Writing for the Web, Yahoo! Style
By Trystan L. Bass
The Web is not the same as paper

Some facts about reading and the Web…

- 79% of people scan webpages, instead of read them.

- Reading on a computer screen is 25% slower than reading on paper.

- Computer screens have about 10% the resolution of paper.

- About half of U.S. adults read at 8th-grade level or lower.
More people read news online

- Online news now ranks second to TV news (#1) and ahead of radio news (#3) and newspapers (#4) in popularity.

- 53% of all American adults get their news online today.

- Only 21% of people reading news online regularly go to one favorite news website.

- 44% of visitors to Google News don’t click to read the full article – they only scan the headline.

- 33% of cell phone owners get news on their mobile devices.
How people read online

- Eye-tracking studies show how people skim through webpages. Yahoo!’s Usability Lab calls the pattern a triangle. Red areas are the hot spots – X’s show where eyes stopped.
Better writing can improve your site

What can writers, editors, and publishers do?

- Testing has shown that you can improve the usability of your webpages by 159% simply through **better writing**!

- Clear, concise text makes it easier for people to use your site and get to the information that matters most to them.

- No flashy redesigns required.
The Yahoo! Style Guide – coming July ‘10

The ultimate sourcebook for writing, editing, and creating content in the digital world.

Key Topics:

- Write for an online audience

- Speak to your entire audience:
  Gender neutral, global writing, accessibility

- Write UI text, email, and mobile-friendly content

- Resources:
  Basic HTML, search engine optimization, copyright basics, word list
Five tips for writing for the Web

- Front-load your information – each sentence should start with the most important words, and each paragraph should start with the most important sentence.

- Add brief, keyword-loaded headings throughout an article.

- Break long paragraphs up into smaller ones.

- Format text as lists where relevant.

- Use active voice and active verbs.
Moving From Paper to Web
Things to Consider
Who is your audience?

- Is it the same as your print audience? Probably not.

- Look at your current data – where does your traffic come from? Who visits your site, for how long, what do they look at most? Know your audience!

- Local becomes global online. Think expats, transplants, and topical searches.
Local goes global

With one click, the New York Times switches from a U.S. paper to a global paper.
What is your voice?

- Voice is the expression of your company or site through images, graphics, typeface, colors, content selection, and words.
Finding your voice

A strong, consistent voice sets your site apart from the competition.

- What do you want to be known for?

- Does your website provide something different from your print version? Emphasize this.

- Be consistent throughout all parts of the site (especially important for large websites).
A closer look at voice

- An effective voice makes people feel at home through words that speak their language, literally and metaphorically, as it communicates what your brand is all about.

- For example, New York Times versus New York Post …
Jeter Declares His Independence From the Steroids Era

TAMPA, Fla. — Derek Jeter subtly expressed his support for Alex Rodriguez as Rodriguez grapples with repercussions from admitting to steroid use. But Jeter was much more forceful in distancing himself from any connection to the steroid era and, ostensibly, any connection to what Rodriguez did.
TAMPA - Insisting he has never used performance-enhancing drugs, Derek Jeter is miffed at those who suggest all players have or are using during the "Steroid Era."

And the Yankees' captain is disappointed at the players - including Alex Rodriguez - who have tainted baseball's image by using PEDs.

"One thing that irritates
Voice aligns with company brand

The Mac vs. PC ads personify the Apple voice and brand – while subversively defining the Windows brand as well!

How clearly does your website express your voice and brand?
Headlines for the Web
Not the same as print
Online headings test

- Scan an article reading only the headings (headline, all subheads, anything in bold)
- Can you understand the basic flow and substance of the story?
- Does the content seem confusing or out of order?
- Rewrite!
11 Crazy Things We Do While We Drive

By Michelle Crouch

You think texting while driving is bad? Wait until you hear what America’s truckers have seen.

Plus: The 7 Worst Roads in America

1. Wardrobe changes.
"One time on the 405 in L.A., I saw a woman switch from a very nice business outfit into a leotard. At one point, she was just sitting there in her undergarments."

2. Diaper changes
"A woman had her baby in the front seat next to her and was changing the baby’s diaper."

3. Piano playing
"I saw a gentleman one time—in a Suburban—and he had a full-size piano keyboard sitting between the two seats. He was using his right hand to play it while he was going down the road."

Plus: 10 New Ideas for Better Roads
Thirty-Five Minutes to Riches
by Asa Fitch, Amanda Gengler, Josh Hyatt, and Ismat Sarah Mangla
Friday, September 14, 2007
provided by
Money on Money.com

Find out your credit score

Time it takes: 7 minutes

Know how lenders see you. Take seven minutes to download a free credit report at annualcreditreport.com. (For year-round monitoring, get a report from one of the three major credit bureaus every four months.) If you spot an error, notify the bureau (online, by phone or by mail) and the creditor (call and also send a letter). You won’t find your credit score here, so when you request a report from Equifax, pay $7.95 for your FICO score, the most commonly used score. The range is 300 to 850, and above is good.

Raise your credit score

Time it takes: 8 minutes

It takes time to recover from major credit lapses, but you can do two things fast that will improve your credit score. Both will lower the size of your outstanding debt as a percentage of your total borrowing power.
1. Pay down a balance. 2. Call your issuer and ask for a higher credit limit. And don’t spend it.

Triple the return on savings

Time it takes: 10 minutes

Do you have cash going nowhere in a checking or savings account? Bank money-market accounts typically pay less than 1%. You can open a savings account with HSBC Direct that recently paid 5.95%. No minimum balance is required.

With your driver’s license and Social Security number handy, visit hsbcdirect.com and click on Sign Me Up. You’ll be walked through screens to enter personal information. Want to fund your account immediately? Have a check with your bank account number and routing code handy to authorize an electronic transfer.

Stop junk mail

Time it takes: 5 minutes

Call 888-SOFTOUT to remove your name from credit issuers’ mailing lists. The result of that five-minute talk with a computer? Fewer temptations and a mailbox filled with letters, not offers for pre-approved cards.

Most important, you’ll cut the risk of an identity thief raiding your mailbox or garbage can and applying for credit in your name. Stolen paper mail accounts for 9% of identity fraud cases, according to Javelin Strategy & Research.

Note: Because we’re talking credit bureaus, you’ll have to provide your Social Security number. It’s okay.

Freeze your credit

Time it takes: 25 minutes

Doing this prevents anyone from issuing credit in your name. (You, of course, can...
'Dancing With the Stars' Week 4 Recap: Tango and Tears; Splits and Soaps

By Rebecca Harter, Hulu | Wednesday, April 14, 2010, 3:08 PM

"Dancing With the Stars" gave us a little bit of everything this week, treating us to two sexy dancers — the tango and the rumba — and two sets of scores. Along the way, there were tears (reality-TV star Kate Gosselin broke down about her very public custody battle), outrageous gifts (football player Chad Ochocinco gave his partner Cheryl Burke a blinged-out diamond ring) and one heck of a finish (blond bombshell Pamela Anderson did a jaw-dropping split). Here's a look at some memorable dances of the week, as well as a sendoff to the latest celebrity to hang up his dancing shoes.

Dance of the Week: Pamela Anderson's Rumba
After seeing former "Baywatch" babe Pam Anderson do the rumba with partner Damian Whitewood this week, the question on everyone's mind was "Are they or aren't they?" Their sexual rumba surprised us all, showing off Anderson's understated, sophisticated side — and it worked! Her dazzling split certainly piqued the audience's interest, but so did Anderson and Whitewood's tousled foxy chemistry. Their final tally, with technical and performance scores combined: 47 points.

High Score: Evan Lysacek
As Olympic gold medalist Evan Lysacek rehearsed his tango with partner Anna Trebunskaya, the dirty truth came out: He's been dancing with two broken toes. But the disciplined skater was determined to improve his technique this week — and that meant learning to be lighter on his feet, a challenge since he's so used to being weighed down by ice skates. To help him focus on the details, he told his red-haired coach that she should feel free to break another toe if he misstepped. Their final score: 52 points, placing them at the top of the leaderboard.

Breakthrough Performance: Kate Gosselin
Each week, Kate Gosselin — the first to admit she's not a born dancer — has struggled to find her footing among the more (relatively) graceful celebrities. And the reality-TV mom's rehearsals with partner Tony Dovolani have turned into therapy sessions as she copes with media scrutiny and a nasty custody battle. After getting picked apart by the press and the judges for last week's art-imitating-life paso-doble tribute to Lady Gaga's "Paparazzi," she attacked the tango Monday night — and actually earned some positive remarks from the judges. Her total score: 39 points and, apparently, a ton of votes from viewers at home as she was saved from elimination.
Where are your headlines?

Headlines appear in many places on the Web:

- In the title of your story
- On the `<title>` of the page (see the top browser bar)
- In the heading of browser tabs
- As the text in bookmarks
- As the header for search results
- Sometimes as the only text readers will see in a news feed
Images of disappearing glaciers

Melting glaciers have become a well-known symbol of climate change.

Why? "It's one of the simplest indicators of climate change," says Eric Rignot, a senior research scientist at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory and a professor at the University of California, Irvine. 

"Glaciers melt when temperatures are increasing. It's just basic physics."

We also have access to numerous images of disappearing glaciers. Yet sometimes it's hard to know exactly what the pictures are showing.

Below are some of the best photos that glaciologists say illustrate what they are seeing — a worldwide retreat in glaciers due to warming temperatures. The photos represent what is happening both in an individual glacier and in the various regions around the world.

"You don't need to be a scientist to appreciate the magnitude of change of these glaciers," says Rignot. "There shouldn't be any doubt about these images."
This headline gets around
Print headlines don’t always work online

- Scents lighten up for spring
- Classic Easter fare: a grilled, herb-laden ham
- Oakland behind the curve on hunger for street eats
- Better than a jungle gym: Native garden at Long Beach school open to public on Sunday
- Amtrak on course to set ridership record this year
- State accuses Mercury Insurance
Suggested Web rewrites

Scents lighten up for spring — **Reviews of new spring perfumes**

Classic Easter fare: a grilled, herb-laden ham
— **Book reveals history of Easter ham**

Oakland behind the curve on hunger for street eats
— **Trendy street food vendors struggle with Oakland laws**

Better than a jungle gym: Native garden at Long Beach school open to public on Sunday
— **This Sunday, Long Beach school garden open to public**

Amtrak on course to set ridership record this year
— **Amtrak on course to set ridership record in 2010**

State accuses Mercury Insurance
— **Mercury Insurance may have violated CA laws**
Tips for writing Web headlines

- Use verbs that are strong, active, fresh, and accurate
- Front-load the most relevant info
- Try subject-verb-object structure to put the actor up front
- Make sure the headline can stand alone, without a tease, subhead, photo, or even the article
- Choose clarity over cleverness
- Keep global audience in mind
- Include relevant search keywords
Search Engine Optimization
Basics for writers and editors
What is SEO?

Search engine optimization (SEO) refers to the many techniques you can use to raise your webpage’s rank in search engine results.

Search engines analyze the words on a page and consider some words as more important. Essentially, the search engine will think the webpage is “about” whatever those words say.

Search engine algorithms take other things into account too, but as writers and editors, we can make a big difference in SEO by creating well-organized and information-rich copy.
SEO basics

Search engines crawl a whole page, but they give particular weight to the:

- Page <title>
- Headline
- Bold headings and subheadings
- Links
- Bulleted and numbered lists
- Introduction and conclusion

Seed keywords in those spots, and search engines will like your page better!
What is a good keyword?

- A keyword is a word or short phrase people will use to search for your article.

- Keywords are usually “everyday language” not insider jargon or marketing hype.

- Spell out keywords because people don’t search for abbreviations.

- Test a few of your keywords using these tools:
  http://www.keyworddiscovery.com/search.html
  http://tools.seobook.com/keyword-tools/seobook/

  The tools will give you a list of related terms, from most results to least.
Headline SEO rewrites

10 amazing sleeps in the West  
(article about non-traditional accommodations in CO, WA, CA, OR, etc.)

vs:

Find 10 unusual hotels on the West Coast

A leading voice in the Catholic Church  
(background of Jose Gomez, newly appointed archbishop of Los Angeles diocese)

vs:

Profile of new Catholic archbishop Jose Gomez

The gender line  
(article about risk of sudden cardiac arrest differing between men and women)

vs:

Gender may be a factor in sudden cardiac arrest
Headline SEO rewrites

Driving while demented
   *(health column about new guidelines for elderly people driving with dementia)*

vs:

Guidelines add to driving with dementia debate

More Asian voices in whiskey debate
   *(article reviewing expensive Japanese-made whiskeys)*

vs:

Taste-test these rare Japanese whiskeys

Don’t trash or stash old cell phones; recycle them
   *(article about EPA recommendations for cell phone recycling)*

vs:

Recycle cell phones – don’t stash or trash old cell phones
SEO for articles

- Try to repeat each keyword 2 to 4 times in a 300-word story.

- But you don’t want your text to sound artificial or so repetitive that it's ridiculous.

- Include keywords and variations in subheads, bold, bulleted lists.

- Draft your story first and then see where you can tweak wording and use keywords and variations.
Links in your articles influence SEO

- Links are like votes: When you link to a site, you endorse it, in the eyes of search engines.

- They need to be good links: If you link to a less-relevant site, the search engine may ding your page. And you don’t get “extra credit” for linking to lots of sites.

- Aim for three links to relevant pages on the same or similar topic. Use keywords in the link text.

- Encourage other sites to link to your page.
Yahoo!’s editors have given the rules of the writing road a smart and timely reboot. It’s Strunk and White for the online world.

– Arianna Huffington
Co-founder and editor-in-chief of The Huffington Post
Excellent and eminently useful book with many compelling examples of rewrites. While rewriting content for usability will hugely increase a website's business value, the word list alone can save you the cost of the book by eliminating wasted time arguing over proper usage.

– Jakob Nielsen, PhD
Principal, Nielsen Norman Group
Author Eyetracking Web Usability
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