Writing for online learners and readers

Online writing that matches up to the needs of online learners and readers
Today's tips on

1. How we read and learn online
2. How to present information online
3. How to maintain interest in content
4. How to avoid information overload
5. Building a bi-literate brain
Online, do you or your learners:

• read everything word for word, beginning to end?
• scan for the most important information?
• navigate quite easily from one content to another?
• look for clear instructions to tell you what to do next?
• get easily distracted by other websites, images or videos?
• like looking at a visual or video before reading the text?
• feel tired after reading on the screen for awhile?
1. How we read differently online

- 16% read word for word
- 79% of readers skim and scan for relevant information
- 25% slower comprehension rate online than on paper
- **47% increase in understanding when the online page is more usable for the reader**
- time conscious readers
- short attention span
- online readers scan and slow down only when specific content grabs attention
- information overload, screen glare, eye stress challenges
Online text scanning patterns

“Eye tracking research shows that there are 4 main patterns that people use to scan textual information on webpages.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pattern</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. F shaped pattern</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Spotted scanning pattern</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Layer cake pattern</td>
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<td>4. Commitment pattern</td>
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1. F shaped reading pattern

https://www.nngroup.com/articles/f-shaped-pattern-reading-web-content/
2. Spotted scan reading

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2. How to present information online

• Think about the **purpose** of the reading activity.

• Is it to gather information or pass a quiz? **High stakes or low stakes?**

• **Layout** the information for how learners scan.

• Break information up into chunks of information or **small bytes**. This helps with retention.

• Arrange **chunks into meaningful groupings** through headings and visual cues. Help the learners understand how it is organised.
How to present information online

• Write paragraphs in the **pyramid style** - most important information first and key words at the beginning of sentences.

• **Present the content in different ways.** A procedural text can work better as a series of visual steps. Or a concept might be better explained in a video rather than as written text. Bilingual glossaries can be enhanced by images. Think about the best way to convey a fact, concept or meaning in multiple ways.

• Think about **page length**. Shorter pages support scanning. Longer pages involve more scrolling.
When communicating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:

- People skills are important. Remembering names and the relationships between people will help you engage, earn trust and be viewed as credible.
- Broaden your concept of family - many Aboriginal people base their decisions on a consensus of extended family and kinship (community), rather than just the immediate family group.
- Be empathic without being overly-familiar and accept that unless you are Aboriginal, it may be difficult to fully understand the person’s opinions or situation. Ask genuine, but non-intrusive questions about family and culture.
- Be patient. Many Aboriginal people understandably mistrust mainstream agencies and it can take time to earn their trust. Ask family members if they would be more comfortable speaking about personal issues with a support person present.
- For many Aboriginal people, direct eye contact may be inappropriate. This may be due to reciprocity, shyness or unfamiliarity with the person speaking to them.
- Recognise that, like other cultures, Aboriginal people often begin with general talk and interaction, before getting down to business.
- Respect and understand silence. Silence may mean people are not ready to express an opinion yet or they are listening and reflecting on what has been said.
<table>
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250
Number of Aboriginal languages spoken in Australia before invasion

600
Number of dialects spoken in Australia before invasion.

60
Number of Aboriginal languages considered 'alive' and in use as a first tongue today.

11%
Percentage of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people mainly speaking an Aboriginal language at home in 2008, unchanged from 2002. 75% of these can also speak English.
Aboriginal languages

“Yolngu (north-Australia) language is our power, our foundation, our root and everything that holds us together. It gives us strength; language is our identity, who we are. Yolngu language gives us pride. Language is our law and justice.”

Yalimay Yunupingu, Aboriginal teacher

www.CreativeSpirits.info, Aboriginal culture

Each Aboriginal language is associated with an area of land and has a deep spiritual significance - these languages came to the country and ancestral people of Aboriginal Australians in a distant age called ‘the Dreamtime’.

It is through their own languages, that Aboriginal people maintain their connection with their ancestors, land, law and culture.

A common feature of many Aboriginal languages is that they display so-called mother-in-law languages, special speech registers used only in the presence of certain close relatives. These registers share the phonology and grammar of the standard
“The inverted pyramid is perfectly suited for the web - on any screen size. We know that users don’t read carefully online. They have little patience for content that doesn’t engage them. Users scroll, but only when they think that the content they want or need will appear on that page. The inverted pyramid style addresses all of these aspects of user behavior.”
3. How to maintain interest in the content

• Write for your **audience**. Think about the appropriate tone for your audience e.g. conversational, personal, formal.

• Use **personal pronouns and/or characters**. Learners want to feel involved and that it relates to what they’re doing in their life now.

• Use the **active voice** in sentences as they are easier to understand online.

• Use **key statements to guide and instruct**. Think about the difference between transitional and instructional statements. Learners want to know where they are heading.
How to maintain interest in the content

• Engage learners in different ways. It doesn’t have to be all written. Use visuals and videos or even audio to highlight or explain a point.
• Use quizzes with immediate feedback to foster a sense of achievement between chunks of information.
• Use tasks to break up the reading text load. e.g. dictionary, writing, drawing, thinking tasks.
• Provide offline options. Learners may find it useful to download a file (a Word document, pdf, audio or video) to work offline. This gives them more time to digest it at their own pace as well as cater to those with limited internet connection.
Editing symbols for writing

In writing, everybody makes mistakes. It is helpful to know WHAT errors you are making in your writing. Sometimes you make the same error a lot, and once you can see the error you can correct it yourself and improve your writing. Here are some symbols which will be used when your writing is assessed by your writing teacher. You will be expected to correct your own errors, and edit a second draft when required. If you cannot understand what needs to be done to improve your writing, please ask your teacher or your classmates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Punctuation - (add OR remove a comma, full-stop, question mark, colon, quotation mark etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Capital letter e.g. Mr Johnson - Johnson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missing word or words e.g. Today is first day of the course. Today is the first day...</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change the word order e.g. day cold = cold day</td>
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<tr>
<td>NP</td>
<td>Make a New Paragraph</td>
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<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Verb tense requires changing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Remove the word or words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sp</td>
<td>Correct the spelling of the word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ww</td>
<td>Wrong word. Find another word with the right meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wf</td>
<td>You have the correct word, but the wrong form of the word e.g. Unite - unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pr</td>
<td>You need a pronoun e.g. She lives with her brother. She lives with her brother. She went to the lecturer and gave the assignment.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
**Passive to active sentence example**

**Wordy:** There are many ways in which we can classify plants.

**Concise (don’t start sentences with "There are"):** We can classify plants in many ways.

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[Link to blog post](https://www.shiftelearning.com/blog/7-techniques-for-reducing-wordiness-in-your-elearning-courses)

Personal pronouns connect to the audience

More direct, engaging and energetic tone.
Transitional:
Now let’s look at how we classify plants.
When you are ready, click next to.

Instructional:
Here are the steps to plant identification.
Let’s practice the following steps.
4. How to avoid information overload

• Present the information in a **consistent layout** so the learner knows what to expect.

• Use **headings** to provide key information. Try to make it short, relevant and memorable.

• Provide **white space as a ‘breather’** between content. Too dense affects readability.

• **Avoid more than two or three colours or purely decorative images** that don’t add meaning to the content. Too loud and colourful the key points get lost.
Avoid too many links. You want learners to stay within the online resource as much as possible or they might not come back.

Avoid click fatigue. Two or three links max is enough. If learners have to keep clicking to get to a resource or key information, they will get frustrated.

Avoid scrolling for too long for the same reason.
En la aduana

1. ¿Qué hay en el maletín?
   - El empleado
     - Una caja de papel
     - Un ordenador
     - Un libro
   - El señor Atilano
     - Muchos tesoros

2. ¿Qué hay en la maleta?
   - El empleado
     - Una camisa, una corbata...
   - El señor Atilano
     - Un traje, zapatos

3. ¿Dónde va a ir?
   - El empleado
     - A México, a España...
   - El señor Atilano
     - A un viaje de negocios

Actividad
1. Escucha y completa el diálogo con el libro de actividades. Llena y completa el diálogo en el libro de actividades.
Dialogo 1
A. Por favor señora, el avión para Barcelona, ¿qué puesta es?
B. Puerta número uno, señora.

Dialogo 2
A. Buenos días!
B. Buenos días ¿Cómo está usted?
A. Mucho mejor, ¿y usted?
B. Bien, gracias.

Dialogo 3
A. Hola ¿Qué tal?
B. Muy bien, y tú?
A. Pues regular.
Understanding Stress

Typically we think of stress as a bad thing, but that’s not always the case. At low levels, stress can help you focus and give you the motivation you need to reach your goals. However, when your stress level is too high it stops being helpful and starts being harmful for both your productivity and your health.

It’s important to monitor your stress levels and recognize when they’re getting too high, so you can take steps to get yourself back on track.
Can you remember...

How many miles from Earth is the sun?

Click on one of the options below, then click Answer

- 9 miles
- 9 million miles
- 93 million miles

Answer Feedback
CHIFFONADE (SHREDDING)

USED ON LEAFY VEGETABLES AND HERBS BY CUTTING INTO LONG STRIPS AND THEN CROSS-CUTTING INTO THE PREFERRED THICKNESS

https://community.articulate.com/e-learning-examples/storyline-virtual-knife-cutting-cooking-class
How would you transform this resource for online learners?

Listening

Fast, colloquial speech

1. Listen to two people talking about issues connected with eating. Note down the problems each person mentions.

2. Listen to a sixteen-year-old schoolgirl talking about eating habits in her family.
   - Which of the problems mentioned above does her story illustrate?
   - Do you sympathize with her? Why / why not?

3. Listen to the same girl describing an incident involving her brother.
   - What is the main point of the story?
   - Which fillers can you hear?

4. Turn to the Tapescript on p. 110, listen again, and underline the fillers.

5. Listen again without the Tapescript. Can you understand the story better?

6. What do you think? In pairs, ask and answer the questions.
   1. Do you think children these days have a less healthy diet than in the past?
   2. In your country, do people generally sit down together and eat as a family? Is this an important part of family life? Why / why not?
   3. Whose responsibility is it to give advice on healthy eating?

Did you notice...?

Well, there’s, like, my mum, my brother, and me and, like, we almost never eat together.

Like here is an example of a filler. Fillers are words or phrases that are often used in fast speech to give the speaker thinking time.
5. Building a bi-literate brain from *Reader, Come Home*

“The future of the reading circuit will require an understanding of the limits and possibilities of both the literacy-based circuit and digital based ones.”

Maryanne Wolf
“Deep-reading skills not only provide critical antidotes to the negative effects of digital culture, like the diffusion of attention and the attrition of empathy, but also complement positive digital influences.”

Maryanne Wolf
“…the formation of a code-switching bi-literate brain that has internalized the best characteristics of both print and digital reading…children with the flexible medium-switching capacities of a fully bi-literate brain will further the intellectual development of our species”

Maryanne Wolf
Thank you!

Have a great day ahead.

1 May, 2021

Caterina Mastroianni
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