**Quick guide to writing and updating web pages**

This quick guide can help you write for your webpage: what to think about before you start, and how to write in a simple way. It gives advice on layout, formatting and checking your leaflet. For more support, email to [stsft.nenchealthliteracy@nhs.net](mailto:stsft.nenchealthliteracy@nhs.net).

**Before you start**

* **Think about your audience –** what do they need to know?
* **Purpose –** what message do you want the reader to take away?
* **Key points -** write down key points that you want to cover.
* **Headings -** give each key point a heading.

**Tips for writing**

* **Less is more** – better to have someone take in three key points than ignore the whole thing because it's too long!Avoid clutter – e.g. Tuesday 27 June, 2pm is easier than Tuesday 27th of June, 2.00 p.m.
* **Use everyday language –** write as if you were talking to a friend. Instead of saying ‘facilitate the healing process’, say ‘help you get better’.
* **Avoid jargon –** if you must use medical words, explain them, then put the meaning in brackets e.g. ‘the needle will go in your vein (intravenous injection)’.
* **Avoid acronyms -** spell the name out the first time, with the acronym in brackets, e.g., North East Ambulance Service (NEAS). NHS is the exception; you do not have to write this out in full.
* **Use short, simple words –** instead of ‘the majority of’, say ‘most’.Use our alternative word sheet to help.
* **Aim for a reading age of 10 –** check readability statistics in Word and aim for a Flesch Kincaid Reading Grade of 6 or lower. ([click here for instructions](https://support.microsoft.com/en-gb/office/get-your-document-s-readability-and-level-statistics-85b4969e-e80a-4777-8dd3-f7fc3c8b3fd2))
* **Use short sentences –** no more than 15 words. Have one idea per sentence.
* **Use short paragraphs –** no more than four sentences.
* **Use bullet points or numbered lists –** try to have no more than six points.
* **Use the active voice –** ‘we are improving services' not 'steps are being taken to improve services'.
* **Use lower case letters -** they are easier to read. Exceptions are proper names and the first letter in a sentence. Example: “GP practices are a key part of primary care”, - not “GP Practices are a key part of Primary Care”.
* **Numbers –** write one to nine as words, 10 or above as figures such as 156.
* **Quotes –** use a colon before a direct quote and use speech marks.
* **Job titles** – use lower case except for roles where there is only one, e.g., the Prime Minister. For long job titles, see if they can be abbreviated.
* **Headlines and titles** – keep it brief. If it runs to three lines on the website, see what you can cut out.
* **Phone numbers** – add spaces.11 figures with no gaps are hard to read.
* **Financial years** – 2018-19 not 2018/19 or 2018-2019, 201819, etc.
* **Tone -** use I, we and you, so you are speaking to the patient. Be warm, professional, respectful and [use inclusive language](https://service-manual.nhs.uk/content/inclusive-content).
* **Website addresses** –embed links behind text, and avoid saying 'click here' (it confuses screen readers). 'Read this article[on the BBC website](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news)' is better than a long address. To embed a link, highlight the text, right-click and click 'Link'.

**Layout and formatting**

* **Use Arial, size 12 for most text.** For people with avisual impairment, use 14.
* **Do not use BLOCK CAPITALS, *italics* or underlining*.* Use bold sparingly.**
* **Have plenty of white space.**
* **Pictures –** use pictures to explain the meaning of words. Make sure they have labels to say what they show. Make sure you have permission to use them.

**Checking**

* **Is there anything you can take out** – e.g. unnecessary words?
* **Read it aloud –** does it sound how you would talk to a friend or patient?
* **Ask a colleague** to check it. They will be a fresh pair of eyes.
* **Ask patients** what they understand, what’s missing, what could be clearer.
* **Check links –** make sure links to websites are up to date and that they work.
* **Check readability –** Flesch-Kincaid Reading Grade of 6 or lower. ([Details here](https://support.microsoft.com/en-gb/office/get-your-document-s-readability-and-level-statistics-85b4969e-e80a-4777-8dd3-f7fc3c8b3fd2))

**For more information**

Check out our Guide to writing patient information.

[How to write in plain English](http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/files/howto.pdf)

[NHS content style guide](https://service-manual.nhs.uk/content/)

[NHS formatting and punctuation](https://service-manual.nhs.uk/content/formatting-and-punctuation)

[NHS numbers, measurements, dates and times](https://service-manual.nhs.uk/content/numbers-measurements-dates-time)