

Creating Good Web Content

By now you have probably heard that people scan webpages rather than read them. This is certainly true for me. There is nothing that sends me elsewhere faster than a big page of fat paragraphs. The second thing that sends me packing is dated content.

Good web content has to be persuasive. You are trying to keep the visitor on your page or direct the visitor to other pages you want them to see. Paragraphs need to be short with active language, bullet lists are nice but not always the solution. Putting words in bold typeface works but can also be overdone. Links in the text are good but remember, when they click the link, they will be leaving your page. Moderation and balance, just like everything in life.

Think about your audience: prospective students, current students, parents, alumni, faculty and staff. Who are you writing for?

Images should be used but also changed frequently, as this indicates quickly to a visitor that there maybe something new here.

So your tasks are:

- Keep it simple
- Keep it fresh
- Write for your audience
- Change the images frequently

Don't be afraid to test your pages, ask current students or people you know what they think of a page. Just because you like something doesn't mean it works on the web. Sorry all you clip-art lovers, but clip-art reeks of homemade and to me it means the content creator couldn't be bothered to go find a good image to go with the story even though there are millions of images available online.

It is easy for me to tell you what not to do, the hard work is yours. And as soon as you are done creating the perfect content, start over because content is like fruit, it ripens and then rots. No one likes overripe content.

More info: <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~webteach/articles/text.html>

Terms to Google: writing strong web copy or content

Reusing and copying content

Content is that stuff that goes in the middle on our webpages. Though you can create it in the page, it lives in a separate area (notice the content tab at the top of the CMS window). This means that you can reuse content on more than one page. This is done by selecting reuse content from the dropdown menu of the container. Let's say you created some great content and want to reuse it but also make some changes without changing the original content. You need to open the original content and select the "copy" button on the bottom of the page. Then select the content tab at the top and search the name of the content. You should see two versions, one which has (copy) next to it. You can open the copy, rename it, and edit it as needed. Then goto the page where you want to use it and select reuse content and browse for the content you just edited.

The Left Hand navigation menu – how to do it has been documented (see PDFs) just remember that you should limit the left nav so as to not overwhelm your vistors.

<http://www.gettysburg.edu/dotAsset/2089078.pdf>

<http://www.gettysburg.edu/dotAsset/2090057.pdf>

<http://www.gettysburg.edu/dotAsset/2090055.pdf>