Mobile Web usability is a measure of how easy (or otherwise) a user finds it to interact with a web site through a mobile device. In this chapter we look at some of the most heavily used Mobile Web sites and show you how to apply best practices and design guidelines to create an effective web site for a mobile device.

As we delve into Mobile Web usability, you should keep one thing in mind: you are developing for a mobile user. A mobile user is not someone sitting in front of a computer with undivided concentration, but rather someone who is on the move, waiting for a bus, on his way to work, with friends in a coffee shop, shopping. A mobile user’s attention is often divided: she might be listening to music or talking to friends while using the mobile device. A mobile user has a very short attention span and is in a highly interruptible and dynamic environment.

A user visits a web site on a mobile device for a purpose. As a developer, your goal is help her achieve that purpose in the least amount of time. This chapter will help you develop such a Mobile Web site, and is divided into four sections:

**Best Practices for Usable Mobile Web Sites** looks at mobile versions of four popular web sites—Bank of America, CNN, Flickr, and Wikipedia—to see how they satisfy their customer’s goal in an effective way.

- Mobile Browser Layout Comparison gives you specific information about mobile browsers across popular devices: Android, iPhone, BlackBerry, Palm Pre, Windows Mobile, Nokia Series 60, and Nokia Maemo. This section shows you the screen layouts of all the popular mobile devices and gives a context for your development.

- Designing Mobile Web pages dives into different web site categories and show you how to create an effective design for each of them. This section covers the following: news, search, service, portal, and media-sharing web sites with example layouts.
Design Guidelines are a set of tips and practices that can be used for developing web sites that cater to the maximum number of users. These guidelines can be used as checkpoints while developing your Mobile Web site.

Best Practices for Usable Mobile Web Sites

In this section we will see how popular Internet brands have created mobile versions of their web sites, and what trade-offs they have made with respect to design and functionality.

We looked into twenty-five popular Mobile Web sites (more details in a later section) and selected these four web sites for our case studies.

- Bank of America
- CNN
- Flickr
- Wikipedia

Each of these Mobile Web sites represents a particular type of site, each requiring distinctive functionality (see Table 6-1). For example, the Bank of America web site provides continual online service and it demands login authentication. CNN, on the other hand, is a news site that delivers an ever-changing flow of information. Flickr typifies the current trend of media-sharing web sites, while Wikipedia is an encyclopedia, dictionary, and search tool.

We will study each of these web sites carefully, looking for common patterns, and identify the features that determine the design of these Mobile Web sites.

Table 6-1. Popular Mobile Web Sites by Type and Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Web Site</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Features</th>
<th>URL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bank of America</td>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Secure online banking, location lookup, help</td>
<td><a href="https://bankofamerica.com/mobile/">https://bankofamerica.com/mobile/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNN</td>
<td>News</td>
<td>Dynamic information, headlines, weather</td>
<td><a href="http://m.cnn.com">http://m.cnn.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flickr</td>
<td>Media</td>
<td>Media sharing, my account, search</td>
<td><a href="http://m.flickr.com/">http://m.flickr.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wikipedia</td>
<td>Encyclopedia</td>
<td>Information database</td>
<td><a href="http://m.wikipedia.org/">http://m.wikipedia.org/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>