

Using IFADAsia: Top Tips for Improving your online writing style

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1. General tips

Understand your audience

Studies show that people behave **very** differently when they read online than when reading a book or printed document.

The most important things to remember is that

- They read as little as possible
- They **scan** for information
- If you don't easily provide the information, they will click away very quickly

Because of this, it is essential we **write differently for web communication**

Aim for **quality** not **quantity**

... put your word count on a diet

On a page with 200 words, the average reader only reads around

40%

How your content will appear:

In IFADAsia content can appear in three ways:

1. Just the headline, in a list
2. The headline, plus the first few lines of text in a list
3. The full article

5 Ws & and H

This is regarded as the basis of good information gathering:

- WHO is it about?
- WHAT happened?
- WHERE did it take place?
- WHEN did it take place?
- HOW did it happen?
- WHY did it happen?

Link! Link!! Link!!!

Don't feel that you need to include all background information to your article. It's better to add links to content elsewhere which has this, and which allow interested readers to find out more, without distracting those who don't need it.

Because links are often highlighted and underlined, the reader scanning will notice them more than the rest of the text.

Therefore, rather than just writing and linking the words '[click here](#)', it's better to actually use a few meaningful words to describe where the link takes you.

Links should be 2—5 words.

e.g. Read more about [writing for the web](#)

SOAA! (spell out all acronyms)

Just because they're familiar to you, doesn't mean that they are to others

2. The Headline

Your headline is the most important part!

- It is often is the only thing a reader will see.
- It is vital that it makes sense out of context so readers know what they'll be reading about before they click.

Headlines should be:

1. Short – aim for 5 words, with a maximum of 10
2. Informative *and* catchy — loaded with keywords
3. Understandable out of context – readers should know what they're reading about before they click on the title
4. Can use single apostrophe to 'quote' or double to "quote speech"
5. Written in present tense

e.g. **'Progress' in Pacific trade talks**
Apple brings new iPad to China

Before or After?

If possible, you should think about what you want to say, and write your headline **before** you write the article.

Your headline is a **promise** about what lies beyond in the article — so make that promise and then fulfil it by writing a great, focused piece.

Read news website headlines for **inspiration**.
One of the best is the **BBC**

3. The article itself

Tops tips for your writing:

- Highlight keywords in bold
- Use meaningful subheadings
- Use bulleted or numbered lists
- Use short paragraphs – one idea per paragraph means that if readers scan the first line they will still get the idea.
- Use objective language, never promotional/marketing writing style – studies show this increases credibility and even improves the speed of reading and understanding.

Turn the pyramid upside down!

Start by writing the most important things you have to say.

Imagine someone is going to only read the first half—what message would they take away?

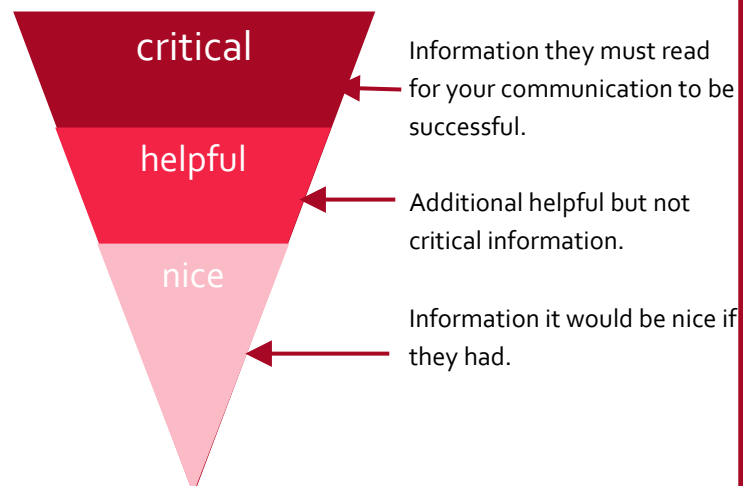
Now imagine they only read the first three lines.



Academic style:
Start with the foundation
Build up to the conclusion



Online style:
Start with the conclusion
Follow with supporting information & background



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