

Infobits technical documentation

Style guide

Infobits technical documentation: Style guide

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Chapter 1. Conventions

Infobits documentation conforms to the following conventions:

Convention	Meaning	Example
command	Command names and options, subcommand names, function names, path names, file names, and URLs are in a fixed-width font.	<code>screen, -Dr</code>
variable	Variables and other replaceable text are in italics.	<code>my-path</code>
user input	Text that a user actively enters is bold and fixed width.	<code>make deploy</code>
<i>new term</i>	A newly-introduced term is in italics.	<i>concurrency</i>
{ }	Syntax elements that are required are in curly brackets.	<code>{-d}</code>
[]	Syntax elements that are optional are in square brackets.	<code>[-t]</code>
< >	The HTML or XML element (or tag) is in angle brackets; the name of an HTML or XML element is not in angle brackets.	<code><body></code> ; the body element
	A pipe denotes a logical OR within syntax.	<code>a b</code>

1.1. File names

For the sake of consistency, and to avoid rendering problems that occur on some platforms and applications, use the following characters when naming a file:

- lowercase (abc) letters
- uppercase (ABC) letters only for the initial letter of file names such as `Gemfile`, `Makefile`, or `Procfile`
- numbers (123)
- hyphens (-)
- underscores (_)
- dots (.)

Chapter 2. Organization

It is often easier to organize a document after you have ample content. "Let the data do the organizing."

2.1. Chapter versus section

If you chunk information into smaller parts, write an introductory sentence or paragraph. If you find it difficult to write that introduction, your organizational structure might be bloated; you might have a section or subsection that you can remove.

Chapter 3. Lists

If you use a list, include more than one list item. If you only have one list item, remove the list and rephrase the information using one or two sentences. Doing so removes unnecessary structure. Use only one type of list at a time; avoid `* foo: A tool that ...`, where `*` signifies an unordered list and `:` signifies a definition list.

3.1. Definition

Use an definition (or variable) list for complementary information that includes a term and a definition.

3.2. Ordered

Use an ordered (or numbered) list for information that needs to be performed in a particular order. If only part of the list needs to be performed in a particular order, write a default order that you want your reader to use.

3.3. Unordered

Use an unordered (or bulleted) list for information that does not need to be performed in a particular order.

Chapter 4. Numbers

Generally, single-digit numbers are spelled out. For example, one, two, three, or 10, 11, 12. For details about how to be most clear when writing technical content that includes numbers, see *Writing Numbers* [<http://www.grammarbook.com/numbers/numbers.asp>].

Chapter 5. Parts of speech

For terms such as *set up*, *setup*, and *set-up*, examine the underlying parts of speech:

Verb	Noun	Compound adjective
set up	setup	set-up
log in	login	log-in
log out	logout	log-out

Chapter 6. Shortened text

An *acronym* (or an *initialism*) is pronounced as a word (or a series of letters), and is a short version of an expanded set of terms. For the sake of simplicity, the term acronym is used in Infobits documentation.

If an acronym is unfamiliar to the reader, expand it first and put the acronym in parentheses as in *Simple File Transfer Protocol (SFTP)*. If an acronym is familiar to the reader, expand it in parentheses after the acronym as in *SFTP (Simple File Transfer Protocol)*.

Note

To avoid insulting your reader, do not expand an acronym if it is used on a regular basis.

Expand abbreviations, such as e.g., because they add complexity for non-native readers, are used inconsistently, and are unnecessary.

Chapter 7. Titles

Title styles differ depending on where they are used. To avoid typos, consider using entities, such as `&seealso`, for section names that are frequently used. To be consistent, leave out trailing colons within titles if they cannot be inserted systematically.

Book	For a book, use a title that provides enough context. For example, <i>Infobits technical documentation: Style guide</i> clarifies that the style guide is about technical documentation rather than legal documentation, and <i>Infobits</i> specifies that it is derived from Infobits rather than another entity.
Chapter or section	For a chapter or section, use a title that provides enough context without being redundant. In a chapter titled <i>Lists</i> , for example, use section titles <i>Ordered</i> and <i>Unordered</i> rather than <i>Ordered list</i> and <i>Unordered list</i> .
Procedure	For procedure titles, use a gerund [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerund] (also known as a verb with an <code>-ing</code> ending), such as <i>Writing</i> in the example that follows. Doing so keeps the procedure name short, and distinguishes the name of a procedure from its steps that are in the imperative [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperative] form.

Procedure 7.1. Writing a procedure

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consetetur sadipscing elitr, sed diam.

1. Create a new file (`File → New...`).
2. Give the file a name that is similar enough to the name of the procedure, for example `writing-procedure.xml`.
3. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Sed mi mauris, accumsan vitae.
4. Suspendisse erat tortor, condimentum sed turpis condimentum, semper sagittis velit. Fusce sed magna pretium, accumsan tellus id, congue.