

Categories

The Categories Menu is used to establish the category browsing structure that will be used throughout the site. The highest level category is the System Category of "main". This is not an actual category in the system but considered the "parent" for all the first level categories. The highest level categories that you will enter will be applied to/under "main". You can then enter 'categories' (now called subcategories) to your main level categories if you like. The software will allow you to enter as many categories and subcategories levels as you desire.

We suggest keeping your categories to a manageable level. Too many categories can make your site hard to navigate. Categorizing listings too much using categories can leave some categories empty or with few listings.

You can easily add new categories to a site that has too many listings in one category. It is a bit harder to remove a category as listings in that category will need to be moved to a parent category in the process.

<tip c n>**NOTE:** Keep in mind, however, that a high number of categories and subcategories (thousands for example) can slow down the script/server in certain instances. So, remember this for planning purposes when setting up you category structure.</tip>

What to put in your category structure and what not

Put some thought into this one as there are a few other features within the software that can help with navigating to specific auctions or classifieds a client browsing your site wants to see. We strongly suggest that you think if you are planning to put "geographic based" categories into your category structure. We suggest not putting any geographic based navigation into your site without a bit of thought...then rethought. One of the first problems you will encounter is how geographically "granular/detailed" you should get. If you do add regions to the category structure make the lowest regions of the structure very broad. The more specific you get the more categories you are adding. We have also seen that clients have created genre specific main categories and then put levels of geographic based categories below these. When you do it this way you are creating MANY categories within the system that in and of themselves become a management problem. If you need to add another region you would need to do so to all those categories. If you added a new genre you would need to add a whole new set of geographic subcategories.

If you're thinking about following the above scenario in your own site we also ask you to think about how many clicks it would take for your browsing clients to see what they actually came to look at. Then how many more clicks to see the same "geographic based" listings in another genre. The ease of use of your site needs to be looked at.

Also note that putting geography into the category structure may create a LOT of empty categories at least at first. Not sure how you feel about it but it kind of feels like walking through a huge empty store to find just a few items. If you start with this scenario we suggest adding granularity to your geographic category as you go so that there are not too many empty categories on your site at one time.

We bring this scenario up to give you all the other possible ways you can structure your site without

having to put geographic regions into your category structure. We have created the Geographic Navigation Addon and Zip Search Addons to help with options to the "geographic category" problem. If geography is a big part of the functionality of your site we suggest moving some if not all of your geographic navigation into one of these two addons. We would suggest keeping genre specific criteria in your category structure while using one of these addons to "filter" those category results to the geographic regions they only want to see results from.

Geography To Filter Results

If you use the Geographic Navigation Addon to allow your clients to filter category results it is easy to use. It usually only takes a few clicks to get to the region your client only wants to see results from. Mouse clicks are the only thing needed....easy. Also with this addon is that the region choice only needs to be made once and their selection is saved. They only need to change the filter if they want to change the results their listings viewed are pulled from. The client can move from one category to another and still only see the region results they have chosen.

The problem with geographic filtering in this addon is that you have to define the regions used and how granular they should be. The problem is that within major cities and immediately around/within them are a multitude of smaller towns/cities that could pose a problem. Do you put ALL cities into your addon which takes a lot of work to insert and maintain? Do you just leave it to cities and force users within these smaller cities to use the major cities around them to place their listing in? How about those that want to search a few different suburbs in their own area. To search each they would need to adjust the geographic filter every time. If you are using the Geographic Navigation may we suggest that you use large regions to place listings into. The reason for the larger areas is to make it easier on the client when searching. Many cities have several suburbs. If you entered each suburb a client would need to navigate into a specific suburb and then navigate to a separate suburb to see results from that another suburb. In most cases clients are willing to search within larger areas for something while weeding out listings that may not apply. You just need to modify your regions so that the client isn't deluged with listings that are completely out of their customary search area. The client may need to go through a few more auctions or classifieds than they want to but at least they find what they want. Getting more granular in your regions may force the client to click a lot more to get to where they want...a little more work than they want to put in.

Using Postal Code to Filter Results

If you have many of the same concerns as those in the previous example you may consider using the Zip Search Addon to filter the results of your site. This works in much the same way as the Geographic Navigation Filter Addon (above) but returns the category results based on the postal code and distance around that postal code they wish to search. The client needs to initially enter their search postal code and the distance from that postal code "center" they wish to see results from. This is a little more work than simple clicking as they may need to lift their hand off the mouse but feel the results are more easily adjusted. The client only needs to change the distance to see a narrower or broader result of listings. As above their "filter selection" follows them around the site filtering all category based results while providing flexibility to widen or narrow those results. This we feel can be the best solution if you are collecting reliable postal code data and you can obtain reliable longitude/latitude based data for the region your site focuses on. For more on what is included please consult the information about that addon within our site.

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