

Web Writing Style Guide

Solutions for Your Life

About

This style guide addresses some of the most common inconsistencies and errors made on the Web. It is meant to be helpful in standardizing UF/IFAS's Web presence, and is not all-encompassing. The standards discussed here are specific to UF/IFAS.

This document is based on the Chicago Manual of Style (references are provided where appropriate), and for any style questions not addressed here you should refer to that book: *The Chicago Manual of Style: The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors, and Publishers (CMS)*. 15th Ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Other Resources

For official names of degrees, offices, institutes, centers, etc., please consult the UFCN Writing Stylebook: <http://www.urel.ufl.edu/ufcn/style.html>.

To download UF/IFAS wordmarks and logos, visit the ICS Web site's Signatures page: <http://www.ics.ifas.ufl.edu/wordmarks.html>.

For information about using UF and UF/IFAS wordmarks and logos, please consult the UF Identity Web site: <http://identity.ufl.edu/>.

Feedback

This style guide is constantly being updated and improved. Suggestions and questions are welcome. Please contact Erin McKenna Halsey, SFYL.com Web Writer, in IFAS Communication Services: emckenna@ufl.edu.

General

- Writing on the Internet should be as short as possible. No one enjoys scrolling; reading lengthy text on a computer screen can be difficult, if not downright uncomfortable. Whittle down writing when you can. Use bullets and other means of breaking up lists. Limit paragraphs to one concept.
- We use the following versions of Internet-related terms:
 - *Web site* (not *website*)
 - *World Wide Web* or just *the Web* (not *the web* or *The Web*)
 - *Internet* (not *internet*)
 - *E-mail* or *e-mail* (not *email* or *Email*)
- Our organization is always referred to as *UF/IFAS* (never *UF-IFAS* or just *IFAS*).
- *Extension* should always be capitalized, as in the following sentence: *For more information, call your local county Extension office. County* is lowercase unless referring to a specific, named county, as in, *Call the Gilchrist County Extension office.*

- When the slogan *Solutions for Your Life* is used as a title, headline, or to refer to the Web site, *for* should always be lowercase.
- Our Web site address (URL) should always be referred and linked to as *SolutionsForYourLife.com* or *www.SolutionsForYourLife.com* (externally) or *SolutionsForYourLife.ufl.edu* or *www.SolutionsForYourLife.ufl.edu* within UF/IFAS. The initial caps make the URL easier to read, but do not change the actual link. *For* is capitalized here only for readability.
- When UF and UF/IFAS links are on UF/IFAS Web sites, all references to UF and UF/IFAS should be removed: *Department of Animal Sciences* (not *UF/IFAS Department of Animal Sciences* or *UF Department of Animal Sciences*). It is difficult to scan text quickly when everything begins with the same word(s). When links are to departments and schools at other universities, the universities should be clearly identified.
- Do not use the word *the* before *UF* or *IFAS* unless they are used as adjectives.
CORRECT: *He works in the UF English department.*
INCORRECT: *He works at the UF.* (CMS 15.9)
- When you link to the Web page for a specific program at a particular organization, the organization should go first and then the program: *Florida FWC Manatee Program*. When the page is not that of an actual program but has a name, the name of the page should go first, followed by a long dash (rendered as two hyphens) and then the Web site where the page can be found: *Manatees Galore--Florida FWC*. If the page has no name, one (specific yet short) should be made up for it and its location should follow, after a long dash: *Manatee Information--Florida FWC*.
- When you have to wrap URLs or e-mail addresses from one line to another, do not use a hyphen. For specific directions about where to break URLs and e-mail addresses, see *CMS 7.44*.
- Instead of, for example, *Howard T. Odum Center for Wetlands at the University of Florida*, on the Internet, we will just link to *Center for Wetlands*.
- Numbers up to one hundred, round numbers, and numbers beginning sentences should all be spelled out: *three hundred dollars* and *twelve different rocks*, but *1,132 varieties of tulip*. (CMS 9.2) The same applies to ordinals (*eighth*, *125th*). (CMS 9.8) When a number begins a sentence, it is always spelled out. (CMS 9.5)

Abbreviations

- When referring to one of our programs, *Florida* should always be spelled out, e.g., *Florida Wildlife Extension*. In other cases, wherever possible, spell out the word *Florida* (because that is what we are promoting) unless space is an issue. If you must abbreviate this word, use *Fla.* (FL is a postal abbreviation only.) *CMS 15.29* lists nonpostal abbreviations for all states.
- We write initialisms without periods, e.g. *UF* and *USDA*. When used as an adjective, *U.S.* should not be spelled out, and should be written with periods. But do not use *U.S.* as a noun—spell it out: *In the United States, we use the U.S. Postal Service.* (CMS 15.4, 15.34)

- In text, *and* should always be spelled out. In all Web headings, & should be used. In the names of departments, always use *and*. Use a serial comma with *and* but not with &. For example, a heading would be written as *Fruits, Veggies & Edibles*. In a paragraph, the phrase should be written as *Fruits, veggies, and edibles*. (CMS 6.24)
- Acronyms are typically spelled out and then parenthetically shortened in the first usage. So we would write *Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)* on first use, and thereafter *Florida FWC*. But because the Web is not linear, use your judgment on where acronym use is appropriate. On the Internet, acronyms may be preferable because of space issues. In addition, for some audiences (e.g., scientists) or for certain terms (*DNA, IQ*), the acronym is preferable. (CMS 15.2)

Capitalization

- When referring to a department generally, lowercase: *I know him from the animal sciences department*. But when referring to the official name of the department, capitalize: *I worked in the Department of Animal Sciences*. (CMS 8.73)
- If compound words are used in titles, headlines, and headers, do not capitalize the word that follows a hyphen unless it is a proper noun, thus: *Upsy-daisy* but *Un-American*. The trend is away from hyphenization where possible. (CMS 7.90)

Punctuation

- When writing out an ellipsis, write it as a word, space, three periods, space, and then the next word. The spaces before and after the ellipsis will allow text to wrap nicely.
- Use a serial comma—the comma that comes just before the *and* or *or* in a series: *Corn, cotton, and peanut are widely grown row crops*. (CMS 6.19) (The exception—when an ampersand is used—is explained in the “Abbreviations” section above.)
- Do not use periods in *BA, MA, and PhD*. (CMS 15.21)
- A long dash should be rendered by two hyphens, no spaces. So *x--x* not *x – x* or *x - x*.
- When writing a range, e.g. *A–Z*, use a hyphen preceded and followed by a space, i.e. *A - Z*.

SFYL Template Style

- Do not use underlining (<u>) to add emphasis or to indicate links. Although underlining was once used to distinguish links from plain text, underlined text can be distracting to the reader and can violate accessibility guidelines. Use bolding () and italics () to indicate emphasis.
- Do not use flickering, blinking, or scrolling text. Scrolling text causes screen readers to stop working, and flashing or blinking text can induce epileptic seizures.