

“Print vs. Web” tip sheet

This document was compiled from original material created by Monica Allard Cox (RI); the Sea Grant Communicators 2002 Webmasters “Print vs. Web” panel at Baton Rouge (David Gordon, WA; Carol Kaynor, AK; Pauli Fitzgerald, VA; Patty Snow, SC; and moderated by Melissa O’Neill, WA); the panel notes of Carol Kaynor (AK); and selected portions of Amy Painter’s document “Writing for the Web.”

This tip sheet was created as a handy reference for communicators and non-communicators alike to assist them with decisions when creating products for print and/or the Web. Take advantage of each medium’s differences in order to complement (not mirror) one another.

“How do you decide, print or Web, or both?”

The same fundamental questions apply to both print and Web products:

- What is the purpose of this product?
- Who is the audience?
- What is the level of effort needed to create this product?
- How will the product be promoted?

“Just because you can, doesn’t mean you should.”

When posed with the question “Can we place this on the Web?” a more important consideration comes to mind...is it a good decision? The objectives and intent of the audiences differ. **Example:** Consider the visual, structural, and content differences between a printed newspaper and their online version.

Considerations for Web:

- How often will updates be necessary?
- Will printed pieces accompany the Web material?
- Reformatting and editing text will be necessary before posting on Web (*50% less content*)
- Web sites are dynamically structured with an interactive experience for the user
- Break up long documents into smaller chunks
- Users may enter the site at any page
- Each page should stand alone with a consistent navigation system
- Web pages can be used as an archive
- Depending on browsers, platform, etc., users will view your Web pages differently
- Web pages can be updated more easily and are less costly than re-printing
(*Keep in mind Web sites are never free: labor costs associated with editors, designers, programmers, and IT folks need to be considered.*)
- Web sites are never “finished” and are constantly evolving
- Can adjust/increase the font size with browsers for easier viewing

Considerations for print:

- All print material will be viewed consistently
- Printed products are tangible and portable (*a perceived value or quality*)
- Length of shelf-life of material
- Do you have time for the print production process?
- Users are very familiar with the format and flow of printed material
- Printed materials are usually more expensive to produce/revise
- Printed pieces can be used together to create a package of collateral materials

Resources: <http://www.useit.com/papers/webwriting/>
http://www.berkeley.edu/standards/design.print_vs_web.html
<http://www.sun.com/980713/webwriting/>
<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/990124.html>