

Tips for writing engaging content

Good written content:

1 Speaks to a target audience

Know your audience and adapt your language to them and give them something worth reading to the end. At Impact on Urban Health, our main audiences are professionals in health, the built environment, policy-makers and other foundations. Your tone should reflect your audiences, but still avoid jargon and favour plain English.

2 Remembers audiences are still people

They are, like anyone else, attracted to interesting ideas explained simply, and more likely to connect with other people - not just facts and logic. They respond better to things they can picture for instance by using examples and real stories.

3 Is short, structured and to the point

Blog posts and news stories should be easily digestible during a coffee break. About 500-600 words is a good rule of thumb. Don't try to cover everything - think of one or two main points you want to make and build a strong argument around them. Use a structure you're comfortable with (e.g. intro - detail - conclusion) and don't be shy to use lists and bullet points where helpful.

4 Is quick and easy to read

Make posts easy to skim by cutting content up into sections. Most people reading this will simply skim the bolded description for each point and read the explanations for the points they don't understand. Keep sentences to 20-25 words max and mix them up with shorter ones. This gives a sense of pace. It makes your copy more interesting.

5 Says something useful

It's okay to write a blog post about a quick thought, but make sure it's a whole thought, not half of one and half of another. Your writing should always pass the 'so what?' test - why should your audience care?

6 Shows, and not just tells

Don't tell readers that something is great; give them examples, help them picture it and arrive at that conclusion by themselves.

7 Has a compelling title and lead paragraph

Make your readers want to read your post right away. But don't promise something with your title and intro that you don't deliver.

8 Is SEO optimised

SEO stands for Search Engine Optimisation. Put simply, it's the rules and algorithms that tell Google where to rank content when someone does a search. Ranking is affected by many things. One of them is how you incorporate search keywords in a post. So, especially with titles, you need to strike a balance between it being catchy and it including keywords. For example, if your blog piece is about children's health in London, weave in those very words in the title.

9 Connects to other content

Posts are stronger if they show how they fit with other work. Make room in your copy to mention connections and add links to other places on your website or elsewhere.

10 Includes a call to action

Even if it's just a call to comment, go somewhere else on the website to find out more or connect on LinkedIn, blog posts should end with something that moves readers to a next step.

11 Doesn't have to be a work of art

You probably won't win a Pulitzer Prize and that's okay. As long as your posts are useful, readers will come back for more.