Easy Fixes to Improve Your Editorial Website

ASG Editorial

EDITING & PROOFREADING SERVICES

This booklet began life as a PowerPoint talk for my local CIEP group in November 2017. Happily, most of the content is still relevant; I've just updated the website plan comparison section to show 2021 pricing.

One thing I haven't really touched on in the following pages is the need for all websites to have an SSL certificate. SSL stands for Security Socket Layer – encryption in other words. It protects any transactions, financial or otherwise, that take place on your website.

You can tell when a website is secure because there will be a little padlock next to the web address in the browser bar. Also, the URL will have the protocol (prefix) **https://**. The protocol for a 'not secure' site is **http://**.

When a site is not secure, it means that visitors do not have any privacy when viewing your web pages. This leaves them especially vulnerable if they are accessing your website from a public Wi-Fi spot, such as a café or train station, where other computers can access the same network.

If your site hasn't been updated with this extra layer of security, talk to your web host – they usually provide them free of charge or at a very low cost.

So, that's my bugbear aired! Hope you find some useful tips in the rest of this booklet to help improve your website's speed, design and visibility.

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In this booklet, section by section, I'll show you how to improve the following areas of website management:

- **DESIGN**
  You have only a few seconds to capture your visitor's attention. Your design must clearly convey the purpose of your website: what you do, why you do it, and who you do it for.

- **SPEED**
  Is your site slow to load? Most people won't wait more than five seconds for a page to load. Does it work across all devices – mobile, tablet and laptop?

- **SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION (SEO)**
  SEO uses free, organic search engine results to attract visitors to your site. Through a variety of techniques, SEO helps to improve search engine rankings for your website or blog.

Design: IMAGES

- **Avoid** clichéd stock photos, go for a more naturalistic approach and don't forget to credit the photographer if that's part of the deal for using a free image.

- **Invest** in a well-lit personal image for your About page. Either pay a professional for a studio picture or ask someone to take your picture in natural daylight. Make sure it's not back-lit, and avoid flash.

- **Always** use an image to add interest to your blog posts. If you use a landscape picture, put it at the top of your post, the same width as the text. An upright picture looks better set to the right dropped into the text.

Design: TEXT

- **Increase** the size of your text. A common rule for setting the body text is to set it to a size of the text in a book that you can read at arm's length.

- **Use** Two typefaces – one for headlines, one for body copy. Fontpair.co helps you pair Google fonts and lists them under different headings such as serif/sans; sans/serif; sans/sans; cursive/sans, and so on.

- **Write** fewer words on your pages: use bullet points, lists, headings and subheads to break up text and make it more readable. If you want to write at length, save that for your blog posts.

Design: NAVIGATION

- **When** designing your website, navigation is key. It's essentially a map helping visitors to reach a destination

- **Limit** the number of items on your primary menu to around four to seven. Any more will look crowded and can cause layout issues on mobile and tablet.

- **Order** your navigation bar in terms of hierarchy: Home, or use your logo to link to your home page; About, Services, FAQ, Blog and Contact. And don't forget to use internal links to pages or posts.

- **Make** good use of the footer for things like contact details, social links and site menu. It saves visitors to your site having to scroll back up to the primary menu.

Speed: LOADING TIMES

- **Pictures too large:** A rough sizing guide is 100 kilobytes (kB) for a large image; 50 kB for a medium image; 30 kB for a small image. This will improve load speed and save storage.

- **Flash:** Not needed unless you are a games developer or animator. Google doesn't like flash because it's hard to read, therefore it won't improve your rankings.

- **Unnecessary plugins:** Every time you install a plugin, several lines of code are added to your website, slowing down the time it takes to load your site. Deactivate and delete unnecessary plugins. Consider installing W3 Total Cache, which works to improve load speed.

Speed: MOBILE-FRIENDLY

- **Google prioritises mobile-friendly (responsive) websites**: The Google algorithm change of April 2015 tweaked the way that Google displays mobile search results. Websites optimised for mobile rank better than those that aren't.

- **You may lose clients if your site is not 'responsive':** People use mobile devices to do everything from searching to shopping because it's fast and easy.

- **It helps you build credibility with your customers**: With a responsive website, anyone who tries to visit your site on a mobile device will have a proper experience. Your business will be seen as modern and relevant.

Speed: USEFUL LINKS

- **To find out** if your website is mobile-friendly (responsive), try the mobile-friendly test. You tap in your website's URL and Google will run the test. If it fails, Google will explain why and offer suggestions on how to fix it.
Mobile-Friendly Test
- **Below is a link** to an article listing several free tools, including WordPress plugins, that will help you to create a responsive website.
Free tools to help you create a mobile website
- **To check the speed** of any webpage, try the following:
Web Page Test and GTMetrics

SEO: Keywords

- **Search Engine Optimisation** is the process of attracting traffic to your site via free, organic search engine results. SEO is a series of devices used to improve the rankings of your blog or web pages.

- **Stuffing** your content with keywords you want to rank for will backfire as Google penalises over-optimisation. Around 1–2 percent of content is enough. WordPress users should install the Yoast plugin to monitor their SEO. The free version is fine.

- **Keywords:** Your keywords should be based on what your customers are searching for. Long-tail keywords are your best option as competition is smaller but more focused. See Backlinko article.

SEO: Content

- Once you understand which keywords reflect the needs of visitors you want to attract, you can create useful content to provide the answers they are looking for.

- Blog posts are your bread and butter for staying relevant and feeding the SEO monster, but infographics, testimonials, videos and case studies are also valuable.

- Search engines reward high quality, helpful content that adds value to the visitor's experience.

- Writing an optimised blog post is not difficult. Check my post To Blog, or Not to Blog
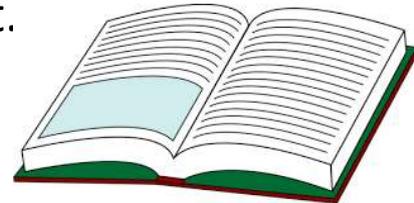
SEO: Sitemap

- **Make sure** you have a sitemap. It's a simple directory that holds information about your website. This links your homepage to your sitemap, making it easier for bots to crawl your whole site and index it properly. Very important for SEO.

- **Use internal links** to posts and pages – these help humans *and* bots to navigate your site and give visitors more reason to stay on your website, thereby reducing your bounce rate.

SEO: Listings

- **Claim your** Small Business Listings via Google My Business, Bing Places for Business, Cylex, Yell, FreeIndex, Small Business Finder. For more directory ideas, look here: Top 15 free UK business directories

- **Once you've** written your content, make sure you place it where your clients are likely to see it: via your Facebook Page, on Twitter or on LinkedIn. Think of social media as you distribution tool.

POPULAR WEBSITE PLATFORMS
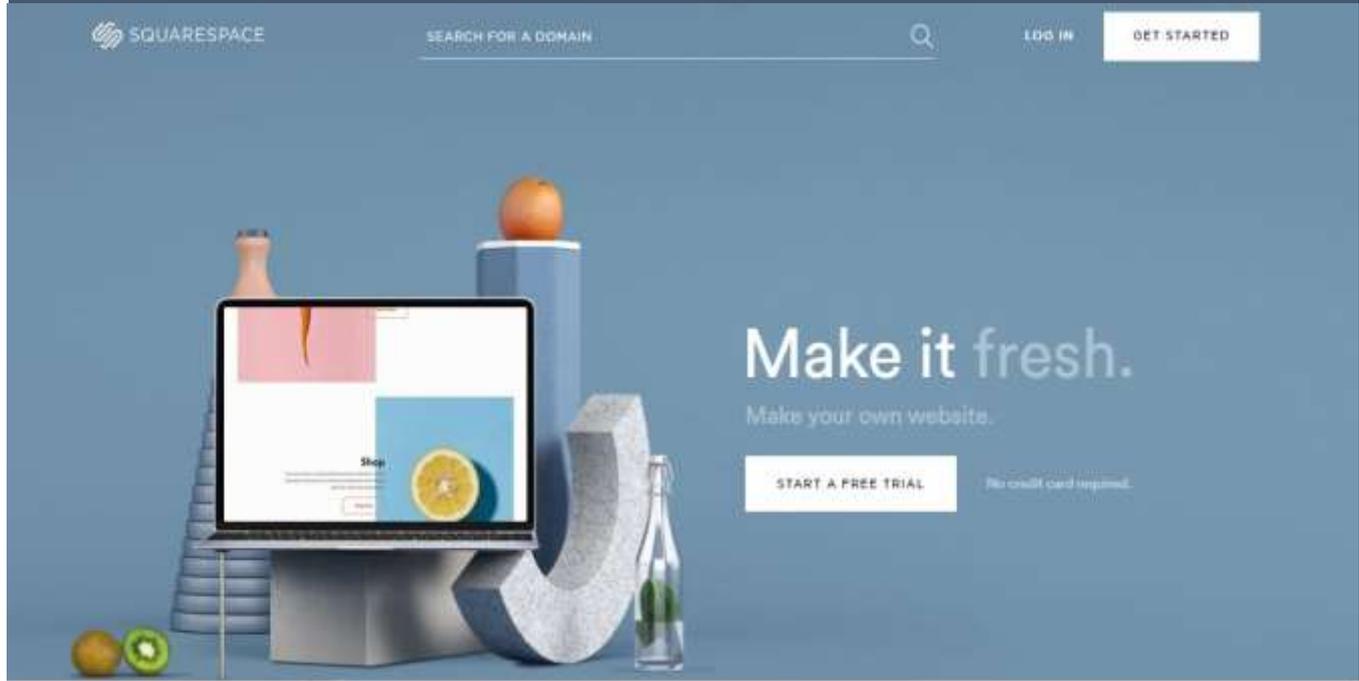
Website Builders

- SquareSpace

- Wix

- Weebly

Blogging Platform

- WordPress.com

Content Management System

- WordPress.org

SquareSpace

PROS: Great for visuals, beginner-friendly, free 14-day trial
CONS: Limited options to create a membership site. Cannot back up whole website. Changes immediately visible to public.

SquareSpace - What you get

PERSONAL

£10 per month billed annually
or
£13 per month on a month-by-month basis

No online shop

BUSINESS

£15 per month billed annually, otherwise £21 per month

Ecommerce: Sell unlimited products (3% transaction fee)

Accept donations and gift cards

ALL PLANS HAVE

Free custom domain

20 pages

Unlimited storage

Wide range of templates

Mobile optimised

SSL security

SEO features

24/7 customer support

- Fully integrated ecommerce (Business only)

Wix

PROS: Lots of support; latest design trends; floating help notes; free platform; can integrate third-party apps such as Shopify.
CONS: Prominent ads on free platform; no export function; cannot switch to another template without reinserting content.

Wix – What you get

COMBO (See right)

£8 per month (£6 per month if paying yearly)
No adverts, use of own domain

- 30 minutes of video
- Up to 3 GB of storage
- Up to 2 GB of bandwidth

UNLIMITED (See right)

£11 per month (£8 per month if paid yearly)

- Unlimited bandwidth
- 10GB storage
- Connect your domain
- Free domain for one year
- Customised favicon (site identifier
- Vouchers for form builders, Google Ads
- Site booster app

BUSINESS BASIC

£16/£13
Unlimited bandwidth
Up to 20 GB storage
Can sell online and take bookings
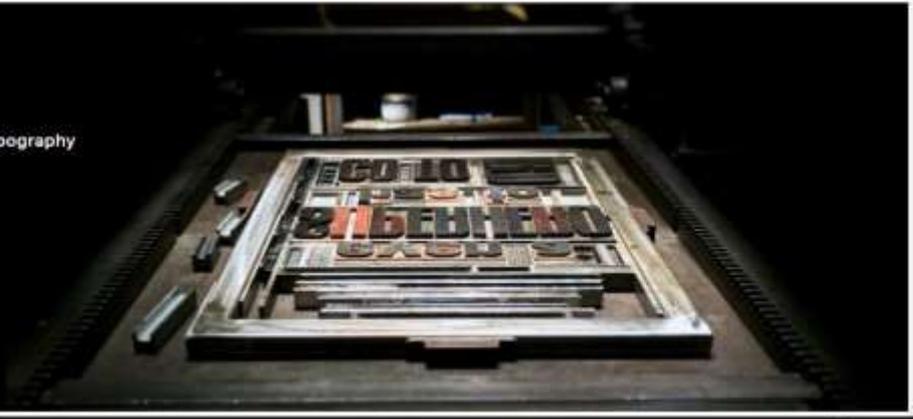Upload up to 5 hours of video

Weebly

PROS: User-friendly; Good selection of designs; easy to change templates; access to code for modifications; free platform.
CONS: Free plan only five pages; cannot highlight related posts or popular posts; limited amount of customisation.

Weebly – What you get

CONNECT

£4 per month when paid annually
Free SSL Certificate
500 MB storage
Connect a custom domain

PRO

£9 per month (paying annually)
Free domain
Free SSL Certificate
No Weebly ads
Unlimited storage
Ecommerce (3% transaction fee)
Advanced site stats
Phone support

BUSINESS

Free domain
No ads
Unlimited storage
Online store (3% transaction fee)
Inventory management
Tax calculator
Shipping discounts
Shipping calculator
Phone support

ALL PLANS HAVE

Chat/email support
Community forum
SEO

WordPress.com

STILL IN NORFOLK
JUST GETTING ON WITH LIFE

HOME · ABOUT · BLOG

OUR WEEKEND STARTS WITH A DOSE OF CAFÉ CULTURE

April 30, 2017

Leave a comment

Edit

We've started a new tradition in our house. Every Saturday - even if Norwich are playing at home - we head to Aldi in Diss to pick up a few bits and pieces. Now, before your jaw drops in wonder at the excitement of it all, it doesn't stop there. We do the shop, attempt … Continue reading

CATCHING UP WITH THE NEWS FROM MY OLD WORKPLACE

November 10, 2016

Leave a comment

Edit

I had a coffee or two with an old friend today. We don't see each other as frequently as we did when we worked together, which makes our catch-ups even more delightful. Talk flows easily; we share similar interests and have many mutual former colleagues and friends. Once every three months, we take over a … Continue reading

- FOLLOW STILL IN NORFOLK VIA EMAIL -

Click to follow Still in Norfolk and receive notifications of new posts by email.

Join 4 other followers

FOLLOW

- GOODREADS -

The Girl In The Ice
by Robert Bryndza
Intriguing mystery. Really enjoyed this book. Would definitely read more by this author.

WordPress.com – PROS and CONS

- You don't have to worry about maintaining your site, spam threats or back-ups. Unlimited email support.

- You become part of a community of bloggers so you can build a following and follow like-minded bloggers.

- Limited SEO control and limited analytics. Only the eCommerce plan (£432pa) has the facilities for an online store. Business plan is £240 per annum.

- Unless you upgrade to a Personal plan (£36pa), you can't have a custom domain name and you have to carry WordPress ads. Video enabled only from Premium plan (£84pa) upwards.

WordPress.org

WordPress.org – PROS

- You can use any free or paid-for theme that you like and upload any plugin you fancy.

- You can sell ads on your website and keep all the money.

- You can install the best SEO plugins and the most powerful analytics tools.

- Sell digital or physical goods and accept payment by credit card or PayPal.

- Create a membership site and protect your content.

- Take bookings and reservations.

- You are free to customise your site.

WordPress.org – CONS

- You have to pay for web hosting. Costs vary according to the amount of traffic to your site and to the web hosting service you choose. It pays to shop around.

- You have to pay an annual domain registration fee. However, you can buy multiple years in one go.

- You are responsible for keeping your site updated, which means regularly updating plugins and themes.

- Ensure you have a back-up process in place. There is a free WordPress plugin for this – WPvivid Backup.

- You need to put anti-spam control in place. The Askimet plugin is the best, but be a good person and contribute to the developers. Karma will reward you!

ABOUT ANNE

Anne is a professional copyeditor, proofreader and content editor. She set up her editorial business, ASG Editorial, in May 2017, after more than two decades of working as an editor and sub-editor for various newspaper and magazine titles

Anne works mainly with fiction and non-fiction authors. She also edits and rewrites website content and blog posts.

Anne has received Inbound Marketing certification from Hubspot – the content marketing experts.

As well as in-house training while working for Westminster Press and Archant, Anne has completed the following courses:

Editing Fiction – The Publishing Training Centre (PTC)

Proofreading 3 (Progress) – The Chartered Institute of Editing and Proofreading (CIEP)

Anne is a Professional Member of the CIEP, and you can read her directory entry here:

Anne Gillion, Professional Member