NYC OTI

Office of Technology & Innovation

NYC.gov

Web Content Development

Guidelines

For Agency/Initiative Sites

Office of Technology & Innovation

September 27, 2022

Introduction

This guide, created by the NYC.gov team (referred to as "us/we" throughout this document), was designed to help you develop content for your new agency or initiative website. The NYC.gov team is

- part of the Office of Technology and Innovation (OTI),
- maintains content on NYC.gov,
- trains and advises agencies on web content development and best practices, and
- leads agencies through the website design/redesign process.

Contact your internal web manager with questions or email us directly at webmail@oti.nyc.gov.

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Your Goal: Produce Clean and Final, "Production-Ready" Content

To ensure the efficient creation of your new site, you'll need to swiftly produce clean and **final**, "production-ready" web content. You and/or your team should work through these guidelines to produce one Word document of accessible content for each page listed in your final site map.

Once you are ready to package and submit your content to us (or to your internal web developers) for production, review all of your content to ensure it meets the following:

- ☐ Your content conforms to the guidelines, the Citywide Linking Policy, and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 AA.
- ☐ You've accepted all tracked edits, and no "markup" remains in the documents.
- ☐ You have resolved all developmental issues with the content, and what you submit is indeed "final."
- ☐ You've tested the reading level of your content and have revised it to fit the level of your audience.
- ☐ You've deleted all comments related to resolved content issues; only comments, if any, for the production team remain.
- ☐ You have obtained all appropriate internal approvals, including any legal approvals, prior to submitting your final content to production.
- ☐ All photos and supplemental documents adhere to the specifications provided.

Web Content Development Process

Follow these high-level steps in the web content development process:

1. **Determine Content Development Strategy**—Decide if one person, a centralized team, or a distributed team of subject matter experts will produce your web content. If you decide on a distributed team, one or two final approvers should still review all of the content to ensure that tone, voice, and style are consistent.

2. **Identify Resources**—Identify the individuals who will develop the content, and ensure they have the commitment and time to produce it as swiftly as possible.

3. **Learn These Guidelines**—Receive and distribute these guidelines to the content producers.

4. **Attend a Training**—Review these guidelines and learn about accessibility requirements in person.

5. **Submit Draft Content**—Produce three pages of draft content and submit to us for feedback.

6. **Produce Clean and Final, "Production-Ready" Content**—Review the feedback, revise the initial documents, and produce the rest of the content in line with the guidelines, as swiftly as possible.

7. **Package and Submit Content**—Gather the content documents, plus all supplemental docs and photos, and review everything to ensure that it meets the guidelines. Then, package the clean and final, "production-ready" content and submit it to us if we will be pouring the content into your website shell. Submit it to your agency's web producers, if they will.

Brainstorm Your Content

Before you begin writing your web content, take time to brainstorm. Analyze your current site. Identify what works and what doesn't. Do a full audit of it to ensure that you're including all necessary topics in your new site, and that nothing important is missed. Analyze your web statistics, site feedback, and 311 online/call stats. Then, take time to answer the following questions. Doing so will help ensure that your content meets your users' needs.

1. What is your agency's mission/key areas of focus?
2. Who is your audience—general public, business community, City employees, other governmental offices, etc.? Prioritize.
3. Which services does your agency/initiative provide?
   a. Who consumes those services and how?
4. Which services are most popular?
5. Who uses your current site? Who will use your new site?
6. Which pages on your current site are the most popular?
7. What files on your current site are most frequently downloaded?
   a. Which content from your current site can be repurposed and streamlined?
   b. Is there content on your current site that is inaccessible—infographics, videos?
8. What do you wish to achieve with your new site?
9. What is the most important info the new site must provide?
10. What info will your users be seeking via the site—services, processes, policies, deadlines, answers to frequently asked questions (FAQ), contact info, news, programs, payment, restrictions, etc.?
11. What will users need to do via your new site?
12. What info do you currently offer or plan to offer (online forms, publications, etc.)? How will users need to consume that info—read, print, fax, and/or mail? Provide clear instructions.

13. Should the content provided be—strictly informational, transactional, searchable, process related, have a call to action?

Creating a Folder Structure in Which to Gather Your Content

Consider storing the web content that your team will be working with on a shared drive, which is **backed up regularly**(!). Then, rather than sending documents as attachments, you can share the path to the documents that you would like your team to review. This should minimize having multiple versions of files floating around through your email system. It should also make it easier for liaisons and your central web project manager to access the shared documents, photos, etc.

☐ Set up folders for each Top Level Global Nav (Level 1) item listed in the site map template.

☐ Set up sub-folders within each Top Level Global Nav (Level 1) folder for each Horizontal Sub Nav (Level 2) item.

☐ Set up sub-folders within each Horizontal Sub Nav (Level 2) folder for each Left Nav (Level 3) item that has many Inside Page (Level 4) items; otherwise, Level 3 folders may not be needed.

☐ Save each Word document of content within its corresponding section folder.

☐ Create one "Assets" folder for photos and other (non-Word) assets (i.e., PDFs, PPTs, Excel spreadsheets, etc.) and within that folder, create sub-folders for the different file types (i.e., images, PDFs, PPT, etc.) to keep everything organized.

Creating Your First Draft Content Documents

Your goal is to end up with one Word document per html page specified in the site map template. While you are brainstorming your first draft, it may be helpful to have all pages for a given section within one Word document.

> **IMPORTANT:** If you are repurposing content from your current website, you must paste that content into a text editor like Notepad or Crimson Editor, and then copy it from there into Word. This will remove any background code that will be problematic once it's pasted into a web page.
>
> When building your website, the developer should also run the content from Word through a text editor to remove any background code that Word generated before pasting the content into the web page template.

Set up your initial draft:

- ☐ Create one Word document per Top Level Global Nav (Level 1) item shown in the site map template.
- ☐ Name it (filename) with the Top Level Global Nav (Level 1) item it represents.
- ☐ Title the first page with the name of the Top Level Global Nav (Level 1) item it represents and assign it with a "Heading 1" style. (This will help you see where different "web" pages begin in the Word doc.)
- ☐ Set the "Normal" style font size to 16 pt. (This will help you see how much content there will be per web page, and will give you a feel for how much will appear onscreen.)
- ☐ Start each Horizontal Sub Nav (Level 2) and Left Nav (Level 3) on a new page in the Word document and assign it with slightly smaller

heading sizes, so that you can see which sections fall under each main sections.

- ☐ Shift content as you are brainstorming to different "web pages" within that document to organize and prioritize it.

- ☐ Once you have fleshed out the content for each section, extract the separate "web pages" into individual Word documents.

Set Up Individual Word Documents

After your content has started to come together in the one main Word doc, you'll need to extract it into individual Word docs to correspond with each page in the final site map.

- ☐ Create one Word doc page listed in the site map.
- ☐ Name the file with the same name that appears in the site map.
- ☐ Save each document within its corresponding section folder.
- ☐ Include a page title at the top of the Word document set as "Heading 1" that matches the html page title listed in the site map. Note: Heading 1 can be used only once per page.
- ☐ Use heading styles in your content. Headings improve accessibility; screen readers recognize them and help orient users on a web page. Set the Word document "Styles" to the following (select one of the font face options) and apply them to headings throughout your content:
  - o Heading 1 = Helvetica Neue > Helvetica > Arial, 22 pt. font.
  - o Heading 2 = Helvetica Neue > Helvetica > Arial, 20 pt. font.
  - o Heading 3 = Helvetica Neue > Helvetica > Arial, 16 pt. font.
  - o Normal = Helvetica Neue > Helvetica > Arial, 14 pt. font. (This is approximately the size/style of the basic body content font on the site.)
- ☐ Setting styles to these options will give you a visual idea of the volume of content on a given web page. The person building your site will set these headings in the web page as well.
- ☐ Establish a "versioning" system if you wish to retain versions of your documents. For example, the initial version of a document may be "filename_v0.1.doc" and the next subsequent version may be "filename_v0.2.doc," etc.
- ☐ Turn on "Track Changes" if you wish to track your changes as you review documents internally.

Best Practices When Writing Content

The mantra of NYC.gov, and therefore agency sites, is for it to be **fast, direct, and helpful**. Users "scan" web pages, so follow these best practices when writing your content to ensure users can quickly easily find what they need:

- ☐ Know your audience and write to it.
- ☐ Start with the high-level picture (conclusion) first, then get more detailed.
- ☐ Be brief and use plain language.
- ☐ Make the info easy to access in **three clicks or less** from the home page. (Another mantra!)
- ☐ Aim for 1.5 screens of content per web page (minimizes scrolling).
- ☐ Place original content only in one place, and link to it from other places, as needed.
- ☐ Write content using
  - ○ the second person ("you") point of view with an active voice,
  - ○ a consistent tone (aim for respectful, helpful, informative),
  - ○ to a 7th grade reading level (test and retest this!) and use
  - ○ consistent style across all pages. (Create an agency specific style sheet (i.e., a one-pager) on which you list various elements (e.g., phone numbers, addresses, etc.) and the style for each, and distribute it to all content writers.)
- ☐ Avoid prohibited content. Official City website content **must not**
  - ○ support or oppose candidates for office, political campaigns, political parties, referenda, or bills pending before legislation unless the bill has been introduced, submitted, or formally supported or opposed by the City;
  - ○ depict or describe violence, nudity, or sexual activities in a way that would violate NYS Penal Law;

- include any hate speech or promote discrimination based on religion, race, gender, national origin, or sexual orientation;
- aid or incite crimes;
- be perceivable as an endorsement or advertisement for a commercial entity or product;
- contain primary content that does not advance a City purpose.
- Avoid acronyms, legalese, and "sales/marketing speak."
- Sprinkle relevant keywords in each page to assist with search-ability.
- Do not list NYC.gov email addresses on your site; have us set up a form instead.
- Proofread all content (e.g., regular, link text, alt text, captions, etc.) for grammar, spelling, usage, etc.
- Follow the hyperlink guidelines contained herein.
- Format content so it is easy to scan by using:
  - Clear, concise bolded headings and sub-headings
  - Short paragraphs
  - Strong subjects and verbs at the beginning of short sentences
  - Underlining only for links (refer to the Hyperlinks section below)
  - Numbered steps in processes
  - Bold text, only sparingly;
  - Alt text for photos, and captions when available
  - Bulleted lists
    - Make all bullets agree.
    - Don't create lists more than three levels deep.
    - Use a period at the end of a bulleted item only when it is a full sentence.
  - Only one space between sentences
  - Consistent spacing throughout the content and minimize extra blank lines, which can bloat content.
- Avoid
  - ALL CAPS and italics, which are hard to read

- o Multi-column tables. From an accessibility standpoint, tables should only be used for data, not regular page content.
- o Special coloring/formatting

Hyperlinks

When scanning a web page, a user's eye will be drawn to hyperlinks. Follow these guidelines to help users quickly scan your content and find what they need.

IMPORTANT: Ensure that all links adhere to the Citywide Linking Policy, and all external links point only to trusted third-party sites.

Examples

The following are examples of good and bad links:

Good:

- Download the December 2016 agenda (link to abc_agenda_20161215.pdf)
- Visit ACCESS NYC (link to https://a069-access.nyc.gov/ACCESSNYC/application.do)

Bad:

- Click here (activated link)
- Download the Commissioner's Monthly Meeting Agenda for December 2016 (link to ABC&DEF Agenda for the Commissioner's Monthly Meeting December 2016.PDF)
- Visit ACCESS NYC at https://a069-access.nyc.gov/ACCESSNYC/application.do

General guidelines:

- Use short, descriptive link text, which starts with an action verb.
- DO NOT list the full URL of the link within the content; the full URL should be hidden behind short link text.

- ☐ DO NOT use "click here." Doing so does not conform to accessibility standards. The link text should explain what will happen when the user clicks the link.
- ☐ <u>Underline link text</u> in your content docs; don't activate the links in your content documents.
- ☐ Insert where the link is to point in parentheses following the underlined link text and highlight it yellow (refer to the examples above)
- ☐ Use consistent capitalization (i.e., title case or initial caps) across links on your site when they fall outside of paragraphs.
- ☐ Include links to any websites listed in your content (e.g., <u>Visit the Department of Health website</u>)
- ☐ DO NOT include links to your old site. Files or pages on your old site must be brought into the work environment of your new site.

Prohibited hyperlinks:

Official City websites **must not link to:**

- ☐ Any content that supports or opposes candidates for office, political campaigns, political parties, referenda, or bills pending before legislatures unless the bill has been introduced, submitted, or formally supported or opposed by the City;
- ☐ Any content that depicts or describes violence, nudity, or sexual activities in a way that would violate the NYS Penal Law;
- ☐ Any content that includes hate speech or promotes discrimination based on religion, race, gender, national origin, or sexual orientation;
- ☐ Any content that aids or incites crime;
- ☐ Any content that would be perceived as an endorsement or advertisement for a commercial entity or product;
- ☐ Any site whose primary content does not advance a City purpose.

Placing hyperlinks:

- ☐ DO NOT link headings and sub headings.
- ☐ Insert links after paragraphs rather than within, as often as possible.
- ☐ Include the link to an "Inside Page" (e.g., Level 4 pages) within the content of the "Left Nav Page" (e.g., Level 3 pages) above it, etc.

Linking to supplemental docs:

- ☐ Mark all non-html (e.g., PPT, Excel, etc.) files that launch other programs with "(in Word)," "(in Excel)," "(in PPT)," etc., accordingly (e.g., Download the data file (in Excel)). You do not need to mark PDFs; modern browsers open them.)
- ☐ **IMPORTANT:** Ensure filenames of supplement documents:
  - o do not include spaces or special characters,
  - o are as short as possible and yet descriptive, and
  - o are all lowercase.

When setting up frequently asked questions (FAQ):

Include anchor links at the top of long pages, include a "back to top" link after each answer, and number the anchor links on a long FAQ page.

When creating links in TeamSite:

- ☐ **Browse** to set up links to ensure that the links will be relative links. This will ensure that you are not linking to TeamSite or to your test site in content staging.

- ☐ **Do not** set links to open in new windows. Doing so creates a poor user experience. If a link must open in a new window, you must discuss it with us and include "(opens in a new window)" beside the linked text.

NOTE: The NYC.gov exit script, a disclaimer, which tells users they are leaving NYC.gov, will automatically appear when a user clicks an external link. You no longer need to add it to the external link in TeamSite.

Graphics, Infographics, & Photos

You can include graphics (e.g., photos, logos, icons, info graphics, etc.) in various places throughout your site—in the home page hero, in programs, on individual pages, in photo galleries, etc. Your graphics MUST comply with the following:

- **Quality**—Original size (but MUST meet minimums shown below!); high quality, highest resolution available
- **Content**—Important text MUST appear as text on the web page, even if it also appears in the graphic. In general, avoid repurposing print graphics for the web, when possible; print graphics may contain small text, which will be illegible on the web.
- **Orientation**—Horizontal, with backgrounds that are not busy
- **File Type**—JPG or PNG
- **Filenames**—Short, clear, and descriptive. Filenames should be all lowercase, with no spaces or special characters. Do not name images with only numbers.
- **ALT Text**—**Required**; ALWAYS provided short, descriptive alt text that explain the content and function of the graphic. Alt text appears when an image is hovered over. **Alt text is required for accessibility** and read by screen readers used by blind individuals or those with low vision. In the alt text, include who is in the picture, where is it, and what are they doing. For infographics, include the text that appears in the infographic in the alt tag, if there is only a line or two of text. If the infographic contains many lines of text, then list that text in an <sr-only>, which will be read only by screen readers.
- **Captions**—Optional; short descriptive text, when needed/if available
- **Credits**—Optional; include photo credits if/when available/required

COPYRIGHT/USAGE PERMISSIONS: It is your responsibility to ensure you have proper copyright/usage permissions for the photos, images, graphics that you would like to use on your site.

Image Size Specifications by Location			
Location	**Width x Height (in pixels)**	**Resolution**	**Examples**
Hero: Image only	940 x 460	72 dpi	www.NYC.gov/ajc
Hero: Image plus left status bar only	820 x 460	72 dpi	
Hero – Image plus right side bar only	720 x 460	72 dpi	www.NYC.gov/nycha
Hero: Image plus left status bar and right side bar	600 x 460	72 dpi	www.NYC.gov
Programs	480 x 480	72 dpi	NYC.gov Programs Page
Custom	480 x variable height; all pics in module should be the same height	72 dpi	NYC Nonprofits – Refer to the "Related Links" module at the bottom of the home page

In-line and Photo Gallery Images	800 pixels wide max x variable height	72 dpi	☐ [Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities](#)

Preparing your content:

Compile your photos and submit them according to these guidelines:

- ☐ In the Word content document within the content where each photo should appear, insert the photo filename in parentheses like so: (insert photo abc.jpg here), and include the alt text (required), caption, and photo credit, if available/needed
- ☐ For photo galleries, insert the photo filenames, along with their supplemental info, in the Word doc in the order in which they should appear.

Sending graphics to us:

- ☐ as individual attachments, when sending a few
- ☐ within an attached zip file, when sending several and the ZIP file size is < 8 MB
- ☐ in a zipped file through a service like Dropbox, YouSendIt, etc., if the file is larger than 8 MB
- ☐ to a new sub folder in TeamSite, when sending a large quantity
- ☐ in a new sub-folder in the "Assets" folder of your TeamSite environment when there is a large volume of photos/images

Adding photos/images to web pages in TeamSite:

If you are building all or part of your new website or adding graphics to pages on your existing site, you **MUST** [follow these guidelines](#) to ensure proper placement and scalability.

Required Content

The following sections detail content that is required on your site.

- o **About Section**—Explains the purpose of the website and lists the agency, office, etc.

- o **Contact Page/Section/Forms**—Lists the various ways that users can contact your agency/office, including:

  - An [Email the Commissioner form](#) through which your users can submit feedback. Required for agency sites. In a Word document, list the Name and title of commissioner or executive director, the message types; message topics; and the email address(es) where feedback should go.

    And/or…

  - A [Generic Contact form](#) (in lieu of listing NYC.gov email addresses on your site, which risks them receiving spam).

    - o In a Word document, list the subject to appear on the list the fields needed on the form, mark which are required, and provide the email address where the feedback should be sent.

    - o Form feedback cannot be sent to a distribution list. It must be sent to an email address. To have a new email address set up, contact the Citywide Service Desk.

  IMPORTANT: Incoming feedback is routed and tracked through the Citywide customer response system to ensure timely follow-up in line with the Citywide Customer Service standard.

- o **Business Tab**—If your office/agency provides services to businesses and/or businesses will make up part of your website audience, then you must include a "Business" tab in the global (top-level) navigation

of your site. In this section, you must include easy access to business information. Check out these examples:

- [FDNY Business Section](#)
- [NYC Health Business Section](#)

- **Home Page Content**—Consider your home page as prime real estate. Brainstorm what your site users will be looking for when they arrive on your site, prioritize those items, and plug them into the various sections of your home page. Visit other agency home pages on NYC.gov to get ideas of what is possible. The hero is where you should feature your most current news at the time of launch.

- **Interagency Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)**—Local Law 40 of 2011 requires agencies to post certain memoranda of understanding and similar agreements entered into among governmental agencies. Check out these examples:

  - [NYC Administrative Justice Coordinator MOU Page](#)
  - [Department of Transportation Page](#)

- **Language Access Plan**—Executive Order 120 created a centralized language access policy for New York City by mandating that all City agencies that provide direct public services create a language access implementation plan in order to ensure meaningful language access to their services. We recommend that you include the Language Access Plan page within the About section. Check out these examples:

  - [Department of Housing Preservation and Development's (HPD) Plan](#)

  - [Department of Buildings' (DOB) Plan](#)

- **Logo**—Must comply with the [NYC.gov Logo Guidelines](#)
- **News/Press Releases**—Include your agency's current year releases on your site. If available, and if required, include prior year releases in

an archive section. Let us know if you're interested in using press release template on your site. Check it out on the New York City Fire Department website. You can use the press release template to upload the content to your site or send us the Word file for each release. **IMPORTANT:** DO NOT recreate mayoral press releases on your site; instead, find the individual mayoral release in the Office of the Mayor - News section and link to that URL.

Other Types of Content

Events

If you have events to publicize, we can handle those in a few ways. Depending on your needs, your events can appear:

1. in a calendar on your site, which feeds into the NYC.gov Citywide Events Calendar,
2. only in the NYC.gov Citywide Events Calendar, or
3. only on your site.

For options 1 or 2 above, we'll send you the events spreadsheet template in which you can log your events. Return the spreadsheet to us at webmail@oti.nyc.gov, and we'll upload it.

For option 3, list your events in Word document, and we'll create a simple list/table calendar on your site.

Format the images to go with your events as 480 x 480 pixel .jpg files. The images should be the highest quality, with no text in the lower quarter of the image.

Filters

If your web users will need to quickly look-up things, which are part of a larger set of programs, services, publications, reports, etc., on your site, ask us about creating a custom filter. Check out these examples:

- ACS Policy Library Search
- NYC Career Pathways Bridge Bank
- NYC Design Commission – Frank Cousins Collection

Send us your ideas for review and discussion. In a Word document, list the search criteria required and what should display in the search results, along

with the order in which things should appear. We'll sent you a spreadsheet in which you'll input the data. Return the content spreadsheet to us; we'll create the filter, upload the content, and test the filter before launch.

For complex filtering/search capabilities, you may need an application developed instead. Go to **Online Applications** for more detail.

Forms

If you're interested in having a form on your site, discuss your custom form needs with us, and follow the steps below. Forms can range from simple to moderate to complex.

- In the Word content document: list the subject that will appear on incoming emails; list all necessary fields and mark the required ones with an asterisk.
- Label all form elements; this is required for accessibility.
- Use title case for field headers and follow with a colon.
- Provide the name and email(s) of the person(s) who will receive submissions. The email address provided MUST be an actual email address and not a distribution list. If you need a new email set up to receive submissions, contact the Citywide Service Desk at (212) NYC-HELP (212-692-4357) or nychelp@oti.nyc.gov.
- Different topics can go to different emails (via drop-down menu).
- To prevent spam and ensure a real person is submitting the form, we include CAPTCHA on all forms that don't require attachments with submissions.

For complex forms and/or filtering/search capabilities, you may need an application developed instead. Go to **Online Applications** for more detail.

Online Applications

If the complexity of your form or filter reaches certain level or if it requires transactional or database functionality, it may require custom application development.

Visit the [Citywide Service Desk Portal](#) to learn about OTI's application development service. Submit the related online service request form to contact a OTI Agency Relations Manager (ARM) who will provide you with additional information.

Your agency may also have a team that develops apps. Check with your IT/MIS unit.

Although, we don't develop applications (app), we can provide an html "skin" with the look and feel of your new website to the app developers. They can "skin" or "re-skin" your applications for a seamless user experience between your website and your online application. Let us know if you are interested.

Programs & Initiatives

We can include your agency's programs and initiatives in the main [NYC.gov Programs repository](#), which will then make them available to add to your home page or to other agency sites via the standard programs module. If interested, log the following items for each into our programs spreadsheet, and send it, along with the photos attached, to us:

- Title (45 characters max., including spaces)
- Description (100 characters max., including spaces)
- Image (480 x 480 jpg, attach separately)
- Categories (Choose from Business; Civic Services, Culture & Recreation; Education; Environment; Health; and Housing and Development)

- Links to any related social media, if available
- URL

If your agency programs already appear within the repository, we'll pull a list and send you the spreadsheet to review. After we migrate your new site to production, you'll need to update the list with the new production URLs. We'll update your programs with the new URLs immediately after we launch your new site.

Throughout the year, send new program requests to us at webmail@oti.nyc.gov using the spreadsheet.

Style/Grammar/Punctuation

Once your content is near final and before you package it to send to us, review it to identify and fix any errors and inconsistencies. (For more detailed information about common misspellings and usage errors, and style inconsistencies, refer to Appendix A and Appendix B at the end of this document.) Check all of your content for the following:

- ☐ Proofread your content for correct grammar, punctuation, etc.
- ☐ Check punctuation in both regular content and bulleted lists.
- ☐ Proofread alt text and captions, and ensure they have consistent capitalization.
- ☐ Ensure the spacing within each document and across all the documents is consistent
- ☐ Confirm that processes have been outlined.
- ☐ Check to ensure usage is correct and the "style" of common terms is consistent with NYC.gov and agency-specific style. Examples include:
  - o Acronyms (Consistent, first instance (in parentheses) follows the full term)
  - o Addresses
  - o City (Capitalized in all instances, which refer to the governmental entity of the City of New York)
  - o Citywide (Capitalized in all instances that it refers to across New York City government)
  - o Common terms
  - o Link text capitalization
  - o Phone numbers (e.g., 212-555-1212 vs. 212.555.1212 vs. (212) 555-1212).
  - o Time (e.g., 9:00 am vs. 9:00PM, etc.)
  - o website – (Lowercase and consistently one word)
  - o web (lowercase)

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Packaging Your Content for Production

Before you send your content to us or your internal web producers, check these points to ensure that it is indeed clean and production ready:

- ☐ Your content conforms to the guidelines herein, the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, and the Citywide Linking Policy.
- ☐ You've accepted all tracked edits, and no "markup" remains in the documents.
- ☐ You have resolved all developmental issues with the content, and what you submit is indeed "final."
- ☐ You've tested the reading level of your content and have revised it to fit the level of your audience.
- ☐ You've deleted all comments related to resolved content issues; only comments, if any, for the production team remain.
- ☐ You have obtained all appropriate internal approvals, including any legal approvals, prior to submitting your final content to production.
- ☐ All photos and supplemental documents adhere to the specifications provided.

Sending your content to us:

Follow these guidelines when sending your final content to us:

- ☐ as individual attachments to an email, when sending a few
- ☐ within an attached zip file, when sending several and the ZIP file size is < 8 MB
- ☐ in a zipped file through a service like Dropbox, YouSendIt, etc., if the file is larger than 8 MB
- ☐ to a new sub folder in TeamSite, when sending a large quantity
- ☐ in a new sub-folder in the "Assets" folder of your TeamSite environment when there is a large volume of photos/images

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Resources

- [NYC.gov Logo Guidelines](#)
- [Creating Accessible Content Guidelines](#)
- [Citywide Linking Policy](#)
- [NYC.gov Style Brief July 2013](#)
- [Social Media Policy, Registration, etc.](#)
- [NYC Social Media Channels](#)
- [Citywide Technology Policies & Guidelines](#)
- [NYC Agency Process Website](#)
- [NYC.gov](#)
- [NYC Agencies](#)
- [Citywide Events Calendar](#)
- [NYC Programs & Initiatives](#)

Appendix A: Avoiding Common Misspellings & Usage Errors

Check your web content to ensure that you have not made the following common misspelling or usage errors.

accept/except *Accept* means to receive; *except* means to exclude and means "other than."

acknowledgment There is no "e" between the "g" and the "m" in this word.

affect/effect *Affect* is an action ("he affected change in the organization," or "the medication affected his ability to sleep"), while *effect* is a noun ("the effect of the music was amazing.") When *effect* is used as a verb, though, it means to achieve or bring about ("The Mayor effected the reduction in budget.")

afterward There is no "s" at the end of this word.

anxious/eager *Anxious* describes a feeling of nervousness (anxiety), while *eager* means excited anticipation.

bring/take If something is coming toward you, someone is bringing it closer. If it's moving away from you, it's being taken away. If you're speaking in terms of the destination, use *bring*, but if you're speaking of removing something from its origin, use *take* (for instance, an announcement for an office potluck might say, "bring your favorite dish." Before you leave the house, you would say to your roommate, "I'm taking that cake with me to the potluck.")

can/may *Can* refers to something that is possible, while *may* refers to something that is permitted.

e.g./i.e. *E.g.* is short for *exempli gratia*, which means "for example." *I.e.* is more specific, and stands for the Latin *id est*, or "that is." Use *e.g.* when

illustrating your point with an example; use *i.e.* to repeat what you've said in another way. Use periods after each letter, and follow the term used with a comma.

ensure/insure Both mean to make certain; *insure* specifically relates to guaranteeing property or people against risk.

if/whether Use *whether* when there's a choice between two things; if the choice is to do something or not to do it (whether or not), you can use *whether* or *if*.

irregardless Do not use this word; use *regardless* instead.

judgment There is no "e" between the "g" and the "m" in this word.

principal/principle Principal means first, or most important. Principle means law or basis.

than/then *Than* is used in a comparison of two things, while *then* indicates the result of one thing from another.

that/which Use *that* when the clause is required in the sentence, and *which*, preceded by a comma, when the clause can be removed ("The house that caught on fire was destroyed," and "My lunch, which is pasta, is in the kitchen.")

toward There is no "s" on the end of this word.

who/whom *Who* is a subject and does something, and *whom* is an object, or has something done to it ("Who is it?" or "To whom am I speaking?").

Appendix B: Ensuring Consistent Style

Style refers to selecting a style for common terms and using it consistently across your site. The City of New York references but does not strictly adhere to the *Chicago Manual of Style* and the *Associated Press Stylebook*. Certain parts of this section follow rules found in the *Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual* and *Woe is I, The Grammarphobe's Guide to Better English in Plain English*.

311 Proper use is "311" or "…dial 311." Do not use "3-1-1."

abbreviations Avoid using abbreviations without first spelling out the full term, unless you're certain the user knows what the abbreviation means (e.g., Dept., etc.). City government uses a wide variety of acronyms and abbreviations that may not be immediately clear to site visitors. See also **acronyms, titles**

acronyms Adhere to the following guidelines related to acronyms. See also **abbreviations**

- Spell out the full term in the first instance followed by the acronym in parentheses.

    Example: Welcome to the official agency site of the Office of Technology & Innovation (OTI).

- Do not include the abbreviation after the full name if the page only refers to the entity once.

- Do not use periods between letters in the abbreviation.

- Although it is acceptable to use acronyms after the first reference, it is preferable to use as few as possible to make the content more understandable to constituents.

- While NYC is acceptable, it is preferable to use New York City, the City of New York, the City, or the five boroughs.

- Public School, Middle School, or Intermediate School should be abbreviated as P.S., M.S. and I.S. with periods between the letters.

am and **pm** Use lowercase, without periods, and put a space between the number and the term (for instance, 10:00 pm).

addresses

- Use the abbreviations for Blvd. and St. only when listing a full mailing address (15 Malcolm X Blvd.); spell out and capitalize when part of a formal street name without a number (Malcolm X Boulevard); spell out and use lower case when referencing more than one street name or on its own (Malcolm X and West End boulevards).

- Decide whether your agency style will be to spell out the state or to abbreviate the state and use that style consistently across your site.

agency Capitalize, if referencing the full name of a specific agency. Indicate clearly when referencing a state, rather than a City, agency.

alphabetical order Numbers should go before letters. "The" as a first word is not included in the alphabetical organization (for instance, "The Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs" would fall in the M section of a list). "The" is considered when it occurs in the middle of a heading ("American Society for Colon Cancer" should be listed above "American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals").

borough Always use "borough," never "boro."

bold/boldface Avoid using bold/boldface within the text of your website.

- Using boldface can distract readers from surrounding text and confuses the value of headings.

- Using descriptive headers, bulleted lists, and short pieces of content in addition to an active written voice can help focus a reader's attention on important points.

capitalization See also **titles**

- Use title case for page and section headings.

- Capitalize "city" and "agency" when they refer to the City of New York and specific City agencies; when they are used in a general sense, use lowercase.

- Capitalize only the principal words in titles or headings when using title case.

- Capitalize both parts of a hyphenated word in title case ("The Non-Profit Sector Rebounds").

- Capitalize World Wide Web, Internet, and Wi-Fi.

- Capitalize specific neighborhoods, but not in common usage (Lower Manhattan, West Village, east side [noun], westside [adjective]).

- Capitalize "Administration" when referring to the current mayoral administration.

- Lowercase website and email (no hyphen).

- Lowercase all letters of URLs and email addresses embedded in text.

- Capitalize NYC when it appears in www.NYC.gov.

- Lowercase "the" in running text, even if it is part of an official title of something (They planned to visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art.)

- Other examples of what to capitalize or lowercase:

  - the City (when referring to the City of New York government)

  - City Hall

  - the East Coast; the eastern seaboard

  - election day

  - federal agency; the federal government

  - a master's degree

  - New Year's Eve; the New Year

  - the Office of the Mayor

  - PlaNYC

  - GreeNYC

City, city Capitalize "City" when referencing the governmental entity of the City of New York. When referencing a "city" in general or the geographical area, use lowercase.

Citywide, citywide Do not use a hyphen. Capitalize only when "City" refers to the "City" government. When "city" references the geographic entity, use lowercase.

Citywide Service Desk Use "Citywide Service Desk" when referring to the City of New York's official help desk. See also **help desk**

citizens Do not use "citizens" to refer to people who live in New York City, etc., since not all people who reside in NYC are actually "citizens." Use "residents," "New Yorkers," etc., instead.

contractions Use the full form of the words. Do not use contractions. Write out "you are" not "you're."

colored text Don't use colors outside the color scheme of your website to draw attention to certain text. For example, using bold red to highlight text, when red isn't otherwise used in the color scheme of the site. Colored text is hard to read, and, also, doing so can cause a site to look busy and unkempt.

dates Spell out dates (don't format them as 04/12/04) to avoid confusion with users who may be more familiar with putting the numerals in a different order, and include the year when possible. Users can sometimes find outdated information on a site, and without the year, the information may be unclear.

department Capitalize if referencing the full name of a specific department. Indicate clearly when referencing a state, rather than City, department. Use "Dept." if space is an issue.

Dial 311 See "311" above.

double click Two words; avoid using this terminology unless you're listing instructions for an online application.

email Do not use e-mail. While it can be written either way, the NYC.gov standard is email, without a hyphen, and with a lowercase "e."

entry-level Use a hyphen when this term (compound modifier) is used to describe the word immediately after (for instance, entry-level position). If the term comes after the noun (the position is entry level), don't use a hyphen. See also **hyphens**

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etc. Because website content should always be concise and to the point, avoid using the term "etc." Users know that following the link will provide them with more detail, so its use is redundant.

frequently asked questions (FAQ) Spell out the full term, and do not add an "s" to the end of it unless you are referring to two or more separate sets of FAQs. The term "frequently asked questions" is already plural. When referencing one, use "an" instead of "a" ("We created an FAQ for the agency.").

gender-specific language City law requires language to be gender neutral unless referring to a specific person. Rearrange the sentence if necessary to remove any associations with female or male (for instance, "The police officer should carry his badge" should be changed to "Police officers should carry their badges" to avoid the assumption that the officer is a man).

government forms Use a dash in the name of government forms that are a combination of letters and numbers, such as W-9 and W-2. If the acronym or short name of the form is unclear, use the full, proper name the government uses followed by the abbreviation, if only in the first instance.

health care This should be two words.

help desk This should be two words when used generically. Use "Citywide Service Desk" when referring to the City of New York's official help desk.

home page This should be two words.

hotline or **hot line** This is generally one word, although some agencies have created official hotlines with names that use "Hot Line;" if this is the case, use the official name the agency uses.

Internet This word should be capitalized.

intranet This word should not be capitalized.

italics Use italics sparingly; text in italics is hard to read on a computer screen. Whenever possible, highlight content using headings, active language, and bulleted lists to call out important issues.

keyword This should be one word.

login/logout These should both be one word, no hyphen, when used as an adjective (your login name); make two words when used as a verb (first, log in). This terminology should only be used when visitors are accessing an application or a site that requires a password—visiting a standard City site is not "logging on."

magazine citations Capitalize the name of the referenced media; for magazines, capitalize the name of the magazine, but only the word "magazine" if it's part of the name (Harper's Magazine versus Time magazine).

money Use the $ sign and include cents, as in "$40.00" when referencing fees or charges. Otherwise, use the round number with commas where needed ($540 or $6,230) and spell out million when applicable ($4 million).

multimedia Should be one word, no hyphen.

newspaper citations Capitalize "the" in the name only if it's part of the publication's official name.

nonprofit Write as one word without a hyphen; an alternative is "not-for-profit."

numbers The following rules apply to the use of numerals:

- Spell out numbers one through nine except when the number is the first word of the sentence.

- Starting with 10, always use figures.

- Spell out a number at the beginning of a sentence.

- Spell out "first" through "ninth" (and "one" through "nine") when indicating a sequence in time or location (first base, first in line).

- Spell out fractions and hyphenate.

- Use the % symbol and never spell out the number when using percentages in text.

- If a number is 1,000 or greater, there should be a comma separating the thousands.

- Use numbers for decades (the 90s), districts, precincts, fractions, millions and billions, monetary units, telephone numbers, percentages, temperatures, and years.

   - 1.1 million students

   - $10 billion

NYC.gov When referencing the entity, capitalize the three first letters, but not the last three. When using it in the context of a web address, use www.NYC.gov... and the rest of the URL.

NYC-specific terminology

- 9/11

- Ground Zero

- Governors Island

- Randall's Island

- The High Line

online Spell as one word without a hyphen.

PDF Use the acronym (no periods).

pm and **am** Use lower case, without periods, and put a space between the number and the term (for instance, 10:00 pm).

percent Spell out the word; the number immediately preceding should be a numeral. See also **numbers**

phone numbers Always include an area code. Enclose the area code parentheses ((212) 639-9675) or set it off by hyphens (212-639-9675); however, select one style and use it consistently. Use a hyphen to separate the numbers unless they spell something, in which case spell out the acronym and follow it with the numeric equivalent in parentheses, using a hyphen between area code and prefix: (212-NEW-YORK) (212-639-9675).

pop-up Separate the two words with a hyphen.

pull-down Separate the two words with a hyphen.

punctuation Follow these rules regarding punctuation:

- Do not use exclamation marks.

- Use a serial comma or series comma (also called Oxford comma and Harvard comma) in a series of three or more terms.

    Example: A list of three boroughs should be punctuated as "Brooklyn, Staten Island, and Queens."

- Commas and periods should go inside the quotation marks, even if it is not part of the quotation itself. "Like this." Not "Like this".

    Incorrect: Mayor de Blasio said, "Welcome to the greatest city in the world".

Correct: Mayor de Blasio said, "Welcome to the greatest city in the world."

ampersands Try to avoid unless they're required for a design purpose or they're used in an official name.

ampersand and @

- Ampersand should only be used if it is a formal part of a name or organization. It should not arbitrarily be used in place of "and."

- Do not use @ in place of the word "at."

apostrophes Many rules apply to using apostrophes. Some of the main points to remember are:

- Add an apostrophe with an "s" to abbreviations and letters, but not to numbers (for instance, "The DOT's Commissioner was hired in the 1980s, and he's learned to mind his p's and q's").

- Use to replace omitted figures ("She started in the '80s").

- Follow the user's practice when a department or office name is descriptive ("Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs").

- See also **possessives**

commas Use serial commas. For example, "The boxes were red, blue, and orange" instead of "The boxes were red, blue and orange."

em-dashes Because em-dashes require extra coding on websites, use a space, a dash, and a space in place of them in web content. For instance, "The reason he couldn't attend the party – he had a cold – was not known until later."

exclamation points They are not appropriate in this context. Please do not use them on the City websites.

hyphens The rules for using hyphens can be confusing. Some tips to remember are:

- Use hyphens when two words go together to describe the noun immediately following them, and the description wouldn't make sense by itself (gray-haired; "gray man" and "haired man" don't work). In this instance, the two words are considered a compound modifier.

- When those words follow the noun, don't use a hyphen ("the man is gray haired").

- Use a hyphen if "self" or "quasi" is one of the words, but don't use a hyphen if "very" is one of the words.

- Capitalize both parts of the hyphenated word in a title or heading ("The Buy-Out Program").

periods Don't end call-to-action hyperlinks with a period ("[Learn more](.).") However, do so if the call-to-action hyperlink appears within a paragraph and ends a sentence.

possessives There are many grammar rules related to possessives. Some basic principles are:

- If a word is singular, add the apostrophe and "s" regardless of the last letter of the word ("the class's homework," "the boy's bike").

- If the word is plural but doesn't end in "s," add apostrophe and "s" (children's).

- If the word is plural and ends in "s," add the apostrophe only (the Jameses' home).

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- If two entities possess one thing together, use the possessive form only after the second/last word ("Dennis and Kelly's cube").

- See also **apostrophes**

quotation marks When creating web content, turn off the smart quotes feature on Microsoft Word; they don't always appear correctly on the screen and can cause problems in production. To do this, go to *File > Options > Proofing > AutoCorrect Options* and click on the tab *AutoFormat as you Type*. Deselect "Replace straight quotes with smart quotes."

semicolons Use a semicolon to separate two complete sentences that are connected in meaning. The semicolon indicates more separation than a comma, but less than a period.

site map This should be two words.

statewide This should be one word.

TV show citations TV shows are not in quotes, but should be capitalized.

theatre v. theater Use "theater" in general, but follow the style of particular entities ("Mayor's Office of Film, Theatre, and Broadcasting").

time Always include "am" and "pm" when referencing time. See also **am** and **pm**

> *Example: Please report to the office at 10:15 am.*

> *Example: The service desk is open from 9:00 am – 2:00 pm.*

titles Spell out and capitalize legislative titles before one or more names in a quote. If outside of a quote, use abbreviations such as "Sen." and "Rep." Otherwise, use lowercase "representative" and "senator." Capitalize formal titles such as "mayor," "assemblyman," and "councilor" when referring to

the specific person who holds that title ("The Mayor wanted to take the subway"). See also **capitalization**

- Titles of large works of art, art exhibitions, movies, books, magazines, Broadway shows, and the names of ships should be italicized.

- Title of smaller works of art should be in quotes (songs, media headlines, magazine stories)

- Titles belonging to officials:

    o 110th Mayor of New York City

    o Mayor Eric Adams (on first reference); Mayor Adams (thereafter)

    o Governor Kathy Hochul

    o President Joe Biden

    o Vice President Kamala Harris

    o Commissioner

    o Chief of Staff

    o City Council Member

    o Attorney General (Attorneys General, plural)

Unnecessary Words and Phrases Avoid the use of the following:

- As per

- As you know

- Please be advised that

- We trust that you find this information helpful

- "impact," which is not a verb

you Because the City uses websites to facilitate communication with constituents and businesses, a more casual and direct style is used; "you" and the second person in general should be used.

versus Abbreviate using "v." but don't capitalize when used in a heading.

web This should be one word, and "web" is lowercase.

web page This should be two words, and "web" is lowercase.

website This should be one word.

website citations Websites should only be referenced by their URL if that is the official name of the company (Pets.com); otherwise, use the full name of the company, and add the URL to direct users to the site. Activate the link on your site.

webcast This is one word.

Wi-Fi Not WiFi