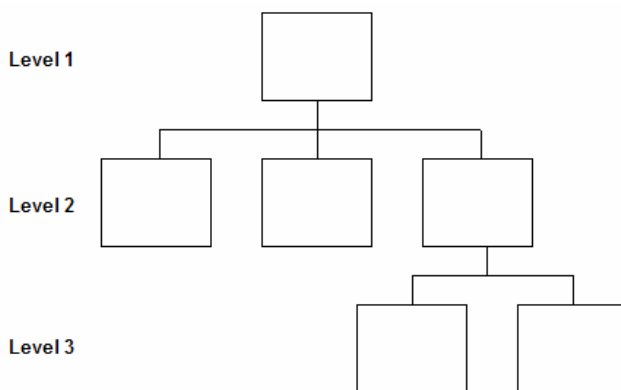


Circular Cube | Writing Text For Your Website

Structure

Give some thought as to what pages you need and how the different pages will need to be structured. The standard approach is to have a home page (level 1), a number of main pages (level 2) such as "about us", "products", "contact us" etc, and then optionally each of these pages may have a number of sub-pages (level 3). You may wish to sketch out the structure as a tree diagram on a piece of paper to give yourself an idea of how the pages need to be organised.



Usability

People read more slowly from a monitor and it's quite common for users to print longer articles out to pursue a serious reading. Their ability to maintain attention on a webpage is reduced; users aren't as motivated to read a whole page as they might be if they had a printed text. Anecdotal reports suggest that visitors may spend only few seconds on a given page and may not even start to read a long paragraph.

This needs to be taken into consideration. Keep your sentences short, in everyday language, informative and direct. Reduce your word count as far as possible. Your most important points should appear higher up in the text, since the lower down they are, the less likely they will be read.

If you have a long piece — a transcribed talk or an archived edition of a printed article — either edit it for the medium or break it down into discrete, linked pages. Avoid one long, scrolling page. Ideally, reconsider your topic so that it is presented as a group of interlinked pages that can be read in any order, allowing the user to focus on specific points and compose a site navigation structure to accommodate this. Many will jump into the middle from a search engine. Don't assume that visitors will start reading your site from any particular page, nor that they will explore it in a linear order.

Findability

You are probably aware that most people find information on the web by using a 'search engine'. Probably the best-known one is Google, but it is by no means the only one. They are programs that index and/or categorises the thousands of websites sitting on computers worldwide.

Of course this doesn't happen by magic. Just posting a website doesn't mean it will suddenly appear as a result in a search through Google; you need to be found and indexed.

Imagine that you were searching for a site like your own; imagine typing keywords into a Google window. What words do you think should throw up *your* site in the top ten of a results page? Do these words or phrases appear in your text? If they don't, then you need to add them. Software can't 'read' as humans do, so it can't infer meaning. It simply logs words and phrases that it believes describe what your site's about.

So spend some time jotting key words and phrases down. When you've identified these, work them intelligently into your text. Repeat them because the higher incidence of a term flags relevancy; in other words, mentioning 'Yourtown' fifteen times makes the site seem more relevant for that word than mentioning it only once! Cover as many potential combinations of searchable terms as possible. Don't be afraid of repetition, but of course stop short of being stilted.

In ordinary language we edit terms down once the context has been understood. For example, if we establish that we're discussing Spain, we wouldn't ordinarily go on to talk about Spanish waiters in Spanish restaurants on the Spanish coast. In web friendly text, we should allow ourselves to overemphasise the point a little.

The first couple of paragraphs on any given page can be the most crucial ones for search engines to 'harvest' key terms. But see your opening paragraph on your homepage as a golden opportunity.

Links

It is good practice to include links to other pages or websites within the text of each page. When writing your text please indicate in brackets that you wish a link to be inserted and underline the text to be linked. For example: -

"Have a look at our [comments page](#) (link to comments page) for some impressions..."

Images

It may be that for a given page you have a definite idea about an image or images that you would like to be added along with the text. Please indicate this by adding a note in the relevant place in the text which image you would like in that place. For example: -

[image: rover-the-dog023.jpg]

Traditional Chinese Veterinary Medicine (TCVM) is a sophisticated holistic system of medicine that has been used for well over 2000 years. It describes the body in terms of paired organs and corresponding channels or meridians. The flow of life force (Qi) along meridians and through organs is equivalent in Western Medical terms to the flow of physiological processes through the musculoskeletal, circulatory, nervous, and organ systems of an individual.

It is helpful if you use the file name of the image as supplied on disc or by email.