Anatomy of a Webpage

(borrowed and adapted from Bethel University)
Here’s a quick guide to the basic parts of a webpage.

Page Title
The page title should tell visitors exactly what they will find on the webpage. The title will appear as a link in the navigation.
● Keep it short.
● Use clear language.
● Make the first two words count.
● Avoid internal jargon or acronyms.

Photos
Photography is the best way to set a tone and tell a story. You can insert a feature image in most pages or use photos in the body.
● Only use high-quality photography.
● If you need a photo created, ask for it. Contact Joe Davis at j-davis@neiu.edu or extension 4237.
● Use brand.neiu.edu for your graphic and photography needs.
● Use photos that match the tone of the content.
● Don’t:
  ○ Stretch or resize small photos to fit big spaces — they will look fuzzy.
  ○ Use photos you do not own without permission.
  ○ Clutter the page with too many photos. One good photo is better than many small ones.
  ○ Reuse the same photos that are used elsewhere in the site.

Headings
● Headings help users scan and find information quickly so they can assess if they're in the right place.
  ○ Accurately describe the information in the section.
  ○ Be clear and concrete.
  ○ Use key terms or phrases that are relevant for users.
  ○ Use powerful and active words.

Body
The body is the bulk of your webpage content. It’s the information you’re providing to help visitors complete their tasks. See the handout Writing for the Web for guidance.
Lists

A list is a helpful tool for breaking down huge paragraphs or providing step-by-step instructions.

- Start with a capital letter.
- Place a period at the end of complete sentences.
- Use parallel language for list items (all fragments, all complete sentences, all questions, etc.).
- Use numbers if you’re outlining a process or concrete steps that a visitor needs to take.
- Visitors usually only see the first two words for each list item, so make them meaningful.

Formatting

Bold

- Use bold for highlighting important info, such as an application deadline or fee. You can also use bold for key introductory phrases of bulleted lists.
- If bold is overused, it’s no longer helpful. When too much is emphasized nothing stands out.

Italics

- Use italics for book, movie, newspaper or publications titles.
- Italics can also be used to format a repeated piece of minor information. Examples:
  - Room locations on schedule of events for a conference
  - Job titles on a staff list

Underline

- Never underline text on the web. Visitors will mistake underlined text for a link. This leads to confusion and reduces the impact of what you were trying to highlight. Use bold for emphasis instead.

Punctuation

- Colons and semicolons appear too formal — use em dashes (—) and bulleted lists instead.
- Exclamation points appear silly and devalue our credibility — choose better words to convey excitement.

Links

- Hyperlink meaningful phrases rather than single words or words that lack context.
  - Phrases are easier to spot.
  - Meaningful words help search engines scan and pick up useful information.
  - Avoid using "here" and "click here."

Buttons

- Use buttons to help people take next steps or take action.

Promos

Promos are pull out boxes that highlight certain content on a page. Use promos for other content you want to draw the visitor’s attention to, including pages in other sections.