

Online Journalism

Coaching Tips

- Plan interactive elements.
- Provide blogs or forums for readers.
- Write short, simple sentences.
- Write enticing headlines and blurbs.
- Plan photo, audio and video elements.
- Consider summary or highlights boxes.

Mojo

A mojo: a magic charm or spell, a new breed of journalist. They are mobile journalists equipped with notepads, cameras, recorders, cell phones and laptop computers so they can file community news stories for the Web at a moment's notice.

- They don't go to a newspaper office.
- Their deadlines are whenever they get their information.

- The concept was initiated at 3 of newspapers owned by the Gannett Corp.
- “hyper local news,” the cheapest gas.
- Reorganized its newsroom as “information center.”
- Breaking news on the Web is short, fast and frequent.

Qualities of journalism in a Webcentric society

- Immediacy.

- Interactivity.
- Multimedia.
- Innovation (www.journalists.org/awards/).

Reporting for the Web

Good reporting is similar in any medium, but you need some additional tools and reporting steps for the Web.

- Plan for full coverage.
- Equipment.
- Time lines.
- Updates and follow-up stories.
- E-mail reporting.
- Check accuracy and timeliness.

Online readers

Online users don't read the same way on the Web as they do in print publications.

- Eye track studies (using specially fitted glasses.)
- Linear vs. nonlinear.
- Embedded or external links.

Story planning

- Time lines.
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ.) • Interactivity.
- Lists or data for full coverage.
- Miniprofiles.

- Multimedia.
- Related links.
- E-mail addresses of reporters.

Writing techniques

- Consider the inverted pyramid for breaking or serious news.
- A narrative form might be suitable to tell a good story.
- Because people read differently, you have to write differently.
- Write short.

- Write for readers who scan Web sites instead of reading thoroughly.
- Write to the point.
- Use common language.
- Most important information in the first two paragraphs.

Headlines, blurb and briefs

- They are called “microcontent” the smaller elements of a story.
- Clarity is crucial.
- A Web page offers scores of headlines and links competing for attention.

- Catchy teaser headlines could be misleading.

headlines

- Write brief headlines: fewer than six to 10 words create better links.
- Use strong verbs.
- Put the most important words first.
- Avoid articles.
- Use question headlines if the subject is interesting enough to entice readers.

blurbs

- A few sentences.
- Entice readers to read more.
- If the lead doesn't give the main point of the story, write a clear summary as a blurb.
- Avoid writing summaries that repeat the headline.
- Address the reader when appropriate (you.)

briefs

- A few paragraphs.
- It can stand alone in place of a story.
- Sometimes there is not much difference between a blurb and a brief.

Summary highlights

- Another tool that serves as a quick summary for Web readers who are scanners is the highlight box on top of the story.

- CNN tops its Web stories with a bulleted list of the main points.

Story structure

- Get to the point of the story quickly.
- Within 50 words.
- With a photo, a banner advertisement, the headline; this doesn't leave much room.
- Readers may use small portable devices.

- Text is enclosed in tables about 4 inches wide to facilitate reading (about 100 to 150 words per screen.)

Story structure

- **Inverted pyramid**, descending order of importance.
- **List format**, break up the text and help readers scan Web stories quickly.
- **Question/Answer format**, good alternative but need an introduction.

- **Storytelling format**, narrative writing can be compelling, especially if it is split into several pages with cliffhanger ending that entice readers to continue.

Personal storytelling

- Human beings have been telling stories since prehistoric man drew pictures on caves and recited stories around a fire.
- The Web is simply a new cave blending old and new techniques.

- Personal storytelling thrives on the Web and increasing on news sites.

Revise

- Be concise.
- Cut every word that doesn't advance the story.
- Short sentences, short paragraphs and active verbs.
- Every word should tell.

Take risks

- Writing for the Web will evolve as technology improves accessibility of multimedia.
- Concepts of accuracy, structure and simplicity will remain.
- The challenge is to think of the Web as a different medium not an extension of the newspaper.
- Be flexible, be smart, be daring.