

OISE MINI STYLE GUIDE FOR WEB

NAMING CONVENTIONS (FOR NAVIGATION)

- Use “prospective students” instead of “future students”
- Use “current students” instead of “students”
- Use “teacher candidates” when referring to current students who are initial teacher education students
- Use the ampersand (&) instead of “and”, e.g., Research & Expertise; Faculty & Staff; Alumni & Friends
- Use “contacts” instead of “contact information”, or “contact”, or “people”
- Use “faculty & staff” instead of “professors”, “personnel”, or “people”

WRITING FOR AND ABOUT THE INTERNET

Writing for the web should generally follow the rules of newspaper writing – pyramid style, tight leads, strong quotes. Long passages should be broken into chunks.

- Keep it current: Update stories and remove old content regularly.
- Shorter is better
- Write for your reader
- Question your modifiers: one of the hallmarks of bad writing is overuse of adjectives and adverbs.
- Never use a [metaphor](#), [simile](#) (comparison using a figure of speech: *As brave as a lion*) or other [cliché](#).
- Never use a long word where a short one will do.
- If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.
- Never use the [passive](#) where you can use the active.
- Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word or a [jargon](#) word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.

- Not just words: Sound is a huge plus online. Audio conveys not only basic facts but also reveals mood and emotions
- Hyperlinks: Like footnotes in a text, hyperlinks allows for expanded material that’s relevant but not essential, without much effort. Some tips: Only link once to the same site; keep writing about the subject; embed hyperlinks in text that acts as a header that explains the content. Use “[Alister Cumming](#) received an honorary degree”, NOT “Click [here](#) to see Alister Cumming’s faculty profile”.
- Source it: Avoid anonymity – be clear about where your material comes from.
- Copyright: Seek permission before reproducing or using any material from another source in essentially the same form. Or cite sources in full.
- Correct mistakes: It is as important to fix mistakes in online stories as it is for stories published in print. Minor factual mistakes, spelling or grammatical problems should be fixed as soon as they are noted. More serious errors and changes require an Update Note on the top to alert readers that the material has changed.
- Writing about computer technology: much of what is written about computers, computer technology and the Internet is filled with buzzwords and obscure abbreviations. Find a balance between mixing jargon with everyday plain language. Tech talk works best if it is set against a familiar backdrop that makes it understandable. In general, forego the buzzwords.
- In general, use “Dr.” for licensed health care professionals. Do not use “Dr.” for people with doctorates outside the health care field.
- Use “month day, year”
- Distinguish between Alumna/alumnus, alumnae/alumni as appropriate.



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PUNCTUATION, SPELLING AND CAPITALIZATION (REFER TO THE CANADIAN PRESS STYLEBOOK)

PUNCTUATION

- If providing an actual web address (url), follow upper and lower case exactly: www.oise.utoronto.ca. The http:// does not need to be included. Some addresses begin with other expressions (ftp://, for instance), and these must be included. If web addresses are too long to fit on one line, they should be broken before any punctuation:

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geonames.nrcan.gc.ca/English  
/home.html
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The dots between the elements of the url are NOT punctuation marks, whereas, the period before html is a punctuation mark.

- Compound adjectives are often hyphenated before the noun they modify: “world-renowned scholar”, “wide-ranging research”
- Use a colon after a formal salutation: “Madam Speaker:”, “Dear Mrs. Smith:”
- Informal salutations may take a comma: “Dear Jack,”
- Write “5 a.m.”, not “5:00 a.m.”
- Use hyphens with a successive compound adjective (note spacing): “18th- and 19th-century history”
- Use a hyphen to connect dates, except when preceded by “from” or “between”: “the 1982-83 tax year, from January to May (not from January-May), between 1970 and 1976 (not between 1970-76).
- For months used with a specific date, abbreviate only “Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., and Dec.”. Spell out standing alone, or with a year alone: “Oct. 1, 1995 was a Friday. January 1998 was wet.”
- Don’t drop the first two digits if the numbers are not the same: “1998-99, but 1998-2002”
- Follow usual style for abbreviations, mixed abbreviations that begin and end with a capital letter do not take periods: B.Sc., BA, M.Sc., MA, B.Comm., PhD, M.Ed., EdD, and U of T (not UofT).

SPELLING

- Use “program” instead of “programme”
- Use “counselling” instead of “counseling”
- Use “honorary degree” instead of “honourary degree”

CAPITALIZATION

- If pertinent, say a person has an earned or honorary degree, and give the discipline: “Cumming, a doctor of education. Cumming received an honorary doctorate of letters from the University of Copenhagen.”
- Capitalize formal titles (those that are almost an integral part of a person’s identity) when they directly precede the name: “Pope Pius”, “Queen Elizabeth”, “Prime Minister Gordon Brown”, “Dr. Spock”, and “Prof. Harold Smith”.
- Lowercase occupational titles that follow the name: “David E. Hunt, professor emeritus”.
- A title set off from a name by a comma is lowercased: “The dean, Jane Gaskell, will represent OISE at the meeting”.
- Capitalize the names of universities and colleges but not their departments: “University of Toronto, faculty of arts and science, department of political science”.

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PHOTOS AND VIDEOS (SEE OPTIMIZING IMAGES AND VIDEOS FOR THE WEB):

www.oise.utoronto.ca/ec/UserFiles/File/CMS_help/cmsv1-OptimizingImagesVideos-fin.pdf

- The preferred image size for top-level pages is 100x100 px (headshot only)
- The preferred image size for an image that links to a video (video template) is 100x150 width px
- Recommended minimum resolution for images and graphics is 72 dpi
- Recommended image and graphic file format for the CMS is .png, or .jpeg

SITE LEVELS AND PERMISSIONS (OISE VISUAL IDENTITY)

Site levels and permissions assigned to OISE websites derive from the organizational structure of the University of Toronto and OISE (and include Extra-Departmental Units). When a website is created in the OISE CMS, a site level is assigned. The site level determines the website's alignment to the OISE visual identity as follows (note alignment restrictions decrease as levels increase):

WEB APPROVAL PROCESS

Prior to a live launch, all OISE websites require consultation from and the approval of the Office of Strategic Communications in the Office of the Dean. These processes help to ensure that the Web Content Planning Guide and Style Guide for Web are interpreted accurately. Opportunities for consultation and approval are automatically built into websites newly developed in the CMS. For major changes to information architecture, layout and design or naming conventions, OISE websites already live in the CMS must also consult with the Office of Strategic Communications.

Level 1: www.oise.utoronto.ca (home page and top level pages)

Level 2: Departmental websites

Level 3: Research Centres

Level 4: Units

Level 5: Project/other websites (OISE funded)

Level 6: Project/other websites (shared funding)

REFERENCES:

Tasko, Patti (ed.). *The Canadian Press Stylebook: A Guide for Writers and Editors*. The Canadian Press. Toronto, 2004.

McGovern, Gerry, Norton, Rob, and O'Dowd, Catherine. *The Web Content Style Guide: An Essential Reference for Online Writers, Editors and Managers*. Prentice Hall. London, 2002.

OISE Education Commons. *CMS v1.0 Users Manual*. Retrieved January 1, 2010, from www.oise.utoronto.ca/ec/UserFiles/File/CMS_help/cmsv1-OptimizingImagesVideos-fin.pdf