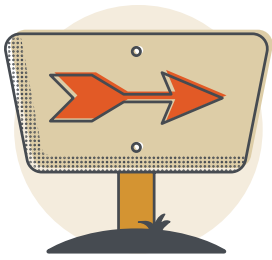


# SO YOU WANT TO COPYWRITE YOUR WEBSITE

A COMPLETE GUIDE TO  
CONTENT STRATEGY FOR THE WEB

# COPYWRITING YOUR WEBSITE

A COMPLETE GUIDE TO CONTENT STRATEGY FOR THE WEB



TRAILHEAD STARTS HERE

## WHAT TO EXPECT

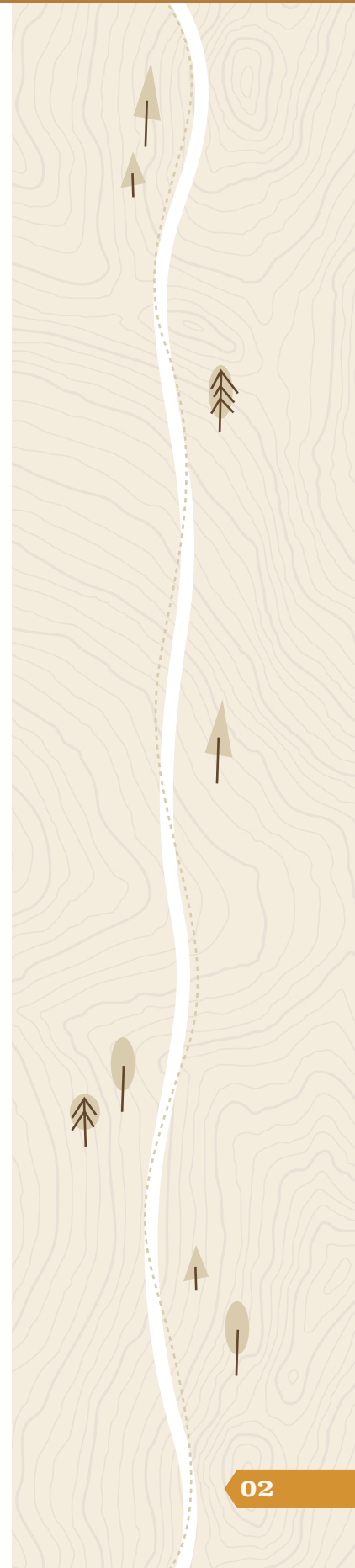
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Most people think that if you can write an email – you can write for the web. But copywriting is so much more than coherent sentences and proper grammar – though you’d be surprised how many sites are missing both.

Whether it’s for the web, a billboard or a business card, marketing messages are meant to tell a story. And that story should persuade your audience to action. This could be in the form of buying your product, donating to your cause or something even as simple as signing up for your monthly newsletter.

Your website is one of the most important touch-points for your brand. And your site’s messaging could mean the difference between a new customer and a lost lead. That’s a lot of pressure riding on your website to say the right thing, to the right person, at the right time.

If you’re still sure you want to blaze your own trail and copywrite your site, let us guide you along the way.



# WEBSITE COPYWRITING

A COMPLETE GUIDE TO CONTENT STRATEGY FOR THE WEB

START HERE



AUDIT YOUR SITE



CREATE PERSONAS



KNOW YOURSELF



OUTLINE PAGE FLOW



CONDUCT INTERVIEWS



WRITE YOUR LIST



KNOW YOUR PRINCIPALS



AND KEEP WRITING



MAP YOUR CONTENT



NOW CELEBRATE!

# COPYWRITING YOUR WEBSITE

A COMPLETE GUIDE TO CONTENT STRATEGY FOR THE WEB



MILE MARKER 1

## AUDIT YOUR SITE

TIME COMMITMENT // 2-3 hours

# 01

Before you even begin thinking about your new website, take an audit of the content on your current site and answer the following questions:

- How many pages exist on my current site?
- How many of those pages are necessary, useful, repetitive or could be combined with other pages?
- Which pages are most important to my site's conversion process?  
You can use Google Analytics to help answer this.
- How many audiences will I be writing for? For example, volunteers and donors are different audiences. In fact, even a \$25 donor is different from a \$2,500 donor.
- Is the content on my current site compelling and engaging? Why or why not?
- Can I re-use or refine any content from the old site for the new site?
- How many calls-to-action are on my site?
- Have I prioritized those calls-to-action?



MILE MARKER 2

## CREATE PERSONAS

TIME COMMITMENT // 2-5 hours

# 02

Create personas for each major audience group. Get as detailed as possible – this could include name, age, favorite store, preferred activities, favorite television shows and any other details that help you specify your unique audience. The goal here is to get into the mindset of your audience so that when you pick up a pen to start writing, you're writing with them in mind.

→ OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Trying to fit old content into a new site is like trying to fit a window from your old cabin into your new one. It just won't fit the way a new, custom window will.

03

# COPYWRITING YOUR WEBSITE

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MILE MARKER 3

## KNOW YOURSELF

TIME COMMITMENT // 8-10 hours

# 03

If you haven't already, identify your organization's [Why](#). You may know what you do and how you do it, but people don't buy what you do – they buy why you do it. In today's digital world, your audience will engage with your brand as if it were a person with a personality. And whether you choose your personality, or let one be chosen for you, your brand **does** have a personality. Your Why will act as a compass in everything you do – from copywriting to hiring new employees.

- **Step 1:** Identify what role your Why will play in your website. Is it a silent compass to direct your writing, or will it be front-and-center for everyone to see.
- **Step 2:** Create a This But Not That List of your brand's personality traits. This list will act as boundaries for your writing. Feel free to use our This But Not That List as your guide.

➔ THIS BUT NOT THAT

### DESIGN RANGERS ARE:

PLAYFUL	BUT NOT	CARELESS
CLEVER	BUT NOT	PRETENTIOUS
CONFIDENT	BUT NOT	ARROGANT
STRUCTURED	BUT NOT	INFLEXIBLE
ADVENTUROUS	BUT NOT	DANGEROUS
INNOVATIVE	BUT NOT	ALIENATING
APPROACHABLE	BUT NOT	SLOPPY
SINCERE	BUT NOT	SAPPY

# COPYWRITING YOUR WEBSITE

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MILE MARKER 4

## CONDUCT INTERVIEWS

TIME COMMITMENT // 5-10 hours

Two heads really are better than one. Before you start writing, conduct a series of interviews with your internal team and your audience to understand what information is most important to them.

- **Interviewing your internal team:** Everyone on your team will likely have slightly different priorities for the site. Let your team members be heard, but also make it clear that you are in charge of prioritizing content and your goal is to find common threads throughout your interviews. Most of the time, your internal team just wants to feel like they are part of the process.
- **Interviewing your audience:** The easiest way to find out what your audience wants to hear is to ask them! What language do they use to talk about your brand? Is it the same language you're using? Your brand is just as much what you say about yourself as it is what your **audience** says about you.

### → INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### QUESTIONS TO ASK

- How do you currently use our site?
- What do you like about the site?
- What do you think could be improved?
- Is there anything about the current site that doesn't make sense?
- How does the current site support your goals?

### → OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Interviews can be time-consuming and challenging to coordinate. If you're unable to conduct interviews, try sending out a survey that stakeholders can respond to in their own time.

# COPYWRITING YOUR WEBSITE

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MILE MARKER 5

## OUTLINE PAGE FLOW

TIME COMMITMENT // 1-2 hours per page

Time to put pen to paper, sort of. First, you'll choose a page to outline – we suggest selecting a page on your site that you're familiar with. Don't worry about your homepage – we'll help you prioritize important pages on your site. But before you even begin outlining, focus on the goals:

### ➔ GET FOCUSED

WRITE YOUR TOP 3 GOALS FOR THE PAGE  
**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

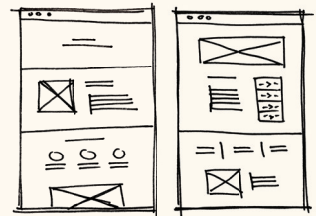
- How do you want someone to feel on this page?
- What do you want people to understand when they get here?
- What do you want them to do when they leave?

### Outlining Your Page

1. Draw a long rectangle, like the one in the diagram to the right. This will act as your page "boundaries."
2. Begin prioritizing information down the page. Use lines to divide content into "sections." Make note of what kind of content will be needed for each section – ie. headline, paragraph, bullet points, photo, icons.
3. Think about the page as if it were live. Where would you want someone to click to learn more? Where are you offering them opportunities to convert?
4. You're finished outlining when your rectangle is filled and you have sketched out all of the information you want included on this page.

### ➔ OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Outlining page flow is no time to be a perfectionist. Sketches should be loose – only your eyes will ever see these beauties!





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MILE MARKER 6

## WRITING FOR THE WEB

TIME COMMITMENT // 2-3 hours

Page 7 of this Content Strategy Guide and we're **finally** talking about writing for your website! There's so much trail to blaze – but if you can brave the wilderness with us a little longer, we'll have you copywriting like the pro you are in no time.

There are a few guiding principals we like to keep in mind when we're writing, whether it's for print, web, or anything in between:

### → RULES FOR WRITING

#### GUIDING PRINCIPALS

- **Always consider your audience:** It seems obvious, but you are writing for them – not yourself.
- **Choose clarity over cleverness:** Being witty or funny means nothing if your message isn't clearly understood.
- **Avoid jargon and acronyms:** You and your team may understand them, but your audience likely doesn't. Help them feel confident and safe.
- **Read your writing out loud:** Does your writing sound natural, or like a research paper?
- **Keep. It. Simple. Sugar:** Writing is one place where less truly is more. Marketing copy should be written at a 3rd or 4th grade level, so keep those sentences short, simple and to the point.
- **Be kind to yourself:** Writing your entire organization's website is a tall task. Start with a Shitty-First-Draft (SFD) and then edit.



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MILE MARKER 7

## CONTENT MAPPING

TIME COMMITMENT // 1-2 hours

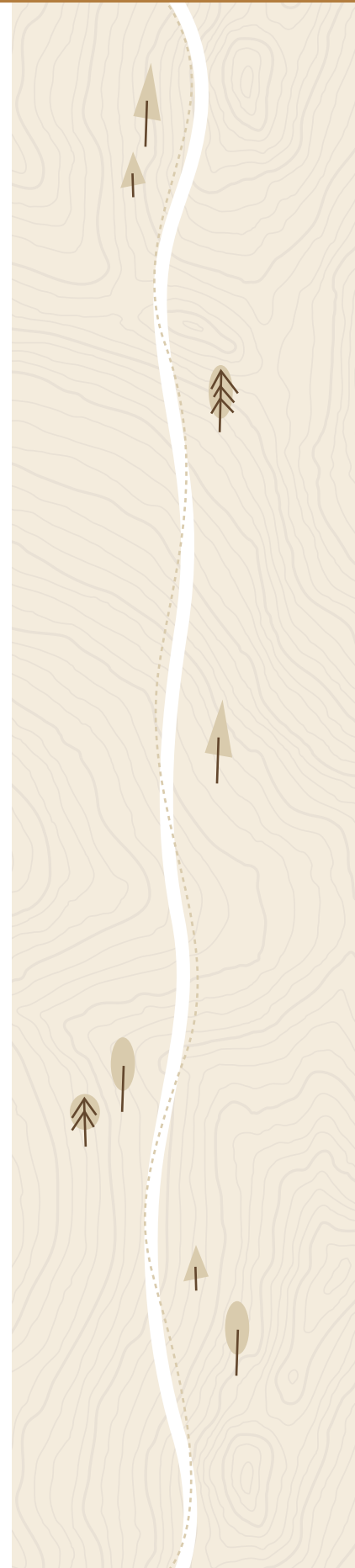
Your brand's voice is the result of your personality. And just like your individual personality doesn't change from day-to-day, neither should your voice. That being said, how you talk to your hair dresser may differ from how you talk to your accountant. The words you use in a business meeting might be a little different than the one's you use while out at a restaurant with friends.

**This is called your tone.**

It changes based on who you're talking to, where you're talking, and how your audience is feeling. The same goes for your brand's tone. The tone you take should change if you're copywriting for a 404 page versus a blog post.

Content Mapping helps you outline the tone you want to take with your audience at exactly the right time.

TYPE OF CONTENT	HOW YOUR AUDIENCE IS FEELING	THE TONE YOU SHOULD TAKE
404 error	confused, frustrated	helpful, supportive
blog post	intrigued, open	casual, inviting
contact info	eager, maybe nervous	clear, confident



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MILE MARKER 8

## ONGOING CONTENT

TIME COMMITMENT // xx hours

A great website is never finished.

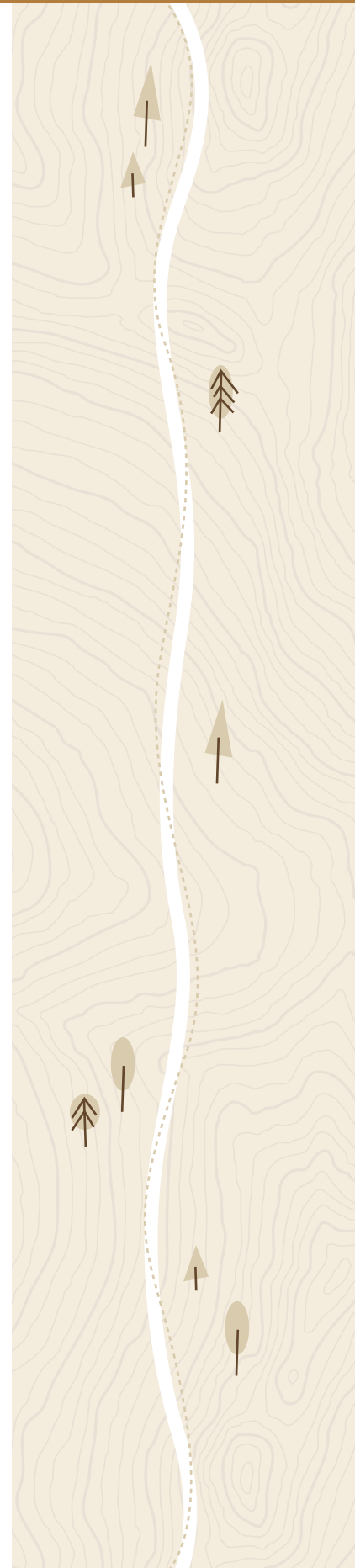
If you are using your website as an ongoing marketing tool, then it needs the same care and feeding you would spend on the rest of your marketing efforts.

Blogs, news and press releases are great ways to keep your audience engaged and returning to your site. And while some pages like your Homepage or About Us page may not change often, it's important to still keep that content fresh and relevant.

➔ GET ORGANIZED

### KEEP A CALENDAR

Content Calendars are great for staying on top of your writing and in contact with your audiences. Develop a calendar to remind yourself when you need to audit, update or post relevant information. This calendar can be used for social media, your website and email marketing.



# COPYWRITING YOUR WEBSITE

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LOOK AT YOU, YOU TRAIL BLAZER!

## TIME TO CELEBRATE

---

You just copywrote your entire site!

Oh, what's that on your shoulder? I think you need to brush it off.

In our experience, now is a great time to ask for a raise. You've single-handedly written the content for your entire website, and you have a beautiful, user-friendly marketing machine of a site to show for it. Just imagine the wild success your business is going to see because of you.

Lean into that.

And cheers from the Rangers!

