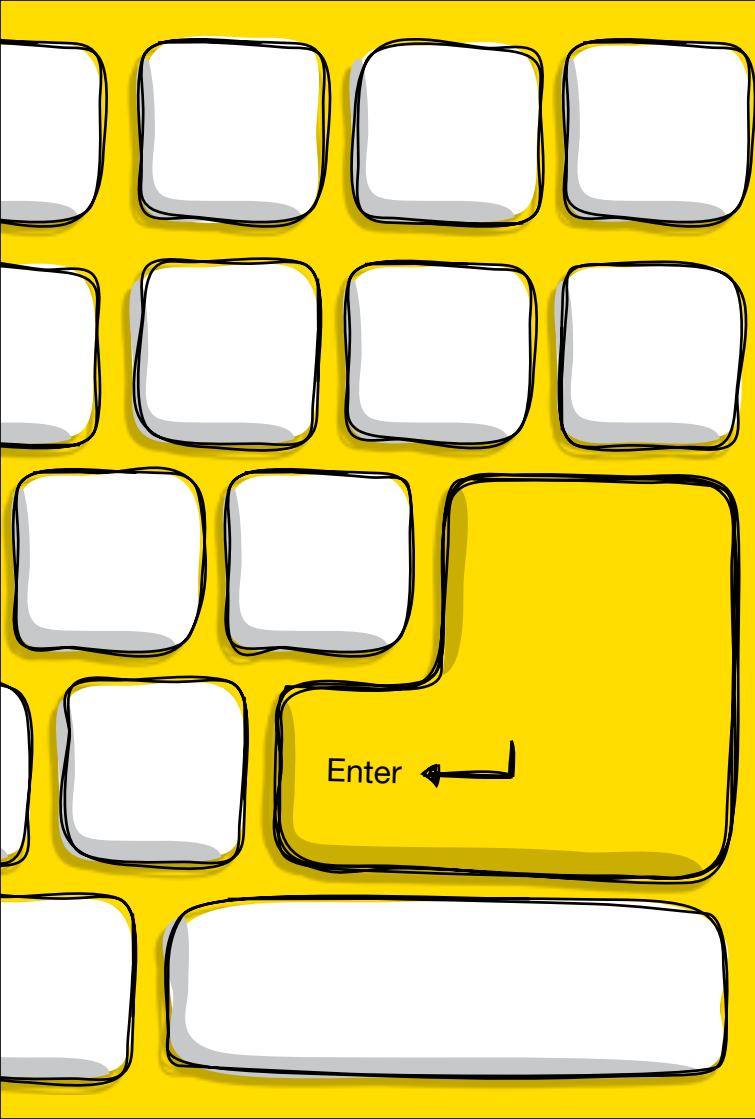


A Word in Your Ear

Writing copy for websites



CREATIVE

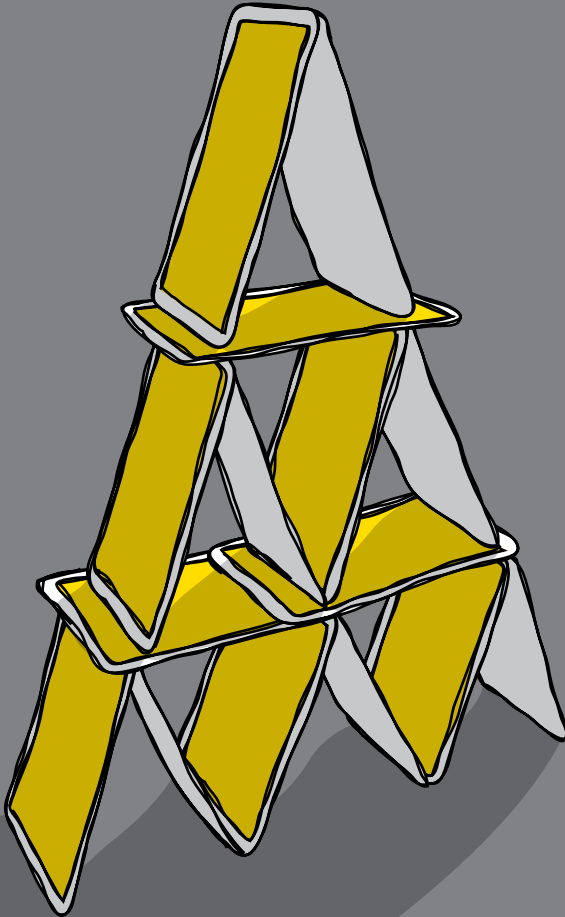


Let's forget the complicated, technical stuff.

This handy little booklet is all about one little word with big connotations. ***Communication.*** Whether you're writing for the web, composing a letter, crafting a brochure or initiating a conversation... the basic rules of the game are the same. *'Grab their attention, then say something interesting and relevant.'* But, while the basics are really simple, creating websites that communicate properly is also very complicated. Which is, of course, why we've created this handy little booklet for you.

Build the right structure

(Otherwise, the building could fall down)



In a brochure the headline, opening paragraph and body copy are usually read in sequence. On a website readers will search for their key words in your text. They'll only need full information when they arrive at their destination. This simple structure details the key three levels and provides a road map for a successful journey:

The introduction and main navigation

The home page and the 'landing' pages.

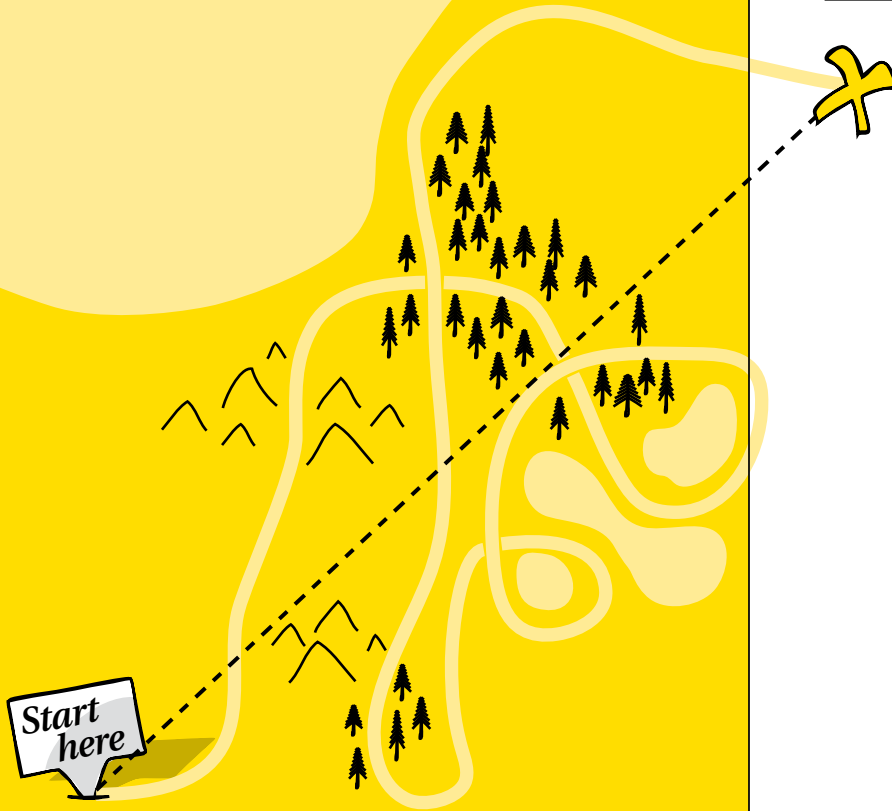
The top line information and direction

Summaries of key information, directions to additional resource material and ways to make the most of the site.

The facts and figures

In-depth information (Separate, ideally downloadable PDF's etc.)

Think about your target audience



The way you think about your target audience is crucially important. We suggest that it would be a good starting point to not think of them as ‘visitors,’ ‘clients’ or ‘customers.’ They’re **people**. Each person is looking for something. Your job is to help them find it. Give them directions. Help them on their journey. They’re not interested in how brilliant you might be. They want to know who you are and what you do. Then they want to find, and absorb, the key information that they need to make a decision about whether to purchase your wares. *And they want to achieve these goals as quickly as possible... with the minimum amount of fuss.*

Keep it short. And sweet.



A lot of people think of a website as an online brochure because, in many ways, that's what it is. The first rule is to think of the sort of text length that you'd put in a brochure and then cut it by 50%. By the way, this particular kind of brochure will not be read... it will be scanned. It won't be read in a conventional sequence from left to right, top to bottom. It will not be absorbed slowly. It will be scanned quickly while readers look for information cues and signposts. Websites are not three course meals to be digested in a leisurely fashion. They are takeaways to be consumed, and enjoyed, on the run.

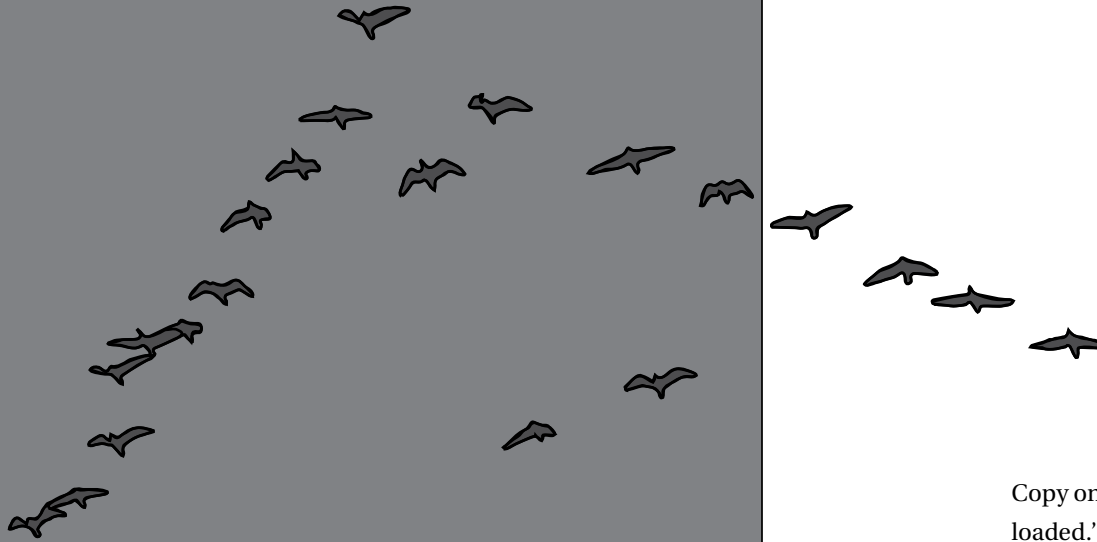
Think like a customer

most visits are prompted via search engines



Take into account the priorities of the people who visit the site. The main body of the text needs to be concentrated on the home pages, the 'landing pages' and other high level pages. Because most visits are prompted via search engines or emails, people invariably land on a product or topic page that will naturally be lower down in the site structure. Consequently, 'landing pages' must be short, easy to scan and quick to locate via search engines while still being interesting and targeted. They also have to be self-contained because they will usually be viewed in a way that is 'out of context' with regard to the rest of the site.

Lead from the front



Copy on a website needs to be 'front loaded.' It has been shown that people reading online invariably focus on the first two words of a sentence, the first two sentences in a paragraph and the first two paragraphs on a web page.



Go for quality

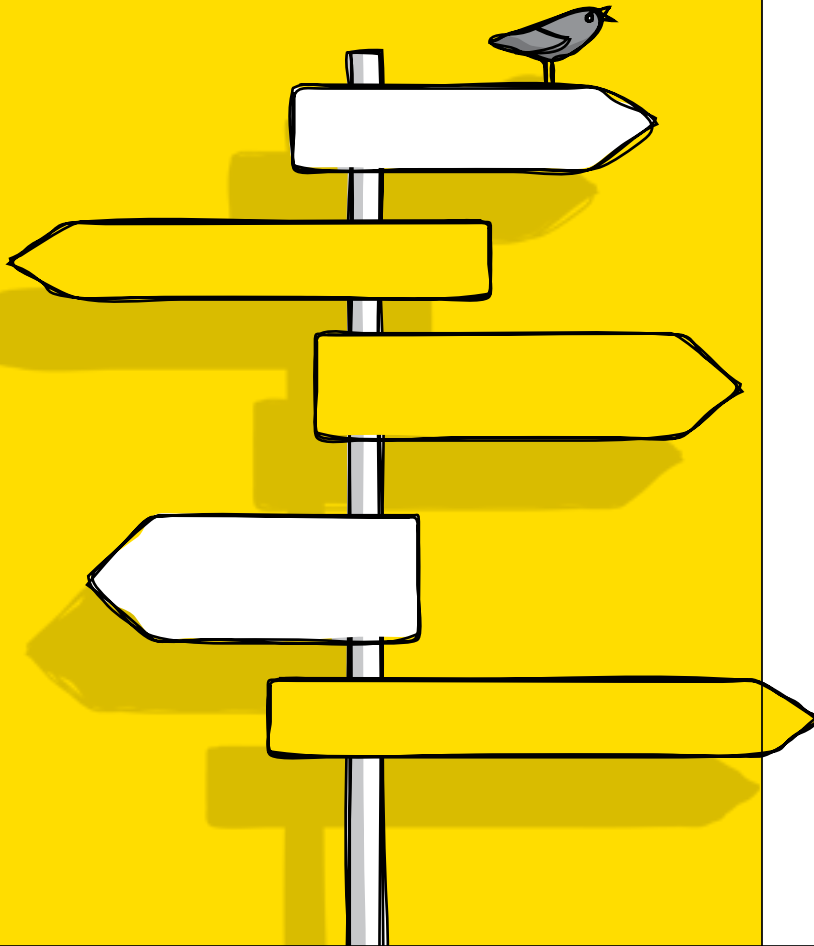
In the early days, it was generally thought that speed and convenience were the key factors. Now that everybody is online the emphasis has switched to the actual quality of the content. Essentially, you're having a conversation with the people reading your website so you have to *engage* the person reading your copy. Here are some words to remember: *Concise, direct, punchy, relevant, short, sweet, simple, sincere, informative, clear, cogent and compelling*. Here are some words to forget: *Rambling, woolly, convoluted, self-serving, waffle, hype, bland and complex*.

Split the communication



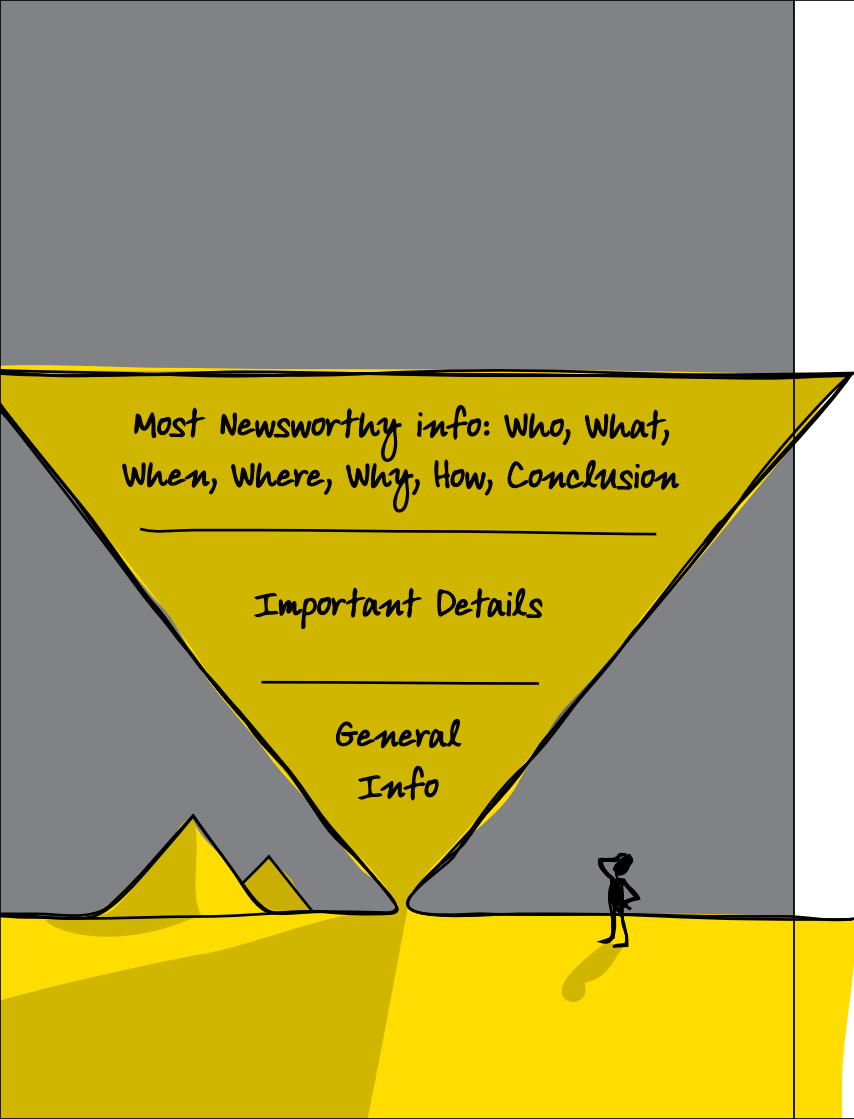
Huge swathes of copy aren't a good idea. Short sentences and short paragraphs are mandatory. Bullet pointed lists are terrific as long as they're short. (Research has shown that people generally have a problem remembering 7 to 10 things at a time. Keeping each list item down to around 7 words will also reap dividends.) Short and punchy headlines and sub headings are essential. Summarise in the opening paragraph. Punch home the key message in the second paragraph. Less is *(always)* more.

Always give them plenty of options



You're driving the tour bus. It's your job to take people on a journey that they'll enjoy... and remember. Make it easy for them to see where they're going. Calls to action are crucially important. The signposts need to be carefully worded and you need to offer lots of options... on every page. Copy has to be search-friendly as well a user-friendly. Text needs to be linked, internally and externally. Highlighting keywords as hypertext links is always preferable to featuring Click Here buttons. The web is a linking medium and the link should be an inherent part of the communication.

Remember the 'Inverted Pyramid Rule'



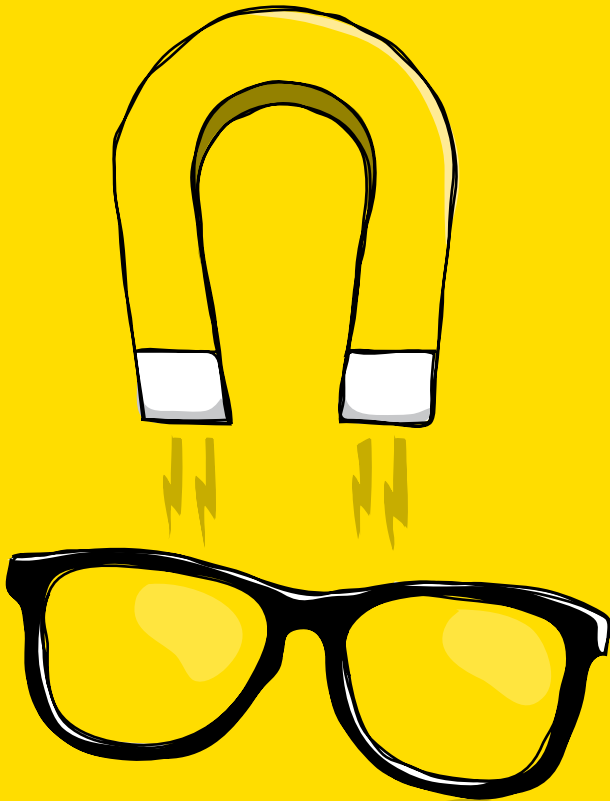
Most Newsworthy info: Who, What,
When, Where, Why, How, Conclusion

Important Details

General
Info

Start with the conclusion, follow up with the most important supporting information and end by giving the background.

Always be interesting and informative



People need to be informed in an interesting way. As you're dealing with an interactive medium it would be a good idea to involve them as well. Recent research has shown that users do usually scroll down below the fold, which didn't use to be the case, but you still need to grab their attention... and keep it. Hypertext theory shows that writing for interconnected information spaces is totally different from writing linear flows of text. You need smaller, cohesive chunks of copy. But you can follow all of the rules and your copy still runs the risk of not being read properly. You need to attract, interest, inform and involve the reader. All the time.

Our services

From brand identities to advertising campaigns. From websites to direct mail. From internal communications to SEO. We create all kinds of communication... via all types of media channels.

Branding.

We've launched small companies from scratch.

We've revamped, or refreshed, the brand identities of global, market-leading brands.

We've done almost everything in between.

- _ Strategic Positioning
- _ Product and Company Naming
- _ Logo Design
- _ Corporate Identity
- _ Strap Lines
- _ Brand Guidelines

Digital.

We have been designing, and developing, highly effective websites, applications and online tools for over 6 years now.

In fact, when it comes to New Media in general we think of ourselves as old hands.

- _ Design & Build
- _ Content Management Systems
- _ Web Applications
- _ Ecommerce Sites
- _ API Integration
- _ SEO
- _ Digital Campaigns

Communications.

If a message doesn't hit home it's not a message. It's a meaningless statement – a waste of time, space and money. Making sure that your comms communicate a proposition clearly and cogently goes to the heart of everything we do.

- _ Advertising
- _ Corporate Communications
- _ Direct Mail
- _ Display Graphics
- _ Integrated Campaigns
- _ Internal Communications
- _ Literature
- _ Packaging

Get in touch

Congratulations. You've finally found a design agency that talks your kind of language. To get the ball rolling please get in touch and we'd be delighted to come and see you to explain what we could do for your brand.

+44 (0)1509 410 376

Branding. Online. Offline.



CREATIVE

Where Brands Grow™

35-37 High Street
Barrow upon Soar
Loughborough
Leicestershire
LE12 8PY

www.simscreative.co.uk