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Nielsen's Example

- ✓ **Original text:** Narrative text with unneeded details (for tourists) and “marketese” (61 words)

Nebraska is filled with internationally recognized attractions that draw large crowds of people every year, without fail. In 1996, some of the most popular places were Fort Robinson State Park (355,000 visitors), Scotts Bluff National Monument (132,166), Arbor Lodge State Historical Park & Museum (100,000), Carhenge (86,598), Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer (60,002), and Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park (28,446).

- ✓ **Most successful text:** Eliminates unnecessary detail; text is more scannable in a bulleted list; “marketese” is removed (38 words)

In 1996, six of the most-visited places in Nebraska were:

- Fort Robinson State Park
- Scotts Bluff National Monument
- Arbor Lodge State Historical Park & Museum
- Carhenge
- Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer
- Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park

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Example 1: Reducing Word Count

- ✓ **Original:** Wordy “legalese” in one long paragraph (103 words)

The information contained in this Web site is based on the observation of Colorado Department of Transportation employees and others and represents the general road and weather conditions at the time of the observation. Please note that some time may have passed since the observation was made and conditions may have changed. It is not intended that this information be used as the sole basis for travel decisions. During inclement weather, it is advisable that travel be delayed until CDOT has had an opportunity to perform any necessary maintenance activities. Always drive at speeds reasonable in relation to the condition of the highway.

- ✓ **Optimized for online:** Eliminates unnecessary words; uses short sentences & paragraphs (61 words)

Information on road and weather conditions is based on the observation of Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) employees and others.

Road conditions might have changed since these observations were made. Do not use this information as the sole basis for travel decisions.

During inclement weather, delay travel until CDOT has completed any maintenance. Always drive at speeds reasonable for road conditions.

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### Example 2: Reducing Word Count

- ✓ **Original:** Wastes words referring to the mechanism of the Web (34 words)

Are you ready to improve your personal health and well-being? Just click on one of the following highlighted articles or click on a subchannel from the menu on the left of your screen.

- ✓ **Optimized for online:** Does not refer to the mechanism of the Web (23 words)

Are you ready to improve your personal health and well-being? Choose:

- A highlighted article
- A topic from the menu on the left

- ✓ **Better yet:** Don't give any instructions on how to choose a topic. Site navigation should be so obvious and simple that instructions are unnecessary.

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### Example 3: Making Text More Scannable

- ✓ **Original:** Important information is buried in narrative text (146 words)

Nielsen states that Web users do not read long blocks of text carefully or thoroughly. "Screen resolution is too low, too coarse, so the letters don't feel smooth to the eye," he says. "That slows down the eye when it tries to read the text."

In fact, studies show that reading from a screen is about 30% slower than reading from paper. Since screens are smaller, grainier, less portable, and more glaring than hardcopy, reading online also can be less convenient and cause eyestrain. Readers often report that they find online reading unpleasant. Moreover, processing text online requires spatial and relational processing abilities. Thus, designers need to consider rhetorical issues such as purpose and audience differently than they would for conventional texts. Often, documents that were never designed for the screen are simply dumped online. This common pitfall can make documents unreadable and inaccessible for readers.

- ✓ **Optimized for online:** Improves scannability using a bulleted list and bold for list items (134 words)

Studies show that reading from a screen is about 30% slower than reading from paper. Reasons include:

- **Screen resolution is lower than in printed material.**

Nielsen states, "Screen resolution is too low, too coarse, so the letters don't feel smooth to the eye." As a result, Web users do not read long blocks of text carefully or thoroughly.

- **Screen reading causes eyestrain.**

Since screens are smaller, grainier, less portable, and more glaring than hardcopy, readers often find reading online inconvenient and unpleasant.

- **Processing text online requires spatial and relational processing abilities.**

Thus, designers need to consider rhetorical issues such as purpose and audience differently than they would for conventional texts.

- **Often, documents that were never designed for the screen are simply dumped online.**

This common pitfall can make documents unreadable and inaccessible to readers.

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**Example 4: Making Link Text More Scannable**

- ✓ **Original:** Important information is buried in narrative text; link text refers to the mechanism of the Web (60 words)

There will be a moderated online chat on Writing for the Web on Thursday, June 21, at 11:00 a.m. Mountain Daylight Time. The guests are Amy Gahrn, editor of *Contentious*, a Web-zine for online writers and editors, and Crawford Kilian, author of the book, *Writing for the Web* (Self-Counsel Press). To join the chat, [click here](#).

- ✓ **Optimized for online:** Self-explanatory link text; use of bold and list aid scannability (50 words)

Join the [online chat](#) on **Writing for the Web** on Thursday, June 21, at 11:00 a.m. Mountain Daylight Time. The guests are:

- **Amy Gahrn**, editor of *Contentious*, a Web-zine for online writers and editors
- **Crawford Kilian**, author of the book, *Writing for the Web* (Self-Counsel Press)

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**Example 5: Making Text More Scannable**

- ✓ **Original:** Information is buried in narrative text (123 words)

You can combine both high-level and low-level organizational strategies in the same online document. You can use a hierarchy, which organizes content at the section level, for a large number of layered topics that are hyperlinked. To organize text at the paragraph and section level, you can use an inverted pyramid. Tables also typically organize content at the paragraph level. However, you should only use them when each topic contains the same subtopics. For high-level overviews that show how topics or groups of tasks or procedures are related, you can use a flow diagram. For task-oriented users who are not interested in overview information but want quick access to step-by-step instructions, you can organize content by task.

✓ **Optimized for online:** Content in a bulleted list; use of bold also aids scannability (114 words)

You can combine the following high-level and low-level organizational strategies in the same online document:

- **Hierarchy** – Use for a large number of layered topics that are hyperlinked. This structure organizes content at the section level.
- **Inverted pyramid** – Use for text within individual sections. This structure organizes content at the paragraph and section level.
- **Table** – Use when each topic contains the same subtopics. This structure typically organizes content at the paragraph level.
- **Flow diagram** – Use for high-level overviews to show how topics or groups of tasks or procedures are related.
- **Task** – Use for task-oriented users who are not interested in overview information but want quick access to step-by-step instructions.

✓ **Optimized for online:** Improves scannability even more by presenting content in a two-column table (109 words)

The following table shows high-level and low-level organizational strategies that you can combine in an online document.

<b>Structure</b>	<b>When to Use</b>
Hierarchy	For a large number of layered topics that are hyperlinked. Organizes content at the section level.
Inverted pyramid	For text within individual sections. Organizes content at the paragraph and section level.
Table	When each topic contains the same subtopics. Typically organizes content at the paragraph level.
Flow diagram	For high-level overviews to show how topics or groups of tasks or procedures are related.
Task	For task-oriented users who are not interested in overview information but want quick access to step-by-step instructions.