



# Writing for the Web

## TERMINALFOUR

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## List of topics

- > How people read on the web
- > Statistics
- > Numbers as Numerals
- > Scannable - *F for fast*
- > Heading, intro, paragraphs
- > Inverted Pyramid
- > Lists
- > Readability level

## How people read on the web

Writing for the web is different from writing for print... Studies show that online readers **don't read!**

Your readers are less likely to read your entire document. Their tendency is to scan and mainly look at headings, links, etc. They do not read as fast as your "standard" reader, on average reading online is twenty-five percent slower than reading printed material, partly because it is harder on the eye to read online and the longer the document, the bigger the problem. It is suggested that web content should aim to have half of the word count of its paper equivalent.

The most significant barrier web writers must overcome is behavioural, as people behave differently when online. When viewing a new page, they do not read—they scan—with seventy-nine percent of users scanning the page instead of reading word-for-word. They look at headings and subheadings first; they scan for hyperlinks, numerals, and keywords. They jump around, scrolling and clicking—their fingers never far from the browser's "Back" button. The word that best describes their behaviour is impatient.

## Statistics

Statistics show that website visitors and humming birds have a lot in common: They're flighty.

The content above contains 3 statistics from Jakob Nielsen; they are not easy to find quickly because the content isn't written with scannability in mind. We will work to improve the above content later, but for now, see if you can find the 3 statistics "hidden" in the two paragraphs above.



### Link the number to the statement:

79%

25%

50%

slower  
reading  
speed online  
vs. print

of people  
scan a web  
page then  
move on

less words  
than its  
printed  
equivalent

## Numbers as numerals

In the previous task, was it easy to find the numbers in the text? Probably not. Research by Jacob Nielsen in 2007 tells us that numerals often stop the wandering eye and attract fixations, even when they're embedded within a mass of words that users otherwise ignore.



### 23 or twenty-three: that is the question.

According to eye-tracking data, it's better to use "23" than "twenty-three" to catch users' eyes when they scan web pages for facts.

## Scannable

The most important aspect of a web page is the content: the information provided on a web page. To get your point across, however, you need to keep the readers in mind:

They do not read; instead they scan the pages, trying to pick out a few sentences or even parts of sentences to get the information they want.

They do not like long, scrolling pages – they prefer text to be short and to the point.

They typically dislike "marketing speak" and ignore anything which looks like banners, ads, etc.

Eye-tracking visualisations show that users often read Web pages in an F-shaped pattern: two horizontal stripes followed by a vertical stripe.





## F for fast

- > **Users won't read your text thoroughly** in a word-by-word manner. Exhaustive reading is rare, especially when prospective students are conducting their initial research to compile a shortlist of Universities/Colleges. Yes, some people will read more, but most won't.
- > **The first two paragraphs must state the most important information.** There's some hope that users will actually read this material, though they'll probably read more of the first paragraph than the second.
- > **Start subheads, paragraphs, and bullet points with information-carrying words** that users will notice when scanning down the left side of your content in the final stem of their F-behavior. They'll read the third word on a line much less often than the first two words.

## Headings

Headings are vital in web content. When used well, they can give users a quick idea of what's on the page, and make the content look more inviting. Nothing puts users off faster than a wall of text.

Headings can help people find your page via search engines especially the top heading, (H1) and navigate around your page once they arrive

Make the top heading on the page an H1, with subheadings H2 and lower. If you do not use these formats for your headings, they will not be recognised by search engines.

For search engines, H1 headings are looked at with more importance than average text. Lower-level headings - H2, H3, etc. - also influence search engines.

Visitors to your webpage are more likely to scan your content rather than reading every word, so headings are important signposts to help them find their way around.

Headings are noticed more than body text, therefore have many more headings than you would for print documents – even one heading for every paragraph may not be too much.

**Heading 1**

**Heading 2**

**Heading 3**

*Heading 4*

**Heading 5**

*Heading 6*



## Headings should:



- > **Be short.** Avoid headings longer than about 8 words
- > **Be clear.** Avoid jargon, abbreviations and acronyms unless well known to your target audience
- > **Break up and organise content.** Use a heading roughly every 2-4 paragraphs; a single paragraph under a heading is fine
- > **Lead with the key idea**
- > **Meaningfully describe the content in that section** and its relationship to other sections
- > **Communicate the key message**, avoiding bland headings such as "important information"
- > **Be interesting** to attract the attention of scanning readers.
- > **Be written in sentence or title case.** Don't use uppercase unless you are locked into a "house" style

Writing good headlines is an art. It takes time, practice and patience. It also takes knowing what works best for your audience (which is not always what you think will work best for them).



## Headings task:

Suggest alternative headings. The information in brackets gives a bit of background.

 Original heading	 Suggested alternative
<b>The Organisation's existing framework</b> <i>(in a page on ethics in the Organisation)</i>	
<b>Procedures</b> <i>(in a page on press accreditation)</i>	
<b>Your Internet - Your choice</b> <i>(too much slogan and too general)</i>	

## Introductions and paragraphs

Your first paragraph is the most important one. As such, it should be brief, clear, and to the point in order to quickly engage the reader.

Short paragraphs keep content scannable. Many readers will scan only the first sentence of each paragraph.



### Introductions and paragraphs should:

- > **Provide a short summary.** Get to the point in the first paragraph; then expand upon it.
- > **Focus on 2 questions**
  - What will readers find on this page?
  - Why should they care/read?
- > **Be easy to read, accurate and concise**
- > **Be short.** 50 words or fewer directly under the main heading.
- > **Be no more than 5 lines**
- > **Built around a single idea**
- > **Be replaced with a bulleted list where possible**

## Lists

List can be a great way to break up text. It's usually easier to identify important points from a list, when compared to chunks of text/paragraphs. Lists are preferable to long paragraphs because they:

- > Allow users to read the information vertically rather than horizontally
- > Are easier to scan
- > Are less intimidating
- > Are usually more succinct

## Parallelism in list elements

Any items in a bulleted list or a numbered list must stay parallel. Start each bullet or number with the same part of speech and sentence construction. Unparalleled lists are awkward to read and reduce the quality of your content.



### Right or wrong?

John likes:

- > singing
- > walking
- > diving

John needs to get:

- > milk
- > bread
- > go to the bank



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Readability describes the ease with which a document can be read. Webster's defines "readable" as:

- > fit to be read
- > interesting
- > agreeable and attractive in style
- > enjoyable

Readability tests are mathematical formulas and cannot measure features like interest and enjoyment. Also, when we ask whether text is understood by its reader, we are questioning its "comprehensibility". Readability formulas cannot measure how comprehensible a text is. And they cannot measure whether a text is suitable for particular readers' needs.

## Flesch Reading Ease

Considered as one of the oldest and most accurate readability formulas; Rudolph Flesch, an author, writing consultant, and a supporter of the Plain English Movement, developed this formula in 1948. Raised in Austria, Rudolph Flesch studied law and earned a Ph.D. in English from Columbia University.

The formula measures readability which indicates how easy a text is to read.

- > The higher the rating, the easier the text is to understand.
- > Lower numbers mark passages that are more difficult to read.



### Flesch Reading Easy formula

$$RE = 206.835 - (1.015 \times ASL) - (84.6 \times ASW)$$

- > RE = Readability Ease
- > ASL = Average Sentence Length (i.e., the number of words divided by the number of sentences)
- > ASW = Average number of syllables per word (i.e., the number of syllables divided by the number of words)

The Flesch Reading Ease Scale measures readability as follows:

Score	Summary	Detail
90-100	Easily understood by an average 11-year-old student	Average sentence length is 12 words or fewer. No words of more than two syllables.
60-70	Easily understood by 13- to 15-year-old students	Average sentence is 15 to 20 words long. Average word has two syllables.
0-30	best understood by university graduates	Sentences will have mostly 25 words. Two syllables usually.

## Flesch–Kincaid Grade Level

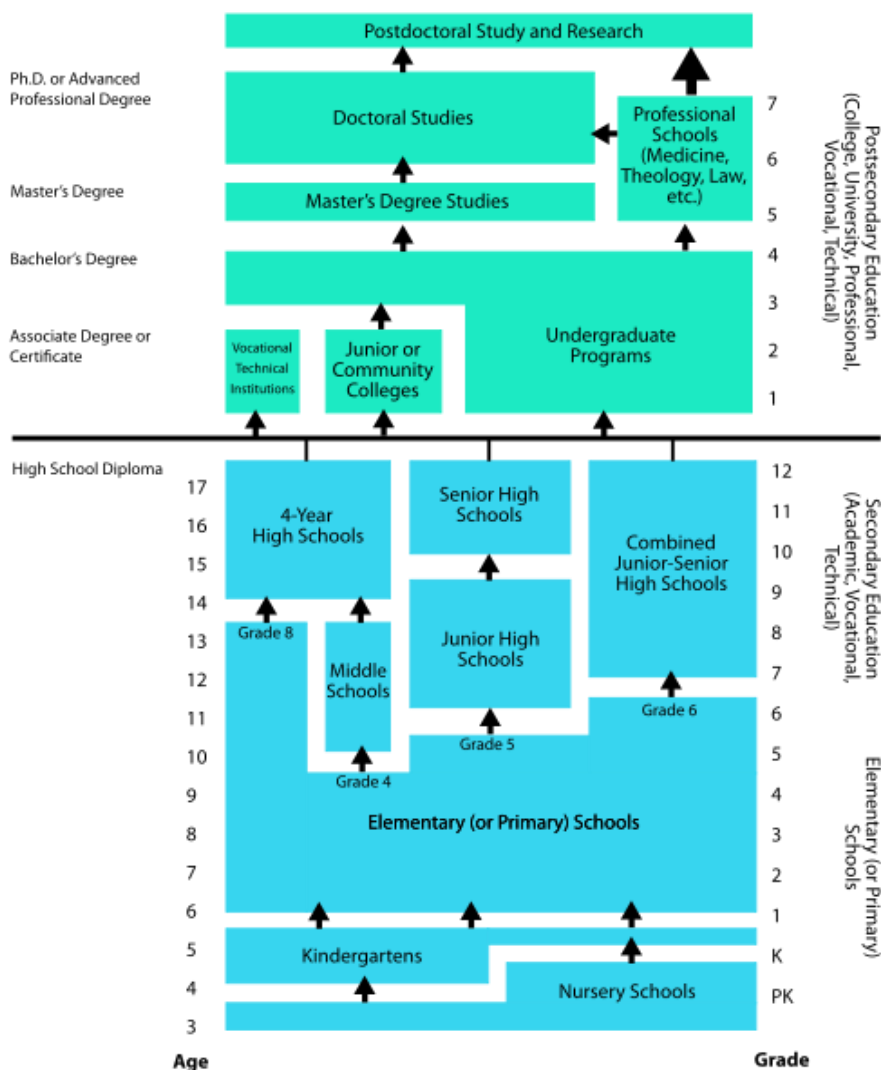
The readability tests are used extensively in the field of education. The "Flesch–Kincaid Grade Level Formula" translates the 0–100 score to a U.S. grade level, making it easier for teachers, parents, librarians, and others to judge the readability level of various books and texts.



### Flesh-Kincaid Grade Level formula

$$FKRA = (0.39 \times ASL) + (11.8 \times ASW) - 15.59$$

- > FKRA = Flesch-Kincaid Reading Age
- > ASL = Average Sentence Length (i.e., the number of words divided by the number of sentences)
- > ASW = Average number of syllables per word (i.e., the number of syllables divided by the number of words)





## From DIFFICULT to EASY

- > Few receive paediatric antiretroviral treatment (Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level = 12)
- > Few get appropriate medical help (Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level = 9.9)
- > Few get the medicine they need (Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level = 2.4)

<b>Counts</b>	
Words	58
Characters	364
Paragraphs	1
Sentences	2
<b>Averages</b>	
Sentences per Paragraph	2.0
Words per Sentence	29.0
Characters per Word	5.9
<b>Readability</b>	
Passive Sentences	100%
Flesch Reading Ease	0.0
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	26.6

- > Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Readability Formula is inbuilt within the MS-Word application.



## Make it easier to read

Use what you have learned on the previous pages to cut the text down to half the words and make it **online user friendly**. The current Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level is 26.6:

The United States of America is filled with internationally recognised attractions which draw large crowds of people every year, without fail. In 2010, some of the most popular places were Times Square (37,600,000 visitors), the Las Vegas Strip (30,000,000), the National Mall and Memorial Parks (25,000,000), Faneuil Hall Marketplace, 20,000,000), Disney World's Magic Kingdom (17,100,000), and Disneyland (14,900,000).

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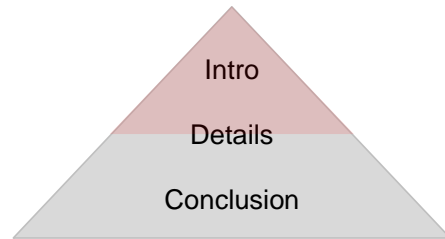
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## Inverted pyramid

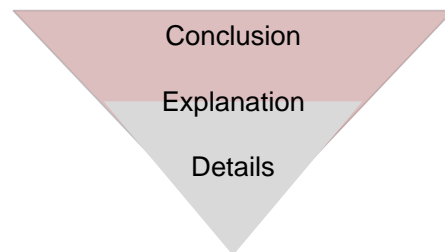
Traditionally, when composing an essay, we start with a "foundation" and gradually build to a conclusion in a pyramid style. We might write an essay or article using the following structure:

1. Present the problem statement
2. Related or supporting information
3. Methodology- How did something occur?
4. Results
5. Conclusion, outcomes or most important information



Journalists, on the other-hand, use an *inverted pyramid style* of writing. They start with the main conclusion or outcome and get progressively more detailed towards the end of the piece:

1. Conclusion or most important information
2. Supporting information
3. Background and technical details

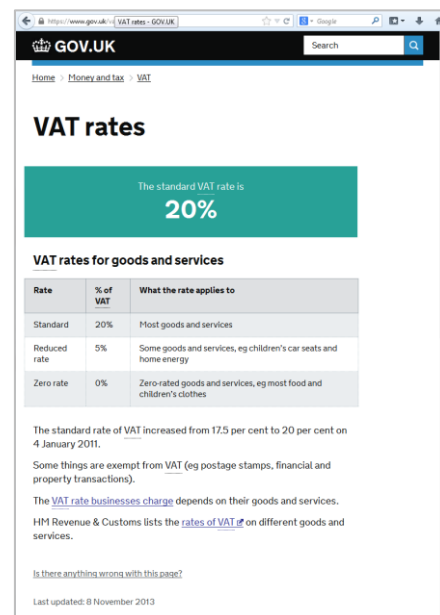
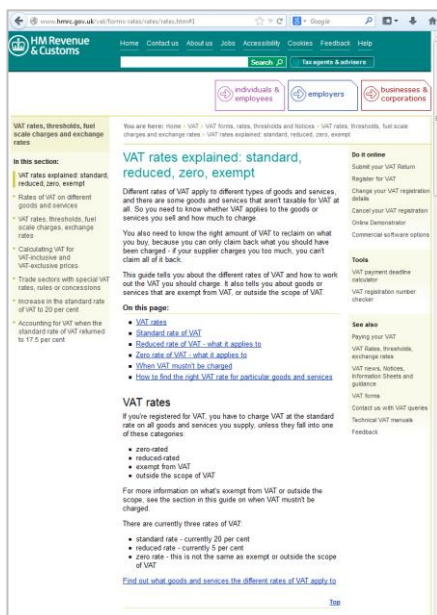


Since web users typically scan text, using the inverted pyramid is a good way to get the most important information to your readers first. Position your main points (who, what, when, where, why and how) at the beginning and then go into more detail towards the end of your piece.

## From theory to practice

In the example below, the UK Government explain how VAT rates are applied. The first example is an old piece of content. It uses lists and headings, but it's still text-heavy. In the new version, the main message is clearly stated first, and the detail is briefly outlined in a table.

Do you think they receive fewer queries about VAT rates?





## Topic overview

- > Rules or no rules?
- > Is grammar a thing of the past?
- > Basic punctuation
- > Power words
- > Branding
- > Formal or informal writing style
- > Active or passive voice?

## Rules or no rules?

There are, in fact, rules – even online. Rules are not restrictions. Grammar, spelling, punctuation, rhythm, focus, syntax and structure are not especially romantic terms, until you get to know them.

Writers want to make sense. They want to move the reader. It ain't gonna happen if you got busted paragraphs, mistaken punctuation and bad rhythm, not to mention creative spelling: see?

*Clarity is key. Learn the rules. Break 'em later!*

So who makes the rules and how do you know what they are? That's where a style guide comes into the picture.



A selection of pages from the Skype style guide.



## Right or wrong?

- > The University organises a range of initiatives and activities for students and their advisers throughout the year.
- > The University organise a range of initiatives and activities for students and their advisers during the year.
- > The University organizes a range of initiatives & activities for students and their advisers throughout the year.



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## Are grammar, punctuation and spelling things of the past?

Web writing doesn't always need perfect traditional grammar and full sentences. Short works. Sometimes, anyway. Still, good command of the language is important for credibility, which is important online where an organisation only exists in the form of pixels on the screen. Typos, grammatical errors, and poor language all reduce users' trust in a website, because it makes them feel that the website is not as professional or as well maintained as a site without these mistakes. (Jakob Nielsen).

Grammar sometimes determines the meaning of a sentence, so consider how you use commas, apostrophes, brackets, etc.



### What does this mean?

- > My \$10 million estate is to be split among my husband, daughter, son, and nephew.
- > My \$10 million estate is to be split among my husband, daughter, son and nephew.



### Basic punctuation

( . ) Period/Full Stop	End a sentence: The subject was interesting.
( ? ) Question Mark	End a sentence and denote inquiry: What time is it?
( ! ) Exclamation Point	End a sentence and denote excitement or emphasis: Be careful with the chemicals!
( , ) Comma	Denote a break within a sentence or direct address of a person or group: Mary, listen to me.  Separate two or more adjectives: He is a charming, attentive listener.  Separate items in a list: Please buy eggs, milk, butter and flour.  Separate the name of a city from the name of a state: I live in Salt Lake City, Utah.  Separate two independent clauses: The waiter still hasn't taken our order, and the play starts in five minutes.

## **i** Basic punctuation

( ; ) Semicolon	<p>Separate two related but independent clauses: I asked the student to write an essay; she has good knowledge of the topic.</p> <p>Separate a series of items that already contain commas: For our wedding colors, I chose white, the color of innocence; red, the color of passion; and yellow, the color of lemons.</p>
( : ) Colon	<p>Introduce a list. For Christmas, I would like the following presents: a hula hoop, a hippopotamus, and my two front teeth.</p>
( - ) Hyphen	<p>Add a prefix: Trans-Atlantic flights are costly.</p> <p>Create compound words: Spider-Man is my favorite superhero.</p> <p>Write numbers as words: I have lived in this house for thirty-three years.</p>
( – or — ) Dash	<p>Make a brief interruption within a sentence or a parenthetical phrase: Johnny asked me—with a straight face, I might add—if he could borrow the car for the weekend.</p>
( ( ) ) Parentheses	<p>Indicate clarification: Please bring home some real butter (as opposed to margarine).</p> <p>Indicate an afterthought or personal commentary: Anyone can edit Wikipedia (not that there's anything wrong with that).</p>



"Sorry about some of the punctuation — I haven't learned the top row of the keyboard yet."

© Original Artist



### Right or wrong?



- > Most of the time, travelers worry about their luggage.
- > Most of the time travelers worry about their luggage.

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## Branding

Your branding is your image to the outside world, and you want people to recognise you based on your brand. But what exactly is a brand, and why is it important to your website?

When we talk about branding on a website, we typically think about the brand name, the logo, the identity or image associated with the brand, etc.



May 2013 **TERMINALFOUR Announce User Conference Dates**



The dates for TERMINALFOUR'S annual user conferences have been announced.



### How to keep branding consistent

What do you do to keep branding consistent?

1. -----
2. -----
3. -----
4. -----
5. -----



## Writing style

As a general rule, people consider the web a more informal place for accessing information, and as a result of that, the writing style is often less formal than would have been the case for printed material.

It's difficult to change your writing style from formal to informal, or vice-versa, so here's a list of "quick win" tips from The University of Nottingham's Web Style Manual:

- > **Write in plain English** – don't risk the reader feeling intimidated, alienated or confused by convoluted or over-complicated language, jargon or concepts.
- > **Adopt a conversational, friendly and relaxed style** – it needs to be reader-friendly.
- > **Avoid humour and word-play** – it can be off-putting or perceived as trying to be too clever.
- > **Avoid overly-hyped language or "marketing speak"** – reader don't like to feel they are being obviously marketed to.
- > **Use short sentences and paragraphs** – it is important to be succinct and concise, so use less words than you would use with a print publication.
- > **Lead with main points and follow with secondary points** – people can then find key information quickly and have the choice to read further or move on.
- > **Use one concept per paragraph, keeping paragraphs short and divided by subheadings whenever possible** – this will clearly label the information on the page and indicate exactly where readers will find the information they are looking for.
- > **Use bullet points to highlight key points** – information will get buried in the paragraph if lists and key points are written in conventional sentence structure list format. Bulleting the list not only breaks up large chunks of text, making it easier on the eye, it makes important and relevant bits of information leap out at the reader.

You'll probably need a mix of both formal and informal writing styles on your web site.

To fully understand the difference, let's look at how formal writing typically stands out. In formal writing, you typically:

- > Avoid contractions (write out full words – cannot, will not, etc.).
- > Use third person (the student, he/she).
- > Avoid imperative voice (sign up!)
- > Use passive voice (the course was attended by the student).
- > Use longer and more complex sentences.



## Formal or informal?



- > It is not clear what or how this communication between Kelley and Allen has been, but the American federals are investigating between 20 000 and 30 000 pages of e-mails and other documents, which likely has been sent between Allen and Kelley between 2010 and 2012, according to one of Panetta employees. 

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- > It isn't totally clear how Allen and Kelley communicated, but FBI are investigating 30 000 emails and documents, 30 000! 

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- > As the price of five dollars was reasonable, I decided to make the purchase without further thought. 

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- > The real estate market is going sky-high which is not very good for anybody. Well it's good for the people working in the real estate business but for us citizens it's not very good. 

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- > This is to inform you that your book has been rejected by our publishing company as it was not up to the required standard. In case you would like us to reconsider it, we would suggest that you go over it and make some necessary changes. 

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### The University

The University is a confederation of Schools, Faculties, Departments and Colleges. The Colleges are governed by their own statutes and regulations, but are integral to the make-up of the University.

### Colleges

Students live, eat and socialise in one of the University's 31 autonomous Colleges. Undergraduates receive College supervisions – small group teaching sessions – regarded as one of the best teaching models in the world.

Each College has its own internal procedures. They select their own students, subject to University regulations, and most admit both undergraduate and postgraduate students. College representatives sit on the University Council and Finance Committee.

### Schools

There are six Schools, each of which constitutes an administrative grouping of Faculties and other institutions. They are: Arts and Humanities, Biological Sciences, Clinical Medicine, Humanities and Social Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Technology.

There is a Council of each School – including representatives of its Faculties and Departments. The Schools are represented on the General Board.



## From formal to informal

- > The text about The University is very formal. Use what you have learned and write a more informal version of the content.

A large rectangular area with a rounded top-right corner, enclosed by an orange border. It contains 25 horizontal dashed lines for writing.

## Active or passive voice

To stay in line with the less formal writing style, you should aim to use active voice (who does what) as much as possible. Using active voice makes the writing more readable and less formal and makes it very easy for the reader to tell who's responsible for the action.

To make it simple, in a sentence written in the **active** voice, **the subject of the sentence performs the action**. In a sentence written in the passive voice the subject receives the action.

Here are some things to look out for:

- > Look for a "by" phrase (e.g., "by the student"). If you find one, the sentence is likely written in the passive voice. To change the sentence to active voice, move the subject buried in the "by" clause closer to the beginning of the sentence.
- > If the subject of the sentence is somewhat anonymous, see if you can use a general term, such as "researchers," or "the study," or "experts in this field."



### From passive to active

The sentences below are all written in passive voice. Change them to active voice.

P: It was earlier demonstrated that heart attacks can be caused by high stress.

A: .....

P: The book was written by the student.

A: .....

P: A great assignment was handed in.

A: .....

P: The project will have been completed before the deadline.

A: .....



## Active or passive voice

Active voice is not always best, and there are certainly situations where using the passive voice is better:

- > To emphasize the action rather than the actor (After long debate, the proposal was endorsed by the long-range planning committee).
- > To be tactful by not naming the actor (The procedures were somehow misinterpreted).
- > To create an authoritative tone (The door must not be left open).



## List of topics

- > Screen reader
- > Text alternatives
- > Links
- > Link text

Writing good content is only part of the story; we also need to ensure the content is accessible.

Web users have unique requirements in relation to how they use the Internet. This can range from the kind of browser they are using or considerations relating to people with a particular disability. By enhancing a website's accessibility and allowing every user to use your website in a way that works best for them, you are better positioned to reap the rewards of your website investment.



## Screen reader

A screen reader speaks aloud all the information that appears on a screen, for users with impaired vision. It is able to describe everything on the screen, including all the commands and buttons that can be used.





A screen reader, however, cannot read your mind. Unless you make it very clear how your content should be interpreted, it might not convey the right message to your reader.



## Non-text alternatives

A text equivalent for every non-text element should always be provided (e.g. via "alt", "longdesc", or in element content), but what is a good non-text alternative?

Suggest a better non-text alternative

	Cake	
	Cake	
	Cake	
	Cake	

## Links

From an accessibility point-of-view, the most important link-accessibility advice is to write good link text. Have the words explain where the link will take the reader. A person who uses a screen reader won't find much use in "Click here" or random words that don't explain anything about the destination.

If you have a link that isn't self-descriptive, or the link destination could benefit from being explained in more detail, add information to the link using the "title" attribute.



### Link text:

Suggest examples of good link text to replace the four links:

To get to the university, you can get the <https://www.greyhound.com> or plan your own route and drive; click on <http://maps.google.com> for details. Once you arrive, you may need to visit <http://www.supermarket.com> – unless, of course, you plan to eat in the <http://www.university.com/restaurant>.

1	
2	
3	
4	



## Topic overview

- > Images
- > Colours and Contrasts
- > Fonts
- > Emphasis
- > Entry Points



## Guidelines

Online layout has taken on a whole new meaning in the last couple of years, especially with the introduction of responsive design. We've talked about the F-Shape and how users scan web pages, but there are many other things to take into account, such as images, colours and contrast, fonts, emphasis, alignment, etc.

You may not be able to change the fonts used on your website, and you may have no influence on contrast, but it's still important to know what's important – and understand why some decisions have been made by others.

## Images



A large number of published documents contain text only. They often look boring, and they might be written in obscure language, using mile-long sentences and cryptic technical terms, using one font only, perhaps even without headings. It's natural to think such documents can benefit from a few illustrative images; however, just adding illustrations can be rather useless.

- > Use images to compliment your text
- > Make sure they are appropriate
- > Quality is important – avoid blurred images
- > Resize if the image takes too long to load – keep mobile devices in mind
- > Remember to use an Alt tag (associated text)

It's easy to go to the other extreme as well when trying to avoid boring, plain text. Some people seem to think you can't have too many images and that any image will do.

When people say an image tells more than a thousand words, they tend to overlook the fact that what the image says might be true or false, relevant or off-topic, useful or disturbing, constructive or tasteless.



## What does the image in the paragraph above say?

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## Colours and Contrast

When designing a website, be careful to maintain sufficient contrast between text and background colours. Most readers on the web prefer dark text on a light background because it's easier to read, but it's not just a matter of likes and dislikes. If you want to comply with the W3C standards, there's a long list of things to take into account, and you may end up having both a "normal" and high-contrast version of your site.

WCAG 2.0 is a stable, referenceable technical standard. It has 12 guidelines that are organized under 4 principles: perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust. For each guideline, there are testable **success criteria**, which are at three levels: A, AA, and AAA.

<h3>Headline 1</h3> <p>Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipisicing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.</p> <p>Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud commodo consequat.</p>	<h3>Headline 3</h3> <p>Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipisicing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.</p> <p>Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud commodo consequat.</p>
<h3>Headline 2</h3> <p>Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipisicing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.</p> <p>Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud commodo consequat.</p>	<h3>Headline 4</h3> <p>Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipisicing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.</p> <p>Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud commodo consequat.</p>

To cater for people with colour blindness, you should avoid using combinations of green and red as well as black and red.



### Testing colour contrast

Many tools are available online to check colour contrast. Go to <http://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/> and check an example from your own website and see if you pass.

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## Fonts

The fonts you use on your websites can make a big difference in your audience's ability to read, understand and use what you publish. As Jakob Nielsen states in 2012:

*Decent computer screens with pixel densities of 220 PPI or more lead to new usability guidelines for on-screen typography.*

There are three basic types of fonts:

- > Serif fonts
- > Sans serif fonts
- > Decorative fonts

In his most recent studies about typography, Jakob Nielsen says:

The **old** usability guideline for online typography was simple: stick to sans-serif typefaces. Because computer screens were too lousy to render serifs properly, attempting serif type at body-text sizes resulted in blurry letter shapes.

The old guideline was dictated by the poor screens on all mainstream computers. Now that we have high-quality screens, it's time to change the guideline.

The following picture provides a quick reminder of the difference between serif and sans-serif fonts. Compare the two big As and you can clearly see the serifs (small feet) in the Garamond typeface. "Sans serif" simply means a typeface that doesn't have these serifs — from the French word sans, meaning without.

A sans serif font: Franklin Gothic

A serif font: Garamond



It used to be very simple to pick fonts for online use. Verdana was designed by Microsoft in the mid-1990s and was specifically intended for on-screen use. The individual letters are quite broad and hence very clear and easy to read, and for about 15 years it was the most used font for on-screen content. However, in today's world there are more elegant fonts which takes up much less space, whilst still offering the benefits of being clear and easy to read.

So can we ignore all the old rules? Jakob Nielsen says not and concludes that "using more than one or two font families can produce a ransom-note effect and should be avoided; you should also shun overly fancy typefaces with poor legibility."

## Emphasis

There are many ways to emphasize text or make it stand out more. In traditional writing, the most common ways are underlining words and using italics or bold.

Because of the way readers scan text online, emphasizing important words or key phrases are even more important than in print, but consider the best ways to emphasize:

- > Underline
- > Bold
- > Italics
- > Colour
- > Uppercase
- > List

You might also find that alignment can draw extra attention to your text, but be careful about too much variety. In the western world, people read left to right, so it's only logical to left align text. Other alignment should consequently only be used for "special effect".



### What's this about?

**Dublin** is the capital and **most populous city** of Ireland. The ENGLISH name for the city is derived from the Irish name Dubhlinn, meaning "*black pool*". Dublin is situated in the **province of Leinster near the midpoint** of Ireland's east coast, at the mouth of the River Liffey and the centre of the Dublin Region.

Founded as a Viking settlement, it evolved into the Kingdom of Dublin and became the island's principal city following the **Norman invasion**. The city expanded rapidly from the 17th century; it was briefly the second largest city in the **British Empire** and the fifth largest in Europe. Dublin entered a period of stagnation following the Act of Union of 1800, but it remained the economic centre for most of the island.

Following the partition of Ireland in 1922,

- the new parliament,
- the Oireachtas, was located in Leinster House.

Dublin became the **capital of the Irish Free State** and later the Republic of Ireland.

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## Entry points

We've already established that writing webpages is different to writing books, but one of the biggest differences is the fact that each individual webpage can be reached on its own, and you hence need to ensure it can be read as a stand-alone piece.

That's easier said than done!

You've probably considered the hierarchy for your site, and when the readers get to your page, there are certain things you'll expect them to know. However, a search engine might bring a reader directly to your page, and whilst the reader might jump to another page afterwards, that might not be the page you had in mind.

Knowing where users are entering your site can help you understand what their first impression is. Many times you will find that your home page is not the most common entry point as you may have thought.



### What's missing if this is an entry point?

He says he's "bored by out-and-out fabrication, by myself and others; bored by invented plots and invented characters" and much more interested in confession and "reality-based art." His own book can be taken as Exhibit A in what he calls "recombinant" or appropriation art.

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There are plenty of exceptions, of course, including in economics, history and some sciences, in professional schools like law and business, and, above all, in schools of public policy; for that matter, we have a law professor in the White House. But, overall, there are, I think, fewer public intellectuals on American university campuses today than a generation ago.

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But the newest chorus of complaints is coming from one of the most liberal states, and one of the earliest champions of the standards: New York. And that is causing supporters of the Common Core to shudder.

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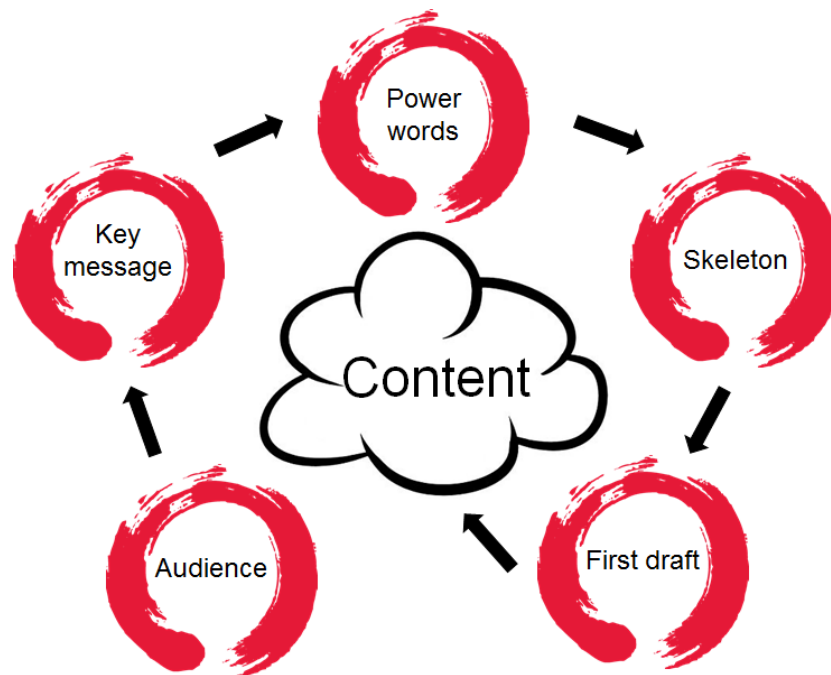


## Topic overview

- > What's the plan
- > Pick your audience
- > Key message(s)
- > Power words
- > Building the skeleton
- > Put meat on the bones

## What's the plan?

The first thing you need to ask yourself when setting off to write content is: "what's the purpose of my content?" To fully answer that question, you need to know who a bit more...



## Sell the idea!



- > You are running out of car park space at the university, and your job is to sell the idea of riding bicycles instead of driving.
- > You have to write **two pieces of content**; the first should be aimed at the **students** and the second one at the **students' parents**.
- > What messages do you want to convey to the two audiences and what words will you use?

## Power words

There is more to writing than punctuation and grammar. One of the key ingredients is words, and picking the very best words can turn a piece of average writing into high-quality writing.

Consider a scenario where you have been given the opportunity to write the "About Us" page for your department or faculty. Jakob Nielsen has this to say about the topic:

*Unfortunately, while most sites offer an About Us section, they often do a poor job of communicating the crucial information it should contain.*

So what do you want to communicate? Try to brain-storm the topic first and come up with a list of power words you can incorporate into your content.



### Key message & power words

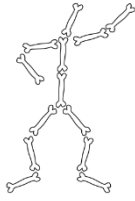
> List your **key message**:

Students	Students' parents

> We have previously talked about "**power words**". List 5 power words for each audience:

Students	Students' parents
<b>1:</b>	<b>1:</b>
<b>2:</b>	<b>2:</b>
<b>3:</b>	<b>3:</b>
<b>4:</b>	<b>4:</b>
<b>5:</b>	<b>5:</b>

## Building the skeleton



Now that you know what message you want to convey to each audience, and what power words you are going to include, you can build the skeleton for your content.

You've previously learned about the F-shape, so you should structure your content accordingly. It's a good idea to write your headings first and even add some of your power words before you write the first draft of the content.



### Build the skeletons

- > Build the skeletons for your two pieces of content. Simply write the headings based on your key message, and add your power words into the mix.

**Students:**

A writing template for students. It features a large, thick black 'F' shape on a background of horizontal dashed lines. The 'F' shape is designed to guide the placement of headings and key words. The vertical bar of the 'F' is on the left, and the horizontal bars extend to the right. There are three horizontal bars in total, each with a small grey rectangular box at its right end, likely for a date or page number.

**Students' parents:**

A writing template for students' parents. It features a large, thick black 'F' shape on a background of horizontal dashed lines. The 'F' shape is designed to guide the placement of headings and key words. The vertical bar of the 'F' is on the left, and the horizontal bars extend to the right. There are three horizontal bars in total, each with a small grey rectangular box at its right end, likely for a date or page number.



## Put meat on the bones

- > Based on the skeletons you've built; write the first draft of your content. Write this quickly without too much concert for style and use of grammar and language. The most important thing is to follow the structure you've created and get some complete sentences pieced together. You can fine-tune them later.

**Students:**

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**Students' parents:**

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## List of topics

- > It's time to write
- > KISSSS
- > Final edit
- > AIDA



## About Us

- > According to Jakob Nielsen, "while most sites offer an About Us section, they often do a poor job of communicating the crucial information it should contain." Read the "About Us" content below, as this content contains the information you need to write your new and improved "About Us" page.

### About Us

Welcome to the Music Department's website – within these pages you will find information on our wide-ranging research, the distinctive education we offer, and our concert and outreach activities. The Music Department is home to a large, dynamic and ambitious community of academic and support staff, postgraduate, undergraduate and diploma students. The key areas of musicology, performance, composition and music technology lie at the heart of our activities.

We are dedicated to providing high-quality research-led teaching and supervision and host a regular series of research seminars together with international conferences. We enjoy facilities including lecturing, studio and practice spaces. Our suite of degrees fosters vital skills and includes the undergraduate BMus, BA, and BA Music Technology programmes and, at postgraduate level, a variety of taught MAs as well as the MLitt and PhD by independent research.

The Department is renowned for its long and proud tradition of communal music making. Our concert life is underpinned by the steady rhythm of rehearsals involving students and staff from across the University and members of the local community. Our professionally directed ensembles include the Chamber Orchestra, Chamber Choir, Traditional Group, 150+-strong Choral Society, Ladies' Choir, Guitar Ensemble and contemporary music ensemble Fuaim. The annual schedule of concerts includes weekly lunchtime recitals (given by guest performers, students and staff) and special evening and afternoon concerts which deepen students' learning and cultural opportunities.

The distinctive education we offer here is founded on traditional values enriched and enlivened by the diverse research expertise of our staff. The Music Department is a vibrant, stimulating and friendly place in which to study. Do take some time to find out more about our work and please contact us if you have further questions.



## About Us – audience

- > Decide who your main audience is for the content: \_\_\_\_\_



## About Us – key message

- > Write down your key message:

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## About Us – power words

- > Write a list of power words:

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## About Us – skeleton

- > Build the skeletons for your content. Simply write the headings based on your key message, and add your power words into the mix.

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## About Us – it's time to write the first draft

Rewrite the About Us page based on the skeleton you've built (structure), making sure you incorporate your power words, convey the key message and write for the selected audience.

A large area for writing, enclosed in an orange rounded rectangle. It contains 25 horizontal dashed lines for text entry.

## KISSSS

Throughout the day you've seen that writing good content isn't a quick and easy task. It takes time to plan, and Mark Twain is reputed to have said:

*"I didn't have time to write a short letter, so I wrote a long one instead."*

KISS is an acronym for "Keep it simple, stupid" as a design principle noted by the U.S. Navy in 1960. Many variations have appeared over the years, and when it comes to writing good content, the most popular one is:

**K I S S S S S**

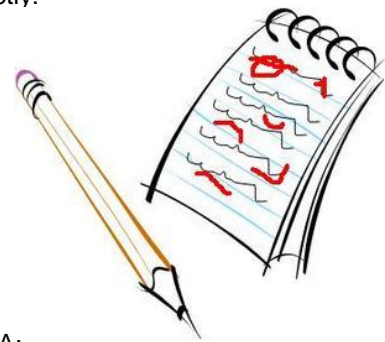
--- keep it short, simple, strong, and sincere ---

<p><b>Short</b> – cut the word count</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; <i>You must ensure that you hand in your assignment on time.</i> (11 words)</li> <li>&gt; <i>Ensure you hand in your assignment on time.</i> (8 words)</li> <li>&gt; <i>Ensure your assignment is on time.</i> (6 words)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Simple</b> – get the point across the first time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Identify the <b>verb</b> (and who is doing it)</li> <li>&gt; Consider: <i>Having <b>taken</b> a two-hour lunch break, my boss <b>gave</b> me a severe reprimand.</i> (who took a two-hour lunch break?)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strong</b> – be clear and authoritative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; You need to get buy-in from your target audience.</li> <li>&gt; If you have a call-to-action, this is a good way to measure if your message is strong enough.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Sincere</b> – be human</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Remember that you're writing for real people, so use every-day English.</li> <li>&gt; <i>Further to our recent communication, please find enclosed the requested information.</i></li> <li>&gt; <i>Thank you for contacting us. I enclose the information you requested.</i></li> </ul>

## Final edit

Your first draft is complete – sleep on it before you carry on! When you're ready for the final edit, consider these simple steps:

1. Read your content
  - > Will the reader get the message (easily)?
  - > Will the reader respond/react as intended?
  - > Is the content clear, concise, readable and human?
  - > Are grammar and punctuation correct and consistent?
  - > Did you follow the writing styleguide?
2. Read your content again
  - > Print your content and read it again
  - > Use a pen to make changes
  - > Apply the changes to your online version
3. Spell-check
  - > Run a spell-check – we all make mistakes
  - > Be careful about correctly spelled words used incorrectly!
4. Get a second opinion
  - > Get someone else to proof-read your content



## And yet another acronym

The highlights of what we've covered today can be summed up in AIDA:

A

Attention

You need to be quick and direct to grab people's **attention**. Use powerful words, or a picture that will catch the reader's eye and make them stop and read what you have to say next.

I

Interest

Gaining the reader's **interest** is tougher. You get very little time to do this, so you must stay focused! Help the reader pick out the messages that are relevant by using bullets and subheadings, and break up the text to make your points stand out.

D

Desire

As you're building the reader's interest, you need to make it clear that what you're offering can help in a real way. Appeal to the reader's needs and wants. Appeal to the reader's **desire**.

A

Action

Finally, be very clear about what **action** you want your readers to take, and make it easy rather than just leave your readers to work out what to do for themselves.



## Objective

- > Congratulations on completing the Writing for the Web training course.
- > Please open our on-line survey and provide your feedback



## Training feedback survey

Congratulations on completing the  
TERMINALFOUR training course.

Please provide your feedback by  
clicking the link below:

[Training feedback survey](#)