

DC Portal Standards Quick Reference Guide

Content	Style
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present content as: 1) Services the agency provides to constituents, 2) Information the agency provides to constituents. • Use bullets and tables instead of wordy text. • Try to limit content presentation to one page to avoid scrolling. If the content is longer, create multiple pages or anchor links to maintain minimal scrolling. • Use position titles—not position holder names. • Hyperlink text email to preferred email account in place of printing full account address. • Hyperlink text to destination URLs, do not expose the URL on the page unless it is a friendly URL. e.g. http://disb.dc.gov/insurance • Set links to CLASS=red; set external links to TARGET=_blank • Use the words “select” or “view” when pointing a user to a link, do not say, “Click here.” e.g. View the report. • Post current information only. • Unpublish or archive obsolete content. • Do not lead off with a mission statement in the About the Agency category. • Add disclaimers for file types (PDFs, video) and for content or links outside the DC portal. All links to file types are denoted by an asterisk (*). • Make sure the online processing of services contains: 1) Instructions for completing and submitting forms, 2) A description of how the request will be processed and tracked, and 3) Information on notification of receipt and expected response time. 	<p>Follow these style rules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • citywide (don't hyphenate) • email (don't hyphenate) • government (lowercase when used informally or as an adjective) • home page (two words) • Mayor (always capitalize when referring to District's Mayor) • nation's capital (don't capitalize) • online (don't hyphenate) • onsite (don't hyphenate) • web page (two words) • website (one word) • Don't use periods for abbreviations e.g. states, acronyms, quadrants, times (DC, MD, OCTO, NW, SE, am, pm) • Spell out a title followed by the acronym in parentheses. Use the acronym for all remaining references. e.g. ...the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO). OCTO develops and enforces policies and standards for information technology in the District. • Form addresses so that street types are spelled out (Street, Avenue). Don't spell out numbered streets but do put a comma between the street and quadrant. e.g. 441 4th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001 • Place parentheses around the area code for phone and fax numbers. e.g. (202) 727-6436; 1(800) 555-5555 • Use figures for ages (I'm 5 years old). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spell out numbers one to nine. • Write double-digits as numbers unless they begin a sentence (10; 250; 1,045). • Spell out ranks (first, second, third) unless they refer to street numbers or double digit numbers. (4th Street; 34th Annual Event) • Refer to the complete Web Style Guide online at http://octo.in.dc.gov under Web Internet Standards for more style guidelines.

System Questions? Contact DSF Support at support.dsf@dc.gov or go to <http://websupport.in.dc.gov>
Posting Requests: Email mainteditor@dc.gov (do not send to individual editors)

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Grammar and Punctuation

- Use active tense—avoid passive voice.
- Place punctuation inside quotes.
- Use quotation marks sparingly, unless used in a direct quote. To make a word stand out, use italics instead or rephrase the sentence.
- Capitalize letters consistently.
- Pay careful attention to the words that sound alike but are spelled differently (it's vs. its, their vs. there, you're vs. your).

Web Page Features to Avoid

- Minimize scrolling pages
- No home pages should scroll
- No animated graphics
- No blinking text
- No embedded sound files
- No hot colors—use dark blue, red, and black
- No blink links—mark links with descriptive text
- No ads, promotions, or nonagency logos
- No pop ups

PDFs and Multimedia Files

- Convert all document types (Word, Excel, Powerpoint) to the Portable Document Format (PDF) when adding file links.
- Use PDFs because they are: 1) an official document difficult to duplicate on the web; 2) viewable by all users via Adobe Reader, which can be downloaded for free, 3) more likely to be printed than viewed online.
- Do not add PDFs or multimedia files as home page headlines. Files must be placed on a transfer page.
- Denote file links with an asterisk (*) and add appropriate file disclaimer. The asterisk should be a part of the link.
- Indicate one asterisk (*) for one file type, two asterisks (**) for an additional file type, etc.
- PDFs should not exceed 5MB per broadcast. Separate larger files into multiple files. Contact mainteditor@dc.gov if files larger than 5MB cannot be separated but need to be broadcast.
- PDFs should open in a frame.
- Video files should be brought to OCTO via CD or FTP. Large files should be hosted by the Office of Cable Television for web streaming.

File/Content Disclaimers

Use these disclaimers for the following file types:

PDFs

*This document is presented in Portable Document Format (PDF). A PDF reader is required for viewing. [Download a PDF Reader](#) or [Learn More About PDFs](#).

Microsoft® Media Player

*On-Demand Video is presented in Microsoft® Media Player format. A Microsoft Media Player is required for viewing. [Download](#) the player.

RealPlayer

*This video is presented in [RealPlayer](#) format. You may have to [download RealPlayer](#) to view the video.

Content/Links Outside the Portal

*The District of Columbia government is not responsible for information on websites outside the DC.Gov portal.

*These links are provided by [agency name] as a courtesy. The District government is not responsible for information on websites outside the DC portal. Inquiries should be made to the sponsoring organizations.

Note: If available, remember to use disclaimer templates for DSF. Disclaimers automatically appear for PDF files and Media Player files for the News Room tool.

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Agency Home Page

The screenshot shows the DC Department of Human Resources (DCHR) home page. The page layout includes a top navigation bar with links like 'MAYOR FENTY', 'DC GUIDE', 'RESIDENTS', 'BUSINESS', 'VISITORS', 'GOVERNMENT', and 'FOR KIDS'. The main header features the 'Department of Human Resources' title and a logo. A left sidebar contains navigation links for 'DCHR HOME', 'SERVICES', 'INFORMATION', and 'ONLINE SERVICE REQUESTS'. The main content area is divided into 'Services' and 'DCHR NEWS' sections. The footer contains a 'DC Department of Human Resources' address and contact information, along with a 'Telephone Directory by Topic' link.

#	Standard Component	#	Standard Component
1	Agency Name Title	9	Address Footer
2	Agency Name Title Bar	10	Director Photo
3	News Header	11	Left Navigation
4	Headline	12	Agency Home / Home Topics
5	Subhead (Caption)	13	Online Service Requests
6	"Full Text" Link	14	Agency Logo
7	Title Header	15	Header
8	Sublinks (Bulleted List)	16	Footer

Agency Home Page Standards

- Organize content as Services or Information; headings should include most sought-after content.
- Link Services and Information headings to their appropriate index pages.
- Put links into two columns on the home page to avoid page scrolling.
- Ensure left nav matches home page Services and Information bullets.
- Make bullets solid black.
- Include three headlines (maximum of four) on the home page that are similar to newspaper headlines (include verbs and no end punctuation). Use title case.
- Ensure subheads/captions are complete sentences with end punctuation—avoid repeating headline words. Use sentence case.
- Don't include PDFs or links to outside sites on the home page.
- Remove out-of-date headlines promptly.
- Set agency logos flush right; dimensions should be 300 pixels wide by 85 pixels high maximum.
- Do not request changes to the Header and Footer; the content is universal throughout DC.Gov.

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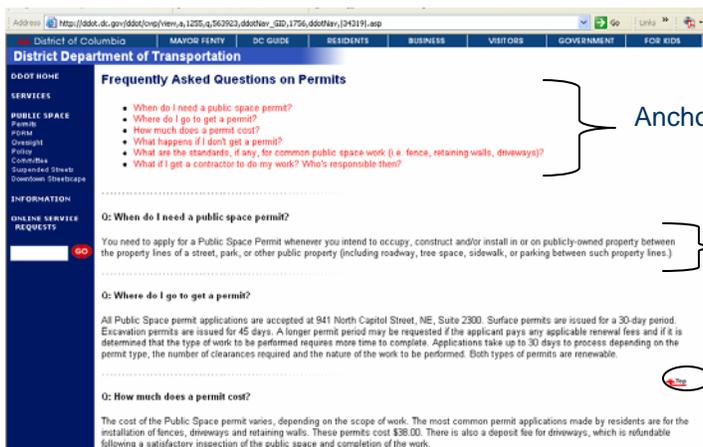
Agency Website Components

Services and Information

- List agency's most sought-after services and information in bullet format under Services and Information headings. Links should direct users to pages with detailed information.
- Put links into two columns on the home page to avoid page scrolling.
- Put bulleted items in alphabetical or logical order.
- Provide contact information for each Service or Information resource, detailing the following where applicable: 1) Office address, 2) Hours of operation, 3) Phone and fax numbers, 4) Link to email address.
- Add new bulleted links to the Services and Information index pages.

Internal Pages

- Include title and body text; use Standard Content Page template.
- Keep content concise, use bulleted lists, links and tables where appropriate.
- Set page size so that pages do not scroll up and down or left to right using the 1024 x 768 screen resolution.
- Use multiple page format (page x of y) when content is a single document without subcategories.
- Organize content so users can find what they are looking for in as few 'clicks' as possible. Use no more than three 'clicks' from the home page to the most detailed level of information.
- ****Use a bulleted list of jump links to move important information to the top of the page and eliminate the need to scroll (A jump list contains bullets anchored (linking) to subheads and information below on the same page or on a jump page). Jump pages should be used when content is divided into subcategories.**



****Use a bulleted list of jump links that incorporates the anchor links and detailed text on one long page. Incorporate "top" graphics to allow a user to return to the top of the page.**

Left Navigation

- Maintain primary navigation structure (Agency Home, Services, Information, Online Service Requests).
- Ensure left nav matches home page Services and Information bullets.
- Ensure the left navigation bar changes to display the content within the section on internal agency pages.
- Do not add PDFs to the home page or to the left navigation.
- Do send requests to update How to Reach Us, Ask the Director and FOIA Requests pages to mainteditor@dc.gov. Agencies do not have access to update these pages.

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Tables

Use tables to reduce the amount of space needed to display information or data.

DC Standard Table

Program	Description	Ages	Date	Time	Location
Black History Quiz Bowl	Teams from each ward will answer questions on achievements and accomplishments of African-American heroes.	13–19	Feb 5, 2006	6:00 pm	441 4th Street, NW
Clothesline Project	The focus of Domestic Violence Awareness Month is to educate teens and their families about the extent of violence against women and the effects on the battered individuals and their families and friends.	13–19	Feb 22, 2006	6:30 pm	2000 14th Street, NW
Junior Roving Leader Program	This program comprises young adults throughout the District who are between ages 16 to 24, and successfully enrolled in an academic or vocational program.	16–24	Feb 27, 2006	7:00 pm	400 6th Street, NW

Table Standards

- Use abbreviations (e.g. Jan, Feb, Mon, Tues, St, Ave) and symbols (e.g. %, #) for tables to save space.
- Do present times in three or four digits (3:00, 10:00) so they line up in the column but do use 3 pm, 10 pm elsewhere on the site.
- Connect continuing or inclusive numbers, dates, or times with an en dash (no spaces on either side) or a single hyphen with one space on either side.
- Alphabetize items by going down column one, then wrapping to the top of column two, and so forth (not horizontally by row) for tables that consist of a list of items.
- Spell out the date if the date column is wide enough, e.g. January 30. If not, abbreviate the month: Jan 30
- Set table borders to zero (0).
- Use DC Standard Table to break up large text blocks, organize long lists; colors should alternate white/blue/white/blue.
- Use Standard HTML Table to line up text, such as bullets, lists, etc., when appropriate.

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Graphics and Images

Download time should be considered when including graphics on a page. Graphic file sizes should be limited to 30K wherever possible and contain "ALT" statements for text browsers. Add graphics in a GIF or JPEG format.

GIFs, JPEGs and Other Images

Use images sparingly so DC portal web pages load quickly on computers with dial-up Internet connections. The maximum page load should not exceed 70K. Graphics—primarily GIFs and JPEGs—should be compressed using Photoshop or a similar program. Limit graphics to 256 colors (the maximum number of colors that older video cards can support). Webmasters can also optimize performance by using the exact same name and path each time the same image is used.

Note: All images must either be owned by the DC government, used with permission, or be non-copyrighted images.

Principal Formats

- JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group): Use the JPEG format for photos.
- GIF (Graphics Interface Format): with a 256-color limit, the GIF format is the best choice for scanned images and illustrations.

Image Sizes

- Logos: 300 pixels wide by 85 pixels high maximum
- Photos/Images: 300 pixels wide by 250 pixels high and 30K per image maximum
- Director's photo: 110 pixels wide by 130 pixels high maximum
- Thumbnails: 140 pixels wide by 100 pixels high and no more than 30K per image maximum. When selected, the image should enlarge to 420 pixels wide by 300 pixels high.



Multimedia

Multimedia should only be used when there is clear benefit. It increases download time for users who don't have fast Internet connections. Multimedia may become more acceptable on the DC portal as computers advance and technology becomes less expensive. Webmasters should always check first with OCTO regarding the use of multimedia applications to ensure they are in compliance with standards and policies.

Animation/Animated GIFs

Use animation or animated GIFs only if they truly enhance the agency's message. Animation increases the load time of a web page and often does not add real benefit.

Background Color and Images

Background color and images aren't used on the DC portal. Background images make text harder to read and pages longer to load. They can cause older or resource-limited browsers to crash. Additionally, they're often difficult to print.

Alternate Text (ALT Text)

Provide a text equivalent for every content-supportive nontext element. This includes images, graphical representations of text (including symbols), image map regions, animations, e.g. animated GIFs), applets and programmatic objects, frames, scripts, images used as list bullets, transparent spacers, graphical buttons, sounds (played with or without user interaction), stand-alone audio files, audio tracks of video, and video. If an image must be used for displaying text, the alternate (ALT) text should match the text. For transparent images ("spacer GIFs"), use **ALT=" "**.



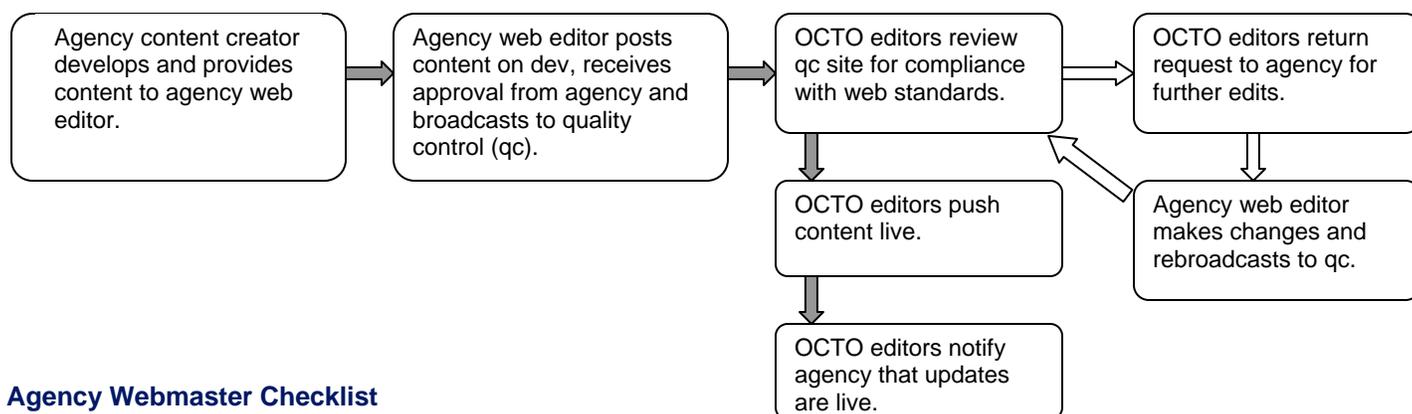
DC College Savings Plan

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Publishing Process

Website Maintenance Notification Process for Agencies With In-house Webmasters

1. The agency webmaster should make updates on the development server (dev) following the District's web style and standards. When the agency content editor has reviewed the content on dev, the agency webmaster should publish the update and "broadcast" those changes to the quality control environment (qc). **Note:** When broadcasting updates, always include the changes you have made into the description pop-up window in DSF or the News Room tool.
2. After the changes are "broadcasted," the DSF system or the .Net News Room system sends an automated email to mainteditor@dc.gov containing the URL and a detailed description of the changes provided by the agency webmaster.
3. The OCTO maintenance editor performs a quality check on the updated pages and accepts or rejects them. If the request is accepted, the agency webmaster receives a system generated approval email. If the request is rejected, the maintenance editor sends a message through the DSF or .Net News Room system listing the reasons for the rejection along with edits.
4. The agency webmaster makes the suggested changes on dev and re-broadcasts the affected pages to qc.
5. The maintenance editor verifies that all revisions have been made and pushes the site from qc to live.



Agency Webmaster Checklist

Consistent Content

- Follow the web standards and publishing procedures.
- Follow the web style guidelines.
- Review all pages within your agency site and make updates on every page affected.

Consistent Applications

- Check all applications on your site that might include information you are changing, such as addresses, contact information, acronyms, etc. Contact the application developer to make the corrections.

Consistent Communication

- Do email the entire OCTO Web Maintenance Group at mainteditor@dc.gov for timely processing.
- Do use your agency acronym in the subject line of the email, e.g. DDOT Update
- Do include page titles, URLs, update details and/or problems with pages in your email.
- Do keep in contact with other agencies. Content updates to your website may need to be made to other agency web pages. For example, contact information or an address could be referenced on another agency's page or application. Identify these pages and coordinate with the other agency webmasters so that you can make these changes at the same time.
- Do email support.dsf@dc.gov for DSF system or .Net News Room tool questions.

Note: Once a web update request is made either through the DSF system, the .Net News Room tool or via mainteditor@dc.gov, OCTO's Web Maintenance Group will respond to your request within 24 hours.

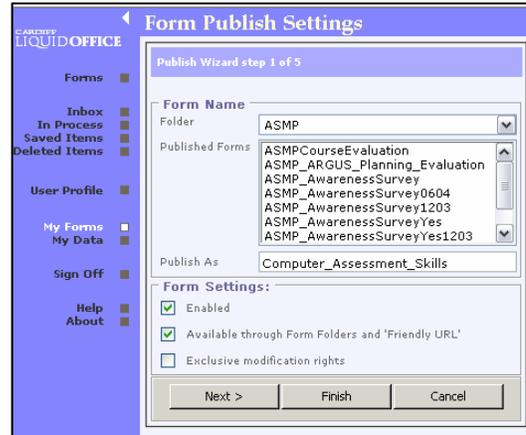
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DC Portal Engines

The following engines are software systems installed on DC portal servers where any agency can access them to create online forms or surveys, create static web content, and retrieve web trends data. For more information about any of the following engines or to sign up for training, please contact mainteditor@dc.gov.

Online Forms Engine: Liquid Office

- Provides online support for online submission of forms.
- Allows agency webmasters to quickly and easily create and update online forms.
- Ensures that forms are available to users in an HTML or PDF format. Data is collected as accurately and efficiently as possible, and data is compatible with any number of backend systems by using a standard file format.
- Routes data to an agency's email account to be processed and/or forwarded. For agencies without an existing backend database system, the Desktop component will provide simple and quick access to the data.



Online Survey Engine: SurveySolutions

- Provides specialized reporting functions for surveys.
- Allows questionnaire authoring, response management, and in-depth analysis and reporting directly from the agency's desktop to an Internet-based database. It includes a word processing feature for survey design, a spreadsheet environment to view and manage survey responses, and a reporting and presentation system to analyze the results.
- Provides the technology for secure access, automatic survey table creation, and survey table population.
- Allows web-based survey design, administration, reporting, and analysis to take advantage of powerful survey management functionality, and provides website users with controlled access to survey results.

Search Engine: Google Search Appliance

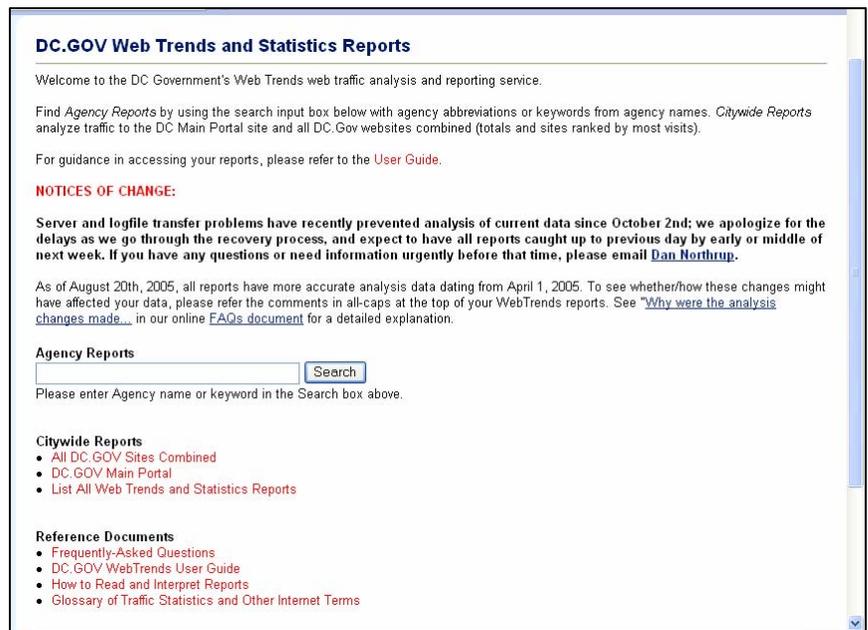
- Provides site-wide and "intelligent" indexing and searching.

Content Management Engines:

- Dynamic Site Framework (DSF)
- .NET
- Live Edit

Web Trend Reporting Engine: WebStats

- Log on to <http://webstats.in.dc.gov/default.asp> to view reports of web trends and statistics for your agency website.
- Find data on the number "hits" per day, page view trends, and average visit lengths.



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News Room

The news room includes releases, news advisories, testimonies and other time-sensitive items related to the agency.

- Do include headline, subhead and body text for all news items.
- Do split up longer releases into multiple pages to avoid scrolling.
- Do, if available, add an agency media contact name and phone number in bold before the body text.
- Do include links to more information appropriate to the release if available.
- Do set links to CLASS=red and external links to TARGET=_blank.
- Do remove references to the agency website in press releases such as, "For more information, log on to ddot.dc.gov." These statements are appropriate for printed releases; however, users are already on the agency website and do not need a link to its home page.
- Do not add PDFs, videos or external links as home page headlines. These links should appear on transfer pages.
- Do add PDFs as redirects or add them as a news release with a headline, subhead, and introduction text. This way the news item can easily be added as a headline.
- Do limit PDFs to 5MB per broadcast.
- Do remove out-of-date headlines promptly.
- Do also broadcast the Site Greeting in DSF when making changes to the home page headlines.
- Do include three headlines on the home page if timely. There can be a maximum of four headlines and a minimum of one headline on the home page.

Headlines

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

- **Protect Yourself From Consumer Fraud** instead of **Consumer Fraud**.
- **Lottery Soars at \$14 Million** instead of **Lottery of \$14 Million**.
- **Woman Rescued From Capitol Hill Fire** instead of **Capitol Hill Row House Fire**.
- **January Issue of *The District's Business* Released** instead of **January Newsletter**

Subheads

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

Headline: **District Employees Receive Pocket Guide**

Correct subhead: The handy reference directory provides District agency and topic listings. **Full Text**

Headline: **District Employees Receive Pocket Guide**

Incorrect subhead: District Agency and Topic Listings. **Full Text**