

5 Writing Rules to Break for Great Website Content

By Kristen Fischer
www.kristenfischer.com

5 Writing Rules to Break for Great Website Content

For many people, the process of crafting content for their business website is a daunting task. Most individuals stumble on this aspect of marketing because they get frustrated trying to remember all of those writing rules they learned eons ago. Some of those guidelines can go out the window when it comes to writing sales-oriented website content. Here are a few strategies to keep in mind when you want to use your website to turn visitors into customers.

Rule: Write formally at all times.

Be casual. Most website content is conversational in nature. While you don't want to be too informal, it's good to make everything easy to understand. Remember, the goal of your website is to lead potential customers to contact you, so it's okay to leave out the details and keep that for your one-on-one interaction. For your website content, keep it concise, putting everything into layman's terms. Know your audience and speak to them genuinely—explain things simply and methodically. And be sure to prompt them at the end of every page to contact you. (This is commonly called a "call to action" because it encourages the reader to take action. "Contact us today by calling..." and "Act now by clicking here..." are good examples of strong calls to action.)

Rule: Do not use contractions.

Contractions are okay. Your English teacher may have taught you how to use apostrophes to make one word out of two, but as your education went on you likely weren't encouraged to use contractions. Because sales-getting content needs to be conversational, a contraction here or there cannot hurt; just don't use them too much. They help to make everything a little more personal, as opposed to visiting another webpage where the writing sounds like a technical journal. Unless you are writing technical information, make your text more casual by using contractions.

Rule: Never split an infinitive.

Go ahead—split an infinitive. An infinitive is a verb preceded by the word "to" as in the phrases, "to play" "to make" or "to be." You probably learned in school to keep your "to's" and your verbs together, as in "to be absolutely sure." But in the Internet copywriting age, it's okay to write like you speak so long as it's professional and it doesn't change the meaning of the sentence. If you want to tell potential customers "to absolutely be sure," for example, that's absolutely alright!

Rule: Write in complete sentences.

Make statements. Remember studying sentence subjects and predicates? Your English teacher may have told you that a sentence had to have a beginning and an end, but that's not the case when you are copywriting. Some people want their material to be straight and to the point—or dramatic. In that case, using a short sentence is useful. This is another way to make it sound more conversational, while still keeping it professional. Enough said.

Rule: A paragraph must have at least three to five sentences.

Break up your text. The Internet is packed with millions of websites. So when a customer comes to yours, you have only seconds to grab his or her attention. In addition to sharp design, making your text easy to understand is key to retaining that person's interest. Breaking up the text spatially can be valuable because it is easy on the eyes and makes your content easily scannable. Most people do not read an entire website from top to bottom, so making sure they can get your message as quickly as possible is a must. One way to break up the text is to use shorter paragraphs. Again, you want to get away from something that resembles a term paper. Add in some catchy subheads or use bullet points to convey information and make it easy to grasp. So go ahead—get choppy.

Kristen Fischer is a copywriter, editor and author living at the Jersey Shore. For a free consultation on your next editorial project, visit www.kristenfischer.com or contact Kristen at kristen@kristenfischer.com.