



How to structure content for eHealthireland.ie

When deciding on the content you want for your web page, consider the user in the structure of the page. How do people move through your content and where do they need to go next? Below are some points for you to consider. Each section has a brief description which should assist you with your content submission.

Put the most important information first

Use the 'inverted pyramid' model. Start with the content that is most important to your audience, and then provide additional details.

'Front-load' copy (especially headings, links, bullets, and captions) – put the most important information first.

Make it easy to scan

People don't read content online – they scan it. That means they don't read top to bottom, or even from word to word. They will scan in an F-shape, looking for something relevant to grab their attention. So, we structure content to help people scan.

Think about the structure of content from the point of view of someone who's scanning it quickly. They are checking to see if this is the right page for them. What are the signposts they are likely to see?

The most attention-grabbing structural elements are:

- headings and sub-heads
- bulleted lists
- images and captions
- links

Plain English

Everything we publish must be written in plain English. Plain English is a style of writing and presenting information that helps the reader to understand it the first time they read it.

To do this, we:

- choose short, simple words
- write short, clear sentences – 20 words maximum
- explain technical terms
- don't use jargon

Research shows that everyone prefers plain English, no matter their level of education or reading ability.



Check content is easy to use and understand

We use 'readability' tests as one measure of how easy it is to understand our content. 'Readability' tests check written content to predict what level of 'reading age' (level of educational reading ability) someone will need to understand our content.

We do this in:

- [the Hemingway app](#)
- [Microsoft Word](#)
- [Readable](#)

As a rule of thumb, aim for a reading age of about 9. For technical medical and professional content, aim for 12.

Jargon

People don't understand jargon. It's often vague and risks misinterpretation. People don't trust it. It's easy for jargon to sneak into copy, particularly if you know your subject well.

Technical terms

Technical terms are not jargon. It's fine to use them where necessary – just explain what they mean the first time you use them.

Writing for specialists

Plain English is for everyone.

A common argument is that if you're writing for a specialist audience, you don't need to use plain English. But plain English is better for everyone.

[HSE Digital Communications Content Principles can be found here](#)