



Formatting Stories & Writing Techniques

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Today's Topics

Techniques to enhance your stories

- ▶ How users read on the web
- ▶ Specific writing techniques

Jacob Nielsen's findings

- ▶ Users do not **read** online
- ▶ They **scan**

Jacob Nielsen's findings

- ▶ One idea per paragraph
- ▶ Three sentences tops per paragraph
- ▶ Half the word count (or less) than printed writing

<http://www.nngroup.com/articles/how-users-read-on-the-web/>

Jacob Nielsen's findings

Additional findings

- ▶ Users scan in an "F Pattern"
- ▶ Highlighted keywords stand out
- ▶ Bulleted lists helpful
- ▶ Sub-headings should be meaningful – not "cute"

<http://www.nngroup.com/articles/how-users-read-on-the-web/>

The F Pattern

Users read web pages in an F-shaped pattern

- ▶ First a long horizontal stripe
- ▶ Then a shorter horizontal stripe
- ▶ Then a vertical stripe

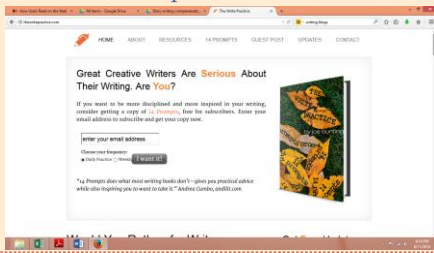
<http://www.nngroup.com/articles/f-shaped-pattern-reading-web-content/>

The F Pattern



<http://www.nngroup.com/articles/f-shaped-pattern-reading-web-content/>

The F Pattern - Examples



The F Pattern - Examples

While they may not credit them like poets in advertising as the foundation of their literary skill set, it's undeniable that it had some influence on their writing style.

As a writer, copywriting demands that you:

- Understand the requirements of every single word.
- Consider the art of working within deadlines.
- Get inside your reader's head.

Beyond being a better writer, learning copywriting also comes in handy when you have to implement some of the strategies that underscore the rest of the job, such as building your brand, creating an email list, and working hard to efficiently market to that market.

In this post, we're going to explore four copywriting techniques, tips that can also make a world of difference in your creative writing. Let's get started.

1. Consider the requirements of every single word.

The F Pattern in a story – basic story



CASA Volunteer Alicia Ritchie

For Alicia Ritchie, becoming a CASA volunteer was like entering a whole new world.

The specialist in international economic development had just retired from a 30-year career when she looked into volunteering with the CASA program. Although eager to volunteer, Alicia was unfamiliar with the child welfare system and working with traumatized children.

Nothing she had encountered on the job or as a parent had prepared her for this type of work.

Nevertheless, Alicia immersed herself in her case, advocating for two young boys whose parents were cited for neglect. The parents spoke little English, were undocumented, and struggled to address the boys' needs at home and at school. The mother's cognitive issues made the case even more challenging.

The F Pattern in a story – one option



For Alicia Ritchie, becoming a CASA volunteer was like entering a whole new world.

The specialist in international economic development had just retired from a 30-year career when she looked into volunteering with the CASA program. Although eager to volunteer, Alicia was unfamiliar with the child welfare system and working with traumatized children.

Nothing she had encountered on the job or as a parent had prepared her for this type of work.

Nevertheless, Alicia immersed herself in her case, noting the particulars:

- A neglect case, involving two boys
- The parents spoke little English and were undocumented.
- The mother's cognitive issues made the case even more challenging

The F Pattern

Vertical Stripe Options

- ▶ Bullets
- ▶ Numbered list
- ▶ Others?

The Z Pattern

More Nonprofit Stories

Chris Runkhofer
Executive Director of CASA
 Chris Runkhofer is the Executive Director of CASA of the United States. He has been in the field for over 20 years and has worked with many different types of nonprofits.

Richard Dworkin
Executive Director of CASA
 Richard Dworkin is the Executive Director of CASA of the United States. He has been in the field for over 20 years and has worked with many different types of nonprofits.

Making a Difference
How it works
 Making a difference is not just about the money. It's about the passion and the commitment to help those in need.

Maria Teresa Milla
The Success Story
 Maria Teresa Milla is the Executive Director of CASA of the United States. She has been in the field for over 20 years and has worked with many different types of nonprofits.

See More

Adding keywords and hyperlinks- example



Child Advocates like Alicia make a difference

For Alicia Ritchie, becoming a [CASA volunteer](#) was like entering a whole new world.

The specialist in international economic development had just retired from a 30-year career when she looked into volunteering with the CASA program. Although eager to volunteer, Alicia was unfamiliar with the [juvenile court system](#) and working with traumatized children.

Nothing she had encountered on the job or as a parent had prepared her for this type of work.

Nevertheless, Alicia immersed herself in her case, advocating for two young boys whose parents were cited for neglect. The parents spoke little English, were undocumented, and struggled to address the boys' needs at home and at school. The mother's cognitive issues made the case even more challenging.

Meaningful headings

The 4 Types of Sentences

When you get a subject and a predicate together, you get a clause! (Yes, like Santa.) The fun thing is you can combine clauses together to form different types of sentences.

Good writers vary the types of sentences they use. For example, don't use too many simple sentences. You might sound childish. However, if you use too many compound-complex sentences, your writing might be too difficult to understand.

Here are the four types of sentences:

Simple Sentences

Simple sentences contain a single clause (i.e. one subject, one predicate). Here are a few examples:

- John had broken his toe.
- John shouted in pain.
- John was very upset.

Compound Sentences

Compound sentences contain two independent clauses (independent because they

More Meaningful Headings

Remarkable content takes your readers on a journey

Let's review the three-step journey.

1. **Start with their eyes.** Use everything you know about design to invite your reader to interact with your content.
2. **Engage their minds.** Use the principles taught here on Copyblogger to keep your reader interested. Strong headlines, subheads, and solid content will hold their interest.
3. **Enlist their hearts.** For truly remarkable content, incorporate common human experiences that will touch your reader and make them remember what they've read, and want to share it.

Let's talk about your remarkable content journey. [Join me on Google+](#) to continue the conversation.

▶ <http://www.copyblogger.com/remarkable-content/>

Meaningful Headings



Alicia Ritchie story cont'd

Reflections as the case sets to close

Cuban-born Alicia knows that her fluency in Spanish has also been an asset on this case. The parents normally rely on translators to communicate. "I don't know how a non-Spanish speaking CASA could have done it."

With the case set to close soon, Alicia reflected that what might have been tough – advocating in an unknown field – turned out to be manageable and rewarding. "The hard part is knowing I cannot solve every problem for these boys. The children have a lot not going their way, their lives are not going to be easy." But because of court intervention, "their lives are better."

Would you like to become a CASA Volunteer?

Help protect the fundamental rights of children.
Become a Court Appointed Special Advocate.

[Learn More](#)

Adding Images

Nielsen's rules

- ▶ Images must be relevant to the content – NOT decorative
- ▶ Real people register faster than stock photos

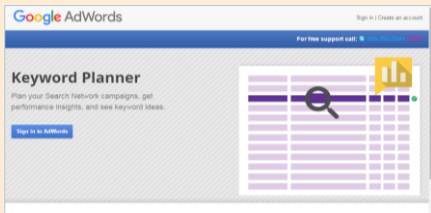
Sample Images



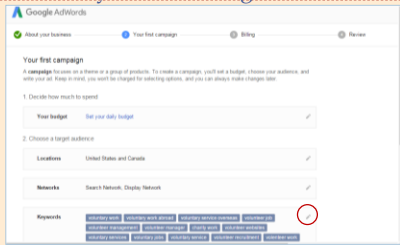
Infographics



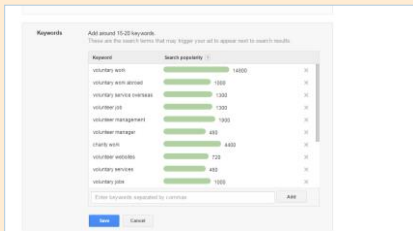
How to find keywords



How to find keywords – Google AdWords



How to find keywords – Google AdWords





Working with Quotes

- ▶ Introduce the author of your quotation
- ▶ Explain the context
- ▶ Vary the style of your quotations



Writing Techniques

- ▶ Working with Quotes
- ▶ Author's Point of View
- ▶ Closings

Working with Quotes

- ▶ Introduce the author of the quotation

Lisa Walsh has always cared deeply about children.

"When my husband and I decided it was time to have kids, I quit my job so I could be a full-time mom," said the former worldwide director of travel and transportation for IBM.

OR

"We get along great," said Laurreta. "We have different strengths that we bring to the table."

Working with Quotes

- ▶ Explain the context

For the Skigens it's all about getting it right—for the kids. "It's important to be accurate and have all the facts to allow these professionals to deal with this particular case in the best way possible," said Laurreta.

OR

"She did all she was court ordered to do and more," Matt reflected on the mother's progress. "I was blown away by how she turned this thing around."

Working with Quotes

- ▶ OK to begin a quotation in the middle of the sentence

The CASA case was "life changing" for Matt.

- ▶ OK to use a colon as an introduction:

Frank's advice for incoming advocates: "Learn the system and never be afraid to ask—even if it's for sensitive information. Because what matters is what's best for your CASA kid."

Working with Quotes

- ▶ Identify some **Pull Quotes**

The quote you select should be thought-provoking and engaging, but not too long.

Pull Quotes with a Story

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Nothing she had encountered on the job or as a parent had prepared her for this type of work.

Nevertheless, Alicia immersed herself in her case, advocating for two young boys whose parents were cited for neglect. The parents spoke little English, were undocumented, and struggled to address the boys' needs at home and at school. The mother's cognitive issues made the case even more challenging.



"I felt supported from the very beginning"

- CASA Volunteer Alicia Ritchie

Working with Quotes - sample list

Use some variety in referencing quotations

Says	Claims
Writes	States
Observes	Comments
Reflects	Thinks
Notes	Affirms
Remarks	Asserts
Adds	Explains
Declares	Argues
Informs Us	
Alleges	

Horizontal lines for writing practice.

Point of View



Write from the first person

I grew up in a safe, loving home. And I believe all children deserve to be raised that way. Knowing that there are kids in our country who don't have that, it called out to me, and that's why I decided to become a CASA volunteer.

Don't get me wrong. It's a tough subject matter, but you can make a real difference. The moment that stands out in my mind is of my first time in front of a judge...

Horizontal lines for writing practice.

Point of View



Write from the second person

I am the oldest of seven children. We almost took care of ourselves. I was only fourteen, and I felt the weight of the world on my shoulders. Everybody told us it would be a couple of weeks in foster care but it turned into months, then years.

Suddenly a new person walked into the life of me and my sister. With the constant changing of social workers and counselors, I didn't know what to expect. She asked us what our interests were, and we set up a time to meet every week. For the first time in awhile I felt that this just might be a good thing...

Horizontal lines for writing practice.

Closings



- ▶ Bookends
- ▶ Happy Ending
- ▶ Back to Basics: sum up the main idea again
- ▶ Reflection

Closings



- ▶ Bookends

"I call her jellybean."
 Another proud achievement? The smile on her teen's face when she uses her nickname. "She was called Jellybean as a young child. When I call her that now I get to enjoy her wonderful impetuous laugh. Those moments of joy are priceless."

Closings



- ▶ Reflection

"I now look at people in these situations differently. Prior to my time at CASA, whenever I heard people abused or neglected their children, I would think, "how do you do that?" But for the mom on my case, I realized that with so many psychological issues, things are out of control," says Diebler. "I saw how services and treatment truly make a difference in someone's life. Now that she's mentally healthy, this mom is a good mom. There's always more to the story."

Closings



▶ Happy Ending

I put my observations into the court report, and it convinced the judge that she was ready to regain custody. Afterwards, I was asked to monitor the transition, and it was such a joy to see the children happy with her at home—it is just a beautiful story.

Closings



▶ Big Reveal

For Mary, being part of the CASA program did more than provide a rewarding volunteer experience – it set her on the path to a entirely new career. This IT executive has switched careers. She is now a social worker.

Contact Info



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