

Web Writing Guide



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CONTENTS

1. Before you start

- 1.1 Decide the purpose
- 1.2 Know your audience
- 1.3 Consider the funnel

2. Write for busy people

- 2.1 Frontloading
- 2.2 Inverted pyramid
- 2.3 Benefits vs. features

3. Scannability

- 3.1 Headlines
- 3.2 Subheads
- 3.3 Length and lists
- 3.4 Linking

4. Readability

5. Accessibility

6. SEO

- 3.1 Meta data & URLs
- 3.2 Page copy
- 3.3 Keyword research
- 3.4 SEO checklist

01

Before you start



Understand the strategy

Your website's content is driven by a content strategy. It's the north star for getting the right content to the right people at the right time in their website journey.

The content strategy is an integrated set of choices that are user-centred and goal-driven, backed by research and analytics.

Do you know what the overall goals for the website are?

If you aren't clear, pause and consider your organization's high-level content strategy before you begin.

01.1

Before you start
Purpose

Why *this* piece of content?

Before your fingers touch the keypad, define the purpose of this content – whether it’s a small bit of copy, a landing page, an article or an ebook – articulate WHY you are doing it.

Every piece of content serves a purpose for your organization. Which one is **the main reason** you creating this precise piece of content?

- Create awareness
- Allow product/investment consideration
- Urge investment/job application decision
- Create brand advocates

How will your content achieve its purpose?

But before content can achieve its business purpose, it **needs to serve its audience.**

So, the *real* purpose of your piece of content is to:

- Educate
- Inspire
- Convince
- Entertain



Educate

Educational content is rational, and helps your audience solve their challenges.

Content sources

- Authoritative information
- Expert point of view
- Original research
- Trends
- Guides (how-to)
- Demos
- News

Ideal content types

- Pillar pages
- In-depth articles
- Usable content (lesson plans, etc.)
- Reports
- White papers

Ideal content types

- Infographics
- eBooks
- Webinars
- Videos
- Press Releases
- New articles

Inspire

Inspiring content uses emotion to push users towards a purchase decision.

Content sources

- Strategy
- ESG reports
- Brand story
- Industry thought leadership
- Endorsement

Ideal content types

- Video
- Blog posts
- Case studies
- Scenarios
- Community forums
- Events
- Testimonials

Convince

Convincing content addresses the practical interests of your audience, informing through proof points, like facts and figures:

Content sources

- Product features and knowledge
- Pricing
- Ratings
- Reviews
- Real-life examples

Ideal content types

- Video
- Blog posts
- Case studies
- Scenarios
- Community forums
- Events
- Testimonials

Entertain

Urge users to make a change through attention-grabbing and entertaining content

Content sources

- Industry knowledge

Ideal content types

- Quizzes
- Customer stories
- Video

01.2

Before you start

Know your audience



The power of one-on-one

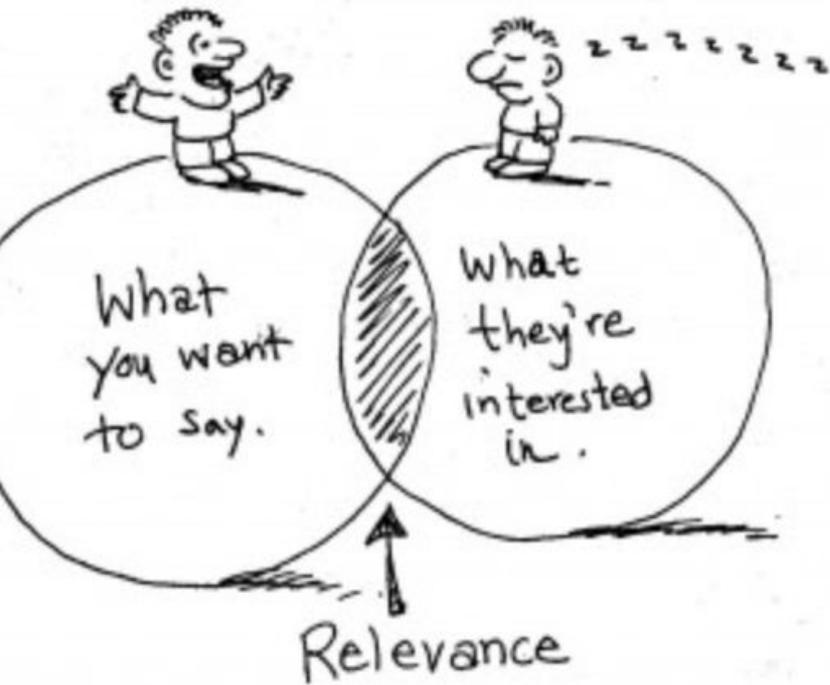
To solve a need, you need to make it about one person. And they don't care if you think your fancy new product is the best on the market. They want to know how it can make their lives better.

And, think about it. When a user is on your website, it's a one-one-one conversation. Make sure you include them.

Know your audience

“ Digital business is all about nurturing a long-term relationship with your customers, and content is the mediator of that relationship. ”

Content Science Review



Know your audience

Great relationships require trust. Build trust with content that directly reflects and speaks to the specific needs of your audience. Your content needs to be relevant and useful.

Content Relevance: audience's perception of your content's pertinence to topics, issues, needs, or interests.

Content Usefulness: your content's ability to help users make decisions or make progress toward goals.

Audience goals

Web users have a specific goal in mind. Help them achieve it with relevant and useful content:

- Specific to needs
- Detailed, thorough
- Comparisons
- Timely



Did you know ...

75.9%

Users who indicated content was neither relevant nor useful rated the content 75.9% less effective than users who indicated it was both

24.7%

of users who said content was not useful indicated the content was too vague, general or basic

70.4%

of people who found content irrelevant also said content wasn't useful



Use personas to create more relevant and useful content

How does writing for a particular persona help?

- Speaks to their specific challenges
- More conversational, relatable
- Promotes simple, concise messaging
- Provides context to reduce verbosity, diluted writing
- Wastes zero time: it helps users determine if content is intended for them

After all, it's one persona at a time reading your content.

Personas

“ If only 1 out of 10 users need your content, you’re wasting 90% of your time and resources. ”

Personas are designed to help you to understand your users' needs, experiences, behaviours and goals. Make sure you have one primary persona in mind for each piece of content (even if it might be useful to another persona).

Did you know ...

57.2%

of people who indicated that content seemed intended for someone else with different needs said content was not useful

74.2%

of users said content that seemed incomplete was irrelevant

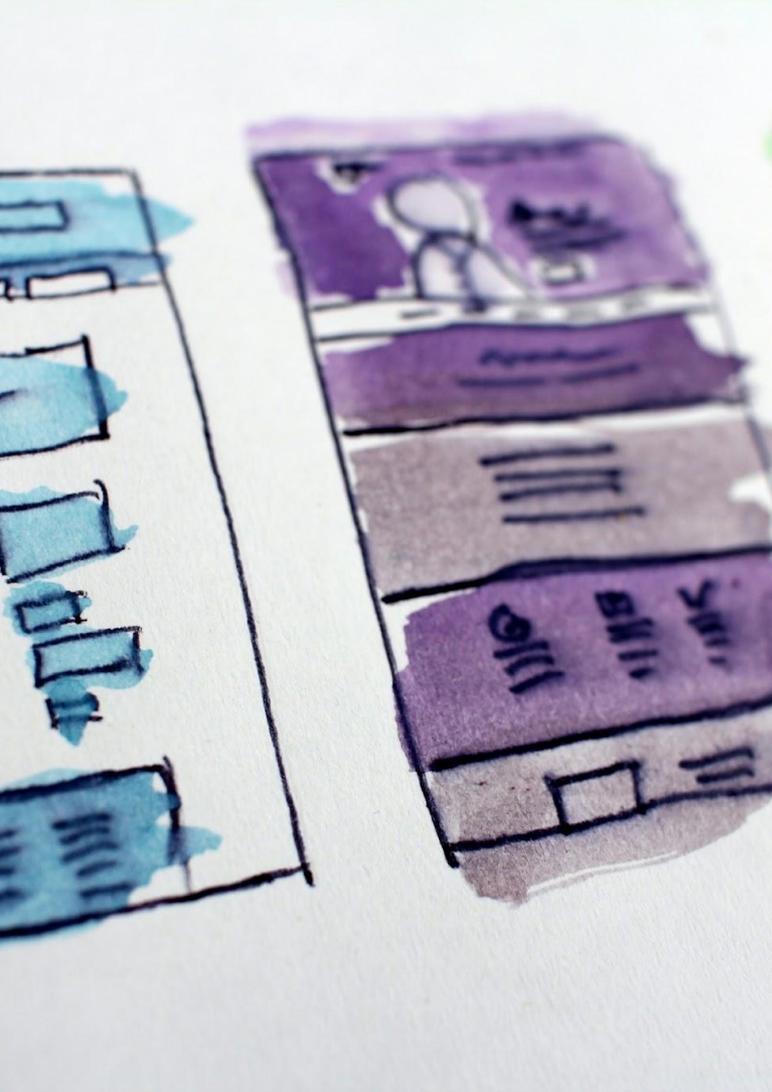
67.4%

of people who said content does not help them compare their options also said content didn't seem relevant

01.3

Before you start

Consider the funnel



Meet them where they are

Users sometimes follow the path through your website just as you intended – but rarely.

You know how you go through a website. Probably a little unpredictably. Things catch your eye. Sometimes you enter through the home page. Sometimes search or social media takes you to a deeper page.

No matter what you are writing, always consider your persona at different stages in “the funnel.”

“Skimmers, Swimmers and Divers”

At any given time, any user can be a Skimmer, Swimmer or Diver, depending on the task they are currently trying to complete.

Try to consider all three on the web pages you write.

Skimmers get in, get the information they need, and get out.

Swimmers are looking for something specific, but will stop to “splash round” if something catches their attention. They don’t like to click more than once, but will absorb related information if it’s offered in context.

Divers want the full story. They’ll read much of the copy, visit other multiple site pages and come back for new additions.

Put yourself in their shoes water

Skimmers

- Need top-line info only
- In a hurry

They want

- Speed
- Ease
- Clarity
- Brevity

Skimmers use search, headlines, bullets and landing pages to guide themselves through the site quickly

Swimmers

- Interested, but have limited time and energy
- Looking for specific information, but may stop if something catches their eye

They want

- Options
- Simplicity
- Efficiency
- Possibility

Swimmers will look at things like quotes, call-outs and sidebars, and read the first level of sub-content.

Divers

- Will read the full story
- Will return for further information

They want

- Details
- Background
- Interaction
- Connection

Divers will fully engage with multimedia such as video, imagery and audio, as well as interactive pieces such as surveys or forums.

Content types for different user types

Skimmers

- Clear headlines and subheads
- Images with captions
- Intro videos, max length 1:00
- Short lists
- Fast facts

Bulleted lists should have no more than 5 bullets; 3 is ideal

Statistics can be most easily absorbed as infographics, not text

Swimmers

- Graphs, charts
- Checklists
- How-tos
- Infographics
- Press releases
- Information videos, max length 2:00
- Case studies

Checklists: use to determine best product for user, for example

How-tos: best set up for your blended learning classroom, for example

Divers

- Reports in PDF
- FAQ, fewer than 10
- Data sheets
- Online applications
- Conference call recordings
- Webcasts and webinars
- In-depth video

PDF when there is a lot of info to absorb, and there may be benefits to printing

In-depth video: How-to content such as lessons

Key takeaways: Before you start

Take a moment before you start writing to clarify why you're writing. Your users will thank you.

1. **Content Strategy** documents aren't just for the strategists. Get to know what your organization is expecting.
2. **Write down the content's purpose;** for the organization, yes, but more importantly, for the user. Is this to inform? Convince? Keep those sticky notes near your keyboard as you write to stay focused.
3. **Write to one person.** Read the personas. Know which one this content is really for. Then visualize one, single person to write to. Make it personal.
4. **Is it relevant? Useful?** If not, it's not worth your time. Take the time to understand your personas' problems, and how you are helping to solve them.
5. **Skimming, swimming or diving?** In any given viewing session, any persona can be doing all of those things. Help them find their way in the waters.

02

Write for busy people

02.1

Write for busy people

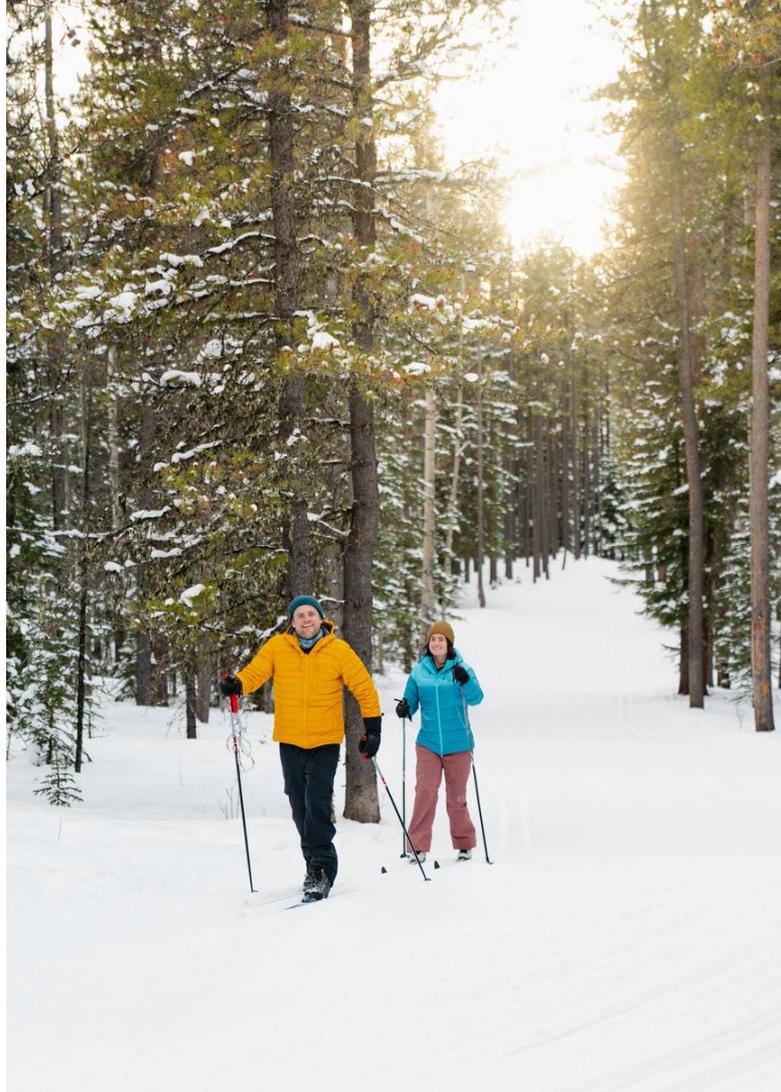
Frontloading

Frontloading

Writing for the web should feel as urgent as trying to defuse a bomb. If you can't get your point across quickly, the reader is going to explode. Or just stop reading.

Front-loading means putting the important details, special information and keywords at the front of sentences, headings, paragraphs, links, buttons, list items and calls-to-action.

That way, readers are more likely to discover your **key messages** – and less likely to get bored.



Frontloading in action

Compare:

For over 70 years, [The Old Red Barn](#) has stood sturdy and strong on its vantage overlooking the forested banks of the Whitemud Creek. It was home to generations of dairy and beef cattle until 2017, when Melissa and Matthew Schur put the barn to a bold new purpose: restoring Albertans' faith in their food, one meal at a time.

-

or

-

Melissa and Matthew Schur are restoring Albertans' faith in their food, one meal at a time.

For over 70 years, [The Old Red Barn](#) has stood sturdy and strong on its vantage overlooking the forested banks of the Whitemud Creek. It was home to generations of dairy and beef cattle until 2017, when Melissa and Matthew put the barn to a bold new purpose.

Frontloading in action

Help busy users get what they need by offering the conclusion first. Every page, paragraph – and even sentence – should be constructed with frontloading in mind.

Original

The [Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology](#) in **Drumheller** has long been one of Alberta's premiere destinations, bringing nearly half a million visitors through its doors each year. Its unparalleled offering of dinosaur skeletons and other fossils remains one of the most **awe-inspiring** and quintessentially Albertan experiences you can have.

Revised

Drumheller's [Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology](#) is one of the most **awe-inspiring** and quintessentially Albertan experiences you can have. It has long been one of Alberta's premiere destinations, bringing nearly half a million visitors through its doors each year to see its unparalleled offering of dinosaur skeletons and other fossils remains.

PS

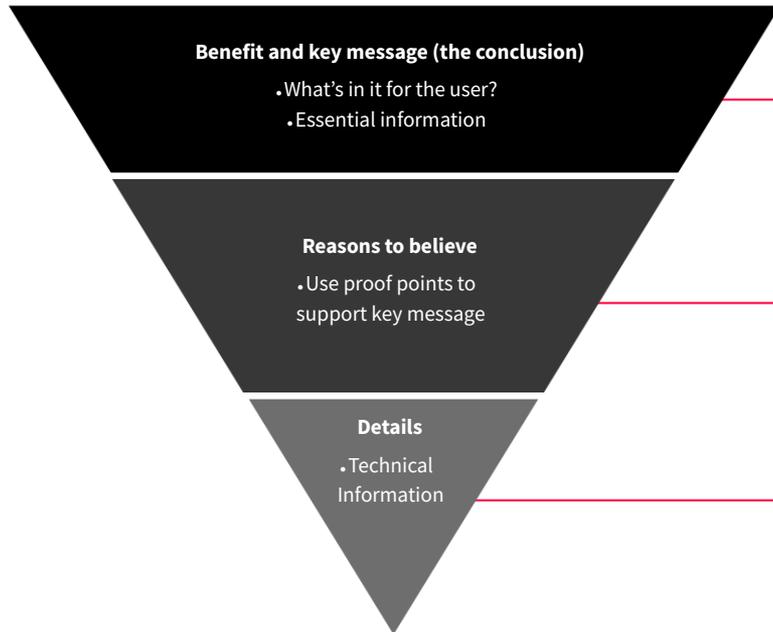
- Try to talk about the user, NOT yourself – especially at the beginning of a sentence.

02.2

Write for busy people

Inverted pyramid

Inverted Pyramid



Get to the point.

On the web we toss out the traditional academic model of writing in favour of a more journalistic style. So, no more introduction, expanded arguments and conclusion. We turn that on its head.

Note that while the following sounds a bit dry, you'll put your storytelling skills put to use throughout.

Skimmers can quickly navigate to find the information they need.

Swimmers find a little more fulsome information to learn more (make sure it's all relevant to the user or you'll lose them).

Divers can immerse themselves to their satisfaction.

02.3

Write for busy people

Benefit vs. feature

Benefit vs. feature

Just because *you* know why your product will make your customer's life better doesn't mean *they* do.

Features

Features are the **distinctive attributes** of a product or service, and tend to get all the attention.

Why? Because that's what people at work talk about all day.

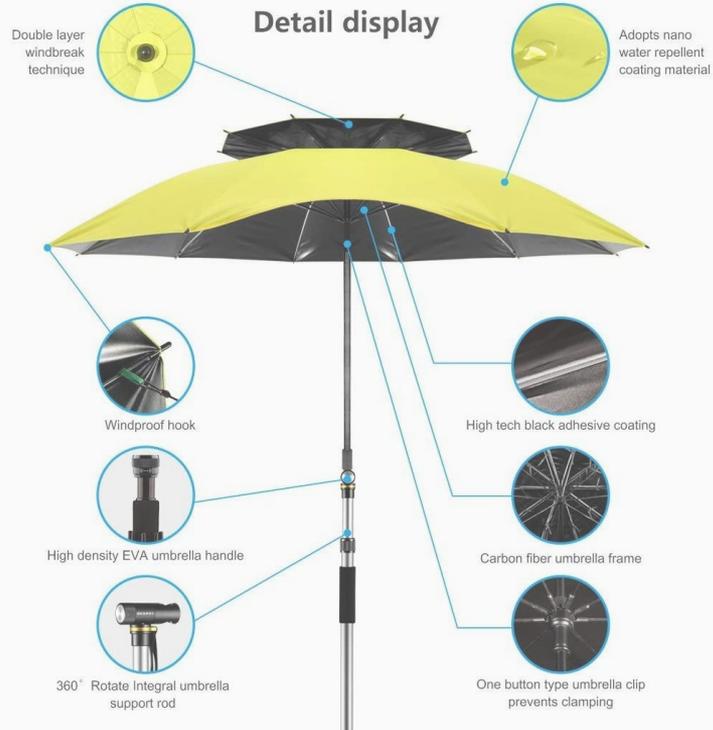
But what do humans really care about?

Benefits.

Benefits

Benefits are the **advantages a customer gains** from your product or service. It's "what's in it for me?"

Benefits tell customers how your product's features will make their lives better. **It's your promise.**



A Classic example

The features are what your product *has* or *is*, and what it *does*.

Like an umbrella that *has* sun- and rain-proof fabric. Protection from the sun and rain are what the feature *does*.

Benefits

The benefit is the *outcome* your customer will experience because of the product and features.

Like enjoying sunny days with none of the worry.

Like getting to work with the hair you started with.

PS

- Use emotive language around benefits to help the user see it quickly.



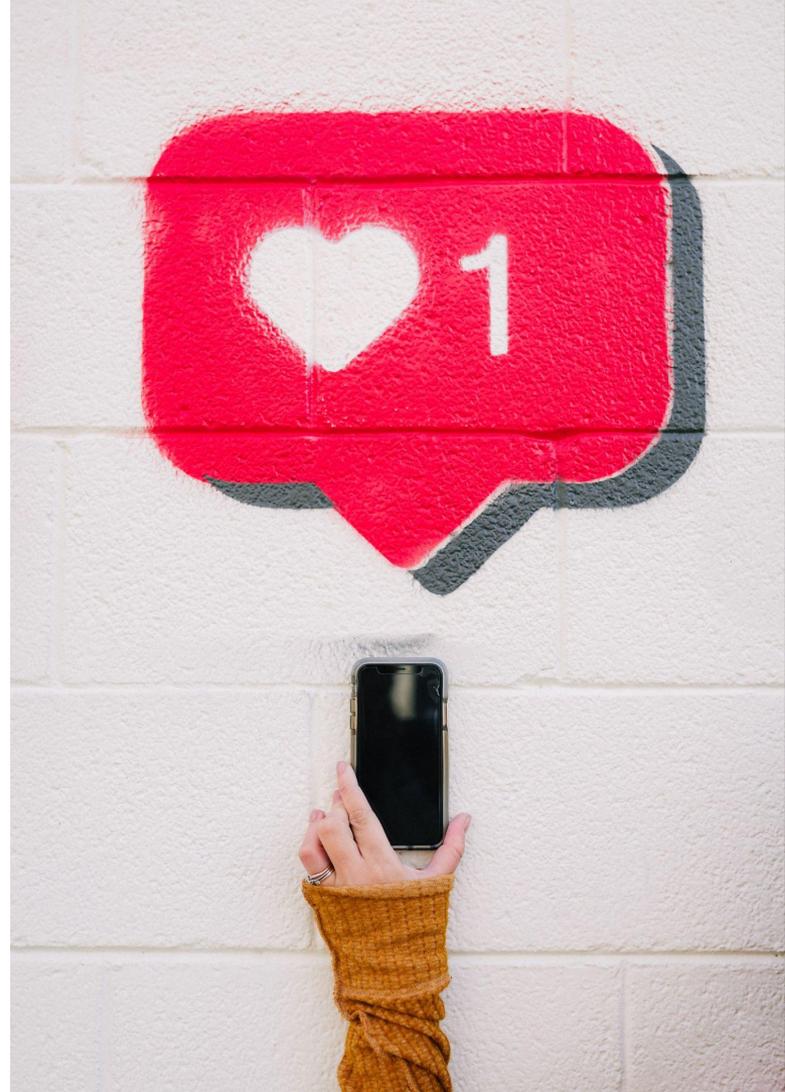
Write for busy people > Benefit vs. feature

Prove it

To build trust, don't make a claim you can't prove right there on the website.

Proof is concrete, tangible evidence, including:

- Statistics and data, including history, rankings, achievements, awards, events
- Social proof, including testimonials, reviews or quotes from a reliable 3rd-party source



Write for busy people > Benefit vs. feature

Sometimes, only a few words can evoke the right emotion to express the benefit.

Storage for 1GB of MP3s



VS

1,000 songs in your pocket



Key takeaways: Write for busy people

Users are wild animals on the hunt. Give them a scent trail to follow easily.

1. **Front-load** sentences, headings, paragraphs, links, buttons, list items and calls-to-action
2. **An inverted pyramid** helps your double-down on front-loading technique.
3. **Lead with benefits** instead of the “thing” – a benefit is *how* the “thing” changes a user’s life for the better.
4. **Add proof** or it is simply “corporate speak.”

03

Scannability

Did you know ...

80%

of text is NOT read on an average page visit.

Viewers typically leave a website after only 10 to 20 seconds.

25%

more slowly...is how we read online.

Reading speed and comprehension are further impaired on mobile screens.

16%

of users read word-by-word.

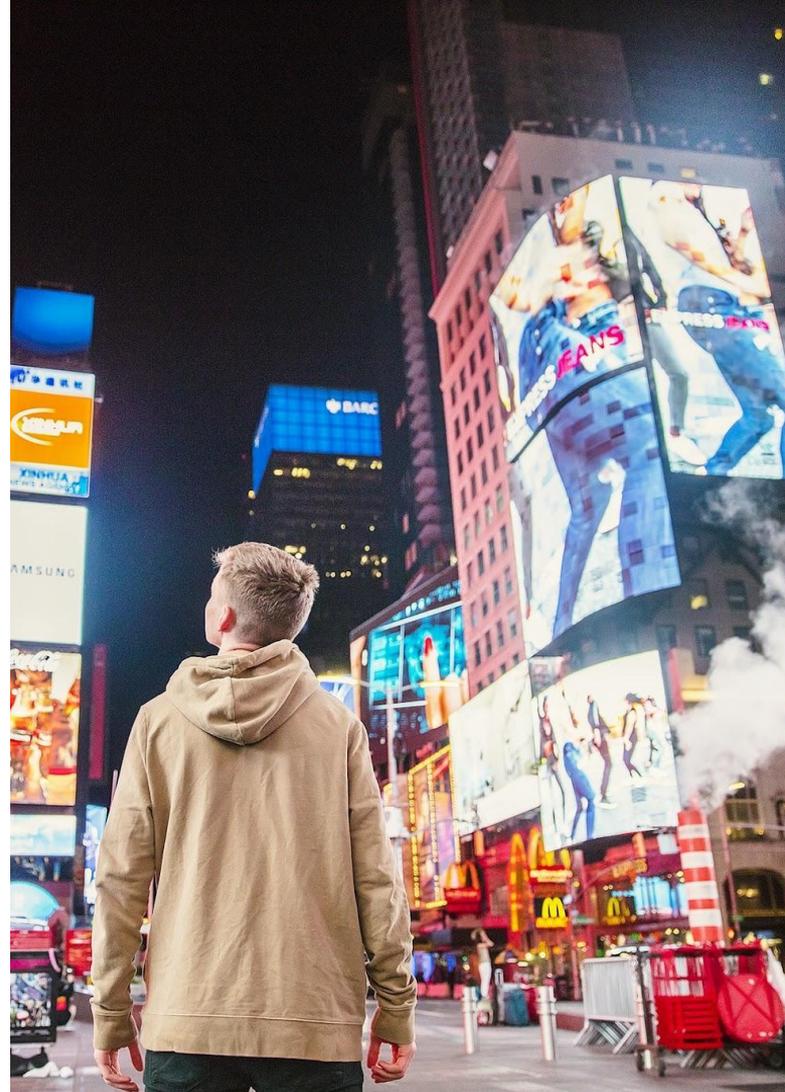
If you convert print text to the web, you should reduce content by about **50%**

A fleeting glance

Remember the wild animal, hunting for the scent of prey?

We all glance through websites. How can we help the user scan efficiently?

Page organization and text formatting.



Layer cake

Layer cake pattern

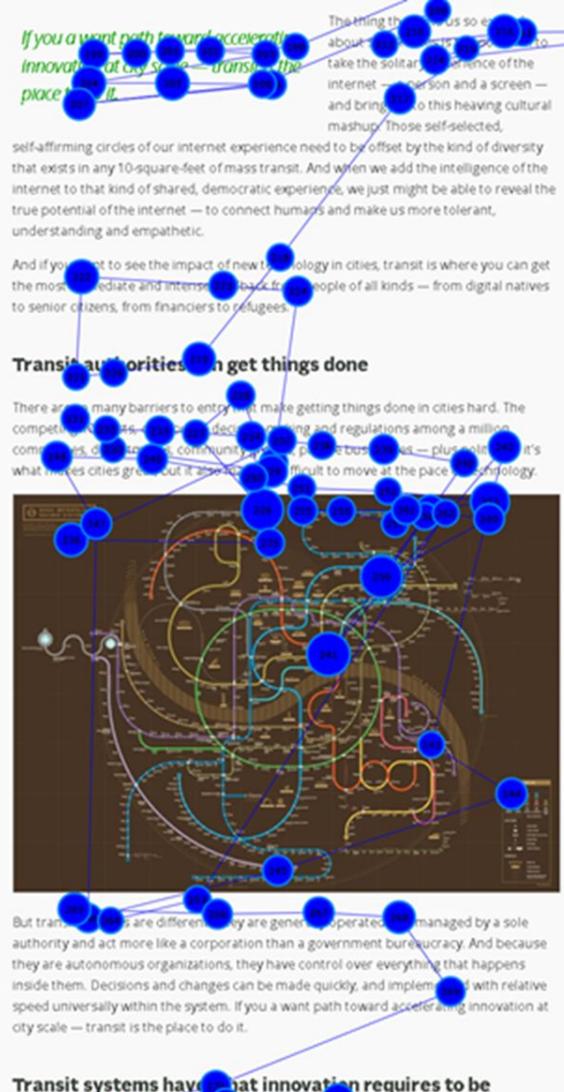
Scanning pattern that occurs when the information on the page is split in clear headings and subheadings.

Think of the page and your copy as a layer cake.

Clear chunks

Chunking content and assigning clear, descriptive subheadings create a layer-cake scanning pattern.

The pattern increases users' efficiency because they can quickly identify the content that is most relevant to their task.



THE LAYER-CAKE PATTERN OF WEBSITE SCANNING

If you've regularly read my blog, you know that one of my favorite sources of new information and research is NN/g ([Nielsen Norman Group](#)). NN/g is hyper-focused on user experience, which runs counter to almost every way an organization looks at its website.

NN/g research using eye-tracking and gaze plot analysis reveals that people are lazy: They do not read every word of a website (or any other digital communication such as email). People want to find what they want quickly and easily. As NN/g says, "People are naturally efficient and attempt to put in the least possible work for achieving their goals."

Essential Information

Website layouts must visually organize the information so users can identify "essential" information. The layer-cake scanning pattern is created by people stopping mostly on headlines and subheads. So heat maps show stopping at a headline (the frosting), only occasional stopping on body copy (the cake), stopping on the subhead (frosting) and little stopping at attached body copy (cake). The layer-cake method is how people scan a page.

How to Do Layer-Cake Design

The problem arises when type sizes, colors or fonts do not make a clear delineated pattern of headline and subhead mapping. Here are a few ideas on accomplishing this for mobile and desktop websites:

- Mark subheads so they clearly stand out
- Use a "consistent, predictable" format
- Clearly show which body copy goes with a headline
- Prioritize content ordering on website
- Chunk content blocks

The layer-cake approach is much more efficient than the F-pattern. UX is what web design is all about.



Scannability

“ The layer-cake pattern is by far the most effective way to scan pages: most of the time, it ensures that users will find the information they are looking for. ”

Nielsen Norman Group

03.1

Scannability
Headlines

Headlines

First impressions matter.

No matter how well you write, most people won't read it all. It's essential to pack your headlines with intrigue and value.



Headlines

“ Traffic to your post will vary depending on the power of your headline. If you fail to make it impactful and clickable, every other marketing step that you take will be a total waste of time. ”

Neil Patel

Did you know ...

500%

is how much your traffic could vary because of your headline.

80%

of users will read a headline.

20%

of users will click through after reading the headline.

Headline tips and tricks

Tips and tricks

Headlines

The 4 Us formula

- Urgent
- Unique
- Useful
- Ultra-specific

PS

- Never repeat a headline. If it appears in the banner space, don't repeat it on the page
- Make sure your headline is not found anywhere else on your website

Resources

A complete guide to writing headlines

For blog posts and articles (more so than regular web pages) there's plenty of research on what makes users click and read on. Here's Neil Patel's roundup: [How to Write Headlines: a Step-by-Step Guide](#)

26 Nuggets to improve your headlines

Need some inspiration for headlines? Here are 26 thought-starters to add some variation from the Content Marketing Institute. [The Easy A-to-Z Guide to Writing Great Headlines](#)

Tips and tricks

Headlines

Headline length

The first 3 words in a headline are the most read. Make them valuable.

The last 3 words of a headline are often read vs. the middle. **Make them helpful.**

General rules:

- 6 - 8 words per headline
- Under 60 characters

PS

Consider the mobile view; don't overwhelm screens with headlines.

Resources

A complete guide to writing headlines

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Tips and tricks

Headlines

A powerful headline includes:

- Active verbs
- Concise language
- Blend of familiar and unexpected words
- Clear benefit for intended audience

Resources

A complete guide to writing headlines

For blog posts and articles (more so than regular web pages) there's plenty of research on what makes users click and read on. Here's Neil Patel's roundup: [How to Write Headlines: a Step-by-Step Guide](#)

26 Nuggets to improve your headlines

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03.2

Scannability
Subheads

Subheads

Subheadings make it easy to browse a page in the same way in which the global navigation makes it easy to browse a site.

Good subheadings help users determine if a section is worth reading, and understand where they should navigate to complete their task.

Mini-IA

Just like the website IA reflects the information structure of a website, the mini-IA, which is made up of all the page headings and subheadings, reflects the information structure of a page.



Did you know ...

Aa

Text attracts attention before graphics.

According to an eye tracking study by Nielsen Norman Group...

22%

of users' first three eye-fixations on a page were on **graphics**.

78%

of users' first three eye-fixations on a page, were on **text**.

How subheads help your user – and your writing

Subheads are the hardest-working part of your web page

Overview: subheads provide a “table of contents”

Organization: logically ordered, subheads are context that help users move forward

Guide Posts: natural signposts help readers quickly find information

Comprehension: subheads make content easier to read and absorb

Calming: subheads and short sections give the eyes a quick rest

Appeal: subheads and sections of various lengths provide visual interest

SEO: clear subheads help search engines understand for better indexing. Also:

- Page rank may improve if a subhead explicitly matches a particular user search
- If subheads improve user experience (signaled by metrics) Google rewards you

Social Sharing: even non-readers share content if they scan and think it will interest others.

Multi-deck headline

Why write a multi deck headline?

Because it's the best-read element on the page.

Decks – those one-sentence summaries under the headline – do the heavy lifting on web pages.

- Offer a second layer of detail to scanners who don't read word by word.

Use a subhead with your headlines as often as possible.



Did you know ...

95%

of web page visitors read all or part of the deck.

5-10

seconds are spent reading the deck.

Subheads tips and tricks

Tips and tricks

Subheads

Use levels

H2: The first level of subheading, the H2s are your main outline points or the header for each main section of your piece.

H3: These are the subsections of the main H2 points.

H4: The H4 headings are detailed subheadings that break the content down into more specific sections.

Explain more

Expand on the headline.

Talk about benefits.

Why read on – what's in it for me?

Resources

Write better subheadings

Make use of eye-catching subheads. The Freelance Writing website tells you how. [How to Write Gripping Subheads & Add More Value to Your Article](#)

Need some examples?

Hubspot has an article on subheads with plenty of examples for inspiration. [Subheadings: What They Are & How to Craft Great Ones](#)

Tips and tricks

Subheads

Clear language

Users won't slow down to muscle through a headline or subhead. Make it clear.

Single idea

Each subhead should indicate one discrete idea that is paid off in following content.

Subhead length

Keep them concise and quick to read.

Resources

Write better subheadings

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Need some examples?

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Tips and tricks

Subheads

Attention-grabbing

Use verbs, active words, questions, facts, or other interesting details.

Descriptive and frequent

Place a subhead every 1 to 3 paragraphs.

Place one before conclusion

Place a subhead right before the content conclusion for finality and valuable takeaway. The conclusion should lead naturally into the CTA.

Resources

Write better subheadings

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03.3

Scannability

Length and lists

Tips and tricks

Length

Sentences

Short sentences are the easiest and quickest to read online. It's that simple. Make sure you only include one key message/benefit per sentence.

- Sentence length of no more than 14 words
- Vary sentence length
- One thought per sentence

Paragraphs

- One idea per paragraph
- 1 to 4 sentences per paragraph

Resources

Are your sentences hard to read?

Try pasting your work into an app that will tell you which sentences are difficult to read. Often length is the problem. [Hemingway App](#)

Also see **Section 04: Readability**

Tips and tricks

Lists

Bullet points help break up large blocks of text, make complex articles and blog posts easier to grasp, and make key information stand out.

Use bullets sparingly, or:

- they lose their effectiveness
- are as daunting as a wall of copy

Try for similar line lengths

The items should share a similar level of importance, and similar line lengths help convey that. Plus, it looks better.

Resources

Examples of list best practice

Along with these tips and tricks, this article shows concrete examples of each guiding principle.

[7 Tips for Presenting Bulleted Lists in Digital Content](#)

Tips and tricks

Lists

Use numbered lists appropriately

Numbered lists are great for how-to and listicles. Use only when the numbers are meaningful.

Use parallel sentence construction

Consistent phrasing style helps reading speed. Make sure each bulleted-list item starts with the same part of speech (e.g., noun, verb) and that they are all either fragments or complete sentences.

Introduce a list with a clear, descriptive sentence or phrase.

The lead-in helps reader comprehension.

Resources

Examples of list best practice

Along with these tips and tricks, this article shows concrete examples of each guiding principle.

[7 Tips for Presenting Bulleted Lists in Digital Content](#)

03.4

Scannability
Linking

Linking

Help readers find more great content by hyperlinking certain words or phrases to other relevant resources, especially those on your own website.

- Links help scannability – make them descriptive
- Links help SEO rankings – use keywords
- Links increase credibility – find related content

- Nielsen Norman Group

They can also be distracting, so don't overdo it.

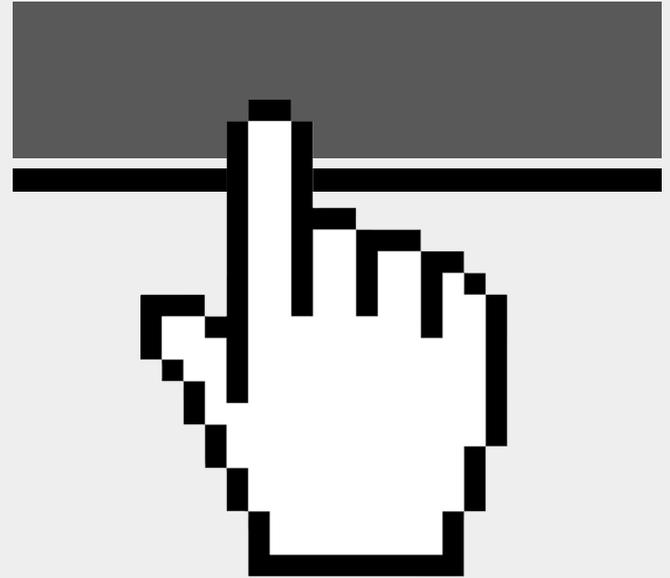


Linking

Internal linking

Keep people engaged with your content and moving through your site. Internal linking:

- Illustrates your expertise
- Improves your user experience
- Helps search engines



Linking: CTAs

Good content inspires action – so let your CTA help.

We develop content because we want our users to act. Whether it's to read more content to build trust in your brand or book a demo, every piece of content should have a clear CTA.

Avoid generic

The ubiquitous “Learn more” is too vague. Users want to know what they will get when they click, so let them know. We avoid clicking if we aren't sure of the payoff.

If “[learn more](#)” is the best option, make sure to add descriptive text - what will users learn more about?

And “[click here](#)” isn't necessary. Today's web users understand what a link or CTA looks like. They know to click.

Linking

“ A suitor asks you on a date but doesn’t show up. A parent says she’ll play a game but never does. A link says *Products & services* but opens a registration page. Damaged promises make a person feel baited, annoyed, disrespected, disappointed, and duped. ”

Linking tips and tricks

Tips and tricks

Linking

The 4 Ss of links:

- Specific
- Sincere
- Substantial
- Succinct

Keep it concise

Users prefer shorter links, as long as they are clear and descriptive and in context. A Nielsen Norman study showed that users primarily scan the first two words, or roughly **11 characters**, of a link. Make them count.

Resources

A link is a promise, so keep it.

Learn more about why a link is a promise and how users look at links in this Nielsen Norman article.

[A Link is a Promise](#)

Writing good hyperlinks is part of being a great web writer.

Links affect usability – but also SEO and accessibility. The Nielsen Norman Group has the goods. Check out:

[Writing Hyperlinks: Salient, Descriptive, Start With Keyword](#)

No more “Learn more”

Read why “Learn more” causes user hesitancy, and what to say instead.

[“Learn More” Links: You Can do Better](#)

Tips and tricks

Linking

Ensure payoff

If the link turns out to be irrelevant or useless, you've lost your customer's trust.

Specific and descriptive

Avoid "learn more" or "click here."

In a Nielsen Norman study, they identified the "3 nasties" in links that cause bad content usability:

- Bland, generic words
- Made-up words or terms
- Starting with blah-blah (deferring the info-carrying text to end)

Resources

A link is a promise, so keep it.

Learn more about why a link is a promise and how users look at links in this Nielsen Norman article.

[A Link is a Promise](#)

Writing good hyperlinks is part of being a great web writer.

Links affect usability – but also SEO and accessibility. The Nielsen Norman Group has the goods. Check out:

[Writing Hyperlinks: Salient, Descriptive, Start With Keyword](#)

No more "Learn more"

Read why "Learn more" causes user hesitancy, and what to say instead.

["Learn More" Links: You Can do Better](#)

Tips and tricks

Linking

Ask yourself:

- Is it relevant to the destination page?
- Is it relevant to my content?
- Does the surrounding text provide more context?
- Are keywords used appropriately (not stuffed)?
- Is it too generic?

Resources

A link is a promise, so keep it.

Learn more about why a link is a promise and how users look at links in this Nielsen Norman article.

[A Link is a Promise](#)

Writing good hyperlinks is part of being a great web writer.

Links affect usability – but also SEO and accessibility. The Nielsen Norman Group has the goods. Check out:

[Writing Hyperlinks: Salient, Descriptive, Start With Keyword](#)

No more “Learn more”

Read why “Learn more” causes user hesitancy, and what to say instead.

[“Learn More” Links: You Can do Better](#)

Key takeaways: Scannability

Use formatting to help users understand the available information at a glance.

1. **Make a layer-cake** page with clear, descriptive subheadings
2. **Concise, unique headlines and subheads** are most helpful to users. Sacrifice clever for useful – although both is a bonus.
3. **Multi-deck format** for headlines and subheads is effective; use it to further the story.
4. **Keep your promises.** Make all links descriptive, clear and accurate.
5. **No more “Learn more.”**
6. **Short sentences are best.** However, varied lengths for rhythmic interest also inspire engagement
7. **One idea per paragraph.** It’s ok if it’s only one sentence long. Keep it under four.

04

Readability

A writer's haiku

**CUT. Cut. Cut.
Cut some more.
Cut again.
Then cut that.**

Readability

Readability is a measure of how easy or difficult it is to understand a piece of text.

Readability is a key factor in user experience.
Accessible content builds trust with your audience.

It helps:

- SEO score; Google considers it a key ranking factor
- Voice search AI find information on your site
- Users navigate the site easily

Readability Score

There are several readability calculators to help you. A good readability score is Grade 6-8 for the public and Grade 8-10 for experts and scholars.

Even if you are writing for a highly educated audience, a lower score is still preferred. Highly proficient readers still prefer the time saved by plain English.

(This page is Grade level 5 -7)

Readability Score Resources

Just paste your text into these calculators to check the difficulty level. You can edit your text within the calculator to achieve a lower score.

[Hemingway App](#)
[Flesch Kincaid Calculator](#)

The plainlanguage.gov website is full of great advice in their plain language guidelines. Check out the section on [choosing your words carefully](#). It's worth your time.

Readability Score

Lowering the readability score doesn't mean you are "dumbing down." As the Nielsen Norman group says, "All writers, including producers of technical and academic content, owe it to readers to communicate information simply, and clearly."

Still not convinced? See more proof from [Nielsen Norman studies](#).

“ But our audience is highly educated ”

Original

Your Health News Nutrition & Fitness Medical Conditions Prevention Mental Health About Us

Search

Scientists Engineer An Opioid That May Reduce Pain With Less Risk

April 17, 2018 12:02 PM EDT



Once people realized that opioid drugs could cause addiction and deadly overdoses, they tried to use newer forms of opioids to treat the addiction to the parent. Morphine, about 10 times the strength of fentanyl, was used to curb opioid cravings in the early 1980s (Cushman, 1982), and was tested as a nonaddictive drug by pain relief, as we have:

Those attempts were doomed to failure because of opioid drugs entering with the brain in the same way they do to a specific **neural receptor**, the mu-opioid receptor, which controls the effects of pleasure, pain relief and mood.

Now scientists are trying to create **opioid painkillers** that give relief from pain without triggering the addictive, euphoric and life-threatening respiratory depression that causes deadly overdoses.

That wasn't thought possible until 2003, when a scientist named **Laura Bohn** found out something about a protein called **beta-arrestin**, which sticks to the opioid receptor when something like morphine attaches to it. When the gene responsible for making that protein is made inactive, they were still able to pain, but a lot of the negative side effects of the drug were missing. They didn't build tolerance to the drug. At certain dosages, they had less addictive. Their breathing was more regular, and they weren't as compulsive as normal mice on opiates.

Bohn had a question: **couldn't people** that use the opioid receptor have a similar protein that blocks the effects of opioids on or off together? How events they could be used. "The hope is you'd have another molecule that binds like morphine and binds to the same receptor. The way it binds the receptor is a slightly different," says Dr. **Arash Margh**, a professor at Stanford University School of Medicine, who is Bohn's advisor.

After Bohn's discovery, a number of people, including a team that includes Margh, started looking for a drug that could connect to the mu-opioid receptor in a way that avoids the negative effects of beta-arrestin.

To do that, they **repaired the receptor's structure** in a computer program and started looking for chemicals that would stick to it. "We tried to look for molecules that would bind to this D-3 structure, but as far as we are using from receptors and opiates as possible," Margh says.

The team ran 3 million possibilities through the computer and picked the 20 best candidates to test in a lab. One chemical, **PZM21**, seems to do what they hoped. Turn the opioid receptor on without using much beta-arrestin. They report their findings in *Nature* on Wednesday.

The scientists then treated the chemicals to make it more potent and gave it to mice. The mice had pain reduction similar to that with morphine. But their breathing was more regular, and they didn't seem to get high.

"I think this is a really big drug that activates the opioid pathway, the dopamine, and morphine, the nice part and the bad part. In this compound, we saw very little of that," Margh says.

The mice also didn't seem to have compulsive behavior, the craving and the addiction.

That means it's possible that the compound is less addictive and has less potential for abuse compared to something like morphine, but it still might be an effective of a painkiller. It, of course, it takes a lot of work to become. So far it's only been tested in mice.

And the idea that beta-arrestin plays in opioids is just one hypothesis. It would be early to conclude if the negative effects of opiates are tied to this one protein. The mice that didn't have any beta-arrestin actually seemed to have a stronger preference for respiratory over other. So there may be other things going on that science hasn't looked at yet.

But the work has brought out the collaborations have been done accompanying by the search for the next generation of painkillers - ideally ones that are safe and non-addictive.

"I think this was really a big deal," says **David Patterson**, a researcher at the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, which also helps to design new agents for pain but he wasn't involved in the study. "They're new articles with really different pharmacological profiles. These are great promises for agents over the course of the next five to 10 years."

Bohn, now a professor at The Scripps Research Institute in Jupiter, Fla., is hopeful that a safer option may be coming for the pain. She:

Margh and some of his collaborators have founded a company that will try to bring these new drugs to market, and the pharmaceutical company **Teva** is running a very similar molecule through clinical trials now.

But that safe, effective painkiller isn't here yet, Bohn says. "We have some really gorgeous compounds, and I think opiates are a terrible addiction. But I would be careful of oversteering this as the answer."

Medical conditions | Behavioral sciences | Science | Arts

Revised

Your Health News Nutrition & Fitness Medical Conditions Prevention Mental Health About Us

Search

New Opioid Painkiller With Fewer Health Risks

April 17, 2018 12:02 PM EDT



Opioid painkillers such as morphine and codeine are used to alleviate pain. But painkillers have risks. They suppress breathing, are highly addictive, and can lead to overdose.

How opioids work

All opioid drugs interact with the brain in the same way. They stick to a specific **neural receptor**, the **mu-opioid receptor**, which controls the effects of pleasure, pain relief and mood.

Now scientists are trying to create **opioid painkillers** that give relief from pain without triggering the receptor that leads to addiction, dependence and the life-threatening respiratory depression that causes deadly overdoses.

Beta-arrestin, the culprit of negative effects

In 2003, Dr. **Laura Bohn** discovered a protein called **beta-arrestin**, which sticks to the brain's opioid receptor. When the gene responsible for making that protein is made inactive, they were still able to pain, but a lot of the negative side effects of the drug were missing.

- They didn't build tolerance to the drug.
- A lesser dosage, they had less addictive.
- Their breathing was more regular, and they weren't as compulsive as normal mice on opiates.

Scientists find drug to block beta-arrestin

After this discovery, researchers started to explore different possibilities of drugs that could connect to our brain's mu-opioid receptor and avoid the negative effects of beta-arrestin.

According to Dr. **Arash Margh**, a Stanford University researcher:

"The hope is you'd have another molecule that binds like morphine and binds to the same receptor. The way it binds the receptor is a slightly different."

PZM21: New opioid with fewer negative effects

Scientists tested the receptor's structure in a computer program and started searching for chemicals that would attach to the mu-opioid receptor.

The team ran 3 million possibilities through the computer and picked the 20 best candidates to test in a lab. One chemical, **PZM21**, seems to do what they hoped. Turn the opioid receptor on without using much beta-arrestin.

In lab studies, the mice had pain reduction similar to that with morphine. But their breathing was more regular, and they didn't seem to get high.

"I think this is a really big drug that activates the opioid pathway, the dopamine, and morphine, the nice part and the bad part. In this compound, we saw very little of that," Margh says.

The mice also didn't seem to have compulsive behavior, the craving and the addiction.

That means it's possible that the compound is less addictive and has less potential for abuse compared to something like morphine, but it still might be an effective of a painkiller. It, of course, it takes a lot of work to become. So far it's only been tested in mice.

Further research with humans needed

So far, PZM21 has only been tested in mice. These results have the potential to ease opioid crisis, but further research is needed to observe its effects in humans.

Dr. Bohn believes there's a great promise for opiates over the next five to 10 years. However, that safe, effective painkiller isn't here yet.

Medical conditions | Behavioral sciences | Science | Arts

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A nurse practitioner with a doctorate degree compared two versions of an article on opioid treatments. The original (left) contained big words and longer sentences, while the revised (right) was written in casual language and better formatted. She preferred the revised version for its concision and ease of scanning.

The Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology in Drumheller one of the most awe-inspiring and quintessentially Albertan experiences you can have. It has long been one of Alberta's premiere destinations, bringing nearly half a million visitors through its doors each year to see its unparalleled offering of dinosaur skeletons and other fossils remains.



Hemingway

Editor

Readability

Grade 13

OK. Aim for 9.

Words: 53

Show More ▾

2 adverbs. Aim for 1 or fewer.

0 uses of passive voice. Nice work.

0 phrases have simpler alternatives.

0 of 3 sentences are hard to read.

2 of 3 sentences are very hard to read.

<https://hemingwayapp.com>

The dinners were born out of a chance encounter between the Schurs and local Alberta chef and food champion Brad Smoliak. After visiting their farm, he planted the seed about opening it up to agri-tourism and helped connect them with partners like Edmonton Tourism and Travel Alberta to transform this vision from dream to reality. In 2017, the Schurs hosted their first dinner with Smoliak as chef.

Hemingway

Editor

Readability

Grade 13

OK. Aim for 9.

Words: 67

Show More ▾

0 adverbs. Well done.

0 uses of passive voice. Nice work.

0 phrases have simpler alternatives.

1 of 3 sentences is hard to read.

1 of 3 sentences is very hard to read.

Readability tips and tricks

Tips and tricks

Readability

Along with headings and subheads, bullets, sentence and paragraph length, here's more to help your users:

Omit unnecessary information

Use only the information your users need to achieve their top tasks. Omit unnecessary information. Some studies say if you convert print text to the web, you should reduce content by 50%.

Word complexity

Don't use a long word when a short word will do. For example, instead of "utilize," use "use."

Resources

It's right there, in plain language

A U.S government site dedicated to plain language has lots of tips and tricks.

[Checklist for Plain Language](#)

Tips and tricks

Readability

Wordy phrases

Use compact substitutes, such as “because” instead of “in view of the fact that.”

Cut unnecessary words

Keep it tight. For example:

- “Very” and “really” are really very useless words
- Use “this,” “that” and “these” only if necessary, and never at the beginning of a sentence
- Remove phrases that add nothing to your story, including “In order to…” and “needless to say.”

Resources

It's right there, in plain language

A U.S government site dedicated to plain language has lots of tips and tricks.

[Checklist for Plain Language](#)

...in order to promptly respond
in the event of an emergency.

Tips and tricks

Readability

Reduce prepositions

For succinct – and readable – text, cut as many prepositions as possible. For example:

Original:

With the acquisition **of** XYZ Widgets in January 2019, the employees **at** the Scranton plant opted **to** throw a party **in** celebration **of** their new employer.

Edit:

To celebrate the company's January 2019 acquisition, XYZ Widget's Scranton plant employees threw a party.

Resources

It's right there, in plain language

A U.S government site dedicated to plain language has lots of tips and tricks. [Checklist for Plain Language](#)

Prepositions can be tricky.

There are more prepositions than the common ones we can quickly spout off. Here's one (of many) references.

[A Full List of Prepositions \(No Singing Required\)](#)

Tips and tricks

Readability

Nix the jargon

Make sure your text is understandable for the educated non-specialist, not just technical experts.

Use active language

Active language and phrases are easier to read than passive verbiage – especially for those whose first language is not English.

Example:

Passive: **I am loved.**

Active: **He loves me.**

Resources

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Active vs. passive voice

This Hunter College reference is clear, but give all the details, including active and passive in all verb tenses. [Grammar and Mechanics: Active and Passive Voice](#)

Tips and tricks

Readability

More on active vs. passive

To identify and fix passive voice, rearrange your sentence with the subject before the verb. If that still sounds complicated, here's a trick: Swap out the subject for "I." **Make yourself the subject in the first person.**

"A great time was had by all." – Eliminate the subject and replace it with the first person "I."

"A great time was had by I." – Doesn't make any sense, right? Put the subject in front of the verb.

"I had a great time." – Now that you've rearranged things, replace "I" with a subject that fits the intent of the original sentence.

"Everyone had a great time" – Done.

Resources

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Active vs. passive voice

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Tips and tricks

Readability

Use the active form of verbs

Reduce usage of verb tenses that end in “**ing.**” Instead, use the active form of the verb.

Why? Because “ing” verbs tend to weaken and water down your copy.

An example:

“...assist Alberta businesses and municipalities with **launching** new tourism infrastructure initiatives, **acquiring** experience assets, and **assisting** with visitor program development.

vs

“...assist Alberta businesses and municipalities **launch** new tourism infrastructure initiatives, **acquire** experience assets, and **assist** with visitor program development.

Resources

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Active vs. passive voice

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Tips and tricks

Readability

Avoid the exclamation mark!

The world's most over-used punctuation mark can make your words feel fake, or amateur. And they're distracting.

If a statement's flat, no amount of exclamation marks will liven it up. Instead, rewrite with more powerful verbs. Get out the Thesaurus.

Like everything, though, they have their place. Use judiciously, and never as a crutch.

Resources

It's right there, in plain language

A U.S government site dedicated to plain language has lots of tips and tricks. [Checklist for Plain Language](#)

Active vs. passive voice

This Hunter College reference is clear, but give all the details, including active and passive in all verb tenses. [Grammar and Mechanics: Active and Passive Voice](#)

Key takeaways: Readability

Writing simply and clearly isn't dumbing down. It's respecting your online readers.

1. **Grade 6-8** is ideal for the majority of web pages. For deep-diver pages, you can creep up to grade 10.
2. **Reduce information.** Leave your copy for a day or two, then review to see if anything is extraneous.
3. **Tighten up.** Compact phrases. Reduce prepositions. Nix the jargon.
4. **The copy was written in an active voice.** Nope. That's passive. Write copy in an active voice.
5. **Commit to inclusiveness.** Accessibility is good for all users.
6. **Alert!** Never use exclamation points. Rarely, at least. Try a powerful verb instead.
7. **Interesting.** If you see an 'ing' in your copy, try again. It will likely improve if you rewrite it to avoid the 'ing.'

05

Accessibility

Accessibility

“The Web is fundamentally designed to work for all people, whatever their hardware, software, language, location, or ability. When the Web meets this goal, it is accessible to people with a diverse range of hearing, movement, sight, and cognitive ability.”

Did you know ...

26%

of Americans have temporary or permanent disabilities. **10% of those depend on the internet** for work or other important tasks.

51.4

Average number of **accessibility errors** on the top 1M websites' home pages.

3500+

Digital accessibility **lawsuits** in the US in 2020/

Accessibility

“ Plain language solves a lot of accessibility problems for people with cognitive issues like short-term memory or learning disabilities such as dyslexia. ”

Intuit

What's web accessibility?

Accessibility means that websites, tools, and technologies are designed and developed so that people with disabilities can use them. More specifically, people can:

- perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with the Web
- contribute to the Web

Accessibility resources

The Web Accessibility Initiative website is full of great advice.

[Intro to web accessibility](#)

[Writing for web accessibility](#)



Who Needs Accessibility?

All of us, some of the time.

Some of us, all of the time.

Any user struggling in a physical, cognitive, or mental capacity – that can be a headache one day, hearing loss as we age, or as complex as a rare disease requiring technological assistance at all times.

What affects web access?

Web accessibility encompasses all disabilities that affect access to the Web, including:

- auditory
- cognitive
- neurological
- physical
- speech
- visual

Accessibility resources

The Web Accessibility Initiative website is full of great advice.

[Intro to web accessibility](#)

[Writing for web accessibility](#)

What benefits does it bring?

Web accessibility also benefits people *without* disabilities, for example:

- people using mobile phones, smart watches, smart TVs, and other devices with **small screens**, different input modes, etc.
- older people with changing abilities due to **ageing**
- people with “temporary disabilities” such as a broken arm or **lost glasses**
- people with “**situational limitations**” such as in bright sunlight or in an environment where they cannot listen to audio
- people using a slow Internet connection, or who have limited or expensive **bandwidth**

Accessibility resources

The Web Accessibility Initiative website is full of great advice.

[Intro to web accessibility](#)

[Writing for web accessibility](#)



Remember:

Listening is in.

Use clear and simple language. It helps automated reading software to scan your site.

Clean formatting to break up information for better comprehension when read aloud.

Where possible, provide recordings for longer content, like blog posts.

Accessibility tips and tricks

Tips and tricks

Accessibility

Unique page titles

A short title that describes the page content and distinguishes it from other pages, with most relevant information first.

Convey meaning and structure with headings

Group related paragraphs and clearly describe the sections.

Meaningful link text

Describe the content of the link target.

Resources

[Writing for Web Accessibility](#) on WAI website

[Formatting for accessibility](#) on AT3 website

[5 tips for creating accessible content](#) on Content Science Review website

[Guidelines for inclusive language](#) from the Linguistic Society of America

[Make social media accessible](#) at Accessible Social website

Tips and tricks

Accessibility

Alt text for images

Provide the information or function for the image.

Transcripts and captions for multimedia

If a video is short, provide captions. If it's long, or it's audio-only, provide a transcript.

Clear instructions

Make instructions, guidance, and error messages clear, easy to understand, and avoid unnecessarily technical language. Describe input requirements, such as date formats.

Resources

[Writing for Web Accessibility](#) on WAI website

[Formatting for accessibility](#) on AT3 website

[5 tips for creating accessible content](#) on Content Science Review website

[Guidelines for inclusive language](#) from the Linguistic Society of America

[Make social media accessible](#) at Accessible Social website

Tips and tricks **Accessibility**

Clear and concise content

Use simple language and formatting, as appropriate for the context.

- Write in short, clear sentences and paragraphs.
- Avoid using unnecessarily complex words and phrases.
- Consider providing a glossary for terms readers may not know.
- Use list formatting as appropriate.
- Consider using images, illustrations, video, audio, and symbols to help clarify meaning.

Resources

[Writing for Web Accessibility](#) on WAI website

[Formatting for accessibility](#) on AT3 website

[5 tips for creating accessible content](#) on Content Science Review website

[Guidelines for inclusive language](#) from the Linguistic Society of America

[Make social media accessible](#) at Accessible Social website

Tips and tricks **Accessibility**

Use inclusive language

[Guiding principles](#) from the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. The message for all of us: do your research.

- Know which populations within your audience have fewer advantages, are marginalized and/or are objects of bias
- Be sure your messages do not exclude—or appear to exclude—any groups
- Use respectful language that acknowledges people’s humanity
- Try to use language preferred by the group (for example, *people with disabilities; Deaf person*)

MORE resources

Style Guides

Check out the Contently article on inclusive writing with links to style guides:

[How to Find inclusive Style Guides That Lead to More Thoughtful Writing](#)

Why Alt text?

Here’s a blog post to explain Alt text, and how to write it.

[How To: Write Good Alt Text](#)

Add captions to video

Read about why adding text to videos is becoming more and more important.

[No More Excuses – You Need to Add Captions to Your Videos](#)

What’s inclusive?

A quick education:

[A Guide to Writing Inclusive Language and Copy](#)

Tips and tricks **Accessibility**

Use inclusive language, con't

- There may not be universal consensus around terminology. (For instance, some indigenous American groups use the term *Native American* while others prefer *American Indian* or *First Nation*.) Learn how distinct groups prefer to self-identify.
- Describe a person or group at the appropriate level of specificity. To avoid objectification, identify a group or an individual as a member of a group only when it is relevant to your message.

MORE resources

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Tips and tricks **Accessibility**

Use inclusive language, con't

- Use adjectival forms (e.g., *older adults*) or nouns with descriptive phrases (e.g., *individuals living in poverty*) rather than labels (*the elderly, the poor*)
- Like our society, language is always evolving. Seek continual learning about the meaning of words and how groups self-identify

MORE resources

Style Guides

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[How to Find inclusive Style Guides That Lead to More Thoughtful Writing](#)

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Here's a blog post to explain Alt text, and how to write it.

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What's inclusive?

A quick education:

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Review: Which One Is Easier to Scan?

You don't have to understand the language to understand which site is taking better care of their users.

Alibus et accatem quunducient as verro mincia dent sunt exlab ipsus enderer spedisincata sam venit omni magniment facerun tisita volorum nis est, equatusam nisquo litiqui tem lab is quunte soluptas eos aut harumet od enia qui si delicil iunt hillature.

Aruptis aut omnis sam re pos ad molorum et dolupt atquos eossi cu et ut qui utent es ullessimus perepe [dolorem verit dolupta alis ea](#) consequibus, sime pelectum ut rem et officia que mi, tes ate vollabo. Es dolupatqui vent. Alibus et accatem quunducient as verro mincia dent, sunt exlab.

Alibus et accatem quunducient

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- equatusam nisquo
- litiqui tem lab is quunte soluptas eos aut
- harumet od enia qui si delicil iunt hillature.
- Aruptis aut omnis sam re pos ad molorum et

dolupt atquos eossi cu et ut qui utent es ullessimus perepe [dolorem verit dolupta alis ea](#) consequibus, sime pelectum ut rem et officia que mi, tes ate vollabo. Es dolupatqui vent. Alibus et accatem quunducient as verro mincia dent, sunt exlab.

Example: Making content readable and understandable

❌ Unnecessarily complex

CPP: In the event of a vehicular collision, a company assigned representative will seek to ascertain the extent and cause of damages to property belonging to all parties involved. Once our representative obtains information that allows us to understand the causality, we may or may not assign appropriate monetary compensation. The resulting decision may occasion one of the following options: the claim is not approved and is assigned a rejected status, the status of the claim is ambiguous and will require additional information before further processing can occur, the claim is partially approved and reduced payment is assigned and issued, or claim is fully approved and total claim payment is assigned and issued.

✅ Easier to understand

Claims Processing Procedure (CPP): If you have a car accident, our agent will investigate. Findings will determine any claim payment. This could result in:

- Approved claim - full payment
- Partially approved claim - reduced payment
- Undetermined claim - more information needed
- Rejected claim - no payment



Key takeaways: Accessibility

Writing simply and clearly isn't dumbing down. It's respecting your online readers.

1. **Accessibility means** that anyone can perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with your site
2. **Listening is in.** Think about how your formatting and copy sound if they can't be read.
3. **Clear, concise.** Always. For everyone.
4. **Convey meaning everywhere.** Including in alt text, headlines, subheads, links and CTAs.
5. **Use alt text.** Make your language as accurate as the image.
6. **Captions and transcripts.** Automated is a good start, but check it over carefully for correctness.
7. **Web writing best practice = accessibility.** Everything in this document helps with accessibility.

06

SEO

On-Page SEO

What is on-page SEO?

On-page SEO (sometimes called on-site SEO) involves optimization of page copy and HTML.

Why is it important?

The way your page is optimized can have a huge impact on its ability to rank in search results.

How does it improve sites?

Optimizing page copy and HTML with relevant keywords can help increase rankings and traffic.



Focus Areas

The three main areas of on-page optimization:

Meta Data

Optimizing meta titles, descriptions, and alt attributes with relevant keywords.

Keyword Research

Identifying relevant, high-traffic keywords that are searched by users.



Page Copy

Optimizing page body copy, h1 (headers) etc. with important keywords.

06.1

SEO

Meta data and URLs

Overview

What is meta data?

Meta data (or meta tags) are snippets of text that describe a page's content in the Search Engine Results Page (SERPs).

Why is it important?

Meta data helps search engines to better understand what your page is about.

How do they improve sites?

Optimized meta data can improve organic keyword rankings and increase the relevancy of visitors to your site.

Meta data (tags) as seen in search results

<https://moz.com> › The Moz Blog ▾

[The Ultimate Guide to SEO Meta Tags - Moz](#)

Jul. 24, 2019 — What are **Meta Tags**? **Meta tags** provide information about the webpage in the HTML of the document. This information is called "metadata" and ...

<https://www.w3schools.com> › tags › tag_meta ▾

[HTML meta tag - W3Schools](#)

Definition and Usage. The **<meta> tag** defines metadata about an HTML document. Metadata is data (information) about data. **<meta> tags** always go inside the **<... charset Attribute · Try it Yourself · Meter · Example**

<https://www.searchenginewatch.com> › 2018/04/04 › a-... ▾

[A quick and easy guide to meta tags in SEO - Search Engine ...](#)

Apr. 4, 2018 — **Meta tags** are invisible tags that provide data about your page to search engines and website visitors. · In short, they make it easier for search ...

<https://www.searchenginejournal.com> › SEO ▾

[10 Most Important Meta Tags You Need to Know for SEO](#)

Jul. 28, 2020 — 1. Title Tags · 2. Meta Description Tags · 3. Heading Tags (H1-H6) · 4. Image Alt Attributes · 5. Nofollow Attributes · 6. Robots **Meta Tag** · 7. rel=" ...

Meta Titles

Follow these guidelines and best practices for writing meta titles:

Meta Titles (70 characters or less)

- ✓ Use brief, but descriptive titles (70 characters maximum, if possible)
- ✓ Include at least one keyword in meta titles
- ✓ Do not duplicate titles
- ✓ Avoid “stuffing” keywords in meta titles if it compromises its ability to be informative

Page Name

Include page name at the beginning of the meta title

Keyword(s)

Include at least one keyword in the title (if there are enough characters available)



Brand (Site) Name

Brand name is place towards the end of the meta title

Meta Descriptions

Follow these guidelines and best practices for writing meta descriptions:

Meta Descriptions (155 characters or less)

- ✓ Meta descriptions should provide very brief summaries of page contents
- ✓ Include call-to-action in descriptions (if possible) to entice users to click-through from search results
- ✓ Do not duplicate meta descriptions
- ✓ Avoid “stuffing” keywords in meta descriptions if it compromises relevancy

Page Summary

Include page name at the beginning of the meta title

Keyword(s)

Include at least one keyword in the description (if it's relevant)

Meta Description

Meta descriptions should briefly summarize page content and include a call-to-action to encourage click-throughs.

Action-oriented

Write descriptions in a way that encourages users to click on the result to find out more

Image Optimization

Optimizing images helps search engines to better understand image contents and improves usability for users:

1. Alt Text

Alt text should be used to describe the contents of an image.

Example of bad alt text:

```
<img alt="This is a photo of a building"
```

Example of good alt text:

```
<img alt="Calgary's new central library located in East Village"
```



2. Image File Name

Instead of using non-descriptive image labels like “IMG_111”, images should include keyword-rich file names.

Example of bad image file name:

```
calgarymlc.ca/content/IMG435.jpg
```

Example of good image file name:

```
calgarymlc.ca/image/calgary-new-central-library-east-village.jpg
```

Optimized Page URLs

Page URLs are one of the first things seen by search engines and used to determine relevancy:

1. Keywords in URLs

Try to include at least 1 relevant keyword in URLs (if possible).

Example of bad URL format:

website.com/pg26381291

Example of good URL format:

website.com/landing-page

2. Hyphens in URLs

Separate page keywords with hyphens (“-”) to improve URL readability.

Example of bad URL format:

website.com/landingpage

Example of good URL format:

website.com/landing-page

3. Lowercase URLs

Use only lowercase letters in URLs to prevent duplicate page issues.

Example of bad URL format:

website.com/Landing-Page

Example of good URL format:

website.com/landing-page

06.2

SEO

Page copy optimization

Copy Optimization

Important elements to optimize across pages:

1. Optimize Header Tags

Include important keywords in headings (H1) and subheadings (H2,H3,H4 etc.)

Why are these important?

- Help users and search engines to better navigate and understand page content

2. Page Formatting

Break up large pieces of text into smaller paragraphs and include at least one image / video on pages.

Why is this important?

- Improve page readability and overall user engagement.

<headline> (h1)

<subhead> (h2)

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.

Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat.

Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur.

3. Optimize Body Copy

Include important keywords throughout page copy without 'keyword stuffing'.

Why is this important?

- Improve page rankings and traffic for keyword terms

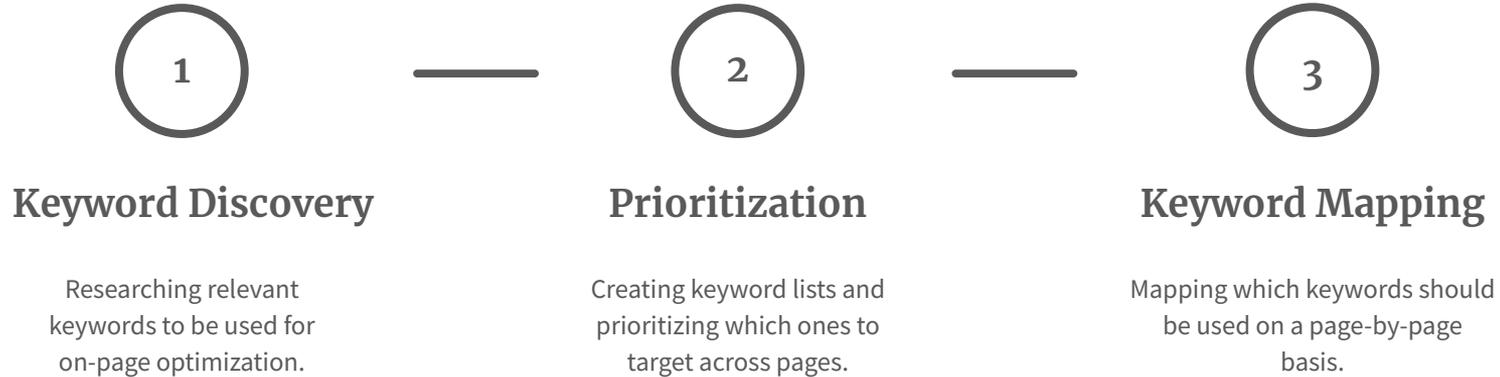
06.3

SEO

Keyword research

Keyword Research Process

Follow this process for keyword research and page optimization:

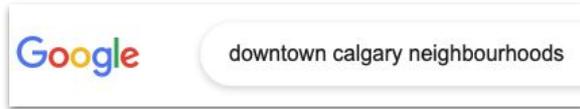


Keyword Discovery

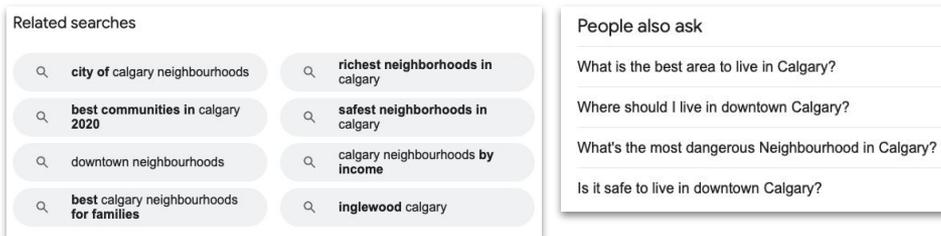
Follow these steps to find new keywords for content optimization:

1. Manual Search

Search for a starting term via Google



Review search results to discover related terms and questions



2. Keyword Research Tools

Add starting terms to one of the following keyword research tools to discover new keywords:

[Ahrefs](#) (Paid)

[SEMRush](#) (Paid)

[Moz](#) (Paid)

[MozBar](#) (Free)

[Google Search Trends](#) (Free)

[Answer The Public](#) (Free & Paid Options)

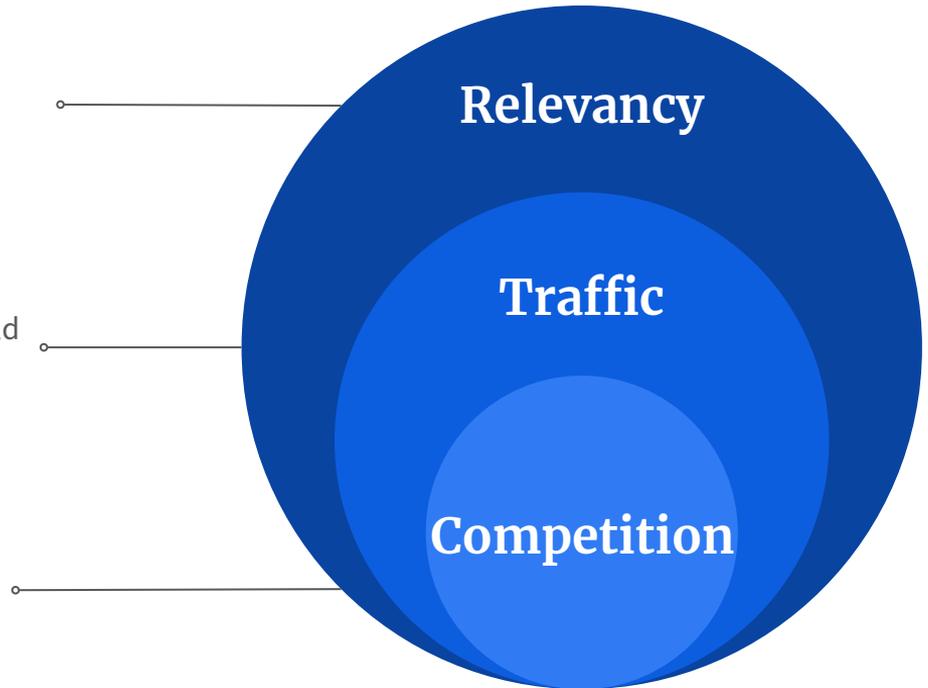
Prioritization

Prioritize which keywords are used across content:

1. Relevancy: relevant keywords (in relation to page content) should be the first priority when using keywords.

2. Traffic: keywords with high monthly searches should be prioritized in content (where possible / relevant).

3. Competition: keywords with low competition / difficulty are easier to rank for in search results.



Keyword Mapping

Follow these steps to map keywords across page content:

1. Use a Worksheet

Use a worksheet to manage keyword mapping across site pages (Excel or Google Sheets format recommended):

Page	Primary Keyword	Secondary Keyword(s)
/landing-page/	Keyword 1	Keyword 2, keyword 3, keyword 4 etc.

2. Page Copy & Meta Tags

Add mapped keywords to page copy, meta titles and descriptions. Primary keywords should be included in meta titles and h1 (headers). Secondary keywords should be included in body copy and meta descriptions (if possible / relevant).

06.2

SEO

On-page SEO checklist

On-Page SEO Checklist

Follow this checklist for improving on-page SEO across pages:

Meta Data

- Do pages have unique meta title and description added?
- Do meta tags adhere to Google's character guidelines?
- Is there at least one keyword used in the page meta title & description (if relevant / possible)?
- Do meta descriptions include action-oriented copy / call-to-action?

Images

- Do images include optimized alt text?
- Are relevant keywords included in image file names?

Page URLs

- Are hyphens used to separate URL keywords?
- Are all keywords included in URLs lowercase?

Page Copy

- Do pages include relevant (h1) header tags?
- Are large pieces of text broken up into smaller paragraphs?
- Are relevant subheadings (h2, h3 etc.) used throughout copy?
- Do header tags include relevant keywords?
- Are target keywords and related terms included in body copy?

**Ready to hit
send?**

Apply brand voice

Does your style reflect the Travel Alberta brand voice?



Read out loud

It's a common concept, but we don't do it enough.

Take the time to read your copy out loud. You'll find phrases that are awkward to read, typos your computer missed, and information to add – or cut.



**Happy
writing!**

evans HUNT