

# SCHOOLNET INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM STYLE GUIDE

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## Content Reuse

When possible, make use of Flare's built-in tools Variables, Snippets, and Glossary to document features that use common UI components:

- **Variables** - Product/Module names
- **Snippets** - Blocks of content that apply to multiple places, i.e. Item Types that share common additional properties.
  - Snippets should be clearly labeled to match the UI component.
  - Snippets should be multiple complete sentences, where possible.
  - Avoid creating two-word snippets.
- **Glossary** - Use Glossary popups to define specific Schoolnet terms. To avoid creating multiple terms for the same definition, enter terms on the glossary first then link these terms within a topic. Editing Term labels creates new entries to the glossary:
  - Do enter **1 term per line** to create a single glossary entry with multiple associated terms having the same definition. For example, Observation, observation, observation tool, observations on separate lines of the glossary
  - Avoid creating separate entries with duplicate definitions.
  - Avoid defining industry specific terms such as industry laws, No Child Left Behind.
  - Do not change the Term label or another term is created. Also if you create a term from a topic, a brand new term will be created if it doesn't match any existing term.
  - Do a search/replace to ensure terms are consistent

## Capitalization

Follow these conventions for HED online materials:

- Use capitalization sparingly.

- Lead capitalization (capitalizing the first letter of the first word only) is preferred for on-screen headings, topic headings, column headings, items in lists, and figure callouts. When written text references the user interface, the written text should match the capitalization style used in the software.
- Do not use capitalization for emphasis.

## Date and Time Formats

Be sensitive to the culture of the audience when you express dates and times. The following conventions are acceptable:

### Dates

- July 1, 2011 or 1 July 2011
- July, 2011
- Q1 2012 (for first quarter of 2012)
- 1990 to 1997
- the 1980s

Do not use season names for dates: Summer in the United States (northern hemisphere) is Winter in Australia (southern hemisphere).

Do not abbreviate the name of months.

Do not use ordinal numbers in dates. Use September 9 or 9 September. Do not use September 9th or 9th September.

Do not use the mm/dd/yy format to express a date because this is confusing for international audiences.

### Time

- 8 a.m. or 8:00 a.m.
- 06:45, 21:45 (24-hour clock)
- 21:45 (military time)
- -5 UTC or +9 UTC (universal time)

## Version Formats

When referencing a specific software version, either Schoolnet or non-Pearson applications, do not include the term version in the reference, i.e. Schoolnet 15.4.0 not Schoolnet Version 15.4.0.

Use 3 digits when referencing Schoolnet software versions, i.e. 15.4.1 not 15.4.

## Glossary Terms

Glossary terms have their own mini-style guide for how they should be written. The following rules apply:

- **Acronyms:** Where glossary entries are defining acronyms, spell out the acronym as the first sentence of the definition. For example, “**AYP:** Adequate Yearly Progress. NCLB legislation requires...”.

- **Brevity:** Try to keep glossary entries as short as possible. Generally, glossary entries are 1-4 sentences long, with the 3-4 sentence ones needing the use of examples to get sufficiently defined.
- **Capitalization:** Report and page names such Analysis Spreadsheet, acronyms like Instructional Management Suite (IMS), module or product names like Educator Development and PowerSchool, and terms relating to UI where terms are capitalized should be capitalized. All other terms should be in lowercase. In the actual help file, use whatever capitalization makes sense. If this doesn't match the form the term is defined in the glossary, spell it the way it is in the glossary first > highlight and insert glossary link > change the capitalization/spelling variations/pluralization according to how you want it (this will retain the glossary popover).
- **Directing to other glossary entries:** If a glossary entry contains a reference to a different glossary entry, use it in the definition without putting a direction like "See other glossary term for more information" at the end.
- **Examples:** When using examples to define a glossary term, use as general and/or popular real-world instances as possible without getting client-specific. For instance, *standardized tests* can be defined using the examples of Common Core, SAT, pre-SAT, etc. Avoid using client-specific examples like Ohio Standardized Test and Idaho Standards Achievement Test.
- **Repeating definitions:** You may use one definition for multiple terms if these multiple terms come up in the system (for example, student growth and student outcomes). Acronyms should not repeat in a glossary (refer to Acronyms above to see how they should be defined). Also, alert UX or Product to this inconsistency.
- **Tagging terms:** Tag the first instance of the term for each expanding section or page. and Do NOT tag glossary terms found in headers, UI elements, notes or tips.

## Email

For system-generated emails, be sure to use the active voice and convey concise message to end users.

- **Email Subject:** - Reference the user interface activity responsible for generating the notification, i.e. *Your Professional Growth Plan has been approved* versus There is a pending activity requesting for your approval. Do not email subject, but follow other capitalization rules (for instance if report or product name is mentioned, capitalize like with "Professional Growth Plan" in aforementioned example.
- **Salutation:** "<User First Name>," Do not include Dear, Greeting, Hi, or Hello.
- **Body:** Use active voice to clearly communicate the information. DO include all relevant information such as dates, time, location as well as any actionable items that are required by user such as approval needed, click <link> , Do Not Reply, etc.
  - Activity credit request has been submitted for your review. Click [here](#) to review approval requests.
  - An intervention plan team meeting for student <first name last name> has been scheduled on <month day year> at <hour:min AM/PM> at the following location <School, Conference Room>. Click [here](#) to view the calendar invite.
  - Where links are provided in emails use: "Please use the link below to <description of action to be taken>: [linebreak][linebreak] <provide full URL (and point developers to the page in Schoolnet users should be taken to>

- **Closing:** This section is not needed for business email. Therefore, do not use thank you, sincerely, regards.

## Hyperlinks and Cross-References

Hyperlinks and cross-references can be highly effective tools when used appropriately and judiciously. They provide links to additional information, increase SEO and help readership, and are a generally accepted way to improve help documents.

Follow these best practices:

- i. Use cross-references instead of hyperlinks whenever possible. They offer several advantages:
  - i. When help file names change, cross-references appearing in other help files will change as well. Hyperlinks will not. If you have a topic now called “Create Resources” and it’s later renamed to “Create Activities”, you will have to remember and manually change all help files that mention “Create Resources” and have hyperlinks to it. If cross-references are used, MadCap will do the updating for you. Note: follow these instructions to see updated cross-references. This is an optional step as MadCap does update them for you, but you may not see the updates in source files right away: [http://webhelp.madcapsoftware.com/flare9/Content/Nav\\_Links/Cross\\_References/Updating\\_Cross\\_References.htm](http://webhelp.madcapsoftware.com/flare9/Content/Nav_Links/Cross_References/Updating_Cross_References.htm)
  - ii. For PDF outputs, cross-references mention page numbers. If a guide is being printed out, hyperlinks are useless as they do not offer the ability to include page numbers.
- ii. For cross-references, PDF outputs will use “Topic Title” on page #, while WebHelp will use a hyperlink-looking style. Insert “see”, “refer to”, “for more information on”, etc. (whatever makes sense) before the cross-reference to introduce it.
- iii. For hyperlinks and cross references to other help systems, use “See “topic name” in the <Document.Name variable for user guide>” (print condition) and a regular external project hyperlink so the link works online (screen condition). There is no such thing as an external project cross-reference (yet), so a tech writer has to manually remember to update external link titles and links when topic names change or topics move (which is a release sprint task, but better done as early as possible). Also be sure to test your hyperlink online to make sure it works.
- iv. Do not hyperlink the words, “Click here to..”. Rather, hyperlink words inline so the flow of reading isn’t interrupted. Example: "The skill you selected for educators to choose from appears on top with a See all School and Educator Goals link beside it which takes you to the Professional Growth Plans page."
- v. As with acronyms, avoid overuse of links as this can make your written material illegible.
- vi. Always include the full URL in email messages so users who receive the message in text format can access the link. Coded hyperlinks do not function in emails delivered as text.

- vii. For external links (links outside of Schoolnet help), add “target=”\_blank” at the end of the URL. This will open the links in a new tab or window. NOTE: External links will not work if this is not included. For example: `<a href="http://www.w3schools.com" target="_blank">Visit W3Schools</a>`

## Keeping Readers Engaged

In any document, it's very important to keep your readers in mind and keep them engaged. Here are some ways to make your documents more effective:

- Always keep in mind who is using your document and why. Exclude any information that isn't directly relevant to your readers and their needs. Also keep in mind the reading level of your readers, especially if they are students.
- Do not use gerunds in a topic title, toc entry or to introduce lists.
- Keep your readers engaged by addressing them as you. For example, it's too distancing to say:  
Instructors can create tests.  
  
If you are writing for teachers, say:  
You can create tests.  
  
If you are writing for students, say:  
Your teacher can create tests.
- Write in the present tense. Use will only when you are referring to a future occurrence.
- Avoid passive voice whenever possible. It makes for dull writing and causes the reader's attention to falter.
- Bear in mind that readers want information quickly. After you write a document, do an editing pass and ruthlessly cut and condense to make your text as brief as possible.
- Begin your document with an overview so your readers understand the purpose and context of the more detailed information.
- Define jargon or other specific terminology on first use, especially if your audience may not be familiar with it.

## Keyboard keys

Use the following names and capitalization for keys on the keyboard:



- Enter (even if the key is labeled Return)
- Ctrl
- Alt
- F1, F2, and so on
- Esc
- Shift
- Delete
- Insert
- Tab
- Left arrow
- Right arrow
- Up arrow
- Down arrow
- spacebar
- Page Up
- Page Down

Do not use the word *key* after key names.

#### Example

Correct: Press Enter.

Incorrect: Press the Enter key.

## Compound keystrokes

Display compound keystrokes (also known as keyboard shortcuts or key combinations) according to the following standard.

#### Examples

- Ctrl + O
  - Shift + F1
  - Ctrl + Left arrow

## Lists

Use lists to provide instructions, describe the order in which a process occurs, describe parts of a whole (such as components of an object or features of software), or to define terms in a glossary.

The HED documentation team follows these general guidelines for lists:

- Always provide a lead-in sentence or phrase to introduce a list and punctuate the lead-in sentence with a colon.
- Write items in a list using parallel construction; that is, following a similar structure for each item in a list. Examples of parallel construction include using all imperative verbs. Do not use gerunds.
- Punctuate list items with periods when they are complete sentences. If any one item in the list ends with a period, make all items end with a period. Do not punctuate a list of nouns, single words, or a short noun phrase with periods unless the words or phrase are followed by a complete sentence.

There are three types of lists: *numbered*, *bullet*, and *definition*. Lists can also be *nested*.

### Numbered lists

Use a numbered list for items that require a specific sequence, as when describing a procedure.

**Example**

To see your results on assignments:

- i. Go to your Results page.
- ii. Choose the time period you want to view from the toolbar. You can choose **Past 2 weeks**, **Past month**, or **Entire course**.
- iii. From the **All Assignments** list, select what type of assignment you want to view.

**Bullet lists**

Use a bullet list for multiple items without an inherent sequence, for example, a list of resources needed to perform a task. Do not bullet one item by itself. Do not connect bullet list items with the word *and* or *or*.

**Example**

The course announcements page gives you the following information about your online course:

- In math courses, a link to the How to Enter Answers video tour, where you can learn how to answer questions online.
- In economics and finance courses, a link to news and videos updated daily from ABC News and Financial Times.

**Definition lists**

A definition list is a list that provides definitions of terms or descriptions of items.

**Example**

Users can choose from two options:

**Check boxes** — allow multiple selections from a number of options.

**Radio buttons** — allow only a single selection from a number of options.

**Nested lists**

Use a nested list when multiple, additional details are provided for one item in a list. For example, the options available under a single step of a sequence. Alternatively, you can nest a bullet list within a numbered list, or vice versa.

**Example**

To review student outcomes:

- i. Click the **Gradebook** tab.
- ii. Click the **View Learning Outcomes Summary** link.
- iii. To see the assignments and items associated with an outcome, click the outcome. You can then see:
  1. Student responses by clicking an item title.
  1. Overall assignment information by clicking the assignment title and clicking **Summary View**, **Diagnostics View**, or another tab.



## Optional Steps

In a case where a step or multiple steps in a procedure are optional for a user, note this at the beginning of the step in this format:

- Optional: Click **Save as Draft** to save your progress for later use.

## Preferred Terms

Refer to the [Schoolnet Usage Dictionary](#) for Schoolnet's preferred spelling and word selection for Dictionarymon terms.

## Punctuation

This section summarizes the Documentation team's punctuation conventions. For additional information on using punctuation correctly, refer to *The Elements of Style*, Fourth Edition, or Microsoft Style Manual.

Type only one space after a period that ends a sentence.

Use a period in a list when the list item is a complete sentence. Do not punctuate a list of nouns, single words, or a short noun phrase unless the words or phrase are followed by a complete sentence. If any one item in the list ends with a period, all items must end with a period.

### Example 1

Common household pets:

- Dogs
- Cat
- Fish

### Example 2

#### To configure the computer:

1. Start the application.
2. Select Format from the Configure menu.
3. Follow the instructions that appear on the screen.

In tables that use Information Mapping to present information, include periods even if only a word or phrase is included in the table's last column.

### Example 3

#### To... You need...

Open a file	Read access.
Save a file	Write access.

## Commas

Refer to the following table for the proper use of commas.

Use a comma	Example
To separate three or more items in a series. Use the comma before conjunctions, such as <i>and</i> and <i>or</i> .	You should find a cable, a manual, and three diskettes.
At the end of a long phrase (more than five words) at the beginning of sentence.	When you finish entering the data, you are ready to continue the registration process.
To separate independent clauses joined by a conjunction (such as <i>and</i> , <i>but</i> , <i>although</i> , <i>or</i> , or <i>yet</i> ).	You can add up to 254 backup lines, but network throughput may be adversely affected.

## Colons

Use a colon:

- After a lead-in sentence that introduces a list, procedure (a series of steps), a table, or a figure.
- Between two clauses when the second clause explains or expands the first clause (rarely done).
- For drop-down text, and at the end of lead sentences, do not use a colon in the “To...” header, and do not bold this header.
- Type only one space after a colon that is used within a sentence.

### Examples

The following figure shows the Export Manager splash screen:

To copy an object (if drop-down no colon):

You have two choices when saving a document: click the Save button or select Save from the File menu.

## Semicolons

Use semicolons to separate two closely related independent clauses. Semicolons often appear before the word *however*, and the phrases *that is* and *for example*.

Do not use a semicolon to separate a dependent clause from an independent clause.

Type only one space after a semicolon.

## Dashes

Use two kinds of dashes in Pearson Higher Education materials and documentation: the en dash and em dash.

### En Dash (–)

Use the en dash:

- For minus signs.
- For negative numbers.
- To indicate a range; for example, 2006–2010; steps 1–10.

To insert an en dash in Windows, press Alt + 0150 on the numeric keypad, or select en dash from the

Character Map program. On the Macintosh, press Option + - (hyphen). In Flare Web-based Help projects select **Insert > Character > En Dash**.

### Em Dash (—)

Use the em dash:

- To show an abrupt shift in thought.
- To set off and highlight important information in text.

To insert an em dash in Windows, press Alt + 0151 on the numeric keypad, or select en dash from the Character Map program. On the Macintosh, press Shift + Option + - (hyphen). In Flare Web-based Help projects select **Insert > Character > Em Dash**.

Do not substitute double hyphens (--) for an em dash.

Do not use spaces around either en dashes or em dashes.

**Note:** Depending on your application's support for UTF-8, dashes may not appear correctly when displayed in a Web browser.

### Hyphens

Hyphenate when:

- A unit of measure is used as an adjective, for example, 3.5-in. disk, 2-element array.
- Fractions are spelled out, for example, three-fifths of the electorate voted last year.
- Words begin with the prefix *self-* or *cross-*, for example, self-examine, cross-reference.
- A prepositional phrase is used as an adjective, for example, up-to-date information.
- A string of words is used as an adjective, for example, high-level description, EPA-compliant regulation, or worn-out shoe, but **not** adverb-adjective combinations, for example, do not hyphenate words ending in *-ly*, as in quickly dropping pressure.

Also hyphenate when the next word normally begins with a capital letter or when a double letter would look confusing.

#### Examples

mid-Atlantic, pre-IBM, non-negative, de-energize, electro-optical, multi-image, re-sent, re-creation

Do not hyphenate an expression when it is used as a verb or noun.

**Examples****Hyphenate      Do Not Hyphenate**

The check-in procedure...

Up-to-date information is important.

A start-up company...

The set-up routine...

All strings are case-sensitive.

The third-party software license...      Check in the material...

I need information that is up to date.

Start up the computer.

Set up the equipment.

To modify your setup...

Back up your data.

The backup is complete.

Log in to your account.

Enter your login...

Do not use end-of-line or automatic hyphenation.

**Prefixes and Hyphens**

Do not use a hyphen after a prefix unless the prefix is used with a number or a proper noun.

The following prefixes usually do **not** require a hyphen:

ante	anti	bi	co
counter	de	dis	electro
en	extra	intra	macro
micro	mid	multi	non
over	post	pre	pseudo
re	retro	semi	sub
super	tele	ultra	un
under	uni		

**Examples**

predefined, pre-2005

unshared, un-American

non-English-speaking, nonabrasive

**Apostrophes**

Use apostrophes to indicate ownership. Form the possessive of singular nouns by adding an apostrophe (') and the letter *s*.

Form the possessive of plural nouns by adding only an apostrophe at the end of the word (unless the plural noun does not end in *s*, in which case add an apostrophe and *s*, for example, children's). Avoid plural possessives whenever possible by recasting the sentence in the singular.

Do not make a possessive out of a trademark. Do not use contractions.

**Example**

Correct: The features in Microsoft Windows

Incorrect: Microsoft Windows' features

Avoid inanimate possessives when possible and do not use an apostrophe when you make an acronym plural.

**Example**

Correct: Plug in all the CPUs.

Incorrect: Plug in all the CPU's.

**Quotation Marks**

Use quotation marks for direct quotes. Do not use quotation marks to highlight or emphasize a work, new item, term, or phrase; use boldface in Web-based Help, or italics in printed or PDF documents.

Place closing quotation marks after commas and periods.

**Page & Topic References:**

Use hyperlinks to refer to other topics or sections of topics. Avoid using Page # or quotations around the topic

Correct: Embedded or sentence [Creating Activities](#).

Incorrect: See "Introduction to Styles", page 5.

**Parentheses**

Use parentheses to:

- Surround an acronym or abbreviation after spelling out the full term.

Do not nest parenthetical expressions.

**Exclamation Points**

Avoid exclamation points in technical documentation, except when they occur as part of a command or



error message.

## Ellipses

In technical documentation, tables using Information Mapping to present information should contain an ellipsis in each column head.

### Example

#### To...      You need...

Open a file	Read access.
Save a file	Write access.

## Other Punctuation

Avoid the use of other types of punctuation unless required by the syntax of the command you are documenting, for example, text on a command line or a Web URL.

**Exception:** **I/O** or **client/server** is acceptable.

## Using Breadcrumbs and How to write Step 1's

Style rules:

- **Go to:** [module name] > link to click > link to click
- **Go to** [module name]
- Apply div.breadcrumbs to this in the Styles panel in MadCap
- Use as many “link to clicks” as needed as long as they are a straightforward click path, don’t diverge into multiple possibly steps, and don’t use any optional steps
- Do not end with a period.
- MadCap bug (v.9): do not manually type “Go to”. The style should take care of this. Currently, Preview in MadCap will not show a “Go to:” appearing, but once Target is generated, it will be put in.

The div.breadcrumbs style in all of our Flare projects is used in the following scenarios:

- i. When there’s one procedure/ordered list in a help file. Do not include a header to introduce the procedure and rely on the help file’s title. For example if “Cancel an Observation” is the help file name, Go to Educator Development > My Observation Caseload is step 1.
- ii. There there are more than one procedures in a help file, but a header is used.

Not used:

- i. Two-step procedures.

- ii. Multiple ordered lists in a help file where the header or help file name is not clear about what steps are being described. For example, a help file called “Item Central Overview” has three drop-downs - “standard search”, “search for rubrics”, and “other search tasks”. These headers need more explanation and a user wouldn’t jump right into the click path for these.
- iii. Step 1’s that have multiple possibility routes (for example 1.a and 1.b, depending on which route a user chooses).
- iv. Directly above a drop-down, as this creates too much space between the items (maybe something that can be looked at in the css and fixed in the future).

Where a breadcrumb is not used, Step 1 should still be written the same way, starting with “Go to [module name] > **link to click**.” but in an ordered list, ending with a period, and with a standard li style applied.

## Click Path Tips

- Remove references to “\_\_\_\_\_ appears” or “on the Module Name Dashboard”. Assume it appears, and guide users through the next steps.
- All clickable items must be bolded, with the exception of breadcrumbs (see above), which are completely bolded. User a variable for all the module names throughout the help (Flare will provide a type-ahead). Module names match the blue ribbon headers in Schoolnet.

## Styles and formatting

Styles and formatting are essential to effective technical communications. We rely on them to provide the reader consistent visual cues regarding the information we are writing about. For this reason it is important that you know what conventions we use.

Current format: Refer to webhelpstyles.css in MadCap Flare. Important ones include: p.notes for notes, tips, and cautions, H1 for first page of chapter, H2 for header of all other topics in a chapter.

Also use <em> instead of <i> and <strong> instead of <b>.

## Links and Buttons

### User Interface:



**User Documentation** - For buttons with text, or icons with text beside them:

- Write “Click **button/icon text**”.
- Note the bold, lack of.
- Do not include screenshot of the icon beside the text.

**For icons without text beside them:**

- i. Write “Click **icon name icon (\*image of icon\*)**”. For example: Click the edit icon (#).

- Create a to-scale, transparent background .png or .gif of the image ending in \_icon and insert it within parentheses.
- Don't use when there is link name beside the icon.

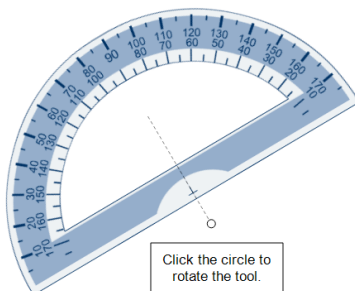
Icon Image	Label	Module
	warning (informational)	Assessment - triangle_warning.png
	alert (action required)	Assessment - circle_alert.png

## Images

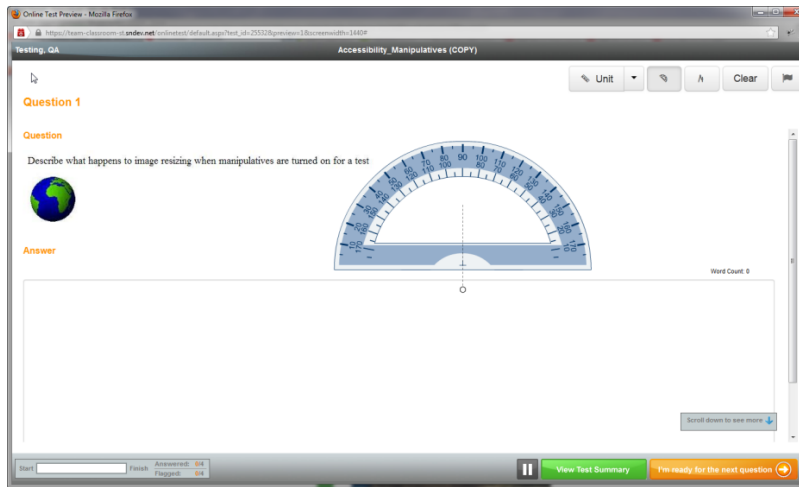
Images including illustrations, charts and graphs should be used to convey complicated information and **must** add value to the user. Images may also be used when the user interface does not have tooltip to identify an icon (shown above) . Images should be used sparingly. Use “smart” images to demonstrate a selected area of a screen or specific function. Avoid using a full screen image as these are difficult to maintain.

### Example:

Correct:



Incorrect:



## Notes, Tips, and Cautions

In some limited cases, you may want to set certain information apart from body text because it has special significance for the reader or because you want to provide expert advice on the subject matter. This information is formatted using a notification term such as Note, Tip or Caution and should be used **sparingly**. Do not add a note, tip or warning to a step procedure or to the first sentence of a paragraph. Multiple notes should be avoided. Instead incorporate the information into the topic overview or within a step.

For a single piece of information, use the introductory term, followed by a colon, and ending with the information on the same line.

### Example

**Note:** This option is only available for instructors.

For multiple notes about a single topic, treat each note as an item in a bulleted list.

### Example

#### Notes

- If you run the editor in Firefox, and only part of the table appears after aligning, press **Enter** and the whole table should appear.
- When you change alignment from left to center or right, table handles do not move with the table. Resize the table by dragging the handles before changing the table alignment.

## Cautions

Cautions notify users of potential dangers that can damage their data, software, or hardware. For conceptual information, cautions must appear immediately underneath the information they modify, on the same page. For procedures, cautions must appear before the list of steps. If the caution applies to only one step in a procedure, place the caution immediately following the step.

### Example

**Caution:** Turn off background tasks before turning off the computer. If you do not, open data files may be lost or damaged.

## Warnings

Warnings clearly identify situations where improper use of the product can result in personal injury or permanent/catastrophic damage to equipment. For conceptual information, warnings must appear immediately underneath the information they modify, on the same page. For procedures, warnings must appear before the list of steps. Because most of the user instructions you write focuses on software and not hardware, you should have very few (if any) warnings in the documents you create and revise.

### Example

**Warning:** Do not put paper clips in the wall socket.

## Typographical Conventions

The following sections summarize acceptable typographical usage. In technical documentation, use the styles in the style sheet (.css) to set the appearance of text in your documents.

[Boldface](#) | [Italics](#) | [Underlines](#) | [Courier Font](#)

### Boldface

Many styles rely on selective use of boldface. Do not use boldface unless a specific style calls for it.

In web-based help, use strong or em, not italics, for emphasis. Also use boldface in procedures to identify user interface elements that you select, such as the **Open** command, or the **Print** button.

### Examples

Select **Open**.

Click **Print**.

Use boldface for the breadcrumb of a command or menu path (for example, **File > Open**), or when you need to offset a word or phrase from the surrounding text.

In definition lists, use bold to offset the term from the definition or description.

### Example

WPS generates the following types of reports:

**Launch Error Reports** — identify errors in a volume prior to launching it. Refer to [Generating a Launch Error Report](#) for more information about creating launch error reports.

**SMS Configuration Reports** — list the details of all the SMS configurations for the current object and its children or for the entire volume, depending on the option selected. Refer to [Generating an SMS Configuration Report](#) for more information about creating this type of report.

**Shared Content Reports** — provide the details on shared objects and pointers based on the option selected. Refer to [Generating a Shared Content Report](#) for more information about creating this type of report.

## Italics

### Printed Documents

In print-based documents, use italics for emphasis sparingly. (Do not use quotation marks for

emphasis.)

All references to complete documents to other Schoolnet PDFs must use the MadCap document name variable.

### Web-Based Help

In web-based help, use hyperlinks for references to other sections and chapters. Hyperlinks are always underlined; do not use italics or quotes for hyperlinks. The color of the link depends on the browser or the style sheet. By default, a link that has not been clicked is blue. A link that has been clicked is violet.

### Underlines

Do not use underlines in a printed document. In web-based help or electronic files, underlines are used to indicate a hyperlink.

### Courier Font

User entries, screen messages, and script examples are always formatted with the Courier font.

#### Examples

When coding links that do not change the current URL, many people use a pound sign with straight quotation marks in the link, as the following example shows.

```
<A HREF="#" onClick="popWindow('http://www.cnn.com') ">
```

You can only edit questions in problemsets; you cannot edit pointers. If you try to edit a combination of questions and pointers, the following message appears:

Some of the items you selected cannot be edited because of their current status.

If you want to continue with the operation for the items that can be edited, click OK; otherwise click Cancel.

## Words to Avoid

Do **not** use these words and phrases:

- after completion of
- basically
- currently (for example, instead of the phrase *the currently selected item*, the text *the selected item* is preferred)
- general, generally
- generally categorized as being
- in order to
- in some instances (instead be specific and identify the instances you are describing)
- in the case of
- is essential that
- is quite possible that
- note that

- of the type required
- on the basis of
- please
- simply
- the characteristics of
- the conditions imposed by
- there is a large number of
- to make an approximation as to how much
- very
- will (instead write in the present tense)
- any mention of colors (508 compliance)

## Other Preferred Usage

### Write in the Present Tense

Write in the present tense whenever possible. Most occurrences of the future tense are unnecessary. Use the future tense only to describe things that occur sometime after the present.

#### Examples

Correct use of the *present* tense: Click **Save**. The Save dialog box appears.

Correct use of the *future* tense: Using this dialog box, you can save your data. You will need this information for reference later.

Incorrect use of the *future* tense: Click **Save**. The Save dialog box will appear.

### That and Which

The words *that* and *which* have different meanings. Do not use them interchangeably.

In technical writing *that* is preferred. *That* is restrictive: *that* introduces a phrase that is essential to the meaning of the word it modifies. Do not set off a phrase beginning with *that* with a comma.

#### Example

The pie that is on the table has been prepared for our Thanksgiving celebration.

*Which* is non-restrictive: *which* introduces a phrase that is not essential to the meaning of the word it modifies. Always set off a phrase beginning with *which* with a comma.

#### Example

The pie, which is on the table, is for our Thanksgiving celebration.

When editing your documents, make sure that *which* is used correctly. Most uses of *which* join two loosely related ideas that can be better expressed by two separate sentences.

### Because, Since and Due to

Use *because* only to show causation. Use *since* to indicate *since the time that*.

*Due to* is a noun modifier that cannot modify a verb or adjective. Use *because of*, *as a result of*, or *by* instead of *due to* when modifying a verb or adjective.

### Examples

#### Wrong Acceptable Better

The WPS launch failed **due to** a style error. The WPS launch failure was **due to** a style error.

The WPS launch failed **because** the wrong style was applied to the volume.

Fred was tired **due to** a lack of sleep. Fred was tired **because** he had not slept in the last two days. Fred's fatigue was **due to** no sleep.

Fred was tired **since** he had not slept. Fred was tired **because** he had not slept.

**Because** of the election of President Smith, people have been pleased with his performance in office

**Since** the election of President Smith, people have been pleased with his performance in office.

## Numbers

Use Roman numbers to number the pages in the front matter of printed documents.

Spell out all ordinal numbers. Ordinal numbers relate relative position, for example, first, second, or third.

Use Arabic numerals to:

- Represent values equal to or greater than 10, negative numbers, percentages, monetary values (\$5.00 or 25 cents), and items are numbered (step 7, page 12, slot 1, or Chapter 4).
- Indicate a fraction. Use decimal notation (0.5, 1.25, 6.75) whenever possible.
- Show measurements, for example, 3 inches, 5 miles, or 7 minutes.
- Relate the time and date, for example 3:45, 7:15 April 1, or 3/20/2006.
- Number steps in a procedure.
- Specify version numbers.
- Document telephone numbers.
- Provide street addresses.
- Record publication dates on the copyright page.

Spell out numbers from one to nine unless they are a part of a measurement.

### Examples

Five apples and 12 oranges

5 feet and 11 inches

Also spell out numbers for large values such as hundred, million, or billion. Place a numeral before the word.

### Examples

The world population is over 6 billion people.

The population of the United States is over 300 million.



When two numbers follow in succession, spell out the first number.

**Example**

You will need twenty-five 3-inch pieces of wood to build your bookcase.

If the number starts a sentence, spell out the value even if it is greater than nine.

**Example**

Fifteen people were taken hostage by terrorists.

For numbers that normally are not spelled out (for example, software version numbers, such as Acrobat 9), do not use the number at the beginning of a sentence.

**Example**

Correct: Custom styles for WPS 6.x do not support the legacy grader.

Incorrect: 6.x styles do not support the WPS legacy grader.

## Units of Measure

Do not punctuate a unit-of-measure abbreviation, unless you are describing inches. A period is used with the abbreviation in. to distinguish it from the word *in*.

**Example**

3 ft, 5 in.

Do not make units of measure plural by adding the letter *s*.

Put a hard space (also known as a non-breaking space or fixed space) between the number and the unit of measure to prevent the unit from wrapping to the next line without its number (for example, 10 km, 700MHz, 640 MB).

To create a hard space:

- Word: Ctrl + Shift + spacebar
- HTML: &nbsp;
- Framemaker and RoboHelp: Ctrl + spacebar
- Flare: Shift + spacebar

**Exception:** 128K

Hyphenate measurements when used as adjectives.

**Example**

5-yr penalty

Do not hyphenate KB or MB when used as adjective.

**Example**

800 MB disk drive

## File Extensions

When writing about file extensions, assume that these are jargon to users and require spelling out on each file they appear in. For example:

Comma-Separated Values (CSV) files can be used to bulk upload users in User Management.


To upload a CSV file:

### See the Steps

- i. If a help file has two steps, use “See the steps for.” Look at the improvement below (impatient users could skip over the long into).
- ii. Set See the steps to hide for print

### Deleting an Observation

Observations may need to be removed in order for new observations to take their place, or for errors made during the observation process. Different users can remove different types of observations from the system. System Operators and users with the *Delete observation* operation can delete any kind of observation that has occurred (In-Progress, Draft, and Completed). Only observers who have scheduled announced or unannounced observations can remove them from their caseloads. If they have not started these scheduled observations, other observers can still go in and start observations for windows where only one observation is allowed.

 [See the steps:](#)

For detailed guides and information, download the [14.4 Release Notes](#) or access our comprehensive [Support Library](#).

- iii. Remove all print conditions wherever you see them, and never use them again. Can anyone think of a case where something needs to be conditioned out or into a print doc? Avoid using page and chapter numbers – PDFs have links, just like Webhelp.
- iv. Project Import the Operations topic from User Management and include it in every help system.
- v. Related topics vs. Relationship Tables

### See the Steps

- Follow an introduction/why am I doing this/concept paragraph.

**Use** “See the steps” as an introduction to a procedure, using a drop-down. When there are multiple steps, “See the steps for \*role\*” “See the steps for \*more specific procedure\*”.

## What’s New Content

Use the following style conventions when writing your What’s New content for each release:

- Title - a brief descriptive title
- Description - a 3-4 sentence description of the new feature (do not use bulleted lists)

- Images - include a thumbnail sized image where applicable. Add a 1 px border to every image.
- Configuration settings - keep references to system settings non-specific. Do not link to system topics or provide images of system settings, or direct the user on how/where to set up system configurations.

## User Interface Copy

**Tone:** Informal, professional

**Tenor:** Active voice, present tense use natural language

**End Punctuation:** Use only one space between sentences, after end punctuation.

**Headings & subheadings:** Make short and easy to read.

**Buttons/Links:** Use buttons for actions. Begin with a verb. Capitalize the first letter of the first word. If necessary, use the second person (you, your) to tell users what to do, and use the first person (I, me, my) to let users tell the program what to do.-‘ *Download*’- ‘ *Open an account*’ – ‘ *Choose what you want to print*’ – ‘ *Print the photos on my camera*’

- Use sentence-case capitalization and keep copy to a minimum and keywords for link text. Examples:
- **Save** vs. **Yes, save**
- Download vs. Download file now

**Page Titles & Descriptions:** Keep titles short and use keywords to easily identify the available features/actions on a page. For example: Create Test versus Create a test for the online test tunnel.

### Capitalization:

- Capitalize first letter of Schoolnet and always bold it (and use the ® symbol the first instance)
- Capitalize every letter of the names on Tabs in the top menu bar – ‘CLASSES’ - ‘GRADES’
- Capitalize first letter of all main words in page titles, wherever they appear on the page in the UI –‘Select a Class’, ‘Browse Programs’, ‘Students & Groups’, ‘Class Data Overview’, ‘Table of Contents’ and also when referring to them in support docs –‘the Create a Class page’.
- Capitalize first letter of all main words in the secondary menu (subnav) bar in the UI – ‘Table of Contents’ – ‘Standards’ – ‘Tools’

- Capitalize first letter of all sentences
- Capitalize first letter of all proper names
- Capitalize first letter of first word on buttons - 'Go back'
- Capitalize first letter of first word in dialog boxes (placeholder prompts) - 'Search for content'
- Capitalize first letter of stand-alone words in the UI - 'Undo'
- Capitalize first letter of first word in quick links - 'Hide class', 'Students & groups'
- Capitalize first letter of names of the data graphs when you refer to the graphs in write-ups and support documents - 'the Progress graph'
- Capitalize first letter of the first word on x and y axis of all graphs.
- Do not capitalize the T and the C in the word 'table of contents' unless beginning a sentence and if then, capitalize only the T. (abbreviated TOC). In the UI, capitalize both T and C if it's a page title.
- Do **not** capitalize *class, test, assignment, program, data, mastery, progress, usage, standard or grade* except when following the rules as outlined above.

**Dashes & Ellipses:** Use an en dash – for ranges (with no spaces in between) - '9 a.m.–2 p.m.' 'Refer to pages 16–24'. Use Ellipses when additional information that cannot fit.

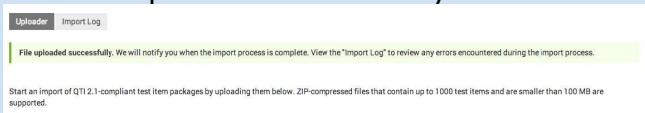
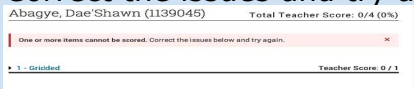
**Show/Hide** to expand/collapse copy.

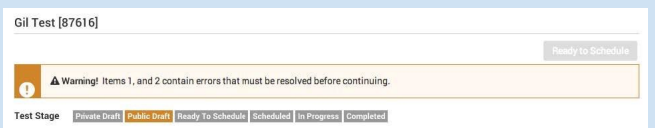

### **Messaging:**

In 1-2 sentences:

- i. Be as specific as possible
- ii. Be as obvious as possible
- iii. Don't overwhelm the users with needless information
- iv. Provide additional guidance - if there is a remedy that can be performed by the user, be sure to include it in the message.
- v. Use active voice and natural language.
- vi. Use end punctuation.

- vii. Capitalization the first letter of main works for short messages: Download Now vs. Download now.

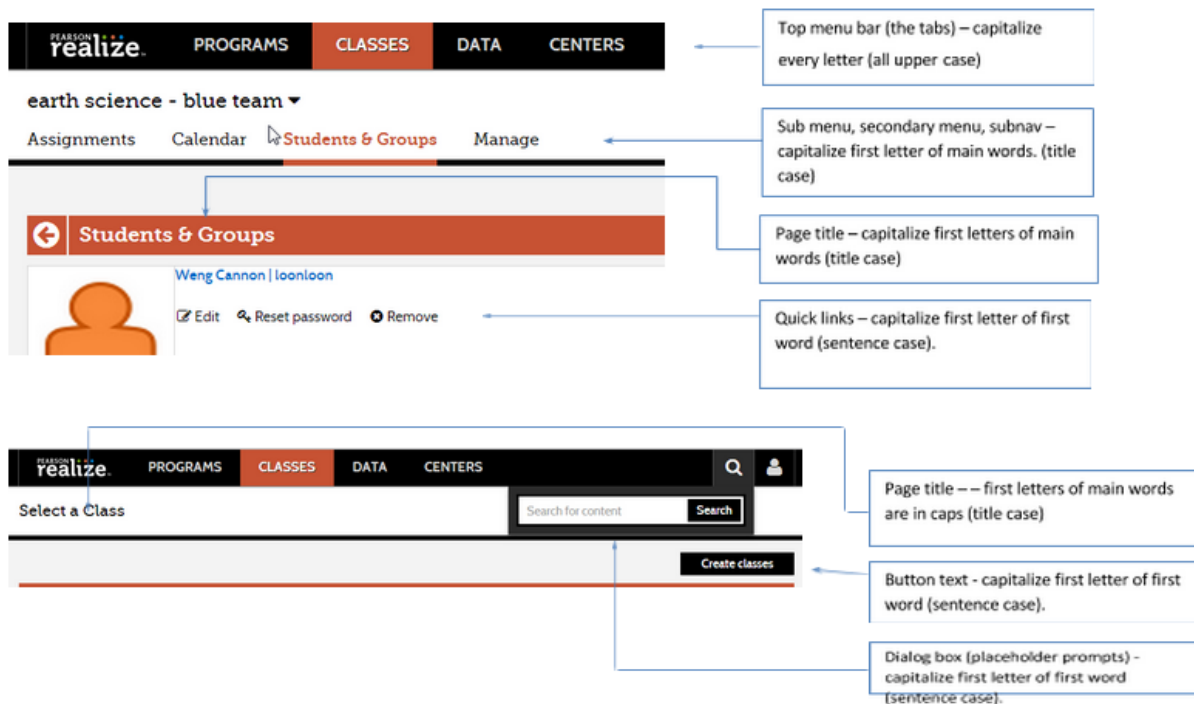
Message Type	Definition	Examples
Application Errors	System errors.	<p>Do: The report server is not configured properly. Contact your Schoolnet administrator for further assistance.</p> <p>Do Not: The report server is not configured properly. Please contact your local support representative or your Schoolnet Project Manager.</p>
Application Modals	System pop-up messages that prompt users	<p>Do: Informational, but as short as possible. Only include info that's relevant for the user to know. "Are you sure? This action cannot be undone. Delete/Cancel".</p> <p>Do Not: Too long, short, and/or repetitive. "Delete Comment / Are you sure you want to delete this comment? / Delete/Cancel".</p>
Inline	User enters invalid data to a field.	<p>Do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Title is required.</li> <li>Invalid characters.</li> </ul> <p>Do Not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Please enter a descriptive title for this material.</li> <li>Invalid Characters.</li> </ul>
Success	Action/Task completed	<p>Do: File uploaded successfully.</p> 
Exception	Action cannot be completed.	<p>Do: One or more items cannot be scored. Correct the issues and try again.</p>  <p>Do not: Please fix all issues and try again.</p>
Progress	Activity or request is processing	<p>Do: Your work item export is in progress. You will be notified here when the export process is finished.</p>

Warning	Informational signifies a potential error	
Alert	Action is required in order to proceed.	<p>Do: Not worth any points</p> <p>Do Not: This item is not worth any points and cannot be saved.</p>
Global	Informational only.	

## Resources:

<http://unmatchedstyle.com/news/microcopy-why-is-it-so-important.php>

<http://signalvnoise.com/posts/3633-on-writing-interfaces-well>



## Terminology:

See Schoolnet Acceptable Terms List

- email not e-mail
- website not Website or Web site
- Web part not webpart
- Home Page

## Conditions

Conditions in Flare are used to include or exclude content from publication. The Schoolnet documentation uses the following conditions:

Default	Conditions used to control specific content
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For Review	No longer used since all doc changes tracked in Rally.
Hide	Hide - used when teams won't be releasing for the current release.
In Progress	Help file not complete - hide in targets.
PowerSchool	Content is applicable to Schoolnet customers that are integrated with PowerSchool SIS.
PrintOnly	For Print/PDF only.
ScreenOnly	For screen/Webhelp only.
StateImplementation	For State-specific output only. Currently not used, but may be needed in the future.
What's New	Content is for What's New.
For Students	Content is for students only. Currently used only in MSN, but may be used in other projects in the future.
Not for Students	Content is NOT for students. Currently used only in MSN, but may be used in other projects in the future.

Products	Conditions used to control inclusion in specific product guides
Advanced Analysis	Advanced Analysis (Analyze)
Assessment Admin	Assessment Admin (Assess)
Classrooms	Classrooms (Align)
ED General	Educator Development: General (PD)
ED PD Planner	Educator Development: PD Planner (PD)
General Admin Guide	General System Operator Guide (Admin)
Interventions	Interventions (Respond)
My Schoolnet	My Schoolnet (MSN)
Outreach	Outreach (Outreach)



Sand DD	School and District Data (Account)
ScanIt	ScanIt (Assess)
Secure Tester	Secure Tester (Assess)
Teacher Compass	Teacher Compass User Guide (PD)
Student My Schoolnet	My Schoolnet Student (MSN)

<b>EDSProducts</b>	<b>Conditions used for PD Planner Guides</b>
EducatorDevelopment	Educator Development: General User Guide (PD Planner)
PDPlanner	Educator Development: PD Planner User Guide (PD Planner)
TeacherCompass	Teacher Compass User Guide (PD Planner)