Week 1: Principles

—

nfenton1@sva.edu
strategicwriting.club

Activities

- Introductions and warm-up exercise.

- Discuss writing's purpose, various forms, and strengths.

- Articulate our goals for the next four weeks.

- Come up with principles and examples of good writing together.

Introductions

- Your name

- Where you're from

- Something you're hoping to learn in this class

Warm-up

Hopes and fears exercise

- What do you hope to learn in this class?

- What do you hope to accomplish with your thesis?

- What are you afraid of when it comes to writing or this class?

- What about your thesis?

A short preamble

Course objectives

- Investigate how writing shapes and contributes to the design process

- Practice writing and editing collaboratively

- Develop and structure various kinds of text

- Use writing exercises to prepare for your thesis and process book

Course requirements

We will practice thinking and writing through conversation, writing exercises, and peer editing. Be prepared to:

- Ask questions, take risks, and express yourself

- Share rough ideas and unpolished drafts with the class

- Give candid, considered, and supportive feedback

- Grapple with the subjectivity of language

Several short sentences about writing

Verlyn Klinkenborg

Writing and content basics

Nicely Said

WRITING FOR THE WEB WITH STYLE AND PURPOSE

Nicole Fenton and Kate Kiefer Lee

Good writing is:

- Clear

- Friendly

- Useful

- Honest

- Appropriate

1. Writing is design.

"For every word we use to describe where we want to go, there's another word that we're walking away from."

Abby Covert, *How to Make Sense of Any Mess*

Content design

- Research

- Planning

- Writing

- Editing

- Standardizing

- Testing

Things we make

Content and communication audits

Interview scripts

Product and user scenarios

Audience profiles and personas

Strategy documents

Workflow diagrams

Wireframes and sitemaps

Journey maps

Taxonomies

Product, legal, marketing, and interface copy

Blog posts

Presentations

Content variations for testing

Playbooks, guides, and best practices

Technical documentation

Research reports

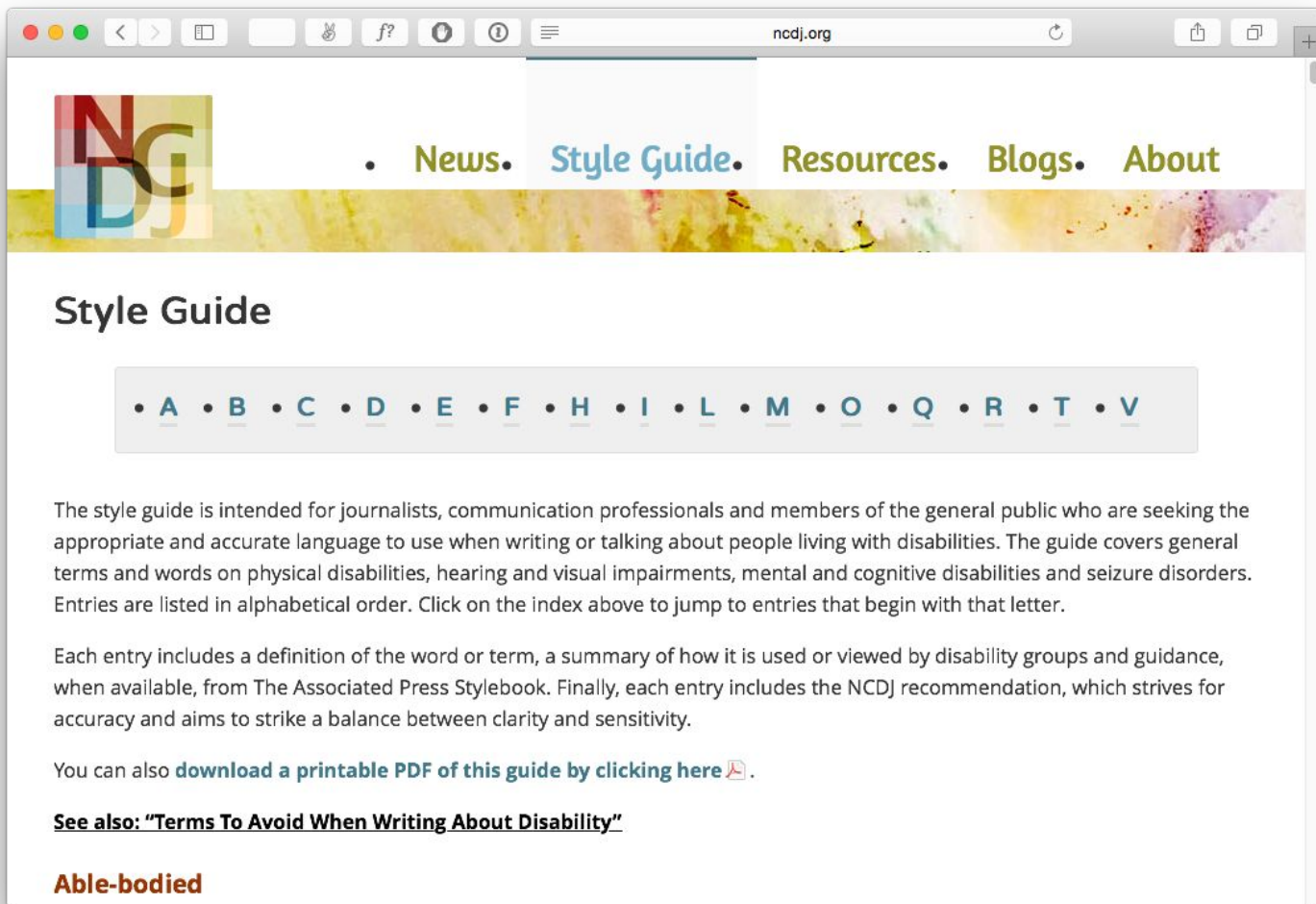Content standards

Style guides

Content

is

the user experience

Users need words to navigate your service. Involve content designers from the start.

Government Digital Service
www.gov.uk/guidance/content-design

2. We have a huge responsibility.

"This is difficult but it is important: either we and the technology that we build work against the systems that prolong inequality or we perpetuate them."

Mandy Brown, "Hypertext as an Agent of Change"

Style Guide

The style guide is intended for journalists, communication professionals and members of the general public who are seeking the appropriate and accurate language to use when writing or talking about people living with disabilities. The guide covers general terms and words on physical disabilities, hearing and visual impairments, mental and cognitive disabilities and seizure disorders. Entries are listed in alphabetical order. Click on the index above to jump to entries that begin with that letter.

Each entry includes a definition of the word or term, a summary of how it is used or viewed by disability groups and guidance, when available, from The Associated Press Stylebook. Finally, each entry includes the NCDJ recommendation, which strives for accuracy and aims to strike a balance between clarity and sensitivity.

You can also **download a printable PDF of this guide by clicking here** .

See also: "Terms To Avoid When Writing About Disability"

Able-bodied
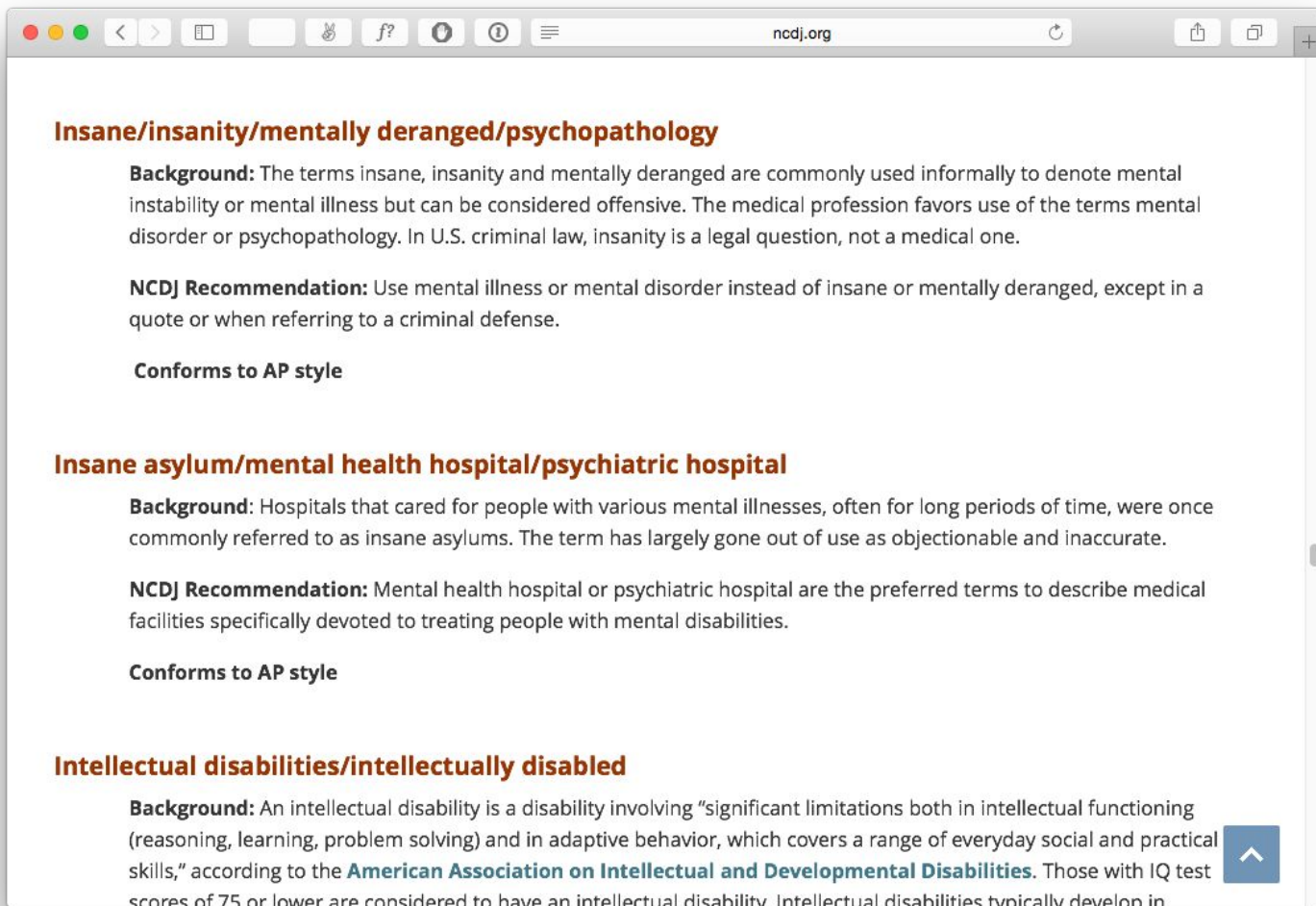
Insane/insanity/mentally deranged/psychopathology

Background: The terms insane, insanity and mentally deranged are commonly used informally to denote mental instability or mental illness but can be considered offensive. The medical profession favors use of the terms mental disorder or psychopathology. In U.S. criminal law, insanity is a legal question, not a medical one.

NCDJ Recommendation: Use mental illness or mental disorder instead of insane or mentally deranged, except in a quote or when referring to a criminal defense.

Conforms to AP style

Insane asylum/mental health hospital/psychiatric hospital

Background: Hospitals that cared for people with various mental illnesses, often for long periods of time, were once commonly referred to as insane asylums. The term has largely gone out of use as objectionable and inaccurate.

NCDJ Recommendation: Mental health hospital or psychiatric hospital are the preferred terms to describe medical facilities specifically devoted to treating people with mental disabilities.

Conforms to AP style

Intellectual disabilities/intellectually disabled

Background: An intellectual disability is a disability involving "significant limitations both in intellectual functioning (reasoning, learning, problem solving) and in adaptive behavior, which covers a range of everyday social and practical skills," according to the **American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities**. Those with IQ test scores of 75 or lower are considered to have an intellectual disability. Intellectual disabilities typically develop in
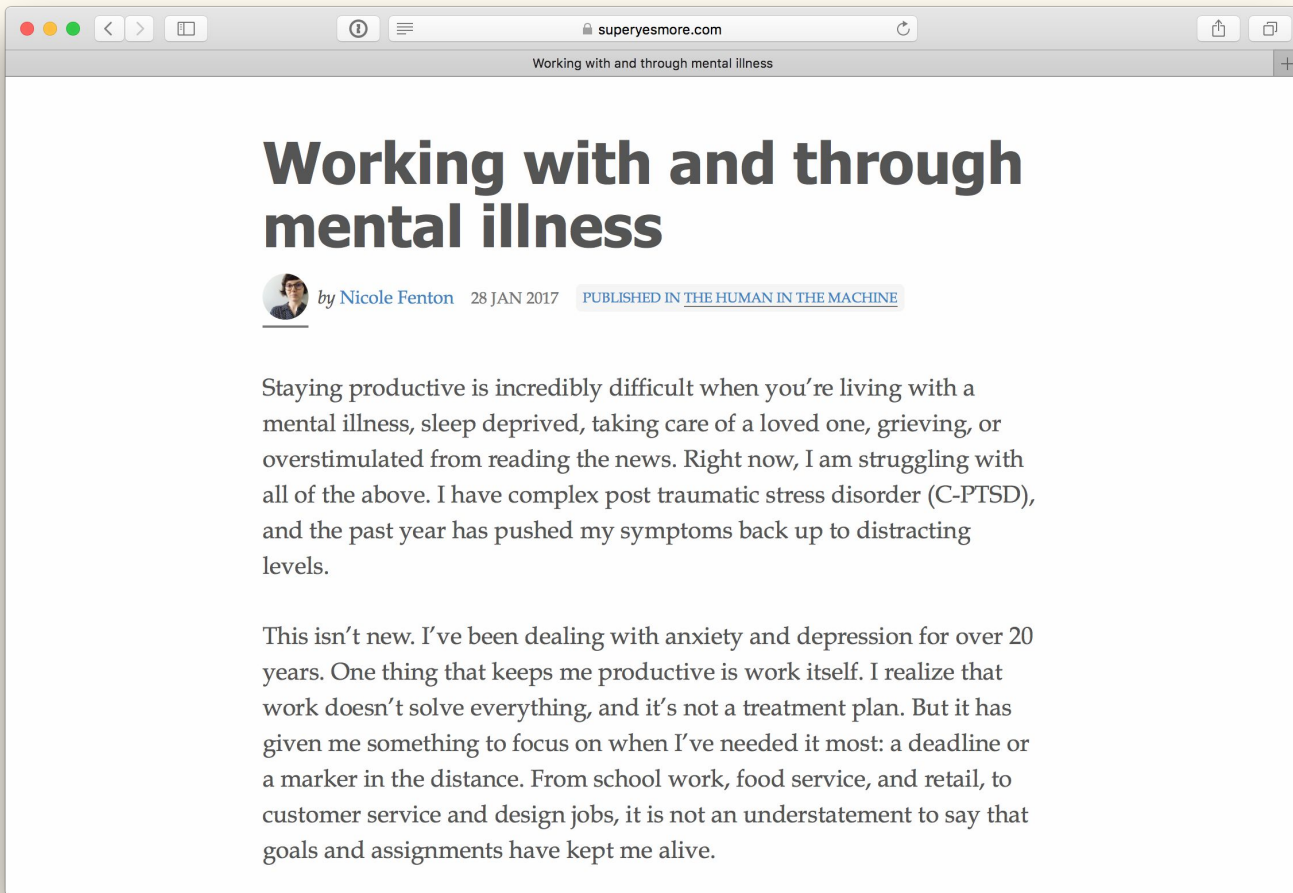
Working with and through mental illness

by **Nicole Fenton**   28 JAN 2017

Staying productive is incredibly difficult when you're living with a mental illness, sleep deprived, taking care of a loved one, grieving, or overstimulated from reading the news. Right now, I am struggling with all of the above. I have complex post traumatic stress disorder (C-PTSD), and the past year has pushed my symptoms back up to distracting levels.

This isn't new. I've been dealing with anxiety and depression for over 20 years. One thing that keeps me productive is work itself. I realize that work doesn't solve everything, and it's not a treatment plan. But it has given me something to focus on when I've needed it most: a deadline or a marker in the distance. From school work, food service, and retail, to customer service and design jobs, it is not an understatement to say that goals and assignments have kept me alive.
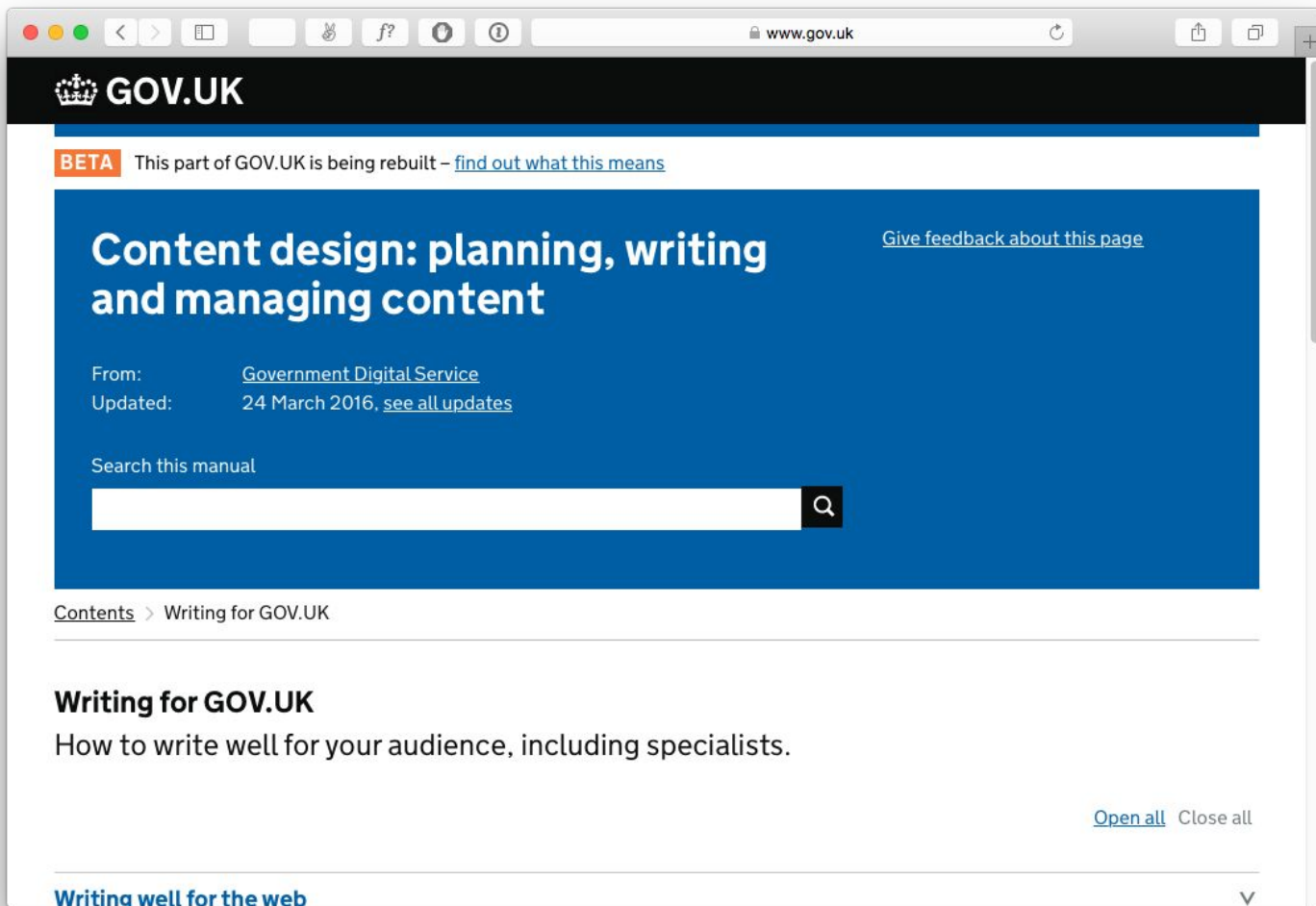
Content design: planning, writing and managing content

Give feedback about this page

From: Government Digital Service
Updated: 24 March 2016, see all updates

Search this manual

Contents > Writing for GOV.UK

Writing for GOV.UK

How to write well for your audience, including specialists.

Open all Close all

Writing well for the web ⌄

glaad 🔊

f Like   Share   287K

🐦 Follow @glaad

press releases   our experts   media reference guide
download logos   blog

GLAAD Media Reference Guide - Transgender Issues

For additional resources on how to fairly and accurately report on transgender people, please see "In Focus: Covering the Transgender Community" and visit glaad.org/transgender.

Sex

The classification of people as male or female. At birth infants are assigned a sex, usually based on the appearance of their external anatomy. (This is what is written on the birth certificate.) However, a person's sex is actually a combination of bodily characteristics including: chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics.

Gender Identity

One's internal, deeply held sense of one's gender. For transgender people, their own internal gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Most people have a gender identity of man or woman (or boy or girl). For some people, their gender identity does not fit neatly into one of those two choices. Unlike gender expression (see below) gender identity is not visible to others.

Gender Expression
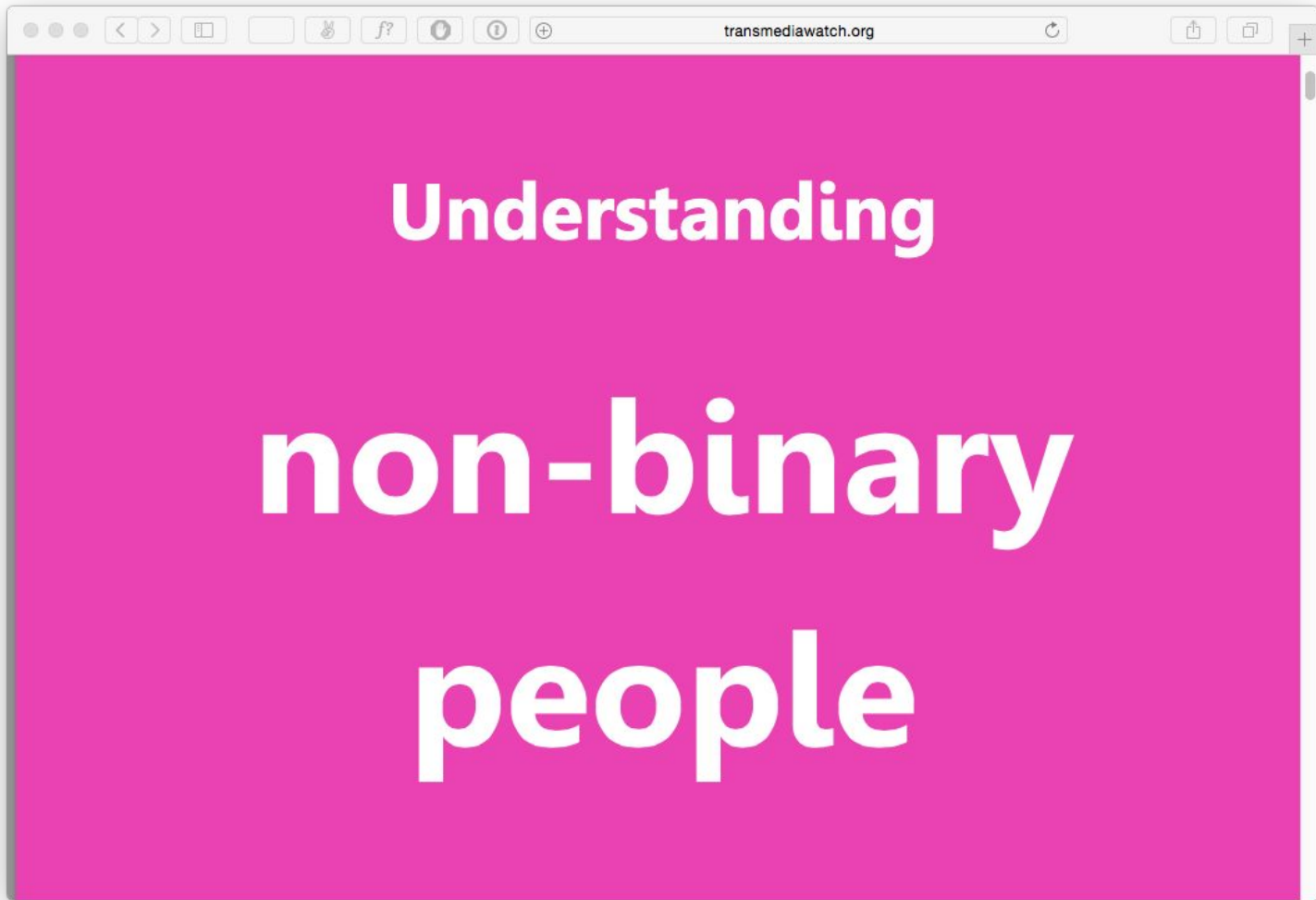
Understanding

non-binary

people

3. Culture shapes content.

Healthy culture:

- Collaborative

- Iterative

- Inclusive

- Generous

- Thoughtful

"Language doesn't just make things—it assembles, cobbles together, entire worlds and all the relations within."

Dr. Anne Galloway, VUW School of Design

18F Handbook
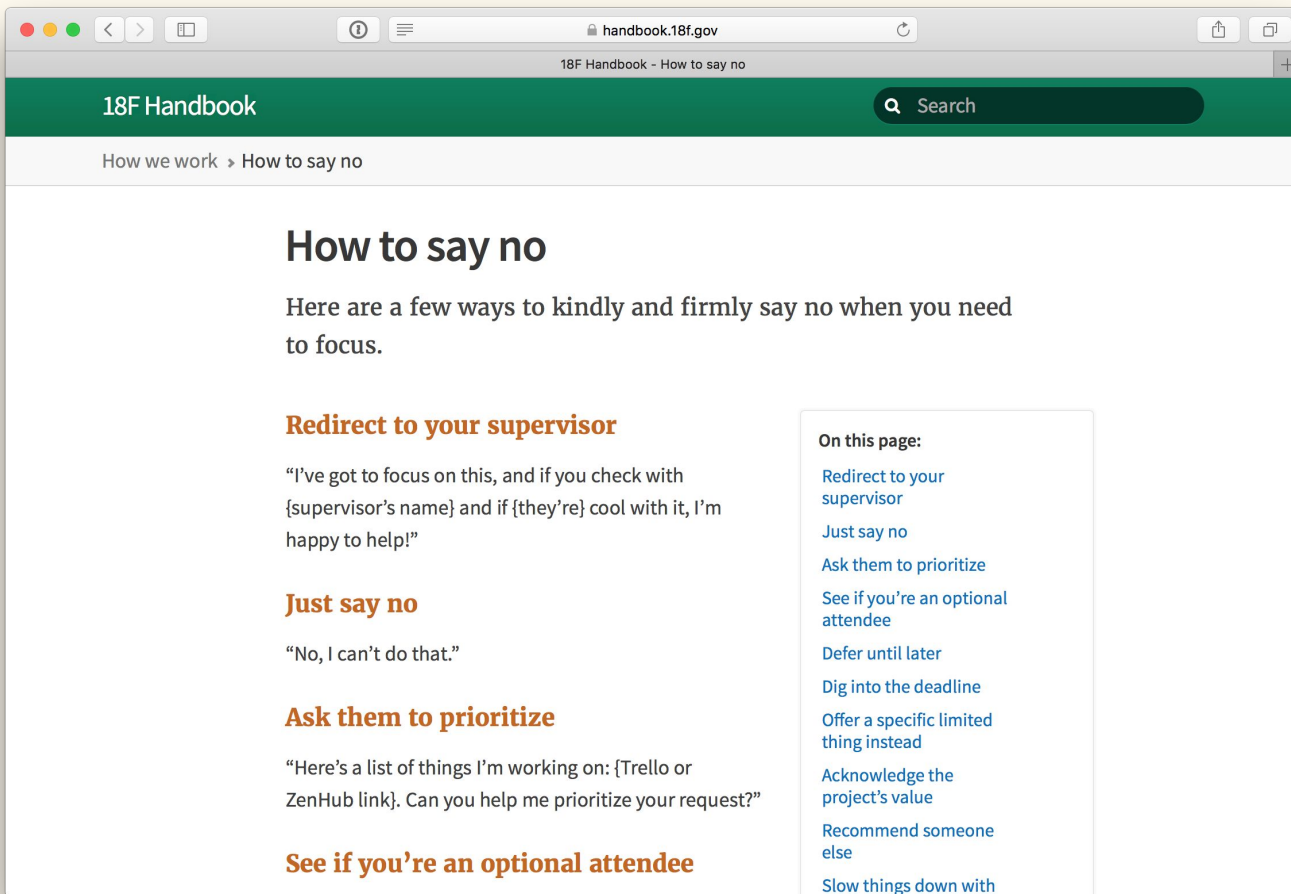
How to say no

Here are a few ways to kindly and firmly say no when you need to focus.

Redirect to your supervisor

"I've got to focus on this, and if you check with {supervisor's name} and if {they're} cool with it, I'm happy to help!"

Just say no

"No, I can't do that."

Ask them to prioritize

"Here's a list of things I'm working on: {Trello or ZenHub link}. Can you help me prioritize your request?"

See if you're an optional attendee

18F Content Guide

Search

How to plan, write, and manage content at 18F.

Introduction

How to use this guide

License

Resources

Our approach

Tips and standards for developing user-centered content.

Content principles

Address the user

Avoid duplication

Be concise

Use plain language

Structure the content

Our style

Grammar, spelling, and mechanics.

Abbreviations and acronyms

Active voice

Numbers and percentages

Punctuation
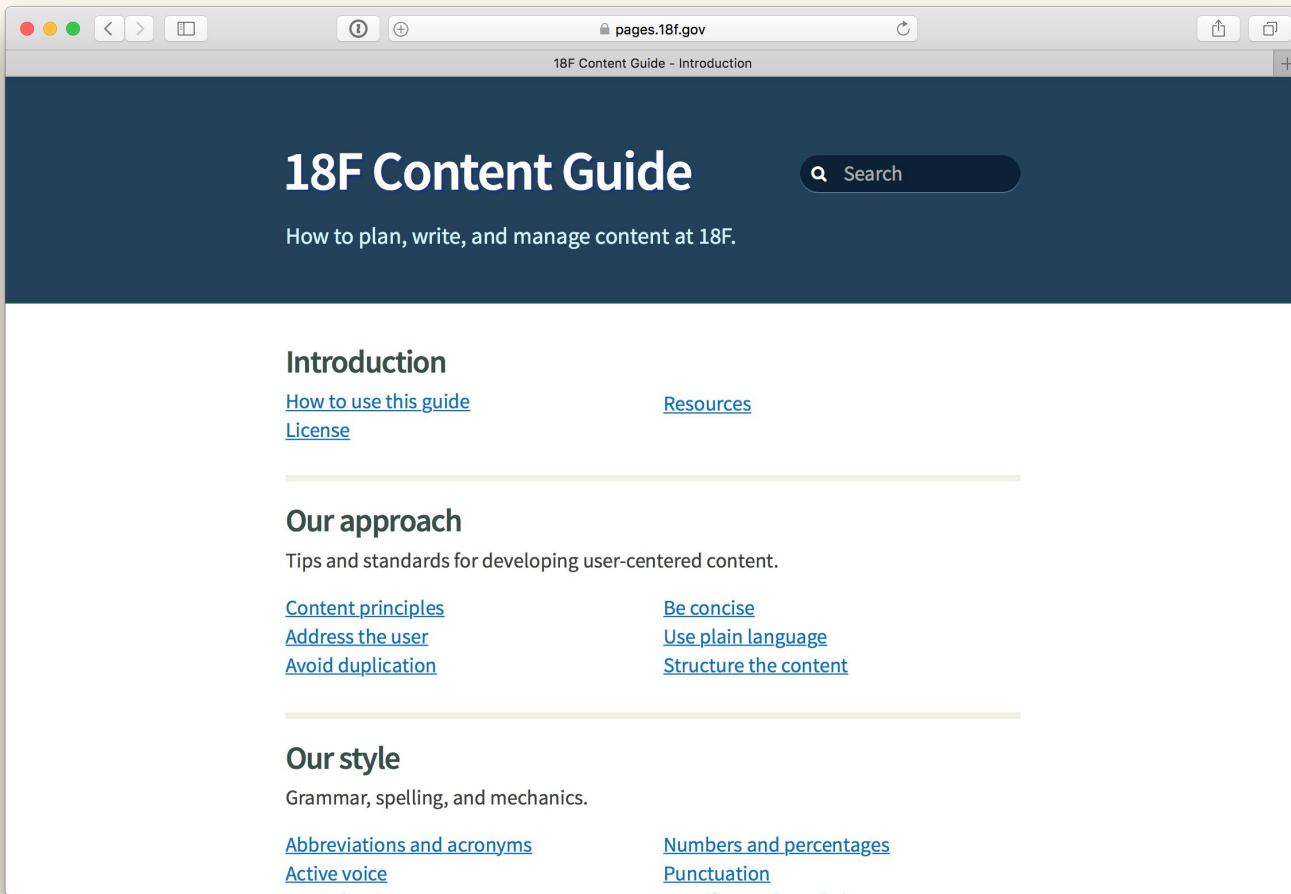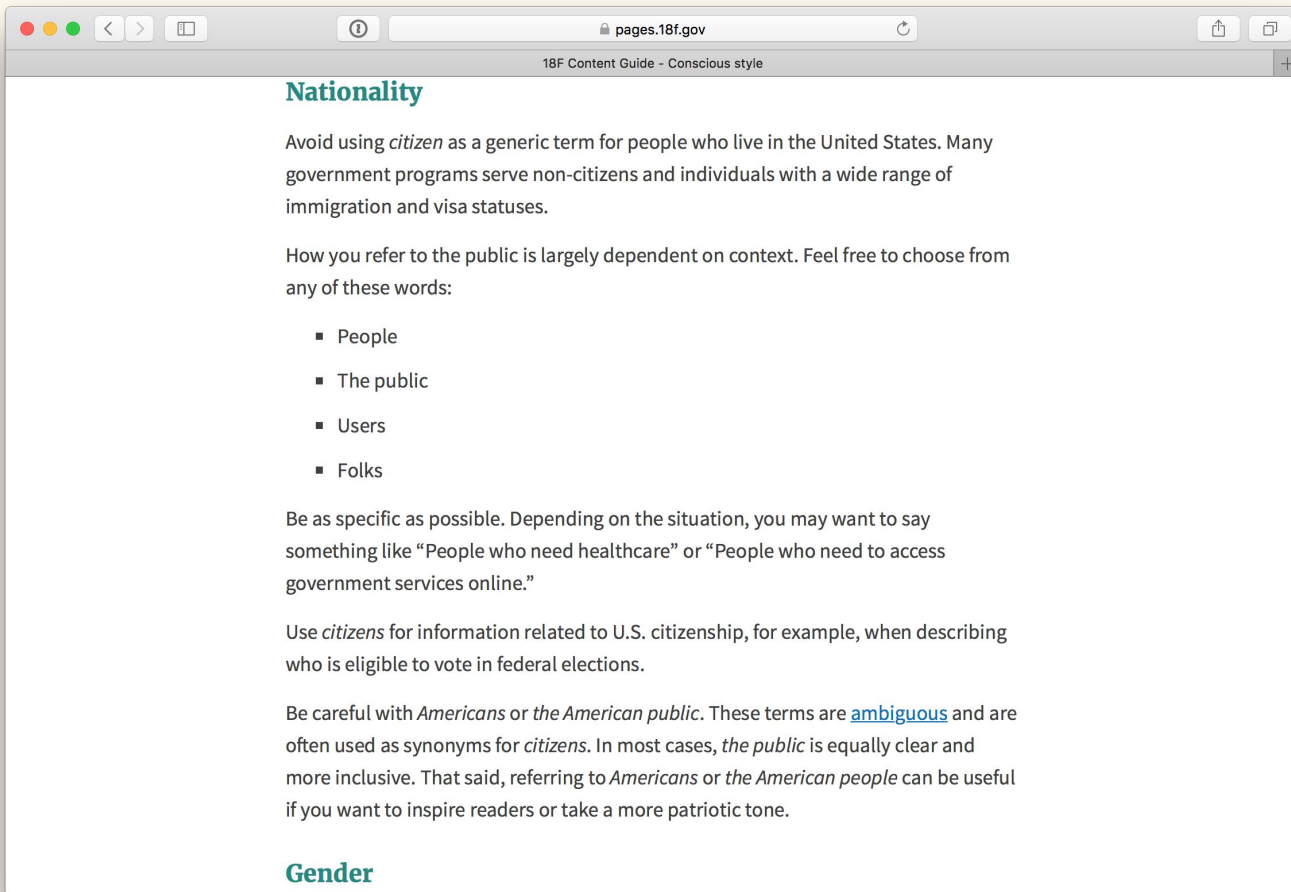
Nationality

Avoid using *citizen* as a generic term for people who live in the United States. Many government programs serve non-citizens and individuals with a wide range of immigration and visa statuses.

How you refer to the public is largely dependent on context. Feel free to choose from any of these words:

- People
- The public
- Users
- Folks

Be as specific as possible. Depending on the situation, you may want to say something like "People who need healthcare" or "People who need to access government services online."

Use *citizens* for information related to U.S. citizenship, for example, when describing who is eligible to vote in federal elections.

Be careful with *Americans* or *the American public*. These terms are [ambiguous](#) and are often used as synonyms for *citizens*. In most cases, *the public* is equally clear and more inclusive. That said, referring to *Americans* or *the American people* can be useful if you want to inspire readers or take a more patriotic tone.

Gender

4. The content will change.

RESEARCH   CLARIFY   WRITE   REFINE

hello.

An official website of the United States government

What we deliver How we work About 18F **Blog** Contact

‹ Blog

Taking an agile approach to content

By **Nicole Fenton**, **Kate Garklavs**

May 31, 2016

agile content design design

So, you've recently joined an agile team — congratulations! Here at 18F, we work in an agile way — in other words, we base our designs on user needs, conduct usability testing, iterate quickly, and release MVPs (minimum viable products) rather than highly finalized releases.

We take an agile approach to content too. While there's really no "ideal" project or process most of the time, we've found that these guidelines help us develop useful services for millions of people.

Participate in the process

How To Write an "About Me" Page That Gets You Hired

An about page doesn't have to be anxiety-inducing. Keep it simple and put your inner-critic aside.

By Nicole Fenton

About pages are hard. You have one page to summarize who you are, what you do, and how you're different in a clear, concise, and confident way. No big deal! Just tell us why you matter in two to five paragraphs, without bragging.

Honestly, I don't know anyone who enjoys this process. Even if you're comfortable writing about yourself, it's hard to know where to start or what to leave out. You know yourself better than anyone, but that only seems to make it worse.

Over the past 10 years, I've been fortunate enough to help all sorts of people get
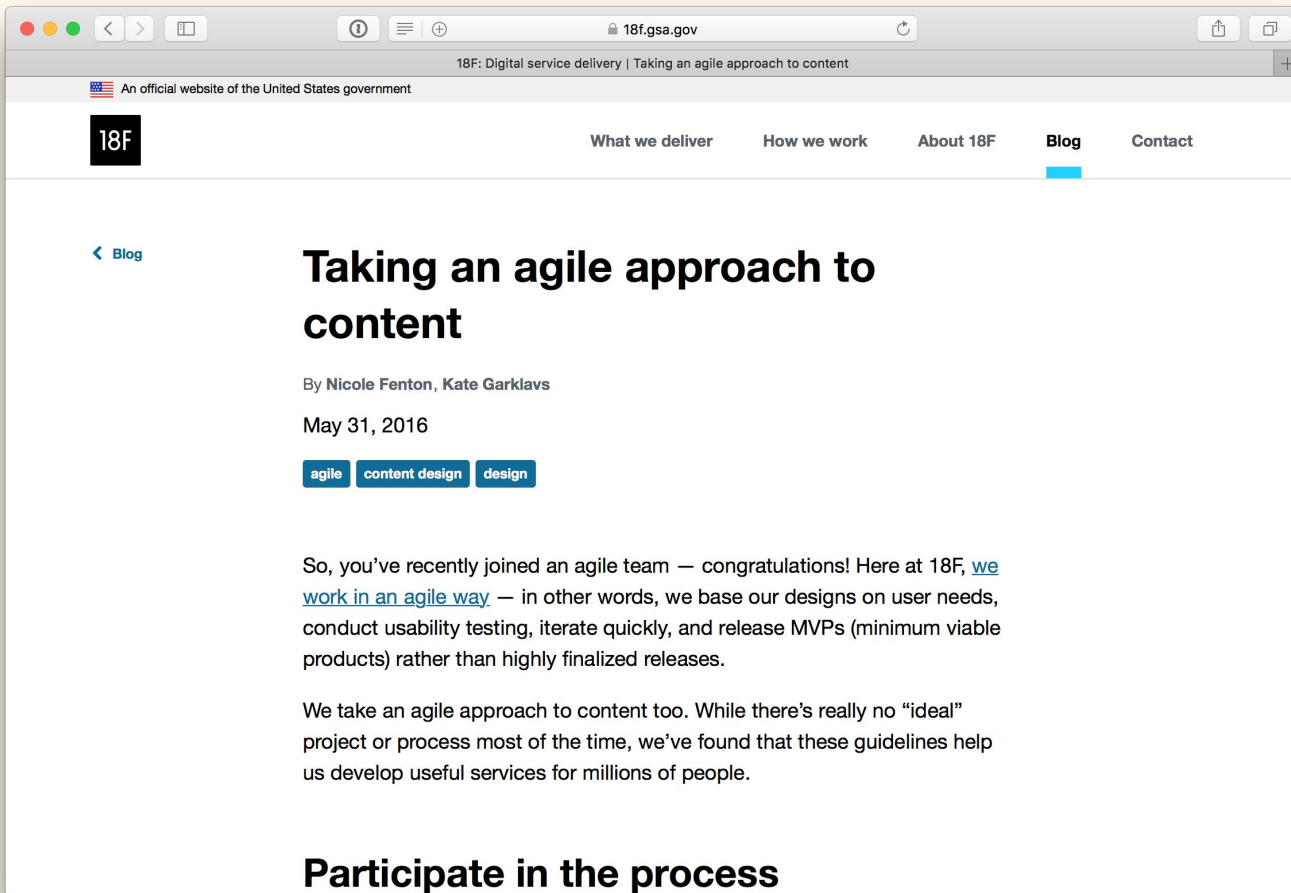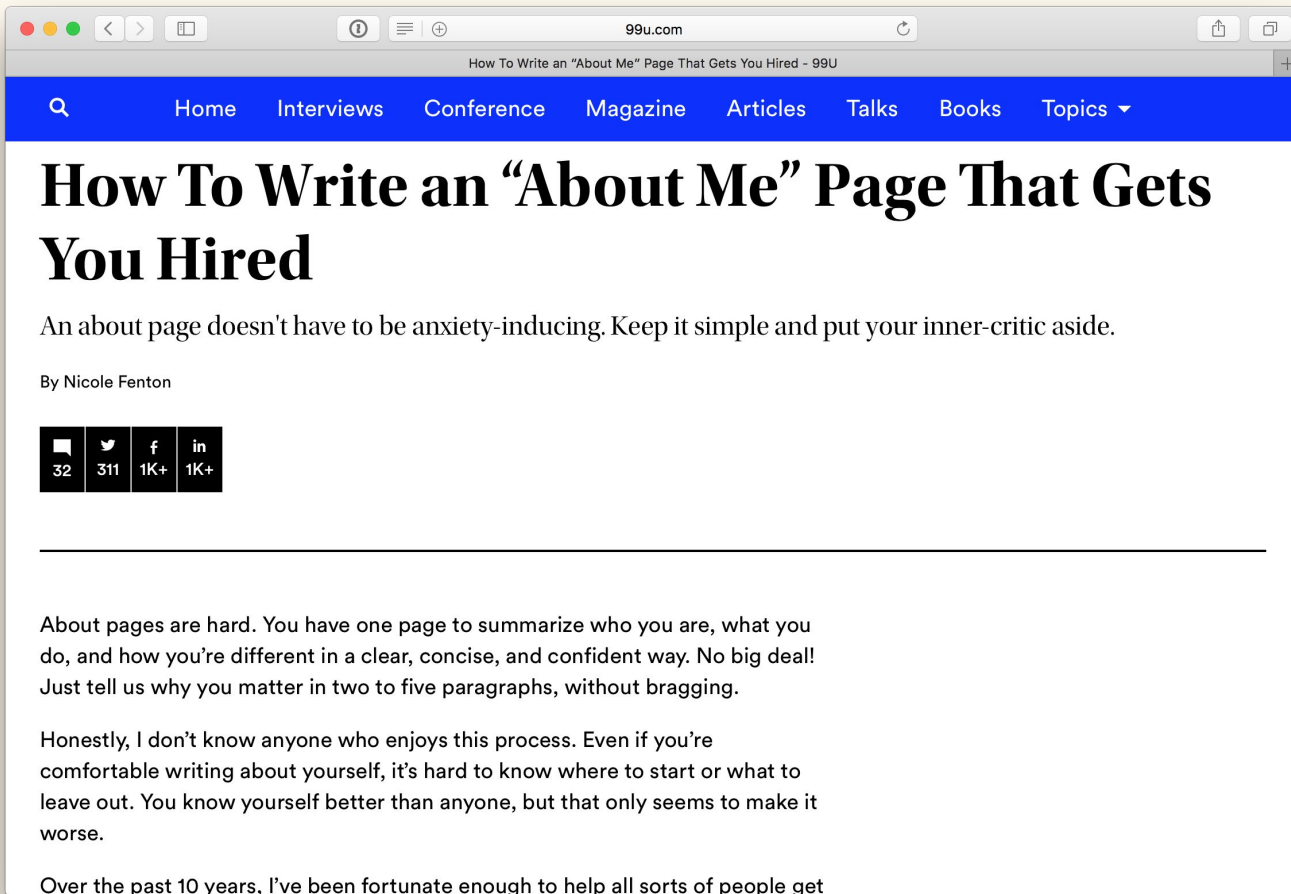
Discussion

What have you been writing lately?

What other types of content are important right now?

What do you want to focus on in this class?

Core values

Think about someone you respect and admire.

Think about someone you respect and admire.

Write down their name.

- What are their strengths?
- What are they passionate about?
- What keeps them going?
- Why do you look up to them?

- What are your strengths?
- What are you passionate about?
- What keeps you going?
- Why do people look up to you?

Inspiration

- Find 3 companies or websites with good content.

- Collect evidence as to why the sites or brands appeal to you.

What did they do well?

What we liked

Reliable, tested

Accessible

A good story

Quick, simple

Personal, honest

Innovative

Questions?

See you next week.

—

nfenton1@sva.edu
strategicwriting.club