iSCHOOL
WEB STYLE GUIDE
Version 2.0
Faculty of Information

Information Services
December 2011
# Table of contents

1. **General** .................................................................
   - 1.1 Language & spelling
   - 1.2 Punctuation
   - 1.3 Measurements
   - 1.4 Abbreviations, acronyms, & symbols

2. **Formatting** ............................................................. 7
   - 2.1 Capitalization
   - 2.2 Italics
   - 2.3 Bolding
   - 2.4 Colour
   - 2.5 Page/section titles & headings
   - 2.6 Links
   - 2.7 Tables

3. **Writing for the Web: some pointers** ................................. 9
   Includes an example of a re-worked paragraph and page

4. **Thesaurus** ........................................................................ 11
   Some examples of how thesaurus entries might look
1. GENERAL
1.1) Language & spelling

- Always prefer gender inclusive language, but avoid multiple uses of ‘he/she’. S/he is also acceptable unless its use becomes unwieldy or excessive.
- Prefer Canadian spelling if there is a difference between Canadian and American spelling, e.g.,
  - Colour, not color  
  - Centre, not center  
  - Program, not programme
  - Organize, not organise
- Avoid verbosity, clichés, jargon, redundancies, long sentences, comma splices, and other things that interfere with clarity and conciseness. Refer to Section 3: Writing for the web.

1.2) Punctuation

| Commas | Items in a series of more than two are separated by commas.  
| - Oranges, apples, and pears  
| - Books, periodicals, or pamphlets |
| PerIODS | Use periods with most abbreviations.  
| - a.m.  
| - p.m.  
| - i.e.  
| - e.g.  
| - etc.  
| - et al.  
| - Mr.  
| - Dr. |
| Hyphens | Hyphenate compound words, and modification of words.  
| - Cross-cultural collections  
| - Large-scale information systems  
| - Degree-seeking, library-related  
| Do NOT hyphenate the following:  
| - Interlibrary loan  
| - Email  
| - Website |
| Special cases: e- and web | Electronic resources: hyphenate, and capitalize only if sentence-beginning.  
| - We have e-books and e-journals Web-related words: Capitalize only if the word ‘web’ stands alone.  
| - Web designers and Web pages  
| - but  
| - webcast, webmaster, webcam  
| Exceptions:  
| - website & email : one word, lowercase, unless sentence-beginning |
| Dashes | Use the en dash without spaces to show sequence.  
| HTML tag for en dash is &ndash;  
| - 2005–2010  
| - May–June |
| BrACKETS | Avoid unless necessary: work it out with sentence construction.  
| Do not use for area codes in phone #s.  
| - POOR: On Halloween, students (MMST and MI) dress up  
| - GOOD: On Halloween, MMST and MI students dress up |
| Quotation marks | Double quotes ONLY for what someone has actually said.  
| - She said, “Forward ho!”  
| Single quotes for other emphasis  
| - ...known as ‘Coach House’ |
| CoLONS | Do not use colons in section headings unless it makes sense.  
| - Contact information [no colon]  
| - Office hours [no colon]  
| - Requirements include: [colon] |
### 1.3) Measurements

| Time | Use the twelve-hour clock. Use abbreviations a.m. and p.m. with periods.  
|      | • 11 a.m., not 11:00 a.m.  
|      | • 11:30 a.m.  
|      | • 9:30 a.m.–1 p.m.  
|      | • 1–5 p.m. |
| Dates | All dates are spelled out in full, with month, day, and year.  
|       | January 15, 2011  
|       | No comma for only month and year.  
|       | January 2011 |
| Days & months | Always spelled out in full.  
|               | • Wednesday  
|               | • February  
|               | • Monday–Friday |
| Calendar system | Use the Gregorian calendar system.  
|                 | • 2011  
|                 | Use CE and BCE to denote eras.  
|                 | • 310 BCE  
|                 | • 800 CE |
| Seasons or terms | Always begin with lower-case letter, unless denoting a specific term.  
|                  | • Usually, summer terms are quiet  
|                  | • New style guide in effect as of Summer Term 2012  
|                  | • In Summer 2012, we will be away |
| Temperature | Always use Celsius.  
|              | 15°C (no space) |
| Currency | Always use $# CAN and $# USD to denote North American currencies. |
| Length, etc. | Use metric measurements unless imperial measurements are required. Periods not used for these international abbreviations unless at the end of a sentence, e.g.,  
|               | • metre m  
|               | • centimeter cm  
|               | • kilogram kg  
|               | • kilometer km  
|               | • litre L  
|               | • gram g |
| Numbers | **Cardinal numbers**  
|         | One to ten – spelled out.  
|         | 11 to $\infty$ – use the number.  
|         | Spell it out only if the number is the first word of a sentence.  
|         | The dean met with 13 students.  
|         | Thirteen students met with Dean Simone Cohen.  
|         | **Ordinal numbers**  
|         | Use the number with superscript.  
|         | $3^{rd}$  
|         | **Telephone numbers**  
|         | Use dashes for telephone numbers. Do not use brackets around area codes.  
|         | 416-978-5555 |
1.4) Abbreviations, acronyms, & symbols

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviations, degrees, and course codes</th>
<th>Use sparingly. Prefer to spell out within sentences.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Professor Bhandari, not Prof. Bhandari</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Never abbreviate the following:

• Page(s), chapter(s), paragraph(s), part, section, appendix, table, figure, professor
• Names of faculty member, other than in citations, e.g., Chun Wei Choo, not C.W. Choo

Provinces & territories

Canadian provinces and territories, always spell fully within sentences, but use Canada Post abbreviation for addresses

- Alberta AB
- British Columbia BC
- Manitoba MB
- New Brunswick NB
- Newfoundland and Labrador NL
- Northwest Territories NT
- Nova Scotia NS
- Nunavut NU
- Ontario ON
- Prince Edward Island PE
- Quebec QC
- Saskatchewan SK
- Yukon Territory YT

Degrees

Be consistent with the following degrees (no periods, upper and lower case as specified)

- MI for Master of Information
- MiSt for Master of Information
- MMS for Master of Museum Studies
- JD/MI for Juris Doctor/Master of Information
- PhD for Doctor of Philosophy
- DAIS for Graduate Diploma of Advanced Study in Information Studies

Course codes

Be consistent in the use of course designators. Put letters in uppercase. No spaces between letters and numbers. Use H and Y for half and full courses. Use four digits for sections, with two spaces between the course code and course section.

- BKS1002H
- FIS1320H
- INF1002H 0101
- INF1002H 0102
- INF2145H
- KMS1002H
- MSL2300H
- MSL4000Y

In a list of courses, always leave two spaces between course designator and course title.

- YES: INF1320H Introduction to Bibliographic Control
- NO: INF1320H Introduction to Bibliographic Control
| Acronyms                  | Use sparingly. Prefer to spell out the full form, e.g.,  
|                         | • American Library Association, not ALA  
| Use well-known acronyms sparingly, e.g., |  
| • U of T, CBC  
| For full forms repeated on a page – spell out the first time, with the acronym in ( ); then use the acronym alone on the rest of the page. |  
| • University of Toronto Libraries (UTL) rocks. In later years, UTL....  
| • School of Graduate Studies (SGS) is located at ...  
| Symbols                  | Symbols such as $ or % can be used as appropriate.  
|                         | Use ampersands (&) in navigation tabs, menus, page titles, and section headings but not in text itself.  
|                         | • Abbreviations, acronyms, & symbols  
|                         | • Reference & research  
|                         | • On Thanksgiving Day, we shall dine on turkey and ham.  |
## 2. FORMATTING

### 2.1) Capitalization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Places</th>
<th>Governments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Dublin, Ireland</td>
<td>• Government of Ontario</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>People, and their titles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• University of Toronto; Faculty of Law</td>
<td>• Professor Pierre Girard, Provost Milena Poretsky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do not capitalize if their title follows their name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pierre Girard, professor in the Chemistry Department...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seasons</th>
<th>Bullet points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Course reserves for fall term</td>
<td>Each bullet point within a list begins with a capital letter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Course reserves for Winter Term 2012</td>
<td>Do not use periods at the end of a bulleted point.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Alpha dog owners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Beta- testing for web apps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Omega 3 farm-fresh eggs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Exceptions**

Do not capitalize people’s titles or positions used in general, unless it is in relation to someone’s name.

- The chief librarian started his term in August 2011...
- In August 2011, Chief Librarian Larry Alford...

Do not capitalize ‘librarian’ unless it is a specific named position.

- ...librarian Nancy Pearl, *but* Chief Librarian, Larry Alford *and* Information Literacy Librarian, Denise Moran

Do not capitalize words like or ‘professor’ or ‘dean’ when not used in reference to an actual person’s name

- ...Professor Paige Turner, *but* the professor who teaches information design courses...
- ...Dean Simone Cohen *but* the faculty deans meet once a month at ...

Capitalize official names of organizations, departments, offices, committees, conferences etc., but not part of the name:

- The Faculty of Information, *but* the faculty
- The Student Services Office *but* the office
- The Executive Committee *but* the committee
- The iSchools Conference *but* the conference

Do not capitalize subjects unless it is the name of a language, or a specific named & numbered course:

- LibGuides are available for courses in history, chemistry, Spanish, philosophy, German...
- Here is the syllabus for Philosophy of Information, INF5555H...
2.2) Italics

Use sparingly. Never use for emphasis.

Valid uses of italics:

- For book or journal titles
  - The Information
  - The Information Society Journal
- For forms
  - Thesis Proposal Form
  - Fill out the Request for Computing Services Form.

Titles of artworks, films, and databases

2.3) Bolding

Use sparingly and only when essential for emphasis.

2.4) Colour

Do not use colour for emphasis, or any other reason. Use of colour is dictated by the website theming, and the CSS control the colours of new and visited links.

2.5) Page titles & headings, incl. section headings

Use sentence case, not title case

- Sentence case: iSchool style guide decisions so far
- Title case: iSchool Style Guide Decisions So Far

2.6) Links

Link words

NEVER EVER say ‘Click here’. Work it out with sentence construction.

Some examples:

- Consult our FAQ for more details
- Read instructions on how to proceed
- Students must login to see course syllabi

Embedding links

Don’t embed a link into too many words. Link text should be short as possible.

GOOD: Check the U of T Catalogue first.
POOR: Check the U of T Catalogue first.

2.7) Tables

Use tables only when it makes a big difference in the clarity of information presented.
3. WRITING FOR THE WEB: SOME POINTERS

Do not copy and paste text from Microsoft Word into the Web editor you are using.
- Formatting will be lost anyway, and hidden characters in Word can mess up Web text
- Instead, convert Word documents to unformatted modes such as rich text format
- Cut and paste the unformatted text into the Web editor

Use as few words as possible – be concise, clear, and direct.

Prefer bulleted points instead of full sentences and long paragraphs. Users will not read full paragraphs.

Group text where possible, using sub-headings.

Avoid:
- Verbosity
- Clichés
- Jargon
- Redundancies
- Long sentences and paragraphs
- Comma splices
- Other things that interfere with clarity and conciseness

Prefer active voice over passive voice.

Examples of undesirable practices vs. good practices:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VERBOSITY</th>
<th>CLICHES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In addition, databases can be accessed off-campus.</td>
<td>Databases can be accessed off-campus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thus, your card is blocked.</td>
<td>Your card is blocked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basically, we’ll demonstrate time-saving tips for you to use.</td>
<td>We’ll teach you time-saving tips.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JARGON</th>
<th>REDUNDANCIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acquire, obtain, access</td>
<td>Get</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilize</td>
<td>Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>People, staff, students...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMA SPLICES</th>
<th>ACTIVE VOICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The building is new, students like it.</td>
<td>The building is new. Students like it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some examples taken from:
Use the following structure when presenting information on the web:

- **Inverted pyramid model**: Give a concise summary first, then the details
- First say WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY. Explain HOW later

When writing instructions:

- Use numbered or bulleted lists
- Start points with verbs
- Don’t say ‘please’, or ‘be sure to’
- Write them, follow them yourself, then re-write

Separate individual ideas into separate points or sentences. Do not combine them in one point or sentence.

Be consistent in how you refer to things – so, don’t refer to both Short Term Loan and Course Reserves.

Avoid this:

> Alumni card holders may borrow up to 25 items at a time, in addition, alumni borrowers cannot renew items.

Do this instead:

> Alumni borrowers are entitled to:
  > 25 loans at a time
  > No renewals

Be logical in the information you present.


TAKE OUT THE EXTRA WORDS! An easy-to-comprehend Web page is better than a polite Web page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POOR:</th>
<th>If you wish, print out this mini 'how-to' guide (courtesy of the iSchool).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOOD:</td>
<td>Help guide available. [It should say iSchool on the help guide, so no need to attribute]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Maintain congruency between words on the menu item and words on the destination page.

| e.g., | Menu says RACER (Interlibrary loan) Yet, clicking takes you to a page that says: ‘Request articles or books from other libraries’ |

Use ‘&’ in headings/sub-headings instead of ‘and’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOOD:</th>
<th>Tuition &amp; other fees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POOR:</td>
<td>Tuition and other fees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXAMPLE OF RE-WORKED PARAGRAPH

BEFORE

Meet RACER, the new automated Interlibrary Loan and Intercampus Delivery management system being implemented across Ontario University Libraries. Gone are the days of filling out paper forms. Now placing requests is as simple as filling out a one-time registration form and using RACER to simultaneously search the catalogues of Ontario universities, Ontario public libraries, national libraries and document suppliers. Once you find an item you’d like to borrow use RACER to send your request directly to one of the University of Toronto Intercampus Delivery/Interlibrary Loan departments. You will receive an email telling you when your item is available for pickup.

AFTER

About RACER
▶ Online Interlibrary Loan (ILL) and Intercampus Delivery (ICD) system
▶ ICD – used by U of T students, staff, and faculty to borrow items from other U of T campuses
▶ ILL – used by U of T students, staff, and faculty to borrow items from non-U of T libraries
▶ Simultaneous search of Ontario universities and public libraries, national libraries, and document suppliers’ catalogues
▶ Used by all Ontario university libraries
▶ One-time registration required

EXAMPLE OF RE-WORKED PAGE

- Info scattered and not chunked in intuitive or logical ways – slows down comprehension
- Formatting under-used
- Distinction not made between ICD and ILL, resulting in ambiguity

BEFORE
Request articles or books from other libraries [H1]

Intercampus Delivery (ICD) services [H2]
- Items can be requested from different U of T campuses
- Use the ‘Request Item’ feature in the UTL catalogue
- ICD services are available to the following groups of users:
  - User type A
  - User type B,... etc.

Interlibrary Loan (ILL) services [H2]
- Items can be requested from non-U of T libraries, including libraries in other countries
- Use RACER, the online ILL system
- ILL services are available to the following groups of users:
  - User type A
  - User type B... etc.

How to access ICD & ILL services [H2]
Returning users [H3]
Login to your RACER account.

New users [H3]
Register for a RACER account.

Details about using ICD & ILL services can be found in the pages listed below.

Choose your starting point according to your University of Toronto affiliation.
- Students, faculty, and staff at the University of Toronto
- Consortium hospitals
- Associate members
- Registered research and alumni readers
- Direct borrowers
- Libraries and other organizations not affiliated with U of T

Commonly asked questions about ICD & ILL: FAQs

*The actual point spacing of 5 & 10 pt in this example is arbitrary, and just used to illustrate chunking.*
Examples of THESAURUS entries

The thesaurus will help web editors to:
1. Use the same term consistently throughout the website
2. Use terms that users are most familiar with – i.e., Course Reserves, not STL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Reserves</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UF Short-term loan, STL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USE Short-term loan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USE Course Reserves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STL Course Reserves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U of T Libraries, or University of Toronto Libraries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UF UTL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USE U of T Libraries, or University of Toronto Libraries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Last update: December 12, 2011

Compiled by Nalini K. Singh, Faculty of Information, University of Toronto
Based on a draft of the Faculty of Information Web Style Guide (May 2011) by Joe Cox