

WRITING FOR THE WEB

**COMPLETE REFERENCE GUIDE CAN BE FOUND AT:
<P:\CMO\PIO\WEBSITE\WEBSITE STANDARDS HANDBOOK.PDF>**

The Web Today

The way we consume web information is changing:

- We want to find information fast; want pages that are easy to scan; short, brief, quick (bulleted lists, short sentences)
- We are using mobile devices – cell phones, tablets, pads (moving from one device to another)
- We are looking for specific, quick information (dates, location, times, phone numbers, emails, registration)

Writing for the Web

Be succinct: write no more than 50 percent of text you would use for hardcopy

Write for scan-ability

- Bulleted lists
- Hyperlinks with descriptive words (not “click here”)
- Paragraph breaks
- Headings to separate text

Split long information (if necessary) into multiple pages

Website Standards and Usage Guidelines

- Consistency
- Usability
- Quality
- Clear Information

Exercise

Replace the following with a single word:

- ~~A large number of~~ Many
- ~~Despite the fact that~~ Although
- ~~Personal opinion~~ Opinion
- ~~Each and every~~ Each, every, all
- ~~Has the opportunity to~~ Can, could
- ~~End result~~ Result
- ~~At this point in time~~ Now
- ~~Compare and contrast~~ Compare
- ~~At an early time~~ Early
- ~~In a case in which~~ When, where

Exercise

1. The creditor must ~~first establish~~ that the debtor is ~~undoubtedly~~ bankrupt.

show

2. Our main role is to raise money ~~by way of donations in order to fund the works of~~ these charities.

by

3. Professor Smith was picked by ~~each and every person~~ on the committee.

everyone

4. ~~A large number of~~ parking spaces are close to City Hall ~~as a consequence of~~ the parking lot expansion.

Many

because

5. We will send ~~out~~ brochures free ~~of charge~~ to the ~~general~~ public.

Exercise

~~The Passport Office is replacing, free of charge, until the dates specified, any current passport lost, damaged or destroyed as a result of the recent floods. Eligible applicants should contact the Passport Information Service (PIS) at 998-9988 for further information.~~

We are offering free replacements for current passports lost or damaged in the recent floods. You must contact us at 998-9988 by June 10.

~~We host a number of email lists to serve as discussion forums for citizens, community groups and businesses to talk about city issues. Although the lists have a Westminster focus, individuals and organizations from anywhere around the world are welcome. There is no charge for this service.~~

We host free email lists for citizens, community groups and businesses to discuss city issues. They have a Westminster focus, but anyone can join.

Usage Guidelines

Avoid jargon

- Use acronyms appropriately.

Acronyms

- On first reference - spell out, with acronym following in parentheses if you will reference it later on the page.
- Subsequent references on the same webpage should use the acronym.
Example: “The National League of Cities (NLC) visited Westminster in 2006. NLC is an organization...”

Quotation marks

- Periods and commas always go inside quotation marks. Place question marks and exclamation marks inside quotation marks only when they are part of the quoted material.

Spaces

- Use only **one space** between a period and the beginning of the next sentence.

Usage Guidelines

Addresses

- Never abbreviate Drive, Road, Circle (1002 Dogwood Drive, 6000 Old Smithfield Road)
- Abbreviate Blvd., Ave. and St. with a complete address (337 S. Salisbury St., 400 Capital Blvd.)
- Abbreviate directions as E., N., W., S. (4800 W. 92nd Ave.)
- If no street number is given, spell out Blvd., Ave., St. and directionals (He lives on South Tyler Avenue.)
- Do not use superscript formatting in suffixes. (92nd Ave. NOT 92nd Ave.)

Dates

- Format: March 25, 2013 - No suffixes (st, nd, rd, th) used with dates.
- Do not abbreviate days of the week.
- Abbreviate all months except for March, April, May, June, July when used with a day.
- If no day is used, spell out the entire month.
- Do not use the year if it is evident when the event is occurring.

Usage Guidelines

Times

- Use a.m. and p.m. - lower-case and periods
- Do not use :00. Example: 8 p.m. or 8:30 p.m.
- Duration completely in the a.m. or p.m. – use a hyphen and the a.m. or p.m. designation only at the end (9-10 a.m.)
- Duration spans from a.m. to p.m. - use “to” and the a.m. and p.m. designation in both cases. (9 a.m. to 7 p.m.)
- Use “noon” or “midnight” – not 12:00
- For duration, use “to” (noon to 3 p.m. or 9:30 a.m. to noon)

Phone numbers

- Format: 303-658-2012. Do not use parenthesis around the area code. Use hyphens.

Usage Guidelines

COWnet

- When referenced, COWnet should appear with capital “COW” followed by lowercase “net.”

City Council

- First reference - use the formal name “Westminster City Council.”
- Subsequent references use “City Council” capitalized, or “the council” in lower case.
- Capitalize “mayor” and “councillor” when used before a name; lowercase if used after, or standing alone. (Note: Use the British spelling of “councillor”).
 - Mayor Atchison began the meeting.
 - Herb Atchison, mayor of Westminster, began the meeting.
 - City Councillor Winter supported the motion.
 - Faith winter, Westminster city councilor, supported the motion.

Usage Guidelines

Rooms

- Although descriptive in nature, room names may be capitalized. (Note: Multi-purpose Room; Council Boardroom; Main Level Training Room)

Departments

- Capitalize the name of the department on the first reference.
- On subsequent references, just use the general term “the department” in lowercase.

Job Titles

- Capitalize when used before a name. Do not use commas to separate the title from the person’s name (City Manager Brent McFall gave a speech...).
- Lower case when it comes after a name and surround it with commas (Brent McFall, city manager, gave a speech...)

Usage Guidelines

Money

- Format: no “.00” is necessary (\$375)
- Don’t use the word “dollars” (\$930 million, not \$930 million dollars).
- For amounts less than \$1, use the word “cents.” (25 cents NOT \$0.25)

Numerals

- Spell out numbers nine and under; use numerals for 10 and above.
- Exceptions to this rule are:
 - When the number starts a sentence (or try to reconstruct sentence)
 - Ages and measurements (3-year-old, 7 inches of snow, 6 percent)
- Ages: Hyphenate when used as a noun or adjective (a 52-year-old woman). Hyphens are not needed for “the child was 5 years old.”

Usage Guidelines

City vs city

- “City of Westminster” should always be capitalized.
- Use the entire city name in the first reference.
- In subsequent references, use the word “city” in lowercase.
- Do not capitalize the word “city” when used alone to replace the city’s full name.

Website vs. web page

- “Website” should be written as one word, lowercase (website).
- “Web page” should be written as two words, lower case (web page).

Online/internet/email

- “Online” – one word, no hyphen, lower-case (online)
- “Internet” – lower-case (internet)
- “Email” – one word, no hyphen, lower-case (email)

Web Standards

Headings

- Use headings in appropriate order, hierarchy of information
- Heading 1 always at the top of all web pages

Text formatting

- Do not change default color or font type – keeps pages consistent
- Never underline text – this assumes a link
- Bold text to make it stand out
- Avoid italics
- Use headlines to separate text

Web Standards

Hyperlinks

- **Websites**
 - Link words, not URLs (ex: Visit the State of Colorado website for passport information)
 - Avoid “click here” – use descriptive words for scan-ability (ex: youth application)
- **Emails** – link the contact person’s name to their email address: [John Doe](#)
- **Pdfs, Word, Excel** – open in new window; choose the appropriate CSS class

Web Standards

Images/Graphics

- Use image to support information on page
- Use an ALT tag to describe the image
- Use image editing software to reduce size to 72 dpi. Width requirements:
 - 650 px -- regular content pages
 - 435 px -- content pages with sidebar
 - 185 px -- images in sidebar
- Images should not have a border.
- Do not use “clip art.”
- When wrapping text around an image, use between 7-10 pixels of space for margins.

Web Standards

Tables

- Use to match data both horizontally and vertically
- Use only if a list won't make information understandable

Lists

- In body of text, commas should appear after every item in the series, unless the word is followed by the word “and.”
Example: Bald eagles, ospreys, herons, mergansers and kingfishers are native to this area.
- Bullet points with complete sentences - use capital letters at the beginning of the sentence and appropriate punctuation at the end.
- Bulleted lists with only single words or short phrases - use capital letters at the beginning of each bullet, with no other capitals except for proper names and no punctuation at the end.