



# Writing for the web: Guide for approved projects

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# About this document

We wrote this document to help partners of approved Interreg Europe projects for the 2021-2027 programming period write and publish better content for their project websites.

It is aimed at all project partners.

## Basic principles

Did you know that the average web user has about 7-10 seconds to be engaged by a website before clicking away?

That is why it is so important to think before you publish and to understand how to keep your audience engaged.

### Know your audience

The first step to writing engaging content is to know your audience. Ask yourself:

- Who are they? (country, age range, job profiles, web proficiency, etc.)
- Why do they come to your website?
- What interests them? What are they looking for?
- How much time do they have to spend online?

Make sure you provide them with content that meets their expectations.

### Effective tone and voice

Write using clear, plain language. Try to apply the Interreg Europe voice and tone.

#### Our voice

Our voice is like our personality.

- Interreg Europe is **human**. We are **familiar, friendly** and **straightforward**.
- We are **positive** and **professional**. We offer **credible, useful** support and guidance.
- Our language is **simple, clear** and **common**. We use **Plain English**.

#### Our tone

A tone is your writing's flavour. You can have many because it changes to meet your needs.

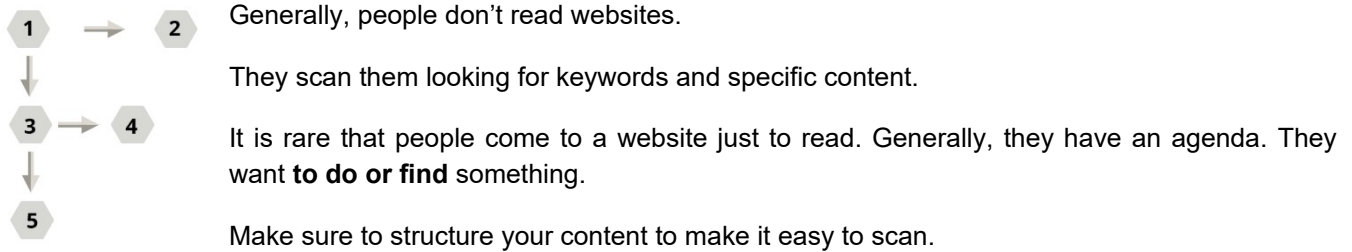
At Interreg Europe:

- We can be **conversational**. We speak as if we were **talking** to you **face-to-face**. We use **we** and **you**.
- If you are curious, we **inspire** and **inform** you. We show you a way forward.
- We have lots of experience. We share it in a **helpful** and **resourceful** way.
- We give you practical information **concisely** and **clearly**. **In a way that you can use**.

When writing, choose the best tone that matches with the messages you are trying to send.

## Understand how people ‘read’ websites

Did you know that people **only read 20%** of texts on websites?



# Engaging writing

Once you understand the basic principles, you are ready to start writing content for your website.

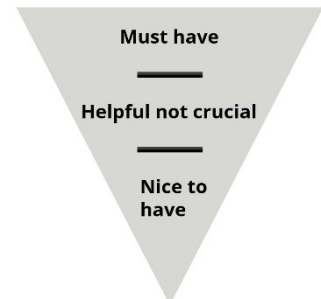
## Structure your article

First, layout what you want to write.

The key to structuring your content is to put the most important facts at the beginning so that your reader can easily find it. Don't bury it in the middle.

1. First, what does your audience absolutely need to know to understand what your main message?
2. Next, what should they also be aware of that is quite helpful or important?
3. Finally, what additional details might they find interesting?

Think like a journalist. Make sure you answer the 5Ws: Who, What, When, Where, and Why?



## Perfect your sentences

Use these tips to make your writing as engaging as possible.

- Use short sentences (15-20 words)
- Mix the length of your sentences to give your article style.
- Say only one thing per sentence. When in doubt, use a full-stop.
- Use everyday words that everyone would understand.
- Avoid jargon and acronyms when possible.
- Use a conversational tone rather than an academic or overly formal one (stay professional and correct).
- Use first and second personal pronouns to refer to your organisation and reader (we, us, and you).
- Use active sentences, not passive ones (e.g. The European Commission published the document VS The document was published by the European Commission).
- Avoid nominalisation (e.g. decision vs decide).

- Use Plain English.

## Make it scannable

Once your article is written, organise it on the web page to make it easy to scan.

- Use bullet points or numbered lists rather than long paragraphs.
- Divide information into clearly distinct groups of related content (called ‘chunking’).
- Avoid walls of text, which can appear intimidating or time-consuming. Use short paragraphs (3 lines).
- Add headings and sub-headings.
- Highlight keywords in bold.
- Don’t be afraid to include quotes, images, videos, documents, links etc.

Remember that having a concise, scannable text will increase its usability by 124%.

## Make it accessible

The more accessible you make your article, the easier it will be for **everyone** to read and understand.

So follow our advice above (headers, sub-headers, bullet points, short sentences, etc.) and create **accessible links** within your article.

1. Your link’s text should be unique and easy to speak out loud.
2. It should be obvious what you will get if you click on it.
3. Avoid general links: click here, learn more, read more, next step.
4. Complete the ARIA label by letting users know what will happen when they click on the link (e.g. Download file, Click to open external page)

Or [search our community](#) for people with similar interests as you. **Get in touch** with them to find out if they want to form a partnership.



## Share related content

Links that follow up on the user’s current interest encourage site exploration and reduce bounce rates. With the proper invitation, people will stay longer on your site.

- End articles with links to related content. Keep the conversation going by providing additional insight when the audience is most perceptible.
- Choose relevant related links, but don’t use more than seven.

# Further reading

1. [Writing for the web: articles and videos](#), Nielsen Norman Group
2. [Web content best practices](#), Orbit Media Studios
3. [Interreg Europe style guide](#)