

### **9-3.1 Page layout: Tips for improving “scan ability”**

<http://www.websuburb.com.au/HelpDesk/Content/ScanandSkim/tabid/756/Default.aspx>

Users from search engines tend to “information-snack” so content needs to offer value for ultra-short visits. A user will scan the page for less than a second to decide whether to proceed. To improve “scan ability”, make sure you incorporate the following into your website:

- Headings: a large heading at the top of the page (advertisers typically target around 25% of the page size) to grab the reader’s attention.
- Paragraph headers, numbered lists and bullet points create the impression that information has been structured, that someone has taken care to organise the information and it is therefore more likely to be useful and sensible.
- “Clean” design – though it can be hard to define, most people know a messy page when they see one.
- Navigation: ensure that the following links exist on every page. The menu system used by WebSuburb takes care of this automatically.
  - Home
  - About Us (no matter how obvious you think your website’s purpose is)
  - Site Map (gives a quick summary of the site)
- Use categories and groupings according to your target audience’s knowledge, skills and experience. This will allow your reader to get their head around your content quickly and easily.

Other points to keep in mind when designing your website:

- If the user finds something offensive they will be off in a flash.
- If the page looks ‘amateurish’ then the user’s interest and attention will automatically lower.
- If the page looks difficult to read, ie. large paragraphs of small text, the user won’t bother.
- Be sure to spend time developing a good template and ensure this is consistently applied throughout the site.

### **9-3.2 Page Layout: Improving “skim ability”**

Skimming is the practice of sifting through a page looking for keywords and trigger words.

- Include keywords and trigger words in the high-exposure areas.
- Grammar: your writing style and choice of words should suit the intended reader. Write as if you were talking across a desk to your ideal reader.
- Use paragraph headers to help readers to decide whether they want to read the paragraph in detail.
- Numbered lists: enable readers to more quickly grasp information.
- Bullet Points: these highlight the information points.
- Spelling and punctuation: both important in making a good impression.

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Target a significant amount of every page to headers, lists, isolated and bold text. Ensure that headers and isolated text are in the page “hotspots”.