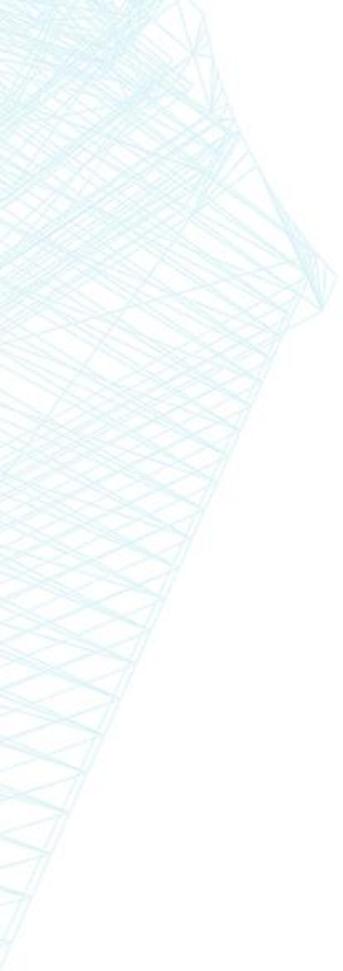# EDITING FOR THE WEB AND MOBILE APPS
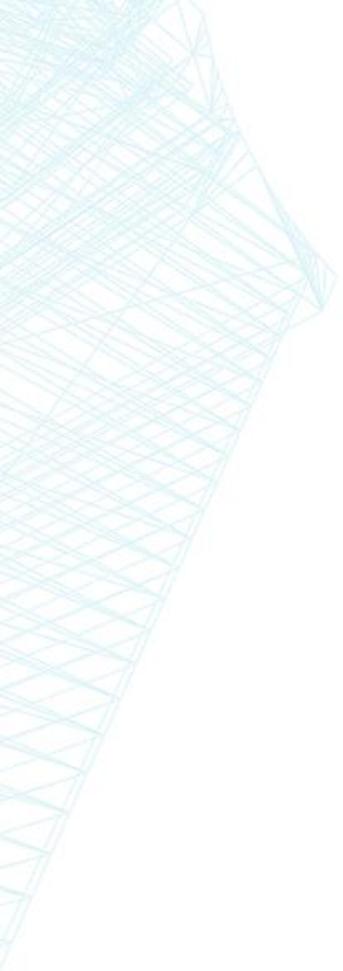
Wireframes and mockups and UX — oh my!

THINGS WE'LL TALK ABOUT TODAY

- Guidelines for editing mobile app and web copy

- How editing mobile app copy differs from other types of editing

- Mobile app development workflows and where editors fit within this process

- Tools that copywriters, designers, and User Experience (UX) specialists use to design mobile apps and webpages

ABOUT ME

- I'm a graduate of Ryerson's publishing program.

- I've been building WordPress websites since 2010, both for myself and freelance clients.

- I've written and edited copy both in-house and as a freelancer since 2010, and have updated Content Management Systems for companies like HSBC and TD.

- I'm now an Intermediate Editor of User Experience and Design with Rogers Communications and have done editorial work with Rogers on mobile content/apps since early 2015.
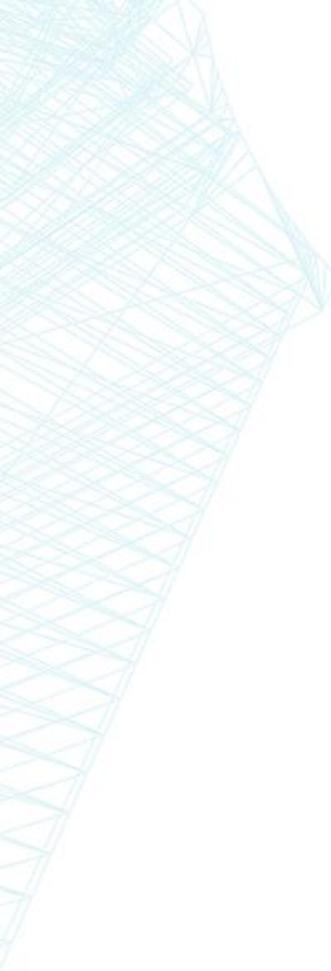
MOBILE WEB AND APP STATISTICS

- In 2015, the CRTC reported that 20.4% of Canadian households used wireless phones exclusively compared to landlines. ([Source](#))

- In 2015, 68% of the time Canadians spent on social networks and 41% spent on online retail was through smartphones or tablets. (ComScore, 2015 Canada Digital Future in Focus)

- The same report said that 1.5 million Canadians accessed the internet *exclusively* through mobile devices. (ComScore)

- 48% of Canadians access the web through *both* their desktops and mobile devices. (ComScore)
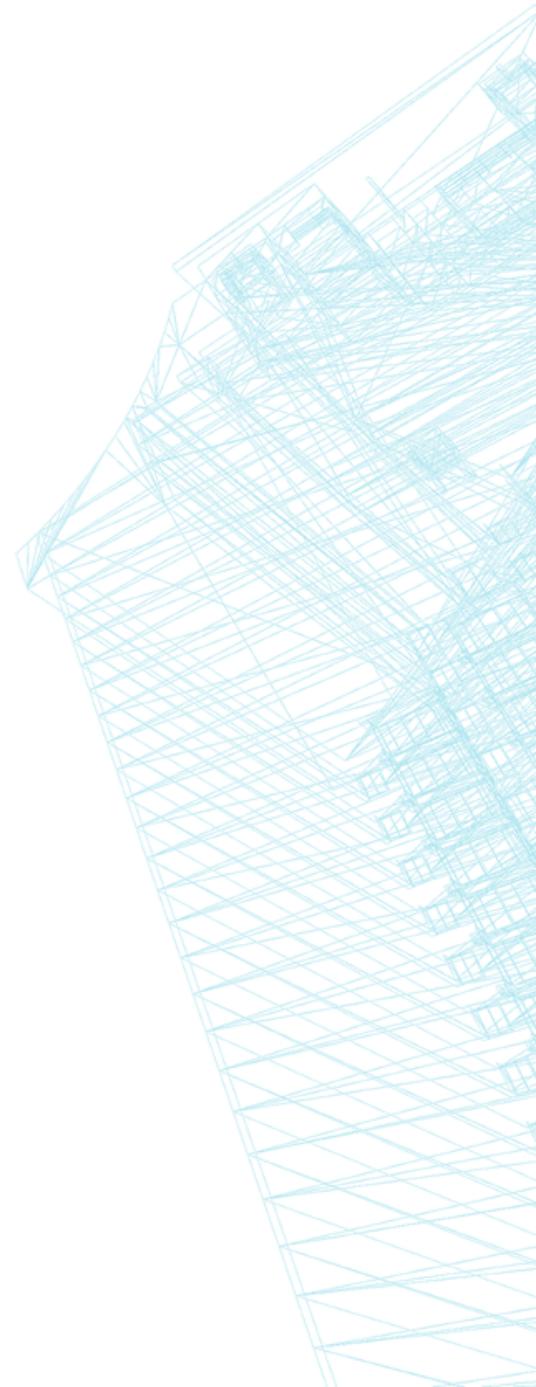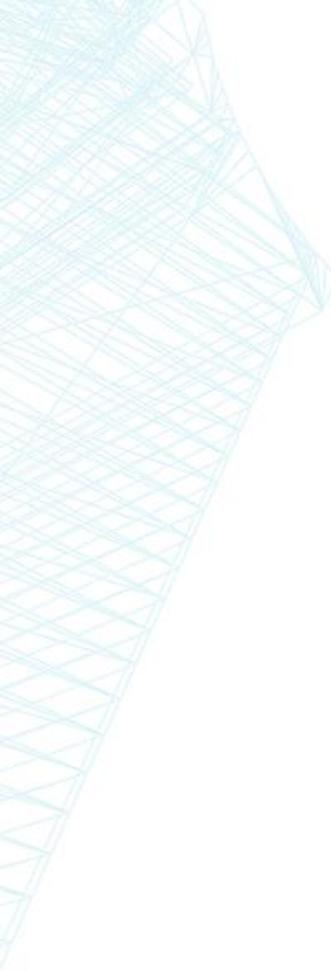
Long story short….

THE MOBILE WEB IS *REALLY* IMPORTANT!

However, many sites still think of desktop computers as the primary platform.

This is a problem. It's far more flexible to adopt a mobile-first content strategy.

But what does *that* mean?

RULES FOR A MOBILE-FIRST CONTENT STRATEGY

- Don't think of your mobile site as a stripped-down version of your "real" site. In the words of Karen McGrane, "aim for content parity between your desktop and your mobile experiences—maybe not exactly the same content presented exactly the same way, but essentially the same experience." (Source)

- Use teasers and metadata info smartly to give readers a quick idea of what to expect when they visit a new page.

- Use lists and links to highlight important words and make mobile pages easy to understand.
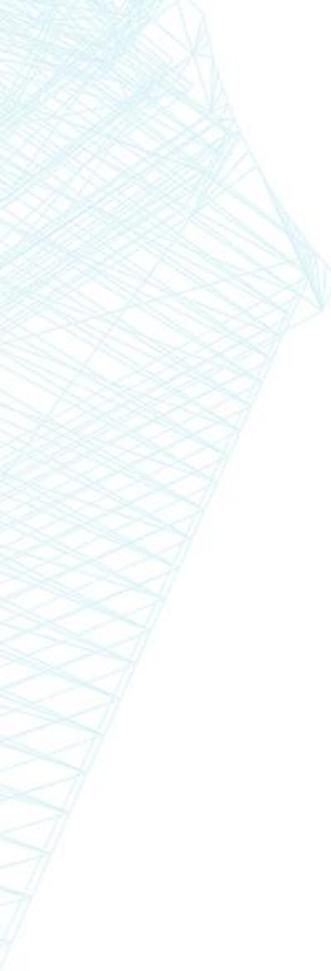
MORE RULES FOR A MOBILE-FIRST CONTENT STRATEGY

- Think of "content packages" rather than different pages/blobs of copy

  - Eg: Multiple headlines and teasers of different lengths, or multiple image sizes to accommodate different platforms and screen sizes

- Make your content **reusable** across several interfaces/platforms:

  - Don't cherry-pick content for the mobile experience and force users to miss out on important content/features that are available only on the "full" desktop website

- Understand user navigation patterns so visitors can find what they need using a minimal number of taps
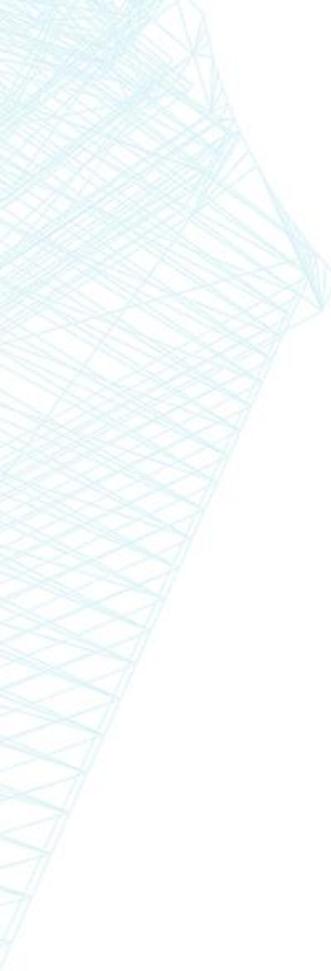
# HOW IS EDITING WEB AND MOBILE COPY DIFFERENT FROM OTHER PROJECTS?

A lot of the rules behind what makes "good" copy good are the same — like an understanding of logic and structure, plain language, and the active voice. However, be prepared for:

- **Iterative processes:** You will need to go back and revise copy/pages to update pages after doing usability testing or as new features are introduced.

- **Learning more about technology:** Conversion rates? Analytics? Content Strategy? Metadata? Usability testing? These concepts are critical for long-term success.

WHAT TYPES OF CONTENT ARE THERE?

Many types — not just traditional long-form text!

- Landing pages

- Signup and feedback forms

- Maps

- FAQs

- Surveys

- Error messages

- Emergency alerts

- Loading screens

- Emails to clients/customers

- Legal disclaimers/T&Cs

- Images (e.g.: alt tags, captions, and other descriptive information for screen readers)
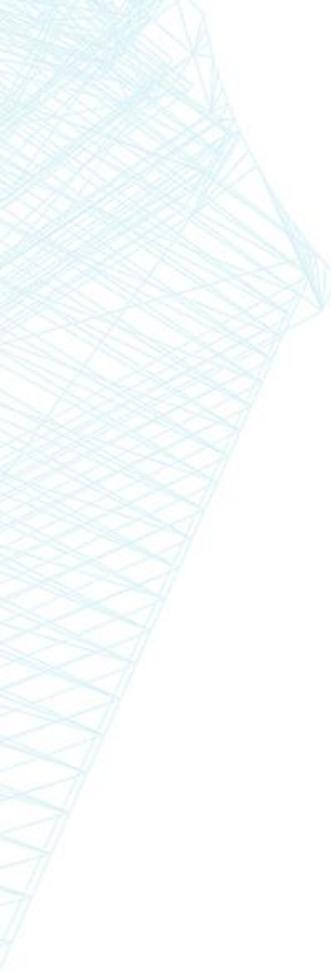
WHO HAS A SAY OVER CONTENT?

Working with mobile copy is a group process, which means many others could be involved in refining the content, such as:

- Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)

- Project managers

- Copywriters

- UX designers

- Graphic designers

- Branding and marketing professionals

- Lawyers

- Translators

- End users (who take part in usability testing)

DEVELOPMENT CYCLES: PUTTING CONTENT IN CONTEXT

Content doesn't exist in a vacuum. In the mobile context, understanding the software development life cycle is key.

- **Inception:** When the idea behind the app gets drawn out. Here, app creators determine the app's purpose, potential reach, competitive advantage, etc.

- **Design:** When the app's general layout and interface is first created and tested. This is the fun part where *we* come in!

- **Development:** When the app is actually built, coded, etc.

- **Testing and QA:** This is when developers and others identify and resolve bugs or do user testing. We might be doing some last-minute cleanup here.

- **Launch and distribution:** A wild app appears! It's super effective and users love it! (Or not.)
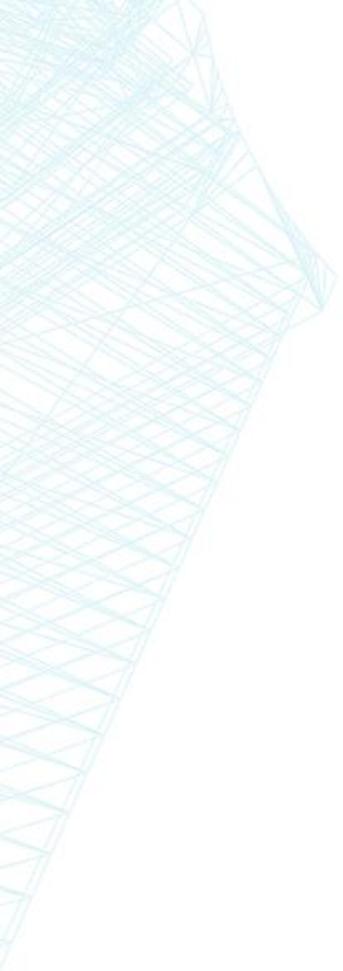
SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT METHODOLOGIES

This development cycle can be implemented using several methods. Here are three:

Waterfall method: The development cycle consists of one-off, fixed stages resulting in one big "deliverable" at the end of the project timeline.
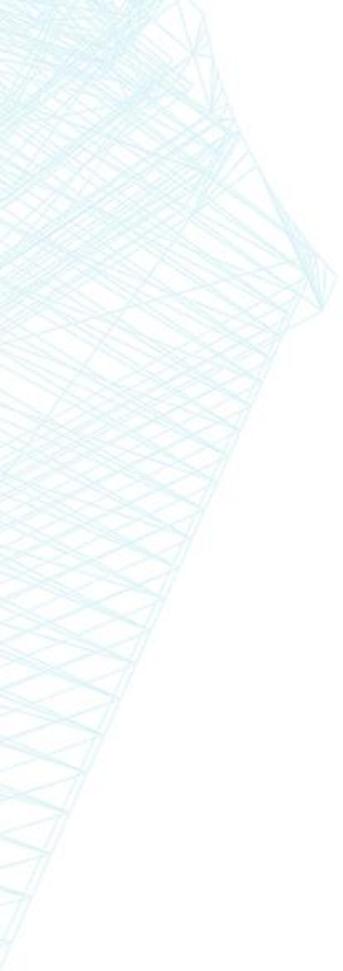
Agile method: Instead of developing one big thing, you develop many small things and constantly test them, fitting the pieces together as you go.

Spiral method: A combination of the two, where prototypes of a project are constantly refined based on user/customer feedback.

UNDERSTANDING WORKFLOWS

Now that we've got some of that techie stuff out of the way…
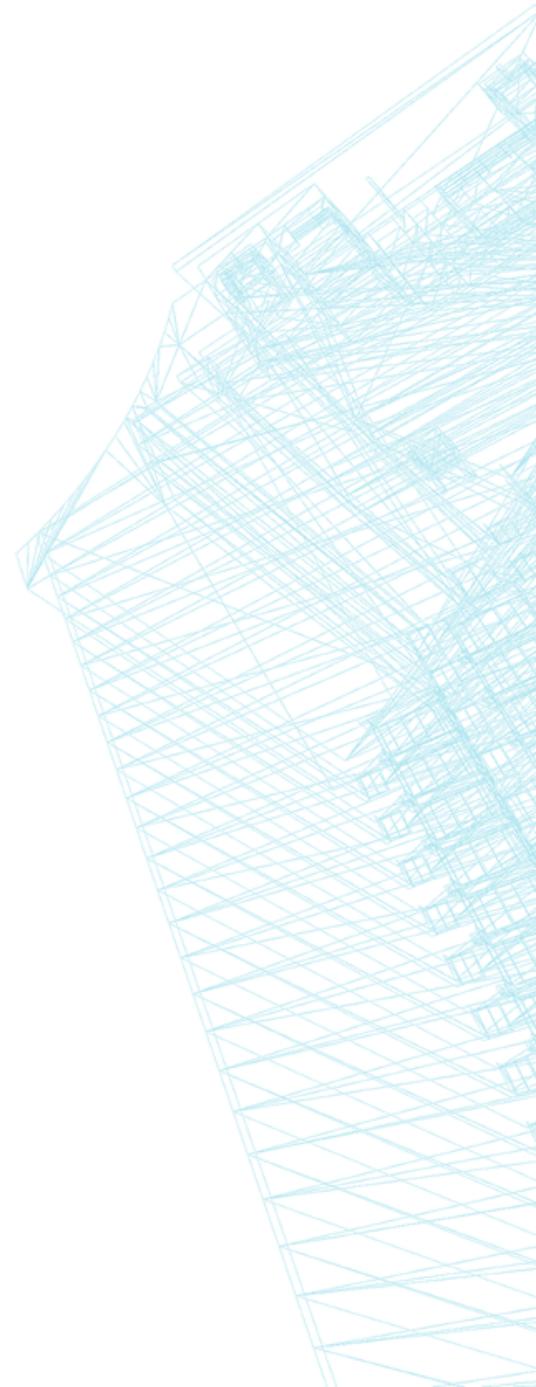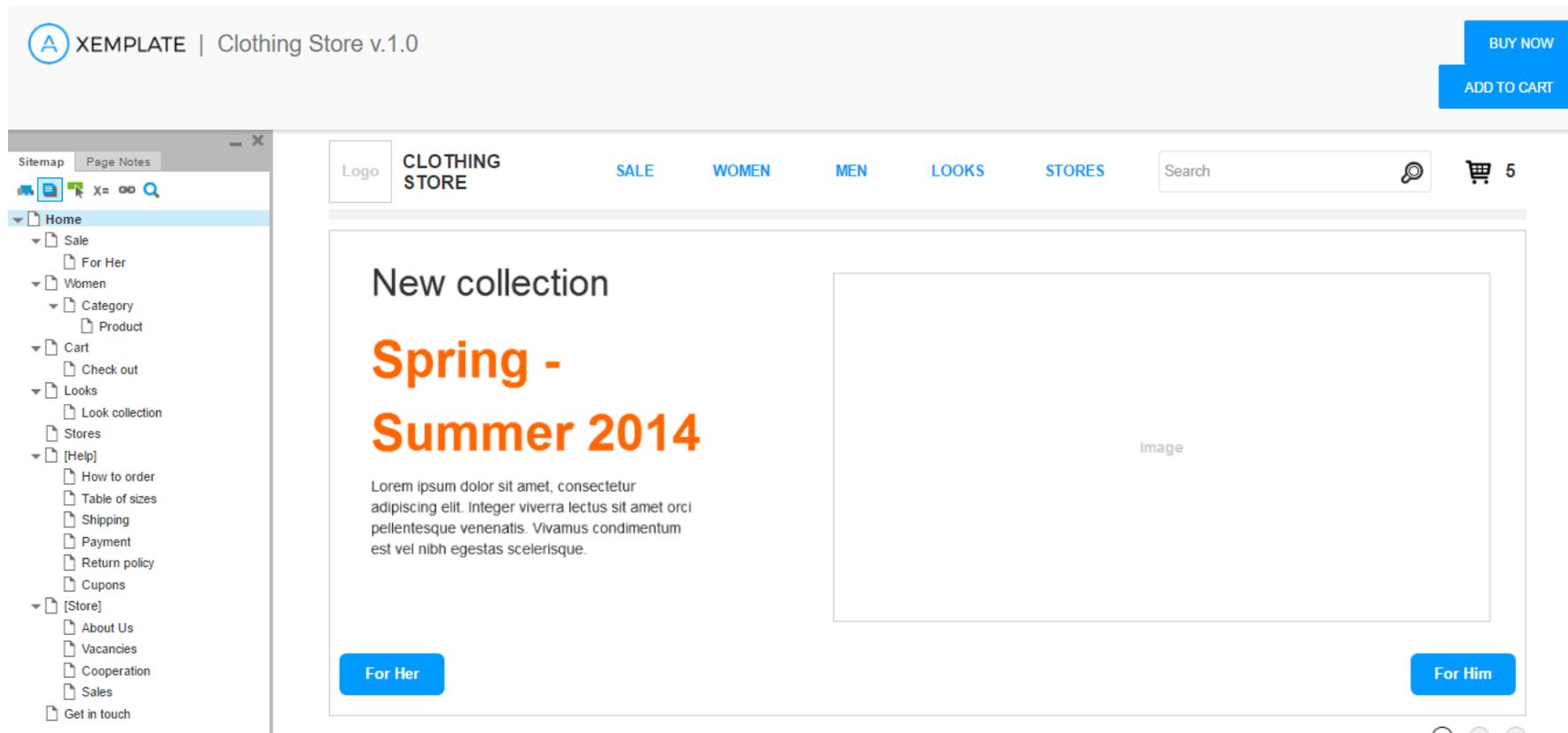
WORKFLOWS: UX DESIGN

User Experience (UX) designers review an app's needs/requirements to determine how the user should interact with it. For example:

- What will the total flow of all possible/required screens look like?

- What possible errors or failure states will users encounter?

- How will the screens be laid out? Where should elements like headings and buttons be placed?

- How will the proposed layout appear on different devices of different sizes?

After answering these questions, UX designers then create a **wireframe** — a blueprint for the app/screen.

AN EXAMPLE WIREFRAME

Source: https://axemplate.com/download/demo/clothing_store/#p=home

ANOTHER EXAMPLE WIREFRAME

Source: http://axure.nockles.com/xyz_diagnostic_tool/

WORKFLOWS: COPYWRITING

Depending on the project, writing and editing can be done in one stage or in separate stages. Writing the copy involves:

- Reviewing the creative brief to determine what key messages to include

- Reviewing the wireframe to see what page elements to incorporate into the copy deck (eg: breadcrumbs, headings, buttons, labels, maps)

- Ensuring that the copy follows brand/style guidelines

- Reviewing the copy with other parties (eg: graphic designers and SMEs) to ensure accuracy and visual integrity
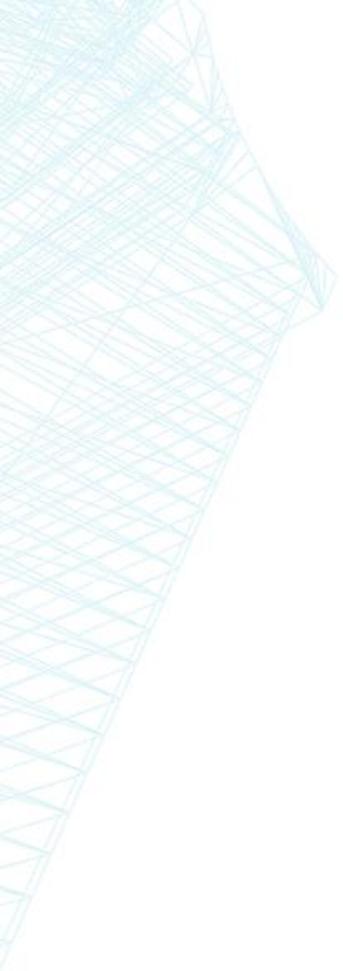
WORKFLOWS: EDITING

We've already discussed mobile content strategy. However, don't forget nitty-gritty things like:

- Checking that screens/sections shown in the wireframe are accounted for in the copy deck (though some may be omitted from the deck on purpose)

- Ensuring that calls to action (eg: "Sign Up" or "Buy Now") are clear and succinct

- Removing repetition from longer-form documents like FAQs

- Querying confusing or unclear copy so stakeholders can give feedback

- Following brand/style guidelines
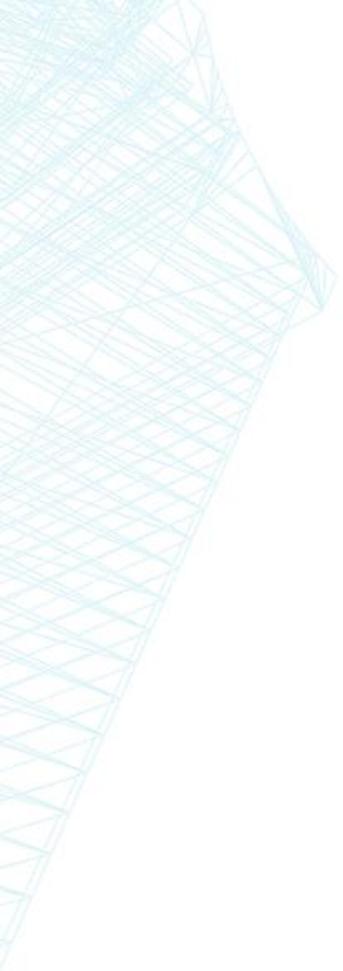
# MORE RULES FOR EDITING MOBILE AND WEB COPY

▪ Put the most important information at the top of the page.

▪ Use plain language and the active voice.

▪ Be aware of character-count limitations for page elements like headings and buttons.

▪ Make content easy to understand at first glance — avoid jargon and marketing fluff.

▪ Have clear brand standards and guidelines in place.

Most importantly….

BE BRIEF!

Brevity is not only the soul of wit — it's **imperative** in an environment where both space and attention are limited.
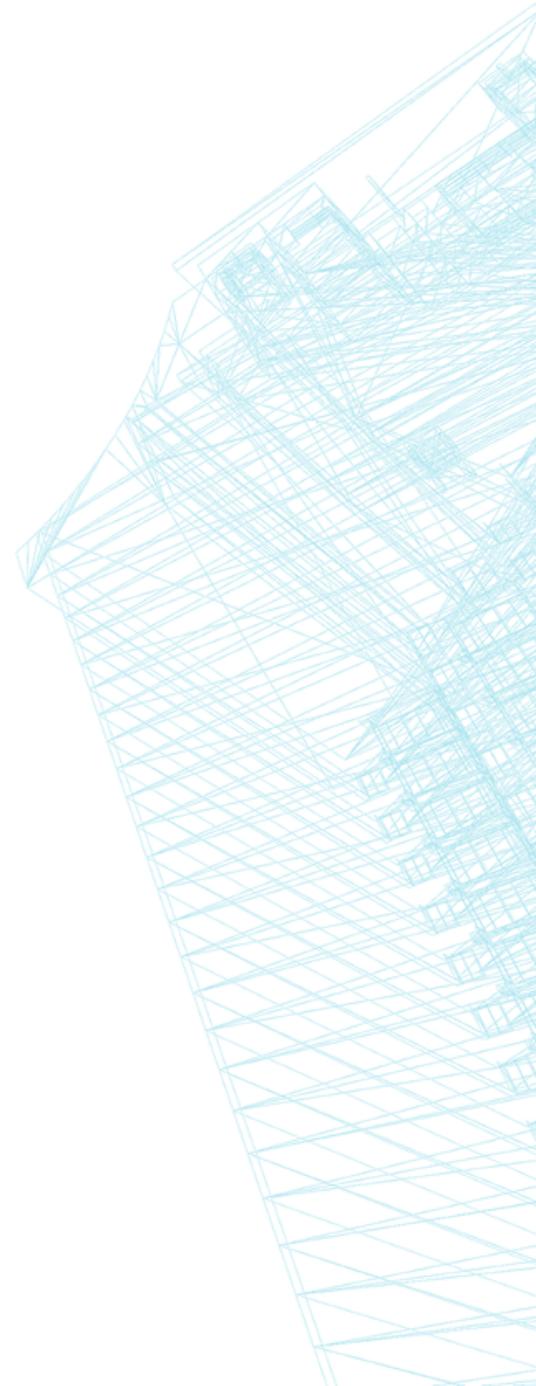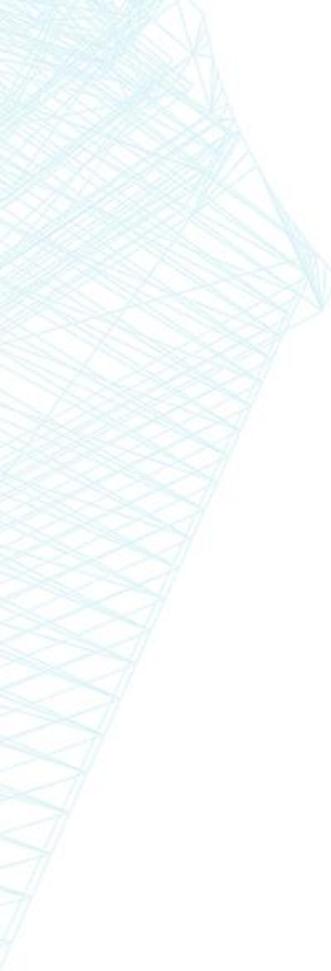
WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN CONTEXT?

- Remember that headings, labels, and buttons may have character count limits to fit mobile screens.

- Use keyword-rich copy to help readers orient themselves quickly on the page.

- Determine what primary, secondary, and supporting messages you want each page/screen to deliver to the reader.

- Recognize that readers "scan" the page, instead of reading all the way through.

  - However, mobile readers don't read in the traditional F-shaped pattern of desktop readers — instead they stick to the "golden triangle" formed by the top corners and centre of the page. (Peter Marsh, Newscycle Solutions)
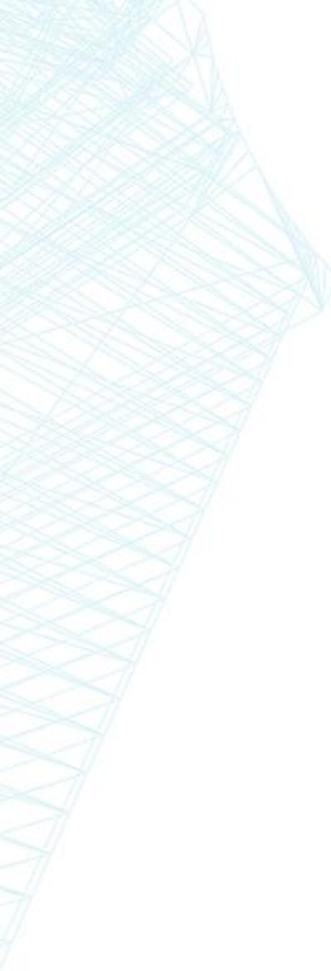
WORKFLOWS: OTHER ASPECTS OF COPY

Just because you've edited the copy doesn't mean it's ready for prime-time. Here are few more steps you may need to consider:

- **Legal review:** Does the copy include any promises or claims made to customers? If so, lawyers may need to add disclaimers or adjust the copy to meet legal guidelines.

- **Translation:** This is especially important in Canada since French phrases are often longer than English ones.

- **Brand approval:** Are trademarked terms formatted properly? Are slogans or logos incorporated according to brand guidelines? Does the copy fit the company's "voice"?
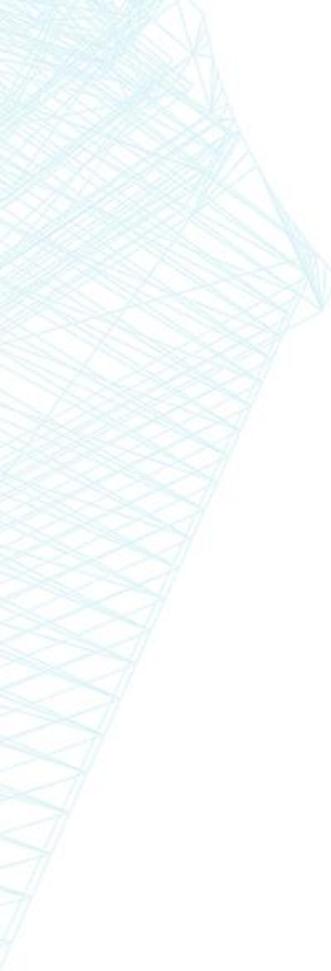
WORKFLOWS: GRAPHIC DESIGN

Design choices also affect copy:

- Mockups (prototypes of the final design) may show that certain page elements may be too large, requiring shorter text.

- Design elements may need to be rearranged on the page, so the copy deck might need updates to match.

- Extra copy with further information (eg: disclaimers or eligibility requirements for certain products) may need to be included in pop-ups or other interactive display tools.
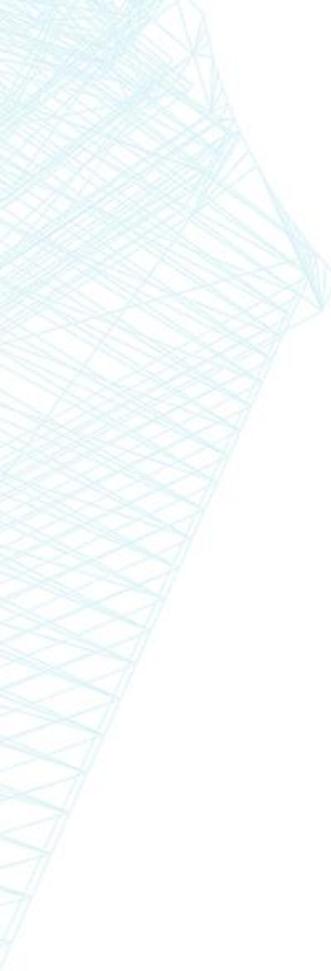
WORKFLOWS: TESTING AND QA

Once the site or app has been coded, you may be involved in making sure it works properly. The final stages of QA may involve:

- Creating small but important pieces of copy that developers realized were missing

- Changing copy based upon further review by stakeholders

- Flagging and resolving discrepancies between the approved copy and the copy visible on the test site
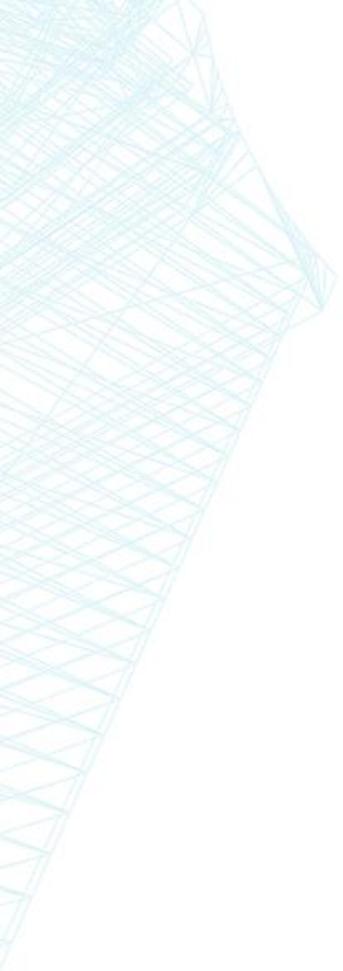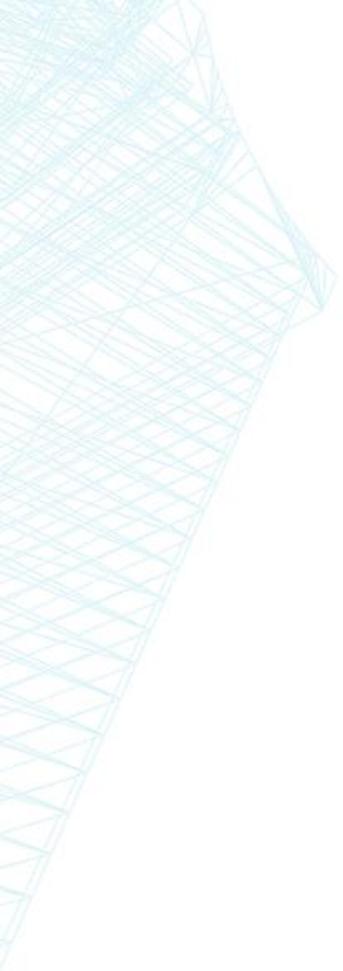
TOOLS USED IN CREATING APPS

Wireframes and mockups:

- Axure (www.axure.com)

- Balsamiq (www.balsamiq.com)

- Microsoft Visio

- InVision (www.invisionapp.com)

- Photoshop

Copy decks:

- Word

- Excel

BEFORE I STARTED, I WISH I'D KNOWN ABOUT…

1. **The fact that mobile copy is not a one-and-done deal:** Writing copy for mobile apps and websites is an iterative process. As features get added, removed, or updated, you'll need to update your copy to match.

2. **The importance of version control:** If copy gets updated so often and by so many people (marketers, project managers, copywriters, lawyers, etc), there's a high risk of working on the wrong file. Make sure that your colleagues know what version to use!

3. **The number of other people involved in the process:** There's more to creating a site than pressing "publish". Each role contributes something important to the development process.
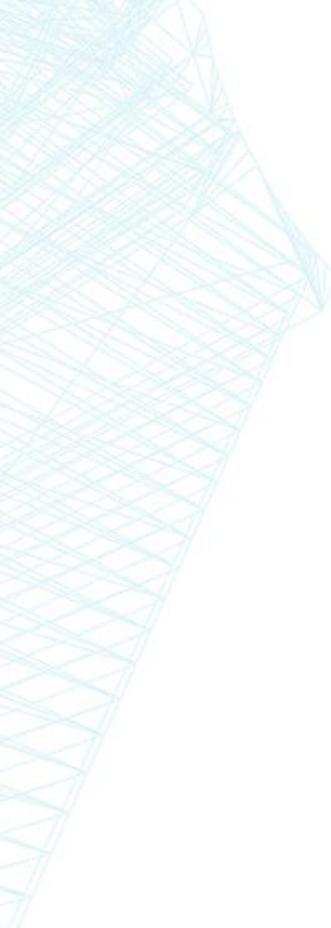
USEFUL RESOURCES

- A List Apart: www.alistapart.com

- *Content Strategy for Mobile* by Karen McGrane

- Smashing Magazine: www.smashingmagazine.com

- *Nicely Said: Writing for the Web with Style and Purpose* by Kate Kiefer Lee and Nicole Fenton

- Usability Matters: www.usabilitymatters.com/

- *Don't Make Me Think* and *Rocket Surgery Made Easy* by Steve Krug

- GatherContent blog: https://gathercontent.com/blog/
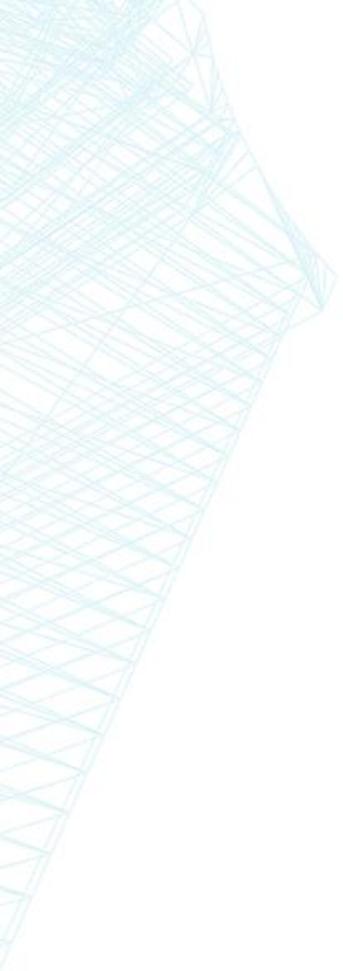
THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!

Any questions?

Contact me:

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