



## Writing for the Web

### Do your Research

Proper research will lead to factual content that users will enjoy reading. *Every sentence you write should be based on a solid fact.* Content is more important than the design that supports it. If a web page provides users with high quality content, they are willing to accept design flaws in the site. This is why some poorly designed websites with high quality content get a lot of traffic over years.

### Keep it Short

In general, no web page should be over 600 words or four paragraphs in length. If you need to have a larger page for any reason, consider creating a new category with a sub-menu and several lower level pages. If you must have articles in your site, create separate links to them.

Use short and concise sentences (come to the point as quickly as possible). A good rule is to use a maximum of 18 words or 50-80 characters per line of text. Categorize the content, using multiple heading levels, visual elements, and bulleted lists to break the flow of uniform text blocks.

### Write for People

The more interesting you make your content, the more people will read it. However, be sure to use plain and objective language.

### Write for Grade 6

Pfizer conducted an extensive study on web reading habits that showed that **43% of web users are “low literacy” users who cannot understand a page written above a Grade 6 level.** Therefore, top level web pages should be written at the Grade 6 level, while more in-depth pages used deeper in the site should be written at a Grade 8 level.

How do you check the grade level of your text? Simply, copy and paste your text into an online readability calculator such as [http://www.online-utility.org/English/readability\\_test\\_and\\_improve.jsp](http://www.online-utility.org/English/readability_test_and_improve.jsp). This will give you a host of statistics, including **Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level**. That figure should be at or around 6 for your top level pages, as suggested. If it isn't, go back and shorten sentences and change larger words to simpler ones until you've worked it down to where it needs to be.

### References

- 10 Writing tips for web designers (<http://www.webdesignerdepot.com/2009/02/10-writing-tips-for-web-designers/>)
- 10 Principles of Effective Web Design (<http://uxdesign.smashingmagazine.com/2008/01/31/10-principles-of-effective-web-design/>)