

Writing Great Content for your Website

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So how can you ensure that your website has better content than those of your competitors? We offer 10 tips to help you.

- 1. Write for your visitors:** know who they are and what they are interested in. When you write copy, envision a person reading it-maybe an alumnus you know, a prospective student you met last week. And establish style and readability guidelines. If a website's tone is inconsistent, it gives an impressions that your organization is not cohesive or professional.
- 2. Write great headlines.** If possible, keep them under 8 words-but, above all, keep them simple and clear. Don't be clever or obtuse, watch for double meanings, and remember the core mantra of website design, "don't make me think!"
- 3. Surface "who, what, when, where, why":** the facts should be in the first paragraph, subhead, or teaser. Let people know what they're going to get if they read further.
- 4. Keep copy short, simple, clear, and easy to scan.** There is room on the web for longer copy, but it needs to be formatted appropriately, with subheads, anchors at the beginning, and/or broken up onto several screens.
- 5. Write for functionality-formulate content** so that it can be easily syndicated and integrated into your website (through hyperlinking, related links, and other techniques). Write bulleted or numbered copy; use callouts.
- 6. Use your internal constituents to advantage.** Some institutions can use lengthy profiles because people will read them [Hamilton College (<http://www.Hamilton.edu> does this extremely well)]. In other cases, testimonials may be the way to go: see the way Kenyon leverages alumni and students (<http://www.kenyon.edu/x1138.xml>).
- 7. Be conversational.** Think "you." Avoid passive voice.
- 8. Use links wisely.** Too many links in text interrupt the flow of the text and are distracting. Too few contextual links and your visitors hit a dead end.
- 9. Write great metadata.** Metadata will help surface your pages on external and internal search engines-keywords and page titles are essential.
- 10. Edit. Edit. Edit.** Then edit again.

There are reasons to break some of these rules--but do so judiciously. You can, for example, write a clever headline if you use a deck or subhead to clarify its meaning.

Other writers to check out:

Content Critical: Gaining Competitive Advantage through High-Quality Web Content

by [Gerry McGovern](#), [Rob Norton](#)

Net Words: Creating High-Impact Online Copy

by [Nick Osborne](#)

Hot Text: Web Writing that Works

by [Jonathan Price](#), [Lisa Price](#)