

VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY

eTuition Online Style Guide

FY2011

Course materials should follow editorial conventions and standards for consistency. Courses developers should consult the most recent version of the style guide used by their department (ALA, MLA, Chicago Manual, Turabian, and other). If the applicants department does not provide a style guide, this guide based on Chicago Manual may be used.

Style Guide

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Tone and Writing Style

1.1 Avoid personal references. You have been tasked with creating the master copy of a course that will be used by multiple instructors, so you should strive to make it as universally applicable as possible. Avoid reference to “I” or “me” and do not include personal anecdotes unless you are sure they will have universal appeal and relevance.

1.2 Avoid direct ties to a particular textbook in the course content. This is important for several reasons. Remember that other instructors will use the course, and they may not choose to use the same text. Also, because textbooks are revised frequently, avoid direct references to page numbers. They would likely need to be updated with every textbook update. Of course, you may need to refer to text page numbers when listing reading assignments, but you should limit these to the syllabus and assignment pages and keep them off the main content pages whenever possible.

1.3 Use consistent language. Consistency increases readability and contributes tremendously to ease-of-use. Keep this guideline strictly in mind as you develop course content. For example:

- Format instructions consistently from one assignment to the next.
- Always use the same names to refer to assignments, quizzes, discussions, etc. For example, if you call something “Quiz 1” in the syllabus, do not call it “Unit 1 Quiz” on the assignments page.

Preferred Wording

2.1 Begin outcome statements with measurable verbs instead of intangibles. While it is acceptable for goals to use the *language of knowing* (e.g., “understand,” “appreciate,” “learn”), outcome statements must use the *language of doing* (e.g., “demonstrate,” “identify,” “compare and contrast”).

Poor Outcome Statements

- Understand the trends in historic preservation in the United States
- Learn how typefaces are classified

Better Outcome Statements

- List and describe the trends in historic preservation in the United States
- Identify a typeface based on its stroke weight and stress

2.2 When referring to a unit number, do not use a leading zero.

Incorrect:

- Unit 01: Introduction
- Your final project is due at the end of Unit 09.

Correct

- Unit 1: Introduction
- Your final project is due at the end of Unit 9.

2.3 Use *click* not “click on” when referring to online actions.

Examples:

- Click the arrow to continue
- Click the Help link...

Use *press* not “hit” when referring to keys on the keyboard, and use *click* when referring to interactive screen elements.

Poor:

- Type your name and hit Return.
- Press *Next* to continue

Better:

- Type your name and press Return.
- Click *Next* to continue

2.4 Be sure all instructions are relevant to both Windows and Mac users.

For instance, avoid references to the “right mouse button.”

2.5 Include the file size and type in parentheses after every download link

You may omit the file type when the context and file extension make it obvious.

Examples:

- Read “Case Study One: Visual Propaganda in Soviet Russia” (PDF, 2.5 MB).
- To watch the video, you will need to download and install the Techsmith codec (executable file, 192 KB).
- Download the zipped file elk_Example.zip (3.7 MB).

2.6 Omit *the* and *button* in instructional text.

Unless necessary for clarity, omit **the** and **button** when giving user instruction onscreen. Use only the button name to refer to the button.

Poor:

Click the **Next** button to continue.

Better

Click **Next** to continue

2.7 Use the term *unit* instead of *week*.

Never use the term week when referring to a unit of instruction. These courses may at some point be run on an expanded or compressed timeline.

Examples:

- Project A is due at the end of Unit 3.
- Post your discussion responses before the end of this unit.

2.8 Capitalize *Unit* only when referring to a specific unit of instruction.

Do not capitalize it when referring to *this unit*, *the previous unit*, etc.

Incorrect:

- Project A is due at the end of unit 3.
- Post your discussion response before the end of this Unit.

Correct:

Project A is due at the end of Unit 3.
Post your discussion response before the end of this unit.

Punctuation

3.1 Do NOT add an apostrophe when forming the plural of an acronym or referring to decades.

Incorrect:

- PDF's
- 1980's
- '80's and '90's

Correct

PDFs
1980s
'80s and '90s

3.2 Use only one space after the punctuation mark at the end of a sentence. Note: Windows: press ALT +0151 (Windows) or Option + Shift + hyphen (Mac OS).

3.3 Use an em dash (—) to indicate a sudden change in thought or an abrupt change in sentence structure. Note: Windows: press ALT +0150 (Windows) or Option + hyphen (Mac OS).

Do not use a space before or after the em dash.

3.2 Use an en dash (–) in the following situations.

Type Style, Text Color, and Capitalization

4.1 Design for the color-blind user. Always include sufficient light-to-dark contrast between text between text and the background and among instructional graphic elements, such as charts and graphs. In general, avoid the following color combinations for foreground and background:

- Red, green

- Green, gray
- Red, gray
- Yellow, green
- Red, black
- Gray, white

4.2 Show titles of books, journals, plays, feature-length films, and other freestanding works in italics.

4.3 Show titles of articles, chapters, songs, short stories, specific episodes of television series, and other short or partial works in quotation marks.

4.4 Show the names of works of art in italics.

Examples:

- Fig. 4: Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa* (1503 – 1506), Oil on Wood
- Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* marked a resurgence of energy in the mood of European culture.

4.5 Use all caps for file types, except in file names.

Examples:

- Save your file as a PDF before posting it to the discussion board.
- Use the JPEG format for online distribution of photographs or images that contain tonal gradients.
- The image "sample_pic.jpg" shows pixilation caused by enlarging a low-resolution image.

4.6 Use title case for labels and headings. All words in a label or heading should have initial caps except articles, conjunctions, and prepositions, unless the preposition is part of a verb phrase. Always capitalize the first and last words of a label or heading, regardless of their parts of speech.

Incorrect

- Web resources
- Setting up Your System
- Rules to Live by

Correct

Web Resources
Setting Up Your System
Rules to Live By

4.7 Capitalize Unit only when paired with its number in instructional text.

Example:

- Welcome to Unit 2. In this unit, you will examine the creative process as it applies to the development of package designs.

4.8 Capitalize references to tools and menus in instructional text. Do not capitalize the word menu itself.

Examples:

- Use the Journal to take notes.
- Choose **Print** from the File menu

Numbers and Mathematics Formatting

5.1 Spell out the numbers one through nine, and use numerals for numbers above nine, except as noted in rules below.

Incorrect:

- There are 7 days in a week.
- Repeat each sentence 3 times.

Correct:

There are seven days in a week
Repeat each sentence three times.

5.2 If numbers are adjacent, use a numeral for one of them.

Example:

- Four 5-sided figures

5.3 Use leading zeros with decimals, except with probability.

Examples:

- 0.5
- P = .55

5.4 Always use leading and trailing zeros for dollar amounts.

Incorrect:

- \$.75
- \$80

Correct:

\$0.75
\$80.00

Times and Dates

6.1 Use lowercase a.m. and p.m. and include the periods.

Incorrect:

- The clock stopped at 6:47 pm.
- The clock stopped at 6:47 PM.

Correct:

The clock stopped at 6:47 p.m.

6.2 Do not abbreviate the days of the week or the months of the year in text content. If necessary for other situations (e.g., tables and graphs), use the following abbreviations:

- Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr., May, June, July, Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.
- Sun., Mon., Tues., Wed. Thurs., Fri., Sat. (preferred)
- Sun, M, Tu, W, Th, F, Sa (only if necessary)

6.3 Always use a four-character year for dates.

Incorrect:

- 2/12/99
- September '01
- January 15, '05

Correct:

- 2/12/1999
- September 2001
- January 15, 2005

6.4 Do not include periods in the abbreviation for BC, BCE AD, and CE.

Incorrect:

- In 2190 B.C.E., the political unity that had long characterized Egyptian history came to an end.
- During the early part of the Middle Ages, approximately 500 – 1,000 A.D., art was not produced on a large scale.

Correct:

- In 2190 BE, the political unity that had long characterized Egyptian history came to an end.
- During the early part of the Middle Ages, approximately 500 – 1000 AD, art was not produced on a large scale.

List

A *run-in list* fits neatly into normal sentence structure, using commas or semicolons to separate individual items. A *vertical list* uses line breaks to separate items. Vertical lists are further categorized by whether they are titled or introduced by a sentence or phrase.

7.1 Use bulleted lists when the order of elements is not important and numbered lists when the order of elements is important.

Examples:

- For each unit, complete the required readings, discussions, exercises, and project tasks.
- The main principles in visual perception psychology associated with Gestalt theory are:
 - Proximity
 - Similarity
 - Continuity
 - Closure
- To complete the activity, follow these steps:
 1. Scan your photographs.
 2. Create a background image in Photoshop.
 3. Combine your scans with the background.

7.2 Use parallel structure among list items.

7.3 Use parallel categorization of list items.

Figures

8.1 Identify *all* illustrations in courses as *figures* and provide appropriate captions. This includes multimedia objects that appear as graphics on the page. It does include tables and pop-up content, which are handled separately.

8.2 Spell out and capitalize *Figure*. Do not abbreviate in text. Do abbreviate in figure captions.

Example:

- Note the color cast in the scanned image before corrections have been applied (Figure 3).
- Compared to Figure 2, Figure 3 shows a more sophisticated application of a design grid.

8.3 Number all figures consecutively throughout a unit, except on project pages. The first figure of each unit will be *Fig. 1*. Prefix figure numbers on project pages with the project letter, and begin with number one.

Example:

- *Fig. B1: Andy Warhol, Campbell's Soup*

Tables

9.1 Include a title for all tables.

9.2 Use title case for column and row headers.

Source Documentation

(These examples are based on Chicago Manual. Please refer to your departments style guide)

10.1 Double space between footnotes.

10.2 Include the URL for online sources at the end of the footnote. Include the protocol (http://, ftp://, etc.). If no access date is given, follow the URL immediately with a period. Do not put carets, parentheses or brackets around the URL.

10.3 Whenever possible, include the access date in parentheses after the URL for online sources.

Example:

- [7] Lawrence Reaves, "A Weighty Issue: Ever-Fatter Kids," interview with James Rosen, *Time*, March 14, 2001, <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,102443,00.html> (accessed July 10, 2001).

10.4 Use the title of an online source, not the URL, as the link text. The link text in the example below should be “The Natural History”:

- [7] Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*, ed. John Bostock and H.T. Riley, in the Perseus Digital Library, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Plin.+Nat.+1.dedication> (accessed November 17, 2005).

10.3 Use the abbreviation *ibid.* when a footnote refers to the exact same sources as the footnote immediately preceding it. Add any information that differs from the previous footnote, such as page numbers.

Example:

- [3] Michael Fleishman, *Exploring Illustration* (Thomson Delmar Learning, 2003), 30.
- [4] *Ibid.*, 33 – 34.

Appendix A: Citation Quick Guide

(These examples are based on *Chicago Manual*. Please refer to your department style guide)

Book

One Author

Footnote

[1]Wendy Woniger, *Splitting the Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 65.

Bibliography

Doniger, Wendy. *Splitting the Difference*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Two Authors

Footnote

[6]Guy Cowlshaw and Robin Dunbar, *Primate Conservation Biology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 104 – 7.

Bibliography

Cowlshaw, Guy, and Robin Dunbar. *Primate Conservation Biology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Four or More Authors

Footnote

[13] Edward O. Laumann et al., *The Social Organization of Sexuality: Sexual Practices in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 262.

Bibliography

Laumann, Edward O., John H. Gagnon, Robert T. Michael, and Stuart Michaels. *The Social Organization of Sexuality: Sexual Practices in the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1994.

Journal Article

Article in a Print Journal

Footnote

[8]John Maynard Smith, “The Origin of Altruism,” *Nature* 393 (1998): 639.

Bibliography

Smith, John Maynard, “The Origin of Altruism.” *Nature* 393 (1998): 639 – 40.

Article in an Online Journal

If an access date is required by your publisher or discipline, include it parenthetically at the end of the citation, as in the fourth example below.

Footnote

[33] Mark A. Hlatky et al., “Quality-of-Life and Depressive Symptoms in Postmenopausal

Women after Receiving Hormone Therapy: Results from the Heart and Estrogen/Progestin Replacement Study (Hers) Trial,” *Journal of the American Medical Association* 287, no. 5 (2002), <http://jama.ama-assn.org/issues/v287n5/full/joc10108.html#aainfo> (accessed June 8, 2002).

Newspaper Article

Footnote

[10] William S. Niederkorn, “A Scholar Recants on His ‘Shakespeare’ Discovery,” *New York Times*, June 20, 2002, Arts section, Midwest edition.

Bibliography

Niederkorn, William S. “A Scholar Recants on His ‘Shakespeare’ Discovery.” *New York Times*, June 20, 2002, Arts section, Midwest edition.

Web Site

Footnote

[11] Evanston Public Library Board of Trustees, “Evanston Public Library Strategic Plan, 2000 – 2010: A Decade of Outreach,” Evanston Public Library, <http://www.epl.org/library/strategic-plan-00.html> (accessed June 1, 2005).

Bibliography

Evanston Public Library Board of Trustees. “Evanston Public Library Strategic Plan, 2000 – 2010: A Decade of Outreach.” Evanston Public Library. <http://www.epl.org/library/strategic-plan-00.html>.

E-Mail Message

Footnote

[2] John Doe, e-mail message to author, October 31, 2010.