

Tips for Web Writing

Keep Content Simple, Succinct, and Scannable

Users don't read the Web. They scan pages and pick out headings, sentences, and phrases to find what they need.

- Test content on the target audience (or someone outside the area of expertise for which you are working). What's clear to you may not be clear to readers.
- Get to the point with short words and phrases.
- Avoid "there is" and "there are."
- Use plain English.
- Use inverted pyramid structure: conclusion > explanation > details.



Use Heading and Sub-Headings

Use headings and sub-headings to help readers scan for specific topics and information.

- Include key words from the associated paragraphs.
- Keep headings and sub-headings short (4-8 words).

Break Up Lengthy Paragraphs into Lists

If you are using a lot of commas, colons, and/or semi-colons, try pulling the points out into a list.

- List items should be no more than 3 lines long.
- Have no more than 9 items in a single list.
- Keep lists to a maximum of two levels.
- Use numbered lists where the order of entries is important.
- Use bullet point lists where the sequence of entries isn't important.
- Ensure each list is introduced by at least one line of text.

How not to write for the Web

- write in academic, legalistic prose,
- use the pyramid information structure,
- address your peers and colleagues (that is, people who already understand what you're writing about),
- use jargon that's so ingrained you don't even realize it is jargon,
- be wordy and verbose

St. Mary's City & Beyond

Print

There are several interesting and historic places to visit within a reasonable driving distance from the College. The campus is located at Historic [St. Mary's City](#), an outdoor "living" museum offering tours and re-creations of 17th century colonial life. Located about 20 minutes from the College is [Solomons Island](#), a quiet waterfront fishing village offering museums and attractions, shopping, waterfront dining, sailing and other water sports. Historic [Leonardtown](#), located 20 minutes from St. Mary's, boasts one of the state's few preserved town squares and the renewal of the old waterfront. Maryland's state capital, [Annapolis](#), is located 70 miles from the College. The Nation's Capital, [Washington, D.C.](#), is 75 miles from the College and the harbor city of [Baltimore](#), Maryland is approximately 120 miles from campus.

To translate for Web: *Break up lengthy paragraphs into lists; use phrases, not wordy sentences.*

Cities should be listed in a bulleted list. Name the city first, followed by very brief information about the city. Full sentences are not necessary. Users can click on links for more information.

St. Mary's City & Beyond

There are several interesting and historic places to visit within a reasonable driving distance from the College.

Web

- Historic [St. Mary's City](#)- an outdoor "living" museum offering tours and re-creations of 17th century colonial life.
- [Solomons Island](#)- a waterfront fishing village offering museums and attractions, shopping, waterfront dining, sailing and other water sports. About 20 minutes from the College.
- Historic [Leonardtown](#)- one of the state's few preserved town squares and renewal of the old waterfront. 20 minutes from St. Mary's.
- [Annapolis](#)- Maryland's state capital. 70 miles from the College.
- [Washington, D.C.](#)- The Nation's Capital. 75 miles from the College
- [Baltimore](#), Maryland- A harbor city approximately 120 miles from campus.

St. Mary's Publications

- The [River Gazette](#)- aims to convey a sense of the wide variety of activities, talents, and expertise that make up the College. Published six times a year.
- [The Mulberry Tree](#)- the College's alumni magazine. Published twice each year.
- [SlackWater](#)- journal focusing on exploring and documenting the region's changing landscapes.
- *This Place Where We Are*- collection of essays about St. Mary's written by English professor Jeffrey Hammond. Published by the St. Mary's Press.
- *St. Mary's: "A When-Did?" Timeline* by Janet Haugaard- in-house Timeline for the College and Historic St. Mary's City. Published by the St. Mary's Press.
- *Avatar*- student-produced literary magazine.
- *Underwire*- student outlet published annually.