



semantic



Selling your value proposition online

Writing for the Web

8 top tips on writing copy for
your website

Semantic Website Wins #7
Nick Wake – April 2020



Welcome

Semantic Website Wins is a new series of mini guides to help marketers optimise their website, learn something new, and make the most of these strange times.

Many of us are working from home or furloughed, so day-to-day work has reduced or stopped. We hope that you can use our guides to find website wins to use now, or in the future and also build your skills so that you're ready to bounce back stronger.

We'll be writing guides with advice, tips and ideas to help you optimise your website in the coming weeks. Of course, we're always happy to help with any questions and provide further support if you get stuck.

Just drop me a line I'll be back in touch:
neil@semantic.co.uk or 02380 111 545.

In the meantime, stay safe, and stay positive.

Neil

P.S. Need some extra support?

We're offering free video-call consultancy sessions for leisure & tourism, sports, theatres and professional bodies impacted by Coronavirus.

We can cover SEO, conversion rate optimisation, technical or critical analysis of your site.

Just give us a call for more details on 02380 111 545.

Writing for the web

"There is power in words. What you say is what you get."

Zig Ziglar

In this issue we have 8 tips for writing good web copy.

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1. Short simple sentences. Right tone

Long sentences belong in Booker Prize winning novels. The attention span of most online readers today demands sentences of 35 words or fewer.

Avoid jargon. Explain complex or niche terms. Both these points are particularly important if you work in a technical business that needs to communicate with non-technical customers.

Lean towards nouns and verbs and keep adverbs and adjectives to a minimum. Use a tone of voice that suits your brand. HMRC has a very different tone to Virgin mobile. For example, when have you ever seen an HMRC communication with an exclamation mark in it?

2. Active not passive voice

For example, rather than writing "A game was played," write "The children played a game." Instead of saying "Tickets can be purchased by clicking here", say "You can purchase tickets here"

Active voice delivers clear reader-friendly copy. When you speak directly to the audience e.g. "You can download here", it's more engaging than saying "Downloads are available here".

3. Show don't tell

Specific, real-world examples help readers better understand and picture your products and services. Consider these two descriptions:

This is the best way to learn golf quickly.

Or

The golf lessons are delivered by a team of experienced PGA accredited professionals, with a proven track record of turning novices into golfers in just 6 weeks.

Which version gives you a clearer picture of the type of lessons you're buying? Specific details in the second description help readers visualise the experience rather than merely tell them about it.

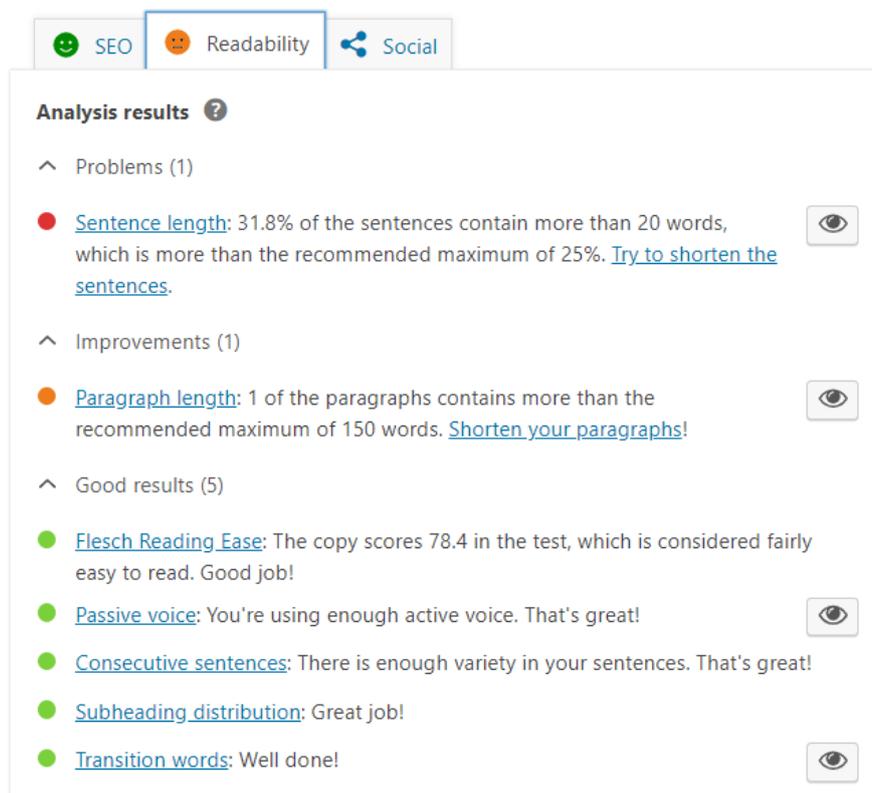
4. Search Engine Friendly

Everyone wants to rank well for the words and phrases associated with the products and services they specialise in. If you're selling a great day for the whole family - this phrase and variations on it, need to appear with some frequency, but not at the expense of a poor story. It's all about balance.

In your About page, you'll need to have words like "family", "fun", "day out" threaded through the copy. On the "Testimonials" page, you might write: "Here is what some families had to say about their great fun day out at (attraction name)."

A blog or news section in your site, is the area where you can keep your story dynamic and make a major contribution to search engine optimisation, with those same keywords and phrases weaved through the content.

Don't be a writer who gives the copy to someone else to post. Use the tools available in most content management systems (CMS) to identify opportunities for improvement. These include SEO and readability analysis.



The screenshot shows a readability analysis tool interface. At the top, there are three tabs: 'SEO' (with a smiley face icon), 'Readability' (with a sad face icon), and 'Social' (with a share icon). The 'Readability' tab is selected. Below the tabs is a section titled 'Analysis results' with a help icon. The results are organized into three expandable sections: 'Problems (1)', 'Improvements (1)', and 'Good results (5)'. Each item in these sections includes a colored dot, a link to the specific metric, a brief description of the issue or success, and an eye icon for toggling visibility.

- Problems (1)**
 - Sentence length:** 31.8% of the sentences contain more than 20 words, which is more than the recommended maximum of 25%. [Try to shorten the sentences.](#)
- Improvements (1)**
 - Paragraph length:** 1 of the paragraphs contains more than the recommended maximum of 150 words. [Shorten your paragraphs!](#)
- Good results (5)**
 - Flesch Reading Ease:** The copy scores 78.4 in the test, which is considered fairly easy to read. Good job!
 - Passive voice:** You're using enough active voice. That's great!
 - Consecutive sentences:** There is enough variety in your sentences. That's great!
 - Subheading distribution:** Great job!
 - Transition words:** Well done!

5. Make is scannable and let it breathe

Put the most important information up top and make sure text is easy to skim. Most web readers will scan the page to find the specific piece of information they're looking for. If they don't find it easily, they'll leave.

Organise your copy under headings and subheadings. Use bulleted or numerical lists, where appropriate. Give the copy room to breathe. A bit of white space around text makes it more legible, and more enjoyable to read.

6. Spread your content

In a website you have more than pages to work with so help your readers by hyperlinking certain words or phrases to other relevant resources, especially those on your own website. This will help keep people engaged with your content and support your search engine ranking.

For example: "Indoor skydiving is perfect for gifts, parties, school groups, charity fundraising and skydiver training". Each one of these options can be linked to more information about what this activity has to offer against each user occasion.

One note of caution: If you overload your text with links, your readers won't know what to click on. Google recommends keeping the volume of hyperlinks on a page to a "reasonable number".

7. Call to action

The sole purpose of a website is to get the reader to do something. So, help them with calls to action (CTAs).

Keep your CTAs succinct and action orientated. For example: "Download," "Share," "Join," "Sign Up," "Learn More," "Watch," and of course "Buy now". Though be careful not to overdo this one. Remember buyers are on a journey and being told to "Buy now" may encourage the opposite reaction to the one you are hoping for. Always worth testing your CTAs and letting the data decide.



8. Proof...and get some else to proof too

This sounds obvious but it's remarkable how often you see typos or grammatically incorrect sentences on websites. After drafting your copy, in a Word doc—or similar, read through it. And then read it again. Don't just rely on spell checker - "through" and "though" are both correctly spelled words - with completely different meanings. And get someone else in the team to give it fresh eyes.

Typos make a website, and therefore your business, look unprofessional and sloppy. Who wants that?

Need a hand?

So, there you go - Semantic's view on how to write good copy for the web. If this is all you need, then go ahead and put it into play. If you need an expert hand, you know where we are.

Email me on neil@semantic.co.uk

- Call 02380 111 545
- Book a time in my diary to chat at <https://calendly.com/neillewin/>



Neil
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