

CONTENT WRITING 101

A SIMPLE GUIDE TO LEARN



CONTENT WRITING FOR BUSINESS

Content Writing 101

A Simple Guide to Learn Content Writing for Business

By Sunu Philip

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Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Why Writing is Important for an Online Business	6
How to Write When You're Not a Writer	9
How to Write Effectively for Your Target Audience	. 14
How to Write an SEO Friendly Article in 6 Simple Steps	. 19
Writing Tools and Resources	. 27
About the Author	. 49

Introduction

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1	nave a	confession	to make

I am not a writer.

I truly wish I was, but writing isn't something that comes naturally for me.

While I do possess dozens of journals, each filled with thoughts, ideas and sketches, none of them would make the cut online.

It takes a lot of effort and time for me to get my thoughts off the paper, and onto the computer screen.

I wish I could get by without writing, but that's not a possibility as long as I'm running an online business.

I realize there may be others like me who don't like writing, but still want to see their online businesses thrive.

In this short eBook, we will look at the importance of writing in online business, the writing process I follow, and how you can write good content that matters to your audience and ranks well with search engines.

Why Writing is Important for an Online Business

Let's start with why writing is important for an online business.

Marketing is no longer about the stuff that you make, but about the stories you tell. – Seth Godin

Seth Godin nails it as usual!

Online marketing has evolved beyond just talking about the products you sell or the services you provide.

Marketing is about creating personal connections, crafting stories, sharing helpful information, and meeting the needs of your target audience.

And for each of these aspects of marketing, you need the written word.

While you can create fun graphics, podcasts, videos, and slides to get your message across, you do need a copious amount of text as well.

Just think about it... We use the written word in:

- Website content
- Blog posts
- Email newsletters
- Landing pages for products/services/freebies
- Social media updates
- Paid marketing campaigns

In each of these avenues mentioned, your words play an important role.

People are starting to look beyond the products/services you have to offer, and into the stories that are weaved around them.

Writing does play a crucial role in your online business. If you are real and honest with your words, people will be able to relate with you and start trusting you.

Good writing gives your brand a clear voice.

Your business represents an idea and conveys a particular message. Writing gives your audience clarity about what your business stands for.

Your words do matter. But for your idea to be understood and for your message to be passed on, it needs to be clear and comprehensible.

If you want word about your business to be passed around, you need to convey your values to your audience in clear writing. You don't have to be an English major to write good content - just simple, correct English that speaks to your audience will do.

Good writing is equated with professionalism.

Let's say you find a good website that offers just the right solution for your problems. But on further exploring the site, you find it filled with grammatical errors and spelling mistakes... Will you still be willing to shop around on that site? You probably hit the 'x' button before you think another thought.

If you want to be taken seriously as a professional, your writing skills need to be up to the mark. Only then will you be portrayed as a trusted person who knows what they're writing about. This is one aspect you absolutely cannot compromise on.

Good writing skills are a must if you're planning to get established online, and if you want others to take us seriously. No matter what language you're using, ensure that the sentence structure, grammar and spellings are correct.

Good writing helps you build a rapport with your audience.

It is your words that keep your audience coming back to you for more. When you share your stories, past struggles and honest experiences, people connect with you. It hooks them in to what your business has to offer, and keeps them coming back.

The more readers you have, the more your content gets shared. It brings in more traffic, which in turn leads to more conversions as subscribers/sales.

Your writing has the power to change the course of someone's life. Someone out there might be looking for the exact solution that your online business has to offer. You can get the word out to them through your writing.

How to Write When You're Not a Writer

As I confessed in the previous chapter, I don't consider myself a writer.
Yes, it's true!
I have all these great ideas
Too many, in fact
But they are nothing more than scribbles and sketches in my notebooks.
To get them all down into actual content that can be shared online is a very humongous task
at least for me!
I also have perfectionistic tendencies, which means I'm never truly satisfied until my idea is presented exactly the way I originally pictured it.
Perhaps you can relate?
Over the years, I've come up with a process to get my abstract ideas into good content online without feeling overwhelmed.
Regardless of whether you consider yourself a good writer or not, I'm sure these tips will help!

1. Write Something

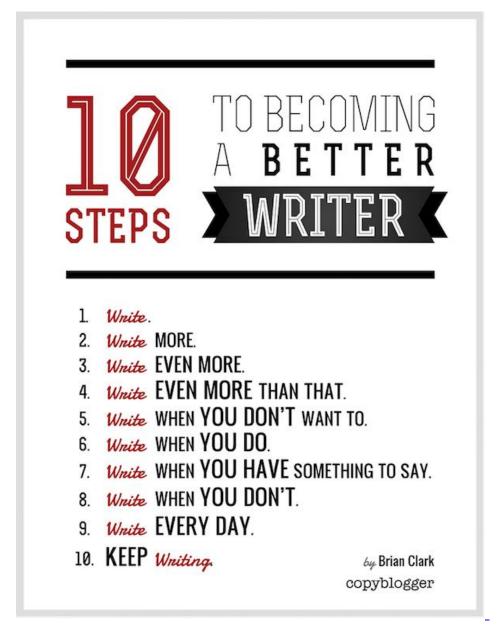


Image Courtesy: Copyblogger

I came across this image early in my online business career and considered it very good advice. I started writing a little something everyday, and it really helped get my thoughts organized and written down on paper.

The simple act of writing in my journal (almost) everyday has helped me tremendously. Whether it is some notes from my current Bible study, takeaways from a podcast I heard, or ideas for my business, I write them all down.

If you struggle with the act of writing, I encourage you to just write something in your journal every day. Once it becomes a habit, the words flow a bit easier.

2. Pen Down Ideas

I have these sudden bursts of creativity where I'm inundated with new ideas for articles and blog posts. I pen them down quickly in my journal, just to make sure I don't miss any of them.

It's always handy to have a journal and pen within arms reach, even if you're outside the house. When creativity strikes, make a quick note of what the idea is and a few lines about it. You don't have to sit and write a lengthy description – just a short note to jog your memory will do.

If you'd prefer a technical alternative, you could use a notepad app on your smartphone/tablet, or specialized apps such as Evernote or a mindmap.

3. Outline the Drafts

The next step is to get the ideas you've jotted down on to the screen. When you are in front of the computer, pull out all your recent notes and start making quick drafts. Whether it is an article, a newsletter, or a guest post, open your blog/writing program and type out the idea quickly.

Some of these drafts may never see the light of day, and that's okay! The key is to keep them, so you're not at a loss for ideas down the line.

Out of these drafts, pick the one you will be working on first. Once you've finalized which idea you'll be focusing on for now, start outlining the content.

Identify what the article is about, what you want to convey, and what needs to be added into the content. Jot down headings and sub-headings wherever possible. This will serve as a skeleton to be filled out in the next step.

4. Research

Once you've finalized your topic, take some time to research it online. Read articles that have covered the same topic, and see what they've missed. Compile related resources that might be beneficial to your audience.

The truth is, there is nothing new under the sun. Others might have written similar articles on the same topic you've chosen. But your take on it will be entirely different. When you write from your perspective, throw in your experience, and present the content in your unique voice, that is just what will jive with your audience.

5. Write. Write. Write.

When all the preliminary research is done, it's time to do the actual writing. Use the skeletal framework you already have and start filling in all the missing details.

Write at a stretch, without stopping to edit the content in between. That way, your words will flow easily, and you can always come back to edit it later.

6. Refine the Content

It's always best to have the content written a few days before it is due, so you'll have time to refine it. Let it sit for a day or two, and then revisit the content.

Read through it once and make the desired changes. Reading it aloud will also help you find subtle mistakes. Check for grammar, spelling, punctuation, clarity and flow of thought.

Add images wherever applicable, and give your content one final look over so you're satisfied with it. It's best not to aim for perfection, though – even printed books have typos.

7. Publish!

Just hit the 'Publish' button! Don't linger too long making changes, or your writing will never make it out there. Once you publish the article, you can give it a cursory glance to make sure it has come out alright.

Well, these are the 7 steps I personally follow for articles I write. I hope it inspires you to organize your own writing process, and boldly get your words out there.

How to Write Effectively for Your Target Audience

Writing.
It's the simple act of using a pen/keyboard to get thoughts and ideas across to another person.
But when it comes to online business, writing is a bit more complicated, isn't it?
You can just write what comes to your mind
But how many people will actually read it?
For some of us, writing is therapeutic.
And that's good.
But if you want your writing to build your online business, it has to matter to the person reading it.
Importance of Writing for Your Audience
We like to write about what we think, feel, or know.

If you want your writing to actually matter to your readers, you need to take the focus off yourself, your brand and your business, and place it squarely on the reader.

Write content that your readers need to read.

But is that what our readers want to read?

Write about solutions for their problems.

Write with empathy, giving them a lifeline of hope.

Write content that will help improve their lives.

Writing with your audience in mind is a sure way to get more people interested in what you/your business has to offer.

Questions to Ask Before You Start Writing

There are two questions you'll have to ask yourself before you can even start writing.

1. Who is your ideal reader?

When you have a blog or online business, you have a target audience. You will not be attempting to reach all the billions of people living on earth right now!

You need to identify who your ideal audience is.

Taking this blog for example: my target audience is mothers who want to use their talents to make money online and support their families financially. I target my writing towards women who have basic computer skills, and the passion to turn their talents into profits online.

When you know whom you are writing for, it will make your content more relevant and useful for those reading it.

2. What message do you want to convey?

Every piece of content has a goal – whether you realize it or not. You want the reader to take away something from it, or act on what they've read.

Identify what is the message you want to convey through each content piece you write. Take this article for instance... I want readers to understand why it's important to write with their audience in mind. I will be sharing specific tips, and actionable ideas on how they can implement the same through their writing process.

Before you start writing an article, eBook or landing page copy, identify what message you want to convey to your audience through it. This will give you clarity, and help you lay out your content in a better manner.

How to Write for Your Audience

Now that you have clarity on whom you are writing to, and what message you want to convey, it's time to get into the actual writing.

Start with a catchy title

I can't stress enough the importance of having a good title for your content. It is your headline that entices readers to actually click through and visit your site.

Make sure your headline is simple, easy to read, and conveys exactly what your content is about. If possible, add an element of suspense. People love a bit of mystery, and will click through and read your content just to satisfy their curiosity.

Draw readers in with your first few lines

On average, 8 out of 10 people will read your headline copy, but only 2 out 10 will read the rest. – Brian Clark

Isn't that a startling statistic?

If you've done a good job with your headline, people are already on your site, ready to read what you've written. The first few lines of your content has to convince them to stay on and read the rest.

Engage readers with your opening paragraph and make them want to read more.

Write for different readers

Your target audience will consist of 3 different types of readers. Here's how you need to write for each of them.

- The Reluctant Reader These are people who tend to skim through written content. The usage of sub-headings and lists with bullet points will help them get the gist of your content with ease.
- **The Avid Reader** These are people who like to read lengthy articles. Provide them in-depth, meaty articles, explaining everything in as much detail as possible.
- The Visual Reader These are people who prefer visual representations rather than written content. Complement your writing with relevant images, illustrations, and graphs to reach the visual reader.

Have a healthy mix of content that caters to all these three categories of readers and you'll definitely have them coming back for more.

Encourage readers to take action

The end of your content is probably as important as its beginning. What do you want readers to do after they finish reading your content? Make sure you have a specific call to action telling them what to do.

You could ask them to:

- Share your article on social media
- Subscribe to your newsletter
- Download a freebie
- Buy a product
- Leave a comment
- Visit another post/page on your site

Take some time to find out who your ideal reader is and the message you want to convey through your writing. I hope the tips I've shared in this chapter help you write content that your audience will actually read.

How to Write an SEO Friendly Article in 6 Simple Steps

S.E.O.

Three simple alphabets that has every online business owner/marketer clamoring about it.

You cannot ignore the impact that search engines have on your writing.

If you truly want to get the word out about your product, service, or story, it's important that your writing is optimized for search engines.

Sadly, some people go over the top with SEO and churn out meaningless content stuffed with keywords to appease search engines.

And these search engines are not to be trifled with either.

Over the past 8 years I've been in the online marketing field, I've seen search algorithms morph and change for the better.

They are no longer mindless robots crawling your site to find content that people search for.

They have mutated into intelligent beings who take over 200 factors into consideration before a site makes it to the first page of the search results.

So what can you do to make sure your writing makes it to the coveted spot?

Let me take you through the process I followed to curate an article for one of my clients.

Step 1: Identify the Keywords

When you start writing, you probably have an idea you can expand on. The first step is to find keywords that are relevant to your idea. I've written a detailed article on <u>how to do keyword research</u> if you need a step by step guide.

Identify relevant keywords that have a high search volume and medium-high competition. Also make note of related synonyms that you use within the article.

Example:

I had an idea to create a travel guide for someone traveling to India for the first time. I knew this would prove to be very useful for my client's target audience.

The first step was to identify phrases related to this idea that people were searching for online. I did the initial keyword research and came up with the following keywords:

Keyword	Avg. Monthly Searches (exact match only)	Competition	Suggested bid	
india travel guide	1000	0.65	90.22	
travel guide to india	70	0.88	130.72	
india travel guides	50	0.81	51.53	
travel india guide	90	0.5	108.42	
best india travel guide	50	0.42	6.47	
india travel guide book	70	0.93	8.11	
travel guide for india	40	0.74	104.85	
tourist guide india	110	0.51	104.41	

Out of this list I chose "Travel Guide to India" as my focus keyword, and framed the article title as "The Ultimate Travel Guide to India – X Travel Resources for Your First Indian Trip".

When writing the article, make sure you identify what your focus keyword is, and then include the rest of the keywords and their synonyms within your content.

Step 2: Write In-Depth Content

This is something I try very hard to do, as well. Rather than publishing a large number of mediocre articles, aim to write meaty content that will prove to be quite useful for your audience.

Write in-depth articles rather than just rehashing old content. In-depth articles of over 1000 words can become power pages on your site. You can follow the writing process I shared earlier in the second chapter.

Example:

With respect to the Indian travel guide, I brainstormed with my team and came up with a list of the type of resources anybody visiting India for the first time may need. We created a spreadsheet with our ideas.

Sub Headings	Status	Comments
State specific blogs	Done	Must visit places in each state - linking to specific blog posts
Top 10 blogs - all through India	Done	
Travel tips	Done	Word doc & blog post
Hotels & Restaurants	Done	
Climate - best season to visit	Done	Generic info about Indian Climate + Sites to check seasonal weather
Embassy websites	Done	Embassies of Major countries - European, American, Austrailian, British, South Africa
Maps - Google Maps, Map of India	Done	
Travel Apps	Done	
Booking & Ticketing	Done	
Emergency Numbers	Done	

These became the sub-headings of our post and the article skeleton was ready. We then collected resources for each section of the article, making sure to add our two cents about each topic. This added a personal touch to the article as well.

Step 3: Optimize the Article for Search Engines

This is a pretty straightforward task, but one that is easily overlooked by even seasoned writers. Make sure your article has the focus keyword in the title, URL, meta description, as a heading within the content, and in the first paragraph if possible.

I recommend using a plugin such as <u>WordPress SEO by Yoast</u> to make the process easier. Try to also include at least 2 or 3 internal links to other posts/pages on your site.

Example:



We made sure the title of the post had the focus keyword at the beginning itself. The URL also included the focus keyword, and I've also linked to other articles within the site in the article.

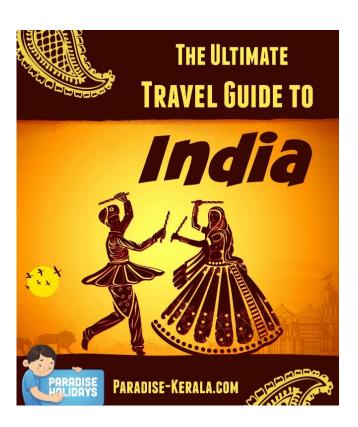
Step 4: Add a Visual Component

Google and other search engines images pay extra attention to images/videos that are included in the content. Plan to include at least 1 or 2 related images in your article. If you're including a video blog, make sure you add the transcript of it in the same article.

The images within your content also need to be optimized for search engines. Make sure the keyword is included in the following:

- Image file name
- Image title
- Image alt text

Example:



If you visit the link, <u>The Ultimate Travel Guide to India</u>, you'll find lots of images scattered amid the text. This breaks the monotony for the reader, and makes the content more visually appealing.

Step 5: Increase Social Signals

The advantage of writing great content is that your readers will want to share it. When a particular article receives more likes and shares, it is more likely to rank well on

search engines.

Add social sharing buttons to your post and encourage your audience to share, retweet,

and repin your article across various social media platforms.

Example:

You'll notice that my article has social sharing buttons at the top and bottom of the

page. I will be running Facebook campaigns for this article, and I'm also in the

process of getting other travel bloggers to link back to it, which will make the article

more popular with search engines.

Step 6: Optimize User Signals

Search engines pay particular attention to how users behave on your site. You can try

to reduce your bounce rate by taking efforts to keep users on your site a little while

longer.

If you've written good, in-depth content, readers will spend more time on your site

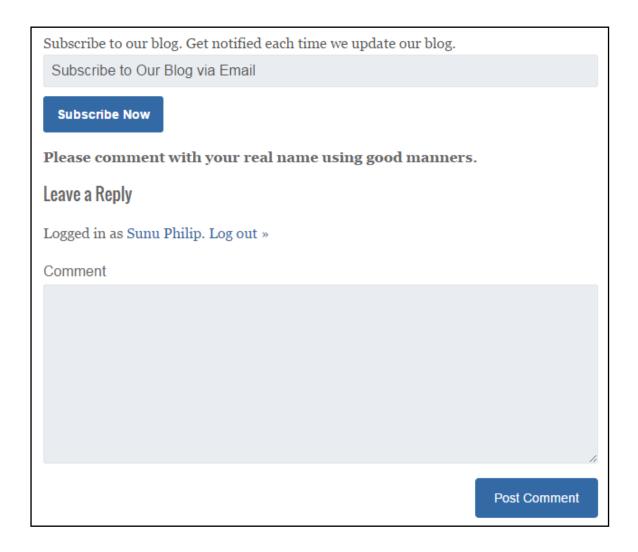
and they will most likely be coming back for more.

You can also keep readers on your site by adding a call to action to your content,

urging them to read a related article, subscribe to your mailing list, or visit other pages

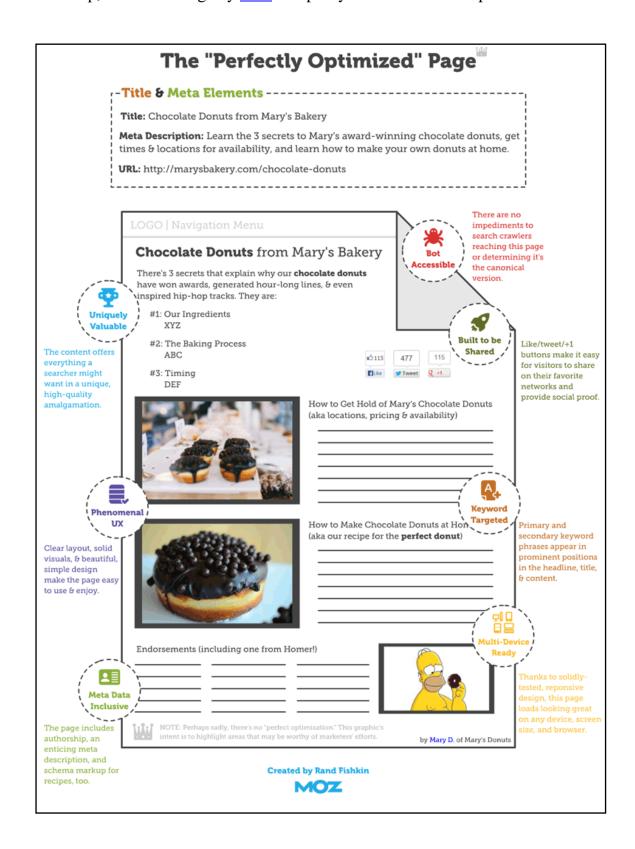
on your site.

Example:



In our <u>Ultimate Travel Guide to India</u>, we do this by asking readers to subscribe to our email updates and/or leave a comment about the content they've read.

To wind up, here's an image by Moz that pretty much sums it all up!



This is a very basic guide to make your written content search engine friendly. I hope you're able to start incorporating these suggestions on your website.

Writing Tools and Resources

All of us, whether we're good writers or not, could use a little extra help. There are numerous tools and resources available to help you write better content online. You will find below, a collection of good writing tools and writing resources to assist your online content writing skills.

Writing Tools

1. BuzzSumo

Buzzumo is an easy to use search tool that analyzes content ideas, specifically those that are getting a lot of social shares in your niche, or for your competitor. This also helps you to identify key influencers who can help you in promoting your content.



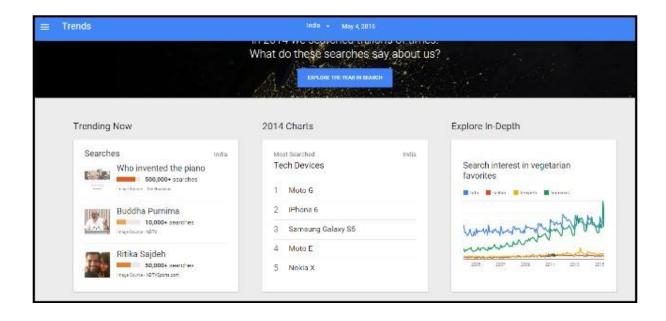
2. Portent Title Maker

Portent Title Maker is a useful title generator tool which provides an array of titles for blogs and presentations. Enter your subject and wait to get unique ideas for your next post.



3. Google Trends

Google Trends is one of the most helpful online search tools. It checks the search queries of specific keywords, subjects and phrases over a particular period of time. The results will give you an idea of topics that are searched for a lot, or rather, what is buzzing with respect to your industry's relevant topics.



4. Keyword Planner

Keyword Planner is very helpful to find new long-tail keywords related to your topic. It is a more focused keyword tool, which helps advertisers create new ad groups and ad campaigns.



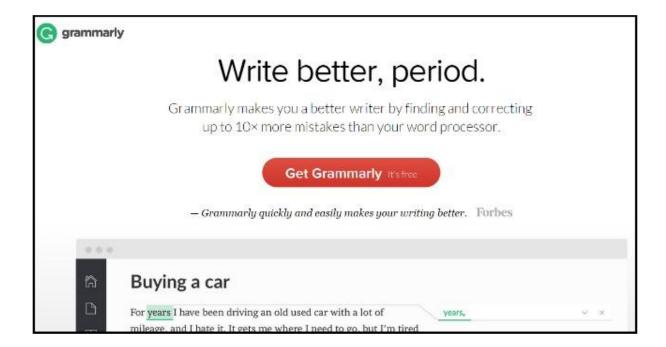
5. Egg Timer

Egg Timer is a simple and very easy to use countdown timer, which allows you to set a countdown for a specific date and time.



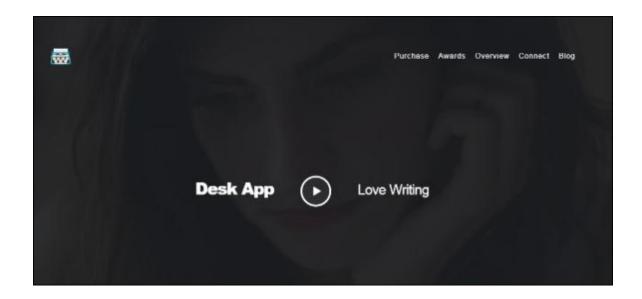
6. Grammarly

Grammarly is an online grammar checker which helps you identify grammatical and spelling errors. This tool helps you improve your writing by offering helpful explanations of each identified mistake.



7. <u>Desk</u>

Desk is designed to provide a distraction free writing experience for writers, bloggers, note-takers and productivity artists. Keyboard shortcuts and quick publish functionality are the unique qualities of this tool, which ensures productivity and speed.



8. Filament

Filament is an ideal app to increase the engagement of audience in your blog post. This tool helps trace the sources which bring the most engaged audience, thereby enabling you to find where to focus most effectively.



9. Write or Die

Write or Die is an awesome online tool that encourages you to write. Here you are forced to write to avoid consequences.



10. Quabel

Quabel is an online text editor that is designed for a distraction free writing experience. It helps you set writing goals and concentrate on your writing.



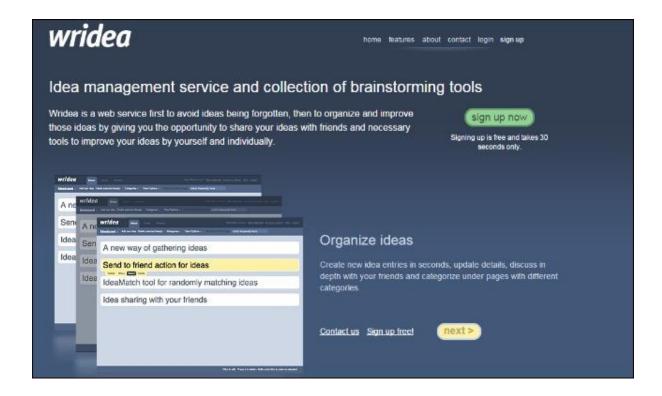
11. Plotbot

Plotbot is a free and easy to use web-based screen writing application. You can write your screenplays alone or with friends. You have to think only about ideas and Plotbot will handle all the other formatting.



12. Wridea

Wridea is a useful online tool for idea management. This brainstorming tool enables you to create new ideas, discuss it with your friends and arrange the data under different categories.



14. <u>Bubbl.us</u>

Bubbl.us is a free mind mapping and brainstorming tool that captures and connects your ideas on a topic. It also enables you to expand and organize your thinking.



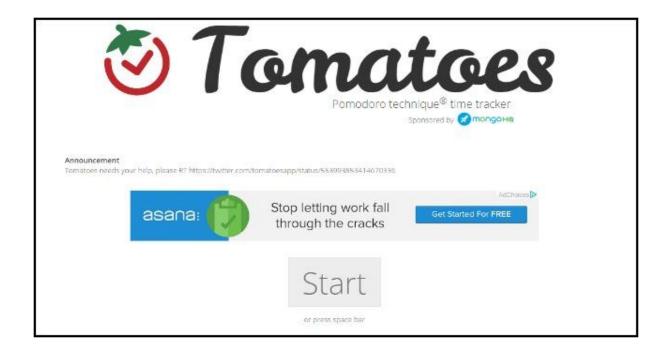
15. StayFocusd

StayFocusd is an excellent tool to keep you away from sites you are addicted to. You can set a timer on specific time-wasting websites to increase your productive.



16. Tomato.es

Tomato.es is one of the best pomodoro time trackers to organize your tasks. It enhances your work efficiency and productivity by allowing you to split your tasks into many units.



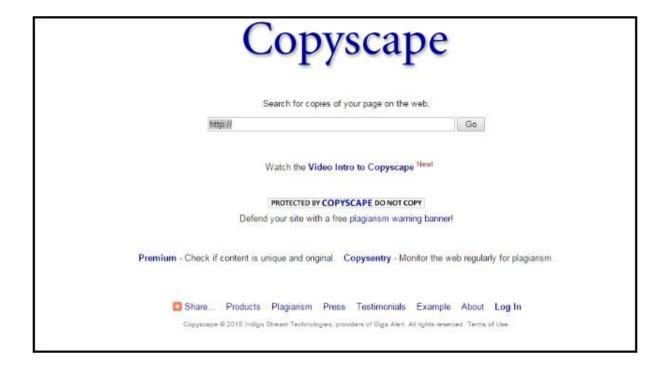
17. Headline Analyzer

Headline Analyzer increases your social shares, traffic and SEO value by providing perfect headlines every time. It helps you use emotional and powerful words to convey the message.



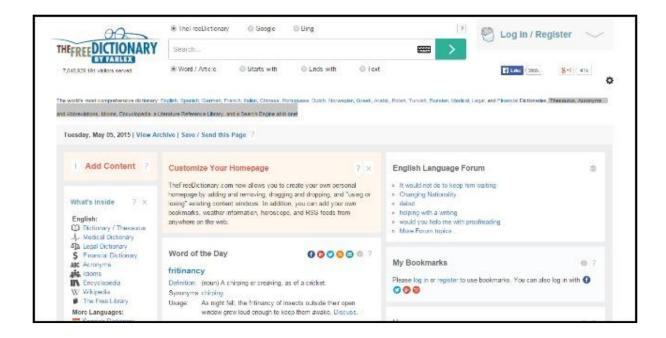
18. Copyscape

Copyscape protects your site from online plagiarism by simply submitting the URL or pasting the content into the text field.



19. The Free Dictionary

Apart from its services in more than 15 languages, The Free Dictionary provides a lot more functionalities to online writers. This app provides a thesaurus, acronyms and abbreviations, idioms, encyclopaedias, a literature reference library, and a search engine all in one.



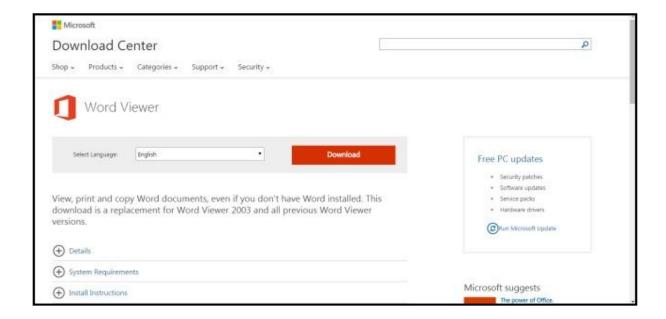
20. Web Notes

Web notes is an online note tool that enables you to add notes to web pages and PDFs. It is an ideal tool to collect and organise important information.



21. Word Viewer

Word Viewer lets you to view, print and copy word documents without installing Microsoft Office.



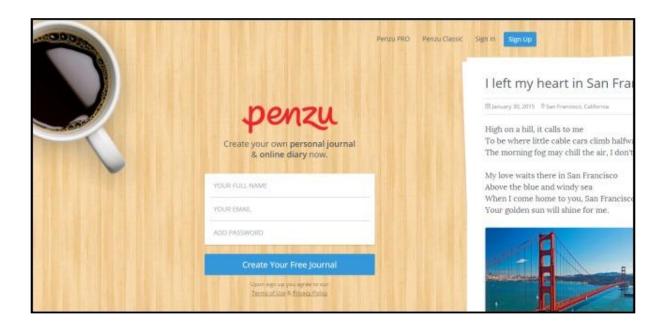
22. Etherpad

Etherpad is a real time collaborative document editor that runs on a web browser. It lets you write articles, press releases, and to-do lists collaboratively with your friends in a single document at the same time.



23. Penzu

Penzu is an online diary and personal journal where you can keep your entries private by default. You will have a unique and compelling writing experience with Penzu, which lets you take your journal wherever you go.



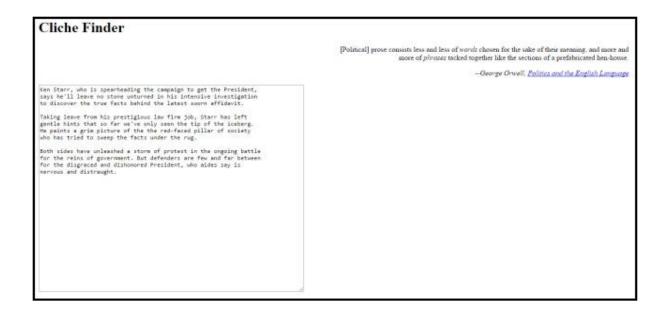
24. Letter Count

Letter Count is a free online tool to count the letters and characters in your post. You need to simply paste the text in the text area and this calculator counts the letters quickly.



25. Cliche Finder

Cliche Finder is an ideal tool to identify overused phrases in your text. Submit your text to cliché finder to find out the clichés listed in the Associated Press Guide to News Writing.



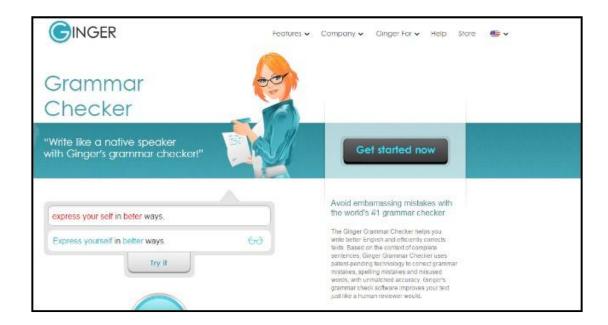
26. Imagination Prompt Generator

Imagination Prompt Generator is a good resource to produce writing prompts for journals, blogs and other creative projects. The randomly generated prompts from this web tool will inspire your imagination skills.



27. Ginger Grammar Check

With Ginger Grammar Check you can trace out the grammar mistakes, spelling mistakes and misused words to improve your writing in English.



28. Thesaurus.com

Thesaurus.com is a free and easy to use online tool, helpful in finding synonyms, antonyms and related words very quickly.



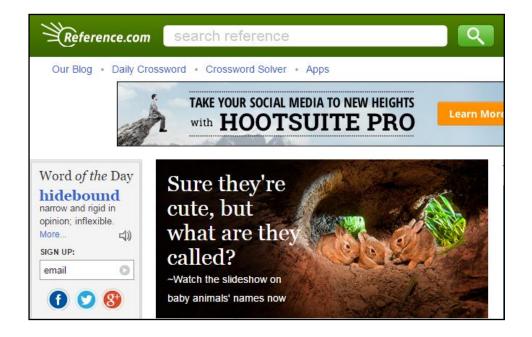
29. Dictionary.com

Dictionary.com is the most leading online dictionary in the world. It helps you discover words from anywhere at any time.



30. Reference.com

Reference.com is a popular online encyclopaedia, thesaurus and dictionary, that's sure to reduce your online writing workload.



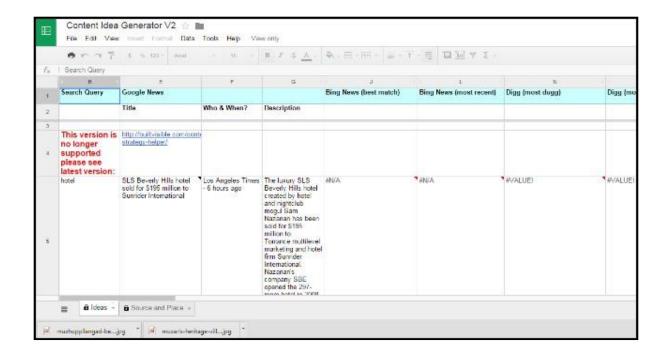
31. Encylopedia.com

Encylopedia.com helps you to get facts, information, biographies and definitions with the help of trusted sources like encyclopaedias, dictionaries and thesaurus.



32. Content Idea Generator

Content Idea Generator is an online tool which helps you get great content ideas to attract more visitors to your website.



33. Focus Booster

Focus Booster is an easy to use software tool to increase your productivity. It is based on the Pomodoro technique that encourages effective time management in your tasks.



Writing Resources

- <u>50 Free Resources That Will Improve Your Writing Skills</u>
- 17 Ways To Improve Your Web Writing by Dean Evans
- Online Writing Jobs for Freelance Writer
- How to Write Good Content for Blogs, Ebooks and Websites
- How to Create Written Content that Generates Leads
- The Nine Ingredients That Make Great Content
- How To Write Great Content That Deserves To Rank: In 4 Simple Steps
- 12 Content-Writing Secrets of Professional Writers
- How to Write Great Blog Content
- 9 Simple Tips for Writing Persuasive Web Content
- How to Write Good Website Content
- How To Write Good Quality Content, Stay In Peace With People And Search Engines
- 5 Ways to Write a Damn Good Sentence
- 10 Tips for Writing Good Content and Attracting Readers
- How to Write a Blog Post: A Simple Formula + 5 Free Blog Post Templates
- 20+ Awesome, Free Resources for All Content Writers
- 4 Online Resources for Becoming a Better Content Writer
- Web Content, Writing for Web Sites
- Six Kickass Writing Resources for Bloggers
- Daily Writing Tips

These are just a fraction of the numerous writing tools and resources available online. They are sure to be of some help as you get started with online content writing.

Writing, like any other creative skill, takes a lot of practice. Keep at it, write consistently, and soon your words will start weaving magic around the World Wide Web.

"You don't write because you

Want to say something,

you write because you have

something to say."

- F. Scott Fitzgerald

About the Author



Sunu Philip, founder of Get Found Online, is a Certified SEO Specialist and Internet Marketing Consultant. She founded Get Found Online to help businesses get more business by tapping into the power of the internet. For over 5 years, Get Found Online has helped companies establish their online presence and build trust with their clientele. We can help your business get more traction through customized services such as search

engine optimization, content marketing, social media marketing, inbound marketing and email marketing.

You can connect with Get Found Online on <u>Facebook</u> and <u>Twitter</u>. If you'd like to get your travel company found online, you can contact us directly through our website.

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