The Good <u>Login</u>
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Registration and Log In
Close interaction with users requires trust and shared information. The most common way to protect that information is to enable them to save it on a system s server and access it via a username and a password.

Registration/Log In functionality is very attractive to the site — it enables personalization and special features, but is seen as a necessary evil by the user. The users goal is access; the registration and login are just intermediate steps. The user and site have some conflicting goals: the user wants to maintain freedom and not be hassled; the site wants to provide personalized services, which requires login.

Many sites do not recognize the obstacle that registration and login pose to many users. Forgotten user ID s and lost passwords are a consistent problem, frustrating users and preventing sales. As most e-commerce transaction failures happen during check-out, the process of logging into the service is likely to be a major factor.

Different types of sites have different goals for their logins. E-commerce sites want to encourage customer loyalty with convenience and personalization. Sites that sell media and intellectual property, for example industry research need to restrict access as a fundamental part of their business. Bulletin boards and Chat sites need identities for the contributors.

Potential Benefits and Drawbacks to Registration
(may not apply to all sites)

User Benefits	Business Benefits
-access, if registration is required	-restrict access to customers
-convenience of stored personal info	-convenience increases usage
-personalized service	-personalized service
	-data mining

User Drawbacks	Business Drawbacks
-potential theft of personal info	-registration an obstacle to sales
-potential sale of contact info	-potential theft of customer info
-having to remember password	

Good Practices

-Avoid unnecessary logins!

-Identify what the user s goals are for logging in.

-Always communicate to the user the benefits of logging in. A good example is Amazon.com Sign in to get recommendations.

-Locate the login process as close as possible to the point in the process when the user has a focused goal. For example, after the user moves from browsing to purchasing. Forcing a log in before the user knows that they want something can prevent them from forming that opinion.

-Integrate registration into the user s goals. Many sites require the user to fill out a registration form before they can act. In most cases, the user will enter the same information in the process of achieving their goals. As an example, buying a product online requires one to enter information such as mailing address, email, etc. As the user understands the use of the information during the order, it is seen as less of an obstacle. At the end of the order, the user can be prompted to simply add a password to save the information.

-Use the user s email address as their ID. This eliminates potential duplicate user IDs and captures the user s email for future communication.

-Use multiple levels of access: identification, information, action. Personalization generally only requires that the site know which user they are interacting with, and can personalize the content without revealing personal information. This can be done with a cookie.

-When saving identification with a cookie, explain the consequences. Identify if you are going to save the ID and the password, as this can compromise security.

- Sign In is a friendlier term than Log In , though the latter is the standard in the tech world.

-Enable the user to update their personal information. This is shockingly rarely possible.

-Allow passwords and user ID s to be retrieved using with more personal information, such as birth date or credit card info (if applicable). Try to enable the user to solve the problem at the site, without, for example, going to their email program to receive the password. A common solution is to present the user with several standard personal questions What is your dog s name? and allow them to enter the answer as a backup password. Keep in mind that there are potential security risks with any system. In particular, the password and ID should never be sent together, this allows anyone who sees it immediate access.

A Good Login Process

Not Logged In
(state, not page)

Login Page

Password Error
(Adds error
description
on page)

Forgotten
Password
(Adds password
memory clue, link
to email password)

Logged In
(gives access or
personalization)

Register Form

□ Screen

○ Event
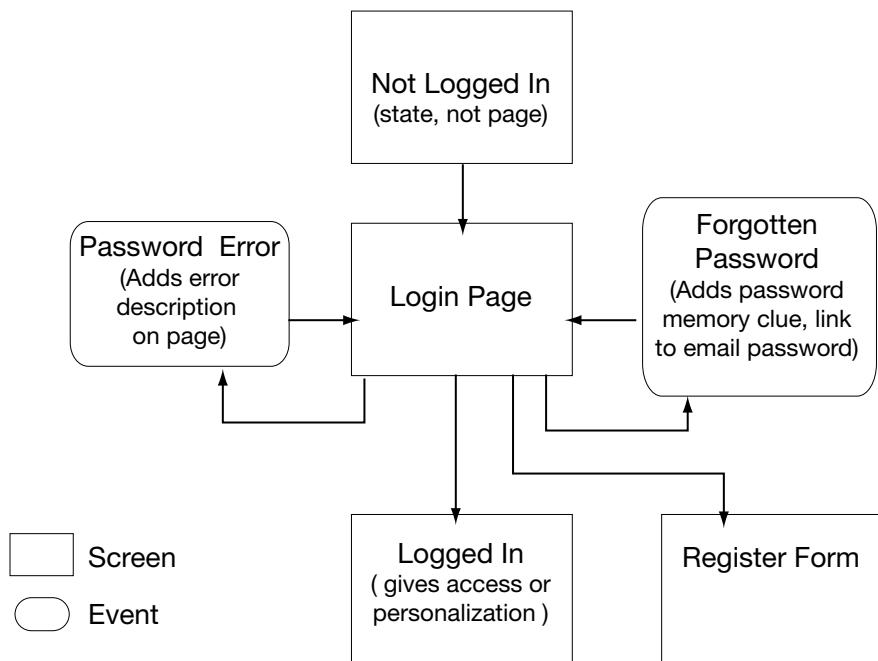
A Good Login Screen

Separate areas for different user types

New Visitor?

Enter your email address

Continue

Learn more about us

Please Sign In

Enter your email address

Enter your password.

Sign In   Forgot your password?

☐ Save your password on ths computer
How this works

Allow user to complete task (checkout)
and register afterward

Opt-In cookie storage of password,
with explanation

Good Examples

Sites should use a login approach that matches their business objectives and site goals. Amazon.com encourages registration to provide recommendations throughout the browsing process. Yahoo.com separates their personalized services into my.yahoo.com as its primary functionality does not require identifying the user. The Wall Street Journal, a paid subscription site, requires a login to read anything other than a few sample articles.
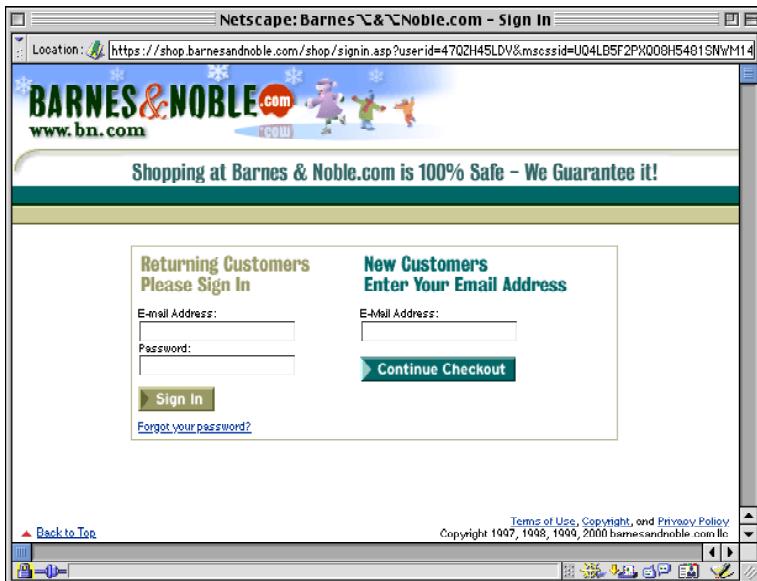
One of the clearest log in screens is on Barnes & Noble s site(http://www.bn.com). Log in happens during the check out process and separates the registered and the unregistered. The darker colors focus the attention of the new user, who typically needs more guidance.
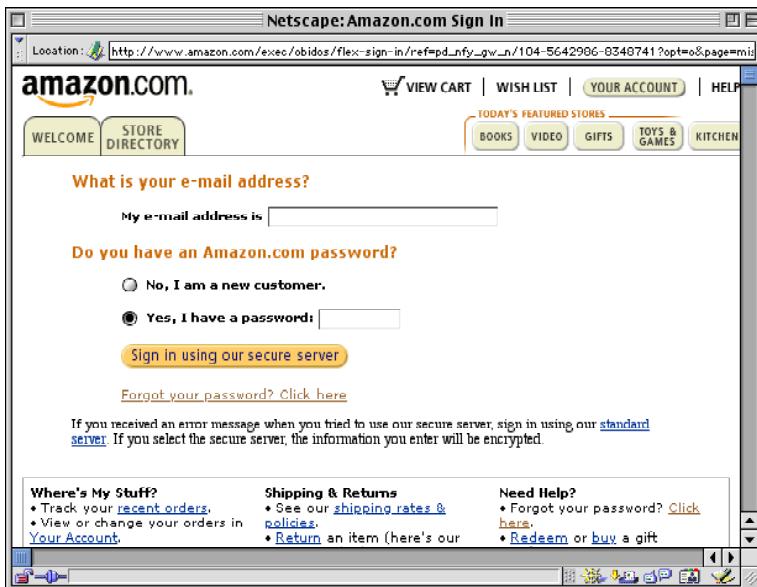
As a counter example, the Amazon login (http://www.amazon.com), while still generally usable, asks the user to concentrate on two questions at once. Giving the users the benefit of context, by separating them into their types (registered and unregistered) enables them to easily understand the goal of the page.

The yahoo mail site (http://mail.yahoo.com) requires a login, whereas the main site (http://www.yahoo.com) is freely accessible.
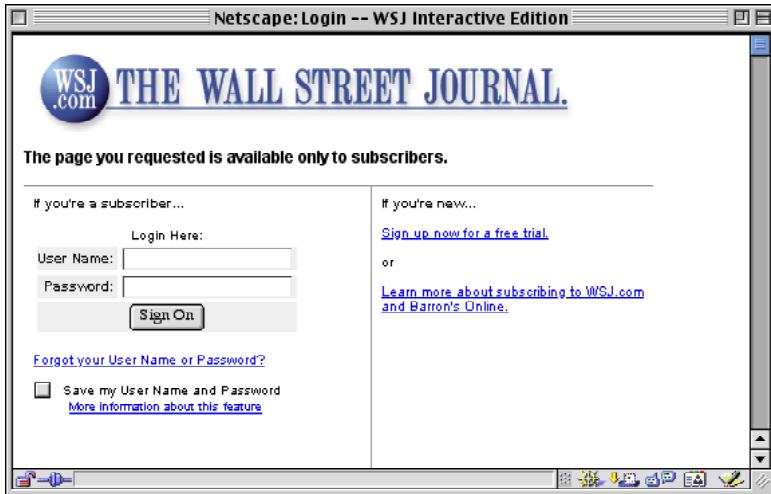
The wall street journal site (http://wsj.com) is mainly accessible to subscribers.