

Eyetrack and Usability Notes

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I recently discovered a new study on web site usage. [Eyetrack III](#) is a study of the eye movements of 46 people on fictional and real news web sites. They published a [summary of their findings](#) as well as an [FAQ about Eyetrack](#). For ongoing reading on the topic, check out the [Eyetools Blog](#).

While on the topic of eye tracking, I read one of the [recent enties on the Eyetools blog](#) and thought it was worthy of mention. The [Washington Post](#) web site just underwent a redesign. Eyetools created a Heatmap of the page from 19 visitors. The Heatmap reveals that the bottom of the page is getting very little attention.

What is interesting about this is that evidence demonstrates that this is NOT a [below-the-fold](#) problem. The Heatmap shows no dramatic drop in attention for areas below the fold.

So what is the problem? Eyetools says "ineffective line-height spacing and lack of white-space reduce reading". I think they are right, but their Heatmap shows a dramatic drop. I decided to go out to WashingtonPost.com myself. I scrolled down to around the end of the area where people seemed to be looking and here is what I saw:



Looks like the bottom of a web page doesn't it? It isn't. The page continues, but no one is looking. This seems to coordinate with the ["Avoid Scroll Stoppers"](#) (pdf) guideline on [Usability.gov](#), which Usability.gov gave a "Strength of Evidence" of 4/5 and a "Relative Importance" of 2/5.

This certainly seems like something to watch out for in your designs!