

# Users' Questions and Guidance for Common Types of Web Pages

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This document was produced by instructor Leslie O'Flahavan and the participants in [Web Manager University's](#) April 1, 2009 [Advanced Writing for the Web](#) course.

## Common Types of Web Pages:

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About Us Pages		
Questions users ask:	Guidance:	Examples:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Who is the sponsor of the site (agency name)?</li><li>• What does the agency do? What are its mission and responsibilities?</li><li>• What is the scope of the site? What are the parameters of the online information?</li><li>• Whom should I be talking to for what?</li><li>• What is your statutory authority?</li><li>• What is your history?</li><li>• How are you organized &gt; structure &gt; contacts?</li><li>• What are your "bona fides"? What is your credibility?</li></ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Start with an overview, summary, or description of mission. Use plain language.</li><li>2. Indicate what you do and how you are organized.</li><li>3. Show your parent organization and your child subgroups.</li><li>4. Enable different types of users to find the information they need.</li><li>5. Write for people who don't know about you.</li><li>6. Link to or incorporate Contact Us information.</li></ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FBI's About Us page at: <a href="http://www.fbi.gov/aboutus.htm">http://www.fbi.gov/aboutus.htm</a></li><li>• Minority Business Development Agency's About Us page at: <a href="http://www.mbda.gov/?section_id=2">http://www.mbda.gov/?section_id=2</a></li><li>• WebContent.gov's guidance on writing About Us pages at: <a href="http://www.usa.gov/webcontent/managing_content/organizing/common_content/about_us_pages.shtml">http://www.usa.gov/webcontent/managing_content/organizing/common_content/about_us_pages.shtml</a> and About Us page template at <a href="http://www.usa.gov/webcontent/usa_bility/templates/about_template.html">http://www.usa.gov/webcontent/usa_bility/templates/about_template.html</a></li></ul>

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Contact Us Pages		
Questions users ask:	Guidance:	Examples:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you have an employee search function or a directory?</li> <li>• Do you have a list of departments (in a dropdown menu)?</li> <li>• Where are you located?</li> <li>• What is your mailing address? Your fax number? Your email addresses?</li> <li>• How do I find a person or an office?</li> <li>• How soon can I expect to receive a response when I contact you?</li> <li>• How do I report a specific type of information?</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Balance breadth and depth of Contact Us content by chunking listings and using sub-pages.</li> <li>2. Give specific information about how to contact you by phone, email, postal mail, fax, visit, etc.</li> <li>3. Indicate who to contact for what.</li> <li>4. Provide links to narrowed contact information: Department&gt;Agency&gt;Program.</li> <li>5. Link to other help-related or self-service content such as FAQs, knowledgebase, etc.</li> <li>6. Use terms that unfamiliar users will understand.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service Contact Us page at: <a href="http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Contact_Us/index.asp">http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Contact_Us/index.asp</a></li> <li>• Social Security's Contact Us page at: <a href="http://www.ssa.gov/pgm/reach.htm">http://www.ssa.gov/pgm/reach.htm</a></li> <li>• HUD's Contact Us page at: <a href="http://www.hud.gov/assist/contactus.cfm">http://www.hud.gov/assist/contactus.cfm</a></li> <li>• WebContent.gov's design template for a Contact Us page at: <a href="http://www.usa.gov/webcontent/usability/templates/contact_template.html">http://www.usa.gov/webcontent/usability/templates/contact_template.html</a></li> </ul>

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FAQ Pages		
Questions users ask:	Guidance:	Examples:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can I find my info more easily here than in "real" content pages?</li><li>• Can I find my questions phrased in my wording, terminology that I will understand?</li><li>• Can I discover what issues others are having or the question they are asking?</li></ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Choose the appropriate question word.</li><li>2. Organize FAQs in a way that's easy for the user to grasp.</li><li>3. Position the FAQs section near other kinds of help.</li><li>4. Integrate user questions into page text throughout the site.</li><li>5. Deep link answers to other relevant information at the site.</li></ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Energy Information Administration FAQs at: <a href="http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/ask/faq.asp">http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/ask/faq.asp</a></li><li>• IRS FAQs at: <a href="http://www.irs.gov/faqs/index.html">http://www.irs.gov/faqs/index.html</a></li></ul>

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Newsletter Archive Pages		
Questions users ask:	Guidance:	Examples:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How far back does the archive go?</li><li>• How can I search for back issues?</li><li>• What format are the back issues in?</li><li>• Is the information in the back issues still correct?</li></ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Enable users to find a back issue without opening every one in the archive.</li><li>2. Indicate the newsletter topic in the archive.</li><li>3. Archive back issues for a reasonable amount of time.</li><li>4. Try to make the archive more than a mere repository; make it a content page.</li></ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• American Bar Association's newsletter archive at: <a href="http://www.abanet.org/environ/committees/endangered/newsletter/archive/">http://www.abanet.org/environ/committees/endangered/newsletter/archive/</a></li><li>• EPA's newsletter archive at: <a href="http://www.epa.gov/greeningepa/pubs/archives.htm">http://www.epa.gov/greeningepa/pubs/archives.htm</a></li><li>• Pew Forum newsletter archive at: <a href="http://pewforum.org/newsletters/">http://pewforum.org/newsletters/</a></li></ul>

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Newsroom Pages		
Questions users ask:	Guidance:	Examples:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How long are releases or newsletters archived?</li><li>• How do I search the archive? Can I search your releases by date, topic, author, source, etc.?</li><li>• What is the newest news?</li><li>• Who is your press contact person? Whom should I contact on specific topics?</li><li>• Can I search your releases by (date, author, etc.)?</li><li>• Can I sign up to receive info from your press office? RSS feed, newsletter, etc.</li><li>• Is your press info translated into languages other than English?</li><li>• Is your press info available in printer-friendly format? Is it downloadable?</li></ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Enable the press to publish about you without contacting you.</li><li>2. Provide direct contact info for the press.</li><li>3. Feature the most recent content in greatest detail.</li><li>4. Make searching easy.</li></ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• National Cancer Institute's News page at: <a href="http://www.cancer.gov/newscenter/">http://www.cancer.gov/newscenter/</a></li><li>• WebContent.gov's guidance on using a social media release at: <a href="http://www.usa.gov/webcontent/technology/social_media_releases.shtml">http://www.usa.gov/webcontent/technology/social_media_releases.shtml</a></li><li>• FAA's News page at: <a href="http://www.faa.gov/news/">http://www.faa.gov/news/</a></li></ul>

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Publications Pages		
Questions users ask:	Guidance:	Examples:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are your recent publications on the topic that interests me?</li><li>• Who is the intended audience for your publications? Are they written for me? For experts? For novices?</li><li>• What format is the publication in?</li><li>• Can I download your publication? Can I print it?</li><li>• How far back do your publications go?</li><li>• What are all the publications on my topic?</li><li>• Who is the author for each publication? Is the author credible?</li><li>• Whom can I contact for more information?</li></ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Sort publications by topic, type, date.</li><li>2. "Sell" publications; explain their value.</li><li>3. Relate publications to each other by grouping them.</li><li>4. Feature 1 or 2 publications and describe them.</li></ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• OSHA's Publications page at: <a href="http://www.osha.gov/pls/publications/publication.html">http://www.osha.gov/pls/publications/publication.html</a></li><li>• CIA's Publications page at: <a href="https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/index.html">https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/index.html</a></li><li>• FBI's Reports and Publications page at: <a href="http://www.fbi.gov/publications.htm">http://www.fbi.gov/publications.htm</a></li></ul>

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Task Pages		
Questions users ask:	Guidance:	Examples:
<p>(These questions are based on the task "How to sign up for a newsletter.")</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What personal information must I give to complete this task?</li> <li>• How frequently will I receive information from you once I subscribe?</li> <li>• Will you share my email address with others?</li> <li>• Can I sign up for more than one thing?</li> <li>• Can I remove myself from this list? If so, how do I do it?</li> <li>• How will the info be delivered? RSS? Email?</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Name the task clearly and provide an overview.</li> <li>2. Identify the outcome of the task.</li> <li>3. Make the task scannable as users may bookmark it and return frequently.</li> <li>4. Provide an example, illustration, screenshot when necessary.</li> <li>5. Link to background info instead of including it in the task.</li> <li>6. Make the web content substantive; don't lock all the info about the task into the PDF form.</li> <li>7. Let users know how to get more help.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Archives' "How to Request..." task page at: <a href="http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/get-service-records.html">http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/get-service-records.html</a></li> <li>• Federal Trade Commission's "How to Dispute..." task page at: <a href="http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/credit/cre21.shtm">http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/credit/cre21.shtm</a></li> <li>• Veterans Affairs "How to Obtain" task page at: <a href="http://www.homeloans.va.gov/elig1.htm">http://www.homeloans.va.gov/elig1.htm</a></li> </ul>