

Vantage Point

In general, Vantage Point blogs should be written in plain language with the Veteran as the primary audience and family members, care givers and stakeholders as a secondary audience.

Style

Vantage Point follows AP style with one exception – Veteran is capitalized when referring to a U.S. military Veteran.

Capitalization

The following are the most common capitalization mistakes:

Incorrect example: John Smith, Secretary of Veterans Affairs

Correct example: John Smith, secretary of Veterans Affairs

**Titles are only capitalized when directly preceding a name and not separated by a comma.*

Correct example: VA Secretary John Smith

Incorrect example: Joe Smith developed an interest in Public Health early in his career.

Correct example: Joe Smith joined VA's Office of Public Health in 1999.

**Organizations and offices should be treated as proper nouns when used as a name and lowercase when used as a topic*

Acronyms

Per AP Style, "do not use abbreviations or acronyms that the reader would not quickly recognize."

Since Vantage Point is a less formal medium, avoid using the "U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)" on first reference. As a rule of thumb explore alternatives to acronyms not commonly used by the public.

Example: VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend Health Care System (VATVCBHCS)

*** Do not use acronyms such as this one.** Spell out on first reference and then use an alternative word. **Example:** Joe Smith, the system's longtime public affairs officer.

If the blog is about a specific facility or organization within the system, then use that name or reference instead of the system's name.

Example: The Corpus Christi VA Outpatient Clinic (CCVAOC), a part of the VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend Health Care System (VATVCBHCS) held a blood drive Friday.

Instead use: The Corpus Christi VA Outpatient Clinic held a blood drive Friday. The clinic collected more than 200 pints of blood.

Formatting

- Headlines

Headlines should be fully developed and reference to why the post is important to Veterans.

Incorrect example: VA secretary makes announcement on new program

Correct example: VA secretary announces new program designed to reduce wait times for care

Only proper nouns should be capitalized in headlines.

Incorrect example: VA Secretary Announces new Program Designed to Reduce Wait Times for Care

Correct example: VA secretary announces new program designed to reduce wait times for care

Put the relevant info in the headline, use the sub-head for context.

Subheads within the body of the post should be “Headline 4” font using mixed case as well.

- Author bios

If the author has a profile in the WordPress system, do not add an author bio. It will be auto-generated in the post once you publish, as long as that bio has been added to their profile.

Separate a hand-crafted bio with a horizontal rule using the code <hr> Bios are in italics.

The bio should be in sentence form.

Incorrect example: Joe Smith, Public Affairs Officer, Tennessee Valley Healthcare System

Without photo: Bio starts with: “About the author:” followed by the name, then description.

Correct example (no photo): About the author: Joe Smith is a public affairs officer for the Tennessee Valley Healthcare System.

With photo: Bio photos are justified left and no larger than 150 pixels tall

Correct example (with photo): Joe Smith is a public affairs officer for the Tennessee Valley Healthcare System.

- Videos

Video posts still require a feature photo.

In the right nav menu, select video. This will keep the feature photo from appearing on the page.

If the video is embedded at the bottom of the post, leave the format as “Standard”

Embedded videos should be the same size as a feature photo – 730 x 370. This will require editing the embed code you’ve pasted into the text version of the blog to those dimensions.

- Meta data and SEO

In order to ensure we are meeting meta data and SEO checks, please make sure you are doing the following:

Excerpt: Please create an excerpt of the story and paste it into the Excerpt and Summary boxes. This becomes the description of the blog that is pulled when it is 1) featured as a top story on Vantage Point; 2) posted as a link on Facebook; 3) shows up in Google/web searches.

Categories: Please only select one primary category (Current primary categories are: Health, VA Tags: Please add tags to your post. The blog uses these to generate links to “related content” when you are on the blog’s page.

Author: If the writer is a VA employee without a user profile, select Vantage Point Contributor. If the writer does not work for VA, be sure to select Guest Posts as a primary category and Vantage Point Contributor as the author.

- Punctuation

Please use AP style, i.e. no Oxford commas

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Updates will be added as need to the bottom of this style guide for quick reference.

Update – April 25, 2018

service member - Per AP style, service member is two words, both lowercase. (Implemented by OPIA Media Relations, December 2016)