LAWRENCE UNIVERSITY

WRITING FOR THE WEB

HI, I'M LAURA.

▸ I've been working with Lawrence's Office of Communications on updating web copy since last year.

▸ I'm an ACM grad. I graduated from Knox College as a double major in American Studies and English Literature.

▸ I'm a Nashville-based freelance web designer and writer. I work primarily with eCommerce clients, as well as with higher education, tourism, and B2B sales clients.

▸ This presentation is based on my personal experience helping brands optimize their online presences.

OUR GOAL FOR TODAY:

We will explore strategies specific to web writing that will

help you communicate effectively online.

WRITING FOR WEB

STEPS FOR SUCCESS

STEP ONE

STRUCTURE

INVERTED PYRAMID

Think of pyramid turned upside down.

Broad at the top and narrowing to a fine tip,

this visual is a great model for delivering information in web writing.
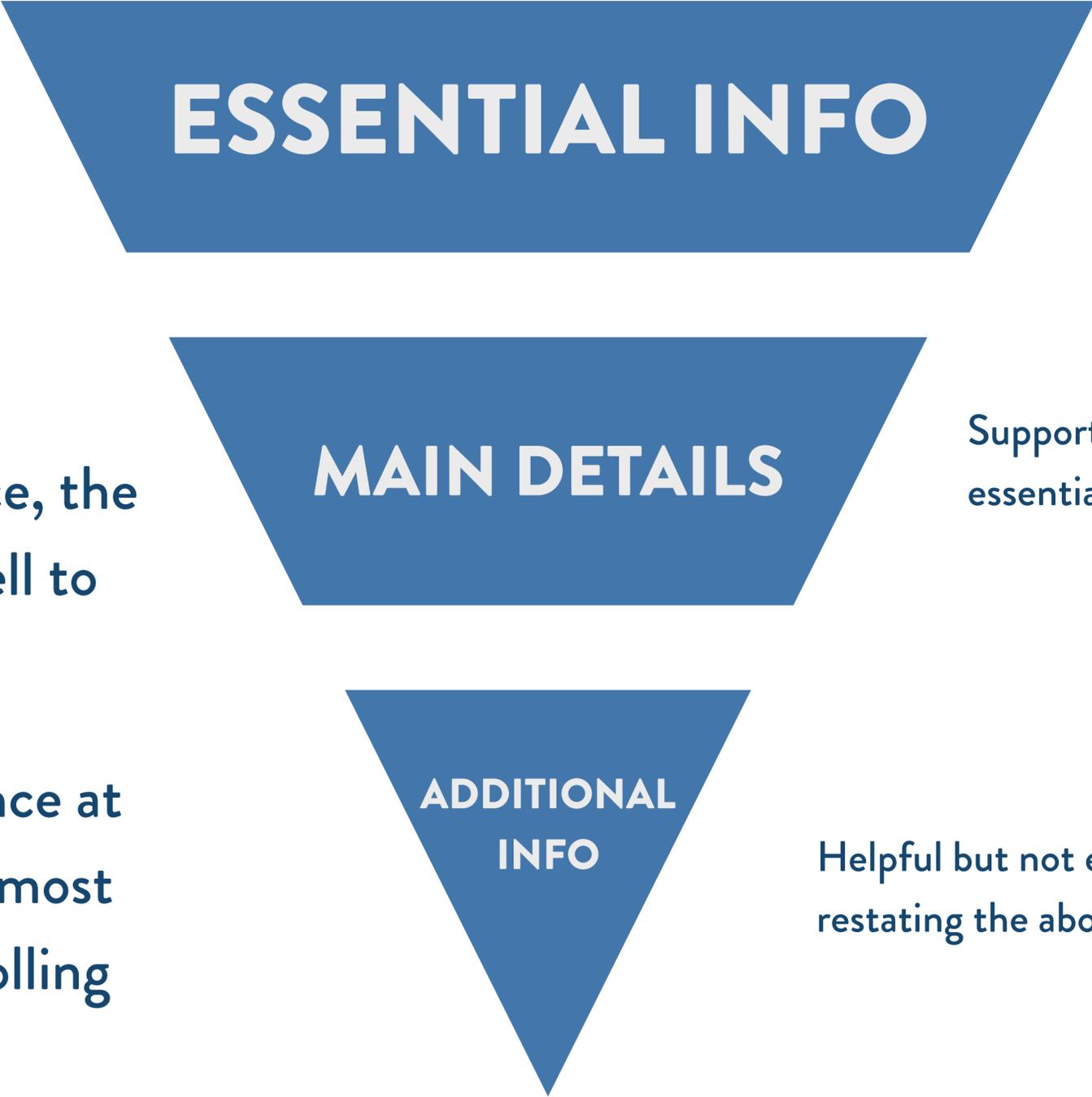
ESSENTIAL INFO

Who, what, where, when, why

MAIN DETAILS

Supporting information for users who found the essential information relevant

Initially a journalism practice, the inverted pyramid applies well to web writing.

Assume most users will glance at the largest header, and the most invested users will keep scrolling for more information.

ADDITIONAL INFO

Helpful but not essential information or restating the above in more detail

THE WEB WRITER'S TOOLBOX

▸ **Headers**

    ▸ Headers are essential for organization and help break up paragraphs of text.

▸ **Subheaders**

    ▸ Using more than one header style further delineates concepts and helps with "scanability," which is key for mobile users.

▸ **Bullets**

    ▸ Three bullet points with distinct concepts is easier to read than a paragraph with three sentences.

▸ **Bolding**

    ▸ Help key points like times, dates, or questions stand out on the screen.

▸ **Use numerals**

    ▸ Formal style guides prompt us to write out numbers (ex. "seven," instead of 7), but for informal web writing the numerals are easier to read while scanning a page.

STEER CLEAR OF THESE:

▶ **Italics**

  ▶ The less noticeable and more confusing sibling of bolding.

▶ **All caps**

  ▶ Please don't yell.

▶ **25 cent words**

  ▶ Challenging vocabulary or excessive adverbs can cloud your message.

▶ **Long introductions**

  ▶ With the inverted pyramid as your guide, start with your point and editorialize later.

Trash Collection

Trash collection service is provided to single-family homes and businesses that use brown trash carts in the Urban Services District of Nashville. Residents must place trash in their brown roll-out cart. For more details on the residential trash collection program, read through the frequently asked questions below or call 615-862-5000.

Banned Materials

The following items are **not allowed** in your trash cart:

- Yard Waste:
  Yard waste (brush, leaves and grass) can be placed at the curb for Brush Collection.
- Cardboard:
  Cardboard must be recycled and should be placed in curbside recycling containers or taken to a recycling drop-off site.
- Construction Debris:
  Residential construction waste must be collected by a private hauler or contractor. Small amounts of Do It Yourself construction waste that would fit in a regular size pick-up truck no higher than the top of the bed can be taken to the Omohundro or East Convenience Center.
- Electronic Waste:
  Electronic waste must be recycled through our electronics recycling collection at the following convenience centers: East, Ezell Pike, or Omohundro. Learn more about electronic waste recycling.

Public Works will provide customers additional recycling carts (up to 3) and monthly collection of recycling at no additional cost.

Curbside Carts

How to Use Your Trash Cart

- Check for your pick-up day online.
- On your pick-up day, place your cart on the curb or in the alley with the arrow on the lid pointing toward the street or alley. Your trash will be picked up between the hours of 7 a.m. and 5 p.m.
- Do not place the cart within 3 feet of any stationary object such as a car, mailbox, utility pole, recycling cart, etc.
- Do not place the cart under wires, tree limbs, building overhangs or other items that could be damaged. Please make sure there is 15 feet of clearance.
- All items must be bagged and placed inside the trash cart. Items that are placed outside the trash cart will not be picked up.
- Please remove your cart from the street by 7 p.m. on pick-up day.

Number of Carts Issued Per Service Address

Each service address is issued 1 brown department approved curbside cart for trash disposal at newly constructed homes. Residents and businesses that currently have more than 2 trash carts will be able to continue their same level of waste collection service but will be charged for the collection and disposal fee for waste in additional carts. Additional recycling carts are available at no cost ⤤.

TOP LEVEL:

Who is trash collection for? How do I use it? Who do I contact if I have a problem?

These questions are all clearly answered in the first three sentences.

MID LEVEL:

Common issues organized by topics and subtopics.

It's easy to scan these sections to find the answer to your specific question

because of the visual delineation of headers, bullets, and bolding.

BOTTOM LEVEL:

Further down the page, they addressed less common concerns and restated the phone number.

TAKE A MINUTE:

How could these structure guidelines have enhanced your

message in your writing example?

SPEAK TO YOUR AUDIENCE

USER-CENTERED THINKING

User-Centered thinking is a concept that puts communication

with the user at the center of all decisions about design and content.

WHO WILL BE READING THIS WRITING?

▶ **What background information do they have?**

  ▶ Institutional knowledge vs. prospective students

▶ **How did they find this writing?**

  ▶ Linked from course materials vs. available to generalist audiences

▶ **Where are they reading this writing, physically?**

  ▶ On campus vs. off, using a mobile phone during an event, etc.

▶ **What are they expecting to find?**

  ▶ Put yourself in the shoes of the user you just imagined.

HOW CAN YOU SPEAK TO THEM?

▸ **Consider screen sizes.**

  ▸ Brevity is key to keep information digestible for all screen sizes.

▸ **Keep it conversational.**

  ▸ Good web writing is a helpful one-on-one conversation.

▸ **Lead the way.**

  ▸ Communicate in a way that prevents the user from wondering, "what do I do next?"

▸ **Be specific.**

  ▸ The best web writing is helpful and relevant, which can come only from carefully considering your audience.

HOW DOES THIS TRANSLATE TO WRITING?

We are hosting a picnic on Friday to celebrate the end of the term. We've all worked very hard and are looking forward to commemorating this term! If are interested in attending, please contact Dr. Smith.

▸ What's next?

▸ Is this for me?

▸ Should I call or email Dr. Smith?

You're invited to celebrate the end of the term with the Metaphysics Department!

• 11 AM on Friday, 5/21 on the Quad

• Food will be provided

• Bring a friend!

Fill out the RSVP form below by Monday, 5/17 to let us know you're coming.

▸ This is for me, it's speaking to me and I'm a metaphysics major

▸ All of my questions are answered

▸ I know what to do next— have to fill out the form

WELL CRAFTED WEB COPY = TRUST.

Careful consideration of how to craft a conversation with your

specific audience generates trust.

Trust is desperately desired but rarely found by online users.

TAKE A MINUTE:

▸ What did you take into account about your audience in your writing example?

▸ How could you make your example more relevant and helpful to that audience?

DEFINE THE GOAL

WHAT DO YOU WANT THE USER TO DO WITH THIS INFORMATION?

▶ **Stay online.**

  ▶ Examples: going to another webpage, putting information in a form, uploading a document.

▶ **Do something offline.**

  ▶ Examples: bring the correct documents to a meeting, go to the right location for an event.

HOW WILL THEY TRANSLATE YOUR WRITING INTO ACTION?

WHAT COULD GET IN THEIR WAY?

▶ **Murky directions.**

   ▶ Tell them precisely what to do next, either in writing or with a design element like a button or a link.

▶ **User fatigue.**

   ▶ If they have been searching for information that they have been unable to find, each new webpage full of information becomes harder to digest.

▶ **"Is this for me?"**

   ▶ If the user does not see clear cues that this information is meant for them and speaks to them, the conversation falls apart.

▶ **Device challenges.**

   ▶ A block of text as as paragraph might not seem like a big deal on a desktop computer, but could have a user scrolling and scrolling on a phone, rolling past useful info as they hunt for what they think they need.

HOW DOES THIS TRANSLATE TO WRITING?

After many long nights studying, lots of exams, and so many memories made as part of the Metaphysics Department, it is finally time. Time, that is, to gather our memories together in a wonderful way that ensures we will never forget them.

The department is making a collaborative scrapbook and is looking for submissions.

It's almost graduation time! Celebrate by adding a memory to the Metaphysics Scrapbook.

STORIES

If you have a story to submit, please fill out this form.

PHOTOS

Show us your favorite pictures! Send any photos you would like published to Dr. Smith at smith@lawrence.edu.

▸ Lost in the intro

▸ This is my 50th email about graduation time this week

▸ I'm on my phone in the cafeteria and this is a wall of confusing text, I'll check in on this later.

▸ Active voice

▸ Speaking straight to me

▸ There is still excited energy and personality, but it doesn't distract from what you want from me.

WRITING FOR WEB

QUESTIONS?