

BYU OFFICE OF IT WRITING STYLE GUIDE

Updated Summer 2023

Includes references to *The Chicago Manual of Style*, and
The Global English Style Guide by John R. Kohl

BYU Office of Information
Technology

BYU Office of IT Writing Style Guide

Welcome to the [BYU Office of IT](#) writing style guide. The Office of IT (OIT) is an organization that supports the technical needs of BYU students and faculty. OIT strives to be a trusted point of contact with all stakeholders of BYU to craft valuable solutions to technical problems. OIT aims to accomplish the BYU mission of “Assisting individuals in their quest for perfection and eternal life” by providing valuable services and supplying employment opportunities.

Strategic Imperatives





Style Guide Purpose

OIT interacts with people all around the world. Any student applying to a Church Education System (CES) institution uses OIT for technical support. There is a marked need for the use of global English because OIT serves people from a wide variety of countries and cultures.

As OIT is an organization within BYU, style choices will be similar to those listed in the BYU Brand Guide. However, as OIT is also a technology company, there are many terms not listed in the BYU style guide that will be further defined in OIT in-house style guide.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For this style guide, both *The Chicago Manual of Style* and *The Global English Style Guide* by John R. Kohl will be the main sources of reference. However, there will be several departures from Chicago and Global English because of the necessity of certain abbreviations, terms, and vocabulary unique to OIT. This style guide is intended to be used by OIT for consistency in writing and word usage.

Please refer to the University Web Accessibility Guidelines when organizing web content, writing copy, or using multimedia for a university website.

Contact the [Technical Writing team](#) with questions and feedback.





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Brand Voice: Helpful and Polite

Everything you write for BYU should support the core mission to “assist individuals in their quest for perfection and eternal life” by being positive, helpful, vibrant, and uplifting. As the BYU Office of IT, communicate with users in a helpful and polite way. Aim for a conversational tone that lets your personality show and provides necessary information.

OUR VOICE

- Innovative and clever
- Humble and polite
- Modern and clean
- Vibrant and alive
- Helpful and useful

The Office of IT voice should strive to align with the 14 characteristics of polite software:

- Interested in you
 - Is deferential to you
 - Is forthcoming
 - Has common sense
 - Anticipates your needs
 - Is responsive
 - Is taciturn about its personal problems
 - Is perceptive
 - Is self-confident
 - Is well informed
 - Stays focused
 - Is fudgeable
 - Gives instant gratification
 - Is trustworthy
- 

FOCUS ON THE USER

Avoid using technical jargon your audience may not understand. For example, unless your audience is engineers, avoid using *API* or other overly technical terms without explanation.

Structure your writing so those without technical backgrounds can skim over your content and understand the main points. Start with the key takeaway and put the most important idea in the most noticeable spot.

Be clear and get to the point. To avoid user confusion, if two words mean the same thing, use only one consistently throughout the article. Common contractions are acceptable to maintain our conversational tone.

Use positive statements as they are clearer than negative statements

- ✓ Add a member to the GRO group to allow them to join the organization's slack channel.
- ✗ Not adding a member to the GRO group won't allow them to join the organization's slack channel.

POINT OF VIEW

When providing your audience with information, use either second person point of view or third person point of view.

- Avoid first person point of view
 - ✓ The user should call the Service Desk if their house catches fire.
 - ✗ We (referring to OIT) often receive calls from users about their houses catching fire.
- Use the same point of view throughout the document
 - ✓ The user may want to purchase our fire insurance policy. It will help them protect their house and belongings.
 - ✗ The user may want to purchase our fire insurance policy. It will help you (referring to the user) protect your house and belongings.

Bias-Free Communication

Use gender-inclusive alternatives for commonly gendered terms.

- ✓ Workforce
- ✗ Manpower
- ✓ Staff
- ✗ Guys

ALUMNI

Know when to use the following terms properly when referring to university graduates: *alumnus*, one male graduate; *alumna*, one female graduate; *alumni*, a group of male graduates; and *alumnae*, a group of female graduates.

When writing for the Office of IT, simply use *alum* when referring to a single graduate, male or female. Use the term *alums* when referring to a group of graduates, male or female. These terms are less formal, but they are gender neutral.

- ✓ Mary, a soon-to-be alum, made a generous donation.
- ✗ Mary, a soon-to-be alumna, made a generous donation.
- ✓ BYU is proud of its alums and all they do to improve the world.
- ✗ BYU is proud of its alumni and all they do to improve the world.

THEY

In a departure from *Chicago*, the Office of IT encourages the use of *they* as a singular, gender-neutral pronoun, preferable to the phrase “he or she.”

- ✓ They will call the Office of IT.
- ✗ He/She will call the Office of IT.

Capitalization

Capitalize proper nouns in body text. Always capitalize the full names of institutions.

- If *the* precedes the name of an institution as part of the official title, *the* is uppercase in body text.
 - ✓ Students from The University of Edinburgh came to visit Brigham Young University.
 - ✗ Students from the University of Edinburgh came to visit Brigham Young University.
- The term *university* is lowercase except when used in the entire name of a university.
 - ✓ Brigham Young University is a fantastic university.
 - ✗ Brigham Young university is a fantastic university.
- *Department* is lowercase unless it is a proper noun; the same applies to names of majors and minors.
 - ✓ My department is the best.
 - ✗ My Department is the best
 - ✓ The English Department is the best.
 - ✗ The english department is the best
 - ✓ I am majoring in English. She is majoring in editing.
 - ✗ I am majoring in english. She is majoring in Editing.

- Lowercase semester and term names.

✓ I will be here for winter semester.

✗ I will be here for Winter Semester.

See *Chicago* 5.6 and 8.68.

TITLES

Capitalize product and service names, blog names, book and song titles, article titles, and titles of people. Follow these guidelines:

- Always capitalize the first and last words.

✓ “A Resource to Look At”

✗ “a Resource to Look at”

- Lowercase articles like *a*, *an*, or *the*, unless it’s the first word.

✓ “The Official Opinion on the Issue”

✗ “The Official Opinion on The Issue”

- Lowercase prepositions (*on, to, in, up, down, of, for*) unless it's the first or last word

✓ “To Find the Finance Center”

✗ “to Find the Finance Center”

- Lowercase coordinating conjunctions (*and, but, or, nor, yet, so*) unless it's the first or last word

✓ “How to Update Your Address and Phone Number”

✗ “How to Update Your Address And Phone Number”

- Capitalize all other words, including *is*, forms of *be*, *very*, *too*, *this*, *that*, and *its*.

✓ “Why Registration Is Not Open”

✗ “Why Registration is not Open”

- Capitalize the word after a hyphen if it is the last word and would be capitalized without it.

✓ “Copy-and-Paste Information”

✗ “Copy-and-paste Information”

✓ “Snap-in Requirements”

✗ “Snap-In Requirements”

See *Chicago* 8.159.

TRADEMARKS AND UNIVERSITY MOTTOS

Use correct capitalization in trademarked terms.

✓ MyMAP

✗ Mymap, mymap, MYMAP

In a departure from *Chicago*, university mottos will be set off in quotation marks with only the first letter capitalized in body text. In display text, the motto is capitalized like a title without quotation marks. Refer to the [BYU Brand Guide](#) for more information.

✓ “Enter to learn; go forth to serve” (body text)

✗ “Enter to Learn; Go Forth to Serve” (body text)

✓ Enter to Learn; Go Forth to Serve (display text)

✗ Enter to learn; go forth to serve (display text)

Formatting Text

BUTTONS

Use bold formatting for the name of the button. Write the UI exactly as it appears. If the punctuation is not included in the UI, don't bold it. Tabs are considered buttons and should be formatted the same as buttons. For clarity, write *tab* after the tab label you are referencing.

- ✓ Select **Save as**.
- ✗ Select Save as.
- ✓ On the **View** tab, select **Navigation**.
- ✗ On View, select **Navigation**.

ITALICS

When referring to a specific word within a sentence, italicize it. Do not put quotes around it. When referencing titles of major works, like books or films, use italics. Italics may also be used for emphasis; however, this should be done sparingly.

- Italicize references to specific words

✓ Yesterday I learned what the definition of the word *documentation* is.

✗ Yesterday I learned what the definition of the word documentation is.

✗ Yesterday I learned what the definition of the word “documentation” is.

- Italicize titles of books or films

✓ Someday I’ll write a book called *Welsh: A Fascinating Yet Fiercely Difficult Language*.

✗ Someday I’ll write a book called “Welsh: A Fascinating Yet Fiercely Difficult Language”.

See *Chicago* 7.50 and 8.2.

STEP-BY STEP INSTRUCTIONS

To set off step-by-step technological instructions, ">" will be used with a space before and after. This practice is common in website tutorials that involve many steps and navigation.

- ✓ Click on the **Toolbar > Customer > Organization Record**.
- ✗ Click on the **Toolbar**, then **Customer**, and then the **Organization record**.

Grammar and Word Usage

For specific grammar questions not covered in this style guide, see *The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS)*.

ABBREVIATIONS


This style guide uses *abbreviation* as an umbrella term for the *CMOS* categories: acronyms, initialisms, and contractions.

See *Chicago* 10.2.

Spell out unfamiliar abbreviations on the first reference. If you think your audience may not know what an abbreviation stands for, tell them. Give the full name first, followed by the abbreviation in parentheses.

- Spell out unfamiliar abbreviations in the first reference.
 - ✓ Program Granite is BYU's effort to implement a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software system.
 - ✗ Program Granite is BYU's effort to implement a new ERP software system.

See *Chicago* 10.3.



Eliminate the Latin abbreviations *e.g.* and *i.e.* These are often used incorrectly or inconsistently, and non-native English speakers may have a difficult time understanding them.

- ✓ Computers and other devices (for example, phones, tablets, and gaming devices) are required to authenticate before joining the BYU network.
- ✗ Computers and other devices (e.g. phones, tablets, and gaming devices) are required to authenticate before joining the BYU network.

See *Kohl* 9.11.

Confine scholarly abbreviations to parentheses or notes. Ensure that these abbreviations are used according to their traditional dictionary definitions.

- ✓ Laptops and other electronic devices (misc. phones, tablets, projectors) are often stored at the Office of IT.
- ✗ Laptops and other electronic devices, including misc. phones, tablets, projectors, are often stored at the Office of IT.

See *Chicago* 10.42.






To make an acronym plural, use an *s* without an apostrophe. There is no space between the letters of acronyms.

- ✓ The CEOs held a meeting.
- ✗ The CEO's held a meeting.
- ✓ Three APIs
- ✗ Three API's

To make an acronym possessive, use an apostrophe + *s*. Don't use the possessive form unless the acronym refers to a person or untrademarked organization.

- ✓ The CEO's phone
 - ✗ The CEOs phone
- 

SPECIFIC ACRONYMS

When using an acronym, spell it out in the first use followed with the acronym in parentheses. Once you've defined the acronym, you can use it throughout the document.

The **BYU Office of IT** is referred to by many names. The first reference in external documentation should read "BYU Office of Information Technology." The second reference, and every reference within internal documentation, it can be referred to as "OIT."

- First use
 - ✓ BYU Office of Information Technology (OIT)
 - ✗ BYU Office of Information Technology
- Following uses
 - ✓ OIT
 - ✗ BYU Office of Information Technology
 - ✗ Office of Information Technology



- Internal Documentation

- ✓ OIT

- ✗ BYU Office of Information Technology

- Formal Documentation

- ✓ The Office of IT

- ✗ OIT



SPLIT INFINITIVES

Splitting infinitives with adverbs is accepted in most usage situations.

- ✓ Download the Configuration Utility to automatically set up your connection to the BYU Eduroam network.
- ✗ Download the Configuration Utility to set up automatically your connection to the BYU Eduroam network.

See *Chicago* 5.171.

USE OF *HAVE* AND *GET*

Do not use *have* and *get* as auxiliary verbs meaning “to cause someone to do something” or “to cause something to happen.” Use an alternative word.

- ✓ If the Office of IT does not immediately answer a request from a patron, the patron should look elsewhere for an answer.
- ✗ If the Office of IT does not immediately answer a request from a patron, the patron will have to look elsewhere for an answer.

See *Kohl* 3.10.2.

USE OF HOWEVER AND THEREFORE

Conjunctive adverbs (such as *however* and *therefore*) demonstrate logical connections between clauses. Generally, place them at the beginning of a sentence. Set off these types of adverbs with a comma.

- ✓ However, I will first check your Net ID.
- ✗ I, however, will first check your Net ID.
- ✗ However I will first check your Net ID.


See *Kohl* 3.9.2.

VERBS

Use the present tense for clarity.

As a rule, **use active voice** to aid in clarity, concision, and translation. Passive voice is acceptable when the agent of the action is unknown or unimportant, when the recipient of the action needs emphasis, or when the subject may be overly long.

- ✓ Students and faculty can install a full version of Office applications on five personal computers.
- ✗ A full desktop version of Office applications can be installed on five personal computers.

- 
- ✓ The BYU Office of IT strives to provide working software and genuine help.
 - ✗ Working Software and genuine help is provided by the BYU Office of IT.
 - ✓ This academic database can be accessed by full-time undergraduate and graduate students majoring in English, as well as faculty in the English Department.
 - ✗ Full-time undergraduate and graduate students majoring in English and faculty in the English Department can access this academic database.

See *Kohl*3.6.



Information to Include

Finding a balance between essential information and extra information is important, but difficult. When writing, consider what your audience already knows, and focus on what they need to know. Eliminate any unnecessary information to increase clarity. Provide links for information that may still need an explanation for a part of your audience.

LINKS

When you assume the reader already knows how to do something, link to another document that explains how to accomplish that task. Links can show the reader where to go next, and links to other relevant information keeps readers engaged in your content.

Avoid using *click here*. Instead, phrase the sentence so that the link label gives context about what page the link takes the user to.

- ✓ Visit [Cougar Cash FAQ](#) for more information
- ✗ [Click here](#) for more information

Numbers

When writing UI numbers, copy them exactly as they appear. Otherwise, follow the guidelines below.

COMPOUND NUMBERS

Hyphenate compound numbers when they're spelled out.

- ✓ Twenty-three words
- ✗ Twenty three words
- ✓ The thirty-fifth student
- ✗ The thirty fifth student
- ✓ One-third of the page
- ✗ One third of the page

DATES

The Office of IT follows the day-month-year structure to avoid comma usage. To start a sentence, add *on* before the date. Do not use the superscripts *st*, *rd*, or *nd* to form ordinal numbers in dates. Always use numerals for dates. To avoid confusion, especially for global readers, always spell out months and days.

- ✓ The update will be installed 1 February 2019 at noon.
- ✗ The update will be installed February 1, 2019, at noon.
- ✓ On 3 February 2019 we updated the software.
- ✗ February 3rd, 2019 was when we updated the software.

NUMERALS OR WORDS

- Write out numbers from zero to nine but use numerals for numbers 10 and over. However, if one item in a sentence requires a numeral, use numerals for all other items of that type.
- ✓ The product goes live in one month and 16 days.
- ✗ The product goes live in 1 month and 16 days.
- ✓ The document has 16 pages, but the other one only has 3.
- ✗ The document has 16 pages, but the other one only has three.

- When there are two numbers next to each other that refer to different things, use a numeral for one and spell out the other.
 - ✓ There are twelve 14-page documents.
 - ✗ There are twelve fourteen-page documents.
 - ✗ There are 12 14-page documents.
- Never start a sentence with a numeral. To avoid this, begin the sentence with a modifier or spell the number out.
 - ✓ Twenty-five pages are ready.
 - ✗ 25 pages are ready.

NUMERALS

Always use numerals in the following situations:

- Measurements and dimensions (7-inches)
- Inputted numbers (Enter 15 in the next box)
- Round numbers over a million (1,000,001)
- Percentages (76%)

- Times of day (6 o'clock)
- Sections of documents (Section 12)
- Chapter numbers (Chapter 6)
- Columns and rows (Row 4)

See *Chicago* 9.3.

ORDINALS

Format ordinal numbers the same as the rest of the text. Ordinals should never be used in dates and should never have the suffix *-ly*.

- ✓ The Office of IT is the 122nd room in the building.
- ✗ The Office of IT is the 122nd room in the building.
- ✓ First, set an appointment with your supervisor.
- ✗ Firstly, set an appointment with your supervisor.

See *Chicago* 9.6.

RANGES

Use the en dash for a range of numbers. The en dash should not be used with words *from* or *between* to avoid redundancy.

- ✓ Look at pages 43-153.
- ✗ Look between pages 43-153.

See *Chicago* 9.60.

TELEPHONE NUMBERS

To create consistency throughout all the Office of IT's documentation, phone numbers are formatted with the first three digits in parentheses, a space, the second three digits, a hyphen, and then the last four digits.

- ✓ 123-456-7890
- ✗ (123) 456-7890

Punctuation

AMPERSANDS

An ampersand (&) can be used instead of the word *and*. The ampersand may be used between links, titles, and subheadings.

- Omit the serial (oxford) comma.
 - ✓ Use the tab **Students, Faculty & Staff** to see the Directory.
 - ✗ Use the tab **Students, Faculty, & Staff** to see the Directory.
- Avoid ampersands in running text as it may be confusing to some non-native English speakers.
 - ✓ The tab contains directory information on students, faculty, and staff.
 - ✗ The tab contains directory information on students, faculty & staff.

See *Chicago* 6.21.

APOSTROPHES

Use apostrophes to indicate possession by adding *s* to singular nouns even if the noun ends in *s*, *x*, or *z*. Use apostrophes to indicate possession for regular plural nouns by adding only the apostrophe (*'*). Trademarked terms should not be possessive.

- ✓ John rescued the department's color scheme from monotony and mediocrity.
- ✗ John rescued the departments color scheme from monotony and mediocrity.
- ✓ Emily climbed the pass's steps to a rural Chinese village and documented their language.
- ✗ Emily climbed the passes steps to a rural Chinese village and documented their language.
- For regular plural nouns, use an apostrophe after the *s*.
 - ✓ The Joneses' computer
 - ✗ The Joneses's computer
- For most irregular plural nouns, indicate possession by adding *'s*.
 - ✓ Although he was an engineer, children's puzzles had always stumped Dan.
 - ✗ Although he was an engineer, childrens puzzles had always stumped Dan.

The following are specific examples where an apostrophe is not necessary.

- Years and numbers
 - ✓ 1 20s, 1 30s, etc.
 - ✗ 1 20's, 1 30's, etc.
 - ✓ Twos, threes, etc.
 - ✗ Two's, three's, etc.
- References to words and letters
 - ✓ lfs, ands, buts
 - ✗ lf's, and's, but's
 - ✓ Rs, Ts, Qs, etc.
 - ✗ R's, T's, Q's, etc.

See *Chicago* 6.116.

COLONS

Use a colon between two independent clauses or after a complete sentence to indicate a series, or between two independent clauses. When a colon is used in body text, the next word following the colon should only be capitalized if it introduces two or more complete sentences. Capitalize the word following the colon in a title. Colons should not be used after section headings.

- ✓ The company slogan was just what Robyn wanted to hear: “Gluten-free, Organic, and Non-GMO.”
- ✗ The company slogan was just what Robyn wanted to hear, “Gluten-free, Organic, and Non-GMO.”
- ✓ Get Started with Code: An Interactive Guide
- ✗ Get Started with Code: an Interactive Guide
- Colons should be used in place of hyphens or em dashes in titles.
 - ✓ Use Wireless Network Access: Troubleshooting for Information
 - ✗ Use Wireless Network Access-Troubleshooting for Information

See *Chicago* 6.61.

COMMAS

Appositives: Use commas around words or phrases that are used for additional information but could be removed from the sentence and not affect its comprehensibility.

- ✓ Mary, the technical writer, wrote that documentation.
- ✗ The technical writer, Mary, wrote that documentation.

See *Chicago* 5.23.

Conjunctions: Use commas between independent clauses combined with coordinating conjunctions (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*). You can omit the comma if the clauses are short and closely related.

- ✓ Levi is from Ohio and likes thunderstorms.
- ✗ Levi is from Ohio, and likes thunderstorms.
- ✓ Did Davis go skydiving, or did he go hang gliding?
- ✗ Did Davis go skydiving or did he go hang gliding?

See *Chicago* 6.22.

Introductory Phrases: Use a comma after an introductory phrase. Omit the comma if the phrase comes immediately before the verb in the sentence.

- ✓ Fascinated by communications systems, Steve spent all his free time studying Cisco phones.
- ✗ Fascinated by communications systems Steve spent all his free time studying Cisco phones.
- ✓ Overwhelming as it was, she completed all 54 tasks.
- ✗ Overwhelming as it was she completed all 54 tasks.

Series: Separate items in a series with commas. When the last two items in a series are joined with a conjunction, put a comma before the conjunction. This is known as the Oxford comma.

- ✓ Don flew to China, ate exotic cuisine, and returned with souvenirs.
- ✗ Don flew to China, ate exotic cuisine and returned with souvenirs.

See *Chicago* 6.33 and 6.19.

DASHES

Dashes and hyphens are not interchangeable. There are two different types of dashes: em dashes and en dashes.

Em dashes are used to mark an aside or comment within a sentence or phrase. They should also be used for negative numbers and the minus sign. Don't put a space on either side of an em dash.

- ✓ Candice is a skilled developer—she's a fantastic person too—who recently left for an exciting internship in San Francisco.
- ✗ Candice is a skilled programmer – she's a fantastic person too – who recently left for an exciting internship in San Francisco.

(Special note: equations are an exception. In an equation, put a space on either side of an em dash. For example, $18 - 6 = 12$.)

En dashes are used to connect inclusive numbers, dates, and times. There shouldn't be a space on either side of an en dash.

- ✓ The office party, 8:00-12:00, will be on a Saturday.
- ✗ The office party, 8:00 - 12:00, will be on a Saturday.

See *Chicago* 6.85 and 6.78.

HYPHENS

Some compound words are hyphenated. Regrettably, no consistent hyphenation policy has been created to ensure that writers or editors know when to hyphenate compounds. However, you could go by this next set of relationship rules. If the words are acquaintances, a space between them is best. If they are friends, a hyphen will do. If they are lovers, you can combine them into one word. If these rules prove insufficient, consult a reputable dictionary.

Compounded forms may change based on part of speech. For example, *login* is one word when used as a noun, but it is two words when used as a verb, *log in*. Usually, when two adjectives come before a noun and the adjectives are being used to convey a single meaning, put a hyphen between the adjectives.

- ✓ Jim watched the destruction of the on-campus building.
- ✗ Jim watched the destruction of the building on campus.
- ✓ Dan's pleasant-smiling face returned once more when he heard his classical music.
- ✗ Dan's pleasant smiling face returned once more when he heard his classical music.
- ✓ Jim used his login to log in.
- ✗ Jim used his log in to login.




The following are examples of compound words related to technology that are one word:

- Website
- Webpage
- Online
- Internet

PERIODS

End all sentences in running text with a period, and only use one space after a period. Avoid end punctuation in headlines, headings, subheadings, UI titles or text, or phrases in a list.

- ✓ Enter your password.
 - ✗ Enter your password
 - ✓ Go to the **Input Password** tab.
 - ✗ Go to the **Input Password.** tab.
- 

QUOTATION MARKS

Quoted material is generally introduced with a comma. However, if the words *that*, *whether*, or a comparable conjunction introduce the quotation, a comma is not necessary.

- ✓ As Jeff was running down the hallway, he said, “I need to set my alarm next time.”
- ✗ As Jeff was running down the hallway, he said “I need to set my alarm next time.”
- ✓ Kurt said that Jeff should stop being late all the time.
- ✗ Kurt said that “Jeff should stop being late all the time.”

Include punctuation in the quoted material, even if it is not part of the original quote.

- ✓ Jen asked, “How do I log in?”
- ✗ Jen asked, “How do I log in”?
- ✓ The page must have “Approve,” “Deny,” and “Request” added.
- ✗ The page must have “Approve”, “Deny”, and “Request” added.

See *Chicago* 6.40.

SEMICOLONS

Use a semicolon when combining two closely connected sentences not joined by a conjunction. Semicolons can also be used like commas in a series when the listed items contain multiple words.

- ✓ Maria opened her computer; she hoped it would work this time.
- ✗ Maria opened her computer, she hoped it would work this time.
- ✓ Cate had been everywhere: Ashville, NC; Cardiff, UK; Florence, Italy; and San José, Costa Rica.
- ✗ Cate had been everywhere: Ashville, NC, Cardiff, UK, Florence, Italy, and San José, Costa Rica.

SLASHES

Slashes may be used, but only in situations where the two entities are similar in meaning. When a slash is used, do not use spaces on either side of the slash. If the word before the slash is capitalized, also capitalize the word after the slash. Don't use a slash as a substitute for *o* unless the UI uses a slash this way. Use of *and/or* is acceptable in running text.

- ✓ Click Microsoft Office Suite/Office 365 for more information.
- ✗ Click Microsoft Office Suite/the button for more information.



Scannable Content

Readers scan text to find solutions that complete their task or to determine if the information they are looking for is contained in the article. Put the most relevant information at the top to make it easy for readers to identify key points. Use short headings, short sentences, and short paragraphs. When you have a long document, make it easy to navigate.


INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions should establish the context and explain what the article will help them do. When applicable, explain the who, what, when, where, and why of your article.

HEADINGS

Headings should provide an outline for your article. If you have multiple topics discussed under a single heading, add subheadings. Never have two headings in a row or use filler text to separate headings: reorganize your article instead. Leave headings without punctuation, unless a question mark is needed to convey meaning.

Other tips include:

- Keep headings short
 - Use words the customer is looking for
 - Use parallel sentence structure
 - Keep font size consistent with each heading level/style
- 

LISTS

Lists should be introduced with a heading, complete sentence, or a fragment to make the purpose clear. Only add a colon to the end of a complete sentence or independent clause. Avoid ending a heading with a colon.

The first word in a vertical list should be capitalized. Other capitalized words include acronyms and user elements that appear capitalized on the interface.

- ✓ There are many people involved in web development:
 - UX/UI designers
 - Technical writers
 - Software engineers
 - Administrators

- ✗ There are many people involved:
 - UX/UI designers
 - Technical writers
 - software engineers
 - Administrators

See *Chicago* 6.127 and 6.67

Bullet Points: Use bullet points when you are listing a series of similar items or phrases. Be sure to maintain parallel structure. Bullet points should not be complete sentences or end with punctuation.

✓ My favorite foods include the following:

- Apples
- Chicken
- Ice cream

✗ My favorite foods include the following:

- Apples
- The chicken nuggets in the purple bag
- Ice cream

Numbered Steps: Use numerals for instructional steps and begin every new step with an imperative verb. Steps should be parallel and written in complete sentences. In a deviation from *Chicago Manual of Style*, numbered steps should not end with punctuation.

✓ To clock in:

1. Find a keypad
2. Type in your student ID number
3. Press IN/OUT

✗ Clocking in includes:

1. Find a keypad
2. Type in your student ID number
3. Press IN/OUT

TABLES

Use tables to arrange data into multiple rows and columns. Make sure the data is clearly labeled with headers. Distinguish the header text from the data text by making it larger, bolder, or a different color. Title text, heading text, and in-cell text should have sentence-style capitalization. If the table requires further explanation, include a brief introduction. Within tables, align decimals on the decimal point.

Food	Price	Rating
Steak	\$45.00	5.7
Green Eggs and Ham	\$27.60	8.3
Peri Peri Chicken	\$33.00	7.0



Resources

Glossary

[Glossary of Common OIT terms in Box](#)

Example Documents

[Document Examples in Box](#)

