

# 10 Writing for the Web Tips

- 1. Get to the Point:** Use the “Inverted Pyramid” model. Put the most important or newsworthy facts at the top, followed by the most important supporting information, and end by giving the background. Since web users do not take a lot of time to read, get to the point quickly.
- 2. One Paragraph One Idea:** Users often scan, which means they frequently read the first sentence to decide if the paragraph is worthwhile. If more than one idea is addressed in a paragraph many users will miss the additional ideas not addressed in the first sentence.
- 3. Simple Language:** Reading from a computer screen is more difficult than reading from print; don't make it more difficult. Use simple sentence structure and language where possible. Convoluting writing and complex words are even harder to understand online.
- 4. Active Voice:** In sentences written in active voice, the subject performs the action expressed in the verb; the subject acts. In sentences written in passive voice, the subject receives the action expressed in the verb; the subject is acted upon. Passive voice is often not as clear and can lead to wordiness.
- 5. No Buzz Words:** A buzzword is a fashionable word or concept, often associated with a particular group of people and not understood by outsiders. Avoid using buzzwords, jargon and acronyms that may not be understood by your visitors, rather use concise descriptive text.
- 6. Headings and Subheadings:** Informative headings and subheadings help readers quickly find content of interest, since most web readers scan. It is important to use meaningful headings that tell the user what to expect if they read the accompanying text.
- 7. Emphasis on Important Words:** Use highlighting to make important words catch the user's eye. Hypertext links serve as one form of highlighting; typeface variations (such as bold and italics) are others. Color can also be used, however this poses accessibility problems.
- 8. Get it Right:** Check spelling, even simple errors can affect your site's perceived credibility. It is also important to have your text proofread, preferably by an outside party. We often have a strong affinity for our own words, and use too many of them.
- 9. Can't Cut It, Chunk It:** If your text is long and cannot be shortened consider chunking the text. Chunking is a method where hypertext is used to break information into multiple sections.
- 10. Rewrite It:** Often the information on the web was not written specifically for the web, but rather is repurposed for the web. This means the information is probably not optimized for the web. When possible it is best to rewrite rather than repurpose information for the web.