

## What has your website got to do with goldfish?

What a strange question! But did you know that the attention span of the average web-surfer is equivalent to that of a goldfish? About four seconds - if you're lucky!

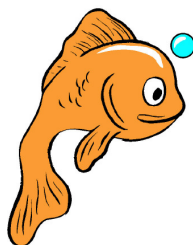
So what will stop them clicking off somewhere else? Something has to get their attention really quickly - within that magic four seconds. Let's look at the things that turn web-surfers on - and off!

1. A splash page (that's one of those pages, often with moving graphics, that says 'click here to enter') is just another barrier to them getting to the information. You're already using up your four seconds. If your site takes a long time (more than about 8 seconds) to load - they will have gone!
2. A headline that grabs attention is a big plus. If they have to search to find out if your site has any likelihood of providing them with what they are looking for - most won't bother. Tell them they've come to the right place!
3. A smart website looks good and is easy to read - so text should NOT be smaller than 10 point (some of us have dodgy eyesight, don't make it too hard for us).
4. Stick to clean, sans serif fonts (that means Arial, Gill, Helvetica, Verdana, not Times New Roman, Palatino and Garamond). With the screen resolution being relatively low in comparison with printed media, lots of little lines just contribute to the dazzle effect.
5. Stick to light coloured backgrounds - white or pale yellow are best, but if your corporate colours are dark blue, don't be tempted to use a dark blue box with light coloured writing - it might look pretty, but it's impossible to read easily.
6. Don't have text justified on both sides - it just makes it easy for the reader to lose their place. Left justified is fine - leave the right hand side unjustified.
7. Don't have moving images on your site. They just distract people who are trying to read your message. If they MUST move - then they should move ONCE and then stay put. Flash media and whizzy graphics are now very old-hat.
8. Don't overload the reader with text - short paragraphs with lots of white space will encourage them to carry on reading. Big blocks of text will stop them from trying to read - break it up.

9. Do use bullet points - they are much easier to read and often are read where traditional paragraphs are not.
  
10. Don't put clever little internal scroll devices on your site. The whole page needs to scroll down - but not too far. Most web-surfers won't read more than a couple of screens.
  
11. Do remember that we don't all work on huge screens. Make sure that your website fits to the screen of the web-surfer. Having to scroll from side to side to read is guaranteed to send your reader elsewhere.
  
12. Decide what the purpose of your website is and then tell the surfer what to do at the end of each page. e.g. 'Visit our products page for more information'.
  
13. Make things easy - ensure that other pages mentioned are live links, don't make them have to find the menu and then navigate through a couple of pages to get there.
  
14. Have a simple menu - not 23 buttons for them to choose from. Only put useful information on the website - think about it from your potential client's angle - what do they want to know?
  
15. Don't use mobile numbers or 'freebie' email addresses. Make sure you have a landline number and professional email (ideally the same as your website) on every page - don't make it hard for people to contact you.
  
16. Be sure you know the features, advantages and benefits of your product or service and use that in your copy. People don't buy features, they rarely buy on advantages - the majority of people buy benefits. These are the emotional triggers.
  
17. Have a consistent image - so your website, brochures, flyers, newsletters, letterhead and business cards are all recognisably from one organisation.

Finally, if in doubt, get a professional in! Some web designers have copywriting services, but, if they don't find one who will write your message in a way that captures the surfer and turn him (or her) into a client!

Get your message across in writing



### ... and finally

Visit [www.lesleywriter.com](http://www.lesleywriter.com) and sign up for the free reports on website readability if you haven't already.

Visit [www.webcopythatpeopleread.com](http://www.webcopythatpeopleread.com) for lots of tips and information on copywriting and marketing on and offline.

If you need help with your written communication

email us at [Lesley@lesleywriter.com](mailto:Lesley@lesleywriter.com)

Call +44 1245 473296

Skype: Lesleywriter with a 'I need some help' message!

---

*Lesley Morrissey is an expert in readability and specialises in helping people to develop a website that works for their business.*

*You can contact Lesley on +44 1245 473296 or [Lesley@insidenews.co.uk](mailto:Lesley@insidenews.co.uk) or visit the Inside News website at [www.insidenews.co.uk](http://www.insidenews.co.uk).*

