Website Content Policy

Authority: Town Manager	**Effective Date:** October 31, 2019
Signature: _[signature]_	**Future Review Date:** 2023
Responsibility: Communications	**Last Review/Revision:** 2015
References: People Policies	
Replaces: Website Content Management A-C-005	

1.0 Purpose: This policy governs the content and posting on the Town website and microsites.

2.0 Scope: This policy applies to all employees.

3.0 Definitions:

> **Employee:** includes permanent, part-time, temporary, union, casual, contract, and interns who are employed by the Town of Stony Plain.

> **Microsites:** includes such sites as ChooseStonyPlain.com and GolfStonyPlain.com.

4.0 Statement: The Town of Stony Plain uses *stonyplain.com* along with other municipal microsites to inform and engage residents. The Town endeavours to ensure the websites provide relevant, accurate, accessible and clearly stated content that promotes transparency and supports our core values.

5.0 Standards:

> 5.1 The Town website and microsites shall contain content that is:

>> 5.1.1 Relevant: The content shall align with the goals set out in the Town of Stony Plain Vision;
>> 5.1.2 Quality Controlled: The content shall be written in plain language, free of errors in spelling and grammar.
>> 5.1.3 Functional: All links shall be checked for connectivity;
>> 5.1.4 Timely: The content must be recent and currently in use at the Town.

> 5.2 All *stonyplain.com* content shall follow the Website Style Guide as set out in Appendix A;
> 5.3 All *stonyplain.com* content shall follow the Writing Style Guide as set out in Appendix B;

Roles and Responsibilities:

> 5.4 Departments

5.4.1　　All departments are responsible for posting and updating content on ***stonyplain.com*** that is directly related to their day-to-day operations. Microsites are the sole responsibility of the managing department.

5.5 Corporate Communications

5.5.1　　Corporate Communications supports all departments and advises on all content within the ***stonyplain.com*** website.

5.6 The Town of Stony Plain's current People Policy may be applied in the event this policy is not followed.

6.0 Policy Review: This administrative policy shall be reviewed within four years of being implemented, with any changes being submitted to the Town Manager for approval.

Table of Appendices:

Appendices attached do not form part of this policy.

Appendix A Website Style Guide

Appendix B Writing Style Guide

Town of Stony Plain Style Guide

The following information is provided as an addendum to training. This information is specific to the Town of Stony Plain website.

At time of printing – website is not "live". Temporary URL (in i:Create development stage):

https://stonyplain.ic11.esolg.ca/

Contents

Contacting eSolutions / Product Support

Product Support Toll Free: 1.866.691.5528

Product Support Email: support@help.esolutionsgroup.ca

Home Page

Digital ideas. Delivered. **www.esolutionsgroup.ca**

Homepage

Homepage Logo

1

Use the Edit Logo tool at the upper left of the element.

Image size: 488 x 82 (pixels)

For best results use vector based .svg files.

Menus: MainNav, FooterNav, Social Links, I Want To, Site Map, Dropdown Menus

2

Linked using the Menu Manager module.

Homepage Banner Images

3

Use the Manage Banners tool at the upper left of the page element to modify content.

Image size: 1800 x 960 (pixels)

All banner images should be 300 kb or less. Larger images may prevent visitors with slower connections from viewing the page properly. Use JPG files (compression setting 50% to 60%).

News Ticker

4

Maintained using the News Manager module (More → News Manager).

Select the news feeds to display by clicking on the news feed icon in the token toolbar.

Feature Boxes (x3)

5

Use the Manage Feature Boxes tool at the upper left of the page element to modify content.

Image size: 700 x 601 (pixels)

Use JPG files (compression setting 50% to 60%).

Digital ideas. Delivered. **www.esolutionsgroup.ca**

6

Manage Quick Links

Use the Manage Quick Links tool at the upper left of the page element to modify content.

Maximum 6 entries.

7

Feature Banner

Use the Manage Feature Banner Image tool at the upper left of the page element to modify content.

Image size: 1800 x 543 (pixels)

Use JPG files (compression setting 50% to 60%).

8

Events Calendar

Maintained using the Calendar module (More → Calendar).

Select the calendar feed to display by clicking on the calendar feed icon in the token toolbar.

9

Optional Editable Focus Area

Using i:Create tool bar, insert text and hyperlink(s). This area will remain hidden if empty.

10

Social Media Feeds (x4)

Move your mouse over the feed to see the social media management tools. Add new feeds or select an existing feed from the available drop down.

11

A tp Z Listings

Maintained using the A to Z Services – Town of Stoney Plain module (More → A to Z Services – Town of Stoney Plain).

12

Footer Text, Copyright information, Contact, Logo

Edited using the **FooterTextTopLeft, FooterTextTopRight** and **FooterLogo** pages (Includes → Blank).

13

Menus: Drop Down – Menu Images

Linked using the Menu Manager module.

Controlled through the Menu Images entry under each vertical in the MainNav section. Change the file path in the Image Name field to select another image.

Image size: 266 x 168 (pixels)

Use JPG files (compression setting 50% to 60%).

eSolutions

1 Welcome to
STONY PLAIN

What are you looking for?

LIVE   PLAY   WORK   TOWN HALL   ☰

2 Family and Community Support Services
Optional Sub Headline Goes Here

Connecting to Your Community
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adi piscing elit.

Wellbeing and Mental Health
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adi piscing elit.

3 **Seniors**
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adi piscing elit. Ut pretium pretiummet, consectetur.

NEWS

News Headline One Goes Here
July 20, 2018

News Headline Two Goes Here
July 18, 2018

News Headline Three Goes Here
July 14, 2018

View All News...

Volunteering
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adi piscing elit. Ut pretium pretiummet, consectetur.

About FCSS
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adi piscing elit. Ut pretium pretiummet, consectetur.

4 **Youth**
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adi piscing elit. Ut pretium pretiummet, consectetur.

EVENTS

Event Headline One Goes Here
July 20, 2018

Event Headline Two Goes Here
July 25, 2018

Event Headline Three Goes Here
August 1, 2018

View All Events...

Feature Box Headline
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adi piscing elit. Ut pretium pretiummet, consectetur.

Feature Box Headline
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adi piscing elit. Ut pretium pretiummet, consectetur.

5 **Feature Box Headline**
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adi piscing elit. Ut pretium pretiummet, consectetur.

Feature Box Headline
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adi piscing elit. Ut pretium pretiummet, consectetur.

6

7 📖 **Resources and Links** | 📘 **Facebook**   **8** | 🐦 **Twitter**   **8**

Town of Stony Plain Housing Booklet

Provides brief descriptions of apartment and townhouse units available for rent in Stony Plain and Spruce Grove.

Seniors' Information Guide

A listing of information and services for local seniors.

Town of Stony Plain Housing Booklet

A variety of free Online CBT treatment providers are available and offer programs and apps to treat a number of mental health issues including: Addiction, Agoraphobia, Anger, Anxiety,

Addiction Services Resource List

Information on addiction helping services.

View All Resources and Links

9

Digital ideas. Delivered. **www.esolutionsgroup.ca**

Landing Page

1

Landing Logo

Use the Edit Logo tool at the upper left of the element.

Image size: 488 x 82 (pixels)

For best results use vector based .svg files.

2

Landing Page Banner Images

Use the Edit Banner tool at the upper left of the page to modify content.

Image size: 1800 x 722 (pixels)

All banner images should be 300 kb or less. Larger images may prevent visitors with slower connections from viewing the page properly. Use JPG files (compression setting 60% to 70%).

3

Feature Boxes – News Panel (x3)

Optional – Can be hidden with check boxes below banner.

Use the Manage Feature Boxes – News Panel tool at the upper left of the page element to modify content.

Image size: 330 x 216 (pixels)

Use JPG files (compression setting 50% to 60%).

News Ticker

Maintained using the News Manager module (More → News Manager). Select the news feeds to display by clicking on the news feed icon in the token toolbar.

4

Feature Boxes – Events Panel (x3)

Optional – Can be hidden with check boxes below banner.

Use the Manage Feature Boxes – Events Panel tool at the upper left of the page element to modify content.

Image size: 330 x 216 (pixels)

Use JPG files (compression setting 50% to 60%).

Events Calendar

Maintained using the Calendar module (More → Calendar).

Select the calendar feed to display by clicking on the calendar feed icon in the token toolbar.

5

Feature Boxes – Content Panel #1 (x4)

Optional – Can be hidden with check boxes below banner.

Use the Manage Feature Boxes – Content Panel #1 tool at the upper left of the page element to modify content.

Image size: 330 x 216 (pixels)

Use JPG files (compression setting 50% to 60%).

6

Feature Boxes – Content Panel #2 (x4) - Not Shown

Optional – Can be hidden with check boxes below banner.

Use the Manage Feature Boxes – Content Panel #2 tool at the upper left of the page element to modify content.

Image size: 330 x 216 (pixels)

Use JPG files (compression setting 50% to 60%).

7

Resource Links (x4)

Use the Manage Resource and Links tool at the upper left of the page element to modify content.

8

Social Media Tabs

Move your mouse over the feed to see the social media management tools. Add new feeds or select an existing feed from the available drop down.
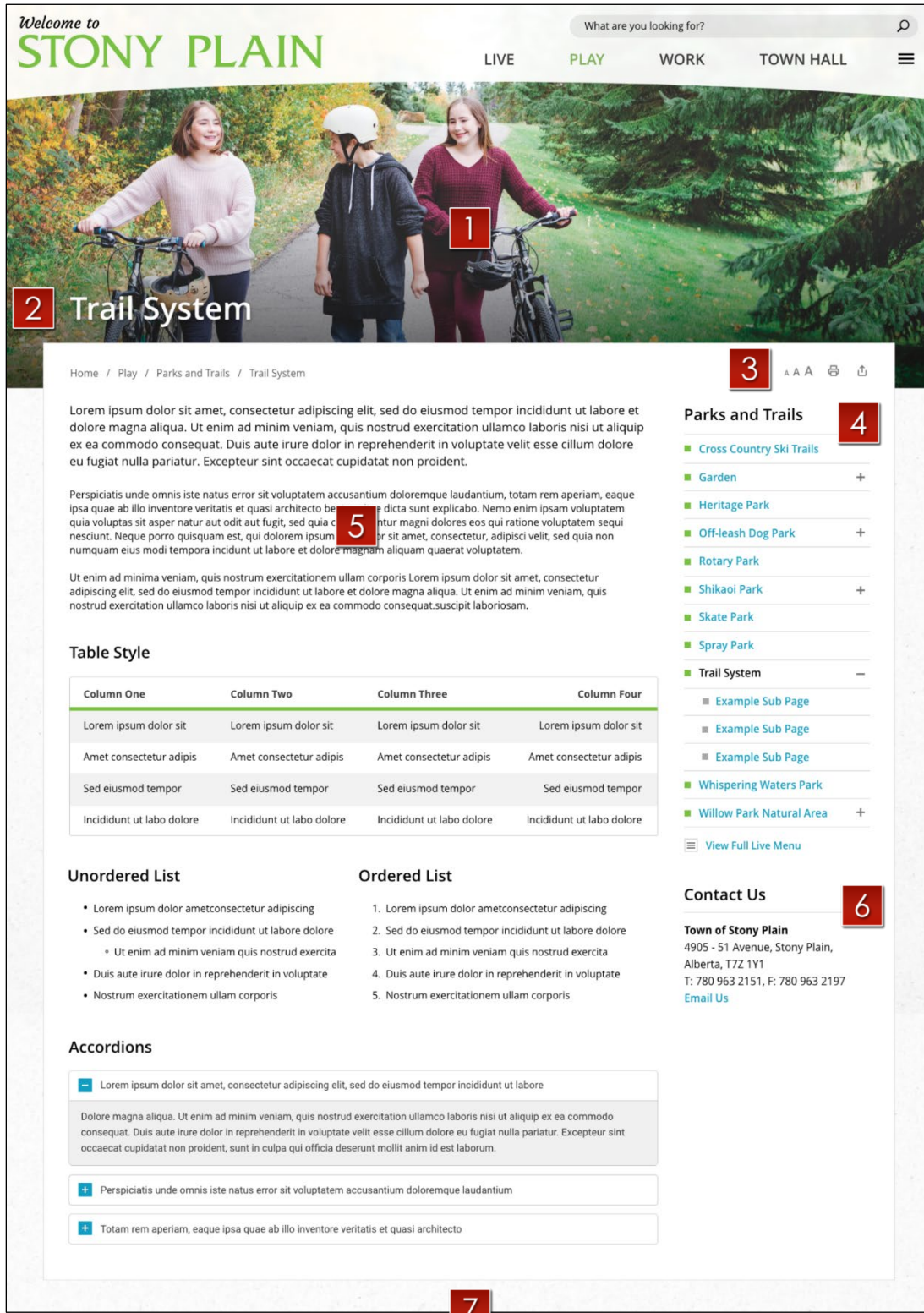
9

Optional Editable Focus Area

Using i:Create tool bar, insert text and hyperlink(s). This area will remain hidden if empty.

eSolutions

Interior Pages

Welcome to
STONY PLAIN

What are you looking for? 🔍

LIVE   PLAY   WORK   TOWN HALL   ☰

1

2 Trail System

3 A A A 🖨 ⬆

Home / Play / Parks and Trails / Trail System

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur. Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non proident.

Perspiciatis unde omnis iste natus error sit voluptatem accusantium doloremque laudantium, totam rem aperiam, eaque ipsa quae ab illo inventore veritatis et quasi architecto be **5** e dicta sunt explicabo. Nemo enim ipsam voluptatem quia voluptas sit asper natur aut odit aut fugit, sed quia c ntur magni dolores eos qui ratione voluptatem sequi nesciunt. Neque porro quisquam est, qui dolorem ipsum r sit amet, consectetur, adipisci velit, sed quia non numquam eius modi tempora incidunt ut labore et dolore magnam aliquam quaerat voluptatem.

Ut enim ad minima veniam, quis nostrum exercitationem ullam corporis Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat.suscipit laboriosam.

Table Style

Column One	Column Two	Column Three	Column Four
Lorem ipsum dolor sit	Lorem ipsum dolor sit	Lorem ipsum dolor sit	Lorem ipsum dolor sit
Amet consectetur adipis	Amet consectetur adipis	Amet consectetur adipis	Amet consectetur adipis
Sed eiusmod tempor	Sed eiusmod tempor	Sed eiusmod tempor	Sed eiusmod tempor
Incididunt ut labo dolore	Incididunt ut labo dolore	Incididunt ut labo dolore	Incididunt ut labo dolore

Unordered List

- Lorem ipsum dolor ametconsectetur adipiscing
- Sed do eiusmod tempor incidunt ut labore dolore
  - Ut enim ad minim veniam quis nostrud exercita
- Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate
- Nostrum exercitationem ullam corporis

Ordered List

1. Lorem ipsum dolor ametconsectetur adipiscing
2. Sed do eiusmod tempor incidunt ut labore dolore
3. Ut enim ad minim veniam quis nostrud exercita
4. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate
5. Nostrum exercitationem ullam corporis

Accordions

⊟ Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore

Dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur. Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non proident, sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt mollit anim id est laborum.

⊞ Perspiciatis unde omnis iste natus error sit voluptatem accusantium doloremque laudantium

⊞ Totam rem aperiam, eaque ipsa quae ab illo inventore veritatis et quasi architecto

Parks and Trails **4**

- Cross Country Ski Trails
- Garden   +
- Heritage Park
- Off-leash Dog Park   +
- Rotary Park
- Shikaoi Park   +
- Skate Park
- Spray Park
- Trail System   −
  - Example Sub Page
  - Example Sub Page
  - Example Sub Page
- Whispering Waters Park
- Willow Park Natural Area   +

☰ View Full Live Menu

Contact Us **6**

Town of Stony Plain
4905 - 51 Avenue, Stony Plain, Alberta, T7Z 1Y1
T: 780 963 2151, F: 780 963 2197
Email Us

7

FREDERICTON, NB
466 Hodgson Road
T. 506-458-1248

OTTAWA, ON
179 Colonnade Road, Suite 400
T. 613-727-6947

TORONTO, ON
184 Front Street East, Suite 302
T. 416-360-1600

WATERLOO, ON
651 Colby Drive
T. 519-884-3352

Digital ideas. Delivered. **www.esolutionsgroup.ca**

Interior Pages

1

Page Banner

Option to have one or more images that are ***randomly*** loaded when a user loads the webpages.

This image set is determined ***per department*** (per menu vertical).
Managed through the Rotating Image Manager module (More → Rotating Image Manager).

*Option to override the default image by adding a unique picture ***per page***.
Area is also editble using the i:Create toolbar.

Image size: 1800 x 696 (pixels)

All banner images should be 300 kb or less. Larger images may prevent visitors with slower connections from viewing the page properly. Use JPG files (compression setting 60% to 70%).

2

Current Page Header (H1)

The primary title of your page.

Pulled directly from the file information. Use the Page Properties tool to edit it.

3

Text Size, Print, Share

Are standard user functions. If a change is required, please contact eSolutions.

4

Current Page / Secondary Navigation

Created / edited using Menu Manager tree structure.

Page Content Area

Editable… using the i:Create toolbar.

Editable area adjusts based on resolution of viewing device.

Page Layout Tool

Available on layout builder enabled templates.

Use the Manage Layout Tool to create editable layouts of 1 to 4 columns using text or images.

Drag and drop page layout components as required.

For all column layouts images should be identical widths and heights to create a consistent appearance. Recommended image size by column number:

One Column Recommended Image size: 1400 x 500 (pixels)

Two Column Recommended Image size: 685 x 350 (pixels)

Three Column Recommended Image size: 445 x 270 (pixels)

Four Column Recommended Image size: 325 x 230 (pixels)

For image only layouts use the Manage Content tools associated with each image.

For a standard single column content page use the "Standard One Column Layout".

Use JPG files (compression setting 50% to 60%).

Contacts

Contacs are added to the page using the search field, and removed using the clear button.

Contacts can be added or modified in the database by using the Contacts Management module (More → Contact Manager).

Page Subscription Tool (Not Shown)

Managed using the Reports tab in the Administrative Interface.

eSolutions

You are able to format headings on your webpage, using the available Font Formats. When editing a page, select the Font Format dropdown box to reveal the heading levels.

Font Format	Size (Pixels)	Colour (Hex) / RGB	Weight	Default Font Face
Heading 1	50	# FFFFFF	Bold	Open Sans, sans-serif
Heading 2	35	# 333333	Bold	Open Sans, sans-serif
Heading 3	30	# 333333	Bold	Open Sans, sans-serif
Heading 4	25	# 333333	Bold	Open Sans, sans-serif
Heading 5	22	# 333333	Bold	Open Sans, sans-serif
Heading 6	19	# 333333	Bold	Open Sans, sans-serif
Paragraph Text	16	# 333333	Normal	Open Sans, sans-serif
Hyperlink Text	16	# 138EC2	Bold	Open Sans, sans-serif

Information is presented here for matching purposes when creating non website documents.

Example

h1.Heading

h2.Heading

h3.Heading

h4.Heading

h5.Heading

h6.Heading

Table Formatting

This information outlines colour and text information for the website's default table style.

Font Format	Size (Pixels)	Colour (Hex) / RGB	Weight	Default Font Face
Header Background	-	# FFFFFF	-	-
Row Background	-	# F2F2F2	-	-
Alt Row Background	-	# FFFFFF	-	-
Header Text	16	# 000000	Bold	Open Sans, sans-serif
Table Text	16	# 333333	Normal	Open Sans, sans-serif
Caption Text	35	# 333333	Bold	Open Sans, sans-serif

Information is presented here for matching purposes when creating non website documents.

Example

Table Style

Column One	Column Two	Column Three	Column Four
Lorem ipsum dolor sit	Lorem ipsum dolor sit	Lorem ipsum dolor sit	Lorem ipsum dolor sit
Amet consectetur adipis	Amet consectetur adipis	Amet consectetur adipis	Amet consectetur adipis
Sed eiusmod tempor	Sed eiusmod tempor	Sed eiusmod tempor	Sed eiusmod tempor
Incididunt ut labo dolore	Incididunt ut labo dolore	Incididunt ut labo dolore	Incididunt ut labo dolore

Additional Styles

These styles can be added to your pages through the "Styles" dropdown in the tool bar. Select the desired target text and specify the style in the dropdown list.
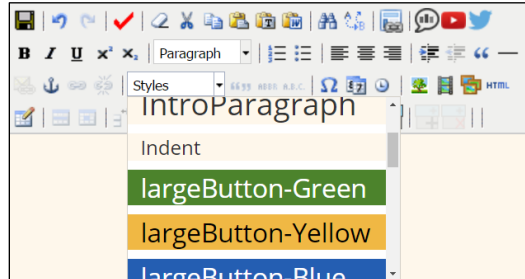
Emphasis

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod

Tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua ut enim ad minim

Veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip

Buttons

Primary   Secondary   Basic

Accessibility Considerations

Title Text

All links are required to have title text (the tool tip which appears when you mouse over them). Each type of link has a slightly different title style which is standardized across your website:

Link Type	Title Text Format	Example
Internal	View our "page name" page	View our Contact Us page
External	Open new window to view "website name or address"	Open new window to view www.google.ca
Anchors	Jump to section: "section name"	Jump to section: By-law Enforcement
Email	Open new window to send an email to "recipient"	Open new window to send an email to the CEO
Documents	Open file in new window: "file name and extension"	Open file in new window: aplication.pdf

Alt Text

Alt Text is an image attribute used by assistive technologies such as screen readers, or displayed in situations where images are not seen (such as when images are switched off on mobile devices).
Alt text should include a brief, objective description of the content of an image. The maximum length is 100 characters, including spaces and punctuation. Alt text should not be artistic, emotional, or subjective, nor should it be promotional or commercial.

Good Example: Two ducks on a pond surrounded by lily pads.

Bad Example: Two Mallards, one male, one female, swimming in Waterloo lake surrounded Nymphaeaceae, bathed in summer sunlight.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WRITING FOR THE WEB

People do not read web pages like they do printed text. When reading online, people tend to skim, scan and move on quickly. This is why different rules apply to writing for the web versus writing for print.

RULE #1: THE INVERTED PYRAMID

On the average web page, visitors read approximately 28% of the content on the screen. For this reason, web writing uses the inverted pyramid style of writing, where the most pertinent information appears at the top, as seen in the diagram below.
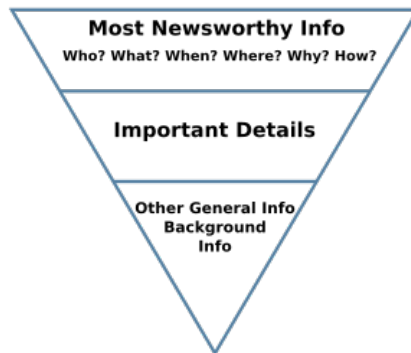
RULE #2: 50%

The basic rule for converting printed content into web content allows for only 50% of the text to make it onto the web page.

RULE #3: LITERACY LEVELS AND READABILITY STATISTICS

Your readers have varying literacy levels. To reach lower-literacy visitors and create greater ease for all visitors, target an average of a Grade 3 to 6 reading level, taking into account that pages that are technical in nature may drive a higher reading level than others.

To turn on Readability Statistics for your document in Word 2007 and 2010:

1. Select "Review" tab from the top menu;
2. Choose the "Spelling & Grammar" button (F7);
3. Select the "Options" button in the bottom left of the window;

4. Select/turn on the "Show readability statistics" check box;

Word Options

General	ABC — Change how Word corrects and formats your text.
Display	
Proofing	**AutoCorrect options**
Save	Change how Word corrects and [AutoCorrect Options...]
Language	formats text as you type:
Advanced	**When correcting spelling in Microsoft Office programs**
Customize Ribbon	☑ Ignore words in UPPERCASE
Quick Access Toolbar	☑ Ignore words that contain numbers
Add-Ins	☑ Ignore Internet and file addresses
Trust Center	☑ Flag repeated words
	☐ Enforce accented uppercase in French
	☐ Suggest from main dictionary only
	[Custom Dictionaries...]

French modes: [Traditional and new spellings ▼]
Spanish modes: [Tuteo verb forms only ▼]

When correcting spelling and grammar in Word

☑ Check spelling as you type
☑ Use contextual spelling
☑ Mark grammar errors as you type
☑ Check grammar with spelling
☑ Show readability statistics

Writing Style: [Grammar Only ▼] [Settings...]
[Recheck Document]

Exceptions for: [📄 About Us.doc ▼]
☐ Hide spelling errors in this document only
☐ Hide grammar errors in this document only

[OK] [Cancel]

5. Let Word run through the document for spelling and grammar errors. At the end of this process, a dialogue box will appear showing the readability score. If there are no spelling errors, the readability box should pop up immediately. You will only have to turn this option on once.

Desired results:

- Passive Sentences should be 0-5%
- Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level should be between Grade 3 – 6
- Words: 200-300 per page
- Words per Sentence: 20 words maximum (10 words is ideal)

Tip: If the content reads well and isn't unnecessarily technical, you're likely in good shape, even if you don't hit these results.

RULE #4: TONE – BE RELEVANT, FRIENDLY, OBJECTIVE AND DIRECT

Tone

Write in a conversational, friendly tone and in the first-person (i.e., you, we, us) as opposed to "one," but do not use "I."

Ex: You can visit us online.

Make sure to reference your Town/Township/County/Region/City/company as the formal name in the first instance on each page, then by "we" or "us" in the remaining instances.

Sentence structure

Use short phrases and direct conclusions. Sentence fragments are permissible in web writing.

Up-to-date information

Remove any outdated information.

Objective

You are writing to represent facts. Any word or sentence that does not provide new information should be cut out.

From the top

Do not use introductory paragraphs as they will likely cause the reader to leave your page. Get to the point as quickly as possible.

Direct language

Avoid jargon and ambiguous words or phrases. Be authoritative and educational with the information that you provide.

FEATURE ACTIONABLE CONTENT: BULLETS AND HYPERLINKS

The reader's eyes go directly to more actionable content, such as bulleted lists or hyperlinks; use them to provide information wherever possible to break up text. Within a bulleted list, make sure that the grammatical structure is parallel; if the first bullet starts with a noun, the rest of the bullets in the list should be treated the same – same goes for verbs.

Active voice vs. passive voice

Sentences can be active or passive. In an active sentence, the thing/person doing the action is the subject of the sentence, and the thing/person receiving the action is the object. We use this voice most of the time in speech.

[Thing doing action] + [verb] + [thing receiving action]

Addressing the reader directly creates an active voice, however, using phrases like "one may" instead of "you can" creates the passive voice and should avoided.

Active voice example: You can register for the program in the spring.

Passive voice example: Those who wish to register for the program may be registered in the spring.

When writing web content, you should try to use the active voice whenever possible. It is clear, simple and easy to understand.

SITEMAP STRUCTURE AND CLONE PAGES

ADDING, REMOVING OR RENAMING A PAGE IN THE SITEMAP

If you need to add or delete folders and files in your sitemap, please let your Content Champion/Coordinator/Manager know. Do not ever add, remove or rename a page or folder without approval. Once your site is live, you must go through the proper approval/governance process for these actions as well.

CLONE PAGES

There will be situations where you will need to link to the same content page in more than one place on your website. The original (default) Word document file will hold all of the content within it. The duplicate pages will be added after your content is imported into the content management system (CMS). These duplicate pages can be left blank in Sitemapper, as there will be a note that they are clone pages. Once your website is live, editing the main page will automatically edit all clones as well.

ACCESSIBILITY

Web accessibility refers to the inclusive practice of making websites usable by people of all abilities and disabilities. When sites are correctly designed, developed and edited, all users have equal access to perceive, understand, navigate and interact with your website.

A website is accessible if it can be used by people with disabilities (i.e. those with mobility impairments, vision loss, hearing loss, learning disabilities, etc.). Mobile users must also be considered (i.e. those using smart phones, tablets) as they access your website in a different way and also have special usability needs.

COMPLIANCE TO AODA (ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT)

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) has developed a universal accessibility guideline ensuring equitable access to content on all websites. See www.w3.org for additional information.

As of January 1, 2014, all private and non-profit organizations with 50 or more employees and all public sector organizations have to ensure new or significantly modified websites (internet not intranet) and web content on those sites conform to the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level A.

As of January 2, 2021, all public websites and web content on those sites must conform to the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA (including content created/posted before 2012). Following Level AA Guidelines now will reduce the amount of changes needed in the future. This writing guide and the i:Create content management system are designed to meet Level AA guidelines.

GENERAL RULES

Accessibility features in Adobe Acrobat 9, 10 or 11 Professional versions make it easier for people with disabilities to use PDF documents and forms with assistive software/devices like screen readers, screen magnifiers and Braille printers. If you are creating documents that will appear on your website:

1. Use pre-set styles for headings, lists and hyperlinks and when formatting Word documents rather than character formatting;
2. Add captions and ALT descriptions/tags to graphics, images and multimedia in your files;
3. Add title, author, subject, description, language to document properties;
4. Make sure the document has searchable text, not scanned text. Scanned text must be converted using Optical Character Recognition (OCR);
5. Form fields should be interactive (users can enter values);
6. Use navigational aids such as links, anchors/bookmarks, headings, a table of contents and a preset tab order for form fields (because these can be accessed using a keyboard without relying on a mouse);
7. Ensure the security settings don't interfere with a screen reader's ability to convert the on-screen text to speech;
8. Use a table editor (if available) to create tables, but not for whole file design layouts;
9. Generate the PDF file with tags (set your PDF output preferences option to tagged PDF);
10. Check the results after generating a PDF and fix any errors as required.

FORMATTING FOR ACCESSIBILITY

Text and content

Do not use *italics*, **bold**, <u>underline</u>, font styling, or play with different fonts, colours or sizes as these cause accessibility issues. Only the approved font and size should be used when updating content in the CMS. If something is important, "highlight" it with a bullet or by putting it at the top of the page or paragraph.

Keep alignment as Align Text Left for all documents (do not justify or wrap text).

Do not tab or use multiple spacing to align text in rows or columns. Insert a table instead, when necessary.

HALT

When writing for accessibility, think HALT:

- Headings
- ALT text (alternative text to images)
- Links (hyperlinks)
- Tables

Headings

Headings on a webpage serve three purposes:

1.   To divide content so website visitors can scan it quickly;
2.   To provide a table of contents for users of adaptive technologies (i.e. screen readers) so they can skip to a section they are interested in; and
3.   To add keywords to your webpage and increase your site's visibility on major search engines.

Headings range in number from one to six, with Heading 1 having the highest importance and Heading 6 having the lowest importance. When you are entering content, ensure that the heading styles begin with Heading 1, then Heading 2 for any subheadings, Heading 3 for a third-level subheading and so on.

Use the pre-defined heading tags listed in MS Word. Do not create custom heading tags. Do not waste time styling your headings (or worry if they appear *italicized* or **bolded**) as these will be stripped out when put into the CMS.

HEADING 1

Every content page will have the Heading 1 automatically generated by the page name. You will not use any Heading 1s in content. Simply start typing the body of the first paragraph at the top of the page. Subsequent main topics on the page begin with Heading 2.

HEADING 2

Subheadings or topics on your page are represented with a Heading 2. Headings 2s have the first word capitalized, but the rest appear in sentence style (lowercase). There can be as many Heading 2s as you need per page.

HEADING 3

Heading 3 follows Heading 2 when a submenu is necessary inside of your Heading 2 topic. There can be as many Heading 3s as you need to create. Once the subheading (Heading 3) menu under the Heading 2 ends, you will go back to a Heading 2 for your next main topic on the page.

HEADING 4

Heading 4s follow as sub-sub-menus under Heading 3s, and the same rules apply as above. This is true for all subsequent heading numbers (Heading 5, Heading 6 and so on).

HOW TO ADD HEADINGS IN MS WORD DOCUMENTS

If you are using Word 2007 or 2010:

- Select the "Home" tab in the top menu;
- Highlight the text that requires a heading style or simply click the cursor onto the desired line of text;
- Select the required heading from the "Styles" section of the menu.
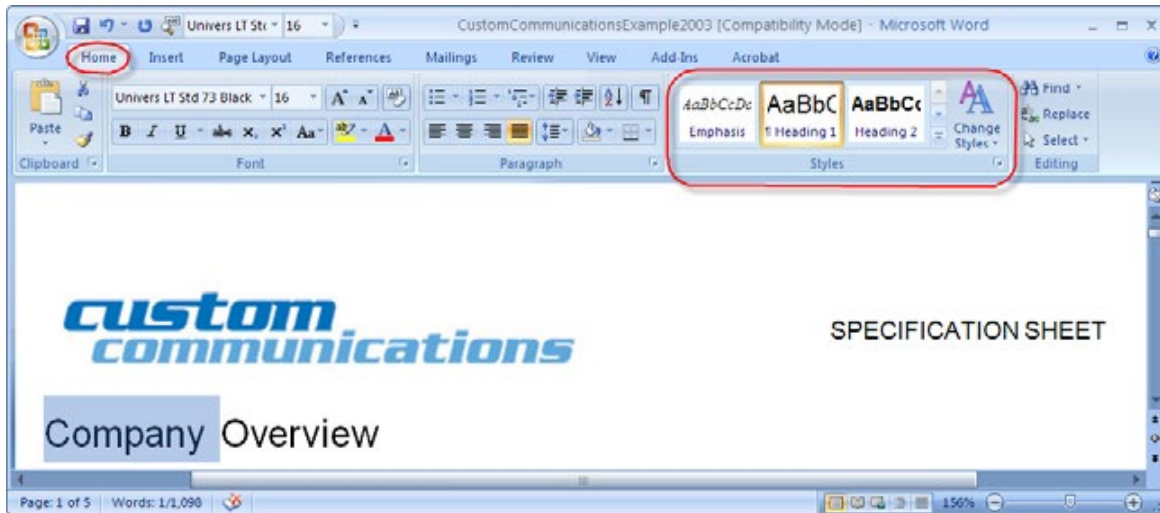
ALT Descriptions on images

Use an ALT Description that is less than 75 characters long and include enough information for a visually-impaired reader to easily understand what the image is showing.

Do not preface your description with the words "image of" or "picture of" as most screen readers will already state this, so the words become redundant.

ALT Description text should be objective and not subjective. To do this, remove adjectives and describe only what you see. This will also help you cut down on your character length.

> Ex: Boy with dog in park.

> Not: Happy boy with playful dog on a sunny day at the park.

Note: only your team involved in content clean-up (content champions, etc.) will need to know how to use ALT text for the initial content creation and upload.

AUDIO/VIDEO

Audio and video can enhance the message on your web page, but like images, they should not replace text. Also like images, you will need to provide captions, transcripts and text alternatives (ALT text) for these files.

Tables

Tables should only be used when absolutely necessary to show things like tabular data (price lists, for example). When including a table on your page, ensure content is presented so that it can be understood when read from the top-left to the bottom-right cell of the table. Do not use a table simply to break up content; that's what bullets are for.

HEADER CELL

Use cell headings (which is simply the top line of your table – no special action or formatting is required) to indicate the types of content held within table rows. This allows assistive technologies to read the information in a way that makes sense to the listener. Do not put headings/topics on the left-hand side. You menu topic items should appear only along the top row of your table (as your header cell). Do not merge any cells in your table, this includes the header cell. Try to build your table with as few columns as possible. Two or three is ideal.

TO INSERT A TABLE

To insert a table in Microsoft Word:

1. Click "Insert" from the top tab menu;
2. Click "Table" from the new menu that appears;
3. Highlight the amount of cells that you need and click – your table will be inserted directly into your document.

TABLE CAPTION

Your table should begin with an explanatory sentence before it is inserted.

Below the table, a table caption should be put on the line below the table, surrounded by square brackets and highlighted in yellow.
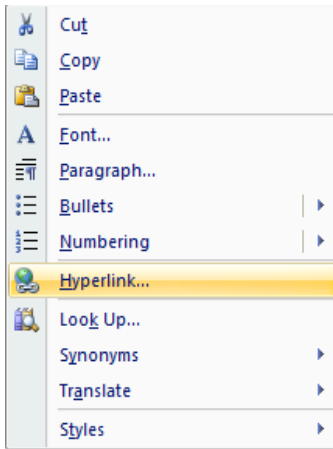
Ex:

Price list for animal services:

Service	Price
Nail clipping	$15
Grooming	$60
Vaccinations	$120
Examination	$150

[TABLE CAPTION: Animal services and price list.]

Links

Links to internal and external resources such as PDF and Excel files can be inserted in the content of the Word document using hyperlinks. Any links to outside resources must be saved in the appropriate _resources folder in the sitemap file structure for later insertion into the CMS.

Your hyperlinks will always begin by highlighting the words that you wish to hyperlink, then right-clicking on your mouse and selecting hyperlink from the menu that will appear.

| Cut |
| Copy |
| Paste |
| Font... |
| Paragraph... |
| Bullets ▸ |
| Numbering ▸ |
| Hyperlink... |
| Look Up... |
| Synonyms ▸ |
| Translate ▸ |
| Styles ▸ |

HOW TO LINK TO RESOURCES

To link to one of your resources:

- Upload/save the resource file (i.e., your PDF, Word or Excel document) to the appropriate _resources folder in the sitemap file structure;
- Within your Word document, highlight the text you would like to be the hyperlink;
- From Word's top menu bar select "Insert" then "Hyperlink" or right click the highlighted text and select "Hyperlink…" from the drop-down list;
- Browse to the corresponding file in the sitemap structure and select the file, double click or click "OK."
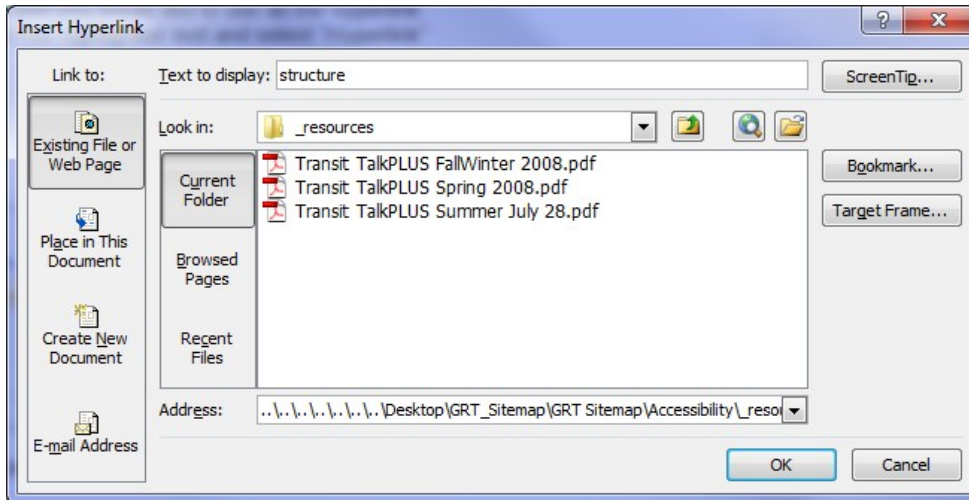

WEBSITE OR WEBPAGE LINKS

You can create hyperlinks to external websites or web pages. Your hyperlink text should describe where the user will go when they click the link. Do not use "click here" or "click this link" as these are unclear and can cause accessibility issues.

To create a hyperlink to an outside webpage:

- Highlight the desired text and right-click on your mouse;
- Select hyperlink;
- Select the first option on the left-hand side of the pop-up (Existing File or Web Page);
- Type the webpage in the bottom "Address:" bar of the pop-up then click "OK."
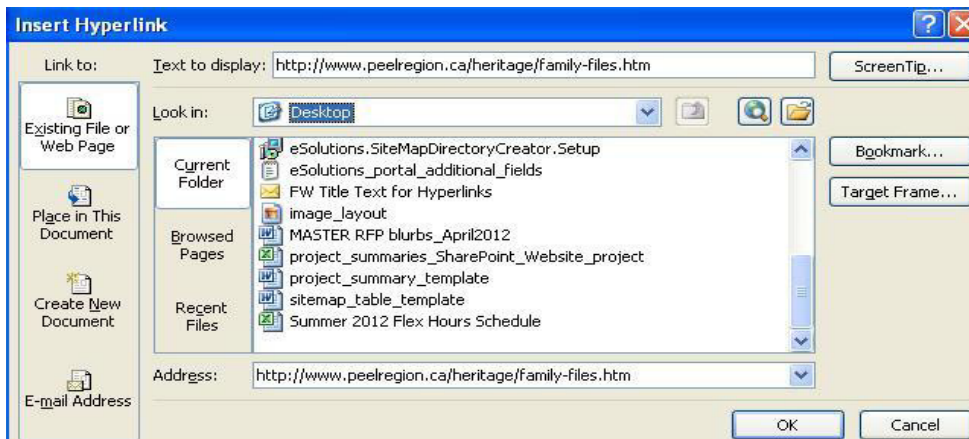
HOW TO LINK TO ANOTHER WORD DOCUMENT (INTERNAL WEB PAGE FROM YOUR SITEMAP)

Once you have highlighted the words that you wish to hyperlink and right-clicked and selected "hyperlink" from the menu, your hyperlink pop-up menu will appear. You will select the first option to link to an existing file or web page, then browse to the corresponding Word file in the sitemap structure, select the file and choose "OK." Your text will now have a hyperlink and appear in blue.
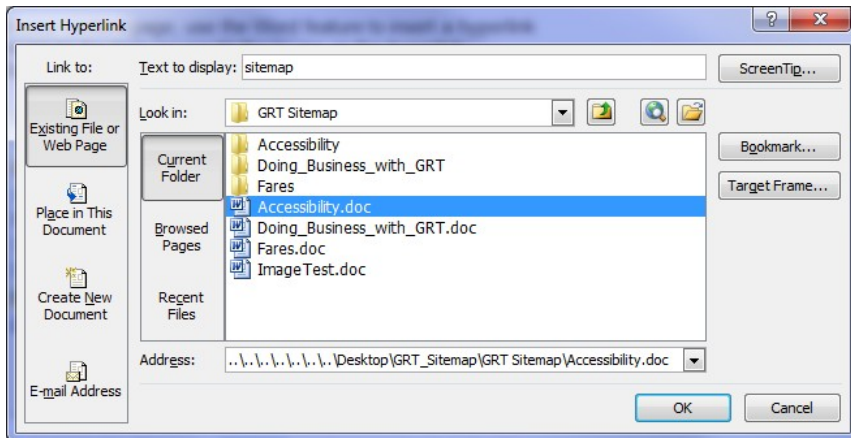
Ex: To learn more about accessibility standards, please visit our accessibility page.

FORMATTING TOOLS

ACCORDION FOLDOUT

When creating a long list of items, sometimes an accordion foldout is used to allow users to represent a large amount of information in a clean format as per the following example. If you would like to use an accordion foldout to open and collapse your information, please leave this note: [INSERT INFORMATION BELOW IN AN ACCORDION FOLDOUT]

Example of a closed accordion foldout:

Example of an open accordion foldout:

THIRD-PARTY APPLICATIONS

If a third-party application needs to be pulled onto a page, simply indicate it in square brackets on your MS Word document. Please also include the URL of where the application is currently located.

Ex: [Pull in job search application: www.3rdpartyapplication.com]

REUSABLE CONTENT

The shared content tool allows users to create page elements (such as images, text, tables or any combination of content types) that can be used over and over again across multiple pages. These elements remain linked back to the original content, so that any updates to the original content will immediately be duplicated in all other places that the content is found. Reusable/shared content is commonly used for cost tables, hours of operation, addresses and contact information.

To indicate the use of shared content on your Word document, simply add a note in square brackets.

Ex: [Pull information from shared content module for contacts]

PAGE DESCRIPTION

Each page on your site should have a unique page description or overview of what the page is about. This helps website visitors and search engines recognize the different pages on your website as defined by the key words that you use to describe the page. When you put words into a search engine and execute a search, a list of websites will appear along with a brief description immediately below the clickable link. This brief description is your page description (if no page description has been entered, the search engine will replace it with the top lines of text found in that web page's content).

Page descriptions should include key words from the page, so users can be guided to your page by their search engine (the goal is to use the words that will rank you highest in the search results).

The page description should not exceed 160 characters in length including spaces and punctuation, or the whole description will not make it into the search results display field.

Ex: Includes city council, transit schedules, general visitor information, business directory and a city staff directory.

Note: only your team involved in content clean-up (content champions, etc.) will need to know how to use page descriptions for the initial content creation and upload.

<div style="background-color:#8B1A1A; color:white; text-align:center;">**FORMATTING FOR EASY READING**</div>

LISTS

Lists serve to simplify complicated steps and organize ideas for users.

Replacing a paragraph with a bulleted list can:

- open up white space on the page
- make text easier to scan and read
- shorten copy
- relate items
- show a sequence or the level of importance

The secret lies in knowing when to use what kind of list and how to format it for grammar and consistency throughout your website. The above list, for example, has been created with simple bullets.

Numbered lists

Use a numbered list when the sequence of the listed items is important (such as a procedural list where step one must be completed before step two and so on).

A numbered list is introduced by a grammatically complete sentence that clearly indicates that a list is to follow. For accessibility purposes, identify the number of items in this introductory sentence. In a numbered list, it is not compulsory to link the last two items with "and" but doing so may increase clarity.

Ex:

The consulting company presented the following four steps necessary to improve the city:

1. Take steps to improve the downtown core;
2. Hold public meetings to discuss economic revitalization;
3. Budget for downtown improvements;
4. Draft a 5-year plan for economic development.

Bulleted lists

Bulleted lists are used to present related items when the sequence is not important and where each item in a bulleted list carries the same weight and importance. The two types of bulleted lists are simple bullets and complex bullets.

SIMPLE BULLETS

There are two ways to present a list with simple bullets. The first occurs when you are providing a list of items that are often only one or two words in length and the second occurs when the list contains sentence fragments or elements of the same main point (which complete the introductory sentence). Lowercase letters begin each bullet point (unless, of course, it is a proper name or place beginning the bullet) and no punctuation is required at the end of any of the bullets including the last.

Ex 1 – a short list:

We accept the following three methods of payment:

- cash

- cheque

- credit card

Ex 2 – sentence fragments that complete the introductory sentence:

Hiking in our trails can:

- improve your overall health
- get you outdoors
- save money on gas
- help the environment

COMPLEX BULLETS

There are two ways to present a list with complex bullets. A complex bullet list is introduced by a grammatically complete sentence that anticipates a list to follow. For accessibility purposes, identify the number of items in the opening sentence in either instance. For the first way to present a complex bullet list, each item begins with the same part of speech and all items end with a semi-colon except the second last which ends with a semi-colon followed by the word "and" which is followed by the final bullet that ends with a period.

Ex 1 – which anticipates a list to follow:

The local business owners presented a list of suggested improvements to the City containing four items:

- Take steps to improve the downtown core;

- Hold public meetings to discuss economic revitalization;

- Budget for downtown improvements; and

- Draft a 5-year plan for economic development.

In sentences where the items that appear in the bullets complete the sentence, but in which the bulleted points are long sentence fragments, do not use any punctuation at the end of the bullet points but do begin each item with a capital letter.

Ex 2 – long sentence fragments which complete the original sentence or introductory point:

The Fire Services department is responsible for maintaining health and safety in the community, which services include:

- Ensuring that every individual in your home is aware of how a smoke alarm works
- Providing training to all schools within the district to ensure the safety of children
- Working around the clock hours so that no call ever goes unanswered
- Collaborating with police and ambulance to make sure no emergency is without proper care
- Issuing tickets to those who break the fire laws of our region

Tips

Here are a few quick tips about making lists (which are presented in complex bullet format):

- Lists need a heading or a sentence of introduction to let the user know why the list is important
- Avoid embedding a list within a list as a convoluted list can be difficult to follow
- Avoid alphabetical lists

NUMBERS

Write out complete words for numbers one through nine. Also, for rounded numbers of one million and up, unless dealing with money (see money below).

Ex: There were five birds in seven different species of trees in the woods.

Use numeric symbols (digits) for numbers 10 and up.

Ex: There were 14 birds in 11 different species of trees in the woods.

If both appear in the same sentence or on the same page, be consistent by choosing one or the other.

Ex: There were seven birds in eleven different species of trees in the woods.

Ex: There were 7 birds in 11 different species of trees in the woods.

When numbers from 21 to 99 must be written out, use a hyphen.

Ex: There are twenty-one different species of birds in these woods.

Avoid using superscript with numbers.

Ex: He came in 12th place.

Not: He came in 12th place.

Your computer may be set up to automatically put ordinals in superscript mode. To change this go to File – Options – Proofing – Auto Correct Options – Auto Format as You Type – Replace as you Type – "Ordinals (1st) with superscript" – make sure to unclick "Ordinals (1st) with superscript."

DATES, TIME, CENTURIES AND DECADES

For dates, always ensure there is a comma following the day of the week and the date before the year.

Ex: Monday, February 7, 2014 or February 7, 2014.

Do not use: Mon. or February 7th or February 7th or 7 February 2014 or FEB 7 or Feb 7 or the 7th of February.

If there is no date, there is no comma between the month and year: February 2014.

If you must write out a date with numbers only, put first the year, then the month, then the date (yyyy-mm-dd).

Ex: 2015-03-10 is March 10, 2015

Do not list decades or centuries in the possessive form.

Ex: The 1920s was a decade of depression in the 1900s.

Not: The 1920's was a decade of depression in the 1900's.

For time, a colon separates hours and minutes. The time of day is indicated by the abbreviations a.m. or p.m. – not AM or PM

Ex: 9 a.m. or 9:30 p.m.

Not: 9AM or 9:30 PM

Use the link word "to" to describe a time period.

Ex: 9 a.m. to 10 a.m.

Not: 9 a.m. – 10 a.m.

AGE

Write ages like these examples:

She is two years old.
He is in his 50s.
A four-year-old wrote the letter.

PHONE NUMBERS

Use dashes between numbers, not brackets or periods.

   Ex: 519-884-3352 ext. 2207

PERCENTAGE SYMBOLS

Use the percent sign (%) in economic, financial, statistical or other documents where figures are abundant.

   Ex: a 15% tax (no space between number and %)

RULINGS

Use numeric symbols.

   Ex: Council voted 6 to 2 in favour of the program.

DECIMALS AND FRACTIONS

Keep decimals to a maximum of two places unless it is important to be more precise. Commas should appear in numbers to break up thousands or millions.

   Ex: 1,000 or 100,000 or 1,000,000

Fractions are spelled out and hyphenated.

   Ex: two-thirds, one-half

   Not: 2/3 or one half.

MONEY

Use $5, not five dollars or $5 dollars.

For higher numbers, use $5,000 (include comma, not cents if rounded to the dollar).

Use a combination of numbers and words for very high numbers like $5 million (express numerals in the millions or higher as a combination of words and figures unless you have to use entire numeric symbols, such as $568,254.69).

ADDRESSES

Addresses will need to always either be written out in full or abbreviated for consistency.

Abbreviations are recommended, such as:

2 Bloor St., Toronto

6 Eglinton Ave., Toronto

10 Maloney Blvd., Gatineau

42 Old English Ln., Markham

Spell out street names under nine but use symbols over 10, such as:

4 Fifth Ave., New York

23 59th St., New York

METRIC UNITS OF MEASUREMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

The short forms of metric units are symbols and not abbreviations, and should generally be used in web writing. The metric symbols should never end with a period unless it is the last word in the sentence.

    Ex: The lake was 30 km long.

    Not: The lake was 30 km. long.

    Ex: The lake was so long that it spanned 30 km.

    Not: The lake was so long that it spanned 30 km

Metric symbols should be preceded by digits and a space must separate the digits from the symbol.

    Ex: The lake was 30 km in length.

    Not: The lake was 30km in length.

Metric symbols are always written in the singular form.

    Ex: 50 kg

    Not: 50 kgs

However, pluralized written-out in-full metric unit names should have an "s" at the end.

Ex: 50 kilograms.

The symbol for a compound unit that is a quotient of two units is indicated by a solidus or by a negative exponent.

Ex: km/h

Not: kmph or kph

Use Canadian spelling, such as metre (not meter) and litre (not liter).

The symbol for litre should be a capital "L" even when it appears as the second letter.

Ex: 10 L or 15 mL

CORRECT METRIC USAGE

Correct Usage	For
km	kilometre
m	metre
mm	millimetre
L (use capital l)	litre
mL	millilitre
kg	kilogram
g	gram
h	hour
s	second
cm^3	cubic centimeter
km/h	kilometre per hour
kHz	kilohertz
mHz	megahertz
hPa	hectopascal
kPa	kilopascal
C	degree celsius
k	kelvin

STYLE

COMMONLY MISSPELLED, MISUSED AND CONFUSED WORDS

Use your spellchecker on every single page of content. You should also use the grammar tool.

Beware of homonyms and commonly confused words such as there, their and they're or affect and effect which spellchecker and maybe even grammar checker will not catch, such as:

accept (receive); **except** (exclude)

affect (influence); **effect** (verb: bring about, result in, noun: consequence, impact)

a lot (alot is not a word)

allusion (reference); **illusion** (misleading appearance)

all ready (prepared); **already** (previously)

all right (alright is not a word)

alternate (by turns); **alternative** (one of two or possibly more choices)

anymore (any longer)**; any more** (when referring to quantity, any more is always written in two words)

anyone (referring to people); **any one** (referring to things)

appraise (set a value on); **apprise** (make aware of)

approve (to ratify); **approve of** (to think well of)

assume (take or put on oneself); **presume** (take the liberty)

assure (to remove doubt); **ensure** (to make sure or certain); **insure** (related to insurance)

ascent (climb); **assent** (agreement)

beside (by the side of); **besides** (in addition to)

biannual and (twice a year); **biennial** (every two years); **semi-annual** (twice a year)

breach (gap; violation); **breech** (lower part)

canvas (cloth); **canvass** (solicit)

capital (city; very significant); **capitol** (government building in US)

censor (check the morality or acceptability of; person who does this); **censure** (criticize, blame, criticism); **sensor** (device)

complement (complete; that which completes; i.e. staff complement); **compliment** (praise, or for free)

comprise (consist of); **constitute and compose** (make up, account for)

continual (a rapid succession of events); **continuous** (uninterrupted in time or sequence)

councillor (member of council); **counsellor** (adviser; lawyer; camp counsellor)

dependant (noun); **dependent** (adjective)

discreet (prudent, tactful); **discrete** (distinct, separate)

either/or; **neither/nor** (Ex: Either they go or I go. Neither the City nor the Region is involved in this project)

elicit (draw forth); **illicit** (unlawful)

foreword (preface); **forward** (ahead)

immanent (inherent); **imminent** (about to occur)

imply (meaning intended by the speaker); **infer** (refers to meaning understood by the receiver of the message)

its (belonging to); **it's** (it is)

lead (guidance); **led** (past tense of lead)

loose (set free; not tight); **lose** (mislay, forfeit)

pedal (operate levers with feet; activation device); **peddle** (sell, hawk)

personal (individual; private); **personnel** (staff)

principal (chief, main, leading; school administrator, a sum of money owed as a debt upon which interest is calculated); **principle** (rule)

practicable (that which can be done, which is feasible); **practical** (having to do with action or practice, fit for actual practice)

preceding (what comes immediately before) **previous** and **prior** (existing or occurring (some time) before something else

procedure (a set way of doing something); **process** (a series of progressive and interdependent steps carried out to achieve a particular result)

utilize [to put to (unexpected) practical use]; **use** (to apply)

staff (should be referred to as a singular entity, not plural. Ex: The staff has its kitchen on the second floor.)

stationary (fixed; motionless); **stationery** (writing material)

who (the subject of a verb); **whom** (object) (Ex: Who will be hired? It does not matter whom we hire.)

waive (give up, forego); **wave** (move up and down)

Plural forms of nouns (commonly confused/misused)

analysis, analyses   appendix, appendices

atriums, atria

bureau, bureaus

census, censuses

crisis, crises

focus, focuses

formula, formulas

hypothesis, hypotheses

index, indexes (of a book), indices (in mathematics, statistics)

memorandum, memoranda

memo, memos is acceptable

parenthesis, parentheses

CAPITALIZATION

Avoid using ALL CAPS (all uppercase letters). It is often difficult to read, can unintentionally convey alarm and some people regard it as shouting. Accessibility devices may also read each letter out instead of recognizing the word. Capitalize proper nouns such as the legal name of the Town/Township/County/Region.

Government

Capitalized when it refers to the political party in power.

Ex: The Liberal Government is developing a policy.

government – lowercase when it refers in a general way to the offices and agencies that carry out the functions of governing.

Ex: It is government policy.

Always: Government of Ontario, Government of Canada

Titles of respect

Capitalized even when used in the plural.

Ex: Your Honour, Mr. Chairman, Her Worship, Honourable, Your Honours

Formal titles

A person's formal title should be capitalized when either immediately following or preceding the person's name. It is important to remember that only formal titles and not regular job titles or roles should be capitalized.

Examples:

Allow me to introduce Mayor John Tory, who wishes to welcome you to Toronto.

John Tory, Mayor of Toronto, welcomes you to his city.

Mayor John Tory's administrative assistant has been with him for two years.

Furthermore, when a person's title is being used as a common noun (not a proper noun), their title is not capitalized. To differentiate between a common noun and a proper noun, consider if the person who holds the formal title could have their title replaced with their name in the sentence or not. If the name could replace the title, it is a proper noun and should be capitalized. Again, keep in mind that this is for formal titles only and does not apply to regular job titles or roles.

Examples:

If we elected someone new to be the mayor, we could move forward with our economic plan.

The Mayor is ready to move forward with our economic plan.

The administrative assistant should be here soon.

The "the" portion of a formal title is only capitalized if it begins the sentence.

Examples:

The Mayor said he would reduce the crime rate in our city.

I asked the Mayor, and he said that he would lower the crime rate in our city.

Seasons

Not capitalized: winter, spring, summer, fall

Direction

Use lowercase letters for direction: north, northeast, downtown

Departments

Use uppercase letters for departments and divisions within the Town/Township/County/Region, agencies and boards or other government agencies.

It is not necessary or required to insert the word "department" after a department name. The word "department" is always lowercase unless it is the first word in a sentence.

Following a colon

Use lowercase immediately following a colon unless it is a proper noun (like someone's name).

What to do with "the"

Capitalize "the" for the titles of books, magazines, movies, TV programs, songs, paintings, etc.

Example: If interested in contributing to The Walrus, please read this Canadian magazine.

Do not capitalize "the" before newspapers, directories, handbooks, names of companies, associations, institutions, awards, ships, trains, nicknames, rock groups, etc.

Example: The story in the National Post.

PUNCTUATION

Double-spacing after a period, question mark, colon or exclamation point is no longer required and it causes problems for visually-impaired computer users. Use one space only.

Commas (,) are used between elements in a series except before the final "and," "or" or "nor."

Example: The bylaw regulates dogs, cats and birds.

Use commas to separate adjectives before a noun when the commas represent "and." Omit commas if the adjectives could not be separated by "and" and still make sense.

Example: The large, decorative sign was installed.

Colons (:) indicate something is following. They're used instead of a comma to introduce bullet points and explanations, contrasts, hours, minutes and seconds.

Dashes (–) emphasize the text contained between them and to interrupt a sentence.

Ex: The pool – one of the largest in Canada – is located on the second floor.

Hyphens (-) join words together for ease-of-reading.

Ex: The RHCPA is a state-of-the-art theatre.

A hyphen can also be used to join words together to form a separate concept.
Ex: The plaque is well-placed.

Periods (.) are used to end a sentence and after abbreviations.

Quotation marks (" ") mean "he or she says" and also draw attention to specific words and/or phrases. Only use single quotations for quotes within a quote.

Ex: Mayor Tory said, "The Queen said 'we shall have peace' and so we shall."

Semicolons (;) join two independent clauses that are closely related. They do not make sense as separate sentences. Use semicolons for separate phrases that contain commas (e.g., Richmond Hill, Ontario; Vaughan, Ontario; and Aurora, Ontario) and before explanatory phrases introduced by "for example," "namely," "like," "including," and "that is."

Ex: Some activities cost next to nothing; for example, walking trails.

APOSTROPHES WITH ACRONYMS

Do not use apostrophes to pluralize acronyms.

Ex: The MPs are heading to the House of Commons.

Not: The MP's are heading to the House of Commons.

Use an apostrophe with an acronym only when it is possessive.

Ex: The MP's office is nearby.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Latin abbreviations are acceptable: i.e., e.g., etc.

i.e. means "that is" and introduces a clarification or expands upon an idea

Ex: I will look it up in a reliable source, i.e., the dictionary.

e.g. means "for example."

When using i.e. or e.g. in a sentence, follow by a comma (e.g., this is an example).

Omit periods in an all-cap abbreviation unless it refers to a person's initials.

Omit titles: only use titles such as Dr. and Prof. when it's relevant. Never use Mr., Mrs., Miss or Ms.

Temperatures: use -20 C, not minus 20 degrees Celsius.

Spell out shortened words such as app (application), specs (specifications), stats (statistics) and rep (representative). Users may mistake one definition for another.

Do not abbreviate terms such as association, department, division, organization in corporate and government names.

Ex: Public Works department

Not: PW Dept.

If an acronym will be used, spell it out in full in the first reference, then use the acronym in following references.

Ex: A registered retirement savings plan (RRSP) is a great way to save for the future. An RRSP can also give you considerable tax savings.

WE ARE CANADIAN

Canadians opt for the traditional British "our" spelling: neighbour, harbour, rumour, honour, favourite, etc.

However, variations of these root words do not always retain the "u." It's behaviour, and behavioural, favour and favourite, but it's glamour and glamorous, and honour and honorary.

re vs. er

Use the "re" ending for words not the "er" ending (think French Canadian pronunciation of these same words, like theatre or centre).

Examples: centre, theatre, fibre, metre, calibre

ize vs. ise

Examples: civilize, authorized, organization.

Similarly, "yze" is preferred over "yse" as in analyze and paralyze.

However, some words are always "ise", such as advertise, franchise and supervise.

ce vs. se

"ce" when used as a noun.

"se" when used as a verb.

Ex: Come to practice in order to practise hard.

Ex: If they license me to drive, I will then have a driver's licence.

able vs. ible

If the negative of the word is formed by the prefix "un", use able (presentable, bearable).

If the negative of the word is formed by the prefix "in", use ible (accessible, eligible).

Note: There are some instances that the same word with the different suffix has a different meaning:

impassable – impassible

forceable – forcible

STYLE TIPS

Here are some general style tips for items that may arise while you are writing:

- All Acts must be capitalized (Planning Act, Municipal Act) but should not be italicized;

- When spelling out department and division names with "and" in the title, use the word and (Environment and Infrastructure Services) and not an ampersand (Environment & Infrastructure Services);

- Publications should be capitalized and italicized;

- All government bodies, legislation and higher courts (those higher than municipal courts) should be capitalized (Supreme Court of Canada);

- Words than begin with a silent "h" (such as honest or honour) need to have the word "an" come before it, not "a" when writing them in a sentence;

- Do not use Mr., Mrs., Ms. or Miss with a name, use the full name instead (Kelly Armstrong not Ms. Armstrong);

- List people's titles with both their first and last names on first reference only, full names and titles should be used rarely thereafter;

- Always write out full titles and names first and follow it with the acronym (short form) in brackets. Then the acronym can be used in the rest of your document (Ex: The Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts (RHCPA) is located in the heart of Richmond Hill's historic downtown. The RHCPA's main auditorium can seat 631 people;

- The meanings of e.g. and i.e. are different. When you want to say "for example," use e.g. (The abbreviation e.g. is Latin for exempli gratia, which means "free example"). When you mean to say "that is," use i.e. (The abbreviation for the Latin phrase id est and means "that is");

- Who vs. Whom – use "who" when it means he, she or they. Use "whom" when it stands for him, her and them;

- It's vs. its – It's is the short form (abbreviation) of "it is." It cannot be used for anything else. If you cannot break it down to "it is" or "it has," then you are using the wrong form. "Its" is the possessive form of it;

- Who vs. That – "That" is a relative pronoun used when referring to a person or thing. "Who" is a relative pronoun that's used when referring to a person;

- You and I vs. You and Me – To decide whether to use "I" or" me "in a sentence, remove the other person and then replace the word you with "I" and then "me" and decide which makes more sense;

- Place commas and periods inside quotation marks, not outside, but place colons and semicolons outside of quotations. Question marks and exclamation marks go inside the quotations when they apply to the quoted matter only and outside when they apply to the entire sentence.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- The Canadian Oxford Dictionary
- The Canadian Dictionary of the English Language
- The Oxford Guide to Canadian English Usage
- The Canadian Style – A Guide to Writing and Editing (published in cooperation with the Public Works and Government Services Canada)
- Really Practical Writing Rules for Canadians
- The Canadian Press Stylebook, 17th Edition
- The Canadian Press Stylebook – Caps and Spelling, 20th Edition
- The Globe and Mail Style Book
- The Chicago Manual of Style, 15th Edition