



Writing text for your web site

Are you finding it difficult to write content for your web site?

You're not alone. When the initial excitement of the design stage begins to wane, you realise that it needs to have some substance. Great sites do more than just look good. They contain informative content that is of benefit to the reader.

Time to get started

Start with a menu structure that is logical and decide what the main sections of your site will be. Then decide if you will also require the main sections to be divided further. Use this information as the starting point for writing your content.

If all of your pages are not accessible from your main site menu, consider adding a site map page. This will help visitors who can't find what they are looking for.

Remember that visitors may not always enter your site at the homepage (the 'front' page that people get when they type your website address).

Things to think about

For sections of text, it is best to stick to familiar, common fonts. There is no right or wrong choice, but you need to bear a few things in mind. What works well on paper will not always work the same on screen. This is because on paper you are looking at the ink, while on screen you are looking at shining light.

Try to avoid using underlining for emphasis. This is because some visitors will see this as a link and become confused.

When you use pieces of text as a link, try to avoid just using the words 'click here'. This is because people with visual difficulties often use a screen reader, which converts the text on a website to speech. When somebody uses a screen reader to choose one of the links on your page, they will only hear the words used for the link. Just hearing 'click here' will not give any idea what the link is for.

And of course, don't forget to avoid using jargon and check your spelling & grammar. You don't want customers pointing out your mistakes.

Tell visitors who you are

When a visitor comes to your site, it should be clear straight away: who the site belongs to, what purpose the site serves and how to contact the people behind the site.

Whether your company is large or small, the internet gives you the opportunity to trade on an equal level with your competitors. Create an about us page and use it to talk about yourself, your staff and your passion for the organisation. Tell visitors how long your organisation has been established and include a picture; we all like to see who we are talking to.



Tell visitors where you are

The contact page is one of the most important parts of your site. Even if your customers never intend on visiting you, they will want to know if they can trust you.

If you are tempted to put only an e-mail address and no phone number or postal address, remember that: you may be asked for these details regularly which will waste your time and having a phone number with a 'real-life' address will reassure visitors that you are a genuine organisation.

Sell visitors your products and services

Depending on what your organisation does, the main pages of your site will be about what you are offering. Give a clear overview of what you are selling. Not every item can be given an exact cost, so it is acceptable to ask people to request a quotation. But if you are selling items that are exactly priced it always helps to be up front and display your prices.

Give as much descriptive text as possible about your services and products. The more information you have on your site, the less time you will waste answering people's questions.

Try to remember that just like a brochure, your web site should be used to promote awareness of your organisation. Keep it professional and well organised.

Have you got a good reputation?

If you want people to part with their money over the internet, they need to trust you. Ask your satisfied customers for testimonials. They can be used as selling aids to reassure your potential customers that you will deliver.

If you are a member of a professional association ask if you can use their logo on your site.

You should have a privacy policy clearly displayed somewhere in your website and a copy of your terms and conditions.

Remember

- Avoid using jargon and confusing language
- Take your time
- Leave your text for a few hours and then read it again, see if you need to rework it
- Check for spelling and grammar errors
- Lots of well written, informative content may help search engine rankings
- Web sites grow over time, keep content updated and visitors will return
- Ask for professional help if you need it