



✘ When you're creating content, is there any difference between standard websites and mobile? The answer is a resounding 'yes', and the reason is size. If you're reading something on a laptop or PC, or even on a tablet, you can get a lot more content onto a page. If you're reading it on a mobile, and you want to be able to read it easily, there isn't very much room. An article is going to take a while to scroll through on a mobile. Unless it's really compelling, the chances are that you will have lost interest by the end.

Jakob Nielsen of the [Nielsen Norman Group](#), which provides evidence-based user experience research, noted as far back as 2011 that people use mobile sites for two reasons: to find information, and to kill time. The paradox is that they may well be browsing to occupy time, but they still want to maximise their opportunity and find interesting stuff quickly.

What's more, you have a lot of choice about what you read on your mobile. With plenty of alternatives around, why would you waste time on an article that's difficult to read, or too long? You can just go somewhere else and find something more interesting, whether an article or a funny cat picture. This is particularly an issue for intranet sites, which by their very nature tend to contain content that people need to know, but don't find interesting, and which were often developed back in the days when employees didn't have competing internet access, but it's worth remembering for any content. It leads to some quite different writing styles for mobile, and goes some way to explaining why organisations develop different content for mobile sites.

Some practical ideas for mobile communication

Fortunately, there is plenty of advice about how to write for mobile, including practical tips. We've collected the best from Jonathan Phillips, responsible for 'digital stuff' at CocaCola Enterprises, Martin Wake, the content director of [Sticky Content](#), and Jakob Nielsen from the Nielsen Norman Group.

1) Tell a story

We've written before about the importance of [putting a story around your message](#). For mobile, however, the key take-home is slightly different: content should make your readers care. It isn't enough just to tell a story, your audience also needs to care enough to read on. And as with any thought leadership content, you do need to include a call to action: something the reader is going to do as a result of your article.

2) Make it short and snappy



Mobile users often have very specific needs. Speed is likely to be one of their key desires, so don't waste their time on content that they don't want, or verbose copy that doesn't get to the point. More than about two pages to scroll through on a mobile, and people are less interested. Three or four pages, and they won't bother. The key rule of mobile should be 'If in doubt, leave it out'.

3) Keep it simple

Mobile content also has to be easy to read: no jargon, fewer links, fewer pictures. Yes, this is contrary to the usual advice on content, but it's crucial for mobile. Another useful tip if you do need links is to remember that mobile users are likely to be using a touchscreen: you need to leave enough room between links to make them clearly distinguishable.

4) Refine it further

It is always possible to improve your content, and it is always worth taking the time to tighten your text. For example, if you are crafting a beautiful tweet, you want people to retweet it. If possible, therefore, it's best to leave them space to add a comment to their followers. So you need to cut it down beyond even the Twitter limits. It often takes longer to write something short than to write something longer, but it's worth taking that extra time to get it right if it means the message is read more often and by more people.

5) Aim for comprehension

Cut out any wordplay at all, and aim for instant understanding

Simple rules

It's clear that there are different rules for writing for mobile than for websites. You can, of course, write your content in a way that enables 'chunking', cutting out particular chunks for the mobile site. Alternatively, you can tailor it. But whatever you do, don't just serve up the same content and expect to get results.

Image credit: Morning Trio, Reflected by [William Miller](#)