



Dear Reader,

As a new year starts, it's time to tell last year's buzzwords that they have worn out their welcome.

Wishing you a happy, prosperous 2006!



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Three Simple Ways to Improve Your Web Writing

1. **Cut it in half.** If web users don't quickly see what they're looking for, they move on. So keep it short. Web documents should be no more than half as long as their print equivalents. Cut out anything readers don't need and ensure the rest is in simple, direct language. Use no more than 6-8 lines per paragraph and 17-20 words per sentence.
2. **Break it up.** Don't put readers off with a single, unbroken mass of text filling the screen. Break your text into chunks. Have one idea per paragraph. Start with the point then give the details. Use headings and subheadings as well as bullets and numbered lists. Emphasize key words.
3. **Help readers read.** It takes 25% longer to read from a monitor than from the printed page. Make web text more legible by using sans serif fonts such as Arial or Verdana (this newsletter and the EC Writing site use Arial). Reserve other fonts only for special situations such as headings and logos. Avoid writing text in all-caps. It takes up 30% more space and slows reading by a further 15%.

Buzz Off : *Low-hanging fruit*

In business the expression "low-hanging fruit" refers to the goals or opportunities that are within easy reach. Literally speaking, this is inadvisable, as low-hanging fruit actually ripens last and should be picked later. However, as a cliché, it's overripe.

Instead of "picking the low-hanging fruit", reach for one of the following:

- "Seek out easy new business opportunities."
- "Start with simple problems that have effective solutions."
- "Focus on excellent short-term opportunities."

Thanks to subscriber Deb Gaines for nominating this month's buzzword.

Is there a buzzword you would like to banish? Send your suggestion to writer@ecwriting.com, then look for your buzzword and name in an upcoming issue.

Parting Words

"When you write, try to leave out all the parts readers skip."

– Elmore Leonard, novelist and screenwriter