Writing for the Web Resources

Mobile First Philosophy

The Mobile First Philosophy means focusing design on mobile devices before progressing to the desktop.

Designing for the smaller screens forces us to focus and prioritize our content to these narrower constraints.

Prioritizing content, placing the most important and relevant information first, will enhance the experience for the user whether they are on a mobile device or a desktop.

Food for Thought

This is a photo of a webpage designed to fit into the constraints of a phone but the content isn’t optimized or prioritized. The result is a 13 foot webpage. Would you scroll past the first foot?

"The photo shows a responsive website printed out at the width of an iPhone."

"What the prop is meant to depict is how ridiculously long the mobile version of the site would have been if we did not optimize. I’ve used it in several presentations, and I think it makes the case for optimization quite nicely. Unfortunately, the original message is not always conveyed along with the image. Therefore, the response has typically been some internet teeth gnashing over how silly it is that such a site would ever be served to small screen devices. My point exactly."

Pasted from <http://erikrunyon.com/2014/02/the-13-foot-website/>
User Behavior

Users scan the webpage before leaving or reading for more information.

Users scan the content on the page typically in an F-pattern.

Clear headings, bold and italic text, and link text help focus the user’s attention on key information. Scanning the webpage helps to determine if you have the information they want. Users want to know what they are getting into before they read on. A user typically reads 20% of the words. Even high-literacy users scan text.

All users, regardless of reading ability behave this way in research.

The F-Pattern

If you squint and focus on the red (most-viewed) areas, all three heatmaps show the expected F pattern. Of course, there are some differences. The F viewing pattern is a rough, general shape rather than a uniform, pixel-perfect behavior.

Implications of the F Pattern

The F pattern’s implications for Web design are clear and show the importance of following the guidelines for writing for the Web instead of repurposing print content:

- Users won’t read your text thoroughly in a word-by-word manner. Exhaustive reading is rare. Yes, some people will read more, but most won’t.
- The first two paragraphs must state the most important information. There’s some hope that users will actually read this material, though they’ll probably read more of the first paragraph than the second.
- Start subheads, paragraphs, and bullet points with information-carrying words [front-loading] that users will notice when scanning down the left side of your content in the final stem of their F-behavior. They’ll read the third word on a line much less often than the first two words.

Writing for the Web

Creating Scannable Text

- Start with an introductory sentence or 2 to set the purpose of the webpage [Inverted Pyramids]
- Have one idea per paragraph (users will skip over any additional ideas if they are not caught by the first few words in the paragraph)
  *Yes, a paragraph can be only 1 sentence
- Use meaningful headlines with 2 to 3 levels of headlines. (i.e., the heading should tell the user what the page or section is about)
- Use bulleted lists when necessary (3 or more bits of information)
- Use bold and emphasised to make important keywords catch the users eye

Inverted Pyramids

Start with the conclusion as a succinct introduction to the information on the page. Then follow with the most important supporting information.
Newspapers use the inverted pyramid because readers can stop reading at any moment and still have the most important information.

Front loading

Users typically scan the first 2 words or 11 characters of headings, and link text (even bulleted lists). Front-load the text/phrase with the most important information carrying words.

Headings

Headings should stand on their own and make sense when the rest of the content is not available.
- Clearly explain the text to follow
- Use simple, clear, plain language
- Exclude "The" and "A"
- Avoid teasers and "cute" and "clever" headings

Heading levels should have a meaningful hierarchy, e.g.:
- Heading Level 1 <h1>
  - Heading Level 2 <h2>
    - Heading Level 3 <h3>
    - Heading Level 3 <h3>
  - Heading Level 2 <h2>
    - Heading Level 3 <h3>
    - Heading Level 4 <h4>
    - Heading Level 4 <h4>
  - Heading Level 2 <h2>

Pasted from <http://www.w3.org/WAI/eval/preliminary.html>
Plain Language & Readability

Plain language is clear and concise writing. The user will understand your message after reading it only once. Readability is the ease with which text can be read and understood. And the speed with which they read the page.

Improve reading ease by:

- Writing for the reader
- Using familiar and simple words
- Being concise
- Using short, simple sentences
- Using short paragraphs
- Organizing sections and ideas in a logical order (from the users point of view)

https://readability-score.com/

This tool is great checking readability. It is helpful to remove heading and lists from the text. Think about the reading level of your audience and their familiar word.

- Readers Digest is at an 9th grade level or a 65 on the Flesch-Kincaid Reading Ease score.
- Accessibility standards suggest an 8th grade level.
- The New York Times is a 39 on the Flesch-Kincaid Reading Ease score.

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<th>Flesch-Kincaid Reading Ease</th>
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<td>30+ to 50</td>
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A Quick Check List

- Page has 4-10 word headlines that explain what is on the page [Scannable Text]
- First paragraph is an introduction to the whole page [Scannable Text / Inverted Paragraph]
- The first fifth of the page contains 50-60% of the essential information. [Inverted Paragraph]
  (The last fifth contains nice to know information.)
- Average sentence length is 12-17 words [Plain Language/Readability]
- Average paragraph length is 20-50 words [Plain Language/Readability]
- Flesch-Kincaid Reading Ease score is 55-70 or higher [Plain Language/Readability]