

Website and Blog Copywriting

The Ultimate Guide to Engaging and Converting Readers

Gaurav Tiwari

Second Edition

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4 The Homepage

A visitor lands on your homepage, reads “We help businesses grow with innovative digital solutions” and still can’t tell whether you build websites, run ads or sell accounting software. They scroll a little, see 3 icons with one-word labels and leave. The design was fine, but the copy never told them who the site was for or where to go next.

I think the homepage has a smaller job than most people give it. It should help the right visitor recognize themselves within a few seconds, and then it should send them to the page that answers their question. I want to start with what that job looks like, because every line on the page depends on it.

What a Homepage Has to Do

A homepage is the one page that serves everybody. On a single day, your homepage can get all of these visitors:

- A first-time visitor arrives from a search result.
- A client comes looking for the login link.
- A journalist checks who you are.
- A regular reader wants your latest post.

A landing page can speak to one visitor about one offer. The homepage can’t do that, so I give it 2 jobs instead:

- **It confirms relevance.** The visitor should know what you offer and who it’s for before they scroll.
- **It routes.** Each kind of visitor should find a clear path to the page that serves them, such as a service page, a product, the blog or the contact form.

The selling happens further along, on the pages the homepage sends people to. When a homepage tries to close the sale for every visitor at once, it turns into a long list of everything, and the visitor is left to do the sorting.

Before you write a single line, I recommend writing down the 3 or 4 kinds of visitors your site gets. I walked you through most of this in Chapter 2. Here you only need the short version: who they are and what they came to find.

Visitor	The question in their head	Where the homepage should send them
First-time visitor with a problem	"Is this for someone like me?"	The service or product page that matches their problem
Visitor comparing options	"Why you and not the others?"	Case studies, a comparison or a "how it works" page
Ready to buy or hire	"What does it cost and what happens next?"	Pricing, booking or the contact form
Returning client or reader	"Where is the thing I used last time?"	The login, the blog or the newsletter archive

The First Screen

The first screen is everything a visitor sees before they scroll. On a phone, that is often just a headline, 1 or 2 lines of text and a button. I treat that small space as the place where 4 questions get answered:

- What is this?
- Who is it for?
- What will it do for me?
- What should I do next?

A visitor who gets clear answers keeps reading. A visitor who gets a slogan, a stock photo and half a button generally leaves, because hunting for the answer costs more effort than pressing the back button.

Most first screens need only 4 pieces of copy to answer those questions:

- **Headline.** The headline says what you offer and who it's for, in the words your visitor would use.

- **Supporting line.** This line gives the outcome and adds the detail that makes the headline believable.
- **Primary button.** The button names the next step and tells the visitor what actually happens when they click it.
- **One piece of proof.** You add it when the claim needs support right away. It could be a client name the visitor will recognize, a number you can back up or a short quote from someone like them.

Here is what that looks like for a small web studio. I made this studio up, so please treat the details as an example.

BEFORE

Welcome to Pixel Perfect Studio

We are a passionate team of creative professionals delivering innovative digital solutions that help businesses of all sizes thrive online.

Learn More

AFTER

WordPress websites for dental and physiotherapy clinics

Fast, accessible sites that let patients book an appointment from their phone. Built and looked after by a 3-person studio in Columbus, Ohio.

See clinic websites we've built

Trusted by 14 clinics across Ohio and Michigan.

Here is what I changed and why:

- The headline now names the product (WordPress websites) and the buyer (clinics). The old one named only the studio.
- I removed "passionate", "innovative" and "of all sizes". These words fit every agency, so they tell the visitor nothing.

- The supporting line now gives the outcome a clinic owner cares about, which is patients booking from a phone.
- “Learn More” became a button that says where it goes.
- I kept the proof line specific enough to check. “Trusted by hundreds of businesses” would ask the visitor to take it on faith.

Writing the Headline

The headline does most of the work on the first screen, and it’s the line people are most tempted to make clever. “Elevate your digital presence” sounds polished, but a visitor can’t act on it because it doesn’t say what you sell.

I would make every homepage headline name 2 things: what you offer and who it’s for. The outcome can sit in the headline or in the supporting line under it, whichever reads more naturally. These patterns work for most sites:

- **Offer and audience.** “Bookkeeping for freelance designers” tells the visitor what you sell and who you sell it to.
- **Outcome and audience.** “Get your Shopify store found on Google without hiring an agency” leads with the result the store owner wants.
- **Offer and problem.** “WordPress maintenance for sites that can’t afford downtime” names the service and the worry behind buying it.
- **Topic and reader, for a blog.** “Plain-English money advice for first-time freelancers” tells a new reader what they’ll learn and whether it’s meant for them.

I recommend a quick test that catches most weak headlines. If a competitor could put your headline on their homepage without changing a word, it doesn’t say anything about you yet.

“Quality web design you can trust” fits any agency on the planet. “WordPress websites for dental and physiotherapy clinics” fits only the studio that does that work.

Your headline should also use the words your clients use. If they write to you saying “my site is slow”, the headline should say “slow” rather than “performance optimization”. I showed you where to find that language in Chapter 2.

> **WATCH OUT**
> Puns and wordplay only work when the reader already knows what you do. On a homepage most visitors don't, so the joke has nothing to land on. I would save the wordplay for a blog post title, where the topic is already clear.

What Goes Below the First Screen

Once the visitor knows they're in the right place, the rest of the page should answer their next questions in the order those questions usually come up. Not every homepage needs every section, but I recommend this order for most service and product businesses:

Section	Its job	Copy that does the job
What you do	Expand the headline into 2 or 3 specific offers	A short paragraph or card per offer, each linking to its own page
Proof	Show that the claim is true	Results with context, named clients and testimonials from people like the visitor
How it works	Remove the fear of the unknown	3 or 4 plain steps from first contact to result
Paths by visitor	Send each visitor where they belong	Links or cards such as "For clinics", "For agencies" and "Read the blog"
Common doubts	Answer the objection that stops people	3 to 5 real questions with direct answers
Final call to action	Repeat the main next step	The same primary button, with a line that fits this point on the page

Each section should earn its place by answering a question a visitor actually has. An "Our Values" block listing integrity, innovation and excellence answers nobody's question, so I would cut it.

> **TIP**
> I suggest writing the homepage after the pages it links to. Once your service pages, product pages and About page exist, the homepage is mostly a summary of their headlines and a set of paths to them.

Proof That Answers a Doubt

Proof works best right next to the doubt it answers. A row of logos under the headline shows that other businesses hired you, and that is all it shows. The visitor still has to guess whether you can solve their problem.

Each claim on your page needs its own kind of proof:

- **"We're good at this."** The work itself makes this case best, through a before-and-after or a short case study with the problem, what you did and the result.
- **"We're right for you."** A testimonial from a customer the visitor recognizes as similar to them answers this one.
- **"It's safe to try."** Here the visitor wants the refund terms, the free trial or what happens on the first call, stated in plain words.
- **"We'll be there after the sale."** Your support hours and how quickly you reply settle this doubt.

> **WATCH OUT**
> Numbers without a source hurt you. "500+ happy clients" or "10x more traffic" with no context reads as made up, and a careful visitor discounts the rest of the page along with it. I would use a number only when you can show where it came from.

One Main Action

A homepage offers several paths, but I still give it one main action. That is the thing you most want a ready visitor to do, such as booking a call, starting a trial, buying or subscribing.

That action should get the strongest button on the first screen and appear again near the end. The other paths can be text links or quieter buttons.

The button label should say what happens next. These are the kinds of labels I would change:

Vague label	Label that says what happens
Learn More	See clinic websites we've built
Get Started	Start your 14-day free trial
Contact Us	Book a 20-minute call
Submit	Send my question

Repeating the same main button 3 times on a long page is fine, because it's the same action offered at 3 decision points. Trouble starts when the page offers a call, a guide, a newsletter and an Instagram follow, all with buttons of the same size. Then the visitor has to choose between 4 things before deciding on 1.

I will cover buttons and the small copy around them in detail in Chapter 8.

Homepages for Blogs

A blog's homepage often defaults to a list of the latest posts. That works for readers who already follow you. A new visitor from a search result, though, sees whatever you published last week, which may have nothing to do with the problem that brought them there.

I would give a blog homepage the same 2 jobs as a business homepage, with different pieces:

- **A one-line description.** It names the topic, the reader and the promise. "Practical WordPress and SEO guides for people who run their own sites" tells a new reader whether to stay.
- **Start-here paths.** You pick 3 to 6 topics or guides that answer the questions new readers usually arrive with.
- **The latest posts.** These sit lower down, where returning readers will look for them.
- **One main action.** It is usually the newsletter, with a line that says what readers get and how often.

- **A short note about the author.** It matters when the topic needs trust, such as money, health or technical advice. The note should link to your full About page, which I cover in Chapter 5.

What to Cut

Some homepage habits are so common that they feel required, yet each one takes space the visitor needs for something else. I would cut these first:

- **The welcome line.** "Welcome to our website" spends the most valuable line on the page telling visitors where they already are.
- **The slider.** A rotating slider puts 3 to 5 messages in the space meant for one, and every slide after the first depends on the visitor waiting for it. The fifth slide must be having a very lonely life.
- **The mission statement up top.** "We believe every business deserves..." talks about you before the visitor knows whether you're relevant. Your About page is a better home for it.
- **The bare feature list.** Features without outcomes leave the visitor to work out why they matter. I will show you how to turn each feature into an outcome in Chapter 6.
- **The jargon.** Words like "solutions", "synergy" and "end-to-end" make the visitor translate. Your clients' own words for the problem work better.

> **TRY THIS ON YOUR PAGE**
>
> 1. Open your homepage on a phone and take a screenshot of the first screen.
> 2. Show it for 5 seconds to someone who doesn't know your business. Ask them what you offer, who it's for and what they would click.
> 3. Compare their answers with what you intended. Each gap is a line to rewrite.
> 4. Run the competitor test on your headline. If it would fit another business, add the audience or the specific offer.
> 5. List every section below the first screen and write the visitor question each one answers. Cut or merge any section that has none.

A homepage that does these jobs usually looks plainer than the one it replaces. It is wise to accept that. The visitor came with a question, and the page that answers it fastest gets the click.