

# Writing for URMC Web Sites

University of Rochester Medical Center Web Services  
<http://www.urmc.edu/web-services/>  
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## Purpose of this Document

This document is written for the UPMC web author who is developing content for a research or education web site on [www.upmc.edu](http://www.upmc.edu). Our goal is to help you:

- Focus the scope of your content for your audience
- Organize the content in a meaningful way
- Present the content in the way your audience will best be able to use it.
- Optimize the content to improve relevance in search engines

The result should be streamlined content that quickly delivers your message to your audience.

## Focus the Scope

Begin to scope your project by doing the following.

- **Talk to various members of your audience.** What do they need most? What are their secondary needs? The goals of your site should be built around the needs of your audience.
- **Consider how your users use the web.** How do they think? What vocabulary do they commonly use?
- **Identify those things about your department or program that are unique or put you at a competitive advantage.** Highlight those features up front.
- **Avoid "fluff."** Long, folksy introductions to content distract the user from the main message. The web is not print, and people do not use it for leisurely reading. In addition, material that is not relevant to the page title (as indicated in the main heading on the page), may detract from search engine rankings. Ideally you should keep your content focused on the subject of the page.
- **Identify existing content.** Before writing an essay on the benefits of living in Rochester or developing an online handbook with all the details of parking at the Medical Center, consider that web pages for these items already exist. A little preliminary research can save you hours of work. Web Services can also help identify existing content so you can focus on the "meat" of your site.

## Organize your Content

Your users' primary and secondary needs should determine your site's navigation. Many URM C departments will have content for patients, researchers, and students. Each of these audiences will have key, but very different, needs. A patient will want to know location information, hours of operation, and types of services provided, for example. A researcher will want to know about lab facilities and available faculty positions. Students will want information about residencies and fellowships or other graduate opportunities. Look to the sites below for examples of how content can be organized around these three main audiences.

- [Department of Surgery](#)
- [James P. Wilmot Cancer Center](#)

Consistency in organization across the URM C web will help all our customers find what they need.

## Present your Content

**Be brief.** Use short words instead of long ones ("ask" vs. "inquire", "need" vs. "necessitate"). Use active verbs, rather than passive ones ("We determined that..." instead of "It has been determined that..."; "We need..." instead of "There is a need for ...").

**Focus the user on key points.** Use bulleted lists, headings, tables, paragraph, and pull-quote styles (see our [Style Guide](#) for more information).

**Avoid long, wordy pages.** Use subnavigation and break pages into shorter pages if necessary.

# Optimize Content for Search Engines

## Keep Content Relevant

To improve search engine ranking, focus the user on key points using keywords (terms we want to be ranked for in search engines) as much as possible in the following.

- The page title (Title tag in HTML)
- The first order heading (H1 in HTML)
- The opening sentences of your page

Each page should stay focused on these keywords, with a limit of 2-3 key phrases per page. Subheadings should be relevant to the main page title and not introduce a new topic. Keywords that are topically different (e.g., "knee replacement" and "physical therapy") should be on separate pages.

A site home page should also mention geographic location to improve search results should a user be looking for a particular service in the Rochester, NY area.

Internal links within the content of a page should also be kept relevant by describing the page that is linked, using keywords. Link text such as "Learn more" or "Click here" do not describe the content of the page that is linked, and are therefore not considered relevant by search engines.

*Bad Example:*

"Click [this link](#) to learn more about our program."

*Good Example:*

"Our [graduate education program in the biomedical sciences](#) is known for its high quality curriculum."

## Update Content Regularly

Web authors need to commit to regular review and updates of their web content. Content that is frequently updated improves the reputation of a site, and therefore its ranking in search engines.

## Final Thoughts

Always keep the goals of your site close at hand while composing your content. Your goals should be built around the needs of your audience.

Remember how your users think, what they will be looking for. Keep it simple and to the point. You will end up with a much more valuable site that your users will actually use.