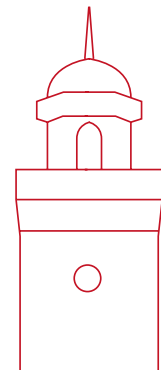


# Web Writing Guide



grow exponentially

This Guide is produced by the Office of Communications and Marketing at Acadia University. If you have any questions, please contact us:

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# Introduction

## Our campus website

With more than a million visitors each year, Acadia University's website is our top platform for reaching people. They visit our site in order to find information, complete a transaction, or to discover what's new on campus.

For some, it will be their first introduction to Acadia, while for others they already know the University well. It's crucial that our web presence be truly representative of Acadia.

Because we have a decentralized web presence, web trustees have the opportunity to showcase their institutional websites in a way that best characterizes their program, department, or unit.

## Top three tips for web trustees

### 1. BE USER-FRIENDLY

Never forget that your website is not for you – it's for your visitor. Take time to define your audience and make sure the page design, navigation, and content will work for them. In other words, make your site intuitive.

### 2. BE CONSISTENT WITH ACADIA'S BRAND

Acadia's content management system (CMS) is designed in keeping with Acadia's brand identity and uses our approved logo, colours, and images. If your website is built on another platform, please refer to our *Brand Identity Guide* so that visitors to your website recognize that it is part of Acadia.

### 3. INCLUDE STRONG CONTENT

Without content there is no website. However, what you say and how you present your information matters. It's important to provide engaging writing and images and to regularly maintain your site with updates that highlight news and events.

You are encouraged to use our *Editorial Style Guide* to help you with your writing and ensure consistency. The Guide also recommends formats for address blocks, email signatures, and includes correct spelling and capitalization for Acadia-specific names and titles.



## Writing well for the Web

Most users visit a web page for 10-15 seconds. In that brief time, 80 per cent will skim the page for keywords they already have in mind. So, before you begin writing web content, it's important to understand your audience and anticipate what content and keywords are expected.

Following these guidelines will improve your web content:

### Understand your audience

Before you begin writing your web content, it's important to know your audience and understand what they're trying to find on your website. Answer these questions before you start:

- Who is your audience?
- What do they want to do?
- What do you want to say to them?
- What do you want visitors to do?
- What keywords would your audience type in to find your content?

### Make text easy to scan

- Put the most important information at the top of the page.
- Use plenty of embedded links, subheadings, bullets, lists, and anchors to break up your text.
- Use tables, numbers, and charts to convey information visually when you can.

## Cut your content

The biggest mistake web writers make is providing too much content and introductory text. In general, cut your print text by at least 50 per cent and use the following guidelines:

- Web writing should be clear, concise, and direct.
- Write at a 6th- to 8th-Grade reading level.
- Always try to write in first or second person.
- Whenever possible, stick to facts.
- Use active verbs and concrete words whenever possible.
- Avoid jargon, abbreviations, technical terms, and being too clever.
- Keep paragraphs short and focus on one main point at a time.
- Sentence structure should be simple and varied.

### Write accessible link phrases

Accessible link phrases should differentiate links on the same page and be understood easily when read out of context. In general, links should:

- be brief and descriptive;
- provide information even when read out of context;
- explain what the link offers;
- not deal with the mechanics of the site;
- not include phrases such as, "click here for more info;"
- identify a new document type if not html (i.e. PDF, DOC, XLS).



## Write short headlines

Users can generally only process a few words at once, so short headlines are best.

Headlines should:

- be concise and direct;
- be able to stand on their own or be understood out of context;
- avoid jargon, abbreviations, cleverness, and technical terms;
- be search engine friendly (use key words in your content).

## Maintain your web content

Now that your new content is live, it's still a good idea to check and recheck it.

- Check spelling and grammar, and test links to make sure they're working properly and the pages are still live and current.
- Use the Editorial Style Guide to ensure consistency with the spelling and capitalization of key Acadia-specific names and titles.
- Make sure your content is easy to read when users print your pages, and that you have social sharing icons included on each page. Check with Technology Services if you need to change your print options or add social sharing icons.
- Designate one person to be responsible for maintaining and updating your content. Make sure it's clear how often the content will need to change. Google Analytics can show you when your site has lulls in traffic, and when your site will be busy – plan accordingly.
- Create a content maintenance plan that outlines who is responsible for updating which pages and how often the pages will need to be updated. Make sure to include annual reviews of your web content.



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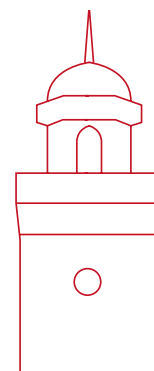
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