

Writing for the web

Writing for the web is different from writing for print. People rarely read web pages word by word. They scan. They skim across navigation and content, picking out headings, summaries, the first sentences of paragraphs, and so on.

Some people may find reading from a screen uncomfortable. It is important to make your writing easy to read. Information should be presented clearly and concisely, and come straight to the point.

Every part of a website should be self-explanatory. You don't read a website in a straight line like printed publications. Each page on a site should be self-explanatory and stand-alone.

Websites try to build a relationship of trust with users to encourage them to return. This leads to a more personal and conversational tone.

Pointers

To help users absorb information we need to:

- use plain English
- make effective use of headings and subheadings
- use bulleted lists
- provide short, snappy summaries where appropriate
- use clear and concise sentences and paragraphs
- aim for one idea per paragraph
- start with the conclusion (the inverted pyramid style).

Plan ahead

- Before you start writing you should ask yourself:
- Why am I writing this?
- What do I want this content to do?
- What are its aims and outcomes?
- Who is my audience?

It is important to spend time answering these questions. Always put yourself in the position of the person who is going to use your material. Think about what the user is hoping to get. The following questions can help when planning your material:

- What do I want my user to learn/know?
- What do they need/want to learn/know?
- What is the simplest and most appropriate way of passing on this information?

Organise material under meaningful headings. Reject anything that is not essential for the user.

Keep these points in mind while you are writing, and you will be more likely to produce a well structured piece of work.

Format

If you are writing material for the [Scottish Social Services Learning Networks](#) (SSSLNs), our preferred option is to receive it in the following way

- Use only a single space between sentences
- Provide text with minimal formatting. Your formatting can cause problems when we try to put the work into our templates. Please leave detailed formatting to us.
- Supply text in Microsoft Word format preferably.

If you are producing resources for publication on the SSSLNs' website, you need to know about accessibility. The SSSLNs resources must meet the [World Wide Web Consortium's Web Accessibility Initiative \(W3C WAI\) Double-A](#) standard.

Accessibility is a legal obligation

Under the Disability Discrimination Act, it is unlawful for companies and organisations, in both the private and public sector, to discriminate unjustifiably against disabled persons.

Part III of the Act applies to any person or organisation concerned with the provision in the United Kingdom of services to the public or a section of the public. Among the services covered are those provided to the public by local councils and government departments and agencies.

The SSSLNs are therefore legally obliged to make its resources as accessible as possible.