

Spring Style Guide

This Spring Style Guide is for the Tanzu Learner Development Team, and all others who create Spring content at VMware.

Capitalization

Do capitalize:

- Titles – Use title style capitalization.
- Headings – Use sentence style capitalization.
- Proper Nouns, including names of companies, people, and products.
- Diagrams, Figures, Tables.

Do not capitalize:

- If you're not sure whether to capitalize.
- A feature name unless it is to match usage.
- A spelled-out term just because it is typically used as an acronym.

Dashes and hyphens

Dashes and hyphens have different purposes:

- Em dash (—) Functions similar to parentheses or a pair of commas when used in a sentence. Avoid both parentheses and em dashes when possible. Instead, use two sentences.
- En dash (–) Use for ranges (e.g., ©2021–2022, 266MHz–500MHz), and between a main clause (noun or verb) and its definition in bulleted lists.
- Hyphens (-) Use for following:
 - Connects two or more words.
 - Clarifies an ambiguous word or phrase (e.g., cloud-native microservices).
 - Indicates a location (e.g., Lower-left pane).

When in doubt, do not use hyphens.

Gender

Whenever possible, rewrite to avoid gender specificity. It's OK to use “they” instead of “he” or “she.”

- **Original:** If a learner doesn't have access to the introductory lesson, “he” is not going to understand the advanced one.
- **Rewrite:** If a learner doesn't have access to the introductory lesson, “they” are not going to understand the advanced one.

Jargon

Do not use jargon in your writing. Jargon causes people to disconnect from what they are reading because they do not understand it.

To keep jargon out of your writing:

- Avoid using obscure, specialized, or idiomatic language.
- Write in plain language that all readers can quickly grasp.
- When introducing new terminology, provide a brief definition or explanation and consider using italics on first use to mark the word as a specialized term.
- Avoid overusing acronyms.

Lists

A list is either bulleted or numbered.

- Use a bulleted list when describing options that have no sequence, priority, or detrimental effect if you decide to change their order in the list.
- Use a numbered (ordered) list to organize a list of high-level tasks that have a prescribed sequence, or to organize options by priority.

When creating a list:

- Use a consistent style. There are two style options that you can use for lists:
 - Full sentences for each item. Put a period after each item.
 - Single words or short sentence fragments for each item. Use no closing punctuation unless they start with an imperative verb.
- Use the same grammatical form for all items in a list. For example, the items in the list must begin with all nouns, or all verbs.
- Make all the items within a list grammatically parallel. For example, each item might start with a noun, or each item might start with a verb.
- Capitalize the first word in every item of every list.
- Make each list item independent. Don't add linking words (and or then), or commas between list items.

Numbers

Spell out numbers lower than 10 (unless they are used with a unit of measure).

For example:

- There are five users online.
- Wait 5 seconds before restarting the machine.

Proper nouns vs. common nouns

A proper noun is a specific name for a particular person, place, or thing. A proper noun is always capitalized no matter where it appears in a sentence.

A common noun is the generic name for a person, place, or thing in a class or group. Unlike proper nouns, a common noun is not capitalized unless it either begins a sentence or appears in a title.

For example, **Spring** (a proper noun) is an **open-source application framework** (a common noun).

Second person voice

Writing in the second person supports a friendly, active voice that speaks directly to your audience. The use of a second person voice in your writing helps them to quickly connect the objectives in your course to their personal experience. It also makes writing instructions more clear and direct. For example, “Select one or more options.” or “Click Go to continue.”

When writing in the second person, use second person pronouns (you, your) as much as possible. Use first-person pronouns (I, me, my, mine, we, us, ours) sparingly.

Be inclusive in your writing by replacing first-person pronouns with second person pronouns as much as possible.

Example:

Replace “*My team and I wrote this lesson for you*” with “*This lesson is for you.*”

Words ending in -ing

Avoid overusing gerunds in your writing. Gerunds are nouns and verbs that end in -ing. Gerunds make writing passive because they require additional words (am, are, is, was) to support them.

Words and sentences

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.