Writing Content for the Web

- Concise
- Objective
- Scannable
- Accessible
- Searchable
Writing Concise Text

• Use 50% fewer words than you would in print

• Limit each paragraph to one main idea

• Use topic sentences

Writing Concise Text

• Use simple sentence structure and simple words (20 words or less)

• Avoid clichés, jargon, buzzwords, abbreviations

• Write for your audience
Writing Objective Text

- Credibility is important

- Avoid a “promotional” style of writing

- Avoid “hype” such as superlatives and inflated adjectives (most, best, perfect, greatest)

Writing Objective Text

- Avoid using punctuation for emphasis

- Stick to the facts
Promotional Writing

Nebraska is filled with internationally recognized attractions that draw large crowds of people every year, without fail. In 1996, some of the most popular places were Fort Robinson State Park (355,000 visitors), Scotts Bluff National Monument (132,166), Arbor Lodge State Historical Park & Museum (100,000), Carhenge (86,598), Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer (60,002), and Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park (28,446).

Objective/Concise Text

In 1996, six of the best-attended attractions in Nebraska were Fort Robinson State Park, Scotts Bluff National Monument, Arbor Lodge State Historical Park & Museum, Carhenge, Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer, and Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park.
In 1996, six of the best-attended attractions in Nebraska were Fort Robinson State Park, Scotts Bluff National Monument, Arbor Lodge State Historical Park & Museum, Carhenge, Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer, and Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park.

**Removed:** Nebraska is filled with internationally recognized attractions that draw large crowds of people every year without fail.

**Changed:** “some of the most popular places were” to “six of the best-attended attractions”

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In 1996, six of the most-visited places in Nebraska were:

- Fort Robinson State Park
- Scotts Bluff National Monument
- Arbor Lodge State Historical Park & Museum
- Carhenge
- Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer
- Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park.
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**Writing Scannable Text**

- **Layering**
  - General information up front
  - Links to additional information
  - Separate “need to know” from “nice to know”
  - Uses a hierarchical structure, which supports main topics and sub-topics
  - Helps accommodate different audience levels from experts to new users
Inverted Pyramid

Writing Persuasively

• Get the readers attention in the opening

• Emphasize service and reader benefits rather than features or yourself

• Use concise descriptive headlines

• Use concrete words and action verbs
Writing Persuasively

- Be specific
- Use statistics
- Avoid promotional language

Writing Persuasively

- Use a confident style
- Use short, concise paragraphs, words and sentences
- Use graphics effectively
Writing Persuasively

• Link to support information such as quotes or third party research, testimonials, and concrete examples

• Provide interactivity

Writing Persuasively

• Make action steps clear

• Offer free useful information

• Provide contact information
Page Layout

- Overall graphic pattern and contrast of page is seen first
- Page elements are seen next
- Regular, repeated patterns of text and graphics help the reader to quickly establish the location and organization of information
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page Layout - Writing Headings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Help orient the readers to their location (contextual cues)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Help readers decide if they want to read the section</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page Layout - Writing Headings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Identify organization and levels of importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use the same headings that appear in the main menu/table of contents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use parallel construction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Page Layout - Writing Headings

• Use no more than 3 levels

• Put the “information words” at the beginning

• Eliminate such words as A, An and The

Page Layout - Writing Headings

• Try not to start all titles with the same word

• Avoid “teasers” or metaphors

• Avoid use of all caps

• Don’t center headlines
Summary

• Don’t do this:
  • http://medsol.media.utah.edu/media/writing_web/index.html
• Do this:
  • Google.com

References

• Designing Web Usability
• Yale Manual of Style
• Google Webmaster Tools
• WebAim Writing Guide