Writing for the web: Tips

Determine purpose

First – figure out why you are writing and what your point is. Ask yourself these questions.

Why?

Why would someone need to know this – what's important to them?

Why do you want to communicate this – what's important to you?

How can you match these up?

Who cares?

Who cares enough to read this?

What's in it for them?

So what?

What are the consequences?

What will happen if people don't understand?

What should the reader do next?

Make it scannable

People don't read line-by-line – they scan. Help them get your idea even when scanning.

Put the main idea toward the top, then elaborate – don't make people read the whole lot to get the point.

Make long paragraphs shorter so they can be scanned. But don't overdo it – make sure each paragraph still represents one idea.

Add headings – these help people get an idea of what the page is about, and give context to the paragraphs.

Make bulleted lists from any inline lists.
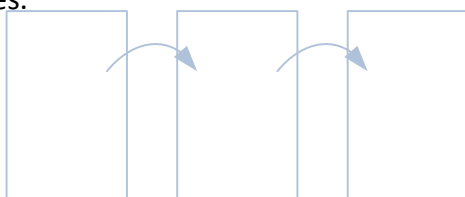
Link it together

The web is all about hyperlinks. Offer appropriate places for your readers to go next.

Think about what people might want to do next, or find out more about. Use that to figure out what to link.

Make the label of the link match the destination – similar enough that there are no surprises (but the wording does not need to be exact).

If you have two links labelled the same, make sure they go to the same place – and vice versa.

Replace all 'click here' and 'more' links with descriptive titles.

Check for

Before you publish, check these tips to make sure your writing is great.

✓ Does the writing sound like it was written by a real person in a true voice?

✓ Did you use the active voice as far as possible?

✓ Did you replace long, complicated words with short, simple ones (where you wouldn't lose meaning)?

✓ Have you illustrated your writing – with images, case studies, stories, key points or something other than plain text?

✓ Did you get someone to do a spell and grammar check?