

# Writing for the Web

## A Quick Guide on What to Write and How to Write It

This is a short guide on how to write for websites – designed to give you a few tips and encouraging words to get started writing.



### Remember: it's all about Participation not Perfection

Good writing on the web serves a purpose. Words can inform, inspire, entice or sell. The best web writing would not qualify as great writing in the literary sense. So don't feel you need to pepper your writing with unusual words or poetic touches. You'll achieve greater success if you just try to **communicate** with your audience.

#### Remembering your reader

Whenever you write, try to keep your reader at the forefront of your mind. Who are they? What do they want? Make sure your writing fulfils their needs.

If you're writing about a product or service, remember to write about the **benefits** that those products or services offer. So rather than focusing on **features**, and writing something like:

*"Our chain saw blades are made of high-carbon steel"*



Try to highlight how the **features** of a product or service translate into **benefits** to the user or consumer, like this:

*"The high-carbon steel blade keeps a sharp edge for longer – allowing you to cut faster and more safely."*



### What's the benefit of benefits?

Imagine you want to buy a lawn mower. What do you really want? Do you want a machine that cuts grass or do you want shorter grass? You really want shorter grass – the machine is just a means to an end. **Remember that your readers actually want shorter grass.**



Although my examples are based around very physical products, the need to give readers clear benefits applies to all kinds of companies, services and products.

### What's so special about the web?

You need to be aware of the little things that make writing for the web different to writing for print. You can't just lift your writing from a Word document and expect it to flourish on the web.

### Reading from the screen

Reading on screen can be hard on the eyes. You can make it easier:

- Write in short, simple sentences.
- Use headings and sub-headings to break up blocks of text.
- Leave white space between paragraphs

### Links – a web of connections

With links, pages on the web can lead visitors anywhere – giving you the power to support your claims, show your sources and share great finds. Don't forget to add links to your writing wherever appropriate.

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## Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

Many people find things on the Internet by searching for them. Google, Yahoo and the other search engines 'read' the pages of your website, and direct people to your site if it contains what people are searching for.

It's important to remember this when writing for your website. What terms might people search for your information with? Make sure you think about the words and phrases other people use when talking about your products and services. Make sure you use these words and phrases in your writing, and in headings and sub-headings.



### Remember who you're writing for!

With SEO, it's easy to get distracted with thoughts of how search engines will interpret your content. While it's wise to understand the way search engines work, you should **always write for people**. Focus on what your human audience want to read. If you publish things on the web that are interesting, people will link to your writing. This is a better, more natural approach to SEO.

## Getting discovered

If you want people to find your writing, you'll need to get in front of their eyes. Write comments on other bloggers' posts, use social media tools like Twitter and Facebook, and contribute to forums (making sure to include a link to your website in your signature) to find your audience.

Every link to your website has two values: it helps people discover your work, and it improves your website's search engine performance.

## On Writing

Be nice to your readers: use a spell checker. Also, ask a friend, relative or colleague to review your work. It's always sensible to let your words rest overnight before re-reading, just to make sure they still make sense in the morning.

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## The Internet: nothing to fear

Many people worry that when they post their writing to the Internet, a stream of mean, sarcastic comments will rush to greet them. In reality, this is highly unlikely.

If you post informative content in a considerate, friendly way, you are not likely to receive anything but friendly, polite responses.

## Flex your writing muscles!

I hope this brief guide has given you a few pointers to get writing. With any kind of writing, the only way to get better is to **write**.

Imagine that you have a writing muscle. You might not have exercised this muscle recently, but all you need to do is start writing. **So start writing, and flex your writing muscles!**

### Key Points

- Remember your reader – what do they want?
- Remember your desired result – what do you want to achieve?
- Highlight how the features of a product or service translate into benefits
- Optimise your writing for the screen with short, simple sentences.
- Use white space, headings and sub-headings to break up text
- Look for ways to lead people to your website – gaining links and mentions on forums, blogs (in comments) and social networking sites
- The best way to become a better writer is by writing. So start writing!

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