

# **25 Tips for Writing Compelling Web Copy**



**Add color and substance to make your  
content engaging.**



## See if this describes you...

You are an articulate and enthusiastic speaker when telling others about your business or answering their questions about your work, but when you attempt to put those words into writing, you find yourself gazing at the screen unable to craft a single coherent sentence.

Worst of all, you get that same jittery feeling in your stomach you recognize from Freshman English class when your term paper, the one you were supposed to be working on all semester, was due in less than a week.

Relax, those days are past. Nobody is going to grade your paper and any mistakes you make can be fixed. Here then, are 25 tactical tips to help you write effective web copy that attracts visitors to your site and converts them into paying customers.

## **1. Set realistic goals.**

The most intimidating part of writing is looking at that blank screen in front of you. Getting those first words out of your head is like attempting to scale a glacial mountain wall. Where do you even begin? The answer, for both the wall and the copy, is to take those first few steps.

Writing a paragraph isn't hard, but the thought of crafting a whole website or brochure is terrifying. Who wouldn't find plenty of reasons to procrastinate?

So make the task less daunting. Don't think of the project in its entirety. Focus on one, small portion, whether that's a section, a paragraph or even just a sentence. Little spurts of progress eventually add up. Use smaller goals to eventually achieve your bigger objective.

## **2. Start Anywhere You Like**

While you must start at the bottom when attempting to climb a mountain, that's not necessarily the case when writing web pages. Sure, if you can come up with a working headline and decent opening paragraph you'll be off to a great beginning. But you may find you're not ready to confront that challenge.

Give yourself permission to skip to a section that's not so daunting, one for which you already have an inkling of what to say. Maybe that's a single paragraph in the middle to explain a specific point. Or, it may be the clever zinger you plan to use in your close. Just start somewhere and continue filling in the pieces, all of which will eventually come together.

Once you've got the ball rolling, the process gets much easier. You'll build on each little achievement, and the momentum will carry you forward.

## **3. Write Like You Speak**

You probably remember the tedium of writing English essays back in school. The only thing worse had to be reading them if you were the teacher. They were formal, filled with pretentious words and devoid of any emotion. While that carefully perfected essay may have gotten you an "A" in freshman English, formal writing won't work for marketing copy or website content.

The way to reach your visitor's heart is to be conversational. Write like you speak. Keep it simple, yet infuse your words with emotion. Let your personality shine through.

Use words that are easy to comprehend. Conjunctions are fine. Be real, not affected. You can still sound professional, just ditch the formality. Your reader will sense you are talking – not writing -- directly to him.

#### **4. It Doesn't Have to Be Perfect...Yet.**

When you're first getting the words out of your head and onto "paper," don't strive for excellence. That's too much pressure. You needn't worry about perfecting those initial attempts. You'll have plenty of time to do that later.

Instead, do a brain dump, letting the ideas flow freely. Take advantage of that momentum to get the first draft under your belt. Everything after that, from reorganizing paragraphs to polishing each sentence, will seem so much easier.

#### **5. So What?**

One of the most common mistakes new writers make is to assume what is interesting to them will be interesting to others. Your job as a writer is to present the information so that it engages the reader. That means right off the top you need to answer the unspoken question, "So what?"

Readers want to know how the information is relevant to them. Why should they care? If you don't have a good answer that is immediately evident, you've lost them.

#### **6. Narrow your focus.**

While you'd probably love for everyone to buy your product, you know that's not a realistic goal. A better approach is to picture your ideal visitors. Are they male or female, old or young, technically savvy or layperson, etc.?

Make your copy relatable. Show that you understand their needs. By targeting your words to your audience, you'll be able to engage the right people more effectively.

#### **7. The more you tell, the more you sell.**

People turn to the internet for information. You may think that lofty descriptions and big words make your copy sound impressive. In reality, they may create frustration.

If visitors land on your website and don't find answers to their questions, they'll hit the "back" button. If you're leading them toward a sale, then provide the information they need about your product.

You'll have to establish credibility and explain why your product or service is worth the price you're asking.

Supply the facts and readers will happily make their own decision about whether they're a match for what you're selling.

## **8. Give Features and Benefits Center Stage**

Your web copy should spell out the product features. Equally important are the benefits. What's the difference between the two?

Features describe the characteristics of your product – size, weight, color, etc. Benefits explain why those characteristics are desirable – saves time, reduces costs, improves your health, etc.

If you say a product is only 6" big, that's a feature. Tell the reader that because of its small size, it fits in your pocket, putting it within reach any time you need it. Now you have an appealing benefit.

## **9. Provide Proof**

It's not enough to state, "You should buy what we sell because we're the best choice." Today's consumers are savvy. They'll expect you to back up your claim with proof. You'll need to explain how and why your product is superior before they'll believe you.

Doubt and confusion kill sales. Give specifics. Generalities aren't nearly as persuasive. Even better is to provide proof in the form of testimonials, real people who in their own words explain what they most love about your product or service. And don't forget to include their full names and photos too, if possible, for added credibility.

## **10. Leave 'em Laughing**

Make your visitors smile and you'll have gone a long way toward winning them over. A witty comment, sarcastic slam or funny perspective adds color to your writing.

Everyone likes to be amused. If you doubt that, just look at the posts that go viral on Facebook and Twitter; they're usually clever or funny.

A sense of humor can make your content more compelling. Use it to add punch to a dry subject or take the sting out of a dig. Of course, you need to use good judgment, since humor is subjective.

One person's belly laugh is another person's raised eyebrow. But in general, humor, or at least a hint of a smile in your writing, will make your copy more readable and memorable.

## **11. Simple Is Best**

Avoid technical language or jargon your reader won't understand. No need to use big, complex words when a simple phrase works just fine.

Your sentences should be easy to read, your message clear. Use short paragraphs, no more than six lines, to keep the eyes flowing over your words.

## **12. Use variety.**

Change up your sentence structure. Every sentence shouldn't start with the typical subject verb order. Variety will add sophistication to your writing.

Also change up sentence length. A one- to four-word sentence can have great impact, especially when it's surrounded by longer sentences.

## **13. Make it memorable.**

Avoid clichés. Those overused expressions have lost their power to paint a picture in your reader's mind. Original prose will help your words create an impression.

Another technique is to give an anecdote. Everyone loves a good story. If one of your claims is that your product increases productivity, include a real-life story that illustrates its effectiveness.

## **14. Use keywords.**

If you'd like your website to be found on the search engines, as most people do, you'll need to craft your copy with Google in mind. Identify the right keywords to attract your target customers. Then optimize each page of your website for 2-4 keywords.

Be sure to use the same phrasing that searchers are using. For example, don't use the phrase "Inexpensive Airline Tickets" if searchers are using the phrase "Cheap Flights."

Keyword tool software can help you determine which keywords get the most traffic and the level of competition to rank well with them on Google.

Use your main keywords within the first headline and paragraph of your page content. Repeat your main keywords and related terms a few additional times at appropriate places on the page, weaving them naturally into the copy.

Also include your main keywords in the page's title tag and meta-description tag, as those items, placed within your site's programming, help the search engines to correctly index your pages.

## **15. Tailor the length to your subject matter**

You may think that short copy is best because people have limited time. However, research shows that if your copy is interesting and relevant, they'll read it, no matter how long. Just make sure it's well-organized so it doesn't overwhelm them. Don't ramble or make the copy any longer than necessary, but do include anything that could be important to your target audience.

## **16. Craft compelling headlines and subheads.**

Your headline gives readers their first impression of your work, and as in life, you rarely get a second chance to make a good first impression. Without a strong statement to grab their interest, you risk having the rest of your words be ignored.

According to advertising legend David Ogilvy, "On average, five times as many people read the headline as read the body copy." That's why your headline determines the effectiveness of your work.

Subheads count too. They keep readers engaged and help them transition to your next section, all while breaking big chunks of copy into less daunting pieces. Use them to highlight key selling points and benefits.

## **17. Make your contact information easy to find.**

Visitors should be able to find your email address and phone number no matter where they are on your website. Of course you should have a Contact page, but you might also put your contact information in the footer that appears on all pages.

As for what information to include, the best answer is all of it. Some people prefer to pick up the phone while others would rather communicate via email. Give your visitors a choice by providing both.

Don't make them fill out a detailed reply form. Most people dislike filling out forms and are also hesitant to provide detailed information until they get to know you.

Also be sure to include your physical address somewhere on your website. While most people won't choose to mail you a letter or stop by, unless you're a retail store, visitors like to know where your company is based.

Even if you're an internet company, a full address helps them feel you are more real and therefore more trustworthy.

## **18. Offer an incentive for the visitor to contact you.**

You've worked hard to get visitors to your site. Now don't let them leave without introducing themselves. Offer them a free report or a white paper on a subject that's related to your website.

For example, if you're a financial management company, offer a report titled, "The 10 Best Investments for Today's Economy." To get the report, they'll have to provide you with their email address. And once you have that, you have the ability to follow-up with that visitor and work on converting them from prospect to customer.

## **19. Make Text Visually Appealing**

Keep paragraphs short to add white space. Break up big blocks of text with subheads, bullets or numbered lists, all of which catch the eye.

Don't forget pictures. Include visuals whenever possible. They can be photographs, illustrations, charts, infographics or symbols.

## **20. Tell readers what to do next.**

What's the next step? Your copy should lead visitors where you want them to go. Think of yourself as their tour guide. Once you've provided the facts, what specifically do you want them to do?

Make it clear with a succinct call to action. In real life, you'd ask for the sale. On your website, you should do the same.



If you don't include a direct request for visitors to buy or contact you in some way, they might consume your content and then move right along to the next message. Guide them into becoming qualified prospects or customers.

## **21. Now make it perfect.**

Once you've completed your first draft, your mission changes from creating something new to improving it. Check your organization, grammar, punctuation and diction.

Does the copy flow? Is it succinct? Is your message clear? Is it interesting? Keep tweaking until you can answer "yes" to all those questions.

The best writers often do multiple rounds of revisions, sharpening each sentence for maximum impact.

## **22. Consider the user experience.**

Have you ever been to a website and had difficulty finding the information you need? Or perhaps you were trying to complete some sort of task, like filling out a form or making a purchase, and you ran into technical problems? It's frustrating, right?

The best websites ensure a good user experience. Specific information is easy to find thanks to an intuitive menu and well-labeled buttons. Instructions are straightforward, making task completion a cinch.

Once you've posted the copy on your website, even if only in beta form, have several friends or co-workers give it a test drive. Note what paths they take. Ask them if they felt the site was clearly written and easy to use. Finally, be open to any suggestions for improvement.

## **23. Track your results.**

Once your copy "goes live," you should monitor your website analytics. Reports and traffic logs will show you how visitors arrive at your site and what keywords are working best.

Use data to answer these questions: Is your content attracting the right audience? On which pages are visitors spending the most time? What pages do they leave the quickest? What paths do they take as they navigate around your site?

Most important is the correlation between website traffic and conversions. Are the people who come to your site being converted into qualified leads or sales? If not, you may need to do some reworking.

## 24. Get 'er done!

Once you've written your copy and perfected it to the best of your ability, publish it. Don't procrastinate on this last step. And don't overthink it.

The best content in the world isn't worth a dime if no one has an opportunity to read it. Sure you can agonize over every phrase and comma, but at some point you need to commit. Pick it and stick it!

Put the copy online and let it start working for you. The beauty of the online world is that you can modify your content later if desired, a benefit that doesn't exist with some other marketing materials like a printed brochure.

## 25. Keep it fresh.

Look upon your website as a dynamic, ever-changing sales tool. Continually update and add to your content. Remove outdated material. Add informational articles related to your product or service. They'll help position your site as the authority on the topic. Testimonials and case studies also present opportunities to refresh your site and convert visitors into customers.

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*I hope you found these copywriting tips useful. They're based on 20+ years of work experience as a freelance copywriter and marketing consultant. Should you decide you'd like professional assistance with your copy, please contact me for a no-obligation quote on your project.*



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