TECHNICAL DOCUMENTATION

ENC 4293

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

Communication is an important skill in academia and the workplace. Writers must create documents in many formats, styles, and subjects. The learning process towards becoming a good writer is lifelong, and every new document presents an opportunity.

Most students encounter their first style guide in college classes. As a college student, it is easy to assume that style requirements are just another layer of work irrelevant to the real world. However, learning about style guides can prepare students for the workplace. Style guides ensure that documents follow specific formats and aspire to a high level of quality. Many companies have style guides that they follow when creating documents. Some of these guides can be strict, especially those that deal with government or medical documents. The sooner students understand the importance of style guides, the better prepared they are to write professional documents. Style guides can be

teaching tools for many types of documents, guiding writers in the creation of clear and meaningful content.

The ENC 4293 class of 2020 has compiled this style guide as a reference for academic and professional writers alike. Rather than focusing solely on content or format, this guide also touches on the social responsibilities of a successful writer. These responsibilities include intercultural awareness, ethics, accessibility, and the importance of proper research. By adding these elements into the style guide, the class hopes to emphasize the fact that writing well involves more than stringing words together. Writing is a social activity, and effective writing is a conversation between writers and their readers.

"We are all apprentices in a craft
where no one ever becomes a master."
-Ernest Hemingway

Grammar

Parts of Speech

Nouns

A noun identifies a person, place, thing, or concept. In a sentence, a noun has several functions. They can be the subject, the object of a verb or preposition, a complement, an appositive, or a modifier. Only nouns can be modified to express plurality and possession.

Common Nouns

A common noun is a general reference to a person, place, or thing.

Examples:

computer, company, country, manager

Proper Nouns

A proper noun is a specific reference to a person, place, or thing.

Examples:

Acer, Microsoft, New York, Bill Gates

Plural Nouns

A plural noun represents more than one subject.

Examples:

emails, reports, headings, folders

Possessive Nouns

A possessive noun implies ownership of an object or idea.

Examples:

the student's book, the company's style guide

Compound Nouns

A compound noun is a group of nouns—usually two or three—joined together naturally or with a hyphen to make a single noun.

Examples:

copyediting, cross-reference, two-year-old

Collective Nouns

A collective noun represents a group of things. Treat collective nouns like singular nouns when they represent one group. *Examples:*

Society, committee, flock, organization

Pronouns

Pronouns are words that can replace a noun in a sentence. They are tools writers can use to add variety to their sentences rather than using the same nouns in every instance.

Singular Pronouns

A singular pronoun replaces a singular noun.

Examples:

Dave is a technical writer.

He is a technical writer.

Plural Pronouns

A plural pronoun replaces a plural noun.

Examples:

The team finished writing.

They finished writing.

Subject Pronouns

A subject pronoun replaces the subject noun in a sentence. It becomes the subject of the verb.

Examples:

Marta wrote this document.

She wrote this document.

Object Pronouns

An object pronoun replaces the direct or indirect object of the sentence.

Examples:

Marta gave Dave a task.

Marta gave him a task.

Object pronouns are also used for objects following prepositions.

Examples:

Marta has a project for you.

I can help you with it.

Possessive Pronouns

A possessive pronoun implies ownership. Possessive pronouns do not require apostrophes.

Examples:

Marta is proud of her work.

Your work is excellent.

Plural Pronouns

A plural pronoun replaces a plural noun.

Examples:

The team finished writing.

They finished writing.

Reflexive Pronouns

A reflexive pronoun is used when the subject of the sentence is performing an action on itself.

Example:

The computer restarted itself after the update.

Intensive Pronouns

An intensive pronoun emphasizes the subject. Intensive pronouns are usually redundant and should be avoided.

Examples:

I will write it myself.

You yourself are responsible.

Demonstrative Pronouns

A demonstrative pronoun implies proximity between the speaker and the object of the sentence.

Examples:

This is my paper.

Hand me that pen.

Interrogative Pronouns

Interrogative pronouns ask questions about the subject.

Examples:

What are you writing?

Who is your editor?

Indeterminate Pronouns

Indeterminate pronouns do not refer to a specific subject.

They are used to make generalities.

Examples:

Everyone likes the format.

Are there any questions?

Multiple Gender Pronouns

When writing to or about a group of multiple genders, there are two ways to write inclusively.

Examples:

Everyone should submit his or her work tomorrow.

Everyone should submit their work tomorrow.

Verbs

Verbs indicate actions performed by the subject of a sentence or a state of being. Together, subjects and verbs form the basis of all complete sentence structures. Verbs change their form in a process called conjugation, depending on when the action is taking place (i.e., past, present, or future tense).

Transitive Verbs

A transitive verb links the subject to a direct object. It answers the question "what?" or "who?"

Example:

Marta has increased productivity.

Intransitive Verbs

An intransitive verb does not require a direct object to form a complete sentence.

Example:

The computer crashed.

Linking and To Be Verbs

A linking verb links a subject to a complement that reflects the subject, usually an adjective or a noun phrase that could substitute for the subject.

Examples:

This assignment looks challenging.

Marta is the director of the writing team.

Action Verbs

An action verb shows what the subject is doing. It is also known as a helping verb.

Examples:

Marta directs the writing team.

The team composed the style guide together.

Modal Verbs

A modal verb conveys ability or possibility. It is used in conjunction with action verbs.

Examples:

David can help with editing.

We must complete the project by Friday.

Auxiliary Verbs

An auxiliary verb works with the main verb in negative or interrogative sentences. *To be* and *modal* verbs are also auxiliary verbs.

Examples:

We should have consulted the style guide first.

Do you know when the project is due?

Irregular Verbs

An irregular verb does not follow the rules of conjugation for past and present participles.

Examples:

I will write the introduction. (regular verb)

Who wrote the reference list? (irregular verb)

Have you written the index yet? (irregular verb)

Infinitive Phrase

An infinitive phrase is a compound verb joined with the word *to* in front of it. Infinite verbs can act as subjects, direct objects, complements, and modifiers.

Examples:

To delay publishing is not an option. (subject)

We wanted to finish today. (direct object)

Our goal is to publish a style guide. (complement)

Marta agreed to help me. (adjective)

Split Infinitives

A split infinitive occurs when the word *to* is separated from the infinitive verb stem. While it is acceptable in an informal context, split infinitives should be avoided in formal writing.

Examples:

We need to quickly finish editing. (casual)

We need to finish editing quickly. (proper)

Gerunds

A gerund is a verb ending in *-ing* that functions as a noun.

Examples:

Writing is therapeutic for some people. (subject)

Improve your writing with practice. (direct object)

You can take classes on writing. (preposition)

Participles as Nouns

A participle is a verb used as an adjective to modify a noun or pronoun. They usually end in *-ing* (present participles) or *-ed*, *-en*, *-d*, *-t*, *-n*, and *-ne* (past participles).

Examples:

The finished manuscript was approved.

The managing editor assigned the project.

Adjectives

Adjectives describe or modify nouns and pronouns using observational and sensory words. Adjectives answer questions like; *what color*, *how big*, *how many*, and *which one*, to name a few.

Descriptive Adjectives

A descriptive adjective is the most common type of adjective. It describes an attribute or quality of a noun or pronoun. They are also called qualitative adjectives.

Example:

The large dictionary is on her desk.

Adjective Degrees

Adjectives come in three degrees: positive, comparative, and superlative.

Examples:

This is a good book. (positive)

It's better than the last one. (comparative)

This is her best work yet. (superlative)

Compound Adjectives

A compound adjective is two or more modifiers combined to modify a noun.

Example:

The sixty-page draft was sent over yesterday.

Quantitative Adjectives

A quantitative adjective provides numeric information. It answers the questions *how much?* or *how many?*

Examples:

I have twelve articles to edit.

Turn in the whole assignment on Friday.

Proper Adjectives

A proper adjective is a proper noun used as an adjective.

Examples:

The publishing company uses the Chicago style.

A Shakespearean sonnet has fourteen lines.

Demonstrative Adjectives

A demonstrative adjective is a direct reference to a person or thing.

Examples:

That manuscript is ready for printing.

This manuscript needs further revision.

Possessive Adjectives

A possessive adjective suggests ownership of the subject.

Examples:

My assignment is nearly finished.

His manuscript needs formatting.

Interrogative Adjectives

An interrogative adjective asks a question: *which*, *what*, or *whose*. A noun or pronoun always follows an interrogative adjective.

Examples:

Which style guide did you use?

What font is this?

Indefinite Adjectives

An indefinite adjective is a general or unspecific modifier.

Examples:

Several writers were assigned to the project.

It is due in a few days.

Articles

An article is an adjective that determines the specificity of the noun it modifies.

Examples:

The manuscript is ready for printing.

A manuscript is ready for printing.

Participles as Adjectives

A past participle can take the place of an adjective without using an auxiliary verb.

Example:

I have the edited copy of that manuscript.

Adverbs

Adverbs are words that modify verbs, adjectives, and even other adverbs. They indicate manner, quality, and degrees, as well as when, where, and how often actions occur.

Conjunctive Adverbs

A conjunctive adverb connects a phrase or independent clause, demonstrating a relationship between the different sentence segments.

Example:

The team missed the deadline; consequently, the publication date was pushed back.

Sentence Adverbs

A sentence adverb begins a sentence and modifies the entire sentence.

Example:

Hopefully, the editors will finish in time.

Adverbs of Time and Frequency

An adverb of time or frequency answers the questions *when?* or *how often?*

Examples:

The project is due Thursday.

The writing team is never late.

Adverbs of Place and Direction

An adverb of place or direction answers the question *where?*

Examples:

The manuscript was sent to the publisher.

File it under the Completed Task tab.

Adverbs of Degrees and Manner

An adverb of degree or manner answers the questions *how much?* and *how?*

Examples:

I completely forgot about the deadline.

I emailed my editor quickly.

Prepositions

Prepositions indicate a relationship between a noun and the rest of the sentence.

Prepositions of Time

A preposition of time indicates a time-based relationship between the noun and the rest of the sentence.

Example:

The project is due before noon on Friday.

Prepositions of Measurement

A preposition of measurement indicates quantity.

Example:

Pens are sold by the dozen, and paper by the ream.

Prepositions of Place and Movement

A preposition of location or movement demonstrates a location-based relationship between the noun and the rest of the sentence.

Example:

The meeting is across the hall in room 102.

Prepositions of Agency and Manner

A preposition of agency or manner suggests an action being performed by a noun.

Example:

This manuscript was edited by Marta with the *OED*.

Prepositions of Instrumentality

A preposition of instrumentality suggests an action done *to*, *with*, or *on* a noun.

Example:

I wrote this page on a Word document.

Prepositions of Source and Possession

A preposition of source or possession implies origin or ownership of a noun.

Example:

It was written by the intern with gold glasses.

Phrasal Prepositions

A phrasal preposition is a compound phrase that functions like a preposition. It is not the same as a prepositional phrase.

Example:

According to the style guide, use a 16pt font.

Conjunctions

Conjunctions connect phrases and clauses to the rest of the sentence, demonstrating a relationship between multiple elements in a sentence.

Coordinating Conjunctions

A coordinating conjunction is used to join two words, phrases, or independent clauses.

Example:

The style guide was edited and formatted in Microsoft Word.

Correlative Subordinate

A correlative conjunction is used to compare or contrast correlating parts of a sentence. They are usually paired with a second conjunction.

Example:

Neither the index nor the forward are finished.

Subordinate Conjunctions

A subordinating conjunction is used to join unparallel parts of a sentence, like a dependent clause and an independent clause.

Example:

Before publishing, they format the document.

Interjections

Interjections are unusual and stylistic additions to sentences. They express surprise or sudden emotions with an implied pause. They are not common in formal writing but are frequently used in written dialogue that captures real speech.

Emotion or Surprise

An interjection of emotion or surprise demonstrates a sudden emotion with added emphasis.

Examples:

Wow! That's a long manuscript.

Interruptions

An interjection of interruption breaks the flow of the sentence, usually with a sound, not a word.

Examples:

You, uh, missed a typo on page four.

Approval and Disapproval

An interjection of approval or disapproval provides a direct *yes* or *no* answer.

Examples:

Yes, the manuscript is ready for printing.

No, I'm not finished editing.

Attracting Attention

An interjection of attention is meant to attract attention.

Example:

Hey! Can you hear me now?

Prefixes

A prefix is a type of modifier joined to the beginning of a root or stem word.

Examples:

anticlimax, extract, foretell, pretext

Suffixes

A suffix is a type of modifier joined to the end of a root or stem word. Sometimes the ending of the word is altered and replaced by the suffix. Suffixes are used in many verb and adjectival variations as well as nouns.

Examples:

intern<u>ship</u>, opin<u>ion</u>, simpl<u>ify</u>, creat<u>ive</u>

Usage

Once you understand the basic elements of English grammar, usage techniques help you arrange these elements and form coherent sentences. Many of these techniques ensure agreement and consistency between subjects and verbs.

Agreement

Subject-verb agreement is a set of rules that govern the subject-verb relationship in a sentence. There are several rules that a sentence must follow to establish agreement.

Singular and Plural

Singular nouns require singular verbs. Plural nouns require plural verbs.

Examples:

<u>I am</u> writing. <u>She is</u> researching. (singular)

<u>We are</u> writing. <u>They are</u> researching. (plural)

Prepositional Phrases

A prepositional phrase modifying the subject does not change the verb's conjugation.

Examples:

A flyer about rules is going around. (singular)

Rules about agreement are in the style guide. (plural)

Conjunctions

When the conjunction *and* joins two or more nouns, the subject phrase becomes plural.

Example:

Marta and Dave are editing the manuscript.

Conjunctive Phrases

When a conjunctive phrase like *as well as*, *along with*, *together with* replaces *and*, the verb is not affected.

Example:

Marta, along with Dave, is editing the manuscript.

Indefinite Subjects

Indefinite pronouns are usually singular and therefore require a singular verb.

Examples:

Someone is bringing coffee. (singular)

Neither of you is on the writing team. (singular)

The exceptions to this rule are the plural indefinite pronouns *many*, *several*, *others*, *both*, and *few*.

Examples:

Both of us are on the editing team. (plural)

Several of them are working together. (plural)

When *none* is paired with the prepositional phrase *of the*, the verb becomes plural.

Example:

None of the writers are here today. (plural)

When referencing an indefinite number of subjects with the phrase *a number of*, the verb is plural. If the number is known, the verb is singular.

Examples:

A number of writers are on the project. (plural)

The number of writers on the project is 17. (singular)

Plural Nouns

Some nouns like *scissors*, *pants*, and *glasses* are always plural, even in a singular context. If the plural noun is preceded by the phrase *a pair of,* then they are considered singular.

Examples:

My glasses are broken. (plural)

This pair of glasses is broken. (singular)

Correlative Conjunctions

When nouns are paired using *either...or* or *neither...nor*, the verb agrees with the last noun in the sequence.

Examples:

Neither Marta nor Dave is attending the meeting.

Either Marta or the writers are bringing coffee.

Here/There Sentences

In *here/there* sentences, the subject comes after the verb. The rules of subject-verb agreement still apply.

Examples:

Here is the manuscript you asked for. (singular)

There are the manuscripts you asked for. (plural)

Collective Nouns

Collective nouns are usually treated as singular nouns.

Examples:

The team is finished editing.

The committee is holding a vote.

Gerunds

Gerunds are always paired with a singular verb.

Example:

Writing is therapeutic for some people.

Adjectives as Nouns

When an adjective is used as a noun, the verb will always be plural.

Example:

The industrious are reliable.

Voice

Voice is a technique that determines how the subject and verb relate to each other. In English grammar, there are two types of voice: active and passive.

Active Voice

Active voice is when the subject of the sentence is performing the action or verb. It is the most direct means of expression.

Example:

Marta is editing the manuscript.

Passive Voice

Passive voice is when the subject is having an action performed on it.

Example:

The manuscript is being edited by Marta.

While active voice is preferred in professional and academic writing, there are cases where passive voice is the better choice. In cases where the sentence's focus is the action, use passive voice to emphasize the verb. Regarding perfect tenses, passive voice is preferred to reduce verbosity.

Example:

Marta was hired by the former lead editor.

Mood

Mood is the overall feel of a document reflected in the author's vernacular and how they present the information. There are three kinds of mood: indicative, subjunctive, and imperative.

Indicative

A sentence written in indicative mood implies that something is factual.

Example:

Marta is the best lead editor.

Subjunctive

A sentence written in subjunctive mood expresses a possibility or hypothetical statement.

Example:

If I finish this task, I'll have tomorrow off.

Imperative

A sentence written in imperative mood is making a command or request. A second person or subject is the implied recipient of the command.

Example:

Bring me the finished copy, please.

Tense

Tense is a verb mechanic that modifies an action to reflect when that action occurred. Present and past tense verbs represent the purest forms of conjugated verbs, while the verb forms use auxiliaries to modify the action.

Present Tense

Present tense suggests that the action is taking place in the present. There are four forms of present tense. Present indefinite or simple present tense implies a habitual or continuous action or state of being.

Example:

Marta edits technical documents. She is a good editor.

Present progressive or continuous tense suggests that action is taking place in the immediate present.

Example:

I am writing the next chapter.

Present perfect tense is used when the time of the action is unspecified, but the effect of the action on the subject is ongoing.

Examples:

I have read the manuscript several times.

Marta has worked in this office for over ten years.

Present perfect progressive implies that an action started in the past and is still ongoing in the present.

Example:

She has been working on this task all week.

Past Tense

There are four types of past tense. Past indefinite tense, or simple past tense, indicates that an action occurred in the past.

Example:

I submitted the manuscript last week.

Past progressive tense suggests that an action occurred over a period of time in the past.

Example:

I was editing when Marta visited my office.

Past perfect tense is used to show a sequence of actions, one after another.

Example:

I had finished editing before Marta visited my office.

Past perfect progressive tense shows when a past action occurred for a certain time frame but then stopped before a second action began.

Example:

Elis had been editing for 20 years before he retired.

Future Tense

Future tense indicates that an action will occur in the future. There are four types of future tense. Future indefinite or simple future tense promises that an action will happen in the future.

Example:

Marta will move into her new office soon.

Future continuous tense implies that an action will happen over a specific time period in the future.

Example:

I will be writing tomorrow morning.

Future perfect tense promises that an action will occur and finish by a certain time in the future.

Example:

The writers will have finished their work by Thursday.

Future perfect continuous tense suggests that an action that started in the past will continue into the future but stop before a second action begins.

Example:

They will have been writing for 8 hours by the end of the day.

Literary Present

Always use the present tense when writing an analysis of a literary work.

Example:

The new APA manual is divided into 12 chapters.

Consistency

To eliminate confusion, maintain a consistent tense throughout sentences and paragraphs.

Examples:

Marta edited the manuscript then sends it back to the writer for revision. They revised and will submit it again.
(inconsistent tense)

Marta edited the manuscript then sent it back to the writer for revision. They revised and submitted it again.
(consistent past tense)

When reporting on a past event or predicting a future event, a change of tense indicates a shift in time and is acceptable.

Examples:

I predict the project will take a month to finish.

As I recall, Marta asked us to stay late.

Usage Strategies

The best way to improve your writing is practice, but there are several strategies and techniques that can you polish your work and create a clear message.

Conciseness

Concise writing is a simplistic writing style that emphasizes close subject-verb relationships and a reduction in wordiness. In the following example, the sentence is too verbose, and the message is unclear.

Example:

The team came to an agreement about the idea of writing in a concise style for their assignment. (18 words)

In this example, *came to an agreement* is a noun phrase that can be replaced with the verb *agreed*. To make the sentence less wordy and more concise, eliminate unnecessary words and turn noun phrases into verbs.

Example:

The team agreed on a concise writing style for their assignment. (11 words)

Jargon and Word Choice

Be mindful of your audience when establishing your vernacular for a document. If your audience is not familiar with your terminology, you may have to define terms or use simpler ones.

Examples:

They sued for intellectual property theft.

They sued because their idea was stolen.

Be consistent in your word choices to avoid confusing the reader. For example, there are several names for the word *document*: form, piece, work, file, letter, paper. Once you've decided on a name, use the same identification mark for the entirety of the document.

Avoiding Adverbs

There is no rule against adverbs; however, excessive and misplaced adverbs can increase verbosity and distort your message. Use them sparingly, especially in formal writing. Remove redundant adverbs or replace them with stronger verbs or descriptors.

Examples:

The style guide is very long. (informal)

The style guide is lengthy. (formal)

Marta smiled happily. (redundant)

Marta smiled. (concise)

Clichés

Clichés are overused sayings and idioms. Avoid clichés in formal and academic writing.

Examples:

- in today's society
- follow the money
- in this day and age
- throughout history
- since the dawn of man
- little did I know
- in the nick of time

all walks of life

Parallel Structure

Parallel structure is a sentence construction that emphasizes balance between phrases.

Examples:

Our tasks include writing, an edited paper, and to publish.

(not parallel)

Our tasks include writing, editing, and publishing.

(parallel)

We edit consistently, accurately, and in a concise manner.

(not parallel)

We edit consistently, accurately, and concisely.

(parallel)

Misplaced Modifiers

A misplaced modifier modifies the wrong subject. In the first example, *edited* is modifying *author's*. In the second example, *edited* modifies *manuscript,* which is correct for this sentence's context.

Examples:

The edited author's manuscript was published. (incorrect)

The author's edited manuscript was published. (correct)

Structures

In writing, structures are like formulas that help authors organize their words and form a cohesive message. Smaller structures—subjects, verbs, objects, and phrases—are strung together to make complete sentences. Paragraph structures arrange sentences about a similar topic, and multiple paragraphs form larger documents.

Sentence Structures

Sentence structures provide frameworks for writers to organize their words. A writer can use a wide variety of word combinations and sentence elements in their sentence. However, to form a coherent sentence, these elements must be arranged in a certain way. All sentences follow a basic format called the subject-predicate structure.

Subject-Predicate Structure

Every sentence can be broken down into two basic parts: the subject and the predicate. The subject is the topic or the source of the action in the sentence. The predicate is what is being said about the subject or an action being performed by the subject. A sentence can be a simple as two words—a noun and a verb.

Examples:

Marta edits. David writes.

A sentence can also incorporate complex elements like phrases and clauses that modify the subject or enhance the predicate. Despite the additional details, these two sentences still adhere to the subject-predicate structure.

Examples:

Sitting in her office, Marta edits the new manuscript.

David, a fiction fan, writes the company blog.

Objects

An object is the focus or recipient of the action in the sentence. Objects are accessory elements in a sentence structure because not every sentence needs an object. There are two kinds of objects: direct and indirect.

A direct object is the direct recipient of the action in a sentence.

Examples:

Marta edits the manuscript.

David writes the blog.

An indirect object is the indirect recipient of the action in a sentence. In this sentence, *David* is the indirect object of the action, *gave*. *The manuscript* is still the direct object.

Example:

Marta gave David the manuscript.

Complements

Complements describe or redefine the subject or object of the sentence. In this sentence, *Marta* is redefined as *an optimist*. *Marta* is the subject, and *an optimist* is the subject complement (it is also a noun phrase).

Example:

Marta is an optimist.

In this sentence, *David* is described as *puzzled*. *David* is the subject and *puzzled* is the subject complement (it is also an adjective phrase).

Example:

David looked puzzled.

In this example, *the manuscript* is the direct object, and *a best-seller* is the object complement (it is also a noun phrase).

Example:

Marta called the manuscript a best-seller.

Phrases

A phrase is a small group of words that modify and add meaning to a sentence. A phrase does not have a verb. Therefore, it cannot stand alone. A phrase can be a single word used to modify another element in a sentence.

Examples:

Marta is a very experienced editor.

Editing memoirs is her specialty.

There are eight types of phrases: noun, adjective, adverbial, prepositional, conjunctional, interjectional, participle, and dangling.

Noun Phrases

A noun phrase is a group of words that form the subject, object, or complement. It usually includes a headword (a noun) and a determiner (*the*, *a*, *this*, *to*, *for*, etc.) that signals the noun.

Examples:

The manuscript is ready. (subject)

We are ready to edit the manuscript. (object)

We will use the APA 7th edition. (complement)

Adjective Phrases

An adjective phrase is a collection of words that modifies a noun.

Examples:

Marta is a very thorough editor.

The author made a lot of changes.

Adverbial Phrases

An adverbial phrase is a group of words that modifies a verb.

Examples:

The editors worked as quickly as possible.

The author writes very slowly.

Prepositional Phrases

A prepositional phrase is a group of words that act like a single preposition to connect a noun to the rest of the sentence.

Examples:

The manuscript is on the way to the publisher.

By working diligently, the editors finished the task.

Conjunctional Phrases

A conjunctional phrase works the same way as a conjunction to join parts of a sentence.

Examples:

Marta left early in order to beat the traffic.

We will edit as soon as we get the manuscript.

Interjectional Phrases

An interjectional phrase is a group of words that acts like a singular interjection. Its purpose is to inject a dramatic statement.

Examples:

The manuscript is ready. What great news!

Oh no! Marta left already.

Participial Phrases

A participial phrase is a verb phrase comprised of a participle and a modifier. Participial phrases function as adjectives to modify a noun.

Examples:

Marta saw David writing in his office.

Editors interested in the seminar sign up here.

Dangling Participle Phrases

A dangling participle phrase is a group of words that open or close a sentence. It is also called a dangling modifier. It is not a complete sentence because it does not contain a subject, but it modifies the subject of the sentence it is joined to.

Example:

Sitting at the desk, Marta finished the manuscript.

A dangling modifier that does not modify a noun is a syntax error. In the previous example, *sitting at the desk* is modifying *Marta*. In the example below, *sitting at the desk* is not modifying a noun—*the manuscript* is not the subject of the sentence.

Example:

Sitting at the desk, the manuscript was finished.

Avoid this syntax error by verifying the relationship between the dangling participle and the noun it is supposed to modify.

Clauses

A clause is a group of words that contains one subject and predicate. The subject can be implied, but the verb must be apparent.

Examples:

Marta writes. David edits. The interns proofread.

There are five types of clauses: independent, dependent, relative, absolute, and elliptical.

Independent Clauses

An independent clause functions and looks like a complete sentence.

Examples:

Marta finished the manuscript.

David edited it.

Two independent clauses can be joined using a coordinator (*and*, *but*, *so*, *for*, *or*, etc.)

Example:

Marta finished the manuscript, and David edited it.

Dependent Clauses

A dependent clause cannot stand on its own. It is joined to an independent clause to modify the sentence. It is also called a subordinate clause.

Example:

If we work hard, we will beat the deadline.

Relative Clauses

A relative clause is a modifier in a noun phrase. It functions as an adjectival phrase, but it uses a complete subject-predicate idea to modify the headword inside the noun phrase.

Examples:

The author who won last year's award emailed me.

The manuscript sitting on Marta's desk is ready.

Absolute Clauses

An absolute clause is a stylistic element of a sentence that modifies the subject or the whole sentence.

Examples:

Marta edited, her pen moving across the paper.

Writing finished, the author submitted his work.

Elliptical Clauses

An elliptical clause is an adverbial modifier that implies a subject while modifying the verb of the sentence.

Examples:

While reading the book, the team enjoyed donuts.

When stripped of adverbs, the document flows.

Paragraph Structures

Paragraph structures are writing mechanics that help writers organize their sentences and form a coherent piece of writing. A standard paragraph should include basic structures like a topic sentence and a conclusion. The body or bulk of the paragraph is where writers organize supporting or relevant information. How a writer organizes their paragraph will depend on several factors like the topic, the audience, and the document's purpose.

Topic Sentences

A topic sentence introduces a subject at the beginning of a paragraph. It tells the reader what the section is going to discuss. There are several different kinds of topic sentences, also referred to as introduction sentences. You can begin a paragraph with a general topic, a specific topic, or a question, to name a few. A good topic sentence will draw the reader in—a technique called a hook—and encourage them to keep reading.

General-to-Specific

The general to specific paragraph structure begins with a topic sentence that introduces the paragraph's overarching subject. As the paragraph progresses, each sentence introduces more details about the main topic. This paragraph style is one of the most common. It is designed for documents like this style guide, where the reader is more likely to skim the pages looking for a specific topic. They read the first sentence—maybe two—and move on to the next paragraph if they do not think the section contains what they need.

Specific-to-General

A specific-to-general paragraph begins with small, supporting details about a subject. As the paragraph progresses, the subject expands to encompass larger topics with greater implications. Persuasive writing uses this style most often. For example, a persuasive essay written for the Department of Education might begin with a small subject—an inner-city teacher using her own money to buy supplies for her classroom—then transition into the larger topic—the problems with the public school system.

Question-and-Answer

A question-and-answer paragraph presents the reader with a question at the beginning of the paragraph. The author spends the rest of the section answering that question. The question is usually hypothetical; its purpose is

to get the reader to think about the subject but not answer directly. The writer can also use the question-and-answer technique to introduce a new topic. Asking a question is generally less formal, and the writing feels more personable to the reader. It is an excellent way to engage with your audience.

Conclusion Sentences

Conclusion sentences, as the name implies, finish a paragraph. They are usually the last sentence in the section. The conclusion sentence summarizes the main points cover in the previous paragraph.

Rhetorical Structures and Tools

Rhetorical grammar tools are writing techniques that help writers present information. How a writer chooses a tool depends on the purpose of the document. For example, if they are writing an educational presentation, the writer might use definitions and descriptions to introduce new terms or ideas. If it is a persuasive essay, the writer might use comparison and contrast to convince the audience to think a certain way about the topic.

Definition, Description, & Narration

A definition is one of the most common rhetorical grammar tools. It describes or explains the key features of a subject or an unfamiliar term. In

technical writing, this is especially important for defining new technology and ideas. Definitions are usually short—1 or 2 sentences.

A description is an elaborate definition. A description communicates the unique features of the subject: color, shape, size, purpose. It demonstrates movement, function, sight, sound, and other sensory observations.

A narration is a description of an event, usually in chronological order. Narration tells a story in fiction or recalls history in nonfiction. In technical writing, a narration can describe a step-by-step procedure.

Comparison, Contrast, & Analogy

A comparison demonstrates how two or more subjects are similar. Comparisons use connecting words like *like*, *similar*, *resemble*, *same as*, *also*, and *too*.

A contrast shows how two or more subjects are different or how one thing is better or worse than another. Contrasts use words like *unlike*, *as opposed to*, *different from*, and *whereas*.

An analogy is similar to a comparison. It juxtaposes two or more subjects, using one object to explain or describe the other, for example, explaining an atom's anatomy by comparing it to a solar system.

Enumeration & Classification

An enumeration is a numeric organization system within paragraphs and documents. An enumeration introduces a new subject or idea, usually at the start of a sentence: *firstly, secondly, finally*. They are also transitions that signal a change or the next step in a procedural. They suggest chronological order or a sequence of events.

Classification is both a comparison technique and an organization tool. Similar subjects are organized in a list either in a paragraph or in bullet points. For example, comparison, contrast, and analogy are classified or categorized as rhetorical writing tools.

Cause-and-Effect

Cause-and-effect is similar to enumeration. It demonstrates, usually chronologically, how one action or subject is affected by the actions or presence of another subject. In technical writing, cause-and-effect is used to describe manufacturing processes like how lithium becomes a battery through a series of activities that affect the raw materials. Words like *therefore*, *consequently*, *because*, and *as a result* signify a cause-and-effect relationship between the subjects.

Punctuation Rules

Breaking Points

Breaking points are punctuation marks that create a pause in the clause, phrase, or sentence. Commas, colons, and semicolons are breaking points.

Commas

A comma (,) divides three or more words or phrases.

Example:

> Three methods used to structure a group's collaboration are divided, face-to-face, and layered.

When the comma is before the last word in the series, it is called an Oxford comma. Many writers drop the Oxford comma because they believe it is not necessary. However, this can confuse the reader, as the example below demonstrates.

Example:

> The best research places on campus are the library's Special Collections, University Archives and Education Complex.

A comma (,) is needed after *Archives* to show the reader that these three locations are a part of the same group.

A comma (,) divides two adjectives if the words are alike. The words should be interchangeable.

Example:

This is a large, complex project. This is a complex, large project.

A comma (,) never ties two independent clauses together. Use a period instead of a comma in run-on sentences or comma splices.

Example:

The fonts are 16pts. Verdana**,** we downloaded from the internet.

This is not the correct way. The correct way should look like this:

Example:

The fonts are 16pts. and Verdana. We downloaded them from the internet.

A comma (,) lies between independent clauses with conjunctions like *and*, *or*, *but*, and *nor*.

Example:

The project manager copies the schedule, and the assistant gives it to the group.

If the clauses are short, omit the comma.

Example:

The manager gives copies to the group.

A comma (,) goes with a dependent clause at the beginning of a sentence.

Example:

Although the task schedule is clear, the copy is saved in a server.

A comma (,) goes with a short opening phrase.

Example:

While meeting with the group, concerns are addressed.

A comma (,) goes with the prepositional phrase after an introductory phrase.

Example:

After the meeting, the team members work on the document.

A comma (,) goes with the subject and the appositive phrase that assigns a title to the subject.

Example:

Michael, the team manager, is the one who called the meeting.

A comma (,) does not follow a restrictive appositive phrase at the beginning of a sentence, do not use a comma. This helps the reader identify which person is the manager.

Example:

The team manager Michael called the meeting.

A comma (,) may not be necessary when a dependent clause follows an independent clause.

Example:

The writer uses the keyboard on special occasions.

A comma (,) goes between words to separate them from words or phrases that modify the noun phrase in the sentence.

Example:

The team member, looking out a window, works on the document.

A comma (,) accompanies an introductory word of a sentence.

Example:

Hey**,** I know. I will document the decision in the group's meeting minutes.

A comma (,) goes between the day of the month and a year.

Example:

We started the class on August 12, 2020.

A comma (,) separates a title or name in a sentence.

Example:

Merry Christmas, Miss Campbell.

A comma (,) separates a name and title.

Example:

Jessica Campbell, Ph.D., emailed the students.

A comma (,) separates words that interrupt the flow of a sentence.

Example:

Team members, like Michael and Chris, took a break while the rest kept working.

A comma (,) goes before and after a quotation.

Example:

The writer said**,** "Because I am the one typing this." "I can help you," the manager offered.

A comma (,) divides an assertion and a question.

Example:

The team will meet tomorrow, won't they?

A comma (,) divides oppositional elements in a sentence.

Example:

I type documents, specifically informative documents.

A comma (,) accompanies *e.g.***,** *i.e.***,** *etc.***,** and *for instance* when they precede other words in a sequence.

Example:

I specialize in technical documents, e.g.**,** plans, charters, and reports.

Semicolons

A semicolon (;) separates two independent clauses if a coordinating conjunction is removed.

Example:

The team is not ready; the presentation will be late.

The semicolon (;) can replace the word *but* and a comma in a sentence with two independent clauses. The semicolon is used in the sentence if the second clause adds more information about the first clause.

Example:

The team finished on time; the results were lackluster.

A semicolon (;) separates two independent clauses when a transition word links them.

Example:

The due date was Friday; nevertheless, the editor turned the report in late anyway.

A semicolon (;) separates items in a list.

Example:

The punctuation outline covers several subjects: commas, semicolons, and colons on the first few pages; periods, question marks, and exclamation points come later.

A semicolon (;) accompanies a comma to create an elliptical construction. The comma becomes an ellipsis that eliminates repetition in the clause.

Example:

In 2010, the company employed 25 people; today, they have 200.

Colons

The colon (:) introduces a list.

Example:

The office specializes in two areas: family and criminal law.

Never use a colon if the list does not need one.

Example:

The office specializes in family and criminal law.

The colon (:) separates independent clauses when further explanation is needed in the second sentence.

Example:

All the team members have jobs: Michael is a manager, Eric is a designer, Hela is a writer, and Keyur is a programmer.

When there are more than two sentences after a colon, capitalize the first word.

Example:

The editor made two requests: First, he wanted his own computer. Second, he wanted to edit his own document.

A colon (:) highlights a word or an expression. An em dash can also be used in this scenario.

Example:

After the first week of job interviews, the committee made its decision: hired.

A colon (:) is also used in non-grammatical scenarios. The colon is used between the hour and minutes to tell time, in biblical texts, volume and page numbers in a cited article or book, and to determine ratios. There is no space between the numbers and the colon.

Example:

8:33 a.m., John 3:16.

A colon (:) is also placed in personal and professional correspondence.

Example:

Dear Mr. Wilson:, cc: Ms. Campbell, Attention: Human Resources, PS: Bring snacks.

Ending Points

Ending points are punctuation marks that conclude a sentence. Periods, question marks, and exclamation marks are examples of ending points.

Periods

A period (.) follows the last letter of a sentence. This lets the reader know that there is a new sentence coming up.

Example:

I love feedback. Add another sentence. I love revision.

A period (.) follows abbreviations. They shorten the original word in informal writing.

Example:

Dec. 16, 1991.

A period (.) is not needed with many scientific abbreviations that are mixed with upper and lower case.

Example:

The plane flies at 4,000 rpm. FoMo stands for Fear of Missing Out, according to psychologists.

A period (.) is not needed if the last word in a sentence is abbreviated.

Example:

The class will end at 9:00 a.m.

A period (.) is placed at the end of an indirect question instead of a question mark.

Example:

I wonder what time the class ends.

A period (.) follows a closing parenthesis if it is part of a sentence and at the end.

Example:

The team members will meet at the library (it is the best place to work).

A period (.) accompanies a parenthesis when it is a citation.

Example:

(The Technical Writer's Handbook, p. 6).

A period (.) is placed inside the parenthesis if the phrase is a complete sentence.

Example:

Michael got the promotion. (Everyone knows Michael is the best manager.)

A period (.) is placed inside a quote if it is at the end of a sentence.

Example:

Professor Campbell's directions said the paper is "due by midnight."

A period (.) is not placed if the quotation ends in an exclamation or question mark.

Example:

The editor asked, "Michael, when should we submit the assignment?"

Exclamation Points

An exclamation point expresses a sudden emotion or dramatic emphasis. The exclamation point ends the sentence and should never be followed by a question mark or a period. Exclamation points should be used sparingly. Professional documents do not have exclamation points.

Example:

I need the report immediately!

An exclamation point (!) ends a sentence inside a quotation in place of a comma.

Example:

"Hand me the report!" the editor yelled.

If an exclamation point is part of a title, do not alter or omit it.

Example:

I looked up the answer on *Yahoo!*.

Question Marks

A question mark (?) ends a sentence if it is a question.

Example:

When is the document due?

A question mark (?) is not used when the question is unintended.

Example:

I wonder when the document is due.

A question mark (?) ends a sentence if the question is implied.

Example:

Have the style editors chosen a font? Michael wondered.

There should not be a comma or period next to the question mark at the end of the question. However, if you are citing a title, the title and question mark should be in italics. There should be a comma after the question mark before the rest of the sentence after the reference.

Example:

I have read *How Can I Create A Style Sheet?*, written by Wauson and Wilson, which was very helpful.

If the title ends with a period, then a question mark replaces it.

Example:

Have you read *The AMA Business Writer's Handbook*?

A request is different from a question, and therefore, it should end with a period.

Example:

Would you please submit the document.

A question mark (?) can be used informally in parenthesis and brackets. This is done when the writer is not sure of the information and might need more clarification.

Example:

The professor asked the class for 5 (?) pages of homework. We could have it done by 5:30 [6:00?] at the latest.

A question mark (?) ends a quotation instead of a period.

Example:

The editor asked, "Should I add another page?"

Hyphens and Dashes

Hyphens are used to join words together; they are not separated by spaces. Dashes separate words or phrases from the rest of the sentence; there are no extra spaces before or after the dash. Em dashes add special emphasis to the sentence or phrase they surround.

Hyphens

Hyphens (-) help form compound terms. A hyphen works differently than en and em dashes. There are three types of compounds. Open compounds do not need a hyphen.

Example:

peanut butter, high school, living room, web page, first aid, roller coaster.

Closed compounds are one word.

Example:

pancake, butterscotch, showoff, candlestick, showoff, fishbowl.

Hyphens (-) are placed in hyphenated compound nouns and adjectives.

Example:

Editor-in-Chief, 45-minute presentation, 15-page report, free-range.

Hyphens (-) are used in professional publications to divide the words between the end of the line and the line on the next page. This is called an end-of-line hyphenation in publishing.

Em Dashes

Em dashes (—) can take the place of commas, colons, and parentheses. Do not use an em dash more than twice in a paragraph. Em dashes are longer than hyphens and en dashes. They modify parts of a sentence like a prepositional phrase.

Example:

The editor completed her work—with errors—two weeks late.

Em dashes (—) are used instead of parenthesis when a less subtle approach is needed. Additional punctuation is not necessary when using em dashes.

Example:

Once the editor found the mistakes—27 in all—the document was ready to print.

An Em dash (—) replaces parenthesis at the end of a sentence using one dash.

Example:

At ten o'clock, the editor was tired of tapping the keyboard—or feeling tapped out.

The Em dash (—) replaces a colon to stress a point at the end of a sentence.

Example:

The deadline for the submission was near—they planned for emergencies like this.

Em dashes (—) are used to replace a word that has been deleted or is missing.

Example:

The new editor, J**——,** had not checked in yet.

Typically, there are no spaces before and after em dashes. AP Style requires a space before and after the em dash.

En Dashes

The en dash (-) is longer than a hyphen and smaller than the em dash. You do not need a space before or after an en dash. En dashes are used to address numbers, time, and dates.

Example:

The editor read pages 23-35. The project lasted from 2011-2012. The class is between 10:30-11:45 on Wednesdays.

When the words *from* or *between* introduce numbers, no en dash is needed.

Example:

The editor was our leader from 2020-2021.

An en dash (-) separates words to show a connection.

Example:

The Boston-Miami flight is at 7.

Punctuation for Citations

Quotation Marks

Quotation marks ("") are primarily used to group words that are reproduced. Periods and commas go inside the quotations as part of the entire sentence.

Example:

“The deadline is on Friday,” according to the editor, “and will not be changed.”

If commas and periods are not part of the quotation, they are placed outside the quotation marks.

Example:

> Did the editor write, “The last page is due Friday?”

There are two types of quotations: run-in and blockquotes. Run-in quotations are short. They can be added to a text with quotation marks. Block quotations are longer and do not need quotation marks. Blockquotes are separated from the main text and have wider margins on the left. The block quotation may also have a different font than the rest of the text with less spacing. MLA recommends block quotations if a quote is more than four lines. APA recommends block quotations over 40 words. The Chicago Manual of Style recommends block quotations if it is over 100 words.

A colon introduces a sentence before a quotation if the sentence can stand alone.

Example:

> In the MLA handbook, Wilson sums up his argument: “Never place a period in the middle of a sentence.”

A period precedes a block quotation if the sentence can stand alone.

When the quoted text flows effortlessly with the introductory text, no punctuation is needed.

Example:

> At the end of the book, she warned against “using exclamation points too often.”

A short quote at the beginning of a sentence does not need punctuation.

Example:

> The words “to be or not to be” are quoted from the office document.

Single quotation marks are placed in a sentence when there is a quote within another quote. If there is a quotation (single quotation marks) within another quotation, use double quotation marks.

Example:

> “When Wilson writes about ‘fixing the punctuation with a “conservative” pen,’ he does not understand punctuation.”

Quotations marks (“ ”) can be placed when referring to an alphabetical letter or an individual word in a sentence. Italic formatting is also used in place of quotations when the text is speaking about language and usage.

Example:

> The editor *scanned* the document for mistakes.

Quotation marks (“ ”) are also used in scare quotes when they are used as a euphemism or to stress sarcasm.

Example:

The editor’s “ideas” on the project are unconventional.

Quotation marks (“ ”) surround the middle of a person’s name if they have a nickname.

Example:

Professor Blake “The Hammer” Scott.

Quotation marks (“ ”) accompany measurements separating feet from inches. A single quotation is used to express feet. A double quotation is used to express inches. A period comes after the end quotation mark.

Example:

5’10”.

Brackets

A bracket ([]) clarifies a statement in a sentence if a noun is not clear.

Example:

The editor said they “will not promote them [Writing group 1] if they do not turn in their work.”

Never change the original quote. The quote stays the same.

A bracket ([]) separates languages when a foreign word needs translation.

Example:

The editor said, “Ich liebe dich [I love you].”

A bracket ([]) surrounds the first letter if the original quote is not formatted correctly.

Example:

> "[T]he document which was edited by Keyur, needs to be revised right away."

A bracket ([]) addresses an error in a sentence. For example, [*sic*] informs the reader that the writer did not make the mistake*. Sic* is a Latin word that means *so* or *thus*. In this example, *suggested* was spelled wrong by the original author of the quote, not the writer using the quote.

Example:

> "The editor suggested [*sic*] *the change."*

If the writer is not sure if the word in a sentence is right, add the word in brackets.

Example:

> "The document reads that Group 1 [Group 2?] made mistakes with grammar."

A bracket ([]) is used when the writer wants to stress or clarify a point.

Example:

> The editor wrote that he might "allow the members to throw a party, but only *if there were rules* [as in no water balloons]."

Another way to write this would be to use parenthesis and stress the point after the quotations.

Example:

> "The editor wrote that he might "allow the members to throw a party, but only if *there were rules*" (as in no water balloons.)

Another alternative would be to add a parenthetical note at the end of the sentence.

Example:

> (as in no water balloons.)

A bracket ([]) is placed in a sentence to sensor expletives or swear words.

Example:

> The editor yelled, "I hate this [expletive] assignment!"

A bracket ([]) is used when parentheses are required within parentheses.

Example:

At noon, he started reading his favorite book (renamed *The AMA Business Writer's Handbook* [2011]).

Ellipses

An ellipsis (…) is placed in a sentence when there is a pause or an omission. There is a space between each dot unless it is next to a question mark.

Example:

"The total is five…five or six pages."

An ellipsis (…) is placed as suspension points. They are sometimes overused.

Example:

"Revision…Re…vision…takes…time."

An ellipsis (…) shortens a quote when the words are unnecessary. It implies that some of the text was omitted for the sake of conciseness.

Example:

The editor said, "Writers, if you have time…write it."

Punctuation for Clarification

Apostrophe

An apostrophe (’) accents plurals, contractions, and possessives. Professional writing usually prohibits contractions.

Examples:

Contractions

- he’s, couldn’t, don’t

Plurals

- writer’s, editor’s, employer’s

Possessives Singular Nouns

- editor’s pen, writer’s laptop

Possessive Plural noun

- two weeks’ vacation, ten years’ experience

An apostrophe (‘) goes before -the digit year lacking a century in informal writing.

Example:

The Class of ‘98. Music from the ‘90s.

Do not use an apostrophe if there are four digits.

Example:

I learned to edit in the 1980s.

An apostrophe (’) is placed after a plural noun in a possessive form, even if it ends in *s.*

Example:

the teams’ due date.

An apostrophe (’) may be placed after the *s* in a plural noun.

Example:

the editors’ office, the teachers’ lounge

An apostrophe (’) indicates joint ownership. Sn apostrophe is placed with the last owner’s name to indicate individual ownership.

Example:

Wilson’s and Waus’s writing are uniquely different.

An apostrophe (’) stays with a word in a sentence and is never separated by other punctuation.

Parentheses

Parentheses (()) surround a word, clause, or sentence that adds information. The sentence must make sense without the additional information in parenthesis.

Example:

Jess (along with her brother, Larry) graded the papers.

Parentheses (()) are paired around letters and numbers in a list.

Example:

The editors need (1) the first draft, (2) the second draft, and (3) the third draft.

Parentheses (()) enclose time zones, area codes in phone numbers, and a person's birth and death.

Example:

The Zoom meeting is at 2:00 p.m. (EST). Hela's phone number is (520) 912-8013. Ernest Hemingway (1899--1961) was a skilled writer.

Parentheses (()) are placed around short texts that are not quotes.

Example:

She said, "good morning" (*guten morgen*).

Parentheses (()) surround abbreviations and acronyms introduced for the first time in a sentence.

Example:

The FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

Parentheses (()) surround a sentence that stands alone and the final punctuation mark.

Example:

The editors put together the final document (Several consulted the technical editors helped with formatting.).

Parentheses (()) surround parenthetical content that ends a sentence but not the final punctuation.

Example:

The class submitted their homework (in addition to their well-written chapters).

Parentheses (()) surround a text in the middle of a sentence but not the punctuation that follows.

Example:

The manager excepted the document (a separate Word file) and asked us to revise it.

Parentheses (()) surround a full sentence in the middle of another sentence and a question mark or exclamation mark. It cannot start with a capital letter or encase a period.

Example:

The class read many pages (how did she write so many pages?) written by Hela Holiday.

Braces

Braces ({}) are used in language programming, musical notes, and mathematical expression. Braces are not used in place of brackets or parentheses. For writing that is casual, braces can be used anywhere. In mathematics, braces separate numbers or factors. In music, they separate two musical staves. Braces separate codes in computer programming and online languages like C++ and HTML.

Example:

Pick a number {1, 2, 3, 4}.

Slashes

Slashes (/) are used in place of the words *and*, *or,* and *per*.

Example:

The editor is a Technical Communication/ Writing & Rhetoric major. The editor was paid $1/word for the document.

Slashes (/) are used as shorthand in some *and/or* phrases; however, avoid using them in formal writing.

Example:

The office will receive cupcakes and/or party supplies.

Slashes (/) are used in mathematics to separate the denominator and the numerator. They are also used in some abbreviations.

Example:

¾, ½, w/o, c/o, p/e.

Slashes (/) are used to pair two years together in a sentence in informal writing.

Example:

The class end sometime between 20/21.

`

Slashes (/) have a similar function as en dashes; they show a similarity or difference between things.

Example:

I watched the Republican/Democrat debate.

Slashes (/) are used to represent the combination of two things in informal writing.

Example:

Michael is a team writer/manager in Writing Group 1.

Capitalization

What is Capitalization?

The main rule of capitalization is to always capitalize the first word in a sentence. Capital letters indicate the beginning of a new sentence and convey important information to readers regarding specific topics. Capitalization also draws the reader's attention to a unique term or subject. Seeing proper capitalization usage, for a reader, is a representation of respect for the words.

What Should I be Capitalizing?

When writing, you should always capitalize proper names, geographic locations, temperature scales, and processes or apparatuses named after people. Examples of what should be capitalized are listed below:

- Names of schools, colleges, and universities
    - University of Central Florida
- Names of individuals, organizations, routes, and buildings.
    - Robert James
    - Society of Technical Communications
    - Route 66

- Geographic locations, such as countries, cities, and states.
    - the Grand Canyon
    - Orlando, Florida
    - Jupiter
- Nationalities and languages.
    - My mother is American, and my father is British.
- Capitalize calendar events
    - Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday
    - January, February, March
    - Thanksgiving, Christmas
    - Do not capitalize seasons like summer

Furthermore, if a sentence is a quotation within a larger sentence, you should capitalize it, but only if it is a complete sentence. If it is just a phrase that could fit into a larger sentence, capitalization is not needed. Here are some examples:

- Capitalized: The professor said, “The mid-term exam will be in two weeks.”
- Not capitalized: The professor told us that our mid-term exam will be “in two weeks.”

Misuse of capitalization

Students tend to capitalize information they find important. Capitalizing excessively not only rejects capitalization rules, but it also distracts and confuses the reader. On the other hand, not capitalizing certain terms may appear unprofessional. Do not capitalize every letter of a word—it will sound like you are shouting, and you will intimidate the reader. Not using capital letters strips certain words of their meaning, like the President of the United States. Most importantly, do not write people's names in all lower-case letters. This is a sign of disrespect and is perceived as an insult.

Words after a colon do not need to be capitalized. Colons go before the introduction of a list.

Example:

Here are my favorite colors: black, gray, and dark blue.

Similarly, you do not need to capitalize after a semicolon. Even though a semicolon could be used to separate two independent clauses, they are part of the same sentence.

Example:

The professor said our mid-term exam will be in two weeks: however, it will not be open book.

When Capitalization does not Matter

Capitalization is not necessary for email addresses. An email address is composed of two parts: the username and the domain name. The username comes before the @ symbol. This is the owner of the mailbox. Capitalization does not matter.

Example:

RobertJames@gmail.com.

RobertJames is the username in this address.

The domain name comes after the @ symbol. This tells the email server you are using where to send your email. Domain names are not case sensitive.

Example:

RobertJames@Gmail.com

Gmail.com is the domain name.

Some rules may be less used in certain situations when it comes to writing an informal letter or an email. For example, if you send an email or a letter to your friends/family, it is not necessary to capitalize every noun, only proper nouns making an email or a letter more informal. However, you would capitalize every noun in a formal business email or a letter.

Capitalizing all nouns indicates that an email or a letter is formal and professional. Depending on the place, they may ask for you to capitalize every word in the salutation of their formal professional email or letter. Every first letter of this phrase would all be capitalized because you are using it as a proper noun, and it is taking the place of someone's name.

Example:

To Whom It May Concern.

Capitalization in the Subject Line

There are some options to consider when using capitalization in the subject line of an email. Always capitalize proper nouns like *Shakespeare*, *San Diego,* and *Microsoft*. Do not use all-caps in the subject line. This is risky because it could trigger your email's spam detectors. Even capitalizing one full word in the subject line can significantly increase your chances of the email being labeled as spam; this means the recipient might not see it.

Capitalize the subject line as you would with a title, where you would begin everything except for minor words with capital letters.

- The first word of the title and subtitle
- The last word of the title
- All other words, except:
    - Conjunctions (*and*, *or*, *but*, *nor*, *yet*, *so*, *for*)
    - Articles (*a*, *an*, *the*)
    - Short prepositions (*in*, *to*, *of*, *by*, *up*, *for*, *off*, *on*)

Spacing

Spacing and Punctuation

Proper spacing usage around punctuation is crucial to preserve a sentence structure that is straightforward and non-confusing. One example of incorrect spacing is that adding extra spaces before a comma. This can puzzle the reader and interrupt their concentration, distracting them from the content they are reading. As such, it is important to understand how to use spacing before and after punctuation.

Spacing before Punctuation

Use a space after the period in the initials of a proper name. To avoid breaking the name between two lines, use a line break before the name while formatting.

Example:

J. K. Rowling.

Do not use spaces before commas, periods, colons, exclamation points, question marks, or semicolons.

A hyphen needs to be used to join two or more words that work as an adjective before a noun.

Example:

It’s a well-known dish.

There should not be a space before a hyphen that unites two words.

Example:

Not keeping punctuation in mind will result in writing that is accident-prone.

Spacing after Punctuation

In general, there will usually be a space right after any comma, period, colon, semi-colon, exclamation mark, or question mark. The exception is that there should not be a space if the punctuation is followed by a quotation mark or a parenthesis.

Example:

“No,” Tyrese said.

Word Spacing

In between words, there should only be one space. Do not create a lot of extra spaces in text editors unnecessarily. This can lead to formatting issues, so only create spaces as necessary.

Spacing Between Sentences

There should only be one space in between sentences. Some might be used to having two spaces between sentences, but this is an outdated practice. Double-spacing between sentences is acceptable when using typewriter fonts.

Character Spacing

When writing body text, for printed documents the suggested size is 10-12 points. On web documents, the point size should be 15-25 pixels. In case of all capitals, increase the spaces between characters by 5-12% to improve readability.

Spacing Between Sentences

In between every sentence, there should be exactly one space. Although in the past two spaces was common practice, this is no longer the recommended approach. That said, in cases where a typewriter-style font is being used, two spaces is acceptable if desired. This is the only exception to the rule.

Abbreviations

Abbreviation Principles

According to the Webster dictionary, an abbreviation is "a shortened form of a written word or phrase used in place of the whole word or phrase". There are three different types of abbreviations to keep in mind: initialisms, shortened words, and acronyms.

Initialism

An initialism is created from the first words of a phrase, but it is treated as its own word. Examples include ASAP for "As Fast as Possible," or NOW for National Organization of Women.

Shortened Words

These are used instead of their full-word counterparts. They are a part of a phrase or a word, and they sometimes end up with a period. Examples include *vet* for *veterinarian*, or *gym* for *gymnasium*.

Acronyms

These are like initialisms, but each word is pronounced individually. Examples include YTD for "Year to Date" and ROI for "Return on Investment."

When Not to Use Abbreviations

To avoid looking unprofessional, it is advised to never use popular internet slang in writing. Terms such as AMA, ELI5, or FTFY are best kept in the web and have no place in a professional piece of writing.

For abbreviations of words that are common, it is best practice to spell out the whole word. For example, instead of using *apt.* and *dept.*, it is recommended to write *apartment* and *department*; the abbreviations are unnecessary.

Periods and Abbreviations

For acronyms which are pronounced as a word and not letter by letter, periods are not to be placed at the end. Examples include AIDS and SWAT. On the other hand, if the abbreviation is a shortened word, then a period at the end is appropriate. Examples include *Jr.* and *Sr.* Similarly, initialisms do not have periods at the end either.

Words with Long and Short Versions

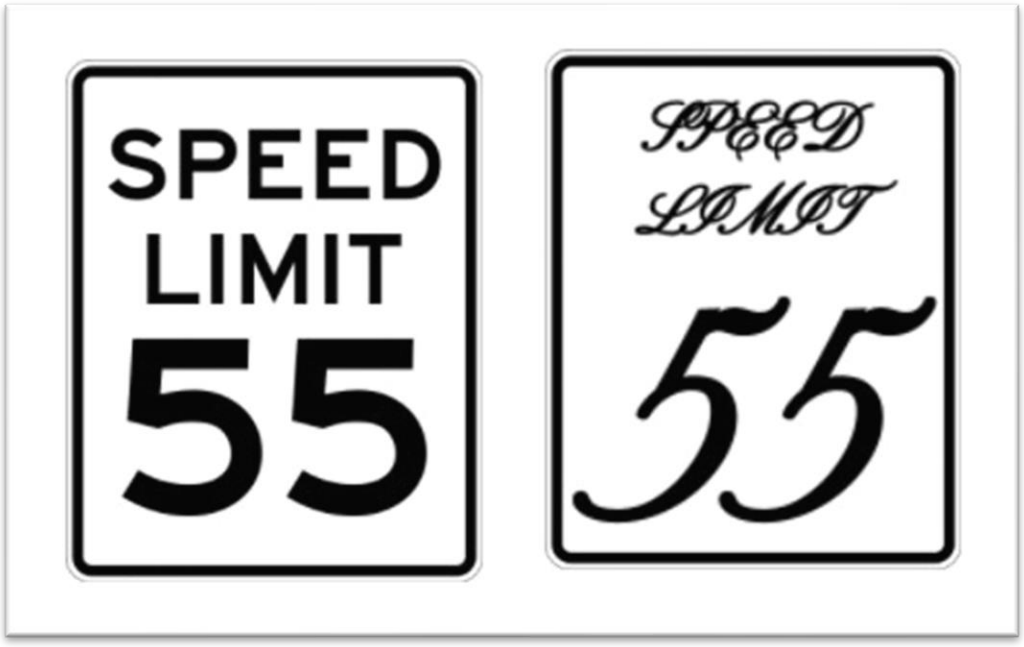
Some words have long and short versions that are universally accepted and usually interchangeable, such as *demo* and *demonstration* or *app* and *application*. Those short versions are to be treated as an independent word and not as abbreviations. And they are different from shortened words in that those are used as a shorter word only for writing. As a rule of thumb, if you cannot use the word in a spoken conversation instead of writing, it is a shortened word, not a condensed version of a word.

Typography

What is typography?

Typography is the visual elements of a text. Any text in print or digital format inherently possesses typographic elements. Typography includes, but is not limited to, font, spacing, alignment, line breaks, and punctuation (Butterick, 2013). While good examples of typography often go unnoticed by the general public, bad examples tend to stick out.

Figure 6.1 *Road Sign Typography Example*



Why Typography Matters

Any typographic choice made by a writer will consequently affect reader consumption. Stylistic choice can make or break your work and will reflect directly on UCF.

Composition

Symbols, emojis, and emoticons

Symbols are marks or characters used as conventional representations of objects, functions, or processes. Below are some tips and examples of common usage.

Math symbols

For multiplication, do not use the letter *x* key. Instead, insert the × symbol where applicable (see Insert → Symbol menu in Microsoft Word). This principle also applies to dimensional notations (Butterick, 2013).

Example:

9 × 9 = 81

8.5” × 11”

For subtraction, make sure to use the en dash rather than a hyphen. Microsoft Word should make this correction when you add a space and subsequent text after a hyphen.

Example:

8 – 7 = 1 (correct usage)

8 - 7 = 1 (incorrect usage)

Trademark symbols

Treat these symbols as you would superscripts; no space is needed between trademark symbols and the words they reference. For a registered trademark, use the ® symbol. For a trademark, use the ™ symbol.

Example:

McDonald’s ®, Starbucks ™

Copyright symbols

Since the symbol © is meant to replace the word *copyright*, treat it as you would any other word, and use a single space after the symbol.

Example:

© *Fact Finding, Inc.*

Emojis and emoticons

Emojis and emoticons should be reserved for informal settings, not an official UCF document, whether internal or public.

In your written communications with peers, faculty, or UCF staff, keep the use of emojis and emoticons to a minimum. They do have a role in providing levity to specific informal contexts, but usually not in professional and academic settings. For more information, refer to the chapter entitled, Punctuation.

Line breaks and page breaks

The best way to move your cursor down a line without beginning a new paragraph is by using a hard line break. In Microsoft Word, the keyboard shortcut for this is [shift + enter]. Hard line breaks are useful when you need to create bulleted, numbered lists or balanced distribution of words between lines (Butterick, 2013).

Example:

Yolanda doesn’t just paint; She also has a line of luxury towels. (without hard line break)

Yolanda doesn’t just paint;
She also has a line of luxury towels. (with hard line break)

Formatting

Headings

Make sure that your headings accurately describe their section content. If you plan to deviate from your heading content or have more topics to address, consider using a new heading or subheading. You should limit your headings to three levels. This way, readers are not tasked with scrutinizing excessive variations in font size, and readers may navigate the document more easily.

Text and Font

When composing your document, prioritize the body text, and pay special attention to the following four points for best results across all of your written work: font, point size, line spacing, line length. Since these will impact your document's appearance, address body text characteristics as early as possible in the writing process. Refrain from mixing fonts beyond two in a document. Using two fonts should only be done if there are two distinct purposes for each font usage. If you are writing for online consumption, you will want to have a larger point size for text, given that readers will typically be viewing it from further away. Stick with 10–12-point font for print and anywhere from 15–25-point font for online viewing (Butterick, 2013).

Web and Email Hyperlinks

When using web addresses in your documents, be mindful of how the text is consumed and whether the link itself will be usable in context. In a printed text, only briefly refer to websites before citing them in the footnotes. You may consider using an address-shortening service, such as Bitly or TinyURL. This way, if you must print the full web address in your footnotes, you may accompany the reference with its shortened counterpart. Streamline access for online consumption by using hyperlinks so that there isn't any undue typographic interference.

Fonts

Basics

A font is the on-screen appearance of computer language. In printed form, it is also referred to as font (or typeface). Attention to detail with font choice will benefit writers and readers alike. When you use an aesthetically pleasing option, your readers are more likely to pay attention and comprehend the information.

System fonts and alternatives

Writers should use a professional font for their work, especially if the document represents a professional institution. Monospaced fonts are not advisable since the original purpose for use in typewriters does not

necessarily translate to other mediums. One example of this in Microsoft Word is the Courier font. This issue can lend itself to kerning, which is the process of adjusting the spacing between characters to achieve a result that is visually pleasing. Proportional fonts such as Calibri are more appropriate.

Bad fonts

There are several fonts in Microsoft Word that should be avoided in professional documentation. There may be cases where a writer can employ artistic or casual fonts, but in any professional setting, these should be avoided completely.

- Comic Sans
- Chiller
- Jokerman
- Wide Latin

These fonts can impede the credibility of the organization you represent and reduce readability and comprehension.

Layout

Tables and grids

Tables and grids are acceptable when the writer wants to display numeric data or timetables. Make sure that tables are as unobtrusive as possible and

that the information inside is easy for readers to interpret.

Table 7.1 *Easy-to-Read Table Example*

ABC	**DEF**	**GHI**	**JKL**	**MNO**
PQR	**STU**	**VWX**	**YZ**	**123**
456	**789**	**012**	**345**	**678**

The above example is simple and effective, large enough for the audience to read without eye strain.

Working with lines

Make every effort to keep lines from the same body text together and on the same page. For example, headings should not start at the bottom of one page. This forces the body text to jump to the following page. Breaks between headers and text can impact your work negatively because it disrupts the flow of the document. Additionally, space your lines appropriately depending on your audience and documentation guidelines. While most guidelines suggest single or double-spacing, you can also make custom modifications in the “Line Spacing Options” menu of Microsoft Word.

Tone

Introduction to Tone

Tone is a very important literary element that expresses the attitude and feelings of the author. This is an important element in literature because tone carries a subliminal message that helps us gain a better understanding of the author's perspective.

Tone can be classified in two different ways: formal or informal. Formal tone is used in a professional setting such as work or school. This formal way of expressing information allows for the reader to understand the formality of the content. An informal tone is usually associated with a lenient style of writing because it doesn’t require for a formal structure. Informal tone is used with things or people you may know on a personal level, meaning your professionalism is the main priority when writing.

It is important to learn and understand both types of tone. Some examples of informal tone include slang, figures of speech, broken syntax, and asides. These are not found in professional settings and are more likely used when communicating with people you may know on a more personal level. A common form of formal tone is the substitution of words for more

professional and eloquent words. This tone approach helps provide formality in the message you are trying to convey and establish respect for your audience. These are the most common ways to identify the two different classifications of tone in writing.

Understanding Tone

Tone is a great tool for readers to understand what exactly the author is conveying and what type of information will be presented. Although tone is not stated out by the author, readers are subconsciously adhering the tone given as it helps process the information given. This is understood using two opposite sides of the spectrum to clearly see the influence tone has on the readers understanding and processing of the information.

Reading a newspaper article, the author is going to display a sense of professionalism, factual evidence, and credibility. As the reader is reading the information on the article, they are observing the tone in which it is presented. The tone in this situation is formal, making the reader trust, and accept the information as credible and reliable.

On the other hand, a comic book may present a more relaxed tone due to the content of the media. The author will then use informal tone to subconsciously relax the reader in order to deliver the entertainment effectively.

Understanding how authors can use tone to influence and effectively deliver their information will allow readers to gauge an even larger understanding of the information.

When Tone Matters

Tone matters most of the time in writing and used when trying to communicate a point across more clearly. When purposely reading content, our main goal is to grasp the information as best as possible. The author understands the priority of information and will base the tone around the topic of the content. This displays concise information from the author and clarity from the reader. Going back to the news article and comic example, news information should be used in formal tone to show the reader the professionalism of the article. Because professionalism and formal tone coincide, applying both of them simultaneously will provide clarity in the

information given to the reader. While on the other hand mixing the content of the article with a different tone would cause confusion and uncertainty.

Tone Within Instructions

Tone within instructions is a good understanding of the balance of tone. Instructions are a good example of tone that is slightly informal, while slightly formal, due to the purpose of instructions. Instructions are meant to provide the clearest way of a task. Formality could make this challenging while, informal tone would loosen the structure of the task, potentially creating a challenge as well.

Tone applied to UCF

When using tone regarding students, faculty, and staff it is important to maintain respect and proficiency, some traits that are found in formal tone. The school setting is a good example of when professionalism should take place, either in person, through zoom, or email. These are all different settings that the proper tone use should be applied regarding UCF students, faculty, and staff.

Information Fluency

Information Fluency is the ability to interpret and understand information in various forms and gain knowledge. One must be able to extrapolate meaning and importance from a piece of information. To solve real-world issues and tasks effectively, one must be able to gather and understand data. When we express information, we attempt to convey an idea or message. How we choose to do this can positively or negatively affect our fluency in expressing those ideas. Here are some things you should consider.

Content and Your Audience

Content can range from text to video and even audio. When considering your audience, consider all variables. For example, a marketing team may target a certain age group, while a non-profit may target a certain individual.

Types of Information: Digital vs. Analog

In today's increasingly connected world, we can express information in many ways. Primarily, we use digital and analog information. These two types of information can convey different ideas or messages. For example, digital information is what you see when a company places an ad on your social media page. Analog information is the flyer you get when you receive a code

for a free product. Good use of analog and digital information creates content that readers can digest. Digital information refers to the information we usually process online, such as browsers and web pages. Analog information is from physical sources, like a code printed on the back of canned goods.

Digital Information

- Social Media
- Websites
- Videos
- Software
- Applications
- Video
- Audio
- Images
- Text
- Email

Analog Information

- PDF files
- Paper
- Magazines
- Books
- Hardware

Resources for Digital and Analog Information

Finding resources for digital and analog information may overlap. With increasing dependence on digital information, the overlap means you usually find analog information digitally. For example, making a flyer is usually done digitally but distributed as analog information.

Analog Information

Analog information refers to anything that expresses information in a physical format, like papers and books. This information cannot be saved in a file drive or stored within a computer. Finding resources for analog information depends on your content. For instance, a business card with social media accounts is analog, yet the same information may be found digitally.

Digital Information

Digital information refers to information that you process digitally. For most, this means online. Digital information isn’t limited to words on a screen. Digital information is the sound you hear when you get a text message or navigational app. Digital information encompasses information and ideas that are conveyed digitally. A meme is an excellent example of digital information. This type of information is usually shared digitally. When it is shared through analog means, it is done because digital ones are unavailable.

Digital Resources

- Programs and Applications
- Image Libraries (Getty Images)
- YouTube, video, and audio
- Search Engines

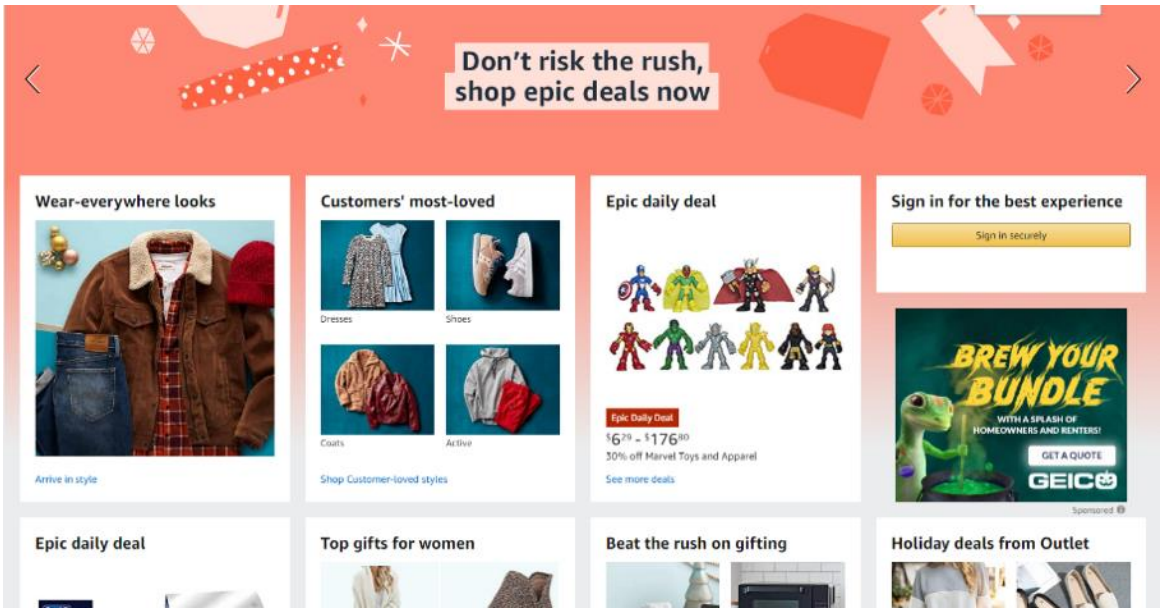
Analog Resources

- Libraries
- Printers, normal and 3-D
- Brick and Mortar markets
- CD-ROMs, DVDs, VCDs

Presentation

The way your information is printed on a document, flyer, or website will influence your reader's first impression. In the virtual marketplace example, information is arranged across multiple cards, evenly spaced across the screen. These cards organize a variety of information, including a sign-in portal, advertisements, and product images. In the physical document example, the menu is spaced evenly, and text appears clearly.

Figure 8.1 *Virtual Marketplace Example*



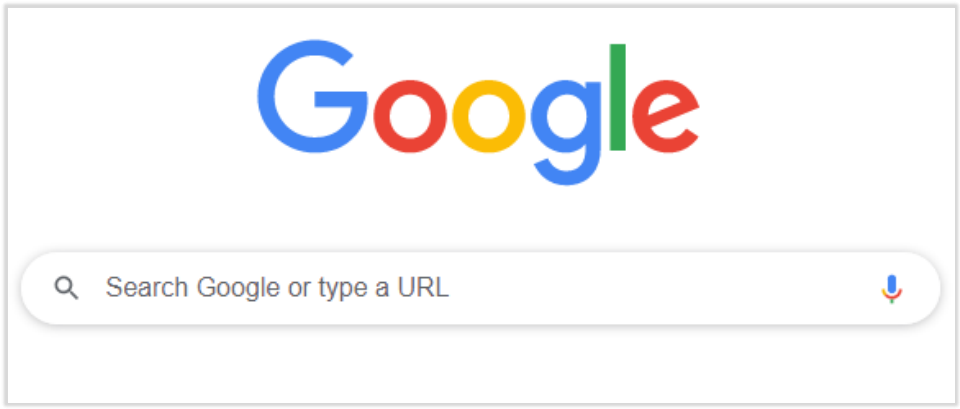
As you format a document or webpage, ask yourself what you want to present and why. What do you want your audience to see first? What reaction will readers have when they view your material?

Figure 8.2 *Physical Document Example*

Clarity and Spacing

Clarity is a measure of how easily a message is conveyed. Clarity manifests through various elements on a document or screen. These elements include paragraphs, graphics, colors, and forms. Clutter impedes clarity, distracts the viewer, and distorts the message. Spacing complements clarity. Too much space confuses the reader, while too little space makes it challenging to find information.

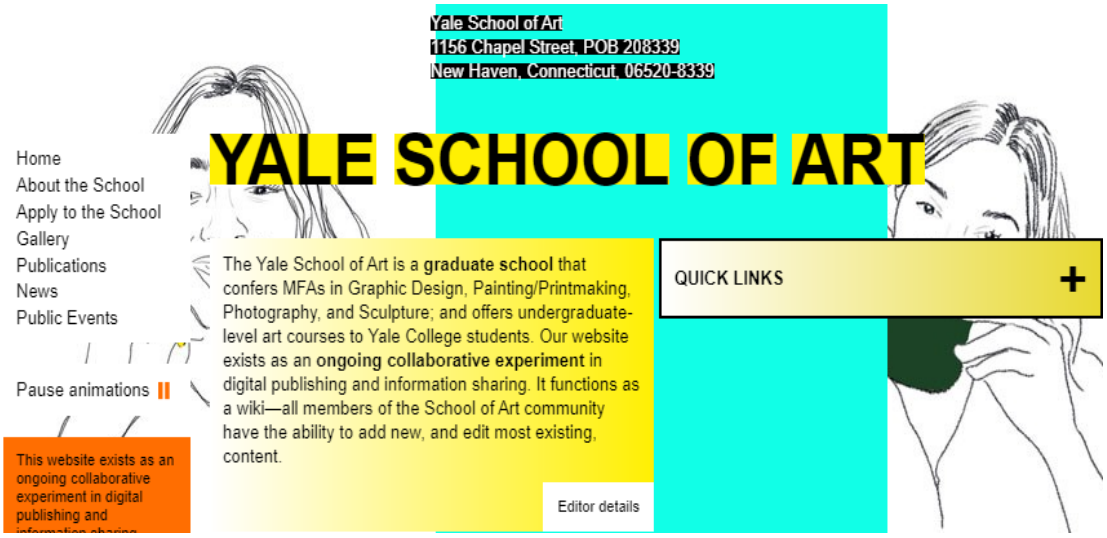
Figure 8.3 *Google Main Page*



Google's homepage is a perfect example of clarity. The ample use of white space directs the eyes to the center of the screen and the purpose of your visit: the search bar.

Color and Light

Figure 8.4 *Color Spectrum Example*



The site above includes a wide spectrum of color, text, and light colors on a white background. The colors attract more attention than the information on the site, which is counter-productive to the website's goal**.** Compare Figure 8.4 to the image below, which has similar color.

Figure 8.5 *The New York Times*

Readability

Readability encompasses the structure of your text. Does your text contain long, verbose passages? Do you use large words when smaller, easier to understand words can be used? Is your content for the everyday person or a targeted audience? Bettering your readability increases the likelihood of your content being digested.

Information and Computer Literacy

Literacy is more than just being able to read; it is the ability to understand the information being presented.

Organization

When organizing your information, do so in a way that supports a natural flow of conversation. Conversation is the ability to communicate ideas. Conversational phrases in your content help readers feel more comfortable. Organizing your information also refers to how you structure it, your readability, and where you place your information. For example, organizing your content by starting with easier subjects or large fonts near the beginning may help readers start digesting with ease.

Age Groups

Your audience can encompass a wide range of age groups. If your information has a targeted age group, tailor your information for that age group. Younger readers are familiar with technology but may struggle with analog information. You may have an easier time using digital information. Middle age users are usually adults in the working world. Creating content using digital means will work, but do not underestimate analog information and its place within technological lifetimes. Middle age users can respond to both types. Older users challenge your skills as a content creator in the best way. Neither digital nor analog information is best. What is best is knowing their needs in detail in detail and clearly conveying that message.

Availability

Availability is how easy it is to reach your content. It is more than how downloadable your app is or how you've optimized your SEO (search engine optimization). Information is considered 'available' when users are able to reach it through multiple platforms. As a content creator, you can decide where and how users will access your content. Availability is also how much you monitor your own content. Though mainly digital, making sure your links work is a part of availability. While information is readily available online, consider your analog information. If you are creating documents, printing, and securing resources, increase your availability. Placing these documents in easy-to-reach areas bolsters availability.

Platforms

Platforms are more than just social media; your content should be available on platforms that you can control. You should not put your content on every platform that you can find. Publish your content on sites that are easily understood by your target audience and tailor the information to that platform. Videos on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube can be shared across multiple platforms with ease. However, for text-based content, Facebook or WordPress may be a better choice for publishing. Twitter only allows for 280 characters, so this might not be a viable option for longer content. Creating tailored content across multiple platforms gives your content variety and depth.

Research Skills

Reliable Resources

When researching information, it is very important to make sure the information you are taking is accurate and, most importantly, credible. A credible source can be something that is unbiased and based on evidence.

There are many different reasons why you should find the most credible sources:

1. Find the most relevant information for your topic.
2. Ensure your research is of the upmost quality
3. Get information straight from the experts'
4. Get rid of any information that is incorrect

Sites like Wikipedia are not reliable because anyone can change and edit the page to whatever they want—knowing which sources are reliable can be tricky.

Credible information is everywhere; knowing the right places to look can be difficult. Libraries have ton of credible information, both inside and with the databases that many libraries offer.

To test a site's credibility:

- Examine authorship
    - Check to see if there is a name attached to the work. If someone is found, an easy google search can find out their credentials
- Check dates
    - Check to see if the content is up to date; information published from 1980 might not be accurate as new information is found every day.
- Domain Names
    - Domain names like .com, .net, or .org can be bought by anyone so try and stay away from these if you can. Names like .edu and .gov are reserved for government and university purposes, these will be your best bet.
- Check the pages grammar
    - If you find one or more grammatical errors, check other sources, this one might not be that reliable.
- Check the sites sources
    - See if they site any sources, check credibility on those too.

Types of Research

Different Types of Research

Before conducting your research and finding information to back it up, it is important to understand what type of research you will be doing. The two most broad types of research out there will be primary research and secondary research. Primary research is defined as research done firsthand and relevant to a person. Secondary research is normally done in the public and is more based off a large amount of people. Beginning your research by understanding these two types can really narrow down what you are looking for.

Examples of primary research includes surveys, interviews, observations, or cultural research. Primary research is data that you will need to collect yourself. Some forms of secondary research include articles, reviews, analyses, textbooks, encyclopedias, and the news. Just make sure any research you use is credible unless told otherwise.

There are three other types of research, and it is very important in understanding what they are and how they work.

Quantitative research

Quantitative research is one of the three, and it is based on statistical generalization, meaning a sample that is applied to a population. It allows us to make numerical observations, which can be very important when

conducting primary research. When conducting research on large groups or anything involved with probability, just understand you are practicing quantitative research.

Qualitative research

Qualitative research is the second kind of research. It is a more in-depth kind of information that more accurately generates public opinion that is not statistically generalized. It is especially important because it accurately gets public opinion. It normally begins with asking questions like h*ow?* or w*hy?*

Mixed methods or Triangulation

Mixed methods or Triangulation is a combination of both methods above. It is understood that this is the best method because it garners the most reliable research.

Knowing which type of research to use

The type of research you are going to conduct depends on what questions you want to ask. Start by figuring out if your research is either primary or secondary. Remember primary is any data that you collect yourself, and secondary is data that you can getting data that is already existing.

If you are planning to write a report for your science lab, you will lean yourself toward primary. If you are writing a paper for work or a class, your data will be secondary.

That is just an example of really knowing what kind of research you will be doing. With the tools above, finding what type of research you are going to use will be much easier as now you already understand what to look for.

Critical Thinking

What is critical thinking?

Critical thinking can be defined as any objective analysis and evaluation of any matter to form a judgment on it. Critical thinking dates back thousands of years ago were the first recorded instance of this observational thinking was the teachings of Socrates that were recorded by Plato. We use critical thinking in our everyday lives without even noticing it. Everyone encounters problems that require thinking to solve them. Understanding how to think critically can help anyone throughout their careers and just life in general. Forming a judgment can be easier than it seems. Some things to keep in mind when encountering a problem include:

- Organize information
    - Gather any information to help derive a conclusion.
- Reasoning
    - Gather rational opinions and reasons to back up the information you gathered. If nothing backs up your original idea, consider coming up with something new.

- Arguments
    - Arguments can again make or break your point, but that is ok. The end goal is to find the best solution for your problem.
- Communicate
    - In the end, the best idea is the communicate your solution in case anyone else comes across the same issue in the future.

Important principles and skills

Critical thinking skills are important for self-development and improvement in the workplace. In the job market, you would not reach your potential without these skills. Analysis, interpretation, inference, self-regulation, open-mindedness, evaluation, explanation, and problem-solving are skills very key to proper critical thinking.

- **Analysis**: Collecting and processing information
- **Interpretation**: understanding what the information means
- **Inference**: determining If the information is reliable
- **Self-regulation**: being able to correct your own way of thinking
- **Open-mindedness**: understanding other possibilities
- **Evaluation**: making decisions on the available information
- **Explanation**: the ability to communicate your reasonings
- **Problem-Solving**: tackling unexpected issues and conflicts

Critical thinking is formed from curiosity. Questions need answers, and that's why thinking critically is so important. It helps us get a greater understanding of the world around us. Albert Einstein once said, "The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing." As one of the smartest people on the planet, Einstein understood the importance of thinking critically. As he would say, consider curiosity like an exercise for the brain, combatting boredom and staying energized.

Analysis

What is analysis, and why is it important?

Before doing an analysis, it is important to understand what an analysis is first. An analysis is a detailed examination that draws its conclusions on a set of facts. You base off your final analysis of evidence you gather throughout your research and finalize it for your results. When used properly, a well-made analysis can be beneficial for anyone and everyone. Businesses, students, and scientists, for example, benefit greatly from this. Analysis is very important because it helps understand problems in different and effective ways by looking at facts and figures. A proper analysis can organize and structure data in a way that presents it to be used later. Without making an analysis, there is a better chance of missing important information that can really benefit someone later.

How to write an Analysis

Writing your analysis can be a lot easier than it sounds. You can divide your analysis into three parts to make it a whole lot easier.

Topic

Choose a topic to start off your analysis. You can break up the general topic into areas you might want to research. For example, if your research includes pets, break some topics down into cats and dogs to better help you get information.

Notes

Obviously, once you get the topic down, you are going to need to take some notes. Ask a lot of WHY and How questions. Get as much information as you can; you might need it later.

Conclusion

After you have written down all your notes, it is time to come up with a conclusion. Make sure to communicate with others about the conclusion. The conclusion of your analysis is what most of the paper will be about.

Important research tools

There are many tools to help with your research. Some of the basic tools to help you are:

- Box and Whisker plots
- Check sheet
- Control Chart
- Histogram
- Scatter diagram
- Stratification

These are some tools to help you with collecting and organizing your data. There are also many programs out there to help you with data collection that includes everything mentioned above. For example, the whole Microsoft office can be used, the Adobe platform, and the Google service such as google doc and google slides. There are also multiple programming languages that are helpful data tools such as Python, Java, and C++, to name a few.

Other Research tools

Students do a lot of research, so it is important that they understand what kind of research tools they can use to help with their big assignments and individual research. Some tools that are amazing and easily accessible are:

- Library catalogs
- Online libraries
- Search engines
- Research blogs

Documentation and Citation

MLA Format

MLA format is one of the most common formats you will use in college. It is often a requirement in Language Arts and Humanities courses. MLA style has been modified over time to accommodate resources found on online platforms and other technological media.

MLA is an abbreviation for Modern Language Association, an association of instructors and scholars in language and literature. The *MLA Handbook* establishes standards and guidelines for writers and editors to follow for academic or scholarly writing. This guide also provides a framework for citing sources at the end of your paper. While most MLA principles focus on structure and organization, other guidelines increase readability and create uniformity.

Basic Guidelines

Format is one of the first elements of an MLA style document. MLA papers are entirely double-spaced. While no specific font is required, Times New Roman is recommended. Choose a readable font and use 12-point font size, even for titles and citations. Indent the first word of each paragraph half an inch. Leave one space after each period or punctuation mark.

Page Layout

Set page margins to 1 inch on all sides. The header of your first page should include your name, your instructor's name, the course title, and the date, each on separate lines. Do not make a title page unless specifically directed to. The running head of a document appears on every single page. In an MLA document, this should include the author's last name followed by the page number, positioned in the top right of every page. The running head should be positioned half an inch from the top of the page. Applications like Microsoft Words and Google Docs will automatically format this for you.

Bibliographic Information

Citations are necessary to properly credit the work of others and avoid plagiarism. Any work that is not yours must be documented according to MLA guidelines.

You should always document:

- Direct quotations from a text
- Paraphrases, summaries, and shared ideas from another text
- Any borrowed material from another source
- Information that is otherwise not regarded as common knowledge

In-text citations are required when referencing any material described above. In-text citations, also known as parenthetical citations, are written in parenthesis after referencing a work. At the end of the sentence describing

your cited material, include the author's name and the page of the text you acquired the information from (do not include the word *page* in the citation).

Quotation with parenthetical citation

There is a clear opposition between native land and European influence in *Heart of Darkness*, otherwise examined as an "antagonism of town and country" in *The German Ideology* (Marx 731).

Quotation with attributive tag

The novella explores Marxist ideology as Marlow himself witnesses the hierarchical structure established within Europe's colonization of Africa. Karl Marx speaks of an "antagonism of town and country" in *The German Ideology*. In Marlow's journey, the jungles of Congo represent the "country" Marx refers to (731).

Paraphrase with parenthetical citation

It is briefly described in the *German Ideology* that rural life and city life are an antithesis to one another (Marx 731). They are opposing forces that clash in *Heart of Darkness*, reinforcing one of the novella's driving themes.

Paraphrase with attributive tag

> In Heart of Darkness, the wilderness of Africa acts as the countryside Marx refers to, otherwise known as unconquered land through the eyes of European colonists (731).

Block Quotations

A direct quotation from another text that is four lines or longer must be formatted as a block quotation. To format a block quotation, indent the entire quotation half an inch from the left margin and *do not* include quotation marks. Place the parenthetical citation after the period that closes the block quotation.

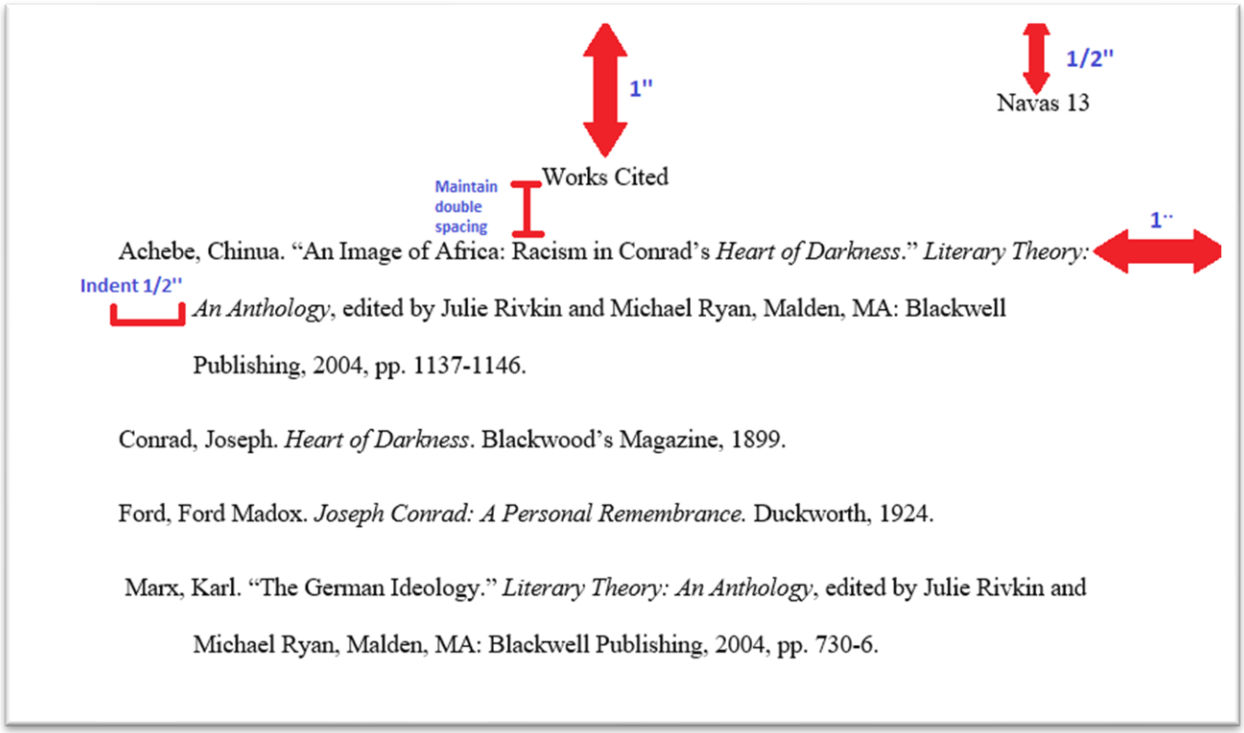
Example:

Even as the "ruling class," Mr. Kurtz himself becomes corrupt in his expedition for ivory. Marlow exposes Mr. Kurtz's desire to take everything as his own:

> You should have heard him say, 'My ivory.' Oh, yes, I heard him. 'My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my—' everything belonged to him. It made me hold my breath in expectation of hearing the wilderness burst into a prodigious peal of laughter that would shake the fixed stars in their places. Everything belonged to him— but that was a trifle. The thing was to know what he belonged to, how many powers of darkness claimed him for their own. (Conrad 80)

The Works Cited page is an alphabetical list of all sources referenced in your work. It is required at the very end of your paper on a separate page. If one citation continues onto a second line, that line must be indented half an inch. While citations vary depending on the medium the piece is from, or what form in which the information is presented, they all follow a similar structure: Include the author's name (last name, first name), the title of the work, and the container. The container includes information about where the source can be found (in print or online) and other details such as the publisher and the date in which the work was published. Figure 10.1 shows a sample of the Works Cited for a previous essay about *Heart of Darkness* and different literary themes that are observed in Joseph Conrad's novella.

Figure 10.1 *Top of a Works Cited page*



APA Format

In college, you will most likely learn many formats for documentation. APA is often used in courses related to Social Sciences, History and Psychology. APA is an abbreviation for American Psychological Association. It is important to evaluate what type of source you are working with before citing any of your sources when following APA guidelines.

The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* provides direct instructions for structuring a paper according to their guidelines.

The Basics

Like MLA format, leave margins of one inch on each side of the page. The line spacing for the entire text (including headings, quotations, and references) will also be double spaced. Indent the beginning of each paragraph half an inch. One key difference between MLA and APA papers is that a cover page is required for an APA paper, and sometimes an abstract.

On the title page, include the title of the paper, the author's name, and the affiliated institution on separate lines in the center of the page. The running head is a shortened version of your paper's title and should not exceed 50 characters. If required, left-align the text, and begin with the words *Running head*, followed by a colon and the short version of the title. The title should be no more than fifty characters long.

An abstract (if requested) should immediately follow the cover page, with the word *Abstract* centered on the first line of the page. An abstract is about a paragraph long, or 150-250 words. It is a brief summary of the major findings covered in your work. Choose a standard, readable font. Font size can range from 10pt to 12pt. Keep the size consistent throughout the paper. The basic format for in-text citations includes the author's name, publication year, and page number(s).

Citations

The basic format for in-text citations includes the author's name, publication year, and page number. However, a page number is not necessary if you are not quoting directly from the text. Use the abbreviation "p." for one page and "pp." for multiple pages when citing a quote. Here are some examples of APA in-text citations:

Borrowing Directly from Another Work

Marlow makes it quite obvious that he deeply admires and respects the white man, for he "took him for a sort of vision" and continues to glorify his individualism (Conrad, 1902, p. 26).

Referring to Another Work

Kurtz is fixated on retaining power in favor of capitalistic profit, in turn, using the working class below him to fulfill his capitalistic interests (Marx, 1932).

There are several ways to cite a source within your writing. Incorporating a short quotation in the text allows you to introduce the author as a signal phrase, or a short introduction phrase, and follow their name with the publication date in parenthesis. The closing parenthetical citation would only require the page number you obtained the quote from.

> Example: According to Chinua Achebe (2004), Africa is set as the "antithesis of Europe" in *Heart of Darkness* (p. 1138).

Long quotations (four or more lines) are formatted as a block quotation indented half an inch below the text. Remember to add the citation after the closing punctuation mark. Refer to the example below to properly format a block quotation in APA style:

Conrad (1902) vividly describes the slaves at work:

> Six black men advanced in a file, toiling up the path. They walked erect and slow, balancing small baskets full of earth on their heads, and the clink kept time with their footsteps. Black rags were wound round their loins, and the short ends behind waggled to and fro like tails. (p. 23)

References

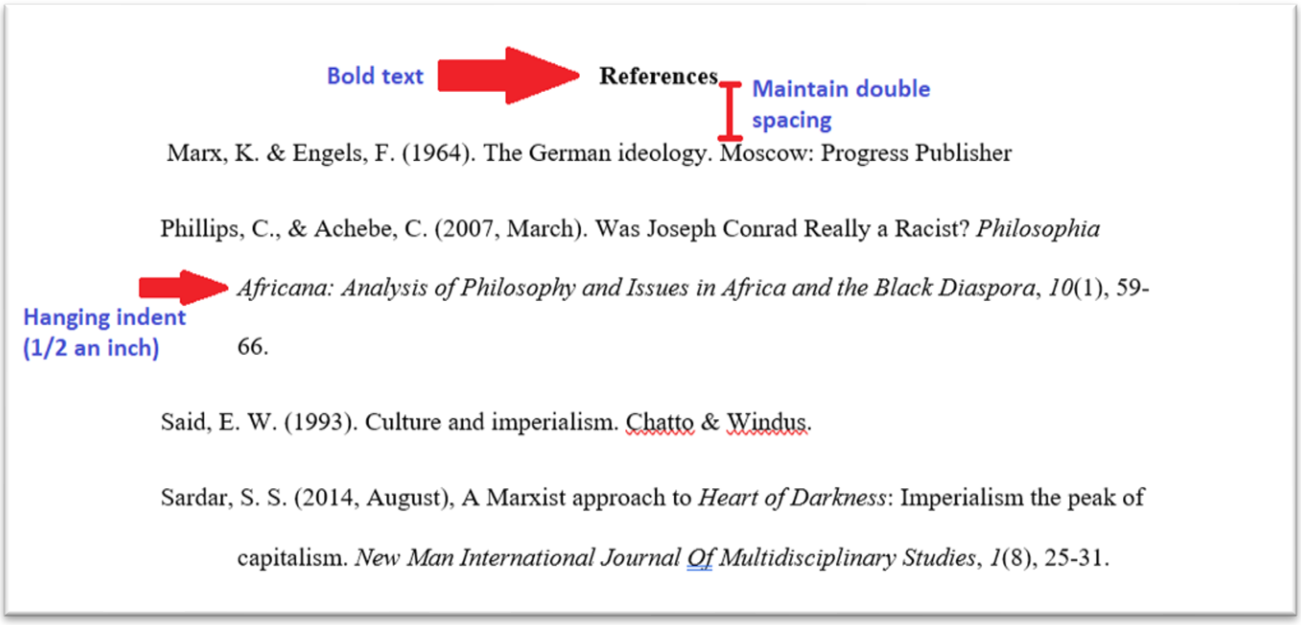
Instead of a Works Cited section, APA documents use a reference list at the end of the paper. Label the list "References" on a new page separate from the body text. Bold and center the title on the top of the page. Include every source you used in your paper on the list, as well as any additional references you used for background research that you did not explicitly write into the text. Format every line after the first line of a source with a hanging indent, half an inch from the left margin. Each reference begins with the author's last name, followed by the initial of their first name (and middle name if they have one). Write the year of publication in parenthesis right after the name. The full title is italicized after the date. There should always be a period after each piece of information. Include the location (the edition, publisher) of the source after the title. If there is a link available, paste the link after the words "Retrieved from." If you are using a source that can only be accessed online, you will want to provide the link.

Here is an example of a standard APA reference:

Pratchett, T., & Gaiman, N. (1991). *Good Omens: The nice and accurate prophecies of Agnes Nutter*, Witch. London: Corgi Books.

Notice that when there is more than one author, a comma is placed between each of their names, and an ampersand (the "&" symbol) separates the final author's name. When there are eight or more authors, list the first six, add an ellipsis, and list the last author. Note that not all words are capitalized in the title. For the title (and the subtitle), you only need to capitalize the first word—but keep proper nouns (names, places) capitalized. Below is a sample of a reference list. The second reference cites an article in a magazine. Note that the periodical title is italicized, and the volume and issue numbers are included. The source ends with the page numbers (using "p." or "pp." is not required).

Figure 10.2 *Top of a References page*



Chicago Style

The Chicago Manual of Style is used for professional writing work or historical research. This documentation style uses footnotes because they are effective for citing evidence and sources throughout the text. Chicago documentation has two varieties. Researchers can choose to format their references in the "Notes and Bibliography" style or to use the "Author-Date" system.

You may have heard of Turabian style, a spin-off of Chicago style developed by an educator named Kate Turabian. There are a few differences between the two; the Turabian style focuses more on design and structure. Refer to the 6th edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style* to get specific guidelines on how to format your information in a Chicago style document. In most cases, Chicago style is used for published professional work and research.

Two Styles

The Notes and Bibliography style is the traditional format that utilizes footnotes and endnotes that direct readers to the original source. A footnote is a comment or reference found at the bottom of a page. If necessary, this style may also include a Bibliography at the end of the document. The Author-Date System is a good alternative for those who prefer to use in-text citations. The parenthetical citation—similar to the MLA and APA style—tells the reader to see the list at the end of the document for full citations.

General Formatting

The Chicago Manual of Style does not provide many guidelines for page formatting. Considering that Chicago documentation is publicized more often, specific formatting is the publisher’s discretion. Authors must follow the publisher's rules and style guides while keeping some general guidelines in mind. Like most other formats, the body text of the document needs to be double-spaced. This excludes block quotations, table titles, list appendices, footnotes/endnotes, front matter like the table of contents, and references—these should all be single-spaced. While the content of a Bibliography is single-spaced, keep each separate list item double-spaced. The margins of your document should be at least one (1) inch on each side. In some publishing houses, the left margin is slightly larger.

As most formats suggest, use a readable font. Times New Roman and Arial are often recommended. Times New Roman is more common in professional documents and research papers—make sure that the font is at least 12pt if you choose to use it.

Use regular numerical values for your page numbers. Front matter such as your title page or table of contents should use lowercase roman numerals (i, ii, iii, iv, etc.).

Writing a Chicago style document does not require a cover page. If specifically requested to include one, center-align the title and double-space the text. The title should appear about one-third of the way down the first

page. Include any additional information (this could be your name, a course title, the date) about two-thirds down the page. Separate each piece of information on a new line. Do not include a page number on the title page. The cover page is included in the page count, so the second page of your paper should start with the number two. Any visuals included in your paper should be placed as close as possible to their relevant text.

Figure 10.3 *Sample Chicago-style Cover Page*

Content

Headings

Chicago style allows but does not require headings. Turabian style offers five different ways to format your headings. While the *Chicago Manual of Style* does not give any formal rules, the text recommends that writers use the following guidelines:

- Use headline-style (capitalizing all major words)
- Begin subheadings on a new line
- Distinguish headings by changing the font size
- Maintain consistent typographical features (font size, parallel structure, capitalization)
- Differentiate the presence of subheads by changing its type style (by bolding or italicizing the font) and by altering its placement on the page (flush left or center the subheading)
- Ensure that each hierarchy level is consistent and logical
- Use no more than three levels of hierarchy
- Avoid ending subheadings with periods

Block Quotations

Block quotes in a Chicago document are necessary for quotations that are five lines or longer. Unlike the rest of your Chicago paper, the block quote will not be double spaced. Omit quotation marks and indent half an inch on a separate line below the body text.

Example:

Shigeru Miyamoto discusses the Switch's success after the console reached its third anniversary:

> The Switch released with good timing in this age where people are walking around and using devices like smartphones. And yet, they get loaded up with a lot of data. So for this reason, we thought it should be relatively easy for a single console with a single technological architecture to succeed, given the situation. (Dino 2020)

In-text Citations and Notes

Remember that citations appear as footnotes or endnotes in the Notes and Bibliography style.

Bibliographic Information

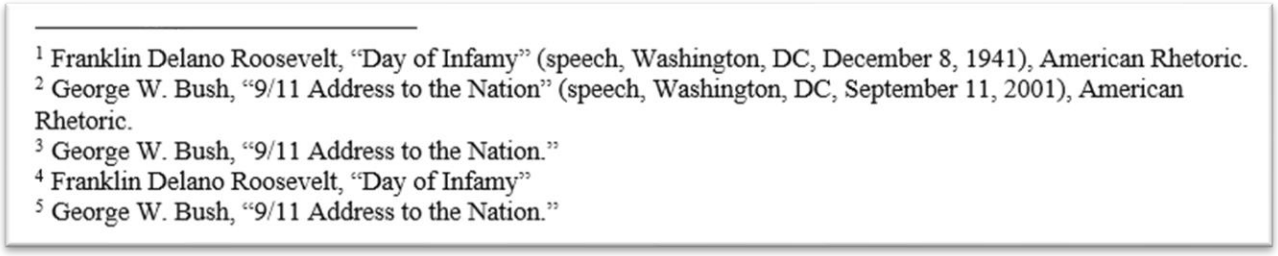
Citing Sources

Remember that the Notes and Bibliography style utilizes footnotes and endnotes to cite sources in the text. Use superscript numbers to mark citations in the text.

Format the superscript after the ending punctuation of the sentence that contains the source material. Number the citations sequentially throughout the text.

To format a footnote, indent the first line of each note half an inch and begin with a number and a period. Add a space after the period and enter the note—this will include the author's name, the title of the work, the city of publication and the publisher, the year, and the page number(s). After providing the full information for a work you have already cited, you only need to include a shortened version of the footnote. Additional references to the work only need to include the author's name, a comma, a short version of the title, a comma, and the page number.

Figure 10.4 *Sample of Footnotes*



[1] Franklin Delano Roosevelt, "Day of Infamy" (speech, Washington, DC, December 8, 1941), American Rhetoric.
[2] George W. Bush, "9/11 Address to the Nation" (speech, Washington, DC, September 11, 2001), American Rhetoric.
[3] George W. Bush, "9/11 Address to the Nation."
[4] Franklin Delano Roosevelt, "Day of Infamy"
[5] George W. Bush, "9/11 Address to the Nation."

The 17th edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style* eliminates the use of the Latin abbreviation *Ibid*. Using *ibid* can accidentally lead to citing the wrong source or confuse readers who are unfamiliar with the abbreviation.

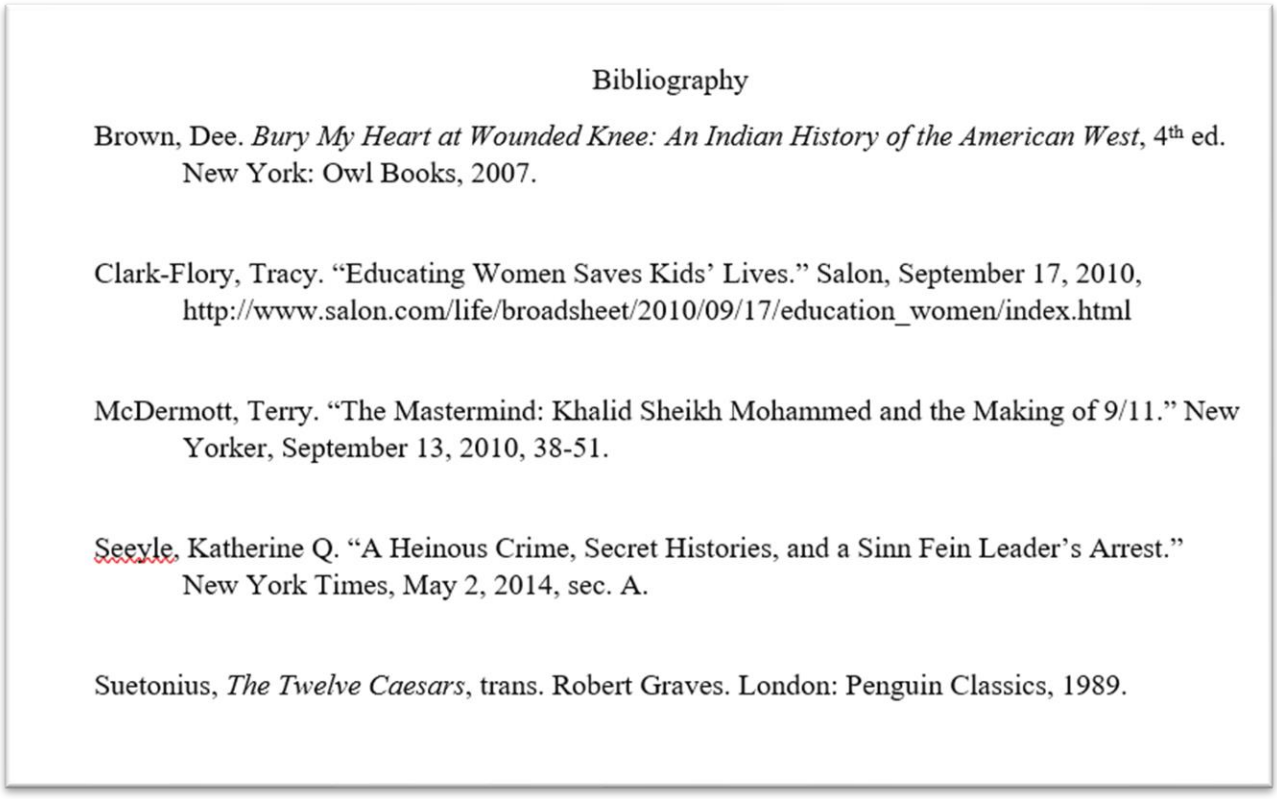
The author-date style uses in-text citations. In parentheses, the citations usually contain the author's name, the year of publication, and the pages being referenced.

> Example: In his lecture, Achebe accuses the young writer of painting African landscapes in a negative light (Chinua Achebe 2004, 1138).

Bibliography

If writing a *Chicago* document that follows the Notes and Bibliography style, begin your list of sources after the main text and any endnotes. Center the title *Bibliography* on the top of the page. For a bibliographic entry, include the information from the first footnote of the source but omit page numbers. List the author's last name and first name (separated by a comma) and separate the remaining elements with periods instead of commas. Single space your sources and list them alphabetically. Italicize titles of books and periodicals; shorter works can be enclosed in quotation marks. Leave a blank line between entries. Indent the second line of every source by half an inch.

Figure 10.5 *Sample Bibliography Page*



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Clark-Flory, Tracy. "Educating Women Saves Kids' Lives." Salon, September 17, 2010, http://www.salon.com/life/broadsheet/2010/09/17/education_women/index.html

McDermott, Terry. "The Mastermind: Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and the Making of 9/11." New Yorker, September 13, 2010, 38-51.

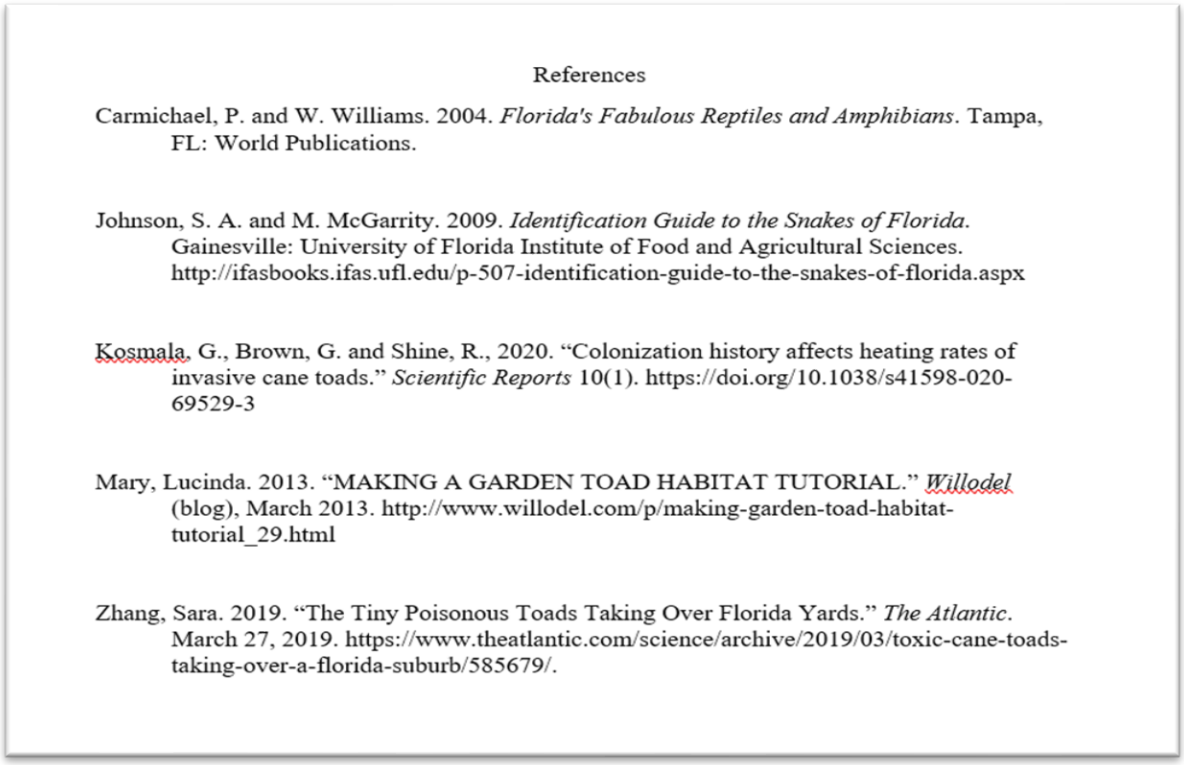
Seeyle, Katherine Q. "A Heinous Crime, Secret Histories, and a Sinn Fein Leader's Arrest." New York Times, May 2, 2014, sec. A.

Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, trans. Robert Graves. London: Penguin Classics, 1989.

References

A reference list is used for Author-Date citations. Reference lists must be included at the end of your paper, fully citing any sources used throughout the work. The reference list follows the same format as the Bibliography for the other style—the text is single-spaced, and you must add a line between each source. Organize your entries alphabetically. The second line of longer references also require a hanging indent of half an inch. Page numbering continues for both the Bibliography and Reference List. The 17th edition of the C*hicago Manual of Style* advises against using 3 em-dashes to cite multiple works by the same author. Simply rewrite the author's name for repeated sources in your citation list.

Figure 10.6 *Sample References Sheet*



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Locating Reference Information

As a writer, it is important to understand and break down different sources you are working with. You may gather information from interviews, surveys, print articles, online articles, magazines, or scholarly websites. When you locate a source, make sure to differentiate between primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources are raw information directly taken from books, photographs, pieces of art, films, or your own field research. Primary sources provide firsthand knowledge. Secondary sources report or analyze the research of others, discussing original information obtained from another source. Distinguishing between these two will help you understand what elements you need to include in a list of sources.

This coincides with the first step of documentation: evaluate your sources. It is easy to locate information quickly through search engines and databases. It may seem easier to pick the first results you see, but how do you know that these sources are trustworthy? Relevance and credibility are two significant criteria to consider when evaluating a source. Most universities offer students access to databases maintained by the institution. Library databases, scholarly journals, published books, or government documents are the safest forms of research in terms of credibility. Learn as much as you can about a source to evaluate its credibility properly. Can you identify the author? Can you locate the date of publication? Is the publisher reliable? What are the author’s credentials and qualifications that enable them to speak knowledgeably about the topic?

After evaluating a source for its relevance and credibility, collect the information you will use to create a citation. Key source elements to look for include:

1. The author
2. The title of the source
3. The title of the container
4. Other contributors
5. Version/Edition
6. Number
7. Publisher
8. Publication Date
9. Location

Use this list as a guide to gather as much information as you can.

The purpose of a citation is to credit the author of a work from which you have borrowed ideas. Citations also guide your readers to the source that contains the borrowed material.

Lastly, organize the information according to the document format you are writing. Your citations should include enough information so that readers can quickly understand the type of source and locate the source themselves.

Avoiding Plagiarism

It is essential for writers to know the difference between quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing. Quoting takes words directly from a text or audio source. Paraphrasing is a restatement of someone else's words into your own. Summarizing focuses on the main ideas of another source. It is important to highlight the originality of your own ideas to distinguish it from the sources you are using. Use other works as support for your own ideas. Rather than copying ideas, you will be adding to them by providing your own insight. Remember to analyze and evaluate different sources before choosing them. When in doubt, cite your sources.

Communicating Online

Professional Tools

The communication world is shifting, and so is its need for professional communication tools. As technology becomes increasingly prevalent, teams can now remain connected to their work regardless of their physical location. Team communication skills are critical in this virtual environment. It has also given rise to a range of powerful communication and engagement tools.

Chat and Instant messaging

Chat and instant messaging are short, real-time messages that allow you to talk faster and easier than email. Chat and instant messages are transmitted instantly to the recipient. If an individual is online, they can reply instantly. By comparison, an email message will not be seen until the recipient opens their mail. Therefore, instant messaging is better for quick communication.

Here are some advantages and disadvantages of instant messaging:

Advantages

- It is instantaneous
- It is easier to carry on multiple conversations at once

Disadvantages

- It is not as convenient for lengthy or complicated messaging.
- If someone is not online, you have to contact them by other means.

Video Conferencing

Video conferencing allows you to see and hear the people you are communicating with in real-time. Video conferencing can add a personal touch to your conversations, whether you are talking with team members one-on-one or collaborating with several people at once. Video capabilities are included in many instant messaging and chat services, and it is usually free.

Here are some advantages and disadvantages of video conferencing:

Advantages

- You can see the person you are communicating with.
- You can talk to multiple people at once.
- It is included in many voice chat services for free.

Disadvantages

- Performance issues can occur with slower internet connections.
- Even though you can see a person, it is not the same as a face-to-face conversation.
- You may need to purchase additional equipment, such as a webcam and headset.

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)

VoIP is a type of online phone service. It is easy to make free or inexpensive phone calls to nearly anywhere in the world using your computer. VoIP is included in many instant messaging and chat services. VoIP is often used as a replacement for traditional telephone services.

Here are some advantages and disadvantages of VoIP:

Advantages

- Unlike instant messaging services, you can talk to someone instead of typing and sending messages.
- It can replace a traditional landline phone service.
- You can talk to multiple people at once.

Disadvantages

- It is difficult to have multiple conversations at once.
- You may need to purchase extra equipment, such as a headset.
- Slower network connections can cause issues like call drops or static noise.

Email

Email has become one of the most common methods of electronic communication today. Email is a typed message sent from a computer or mobile device. It is possible to attach documents, letters, images, and other items to the email and send them along with the message. The original

message is sent with the response when you reply. This feature keeps a history of your communications for future reference.

Here are some advantages and disadvantages of Email:

Advantages

- The recipient does not have to be present to receive a message.
- Messages can be prepared in advance and saved until you are ready to send them.
- Messages can be encrypted to send confidential information.

Disadvantages

- Spam is a big problem; up to two-thirds of emails are spam mail.
- Email attachments can contain viruses or other vulnerabilities.

Communication Norms

What are group norms?

Group norms are a set of informal and formal ground rules that dictate how people interact. These rules help group members conduct themselves, clarify roles, and establish group communication guidelines.

Teams with clear ground rules have several advantages:

- Teammates have a shared value system and work together to achieve their goals.
- Everyone understands the group's expectations.
- Conflict resolution mitigates problems quickly and effectively.
- Communication is more constructive.

Why are norms important?

Norms allow teams to communicate clearly and serve as guidelines for conflict resolution. However, not all norms are intentional; some are implied through standards of common decency. Written communication methods, like email, are an excellent example of pre-established norms. It is easy to introduce a simple discussion to a small team with email chains. However, the larger the group, the more complicated it becomes. Team members should critically decide which communication methods are best for their particular group based on their size.

Establishing healthy group norms when a team comes together for the first time will save time later. Changing pre-established norms is possible but can be challenging and become a source of conflict. Getting everyone on the same page before the work begins creates a productive environment for the project’s duration. Here are a few common norms you and your team can follow.

Reflect

Once you have joined or created a team, each team member should reflect individually on their strengths and weaknesses before proceeding. Sharing constructive feedback can help uncover problems or truths that the group may not see at first.

Get Specific

Avoid making assumptions about your team and their tasks. Ensure that your team understands the project's expectations. Writing down your objectives provides the team with a straightforward guide that is both measurable and achievable. Encourage team members to share their feedback and reflections. Open, honest, and specific communication creates a productive team environment.

Reevaluate

Norms are agreements that the group can change at any time. They should be flexible depending on the group's needs. It is important to revisit and reevaluate them regularly as the team evolves. This practice reinforces the concept of group norms and helps the team create a productive environment.

Technical Communication Genres

Proposals

The ability to write a proposal is a necessary skill for any employee. A proposal persuades the person reading it that the idea or service you are proposing is worth the time, energy, and resources spent pursuing it. A well-written proposal shows the addressee that you have a clear vision of what you want and the motivation to pursue it.

Typically, proposals are the first step in a project. The author identifies an issue and suggests a way to fix it. The addressee then decides if the project will move forward. For example, an employee at a construction company could submit a proposal on increasing safety measures at work. This proposal could improve the well-being of employees in the workplace. A proposal provides an opportunity for both the employee and the employer to improve their work environment.

Structure

A proposal's specifics vary from one field to another, but they usually follow a general structure.

Project Summary

The project summary should be concise and address the subject of the proposal. The project summary should have a brief synopsis of the problem

and the solution needed to resolve it. The summary should also include why the author is qualified to offer a solution.

Project Introduction

The project introduction gives a complete breakdown of the issue that needs a resolution. It also explains the motivation behind solving the problem and how the author proposes to resolve it. The introduction outlines why the proposal is necessary and the significance of the solution in the workplace.

Implementation

Implementation is the step-by-step plan detailing how the author intends to execute the solution. Here, the author gives the feasibility of their solution and its scope, what will or will not be done. The author should also include a timetable of how long the proposed solution could take. The implementation plan should show the reader that the proposed solution is the best solution to the problem. This section is the most important part of the proposal.

Personnel

This section of the proposal explains why the proposed staff is the right person or group to lead the project. Here you would speak about the qualifications a person has and what their expertise would contribute to the project.

Budget

The budget helps support the proposal and proves that it is affordable. Here, the author should break down the costs and explain why they are necessary.

Conclusion

The conclusion should restate the general message of the proposal and its benefits. Conclusions should strive to leave a lasting impression on the listener because it is the presenter’s last chance to make a strong impression.

Appendices

The appendix usually consists of materials that support the proposal and any relevant information, like cover letters, numeric data, or tables that support your argument.

Audience

When writing a proposal, it is essential to keep the reader in mind. Here are a few things to avoid when writing the proposal:

Jargon or vague writing

The proposal should use plain, concise language. Overly specific or complex language can hinder comprehension and confuse the audience.

Unclear figures

A graphic or table can either clarify parts of the proposal or muddle the reader's understanding. Remember to tailor the type of graphic, chart, or table to the information you want to convey.

Inconsistent formatting

Adhere to the formatting conventions. Using a reference can help the author create and edit their proposal.

Instructions

Well-written instructions convey the steps of a task to the reader quickly, sequentially, and efficiently.

Effectiveness

The effectiveness of your instructions depends on multiple factors. The first thing you should consider is the audience. Knowing your audience is important to the process because it allows you to tailor your instructions to the reader.

Another aspect to consider while writing instructions is keeping your information clear and concise. Avoid unnecessary detail. Being overly specific is not beneficial to the reader and blurs the clarity of the document. Vague sentences can also be unclear because of the lack of specificity. Maintain a direct tone towards the audience and choose your words carefully.

Presentation

It is important to consider the presentation of your instructions. The presentation of your instructions should fit the task that needs completion. If your instructions are for using a computer program, for example, it may be more helpful for the reader if you were to include images of the program in use. Instructions for submitting a proposal would be more appropriate in written form. The significance of graphics cannot be understated in your documents. Graphics convey ideas to your readers in a more straightforward way than a block of text can.

Reports

Reports are used to give progress on a project or present important information to the reader. A report is a structured way of giving anything from the analysis of a problem to the solution to a problem.

Formal vs. Informal

Formal reports are longer than informal reports. They cover more information and offer more detail to the reader. Formal reports can be sent from department to department or to another company entirely. Informal reports are more often loosely formatted and sent to employees within the same company.

Progress Reports

A progress report updates a project manager or other authority on the work that has been completed on a project. It may also include information on what needs to be finished.

Organization

There are two ways to organize a progress report: chronologically or by finished works.

Chronological Order

This structure presents the work that has been done and what has yet to be completed, broken into periods of time so that the reader has a clear idea of what will be finished before different deadlines. This is generally used for projects that will take longer to complete.

Work Completed

This way of organizing the information presents the work that has been finished to the reader in a way that allows them to see the remaining tasks and costs of the project. It does not break up time periods for you like a Chronological Order progress report.

E-mails and Memos

E-mails and Memos are two of the most common methods of communication at work. E-mails are messages distributed electronically from one person to another. E-mails can be formal or informal in the workplace. Memos are official short messages sent by one person to another within a company. Memos are informal.

General Advice

Keep the subject line concise. A lengthy subject line defeats the purpose of this feature, as does a vague subject line. Make the subject line relevant to the reader. The most important information should be at the beginning of the body of your e-mail. This makes it easier for the recipient to prioritize as they read. Finally, make sure to edit and proofread your memos and e-mails before you send them.

Style and Tone

E-mails and memos can serve several functions in the workplace, depending on the needs of the business. It is important to tailor the language in your messages to the recipients. A memo to an entire department would be written more formally than an e-mail to invite a coworker to lunch, for example. The grammar in an e-mail to your friend in the cubicle next door doesn't need to be reread multiple times for grammar, but you may want to proofread an e-mail being sent to your boss. E-mails and memos are easily accessed, so the tone should be polite.

Accessibility

You need to consider accessibility when writing messages to others. Your message needs to be understood by all recipients, including those with visual impairments. Here are some suggestions you can follow to improve the readability of your messages:

- A larger text size
- A highly readable, standard font; for example, using Times New Roman instead of Comic Sans makes your message look more professional
- Avoiding large blocks of text to make the paragraphs visually agreeable
- Separate paragraphs by topic and relevance; use lists in your e-mail to organize your information

Document Design

Document design includes page layout, readability, and visual aids, such as lists, photos, and graphs. With the balance of these elements and white space, documents can be utilized effectively by your intended audience.

Page Layout

Point and Font Size

Point size and font size both refer to the height of an element within a sentence, but they are two different elements of the layout. In typography, point size is the smallest unit of measurement. It is used to measure line height and line length. By comparison, font size describes the physical size of the font being used.

Line Length

Line length refers to the number of characters in a sentence, including letters, numbers, symbols, and spaces. A line of text should be between 45 and 75 characters to enhance legibility. If a line exceeds 75 characters, then it is recommended to adjust the line height to ensure there is enough space between two lines. If a sentence is too long, then readers may lose important details within it.

It is important to be aware of the line-height or spacing. The text becomes difficult to read if it is too close to another line of text or if it is too far away from the next line. Line height should be between 1.2- and 1.5-point line spacing.

Fonts

Fonts are the visual appearance of the text in a document. The most commonly known typefaces are serif, sans serif, and decorative fonts. Serif fonts, like Times New Roman, are typically used because readers can easily distinguish similar letters or letter combinations, like the lowercase letter *m* and the lowercase letter combination *rn*. Serif fonts are most common in printed documents will smaller font sizes. Sans serif fonts, like Arial or Verdana (used in this style guide), are used because they have a cleaner and more polished look on screens. They are most common in web documents. Decorative fonts, such as calligraphy and script, are used primarily for titles and headlines to catch a reader’s attention. They are not appropriate for formal documents but are commonly used for decorative or ornamental purposes such as posters and advertisements.

Readability

Titles

Titles are important to help readers designate what they are reading. Titles on any written work (including subject lines in an email) should be between two to seven words, capitalized. The title should also provide context for what the text will be about. Document titles should be short and concise so that readers can quickly and easily identify the document's contents. Titles that are too long may be difficult to remember. Titles that are only one word are only acceptable for works of art, such as books, films, songs, etc. A title can also include a subtitle separated by a colon, followed by a space. Subtitles are typically longer and more detailed than the main title. To properly capitalize a title, use the following guidelines:

Do not capitalize prepositions (*on*, *to*, *from*, *in*, *out*, *of*), conjunctions (*and*, *but*, *or*, *for*, *nor*, *so*, *yet*), or articles (*a*, *an*, *the*) unless it is the first word in the title.

Example:

"To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee

When capitalizing a hyphenated word, only capitalize the first part of a compound word.

Example:

An In-depth Review of Microsoft Teams

Headings and Subheadings

Headings and subheadings assist readers in navigating specific content in a document. Both headings and subheadings should be bolded so they can stand out against body text. Align headers with the left margin so they are consistent and easy to identify in the document.

Do not use too many levels of headings and subheadings. Too many titles can confuse the reader, who uses headers as guides to identify the document's structure. Two to three levels of headings and subheadings should suffice. Do not type headings in all caps or title case. It makes it difficult to read, especially for long headers. Use boldface, not italics. Bold stands out better on a page and is easier to read. Do not use both.

Visual Aids

Lists

Lists are used to organize information and allow a reader to scan content faster. To use a list, you must have more than one item in the list. The second level of a list, called a sublist, must also have more than one item. Capitalize the first letter of every list item. You must use end punctuation if an item in the list is a complete sentence. If the item is a character, word, or phrase, do not include end punctuation. You must use parallel structure in your list items. For example, if you begin your first item with a verb, your second and third items should also begin with a verb.

The type of list you use depends on the type of information you are trying to organize. Use a numbered list when the items follow a chronological sequence or series. Examples of this include rankings or instructions.

Example:

How to Cook Pasta:

1. Boil water
2. Add salt
3. Add pasta
4. Stir until tender
5. Drain
6. Add sauce
7. Serve

When the order of items in the list is not important, use a bulleted list. You can choose how to organize the information, such as alphabetization or prioritization.

Example:

Types of Pasta:

- Fettuccine
- Spaghetti
- Cavatappi
- Farfalle
- Angel’s Hair
- Penne
- Rigatoni

Images and videos

Help the reader understand your content by adding visuals to illustrate what you are trying to say. Photos, graphics, charts, graphs, and videos are examples of visuals that can enhance your content. It is important to note that a visual should never be used to replace any written content. A visual should be supplementary, not complementary. Choose images or videos that enhance the reader's understanding. Place figures as close as possible to the text they support. Ensure that the text and corresponding image or video are not separated across multiple pages.

Alt text

Some readers use screen readers to convert written content into audible speech. Alt text is embedded code that allows the screen readers to turn text into sound. Add alt text to all images to ensure that the entire document is accessible through reading software.

Before writing alt text, be mindful of the text surrounding the image. The text should refer to the image with keywords such as *before*, *after*, and *following*. This tells the reader that an image accompanies the text. Using directional language (*left, right, above, or below*) is not helpful to visually impaired readers using screen reading software.

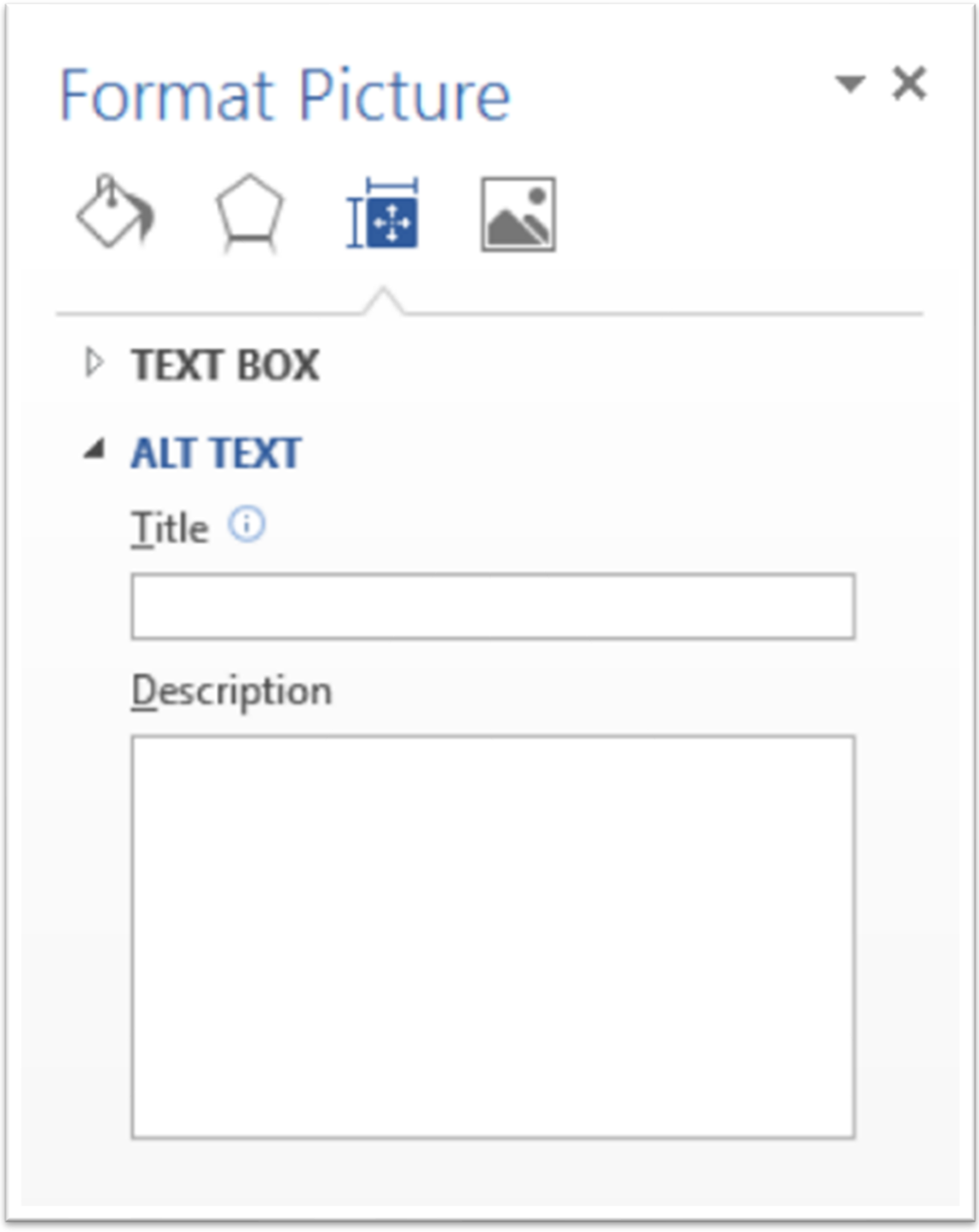
When writing alt text, describe the meaning of the image as well as what the image is. Do not add any new information that was not included in the surrounding text. If the image is complex, use multiple sentences to describe the image. The first sentence should contain the most important information. If the surrounding text describes the image, add a sentence at the end of the alt text describing where the surrounding text is.

Adding Alt Text

To add alt text to a Word document:

1. Click on the Insert tab.
2. Select Picture.
3. Select your image.
4. Click Insert.
5. Right-click on the image.
6. Select Format Picture (See Figure 13.1).
7. Click Layout & Properties (cross icon).
8. Click the drop-down for ALT TEXT.
9. Type a name or description of the image in the Alternative Text box

Figure 13.1 *Alternative Text Tab*



Graphics and Illustrations

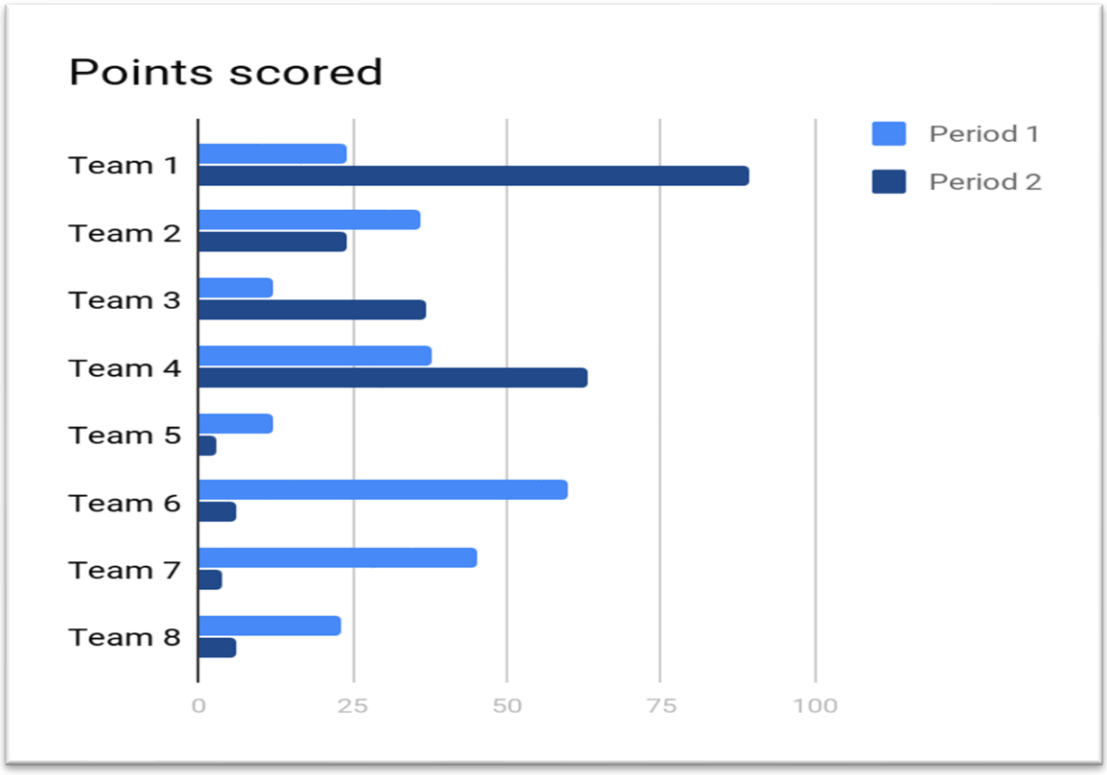
There are hundreds of ways to deliver information using an infinite number of graphics and illustrations. However, there are a few basic principles for styling visual information. The following topics are applicable in most situations.

Size and Positioning

Maintaining a consistent text-to-image ratio on desktop and mobile devices of varying screen sizes is crucial for readability and comprehension. An effective layout for graphics and illustrations enhances the document's usability. Bar graphs and charts that do not require a landscape orientation should be in portrait aspect ratio and formatted to wrap with text bodies when screen width allows for it.

This composition allows the reader to follow along with the graphical information while reading along with articulated details. Use a one-point border that is one shade darker than white to help define the graphic area and frame the adjacent paragraph with a boundary line.

Figure 14.1 *Example Graph*



Citation

All illustrations and charts should have a figure number written as a caption. (currently cannot do in google docs) Cite the source of the graphic in the bibliography using the specified format. Caption photographs and videos with the creator's name and organization, followed by a sequential figure number.

Color and Contrast

Distinguishing the background from the image is usually a stylistic choice. Designing an illustration's borders to blend seamlessly into the web page color is often satisfactory; however, understanding this decision's intent is necessary. If you want to convey the impression of uniform connectedness and continuity to your audience, this is an elegant way to express that perception. However, if you want to imply visual separation, consider using a dividing line or separation element in the layout's visual structure.

The text's color should always be legible; stay away from neon hues as a primary color. Use the same colors consistently throughout the piece. Consider a palate that is complementary yet inclusive of readers with disabilities. Partial or full-color blindness affects three-hundred million people worldwide. For example, using the color salmon might prevent as much as eight percent of viewers with disabilities from understanding your content.

Negative Space and Visual Hierarchies

Negative space or “white space” is an area on a page intentionally left blank to create separation. This common principle of graphic design is carried over and implemented in web and document design as well. The principle of leaving blank space isn’t just simply for clarity, although it certainly is important for that. Like all design elements, it can impart a different emotional effect as the reader reviews the content. Use negative space intentionally and with respect to the Visual Hierarchies previously

established. Grouping related items is of particular importance for graphics. Implementing negative space creates a boundary and can prevent competition for the viewer's attention. Use negative space when in the above situations and others as appropriate.

Gestalt Principles

The Gestalt principles attempt to explain how humans naturally perceive objects and how we organize them as patterns.

Proximity

“Objects or shapes that are close to one another appear to form groups.” (Palmer) Note that only items that are grouped should appear to form groups.

Similarity

“Perception lends itself to seeing stimuli that physically resemble each other as part of the same object.” (Palmer) Adjacent or overlapping objects that need to be distinguished should be a different color or texture.

Closure

"The mind's tendency to see complete figures or forms even if a picture is missing." This is our innate ability to recognize patterns (Goldstein).

Good Continuation

"In an intersection between two or more objects, people tend to perceive each object as a single uninterrupted object." (Banerjee) Overlapping items should be a single object.

Common Fate

"When visual elements are seen moving in the same direction at the same rate, the movement appears to be a part of the same stimulus." (Palmer) Objects of the same group should move together or appear to move as a unified object.

Good Form

"The tendency to group together forms of similar shape, pattern, and color." (Palmer) All elements in your document should follow this principle of uniformity.

Oral Presentations

Preparation

Preparation is vital to any oral presentation because you need to know what you are speaking about. Preparation will help you build confidence in your topic. Please refer to other chapters in this book for more information on research, outlines, and organization.

Types of Presentations

There are many different types of presentations. Knowing which type of presentation, you are going to give will help with the preparation and the outline.

Informative

An informative presentation is the most common type of presentation in the workplace. It informs the audience about recent events or work-related topics. An example of this type of presentation is OSHA presentation about a new protocol.

Figure 15.1 *Example of a live OSHA Presentation*

Instructional

These types of presentations are like academic instructions being given on a new subject. They give directions or information about new procedures. These presentations can be given in different ways, but the most common method is to demonstrate a step-by-step process.

Persuasive

Persuasive presentations convince the audience to accept what you are presenting or to want what is being presented. These presentations offer solutions to problems. They are meant to stimulate the audience's emotions and intellect through sincerity and enthusiasm. The presenter must be clear and logical, providing evidence while appealing to the audience's emotions. This ensures that the audience focuses on the problem or situation.

Decision-Making

Decision-making presentations are similar to the persuasive style but more influential. They show ideas, suggestions, and arguments that persuade the audience to take a particular stance. These types of presentations are usually accompanied by both a story to present a problem and a solution.

Memorizing Your Presentation

Rehearsing your presentation until it is fully memorized is the best way to build your confidence. This means practicing actions and transitions between points. Memorization will help when the audience asks questions and you need to recall information. It will prevent you from becoming confused and repeating sections. Knowing the speech will build confidence and ensure that you deliver the presentation seamlessly.

The Opening

The opening, also called a hook, convinces the audience to listen to the whole presentation. The opening must be powerful.

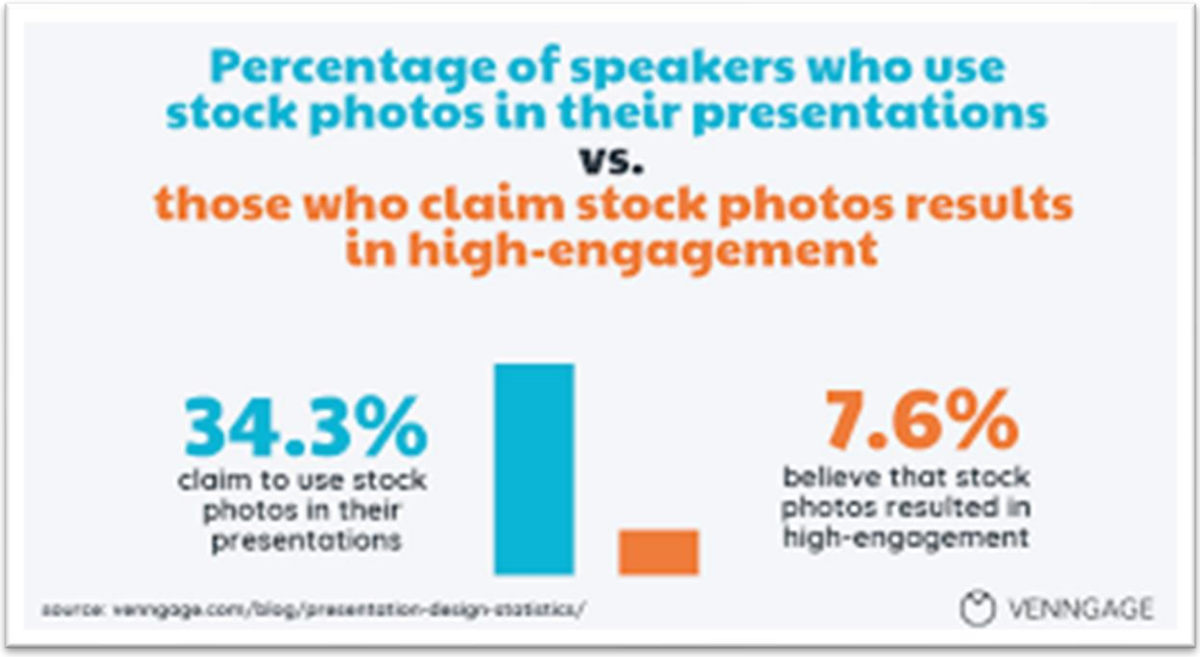
Quote, Powerful Statement, or Phrase

Using a quote, powerful statement, or phrase can sometimes come off as cliché, but it is an easy way to open while catching the audience’s attention and setting the tone. Adding a pause after this to allow the audience to think about what was said.

Statistics

Statistics are used to shock the audience and to get them to start thinking. Using statistics within an opening provides numeric data to the audience. Using a statistic can also allow the speaker to ask a question, ex. Did you know 34.3% of speakers use stock photos in their presentations, as shown below.

Figure 15.2 *An Example of a Statistical Graphic*



Personal Story or Joke

Stories and jokes allow the audience to connect with the speaker and respond better to the overall presentation. The more the speaker relates to the audience, the better the audience, the better the audience will want to pay attention to the whole presentation. Opening with a joke is for more experienced speakers because you have to be mindful of the whole audience. Some jokes can offend the audience unintentionally and distract from your message.

A Picture or Video

Pictures and videos are media used to capture the audience's attention by making them pay attention to the screen. A picture will allow the audience to better connect with the presentation, rather than reading lengthy text. A video can show important information like testimonials or slides that follow along with the presentation.

Tools

Tools will help you with the presentation, but they can also be distracting when they do not work properly. You cannot allow tools to be the main focus of your presentation. Tools are your visual aids and equipment used to better your presentation.

Visual Aids

Keep visual aids short and precise. Visual tools can help present new equipment or procedures but remember to pause and allow the audience to absorb the information. Visual aids include pictures, charts, graphs, and maps. They can also be PowerPoints and Prezi presentations. The visual aids should be appropriate, relevant, and informative

Equipment

Equipment needs to be tested several times before the presentation. The more equipment used, the higher chance something could go wrong. Equipment can include microphones, speakers, computer software, and even a monitor.

Methods

There are many different methods to give your speech. Be consistent once you have chosen your style, or you could lose your audience.

Manuscripts

Manuscripts are commonly used for public speakers, newscasters, actors, and even Presidents, because they use teleprompters, like the photo of former President Barack Obama (Figure 15.3). Manuscripts ensure no mistakes are made, and professional writers are commonly used.

Figure 15.3 *President Obama Using a Teleprompter*

Impromptu

Impromptu presentations are done on the spot with little to no preparation. Some examples of impromptu presentations are a thank you speech, a wedding, or saying grace at dinner. Speakers will typically look at the audience and have little or no notes on the presentation. These presentations are sometimes full of emotion and sentimental.

Memorization

Memorization is a technique taught to children who have to recite a famous speech or perform a song for school or choir assembly. Memorization is essential for actors and actresses. Memorization is taught by repeating a phrase, writing something down multiple times, or listening to something until you can recite it yourself.

Delivery

Stage presence is one of the most significant aspects of an oral presentation. When someone is nervous, they tend to sway back and forth or switch their weight from one leg to another, which can be distracting. When someone is an advanced public speaker, they will walk around and use hand gestures to show emphasis. Eye contact can help you connect to the audience.

Engagement

Engagement is crucial for any presentation because no audience will want to listen to someone who is not interested in what they are saying themselves. Engagement includes interacting with the audience by answer questions or allowing questions to be asked.

Taking questions

Taking questions demonstrations openness. To ensure your audience understand your message, give them the opportunity to ask questions if they are unsure about the topic. It also shows that you know the subject which increases your credibility as a speaker.

Asking questions

Asking the audience questions can be hard because everyone is answering at once, but this will make them connect more with you. Asking questions ensures the audience understood the message.

Thanking the audience

Giving thanks to the audience is a common courtesy. Thanking the audience for coming is commonly done in the beginning of a presentation, and again at the end. Keep the thank you short making it about the sponsors and audience.

Oral Rhetoric

The University of Illinois describes rhetoric as "the way in which you communicate in everyday life." All words convey meaning, but spoken words convey meaning differently than the written word (Calvin University, n.d.). Oxford English Dictionary defines rhetoric as "the art of using language so as to persuade or influence others; the body of rules to be observed by a speaker or writer in order that he may express himself with eloquence."

Understanding rhetoric helps you understand how information will be perceived based on purpose, audience, topic, writer, and context. Use this knowledge and understanding to provide a framework when creating communications, whether written or oral. Oral rhetoric is an essential aspect of communication because it is related to how you prepare, organize, and deliver a speech.

Speech Preparation

Preparing for a speech requires sufficient attention to preparing for the speech. Proper planning gives you the opportunity to take the necessary steps to plan, organize, and construct your speech in a way that will enable you to deliver the message efficiently and for your audience to receive it in the intended way. A lack of preparation can lead to a disorganized and incomplete speech that results in your audience viewing you as unprepared and therefore not credible. Preparing for a speech involves understanding your audience, conducting research, and developing an outline.

Speech Genres

The first step to writing a speech is to understand what type of speech you are giving (Calvin University, n.d.). Speeches are either informative or argumentative. A speech prompt usually identifies the speech type. If the prompt does not identify the type of speech, then look for keywords like *analyze*, *explain*, or *argue*. Words such as *update*, *report*, or *explain* indicate an informative speech, while terms like *persuade* indicate a persuasive or argumentative speech. For more, see the chapter on Oral Presentations for detailed information on different types of speeches.

After you identify the speech genre, getting to know your audience will help shape the goals and content of the speech.

Research

Preparing to write a speech means that you always keep the audience in mind (Anderson, 2018, p. 10). Oral communication requires conducting background research in the same way you would for a research paper. The research process involves two parts. The first part is researching and getting to know your audience. The second part is researching the topic and developing the content.

After you identify the purpose of the speech, determine your audience's expectations. Research to understand who your audience is, their attitudes towards the subject, and what they know about the subject. While you are

getting to know the audience, think about what you can tell them that will fulfill their needs as well as your goals (Anderson, 2018, p. 15). As you get to know the audience, adjust the content to meet the audience's needs and to capture their attention in a meaningful way.

Once you understand the purpose of the speech and who your audience is, you can begin researching the topic. During the research phase, think about the type of information that makes your speech the most persuasive or informative to your audience (Anderson, 2018, p. 72). Research should be thorough, focused, and diverse, including various sources and information (Anderson, 2018, p. 72).

Use credible sources. The audience wants to know that the information you are providing is credible and reliable. According to Calvin University, unreliable sources send a message to the audience that you are unreliable. Consider who the publication comes from (i.e., a trusted organization, an authority figure).

Make evidence-based conclusions that align with your audiences' expectations and explain that significance to the audience (Anderson, 2018, p. 79). Recommendations need to be evidence-based to build credibility with your audience (Anderson, 2018, p. 80).

Outline

After the research is complete, create an outline for the speech to organize the content. An outline is an important planning tool for developing your speech. It is a blueprint for the speech. Outlines help organize your speech and ensure that you cover the points you wanted to make.

Outlines highlight key logical and structural elements (introduction, body, conclusion, stories, high-level concepts, etc.), link the elements together in a sequence, and map out transitions between the elements (Dlugan, 2008). Below is a sample outline for a speech:

1. Introduction (topic, core message, supporting points)
2. Body
    a. Supporting point one
    b. Supporting point two
    c. Supporting point three
3. Conclusion (recap main points, summarize core message, call-to-action)

An outline is a planning tool, not a speech delivery tool. Make notecards that correspond to your speech outline to assist you during the presentation. See Oral Presentations for more information on how to deliver an oral presentation and tools that can help with the delivery.

Organization

After you understand the speech genre, conduct research on your topic, and created a basic outline, the next step is to organize your speech. Organizing your speech will involve structuring your content in a logical way and defining transitions for the content.

Structure

The organization of any speech is critical. When an audience listens to a disorganized speech, they lose their place, forget the main ideas, and lose trust in the speaker (Calvin University, n.d.). An organized speech helps you build credibility and develop the authority to speak on the topic.

Structure refers to the patterns you use to organize your main points. According to Calvin University, a speech should be structured in a way that provides unity and makes the argument coherent. Be logical and think of the presentation as a story (Bourne, 2007). Every story has a logical flow that includes a beginning, a middle, and an end. Set the stage in the beginning, tell the story, and end with a big finish, a clear “take-home” message (Bourne, 2007).

Transitions

Transitions are used in communications to connect one idea to the next. “Transitions can be one word, a phrase or a full sentence” (Beqiri, 2018). Effective transitions prevent confusion and make the speech easy to follow. According to Calvin University, transitions work as signposts to indicate to the audience where they are in the speech. Announcing, signaling, and recapping are examples of signposting that allow the audience to think about what they heard. They also make the speech easier to remember (Calvin University, n.d.).

Announcing is a declaration of what you are doing or about to do. Signaling requires the use of transitional phrases such as “next” to indicate an idea change. Recapping is when you summarize the main points before moving on to the next idea (Calvin University, n.d.). According to Beqiri, there are different types of transitions you can use when developing a speech. Table 16.1 summarizes the different types of transitions, according to Beqiri.

When selecting a transition, be sure that it is not too brief. Make sure the transition can help your audience follow the presentation. Use a variety of transitions and be sure that they are in the correct order and flow correctly (Beqiri, 2018).

Table 16.1 *Speech Transitions*

Transition Type	**Example**
Introduction	Today I will be discussing…
Presentation Outline	There are three key points I will be discussing…
Move from introduction to the first main point	First, let's begin with…
Move between similar points	In the same way…
Move between conflicting points	Now let's consider…
Transition to a significant issue	A significant concern is…
Refer to previous points	Do you recall when I mentioned…
Introduce an aside note	I'd just like to mention…
Emphasize importance	More importantly…

Cause and effect	As a result, …
Elaboration	Furthermore…
Introduce an example	For example, …
Transition to a demonstration	Let me demonstrate this…
Introduce a quotation	There is a lot of support for this, for example, …
Transition to another speaker	Briefly recap what you covered, then introduce the next speaker
Conclusion	Let's recap on what we've talked about today
Conclude	I'd like to leave you with this…
Call to action	What I'm requesting of you is…

Writing a Speech

Public speaking has been a part of persuading an audience for many years now, bringing important information about a topic to people all around the world. Writing a speech is and never will be easy, but there is a guideline that is followed to help organize thoughts and move in the right direction. Everyone has the ability to give a speech in public, but the points that are being addressed must have a clear and concise meaning for the listener to follow along with, absorbing the material that is being portrayed.

Central Point

Every speech has a reason for being created and a clear idea on what the speaker wants to portray to the audience who has come to listen. The most important part of a speech is to captivate our audience and convey a point that is not only influential but descriptive in our language. As the creator, we must look at many different variables when creating the central point of the speech. Avoid overly complicated or convoluted language to help not confuse our listeners. This brings us to the main point, which is to use the first sentence as a preview to the audience. Interacting with the audience by asking questions and having participation will keep the listeners involved because they will feel like they are part of the speech, and it will individually connect with them even though they are in a crowd of X amount of people. Showing the engagement will keep them invested, which has them listen and want to see each word connect to them in a way that may not have been intended but keeps that attention.

Thesis/Purpose Statement

Anything in writing has a purpose, and that purpose is to help convey the audience into our central point. In any form of writing, there is always a reason for it, and that is explained in our thesis. Our thesis should always be the main focus of any form of writing or communication, so while we create our point, it is important to think if each one of our points comes across that the main subject is important to our overall idea. The purpose statement should always be prevalent in any supporting examples that are being made. The use of pictures is a great resource to help support our ideas and the main focus of our topic and allow a visual example for anyone who is still confused by the main details; this can lead to a clearer picture of our point. The main purpose should always be clear on what is being described and how it is implemented in every supporting piece of our speech.

Main Supporting Points

There are always details that help with us carrying our writing to the next level for our audience, and that can be used in multiple ways. When creating our supporting points, they must be reread over and over to make sure that all the information in our speech will make sense and have no confusing terms or muddled meanings in our details. When creating these points, they should always encompass the central idea in our writing. While practicing our speech, it is important to see it from the audience’s perspective and think if what we are saying is painting that clear picture for their understanding. Allowing that moment of reflection, it puts us in our listener's

point of view, which can define a clearer understanding of the main supporting points. This can be avoided by elaborating ideas that connect everything back to our main point in this speech. Giving detailed and relatable examples help not only with breaking down our details into personal experiences but having those details connect with anyone willing to listen. If justifying the thesis can become established with multiple examples, understanding the main point of all our efforts become that much easier.

Introductions

An introduction is the most important part of any speech, and that is what grabs the listener/reader's attention. As described earlier, there are many ways to grasp the attention of our listeners. An interactive style of introduction or making it personal can really get anyone emotionally invested in what details are being explained. While creating a grasping introduction is important, the main goal is to have all the main points as almost a brief description of how everything will be tied together. Any introduction should give the reader/listener a slight understanding and have them able to follow along with all the main points that are being described with a deeper understanding of how the examples help leverage the details being explained. Our introduction should be eye-catching but interactive to keep everyone engaged in all the information that will give over the course of the speech.

Conclusions

Conclusions are meant to give a final statement or closure by summarizing the main ideas that were just discussed. If our conclusion is lost in a bunch of details, the only thing anyone will remember is how unsatisfying the end of all this great information was. A great example to use is a movie that has a great ending and an ok/bad ending. When someone goes to watch a movie, it can have great action, storytelling, and detail, but if the ending fails to deliver on all this, the only thing everyone remembers is how bad the ending was. When this happens, it will not only affect the reviews, but it creates a bad reputation for the next one to release. This idea is the same for writing a speech.

Style

One thing that we must focus on is style, and that depends heavily on what kind of speech that we are trying to give/deliver. If someone is reading your writing for the speech, does it have an appealing argument? Is it formal or informal? Does the speech fit in a way that seems professional? These are all questions that must be answered when writing down our guideline for the speech.

If we use words that are complicated, do we describe what they mean and how they relate to our topic? These are important thoughts to think of when proofreading any form of writing. As we create our speeches for anyone who will be reading it, does the font size fit with the document, and are the

headers clear, consistent font. The detail is important but so is how it looks to anyone who wants to read what the main points are. The style is one of the most important factors when creating our speech for all details and not losing the attention of the reader.

Delivery

Speech Anxiety

Public speaking is one thing that no one wants to do but will have to at some point in their lives. This is something that, as a modern society, happens more frequently than in prior years due to the increasing use of staying behind a screen or on our phones. Public speaking in front of a group of peers can cause nausea and trigger anxiety. Practicing how to deliver the speech, deliver our lines, doing a mock speech in front of our peers, and creating that environment slows down the nerves and creates the confidence needed in order to deliver a well-spoken and informative speech.

Vocal Variety

One key aspect to an important speech is vocal variety and how each set of details is presented to itself. Everyone wants to sound smart in front of their friends and colleagues, especially when it is a piece of information that is very well known to that person. Language is a powerful influencer on making details relatable for our supporting arguments. Consistently using *the*, *um*, *like*, and *and* can disrupt the flow of our speech, possibly removing the importance of our subject. Removing these breaks in each of the sentences

can help our flow of information seem more natural and hit harder on the main points that are being portrayed to our audience.

Table 16.2: *Words to substitute for basic breaks in sentences*

Avoid:	Like	Um	And	I think
Replace:	Compared to	Moving on	As well as	I anticipate

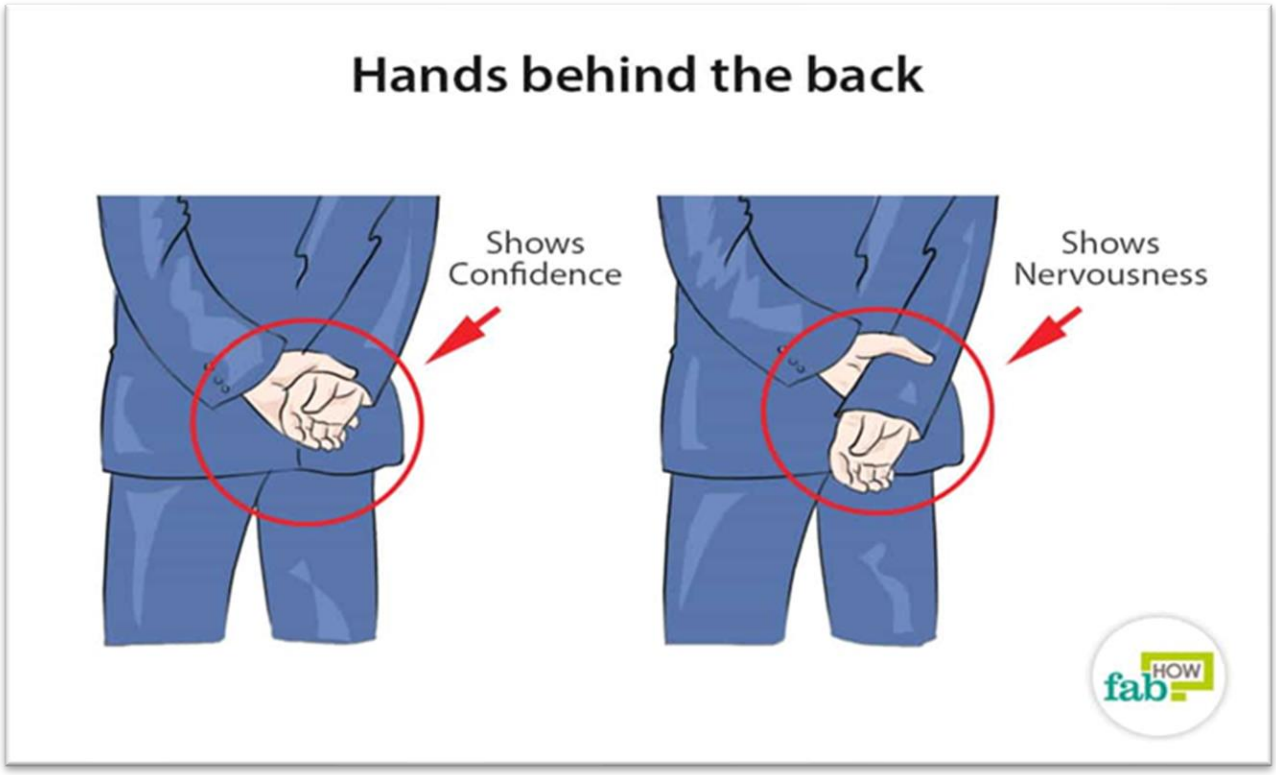
Notecards

When creating a speech, sometimes forgetting our lines or information can invalidate what we are talking about in our speech. Notecards have very useful and practical reasoning when discussing a topic in a public setting. These have multiple benefits such as staying on topic, reminding the speaker of main points that may be missed or trail off from, giving a time restraint on how much will be focused on that specific topic or detail, and keeping the main idea of the speech consistently clear. According to (Wrench, Goding, Johnson, & Attias, 2018) "Your cards should include keywords and phrases, not full sentences. The words and phrases should be arranged in order so that you can stay organized and avoid forgetting important points." These are very useful tools at the disposal of the speaker that can help serve as a reminder for how staying on the topic can have the speech flow more cohesively.

Body Language

One thing in particular to any kind of speech is the confidence in which the words are being explained. This is followed by our body language to show not only professionalism but give that sense of confidence that keeps any person's attention. Confidence is the thing that keeps us from feeling timid and scared of speaking out to anyone in public, which also includes removing the use of hand gestures for no reason. Using hand gestures all the time can be seen as distracting, which can completely lose all focus on the details that are explained in the speech. When hand gestures start to become the primary focus of a speech, the attention of our audience will start to wavier, which will completely take away most of the importance of any speech. According to Ross (2017), "People tend to read hands behind the back differently. Sometimes it is interpreted as a sign of confidence and self-assuredness. Other times it can be interpreted as nervousness or uncertainty." In Figure 16.1, there is a distinct difference between someone who is nervous and someone who is confident.

Figure 16.1 *Confidence versus Nervousness*



Practicing and Preparation

Something that stops a lot of people from public speaking is a lack of preparation and practice. Practice for anything makes perfect, and in order to develop these skills, practice will create the confidence needed. There are many tools for us to use, such as video recording, practicing in front of our peers, using constructive criticism to improve our personal growth, and becoming more comfortable talking in front of people. When we practice a speech multiple times, it will also create more confidence in what information is being given along with shortening our time without forgetting certain key details or constantly reading from a notecard. Practicing using

these skills are only meant to help improve accuracy, comfortability and reduce anxiety for a big speech in the near future.

General Delivery Tips

To summarize, there is a general delivery of the speech, and how continuing to practice will help improve performance. Every chance should be given to practice our speech to make sure that all the information is provided in a smooth and proper format. Notecards are our best friends and should encompass them whenever we can to make sure that none of the main points or details are being skipped over or forgotten. Confidence is a huge part of public speaking, and that is something that anyone can see when delivering a message. Our language is a powerful tool and should be wielded in a way to give an advantage over our audience. Finally, by making the speech more relatable or as closely relatable as possible, we create a sense of connection with our details and how they all tie together to create an image of our main points.

Intercultural Awareness

What is Intercultural Awareness?

Intercultural awareness is understanding your own culture and as well as others. To understand a different culture means that you respect the differences and similarities between values, beliefs, and behaviors. Intercultural awareness gives people the ability to recognize their cultural identity while acknowledging and respecting the culture of others

Self-Awareness

You need to be aware of your cultural values, beliefs, and perceptions. The world around you shapes who you are. Being self-aware can help when learning about new cultures, which is essential for effective communication. In her book, *The 4 Minute Sell*, Jane Elsea states that "the nine important things noticed about people in our society are skin color, gender, age, appearance, facial expressions, eye contact, movement, personal space, and touch." Individuals make split-second assessments of someone, decisions that influence how we treat or act around this person.

Demographic Changes

To fully understand demographic changes, you need to understand diversity. *The PennState Extension* explains that "between 2000 and 2010, more than half of the growth in the total population of the United States was due to the increase in the Hispanic/Latino population." *The PennState Extension* also states, "by 2014, the public-school population will be 50.3 percent minority, and the faculty will be 82 percent white." These statistics show demographics are ever-changing; with demographics changing, it is essential to be aware of differences and be open-minded when speaking to new people.

Economic Globalization

The economy depends on trade from other countries; therefore, each country must strategize business decisions based on the need of other countries. *The PennState Extension* explains, "If we want to sell our products and make profitable business deals with people from other countries, it only makes good business sense to develop an understanding and appreciation of their cultures—their languages, needs, wants, and customs." That means that you would not go to a different country and your new car or toy, a word that translates into a curse word or something inappropriate. The *PennState Extension* explains this happened to Chevrolet when they made the Chevy Nova and marketed the vehicle in Mexico because "no va" means "does not go," also meaning people would not want to buy it.

Creative Problem Solving

Any work environment utilizes creative problem solving, and all participants have different approaches. Working in a culturally diverse group may be a struggle due to many differences and beliefs. It could also open other people's minds, causing a creative way to solve problems. Having culturally diverse group members increases the ability for diverse input and approaches.

Intercultural Communication

Intercultural awareness involves being aware of your own culture and those around you to develop effective and respectful interactions. Interpersonal communication skills are vital in today’s world, whether it is at school, work, or in the community. The everyday world consists of a diverse population, and understanding intercultural communication can lead to more effective communication.

Oxford Reference defines intercultural communication as "loosely, an umbrella term for the interaction between people from different cultural or subcultural backgrounds intended to lead to shared understandings of messages." Another site defines intercultural awareness as "the verbal and nonverbal interaction between people from different cultural backgrounds" (Study.com, 2015).

There are two types of intercultural communication: verbal and non-verbal communication. "Verbal communication consists of words used to communicate messages, whereas non-verbal communication is gestures that give out messages" (Palistha, 2018).

Verbal Communication

Oxford Reference defines verbal communication as "human interaction through the use of words, or messages in linguistic form." Spoken and written languages are both forms of verbal communication. Each is important in intercultural communication. Understanding how cultural factors affect verbal communication enables you to communicate with other cultures effectively. Since different cultures use words, dialects, accents, and slang in different ways, you should spend time researching the culture you are communicating with (Palistha, 2018).

Non-Verbal Communication

Oxford Reference defines non-verbal communication as "any system of communication other than speech or writing: for instance, sign language, or visual language." Examples of non-verbal communication include facial expressions, hand and body movement, eye contact, the use of objects, and clothing choices (Palistha, 2018). Understanding how these cultural differences can impact communication allows a communicator to adjust their communication style. This helps to facilitate communication with others in an effective way.

How to Improve Intercultural Awareness

Learning from Others

Intercultural awareness is important with trading and working with other cultures. Some jobs require us to go from country to country and expand businesses. The first step to learning from different cultures is to learn about our own culture and how we can expand our society into theirs for a more detailed understanding of their way of life. An important factor in a business setting is to train employees on how to deal with the increasing diversity of the global economy. According to (DeakinCo., 2017) "Good communication skills are important when dealing with different cultures. How you communicate with others, both verbally and non-verbally, can be a deal maker or deal breaker" (DeakinCo., 2017). Working with other cultures is an important step in making global connections to other areas around the world. Sometimes, this may also require a translator to understand another culture. Creating a plan to overcome some objections will be important. There will be challenges where meetings, collaborations or exchanging of ideas will not line up which can create issues. It is important to take into account time zones when working abroad in any project that spans across multiple countries and cultures.

Understanding History

Learning the history of a culture is important for multiple reasons. Learning about a culture gives communicators a basic idea of what can and cannot be done within the culture we are learning from. (DeakinCo., 2017) States that "start by including the holidays and festivals of other cultures in your company email or news bulletin, and then celebrate them at work when appropriate." This is an important factor in understanding the history to show recognition and acceptance of their culture. When we show appreciation for their holidays, it helps us connect with their history and makes them feel more accepted into our own or how we can adapt what they do into our own lifestyles. This can better bridge the gap in improving our intercultural awareness.

Avoiding Ethnocentrism

Assuming someone's culture can create animosity towards that person or culture. It is imperative to avoid judging other cultures because it can lead to making a mistake and offending the person. It is essential to learn about cultural differences to avoid these mistakes. Always use the golden rule for anyone we meet in any setting; treat others how you would like to be treated. Learning about other cultures is important. Teaching others about your culture also helps increase cultural awareness and create a diverse environment in the workplace.

Ethics

The Importance of Ethical Writing

What is Ethical Writing?

Ethical writing can be separated into two categories:

1. The practice of properly citing sources used to create a written work.
2. The practice of using inclusive language and accurate, clear content that is free of bias and devoid of prejudices.

A document is ethical when it satisfies both criteria.

Why is Ethical Writing Important?

Ethical writing is essential because:

- It promotes the communication of accurate information.
- It ensures that all contributing sources are accessed with integrity and recognized for their accuracy.
- It addresses all readers equally from a respectful perspective.
- It ensures compliance with professional and institutional codes of conduct.
- It represents the writer and their organization/institution in a positive way.

Responsibility to the Reader

A writer's inherent responsibility to their reader is the foundational reason for practicing ethical writing. Through language choice, content choice, organization style, proper citation, and many other writing components, a writer carries the responsibility of always writing with integrity.

A writer's responsibility to the reader includes:

- Giving proper credit to quoted writers
- Using appropriate vocabulary and tone that does not promote prejudice towards any reader.
- Providing accurate information in a clear, unbiased way to avoid misleading or confusing the reader.
- Presenting information in a way that is accessible to all readers.

Writers should consider all of these components in order to fully benefit readers.

Creating Ethical Content

Gathering Information

Consider ethical writing practices through the entirety of the writing process; this includes during the early stages of gathering information. The way writers choose their sources, access their information, and process the information all play a role in creating ethical documents.

Here are some ways to ethically gather info:

- Choose reputable sources
    - Consider using sources that are written recently for more updated information
    - Seek sources from academic institutions and professional organizations
    - Consider the author(s)credentials
- Access information with integrity
    - Avoid illegally obtaining information
    - Follow proper procedures to access paywalled information
    - Never access proprietary, classified, or any private information without authorization
- Maintain an unbiased perspective
    - Remain objective when assessing information from a source
    - Seek multiple sources on the same topic to compare
    - Avoid generalizing based on opinion

Presenting Information

A writer should always be cognizant of the way they present information. To present information ethically, a writer must closely consider any pertinent codes of conduct, language choice with respect to the reader, and the accuracy of the information being presented.

Codes of Conduct

Writers must consider codes of conduct to align with any organizational/institutional standards they are responsible for. Aligning with a code of conduct is only necessary if the writing is commissioned by a specific organization/institution. Most of the time, these codes of conduct ensure that the written material associated with the organization/institution aligns with their ethical standards and represents them in a positive light.

Language Choice

Writers must also carefully consider the ethics of their language choice with respect to their potential readers. When addressing readers, it is important to avoid using language that assumes the reader's:

- Race
- Gender
- Economic Class
- Sexual Orientation
- Age
- Religion
- Any other factor that could lead to stereotyping

By avoiding stereotypes, writers are less likely to make inaccurate assumptions about their reader's perspectives and experiences; in turn, information is presented using inclusive, non-biased language.

In addition to avoiding stereotypes, it is important for writers to use respectful language when referring to different demographics. Writers should be respectful of how each demographic prefers to be addressed. This means avoiding using racist, homophobic, or other derogatory language. Cultural sensitivity should always be observed.

Accuracy and Clarity

When presenting information, writers must do so with accuracy and clarity. Information should be presented in a way that is easy to interpret. Writers should avoid presenting information in a way that skews data, pushes a hidden agenda, or misleads the reader in any way.

Accurate writing:

- Presents honest, fact-checked information
- Reinforces information in reliable sources
- Acknowledges all perspectives
- Includes all pertinent information

Clear writing:

- Is organized efficiently
- Avoids generalizations and vague language
- Uses simple vocabulary
- Avoids unnecessarily complex language and defines unfamiliar terms
- Is concise

Accuracy and clarity are key components of ethical writing. By properly observing these components, writers can effectively inform their readers and avoid misleading them.

Crediting Sources

What is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is taking credit for someone else's original work. Plagiarism presents itself in many ways, including:

- Submitting something someone else completed
- Submitting something that you previously submitted
- Copying someone else's work without proper citation
- Paraphrasing someone else's work without citation
- Composing a written work using content written by someone else, even with proper citation
- Patchwriting

There are four different categories of plagiarism: direct, self, mosaic, and accidental.

Direct Plagiarism

Direct plagiarism is the blatant copying of someone else's work without proper citation or use of quotes. This is intentional plagiarism.

Self-Plagiarism

Self-plagiarism occurs when an author submits work that was used for a previous assignment. Even using parts of your prior work is considered self-plagiarism.

Mosaic Plagiarism

Mosaic plagiarism occurs when a writer paraphrases a quote without referencing the original author. It is also when synonymous words are used with a similar sentence structure, or a source is provided, but no quotations are used.

Accidental Plagiarism

Accidental plagiarism occurs when someone forgets to cite borrowed content, composes an identical piece of content as another writer without knowing it, or writes a similar sentence that conveys the same idea as someone else without attributing credit.

The Importance of Proper Citation

Proper citation is an important practice because it ensures that all contributing writers are credited. Proper citation displays the author’s name and original source information. Readers have proper references to more in-depth information about the topic. Proper citation provides readers with the exact location of original sources, allowing them to locate more information. Proper Citation adds to the writer's credibility and ensures their ethical use of outside information. There are several guides for proper source citation. Some of the most popular guidelines are:

- Modern Language Association (MLA)
- American Psychological Association (APA)
- The Chicago Manual of Style

These popular guidelines are occasionally updated and can be easily referenced online. Each set of guidelines provides proper formatting for a wide array of source types including, but not limited to:

- Books
- Journals
- Websites
- Newspaper Articles
- Periodicals
- Interviews

Proper citation is the link between writers, contributors, and readers; each of these roles benefit from the ethical practice of properly citing information within a work.

Accessibility

Introduction

Accessibility is a content creation principle. Proper execution ensures that anyone who wishes to consume content can do so regardless of physical, cognitive, or other limitations. Most discussions about accessibility center around web content, but many web accessibility concepts can translate to other media. Print, audio, and video are important means of content delivery on and off the web. Relaying information by touch is becoming increasingly important as well, from Braille to haptic communication.

Once you realize how many ways there are to consume content, the idea of accessible content itself can seem overwhelming. Do you need to make sure every document you create can be perfectly translated into every one of them? The answer depends on who will be consuming your content. When deciding how to present content, writers should be aware of their audience's abilities. Always plan your content according to the abilities of your readers.

What does this mean for students, then? As any university student knows, most documents they create are papers, dissertations, and similar texts. With few exceptions, these documents are printed out on 8.5 by 11-inch white paper with black text in 12-point font. This is standard for academia around the world. Why is the standard problematic? The answer is that these de facto presentational standards are not an effective way for everyone to consume content. For example, could a professor or classmate who was

visually impaired consume content presented in the de facto standard way? Effective technical communication reaches every demographic in its potential audience, not just those in the majority.

Documents in the workplace always have a variety of readers, so accessibility is even more important there. While academic documents are usually for students and their professors, professional documents have even more readers. Business clients, the public, adults, children, and people from cultures worldwide are all potential workplace document readers.

Anyone with any form of physical or cognitive difficulty can benefit from accessible content. This is not limited to people with visible disabilities, either. Accessible content also benefits able-bodied people with temporary difficulties. How many times have you gotten home from a difficult day and just wanted to read a book, but your eyes were tired? Most sighted people have experienced words swimming in front of their eyes because they are too hard to read. If the content is accessible via large font or audio formats, that frustration can be a thing of the past. Perhaps you were watching one of your favorite TV shows, and someone said something you could not hear. Sometimes, even if you turn up the volume and rewind the scene, you cannot make it out. Subtitles can help you figure out what you missed, whether you can hear the show or not. If you think back, you can almost certainly think of a time when accessible content made your life easier. Although there will certainly be many differences between your document’s potential consumers, accessibility is not as complicated as it might seem.

This chapter covers many accessibility concepts that are universal to all media, as well as some concepts that are specific to media types. Students, professionals, and casual content creators can all use these guidelines to help their content reach the people who need it.

Principles of Accessible Text

Plain Language

Plain language in content occurs when "wording, structure, and design are so clear that the intended readers can easily find what they need, understand what they find, and use that information" (Center for Plain Language, 2020). Present important information in simple terms and leave out any details that could distract your readers. Sentences should be logical and straightforward. Try to base every sentence around a single idea. Do not add more than one idea to a sentence unless there is no other way to clearly express those ideas. Writers should prioritize the clarity of their content and structure their sentences accordingly. A series of many short sentences with more words may be clearer than a long sentence with many words. Different writing styles recommend different ideal sentence lengths, but the number of words is less important than the singular idea a sentence expresses.

It is common to see recommendations for, or restrictions on, the number of sentences allowed in paragraphs (Purdue Writing Lab, 2020). This can happen in both academic and professional settings. These recommendations

aim to create plain language, but they sometimes have the opposite effect. Writers sometimes feel that the only way to minimize the number of sentences is to make each sentence long and complicated. When this happens, plain language falters. The more ideas a sentence contains, the harder it is to keep track of ideas as you read. This problem is common in the workplace, especially in technical or scientific writing. You can see this with almost any professional journal article where single sentences contain many ideas connected with commas. Long sentences like this are also common in web content.

Short, simple sentences are especially important for people who cannot see your content on a page. This includes people who use screen readers, people who listen to audiobooks, and people who are watching videos. Tiny distractions can make your audience lose their place or train of thought, but simple sentences can help them reorient themselves.

Transforming sentences into plain language makes it easier for readers to understand them. The following example is from the Accessible Instructional Materials Center of Virginia (2020). Its rewrite into plain language clarifies confusing sentence structure and provides a clear distinction between ideas.

Example Without Plain Language:

> NIMAS is the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard. NIMAS means the standard established by the Secretary of Education

to be used in the preparation of electronic files suitable and used solely for efficient conversion into specialized formats.

Example Using Plain Language:

The National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS) was established by the Secretary of Education. NIMAS is used to prepare electronic files that can be converted into specialized formats.

Readability and Vocabulary

Readability statistics give writers a clear estimate of how easy their writing is to read and understand. Even when using the guidelines for plain language discussed earlier, writers can create surprisingly complex texts without realizing it. Richard Redfearn, director of scientific writing at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center, explains this concept well: "Often, [truly praiseworthy content] falls flat because the text is difficult to read." Difficult text is inaccessible text. The Flesch Reading Ease and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level are two common readability metrics. They both use the average sentence length and the average number of syllables in a word to determine how easy a text is to read (Redfearn 1). As the reading ease of a text goes up, the grade level of the text goes down. The ideal reading level in the United States is 8th grade, while the United Kingdom encourages writing for the reading level of age nine (Center for Plain Language, 2020).
This variability in reading level highlights another consideration between readability and accessibility. Different countries, companies, and

organizations have different standards about what they consider most accessible. Redfearn acknowledges this in his discussion of readability metrics, stating that "[t]hese measurements are sometimes not very useful for scientific writing." However, Redfearn also assumes that readers' scientific knowledge can make up for deficits in clarity exposed by readability metrics. This is not always the case, and complex vocabulary or technical terms may not be the only reason a reading metric is low. Thus, readability metrics are useful as a starting point, but they should not be the only indicator for text accessibility. This is proven through the online peer-reviewed journal *Frontiers in Young Minds*, which fosters collaboration between scientists and children. *Frontiers in Young Minds* states that "distinguished scientists are invited to write about their cutting-edge discoveries in a language that is accessible for young readers." They foster accessibility by focusing on simple, inclusive language, and their lower readability metrics are a byproduct of this approach.

It is also important to understand how readability metrics can be misleading for simple sentences. Although they can be useful in many types of writing, highly technical writing may have low readability scores no matter how simple it is. As mentioned previously, complex language and complex vocabulary can both impact readability. It is possible to do something about complex language, but it is not always possible to do something about complex vocabulary. In these cases, writers should be more concerned with making sure complex vocabulary is well-defined. Clear and precise definitions for complex vocabulary can often compensate for undesirable

scores in readability metrics. Writers should also be aware that "complex vocabulary," in terms of readability metrics, may include common words containing many syllables, like *conversation*.

The following example shows the usefulness and limitations of readability metrics. The sentence with complex language contains many ideas in a complex sentence structure. This results in a reading level that could easily be understood only by those who have completed many years of higher education. The rewritten paragraph with simpler language splits the longer sentence into 5 shorter sentences logically connected by their ideas. The reading level is still higher than the ideal, but this is not because of complex sentence structure or length. Instead, it is due to required words that have many syllables, such as *engineering*, *electronic*, and *technologies*.

Example with Complex Language and Low Readability Score:

> Electrical engineering is a complex topic, involving knowledge of electronic components, lots of schooling, and years of real-world experience, including continued learning as standards and technologies change over time. (30 words, 1 sentence, grade level over 19)

Example with Simple Language and High Readability Score:

> Electrical engineering is a complex topic. Knowledge of electronics concepts requires years of schooling. Real-world experience is essential to success. Standards and technologies change over time. This means that continued learning is necessary. (34 words, 5 sentences, grade level under 10)

Typography

The standard in print typography for years has been Times New Roman font at a size of 12pts. As knowledge of accessibility has grown, however, other fonts now exist that could be much easier for people to read. The problem with Times New Roman is that it is a serif font. That means the font has little lines, or serifs, on the ends of some of its letters. These tiny visual flourishes can make it challenging to read the text, especially if the text is small. Modern typography in print and on the web is best done with a sans-serif font, as described by Janice Redish, a prominent content specialist. The sans-serif font used in this style guide is called Verdana. It was initially designed for computer screens but has also found a home in print documents due to its easy legibility. Different fonts take up different amounts of space in print and on-screen, even if they are technically the same point size. Redish advocates for legibility over flair in both print and web formats, emphasizing sans-serif fonts for low-vision readers in print and on the web.

Since legibility is a primary concern in typography, small changes to fonts can determine how easy they are to read. Fancy or cursive fonts are not useful for accessibility purposes because their decorative features can make characters unclear. Small flourishes in fonts can make it dramatically more difficult for people to read them. Conversely, small changes to established fonts can make them much easier to read. An example of this is the Dyslexie font, created specifically for people with dyslexia (Dyslexie Font B.V., 2020). The rationale behind the font is that the lower parts of the glyphs are thicker, which helps people with dyslexia keep letters in their proper places as they read. Another font specifically designed for people with dyslexia is Lexie Readable (K-Type, 2020). Accessible fonts like these focus on increasing distinctions between similar characters, such as between a lowercase *b* and a lowercase *d*. Unfortunately, accessible fonts can have trouble gaining traction in the mainstream since they sometimes look significantly different than standard fonts most readers are used to.

Creating documents with larger font sizes is a major step toward accessible typography. The American Council for the Blind recommends 18-point font for people with low vision (Sutton, 2002, p. 16) but implicitly advocates for a range between 14 and 18pts. Sutton acknowledges that many federal regulations in the United States consider 14-point font to be acceptable. However, she explicitly points out that a font size larger than 14pts increases a document's potential audience. The de facto standard on the web is smaller at 12pts (Scacca, 2018) since no guideline laws currently exist. Many websites focused on accessibility use larger default font sizes,

especially when viewed on mobile devices. For example, the web accessibility organization Web Accessibility in Mind acknowledges the 12-point standard but uses a font size of nearly 14pts (WebAIM, 2020a). This echoes the minimum font size suggested by the American Council for the Blind for print documents. Large text is useful in all media, not just print.

Example of Standard Font Size:

This is a 12-point font, readable for most but not large enough for many.

Example of Minimum Recommended Size:

This is a 14-point font, a minimum accessible size according to Sutton.

Example of Median Accessible Print Size:

This is a 16-point font, which is accessible but not considered large print.

Example of Large Print:

This is an 18-point font: very accessible but it takes up more space.

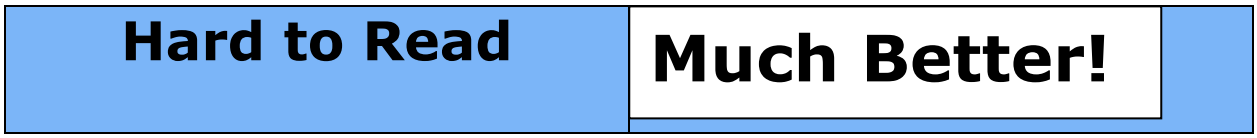
Color Contrast

Color contrast is an issue most often discussed in web accessibility, but it also has implications for print accessibility. Regardless of the medium, writers should make sure that their text stands out well enough from its background to be easily read. This is especially important for readers who are partially or fully colorblind and rely on contrast alone. Writers can apply modern web design contrast rules to achieve acceptable contrast ratios for text in their documents. Dark text on a light background is the most reasonable format in terms of contrast (WebAIM, 2020b). Dark backgrounds with light text can also have acceptable levels of contrast. Using light or dark backgrounds is a matter of preference; the important thing to consider is the amount of contrast between text and its background. WebAIM has a contrast checker that helps writers decide whether their color combinations are accessible. Sometimes, the results are surprising, as the following image shows. It makes sense that a pale orange would contrast well with black and that a light gray would not contrast well with white. So, it could be a surprise that light orange against blue does not have high contrast, even though they are complementary colors. Testing color combinations for any document is important; sneaky color combinations like this can cause headaches for readers. Whenever you are in doubt, use the color contrast checker.

Figure 19.1 *Good, Bad, and Less Than Ideal Contrast*

Never use gradients or patterns in text. Whether as the text color itself or as the background, shifting colors can cause contrast problems that could make text almost unreadable. This happens because a pattern or gradient contains contrast inside itself with multiple colors. Readers must identify those colors while trying to determine the shapes and positions of text characters. It is too much information for readers to process at once. They end up lost in colors and shapes rather than the message conveyed by the text. The same thing happens when text is against a background gradient. Unless you change the text color with the gradient, there is no way to keep a high level of contrast throughout the entire gradient. Changing text colors can be distracting and make readers lose their place. Background gradients and patterns, when isolated from the text, are okay if they are not intrusive. In the figure below, the text on the left is difficult to read because the background pattern interferes with the text. The text on the right, isolated from the background pattern, does not have this problem.

Figure 19.2 *Text on a Pattern*



Text with Images and Tables

Images and tables should be accessible just like the text they complement. They can convey important information to readers, and writers should tailor them to everyone in their potential audience. Regions of a document that are more complex than plain text are just as important as the text itself. The American Council of the Blind says that "[i]mages need text descriptions, graphics should be labeled, and tables require careful formatting" (Sutton, 2002, p. 27). This means that writers should always associate text with non-text content consistently. Once you choose a style rule, stick to that rule throughout the document. It does not matter exactly where text descriptions and labels are if they are clearly associated with the object they describe. For example, Sutton does not recommend that table captions always be placed below a table or that text descriptions always be placed before images. Consistency and clarity are more important than specific placement.

If images are decorative, it is not necessary to make them accessible. An image is decorative if it does not convey information and is there only for visual flair or layout. "[I]t is not necessary for a blind person to hear about the existence of all separators or blank space images on a page" (Sutton, 2002, p. 28). Descriptions of these things are unnecessary at best and confusing at worst because they could distract from important information.

Decorative images should not overlap with text and should not make it more difficult to consume information. Avoid images of text whenever possible since problems with resolution and color contrast could make them more difficult to read than the text itself (Yale University, 2020a).

Table formatting is vital for accessibility. They should be used to illustrate data, and not for layout, according to Yale University. Table headers and captions are vital sources of context for the information in a table (Yale University, 2020b). The context of information in a table should always be obvious. As tables become complex, it is easy to lose that context, especially if a reader cannot see the table layout. This means that data tables often benefit from long descriptions of the information they describe. The description can be a simple summary or a linearized list of all the information in the table. Many tables can be expressed in a more accessible way as lists. Table cells should not contain sentences or paragraphs; they should each contain single pieces of information that are easy to interpret.

The rules for tables and images also apply to more complex displays of visual information, like graphs, charts, and diagrams. Writers should always present them in the simplest way possible and pay attention to the way they convey information (Sutton, 2002, p. 14). There are many ways that writers can describe the same visual information, but context can provide clues. For example, a simple flow chart could be converted into text as an ordered list, while a complex flow chart might be better described as an outline. A single sentence might be enough to describe the important elements of a

photograph, but a longer paragraph might be necessary to describe a graph or diagram. No matter how a writer decides to structure their words, an accessible description conveys all the important information contained in visual information. The idiom that "a picture is worth a thousand words" might be literally true with some complex visual information. This truth emphasizes how much a person with a disability might miss if they cannot understand the image without explanatory text.

Figure 19.3 *An Image with an Accessible Description Below*

A view of a hurricane from space. Cloud bands extend far beyond the circular vortex, and the vortex covers a large amount of landmass.

Accessible Text Considerations in Non-Print Media

WAI-ARIA for the Web

Making information accessible on the Internet is a complex process. Web browsers allow readers to experience many content types, including static text, images, and dynamic widgets. Information display on the Internet depends on interactions between computers, peripherals, and people. Accessible information on the Internet must include as many people as possible, regardless of the hardware they use or their ability levels. The World Wide Web Consortium, or W3C, is an international organization that works to establish accessibility standards for the Internet. Their most well-known accessibility project is WAI-ARIA, otherwise known as Web Accessibility Initiative Accessible Rich Internet Applications. WAI-ARIA defines a group of practices, structural markups, and roles that are compatible with assistive technologies (World Wide Web Consortium: WAI-ARIA Initiative, 2017). Web developers integrate these design strategies, markups, and attributes into websites to give assistive technologies context clues about the content displayed through web browsers. The WAI-ARIA specification is massive and far too complex to cover in its entirety within this chapter. When creating content for the Internet, however, writers should be aware of some basic WAI-ARIA concepts.

WAI-ARIA requires a writer to modify the code that displays a website. This code has a name that almost everyone is familiar with: HTML. HTML allows writers and developers to add specific information to code pieces called

attributes (World Wide Web Consortium: WAI-ARIA Initiative, 2017). These attributes tell a web browser or assistive technology what code pieces do and how to interpret them. WAI-ARIA defines three types of specialized attributes: roles, states, and properties. Roles describe what purpose a piece of code serves on a website. These can be a navigation link, a section heading, a list item, or many others. Adding roles into HTML code gives browsers and assistive technologies a sense of a website's structure that they can translate to a user. States describe the condition of a piece of code or an object on a website. These can describe whether a dropdown menu is open, whether a button has been pressed, or whether a piece of text is visible, among other things. States are often dynamically changed when a user interacts with a website. Adding states into HTML code gives browsers and assistive technologies information about a website's condition so they can relay changes to the user as they happen. Properties describe data that is unlikely to change but is essential to a user's understanding of the page. These can be content descriptions formatted for screen readers, connections between components on a website, or information that helps the website work, among other things.

As of this writing, WAI-ARIA is a W3C recommendation rather than a requirement (World Wide Web Consortium: WAI-ARIA Initiative, 2017). This is because the implementation of WAI-ARIA concepts on a website is so variable that it is extremely difficult to run conformance checks in all contexts. Writers should not take this status as an indicator that accessibility can be ignored on websites. Best practices and strategies for accessibility

through WAI-ARIA are constantly evolving. The W3C has made accessibility one of its priorities for the modern Internet. For more details on WAI-ARIA, writers can refer to one of the W3C's excellent tutorials on the subject.

Information on Mobile Devices

A substantial fraction of people access the Internet from mobile devices. Most web accessibility principles apply whether viewing a website on a traditional computer or on a mobile device. The World Wide Web Consortium's Mobile Accessibility Task Force explains this concept well: "While mobile is viewed by some as separate from [desktops and laptops], and thus perhaps requiring new and different accessibility guidance, in reality there is no absolute divide between the categories." The task force continues by saying, however, that "mobile devices do present a mix of accessibility issues that are different from the typical desktop/laptop" (World Wide Web Consortium: Mobile Accessibility Task Force, 2018). This means that mobile devices require a slightly different application of accessibility guidelines than desktops and laptops for Internet viewing.

Web accessibility of all kinds has its basis in four gold standards called POUR principles (World Wide Web Consortium: Mobile Accessibility Task Force, 2018). POUR principles dictate that Internet content should be Perceivable, Operable, Understandable, and Robust. This means that websites should have easily accessible information, be easy to operate, contain easily understandable information, and be functional in many contexts. There are

multiple accessibility considerations for each POUR principle that are specific to mobile devices. A common concern with mobile devices in terms of perceivability is their small screen size. Writers may need to reorganize or eliminate information so key concepts can fit on small screens. In addition, high contrast is particularly important on small screens because people tend to use mobile devices in varied environments. When designing mobile content for operability, writers should make sure that their content can be entirely navigated without using a mouse. People on mobile devices must move between parts of pages quickly, and scrolling is difficult for many people who use mobile devices. Understandable mobile content has a consistent layout, which writers can create by making their content visually and functionally predictable. This includes keeping navigation elements in the same places, making it obvious where content contains links, and making sure navigation and links are easy to access. Robust mobile content presents itself in an unobtrusive way that matches what users expect on mobile devices. This can mean using larger text sizes, ensuring word wrap, so users do not need to scroll horizontally, or making sure text is still legible when zoomed. POUR principles add another layer to web accessibility that puts the user first.

Designing containers for content on the Internet can be challenging. Websites often must look different depending on the screen size they are viewed upon. There are two schools of thought on how to do this: responsive design and adaptive design (Soegaard, 2020). Responsive design embraces the idea that website layouts should transition seamlessly between screen

sizes as users move to different devices or increase window sizes. It shows content that fits the space a browser provides, and the content arranges itself based on the available space. While responsive design can handle any screen size in theory, implementation is often difficult in practice and requires precise knowledge of a website's users. Adaptive design, by contrast, involves creating multiple individualized layouts that fit different screen sizes. The browser selects the most appropriate layout for the screen instead of trying to organize content by the amount of available space. One of these layouts can be a standalone mobile design, if necessary. Text content can be presented equally well with either of these strategies, but other media may be more difficult to handle. For example, it is common for images to fill the mobile screen in a responsive design, but an adaptive design may prevent that problem.

Audio and Video

Accessibility of audio is not limited to the Internet, although most discussion of the topic centers around web content. Pure audio content becomes accessible when it is written in plain language (World Wide Web Consortium: WAI-ARIA Initiative, 2020b), which was described earlier in this chapter. Long, complex sentences make audio content difficult to follow, just like what happens with written content. Background noise can also be a problem because it can obscure what is being said on an audio recording. High-quality audio is vital to accessibility; the smallest amount of static or muddled sound can cause great frustrations for people with disabilities. When recording audio, writers should have a script ready, and they should

speak clearly and slowly. Social cues that signal transitions in thoughts and ideas are less detectable in recordings. Pausing between important ideas and giving listeners time to process them greatly aids in understanding. This is especially important when providing instructions in an audio format. When providing instructions, try to explain as many sensory characteristics as possible so people with different abilities can understand. For example, an instruction to connect a blue wire is useless to someone who is visually impaired. Instead, say that a person should connect a blue wire that also has a specific size connector on the end. Provide as much information as possible to help listeners distinguish between objects.

Accessible video starts with accessible audio (World Wide Web Consortium: WAI-ARIA Initiative, 2020a). The two forms of media are tightly linked together. Even if a video is silent, it still requires accessible audio. This means that the video's audio track should strive for the accessibility principles already described, and it should give users a visible translation of that audio. Audio translations can be captions, longer descriptions of what is happening on the screen, or sign language. Captions and subtitles are different words for the same concept: visible text on a screen. Visual translations of a video's audio track should follow the principles of accessible text, particularly appropriate size and color contrast. The reason most captions on television screens are white text on a black background is that the high contrast makes it easy for people to read. Other types of captions can lose their contrast against images on the screen, making them harder to read. Longer descriptions of screen activity include captions but also contain

context required to understand what is happening beyond sight. For example, long descriptions may include people's facial expressions, people's actions, or descriptions of the world around them. At their best, long descriptions turn video into something like an audiobook.

Writers should always provide a written transcript of any audio or video they create (World Wide Web Consortium: WAI-ARIA Initiative, 2020a, 2020b). People with sensory disabilities may have a difficult time processing information in audio or video if it is presented too quickly. Written transcripts allow readers to absorb information in their own time without needing to slow down or pause media. There are two types of transcripts: basic and descriptive. Basic transcripts provide a text version of information needed to understand the content, including speech and non-speech audio information. Descriptive transcripts are more in-depth, providing descriptions of visual information. Deaf-blind people require descriptive transcripts to get the full experience from media, so writers should strive to produce these transcripts whenever possible.

Tactile

Although it is far less common than other media, writers should be aware of how to translate their words into tactile information. Tactile communication benefits people who are blind or deaf-blind. Braille is perhaps the most well-known tactile communication system, and it is more flexible than many realize. Tables and spreadsheets can be translated into braille if their layouts

are conserved (Sutton, 2002, p. 19). Tactile graphics are also possible and are often interspersed with braille text. The creation of braille text and tactile graphics are specialized services, so they almost always require the assistance of professional contractors. Writers can create an electronic file that braille text professionals can translate and bind into a physical document for the appropriate readers (Sutton, 2002, p. 25). These binary files, when placed online, can save the hassle of printing out Braille but keep the information available to visually impaired users. As physical media declines and assistive technology like braille readers for computers increases in popularity, tactile binary files will likely become more important. Writers should always provide these with their work.

Deaf-blind people in the workplace and in academia often feel that other people's attitudes toward them are more limiting than a disability (Arndt, 2011, p. 3). They often struggle to find accessible information and activities because tactile information is lacking. This makes it more difficult for them to succeed through no fault of their own. Providing tactile information for these readers can be challenging because what works for one person may not work for another. Arndt emphasizes that "expressing what they need may be difficult for many young adults who are deaf-blind. It is important that [writers] take some of this burden on themselves, reach out to [them], and work with them to meet their needs." The necessity of this communication also emphasizes one of the most important unspoken truths of accessibility. The best accessibility practices come from empathy and attempting to understand how others experience the world.

This philosophy is perhaps best exemplified by another form of tactile communication called protactile principles. The principles come from “the realization that DeafBlind [sic] people’s intuitions about tactile communication are stronger than the intuitions sighted people have” (Granda and Nuccio, 2018, p. 1). Although protactile principles were developed specifically for American sign language, many concepts can be applied more broadly to tactile communication. For example, the concept of reference space establishes a type of physical contact that refers to a specific person or idea (Granda and Nuccio, 2018, p. 4). In sign language, this refers to a specific type of touch on the body. Translated words could accomplish the same goal by interspersing specific glyphs or tactile images with braille. Protactile principles can express any emotion or create any emphasis that other forms of communication can. Since everyone interprets touch differently, some people with disabilities may find protactile principles the easiest way to understand information.

Glossary

Abbreviation - A shortened word or phrase. E.g.: "app" for application.

Accessibility - A content creation principle that focuses on universal design, making information easy for everyone to access and understand.

Accidental Plagiarism – Forgetting to cite borrowed content; unintentionally writing an identical piece of writing as someone else; writing a similar sentence that conveys the same idea as someone else without realizing it.

Active Voice - Unmarked voice for clauses featuring a transitive verb in the nominative.

Acronym - An abbreviation where each letter is taken from the initial letter of other words, but it is pronounced as one word. E.g.: NASA

Alt Text – Embedded code that allows the screen readers to turn text into sound.

Analog Information – Analog information is content created in analog, or physical form. Examples include paper, business cards and flyers.

Animosity - A strong feeling of hostility or distaste.

Apparatuses – a set of materials or equipment designed for a particular use

Appropriate - Suitable or proper for a given subject or circumstance.

Attitude - Perspective adopted by the author in certain work

Availability – Availability is how available your content is. This includes having content in multiple forms (across device types, Microsoft vs MacIntosh), is available through clickable links that work as intended, and can even refer to flyers and cards or other handheld material.

Block Quotation - A long quotation that is set off from the main body text in a written document.

Body Language - The process of communicating what you are feeling or thinking by the way you place and move your body rather than by words.

Citation – The act of quoting a book, website, magazine, or any other piece of writing that is used for reference when writing.

Code of Conduct – A set of standards developed by an organization or institution which outlines the rules and expectations for those within the organization.

Colon – Used to separate two independent clauses when the second explains or illustrates the first

Color Contrast - The visible distinction between elements and their background or other nearby elements, such as text and its background.

Communication Tools - a set of tools or programs that allow you to communicate efficiently in any dynamic setting.

Concise - A style of communication marked with brief and precise language; a language style that is free of excess elaboration and superfluous detail.

Conclusion – A judgment or decision reached by reasoning.

Confidence - The feeling or belief that one can rely on someone or something

Conflict Resolution - The informal or formal process that two or more parties use to find a peaceful solution to their dispute.

Contrast - the difference in luminance or color that makes an object distinguishable.

Copyright - A type of intellectual property that gives its owner the exclusive right to make copies of a creative work, usually for a limited time.

Credibility - The quality of being trusted or being believable.

Credible Source - A source that is unbiased and supported with facts or evidence.

Culture - The arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively

Declarative Sentence - A complete sentence that ends with a period.

Domain Name – The part of a network address that identifies it as belonging to a particular domain.

Digital Information – Digital information is content created in digital form, used on the internet. Digital information can be found using a search engine, image libraries like Getty Images or content on sites like YouTube.

Direct Plagiarism – Blatant use of someone else's work without citing sources.

E-mail (electronic mail) - Messages distributed electronically from one computer user to one or more recipients.

Ethics – The practice of determining what is morally good and bad based on a set of standards set forth by an organization, culture, or other groups.

Ethnocentrism - Evaluation of other cultures according to preconceptions originating in the standards and customs of one's own culture

Excessively – In greater amounts than is necessary

Exclamative Sentence - A complete sentence that exclaims a surprise and ends with an exclamation mark.

Font Size – The size of the font used in a text.

Footnote - Notes placed at the bottom of a page; also called an endnote.

Formal - Respect to the audience suggesting seriousness about the topic.

Gestalt Principles - Gestalt psychology or gestaltism is a school of psychology that emerged in Austria and Germany in the early twentieth century based on work by Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Köhler, and Kurt Koffka.

Group Norms - A set of informal and formal ground rules that dictate how people interact in a group setting.

Hyphen - A punctuation mark used to join words and to separate syllables of a single word.

Imperative Sentence - A complete sentence that employs an order and ends with an exclamation mark.

Informal - Casual and spontaneous communication when writing in conversation.

Information Literacy – Information Literacy encompasses how content is read. It covers organization and target audience. For example, creating content for doctors may require a more advanced lexicon. Therefore, the content designed for doctors may be 'illiterate' for normal people.

Initialism - An abbreviation consisting of letters that are pronounced individually. E.g.: CPU

Instructions- Detailed information telling how something should be done or assembled.

Intercultural - Occurring between or involving two or more cultures

Intercultural Awareness - The verbal and nonverbal interaction between people from different cultural backgrounds

Interrogative Sentence - A complete sentence that ends with a question mark.

Line Height – The distance between two lines of text.

Line Length – The average number of characters in a line of text.

Mosaic Plagiarism – Paraphrasing a quote without referencing the author and/or using synonymous words and sentence structures. Also includes citing a source while not using quotations.

Negative Space - The space around and between the subject of an image.

Norm - A standard or pattern, especially of social behavior, that is typical or expected of a group.

Object - In a sentence, the object is subject to the actions of the verb; the target or receipt of the action in a sentence.

Oral Rhetoric - The art of using language so as to persuade or influence an audience.

Passive Voice - Grammatical Subject expresses the theme of the main verb.

Patchwriting – Paraphrasing someone else's work but using too much of the original content within the paraphrase.

Paywalled Information – Online resources that can only be accessed if a fee is paid or a subscription is made.

Plagiarism – Using someone else's work and taking credit for it as your own.

Plain Language - Text that is clear enough where readers can easily find and understand the information that they need.

Point Size – Used to measure elements apart from font size.

Predicate - The part of the sentence that contains the action verb; the action being performed by the subject of a sentence.

Presentation - A manner or style of speaking to a group of people in which something is taught or displayed.

Progress Report - A report about how much work has been done on a project.

Proposal - A formal plan or suggestion put forward for consideration or discussion by others.

Punctuation Pauses - Pauses in a sentence or term that use the colon, semi-colon, or comma.

Punctuation - Marks in writing used to separate sentences, place emphasis, and overall clarify the message.

Rational – Based on or in accordance with reason or logic.

Readability Metric - A mathematical calculation that provides an estimate of how easy text is to read, usually by schooling grade level.

Running Head - A header printed at the top of each page in a document; a short version of a paper title.

Salutation – Is a gesture or utterance made as a greeting of another's arrival or departure

Sans Serif – A type of font without serifs.

Self-Regulation – The fact of something such as an organization regulating itself without intervention from external bodies.

Self-Plagiarism – When an author submits work that includes content from a previous assignment or work.

Serif – Small strokes or extensions attached at the end of a larger stroke in certain typefaces.

Signal Phrase - A short phrase that introduces a quote, paraphrase, or summary.

Socrates – An ancient Greek philosopher who is credited as one of the founders of Western philosophy.

Spacing - The spaces used between letters, words, and sentences to properly separate them from each other.

Statistics - Analyzing data for the purpose of having numerical data.

Subject - In grammar, the subject is the focus of the verb; the person or thing performing an action.

Subject-Verb Agreement - When a subject and verb agree in terms of singularity, plurality, tense, and comparison.

Symbol - A symbol is a mark, sign, word, or special character that represents an idea, object, a relationship or connection.

Tactile Communication - Expression of text, images, and other complex concepts in a physical form for people who are visually impaired or deaf-blind.

Teleprompters - A device used to project a speaker's script which is normally always hidden from the camera.

Thesis - A statement or theory that is put forward as a premise to be maintained or proved.

Trademark - A symbol, word, or words legally registered or established by use as representing a company or product.

Typography - The visual elements of a text. Typography includes, but is not limited to, font, spacing, alignment, line breaks, and punctuation.

WAI-ARIA - Web Accessibility Initiative Accessible Rich Internet Applications, a cornerstone of modern web accessibility.

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Contributing Authors

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Jessica Reuter Castrogiovanni is a writer, scientist, and accessibility advocate. She is pursuing a degree in English with a focus on technical communication to expand her professional skills. Her top priorities are learning new things every day and being the best parent possible to her daughter.

Leland Dutcher, a Central Florida native, is majoring in Information Technology and Computer Science. He enjoys the outdoors and expects to spend more time outside in the coming months after graduation. He plans to continue freelancing for a career while maximizing his ability to travel and spending as little time as possible doing things he does not enjoy.

Jessica Entwistle is from Shreveport, Louisiana. She is a first-generation graduate with her Bachelors in English Literature from UCF. She is currently obtained her Publishing and Editing Certificate from UCF. Jessica plans on looking for a job in editing and pursuing her dream of working with books. In her free time, she loves reading anything she can get her hands on and teaching her niece to read.

Chris Estevez is a New York-born Dominican student at UCF. He is a junior who will be graduating in the Fall of 2020 with a Bachelor of Arts in Information Technology. After graduation, he plans to find a job in his field where he can use the technical skills he has developed both in and out of school. In his free time, he enjoys going to theme parks with his friends, watching movies, playing video games, and reading thought-provoking books.

Francisco Fonseca Rodriguez is from Miami, Florida. He is currently pursuing a degree in Information Technology. He has a passion for technology, specifically building computers. His interests and hobbies include wrestling, running, and playing video games in his free time.

Steven Freire was born in Hoboken, New Jersey. Steven is a sophomore at the University of Central Florida, where he is majoring in Information Technology. He is currently in the Air Force ROTC program; after graduation, he plans to enlist as an officer in the U.S. Military. In his free time, Steven enjoys playing the ukulele, playing lacrosse, and spending time with friends and family. He recently took up a new hobby, modifying cars with his best friend.

Hela Lily-Rose Holiday is from Tucson, Arizona. She is pursuing a double major in Technical Communication and Writing & Rhetoric. In the future, she plans to obtain her master's degree from Florida State University, write fiction books that make the New York Times Best-sellers lists, and make the world a better place as a high school English teacher.

Jessica Lang is a full-time mom from Central Florida, majoring in Technical Writing. She is pursuing her degree while working full-time and using what she is learning to strengthen her writing skills. She plans to remain at her current job long-term because she enjoys writing client plans and managing the company's written policies. Jessica is devoted to her family and church; she spends her free time with family or serving the people around her.

Joseph LaRosa is from Queens, New York. He was majoring in Computer Science before switching focus to Information Technology. After graduation, he plans to work with a major corporation while keeping up with his hobbies, such as building computers and streaming. Joseph continues working full time and moving towards making his goals a reality with dedication and hard work.

Yehowshua Leonard is a native Floridian from Orlando. He is currently pursuing an education in Technical Communication while working full time assisting our veterans through military unemployment. After earning his bachelor's degree, Yehowshua will pursue a job as a technical editor and study programming through continuing education courses. Yehowshua plans to use both his bachelor’s degree and his minor in pre-law to build a career in his home city. During his free time, Yehowshua enjoys walking and meditating.

Nancy Jean Lopez is a writer for an online marketing firm. She will graduate from the University of Central Florida in the Fall of 2020 with a Bachelor of English and Literature. After graduation, she plans to pursue a career in publishing as an editor. In her free time, she is either reading nonfiction or studying web design; Nancy is always striving to improve her craft and add new skills to her writer’s toolbox.

Keyur Mistry was born in Gujrat, India. He will graduate from the University of Central Florida in the Fall of 2020 with a degree in Information Technology. After working in the IT industry for a couple of years, he plans to start his own IT business in the future. For the last six years, he has turned one of his hobbies, photography, into a side business that has supported him while pursuing his education.

Christopher Narciso is from Wauchula, Florida. He is a first-generation graduate in his family. After completing his Computer Science degree, he plans to use his skills to improve everyday lives through technology. In his free time, he enjoys working on programming side projects and playing video games.

Rebecca Navas is a senior studying Technical Communication from Miami, Florida. She has a completed minor in Digital Media and is planning to become more involved in video game development. In her spare time, she enjoys writing, streaming gameplay, and cuddling her cats.

Michael Otero is a lifelong Floridian from Melbourne's east coast, but he's been based out of Orlando for the last ten years. He is pursuing a bachelor's degree in Technical Communication, with a minor in Mass Culture and Collective Behavior. From 2013 to 2017, he spent much of his time as a performing and recording artist for an Orlando-based alternative rock group; he hopes to rekindle his musical endeavors again in the future.

Stephanie Peters is an undergraduate student at the University of Central Florida, where she is working towards a bachelor's degree in Technical Communication. Additionally, she is taking courses towards a Writing and Rhetoric minor and a certificate in Editing and Publishing. In the future, she hopes to find work alongside an aspiring author as a book editor.

Valery Pion-Rosario was born in Bayamon, Puerto Rico. She is a junior at UCF, majoring in Technical Communication and minoring in French. After graduation, she plans on working as a technical writer. Her interests include learning languages, running, and reading.