# WEB DOCUMENT PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES
# 2001

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revised January 2005

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**Web Document Procedure**

New Health-Related Content

Any information that has not been previously reviewed by the Division Director (or designated supervisor by division), Web Health Information Administrator, and the Health Communications Chief. It is health-related information whose content is fundamentally and conceptually novel to HEALTH Web site.

1. Each division develops their respective health content intended for placement on the HEALTH Web site consistent with the web design standards posted on HEALTH's Web site.
2. **Each Division Director (or other designee)** must approve all new health content intended to be placed on Web site. Exploration of the benefits and the weaknesses associated with instituting a short form documenting division head approval will occur.
3. Submitter meets with Health communications (Health Information Administrator and Health Communications Chief) to implement plan and timeline for completion.
4. Submitter provides content in an electronic format.
5. **Format for E-documents**: Presently, the format for E-documents that can be most easily and quickly converted to a format for the web site are Microsoft word documents (MS Office 2000). Excel documents are most easily and quickly converted to a format for the web site when they have a simple structure.
6. The document is placed in template and posted on test site and submitter is asked to review the draft document.
7. Any necessary edits are made.
8. Health communications performs final review
9. Document is moved to live site and all links are tested.
10. Health communications notifies submitter that the document is live.

* **note**: *A HEALTH template was created to provide a unified look and feel to the HEALTH web site as well as simplify the process to contribute content to the Website. A template for the HEALTH web site homepage and template for interior pages is used for HEALTH web pages.* ***Because of this, please contact Colleen or Barry in room 103 before contracting out any web site / web pages development.***

Routine health-related information updates are defined as health content that is not new to the Web site and does not alter the fundamental concept of the information already displayed on the Web site.

Routine health-related information

1. Submitter provides update in electronic format (see "new health information for specifics)
2. Routine health-related information updates are received and reviewed by Web Health Information Administrator (Data, Chief HC)
3. Routine health-related information changes are made to the designated Web page or Web site by Web Health Information Administrator

Monthly Web site activity reports are conducted by Web Health Information Administrator and disseminated to Health Communications Chief (Colleen Caron) and Associate Director, Public Affairs (Bob Marshall)

Publications/Reports

1. Publications and reports are created as Adobe PDF's
2. Final discretion of whether or not to create the document in an HTML version will be with the Health communications
3. **Parts of the publication extracted out (i.e. Executive summary, key findings, graph) and placed in HTML is beneficial** to:

a) make visually appealing to read on the monitor and allow viewer to decide whether or not to download complete document;
b) make the report more inviting;
c) leverage the Web to deliver health information

## Maintenance/Removal of Web site information

The benefits associated with current health information include enhanced public confidence in content credibility, trustworthiness, reliability and greater return appeal. To achieve this goal:

- On a weekly basis HI&C will review content currency on the Health Department Homepage and HEALTH news. Under routine conditions, the timeframe for Public Health News will be 2- 4 weeks. This timeframe is consistent with standard timeframe practices exhibited by government and health related web sites. Exceptions to this timeframe will be evaluated on a case by case basis.
- Note: November 2001 the Executive committee approved the recommendation put forth by the web policy group for updating content on the HEALTH Website. Because the number of web pages on HEALTH web site has grown significantly and program personnel are the most expert in their respective field, each division is responsible for their web page content currency. On a quarterly basis, content authors will update their web-based content. Each division's web policy member will email a reminder to their respective program authors to review their respective WebPages and update any necessary information. Updates, changes, modifications will be emailed to Website health information administrator, cc'd health communication chief, as well as adhere to division-level process.

Press Releases

- Established policy presently in existence for press releases shall be complied with
- All media releases such as advisories, alerts etc. must be signed by the Division Director.
- All media releases must be processed through the Director's office prior to posting on the Web site.

Web Sites/Pages Under Construction

- It is strongly recommended that web sites/pages are complete in their construction. Web pages under construction have the potential to diminish the impact of existing web site content, reduce the return appeal, and diminish content credibility.

- When sites need to be published before their completion, it is recommended that the timeframe for "under construction" messages extend no longer than 1-months time.

Web Policy Group Member

To ensure efficient workflow for web development projects and enhance communication among divisions, the web policy group was created. Each division has one representative who serves as a liaison. The web policy member serves:

- Liaison between division and health communications
- Encourages others to utilize the web
- Understanding of division existing web pages
- Familiar with web submittal procedures (i.e. content in electronic format)
- Understand importance of keeping WebPages within division current

**Areas for consideration when delivering information on Web**

Pages 2 and 3 are guidelines to assist when writing and/or adapting written documents for the Web.

**Set Goals and Objectives**

1. What are your goals for creating your Website (i.e. educational, informational, services provided)
2. What objectives are tied to each of the goals (realistic, measurable, objective). What do you want your audience to walk away with?
3. Performance Goals

**Audience**

1. Identify your intended audience(s)
2. Prioritize audience groups
3. Special issues (technical, educational, communication channel etc.)

**Information Needs of Audience**

1. Identify the information needs of audience
2. Identify how will audience use the information
3. Determine if information is appropriate for web or does it need to be modified for web (i.e. more concise, bullets, subtitles)
4. Information already on web that can be linked to
5. Determine familiarity of audience with using computer
6. Determine familiarity of audience with using web
7. Identify how audience will access your site (dial-up, cable)

**Consider Internal Issues**

1. Identify staff resources to create web-based information (resources, time, if document layout/organization need to be modified)
2. Identify staff resources to update information

**Principle Writing Guidelines**

1. Be succinct
2. Write for scannability- use short blocks of text (Long sentences and long paragraphs are hard to scan for central ideas). Usability studies report users who scan Websites

had better objective outcomes in terms of recall, memory of content, task time, task errors and subjective satisfaction
- Include one idea per paragraph
- Use approximately half the word count of conventional writing
- Use bulleted lists
- Use headlines, subtitles, and meaningful titles to guide the reader (scan)
- Users like inverted pyramids with summary on top. This provides information for the decision to read the full document. An executive summary can serve this purpose.

**Additional Writing guidelines**
- Content is critical. Quality and relevance of content is important to users
- Usability studies demonstrate that promotional, superfluous language decreases reading comprehension and turns users away.
- Users prefer clear, simple writing

**RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH WEBSITE**

Below are some general, evidence-based principles to guide the organization of content of WebPages and/or Websites. HEALTH's template incorporates many Website design principles and is used throughout HEALTH's Website to make it user-friendly. Writing guidelines located on pages 2 and 3, and "Paragraphs and sentence length" section on page 9 are more specific to content.

**Page Layout and Design Principles**

1. Use a common signature/brand/ logo or header to brand the site.
   Users need a frame of reference throughout the site so they know they are on your site. Each page needs a common signature or masthead across the top of the site that is constant throughout. **See image next page**.

2. Put critical global navigation elements together in the same place on each page. Critical global navigation elements such as Home, Search, need to be present on every page as aids to navigation. **See image next page**.

3. Prioritize the information. Information should be presented in the order that users identified (in online feedback forms and interviews) as being most important. **See image next page.**

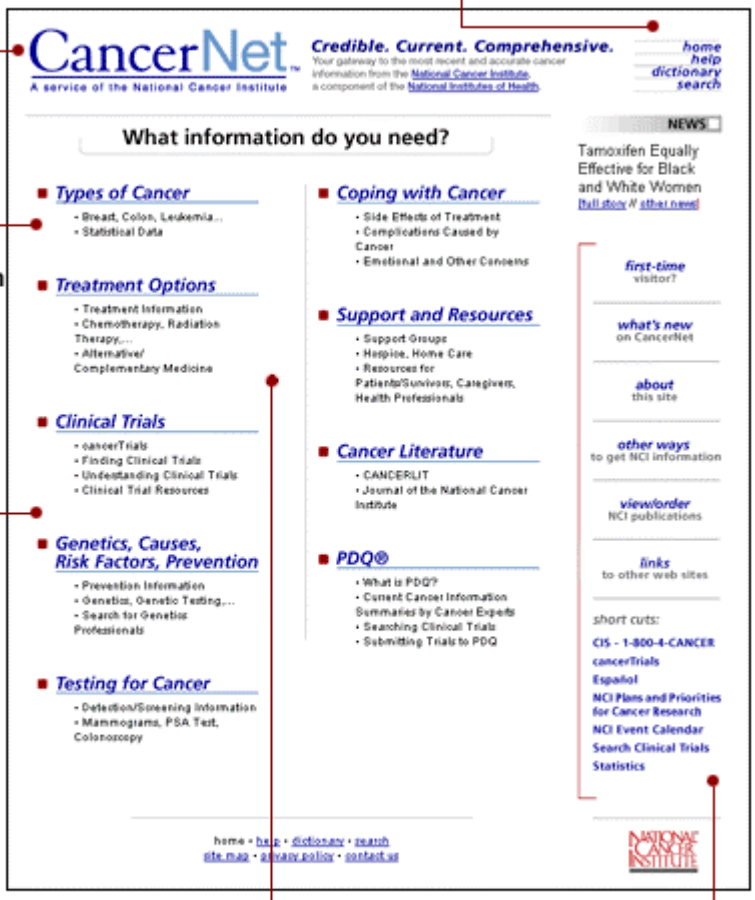
4. Separate critical core information from secondary information. Page layout must help users find the important information. Primary information should be placed in the center of the page. Secondary information should be placed less prominently on the page. **See image next page**.

**1. Common Brand/Logo/Masthead**

CancerNet masthead on every page . . . in same position

**2. Critical Global Navigation Elements**

Consistent on all pages.




**3. Information Prioritization**

Content categories are placed in order of user priority/ frequency of need.

**4. Information Layout**

Major information sources are in the main part of the page.

**4. Layout**

Core information is prominent on the page. Secondary information is on the right side.

## Page Layout and Design

*(Including Navigation)*

- Present information and similar functions consistently throughout the site, including logos, page titles, headers, navigation elements, etc. Also use a consistent position on all pages for logos, recurring text, buttons, and graphics.
- The more consistent a Web site is in its design, the easier it will be for users to quickly evaluate categories and match expectations on all pages. Users, particularly older users, tend to learn and remember locations of information, functions, and controls.
- Keep in mind that users spend most of their time on other sites, which is where they form their expectations for how the Web works on your site.
- Keep navigation aids consistent
- Group navigation aids

**Do this—**

**The consistent placement of the logo, top navigation, and left-hand navigation helps orient users as they click through the site**

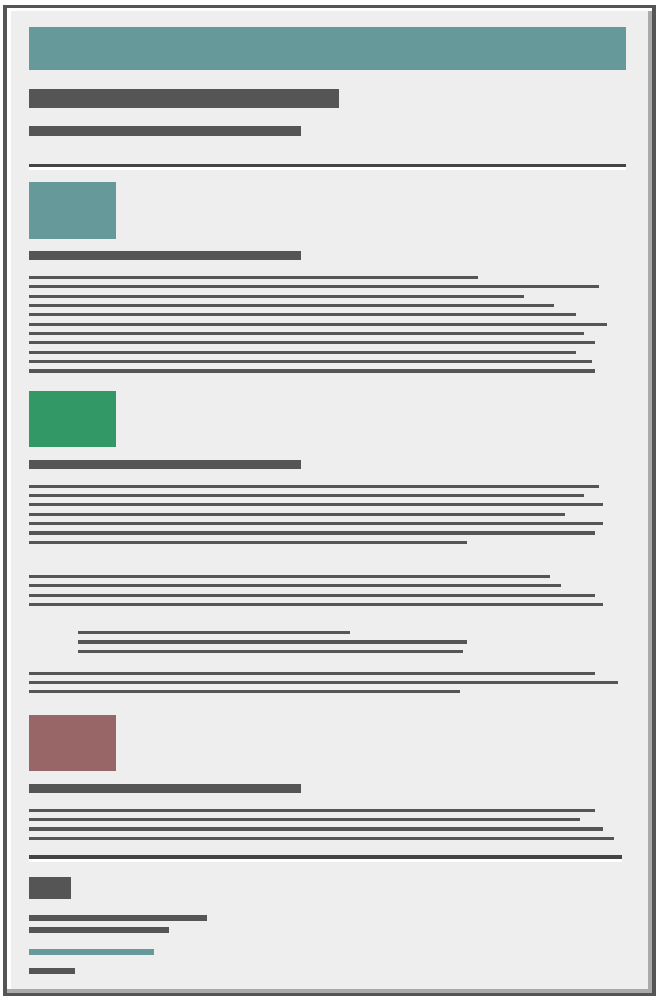
**Don't do this—**

**The navigation is missing on the right screenshot**

## Page Layout and Design

Poor page layout

Better page layout



## Page Length

Consider the following areas when deciding upon page length

•Relationship between page and screen size
•Content of document
• Do you expect reader to browse online or download. Users tend to print and read long and/or dense documents offline. PDFs can serve this purpose.
• Bandwidth of your audience

**Page Length**
**Short pages** are recommended for the following:

•Homepages, navigation, menu pages
• Documents to be browsed and read online
• Pages with very large graphics

**Page Length**
**Long pages** are recommended for the following:

•Easier to maintain (all in one place to download)
• More like structure of paper counterpart
• Easier to download and print

**Mixture: Online and printing**

- pdf-- presentation
- HTML, SGML-- structure

Some documents or reports that are long can be presented in a mixed format. The document can be placed on the web as a pdf. Viewers can download and print out the document to read offline. To increase visual appeal, highlight the major points, and draw greater attention to the document:
• Extract 2 to 3 page length chunks of information
• Provide link to full text document

**Graphics**

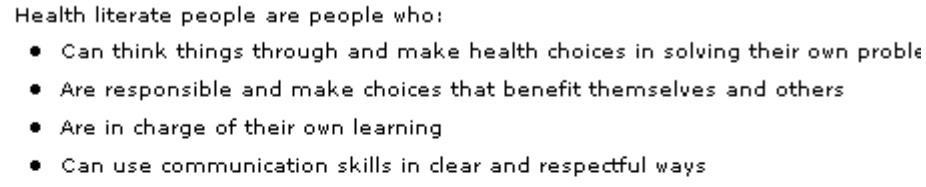
- Use graphics wisely to enhance understanding of content, or add visual appeal
- Be selective with the use of graphics as they increase downloading time.

**Paragraphs and Sentence Length**

- Use short sentence/paragraph length
- Use bulleted lists
- As most people scan documents and few read word for word this helps the reader quickly find important information and the main objectives
- Write sentences with 20 or fewer words and paragraphs with fewer than five sentences. Use lists to break up long sentences.
- Readability improves when sentences and paragraphs are relatively short. Users tend to skip over text they consider nonessential.
- Studies report that between 75% and 79% of users scan any new page. Only 16% read word-by-word. Also, most users (78%) tend to focus first on text, not graphics.

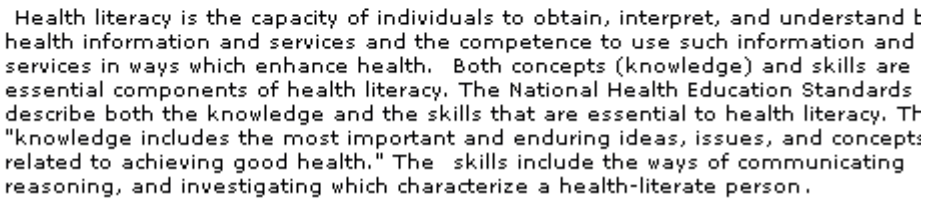
**Do this—**

**Text is easy to scan**




**Don't do this—**

**Long sentences and long paragraphs are hard to scan for central ideas**



## Headings, Subheadings, and Lists

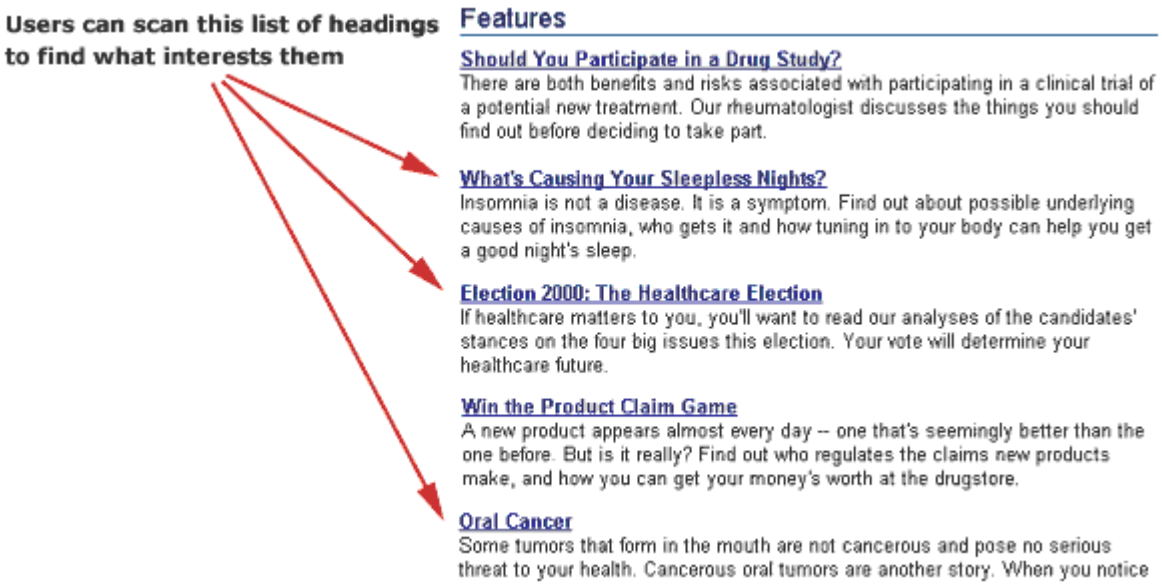
Use headings, subheadings, and lists. Users locate information faster when it is presented through headings, subheadings, and short bulleted phrases rather than in undifferentiated paragraphs. **See image below and following page.**

Using subheadings ensures that some subcategories are not overlooked and also informs users of what they can expect to find. **See image below and following page.**

**8. Headings**

**Subheadings**

## Headings, Subheadings, and Lists



**Web Document Format Specification**

**Purpose-** The purpose of this section is to outline specifications for web-based documents for both internal submittals and for outside vendors.

I. Electronic, Text Based Documents

1. PC only
   - Microsoft Office 2000
   - Pagemaker
2. PDF- cross platforms (Mac and PC)

II. MS Word Documents

A. Body of Document
   1. Font color- black
   2. Font size – 12 pt
   3. Font style - Verdana

B. Special – Document Title
   1. Centered

III. Graphics

1. jpeg
2. gif

Special Note Regarding outside vendors

1. Clearly identify the document/report formats
   Request the following:

a. Electronic version of the native document

- If the electronic version is not in the format as outlined above in Section I. (MS Office 2000, Pagemaker) then request the vendor to provide the document in either one of the acceptable formats
- It is important to communicate the acceptable formats early on in the discussions so the vendor is able to budget for any necessary format conversion.
- If the electronic document in its native format is not MS suite 97, Pagemaker, it is beneficial to have the vendor provide the electronic version in one of these formats as well as pdf.

b. Hard copy

Electronic Document Format:

PC, Microsoft Office 2000_____
PC, Pagemaker _____
PDF_____

If format is not one of the above, the process to occur is:
Vendor will convert document into the following format:
a. PC, Microsoft Office 2000_____ specify (ie. word) _____
b. PC, Pagemaker _____
c. PDF_____
d. Other_____