

Writing for the Web Guidelines

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WHAT: Keep focused on the user

- First step in any content audit: identify who comes to your website and why?
- Think of your target audience for every page; who needs this content?
 - Rank content, prioritize content for primary audience
- Focus: what is the central message / key idea on the web page?
 - What question does this content answer? What task can be accomplished?
 - Try to make your users lives simpler and easier
- Can your content be improved? (edit, consolidate)
 - Remove content ROT (redundant, out-of-date, trivial)

HOW: Make your point first, then explain it

- Use inverted pyramid style, put your most important information first
 - Easy to skim, user can quickly decide if content is relevant to them
 - Can stop reading at any point and still have main idea
- Create visual hierarchy, give key content visual weight
 - Use headings, subheads, chunk content
- Make text scannable
 - Use bulleted lists, FAQs
 - Use pull quotes
- Keep text concise (about 50% of what you'd write for print)
 - Avoid formal sentence construction, keep conversational, 4th grade level
 - Use plain language; active voice, avoid jargon, use keywords

WHY: Keep user engaged

- Break long pages into multiple pages
- Use visuals; is there a graphical way to present this information?
 - Stats, icons, fast facts, calls to action, links as practical
- Avoid long lists of links or documents
 - Group documents with headings, include summary text (title might not be descriptive enough)
 - Use visual links (show me why I should go to this section or site)
 - Make hyperlinks relevant; use keywords, give user clear expectation where link will go