

Writing for the Government of Yukon website

The purpose of the Government of Yukon website is to provide our users with one place where they can access our information and services.

The following rules must be used to develop and edit content for Government of Yukon websites. They should be used to supplement the writing standards set out in the Government of Yukon Style Guide.

What content should go on the Government of Yukon website?

Government of Yukon websites are for services, information and advice that only the Government of Yukon can provide.

Content can be published to the Government of Yukon website if it meets the following criteria. Your content should:

- meet a user need;
- be in current high demand from users;
- explain what users need to know or do in order to transact with the Government of Yukon;
- explain a user's rights or obligations;
- be something that only the Government of Yukon can or should do;
- explain what the Government of Yukon is doing about something;
- be something the Government of Yukon has a statutory obligation to publish; or
- explain the purpose of a Government of Yukon organization.

Content shouldn't go on the Government of Yukon website if it is:

- general advice;
- already on the Government of Yukon website – think from a corporate perspective and avoid duplication; or
- information or services reliably provided by non-government organizations

When you write for the Government of Yukon website, ensure your content is:

- **Actionable:** Content should allow a user to complete a specific task.

- Strategic and targeted: Content should be focused on helping specific audiences complete a task in as few steps as possible.
- Current: Plan the lifecycle of your content. Know how it will be maintained to ensure it is kept up-to-date and accurate. Make a plan so you know what will happen to it once it is no longer needed.
- Consistent and formatted for the web: Content must be written and organized so users can quickly scan with confidence and trust.

The Government of Yukon's website tone is:

- authentic – inclusive warm, human, down-to-earth;
- supportive and professional – direct, helpful, instructional, easy-to-understand; and
- friendly – open and reassuring.

Page content should stand alone

Most users get to the Government of Yukon website by using search engines. Write your page content so it shows up in a search. You want users to find the content they are searching for with minimal effort.

To make information easier to find, ensure that page content stands alone. For example, users shouldn't need to read Page A to understand the content on page B.

Understand your users

Government of Yukon website users can be anyone. They could be citizens living in Yukon who need government information and services or people from other locations who want to do business, come for a vacation or move here.

It's important to ensure your content can be understood by any audience. Write in plain language. Use common words, phrases and terms your users will be familiar with. People scan web pages rather than read every word.

Plan and review the keywords you'll use on your page before you begin writing. Use the same words your target audience uses so it takes less effort for them to find the information they're looking for.

When you write for the web, give your audience only what they need to:

- find information;

- solve their problem; or
- complete a task.

Adding additional content will make it more difficult for the user to accomplish their goal. Leave just enough content to be clear.

Keep it simple

Good online content is easy to scan and takes minimal effort to understand.

- use short words (up to five letters) instead of longer words (longer than nine letters);
- use short sentences – aim for 20 words or fewer;
- use short paragraphs – aim for one to three sentences per paragraph; and
- focus on the facts (this makes it easier for you to remove irrelevant information and help your user complete their task).

Measure the readability of your website text

Your website should be readable for all audiences. Research shows that educated people prefer plain language because it allows them to spend less time and energy trying to understand the information and spend more time focused on completing their task.

Write for a Flesch-Kincaid Reading Ease score of 50.0 and above. The higher the score, the easier the material is to read. Lower scores indicate it is more difficult to read.

- 90.0–100.0: Your content is easily understood by an average 11 year-old student.
- 60.0–70.0: Your content is easily understood by 13 to 15 year-olds.
- 0.0–30.0: Your content is best understood by university graduates.

You can use the readability feature in Microsoft Word or a site such as readability-score.com.

Use action-oriented content

People come to Government of Yukon websites to complete a task. Every sentence you write should help them accomplish their task.

- Place the most important information at the beginning of your page, sentences and headings.
- Name the action(s) you want your user to take. For example – apply for funding, find an office, register for a workshop, get your Yukon health care card, etc.
- Use the active voice to make it clear who is responsible.
 - In active voice the subject performs the action expressed by the verb.
 - In passive voice the subject receives the action expressed by the verb.

Active voice: Apply to the Business Incentive Office to have your products added to the Rebate Schedule.

Passive voice: Applications to have your products added to the Rebate Schedule can be made to the Business Incentive Office.

Write great titles and headings

Clear, concise titles and headings help your users scan for what they want and understand the information on the website.

Your page title will often be displayed in search results. The title is the first thing users will see. Help them recognize the content so they will visit your site and find what they need.

- Keep titles and headings to around six words. Break up long titles by using a colon: Smaller chunks of text are easier to scan.
For example – “Local food strategy for Yukon: Encouraging the production and consumption of Yukon-grown food” works better than “Encouraging the production and consumption of Yukon-grown food local food strategy for Yukon.”
- Be clear and precise. Avoid puns and wordplay. These devices make it difficult for users to find your content.
For example: “Current road conditions” is clearer than “Roads.”
- Place keywords at the front of your page titles and headings. This positioning will make your content more visible to search engines.
For example: “Health and safety regulations for the hospitality industry” can be rewritten to “Hospitality industry: Health and safety regulations.”
For example: “Health and safety regulations for the manufacturing industry” can

be rewritten as “Manufacturing industry: Health and safety regulations.”

- Cut out as many adjectives and prepositions as possible (and, the, a, of).

Use lists

- Use bulleted or numbered lists to break up large blocks of text.
- Minimize the number of items in your list. This will help your user remember them. If you have a longer list, try creating several smaller lists with clear headings.
- Use numbered lists only if you need to show users how to complete steps in the correct order.

Write meaningful links

- Place keywords at the beginning of link text. Be explicit about what the link offers. Descriptive links often work better.
- Use active words and phrases, but never use “click here” or “click to open.” Users know to click on a link if it looks like a link.
- Place links in the context that they should be in and not at the end of a page or on a separate page of links. Avoid excessive use of links within paragraphs.
- Write links as:
 - headlines and titles – for example “Designating a heritage property”
 - short sentences – for example “Find out more about the programs we offer”
- Use action phrases and verbs.
For example – “Contact us,” “Sign in,” or “Register now”