

WMO Web Best Practices

The WMO Web Best Practices is a valuable resource for creating consistent and compelling web content that reflects the organization's mission and values. It provides guidelines for creating easy-to-read and engaging content and using web elements such as links and images. The guide's target audience includes web designers, writers, and editors who work on the WMO website. The guide is based on best practices from various sources and is an extension to the [WMO Writing and Style Guide](#).

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Web writing best practices

WMO web content should be written in a professional, informative, and engaging tone that reflects the organization's values and mission. A consistent and engaging tone helps establish the WMO's brand and makes the website more enjoyable to use.

Writing for the **web** is different from writing for **print**. Users have shorter attention spans when reading online and often look for specific information. Therefore, creating content that is easy to scan, read and understand is essential. The following are some best practices for writing for the web:

- Short paragraphs
- Active voice

- Accessible language
- Use of bullet points and numbered lists
- Headings and subheadings
- Use of keywords

Consistency in grammar and punctuation is essential to ensure the content is easy to read and understand. The following are some best practices for grammar and punctuation:

- Capitalization rules
- Proper use of abbreviations and acronyms
- Proper use of quotation marks and italics

The WMO is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion. Therefore, it's essential to use inclusive language that avoids bias and stereotypes.

Best practices for page titles, headings, and subheads

- **Use sentence case for headings and subheads:** This means only capitalizing the first letter of the first word in the title and any proper nouns or acronyms. For example, "How to prepare for a hurricane" instead of "How to Prepare for a Hurricane." Page titles follow the same rule: "About us," unless the title is part of the website's top navigation (use title case: About Us).
- **Keep it concise:** Keep your page titles and headings brief and to the point. Aim for no more than 70 characters, including spaces.
- **Use descriptive language:** Make sure your title and headings accurately describe the content on the page. Use clear, concise language that accurately reflects the topic or subject matter.
- **Avoid using all caps:** Using all capital letters in titles and headings can make them harder to read and may give the impression of shouting. Stick to sentence case.
- **Use hierarchy:** Use different heading levels to create a clear hierarchy of information on your page. Typically, the main title will be an H1 heading, with subheadings using H2, H3, and so on.
- **Be consistent:** Make sure all of your page titles and headings follow the same style and formatting guidelines. This helps create consistency throughout your website and makes navigating easier for users.
- **Avoid punctuation:** Do not use periods (.) at the end of headings.

Titles optimized for SEO and accessibility

The best practice for website page titles in terms of length, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), and accessibility is to keep them concise, descriptive, and within a specific character limit.

For SEO purposes, keeping the title tag length between **50 and 60 characters** is recommended. This is because **search engines typically display up to 60 characters in search results**, so keeping the title within this limit ensures that the user fully displays and understands it. Additionally, including relevant keywords in the title tag can improve its ranking in search results.

For accessibility, it is essential to keep the title tag descriptive and informative, as it is often the first thing users with screen readers encounter. A well-crafted title tag can help these users understand the page's context and navigate the website more easily.

Overall, the best practice is to create a title that accurately reflects the page's content, uses relevant keywords, and is concise and informative.

Best practices for web accessibility

The WMO is committed to making its website accessible to all users, regardless of disability or assistive technology used.

This includes using clear and concise language, providing alternative text for non-text elements, and ensuring sufficient color contrast.

Plain language is essential for ensuring that web content is accessible to a diverse audience, including those with cognitive disabilities, non-native speakers, and people with low literacy levels. **Plain language involves using simple, clear and concise language that is easy to understand.**

Using plain language is especially important for international audiences, as it helps overcome language barriers and ensures that content can be easily translated into other languages.

Some best practices for using plain language include:

- Using short sentences and paragraphs
- Avoiding technical jargon and complex terms unless these terms are common knowledge
- Using active voice and avoiding passive voice
- Using simple and familiar words
- Breaking up complex ideas into smaller pieces

By following these best practices, the WMO can ensure that its website is accessible to all users and that its content is easily understood and acted upon.

Best practices for web links

- **Be descriptive:** The link text should accurately describe the content it links to. Avoid generic text like “click here” or “read more.” Instead, use descriptive text, such as “Download the latest [report on climate change](#)” or “For more information: [Water topic](#).”
- **External links placement:** Avoid adding external links in the first few paragraphs of a web page, as this may drive visitors away before they engage with the content. Instead, **place external links at the end of the text or web page**, where users can explore additional resources after reading the main content.
- **Use concise and clear text:** Keep the link text short and to the point.
- **Use meaningful and relevant URLs:** Avoid lengthy URLs with unnecessary characters or parameters.
- **Use internal links:** Internal links help users navigate your website and find related content.
- **Use external links sparingly:** External links should only be used when they provide valuable information unavailable on your website.

Internal vs. external links: When adding links to pages on the public website, exclude the domain from the URL (e.g., /about-us, not https://wmo.int/about-us). External links require the full URL, including the domain (e.g., <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange>).

Best practices for web images

Images are a key part of WMO’s website. They help tell our story, show the impact of our work, and make content more engaging. But to be effective, they must be relevant, high-quality, consistent, and accessible.

This guidance is for anyone choosing or uploading images to the WMO website, especially for news items.

Choose the right image

Use images that clearly reflect the topic or message. Images should support WMO’s main themes:

- Early warnings and disaster risk reduction

- Climate monitoring and action
- Water and hydrology
- Atmospheric science and innovation
- Capacity development and inclusion
- International cooperation in weather, water and climate

Whenever possible, show real people who benefit from WMO's work. Avoid abstract, decorative or symbolic visuals that don't add meaning.

Use authentic photos—ideally taken during WMO activities or submitted by Members. Avoid staged or overly polished stock images unless there is no alternative.

Image quality and size

All images must:

- Be at least **768 pixels wide**
- Use a **3:2 aspect ratio** (standard **landscape**)
- Be saved in a **compressed** format (JPEG or PNG) for fast page load

Large image files slow down the site. Use tools to reduce file size without compromising image quality.

Make images accessible

- **Don't place text directly on images.** Text in images can't be read by screen readers and can't be translated. Use regular text next to the image instead.
- Add **alt text** (a short description of the image). The website CMS may generate it automatically, but it's your job to **review and edit it** to ensure accuracy.
- Add **captions and descriptions** when the image carries important context, especially for:
 - **Group photos:** Include names, titles and event details (e.g., "WMO Executive Council meeting, Geneva, 2024. Left to right: Dr. Jane Doe, Secretary-General; Mr. John Smith, President.")
 - **Charts and infographics:** Summarize the main message (e.g., "Global temperature trends show a 1.2°C increase from 1880 to 2023.")
 - **Maps and satellite images:** Indicate region and date (e.g., "Satellite image of Hurricane Ian approaching Florida on 28 September 2022.")

- **Event or historical photos:** Add context (e.g., “World Meteorological Day celebration, WMO Headquarters, 2023.”)

Credits and licensing

Every image used on the WMO website must be appropriately credited, and permission to use it must be clear.

Only use images that are:

- **Owned by WMO**, including those taken by staff or consultants who have given written permission to publish them
- **From the official WMO Flickr gallery:**
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/worldmeteorologicalorganization/>
- **Shared by trusted partners or Members**, with confirmation that WMO has permission to publish them
- **From free-to-use libraries** such as [Pexels](#) or [Unsplash](#), which offer high-quality Creative Commons-licensed images for editorial use
- **From Adobe Stock, Canva, or other official image tools** licensed for WMO use.

Do not use images found on the internet unless you have confirmed licensing and permission. Google image search does not mean the image is free to use.

Examples of proper image credits:

- WMO/Photographer’s Name
- NASA/Photographer’s Name
- UN Photo/Photographer’s Name
- Adobe Stock/Photographer’s Name
- AI-generated/WMO

When in doubt, check with the WMO web or communications team before publishing.

AI-generated images

AI-generated images may be used for illustrative purposes only—not to depict real people, events, or places.

If using AI-generated images:

- Check carefully for visual errors (e.g., extra fingers, distorted faces)
- Clearly mark the credit as “AI-generated/WMO”

- Never use to imply something is real when it's not

Keep it consistent

Use similar framing, lighting and style across images. This gives the website a more professional, cohesive look. Avoid mixing overly stylized images with real photos unless clearly justified.

Quick checklist for images

- Is the image relevant and helpful to the story?
- Is it at least 768px wide and optimized for web?
- No text embedded in the image?
- Alt text added (and reviewed)?
- Caption and description added if needed?
- Source credited clearly?
- Proper rights or permission confirmed?
- AI-generated images clearly marked?

Future Developments: WMO Content Design System

A **more detailed Content Design System** is currently in preparation. This system will provide **comprehensive guidelines** covering all aspects of web operations at WMO, including, but not limited to:

- **Approval processes** for content publication
- **Web governance** to ensure consistency and compliance
- **Quality control** measures for accuracy and accessibility
- **Editorial workflows** to streamline content updates
- **Technical guidelines** for multimedia, metadata, and SEO optimization

The **Strategic Communication Office (SCO)** provides overall guidance on **web content and digital products** to ensure alignment with WMO's strategic objectives and communication standards.

This future resource will serve as a **central reference** for all WMO web editors and contributors, ensuring a **high standard of content creation and management** across the organization.

For further updates, contact the **WMO web team** at website@wmo.int.

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