



At first glance, tagging might seem like a simple task: you have data, you describe it, find appropriate keywords, add the labels, done. However, although the tagging itself is extremely powerful, it also has some shortcomings. The problem is that the natural language we use is ambiguous. While labeling data with tags, we make use of our personal understanding of this data and these tags, but keywords are usually not specific enough. For instance, it's not clear whether the tag "water" is related to bottled water, tap water, sea water or contaminated water. Most words have a number of different associations, which is why the quality of tag clouds quickly becomes messy and useless once you label data with too many common tags. Do you want to be more abstract or more concrete? The more concrete tags you have, the larger your tag clouds become and the fewer topics will be given a higher priority.

Instead of large font sizes, designers tend to use colors. The importance of the tags isn't only determined by the font-size, but also by the color it has. The more contrast that exists between the color of the tag and the background, the more active and important the tag is. "Passive" tags usually have colors more similar to the background color, as they have to remain in the background, unnoticed.

Bear in mind that even though colors are helpful, the more colors are used, the more irritating tag clouds will be, as a variety of colors doesn't provide any helpful information. What do the used colors stand for? Is green more important than red? And what does it mean 25 different colors in the cloud? In most cases 2 or 3 colors should be the maximal number of colors used in a tag cloud, so that way the viewer won't run away screaming.