



Takeaway checklists for Contented authors

Ask yourself these questions before you start writing

1. Is this web page really necessary?
2. Does this content exist somewhere else?
3. Why are you writing this page? (OK, to provide information, but why?)
4. Who are your target readers?
5. What do you want people to do after reading your content?
6. What is the essential information for all target readers?
7. What links will help people to learn more or take the next step?

Print these checklists and keep them handy when you get into your web writing work!

After writing, use these 10 tests to check for quality

When you have written a page, how do you know it is high quality content? Every page should pass these simple tests.

1. The 3-second test

Can people get the gist of this page in 3 seconds, without scrolling or reading every word?

2. The serenity test

Does the content of the page look well organized, calm and orderly?

3. The tip-top test

Is the essential information at the top of the page content, in the headline and first paragraph?
Does the first paragraph contain a summary, description or key message of the page?

These takeaway checklists are part of the course materials for Contented's online web writing courses. To find out more about Contented's courses and to enrol, visit: www.contented.com.

4. The identity test

Is it obvious who owns this content? If relevant, is the owner's location obvious in the content (not just in the logo or banner)?

5. The plain language test

Are the words familiar and easily understood? Are sentences 20 words or fewer? Are paragraphs 65 words or fewer?

6. The So what? test

Can your target readers instantly see the relevance of the content to their own needs and situation? Does content use the word "you", speaking directly to the reader?

7. The action test

Can readers quickly see how to take the next logical action online? Are links useful to the reader? Are links in the place most useful to the reader?

8. The accessibility test

Can all readers get the information from this page, regardless of their physical abilities, computer, browser or systems? Are all images clear, well-sized, and useful? Do all images have ALT-text? Do complex images have a text equivalent?

9. The Yeah, right! test

Will readers trust this information? Is it obviously up to date? Does the content seem expert and reliable? Is it easy to contact the owners?

10. The stand-alone test

Does the content of this page make sense out of context? Does it make sense even if it is the first page a person visits? Does it make sense without the logo? Would the headline and first paragraph make good sense in search results?

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Objective tests: a handy checklist

Everybody has an opinion about what is high quality content, but these are objective tests. The most important test is the first one: your reader gets the message immediately.

- When someone else (ideally, your intended reader) reads the page, he or she understands it immediately.
- Page has a 4-10 word headline that explains what is on the page.
- First paragraph summarises or describes the whole page or gives the key message.
- Links are left-aligned.
- Link-text clearly shows people what they will discover when they click on the link.
- The word 'you' is used: the reader is addressed directly.
- The first fifth of a page contains 50%-60% of its essential information. The last fifth contains nice-to-know information.
- Average sentence length is 12-17 words.
- Average paragraph length is 20-50 words.
- 80%-100% of verbs are active.
- Flesch Reading Ease Readability score is 60-70 or higher. (Use MS Word Spelling and Grammar tool to measure readability.)
- Content, grammar, spelling and punctuation are correct.

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