

Writing for the web – a checklist

Top points

- ❑ Provide interesting, accurate, useful content.
- ❑ Write for scanning.
- ❑ Keep headers and subheads on pages short and informative to entice readers.
- ❑ Use subheads to break up text blocks.
- ❑ Use short paragraphs. (100 words)
- ❑ Use short sentences. Avoid connecting sentences with conjunctions.
- ❑ Use lists to help the reader scan the page.
- ❑ Use bulleted lists when applicable.
- ❑ Avoid embedded links in stories unless they're critical – save links for the end of the story or as a sidebar item.
- ❑ Use teaser or summary headlines that don't repeat the lead paragraph, especially when writing a news story that features an anecdotal lead.
- ❑ Write in chunks of information that can be split into logical subtopics and related nonlinear parts.

Other things to consider

- ❑ Use nonlinear formats when they enhance the content. For a long, scrollable article, consider internal links targeted to topics on the same page. If the article has logical breaks that might be presented as a short series or sidebars, consider screen-size chunks.
- ❑ If content is presented on different web pages, treat each chunk as a separate story like a sidebar. Restate the context.
- ❑ Avoid the journalistic convention of using last-name only on second reference. When readers scroll different screens or click to another chunk on a separate Web page, the second reference is confusing.
- ❑ Add interactive elements where appropriate, for example: feedback questions, quizzes, calculators and search capabilities to let readers figure how a budget story will affect them.
- ❑ Write to entice.
- ❑ Be credible – avoid hyperbole and “marketese”.
- ❑ Leave your reader with an action.

Formatting questions

- ❑ Is the body text in a sans serif font?
- ❑ Is the column width less than 401 pixels?
- ❑ Does the reader have to scroll too much? Click too much?
- ❑ Have you broken lists into bulleted points when possible?
- ❑ Are there subheaders to break up the text?