




University of
West Florida

Writing for the Web

Marketing & Creative Services

Today we are going to discuss...

- How to identify your audiences and understand them
 - How to identify your goals & achieve them
 - Ways you can help your audience
 - How and why search engines are important
 - Basic Guidelines for Writing Web Content
- 



Identify Your Audience

Ask These Questions:

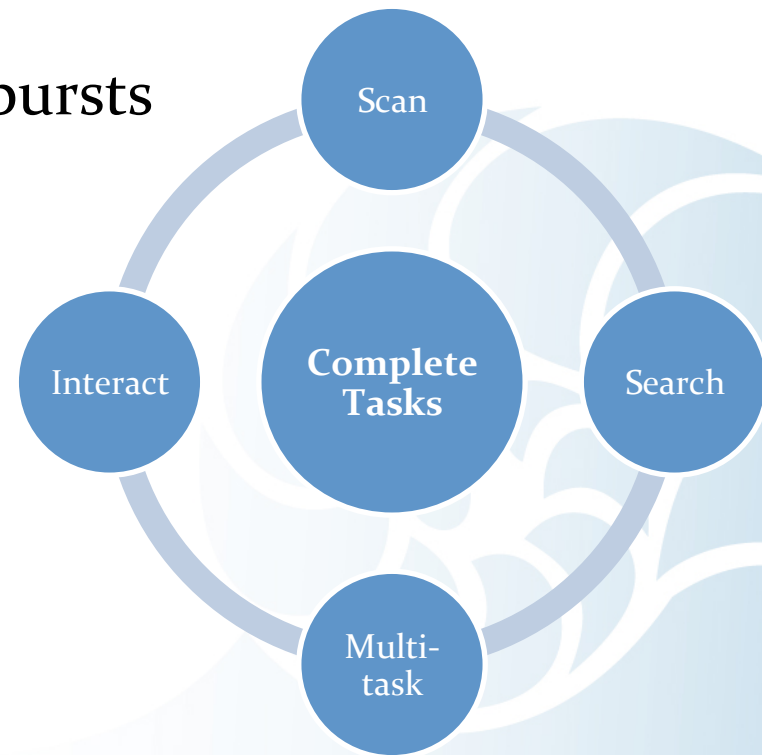
- Who is sitting behind the screen?
- When are they visiting my website?
- Why are they visiting my website?
- What tone/voice will be most appealing to them?
- How can I help them find what they are looking for?

If you don't know the answers to the above questions for each of your audience types, seek them out. *Conduct research.*

In fact, M&CS has a report on our research key findings that may help you get started!

Understand Your Audience

- Scan pages
- Pick out key words and phrases
- Read in quick, short bursts
- Respond to action oriented info
- Click and forage in search of info
- They multi-task



Goals: The Most Important Decision

Is your goal to.....

- Inform
- Engage
- Action
- Differentiate

In what format should you do that...

- Stories
- Profiles
- Tables of Information
- Videos, etc.

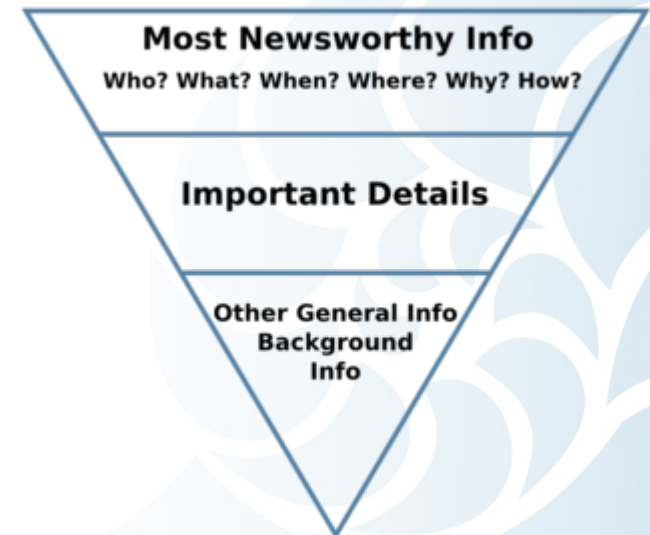
Help Your Audiences: Formatting

Avoid Large Blocks of Text

- Be concise and to the point
- Use short paragraphs (2-3 sentences)
- Divide text blocks with headlines and subheads
- Write in inverted pyramid format

Other Tools

- Bulleted Lists
- Easy-to-Follow Steps
- Tables
- Infographics
- Blockquotes





The Web is Different Than Print

In many ways, the web is like a PowerPoint presentation—once you get a chunk of copy going, it doesn't matter how scintillating the prose nor how important the information nor even how witty or on-brand your message is. The designers, alas, are right. It's just a static gray patch in a world of color and motion. If you write for the web in the same way I have written for this slide, you are writing for an audience of one...and that would be YOU because no one else will read this. Face it, no one will ever find their way through this thicket of letters again. Seriously, are you still reading this? I can't stand when people try to write a novel on a poor defenseless little website that never did anything to hurt anyone. You've got to be kidding me. Hopefully you are giggling at this point because really – this is ridiculous and totally unnecessary. However, I will say that we have quite a few sites that look like this and it really does baffle me.

Tip: Break up Blocks of Copy with Substantive Subheads

A scanner will grab that bit of info and someone looking for more info will remain oriented and grounded.

(sources: Joan Benson, senior writer, Stamats)

Help Your Visitors: Organization

Organization

- Organize similar content consistently
- Help visitors know what to expect

The screenshot displays the University of Central Florida website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the university logo, the text "UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA", a "Quicklinks:" dropdown menu, a "myUCF" button, and a "Search UCF" search bar. Below the navigation bar, the main content area features a large banner image of a campus scene with the text "This is UCF". To the right of the banner, there is a navigation menu with links for "Academics", "Visit UCF", "Cost & Aid", "Why UCF?", "Media", and "Contact". Below the banner, there is a yellow callout box with the text "UCF graduate George Kalogridis named new President of Walt Disney World". To the right of this box, there is a "Ready to Start?" section with three green checkmarks and links for "Apply Now", "Visit the Campus", and "Request Information". Below this, there is a "Find Out More" section with links for "Prospective Students" and "International Applicants".

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Quicklinks: myUCF Search UCF

Undergraduate Admissions Academics • Visit UCF • Cost & Aid • Why UCF? • Media • Contact

This is **UCF**

panorama 1

UCF graduate George Kalogridis named new President of Walt Disney World

Ready to Start?

- ✓ [Apply Now](#)
- ✓ [Visit the Campus](#)
- ✓ [Request Information](#)

Find Out More

[Prospective Students](#)
Learn more about the admissions process.

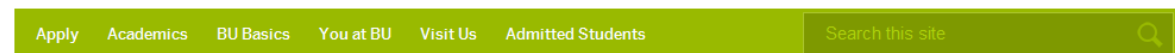
[International Applicants](#)
Find out the steps needed to complete

Help Your Visitors: Repetition

Repetition

- If it's important, say it in more than one way
- For action items, use repeated visual cues

Boston University Admissions



**GO AHEAD.
KNOCK ME OUT.**

I read thousands of application essays. Before you write yours, find out what I'm looking for.

HOW TO APPLY

From reviewing [program requirements](#) and writing the perfect [essay](#) to completing the Common App and [financial aid](#) forms, everything you need to apply is right here. Good luck!

[learn more](#)

ARRANGE A VISIT

Getting a feel for BU through this site is one thing, but the best way to experience BU is to [schedule a visit](#). Be sure to take a tour or visit a particular school or college. See you soon!

[learn more](#)



DEAN'S CORNER

Dean of COM
Thomas Fiedler

Meet the Dean of the College of Communication.

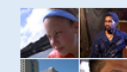
[learn more](#)



INQUIRING MINDS

A look at four student projects conducted through BU's Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP)

[learn more](#)



**SEE
YOURSELF**

Help Your Visitors: Dynamic Content

The screenshot displays the University of West Florida website with a blue header and navigation menu. The main content area features a large image of three people in front of a brick building, overlaid with the text "Lorem Ipsum" and "Praesent semper viverra tunc diam". Below this is a navigation bar with four buttons: "Explore UWF", "Find a Major", "Live Here", and "Connect with Us". The main content is divided into three columns: "University News" with three news items, "Featured Events" with three event listings, and "Sign Up for a Campus Tour" with two placeholder boxes. The footer contains contact information, social media links, and a "WEST FLORIDA RESOURCES" logo.

- Content that changes automatically
- Content that changes regularly



Help Your Visitors: Action Items

Action Items

- Should be defined when goals are developed
- Clearly state desired actions and point them out
- Convey energy urgency and/or motion

Click here to apply

vs.

Apply Now!

Take Responsibility for Visual Copy

Help Your Visitors: Additional Tips

- Use simple language and words
- Use only one space after periods
- Avoid excess punctuation
- Use hyperlinks within text blocks
- Use more descriptive links, not “click here”
- Capitalize words in headlines except prepositions
- Create useful headlines that are visual cues
- Avoid passive voice
- Be credible and factual
- Avoid marketing fluff
- Use humor sparingly
- Proofread and use spell check

Search Engines: Audience First

Rule #1

Always write for your visitors first.

THEN strategically weave search engine best practices into your overall web content plan.

The Google logo, featuring the word "Google" in its signature multi-colored font.The YAHOO! logo, with "YAHOO!" in a bold, red, serif font.The bing logo, with "bing" in a blue, lowercase, sans-serif font.A row of four search engine logos: AOL (blue text with a blue play button icon), Ask (red text with a red speech bubble icon), LYCOS (black text with a black dog icon), and altavista (black text with a red and white swirl icon and the tagline "Go get it!").

Search Engines: SEO

What is search engine optimization?

- Process of improving the volume and quality of traffic to a Web site from search engines via “natural” search results
- The higher a site appears in search engine results, the more traffic it will receive
- Search engine “spiders” crawl Web sites indexing sites based on content and following links to other pages and sites
- Search engines then use complex algorithms to weigh other factors into the ultimate ranking

Search Engines: Referral Links

#1 factor for Google is
high quality referral links

Other Factors

- Keywords used strategically throughout content
- Meaningful page titles
- Meaningful alt tags
- Meaningful link text
- Header tags
- Meta tags
- URL structures
- Site Maps

Search Engines: Keywords

Keywords

- Consider what words and phrases people search for
- Look at the Web stats to see what words are currently leading users to your site.
- Weave relevant keywords throughout the content of your site. Keywords may be different depending on the particular content of each page.
- Do not stuff keywords. Try to weave them naturally into the content.
- Continually monitor and analyze your web statistics.

Basic Web Writing Guidelines:

- Write for Your Audience – put their needs first
- Embrace Your Role – you help protect the brand
- Develop Visual Copy – cues that create interest
- Be Action-Oriented – encourage response
- Write Persuasively – connect the dots for them
- Embrace Brevity – be short and concise
- Write for Search Engines – help them help you
- Have a Goal – be strategic and have a purpose



Tell me one thing you are
going to do this week to
improve your department's
web content!

Any Questions?

Marketing & Creative Services

