

Web Style Guide

Digital Content Standards & Conventions

Abbreviations

❖ Avoid creating your own abbreviations.

❖ When referencing the World Trade Center terror attacks of September 11, 2001, it is acceptable to abbreviate to *9/11*. Spell out the date when it appears at the beginning of a sentence. Adding the year is not necessary, unless not doing so will change the meaning of the reference. Do not use the phrase *nine-eleven*.

Examples:

- "Airport security procedures have changed dramatically since September 11, 2001."
- "He vowed not to let the September 11 attacks affect his positive outlook on life."
- "Everyone remembers where they were and what they were doing on 9/11."

❖ It is acceptable to use abbreviations for addresses and street name extensions in some web content situations.

Example:

"The warehouse can be accessed via Clyde Morris Blvd."

However, take care not to mix usage.

Example:

"From International Speedway Blvd., take a right onto Midway Avenue, then your next left onto Richard Petty Boulevard."

❖ Spell out the street name *International Speedway* in web content.

Examples:

Use: "Visiting families may wish to spend a day at NASCAR, located on International Speedway Blvd."

Avoid: "The charter bus will take International Spdwy on its way to the beach."

Avoid: "The Volusia Mall is conveniently located just off Int'l Spdwy Blvd."

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✳ a.k.a. is an abbreviation for *also known as*. It should be avoided in web content.

Examples:

Avoid: "James Grekadopolis, a.k.a. 'Jimmy the Greek,' is a world-renowned author and playwright."

Use: "James Grekadopolis — also known as 'Jimmy the Greek' — is a world-renowned author and playwright."

Use: "James 'Jimmy the Greek' Grekadopolis is a world-renowned author and playwright."

✳ It is acceptable to abbreviate countries using the following method:

- "I'll return to the U.K. for Spring Break."
- "My grandparents still live in the U.A.E."
- "My sister is a Canadian citizen, but the rest of us are U.S.-born."

✳ Corporate title abbreviations are acceptable in web content. These should appear without the use of punctuation.

Examples:

- CAO
- CEO
- EVP

✳ When referencing educational degrees, proper abbreviation is as follows:

- B.S.
- M.S.
- Ph.D.

✳ Avoid abbreviating department names or official titles.

Example:

Instead of: "You'll have to call someone from I.T."

Use: "You'll have to call someone from the Information Technology Department."

✳ When referencing distances, spell out the words.

Example:

"She lives less than 10 miles from the beach."

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* GPA (short for *grade point average*) may be used at first reference in web content, as shown [all-caps *GPA*, without use of periods].

* I.D. (short for *identification*) may be used at first reference in web content. Proper punctuation dictates use of periods and capitalization as shown.

Examples:

Use: "MyCard works like an I.D., debit, and access card all in one!"

Avoid: "Please bring two valid forms of i.d."

Avoid: "I can't believe they asked for ID! Do I really look that young?"

* Avoid abbreviating titles as they pertain to job descriptions:

- use *Senator* instead of *Sen.*
- use *Professor* instead of *Prof.*
- use *Lieutenant-Colonel* instead of *Lt. Col.*

* When referencing measurements, spell out the words:

(See Also: *Spelling Standards*)

Examples:

- feet, not ft.
- inches, not in.
- miles, not mi.
- page, not pg.
- pounds, not lbs.

* Some measurement abbreviations are acceptable in web content.

dpi (dots per inch)	GB (gigabyte)	MB (megabyte)
MHz (megahertz)	KB (kilobyte)	ppm (pages per minute)

This is not a comprehensive list.

* Do not abbreviate military titles.

Examples:

Use: Lieutenant Colonel Evelyn Davis

Avoid: Lt. Col. Evelyn Davis

* It is acceptable, however, to abbreviate branches of the military — on second reference only.

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* Military branch abbreviations are only acceptable from first reference when listing an officer (or member of the military) in a photo caption or contact content item.

Example:

Beth Adams, USAF (pictured)

* ROTC (an acronym for *Reserve Officer Training Corps*) may be used from first reference. The use of periods is not required.

* Do not abbreviate months in web content.

Examples:

Use: "The lecture is scheduled for January 25, 2018."

Avoid: "The lecture is scheduled for January 25th."

Avoid: The lecture is scheduled for Jan. 25."

* Do not abbreviate days in web content.

Examples:

Use: "Hours are: Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m."

Use: "Hours are Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m."

Avoid: "Hours are Mon-Fri, 8:00a - 5:00p."

* Do not use the abbreviation *no.* when referring to numbers.

Examples:

Avoid: "I'm sorry, but you are no. 45. You'll have to wait your turn."

Avoid: "I'm sorry, but you are #45. You'll have to wait your turn."

Use: "I'm sorry, but you are number 45. You'll have to wait your turn."

* Do not abbreviate the word *extension* when listing phone numbers.

Examples:

Use: 928-777-6600, extension 415

Avoid: 928-777-6600 ext. 415

Avoid: 928-777-6600 x415

* It is acceptable to display the retired status of military personnel. Do not abbreviate the word. Place the word at the end of the name, in parentheses. Always capitalize the word.

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Examples:

- Use:** Major Sheila Thompson (Retired)
- Avoid:** Major Sheila Thompson (Ret.)
- Avoid:** Major USAF Retired Sheila Thompson

- Use:** General Robert Smith (Retired)
- Avoid:** General Robert Smith (retired)
- Avoid:** General Robert Smith, retired

✱ Displaying a person’s retired status is typically reserved for military personnel. Others may be referred to as *former*.

Examples:

- Use:** Former teacher Jillian Phibes.
- Avoid:** Jillian Phibes (Retired).

✱ It is acceptable to abbreviate the word *saint* in web content.

Example:

“The St. Johns River meanders through 12 Florida counties.”

✱ It is acceptable to use abbreviations in salutations.

- Dr.
- Mr./Mrs.
- Sr./Jr. (as in Billy Williams, Jr.)

✱ When referencing credentials, use only the highest degree attained, plus any relevant professional designation (if applicable).

Examples:

- Dr. Florence Tapetta, R.N.
- Fleetwood Grover, M.A., C.P.A.

✱ Avoid excessive introductions.

Examples:

- Use:** “Dr. Felix Johannsen said grapes are unhealthy.”
- Use:** “Felix Johannsen, Ph.D., said grapes are unhealthy.”
- Avoid:** “Dr. Felix Johannsen, Ph.D., said grapes are unhealthy.”

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* Do not include salutations when they are not called for.

Examples:

Instead of: "Mr. Randy Johnson, Jr. will be playing basketball with us today."

Use: "Randy Johnson will be playing basketball with us today."

* When referencing speed or measurements, it is acceptable to use abbreviations.

Examples:

- "The van was going 120 mph when it passed the squad car!"
- "He'll need an additional 10 mg of medicine this evening."

* When referencing specific times, use the following method:

Examples:

Use: 5:00 p.m.

Avoid: 5 p.m.

Avoid: 5:00PM

* State Names

State names should be spelled out in web content. Official state abbreviations may be used in addresses.

Examples:

Use: "The company has locations in Davenport, Iowa and Silver Spring, Maryland."

Use: "Mail your application to: 4501 West Main Street, Flagstaff, AZ 86011."

Avoid: "The company has locations in Davenport, IA and Silver Spring, MD."

Avoid: "We visited Flagstaff, Ariz. and San Diego, Calif."

* The term *Noon* is acceptable in web content when referring to the middle of the day. However, avoid use of the phrase *12 Noon*.

Examples:

Use: "A barbecue will be held in the Resident Commons from Noon to 4:00 p.m."

Avoid: "Please meet me promptly at 12 Noon."

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* The term *Midnight* is acceptable in web content when referring to the start of a new day. However, avoid use of the phrase *12 Midnight*.

* Do not use the slang spelling *thru* in web content. Spell out the word *through*.

Examples:

Avoid: "We're open Monday thru Friday, from dawn to dusk."

Use: "Visit us anytime Monday through Friday — from dawn to dusk."

Use: "In a fit of frustration, Stan threw the computer through the window."

* *United States of America* may be abbreviated either *U.S.* or *U.S.A.* (with periods) in web content. Do not mix usage.

* It is acceptable to abbreviate the title *Veterans Affairs* in web content, as shown.

Example:

"The wounded soldier is receiving physical therapy at the V.A. Medical Center."

* There is no apostrophe in the title *Veterans Affairs*.

Examples:

Use: "The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is located in Washington, D.C."

Avoid: "I was told to pick up a form at the Veteran's Affairs Office."

* However, include the apostrophe when referencing topics concerning veterans, or items that belong to veterans.

Examples:

- "The veterans' biggest concern was that vandals had spray-painted the flag."
- "Neighbors decorated the veteran's home with red, white, and blue streamers."

* The term *Veterans Day* should appear without an apostrophe in web content. This is based on [U.S. government code](#).

* Wi-Fi (short for *wireless fidelity*) may be used at first reference in web content, as shown.

Examples:

Use: "Does the café have Wi-Fi? I'd like to check my e-mail."

Avoid: "Our library provides free wifi access."

Avoid: "For a fee, passengers can connect to on-board WiFi."

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❖ Avoid word abbreviations in web content:

- e.g. (use *for example*)
- i.e. (use *that is*)
- et al. (use *and others*)
- etc. (use *and other things, and so on/and so forth*, or omit entirely)

❖ Spell out words whenever possible. Strive for alternatives in sentence structure that will allow you to eliminate word abbreviations entirely.

Examples:

Instead of: "The student purchased notebooks, pencils, file folders, a ruler, etc."

Use: "The student purchased notebooks, pencils, file folders, and a ruler."

Use: "Among other items, the student purchased notebooks and file folders."

❖ The term *X-ray* is short for *energetic high-frequency electromagnetic radiation*. Use *X-ray* in all references, as shown [capital X, lowercase ray — separated by a hyphen].

Acronym Usage

❖ Avoid creating your own acronyms.

❖ When referencing well-known or industry standard acronyms, it is acceptable to use only the acronym from first use and throughout the content.

Examples:

- FAA
- NASA
- NOAA

Other acronyms are acceptable at second reference, after being spelled out at first reference.

❖ Some acronyms may not feature the required periods.

Examples:

USAF	USMC	POW	MIA
PTSD	USDA	USPS	ADHD

This is not a comprehensive list.

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❖ FAQ is an acronym for *Frequently Asked Questions*. It should appear in web content as shown [all-caps *FAQ*, without the use of periods]. Since the word *questions* is already in plural form, do not place an *s* at the end of this acronym.

Examples:

Use: "Please read the website's FAQ for more information."

Use: "You may wish to visit our FAQ section prior to your arrival at the University."

Avoid: "Many of your concerns will likely be answered by viewing our FAQs."

❖ NASCAR is an acronym for *National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing*. It should always appear in capital letters, without the use of periods.

❖ Full titles should be spelled out at their first appearance. Acronyms may be used later in content — provided the acronym has been previously established.

❖ The acronym PDF stands for *portable document format*. However, PDF has become a household term. Therefore, it may be displayed from first use in web content by initials only, as shown [all-caps *PDF*, without the use of periods].

Examples:

Instead of: "You can view our course schedule in portable document format here."

Use: "Download our [PDF course schedule](#)."

❖ The acronym PIN stands for *personal identification number*. However, PIN has become a household term. Therefore, it may be displayed from first use in web content by initials only, as shown [all-caps *PIN*, without the use of periods].

❖ The acronym in the term *ZIP code* stands for *zoning improvement plan*. It should appear in web content, as shown [all caps *ZIP*, without the use of periods].

Examples:

Use: "What is the ZIP code for your neighborhood?"

Avoid: "What is the Zip code for your neighborhood?"

Avoid: "What is the zoning improvement plan code for your neighborhood?"

Capitalization

❖ Use of all capital letters (ALL CAPS) should be avoided, except in the case of commonly used and industry-standard acronyms.

Examples:

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- FAA
- NASA
- USPS

Note: There are exceptions to this rule.

(See Also: Syntax)

* Do not capitalize academic honors.

Examples:

- After graduating cum laude with a degree in Business Administration, she accepted a management position with Delta Airlines.
- Bronson Daniels — who graduated magna cum laude — has become an inspiration to the students who plan to follow in his footsteps.
- Ella is a recent graduate of Howard University, where she earned her Bachelor of Science (summa cum laude) in Applied Physics.

* Names of buildings should be capitalized when referencing the actual title of the building.

Examples:

- "Meet me at the library."
- "Are you going to the Student Center?"

* The following words should only be capitalized if they appear as the first word in a sentence:

Word	Hyphen?	Capitalize?	Web Content Use
associate's degree	no	only as first word	associate's degree
bachelor's degree	no	only as first word	bachelor's degree
campus-wide	yes	only as first word	campus-wide
e-mail	yes	only as first word	e-mail (one word)
master's degree	no	only as first word	master's degree
statewide	no	only as first word	statewide (one word)
web page	no	only as first word	web page (two words)
website	no	only as first word	website (one word)

This is not a comprehensive list.

* Capitalize the word *class* when referring to class year.

Examples:

- "Join us this Sunday for the Class of 2018 commencement ceremony."
- "Tawnya Jakobs (Class of 2000) is the new CEO of XYZ Corporation."

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❖ Do not capitalize compass points (ESE, WNW) when referencing direction.

Examples:

- "The train was travelling east."
- "He says the museum is north of the park."

Capitalize the words, however, when they designate a region.

Examples:

- "She has a Southern accent."
- "They live in Central Florida."
- "Dorothy killed the Wicked Witch of the West."

❖ Names of courses should be capitalized if referencing the actual title of the course.

❖ Academic degrees should not be capitalized unless referencing a specific degree program.

Examples:

- bachelor's degree
- master's degree
- doctoral degree
- Bachelor of Arts in English

❖ Areas of study and degree specifications do not need to be capitalized.

Example:

"The University offers more than 35 degree programs in several areas of study including aeronautical science, business administration, civil engineering, and communication."

❖ Capitalize events and formal occasions.

Examples:

- American Red Cross Month
- Arbor Day
- Election Day
- Fourth of July weekend
- Mother's Day
- National Library Week

❖ Do not capitalize the word *million* when it follows money or figures.

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Examples:

- “The projected cost of the facility is \$10 million.”
- “Network executives say 1.5 million viewers tuned into the series finale.”

✳ Capitalize the word *office* only when referring to a specific office title/name.

Examples:

- “Did you get those forms at the Human Resources Office?”
- “The Yavapai County Sheriff’s Office has assured us they will investigate.”
- “I will visit the dentist’s office after work today.”

✳ Other words should only be capitalized when they are part of a title, headline or official organization name.

✳ The word *president* should only be capitalized when referring to a person’s official title.

Examples:

- “President Obama met with President Johnson in Daytona Beach.”
- “Janice is president of the Oak Hills Garden Circle.”

✳ Capitalize the word *president* when referring to the current head of an organization. When referring to those who previously held the position, do not capitalize the word.

Examples:

- “President Bill H. Johnson is a pilot and avid outdoorsman.”
- “Former president John Ballast moved the company to Daytona Beach in 1965.”

✳ Do not use the word *former* when referring to U.S. presidents. Regardless of whether they currently hold the title, they should always be referred to as simply *President*, with a capital P.

Examples:

Correct: President Barack Obama

Correct: President Ronald Reagan

Incorrect: Former President Franklin Delano Roosevelt

✳ The word *University* should only be capitalized when referring to an institution by name. Do not capitalize when used as a general noun.

Examples:

- “Applications to the University may be submitted online.”

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- “If you plan to attend a university in Arizona, consider Howard.”

✱ The word *worldwide* should appear in web content as one word, or two words separated by a hyphen.

Examples:

Use: Worldwide

Use: World-wide

Avoid: WorldWide

Files & Programs

✱ Files, page names, and documents should appear using all lowercase letters. Use hyphens — not periods or underscores.

Examples:

Use: application-instructions.pdf

Avoid: application_instructions.pdf

Use: technical-management.html

Avoid: technical.management.html

✱ Avoid presenting information in Microsoft Word format. These documents require downloading, and can slow the user experience. Instead, strive to convert information to a traditional web page. Doing this will also aid in your website’s search engine optimization (SEO).

[See Also: [Web Writing Manual](#)]

✱ There will, however, be times when a document requires printing (in the case of guides, handbooks, and application forms). In these cases, PDF should always be preferred to Microsoft Word format.

[See Also: [Forms & Files Guide](#)]

Formatting

✱ Punctuation is not required at the end of each bullet point in lists, unless the point is a sentence.

Examples:

- apples
- oranges
- pears

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- Dave likes apples.
- Mary likes oranges.
- Denise likes pears.

* The following words should only be capitalized if they appear as the first word in a sentence:

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associate's degree	no	only as first word	associate's degree
bachelor's degree	no	only as first word	bachelor's degree
campus-wide	yes	only as first word	campus-wide
e-mail	yes	only as first word	e-mail (one word)
master's degree	no	only as first word	master's degree
statewide	no	only as first word	statewide (one word)
web page	no	only as first word	web page (two words)
website	no	only as first word	website (one word)

This is not a comprehensive list.

* Decimals are acceptable in some web content situations.

Examples:

- "The new complex will cost \$3.7 million."
- "Students must have at least a 2.75 GPA to qualify for the program."

* Do not double space between sentences or paragraphs.

* When referencing measurements, spell out the words:

- feet, not ft.
- inches, not in.
- miles, not mi.
- page, not pg.
- pounds, not lbs.

* Do not use symbols to express measurements. Use words instead.

Examples:

Instead of: "The 40' wide trailer could not navigate through the alley."

Use: "The 40-foot-wide trailer could not navigate through the alley."

Instead of: "At 6'8", Jimbo is the tallest student on campus."

Use: "At six-foot-eight-inches, Jimbo is the tallest student on campus."

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Use: "At six-foot-eight, Jimbo is the tallest student on campus."

* Proper names of publications, catalogs, and reference materials should appear in *italics*.

Example:

"After reading the article in *USA Today*, I knew Howard University was the school for me."

* Proper names of ships, aircraft, and spacecraft should appear in *italics*.

Examples:

- *RMS Titanic*
- *Spirit of Saint Louis*
- *Challenger*

* Telephone numbers should appear using dashes and should feature 10 digits. Parentheses, periods and hyphens should not be used.

Examples:

Use: 386-226-6452

Avoid: (386) 226-6452

Avoid: 386.226.6452

Avoid: 1-386-226-6452

Avoid: 226-6452

* When listing telephone numbers that feature a word, provide the word version first, and then provide the last seven digits of the number in parentheses.

Example:

"To report a campus emergency, contact Campus Safety & Security at 450-538-SAFE (538-7233)."

* Use proper titles and full names when first referencing people in web content. Second references should use the person's last name only, without title.

Example:

"President Bill Johnson was the banquet's keynote speaker. Johnson discussed the University building projects currently underway."

* The use of underlined text is reserved exclusively for [hyperlinks](#). Use **bold** or *italics* for emphasis.

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Gender Neutral Terminology

* Gender neutral terms should be used whenever possible.

Examples:

- *Chair* instead of Chairman or Chairperson
- *People* instead of men and/or women
- *Student* or *students* instead of gender specific articles (*he* or *she*)

* Plural forms of pronouns should be used whenever possible. Instead of *he* or *she*, use *they*.

Hyperlinks

* Hyperlinks must feature [anchor text](#). Avoid the phrase *Click here*.

Examples:

Use: For more information, visit the [library website](#).

Avoid: [Click here](#) for more information about the library.

* Do not link to commercial websites (sites that advertise and/or sell products or services). There are exceptions to this rule:

- Links to sites owned or sponsored by entities with which the company has a business relationship are permitted.
- Links to articles posted on reputable news websites in which the company is mentioned are permitted.

* Footers and/or links that credit a designer or agency are never permitted.

* Hyperlinks should open in the same browser window. PDF files and other non-web documents are the exception.

* Detailed directives on hyperlink use/display can be found in the [Brand Standards Manual](#).

Numbers

* Avoid use of the phrase *24-hour* by restructuring sentences.

Examples:

Instead of: "The 24-hour facility features state-of-the-art equipment."

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Consider: "Featuring state-of-the-art equipment, the facility is accessible anytime."

❖ Do not begin sentences with digits. Instead, write out the number.

Example:

"Fifteen students attended the conference."

In cases where this method would appear awkward, consider restructuring the sentence.

Examples:

Avoid: "250 students were awarded scholarships this year."

Awkward: "Two-hundred-fifty students were awarded scholarships this year."

Use: "This year, the University awarded scholarships to 250 outstanding students."

❖ Do not begin sentences with years (digits).

Examples:

Instead of: "1989 was a great year for Melvin."

Use: "Melvin felt 1989 was a great year."

❖ Cardinal numbers from one to nine may be written as digits in headlines.

Example:

Top 5 Reasons to Choose Howard University

❖ Always use numerals for credit hours. It is also acceptable to first feature the numeral, and then the number, in parentheses. Do not write out numbers larger than ten.

Examples:

- "EN 101 is a 3-credit course."
- "Transfer students must show proof of at least 10 (ten) credits in comparable study."
- "Samantha earned 15 credit hours from her psychology internship."

❖ When a number is part of a form's title, use the numeral and omit punctuation.

Examples:

Use: 1040 EZ

Avoid: 1,040 EZ

Avoid: 1040-EZ

Use: Form 2A

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Avoid: Form Two-A

* Fractions should be spelled out and hyphenated (*one-fourth* instead of $\frac{1}{4}$).

* Reference to money should be presented using digits. Use the dollar sign (\$) in place of the word *dollar(s)*.

Examples:

Use: "The students raised more than \$5,000 for charity."

Avoid: "The students raised more than 5,000 dollars for charity."

Avoid: "The students raised more than 5 thousand dollars for charity."

Avoid: "The students raised more than five-thousand-dollars for charity."

* To avoid confusion, do not include cents when listing monetary values, unless featuring a value for this area.

Examples:

Use: "Your remaining balance is \$54.86."

Use: "The \$100 materials fee will help offset costs of the program."

Avoid: "The \$100.00 materials fee will help offset costs of the program."

* Do not use the abbreviation *no.* when referring to numbers.

Examples:

Avoid: "I'm sorry, but you are no. 45. You'll have to wait your turn."

Avoid: "I'm sorry, but you are #45. You'll have to wait your turn."

Use: "I'm sorry, but you are number 45. You'll have to wait your turn."

* Avoid number endings. This can be achieved through rephrasing or changing the sentence structure.

Examples:

Avoid: "Applications are due by August 2nd."

Avoid: "Applications are due August Second."

Use: "Applications are due 08/02/18."

Use: "Applications are due August 02, 2018."

* Avoid use of the number or pound sign (#) in web content.

* Ordinal numbers less than 10 should be spelled out.

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Example:

"She is the first in her family to attend university."

- ✳ Ordinal numbers 10 or greater should be formatted accordingly.

Examples:

Instead of: "Florida ranks twenty-second in size among the 50 states."

Use: "Among the 50 states, Florida is number 22 in size."

- ✳ Percentages should feature words and numbers. Avoid use of the percent sign (%).

Examples:

- "We expect to see a nine-percent increase in these figures by next quarter."
- "Enrollment is up 23 percent from last year."

- ✳ Numbers from one to nine should be spelled out. Numbers 10 and greater should be presented as digits.

Examples:

- "The University offers more than 35 degree programs."
- "Ten students will be selected to represent the University at the convention."
- "The company operates on a four-day work week during the summer months."

Plurals

- ✳ Be aware of noun usage when using plurals.

Examples:

- "The couple has a baby boy."
- "The couples have baby boys."

- "A two-thirds majority is needed to pass the legislation."
- "A majority of the Senate were opposed to the bill."

- ✳ The word *media* is a plural term suggesting more than one means of communication — such as newspaper, radio, television, and online information. An exception to this rule occurs when referring to mass media as one single entity.

Examples:

- "Radio and television may have replaced newspapers as the public's favored media."

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- "Online reporting is now considered a major news medium."
- "Martin is convinced the local media is out to get him."

Punctuation

Ampersand (&)

■ Ampersands should only be used in headings and when referencing clubs, programs, or departments that feature an ampersand in their official title. In other cases, spell out the word *and*.

Examples:

- Arts & Letters Series
- Clubs & Organizations
- Housing & Residence Life

Use: "Howard has a variety of degrees and programs to choose from."

Avoid: "Howard has a variety of degrees & programs to choose from."

Use: "Contact Student Activities & Campus Events at 386-226-8581."

Avoid: "Contact Student Activities and Campus Events at 386-226-8581."

Apostrophe (')

■ When referencing academic degrees, it is appropriate to use an apostrophe:

- bachelor's degree
- master's degree

However, do not use an apostrophe when referencing doctoral programs.

Examples:

Avoid: doctorate's degree

Use: doctoral degree

Use: doctoral program

■ Words ending in *s* should not feature an added apostrophe when referencing terms in the possessive form.

Examples:

- "He was allowed to use his boss' car for the weekend."
- "It is one of the campus' best features."

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■ Attributive nouns do not require an apostrophe before or after an s.

Examples:

- Founders Day
- Parents Association
- Veterans Affairs

Colon (:)

■ Do not use a colon with a dash.

■ Colons often appear after expressions such as *the following* or *as follows*.

■ The colon has three main uses in web content:

- 1) to introduce a list

Example:

“The Board appointed three people to the committee: Bob Jones, Mary Walker, and Jean Richards.”

- 2) to emphasize a word or phrase

Example:

“Larry had only one thing on his mind Friday: to ride his motorcycle all weekend long.”

- 3) to separate numbers, in reference to time

Example:

“Students are to report promptly at 7:30 a.m.”

■ Do not use a colon immediately after a verb.

Comma (,)

■ Commas should be used before the word *and* in a list.

Examples:

- “University staff, faculty, and students arrived at the facility.”
- “I like to eat pasta, steak, and salad.”

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✱ It is acceptable to insert a comma before the last item in a series, if the item consists of a compound phrase that requires use of the word *and* as part of its description.

Examples:

- “The invited diplomats are from India, Australia, and Trinidad and Tobago.”
- “She ordered salad, bread, and spaghetti and meatballs for dinner.”

✱ Commas may also be used to demonstrate a separation of thoughts.

Example:

“Byron felt the admission price was too high, and that there should have been a student discount.”

✱ Commas should be used when referencing numbers 1,000 and greater.

Example:

“I hope they’re careful. That desk cost \$2,000!”

✱ Place a comma before the month and year when the day is mentioned. When the day is not mentioned, do not use a comma between the month and year.

Examples:

- “On April 27, 2009, hundreds of people gathered in Central Park.”
- “Hundreds of people gathered in Central Park in April 2009.”

Dash (—)

✱ Dashes should not be confused with hyphens. Long dashes (sometimes called em dashes) have three main purposes:

- 1) to explain, justify, or emphasize information in the second part of a sentence

Example:

“The new center will be open Monday — if the air conditioning works.”

- 2) to make an emphatic pause or abrupt change in thought within a sentence

Example:

“The new center — opening three months behind schedule — is nonetheless already getting praise from critics and audiences alike.”

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3) to start a phrase that has a series of words separated by commas

Example:

“The student described the qualities — intelligence, compassion, and a sense of humor — she wants in an instructor.”

- ❖ Do not use a double-hyphen (--) when an em dash (—) is required.
- ❖ There is a keyboard shortcut for the long dash. (Ctrl-Alt-minus sign)
- ❖ Insert a space both before and after the em dash.

Example:

Elton finally stopped shouting when Tommy ‘The Dragon’ Zamora — a black belt in karate — told him to “calm down.”

Ellipsis (...)

- ❖ Avoid using ellipsis points to indicate interruptions or abrupt changes in thought. In these cases, it is best to use em dashes (—) instead.

Exclamation Point (!)

- ❖ Strive to avoid use of exclamation points. This is not to suggest web content will never feature this type of punctuation.

Hyphen (-)

- ❖ When referencing aircraft, use the following rules for hyphens:

Airbus A340	B-2 bomber	DC-10	F-22
Grasshopper L-6	Lockheed P-3 Orion	MiG-31M	Mirage F-1E

This is not a comprehensive list.

- ❖ Do not confuse hyphens with long dashes (sometimes called em dashes). These dashes have three main purposes:

1) To explain, justify, or emphasize information in the second part of a sentence

Example:

“The new center will be open Monday — if the air conditioning works.”

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2) To make an emphatic pause or abrupt change in thought within a sentence

Example:

“The new center — opening three months behind schedule — is nonetheless already getting praise from critics and audiences alike.”

3) To start a phrase that has a series of words separated by commas

Example:

“The student described the qualities — intelligence, compassion, and a sense of humor — she wants in an instructor.”

❖ Do not use a hyphen with the prefix *dis*.

disability	disadvantage	disaffect
disaffirm	disagree	disappearance
disappoint	disapprove	disassemble
disarray	disavow	disbelief
disclaim	disclose	discolored
disconnect	discourse	discredit
disgruntled	disheartened	disintegrate
dismantle	disorganized	disseminate

This is not a comprehensive list.

❖ The phrase *e-mail* (short for *electronic mail*) appears in web content with a hyphen. Do not capitalize unless it is the first word in a sentence, or being used in title form. In the case of title form, only the *e* is capitalized.

Examples:

- “E-mail is the best way to reach her.”
- “Did he give you the correct e-mail address?”
- E-mail us for More Information

❖ Use hyphens when referencing employment or occupation.

Examples:

- “Ansley is a full-time engineering student.”
- “Beth works part-time in the library.”

❖ Fractions should be spelled out and hyphenated (*one-fourth* instead of $\frac{1}{4}$)

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❖ Do not insert hyphens into words where they don't belong:

airfield	airspace	bilingual
blackboard	blueprint	breakthrough
businessman	comeback	flagpole
goodwill	meatball	minefield
nationwide	nighttime (two t's)	roadblock
roommate (two m's)	restroom	software
statewide	wartime	website

This is not a comprehensive list.

❖ Hyphens should be used when referencing ages or lengths of time.

Examples:

- "The 18-year-old is the first in his family to attend college."
- "Williams, a 35-year veteran of the force, will retire next month."

❖ Do not use hyphens in place of the word *to*, except when referencing figures.

Examples:

- "Construction will be completed within four to five months."
- "Alice plans to remain a member for 10-12 years."

❖ Use care with placement of hyphens, as they can change the meaning of content.

Examples:

- "a little-used car" is not the same as "a little used car"
- "twelve-hour shifts" is not the same as "twelve hour shifts"

❖ Do not use a double-hyphen (--) when an em dash (—) is required.

Miscellaneous

❖ Do not use punctuation at the end of bullet items, unless the items are sentences.

Examples:

- Bullet point one
- Bullet point two

- The first bullet point will be discussed Tuesday.
- The next bullet point will be discussed Wednesday.

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✎ When referencing degrees, proper abbreviation is as follows:

- B.S.
- M.S.
- Ph.D.

✎ I.D. (short for *identification*) may be used at first reference in web content. Proper punctuation dictates use of capitalization and periods as shown.

Examples:

Use: "MyCard works like an I.D., debit, and access card all in one."

Avoid: "Please bring two valid forms of i.d."

Avoid: "I can't believe they asked for ID! Do I really look that young?"

✎ When referencing time, use the following method:

Use: 5:00 p.m.

Avoid: 5 p.m.

Avoid: 5:00PM

Tilde (~)

✎ Avoid using the tilde in web content.

Semicolon (;)

✎ Semicolons may be used in web content if the parts of the sentence separated by a semicolon could stand alone as separate sentences.

Example:

"They agreed on three points: the ceasefire should be immediate; terms should be internationally supervised; and a peace conference should be held — preferably in Geneva."

✎ Semicolons should also be used to alleviate excessive comma usage.

Example:

"As I continued to search for the perfect hamburger, my travels led me to Scranton, Pennsylvania; Prescott, Arizona; and Stuttgart, Germany."

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Slash (/)

✱ Slashes should be used sparingly in web content. Use with commonly known abbreviations is acceptable.

Examples:

- 9/11
- and/or

✱ Avoid use of the slang term 24/7.

Quotation Marks (“ ”)

✱ Quotation marks should be used for direct quotes, and to suggest irony or a double meaning.

Examples:

- “I will be glad to meet with you Thursday,” she said.
- The “expert” turned out to be little more than an amateur hobbyist.

✱ Punctuation should always be placed inside quotation marks.

Examples:

- Kathy Mortensen said the school prepared her for “real-world experiences and decision-making.”
- “I couldn’t quite hear you,” he said. “Would you mind repeating the question?”

Spelling Standards

✱ ‘-able,’ ‘eable’ or ‘ible?’

-able	-eable	-ible
acceptable	knowledgeable	accessible
dependable	likeable	admissible
comfortable	loveable	convertible
imaginable	manageable	indestructible
indescribable	moveable	irresistible
indispensable	sizeable	permissible
suitable	unshakeable	submersible
unmistakable	useable	visible

This is not a comprehensive list.

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* Adverse or Averse?

Adverse describes things, conditions, or circumstances that are unfavorable, harmful, or hostile.

Examples:

- “Due to adverse weather conditions, we had to cancel the road trip.”
- “After the coach punched a referee, it was clear the team would suffer adverse publicity.”

Averse describes personal feelings of reluctance or opposition.

Examples:

- “The senator was averse to the proposed budget cuts.”
- “Linda has an aversion to cauliflower.”

* Aid or Aide?

Aid means to help. An *aide* is a person who provides assistance to someone. Administrative Assistants and student interns could be referred to as *aides*, but never as *aids*.

* Alumnus, Alumna

An *alumnus* is a male student who has attended and/or graduated from an educational institution. An *alumna* is a female student who has attended and/or graduated from an educational institution. The plural of *alumnus* is *alumni*. The plural of *alumna* is *alumnae*.

* Current convention allows for use of the general term *alumni* when referring to both male and female students who have attended and/or graduated from an education institution.

Example:

“University alumni are welcome to visit the campus at any time.”

* When including a married alumna’s maiden name, that name should be placed in parentheses.

Example:

“Jossalyn (Williams) McGillicuddy said the reunion was the highlight of her year.”

* Some common misspellings include:

accommodate	accumulate	acknowledgment
aesthetic	amiable	amid (not amidst)
battalion	commitment	enrollment

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feasibility	maintenance	occurred
omitted	personnel	questionnaire
recommend	transatlantic	travelled
unnecessary	unparalleled	withhold

- ✖ When referencing distances, spell out the words.

Example:

"She lives less than 10 miles from the beach."

- ✖ The word *Internet* should always be capitalized in web content.

- ✖ *Its* or *It's*?

Its is possessive, while *it's* is a contraction for *it is* or *it has*.

Examples:

- "The company lost all of its assets in the robbery."
- "It's been a long time since we've had this kind of chat."

- ✖ The word *memo* is short for *memorandum*. It is acceptable to use the shortened *memo* in web content (except for official use).

- ✖ When referencing speed or measurements, it is acceptable to use abbreviations. However, it is preferable to spell out the words.

Examples:

Good: "The van was going 120 mph when it passed the squad car!"

Better: "The van was going 120 miles-per-hour when it passed the squad car!"

Good: "He'll need an additional 10 mg of medicine this evening."

Better: "He'll need an additional 10 milligrams of medicine this evening."

- ✖ *Whose* or *Who's*?

Whose is possessive, while *who's* is a contraction for *who is* or *who has*.

Examples:

- "Who's buying lunch today?"
- "Whose turn is it to buy lunch?"

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Style

(See Also: [Web Writing Manual](#))

Headings

☛ Headings — including subheadings and headlines — organize web content into more readable “chunks” that help users quickly get the information they need.

☛ Most headings don’t include punctuation, with the exception of question marks. Crafting headings that don’t require punctuation at all is preferable.

☛ The first letter of every word in a heading should be capitalized, with the exception of prepositions.

Examples:

- The Story of Jenny Jones
- The Best Aviation and Aerospace University in the World
- Degrees Offered at Howard University

☛ Some commonly used prepositions include:

about	above	across
after	against	along
among	at	before
behind	below	beneath
beside	between	but
by	down	during
except	for	from
in	inside	instead
into	like	near
of	off	on
onto	outside	over
past	per	since
than	through	to
toward	under	until
up	upon	versus
with	within	without

Lists

☛ Lists are an effective way to present information that satisfies the scanning tendency of readers. Lists can reduce the number of sentences and/or paragraphs in web content.

☛ Strive to keep lists to seven bullet items or less.

☛ Web users may be accustomed to a few types of lists:

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1) A **numbered list** is used when the exact sequence of events is important. This list can be used to explain the necessary steps in a procedure.

Example:

To create your own geyser:

- 1) open a bottle of carbonated soda
- 2) drop four Mentos into the bottle
- 3) stand back

2) A **bulleted list** is best used when the exact sequence of events is *not* important. When possible, items in a bulleted list should be the same length.

Examples:

David insisted some songs would not be played at the wedding:

- Celebration
- The Chicken Dance
- The Macarena

David felt the music should:

- reflect the couple's feelings for each other
- be recognizable by all invited guests

3) An **introducing list** sometimes features sentence fragments.

Example:

The boxed lunch will feature:

- a ham sandwich
- an apple
- a juice box
- a pudding cup

■ Lists can also highlight information in easy-to-read segments.

Examples:

Incoming students: It is important for you to maintain a professional attitude at all times when on campus.

Returning students: You are in a position to serve as a model for first-year students.

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✱ When listing items in paragraph form, use commas to separate the items. Use of numbers inside lists is acceptable, but often unnecessary.

Examples:

- “Board members feel the student should (1) improve his interpersonal skills, (2) attend classes more regularly, and (3) focus on completing tasks and assignments by their due dates.”
- “We expect our vendors to: monitor the system daily, troubleshoot and resolve system errors when the need arises, respond to maintenance requests in a timely manner, and follow up with customers, to ensure satisfaction.”

Paragraphs

✱ Paragraphs should be clear and concise, focusing on only one topic or idea.

✱ Since most readers scan web pages, include the most important information at the beginning of each paragraph.

✱ Strive to keep paragraphs to two or three sentences.

✱ Do not double space between paragraphs.

Sentence Structure

✱ Sentences should be clear and concise, focusing on only one topic or idea.

✱ Like paragraphs, sentences should be written with the most important information at the beginning.

Examples:

Instead of: “Flying the three-year-old plane (dubbed *Eagle*), the student, Joe Nattick, broke a speed record.”

Use: “Joe Nattick broke a speed record flying *Eagle* — a three-year-old plane.”

✱ Sentences should be concise and to the point. It is preferable to use short sentences to longer ones. Newspapers and magazines are written to an eighth-grade level. Many people are used to reading content written in this fashion, regardless of their educational backgrounds.

Examples:

Longer Sentence: “More than 3,000 residents fled the wildfires — which have now burned more than 10 square miles — while the mayor has promised to send more

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firefighters to the scene.”

Shorter Sentence: “More than 3,000 residents fled the wildfires, which have now burned more than 10 square miles. The mayor has promised to send more firefighters to the scene.”

- ✳ Do not double space between sentences.

Symbols

Symbols can make web content difficult to read. It is best to avoid the use of most symbols.

- ✳ The ‘at’ sign (@) should only be used in e-mail addresses.

- ✳ Avoid using the number/pound sign (#).

Use: “The University is rated number one in aviation and aerospace college education.”

Avoid: “The University is rated#1 in aviation and aerospace college education.”

- ✳ It is acceptable to use the dollar sign (\$) when referencing money.

Use: “I refuse to pay \$10 for a sandwich!”

Avoid: “He still owes me 20 dollars from last weekend.”

- ✳ Percentages should feature words and numbers.

Use: “Her investments saw a nine percent increase last quarter.”

Use: “Enrollment is up 23 percent from 2015.”

Avoid: “I am only 40% finished and the project is due tomorrow!”

- ✳ Use the word ‘and’ instead of an ampersand (&), unless referencing a specific title.

Use: “This Thanksgiving, we’re having turkey and ham; sweet and yellow potatoes; cole slaw and salad; and for dessert, pumpkin pie and chocolate mousse.”

Use: “She’s majoring in Global Security & Intelligence Studies.”

Avoid: “I’ll bring my laundry & textbooks when I come home this weekend.”

- ✳ Avoid the star symbol (*). Use bullet points for lists and **bold** or *italics* for emphasis.

- ✳ Do not use ownership/trademark symbols in web content.

Examples:

- “We always make S’mores® with Hershey’s® milk chocolate.”
- “My family prefers the taste of Coke Zero™ to Pepsi Max®.”

- ✳ Copyright information appears in the footer of each company web page. There is no need

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to use the copyright symbol (©) in web content.

Syntax

■ Display the emergency telephone number *911* with all digits and no dashes.

Examples:

Use: "Somebody call 911!"

Avoid: "Dial 9-1-1 for emergencies."

Avoid: "The nine-one-one operator advised us to remain calm."

■ Use either *barbecue* or *BBQ*. Do not mix words and letters. *BBQ* should be displayed as shown [all-caps *BBQ*, without the use of periods or hyphens]. Do not capitalize the word *barbecue* unless it is the first word of a sentence. Do not hyphenate the word *barbecue*.

Examples:

Use: "Are you going to the barbecue on Saturday?"

Use: "Bring a friend and your favorite dish to the BBQ!"

Avoid: "I'm hosting a Bar-B-Q this weekend. I hope you can come."

Avoid: "Wendy is always the "grill-master" at our Barbecues."

Avoid: "What are you bringing to the bar-becue?"

Avoid: "Unfortunately, our barbeque got rained out."

■ Take care to respect branding titles in web content. This is especially important when referencing companies and services with which the company has a business relationship.

Example:

"We were thrilled to find a Chick-fil-A inside the Student Center."

■ Discretion should be exercised, however, in cases where presenting branding titles would appear awkward.

Examples:

Instead of: "We took him to Ames HEAL-thCare, where he had to get 20 stitches."

Use: "We took him to Ames Healthcare, where he had to get 20 stitches."

Instead of: "The group will meet Tuesday night at YOU-Natty-T n' Koff-E-Haus."

Use: "The group will meet Tuesday night at Unity Tea and Coffeehouse."

■ Some company names are acronyms, and should be presented per acronym convention.

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[See Also: **Acronyms**]

Example:

"We spent the morning at NASCAR and then took a tour of the University."

* FAQ is an acronym for *Frequently Asked Questions*. It should appear in web content as shown [all-caps *FAQ*, without the use of periods]. Since the word *questions* is already in plural form, do not place an *s* at the end of this acronym.

Examples:

Use: "Please read the department's FAQ for more information."

Use: "You may wish to visit our FAQ section prior to your arrival at the University."

Avoid: "Many of your concerns will likely be answered by viewing our FAQs."

* GPA (short for *grade point average*) may be used at first reference in web content, as shown [all-caps *GPA*, without use of periods].

* When referencing GPA, always use a decimal point. However, do not list more than two decimal places.

Examples:

Use: "A 3.0 GPA is required for admittance to the program."

Use: "Helena's parents were not impressed with her 1.25 GPA."

Avoid: "Austin's 4 GPA delighted his parents."

Avoid: "I consider my 2.756 GPA to be average."

* The word *Internet* should always be capitalized in web content.

* The acronym PIN stands for *personal identification number*. However, PIN has become a household term. Therefore, it can be displayed from first use in web content by initials only, as shown [all-caps *PIN*, without use of periods].

* Do not use ownership symbols in web content.

Examples:

- "We always make S'mores® with Hershey's® milk chocolate."
- "My family prefers the taste of Coke Zero™ to Pepsi Max®."

* Some international students will have a student visa that allows them to study in the United States. Do not capitalize the word *visa* unless referencing a specific office or event.

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Examples:

Use: "To attend school in Egypt, Lynelle will have to get a student visa."

Use: "Does the University have a Student Visa department?"

Avoid: "I can't believe it's already time to renew my Visa!"

* Wi-Fi (short for *wireless fidelity*) may be used at first reference in web content, as shown.

Examples:

Use: "Does the café have Wi-Fi? I'd like to check my e-mail."

Avoid: "Our library provides free wifi access."

Avoid: "For a fee, passengers can connect to on-board WiFi."

* The term *X-ray* is short for *energetic high-frequency electromagnetic radiation*. Use *X-ray* in all references, as shown [capital *X*, lowercase *ray*, separated by a hyphen].

* The acronym in the term *ZIP code* stands for *zoning improvement plan*. It should appear in web content, as shown [all caps *ZIP*, without use of periods].

Examples:

Use: "What is the ZIP code for your neighborhood?"

Avoid: "What is the Zip code for your neighborhood?"

Avoid: "What is the zoning improvement plan code for your neighborhood?"

Usability

* References to contacting a department within web copy should always link to that department's page, or provide specific contact information to reach that department.

* It is not necessary to reference Adobe Reader in web content. The necessary plug-ins for optimal use of the company's websites are referenced in the *Terms of Use* section.

Examples:

Instead of: Download the [Course Catalog](#) (Adobe Reader Required)

Use: [Download the Course Catalog](#)

* Providing the size of PDF files can be offered as a courtesy to web users, but is not necessary.

(See Also: [Forms & Files Guide](#))

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Example:

[Download the Course Catalog](#) (PDF, 3.7 MB)

✱ Alternatively, strive to keep PDF files to a size manageable by all web browsers.

Voice

✱ Active voice should be favored over passive voice whenever possible. This is not to suggest passive voice will never be used in any web content situation.

(See Also: [Web Writing Manual](#))

✱ Strive for a conversational tone in web content. Avoid jargon and slang.

Visits, Tours, Maps

✱ Make the following distinctions when referencing campus visits, geographical maps, and virtual tours:

- When referencing a physical trip to a campus location, use the word *visit*.

Example:

“Schedule a visit to a Howard University campus.”

When referencing photographs of buildings associated with a directory of the campus, use the word *map*. Use the word *tour* only in context of a specifically guided tour or a virtual tour media element.

Word Usage

✱ A, An

Use the article *a* before consonant sounds, and *an* before vowel sounds.

Examples:

a historic event	a NASA engineer	a full-color brochure
an honorable person	an FBI tradition	an FAA regulation

This is not a comprehensive list.

✱ Ability, Capability, Capacity

Ability describes a person’s skill or physical power to accomplish a task.

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Example:

"She has the ability to accomplish whatever she sets her mind to."

Capability describes the ability of a machine to be used to accomplish a task, or the ability of an organization to accomplish a task or meet a goal. It can also be used when referencing people, though *ability* is the preferred word and simpler choice.

Examples:

- "The dexterity and capability of the robot is amazing! It can do anything!"
- "This department has the resources and capability to complete the project by 2025."

Capacity refers to the ability to get, hold, contain, produce, carry or absorb. Used figuratively, it can describe a person's mental or physical power. It can also refer to a person's job, position or duty.

Examples:

- "Aaron says we won't need to fill up during the road trip; his gas tank has the capacity for nearly 20 gallons of fuel."
- "Einstein's mental capacity was staggering. He was like a human computer!"
- "Shelly is sure to excel as the new Dean of Students. In this capacity, she will be responsible for a number of key projects."

Above, More than, Over

Above should be used when referencing location or vantage point.

Examples:

- "You will find the dictionary on the shelf above the computer."
- "She watched the bird fly above her head."

More than should be used when referencing quantity.

Examples:

- "More than 2,000 students attended the commencement ceremony."
- "Amelia sold more than \$300 in Girl Scouts Cookies this year."

Over should be used when referencing spatial relationships.

Example:

"Ernst flew the plane over the ocean."

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✎ Using the word *above* should be avoided when referencing terms meant to relay *more than*, *older than*, or *longer than*.

Examples:

Use: "Men 18 and older could be drafted."

Avoid: "Men 18 and above could be drafted."

Avoid: "Men 18 and over could be drafted."

✎ Accept, Except

Accept is a verb that means *to receive*, *to admit*, *to regard as true* or — in some cases — *to reply in the affirmative* (say yes).

Examples:

- "I'm sorry, but I cannot accept this gift."
- "Michael's family was thrilled he got accepted to the University."
- "After your lengthy and detailed explanation, I can accept your theory."
- "She proposed to him, and he accepted!"

Except means *other than*, *but for*, or *to exclude*.

Examples:

- "I know everyone at the party except that couple in the corner."
- "I can accept all of your suggestions except the last one."
- "Everyone except Rania is going to the beach today."

✎ Adjectives and adverbs enhance web content. Adjectives describe nouns and pronouns. They will often answer a question such as:

- "What kind?"
- "How many?"
- "Which one?"

Adverbs can also answer questions such as:

- "How?"
- "When?"
- "Why?"

Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. They often (but not always) end in *ly*.

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❖ Admissions: plural or singular?

When referencing a student's individual admission concerns, use *admission*. When referencing the process, use *admissions*.

Examples:

- "What are your admission requirements?"
- "Could you e-mail me the admission information?"
- "I am unfamiliar with Howard's admissions process."
- "I cannot find an Admissions FAQ anywhere on your website."

❖ Affect, Effect

Affect means *to influence* or *to produce a change in*. *Effect* refers to an outcome. It can also mean *to bring about*.

Examples:

- "This game will affect the team's division standings."
- "The inspirational video had a profound effect on him."
- "She will, most surely, effect many changes in the company."

❖ Among, Between

Things happen *between* two people but *among* three or more people, departments, and so forth.

Examples:

- "The funds will be divided between Bill and Jenny."
- "Discussions are underway among the marketing, activities, and human resources departments."

❖ Do not use the outdated word *amongst*. Use *among* instead.

❖ Amuse, Bemuse

Amuse means to make someone smile or laugh. It can also be used when referencing entertainment. *Bemuse* means to confuse, be lost in thought, or otherwise preoccupied.

❖ Assure, Ensure, Insure

Assure means to declare earnestly, to pledge or promise. *Ensure* means to secure or guarantee. *Insure* refers to matters dealing with insurance.

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Examples:

- “Despite the rain, Linda assured us the wedding would go on as planned.”
- “All necessary steps were taken to ensure accuracy of the content.”
- “The new policy insures his life.”

8) Avoid branding terms in web content.

Examples:

- Use *tissue* instead of *Kleenex*
- Use *lip balm* instead of *Chap Stick*
- Use *photocopy* instead of *Xerox*
- Use *web search* instead of *Google*

This is not a comprehensive list.

9) The word *broadcast* can be used in both the present and past tense.

Examples:

- “The air show was broadcast on live television.”
- “Highlights from the event will be broadcast via streaming video.”

10) *Cannot* should always appear as one word, without spaces or hyphens.

11) *Can, May*

Can is used when making reference to capability, physical or mental ability, or the actual power to do something. *May* is used when referencing authorization or permission and possibility.

Examples:

- “The students can have that report finished by next month.”
- “May we have another month to finish the report?”
- “Amy can accomplish whatever she sets her mind to.”
- “We may have to choose another route to get to the theater.”

12) *Compliment, Complement*

Compliment refers to praise, or the expression of courtesy. *Complement* means *to match, pair, balance, supplement, or add to*.

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Examples:

- "I was trying to pay her a compliment, but she completely ignored me!"
- "This cheesecake is compliments of the chef."

- "The waiter said white wine would complement our entrées."
- "The bright blouse complemented her dark skirt."

✳️ Contractions are acceptable in web content as long as they're used appropriately and don't impede meaning.

✳️ The term *course work* may appear in web content as two separate words, or one word connected by a hyphen.

Examples:

Use: "You must complete the appropriate course work by the end of the semester."

Use: "You must complete the appropriate course-work by the end of the semester."

Avoid: "You must complete the appropriate coursework by the end of the semester."

✳️ *Either, Neither*

Use *either* when referencing one or the other of two people, places, or things.

Examples:

- "I've been to Boston and Los Angeles, but I wouldn't want to live in either city."
- "Either answer is correct."

Use *neither* when *excluding* one or the other of two people, places or things.

Examples:

- "Neither city appeals to me."
- "Neither of the candidates was selected."

✳️ *Fewer, Less*

Use *fewer* when referencing items that can be counted.

Examples:

Use: "Fewer than 10 applicants applied for the position."

Avoid: "There were fewer cold days this year than last."

Use *less* for bulk or quantity.

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Examples:

Use: "I won't be going out for lunch today. I have less than \$10 in my wallet."

Avoid: "University staff are concerned there could be more students and less rooms this year."

* Freshman, Freshmen

Use *freshman* when writing about one first-year student. Use *freshmen* when writing about more than one first-year student. *Freshman* may also be used as a modifier.

Examples:

- "She lives in the freshman dorm with 400 other freshmen.
- "UNIV 101 is a mandatory freshman course."

However, use *freshman class* instead of *freshmen class*.

* Avoid use of the slang term *frosh*.

* Fundraiser

The word *fundraiser* (also *fundraising* and similar) should appear in web content as one word, without the use of hyphens.

* The phrase *half-mast* is only used when referring to ships. Use *half-staff* when necessary.

Example:

"The President ordered flags to be flown at half-staff, in remembrance of those who died."

* Historic, Historical

Historic suggest importance, while *historical* refers to events that happened in the past. *Historic* can also refer to a person, place, or event with significance in history.

Examples:

- "The First Lady's visit to the small Vermont town was a historic event."
- "Historic Saint Augustine is only an hour from Daytona Beach."
- "Professor Ames' archaeological dig has historical implications."
- "This book is about the historical adventures of King Arthur."

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✳️ *I or Me?*

The decision on whether to use *I* or *me* is often best solved by experiment. Try to leave out one object or the other, and then determine if the sentence still makes sense.

Example One:

Original Sentence: "Would you explain that to Ellen and I?"

Experiment: "Would you explain that to Ellen?"

Experiment: "Would you explain that to I?"

Correct Sentence: "Would you explain that to Ellen and me?"

Example Two:

Original Sentence: "You should join Marty and I for lunch."

Experiment: "You should join Marty for lunch."

Experiment: "You should join I for lunch."

Correct Sentence: "You should join Marty and me for lunch."

Example Three:

Original Sentence: "The kids and me will go shopping tomorrow."

Experiment: "The kids will go shopping tomorrow."

Experiment: "Me will go shopping tomorrow."

Correct Sentence: "The kids and I will go shopping tomorrow."

✳️ Do not use the term *irregardless* in web content. Use *regardless* instead.

✳️ *Male/Female*

Use these words only as adjectives.

Examples:

Use: "He is the first male student from Belarus."

Avoid: "He is the first man student from Belarus."

Use: "She is the only female governor to have served on the board."

Avoid: "She is the only woman governor to have served on the board."

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❖ Avoid excessive word usage in web content.

Examples:

- very (often unnecessary)
- track record (use *record*)
- weather conditions (use *weather*)
- so-called (often unnecessary)
- top priority (use *priority*)

❖ The word *that* can often be removed from web content without impeding meaning.

Examples:

- "He said that he would go to the game tonight."
- "He said he would go the game tonight."

This is not to suggest the word *that* will never appear in web content.

❖ Avoid the phrases *goes without saying* and *needless to say*.

❖ Moderate use of nicknames is acceptable in web content. However, discretion is encouraged. Avoid excessive or inappropriate nicknames.

Examples:

Acceptable:	Janice "Janie" Feldman will deliver the keynote address.
Use Discretion:	The jacket belonged to John "Wild-Eyed Jack" Stanton.
Excessive:	Please ask Roger "Rootin', Tootin' Rodge-Dodge" Jefferson to attend.
Inappropriate:	I'm going downtown with Willa "the Killa" and Sludge-186.

❖ Be cognizant of (and sensitive to) how people prefer to be addressed. Use their desired names when possible — but also use discretion, as detailed elsewhere in this manual.

Examples:

- J.R. Hutchison
- Don Williams, Jr.
- Susie Meriwether

Use: Terrence "Dark Heart" Fowles

Avoid: Dark Heart Fowles

Avoid: Robert "Bob Dylan" Zimmerman

Use: Bob Dylan

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* The term *Noon* is acceptable when referring to the middle of the day. However, do not use the phrase *12 Noon*.

Examples:

Use: "The ice cream social runs from Noon to 4:00 p.m."

Avoid: "Please meet me promptly at 12 Noon."

* The term *Midnight* is acceptable in web content when referring to the start of a new day. However, do not use the phrase *12 Midnight*.

* The word *obviously* can be perceived as insulting and condescending. It is best to avoid this word in web content.

* Some commonly used prepositions include:

about	above	across
after	against	along
among	at	before
behind	below	beneath
beside	between	but
by	down	during
except	for	from
in	inside	instead
into	like	near
of	off	on
onto	outside	over
past	per	since
than	through	to
toward	under	until
up	upon	versus
with	within	without

* Capitalize the word *president* when referring to the current head of an organization. When referring to those who previously held the position, do not capitalize the word.

Examples:

- "President James H. Johnson is a pilot and avid outdoorsman."
- "Former president Ellen Sikes moved the company to Daytona Beach in 1965."

* Do not use the word *former* when referring to U.S. presidents. Regardless of whether they currently hold the title, they should always be referred to as simply *President*, with a capital *P*.

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Examples:

Use: President Barack Obama

Use: President Ronald Reagan

Avoid: Former President Franklin Delano Roosevelt

* Resume or *Résumé*?

Accents should not be used for the word *resume*. When written in the context of employment, it is generally understood to be referencing the document used for job search/interviews, and not *resume* — which means *to continue* or *to start again*.

* Stay tuned

Do not use the phrase *stay tuned* in web content. This is a broadcast term. Similarly, avoid the phrases *coming soon*, *check back soon*, and variations.

* Student

Use the word *student* sparingly. Strive to use the more conversational *you* whenever possible.

Examples:

Instead of: "Students must choose a major during the second semester."

Consider: "You must choose a major during your second semester."

Instead of: "Students must declare a concentration of study during their first year."

Consider: "You must choose a major your first year."

* Than, Then

Use *than* in comparative statements.

Examples:

- "Arturo is taller than I am."
- "They charge more for books than the other store."

Use *then* when making reference to time or a sequence of events.

Examples:

- "I had three morning classes, then went surfing for the rest of the day."
- "Kids back then knew how to respect their elders!"

* Do not add an s to the word *toward*.

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* Do not use the word *thru* in web content. Spell out the word *through*.

* Conventional and simple words and phrases should be favored over more technical and complicated ones. Avoid “ten-dollar words.”

Examples:

Instead of: **Use:**

acquire	buy, get, win
detrimental	harmful
operational	active, live, operating, running, working
optimum	best, greatest, ideal, most suitable
remittance	funds, money, payment
render	deliver, do, give, hand over, make, present
skillset	abilities, skills, talent
without further delay	now, immediately
with the exception of	except

This is not a comprehensive list.

Writing

(See Also: [Web Writing Manual](#))

* Avoid words not commonly used in conversation, unless they are industry specific. “Fancy wording” often turns readers off to content, and ultimately off web pages.

* Less is more when it comes to web content. Take care not to overwrite.

* Long paragraphs and sentences can intimidate readers and turn them off web content. Strive to limit paragraphs to between four and five sentences. Consider using a bulleted list or table to display important points.

Years

* When referencing years, use four digits (2018 instead of '18).

* However, when referencing graduating year (as in the case of alumni materials) it is acceptable to abbreviate.

Examples:

- “Shelly-Marie Mapleton ('10) has been promoted to Vice President of XYZ Corporation.”
- “Upon graduation, Bobby Martens ('15) hopes to start his own business in Prescott.”

* Use hyphens when referencing a date range (2018-2019).