



FACULTY OF EDUCATION

WEB CONTENT WRITING GUIDE

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1. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Faculty of Education Web Content Writing Guide. This guide offers guidance on how to write clear, concise and engaging stories for your department, unit or project website. These guidelines will help increase the visibility of your stories online and increase the number of visitors coming to your website.

Writing for the web is different than writing for print or other offline media. Use these tips and guidelines when developing or refreshing content for your website.

This guide not only compliments the [UBC Writing & Style Guide](#), but offers specific suggestions for the Faculty of Education. If you have any questions about this guide, please contact the Communications Coordinator at communications.educ@ubc.ca.

2. GRAMMAR

The style, voice and content of online material should reflect the Faculty of Education brand by communicating in a friendly, professional, clear and easy-to-understand tone.

2.1 Grammar and Punctuation

The Faculty of Education and UBC recommends using [The Canadian Press Stylebook](#) or the [Chicago Manual of Style](#) (CM) for general writing guidelines, and The Canadian Oxford Dictionary for spelling. [The Canadian Press Stylebook](#) (CP) is the industry standard for public relations and journalism-style writing. It is strongly recommended for use in all publications at the Faculty of Education.

Remember:

- When writing for websites, use one space between sentences, not two.
- Use the Canadian/British spelling for words.

2.2 Capitalization and Faculty vs. faculty

Faculty and Departments

a. Always capitalize the faculty or department when using the unit's full name.

Ex. Faculty of Education

Ex. Department of Language and Literacy



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- b. Keep the capital letter when reducing the full name to just “Faculty” or “Department.”
Ex. The Faculty of Education is hosting the lecture as part of the Year of Indigenous Education initiative. The Faculty will also host a special concert to celebrate the accomplishments of local Indigenous artists.
- c. Use the lower-case when speaking about two or more departments or faculties together.
Ex. The departments of Language and Literacy, and Educational Studies.
Ex. The Department of Language and Literacy and the Department of Educational Studies.

Faculty Members

When talking about faculty members, always use lower-case.

Ex. The Faculty of Education is honouring ten faculty members with a special teaching award.

3. CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Writing for the Web is Different

- People rarely read entire pages word for word
- People scan and pick out keywords and phrases
- People read in quick, short bursts
- They are action oriented
- They are looking for bits of information that lead them towards a goal

Because of these differences, text should be specifically created, edited and/or reformatted for best online results.

For best online results be sure to:

- Create text that can be quickly scanned by the reader
- Highlight keywords (using hypertext links or typeface variations)
- Write meaningful subheadings
- Use bulleted or numbered lists
- Include one idea per paragraph to get a user’s attention with the first few words
- Sentence fragments are fine
- Use bright, colourful images in combination of text where possible



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3.2 Use Fewer Words and Simpler Words

When writing for the web, use half the words you would if you were writing a print story. Use the word counts below as a general guideline.

- Story Title: Under 10 words
- Header: 1-3 lines
- Sentences: 15-20 words
- Paragraphs: 40-70 words
- Full story: 250 words or less is ideal, but you can go up to 500 words for an in-depth story or feature

3.3. Story Format

- Headlines should be short, to the point and accurately describe what the story is about to catch the reader's attention.
- The opening paragraph should hook the reader and provoke their interest into reading more. Use 1 - 3 lines maximum for the opening paragraph.
- Write user-driven copy.
- Photographs are very important. Bright, colourful images make a huge impact. Please credit photographers when possible and include a line below the photograph that lists the people who are in it.

Ex. Above photograph, left to right: Dr. Blye Frank, Dean of the Faculty of Education and Dr. Rita Irwin, Associate Dean for Teacher Education

Ex. Photography Credit: Martin Gee

3.4 Writing Headings

Headings should clearly:

- Identify the information on the page
- Organize the information on the page
- Relate to the copy or calls to action that follow them
- Use questions – phrased as your reader would phrase them
- Use phrases or sentences – works especially well for pages of longer text
- Use nouns to identify something the user is looking for

Ex. Honouring Janusz Korczak's Legacy at UBC

Ex. Brock Tully's Mission to End Bullying

Ex. Nominations Now Open: Dean's Award for Staff Excellence

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3.5 Introduction Copy on a Website or Page

Introductory copy on a website or page is the opportunity to communicate what the site or page's purpose and value right away.

- Communicate the purpose and value of the website or page – summarize the content briefly
- Tell readers why the page's content is relevant to them
- Keep it simple – 1 to 3 sentences
- Write user-driven copy

Ex. On November 2nd, the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada unveiled a bronze relief in the Scarfe lobby to honour Janusz Korczak's legacy in the area of children's rights.

Ex. UBC Alumnus Brock Tully is on a mission to prevent bullying, cruelty and violence in our world.

Ex. Have you received outstanding service from a Faculty of Education staff member? Show your appreciation and nominate them for the Dean's Award for Staff Excellence.

3.6 Writing Subheadings

Subheadings help ensure that users can find the information they're looking for more quickly.

- Start subheads with information-carrying words – users typically scan the first one or two words only
- Use plain language - avoid abstract, vague, cute or cryptic subheadings
- Use short, quick hitting sentences or phrases

3.7 Writing Body Copy

- Get to the point quickly. If you don't, you will lose the reader. A narrative, storytelling approach might be great in print, for online purposes this doesn't work.
- Focus on the user's need. What would someone be looking for when they come to your Website or page? Write user-driven copy.
- Fragments are fine. Incomplete sentences are less important than in offline mediums. Use keywords and edit, edit, edit.

Ex. [Brock Tully Story](#)

Ex. [Dean's Award for Staff Excellence Story](#)



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4. SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO) TACTICS

4.1 What is SEO?

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of improving the visibility of a website or a web page in a search engine's (like Google) "natural" search results. The higher ranking on the search results page the more visitors will visit it.

By using SEO tactics, we increase the searchability and visibility of your stories and the website. Our goal is to increase visitors to the website so that your information is read by more people.

4.2 Writing Page Title Tags

Story Titles often become the title tag of your web page. A Title Tag tells both users and search engines what the topic of a particular page is.

Good practices for Page Title Tags recommended by Google:

1. Effectively and accurately describe the page's content. Don't: Choose a title that has no relation to the content on the page
2. Use brief, but descriptive Titles – titles can be both short and informative. If the title is too long, search engines will show only a portion of it in the search result.

4.3 Write SEO Friendly Content

Write for your web audience. Ask yourself, how would my target audience describe this?

[Google's Search Engine Optimization Guide](#) suggests:

Use words that the audience would use:

- That's how your prospective readers will search for what they want on Google
- Use familiar/current terminology

Stay organized around the topic:

- Break content up into logical chunks or sections with headers to help users find what they're looking for faster

Create fresh, unique content often:

- New content will not only keep people coming back, but it will also attract new visitors



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Avoid:

- Using jargon and marketing-speak
- Rehash (or even copy) existing content that will bring little extra value to users
- Insert numerous unnecessary keywords aimed at search engines but are annoying or nonsensical to use in relation to your story

4.4 Interlinking Content and Linking Strategies

Where applicable, include links in your copy to other pages on the site. This will help users easily find information they're looking for, and give them more to explore if they're just browsing.

Make sure the links you include have Anchor Text - the clickable words that users will see as a result of a link. It should tell users and search engines something about the page you're linking to.

Example 1

For more information, see our most recent [Strategic Plan](#).

Instead of

To see our most recent annual report, [click here](#).

Example 2

[Learn more about the Community Report](#).

Instead of

You can find more details about the program [right here](#).

Example 3

To learn more about the Faculty of Education's community investments, [read the report](#).

Instead of

Read the Community Report to find out more about the Faculty of Education's investments in schools. [Click here](#).