

DSC SPEED READS

**COMMUNICATIONS**

# Writing for the Web

Moi Ali

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DIRECTORY OF SOCIAL CHANGE

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# Introduction

## Who will this book help?

Writing for the World Wide Web (Web) is unlike other types of writing you may undertake at work. It requires a different thought process and different techniques. If you have never written for the Internet or you lack experience and confidence in this area, this book is for you.

## What will it give you?

This book covers the different aspects of writing for the Internet. It includes jargon-free quick tips on how to create readable, accessible text that caters for the way people read online material. It does *not* cover the technical or programming aspects of website development.

# Chapter 1

## Reading on the Internet

*This chapter explains the key differences between printed material and Web-based text. It describes how people use websites and read on-screen information and includes tips on how to create an accessible and easy-to-read web page.*

Cyberspace used to be a world inhabited by ‘anoraks’ and ‘geeks’. But today the Internet is a part of everyday life and most of us would find it hard to live without Google, eBay and Amazon. How did we manage without this amazing world that is only one or two clicks away? How did children do research for their homework in the days before the Web? How did we order obscure books or trade our vintage vinyl?

Now that the Internet is a feature of mainstream life, the number of websites has proliferated. In theory this should mean access to a wider range of useful information than ever before, but in practice it has resulted in gateways to more useless information. There’s so much material in cyberspace that it can be hard to filter out the dross and home in on what is worth reading. That’s where good writing comes into its own: a well-written site is less likely to be ignored. However, you can only begin to write effectively for

the Internet when you understand how people use websites and read on screen.

## How people use websites

Think about how you use a website. Assuming you are not online to gamble, play games, download music or watch videos, the chances are that you will be there to seek out information. Most pages that you visit will not contain the information you are looking for. Each page that you encounter is a step on the journey to arriving at the information you need. If the journey is too long, you may give up or take a different route (by using someone else's site).

Let's try an experiment. Use the Internet to find out as quickly as you can what sperm whales eat. You probably did the following.

- 1 Entered key words (probably sperm, whale and eat or food) into a search engine such as Google.
- 2 Cast your eye quickly over the results and chose the first website in the list that looked promising.
- 3 Clicked on the link and entered that website.
- 4 Scanned pages looking for the required information.
- 5 Clicked on hypertext links in the hope that they would lead to the information sought.
- 6 Found the information on that website . . . or gave up, went back to Google and picked another site, repeating steps 3 to 6.

In this way, use your own experiences, and speak to friends and colleagues to understand how readers tackle web pages and what they like and dislike.

# DSC Speed Reads

Aimed at people who are short on time and need to absorb information quickly, these indispensable guides are:

- **Accessible** – practical guidance on a wide range of subjects
- **Condensed** – distilling experience and expertise in just 32 pages
- **Clearly signposted** – Top Tips, Case Studies and Where Next ideas

Covering a wide range of topics and building into an invaluable library, Speed Reads are an essential addition to any bookshelf.

## Writing for the Web

Writing for the Web is unlike other types of writing you may undertake at work. This new title will help those who have never written for the Internet, or anyone who wants to build confidence in this area. It includes jargon-free tips on how to create readable, accessible text that caters for the way people read online material.

**Moi Ali** has worked as a public relations and marketing consultant for over two decades, and is a well-respected trainer and widely-published author. She runs and is founder of Pink Anglia PR, which specialises in working with small businesses and charities.



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