



Web Style Guide for the District of Columbia

****Note: OCTO** reserves the right to alter standards/styles for the new CMS.

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Introduction

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

Who needs this guide?

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

Why is style important?

Content is *what* is written; and style is *how* that content is written. Style has a major impact on whether people perceive content as authoritative, reliable and believable.

Keep these general style principles in mind:

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

What improves readability?

A highly readable web page should be written at a reading level that's appropriate for its audience. Craft your message to suit the medium and the audience. Write clearly and use simple, **plain language** to deal with complex issues.

What do readers and web users expect?

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

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

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

consistency throughout the website. Web content should be clear, concise, organized logically, and highly readable. Readability formulas such as the Fog Index can be used to gauge the difficulty of written material according to the grade level needed to understand it. Ideally, the content on agency sites should be at a sixth to eighth grade reading level and should not exceed a 12th grade reading level.

Style and Usage Standards

The following alphabetical listing explains the style standards for capitalization, abbreviation, spelling, and usage for various words, phrases, numerals and punctuation symbols. **Note: All proper names used are for example only; these names are not an accurate reflection of the members of the District's administration.**

abbreviations: Avoid abbreviations except as necessary. When used, capitalize abbreviations of capitalized words: *Aug (August)*, *Mon (Monday)*, *St (Street)*.

In tables and calendars, there should be no punctuation after abbreviations.

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

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

- The Mayor graduated magna cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts in political science from Yale College.
- John Smith earned a juris doctorate from Harvard Law.
- Jane Smith earned a master's degree in public policy from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.
- Jane Jones graduated from American University with a Master of Science.

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

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

It is acceptable to repeat the full name or use a shortened version of the name for emphasis.

See **Appendix D** and **Appendix E** for a list of common abbreviations and acronyms.

active content: Update and make changes to content that reflects the most current information available or, that represents present operations and uses (biographies, letters, FAQs, job opportunities, services, information, current statements and releases).

active directory: Lowercase unless used in a title.

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

An active verb directs the action towards an object.

- The Mayor led the discussion.

ad hoc: adjective meaning concerned with a particular end or purpose (an *ad hoc* investigating committee). Use italics.

address format: Use three-line format.* Do not include *One Judiciary Square* in addresses of DC government agencies located at 441 4th Street. It's the building name, not its address, and could confuse people. Spell out North and South. Insert a space between the suite number and North or South. Use two spaces between the state abbreviation and zip code. In address footers on agency home pages, insert two spaces between the zip code and phone number. Do not spell out numbered streets. On contact information pages, phone numbers go directly beneath addresses. When an attention line is necessary, make it the first rather than the last line of the address.

Address format for footer on DC.Gov home page:

Office of the State Superintendent of Education

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

Address format for website contact information pages:

Office of the State Superintendent of Education

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

DC Tuition Assistance Grant Program

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

Attention line address format:

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

age: Always use figures.

- Even a 10 year old could understand this sentence (no hyphens for nouns)
- Her son is 5 years old (no hyphens)
- Girls ages 16-20
- The 7-year-old boy went to the store. (hyphens for adjectives)
- The woman is in her 30s. (no apostrophe)

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

Anacostia waterfront: Anacostia should be uppercase and waterfront should be lowercase. Use initial caps for titles or headlines.

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

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

apostrophes:

- Form plurals without an apostrophe, e.g. *Agents and Brokers Licenses* (DISR), or *ABCs of Life* (DPR).
- For plural nouns ending in s, add only an apostrophe: the girls' toys, states' rights. For singular common nouns ending in s, add 's: the hostess's invitation, the witness's answer.
- For singular proper names ending in s, use only an apostrophe: Descartes' theories, Kansas' schools.
- For singular proper names ending in s sounds such as x, ce, and z, use 's: Marx's theories, the prince's life.
- For plurals of a single letter, add 's: Mind your p's and q's, the Red Sox defeated the Oakland A's.
- Do not use 's for plurals of numbers, or multiple letter combinations: the 1980s, RBIs

archived content: Do not change information that reflects historical records or documents, and material that is meant to be preserved (news releases and advisories, speeches, statements).

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

asterisk: (*) Asterisks should be added to the end of a hyperlink that opens a PDF, video, audio or other document file (Windows Media Player, RealPlayer, etc). The asterisk should be included as part of the link and should be class=red. If the link falls at the end of the sentence, the punctuation should come after the asterisk. **e.g.** Read the Mayor's [testimony](#)*

Note: If you include an asterisk at the end of a link, you will also need to include a disclaimer at the end of the web page. See [disclaimers](#).

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

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

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

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

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

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

The company accepts the following forms of identification:

- Driver's license
- Birth certificate

- Social Security card

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

Cancelled: Not canceled. Use two ls.

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

caption: Left justify captions for website photos. If two or more individuals are in a photo, list names starting from the left and include the words *from left* before the list. Font is verdana, size is 8 pt.

carsharing: Use as a single term, no hyphens.

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

- Chairman John Smith
- Chairwoman Jane Smith

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

- Commission on Education Chair Jane Smith
- Letter from the Chair or the Chairwoman's letter
- DC Council Chairman Jane Smith (according to DC Bylaws)

Chancellor: Capitalize *Chancellor* when used before the DCPS Chancellor's name. Lowercase chancellor when it is used by itself or comes after the chancellor's name. See **position titles**.

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

city: When referring to Washington, DC, the word *District* is preferable to the word *city*. Unless it is in a title or at the beginning of a sentence, *city* is not capitalized:

- The city is one of the first locations to have an intra-governmental link.

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

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

Citywide Call Center: Always use initial caps.

Click here: Never acceptable to use *click here*. It is not 508 compliant. Preference when introducing a list of links is to use “select here” or to use text links only.

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

- Jane Smith appointed three people to the committee: John Smith, Jack Jones and Jean Johnson.

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

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

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

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

colors: The following color standards have been established for:

The DC portal*: #001864 blue and #FF0000 red

DC government stars and bars logo: PMS 185 (red) and white

OCTO print materials: PMS 282 (Old Glory Blue) and PMS 193 (Old Glory Red)

Commas: Use commas to punctuate a series of three or more words, phrases or thoughts, NOT including the word or phrase before *and*. See more in **Appendix B**.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Councilmember: This word is usually two separate words, but inside the DC government, it is used as a single term, *Councilmember Jane Smith*

date formats: Whenever possible spell out month, day, and year: January 1, 2001. Capitalize the month. In tables, calendar events, or other appropriate areas, abbreviate the month and use dashes to separate the numerals for month, day, and year.

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

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

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

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

DC: Not an acceptable single/first reference for Washington, DC. (See *Washington, DC, District* and *city*).

DC.Gov: Use when referring to the District of Columbia government website or the DC portal.

DC portal: Do not capitalize *portal*.

DC Public Schools: Use DC Public Schools or DCPS.

de facto: This means being such in effect though not formally recognized (e.g. a *de facto* state of war) or exercising power as if legally constituted (e.g. a *de facto* government). Use italics.

degrees: See **temperature**.

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

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

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

disclaimers: You must add the appropriate disclaimer to the bottom of a web page where you have placed attached files such as PDFs, video, audio or other document type. Disclaimers are necessary because some users may not have the appropriate software to view the document(s). The disclaimers let users know what type of document they are about to open and where to download software to open and view the file(s).

Note: If you add multiple file types to a page, you will need to include a disclaimer for each file. You will also need to indicate one asterisk (*) for one file type, two asterisks (**) for an additional file type and so on.

PDFs

*This document is presented in Portable Document Format (PDF). A PDF reader is required for viewing. [Download a PDF Reader](http://www.adobe.com/)<<http://www.adobe.com/>> or [Learn More About PDFs](http://www.adobe.com/support/index.html)<<http://www.adobe.com/support/index.html>>.

Video Files

Microsoft® Media Player

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

<http://www.microsoft.com/library/errorpages/smartererror.aspx?404;http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/players.asp>> the player.

RealPlayer

* This video is presented in [RealPlayer format](http://www.realn timers.com/company/index.html)< <http://www.realn timers.com/company/index.html>>. You may have to [download RealPlayer](http://www.real.com/player/index.html?src=downloadr)< <http://www.real.com/player/index.html?src=downloadr>> to view the video.

Note: According to OCTO web standards, you cannot add a PDF or a video link as a home page headline. Files must be placed on a transfer page.

District: Always capitalize *District* when referring to the District of Columbia.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The HTML code for the em dash is —.

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

- 1968–72
- 10 am–5 am
- pp. 38–45

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

The HTML code for the en dash is –.

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

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

FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions): Do not spell out. Do not use an apostrophe for plural or possessive FAQs. Most people familiar with the Internet know what *FAQ* means.

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

Office of the State Superintendent of Education

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

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

fiscal year: Spell out and lowercase unless it is part of the title of a document, report or law.

The DC council will meet tomorrow about the budget for fiscal year 2008.
He referred to the FY 2006 Annual Budget Addendum.

flyer: not flier. A document or circular (often in the form of a pdf) that provides additional information.

For more information: an acceptable segue, but only if it offers information beyond the obvious.

Good: For more information or to submit ideas,
Bad: Please visit the website for more information (when the website where this release resides)

gerunds: A gerund is a verb written with an *ing* ending that is used as a noun. For example:

The OBFI offers the following services:
Helping regulate banks and financial industries
Creating economic growth
Working closely with industry regulators

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

The OBFI:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

grade: The teacher brought cookies for her fourth *grade* students.

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

greater metropolitan: Lowercase unless part of a title.

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

ground breaking: The Mayor attended a *ground breaking* for the new hospital.

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

DC Champion Trees Program

Judging Criteria

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

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

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

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

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

home page: Write as two words.

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

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

- well-being
- re-emerge
- The Grants-in-Aid to Organizations Program
- over-the-hill

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

- full-scale
- full-service
- web-based
- well-being

Do not hyphenate:

- citywide
- email
- online
- onsite
- web page

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

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

hyperlinks: See **links**.

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

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

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

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

in-house: Hyphenate.

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

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

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

Internet: Always capitalize.

Intranet: Always capitalize.

Intranet portal: Do not capitalize *portal*.

is: Always capitalized in headlines.

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

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

JPEG: This stands for joint photographic experts group. All letters in this acronym are capitalized, and there are no periods.

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

kindergarten: Lowercase, except if the word starts a sentence. Same for pre-kindergarten and pre-k.

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

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

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

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

lists: See **bullet points**.

log on: Use two words and lowercase when used as a verb (*to log on to a network*). Use one word for adjectives (*logon password*, *logon routine*) and nouns (*his logon is abc123*).

Long-term: adj. hyphenated. "We are implementing long-term changes," said Mayor Gray.

magazine names: Capitalize the name of the magazine but do not place it in quotes; italicize it. Lowercase *magazine* unless it is part of the publication's formal title: i.e. *Harper's Magazine*; *Newsweek* magazine; *Time* magazine

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

- Mayor John Smith
- Today, the Mayor was quoted.

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

Media Contact: This is most often used above a press release, to provide an additional point of contact. Both words should be bolded. Capitalize only the M and the C, follow it with a colon, and provide the contact's email (as a hyperlink) and phone number.

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

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

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

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

nation's capital: Lowercase.

navigation bar: The blue left navigation bar should list links in the following order. Indent three non-breaking spaces from the beginning line if a navigation bar item wraps to a second or third line. Note: The Agency Home does not have to include: Scorecard; Employment Opportunities; or Helpful Links.

[AGENCY] HOME

About [Agency]
How to Reach Us
Ask the Director
FOIA Requests
News Room
Scorecard
Employment Opportunities
Helpful Links
Site Map

SERVICES

(Arrange alphabetically or in another logical order.)

INFORMATION

(Arrange alphabetically or in another logical order.)

ONLINE SERVICE REQUESTS

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

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

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

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

- The District won first, second, and third place in the website contest.
- Please contact us at 441 4th Street, NW.
- Jim is ranked 10th in the nation.
- Come to the 34th Annual Fundraiser event.

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

off site: Write as two words.

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

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

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

passive voice: Try to avoid using the passive voice. Passive sentences are often weak and produce awkward or stilted sentences. A passive verb directs the action towards the subject.

- Do: The DC Council provides insight.
- Don't: The DC Council was chosen to provide insight.
- Do: The Mayor led the discussion.
- Don't: The discussion was lead by the Mayor.

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

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

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

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

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

- **Standard format:** (202) 342-2000
- **Fax format:** Fax: (202) 234-7678
- **Extension format:** (202) 337-2100 ext. 307
- **TDD and TTY format:** TDD: 711

DC Department of Employment Services

609 H Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 724-7000 TDD: (202) 698-4817

Emergency format:

Call 911 for emergency assistance.
Call 311 for non-emergency assistance.

Toll-free format:

1(800) 555-1212

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

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

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

- Chief Financial Officer John Smith
- Jane Smith, director of the Department of Public Works
- agency directors
- the director

prepositions: In document or page titles and headlines, capitalize prepositions with four or more letters.

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

programs: Capitalize names of DC government programs, e.g. *Adopt an Agency, Agency Liaison Program, Administrative Services Modernization Program*.

public-private partnerships: Use hyphens instead of slashes.

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

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

- *Web Standards Kit*
- DC portal database

See **titles**.

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

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

See **Appendix B** for more on punctuation.

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

regions: See **compass points**.

ribbon-cutting: Hyphenate. The Mayor attended a ribbon-cutting to celebrate the opening of the new playground.

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

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

second-guess: Hyphenate.

semiautomatic: Do not hyphenate.

September 11: The date September 11, 2001, should be abbreviated 9-11 not 9/11.

series/rankings: Spell out numeric rankings or numbers in a series (*first, second, third*) unless they refer to street numbers, suite or office numbers or double digit numbers.

- The girl began fifth grade.
- The runner won second place.
- Today is the third annual community day.
- Join us for the 23rd Music Festival.

Services and Information categories: Form plurals without an apostrophe, e.g. *Agents and Brokers Licenses* (DISR), or *ABCs of Life* (DPR).

Use bullet points on the home page under SERVICES and INFORMATION. Alphabetize items or put them in logical order according to priority or topic. If a bullet item wraps, indent the next line three non-breaking spaces.

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

Short-term: adj. hyphenated. "He worked to make some short-term fixes."

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

St. Elizabeths: When referring to the hospital or campus, do not include apostrophe (*St. Elizabeths campus*).

Spacing: only one space after periods, and all other forms of punctuation, as well.

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

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

startup: Write as one word for noun and adjective when describing a new business venture.

state abbreviations: Use the two-letter United States Postal Service abbreviations without periods, e.g. DC, MD, VA.

See **Appendix D** for a complete list of state abbreviations.

subheads: Write subheads (located below headlines on DC.Gov home pages under *Agency News*) as complete sentences. Do not repeat information already included in the headlines or in the first paragraph of the press release. Subheads appear in sentence case (no initial caps). The same subhead style is used on press release pages as well.

Headline: **District Employees Receive Pocket Guide**

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

Headline: **District Employees Receive Pocket Guide**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TDD and TTY: TDD stands for *Telecommunications Device for the Deaf*; TTY stands for *Teletypewriters* (the original communication devices used by individuals with hearing or speech impairments). See **phone numbers** for TDD/TTY style standards. A list of TTY/TDD Phone Services is available via a link in the footer of every DC.Gov page. You can find the page at http://dc.gov/tty.asp?portal_link=fl.

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

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

time: Use *am* and *pm*, not *a.m.* and *p.m.*; always provide a space between the hour and the annotation, i.e. 7 *am*, not 7*am*. **i.e.** Do not use 12 pm; the hour is **noon**. *The meeting was held from noon to 2 pm*. The event is at 7 pm. When the time is on the hour, use the number by itself, i.e., 6 *pm* not 6:00 *pm*, except in a table:

Awards Luncheon Schedule
Noon: Greeting and opening remarks
12:30 pm: Guest speaker

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

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

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

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

- "Tonight marks a new era in our administration," said the chief.
- The results were announced on Friday.

- The law was passed Thursday, September 19.

Exception: You can use the current year for application deadlines.

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

URL: This stands for *Uniform Resource Locator*, an informal term associated with popular Uniform Resource Identifier schemes: http, ftp, mailto, and others. Also see [links](#).

US: Abbreviation for the United States. Do not use periods.

user-friendly: Hyphenate.

utilize: The word *use* is preferred.

Washington, DC: In datelines of press releases, it is never in all caps. There are never periods in DC.

versus: Spell out in ordinary writing: *They discussed the proposal to revamp Medicare versus the proposal to reform Medicare*. For court cases use v.: *Marbury v. Madison*

voicemail: Do not separate or hyphenate.

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

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

With: capitalized in headlines.

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

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

Appendices

The Appendices includes explanations regarding grammar, parts of speech, punctuation, problem words, abbreviations and DC government acronyms. **Note:** All proper names used are for example only; these names are not an accurate reflection of the members of the District's administration.

Appendix A: Grammar

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The OBFI offers the following services:

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

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

The OBFI:

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

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

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

collective nouns: Nouns that denote a unit take singular verbs and pronouns: class; committee; crowd; family; group; herd; jury; orchestra; team; etc.

- The committee is meeting to set its agenda.
- The jury reached its verdict.
- A herd of cattle was sold.

Some words that are plural in form become collective nouns and take singular verbs when the group or quantity is regarded as a unit.

- A thousand bushels is a good yield. (A unit)
- A thousand bushels were created. (Individual items)

passive voice: Try to avoid using the passive voice. Passive sentences are often weak and produce awkward or stilted sentences. A passive verb directs the action towards the subject.

- Do: The DC Council provides insight.
- Don't: The DC Council was chosen to provide insight.
- Do: The Mayor led the discussion.
- Don't: The discussion was lead by the Mayor.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Transitive: *Feel* the fabric.

Intransitive: I feel hot. (*hot* is an adjective, not an object)

Appendix B: Punctuation

Use the following punctuation standards for the DC portal.

apostrophe (')

- For plural nouns ending in s, add only an apostrophe: *the girls' toys, states' rights*.
- For singular common nouns ending in s, add 's: *the hostess's invitation, the witness's answer*.
- For singular proper names ending in s, use only an apostrophe: *Descartes' theories, Kansas' schools*.
- For singular proper names ending in s sounds such as x, ce, and z, use 's: *Marx's theories, the prince's life*.

- For plurals of a single letter, add 's: *Mind your p's and q's, the Red Sox defeated the Oakland A's.*
- Do not use 's for plurals of numbers, or multiple letter combinations: *the 1980s, RBIs*

colon (:

The colon is primarily used to introduce a list, often after expressions such as *the following* or *as follows*. When introducing a list, make sure that a complete sentence precedes the colon. If there is a fragment before the colon, rewrite the fragment as a sentence.

The park includes the following:

- Playground
- Basketball courts
- Picnic areas
- Jane Smith appointed three people to the committee: John Smith, Jack Jones, and Jean Johnson.

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

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

Colons go outside quotation marks unless they are part of the quoted material. Use only a single space after a colon.

comma (,)

- Use commas in a simple series
- Do not put a comma before the conjunction in a simple series: John, Paul, George and Ringo; red, white and blue.
- Use the serial comma if it is integral to the series: I had orange juice, toast, and ham and eggs for breakfast.
- Use the comma before the concluding conjunction in a complex series of phrases: The main points to consider are whether the athletes are skillful enough to compete, whether they have stamina to endure the training, and whether they have the mental attitude.
- Use a comma to set off a person's hometown and age: Jane Doe, of Framingham, was absent. John Doe, 34, was arrested yesterday.

dash (—)

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

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

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

Use en dashes to connect continuing or inclusive numbers, dates, or times. En dashes are half the length of em dashes and longer than hyphens,

- 1968–72
- 10 am–5 am
- pp. 38–45

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

The HTML code for the en dash is –.

hyphen (-)

- Use a hyphen for compound adjectives before the noun: well-known actor, fulltime job, 20-year sentence
- Do not use a hyphen when the compound modifier occurs after the verb: The actor was well known. Her job became full time. He was sentenced to 20 years.
- Do not use a hyphen to denote an abrupt change in a sentence—use a dash.

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

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

- well-being
- re-emerge
- The Grants-in-Aid to Organizations Program
- over-the-hill

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

- full-scale
- full-service
- web-based
- well-being

Do not hyphenate:

citywide
email
online
onsite
web page

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

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

parentheses ()

The perceived need for parentheses is an indication that your sentence is becoming contorted. Try to rewrite the sentence, putting the incidental information in commas, dashes or in another sentence. If you do use parentheses, follow these guidelines:

- If the material is inside a sentence, place the period outside the parentheses.

- If the parenthetical statement is a complete independent sentence, place the period inside the parentheses.

period (.)

Use the period to end declarative sentences: *Here is the stylebook.*

Placement Within Quotation Marks: Periods always go inside quotation marks.

Placement With Asterisks: If a PDF or other file link denoted with an asterisk concludes a sentence, the period should go **after** the asterisk and not be included in the link.

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

quotation marks (“ ”)

- In dialogue, each person's words are placed in a separate paragraph, with quotation marks at the beginning and end of each person's speech.
- Periods and commas always go within quotation marks.
- Dashes, semicolons, question marks and exclamation points go within the quotation marks when they apply to the quoted material. They go outside when they apply to the whole sentence.
- Use single marks for quotes within quotes: She said, "He told me, 'I told you so.'"

semicolon (;) a semi-colon connects two independent clauses, a series of words that could stand as complete sentences. Example: This could be a complete sentence; this could be another one.

Appendix C: Problem Words

The following words, phrases, acronyms and abbreviations are sometimes misspelled, punctuated or capitalized incorrectly, misused, or used inconsistently. Below are the correct forms that meet the style standards for the DC portal.

#

311

911

24/7

3D

9-11 (September 11)

A

accept (means *to receive*)

American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE)

Asian flu

B

Bachelor of Arts; Bachelor of Science

bachelor's degree

bachelor's

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

bandwidth
blog (web log)

C

carsharing
city of access
citywide
Citywide Call Center
commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS)
Columbus Day

D

database
daylight-saving time (not *savings time*)
daylong
day to day; day-to-day (hyphenate when used as a compound modifier)
DC
DC.Gov
DC portal
District government
dial in (verb)
dial up (verb), dialup (adj.)
desktop (noun and adj.)
disc (for CD-ROMs, DVDs, laserdiscs)
disk (for hard drives and floppies)
District-wide
dot-com
downtime
dpi
driver's license(s)
drop-down

E

e.g. (*exempli gratia*)
email (*one word*)
except (means *to exclude*)
e-government
e-commerce
e-cycling
e-zine or webzine (not 'zine)

F

FAQs
federal
filename
full-scale
full-service

G

geographical information systems (GIS)
gray (not grey)
greater metropolitan
greater Washington

H

help desk
helpline
HIV positive (noun) **HIV-positive** (adj.)
home page
hotline
HTML
HTTP
hyperlink

I

i.e. (means *that is*)
IP address
in-house
inner city (noun) inner-city (adj.)
Internet (always capitalize)
Intranet (always capitalize)
Intranet portal
IT (information technology)

J

JavaScript
JPEG(s)
Jr.
judgment

K

keystroke
keyword
kilobyte (K)
Kwanzaa

L

Labor Day
laptop
learner's permit(s)
listserv
local area network (LAN)
local small disadvantaged business enterprises (LSDBEs)
log in (verb), login (adj.)
log off (verb), logoff (adj.)
log on (verb), logon (adj.)
look and feel

M

Martin Luther King Jr. Day (no comma after Jr.)
Master of Arts; Master of Science
master's degree
master's
MHz
monthlong (one word)
mouseclick, mouseover, mousepad
multilingual
multitask

N

network operations center (NOC)

new economy
newsgroup
newsreader
New Year's Day
New Year's Eve
nonprofit (one word)

O
off line
offscreen
off site
online
onsite

P
PDA
PDF
Photoshop
portal
Presidents Day
printout (noun), **print out** (verb)
pulldown (adj.)

Q
questionnaire

R
real time
reengineering
runner-up, runners-up
rush hour (noun), **rush-hour** (adj.)

S
screensaver
screenshot
second-guess
semiautomatic
set up (verb), **setup** (noun and adj.)
sought after
spellcheck (noun and verb)
spellchecker
Sr.
state-of-the-art
Supercan

T
T1, T2, T3
take-home pay
telnet
toolbar
touchpad

U
Unix

US
user-friendly
username

V
Veterans Day
virtual private network (VPN)
vCard
voicemail
voice over
virus
versus

W
web-based
webmaster
web-related
web page
web portal
weeklong
well-being
wide area network (WAN)
workday
work force
workplace
workstation
workweek
World War I, World War II
worldwide

X
XML
X-ray

Y
yearlong
year-end (adj.)

Appendix D: Abbreviations

Most abbreviations for the DC portal should not include periods.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Abbr.	Name	Abbr.	Name	Abbr.	Name	Abbr.	Name
AL	Alabama	ID	Idaho	MT	Montana	RI	Rhode Island
AK	Alaska	IL	Illinois	NE	Nebraska	SC	South Carolina
AS	American Samoa	IN	Indiana	NV	Nevada	SD	South Dakota
AZ	Arizona	IA	Iowa	NH	New Hampshire	TN	Tennessee
AR	Arkansas	KS	Kansas	NJ	New Jersey	TX	Texas
CA	California	KY	Kentucky	NM	New Mexico	UT	Utah
CO	Colorado	LA	Louisiana	NY	New York	VT	Vermont
CT	Connecticut	ME	Maine	NC	North Carolina	VA	Virginia
DE	Delaware	MH	Marshall Islands	ND	North Dakota	VI	Virgin Islands, US
DC	District of Columbia	MD	Maryland	MP	Northern Mariana Islands	WA	Washington
FM	Federated States of Micronesia	MA	Massachusetts	OH	Ohio	WV	West Virginia
FL	Florida	MI	Michigan	OK	Oklahoma	WI	Wisconsin
GA	Georgia	MN	Minnesota	OR	Oregon	WY	Wyoming
GU	Guam	MS	Mississippi	PA	Pennsylvania		
HI	Hawaii	MO	Missouri	PR	Puerto Rico		

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

TDD/TTY: TDD stands for *Telecommunications Device for the Deaf*; TTY stands for *Teletypewriters* (the original communication devices used by individuals with hearing or speech impairments). A list of TTY/TDD Phone Services is available via a link in the footer of every DC.Gov page. You can find the page at http://dc.gov/tty.asp?portal_link=fl.

Appendix E: DC Government Acronyms

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

In general, spell out the name the first time you use it, then put the acronym in parentheses in capital letters. After that, use the acronym as much as you want. It is acceptable to repeat the full name or use a shortened version of the name for emphasis. Do not use periods between the letters in an acronym.

Example:

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

A

ABC: Alcoholic Beverage Control
ABRA: Alcoholic Beverage Regulation Administration
ACD: Automatic Call Distribution
AFGE: American Federation of Government Employees
ANC: Advisory Neighborhood Commission
APIA: Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs
ASMP: Administrative Services Modernization Program

B

BAR: Board of Appeals and Review
BLRA: Building and Land Regulation Administration
BOEE: Board of Elections and Ethics
BRA: Business Regulation Administration
BRC: Business Resource Center
BRPAA: Board of Real Property Assessments and Appeals
BZA: Bureau of Zoning Adjustment

C

CAB: Contract Appeals Board
CAC: Citizens Advisory Council
CAH: Commission on the Arts and Humanities
CAPPS: Comprehensive Automated Personnel and Payroll System
CFL: Consolidated Forensic Laboratory
CFO: Chief Financial Officer
CCRB: Citizen Complaint Review Board
CFSA: Child and Family Services Agency
CIR: Center for Innovation and Reform
CJCC: Criminal Justice Coordinating Council
CJDT: Commission on Judicial Disabilities and Tenure
CNCS: Serve DC
COA: City of Access
CON: Certificate of Need
COPP: Communities on Phone Patrol
COS: Community Outreach Specialist
CPS: Community Partnership Section (of the MPD)
CPW: Committee to Promote Washington
CSSD: Child Support Services Division
CTO: Chief Technology Officer
CVCP: Crime Victims Compensation Program

D

DC: District of Columbia (no periods)
DCA: code for Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport
DCBOEE: DC Board of Elections and Ethics
DCCAH: DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities
DCGIS: DC Geographic Information Systems
DCEMA: DC Emergency Management Agency (DCEMA was the former title, it is now Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA))
DCEO: DC Energy Office (Part of the District Department of the Environment (DDOE))
DCHA: DC Housing Authority

DCHFA: DC Housing Finance Agency
DCHR: DC Department of Human Resources (Previously: DC Office of Personnel (DCOP))
DCIG: DC Inspector General
DCLB: DC Lottery (and Charitable Games Control) Board
DCOA: DC Office on Aging
DCOZ: DC Office of Zoning
DCPC: Office of Police Complaints (formerly OPC)
DCPCSB: DC Public Charter School Board
DCPL: DC Public Library
DCPS: DC Public Schools
DCPSC: DC Public Service Commission
DCPS CFO: DC Public Schools/Chief Financial Officer
DCRA: Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs
DCRB: DC Retirement Board
DCSF: DC Summer Fun
DCTC: DC Taxicab Commission
DCWASA: DC Water and Sewer Authority
DCYAC: DC Youth Advisory Council
DDOE: DC Department of the Environment
DDOT: District Department of Transportation
DDS: Department of Disability Services
DHCD: Department of Housing and Community Development
DHS: Department of Human Services
DISR: Department of Insurance and Securities Regulation
DME: Deputy Mayor for Education
DMPED: Deputy Mayor of Planning and Economic Development (DCBIZ)
DMH: Department of Mental Health
DMV: Department of Motor Vehicles
DOC: Department of Corrections
DOES: Department of Employee Services
DOH: Department of Health
DPR: Department of Parks and Recreation
DPW: Department of Public Works
DSLBD: Department of Small and Local Business Development (Previously: Office of Local Business Development (OLBD))

E

EC: Education Center
EIC: Emergency Information Center
EMA: Emergency Management Agency
EMS: Enterprise Management System
EOC: Emergency Operations Center
EOM: Executive Office of the Mayor
ESF: Emergency Support Functions

F

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

G

GIS: Geographical Information System
GRC: Government Resource Center
GRAD: Gradual Rearing of Adult Drivers

H

HAA: HIV/AIDS Administration

HPLA: Health Professional Licensing Administration

HRIS: Human Resource Information System

HRLA: Health Regulation and Licensing Administration

HSEMA: Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA)

I

IAD: Code for Washington Dulles International Airport

ICH: Interagency Council on Homelessness

ITA: Individual Training Account

iTAB: Information Technology Advisory Board

iTASC: Information Technology Architecture Standards Committee

iTEC: Information Technology Executive Committee

IVR: Interactive Voice Response

J

JGA: Justice Grants Administration

JNC: Judicial Nominations Commission

L

LCGCB: Lottery and Charitable Games Control Board

LGBT: Lesbian, Gay, and Transgender Affairs (Sometimes referred to as GLBT)

LSDBE: Local, Small, and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises

M

MPD or **MPDC:** Metropolitan Police Department

MPTD: Office of Motion Picture and Television Development

MSS: Management Supervisory Service

MVIS: Motor Vehicle Information System

MWAA: Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority

MWCOG: Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

N

NCPC: National Capital Planning Commission

NGO: Non-government Organization

O

OAA: Office on African Affairs

OAD: Office of Adjudication

OAG: Office of the Attorney General

OAHA: Office of Administrative Hearings

OBC: Office of Boards and Commissions

OBFI: Office of Banking and Financial Institutions

OCAF: Office of Community Affairs

OCF: Office of Campaign Finance

OCFO: Office of the Chief Financial Officer

OCME: Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

OCP: Office of Contracting and Procurement

OCRS: Office of Community Relations and Services

OCTO: Office of the Chief Technology Officer

OCT: Office of Cable Television

ODR: Office of Disability Rights

OEA: Office of Employee Appeals

OFT: Office of Finance and Treasury

OGMD: Office of Grants Management and Development
OHR: Office of Human Rights
OIG: Office of the Inspector General
OLA: Office of Latino Affairs
OLBD: Office of Local Business Development (OLBD was former title: DO use DSLBD, Department of Small and Local Business Development)
OLMP: Office of Labor-Management Programs
OLRCB: Office of Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining
ONS: Office of Neighborhood Services
OP: Office of Planning
OPC: Office of Police Complaints
OPGD: Office of Partnerships and Grants Development
OPRS: Office of Pay and Retirement Services
OPM: Office of Property Management
OR: Office of Recycling (also called *DC Recycles*)
OS: Office of the Secretary
OSSE: Office of the State Superintendent of Education
OUC: Office of Unified Communications
OVA: Office of Veterans Affairs
OVS: Office of Victim Services
OWPI: Office on Women's Policy and Initiatives
OTA: Office of the Tenant Advocate
OTR: Office of Tax and Revenue

P

PEPCO: Potomac Electric Power Company
PERB: Public Employee Relations Board
PLA: Professional Licensing Administration
PSMP: Property Services Modernization Program
PPS: Partnerships for Problem Solving (MPD)
PRIDE: Police Reporting and Incident Delivery System
PSA: Police Service Area or Pretrial Services Agency
PSC: Public Service Commission

R

RAPIDS: Remote Access Property Inspection and Dispatch System
RFA: Request for Applications
RFC: Request for Comment
RFP: Request for Proposals
RRC: Resident Resource Center
RSA: Rehabilitation Services Administration

S

SEO: State Education Office (SEO was former title: DO use OSSE, Office of the State Superintendent of Education)
SIS: Student Information System
SOAR: System of Accounting and Reporting
SRC: Service Request Center
SSC: Social Services Center

T

TANF: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
TIF: Tax Increment Financing
TSMP: Transportation Services Modernization Program

U

UCC: Unified Communications Center

UDC: University of the District of Columbia

UFA: Urban Forestry Administration

UPPS: Unified Personnel and Payroll System

US: United States (no periods)

V

VOS: Virtual One-Stop

VRC: Visitors Resource Center

W

WASA: Water and Sewer Authority

WCCA: Washington Convention Center Authority

WGIS: Washington Geographic Information System

WIA: Workforce Investment Act

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

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

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

Y

YAC: Youth Advisory Council

If you have questions or comments about this guide, please email mainteditor@dc.gov.