

Writing for the Web

Practical Guide for Business & Community Engagement





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Introduction

Business and Community Engagement (BCE) units across the education sector recognise that the good use of the World Wide Web can greatly enhance the effectiveness of their work. The key roll of providing: *an interface between universities and the rest of the world*, makes the use of the web crucial.

New and exciting technologies, including multimedia, offer great opportunities, however, the basic text must be well written to start with. This module provides help with ensuring that the most important information regarding knowledge and technology transfer, and business engagement is appealing and useful to the potential client. It looks at the written content rather than the technology that may surround it.

What is so different about writing for the web?

The ability to write and re-purpose content for the web is an important skill. website visitors can abandon a site at the click of a button if they are not enticed by what has been written. This module explores techniques that can be applied directly to web pages and looks at practical writing techniques for use in an online environment.

Important factors that must be remembered include:

- What does the visitor want?
- What are the benefits to contacting and working with you?
- Does it speak directly to them and help them work more efficiently?
- Does it increase loyalty and trust in your site?
- Does it use appropriate language - avoiding jargon and in-house terms?

Who is it for?

This module is aimed at those broadly involved in Business and Community Engagement who are likely to be involved in the writing and delivery of text-based online content.

These areas of work might also be termed Third Stream, Third Strand, Third Mission Employer and Community Engagement, Knowledge Exchange, Enterprise and Innovation or Knowledge Transfer.

This is not a technical module but you should be familiar with the use of a web browser. An awareness of writing styles and some experience of editing content on and off-line would also be useful - but not essential.

Useful resources that help with this module include:

Reading Online Text: A Comparison of Four White Space Layouts

<http://psychology.wichita.edu/surl/usabilitynews/62/whitespace.htm>

How Users Read on the Web

<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/9710a.html>

Writing Well for the Web: Quick and Easy Tips for Non-writers

<http://www.webreference.com/content/writing/>

User Scenarios

- Objectives** To re-purpose a piece of text based upon a given scenario.
- Method** Based on the information provided in the scenario, you will re-purpose the text for the intended audience. Use the information gathered from the Writing for the Web presentation to assist you.
- Comments** Ideally, you should work in groups of 2 or 3 to complete these tasks.
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Task 1.1 In your browser go to the address:

`http://materials.netskills.ac.uk/resources/161writingweb/`

Download the appropriate file(s) for the scenarios you intend to work through as follows:

Scenario 1: `widget.txt`

Scenario 2: `apt.txt`

Scenario 3: `arrr.txt`

Task 1.2 Print out a copy of the appropriate scenario(s).

Ensure each member of your group has a paper copy to work from.

Task 1.3 Based upon the information provided in this scenario, alter the content you have been supplied with to convey your message in an appropriate manner.

You should add extra information into the pages that you will create.

This task should take approximately **60 minutes** to complete.

Note If this task is new to you, you may wish to read the “Précis Writing Tips” at the end of this document before you start.

Scenario 1

Based upon the information in this scenario alter the content you have been supplied with to convey your message to the visitors. You should add extra information into the pages that you will create.

You have been commissioned to create the content for the **Welcome page** to this site.

In addition to this page the company who are employing you want you to create 3 additional pages:

- Contact Us
- Recommendation
- Product Process

The target audience for your web site are regarded as early adopters and users of the internet. They have browsed to your web site to see what new products have been introduced. They are primarily interested in what the products can do for them in terms of saving them time or enhancing their lifestyle in some way. As early adopters their attention span is low and any obstructions that you place in there way will probably be dealt with by a quick exit to a competitors web site.

The reputation you have in the online market is second to none and you are widely regarded as innovative, user-friendly and customer oriented. You have over 1 million registered users worldwide and the satisfaction rate of your users with your service is over 95%. You provide online customer support and a help line telephone service on selected products.

Your web site uses a double reputation manager system. Products and services are reviewed on the site and in-turn reviewers of these are also rated by people who read the reviews.

You should have a paper version of the content.

If not, you can download this from:

`http://materials.netskills.ac.uk/resources/161writingweb/`

The file name is: `widget.txt`

Scenario 2

Based upon the information in this scenario alter the content you have been supplied with to convey your message to the visitors. You should add extra information into the pages that you will create.

You have been commissioned to create the content for the **Welcome page** to this site.

In addition to this page the company who are employing you want you to create 3 additional pages:

- About Us
- AGM
- Membership

Your web site is membership driven. Without them it would not exist. For funding the site relies entirely on attracting new members, contributions and members volunteering to assist and help in any way they can. For example, this could mean volunteering their IT technical skills, journalistic skills, legal knowledge or marketing ideas.

Visitors to your site, generally speaking are like-minded individuals who share your common aims and beliefs.

The site has been in existence for 6 years and in the past 2 years membership has started to decline. A further decline next year will probably result in the closure of the web site.

Your current members are familiar with using the web and embracing digital technologies to promote the aims of the site.

You should have a paper version of the content.

If not, you can download this from:

`http://materials.netskills.ac.uk/resources/161writingweb/`

The file name is: **ap.txt**

Scenario 3

Based upon the information in this scenario alter the content you have been supplied with to convey your message to the visitors. You should add extra information into the pages that you will create.

You have been commissioned to create the content for the **Welcome page** to this site.

In addition to this page the company who are employing you want you to create 3 additional pages:

- About Us
- Events
- Services

Visitors to your site are generally speaking interested in the latest developments in your subject area. They are interested in local, regional, national and international events. They are keen amateur practitioners in your subject area who are generally not too IT literate and confident with using the web. For this reason your content and layout of the page must be simple and easy to follow.

Above all you must consider what sort of events they are interested in. To assist you in this your web team have developed an online form which you need to incorporate on this page.

You should have a paper version of the content.

If not, you can download this from:

`http://materials.netskills.ac.uk/resources/161writingweb/`

The file name is: `arrrr.txt`

Précis Writing Tips

A précis is defined in The Concise Oxford Dictionary as “a summary or abstract” especially when related to text or speech. In order to assist you with Task 1 a few bullet points are listed below:

- Read the whole passage attentively
- Re-read the passage several times if necessary for clear understanding of ideas
- Unimportant or superfluous points, including details, examples and anecdotes should be discarded
- Underline key points and phrases
- Note and disregard parts of the author’s work that are introductory
- Try to capture the tone or feeling of the original, especially if it is deliberately humorous, ironic or biased
- When you are selecting aspects of a passage, ask yourself the following question:
If this idea were omitted, would the fundamental meaning of the passage be changed?
- Check your draft version for expression errors, repetition or vague phrasing. Re-write another version if necessary
- Do not attempt to copy the style of the original passage. Do use factual and clear expressions
- Do not introduce ideas of your own. Avoid criticising the author’s ideas.