The *Tip Jar*

Best web practices to help you improve your online content

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Issue 9:
Audience Focus

Know your audience before creating your content

Some content is directed to specific groups, but for the majority of our websites the main audience is the public. For POD, it's all staff although the Manager Resources section is targeted to managers and other leaders.

Other important audiences that access our websites are:

- health-care professionals
- health authority staff
- researchers
- media

Who are your primary and secondary audiences?

What does your audience need?

Identify common tasks they need to complete or questions they need answered, and make sure your content gives them the information they need.

- Use the **"what's in it for me?"** lens. What is their goal in visiting your page? Are they trying to complete a specific task or just learn about a specific topic?
- Anticipate **popular questions** – what are frequently asked questions from your audience? What do they call or email you for? Don't just list these as FAQs. Your page content should all be about answering common questions.
- Is there any **related information** they might need or find useful? Provide links to content from other teams and departments to make it as easy as possible for them to find that information.
- Ask other web editors to **link to your content**, if it will help your audience. You can find web editors for our external websites listed on the Editor Hub Contacts page. On POD, page owners and editors are listed on the right of each page.
- What do you **want to tell them**? Make a list, then check whether any of the items on it match what your audience actually wants to know.

Tone

- If the public is your main audience, aim for a **professional, clear, conversational** tone. The same goes for writing for PHSA staff on POD.
- Be **friendly and informative**. Don't overwhelm your audience with medical terminology, technical terms or lots of acronyms.
- **Tone should match your subject matter**. A sensitive subject requires a sensitive touch. For example: "The days and weeks following a miscarriage can be very difficult. You may have a range of emotions—numbness, sadness, anger and guilt—over what happened and what could have been."
- Use the words **"you" and "your"** instead of "one" or "the patient." This increases your connection with your readers. For example: "Washing your hands is a great way to help keep you and your family from getting sick. Use lots of soap and warm water, and wash all over your hands. Rinse and dry your hands afterwards. If you are in a hurry, you can use alcohol rub instead."

Write in plain English

Contrary to popular belief, writing in plain language does not 'dumb down' your content. Even smart people want content that is easy and straightforward to read. Learn more about writing in plain language.

If you are writing for a health professional audience, you can assume a certain level of understanding of your subject, but still follow principles of writing for the web. For example, you won't need to define basic, commonly-used oncology terms if you're writing in the health professional section on the BC Cancer site.

For more, see http://editorhub.phsa.ca/writing-style/create-good-content.