# 5.5 Writing for the Web

Long-winded sentences and explanations are often found in academic textbooks and romance novels, but they really are not appropriate on a web page. Large blocks of text and long paragraphs are difficult to read on the Web. The following suggestions will help to increase the readability of your web pages.

## *Language*

### Text in Hyperlinks

Hyperlink key words or descriptive phrases; do not hyperlink entire sentences. Avoid use of the words "Click here" in hyperlinks because users know what to do by now. Also, be aware that an increasing number of people are using touch screens so they'll be selecting or tapping rather than clicking.

### Reading Level

Match the reading level and style of writing to your target audience. Use vocabulary that they will be comfortable with. Juicy Studio offers a free online readability test at http://juicystudio.com/services/readability.php.

### Spelling and Grammar

Unfortunately, many websites contain misspelled words. Most web authoring tools such as Adobe Dreamweaver have built-in spell checkers; consider using this feature. Finally, be sure that you proofread and test your site thoroughly. It's very helpful if you can find web developer buddies—you check their sites and they check yours. It's always easier to see someone else's mistake than your own.

## *Organization*

### Organize Your Content

According to web usability expert Jakob Neilsen, people don't really read web pages; they scan them. Organize the text content on your pages to be quickly scanned. Be concise. Use headings, subheadings, brief paragraphs, and unordered lists to organize web page content so that it is easy to read and visitors can quickly find what they need.

Also be aware of line length—use white space and multiple columns if possible. Look ahead to Figure 5.15 for examples of text placement on a web page. While it's fine to center headings and navigation areas, avoid centering all of your text—a paragraph of centered text is more difficult to read than left-aligned text.

# *Font*

## Use Common Fonts

Use common font typefaces such as Arial, Verdana, Georgia, or Times New Roman. Remember that the web page visitor must have the font installed on his or her computer in order for that particular font to appear. Your page may look great with Gill Sans Ultra Bold Condensed, but if your visitor doesn't have the font, the browser's default font will be displayed. Explore the list of "browser safe fonts" at http://www.ampsoft.net/webdesign-l/WindowsMacFonts.html.

## Font Size and Weight

Be aware that fonts display smaller on a Mac than on a PC. Even within the PC platform, the default font size displayed by browsers may not be the same. Consider creating prototype pages of your font size settings to test on a variety of browsers and screen resolution settings. **Bold** or *emphasize* important text. However, be careful not to bold everything—that has the same effect as bolding nothing.

## Font Color Contrast

Use appropriate color combinations. Newbie web designers sometimes choose color combinations for web pages that they would never dream of using in their wardrobe. An easy way to choose colors that contrast well and look good together is to select colors from an image or logo that you will use for your site.