**Plain Language Web Writing Tips**

On the web, people are in a hurry. They skim and scan, looking for fast answers to their questions, so it’s important to get to the point - quickly!

Help your readers complete their tasks with these writing tips:

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| **Audience** | Write for *your* reader. Don't write for the experts, the lawyers, or your management, unless they are your intended audience. |
| **Length** | Less is more! Be concise. Eliminate ALL unnecessary words. Challenge every word = do you need it? |
| **Tone** | Use conversational pronouns (you, us, our, we). Write as if you were talking to a colleague or friend. Use contractions (we’re instead of we are).  |
| **Voice** | Use active voice with strong verbs. Say “We mailed your form on May 1” instead of “Your form was mailed by us on May 1.” |
| **Word Choice** | Use the same words your readers use when they search for your info on the web. Avoid acronyms and jargon.  |
| **Simplify** | Use simple, descriptive section headings; short paragraphs; and ordinary, familiar words. |
| **Links** | Never use "click here" — link language should describe what your reader will get if they click that link. Include key words to help search engines. |
| **Organization** | Put the most important information first, followed by the details. |
| **Improve Tasks** | Organize content around your customers’ tasks, not your organization. Highlight action items (step 1, step 2, etc.). |
| **Scan-ability** | Separate content into small chunks. Use lots of white space for easy scanning. In general, write no more than 5-7 lines per paragraph. Use lists and bullets, they are easy to scan. |
| **Separate Topics** | Present each topic separately. Keep the information on each page to three (or fewer) levels. |
| **Context** | Don’t assume your readers already know the subject or have read related pages. Each page should stand on its own. Put everything in context. |
| **Test and Evaluate** | Test web pages with actual customers so you can be sure real people can understand what you write.  |
| **Train** | Encourage *all* your colleagues (lawyers, accountants, researchers, etc.) to use plain language – because *all* content is potentially web content. |