

TOPTIPS

WRITING FOR THE WEB

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Compared to the design and technical aspects of having a website for your church, the written content appears far easier. Writing for the internet however is different from writing a book or for a magazine as people read and take in information differently online. Here are five tips for writing for the web:

1 Think about your audience

Have in mind the type of people who are likely to visit your website: where they live, how old they are, their interests and what their potential 'goal' is when visiting the site. The website design and written content should then be targeted at these imaginary profile audiences. So for instance there may be a young family moving to the area looking for a church to go to. What information will they appreciate on your site? Service times, details of your children's work and how to find where you are would be helpful. I have seen church websites which have long essays on what they theologically believe but then there are no directions or contact details on how to visit them!

2. Keep it brief

Written content on your website should be as short as possible and easy to skim through. Research has found that web users don't like reading word for word on screen. They resist reading until the last moment. Users tend to come to the website to fulfil a special task rather than just to browse or for 'a good read'. When you have written potential text for your site, see if there is anything in it that is not 100% necessary and cut it. If you have a long document that needs to go on your site, it is best to have it as a pdf attachment with a short paragraph on the relevant webpage telling them what it is and the benefit of reading it, so people can decide whether they need to download it or not.

3 Easy to read

Text should be written in plain English wherever possible. Sentences and paragraphs should be short and to the point, with easy to understand words. Try to avoid phrases or content that someone that does not go to your church or maybe isn't a Christian would not understand.

4 Be search engine savvy

Many people will arrive on your website on different pages because they have used a search engine to find you. Therefore every page on your website should be self contained not assuming that people have read something on another page or the home page because they may not have so. Users select their own journey through your content. Their precise entry and exit points cannot be predicted. When possible put keywords (like the name of your church for instance) at the start of paragraphs and sentences that will enable it to be picked up by search engines so people can find relevant information easier.

5 Keep it up to date and accurate

Regularly go through your written content on the site and change material that has gone out of date. If people see that the content is out of date they are less likely to visit again. Make sure that spelling and grammar is correct as this will slow readers down and will also put them off your site.

