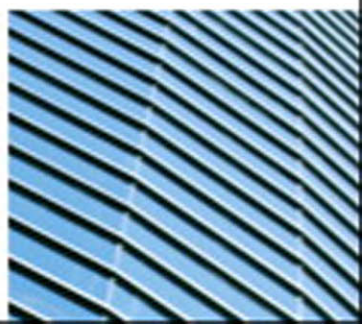


STYLE GUIDE

FOR BUSINESS AND
TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

Tools for Highly Effective Communication™

FIFTH EDITION





Style GuideTM

FOR BUSINESS AND TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

FIFTH EDITION

Preface

Effective communication is the essence of good business. We serve customers, co-workers, employers, suppliers, and the community well by sharing relevant information clearly and efficiently. We fail to serve them when we communicate in unclear, bland, misleading, or irrelevant ways. That's why this book is essential to all organizations—businesses, government agencies, or educational institutions.

The aim of this fifth edition of the *FranklinCovey Style Guide for Business and Technical Communication* is to help you serve your customers and co-workers in these ways:

- You will be complying with the best current practices in business and technical communication.
- You will solve problems more effectively and make better decisions.

Comply with the best current practices in business and technical communication. Many useful stylebooks serve the needs of professional writers, scholars, editors, and publishers. This book, by contrast, is for people in the business and technical professions. All guidelines, examples, and model documents come from the real “world of work” rather than from the academic world. Everything in this book has been tested and refined in workshops with thousands of professionals literally around the world—from the oilfields of Saudi Arabia and Indonesia to the pharmaceutical industry of Switzerland to the aerospace, engineering, service, and manufacturing centers of North America and Europe.

Solve problems more effectively and make better decisions. Writing in the workplace is far more than pumping out emails, checking grammar, and fixing spelling. It is a problem-solving and decision-making process. Cogent and persuasive business plans allow swift, logical management decisions. Analytic and

well-crafted scientific reports lead to robust dialogue and sound policy decisions. Well-designed and clearly written user information builds customer loyalty and prevents costly downtimes.

New in the Fifth Edition

The most current guidelines on email, information management, and online documentation. Learn how to manage the flood of email coming at you and to get results from the email you send. Find out how to add distinctiveness and power to your online presence.

Updated best practices for graphics. Here's the best current thinking on visuals for documents and presentations, charts, color, illustrations, maps, photos, and tables—including all new examples.

Guidance on global English. There is a new section on English as a second language for business professionals, as well as updated guidance on international business English.

Valuable new insights for knowledge workers. Learn new ways to think and process information better in updated sections on thinking strategies and the writing process, as well as practical guidance for managing projects and meetings.

Model documents for today. As email supplants traditional business letters and memos, you need new models to follow. See the MODEL DOCUMENTS section for updated samples of sensitive emails, reports, proposals, procedures, and resumes.

Everything in this fifth edition has been updated to help you meet the communication challenges of the high-tech, high-demand business world of today.

Improving Communication Quality

Business Communication Solutions from FranklinCovey

The Challenge

Business professionals devote hours every day to communication tasks in the workplace. Much of this communication is hampered by unproductive thinking, weak attempts at persuasion, poor organization, and a lack of basic writing skill that undercuts credibility. Floods of useless emails swamp and slow the whole organization. Web content lacks distinctiveness and power. Poorly managed, inconclusive meetings eat up time. Weak sales presentations fail to sway customers.

One dramatic way to increase your productivity is to improve your communication processes and skills.

The Solution

FranklinCovey offers tools, training, and services to help people and organizations do the great things they are capable of. Our mission is to enable great performance. We train more than a quarter of a million people every year worldwide in leadership, trust building, execution, and communication. Our unique approach is to challenge the paradigms that hold people back and unshackle them by teaching them new, more effective paradigms.

FranklinCovey training and consulting is available in live and online formats.

Instructor-Led Options. Experienced FranklinCovey consultants or certified facilitators teach our workshops onsite. These workshops can be customized to address the specific needs, challenges, and objectives of your organization.

Online Options. FranklinCovey's LiveClicks™ webinar workshops led by our consultants make our high-quality instruction available online. Engaging and interactive, these two-hour modules offer compelling skills training through award-winning videos, case studies, quizzes, and group discussion.

Training Programs for Effective Communication

- Writing Advantage™: Business Writing Skills for Professionals
- Presentation Advantage™: Professional Presenting Skills
- Meeting Advantage™: How to Lead Great Meetings
- Technical Writing Advantage™: Writing Skills for Technical Professionals
- Leading at the Speed of Trust™
- Working at the Speed of Trust™

For more information on FranklinCovey training and consulting, visit our website at franklincovey.com/tc.

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Foreword

This is a book for the Knowledge Age.

In the 21st century, value is created by knowledge work—the analysis, research, design, and development work done by strategists, scientists, technologists, and service professionals. Knowledge work and writing are roughly the same process: a document or presentation is the means of creating value in a high-tech world. Clearly, the value of the chemicals in a bottle of life-saving pills is negligible, but the value of the research and knowledge documented in the package insert is incalculable. The value of the silicon in a computer chip is slight, but the value of the knowledge embodied in the research reports, patent documents, and procedures is substantial. The documents are your best thinking made visible and sharable.

Although this book gives practical guidance on business grammar and usage, it does far more than that. You will find here guidelines to help you think and communicate more productively: to manage information efficiently, present persuasively, visualize clearly, frame and solve problems, and strategize soundly.

But beyond this practical guidance, this book is imbued with the paradigms and principles of high effectiveness:

- It stresses throughout the key attributes of good character—full honesty, integrity, and high ethics—as the starting point of trustworthy communication.

- “Beginning with the end in mind” is a thread that runs through every section—clearly defining your purpose in every interaction, whether a major presentation or a meeting or the simplest email message.
- First things are always first—priority information takes priority in every business communication.
- Win-win thinking is ever present at the heart of effective proposals, negotiations, presentations, meetings, resumes—in short, in all truly successful business dealings.
- The emphasis is on really listening to the needs of the customer, the co-worker, or the community before making yourself heard. Matching your message to their needs serves your purposes as well as theirs.
- Perhaps the highest form of communication is synergy—when human beings, collaborating with a win-win mindset, truly listening to one another, arrive together at new and better insights. Synergy is central to effective knowledge work.

The guidelines and processes in this book lead to synergistic communication, the kind of knowledge work that unleashes the human capacity to create, to build, and to win in the Knowledge Age.



Stephen R. Covey

Author Acknowledgments

Larry H. Freeman, teacher, technical writer, and editor, coauthored the first edition of the *Shiplely Associates Style Guide* (1985). This edition won an Excellence award from the Society for Technical Communication. Larry became lead author for the second edition (1990) and continued as lead author for the third edition (1997, renamed the *FranklinCovey Style Guide*). Having trained thousands of professionals in technical writing for such clients as Pratt & Whitney, Exxon Mobil, and the U.S. Government, Larry is now a senior environmental consultant for the Shiplely Group. A recognized authority in environmental documentation, he holds the Ph.D. in English language and linguistics from the University of Oregon. Larry recently marked 50 years of teaching in both the academic and business worlds.

Breck England, author and consultant, has helped some of the world's leading corporations become more effective in their strategic communication processes. He has directed such projects for Roche, Verizon, Chevron, Aramco, Bristol-Myers Squibb, and many others. Before joining FranklinCovey, he was vice president of consulting for Shiplely Associates, an international communication-training firm. A Ph.D. in English from the University of Utah, Breck taught leadership communication for seven years in BYU's graduate school of business. At FranklinCovey, he was a core developer of *The 4 Disciplines of Execution*, *The 7 Habits for Managers*, and the xQ Survey. A contributor to the third edition of the *FranklinCovey Style Guide*, he is lead author of the fifth edition.

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Reference Glossary

STYLE GUIDE
FIFTH EDITION

Using the Reference Glossary

The Reference Glossary is designed and written to help writers and editors answer routine, yet important, questions about the preparation of business and technical documents. The alphabetical arrangement of the entries allows writers to answer questions easily and rapidly, often without having to search through the Index. The many illustrative phrases, words, and sentences make the various rules and suggestions practical and applicable to real-world situations.

Still, as with any reference book, users need to become familiar with what the Reference Glossary covers and what it doesn't cover. To assist new users, we make the following suggestions about using the Reference Glossary.

- Use the alphabetical arrangement to help you find where a specific topic is addressed. As with any alphabetical list, you may have to try a couple of titles before you find the information you want. If you cannot find a topic, refer to the Index (p. 421).
- After you have found the relevant entry, survey the listed rules or headings previewed in the shaded box at the beginning of the entry. Then turn to the rule or heading that appears to answer your question.
- Read the rule and accompanying text. Be sure to review any illustrative phrases or sentences because they will often help clarify the rule. Remember, also, that many of the rules are suggestions rather than legal requirements.
- Check to see if any notes follow the rule and its examples. Notes begin with the word NOTE and are numbered if there are several notes. Notes often include information about exceptions or options to the stated rule.
- Turn to other entries that are cross-referenced, especially if you still have questions that the entry has not answered. Cross-references have this format: See LETTERS and MEMOS.
- Don't be disappointed if you cannot find the answer to a question. No reference book can answer every question. To help answer difficult or obscure questions, experienced writers and editors usually have several recent references available. For a list of other references, see the entry entitled REFERENCES.

Abbreviations allow writers to avoid cumbersome repetition of lengthy words and phrases. They are a form of shorthand and are appropriate in technical and business writing, particularly in lists, tables, charts, graphs, and other visual aids where space is limited. See ACRONYMS.

1. Eliminate periods in and after most abbreviations.

Formerly, most abbreviations required periods. Today, the trend is to eliminate periods in and after abbreviations, especially in the abbreviated names of governmental agencies, companies, private organizations, and other groups:

AFL-CIO	AMA	CBS	DOE
FTC	IOOF	NFL	NLRB
OPEC	TVA	TWA	YWCA

NOTE 1: The abbreviations covered by this rule do not include informal ones such as *Dept.* and *Mgt.*, which use a final period but no periods between letters.

NOTE 2: By convention, some abbreviations still require periods:

C.E.	a.m.	B.C.E.	Dr.
e.g.	etc.	i.e.	Mr.
Mrs.	Ms.	p.m.	pp.
U.K.	U.S. (or U.S.A.)		

Retain the period, too, in abbreviations that spell normal words:

in., inches (*not in*)
no., number (*not no*)

A recent dictionary, such as *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, is the best resource for determining if an abbreviation requires periods. See REFERENCES.

NOTE 3: Abbreviations with periods should be typed without spaces between letters and periods:

e.g. (*not e. g.*)
U.K. (*not U. K.*)

Abbreviations

1. Eliminate periods in and after most abbreviations.
2. Use the same abbreviation for both singular and plural units of measurement.
3. Clarify an unfamiliar abbreviation by enclosing its unabbreviated form within parentheses following its first use in a document.
4. Do not abbreviate a unit of measurement unless it is used in conjunction with a number.
5. Do not abbreviate a title unless it precedes a name.
6. Spell out abbreviations that begin a sentence (except for abbreviated words that, by convention, are never spelled out, like *Mr.* and *Mrs.*).
7. Spell out rather than abbreviate words that are connected to other words by hyphens.
8. Do not abbreviate the names of months and days within normal text. Use the abbreviations in chronologies, notes, tables, and charts.
9. Avoid the symbol form of abbreviations except in charts, graphs, illustrations, and other visual aids.
10. Use a single period when an abbreviation ends a sentence.

2. Use the same abbreviation for both singular and plural units of measurement.

When you abbreviate a unit of measurement, use the same symbol for both the singular and the plural forms:

6 lb and 1 lb
3 m and 1 m
20 ft and 1 ft
23.5 cm and 1.0 cm

If you spell out the abbreviated word, retain the plural when the number is greater than one:

15 kilometers and 1 kilometer
6.8 meters and 1 meter

3. Clarify an unfamiliar abbreviation by enclosing its unabbreviated form within parentheses following its first use in a document:

The applicant had insurance through CHAMPUS (Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services).

The alloy is hardened with 0.2 percent Np (neptunium). Adding Np before cooling alters the crystalline structure of manganese host alloys.

NOTE 1: Some writers and editors prefer to cite the unabbreviated form of the word or words before the abbreviation. We believe that this practice can inhibit, rather than enhance, the reader's comprehension of the abbreviation:

The applicant had insurance through the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services (CHAMPUS).

Abbreviations

The alloy is hardened with 0.2 percent neptunium (Np). Adding Np before cooling alters the crystalline structure of manganese host alloys.

NOTE 2: Do not use an unfamiliar abbreviation unless you plan to use it more than once in the same document.

4. Do not abbreviate a unit of measurement unless it is used in conjunction with a number:

Pipe diameters will be measured in inches.

but

Standard pipe diameter is 3 in.

The dimensions of the property were recorded in both meters and feet.

but

The property is 88 ft by 130 ft.

The southern property line is 45.3 m.

5. Do not abbreviate a title unless it precedes a name:

The cardiac research unit comprises five experienced doctors.

but

Our program director is Dr. Royce Smith.

6. Spell out abbreviations that begin a sentence (except for abbreviated words that, by convention, are never spelled out, like *Mr.* and *Mrs.*):

Oxygen extraction will be accomplished at high temperatures.

not

O₂ extraction will be accomplished at high temperatures.

but

Ms. Jean MacIntyre will be responsible for modifying our subsea sensors.

7. Spell out rather than abbreviate words that are connected to other words by hyphens:

6-foot gap (*not* 6-ft)

12-meter cargo bay (*not* 12-m)

3.25-inch pipe (*not* 3.25-in.)

NOTE: The spelled-out form is preferred. The abbreviated form (as in *6-ft*) is common in some engineering documents, especially those with many numerical values. The hyphen is retained in the abbreviated form. See **HYPHENS** and **FRACTIONS**.

8. Do not abbreviate the names of months and days within normal text. Use the abbreviations in chronologies, notes, tables, and charts:

The facilities modernization plan is due January 1985. (*not* Jan 1985 or 1/85)

9. Avoid the symbol form of abbreviations except in charts, graphs, illustrations, and other visual aids:

55 percent (*not* 55%)

15 ft (*not* 15')

32.73 in. (*not* 32.73")

10. Use a single period when an abbreviation ends a sentence:

To head our laser redesign effort, we have hired the 1994 Nobel prize winner from the U.S.A. (*not* U.S.A..)

NOTE: If the clause or sentence ends with something other than a period, (e.g., comma, semicolon, colon, question mark, exclamation mark), then the other mark of punctuation follows the period at the end of the abbreviation:

Have we hired the 1994 Nobel Prize winner from the U.S.A.?

If you plan to arrive by 6 p.m., you will not need to guarantee your reservation.

List of Abbreviations

Following is a short list of many common abbreviations for words and common measurements. For more complete lists of abbreviations, refer to *The Chicago Manual of Style* and to *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. See **REFERENCES**.

In this listing, some abbreviations appear with periods, although the trend is to eliminate the periods (see rule 1). For example, *Ph.D.* appears with periods to assist writers and typists who wish to retain the periods, although many writers today prefer the increasingly more common *PhD* without periods.

In this listing, abbreviations printed without periods are ones that customarily appear without periods—for example, *HF* or *log*.

Abbreviations List

AA, Alcoholics Anonymous
A.B. or B.A., bachelor of arts
abbr., abbreviation
abs., absolute; absent; absence; abstract
acct., account; accountant
A.D. (*anno Domini*), in the year of the Lord
ADP, automated data processing
A.H. (*anno Hegirae*), in the year of the Hijra
a.k.a., also known as
A.M. (*anno mundi*), in the year of the world
A.M. or M.A., master of arts
a.m. (*ante meridiem*), before noon
A/P, accounts payable
app, application
approx., approximately
A/R, accounts receivable
Ave., avenue
a.w.l., absent with leave
a.w.o.l., absent without official leave

BAFO, best and final offer
B.C., before Christ
Bcc: blind courtesy copy
B.C.E., before the common era
bf., boldface
Bldg., building
B.Lit(t). or Lit(t).B., bachelor of literature
Blvd., boulevard
b.o., buyer's option
BPS, basis points
B.S. or B.Sc., bachelor of science

Cliches

better left unsaid
beyond the shadow of a doubt
bite the bullet
bitter end
blissful ignorance
block out
bloody but unbowed
bolt from the blue
bone of contention
bottom line
brain dump
bright and shining faces
broad daylight
brook no delay
brute force
budding genius
built-in safeguards
burning question
burning the midnight oil
busy as a bee
by leaps and bounds
by the same token

Calm before the storm
capacity crowd
cast a pall
casual encounter
chain reaction
charged with emotion
checkered career/past
cherished belief
chief cook and bottle washer
circumstances beyond my control
city fathers
clean bill of health
clear as crystal/day
colorful display
come full circle
common/garden variety
confirming our conversation
conservative estimate
considered opinion
consigned to oblivion
conspicuous by its absence
contents noted
controlling factor
cool as a cucumber
crying need
curiously enough
cut a long story short
cut down in his prime

Dark horse
date with destiny
days are numbered
dazed condition
dead as a doornail
deadly earnest
deafening crash
deficits mount
deliberate falsehood
depths of despair
diamond in the rough
dig in your heels
discreet silence
do not hesitate to
doom is sealed

doomed to disappointment
dramatic new move
drastic action
drink the Kool-Aid
due consideration
dynamic personality

Each and every
easier said than done
eight-hundred-pound gorilla
eloquent silence
eminently successful
enclosed herewith
engage in conversation
enjoyable occasion
entertaining high hopes of
epic struggle
equal to the occasion
errand of mercy
even tenor
exception that proves the rule
existing conditions
express one's appreciation
eyeball to eyeball

Failed to dampen spirits
fair sex
fall on bad times
fall on deaf ears
far and wide
far be it from me
far cry
fateful day
fate worse than death
feedback loop
feel free to
feel vulnerable
festive occasion
few and far between
few well-chosen words
fickle finger of fate
final analysis
fine-tune one's plans
finishing touches
fire on all cylinders
fit as a fiddle
food for thought
fools rush in
foregone conclusion
foul play
from the sublime to the ridiculous

Gala occasion
generation gap
generous to a fault
gild the lily
give the green light to
glowing cheeks
go down the drain
goes without saying
goodly number
good team player
grateful acknowledgement
grave concern
green with envy
grim reaper
grind to a halt

Hale and hearty
hands across the sea
happy pair
hastily summoned
have the privilege
heartfelt thanks/appreciation
heart of the matter
heart's desire
heated argument
heave a sigh of relief
height of absurdity
herculean efforts
hook, line, and sinker
hook or crook
hope springs eternal
hot pursuit
house divided
how does that grab you?
hunker down
hurriedly retraced his steps

Ignominious retreat
ignorance is bliss
ill-fated
immaculately attired
immeasurably superior
impenetrable mystery
in close proximity
inextricably linked
infinite capacity
inflationary spiral
innocent bystander
in no uncertain terms
in reference/regard to
in short supply
internecine strife
in the limelight
in the nick of time
in the same boat with
in the twinkling of an eye
in this day and age
into full swing
iron out the difficulty
irony of fate
irreducible minimum
irreparable/irreplaceable loss
it dawned on me

Just desserts
just for openers

Keep options open
knock your socks off

Labor of love
lashed out at
last analysis
last but not least
last-ditch effort
leaps and bounds
leave no stone unturned
leaves much to be desired
leave up in the air
lend a helping hand
let well enough alone
like a bolt from the blue
limped into port
line of least resistance

little woman
lit up like a Christmas tree
lock, stock, and barrel
logic of events
long arm of the law
low-hanging fruit

Make good one's escape
man the barricades
marked contrast
masterpiece of understatement
matter of life and death
mecca for travelers
method to/in his madness
milk of human kindness
miraculous escape
moment of truth
momentous decision/occasion
monumental traffic jam
moot point
more in sorrow than in anger
more sinned against than sinning
more than meets the eye
more the merrier
motley crew

Narrow escape
nearest and dearest
needs no introduction
never a dull moment
never before in the history of
nipped in the bud
none the worse for wear
no sooner said than done
not wisely but too well

One and the same
ongoing dialogue
on more than one occasion
on unimpeachable authority
open kimono
order out of chaos
other things being equal
outer directed
overwhelming odds
own worst enemy

Pales into insignificance
paralyzed with fright
paramount importance
part and parcel
patience of Job
pay the piper
peer group
pet peeve
pick and choose
pie in the sky
pinpoint the cause
pipe dream
place in the sun

play hardball
play it by ear
point with pride
poor but honest
powder keg
powers that be
pretty kettle of fish
pros and cons
proud heritage
pull one's weight
push the envelope

Rack and ruin
ravishing beauty
red-letter day
regrettable incident
reigns supreme
reliable source
remedy the situation
right on
riot-torn area
ripe old age
round of applause
rude habitation

Sadder but wiser
saw the light of day
scathing sarcasm
sea of faces
seat of learning
second to none
seething mass of humanity
select few
selling like hotcakes
shattering effect
shift into high gear
shot in the arm
sigh of relief
silence broken only by
silhouetted against the sky
simple life
skeleton in the closet
snug as a bug in a rug
social amenities
something hitting the fan
spectacular event
spirited debate
steaming jungle
stick out like a sore thumb
stick to one's guns
straight and narrow path
structure one's day
such is life
sum and substance
superhuman effort
supreme sacrifice
sweat of his brow
sweeping changes
swim with the sharks

Take the bull by the horns
teaching moment
telling effect
tender mercies
terror stricken
thanking you in advance
there's the rub
think outside the box
this day and age
those present
throw a monkey wrench
throw a party
throw caution to the winds
thrust of your report
thunderous applause
tie that binds
time immemorial
time of one's life
tongue in cheek
too funny for words
too numerous to mention
tough it out/through
tower of strength
trials and tribulations
trust implicitly
tumultuous applause

Uncharted seas
unprecedented situation
untimely end
untiring efforts
up tight

Vale of tears
vanish into thin air
viable alternative

Watery grave
wax eloquent/poetic
weaker sex
wear and tear
wend one's way
whirlwind tour
wide open spaces
words fail to express
word to the wise
work one's wiles
worse for wear
wrought havoc

X-ray vision/view

Yea verily yea
yeasty blend/mix
yellow journalism
yen for . . .
Young Turk

Zero hour
zest for life

Colons

Colons signal readers to keep reading because related thoughts or a list will follow. In this role, colons differ from periods, semicolons, and even commas, all of which signal a pause or even a full stop.

1. Colons link related thoughts, one of which must be capable of standing alone as a sentence.

Colons emphasize the second thought (unlike semicolons, which emphasize both thoughts equally, and dashes, which emphasize the break in the sentence and can emphasize the first thought).

Colons shift emphasis forward: They tend to make the second thought the most important part of the sentence. When such is the case, the colon indicates that explanation or elaboration follows:

The Franklin Shipyard needed one thing to remain solvent: to win the Navy's supercarrier contract.

The Franklin shipyard needed one thing to remain solvent: It had to win the Navy's supercarrier contract.

See CAPITALS.

NOTE: The two complete thoughts in the second example could also appear as two sentences:

The Franklin Shipyard needed one thing to remain solvent. It had to win the Navy's supercarrier contract.

However, linking these thoughts with a colon emphasizes their close connection. Writing them as two sentences is less emphatic if the writer wishes to stress that the **one thing** Franklin needs is to win the contract.

Colons

1. Colons link related thoughts, one of which must be capable of standing alone as a sentence.
2. Colons introduce lists or examples.
3. Colons separate hours from minutes, volumes from pages, and the first part of a ratio from the second.
4. Colons follow the salutation in a formal letter.
5. Colons separate titles from subtitles.

2. Colons introduce lists or examples:

Our management-development study revealed the need for greater monitoring during these crucial phases:

1. Initial organization
2. Design and development
3. Fabrication and quality control

The Mars Division's audit of field service-personnel centers found the following general deficiencies:

1. Service personnel do not fully understand the new rebate policy.
2. Parts inventories are inadequate.
3. The centralized customer records are not operational, although the computer terminals have all been installed.

NOTE 1: A colon need not follow a heading or subheading that introduces a list. The heading itself is sufficient; a colon is redundant.

NOTE 2: The items listed do not require periods unless they are complete sentences. See LISTS.

3. Colons separate hours from minutes, volumes from pages, and the first part of a ratio from the second:

The deadline is 3:30 p.m. on Friday.

See *Government Architecture* 15:233.

The ratio of direct to indirect costs is 1:1.45.

4. Colons follow the salutation in a formal letter:

Dear Ms. Labordean:

Dear President Crouch:

Dear Clarence Johns:

See LETTERS.

5. Colons separate titles from subtitles:

Government Architecture: Managing Interface Specifications

Color helps readers and viewers acquire and interpret information. Appropriate use of contrasting or complementary colors clarifies the structure and emphasis of a visual message. For example, if main headings are black and subheadings are blue, readers can easily grasp the organization of a document.

Color originates when an object emits or reflects different wavelengths of light. Light (as in a beam of sunlight) is made up of the colors of the spectrum. See figure 1. Light shining through a prism bends to a different degree depending on its wavelength, thus revealing all the different colors in the spectrum.

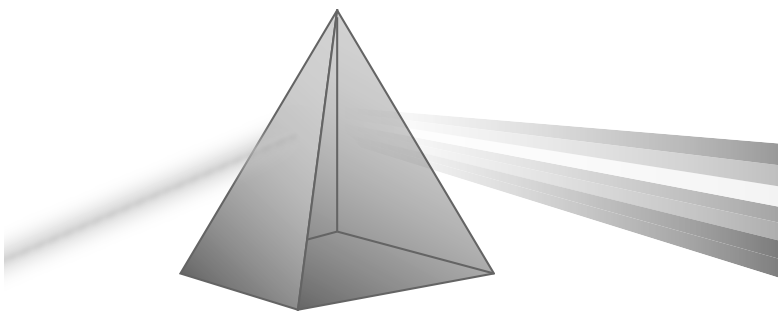


Figure 1. Colors of the Spectrum Displayed With a Prism. *As in this figure, the rainbow colors in a spectrum always appear in the same order.*

Colors are categorized as primary or additive. Additive color starts with the light of three primary colors: red, green, and blue. Mixing light of these colors in equal amounts makes white light (imagine three overlapping colored spotlights in a darkened room). See figure 2. Changing the mixture produces any color. For example, equal parts of red and green light make yellow light; red and blue make magenta; and green and blue make cyan.

That is why color in a computer-generated graphic

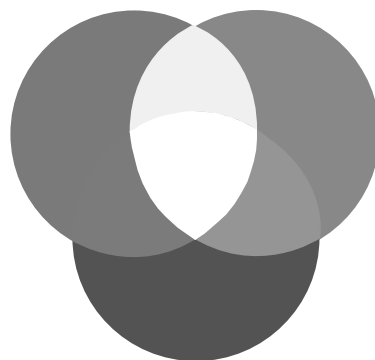


Figure 2. Colors of the Spectrum Displayed by Mixing Primary Light Colors. *Visualize multiple filters overlapping each other to produce different hues.*

Color

1. Establish a color scheme and then add color standards to the project styles.
2. Use contrasting, bright colors to show opposing concepts or major changes; use shades or tints of one color to show minor variations.
3. Match your color choices to your goal or purpose in designing a document or making a presentation.
4. Remember that color perception varies greatly among individuals.
5. For more legibility, use a light background with dark text, and use colors sparingly.
6. Combine colors and textures to improve legibility and understanding.

is designated by its RGB ratio (i.e., the ratio of red to green to blue). A graphic with an RGB ratio of 0-255-0 is pure green, where 0-255-255 is cyan. You can manipulate the RGB ratio with the color wheel or the custom color field in your software program.

1. Establish a color scheme and then add color standards to the project styles.

The styles for your document or presentation should include a color scheme, with text color(s), when or where they will be used, and background colors listed by topic, section, subject, or other logical grouping. For example, you might decide to use blue lettering for important rules and a light gray-shaded background for quoted passages. To predefine colors, you can choose the standard colors of your software program or select custom colors. Often you must use colors branded by your organization. The formula for these colors should be available as an RGB ratio. See PAGE LAYOUT for examples of styles. As you select colors, try to establish a color scheme that makes sense to potential readers. For example, if your readers

Color



Figure 3. The Color Wheel. This schematic presentation shows which colors are complementary (opposite) of each other and which are only minor shades and tints.

are from the United States, green suggests prosperity (as in money), yellow suggests caution (as in a traffic signal), and red shows failure (as in red ink) or danger.

Color associations are not universal, so avoid assuming that a certain color always has a particular meaning. For example, in several Eastern countries, the color white is associated with death and mourning; in the West, white is traditionally a sign of purity and innocence.

2. Use contrasting, bright colors to show opposing concepts or major changes; use shades or tints of one color to show minor variations.

The color wheel in your software program is a basic diagram showing the relationships of colors, hues, shades, and tints, as well as complementary and harmonious relationships. A shade is a darkened hue—the decrease of light or

the addition of black. A tint (the opposite of a shade) is a lightened hue—the increase of light or the addition of white.

The color wheel in figure 3 shows the relationship between hues, tints, and shades.

Complementary colors are opposite one another on the color wheel. As the top row of figure 4 shows, yellow and violet are complementary colors. Other complementary pairs are blue and orange, or red and green. As complementary colors, yellow and violet contrast sharply, as shown in the middle circle on the top row. Choosing a tint of yellow or a shade of violet produces less contrast, as in the third box on that row.

Graphic artists often choose complementary colors to create

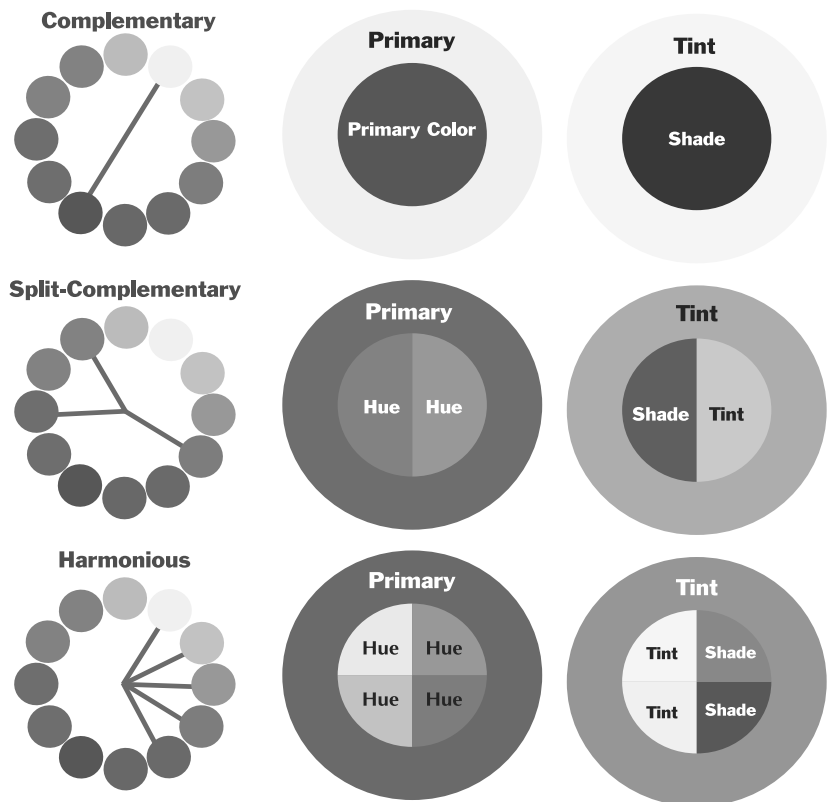


Figure 4. Complementary, Split-Complementary, and Harmonious Combinations. The left-hand column shows how these three combinations are defined. The middle and right-hand columns demonstrate different combinations as they would appear in graphics.

high contrasts. But this choice must depend on the purpose of each graphic. Some graphics—such as the advertising on a website—need to catch a buyer’s eye immediately, so high contrast is valuable. In other contexts—for instance, a high-definition computer projection—complementary colors are often too bright, maybe even annoying.

Split-complementary colors are two colors positioned adjacent to a single color on the wheel. Their complement is opposite their adjacent color on the wheel. As the second row in figure 4 shows, red-orange is complementary to both blue and green. Split-complementary colors provide less contrast than complementary colors, but combinations of them are still bright, as the middle box on row 2 indicates. Using tints and shades decrease the contrast, as shown in the third box on row 2.

Harmonious colors lie between two primary colors on the color wheel. As figure 4 shows, the harmonious colors between red and yellow clearly relate to each other; thus they provide less contrast than complementary combinations. Tints and shades will further decrease the low contrast between harmonious colors. Graphic artists use harmonious colors when they want to convey related ideas within a graphic or a document.

3. Match your color choices to your goal or purpose in designing a document or making a presentation.

Which color combinations should you choose? No set answers exist. Assess the purpose of your graphic and your text. If you need to communicate highly contrasting ideas or create a strong impact, choose complementary or

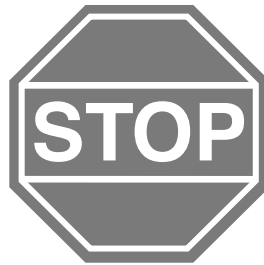


Figure 5. Road Signs. Road signs use bright, contrasting color combinations for high visibility.

split-complementary colors, as explained in rule 2 above. Conversely, if your message needs to be more subtle, then choose tints, shades, or even harmonious combinations.

Figure 5 shows one use of high-contrast colors. On road signs, the goal is to use colors so vividly that no one can miss seeing the sign.

A more subtle use of color is desirable, however, in most business and technical documents and in graphics for business or technical presentations. Figure 6 shows how three business graphs would look with different color combinations. As in this figure, try printing sample graphics with different color combinations to judge what will be

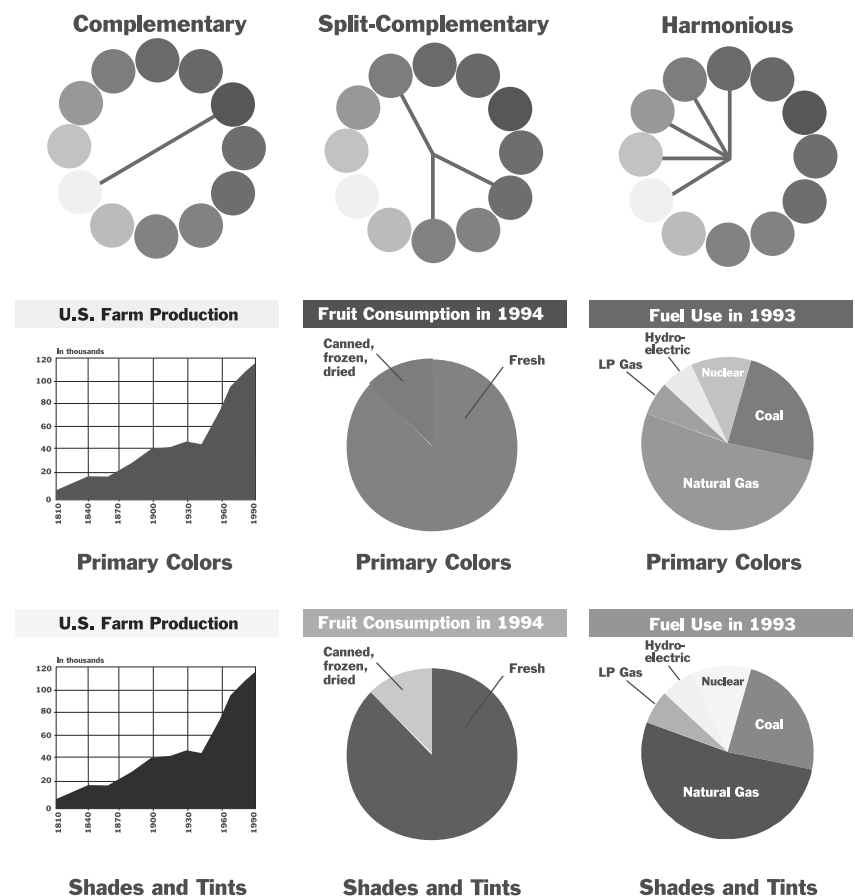


Figure 6. Color Combinations in Graphics. Color combinations in the second row are bright and might be distracting. The bottom row shows more subdued combinations using tints and shades.

Color

effective. Also, remember that the colors you see on a computer screen may not print accurately. You must often adjust colors to the parameters of the printer.

If possible, test your color combinations by asking colleagues to review actual versions of your materials. Do they find the combinations to be appropriate, given the intended use of the materials? What changes would they suggest?

After some experimentation and after comments from colleagues, you will be ready to settle on a color scheme that works for a particular project. This is the color scheme you should include in your project style sheet (see rule 1 above).

4. Remember that color perception varies greatly among individuals.

Some combinations, such as orange-blue and red-green, appear to vibrate and disturb many readers. Although rare in women, red-green color blindness affects one in every 10 men. This combination is very difficult for color-blind men to interpret and should not be used. A red-blue combination does not provide enough contrast for a clear message. See **GRAPHICS FOR PRESENTATIONS**.

5. For more legibility, use a light background with dark text, and use colors sparingly.

Text in documents is usually printed in black ink on white paper because black ink generally costs less, so don't make understanding your message dependent on text color.

But color is useful to separate sections or emphasize important points. Using colored paper is an inexpensive way to add color. For example, the USDA Forest Service manual, which contains rules governing Forest Service management activities, has traditionally used different colored papers for national, regional, and local sections of the manual.

Different combinations of text color and background vary widely in readability. Figure 7 on the next page shows some examples of colored text and backgrounds.

Remember that any of these examples may be less legible if you are using a computer projection or a video screen. Test the circumstances. Stand halfway back in the audience. A person in the back receives about one-fourth the image quality you see halfway back. See **GRAPHICS FOR PRESENTATIONS**.

In computer presentations, the high contrast of a dark background and light letters creates impact, but also a darker, more sober emotional effect.

6. Combine colors and textures to improve legibility and understanding.

Colors and textures can make almost any graphic easier to understand. But you must choose carefully to ensure that the viewer interprets textural elements as you intend.

Use similar colors to bring together elements in groups. Black-and-white patterns are almost as effective as color in grouping elements.

Be cautious in using textures, gradients, and embossing. The purpose of such elements is to help readers interpret information, but overuse can detract from your message and confuse readers. Avoid faddish use of these elements, such as swirls, vectors, splatters, or smoky effects.

Textures such as crosshatching, dots, or other shapes or lines should be used only when color is not available to distinguish between elements of a visual. Neighboring areas should not be too similar in texture.

Also, when selecting colors and tones or textures for graphs, consider how the finished graphic will photocopy. You may want to use both color and texture to create a pleasing color graphic while ensuring improved legibility of a photocopy. See also **CHARTS**, **GRAPHICS FOR DOCUMENTS**, **GRAPHICS FOR PRESENTATIONS**, **GRAPHS**, **ILLUSTRATIONS**, **MAPS**, and **PAGE LAYOUT**.

Color	Not Recommended	Recommended
Dark Red	Blue, green, black	White, yellow, lt. yellow, lt. blue, lt. red, lt. green
Red	Brown, blue, green, orange	White, yellow, lt. yellow, lt. red, lt. orange, black
Medium Red	Brown, yellow, red	White, black, dk. blue, brown, blue violet, dk. green
Light Red	White, yellow, lt. yellow, lt. blue	Black, dk. red, dk. blue, brown, blue violet, dk. green
Dark Green	Black, brown, med. brown, red, blue	White, yellow, lt. yellow, lt. red, lt. blue
Green	Blue, red, violet, blue violet, dk. green, med. brown	White, yellow, lt. yellow, lt. red, black
Light Green	lt. red, lt. blue, lt. yellow, med. brown	Black, white, brown, dk. blue, dk. green
Dark Blue	Red, green, orange	White, yellow, lt. yellow, lt. blue
Blue	Red, green, orange, violet	White, yellow, lt. yellow, lt. red
Light Blue	lt. red, lt. blue, lt. yellow	Black, yellow, dk. blue, violet
Dark Yellow	Red, green, blue	Black, yellow, white, lt. yellow
Light Yellow	White, lt. blue, lt. green, orange	Black, red, dk. red, blue, dk. blue, dk. violet, dk. green, brown
Dark Brown	Black, green, blue, dk. blue, red	White, yellow, lt. yellow, lt. red, lt. green, lt. blue
Medium Brown	Blue, green, red	White, black, yellow, lt. yellow,
Black	Red, blue, green, violet	White, yellow, lt. yellow, lt. blue, lt. red

Figure 7. Colored Text on Different Colored Backgrounds. *The recommended combinations (right column) still need to be verified in your particular context. Your printer or your paper may be just different enough to produce readability problems.*

Commas

Commas keep English sentences readable, especially long, involved sentences. Without commas, readers wouldn't know when to pause. But as the following rules show, correct placement of commas reflects the grammar and syntax of the language, not merely places to pause. See PUNCTUATION for information on mandatory and optional uses of commas.

1. Commas separate complete thoughts joined by these simple conjunctions: *and, but, or, for, nor, so, yet*:

He was a Russian linguist in communications intelligence, and he has logged over 5,000 hours as a C-130 navigator in the Air Force.

Visophane has been marketed abroad since 2005, but it was not approved for the local market until May of last year because of insufficient clinical trials.

NOTE 1: You may omit this comma if both complete thoughts are short:

The chairman resigned and the company failed.

The simple conjunctions cited above are called coordinating conjunctions. When they link two complete thoughts, the resulting sentence is called a compound sentence. See CONJUNCTIONS, SENTENCES, and BRITISH ENGLISH.

NOTE 2: If you use any other transitional or connecting word (*however, furthermore, consequently, and so on*) to join two complete thoughts, use a semicolon. See SEMICOLONS and TRANSITIONS.

Commas

1. Commas separate complete thoughts joined by these simple conjunctions: *and, but, or, for, nor, so, yet*.
2. Commas separate items in a series consisting of three or more words, phrases, or even whole clauses.
3. Commas separate long introductory phrases and clauses from the main body of a sentence.
4. Commas enclose parenthetical expressions.
5. Commas separate nonessential modifying and descriptive phrases and clauses from a sentence, especially those clauses beginning with *who, which, or that*.
6. Commas separate two or more adjectives that equally modify the same noun.
7. Commas separate items in dates and addresses.
8. Commas separate titles and degrees from names.
9. Commas follow the salutation in informal letters and the complimentary closing in all letters.
10. Commas enclose in text the names of people addressed.
11. Commas (or a comma and a semicolon) set off (enclose) the following transitional words and expressions when they introduce sentences or when they link two complete thoughts: *accordingly, consequently, for example, for instance, further, furthermore, however, indeed, nevertheless, nonetheless, on the contrary, on the other hand, then, thus*.
12. Commas, like periods, always go inside closing quotation marks. Commas go outside parentheses or brackets.

2. Commas separate items in a series consisting of three or more words, phrases, or even whole clauses:

Control Data's Integrated Support Software System provides compatibility between tools and workers, consistent tool interfaces, ease of learning, user friendliness, and expandability.

The user may also return to the control program to perform such other functions as database editing, special report generation, and statistical analyses.

The Carthage-Hines agreement contained provisions for testing the database, cataloguing the findings, creating a more user-friendly software package, and marketing any new software developed jointly.

NOTE 1: A comma separates the last two items in a series, even though these items are linked by a conjunction (*and* in the above examples, but the rule applies for any conjunction). This comma was once considered optional, but the trend is to make it mandatory, especially in technical and business English. Leaving it out can cause confusion and misinterpretation. See PUNCTUATION and BRITISH ENGLISH.

NOTE 2: If all of the items in the series are linked by a simple conjunction, do not use commas:

The user may also return to the control program to perform such other functions as database editing and special report generation and statistical analyses.

NOTE 3: In sentences containing a series of phrases or clauses that already have commas, use semicolons to separate each phrase or clause:

Our legal staff prepared analyses of the Drury-Engels agreement, which we hoped to discontinue; the Hopkinson contract; and the joint leasing proposal from Shell, Mobil, and Amoco.

See CONJUNCTIONS and SEMICOLONS.

3. Commas separate long introductory phrases and clauses from the main body of a sentence:

Although we are new to particle scan technology, our work with split-beam lasers gives us a solid experiential base from which to undertake this study.

For the purposes of this investigation, the weapon will be synthesized by a computer program called RATS (Rapid Approach to Transfer Systems).

Oil production was down during the first quarter, but when we analyzed the figures, we discovered that the production decline was due to only two of our eight wells.

NOTE 1: In the last example, the *when we analyzed* clause does not open the sentence, but it must still be separated from the main clause following it. It introduces the main thought of the last half of the sentence.

NOTE 2: If the introductory thought is short and no confusion will result, you can omit this comma:

In either case the Carmichael procedure will be used to estimate the current requirements of the preliminary designs.

4. Commas enclose parenthetical expressions.

Parenthetical expressions are words or groups of words that are inserted into a sentence and are not part of the main thought of the sentence. These expressions describe, explain, or comment on something in the sentence, typically the word or phrase preceding the parenthetical expression:

The transport will, according to our calculations, require only 10,000 feet of runway.

The survey results, though not what we had predicted, confirm that the rate of manufacturer acceptance will exceed 60 percent.

Parentheses and dashes may also enclose parenthetical expressions. Use commas most of the time, but when you want to make the expression stand out, enclose it with parentheses (which are more emphatic than commas) or dashes—which are more emphatic than parentheses. See PARENTHESES and DASHES.

5. Commas separate nonessential modifying and descriptive phrases and clauses from a sentence, especially those clauses beginning with *who*, *which*, or *that*:

These biocybernetic approaches, which merit further investigation, will improve performance of the man/machine interface.

In this sentence, *which merit further investigation* is not essential because the reader will already know which biocybernetic approaches the sentence refers to. The clause beginning with *which* is nonessential and could be left out:

These biocybernetic approaches will improve performance of the man/machine interface.

If several biocybernetic approaches were listed, however, and if the writer needed to identify only those

meriting further investigation, the clause would be essential, could not be left out, and would **not** take commas:

Improving the performance of the man/machine interface meant identifying those biocybernetic approaches that merit further investigation.

The *that* in the preceding example commonly introduces essential clauses, although *which* sometimes appears. See *that/which* in WORD PROBLEMS.

Modifying or descriptive clauses should always follow the words they modify. If they cannot be removed from the sentence without changing the meaning, they are essential and must not be separated by commas from the word they modify. If they can be removed, they are nonessential and must be separated by commas from the main thought in the sentence:

Essential: She is the Dr. Gruber who developed analytical engine compressor stability models for NASA.

She is the Dr. Gruber does not make sense as an independent statement. The descriptive clause beginning with *who* is essential and therefore cannot be separated by a comma from *Gruber*.

Nonessential: Our Design Team Leader will be Dr. Janet Gruber, who developed analytical engine compressor stability models for NASA.

Our Design Team Leader will be Dr. Janet Gruber does stand alone as a complete and independent thought. In this case, the descriptive clause beginning with *who* is nonessential. Separating it from *Gruber* with a comma shows that it is additional and nonessential information. Note that a comma would follow *NASA* if the sentence continued. See PRONOUNS for a discussion of relative pronouns.

Commas

6. Commas separate two or more adjectives that equally modify the same noun:

This design features an advanced, multidose oral therapy.

NOTE: If two or more adjectives precede a noun, however, and one adjective modifies another adjective—and together they modify the noun—you must use a hyphen:

They had designed a no-flow heat exchange.

A good test for determining whether two or more adjectives equally modify a noun is to insert *and* between them. If the resulting phrase makes sense, then the adjectives are equal, and you should use commas to replace the *ands*:

old and rusty pipe (*therefore*, old, rusty pipe)

however

old and rusty and steam pipe (*The and between rusty and steam makes no sense. Therefore, the phrase should be old, rusty steam pipe.*)

See HYPHENS and ADJECTIVES.

7. Commas separate items in dates and addresses:

The proposal was signed on March 15, 2007.

Contact Benson Pharmaceuticals, Lindsay, Indiana, for further information.

NOTE: A comma follows the day and the year when the month and day precede the year. However, when the date consists only of month and year, a comma is not necessary:

The final report will be due January 14, 2011, just a month before the board meeting.

but

The final report will be due in January 2011.

When the date appears in the day-month-year sequence, no commas are necessary:

The report is due 14 January 2011.

See PUNCTUATION.

8. Commas separate titles and degrees from names:

The chief liaison will be Roger Hillyard, Project Review Board Chairman.

Mary Sarkalion, PhD, will coordinate clinical studies.

Clinical studies will be the responsibility of Mary Sarkalion, PhD.

NOTE: When the degree or title appears in the middle of a sentence, commas must appear before and after it.

9. Commas follow the salutation in informal letters and the complimentary closing in all letters:

Dear Joan,

Sincerely,

See COLONS and LETTERS.

10. Commas enclose in text the names of people addressed:

So, Bob, if you'll check your records, we'll be able to adjust the purchase order to your satisfaction.

11. Commas (or a comma and a semicolon) set off (enclose) the following transitional words and expressions when they introduce sentences or when they link two complete thoughts: *accordingly, consequently, for example, for instance, further, furthermore, however, indeed, nevertheless, nonetheless, on the contrary, on the other hand, then, thus*:

Consequently, the primary difference between CDSP and other synthesis programs is development philosophy.

Synthesis programs are now common in industry; however, CDSP has several features that make it especially suitable for this type of study.

or

Synthesis programs are now common in industry; CDSP has, however, several features that make it especially suitable for this type of study.

See SEMICOLONS.

NOTE: A few of these transitional words (*however, thus, then, indeed*) are occasionally part of the main thought of the sentence and do not form an actual transition. When such is the case, omit the punctuation before and after the words:

However unreliable cross-section analysis may be, it is still the most efficient means of scaling mathematical models.

Thus translated, the decoded message can be used to diagram nonlinear relationships.

12. Commas, like periods, always go inside closing quotation marks. Commas go outside parentheses or brackets:

The specifications contained many instances of the phrase "or equal," which is an attempt to avoid actually specifying significant features of a required product.

Thanks to this new NSAID (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug), posttraumatic or postoperative conditions were significantly reduced.

NOTE: British usage places commas and periods inside or outside the quotation marks, depending on whether they are or are not part of the quotation. See SPACING, BRITISH ENGLISH, and QUOTATION MARKS.

Compound words are formed when two or more words act together. The compound may be written as a single word (with no space between the joined words), with a hyphen between the joined words, or with spaces between the joined words:

footnote
ourselves
right-of-way
3-minute break
delayed-reaction switch
land bank loan
parcel post delivery

The form of the compound varies with custom and usage as well as with the length of time the compound has existed.

Compound words usually begin as two or more separate, often unrelated words. When writers and speakers begin using the words together as nouns, verbs, adjectives, or adverbs, the compound generally has a hyphen or a space between words, depending on custom and usage. As the new compound becomes more common, the hyphen and space might drop, and the compound might be written as one word:

on-site *has become* onsite
co-operate *has become* cooperate
rail road *has become* railroad
auto body *has become* autobody

However, because of custom or usage, some compounds retain the hyphen or space between words:

all-inclusive
deep-rooted
living room
middle-sized
re-cover (*to cover again*)
re-create (*to create again*)
rough-coat (*used as a verb*)
sand-cast (*used as a verb*)
satin-lined
steam-driven
sugar water
summer school
terra firma
throw line
under secretary

Because new compound words are continually appearing in the language

Compound Words

1. Write compounds as two words when the compounds appear with the words in their customary order and when the meaning is clear.
2. Write compounds as single words (no spaces between joined words) when the first word of the compound receives the major stress in pronunciation.
3. Hyphenate compounds that modify or describe other words.
4. Treat compounds used as verbs as separate words.

and because even familiar compounds might appear in different forms, depending on how they are used in a sentence, writers might have difficulty deciding which form of a compound to use. Recent dictionaries can often help by indicating how a word or compound has appeared previously.

However, for new compounds and for compounds not covered in dictionaries, use the principles of clarity and consistency, as well as the following guidelines, to select the form of the compound.

1. Write compounds as two words when the compounds appear with the words in their customary order and when the meaning is clear:

test case	report card
sick leave	barn door
flood control	social security
real estate	civil rights

NOTE 1: Many such combinations are so common that we rarely think of them as compounds (especially because they do not have hyphens and are written with spaces between words). In many cases, writing them as a single word would be ridiculous: *floodcontrol*, *realestate*.

NOTE 2: We continue to pronounce such compounds with fairly equal stress on the joined words, especially when one or more of the words has two or more syllables (as in *social security*).

2. Write compounds as single words (no spaces between joined words) when the first word of the compound receives the major stress in pronunciation:

airplane
cupboard
doorstop
dragonfly
footnote
nightclerk
seaward
warehouse

NOTE 1: The stress often shifts to the first word when that word has only one syllable, as in the preceding examples.

NOTE 2: Words beginning with the following prefixes are not true compounds. Such words are usually written without a space or a hyphen:

afterbirth
Anglomania
antedate
biweekly
bylaw
circumnavigation
cooperate
contraposition
countercase
deenergize
demitasse
excommunicate
extracurricular
foretell
hypersensitive
hypoacid
inbound
infrared
interview
intraspinal
introvert
isometric

Compound Words

macroanalysis
mesothorax
metagenesis
microphone
misspelling
monogram
multicolor
neophyte
nonneutral
offset
outback
overactive
overflow
pancosmic
paracentric
particoated
peripatetic
planoconvex
polynodal
postscript
preexist
proconsul
pseudoscientific
reenact
retrospect
semiofficial
stepfather
subsecretary
supermarket
thermocouple
transonic
transship
tricolor
ultraviolet
unnecessary
underflow

NOTE 3: Words ending with the following suffixes are not true compounds. Such words are usually written without a space or hyphen:

portable
coverage
operate
plebiscite
twentyfold
spoonful
kilogram
geography
manhood
selfish
meatless
outlet
wavelike
procurement
partnership
lonesome
homestead
northward
clockwise

3. Hyphenate compounds that modify or describe other words:

rear-engine bracket
tool-and-die shop
two-phase engine-replacement program
down-to-cost model
two- or three-cycle process
4-year plan
20-day turn around
2- or 3-week vacation

See HYPHENS and ADJECTIVES.

NOTE 1: Such compounds are hyphenated only when they come before the word they modify. If the words forming the compound appear after the word they are describing, leave out the hyphens:

bracket for the rear engine (*but* rear-engine bracket)

a shop making tools and dies (*but* tool-and-die shop)

a program with two phases (*but* two-phase program)

NOTE 2: When the meaning is clear, such compound modifiers may not need hyphens:

sick leave policy
land management plan
life insurance company
per capita cost
production credit clause
speech improvement class

NOTE 3: Do not hyphenate if the first word of the compound modifier is an adverb ending with *-ly*:

barely known problem
eminently qualified researcher
highly developed tests
gently sloping range

however

well-developed tests
well-known problem
well-qualified researcher

4. Treat compounds used as verbs as separate words:

to break down
to check out
to follow up
to get together
to go ahead
to know how
to run through
to shut down
to shut off
to stand by
to start up
to take off
to trade in

The parallel compound nouns are usually either written as one word or hyphenated:

breakdown
checkout
follow-up
get-together
go-ahead
know-how
run-through
shutdown
shutoff
standby
start-up
takeoff
trade-in

However, some verb phrases are identical to the compound noun form:

cross-reference (both a noun and a verb)

When in doubt, check your dictionary.

Conjunctions connect words, phrases, or clauses and at the same time indicate the relationship between them. Conjunctions include the simple coordinating conjunctions (*and, but, or, for, nor, so, yet*), the subordinate conjunctions (*because, since, although, when, if, so that, etc.*), the correlative conjunctions (*either ... or, neither ... nor, both ... and*), and the conjunctive adverbs (*however, thus, furthermore, etc.*).

Coordinating Conjunctions

The simple coordinating conjunctions are *and, but, or, for, nor, so, and yet*. They often connect two independent clauses (complete thoughts):

The program designer established the default settings, and the programmer built them into the system.

Our proposal was a day late, but we were not eliminated from competition.

The pump will have to be replaced, or we will continue to suffer daily breakdowns.

We rejected his budget, yet he continued to argue that all contested items were justified.

See SENTENCES.

These simple connectors establish the relationship between the thoughts being coordinated:

- And* shows addition
- Or* shows alternative
- Nor* shows negative alternative
- But* and *yet* show contrast
- For* and *so* show causality

NOTE 1: When you use a coordinating conjunction to connect two independent clauses or complete thoughts, place a comma before the conjunction, as in the sentences above. However, you may omit the comma when the two clauses are short and closely related. Also, a semicolon can replace both the comma and the conjunction. See SEMICOLONS and COMMAS.

Conjunctions

1. Ensure that in choosing *and* and *or* you select the conjunction that conveys exactly what you mean.
2. Occasionally, sentences can begin with a coordinating conjunction.
3. Do not use *and* or *but* before *which* (or *that, who, whose, whom, where*) unless you use a preceding parallel *which* (or *that, who, whose, whom, where*).
4. Subordinate conjunctions can begin sentences.
5. Distinguish between some subordinate conjunctions that have overlapping or multiple meanings (especially *because/since/as* and *while/although/as*).
6. Make the constructions following each coordinating conjunction parallel.
7. Use a semicolon before and a comma after conjunctive adverbs used to join two complete thoughts.
8. Use a comma following conjunctive adverbs at the beginning of a sentence.

NOTE 2: The conjunctions *and* and *or* (preceded by a comma) also connect the last two items in a series:

The engineer designed an emergency exit door, a narrow outside stairway, and a concrete support pad.

She requested full written disclosure, an apology, or financial compensation.

See COMMAS.

1. Ensure that in choosing *and* and *or* you select the conjunction that conveys exactly what you mean.

At first glance, *and* and *or* merely join two or more items, but they can and often do imply much more.

And

In the following sentences *and* does more than merely connect the ideas. What *and* implies is stated in parentheses following each example:

He saw the accident, and he called the police. (*therefore*)

My boss is competent, and David is not. (*contrast*)

He changed the tire, and he replaced the hub cap. (*then*)

Explain the cost savings, and I'll approve your proposal. (*condition*)

Or

The conjunction *or* usually means one of two possibilities:

I want either a Ford or an Acura.

However, *or* sometimes has other, occasionally confusing, implications:

The faulty part or the worm gear seemed to be causing our problem. (*Are the faulty part and the worm gear the same? Only knowledgeable readers would know for sure.*)

Add to the bid, or I'll reject your offer. (*negative condition*)

He began doing the schematics, or at least he appeared to be doing them. (*correction*)

See AND/OR in WORD PROBLEMS.

Conjunctions

2. Occasionally, sentences can begin with a coordinating conjunction.

This advice contradicts the rule that many of us learned in school: “Never begin a sentence with *and*.” Some writers and editors still offer this advice, but most have now recognized that this so-called rule has no basis. Even Shakespeare began some of his sentences with coordinating conjunctions.

A coordinating conjunction at the beginning of a sentence links the sentence to the preceding sentence or paragraph. Sometimes, the linking is unnecessary:

We objected to the proposal because of its length. And others felt that it had errors in its facts.

The *and* at the beginning of the second sentence is simply unnecessary. It adds nothing to the thought and may easily be omitted:

We objected to the proposal because of its length. Others felt that it had errors in facts.

Using a conjunction to begin a sentence is not grammatically incorrect. Sometimes, it is good stylistic variation. But it tends to look and sound informal, so avoid this practice in formal documents.

3. Do not use *and* or *but* before *which* (or *that*, *who*, *whose*, *whom*, *where*) unless you use a preceding parallel *which* (or *that*, *who*, *whose*, *whom*, *where*):

We explored the DeMarcus itinerary, which you explained in your letter but which you failed to mention in Saturday’s meeting.

The meetings should take place where we met last year or where we can arrange for equally good facilities.

The following sentence violates this principle. Consequently, it is awkward and nonparallel:

The plans called for a number of innovative features, especially regarding extra insulation, and which should save us much in fuel costs. (*Deleting the and would solve the lack of parallelism in this sentence.*)

See PARALLELISM.

Subordinate Conjunctions

In contrast to the limited set of coordinating conjunctions, subordinate conjunctions are a varied and diverse group:

after, although, as, because, before, if, once, since, that, though, until, when, where, while

in that, so that, such that, except that, in order that, now (that), provided (that), supposing (that), considering (that), as far as, as long as, so long as, sooner than, rather than, as if, as though, in case

if . . . (then)
although . . . yet/nevertheless
as . . . so
more/–er/less . . . than
as . . . as
so . . . (that)
such . . . as
such . . . (that)
no sooner . . . than
whether . . . or (not)
the . . . the

Subordinate conjunctions introduce subordinate clauses and phrases (dependent clauses and phrases that do not convey complete thoughts and are therefore not independent):

After the engineer gave her talk

Because of the voltage loss

When the test results come in

While still producing fluids

In that you had already made the request

Except that the procedure was costly

Provided that you calculate the results

As though it hadn’t rained enough

If we fail

As aware as he is

So expensive that it was prohibitive

Whether or not you submit the report

These subordinate clauses and phrases must be attached to independent clauses (complete thoughts) to form sentences:

After the engineer gave her talk, several colleagues had questions.

In that you had already made the request, we decided to omit the formal interview.

If we fail, the project stops. (or If we fail, then the project stops.)

As aware as he is, he must be sensitive to the personnel problems.

See SENTENCES.

NOTE 1: A subordinate clause or phrase that opens a sentence should be followed by a comma. The preceding sentences illustrate this rule. See COMMAS.

NOTE 2: When the subordinate clause or phrase follows the independent clause or main thought of the sentence, no commas are necessary:

The experiment failed because of the voltage loss.

We would have denied the request except that the procedure was so costly.

We wondered whether you would turn in your report.

NOTE 3: Occasionally, the subordinate clause or phrase interrupts the main clause and must have commas on both sides of it to indicate where the clause or phrase appears:

The President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, after receiving the latest aerial reconnaissance photos of the area, decided on a naval blockade of all ports.

Our budgetary problems, regardless of the Madierra Project expense, would have taken care of themselves if the prime rate hadn’t gone up three points.

4. Subordinate conjunctions can begin sentences:

When the test results come in, we'll have to analyze them carefully.

Because the project manager was unfamiliar with the budget codes, we failed to expense the costs of fabrication.

NOTE: The old-school rule "Never begin a sentence with *because*" was and remains a bad rule. You may begin a sentence with *because* as long as the dependent clause it introduces is followed by an independent clause or complete thought.

5. Distinguish between some subordinate conjunctions that have overlapping or multiple meanings (especially *because/since/as* and *while/although/as*).

Avoid using *since* and *as* to mean "because":

Because the Leiper Project failed, several engineers were reassigned to electro-optics. (*not* Since the project failed . . .)

Because we had ample supplies, no new batteries were ordered. (*not* As we had ample supplies . . .)

Avoid using *while* and *as* to mean "although":

Although many employees begin work at 8 a.m., others begin at 7 a.m. (*not* While many employees begin work at 8 a.m. . . .)

Although the value of the test results declined, we still felt we could meet the deadline. (*not* As the value of the test results declined . . .)

Correlative Conjunctions

Correlative conjunctions are pairs of coordinating conjunctions:

both . . . and
either . . . or
neither . . . nor
not only . . . but also

6. Make the constructions following each coordinating conjunction parallel:

The committee was interested in both real estate holdings and stock investments. (*not* . . . both in real estate holdings and the stock investments.)

The investigation revealed that either the budget was inaccurate or our records had gaps. (*not* The investigation revealed either that the budget was inaccurate or our records had gaps.)

NOTE: Faulty parallelism problems occur when the same phrase structure or word patterns do not occur after each coordinating conjunction:

He was aware that not only was the pipe too small but also that the pipe supports were made of aluminum instead of stainless steel.

This sentence is confusing because the two *thats* are not parallel. The first *that* comes before *not only*, and the second *that* comes after *but also*. A parallel version of the sentence is much smoother:

He was aware not only that the pipe was too small but also that the pipe supports were made of aluminum instead of stainless steel.

See PARALLELISM.

Conjunctive Adverbs

Conjunctive adverbs are adverbs that function as conjunctions, typically by connecting independent clauses or complete thoughts.

Usually, a semicolon appears along with the conjunctive adverb.

The most common conjunctive adverbs are *accordingly*, *also*, *besides*, *consequently*, *further*, *furthermore*, *hence*, *however*, *moreover*, *nevertheless*, *otherwise*, *then*, *therefore*, *thus*, and *too*. See TRANSITIONS.

NOTE: Conjunctive adverbs and the accompanying semicolons lengthen sentences and convey a heavy,

formal tone. If possible, replace conjunctive adverbs with *and*, *but*, *or*, *for*, *nor*, *so*, and *yet*.

7. Use a semicolon before and a comma after conjunctive adverbs used to join two complete thoughts:

Motherboard assembly is a lengthy production process; however, the individual assembly steps must still be tightly controlled.

Increasing pressure in the T-valves is potentially dangerous; nevertheless, we will not be able to monitor effluent discharge without increasing the pressure.

See SEMICOLONS and COMMAS.

NOTE: You can omit the comma following the conjunctive adverb if the sentence is short:

I think; therefore I am.

8. Use a comma following conjunctive adverbs at the beginning of a sentence:

Therefore, I am recommending that Pharmaco reconsider the baseline scores for the principal efficacy parameters.

However, sulfur compounds might not be the answer either.

NOTE 1: You may omit this comma if the sentence is short:

Thus the plan failed.

NOTE 2: If the adverb appears at the beginning of the sentence but does not behave as a conjunction, it is part of the sentence and cannot be followed by a comma:

Then the seam split at the forward discharge valve, and the boiler lost pressure rapidly.

Regardless of how we examined the problem, we could not resolve the fundamental dispute between the software designers and the copyright holders.

See COMMAS.

Contractions

Contractions are words formed by joining two words and dropping letters. An apostrophe marks the dropped letters:

cannot
can't

we are
we're

there is
there's

1. Use contractions to establish a personal, informal tone.

Contractions are not appropriate for very formal or ceremonial documents such as contracts or legal notices. However, contractions lead to a conversational, friendly tone in most other business correspondence. Contractions are common in electronic mail (email) messages because they cut the amount of screen space required.

We're excited that you'll be joining our sales force!

It's been a long time since you've come to see us.

See **LETTERS, TONE, and contractions** in **WORD PROBLEMS**.

Contractions

1. Use contractions to establish a personal, informal tone.
2. Don't confuse contractions with possessive pronouns.

2. Don't confuse contractions with possessive pronouns.

Writers often confuse contractions, which require apostrophes, with possessive pronouns, which need no apostrophes:

It's (it is) a regulatory issue.

The company lost *its* lease.

There's (there is) no time to waste.

The contract is *theirs* if they want it.

Watch out for these pronouns commonly mistaken for contractions:

hers, *not her's*
yours, *not your's*
ours, *not our's*
theirs, *not their's*

Distinguish between:

it's (it is)

its (belonging to it)

you're (you are)

your (belonging to you)

they're (they are)

their (belonging to them)

See **APOSTROPHES AND PRONOUNS**.

Dashes are excellent devices for emphasizing key material and for setting off explanatory information in a sentence. They can also be used to indicate where each item in a list begins and to separate paragraph headings from succeeding text. See **HEADINGS, LISTS, and PUNCTUATION**.

Dashes primarily appear as an em dash—meaning that the dash is about as wide as the letter “m.” Dashes also appear as an en dash, which is as wide as a letter “n.” The en dash has only a few uses:

1959–1960
Appendix D–2
pages 120–122

Most word-processing software programs have a special code for dashes so that dashes appear as a solid line, not two separate hyphens. Using this code makes your text appear to be typeset, not typed on an old-fashioned typewriter. When you use a dash between two words, leave no space on either side of the dash. See **SPACING**.

NOTE: Traditionally, hyphens are even shorter than en dashes, but many software programs have the same code for hyphens and en dashes. See **HYPHENS**.

1. Dashes link introductory or concluding thoughts to the rest of the sentence.

Dashes linking thoughts emphasize the break in the sentence. Dashes often make the first thought the most important part of the sentence:

Winning the Navy’s supercarrier contract—that’s what the Franklin Shipyard needed to remain solvent.

Dashes

1. Dashes link introductory or concluding thoughts to the rest of the sentence.
2. Dashes interrupt a sentence for insertion of thoughts related to, but not part of, the main idea of the sentence.
3. Dashes emphasize explanatory information enclosed in a sentence.
4. Dashes link particulars to a following summary statement.

Dashes can act like colons, however, and throw emphasis to the last part of the sentence:

We subjected the design to rigorous testing—but to no avail because stress, we discovered, was not the problem.

Often, the information following the dash clarifies, explains, or reinforces what came before the dash:

We consider our plan bold and unusual—bold because no one has tried to approach the problem from this angle, unusual because it’s not how one might expect to use laser technology.

Dashes can also link otherwise complete sentences:

The technical problem was **not** the design of the filter—the problem was poor quality assurance.

2. Dashes interrupt a sentence for insertion of thoughts related to, but not part of, the main idea of the sentence:

Octoronase had been undergoing clinical tests—all these were done abroad—for 3 years before the patients were withdrawn from the trial.

In this example, parentheses could replace the dashes; with parentheses, the sentence becomes slightly less emphatic. See **PARENTHESES**.

3. Dashes emphasize explanatory information enclosed in a sentence:

Two of Barnett’s primary field divisions—Industrial Manufacturing and Product Field Testing—will supervise the construction and implementation of the prototype.

In this example, commas or parentheses could replace the dashes. The commas would not be as emphatic as dashes; the parentheses would be more emphatic than commas, but less emphatic than dashes. See **PARENTHESES and COMMAS**.

4. Dashes link particulars to a following summary statement:

Reliability and trust—this is what Bendix has to offer.

Developing products that become the industry standard, minimizing the risk of failure, and controlling costs through aggressive management—these have become the hallmarks of our reputation.

Decimals

Decimal numbers are a linear way to represent fractions based on multiples of 10. The decimal 0.45 represents the following fraction:

$$\frac{45}{100}$$

See FRACTIONS.

The decimal point (period) is the mark dividing the whole number on the left from the decimal fraction on the right:

$$504.678$$

In some countries, writers use a comma for the decimal point:

$$504,678$$

1. Use figures for all decimals and do not write the equivalent fractions:

$$4.5 \text{ (not } 4 \frac{5}{10}\text{)}$$

$$0.356 \text{ (not } \frac{356}{1000}\text{)}$$

$$0.5 \text{ (not } \frac{5}{10}\text{)}$$

$$0.4690 \text{ (not } \frac{4690}{10,000}\text{)}$$

2. If the decimal does not have a whole number, insert a zero before the decimal point:

$$0.578 \text{ (not } .578\text{)}$$

$$0.2 \text{ (not } .2\text{)}$$

NOTE: This rule has a few exceptions, including:

Colt .45

A batting average of .345

A probability of $p = .07$

Decimals

1. Use figures for all decimals and do not write the equivalent fractions.
2. If the decimal does not have a whole number, insert a zero before the decimal point.
3. Retain the zero after the decimal point or at the end of the decimal number only if the zero represents exact measurement (or a significant digit).
4. Use spaces but not commas to separate groups of three digits in the decimal fraction.
5. In columns, line up the decimal points.
6. Do not begin a sentence with a decimal number.

3. Retain the zero after the decimal point or at the end of the decimal number only if the zero represents exact measurement (or a significant digit):

$$0.45 \text{ or } 0.450$$

$$28.303 \text{ or } 28.3030$$

NOTE: Also retain the final zero in a decimal if the zero results from the rounding of the decimal:

$$23.180 \text{ for } 23.1789 \text{ (if the decimal number is supposed to be rounded to three digits in the decimal fraction)}$$

4. Use spaces but not commas to separate groups of three digits in the decimal fraction.

In the metric system, the decimals may be broken into groups of three digits by inserting spaces:

$$56.321\ 677\ 90$$

$$707.004\ 766\ 321$$

$$\text{but } 567.4572 \text{ (not } 567.457\ 2\text{)}$$

You can use commas to separate groups of three digits that appear in the whole number part of the decimal:

$$56,894.65$$

$$500,067.453\ 467$$

However, do not use commas to separate groups of three digits in the decimal fraction:

$$4.672\ 34 \text{ (not } 4.672,34\text{)}$$

$$2344.000\ 567 \text{ (not } 2344.000,567\text{)}$$

See METRIC SYSTEM.

5. In columns, line up the decimal points:

$$\begin{array}{r} 56 \\ 0.004 \\ 115.9 \\ 56.24445 \\ 0.6 \end{array}$$

NOTE: Whole numbers without decimals (e.g., 56 above) do not require a decimal point.

6. Do not begin a sentence with a decimal number:

this

The timer interrupts the processor 14.73 times a second.

not this

14.73 times a second, the timer interrupts the processor.

See NUMBERS.

Editing and Proofreading

Anyone who works with documents must have a system for indicating changes to text. Much editing and proofreading is now done on a computer screen, and your software program has those capabilities. But because screen resolution is typically one third or so less than print, it's wise to proofread printed text to catch errors difficult to see on a screen. The following rules apply mostly to proofreading hard copies of documents. You will also find suggestions for proofreading onscreen.

Standard editing and proofreading symbols (listed in most dictionaries) are more numerous and complex than most of us need unless we are copy editors, typesetters, or printers.











A simplified set of editing and proofreading symbols listed in rule 1 addresses the needs of most business and technical writers who must communicate suggestions and editorial corrections to others. If you need the complete set of proofreading symbols, see the most recent editions of *The Chicago Manual of Style* or the *United States Government Printing Office Style Manual*.

The example under rule 1 illustrates the simplified method of editing and proofreading printed text. This example also follows the rules cited below.

Editing and Proofreading

1. Use consistent proofreading symbols to indicate changes or corrections to text.
2. Use marginal marks to indicate corrections made within lines.
3. Use different colors of ink for different proofreadings (either by the same person or several people).
4. Keep a list of editorial or proofreading decisions so you can be consistent and so you can summarize for the writer the changes you routinely make.
5. Follow effective proofreading strategies.

1. Use consistent proofreading symbols to indicate changes or corrections to text:

-  Delete or take out.
-  Insert a phrase, word, or punctuation mark.
-  Transpose letters, words, or phrases.
-  Move to the right.
-  Move to the left.
-  Use capital letter(s).
-  Use lower case letter(s).
-  Close up a space.
-  Add a space.
-  Make a new paragraph.

NOTE 1: Professional proofreaders sometimes use a different symbol in the margin than they use in the text. For instance, the # sign in the margin indicates that a space should be added. In text, a slash mark indicates where the space should be added:

~~#~~ The incorrect proposal

NOTE 2: Some reviewers also use the symbol *sp* in the margin to indicate a spelling error.

Original

Writers and secretaries of word processing specialists have to agree on what to use when editing and proofreading draft materials. Without such an agreement, and a consistent convention, errors creep in and quality writing is impossible. ✓
✓
✓
✓

Corrected

Writers and secretaries or word processing specialists have to agree on what symbols to use when editing and proofreading draft materials.

Without such an agreement, errors creep in and quality writing is impossible.

Editing and Proofreading

2. Use marginal marks to indicate corrections made within lines.

Changes to a text are sometimes difficult to see, particularly those changes made in pencil or black ink, which readers may have trouble distinguishing from surrounding print. To highlight changes or corrections, you should use a red or green pencil or pen for changes. Even the change in color is sometimes difficult to see, however, particularly for color-blind reviewers.

So indicate changes by marking the change within the text but also inserting a check mark to show that a change appears in the text beside the mark.

Be consistent in using these standard proofreading symbols.

3. Use different colors of ink for different proofreadings (either by the same person or several people).

Printed text going through multiple revisions can become difficult to decipher if readers can't distinguish between versions. A very good system is to change the color of the reviewer's or proofreader's pencil or pen (as in the example below).

The first reviewer might indicate changes in blue ink, the second in red, the third in green, and so on. The color of the suggestion thus indicates when and by whom the suggestion was made. This system is particularly effective during peer or group review.

4. Keep a list of editorial or proofreading decisions so you can be consistent and so you can summarize for the writer the changes you routinely make.

The list of editorial or proofreading decisions is sometimes called an editorial style sheet. Writers themselves sometimes develop it, or they wait for an editor or a proofreader to develop one. The earlier it can be developed, the better. Your software program can be set to follow your rules so you don't have to track these decisions.

Items on this list would include all decisions about punctuation, capitalization, spelling, or word usage. To illustrate, a proofreader working with the preceding example could make these sorts of decisions:

Grayson plant (*not* Grayson Plant)

MOGO (*not* Mogo)

An Example of Multiple Proofreadings

✓✓ The Grayson plant operated by Mogo recovers almost all of the propane, butane and
✓✓ gasoline, but no ethane and the residue gas is sold to TPS (TransState Pipeline Co.)
✓ processes the ~~the~~ residue stream and recovers most of the ethane and remaining
✓ NGLs. ~~TPS~~ purchases the gas at the Grayson plant outlet and then transmits it some
✓✓ 6 miles to its processing plant near Abilene, Texas. Once there, the residue stream is
✓✓ processed within some thirty-six hours and the resulting products are sold both to
✓ other companies, although TPS does ship some of the products to its chemical nearby
✓✓✓ subsidiary. The TPS operation clearly complements the Mogo operation at Grayson, so
✓✓ we should consider bidding on the TPS facilities (if of course the price is reasonable.)
✓✓ Actually we've heard rumors that TPS is interested in selling.

Comma in a series precedes and:
propane, butane, and gasoline

TransState Pipeline Co. (*not* Company)

TPS (TransState Pipeline Co.) *rather than*
TransState Pipeline Co. (TPS)

When proofreading on a computer screen, use the feature that records and tracks changes so others can see your suggestions. You can find this feature in the review or revision menu of your software program. Once activated, the computer marks changes you make in the document. You can also indicate which changes you want marked. For example, you can order the computer to underline insertions, strike through deletions, or bold changes in format. You can also identify which reviser is making these changes.

NOTE: As the above examples suggest, some language decisions about a document are not clearly right or wrong. Instead, an editor or proofreader has to pick the preferred form and then stay with that choice throughout the document. See **STYLE** and **PUNCTUATION**.

5. Follow effective proofreading strategies.

To ensure the effectiveness of your document and to protect your image and your organization's, you should proofread every important document—even emails if they have significant implications. Documents differ in importance, however, and require different proofreading strategies. See **WRITING AND REVISING**.

When hurried or faced with a low-priority document, read through the document once, paying special attention to important points such as headings, topic sentences of paragraphs, visuals, and captions.

For more important documents, consider some of these proofreading strategies:

- **Check format.** Does the document look good—with uniform spacing, heading styles, and lists? Are emphasis techniques (boldface, italics, etc.) consistently applied?
- **Check content.** Is the information correct? For example, if the invitation says the meeting is on Monday, June 15, will the meeting actually take place then? And does June 15 really fall on a Monday? Are figures such as monetary amounts or percentages correct? Do you find facts contradicted from one page to another?
- **Check for errors.** Double-check spelling of names. Question every capitalization, punctuation, and word division. Note that typographical errors often occur in groups. Question every number and add up figures to make sure sums are accurate.

When proofreading onscreen:

- **Magnify the text** so you can spot problems that would otherwise go unnoticed. Enlarge the text to 150 percent or whatever suits you.
- **Correct errors** flagged by spell check and grammar check. Do not rely on these features to find every error. Although a spell check will flag spellings it does not recognize, you must often decide if words are spelled correctly for the context (for example, *their* vs. *there*). Even advanced grammar checking software can be wrong. If it flags a sentence as a fragment, for example, refer to this *Style Guide* for help in deciding if the sentence truly is a fragment or not.
- **Turn on hidden formatting symbols** such as paragraph and space marks so you can see if the spacing between lines and words is proper.

For particularly important documents, consider these strategies:

- **Read backwards** so the content does not distract you from watching for errors.
- **Read aloud** so you slow your reading speed and are more alert to flaws in grammar and sense.
- **Read in groups.** For long, complex documents, some readers can mark changes on the text or look up words or facts while another reads aloud. In this way, you get more than one viewpoint and speed up the work.

Electronic Mail

Electronic mail (email or e-mail) is the exchange of digital messages through a network server.

A boon to business, email has made communication inexpensive, virtually instantaneous, and—most important—far less time consuming than regular mail or even the telephone. It permits immediate communication but also allows people to respond to messages at a convenient time instead of having to be present. Email reduces paperwork and enables more efficient, more rapid decision making.

Still, email can be a hindrance to business as well. Documentation becomes weak and incomplete because email is a shorthand form of communication. You might have trouble explaining or defending a decision if the record of it is a long chain of fragmentary emails. Because writers give much less thought to emails than to, say, traditional letters, messages can mislead recipients. The tone of an email can give the wrong impression.

But the main problem with email is the sheer quantity of it. Hundreds of billions of email messages are sent each day. Adding to the problem are instant messaging, texting, and streaming social-networking services such as Twitter. These services enable people to hold billions of conversations every day via text and images in real time anywhere they may be. Managing this tidal wave of information is a major productivity challenge for many people. For guidance, see *MANAGING INFORMATION*.

Despite these problems, email is essential to the high-tech business world. The following rules will help you write effective e-messages for these various media and avoid the pitfalls.

Electronic Mail

Using Email Effectively

1. Choose email when you want to communicate information rapidly and when the information is better conveyed digitally than by phone or hard (printed) copy.
2. Write an informative subject line
3. Preview key content up front and limit your document to one screen (page) if possible.
4. Use business-appropriate tone of voice in an email.
5. Review and revise (as necessary) your email before sending it to readers.
6. Signal clearly the end of your message.
7. Control the distribution of your email.

Using Social Media Effectively

8. Contribute value to the ongoing conversation of social media.
9. Follow high ethical standards in online conversations.

Using Voice Mail Effectively

10. Be sure to identify yourself and give your listener the date, time, and your phone number.
11. Think before you speak.
12. Speak clearly and repeat important information.

Using Email Effectively

1. Choose email when you want to communicate information rapidly and when the information is better conveyed digitally than by phone or hard (printed) copy.

Email is especially efficient when the persons you want to contact are unavailable. Email allows you to send the message so that it will be available when the recipients log in.

Electronic mail is also valuable when the data or information would be inconvenient to deliver in other ways. For instance, a long list of names, addresses, and phone numbers are time-consuming to dictate over the phone. Hard copy is,

of course, an option, but hard copy might take several days to arrive if it has to go by outside mail or even through an internal mail system. A fax is another option, but it often requires the sender and receiver to go to fax stations somewhere else in their buildings.

Use the phone when you want to get immediate feedback or response to your message. For instance, if your message requires extra tact and the personal touch, use the phone. Email can seem cold and dismissive, for example, when the writer has to send unpleasant or negative messages.

Print and send hard copies when you want the recipient to have a record of your message. Email is not always

delivered, and even an archived email can disappear for many reasons; so you will want to forward and retain hard copies of certain documents. For example, you might want to summarize a meeting where important departmental decisions were made. A second example would be personnel decisions, which potentially become part of an employee's personnel file.

2. Write an informative subject line.

Enter your entire message in the subject line, if possible, so readers do not have to open your email. They will appreciate the convenience, and you will be more likely to get the result you want. One good practice is to type in EOM for "end of message," signaling that there's no need to open the email.

For longer emails, make sure your subject line will stand out from a long list of subject lines that appear on the reader's screen. Hundreds of entries can confront a reader who calls up a list of emails. If your subject line doesn't catch a reader's attention, your file might never be opened!

Write subject lines that get your message across in a few words. See "Subject Line" in LETTERS.

this

- Agenda for scoping meeting 10 p.m. Nov. 9
- Review cost overruns of 20% on A-345 Prototype
- Please sign divisional budget by July 5 EOM

not this

- Scoping meeting
- Cost overruns
- Divisional budget

See HEADINGS.

3. Preview key content up front and limit your document to one screen (page) if possible.

If your message is long, list your conclusion and main points first so readers will know what is coming. Email readers do not like being forced to scroll through several screens to get to the point.

If possible, limit your document to one screen (page).

Whenever possible, design this one screen using emphasis techniques such as lists, headings, and single-sentence paragraphs. See EMPHASIS.

this

We propose increasing the division's supplemental budget for July by \$15,000 to account for cost overruns on the XYZ project. Here's why:

1. Labor rates are going up from January through July.
2. Several additional fact-finding trips will be needed during July.
3. Managers are now very interested in XYZ.

not this

As you know, during the recent managerial coordination meeting (January 15), the subject of XYZ came up. Concerns expressed included the timing of the project, especially work during July. Also, the engineering representatives indicated that several extra trips might be necessary during July ...

See ORGANIZATION.

For longer documents, consider writing a separate executive summary for the first page (screen) and then include other data as necessary. In many cases, the executive summary might be sufficient by itself, with the background or supporting data merely referenced or transmitted in hard copy to follow up the electronic version. See SUMMARIES.

4. Use business-appropriate tone of voice in an email.

Email invites informal language—unguarded, casual, and personal in tone. At the same time, you need to make sure that a too familiar or offhand tone of voice doesn't offend readers. You should adopt a conversational, businesslike tone. See TONE.

Depending on your familiarity with the reader, you can vary your tone. Don't be flippant, terse, or abrupt with someone you don't know well and whose business you need.

this

Thank you for the opportunity of submitting our ideas for your new artwork.

not this

Here's the artwork you wanted.

Avoid using breezy abbreviations like "plz 4ward yr specs 4 new artwork." Emailing a client is not the same as texting a close friend.

Avoid fancy fonts, patterned backgrounds, or gimmicky animations unless your branding requires them.

5. Review and revise (as necessary) your email before sending it to readers.

The immediacy of email is both its strength and its weakness. An important message will profit from review, both for errors and undesirable or misleading content. See WORD PROCESSING.

Depending on your potential readers, take time to clean up your email. A few minor errors will

Electronic Mail

detract from the message; a glaring error or many errors will damage your credibility and the impact of your message.

Fix flagged misspellings, but remember that a spell check will often not identify wrong words (for example, *there* instead of *their*).

With all business documents—especially those written under time pressure or in anger—a cooling period has always been desirable. Consider allowing a cooling period before you send certain emails to recipients. Give yourself a few minutes (or longer) to reconsider a sensitive message. Often you will change the message, and sometimes you may even decide not to send it.

6. Signal clearly the end of your message.

Give your documents a quick, complimentary close—*Sincerely*, *Thanks*, *See you Thursday*, etc.

End a long email with a brief summary or review of the content. You might restate a request or a deadline, or you might even list again the reasons for your request.

If the end of the message is not obvious, signal it with *EOM* (end of message).

Automate your signature line, and include all the contact information a recipient needs to get in touch with you.

7. Control the distribution of your email.

Keep in mind that your email might be forwarded to others, so your audience is potentially larger than you think. Even messages marked private are easy to transfer to others and can spread around the world in seconds. If the email contains

information you would not want others besides your addressee to read, don't send it. Use a more private medium.

Don't copy recipients unless they need to know the content of your email. People will learn to ignore your emails if they repeatedly get marginally relevant messages from you.

Don't ask for "return receipt" (RR) unless you specifically need to know if the recipient received the message. Replying can be inconvenient and even intrusive to recipients.

When sending an email to a large group of recipients, say, your entire contact list, do not include them all in the "To:" field. Rather, address the email to yourself and then insert the large list in the "Bcc:" field (blind courtesy copy). There are several reasons for this:

- Some recipients will reply to everyone on that lengthy list with their opinions, quips, or anecdotes, thus wasting people's time.
- Some recipients must abide by company policies about personal use of email. Receiving inappropriate email can be contrary to those policies.
- Recipients concerned about the volume of spam messages and the danger of viruses do not want their email addresses exposed to the world.

When replying to an email, take care to send your reply to the proper audience. Is it only for the sender or for the entire group of addressees?

See *LETTERS* and *MEMOS*.

Using Social Media Effectively

Electronic media such as blogs, podcasts, and networking sites

are now a primary means of communication and marketing. Unlike email, social media are usually open to any subscribers who want to participate. Many businesses and government agencies now sponsor online communities for the use of their clients and the interested public.

Unlike the old industrial media that communicated only one way, social media are ongoing conversations among organizations and their clients and communities. Websites, blogs, and community sites can be wonderful tools for promoting an organization.

Thus, business and technical professionals have a serious stake in the use of social media. Like other media, they can be used effectively or ineffectively—and can even become destructive.

Social media can severely hinder an organization's success. People typically spend from half an hour to three hours during the workday accessing social media, wasting a tremendous amount of time and bandwidth. Also, frivolous, defamatory, or obscene blog entries or e-messages can cause you and your organization real trouble. One well-known restaurant chain suffered a good deal of bad publicity when an employee posted on the Internet a video of himself shoving French fries up his nose.

The following rules will help you use social media effectively:

8. Contribute value to the ongoing conversation of social media.

Social media encourage informal, spontaneous writing with little thought or planning behind it. As a result, much online content is banal or valueless. If you write

online a blog entry or comment that represents your organization—as more and more people do—use the same thoughtful process you would follow for a more formal document (i.e., planning, revising, and so forth). See **WRITING AND REVISING**.

Consider carefully your purpose for writing. What is the job that needs to be done? Who will read this? What do you want readers to know, do, and feel? What kind of response do you want from them?

9. Follow high ethical standards in online conversations.

Social media invite anonymity. As a result, many people misuse the media to defame others or to spread falsehoods. Often inadvertently, people post misleading or confidential information.

Be honest, open, and respectful in online conversations. Correct inaccuracies as soon as possible. Know and strictly follow your organization's policies governing disclosure of confidential information about people, financials, trade secrets, strategic initiatives, and intellectual property.

If you have any doubts about the appropriateness of your writing, ask a trusted colleague to review it with you.

Avoid being negative in a public online space. Private conversations can be taken offline.

Using Voice Mail Effectively

The main benefits of voice mail are to avoid “telephone tag” and to get your message across quickly and efficiently.

10. Be sure to identify yourself and give your listener the date, time, and your phone number.

Don't assume that your listener will recognize your voice; also, not every system will automatically record the date, time, and your phone number. Give your phone number even if it's listed; this way the respondent won't have to look it up.

11. Think before you speak.

Take a minute before dialing to review mentally your main points and your intent in making the call—perhaps even jot a list of points to cover. Unless you do one or both of these things, you are likely to ramble and to confuse your listener. Rambling is a problem if you are limited in the time you have to record your message.

12. Speak clearly and repeat important information.

Misunderstandings are inevitable, so work to reduce them in your recorded messages. Speak clearly and slightly slower than you would normally. As necessary, spell out difficult words—for example, people's names or the names of places, because names often have unusual spellings. Technical terms and associated numbers are also easy for a listener to confuse.

Repetition of meeting times, deadlines, and other important details is a courtesy. You might, for example, conclude by repeating your key request or recommendation, including any associated date or meeting time. See **REPETITION**.

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Index

Using the Index

Indexes are often more annoying than useful. They omit key cross-references, or they refer readers to pages where the indexed word or phrase is missing. To address these problems, we have provided detailed cross-references. We have also tried to eliminate inaccurate or “ghost” references.

We used the following conventions as we compiled the index. Please take a moment to familiarize yourself with these conventions:

- Main entries from the Reference Glossary are printed in a large capital and small capitals. For example, ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS, and ACTIVE/PASSIVE.
- Following the title of a main entry, the page number(s) in boldface refer to the main alphabetically arranged entries, as in this example: ADJECTIVES, **12–14**.
- Cross-references with only *See* and a page number indicate that what you are looking up appears under the *See* reference.
- Cross-references with *See also* and a page number indicate that you will find extra information on the pages listed, but that this information is not the main discussion. For example, under ADVERBS appears this reference: *See also* ADJECTIVES. Thus, you will find that the entry for ADJECTIVES discusses adverbs on p. 12, even though the main discussion of adverbs appears on p. 15.
- Model documents on pp. 358–420 are not indexed in detail. They are only listed once and then only by their title. These single references appear in boldface followed by a page number, as in this example: **Technical Report (model), 415–418**.

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