

Write for the web

Reading online is quite different from reading printed material. In preparing your site, you may find you have existing materials you want to use. To help maximize student learning, chances are you need to do some editing to get these ready for the web.

[A 1997 survey conducted by Jakob Nielsen](#) shows that approximately 80% of test users simply scanned web pages. Only 16% read the content word for word. Nielsen's study also shows that most users read in an "F" formation: First, they sweep across the top part of the page. Next, they skip down several lines and carry out a second horizontal sweep, following this up with a vertical skimming of the left side of the page.

What does this mean for creating your site? Put the most important information in the first two paragraphs. If users don't read any further, at least they are exposed to the main concepts. Visitors with cognitive difficulties may quit reading part way through the page and will benefit if the information is structured in this way.

Consider using more of the following guidelines from Jakob Nielsen's website:

- Present information in chunks.
- Use bulleted lists to further break up content.
- Put your most important content at the top of the screen or in the region of the browser window that loads first.
- Use short, concise sentences.
- Reduce word count. Recommended suggestion is to use 50% less words than you use in print.
- Highlight key words.
- Avoid using all caps. This is difficult to read and carries extra emphasis in a screen reader.
- Use a conversational tone.
- Avoid jargon and unnecessarily complex or technical language.