



2002-2003

Web Style Guide
for the
District of Columbia



Web Style Guide for the District of Columbia 2002–2003

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Introduction

The *Web Style Guide* provides clear, up-to-date, and easy-to-use guidelines for content on the District of Columbia portal (<http://www.dc.gov>). It also details how to write or edit documents, memos, and presentations in the style and format authorized for the DC portal. The guide covers punctuation, capitalization, spelling, terminology, word or formatting usage as well as names, numbers, bullets, hyphenation, abbreviations, and acronyms. The online version of the guide will address new style issues as they emerge. For your convenience, *Web Style Guide* items are listed in alphabetical order.

Who needs this guide?

The style guide is for all District employees who produce written materials for internal and public use as well as those who contribute to the District of Columbia web portal. It can be printed or viewed online.

Why is style important?

Content is *what* is written; and style is *how* that content is written. Style has a major impact on whether people perceive content as authoritative, reliable, and believable. Keep in mind these general style principles:

- Write simply, directly, and accurately.
- Focus on the needs of the audience and anticipate how it will receive the information.
- Establish a logical order.
- Avoid long sentences and long paragraphs; vary sentence and paragraph length.
- Use active voice whenever possible.
- Use adjectives and adverbs sparingly.
- Use appropriate nouns and verbs.
- Avoid overuse of the verb *to be*.
- Use headlines, summaries, and bullet points.
- Avoid jargon.
- Above all, be consistent.

What improves readability?

A highly readable web page has a reading level that's appropriate for the audience. Craft your message to suit the medium and the audience. Write clearly and use simple language to deal with complex issues.

What do readers and web users expect?

People rarely read every word of text. They usually scan newspapers and magazines until they find what they need or come across something that interests them. They look for meaningful words, sentences, headings, subheadings, lists, and summaries. Once they have a general idea of the content, they look for more specific facts.

Web users are no different. In general, they're impatient and demanding. If they're not pulled in immediately (often in as few as three to six seconds), they move on. In addition, low resolution on some computer screens can make it difficult to read every word of text (the rate is about 25 percent slower than reading print on paper). People typically read half the number of words on the web that they would read in a printed publication.

Each page on a website has to compete with many other pages for the user's attention. Lives are hectic and fast-paced—people don't have the time to work hard for their information. They expect text to be succinct and clearly written. They know that internal and external links will provide additional content and navigational help. They expect consistency throughout the website.

Web content should be clear, concise, organized logically, and highly readable. Readability formulas such as the Fog Index can be used to gauge the difficulty of written material according to the grade level needed to understand it. Ideally, the content on agency sites should be at a 6th to 8th grade reading level and should not exceed a 12th grade reading level. See the *Professional's Guide to Web Standards* for more information on readability standards and the Fog Index.

Style and Usage Standards

abbreviations: Avoid abbreviations except as necessary. When used, capitalize abbreviations of capitalized words: *Aug (August), Mon (Monday), St (Street)*. In tables and calendars, there should be no punctuation after abbreviations.

If a document, press release, or website subsection is longer than one page, include a partial title and *Cont.* in parentheses on subsequent pages. The abbreviation *Cont.* and the parentheses should be in Arial 2 font and should not be bold. For example:

- If the title on page one is:
DC's Radiological Readiness Benefits from Federal Reuse Program
- The title on subsequent pages should be:
Radiological Readiness (Cont.)

See **Appendix B** for a list of common abbreviations.

academic degrees: Capitalize specific degrees and their abbreviations (no periods) following proper names. Lowercase the subject of study if it is not part of the formal name of the degree. Set the generic or informal form of the degree (e.g. bachelor's) in lowercase.

- The Mayor graduated magna cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts in political science from Yale College.
- Charles Smith earned a juris doctorate from Harvard Law.
- Linda Evans earned a master's degree in public policy from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.
- Susan Jones graduated from American University with an MA in literature.

acronyms: Use the actual title followed by the acronym (uppercase in parentheses) in the first reference on a page. Then use the acronym.

- Some agencies currently use the Comprehensive Automated Personnel and Payroll System (CAPPS). The committee votes next week on adopting CAPPS District-wide.

See list of abbreviations and acronyms in **Appendix D**.

active voice: The active voice is direct, authoritative, and usually more concise. *The Council provides insight*, is preferable to *Insight was provided by the Council*.

address format: Use three-line format.* Do not include *One Judiciary Square* in addresses of DC government agencies located at 441 4th Street. It's the building name, not its address, and could confuse people. Spell out North and South. Insert a space between the suite number and North or South. Use two spaces

*For mail, the United States Postal Service prefers addresses with all caps and no punctuation.

between the state abbreviation and zip code. In address footers on agency home pages, insert two spaces between the zip code and phone number. Do not spell out numbered streets. On contact information pages, phone numbers go directly beneath addresses. When an attention line is necessary, make it the first rather than the last line of the address.

- Address format for footer on dc.gov home page:

State Education Office

441 4th Street, NW, Suite 350 North
Washington, DC 20001 (202) 727-6436

- Address format for website contact information pages:

State Education Office

441 4th Street, NW, Suite 350 North
Washington, DC 20001
Phone: (202) 727-6436
Fax: (202) 727-2834
Email: seo@dc.gov

DC Tuition Assistance Grant Program

441 4th Street, NW, Suite 350 North
Washington, DC 20001
Phone: (202) 727-2824
Toll free: 1(877) 485-6751
Spanish: (202) 727-8450
TTY: (202) 727-1675
Email: seo@dc.gov

- Attention line address format:

Attention: Program Director
DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities
410 8th Street, NW, 5th Floor
Washington, DC 20004

age: Always use figures.

- Even a 10 year old could understand this sentence (no hyphens for nouns)
- Her son is 5 years old (no hyphens)
- Girls ages 16–20

ampersand (&): In general avoid use of the ampersand (&). However, it should be used instead of the word *and* in the left navigation bar on agency websites. The ampersand may also be used in tables and agency home pages to save space.

and: Use the word *and* (instead of the ampersand) in most titles if space allows. Do not capitalize.

apostrophes: Form plurals without an apostrophe, e.g. *Agents and Brokers Licenses* (DISR), or *ABCs of Life* (DPR). There is no apostrophe after the s in *Williams Administration* unless it is possessive.

- Usual usage: The Williams Administration has a snow plan.
- Possessive: Mayor Williams' administration has been working toward home rule.

articles: Unless they begin a sentence, set articles, conjunctions, and short prepositions in lowercase (also lowercase *a, an, and, at, for, from, in, of, on, or, the, to, with*).

Board of Education: Do not use *School Board*.

bridges: Capitalize names of individual bridges, e.g. *Key Bridge*.

buildings: Capitalize names of individual buildings, e.g. *Library of Congress*.

bullet points: If the sequence isn't important, use bullets instead of numbers or letters in a list. Use solid black circles only. Use bullet punctuation consistently (no punctuation after a sentence fragment, period at the end of a full sentence). Use parallel construction to increase readability and consistency, i.e. if the first two bullets begin with an action verb, the subsequent bullets should as well. For example:

When applying to college, it's important to be prepared:

- Find out application deadline dates.
- Schedule visits to several campuses.
- Choose at least one school that is a sure thing.
- Ask someone to edit or review your essays.

The company accepts the following forms of identification:

- Driver's license
- Birth certificate
- Social Security card

Use bullet points on website home pages under SERVICES and INFORMATION. Alphabetize items or put them in logical order according to priority or topic. Indent three non-breaking spaces from the beginning line if a bullet point item on the front page wraps to a second or third line.

Capitol vs. capital: The Capitol is the actual building where the House and Senate are located. The capital is the city or area where the government is situated.

caption: Left justify captions for website photos. If two or more individuals are in a photo, list names starting from the left and include the words *from left* before the list. For example:



District officials accept radiological equipment from the federal government. From left: Interim Fire/EMS Chief Adrian Thompson, Deputy Mayor Margaret Kellems, and DC Emergency Management Agency Director Peter LaPorte.

chair/chairman/chairperson/chairwoman: Use *chairman* or *chairwoman* if the gender is known.

- Chairwoman Gloria Tate
- Chairman Henry Ford

For a neutral reference, use *chair* (technically, chairperson is acceptable, but not preferred.) If a personal preference has been indicated, use that term.

- Commission on Education Chair Doris Flowers
- Letter from the Chair or the Chairwoman's letter
- DC Council Chairman Linda W. Cropp (according to DC Bylaws)

citizen(s): Use the word *resident(s)*, not *citizen(s)*.

city council: Use *the Council of the District of Columbia* or *DC Council* rather than *DC city council* or *city council*. Use initial caps.

city: When referring to Washington, DC, the word *District* is preferable to the word *city*. Unless it is in a title or at the beginning of a sentence, *city* is not capitalized: *The city is one of the first locations to have an intra-governmental link.*

citywide: Do not hyphenate this word. Use initial caps when appropriate.

colon: The colon is primarily used to introduce a list, often after expressions such as *the following* or *as follows*.

- Loretta Schwieterman appointed three people to the committee: David Allen, Greg Edwards, and Jean Rheinhard.

The colon is also used to emphasize a word, words, or sentence. When used this way, the colon replaces such words as *that is*, *namely*, and *for example*.

- She had only one thing on her mind: flowers.

Capitalize the first word after a colon if it is a proper noun or the start of a complete sentence.

- The news was good: No one would be laid off.

colors: The following color standards have been established for:

- **The DC portal*:** #001864 blue and #FF0000 red
- **DC government stars and bars logo:** PMS 185 (red) and white
- **OCTO print materials:** PMS 282 (Old Glory Blue) and PMS 193 (Old Glory Red)

commas: Use commas to punctuate a series of three or more words, phrases, or thoughts, including the word or phrase before *and*.

- Jeff was interested in the website, book, and TV version of life in Washington.

company and corporation names: Give the full name (initial caps) in straight text. It is best to list a company exactly as it is legally listed. Usually *Inc* and *Ltd* are dropped. If it is widely recognized, the full name may be shortened:

- Xerox Corporation, Xerox
- General Foods Corporation, General Foods
- the Smithsonian Institution, the Smithsonian

The current trend favors omitting periods whenever possible (*Bros, Co, Corp, Inc, Ltd*). Many companies and organizations use all caps or small caps for their names and/or the names of their products. All caps, however, should generally be limited to acronyms and abbreviations. To avoid confusion, begin all company and product names with a capital letter, regardless of how the company does it (Excite, not excite).

Exceptions: names that begin with a lowercase *i* for Internet or *e* for electronic, followed by a capital (*iMac, eBay*). When a sentence begins with one of these names, however, the *i* or *e* is capitalized (*IVillage*). Try to structure sentences so this doesn't happen.

*For more information on website standards see the *Professional's Guide to Web Standards*.

compass points: Capitalize when used in reference to directions and quadrants. Omit periods (*N, E, S, W, NE, NW, SE, SW*). Capitalize when used in reference to major regions, specific cultures, proper names, and quadrants in DC (*the Pacific Northwest, the East Coast, the Deep South, Eastern states, Northwest DC, East of the River*). Set them in lowercase when used as directions, e.g. *Turn north at the second light.*

compose, comprise, and constitute: Compose means to create or put together. Comprise means to be made up of. *Comprised of* is redundant; use *comprises* instead. Constitute means to be the elements of and may work best when neither compose nor comprise seem to fit.

- The book is composed of 80# bond paper.
- The book comprises many different points of view.
- The various sections constitute the entire book.

Congress: Capitalize when referring to both the US Senate and House of Representatives.

conjunctions: In titles, capitalize conjunctions with four or more letters (exception: with, from). See **Appendix A** for parts of speech and their definitions.

contacts: Use the title of the contact (not the person's name) and phone number. Email should be a generic name assigned to the department.

- For more information, call the communications manager at (202) 727-2727.
- **Email** the communications manager.

continued: If a document, press release, or website subsection is longer than one page, include a partial title and (*Cont.*) on subsequent pages. The abbreviation *Cont.* and the parentheses should be in Arial 2 font and should not be bold. For example:

- If the title on page one is:
DC's Radiological Readiness Benefits from Federal Reuse Program

The title on subsequent pages is:
Radiological Readiness (Cont.)

Council of the District of Columbia: For brevity, use *DC Council*. Do not use *DC city council* or *city council*, Use *the council* in subsequent references.

Councilmember: This word is usually two separate words, but inside the DC government, it is used as a single term, i.e. *Councilmember Kathleen Patterson*.

date formats: Whenever possible, use month (spelled out), day, and year. In tables, calendar events, or other appropriate areas, abbreviate the month and use dashes to separate the numerals for month, day, and year.

Dashes are preferable to slashes because they help to retain data during database conversions. (Slashes are interpreted as delimiters by most programs.) The date September 11, should be abbreviated 9-11 not 9/11. Do not use *st*, *nd*, *rd*, or *th*.

- January 31, 2002; not 31 January 2002
- Jan 31 (in tables)
- 1-31-02 not 1/31/02

When typing a date in which the apostrophe represents a century—*Class of '99*, *the '60s*—be sure to use a **right** single quote, which is the same as the apostrophe. Your word processor would probably insert a left single quote, but that would be incorrect.

days: Capitalize days of the week (*Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday*). Abbreviations without punctuation (*Mon, Tues, Wed, Thurs, Fri, Sat, Sun*) may be used to save space.

DC portal: Do not capitalize *portal*.

degrees: See **temperature**.

departments: See **governmental and judicial bodies**.

dev: This abbreviation for the DC WAN development server is always lowercased and not written with a period.

directions: See **compass points, quadrants**.

District government: *District* is capitalized, *government* is not.

District-wide: Hyphenate. In titles and headlines, capitalize *Wide*, e.g. *District-Wide Services*.

dot-com: Hyphenate. In titles and headlines, capitalize the *d* and the *c*: *Stock Market Dashes Dot-Com Dreams*.

e.g.: Short for *exempli gratia*, *e.g.* means *for example*; if no other mark precedes the abbreviation, place a comma before it. No comma is necessary after the abbreviation.

em dashes: Use em dashes, not double hyphens, to denote abrupt changes in thought or sentence structure, to amplify explanatory or digressive elements, and to set off defining elements inserted into sentences. Em dashes within sentences should be set with no extra space on either side.

- All at once Cartwright—gripped by jealousy and rage—shook his fist in the ambassador's face.
- When I saw the letter, I was consumed by one thing—anticipation.
- Because the data had not been completely analyzed—the reason for this will be discussed later—the publication of the report was delayed.

Do not capitalize the first letter of the word following an em dash unless it is part of a title. A **single hyphen** should never be used as a stand-in for an em dash.

The HTML code for the em dash is —.

en dashes: Half the length of em dashes and longer than hyphens, en dashes are used to connect continuing or inclusive numbers, dates, or times.

- 1968–72
- 10 am–5 am
- pp. 38–45

En dashes within sentences should be set with no extra space on either side.

The HTML code for the en dash is –.

email: Do not hyphenate. Only capitalize at the beginning of a sentence or in a title. Use lowercase and hyphen for *e-government* and *e-commerce*.

etc.: Do not use the abbreviation of et cetera. All references to this word should be deleted.

FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions): Do not spell out. Do not use an apostrophe between the Q and the s. Most people familiar with the Internet know what *FAQ* means.

fax: This is used as a noun, adjective, and verb. Do not use *FAX*. When providing a fax number along with an address, *Fax:* should go in front of the fax number.

- **State Education Office**
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 350 North
Washington, DC 20001
Phone: (202) 727-6436
Fax: (202) 727-2834
Email: seo@dc.gov

federal: Only capitalize if used to describe an architectural style or if part of a formal name, e.g. *Federal Trade Commission*. Lowercase if used as an adjective, e.g. *federal court*, *federal government*, *federal agency*.

gerunds: A gerund is a verb written with an *ing* ending that is used as a noun, e.g.:

The OBFi offers the following services:

- Helping regulate banks and financial industries
- Creating economic growth
- Working closely with industry regulators

Phrases that begin with gerunds are less effective than those that use active verbs. Whenever possible, use active verbs.

The OBFI:

- Regulates banks and financial industries
- Creates economic growth
- Works closely with industry regulators

GIF: This stands for graphics interchange format. All letters in this acronym are capitalized, and there are no periods.

government: Capitalize in full names and proper names. Lowercase when used informally or as an adjective.

- Annual DC Government Employees' One Fund Drive
- Working for the DC government
- DC government jobs
- Government of the District of Columbia

governmental and judicial bodies: Full names of legislative, deliberative, administrative, and judicial bodies; departments; bureaus; and offices are usually capitalized. Adjectives derived from them are lowercased, as are paraphrased or incomplete designations, except abbreviations.

- United States Congress; the Seventy-first Congress; Congress; congressional
- Committee on Foreign Affairs; Foreign Affairs Committee; the committee
- Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs; Consumer and Regulatory Affairs Department; DCRA; the department
- Department of Mental Health; Mental Health Department

gray: Do not use *grey* (except in *greyhound*).

greater metropolitan: Lowercase unless part of a title.

greater Washington: *Washington* is capitalized, and *greater* is not (unless it's in a title or headline).

headings: Left justify page headings and page subheadings to increase readability. For headings, use initial caps and Arial 4 font in blue (#001864) (formerly <bold>). For subheadings, use initial caps and Arial 2 font in black (#000000) (formerly <bold>). For example:

DC Champion Trees Program

Judging Criteria

The UFA judges trees on a point system based upon circumference, height, and average crown spread measurements. Circumference is measured in inches, at a point on the trunk 4 ½ feet above ground.

headlines: Use initial caps. Set articles, conjunctions, and short prepositions in lowercase. Capitalize conjunctions and prepositions with four or more letters (except *from* and *with*). Headlines should include a noun (subject) and a verb/implied verb (action word)—not just titles or topic headings.

- **Protect Yourself from Consumer Fraud** instead of **Consumer Fraud**.
- **Lottery at \$14 Million** instead of **Lottery of \$14 Million**.
- **Woman Rescued from Capitol Hill Fire** instead of **Capitol Hill Row House Fire**.

See **Appendix A** for parts of speech and their definitions.

health care: Normally two words when used as a noun or an adjective. It may be used as one word (*healthcare*) or hyphenated (*health-care*)—this is not preferred but acceptable.

home page: Write as two words.

hyphens: Use in fractions whether nouns or adjectives (e.g. *one-third*) and adjectives made up of two or more words (e.g. *full-service facility*). Unless used in tables, hyphens should be set with no extra space on either side. In tables where continuing or inclusive numbers are listed, a single hyphen with a space on either side may be used instead of an en dash.

In titles of documents, headlines or page headers, use initial caps for hyphenated words made up of two words that can stand alone independently. Hyphenated words that include prefixes should not use initial caps. Set articles (*a, an, the*), conjunctions (*and, but, or, so*), and short prepositions (*at, for, from, in, of, on, to, with*) in lowercase. Capitalize conjunctions and prepositions with four or more letters (exception: *from, with*).

- Well-Being
- Re-emerge
- The Grants-in-Aid to Organizations Program
- Over-the-Hill

The following words are hyphenated. Use initial caps where appropriate:

- Full-scale
- Full-service
- Web-based
- Well-being

Do not hyphenate:

- Citywide
- Email
- Online
- Onsite
- Web page

If in doubt about whether or not a word is hyphenated, use a dictionary. Search Merriam-Webster's online dictionary at <http://www.m-w.com/> or <http://webster.com>, or the Random House online dictionary at <http://www.infoplease.com/dictionary.html>.

See **Appendix B** for a more extensive list of hyphenated, compound, and problem words.

hyperlinks: See **links**.

i.e.: Short for *id est*, *i.e.* means *that is*. If no other mark precedes the abbreviation, place a comma before it. No comma is necessary after the abbreviation. Use with or without parentheses:

- DPW collects all refuse, *i.e.* bulk items, household trash, and hazardous materials.
- DPW collects all refuse (*i.e.* bulk items, household trash, and hazardous materials).

incident vs. incidence: An *incident* is the occurrence of an action or situation that is a separate unit of experience. *Incidence* refers to the rate of occurrence or influence:

- He denied involvement in last week's incident.
- Last year there was a high incidence of crime in the city.

in-house: Hyphenate.

inner city: Write as two words as a noun and hyphenate when used as an adjective.

- The inner city was much safer than I expected.
- Inner-city schools won't thrive without the proper funding.

Internet: Always capitalize.

intranet: Do not capitalize.

its: When written without an apostrophe, *its* is a possessive pronoun meaning *of it* or *belonging to it*, e.g. *A flower is known for its beauty*.

it's: When written with an apostrophe, *it's* is a contraction for *it is* or *it has*, e.g. *It's a girl* or *It's been enjoyable*.

kilobytes: Abbreviate with the capital letter *K*. When listing the number of kilobytes, there should be no space between the number and the *K*.

- Do: 300K
- Don't: 300 K

links: When linking to an email address or another website, don't display the URL in the text.

- **Email** the CFO for more information.
- For more information, visit the Office of the Chief Financial Officer **website**.

lists: See **bullets**.

log on: Use two words, lowercase, as a verb (*to log on to a network*). Use one word for adjectives (*logon password, logon routine*) and nouns (*his logon is abjones*).

Mayor: Always capitalize *Mayor* when referring to the District's Mayor.

- Mayor Anthony Williams
- Today, the Mayor was quoted.

margins: Left-justify text and headings except in tables.

Metro: Use initial caps when referring to the transit system. Lowercase when referring to the metropolitan area.

names: Capitalize names of legislative and administrative groups and/or organizations. Adjectives and paraphrased designations are usually lowercased:

- The Williams Administration
- The Mayor and his administration
- The Government of the District of Columbia
- Annual DC Government Employees' One Fund Drive
- Working for the DC government
- DC government jobs
- Board of Directors
- A board member
- The board

See also **governmental and judicial bodies, personal names**.

nation's capital: Lowercase.

navigation bar: The blue left navigation bar should list links in the following order. Indent three non-breaking spaces from the beginning line if a navigation bar item wraps to a second or third line.

[AGENCY] HOME

About [Agency]
Ask the Director
Comments & Feedback
News Room
FAQs
Scorecard
Contact Information
Employment Opportunities
Helpful Links
Site Map

SERVICES

(Arrange alphabetically or in another logical order.)

INFORMATION

(Arrange alphabetically or in another logical order.)

ONLINE SERVICE REQUESTS

For more information on website standards, see the *Professional's Guide to Web Standards 2002–2004*.

number: Use the word *number* instead of the # symbol. In tables, the symbol is acceptable. In text, use *goal number one*, *first goal*, or *primary goal* instead of *goal #1*.

numerals: Numbers from one to nine should be spelled out as a word (*one*, *two*, *three...*), unless they are in tables, sentences, or paragraphs with multi-digit numbers. Double digits and multi digits are written as numbers, unless they begin a sentence. Use commas to separate thousands in number amounts (e.g. *1,000* or *\$15,335*). In tables with numbers in a column, line up the decimal points (even if one or more of the numbers is zero).

- There were 20 people at the meeting, but only 9 people at the reception afterward.
- Three hundred paintings hang on the museum's walls.

Spell out places (*first*, *second*, *third*) unless they refer to street numbers or double digit numbers.

- The District won first, second, and third place in the website contest.
- Please contact us at 441 4th Street, NW.
- Jim is ranked 10th in the nation.

offices: See **governmental and judicial bodies**.

online: Do not hyphenate. Use initial caps where appropriate.

onsite: Do not hyphenate. Use initial caps where appropriate.

parts of speech: See **Appendix A**.

passive voice: Try to avoid using the passive voice.

- Do: The Council provides insight.
- Don't: The Council was chosen to provide insight.

- Do: DPR offers a variety of services.
- Don't: A variety of services are offered by DPR.

percent: In bullets and tables, show percentages using numbers and symbols. It makes the information stand out, and it is easier to read or skim. Spell out the word *percent* in press releases and other printed documents, unless complex statistical data or multiple percentages are being given.

periods: Do not use periods between the letters in abbreviations or acronyms (e.g. *ID, IRS, NATO*). (See **Appendix D** for more abbreviations and acronyms.) Do not use periods between letters in *US, DC*, and all street quadrants (*NW, SW, NE, SE*). Use *am* and *pm*, not *a.m.* and *p.m.* Use *BA, MA* and *PhD*, not *B.A., M.A.,* and *Ph.D.*

personal names: Omit commas before and after *Jr.* and *Sr.*, and after roman numerals.

- Charles Williams Jr. ran for Congress.
- Charles Williams III ran for Congress.

phone numbers: The standard format is: (*area code*) xxx-yyy. Insert a space after the parentheses. If there is an extension, insert a space after the phone number and use *ext.* before the extension number. In home page address footers, include TDD, TTY, and 800 numbers on the same line as phone numbers. If there are two or more phone numbers on the same line, insert three spaces between each group of numbers. Emergency and non-emergency numbers should be used without dashes, i.e. *911* and *311* instead of *9-1-1* and *3-1-1*.

- Standard format: (202) 342-2000
- Fax format: Fax: (202) 234-7678
- Extension format: (202) 337-2100 ext. 307
- TDD and TTY format:
DC Department of Employment Services
609 H Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 724-7000 TDD: (202) 698-4817

- Emergency format:
Call 911 for emergency assistance.
Call 311 for non-emergency assistance.
- Toll-free format: 1(800) 555-1212

plural or collective nouns: Many words (including *faculty, committee, board, youth, staff, team, class, public, group, and data*) can be both singular and plural. The choice of a singular or plural verb depends upon whether the intent is to refer to the group as a whole or to the members of the group. For clarity, it helps to add *members of* before the reference.

- Our department's faculty is highly respected in international professional circles.
- Members of the faculty are highly respected.

position titles: When referring to a specific District employee, board member, or other city representative, capitalize the title. Lowercase the title if it comes after the person's name. Generic titles should also be lowercased (*the director, agency webmasters*). Exceptions: *the Mayor, Councilmember*.

- Chief Financial Officer Dr. Natwar Gandhi
- Neil Albert, director of the Department of Public Works
- agency directors
- the director

prepositions: In document or page titles and headlines, capitalize prepositions with four or more letters (except *from* and *with*).

- News Travels Quickly Around Town
- Annual Budget to be Finalized Next Month
- Mayor Acquires Funds from Federal Agency

public-private partnerships: Use hyphens instead of slashes.

- Do: The theme of the OPGD conference is public-private partnerships.
- Don't: The District seeks public/private partnerships.

publications: Italicize publication or program names not databases, forms, or files, e.g.:

- *Web Standards Kit*
- DC portal database.

See **titles**.

quadrants: Capitalize quadrants in DC (e.g. *Northwest DC, East of the River*). Omit periods when abbreviating (e.g. *N, E, S, W, NE, NW, SE, SW*).

quotation marks: Unless providing a direct quote, use quotation marks sparingly. Use italics or an alternate sentence construction to call attention to a word or phrase.

real time: This is written as two words without a hyphen.

regions: See **compass points**.

seasons: Do not capitalize, unless part of a proper name or title. Use the season and the year.

- She was elected in fall 1991.
- Fall Schedule of Activities

second-guess: Hyphenate.

semiautomatic: Do not hyphenate.

September 11: The date September 11, should be abbreviated 9-11 not 9/11.

Services and Information categories: Form plurals without an apostrophe, e.g. *Agents and Brokers Licenses* (DISR), or *ABCs of Life* (DPR). Use bullet points on the home page under SERVICES and INFORMATION. Alphabetize items or put them in logical order according to priority or topic. If a bullet item wraps, indent the next line three non-breaking spaces.

shall or will: Try to avoid the future tense. Use the present tense instead. When the future tense can't be avoided, use *will* instead of *shall*.

staff: This word can be both singular and plural. The choice of a singular or plural verb depends upon whether the intent is to refer to the group as a whole or to the members of the group. For clarity, it helps to add *members of* before the reference.

- The agency's staff is top-notch.
- Several members of the agency's staff were there.

state abbreviations: Use the two-letter United States Postal Service abbreviations without periods, e.g. DC, MD, VA. See **Appendix C** for a complete list of state abbreviations.

subheads: Write subheads (located below headlines on dc.gov home pages under *Agency News*) as complete sentences. Do not repeat information already included in the headlines. Subheads appear in sentence case (no initial caps).

Headline:	District Employees Receive Pocket Guide
Correct subhead:	The handy reference directory provides District agency and topic listings. Full Text
Headline:	District Employees Receive Pocket Guide
Incorrect subhead:	District Agency and Topic Listings. Full Text

tables: Use tables to reduce the amount of space needed to display information or data. Abbreviations (e.g. *Jan, Feb, Mon, Tues, St, Ave*) and symbols (e.g. *%, #*) are permitted in tables. Times should be presented in three or four digits (3:00, 10:00) so they line up in the column.

Connect continuing or inclusive numbers, dates, or times with an en dash (no spaces on either side) or a single hyphen with one space on either side.

Program	Description	Ages
Black History Quiz Bowl	Teams from each ward will answer questions on achievements and accomplishments of African-American heroes.	13 - 19
Clothesline Project	The focus of Domestic Violence Awareness Month is to educate teens and their families about the extent of violence against women and the effects on the battered individuals and their families and friends.	13 - 19
Junior Roving Leader Program	This program is comprised of young adults throughout the District who are between the ages 16 to 24, and successfully enrolled in an academic or vocational program.	136- 24

In tables that consist of a list of items, alphabetize items by going down column one, then wrapping to the top of column two, and so forth (not horizontally by row).

Alabama	Hawaii	Michigan	North Carolina	Texas
Alaska	Idaho	Minnesota	North Dakota	Utah
Arizona	Illinois	Mississippi	Ohio	Vermont
Arkansas	Indiana	Missouri	Oklahoma	Virgin Islands
California	Iowa	Montana	Oregon	Virginia
Colorado	Kansas	Nebraska	Pennsylvania	Washington
Connecticut	Kentucky	Nevada	Puerto Rico	West Virginia
Delaware	Louisiana	New Hampshire	Rhode Island	Wisconsin
District of Columbia	Maine	New Jersey	South Carolina	Wyoming
Florida	Maryland	New Mexico	South Dakota	Other
Georgia	Massachusetts	New York	Tennessee	

If the column containing the date is wide enough, spell it out, e.g. *January 30*. If not, abbreviate the month: *Jan 30*.

Form #	Title	Filing Date
100	Power of Attorney Declaration	As necessary
101	Request for Certified Copy of Individual or Business Tax Return	As necessary
102	Other Returns	On or before September 3

For calendar events, abbreviate the day of the week and give the month and day (dashes, not slashes).

Sat 11 - 23	15th Annual Fannie Mae Help the Homeless Walkathon Time: 9 am Location: National Mall between 3rd and 7th Streets
--------------------	--

temperature: When referring to temperature in degrees, insert the degree symbol and *F* after the number, e.g. *46° F*. The **HTML code for the degree symbol is º.**

TDD and TTY: TDD stands for *Telecommunications Device for the Deaf*; TTY stands for *Teletypewriters* (the original communication devices used by individuals with hearing or speech impairments). See **phone numbers** for TDD/TTY style standards.

tense: Try to use present tense (active voice) for sentences. Avoid phrases with *will* or *shall*.

- Do: The District gives users easy access to the portal.
- Don't: The District will give users access to the portal.

time: Use *am* and *pm*, not *a.m.* and *p.m.*; always provide a space between the hour and the annotation, i.e. *7 am*, not *7am*. When the time is on the hour, use the number by itself, i.e., *6 pm* not *6:00 pm*, except in a table:

Awards Luncheon Schedule	
12:00 pm	Greeting and opening remarks
12:30 pm	Guest speaker
1:30 pm	Awards ceremony

titles: Publication, TV show, report, and book titles should be italicized, not underlined or in quotes. Use initial caps for all words except articles (*a, an, the*) and short prepositions (including *at, in, on, to, from, with*). Capitalize conjunctions and prepositions with four or more letters e.g. *because, however, about, around, over*.

- *The Washington Post*
- *Catcher in the Rye*

See **position titles** or **Appendix A** (parts of speech).

today, tonight: Use only in direct quotations, such as in a news release. Otherwise, use the day of the week if it's within seven days of publication, and the day plus the date in all other cases (do not use the current year).

- "Tonight marks a new era in our administration," said the chief.
- The results were announced on Friday.
- The law was passed on Thursday, September 19.

trademark names: Capitalize trademark names, such as *Microsoft Word* or *Microsoft Excel*. It is not necessary to use the registered trademark symbols in running text. However, the product or brand name must be accurate. Check dictionaries for registered trademark names.

URL: This stands for *Uniform Resource Locator*, an informal term associated with popular Uniform Resource Identifier schemes: *http, ftp, mailto*, and others. In written text, URLs for websites on the DC portal should end with *dc.gov*, e.g. *http://cfo.dc.gov*. Do not use *www* unless it is a required part of the address. Also see **links**.

user-friendly: Hyphenate.

utilize: The word *use* is preferred.

voicemail: Do not separate or hyphenate.

website: This is one word, and is not capitalized unless it's at the beginning of a sentence.

youth: This word can be both singular and plural. The choice of a singular or plural verb depends upon whether the intent is to refer to the group as a whole or to the members of the group.

- Singular: This was designed for today's youth.
- Plural: The youth wanted their concerns addressed.

III Appendices

Appendix A: Parts of Speech

Every word in the English language functions as at least one part of speech; many words can serve, at different times, as two or more parts of speech, depending on the context.

adjective: A word or combination of words that describe (or modify) a noun.

- *blue-green* car
- *half-baked* plan
- *temporary* leave

adverb: A word that modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb.

- She walked *slowly*.
- The song was *gloriously* upbeat.

article: Any of three words used to signal the presence of a noun. The words *a* and *an* are known as indefinite articles; *the* is the definite article.

conjunction: A word that connects other words, phrases, or sentences (*and*, *but*, *or*, *because*).

- The office issued bills *and* payments.
- You may eat now *or* after the show.
- John drove to town, *but* Sheila caught a ride with Mary.

noun: A word or phrase that names a person, place, thing, quality, or act. A noun may be used as the subject of a verb, the object of a verb, or the object of a preposition.

- *Oregon* is beautiful. (subject of verb)
- I received a *letter*. (object of verb)
- The children played in the *house*. (object of preposition)

preposition: A word or phrase that shows the relationship of a noun to another noun (*at*, *about*, *around*, *by*, *in*, *on*, *to*, *from*, *with*).

- Mother is *at* work.
- I sat *in* the car.
- I'm going *to* the city.
- Lucy is *on* the phone.



pronoun: A word that substitutes for a noun and refers to a person, place, thing, idea, or act that was mentioned previously or that can be inferred from the context of the sentence (*he, she, it, that*).

- After hearing the news, *he* jumped for joy.
- Lisa plays a lot of sports. *She* barely has any free time.
- *It* didn't turn out the way I expected.
- *That* isn't what I said.

verb: A word or phrase that expresses action, existence, or occurrence (*throw, be, happen*). Verbs can be transitive, requiring an object, e.g. in the following sentence, the word *her* is the object of the word *met*: I met her.

Verbs can also be intransitive, requiring only a subject: The sun *rises*. Some verbs, such as *feel*, are both transitive and intransitive.

- Transitive: *Feel* the fabric.
- Intransitive: I feel hot. (*hot* is an adjective, not an object)

Source: Cool Fire Technology's Brain Bank website at <http://www.cftech.com/BrainBank/index.html>

Appendix B: Problem Words

These are words, acronyms, and abbreviations that are sometimes misspelled, incorrectly punctuated or capitalized, misused, used inconsistently, or about which there is confusion regarding style or usage:

3D

back up (verb), **backup** (noun and adj.)

bandwidth

citywide

DC portal

District government

dial in (verb)

dial up (verb), **dialup** (adj.)

desktop (noun and adj.)

disc (for CD-ROMs, DVDs, laserdiscs)

disk (for hard drives and floppies)

District-wide

dot-com

downtime

dpi

driver's license(s)

email

e-government

e-commerce

e-zine or **Webzine** (not 'zine)

FAQs

federal

filename

full-scale

full-service

gray (not grey)

greater metropolitan

greater Washington

look and feel

helpline

HIV positive (noun) **HIV-positive** (adj.)

home page

hotline

in-house

inner city (noun) **inner-city** (adj.)

Internet

intranet

JPEG(s)

keystroke
keyword

laptop
learner's permit(s)
listserv

log in (verb), **login** (adj.)
log off (verb), **logoff** (adj.)
log on (verb), **logon** (adj.)

MHz

mouseclick, mouseover, mousepad
multitask

new economy
newsgroup
newsreader

off line
offscreen
off site
online
onsite

printout (noun), **print out** (verb)
pulldown (adj.)

real time
reengineering

screensaver
screenshot
second-guess
semiautomatic
sought after
spellcheck (noun and verb)
spellchecker

T1, T2, T3
telnet
toolbar
touchpad



Unix
user-friendly
username

vCard
voicemail
voice over

web-based
webmaster
web-related
web page
web portal
well-being
workstation

Source: *Uncle Netword's WebStyle Guide* at www.uncle-netword.com

Appendix C: Abbreviations

Include an unfamiliar abbreviation in parenthesis (after a proper noun) before using it on second reference: *People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)*.

e.g.: Short for *exempli gratia*, *e.g.* means *for example*; if no other mark precedes the abbreviation, place a comma before it. No comma is necessary after the abbreviation.

FAQ: This stands for *Frequently Asked Question(s)*. Do not use an apostrophe for plural or possessive (*FAQs*).

i.e.: This is an abbreviation for *id est*. It means *that is*. If no other mark precedes the abbreviation, place a comma before it. No comma is necessary after the abbreviation.

initials: Omit periods after a person's initials (JFK, LBJ, MLK).

K: Short for kilobyte. When listing the number of kilobytes, there should be no space between the number and the K, e.g. *300K* not *300 K*.

names: Omit commas before and after *Jr.* and *Sr.* (*Charles Williams Jr. ran for Congress.*)

quadrants: Do not use periods between letters in directions, compass points, or street quadrants (*NW, SW, NE, SE*).

periods in abbreviations: The current trend favors omitting periods whenever possible. Do not use periods between letters in *US, DC*, and all street quadrants.

state abbreviations: Use United States Postal Service two-letter abbreviations without periods.

State Abbreviations:			
Abbr.	Name	Abbr.	Name
AL	Alabama	NV	Nevada
AK	Alaska	NH	New Hampshire
AS	American Samoa	NJ	New Jersey
AZ	Arizona	NM	New Mexico
AR	Arkansas	NY	New York
CA	California	NC	North Carolina
CO	Colorado	ND	North Dakota
CT	Connecticut	MP	Northern Mariana Islands
DE	Delaware	OH	Ohio
DC	District of Columbia	OK	Oklahoma
FM	Federated States of Micronesia	OR	Oregon

FL	Florida	PA	Pennsylvania
GA	Georgia	PR	Puerto Rico
GU	Guam	RI	Rhode Island
HI	Hawaii	SC	South Carolina
ID	Idaho	SD	South Dakota
IL	Illinois	TN	Tennessee
IN	Indiana	TX	Texas
IA	Iowa	UT	Utah
KS	Kansas	VT	Vermont
KY	Kentucky	VA	Virginia
LA	Louisiana	VI	Virgin Islands, U.S.
ME	Maine	WA	Washington
MH	Marshall Islands	WV	West Virginia
MD	Maryland	WI	Wisconsin
MA	Massachusetts	WY	Wyoming
MI	Michigan		
MN	Minnesota		
MS	Mississippi		
MO	Missouri		
MT	Montana		
NE	Nebraska		

time: Use *am* and *pm*, not *a.m.* and *p.m.*; always provide a space between the hour and the annotation, i.e. *7 am*, not *7am*.

TDD/TTY: TDD stands for *Telecommunications Device for the Deaf*; TTY stands for *Teletypewriters* (the original communication devices used by individuals with hearing or speech impairments).

Appendix D: DC Government Abbreviations

Most of the abbreviations listed here are those of District of Columbia government agencies. Only a few will be recognizable to most DC residents, so don't use them without explaining what they mean.

In general, spell out the name the first time you use it and include the abbreviation or acronym in parentheses in capital letters. After that, use the abbreviation as much as you want—although there may be cases where it is necessary to repeat the full name, or use a shortened version of the name.

Example:

The mission of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) is to prevent crime. MPD's goal is to establish the District of Columbia as the safest major city in the United States. The department works with residents to build safe and healthy neighborhoods.

ABC: Alcoholic Beverage Control

ACD: Automatic Call Distribution

ANC: Advisory Neighborhood Commission

APIA: Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs

BAR: Board of Appeals and Review

BLRA: Building and Land Regulation Administration

BRA: Business Regulation Administration

BRPAA: Board of Real Property Assessments and Appeals

BZA: Bureau of Zoning Adjustment

CAC: Citizens Advisory Council

CAPPS: Comprehensive Automated Personnel and Payroll System

CFO: Chief Financial Officer

CCRB: Citizen Complaint Review Board

CON: Certificate of Need

COPP: Communities on Phone Patrol

COS: Community Outreach Specialist

CPS: Community Partnership Section (of the MPD)

CPW: Committee to Promote Washington

CTO: Chief Technology Officer

CVCP: Crime Victims Compensation Program

DC: District of Columbia (no periods)

DCA: code for Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport

DCBOEE: DC Board of Elections and Ethics

DCCA: DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities

DCEMA: DC Emergency Management Agency

DCEO: DC Energy Office

DCHA: DC Housing Authority
DCHFPA: DC Housing Finance Agency
DCIG: DC Inspector General
DCLB: DC Lottery (and Charitable Games Control) Board
DCOA: DC Office on Aging
DCOP: DC Office of Personnel
DCOZ: DC Office of Zoning
DCPCSB: DC Public Charter School Board
DCPL: DC Public Libraries
DCPS: DC Public Schools
DCPSC: DC Public Service Commission
DCRA: Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs
DCRB: DC Retirement Board
DDOT: District Division of Transportation
DHCD: Department of Housing and Community Development
DHS: Department of Human Services
DISR: Department of Insurance and Securities Regulation
DMPED: Deputy Mayor of Planning and Economic Development
DMV: Department of Motor Vehicles
DOC: Department of Corrections
DOES: Department of Employee Services
DOH: Department of Health
DPR: Department of Parks and Recreation
DPW: Department of Public Works

EMA: Emergency Management Agency
EMS: Enterprise Management System
EOC: Emergency Operations Center
EOM: Executive Office of the Mayor

FARS: Financial Accounting and Reporting System
FDC: Family Development Center
FEMS: Fire and Emergency Medical Services

GIS: Geographical Information System
GLBT: Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Affairs
GRAD: Gradual Rearing of Adult Drivers

HRIS: Human Resource Information System

IAD: Code for Washington Dulles International Airport
ITA: Individual Training Account
iTAB: Information Technology Advisory Board
iTASC: Information Technology Architecture Standards Committee
iTEC: Information Technology Executive Committee
IVR: Interactive Voice Response

LSDBE: Local, Small, and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises

MPD or **MPDC**: Metropolitan Police Department
MSS: Management Supervisory Service
MVIS: Motor Vehicle Information System
MWAA: Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority
MWCOG: Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

NCPC: National Capital Planning Commission

OAD: Office of Adjudication
OBFI: Office of Banking and Financial Institutions
OCC: Office of the Corporation Counsel
OCCR: Office of Citizen Complaint Review
OCF: Office of Campaign Finance
OCFO: Office of the Chief Financial Officer
OCP: Office of Contracting and Procurement
OCTO: Office of the Chief Technology Officer
OCTT: Office of Cable Television and Telecommunications
OFT: Office of Finance and Treasury
OGMD: Office of Grants Management and Development
OHR: Office of Human Rights
OLBD: Office of Local Business Development
OLRCB: Office of Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining
OP: Office of Planning
OPC: Office of the People's Counsel
OPM: Office of Property Management
OTR: Office of Tax and Revenue

PEPCO: Potomac Electric Power Company
PPS: Partnerships for Problem Solving (MPD)
PRIDE: Police Reporting and Incident Delivery System
PSA: Police Service Area or Pretrial Services Agency
PSC: Public Service Commission

RAPIDS: Remote Access Property Inspection and Dispatch System
RFA: Request for Applications
RFC: Request for Comment
RFP: Request for Proposals

SIS: Student Information System
SOAR: System of Accounting and Reporting

TANF: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
TIF: Tax Increment Financing

UDC: University of the District of Columbia
UPPS: Unified Personnel and Payroll System
US: United States (no periods)



VOS: Virtual One-Stop

WASA: Water and Sewer Authority

WCCA: Washington Convention Center Authority

WGIS: Washington Geographic Information System

WIA: Workforce Investment Act

WIC: Workforce Investment Council or Women, Infants, and Children

WMATA: Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (Metro buses and Metro rail trains.)

WMATC: Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Commission. [Airport shuttles, charter and tour buses, handicapped transportation, and other privately owned passenger carriers.]

If you have questions or comments about this guide, please call OCTO Communications at (202) 727-2727.

The primary sources used in the *Web Style Guide* include *The Chicago Manual of Style* (14th edition), the *Microsoft Manual of Style for Technical Publications* (2nd edition), *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (10th edition), *The Encyclopedic Dictionary of Style and Usage*, and *By George! Online Style Guide and Reference Manual*.