10 Ways to Improve Your Web Content

— Scott Dasse & Annie Laurie Sanchez
Terms we will not use today

- Usability
- Information Architecture
- User Experience
- Human Factors
- Personas
- Microcopy
- WordPress
1 Know your users
1. Know your users

- Why do people visit your pages?
- What are they hoping to learn?
- What are they hoping to do?
Know your users

Provide **useful** information based on your users’ goals.
Know your users

Provide useful information based on your users’ needs.
Be concise
Be concise

What can I absorb in about 3 seconds?
Be concise

- Make it skimmable
- Provide simple labels
- Avoid jargon
- Get to the point quickly
- Avoid filler and formality
Findings from Nielsen Norman Group’s usability studies using eye tracking technology. From useit.com.
3 Organize intuitively
Organize intuitively

Group items together into logical categories.
Organize intuitively

Cherries
Apples
Chicken
Rice
Nuts
Tofu
Bread
Bananas
Grapefruit
Eggs
Pasta
Organize intuitively

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fruits</th>
<th>Grains</th>
<th>Protein</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apples</td>
<td>Bread</td>
<td>Chicken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bananas</td>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>Eggs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherries</td>
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<td>Tofu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grapefruit</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nuts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3 Organize intuitively

Backup & Restore  Computer Labs  BU Login
Directory Services  Purchasing  E-mail Accounts
BU Linux  IT Help Center  Working Remotely
Wired Network  Repair Services  Using BU (802.1x)
Wireless Network  VirusScan  BU Google Apps

(This list is hard.)
3 Organize intuitively

Prioritize content based on your audiences’ goals.
Organize intuitively

The content hierarchy

primary content
related content
other stuff
Organize intuitively

The content hierarchy on a web page

primary content

related

other

other
Emphasize keywords
Click here to win a million dollars.
Find out how to win a million dollars.
The Massachusetts State Lottery was established by the legislature in 1971 in response to the need for revenues for the 351 cities and towns of the commonwealth. Find out how to win a million dollars or more by playing one of the nation’s largest lotteries.
5 Format like a designer
5 Format like a designer

- Use headings h1–h3
- Use bulleted and numbered lists
- Apply tables (if appropriate)
- Allow for extra space
Build on substance
Don’t just say you’re great. **Prove it.**
"The word **excellence** is like perfume."

— Robert A. Brown
7 Write with style
Write with style

• Be conversational
• Use an active tone and actionable words
• Use the correct terminology
• Check BU’s editorial style guide
8 Use meaningful visuals
Users pay close attention to relevant photos and images.
Use meaningful visuals

Eye-tracking heat map of a baby looking directly at us. From the UsableWorld study.
Use meaningful visuals

Users ignore photos merely included as decorative artwork.
8 Use meaningful visuals

Images must directly support textual content.
Embrace scrolling
Embrace scrolling

- The fold is dead (sort of)
- Combine short pages to make a longer, content rich page
Embrace scrolling

Without scrolling, I should see:

- Page title
- Navigation to main sections
- Search field
- Value proposition — what’s here for me?
As the document of authority for all students, the Bulletin is your guide to the departments, programs, policies, faculty, and courses at BU. Requirements listed here take precedence over information found elsewhere.
Keep it up
Estimate how long it will take to develop your content. (Then triple it.)
10. Keep it up

- Don’t let news or events feeds go stale
- Social media destinations should be active
- Avoid using language that will appear dated almost instantly
Keep it up

*Evaluate, and re-evaluate.*

- Is it useful information?
- Is it easy to skim?
- Is it pleasant to read?
1. Know your users
2. Be concise
3. Organize intuitively
4. Emphasize keywords
5. Format like a designer
6. Build on substance
7. Write with style
8. Use meaningful visuals
9. Embrace scrolling
10. Keep it up