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Chartered
Institute of
Editing and
Proofreading

Writing for the CIEP – guidelines for online articles

Thank you for your interest in writing an article for us. We ask writers to follow these guidelines, which have been developed to enable maximum engagement with the content we publish.

Please send your draft article to **infoteam@ciep.uk**. Contact us if you have any questions. If we agree to publish your article the process will be:

- **Copyedit:** Our information team will arrange the copyediting, including applying CIEP house style. We may ask you to clarify, review or amend parts of your article.
- **Preparation:** We'll format the text for our platform, using our standard structure and layout. We'll add appropriate images if you haven't supplied these, along with keywords, a short summary and other such metadata to make the article findable in web searches (SEO).
- **Proofread:** We'll arrange proofreading by a CIEP APM or PM, and we may ask you to do a final readthrough too.
- **Publication:** We'll let you know when your article is live and send you the link.
- **Promotion:** We'll publicise your article as appropriate, for example in our newsletters, on the forums, and on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. You are welcome to promote your article through your own social media too.

Items to include

Our online articles usually have the same basic structure. When writing your article please include the following. You'll find specific guidance on these items in the rest of this document.

- Main title (level H1 on a web page)
- Introductory paragraph
- List of key themes
- Main content, with level H2 (and H3) headings to separate ideas/themes
- Wrap-up
- Author bio and photo/image
- Optional: Links to related content
- Optional: Photos/images essential to your content, with copyright credits

The following points are our preferred good practice for online content. If there's anything you're not sure about, please ask your contact for guidance.

Main title (level H1)

- The article title should clearly state the problem being solved for the reader
- Include keywords (used by people and search engines)
- Use verbs (to convey action)
- Put the keywords near the front of the title
- Use digits rather than spelled-out numbers

Why it's important

Search engines should be able to identify relevant content

- When a user types a query into a search engine, it looks for relevant content that answers the question.
- The H1 title is the strongest signaller of relevance. Search engines have no sense of humour, so an informative title will always be more visible than one designed to be entertaining.

People should understand what's on offer

- People are busy. We have seconds to engage them.
- When a busy reader decides whether to click through to an article listed in a search (or on another platform such as YouTube, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, the forums), they should know exactly what problem will be solved, and therefore why they should invest their time in reading the article.

Examples

- What is an en dash, and how do I use it in British English writing?
- How to increase productivity and increase editorial income
- Does a different first language affect editorial competence?
- 10 tips on setting up a proofreading and editing business
- Should editors and proofreaders make their prices public?
- What are the different types of comma, and when should I use them?
- What are the best reference-checking tools?

Introductory paragraph

- Write an introductory paragraph of one or two sentences
- Outline the problems the article will solve
- This paragraph should ideally reflect your H2 headings

Why it's important

Signals relevance to the search engines

Search engines don't look only at H1 titles to find content that's relevant to queries. They use keyword-rich text too. Furthermore, they often show the first piece of text they find on a page as snippets in search results.

Signals relevance to people

The introductory paragraph is the first thing people see when they land on the article. A good summary of what's on offer increases the likelihood they'll stay on the page.

Can be used for findability (SEO metadata)

Our team will use the introductory paragraph for the article's short description that shows up in search results and when shared on some social media platforms.

Assists sharers

Busy people are more likely to share if they don't have to invest time in writing a summary of what the article is about. The introductory paragraph is something they can copy and paste.

Examples

- Should punctuation go outside or inside quotation marks in non-fiction? Luke Finley examines UK and US variations in informal, formal and academic writing, citations and displayed quotes.
- Do you struggle with ellipses? Riffat Yusuf discusses what they are, how to space them, when to use them and how they work with other punctuation marks.
- Picture researchers do more than find images. Lorraine Beck explains what the role involves, who uses them, how to brief them, the picture research process and the key terminology.

List of key themes

- List the key themes covered (usually the H2 headings)
- Use bullet points
- No more than a one-line summary for each

Why it's important

Engagement

A summary of the key themes in the article – taken from the H2 headings – shows readers exactly what they can expect if they invest time in reading the whole article. The list is a way of grabbing attention and demonstrating the article's worth.

Relevance testing

The list will help you and us test whether the H2 headings communicate effectively. For example, amusing headings may appear meaningless in an isolated bullet list without the surrounding text. That's your opportunity to tighten them up and ensure they explain what's in the content.

Example

Here's what I'll be looking at in this article.

- Why Microsoft Word is the go-to platform for editors
- Word for Practical Editing (CIEP online course)
- Who the course is suitable for
- What you need to know before doing the course
- Core learning outcomes
- What I liked best about Word for Practical Editing

Body content

- The text should ideally solve a problem for the reader
- Write in plain English as far as appropriate and order the text logically
- Write in your own voice, but ensure the content reflects the CIEP's values:
    - » authoritative but not stuffy
    - » forward-thinking, not prescriptivist
    - » inclusive and welcoming

- Use H2 headings to introduce each section, idea or theme
- H2 headings should pique curiosity (eg with a question or a benefit)
- Use H3 headings if necessary
- Paragraphs should be short (no more than four lines of an A4 page at 14pt in Calibri or Times New Roman)
- Use bullet points, and if relevant infographics, to make complex information accessible
- Identify key information that should be visually highlighted (eg displayed quotes or boxed text)
- Supply a short description (alt text) for all graphics and images

Why it's important

Text: Engagement and brand awareness

- Problem-solving content is useful, and more likely to be talked about, shared, read in full and linked to. That's good for the CIEP as it adds web page authority, engagement and brand awareness and so helps us increase professional standards. But it's also good for your visibility and reputation too as the writer.
- Readers are more likely to revisit and subscribe to a site they can depend on to provide solutions, and more likely to implement good-practice guidance that drives editorial excellence.

Text: Accessibility for different types of readers

- Jargon or technical language can be used if it serves an educational function, but it should be explained so that even readers unfamiliar with the terminology can access and implement the guidance.
- Don't be afraid to assume that the reader knows nothing. Those who know a lot will skim over what they don't need.

Headings: Pique curiosity and signal relevance

- Busy readers scan long articles for signals that the content solves their problems. Text with strong headings is more likely to be read than text without. H2 and H3 headings should therefore be interesting, informative and benefit-laden.
- Headings can be witty unless humour comes at the expense of interest, information and benefit!
- Questions, specific problems (pain points), numbers and solutions are particularly effective in headings.

Accessibility for multiple audiences across multiple devices

- Long paragraphs are off-putting to busy readers seeking solutions, even those using large screens. On mobile devices, they appear as impenetrable walls of text.
- Restricting paragraph length to a maximum of four lines – even if those paragraph breaks would be unnatural in an essay, journal article or book – assists accessibility for readers across all devices.
- Bullet lists, boxes and graphics help to break up text further, and give readers multiple ways to digest the information. That increases engagement, meaning the reader is more likely to finish the article.
- People using screen readers or who can't view images can access the image alt text description to understand the content.

Increased engagement and trust

- Busy or impatient readers seeking solutions to problems are more likely to stay on an article that's easy on the eye.
- The longer they stay, the more likely they are to digest the learning, talk about the article, share and link to it and return/subscribe to the page.

Example

<H2> 2 ways to stay on top of your schedule

How do you keep track of what you need to get done today, tomorrow, next week? Here are two options to consider.

<H3> Todoist: A comprehensive but simple task-management app

Todoist allows you to add tasks by forwarding emails, and has integration with many other apps and tools (including Alexa's free and paid plans).

<H3> Trello: Master your to-do list

Trello is based on Kanban boards, a project-management tool where tasks can be moved from one section within a board to another, or across boards.

This has been the one thing I've tried in recent years that has really worked for me:

- I create a board for each week.
- On each board is a list for each day, as well as a master 'to do' list and a 'done' list.
- I start the week with all my cards (tasks) in the 'to do' list, and drag them across to the day on which I want to get them done.
- At the end of the week, I move all the things I haven't done into the next week's board and close down the now old board.

Wrap-up (and call to action)

- The final paragraph should summarise the key learning points
- Keep paragraphs to no more than four lines
- Include a direct call to action if it fits with your article

Why it's important

Pulling in readers who scroll to the bottom

Many readers are used to finding additional resources at the bottom of articles. Others might get all the way to the bottom but have forgotten earlier information, particularly if they're reading quickly. The wrap-up is your opportunity to remind and re-engage.

Readers do what they're told

- Readers are also more likely to do what they're told. A call to action tells them what we want from them – what to click on, what to read next, what to download or where to comment.
- Don't call this the conclusion or summary, or say 'to sum up' or 'in conclusion', as people may think they've read all the information already and will stop reading. They may then miss the call to action.

Example

<H2> Wrapping up: What we've learned about dashes

Now you know what all the different types of dashes are and how to use them. Don't forget these golden rules:

- The marks you choose will be determined in part by client style preferences and regional conventions.
- There's more than one way to use some of the dashes.
- Dashes, like any form of punctuation, are loaded with nuance.

What's your favourite dash? **Drop us a line in the comments**.

Links to related content

- If you can, include links to other CIEP content: relevant blog posts, guides, courses and resources and other related pages
- You can include external links in the text if they're relevant to the article content (eg a discussion of using Trello can link to the Trello site, or you might mention a guide you've created to help with the topic)

Why it's important

We want readers to find CIEP's other useful content and trust us as a reliable source

Articles provide a good opportunity to build trust in and awareness of the value of the CIEP and to let people know what we offer.

Example

<H2> More useful guidance on editing software

Here are some additional resources to help you edit and proofread more productively.

- Word for Practical Editing (online course)
- How editors can keep track of time, projects and money (blog post)
- Getting started with macros (members-only fact sheet)
- Word shortcuts (free fact sheet)

Author bio

- Include a short bio (max 60 words) with, for example, your name, editorial expertise and any relevant business links you wish to include
- Please send a high-resolution headshot if you're happy for your image to appear

Additional help with voice and tone

For more guidance on CIEP tone and voice, including words, phrases and ideas we ask writers to avoid, please read the **CIEP writing tone guidelines**.