

Essential Writing Guidelines for Just Focus

1. **700 word limit for articles** (If you think the article needs to be more than this, discuss it with the JF coordinator. Is your article too broad? Could it be divided into two articles?)
2. **20 words max in a sentence**
3. **Write in Word** documents and send as an email attachment (If you just email it we will have to spend hours reformatting and we're busy enough thanks!)
4. **Put all your main points in the first paragraph**
5. **Provide links to relevant sites and also for where you got your info from**
6. **Provide photos/art/graphics to go with your article** (that we are legally allowed to use, not just grabbed from someone else's site) – this is not compulsory but is very helpful!
7. **Use your keywords often – especially in headings** (this means that you will score higher in search engines and so will be read more)
8. **Keep your Focus** (Remember what Just Focus is about. It is a site with a global focus but for young people in New Zealand. That means when you write you need to write about topics that are not only about this country and you also need to say how it is relevant to us here in NZ)
9. **Have respect for others – criticise ideas not people and be aware of the use stereotypes and generalisations**
10. **Follow the model:**

AWARENESS	Provide some info on the issue – back up your statements with examples or statistics where possible (and reference these)
ANALYSIS	Look a bit deeper – why is what is happening? What bigger global process/es is it attached to? What impact does it have on us here in NZ?
ACTION	So now I know about it, what can I do about it? Provide some examples of places people can go for more info or ways they can do even small things in their own community.

A Step-By-Step Guide for Working with *Just Focus*

1. **Think** about the topic. What do you want to research? What questions do you have about the issue? What would your (slightly less well-informed) mates need to know? How does it relate to us in NZ? Why/how has the issue come about? What can young people here do to take action?
2. **EMAIL US** the title so we can keep a track of it and set some deadlines – usually something like:
 - Week 1 – title and plan
 - Week 2 – research and first draft
 - Week 3 - editing / rewriting and finished!
3. Write a **plan** - what will go in each paragraph? (Send it to us if you like)
4. Write a **first draft** – re-read it to check for typos and that it makes sense (get a mate to read it?) then mail it to us for **editing and comments**
5. Write the **final draft** and mail it to us...
6. We do the final edit and **post it onto the site!**

General Guidelines for Writing for the Web

Key Points:

- People have a much **shorter attention span** for reading on the Internet.
- 80% of people **don't actually read** on the Web - they **scan** the pages, picking out the information they want
- Text must be short and **to the point**

Why?

- Reading from computer screens is tiring and 25% slower than paper
- The Web is user-driven. Users want to be active not passive consumers
- Each page competes with millions of others – which are mostly not useful.
- People do not read a page in the hope that it has potential...

Keep Your Writing Concise:

- Aim for writing 50% less text than you would on paper
- Stick closely to your topic
- Give examples, background information etc. in hyperlinks to other pages
- Use simple sentence structures

Aim for Objectivity:

- State nothing as a fact without presenting evidence and giving references
- Don't boast, exaggerate or self-congratulate
- Present facts/issues clearly and users will decide for themselves what is useful – show don't tell

Help People Find What They Need Easily:

- Break text into **short sections**, with breaks in between
- Use **clear headings** (not clever ones) to show what a section contains
- **Highlight** key information carrying words, but not whole sentences
- Use bulleted and numbered **lists** - bulleted when the order of the list is not important, numbered when it is - most important first
- Limit each paragraph to **one idea** and state what it is in the **first sentence**
- Split long information into multiple pages according to subject (e.g. 2 articles)

Immediately involve your audience:

Users look at the **first part** of an article to decide if they want to read it. Therefore it is important to put the most important information first. If a reader is interested s/he can keep on scrolling down or connecting through hyperlinks until s/he finishes reading the text.

Conclusions come first:

- Users need to know **conclusions first**, not last.
- An **academic/research style does not work** on the Internet. (Most academic /research papers are written to a plan of giving a problem statement, elaborating on the context, reviewing prior work, considering different options and discussing methodologies. Finally they present results and conclusions. It takes a long time to reach the conclusions. Using this approach on the Internet is **not effective**.)

Studies show that Web users:

- want instant gratification
- do not want to guess what is in a paper
- do not read something that might not be useful.
- want information to be immediately available – if it isn't they click away to something else.

According to their interest in the subject, readers can continue onwards for as much information as they want but they know the most important parts of an article from the start.

Avoid:

- Narrative (storytelling) writing style; not for the way users read online
- Superlatives and vague claims

Write in the Active Voice:

Cut out the passive voice ("One thing of which I have become aware..." becomes "I'm aware of...").

Finally...These are GUIDELINES. Don't stress yourself over keeping to them all absolutely 100%, but they are designed to help you to write the most effective article. Feel free to ask for help and don't be shy about sending us your stuff **AND HAVE FUN!!!**