

Writing for the web: Part 1

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Structure

Web writing is best structured as an inverted pyramid – similar to a news article. Start by giving the reader the conclusion (headline and first paragraph), followed by the supporting information and end with the background or historical information. Readers can stop at any time and still get the most important parts of the content – they will also understand and retain the message better.

Use sub headings liberally

Meaningful sub-headings help the reader quickly scan the content to determine if it will be useful to them.

Use short paragraphs

Small, coherent pieces or 'chunks', with no more than one idea per paragraph, are easier to comprehend. This avoids long scrolling pages.

Link to more detailed information

If more information is required it is best to link from the 'chunked' material to a more substantial document for printing and reading offline.

Use short sentences

Long sentences are difficult to read online. The optimum line width for easy reading on screen is between 40-60 characters, approximately 11-14 words.

Use bullet points

Bulleted lists help users quickly scan web pages. If a sentence contains a list of items, split it up into bullet points. Write a short sentence or phrase to introduce the subject followed by a colon:

- point 1
- point 2
- point 3

Describe links clearly

Briefly describe the content of any link in two lines or less. If the link is to a pdf file the Adobe Acrobat Reader icon can be used (available from adobe.com). As pdf files are relatively large and can take some time to download, the size of the file should be also be noted. This allows users to make a decision on the usefulness or value of the material before they take the time to link to it or download it. Users, especially those with slower internet connections, appreciate these small courtesies.

Example:

More information on the connection between exercise and mental health can be found in [healthymind .pdf](#) _____ [192kb]