

Manual

How to write an academic story for the web

(incl. Requirements for grading)

Writing a story for the web requires a different mode of communicating your thesis, statements and opinions than an essay. Scientifically they pursue a similar scope. Nonetheless, reading from a computer is not the same as reading from paper, the latter being far more relaxing for the eyes.

Reading from screen, people always start by scanning the screen for keywords, links, and headings. When they do this they will notice certain areas of the screen and will miss other parts. Only, and only, if they see something interesting they will start reading the first lines of the text. If these lines are not catchy or informative enough, the reader will simply press the “Back” key and look at another page.

This reading behaviour has substantial consequences for the way in which you structure your web text. A web essay is structured as an “inverted pyramid” style and makes an argument differently. Below you will find an explanation per point. It might well be that your teacher keeps these points in mind when he or she grades your academic story for the web.

A web text that is intended for an online museum exhibition often combines and intertwines text with (audio) visual material in a way that both elements are equally important. Images, objects, and (audio) visual material are NOT an illustration to a story. Read more about objects in the Manual “How to Contextualize an object?”.

Writing an academic story for the web

Web articles/stories have short texts, are very direct, contain no unnecessary words, and consist of short paragraphs. A web story has the form of an “inverted pyramid”. Usually, the main conclusion is the first sentence of the text. Only then follows an argumentation with examples, finishing with a nice concluding sentence or challenging question.

The story always starts with the key-sentence. This sentence is a concluding statement about the topic of the tour. This means that the sentence is NOT a description of the subject of the tour. The sentence should be seen as the result of extensive research on the tour topic.

Tour subject → pose question to subject/hypothesis → search and read literature → formulate conclusion → create one-sentence statement that is the first sentence of the story.

Characteristics of a good WEB article according to author of *The Web Content Style Guide*, Gerry McGovern, are:

- 1: Writing for the Web is different
- 2: Shorter is better
- 3: Be direct
- 4: Web headings that work
- 5: Use subheads
- 6: Web paragraphs are different
- 7: Keep your sentences simple
- 8: Edit yourself

You will find a short summary of these points at <http://nzchinasociety.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/writing-for-the-web.pdf>.

Requirements story

- Story title: short, informative, creative
- Appropriate key statement
- Composition (inverted pyramid, paragraph structure, clear language)
- Content (well-researched, interesting, to-the-point)
- Max. 200 words
- Good academic references according to the Chicago Manual Style
- Originality: the more original your story is, the higher we will grade it.
- Based on at least 2 good sources.

Note on plagiarism

You might be used to copying texts and information from the web as you wish. The odds are quite high that you do so without being allowed to. Bluntly put: if you use information or if quote from a source you have to reference properly to your sources. If you do not do this, then you could be accused of plagiarism. This is a serious offence. (Just think of recent discoveries that have destroyed the entire career of Dutch professor Diederik Stapel)