

Page Design and Layout

Templates

When creating new pages, use existing templates (resources, mayors' office, departments, etc.).

Cascading Style Sheets

Use the site's cascading style sheet (CSS) when programming html. Use the CSS to define all tags, including: fonts/text, links, numbered and bulleted lists, paragraphs, spans, tables and all table elements.

Alignment

Images and contact-information tables should be aligned both vertically (top) and horizontally (right). Text should be left-aligned. Never center titles or content.

Images/Graphics

Image sizes affect download time. Include images only if they are necessary for graphical interest (photos of the city only) or if they illustrate a point related to the content (e.g. a graph, diagram, or official logo).

- use jpegs or gifs
- optimize images for the web (e.g. with Photoshop or Fireworks)
- provide an "alt" tag briefly describing the image
- specify image width and height
- do not use flash or animation
- images should not take up more than 30-35k of each page

Titles and headers

Each page should have a title (this is the title that appears in the user's browser window). Page headers should be in bold, all caps, and should include the name of the department, e.g.:

HEALTH and INSPECTION SERVICES > WIRING

City departments' index pages

Each index page should have a contact information box listing the phone number, fax number, address, contact information, etc. Also, forms that are available for download can be included in this area.

Spacing

Use two breaks after a page header or title and only one break after a page subheader or subtitle.

Fonts (type-faces)

Use the stylesheet definitions for fonts. The navigation and main pages use different font sizes and styles. Generally, fonts should be Geneva, Arial, Helvetica, sans-serif. Always list at least all four fonts as not all users have the same fonts on their machines.

Font sizes should be 12 pixels in the body of the text, and 10 pixels for smaller (e.g. for footers) text.

Writing for the Web

Page Length

Break up long pages so a limited amount of scrolling is necessary. If the information extends to more than one page, provide links to the next page on both the top and the bottom of the first page.

Make Pages Easy to Scan

Break up long paragraphs. Use bullets, numbering, and sub-titles to help a reader scan through the text. Do not use repetitive wording, and keep sentences reasonably short.

Text Decoration

Do not use italics, underlines, strikethroughs or other decorations. Bold text is acceptable (in reasonable amounts).

Common phrases/elements

Times of day: Use a.m., not A.M.

Phone numbers: Use 978-555-1212, not 978.555.1212

Prices: Use \$5.00, not \$5 or 5 dollars.

Days: Use Mon., not Monday, etc.

Months: Use "Jan." for January, etc. Do not use "J", etc.

For acronyms such as "FAQ", do not use apostrophes for plural forms. Use "FAQs."

Use "website", not "web site."

Numbered/bulleted lists

Be consistent with numbered and bulleted lists. Insert a space between the bullet and the start of the phrase/sentence to make it easier to read. Start each bullet with a capital letter.

Capitalization

The following should be capitalized:

- Proper names,
- Proper nouns,
- The titles of published works,
- Persons' titles when the persons' names are also included, e.g.: This room is for Councilor Smith's meetings. (Do not capitalize when the name is not specified, e.g. "This room is for the councilor's meetings.")

Do not capitalize nouns for the sake of emphasis. Use bold (sparingly) for emphasis.

Links

Link styles should be defined according to the style sheet. Left-hand and footer navigation links differ from links in the main body of text.

Link within your text; do not use "click here." Choose words that best illustrate the information that the link will provide and avoid using more than three or four words in a link. For example:

Download the [job application form](#).
The [1999 environmental regulations](#) are now available online.