

The 5 essential skills for great web writing

Web design keeps changing

The wonderful Leslie O'Flahavan gave a great presentation/workshop last week about new web design trends and how they affect web writing. You can download it [here](#). Some of these trends include infinite scrolling (like on the Time Magazine website, where you can just keep scrolling down through endless articles) and the large-type front page (like this, on this page with A to X Writing Advice). There's also a trend to include pre-made shareable content (usually pre-written tweets).

How people access a website has to be considered

Then there is the need (this is *not* a trend) to have everything visible and rendering appropriately on any device people happen to be using to access your website—desktop, laptop, tablet or smartphone. Type has to be readable. Although these issues are solvable by good design and web architecture, web writers have to consider these when deciding how to present which information.

Web writing is not quite the same as writing for print

Since most every business, nonprofit and news organization is on the web, web/content writing is probably the largest type of writing being done today. Yet, it is not as if you can just take your print materials, digitize them and call it a day. Clearly, there is a lot to consider when you are writing for the web.

What makes for a good web writer?

Can just anybody write for the web? Not really. I think people

can be taught how to write for the web, but not everybody has the ability to be like Leslie and be able to see what is going on in web design, spot trends and realize how these new changes affect web content.

The five essential skills of a great web writer:

1. The ability to spot the trends. This also means keeping on top of UX (user experience) and other issues that affect how websites are designed.

2. Understanding how the new design trends affect what you write. It's not enough to spot the trends. You need to be able to see how those trends impact what content should be included and how it should be written.

3. Ability to write in short and long formats. As Leslie describes in her presentation, there's the snack and then there's the meal. You have to be able to write short, snappy headlines but also be able to write longer, more "meaty" content.

4. Ability to synthesize information. You are called on to write short descriptions, whether it be for pre-made tweets or web page headings. In order to do this, you must be able to take a lot of information and condense it. It's helpful if you can explain things simply too.

5. Visual and design sensibility. Being able to understand the role that visual and design play in how a website is read and viewed is key, as the ability to work with graphic/web designers to make your content look appealing.

Have you noticed website writing has changed? Have you seen websites that look great but read poorly? What is your experience with web writing?