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How To Write for the Web

By Glenn White

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The Scanning Reader

Writing for the Web is different than writing for print. The differences are slight but significant. First, people don't really read online; they scan because of what is called the "flicker rate" of a computer monitor. This means people read 25% slower online than in print publications. What does this mean for you as a writer? It means you have to write differently to connect with readers.

Begin at the End

Writing for the Web is like good journalism. Use the old, "Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How" journalistic formula when you write for the web. This is called the inverted pyramid. Put your conclusion at the beginning and then write the details. The Web is a no-nonsense, grab-it-and-go, and give-it-to-me-now medium. You must connect with a reader immediately or you lose them.

Write Chunky

Since the reader is scanning rather than reading you must break your text down into bite size portions. You'll notice this article has short, chunky segments. Each segment only needs 75 words or less. This opens up the white space surrounding the text and provides comfortable reading. Chunky writing takes some practice but it is quite easy. When you write chunky, create strong headlines and subheadings. Make your main points and move the reader along. Also, use short bulleted or numbered lists like this:

§Bullets Numbers More numbers Still more numbers

See how the text opens up and moves along?

Sail the High Cs

There are four C words you need to know when writing for the Web.

§Concise

Write tight. Keep it short. Eliminate unnecessary words.

§Clear

Use precise words. Get specific and avoid generalizations.

§Clean

Avoid excessive clutter in your writing. Pick up the litter of too many -ly words and put them in the wastebasket. Empty "that" into the dumpster unless you have to keep it. Then keep only what you need.

§Credible

Write with honesty and integrity. Nothing is wrong with marketing but readers recognize slick, manipulative tactics. Write from your heart, even in advertising, and you will reach readers.

K.I.S.S.

Keep It Simple Sweetheart! The last "S" was changed intentionally to a term ala Humphrey Bogart. Because you should never, ever insult your readers' intelligence. But at the same time, write in easy-to-understand terms and your readers will love you for it. And they will keep reading what you write. Every writer needs a good vocabulary but that doesn't mean it should be used to make readers feel unlearned or uneducated.

The bottom line? Keep it simple, encourage and inform your readers with short, clear, crisp writing. Then you will enjoy success as a great web writer!

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It's All About YOU!

By Glenn White

The Hottest Word on the Web

Did you know marketing people and copywriters are developing a science about writing for readers in this new medium called the Web? In fact, they use carefully selected words to catch a reader's attention. Here are a few: New True Authority Sexual Guaranteed Bonus First Quick Now Catch

Fast Personal Spiritual Success Free

These words are not in any order of importance or frequency. If you have been surfing the Web for any length of time you will see these words a lot. I have intentionally omitted the BIG word on the Web until now. Most web usability experts, agree the word with the strongest appeal is...YOU! Yes, YOU is the hottest word on the Web.

Tune in to WIIFM

You probably don't write ad copy for a large advertising agency but you can still learn from what they know. It's agreed by many marketers that most people are listening to WIIFM in their heads. What's WIIFM? It means "What's In It For Me?" That's right; people want to know, "What will I get?" out of a large banner ad on a web site or even the little article you worked so hard to write.

People really don't care, and really don't want to know, you spent half the night writing your heart out. They only want to know what they will get out of your article. You need to tell them or you won't get their attention.

Write to Connect

Let's look at how you can write to connect with readers on the Web. Let's take a phrase and rewrite it.

"Writing for the Web is easy once a few things about readers are recognized."

This is not a bad sentence; it just lacks a hook to pull the reader in. The hook is only one word; YOU. Let's rewrite it.

"You can write for the Web! It's easy when you recognize a few things about your readers."

Okay, this may not be the greatest sentence in the world. But the question is, "Did you feel pulled into the sentence?" You probably did because of that one word, YOU. Writing to connect with your readers on the Web means using one word, YOU, repeatedly and without apology.

Remember YOU is, and always will be, important to your reader. Write for YOU and you will connect with your readers. It's all about YOU! Write to connect with YOU and you will write to inspire sales and your writing career!

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Glenn White is a freelance writer, editor and content manager at his web site for Inspirational and Christian writers at:

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