UNIT STRUCTURE

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6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- define cyber media,
- enumerate the characteristics of cyber media,
- distinguish between cyber content and print content,
- distinguish between the writing style for print and cyber media,
- learn the basic principles of writing for cyber media.

6.2 INTRODUCTION

In this fast changing media scenario, cyber media is an ever expanding medium. Every organisation and almost every individual nowadays has an online presence. You will come across websites that cater to every sector, every branch of human knowledge and every business enterprise. The online or cyber world is not merely a storehouse of information or knowledge but it has now become the most popular medium of expressing views, advertising products and maintaining social contacts.

In such a scenario, web or cyber writing has also become a booming enterprise. With so many websites in the cyber world, the demand for

with other web pages. These linked web pages may be available in that website itself or in any other website on the World Wide Web. This is called hypertextuality and it is one of the major characteristics of cyber media.

- **Interactivity:** Cyber media is an interactive media. Any and every website in the World Wide Web has options for readers to interact with the cyber writers. Readers of online content can not only give their views but also receive their replies from the writer in no time. There is a steady flow of information between the sender and the receiver.

- **Multimedia:** Use of multimedia is another important feature of online media. Web content can be supplemented by pictures, graphics, audio streams and video footage.

- **No space/time limitations:** Web or cyber media is accessible 24 hours a day. A web page on a publicly available web server can be accessed by anyone through the Internet anytime. This means that web works are virtually everywhere at any time, so it's not time bound. And unlike other media which need to be physically moved from one place to the other, web content flows through web space on the network.

6.3.2 Difference between cyber content and print content

Much like the difference between the mediums—cyber and print—the content for both the mediums differ too. A person who can write for the print medium may not be able to do so for the web. There are several distinct features which distinguish web content from print content. The difference may not seem too strong but to achieve good results, each media requires a distinct content style. Some of these distinct differences are:

- A story on the web requires to be more comprehensive

prepare the content for this media and present it before the user. But online content is completely based on user needs. The user can ruthlessly reject any content which is not what he desires. They will accept only that which they require by rejecting whatever else is being pushed.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS-A

1. What is cyber media?

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2. Cyber Media has no space/time limitations. Explain in brief.

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3. Why does cyber content need to be more informative than print content?

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6.4 HOW TO WRITE FOR CYBER MEDIA

As discussed in the previous section, cyber content varies from print content in many ways. Therefore, it can be said that the writing for web media is also very different from writing for magazines or newspapers. Web writers need to take into consideration several factors while writing for web and all this factors are based on what kind of a content cyber media demands.

Effective copies for cyber media needs to be take the following characteristics into account:

6.4.1 Cyber writing style and format

While writing for the web, certain stylistic and formatting guidelines need to be followed to create a perfect copy for the web. These guidelines are:

- Write in inverse pyramid style by giving the most important information in the first paragraph. Elaborate later but don't forget to reinstate the main point in the last paragraph again.
- Use active voice and strong verbs to make your story sound important and immediate.
- Do not use unnecessary words. Make sure that every word counts. Reread the story after you have written it and delete the unnecessary words. Be as precise as possible.
- Write in third person. Avoid superlatives and exclamation points. They'll make your story less credible.
- Keep the paragraphs short and provide ample space between them. This helps online readability and keeps the readers' attention.
- Keep the headlines short. If you want to put more information into the headline use a sub heading.
- Most websites demand a small introduction to your story. Keep it four sentences or less and these lines may help you get a reader or get him off the site. So make sure you use the right words to intrigue the reader but don't give away the story.
- Take necessary steps to eliminate mistakes. Check and cross check your story before uploading it on the site. Write out the story on a word document first to eliminate any typing errors. Even a wrong spelling will make you lose your credibility.
- The writing style should be conversational to give it a personal edge. A casual sense of writing makes your story user friendly and easier to read.

about communal riots then make sure that you use words like 'religion', 'riot', 'Hindu', 'Muslim' etc. So, when an internet user uses a search engine to look for a story on communal riots he will definitely use these terms and will be directed to your story.

- Use the keyword in the first paragraph itself and sprinkle it all across the story. It may be difficult to not sound repetitive but you have to make your point obvious.
- Do not push your product. Although you wish to sell your idea or product, do not let that become evident in your writing. Your aim should be to inform not persuade. The best way to do so is to mention the problem and then to put up your idea as the solution for the problem.
- Use personal stories as references. Mention people and real life incidents. Readers love to read human interest stories and it also authenticates your story.
- Avoid using metaphors or technical jargon or figures of speech. In other words, avoid writing like a typical author with fancy words and poetic bent. If you work as a technical writer then you would need to use technical jargon but that's alright because technical websites have users who understand those terms.
- Sarcasm and irony should be used sparsely and whenever you do wish to get sarcastic or witty mention it.
- If you wish to give in your own opinions say so and when you are stating facts present the source.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS - B

1. Why is it important to know the audience while writing cyber content?

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- Use decimals and not fractions. For numbers below 1, use 0 befor decimal. Eg: 0.98. To describe money in rupees or millions use only one decimal place. Eg: Rs 5.2 crore.
- Avoid using the term dot-com. Instead rephrase the sentence to use the word Internet or Internet company.
- Avoid using emoticons.
- Avoid using hyphens. Use them between complex phrases to reduce ambiguity.
- Do not use the symbols for inches and feet. Spell them out. Eg: a ten-foot bar.
- Also spell out the following: miles, pages, pounds, yards.
- Abbreviations can be used for the following

Centimetre	Cm
Dots per inch	Dpi
Gigabyte	Gb
Gigahertz	Ghz
Hertz	Hz
Kilobit	Kb
Kilobyte	KB
Mega byte	Mb
Miles per hour	Mph
Mili metre	Mm

- One million equals to 10,00,000 and can be abbreviated as M. Eg: He won $10M in lottery.
- A Billion equals to 1,00,00,00,000 and it can be written as B.
- Avoid using Mr / Ms / Mrs unless an article has one or more individuals with the same surname.
- While writing numbers spell out the numbers from 0 to 9. From 10 onwards write the digits.
- Do not use a dash to describe a range, use ‘to’. Eg: The meeting will be attended by 30 to 35 people.

can be linked to several other pages, which have similar stories, in other websites.

- Cyber media is interactive because it enables immediate and constant interaction between the web users. The interaction maybe between the writer and the readers and even among readers.
- Content in cyber media is very often supplemented by multimedia like video footage, sound streams, pictures, etc. This is only possible in web media content.
- Cyber media content is available round the clock. If you have access to the Internet you can access any website any time of the day. Also cyber media content need be physically carried from one place to another like other media. It travels through the virtual web network.
- Cyber media content varies from print media content in several ways.
- Web stories are more specific while print stories can be narrative and detailed.
- Stories for print media uses well constructed sentences but cyber media stories should have short sentences.
- The content is most traditional media forms like print, TV or Radio is author drive. But web media content is user driven. It is the user or web reader who decides what he wants to read or see. Accordingly web makers prepare the content.
- There are certain characteristics of good web copy. They are:
    i. Web copies need to be short and simple.
    ii. Long copies need to be organised well with appropriate breaks through subheads and paragraphs.
    iii. The writing style needs to be lively even if the content is more informative.
    iv. Before writing for the web one should know one's readers. The target readership should be ascertained and the stories should concentrate on their needs.

fore, they are catering to only a niche clientele. And if they wish to sustain those users they need to know the readers well enough. It is not possible to please every web user. So it is essential to please only those users who are the target group. Know these users, try to figure out what information they might seek and provide that. It will guarantee a regular flow of loyal users to the site.

2. A conversational style of writing helps to attract readers to a story. Web users generally are always in a hurry. So in order to keep them glued to the story it is essential to write it out in a lively and interactive way. Even though it's just information, the style of writing needs to be witty. It is user friendly.

3. Fill in the blanks:

   i. sarcasm
   ii. dividing
   iii. italicize
   iv. quotes
   v. credible



6.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Cyber copies need to be short and simple. Elucidate.
2. Discuss the importance of cyber media in context to the present times.
3. Web users are fickle minded. Discuss.
4. Write five regular stylistic conventions that web writers must stick to.
5. Owing to the onslaught of websites and the demand for online writers, print media is staring down the barrel. Yes or no? And why?

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