



Digitising Content Together

## Ministerial NETwoRk for Valorising Activities in digitisation

# Web writing



# Reference

The Jakob Nielsen: "Be succinct! (Writing for the Web)",  
1997

<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/9703b.html>

"How Users Read on the Web", 1997

<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/9710a.html>

Writing for the Web

<http://www.sun.com/980713/webwriting/>

Web content management

<http://www.webcontentmanagement.it/scrittura.htm>

Web writing that works

<http://www.webwritingthatworks.com>

Museo&Web

[http://www.minervaeurope.org/structure/workinggroups/userneeds/proto  
tipo/progproto/comunicazione/stilescrivere.html](http://www.minervaeurope.org/structure/workinggroups/userneeds/proto<br/>tipo/progproto/comunicazione/stilescrivere.html)



# Quality in communication

A high-quality cultural site must be intelligible and communicate clearly, combining contents and design in such a way that the user can navigate efficiently, effectively and satisfactorily.



# Visual aspect

The graphic design of a web site is quite different from that of a book!

Reading from a screen is considered to be 25% slower than reading on paper.

What seems elegant and aesthetically pleasing to the eye in a publication can appear illegible or even visually disturbing on a screen.

The characters visualized by a computer have an inferior resolution in comparison to those on paper.



# Visual aspect

The following elements must be taken into account when designing a web site:

- Legibility of the characters on the screen
- type of character
- colours
- alignment
- line length and spacing
- elements to be emphasized



# Reading a web page

Quick glance: the visual information of a page is perceived as a whole together with the presence or not of particular questions.

Scanning: each word of the text is not read and the meaning is drawn from just a few words. This is the most commonly used reading technique.

It is the reading technique preferred by 79% of users.



# Suggestions for facilitating the quick glance

- Few graphic elements
  - The same position on each page for any common functional blocks
  - Headings in hierarchical order from the general to the detail
  - Clear coherent visual information throughout the site (e.g. the same graphic symbols always with the same meaning)



# Suggestions for facilitating scanning the text

- Highlight the headings as small abstracts
  - Subdivide the text into paragraphs
  - Separate paragraphs from one another by spaces
  - Halve the number of words used with respect to what you would use on paper.
  - Highlight the important words in a paragraph by means of the character used.
  - Make characters more legible.



# Characters

Not all predefined characters of most operational systems are clearly legible in a web page.

For example, Georgia and Verdana are characters that are more easily read on a screen than Times New Roman because even while having the same dimension the characters are taller.



# Colours

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) advises using an algorithm for calculating the right contrast between the colour of the text and the background

(Checkpoint 2.2) (<http://www.w3.org/TR/AERT#color-contrast>).



# Style

## BASIC SUGGESTIONS

- clear concise style; construct clear paths through a well-defined structure of paragraphs: titles, sub-titles, short texts, empty spaces, indexes;
- short texts (half of those on paper!)
- adopt the order of the "inverted pyramid" in arranging the contents, that is to say, first present the synthesis to then go down gradually towards the greater details;



# Style

- use hypertext for layering the information on various levels (write “in depth” rather than “in length”);
- if possible avoid use of scrolling;
- be careful of punctuation that can sometimes be read incorrectly by screen readers.

A suggestion:  
prepare a “style manual” of the site



## Some simple advice

Non professional users: insertion of a glossary is a good idea.

Potential readers are all over the world! Be careful:

- of dates: in the United States day and month are reversed
- of phone numbers: always give the international prefix
- of acronyms: they are not always understood
- of the indication of the country of origin (to say Roma is not sufficient if the site is then translated into English)



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**Thanks!**

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