

Writing for the Web

Ten steps to writing effective
web content

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Introduction

This guide presents techniques and strategies on how to write effective content for a web site. We'll first suggest ways you can adapt existing printed text for the web. Then we'll show you ten ways you can write new web content that's informative and easy-to-read.

Adapting print content to the web

According to web usability expert Jacob Nielsen, people read a computer screen 25% slower than they read a printed page. Therefore, he concluded, web content should be 50% less than its print counterpart. This does not mean slashing your text to the point it loses its meaning, but that you should learn how to say the same thing with fewer words. Below are a few ways you can do this.

Reduce promotional tone, increase informational tone

Promotional text includes marketing fluff and hype words. This content is usually found in brochures, and is used to create a sense of excitement about a product or service. Most web readers, however, want to feel like they're learning new information rather than being sold on something.

Get rid of redundant content

Delete content from a web page that is located in other areas of your site. For example, if you are transferring content from a brochure to a web site, you do not need to include your organization's address on every page. Simply create a link to your Contact page each time you mention the address.

Review content for technical accuracy

Sometimes you might be able to delete text that is no longer true or timely. When transferring print content to the web, read it carefully to ensure that it's accurate. If necessary, pass the content around to subject matter experts for review (for example, instructors, engineers, and product managers).