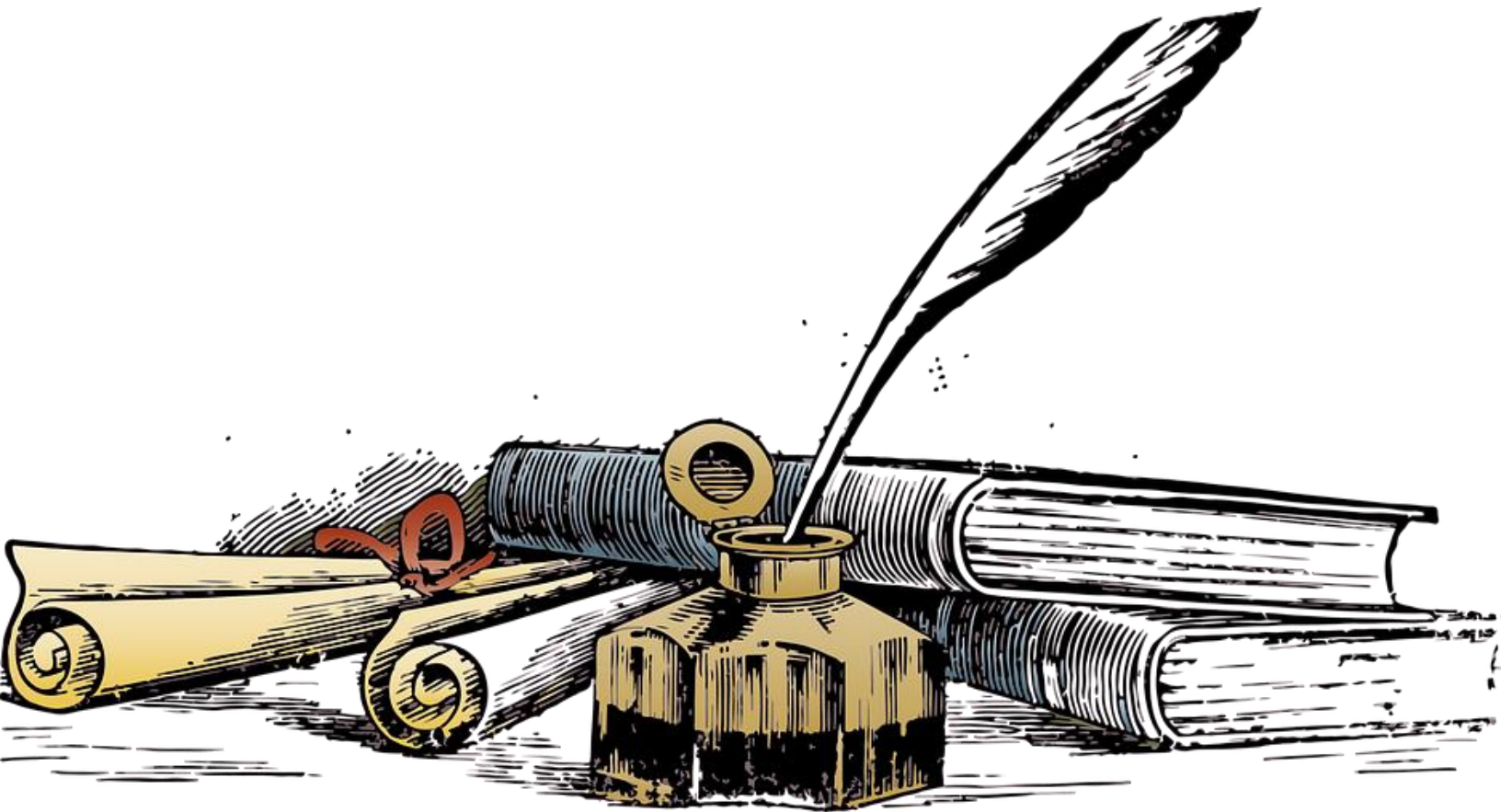


# 105 WEB CONTENT WRITING GUIDELINES FOR BLOGGERS AND MARKETERS

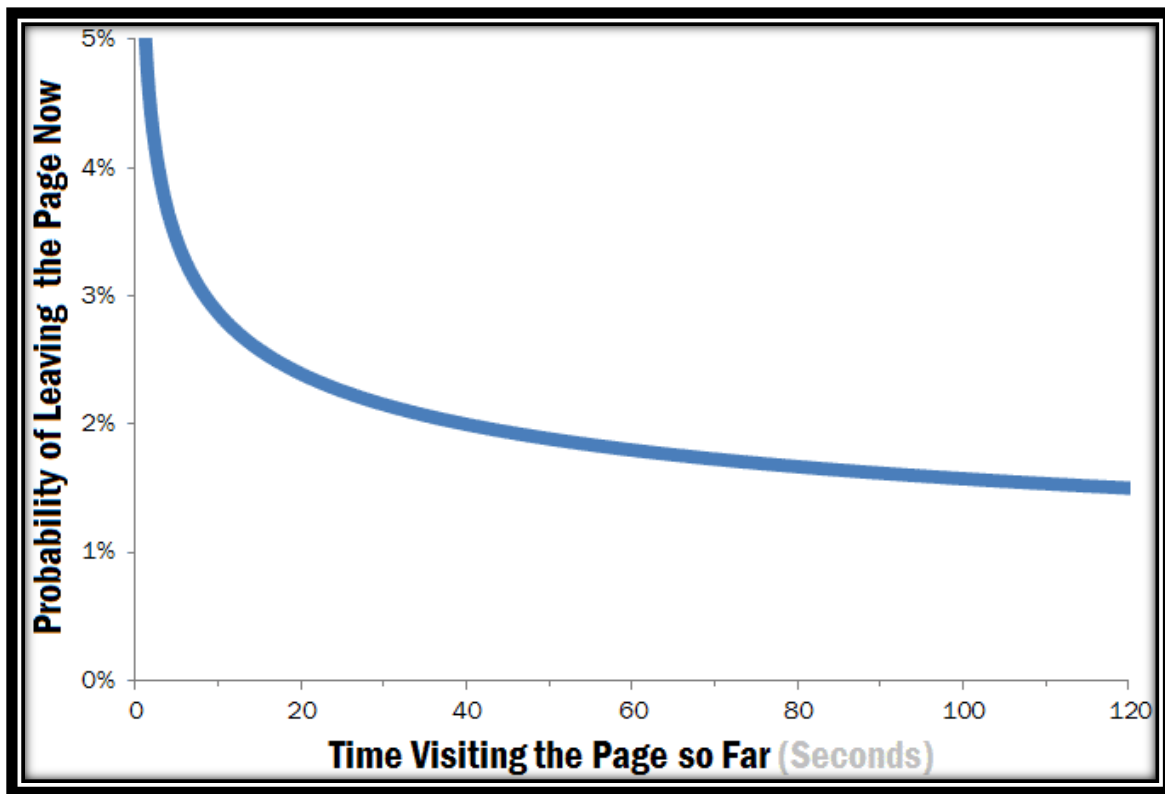
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THE NEXT LEVEL BLOGGING STARTS HERE



*By Sabih Javed*

Writing [content for the internet is different](#) in many ways from writing content for print. The attention span of most readers is lower online, you only have between [5 to 10 seconds to grab their attention](#).



Source: [nngroup](#)

The first 10 seconds are extremely crucial and they play a significant role when it comes to engagement, content conversion and delivering value.

[Reading from a computer is 25% slower](#), which is why readers prefer skimming instead of reading word by word.

There are several content writing guidelines that if used, can help web content writers create a *hook*, and can encourage people to stay on their websites for a lot longer.

According to [Neil Patel](#), the biggest challenge that copywriters face, is creating content that is friendly for both search engines and readers.

Other challenges include [maintaining quality](#), [idea generation](#), and using the right [tools and resources](#).

These web content writing guidelines and tips will help you overcome these (and many other) challenges.

These guidelines have been divided into 5 categories:

1. [Planning](#)
2. [Writing](#)
3. [Formatting](#)
4. [SEO](#)
5. [Editing and Proofreading](#)

# PLANNING

## 1. Idea Generation

Everything and anything that's creative starts with an idea, same is true for content writing.

It all starts with a simple idea.

Being a writer, you should always be in [research mode](#), and as soon as you find something interesting, take notes, save URLs and sources immediately. You can use [Evernote](#) or [Google Keep](#) to take notes if you are a modern-day writer, but a diary and pen are good options too.

You must have a decent supply of ideas for your upcoming blog post, video or podcast. The moment you run out of ideas, frustration will take control of your brain, making things much more difficult.

If you run out of ideas, you should visit this [list](#) by Nicole Miller. She's created a comprehensive catalog of 38 tools for generating new ideas.

Idea generation for your article is not as important as *taking notes*. You'll get tons of ideas every single day when you read a newspaper, listen to the radio, watch TV, talk to someone on the phone, or use the internet, but the real issue will be when your mind goes blank while you're at your desk crafting your next project.

So start taking notes.

## **2. Competitor Spying**

Spying on your competitors can provide you with some useful insights into their content creation and marketing strategies. At the same time, you'll be able to screen your ideas - like those generated in the previous step.

The end result is that you'll know what's working for your competitors and how to model their strategies for yourself, and even how to make them work better.

# Good Reasons

## How to Spy on Competitors



Get inspiration for new ways to connect with customers and improve customer retention.



Find out whether competitors are doing anything better than you and how you can beat it.



Look under the hood of their search and marketing optimization strategy and see what you can legally steal.



Improve your own plans to beat the competition based on data rather than assumptions.



Image source: [Mention](#)

Here's a brief overview of how to spy on your competitors to see what type of content they're generating and how they are ranking for it.

- [Ahrefs](#), [Searchmetrics](#) and [iSpionage](#) are useful to see competitor's rankings.
- Use [Alexa](#), [Similar Web](#) and [Quantcast](#) to see how much traffic your competitors are receiving.
- Use [Tag Inspector](#) to get a complete list of tags.

These three steps will provide you with some good insights into what is working best for your rivals, and how to craft your content based on the results.

### 3. Newsjacking

Newsjacking can be a double-edged sword. I will tell you why in a moment, but first, what it is?

Newsjacking refers to using breaking news to craft your content, so that it gets additional hype. Adding your ideas to a current news story can put your brand—or you—in front of thousands more people, and your content might even go viral.

According to [Ginny Soskey](#), newsjacking is not always a piece of cake.

It can be a double-edged sword for two reasons:

1. Done well, you can gain media attention, traffic, content conversion and immediate business growth, and since the latest news will provide you with tons of ideas for content generation, you will never run out of ideas for your upcoming content.

2. The problem with Newsjacking is that the impact of breaking news is not usually long-lasting, and so your effort will be effective only for the duration of the news cycle.

The real art here is how to use it smartly. [The New Rules of Marketing & PR](#) by David Meerman Scott is the best guiding source available for those who are interested in creating content by hijacking news stories.

**BEEF.  
WITH A LOT  
OF HORSES  
HIDDEN IN IT.**



Experience the muscular MINI John Cooper Works Roadster. With an unexpectedly generous helping of 211 horsepower.

SEARCH **MINI JCW ROADSTER**

Official Fuel Economy Figures for the MINI Roadster Range: Urban 27.2-53.3 mpg (10.4-5.3 l/100km). Extra Urban 51.4-70.6 mpg (5.5-4.0 l/100km). Combined 38.7-62.8 mpg (7.3-4.5 l/100km). CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions 169-118 g/km.

Source: [Iris](#)

Here is a great example of Newsjacking. The ad refers to the news of horsemeat inclusion in beef products in Europe. Iris took the story and created this ad – *Beef. With a lot of horses hidden in it.*

This actually worked well for Mini John Cooper Works Roadster.

#### **4. Quora**

[Quora](#) is one of the best friends of content writers and bloggers, especially those who are always short on ideas. Use their search bar to find suitable questions for your niche.

Every single question, whether answered or unanswered, can be used to generate a new article for a blog.

[Yahoo Answers](#) is a similar source which can be used for the same purpose.

#### **5. Reddit**

If you ever want to see what's trending in your industry, and what you should write about, visit [Reddit](#). Look for posts that are the most active and that are getting lots of upvotes and comments. All these trending posts are topics that you can write about.

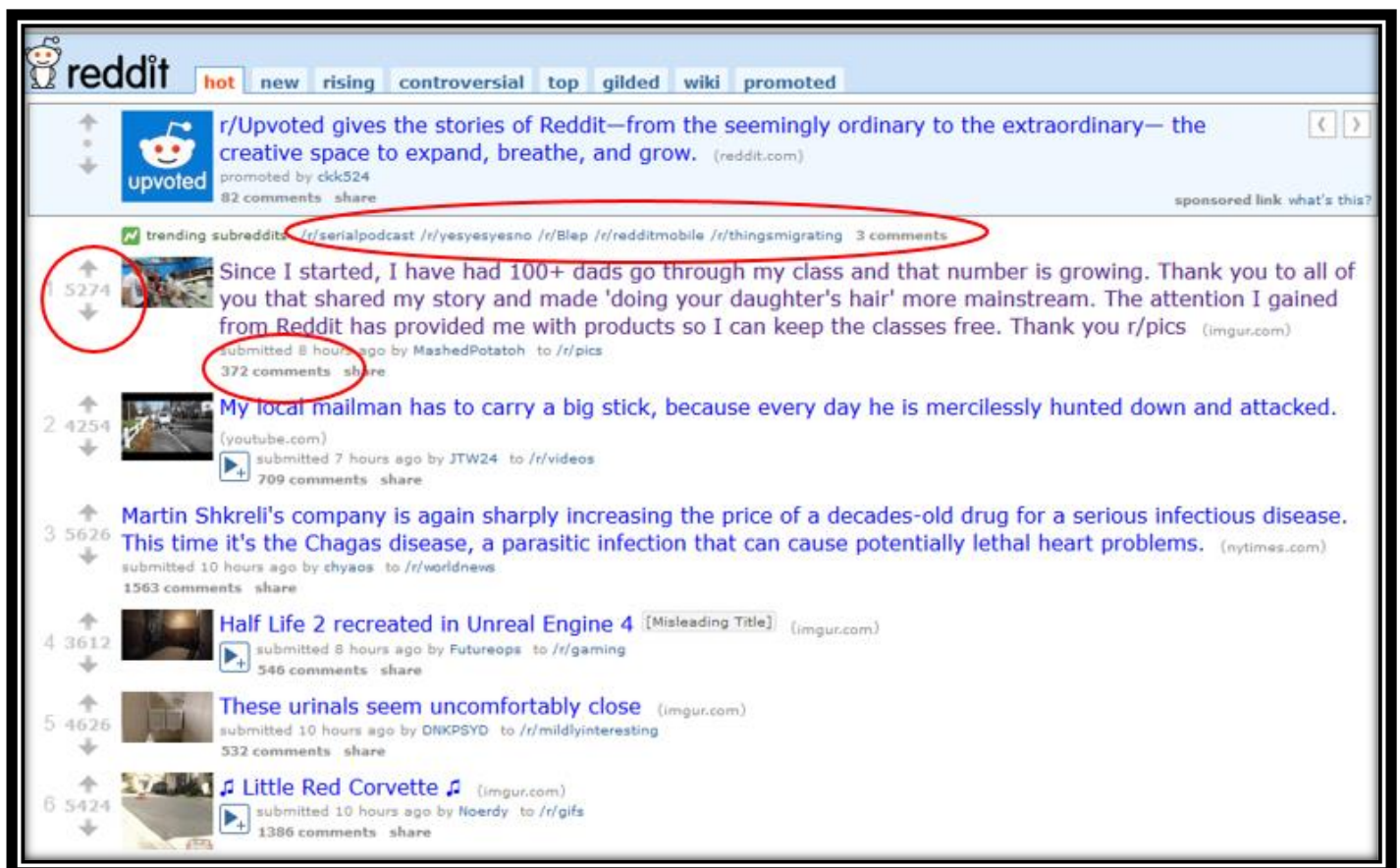
#### **6. Objectives**

Every piece of content that you plan to write must have definitive objectives. Content written without objectives is useless for your website.

Before you start writing content, ask yourself following questions:

- What do you want to achieve from it?
- What do you expect your readers to do after reading it?
- What outcomes are you expecting?
- Will it help promote something?
- Will it be informational content?
- What is the purpose of the content?

These questions will help you define the objectives for the content you are creating.



## 7. Know Your Audience

Everyone writes for an audience, but only a few really **understand their audience**.

Ask yourself the [following questions](#) and write your answers on a piece of paper or in separate word document:

- **What** problem will it solve?
  - How much do they already know?
- **Who** are the readers?
  - Demographics
  - Psychographics
- **Why** do readers need your material to solve their problem?
  - Trust factor

According to [Geoff Hart](#),

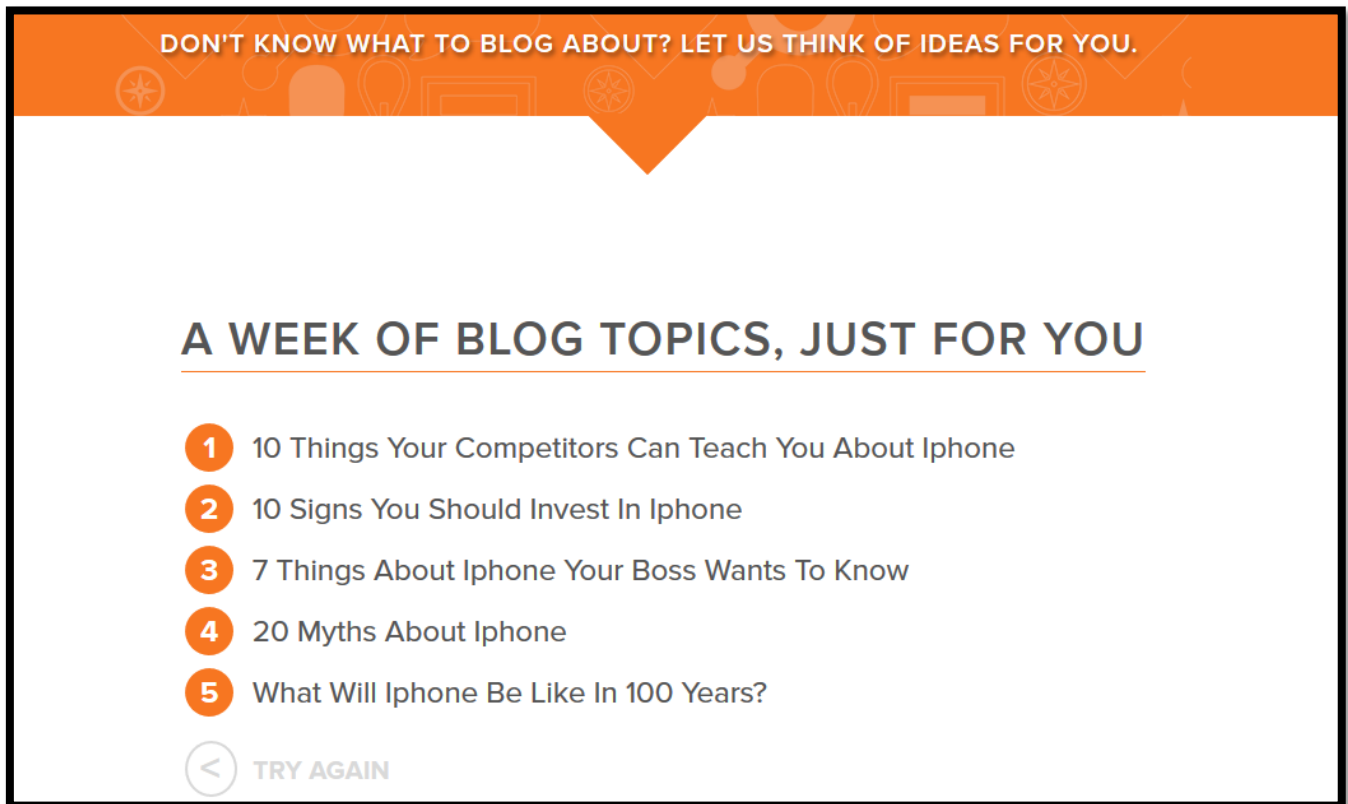
*“Almost any attempt to understand the audience's needs, even relatively simplistic attempts, will result in better documentation; more sophisticated approaches will produce correspondingly better results.”*

## 8. Crafting Topics

You know your audience and you’ve collected some good data about them, which is great. So you now have to create a topic for your blog based on this information.

As a starting point, use [Hubspot’s blog topic generator](#) to generate topics to write about based on the primary keyword(s).

It provides you with multiple helpful topics.



The screenshot shows a web interface for a blog topic generator. At the top, an orange banner contains the text "DON'T KNOW WHAT TO BLOG ABOUT? LET US THINK OF IDEAS FOR YOU." Below this, the main heading is "A WEEK OF BLOG TOPICS, JUST FOR YOU". Underneath the heading is a numbered list of five topics, each preceded by an orange circle with a white number. At the bottom left of the list is a circular button with a left-pointing arrow and the text "TRY AGAIN".

DON'T KNOW WHAT TO BLOG ABOUT? LET US THINK OF IDEAS FOR YOU.

## A WEEK OF BLOG TOPICS, JUST FOR YOU

- 1 10 Things Your Competitors Can Teach You About Iphone
- 2 10 Signs You Should Invest In Iphone
- 3 7 Things About Iphone Your Boss Wants To Know
- 4 20 Myths About Iphone
- 5 What Will Iphone Be Like In 100 Years?

< TRY AGAIN

This tool is good for providing useful ideas for your article.

## 9. Editorial Calendar

[Hubspot's blog topic generator](#) gives you 5 topics that you can tweak and then save in your editorial calendar for later use. It's not necessary to create an editorial calendar, but doing so will provide you with a good supply of content ideas.

Instead of just choosing or creating one topic for a single article or blog post after doing all the hard work, why not create multiple topics?

An editorial calendar keeps a record of when new content has to be published and what topics to cover. What you should technically do is tweak all five blog topics from Hubspot and then put them up in your editorial calendar.

Follow [this guide](#) on creating an editorial calendar.

# WRITING

## 10. Keywords

[Brian Dean](#) says “There is no such thing as SEO without keywords”.



Your blog topic is not the same as the keywords you use.

When you sit down to write your content, you need to do keyword research so that you have a list of relevant keywords (or words) that your audience will use to find your content.


Here is a list of some [free and paid keyword research tools](#).

This [keyword research guide by Brian](#) is probably the best in town, and it shows you exactly how to make most of these keyword research tools.

## 11. Title

The title is the first thing that a potential reader will look at and decide – should I read it?

**Readers look at titles before they click.**

- ➔ **How to fix a PC that won't boot up - How-To - PC Advisor**  
[www.pcadvisor.co.uk](http://www.pcadvisor.co.uk) > ... > How to fix a PC that won't boot up ▾  
Jun 24, 2015 - My PC won't boot: Check the power supply. Laptops. This is one of the most common problems. There are various things that can go wrong, ...
- ➔ **PC Laptop Repair - iFixit**  
[https://www.ifixit.com/Device/PC\\_Laptop](https://www.ifixit.com/Device/PC_Laptop) ▾ iFixit ▾  
Repair guides for many brands of PC laptop (notebook) computer. PC Laptop ... Why my hp laptop is not connecting to wireless internet? HP Laptop. 11 Answers.  
HP Laptop Repair - Dell Laptop Repair - Asus Laptop Repair - Lenovo Laptop
- ➔ **Easy Fixes for Six Common Laptop Problems | PCWorld**  
[www.pcworld.com/article/171753/laptop\\_repairs.html](http://www.pcworld.com/article/171753/laptop_repairs.html) ▾ PC World ▾  
While many people think that notebook damage can be repaired only by the manufacturer or a computer shop, there are some problems that can be ...
- ➔ **\*FIXED!\* Help me fix my laptop! - YouTube**  
 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iPa6AB3GDic>  
Aug 5, 2008 - Uploaded by Mega Man & Friends

Being a content writer, your job is to create a title that acts as a magnet for readers.

There are certain characteristics of a title that make it effective:

1. It must be catchy.
2. It must be short and smart.
3. It should convey the message.
4. It must not be ambiguous.

Here is a good example of a title that's catchy, short and smart, conveys the message and is not ambiguous.



The screenshot shows a blog post layout. On the left is a vertical sidebar with social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Pinterest, SoundCloud, Email, and Print. The main content area has a breadcrumb trail 'Home / Laptops' in blue. The title 'Easy Fixes for Six Common Laptop Problems' is in a large, bold, black font. To the right of the title is a blue box with '14' and the word 'COMMENTS' in blue. Below the title, the author 'By Brian Nadel, Computerworld' is listed. The first paragraph reads: 'We live and work in a cold, cruel world where our laptops take a lot of abuse. Regardless of how gentle we try to be, it's inevitable that sooner or later our notebooks will get dropped, spilled on and worse.' To the right of this paragraph is an illustration of a yellow-gloved hand using a screwdriver on a laptop, with a bottle of 'RUBBING ALCOHOL' nearby. The second paragraph reads: 'While many people think that notebook damage can be repaired only by the manufacturer or a computer shop, there are some problems that can be inexpensively and easily fixed with common tools, spare parts and a little effort. Many of these repairs are no harder than high school art projects.' The third paragraph reads: 'Using a couple of old, beat-up notebooks, I'll show you how to fix everything from a broken case and frayed charger cord to a bad fan and scratched screen. Each restoration project

Now look at the title below.

# How to reinstall factory OS

📁 posted in: Software | 💬 40

In this post I explain how to reinstall factory operating system. This should work for most laptops running Windows Vista or Windows 7 OS.

This could be useful if your OS stopped working properly, got corrupted or infected with a virus.

It has quite a few problems.

First, **OS** is an abbreviation, and most readers won't know what it means.

Using abbreviations in titles is a really bad idea.

Second, the title is ambiguous. As a reader, you could easily get confused about whether the writer is talking about a laptop, an android phone or any other device.

The infographic below by [Pauline Cabrera](#) is one of my favorites. All you have to do is fill in the blank to get a cool title idea.

# 74 CLEVER BLOG POST TITLE TEMPLATES THAT WORK

1. How To \_\_\_\_\_ That Drives \_\_\_\_\_
2. How To \_\_\_\_\_ in [#] easy steps
3. How To \_\_\_\_\_ In \_\_\_\_\_
4. How I Made \_\_\_\_\_ In \_\_\_\_\_
5. How To Find \_\_\_\_\_
6. How To Rock \_\_\_\_\_
7. How To Make A Strong \_\_\_\_\_
8. How To Completely Change \_\_\_\_\_
9. How To Create \_\_\_\_\_ That Gets \_\_\_\_\_
10. How To Use \_\_\_\_\_ To Stand Out
11. How To Tell If \_\_\_\_\_
12. How To \_\_\_\_\_ The Right Way
13. How \_\_\_\_\_ Can Inspire Your \_\_\_\_\_
14. How To Get Rid Of \_\_\_\_\_
15. What To Do With \_\_\_\_\_
16. Where To Find \_\_\_\_\_
17. Quick Guide: \_\_\_\_\_
18. A Complete Guide To \_\_\_\_\_
19. Ultimate Guide: \_\_\_\_\_
20. Beginners Guide: \_\_\_\_\_
21. Hack: \_\_\_\_\_
22. DIY: \_\_\_\_\_
23. The Anatomy Of \_\_\_\_\_ That Gets \_\_\_\_\_
24. [#] Things your \_\_\_\_\_ Doesn't Tell You
25. [#] \_\_\_\_\_ Trends For [YEAR]
26. [#] \_\_\_\_\_ Every \_\_\_\_\_ Should Own
27. [#] \_\_\_\_\_ To Consider For \_\_\_\_\_
28. [#] Amazing \_\_\_\_\_ To Try Right Now
29. [#] Insane \_\_\_\_\_ That Will Give You \_\_\_\_\_
30. [#] Types Of \_\_\_\_\_
31. [#] Questions You Should Ask Before \_\_\_\_\_
32. [#] Worth-It \_\_\_\_\_ For \_\_\_\_\_
33. [#] Secrets To \_\_\_\_\_
34. [#] Resources to Help You Become \_\_\_\_\_
35. [#] Signs You Might \_\_\_\_\_
36. [#]-Point Checklist: \_\_\_\_\_
37. [#] Rules For \_\_\_\_\_
38. [#] Habits Of \_\_\_\_\_
39. [#] Ideas To \_\_\_\_\_
40. [#] Trends You Need To Know \_\_\_\_\_
41. [#] Best \_\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_\_
42. [#] \_\_\_\_\_ We Love
43. [#] Facts About \_\_\_\_\_
44. [#] Essential Things For \_\_\_\_\_
45. [#] Key Benefits Of \_\_\_\_\_
46. [#] Examples Of \_\_\_\_\_ To Inspire You
47. [#] \_\_\_\_\_ That Will Motivate You
48. [#] \_\_\_\_\_ Ideas
49. [#] Reasons You Didn't Get \_\_\_\_\_
50. Getting Smart With: \_\_\_\_\_
51. [#] Smart Strategies To \_\_\_\_\_
52. [#] Most Effective Tactics To \_\_\_\_\_
53. [#] Most Popular Ways To \_\_\_\_\_
54. [#] Essential Steps To \_\_\_\_\_
55. [#] Wrong Ways To \_\_\_\_\_
56. [#] Creative Ways \_\_\_\_\_
57. [#] Tips For Busy \_\_\_\_\_
58. [#] No-Nonsense \_\_\_\_\_
59. [#] Surprising \_\_\_\_\_
60. [#] Foolproof \_\_\_\_\_ Tips For \_\_\_\_\_
61. [#] Epic Formula To \_\_\_\_\_
62. [#] Handy Tips From \_\_\_\_\_ For \_\_\_\_\_
63. [#] Superb Ways To \_\_\_\_\_ Without \_\_\_\_\_
64. [#] Tricks \_\_\_\_\_
65. [#] Ways To Make Sure Your \_\_\_\_\_ Is Not \_\_\_\_\_
66. [#] Mistakes You'll Never Make Again
67. [#] Weird But Effective \_\_\_\_\_ For \_\_\_\_\_
68. [#] Tactics To \_\_\_\_\_
69. [#] Super Tips \_\_\_\_\_
70. [#] That Will Make You \_\_\_\_\_
71. [#] Supercharge Your \_\_\_\_\_
72. [#] Pleasant Ways To \_\_\_\_\_
73. [#] Wittiest \_\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_\_
74. What No One Tells You About \_\_\_\_\_

MORE AT [TWELVESKIP.COM](http://TWELVESKIP.COM) // BY PAULINE CABRERA

You can make your title even more effective by using power words.

## 12. Use Power Words

Power words let you connect with your readers on an *emotional level*. These are more than simple words because they have the potential to create an *emotional hook*.

Using power words in the **title**, **headings** and **sub-headings** help evoke reader's feelings.

Power words vary from industry to industry and the trick is to use the right power words for the right situation, and also for the target audience.

For example, *silly* happens to be a power word. You can write *I have a silly friend* or *I have a silly idea* or use it in several other ways. It all comes down to how you use it.

Some of the common power words are:

Free, abuse, crave, dumb, guts, smash, discover, unleash, fool...

[The Muse](#) has done a good job of compiling and categorizing 185 power words.

Need more power words, here is a [list of 317 power words](#).

## 13. First Sentence

*“The most important sentence in any article is the first one. If it doesn't induce the reader to proceed to the second sentence, your article is dead. And if the second*

*sentence doesn't induce him to continue to the third sentence, it's equally dead. Of such a progression of sentences, each tugging the reader forward."*

– [William Zinsser](#)

Eugene Schwartz, sometimes [spends up to a week writing the first few words](#) of a sales letter.

The best first sentence is one that is connected to the title. It shouldn't delude. The first sentence must **explain, ask, quote or claim** what has already been said in the title (or the heading, if there is one).

Darren Rowse has written [10 tips for opening your next blog post](#). If all these tips are categorized, we can conclude that there are actually four types of opening sentences.

**Explain:** They expand the title and tell readers more about it by adding statistics, they remind the reader of one of their problems, or they express the benefits of continued reading, and so on.

Example: *This is a detailed guide on **how to choose and buy a DSLR camera**. (By Nasim Mansurov)*

**Ask:** Then there are opening sentences that start from a question. They ask readers a direct question to develop the hook.

Example: *Want to grab your reader's attention with the first line of your next blog post? (10 Ways to Hook Blog Readers with Your Opening Line)*

**Quote:** These are the opening sentences that use quotations. Just like I have quoted William Zinsser to start the tip number 13.

**Claim:** Opening sentences that make a bold claim.

The following [infographic by Kibin](#) adds a humorous anecdote and give examples of the type of opening sentences that work.

## 14. Crafting a Lead

A lead refers to the introductory part of the content. In journalism, the lead is the first paragraph. For web content, the first 100 words constitute the lead.

The art of crafting a lead is simple- create hype, make it appealing and involve the readers.

There are different types of leads such as **summary**, **analysis**, **blind**, **scene-setter** and **narrative**.

One of the best ways to craft an effective lead is to [write it in the narrative](#). This gives the reader a good idea of what the article is about. It's also useful to put the best sentences at the start of the article to establish the hook.

## 15. Introduction

The introduction is not the same as lead. The introduction is much longer and its purpose is to share the content of the piece with the readers. It *introduces* the readers to what's coming next, and tells them what to expect.

There are two rules for writing an introduction that develops the hook and keep readers engaged.

First, the best way to write a killer introduction for your article is to write it last.

Second, do not disclose the main subject right away, this is critical for user engagement.

[This video](#) describes this point well.

## 16. Use Headings

Headings do two useful things:

1. They make content easy to read. Readers know what they are reading about, and if readers want to skip a certain portion, they can do so by referring to headings. Nobody likes big blocks of text without headings or subheadings.
2. Headings are important for on-page SEO and they give your content a nice boost in terms of search engine ranking.

*On average, five times as many people read the headline as read the body copy.*

—David Ogilvy

Headings come in handy when readers are in a mood to skim.

Headings should be:

- Short
- Self-explanatory
- Consistent

[Here](#) is a great tool to analyze headlines.

Enter your text to begin headline analysis:

5 ways to eat apple

Analyze Now

Analysis Complete

45

Headline Score

This headline analyzer gives the following details about your headline:

- Score
- Word balance
- Headline type
- Length analysis
- Keywords used
- Search engine preview
- Email subject preview
- Sentiments
- And much more

Enter heading, click on “Analyze Now”, and you’ll get all the details.

The image below has some of the most popular words/phrases that can be used in a headline.

Most Popular Words/Phrases In Highly-Shared Headlines		
Word/Phrase	# of uses	% of headlines
List Post	787	11.10%
You/Your	478	6.74%
Free/Giveaway	255	3.60%
How To	205	2.89%
DIY	197	2.78%
I/Me/My	153	2.16%
Easy	137	1.93%
Win	104	1.47%
New	97	1.37%
Ways	75	1.06%
Why	60	0.85%
Video	51	0.72%
The Most	17	0.24%

Source: [OkDork](#)

[Emotional Marketing Value Headline Analyzer](#) is another good tool that measures the emotional marketing value of a headline.

## 17.Subheadings

Subheadings are equally important for content writing. Subheadings – along with headings – are used to organize content, making it easy-to-read and more search engine-friendly.

Subheadings should:

- Look like subheadings and therefore must be smaller than headings (visually and in word count)
- Decrease in size as you move down the article (subheading of a subheading and so on)

## **18.Front-Load Content**

Front-loading refers to starting your article from the conclusion. If you put the conclusion at the start of the article, it will give your readers a quick insight into the content.

Front-loading content is the type of content writing that journalists use. You don't have to use this technique all the time, and there are certain articles where you cannot put conclusion first, such as if you are comparing two different products.

Newspaper articles are the best example of front-loaded content. They almost always put the conclusion first.

# New school in Hebden Bridge to teach children using yoga and meditation

West Yorkshire community known for creative flair to open school with no headteacher in attempt to be 'truly progressive'



Children attend a school yoga class. Hebden Bridge school plans to foster optimum receptivity to learning through yoga and meditation. Photograph: Alamy

It has a [cafe for dogs](#), crystal shops and an [organic workers' cooperative](#). Next September the eclectic community of Hebden Bridge in West Yorkshire will also boast a high school offering daily meditation sessions, morning yoga and vegetarian lunches.

When using this technique for writing content, start the article by clearly stating **what** and **why**.

What is the content about and why readers should read it.

## 19. Write Nothing but the Truth

Write what's true. Do your research, find quality information that's reliable, and link to your sources.

Link to experts and cite others in your writing, as this is how your readers will develop trust.

## **20. Provide Answers**

Providing answers to your readers will make your content much better, and it's one of the most critical ingredients of good content writing, as pointed by Zach Bulygo in his blog post [The Nine Ingredients That Make Great Content](#).

Readers look for answers to their questions when they're reading your content. Provide them with answers or they will leave.

This is a good reason why front-loading content does well; readers find what they are looking for right away. Although they may leave fairly quickly, they won't be leaving your website forever. They'll remember you, your content and your brand.

## **21. Speak the Reader's Language**

Write content in the language that your readers use. While trying to understand your target audience, you need to see what language they use, what type of questions they ask, what words and phrases they use regularly.

Try copying your reader's language because that's how you'll *connect*.

Let's say you have a doctorate degree, and you put an academic paper on your weight loss blog, with your main audience being overweight teens. Obviously, your readers won't be able to understand the statistical analysis, diagrams and academic discussion, and it won't be of much interest for them.

According to Sarita Harbour, writers need to [mimic the language of their readers](#). It's important to make them feel at home, and to make them realize that you understand their concerns by using same phrases, words and sentences that they use.

[It's always a good idea](#) **not to use industry-centric language** in your content, but rather to use reader-centric language.

Michael at [Daily Writing Tips](#) has echoed this point and has done well in differentiating other English speaking countries from the United States. Accent, writing format and spelling do not remain the same. For instance *color* is used in US, while it's spelled *colour* in UK and other English speaking regions such as Canada.

Using *colour* for US audience and *color* for UK audience might not work well.

There are certain ways to know what type of language your readers use.

- **Visit forums** where your target audience hangs out and see what type of questions they post, how they write and what type of phrases they use.
- **Social media** has made your life easier. Facebook and Twitter alone can provide you with some rich data on written language being used by your audience.
- **Read comments** on your own blog and read comments posted at your competitor's blogs.

## 22. Use Active Voice

Using passive voice in web content writing – or potentially in any type of business writing – is [considered a sin](#). Using active voice makes content more [direct](#), [concise](#), confident, effective and user-friendly.

Writers and copywriters know and agree that active voice is the best way to [double the effectiveness of the content](#).

Active and Passive Examples		
The table below shows example sentences in active and passive voice for the basic tenses as well as various other verb forms, including infinitives and participles.		
	active	passive
<b>Present Simple</b>	How does one <i>pronounce</i> his name?	How <i>is</i> his name <i>pronounced</i> ?
<b>Present Continuous</b>	Ati's <i>helping</i> Tara.	Tara's <i>being helped</i> by Ati.
<b>Present Perfect</b>	Kid <i>has served</i> dinner.	Dinner <i>has been served</i> .
<b>Present Perfect Continuous</b>	The police <i>have been watching</i> that house for weeks.	That house <i>has been being watched</i> for weeks.

Source: [Crazy Egg](#)

Here is a quick example.

*We can help you grow your business* versus *let us help you grow your business*.

*We can help you grow your business* is the passive voice and it seems as if you are talking about your own business. The focus is on *we can help*.

While *let us help you grow your business* changes the attention to *grow your business* and it clearly shows it's about *growing your business*.

This is what the active voice can do to your copy.

## 23. Your Voice

We talked about speaking your reader's language and now it's time to add your own voice to the content.

Just as they say it is [crucial to add your own voice to curated content](#), similarly it is vital to **add your own voice** to whatever you are writing. The voice here refers to the **writer's own personality**.

Not only should you add your own voice to the content, but you should mix it up with your brand's voice, according to [Natasha Watts](#).

Adding your own voice to content makes it yours and makes it personal, and it works best for user-engagement. If readers like your style, they'll connect with you.

So we have three types of voices that content must have:

- Your reader's language (aka the reader's voice)
- Your own voice
- Your brand's voice

There is a fine line between the three types, and you should try to utilize them all.

[Wishpond blog](#) is a good example. Every blog post has a featured image, and all the featured images follow the same pattern. They put the title of the blog post in the featured image and this is how they have maintained their brand's voice.

## 24. Trending Topics

Writing content based on trending topics is a great way to attract new readers. Unfortunately, most content writers don't focus on trending topics because they are already being covered in every newspaper and magazine, as well as by all the leading blogs.

[Trending topics are goldmine.](#)

Instead of just sharing a story, you have to make it completely yours. Add your point of view.

[Pratik Dholakiya](#) has a decent strategy for creating content around trending topics by adding a *hook*.

There are other strategies for covering trending topics:

- Critically analyze the trending topic
- Establish a link between a trending story and your industry, niche or business
- Add your personal thoughts to it

Commenting on a trending story, discussing its pros and cons, stating its future impact and talking about its impact at micro and macro levels *is not going to help* as this is what 95 percent of other writers do. You have to come up with something different, a unique and never-published-before version of the trending topic.

## 25. Unique Content

This [video](#) by [Rand Fishkin](#) is one of the best videos that I've seen on the importance of unique content and why it matters.

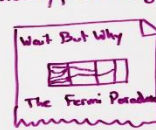
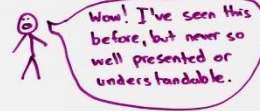
## How to Provide "Unique Value" in Your Content

### Modern Criteria for Content:

- ☐ One-of-a-kind - doesn't appear elsewhere on the web
- ☐ Relevant - contains content both humans + engines interpret as on-topic to the searcher's query/intent
- ☐ Helpful - resolves the searcher's query in a useful, efficient manner
- ☐ Uniquely Valuable - provides information that's unavailable or hard to get elsewhere
- ☐ Great UX - is easy and pleasurable to consume on any device

### Unique Value

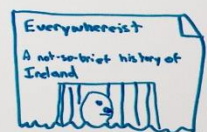
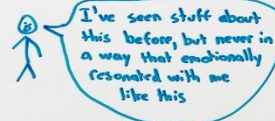
#### 1. Massive upgrade in aggregation, accessibility, and design



#### 2. Information available nowhere else



#### 3. Content presented with a massively differentiated voice/style



Your content doesn't just have to be unique; it must also provide unique value to the reader.

So what happens when you write unique content, both in terms of percentage and value? Well, there are some benefits that your website will eventually enjoy, such as increased readership, increased credibility, and proving yourself as an authority in your niche.

There are certain rules to deliver unique value in your content, and they should be:

1. Relevant to your readers' queries
2. Easy-to-read
3. Easy-to-navigate
4. Not found elsewhere





Source: [Moz](#)

Next time you're about to write content, put more emphasis on unique value than unique words.

## 26.Highlight Benefits

The secret to writing compelling content *that converts* is to focus on the benefits instead of features.

### Examples

-  Heriot-Watt offers courses in a range of subjects.
-  Studying at Heriot-Watt will enable you to develop skills and experience to help you achieve you career ambitions.
-  At Heriot-Watt you will be based on our picturesque campus.
-  At Heriot-Watt you will be part of a supportive community of like-minded people who share your interests and ambitions.

Source: [Heriot-Watt University](#)

An unintentional mistake that many writers make when they're creating benefits, is that they create *fake benefits*. [Brian Clark](#) recommends focusing on *true benefits* which are derived from product features. This is how true value is passed on to the readers, and thus the buyers.

A general rule is to derive benefits from product features, and then further support those benefits with the features.

Here is how to do it:

1. Find the features of the product and write them down.
2. Extract the benefit from each of the feature while keeping your target audience in mind.
3. Prepare a list of the benefits.
4. Add these benefits into content.
5. Use the features to support your benefits.

## 27. Focus on Positives

This is one of the tips that I read recently at Heriot Watt University in their [guide for web content writing for university websites](#).

Naturally, most content writers focus on positive aspects of the product they are writing about. For instance, instead of writing “*our product is not for singles*” they write “*our product is best for parents*”.

If you don’t do this now, you should definitely start.

The idea is simple, instead of highlighting the negative aspects, shape them to highlight the positive ones. Instead of showing the dark side to readers, show them the bright side.

Every product has negative aspects. Your job as a content writer is to push these **flaws to the background**, but don’t hide them.

In the example above, when we say *our product is best for parents*, it doesn’t deny the fact that it is *not for singles*. Of course singles can use it but it is not actually for them. You have conveyed the message by pushing its negative aspect to background.

## 28. Stay on Topic

Readers on the internet need what they are looking for **minus** all the fluff. Adding off-topic material will never please your readers.

As soon as you move slightly off-topic, [you lose the reader’s interest](#) and make them [frustrated](#).

There are different techniques that can be used to stay on topic throughout your article.

1. Use a detailed outline. This outline has to be created prior to writing content. Good writers use paragraph level outline. Main ideas (points) to be discussed in each paragraph should be mentioned in the outline.
2. Peer review is a decent technique where you ask a peer to quickly scan the final draft to see if everything is related to the topic.
3. A subject matter expert can give you even better insights.

[This video](#) has a step-by-step technique for staying on topic.

## **29. Consistency in Style**

Consistency in style makes the content uniform.

Look at the following news items from three different sources, and notice the *difference in style*.

- Ferrari North America Inc., a division of Ferrari NV ([RACE.N](#)), is recalling some 2016 California T vehicles due to the risk of a fuel leak in the engine compartment, according to a U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) notice on Friday.
- The recall, which began on Dec. 14, affects up to 185 vehicles manufactured between Sept. 8 and Nov. 11, 2015.
- The higher risk of a leak, which increases the chances of fire, was the result of a manufacturing defect in a part provided by a supplier, according to a filing with the National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration, a division of the DOT.
- The move comes after Ferrari, owned by Fiat Chrysler Automobiles NV ([FCAU.N](#)), recalled upwards of 800 cars in the United States to fix a problem with its Takata airbags over the summer.

Ferrari issued a stop sale notice to dealers of the 2016 model California T, which has a list price of just over \$167,000 according to The Car Guide, on Nov. 23, filings show. Dealers will replace the line free of charge, the notice read.

(Reporting By Luc Cohen; Editing by Alan Crosby)

News from [Reuters](#)

Ferrari North America Inc. recalled the 2016 California T convertibles it made over a two-month period this year because of the risk of fuel leaks.

The California Ts produced between Sept. 8 and Nov. 11 may have a low-pressure fuel line that doesn't connect properly to the fuel-pump feed pipe, creating a fire risk, the U.S. National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration said in an [advisory](#) on its website today. Ferrari, in documents submitted to NHTSA, blamed a manufacturing defect in a part made by a supplier.

The model has a base price of \$231,606, according to the Car Guide. More than 50 Ferrari dealers from Beverly Hills, California, to Philadelphia received notices to stop sales of the vehicles on Nov. 23. The company has notified owners of the 185 luxury cars potentially affected and dealers will replace the low-pressure fuel assembly at no cost, the advisory said. The recall began Dec. 14.

News from [Bloomberg](#)

Ferrari North America is recalling some 2016 California T vehicles because of the risk of a fuel leak in the engine compartment, according to a United States Department of Transportation notice on Friday. The recall, which began on Dec. 14, affects up to 185 vehicles manufactured between Sept. 8 and Nov. 11, 2015. The higher risk of a leak, which increases the chances of fire, was the result of a manufacturing defect in a part provided by a supplier, according to a filing with the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#). The move comes after Ferrari, owned by [Fiat Chrysler Automobiles N.V.](#), recalled upward of 800 cars in the United States to fix a problem with its Takata airbags over the summer. Ferrari issued a stop sale notice to dealers of the 2016 model California T, which has a list price of just over \$167,000 according to The Car Guide, on Nov. 23, filings show. Dealers will replace the line free of charge, the notice read.

News from [The New York Times](#)

Same story. Different styles.

Being an online content writer, you must develop your own unique style, or else you and your content will be lost.

A [style guide](#) can help you maintain consistency with your writing style. It's a guide for writing content for specific entity such as a business. You can choose from [free online writing style guides](#) such as [the Wikipedia guide](#), [the Economist style guide](#) or [the Telegraph style book](#). These free guides provide you with instant access to a writing style guide.

But this alone will not make you stand out from the crowd. These free style guides are used by hundreds already. A better idea, therefore, is to [create a writing style guide](#) for you own blog, website or for business.

Creating a content style guide for your personal use needs a bit of hard work initially, but it will pay off in the long-run.

Just imagine - you have a business blog that you have been personally writing for many years, and now you need to outsource blog posts or you need a content writing agency to write and publish on your blog, **but** you want them to follow the same writing style.

Having a writing style guide will make this transition much more smooth and effective.

## 30. Tone

The tone you use is different from the voice that has been already discussed. **The tone represents the attitude** of the writer, while **the voice represents the personality** of the writer.

The voice is not changeable – since you cannot alter your personality – but you can change your attitude.

This means you'll have same voice whether you write formally or informally, but your tone will be different, and your **tone is what makes your content formal or informal**.

The tone is the attitude of the writer towards the subject.

Look at the following examples.

### Example #1

Father: "We are going on a vacation."

Son: "That's great!!!"

– *The tone of son's response is very cheerful.*

### Example #2

Father: "We can't go on vacation this summer."

Son: "Ok. Great! That's what I expected."

– *The son's tone is sarcastic in the given response.*

### Example #3

"You will get good grades like in the previous exams"

– *The tone is pessimistic in this example.*

### Example #4

"Can someone tell me what the hell is going on here?"

– *This has an aggressive tone.*

Source: [Literary Devices](#)

[Tone is created](#) by:

- Diction
- Syntax
- Grammar
- Details
- Facts

Amanda Patterson has a massive [list of 155 ways to describe tone](#). This is a list worth reading.

### 31.Mood

The mood and the tone in writing are often seen as interchangeable, however they are not the same.

The mood is the [general atmosphere](#) created by content. It is how readers feel. The mood, therefore, is more related to the reader.

If you **feel peaceful** after reading a Charles Dickens novel, that's the mood that the writer has created.

This mood is also created by the content writer. Ask yourself, what you want readers to feel after reading your article? Do you want them to feel happy, excited, sentimental, romantic, optimistic or confident?

The mood is created by:

- Voice
- Tone
- Setting (what theme the writer has created)
- Diction

Look at the two trailers of the movie Frozen and notice how these two trailers of the same movie offer two opposing moods.

[This is the original one.](#)

Now look [at this](#).

The same goes for written content. Making your readers feel sad or happy is all in your hands.

Here is a [list of numerous mood](#) (and tone) words to help you create the type of feelings that can stir your readers.

## 32.Align Content to Your Business

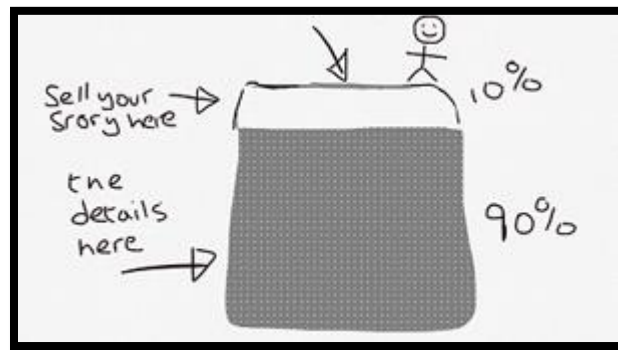
You don't necessarily always write for your own business. Instead you may have to write for other businesses.

To suit another business, you will have to write content that aligns to their business model and goals.

You must *understand* the **business**, its **goals** and its **content marketing strategy**. That's how you will be able to align your articles properly.

### 33. Iceberg Theory

Iceberg writing theory is an interesting writing style used by [Ernest Hemingway](#). There are several interpretations of this theory but the crux is “*less is more*”. Like you only see a small portion of an iceberg, with much of it hidden beneath the surface, your writing style should provide a more minimalistic overview, with a lot of unnecessary content remaining unwritten.

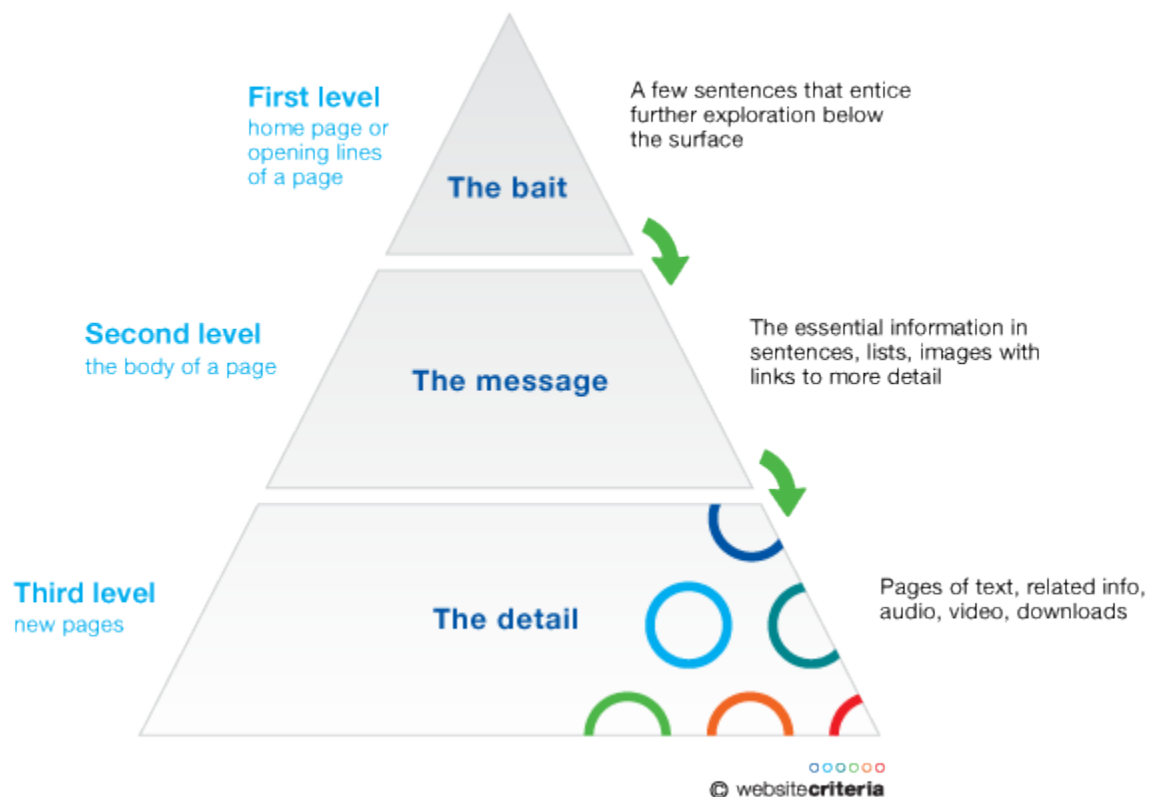


Source: [Copywriter Collective](#)

The image above shows one approach to the Iceberg Theory. It puts a CTA right in the introduction of the article and then move on to details in subsequent paragraphs. So even if a reader leaves, he leaves with your message because it's right at the start of the article.

Here is a detailed approach with the steps to follow.

## Writing for the web The iceberg approach



Source: [Website Criteria](#)

You have to distribute your content into layers.

1. **First layer** must have the bait or you can simply write a brief overview of what this article is about.
2. **Second layer** must have more details about what has been presented or said in the first layer.
3. **Third layer** must share related information or it should have a CTA (external links).

## 34.Type of Content

Being a writer, you can create several types of content. The infographic by [Digital Marketer](#) provides you with an unlimited supply of content ideas.

### 35.Explain

There are certain things that are obvious, but everything else has to be explained.

A simple rule is to put yourself in your reader's shoes and think from their perspective.

Statements like '*we grow your business*' doesn't mean anything in reality unless you explain it.

There are several ways to grow a business. What type of growth you are talking about? What type of businesses is it for, and how will the growth be achieved?

Realistically, you will have to explain almost everything including words, phrases and jargons.

Below is a landing page that doesn't explain what this website is about or what type of services they provide.



When you are writing for a brand, you should explain everything because there will be people who will be visiting it for the first time. There will also be readers who will land from an external source and they might not know the details that you might assume they do.

*“As you know, we are a leading company based in UK.....”*

What if a person is reading this sentence and doesn't know about the company? Add links. Give a brief overview of why you are a leading company in the UK.

### 36. Do Not Repeat

Repetition can take two forms:

- Repeating yourself
- Repeating what others have said

You can stop yourself from repeating by creating an outline. A detailed outline of the write-up will help you in addressing one point in a single paragraph, subheading or bullet.



[Here is a great podcast](#) on how to not repeat yourself as a writer.

When you reproduce or even rewrite, you are repeating what's already out there and has been said by someone else. Instead of **wasting** your time on reproducing (or rewording) **without** adding any new value, you should simply add a link to the source.

Yes, this will make your article shorter, but readers will love you because you didn't waste their time by writing the same old stuff.

### 37. Use Second Person

Most Popular Words/Phrases In Highly-Shared Headlines		
Word/Phrase	# of uses	% of headlines
List Post	787	11.10%
You/Your	478	6.74%
Free/Giveaway	255	3.60%
How To	205	2.89%
DIY	197	2.78%
I/Me/My	153	2.16%
Easy	137	1.93%
Win	104	1.47%
New	97	1.37%
Ways	75	1.06%
Why	60	0.85%
Video	51	0.72%
The Most	17	0.24%

Source: [OkDork](#)

The use of *you* or *your* in a heading makes a post more sharable. Why?

Because it makes the content seem personal, and as if it's directed at readers. It's used for addressing readers as if you're really talking to them.

### 38. Give Credit

Be bold enough to give due credit to the original author of the content. You might [steal content without even knowing it](#), so giving credit and citing the original author of the content (all types of content; image, text, infographic, etc.) has several benefits:

- Readers trust you.
- Authors trust you.
- Others will reciprocate.
- You won't be responsible for what others say. When you cite another's content, you actually pass the responsibility to them.
- You can provide a lot of value in a short article by adding links to multiple sources.
- Readers know you have done your homework.

If you're not sure how to give credit to the original author, [this post](#) by [Corey Eridon](#) and [this post](#) by [Jason Keath](#) are worth reading.

### **39. Use Bullet Points**

The reduced attention span of many readers, slow reading time and tons of sources pose challenges for online content writers. Using bullet points make it easy for readers to quickly go through the main points.

Putting content in long paragraphs with no subheadings will frustrate readers, so don't encourage people to leave your website by making such mistakes.

Not every bullet point is worth reading. Converting a paragraph into a bullet point won't work. Robert Bruce, the founder of Rainmaker, shares [8 tips for writing bullet points](#) that readers will actually read.

Every bullet point is a headline and must be crafted like one. To learn how to write bullet points like a pro, [read this post](#) by Kevin Carlton. It's a complete guide to writing bullet points that convert.

## **40. Clarity**

[This video](#) explains the importance of clarity in depth.

According to [Brad Shorr](#), there are [6 enemies of clarity](#) that restrict you from writing clear content. If you overcome these enemies, you can make your copy clear enough for readers - as well as for search engines.

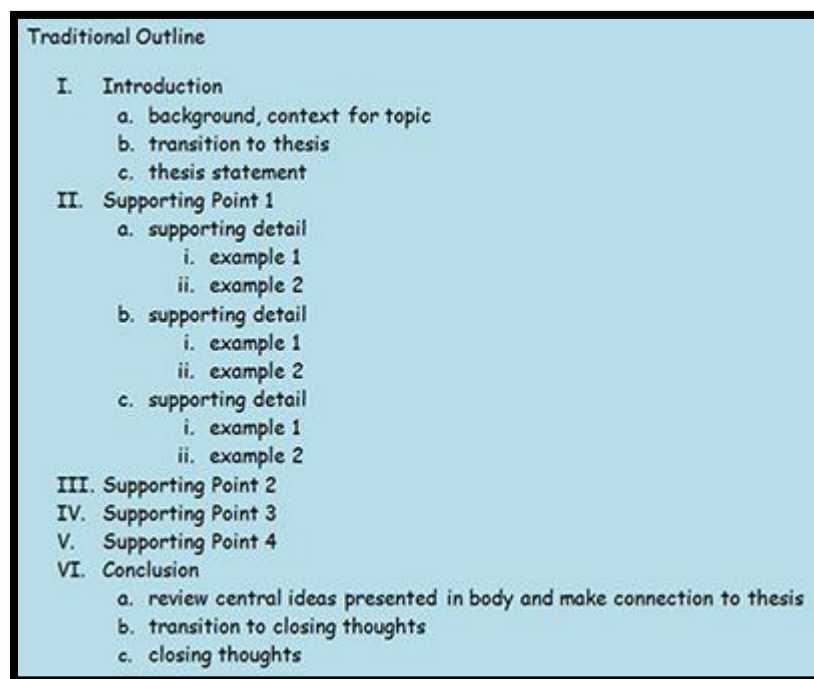
## **41. Write About One Thing Only**

Writing about one thing at a time will help you maintain focus. Choose a topic, then cover one point in each paragraph and make sure every paragraph adheres to the main topic.

When writing long articles, you might deviate from the main topic because it's natural to lose focus. This is where you have to write a detailed outline of the article so as to minimize deviations.

1. Choose a topic.
2. Create a list of points to discuss in the article.

3. Establish connection and see whether each point links to the topic or not. Any points that do not fit in should be removed.
4. Convert points into paragraphs, headings, subheadings and bullet points.
5. Create a mind map. Add details, links to references and any specifics under each point.
6. Adjust the structure of the article and entire outline to make it better. Anything that's irrelevant should be removed.



Source: [Excelsior College](#)

## 42. Cover Your Topic

Whatever your topic is, make sure you cover it in a way that readers don't have to go anywhere else. If readers repeat the same search query after going through your blog post, it's your failure.

If you want to cover every possible aspect of a topic, you should choose something specific. Broad topics are harder to cover.

It is easier to write about *the types of apples available in North America* rather than *WordPress themes for ecommerce stores*.

Choosing and narrowing down the topic is the real art here.

Neil Cunningham has [explained in detail](#) how to choose and narrow down a topic. Although it's related to research papers, it's equally applicable to online content writing, and the same technique can be used to narrow down a topic.

Once you have a narrow topic that's specifically about a single point, you can then cover it easily in a single article.

### **43.Short Paragraphs**

## **BLOGGING 101: WHY YOU SHOULD KEEP YOUR PARAGRAPHS SHORT**

- Most People Scan, NOT read
- Easier on Eyes
- Easier to Understand
- Encourage Reading
- Less Information To Filter
- Less Chance of Committing Errors

TWELVESKIP.COM

Source: [Twelve Skip](http://TwelveSkip.com)

According to Quick Sprout, a [paragraph should have maximum 6 lines](#). Anything over 6 lines is not generally a good idea.

*“Writing is visual—it catches the eye before it has a chance to catch the brain. Short paragraphs put air around what you write and make it look inviting, whereas a long chunk of type can discourage a reader from even starting to read.”*

- [William Zinsser](#)

## **44. Write Professionally**

Writing professionally is the essence of online content writing. While you have to talk to the readers in a language that they can understand easily, you don't have to go too low to make it look unprofessional.

Choose a tone that's friendly and understandable, while maintaining professionalism.

For instance, if you're a cashier in a bank who deals with hundreds of clients every single day, you have to follow a certain dress code to look professional, irrespective of your client's dress code. If people standing in a queue right in front of your desk are wearing informal dresses, you will still have to dress professionally.



Source: [Axis](#)

The same is true for writing. No matter where your readers are coming from, a content writer's job is to be professional.

## **45. Use one Idea per Paragraph**

You don't always have to write short paragraphs. Sometimes you'll be required to write longer ones.

A general rule is to cover [one idea per paragraph](#).

You can have a [paragraph as short as one sentence](#). If idea needs a lot of explanation, it is better to use [one point per paragraph](#). It just depends on the underpinning idea that you're conveying. As long as your paragraph covers the idea (or a single point) completely, you're good to go.

## 46.Diction

Diction means the [selection of words by the writer](#). Diction is used to create expression and to develop the mood.

- "Could you be so kind as to pass me the milk?" Vs. "Give me that!"
- "I regret to inform you that that is not the case." Vs. "You're wrong!"
- "It is a pleasure to see you again! How are you today?" Vs. "Hey, what's up?"
- "I'm a bit upset," Vs. "I'm so pissed off."
- "I would be delighted!" Vs. "Sure, why not?"
- "I'll do it right away, sir," Vs. "Yeah, just a sec."

Source: [Literary Devices](#)

Being an online content writer, you should have access to a dictionary to help you choose the best words to create the right mood and atmosphere.

Use this [thesaurus](#) to find the exact words you're looking for.

## 47.Limit List Items

Limiting yourself to 7 list items will improve conversions [as readers tend to remember first few items \(generally 7 to 10\)](#) in a bulleted list.

In case you have a long list of items, categorize and convert them into batches.

## **48. Visual Impression**

According to Google's research, users form their [opinions in as little as 17 ms](#) after landing on your website.

You have on [average 50 ms](#) to create a visual impression inside your reader's mind - and this impression is formed by what they see on your page.

Though this concept is [more related to design](#) but the headline, area above the fold, a power word, an emotion-driven statement or even font color can do the trick.

Visitors develop opinions in an instant, as soon as they land, 50 ms is just an instant so don't expect readers to read entire headline rather they will see the image, color scheme or a couple prominent words.

See how cancer is visually prominent on the entire page.



Source: [Image](#)

## 49. Images

The importance of images in content writing cannot be denied. The following [infographic](#) by [mdg advertising](#) shows the real power of images and why they matter.

## 50. Videos

By 2017, online videos will account for 69 percent of all traffic, as forecasted by [Cisco visual networking index](#).

The simple truth about videos is that they have the power to go viral. According to [Kristin Lisak](#), one of the primary characteristics of viral content is that it is [easy to share](#).

Videos have the potential to [engage people 10 times](#) more than other types of content. Videos are best for ROI, according to [52 percent marketers](#).

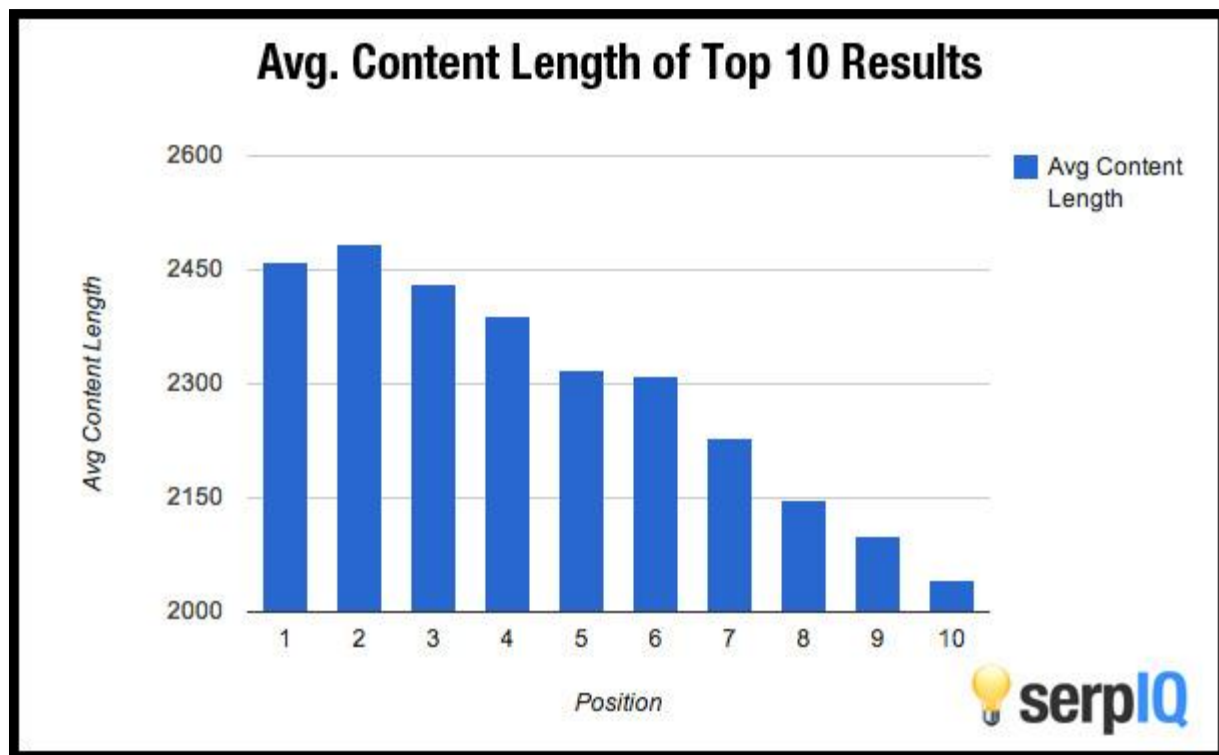
What's the takeaway?

Embed videos in your blog posts to deliver massive information in a short clip.

## 51. Cross 1500 Words

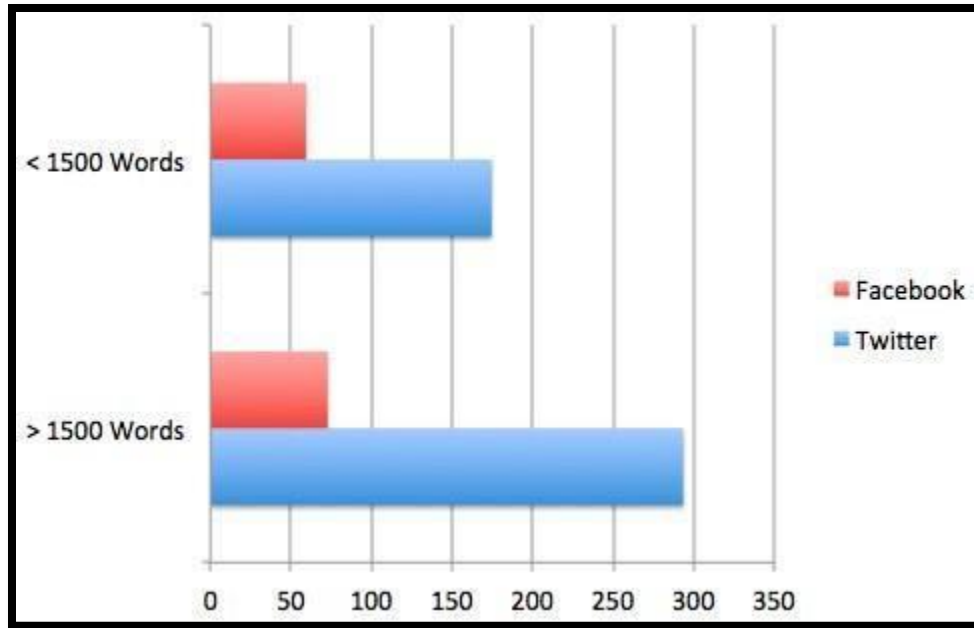
It has been long proved that more text you add, [better search engine ranking](#) you get, [more links](#) your content receives, it is [shared 68 percent more on Twitter](#) and gets [23 percent more](#) shares on Facebook – as compared to articles with a lower number of words.

The following images tell the story.



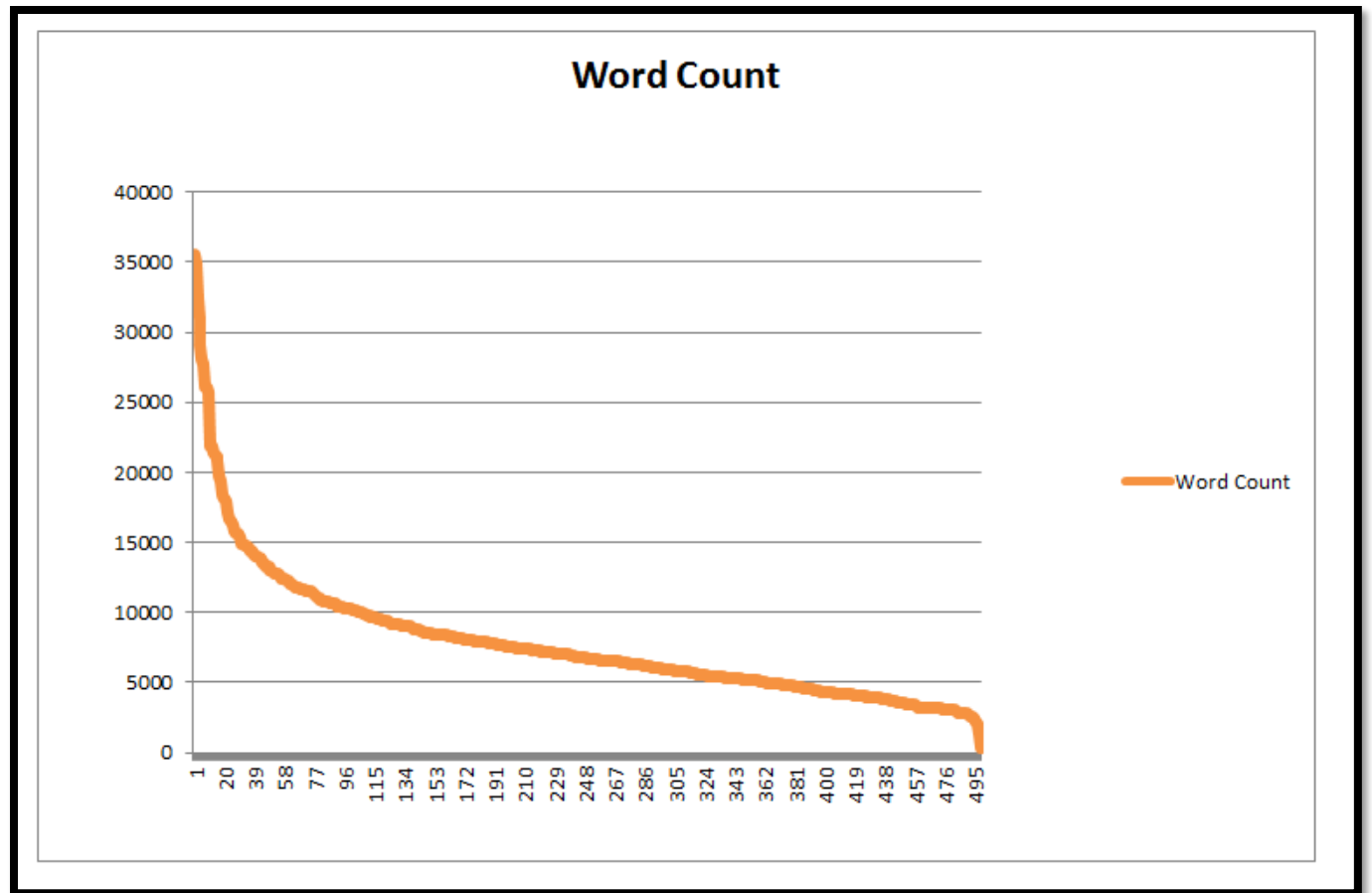
Source: [serpIQ](#)

As the number of words increase, so does the search engine ranking of your article.

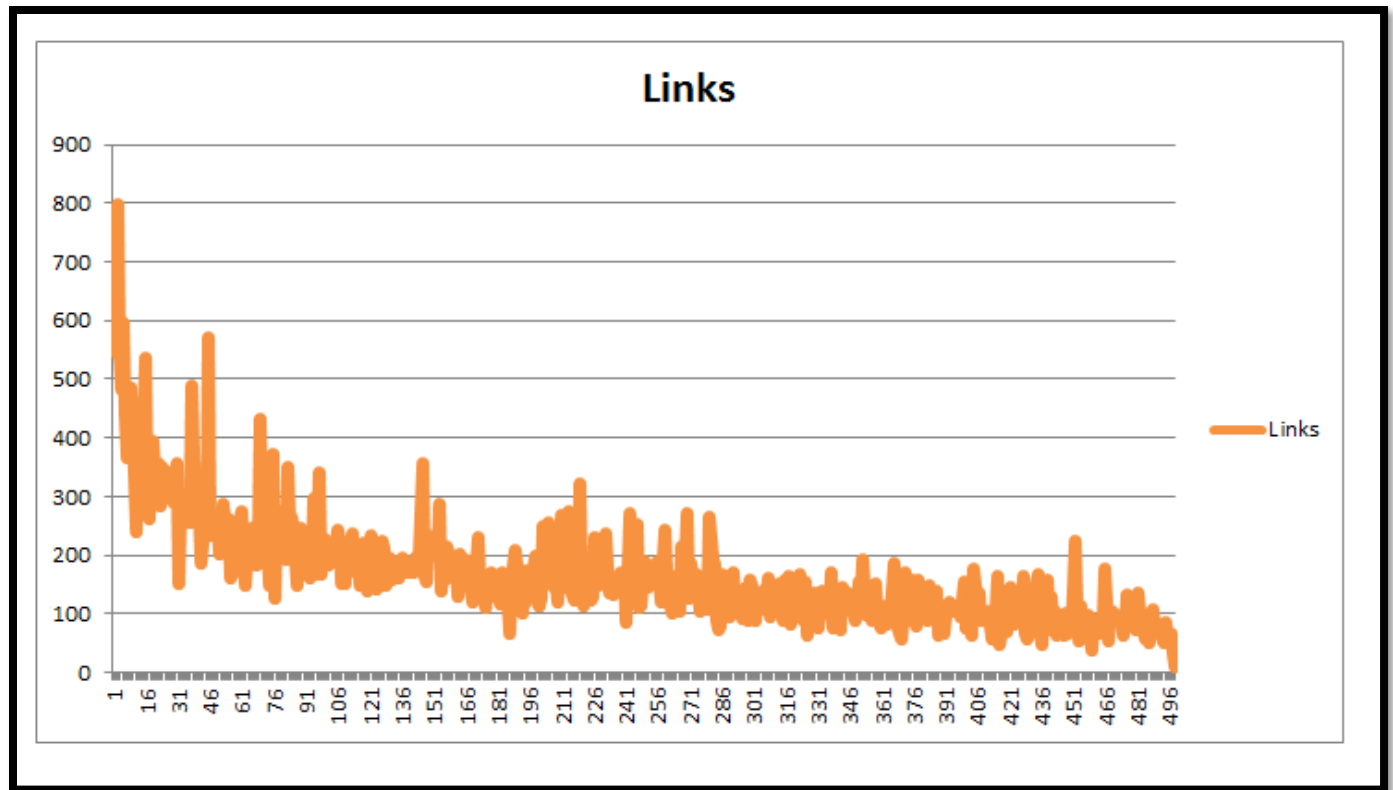


Association between article word count and social shares. Source: [Quick Sprout](#)

Blog posts at Quick Sprout with word count 1500+ are shared 68 percent more on Twitter and get 23 percent more likes on Facebook.



Relationship between article word count and backlinks. Source: [Moz](#)



Relationship between article word count and backlinks. Source: [Moz](#)

As the word count increases, articles start getting more backlinks. There is a positive association between *number of backlinks an article earns* and *number of words article has*.

So try to make your articles and blog posts at least 1500 words.

## 52.Outbound Links

An outbound or external link is a link to other websites. Adding links to other website is a controversial topic.

The [video](#) by [Cyrus Shepard](#) explains the controversy and the two opposing schools of thought.

The choice is yours, but linking to other websites is a good way to prove yourself as an authority. Your readers will think *‘this guy knows the best in the field’*.

So if you are writing about search engine ranking and adding a link to moz.com, it shows your readers (as well as search engines) that you have done your homework.

Gaining the trust of your readers gets a lot easier when you link out to the best sources.

### **53.Internal Links**

A link to your own website or its pages is called an internal link. These can be used in breadcrumbs, links in the footer, and links within the article. [This is an internal link that links to Content Ray’s homepage.](#)

Using internal links will not hurt your website’s ranking so you are free to use as many of them as you want. [This video by Matt Cutts](#) explains why.

Internal links help visitors:

- In navigation
- In accessing relevant information

When writing content, make sure you add some relevant internal links in the content.

### **54.Hyperlinks**

Hyperlinks, in general, increase the trustworthiness of your content. Hyperlinks (both internal and external) stand out from the other text and this is exactly why you should use them in content.

Hyperlinks look visually pleasing.

Here is an image from [Wikipedia](#) with links. You can see those blue links distributed throughout, and how attractive they look.



Even if you hate external links and don't want to pass on any link juice, use internal links just to make your page more colorful and appealing.

## 55.Descriptive Links

Links should be descriptive and tell readers what this link is about and where it leads.

The following links from an article by [Neil Patel](#) are a good example of using descriptive text links that clearly tell the reader what they're about and where they'll lead them.

Here are a few articles to help you understand what plagiarism is and how to avoid it:

- [Law Firm's Plagiarized Website Subject to Expanded Jurisdiction](#)
- [Plagiarism, Content Farms and Google](#)
- [The Right-Brain Thinker's Guide to Beating Blogger's Block](#)

Source: [Neil Patel](#)

It is not always necessary to use descriptive links as long as you have explained all about the link. But since descriptive links stand out from the rest of the text, they must be preferred.

## 56. Use Backups

According to Brad Zomick Chief Content Officer at SkilledUp, [backup is a content enhancer](#) which is used to strengthen the arguments that are used in content writing. For instance; statistics, facts, quotes and anecdotes are backups.

Backups make arguments more powerful.

For instance, *the majority of marketers prefer to use video marketing* is not as powerful as *87 percent of the marketers prefer video marketing*.

The second argument is backed by statistic, and it links to the source where you can find more information about the argument.

Backups induce readers to trust you and believe what you have written as long as you have linked to the actual source of information. If you haven't linked out to the source of the backup, readers will believe it's self-created.

## 57. Conclusion

Dr. Joseph Assan at the University of Liverpool defines the [purpose of writing a conclusion](#) as:

- To summarize
- To provide answers to any questions
- To highlight limitations
- To highlight related topics to be covered

Although this document and pattern is used for writing a conclusion for a research thesis, it's very much applicable for online content writing as well.

There is nothing better than writing a detailed conclusion rather than just asking readers to share their viewpoints in the comments.

Every article or blog post has some limitations and these must be highlighted. You should provide answers to the questions that readers might have, clearly state the related topics that will be covered in future, and create a short summary of the entire article to help readers remember the article.

## 58. Call to Action

A Call to Action (CTA) is a request (a call) to take action. CTA tells readers what they have to do.

CTAs are the most critical part of articles. Phrases like [click here](#), [get a free quote](#), [get instance access](#), [click here if you want to double website visitors in 2 weeks](#) are all CTAs.

According to a [study conducted by Online Marketing Coach](#), 70 percent of the US small business websites don't have a CTA at their homepage.

You can put a call to action anywhere in the content. A good idea is to use them throughout the content but don't overdo it.

Here are some tips to craft killer CTAs.

1. Keep it simple and easy-to-read.
2. Create a sense of urgency.
3. Make it relevant to the topic.
4. One offer per CTA should be used.
5. Clearly state what readers are expected to do and what they will get in return.
6. Use power words.
7. Make descriptive hyperlinks.

Below are some good CTA examples.

*Sign up to get a 10% discount on your next order*

*Call us today to get a free quote*

*Have you signed up to receive your free book?*

*Claim your winter giveaway now*

## **59. Use MS Word Smartly**

There are a whole bunch of things that you can do with MS Word, and I still find something new and surprising every now and then.

For instance, you can [use shortcuts to save time](#) and there are [features that let you get your job done easily](#).

If you still use a pointer, touchpad or mouse while typing, you are not [using MS Word effectively](#), and there's much more you can learn.

## **60. Use a Swipe File**

[Heather Lloyd](#) explains pretty well why a swipe file is important for online content writing. [Watch video here](#).

## **61. Use a Dictionary**

There are a lot of words that writers misuse such as affect - effect, accept - except and many others. Access to an online dictionary such as [dictionary.com](#) while writing will help you find right words.

[Misused words at daily writing tips](#) is one of the best resources for writers.

## **62. Author Bio**

An author bio is a nice place to add information about yourself. Whether you're writing for your own blog or publishing a guest post, an author bio can help readers know you, find you and connect with you.

Want to write an attractive author bio? Read [this post](#) at Hubspot for crafting a great one.

## **63. Writing Tools**

Writing tools can help you a lot, and there are several that can be used for effective online content writing.

Here's a list of [22 writing tools](#) compiled by Lauren Holiday.

Writing tools help you with:

- Writing
- Limiting distractions
- Grammar
- Improving readability
- Minimizing errors and typos
- Focusing
- Idea generation
- Documentation
- Optimization

One of my favorite tools is the [readability test tool](#) which measures how easy-to-read your content is.

## **64. Cloud Storage**

Your job doesn't end once your content has been published. As the writer and owner of every word you've written, you should keep a backup.

Using cloud storage to backing up all your content has several benefits:

- You never lose your content.
- It can be accessed from anywhere.
- It can be accessed from multiple devices.

Cloud storage such as Google Drive, Dropbox, OneDrive and Copy can be used to store any content online.

Sync files and folders in real-time so as to avoid loss of data in case of a malfunctioning hard disk.

# FORMATTING

## 65. Bold and Italics

Bold and italic words, phrases and sentences [might not impact SEO](#) but they do impact readability.

Bold, italic and underline make it easy for readers to scan content. Making important sentences and phrases bold will make them stand out.

While it is a good idea to make most of bold and italics but don't overuse these tags.

## 66. Featured Image

In most of the cases, choosing a featured image is not the responsibility of the writer but it doesn't hurt if you choose a suitable and appealing featured image for content you have written.

Since it is the image that will be featured on home page, with excerpt and at social networks therefore it has to be an image which is a representative of the title. It must be relevant as well as visually appealing.

## 67. Keyword Prominence

The keyword prominence means how prominent keywords are. It is a measure of prominence of keywords.

The prominence of a keyword increases if it is put at the beginning of the title, heading and paragraph. Keywords when placed in the middle or at the end of the title, heading and paragraphs will lose their prominence.

[Marieke van de Rakt](#), project manager at Yoast, says:

*“If you not only want a good but also an SEO-friendly blog post, your text should be written in such a way that the words you want to be found for have a very prominent place.”*

[Keyword prominence is a Google ranking factor](#) but it does not hold a lot of value.

## **68.Keyword Density**

The keyword density is the number of times you use a specific keyword as compared to total word count of the article. There is no best keyword density rather it varies.

Let's see what Matt Cutts says about keyword density in [this video](#).

So there is no optimal keyword density, keep it natural.

## **69.Letter Case**

The use of proper case style not only make content easy-to-read but it also makes it visually appealing.

Choose a single case to be used for headings and titles. You can choose to write headings, subheadings and titles in Title Case or Sentence case. Follow the same rule throughout the article.

[Capital letters slow reading speed](#) and are not considered reader-friendly.

The sentence case is easiest to implement and is more reader-friendly therefore it should be preferred over Title and CAPITAL case.

## 70.Sentence Structure

The sentence structure is how a sentence is organized grammatically. There are [four types of sentence structures](#); simple, compound, complex and compound-complex.

[Here is an exercise at Purdue OWL](#) that will help you avoid basic sentence structure errors.

For online content writing, [simple sentence structure happens to be best](#). Writing complex and/or compound sentences will make content unreadable for a large portion of target audience.

## 71.Sentence Flow

There are [two components of sentence flow](#); sentence length and thought progression.

Sentences should flow in a sequence so that transition from one sentence to the next is smooth and logical.

In their article [Using Kintsch's computational model to improve instructional text](#), Britton and Gulgoz suggested a really easy method to make sentence flow logical. Use information from one sentence in the following sentence. Common information between current and the following sentence will create a natural and logical flow. Information that's used at the **end of a sentence** should be used **as the beginning information** in the next sentence and so on.

Here is an example.

<p>New information in a sentence (info presented towards the end of the sentence) is used as the given information in the following sentence.</p> <p>Sometimes the given information in a sentence is also used as the given information in several of the following sentences.</p>	<p>A seed removal experiment was carried out to determine whether the removal of seeds with elaiosomes is greater than that of seeds from which the elaiosomes have been experimentally removed. The experiment was conducted during January 1998 in Royal National Park in dry sclerophyll vegetation. At this site, a 100 m x 100 m plot was set out. For each species (D. juniperina and A. linifolia), 40 depots were used, making a total of 80 depots. Twenty depots for each species consisted of seeds with intact elaiosomes and the other 20 depots consisted of seeds with the elaiosomes removed. Each depot consisted of a small pile of 10 seeds. The 80 depots were placed out in a grid in random order using a random number table. After 10 hours, the number of seeds removed per depot was recorded. A t-test was used on the results to test the null hypothesis that "the number of seeds with elaiosomes removed per hour is the same as the number of seeds without elaiosomes removed per hour". To test whether ants were the agents of seed-removal, observations were made over a six hour period and organisms seen removing seeds were identified and released.</p>
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A good example of sentence flow. Source: [Uni Learning](#)

## 72.Font Type

The font that you choose is correlated to readability and is linked to emotions of the readers.

The infographic by [Ted Hunt](#) shows how five major types of fonts are linked to the psychology of readers.

[Mikael Cho](#) recommends choosing serif or san-serif font because other fonts like script and decorative are not easy-to-read. Decorative, script, display and modern are fonts that are stylish

and are more suited for logos while serif and san-serif fonts are easier to read due to their traditional structure.

### **73.Font Size**

There has been a lot of debate as to what is the [optimal font size for text](#) on a website. But [16 pixels is supposed to be best font](#) that you should use as it appears to be of same size as that of printed book.

[Most web browsers use 16 pixels as default font size](#) therefore you should use 16 pixel font size to make text readable and visible even from a distance.

[Using 12 pixel font is a big no](#) as it gets too small, especially when there is [28 inches recommended distance](#) between screen and the user.

### **74.Font Color**

The font color must be selected in terms of background. It is recommended to use dark font on light background as doing opposite will [reduce readership between 50 percent and 400 percent](#).

Using light font on dark background will stress reader's eyes and it doesn't look visually pleasing.

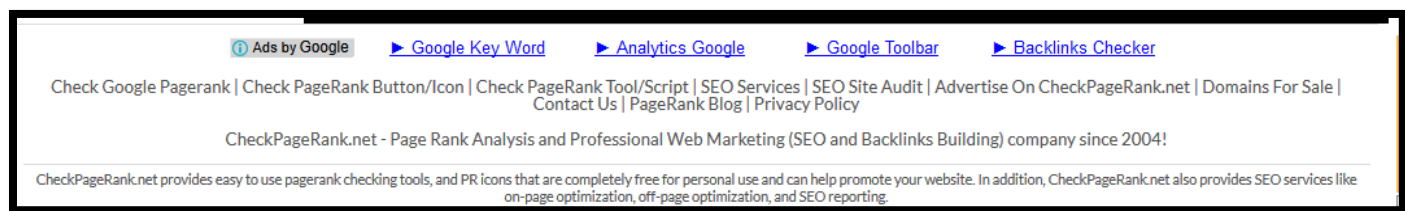
### **75.White Space**

The white space or whitespace refers to the empty space on a webpage. It is also the space between paragraphs, lines, sentences and words.

The [white space is positively correlated to the satisfaction](#) of the reader and is found to be less-fatigued for readers. In a [study by Oslen](#), it was found that white space around highlighted items increases their prominence so if you have to increase the prominence of a sentence, make sure that it has fair enough white space around it.

Lin in his study '[Evaluating older adults' retention in hypertext perusal: impacts of presentation media as a function of text topology](#)' found that white space between and on sides of paragraphs (or any type of written text) increases comprehension by 20 percent. Readers are able to understand and digest what you have written easily if there is enough white space around and among paragraphs.

Text in the screenshot below is not reader-friendly due to the lack of white space.



Make sure you have inserted enough white space between paragraphs on the Word processor as well as on the Content Management System.

## 76. Background Color

This is an online content writing guideline that's not actually related to writers but in case if you are also responsible for publishing content or if you have your own blog, you should use light background color.

Did you ever see a textbook with white text on black pages?

Traditionally, the best background color is white (a light color) and best font color is black (dark color). If you hate following old school, choose a light background color and dark font color.

There is, of course, no [simple formula](#) to find out the best color scheme based on your website's design but a humble recommendation is to go for black on white and make reader's life easy.

## **77. Image Captions**

According to [Drew Eric Whitman](#), image captions receive 200 percent higher readership on a page with no headlines and image caption receives two times more views as compared to the text body.

[Kissmetrics](#) stated that captions get as much as 300% more views than the article body.

Imagine putting your CTAs in caption, sounds interesting.

Don't waste this most read part of content.

# SEO

## 78. Alt Attribute

The alt attribute is used to describe the actual image and its content. [This video](#) by Matt Cutts has some useful information about alt attribute.

In terms of SEO, alt tag does impact rankings and it is a [Google ranking factor](#) with fairly high value. But it doesn't mean you should start spamming alt text. It should be an alternate text that should describe the content of the image (what is in the image) so make sure you write something about the image in the alt attribute.

Keep alt text short, nice and targeted without stuffing in keywords.

## 79. Image Optimization

An image has following attributes:

1. Title
2. File name
3. Alt tag
4. Description
5. Caption

These 5 factors together make images optimized and stand out. But alt text gets the highest value.

Fill up these 5 attributes of the image before its uploaded and goes live with the article. Everything that you put in these 5 attributes should be **related to the image**.

This information is processed by search engines and any contradiction will result in low ranking and poor user experience.

For instance, you have an image of an *apple*.

You have put:

1. Title – green apple
2. File name – my-website
3. Alt tag – weight loss treatment
4. Description – how to lose weight in 10 days
5. Caption – N/A

For a search engine, it gets hard to figure out whether your image is about apple, weight loss or my website. This image is sending multiple non-related signals to search engines and will stand nowhere.

## 80. Title Tag

It is the title of your article and holds critical importance for following reasons:

- It is shown in the browser
- It is visible in the search results (first 50 characters)

- It is seen with the URL. Every time your URL is shared, people see title tag
- It impacts SEO

According to Moz, [optimal format for title tag](#) should be:

Primary keyword – Secondary keyword | Brand name

Your main keyword should be at the start of the title.

Despite having a killer title, Google might not show it and can replace it with a better title. [Here is how Matt Cutts explains this phenomenon.](#)

[Here is how Google choose titles.](#)

You should start focusing on title tags and make them **relevant** (to search query and your website), **descriptive** and **concise**.

This post at hobo is worth reading [about title tags](#) and how to make them better.

## 81.Heading Tags

There are 6 heading tags; h1, h2, h3, h4, h5 and h6. [H1 is the most important while h6 is the least important](#) but it doesn't mean you should start exploiting h1 tags.

Use heading tags smartly and carefully. You can use multiple h1 in a single article but don't do it unnecessarily.

Since Google might use any of your heading tags as title so better make them relevant, descriptive and concise.

The basic purpose of using heading tags should be to structure content.

## 82. Meta Description

The meta description is the element that describes your page to search engines and tells them what your page is about. It has to be well-written, related to article body, concise, descriptive and adding a few keywords do not hurt.

A meta description is used to describe a webpage so if you have written an article about *small business writing tips*, you must write a meta description that signal search engines what this article is about.

Google will not always use *your* meta description rather it can create its own meta description based on search query. Other search engines like Bing will use meta description you provided.

Google has three sources to create a meta description for any given article that you have written.

1. It can use your meta description.
2. It can pull content from different or same parts of the article body to make a meta description of its own.
3. Relevant content can be pulled from directories where you have listed your website.

Most of the leading SEO blogs don't use meta descriptions such as Moz, Search Engine Watch and SEO Book but Google clearly stated to [have meta description on every page on your website](#).

So you should better write meta descriptions that are:

- Unique

- Concise
- Descriptive
- Relevant to the article body
- Have a CTA

Though [meta descriptions do not hold much SEO importance](#) but they are extremely handy in getting good click-through rate as this very description is used in search results and social networks.

### **83. Use Multimedia**

Using images, videos and audio make content user-friendly, and Google also gives importance to content that is interactive.

Having multimedia embedded in content will send positive signals to Google and this will help achieve better search engine ranking.

### **84. External Links**

Adding external links (or outbound links) has multiple benefits but importantly, these links [impact SEO ranking](#).

Idea is simple, when you link out to relevant websites (or even authority websites), it sends search engines signals about relevancy of the topic.

### **85. Put Keyword at Start**

[Brian Dean](#) says to put keyword in first 100 words. The earlier you place your keyword in the article introduction, the better it is as it gives search engines a good signal that what this page is about.

I don't do this (intentionally) as Google chooses its own snippets so it doesn't matter where you are putting a keyword in the article body as long as you have a descriptive meta data, you are good to go.

But Google is not the only search engine that your target audience uses, there are other search engines that do give importance to keyword placement.

If an excerpt of your article is shown at home page, in social networks or at other websites, this keyword will get picked.

## **86.Nofollow or Dofollow Links**

Nofollow links instruct search engines not to pass on the link juice to an external URL while dofollow links instruct to pass on the link juice.

It is like **do not** and **do** pass the link juice.

[Here is what Matt Cutts](#) is saying about these two types of links.

So it is simple.

Use nofollow for untrusted websites and dofollow for trusted websites.

## **87.Updating Content**

Updating content often (as per need) will keep article fresh and updated. Adding new content and updating content [improves ranking](#).

News websites are crawled multiple times a day because these are updated fairly often. The search engines use different metrics to measure freshness of content, the rate of changes on the page is one among them.

Adding or even removing big chunks of information from a published article will [send freshness signals to search engines](#) resulting in improvement in ranking.

This content update has to be done if needed – not just for the sake of influencing rankings.

## **88. Use SEO Tools**

There are hundreds of SEO tools that online content writers can use to craft copies that rank better.

Moz has [100 SEO tools](#) that will help you with SEO.

## **89. nTopic for Topic Generation**

[nTopic](#) is my favorite tool that is helpful in improving ranking of published content by suggesting improvements related to keywords, topic relevancy and excluding terms that are not relevant to the topic.

# EDITING & PROOFREADING

Finally it is time to edit and proofread content before it is sent for publication.

## 90. Difference between Proofreading and Editing

The [proofreading and editing are different](#) where proofreading is used for identifying and correcting grammatical errors, spell, typos, formatting and punctuation errors, whereas editing takes a deep look into the copy for ensuring correctness of structure and organization, sentence flow and arguments.

## 91. Check Flow

See if sentences flow logically. Does transition from one sentence to the next is smooth and logical?

Following are some important factors to look at when checking logical flow of an article.

- Idea (or point) is explained fully by the sentence (or sentences).
- Paragraphs should relate to each other.

- Start and end of sentences and paragraphs should talk about the same idea (or point).
- Remove any repetitions of sentences and/or ideas.

## 92. Clarity

Clarity in content writing takes two forms; concept clarity and structure clarity.

Concept clarity is related to the idea, topic and underlying phenomenon that you have talked about while structure clarity refers to the clarity of overall structure of the copy and how you have organized everything.

To ensure clarity, you have to inspect the content for sentence clarity. [Purdue has a detailed guide](#) on improving clarity at sentence level.

Here are a few things to check to certify content clarity.

- Are you using words or phrases that are hard to understand, replace them.
- Get rid of jargons.
- Get rid of passive voice.
- Get rid of overused words and phrases.

## 93. Consistency

The consistency is easy to maintain. Use a single term instead of using different terms to refer same phenomenon.

It is defined as [treating same elements in content in the same order](#).

For instance, if you are writing about *on-page SEO* make sure you have used the same term instead of using similar terms such as *on-site SEO*.

## **94. Meaningful Whole**

Does content talk about the topic and forms a meaningful whole?

Whatever you have written should be related to the topic. Remove content that's not related to the underpinning idea as such content is referred to as [fluff](#).

You might have to remove massive chunks of text or even rewrite major portions to make it a meaningful whole.

## **95. Accuracy**

The accuracy of content is not only important for readers but it is something that Google is giving a lot of weight. The content accuracy is a [major Google ranking factor](#).

The accuracy refers to correctness of the facts and the information used in the content. This must be rechecked during editing phase because inaccurate information (facts or stats) will not going to help.

## **96. Concise**

“I try to leave out the parts that readers tend to skip.” – Elmore Leonard

Yes, make content concise.

The basic issue with online content writers is that they cannot write without giving due importance to **word count**. This is why most of us hate **backspace** button.

**But** having concise and to-the-point content will not going to hurt as Truman Capote said:

*“I believe more in the scissors than I do in the pencil”*

## 97. Spelling

Spell check tools are not as reliable as a human proofreader. According to [Steve Olenski](#), spell check is not always accurate so stop trusting them. Relying on a spell check is a [biggest mistake content writers](#) make.

Either proofread content yourself or ask a peer to do it.

## 98. Typographical Errors

The typographical mistakes are common but using a grammar checking tool to fix typos is even a bigger mistake.

Some common typographical mistakes to check are:

- Double spacing
- Inconsistent font size
- Inconsistent font, font color and heading tags
- Capitalization, sentence and title case
- Date
- Abbreviations

- Punctuations

## 99. Grammatical Errors

Don't make the mistake of relying on grammar check tools. [Read this grammar guide](#) at Purdue and this [grammar handbook](#) at Grammarly before you sit down and start proofreading content for grammatical errors.

Here is an infographic to help you [fix 10 common grammatical errors](#).

### 100. Fix Punctuation

There are several [common punctuation mistakes](#) that content writers are used to make. Fix them before your copy goes live.

This [infographics by Punctuation Checker](#) is helpful in getting things straight.

### 101. Style Errors

The style errors are hard to spot unless you have a style guide.

The consistency in writing style is hard to detect by someone else so you have to proofread content yourself to find and fix style errors.

### 102. Create Checklist

Creating a checklist for proofreading and editing content makes it easy. A checklist tells you what you have to look for in the document to make it perfect. It is just like a style guide.

Here is an example checklist by [Write at Home](#).

Use this or create your own comprehensive checklist.

### **103. Read Aloud**

One of the best proofreading strategies is to read aloud, according to [University of Minnesota](#) and [Purdue](#).

Read yourself or ask someone else. When you read aloud, you start noticing things that go unnoticed otherwise. This is because now your [brain process information differently](#).

### **104. Self-Editing Rule**

Normally, self-editing content that you wrote is not [considered a good idea](#). Even if you have to self-edit the content, make sure you don't do it instantly.

Edit it after a day or two to get back to it with fresh mind.

Edit it multiple times using different methods:

- Using a ruler for editing is helpful. Put a ruler on the next line to cover it so that you can focus on the line you are reading.
- Use a checklist.

### **105. Read Backwards**

Reading backwards (from end to start) is helpful in proofreading to some extent. You can find spell errors and typos but you will not be able to find grammatical errors.

If it is a short article that you are dealing with, reading backwards is a good idea.

For longer ones, it is not as helpful.

## What to Do Now...

If you like these online content writing tips and guidelines, share them, and start implementing these tips.

To your success,

Sabih Javed

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