

# WEB CONTENT STRATEGY

*A guide for writing student-centered  
content on the web*

Version 1.0

# Context

The TJC.edu website is the first interaction many students have with TJC. For that reason, the website must have a singular, authoritative voice, be consistent in tone and content, and be easily readable by our primary audience.

This guide will provide a framework and content strategy for the TJC.edu site, as well as tips for writing for the web.

# Purpose

The TJC website's main purpose is to recruit new students and retain current students. Content on the website should easily and clearly direct students to apply, find their major, get advising, register for classes, join clubs and organizations, find housing, and the student feel at home at TJC.

Web content should always represent the TJC positioning statement as a unique 2-year college with extensive programs and a true collegiate experience.

To achieve a consistent message, the website must follow these guidelines:

- Identity: Branding allows visitors to recognize immediately a web page's affiliation with TJC.
- Usability: Sites must be made as usable (quick and easy to use, navigate, and understand) as possible for the target audience.
- Consistency: This guide promotes consistency. Consistency simplifies navigation of pages for end users of TJC's web pages. We're committed to maintaining a high level of consistency across web pages in different areas of the University's website.
- Accuracy: Pages must be accurate and up-to-date.
- Voice and Tone

The TJC website is written by humans for other humans. Jargon, legalese, technical language and administrative language is avoidable and should be a last-resort.

Confusing, jargon-filled and badly considered content may not stop people from coming to TJC if they have no alternative, but shouldn't we aspire to more than that?

Embrace the importance of language and make time to pay attention to what we're saying to our students. This can be as simple as taking a few minutes to read your content out loud and asking:

- Does this sound like something a human would say?
- Is this clear?
- If someone I love was listening to my voice say these words, how would they feel?

# Few words, big impact

Although it's easy to mistake content as trivial, when we're writing words that go on the website we're actually doing a bunch of serious things:

- Making choices that welcome students or alienate them
- Providing way-finding information to help our students get around
- Asking for personal, sometimes sensitive information
- Explaining how information we gather will be used
- Giving students tools to connect with people they care about and informing the tone of those connections
- Telling people who we are as an institution, what we do and why we should matter to them
- Content strategy

## Key Concepts

- Omit non-essential words. Users don't read -- they scan.
- Use "inverted pyramid" writing style: start with the point, then support it, using links for more in-depth details.
- One idea per paragraph.
- Keep the most important elements "above the fold," that is, visible upon initial page view without scrolling.
- Categorize according to users' needs, not by departmental organization or hierarchy.
- When creating a link, highlight only the one-to-three most important words, NOT "click here."

Worst: The committee has many excellent resources on their website.

Bad: The committee has many excellent resources on their website.

Better: The committee has many excellent resources on their website.

Better still: There are many excellent resources available on the committee's website.

## Do:

- Facilitate scanning with subheads, bullet points, lists, and captions.
- Provide links to related and additional detail.
- Use an active voice: "The company published the book,"
- Use lists or tables when possible.

## Don't:

- Expect your visitors to read everything.
- Put everything on one page.
- Use a passive voice: "The book was published by the company."
- List items in a paragraph to save room.
- Underline to emphasize. Only underline hyperlinks.
- Bold or italicize entire paragraphs.

# Voice

## Do:

- Use “we” or “TJC”
- Write conversationally
- Use “you” or “students” or “grads”

**Example:** The welding program at TJC is ranked highest in the state for job placement and earning potential. We’re here to help you find an exciting, high-paying career right away.

## Don’t:

- Use “Tyler Junior College” or “The College”
- Write in legalese or administrative language (if the words barely make sense to you, it probably won’t make sense for our students)

**Bad example:** The welding program at Tyler Junior College fulfills section 1.4 of the Texas State Higher Education Coordinating Board’s qualifications for SACS accreditation and gainful employment. Graduates of The College earn in the top 90th percentile statewide in employment according to the Texas Department of Labor.

# What doesn’t belong on the website

The TJC website is not a portal, a message board or bulletin board, or repository for personal information. Announcements about individual courses should not go anywhere on the main TJC.edu website.

## Other things that do not go on the website:

- Anything profane, harassing or discriminatory
- FERPA-protected information and other personal information
- Educational content for individual courses (slides, power points, MP3’s of lectures, lecture notes, etc...). This information belongs in Canvas.

## Things that should be avoided if at all possible:

- Lengthy administrative jargon that potential students are likely to not understand.
- Program announcements, audition dates, submission dates, scholarship deadlines, and other minutiae. This information belongs in Apache Access or Canvas.
- Information specifically for faculty and staff only. Apache Access is the correct location for this type of information.