Agenda

- Online user habits
- Strategy
- Web Writing
  - Content
  - Structure
  - Style
  - Communicating effectively (words, imagery, and media)
  - Proofreading and Readability
How People Read Online
Visitors scan for information

Image credits: Jakob Nielsen, useit.com
Most visitors leave within 20 seconds
Mobile Browsing & Search Engines
Desktop vs mobile vs tablet market share worldwide

Mobile: 51.43%
Desktop: 44.41%
Tablet: 4.16%
Mobile Traffic (2009 - 2018)

Percentage of all global web pages served to mobile phones from 2009 to 2018

Sources
We Are Social; StatCounter
© Statista 2018

Additional Information:
Worldwide; StatCounter; 2009 to 2018
Search is segmenting your site
Strategy
Develop a strategy

Understand what your users need

- Who are your users?
- Why are they visiting?
- What tasks do they need to accomplish?

Understand what your organization needs to communicate

- What are your organizational priorities?

- How will you define success?
- How will you make it all happen?
- Tools: Project charter
THINGS ON THE FRONT PAGE OF A UNIVERSITY WEBSITE

- Campus photo slideshow
- Alumni in the news
- Press releases
- Statement of the school's philosophy
- Virtual tour

THINGS PEOPLE GO TO THE SITE LOOKING FOR

- List of faculty phone numbers and emails
- Campus address
- Application forms
- Academic calendar
- Campus police phone number
- Department/course lists
- Usable campus map

FULL NAME OF SCHOOL

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT
Evaluation

Periodically evaluate and refine your approach. Can you gain insight into what content interests your audience through the following metrics?

Consider:

- Website analytics
- Social media
- Offline cues, e.g. popular events
Structuring Content
What should go on a page?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How long should the page be?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is the audience for this content?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What purpose does it serve?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the questions that this page needs to answer?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# ROAM Analysis

The four questions to ask before writing anything:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Readers</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Impression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who is the audience?</td>
<td>How will you change the reader?</td>
<td>What do you want the reader to know?</td>
<td>What will the reader think of you?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meet your user’s needs

Step into your user’s shoes

- I need information about __________. Where can I find it?
- I’m not sure exactly what options I need, can you help me?
- How do I do __________ process?

- Break content into chunks based on topic
- What should be on the page to answer the user’s questions?
- Make an outline, then fill in the information
Welcome Message

Hello, and welcome to my website, which has been upgraded to provide you with the very latest information about me and the work I'm doing on behalf of the 28th District of New York.

I want this to be your website, and hope you'll find it both helpful and enlightening. We redesigned the site to make it easier than ever to find information important to you, your family, your business, and your community.

You can use links on the site for a variety of purposes, from getting personal assistance from my office to learning about the issues I'm working on every day.

As you know, information on the Internet flows both ways. Just as you can use this website to learn about my work, you can also let me know what's on your mind. I hope you'll be in touch on any matter that's of concern to you.

Thank you for visiting my website. I hope you like it and that you'll return often.
Use clear headlines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Call to action/verb</th>
<th>Apply for Admission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>How do I apply for admission?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phrase</td>
<td>Admission Requirements for International Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Label/Noun</td>
<td>Admission Policies, Admissions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Use semantic markup

- Use header tags `<h1>`, `<h2>` etc, rather than just making text bold or changing font size.
- Better for search engine optimization, accessibility, mobile, and consistency.
Paragraphs

- Short: One topic/concept per paragraph
- One sentence paragraphs are OK
- Use subheads to break up content

Guidelines

Avoid directional language
Avoid directional instructions and any language that requires the reader to see the layout or design of the page. This is helpful for many reasons, including layout changes on mobile.

- Yes: “Select from these options,” (with the steps listed after the title)
- No: “Select from the options in the right sidebar.”

Use headers
Headers should always be nested and consecutive. Never skip a header level for styling reasons. To help group sections, be sure the page title is H1, top-level sections are H2s, and subsequent inside those are H3 and beyond. Avoid excessive nesting.

Employ a hierarchy
Put the most important information first. Place similar topics in the same paragraph, and clearly separate different topics with headings.

Starting with a simple outline that includes key messages can help you create a hierarchy and organize your ideas in a logical way. This improves scannability and encourages better understanding.

Make true lists instead of using a paragraph or line breaks.
Protection Against Suspected Forgery and Attack Sites Features. The Firefox forgery and attack protection feature displays a warning if the website you are visiting is suspected of impersonating a legitimate site (commonly referred to as phishing or forgery website) or a site that infiltrates or damages a computer system without your informed consent, including, without limitation, any computer viruses, worms, trojan horses, spyware, computer contaminant and/or other malicious and unwanted software (commonly called an attack site or malware). By default, Firefox checks the web pages that you visit against a blacklist that is downloaded to your hard drive at regularly scheduled intervals (e.g., approximately twice per hour), the rate of frequency may change from time to time. The blacklist does not include the full URL of each suspicious site. Instead, each URL is hashed (obscured so it can’t be read) and then broken into portions. Only a portion of each hashed URL is included on the blacklist on your hard drive. If there is a match, Firefox will check with its third-party provider to ensure that the website is still on the blacklist. The information sent between Firefox and its third-party provider is not the full URLs. In fact, multiple hashed URLs are sent with the real hash so that the third party providers can determine what site you are visiting. If there is a match, Firefox displays either a "Reported Suspected Attack Site" alert, as applicable.

You may completely turn off the forgery and attack protection features in Firefox’s preferences. If you do this, none of the information described above is loaded to your hard drive or sent to any third party service provider. An article in the Firefox preference gives you information about changing your preferences.

Each time Firefox checks in with a third-party provider, a new blacklist, Non-Personal Information and Potentially Personal Information, such as the information that the browser sends every time you visit a website as well as the version number of the blacklist on your system, is sent to a third party provider. In order to safeguard your privacy, Firefox will not transmit the complete URL of web pages that you visit to anyone. While it is possible that a third party service provider may determine the actual URL from the hashed URL sent, Mozilla’s third-party service providers have entered into a written agreement with Mozilla not to use any data or other information about or from users of Firefox for purposes other than to provide and maintain their service. In addition, in no event will these third party service providers correlate any Firefox user data with any other data collected through other products, services or web properties of that provider. These third party service providers may inform you about additional notices regarding their applicable privacy policies. (For example, see Google Safe Browsing Service in Mozilla Firefox Version 3.)
Bullets and Lists

- Use bullets to organize related items or a list of options
- Use numbers for steps in a process
- Keep them short – a couple of lines, not a paragraph
## Write descriptive links

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Click here for the rocket science class syllabus.</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The rocket science class syllabus is <a href="#">here</a>.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Download the rocket science class syllabus (PDF).</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ready to submit your dissertation proposal? <a href="#">Apply now</a>.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Style
Use simple, direct language

Avoid jargon. Spell out acronyms. Avoid figures of speech. English may not be your visitor’s first language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of:</th>
<th>Use:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Due to the fact that</td>
<td>because</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the event of</td>
<td>if</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior to</td>
<td>before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has a requirement of</td>
<td>Needs, requires</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Use active voice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passive</th>
<th>Active</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A statement was released by the Dean.</td>
<td>The Dean released a statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the event that it snows, the weather emergency hotline should be called prior to coming to campus.</td>
<td>If it snows, call the weather emergency hotline before coming to campus.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Use of Adjectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Department of Rocket Science offers students <strong>small</strong> class sizes and a <strong>unique</strong> approach to learning. <em>Vague</em></td>
<td>Classes at the The Department of Rocket Science have <strong>12 or fewer</strong> students. They are <strong>discussion-based</strong>, and include <strong>labs</strong> that allow students to <strong>explore their individual interests</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Department of Rocket Science offers a <strong>wide variety</strong> of classes. <em>Redundant, no details</em></td>
<td>The Department of Rocket Science offers a <strong>variety of classes</strong>, including astrophysics, rocket design, and intergalactic exploration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Department of Rocket Science has <strong>superior</strong> facilities. <em>Vague, a bit formal.</em> Our facilities are <strong>cutting-edge</strong>. <em>Vague, overused.</em></td>
<td>Our facilities have the latest technologies, including an anti-gravity simulator, jet-propulsion lab, and six computer labs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Calls to Action

WORKING TOGETHER IN OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES
We recognize that improving people’s lives often happen at the local level, where individuals take action in their own communities.

CONNECT WITH US

Get the latest Harvard Gazette news delivered to your inbox.

your_email@email.com

SUBSCRIBE

Start selling on Etsy
Millions of shoppers can’t wait to see what you have in store.

Open a shop today

JOIN OUR TEAM
With over two dozen staff and more than one hundred undergraduate and graduate student fellows, the Bok Center is building a community of people dedicated to enhancing teaching and learning at Harvard. Don’t miss your opportunity to find out how you can contribute to our mission!

SEE OPEN POSITIONS
Communicating Effectively: Words and Images
Writing persuasive copy

- Include benefits, not just features – what problems are you solving?
- What is the value to the user?
- What’s in it for me? Why should I be interested in your department? How can you help me?

What is different about your department/unit/service/product?
Show rather than tell

Illustrate your message with:

- Interesting numbers or statistics
- Examples
- Testimonials
- Stories from the target audience
- Images
- Multimedia
**Purposeful imagery**

- Images are not just for decoration or about adding “splash” to a page
- Images should never be distracting
- Select images that help communicate your message – don’t force it – not every page needs an image
- Plan ahead and consider images as an integral part of your web content, rather than an afterthought. It can take time to obtain good images
Proofreading & Readability
Proofreading

- Content is free of spelling and grammatical errors
- Style of writing is consistent across the site: use a style guide
- Capitalization is consistent
- Harvard-related words such as buildings, centers, degrees, and positions are written and capitalized correctly
- Treatment of bulleted lists is consistent (e.g. using periods at end of list items)
- Check for incorrect punctuation marks, especially apostrophes, quotation marks and hyphens/dashes
Proofreading tips

- Read once for content (does it say what you need it to say, is it accurate?)
- Read again for punctuation, spelling, capitalization
- Have someone else read the copy
- Print it out
Readability

- Measure the readability of your website: Microsoft Word or [http://www.read-able.com/](http://www.read-able.com/)
- Metrics gauge run-on sentences, passive sentence structure, long paragraphs, and complicated words
  - 6th-9th grade: Ideal for a general audience
  - Up to 12th grade: Technical, highly specialized pages
  - Over 12th grade: Revisit – too difficult for a web user to easily navigate
What about writing for domain experts?

- Provide facts, avoid interpretation
- Citations and supporting evidence are critical
- Experts care about recency
- Grammar and spelling count
- They also scan, don’t like fluff
- Don’t assume they are tech-savvy
- Appreciate shortcuts (summaries and subheadings)

Resources

- Harvard Guidelines - harvard.edu/guidelines
- Usability.gov
- Plainlanguage.gov
- Pew Research Center - http://www.pewinternet.org/
- MailChimp Content Style Guide - https://styleguide.mailchimp.com/
- Josh Bernoff - https://withoutbullshit.com/
- SiteImprove.com - Harvard has a license
Thank you.
Questions?