

Dare to DIY your website content?

Your guide to writing
for the web – like a pro

refresh
marketing



A helping hand for daring DIYers



Now, you might think you'd make the ultimate writer for your own website. After all, who knows your business better than you?

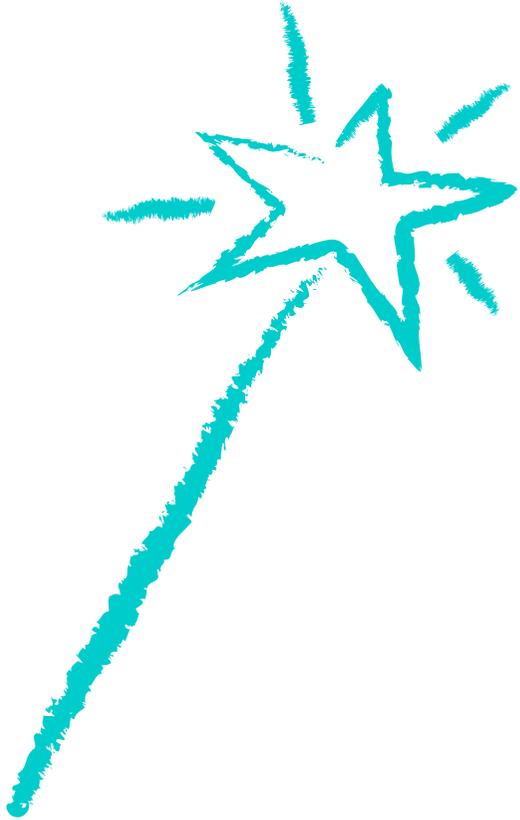
But you'll need a lot more than decent spelling and grammar to get it right.

Because writing for the web is a whole different ball game – one that requires a *very specific* approach to writing.

So, how can you nail your website copy? Get the professionals to do a proper job – *of course*.

But if you're a daring digital newbie writing your own website, here are our best tips from 20 years in the biz.

Now, let's look at how to write web copy that captivates your virtual visitors – and converts them into customers.



The pros' tricks of the trade

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1

Start with your structure

Writing good web content doesn't start with typing words.

It starts with determining the simplest, most intuitive and customer-centric website structure possible.

A clear navigation (otherwise known as your 'information architecture') makes a positive user experience – which will instantly translate to a favourable first impression for your brand.

Even better, your customers and prospects will be more likely to stay on your website for longer (which also pleases the Google Gods).

So if you're committing to a website glow-up, don't just dress your old site in a new design.

A clear and simple navigation

Readers don't fancy a self-guided tour to every corner of your website.

Your online guests are exactly that: guests. And it's up to you to be a good host.

Take them where they want to go – by making sure key messages are front and centre, and other important information is no more than a click away.

Don't

Throw together a messy menu full of disorganised pages.

Use vague menu or page titles that keep your readers guessing (e.g. program/product names new users won't recognise).

Settle on your structure just because it makes sense to you.

Do

Build a simple menu with a handful of primary menu items (aim for no more than five if possible).

Give every page on your menu a clear title that tells readers *exactly* what they'll find.

Use a structure that makes sense to your audience. Get their opinions on how finding information could be more intuitive.

Organise your information logically

If your website doesn't flow, it won't guide your readers. It will confuse them.

So keep information in the right place. And spread it evenly across your website. The more symmetry, the better.

Don't

Include irrelevant information – like prices – on your 'About Us' page.

Build a lopsided menu with piles of pages in some categories, and only a few in others.

Bundle key products or services onto the same page.

Do

Make sure the information on each page matches the page title logically.

Aim for a consistent number of pages under each category of your menu if possible.

Give key products or services their *own* page. (This will improve SEO too.)

Cull pages where you can

Beware of the misconception that more pages equals a higher ranking.

This only occurs when those extra pages perform *well*.

On the other hand, pages without purpose create clutter and weaken the user experience – *lowering* your ranking.

Don't

Have separate pages for small pieces of similar information (e.g. staff profiles and service descriptions).

Clone a page and change the title just to cram in keywords (e.g. 'Ringwood mowing services', 'Box Hill mowing services', 'Mont Albert mowing services').

Do

Group similar small pieces of information on the same page.

Work keywords into a single page where they fit.

Consider your competitors

There's no shame in peeking at your industry's top performers.

Read their websites as a *customer* – not a competitor – to see what works well.

How do they present information?
What makes it flow?
How many sections and pages are there?
How are they linked?

Don't

Blatantly copy your competitors.

Assume your competitors got it right (reality is, they probably haven't).

Do

Adapt your original content to their successful structure.

Review your competitor's website through a critical lens.



2

Make it about your audience

Your website isn't about *you*. It's about *your audience*. And they won't hang around if you harp on about yourself.

They want to know what you can do for *them*.

When people visit your website, they want to know they're in the right place – and how you can help them.

Get to know them

If you want to connect with your readers, you need to *know* them.

Dig deeper than vague demographics like 'Australians in their 20s'. These only explain the 'who'. You need to know the 'why'.



Ask yourself

- What are their key problems and pain points? For example, is their lawn too much work for them? Is their grass patchy?
- What do they value? A cheap solution? A quick job? A *quality* job?
- What motivates them? Saving money? A luxury lifestyle? A functional home?
- How are they feeling when they visit my website? Stressed? Relaxed? Curious? Excited?
- What are their emotional triggers? Control? Ignorance? Unavailability?
- Why would they object to a product or service like mine? Have they had a bad experience with a similar company? Will I need to offer a rationale for a more premium price?

Sell the benefits (not the features)

Your readers don't just want to know what your product or service does. They want to know what it does for *them*.

Instead of

Melbourne Mowing Co. offers same-day mowing services, which are precise and carried out by experienced professionals.

Write

With our same-day service and attention to detail, your lawn will be turning heads before you can say dinner time.

Give them what they want – straight away

Don't make your readers wade through waffle before they find what they need. Your opening statement (on your homepage and every other page) should be about *them*.

Instead of

Melbourne Mowing Co. has provided complete mowing services throughout Melbourne and its surrounds since 1988.

Write

Ready to love your lawn?

Make it personal

Writing in a friendly, conversational tone closes the distance between you and your reader.

So don't be afraid to ask rhetorical questions and create a sense of dialogue. See? It's a lot more engaging, isn't it?

Also, use YOU and YOUR wherever possible. Use WE, US and OURS too, but not as much (remember: it's about *them*, not *you*).



Instead of

Look to Melbourne Mowing Co. for total lawn care. The friendly team are experts in lawn mowing, edge trimming and clippings disposal.

The Melbourne Mowing Co. cares for its clients' lawns.



Write

Want more from your mowing services?

We won't just cut your grass. We'll trim your edges and take care of your clippings too.

We care for your lawns.

3

Write for ruthless scanners

Readers won't mine through your website if they don't strike gold straight away.

The web whizzes at CXL say readers only take 0.5 seconds to form a first impression of your website. Your pages *must* be scannable so they know they're in the right place – right away.

Lead with the most important information

If your audience bothers reading anything, it will most likely be those first couple of sentences on your webpage. Make them count.

Instead of

Welcome to Melbourne Mowing Co's new website. We hope you find our new and improved design helpful.

Write

After a same-day lawn mowing service? You've come to the right place!

Keep paragraphs short

Short paragraphs create white space on your screen and make information stand out – helping your readers scan.

Aim for one to three sentences per paragraph. At most.

Instead of

No two jobs are the same. But with over 30 years of experience, we know our way around even the toughest mowing tasks. From manicuring lawns to tidying acres of overgrowth – if it's grass, we've got it covered.

Write

No two jobs are the same. But with over 30 years of experience, we know our way around even the toughest mowing tasks.

From manicuring lawns to tidying acres of overgrowth – if it's grass, we've got it covered.

Use lots of headings and subheadings (and make them count!)

Scanning eyes are hungry for headings. But it takes more than large, bold fonts to guide your reader.

Your audience should be able to read the heading and know precisely what's to come.

To make sure they can, your headings online should be:

- Clear rather than clever
- As specific as possible
- Jargon-free
- Rich with keywords where possible

 **Instead of**

About

Agrostological expertise

Care

Services

 **Write**

The Melbourne Mowing Co. story

The science behind your luscious lawn

Caring for your lawn after mowing

Lawn mowing services

Use bulleted or numbered lists wherever possible

Lists are easier to scan than paragraphs. So wherever possible, try to turn paragraphs into bulleted or numbered lists.

But keep your lists short. Ideally, three to five items. And *no more* than seven.

Instead of

Our mowing process involves an initial consultation to discuss your requirements. Once we know what you want, we'll begin by trimming your lawn's edges. After that, we'll give your grass a mow. Then we'll tidy up by blowing off your yard and either taking your grass clippings with us or spreading them around your garden for mulch.

Write

Our mowing process includes:

1. Finding out how you want your lawn to look
2. Trimming your lawn's edges
3. Mowing your lawn
4. Tidying leaves and clippings
5. Taking your grass clippings with us – or spreading them around your garden for mulch

Make your links matter

Scanning eyes are also drawn to the links on your web pages. So ensure your link text is helpful and meaningful to your customer.

- NEVER use 'click here' or similar (your links must make sense when read out of context)
- Include a verb in your links to inspire action
- Use keywords where appropriate
- Links should be clear and specific – following a logical user path

Instead of

[Book now](#)

[Click here](#) to contact

Read the [article](#) today!

The [website](#) is now live!

Write

[Lock in your lawn makeover](#)

[Get in touch with the team](#)

[Read the lawn care article](#) today!

The [Mowers' Association website](#) is now live!

4

Use plain English

If you favour fancy words and strung-out sentences, your website will lose touch with your audience.

So keep it simple – with plain English.

What's plain English, you ask? It's language that your audience understands the first time they read it; writing that's clear, simple and concise.

No matter how sophisticated or educated your audience may be, *everyone* prefers writing that's quick to read – and easy to digest.

Keep sentences short (25 words or fewer)

Long sentences lose your readers' attention. They're also a tell-tale sign of trying too hard and being unsure of what message to convey.

Instead of

In the unlikely event that one of our experts has not given you the service you expected, 24/7 assistance can be quickly provided by our friendly and helpful team.

Write

If you have any issues with our service, please call us any time.

Use the active voice

The active voice is clearer, more direct and more engaging than the passive voice.

Write in the active voice by placing the subject at the start of your sentence.

Instead of

Let your lawn be mown and maintained by the pros.

It is the client's responsibility to ensure the property can be accessed and the lawn can be mowed by us.

Monthly or bi-monthly lawn maintenance can be scheduled.

Write

Let the pros mow and maintain your lawn.

You are responsible for ensuring we can access and mow the property.

You can schedule monthly or bi-monthly lawn maintenance.

Cut the wordy phrases

Some phrases only add fluff to your writing. And fluff makes for a weak website.

Often, one word can send the *exact* same message as many. So always look for ways to say the same thing – with fewer words.

Instead of

A number of

Due to the fact that

In many cases

In order to

In the event that

In the near future

The majority

Write

Some

Because

Often

To

If

Soon

Most

Avoid nominalisations

Nominalisations are nouns formed from verbs. Use the verb form instead of the noun form to send a stronger message.

Instead of

We can perform maintenance on your lawn.

We'll make an arrangement to mow your lawn monthly.

We'll conduct an assessment of your grass.

We need to take into consideration any wildlife in your yard.

Write

We can maintain your lawn.

We'll arrange to mow your lawn monthly.

We'll assess your grass.

We need to consider any wildlife in your yard.

Keep adjectives and adverbs to a minimum

Strong web content doesn't need to over-describe.

Here are some common culprits to avoid.

Instead of

Our experienced, professional and helpful service team is on call 24/7 to successfully solve your mowing issues, problems and woes.

Write

Our team is on call 24/7 to solve your mowing woes.

Remove repetition and redundancies

Using more words than necessary confuses the point you want to convey.

So avoid multiple sentences that send the same message. And *definitely* don't pair two words or phrases that mean the same thing.

Instead of

No mowing job is too tough for our team. We can tackle even the trickiest lawns.

Expert specialists

Helpful assistance

New innovations

Urgently with little notice

Write

No mowing job is too tough for our team.

Specialists

Help

Innovations

Urgently

Ditch the jargon, clichés and buzzwords

Corporate speak is off-putting. And your readers will see right through it.

They'll respect your business more if you use everyday words.

Instead of

Cutting-edge

Advantageous

Deliverables

Leverage

Mission-critical

Optimum

Strategic

Value-add

Write

Advanced

Helpful, useful

Results

Gain, win

Critical

Best

Smart

Extra features

Purge the modifiers and qualifiers

Words like 'really', 'very', 'highly', 'probably', 'definitely' and 'extremely' add no value to your writing. Instead, they reek of overselling. So steer clear of them.

Instead of

Our extremely precise methods leave you with a lawn you're definitely sure to love.

Write

Our precise methods leave you with a lawn you'll love.



5

Beware the keyword overkill

Did you know that keyword density is only a small part of Google's algorithm? Less than 5%, according to some SEO experts.

Google's top priority? The user experience.

So it's humans – not robots – who you need to impress.

And it's blatantly obvious to those humans when you go keyword crazy. In fact, Google doesn't appreciate it either, and will even punish you for it by pushing your website down the rankings.

Of course, include keywords where they naturally fit. But not to the point where they're repetitive enough to put your readers off.

Only include keywords where they make sense

This one seems obvious. But some websites *do* sacrifice sense for SEO – especially when a keyword is tricky to integrate.

Let's look at 'mowing services Melbourne' for example.

Don't write

Do you need mowing services Melbourne?

We started offering our mowing services Melbourne in 1988.

Do write

The finest mowing services Melbourne has to offer.

We've offered mowing services Melbourne wide since 1988.

Don't overdo it

Subtlety is key. Too much keyword stuffing will scare off your readers
– boosting your bounce rate and pushing you down the search engine rankings.



Don't write

We're a Melbourne lawn mowing services provider offering Melbourne lawn mowing services in Melbourne.



Do write

We offer lawn mowing services in Melbourne.



Crank up your credibility

The web is bursting at the seams with businesses making unsubstantiated claims and promises. And your prospects will click away at the slightest whiff of a disingenuous boast-fest.

Even if people are in the market for your product or service, you still need to make them *believe* your business is the right choice.

Avoid beaten-to-death terms

Don't promise 'award-winning', 'world-class', 'cutting edge', 'new generation' products or services if you can't back it up. Your readers will roll their eyes – and see through it in a millisecond.

Substitute vague descriptions with specific facts.

Tip: If someone said 'prove it', what would you say?

Instead of

Award-winning mowing services.

Experienced team.

Write

Grass Cutter AU's Mower of the Year (2022).

50 years of combined experience.

Let others do the bragging for you

People take testimonials seriously. But if you want your readers to lap them up, you'll have to do better than throwing together a bunch of generic compliments.

✓ Top tips for testimonials

Keep them genuine.

Make them varied, specific and relevant.

Specify the source (with a name and company/location – not something vague like 'customer, South Yarra').

Put them where your readers will see them organically (sprinkled on key pages).

Promote (and deliver on) a worthwhile guarantee

People perceive less risk when looking at your business if they're covered by a solid guarantee.

Don't settle for statements like 'satisfaction guaranteed'. Tell your reader what you'll do if they're dissatisfied.

And make it as simple as possible – with minimal conditions.

 **Instead of**

Satisfaction guaranteed.

 **Write**

Don't love our work on your lawn? The next mow is on us!

Admit your weaknesses

This strategy can *seriously* help you build trust and stand out from the crowd – especially if you can highlight a positive.

Don't

Claim to be the best in the business – with zero faults.

Do

Be open with your audience. Mention your weaknesses and try to turn them into a positive.

For example:

'Our process might not be the quickest, but it means we mow your lawn right the first time.'

Proofread before you publish!

For such an important and obvious tip, this one sure seems to get overlooked.

Too many websites are teeming with typos and grammar goofs. These muck ups can make your brand look amateur – and tell your future customers that your business lacks attention-to-detail.

So don't publish anything to your website without a proper proofread.

✓ **Follow a proofreading guide**
A set process keeps your approach to proofreading thorough and consistent.

✓ **Forget about it**
Never proofread your writing immediately after you have written it. The longer you can leave it, the better. It will help ensure you read what you have actually written – rather than what you think you have written.

✓ **Find some fresh eyes**
Get a second pair of eyes to look over your web content. Other people are not as close to your writing as you are. And they are more likely to pick up errors that you will simply not see.

✓ **Read it out aloud**
Find somewhere to tuck yourself away and read your work out loud. Or, if you're confident, shout it out for the whole office to hear. It will force you to pay attention to every word and punctuation mark.

Good luck with
your writing, you
DIY daredevil!

And if you DO need help
with your website content,
we're only a click away.

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