

How Users Read on the Screen

Why We Need to Rethink the Way We Communicate



Presented by Derek Belt

Social Media Specialist, King County

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Writing for the web

Today's Discussion

- How people read online
- Writing web-friendly copy
- Understanding the different digital communications tools
- Example of the same story on multiple channels
- Group discussion
- Resources

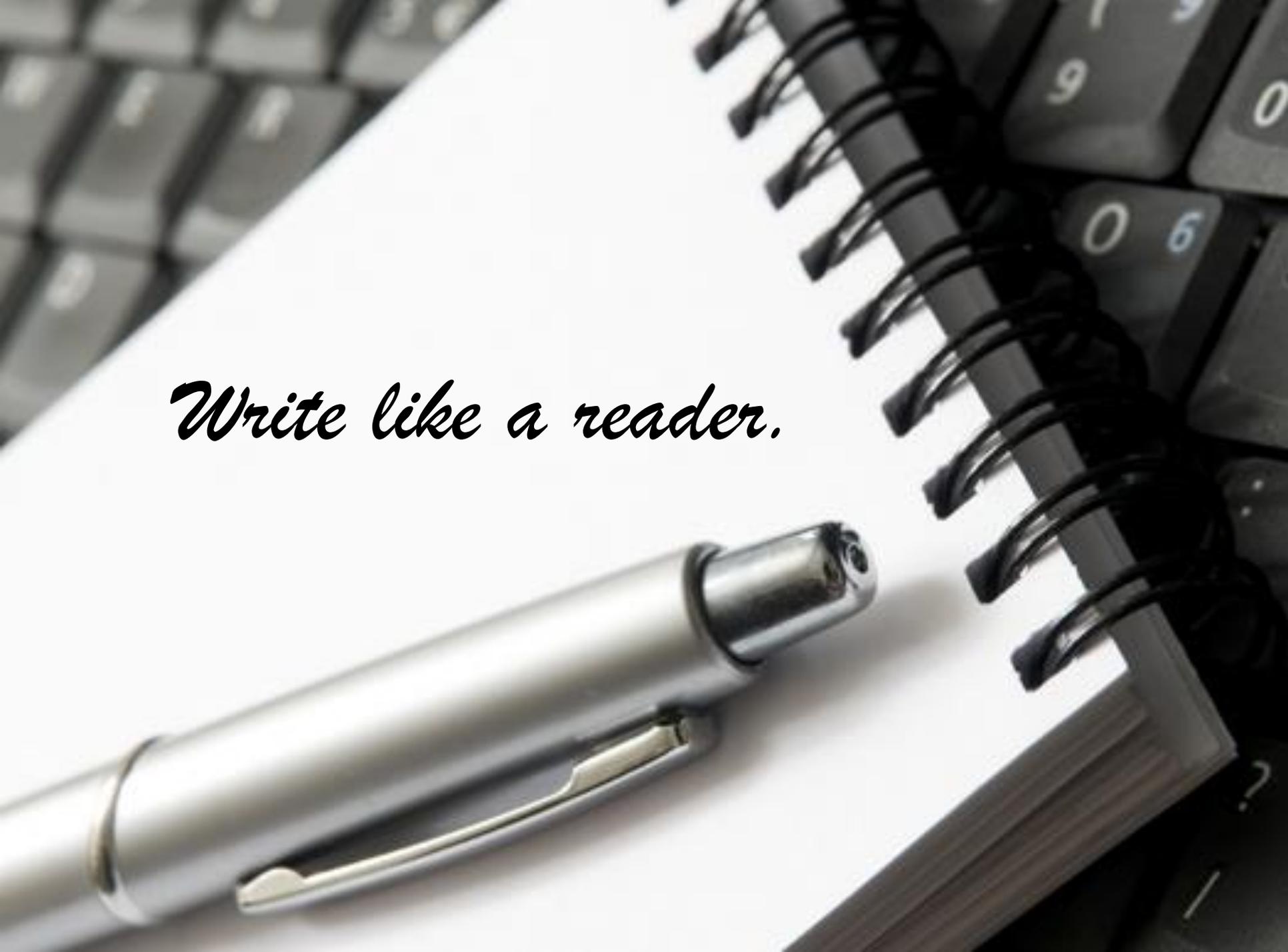


“Before thinking about marketing yourself on a specific channel or platform, take a long, hard look at the channel and ask yourself this very simple question: Why are people here?”

– Mitch Joel, Ctrl Alt Delete

“This simple act will put consumers first in everything that you do and make all the stories that you would like to share that much more valuable to them. On the other hand, trying to force people on Facebook to do what you’d like them to do will be an act of futility, frustration and failure.”

– Mitch Joel, Ctrl Alt Delete



Write like a reader.

How people read online

- **They don't—at least not the way we typically think about how people read.**
- People's attention spans online are very short (roughly 4 seconds!) and they rarely read web pages word by word.
- Instead, readers scan the page, picking out individual keywords and sentences.
- Recent studies show 79% of readers scan the page, while 16% read the copy word by word.

Eye-tracking studies



Heat maps indicate users look around a website in an “F-pattern.” Red areas indicate where their eyes go first; yellow areas indicate fewer views, followed by blue areas which rarely get seen. Grey areas don’t attract any fixations.

What the F-pattern means

- People will read the first two words of a sentence more often than they'll read the third word.
- Headlines, sub-heads, paragraphs and bullets should start with keywords that readers will catch when scanning the page.
- **A best practice in web writing is to write what you think you need, then cut 50%.**





NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC
SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

DRIVING SAFETY

VEHICLE SAFETY

RESEARCH

DATA

LAWS & REGULATIONS

Who We Are and What We Do

WHO ARE WE? The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), under the [U.S. Department of Transportation](#), was established by the Highway Safety Act of 1970, as the successor to the National Highway Safety Bureau, to carry out safety programs under the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966 and the Highway Safety Act of 1966. The Vehicle Safety Act has subsequently been recodified under Title 49 of the U. S. Code in Chapter 301, Motor Vehicle Safety. NHTSA also carries out consumer programs established by the Motor Vehicle Information and Cost Savings Act of 1972, which has been recodified in various Chapters under Title 49.

NHTSA is responsible for reducing deaths, injuries and economic losses resulting from motor vehicle crashes. This is accomplished by setting and enforcing safety performance standards for motor vehicles and motor vehicle equipment, and through grants to state and local governments to enable them to conduct effective local highway safety programs.

NHTSA investigates safety defects in motor vehicles, sets and enforces fuel economy standards, helps states and local communities reduce the threat of drunk drivers, promotes the use of safety belts, child safety seats and air bags, investigates odometer fraud, establishes and enforces vehicle anti-theft regulations and provides consumer information on motor vehicle safety topics.

NHTSA also conducts research on driver behavior and [traffic safety](#), to develop the most efficient and effective means of bringing about safety improvements.

We have a toll-free Vehicle Safety Hotline to provide recall information, receive *SAFETY* complaints and provide consumers with a wide range of information on vehicle safety. The Hotline operates from 8am-10pm Eastern Time, Monday-Friday. Calls during non-business hours connect to an automated answering service. A Spanish-speaking operator is available from 8am-10pm.

The nationwide toll-free number is 1-888-327-4236. For the hearing impaired the TTY number is 800-424-9153.





Mission Statement

Limited English Proficiency (LEP) A Federal Interagency Website

[TeamSTEPPS® Enhancing Safety for Patients With Limited English Proficiency Module, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, March 2013](#)

[Re-Engineered Discharge \(RED\) Toolkit, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, March 2013 \(Toolkit Language Access Topics on the Resources Page\)](#)

[OCR launches national compliance review initiative, "Advancing Effective Communication in Critical Access Hospitals," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights \(OCR\)- April 30, 2013 \(Press Release in PDF \) \(HHS/OCR Report in PDF\)](#)

[Enhanced National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health and Health Care \(National CLAS Standards\), Office of Minority Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services- April 2013 \(PDF Version\) \(Additional Information\)](#)

[Limited English Proficient Individuals in the United States: Linguistic Diversity at the County and State Level, Migration Policy Institute- February 27, 2013 \(Excel\)](#)

[Justice Department Reaches Settlement with School District of Palm Beach County, Florida. The agreement includes "translation and interpretation services throughout the registration" and "disciplinary process" for ELL students and parents who are LEP- February 26, 2013 \(Agreement\) \(Press Release\)](#)





RECOVERY.GOV

TRACK THE MONEY

Recovery.gov is the U.S. government's official website that provides easy access to data related to Recovery Act spending and allows for the reporting of potential fraud, waste, and abuse.

OFFICES OF INSPECTORS GENERAL

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 mandates that funds distributed under the Recovery Act are subject to unprecedented accountability. Inspectors General, therefore, continually review their agencies' management of Recovery funds to ensure that:

- Recovery funds were awarded and distributed in a prompt, fair, and reasonable manner;
- Recovery funds are used for authorized purposes, and that steps are in place to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse;
- Recovery projects avoid unnecessary delays and cost-overruns and that they meet goals and targets



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General
Websites

Read:

- [All Inspector General Reports](#)
- Reports on [Tax Benefits](#)
- Reports on [Contracts, Grants, and Loans](#)
- Reports on [Entitlement](#) programs

Choose an Agency



Go



Write web-friendly copy

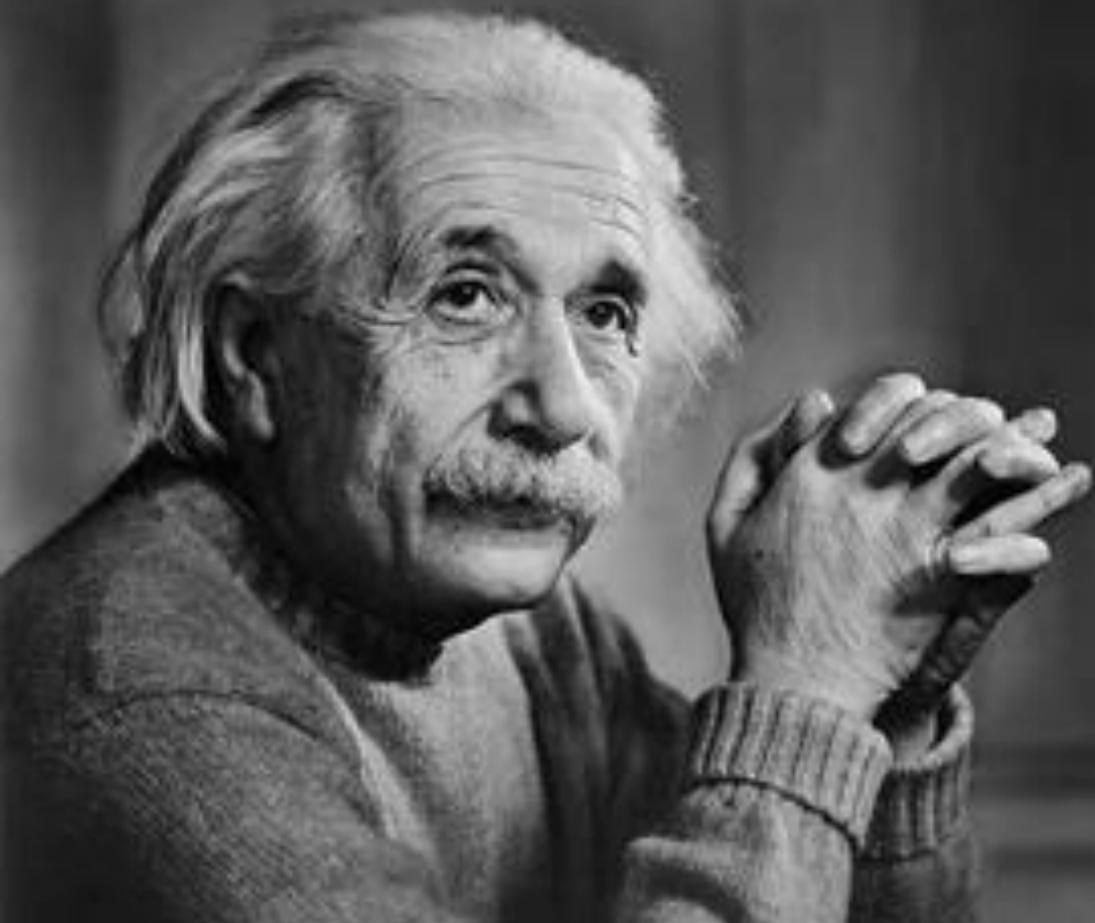
- Employ “scanable” tactics.
- **Write short sentences; limit paragraphs to 2-3 sentences.**
- Front-load the important stuff → Start with the content your audience needs to know, then provide additional details.
- Use keywords that clearly explain what the story, section or paragraph is about.
- Use bulleted or numbered lists.
- Embrace white space to visually separate information.
- Add pictures, images, graphics or illustrations, if available. Always include a brief caption.

Use plain language

- For government agencies, writing in plain language is more than good customer service, it's the law.
- President Obama signed the Plain Writing Act of 2010 that requires federal agencies to use “clear communication the public can understand and use.”
- **Know your target audience, and write for them.**
- Use pronouns → The reader is “you,” while the organization or government agency is “we.”
- Write in the active voice. “The council proposed the legislation,” not “The legislation was proposed by the council.”

If you can't explain it **simply**, you don't understand it well enough.

– Albert Einstein



My all-time favorite story

It was the first day of journalism class, and Sarah's teacher announced the first assignment:

They would write the lead to a newspaper story.

The teacher reeled off the facts: "Kenneth Peters, principal of Beverly Hills High School, announced today the entire school faculty will travel to Sacramento next Thursday for a training in new teaching methods. Among the speakers will be college president Dr. Maynard Hutchins, California Governor Pat Brown and anthropologist Margaret Mead."

The budding journalists, sitting at their computers, began to peck away at the first lead of their careers.

My all-time favorite story

Sarah and most of the other students wrote leads that reorganized the facts into a single sentence:

“Governor Pat Brown, Margaret Mead and Dr. Maynard Hutchins will address Beverly Hills faculty Thursday in Sacramento.
... blah, blah, blah.”

The teacher scanned all the leads, then paused for a moment.

Finally, she said, “The lead to the story is...



There is no school next Thursday.

A vibrant rainbow arches across a dark, stormy sky, its colors transitioning from red on the left to violet on the right. Below the rainbow, a dirt road winds through a lush, green landscape of bushes and trees. In the background, dark mountains with patches of snow are visible under a heavy, grey sky. The overall scene is dramatic and beautiful.

Simple is beautiful.

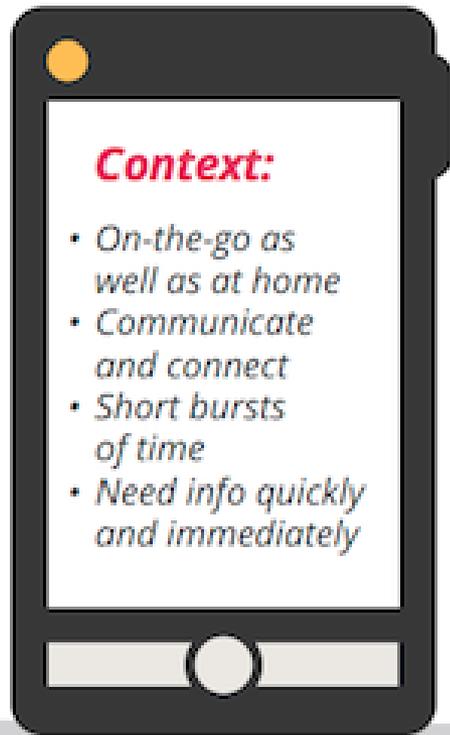
Understanding the tools

- We have lots of tools for connecting with constituents.
- All of these tools are different.
 - Facebook is not Twitter
 - Twitter is not your website
 - Your website is not your newsletter
 - And so on . . .



- **Every tool is different because the audience for every tool is different. Know this, leverage this!**

Communication on the go



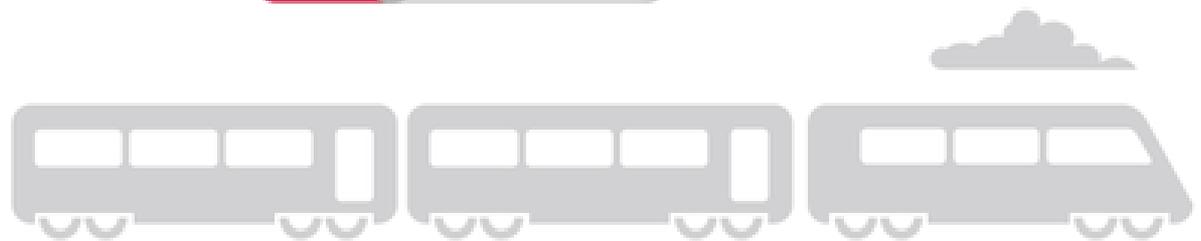
38%

of our daily media interactions occur on a smartphone

Smartphone use is motivated by:

Communication  54%

Entertainment  33%



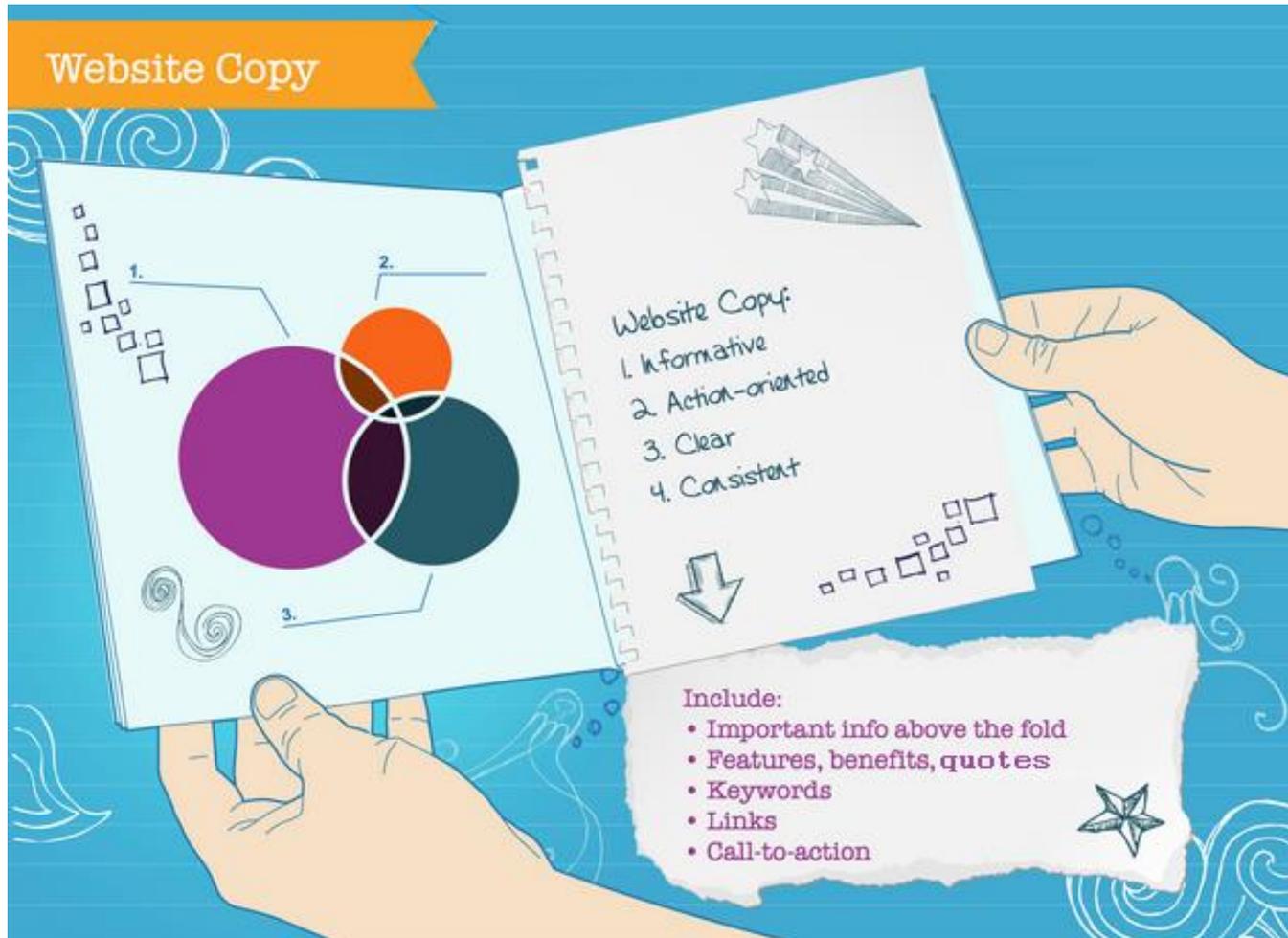
* Mobify, 2012

Welcome to the one-screen world

- According to a 2012 Google study, "90% of people move between devices to accomplish a goal, whether that's on smartphones, PCs, tablets or TV."
- Some say we are living in the "any screen era," where users can do anything on any screen.
- **But if we write like the reader, the only screen that matters is the one in front of you right now.**

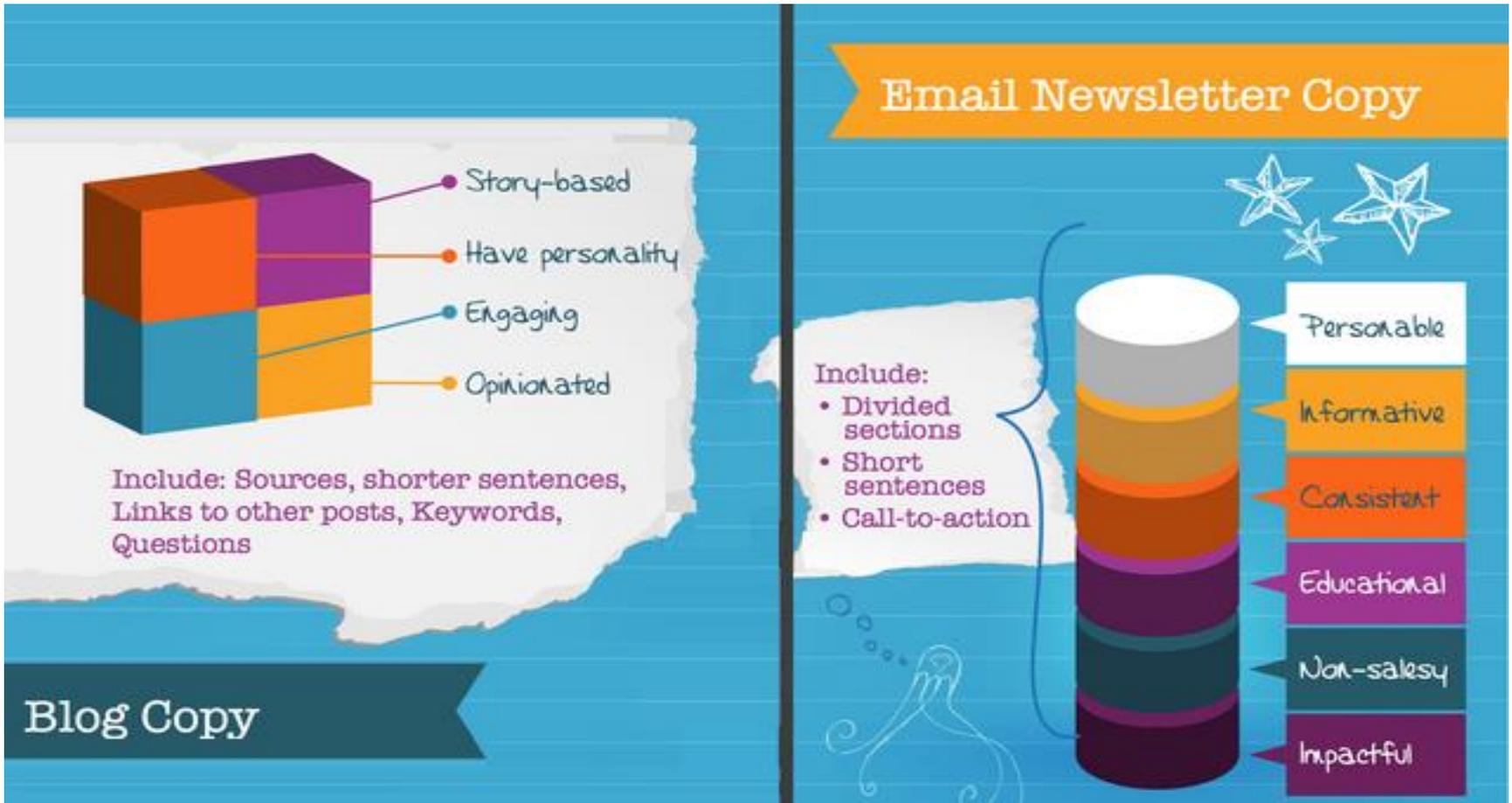


Website copy



* Vertical Response, 2013

Blog and newsletter copy



* Vertical Response, 2013

Social media copy



* Vertical Response, 2013

**All our tools are
different.**



Write for the one screen

King County News

You're in: Executive Office » Recent Exec releases » 2013 Exec news releases » March



March 21, 2013

Executive Constantine reaches agreement to conserve largest piece of unprotected forestland remaining in King County

Purchase of conservation easement for White River Forest near Enumclaw would protect 43,000 acres – an area roughly twice the size of city of Bellevue

King County Executive Dow Constantine today said he has reached an agreement to permanently protect the 43,000 acres of the White River Forest east of Enumclaw from development – an area roughly twice the size of the city of Bellevue.

"This is the largest swath of unprotected forestland remaining in King County," said Executive Constantine. "With this agreement, we will dramatically extend our green wall against sprawl, and achieve the ambitious goal set a decade ago of protecting 200,000 acres of working forests countywide."

Managed by the Hancock Timber Resource Group, the White River Forest is located along scenic Highway 410, which takes motorists to Crystal Mountain ski resort in the winter and over Chinook pass in the summer.

To purchase development rights to the property, the Executive today sent legislation to the County Council to authorize \$8.1 million in existing funding from the County's dedicated open space fund known as the Conservation Futures Fund. The Council last fall approved \$3 million from Conservation Futures and from the King County Parks levy toward the total \$11.1 million price. The land would remain in private ownership with the right to harvest timber sustainably.

Dan Christensen, CEO of Hancock Timber Resource Group, said the Company is committed to conservation efforts and managing forests sustainably.

"We are pleased to move one step closer to our common goal of protecting the impressive White River property as a working forest in perpetuity. We appreciate the commitment of Executive Constantine and King County in preserving the forest with its economic, social and environmental benefits for generations to come," Christensen said. "With the conservation of the White River forest, the Hancock Timber Resource Group's Sensitive Lands program would surpass more than 470,000 acres protected globally. A significant part of that work has been accomplished right here in King County and we greatly respect the County's ongoing efforts to conserve vital working forests."

"Protecting these lands will preserve resource jobs, open space, fish and wildlife habitat, and a significant view corridor for the people of King County," said King County Councilmember Larry Phillips. "This is an important legacy to leave for future generations, building on the hundreds of thousands of acres of open space we've preserved in King County. I am proud to continue the County Council's work finalizing the funding package we began assembling last year toward this preservation effort."

For more information, including maps of the White River Forest receiving protection, please visit www.kingcounty.gov/whiteriverforest.

Write for the one screen

King County News

You're in: Executive Office » Recent Exec releases » 2013 Exec news releases » March

March 21, 2013

King County to preserve 43,000 acres of White River Forest

Largest piece of unprotected forestland is twice the size of Bellevue

King County Executive Dow Constantine reached an agreement with the Hancock Timber Resource Group to permanently protect 43,000 acres of the White River Forest from development.

Located east of Enumclaw along scenic Highway 410, the forestlands are a critical wildlife corridor and an important part of the county's timber resource industry, supporting more than 350 jobs in forestry.

It is the largest swath of unprotected forestland remaining in King County and is roughly twice the size of Bellevue.

Details of the purchase agreement include:

- The Executive sent legislation to the County Council to authorize \$8.1 million in existing funds from the county's dedicated open space funds known as the Conservation Futures Fund.
- Last fall, the Council approved \$3 million from the Conservation Futures Fund and the King County Parks levy toward the \$11.1 million total price.
- The forestland remains in private ownership with the right to harvest timber sustainably.

"With this agreement, we will dramatically extend our green wall against sprawl, and achieve the ambitious goal set a decade ago of protecting 200,000 acres of working forests countywide."

-- Executive Dow Constantine

Learn more about King County's protection of the [White River Forest](#).

For more information, including maps of the White River Forest receiving protection, please visit www.kingcounty.gov/whiteriverforest.

Write for the one screen

The image is a screenshot of a news article from King County News. The article is titled "King County to preserve 43,000 acres of White River Forest" and is dated March 21, 2013. The article is highlighted with a blue border. The article text includes a sub-headline "Largest piece of unprotected forestland is twice the size of Bellevue", a quote from Executive Dow Constantine, and a list of details about the purchase agreement. The article is part of a series of news releases from the Executive Office in March 2013.

King County News

You're in: Executive Office » Recent Exec releases » 2013 Exec news releases » March

March 21, 2013

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Roughly twice the size of Bellevue, the area is the largest swath of unprotected forestland remaining in King County. The agreement dramatically extends the county's wall against sprawl and achieves the ambitious goal of protecting 200,000 acres of working forests countywide. [Read more...](#)

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-- Executive Dow Constantine

Learn more about King County's protection of the [White River Forest](#).

For more information, including maps of the White River Forest receiving protection, please visit www.kingcounty.gov/whiteriverforest.

Write for the one screen

King County News

King County, WA
March 22

King County has reached an agreement to protect 43,000 acres of the White River Forest from development.

Roughly twice the size of Bellevue, the area is the largest swath of unprotected forestland remaining in King County. Dow Constantine, King County Executive, says the agreement extends our "wall against sprawl" and achieves the goal of protecting 200,000 acres of forests countywide. <http://1.usa.gov/ZFEaRq>



Executive Council
unprotected

Purchase of 43,000 acres – an area

King County Executive Dow Constantine announced the purchase of 43,000 acres of the White River Forest.

"This is the largest agreement, we will be protecting 200,000 acres of forestland countywide."

Managed by the Harriet Tubman Motorists to Crystal Lake.

To purchase development rights, the Executive Council last fall approved a \$100 million price. The largest purchase of forestland in King County history.

Dan Christensen, Chief of Forest Management, said the purchase is a significant step in protecting the White River Forest for future generations.

"We are pleased to protect this forest in perpetuity. It is an economic, social and environmental asset. The White River forest, the Harriet Tubman Motorists to Crystal Lake protected globally. A significant step in King County's ongoing effort to protect forestland countywide."

"Protecting these large areas of forestland for future generations, building on the County's ongoing effort."

For more information, including a map of the area, visit www.kingcounty.gov/white

Write for the one screen

King County News

You're in: Executive Office

March 21, 2013

Executive Council unopposed

Purchase of 43,000 acres – an area

King County Executive Dan Christensen announced the White River Forest agreement, we will be protecting 200,000 acres.

Managed by the Harriet Motorists to Crystal Lake

To purchase development in existing forest, the Council last fall approved a \$100 million price. The largest purchase of land in King County history.

Dan Christensen, Chief Executive Officer, managing forests sustainably.

"We are pleased to protect this forest in perpetuity. It's an economic, social and environmental win for the White River forest, the Harriet Motorists to Crystal Lake protected globally. A County's ongoing effort to protect its natural resources."

"Protecting these large tracts of land for future generations, building on the County's long history of protecting its natural resources."

For more information, including photos, visit www.kingcounty.gov/white

King County, WA March 22

King County, WA ✓
@kcnews

King County to protect 43K acres of White River Forest from development, extends wall against sprawl, says @kcexec:
1.usa.gov/ZFEaRq

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Group to... will reen... in King... tious goal of... al set g... /wide."... ow Constantine... King County Parks... y.

Group discussion

Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles

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Disabled Parking Permits

- [Application Requirements](#)
- [Application Form HSMV 83039](#)
- [Procedures & Instructions](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Law changes for disabled parking permit holders!

Effective July 1, 2012: Any person that loses or has their disabled parking permit stolen must provide form HSMV 83039, Application For Disabled Person Parking Permit, completed and signed by their certifying authority within the last 12 months. Once completed, take this form to the local county tax collector office or license plate agency for replacement.

Effective October 1, 2012: Any person renewing their disabled parking permit must have current certification. Before a disabled parking permit can be renewed, the permit-holder must provide form HSMV 83039, Application For Disabled Person Parking Permit, completed and signed by their certifying authority within the last 12 months. Once completed, take form to the local county tax collector office or tag agency for replacement.

(Revised June 11, 2012)

Chapter 320.0848, Florida Statutes, allows for the issuance of disabled Parking Permits. Basic information is provided below:

- A current certification is required on the initial issuance of a disabled parking permit.
- **Beginning July 1, 2012, any person that loses or has their disabled parking permit stolen must provide a form HSMV 83039, Application For Disabled Person Parking Permit, completed and signed by their certifying authority within the last 12 months.**
- Certification must be provided by a Physician, Osteopathic Physician, a Podiatric Physician, a Chiropractor, an Optometrist, an Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner licensed under Chapter 464, under the protocol of a licensed Physician, a Physician Assistant licensed to practice under Chapter 458 or Chapter 459, or by a similarly licensed physician from another state. When certification is provided on form HSMV 83039, the certifying authority's medical license number, the state they are licensed in, and their address must be shown.
- Disabled persons must have either a current Florida driver license or a Florida identification card issued by the Florida Division of Driver Licenses. The driver license or ID number must be affixed to the parking permit. NOTE: Effective November 1, 2009, an exemption from the requirement to have a Florida driver license or identification card is provided if the disabled person is physically unable to visit or be transported to an office to obtain this documentation. The disabled person must provide certification on form HSMV 83039 (revised 10/09 or later) to claim this special exception.
- The expiration date of the disabled person parking permit issued to an individual will be issued for a period up to 4 years to expire on the applicant's birthday.
- **Beginning October 1, 2012, any person renewing their disabled parking permit must provide a form HSMV 83039, Application For Disabled Person Parking Permit, completed and signed by their certifying authority within the last 12 months.**
- Organizations, which provide regular transportation service to disabled persons having disabilities that limit or impair their ability to walk or are certified as legally blind, must provide either a FEID number or a Florida sales tax registration number to be affixed to the disabled parking permit.
- Subsequent or additional parking permits may be issued to persons who are certified as a quadriplegic, or are frequent travelers. (A frequent traveler must indicate on the application form that they frequently travel by plane, train, bus or boat and need one permit to park their vehicle at the place of departure and another one to use at their destination.) Organizations may be issued as many as they have vehicles providing transportation to disabled persons.

Group discussion

Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles

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Questions?

Key takeaways:

- Write like a reader.
- Attention spans are short online, and people scan the page—they don't read it.
- Write what you think you need, then cut 50%.
- Employ “scannable” tactics → Short sentences, bulleted lists, front-load the important stuff.
- Remember, the only screen that matters is the one you're looking at right now.



Thank you!

Derek Belt
Social Media Specialist,
King County

Contact me:

derek.belt@kingcounty.gov
@derekbelt
@kcnews

writ·er /'raitər/

-noun

**1. a peculiar organism capable
of turning caffiene into words**

More resources

- **Letting Go of the Words**
Ginny Redish
- **Made to Stick**
Chip and Dan Heath
- **Don't Make Me Think**
Steve Krug
- **Content Strategy for the Web**
Kristina Halvorson
- **Usability.gov**

