Writing for the Web

Diocese of Toronto
Anglican Church of Canada

Introduction

The way we read online is different from the way we read printed pages. Online, we tend to scan content to find what we need instead of carefully reading every sentence. Follow these tips to help make your website easier to read.

Above all, remember: it's about your reader, not about you. What does your reader need to know? What style will appeal to your reader?

Writing Style

- Use short, simple sentences. Avoid complicated sentence structures.
- Choose simple words. You're not dumbing it down; you're making it easy to read.
- Avoid slang and jargon your audience won't understand.
- Keep it short. Stop once you've said what you need to say.
- Include a call to action. Guide your readers to a next step (e.g. "Call the church office").
- Aim for a conversational tone. Use contractions to keep your content light and casual.
- Address your visitor directly as "you."
- Use an active voice. ("Alex taught the class" instead of "the class was taught by Alex.")
- Use consistent spelling and capitalization throughout your site.
- Proofread! Pay attention to grammar and punctuation.

Format

- Put the most important information at the top. Include more details below.
- Include the words you think your visitors will search for in Google – "Anglican," "church," "Ajax," "Bloor Street," "downtown."
- Avoid unnecessary introductions and explanations. Get right to the point.
- Use simple headings to divide the page into sections.
- Break up long paragraphs into shorter chunks. Try for one idea, or 3-4 short sentences, per paragraph.
- Use bulleted and numbered lists.
- Bold a few select **keywords** to draw people's eyes to them.
- Use a few well-chosen photos to illustrate your ideas. This will also help break up the text.

- Use white space to visually separate information.

Links

Hyperlink text should describe what you're linking to. Avoid using phrases like "click here." This helps all your readers, but especially those with visual impairments using screen readers. Here are two examples:

- Learn more on the Diocese of Toronto website.
- Read about baptism in the Anglican Church.

Questions?

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