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Make the Internet Work for You:
Best Practices for Web Content and Editing

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Is your department using social media?

Does your department or club have an active facebook page that is not listed here:
http://www.citadel.edu/root/connect-with-the-citadel/64-info/2639-the-citadel-on-facebook ? If so,
please email the URL for your facebook page to kara.klein@citadel.edu, and we will add your page to
our social media directory.

Routine checkups for your website

We recommend making a note in your calendar to make a monthly review and cleanup of your
department's website. The Citadel's website is the college's primary communications tool for global
contact with all of our audiences. As such, it is important that each page includes current and accurate
information. Once a month, read through your website content carefully and **remove or update any
links to outdated academic calendars, text that refers to "upcoming events" that have passed,
etc.** Sometimes other departments (or external organizations) delete or move some of their web
content, causing the link on your website to break. During your monthly cleanup, please **click on each
of your links to assure they still work**.

Tips and "best practice" ideas to consider when updating your website:

"Spring clean" your website:
If you have any unused or unpublished articles in your department's article "category", please delete
them from the "Article Manager".

If you have any unused or outdated images, PDFs, word documents etc. in your department's "media
manager folder," please delete them from your folder.

HTTP://
When inserting a link into one of your articles, always include http:// in the URL

Using the "Return key" in Joomla:
Some computers will automatically insert a double space (paragraph spacing) when using the "return key" in the Article Editor. If this is the case, and you need to insert a single space, **hold down the Shift key will hitting Return.**

Using photos on your webpages:
Instead of resizing your photograph in the Joomla Article Editor, please resize your images (using Microsoft Paint, Adobe Photoshop, or any photo editing software you have access to) *before* uploading it to your department's media manager folder. For example, photographs that you download from your camera and onto your computer may be 5184 x 3456 pixels in dimension, but your webpages can only handle images up to **650 pixels wide**. **Resizing the photo before uploading it to your website will make your page load faster.**

Toggle the "spellchecker" tool in the Article Editor screen:
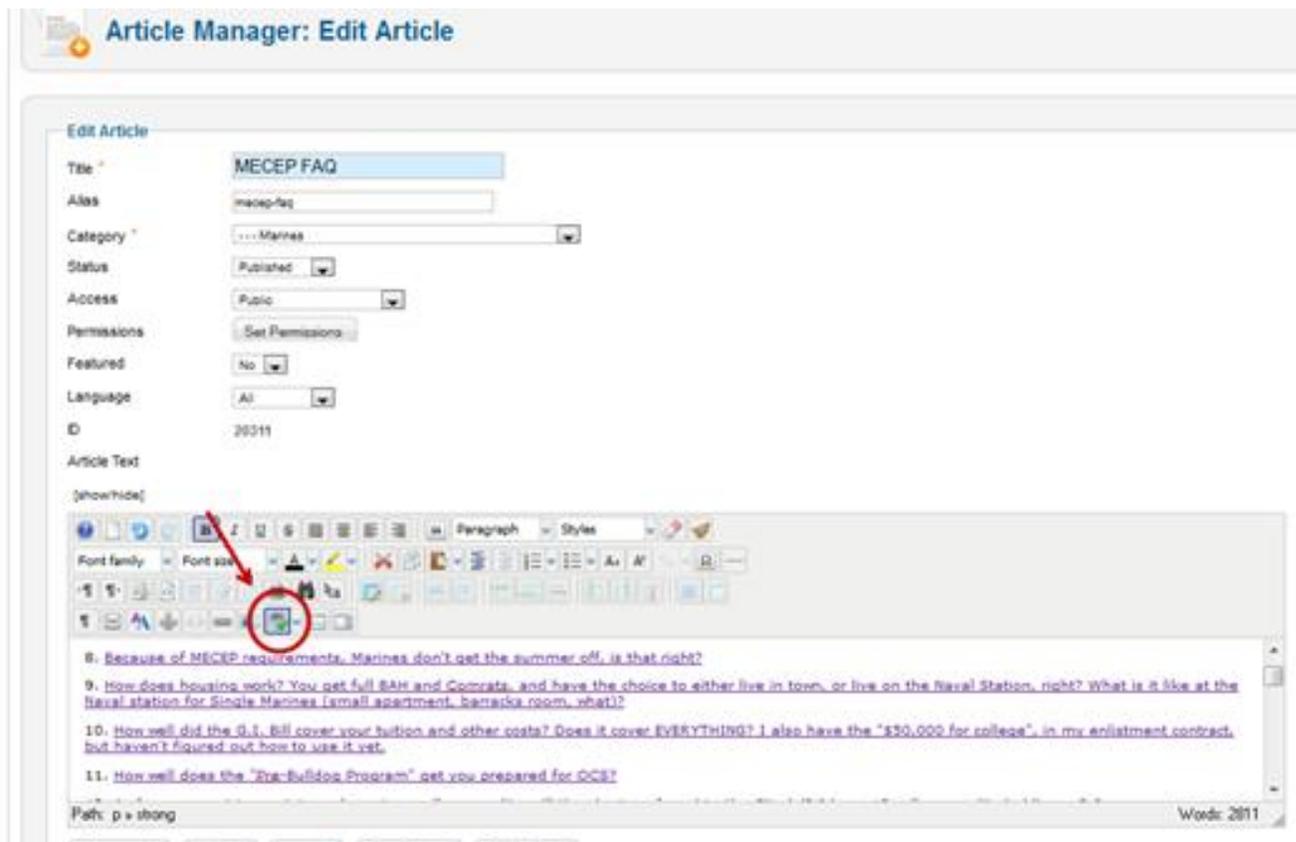
Naming files for the web:
When naming the photographs, Word documents, .pdfs etc. that you plan to use on your website, **use user-friendly, descriptive file names**. Try to avoid default names (DSC0239) or *acronyms* (csba). Please also **refrain from using a "space" in your filename**.

> **Avoid:** ENG101 intro engineering syllabus.pdf
> **Use:** ENG101-intro-engineering-syllabus.pdf

Moving/renaming files in your media manager folder:
It is important to understand that if you re-name or move your images, pdfs and other files, any link to that file on your website will break. For this reason, it is important to carefully name and organize your files from the start. If re-naming/moving a file is absolutely necessary, be sure to adjust the links on your website accordingly.

Website outline and content:
Ask others in your department who aren't as familiar with the department's website (or perhaps one of your students) to browse your site and let you know if anything seems missing, confusing or out of place. Consider their feedback when updating your website.

Take a moment and think about the types of questions you receive most often on the phone. Could these phone calls have been avoided if certain information had been on your website? Or maybe this information *is* on your website, but it's located in a place that is hard for your visitors to find. Consider these things when updating your website as well.

Think about the user – when you click on a menu item (from the menu on the left side of your page)…is the article that appears the type of article the user would expect to see (based on the wording in the left-side menu)?

Informational PDFs:
Imagine that you are browsing your favorite webpage, or maybe reading a news story on a local news site. When you click on a headline, would you rather that story open in Adobe Acrobat on your computer, or would you rather read the story directly on their webpage. There's a very good chance you'd prefer the latter.

That being said, if you have useful information in a PDF, and want to share this information with your website's visitors, try to do the following:

Instead of simply uploading the PDF to your department's media manager folder and inserting a link to that PDF on one of your web pages, **copy & paste the information from that PDF directly into one of your "Articles", and link to that webpage instead of to the PDF.**

Not only will your users enjoy their experience on your website more, but it will be easier for you to update this information in the future. If you simply insert a link to a PDF, but then you accidentally delete that PDF from your computer….you will no longer have the ability to update this content without retyping it all from scratch.

Avoid using "click here": The clickable text (which usually appears blue and underlined in the article editor) that users click on to visit the links on your website is called *anchor text*. Try to use **keyword-rich/descriptive anchor text**, and avoid using "Click here".

>**Avoid:** <u>Click here</u> to see the schedule of events for Parents' Weekend.
>**Use:** The <u>schedule of events for Parents' Weekend</u> can be viewed here.

A "Uniform" citadel.edu:
The Citadel uses a specific font (Georgia) and font colors (in most cases, a specific shade of navy blue) on each of its pages. This consistency makes the website look clean, and strengthens the college's "brand". If you type new text in one of your articles, your page will automatically assume The Citadel's default font settings when you save your page. However, if you copy and paste any text from an email or Word document into your article, the colors and fonts you copied from will override the default settings.

In order to avoid this issue, please type your content directly into the Article Editor instead of copy/pasting. **If copy/pasting is necessary, paste your content into the "Notepad" software** (which comes free with Microsoft Windows and can be found by clicking "Start > All Programs > Accessories > Notepad"), **and then copy/paste from Notepad into the Article Editor.** (Notepad will "strip" your content of the colors and fonts of your text, so that it can assume the website's default settings.)

Use descriptive "Alternate Text" for the images on your website:
When inserting an image to your website, be sure to fill out the "Alternate Text" box in the "Image Manager" window with descriptive text that explains what the photograph is of. This will accomplish three main things:

1. If for any reason the user's web browser is unable to display the image, it will display your descriptive text instead of a big red "x".
2. Google search engines cannot "see", they can only "read." Have you ever "googled" your own name, and pictures of you appear in the search results? Without alternate text, the search engine would have no idea what is in your photograph.
3. If any of your users are visually impaired it is likely they are browsing the web using a "Screen reader." This tool will read aloud to them what is on your webpage. Without alternate text, this tool will be unable to report to the user what is in your photographs.

When inserting this photograph:

Be sure to insert alternate text similar to the following:

Inserting links:
When you are inserting a link to a *.PDF* file or to a *website that is not a part of The Citadel's current web template*, **change the link "Target" from "--Not Set--" to "Open in new window"**. This will open the link in a new tab on the user's web browser (Explorer, Firefox, Chrome, etc.)

If the user opens a PDF or non-Citadel website in the *same tab*, there's a good chance they will "X" out of that page, and then they will no longer have the ability to use the "back" button to return to your website. But if the PDF or non-Citadel website is opened in a *new tab* and the user "X"s out of the page, your website will still be available to them in their original tab.

Call to action:
Does your department have a specific call to action? Do you want users to apply, request more information, donate, or send you information? If so…make it easy for them to do so! Make sure there are easy-to-find links to these action items or better yet, an eye catching button!

Keep your users interested!
A page (Article) that has nothing but a list of links may seem overwhelming or boring to a user. If you want them to click on a link, you'll need to entice them with an intro paragraph that describes what the links are for.

Try and keep content short and punchy—tell users what they need and want to know, and no more. Web users are in a hurry and want instant gratification.

If your page must be long and text heavy, try to break it up by inserting photographs, bullets or by adjusting the appearance of your sub-headlines. Modern day users will scan a page to try and pick out the piece of information they're looking for, so make it easy for them to do so. To adjust your sub-head appearance, highlight the sub-head text and select "bold", or the "H3" (Header3) tool shown below:

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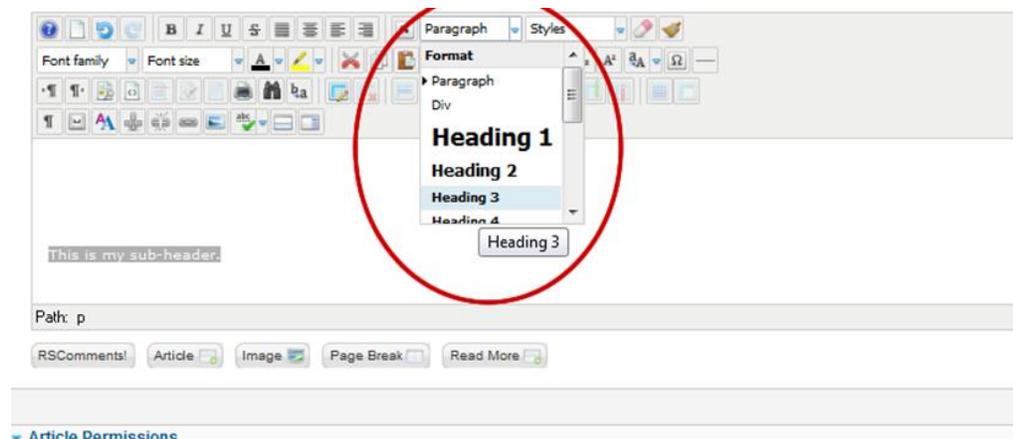
If you have questions about any of these web-editing tips, contact Kara Klein in the Office of External Affairs
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