

Writer's review guide

This guide and its accompanying checklist will help you review your work before you organise a peer review or seek approval to publish.

How to review your writing

Let some time pass

It's too hard to review content right after you've written it. You need some distance from what you've written so you can see it clearly.

If there is pressure to publish quickly, try to wait until the next morning and then review before publishing.

Check on screen and review from print

Check that the content displays properly on screen. If possible, check the content on your phone as well to make sure it resizes well, particularly if you're using tables.

It's easy to miss some problems if you don't review from a printed version too. So print it out and check it carefully.

Read it aloud

Reading your content aloud is a great way to see how it sounds. Is it engaging or does it sound too dry or formal? Are any of your sentences long-winded?

If you're in an open office environment you could use headphones and a browser plug-in to read the content to you.

What to check

Use a checklist to make sure you don't miss anything. Your checklist should include the following kinds of checks.

Meets content plan

Before you started writing, you should have done some planning. Now's the time to review against your plan.

- Is your purpose clear?
- Does the main message or most important information stand out?
- Have you written this for your target audience?

Passes a basic quality check

- Spelling, grammar and punctuation are correct
- Readability statistics (average sentence length, percentage of passive voice used, grade level) are acceptable
- Links work and lead users directly to the named resource

Complies with style guide

If you have a style guide, include checks for compliance with the issues it covers. This could include:

- Writing style uses brand voice
- Images are on brand
- House style for spelling and punctuation is used
- Correct template is used.

Content is usable

- Easy to find (check quality, keywords, title, meta description, file name, main heading, links)
- Easy to scan-read (check structure, headings, paragraphs, lists, tables, links)
- Easy to read (check words used, sentence length, use of active/passive voice, verbs not nominalised, writing is concise)

Content is accessible

- Images meet the 6 relevant accessibility guidelines (alt text, colour, contrast, images of text, flashing, icon consistency)
- Link text is clear
- HTML tags have been used appropriately for headings, lists, quotations, tables and emphasised text

Download our writer's checklist to get you started. See <http://4syllables.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/writers-checklist.pdf>