

Welcome

Article • 05/10/2024



Make every word matter

Welcome to the *Microsoft Writing Style Guide*, your guide to writing style and terminology for all communication—whether an app, a website, or a white paper. If you write about computer technology, this guide is for you.

Today, lots of people are called upon to write about technology. We need a simple, straightforward style guide that everyone can use, regardless of their role. And it needs to reflect Microsoft's modern approach to voice and style: warm and relaxed, crisp and clear, and ready to lend a hand.

Here's what you will find in the *Microsoft Writing Style Guide*:

- Top 10 tips for mastering Microsoft style and voice
- Bias-free communication
- Global communications

We welcome your feedback about the *Microsoft Writing Style Guide*. Contact us at msstyle@microsoft.com.

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What's new?

Article • 08/26/2024

This table shows a history of recent updates to the *Microsoft Writing Style Guide*.

[+] Expand table

Date	Article	Change
August 26, 2024	[Announcement]	The Microsoft Writing Style Guide has now aligned with Merriam-Webster as its dictionary of references. Links and mentions have been fixed globally.
June 25, 2024	prompt, prompting	Updated guidance to address new concerns about AI prompts and provide resources for prompt writing.
May 9, 2024	Accessibility terms	Added guidance to avoid the use of "special needs."
April 19, 2024	Copilot, copilot	Created new topic with information on how to use Microsoft Copilot versus third-party copilots in naming and descriptions.
April 18, 2024	Militaristic language	Created new topic with guidelines on avoiding overly violent and militaristic language.
February 26, 2024	see, see also, and similar phrases	Created new topic regarding visual-based phrases and accessibility.
February 22, 2024	Formatting titles	Streamlined guidance to generally recommend sentence-casing; updated to recommend bold instead of italics for titles for enhanced readability and accessibility.
February 22, 2024	multi-	Updated to only include examples where the MWSG deviates from the American Heritage Dictionary.
December 22, 2023	notification area	Updated guidance to reflect that this now only applies to OS versions prior to Windows 11.
December 22, 2023	system tray	Updated guidance to reflect change with Windows 11.
November 15, 2023	enable, enables	Updated guidance to avoid use of enable, provided links to related topics.
November 15, 2023	percent, percent sign (%), percentage	Streamlined guidance, removed examples to focus on exception to the percent rules.

Date	Article	Change
November 15, 2023	Windows 10, Windows 11	Updated guidance and title to reflect the deprecation of Windows 7 and 8.
June 20, 2023	Accessibility terms	Updated guidance concerning neurodiversity.
June 6, 2023	Bluetooth	Updated guidance to use registered trademark symbol on first mention.
May 22, 2023	disable, disables (functionality)	Changed topic title to separate out functionality from accessibility meaning. Updated guidance to suggest alternatives for functionality. Provided an exception for admin use cases.
May 22, 2023	disabled (person)	Changed topic title to separate out functionality from accessibility meaning. Updated guidance to reflect people-first language is preferred, but not always required if context is provided.
May 22, 2023	turn on, turn off	Updated guidance to suggest as a replacement for enable, disable.
February 22, 2023	Accessibility terms	Updated guidance to align with Accessibility (nuanced discussion of identity-first language); created new table of examples; adopted new table formatting for screen-reader compatibility.
February 22, 2023	objectives and key results (OKR)	Created new topic.
February 22, 2023	key result (KR)	Created new topic.
February 22, 2023	key performance indicator (KPI)	Created new topic.
October 18, 2022	Formatting text in instructions	Clarified the guidance on using <i>dialog</i> .
June 24, 2022	Date and time terms	Reverted guidance (removed mention of ratio symbol in clock time).
June 24, 2022	Colons	Reverted guidance (removed mention of ratio symbol in clock time).
June 24, 2022	Nouns and pronouns	Added guidance regarding capitalization of proper nouns; added link to Person section for discussion of using pronouns in product UI.

Date	Article	Change
June 24, 2022	Person	Revised guidance to move away from first-person singular pronouns (with one notable exception when distinguishing ownership of content in shared visual space); updated examples for use of first- and second-person pronouns to reflect more use cases in UI; added guidance about pronouns in AI-generated content.
May 13, 2022	Lists	Added another example of a bulleted list. Expanded the Exception and added examples to address gaps in guidance regarding lists that do not complete an introductory phrase, but whose items are all short, complete sentences.
May 13, 2022	Periods	Added link to Lists topic in guidance.
May 13, 2022	Numbers	Added new section on phone numbers.
May 13, 2022	phone, phone number	Changed title of topic to include "phone number." Revised guidance to include mobile phones and to address phone number formatting.
December 15, 2021	Cloud-computing terms	Revised guidance to terms in the cloud-computing collection.
December 9, 2021	SQL, SQL server	Revised guidance to use the article "a" with SQL and updated examples.
August 26, 2021	multi-	Added multicloud exception to guideline.
August 26, 2021	touch-sensitive	Added new topic.
August 25, 2021	Bias-free communication	Added inclusive language section.
August 12, 2021	colons	Updated guidance on use of colons in clock time.
August 11, 2021	numbers	Replaced colons with ratio symbols.
August 10, 2021	date and time terms	New section on clock time.
May 31, 2021	workstream	New guidance on spelling and use.

Date	Article	Change
May 31, 2021	wellbeing	New guidance on spelling and use.
April 30, 2021	invite	New topic.
April 30, 2021	dark mode	New topic.
April 30, 2021	SMB	New topic.
March 31, 2021	bits and bytes	Updated guidance on when to abbreviate certain terms.
March 31, 2021	dialog box, dialog, dialogue	Updated guidance on use.
March 29, 2021	check, checkbox, check mark	Updated guidance on use.
March 26, 2021	dropdown	Updated guidance on spelling and use.
March 16, 2021	Welcome page	Updated Welcome page.
January 15, 2021	blacklist	Updated guidance on spacing for alternative term, <i>blocklist</i> .
January 15, 2021	environment variable	Updated topic guidance.
January 15, 2021	whitelist	Updated guidance on spacing for alternative term, <i>allowlist</i> .
November 24, 2020	Accessibility terms	Updated topic to include guidance on using words such as "see", "read", and "look".
November 24, 2020	global	Updated guidance wording to be more clear.
November 24, 2020	URLs and web addresses	Updated example in References to specific sites and domains section.
November 24, 2020	worldwide vs. international	Updated topic's wording and added example.
August 4, 2020	Bias-free communication	Updated guidance regarding unconscious racial bias and associated examples.

Date	Article	Change
August 4, 2020	blacklist	Updated guidance regarding usage and examples.
August 4, 2020	master/slave , master/subordinate	Updated topic name, guidance, and examples.
August 4, 2020	whitelist	Updated guidance regarding usage and examples.
June 30, 2020	above	Updated guidance by replacing <i>hyperlink</i> with <i>link</i> .
June 30, 2020	below	Updated guidance by replacing <i>hyperlink</i> with <i>link</i> .
June 30, 2020	destination	Updated guidance by replacing <i>hyperlink</i> with <i>link</i> .
June 30, 2020	earlier	Updated guidance by replacing <i>hyperlink</i> with <i>link</i> .
June 30, 2020	Formatting punctuation	Updated guidance by replacing <i>hyperlink</i> with <i>link</i> .
June 30, 2020	hot link	Updated guidance by replacing <i>hyperlink</i> with <i>link</i> .
June 30, 2020	hot spot, hotspot	Updated guidance by replacing <i>hyperlink</i> with <i>link</i> .
June 30, 2020	jump	Updated guidance by replacing <i>hyperlink</i> with <i>link</i> .
June 30, 2020	later	Updated guidance by replacing <i>hyperlink</i> with <i>link</i> .
June 30, 2020	navigate	Updated guidance by replacing <i>hyperlink</i> with <i>link</i> .
June 30, 2020	shortcut, shortcut menu	Updated guidance by replacing <i>hyperlink</i> with <i>link</i> .
April 29, 2020	Describing alternative input methods	Updated example.
April 29, 2020	either/or	Updated example.
April 29, 2020	Formatting text instructions	Revised table. Clarified wording for <i>Dialogue boxes</i> entry.

Date	Article	Change
April 29, 2020	mixed reality, mixed-reality	Updated topic; removed acronym guidelines.
April 29, 2020	pane	Added guidelines regarding preposition use; "Use the preposition <i>on</i> when referring to the contents of a pane."
March 31, 2020	Capitalization	Added guidance for hyphenated compound words
March 31, 2020	Hyphens	Updated list of examples.
March 31, 2020	later	Updated list of examples.
March 31, 2020	multifactor authentication	Added guidance for <i>multifactor authentication</i> .
March 31, 2020	Nouns and pronouns	Added guidance for <i>they</i> .
March 31, 2020	Numbers	Updated guidance on comma usage.
March 31, 2020	runs vs. runs on	Updated list of examples.
March 31, 2020	Units of measure terms	Updated examples on Speed frequency. Also updated comma exceptions and examples.
September 21, 2019	Mouse and mouse interaction term collection	Added guidance for <i>scroll</i> .
September 21, 2019	Start button, Start menu	Updated the guideline for when to use bold formatting for <i>Start</i> .
September 21, 2019	Describing interactions with UI	Deleted <i>press and hold</i> . Clarified that <i>select and hold</i> is the correct term to use to describe pressing and holding a UI element. Added examples.
September 18, 2019	Numbers	Added guidelines for using <i>K</i> , <i>M</i> , and <i>B</i> as abbreviations for <i>thousand</i> , <i>million</i> , and <i>billion</i> .
September 17, 2019	Microsoft	Added a guideline about when to include <i>Microsoft</i> in references to product names.
September 13, 2019	Bias-free communication	Clarified and expanded the guidelines for gender-neutral writing.

Date	Article	Change
August 16, 2019	registry, registry settings	Updated the examples.
August 8, 2019	author	Expanded this topic to say don't use <i>author</i> as a verb when you mean in general "to make something." Use a more precise verb.
August 8, 2019	Code examples	Clarified the approach to creating code examples, including planning for and writing. (No change to the guidelines themselves.)
August 8, 2019	Formatting developer text elements	Added updated examples and fixed some errors.
August 8, 2019	Reference documentation	Updated contents. Updated and added more examples.
July 25, 2019	Describing interactions with UI	Clarified the use of <i>select</i> and <i>enter</i> in describing user actions in instructions. Added examples.
June 27, 2019	and so on	Clarified that these terms shouldn't be used. Added examples of alternative wording.
June 27, 2019	sign in, sign out	Added <i>sign into</i> and <i>log into</i> to the list of terms that shouldn't be used. Updated the examples.
May 28, 2019	"appears, displays" and "displays, appears"	Deleted these topics from the A-Z word list. Microsoft style no longer makes a recommendation for these terms.
May 28, 2019	hard-code, hard-coded, hard-coding	Renamed the "hard-coded" topic so that the guideline applies to the additional word forms.
May 28, 2019	passwordless	Added a topic to the A-Z word list.
May 6, 2019	Names and contact information	Added global considerations for content that addresses the customer by name, such as in email or the product UI.
April 4, 2019	Date and time term collection	Added guidelines for abbreviating days of the week. Changed the guideline for month abbreviations to say don't use a period.
April 1, 2019	mixed reality, mixed-reality	Added a topic to the A-Z word list.
April 1, 2019	fail over, fail back, failover, fallback	Added a topic to the A-Z word list.

Date	Article	Change
April 1, 2019	single sign-on (SSO)	Added a topic to the A–Z word list.
March 11, 2019	Commas	Added guidelines for when to use a comma in a series of two or more adjectives that precede a noun.
February 28, 2019	Computer and device term collection	Added guidelines for using <i>desktop</i> as a hardware term. Updated the guidelines for <i>computer</i> , <i>PC</i> , <i>machine</i> , and other device terms.
February 27, 2019	blade	Clarified what the UI element called a <i>blade</i> is. Deleted the guideline to define <i>blade</i> on first mention.
February 22, 2019	AI and bot term collection	Changed the name from "Bot term collection." Updated the guidelines for <i>bot</i> , <i>chatbot</i> , <i>virtual agent</i> , and <i>AI</i> . Added new guidelines for the terms <i>intelligent/intelligence</i> and <i>Microsoft AI</i> .
February 1, 2019	Formatting developer text elements	Clarified the guideline for how to format UI text and updated the examples.
February 1, 2019	Formatting common text elements	Clarified the guidelines for how to format error messages and UI text and how to refer to error messages in text. Updated the examples.
February 1, 2019	Formatting text in instructions	Added guidelines for how to refer to palettes and toggles when they're referenced in instructions.
February 1, 2019	toggle	Clarified the guideline for how to refer to toggle keys and switches.
February 1, 2019	palette	Clarified the guideline for how to refer to palettes and updated the examples.
January 18, 2019	Internet of Things (IoT)	Added a topic to the A–Z word list.
December 12, 2018	toggle	Updated the guidance for using <i>switch</i> , <i>turn on</i> , and <i>turn off</i> when describing actions involving toggle switches and toggle keys. Added examples.
November 27, 2018	Mouse and mouse interaction term collection	Updated the guideline to say that <i>hover over</i> is an acceptable alternative to <i>point to</i> and that <i>hover</i> is OK as an adjective. Added examples.
November 26, 2018	drill down, drill up, drill through	Added a topic to the A–Z word list.
November 26, 2018	avg	Added a topic to the A–Z word list.

Date	Article	Change
November 8, 2018	e.g.	Updated to say that <i>for example</i> , <i>such as</i> , and <i>like</i> are all OK to use instead of <i>e.g.</i>
November 7, 2018	Formatting text in instructions	Changed the guideline for key names, combinations, and sequences to say don't put a space around the plus sign (+) in keyboard shortcuts. Also, use bold formatting for key names and keyboard shortcuts when they appear in instructions.
October 6, 2018	Tables	Clarified that a table must have two or more rows and two or more columns. Otherwise, use a list.
October 4, 2018	Mouse and mouse interaction term collection	Changed the guideline to say that <i>mice</i> is the preferred plural of <i>mouse</i> , not <i>mouse devices</i> .
September 11, 2018	org, organization	Added a topic to the A–Z word list.
September 11, 2018	company vs. organization	Added a topic to the A–Z word list.
September 10, 2018	e-sports	Added a topic to the A–Z word list.

Microsoft's brand voice: Above all, simple and human

Article • 10/18/2022

There's *what* we say, our message. And there's *how* we say it, our voice.

What do we mean by voice?

The Microsoft voice is how we talk to people. It's the interplay of personality, substance, tone, and style.

Though our voice is constant regardless of who we're talking to or what we're saying, we adapt our tone—from serious to empathetic to lighthearted—to fit the context and the customer's state of mind.

Three voice principles

Our voice hinges on crisp simplicity. Bigger ideas and fewer words. Less head, more heart.

Our voice is:

- **Warm and relaxed**—We're natural. Less formal, more grounded in real, everyday conversations. Occasionally, we're fun. (We know when to celebrate.)
- **Crisp and clear**—We're to the point. We write for scanning first, reading second. We make it simple above all.
- **Ready to lend a hand**—We show customers we're on their side. We anticipate their real needs and offer great information at just the right time.

A focus on the customer

Talking to our customers in a way that's warm and relaxed, crisp and clear, and ready to lend a hand reflects our commitment to empowering people to achieve more.

Style tips

A few key elements of writing Microsoft's voice:

- **Get to the point fast.** Start with the key takeaway. Put the most important thing in the most noticeable spot. Make choices and next steps obvious. Give people just enough information to make decisions confidently. Don't get in the way.
- **Talk like a person.** Choose optimistic, conversational language. Use short everyday words, contractions, and sentence-style capitalization. Shun jargon and acronyms. And never miss an opportunity to find a better word.
- **Simpler is better.** Everyone likes clarity and getting to the point. Break it up. Step it out. Layer. Short sentences and fragments are easier to scan and read. Prune every excess word.

Get started

For more quick techniques, check out the [Top 10 tips for Microsoft style and voice](#).

Remember that writing is a skill. If writing isn't a functional role your team has, consider bringing in expert help.

Top 10 tips for Microsoft style and voice

Article • 09/05/2024

Use bigger ideas, fewer words

Our modern design hinges on crisp minimalism. Shorter is always better. To learn more, see [Brand voice](#).

Example

Replace this: If you're ready to purchase Office 365 for your organization, contact your Microsoft account representative.

With this: Ready to buy? Contact us.

Write like you speak

Read your text aloud. Does it sound like something a real person would say? Be friendly and conversational. No. Robot. Words. To learn more, see [Brand voice](#).

Example

Replace this: Invalid ID

With this: You need an ID that looks like this: someone@example.com

Project friendliness

Use contractions: *it's, you'll, you're, we're, let's*. To learn more, see [Use contractions](#).

Example

Replace this: To help you avoid traffic, remember anniversaries, and in general do more, Cortana needs to know what you are interested in, what is on your calendar, and who you are doing things with.

With this: To help you avoid traffic, remember anniversaries, and in general do more, Cortana needs to know what you're interested in, what's on your calendar, and who you're doing things with.

Get to the point fast

Lead with what's most important. Front-load keywords for scanning. Make customer choices and next steps obvious. To learn more, see [Scannable content](#).

Example

Replace this: Templates provide a starting point for creating new documents. A template can include the styles, formats, and page layouts you use frequently. Consider creating a template if you often use the same page layout and style for documents.

With this: Save time by creating a document template that includes the styles, formats, and page layouts you use most often. Then use the template whenever you create a new document.

Be brief

Give customers just enough information to make decisions confidently. Prune every excess word. To learn more, see [Word choice](#).

Example

Replace this: The Recommended Charts command on the Insert tab recommends charts that are likely to represent your data well. Use the command when you want to visually present data, and you're not sure how to do it.

With this: Create a chart that's just right for your data by using the Recommended Charts command on the Insert tab.

When in doubt, don't capitalize

Default to sentence-style capitalization—capitalize only the first word of a heading or phrase and any proper nouns or names. Never Use Title Capitalization (Like This). Never Ever. To learn more, see [Capitalization](#).

Examples

Replace these:

Find a Microsoft Partner

Office 365 Customer

Limited-Time Offer

Join Us Online

With these:

Find a Microsoft partner

Office 365 customer

Limited-time offer

Join us online

Skip periods (and : ! ?)

Skip end punctuation on titles, headings, subheadings, UI titles, and items in a list that are three or fewer words. Save the periods for paragraphs and body copy. To learn more, see [Punctuation](#), [Headings](#), and [Lists](#).

Example

Replace this:

Move a tile.

1. Press and hold the tile.

With this:

Move a tile

1. Press and hold the tile.

Remember the last comma

In a list of three or more items, include a comma before the conjunction. (The comma that comes before the conjunction is known as the Oxford or serial comma.) To learn more, see [Commas](#).

Example

Replace this: Android, iOS and Windows

With this: Android, iOS, and Windows

Don't be spacey

Use only one space after periods, question marks, and colons—and no spaces around dashes. To learn more, see [Punctuation](#).

Example

Replace this: Use pipelines — logical groups of activities — to consolidate activities that are part of a task.

With this: Use pipelines—logical groups of activities—to consolidate activities that are part of a task.

Revise weak writing

Most of the time, start each statement with a verb. Edit out *you can* and *there is, there are, there were*. To learn more, see [Verbs](#) and [Word choice](#).

Example

Replace this: You can access Office apps across your devices, and you get online file storage and sharing.

With this: Store files online, access them from all your devices, and share them with coworkers.

Accessibility terms

Article • 05/09/2024

In general, use people-first language (refer first to the person, followed by the disability). To ensure clarity and consistency, this should be the default unless you know a specific audience prefers otherwise.

In some cases, however, identity-first language can be used, because some people and communities take pride in recognizing their disability as an integral part of their identity and feel that person-first language is marginalizing. Always make an effort to know the preferences expressed by a person with a disability or a disability community and defer to these.

In all cases, don't use language that has offensive or insensitive connotations, such as *maimed* or *impaired*.

The following table lists examples of people-first language (preferred), identity-first language (acceptable, context-dependent), and offensive or insensitive language (never allowed).

[\[\]](#) Expand table

Preferred (people-first)	Acceptable (identity-first)	Do not use (offensive/insensitive)
Person who is blind, person with low vision	Blind person	Sight-impaired, vision-impaired
Person who is deaf, person with a hearing disability	Deaf person	Hearing-impaired
Person with limited mobility, person who has a mobility or physical disability	Physically disabled person, wheelchair user	Crippled, lame, handicapped
Is unable to speak, uses sign language, uses synthetic speech		Dumb, mute, non-verbal
Has multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, a seizure disorder, or muscular dystrophy		Affected by, stricken with, suffers from, a victim of, an epileptic
Person without a disability	Non-disabled person, able-bodied person	Normal person, healthy person

Preferred (people-first)	Acceptable (identity-first)	Do not use (offensive/insensitive)
Person with a prosthetic limb, person with a limb difference, person with an amputation	Amputee	Maimed, missing a limb, birth defect
Person with a disability	Disabled person	People with handicaps, the handicapped
Person with cognitive disabilities, developmental disabilities, learning disabilities, or dyslexia	Learning disabled, dyslexic person	Slow learner, mentally handicapped, differently abled, Special Ed person, stupid, special needs
Person with autism	Autistic person, neurodivergent person	Asperger's
functional needs (or paraphrase according to the specific disability)		special needs

For an overview of Microsoft accessibility policies, see [Accessibility guidelines and requirements](#).

To learn more about writing that conveys respect to all people and promotes equal opportunities, see the [Guidelines for Inclusive Language](#) from the Linguistic Society of America.

AI and bot terms

Article • 06/24/2022

Avoid talking about AI and bot technology. Instead, focus on the benefits of the technology or what the customer wants to do with it. When it's necessary to talk about the technology itself—such as in content for developers or in event presentations, or to make it clear that the customer is chatting with a bot, not a person—use the terms below.

Before you invent a term, make sure a suitable term doesn't already exist. For more information about creating new terms or using emerging terminology, see [Use technical terms carefully](#).

Learn more See [Chatbots and virtual agents](#) for guidelines for creating a new chatbot.

[+] Expand table

Term	Usage
AI	<p>To refer to the technology itself, use <i>AI</i> for all audiences and in most content, including blogs, websites, and email. Don't spell out <i>artificial intelligence</i>.</p> <p>Use <i>intelligent</i> or <i>intelligence</i> to describe or talk about the benefits of AI.</p> <p>Examples</p> <p>Power BI realizes the promise of AI in intelligent features such as image recognition, text analytics, and automated machine learning.</p> <p>From document translation to intelligent threat detection, AI is enhancing the productivity of more than 120 million commercial Office 365 users.</p>
bot, chatbot, virtual agent	<p>Use <i>bot</i> to refer to an app that performs automated tasks or engages with humans through a conversational interface.</p> <p>If necessary, it's OK to use <i>chatbot</i> to clarify that the bot uses conversation to interact with the customer or <i>virtual agent</i> if the bot provides customer or technical support. After that, use <i>bot</i>.</p> <p>Never refer to Cortana as a <i>bot</i>, <i>chatbot</i>, or <i>virtual agent</i>. Use <i>personal digital assistant</i> instead.</p>
conversation as a platform (CaaP)	<p>Don't use in content for a general audience.</p> <p>OK to use if it's necessary to refer to the computing model in which two or more people or other entities exchange messages. Define the term on</p>

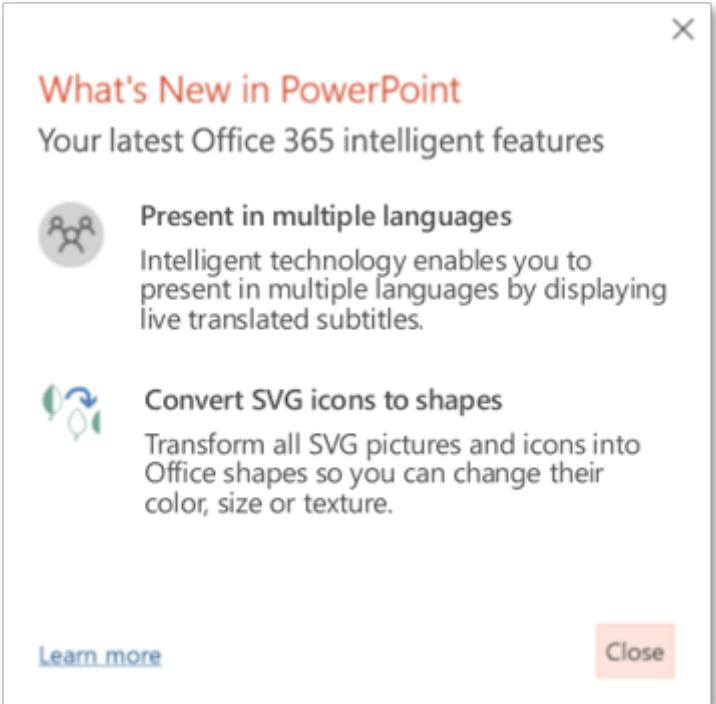
Term	Usage
	<p>the first use, if necessary, to make sure the meaning is clear to your audience.</p> <p>Spell out <i>conversation as a platform</i> whenever possible. If the term appears often, it's OK to use <i>CaaP</i> after the abbreviation is introduced in parentheses. Don't capitalize as <i>CAAP</i>.</p> <p>Don't hyphenate <i>conversation as a platform</i> when used as a modifier.</p>
conversational user interface (CUI)	<p>Avoid the term in customer-facing communications.</p> <p>OK to use if it's necessary to refer to a computing model where people interact with a system in a conversational manner, using text or voice input. Define the term on the first use, if necessary, to make sure the meaning is clear to your audience.</p> <p>Spell out <i>conversational user interface</i> or <i>conversational UI</i> on the first use. Use <i>CUI</i> after the abbreviation is introduced in parentheses.</p>
intelligent, intelligence, intelligent technology	<p>For all audiences and in most content, use <i>intelligent</i> or <i>intelligence</i> to describe or talk about the benefits of AI.</p> <p>In UI, use <i>intelligent technology</i> to describe the underlying technology that powers AI features.</p> <p>Don't use <i>smart technology</i>.</p>

Examples

To help people do their best work, Microsoft is making AI available to everyone by building intelligent features into our core products.

Enhance your sales performance and planning with intelligent applications like Microsoft Dynamics 365 AI for Sales.

From document translation to intelligent threat detection, AI is enhancing the productivity of more than 120 million commercial Office

Term	Usage
	<p>365 users.</p>  <p>What's New in PowerPoint Your latest Office 365 intelligent features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Present in multiple languages Intelligent technology enables you to present in multiple languages by displaying live translated subtitles.  Convert SVG icons to shapes Transform all SVG pictures and icons into Office shapes so you can change their color, size or texture. <p>Learn more Close</p>
Microsoft AI	<p>Use only to refer to the initiative that Microsoft is undertaking to accelerate AI capabilities and infuse intelligence into our offerings.</p> <p>Microsoft AI isn't a technology, feature, product, or service. Don't say things like "Powered by Microsoft AI." Don't spell out <i>artificial intelligence</i> in references to Microsoft AI.</p>
personal digital assistant	<p>Use to refer to a type of bot that has a name, a semblance of a personality, knowledge of a customer's needs and preferences, and the ability to act on those needs and preferences.</p> <p>Use instead of <i>agent</i>, <i>virtual assistant</i>, or <i>intelligent personal assistant</i> to refer to Cortana.</p>
social chatbot, relationship chatbot	<p>Use instead of <i>emotional chatbot</i> or <i>personified chatbot</i> to refer to a chatbot that people have conversations with for entertainment. Social chatbots often have a name and persona. Zo, Xiaoice, and Rinna are the Microsoft social chatbots.</p>
voice-activated device	<p>OK when it's necessary to refer to the category of devices, such as the Harman Kardon voice-activated speaker, that use Cortana.</p>
voice user interface (VUI)	<p>Avoid the term in customer-facing communications.</p> <p>OK to use if it's necessary to refer to a computing model where people use voice input to interact with a system, similar to a conversation. Define the term on the first use, if necessary, to make sure the meaning is clear to your audience.</p>

Term	Usage
	Spell out <i>voice user interface</i> or <i>VUI</i> whenever possible. If the term appears often, it's OK to use <i>VUI</i> after the abbreviation is introduced in parentheses.

Bits and bytes terms

Article • 06/24/2022

In general, spell out *bit* and *byte* terms on the first mention unless:

- Your audience is familiar with the abbreviation.
- You're working on UI text.

In those cases, or after you've spelled out the term on the first mention, it's OK to use abbreviations for *-bit* or *-byte* terms. Use abbreviations only with numbers in specific measurements, such as 128 TB.

- Insert a space between the abbreviation and the numeral, or hyphenate if the measurement modifies a noun.

Examples

512 gigabytes (GB) of RAM

From 1 GB to a maximum of 2 GB

23 MB/day

up to 2 terabytes of physical memory with 8 terabytes of address space

200 MB of available hard-drive space

a 650-MB limit

- In measurements, when the unit of measure isn't abbreviated, use the singular form of the unit of measure when the number is 1. Use the plural form for all other measurements.

Examples

0 megabytes

0.5 megabytes

1 megabyte

15 megabytes

- Use *of* to add a modifier to a measurement used as a noun.

Example

The operation requires 200 MB of available hard-drive space.

- Use commas in numbers that have four or more digits, regardless of how the numbers appear in the UI.

Example

1,024 MB

[+] Expand table

Term	Abbreviation	Usage
bits per pixel	bpp	
bits per second	bps	Don't use as a synonym for <i>baud</i> . See Units of measure term collection for information about <i>baud</i> .
byte	None	Don't abbreviate, unless in UI.
exabyte	EB	Don't use <i>E</i> , <i>E byte</i> , or <i>EByte</i> .
gigabit	None	Don't abbreviate, unless in UI.
gigabits per second	Gbps	Don't spell out as <i>Gb per second</i> .
gigabyte	GB	Don't use <i>G</i> , <i>G byte</i> , or <i>GByte</i> .
kilobit	None	Don't abbreviate, unless in UI.
kilobits per second	Kbps	Don't spell out as <i>KB per second</i> .
kilobyte	KB	Don't use <i>K</i> , <i>K byte</i> , or <i>KByte</i> .
kilobytes per second	KBps	Don't spell out as <i>KB per second</i> .
megabit	None	Don't abbreviate, unless in UI.
megabits per second	Mbps	Don't spell out as <i>Mb per second</i> .
megabyte	MB	Don't use <i>M</i> , <i>meg</i> , <i>M byte</i> , or <i>MByte</i> .
megabytes per second	MBps	Don't spell out as <i>MB per second</i> .
petabyte	PB	Don't use <i>P</i> , <i>P byte</i> , or <i>PByte</i> .
terabyte	TB	Don't use <i>T</i> , <i>T byte</i> , or <i>TByte</i> .
zettabyte	ZB	Don't use <i>Z</i> , <i>Z byte</i> , or <i>ZByte</i> .

Cloud-computing terms

Article • 06/24/2022

As cloud computing evolves, the consistent use of its terminology across Microsoft content presents a clear story to customers.

This section covers common cloud-computing terms.

For more information about creating new terms or using emerging terminology, see [Use technical terms carefully](#).

 Expand table

Term	Usage
as a service (-aaS)	<p>Use only <i>as a service (-aaS)</i> terms included in this term list.</p> <p>Don't create new <i>as a service</i> terms or <i>-aaS</i> acronyms. Instead, describe the service and what it provides the customer.</p>
cloud, the cloud	<p>Don't capitalize <i>cloud</i> except in references to the Microsoft Cloud or when it's part of a product name.</p> <p>Use <i>cloud</i> mostly as an adjective. Use sparingly as a noun—instead of <i>the cloud</i>, talk about <i>cloud computing</i>, <i>cloud services</i>, or a specific service or functionality and what the customer can do with it.</p>
cloud bursting, cloud-bursting	<p>It's OK to use <i>cloud bursting</i> for technical audiences to mean when a private cloud taps into additional resources on the public cloud to meet a spike in demand. Define on the first mention.</p> <p>Hyphenate <i>cloud-bursting</i> as an adjective preceding a noun, as in <i>cloud-bursting configuration</i>.</p>
cloud computing, cloud platform, cloud services	<p>Use <i>cloud computing</i>, not <i>the cloud</i>, to refer generally to the delivery of computing services over the internet.</p> <p>Use <i>cloud platform</i> only in content for a technical audience, such as content about Azure.</p> <p>Use <i>cloud services</i> to refer to the services provided via the cloud—such as servers, storage, databases, and software.</p> <p>All terms are two words and lowercase.</p>
cloud native, cloud-native	<p>In content for a technical audience, it's OK to use <i>cloud native</i> to describe technologies that are built originally for the cloud and therefore optimized for cloud scale and performance.</p>

Term	Usage
	<p>Lowercase. Hyphenate <i>cloud-native</i> as an adjective preceding a noun, as in <i>cloud-native app</i>. Don't hyphenate in other instances.</p> <p>Don't use <i>born in the cloud</i>, <i>cloud-born</i>, or similar phrases.</p>
cloud OS	<p>Don't use. Use <i>platform as a service (PaaS)</i> instead.</p>
community cloud	<p>Never use. Use <i>hybrid cloud</i>, <i>private cloud</i>, or <i>hosted private cloud</i> instead.</p>
content delivery network	<p>Lowercase when referring in general to a distributed network of servers that deliver web content. Always spell out; don't use <i>CDN</i>.</p>
cross-tenant	<p>Hyphenate in all positions.</p>
edge, edge computing	<p>It's OK to use these terms to refer to computing that shifts most data processing from a centralized system closer to a device or system that requires data quickly. Include short definitions of <i>the edge</i> and <i>edge computing</i> unless you're sure your audience is familiar with the terms.</p> <p>Lowercase.</p>
	<p>Use <i>at the edge</i>—not <i>on the edge</i>—in references to edge computing.</p>
elastic computing, elastic cloud computing	<p>In general, avoid using these terms and instead talk about what the customer can do with this technology.</p>
	<p>If your meaning is unclear without the terms, it's OK to use them to talk about the use of cloud computing to quickly expand or decrease computer processing, memory, and storage resources to meet changing demands. Use <i>elastic cloud computing</i> when you need to clarify that cloud services are used.</p>
	<p>Define these terms on the first mention unless you're sure that your audience is familiar with them.</p>
hosted service	<p>Use this term to describe a service, an IT solution, or an application that's hosted by a service provider and made available to customers over the internet.</p>
hosting provider, hoster	<p>It's OK to use <i>cloud hosting provider</i> and <i>web hosting provider</i> if you need to distinguish cloud service providers from web hosts. Don't use <i>hoster</i>.</p>
hybrid cloud	<p>OK to use for technical audiences who are comfortable with cloud technology, but define on the first mention. For other audiences, just talk about a hybrid model.</p>
infrastructure as a service (IaaS)	<p>Use for technical audiences only.</p> <p>It's OK to use <i>IaaS</i> after the term has been spelled out on the first</p>

Term	Usage
	<p>mention with the abbreviated form in parentheses.</p> <p>Don't capitalize as <i>IaaS</i>.</p> <p>Don't hyphenate as a modifier.</p>
IT as a service (ITaaS)	<p>Use for technical or business-decision-maker audiences only.</p> <p>In content for a general audience, refer to the specific type of service, such as applying software updates, in a cloud-computing model.</p> <p>It's OK to use <i>ITaaS</i> after the term has been spelled out on the first mention with the abbreviated form in parentheses.</p> <p>Don't capitalize as <i>ITAAS</i>.</p> <p>Don't hyphenate as a modifier.</p>
the Microsoft Cloud	<p>Use this term to describe the entire Microsoft cloud platform—not just Azure, but also the cloud on which all Microsoft cloud offerings run, including Dynamics 365, Microsoft Power Platform, and Microsoft 365.</p> <p>When used in this meaning, <i>Microsoft Cloud</i> is capitalized.</p> <p>Include the article (<i>the</i>) before <i>Microsoft Cloud</i>.</p> <p>It's OK to add a modifier between <i>the</i> and <i>Microsoft Cloud</i>—for example, “the trusted Microsoft Cloud.”</p>
multicloud	<p>It's OK to use <i>multicloud</i> in content for technical audiences to refer to the use of multiple cloud-computing services from more than one cloud provider (including private and public clouds), in a heterogeneous environment.</p> <p>One word, no hyphen.</p>
multitenant, multitenancy	<p>It's OK to use these terms in content for a technical audience, but in content for a general audience, try to use friendlier language—for example, say <i>services used by multiple tenants</i> rather than <i>multitenant services</i>.</p> <p>One word, no hyphen.</p>
on-premises, off-premises	<p>Hyphenate in all positions.</p> <p><i>Premises</i> is plural. Don't use <i>on-premise</i>, <i>off-premise</i>.</p> <p>Don't use <i>on-premises cloud</i> or <i>off-premises cloud</i>.</p>

Term	Usage
platform as a service (PaaS)	<p>Use for technical audiences only.</p> <p>It's OK to use <i>PaaS</i> after the term has been spelled out on the first mention with the abbreviated form in parentheses.</p> <p>Don't capitalize as <i>PAAS</i>.</p> <p>Don't hyphenate as a modifier.</p>
private cloud, hosted private cloud	<p>Define these terms on the first mention.</p>
serverless	<p>One word, no hyphen.</p>
software as a service (SaaS)	<p>It's OK to use <i>SaaS</i> after the term has been spelled out on the first mention with the abbreviated form in parentheses.</p> <p>Don't capitalize as <i>SAAS</i>.</p> <p>Don't hyphenate as a modifier.</p>

Computer and device terms

Article • 06/24/2022

In the modern world, customers get things done with whatever device is handy. When you write, focus on what the customer wants to accomplish. If you must write about the device itself, use the most general term that works—usually, that's *device*. Sometimes, it's *computer*, *phone*, or *wearable device*. Occasionally, it's *laptop*, *smartphone*, or *fitness band*.

Device interaction terms

Use these verbs to talk about using devices and peripheral devices:

- Use *turn on* and *turn off*, not *power on*, *power off*, *switch on*, or *switch off*.
- Use *set up* to describe preparing hardware or software for first use.
- Use *install* and *uninstall* to refer to adding and removing hardware drivers and apps.
- Use *connect* and *disconnect* to refer to establishing a relationship between devices (direct or wireless) and connecting a device to a network or the internet.

Preferred device terms

[+] Expand table

Term	Usage
device, mobile device	<p>Use <i>device</i> to refer collectively to all types of computers, phones, and other devices.</p> <p>Use <i>mobile device</i> only when you need to call out the mobility.</p> <p>It's OK to modify <i>device</i> when it matters. For example, <i>point-of-sale device</i>.</p>
computer, PC	<p>Use <i>computer</i> when you need to talk about a computing device other than a phone, wearable device, or gaming console.</p> <p>It's OK to use <i>PC</i> when space is a constraint, but don't switch between <i>PC</i> and <i>computer</i>.</p> <p>Don't use <i>mobile computer</i>, <i>portable computer</i>, or <i>mobile PC</i>.</p>
phone, mobile phone,	Use <i>phone</i> most of the time.

Term	Usage
smartphone	<p>If you need to call out the mobility, use <i>mobile phone</i>.</p> <p>Use <i>smartphone</i> only if you need to distinguish a smartphone from other types of phones.</p> <p>Don't use <i>wireless phone</i>, <i>cell phone</i>, or <i>cellular phone</i>.</p>
tablet, laptop	<p>Use a more generic term unless you're talking about a specific class of computers. Use <i>tablet</i> only to refer to a touchscreen computer without a permanently attached keyboard. Use <i>laptop</i> to refer to a portable computer with a permanently attached keyboard, with or without a touchscreen.</p> <p>Don't use <i>slate</i> or <i>notebook</i>.</p>
wearable device, fitness band	<p>Use only when it's necessary to differentiate devices that are meant to be worn from other devices.</p> <p>Avoid using <i>wearable</i> as a noun.</p>

Acceptable terms for specific references

Use the following terms only when you need to be more specific than you can be by using the preferred terms.

[\[+\] Expand table](#)

Term	Usage
handheld device	<p>Use only to refer to a small, limited-use device that accesses, captures, and updates information in real time, such as the devices often used in line-of-business (LOB) applications. If possible, just use <i>device</i>.</p> <p>Don't use <i>handheld</i> as a noun.</p> <p>Don't use <i>handheld PC</i> or <i>handheld computer</i>.</p>
desktop	<p>Use only to refer to a type of computer that isn't portable or a server computer.</p> <p>Don't use <i>desktop</i> as a synonym for <i>computer</i> or <i>PC</i>.</p>
machine	<p>Most of the time, don't use <i>machine</i> to mean a computer. Use <i>computer</i> instead. It's OK to use <i>machine</i> in content for a technical audience and in content about virtualization to describe both physical machines and virtual machines.</p> <p>Examples</p> <p>Updates help to enhance the security and performance of your computer.</p> <p>Move virtual machines from one physical server to another to balance the load</p>

Term	Usage
	<p>among physical servers.</p> <p>A signed machine certificate uniquely identifies the computer.</p>
client, server	<p>Use <i>client</i> or <i>server</i> only if it's clear to the reader whether the client or server discussed is hardware or software.</p> <p>Use <i>client computer</i> or <i>server computer</i> if you need to clarify that you're discussing hardware.</p> <p>Don't use <i>box</i> in reference to client and server hardware.</p>

Peripheral devices and hardware components

In general, use the most generic term that describes a peripheral device or hardware component.

[\[+\] Expand table](#)

Term	Usage
adapter	Use instead of <i>adaptor</i> .
disc	Use <i>disc</i> , not <i>disk</i> , to refer to a CD or DVD.
disk	<p>Use <i>disk</i> only in the context of Azure cloud storage and virtual machines.</p> <p>Use <i>hard drive</i>, not <i>disk</i>, <i>fixed disk</i>, <i>hard disk</i>, or <i>disk drive</i> to refer to the drive on a PC where programs are typically stored.</p>
display, screen, monitor	<p>Use <i>display</i> as a general term for any visual output device, including the built-in display on a computing device and an external monitor or projector.</p> <p>Use <i>screen</i> to distinguish the usable portion of the display from its edges.</p> <p>Use <i>monitor</i> only when you need to refer specifically to a standalone desktop or mounted display device that can be connected to a computing device.</p>
drive	<p>Avoid talking about drives in content for a general audience. It's usually enough to prompt customers to save a file, picture, song, and so on.</p> <p>Use <i>drive</i> as the general term for any type of device where a customer can save or retrieve files, including <i>hard drive</i>, <i>CD drive</i>, <i>DVD drive</i>, <i>USB flash drive</i>, or any other removable storage device. Use <i>hard drive</i> when necessary to refer to a drive on a PC where programs are typically stored.</p>

Term	Usage
	<p>Avoid referring to the type of drive if you can.</p> <p>Use <i>drive C</i>, not <i>drive C</i>:, <i>drive C></i>, or <i>C: drive</i>, when necessary.</p> <p>Use <i>network drive</i>, not <i>remote drive</i>, to refer to a logical network drive name.</p> <p>Example network drive X</p>
mouse, pen, controller, joystick, touchpad, trackball	<p>In general, don't talk about specific input devices. Most of the time, talk about how the customer interacts with the app or game by selecting, choosing, and so on. To learn more, see Describing interactions with UI.</p> <p>When you must discuss interacting with a specific type of device, don't use <i>pointing device</i> or <i>input device</i>. Instead, use the specific term for that device: <i>mouse, pen, controller, joystick, touchpad</i>, or <i>trackball</i>. Use <i>tablet pen</i> on the first mention, and <i>pen</i> thereafter. Don't use <i>stylus</i>.</p> <p>Joysticks have <i>controls</i> (not <i>options</i>) for controlling movement on the screen.</p>
network adapter	Use instead of <i>network card</i> to describe hardware that supports connecting a computer to a network.
touchscreen	One word. Use sparingly. Most of the time, talk about how the customer interacts with the app or product by selecting, choosing, and so on. See Describing interactions with UI to learn more.
USB	<p>Don't spell out. Use only as an adjective.</p> <p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> USB drive USB hub USB 3.0 port

Date and time terms

Article • 05/09/2023

This section covers usage for terms related to time and date.

 Expand table

Term	Usage
24/7	Don't use. Use <i>all day</i> , <i>every day</i> , <i>always</i> , or something similar.
AM, PM	<p>Use <i>AM</i> and <i>PM</i> (preceded by a space). Use capital letters for <i>AM</i> and <i>PM</i>.</p> <p>Examples</p> <p>10:45 AM 6:30 PM</p>
Dates	<p>Use the following format for dates: <i>month day, year</i>, as in <i>July 31, 2016</i>. Don't use <i>day month year</i>, as in <i>31 July 2016</i>.</p> <p>In UI, it's OK to use numbers and slashes for dates if the code supports that format and automatically displays the appropriate date format for different locales.</p> <p>Don't use ordinal numbers (such as 1st, 12th, or 23rd) to indicate a date.</p> <p>Examples</p> <p>February 16, 2016 2/16/16 (in UI)</p>
Days of the week: Sunday–Saturday	<p>Capitalize the days of the week. Don't use abbreviations unless space is extremely limited. Don't include a period with the abbreviations.</p> <p>Three-letter abbreviations are preferred: <i>Sun, Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, and Sat</i></p> <p>In calendars and date picker UI controls, it's OK to use two-letter or one-letter abbreviations: <i>Su, Mo, Tu, We, Th, Fr, and Sa</i> <i>S, M, T, W, T, F, and S</i></p> <p>For the three-letter and two-letter abbreviations, use sentence-style capitalization (<i>Su</i>), not all uppercase (<i>SU</i>).</p>
midnight, noon	Use <i>noon</i> and <i>midnight</i> . Don't use <i>12:00 noon</i> and <i>12:00 midnight</i> .

Term	Usage
	Midnight is the beginning of the new day, not the end of the old one.
Months: January–December	<p>Capitalize the names of months and their abbreviations.</p> <p>Don't use abbreviations unless space is extremely limited. Use three-letter abbreviations when necessary: <i>Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov, and Dec</i> Don't include a period with the abbreviations.</p>
Seasons: autumn, winter, spring, summer	<p>Don't refer to seasons if you can avoid it. Talk about months or calendar quarters instead. If you must mention a specific season, identify the hemisphere, too. (Summer in the northern hemisphere is winter in the southern hemisphere.)</p> <p>Don't capitalize the seasons except to designate an issue of a publication, such as <i>Spring 2017</i>.</p>
Time, ranges of time	<p>Use numerals for times of day: 2:00, 4:15, 7:30. Always include <i>AM</i> and <i>PM</i>.</p> <p>Include the time zone if you're discussing an event that customers beyond the local time zone might see or attend.</p> <p>In text, use <i>to</i> in a range of times.</p> <p>Example 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM</p> <p>In a schedule or listing, use an en dash with no spaces around it.</p> <p>Example 10:00 AM–2:00 PM</p> <p>Exception In a date range that includes two times and two dates, add spaces around the en dash. Lead with whatever is most important to the customer within the context: time of day or date.</p> <p>Examples 2:15 AM–4:45 PM 4/1/16 (time range on a single day) 12/1/17 2:15 PM – 4/1/18 4:45 PM (time plus date range)</p>
Time zones: Eastern Time, Central Time, Mountain Time, Pacific Time, Coordinated Universal Time (UTC), Greenwich Mean Time (GMT)	<p>Capitalize time zones. Don't abbreviate unless space is severely limited. If you must abbreviate, use <i>ET</i>, <i>CT</i>, <i>MT</i>, and <i>PT</i>.</p> <p>Don't specify <i>standard time</i> or <i>daylight saving time</i> unless</p>

Term	Usage
	<p>you're providing information about a specific event where that information matters.</p>
	<p>If you're referring to a time zone as a geographical area, call it a zone.</p>
	<p>Example in the Pacific Time zone</p>
	<p>Not all time zones have names, and some time-zone names are used in more than one geographical area. If you're talking about a particular place, clarify the country or reference Coordinated Universal Time (UTC). Don't include spaces around the plus sign (+) or hyphen (-).</p>
	<p>Examples</p>
	<p>Eastern Time (UTC-5)</p>
	<p>Eastern Time (UTC+10)</p>
	<p>Eastern Time (Australia)</p>
	<p>For time zones without names, refer to the offset from Coordinated Universal Time.</p>
	<p>Example</p>
	<p>UTC+7</p>
	<p>Don't abbreviate <i>Coordinated Universal Time</i> in text unless space is severely limited. Use <i>UTC</i>, never <i>CUT</i>. (It's OK to use <i>UTC</i> in references to a specific time zone, such as <i>UTC+7</i>.) Don't use <i>Universal Time Coordinate</i> or <i>Universal Time Coordinated</i>.</p>
	<p>Don't use <i>Greenwich Mean Time</i> or <i>GMT</i> by itself unless you have no other choice. Use <i>Coordinated Universal Time</i> instead. On the first mention, it's OK to refer to <i>Coordinated Universal Time (Greenwich Mean Time)</i>.</p>

Abbreviating units of time

[] Expand table

Unit	Abbreviation
day, days	<p>d Spell out except in UI or when space is extremely tight.</p>
hour, hours	<p>h</p>
microsecond	<p>Don't abbreviate.</p>

Unit	Abbreviation
millisecond, milliseconds	ms
minute, minutes	min
month, months	mo Spell out except in UI or when space is extremely tight.
nanosecond	Don't abbreviate.
second, seconds	sec
week, weeks	wk Spell out except in UI or when space is extremely tight.
year, years	yr Spell out except in UI or when space is extremely tight.

Keys and keyboard shortcuts

Article • 05/12/2023

This term collection covers how to refer to keyboard shortcuts and the names of specific keys.

For information about describing customers' interactions with UI, see [Procedures and instructions](#).

Keyboard actions and access

[] Expand table

Term	Usage
keyboard shortcut, accelerator key, fast key, hot key, quick key, speed key	<p>In general, use <i>keyboard shortcut</i> to describe a combination of keystrokes used to perform a task.</p> <p>Example Alt+Ctrl+S</p> <p>Don't use <i>accelerator key</i>, <i>fast key</i>, <i>hot key</i>, <i>quick key</i>, or <i>speed key</i>.</p>
access key	<p>Don't use in content for a general audience. Use <i>keyboard shortcut</i> instead.</p> <p>In content for developers or content about customizing the UI, it's OK to distinguish between an <i>access key</i> and a <i>shortcut key</i>. An access key is a letter or number that users select to access UI controls that have text labels. For example, the <i>F</i> in Alt+F. A shortcut key is a key or key combination that users select to perform a common action. For example, Ctrl+V. If you use these terms, explain the difference.</p>
Key Tip	<p>In general, don't use in content for a general audience. Use <i>keyboard shortcut</i> instead.</p> <p>In content teaching basic skills or content for a technical audience, it's OK to use <i>Key Tip</i> to refer to the letter or number that appears in the ribbon when the Alt key is pressed.</p>
key combination	<p>Don't use in content for a general audience. Use <i>keyboard shortcut</i> instead.</p> <p>In content for a technical audience, it's OK to distinguish between a <i>key combination</i> (two or more keys selected simultaneously) and a <i>key sequence</i> (two or more keys selected sequentially). If you use these terms, explain the difference.</p>

Term	Usage
key sequence	<p>Don't use in content for a general audience. Use <i>keyboard shortcut</i> instead.</p> <p>In content for a technical audience, it's OK to distinguish between a <i>key sequence</i> (two or more keys selected sequentially) and a <i>key combination</i> (two or more keys selected simultaneously). If you use these terms, explain the difference.</p>
keypad	<p>Use <i>numeric keypad</i> on the first mention. Don't use <i>keypad</i> by itself unless the context has been established and there's no possibility the customer will confuse the keypad with the keyboard. When in doubt, continue to use <i>numeric keypad</i>.</p> <p>In general, don't distinguish between the keyboard and the numeric keypad. When the customer can select two keys that look the same, direct the customer to the correct key.</p> <p>Example</p> <p>Select the Minus sign on the numeric keypad, not the Hyphen key on the keyboard.</p>
keystroke, keypress	<p>Don't use <i>keypress</i>. Use <i>keystroke</i> instead.</p>
select, press, depress, hit, strike, use	<p>Use <i>select</i> to describe pressing a key on a physical or on-screen keyboard. Don't use <i>press</i>, <i>depress</i>, <i>hit</i>, or <i>strike</i>.</p> <p>Don't use <i>depressed</i> to describe an indented toolbar button unless you have no other choice.</p> <p>Use <i>use</i> when <i>select</i> might be confusing, such as when referring to the arrow keys or function keys and <i>select</i> might make customers think that they need to select all the arrow keys simultaneously.</p> <p>Example</p> <p>Use the arrow keys to move around the text.</p> <p>Use <i>use</i> when multiple platform or peripheral choices initiate the same action or actions within a program.</p> <p>Example</p> <p>Use the controls on your keyboard or controller to run through the obstacle course.</p> <p>Be specific when teaching beginning skills.</p> <p>Example</p> <p>To run through the obstacle course, select the Spacebar on the keyboard or pull the right trigger on the Xbox controller.</p>
	<p>Consider using a table to present instructions that have more than two alternatives.</p>

Term	Usage
	<p>Use <i>select and hold</i> only if a delay is built into the software or hardware interaction. Don't use <i>select and hold</i> when referring to a mouse button unless you're teaching beginning skills.</p> <p>See also Describing interactions with UI, Mouse and mouse interaction term collection</p>
shortcut key	<p>Don't use in content for a general audience. Use <i>keyboard shortcut</i> instead.</p> <p>In content for developers or content about customizing the UI, it's OK to distinguish between an <i>access key</i> and a <i>shortcut key</i>. An access key is a letter or number that users select to access UI controls that have text labels. For example, the <i>F</i> in Alt+F. A shortcut key is a key or key combination that users select to perform a common action. For example, Ctrl+V. If you use these terms, explain the difference.</p>

Key names

- In general, use sentence capitalization for key names.

Examples

the Shift key

the Page up key

- Capitalize letter keys in general references.

Example

the K key

- Lowercase and bold a letter key when instructing customers to enter the letter (unless you're instructing them to enter a capital letter).

Example

enter **k**

- On the first mention, you can use the definite article *the* and the word *key* with the key name if necessary for clarity.

Example

Select *the F1* key.

- On subsequent mentions, refer to the key by its name only.

Example

Select **F1**.

If you need guidance for a key name that isn't on this list, use sentence capitalization and spell it as it appears on the keyboard.

[Expand table](#)

Term	Usage
Alt	Capitalize. Use to refer to the <i>Alt key</i> .
Application key	Capitalize. Use <i>the Application key</i> to refer to the key that opens a shortcut menu containing commands related to a selection.
arrow keys, direction keys, directional keys, movement keys	<p>Arrow keys are labeled only with an arrow. Refer to similar keys on the numeric keypad as <i>the arrow keys on the numeric keypad</i>.</p> <p>Use sentence capitalization to refer to a specific arrow key: <i>the Left arrow key</i>, <i>the Right arrow key</i>, <i>the Up arrow key</i>, or <i>the Down arrow key</i>. It's OK to use <i>arrow key</i> as a general term for any single arrow key. Include <i>the</i> and <i>key</i> in references to a specific arrow key except in key combinations or key sequences.</p> <p>Don't use <i>direction keys</i>, <i>directional keys</i>, or <i>movement keys</i>.</p> <p>Use specific names to refer to other navigational keys, such as <i>Page up</i>, <i>Page down</i>, <i>Home</i>, and <i>End</i>.</p>
asterisk (*), star	<p>Use <i>asterisk</i> to refer to the * symbol.</p> <p>An asterisk is used to indicate multiplication in a programming language or as a wildcard character representing one or more characters.</p> <p>It's OK to use <i>star</i> to refer to the key on a phone keypad.</p>
at sign (@)	Pronounced <i>at</i> . In most cases, don't spell out.
Back	Capitalize. Use to refer to the <i>Back key</i> , which performs the same action as the Back button in a browser.
Backspace	Capitalize. Use to refer to the <i>Backspace key</i> .
backtab	Don't use to refer to the Shift+Tab keyboard shortcut.
Break caps	Use sentence capitalization. Use to refer to the <i>Break caps key</i> .
Caps lock	Use sentence capitalization. Use to refer to the <i>Caps lock key</i> .
comma (,)	Spell out <i>comma</i> when referring to a key or the punctuation mark.

Term	Usage
	Capitalize <i>Comma</i> when instructing a reader to select the key. Include the symbol in parentheses when needed for clarity.
Command	Capitalize. Use to refer to the <i>Command key</i> on the Mac keyboard. Use the bitmap to show this key if possible. It isn't named on the keyboard.
Control	Capitalize. Use to refer to the <i>Control key</i> on the Mac keyboard.
Ctrl	Capitalize. Use to refer to the <i>Ctrl key</i> . Don't use for the Mac keyboard.
Del	Capitalize. Use to refer to the <i>Del key</i> . On the Mac keyboard only, use to refer to the <i>forward delete key</i> .
Delete	Capitalize. Use to refer to the <i>delete key</i> .
End	Capitalize. Use to refer to the <i>End key</i> .
Enter	Capitalize. Use to refer to the <i>Enter key</i> . On the Mac, use only when functionality requires it.
Esc	Always use <i>Esc</i> , not <i>Escape</i> .
F1–F12	Capitalize the <i>F</i> . Don't add a space between the <i>F</i> and the number.
Forward	Capitalize. Use to refer to the <i>Forward key</i> , which performs the same action as the Forward button in a browser.
Help	Use the <i>Help key</i> only to refer to the key on the Mac keyboard.
HELP key	Use the <i>HELP key</i> to avoid confusion with the Help button. Always include the <i>the</i> and <i>key</i> .
Home	Capitalize. Use to refer to the <i>Home key</i> .
hyphen (-)	Spell out <i>hyphen</i> when referring to a key. Capitalize <i>Hyphen</i> when instructing a reader to select the key. Include the symbol in parentheses when needed for clarity.
Insert	Capitalize. Use to refer to the <i>Insert key</i> .
Lock clear	Capitalize. Use to refer to the <i>Lock clear key</i> .
minus sign (-)	Spell out <i>minus sign</i> when referring to a key. Use sentence capitalization (<i>Minus sign</i>) when instructing a reader to select the key. Include the symbol in parentheses when needed for clarity.
Num lock option	Use sentence capitalization. Use to refer to the <i>Num lock option key</i> on the Mac keyboard.

Term	Usage
number sign (#), pound key, hashtag	<p>Use <i>#</i> key to describe the key.</p> <p>It's OK to use <i>pound key (#)</i>, including the symbol in parentheses, to refer to the keypad on a telephone. It's OK to use <i>hashtag (#)</i> to describe the use of the # key to identify a metadata term in social media.</p>
numeric keypad, keypad, numerical keypad, numeric keyboard	<p>Use <i>numeric keypad</i> on first mention. Don't use <i>keypad</i> by itself unless there's no possibility of confusion with the keyboard. Don't use <i>numerical keypad</i> or <i>numeric keyboard</i>.</p> <p>In general, don't distinguish between the keyboard and the numeric keypad. If a customer can select two keys that look the same, specify the correct key.</p> <p>Example</p> <p>Select the Minus sign on the numeric keypad.</p>
on-screen keyboard, keyboard display, soft keyboard, virtual keyboard, visual keyboard	<p>Use to describe the keyboard representation on the screen that the customer touches to enter characters.</p> <p>Hyphenate <i>on-screen keyboard</i>. Don't use <i>virtual keyboard, soft keyboard, visual keyboard</i>, or <i>keyboard display</i>.</p>
Page down, Page up	Use sentence capitalization. Use to refer to the <i>Page up</i> key and the <i>Page down</i> key.
Pause	Capitalize. Use to refer to the <i>Pause</i> key.
period (.)	Spell out <i>period</i> when referring to a key. Capitalize <i>Period</i> when instructing a reader to select the key. Include the symbol in parentheses when needed for clarity.
plus sign (+)	Spell out <i>plus sign</i> when referring to a key. Use sentence capitalization (<i>Plus sign</i>) when instructing a reader to select the key. Include the symbol in parentheses when needed for clarity.
Print screen	Use sentence capitalization. Use to refer to the <i>Print screen</i> key.
Reset	Capitalize. Use to refer to the <i>Reset</i> key.
Return	Capitalize. Use to refer to the <i>Return</i> key on the Mac keyboard.
Scroll lock	Use sentence capitalization. Use to refer to the <i>Scroll lock</i> key.
Select	Capitalize. Use to refer to the <i>Select</i> key.
Shift	Capitalize. Use to refer to the <i>Shift</i> key.
Spacebar	Capitalize. Use to refer to the <i>Spacebar</i> . Always precede with <i>the</i>

Term	Usage
	except in procedures, key combinations, and key sequences.
Tab	Capitalize. Use to refer to the <i>Tab</i> key. Always use <i>the</i> and <i>key</i> except in key combinations and key sequences.
Windows logo key	Capitalize <i>Windows</i> . Use to refer to the <i>Windows logo key</i> .

Special character names

Because special character names could be confused with an action (such as +) or be difficult to see, always spell out the following special character names: *Plus sign*, *Minus sign*, *Hyphen*, *Period*, and *Comma*.

To avoid confusion, it's OK to add the character in parentheses after spelling out the name.

Example

Plus sign (+)

Use discretion. This might not be necessary for commonly used characters, such as the period (.).

To show a key combination that includes punctuation requiring use of the Shift key, such as the question mark, use *Shift* and the name or symbol of the shifted key. Using the name of the unshifted key, such as 4 rather than \$, could be confusing or even wrong. For example, the ? and / characters aren't shifted keys on every keyboard. Always spell out *Plus sign*, *Minus sign*, *Hyphen*, *Period*, and *Comma*.

Examples

Ctrl+Shift+?

Ctrl+Shift+*

Ctrl+Shift+Comma

See also [Special character term collection](#)

Mouse and mouse interaction terms

Article • 01/25/2023

Most of the time, don't talk about the mouse, mouse actions, or the pointer unless it's necessary to avoid confusion. Instead, talk about customer interactions with the UI. To learn more, see [Describing interactions with UI](#).

When you need to talk specifically about the mouse, mouse interactions, or the pointer, use these terms.

Mouse actions

 Expand table

Term	Usage
click	Use to describe selecting an item with the mouse by clicking the mouse once. Don't use <i>click on</i> .
click in	Use only to refer to clicking in a general area within a page, window, or other UI location.
double-click	Use to describe selecting an item by clicking the mouse twice in rapid succession. Hyphenate. Don't use <i>double-click on</i> .
drag	Use to describe holding down a button while moving the mouse, and then releasing the button. Don't use <i>click and drag</i> or <i>drag and drop</i> . It's OK to use <i>drop</i> by itself if <i>drag</i> isn't precise enough.
hover over, point to	To describe moving the mouse pointer over an area of the UI without selecting it, use <i>hover over</i> or <i>point to</i> , as appropriate for your audience. Use <i>hover</i> or <i>hovering</i> as the adjective and noun form. Examples In Microsoft Edge, when you hover over a link, the URL appears in the lower-left corner. The hover image is displayed when the user points to the button. To program the pop-up action that's triggered by hovering Pop-up windows that appear on hover Don't use <i>mouse over</i> or <i>move the mouse pointer to</i> . It's OK to use <i>move the mouse pointer to</i> in content that teaches beginning skills.
press and hold	Use only in content that teaches beginning skills.

Term	Usage
right-click	Use to describe clicking an item by using the secondary mouse button (the right button by default, but the user can customize this).
scroll	Use only in content that teaches beginning skills. In other content, use a phrase such as <i>move through</i> .

Devices

[\[+\] Expand table](#)

Term	Usage
mouse	Use <i>mouse</i> to refer to one mouse. If you need to refer to more than one mouse, use <i>mice</i> .
mouse button	Use to refer to the left mouse button. Use <i>left mouse button</i> only to teach beginning skills or when not doing so would cause confusion. When more than one mouse button is used in a procedure, name the least frequently used button only.
right mouse button	Use to refer to the secondary mouse button. By default, this is the right mouse button. Customers who change the default understand that <i>right mouse button</i> indicates the secondary button.
wheel button	Use to refer to the third or middle button on the mouse. Customers <i>rotate</i> the wheel and <i>click</i> the wheel button.

On-screen pointers

When you must talk about the appearance of the pointer on the screen, include a picture of the pointer if possible. Don't use a picture instead of the word *pointer*—use both.

[\[+\] Expand table](#)

Term	Usage
busy pointer	Use to describe the pointer when it consists only of an activity indicator.
double-headed arrow	Use to describe how the pointer looks over a split line (↑ ↓). Don't use <i>double-headed arrow</i> as a name for the pointer. Example When the pointer becomes a ↑ ↓, drag the pointer to move the split line.

Term	Usage
pointer	Use to refer to the pointer on the screen. Use <i>cursor</i> only for a technical audience or when it's necessary to describe the point where text or graphics will be inserted. Don't use <i>insertion point</i> .
working in background pointer	Use to describe the pointer when it consists of both the pointer and an activity indicator.

Security terms

Article • 06/24/2022

This section describes usage for specific security terms. For definitions of security terms, see the [Microsoft Malware Protection Glossary](#).

[+] Expand table

Term	Usage
antimalware	Use only as an adjective to describe a category of software used to detect and respond to malicious software, such as viruses, worms, trojans, and sometimes spyware and adware.
antiphishing	Use only as an adjective to describe practices or a category of software used to detect and respond to phishing scams, which are attempts to trick individuals into revealing sensitive information, such as passwords or credit card numbers.
antispyware	Use only as an adjective to describe software that detects and sometimes removes spyware.
antivirus	Use only as an adjective to describe software that detects and responds to malware. Use <i>antivirus</i> instead of <i>antimalware</i> to differentiate between antispyware and other antimalware programs. Example Microsoft Security Essentials has both antivirus and antispyware capabilities.
black hat hacker	Consider alternatives where possible. Examples computer criminal unauthorized user malicious hacker
bullet-proof	Don't use.
deceptive software	Don't use. Use <i>unwanted software</i> instead.
hacker, hack	Use <i>malicious hacker</i> to refer to an unauthorized user who accesses a system with the intent to cause harm. If the unauthorized user's intent isn't known or isn't malicious, use <i>unauthorized user</i> . Don't use <i>hacker</i> in content for a general audience. In general use, the term often has negative connotations. It's OK to use <i>hack</i> and <i>hacker</i> in content for developers or in contexts where

Term	Usage
	<p>positive outcomes are involved, such as hackathons.</p> <p>Don't use <i>hacker</i> to mean an amateur programmer. Don't use <i>hack</i> to mean improvising a solution to a programming problem unless the positive context is well understood.</p>
insecure	<p>Don't use to mean <i>not secure</i>.</p>
lock	<p>Don't use to mean <i>protect</i>.</p>
malicious code	<p>Don't use. Use <i>malware</i> or <i>malicious software</i> instead.</p>
malicious user	<p>Don't use. Use <i>malicious hacker</i> instead.</p>
malware, malicious software	<p>Use <i>malware</i> instead of <i>malicious software</i> to describe unwanted software installed without adequate user consent. Viruses, worms, and trojans are malware.</p> <p>If your audience might not be familiar with the term <i>malware</i>, define it as <i>malicious software</i> on the first mention.</p> <p>Example The security filter helps prevent malware (malicious software) from damaging your computer.</p>
spyware	<p>Before using the term <i>spyware</i> to describe specific software, be certain the software has been identified as spyware.</p>
trojan horse, trojan	<p>In content for a technical audience, it's OK to shorten to <i>trojan</i>.</p>
unwanted software	<p>Use as a general term for spyware, adware, and similar software.</p>
vulnerability	<p>Don't use to describe intentional software behavior. For example, don't describe trusting a domain administrator to control any other domain within a forest as a vulnerability.</p>
	<p>On the first mention, use a modifier to identify the type of vulnerability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="473 1703 1384 1823">• Product vulnerability is a set of conditions that violates an implied or explicit security policy. A product vulnerability is usually addressed by a Microsoft security bulletin or service pack. <li data-bbox="473 1861 1384 2018">• Administrative vulnerability is the failure to observe administrative best practices. For example, using a weak password or logging on to an account that has more user rights than needed to perform a specific task. <li data-bbox="473 2056 1348 2137">• Physical vulnerability is the failure to provide physical security for a computer. For example, leaving an unlocked computer running and

Term	Usage
	<p>unattended in a public area.</p> <p>After the first mention, it's OK to use the modifier only occasionally.</p> <p>For other security issues, use the most specific term that describes the issue.</p> <p>Define the term if the audience might be unfamiliar with it. If no specific term exists, use <i>security issue</i>.</p>
white hat hacker	<p>Consider alternatives where possible.</p> <p>Example</p> <p>computer security expert</p>

Special characters

Article • 06/24/2022

Use these terms to describe the special characters shown.

 Expand table

Character	Name
'	acute accent (not <i>accent acute</i>)
&	ampersand Don't use in place of <i>and</i> . See ampersand (&)
< >	angle brackets
'	apostrophe (publishing character)
'	apostrophe (customer-typed text)
*	asterisk It's OK to use <i>star</i> to refer to the key on a phone keypad.
@	at sign
\	backslash
{ }	braces (not <i>curly brackets</i>)
[]	brackets
^	caret, circumflex (not <i>accent circumflex</i>)
¢	cent sign
« »	chevrons, opening and closing Microsoft term, seldom used, especially in documentation. Also referred to as <i>merge field characters</i> in Word.
©	copyright symbol
†	dagger
°	degree symbol

Character	Name
÷	division sign
\$	dollar sign
[[]]	double brackets
...	ellipsis (singular), ellipses (plural)
	Don't add space between ellipsis points.
—	em dash
-	en dash
=	equal sign (not <i>equals</i> sign)
€	euro symbol
!	exclamation point (not <i>exclamation mark</i>)
`	grave accent (not <i>accent grave</i>)
>	greater than sign
	If used in conjunction with the less than sign to enclose a character string such as an HTML or XML tag, <i>right angle bracket</i> is OK.
≥	greater than or equal to sign
-	hyphen
"	inch mark
<	less than sign
	If used in conjunction with the greater than sign to enclose a character string such as an HTML or XML tag, <i>left angle bracket</i> is OK.
≤	less than or equal to sign
-	minus sign (use en dash)
×	multiplication sign
	Use * instead if necessary to match software.
≠	not equal to
#	number sign or hashtag

Character	Name
	In general, use <i>number sign</i> instead of <i>pound sign</i> to refer to the # symbol. In social media, use <i>hashtag</i> . Use <i>pound key</i> when referring to the phone keypad button.
¶	paragraph mark
()	parentheses (plural), opening or closing parenthesis (singular)
%	percent
π	pi
	pipe, vertical bar, or OR logical operator
+	plus sign Don't use to replace words like <i>and</i> , <i>over</i> , or <i>plus</i> . See plus sign (+)
±	plus or minus sign
?	question mark
“ ”	quotation marks (not <i>quotes</i> or <i>quote marks</i>) <i>Curly quotation marks</i> is OK if necessary to distinguish from straight quotation marks.
“ ”	straight quotation marks (not <i>quotes</i> or <i>quote marks</i>)
‘ ’	single quotation marks or single curly quotation marks (not <i>quotes</i> or <i>quote marks</i>)
‘ ’	single straight quotation marks (not <i>quotes</i> or <i>quote marks</i>)
®	registered trademark symbol
§	section
/	slash (not <i>virgule</i>)
~	tilde Don't use in place of <i>about</i> or <i>approximately</i> .
™	trademark symbol
_	underscore

Touch and pen interaction terms

Article • 06/24/2022

Today's customer can interact with UI in a variety of ways. This section covers terms for UI interactions done with gestures of the hand or body and tablet pen.

In general, use input-neutral terms, which support all input methods. If you're writing content specific to touching a screen or using a pen, use *tap* and *double-tap* instead of *click* and *double-click*. *Tap* means to press the screen with a finger or pen tip and then to lift it, usually quickly.

Learn more For information about input-neutral terms, see [Describing interactions with UI](#).

When you need to write specifically about touch and pen UI interactions, use these terms.

[] [Expand table](#)

Term	Usage
tap	Use to describe selecting, opening, or activating a button, icon, or other element on the screen with a finger or the pen by tapping it once. Don't use <i>tap on</i> .
double-tap	Use to describe selecting, opening, or activating a button, icon, or other element on the screen by tapping twice in rapid succession. Hyphenate. Don't use <i>double-tap on</i> .
tap and hold	Use only if required by the program to achieve a specific result. Don't use <i>touch and hold</i> .
flick	Use to describe moving one or more fingers to scroll through items on the screen. Don't use <i>scroll</i> .
pan	Use to describe moving the screen in multiple directions at a controlled rate, as you would pan a camera to see different views in the environment. For contact gestures, use to refer to moving a finger, hand, or pen on the device surface to move through screens or menus at a controlled rate, rather than quickly skipping through content using the flick gesture. Don't use <i>drag</i> or <i>scroll</i> as a synonym for <i>pan</i> .
pinch, stretch to zoom	Use to describe touching the screen or a UI element with two or more fingers, and then moving the fingers toward each other (<i>pinch</i>) or away from each other (<i>stretch</i>) to zoom the view in or out.
rotate	Use to describe putting two or more fingers on a UI element and then turning the hand. This action rotates the item in the direction of the turn.

Term	Usage
select	Use to describe pressing hardware buttons and keys on the keyboard (on-screen or physical).
select and hold	Use to describe pressing and holding an element in the UI.
slide	For touch UI, use to describe pressing and briefly dragging an element in the direction opposite to the way the page scrolls, and then moving it to a new location. For example, if the page scrolls left or right, the item is dragged up or down. The item is released to relocate it.
swipe	For touch UI, use to describe a short, quick movement in the direction opposite to the way the page scrolls. For example, if the page scrolls left or right, an item is selected by swiping it up or down.
swipe or slide from the edge	<p>Use to describe swiping a finger quickly or sliding across the screen from an edge. This action may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="403 885 1408 930">• Open charms. (Swipe from the right edge.) <li data-bbox="403 953 1408 1043">• Open a recently used app or switch between recently used apps. (Swipe from the left edge.) <li data-bbox="403 1065 1408 1200">• Open another app at the same time. (Slide from the left edge without lifting your finger, and drag the app until a divider appears. Then move the app where you want it, and slide the divider to adjust the app.) <li data-bbox="403 1222 1408 1312">• Show a list of recently used apps. (Slide in from the left edge without lifting your finger, and then push the app back toward the left edge.) <li data-bbox="403 1335 1408 1425">• Show commands for the current app, such as New or Refresh. (Swipe in from the top or bottom edge.) <li data-bbox="403 1447 1408 1537">• Close an app. (Slide down from the top edge without lifting your finger, and then drag the app to the bottom of the screen.)

Units of measure terms

Article • 06/24/2022

This section covers usage and abbreviations for a variety of terms related to measurement. For other units of measure not covered here, see [The Chicago Manual of Style](#).

- Use numerals for measurements of distance, temperature, volume, size, weight, pixels, points, and so on—even if the number is less than 10. Add a zero before the decimal point for decimal fractions less than one, unless the customer is asked to enter the value.

Examples

3 ft, 5 in.

1.76 lb

80 × 80 pixels

0.75 grams

enter .75"

3 centimeters

3 cm

- Insert a space between the unit of measure and the numeral, or hyphenate if the measurement modifies a noun. **Examples**

13.5 inches

13.5-inch display

8.0 MP

8.0-MP camera

- Use abbreviations only with numbers in specific measurements, such as 20 MP, and don't follow the abbreviation with a period.

Exception Follow *in* with a period when used as an abbreviation for *inch*.

- Use commas in numbers that have four or more digits, regardless of how the numbers appear in the UI: 1,093 MB.

Exceptions

For years, pixels, and baud use commas only when the number has five or more digits: *1920 × 1080 pixels*, *10,240 × 4320 pixels*, *9600 baud*, *14,400 baud*.

Don't use commas after the decimal point in decimal fractions.

- When the unit of measure is spelled out, use the singular form when the number is 1. Use the plural form for all other measurements.

Examples

0 points
0.5 points
1 point
12 points

- Spell out *by* in dimensions, except for tile sizes, screen resolutions, and paper sizes. For those, use the multiplication sign (\times). Use a space before and after the multiplication sign.

Examples

10 by 12 ft room
3" by 5" image
 4×4 tile
8.5" \times 11" paper
1280 \times 1024

See also [Bits and bytes term collection](#), [Numbers](#)

 Expand table

Category	Term	Abbreviation and usage
Distance and length	centimeters	cm
	feet	ft
	inches	in. (or " if space is limited). Always include a period to avoid confusion with the preposition <i>in</i> . Hyphenate <i>half-inch</i> as an adjective. Use instead of <i>half an inch</i> or <i>one-half inch</i> .
		When space is limited or the measurement needs to be specific, use <i>0.5 in</i> .
		Use the abbreviated form sparingly in content that will be translated or localized. It may be translated incorrectly as a preposition.
	kilometers	km
	meters	m
	miles	mi
	millimeters	mm
Weight	grams	g

Category	Term	Abbreviation and usage
	kilograms	kg
	ounces	oz
	pounds	lb
Area	square foot	sq ft
	square meter	m ²
Volume	cubic foot	cu ft
	cubic meter	m ³
Type and fonts	points	pt
UI, display resolution, and digital imaging	pixels	<p>Don't use the abbreviation <i>px</i> in the context of screen or camera resolution.</p> <p>It's OK to abbreviate as <i>px</i> in content about online design when space is limited.</p>
		<p>Examples</p> <p>48 × 48 px</p> <p>The application icon should be 62 × 62 pixels and PNG format.</p>
	pixels per inch	<p>It's OK to use the acronym <i>PPI</i> in content about creating digital applications, when space is limited, and when you're certain that readers will understand it.</p>
		<p>Examples</p> <p>72 pixels per inch</p> <p>At 72 PPI,</p>
	megapixels	MP
Print and display resolution	dots per inch	<p>It's OK to use the acronym <i>dpi</i> to refer to print and display resolution when you're certain that readers will understand it.</p>
Speed and frequency	baud	<p>Don't abbreviate. Don't use <i>baud rate</i>—it's redundant. When designating baud, use commas when the number has five (not four) or more digits.</p>
		<p>Examples</p> <p>2400 baud</p> <p>In 1991, 14.4 K modem had a 2400 baud.</p>

Category	Term	Abbreviation and usage
	gigahertz	GHz. Spell out on the first mention. After that, it's OK to use the abbreviation as a measurement with numerals.
	Hertz	Hz. Spell out on the first mention. After that, it's OK to use the abbreviation as a measurement with numerals. Capitalize the word and the abbreviation.
	kilohertz	KHz. Spell out on the first mention. After that, it's OK to use the abbreviation as a measurement with numerals.
	megahertz	MHz. Spell out on the first mention. After that, it's OK to use the abbreviation as a measurement with numerals.
Other	degrees	° (for temperature) deg (for angle)
	dialog units	Don't abbreviate.

Example
Converting from MFC dialog units (used in resource files to specify height/width) to pixels

24/7

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Date and time term collection](#)

2D, two-dimensional

Article • 06/24/2022

Spell out on the first mention if your audience may be unfamiliar with the term. On subsequent mentions, use *2D*.

Always hyphenate *two-dimensional*.

3D, three-dimensional

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *3D* most of the time.

Spell out *three-dimensional* on the first mention if your audience may be unfamiliar with the acronym. Always hyphenate *three-dimensional*.

8.5" × 11" paper

Article • 06/24/2022

Use instead of *8.5-by-11-inch*, *8.5 × 11-inch*, *8 1/2 by 11-inch*, or other ways of referring to the paper size. Use a straight quotation mark ("") to signify inches. Use a multiplication sign (×), not the letter x.

Abort, Abortion

Article • 06/24/2022

Never use *abortion*.

Don't use *abort* in content or user experiences for a general audience. If *abort* appears in a UI that you can't edit, use an alternative term to describe the customer action.

Use *abort* for a technical audience only if it's part of the application programming interface (API). Use an alternative term in comments and descriptions.

Alternative Terms

- *End*: use for communications and network connections.
- *Close*: use for apps and programs.
- *Stop*: use for hardware operations.
- *Cancel*: use for requests and processes.

Above

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to mean *earlier*.

Don't use as an adjective preceding a noun (*the above section*) or following a noun (*the code above*). Use a link, or use *previous*, *preceding*, or *earlier*.

Examples

Use the preceding code to display information about the database.

See [Installation instructions ↗](#).

See Installation instructions, earlier in this article.

See also [below](#), [earlier](#)

Access

Article • 06/24/2022

It's OK to use as a verb to mean *obtain access to*.

Don't use *access* to mean *start*, *create*, or *open*. Use a more specific verb or phrase instead.

Access Key

Article • 03/27/2024

See [Keys and keyboard shortcuts term collection](#)

Accessible

Article • 06/24/2022

Reserve *accessible* and *accessibility* to refer to things that are easy to use for everyone, including people with disabilities.

Don't use *accessible* as a synonym for *simple*. Use *easy to learn*, *easy to use*, or *intuitive*. But don't assume that what's easy for you is easy for customers. A better choice is to refer to the specific characteristics that make something easy to use, such as a familiar UI or simplified navigation.

Examples

Support high-contrast themes to make the app more accessible for customers who have low vision.

Reading view sweeps distracting content out of your way, so it's easier to read what you want.

See also [assistive](#), [Accessibility guidelines and requirements](#)

Achievement

Article • 06/24/2022

Refers to an accomplishment that's formally recognized by a game, site, or app. Achievements are sometimes represented by a virtual badge, star, medal, or other reward.

Use title-style capitalization for the achievement name. Lowercase the word *achievement* when it follows the achievement name.

For Microsoft games, use *achievement* only if the achievement is awarded in a player's Xbox Live profile. Don't use *achievement* for any other accomplishments that are tracked by a game.

Examples

You just earned the Superstar achievement!

Take a bow—you've earned your Superstar.

See also [badge](#)

Actionable

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use unless you have no other choice.

Examples

information that you can act on

Once identified, the problem is easy to solve.

Aggregate customer data to make it easier to act on.

Aggregate customer data to make it more conducive to action.

Active Player, Active User

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *active player*, not *active user*, to refer to a person who's currently being tracked or recognized by a motion sensor or camera.

Example

When the game ends, the active player's score will be displayed.

Adapter

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

Add

Article • 06/24/2022

Use as a verb to describe installing add-ins and add-ons. Use *remove* to describe removing them.

Don't use *add* to refer to installing apps and programs. Use *install* instead.

See also [install](#)

Add-In, Add-On

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *add-in* to refer to software that adds functionality to a larger program, such as the Skype Meeting Add-in for Microsoft Outlook. *Add-in* can also refer to a driver or to a customer-written program that adds functionality to a larger program, such as a wizard.

Use *add-on* to refer to a hardware device, such as an external drive, that's attached to the device.

In content for a general audience, use *add-in* and *add-on* primarily as modifiers. For example, *add-in program* or *add-on drive*.

Adjacent Selection

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use if you can use *multiple selection* instead. It's OK to use *adjacent selection* if you must emphasize that the selected items are adjacent to one another.

Don't use *contiguous selection*.

See also [multiple selection](#)

Administer

Article • 03/27/2024

Use instead of *administrate*.

administrator, admin

Article • 01/23/2018

Use *administrator*, *admin*, or *system administrator* unless you need to specify a particular kind of administrator, such as a network administrator or a database administrator.

Don't capitalize *administrator* or *admin* except when referring to the *Administrator* account type. Capitalize *Administrators* only when referring to the Administrators group in Windows security.

Examples

To log on as an administrator, you need to have a user account on the computer with an **Administrator** account type.

Limit the number of users in the Administrators group.

afterward

Article • 03/27/2024

Use instead of *afterwards*.

against

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *to* refer to running or building a program on a particular platform or operating system. Use *on* instead.

It's OK to use *against* in content for a technical audience to discuss evaluating a value *against* an expression or running a query *against* a database.

Examples

Run queries *on* HDInsight using Hadoop, HBase, or Apache Storm clusters to extract meaning from structured and unstructured data in Azure Storage.

Use Elastic Database jobs to run T-SQL scripts *against* all of the databases in an elastic database pool.

AI (artificial intelligence)

Article • 03/27/2024

[See AI and bot term collection](#)

alarm

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a general reference to a sound intended to get the customer's attention. Use *beep* or a more specific description of the sound instead.

It's OK to use *alarm* in a specific description, such as *the low-battery alarm*.

alert

Article • 06/24/2022

For technical audiences, it's OK to use *alert* to refer to automated messages from apps, products, services, and websites.

For general users, don't use *alert* to refer to a system message. Use *notification* instead.

Don't use *alert* as a synonym for *reminder*.

Examples

When hosting a service in the cloud, you may need to monitor and send alerts in response to specific conditions, such as service interruptions.

To receive an alert whenever an event occurs

Select **Add alert**.

alias

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to mean an email address, account name, or distribution group name.

allow, allows

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *allows* (or *enables* or *lets*) to describe things that Microsoft or Microsoft apps make possible for the customer.

It's OK to use *allows* to refer to features, such as security, that permit or deny some action or access.

In content for technical audiences, write around the use of *allow/allows* by referring to customers in the third person, such as *the customer can*.

Examples

Windows allows a user without an account to sign in as a guest.

Microsoft Word supports saving files in HTML format.

alphabetical

Article • 03/27/2024

Use instead of *alphabetic*.

alphanumeric

Article • 06/24/2022

Use to refer to character sets that include only letters and numerals or to individual characters that can be only letters or numerals.

Don't use *alphanumerical*.

AM, PM

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Date and time term collection](#)

ampersand (&)

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use `&` in place of *and* in text or headings unless you're referring to the use of the symbol in UI.

It's OK to use `&` in content for technical audiences that covers its use in HTML or programming languages.

Example

To display a reserved character in HTML, use a character reference, which consists of an ampersand, the code name or number of the character, and a semicolon. For example, use `<` or `<` to display the less than sign (`<`), and use `>` or `>` to display the greater than sign (`>`).

See also [plus sign \(+\)](#)

and so on

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. Instead, be specific. When space is limited, use *such as* or *like* followed by an example or two.

Example

Body text is most readable in Times New Roman, Palatino, and other serif fonts. (Not
Body text is most readable in Times New Roman, Palatino, and so on.)

Body text is most readable in serif fonts like Palatino.

Don't use *and so on* to end a phrase that begins with *for example*, *such as*, or *like*. It's redundant.

Example

Body text is most readable in serif fonts, such as Times New Roman and Palatino. (Not
Body text is most readable in serif fonts, such as Times New Roman, Palatino, and so on.)

and/or

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use unless it helps you avoid lengthy, complex wording. Most of the time, *or* can stand on its own.

Example

Save the document, using its current name or a new name.

antialiasing

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't hyphenate. Don't capitalize *antialiasing* unless it begins a sentence or phrase.
Don't capitalize *aliasing* in *antialiasing*.

Example

Microsoft ClearType antialiasing is a smoothing method that improves font display resolution, compared to traditional antialiasing.

antimalware

Article • 06/24/2022

Use only as an adjective. Don't hyphenate.

Antivirus is often used interchangeably with *antimalware* to describe any program that removes malware. Use *antivirus* when you want to differentiate between antispyware and other antimalware programs.

Examples

antimalware program

Windows Defender has both antivirus and antispyware capabilities.

antispyware

Article • 06/24/2022

Use only as an adjective. Don't hyphenate.

Example

antispyware tools

antivirus

Article • 06/24/2022

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Antivirus is often used interchangeably with *antimalware* to describe any program that removes malware. Use *antivirus* when you want to differentiate between antispyware and other antimalware programs.

Examples

antivirus program

Windows Defender has both antivirus and antispyware capabilities.

app, application

Article • 06/24/2022

If possible, refer to a product by its descriptor, such as *database management system* or *spreadsheet*.

Most of the time use *app*, not *application*, to describe desktop apps and cloud apps for tablets and mobile devices.

Global tip The abbreviated form, *app*, isn't available in all languages, so allow enough space for the full translated term in localized content.

For full-featured products, such as Office and Visual Studio, it's OK to use *program* instead of *application*.

It's OK to use *application* in content for a technical audience, especially to refer to a set of software files that includes executable files and other components.

Don't use *application program*.

See also

[add-in, add-on](#)

[applet](#)

[tool](#)

[Control Panel](#)

appendix, appendices

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *appendices* as the plural form of *appendix*, not *appendizes*.

applet

Article • 06/24/2022

Use to refer to an HTML-based program that a browser downloads temporarily to a customer's hard drive. *Applet* is most often associated with Java.

In general, when referring to a small program, use the name of the program or the most appropriate term, such as *item*, *app*, *program*, *add-in*, or *applet*.

Example

A Java applet in an HTML document supports animation, music, and page updates.

See also

[add-in, add-on](#),

[app, application](#),

[tool](#)

application developer, app developer

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *application developer*, *applications developer*, or *app developer*. Use *software developer*, *web developer*, *developer*, or *programmer* instead.

application file, app file

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. Use the specific name of the file if you can. Otherwise, use *program file*.

application icon, app icon

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to refer to a program icon. Use the specific product name, such as *the Word icon*, instead. If you must use a general term, use *app icon*.

It's OK to use *application icon* in content for developers when discussing programming elements such as the **ApplicationIcon** property.

application window, app window

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to refer to a specific product window. Use the product name, such as *the Word window*, instead.

It's OK to use *application window* in content for developers when discussing programming elements, such as the **WindowSize** event.

argument vs. parameter

Article • 06/24/2022

These terms are often used interchangeably.

Use *argument* in content for a general audience. Differentiate with *parameter* only if necessary.

In content for a technical audience, use the same term consistently to refer to the same kind of element. When you need to differentiate between them:

- Use *argument* for a value or expression that contains data or code that's used with an operator or passed to a function.
- Use *parameter* for a value that's given to a variable and treated as a constant until the operation is completed. For example, a date could be a parameter that's passed to a scheduling function.

See also [Reference documentation](#), [Formatting developer text elements](#)

arrow

Article • 06/24/2022

In content teaching basic skills, it's OK to use *arrow* to identify the arrow next to a list box label. Don't use *up arrow* or *down arrow*, which refer to the arrow keys on the keyboard.

Example

Select the **Font** arrow to display the list.

arrow keys

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Keys and keyboard shortcuts term collection](#)

as well as

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't use as a synonym for *and*.

ask

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a noun. Use *request*, *task*, or another suitable word.

Examples

Your assigned tasks

After you submit your request, you'll receive a confirmation email.

assembly language

Article • 06/24/2022

Use instead of *assembler* or *machine language*.

Hyphenate as an adjective.

assistive

Article • 06/24/2022

Use to describe devices, technologies, and organizations that help people with disabilities. Eye trackers and motion sensors are examples. Keep in mind that some devices and organizations are useful to everyone. Refer to them as *assistive* only in discussions about supporting people with disabilities.

Examples

(General discussion) Calibrate your motion sensor to track your body movements correctly.

(Specific discussion) Learn about assistive technology built into Windows 10.

See also [Accessibility guidelines and requirements](#)

assure, ensure, insure

Article • 06/24/2022

Ensure, *insure*, and *assure* are interchangeable in many situations. To improve worldwide readability, Microsoft style makes these distinctions:

- Use *ensure* to mean *to make sure* or *to guarantee*.
- Use *insure* to mean *to provide insurance*.
- Use *assure* to mean *to state positively* or *to make confident*.

asterisk (*)

Article • 03/27/2024

See [Keys and keyboard shortcuts term collection](#)

at sign (@)

Article • 03/27/2024

See [Keys and keyboard shortcuts term collection](#)

attribute

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't use as a synonym for *property*.

[See property](#)

audiobook

Article • 03/27/2024

One word.

author

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a verb to mean *to make something*. Instead, use a clearer verb that accurately describes the action, such as *write*, *create*, *design*, *produce*, or *build*.

Examples

Design mobile-optimized reports that people can access anywhere.

You don't need a runtime class if you're implementing a Windows Runtime interface for local consumption—for example, if you're writing an app based around CoreApplication. This article describes how to create a Transact-SQL stored procedure.

In content for a technical audience, it's OK to use authoring in reference to programming languages and tools. For example, it's OK to use *authoring tools*, *authoring environments*, and *authoring in XML*.

It's OK to use *coauthor* and *coauthoring* to refer to people working on an Office document simultaneously.

Example

In Word, multiple people can coauthor a document at the same time.

auto-

Article • 08/26/2024

In general, don't hyphenate words beginning with *auto-*, such as *autoscale* and *autodial*, unless it's necessary to avoid confusion. When in doubt, check [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#).

Don't create new words beginning with *auto-*.

To learn more about hyphenation, see [Hyphens](#).

For more information about prefixes, see [The Chicago Manual of Style](#).

avg

Article • 06/24/2022

OK to use the abbreviation, without a period, in UI when space is tight. Otherwise, spell out *average*.

Back End, Back-End

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use if you can substitute a more specific term, such as server, operating system, database, or network.

Two words as a noun. Hyphenate as an adjective.

Back Up, Backup

Article • 06/24/2022

Two words as a verb, one word as an adjective or a noun.

Examples

Back up your files regularly.

Schedule automatic backups.

Backbone

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use in content for a general audience. You don't need to define *backbone* in content for a technical audience.

Backspace

Article • 03/27/2024

One word. OK to use as a verb.

Backtab

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. Instead, instruct the customer to use Shift+Tab.

Badge

Article • 06/24/2022

A star, medal, or other virtual recognition that indicates an achievement in a game or other program. Use title-style capitalization for a badge name. Lowercase the word *badge*.

See also [achievement](#)

Baseline

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *baseline* (one word) to refer to an established standard, as in *baseline data*.

Baud

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Units of measure term collection](#)

Beep

Article • 06/24/2022

Use instead of *alarm* or *tone* to refer to a beeping sound.

Example

Recording begins when you hear the beep.

Below

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to mean *later*.

Don't use as an adjective preceding a noun (*the below section*) or following a noun (*the code below*). Use a link, or use *later* or *the following*.

Examples

Use the following code to display information about the database.

See [Installation instructions ↗](#).

See Installation instructions, later in this article.

See also [above](#), [later](#)

beta

Article • 03/27/2024

[See preview](#)

Bi-

Article • 08/26/2024

In general, don't hyphenate words beginning with *bi-*, such as *bidirectional*, *bimodal*, and *bimonthly*, unless it's necessary to avoid confusion. When in doubt, check [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#).

To learn more about hyphenation, see [Hyphens](#).

big data

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't capitalize.

Big-Endian, Little-Endian

Article • 06/24/2022

It's OK to use *big-endian* and *little-endian* in content for a technical audience. *Big-endian* refers to the method of physically storing numbers so that the most significant byte is placed first. *Little-endian* is the opposite.

Billion, B

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Numbers](#)

Bio

Article • 06/24/2022

OK to use as an abbreviation for *biography*.

Global tip In many languages, the full term is translated because an abbreviation isn't available. So you'll still need to allow ample space for expansion in localized text.

Bitmap

Article • 06/24/2022

One word.

Don't use generically to refer to any graphic. Use *illustration*, *figure*, *picture*, or a similar term instead.

bits per second

Article • 03/27/2024

See [Bits and bytes term collection](#)

Black Box

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't use.

Black Hat Hacker

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Security term collection](#)

blacklist

Article • 06/24/2022

Never use *blacklist*. Use *blocklist* instead. For more specific usage, *blocked senders list* can be used.

Examples

Blocklists can help prevent unwanted spam. It could be useful to have a *blocked senders list*.

blade

Article • 11/02/2023

Avoid talking about UI elements and instead try to discuss what the customer needs to do. If you have to refer to a pane in the Azure portal, use *blade*.

When you must mention a blade:

- Always name the blade except in general references to a blade or blades.
- Use sentence-style capitalization for the blade name.

Example

the **Resource group** blade

- Don't capitalize *blade*, but always include *blade* in the blade title or subtitle.
- In a blade title or subtitle, use a plus sign (+) instead of *and* or an ampersand (&). Include a space on each side of the plus sign.
- Add an article, such as *a* or *the*, to a blade name that consists of a verb and a singular noun.

Example

Add a connector blade. (Not *Add connector blade*.)

- Use *on* to describe the contents of a blade.

Example

On the **Web app** blade, name your site.

- Use *open* and *close* as verbs with blades.

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#), [Formatting text in instructions](#)

blank

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a verb to mean removing the contents of a cell in a table or sheet. Use *clear* instead.

blog, blogger, blogroll, weblog

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *blog* as a noun or verb. Don't use *weblog*.

Use *blogger* to refer to a person who writes or publishes entries for a blog.

Use *blogroll* to refer to a list of links to other online content, particularly blogs, that's provided on a blog page.

blue screen, bluescreen

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *blue screen* or *bluescreen*, either as a noun or as a verb, to refer to an operating system that's not responding. As a verb, use *stop*. As a noun, use *stop error*.

It's OK to use *blue screen* (two words) to refer to the screen display itself.

Example

The operating system stopped unexpectedly, and an error message appeared on a blue screen.

Bluetooth

Article • 06/06/2023

Bluetooth is a proper noun and a registered trademark. Always capitalize. Use the registered trademark symbol (®) upon first mention.

Blu-ray Disc

Article • 06/24/2022

Use this spelling and capitalization when talking about the disc. After the first mention, it's OK to abbreviate to *BD* (no hyphen).

When referring to the technology (not a specific disc), it's OK to use *Blue-ray [X]*.

board

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to describe hardware that provides a connection between a peripheral device and a computer. Use *card* instead.

Examples

video card

motherboard

bold

Article • 06/24/2022

Use only as an adjective, not as a noun or verb. Don't use *bolded*, *boldface*, or *boldfaced*.

Examples

To apply bold formatting to the selected text, select **Ctrl+B**.

The newly added parameters are displayed in bold type.

The selected text is bold.

In writing for customers, use regular type to describe type that's neither bold nor italic.

bookmark

Article • 06/24/2022

One word. Use *favorite*, not *bookmark*, to refer to a saved site or webpage.

[See favorite](#)

Boolean

Article • 03/27/2024

Always capitalize.

boot

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a verb. Use *turn on* to refer to turning on power to a device.

In content for a technical audience, it's OK to use *boot* as an adjective, as in *boot sector* and *boot sequence*—but use *startup* instead if possible.

If the UI or API uses *boot* in a label or element name, use *boot* to refer to the label or element name, but use *start* or *startup* to refer to the action or event described.

Examples

The Boot.ini file stores startup options.

Diagnosing and correcting problems that affect the startup process is an important troubleshooting skill.

See also [turn on](#), [turn off](#)

bot

Article • 03/27/2024

[See AI and bot term collection](#)

bottom left, bottom right

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use except in discussions of the **BottomLeft** and **BottomRight** properties. Use *lower left* and *lower right* instead.

Hyphenate *lower left* and *lower right* as adjectives.

See also [lower left](#), [lower-left](#), [lower right](#), [lower-right](#)

bounding outline

Article • 06/24/2022

Use to describe the visible element, usually a dotted rectangle, that surrounds a set of selected elements. If necessary, use *dotted rectangle* or *dotted box* to describe the bounding outline in content for a general audience, and then use *bounding outline* in subsequent references.

Don't use *marquee* as a synonym.

box

Article • 06/24/2022

Most of the time, avoid talking about UI elements.

When you need to refer to dialog box elements by name, use *box* instead of *field* to refer to any box except a checkbox or a list box. For a checkbox, use the complete term, *checkbox*. For an element that displays a list, such as a dropdown list box, use *list* instead of *box* for clarity.

Examples

the **Read-Only** box

the **File Name** box

the **Hidden Text** checkbox

the **Wallpaper** list

Don't use *box* as a synonym for client and server hardware.

See also

[Describing interactions with UI](#)

[Formatting text in instructions](#)

[Computer and device term collection](#)

bps

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Bits and bytes term collection](#)

breakpoint

Article • 03/27/2024

One word.

broadcast

Article • 06/24/2022

OK to use as an adjective, a noun, or a verb. Use *broadcast*, not *broadcasted*, as the past-tense form of the verb.

Use *webcast* to refer to a broadcast delivered on the web.

browse

Article • 06/24/2022

Use to refer to manually scanning internet sites or other files. To describe using the search feature of an app, product, or service, or using an internet search engine, use *find* or *search*.

It's OK to use *browse the web*, but use *browse through* a list, database, document, or similar item.

bug fix

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. To describe the general category of fixes for an issue, use *software update*.

build

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *in content* for a general audience to mean creating things like documents, charts, graphics, and worksheets. Use *create* instead.

In content for a technical audience, it's OK to use *build* as a verb to mean to compile and link code and as a noun to refer to a prerelease version.

bulk

Article • 06/24/2022

In content for a general audience, don't use *bulk* as an adverb, such as *bulk add* or *bulk edit*, unless the term is in the UI.

In content for a technical audience, avoid using *bulk* as an adverb to describe an action performed on multiple objects. Try *in bulk* as an alternative.

Don't use *bulk* in compound nouns.

Don't hyphenate.

Examples

Add multiple users at the same time.

Replace a value across a large number of fields.

Update multiple product attributes in a single operation.

button

Article • 06/24/2022

Most of the time, avoid talking about UI elements.

When you need to discuss UI elements, use *button* instead of *command button*, *option button*, or *action button*. If possible, refer to a button by its label only without using the word *button*. If you need to use the word *button* for clarity, *button* is lowercase. For example, references to an unnamed button such as **Maximize** may be clearer if you describe it as *the Maximize button*.

Examples

Select a file, and then select **OK**.

To enlarge a window to fill the entire screen, select the **Maximize** button.

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#), [Formatting text in instructions](#)

by (publisher or company name)

Article • 06/24/2022

In an online store (either in a product experience or the web), avoid including *by* in the publisher line. For example, use *Microsoft* not *by Microsoft*.

If you must include *by*, lowercase it.

C, C++, C#

Article • 06/24/2022

It's OK to use *C*, *C++*, and *C#* as adjectives. Don't form hyphenated modifiers with them, such as *C-based* or *C-callable*.

Examples

a C program

a program based on C++

built with exported functions that are callable by C

cable

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't use as a verb.

cabling

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a synonym for *cable* or *cables*.

In a discussion of network connections, it's OK to use *cabling* to refer to a combination of cables, connectors, and terminators.

cache vs. disk cache

Article • 06/24/2022

Differentiate between *cache* and *disk cache*.

- Use *cache* to refer to a special memory subsystem where data values are duplicated for quick access.
- Use *disk cache* to refer to a portion of RAM that temporarily stores information read from a disk.

Don't use *cache* or *file cache* to refer to the location of internet files that are downloaded as you browse the web. Use *Temporary Internet Files folder*.

calendar

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a verb. Use *schedule*, *list*, or another appropriate verb instead.

call back, callback

Article • 06/24/2022

Two words as a verb, one word as an adjective or a noun.

In content for developers, don't use *callback* to mean *callback function*.

call out, callout

Article • 06/24/2022

Two words as a verb, one word as an adjective or a noun.

can, may

Article • 06/24/2022

When you see *can* in your writing, consider deleting it. *Can* implies ability but not action. Rewrite to describe the action if possible.

Example

Use the **/b** option to force a black-and-white screen.

When ability is what you need to express, it's OK to use *can* to describe actions or tasks that the reader or program is able to do. Use *might* to express possibility. Don't use *may*, which might be interpreted as providing permission.

Don't substitute *could* for *can* unless you're referring to the past.

cancel, canceled, canceling, cancellation

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *cancel the selection* instead of *deselect* or *unmark*. Use *clear* to refer to checkboxes.

Use *cancel* to describe ending code requests and processes before they're complete.

Spell *canceled* and *canceling* with one *l*, but spell *cancellation* with two *l*'s.

carry out vs. run

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *run*, not *carry out*, to describe actions related to commands, macros, and programs.

See also [run vs. execute](#)

Cascading Style Sheets (CSS)

Article • 06/24/2022

Capitalize references to the technique for adding fonts, colors, and so on to web content. Spell out unless the abbreviation CSS is familiar to your audience.

Lowercase references to style sheets created using the technique. Don't use CSS to refer to a specific cascading style sheet. Instead, use *the CSS file*, *the cascading style sheet*, or *the style sheet*.

Examples

If this is your first time working with Cascading Style Sheets (CSS), don't worry.

Use a custom style sheet to create a unique look for your SharePoint site.

It looks like there's a problem with the CSS file.

catalog

Article • 03/27/2024

Use instead of *catalogue*.

category axis

Article • 06/24/2022

Lowercase. Don't hyphenate.

Refer to the *category (x) axis* on the first mention. On subsequent mentions, use *x-axis*. It's OK to use *horizontal (x) axis* in content for a general audience.

In 3D charts, both the x-axis and y-axis are usually category axes.

Don't use italic formatting for the *x* in *x-axis* or the *y* in *y-axis* unless the entire word is italic.

See also

[value axis](#)

[x-axis](#)

[y-axis](#)

cell phone, cellular phone

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't use.

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

cellular

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *cellular phone* or *cell phone*.

It's OK to use *cellular* in the context of *cellular data network* or *cellular data connection*.

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

center on

Article • 03/27/2024

Use instead of *center around*.

character set

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a synonym for *code page*. A character set appears on a code page.

chart

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a verb when referring to entering data for a chart. Use *plot* instead.

Use the noun *chart* instead of *graph* to refer to graphic representations of data. For example, use *bar chart*, *pie chart*, and *scatter chart*.

chat

Article • 06/24/2022

Use as an adjective, a noun, or a verb in the context of internet or intranet chat. Use *voice chat* and *video chat* if necessary to avoid ambiguity.

chatbot

Article • 03/27/2024

[See AI and bot term collection](#)

check, checkbox, check mark

Article • 11/02/2023

Use *check mark* to refer to a mark placed next to an item to show it's selected.

Use *checkbox*, not *box* or *check box*, to refer to a checkbox in UI. Avoid talking about UI elements. Instead, discuss what the customer needs to do or what they're looking at.

Use *select* and *clear* with checkboxes, not *turn on* and *turn off*, *mark* and *unmark*, *check* and *unchecked*, or *select* and *deselect*.

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#), [Formatting text in instructions](#)

check in

Article • 06/24/2022

OK to use as a verb phrase, as in *check in code* or *check in changes*. Don't use as a noun.

child folder

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. Use *subfolder*, *subdirectory*, *folder*, or the name of the folder.

choose

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Describing interactions with UI](#)

clear

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Describing interactions with UI](#)

click

Article • 06/24/2022

Avoid this verb, which is specific to using a mouse. Instead, use verbs that work with multiple devices, such as *select*.

It's OK to use *click* when you need to describe mouse actions specifically.

[See Describing interactions with UI](#)

clickstream

Article • 06/24/2022

One word. Don't use in content for a general audience.

clickthrough

Article • 06/24/2022

One word. Don't use in content for a general audience.

client

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *client* to refer to a person. Use *customer* instead.

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

client side, client-side

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use for a general audience. Use *client* instead.

It's OK to use *client side* in writing for a technical audience when it refers specifically to the client part (side) of a program or protocol that acts on both a server computer and a client computer.

Avoid using *client-side* as an adjective. If you must use it as an adjective, hyphenate it.

client/server

Article • 06/24/2022

Always use the slash. Capitalize both words if the context requires *client* to be capitalized.

clipboard

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't precede *clipboard* with *Windows*.

Material is moved or copied *to* the clipboard, not *onto* it.

close

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Describing interactions with UI](#)

Close button

Article • 06/24/2022

Spell out and capitalize the word *Close*. It's OK to use *the Close button* to eliminate ambiguity in content that teaches beginning skills, but for general audiences, just use **Close**. Use bold for **Close** when you're talking about the **Close** button. If you can, use an inline graphic of the button.

Examples

Select the **Close** button  .

Select **Close**  .

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#), [Formatting text in instructions](#)

cloud

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Cloud-computing term collection](#)

cloud platform

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Cloud-computing term collection](#)

cloud services

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Cloud-computing term collection](#)

CO-

Article • 08/26/2024

In general, don't hyphenate words beginning with *co-*, such as *coauthor* and *coordinate*, unless it's necessary to avoid confusion. When in doubt, check [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#).

To learn more about hyphenation, see [Hyphens](#).

code page

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a synonym for *character set*. A character set appears on a code page.

code point

Article • 03/27/2024

Two words.

codec

Article • 01/23/2018

Don't spell out as *compressor/decompressor* or *coder/decoder*. Use only in content for a technical audience or when *codec* appears in the UI.

color map

Article • 06/24/2022

Two words when referring to the color lookup table in a video card.

column format

Article • 03/27/2024

Use instead of *columnar* or *columnlike*.

combo box

Article • 06/24/2022

Two words. Use only in content for a technical audience to describe a box in which the user can enter or select a value. Don't use in content for a general audience. Instead, refer to it as a *box*, using the label provided in the UI.

Use *enter* to indicate that the user can either type an item in the box or select an item in the list. Or just say *For [Control name], enter [value]*.

Examples

In the **Size** box, enter the font size you want.

For **Size**, enter a font size.

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#), [Formatting text in instructions](#)

command

Article • 06/24/2022

In general, avoid talking about the UI. Instead, talk about what the customer needs to do. If you must refer to commands on menus in content for a general audience, use *command* instead of *menu item*, *choice*, or *option*.

In content for developers about creating UI elements, it's OK to use *menu item* when appropriate.

See also

- [Describing interactions with UI](#)
- [Formatting text in instructions](#)
- [option, option button](#)

command button

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *in content* for a general audience. Most of the time, just refer to the button by its UI label. In content that teaches beginning skills, use the label followed by the word *button*.

Examples

For information about the dialog box, select the **Help** button.

For information about the dialog box, select **Help**.

It's OK to use *command button* in content for developers about creating command buttons.

Don't refer to a command button as an *action button* or *push button*.

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#), [Formatting text in instructions](#)

command line, command-line

Article • 06/24/2022

Two words as a noun. Hyphenate as an adjective.

Examples

command-line parameter

command-line tool

Customers enter commands *at a command prompt*, not *on a command line*.

It's OK to use *on the command line* in the context of building apps using command-line tools in Visual Studio.

Use *command-line program* in content for a general audience. Use *console application* only in content for a technical audience.

See also

[Formatting developer text elements](#)

[command prompt](#)

[console](#)

command prompt

Article • 06/24/2022

Use instead of *C prompt*, *command-line prompt*, or *system prompt*.

Command prompt refers only to a prompt itself. For example, `C:>` is a command prompt. The window in which a command prompt appears is the *Command Prompt window*. Note the capitalization.

Don't refer to the Command Prompt window as a *console window* except in content for a technical audience.

Describe entering commands *at a command prompt*, not *on a command line*.

Example

At the command prompt, enter `certutil -setreg ca`.

See also [command line](#), [console](#)

community cloud

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Cloud-computing term collection](#)

company vs. organization

Article • 06/24/2022

Use the term that makes the most sense for your audience.

Company is appropriate for businesses, which don't think of themselves as organizations.

Organization includes schools, nonprofits, and government customers in addition to companies.

See also [enterprise](#), [org](#), [organization](#)

compile

Article • 06/24/2022

It's OK to use *compile* as an adjective, as in *compile time*, or as a verb. Don't use as a noun.

Example

After you save the file, compile your program.

compute

Article • 06/24/2022

It's OK to use *compute* as a verb in content for all audiences.

In content for a technical audience, it's OK to use *compute* to refer to computation, such as in *compute hours* and *compute-intensive*. For a general audience, use terms such as *computing time* or *processor-intensive*.

Examples

Learn how to compute the periodic annual interest rate in Microsoft Excel.

Each Microsoft Azure compute instance represents a virtual machine.

computer

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

connect

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *connect*, *make a connection*, and similar phrases to describe attaching a computer to a network, whether intranet or internet.

Don't use *connect* as a synonym for *sign in* or *map*, as in mapping a drive letter to a shared network folder. But use *disconnect* to describe removing a mapped network drive.

See also [sign in, sign out](#)

console

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *console window* and *console application* only in content for a technical audience. Use *Command Prompt window* and *command-line program* in content for a general audience.

Don't use *console* as a synonym for *snap-in*.

See also

[command line, command-line](#)

[command prompt](#)

[snap-in](#)

context menu

Article • 04/12/2018

Use *context menu* only in content for developers. Make it clear that it refers to the shortcut menu.

Examples

The **Control.ContextMenu** property gets or sets the shortcut menu associated with the control.

Undo, **Cut**, **Copy**, **Paste**, **Delete**, and **Select All** menu commands are included as a standard part of the context menu for the **TextBox** control and appear on the resulting shortcut menu.

See also [shortcut](#), [shortcut menu](#), [pop-up](#)

context-sensitive

Article • 03/27/2024

Always hyphenate.

contiguous selection

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. Use *multiple selection* instead. If it's important to emphasize that all the selected items are adjacent to one another, use *adjacent selection*.

See also [multiple selection](#)

control

Article • 06/24/2022

In content for a general audience, don't use *control* to refer to a UI element such as a text box, checkbox, or list box. It's OK to use *control* to refer to adding a user-defined control in a program.

In other contexts, it's OK to use *control*.

Examples

In the **Font** list, select the font that you want to use.

On the **Developer** tab, in the **Controls** group, click the **Rich Text** control or the **Text** control.

What can I control with Parental Controls?

Control Panel

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *Control Panel*, not *the Control Panel*, to refer to the entire Windows Control Panel feature.

Most of the time, refer to specific, named control panels. When you must discuss control panels generically, refer to an individual control panel as a *control panel item* (lowercase). When you must refer to the icons that represent control panels, use *control panel icon* (lowercase). Don't use *applet*, *program*, *tool*, or *control panel* to refer to either the icons or the items.

Use bold formatting for the names of control panel items and icons and to refer to the **Control Panel** command on the Start menu. Otherwise, don't use bold formatting.

In documentation for a technical audience, refer to *control panel home page* and *control panel category page* (lowercase).

When referring to a control panel item's hub page, use *main <control panel item name> page*.

Examples

In Control Panel, select **Network and Internet**, and then select **Internet Options**.

To open **Internet Options**, select **Start**, select **Control Panel**, and then select **Network and Internet**.

See also

[add-in, add-on](#)

[app, application](#)

[applet](#)

[tool](#)

controller

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

control-menu box

Article • 06/24/2022

Avoid referring by name to this icon and the menu that it opens. If you must, refer to the *<App Name> icon* or the *<title bar> shortcut menu*.



conversation as a platform (CaaP)

Article • 03/27/2024

[See AI and bot term collection](#)

conversational user interface (CUI)

Article • 03/27/2024

[See AI and bot term collection](#)

Copilot, copilot

Article • 04/19/2024

The term *copilot* can be used in a general sense to describe any AI-powered assistant or helper. *Microsoft Copilot* is our first-party tool that uses the power of AI to understand natural language prompts and perform a variety of tasks such as generating content, summarizing information, and organizing data.

Microsoft Copilot experiences

On first mention, use *Microsoft Copilot*. For subsequent mentions, it's OK to use *Copilot*. When using *Copilot* to describe a Microsoft experience, don't make *Copilot* plural, but you may use it as an adjective describing a plural noun (for example, "Copilot experiences"). Don't use an article (*a/the*) in front of names that include *Copilot*. Don't use *Copilot/copilot* as a verb.

Custom copilot experiences

Use a lowercase *c* when referring to a copilot other than Microsoft Copilot, such as a third-party experience created in Copilot Studio that responds to natural language prompts and uses generative AI to help customers complete tasks.

It's OK to use *copilots* in the plural to describe these third-party experiences. When you use *copilot* as a noun or adjective to refer generally to third-party experiences, it should be lowercase. It's OK to use the article *a* with copilot, but not *the*.

Examples

Turn your words into a powerful productivity tool with copilot assistance.

When generating summaries about your document, Copilot will provide references with citations.

Create AI-powered copilots using Microsoft Copilot Studio.

-core

Article • 06/24/2022

Hyphenate adjectives formed by adding *-core* in reference to types of processors.

Example

single-core, dual-core, and multi-core processors

corrupted

Article • 06/24/2022

Avoid. Try to use a more empathetic statement to describe a file or data that has been damaged. Better yet, offer help in fixing it if possible. Don't use *corrupt*.

Example

Looks like something's wrong with that file. Do you want to try to repair it?

country or region

Article • 06/24/2022

Use instead of *country* for list headings, descriptions, and other contexts that might include named dependencies or disputed territories. In general discussions, use just *country*. Don't use *geography* or *geo* as a synonym for *country* or *country or region*.

Examples

This product isn't available in some countries.

Enter your country or region.

It's OK to use *country/region* where space is limited. Capitalize both words if the context requires *country* to be capitalized. For example, if *country/region* is used as a label in a form, capitalize as *Country/Region*.

crash

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use.

Use *fail* for disks or other hardware, or *stop responding* for programs or the operating system.

cut, cut-and-paste

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *cut*:

- As a verb, even to refer to an action involving the **Cut** command. Use *delete* instead.
- As a verb to describe temporarily moving text to the clipboard. Use *move* or *copy* instead.
- As an imperative verb in procedures involving the **Cut** or the **Delete** command. Use *delete* instead.
- As a noun to refer to the action of the **Delete** command. Use *deletion* instead.

It's OK to use *cut-and-paste* as an adjective.

Don't use *cut-and-paste* or *cut-and-replace* as a noun or verb. Use *delete* instead. It's OK to use *paste* by itself.

Examples

Select **Cut** to delete the selected text.

Select the text you want to delete, and then select **Cut**.

Select **Cut** to move the selected text to the clipboard.

Delete the text and paste it somewhere else.

Cut-and-paste capabilities are available across most Windows devices.

cyber-

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't hyphenate words that begin with *cyber*, such as *cybersecurity*, *cyberspace*, and *cyberattack*.

To learn more about hyphenation, see [Hyphens](#).

dark mode

Article • 06/24/2022

Lowercase, two words.

Dark mode is a display setting that changes the interface from a bright background color to a darker color. This setting can be easier on the eyes in lower-light environments and for people who prefer interfaces that aren't as bright.

Examples

Use *dark mode* to reduce eye strain.

Turn on *dark mode* automatically at sunset.

data, datum

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *data* as both a singular and plural noun. Don't use *datum*.

Always use *data* with a singular verb, even if you're talking about more than one data set. Don't use *the data are*.

Lowercase *data* unless it's at the beginning of a sentence or phrase.

Examples

The data shows that 95 percent of users prefer a graphical interface.

The data gathered so far is incomplete.

These facts contradict earlier data.

See also [big data](#)

data binding

Article • 03/27/2024

Two words.

data record

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't use. Use *record* instead.

database

Article • 03/27/2024

One word.

datacenter

Article • 03/27/2024

One word.

datagram

Article • 03/27/2024

One word.

deaf or hard-of-hearing

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Accessibility term collection](#)

debug

Article • 06/24/2022

Use only in the context of software development. Don't use as a synonym for *troubleshoot*.

deceptive software

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Security term collection](#)

decrement

Article • 06/24/2022

Use only in content for a technical audience.

As a verb, use only to refer to decreasing an integer count by one. Don't use as a synonym for *decrease*.

It's OK to use *decrement* as an adjective when discussing decrement operators and values.

default

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a verb.

Examples

If you don't choose a template, Normal.dot is applied by default.

This value specifies the number of sheets to add. The default is one sheet.

defragment

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't abbreviate to *defrag*.

deinstall

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use `except` to reference the term when it appears in the UI or an API. Don't use `deinstall` to refer to the related action. Use `remove` instead.

Example

The `DeInstall` method removes the specified network component from the operating system.

See also [uninstall](#)

delete

Article • 06/24/2022

Use as a verb to describe the results of using the **Delete** or **Cut** command, such as moving files to the **Recycle Bin** in Windows, moving items to the Deleted folder in Outlook, and moving items to the clipboard. Use *delete* to describe these actions even if the customer uses a different method, such as by dragging a file to the **Recycle Bin** or using the **Cut** command.

Use *delete* to refer to actions that result from pressing the Delete or Backspace key on the computer, such as deleting selected text.

Don't use *delete* as a synonym for *remove*. Don't use *cut* or *erase* as a synonym for *delete*.

Examples

Delete the second paragraph.

Delete MyFile.txt from the Windows folder.

Remove the **Size** column from the Inbox.

See also [cut](#), [cut-and-paste](#), [remove](#)

demilitarized zone (DMZ)

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. Use *perimeter network* instead. On the first mention, it's OK to say:

perimeter network (also known as *DMZ*, *demilitarized zone*, and *screened subnet*)

deprecated

Article • 06/24/2022

Avoid in content for a technical audience.

Don't use in content for a general audience. Use *obsolete* or another appropriate word.

depress, depressed

Article • 03/27/2024

See [Keys and keyboard shortcuts term collection](#)

deselect

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. Use *clear* for checkboxes and *cancel the selection* for other UI elements.

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#)

desktop

Article • 06/24/2022

Use to refer to the work area on the Windows screen. Refer to the desktop as *client area* only in content for a technical audience and only if necessary.

It's OK to use *desktop* when it's necessary to distinguish the core version of an app from its variations.

Example

The feature is available on the Outlook desktop, Outlook on the web, and Outlook.com.

See also [Computer and device term collection](#)

destination

Article • 06/24/2022

Use a more precise term, such as *website* or *folder*, to describe an end point, such as the location reached when a customer clicks a link, the folder to which a file is copied or moved, or the document in which a linked or embedded object is stored. Use *destination* as a modifier only if necessary for clarity.

Don't use *target* as a synonym.

destination drive, destination file

Article • 06/24/2022

Avoid. If you can, use more specific language, such as *copy the file to OneDrive*. Don't use *target drive* or *target file*.

device

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

device driver, driver

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *device driver* only in the context of a driver development kit (DDK) or in a general discussion about installing peripheral devices. If you're referring to a driver for a specific device, refer to the driver for that device, such as *mouse driver* or *printer driver*.

In content for a general audience, define *driver* on the first mention.

See also [Computer and device term collection](#)

DevOps

Article • 03/27/2024

Note spelling and capitalization.

dialog box, dialog, dialogue

Article • 06/24/2022

In general, avoid talking about UI. Instead, talk about what the customer needs to do.

When you need to refer to a dialog box, use *dialog*. Don't use *pop-up window*, *dialog box*, or *dialogue box*.

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#), [Formatting text in instructions](#)

dial-up

Article • 06/24/2022

Use only as an adjective (as in *dial-up connection*), not as a noun or verb. Always hyphenate.

Use *dial* as the verb to refer to placing a call or using a dial-up device.

different

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *different* to mean *many* or *various*.

In comparisons, use *different from* most of the time. Use *different than* only when *than* is followed by a clause. Don't use *different to*.

Examples

The result of the first calculation is different from the result of the second.

If the result is different from the result that you expected, verify that you entered your data correctly.

Make sure comparative statements that use *different* are parallel. Read them carefully to make sure they mean what you intended.

Example

The result of the first calculation is different from the result of the second.

Sentences that use *different than* are often difficult to read, even if they're grammatically correct. They work best when the clauses on both sides of the comparison are balanced and parallel. If it's difficult to make them parallel, consider rewriting.

Example

The regional setting doesn't match the language of the localized version of the operating system.

dimmed

Article • 06/24/2022

Most of the time, talk about the actions that customers should take rather than describing UI.

Don't use to describe commands or options that are in an unusable state—use *not available* or *isn't available* instead. It's OK to use *appears dimmed* if you must describe their appearance. Use *shaded* to describe the appearance of checkboxes that represent a mixture of settings.

Examples

The command isn't available until you select text.

If the option appears dimmed, it's not available.

Selected effects appear shaded.

See also [disable](#), [disabled](#), [unavailable](#)

direction keys

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Keys and keyboard shortcuts term collection](#)

directory

Article • 06/24/2022

Most of the time, use *folder* instead. Use *directory* only in content for developers when you need to refer to the structure of the file system or to match the API.

Don't use *directory icon*.

See also [folder](#)

disable, disabled

Article • 05/22/2023

Don't use *disable* to describe making a command or function inactive or unavailable. Replace with specific, plain language phrases, such as *turn off*, *hide*, *make unavailable*, *make inactive*, *block*, or *remove*, as appropriate.

As a state, replace *disabled* with descriptors such as *inactive*, *unavailable*, or *off*.

When admins turn off products, settings, or features, it's OK to use *disable*. But substitute terms like *make unavailable* or *block* if you can reasonably do so.

Example

If the command prompt isn't available, your network administrator might have turned off this feature.

See also

[Accessibility term collection](#)

[turn on, turn off](#)

[disabled \(person\)](#)

[unavailable](#)

[enable, enables](#)

disabled (person)

Article • 05/22/2023

Don't use *disabled* to refer to people with disabilities, unless you know that a specific audience prefers otherwise. Use *person with a disability* or a more specific, people-first term like *person with low vision*.

For more details on exceptions to this guideline, see [Accessibility term collection](#)

See also [Accessibility guidelines and requirements](#)

disc

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

disjoint selection

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use except in content for a technical audience, and only if the term appears in the UI or API.

If you need to describe nonadjacent selected items, use *multiple selection* or list the specific items.

See also [multiple selection](#)

disk

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

disk resource

Article • 06/24/2022

Use to refer to a disk or part of a disk shared on a server.

disk space

Article • 06/24/2022

Use instead of *storage* or *memory* to refer to available capacity on a disk.

See also [storage](#), [storage device](#)

display

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

display adapter, display driver

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. Use *video card* and *video driver* instead.

DNS

Article • 06/24/2022

Spell out as *Domain Name System*, not *Domain Name Server*. When discussing the DNS networking protocol, spell out *Domain Name System* on the first mention. When discussing the Windows DNS feature, don't spell out *DNS*.

The Windows feature is *DNS*, not *DNS Server* or *Microsoft DNS Server*. If you must emphasize that you're referring to the Windows feature and not to the networking protocol, mention Windows.

Don't use *dynamic DNS* or *DDNS*.

A DNS server (lowercase *s*) is a computer that's running DNS server software. DNS Server (capital *S*) is the Windows service that appears in the Computer Management console. In general, refer to the service only in a discussion about stopping and starting it.

A DNS client (lowercase *c*) is a client of a DNS server. DNS Client (capital *C*) is the Windows service that appears in the Computer Management console. In general, refer to the service only in a discussion about stopping and starting it.

document

Article • 06/24/2022

Use for text files, such as files created in Word.

To refer to any editable file located in a folder, use a more specific word, such as *workbook*, *presentation*, or *database*, if you can. Precede the descriptive word with a product name, such as *PowerPoint presentation*, when you need to distinguish a file created in a certain product from files created in other products.

Use *file* for more general uses, such as *file management* or *file structure*, or references to files of mixed types.

domain

Article • 06/24/2022

Domain has different meanings in database design, Windows, and internet addresses. Define the term on the first use, if necessary, to make sure the meaning is clear.

dot-com

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't use.

dotted rectangle

Article • 06/24/2022

Use only if you need to describe the appearance of the element that a customer drags to select a region on the screen. Otherwise, use *bounding outline* (not *marquee*) instead.

[See bounding outline](#)

double buffering

Article • 06/24/2022

Two words as a noun.

Hyphenate as an adjective.

Don't use as a verb. Instead, use a phrase such as *uses double buffering*.

double-click, double-clicking

Article • 03/27/2024

See [Mouse and mouse interaction term collection](#)

downgrade

Article • 06/24/2022

Use only if necessary to express the concepts of downgrade rights, downgrading licenses, downgrading products, downgrading files, and similar subjects. Use only in content for an audience that will understand your use of the word in those contexts.

download

Article • 10/19/2022

Use *download* to describe the intentional transfer of data and files to a system or device. Use *install* to describe adding apps, hardware, and drivers to a device.

When you use *download* as a verb, describe what the customer is transferring *and* where the customer is transferring it *to*.

Don't use *download* to describe the process of opening, viewing, or switching to a webpage.

It's OK to use *download* as a noun to describe data or a file that's available for downloading or that has been downloaded.

In your writing, make sure it's clear whether *download* is used as a noun or verb.

Examples

Install the app.

To learn more about integrating data security across your enterprise, download the poster to your device.

See also

[install](#)

[load](#)

[upload](#)

drag, drag and drop

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *drag and drop* except as an adjective to describe behavior that a programmer puts in a program, such as *drag-and-drop editing* or *drag-and-drop feature*. Use *move* or *drag* instead.

Don't use *click and drag*. It's OK to use *press and drag* to teach mouse techniques in content that teaches beginning skills.

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#)

drill down, drill up, drill through

Article • 06/24/2022

It's OK to use *drill down*, *drill up*, and *drill through* in content about data and the reports generated from them.

Two words as a verb. Hyphenate *drill-down* and *drill-up* as adjectives. Note that *drillthrough* as a noun or an adjective is one word, no hyphen.

Examples

If you have grouped items in your PivotTable, you can drill down on a group name.

Then, you can drill back up to analyze summary data.

Using *drill-down* and *drill-up* actions, you can expand and collapse sections within a report to find the data that interests you the most.

If you add the ability to *drill through* on an existing mining model, the model must be reprocessed before you can *drill through* to the data.

Use a *drillthrough* query to retrieve details from the underlying cases or structure data.

Drillthrough is useful if you want to see additional details from the case data.

Don't use *to mean following a path (such as folders) or giving something further examination.*

Example

Microsoft MVPs joined an in-depth discussion about Azure security management solutions.

drive

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

drive name

Article • 06/24/2022

Use instead of *drive specification*, *designator*, or *designation*.

dropdown

Article • 06/24/2022

Most of the time, avoid talking about UI elements. Instead, describe what the customer needs to do. If you must refer to a *dropdown* menu or list, it's OK to use *dropdown* as an adjective. Avoid using *dropdown* as a noun. (Like as a UI label: *Dropdowns*.)

Examples

Pick from the options in the dropdown list.

Use the dropdown menu to find the category you want.

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#), [Formatting text in instructions](#), [Computer and device term collection](#)

DVD

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't spell out *DVD*. If you refer to a DVD as a *disc*, use the correct spelling.

Most of the time, use *DVD* by itself. If you need to be specific, it's OK to use *video DVD*, *audio DVD*, *DVD-ROM*, *DVD-R*, *DVD-RAM*, or *DVD-RW*.

Refer to the drive for a DVD as the *DVD drive*, not the *DVD player*.

Don't use *DVD disc*, *DVD-ROM disc*, or other redundant phrases.

dynamic-link library (DLL)

Article • 06/24/2022

Spell out on the first mention unless you're positive that your audience knows the term. On subsequent mentions, use the abbreviation *DLL*. Use *.dll* (lowercase with a period) to refer to the file name extension.

Don't use *dynalink*.

dynamic service capacity

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Cloud-computing term collection](#)

e.g.

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. Use *for example*, *such as*, or *like*, as appropriate.

Examples

There are some legitimate business reasons for spoofing—for example, an assistant might need to send email for another person within your organization.

The template can work for different environments, such as testing, staging, and production.

Learn how to use infrastructure automation tools, like Packer and Azure Automation, to manage Azure virtual machines.

earlier

Article • 06/24/2022

If possible, use a hyperlink to help users find information elsewhere in the content. If you can't use a link, use *earlier*, *preceding*, or *previous* instead of *above* to mean earlier in a piece of content.

Use *or earlier* or *previous* instead of *or lower* to refer to all versions of a product that precede a particular release if the statement is accurate for all preceding releases. For example, don't use *Windows 10 or earlier* unless the statement is accurate for Windows 1.0.

Example

You can open files created in previous versions of Microsoft Visio. (If you can open files in every version of Visio including and previous to the version being discussed.)

See also [later](#)

e-book

Article • 06/24/2022

Always hyphenate. Don't use *ebook* or *eBook*.

Use *E-book* at the beginning of a sentence or heading. In uncommon situations where title-style capitalization is required, use *E-Book*.

See also [Capitalization](#)

e-commerce

Article • 06/24/2022

Always hyphenate. Don't use *ecommerce* or *eCommerce*.

Use *E-commerce* at the beginning of a sentence or heading. In uncommon situations where title-style capitalization is required, use *E-Commerce*.

See also [Capitalization](#)

e-discovery

Article • 06/24/2022

Always hyphenate. Don't use *ediscovery* or *eDiscovery*.

Use *E-discovery* at the beginning of a sentence or heading. In uncommon situations where title-style capitalization is required, use *E-Discovery*.

See also [Capitalization](#)

edutainment

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't use.

e-form, form

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't use *e-form*. Use *form* instead.

either/or

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. Use a complete phrase, such as *either close the document or close the program.*

elastic service capacity

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Cloud-computing term collection](#)

e-learning

Article • 06/24/2022

Always hyphenate. Don't use *elearning* or *eLearning*.

Use *E-learning* at the beginning of a sentence or heading. In uncommon situations where title-style capitalization is required, use *E-Learning*.

See also [Capitalization](#)

ellipsis button

Article • 06/24/2022

The name of the ellipsis button varies, based on the result of using it.



On the first mention, provide a graphic of the button or include (...) after the button name. On subsequent mentions, use the graphic rather than the words.

Don't capitalize *ellipsis* when used as a button name.

email

Article • 06/24/2022

Use to refer generically to an electronic mail program, to refer collectively to email messages, or to refer to individual email messages. If necessary to distinguish these meanings, use *email message* or *message* to refer to an individual piece of email. Make sure it's clear that you're not referring to instant messaging. After you have established the context of electronic mail, it's OK to use *mail* instead of *email*.

It's OK to use *email* as a verb.

Global tip In some languages, the translation of *email* is different for noun and verb forms. If you use *email* as a noun, provide enough context that localizers can identify its role in the sentence. For example, write *send an email*, which positions *email* after a verb and an article, where a noun is expected. In contrast, *Email* used by itself as a heading could be a noun or a verb.

Use *Email* at the beginning of a sentence or heading. Never hyphenate *email* or capitalize the *m*.

Examples

You have two new emails.

Scroll through email to find the message you want to read.

You have new mail.

Email us your comments.

See also [message](#)

embed

Article • 03/27/2024

Use instead of *imbed*.

emoticons, emoji

Article • 06/24/2022

Use emoticons. A little personality goes a long way.

In the right context, emoticons can help customers connect with us.

It's OK to use emoticons carefully when:

- The message is short.
- The message will be seen only once.

Don't use emoticons when:

- There's a serious problem.
- The message will be seen repeatedly.

The emoticons :) and :(are widely understood. Be cautious using other emoticons.

Most of the time, don't use emoji in text-based communications. When you do, be aware of potential cultural and diversity implications, as you would with any image. To learn more, see [Bias-free communication](#) and [Global communications](#).

In discussions about emoji, use *emoji* as both the singular and plural noun forms.

Emoticons and emoji might be removed in localized versions. Make sure your message gets across without them, and don't embed them in images.

enable, enables

Article • 11/15/2023

Avoid using in most cases.

Don't use *enables* (or *allows* or *lets*) to refer to things that Microsoft or Microsoft apps make possible for the customer. Rewrite to focus on what's important or possible from the customer's point of view. For example, say, "Write, draw, and take notes on webpages with Microsoft Edge," and not "Microsoft Edge enables you to write, draw, and take notes on webpages."

Don't use *enable* to describe making a feature, setting, or command available. Replace with specific, plain language phrases such as *turn on*, *allow*, *add*, or rewrite the sentence.

In product UI, use *On/Off* (not *Enable/Disable*) as labels for a switch that controls the availability of a feature or a capability in the product. Or use more specific pairs of words such as *show/hide*, *add/remove*, or *allow/block*.

See also

[disable, disables \(functionality\)](#)

[turn on, turn off](#)

end

Article • 06/24/2022

Use as a verb to describe stopping communications and network connections. Use *close* for apps and programs.

Example

To end your server connection, go to **Tools** and select **Disconnect Network Drive**.

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#)

endline

Article • 03/27/2024

One word.

endpoint

Article • 03/27/2024

One word.

End-User License Agreement (EULA)

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. Use *Microsoft Software License Terms*.

See also [Microsoft Software License Terms](#)

ensure, insure, assure

Article • 06/24/2022

Ensure, *insure*, and *assure* are interchangeable in many situations. To improve worldwide readability, Microsoft style makes these distinctions:

- Use *ensure* to mean *to make sure* or *to guarantee*.
- Use *insure* to mean *to provide insurance*.
- Use *assure* to mean *to state positively* or *to make confident*.

enter

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Describing interactions with UI](#)

enterprise

Article • 06/24/2022

It's OK to use *enterprise* for an IT pro or developer audience to mean a *large company* or *corporation*. Use as an adjective if possible, as in *enterprise computing* or *enterprise deployment*, rather than as a noun to mean *corporation*.

Don't use in content for a general audience.

See also [company vs. organization](#)

entry field

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *to refer to a text-entry field. Refer to the box by its label. If you must use a descriptor, use *box*.*

It's OK to use *entry field* in a database context.

environment variable

Article • 06/24/2022

An *environment variable* contains configuration information that can be referenced by anything in the environment.

erase

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a synonym for *delete* unless the app requires it, as in Paint.

See also [delete](#)

e-sports

Article • 06/24/2022

Always hyphenate. Don't use *esports* or *eSports*.

Use *E-sports* at the beginning of a sentence or heading. In uncommon situations where title-style capitalization is required, use *E-Sports*.

See also [Capitalization](#)

et al.

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use except in a citation that includes three or more authors. Use *and others* instead.

etc.

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. Instead be specific. When space is limited, use *such as* or *like* followed by an example or two.

Examples

Body text is most readable in Times New Roman, Palatino, and other serif fonts. (Not
Body text is most readable in Times New Roman, Palatino, etc.)

Body text is most readable in serif fonts like Palatino.

euro

Article • 06/24/2022

Lowercase.

Plural: *euros*

Symbol: €

In US content, place the euro symbol in front of the amount. Different locales might place the euro symbol elsewhere, as appropriate. A euro is divided into 100 *cents*. When expressing an amount in euros and cents in US content, use a decimal point. Different locales might use a decimal point or a comma, as appropriate.

Example

€3.50

Use *supports the euro currency standard* to refer to a country's use of the euro.

Use the following phrases to refer to countries that have adopted the euro as their currency:

- European Union (EU) members trading in euros
- European Union (EU) members that have adopted the euro
- euro nations
- members of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU)

Use references to the EMU cautiously. Some people aren't familiar with the organization.

Note On subsequent mentions, it's OK to use the abbreviations *EU* and *EMU*. It's also OK to refer to EU members as *EU member states* and to EMU members as *EMU member states*.

Use *non-euro nations* to refer to EU member states that haven't adopted the euro as their currency.

The terms *euroland* and *eurozone* are OK to use on websites with an informal tone. Don't use these terms in product documentation or other formal contexts, especially if the content will be localized.

See also [Currency](#)

e-words

Article • 08/26/2024

Don't create new words with *e-* (for *electronic*).

It's OK to use e-words, such as *e-book* and *e-commerce*, that are included in this guide and in [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#).

Almost all e-words are hyphenated. *Email* is an exception.

Lowercase the *e* in body text, and capitalize the *E* at the beginning of a sentence or a heading. The letter following the hyphen is capitalized only when title-style capitalization is required, which is rare in Microsoft content.

Examples

(Sentence-style capitalization) E-commerce and security

(Title-style capitalization) Strategic E-Commerce Systems and Tools for Competing in the Digital Marketplace

See also [Capitalization](#)

executable, .exe

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *executable* and *.exe* as adjectives, not nouns. Use *an*, not *a*, as the article preceding *.exe*: *an .exe file*.

Examples

an executable program

the .exe file

Use *executable file* only in content for a technical audience. For a general audience, use *program file* instead.

execute

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use `except` to follow the UI. Use `run` instead. Even if the UI includes `execute`, the action is `run`. Always use `run` in the context of macros and queries.

Examples

To run the program, select **Execute**.

Commands are run in the order in which they're listed in the file.

A thread is the basic unit of program execution.

exit

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to describe closing an app or program.

[See Describing interactions with UI](#)

expand, collapse

Article • 06/24/2022

Use to describe a customer action that displays more or fewer subentries in a folder or outline.

Example

To expand the folder, select the plus sign (+).

expose

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use in content about UI. Use *make available*, *display*, or a similar term.

It's OK to use *expose* in content about object-oriented programming technologies, such as the Component Object Model (COM), to describe making an object's services available to clients.

extend

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *extend* instead of *grow* to refer to extending a selection.

extension, file name extension

Article • 06/24/2022

Use instead of *file extension*.

Examples

the .bak extension

the .bak file name extension

fail

Article • 06/24/2022

In content for a general audience, use only to refer to disks and other hardware. Use *stop responding* to refer to programs or the operating system.

It's OK to use *fail* in content for a technical audience to describe an error condition. For example, E_FAIL is a common return value in COM programs. A function that returns E_FAIL has failed to do something.

Example

Back up your files to safeguard them against loss if your hard drive fails.

See also [stop](#), [stop responding](#)

fail over, fail back, failover, fallback

Article • 06/24/2022

Two words as a verb, one word as an adjective or a noun. Don't use in content for a general audience.

Examples

failover cluster

a planned failover

Follow these instructions to fail back your servers after they've failed over to Azure.

FALSE

Article • 06/24/2022

In content for developers, use all uppercase to refer to a return value, or follow the capitalization used in the specific programming language.

family

Article • 06/24/2022

Use instead of *line* to refer to a set of related Microsoft products or services.

Far East

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to refer to the geographic region of East Asia. Use *East Asia* or *Asia* instead.

far-left, far-right

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. Use *leftmost* or *rightmost* instead.

Accessibility tip Don't use directional terms (*left*, *right*, *up*, *down*) as the only clue to location. Individuals with cognitive disabilities might have difficulty interpreting them, as might people who are blind and use screen-reading software. It's OK to use a directional term if another indication of location, such as *in the Save As dialog box, on the Standard toolbar, or in the title bar*, is also included. Directional terms are also OK to use when a sighted user with dyslexia can clearly see a change in the interface as the result of an action, such as a change in the right pane when an option in the left pane is selected.

favorite

Article • 06/24/2022

Use to refer to a webpage or site the customer may want to return to later in Microsoft Edge or Internet Explorer. Customers save favorites to the Favorites menu. Use lowercase when referring to a favorite website, and capitalize the menu name. Avoid using as a verb.

Examples

Select **Add to favorites** to add a website to the **Favorites** menu.

Go to the **Favorites** menu to see your list of favorite websites.

fax

Article • 06/24/2022

Lowercase. Abbreviation for *facsimile*. It's OK to use *fax* as an adjective (*fax machine*, *fax transmission*), as a noun (*your fax arrived*), or as a verb (*fax a copy of the order*).

field

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to refer to a text-entry box. Refer to the box by its label. If you must use a descriptor, use *box* instead of *field*.

It's OK to use *field* to refer to Word field codes, in a database context, and in other technical contexts.

file

Article • 06/24/2022

Try to use a more specific term, such as *document* (Word), *workbook* (Excel), or *presentation* (PowerPoint).

It's OK to use *file* to discuss units of storage or file management or to refer to files of mixed types.

file attributes

Article • 06/24/2022

Use lowercase for file attributes such as *hidden*, *system*, *read-only*, and *archive*.

File Explorer

Article • 06/24/2022

Use instead of *Windows Explorer*. Don't use an article, such as *the*, to precede *File Explorer*. Don't shorten to *Explorer*.

file name

Article • 06/24/2022

Two words as an adjective or a noun when referring to the name of a file. Don't hyphenate.

Usually one word when referring to a programming term, such as the **FileName** property.

Example

Set the **FileName** property before you set an initial file name.

file name extension, extension

Article • 06/24/2022

Use instead of *file extension*.

Examples

the .bak extension

the .bak file name extension

finalize

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't use. Use *finish* or *complete* instead.

find and replace

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *find* and *replace* as separate verbs, not as a single verb phrase. Don't use *find and replace* or *find-and-replace* as a noun or an adjective.

Examples

Find the word *gem*, and replace it with *diamond*.

Search through your document, and replace *cat* with *dog*.

Don't use *global* to describe finding and replacing. Use *all instances* or *all occurrences* instead.

Examples

Find all occurrences of the word *gem*, and replace it with *diamond*.

Search through your document, and replace all instances of *cat* with *dog*.

Use *find characters* and *replacement characters* to describe what the customer enters into a find or replace box.

first line, first-line

Article • 06/24/2022

Two words as a noun. Hyphenate as an adjective.

Examples

The XML declaration typically appears as the first line in an XML document.

Help your first-line workers to perform more efficiently.

fitness band

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

fixed disk

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

flick

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Touch and pen interaction term collection](#)

flush, flush to

Article • 06/24/2022

In content for a general audience, don't use *flush*, *flush to*, *flush left*, or *flush right* to describe text alignment. Instead, use *even*, *left-aligned*, or *right-aligned*, as appropriate.

In content for a technical audience, it's OK to use *flush* as a verb, for example, *flush the buffer*.

flyout

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *in content* for a general audience. Instead, describe what the customer needs to do.

It's OK to use *flyout* as an adjective in content for a technical audience if you need to describe a transient UI element that displays settings or information related to what the customer is doing.

Examples

flyout menu

flyout message

flyout control

Avoid using *flyout* as a noun (for example, "the flyout appears"). Don't use as a verb (for example, "the menu will fly out").

folder, folder icon

Article • 06/24/2022

In general, try not to talk about UI. Instead, talk about what the customer should do.

In content about Windows, use *folder* to refer to a container for files and other folders. Use *directory* only in content for developers when you need to refer to the structure of the file system or to match the API. For MS-DOS, use *directory*.

Use *folder icon* to describe the visual representation of a folder. Don't use *directory icon*.

Note Not all folders contain files or other folders. For example, the Printers and Control Panel apps are also folders. Describe the nature of the folder, if necessary.

In instructions, use bold formatting for the folder name if you're directing the customer to select, type, or otherwise interact with the name.

Examples

You can find the file on your hard drive in C:\Windows\System\Color.

You can find the file on X:\Windows\System\Color.

You can find the file in the Color folder.

The system files are in the System subdirectory in the Windows directory.

Select the **Windows** folder.

Select **Documents**, and then select the file you want.

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#), [Formatting text in instructions](#)

following

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *following* to introduce art, a table, or, in some cases, a list.

Example

The following table compares the different rates.

If *following* is the last word before what it introduces, follow it with a colon.

See also

[earlier](#)

[later](#)

[Lists](#)

font, font style

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *font*, not *typeface*, for the name of a typeface design such as Times New Roman or Segoe UI.

Use *font style*, not *type style*, to refer to the formatting, such as bold, italic, or small caps, and *font size*, not *type size*, for the point size, such as 12 points or 14 points.

When referring to bold formatting, use *bold*, not *bolded*, *boldface*, or *boldfaced*. When referring to italic formatting, use *italic*, not *italics* or *italicized*.

Example

Select the bold characters, and then select **Bold** to remove bold formatting.

In writing for customers, use *regular type* to describe type that's neither bold nor italic.

For information about when to use various font styles, see [Text formatting](#).

foo, foobar, fubar

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *fubar*.

Don't use *foo*, *foobar*, or related words in content for a general audience. It's OK to use these words as placeholders or variable names in content for a technical audience, but if you can, use another placeholder instead, such as *Example.exe*.

footer

Article • 06/24/2022

In content related to word-processing and publishing apps, use instead of *bottom running head* or *running foot* when discussing page layout. It's OK to use *running foot* as a synonym in keyword lists.

See also [header](#)

foreground program

Article • 06/24/2022

In content for a technical audience, use instead of *foreground process*.

format, formatted, formatting

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *format* to refer to the overall layout or pattern of a document.

Use *formatting* or *formatted* to refer to specific character formatting, paragraph formatting, and other types of formatting.

See also [font](#), [font style](#)

fourth-generation language

Article • 06/24/2022

Spell out on the first mention. On subsequent mentions, it's OK to abbreviate as *4GL*.

frameset

Article • 06/24/2022

Use only in content for developers.

Use *frames* to refer to the independently scrollable regions on a webpage.

Use *frameset document* to describe the HTML document that describes the frame layout in a frames page.

Use *frames page* to describe the page itself, but don't use this term in content for a general audience. In general discussions, use *frames*.

freeze, frozen

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *freeze* as a synonym for *stop responding*. Don't use *frozen* to describe the resulting state.

See also [stop, stop responding](#)

friendly name

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. Use *display name* instead to refer to a person's name as it appears in an address or email list.

from vs. on

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *from* to indicate a specific place or time as a starting point.

Examples

Paste the text from the clipboard.

From the time you set the clock, the alarm is active.

Use *on* to indicate the starting place for selecting a command or option.

Example

On the **File** menu, select **Open**.

front end, front-end

Article • 06/24/2022

In content for a general audience, don't use as a synonym for the desktop interface to a database or server. Instead, refer to the program by name, or use *interface*, *program*, *app*, or another specific and accurate term instead. It's OK to use these terms in content for a technical audience.

Two words as a noun. Hyphenate as an adjective.

full screen, full-screen

Article • 06/24/2022

Two words as a noun. Hyphenate as an adjective before a noun.

Examples

full-screen display

To make the display full screen

Full screen (in the UI)

function

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to mean *application programming interface (API)*.

Don't use *API* to mean *function*.

Examples

A RESTful API uses HTTP requests to get, put, post, and delete data.

Every C++ program has at least one function, which is `main()`.

gallery

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to mean a marketplace or store.

It's OK to use *gallery* to refer to a collection of pictures, charts, graphics, templates, components, or other items that the customer can select from. Use the verb *select* for items in a gallery.

Example

Select a picture from the gallery.

See also [store](#), [marketplace](#), [gallery](#)

game pad

Article • 03/27/2024

Two words.

garbage collection, garbage collector

Article • 06/24/2022

OK to use in content for a technical audience to refer to the automatic recovery of heap memory or to the automatic deletion of objects that the runtime environment determines are no longer being used.

Use *garbage collector* to describe the component of a runtime environment that performs garbage collection.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Article • 06/24/2022

Capitalize and spell out on the first mention.

Include *the* when used as a noun. When *General Data Protection Regulation* or *GDPR* is used as an adjective, include *the* if the syntax of the sentence requires it.

Examples

Compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is an ongoing process.

Compliance with the GDPR begins with a few key steps.

Learn how Microsoft products and services can help you on the road to GDPR compliance.

general protection fault, GP fault

Article • 06/24/2022

Spell out on the first mention. On subsequent mentions, it's OK to abbreviate as *GP fault*.

gigabit, Gbit

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Bits and bytes term collection](#)

gigabyte, GB, G, G byte, Gbyte

Article • 06/24/2022

[See Bits and bytes term collection](#)

GB is also the abbreviation for *Great Britain* (England, Scotland, and Wales). Don't use *United Kingdom (UK)*, *Great Britain (GB)*, and *England* interchangeably.

gigahertz, GHz

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Units of measure term collection](#)

given

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to mean *specified*, *particular*, or *fixed*.

Examples

Look in the specified folder.

Use the **Find** command to search for all occurrences of a specific word.

The meeting is always at a particular time.

global

Article • 06/24/2022

It's OK to use *global* to mean *worldwide*.

In content for a technical audience, use *global* to refer to:

- Memory that's accessible to more than one process.
- A variable whose value can be accessed and modified by any statement in a program. This is called a *global variable*.
- Similar elements that pertain to an entire program.

Don't use *global* to describe the process of finding and replacing. Instead, describe the action or use *all instances* or *all occurrences*.

Examples

Use the **Find** and **Replace** commands to find all occurrences of specific text and replace it with different text.

The manufacturer is using Office 365 to expand its global supply chain.

See also [worldwide vs. international](#)

glyph

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to refer generically to a graphic or pictorial image on a button, on an icon, or in a message box. Use *symbol* instead. It's OK to use *glyph* in a technical discussion of fonts and characters.

go to

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Describing interactions with UI](#)

graphic, graphics, graphical

Article • 06/24/2022

As a noun, use *graphic* to refer to a picture, display, chart, or other visual representation.

Use *graphics* to refer in general to pictures, displays, charts, and other visual representations using computers. For example, *graphics software*.

Most of the time, use *graphical* as an adjective. Use *graphic* as an adjective only to mean vivid or realistic or in the phrase *graphic arts*.

Examples

To import a graphic from another file, select **Picture**.

Select the graphics file you want to open.

The image is graphic and accurate.

This course provides graphic design basics.

The graphical UI simulates a coliseum.

graphics adapter

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't use. Use *video card* instead.

gray, grayed out

Article • 06/24/2022

Most of the time, talk about the actions that customers should take.

Don't use *gray* or *grayed out* to describe commands or options that are in an unusable state—use *not available* or *isn't available* instead. Use *appears dimmed* if you must describe their appearance. Use *shaded* to describe the appearance of checkboxes that represent a mixture of settings.

Examples

The command isn't available until you select text.

If the option appears dimmed, it's not available.

Selected effects appear shaded.

See also [disable](#), [disabled](#), [unavailable](#)

greater, better

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *greater* or *better* to mean *or later* when identifying multiple versions of programs or apps.

[See later](#)

greylist

Article • 06/24/2022

Note spelling.

Use only to discuss the spam-reduction technique in which mail from an unknown sender is rejected by the server, and an SMTP response tells the client to try again later.

gridline

Article • 03/27/2024

One word.

group box

Article • 06/24/2022

Two words.

Most of the time, avoid talking about specific UI elements. Instead, talk about what the customer needs to do.

When you need to refer to a group box for a general audience, don't include the words *group box*. Just refer to the name of the group box.

Example

Under **Effects**, select **Hidden**.

It's OK to use *group box* in content for a technical audience.

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#), [Formatting text in instructions](#)

group, newsgroup

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *newsgroup*, not *group*, to refer to an internet discussion group that focuses on a particular topic.

grow

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a verb meaning to increase the size of something. Use a more specific verb.

Examples

If you want to increase your business

To extend the selection

hack, hacker

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Security term collection](#)

half inch

Article • 06/24/2022

Hyphenate as an adjective. Use instead of *half an inch* or *one-half inch*. When space is limited or the measurement needs to be specific, use *0.5 in.*

Global tip Be careful when using abbreviations or acronyms that form English words. Machine translation might incorrectly translate the abbreviation *in.* as the word *in.*

See also [Units of measure term collection](#)

handheld, handheld device

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

handle

Article • 06/24/2022

When you use *handle* to describe a token that's temporarily assigned to a device or object to identify and provide access to the device, insert a space between the word *handle* and the sequential number.

Examples

handle 0

handle 1

handle 2

To describe a handle in UI that the customer uses to move or size an object, use *move handle* or *sizing handle*. Don't use *size handle*, *grab handle*, *little box*, or similar phrases.

handshake

Article • 06/24/2022

One word. In content for a general audience, briefly define the term on the first mention.

Example

Systems must use the same flow-control (or *handshake*) method. To determine whether the systems use the same handshake method

hang

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use.

Use *stop responding* to describe a situation in which a program encounters a problem and can't close itself. (It's OK to mention *hang* to support search engine optimization.)

Example

If the application stops responding, or *hangs*, you might have to restart your computer.

Use *close* to describe the action a program takes to close itself when it has encountered a problem and can't continue.

Note Sometimes the computer itself stops responding, and sometimes a program does. In messages, refer to the problem with precision and specificity.

See also [stop](#), [stop responding](#)

hard copy

Article • 06/24/2022

Two words. Use only as a noun.

Example

Scan a hard copy of a document and save it as a file.

Don't use *soft copy*.

hard drive

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

hard-code, hard-coded, hard-coding

Article • 06/24/2022

Always hyphenate.

OK to use in content for a technical audience when writing about a routine or program that uses embedded constants (in place of more general input). Don't use in content for a general audience.

hard-of-hearing

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Accessibility term collection](#)

hardwired

Article • 06/24/2022

One word. Don't use in content for a general audience.

HDMI (High-Definition Multimedia Interface)

Article • 06/24/2022

Use only as an adjective.

Use the abbreviation *HDMI* most of the time. It's OK to spell out in parentheses on the first mention.

Use *an* as an article with *HDMI*.

Examples

This monitor requires an HDMI cable.

Connect the HDMI cable to the HDMI port on your TV.

header

Article • 06/24/2022

In content related to word-processing and publishing apps, use instead of *running head* when discussing page layout. It's OK to use *running head* for clarification or as a keyword.

Don't use *header* as a synonym for *heading*.

In technical content, it's OK to use *header* as a short form of *file header*, as in *HTML header*.

Don't use *header* as a synonym for *header file*, which refers to the file at the beginning of a program that contains definitions of data types and variables used by the program's functions.

See also [footer](#)

heading

Article • 06/24/2022

Use instead of *head* or *header* to refer to the heading of an article or a section.

See also [Headings](#)

hearing-impaired

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Accessibility term collection](#)

Help

Article • 06/24/2022

Most of the time, use just *Help*. Don't use *online Help* unless you need to describe the Help system. Capitalize when referring to a Help system within a product.

It's OK to use *definition Help*, *context-sensitive Help*, and *online Help files* to describe the Help system itself or to explain how to develop a Help system.

Example

Word Help

he/she

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't use.

[See Bias-free communication](#)

hexadecimal

Article • 06/14/2023

Don't abbreviate as *hex*. Use *h* or *0x* when abbreviating a number. Don't insert a space between the number and *h*, and use all uppercase for alphabetical characters displayed in hexadecimal numbers.

Examples

Interrupt 21h

addresses greater than 0xFFFFE

For the hexadecimal color value, enter #FF0000.

hierarchical menu

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. Use *submenu* if you need to emphasize how the menu works as a feature. Better yet, avoid talking about UI. Instead, talk about what the customer wants to do.

It's OK to use *hierarchical menu* when you need to explain types of menus to a technical audience.

Examples

On the **Edit** menu, point to **Clear**, and then select the item you want to clear.

Select **Edit**, point to **Clear**, and then select the item you want to clear.

higher

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *or higher* to mean *or later* to refer to multiple versions of software.

It's OK to use *higher* to refer to display resolution.

Don't use *higher* to refer to processor speed. Use *faster* instead.

Examples

1920 × 1200 pixels or higher resolution

a processor speed of 2.5 gigahertz (GHz) or faster

[See later](#)

high-level-language compiler

Article • 03/27/2024

Hyphenate as shown.

high-quality

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *quality* by itself as an adjective. Always use *high-quality*.

high-resolution

Article • 03/27/2024

Always hyphenate. Don't abbreviate as *hi-res*.

hint

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *hint* as a heading for a type of note. Use *tip* instead.

hit

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use `to` refer to pressing a key. Use *select* instead.

Use *page view* or *page request*, not *hit*, to refer to the number of times a complete webpage, with all its associated files, has been downloaded. It's OK to use *hits* to refer to the number of times a file that's part of a webpage has been retrieved. A single page view can result in many hits.

[See Describing interactions with UI](#)

home directory

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use.

In content for developers, use *root directory* to refer to the starting point in a hierarchical file structure. In Windows, the root directory is indicated by a backslash (\).

In all other content, use *top-level folder*.

See also [root directory](#)

home, home page

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *home* to refer to the main page of a website or the page a browser displays upon opening. Capitalize *Home* only when it's used as a UI label or in references to a UI label.

Use *home page*, two words, in generic references if needed for clarity.

Examples

Select **Home** to return to the main portal page.

Use **Settings** to choose the home page you want to see when the browser opens.

Don't use *start page*.

honeypot

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use.

In content that's specifically about network decoy technology, try to write around the reference. If you can't, define the term on the first mention.

host name

Article • 06/24/2022

Two words unless you're referring to a programming element, such as the **HostName** property.

hosted service

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Cloud-computing term collection](#)

hosting provider

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Cloud-computing term collection](#)

hot key

Article • 03/27/2024

See [Keys and keyboard shortcuts term collection](#)

hot link

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to describe a connection that enables information in related databases or files to be updated when information in another database or file is changed.

Don't use to refer to a link.

See also [hyperlink](#)

hot spot, hotspot

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to refer to a link.

In content for a technical audience, use two words to refer to the specific pixel on the pointer that defines the exact location to which a user is pointing.

Use one word when referring to a site that offers internet access over a wireless LAN.

Use one word when referring to programming elements, such as the elements of the **HotSpot** class, or to match UI.

See also [hyperlink](#)

hover over, hovering

Article • 06/24/2022

[See Mouse and mouse interaction term collection](#)

how to, how-to

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *how-to* as a noun. Always hyphenate as an adjective. Never capitalize the *t* in *to*.

Examples

how-to book

how-to article

How to add an article to the library

(Title-style capitalization) Writing a How-to Article

HTML

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't spell out. If you have a reason to spell out, use *Hypertext Markup Language*.

HTTP, HTTPS

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't spell out unless you're discussing protocols or URLs, and your audience might be unfamiliar with the abbreviation. When you have a reason to spell out, use *Hypertext Transfer Protocol* for HTTP and *Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure* for HTTPS.

Use all uppercase when referring to the HTTP or HTTPS protocol itself. In general, omit `https://` and `https://` from URLs. If for some reason you need to include `https://` or `https://` as part of a URL, use all lowercase.

See also [URLs and web addresses](#)

hybrid cloud

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Cloud-computing term collection](#)

hyperlink

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *hyperlink* or *link* to describe text or a graphic that readers can select to go to another document, to another place within the same document, or to a webpage. Use *hyperlink* to refer to a UI element labeled *hyperlink*.

Don't use *hot spot*, *hot link*, or *shortcut* to refer to a link.

Use *go to* to describe the process of going to another document, place, or webpage.

Don't use *click* or *click on*.

Use *create* to describe writing the HTML code that forms the link.

In content for web designers, it's OK to use *followed link* to refer to a destination that the reader has already visited. Don't use in content for other audiences.

Examples

Select the link to go to another webpage.

On the **Insert** tab, select **Hyperlink** in the **Links** group.

See also [URLs and web addresses](#), [Describing interactions with UI](#)

icon

Article • 06/24/2022

Use only to describe a graphic representation of an object that a customer can select and open, such as a drive, folder, document, or app.

Don't use *icon* to describe graphical dialog box options or options that appear on ribbons, toolbars, toolboxes, or other areas of a window. For options that have graphics rather than text labels, use the most descriptive term available, such as *button*, *box*, or *checkbox*. To refer to the graphic itself, if there's no other identifying label, use *symbol*, as in *warning symbol*.

When referring to an icon, use bold formatting for the icon name. In instructions, use the name of the icon and its image, but don't use the word *icon*.

Example

Select **Xbox** .

It's OK to use the word *icon*:

- In content that teaches beginning Windows skills.
- When you don't have an image of the icon.
- In discussions about the icon itself.
- When you need to differentiate between the Start icon and the Start button (a rare occurrence).

Example

Most apps have their own settings. Look for this icon  in the app.

iconize

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. Use *shrink to an icon* or *minimize* instead.

i.e.

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't use. Use *that is* instead.

if vs. whether vs. when

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *if* to express a condition, use *whether* to express uncertainty, and use *when* for situations that require preparation or to denote the passage of time.

In informal writing for the web, it's OK to use *if* to express uncertainty. Don't use *whether or not* to express uncertainty.

Examples

If you don't know whether a network key is needed, contact your network administrator.

Use your BitLocker recovery key to sign in if you're locked out of your computer after too many failed password attempts.

When Setup is complete, restart your computer.

To find out whether TrueType fonts are available

(Informal) To find out if TrueType fonts are available

Save a webpage to view it later, even if you're not connected to the internet.

illegal

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to mean *invalid* or *not valid*.

Examples

The queue path name is not valid.

You can't compose chords while a segment is playing.

See also [invalid, not valid](#)

image map

Article • 06/24/2022

Two words unless you're referring to a programming map such as the elements of the `ImageMap` class.

imbed

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't use. Use *embed* instead.

impact

Article • 06/24/2022

Use only as a noun. As a verb, use *affect* or another synonym.

inactive, inactive state

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use in content for a general audience. Describe what the customer needs to do in simpler terms.

In content for a technical audience, use instead of *not current* to refer to windows, apps, documents, files, devices, or portions of the screen that are available but not currently in use.

inbound

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to describe email being delivered. Use *incoming* instead.

It's OK to use *inbound* and *outbound* to describe marketing tactics.

incoming, outgoing

Article • 06/24/2022

Use to refer to email messages that are being downloaded or sent. Don't use *inbound* and *outbound*.

increment

Article • 06/24/2022

In content for developers and IT pros, use *increment* as a verb only to mean *increase by one or by a specified interval*. As a noun, use *increment* to refer to the specified interval.

In other content, it's OK to use *increment* as long as the meaning is clear.

indent, outdent

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *indent* to refer to a single instance of indentation. For example, use *hanging indent*, *nested indent*, *negative indent*, or *positive indent*.

Use *indentation* to refer to the general concept.

Don't use *outdent*.

Don't use *indenting* or *outdenting into the margin*. Use *extending text into the margin* or *indenting to the previous tab stop* instead.

index, indexes, indices

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *indexes* as the plural form of *index*. Use *indices* only in the context of mathematical expressions.

info

Article • 06/24/2022

It's OK to use *info* as an abbreviation for *information* in content with an informal tone.

Global tip The abbreviated form isn't available in all languages, so allow enough space for the full translated term in localized content.

infrastructure as a service (IaaS)

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Cloud-computing term collection](#)

initialize

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to mean *start a program or app or turn on a device.*

It's OK to use *initialize* to refer to preparing a disk or device for use or setting a variable to an initial value.

See also [start](#), [restart](#), [turn on](#), [turn off](#)

initiate

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to mean *start a program or app*.

[See Describing interactions with UI](#)

inline

Article • 06/24/2022

One word. Don't hyphenate.

Use *inline styles* to describe styles embedded in tags using the *STYLE* parameter, which override styles in cascading style sheets.

input

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a verb. Use *enter* or another appropriate verb instead.

In content for a general audience, don't use as a noun to mean data or values entered into an app.

Examples

Existing characters move to the right as you enter new text.

To verify the text that you entered

(Technical audience) Windows Presentation Foundation provides an API for obtaining input from a variety of devices.

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#)

input/output, I/O, input/output control

Article • 06/24/2022

Avoid *input/output* in content for a general audience. If you must use it, spell out on the first mention, and then abbreviate as *I/O*.

In content for a technical audience, you don't need to spell out on the first mention.

Use *input/output control* only in content for a technical audience. Always spell out on the first mention. On subsequent mentions, it's OK to abbreviate as *I/O control* or *IOCTL*.

insecure

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't use to mean *not secure*.

inside

Article • 06/24/2022

Use instead of *inside of*.

Example

To change the margins inside the text box

install

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *install* to describe adding apps, hardware, and drivers to a device. Don't use *download*. Use *uninstall* to describe removing them.

Don't use *install* as a noun. Use *installation* instead.

See also [add](#)

instant message, IM

Article • 06/24/2022

Spell out *instant message* or *instant messaging* on the first mention if your audience might not be familiar with the abbreviation. After that, it's OK to use *IM* as a noun or modifier.

Don't use *instant message* or *IM* as a verb. Use *send an instant message* or *send an IM* instead.

Exception

In mobile UI content or to form a parallel construction with another one-word phrase, it's OK to use *IM* as a verb. For example, *tap a name to call* or *IM someone*.

Examples

To send an instant message, select **Send IM** on the toolbar.

Customize instant messaging features based on your friends, family, and work contacts.

Global tip The abbreviated form isn't available in all languages, so allow enough space for the full translated term in localized content.

See also [message](#)

instantiate

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. Use *create an instance of* (a class) instead. If you have a reason to use *instantiate*, its direct object must be the name of a class or a general reference to classes. You instantiate a class, not an object.

insure, assure, ensure

Article • 06/24/2022

Ensure, *insure*, and *assure* are interchangeable in many situations. To improve worldwide readability, Microsoft style makes these distinctions:

- Use *ensure* to mean *to make sure* or *to guarantee*.
- Use *insure* to mean *to provide insurance*.
- Use *assure* to mean *to state positively* or *to make confident*.

intelligence, intelligent technology

Article • 03/27/2024

[See AI and bot term collection](#)

interface

Article • 06/24/2022

Use only as a noun, as in *user interface* and *application programming interface*. Use *interface* by itself only if the context is clear.

For a general audience, it's OK to use *UI* or *API* after spelling out on the first mention.

For a technical audience, it's not necessary to spell out those terms on the first mention.

Don't use *interface* as a verb. Use *interact* or *communicate* instead.

Examples

The familiar interface helps to minimize training requirements.

With Skype for Business, you can communicate with your team from wherever you are.

internet, intranet, extranet

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *internet* to refer to the worldwide collection of networks that use open protocols such as TCP/IP to communicate with one another. Don't capitalize.

Use *intranet* to refer to a communications network based on web technology but that's available only to certain people, such as the employees of a company. Don't capitalize.

Use *extranet* to refer to an extension of an intranet that uses internet protocols to give authorized outside users limited access to the intranet. Don't capitalize.

Internet Connection Sharing

Article • 06/24/2022

Capitalize. Always spell out; don't abbreviate to *ICS*.

Internet Explorer

Article • 03/27/2024

Capitalize. Always spell out; don't abbreviate.

Internet of Things (IoT)

Article • 06/24/2022

Note the capitalization. Spell out on the first mention unless you're sure that your audience knows the term or *IoT* appears as part of a Microsoft product name. On subsequent mentions, use the abbreviation *IoT*.

Include *the* with the spelled-out term but not the acronym.

Examples

The Internet of Things (IoT) is reshaping every industry from manufacturing to medicine. And although IoT is a complicated endeavor, new innovations are making projects easier to deploy.

Learn how to use Microsoft Azure IoT Hub to connect, monitor, and control billions of Internet of Things assets.

internet service provider (ISP)

Article • 06/24/2022

Spell out on the first mention. Lowercase the spelled-out term.

Use to refer to an organization that provides customers with internet access for activities such as web browsing, email, and newsgroups.

invalid, not valid

Article • 06/24/2022

Both terms are OK to use, but try to use more specific terms instead.

Global tip Use *not valid* instead of *invalid* if possible because machine translation might not translate *invalid* correctly.

Examples

There are several reasons why a product key might not be valid.

The FileType you specified is too long. The FileType must begin with a period and can be 1 to 64 characters long.

invite

Article • 06/24/2022

Invite can be used as a noun or a verb.

An *invite* is used to request an individual's virtual participation in a meeting, organization, or an event.

Examples

The working group will *invite* other stakeholders to weigh in on the proposal.

Send an *invite* that includes dial-in conferencing.

invoke

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use in content for a general audience.

In content for a technical audience, it's OK to use *invoke* to refer to a function, process, or similar element.

IP address

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't spell out.

issue

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a verb. Describe what's happening, or use a more specific verb instead.

Example

Windows displays an error message.

Don't use as a synonym for *problem*.

Example

Outlook has run into a problem and needs to restart.

IT pro, IT professional

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *IT pro*, not *IT professional*. Note capitalization. Don't spell out *information technology*—always use *IT*.

italic

Article • 06/24/2022

Use only as an adjective, not as a noun. Don't use *italics* or *italicized*.

Examples

To make the selected characters italic, select **Ctrl+I**.

The characters are displayed in italic type.

In writing for customers, use *regular type* to describe type that's neither bold nor italic.

its vs. it's

Article • 06/24/2022

Proofread your work to be sure you've used the correct word.

- *Its* is a possessive form meaning *belonging to it*.
- *It's* is the contraction meaning *it is* or *it has*.

Examples

It's OK to switch to another webpage anytime—your changes are saved automatically.

After you remove your device from its box

Java, JScript, JavaScript

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *Java* to refer to the object-oriented programming language developed by the Sun Corporation.

Use *JScript* to refer to the Microsoft implementation of the ECMAScript scripting language specification, an open standard.

Use *JavaScript* to refer to the widely used web-based programming language, under the Oracle trademark.

join

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to mean *embed*.

In discussions about databases and related products, use *join* only to refer to a relationship or association between fields in different tables.

Examples

If you join numeric fields that don't have matching **FieldSize** property settings, Microsoft Access might not find all the matching records when you run the query.

When you add fields from both tables to the query design grid, the default, or inner, join tells the query to check for matching values in the join fields.

To embed one object into another, select **Paste** on the **Edit** menu.

joystick

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

jump

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a noun to refer to cross-references to other pages or to links.

Don't use as a verb to refer to going from one link to another. Use *go to* instead.

justify, justified

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a synonym for *aligned*. Justified text is text that is both left-aligned and right-aligned. To describe alignment on one margin only, use *left-aligned* or *right-aligned*, not *left-justified* or *right-justified*.

If your content has an index or a glossary that includes articles about alignment, include *justify* in the index or glossary with cross-references to *align*, *left align*, and *right align*, as appropriate.

See also [left align](#), [left-aligned](#), [right align](#), [right-aligned](#)

Kerberos protocol

Article • 06/24/2022

Always use *Kerberos* as an adjective (*Kerberos protocol*), not as a noun (*Kerberos*).

On the first mention, indicate what version or versions of the Kerberos protocol you're referring to.

Example

Windows Server 2012 implements the Kerberos version 5 authentication protocol.

key combination

Article • 03/27/2024

See [Keys and keyboard shortcuts term collection](#)

key performance indicator (KPI)

Article • 05/09/2023

Spell out on the first mention and include the abbreviation in parentheses immediately following the expanded form. Lowercase the spelled out term.

On subsequent mentions on the same screen or pane, or in the same topic, article or flow, it's OK to use the abbreviation *KPI*.

In UI, if the full term cannot be spelled out due to space constraints, it's OK to abbreviate on the first mention. If possible, use the spelled out term somewhere else within the same flow for context.

See also [key result \(KR\)](#), [objectives and key results \(OKR\)](#)

key result (KR)

Article • 05/09/2023

Spell out on the first mention and include the abbreviation in parentheses immediately following the expanded form. Lowercase the spelled out term.

On subsequent mentions on the same screen or pane, or in the same topic, article or flow, it's OK to use the abbreviation *KR*.

See also [key performance indicator \(KPI\)](#), [objectives and key results \(OKR\)](#)

key sequence

Article • 03/27/2024

See [Keys and keyboard shortcuts term collection](#)

keyboard shortcut

Article • 03/27/2024

See [Keys and keyboard shortcuts term collection](#)

keypad

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Keys and keyboard shortcuts term collection](#)

keypress, keystroke

Article • 03/27/2024

See [Keys and keyboard shortcuts term collection](#)

kilobit, Kbit

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Bits and bytes term collection](#)

kilobits per second, Kbps

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Bits and bytes term collection](#)

kilobyte, KB, K, K byte, Kbyte

Article • 06/24/2022

[See Bits and bytes term collection](#)

For information about using *K* as an abbreviation for *thousand*, see [Numbers](#).

kilobytes per second, KBps

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Bits and bytes term collection](#)

kilohertz, KHz

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Units of measure term collection](#)

knowledge base, Knowledge Base

Article • 06/24/2022

Use title-style capitalization to refer to the Microsoft Knowledge Base. (You don't need to precede *Knowledge Base* with the company name.)

Otherwise, use lowercase for generic references to a *knowledge base*, or *expert system*.

labeled, labeling

Article • 03/27/2024

Use one *l*, not two.

laptop

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

later

Article • 06/24/2022

If possible, use a link to help readers find information elsewhere in the content. If you can't use a link, use *later* instead of *below* in cross-references such as *later in this article*.

It's OK to use *or later* or *and later* to refer to multiple versions of software. Keep in mind that the phrases and later and or later might imply that the functionality or feature discussed will be included or supported in all future releases. If you're not sure, list each applicable version instead.

Examples

Internet Explorer 7 or later, Firefox 3.6 or later

Windows 7, Windows 8, Windows 8.1, Windows 10, and later.

Download and install the Power BI publisher for Excel to use with Microsoft Excel 2010 or later versions.

See also [earlier](#)

launch

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to mean opening an app or form. Use *open* instead.

Examples

Select a tile to open an app.

Select **Register** to open the registration form.

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#)

lay out, laid out, layout

Article • 06/24/2022

In formatting discussions:

- Use *lay out* as a verb to describe positioning elements on a page.
- Use *laid out* as a verb in the past tense.
- Use *layout* to describe the result of laying out elements on a page.

Examples

Lay out complex information in a table to make it easier to read.

Add formatting to your table after it's laid out.

A table layout clarifies complex information.

leading

Article • 06/24/2022

Use instead of *preceding* or *beginning* in phrases such as *leading slashes* or *leading spaces*, which might occur at the beginning of strings, parameters, or other values. *Leading* in this context is the opposite of *trailing*.

leave

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to refer to closing an app or program. Use *close* instead.

[See Describing interactions with UI](#)

left, leftmost, left-hand

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *left* as a directional term by itself. Instead, use a term such as *upper left*, *lower left*, *leftmost*, or *on the left side of*. Include a hyphen when you use *left* to modify a noun, as in *upper-left corner*. Don't use *left-hand* as a modifier.

Accessibility tip Don't use directional terms (*left*, *right*, *up*, *down*) as the only clue to location. Individuals with cognitive disabilities might have difficulty interpreting them, as might people who are blind and use screen-reading software. It's OK to use a directional term if another indication of location, such as *in the Save As dialog box*, *on the Standard toolbar*, or *in the title bar*, is also included. Directional terms are also OK to use when a sighted user with dyslexia can clearly see a change in the interface as the result of an action, such as a change in the right pane when an option in the left pane is selected.

left align, left-aligned

Article • 06/24/2022

Use to refer to text that's aligned at the left margin. Always hyphenate *left-aligned*. Don't use *left-justified*.

See also [justify](#), [justified](#), [right align](#), [right-aligned](#)

left justify, left-justified

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. Use *left-aligned* instead.

See [left align, left-aligned](#)

left mouse button

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Mouse and mouse interaction term collection](#)

legacy

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to describe a previous version of a product. Use *previous*, *former*, *earlier*, or a similar term instead. Be specific if necessary, especially when discussing compatibility issues.

legal

Article • 06/24/2022

Use only to refer to matters of law. Don't use to mean *valid*, as in a *valid action*.

Example

Enter a valid path name.

less vs. fewer vs. under

Article • 04/11/2023

When comparing quantities:

- Use *less* to refer to a mass amount, value, or degree.
- Use *fewer* to refer to a countable number of items.
- Don't use *under* to refer to a quantity or number.

Examples

The new building has less floor space and contains fewer offices.

The new building has fewer square feet of floor space and contains fewer offices.

Fewer than 75 members were present.

Less than a quorum attended.

let, lets

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *lets* (or *allows* or *enables*) to refer to things that Microsoft or Microsoft apps make possible for the customer. Instead, focus on what the customer wants to do.

Example

Present schedule information in a variety of ways using Microsoft Project.

leverage

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a verb to mean *take advantage of*. Use *take advantage of*, *use*, or another more appropriate word or phrase.

license terms

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Microsoft Software License Terms](#)

-like

Article • 06/24/2022

In general, don't hyphenate words ending with *-like* unless the root word ends in double *l*'s or the root word has three or more syllables.

Examples

maillike

bell-like

computer-like

To learn more about hyphenation, see [Hyphens](#).

line

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to refer to a series of related Microsoft products or services. Use *family* instead.

line of business, line-of-business

Article • 06/24/2022

Lowercase. Don't hyphenate as a noun. Always hyphenate as an adjective. Don't abbreviate as *LOB*.

Examples

line-of-business app

In any line of business, ...

link

Article • 03/27/2024

[See hyperlink](#)

list box

Article • 06/24/2022

Two words.

In general, avoid talking about UI. Instead, talk about what the customer needs to do.

When you need to help a customer interact with UI, refer to a list box by its label and the word *list*, not *list box*. For the Mac, use *pop-up list* to refer to unnamed list boxes.

Examples

In the **Background** list, select **Coffee Bean**.

In the pop-up list, select **Microsoft Excel**. (Mac only)

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#), [Formatting text in instructions](#)

load

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a synonym for *start*, *install*, *run*, *set up*, or *download*.

In content for a technical audience, use *load* only to describe dynamically calling graphics, documents, or installed programs or data, such as drivers, DLLs, scripts, registry entries, and profiles, into RAM or a program's virtual memory. Use *unload* or *remove* to refer to removing these items from memory.

For games, use *load* to refer to continuing gameplay at the last place that a game was saved. *Load game* and *Load saved game* are typical button labels for game UI.

Examples

Load the device driver into the upper memory area.

Loading your personal settings ... (system status message)

When you sign in, the app loads your profile.

Run the program in character mode.

Setting up Office 365 (heading)

Download the e-book (link text)

When you're ready to play again, load your saved game.

See also [download](#)

lock

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Security term collection](#)

lock up

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to describe a hardware failure or a program or an operating system that has stopped responding. Use *fail* instead for hardware, and *stop responding* for programs or the operating system.

See also [fail](#), [stop](#), [stop responding](#)

log on, log off

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *log in*, *login*, *log into*, *log on*, *logon*, *log onto*, *log off*, *log out*, *logout*, or a similar term unless it appears in the UI (and you're writing instructions).

Use *sign in* or *sign out* instead.

[See sign in, sign out, connect](#)

lower

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to indicate product version numbers. Use *earlier* instead.

[See earlier](#)

lower left, lower-left, lower right, lower-right

Article • 06/24/2022

Hyphenate as adjectives. Use instead of *bottom left* and *bottom right*.

Accessibility note Don't use directional terms (*left, right, up, down*) as the only clue to location. Individuals with cognitive impairments might have difficulty interpreting them, as might people who are blind and use screen-reading software. It's OK to use a directional term if another indication of location, such as *in the Save As dialog box, on the Standard toolbar, or in the title bar*, is also included. Directional terms are also OK to use when a sighted user with dyslexia can clearly see a change in the interface as the result of an action, such as a change in the right pane when an option in the left pane is selected.

lowercase

Article • 06/24/2022

One word. Don't use *lowercased*. Don't use as a verb.

When using *lowercase* and *uppercase* together, don't use a suspended hyphen (as in *upper- and lowercase*). Spell out both words instead.

Examples

Change all the uppercase letters to lowercase.

Change the case of both lowercase and uppercase letters.

Microsoft uses sentence-style capitalization, meaning most words are lowercase.

low-resolution

Article • 03/27/2024

Always hyphenate. Don't abbreviate as *lo-res*.

machine

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

machine learning

Article • 06/24/2022

In general discussions, use lowercase. Use title-style capitalization to refer to named services, such as Machine Learning API and Machine Learning Studio.

main document

Article • 06/24/2022

Use to describe the document that contains the unchanging material in a merged document, such as a form letter. Don't use *core document*.

makefile

Article • 06/24/2022

One word. Use only in content for a technical audience.

malicious code

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Security term collection](#)

malicious user

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Security term collection](#)

malware, malicious software

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Security term collection](#)

management information systems

Article • 06/24/2022

Abbreviate as *MIS*. Most of the time, use *IS* for *information systems* instead, unless the reference is specifically to management information systems.

manipulate

Article • 03/27/2024

Use *work with*, *handle*, or *use* instead.

marquee

Article • 06/24/2022

It's OK to use *marquee* to refer to the scrolling text feature on webpages. Don't use to refer to the feature that draws a dotted line around a selection on the screen. Use *bounding outline* instead.

See also [bounding outline](#), [dotted rectangle](#)

master/slave

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *master/slave*. Use *primary/replica* or alternatives such as *primary/secondary*, *principal/agent*, *controller/worker*, or other appropriate terms depending on the context.

Use *primary/subordinate* as an adjective. Refer to arrangements in which one device controls another as a *primary/subordinate arrangement*, or refer to the controlling device as the *primary server* and the controlled device as the subordinate server.

Don't use *primary/subordinate* as a synonym for *parent/child*.

Examples Each subordinate device has a unique 7-bit or 10-bit address. The architecture uses a standard primary/subordinate design to replicate data from one server to many.

See also [parent/child](#)

mathematical

Article • 03/27/2024

Use instead of *mathematic*.

matrix, matrices

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *matrices*, not *matrixes*, as the plural form of *matrix*.

Maximize button, maximize

Article • 06/24/2022

Use the **Maximize** button to refer to the button, not just **Maximize**. **Maximize** as part of the **Maximize button** is always bold. Don't use *Maximize box* or *Maximize icon*.

It's OK to use *maximize* as a verb.

Examples

Select the **Maximize** button.

To fill the screen, maximize the window.

Select .

medium, media

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *medium*, not *media*, as a singular subject. Ensure that the verb agrees with the subject (that is, *the medium is* and *the media are*).

Use *media* to describe:

- Materials or substances, such as fiber optic cable or wire, through which data is transmitted.
- Materials on which data is recorded or stored, such as magnetic disks, CDs, or tapes.
- The mass-communications industry and its practitioners, such as publishing and broadcasting.
- Journalists as a group, whether they're published in print or on the web, or broadcast.

Don't use *media* as a shortened form of *multimedia*.

Examples

The media include online broadcasts as well as newspapers, magazines, radio, and television.

The media covers computer industry news.

The medium used for many large computer programs is the DVD-ROM.

megabit, Mb, Mbit

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Bits and bytes term collection](#)

megabits per second, Mbps

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Bits and bytes term collection](#)

megabyte, MB, meg, M, M byte, Mbyte

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Bits and bytes term collection](#)

megahertz, MHz

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Units of measure term collection](#)

member function

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't use if you can correctly use *method* instead.

memory

Article • 06/24/2022

Always refer to a specific kind of memory, such as *random-access memory (RAM)*, *read-only memory (ROM)*, or *hard drive space*.

Spell out RAM and ROM on the first mention unless you're positive that your audience is familiar with the term.

In the noun forms that refer to memory measurements, use *of* in a prepositional phrase, as in *512 MB of RAM*.

Example

Here's what it takes to upgrade to Windows 10 on your PC or tablet:

- **Latest OS:** Make sure you're running the latest version—either Windows 7 SP1 or Windows 8.1 Update.
 - [Find out which version you're running ↗](#)
 - Need the latest version? Download [Windows 7 SP1 ↗](#) or [Windows 8.1 Update. ↗](#)
- **Processor:** 1 gigahertz (GHz) or faster processor or SoC
- **RAM:** 1 gigabyte (GB) for 32-bit or 2 GB for 64-bit
- **Hard drive space:** 16 GB for 32-bit OS or 20 GB for 64-bit OS
- **Graphics card:** DirectX 9 or later with WDDM 1.0 driver
- **Display:** 800 × 600

See also [Bits and bytes term collection](#), [Units of measure term collection](#)

memory-resident

Article • 06/24/2022

Always hyphenate. Use *memory-resident program*, not *TSR*, in content for a general audience.

In content for a technical audience, it's OK to use *TSR* as an abbreviation for *terminate-and-stay-resident*.

menu item

Article • 06/24/2022

In general, avoid talking about the UI. Instead, talk about what the customer needs to do. If you must refer to commands on menus in content for a general audience, call them *commands*, not *menu items*.

In content for developers, it's OK to use *menu items* in the context of UI development.

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#), [Formatting text in instructions](#)

message

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *message* as a verb. Use *send*, *receive*, *email*, *text*, or *send an IM* instead.

Use *email*, *message*, or *email message* to refer to an item sent or received using email.

Use *text* or *text message* to refer to an item sent or received using SMS.

To refer to an item sent or received using instant messaging, spell out *instant message* on the first mention if your audience might not be familiar with the abbreviation. After that, it's OK to use *IM*.

See also

[email](#)

[instant message, IM](#)

[text, text message](#)

metafile

Article • 03/27/2024

One word.

micro-

Article • 08/26/2024

In general, don't hyphenate words beginning with *micro-*, such as *microprocessor* and *microsecond*, unless it's necessary to avoid confusion. When in doubt, check [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#).

To learn more about hyphenation, see [Hyphens](#).

microprocessor

Article • 06/24/2022

Use instead of *processor* to refer to the chip used in personal computers.

Microsoft

Article • 06/24/2022

Never abbreviate *Microsoft*. Don't use *Microsoft's*.

Examples

Microsoft software and services

Microsoft Surface

the Microsoft approach to diversity and inclusion

Exception To avoid awkward wording, it's OK to use *Microsoft's* occasionally when you're referring to the company itself rather than the trademark or brand name.

Example

Microsoft's privacy policies

Include *Microsoft* the first time you mention a product or service name in body text.

When you list several product names, it's OK to include *Microsoft* before the first name only.

Exceptions Never include *Microsoft* before *Bing*, *Skype*, *Xbox*, or *Windows*.

In general, focus on the customer, and avoid making Microsoft the subject of the sentence. For example, say, "Learn about the options available for upgrading," not "Microsoft offers a variety of options for upgrading." It's OK to use phrasing like *we recommend* if it helps you avoid awkward wording like *it's recommended*.

When it's necessary for Microsoft to be the subject, choose the pronouns that best fit your message.

- When the tone is friendly, informative, or inspiring, use *we* and *our*.

Examples

We believe in what people make possible.

We recommend that you upgrade to the latest version of the service when it becomes available.

- In formal legal or business content, use *it* and *its*.

Example

Microsoft and its subsidiaries

- Don't mix pronouns. Don't use *we* to refer to Microsoft and *its* as the possessive pronoun.

Microsoft account

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't capitalize *account*.

Use *Microsoft account* to refer to the sign-in credentials (email address and password) that give someone access to Microsoft services, such as Skype, Xbox Live, and Outlook.com, and to products, such as Xbox consoles.

Don't use *Microsoft account* to refer to corporate domain accounts, which are used to connect to corporate resources and services.

Microsoft account was formerly known as *Windows Live ID*.

Example

This contact info is from your Microsoft account. Friends who have it will be able to find you on Skype. Would you like to add it?

Microsoft AI

Article • 03/27/2024

[See AI and bot term collection](#)

Microsoft Software License Terms

Article • 06/24/2022

When referring to the license agreement, use *Microsoft Software License Terms*, not *End-User License Agreement* or *EULA*. On the first mention, use the full name. On subsequent mentions, it's OK to shorten to *license terms*.

Don't use *licensing terms*.

Microsoft Store

Article • 06/24/2022

Use the full name *Microsoft Store*. Note the capitalization.

In general, don't include *the* (*the Microsoft Store*) unless it's necessary to fix awkward wording. Avoid it in marketing content.

Exceptions In the UI, it's OK to omit *Microsoft* when space is limited, and it's OK to include *the* (*the Microsoft Store, the Store*) when it reads better.

Don't use *Windows Store* or *Xbox Store*. Always use the singular *Microsoft Store*. Don't use *Microsoft Stores*.

Refer to a brick-and-mortar store as a *location*.

Example

Get it at a Microsoft Store location near you.

If your message applies only to a specific part or parts of Microsoft Store, add descriptors if needed for clarity. The approved descriptors are:

- Microsoft Store on Windows 10
- Microsoft Store on Xbox One
- Microsoft Store online
- Microsoft Store location

When you use two descriptors, don't repeat *Microsoft Store*.

Example

Microsoft Store on Windows 10 and Xbox One

If one of the references is to Microsoft Store online, put it first.

Example

Microsoft Store online and on Windows 10

midnight

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Date and time term collection](#)

million, M

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Numbers](#)

Minimize button, minimize

Article • 06/24/2022

Use the **Minimize button** to refer to the button, not just **Minimize**. **Minimize** as part of the **Minimize button** is always bold. Don't use *Minimize box* or *Minimize icon*.

It's OK to use *minimize* as a verb.

Examples

Select the **Minimize** button.

Select  .

minus sign (-)

Article • 06/24/2022

Use an en dash for a minus sign.

Exception In an example in which the customer must type a hyphen to represent a minus sign, use a hyphen in the example and clarify which key should be selected.

See also [Keys and keyboard shortcuts term collection](#)

MIP mapping

Article • 03/27/2024

Two words. Note capitalization.

mission critical, mission-critical

Article • 06/24/2022

Two words. Hyphenate as an adjective.

Use *business-critical* or simply *critical* instead if you can. When necessary, it's OK to use this term in a technical context to describe an application or business process.

mixed reality, mixed-reality

Article • 06/24/2022

Two words as a noun. Hyphenate as an adjective.

Examples

In mixed reality, digital information is represented by holograms that appear in the space around you.

Use mixed-reality video calling to help you make better business decisions and reduce costs.

mobile device, mobile phone

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

monitor

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

monospace

Article • 03/27/2024

One word.

more than vs. over

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *more than* to refer to quantifiable figures and amounts—things you can count.

Use *over*:

- To refer to a position or location that's above something.
- In a comparison in which *more* is already used.

Examples

The Design Gallery contains more than 16 million colors.

After you compress your drive, it will have over 50 percent more free space.

mouse

Article • 06/24/2022

[See Computer and device term collection](#), [Mouse and mouse interaction term collection](#)

mouse over

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Mouse and mouse interaction term collection](#)

movable

Article • 03/27/2024

Note spelling. Don't use *moveable*.

move

Article • 06/24/2022

Use as a verb to describe transferring files or folders from one local location to another.

Use *move* or *drag* as a verb to describe moving any window.

See also [Describing interactions with UI, upload](#)

MPEG

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't spell out. The extension for MPEG files is .mpg.

multi-

Article • 08/26/2024

In general, don't hyphenate words beginning with *multi-* unless it's necessary to avoid confusion or *multi-* is followed by a proper noun.

Don't invent new words by combining words with *multi-*. Check [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#). If you don't find the word there or in the following list of examples, use *multiple* before the word instead.

Examples

multicast
multichannel
multicloud
multicolumn
multiline
multiprocessor

To learn more about hyphenation, see also [Hyphens](#).

multifactor authentication

Article • 06/24/2022

When describing an authentication that uses more than one factor, use the term *multifactor authentication*.

Don't use *multi-factor*. Instead always use *multifactor*, without the hyphen.

Don't use the abbreviated or acronym form of this term.

multiple selection

Article • 06/24/2022

Use to refer to a selection that includes multiple items. It's OK to use *adjacent selection* if you must emphasize that the selected items are adjacent to one another.

Don't use *disjoint selection*, *nonadjacent selection*, or *noncontiguous selection*, except in content for a technical audience, and only if the term appears in the UI or API. If you need to refer to nonadjacent selected items, use *multiple selection* or list the specific items.

multiplication sign (×)

Article • 06/24/2022

Use the multiplication sign (×), not the letter *x*, to indicate the mathematical operation. Use an asterisk (*) if you need to match the UI.

Use × to mean *by* when you refer to screen resolution or dimensions.

Examples

48 × 48 pixels

The application icon should be 62 × 62 pixels and PNG format.

multitask, multitasking

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *multitask* as a verb. *Multitasking* is OK to use as a noun or an adjective.

Examples

A multitasking operating system divides the available microprocessor time among the processes that need it.

Multitasking on Microsoft Surface is a snap.

multithreaded

Article • 03/27/2024

Use instead of *multithread*.

n

Article • 06/24/2022

Use a lowercase *n* in italic type to refer to a generic use of a number—when the value of a number is arbitrary or immaterial.

Example

Move the cursor *n* spaces to the right.

Reserve a lowercase *x* in italic type for representing an unknown in mathematical equations (a variable).

Global note Because *n* doesn't refer to the generic use of a number in all languages, using *n* for this purpose might lead to mistranslation in machine-translated content.

See also [x](#)

namespace

Article • 03/27/2024

One word.

nanosecond

Article • 03/27/2024

See [Date and time term collection](#)

native language

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to refer to a computer system's machine language. Use *machine language* or *host language* instead.

natural user interface, NUI

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *natural user interface* in content for a general audience. Don't abbreviate as *NUI*.

navigate

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to describe going from place to place on the internet or an intranet. Use *browse* instead.

To describe going directly to a webpage or website, whether by entering a URL or selecting a link, use *go to*.

Examples

To browse the web, select any link on your home page.

To go to a webpage, enter the address of the page in the Address bar, and then select **Go**.

Avoid referring to UI controls and buttons as *navigation* buttons and to webpages that orient the customer as *navigation* topics or *navigation* pages. Most of the time, use *buttons*, *topics*, and *pages* instead.

Don't use *navigation pane* unless the term appears in the UI. Use *left pane* instead if you can.

need

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *need* to discuss a requirement or obligation; use *want* when the customer has a choice of actions.

Example

If you want to use a laser printer, you need a laser printer driver.

.NET

Article • 06/24/2022

Note capitalization. Always begin with a period (.). Don't spell out as *dot NET*.

Use *Microsoft .NET* on the first mention. After that, it's OK to use *.NET*.

It's OK to begin a sentence with *.NET* to avoid awkwardness or ambiguity, but be aware that the consecutive periods (. *.NET*) might briefly confuse some readers.

network

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't shorten to *net*.

Don't use *network* as a verb to describe the action of connecting a computer to a network.

A computer is *on*, not *in*, a network, and computers on a network are *linked* or *connected*, not *networked*.

Use *network* as a verb and the noun *networking* only to describe making personal and business connections.

network adapter

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

network administrator

Article • 06/24/2022

Use only to specifically refer to the administrator of networks. In general, use *administrator* or *system administrator* unless you must specify a particular kind.

See also [administrator](#), [admin](#)

network connection

Article • 03/27/2024

Use instead of *local area network connection*.

network drive

Article • 03/27/2024

Use instead of *remote drive*.

newsreader

Article • 03/27/2024

One word.

non-

Article • 08/26/2024

Don't hyphenate words beginning with *non-*, such as *nonnumeric* and *nonzero*, unless a hyphen is necessary to avoid confusion, as in *non-native*, or *non-* is followed by a proper noun, as in *non-English*. When in doubt, check [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#). Don't use *non-* to negate an entire phrase.

Example

unrelated to security (instead of *non-security related*)

To learn more about hyphenation, see [Hyphens](#).

nonadjacent selection

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use in content for a general audience to describe multiple selected items that don't touch. Use *multiple selection* or list the specific items instead.

Use in content for a technical audience only if the term appears in the UI or API.

noncontiguous selection

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use in content for a general audience to refer to selecting multiple items that don't touch. Use *multiple selection* instead, or describe the specific noncontiguous items.

Use in content for a technical audience only if the term appears in the UI or API.

Example

To select multiple cells, select **Ctrl** as you select the cells.

nonprintable, nonprinting

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *nonprintable* to refer to an area of a page that can't be printed on. Use *nonprinting* to refer to characters and other data that can't or won't be printed.

Don't use *unprintable*.

Examples

Some text extends into the nonprintable area of the page.

Select **Show/Hide** to display all nonprinting characters, including paragraph marks and space marks.

normal, normally

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *normal* to mean *customary*, *usual*, *typical*, or a similar term. Don't use *normally* to mean *often*, *usually*, *ordinarily*, *typically*, *generally*, or a similar term.

notification

Article • 06/24/2022

Use instead of *notice* to describe information displayed to a customer about communications, contacts, a service problem, or other item. Don't use *pop-up*, *toast*, or *banner* for this purpose.

Examples

When you receive a message, a notification briefly appears at the top of Start ...

If you get a notification, tap it before you unlock the phone and you'll be automatically taken to the notification.

notification area

Article • 12/22/2023

In Windows 8 and Windows 10, use to refer to the area on the taskbar where the clock and system notifications appear.

In Windows 11, this UI element is referred to as the *system tray*.

See also [system tray](#)

null, NULL, Null

Article • 06/24/2022

Use lowercase *null* to refer to a null value. Better yet, use *null value* to avoid confusion with the constant.

Use **NUL**L or **Null** (depending on the language) only to refer to the constant.

null-terminated, null-terminating

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *null-terminated* as an adjective, as in *null-terminated string*. Don't use *null-terminating*, as in *null-terminating character*. Use *terminating null character* instead.

number sign (#)

Article • 06/24/2022

Always spell out *number* in *number sign*. Don't use *pound sign*.

Don't use the # symbol preceding a numeral. Spell out *number* instead. For example, use *number* 7, not #7. When space is limited, as in tables, it's OK to abbreviate *number* as *No.*

Global tip The abbreviation *No.* isn't used to abbreviate *number* in other languages, so using *No.* for this purpose might lead to mistranslation in machine-translated content.

In social media, it's OK to use the # symbol to indicate a hashtag. Don't use *number sign* to refer to the hashtag.

Example

(on Twitter) A quick look at top conversations and #Office365 product announcements of the week.

It's OK to use the # symbol in references to the # key on the keyboard.

See also [Keys and keyboard shortcuts term collection](#)

numeric

Article • 06/24/2022

Use instead of *numerical*.

For the keypad, use *numeric keypad* instead of *numerical keypad* or *numeric keyboard*.

object

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *object* as a synonym for *item* or *thing*. Instead, refer to a specific object.

For example, in object-oriented programming, an object is an instance of a class that contains both methods and data and is treated as one entity. Similarly, in COM-based technologies, an object is a combination of code and data that implements one or more interfaces. In assembly language, *object* refers to the object module, which contains data that has been translated into machine code.

objectives and key results (OKR)

Article • 05/09/2023

Spell out on the first mention and include the abbreviation in parentheses immediately following the expanded form. Lowercase the spelled out term.

On subsequent mentions on the same screen or pane, or in the same topic, article or flow, it's OK to use the abbreviation *OKR*.

In UI, if the full term cannot be spelled out due to space constraints, it's OK to abbreviate on the first mention. If possible, use the spelled out term somewhere else within the same flow for context.

See also [key result \(KR\)](#), [key performance indicator \(KPI\)](#)

obsolete

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a verb. Use a phrase such as *make obsolete* instead.

of

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *of* after another preposition in phrases such as *off of* or *outside of*.

Example

The taskbar is outside the main window area.

offline

Article • 06/24/2022

One word. Use only in the sense of not being connected to or part of a system or network.

off-premises, on-premises

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Cloud-computing term collection](#)

OK, okay

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *OK* instead of *okay* or *all right*. Never use *alright*.

on

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *on* as a preposition with:

- Menus
- Tabs
- Taskbar, toolbar, ruler, and desktop
- Disks, in the sense of a program being on a disk
- Networks
- Hardware platforms
- The web

In COM programming, an interface is implemented *on* an object.

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#)

on the fly

Article • 06/24/2022

OK to use in content for a technical audience to refer to something that's not created until it's needed.

onboarding

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to mean the process of introducing employees to a new role or organization.
Use *orientation* instead.

once

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a synonym for *after*.

Example

After you save the document, you can close the app.

online

Article • 06/24/2022

One word, both as an adjective and adverb.

Examples

Search Help for more information.

Check online for more up-to-date information.

online services

Article • 06/24/2022

Avoid. If you need to refer generally to apps and services that you access online, mention the services by name or use *services*.

Don't use *online services* to refer to protocols and data formats, such as XML, SOAP, and WSDL, that provide the means for integrating web-based apps. Use *web services* instead.

[See web services](#)

on-screen

Article • 06/24/2022

Always hyphenate as an adjective or adverb. Instead of using as an adverb, try to rewrite by using a phrase such as *on the screen*.

on-screen keyboard

Article • 03/27/2024

See [Keys and keyboard shortcuts term collection](#)

onto

Article • 06/24/2022

Use one word (*onto*) to indicate moving something to a position on top of something else, as in *drag the icon onto the desktop*.

See also [sign in, sign out](#)

opcode

Article • 06/24/2022

It's OK to use *opcode* to refer to a programming term, such as the *opcode* parameter.

Don't use *opcode* as a shortened form of *operation code*. Use *operation code* instead.

open

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *open*, not *opened*, to describe the open state: *an open folder*.

Use *open*, not *start* or *launch*, to describe opening a program or app. Don't use *open* to describe selecting a command, a menu, an option, or other similar element.

[See Describing interactions with UI](#)

open source, open-source

Article • 06/24/2022

Lowercase unless you're talking about the Open Source Initiative.

Hyphenate *open-source* as an adjective preceding a noun, as in *open-source software*.

Don't use *open-sourced* as an adjective.

Don't hyphenate in other instances, such as *Open source is a development model in which*

Don't use OSS as an abbreviation for *open-source software*.

operating environment, operating system

Article • 06/24/2022

OK to use in content for a technical audience, but avoid in content for a general audience.

Use *operating environment* or *environment* to describe both hardware and the operating system software.

Use *operating system* to describe only the software.

Use *graphical environment* to describe the graphical user interface (GUI) of an operating system.

Use *on*, *under*, or *with* as prepositions with *operating system*. Don't use *against*.

Examples

Word 2016 runs with the Windows operating system.

Microsoft Exchange Server runs on the Windows Server operating system.

See also [platform](#)

opt in, opt out

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *opt in* and *opt out* as verbs.

Use *opt-in* and *opt-out* as adjectives.

Don't use as nouns.

option, option button

Article • 06/24/2022

In general, avoid talking about the UI. Instead, talk about what the customer needs to do. Refer to an option by its UI label only. If you must provide a descriptor, use *option*. Use the exact label text, including its capitalization, but don't capitalize the word *option*.

Avoid referring to the option button itself. Just discuss the option that it controls. When you must mention the button for clarity, use *option button*.

Examples

Select **No header row**.

When you select the **Keep source formatting** option,

For **Paste options**, select **Keep text only**.

In content for a technical audience, it's OK to use *option* instead of *switch* to refer to a command argument or compiler option, such as **/b** or **/Za**.

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#), [Formatting text in instructions](#)

org, organization

Article • 06/24/2022

Use the term that makes the most sense for your audience.

In content for a business or technical audience, it's OK to use *org* as an abbreviation for *organization*. Don't use a period after the abbreviation.

Examples

Get an online org chart application that works with Azure Active Directory and Office 365.

How to prepare for your cross-org Exchange migration

See also [company vs. organization](#)

output

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a verb. Instead, use a verb that describes the kind of output, such as *write to*, *display on*, or *print to*.

Avoid using as a noun or an adjective in content for a general audience. Use a more specific term instead.

Examples

Print a document to a file or to a specific printer.

The **HttpResponse.Output** property delivers text output to the outgoing HTTP response stream.

outside

Article • 06/24/2022

Use instead of *outside of*.

Example

The taskbar is outside the main window area.

Over

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *over* to refer to a position or location above something. For quantities, use *more than*.

Examples

A transparent viewing layer with a red border appears over the diagram.

The installed base is more than 2 million.

Don't use to refer to version numbers. Use *later* instead.

See also [later](#)

overwrite

Article • 06/24/2022

Use only to describe replacing existing data with new data. Use *replace* to describe replacing an existing file with a new one that has the same name.

Don't use *overwrite* as a synonym for *type over*.

page

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *page* or *webpage* to describe one of a collection of web documents that make up a website. Use *page* to refer to the page the reader is on or to a specific page, such as the home page or start page.

In a wizard, use *page* instead of *screen* to refer to an individual screen.

palette

Article • 06/24/2022

Use to describe a collection of colors or patterns that the customer can apply to objects.

Most of the time, avoid talking about UI elements. Instead, talk about what the customer needs to do. When you must refer to a palette by name, use bold formatting for the name of the palette. Use sentence-style capitalization unless you need to match the UI.

Examples

In **Colors**, let Windows pull an accent color from your background, or choose your own color.

In the **Color** palette, choose a color for the object outline.

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#), [Formatting text in instructions](#)

pan

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Touch and pen interaction term collection](#)

pane

Article • 11/01/2023

Use only to refer to the separate areas of a split or single window. For example, in File Explorer, the names of all the folders sometimes appear on one pane and the contents of a selected folder on another pane.

If a pane isn't labeled in the UI, use lowercase for the name that describes it, such as *the annotation pane*. If a pane is labeled in the UI, follow the capitalization used in the UI. For example, *the Score pane*.

Use the preposition *on* when referring to the contents of a pane.

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#), [Formatting text in instructions](#)

parameter

Article • 06/24/2022

Use for a value given to a variable until an operation is completed. Don't use to mean *characteristic, element, limit, or boundary*.

See also [argument vs. parameter](#)

parent/child

Article • 06/24/2022

It's OK to use *parent/child* in content for a technical audience to refer to the relationships among processes in a multitasking environment or in content about databases to describe the relationships among nodes in a tree structure.

Don't use as a synonym for a primary/subordinate relationship.

See also [master/slave](#)

parenthesis, parentheses

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *opening parenthesis* or *closing parenthesis* for an individual parenthesis, not *open parenthesis*, *close parenthesis*, *beginning parenthesis*, *ending parenthesis*, *left parenthesis*, or *right parenthesis*. It's OK to use *parenthesis* by itself if it doesn't matter or it's clear which parenthesis is being discussed.

See also [Formatting punctuation](#)

passwordless

Article • 06/24/2022

Avoid. Instead, use wording that's friendlier and more clearly describes the benefit.

When you must use *passwordless*, don't include a hyphen, and use it only as an adjective, not as a noun. For example, use "the steps to a passwordless environment" not "the steps to passwordless."

Examples

Learn why getting rid of passwords is important.

Before you can do away with passwords, you need something to replace them.

See how a password-free environment works.

Sign in without a password.

An authentication solution that doesn't require passwords

path

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *path* instead of *pathname*, both in general references and in syntax.

Use *path* to refer to a drive and any folders below the root directory. When a path also specifies a file, use *full path*.

In command syntax, use *path* to represent only the folder portion of the full path:

`copy [drive:][path]filename`

To indicate a path, first type the drive name, followed by a colon and a backslash. Then type the name of each folder in the order that you would open it, separated by a backslash, as follows:

`C:\Documents and Settings\user1`

Use *address* or *URL*, not *path*, to refer to a location on the internet.

In general, use *path of*, not *path to*, to refer to the location of a file.

Example

The full path of my current tax form is:

`C:\Documents and Settings\user1\My Documents\Taxes\This year's taxes`

When documenting products for the Mac, use colons with no spaces to separate zones, file servers, shared disks, folders, and file names. File names don't require extensions.

Example

(Mac) Macintosh HD:My Documentation:Sales CORP-16:TOMCAT:EX130D Mac
Temp:Workbook1

See also [Formatting common text elements, URLs and web addresses](#)

PC

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

p-code

Article • 06/24/2022

Abbreviation for *pseudocode*. Spell out on the first mention.

Capitalize as *P-code* when it's the first word in a sentence.

Use only in content for a technical audience.

pen

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

per

Article • 06/24/2022

It's OK to use *per* to mean *for each* in statistical or technical contexts. In other contexts, use *a* or the phrase *for each* instead of *per*.

Examples

Customers who sign in only once a day are rare.

You can have only one drive letter per network resource.

Don't use *per* to mean *by* or *in accordance with*.

Examples

Find all the articles that contain a specific word by following the instructions on your screen.

Identify your computer by using the procedure in the next section.

percent, percentage

Article • 11/15/2023

Use the percent sign ("%) with numerals, rather than spelling out "percent." You don't need a space between the percent sign and the numeral.

Exceptions

- Don't use "%" to refer to the symbol itself—refer to the "percent sign."
- Don't use the percent sign at the beginning of a sentence.
- Don't use the percent sign to mean "percentage."

perimeter network

Article • 06/24/2022

On the first mention, use:

perimeter network (also known as *DMZ*, *demilitarized zone*, and *screened subnet*)

After that, just use *perimeter network*.

peripheral

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a noun. Use *peripheral device* or a more specific term instead.

See also [Computer and device term collection](#)

permissions

Article • 06/24/2022

Use only to refer to operations associated with a specific shared resource, such as a file, directory, or printer, that are authorized by the system administrator for individual user accounts or administrative groups. Permissions are *granted* or *assigned*, not *allowed*.

If you refer to a named permission, use title-style capitalization and regular type.

Don't use *privileges* or *permission records* as a synonym for *permissions*.

Examples

Setting the Traverse Folder permission on a folder doesn't automatically set the Execute File permission on all files within that folder.

Grant Read, Read and Execute, and List Folder Content permissions to the Users group. Whenever possible, assign permissions to groups instead of users.

See also [rights](#), [user rights](#)

personal digital assistant

Article • 03/27/2024

[See AI and bot term collection](#)

phone, phone number

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *telephone number*. Use *phone number* instead.

As a UI label, use *Phone*, not *Phone number*.

For information about referring to mobile phones, see [Computer and device term collection](#).

For information about how to format phone numbers, see [Numbers](#).

photo

Article • 06/24/2022

OK to use as an abbreviation for *photograph*. Don't use as a verb. Use *photograph* or *take pictures* instead.

pin, unpin

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *pin* to refer to placing an item, such as a tile, an app, or a command, in a given area of the UI, so it's always accessible in that area. Use *unpin* to describe removing a pinned item.

Examples

When you pin an app, it's added to the Start menu as a new tile.

Pin important messages to the top of the message list, and unpin them when you're done with them.

Pin apps to Start

1. Select the **Start**  button, and then select **All apps**.
2. Press and hold (or right-click) the app you want to pin.
3. Select **Pin to Start**.

pinch

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Touch and pen interaction term collection](#)

ping, PING

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *ping* to refer generally to searching for a program.

It's OK to use *ping* to refer to using the PING protocol, which is used to determine the presence of a host on the internet. Don't spell out PING. If necessary, describe it as Packet Internet Groper.

pipe

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a verb in content for a general audience. Use a more specific term, such as *send*, *move*, *copy*, *direct*, *redirect*, or *write*.

It's OK to use *pipe* as a verb in content for a technical audience to refer to routing data from the standard output of one process to the standard input of another.

The symbol for a pipe in programming content is a vertical bar (|).

See also [Special characters term collection](#)

placeholder

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a verb.

For information about formatting placeholders, see [Formatting text in instructions](#) and [Formatting developer text elements](#).

plaintext, plain text

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *plaintext* only to refer to nonencrypted or decrypted text in content about encryption. Use *plain text* to refer to ASCII files.

platform

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *in* content for a general audience.

It's OK to use *platform* in content for a technical audience when you need to distinguish differing behaviors of a function or other API element in various operating systems.

In content for a technical audience, use *cross-platform* to refer to an app or device that can run on more than one operating system.

Use *on* as a preposition with *platform* in discussions about hardware platforms: *on the Intel Atom platform*, for example, but *in Windows 10*.

See also [operating environment](#), [operating system](#)

platform as a service (PaaS)

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Cloud-computing term collection](#)

playlist

Article • 06/24/2022

One word. A customer *adds* media *to* a playlist and *deletes* media *from* a playlist.

please

Article • 06/24/2022

Avoid *please* except in situations where the customer is asked to do something inconvenient or the application or site is to blame for the situation.

Example

The network connection was lost. Please reenter your password.

Plug and Play, plug and play

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *Plug and Play* as a noun or an adjective to refer to a set of specifications developed by Intel for the automatic configuration of a computer so that it works with various peripheral devices. Note capitalization. Don't hyphenate.

It's OK to use all lowercase (*plug and play*) for all audiences to refer to the ability of a computer to automatically configure a device that's added to it.

Don't use as a synonym for *Universal Plug and Play* (UPnP).

Examples

Plug and Play functionality

Plug and Play printer

Plug and Play records the information in an event log.

See also [UPnP](#)

plug-in

Article • 06/24/2022

Hyphenate as a noun to describe a component that permits a specific browser to recognize and support the file format of an object embedded in an HTML document. Don't use as a synonym for *add-in* or *add-on*.

See also [add-in](#), [add-on](#)

plus sign (+)

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use the plus sign (+) to replace words like *and*, *over*, and *plus*.

Exception Where space is limited, like in UI or a headline, it's OK to use the plus sign to indicate a count that exceeds a certain number.

Examples

Microsoft Dynamics 365 and Office 365 are better together.

Choose from more than 750,000 apps in Microsoft Store.

999+ connections (in the UI)

See also [ampersand \(&\)](#)

point to

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Mouse and mouse interaction term collection](#)

pointer

Article • 06/24/2022

In a programming context, a pointer is a variable that contains a memory location. In the rare case where both types of pointers are discussed, use *mouse pointer* and *pointer variable* as necessary to avoid ambiguity.

[See Mouse and mouse interaction term collection](#)

pop-up

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a noun. For example, don't use *a pop-up*; use *a pop-up window* instead.

Don't use *pop up* or *pops up* as a verb to describe the appearance of a window. Use *open* or a similar verb instead.

It's OK to use *pop-up window* to refer to windows that pop up in Help. Don't use *pop-up window* as a synonym for *dialog*.

It's OK to use *pop-up menu* for a programming audience to describe the menu that appears when a customer right-clicks an item. If you must use a term to describe this type of menu in content for a general audience, use *shortcut menu*.

Examples

Answer the questions in the wizard as they appear.

Some commands carry out an action immediately. Others open a dialog so that you can select options.

A pop-up window gives additional information about an option.

If you want to print the information in a pop-up window, right-click the window, and then select **Print Topic**.

In the pop-up list, select **Microsoft Excel**.

See also [context menu](#), [shortcut](#), [shortcut menu](#)

port

Article • 06/24/2022

Use the verb forms *port to* and *port* only in content for a technical audience in reference to portability.

Don't use in content for a general audience.

postal code

Article • 06/24/2022

Unless you're writing content that's specifically for the United States, use *postal code* instead of *ZIP Code*.

See also [ZIP Code](#)

pound key, pound sign (#)

Article • 06/24/2022

See [Keys and keyboard shortcuts term collection](#) and [Special characters term collection](#)

power cord

Article • 03/27/2024

Use instead of *power cable*.

power down, power up, power off, power on

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. Use *turn off* and *turn on* instead. Don't use *shut down* to refer to turning off a device.

See also

[start, restart](#)

[shut down, shutdown](#)

[turn on, turn off](#)

power user

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to mean that someone must be an expert to use certain programs or features. Instead, identify the specific knowledge or skill that's required.

pre-

Article • 08/26/2024

In general, don't hyphenate words beginning with *pre-*, such as *preallocate* and *preempt*, unless it's necessary to avoid confusion, as in *pre-engineered*, or if *pre-* is followed by a proper noun, as in *pre-C++*. When in doubt, refer to [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#).

To learn more about hyphenation, see [Hyphens](#).

preceding

Article • 06/24/2022

It's OK to use *preceding*, *previous*, or *earlier* to mean earlier in a piece of content, but use a hyperlink instead if you can. Don't use *above*.

press, press and hold

Article • 06/24/2022

Use only to describe pushing a physical button on hardware.

See

[Describing interactions with UI](#)

[Touch and pen interaction term collection](#)

[Keys and keyboard shortcuts term collection](#)

preview

Article • 06/24/2022

Prerelease versions of software and services are typically identified as *Product Name Preview* (preferred) or *Code Name Preview*.

In generic references, lowercase *preview*.

Avoid using *beta* to refer to a prerelease product that's ready for unstructured testing by customers. Use *preview* instead.

Examples

Office 2016 Preview

Windows 10 Insider Preview

Microsoft Power BI Preview

A preview of Azure Container Service is available.

See also [sample vs. preview](#)

print, printout

Article • 06/24/2022

As a verb, use *print* instead of *print out*. It's OK to use *printout* as the result of a print job, if necessary, but try to be more specific.

print queue, printer queue

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. Use *list of documents* instead.

Examples

Your document will be sent to the printer.

Your file will be added to the list of documents waiting to be printed.

private cloud, hosted private cloud

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Cloud-computing term collection](#)

privileges

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a synonym for *permissions* or *rights*.

[See permissions, rights](#)

profile

Article • 03/27/2024

Lowercase unless you need to match the UI.

program

Article • 03/27/2024

[See app, application](#)

program file

Article • 06/24/2022

It's OK to use *program file* as an alternative to *executable file* in content for a general audience. If possible, use the specific name of the file instead.

Don't use *app file* or *application file*.

prompt, prompting

Article • 07/09/2024

The process of instructing an AI to do a task is called *prompting*. We tell the AI a set of instructions (the prompt) and it performs the task. Prompts can be as simple as a question, or as complex as context, instructions, and multiple examples. Prompts can contain prompts, sometimes referred to as prompt chaining.

Guidelines

Focus on outcomes: Tell the user how to describe what they want to achieve their desired results, and include clear, relevant examples.

Avoid using *prompt* as a noun within product UI, as in "Write your prompt." Instead, use request as in "Try a different request."

Avoid using *prompt* as a noun phrase, as in "prompt field."

Do not use *prompt* as a verb, as in "Then prompt Copilot to write your reply."

Learn prompting

If you want quality outputs, you need fine-tuned prompts. To start becoming a prompting pro, check out this [prompt crafting guide](#) (for marketing content) from Writer.com. Additional guidance we like:

[Prompts for communicators using the new AI-powered Bing - The Official Microsoft Blog](#)

[LearnPrompting.org](#)

[Resources to learn prompting](#)

See also [command prompt](#)

prop

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't use as an abbreviation for *propagate*.

property

Article • 06/24/2022

Use only to reference something named in the UI as a property.

property sheet, property page

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use in content for a general audience. Use *dialog box* or *tab* instead.

protected mode

Article • 03/27/2024

Use instead of *protect mode*.

public cloud

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Cloud-computing term collection](#)

pull down, pull-down

Article • 06/24/2022

In general, avoid talking about UI. Instead, describe what the customer needs to do.

Don't use *pull down* as a verb to describe how to use a menu or list. Don't use *pull-down* as an adjective to describe the appearance of a menu or list.

Examples

In the **Background** list, select **Solid color**.

Go to **Tools**, and select **Change language**.

See also

[dropdown](#)

[Describing interactions with UI](#)

[Formatting text in instructions](#)

purge

Article • 06/24/2022

Use only in the context of a programming term, such as the `Purge` method. Otherwise, use *delete*, *clear*, or *remove* instead.

push button, push-button

Article • 06/24/2022

Two words. Hyphenate as an adjective.

Don't use as a synonym for *button* or *command button*. In content for developers, it's OK to use *push button* parenthetically or to describe programming elements such as the `PushButton` class.

See also [command button](#)

quality, high-quality

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *quality* by itself as an adjective. Always use *high-quality*.

quit

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *quit* to refer to any of the following:

- Closing an app or a program. Use *close* instead.
- Closing a document or window. Use *close* instead.
- The action a program takes to close itself when it has encountered a problem and can't continue. Use *close* instead.
- Ending a session on a computer or network. Use *sign out* instead.
- Ending a network connection. Use *end* instead.

Use *stop responding*, not *quit*, when an app encounters a problem and can't close itself.

radio button

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *radio button* only in content for developers in which the API includes the term. In that case, use wording such as `<name> option button` (also known as a *radio button*).

In other content, refer to a radio button by its label. If you must provide a descriptor, use *option*. Capitalize the label text as it appears in the UI, but don't capitalize the word *option*.

See also

[option, option button](#)

[Describing interactions with UI](#)

[Formatting text in instructions](#)

ragged right

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. Use *left-aligned* to describe text with an uneven right edge.

See [left align](#), [left-aligned](#)

RAM

Article • 03/27/2024

[See memory](#)

range selection

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. In content for a general audience, use a phrase such as *a range of cells* or *a range of dates* to refer to a selection of adjoining cells, dates, or other items.

Use the same type of phrasing in content for a technical audience, but if you're describing the feature, use *adjacent selection*.

Use *multiple selection* to describe selecting more than one nonadjacent item.

re-

Article • 08/26/2024

In general, don't hyphenate words beginning with *re-* unless it's necessary to avoid confusion or *re-* is followed by a proper noun. When in doubt, refer to [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#).

Examples

reenter

recover (to get back or regain)

re-cover (to cover again)

recreate (to take part in a recreational activity)

re-create (to create anew)

To learn more about hyphenation, see [Hyphens](#).

read-only

Article • 06/24/2022

Always hyphenate.

Examples

read-only memory

This file is read-only.

See also [read/write](#), [read/write permissions](#)

read/write, read/write permission

Article • 06/24/2022

Use instead of *read-write*. Capitalize both *read* and *write* if the context requires *read* to be capitalized.

Use *read/write permission*, not *read/write access*.

real time, real-time

Article • 06/24/2022

Two words. Hyphenate as an adjective.

Examples

Real-time reporting helps your staff identify and resolve problems before they become major.

Use instant messaging to communicate with coworkers in real time.

reboot

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. Use *restart* instead, and be clear that *restart* in this context refers to the device, not to a program or an app.

Example

After Setup is complete, restart your computer.

If the UI or API uses *reboot* in a label or an element name, it's OK to refer to the label or element name, but use *restart* to describe the action or event that occurs.

Example

The **Reboot** method shuts down the device and then restarts it.

recommend

Article • 06/24/2022

It's OK to use *we recommend* to introduce a Microsoft recommendation. Don't use *Microsoft recommends* or *it is recommended*.

Don't use *recommend* when something is required.

Examples

Windows 10 requires 16 GB of hard drive space for 32-bit OS and 20 GB for 64-bit OS. Small storage devices, like devices with 32-GB hard drives or older devices with full hard drives, might require additional storage to complete the upgrade. If you have limited hard drive space available, we recommend that you have a USB flash drive handy when you install Windows 10.

See also [should vs. must](#)

Recycle Bin, recycle bin

Article • 06/24/2022

Capitalize both words when referring to the *Recycle Bin* on the Windows desktop.

Lowercase when referring to the *recycle bin* in OneDrive.

In UI, it's OK to use *Recycle bin* for labels and headings.

Always use the definite article *the*, as in *the recycle bin*.

refresh

Article • 06/24/2022

Use to describe updating a webpage.

Don't use *refresh* to describe an image being restored on the screen or data being updated. Use *redraw* or *update* instead.

registry, registry settings

Article • 06/24/2022

Use lowercase for the word *registry* except when referring to a named system component, such as the Registry Editor.

Use all uppercase letters for the first-level subtrees, separating words with underscore characters. Registry subtrees are usually bold.

Examples

HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT

HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE

Keys are developer defined and are usually all uppercase or a mix of uppercase and lowercase characters, with no underscores. Subkeys are usually a mix of uppercase and lowercase characters.

Examples

SOFTWARE

ApplicationIdentifier

CurrentVersion

Refer to an entire subkey path as a *subkey*, not a *path*.

Example

(typical subkey)

\HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Policies\Microsoft\SystemCertificates\AuthRoot

In a subkey, use *entries* to describe the items in the **Name** column. Use *values* to describe the items in the **Data** column.

See also [Formatting developer text elements](#)

reinitialize

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to mean *restart*.

See also [initialize](#), [start](#), [restart](#)

relationship chatbot

Article • 03/27/2024

[See AI and bot term collection](#)

REM statement

Article • 06/24/2022

OK to use as an abbreviation for *remark statement* in Visual Basic and some other programs.

Don't use generically to refer to a comment. Use *comment* instead.

remote

Article • 06/24/2022

It's OK to use *remote* as an adjective to describe a person or computer at another site.

Don't use *remote drive* to describe a drive on a remote computer. Use *network drive* instead.

Don't use *remote* as a verb.

Don't use *remote* as a noun except to refer to a remote-control device.

remove

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *remove* to mean *delete*.

Use *remove*:

- To describe taking an item off a list in a dialog box that has **Add** and **Remove** buttons.
- To describe taking a toolbar button off a toolbar or hiding displayed data, such as columns in a spreadsheet, without deleting the data.
- As a synonym for *unload*.
- As a verb to describe removing add-ins and add-ons.

See also [uninstall](#), [delete](#), [load](#)

replace

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *replace* as a noun.

Examples

To replace all instances of a word or phrase at one time

The **Replace** method replaces text found in a regular expression search.

Use *replace* instead of *overwrite*.

Examples

Replace the selected text with the new text.

Replace the file with the changed file.

See also [find and replace](#)

restart

Article • 06/24/2022

Use to describe closing and reopening a program or app or turning a device off and then immediately back on. Make it clear which of these you're talking about.

restore

Article • 06/24/2022

Use as a verb instead of *undelete* to describe restoring an item that was deleted.

Use as a verb to describe restoring an item or condition to its previous state, such as a window that was previously maximized or minimized.

Don't use as an adjective or as a noun in content for a general audience unless you need to match the UI.

Examples

Restore the file.

Restore the window to its minimized state.

For more information about System Restore

For content about SQL Server:

- Use *restore* to describe restoring a series of one or more database backups.
- Use *restore* as an adjective only when necessary.

Examples

Under the full recovery model, first restore one or more data backups, and then restore the subsequent log backups to roll the database forward in time.

Restore the database.

Use the RESTORE statement to specify the restore operation.

reverse video

Article • 06/24/2022

Use instead of *inverse video*, *invert video*, or *reverse screen* to describe the displaying of inverted background and text colors. Use *highlighted* to refer to the appearance.

right, rightmost, right-hand

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *right* as a directional term by itself. Instead, use a term such as *upper right*, *lower right*, *rightmost*, or *the right side of*. Include a hyphen when you use *right* to modify a noun, as in *upper-right corner*. Don't use *right-hand* as a modifier.

Accessibility tip Don't use directional terms (*left*, *right*, *up*, *down*) as the only clue to location. Individuals with cognitive disabilities might have difficulty interpreting them, as might people who are blind and use screen-reading software. It's OK to use a directional term if another indication of location, such as *in the Save As dialog box*, *on the Standard toolbar*, or *in the title bar*, is also included. Directional terms are also OK to use when a sighted user with dyslexia can clearly see a change in the interface as the result of an action, such as a change in the right pane when an option in the left pane is selected.

right align, right-aligned

Article • 06/24/2022

Use to refer to text that's aligned at the right margin. Always hyphenate *right-aligned*. Don't use *right-justified*.

See also [justify](#), [justified](#), [left align](#), [left-aligned](#)

right justify, right-justified

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. Use *right-aligned* instead.

See [right align, right aligned](#)

right mouse button

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Mouse and mouse interaction term collection](#)

right-click

Article • 06/24/2022

Use only when you need to talk specifically about mouse actions. Define in content that teaches beginning skills if you think it's necessary.

Use *select and hold* (or *right-click*) when the instruction isn't specific to the mouse.

Hyphenate.

Examples

Right-click to select the file.

Using the right mouse button (right-click)

Select and hold (or right-click) the Windows taskbar, and then select **Cascade windows**.

[See Describing interactions with UI, Mouse and mouse interaction term collection](#)

rights

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *rights* only in a nonspecific way to refer to system actions that are authorized by the system administrator. For specific references, use *user rights*.

Don't confuse *rights*, which apply to system operations, with *permissions*, which apply to specific system resources, such as files or printers.

Don't use *privileges* as a synonym for *rights*.

Example

Domain administrators should use a primary user account, which has basic user rights in the domain.

See also [permissions](#), [user rights](#)

ROM

Article • 03/27/2024

[See memory](#)

Roman

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to describe type that's neither bold nor italic. Use *regular type* instead.

root directory

Article • 06/24/2022

In content for developers, use *root directory*, not *home directory*, to refer to the directory or folder from which all other directories or folders branch. In Windows, the root directory is indicated by a backslash (\). Don't shorten to *root* when you mean the directory.

In other content, use *top-level folder*.

Example

Change to the root directory, and enter the following command: **edit autoexec.bat**

See also [top-level folder](#)

rotate

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Touch and pen interaction term collection](#)

run vs. execute

Article • 06/24/2022

Avoid *execute* except to follow the UI. Use *run* instead. If the UI includes *execute*, the resulting action is still *run*.

Always use *run* in the context of operating systems, macros, and queries.

Examples

To run the program, select **Execute**.

Commands are run in the order in which they're listed in the file.

running foot, running head

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. Use *footer* and *header* instead. If you think your audience might search for these terms, use *also known as running foot and running head* on the first mention.

runs vs. runs on

Article • 06/24/2022

Avoid *run* for a general audience. For a technical audience, use *run* to refer to an operating system and *run on* to refer to a program.

Examples

To install Exchange 2016, your computer must be running the full installation of Windows Server.

Office 2016 runs on the following versions of Windows: Windows Server 2008 R2, Windows Server 2012, Windows Server 2012 R2, Windows Server 10, Windows 7 Service Pack 1, Windows 8, Windows 8.1, Windows 10.

runtime

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *runtime*:

- To indicate an environment required to run apps that aren't compiled to machine language.
- To indicate the time during which an application is running.
- As an adjective to describe a thing that's occurring or relevant at runtime.

Don't use *runtime* as a synonym for reader programs, such as Microsoft Office file viewers.

(s), (es)

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't add (s) or (es) to a singular noun to indicate that it can be singular or plural. Most of the time, use plural instead. If it's important to indicate both, use *one or more*.

Examples

To add rows or columns to a table,

To add one or more rows or columns to a table,

See also [Nouns](#)

sample vs. preview

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *sample* to describe a graphic representation of something that might show up on the screen. Use *preview* to describe a graphic representation of exactly what the customer will see on the screen.

Examples

This displays a sample of what the control will look like with the scheme applied. To preview what the control will look like with the scheme applied, select **Preview**.

See also [preview](#)

save

Article • 06/24/2022

Use as a verb to describe saving app installation files to a device and saving files to a local drive or share.

scan line

Article • 06/24/2022

Two words when referring to either the row of pixels read by a scanning device or one of the horizontal lines on a display.

screen

Article • 06/24/2022

Use instead of *screenful* or *full screen*.

Exception It's OK to say that a program or app is running in *full-screen mode*.

It's OK to use *screen* in instructions to describe what customers see on the screen or how they interact with it.

See also [Computer and device term collection](#)

screen resolution

Article • 06/24/2022

For screen resolutions, use *number × number* instead of *number by number*. For example, use 640×480 instead of 640 by 480 .

Use the multiplication sign (\times) instead of the letter x .

screened subnet

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. Use *perimeter network* instead. On the first mention, it's OK to say:

perimeter network (also known as *DMZ*, *demilitarized zone*, and *screened subnet*)

screenshot

Article • 03/27/2024

One word.

script, scriptlet

Article • 06/24/2022

Avoid *scriptlet*. Most of the time, use *script* or a more specific term.

It's OK to use *scriptlet* when necessary to refer to a specific component in COM, a section of embedded code, or a small script.

scroll

Article • 06/24/2022

Avoid. Use a verb phrase such as *move through* instead, if the context is clear.

It's OK to use *scroll* in content that teaches beginning skills to describe interacting with a document by using a mouse, keyboard, or other peripheral device.

Examples

Move through the folder until you see the file you want.

Move the wheel button on the Microsoft Arc Touch Mouse to scroll up and down in a document.

scroll bar, scroll arrow, scroll box

Article • 06/24/2022

Most of the time, avoid talking about elements in UI. Instead, describe what the customer needs to do.

Don't use *arrow* to refer to a *scroll arrow*.

Don't use *slider* or *slider box* as a synonym for *scroll box*.

Don't use *gray* or *shaded area* to refer to the *scroll bar*.

search, search and replace

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *search and replace* to describe finding and replacing things in a document or other location. Use *find* and *replace* instead.

Use *search* and *replace* as verbs, not as nouns or adjectives.

Example

Search your document.

See also [find and replace](#)

search box

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't capitalize unless you need to match the UI.

secondary menu

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use in content for a general audience. If it's important to describe how the menu works, use *submenu*.

In content for developers, use only in content about creating menus and only if you can't use *submenu*.

see, see also, and similar phrases

Article • 02/26/2024

Phrases like *see*, *see also*, *view*, *view all*, and *watch it later* are fine to use from an inclusive design perspective, as long as they're being used in contexts that otherwise support accessibility. The problem is when we use that language and then fail to provide a way for the person to consume the content.

See [Accessibility guidelines and requirements](#) for more information about creating products and content that are accessible to people of all abilities.

select

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *select* to refer to marking text, objects, cells, and other items that a customer will take action on, such as copying or moving. Describe the marked items as *the selection* or *the selected* text, objects, cells, and so on.

Don't use *highlight* or *pick* as a synonym for *select*.

For information about using *select* as a verb in instructions and procedures, see

[Describing interactions with UI](#).

server

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

service-level agreement (SLA)

Article • 06/24/2022

Spell out on the first mention. Use lowercase for the spelled-out term, and note the hyphen. Use *an* not *a* with the acronym.

Examples

A service-level agreement (SLA) is an agreement between a service company and a service customer. An SLA defines for both the company and the customer when a service job should be completed.

service-oriented architecture (SOA)

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Cloud-computing term collection](#)

set, specify

Article • 06/24/2022

Avoid generic terms such as *set* and *specify* to describe customer actions. Try to use more specific verbs.

Examples

Select a color for an appointment or a meeting.

Enter a location for **Tab stop position**.

Don't use *set* to indicate entering or selecting a value in a dialog box or other UI element.

It's OK to use *set* in content for developers to describe entering or selecting the value of a property.

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#)

set up, setup, Setup

Article • 06/24/2022

Use as a verb to describe the process of preparing hardware and installed apps for initial use. Two words as a verb, one word as an adjective and a noun. Don't hyphenate.

Capitalize *Setup* when it refers to the Setup program.

Examples

Unpack everything before you set up your computer.

The setup time is about 15 minutes.

Your office setup should be ergonomically designed.

Run Setup before you open other apps.

setting, value

Article • 06/24/2022

Avoid generic nouns, such as *setting* or *value*, in content for a general audience. Use a specific noun, such as *width*, *color*, or *font*, instead.

Examples

Select a color for an appointment or a meeting.

Enter a location for **Tab stop position**.

It's OK to use *settings* or *values* occasionally when you need to talk generally about more than one. Don't use *attributes* or *properties* as a synonym.

set-top box

Article • 03/27/2024

Note hyphen. Don't abbreviate.

shaded

Article • 06/24/2022

Most of the time, talk about the actions that customers should take.

Don't use to describe commands or options that are in an unusable state—use *not available* or *isn't available* instead. If you must describe their appearance, use *appears dimmed*.

It's OK to use *shaded* to describe the appearance of checkboxes that represent a mixture of settings.

Examples

The command isn't available until you select text.

If the option appears dimmed, it's not available.

Selected effects appear shaded.

See also [unavailable](#)

shell

Article • 06/24/2022

OK to use as a noun in content for a technical audience. Don't use in content for a general audience.

Don't use as a verb, such as *shell* or *shell out*. Use more precise terminology, such as *create a new shell* or *return to the operating system*.

ship

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to refer to making products or services available to customers. Use *release* instead.

Example

Windows 10 was released in July 2015.

shortcut, shortcut menu

Article • 06/24/2022

Shortcut is one word as an adjective or a noun. Don't use as a verb. Don't use as a synonym for *link*.

Use *shortcut menu* only if it helps the customer locate the item in the UI. Most of the time, just describe what the customer needs to do.

Examples

Use **Alt+Spacebar** to display the shortcut menu for the active window.

Right-click the selected text, and then select **Copy**.

Select the text, open the shortcut menu, and then select **Copy**.

See also

[Describing interactions with UI](#)

[Keys and keyboard shortcuts term collection](#)

[pop-up](#)

should vs. must

Article • 06/24/2022

Before using *should* or *must*, consider other ways to discuss recommendations or requirements, such as the imperative mood for required actions and a phrase such as *we recommend* for optional ones. Don't use *Microsoft recommends* or *it is recommended*. Be careful to make your tone helpful, not bossy. (For information about the imperative mood, see [Verbs](#).)

Examples

You'll need an internet connection to install the upgrade.

We recommend that you wait for us to notify you when we've confirmed that your PC is ready.

Free technical support is available when you register with Microsoft.

Use *should* only to describe an action that's recommended but optional. Don't use *should* to indicate probability. If you can't make a definitive statement, use *might* or rephrase.

Examples

You should back up your data periodically.

If you don't use automatic updating, you should check for updates yourself at least once every week.

If the antimalware app is compatible and current, it will be preserved during the upgrade.

Use *must* only to describe a required action.

Example

To save copies of a document in the same location, you must save each copy with a different file name.

shut down, shutdown

Article • 06/24/2022

Two words as a verb, one word as a noun.

Use *shut down* to describe exiting the operating system and turning off the device in a single action.

Don't use *shut down* to describe turning off a device or as a synonym for *close*.

Examples

To turn off your computer, select **Settings**, and then select **Shut down**.

Use the **Shutdown** command to safely close open apps, shut down Windows, and turn off the device.

Many computers turn the power off automatically.

The accidental shutdown might have damaged some files.

See also

[Describing interactions with UI](#)

[turn on, turn off](#)

[sleep](#)

sign in, sign out

Article • 10/26/2022

Use *sign in* to describe starting a session on a computer, a device, a network, an app, or anywhere a username and password are required. Use *sign out* to refer to ending a session.

Don't use *log in*, *login*, *log into*, *log on*, *logon*, *log onto*, *log off*, *log out*, *logout*, *sign into*, *signin*, *signoff*, *sign off*, or *sign on* unless these terms appear in the UI (and you're writing instructions).

The verb form is two words, *sign in* or *sign out*. Avoid using as a noun or adjective (*sign-in*, *sign-out*). Instead, use a more descriptive or precise term.

Examples

Enter your password to sign in.

Learn how to sign in to Power BI service on the web and how to sign out of it.

After an extended period without activity, the network will sign you out automatically.

See also [connect](#), [single sign-on \(SSO\)](#)

simply

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to mean that something is easy to do.

Examples

To publish your files to the web, select **Publish to the web**.

When you see a clip that you like, drag it into your document.

single sign-on (SSO)

Article • 06/24/2022

Spell out on the first mention, and lowercase the spelled-out term. Note hyphen.

See also [sign in](#), [sign out](#)

site

Article • 06/24/2022

Use to describe a collection of webpages that's part of a larger whole, such as the Microsoft website or the MSDN website. Use *website* instead of *site* if necessary for clarity.

Information is *on* a site, but the address of a site is *at* www.example.com.

See also [page, URLs and web addresses](#)

site map

Article • 03/27/2024

Two words.

size, resize

Article • 06/24/2022

It's OK to use *size* as a verb, as in *size the window*.

Use *resize* to mean *change the size of*.

sleep

Article • 06/24/2022

Use to describe putting a device into a power-saving state without shutting it down.

See also [shut down](#), [shutdown](#)

slider

Article • 06/24/2022

In general, avoid talking about UI elements. Most of the time, just describe what the customer needs to do.

In content for a general audience, it's OK to use *slider* when you need to describe the UI element used to set a value on a continuous range of possible values, such as screen brightness, mouse-click speed, or volume.



In content for developers, it's OK to refer to a slider as a *trackbar control*.

Don't refer to the scroll box or a progress indicator as a slider.

Example

Move the slider downward to decrease the volume.

slideshow

Article • 06/24/2022

One word unless you need to match the UI. Don't use *carousel* as a synonym.

small caps

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use small caps for key names or for *AM* and *PM*.

It's OK to use the term *small caps*. If necessary for clarity, refer to them as *small capitals* on the first mention, followed by a phrase such as, "often referred to as *small caps*."

smart card, Smart Card

Article • 06/24/2022

Two words. Use lowercase for generic references to smart cards or smart card technology.

Capitalize as part of proper nouns, such as *Lenovo Integrated Smart Card Reader*, but not in general references to smart card implementations.

smartphone

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

SMB

Article • 06/24/2022

Avoid using the acronym *SMB*. Use *small or medium-sized business* instead.

snap-in

Article • 06/24/2022

Always hyphenate. Use only to describe a program that runs in Microsoft Management Console.

social chatbot

Article • 03/27/2024

[See AI and bot term collection](#)

soft copy

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. Use a more specific term, such as *electronic document* or *file*, instead.

software as a service (SaaS)

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Cloud-computing term collection](#)

software-plus-services

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't use.

[See Cloud-computing term collection](#)

Sorry

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *sorry* (and similar wording) only in error messages that notify the customer about a serious problem or one that they might find very frustrating, such as:

- Data is lost.
- The customer can't continue to use the device, service, or application.
- The customer must get help from a support representative.
- A product or service fails.

Error messages should apologize only for things that went wrong with the Microsoft product. Don't apologize for problems that are outside the product, such as a broken link or waiting for a network connection to be found. Consider *Oops* or *Hmm* instead.

Examples

We're sorry, but we detected a problem, and your PC was shut down to protect your files and other data.

Sorry, the service isn't available right now.

This task couldn't be completed. Please try again.

You're not connected. Let's get you back online.

Hmm ... can't reach this page

Oops ... this page didn't load properly.

Let's try this again.

spam

Article • 06/24/2022

Lowercase.

Use *spam* only to refer to unsolicited commercial email.

Don't use to refer generally to commercial email, such as bulk email sent to a customer list. Don't use to refer to an inappropriate posting to a large distribution list.

Don't use *spam* as a verb.

specification

Article • 03/27/2024

Always spell out. Don't use *spec*.

spell checker

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *spell checker* as a general term for a tool that checks spelling. To refer to a specific tool, use the name that appears in the UI.

Use *check spelling* as a verb.

Don't use *spell check* as a noun.

Examples

Use the Spelling and Grammar tool to check spelling in the document.

Check the spelling in the document.

Use a spell checker to find spelling errors in your document.

spin box

Article • 06/24/2022

It's OK to use *spin box* in content for a technical audience to describe a control that users can use to move, or spin, through a fixed set of values, such as dates.



For a general audience, just discuss what the customer needs to do. If you need to refer to the control, refer to a spin box by its label.

Example

the **Start time** box

split bar, split box

Article • 06/24/2022



It's OK to use *split bar* and *split box* in content for all audiences.

spoofing

Article • 06/24/2022

It's OK to use *spoofing* in content for all audiences if you're sure that your audience will understand the meaning. To avoid ambiguity, be specific about the kind of spoofing you're referring to, such as *email spoofing* or *IP spoofing*.

spreadsheet vs. workbook

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *spreadsheet* to refer to an accounting app, such as Microsoft Excel. Use *workbook* to refer to the file produced using a spreadsheet app.

spyware

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Security term collection](#)

SQL, SQL Server

Article • 06/24/2022

When you're referring to a computer that's running Microsoft SQL Server, use *a computer running SQL Server* or *a computer that's running SQL Server*. (Note the capital S in *Server*.)

When you're referring to Structured Query Language as *SQL*, treat *SQL* as an acronym pronounced "sequel" and use the indefinite article *a*: *a SQL database*.

Examples

Connect Power BI to an external data source, such as a SQL database.

Review installation requirements, system configuration checks, and security considerations for a SQL Server installation.

start, restart

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *start* to describe selecting a program or app to open it. Use *open* instead.

Use *restart* to describe closing and reopening a program or app or turning a device off and then immediately back on.

See also [Describing interactions with UI, turn on, turn off](#)

Start button, Start menu

Article • 06/24/2022

Capitalize references to the Start menu and the Start button on the Windows taskbar. Don't use bold formatting for *Start* unless you're referring to the menu or button in instructions.

Don't refer to the Start button as the *Windows Start button*.

Don't include the word *button* unless it's necessary for clarity. If you do, *button* is lowercase.

If possible, to help customers locate the button, include the Start graphic  in references to the Start button.

Example

You'll find the Start  button on the taskbar.

start page

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to refer to the main page of a website or the page a browser displays upon opening. Use *home page* instead.

See also [home](#), [home page](#)

start up, startup

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *start up* as a verb. Use *start* instead.

Note Use *open*, not *start*, to describe selecting a program or app from the Start menu to open it.

Don't use *on startup* or similar noun phrases in content for a general audience. It's OK to use *on startup* in content for a technical audience.

It's OK to use *startup* as an adjective in phrases such as *startup screen*.

Examples

To open the app, select the icon.

When the app opens, a startup screen appears.

Open OneNote and start taking notes.

See also [Start button](#), [Start menu](#)

status bar

Article • 06/24/2022

Use instead of *status line* or *message area* to refer to the area at the bottom of a document window that shows the status of a document and other information, such as the meaning of a command. Messages appear *on*, not *in*, the status bar.



Example

The page number is displayed on the status bar.

stop, stop responding

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *stop* to mean *exit a program*. It's OK to use *stop* for hardware operations.

Use *stop responding* only when a program encounters a problem and can't close itself.

Use *close* to describe the action a program takes to close itself when it has encountered a problem and can't continue.

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#)

storage, storage device

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *storage* to refer to available space on a disk. Use *disk space* instead.

It's OK to use *storage device* to refer generally to external drives, USB drives, and other types of storage hardware.

store, marketplace, gallery

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *store*, not *marketplace*, *gallery*, or another word, to refer to any Microsoft online shopping site—whether all products, services, and items are from Microsoft only or from partners as well. Examples: Microsoft Store, Microsoft Store for Business.

In an online store (either in a product experience or the web), avoid including *by* in the publisher line. For example, use *Microsoft*, not *by Microsoft*. If you must include *by*, lowercase it.

See also [Microsoft Store](#)

stream, streaming

Article • 06/24/2022

OK to use as a noun or verb to refer to audio, video, or graphics coming to a browser or media player over the internet. *Stream* is also OK to use as an I/O management term in C programming.

stretch

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Touch and pen interaction term collection](#)

struct, structure

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *struct* in text to refer to a data structure identified by the **struct** language keyword. Use *structure* instead.

style sheet

Article • 06/24/2022

Two words. Use to refer to a file of instructions for formatting a document or to a list of words and phrases and how they're used or spelled in a particular document.

In XML context, use *style sheet* to refer to an .xsl file. Use *Extensible Stylesheet Language* (or its abbreviation, *XSL*, if the term is familiar to your audience) to refer to the related technology.

See also [Cascading Style Sheets \(CSS\)](#)

sub-

Article • 08/26/2024

In general, don't hyphenate words beginning with *sub-*, such as *subheading* and *subsection*, unless it's necessary to avoid confusion or if *sub-* is followed by a proper noun, as in *sub-Saharan*. When in doubt, check [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#).

To learn more about hyphenation, see [Hyphens](#).

subaddress

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to refer to parts of an address that go to a specific place in a file, such as a bookmark. Use a more specific term.

subclass

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a verb. Use a common verb, such as *create a subclass*, instead.

surf

Article • 06/24/2022

OK to use in informal contexts to describe a more random browsing than the less informal *browse* implies.

swipe

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Touch and pen interaction term collection](#)

switch

Article • 06/24/2022

As a verb, use instead of *activate* or *toggle*.

Example

Use **Alt+Tab** to switch between open windows.

In content for a technical audience, it's OK to use *switch* as a noun to refer to command-line and compiler options, such as `/Za`.

See also [turn on](#), [turn off](#)

symbol

Article • 06/24/2022

Use to refer to a graphic or special character that represents something else, but differentiate a symbol from an icon. (An icon represents an object the customer can select and open. A symbol can appear on an icon.)

Follow these guidelines when discussing symbols:

- Write out the name of the symbol in text and, if the symbol itself is important, enclose the symbol in parentheses. Use a symbol by itself only in tables and lists where space is limited or in mathematical expressions.

Examples

Enter a backslash (\) to return to the previous directory.

Only 75 percent of the students attended.

- For UI elements, such as buttons, you can use a graphic of the button by itself after it has been named once or if selecting it displays a definition.

Examples

Select the **Minimize** button ().

Select  .

- Write out the plurals of symbols, showing the use in parentheses. Don't add s or 's to a symbol.

Example

Enter two backslashes (\\\) to show a network connection.

- Don't insert a space between a number and the symbol it modifies.

Examples

75%

<100

See also [Special character term collection](#), [Keys and keyboard shortcuts term collection](#)

sync

Article • 06/24/2022

Sync, not synchronize, a file, folder, or library to a local drive, a SharePoint drive, a server, or the cloud.

system administrator

Article • 03/27/2024

[See administrator, admin](#)

system prompt

Article • 03/27/2024

[See command prompt](#)

system software

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *system software* (singular) instead of *systems software* (plural).

system tray

Article • 12/22/2023

In Windows 11, use to refer to the area on the taskbar where the clock and system notifications appear.

In earlier versions of Windows, this UI element was referred to as the *notification area*.

See also [notification area](#)

tab

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a verb.

As a noun, use only to refer to tabs on a ribbon, a webpage, in a dialog box, and so on.

For other uses, clarify the meaning with a descriptor, such as *the Tab key*, *a tab stop*, or *a tab mark on the ruler*.

Examples

Use the **Tab** key to move through a dialog box.

Set a tab stop on the ruler.

On the **View** tab

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#), [Formatting text in instructions](#)

table of contents

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *Table of contents* as the heading for the list of contents at the beginning of a document or file. Use just *Contents* instead.

It's OK to refer generically to a *table of contents*.

Don't use to describe on-screen navigation.

tablet

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

tap, double-tap, tap and hold

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Touch and pen interaction term collection](#)

target drive, target file

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use. Refer to the specific drive, folder, or file instead. If the concept of *target* is important to the discussion, use *destination drive* or *destination file* instead.

Examples

Set your phone to automatically save photos and videos to Microsoft OneDrive.

By default, the file is saved to the Scanned documents folder.

Copy the file to the USB drive.

taskbar

Article • 03/27/2024

One word.

terabyte, TB

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Bits and bytes term collection](#)

terminate

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a synonym for *close* or *exit*.

In content for a technical audience, it's OK to use *terminate* in phrases such as *null-terminated string* or *terminate a process*.

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#)

text, text message

Article • 06/24/2022

Use as an adjective, a noun, or a verb in the context of SMS messages. Use *text message* and *send* or *receive a text message*, if necessary, to avoid ambiguity.

Use *text* or *text message* rather than *SMS* (short message service) or *MMS* (multimedia messaging service) for the US audience. For markets where SMS may be the more common usage, localization teams will use the appropriate term.

Global tip In some languages, *text* is translated differently as a noun and a verb. Provide enough context for localization to determine how to translate *text*. For example, instead of *text a friend*, say *send a text to a friend* or *text a quick message to a friend*.

See also [message](#)

text box

Article • 06/24/2022

Refer to a box in which the user enters text only by its label. If you must use a descriptor, use *box*. Don't use *field* or *entry field*, except in content about database programs.

Examples

File name box

Enter or update an email address for **Work email**.

In content for developers, it's OK to use *text box* in content about designing and developing the UI.

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#), [Formatting text in instructions](#)

thanks, thank you

Article • 06/24/2022

In general, use *thanks* not *thank you*. It's OK to use *thank you* in content that has a formal tone or is about a serious subject, such as cybersecurity or privacy.

Don't use *thanks* unnecessarily. Use *thanks* as the closing in email, a letter, or a similar message. Otherwise, thank the customer only when they've been inconvenienced or they went out of their way to do something.

Examples

Thanks for your feedback.

Microsoft offers a 10 percent military discount as a way to say thank you for your service.

that vs. which

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *that* at the beginning of a clause that's necessary for the sentence to make sense. Don't put a comma before *that*.

Global tip Include *that* even if the sentence is clear without it. It helps to clarify the sentence structure.

Use *which* at the beginning of a clause that adds supporting or parenthetical information. If you can omit the clause and the sentence still makes sense, use *which*, and put a comma before it.

Examples

To learn more about features that aren't supported in the trial version, see the feature comparison chart.

Catch the latest episode of "This Week on Windows," which looks at the new Surface Book and more.

The comparison chart shows which features aren't supported in the trial version.

Don't use *that* or *which* in clauses that refer to a person. Use *who* instead.

See also [who vs. that](#)

thousand, K

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Numbers](#)

tile, Live Tile

Article • 06/24/2022

Lowercase *tile* in general references to the shortcuts on the Start menu that customers can move around. These can be static, live, or content tiles.

Capitalize *Live Tile* to describe the feature and in marketing materials.

time out, time-out

Article • 06/24/2022

Always hyphenate as an adjective or a noun. Don't hyphenate as a verb phrase, such as *the connection timed out*.

time stamp

Article • 03/27/2024

Two words.

toast

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to refer to a notification triggered by an app or the operating system that's displayed in a pop-up notification. Use *notification* instead.

to-do

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *to-do* as a noun. Always hyphenate as an adjective. Don't capitalize.

Examples

items on your to-do list

Here's what you need to do.

toggle

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a verb. Instead, use *switch*, *turn on*, or *turn off* with the name of the toggle or command to describe what the customer must do.

OK to use as a noun or an adjective, as in *toggle key* or *toggle switch*. A toggle turns a particular mode on or off.

When you must refer to a toggle by name, use bold formatting for the name of the toggle. Use sentence-style capitalization unless you need to match the UI. Include the word *toggle* if it adds needed clarity.

Examples

Use the **Caps lock** key to switch from typing capital letters to typing lowercase letters.

To switch between Normal, Outline, and Slide Sorter views, use the buttons on the **View** tab.

To make text and apps easier to see, turn on the toggle under **Turn on high contrast**.

To keep all applied filters, turn on the **Pass all filters** toggle.

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#), [Formatting text in instructions](#)

tone

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to refer to a beeping sound. Use *beep* instead.

It's OK to use *tone* in other contexts dealing with sound, such as a *dial tone* or a *tone* coming from a speaker.

tool

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *tool*, not *utility*, to describe a feature that helps customers accomplish tasks.

See also

[add-in, add-on](#)

[app, application](#)

[applet](#)

[Control Panel](#)

toolkit

Article • 03/27/2024

One word.

top left, top right

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't use.

[See upper left, upper right](#)

top-level folder

Article • 06/24/2022

In content for a general audience, use instead of *root directory* to refer to the directory or folder from which all other directories or folders branch.

In content for developers, use *root directory*.

Example

The top-level folder for most customers is the Documents folder.

See also [root directory](#)

touchpad

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

touchscreen

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

touch-sensitive

Article • 03/27/2024

Always hyphenate.

toward

Article • 03/27/2024

Use instead of *towards*.

trackball

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

trailing

Article • 06/24/2022

Use instead of *following* in phrases such as *trailing periods*, *trailing slashes*, and *trailing spaces*, which might occur at the end of strings, parameters, or other values. *Trailing* in this context is the opposite of *leading*.

trojan horse, trojan

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Security term collection](#)

turn on, turn off

Article • 05/22/2023

Use instead of *power on/power off, start/stop, or switch on/switch off* to mean turning the device on and off.

Use instead of *enable* and *disable* to refer to commands and features that can be activated or deactivated. Or use more specific pairs of words such as *make available* and *make unavailable; show and hide; add and remove; or allow and block*.

Don't use to refer to selecting or clearing checkboxes in instructions. Use *select* and *clear* instead. It's OK to use *turn on/turn off* to refer to webpage options and toggles.

Examples

To turn on pop-up blocking

To keep all applied filters, turn on the **pass all filters** toggle.

If the command prompt isn't available, your network administrator might have turned off this feature.

See also

[Describing interactions with UI](#)

[disable, disables \(functionality\)](#)

[enable, enables](#)

[shut down, shutdown](#)

[unavailable](#)

turnkey

Article • 03/27/2024

One word.

type

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Describing interactions with UI](#)

UK

Article • 06/24/2022

Avoid using as an abbreviation for *United Kingdom* unless space is limited.

Don't use as a synonym for *Great Britain (GB)* or *England*.

Ultrabook

Article • 06/24/2022

Use only to differentiate the Intel device from other types of thin and light laptops.

See also [Computer and device term collection](#)

un-

Article • 08/26/2024

In general, don't hyphenate words beginning with *un-*, such as *undo* and *unread*, unless it's necessary to avoid confusion, as in *un-ionized*, or unless *un-* is followed by a proper noun, as in *un-American*. When in doubt, check [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#).

To learn more about hyphenation, see [Hyphens](#).

unavailable

Article • 06/24/2022

Most of the time, talk about the actions that customers should take rather than describing UI.

When you must discuss UI, use *not available* or *isn't available* instead of *unavailable*, *disabled*, or *grayed* to describe commands and options that are in an unusable state. Use *appears dimmed* if you must describe their appearance. It's OK to use *unavailable* to describe an outage or a service that isn't offered to certain customers.

Examples

The command isn't available until you select text.

If the option appears dimmed, it's not available.

If the command prompt isn't available, your network administrator might have turned off this feature.

Some My Site features are temporarily unavailable. Please try again later.

See also [disable](#), [disabled](#), [turn on](#), [turn off](#)

uncheck, unmark, unselect

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to refer to clearing a checkbox. Use *clear* instead.

undelete

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't use.

[See restore](#)

underline vs. underscore

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *underline* to describe text formatting that puts a line under the characters. Use *underscore* to refer to the underscore character (_).

undo

Article • 06/24/2022

OK to use as a verb to describe the action associated with the **Undo** command. Don't use as a noun. For example, don't say, *After an undo, you can redo*

Examples

To undo multiple actions

After undoing an action,

uninstall

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *uninstall* as a verb to describe removing apps, programs, and hardware drivers from a device.

Don't use *uninstall* as a noun.

See also [remove](#)

unregister

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use in content for a general audience. It's OK to use *unregister* in content for developers.

unwanted software

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Security term collection](#)

upgrade

Article • 06/24/2022

Use as a verb to describe replacing an installed version of a product with a newer version of the same product. Use as a noun to describe the process of upgrading software.

Don't use *upgrade* as a synonym for *update*, *service pack*, or any other release that occurs between product versions.

Examples

Upgrade qualified Windows 7 or Windows 8.1 devices for free.

The upgrade was successful.

upload

Article • 06/24/2022

Use as a verb to describe transferring files from a local device to a website, server, or share.

When you use *upload* as a verb, describe what the customer is transferring *and* where the customer is transferring it *to*. In grammatical terms, use both a subject (the thing to be uploaded) and an object (the thing the subject is uploaded to) with the verb *upload*.

Example

Upload a document from your computer to this library.

See also [download](#), [load](#)

UPnP

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't spell out as *Universal Plug and Play*. Don't use as a synonym for *Plug and Play* or *PnP*.

Use *UPnP* as an adjective followed by *certified*, if appropriate, and a specific term, such as *device*, *architecture*, or *standards*.

Example

This UPnP certified device features

Don't use *UPnP* to refer to an uncertified device.

Don't use as a noun by itself. For example, don't say, *UPnP is an architecture for pervasive peer-to-peer network connectivity*. Rephrase the sentence as, *The UPnP architecture enables pervasive peer-to-peer network connectivity*.

For other guidelines, see the [Open Connectivity Foundation website](#) ↗.

See also [Plug and Play, plug and play](#)

upper left, upper right

Article • 06/24/2022

Hyphenate as adjectives. Use instead of *top left* and *top right*.

Example

The upper-right corner

Accessibility note Don't use directional terms (*left*, *right*, *up*, *down*) as the only clue to location. Individuals with cognitive impairments might have difficulty interpreting them, as might people who are blind and use screen-reading software. It's OK to use a directional term if another indication of location, such as *in the Save As dialog box*, *on the Standard toolbar*, or *in the title bar*, is also included. Directional terms are also OK to use when a sighted user with dyslexia can clearly see a change in the interface as the result of an action, such as a change in the right pane when an option in the left pane is selected.

uppercase

Article • 06/24/2022

Most of the time, use *capital letters* instead of *uppercase*. It's OK to use *uppercase* when comparing with *lowercase* or to follow the UI.

One word. Don't use *uppercase* as a verb. Don't use *uppercased*.

When using *uppercase* and *lowercase* together, don't use a suspended hyphen (as in *upper- and lowercase*). Spell out both words instead.

Examples

Change all the lowercase letters to uppercase.

Change the case of both lowercase and uppercase letters.

upsize

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't use. Use *scale up* instead.

upward

Article • 03/27/2024

Use instead of *upwards*.

URL

Article • 06/24/2022

In content for a general audience, use *address* rather than *URL*. In content for a technical audience, don't spell out *URL* on the first mention. If you have a reason to spell out URL, use *uniform resource locator*. Use *a*, not *an*, as an article preceding *URL*.

Use *of* (not *for*) to describe the relationship of the word *URL* to a resource.

Example

Search results include the URL of the page.

See also [URLs and web addresses](#)

US

Article • 06/24/2022

It's OK to use *US* as an abbreviation for *United States* as an adjective and when space is limited. Spell out *United States* as a noun except when third-party, legally required content specifies otherwise.

Don't use *USA*, *U.S.*, or *U.S.A.*.

If you use the abbreviation, you don't have to spell out *United States* on the first mention.

usable

Article • 03/27/2024

Use instead of *useable*.

USB

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

use terms

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to mean *license terms*.

[See Microsoft Software License Terms](#)

user, end user

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use *end user*.

Avoid *user* when you can. Use *audience, customer, person, people, employee, coworker, or you* instead.

It's OK to use *user* in content for developers to distinguish the technology developer from the technology user. It's also OK to use *user* in content for technology professionals to distinguish the system administrator from the system users.

user rights

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *user rights* only to refer to Windows security policies that apply to individual user accounts or administrative groups. The system administrator manages user rights through the User Rights Assignment snap-in. User rights are *assigned*, not *granted* or *allowed*.

When you refer to a named user right, use sentence-style capitalization and bold formatting for the name itself.

If an operation requires that the user be signed in to an account that's a member of a specific administrative group, refer to the group instead of to the associated user rights.

Don't use *privilege* as a synonym for *user right*.

Examples

You must have the **Perform volume maintenance tasks** user right to perform this task.
You must be signed in as a member of the Administrators group to perform this task.

See also [permissions, rights](#)

using, by using, with

Article • 06/24/2022

In instructions or technical content, use *by using* or *that use* to eliminate ambiguity.

Examples

Refine your pictures by using the photo editor.

Azure DNS is a hosting service that uses Azure infrastructure to provide DNS name resolution.

Don't use *with* as a synonym for *using* or *by using*. It's OK to use *with* in marketing contexts and with product and service names.

Example

With OneDrive, you can share your favorite things across your favorite devices, including PCs, Macs, tablets, and phones.

utility

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use.

See

[add-in, add-on](#)

[app, application](#)

[applet](#)

[tool](#)

[Control Panel](#)

value axis

Article • 06/24/2022

Lowercase. Don't hyphenate.

Usually refers to the vertical axis in 2D charts and graphs, which shows the values being measured or compared. Refer to it as the *value (y) axis* on the first mention. On subsequent mentions, use *y-axis*. It's OK to use *vertical (y) axis* in content for a general audience.

Don't use italic formatting for the *y* in *y-axis* unless the entire word is italic.

In 3D charts, the z-axis is usually the value axis.

See also [category axis](#), [z-axis](#)

versus, vs.

Article • 06/24/2022

In headings, use the abbreviation *vs.*, all lowercase. In text, spell out as *versus*.

video call, videoconference

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *video call*, not *videoconference*, when you need to be specific. Otherwise, it's OK to use *call* or *meeting*.

In a verb phrase, follow the UI or use *start a video call*, *join a video call*, *participate in a video call*, or *end a video call*.

video card

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *video card* instead of *video adapter*, *display adapter*, *graphics adapter*, *graphics card*, or *graphics board*.

video display

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't use.

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

video driver

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *video driver* instead of *display driver* or *graphics driver*.

video game, video-game

Article • 06/24/2022

Two words as a noun. Hyphenate as an adjective.

Examples

Tips for playing your video game

Video-game tips

virtual

Article • 06/24/2022

Use only to refer specifically to a device or service that appears to be something it's not or that doesn't physically exist. For example, a *virtual machine* isn't an actual computer; it's something that emulates one.

Don't use in content for a general audience.

Examples

Each Azure service is supported by a different type of virtual machine.

virtual desktop

virtual memory

virtual root

virtual server

virtual agent

Article • 03/27/2024

[See AI and bot term collection](#)

virtualize

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use in content for a general audience.

In content for a technical audience, it's OK to use *virtualize* sparingly to mean creating a virtual implementation. For example, it's OK to use *virtualize storage* to refer to creating virtual storage.

Don't use as a synonym for *simulate*.

visit

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use to describe opening or switching to a website or webpage. Use *go to* instead.

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#)

voice user interface (VUI)

Article • 03/27/2024

[See AI and bot term collection](#)

voice-activated device

Article • 03/27/2024

[See AI and bot term collection](#)

voicemail

Article • 06/24/2022

One word. Don't abbreviate as *v-mail* or *vmail*.

Use to refer generically to a voicemail app, to refer collectively to messages, or to refer to an individual message. If necessary to distinguish these meanings, use *voicemail message* or *message* to refer to an individual voicemail.

Don't use as a verb. Use *leave a voicemail* or *leave a message* instead.

Examples

You have two new voicemails.

To respond to the caller with a message

vulnerability

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Security term collection](#)

W3C

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't spell out.

want

Article • 06/24/2022

Use instead of *wish* or *desire* when the customer has a choice of actions. Don't use when you mean *need*, which indicates a requirement or obligation.

Example

Select **PC info** if you want to find out what version of Windows you're running.

We

Article • 06/24/2022

In general, don't use. Focus on the customer, and avoid making Microsoft the subject.

It's OK to use phrasing like *we recommend* if it helps you avoid awkward phrasing like *it's recommended*, but write around it if you can.

Examples

The scheduled default setting is the easiest way to keep your computer up to date.

(Instead of *We recommend that you use the scheduled default setting*)

Select the people you want to give permission to. We'll verify their identities before opening the document.

In September, we took a major step forward in introducing Windows 10 to our enterprise customers.

See also [Microsoft](#)

wearable, wearable device

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Computer and device term collection](#)

web, World Wide Web, WWW

Article • 06/24/2022

Lowercase *web* as a modifier except to match UI or in feature names that include *web*.

Avoid the phrase *World Wide Web*. Use *the web* instead.

Lowercase *www* in URLs and internet addresses.

Use *on* to refer to material existing on the web. Use *to* or *on* to refer to the action of creating and publishing something *to the web* or *on the web*.

The following terms that include *web* are one word:

- webpage
- website
- webcam
- webcast
- webmaster
- webzine

The following terms that include *web* are hyphenated:

- web-centric
- web-based
- web-enabled

The following terms that include *web* are two words:

- web address
- web app
- web browser
- web content
- web crawler
- web document
- web folder
- web part

See also [URLs and web addresses](#)

web services

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *web services* to refer to protocols and data formats, like XML, SOAP, and WSDL, that provide the means for integrating web-based apps.

Don't use *web service* or *web services* to refer generally to apps and services that you access online. Instead, mention the service by name or use *service* or *services* instead.

wellbeing

Article • 06/24/2022

Do not use *well-being*, but *wellbeing*. Do not hyphenate.

Example

MyAnalytics gives you insights into your work patterns around focus, network, *wellbeing*, and collaboration over the past four weeks.

where

Article • 06/24/2022

Use to introduce a list, as in code or formulas, to define the meaning of elements such as variables or symbols.

Example

Use the following formula to calculate the return, where: r = rate of interest n = number of months p = principal.

while

Article • 06/24/2022

Use only to refer to something occurring in time. Don't use as a synonym for *although*, *whereas*, *on the contrary*, or *in spite of*.

Examples

We're having trouble getting this info right now. Check back in a little while.

Although the icon indicates that the print job is finished, you might have to wait until a previous job is finished.

white hat hacker

Article • 03/27/2024

[See Security term collection](#)

white paper

Article • 03/27/2024

Two words.

white space

Article • 03/27/2024

Two words.

whitelist

Article • 06/24/2022

Never use *whitelist*. Use *allowlist* instead.

For more specific usage, *safe senders list* can be used.

Examples

You can use *safe senders lists* to help with false positives.

The *allowlist* is a list of digits that will not be blocked by the app.

who vs. that

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *who* instead of *that* to introduce clauses referring to people.

Example

Custom Setup is the best choice for customers who want to alter the standard Windows configuration.

Wi-Fi

Article • 06/24/2022

Try to use a general phrase instead, such as *wireless network*, or refer to the specific technology that you're describing, such as *wireless LAN*.

Wi-Fi is a proper noun and a registered trademark. Capitalize and hyphenate when referring specifically to Wi-Fi technologies. Don't use *WiFi*, *wifi*, or *Wifi*. Don't include the registered trademark symbol (®).

wildcard character

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *wildcard character*, not just *wildcard*, to describe a character used to represent one or many characters, such as the asterisk (*) or question mark (?).

Wildcard is one word.

window

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use as a verb.

See also [Describing interactions with UI](#), [Formatting text in instructions](#)

Windows, Windows-based

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *Windows* as a modifier for aspects or elements of the Windows operating system.
Don't use *Windows-based*.

It's OK to use *Windows user* sparingly to avoid awkward constructions, but try to avoid *user* in general.

Examples

Windows app

Windows device

the Windows Recycle Bin

a device running Windows

See also [user](#), [end user](#), [runs vs. runs on](#)

Windows 10, Windows 11

Article • 02/26/2024

Always use the entire name. Don't precede the name with *Microsoft*.

Windows Explorer

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't use.

[See File Explorer](#)

wireframe

Article • 03/27/2024

One word.

wireless

Article • 06/24/2022

Avoid talking about wireless technology to general users except in the context of connecting to a network. Even in that context, whenever you can, discuss connecting to the internet without referring to the technology.

wizard

Article • 06/24/2022

In general, don't use the term *wizard* unless it appears in the UI. Instead, talk about what the customer needs to do to accomplish the task.

It's OK to use *wizard* in content for a technical audience that discusses how to develop wizards.

Use lowercase for the generic term *wizard*. Capitalize *wizard* if it's part of a feature name that appears in the UI. (This is uncommon.)

If you need to refer to an individual screen in a wizard, call it a *page*.

word processing, word-processing

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *word processor* or *word processing* as a noun.

Hyphenate *word-processing* as an adjective.

Don't use *word process* or *word processing* as a verb. Use *write*, *format*, or another term instead.

wordwrap, wordwrapping

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't use.

work area, workspace

Article • 06/24/2022

Work area is two words. *Workspace* is one word.

In general, don't discuss UI. Instead, talk about what the customer wants to do.

If it's necessary to describe UI, use *workspace* to refer to the area within a window where the customer interacts with the UI.

Use *work area* only when the term has a specific meaning in a particular product.

work style

Article • 03/27/2024

Two words.

workgroup

Article • 03/27/2024

One word.

working memory

Article • 03/27/2024

Don't use. Use *available memory* instead.

workstation

Article • 06/24/2022

One word.

Avoid except in discussions of clients and servers.

workstream

Article • 06/24/2022

Use as one word without a hyphen.

Examples

Workstreams are channels within a team that aid the team in organizing their work.

Each channel represents a different topic or *workstream* within the overall team.

Creating channels is a great way to organize conversations and files by *workstream* or subject.

worldwide vs. international

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *worldwide* to describe something that encompasses all regions or involves the entire world. It's OK to use *global* to mean *worldwide*.

Examples

Get one month of free, worldwide calling.

OneNote Mobile for Android is now available in more than 20 markets worldwide.

Ensuring global acceptability in the usability of our products along with local relevance (world readiness).

Don't use *international* in the context of something that encompasses the entire world as it can imply a US-centric worldview.

Don't use *international* to mean "outside the United States." Instead, refer to a specific region or use wording that describes what you mean.

Examples

In the first half of 2016, Azure achieved new certifications in Japan, Spain, and the United Kingdom and expanded certifications in seven other regions. Microsoft is driving the transformation of business and industry across Europe and around the world.

See also [global](#)

write-only

Article • 06/24/2022

Always hyphenate.

See also [read/write](#), [read/write permission](#)

write-protect, write-protected

Article • 06/24/2022

Always hyphenate.

Use *write-protect* as a verb. Use instead of *lock* to refer to the action of protecting disks from being overwritten.

Use *write-protected* as an adjective.

Examples

to write-protect a disk
a write-protected disk

X

Article • 06/24/2022

Use a lowercase *x* in italic type as a placeholder number or variable.

Don't use *x* to refer to a generic, unspecified number. Use *n* instead.

Don't use *x* in place of a multiplication sign.

See also [n](#), [multiplication sign \(×\)](#)

X-axis

Article • 06/24/2022

Lowercase. Hyphenate.

On the first mention, use *category (x) axis* to refer to the horizontal axis in charts and graphs that shows the categories being compared. On subsequent mentions, use *x-axis*. It's OK to use *horizontal (x) axis* in content for a general audience.

Don't use italic formatting for the *x* in *x-axis* unless the entire word is italic.

See also [value axis](#), [category axis](#)

x-coordinate

Article • 06/24/2022

Lowercase. Hyphenate.

Don't use italic formatting for the *x* in *x-coordinate* unless the entire word is italic.

XON/XOFF

Article • 03/27/2024

Note capitalization and slash.

y-axis

Article • 06/24/2022

Lowercase. Hyphenate.

On the first mention, refer to the y-axis as the *value (y) axis*. On subsequent mentions, use *y-axis*. It's OK to use *vertical (y) axis* in content for a general audience.

Don't use italic formatting for the *y* in *y-axis* unless the entire word is italic.

See also [category axis](#), [value axis](#)

y-coordinate

Article • 06/24/2022

Lowercase. Hyphenate.

Don't use italic formatting for the *y* in *y-coordinate* unless the entire word is italic.

Z-

Article • 06/24/2022

Hyphenate all words referring to entities that begin with z used as a separate letter, such as *z-axis*, *z-coordinate*, *z-order*, and *z-test*.

Don't use italic formatting for the z in these words unless the entire word is italic.

Z-axis

Article • 06/24/2022

Lowercase. Hyphenate.

In 3D charts, the z-axis shows depth and generally represents values. On the first mention, refer to the z-axis as the *value (z) axis*, where both the x-axis and y-axis are category axes. On subsequent mentions, use *z-axis*.

Don't use italic formatting for the *z* in *z-axis* unless the entire word is italic.

See also [value axis](#)

zero, zeros

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *zeros*, not *zeroes*, as the plural of *zero*.

When a measurement includes 0, use the plural form of the spelled-out unit of measure.

Examples

0 MB

0 megabytes

See also [Units of measure term collection](#)

ZIP Code

Article • 06/24/2022

It's OK to use *ZIP Code* in content that's intended for a US audience only. Otherwise, use *postal code*.

Capitalize as shown.

zoom in, zoom out

Article • 06/24/2022

Use *zoom in* and *zoom out* as generic verbs in instructions for all input methods.

Don't use *dezoom* or *unzoom*.

See also [Touch and pen interaction term collection](#)

Accessibility Guidelines and Requirements

Article • 06/24/2022

Microsoft devices and services empower people of all abilities, around the globe—at home, at work, and on the go—to do the activities they value most.

This section provides an overview of accessibility guidelines:

- [Writing for all abilities](#)
- [Colors and patterns in text, graphics, and design](#)
- [Graphics, design, and media](#)

See also [Accessibility term collection](#)

Learn more

[Microsoft Accessibility site](#) 

Writing for all abilities

Article • 06/24/2022

Microsoft style—clean, simple design and crisp, clear content—is easier for all readers to use, so nearly every writing recommendation in this guide will improve accessibility. Pay special attention to the following guidelines.

Put the person first

In general, refer to a person who has a kind of disability, not a disabled person. When you must describe specific disabilities or people with specific disabilities, use [approved terminology](#).

Write brief, meaningful, and focused text

Be especially clear and concise in instructions for product setup, basic features, input methods, and accessibility features.

Lead with what matters most, so readers know immediately where to focus their attention.

Keep paragraphs short and sentence structure simple—aim for one verb per sentence. Read text aloud and imagine it spoken by a screen reader.

Use parallel writing structures for similar things. For example, use singular nouns for each top-level heading. Or, use a verb to start each item in a list.

Spell out words like *and*, *plus*, and *about*. Screen readers can misread text that uses special characters like the plus sign (+) and tilde (~).

Write brief but meaningful link text. Be descriptive—links should make sense without the surrounding text.

Distinguish link text visually. Use redundant visual cues, such as both color and underline.

Don't force line breaks (also known as hard returns) within sentences and paragraphs. They may not work well in resized windows or with enlarged text.

Use content structure and location to communicate

Emphasize important points visually and stylistically. Lists, headings, and tables reinforce relationships between concepts. Provide summary information about the table, and use concise and specific column headings.

Use heading styles instead of text formatting. Heading levels communicate the hierarchy of content.

Don't use directional terms as the only clue to location. *Left, right, up, down, above,* and *below* aren't very useful for people who use screen-reading software. If you must use a directional term, provide additional text about the location, such as *in the Save As dialog box, on the Standard toolbar, or in the title bar.*

Document alternate input methods

In product documentation, document all supported modes of interaction, input commands, and keyboard shortcuts. Include mice, keyboards, voice recognition devices, game controllers, gestures, and other interaction modes.

Learn more

[Describing alternative input methods](#)

In procedures and instructions, use generic verbs that apply to all input methods and devices. Avoid verbs like *click* (mouse) and *swipe* (touch) that don't make sense with some alternative input methods used for accessibility.

Learn more

[Describing interactions with UI](#)

Colors and patterns in text, graphics, and design

Article • 06/24/2022

Choose colors and patterns carefully. High contrast may improve readability for people who have low vision. For people with some types of color blindness, certain color combinations are difficult to distinguish.

Don't convey information with color alone. For example, use both color and underlined text for links, and use pattern and color to differentiate information in charts and graphs. Remember that high-contrast personalization themes in Windows alter text color.

Don't hard-code colors. They can become illegible in high-contrast themes.

Choose color combinations with a minimum contrast ratio of 4.5:1. Don't use low-contrast or hard-to-read color combinations, such as light green and white or red and green.

Don't use screens or tints in art.

Don't use screened or shaded backgrounds, watermarks, or other images behind text. Reduced contrast makes text harder to read and hinders screen readers.

Graphics, Design, and Media

Article • 06/24/2022

Websites need to be accessible to everyone. Websites that are accessible to people with disabilities also support customers with various browsers, settings, and devices or who use older technologies.

In general, use clean and simple graphic design. Provide alternate ways to get the information that's conveyed by pictures, multimedia, and image maps.

Design

Keep text within a rectangular grid for visibility and ease of scanning.

Format tables according to the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.0 ↗](#).

If you use frames, provide alternative pages without them.

Don't use scrolling marquees unless the customer has control over them.

Images, image maps, and multimedia

Provide clear descriptions that don't require pictures, or provide both. Make sure the reader can get the whole story from either the picture or the written description.

Provide brief, accurate alt text for elements other than live text, including graphics, audio, video, animations, GIFs, and pictures of text. Describe the element in a way that conveys useful information to the reader. For complex elements, link to a separate page with more details.

Provide closed-captioning, transcripts, or descriptions of audio and video content.

Provide text links in addition to image maps.

Plan links and image-map links to support Tab key navigation with bidirectional text.

Acronyms

Article • 08/26/2024

Acronyms and abbreviations can have an adverse effect on clarity, voice, and findability. Although some acronyms are widely understood and preferred to the spelled-out term, others aren't well known or are familiar only to a specific group of customers.

Don't create acronyms from product or feature names

Always spell out Microsoft product and feature names.

Only use acronyms that your audience is familiar with

The A–Z word list has guidelines for many common acronyms, and some acronyms are so widely used that they're in [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#).

If you have to use an acronym, also spell out the term for clarity

In general, include the acronym in parentheses following the spelled-out term. On subsequent mentions in the same article, page, or screen, you can use the acronym without spelling it out.

Some acronyms, like *USB*, *FAQ*, and *URL*, are more well known than the spelled-out term. Don't spell out the term if the acronym is listed in [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#) or if the A–Z word list says to use the acronym without spelling it out. If you're sure your audience is familiar with an acronym, it's OK to use it without spelling it out.

Examples

Conversation as a platform (CaaP) has the potential to make booking a flight as easy as sending a text message. Developers are also looking to CaaP to make computing more accessible to users of all abilities.

Learn how to connect a USB device to your Microsoft Surface.

Don't introduce acronyms that are used just once

If an acronym will appear only once in your content, just spell out the term. Don't introduce it in parentheses after the spelled-out version.

Exception It's OK to use both the spelled-out term and the acronym if both are needed for SEO, even if the acronym is used only once.

Be careful with acronyms in titles and headings

Avoid using an acronym for the first time in a title or heading, unless it's a keyword that you need to place in the title or heading for SEO. If the first use of the acronym is in a title or heading, introduce the acronym (in parentheses, following the spelled-out term) in the following body text.

Lowercase the spelled-out term

Lowercase all words in the spelled-out form of an acronym except for proper nouns. The names of many protocols and specifications are considered proper nouns and are capitalized when spelled out.

Examples

- infrastructure as a service (IaaS)
- dynamic-link library (DLL)
- High-Definition Multimedia Interface (HDMI)

Use *a* or *an*, depending on pronunciation

Which article (*a* or *an*) you use depends on whether you pronounce the acronym like a word or pronounce each letter.

Examples

- a DLL
- an ISP
- a URL
- a SQL database

Add s to make an acronym plural

Form the plural of an acronym like you would any other noun. If the acronym stands for a singular noun, add a lowercase *s* to make it plural. If an acronym stands for a plural noun, don't add an *s*.

Examples

three APIs

Microsoft Foundation Classes (MFC)

Avoid the possessive form

Unless an acronym refers to a person or an organization, avoid using the possessive form.

Examples

the IDE enhancements

the purpose of the FAQ

the CEO's blog

Global tip In machine-translated content, be careful with acronyms that form common English words, like *RAM*. If the acronym appears outside of the parentheses and without the spelled-out version, it might be translated incorrectly.

See also [Bits and bytes term collection](#), [Units of measure term collection](#)

Bias-free communication

Article • 04/18/2024

Microsoft technology reaches every part of the globe, so it's critical that all our communications are inclusive and diverse.

Use gender-neutral alternatives for common terms.

[+] Expand table

Use this	Not this
chair, moderator	chairman
humanity, people, humankind	man, mankind
operates, staffs	mans
sales representative	salesman
synthetic, manufactured	manmade
workforce, staff, personnel	manpower

Don't use *he*, *him*, *his*, *she*, *her*, or *hers* in generic references. Instead:

- Rewrite to use the second person (*you*).
- Rewrite the sentence to have a plural noun and pronoun.
- Use *the* or *a* instead of a pronoun (for example, "the document").
- Refer to a person's role (*reader*, *employee*, *customer*, or *client*, for example).
- Use *person* or *individual*.

If you can't write around the problem, it's OK to use a plural pronoun (*they*, *their*, or *them*) in generic references to a single person. Don't use constructions like *he/she* and *s/he*.

[+] Expand table

Use this	Not this
If you have the appropriate rights, you can set other users' passwords. A user with the appropriate rights can set other users' passwords.	If the user has the appropriate rights, he can set other users' passwords.

Use this	Not this
Developers need access to servers in their development environments, but they don't need access to the servers in Azure.	A developer needs access to servers in his development environment, but he doesn't need access to the servers in Azure.
When the author opens the document	When the author opens her document
To call someone, select the person's name, select Make a phone call , and then choose the number you'd like to dial.	To call someone, select his name, select Make a phone call , and then select his number.
If you want to call someone who isn't in your Contacts list, you can dial their phone number using the dial pad.	If you want to call someone who isn't in your Contacts list, you can dial his or her phone number using the dial pad.

When you're writing about a real person, use the pronouns that person prefers, whether it's *he*, *she*, *they*, or another pronoun. It's OK to use gendered pronouns (like *he*, *she*, *his*, and *hers*) when you're writing about real people who use those pronouns themselves.

It's also OK to use gendered pronouns in content such as direct quotations and the titles of works and when gender is relevant, such as discussions about the challenges that women face in the workplace.

Examples

The skills that Claire developed in the Marines helped her move into a thriving technology career.

Anthony Lambert is executive vice president of gaming. With his team and game development partners, Lambert continues to push the boundaries of creativity and technical innovation.

The chief operating officer of Munson's Pickles and Preserves Farm says, "My great uncle Isaac, who employed

his brothers, sisters, mom, and dad, knew that they—and his customers—were depending on him."

Do you have a daughter? Here are a few things you can do to inspire and support her interest in STEM subjects.

In fictitious scenarios, strive for diversity and avoid stereotypes in job roles. Choose names that reflect a variety of gender identities and cultural backgrounds.

In text and images, represent diverse perspectives and circumstances. Depict a variety of people from all walks of life participating fully in activities. Be inclusive of gender identity, race, culture, ability, age, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic class. Show people in a wide variety of professions, educational settings, locales, and economic

settings. Avoid using examples that reflect primarily a Western or affluent lifestyle. In drawings or blueprints of buildings, show ramps for wheelchair accessibility.

Be inclusive of job roles, family structure, and leisure activities. If you show various family groupings, consider showing nontraditional and extended families.

Be mindful when you refer to various parts of the world. If you name cities, countries, or regions in examples, make sure they're not politically disputed. In examples that refer to several regions, use equivalent references—for example, don't mix countries with states or continents.

Don't make generalizations about people, countries, regions, and cultures, not even positive or neutral generalizations.

Don't use slang, especially if it could be considered cultural appropriation, such as *spirit animal*.

Don't use profane or derogatory terms, such as *pimp* or *bitch*.

Don't use terms that may carry unconscious racial bias or terms associated with military actions, politics, or historical events and eras. See [Militaristic language](#) for more information.

[+] [Expand table](#)

Use this	Not this
primary/subordinate	master/slave
perimeter network	demilitarized zone (DMZ)
stop responding	hang

Focus on people, not disabilities. For example, talk about readers who are blind or have low vision and customers with limited dexterity. Don't use words that imply pity, such as *stricken with* or *suffering from*. Don't mention a disability unless it's relevant. For more information, see the [Accessibility term collection](#).

Inclusive language Use title-style capitalization for Asian, Black and African American, Hispanic and Latinx, Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and Indigenous Peoples. Microsoft style is to lowercase multiracial and white.

Learn more For more information about writing that conveys respect to all people and promotes equal opportunities, see the [Guidelines for Inclusive Language](#) ↗ from the Linguistic Society of America.

See also [Militaristic language](#), [Accessibility guidelines and requirements](#), [Global communications](#)

Militaristic language

Article • 04/17/2024

Avoid using terms associated with violence and military actions unless you are referring to physical combat operations.

In the context of cybersecurity at Microsoft, use the following recommendations in the table of militaristic terms.

[] [Expand table](#)

Use this	Not this
address; protect against; respond to	combat; fight; eliminate
cyberattack chain	(cyber) kill chain
cyberattacker; bad actor; threat actor	attacker; adversary
impact	blast radius
multilayered approach; defense-in-depth cybersecurity	defense-in-depth approach
protect; safeguard; defend	guard; ward
secured	locked down
security; protection; defense	fortifications; first line of defense; frontlines
security teams; security analysts; defenders	frontline analysts
vulnerabilities; points of access; external exposure	external attack surface

Attack It's ok to use *attack* if there's context in front of it describing what kind of attack it is. For example, say, *Early detection is critical to preventing damage from malware attacks* instead of *Get protection from sophisticated attacks*.

If there's no context before *attack* that describes what kind of attack it is, add *cyber-* in front of *threat* so it reads *cyberattack*, all one word, no space, no hyphen.

Example

Uncover and defend against advanced cyberattacks across your entire digital estate.

Defend, defense, and defenses It's ok to use *defend* and *defenses* if there's context in the same sentence that makes it clear they're referring to cybersecurity.

Examples

Learn how to defend your cloud and on-premises workloads. Extend your defenses across endpoints and clouds with Microsoft Security.

External attack surface It's ok to use this phrase when discussing external attack surface management, external attack surface management capabilities, or the product Microsoft Defender External Attack Surface Management.

Don't use the phrase *external attack surface* when referring to a customer's points of access that are potentially vulnerable to an attack. Use *vulnerabilities*, *points of access*, or *external exposure* instead.

Threat It's ok to use *threat* if there's context in front of it describing what kind of threat it is.

Example

Explore an integrated identity threat and response solution.

If there's no context before *threat* that describes what kind of threat it is, add *cyber-* in front of *threat* so it reads *cyberthreat*, all one word no space no hyphen.

Example

Identify and remediate cyberthreats in the cloud and on-premises.

Threat intelligence It's ok to use *threat intelligence* if the surrounding context makes it clear it's related to cybersecurity. Don't shorten to *threat intel*.

Example

Get actionable insights into new and emerging cyberthreats with dynamic threat intelligence.

Never use These terms are overtly militaristic and should never be used in the context of cybersecurity at Microsoft (though they may be used to refer to physical combat operations):

air cover

bomb, email bomb, mail bomb, time bomb

enemy, enemies, enemy lines

go on the offensive

invade, invasion

missile, torpedo

nuke, go nuclear

strike

troops

See also [Bias-free communication](#)

Capitalization

Article • 08/26/2024

Microsoft style uses sentence-style capitalization. That means everything is lowercase except the first word and proper nouns, which include the names of brands, products, and services. (Microsoft has more than 500 offerings. To help customers recognize, find, and buy them, reserve capitalization for product and service names.)

Follow these guidelines in Microsoft content:

- Use sentence-style capitalization most of the time. That means:
 - Capitalize the first word of a sentence, heading, title, UI label (such as the name of a button or checkbox), or standalone phrase.
 - Capitalize proper nouns. To learn more about proper nouns, see [Nouns and pronouns](#).
 - Use lowercase for everything else.
- Always capitalize the first word of a new sentence. Rewrite sentences that start with a word that's always lowercase.
- Don't use all uppercase for emphasis. (It's OK to use italic sparingly for emphasis.)
- Don't use all lowercase as a design choice. Although all uppercase is used occasionally as a design element, don't use it in text.
- Don't use internal capitalization (such as *AutoScale* or *e-Book*) unless it's part of a brand name.
- Don't capitalize the spelled-out form of an acronym unless it's a proper noun.
- When words are joined by a slash, capitalize the word after the slash if the word before the slash is capitalized.

Examples

Country/Region

Turn on the On/Off toggle.

- For information on capitalization in hyphenated compound words see [Hyphens](#).

Learn more To learn more about capitalization, see [The Chicago Manual of Style](#). If you're not sure whether to capitalize a term, check the A–Z word list and [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#).

For information about capitalizing UI labels in instructions, see [Formatting text in instructions](#).

Sentence-style capitalization in titles and headings

Use sentence-style capitalization in most titles and headings: capitalize the first word and lowercase the rest.

Exceptions Proper nouns, including brand, product, and service names, are always capitalized. If a title or heading includes a colon, capitalize the first word after it.

Titles of blog posts, documentation articles, and press releases use sentence-style capitalization.

Examples

Watch your favorite HD movies, TV shows, and more

1 TB of cloud storage

Choose the Office version that's right for you

Available for Microsoft partners and commercial and public-sector customers

Can a search engine predict the World Cup winner?

Block party: Communities use Minecraft to create public spaces

Title-style capitalization

Occasionally, title-style capitalization—capitalizing most words—is appropriate. For example, product and service names, the names of blogs, book and song titles, article titles in citations, white paper titles, and titles of people (*Vice President* or *Director of Marketing*) require title-style capitalization. In a tweet, it's OK to use title-style capitalization to highlight the name of a quoted article.

On the rare occasions when title-style capitalization is required, follow these guidelines:

- Always capitalize the first and last words.

Example

A Home to Go Back To

- Don't capitalize *a*, *an*, or *the* unless it's the first word.

Examples

Microsoft on the Issues

The Official Microsoft Blog

- Don't capitalize prepositions of four or fewer letters (such as *on*, *to*, *in*, *up*, *down*, *of*, and *for*) unless the preposition is the first or last word.

Examples

How to Personalize Windows

To Personalize Windows

Ryse: Son of Rome

Achieving Excellence in the Classroom Through Technology

OneNote Class Notebooks for Teachers

The Teaching Tool You're Looking For

- Don't capitalize *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *yet*, or so unless it's the first word or the last word.

Example

Monitoring and Operating a Private or Hybrid Cloud

- Capitalize all other words, including nouns, verbs (including *is* and other forms of *be*), adverbs (including *very* and *too*), adjectives, and pronouns (including *this*, *that*, and *its*).

Examples

Enterprise Agility Is Not an Oxymoron

This Is All There Is

Teaching Math Over and Over Again, in Less Time Than Before

- Capitalize the word after a hyphen if it would be capitalized without the hyphen or it's the last word.

Examples

Self-Paced Training for Microsoft Visual Studio

Microsoft Management Console: Five Essential Snap-Ins

Five Essential Snap-ins for Microsoft Management Console

Copy-and-Paste Support in Windows Apps

- Capitalize the first word of labels and terms that appear in UI and APIs unless they're always lowercase (for example, *fdisk*).
- In programming languages, follow the traditional capitalization of keywords and other special terms.

See also [Formatting titles](#)

Chatbots and virtual agents

Article • 06/24/2022

A virtual agent is a type of bot that can be used to:

- Provide information and answers.
- Complete tasks like booking meetings or buying tickets.

Before you create a virtual agent, make sure it will add value to the customer experience.

This type of bot is good for tasks where it's easier to ask for what you want rather than navigate through a menu or search for keywords. But a bot isn't a human, and there are some things that it isn't suited for.

Technically speaking, there are two kinds:

- One kind is scripted. It can respond only to questions that it was programmed to understand.
- Another uses AI, so it can understand what the customer is telling it, and its knowledge grows the more it interacts with people.

This section includes guidelines and tips to help you create this type of bot:

- [Structural and technical considerations](#)
- [Writing for bots](#)
- [Care and feeding of the bot](#)

Learn more

[Microsoft's AI vision, rooted in research, conversations ↗](#)

[Bot Framework documentation](#)

[Responsible bots: 10 guidelines for developers of conversational AI ↗](#)

Structural and technical considerations

Article • 06/24/2022

Clarify intent before acting

Until you're sure your bot can reliably interpret conversational cues, it should:

- Confirm the customer's intent: "You need to reset your password. Is that right?"
- Clarify and disambiguate the customer's input when necessary: "OK, we'll reset your password. But first, I'd like to know more. Did you forget your password, or are you concerned that someone else has your password? You can say, "I forgot," or "My account is compromised."

Be careful not to overdo it, though. It's better not to annoy the customer with a needless prompt unless misunderstanding the request could cause damage.

Use buttons and other UI structure to keep users on track

- Prompt users with actionable statements and buttons to guide the conversation.
- Offer suggestions when the bot is "confused" about what the user's request is.

Pace the conversation carefully

- Break up messages into separate, readable blocks to make the pace of the conversation feel more natural.
- Make sure the bot doesn't respond so quickly that it rushes the customer. Add a minimum delay if necessary.

Accommodate alternative word order and incomplete requests

The bot should be able to recognize the customer's request, regardless of how it's phrased.

Conclude the conversation when the request is resolved

Mimic the sense of closure typical in human-to-human interaction by wrapping up the conversation. For example: "Is there anything else I can help you with? [No.] OK, then. Have a great day!" Having a sense of completion helps the customer feel like there's a shared goal, reinforces the positive experience, and builds confidence in using the bot.

Writing for bots

Article • 06/24/2022

Be friendly while helping to complete the task

Tailor the tone of the bot's responses to the context. If it's something serious—like billing or cybersecurity—be empathetic but brief and straightforward. If it's a more mundane situation (like creating a new account), the tone can be more relaxed. And a bot for Xbox can be lighthearted and casual.

[See Microsoft's brand voice](#)

Be honest and build trust

- Make sure users know that they're not chatting with a person. For example, have the bot introduce itself as a virtual support agent. The message can be brief—research shows that customers are usually aware that they're chatting with a bot.
- Explain what the bot's purpose is and what it can and can't do. Good ways of framing the functionality are suggesting a first task or place to begin, or providing buttons or shortcuts for the most frequent tasks.
- Admit when things get messed up. And have a plan for dealing with the situation.
- Plan for common misspellings and errors. These don't derail human-to-human conversations, and being able to accommodate them will build the user's confidence in the bot.

Accept—and plan for—the bot's limitations

There are some questions a bot just won't have an answer for.

- Make it clear to the user that the bot has a very specific role. Don't imply an open-ended, "Ask me anything" role.
- Be prepared for when the bot doesn't know the answer, and have it point the customer in the right direction.
- Decide what conversational cues will prompt the bot to escalate to a human. At key points in the conversation, let the customer know how they can get help from a human, if they want to.

Keep it simple, and keep it short

Customers abandon a chat when the prompts are lengthy. To keep your writing simple and straightforward, use the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level feature in Microsoft Word or an app like Hemingwayapp.com to figure out the grade level of your scripts. In general, the lower the grade level, the better.

Anticipate mischief

Plan how the bot should respond when users start to play games with it—for example, asking the same question over and over to test it, using offensive language, or asking nonsense questions. An appropriate response shows that the bot can be relevant and helpful, if given a chance. Humor can be effective, but be careful: a humorous response to an offensive question can backfire.

Be a good listener

- Invite the user into the conversation on a regular basis by asking questions or making suggestions.
- Respond to the customer in a timely manner. If the bot is taking a while to process the customer's request, use, "I'm thinking" or the typing indicator to let the customer know the bot is working on a response.
- Boost the relevance of the bot's responses by making them specific to the context. For example, say, "Here's how you change your privacy settings," not "Here's how you do that."

Remember whose side you're on

The bot is working on behalf of the customer and is there to serve the customer. It's not there for Microsoft's benefit.

Watch your pronouns: I, me, my

The bot uses *I*, *me*, and *my* to refer to itself.

When the customer communicates to the bot, they also use *I*, *me*, or *my*. Make sure those pronouns appear on buttons, links, or other elements of the bot that the user selects.

Recognize common words

People are familiar with words like *help*, *settings*, *start over*, and *stop*. Make sure your bot recognizes and responds to them.

Care and feeding of the bot

Article • 06/24/2022

Maintain the bot and evaluate its effectiveness over time

Have a plan for maintaining and evolving the bot. What's working and what isn't? What's your plan for phasing in new and improved features? What can be done better? How will you know when it's time to retire your bot?

Learn from customers

- Make it possible for people to give you feedback directly through the bot. Ask if they got what they were looking for. Give them a way to tell you what they wanted if the results weren't what they expected.
- Label your content blocks in the flow. That way, you can identify the content blocks that users leave from the most, figure out why, and improve them.
- Extend or improve the experience when appropriate. For example, if the customer gives positive feedback, suggest they rate the app. If the experience didn't meet their expectations, provide a link to support.

Content planning

Article • 06/20/2023

Great content starts with a plan that begins with these questions.

Who is your audience? This could be broad—developers, for example—but defining your audience more specifically will help you refine your plan. Is your audience writing software? Apps? IT tools? Games? Are they hobbyists, full-time developers, or IT pros who write code? What development software do they use?

What do they want to accomplish? Are they deciding whether to buy your product? Setting up a new computer? Learning new software? Preparing for a migration? Struggling with a PivotTable? Planning for network security? Is their need urgent? Few customers come to us to see what's new. Understanding why they come will help you satisfy their needs.

What is your business goal for providing the content? Are you building enthusiasm for an upcoming product launch? Establishing a competitive position in the marketplace? Documenting an out-of-band release? Providing support content to accelerate migration? Although the customer's goals are paramount, every communication has a business reason, too.

Do you have time or budget constraints? If time is of the essence, content you can create quickly might be best. The budget and the availability of an agency or specialized resources, like illustrators, designers, and video producers, will help you determine what content options are realistic.

What kind of content best meets the customer's needs and business goals? If the concepts are hard to explain, video or infographics could be just the thing. If the customer is preparing for a major project, maybe they need checklists and sample project plans, or a pricing calculator. For breaking news, tweets or a strategic blog post might be the best approach.

How will the customer find the content? What search terms will the customer use? Plan for search keyword optimization; links back to your content; and promotion through home pages, blogs, newsletters, events, third-party sites, communities, and social media if appropriate. To learn more, see [Search and writing](#).

Where will the customer look for information? Part of knowing your customers is understanding where they go for information. If they have a problem, they may look to product documentation, Microsoft support, or an expert community. For training,

Microsoft Virtual Academy or a video platform like YouTube might be their source. For tips and tricks, maybe it's social media and blogs.

What devices will the customer use to experience the content? Laptops? Tablets? Phones? Wearable devices? Entertainment consoles? All of those? Plan for a great experience across devices the customer is likely to use.

Will the content be translated or localized? If so, plan your content to streamline those processes and contain costs. To learn more about developing content for translation and localization, see [Global communications](#).

How will you measure success? Do you have numeric targets for views, clicks, or downloads? Goals for mentions or backlinks? Targets for lead generation? Planning for specific objectives up front will help you create content that meets them.

With these questions answered, you can narrow your approach. For example:

- If the customer need is immediate, maybe you blog today and create a more polished article later.
- If budget and timeline are tight, you might choose a simple text format.
- If the audience is large and the topic complex, a short, professionally produced video might make sense.
- If content will be localized in multiple languages, graphics supported by text might meet the customer and business need at a lower cost.

Content ideas for specific user needs

[] [Expand table](#)

Need	Content types	Examples
Complete a simple task or use a simple feature in an app	UI text Documentation Short video Blog, if it's a common issue or cool, little-known feature	Setting up email ↗ Recall and replace sent messages ↗ 5 easy and powerful Excel features you may not know about ↗
Complete a complex task or use a complex feature in an app	UI text Video Webcast Documentation Tutorial End-to-end scenarios or conceptual articles	Try the latest touchpad gestures ↗ OneNote for (holiday) planning ↗ Create an ASP.NET web app in Azure App Service ↗ Set up Office 365 for business ↗

Need	Content types	Examples
	Technical papers or articles Wizard	Getting started with Microsoft Intune ↗ Set up Microsoft account on your devices ↗
Get timely communications, including news, announcements, event updates, tips, and stories	Blog Newsletter	OneNote, The Microsoft Office Blog ↗ Virtual PC Guy's blog ↗
Get answers and expertise from a community	Wiki Forum	TechNet wiki ↗ Exchange Server Forum ↗ Microsoft Answers ↗
Learn a complex or comprehensive concept or skill	Online training Tutorial Technical white paper Interactive graphics System architecture	Make and receive calls using Skype for Business ↗ SharePoint Automation with DSC ↗ Azure Network Security (PDF) ↗ Technical diagrams for SharePoint 2013 ↗
Learn or increase knowledge and skills related to a product, service, technology, or business concept	Concept papers E-books Infographics	Azure Security, Privacy, and Compliance (PDF) ↗ SharePoint with SQL Server AlwaysOn Microsoft Dynamics NAV: Grow Your Business e-book ↗
Learn product tips and tricks	UI text Web documentation Apps Microblogs (such as Twitter) Blogs E-books Newsletters Communities	Useful Tips and Tricks to Bring with You to the Vermintide 2 Beta on Xbox One ↗ Skype: Keeping you connected on your vacation ↗ Windows 10 Tip: Go back and forth in time with Timeline ↗
Understand a process	Interactive graphics Interactive flow charts Sample workflows Sample files	What is governance in SharePoint 2013? ↗ Overview of the upgrade process for SharePoint 2013 ↗ Upgrade worksheet for SharePoint 2013 ↗
Troubleshoot a problem	Interactive flow chart UI troubleshooter	How to run the Audio Troubleshooter in Windows 10 ↗

Design planning

Article • 06/24/2022

Design is more than a pretty face. It provides a familiar environment for content. Text length, the use of images, headings, tables, lists, and other writing choices all play a role in the quality of your readers' content experience. Writing with design in mind builds predictability into content, helping readers to navigate it and find what they need.

The time to think about design is before you start writing.

Consult with your design partners early

Collaborate with your designer and marketing manager or PM to develop the [content strategy](#).

If you're working with a designer, meet early and often. Share your outline, your preliminary drafts, and this style guide. Provide preliminary content early in the process so you can identify and solve issues in the design or content approach.

Start with a template

Templates provide a well thought out framework for clear and simple communication. The brand and visual consistency templates bring to content provides predictability to your readers, so they can focus on what you have to say. Taking advantage of all your template has to offer will both enhance the customer experience and streamline modifications you need to make down the road.

- **Use manual formatting sparingly.** Templates take care of most formatting for you. You may need a bold or italic phrase now and then, but always use the built-in styles for headings, subheadings, bulleted lists, tables, and whatever else your template provides.
- **Use a limited number of styles.** Most content needs just a couple of heading levels, bulleted and numbered lists, tables, and of course body text. Using three or fewer styles leads to more streamlined, polished-looking results.
- **Don't create new styles or modify existing ones.** New styles complicate design. You'll almost always find enough styles in a template to meet the needs of your communication.

- **Use styles consistently** for headings, tables, lists, notes, tips, and other text, throughout your communication.
- **Don't fear white space.** Your template probably includes spacing for various text elements. Use it. Empty space helps the reader focus on what's important and makes text seem less daunting. Wide margins, space around graphics, and space between lines of text all improve readability and can draw attention to particular text elements—especially if you use white space consistently.

Make layout decisions before you begin

If you're writing for a platform that limits your design choices, such as a blog platform or website, research proven layout choices and find out where the design is flexible.

If you have options for positioning content elements, place them in the same area on every page. Tips, procedures, blog rolls, references, definitions, and other distinct content types are easier to find when they're located consistently.

Developer content

Article • 06/24/2022

Though the content for developers and IT professionals tends to be more technical than that for a general audience, the fundamentals of [the Microsoft brand voice](#) still apply. Be warm and relaxed, crisp and clear, and ready to lend a hand as appropriate for the context. After all, when they're not coding or managing solutions, developers and IT pros are some of the very same people who play Xbox and use Office.

Of course, it's OK to assume IT pros and developers bring a fundamental understanding of programming concepts. So skip the basic knowledge and focus on technology-specific or product-specific information that helps them achieve their goals.

Two types of content form the foundation of developer documentation: reference documentation and code examples. Reference documentation provides an encyclopedia of all the programming elements, such as classes, methods, and properties, that are available for writing applications. Code examples show how to use those elements.

This section provides guidelines for creating:

- [Reference documentation](#)
- [Code examples](#)

It also has [guidelines for formatting developer text elements](#).

Reference documentation

Article • 10/13/2022

Reference documentation provides details about the programming elements associated with technologies and languages, including class libraries, object models, and programming language constructs.

Consistency is essential in reference documentation. A standard article design, predictable headings and structure, and consistent wording help developers find what they need quickly. Links to articles with related information are also a common feature.

Note Information such as configuration schemas, compiler options, and error messages might not follow the guidelines described in this section.

Article titles

Use the name of a programming element (such as `Clear`), followed by an element type (such as `Class`, `Method`, `Property`, or `Event`). If the name is shared by multiple elements, add a differentiator, such as the parent element name or the product or technology name. Differentiators are particularly important in search results, where they help customers find the article for the correct product or element.

Examples

`Clear` method

`Device.Clear` method

`Clear` method (ADO)

Elements of a reference article

The table lists the information typically provided in reference articles. Not all sections appear in all reference articles. Sections vary depending on the language, product, or technology being documented.

[+] Expand table

Section	Contains
Title and description	The name of the element and a concise sentence or two describing the element. If possible, explain what the element does or represents without repeating the element name. Example

Section	Contains
	<p>MoveRecord method (ADO) Moves the entity represented by a Record to another location.</p>
Declaration/syntax	<p>The code signature that defines the element. This section might also provide usage syntax. If the technology can be used with multiple programming languages, provide syntax for each language.</p> <p>Example</p> <pre data-bbox="473 445 1368 519">Record.MoveRecord (Source, Destination, UserName, Password, Options, Async)</pre>
Parameters	<p>If the element has parameters, provide a description of each parameter and its data type. If appropriate, indicate whether the parameter is required or optional and whether it represents input or output. Provide as much useful detail as possible. Don't just repeat the words in the parameter name or the data type.</p> <p>Examples</p> <p><i>Source</i></p> <p>Optional. A String value that contains a URL identifying the Record to be moved. If <i>Source</i> is omitted or specifies an empty string, the object represented by this Record is moved. For example, if the Record represents a file, the contents of the file are moved to the location specified by <i>Destination</i>.</p> <p><i>Destination</i></p> <p>Optional. A String value that contains a URL specifying the location where <i>Source</i> will be moved.</p> <p><i>UserName</i></p> <p>Optional. A String value that contains the user ID that, if needed, authorizes access to <i>Destination</i>.</p> <p><i>Password</i></p> <p>Optional. A String that contains the password that, if needed, verifies <i>UserName</i>.</p> <p><i>Options</i></p> <p>Optional. A MoveRecordOptionsEnum value whose default value is adMoveUnspecified. Specifies the behavior of this method.</p> <p><i>Async</i></p> <p>Optional. A Boolean value that, when True, specifies this operation should be asynchronous.</p>
Return value	<p>If the element returns a value, describe the value and information about its data type. If the value is a Boolean that indicates the presence of a condition, describe the condition.</p> <p>Example</p>

Section	Contains
	<p>A String value. Typically, the value of <i>Destination</i> is returned. However, the exact value returned is provider-dependent.</p>
Remarks	<p>Additional information about the element and important details that may not be obvious from its syntax, parameters, or return value. For example, you might explain what the element does in more detail, compare it with similar elements, and identify potential issues in its use.</p>
	<p>Example</p>
	<p>The values of <i>Source</i> and <i>Destination</i> must not be identical; otherwise, a runtime error occurs. At least the server, path, and resource names must differ.</p>
	<p>For files moved using the Internet Publishing Provider, this method updates all hypertext links in files being moved unless otherwise specified by <i>Options</i>. This method fails if <i>Destination</i> identifies an existing object (for example, a file or directory), unless adMoveOverWrite is specified.</p>
	<p>Note Use the adMoveOverWrite option judiciously. For example, specifying this option when moving a file to a directory will delete the directory and replace it with the file.</p>
	<p>Certain attributes of the Record object, such as the ParentURL property, won't be updated after this operation completes. Refresh the Record object's properties by closing the Record, then reopening it with the URL of the location where the file or directory was moved.</p>
	<p>If this Record was obtained from a Recordset, the new location of the moved file or directory won't be reflected immediately in the Recordset. Refresh the Recordset by closing and reopening it.</p>
	<p>Note URLs using the http scheme will automatically invoke the Microsoft OLE DB Provider for Internet Publishing. For more information, see Absolute and Relative URLs.</p>
Example	<p>A code example that illustrates how to use the programming element. For more information about writing useful code examples, see Code examples.</p>
Requirements or Applies to	<p>Language or platform requirements for using the element.</p>
	<p>Example</p>
	<p>Record Object (ADO)</p>
See also	<p>References or links to more information about how to use the element.</p>
	<p>References or links to related elements.</p>
	<p>Examples</p>
	<p>Move Method (ADO)</p>
	<p>MoveFirst, MoveLast, MoveNext, and MovePrevious Methods (ADO)</p>
	<p>MoveFirst, MoveLast, MoveNext, and MovePrevious Methods (RDS)</p>

Other information can appear in reference articles as appropriate to the language, product, or technology. For example, instead of a parameter description as shown in the preceding table, there can be descriptions of members, methods, property values, and field values. The following table contains an example of a property value and examples of exceptions and permissions.

 Expand table

Section	Contains
Property value	<p>A description of the value for a property or field. If the property or field has a default value, describe that, too. Include the data type of the property value if applicable.</p> <p>Example</p> <p>Property Value</p> <p>String</p> <p>Returns or sets a String value representing the current date according to your system.</p>
Exceptions/error codes	<p>If the element can throw exceptions or raise errors when called, list them and describe the conditions under which they occur.</p> <p>Example</p> <p><code>IOException</code>—An I/O error occurred.</p> <p><code>ArgumentNullException</code>—<i>format</i> is null.</p> <p><code>FormatException</code>—The format specification in <i>format</i> is invalid.</p>
Permissions	<p>Security permissions that apply to the element, if required.</p> <p>Example</p> <p>Requires CREATE FUNCTION permission in the database and ALTER permission on the schema in which the function is being created. If the function specifies a user-defined type, requires EXECUTE permission on the type.</p>

If you automatically generate reference documentation and comments from the source code, review the quality and appropriateness of the comments. Developers might leave out details that are important to customers. Remove any implementation or internal details that aren't suitable for documentation.

Learn more For other examples of technical reference articles, see the [.NET API Browser](#).

Code examples

Article • 06/24/2022

Code examples illustrate how to use a programming element to implement specific functionality. They might include:

- Simple, one-line examples interspersed with text.
- Short, self-contained examples that illustrate specific points.
- Long samples that illustrate multiple features, complex scenarios, or best practices.

Developers use code examples to:

- Assess a technology through its API during planning.
- Learn or explore a language or technology.
- Write and debug code.

Many developers copy example code from documentation into their own code or adapt code examples to their own needs.

To create useful code examples, identify tasks and scenarios that are meaningful for your audience, and then create examples that illustrate those scenarios. Code examples that demonstrate product features are useful only when they address the problems that developers are trying to solve.

Guidelines for planning code examples

- Create concise examples that exemplify key development tasks. Start with simple examples and build up complexity after you cover common scenarios.
- Prioritize frequently used elements and elements that may be difficult to understand or tricky to use.
- Don't use code examples to illustrate obvious points or contrived scenarios.
- Create code examples that are easy to scan and understand. Reserve complicated examples for tutorials and walkthroughs, where you can provide a step-by-step explanation of how the example works.
- Add an introduction to describe the scenario and explain anything that might not be clear from the code. List the requirements and dependencies for using or running the example.
- Provide an easy way for developers to copy and run the code. If the code example demonstrates interactive and animated features, consider providing a way for the

developer to run the example directly from your content page.

- Use appropriate keywords, linking strategies, and other search engine optimization (SEO) techniques to improve the visibility and usability of the code examples. For example, add links to relevant code example pages and content pages to improve SEO across your content. See [Search and writing](#).

Guidelines for writing code examples

- Design code for reuse. Help developers determine what to modify. Add comments to explain details, but don't overdo it. Don't state the obvious.
- Show expected output, either in a separate section after the code example or by using code comments within the code example.
- Consider accessibility requirements for code that creates UI. For example, include alternate text for images.
- Write secure code. For example, always validate user input, never hard-code passwords in code, and use code-analysis tools to detect security issues.
- Show exception handling only when it's intrinsic to the example. Don't catch exceptions thrown when invalid arguments are passed to parameters.
- Always compile and test your code.

Formatting developer text elements

Article • 06/24/2022

Consistent text formatting helps readers locate and interpret information. Follow these formatting conventions for text elements commonly used in content for developers.

For information about referring to UI elements, see [Formatting text in instructions](#).

See also

[Capitalization](#)

[Formatting common text elements](#)

[Procedures and instructions](#)

[+] [Expand table](#)

Element	Convention	Example
Attributes	Bold. Capitalization varies.	<code>IfOutputPrecision</code>
Classes (predefined)	Bold. Capitalization varies.	<code>ios</code> <code>filebuf</code> <code>BitArray</code>
Classes (user-defined)	Bold. Capitalization varies.	<code>BlueTimerControl</code>
Code samples, including keywords and variables within text and as separate paragraphs, and user-defined program elements within text	Monospace.	<code>#include <iostream.h></code> <code>void main ()</code>
Command-line commands	Bold. All lowercase.	<code>copy</code>
Command-line options (also known as switches or flags)	Bold. Capitalize the way the option must be typed.	<code>/a</code> <code>/Aw</code>
Constants	Usually bold. Capitalization varies.	<code>INT_MAX</code> <code>bDenyWrite</code> <code>CS_DBLCLKS</code>
Control classes	Often bold. All	<code>EDIT control class</code>

Element	Convention	Example
	uppercase.	
Data formats	Often bold. All uppercase.	CF_DIB format
Data structures and their members (predefined)	Bold. Capitalization varies.	BITMAP bmBits CREATESTRUCT hInstance
Data types	Bold. Capitalization follows that of the API.	DWORD float HANDLE
Database names	Bold. The capitalization of database names varies.	Contoso database
Directives	Bold.	#include #define
Environment variables	Often all uppercase.	INCLUDE SESSIONNAME
Error messages	Sentence-style capitalization. Enclose in quotation marks when referencing error messages in text.	An error occurred during report processing. If you see the error message, "Placeholder text in a content control contains items that aren't valid," remove floating objects, revision marks, or content controls from placeholder text, and try again.
Event names	Bold. Treatment of event names varies.	In the OnClick event procedure
Fields (members of a class or structure)	Bold. Treatment of field names varies.	IfHeight biPlanes
File attributes	All lowercase.	The attrib command displays, sets, or removes the read-only, archive, system, and hidden attributes assigned to files or directories.
File name extensions	All lowercase.	.mdb .doc
File names (user-defined examples)	Title-style capitalization. It's OK to use internal capital letters in file names for readability.	My Taxes for 2016 MyTaxesFor2016

Element	Convention	Example
Folder and directory names (user-defined examples)	Sentence-style capitalization. It's OK to use internal capital letters in folder and directory names for readability.	Vacation and sick pay MyFiles\Accounting\Payroll\VacPay
Functions (predefined)	Usually bold. Capitalization varies.	CompactDatabase CWnd::CreateEx FadePic
Handles	All uppercase.	HWND
Keywords (language and operating system)	Bold. Capitalization follows the application programming interface.	main True void
Logical operators	Bold. All uppercase.	AND XOR
Macros	Usually all uppercase. Bold if predefined. Might be monospace if user defined.	LOWORD MASKROP
Markup language elements (tags)	Bold. Capitalization varies.	 <input type=text> <!DOCTYPE html>
Mathematical constants and variables	Italic.	<i>a</i> ² + <i>b</i> ² = <i>c</i> ²
Members	Bold. Capitalization varies.	ulNumCharsAllowed
Methods	Bold. Capitalization varies.	OpenForm GetPrevious
New terms	Italicize the first mention of a new term if you're going to define it immediately in text.	Microsoft Exchange consists of both <i>server</i> and <i>client</i> components.
Operators	Bold.	+ , - sizeof
Parameters	Italic. Capitalization	<i>Hdc</i>

Element	Convention	Example
	varies.	<i>grfFlagClientBinding</i>
Placeholders (in syntax and in user input)	Italic.	/v: <i>version</i> Enter <i>password</i> .
Ports	All uppercase.	LPT1
Products, services, apps, and trademarks	Usually title-style capitalization. Check the Microsoft trademark list for capitalization of trademarked names.	Microsoft Arc Touch Mouse Microsoft Word Surface Pro Notepad Network Connections Makefile RC program
Properties	Usually bold. Capitalization varies.	M_bClipped AbsolutePosition Message ID
Registers	All uppercase. Treatment varies.	DS
Registry settings	Subtrees (first-level items) all uppercase. Separated by underscores. Usually bold. Registry keys (second-level items) follow the capitalization of the UI. Registry subkeys (below the second level) follow the capitalization of the Regedit UI.	HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE SOFTWARE ApplicationIdentifier Microsoft
Statements	Bold. Capitalization varies.	IMPORTS LIBRARY
Structures	Usually bold. Capitalization varies.	ACCESSTIMEOUT
Switches	Bold. Usually lowercase.	build: commands
UI text or strings	Sentence-style capitalization.	Import from file Create a new resource See all your resources

Element	Convention	Example
		Manually trigger a flow Report a bug
URLs	All lowercase for complete URLs. If necessary, line-break long URLs before a slash. Don't hyphenate. See also URLs and web addresses .	www.microsoft.com msdn.microsoft.com/downloads
User input	Usually lowercase, unless case sensitive. Bold or italic, depending on the element. If the user input string contains placeholder text, use italic for that text.	Enter hello world Enter -p <i>password</i>
Values	All uppercase.	DIB_PAL_COLORS
Variables	Treatment varies.	bEmpty m_nParams <i>file_name</i>
XML schema elements	Bold. Capitalization varies.	ElementType element xml:space attribute

Final publishing review

Article • 06/24/2022

Use these tips to help you edit like a pro, so your final content and design shine.

Hit the mark. Review the project brief and customer insights one last time. Did you nail the objective? Is the value proposition front and center? Are key messages and benefits clear?

Get a second opinion. Find someone completely removed from the work to offer feedback and act as the customer. (Or hire an editor.) No matter how well you write, a second set of eyes always offers a new perspective. And don't take suggestions personally—keep an open mind and be flexible to new ways to get the results you want. If something trips up your reviewer, get rid of it, no matter how much you like it.

Read your work aloud. Read it forward, and then backward—one sentence at a time. It may sound silly, but potential edits will jump out.

Read only the headings, and then only the first sentence of every paragraph. Do they tell a story? Are there gaps? Repeated ideas?

Check for keywords in titles and headings. Titles and headings help readers scan and help search engines find your content. Make sure you include relevant keywords in the first few words. While you're at it, read your first sentence to see if it will make sense as a search engine description. To learn more, see [Search and writing](#).

Search for and remove unnecessary and redundant elements. Try removing words, sentences, paragraphs, headings, even entire sections. If you don't miss it, leave it out. It's good for your opening paragraph to summarize the piece at a high level. But don't repeat phrases verbatim, or include tips or notes found later in the text.

Pay attention to the spell checker. Those squiggly lines will help you eliminate a lot of errors. But spell checkers can't think. It's up to you to check each suggestion. Otherwise you might end up saying *manger* where you meant *manager*.

Take a break. Leave the finished piece alone for a day. Read it again tomorrow—you may see things you missed.

Evaluate the voice and personality. Before you call it done, read it one final time. Can you hear the fresh and modern [Microsoft voice](#)? Your writing should sound warm and relaxed, crisp and clear, and ready to lend a hand.

Global communications

Article • 06/24/2022

Microsoft customers live and work all over the world and speak a variety of languages. This section will help you write content for worldwide communication.

It's usually safe to assume your content will be read in many countries and by readers whose primary language isn't English. Some content will probably be translated into other languages or localized.

Translation is simply changing the language of content. Translation is often automated using machine translation.

Localization is the process of adapting a product or content (including text and other elements) to meet the language, cultural, and political expectations and requirements of a specific local market (locale). Localization is done by people who are familiar with the local language and culture.

This section provides guidelines for supporting worldwide customers who use English content and for streamlining localization and machine translation. You'll find a few exceptions to general Microsoft voice and style guidance. This section covers:

- [Art](#)
- [Currency](#)
- [Examples and scenarios](#)
- [Names and contact information](#)
- [Time and place](#)
- [Web, software, and HTML considerations](#)
- [Writing tips](#)

Learn more about worldwide audiences

Be curious. If you write for audiences in particular countries or regions, subscribe to local email newsletters, visit local websites, and follow local news.

Use these resources:

- [Microsoft International Style Guides ↗](#)
- [Plain Language Action and Information Network \(United States\) ↗](#)
- [World Time Zones ↗](#)
- [W3C Internationalization Activity ↗](#)

Read more:

- John R. Kohl, *The Global English Style Guide: Writing Clear, Translatable Documentation for a Global Market* (Cary, NC: SAS Institute, Inc., 2008).
- Edmond H. Weiss, *The Elements of International English Style: A Guide to Writing Correspondence, Reports, Technical Documents, and Internet Pages for a Global Audience* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2005).

Art

Article • 06/24/2022

Use these guidelines to create or choose images that are helpful, legal, and inoffensive throughout the world.

Color

Choose carefully. Colors may have religious, cultural, or political significance, particularly colors used on flags or for country- or region-specific holidays. Neutral and brand colors are usually OK. Your international program manager can provide guidance.

Images

Choose simple or generic images that are appropriate worldwide. Soccer players and equipment, generic landscapes and settings, pens and pencils, international highway signs, and historic artifacts are appropriate images worldwide.

- Avoid holiday or seasonal images.
- Avoid major landmarks and well-known buildings, which may have legal protections or be associated with politics or religion.
- Social or work situations involving men and women are risky in a few locales.
- Don't use hand signs.
- Don't use art based on English idioms.

Limit graphics and animations online. In some countries or regions, long page-loading times can be expensive.

If you use text in graphics, make sure it's easy to edit. Automatic translation software won't translate it. If possible, use captions or describe the graphic in text, instead.

Create descriptive alt text for images, especially button images, which readers may not understand.

Store art in a separate file and link to it from within a document if possible. Localizers can modify art that isn't embedded in the document.

Check restrictions on imported content in countries or regions where the content will be used. Be especially careful with maps, which may be subject to government review.

Improper treatment of a disputed area may be illegal in some countries.

Currency

Article • 06/24/2022

Currency names

In general, lowercase the names of currencies, but capitalize the reference to the country or region.

Examples

US dollar

Canadian dollar

Hong Kong SAR dollar

Brazilian real

South African rand

Pricing through the Microsoft Online Subscription Program is shown in US dollars.

In a structured list, for example a table that compares available pricing options, it's OK to capitalize the name of the currency.

Example

This offer is available to customers located in one of the following countries/regions and will be billed in the currency noted:

Afghanistan	US Dollar (\$)	Lebanon	US Dollar (\$)
Albania	US Dollar (\$)	Libya	US Dollar (\$)
Algeria	US Dollar (\$)	Liechtenstein	Swiss Franc (chf)
Angola	US Dollar (\$)	Lithuania	Euro (€)
Argentina	Argentine Peso (\$)	Luxembourg	Euro (€)
Armenia	US Dollar (\$)	Macao	US Dollar (\$)
Australia	Australian Dollar (\$)	Macedonia (FYRO)	US Dollar (\$)
Austria	Euro (€)	Malaysia	Malaysian Ringgit (RM\$)

Specific monetary amounts

When you're referencing specific amounts of money, use the currency code, followed by the amount, with no space.

Example

The company generated BRL2.89 billion (USD1.42 billion) in net revenue in 2015.

If it's clear which currency you mean, it's OK to use just the symbol. When referring to a specific amount in euros, use the euro symbol (€), not the word *euros*.

Examples

One of the largest companies in the United States, Adatum Corporation generated \$1.42 billion in net revenue in 2015.

Adatum Corporation generated €1.42 billion in net revenue in 2015.

Examples and scenarios

Article • 06/24/2022

Fictitious examples that include the names of people, places, or organizations are potentially sensitive. Use-case scenarios—detailed descriptions of specific customer interactions with a product, service, or technology—present similar problems. To globalize examples and use-case scenarios, use these guidelines.

Be sensitive to how use-case scenarios may be perceived in other cultures. Social situations, politics, religion, events, holidays, sports, traditions, and legal and business practices vary worldwide. For example, greeting cards are uncommon in many parts of the world, and in some cultures men and women don't touch in public, even to shake hands.

Avoid mentioning real places altogether, or use the names of recognizable cities from different parts of the world. Vary the locales from one example to the next.

Avoid discussing technologies and standards that aren't used worldwide. Standards vary, from phone, mobile, wireless, and video to measurement, paper size, character sets, and text direction. And don't assume US standards are familiar or relevant to everyone.

Names and contact information

Article • 06/24/2022

Forms that collect information

If you're creating a real or sample form that collects personal information, use these guidelines.

Names

- Use *First name* and *Last name* in forms, or simply *Full name*.
- If you include a *Middle name* field, make it optional.
- Use *Title*, not *Honorific*, to describe words such as *Mr.* and *Mrs.* Not all cultures have equivalents to some titles used in the United States, such as *Ms.*

Addresses

- Provide fields long enough for customers to include whatever information is appropriate for their locale.
- Use *State or province* instead of *State*. Fields that might not be relevant everywhere, such as *State or province*, should be optional.
- Use *Country or region* instead of just *Country* to accommodate disputed territories. It's OK to use *Country/Region* if space is limited.
- Include a field for *Country or region code* if you need information for mailing between European countries or regions. It's OK to use *Country/Region code* if space is limited.
- Use *Postal code* instead of *ZIP Code*. Allow for at least 10 characters and a combination of letters and numbers.
- Provide enough space for long phone numbers.

Communications that use the customer's name

It's not appropriate in some markets and cultures to address the customer by name—for example, in an email or product home page.

If you're working on content that addresses the customer by name, confirm that the app can reliably determine what region the customer is in and can use the form of address that's appropriate for that market.

Time and place

Article • 06/24/2022

Use the following guidelines when talking about time and place.

Dates

- Begin calendars on Mondays, which is the custom in much of the world.
- Use the date format *month dd, yyyy*. Don't use numerals to represent months. For example, use January 5, 2018.

Time

- Include the time zone when it matters to customers, such as in an event listing. In time stamps that automatically display the customer's local time, you don't need to include the time zone.

Seasons

- Don't refer to seasons if you can avoid it. Talk about months or calendar quarters instead. If you must mention a specific season, establish the hemisphere, too. (Summer in the northern hemisphere is winter in the southern hemisphere.)

Places

- In event locations, include the country or region name.

See also [Date and time term collection](#)

Web, software, and HTML considerations

Article • 06/24/2022

Web content attracts a worldwide audience. When you develop websites, keep in mind that customers may not have the latest browsers, broadband internet access isn't available everywhere, and internet service providers don't always charge a flat monthly rate for access. Follow these guidelines to support customers around the world.

Support a variety of browsers and experiences

Support browsers likely to be used by worldwide audiences. To support earlier versions of browsers, you might need to:

- Provide a no-frames version.
- Avoid certain elements in scripts.
- Include some design information (such as background color) in the document files instead of the style sheet.
- Avoid nested tables.
- Test using a variety of browsers and versions.

Design content so fonts will be substituted if the specified font isn't available. Avoid hand-drawn fonts and fonts that are hard-coded in text or code.

Use standard HTML tags, not proprietary tags. If you're developing HTML text with scripted code, globalize text that's generated by the scripts, too.

Use the simplest possible design solutions.

Minimize download time

Keep pages as small as possible, and include text-only versions for larger content. Internet service charges still vary greatly by locale and access method.

Design pages so text loads first, followed by graphics, so pages are usable before they're finished loading.

Support multiple languages

Support reading from right to left or from top to bottom. For example, provide key information, such as home page links, at both the upper-right and upper-left sides of the page.

Allow space for text expansion due to localization.

Comply with US and local laws as well as software availability

Follow laws pertaining to software restrictions. Pay particular attention to downloads and multiproduct DVDs.

- US law restricts the international delivery of certain information and technology. Verify that the download complies with US law.
- Be aware of local download restrictions. The distribution of marketing statements; political statements; and the names of people, places, and landmarks is restricted by law in some countries and regions. Verify that the download is legal in the country or region.

Verify availability. Some products and formats aren't available worldwide. Localized versions of new and updated products and formats may lag behind US availability.

Globalize links

Link only to sites that are available and useful worldwide.

Link to a site where the reader can specify the appropriate country or region, if possible.

Identify links and cross-references that aren't globally relevant. If you must link to a site or refer to a publication that's not globalized, inform your readers.

Know where your email is going

Monitor subscriptions to your newsletter to determine the reader's location.

Newsletters emailed to people outside the United States must be globalized, localized, or customized to meet local requirements.

Writing tips

Article • 06/14/2023

Content that's easy to read tends to be easy to localize and translate. If you follow the writing recommendations in this style guide, you're off to a great start. Pay particular attention to:

- Word choice
- Grammar and parts of speech
- Punctuation

Tips for all global content

These practices will help localizers and customers.

Write short, simple sentences. Punctuating a sentence with more than a few commas and end punctuation usually indicates a complex sentence. Consider rewriting it or breaking it into multiple sentences.

Replace complex sentences and paragraphs with lists and tables.

Include *that* and *who*. They help to clarify the sentence structure.

Examples

Inspect the database to verify that all tables, data, and relationships were correctly migrated.

Select the checkbox of each folder that you want to sync with your desktop.

Include articles, such as *the*. Articles help readers and translation software identify the nouns and modifiers in a sentence.

Examples

Empty the container.

The empty container

If necessary for clarity, include verbs in short headings and UI labels. For example, say *Access is denied* instead of *Access denied*.

Use sentence-style capitalization. Capitalize proper nouns only, including trademarks and the names of products.

Avoid idioms, colloquial expressions, and culture-specific references. They can be confusing for non-native English speakers and hard to localize. Consider the worldwide

implications of what you write. Customers in other locales may not know much about the history and culture of your country.

Avoid modifier stacks. Long chains of modifying words are confusing even to native English speakers. For example, say "Your migration will proceed more smoothly if you have a project plan that's well thought out," not "With an extremely well thought-out Windows migration project plan, your migration will go more smoothly."

Use active voice and indicative mood most of the time. Use imperative mood in procedures.

Keep adjectives and adverbs close to the words they modify. Pay particular attention to the placement of *only*.

Avoid linking more than three phrases or clauses by using coordinate conjunctions such as *and*, *or*, or *but*. Better yet, avoid linking more than two.

Additional tips for machine translation

Writing style affects the quality of machine translation. These tips will help you write text that's more likely to be translated accurately by machine translation. Follow these guidelines for technical content, instructions, white papers, and other content that has high business value but won't be localized.

Use conventional English grammar and punctuation. Try to balance a friendly voice with clear, accurate English.

Use simple sentence structures. Write sentences that use standard word order (that is, subject + verb + object) whenever possible.

Use one word for a concept, and use it consistently. Avoid using synonyms to refer to the same concept or feature. And don't use the same word to refer to multiple concepts or features.

Limit your use of sentence fragments. Sentence fragments can be hard to translate.

Use words ending in *-ing* carefully. A word ending in *-ing* can be a verb, an adjective, or a noun. Use the sentence structure and optional words to clarify the role of the *-ing* word.

Use words ending in *-ed* carefully. A word ending in *-ed* can be a modifier or part of a verb phrase. Use the sentence structure and optional words to clarify the role of the *-ed* word.

- Add a determiner (*a, an, the, this*) before or after the *-ed* word.

Example

They have **an** added functionality.

- Add a form of the verb *be*.

Example

Configure limits for the backup **that are based** on the amount of storage space available.

- Split the sentence in two.

Example

Configure limits for the backup. These limits should be based on the amount of storage space available.

- Rewrite the sentence to avoid the *-ed* word.

Example

Configure limits for the backup. **Base the limits** on the amount of storage space available.

Use only common abbreviations, such as *USB*, and abbreviations that are defined in glossaries. Check with a localization expert to find out if an acronym is defined.

Grammar and parts of speech

Article • 06/24/2022

Simple grammar tends to be easy to read and understand, like a conversation. That basic grammar you learned before you were 12 is probably just right for most Microsoft content.

This section covers common grammatical issues:

- [Verbs](#)
- [Person](#)
- [Nouns and pronouns](#)
- [Words ending in *-ing*](#)
- [Prepositions](#)
- [Dangling and misplaced modifiers](#)

Learn more For more information about grammar and parts of speech, see [*The Chicago Manual of Style* ↗](#).

Verbs

Article • 06/24/2022

Using precise verbs in the right way helps you write clear and simple sentences.

Verb tense

In the present tense, the action is happening now. The present tense is often easier to read and understand than the past or future tense. It's the best choice for most content.

Examples

The Windows Start screen is uniquely yours, personalized with your favorite apps, people, photos, and colors.

Windows Update installs important updates automatically.

Mood of verbs

The mood of a verb expresses the writer's intent. Most of the time, use the indicative mood. It's crisp and straightforward without being bossy. Don't switch moods within a sentence.

[\[+\] Expand table](#)

Mood	Use for	Examples
Indicative	Statements of fact, questions, assertions, and explanations—most Microsoft content.	Style sheets are powerful tools for formatting complex documents.
Imperative	Instructions, procedures, direct commands, requests, and headings for columns that list customer actions.	Enter a file name, and then save the file. To do this Select this
Subjunctive	Wishes, hypotheses, and suggestions—avoid.	We recommend that you be careful about opening email attachments.

Active and passive voice

Voice is either active or passive. Keep it active whenever you can.

- In active voice, the subject of the sentence performs the action.
- In passive voice, the subject is the receiver of the action.

[Expand table](#)

Voice	Uses	Examples
Active	Most Microsoft content	Divide your document into as many sections as you want. Office 365 includes the Office 2016 apps for PC and Mac.
Passive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Avoiding condescending text or blaming the customer, especially in errors, warnings, or notificationsAvoiding awkward constructionsEmphasizing the receiver of the action	<p>That site can't be found. Double-check the site address in the Address bar.</p> <p>When the user clicks OK, the transaction is committed. (in content for developers)</p>

Verb agreement

Verbs have singular and plural forms. Use the verb form that agrees with the subject of the sentence in number.

[Expand table](#)

When the subject is	The verb is	Examples
A group of things	Singular	A variety of games is available from Microsoft Store.
Two or more singular things connected by <i>and</i>	Plural	Facebook and Twitter are available from Microsoft Store.
Two or more singular things connected by <i>or</i>	Singular	Your tablet or phone is all you need to play your favorite games on the go.
A singular thing and a plural thing connected by <i>or</i>	Singular or plural, to match the closest subject	Skype or social media apps are available from Microsoft Store. Social media apps or Skype is available from Microsoft Store.

Person

Article • 06/24/2022

In grammar, *person* refers to the point of view represented by a statement and determines which pronoun to use.

In general, use second-person pronouns (*you*, *your*)

In second person, you write as though you're speaking to the reader. The second person often uses the personal pronoun *you* or *your*, but sometimes the word *you* is implied. It supports a friendly, human tone and helps avoid passive voice by focusing the discussion on the reader. Omit *you can* whenever the sentence works without it.

In product UI, avoid using *you* and *your* in ways that sound like we're commanding people to do something rather than providing options for them to make their own choices.

However, when AI-generated content is used, we should use past tense (to express action done behind the scenes) by explicitly saying "for you" or by using words that convey uncertainty or subjectivity (to express that a judgment was applied that may or may not be correct).

Examples

Check if you have local admin rights.

Depending on your choice, some features may be turned off by default.

Change your settings

Suggested for you

Use singular first-person pronouns sparingly (*I*, *me*, *my*)

In first person, you write as though you're speaking from the reader's point of view. Marketing and support documentation should never use first person singular. However, it may be used inside our product experiences. First-person singular pronouns can be used in product UI to show someone's control over an action in checkbox, button, or toggle labels.

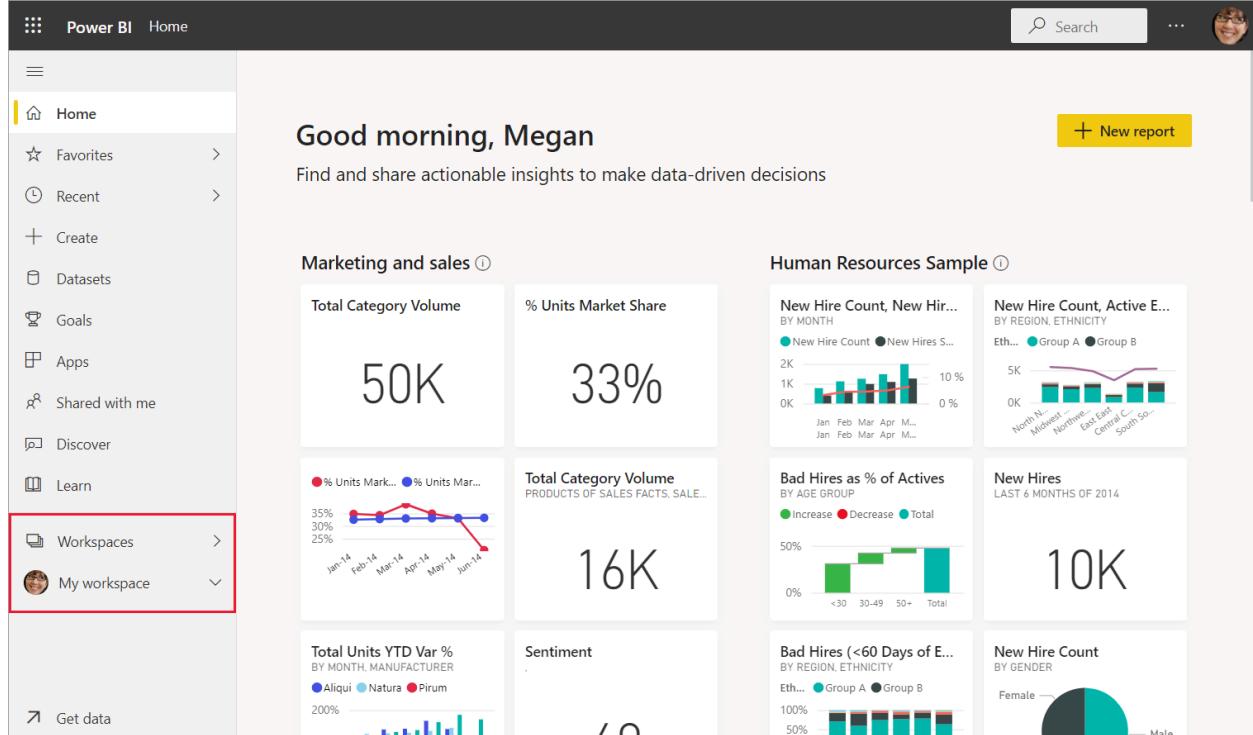
Examples

Notify me when a new Bluetooth device tries to connect to my computer

Remember my password

I agree to the terms of service

Exception In rare cases, it's OK to use "my" in navigation or filter labels if you need to distinguish a person's content from other content that may be presented in the same visual space.



Exception Cortana is a persona, so the use of / is appropriate.

Avoid plural first person (we, us)

First-person plural, which often uses the pronoun *we*, can feel like a daunting corporate presence—the opposite of Microsoft's modern voice. It's OK to use phrasing like *we recommend* if it helps you avoid awkward phrasing like *it's recommended*, but write around it if you can. Try to keep the focus on the customer, not Microsoft. It's OK to use *we* in privacy and security settings where you need to make clear Microsoft is the speaker.

Examples

Notify scheduled default setting is the easiest way to keep your computer up to date.
(Instead of *We recommend that you use the scheduled default setting*)

Change your password (Instead of *We recommend that you change your password*.)

We protect your privacy at every step.

That didn't work. Try again. (Instead of *We weren't able to run the Solution Checker. Try running it again.*)

Allow Microsoft to contact you about this feedback

Nouns and pronouns

Article • 08/26/2024

Capitalization and proper nouns

Proper nouns are one of a kind—unique people, places, and things. Capitalize proper nouns wherever they occur.

Proper nouns include:

- Names and titles of individuals.
- Unique, named places, organizations, events, shows, corporate and philanthropic programs, and other things.
- Product, service, app, and tool names.
- Trademarks.
- Titles of books, songs, and other published works.
- Managed standards, such as Bluetooth.

If there's more than one of a thing, it's a common noun. For example, there are lots of chief operating officers, so *chief operating officer* is a common noun. There's only one *Chief Operating Officer Latasha Sharp*, so that's a proper noun.

Don't capitalize common nouns unless they begin a sentence or the situation calls for title-style capitalization. Most technology concepts, product categories, devices, and features are common nouns, not proper nouns. Examples of common nouns include *cloud computing*, *smartphone*, *e-commerce*, and *open source*.

Capitalize technology terms as proper nouns only when:

- You need to distinguish a component or product, such as SQL Server, from a general technology with a similar name, such as an SQL database server.
- The terms are typically capitalized in the industry. Search [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#), reputable internet sites, and industry-specific dictionaries. Don't rely on unedited websites.

If you're not sure whether a term is a proper noun (and thus capitalized) or a common noun (lowercase), check [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#), and the A–Z word list. Default to lowercase unless there's a compelling reason to capitalize the term.

Learn more For guidelines for sentence-style and title-style capitalization, see [Capitalization](#).

Plural nouns

Some nouns can be challenging to use in the plural. The simple rules that follow will help.

To check the spelling of plural forms of words derived from Latin and Greek that retain their Latin or Greek endings (typically *-a*, *-us*, *-um*, *-on*, *-ix*, or *-ex*), see specific entries in the A–Z word list and [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#).

 Expand table

Noun	Plural form	Examples
Common and proper nouns ending in <i>s</i>	If the noun ends in <i>s</i> , add <i>es</i> .	the Johnsons the Joneses biases
Singular abbreviation	Add an <i>s</i> , even if the abbreviation ends in <i>s</i> .	ISVs DBMSs
Plural abbreviation	If an abbreviation already represents a plural, don't add an <i>s</i> .	MFC (Microsoft Foundation Classes)
Single letter	Add an apostrophe and an <i>s</i> . The letter itself (but not the apostrophe or the ending <i>s</i>) is italic.	<i>x's</i>
Number	Add an <i>s</i> .	the 1950s
Variable	Don't add (<i>s</i>) to a word to indicate that it could be either singular or plural unless you have no other choice. Use the plural form instead.	Wait for <i>x</i> minutes.

Pronouns and gender

Don't use gendered pronouns in generic references. Instead, rewrite—for example, use the second person (*you*).

Or refer to a person's role (*customer*, *employee*, or *client*). It's OK to use *he*, *she*, or *they* when you're writing about real people who use those pronouns themselves.

They can be used as a non-binary pronoun for a singular person instead of a binary pronoun (*she* or *he*).

For more guidelines about how to write using gender-neutral pronouns, see [Bias-free communication](#).

Pronouns and collective nouns

Collective nouns like *company* take a singular pronoun. Don't use a plural pronoun (like *they*) for a collective noun.

Examples

Meet with up to 250 people. All they need is a phone or internet connection.

The company upgraded its cloud storage solution to Microsoft Azure.

Exception If the emphasis is on the individuals in a group, it's OK to use a plural pronoun with a singular noun.

Using pronouns in product UI

See also [Person](#).

Words ending in -ing

Article • 06/24/2022

A word ending in *-ing* can be a verb, a noun, or an adjective. Use *-ing* words with care. The sentence should make it clear which role the word plays.

For example, we don't know whether the heading, *Meeting requirements*, will be a discussion of how to meet requirements or the requirements for a meeting. These examples are clearer:

- The meeting requirements
- Meeting the requirements
- The requirements for the meeting
- How to meet the requirements

Prepositions

Article • 06/24/2022

Prepositional phrases

A prepositional phrase is a combination of a preposition and a noun that modifies or describes some part of a sentence. In the following sentence:

The reading pane displays the content of the selected message.

The prepositional phrase, *of the selected message*, describes the noun, *the content*.

Avoid joining more than two prepositional phrases. Long chains of prepositional phrases are hard to read and easy to misinterpret.

Learn more For information about using prepositional phrases in procedures, see [Writing step-by-step instructions](#).

Placement in the sentence

It's OK to end a sentence with a preposition when it improves readability.

Examples

Use a different instrumentation key for each environment that your application runs in.
Specify which event hub you want to send the data to.

Dangling and misplaced modifiers

Article • 06/24/2022

Modifiers are single words or phrases that modify other words or phrases. Position a modifier to make it clear what it modifies.

If you keep sentences short and simple and use active voice, you probably won't run into dangling or misplaced modifiers.

- A *dangling modifier* doesn't modify anything in the sentence.
- A *misplaced modifier* is too far from the thing it modifies or too near to something else that it could modify.

[] Expand table

Example	Meaning
<i>Only</i> the selected text is deleted.	Nothing other than the selected text is deleted.
The selected text <i>only</i> is deleted.	<i>Only</i> could modify <i>is deleted</i> or <i>text</i> . This sentence could mean one of two things: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The selected graphics aren't deleted.• The text is deleted but not archived.
There are files <i>that can't be removed</i> on the disk.	The phrase <i>that can't be removed</i> modifies <i>the files</i> . This sentence clearly explains that the files can't be removed, and they are on the disk.
There are files on the disk <i>that can't be removed</i> .	The phrase <i>that can't be removed</i> probably modifies <i>the disk</i> , but the writer may have intended to modify <i>files</i> . This sentence could mean one of two things: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The files can't be removed.• The disk can't be removed.

Numbers

Article • 06/24/2022

Be consistent in your use of numbers. When you write about numbers used in examples or UI, duplicate them exactly as they appear in the UI. In all other content, follow the guidelines below.

Numerals vs. words

- In body text, spell out whole numbers from zero through nine, and use numerals for 10 or greater. It's OK to use numerals for zero through nine when you have limited space, such as in tables and UI.

Examples

10 screen savers

five databases

zero probability

7,990,000

1,000

- Spell out zero through nine and use numerals for 10 or greater for days, weeks, and other units of time.

Examples

seven years

28 days

12 hrs

- If one item requires a numeral, use numerals for all the other items of that type.

Examples

One article has 16 pages, one has 7 pages, and the third has only 5 pages.

Microsoft Inspire is only one month and 12 days away.

- When two numbers that refer to different things must appear together, use a numeral for one and spell out the other.

Example

fifteen 20-page articles

- Don't start a sentence with a numeral. Add a modifier before the number, or spell the number out if you can't rewrite the sentence. It's OK to start list items with numerals—use your judgment.

Examples

More than 10 apps are included.

Eleven apps are included.

- Use numerals in these situations.

 Expand table

Use numerals for	Examples
Measurements of distance, temperature, volume, size, weight, pixels, points, and so on—even if the number is less than 10.	3 feet, 5 inches 1.76 lb 80×80 pixels 0.75 grams 3 centimeters 3 cm
A number the customer is directed to enter.	Enter 5.
A round number of 1 million or more.	7 million
Dimensions. Spell out <i>by</i> , except for tile sizes, screen resolutions, and paper sizes. For those, use the multiplication sign (\times). Use a space before and after the multiplication sign.	10-foot cable 4×4 tile 8.5" \times 11" paper 1280×1024
Time of day. Include <i>AM</i> or <i>PM</i> . Exception Don't use numerals for <i>12:00</i> . Use <i>noon</i> or <i>midnight</i> instead. Include the time zone if you're discussing an event, and customers beyond the local time zone may see it. Time stamps in UI and websites usually display local time and date automatically.	10:45 AM 6:30 PM The meeting is at noon. The event starts at 5:00 PM Pacific Time. The date changes at midnight.
Percentages, no matter how small. Use a numeral plus <i>percent</i> to specify a percentage. Use <i>percentage</i> when you don't specify a quantity.	At least 50 percent of your system resources should be available. Only 1 percent of the test group was unable to complete the task. A large percentage of system resources should be available.
Coordinates of tables or worksheets and numbered sections of documents.	row 3, column 4 Volume 2 Chapter 10 Part 5 step 1

Commas in numbers

Use commas in numbers that have four or more digits.

Examples

\$1,024

1,093 MB

Exception When designating years, pixels, or baud, use commas only when the number has five or more digits.

Examples

2500 B.C.

10,000 B.C.

1920 × 1080 pixels

10,240 × 4320 pixels

9600 baud

14,400 baud

Don't use commas in page numbers, addresses, or after the decimal point in decimal fractions.

Examples

page 1091

15601 NE 40th Street

1.06377 units

Numbers in dates

Don't use ordinal numbers, such as *June first* or *October twenty-eighth*, for dates. Use a numeral instead: *June 1, October 28*.

Global tip To avoid confusion, always spell out the name of the month. The positions of the month and day vary by country. For example, 6/12/2017 might be June 12, 2017 or December 6, 2017.

Phone numbers

Use hyphens—not parentheses, periods, spaces, or anything else—to separate the parts of a phone number.

Example 612-555-0175

Global tip For information about how to format phone numbers in a region outside the United States and Canada, refer to the localization style guide for that region.

Negative numbers

Form a negative number with an en dash, not a hyphen:

Example

-79

Compound numbers

Hyphenate compound numbers when they're spelled out.

Examples

twenty-five fonts

the twenty-first day

Fractions and decimals

- Express fractions in words, as symbols, or as decimals, whichever is most appropriate.
- In tables, align decimals on the decimal point.
- Add a zero before the decimal point for decimal fractions less than one, unless the customer is asked to enter the value.

Examples

0.5 cm

enter .75"

- Don't use numerals separated by a slash to express fractions.

Exception When an equation occurs in text, it's OK to use a slash between the numerator and the denominator. Or, in Microsoft Word, go to the **Insert** tab, and select **Equation** to format the equation automatically.

Example

$\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2} = 1$

- Hyphenate spelled-out fractions. Connect the numerator and denominator with a hyphen unless either already contains a hyphen.

Examples

one-third of the page

two-thirds completed

three sixty-fourths

- In measurements where the unit of measure is spelled out, use the plural form when the quantity is a decimal fraction. Use the singular form only when the quantity is 1.

Examples

0.5 inches

0 inches

1 inch

5 inches

Ordinal numbers

- Always spell out ordinal numbers.

Examples

the first row

the twenty-first anniversary

- Don't use ordinal numbers, such as *June first*, for dates.
- Don't add *-ly* to an ordinal number, as in *firstly* or *secondly*.

Ranges of numbers

- In most cases, use *from* and *through* to describe a range of numbers.

Example

from 9 through 17

Exceptions

Use an en dash in a range of pages or where space is an issue, such as in tables and UI. For example, *2016–2020* and *pages 112–120*.

Use *to* in a range of times. For example, *10:00 AM to 2:00 PM*.

- Don't use *from* before a range indicated by an en dash, such as *10–15*.

Abbreviations

In general, don't abbreviate *thousand*, *million*, and *billion* as *K*, *M*, and *B*. Spell out *thousand*, *million*, and *billion*, or use the entire number.

Examples

Fabrikam, Inc., employs more than 65,000 people.

Total cost to the enterprise: 300,000 hours and \$30 million per year

In UI, avoid the abbreviations unless space is too limited to spell out the number.

Global tip Machine translation might not translate these abbreviations correctly. Also, an abbreviated form might not be available or might be longer in the target language, so allow space for expansion in localized content.

If you must use the abbreviations, follow these guidelines:

- Capitalize *K*, *M*, and *B*.
- Don't put a space between the number and the abbreviation.
- Use the decimal form of a number only if it really will save space. In particular, avoid the use of a decimal with *K*—8.21*K* has the same number of characters as 8,210.

See also

[Date and time term collection](#)

[Units of measure term collection](#)

[Bits and bytes term collection](#)

[Dashes and hyphens](#)

[Percent, percentage](#)

[Dashes and hyphens](#)

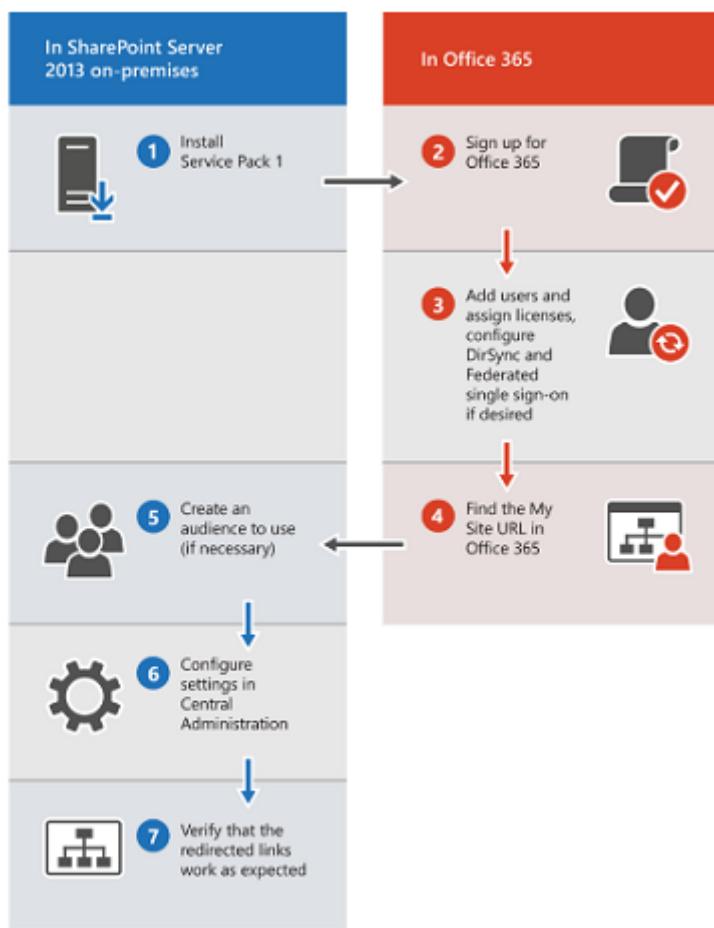
Procedures and instructions

Article • 06/24/2022

The best procedure is the one you don't need. If the UI is crystal clear and leads the customer through a task, a procedure isn't necessary. Start there.

Some tasks are more complex. When you need to provide a procedure, look for the clearest way to present it. That might be:

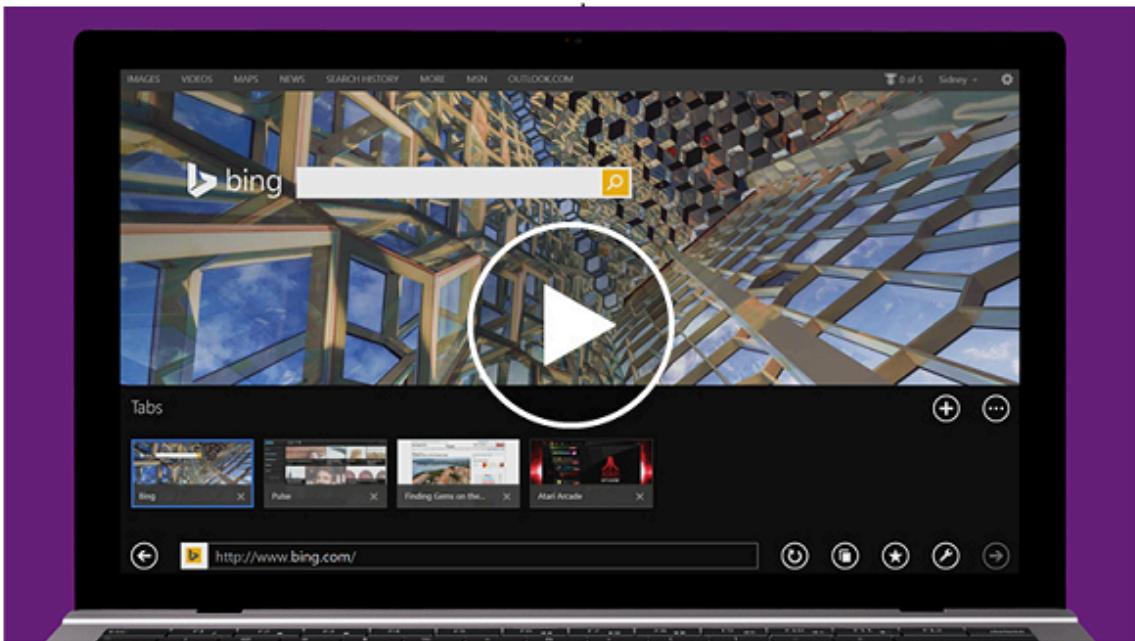
- A picture, an illustration, a poster, or an infographic



- A video.

Getting started with Internet Explorer 11

Internet Explorer 11 is included in your Windows 8.1 or Windows RT 8.1 update. Internet Explorer makes it easier to get where you want to go on the web, and helps you see amazing content at its best. By learning some common gestures and tricks, you'll be able to comfortably use your new browser and get the most out of your favorite sites.



- A one-sentence instruction.

Call a friend

When you get the urge to talk to someone on your phone.

Ready, set, dial—on Start, select **Phone** . After that, select **Dial pad** , dial the number, select **Call** > talk away.

If numbers aren't your thing, select **Phone** > **Phone book** > their name > number to call.

- A numbered procedure, which might include pictures, videos, and links or buttons that take customers where they need to go.

Adding your files to OneDrive

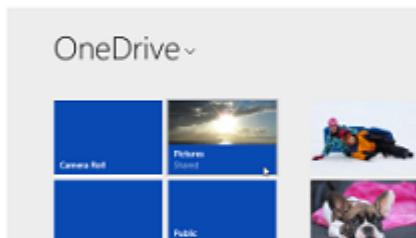
There are a few different ways to put your existing files on OneDrive. First, decide if you want to keep the original files on your PC and put copies of them on OneDrive, or if you want to cut and move them from your PC to OneDrive.

To copy files to OneDrive using the OneDrive app

Step 1
On the Start screen, tap or click OneDrive to open the OneDrive app.



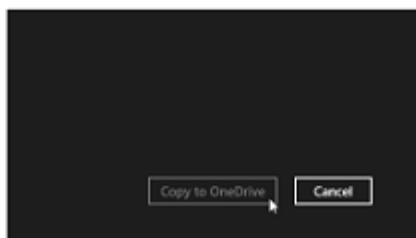
Step 2
Tap or click folders to browse to the location on OneDrive where you want to add the files.



Step 3
Swipe in from the top or bottom edge of the screen or right-click to open the app commands, and then tap or click Add files.



Step 4
Browse to the files you want to upload, tap or click to select them, and then tap or click Copy to OneDrive.



When a procedure is the best approach, use the guidelines in this section to create consistent instructions that are easy to follow:

- [Writing step-by-step instructions](#) describes several ways to write simple and complex instructions.
- [Describing interactions with UI](#) provides a list of input-neutral verbs you can use to write instructions that work with any input method.
- [Describing alternative input methods](#) explains how to describe customer interactions with UI using mouse, keyboard, joystick, pen, touch, and sensor input—and how to consolidate more than one method in instructions.
- [Formatting text in instructions](#) lists the formatting conventions for elements commonly used in instructions.

Note Document all the ways that customers can interact with your UI to support customers of all abilities. This includes mouse, keyboard, voice recognition, game

controller, gesture, and any other input method or device that the product or service supports. The easiest way to approach this is to fully document interactions using each input method, and then write procedures that use input-neutral verbs.

Writing step-by-step instructions

Article • 10/13/2022

Follow these guidelines to help you create clear, easy-to-follow instructions, whether you're writing simple, single-step procedures or complex procedures that consist of multiple steps.

See also

[Formatting text in instructions](#)

[Formatting punctuation](#)

Complex procedures

Complex instructions often consist of multiple steps formatted as a numbered list. For multiple-step procedures in numbered lists:

- Format procedures consistently so customers can find them easily by scanning.
- Consider using a heading to help customers find instructions quickly. Use the heading to tell customers what the instructions will help them do.

Examples

To add an account

Add an account

Choose one phrasing style for the headings, and write them all the same way (in parallel structure).

- Use a separate numbered entry for each step. It's OK to combine short steps that occur in the same place in the UI.
- Most of the time, include actions that finalize a step, such as OK or Apply buttons.
- Use complete sentences.
- Use [imperative verb forms](#). In instructions, customers really want you to tell them what to do.
- Use consistent sentence structures. For example, always use a phrase when you need to tell the customer where to start. The rest of the time, start each sentence with a verb.

Examples

On the ribbon, go to the **Design** tab.

Open Photos.

For Alignment, choose Left.

- Capitalize the first word in each step.
- Use a period after each step.

Exception

When instructing customers to type input that doesn't include end punctuation, don't use a period. Try to format the text so that the user input appears on a new line.

- Limit a procedure to seven steps, and preferably fewer. Try to fit all the steps on the same screen.

Examples

To create a group of tiles

1. On the Start screen, select the tiles you want to group together.
2. Drag them to an open space. When a gray bar appears behind them, release the tiles to create the new group.

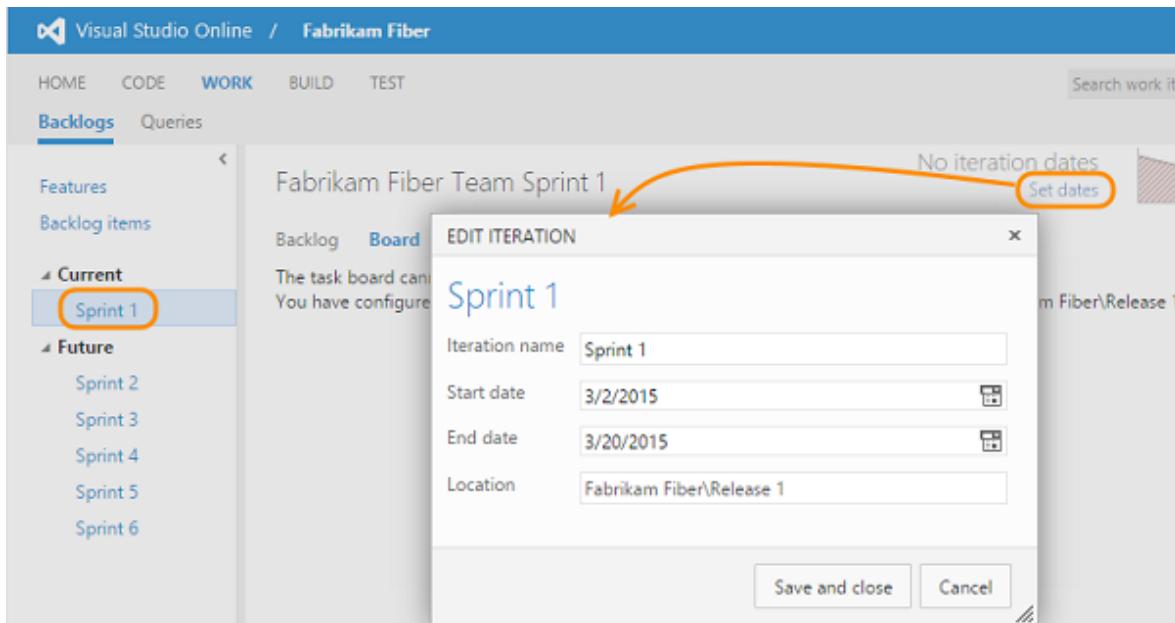
To schedule sprints

1. In the **Backlogs** view, select the first sprint under **Current**. Or, open your sprint backlog from the following URL:

`https://AccountName/DefaultCollection/TeamProjectName/_backlogs/iterations`

Several predefined sprints are listed under **Current** and **Future**. Actual sprint titles vary based on the [process template](#) used to create your team project. However, calendar dates haven't been assigned.

2. To set the calendar dates, select the first sprint under **Current**, and select dates.



Single-step procedures

If you're using a consistent format for step-by-step instructions, use the same format for single-step instructions, but replace the number with a bullet.

Example

To move a group of tiles

- On the Start screen, zoom out and drag the group where you want.

Tips for writing steps

Make sure the customer knows where the action should take place before you describe the action.

- If the instruction appears in the same UI where the action occurs, it's usually not necessary to provide location details.
- If you need to make sure the customer begins in the right place, provide a brief phrase at the beginning of the step.

Example

On the Design tab, select **Header Row**.

- If there's a chance of confusion, provide an introductory step.

Example

On the ribbon, go to the **Design** tab.

Simple instructions with right angle brackets

Abbreviate simple sequences by using right angle brackets. Include a space before and after each bracket, and don't make the brackets bold.

Example

Select **Accounts > Other accounts > Add an account**.

Accessibility tip Screen readers may skip over brackets and read instructions such as **Menu > Go To > Folders** as *Menu Go To Folders*, which might confuse customers. Check with an accessibility expert before using this approach.

Describing interactions with UI

Article • 06/14/2023

Customers interact with products using different input methods: keyboard, mouse, touch, voice, and more. So use generic verbs that work with any input method. Don't use input-specific verbs, such as *click* or *swipe*. Instead, use the verbs listed here.

See also [Formatting text in instructions](#)

[] [Expand table](#)

Verb	Use for	Examples
Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apps and programs• Blades• File Explorer• Files and folders• Shortcut menus• Use for websites and webpages only when necessary to match the UI. Otherwise, use <i>go to</i>.• Don't use for commands and menus.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open Photos.• Open the Reader app.• Select Users + groups to open the blade.• Open the Filename file.• To open the document in Outline view, select View > Outline.• In WindowName, open the shortcut menu for ItemName.
Close	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apps and programs• Blades• Dialogs• Files and folders• Notifications and alerts• Tabs• The action a program or app takes when it encounters a problem and can't continue. (Don't confuse with <i>stop responding</i>.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Close the Alarms app.• Close Excel.• Close the blade.• Close the Users + groups blade.• Save and close the document.• Closing Excel also closes all open worksheets.

Verb	Use for	Examples
Leave	Websites and webpages	Select Submit to complete the survey and leave this page.
Go to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opening a menu. Going to a tab or another particular place in the UI. Going to a website or webpage. It's OK to use <i>On the XXX tab</i> if the instruction is brief and continues immediately. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go to Search  , enter the word settings, and then select Settings. Go to File, and then select Close. On the ribbon, go to the Design tab. Go to the Deploy tab. In the Configuration list ... On the Deploy tab, in the Configuration list ... Go to Example.com to register.
Select	<p>Instructing the customer to select a specific item, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selecting an option, such as a button. Selecting a checkbox. Selecting a value from a list box. Selecting link text to go to a link. Selecting an item on a menu or shortcut menu. Selecting an item from a gallery. Selecting keys and keyboard shortcuts. (Document keyboard shortcuts only if they're the most likely way the customer will accomplish a task or as an alternative input method, usually in a separate keyboard shortcuts article.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select the Modify button. For Alignment, select Left. Select the text, open the shortcut menu, and then select Font. Select Open in new tab. Select the LinkName link. Select F5. Select Shift+Enter. Select Ctrl+Alt+Delete.
Select and hold, select and hold (or right-click)	Use to describe pressing and holding an element in the UI. It's OK to use <i>right-click</i> with <i>select and hold</i> when the instruction isn't specific to touch devices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To flag a message that you want to deal with later, select and hold it, and then select Set flag.

Verb	Use for	Examples
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select and hold (or right-click) the Windows taskbar, and then select Cascade windows. Select and hold (or right-click) the Start button, and then select Device Manager.
>	<p>Use a greater-than symbol (>) to separate sequential steps.</p> <p>Only use this approach when there's a clear and obvious path through the UI and the selection method is the same for each step. For example, don't mix things that require opening, selecting, and choosing.</p> <p>Don't bold the greater-than symbol. Include a space before and after the symbol.</p>	Select Accounts > Other accounts > Add an account .
Clear	Clearing the selection from a checkbox.	Clear the Header row checkbox.
Choose	Choosing an option, based on the customer's preference or desired outcome.	On the Font tab, choose the effects you want.
Switch, turn on, turn off	Turning a toggle key or toggle switch on or off.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the Caps lock key to switch from typing capital letters to typing lowercase letters. To switch between Normal, Outline, and Slide Sorter views, use the buttons on the View tab. To make text and apps easier to see, turn on the toggle under Turn on high contrast. To keep all applied filters, turn on the Pass all filters toggle.
Enter	Instructing the customer to type or otherwise insert a value, or to type or select a value in a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the search box, enter...

Verb	Use for	Examples
	combo box.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the Tab stop position box, enter the location where you want to set the new tab. • In the Deployment script name box, enter a name for this script.
Move, drag	<p>Moving anything from one place to another by dragging, cutting and pasting, or another method. Use for tiles and any open window (including apps, dialogs, files, and blades).</p> <p>Use <i>move through</i> to describe moving around on a page, moving through screens or pages in an app, or moving up, down, right, and left in a UI.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drag the Filename file to the Foldername folder. • Move the tile to the new section. • Drag the Snipping Tool out of the way, if necessary, and then select the area you want to capture. • If the Apply Styles task pane is in your way, just move it.
Zoom, zoom in, zoom out	Use <i>zoom</i> , <i>zoom in</i> , and <i>zoom out</i> to refer to changing the magnification of the screen or window.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoom in to see more details on the map. • Zoom out to see a larger geographic area on the map. • Zoom in or out to see more or less detail.

Describing alternative input methods

Article • 06/14/2023

If you use input-neutral methods in instructions, provide an article that explains how to interact with the product using each available input method. (The article can be in the product or included in documentation or Help.) To support customers regardless of their ability or the device they use, include mice, keyboards, voice recognition devices, game controllers, touch, and other interaction methods.

Learn more To learn more about creating accessible content, see [Accessibility guidelines and requirements](#).

Mouse procedures

Be consistent in how you list mouse procedures. For example, always list the mouse method before the keyboard method if you document both. Don't combine keyboard and mouse actions as if they were keyboard shortcuts unless space is limited. For example, don't use *Shift+click*. Instead, use *Select Shift while clicking*

See also [Mouse and mouse interaction term collection](#)

Joystick procedures

Assume that the mouse is the primary input device. Include joystick information in a table along with other alternative input devices.

Refer to joystick *controls*, not *options*, when you provide specific joystick procedures.

Keyboard procedures

Always document keyboard procedures for accessibility, even if they're indicated in UI (for example, by underlined letters).

See also [Keys and keyboard shortcuts term collection](#)

Pen-computing and touch procedures

Use *tap* and *double-tap* instead of *click* and *double-click* when writing content specific to touching a screen or using a tablet pen. *Tap* means to press the screen with a finger or pen tip and then to lift it, usually quickly.

Term	Usage
tap	Use to describe selecting a button, icon, or other element on the screen with a finger or the pen by tapping it once. Don't use <i>tap on</i> .
double-tap	Use to describe selecting an item by tapping twice in rapid succession. Hyphenate. Don't use <i>double-tap on</i> .
tap and hold	Use only if the app requires it to complete a specific interaction. Don't use <i>touch and hold</i> .
pan	Use to describe moving the screen in multiple directions at a controlled rate, as you would <i>pan</i> a camera to see different views. For contact gestures, use <i>pan</i> to refer to moving a finger, hand, or pen on the device surface to move through screens or menus at a controlled rate, rather than quickly skipping through content using the <i>flick</i> gesture. Don't use <i>drag</i> or <i>scroll</i> as a synonym for <i>pan</i> .
flick	Use to describe moving one or more fingers to scroll through items on the screen. Don't use <i>scroll</i> .
swipe	Use to describe a short, quick movement in the direction opposite to how the page scrolls. For example, if the page scrolls left or right, swipe an item up or down to select it.

See also [Touch and pen interaction term collection](#)

Multiple input methods and branching within procedures

You can document multiple input methods in various ways, depending on the content design, space restrictions, and other considerations. Some approaches are discussed below.

List the steps in a table, and provide a separate column for each input method.

Example

Choose colors to use on webpages

To make webpages easier to see, you can change the text, background, link, and hover colors in Internet Explorer.

Mouse actions	Keyboard actions
On the Start menu:	Display the Start menu by pressing the Windows logo key:

Mouse actions	Keyboard actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Click Internet Explorer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select Internet Explorer by using the arrow keys, then press Enter.
In Internet Explorer: 1. Click the Tools menu. 2. Click Internet Options .	In Internet Explorer: 1. Select the Tools menu by pressing Alt+T . 2. Select Internet Options by pressing O .

Document the primary input method, and provide the alternative instructions in parentheses or separate sentences after the main instructions.

Examples

To pan, slide one finger in any direction (or drag the mouse pointer, or use the arrow keys).

To copy the selection, click **Copy** on the toolbar. You can also press **Ctrl+C**.

If there are multiple ways to perform an entire procedure and you must describe each one, use a table to detail the alternatives. This approach helps the customer decide when to use which method.

Example

This table describes two ways to save a file.

[\[+\] Expand table](#)

To	Do this
Save changes to the file and continue working.	On the File menu, click Save .
Save changes to the file and close the program.	On the File menu, click Exit . If a dialog asks whether you want to save changes, click Yes .

If one step has an alternative, make that alternative a separate paragraph in the step. In a single-step procedure, an alternative can be separated by the word *or* to make it clear that an alternative is available.

Examples

Press the key for the underlined letter in the menu name. You can also use the **Left arrow** key or the **Right arrow** key to move to another menu.

- Press **Alt+the key for the underlined letter in the menu name**.

or

- Use the **Left arrow** key or the **Right arrow** key to move to another menu.

For several choices within one procedure step, use a bulleted list.

Example

1. Select the text that you want to move or copy. Do one of the following:

- To remove the selection, click **Cut** on the Quick Access Toolbar.
- To copy the selection, click **Copy** on the Quick Access Toolbar.

2. Right-click where you want to insert the text, then click **Paste** on the Quick Access Toolbar.

Formatting text in instructions

Article • 01/04/2023

Consistent text formatting helps readers locate and interpret information. Follow these conventions for formatting elements that frequently appear in instructions (also referred to as procedures).

See also

[Describing interactions with UI](#)

[Capitalization](#)

[Formatting common text elements](#)

[Formatting developer text elements](#)

In documentation and technical content

Use these conventions in instructions that appear in documentation and technical content.

[+] [Expand table](#)

Element	Convention	Example
Blades	<p>Avoid talking about blades.</p> <p>Instead, describe what the customer needs to do.</p> <p>When you must refer to a blade by name, use bold formatting for the name of the blade.</p> <p>Use sentence-style capitalization unless you need to match the UI.</p> <p>Don't include the word <i>blade</i> unless it adds needed clarity.</p>	<p>Select a specific operation to view details about that operation.</p> <p>In Web app, provide a name for your site.</p> <p>Go to Audit logs to view the events that occurred against the subscription.</p> <p>On the Resource group blade, select Summary.</p>
Buttons, checkboxes, and other options	<p>Avoid talking about UI elements. Instead, describe what the customer needs to do.</p> <p>When you must refer to a button, checkbox, or other option, use bold formatting for the name.</p> <p>Use sentence-style capitalization unless you need to match the UI. If an option label ends with a colon or an</p>	<p>Select Save as (<i>not</i> Select Save as... or Select the Save as button).</p> <p>Select Allow row to break across pages.</p> <p>Clear the Match case checkbox.</p>

Element	Convention	Example
	<p>ellipsis, don't include that end punctuation in instructions.</p> <p>Don't include the type of UI element, such as <i>button</i> or <i>checkbox</i>, unless including it adds needed clarity.</p>	
Command-line commands	Bold. All lowercase.	copy
Command-line options (also known as switches or flags)	Bold. Capitalize the way the option must be typed.	/a /Aw
Commands	<p>Use bold formatting for command names.</p> <p>Use sentence-style capitalization unless you need to match the UI. If a command label ends with a colon or an ellipsis, don't include that end punctuation in instructions.</p> <p>Don't include the word <i>command</i> unless it adds needed clarity.</p>	<p>Go to Tools, and select Change language.</p> <p>On the Design menu, select Colors, and then select a color scheme.</p>
Database names	Bold. The capitalization of database names varies.	WingtipToys database
Device and port names	All uppercase.	USB
Dialog boxes	<p>In general, avoid talking about UI. Instead, talk about what the customer needs to do.</p> <p>When you need to refer to the UI element, use <i>dialog</i>. Don't use <i>pop-up window</i>, <i>dialog box</i>, or <i>dialogue box</i>.</p> <p>When you must refer to a dialog by name, use bold formatting for its name.</p> <p>Use sentence-style capitalization unless you need to match the UI. If a dialog label ends with a colon or an</p>	<p>Select Upload, and then select a file to upload.</p> <p>In Properties, select Details, and then select Remove Properties and Personal Information.</p> <p>In the Protect document dialog, clear the Shapes checkbox.</p>

Element	Convention	Example
	ellipsis, don't include that end punctuation in instructions.	
Error messages	Sentence-style capitalization. Enclose error messages in quotation marks when referring to them in text.	Hmm ... looks like that's a broken link. If you see the error message, "Check scanner status and try again," use Windows Update to check for the latest drivers for your device.
File attributes	All lowercase.	To remove the hidden attribute from all files in a folder
File name extensions	All lowercase.	.mdb .doc
File names (user-defined examples)	Title-style capitalization. It's OK to use internal capital letters in file names for readability. Use bold formatting for file names in procedures if you're directing the customer to select, type, or otherwise interact with the name.	My Taxes for 2016 MyTaxesFor2016 Enter MyTaxesFor2016 .
Folder and directory names (user-defined examples)	Sentence-style capitalization. It's OK to use internal capital letters in folder and directory names for readability. In procedures, use bold formatting for names if you're directing the customer to select, type, or otherwise interact with the name.	Vacation and Sick Pay MyFiles\Accounting\Payroll\VacPay Select Documents .
Key names, combinations, and sequences	Capitalize. Use bold formatting for key names and keyboard shortcuts in instructions. Don't put a space around the plus sign (+) in keyboard shortcuts. To learn how to refer to keyboard shortcuts and specific keys, see Keys and keyboard shortcuts term collection .	Shift, F7 Ctrl+Alt+Del Alt, F, O Spacebar Select the F1 key. To open the Preview tab, select Alt+3 .
Macros	Usually all uppercase. Use bold formatting if predefined. Might be monospace if user defined. Treatment varies.	LOWORD MASKROP

Element	Convention	Example
Markup language elements (tags)	Bold. Capitalization varies.	 <input type=text> <!DOCTYPE html>
Mathematical constants and variables	Italic.	$a^2 + b^2 = c^2$
Menus	<p>Avoid talking about menus. Instead, describe what the customer needs to do.</p> <p>When you must refer to a menu by name, use bold formatting for the name of the menu.</p> <p>Use sentence-style capitalization unless you need to match the UI.</p> <p>Don't include the word <i>menu</i> unless it adds needed clarity.</p>	<p>Go to Tools, and select Change language. On the Design menu, select Colors, and then select a color scheme.</p>
New terms	Italicize the first mention of a new term if you're going to define it immediately in text.	Microsoft Exchange consists of both <i>server</i> and <i>client</i> components.
Palettes	<p>Avoid talking about palettes. Instead, describe what the customer needs to do.</p> <p>When you must refer to a palette by name, use bold formatting for the name of the palette.</p> <p>Use sentence-style capitalization unless you need to match the UI.</p> <p>Don't include the word <i>palette</i> unless it adds needed clarity.</p>	<p>In Colors, let Windows pull an accent color from your background, or choose your own color.</p> <p>In the Color palette, select a color for the object outline.</p>
Panes	<p>Avoid talking about panes. Instead, describe what the customer needs to do.</p> <p>When you must refer to a pane by name, use bold formatting for the name of the pane.</p> <p>Use sentence-style capitalization unless you need to match the UI.</p> <p>Don't include the word <i>pane</i> unless it adds needed clarity.</p>	<p>Select the arrow next to the Styles gallery, select Apply styles, and then select a style to modify.</p> <p>If the Apply Styles pane is in your way, just move it.</p>

Element	Convention	Example
Placeholders (in syntax and in user input)	Italic.	<p>/v: <i>version</i> Enter <i>password</i>.</p>
Products, services, apps, and trademarks	Usually title-style capitalization. Check the Microsoft trademark list for capitalization of trademarked names.	Microsoft Arc Touch Mouse Microsoft Word Surface Pro Notepad Network Connections Makefile RC program
Slashes	When instructing customers to enter a slash, include the spelled-out term (<i>backslash</i> or <i>slash</i>), followed by the symbol in parentheses.	Enter two backslashes (\ \)
Strings	When referring to strings in code, a document, a website, or UI, use sentence-style capitalization unless the text you're referring to is capitalized differently. Enclose in quotation marks.	Select "Now is the time." Find "font-family:Segoe UI Semibold" in the code.
Tabs	Avoid talking about tabs. Instead, describe what the customer needs to do. When you must refer to a tab by name, use bold formatting for the name of the tab. Use sentence-style capitalization unless you need to match the UI. Don't include the word <i>tab</i> unless it adds needed clarity.	Select the table, and then select Design > Header row . On the Design tab, select Header row . Go to the Deploy tab. In the Configuration list ,
Toggles	Avoid talking about toggles. Instead, describe what the customer needs to do. When you must refer to a toggle by name, use bold formatting for the name of the toggle. Use sentence-style capitalization unless you need to match the UI.	To make text and apps easier to see, turn on the toggle under Turn on high contrast . To keep all applied filters, turn on the Pass all filters toggle.

Element	Convention	Example
	Include the word <i>toggle</i> if it adds needed clarity.	
URLs	All lowercase for complete URLs. If necessary, line-break long URLs before a slash. Don't hyphenate. See also URLs and web addresses .	www.microsoft.com msdn.microsoft.com/downloads
User input	Usually lowercase, unless case sensitive. Bold or italic, depending on the element. If the user input string contains placeholder text, use italic for that text.	Enter hello world Enter -p <i>password</i>
Windows	Avoid talking about windows. Instead, focus on what the customer needs to do. When you must refer to a window by name, use regular text. Use sentence-style capitalization unless you need to match the UI. Use <i>window</i> only as a generic term for an area on a PC screen where apps and content appear. Don't use <i>window</i> to refer to a specific dialog box, blade, or similar UI element.	To embed the new object, switch to the source document. Easily switch between open windows. Open a new Microsoft Edge tab in a new window so you can look at tabs side by side.
XML schema elements	Bold. Capitalization varies.	ElementType element xml:space attribute

In the UI and general content

Instructions can also appear in the UI itself and in content other than documentation, such as blogs and marketing. In this content, avoid bold and italic formatting. The goal is to be readable and friendly but also clearly set off the UI label or other text element from the surrounding text.

Choose one of the approaches below and use it consistently.

 Expand table

Option	Example
Describe the action without referring to a specific UI label.	Choose the group or groups that you want to assign services to.
Use wording that clearly sets off the name of the element.	Assign services to the Business data only group. By selecting the Create my database button, you agree Microsoft can use entity and field names you create to help improve our common data model. Choose how often you want to refresh data in Schedule refresh.
Use quotation marks. Quotation marks can make text cluttered, so use them sparingly and only when necessary for clarity.	Assign services to the "No business data allowed" group.
Use bold formatting.	Assign services to either the Business data only or No business data allowed group.

Punctuation

Article • 06/24/2022

Punctuation provides vital clues for reader understanding. It's governed by well-documented rules. For example, every English sentence requires end punctuation (unless it's a title or a heading). Within those rules are stylistic choices, which we'll cover here.

Writing tip The more punctuation you add, the more complex a sentence becomes. If a sentence contains more than a comma or two and ending punctuation, consider rewriting it to make it crisp and clear.

Learn more Refer to [The Chicago Manual of Style](#) to learn more about specific punctuation.

This section covers:

- [Formatting punctuation](#) in text describing interaction with the UI, parentheses, and brackets.
- [Apostrophes](#) in possessives and contractions.
- [Colons](#) in lists and to elaborate on a statement.
- [Commas](#) in series, clauses, and dates.
- [Dashes and hyphens](#), including [em dashes](#) to set off phrases, [en dashes](#) in open or hyphenated compound words and with numbers, and [hyphens](#) in words and spelled-out numbers.
- [Ellipses](#) in syntax and for omissions.
- [Exclamation points](#), used sparingly.
- [Periods](#) in sentences and lists.
- [Question marks](#), used sparingly.
- [Quotation marks](#) for quotations only.
- [Semicolons](#) between independent clauses, contrasting statements, and items in a list.
- [Slashes](#) in phrases, file paths, and URLs.

Formatting punctuation

Article • 06/24/2022

In general, format punctuation in the same font style as the main content of a sentence or phrase.

Text describing interaction with the UI

In instructions that reference elements such as commands, options, keywords, placeholders, links, pop-up text, and user input:

- If the punctuation is part of the element, such as punctuation that the customer must type, format the punctuation the same as the element.

Example

Enter **Balance due:** in cell A14.

(In this example, the colon is bold because the customer types the colon.)

- If the punctuation is not part of the element, format the punctuation the same as the main text.

Examples

On the **Insert** menu, go to **Pictures**, and then select **From File**.

(In this example, the comma following *Pictures* and the period following *File* aren't bold because the punctuation isn't part of the UI labels.)

Select **Accounts > Other accounts > Add an account**.

(In this example, brackets aren't bold because they aren't part of the UI labels.)

Parentheses and brackets

Format parentheses and brackets in the font style of the main text, not of the text in the parentheses or brackets.

Example

Open any Office app and select **File > Account**. (If you're doing this in Outlook, select **File > Office Account**.)

(In this example, the opening and closing parentheses aren't bold, to match the main text.)

Use the same font style for the closing parenthesis or bracket that you use for the opening parenthesis or bracket.

Apostrophes

Article • 06/24/2022

Use an apostrophe

- To form the possessive case of nouns. For singular nouns, add an apostrophe and an *s*, even if the noun ends in *s*, *x*, or *z*. To form the possessive of plural nouns that end in *s*, add only an apostrophe.

Examples

insider's guide
the box's contents
the CSS's flexibility
Berlioz's opera
an OEM's product
users' passwords
the Joneses' computer

- To indicate a missing letter in a contraction.

Examples

can't
don't
it's

Don't use an apostrophe

- For the possessive form of *it*.

Example

Replace a formula with its calculated value.

- With a possessive pronoun.

Example

The choice is yours.

- To form the plural of a singular noun.

Example

Play your favorite games on all your devices.

Note Don't use the possessive form of Microsoft trademarks and product, service, or feature names.

Colons

Article • 11/01/2023

Preceding lists

Include a colon at the end of a phrase that directly introduces a list.

Example

You can create a backup of all sorts of things to make the transition easier, including:

- The apps you've installed on your phone, along with high scores and progress from participating apps.
- The passwords for your accounts.
- Your call history.

To learn more, see [Lists](#).

Within sentences

Use colons sparingly at the end of a statement followed by a second statement that expands on it.

Example

Microsoft ActiveSync doesn't recognize this device for one of two reasons: the device wasn't connected properly or the device isn't a smartphone.

Most of the time, two sentences are more readable.

When you use a colon in a sentence, lowercase the word that follows it unless:

- The colon introduces a direct quotation.

Example

What does it mean when I see a message that asks: "Are you trying to visit this site?"

- The first word after the colon is a proper noun.

Example

We're considering three cities for the event: Los Angeles, Munich, and Tokyo.

In titles and headings

When you use a colon in a title or heading, capitalize the word that follows it.

Examples

Block party: Communities use Minecraft to create public spaces

Why girls lose interest in STEM: New research has some answers

Get started with Azure IoT: An interactive developer guide

In UI

Don't use a colon when introducing lists of radio buttons or checkboxes.

Commas

Article • 06/24/2022

Use a comma

- Before the conjunction in a list of three or more items. (The comma that comes before the conjunction is known as the Oxford or serial comma.)

Examples

Outlook includes Mail, Calendar, People, and Tasks.

Save your file to a hard drive, an external drive, or OneDrive.

Writing tip If a series contains more than three items or the items are long, consider a bulleted list to improve readability.

- Following an introductory phrase.

Example

With the Skype app, you can call any phone.

- To join independent clauses with a conjunction, such as *and*, *or*, *but*, or *so*.

Example

Select Options, and then select **Enable fast saves**.

Writing tip If the sentence is long or complex, consider rewriting as two sentences.

- In a series of two or more adjectives that precede a noun, if the order of the adjectives can be reversed or if they can be separated by *and* without changing the meaning.

Examples

Adjust the innovative, built-in Kickstand and Type Cover.

PlayFab is a complete back-end platform.

Writing tip Consider rewriting for a friendlier, more conversational tone. For example, say, "Build mixed-reality apps that support collaboration across platforms," not "Build collaborative, cross-platform mixed-reality apps."

- To surround the year when you use a complete date within a sentence.

Example

See the product reviews in the February 4, 2015, issue of the *New York Times*.

For information about using commas in numbers, see [Numbers](#).

Don't use a comma

- To join independent clauses when you don't use a conjunction. (Use a semicolon instead.)

Example

Select Options; then select **Enable fast saves**.

- Between verbs in a compound predicate (when two verbs apply to a single subject).

Example

The program evaluates your computer system and then copies the essential files to the target location.

Writing tip Consider replacing a compound predicate with two sentences. Or add a subject for the second verb.

Examples

The program evaluates your computer system. Then it copies the essential files to the target location.

The program evaluates your computer system, and then it copies the essential files to the target location.

- Between the month and the year when a specific date isn't mentioned.

Dashes and hyphens

Article • 06/24/2022

Dashes and hyphens aren't interchangeable. Follow these guidelines to help you use them the right way, in the right places.

- [Em dashes](#). Use to set off or emphasize parenthetical phrases.
- [En dashes](#). Use in ranges of numbers and dates, in negative numbers, and as a minus sign. Use to connect compound modifiers under specific conditions.
- [Hyphens](#). Use to join words and connect prefixes to stem words. Don't use two hyphens in place of an em dash.

Em dashes

Article • 05/09/2023

Use an em dash (—) to set off a parenthetical phrase with more emphasis than parentheses provide. Don't add spaces around an em dash.

- Use one em dash on each side of a phrase embedded in a sentence.

Example

The information in your spreadsheet—numbers, formulas, and text—is stored in cells.

- Use one em dash to set off a phrase or clause at the end of a sentence.

Example

If you're not sure about the details, look at the illustrations in the wizard—they can help you figure out what type of connection you're using.

Don't use an em dash:

- In place of a bullet character in a list.
- To indicate an empty cell in a table.

Don't capitalize the first word after an em dash unless the word is a proper noun.

En dashes

Article • 11/06/2023

Use an en dash (–):

- To indicate a range of numbers, such as inclusive values, dates, or pages.

Example

2015–2017

- For a minus sign.

Example

12 – 3 = 9

- To indicate negative numbers.

Example

–79

Use an en dash (–) instead of a hyphen in a compound modifier when:

- One element of the modifier is an open compound.

Examples

Windows 10–compatible products

dialog-type options

- Two or more of the elements are made up of hyphenated compounds (a rare occurrence).

Don't use an en dash to indicate an empty cell in a table.

Don't use spaces on either side of an en dash.

Exception Surround an en dash with spaces when it's used as a minus sign in an equation, in a time stamp appearing in UI, or in a date range that includes two times and two dates.

12 – 3 = 9

2:15 PM – 4:45 PM (time stamp in UI)

2:15 PM 12/1/17 – 4:45 PM 4/1/18 (range includes both time and date)

In text, don't use an en dash in a range of times. Use *to* instead: *10:00 AM to 2:00 PM*. In a schedule or listing, use an en dash with no spaces around it: *10:00 AM–2:00 PM*.

See also [Date and time term collection](#)

Hyphens

Article • 08/26/2024

For information about hyphenating specific technology words, see the A–Z word list. For information about hyphenating common words, see [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#) and [The Chicago Manual of Style](#).

Predicate adjectives

Don't hyphenate a predicate adjective (an adjective that complements the subject of a sentence and follows a linking verb) unless the *Microsoft Writing Style Guide* specifically recommends it. Check the A–Z word list to find out.

Examples

The text is left aligned.

The camera is built in.

Many viruses are memory-resident.

Noun modifiers

In compound words that precede and modify a noun as a unit, don't hyphenate:

- *Very*, when it precedes another modifier.

Example

Very fast test

- An adverb ending in *-ly*, such as *completely*, when it precedes another modifier.
Check*[Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#)* if you're not sure whether the word ending in *-ly* is an adverb.

Examples

extremely stylized image

highly graphical interface

Note Use adverbs sparingly. They usually aren't necessary.

Hyphenate two or more words that precede and modify a noun as a unit if:

- Confusion might result without the hyphen.

Examples

built-in drive

high-level-language compiler

read-only memory
lower-left corner
floating-point decimal
line-by-line scrolling
scrolling line by line
up-to-date information

- One of the words is a past or present participle (a verb form ending in *-ed* or *-ing* and used as an adjective or noun).

Examples

left-aligned text
free-flowing form
well-defined schema
The schema is well defined.

- The modifier is a number or single letter plus a noun or participle.

Examples

two-sided arrow
5-point star
y-coordinate values

Suspended compound modifiers

- Don't use suspended compound modifiers, such as *left- and right-aligned text*, unless space is limited. Instead, spell out the entire phrase.

Example

upper-right or lower-right corner

- If you use a suspended compound modifier, include a hyphen with both adjectives. The first hyphen is followed by a space.

Example

upper- or lower-right corner

- Don't form suspended compound modifiers from one-word adjectives.

Example

uppercase and lowercase letters

Compound nouns

Hyphenate compound nouns when one of the words is abbreviated.

Examples

e-book

e-commerce

Exception email

Compound numerals and fractions

Hyphenate compound numerals and fractions.

Examples

a twenty-fifth anniversary

one-third of the page

En dashes in compound adjectives

Use an en dash (–) instead of a hyphen in a compound adjective when:

- The compound adjective includes an open compound.

Examples

Windows 10–compatible products

dialog box–type options

- Two or more of the elements are made up of hyphenated compounds (a rare occurrence).

Prefixes

Avoid creating new words by adding prefixes to existing words. Rewrite to avoid creating a new word. If a word with a prefix is listed in [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#) or the A-Z word list, it's OK to use in Microsoft content.

In general, don't include a hyphen after the following prefixes unless omitting the hyphen could confuse the reader.

- auto-
- co-
- cyber-
- exa-
- giga-
- kilo-
- mega-
- micro-
- non-

- pre-
- re-
- sub-
- tera-
- un-

Use a hyphen between a prefix and a stem word:

- If a confusing word results without the hyphen.

Examples

non-native

pre-provisioned

- If the stem word begins with a capital letter.

Example

non-XML

A prefix affects a word, not a phrase. For example, instead of *non-security related*, use *unrelated to security*.

When adding a prefix to a stem word results in a double vowel and each vowel is pronounced, don't use a hyphen.

Examples

reenter

cooperate

For more information about using prefixes, see [The Chicago Manual of Style](#).

Capitalization in hyphenated compound words

Capitalize any part of a hyphenated compound word that would be capitalized if there were no hyphen.

Examples

 Expand table

Compound word	Example sentence
Customer-friendly	Customer-friendly content is brief, accurate, and to the point.
E-Book	Bisson, Guillermo. <i>The App E-Book</i> . Redmond, WA: Lucerne Publishing, 2015.

Compound word	Example sentence
Add-ins	Bisson, Guillermo. <i>Programming Office 365 Applications, SharePoint Add-ins, and More</i> . Redmond, WA: Lucerne Publishing, 2015.

See also [Capitalization](#)

Ellipses

Article • 06/24/2022

In general, don't use an ellipsis (...) except in the situations described here or to indicate omitted code in technical content.

It's OK to use an ellipsis to indicate a pause in conversational UI messages.

Example

(Hmm ... looks like that link is broken.)

When there's an ellipsis in UI, don't include it in instructions or procedures.

Example

Select **Safety**, and then **Delete browsing history**.

In quoted material, use an ellipsis to indicate omitted text.

- If the ellipsis replaces text within a sentence, include a space before and after the ellipsis.

Example

The quick brown fox ... lazy dog.

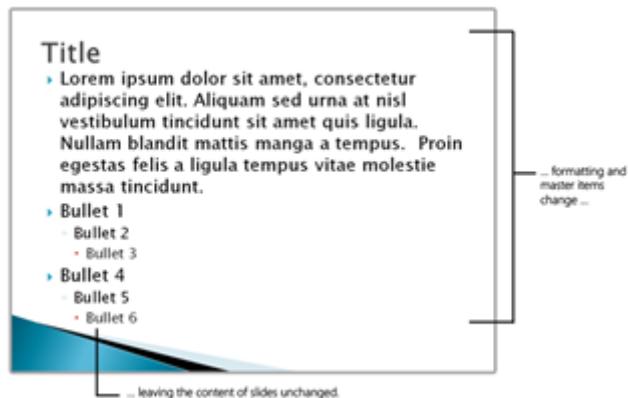
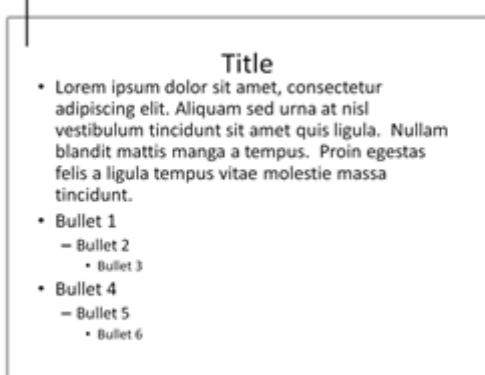
- If the ellipsis replaces the end of a quoted sentence, include a space before the ellipsis and follow it with a closing period, with no intervening space.

Example

The quick brown fox

It's OK to use an ellipsis in multiple-part callouts, especially with screenshots or graphics in documentation.

When you apply a design template ...



... formatting and
master items
change ...

... leaving the content of slides unchanged.

- Ensure that the path through the callouts is clear. Document each step.
- Insert a space and then an ellipsis at the end of a phrase that continues later. Insert an ellipsis followed by a space at the beginning of a phrase that's continued from a previous phrase.
- If the callout ends with additional punctuation, such as a period or comma, insert a space between the punctuation mark and the ellipsis.

If you're using a font that doesn't have the ellipsis character, use three periods with no space between them.

Exclamation points

Article • 06/24/2022

Use exclamation points sparingly. Save them for when they count.

Periods

Article • 06/24/2022

Don't use end punctuation in headlines, headings, subheadings, UI titles, UI text, or simple lists (three or fewer words per item).

End all sentences with a period, even if they're only two words. Put one space, not two, after a period.

For information about how to use periods in bulleted lists and numbered lists, see [Lists](#).

Headline example

Be brief—make every word count

Text example

Be brief. Make every word count.

When a phrase ending with a colon introduces a bulleted list:

- If one or more list elements complete the introductory phrase preceding the colon, use a period after every list element.
- If all list elements are short phrases (three words or fewer), don't end them with periods, even if they form a complete sentence together with the list introduction.
- If one or more list elements are complete sentences, use a period after every element, even if a list element contains three or fewer words.

Question marks

Article • 06/24/2022

Use questions sparingly. In general, customers want *us* to give *them* answers.

When a customer needs to make a decision, a question is appropriate.

Examples

If you forgot your password, provide your secret answer.

More nature themes are available online.

Do you want to save your changes?

Quotation marks

Article • 06/24/2022

In most content, use double quotation marks (" ") not single quotation marks (' ').

In printed content, use curly quotation marks (" ") except in user input and code samples, which call for straight quotation marks (" "). If your project style sheet requires straight quotation marks with sans serif fonts, such as in headings, follow the style sheet.

In online content, use straight quotation marks.

Refer to *quotation marks*, *opening quotation marks*, and *closing quotation marks*. Don't call them *quote marks*, *quotes*, *open or close quotation marks*, or *beginning or ending quotation marks*.

Place closing quotation marks:

- Outside commas and periods.
- Inside other punctuation.

Exception If punctuation is part of the quoted material, place it inside the quotation marks.

Examples

One type of malware is called a "trojan clicker."

One type of malware, called a "trojan clicker," uses your PC to "click" online ads.

What is "gaze awareness"?

A reader asks, "How can I get Windows 10?"

Semicolons

Article • 06/24/2022

Sentences that contain semicolons are often complex. Try to simplify the sentence—break it into multiple sentences or a list—to eliminate the semicolon.

Use semicolons:

- Between two independent clauses that aren't joined by a conjunction.

Example

Select Options; then select **Automatic backups**.

- Between contrasting statements that aren't joined by a conjunction.

Example

What's considered powerful changes over time; today's advanced feature might be commonplace tomorrow.

- To separate items in a series that contains commas or other punctuation. Even better, break out a complex series of items into a list.

Examples

In this tutorial, you'll learn how to construct an interface; implement both single-document interface and multiple-document interface applications; implement features that until now were considered difficult, such as printing, toolbars, scrolling, splitter windows, print preview, and context-sensitive Help; and take advantage of many built-in components of the class library.

In this tutorial, you'll learn how to:

- Construct an interface.
- Implement both single-document interface and multiple-document interface applications.
- Implement features that until now were considered difficult, such as printing, toolbars, scrolling, splitter windows, print preview, and context-sensitive Help.
- Take advantage of many built-in components of the class library.

Slashes

Article • 06/24/2022

When necessary, differentiate between a *slash* for URLs and a *backslash* for servers and folders.

When you instruct customers to enter a slash, always include the spelled-out term (*backslash* or *slash*) first, followed by the symbol in parentheses.

Example

Enter two backslashes (\\)

See also

[Numbers](#)

[Special character term collection](#)

[URLs and web addresses](#)

Use a slash:

- To imply a combination. Capitalize the word after the slash if the word before the slash is capitalized. For example, if *country/region* is used as a label in a form, capitalize it as *Country/Region*.

Examples

client/server

TCP/IP

CD/DVD drive

Use the on/off switch to turn your mouse off when you're not using it.

Turn on the On/Off toggle.

- To separate parts of an internet address. Use two slashes after the protocol name.

Example

`ftp://example.com/downloads`

- In server, folder, and file names.

Example

`\mslibrary\catalog\collect.doc`

- Between the numerator and denominator of fractions in equations that occur in text.

Examples

$a/x + b/y = 1$

$x + 2/3(y) = m$

Don't use a slash as a substitute for *or*, like *product/service*. If the UI uses a slash in this way, follow the interface in describing the label, but use *or* to describe the action in text.

Examples

Select **Automatic trapping** to add or remove a check mark.

To turn the purchasing workflow on or off

Exception It's OK to use *country/region* and *ZIP Code/postal code* where space is limited.

See also

[and/or](#)

[country or region](#)

[either/or](#)

Responsive content

Article • 06/24/2022

If you're writing for the web, assume your content will be used on a variety of devices. Many websites today are *responsive*—that is, they reconfigure automatically based on the device in use. Assume your content will be viewed at small sizes.

Keep it short

Short text is always better, but on mobile devices, it's imperative. Try to write sentences and paragraphs that are short enough to read on a mobile screen without scrolling. It's hard to read a paragraph when you need to scroll to see the second half.

Try to keep headings to one, short line. Two-line headings take up twice as much scarce vertical space. Use short words in headings, too, if you can. If a customer uses larger fonts to improve accessibility, long words may break across lines.

Short sections—headings and the text that follows—are easier to read on small screens. Short sections also make it easier for customers to stop reading and later pick up where they left off.

Use simple images, charts, and tables

Keep in mind that the width of your customer's screen may be just a couple of inches. Keep content simple so it's easy to read and understand.

Choose simple images and crop extraneous detail. Always describe the image using alt text if it conveys useful information.

Create infographics carefully. Provide a way for readers to open an infographic in an application where they can enlarge specific areas. Organize infographics in compact sections that readers can magnify and view on a small screen. Or, present individual sections of the infographic within text, and provide a link to the full infographic.

Simplify charts and graphs so readers can easily read the whole thing on a small screen. Craft very short chart titles, metrics labels, and axis labels.

Limit the number of columns in tables and keep the text in each cell brief—ideally one line. Tables with more than a few narrow columns may be hard to read. Too much text in a cell may cause a table to exceed the height of a mobile screen.

Consider flow

As you create content, think about how it will flow on a 360-pixel screen. Typically, content on the right side of the page moves below content on the left side. Will the content still make sense?

Work with the designer or developer to determine where breaks in the content will occur, how much content displays at each potential resolution, and the order in which content will appear on small devices.

Scannable content

Article • 06/20/2023

The volume of content available to customers is overwhelming. Part of a writer's job is to help readers find what they need quickly, or recognize just as quickly when they're not where they need to be. Writing to facilitate scanning will help.

Organize text into discrete components to support scanning. This section describes some of the methods you can use:

- [Headings](#)
- [Lists](#)
- [Pull quotes](#)
- [Sidebars](#)
- [Tables](#)

How you write is equally important to scanning.

Put first things first

Content on the first screen (also called *above the fold*) is the most likely to be read. Many readers won't scroll further without a compelling reason. So as always, keep it short, and lead with what's most important to the customer. Keep in mind that what appears above the fold varies by device and screen resolution.

Numerous studies have shown that readers look at specific areas of a page first. In left-to-right languages, people read in an F shape, giving the most attention to the upper-left corner of a page. Put your most important information there. Or try placing an offer or a Buy or Download button there. If the navigation is on the left, put your most important information in the upper-left corner of the text pane.

Be brief, be bold, be clear

Long spans of dense text are daunting and unapproachable to readers. Write short headings, short sentences, and short paragraphs that are easy to read—and more visually appealing.

1. Use short, simple words.
2. Get to the point.
3. Then stop.

Include navigation within long documents

In general, keep web content short. When you have a great, customer-focused reason to create longer content, provide readers with at least one way to navigate within it, so they can quickly get to what they need.

- If you're developing content for a collection, break the content up into sections so that information is easy to find in the library navigation.
- In a longer document that's likely to be read online, even if it's a downloadable Word document or PDF file, include a table of contents with links to subheadings.
- Add *Back to top* links at the end of sections.

Establish patterns in content

Consistent writing, design, and formatting create patterns, which help readers comprehend more efficiently. Apply these tactics throughout your content to create familiar landmarks for your readers:

- Lead with what's most important. Place important keywords near the beginning of headings, table entries, and paragraphs so they're easy to spot.
- Use text formatting consistently, such as using bold in procedures to identify UI labels. To learn more, see [Text formatting](#).
- Apply the same sentence structures to similar information. For example, use prepositional phrases consistently in procedures to help customers navigate menus and dialog boxes. And use the same syntax for cross-references and other common content elements.

Writing tip When comparing things, use parallel sentence structures to describe each thing. Write headlines and bulleted list items using the same sentence structure, too.

Give paragraphs room—and keep them short

Paragraphs usually have extra space between them. How much extra space depends on the size of the font. The minimum is usually 50 percent of the line spacing, or at least half the font size.

Short paragraphs, like this one, help to break up long passages of text. Three to seven lines is about the right length for a paragraph.

It's also fine to have a single-line paragraph now and then.

Headings

Article • 06/24/2022

Headings provide both structure and visual points of reference to help readers scan content. If you can break text logically into smaller sections, the extra spacing and distinct fonts associated with headings will help readers scan content and find entry points.

In any type of content—whether it's UI, web content, marketing, or advertising—use headings consistently.

Writing headings

Think of headings as an outline, only more interesting—pithy, even. If readers don't read the headings, they probably won't read the text that follows, either.

- Top-level headings communicate what's most important and divide content into major subjects. Make them as specific as you can to catch the reader's attention.
- When there's a lot to say under a top-level heading, look for two or more distinct topics, and use second-level headings (subheads) to break up the large section into more scannable chunks. If you can't find at least two distinct topics, skip the second-level headings.
- Avoid having two headings in a row without text in between—that might indicate a problem with organization or that the headings are redundant. But don't insert filler text just to separate the headings.
- Each new heading represents a new or more specific topic. The heading should introduce the topic in an interesting way.

Use headings judiciously. One heading level is usually plenty for a page or two of content. For long content, you might need to use additional heading levels. For example, this guide uses four heading levels.

Keep headings as short as possible, and put the most important idea at the beginning. This is especially critical in blogs and social media.

Be as specific as you can, and be even more detailed with lower-level headings. For example, a second-level heading should be more specific than a first-level heading.

Focus on what matters to customers, and choose words they'd use themselves. In most cases, don't talk about products, features, or commands in headings. Concentrate on

what customers can achieve or what they need to know.

Use parallel sentence structure for all headings at the same level. For example, use noun phrases for first-level headings, verb phrases for second-level headings, and infinitive phrases for headings in instructions.

Examples

Source data

Prepare headings

To create a heading

Scrub data

To remove blank rows

PivotTable reports

Report filters

Consider infinitive phrases, such as *To create a heading*, for headings and titles related to tasks. For headings that aren't related to tasks, use a noun phrase such as *Headings*, if possible.

Don't use ampersands (&) or plus signs (+) in headings unless you're referring to UI that contains them or space is limited.

Avoid hyphens in headings if you can. In resized windows or mobile devices, they can result in awkward line breaks.

Use **vs.**, not **v.** or **versus**, in headings.

Formatting headings

Use sentence-style capitalization for headings. That means that you capitalize the first word, any proper nouns, and the first word after a colon (if there is one). Everything else is lowercase. To learn more, see [Capitalization](#).

Examples

Say hello to Surface Pro

Set up the deployment environment

Templates and themes for Office Online

My account

Find a store

Can a search engine predict the World Cup winner?

Block party: Communities use Minecraft to create public spaces

Don't end headings with a period. A question mark or (rarely) an exclamation point can be used if it's needed for meaning.

Examples

Not seeing what you want?

What can we help you find?

Use **italic** if it would be required in body text.

Break two-line headings carefully. Unless you're writing content for a responsive design (which breaks lines dynamically to fit the screen), break the heading in a way that makes sense and balances the length of the two lines. (Shift + Enter inserts a manual line break in many authoring tools.)

- Keep adjectives and prepositions with the words they modify.
- Keep hyphenated words and multiple-word proper nouns (such as *New York*) on the same line.
- Break after punctuation.
- Break naturally, at the end of a complete phrase, if possible.
- If you can't fit a headline on two lines, rewrite it.

Use vertical spacing to make headings stand out. Headings typically have extra space above them and often less space below them. Close proximity between the heading and the text that follows it communicates to the reader that they're related. Heading spacing is built into heading styles in most templates. Use those styles to control spacing in a consistent way.

Don't use extra line breaks to increase heading spacing, especially in web content. In responsive web design, the layout and screen elements (including headings) adjust to the screen size automatically, whether they're viewed on mobile devices, tablets, laptops, or desktops. Extra line breaks might detract from the content appearance on mobile devices.

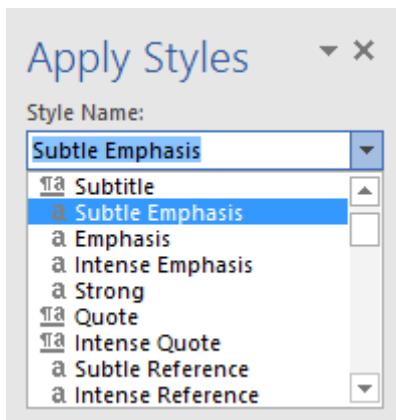
[Learn more Using type](#)

Using run-in headings

If you regularly highlight specific types of content, such as benefits, feature highlights, tips, notes, warnings, or cross-references, consider using a special kind of heading for them. Although they don't add white space to a document, bold run-in headings, like the ones you see in this article, draw the reader's eye to interesting information. Because they're part of the paragraph, run-in headings have less impact than separate headings but require much less space—so they're ideal for packaging blurbs, web content, screen callouts, and the like.

When you use bold formatting for run-in headings:

- Make sure the first few words of the paragraph are interesting and introduce the paragraph contents.
- Consider repeating common phrases, such as *Tip*, *Note*, and *See also*, as run-in headings to call attention to helpful information, interesting but nonessential information, or cross-references, respectively.
- Use a character style, rather than manual formatting, to make your headings consistent, easy to apply, and easy to maintain. You can apply character styles to any selected words in a document without changing the paragraph style. In Microsoft Word, character styles, such as **Subtle Emphasis**, are designated by an *a* next to the style name. To create a new character style in a document, select the characters, and then add the style.



Lists

Article • 06/14/2023

Lists are a great way to present complex text in a way that's easy to scan.

A list should have at least two items but no more than seven items. Each item should be fairly short—the reader should be able to see at least two, and preferably three, list items at a glance. It's OK to have a couple of short paragraphs in a list item, but don't exceed that length too often.

Make all the items in a list consistent in structure. For example, each item should be a noun or a phrase that starts with a verb.

Bulleted lists

Use a bulleted list for things that have something in common but don't need to appear in a particular order.

Examples

The database owner can:

- Create and delete a database.
- Add, delete, or modify a document.
- Add, delete, or modify any information in the database.

Bring your customers into focus

- Own your customer relationship.
- Create raving fans.
- Engage in new ways.

Numbered lists

Use a numbered list for sequential items (like a procedure) or prioritized items (like a top 10 list).

Example

To sign on to a database:

1. On the **File** menu, select **Open database**.
2. In **Username**, enter your name.
3. In **Password**, enter your password, and then select **OK**.

Introductory text

Make sure the purpose of the list is clear. Introduce the list with a heading, a complete sentence, or a fragment that ends with a colon.

If you introduce a list with a heading, don't use explanatory text after the heading. Also, don't use a colon or period after the heading.

Global tip If your content will be localized, avoid lists where an introductory fragment is completed by the list items below it. This can be difficult to translate.

Capitalization

Begin each item in a list with a capital letter unless there's a reason not to (for example, it's a command that's always lowercase). If necessary, rewrite the list item so that all items begin with capital letters or all items begin with lowercase words.

Punctuation

Don't use semicolons, commas, or conjunctions (like *and* or *or*) at the end of list items.

Don't use a period at the end of list items unless they're complete sentences, even if the complete sentence is very short.

Examples

Devices affected by this recall

- Original Surface Pro
- Surface Pro 2
- Surface Pro 3

Limitations on meeting organizers

- Only invited presenters can be selected as breakout room managers.
- The number of breakout room managers is limited to 10.
- Breakout room managers can't be assigned to specific rooms, but they can move freely between rooms.

If the list is introduced by a sentence fragment that ends with a colon, end all the items in the list with a period if any item forms a complete sentence when combined with the introduction.

Examples

Knowledge managers can:

- Confirm or remove topics that were discovered in your tenant.
- Create new topics manually as needed.
- Edit existing topic pages.

Exception Don't use periods if all items have three or fewer words or if the items are UI labels, headings, subheadings, strings, or similar types of text.

The administrative templates for Microsoft Edge are:

- msedge.admx
- msedgeupdate.admx

The topic answer will display:

- The topic name
- Alternate names
- The definition

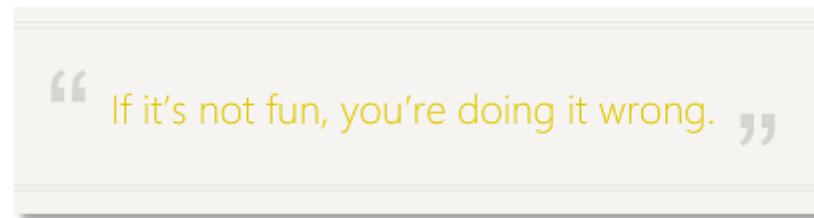
In UI

Often lists are a series of radio buttons or checkboxes inside dialog boxes or settings pages. Unless they're complete sentences, don't use punctuation for each item in a list. If punctuation is necessary for clarity, make sure punctuation is used consistently in the list and in other lists within the same section or screen.

Pull quotes

Article • 06/24/2022

Pull quotes are short sentences—usually a quote from someone important to the story, but sometimes just a short, interesting sentence—set off from body text to grab the reader's attention.



Pull quotes should be short—from a few words to a few lines. If the quote is from a person or publication, include the author's name, title, and organization with the pull quote.

Exception If the content is entirely about the person being quoted, you don't need to include the attribution.

Use pull quotes sparingly.

Sidebars

Article • 06/24/2022

Sidebars are useful in longer articles or documents to call out interesting sections and break up long spans of text. The content you put in a sidebar should be fairly short, interesting, and related but not crucial to the article.

Typically people read sidebars before or after the rest of the page, so don't use sidebars for information that should be read in sequence with the main text.

Five Signs Your Accounting System May Be Hindering Your Growth

Are the people in your office wasting valuable time duplicating data entry or trying to configure an underpowered or outdated system to do things it wasn't designed to do? You can apply workarounds in the short-term, but the longer you wait, the more business you lose.

If you identify with any of these scenarios, it's time to replace your existing system.

You can't scale operations to support business growth. If your business is stifled by the number of people who can access information, transaction limits, or the size restrictions of your database, it's time to find a solution that can scale to support your growth. As you expand product lines and enter new markets, your business processes become more complex. With basic accounting software, even the simplest processes, like invoicing and month-end closing, can take hours—even days—to complete. You need business process automation to handle growth without adding to your payroll.

You can't wrap your arms (or your head) around your business. There used to be a one-to-one correspondence between your employees and the business functions they managed. Now you don't have the controls in place to ensure a detailed and accurate audit trail. If multiple users can make changes to financial entries without proper tracking, it's difficult to trace who has done what. Protect your business with a solution that supports and enforces well-defined roles and processes and gives you tighter control over critical functions, such as payments, purchasing, and inventory management.

You are reactive when you need to be proactive. Sure, your basic accounting software can give you a snapshot of your take performance for the past quarter, but do you know which products produce the highest margin and which customers are likely to purchase the highest volume of those products? Instead of looking at reports of past performance, you need insight into current activities and developing trends to move your business forward. The right business management solution can give you full visibility into what drives your profitability and the ability to turn those profits into cash flow that will support your future growth.

Why companies adopt new business management solutions

	54%	Process integration
	50%	Resolve order processing issues
	50%	Hardware & software obsolescence
	38%	Resolve data duplication/errors
	35%	Reduce excess inventory

Source: Accountants Research, "Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Applications for SMBs"

Tables

Article • 04/11/2023

Tables make complex information easier to understand by presenting it in a clear structure. In a table, data is arranged into two or more rows (plus a header row) and two or more columns. Don't use a table just to present a list of items that are similar. Use a list instead.

 Expand table

Tables are sometimes useful for	Example
Data or values	Text formats and their associated HTML codes
Simple instructions	User interface actions and their associated keyboard shortcuts
Categories of things with examples	SKUs and the products they include
Collections of things with two or more attributes	Event dates with times and locations

Content

Make sure the purpose of the table is clear. If necessary, include a table title or brief introduction.

Place information that identifies the contents of a row in the leftmost column of the table. For example, in a table that describes commands, put the command names in the left column.

Make entries in a table parallel. For example, make all the items within a column a noun or a phrase that starts with a verb.

Example

 Expand table

Function	Description
AddUsersToEncryptedFile	Adds user keys to the specified encrypted file
CancelIo	Cancels all pending input and output (I/O) operations that are issued by the calling thread for the specified file

Function	Description
CancelIoEx	Marks any outstanding I/O operations for the specified file handle
GetTempFileName	Creates a name for a temporary file

Don't leave a cell blank or use an em dash to indicate there's no entry for that cell. Instead, use *Not applicable* or *None*.

Keep responsive design in mind. Limit the number of columns and keep the text in each cell brief—ideally one line. To learn more, see [Responsive content](#).

Balance row height by increasing the width of text-heavy columns and reducing the width of columns with minimal text.

Header rows

If the first row of your table contains column headers, you have a header row.

Distinguish the text in the header row from the rest of the text in the table. For example, make it larger, bolder, or a different color.

Column headers identify the data each column contains. Make headers precise for usability. For example, don't use "Name". Instead, make column headers specific as in "Group" or "Employee". (While screen readers use header information to identify rows and columns, specificity helps all users find the information they're looking for.)

Don't organize a table so that the column header forms a complete sentence when combined with the cell contents. This can make the table difficult to localize.

In long tables, make sure the header row is always visible. For example, on the web, use a fixed header row that stays in place during scrolling. Or, in a downloadable document, occasionally repeat the header row. Some authoring tools provide a way to do this automatically. In Microsoft Word, select the header row. On the **Layout** tab under **Table Tools**, select **Repeat Header Rows**.

Capitalization

Use sentence-style capitalization for the table title and each column header. Use sentence-style capitalization for the text in cells unless there's a reason not to (for example, keywords that must be lowercase).

Punctuation

If there's text that introduces the table, it should be a complete sentence and end with a period, not a colon.

Don't use ellipses at the end of column headers.

For the text in cells, use periods or other end punctuation only if the cells contain complete sentences or a mixture of fragments and sentences.

Search and writing

Article • 06/24/2022

Customers find content in a variety of ways. One of the most common is search. Search engine optimization (SEO) tactics change rapidly, but good writing that addresses customer needs always helps.

As you write, follow these guidelines to help customers find relevant content.

Keywords

Keywords are the terms customers use when they search for content. To help customers find your content in search engines, front-load keywords in headings, subheadings, and page descriptions.

The search terms that customers use aren't necessarily the same terms you would use when searching. So before you write, identify the keywords that you think customers will use to find your content. These resources can help:

- [Bing Keyword Research tool ↗](#)
- [Google Adwords Keyword Planner ↗](#)
- [Google Analytics ↗](#)

When you've identified the keywords that apply to your content, use them as early and as often as possible (without being contrived or repetitious) in these places:

- Titles
- Headings and subheadings
- Summaries
- Overviews
- Introductions
- Page descriptions
- Paragraph text
- Link text
- Image and table alt text

If your content is video, audio, or images, include keywords in a nearby text description and in alt text.

Links and backlinks

Linking to supporting information is a good way to stick to the point and keep content concise. In a large body of content, cross-references can improve navigation and make content easier to scan.

- Write short link text (four or fewer words) that's descriptive and includes keywords.
- If it works, use the title or description of the target page as link text.
- Link to background and related information rather than summarizing it.

Backlinks are links from other online content to your page. Although search engine algorithms change frequently, backlinks are often part of the criteria that determine search ranking. As you plan, think about promotion and what other sites can appropriately link to your content. The more authoritative the site and the closer it maps to your keywords, the more weight the backlink carries.

Never create backlinks just to improve your site's search ranking. Search practices that don't make sense for your content rarely work and often backfire.

Text formatting

Article • 06/24/2022

Type treatment is a key component in great design. The thoughtful use of fonts, text formatting, capitalization, alignment, and spacing creates a first impression, reinforces the Microsoft brand, and improves readability.

The consistent formatting of text elements, such as command names and URLs, reduces ambiguity and helps customers find and interpret information easily. Text-formatting guidelines are sometimes called *document conventions*.

This section covers:

- [Using type](#)
- [Formatting common text elements](#)
- [Formatting titles](#)

See also

[Formatting developer text elements](#)

[Reference documentation](#)

[Procedures and instructions](#)

Using type

Article • 06/24/2022

Beautiful typography is a cornerstone of modern design. The guidelines in this section will help you achieve it.

- Use sentence-style capitalization
- Use left alignment
- Don't compress line spacing

Use sentence-style capitalization

Article • 06/24/2022

In sentence-style capitalization, you capitalize only the first word of a sentence or phrase and proper nouns.

Example

This sentence and the subhead of this section both use sentence-style capitalization.

Although all-uppercase text is used occasionally on webpages, in advertising, and in other marketing communications, don't use it in text. A mix of uppercase and lowercase characters gives words familiar shapes that help readers scan more efficiently. All-uppercase text just looks like a rectangle, so it's harder to read.

Example

THIS SENTENCE IS ALL UPPERCASE AND NOT VERY EASY TO READ, DON'T YOU AGREE?

Don't use all-lowercase text. Capital letters help readers recognize that a new section or thought is beginning. All-lowercase text takes away that helpful cue.

Example

this sentence is all lowercase. or is it a sentence? it's hard to tell with no capital letters.

Learn more To learn more about proper nouns, see [Nouns and pronouns](#). To learn more about capitalization, see [Capitalization](#).

Use left alignment

Article • 06/24/2022

Left-aligned text has an even left margin and an erratic (ragged) right margin.

Don't center text.

Avoid these awkward situations in text:

- **Orphans**, which occur when the first line of a paragraph appears by itself at the bottom of a page or column
- **Widows**, which occur when the last line of a paragraph contains only one word or appears alone on the next page or column
- Lines that end with hyphens

In Word and PowerPoint, you can manage these situations without using manual line breaks.

 Expand table

To	Do this
Keep a hyphenated word from breaking at the end of a line	Insert a nonbreaking hyphen by pressing Ctrl+Shift+_- .
Keep the last word of a paragraph with the word that precedes it	Insert a nonbreaking space by pressing Ctrl+Shift+Space .
Control widows and orphans in Word	Select a paragraph formatted with Normal style. On the context menu, select Styles > Apply Styles . In the Apply Styles pane, select Modify . Select Format > Paragraph . On the Line and page breaks tab, select Widow/Orphan control .

Don't compress line spacing

Article • 06/24/2022

The amount of vertical space between lines of text in a paragraph, called *line spacing*, can help or hinder reading. Adequate line spacing helps readers find their way from the end of one line to the beginning of the next.

If you're using a template, don't change the line spacing. If you're not, ask a designer for advice if you can.

If you need to modify line spacing later, change it in the styles, not in individual paragraphs, so spacing remains consistent throughout the content. Never reduce line spacing to fit more text on a slide or page. Edit the text instead.

[+] [Expand table](#)

Font size	Line spacing
Body text (up to 14 points)	120% minimum
Subheadings (14–36 points)	110% minimum
Headings (36 points or larger)	120% maximum

Formatting common text elements

Article • 06/24/2022

Consistent text formatting helps readers locate and interpret information. Follow these formatting conventions for common text elements.

For information about referring to UI elements, see [Formatting text in instructions](#).

See also

[Capitalization](#)

[Formatting developer text elements](#)

[Procedures and instructions](#)

[] [Expand table](#)

Element	Convention	Example
Database names	Bold. The capitalization of database names varies.	Contoso database
Emphasis	It's OK to use italic formatting sparingly for emphasis.	Cybercriminals might call you and claim to be from Microsoft. Be aware that Microsoft will <i>never</i> call you to charge for security or software fixes.
Error messages	Sentence-style capitalization. Enclose in quotation marks when referencing error messages in text.	We can't find a scanner. Hmm ... looks like that's a broken link. If you see the error message, "Check scanner status and try again," use Windows Update to check for the latest drivers for your device.
File attributes	All lowercase.	hidden system read-only To remove the hidden attribute from all files in a folder
File name extensions	All lowercase.	.mdb .doc
File names	Title-style capitalization. It's OK to use internal caps in file names for readability.	My Taxes for 2016 MyTaxesFor2016

Element	Convention	Example
Folder and directory names	Sentence-style capitalization. It's OK to use internal capital letters in folder and directory names for readability.	Vacation and sick pay MyFiles\Accounting\Payroll\VacPay
Macros	Usually all uppercase. Use bold formatting if predefined. Might be monospace if user defined. Treatment varies.	LOWORD MASKROP
Markup language elements (tags)	Bold. Capitalization varies.	 <input type=text> <!DOCTYPE html>
Mathematical constants and variables	Italic.	$a2 + b2 = c2$
New terms	Italicize the first mention of a new term if you're going to define it immediately in text.	Microsoft Exchange consists of both <i>server</i> and <i>client</i> components.
Ports	All uppercase.	LPT1
Products, services, apps, and trademarks	Usually title-style capitalization. Check the Microsoft trademark list for capitalization of trademarked names.	Microsoft Arc Touch Mouse Microsoft Word Surface Pro Notepad Network Connections
UI text or strings	Sentence-style capitalization.	Find on page Read aloud Hide selected items
URLs	All lowercase for complete URLs. If necessary, line-break long URLs before a slash. Don't hyphenate. See also URLs and web addresses	www.microsoft.com msdn.microsoft.com/downloads

Formatting titles

Article • 02/26/2024

In general, use sentence-style casing (that is, only capitalize the first word of a title, like at the beginning of a sentence), as this makes content more readable and ensures better localizability.

Use bold font instead of italics for titles to enhance readability and accessibility.

There are some notable exceptions to sentence-casing. These include:

- The titles of books (including e-books), white papers, and reports:

Unraveling HTML5, CSS3, and JavaScript

Backup and Recovery Overview for Azure Customers

- Games:

Some of the top games on Microsoft Store include **Sea of Thieves 2023 Edition** and **Stardew Valley**.

- Events and webinars:

The **Microsoft Envision AI Tour** is for decision-makers and developers, with events curated for each audience.

OneNote Best Practices for Educators and Students with Mike Tholfsen

See also [Capitalization](#), [Headings](#)

URLs and web addresses

Article • 06/24/2022

Communications to customers often refer to websites and URLs. Follow these guidelines to make your URL references clear and easy for customers to understand.

URL vs. address

In content for a general audience, use *address* rather than *URL*. In content for a technical audience, don't spell out *URL* on first mention. If you have a reason to spell out URL, use *uniform resource locator*.

Use *a*, not *an*, as an article preceding *URL*.

References to specific sites and domains

Don't include *https://* in a URL. Include the protocol only if it's something other than HTTP, such as File Transfer Protocol (FTP).

Examples

www.microsoft.com/business

[ftp://example.com/downloads/myfile.txt](http://example.com/downloads/myfile.txt)

The trailing slash at the end of a URL is optional. In most cases, leave it off. Never use a trailing slash in a URL that ends with a file name.

Most of the time, use lowercase for URLs, email addresses, and newsgroup addresses.

To refer to an entire website or top-level domain, such as Microsoft.com, omit *http://www* from the URL and capitalize only the first letter of the URL, even if the site name is capitalized differently.

Examples

www.microsoft.com

Microsoft.com

Codeplex.com is home to the open-source project site hosted by Microsoft.

Grammar and formatting

Use *of* (not *for*) to describe the relationship of the word *URL* to a resource. Use the preposition *at* with the location of a specific address.

Examples

Search results include the URL of the page.

Learn more about Microsoft products and services at www.microsoft.com.

If the reader might think the period at the end of a sentence is part of the URL, rewrite the sentence or set the URL off.

Examples

Go to windows.microsoft.com/upgrade to learn how to get your free Windows 10 upgrade.

To get your free Windows 10 upgrade, go to our website:

windows.microsoft.com/upgrade

Write brief but meaningful link text, using the title or a description of a page rather than a generic phrase like *click here*. In alt text for a graphic that links to another location, state clearly that the graphic is a link.

Examples

Go to the [Windows 10 upgrade page](#) to learn how to get your free upgrade.

(Alt text) Picture of a woman talking on a phone that opens an online chat session with Microsoft support.

(Alt text) Windows 10 logo and link to the Windows 10 upgrade page.

Word choice

Article • 06/24/2022

To improve readability and comprehension, choose your words wisely and use them consistently. If you mean the same thing, use the same word.

This section provides tips for choosing the right words for the job:

- Use contractions
- Use simple words, concise sentences
- Don't use common words in new ways
- Use technical terms carefully
- Avoid jargon
- Use US spelling and avoid non-English words

For information about specific words and phrases, refer to the A–Z word list and *The American Heritage Dictionary* ↗.

Use contractions

Article • 06/24/2022

Write using the same, everyday words you use in conversation.

- Use common contractions, such as *it's*, *you're*, *that's*, and *don't*, to create a friendly, informal tone.
- Don't mix contractions and their spelled-out equivalents in UI text. For example, don't use *can't* and *cannot* in the same UI.
- Never form a contraction from a noun and a verb, such as *Microsoft's developing a lot of new cloud services*.
- Avoid ambiguous or awkward contractions, such as *there'd*, *it'll*, and *they'd*.

Use simple words, concise sentences

Article • 06/24/2022

Make every word count. Concise, clear sentences save space, are easy to understand, and facilitate scanning. Use simple words with precise meanings, and remove words that don't add substance. Use your judgment to avoid sounding abrupt or unfriendly.

- Choose simple verbs without modifiers. Whenever you can, avoid weak or vague verbs, such as *be*, *have*, *make*, and *do*.

Examples

[] Expand table

Use this	Not this
use	utilize, make use of
remove	extract, take away, eliminate
tell	inform, let know

- Don't use two or three words when one will do.

Examples

[] Expand table

Use this	Not this
to	in order to, as a means to
also	in addition
connect	establish connectivity

- Whenever possible, choose words that have one clear meaning.

Examples

[] Expand table

Use this	Not this
<i>Because</i> you created the table, you can change it.	<i>Since</i> you created the table, you can change it.

- Omit unnecessary adverbs—words that describe how, when, or where. Unless they're important to the meaning of a statement, leave them out.

Examples

quite

very

quickly

easily

effectively

- Use one term consistently to represent one concept.
- Use words that can be both nouns and verbs carefully—*file, post, mark, screen, record, and report*, for example. Use the sentence structure and context to eliminate ambiguity.

Don't use common words in new ways

Article • 08/26/2024

Most people know the common definition of words—usually the one that appears first in the dictionary. Refer to [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#) if you have any doubts. Use words in the most familiar sense, or define them if you can't.

- Don't create a new word from an existing word.

Example

Don't use *bucketize* to mean *group*.

- Don't apply a new meaning to an ordinary word.

Example

Don't use *graveyard* to mean *archive*.

- Be careful with common words that have industry-specific uses. Assume customers know the common definition of the word, not the industry-specific definition. If you must use the industry-specific definition, define the word in context.

Writing tip Sometimes industry-specific usage, such as *hacker*, becomes part of everyday speech. Know your customer and the language they use. When in doubt, use a simple word with a well-understood meaning.

- Don't use verbs as nouns or nouns as verbs.

Examples

[] [Expand table](#)

Use this	Not this
affect performance	impact performance
download the paper	get the download
respond to the request	respond to the ask

Use technical terms carefully

Article • 08/26/2024

Technical terms come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Sometimes they're everyday words that are given new meanings, like *cloud*, *batch*, or *dashboard*. Other times, common words are combined to create technical terms, like *telemedicine* or *email*. Over time, some technical terms become widely understood, but before that happens, they can be confusing to people who aren't familiar with them. Use technical terms when they're the clearest way to communicate your message, but use them with care.

Use common words whenever possible

Don't use a technical term when an everyday term will do. For example, don't use *rip* to refer to copying files from a CD if you can use *copy* instead.

Don't assume everyone will understand technical terms

When you must use technical terms for precise communication, define them in context.

Use technical terms consistently

When you've decided to use a technical term, use that term consistently across products and services, tools, websites, and marketing communications. Aim for one term, one concept.

Use industry-specific terms for professional audiences

Many industries and professions have their own terminology: banking, healthcare, construction, IT, and project management, for example.

If you're writing for an industry or profession, use the words your audience uses. First, verify Microsoft and industry usage. Check the A–Z word list and [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#). Then look to authoritative industry resources:

- Terminology websites, such as [Webopedia.com](#), and [WhatIs.TechTarget.com](#).

- Industry standard sites, such as [W3C](#) and [IEEE](#).
- Industry research organizations, such as Forrester Research and Gartner.
- Domain books, such as the [PMI Lexicon of Project Management Terms](#) or the [FDIC List of Abbreviations and Glossary of Terms \(Appendix B\)](#).

Don't create a new term if one already exists

Don't create a new term if an existing one serves your purpose. If you must create a new term, verify that it isn't already being used to mean something else.

Research emerging terminology

Technology changes at light speed, and customers expect us to use the latest technical terms. But it's crucial to use them correctly and consistently across our products, services, documents, packaging, and marketing. Before you adopt a new term in your content, find out whether other groups are using it, and how.

- First, check [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#).
- Research the term on *edited* industry websites, such as [Forrester Research](#), [Gartner](#), [CNET](#), [Recode](#), [Mashable](#), [TechCrunch](#), [WIRED](#), [Gizmodo](#), [HuffPost Tech](#), and [Engadget](#). For emerging industry terminology, check reputable business and trade websites, such as [Fast Company](#), [Entrepreneur](#), [Business Insider](#), [Healthcare IT News](#), [American Banker](#), and [GameSpot](#).

Avoid jargon

Article • 06/24/2022

In the right context, for a particular audience, jargon serves as shorthand for well-understood concepts. But for less technical audiences, jargon can impede understanding.

Don't use jargon if:

- You can use a more familiar term, such as *symbol* instead of *glyph*.
- The term is familiar to only a small segment of your readers.
- The term isn't specific to software, networking, cloud services, and so on.

Avoid business, marketing, and journalistic jargon, such as using *leverage* to mean *take advantage of*.

Testing for jargon

Differentiating jargon from technical terminology is tricky. First, check the A–Z word list. If you don't find the term, the following checklist can help.

- If you think a term is jargon, it probably is.
- If it's an acronym or abbreviation, it may be jargon. Spell it out for clarity.
- If a reviewer questions your use of a term, it may be jargon.
- If the term is used in *The Wall Street Journal* or *The New York Times*, or in general-interest magazines, such as *Time* or *Newsweek*, it might be appropriate for some audiences.
- If the term is used in technical periodicals such as *CNET* or *Recode*, it's probably OK to use for technical audiences.

Use US spelling and avoid non-English words

Article • 06/24/2022

When the spelling of English words varies by locale, use the US spelling. For example, use *license*, not *licence*.

Avoid non-English words or phrases, such as *de facto* or *ad hoc*.

Avoid Latin abbreviations for common English phrases.

Exception It's OK to use *etc.*, in situations where space is limited. Otherwise, see [and so on](#) for alternatives.

 [Expand table](#)

Use this	Instead of this
for example	e.g.
that is	i.e.
namely	viz.
therefore	ergo