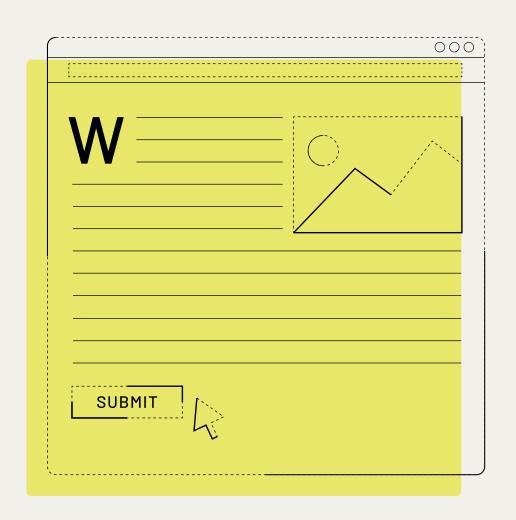
Mastering Web Content Writing for Nonprofits

Improve SEO, Expand your Audience, and Boost Conversions



Introduction

The first way someone may learn about your work is often through your website. Content written for how people read online can help your SEO, help you reach more people, and increase conversions on the site.

Whether you're a seasoned writer or just starting, understanding how people interact with online content is the key to writing engaging and effective copy. We'll help you write effective content for the web by covering everything from how people read online to SEO optimization and accessibility.

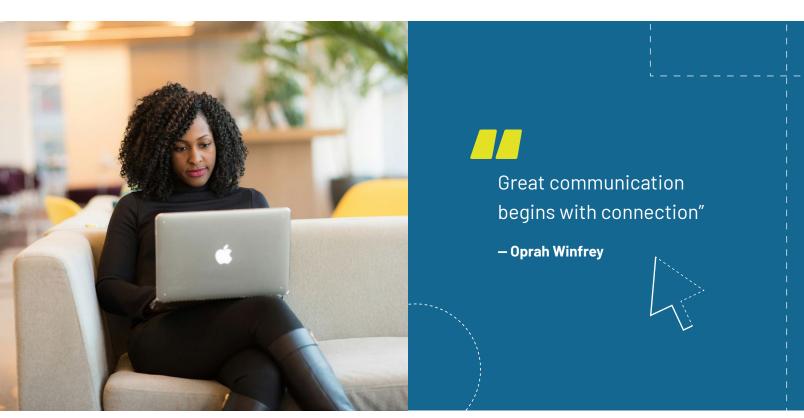


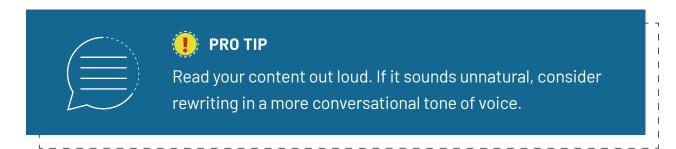
Photo by Christina Morillo from Pexels

How People Read Online

The way people learn information online differs from how they may learn content from books, magazines, or other written sources. Here's a few tactics online audiences use.

Skimming

Online readers are notorious for skimming rather than reading every word. They scan content quickly to find relevant information. To accommodate this behavior, structure your content with scannable elements such as subheads, bullet points, and bold text.



Seeking

When people visit your website, they're typically seeking something specific, whether it's information, entertainment, or a solution to a problem. Understanding their intentions can help you tailor your content to meet their needs effectively.

Diving in

While some visitors skim, others dive deep into your content. These readers are interested in exploring in-depth information, so it's essential to provide detailed and well-organized content to keep them engaged. But, keep your message in mind. This means putting the content YOU want the reader to see in the most visible, convenient spots on the site, then add links/layers the reader can click into to learn more.



The Wide Availability of Content Options

To reach your audience, make sure you are using all the tools available to you. Remember to maximize your online presence using the following tips:

Social Media

Social media platforms serve as gateways to your website, where people discover and share your content. Write attention-grabbing headlines and visuals to entice visitors to click through to your site.



Search Engines

Search engines are powerful tools for driving traffic to your website. By incorporating relevant keywords and optimizing your content for search, you can improve your visibility and attract more visitors.

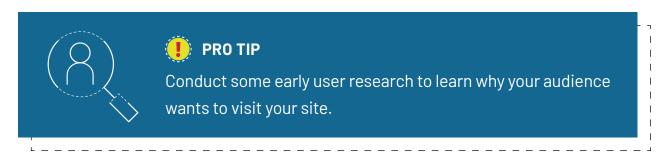
Understanding Your Audience

When writing content, it is important to think about why someone may be coming to your website. Are they hoping to be informed? Do they want to get involved? Are they seeking a resource? By outlining the various reasons someone may be clicking through your site, you can ensure the writing of each individual page is meeting the need. Some audience goals to consider:

Specific Reason: Some people visit your website with a specific goal in mind, such as researching a service you offer or finding answers to their questions. Tailor your content to address their needs and provide valuable insights or solutions.



Just Checking You Out the First Time: First-time visitors may be exploring your website to learn more about what you do, or what kind of difference you make in the world. Make a strong first impression by showcasing your expertise, credibility, and the impact you make.



Recommendation: Those who arrive at your website through recommendations or referrals are already primed to engage with your content. Deliver on their expectations by providing high-quality, relevant content that meets their needs.

Want to Help/Donate: Some visitors may be motivated to support your cause or contribute to your efforts. Clearly communicate your mission and impact, how they can get involved or contribute to your cause, and how their support helps.

Crafting Effective Web Content

Now that you've considered why someone may come to your site, it's time to keep them there. Web content needs to be engaging, but what does that mean? How do you not only reach your target audience, but prompt them to take the next steps? Here are our tips:

Be Concise: In the age of information overload, brevity is key. Keep your content concise and to the point, focusing on delivering value without unnecessary fluff or repetition.

Avoid Jargon: Nonprofits are known for their industry specific language and \$5 words. It's important to write the way people speak — with simple, clear language. Consider hiring a copy editor to tighten up your content. And, for an "outsider's" perspective.

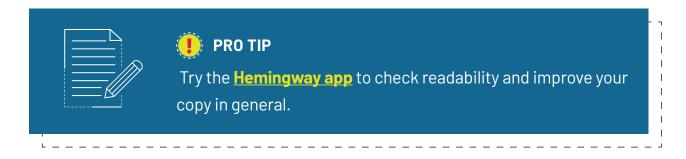


Less Is More: Avoid overwhelming your audience with too much information. Stick to the essentials and prioritize quality over quantity.

Don't Repeat Yourself: Repeating the same information can be tedious for readers and detract from overall readability. Instead, focus on delivering fresh insights and perspectives to keep your audience engaged. Or, link to where the information already exists within your site. This internal linking can help with SEO (bonus points!).

Write Clearly: Clear and straightforward writing is essential for effective communication. Use simple language and short sentences to convey your message effectively. Prioritizing clarity keeps readers engaged and prevents bounce rates.

Readability: Opt for a writing style that is easy to understand, aiming for an 8th-grade reading level to ensure accessibility for a broader audience.



Short Sentences: Long, complex sentences can confuse readers and lead to disengagement. Break up your content into shorter sentences to improve readability and comprehension.

Write Like You Speak: Use a conversational tone in your writing to connect with your audience on a personal level. Imagine you're having a conversation with a friend and convey your message naturally.

Using AI to Write Content

As Al works its way into everything, people will start using it more and more to write content. There's benefits to this, but also some ethical and other considerations.

Draft Mode Only: All is not perfect. It's trained on specific sets of data and can make mistakes. It's important to view Al-created content as your draft. Then you need to review it for errors of fact, repetitive or misleading information, and citation of sources.

Chat GPT 4: Chat GPT 4 is here. And it's pretty incredible. Open Al says it's their "most advanced system, producing safer and more useful responses." With a free account, you have limited access to Chat GPT4 and for \$20/month you get full access. See what it can do.

Ethics: There are still <u>many ethical questions</u> surrounding the use of chatbots and other Al tools. It's worth your time to understand and consider them before deciding the extent to which you want to use these tools. But, with products like <u>Sora, which can create video from text</u>, it's most likely Al tools will continue to grow.

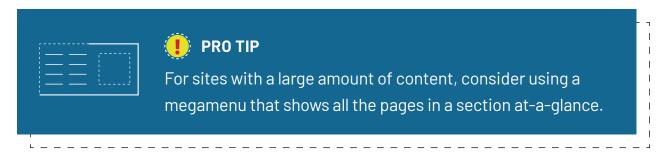


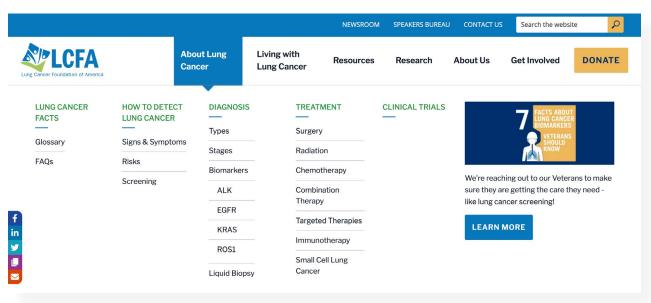
Make A Plan

Creating quality written content for your site requires preparation, drafting, and editing. Most importantly, it requires a plan - a blueprint, if you will. Below are ways to outline the content you intend to create:

All Content Should Have a Purpose: Every piece of content on your website should serve a specific purpose tied to your overall strategy. Are you seeking to inform, entertain, or persuade? Know how your content adds value to your audience before you dive in.

Site Structure/Navigation Menu: A well-organized site structure and navigation menu make it easy for visitors to find what they're looking for. Use clear categories and labels to guide visitors to relevant content seamlessly. Remember, the more pages you have, the more important it will be for you to group like topics together. Also, do break up the content so you have smaller chunks of information per page.





An example of a megamenu for Lung Cancer Foundation of America's brand new website.



Page Structure: Break your content into digestible chunks with clear headings and subheadings. This not only improves readability but also helps search engines understand the structure of your content.

Sections/Subheads: Divide your content into distinct sections with descriptive subheadings. This makes it easier for readers to scan and navigate your content.

Bullet Points: Do not shy away from making your content more readable by using bullet points. It will be visually more accessible and allow for quick skimming.

Layering: Layer your content to provide varying levels of detail. Start with a brief overview, then guide the reader to additional topics by clicking into another layer of the site. This allows you to keep the main content brief while still catering to different audience preferences.

Linking: Include relevant internal and external links throughout your content to provide additional context or resources for your readers. This enhances how people experience the site and improves SEO.

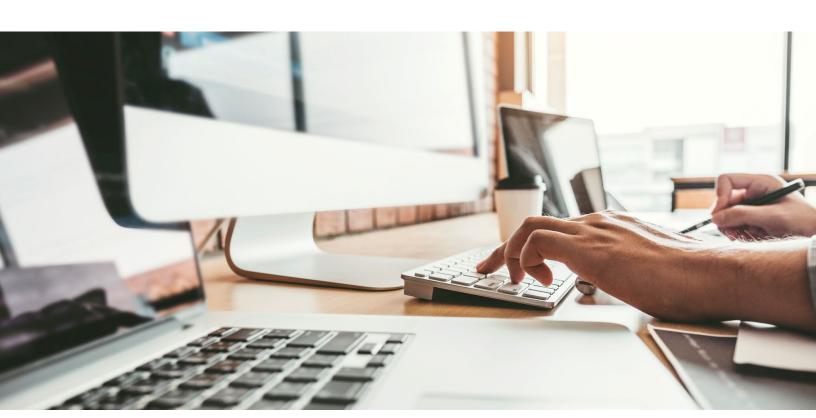


Photo by SARINYAPINNGAM from iStock



Make It Visual

Good written content is essential, but don't forget to plan for good visual content. Your audience will thank you for breaking up blocks of texts. Here are a few examples of ways to incorporate visual elements into your webpages:

Images: Incorporate high-quality images or icons that complement your content and enhance visual appeal. Use visuals to break up text and illustrate key points effectively.

Infographics: Infographics are powerful tools for presenting complex information in a visually engaging format. Use them to communicate data, statistics, or processes in an easy-to-understand manner.



Stats: Support your claims and arguments with relevant statistics and data. This adds credibility to your content and helps build trust with your audience.

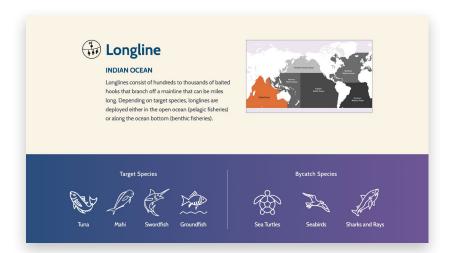
Bullet Lists: Use bullet lists to highlight key points or action items. This format is highly scannable and makes it easy for readers to grasp essential information quickly.

Bold: Emphasize important words or phrases using bold text. This draws attention to key points and improves readability.

Cards: Cards are versatile design elements that can be used to present bite-sized information or organize content into distinct sections. Use them to create visually appealing layouts that guide visitors through your content.

Videos: Incorporate videos to engage your audience and convey information in a dynamic format. Whether it's tutorials, interviews, or product demos, videos can enhance the overall visitor experience and increase engagement.

Visual Examples



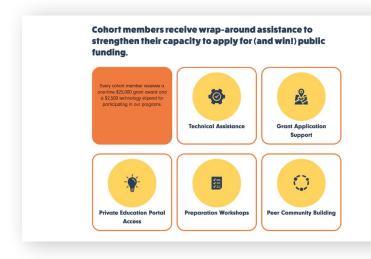
Infographics

Bycatch Solutions Hub uses unique icons to categorize different species.

Stats

UPROSE clearly displays its accomplishments through impactful statistics.





Cards

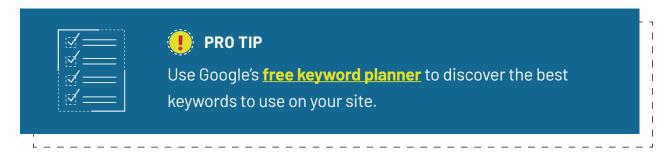
The flip cards on the <u>Justice 40</u>

<u>Accelerator</u> website offer visitors a concise overview of the support provided to their cohort members.

SEO Optimization

What good is high quality content if the search engine makes it invisible? Make sure your desired audience can find you by optimizing your content for search engines. Keep these tips in mind when creating content for your site and social media posts:

Headlines: Write compelling headlines that incorporate relevant keywords to improve search visibility and attract clicks. Use clear language that accurately reflects the content of your page.



Links: Include internal and external links with anchor text that contains relevant keywords. This helps search engines understand the context of your content and improves its ranking.

CTAs: Include clear calls-to-action (CTAs) that encourages people to take the desired action, whether it's making a donation, signing up for a newsletter, or contacting you. Use persuasive language and compelling visuals to motivate action.

Bullets: When listing features or benefits, use bullets to break up text and make information easier to digest. Incorporate keywords naturally within the bullet points for SEO purposes.

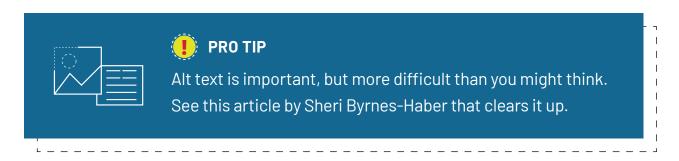
Accessibility

Filenames: Optimize file names for images, videos, and other media to include relevant keywords. This improves search visibility and helps visitors discover your content through image searches.

Alt text: One skill to master for accessibility is learning to write alt text well. Alt text is text that describes the context and meaning of an image for people who may be using a screen reader to access your content.

When writing alt text, focus on describing the essential information conveyed by the image. Avoid unnecessary details and provide context that enhances the experience for all visitors. Describe the content and function of the image concisely and accurately.

Offer descriptive alt text for all of your visual content to ensure accessibility for people with visual impairments. Though, alt text isn't necessary for visuals that are purely decorative. In those cases, you can skip the alt text so the image becomes invisible to a person with a screen reader.



Ask us about our accessibility trainings!

Takeaway

Writing effective web content requires a combination of understanding people's behavior, strategic planning, and clear communication. By incorporating these guidelines and best practices into your writing process, you can create content that captivates your audience, enhances your brand, and drives meaningful engagement.

Remember to keep it concise, relevant, and accessible to ensure maximum impact and success.

Good luck!



If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people together to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea."

- Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Aviator and Writer





Mwire media

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The leading UX design firm for nonprofits providing content, design, and technology solutions to create highly effective websites and microsites.

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