Web masterclass with Iain Mackenzie, BBC News Online technology editor: transcript

Hi, I'm Iain Mackenzie and I edit the technology section of the BBC News website.

Writing for the web is all about getting your message across clearly in a way that keeps people interested - and that all begins with the headline. It's got to be short, snappy and something that's going to catch people's eye.

If you look at this story here, it's about the cost of using your mobile phone abroad coming down. The headline is "Cost of Euro mobile roaming falls" - that's nice and short and pretty much tells you the whole story.

Then the next most important thing is the first paragraph where you begin to tell the story. Again that should be short and snappy and have as much information in it as possible.

It's not enough just to have a nicely written story. You've got to make the webpage attractive to look at so they are drawn in and also so they don't get bored while they're on there. There's lots of different ways we do that. The most important of those is the use of pictures. If we look at this particular story we can see there are nice, big, bold images as you move down. However far down the story you scroll, there's always a strong picture on there.

Something else we use is a cross heading – that's just a couple of words in bold. And another technique we use is the factbox – that's just a little bit of text that sits down the side of the main story ands gives you some more specific info about one part of that story.

As well as the individual stories, we also have to think about the front page of the website - that's the place where all the stories are brought together and how we present that to people. This is today's front page on the technology section of the website and you can see we have one big lead story here which we've put a large image on and a nice big headline and hopefully that is going to draw people in. Down the side we also have a feature and that's probably going to stay there all day – that's a longer piece.

As well as the written stories, we also have written stories on the website. It's worth thinking about other things you could put on there – we have video, audio and all sorts of things that aren't just written text.

Once we've finished writing a story we have to publish it to our site. At the BBC we use a system called CPS but you might have something different in your school. It's important to ask whoever looks after your school's computers how your system works and how you can make a story live on the internet.

Now before we make that story live, there's a couple of important checks we have to go through – most important of all is to make sure that somebody else has checked it. We need that second pair of eyes to look through, to check for mistakes, to check in case we've written anything that maybe breaks the law or offends somebody.

Once we've had that second check from somebody else we work with, they can click on a box, say they've approved the story and then we can make it live. Once we've made a story live on the website the next thing to do is share it.

Here at the BBC we call around the people who look after the different sections of the website. If we can get the story on the World or UK or Science pages then that means more people are likely to see it. If you're in school, you might want to call round some of the other schools in the area to see if they are interested in it as well and maybe they will put it on their websites.

BBC NEWS ■ **SCHOOL REPORT** ■

Remember: however interesting and exciting your story is if you don't make it attractive to people then nobody's going to read it!