

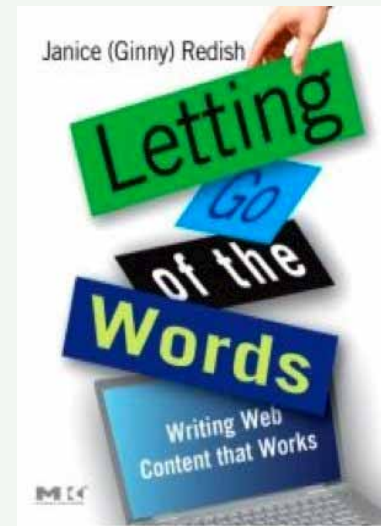
# Writing Web Content that Works

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@GinnyRedish



May 2012

# Topics for this morning

- Setting the context
- Planning successful conversations
- Answering site visitors' questions
- Organizing the conversation
- Writing the conversation
- Checking for success

# Setting the context



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# Sharing stories

You use web sites that others have developed.

- When did you last go to the web?
- Why did you go to the web?
- What were you trying to do or what were you looking for?



Flickr cc photo by theworldcafe

Share your story  
with your neighbor.

# What do people want from web sites?



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Content

Information

To do a task

To satisfy *their* goals

People just want to

- get an answer
- do a task
- solve a problem
- engage in a social conversation

# Navigation and search are critical



# Good, clear design is critical



# Technology that works is critical





## But they all support the content



# Every use of your web site is a conversation started by the site visitor



© iStockphoto

trails

How well does your site converse with your site visitors?

# You site converses well only if...

Your site visitors can

- **find** what *they* need
- **understand** what they find
- **act** appropriately on that understanding  
in the time and effort that *they* think it is worth



## Your web content must meet both...



If you don't design for your site visitors' realities, you are not likely to meet your goals!

# Planning successful conversations



Flickr cc photo by Polandeze

# Plan before you write



Think first.

Write second.

Why? (your purposes)

Who? (your site visitors, personas)

When and why?  
(your site visitors' goals, tasks,  
conversations)

## Why? (your purposes)

- Align with the business' overall strategy and goals
- Be specific
- Be measurable
- Focus on your site visitors / readers

€→€

€→€



# Be specific

## THIS WEEK: START WITH PURPOSE

If a coworker interrupts us while we're writing a letter and asks, "What are you doing?" most of us will answer "Writing a letter."

That answer reveals a focus on the written product, not on its purpose. Such product-focused thinking keeps our writing from being as effective as it could be.

This week, when you start each writing job, take a few seconds to think about your purpose—about what effect you want to have on your reader. This week, if a coworker interrupts your writing and asks what you're doing, be prepared to answer (for example), "I'm trying to get this customer to forgive us for a shipping mistake we made."

Kenneth W. Davis

[http://www.  
manageyourwriting.com/](http://www.manageyourwriting.com/)



# Be measurable

When you write this type of content	what do you want to happen?
Proposal	
Email to get funding to go to a conference	
Report with recommendations	
Instructions	

# Focus on your site visitors

We want to



sell products



have people buy our products



inform people about ...



answer people's questions about ...



tell people how to do [this task]

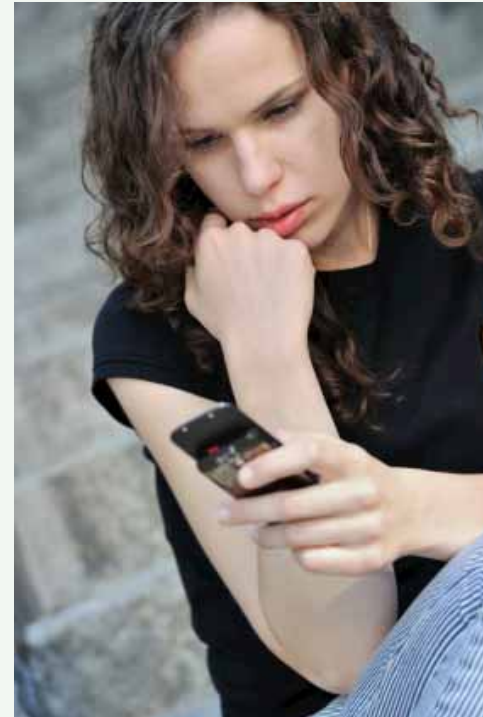


have people do the task correctly

## Who? (Your personas)

Whom are you conversing with?

- Name each group.
  - Travelers
    - frequent
    - occasional
  - Hip, young professionals
  - Seniors



© iStockphoto

Always name people.

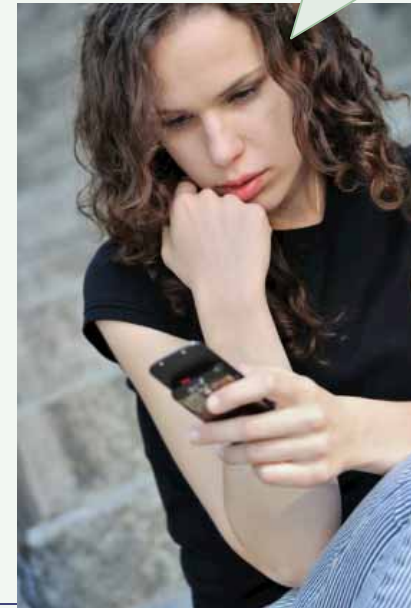
✗ Travel agencies

✓ Travel agents

What should you keep in mind about these people?

- Add adjectives or phrases that describe them.
- Examples:
  - time constraints (busy? multi-tasking?)
  - attitudes (worried? curious?)
  - subject matter knowledge
  - primary language
  - reading ability
  - computer and web experience

No time. Don't want to read. Just give me the information.



Not what *content* they are looking for.  
We'll get to that later.

# Create personas to converse with

Mark Yuchenko | Chief Administrative Officer, Town of Canmore | Existing Municipal Client



## About Mark

Has a family, 52 years old

Has an Engineering degree & an MBA

Was in oil and gas in Calgary before going into public service in Canmore

Savvy, worked hard to get where he is

"When I have a question or issue, I just want to pick up the phone, call someone I know and trust, settle the issue, and move on with my day."

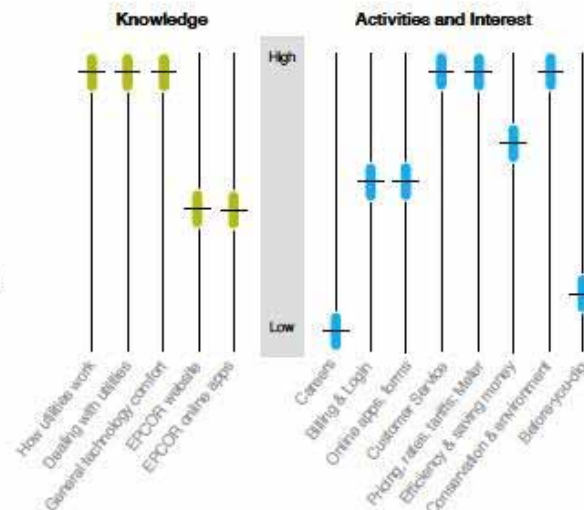
Mark is a hard working public servant who has roots in the oil and gas industry. He enjoys working for the public and understands the pressures of balancing public interests, environmental issues, and political pressures. Mark always says that your head can be in the clouds as long as your hands are working in the real world.

Mark is relied upon by his town council, mayor, and community to make the right decisions for the town. He is respected in his field but he has lots of pressure to make the right decisions on a vendor.

He is a current customer and values EPCOR as a partner. So far, he sees EPCOR as a vendor who does not let him down. It is important to Mark that his vendors can work with existing systems seamlessly and without the need to retrofit expensive parts.

Mark is always on the look out for vendors who can make the experience worry-free and help make him and council look good to his community.

Mark is efficient, effective, and people-oriented.



## Services he recognizes / uses

- Water, waste water treatment
- Conservation, environment, & infrastructure
- Regulations and changes to regulations
- Investors area (on all websites), corporate, operations, newsroom

## Issues or Pain Points

- Infrastructure is depleting and there isn't enough money to address it with competing requests for funds. Time is also of the essence in terms of influencing public opinion.
- Wants to please council members to some extent. Best-value and safety are important.
- Public response is important. The public wants low rates and a good environmental record.
- Business stakeholders and environmental lobbyists are watching and lobbying him and council on both sides.

## Questions

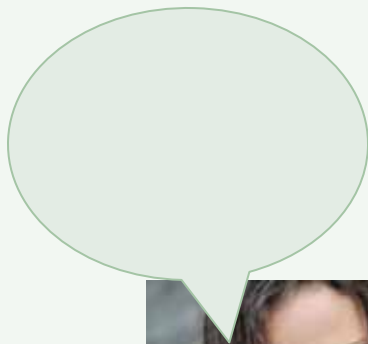
- How does EPCOR compare with competitors in terms of: cost, value, performance (technical & financial), service, reliability, communications, operations, governance, risk, safety, billing, green options, corporate responsibility and image?
- If I were to continue to manage this account going forward, how could I interact with EPCOR better?
- When will EPCOR have live chat for business customers? And is there a short cut or dedicated person to our company account?

## Interests

- Volunteering at the local food bank and Boys & Girls Club - and "giving back"
- Reading the Harvard Business Review
- Educating his teenage kids
- Techie gadgets
- Golfing, skiing, vacationing in warm and exotic places
- Investing
- Wine

Epcor Utilities, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, used with permission

## When and why? (Site visitor's conversations)



Flickr photo by rogerfer



© iStockphoto

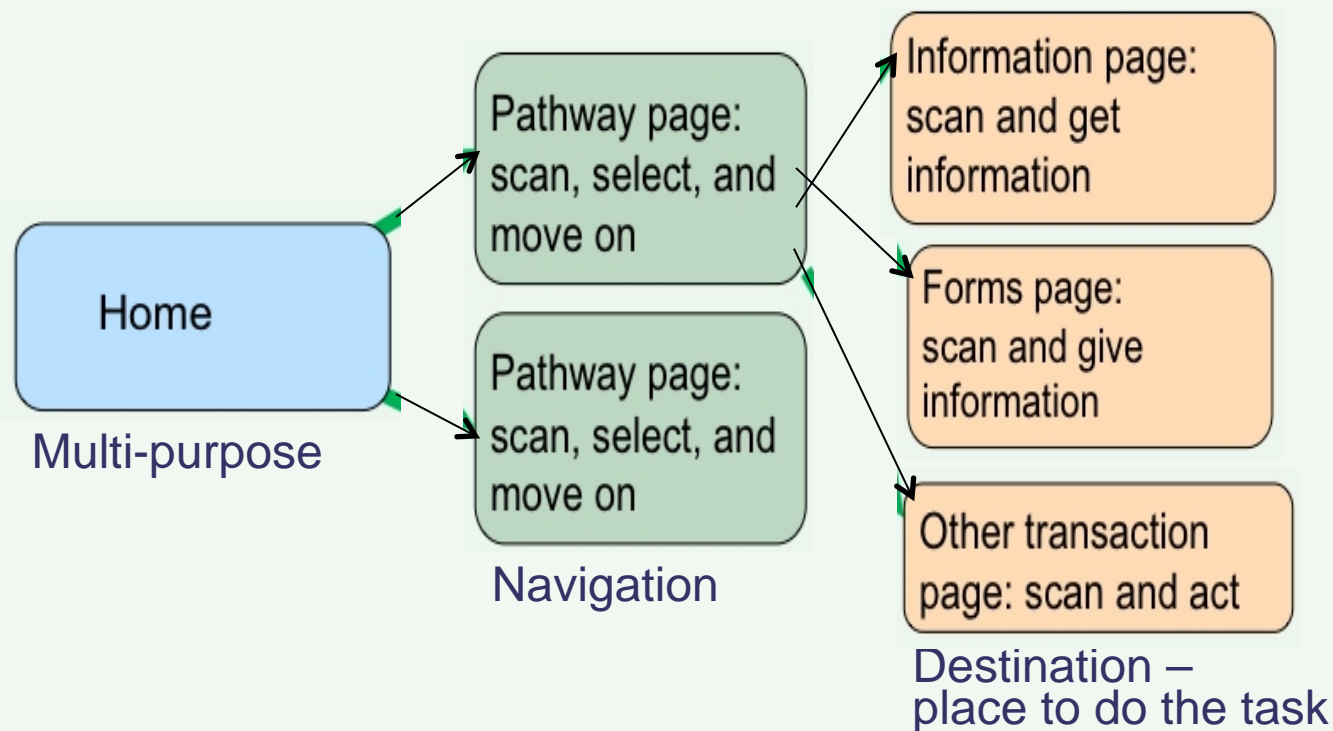


# Answering site visitors' questions



© iStockphoto

# What types of pages does a typical site have?







**n a p a** North American Partners in Anesthesia  
Our Unmatched Anesthesia Experience.  
Your OR's Advantage.

Search Site

HOME | DOWNLOADS | CONTACT US

**Patient Info**  
Hospital Anesthesia Management Services  
Anesthesia Careers  
Additional Products and Services  
About NAPA  
Contact NAPA

**The Leader in Anesthesia Management Solutions**  
Founded in 1986, North American Partners in Anesthesia (NAPA) is the largest anesthesia management company in the U.S. With 700+ clinicians and nearly 500,000 cases performed annually, NAPA delivers more anesthesia than any other provider, and is consistently cited as having the industry's most respected clinical staff, management leadership, and evidence-based quality initiatives – resulting in maximized OR performance, reduced costs and consistent surgeon and patient satisfaction.  
NAPA serves hospitals ranging from small community facilities to the nation's largest health systems, including: centers of excellence, teaching and specialty hospitals, anesthesia residency programs and more. This experience has enabled NAPA to develop the systems and processes that deliver the service, satisfaction and cost you desire – an anesthesia service that is 100% in sync with your hospital's mission. Our anesthesia management services offer the best solution for any hospital interested in anesthesia outsourcing and anesthesia services.

**Hospital Spotlight**  
**Maria Fareri Children's Hospital**  
Maria Fareri Children's Hospital at Westchester Medical Center is much more than a spectacular setting – it's advanced health care.

**Why NAPA?**  
NAPA is one of the most respected **anesthesia management** providers, demand for our services is always increasing. As a result, we are always seeking to add new talent to our staff. NAPA offers a comprehensive array of benefits....  
[READ MORE](#)

[www.napaanesthesia.com](http://www.napaanesthesia.com)



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WHO WE ARE WHAT WE DO SUCCESS & WORK NEWS & VIEWS

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You need visibility. You need more guests. We can deliver both through powerful, data-driven [hotel Internet marketing](#) that consistently produces higher returns. Let our hospitality-specific solutions maximize your direct bookings.

[View Our Solutions](#)

[www.vizergy.com](#)



Girls' Flutter Sleeve Dress

**\$34.50**

Rating



Girls' Flutter Sleeve Dress

**\$34.50**

Rating



Girls' Knit Bubble Tank Dress

**\$34.50**

Rating



Nokia X7-00

Add to compare



Nokia E6-00

Add to compare



Nokia C5-03

Add to compare



Nokia C3 Touch and  
Type

Add to compare

© iStockphoto





© iStockphoto

[www.ebags.com](http://www.ebags.com)

## Delsey Helium Fusion Lite 2.0 21" C/O Exp. Suiter Trolley (Limited Time Offer)



**DELSEY**

Notify me when new Delsey styles are added to the website!

Your Email Address

### You May Also Be Interested In

All products from Delsey  
More products like this

1. Blue \$84.99

Limited Time Offer at \$84.99



### Reviews

Overall (9.1) - Rated "Best of the Best"

72 of 79 (91%) reviewers would buy this again.

[See Full Rating](#) | [Read all 81 Reviews](#) | [Write a Review](#)

### Most Helpful Review

21 people found the following review helpful.

"My daughter is a flight attendant and she owns one. She sold me into buying one, and I'm thoroughly satisfi..." [Read More](#)

### Share This Item

[Send to a Friend](#)

[Like](#) 5 people like this.

MSRP: \$200.00  
Our Price: \$99.99  
Sale Price: \$84.99

We're sorry, discount coupons do not apply to this item.

FREE SHIPPING!

**\$84.99**

That's 58% off MSRP!

[Add to Cart](#)

Earn 4.2 Reward Points when you purchase this item. [Learn More](#)

[FREE 2-Day Shipping](#)  
[Learn More](#)

[Add to Comparison Chart](#)  
[View Chart](#)

100% Price Guarantee

Free Returns

### Estimated Delivery

Check your delivery date:

[Go](#)

Usually leaves warehouse within 5 business days.

### Other Recommendations



Delsey  
Helium Fusion Lite 2.0 25" Exp. Suiter  
Trolley  
(Limited Time Offer)  
**Sale: \$110.49**  
Coupons Not Applicable

[Overview](#)

[Product Features](#)

[Contact Us](#)

### Product Specifications

Size:	21" x 14" x 8.5" Help me choose the right size
Weight:	9 lbs
Material:	Everlast™ Polyester w/EVA Foam backing
Warranty:	Worldwide Limited 10 Year Warranty
Linear Inches:	43.50"

### Product Highlights



Best of the Best

Newly Added



Flickr cc photo  
by Mr.Thomas



WHAT IS MINT?

HOW IT WORKS

FIND SAVINGS

COMMUNITY

COMPANY

Log In

Sign up

Mint Canada

## The best **free** way to manage your money.

Mint brings all your financial accounts together online or on your mobile device, automatically categorizes your transactions, lets you set budgets and helps you achieve your savings goals. [Watch the video](#) | [Learn more](#)

Get started here >



Stay SAFE and SECURE

We never NICKEL or DIME

FEELIN' the LOVE

Like 139k

[www.mint.com](http://www.mint.com)

## Makes your life easier

At Mint, we believe money is for living. So we make everything simple and streamlined. **Sign up** takes less than five minutes. Then Mint **automatically pulls** all your financial information into one place, so you can finally get the entire picture.



It's Free! Get started

## Remember kids, safety first

 Watch security video

### Bank-level security

Mint uses the same 128-bit encryption and physical security that banks use. Our practices are monitored and verified by TRUSTe, VeriSign and Hackersafe, and supported by RSA Security.



### No one can move any money

Mint is a "read-only" service. You can organize and analyze your finances, but you can't move funds between—or out of—any account using Mint. And neither can anyone else.

## Summarizing so far

- Content = conversation.
- Site visitors start the conversation.
- Know your purposes, your personas, their conversations.
- Converse with your personas.
- “Hear” what they are asking and answer their questions.
- Don’ t hog the conversation – keep it short.
- Make it personal.
- Make it visual.





# Break

## After the break

- Organizing – headlines, headings, key message first, bite / snack / meal
- Writing the conversation – sentences and words
- Checking for success

# Organizing the conversation



Flickr cc photo by Moonpir



Flickr cc photo by russellsmith

## About High Blood Pressure

### What is High Blood Pressure?

Blood pressure is the force of blood against the artery walls. It is often written or stated as two numbers. The first or top number represents the pressure when the heart contracts. This is called systolic pressure. The second or bottom number represents the pressure when the heart rests between beats. This is called diastolic pressure.

Blood pressure is traditionally measured with a device called a sphygmomanometer. It measures blood pressure in millimeters of mercury (mmHg). An inflatable cuff is wrapped around the arm and is inflated to squeeze the blood vessels in the arm. The health care provider uses a stethoscope to listen to the pulse as the pressure is released in order to determine the systolic and diastolic pressure. Some blood pressure testing devices are now electronic and provide digital readouts of the blood pressure measurement and pulse rate.

Blood pressure normally rises and falls throughout the day. When it consistently stays too high for too long, it is called hypertension. The Seventh Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure notes these levels for defining normal and high blood pressure in adults:

- High blood pressure or hypertension for adults is defined as a systolic blood pressure of 140 mmHg or higher or a diastolic blood pressure of 90 mmHg or higher.
- Normal blood pressure is a systolic blood pressure of less than 120 mmHg and a diastolic blood pressure of less than 80 mmHg.
- Prehypertension is defined as a systolic blood pressure of 120–139 mmHg or a diastolic blood pressure of 80–89 mmHg. Persons with prehypertension are at increased risk to progress to hypertension.

If the systolic and diastolic blood pressure levels are in different categories, blood pressure status is defined according to the higher category. For example, a person with a high systolic pressure but a normal diastolic pressure will be considered to have high blood pressure (sometimes referred to as systolic hypertension). A person with a high diastolic pressure but a normal systolic pressure will be considered to have high blood pressure also (sometimes referred to as diastolic hypertension).

High blood pressure for adults will usually be measured on at least two different doctor visits before a diagnosis of high blood pressure is made.

For children, high blood pressure is determined by comparing the child's blood pressure with the distribution of blood pressure for children of similar age, sex and height. A child whose blood pressure is

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)  
(old article)

Don't lecture.  
Don't hog the conversation.  
Take turns.  
“Hear” the site visitor's  
next question.

[www.netdoctor.co.uk/  
diseases/facts/  
asthmachildren.htm](http://www.netdoctor.co.uk/diseases/facts/asthmachildren.htm)

## Asthma and children

Reviewed by [Dr Stuart Crisp](#), consultant paediatrician



20



7



0



47

### What is an asthma attack?

The mucous membranes in the small branches of the airways (bronchi) swell and the circular muscles contract ('spasm' or bronchospasm).

More mucus is produced in the already restricted airways, which makes breathing a struggle. This usually produces a wheezing sound, when breathing out.

### What symptoms in children can be due to asthma?

Small children (up to three years):

- a wheezing sound, when breathing out
- **coughing**, wheezing or breathlessness with exercise
- feeling of a tight chest
- prolonged coughing, not because of a cold, often worse at night
- generally feeling unwell
- recurrent **colds** from which it takes a long time to recover.

Children from 3 to 15 years:

- a wheezing sound when breathing out
- prolonged coughing, especially at night
- waking up coughing during the night or in the morning
- inactivity or lethargy – no longer wishing to play physical games or take other exercise when they have enjoyed this before.

### How common is asthma in children?

- Chronic asthma is the most frequent long-term children's disease.
- About 1 to 2 per cent of all children get chronic asthma during their childhood.
- Approximately 15 to 20 per cent of all children will have symptoms of wheeze, without having chronic asthma.

### What causes asthma in children?

In young pre-school children, wheezing is usually brought on by a viral infection – causing a cold, ear or throat infection.



## Physical Exercise

The hardest part of an exercise routine is getting started. Once you've established a regular pattern of exercise, you'll find yourself following it. So, how do you get started? Well, first of all, consult your doctor. Your doctor can recommend the specific [kinds of exercise](#) for your own individual needs. Generally, however, these guidelines should get you going.

First of all, exercise will only become a habit if it's fun! Pick something you will enjoy doing. If you like being with a group of people, try a team sport like basketball or soccer. You don't have to be a super athlete. Anyone can exercise. Social activities like dancing and mall-walking are also good. If you're more of a loner, try bicycling or swimming.

Don't kid yourself. Be honest about what you realistically think you can do. If you have always hated to climb stairs, step aerobics probably isn't for you. Maybe a walk around the neighborhood would be more pleasant. Many people today are walking toward fitness.

Consider your current state of physical fitness. If you haven't exercised in years, you'll definitely want to start with some modest activities. As you get adjusted, you can increase your activity.

Consider your schedule. Are you a morning person? Then plan to exercise in the morning. If you're addicted to your snooze button, plan to exercise in the evening. Start with just a small block of time, maybe fifteen minutes. As you get into your routine, you probably won't mind increasing to twenty, and then thirty, minutes. In order to be effective, you'll need to repeat your exercise routine 3 or 4 times per week.

Will you exercise at home or at a fitness center? [Selecting a fitness center](#) can be a challenge, but you may find the community support motivational. Will you need any special equipment? The variety of [exercise equipment](#) available for purchase today can be overwhelming. Be sure to buy the proper equipment.

Break your content  
into pieces  
with headings.

Verbs – calls to action  
make good headings.

Notice the difference  
in headlines:

Physical Exercise

Physical Exercise:  
Getting Started

## **Physical Exercise: Getting Started**

The hardest part of an exercise routine is getting started. Once you've established a regular pattern of exercise, you'll find yourself following it. So, how do you get started?

### **Consult your doctor**

First, talk to your doctor. Your doctor can recommend specific [kinds of exercise](#) for your own individual needs.

Also, consider these guidelines. They should get you going.

### **Pick something you will enjoy doing**

Exercise will only become a habit if it's fun! If you like being with a group of people, try a team sport like basketball or soccer. You don't have to be a super athlete. Anyone can exercise. Social activities like dancing and mall-walking are also good. If you're more of a loner, try bicycling or swimming.

### **Be honest about what you can do**

Don't kid yourself. If you have always hated to climb stairs, step aerobics probably isn't for you. Maybe a walk around the neighborhood would be more pleasant. Many people today are walking toward fitness.

### **Consider your current state of physical fitness**

If you haven't exercised in years, you'll definitely want to start with some modest activities. As you get adjusted, you can increase your activity.

### **Consider your schedule**

Are you a morning person? Then plan to exercise in the morning. If you're addicted to your snooze button, plan to exercise in the evening. Start with just a small block of time, maybe fifteen minutes. As you get into your routine, you probably won't mind increasing to twenty, and then thirty, minutes. In order to be effective, you'll need to repeat your exercise routine 3 or 4 times per week.

### **Decide where to exercise**

Will you exercise at home or at a fitness center? [Selecting a fitness center](#) can be a challenge, but you may find the community support motivational. Will you need any special equipment? The variety of [exercise equipment](#) available for purchase today can be overwhelming. Be sure to buy the proper equipment.



## For articles, use a medium length headline

This feature	improved click-through
Thumbnail image with headline	27% higher than no image
8 words in headline	21% higher than other lengths
Odd number "5 keys to..."	20% higher than even number
Colon or dash and subtitle	9% higher
Headline as question	higher (% not specified)

Study by Outbrain.com, reported by Kelly Reeves, June 3, 2011  
[http://www.contentmarketinginstitute.com/2011/06/  
headline-click-through-rate/](http://www.contentmarketinginstitute.com/2011/06/headline-click-through-rate/)

# Include informative headings

- Headings help by
  - breaking up the information
  - making the information manageable
  - creating visual separation on the web page
  - drawing the eyes
  - providing context so people can make sense of what follows
- Thinking about headings helps authors analyze the information.

If you write page titles, headlines, and headings using site visitors' key words, your pages will come up high in search engine results.



## **Greenland Ice is Melting – Faster and Faster!**

A new paper by scientists of Utrecht University, Institute for Marine and Atmospheric Research, in collaboration with colleagues from the Netherlands Royal Meteorological Institute, Delft University of Technology, Bristol University (UK) and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (USA) was published in Science recently. The work used the Regional Atmospheric Climate Model to calculate surface processes over Greenland, satellite radar measurements to determine iceberg production and ice sheet mass loss from the Gravity Recovery and Climate Mission (GRACE) satellites.

## Start with your key message

### **Greenland Ice Melting Faster Than Expected**

The Greenland ice sheet is melting faster than expected, according to a new study led by a University of Alaska Fairbanks researcher and published in the journal *Hydrological Processes*.

Study results indicate that the ice sheet may be responsible for nearly 25 percent of global sea rise in the past 13 years. The study also shows that seas now are rising by more than 3 millimeters a year – more than 50 percent faster than the average for the 20th century.

“Hear” your site visitor’s question after each sentence you write.



Nielsen and Pernice,  
*Eye-Tracking Web Usability*

Also, see Redish,  
*Letting Go of the Words*,  
102 – 106

## Layer information (bite, snack, meal)



Bite:  
headline



Snack:  
quick summary;  
key message first



Meal:  
details

Even the whole meal  
should be  
easy to digest.

Concept from Leslie O'Flahavan  
[www.ewriteonline.com](http://www.ewriteonline.com)

[NSF news example](#)



# Writing the conversation



# Keep it short and easy to scan

Find → Understand → Act



Flickr cc photo  
by pedrosimeos7

I make jewelry. If I want  
to sell through Etsy,  
how does it work?

## How does it work?

### List Item

You list the item on Etsy for a fee.



### Get paid

Shoppers find your item and pay  
you directly.



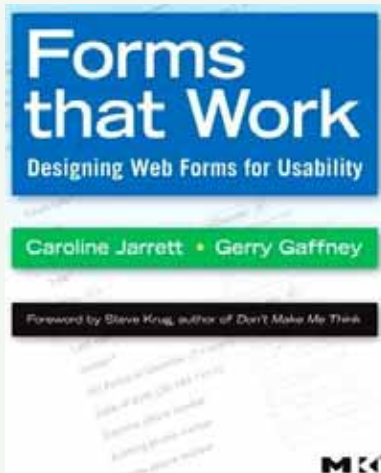
### Ship Item

You ship the item to your customer.





# Converse *with* your site visitor



Caroline Jarrett  
Gerry Gaffney

amazon.com [Your Account](#) | [Help](#)

**Sign In**

**What is your e-mail address?**

My e-mail address is:

**Do you have an Amazon.com password?**

☐ No, I am a new customer.

☒ Yes, I have a password:

[Forgot your password?](#)

## Use pronouns



Pricing of our services is dependent on the level of assistance and service chosen.



Our prices depend on how much help you need and what we do for you.

## Focus on action – verbs, not nouns



Upon successful completion of the online renewal transaction, printing the membership card will be an option.



When you finish renewing online, you can print your membership card.



Renew online. Then, print your membership card.

## Use the shortest, simplest word with the right meaning

- We all read the short, simple, common words faster.
- People inside an organization overestimate the words people outside know by about 30 percent.



"dumbing down"



respecting your busy site visitors' time

# Helping low-literacy users helps everyone

<b>Tasks completed successfully</b>	<b>% of tasks</b>		<b>Improvement</b>
	<b>Before</b>	<b>After</b>	
Low-literacy web users	46%	82%	+77%
High-literacy web users	68%	93%	+37%
All users	59%	89%	+52%

<b>Time spent on tasks</b>	<b>Time (minutes)</b>		<b>Improvement</b>
	<b>Before</b>	<b>After</b>	
Low-literacy web users	22:16	9:30	+134%
High-literacy web users	14:19	5:05	+182%
All users	17:50	6:45	+164%

Summers, K. and Summers, M., 2005,  
Reading and Navigational Strategies of Web Users with Lower Literacy Skills,  
ASSIST 2005, available from <http://iat.ubalt.edu/summers/>

What's wrong with this sentence?

Interested persons, on or before June 14, 2013, may submit to the Hearing Clerk, 1000 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20000, written comments regarding this proposal. Faxed comments will be accepted at 202-555-1234. To submit comments electronically, go to this site:



# Always, think “conversation”

We invite you to comment on this proposal.

Deadline: June 14, 2013

Submit written comments



electronically at  
WWW.....



by mail to  
Hearing Clerk  
1000 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20000



by fax to  
202-555-1234  
Attn: John Jones

Try it.

Slide 53

# Checking for success



Flickr cc photo by  
Per Ola Wiberg (Powi)..away

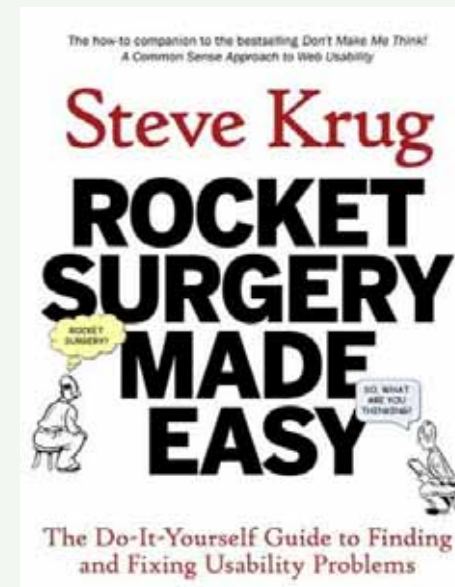
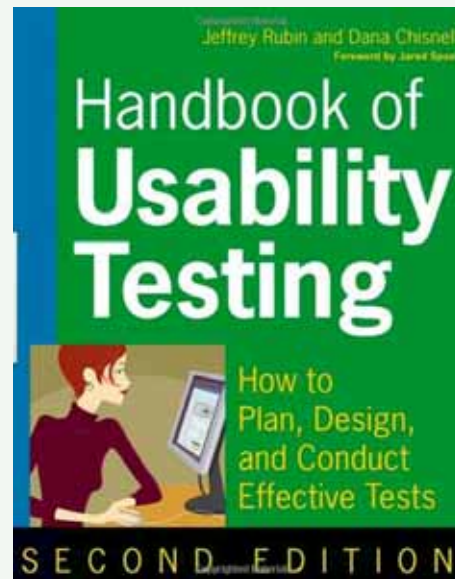
# Read, edit, revise, collaborate

- First draft ≠ final draft
- Read your work out loud.
- Ask someone else to read it out loud.
  - Don't ask if they liked it.
  - Ask what message they got from it.
- Listen! Then revise.
- Work together.



Flickr cc photo by wakacheeka

# Do usability testing



[www.usability.gov](http://www.usability.gov)

# Walk your personas through their conversations





**Thank you  
Obrigada**

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Ginny Redish

