

Writing for the Web Workshop

University of Nebraska Medical Center

mStoner

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Your Presenter Today:

Shannon

- + Director of Content Strategy
- + Harpo, Disney, Dreamworks Alumna
- + L.A. Transplant

As We Get Started

Today's Goal

To help you create the best possible content for your website.

A taxidermied deer head with large, multi-tined antlers is the central focus, lying in a field of dry, brown autumn grass and small plants. The deer's fur is a mix of grey and brown. The background is a soft-focus green forest. Overlaid on the image is the text "Once upon a time ..." in a white serif font, with a small blue horizontal line above the word "Upon".

—
Once upon a time ...



Foundations of Writing for the Web

Agenda

Topics

1. **Content Audits**
2. **Seven Writing Best Practices**
3. **The Basics of SEO**
4. **The Basics of Accessibility**

Agenda

Content Audits

Purpose

- 1. What do we have?**
- 2. What do we do with it?**

Approach

Document

- What is it?
- Where is it?
- Who owns it?
- When was it last reviewed?

Review

- Basic hygiene
- Content quality
- Relevance
- Analytics

Evaluate

- Keep as is
- Improve
- Merge
- Cut

Agenda

Seven Best Practices

Best Practice #1:



Plan your content.

Content Planning & Reflection Guide

1. What's your business goal?
2. Have you framed your idea to relate to your audience(s)?
3. Do you have credible data sources and examples?
4. What structure are you using (lists, how-to, narrative)?
5. Are you writing to one person? Who?
6. What do you want that person to know or do as a result of your content?
7. Have you produced the first draft?
8. Have you put some distance between you and that first draft?
9. Have you rewritten?
10. Have you crafted the brilliant headline?
11. Have you had your copy edited?
12. Have you reviewed your draft one last time for usability/readability? Brand?
13. What's your call to action that ends the piece?
14. Have you chosen an image to support your great content?
15. Have you written an accompanying social post? Hashtags?

Planning & Reflection Simplified

- ❑ What's the goal?
- ❑ Who's the audience?
- ❑ Examples & proof points?
- ❑ Which format or template?
- ❑ Key actions & next steps?
- ❑ Copyedited & readable?
- ❑ Fits the brand?
- ❑ Relevant images?
- ❑ Follows SEO best practices?
- ❑ Follows accessibility best practices?

Moving from Outline to Copy

❑ What's the goal?

❑ Who's the audience?

❑ Examples & proof points?

❑ Which format or template?

❑ Key actions & next steps?



❑ Copyedited & readable?

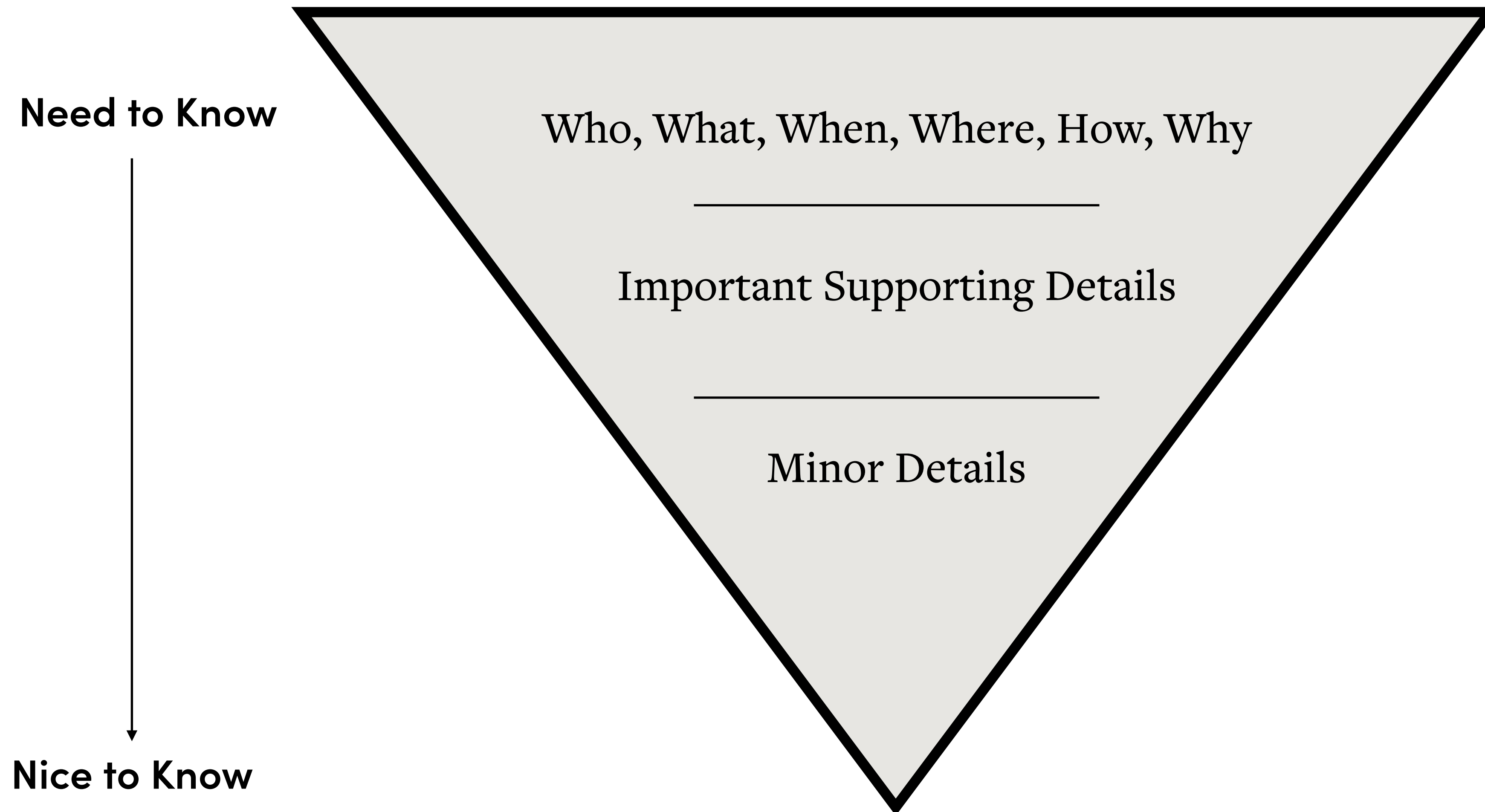
❑ Fits the brand?

❑ Relevant images?

❑ Follows SEO best practices?

❑ Follows accessibility best practices?

The Inverted Pyramid Framework



User-Centered Design

What is my user doing?

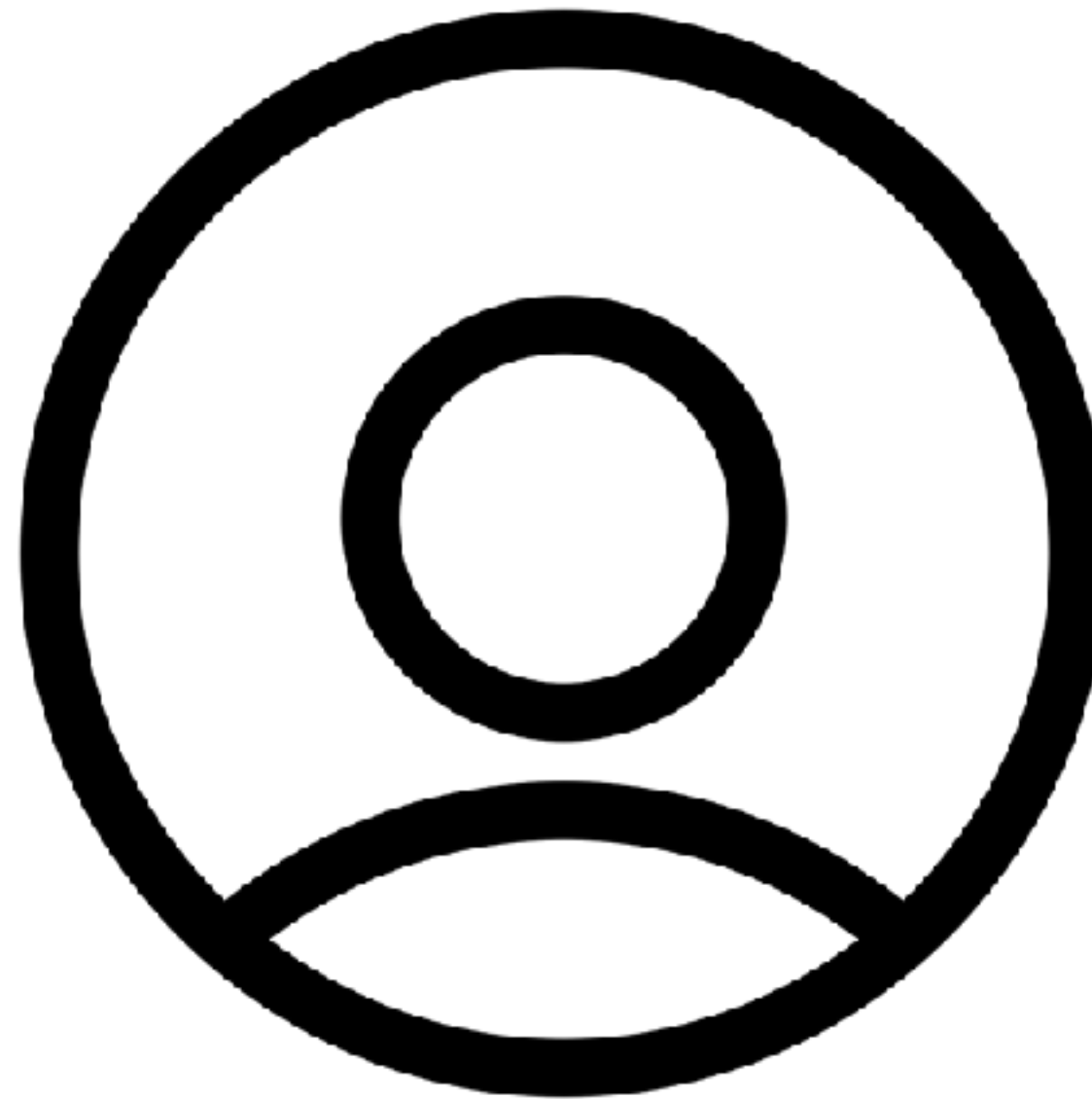
When is she doing these things?

What does my user expect?

What is she thinking?

What is she feeling?

Who/what does she trust for information?



How can I make her journey easier?

How can I surprise and delight?

What else can enrich her user experience?

A few scenarios...

1

A prospective student
looking for financial aid
information

2

A prospective faculty
member exploring UNMC's
news and stories

3

A local resident looking for
parking information for a
clinic

Content Model Worksheet

Page Name _____

Assigned Template _____

Purpose _____

UNMC Goals

Audience Goals

Inward Path

Content Outline

Forward Path

Best Practice #2:

Write at an appropriate reading level for your audiences.

What

reading grade level

do you

think?


13th Grade ● Most New York Times articles

6th Grade ● Harry Potter books and Ernest Hemingway novels

Grade 0 ● “Green Eggs and Ham”



FLESCH READING EASE SCORE

- 
- Developed by Rudolph Flesh in 1948
 - Score: 0 to 100
High score = easier to read
 - Criteria: word length and sentence length
 - The U.S. Department of Defense uses this score for documents and forms.

THE FLESCH-KINCAID READING GRADE LEVEL SCORE

- Created in 1975 for the U.S. Navy to measure the difficulty of technical manuals.
- Score: 0 to 18.
Low score = easier to read
- Criteria: word length and sentence length.
Polysyllabic words have less impact on this score.
- Used widely because of ease in interpreting the score.

“

Writing at a high reading level doesn't inherently
make your content better or more interesting.
Sometimes, it just makes your content
harder to understand.

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Tip #1:

Use direct address.

Direct address is more engaging than content written in third-person.

BEFORE:

The creative writing program at Interlochen Arts Academy boarding high school provides guidance, support and numerous opportunities for young writers. Students in the creative writing program study and create poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, hybrid genres, and screenwriting with a faculty of writer–educators. The goal of the program is to help young writers cultivate their talents and broaden their command of the writer’s craft at all levels.

AFTER:

In this program, you’ll find guidance, support, and numerous opportunities to develop your skills as a writer. Study and create poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, screenwriting, and hybrid genres. Learn from faculty who are both writers and educators. Cultivate your talents and broaden your command of the writer’s craft.

Hemingway
Editor

Readability
Grade 12
OK. Aim for 9.

Words: **67**
Show More ▼

Hemingway
Editor

Readability
Grade 9
Good

Words: **48**
Show More ▼

Tip #2:

Use active voice.

1

Active voice is clearer and more engaging than passive voice.

2

Active voice prompts the reader to action more naturally.

3

Active voice allows you to say more with fewer words.

BEFORE:

All applications must be completed and submitted to HGSE by 30 January.

Hemingway
Editor

Readability

Grade 8

Good

Words: 12

Show More ▼

AFTER:

Please submit your application by 30 January.

Hemingway
Editor

Readability

Grade 8

Good

Words: 7

Show More ▼

Tip #3:

Keep sentences simple.

1

Keep page titles under eight words.

2

Try to limit sentences to 20 words or fewer.

3

Try to limit paragraphs to two to four sentences. Each sentence should focus on one idea.

BEFORE:

Study the *Trials of the Century* and *The Criminal Mind*, learn how the brain works and shapes human interaction, and prepare yourself for a career as a psychologist, neuroscientist, or social worker. Psychology teaches us to listen more closely, think more empathetically, and understand the root causes of human behavior. By studying Psychology at MMC, you are entering a dynamic field that leads to a variety of relevant careers.

Hemingway
Editor

Readability
Grade 14
Poor. Aim for 9.

Reading time: 00:00:16
Letters: 351
Characters: 429
Words: 69
Sentences: 3
Paragraphs: 1

AFTER:

You want to understand mental health on more than an intellectual level: How can we increase access to adequate care? What can we do to raise awareness about mental health issues? What are ways we can advocate for those most in need? Discover how psychology can lead to more than just a humane world.

Hemingway
Editor

Readability
Grade 6
Good

Reading time: 00:00:12
Letters: 242
Characters: 302
Words: 54
Sentences: 4
Paragraphs: 1

Tip #4:

Use lists and subheads to help audiences scan.

1

Bulleted lists allow people to see discreet items.

2

Numbered lists help people to understand scope and scale — for example, the number of steps in a process.

3

Subheads provide focus for a particular section within a page.

1. Complete the online application.
2. Pay your Application Fee: \$95 for U.S. citizens and permanent residents, \$130 for international applicants. Application fees are non-refundable.

Payment Options

- **Online:** Follow payment instructions at the end of the application or on your application status portal.
- **Check or Money Order** (through a U.S. bank): Make payable to "UNCSA" and include your full legal name. Mail your payment and fully legible name of the applicant to the Office of Admissions.
- **Fee Waiver:** Submit an SAT, ACT or NACAC Fee Waiver Request signed by your high school counselor. If you are applying through CFNC, select the "Check/Money Order" option.
- **International Applicants:** Use Flywire to pay your application fee online through an international bank or pay by check or money order through a U.S. bank as listed above.

Best Practice #3:

**Encourage exploration and
action.**

Tip #1:

Make sure you include a call to action or logical next steps.

Tip #2:

Hyperlink phrases instead of single words.

Phrases are easier to see when people are scanning pages.

Best Practice #4:

**Write with a tone and voice
that reflect the heart of
UNMC.**

Best Practice #5:

Use the editorial style guide.

Three reasons to use the style guide:

1

A guide establishes an internal standard across the entire institution.

2

Consistency creates an external impression of cohesion, professionalism, and stature.

3

Inconsistent editorial style weakens your brand.

Get feedback on your writing.

1

From experienced writers and editors you respect:

- Tone and style
- Substance
- Grammar and punctuation

2

Use digital tools to assess your work:

- [grammarly.com](https://www.grammarly.com)
- hemingwayapp.com
- readable.io

3

Consider collaboration tools that enforce workflow and enable collaboration:

- gathercontent.com

Best Practice #7:

Maintain your content.

1

Set a calendar for content review.

2

When time-sensitive content is created, plan early to update or archive.

3

Review analytics and site search logs.

4

For more insight, consider A/B testing, usability testing, and heat maps to refine your content.

“

Far too often for writers and editors the story is done when you hit publish. At The Huffington Post, the article begins its life when you hit publish.

Paul Berry

The Huffington Post

Agenda

The Basics of Search Engine Optimization

“

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the practice of increasing the quantity and quality of traffic to your website through organic search engine results.

Moz

Writing for SEO is not...

- Stuffing a page with keywords
- Using and reusing keyword variants
- Playing games with domain or subdomain names
- Writing for a search engine rather than a human

“

For 90% of web writers, writing a good page according to the writing guidelines we've just reviewed is the best way to ensure your page is search-friendly.

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Best Practice #1:

Think about the words your audience might use.

1

Use natural language and typical terms that your audience would know.

2

Avoid jargon, abbreviations, or labels that only UNMC or industry insiders might understand.

3

Spell out acronyms on first reference.

4

Do some simple research:

- Review search log records
- Consult online tools like moz or SEMrush

Best Practice #2:

Create specific page titles.

BEFORE:

FAQs

Dates and Deadlines

Contact Us

AFTER:

Admissions FAQs

Financial Aid Dates and Deadlines

Contact the School of Nursing

Best Practice #3:

**Apply labels consistently
from link to page.**

Uniquely Mills

Academics

Admission & Aid

Student Life

Transform Your Future.

[Schedule a Visit](#)

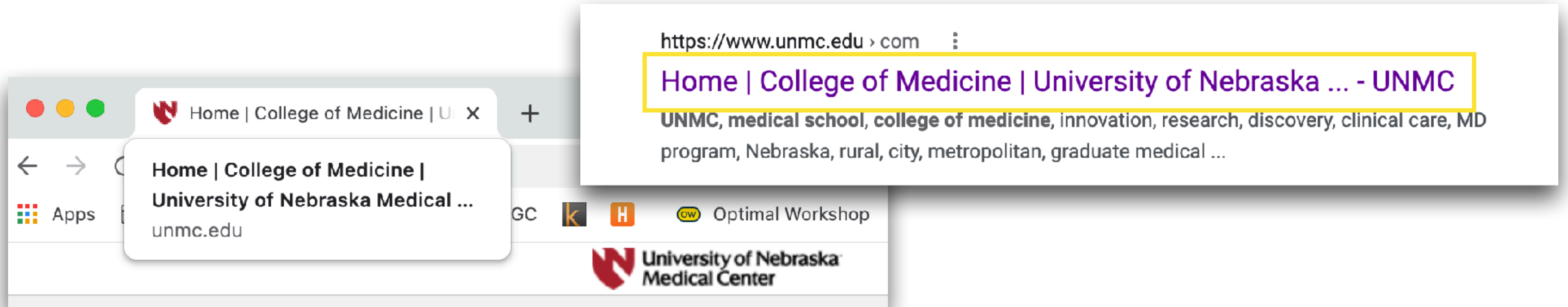
[Apply Now](#)

**BEST
COLLEGES**
& WORLD REPORT
U.S. News
REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES
BEST VALUE
2020

Uniquely Mills

Best Practice #4:

Create good title tags.



1

Title tag appears at the top of many browsers.

2

A total of 50 to 60 characters or shorter is ideal.

3

The title's relevance to page copy is critical for SEO.

4

Front-loaded searched keywords in title tag help search returns.

Best Practice #5:

Create good meta descriptions.

- A meta description appears when someone sees your page in a search return.
- It can let your audience know what to expect before they click on search result.
- A well-written meta description can make the difference between your page getting clicked or missed.

https://www.unmc.edu › com ⋮

Home | College of Medicine | University of Nebraska ... - UNMC

UNMC, medical school, college of medicine, innovation, research, discovery, clinical care, MD program, Nebraska, rural, city, metropolitan, graduate medical ...

https://www.unmc.edu ⋮

University of Nebraska Medical Center

University of Nebraska **Medical** University providing comprehensive health ... Munroe-Meyer **Institute's** ZeroG system helps clients explore possibilities. ... In concert with Nebraska **Medicine** and other clinical partners, **UNMC** uses the latest ...

1

150-character
maximum is the goal.

2

A one-sentence description
is best for scanning.

3

Each page's description
should be unique.

4

Do not use quotation
marks — Google
truncates the
description when it
hits one.

Agenda

The Basics of Accessibility

“

Web accessibility means that people with disabilities can use the Web. More specifically, Web accessibility means that people with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with the Web, and that they can contribute to the Web.

W3C,
the leading international group for web standards

Applications

1

Vision-Related:

- Blindness
- Color blindness
- Low vision

2

Cognitive:

- Reading and learning difficulties
- Memory and attention problems
- Processing problems

3

Situation and Context:

- Older people with changing abilities due to aging
- “Temporary disabilities” such as a broken arm or lost glasses
- “Situational limitations” such as in bright sunlight or an environment where they cannot listen to audio
- A slow Internet connection, or who have limited or expensive bandwidth

Best Practice #1:

**Write descriptive links.
Link phrases when possible.**

BEFORE:

Click here.

Learn more.

Read more.

More.

Here.

AFTER:

Explore master's programs.

Learn more about applying.

Find important dates and deadlines ...

See full event details ...

Give online now.

Best Practice #2:

Use H1-H6 tags in hierarchical order.

Heading tags are tags that are used for the creations of headings. The most important tag is the `<h1>` heading tag, and will usually be the title of a post. Heading tags have a top-down hierarchy from `<h1>` to `<h6>`.

Source: Yoast

Best Practice #3:

Mind the details.

1

Accessible PDFs.

2

Table captions.

3

Alt text and image captions.

4

Closed captions or transcripts for video.

Writing Good Alt Text

1

Describe the image as specifically as possible. Alt text are text explanations of images for users unable to see them.

2

Keep it (relatively) short. The most popular screen readers cut off alt text at around 125 characters.

3

Use your keywords. Alt text provides you another opportunity to signal to search engines that your page is highly relevant to a particular search query.

4

Avoid keyword stuffing. Focus on writing descriptive alt text that provides context to the image and if possible, includes your target keyword, and leave it at that.

5

Don't include "image of," "picture of," etc. in your alt text. It's already assumed your alt text is referring to an image.



Questions?

Thank You!

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