http://nicolehennig.com

https://nicolehennig.com/books/

You’ll get a handout with all the links
Part 1
- Intro: Reading on Screens
- Writing Guidelines
- Design Hints

Part 2
- Mobile Web
- Email
  - Subject Lines
  - Who to Copy
  - Lead with important info
- Examples

Part 3
- Accessibility
- Learning More
Reading on Screens

**tl;dr**
Literally "too long, didn't read"

http://urbandictionary.com

People skim, scan, and select.
Do they ever read whole passages online?

Yes, but only when the goal is to get extended info.
On mobile they may use "read later" apps.

Layer the details

Brief info on higher level
Less is more
They cut the words by 54% and people thought the site's treatment of topics was more complete.

Cut, cut, cut

With each sentence ask, “do readers need that?”
Chunk the content

Keep sentences to one or two points.

Keep paragraphs short. A one-sentence paragraph is OK.
http://library.ceu.edu/using-the-library/access-and-membership/

Use lists
Use pictures & visual elements

http://library.ceu.edu/help/search-tools/

http://library.ceu.edu/using-the-library/
Mission

The central business objective of CEU is to provide academic programs that prepare students for careers in a rapidly changing business environment.

Buildings are not only centers of learning, but also vibrant, active community spaces. CEU believes in the power of ideas, creativity, innovation, and collaboration, and it is committed to fostering an environment that encourages these values. Together with our students, we strive to create a dynamic learning community that is rich in diversity and inclusivity.

A study

“Measuring the Effect of Improved Web Writing”

How Users Read on the Web

Summary: People don’t read web pages word by word. Instead, they scan the page, seeking out important words and sentences.

- A study of how people read websites found that 70 percent of our text is never read. People tend to scan web pages, looking for headings, links, and other key elements.
- Web pages that use white space effectively tend to be easier to read than those that do not.

http://library.ceu.edu/about/mission/

http://www.nngroup.com/articles/how-users-read-on-the-web/
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Version</th>
<th>Sample Paragraph</th>
<th>Usability Improvement (relative to control condition)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promotional writing control condition</td>
<td>Nebraska is filled with internationally recognized attractions that draw large crowds of people every year without fail. In 1998, some of the most popular places were Fort Robinson State Park (365,000 visitors), Scotts Bluff National Monument (101,864), Arikaree Lodge State Historical Park &amp; Museum (80,000), Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer (60,000), and Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park (38,448).</td>
<td>0% (by definition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concise text with about half the word count as the control condition</td>
<td>In 1998, six of the best attended attractions in Nebraska were Fort Robinson State Park, Scotts Bluff National Monument, Arikaree Lodge State Historical Park &amp; Museum, Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer, and Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park.</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

43  
http://www.nngroup.com/articles/how-users-read-on-the-web/
Objective language using concrete, clear, measurable language is the same as the control condition.

Nebraska has several attractions. In 1996, some of the most visited places were Fort Robinson State Park (335,200 visitors), Scotts Bluff National Monument (132,888), Arbor Lodge State Historical Park & Museum (202,890), Carnegie (88,696), Dillin Museum of the Prairie Pioneer (60,000), and Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park (26,448).

In 1996, six of the most visited places in Nebraska were:
- Fort Robinson State Park
- Scotts Bluff National Monument
- Arbor Lodge State Historical Park & Museum
- Carnegie
- Dillin Museum of the Prairie Pioneer
- Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park

Combined version using all three improvements in writing style:
- concise, clear, measurable, and objective

124%

Part 1

Writing Guidelines
Call attention with useful headings

Types of Headings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>question</th>
<th>May I borrow items from other libraries?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>verb phrase</td>
<td>Borrowing items from other libraries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imperative</td>
<td>Borrow items from other libraries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sentence</td>
<td>You may borrow items from other libraries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noun</td>
<td>Interlibrary Borrowing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When to use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>question</th>
<th>Good for policies, FAQs, user guides.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>verb phrase</td>
<td>Sections of a longer page.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imperative</td>
<td>Instructions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sentence</td>
<td>Sub-headings within a long article.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noun</td>
<td>Only if it names something users are looking for.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Catch the user in the first few words

Think journalism (not academic writing)

- Who, what, where, when, why and how
- Start with the conclusion, then give the details
Use the active voice, personal pronouns, and action verbs

Think in short stories

- Use active voice, personal pronouns, action verbs.

When users "think aloud" through a paragraph in typical academic style, they translate the passive, noun-based writing into stories.
Passive vs. active

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An acknowledgement of the order will be issued via an e-mail message when payment is made by credit card.</td>
<td>If you pay by credit card, we'll send you an e-mail acknowledging your order.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Write what you would say to them if you were talking on the phone.

Set the context with the “given/new” principle

The “given -> new” principle
Start with what the user already knows, or something that lets the user say “this applies to me,” then give the new information.

Example:
If you need a customer service phone, please place your order by phone and report Public Listed Overnight Delivery. We're sorry but overnight delivery is not yet available otherwise.
Use lists (numbered for instructions)

Advantages of lists

- They make it easy to scan
- They create chunks
- They separate ideas
- They show relationships
- They allow counting

Nielsen: lists improved usability by 47%
[https://www.nngroup.com/articles/how-users-read-on-the-web/](https://www.nngroup.com/articles/how-users-read-on-the-web/)

Give instructions with imperatives
Give instructions with imperatives

To make instructions easy for users to follow:

- Use numbered lists.
- Use imperatives: “Do this.”
- Put some space between the steps.

Use parallelisms

People like patterns:

- We grasp the information more quickly if we can anticipate the pattern.
- We try to see patterns in information even when there are none.
- When we have to switch patterns, we use extra mental energy.
Use simple words

Your audiences are almost always broader than you think.

• If your site is for the public, avoid internal language.
• If your site is internal only, consider how many different audiences you have inside.
• Even highly educated people read simpler words faster.
Try fragments, but not telegraphic writing

**Fragments**

- Space is always at a premium.
- Complete sentences are not always necessary.
- But telegraphic writing doesn't save time because the user has to mentally put the little words back in.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fragments</th>
<th>Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reaction is the result without the limit of attention. The energy of sudden. The celebration of our honorary二字eter.</td>
<td>Small</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Telegraph writing</th>
<th>Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>User getsunga e-mail message when pass</td>
<td>Small</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Make links descriptive

Links that are descriptive are more useful than links that name categories. (Jakob Nielsen)

- Links that are a few words long are most useful.
- Words must be informative – not jargon.
- They should be self-explanatory.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No (too vague):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Searchable Resources: procedures, you can search for books, journals, e-journals, thesis and more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjects/Contents: topics related to specific subjects &amp; courses at this institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services: research help, ordering articles, library tours and more</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Combine the guidelines

**Combined guidelines**

- The heading is a question.
- Each paragraph ends with a question mark ("If you are...")
- It’s what you’d say to someone on the telephone.
Design Hints

Headings should be close to the text they cover.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heading One</td>
<td>Heading One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Item one</td>
<td>1. Item one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Item two</td>
<td>2. Item two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Item three</td>
<td>3. Item three</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heading Two</th>
<th>Heading Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Item one</td>
<td>1. Item one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Item two</td>
<td>2. Item two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Item three</td>
<td>3. Item three</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Avoid all caps
It slows reading

Readers scan more quickly when they can see the letter shapes.
Which is easier to read?

Tops of letters help us recognize shapes

The cat sat on the mat
The cat sat on the mat

Sentence case vs. title case

Sentence case:
More bumps than a camel
More bumps than a camel

Title case:
More Bumps Than A Camel

Title case takes longer to scan.

Centered text is harder to read than left-aligned text

Avoid justified text

even at low tide, and home to a narrow
long salt marsh, a flowing saltmarsh
surface carpeting the feet of the hillside,
which was covered with brush and ferns
and small rose and starthistle with
the

The grass of the marsh was almost
entirely submerged at this point of the
side, home to future mires, forming
horizontally this way and that, pushed
first downstream by the river flow, that
origin at the highest point of the

A straight margin helps users scan quickly.
Use left-aligned text

- Monographs
  - The 134,000 monograph collection of our 391,000-volume house includes a diverse range of scholarly works spanning many centuries. Monographs are predominantly in English but also include works in other languages and are accessible through the library's online catalog.

- Periodicals
  - The 675,000-periodical collection is comprehensive and includes current and historical periodicals. Periodicals are available both in print and digital formats. Access is provided through the library's online catalog.

- Multimedia collections
  - The multimedia collections include a wide variety of audio, video, and image resources. The collection offers a rich selection of cultural, educational, and entertainment materials. Access is available through the library's online catalog.
Use vertical columns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Total circulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>903</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use high contrast between background color and type color

Poor
Part 2

Mobile Web
So many screen sizes

Responsive web design

Adapts to any screen size.

Fluid layouts

http://nicolehennig.com
Applying these guidelines

How would you improve this?

Interested persons, on or before June 14, 2013, may submit to the Hearing Clerk, 1000 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20000, written comments regarding this proposal. Faxed comments will be accepted at 202-555-1234. To submit comments electronically, go to this site: [URL was here]

My version

We invite you to comment on this proposal.

Deadline: June 14, 2013.

Choose your preferred way to get in touch.

- online  www.123.gov
- mail  Hearing Clerk  1000 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  Washington, DC 20000
- fax  202-555-1234  Attn: John Jones
Discussion

- Do you write content for websites or social media?
- Which of these tips would help you the most?

Part 2

Email

Same rules apply to email

Version 1: Lone Dark Email

Subject: Tomorrow's meeting
Subject: Wednesday’s meeting has been moved from 1pm to 2pm

Version 2: Lone Dark Email

Subject: my upcoming webinar
Subject: Is a date change possible for my Dec. 18 webinar?

Subject lines - be specific

Subject: Tomorrow’s meeting
Subject: Wednesday’s meeting has been moved from 1pm to 2pm

Subject: my upcoming webinar
Subject: Is a date change possible for my Dec. 18 webinar?

Your key message near the top

2. Present your email thoughtfully
   - Open the right amount of whitespace so that your reader is able to read your message easily, and words
     - Place your key message near to whom reads the top of the first line of your reader sees
     - Organize the most important information for the last important
     - Send the number of lines needed for the email to increase the chance of a response
     - Write clearly and ask to the first part of a one to two or three
     - Use short, everyday words instead of jargon and difficult words
     - Avoid unnecessary and poor your reader want fundamental
     - Keep formatting simple

https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/effective-e-mail-communication/

**Lead with the ask**

- She knows it’s a speaking invitation.
- She knows the date and location.
- She knows it has impressive attendance numbers.
- After that, she can read the details and learn more about the conference.

**Can you do this? Five sentences (or less)**

Who, what, why, when

**Who else to copy?**

http://www.writebetteremails.com/to-cc.htm

https://www.fastcompany.com/3064429/three-ways-to-write-shorter-more-effective-emails

https://www.lifehack.org/articles/communication/mastering-the-short-email.html
We looked at closings in over 350,000 email threads. We used messages from mailing list archives of over twenty different online communities. These emails proved to be a great sample for looking at variations in response rate, as many entailed people asking for help or advice, hoping for a reply.

>Closing with a thank you gets higher response rate

A real email from me to the library director and her assistant at the West Tisbury Library on Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts. They know me because I’ve done workshops for them before.
A site that works well

nypl.org

http://www.nypl.org

https://www.nypl.org/get-help
Some ideas for NYPL privacy policy

- more bold headings
- try to match section of the page at top
- find and use parallelisms
- more simple words & friendly language
- emphasize principles
- use lists
- sentence case instead of title case for headings
- convenient links to other places
- consider FAQ format (questions as headings)

Before (NYPL Privacy Policy)

6. The information collected and released to the Library varies depending on the context.

3. Circulating materials checked out with standard NYPL library cards issued to individuals and organizations. This information provides the following reasons to release personal information:

- E-commerce: To process transactions, such as online sales, digital content sales, library card sales, and promotions
- E-Commerce: To process transactions, such as online sales, digital content sales, library card sales, and promotions
- E-Commerce: To process transactions, such as online sales, digital content sales, library card sales, and promotions
- E-Commerce: To process transactions, such as online sales, digital content sales, library card sales, and promotions

1. Circulating materials checked out with standard NYPL library cards issued to individuals and organizations.

The information provided in this paragraph covers standard transactions by borrowers of NYPL's circulating materials (excluding eContent, e.g., eBooks, eVideo, eMusic, and eAudiobooks) with traditional NYPL library cards.

When you check out a book, video, CD, or any other circulating item, the library system tracks the item you check out, including your library card number, the title of the item you check out, the date the item was checked out, the date the item was due, and the date the item was returned.

The information is collected electronically and is stored in the library's integrated library system. This information is used to manage your account, including tracking the items you have checked out, the dates they were due, and whether you have returned them on time.

The information is also used to generate reports for the library's management and to comply with legal requirements, such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

After (NYPL Privacy Policy)

6. The information collected and retained by the Library varies depending on the context.

We keep this information only as long as needed in order to protect your privacy.

1. Circulating materials checked out with standard NYPL library cards issued to individuals and organizations.

The information provided in this paragraph covers standard transactions by borrowers of NYPL's circulating materials, including eContent and traditional NYPL library cards.

When you check out a book, video, CD, or any other circulating item, the library system tracks the item you check out, including your library card number, the title of the item you check out, the date the item was checked out, the date the item was due, and the date the item was returned.

The information is collected electronically and is stored in the library's integrated library system. This information is used to manage your account, including tracking the items you have checked out, the dates they were due, and whether you have returned them on time.

The information is also used to generate reports for the library's management and to comply with legal requirements, such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
If an item is returned after the due date and the fine associated with that item is not paid when the item is returned, then we keep a record of that transaction until the fine is paid.

As a precaution, we also keep a record of information contained in our integrated library system on books that are behind in fees. These fees are purged on a rolling basis so that only four weeks of transaction history is kept on any given item.

Using Our Collaborative Features

Please note that some of the Library’s services and programs, such as Summer Reading and any collaborative features available through the Library’s catalog, may allow you to make information about materials borrowed or otherwise used by you available publicly.

If you use these services, please read the description of the services carefully, and be aware that anyone who searches for your name in the Library’s catalog can view any materials you have borrowed or otherwise used.

Learn more about the use of your information with collaborative features.

Boston Public Library

https://www.bpl.org/about-us/official-policies/appropriate-library-use/

Headings would make it easier to understand

https://www.bpl.org/about-us/official-policies/appropriate-library-use/
Headings would make it easier to understand

Examples of conduct not allowed on library property:
- Eating, drinking, or tobacco products
- Creating noise or disturbing others
- Using pets, except service animals
- Using electronic devices that play audio (e.g., music, movies, games)
- Using outdoor equipment (e.g., skateboards, bicycles)
- Using outdoor furniture
- Smoking, vaping, or using other tobacco products

Examples of conduct not allowed in the library:
- Using electronic devices without permission
- Using electronic devices in areas where they are prohibited
- Using electronic devices in areas where they are allowed but must be turned off

Important:
- All electronic devices must be turned off or set to a sleep mode when used in the library.
- No personal items are allowed in the library.

Headings would make it easier to understand

Examples of conduct not allowed on library property:
- Smoking, vaping, or using other tobacco products
- Unattended children
- Using electronic devices without permission
- Using electronic devices in areas where they are prohibited
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Important:
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Headings would make it easier to understand

Examples of conduct not allowed on library property:
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Important:
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- No personal items are allowed in the library.
Part 3

Accessibility

https://library.duke.edu/about/privacy

https://www.w3.org/TR/2018/REC-WCAG21-20180605/
Accessibility

Which accessibility items do you need to pay attention to when writing page copy?

Accessibility issues for text

- Heading structure <H1> <H2> (don't skip a number)
- Descriptive links
- Simple language
- Color - high contrast

Accessibility issues for multimedia

- Videos should not auto-play and should have captions
- Use the "alt" attribute for images

Learn about “alt” text: http://webaim.org/techniques/alttext/
Functions of the "alt" attribute

- Spoken out loud by screen readers
- Text is shown if images are not loading or turned off
- Describes content of images for search engines

Learn about “alt” text: [http://webaim.org/techniques/alttext/](http://webaim.org/techniques/alttext/)
The "alt" attribute should

- Accurately present the content and function of the image
- Be succinct
- Not be redundant with the surrounding text
- Not use "image of..." or "graphic of..."

Learn about “alt” text: [http://webaim.org/techniques/alttext/](http://webaim.org/techniques/alttext/)

Using an empty "alt" attribute

In some cases (decorative images), an empty attribute is fine.

(alt="")

This image of a rule is decorative.

Learn about “alt” text: [http://webaim.org/techniques/alttext/](http://webaim.org/techniques/alttext/)

Learn to write the best "alt" text for images

### High-level decisions

- Choose an accessible theme for your website
- Web forms have special accessibility requirements

### Good lists of accessible themes

https://webaccess.berkeley.edu/resources/tips/web-accessibility
https://www.webaccessibility.com

https://www.hongkiat.com/blog/accessibility-ready-wordpress-themes/
https://premium.wpmudev.org/blog/make-your-wordpress-site-accessible/

### Learning More

Part 3
Recommended books

Letting Go of the Words: [http://www.redish.net/books/item/5](http://www.redish.net/books/item/5)

Don’t Make Me Think: [http://www.sensible.com/dmmt.html](http://www.sensible.com/dmmt.html)

Accessibility

[https://webaim.org/](https://webaim.org/)

Hemingway Editor

Free images

https://thenounproject.com
https://pixabay.com
https://unsplash.com

Resource guide

https://tinyurl.com/hennig-writing

Go forth and improve your sites!