



**UCF**



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

# **TECHNICAL WRITER'S STYLE GUIDE**

**ENC 4293  
FALL 2024**

# Welcome to the UCF Technical Writer's Style Guide

## A Resource for Professional Writing

### Project Credits and Acknowledgements

ENC 4293 | Fall 2024 | Dr. Jane Vaughn

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# Introduction

The University of Central Florida (UCF) acts as a research university in Orlando, Florida. It offers over 220 degree programs and provides students with a unique opportunity to learn and grow as leaders within our society. One such program offered by UCF resides in the English Department and specializes in technical communication. The students and faculty that participate in and with technical communication at UCF will gain tremendous experience and be ready to go out into the world as technical writers and contributors.

This style guide, created by class ENC4293-0W61 with Professor Jane Vaughan, will act as a guide for all technical writers associated with UCF. It should be used to inform and educate technical communication students and its representatives in conjunction with expectations and standards of writing within and outside of the University. This guide should be referenced to help writers address the following:

1. Document Design
2. Graphics and Graphic Conventions
3. Tone and Company-Specific Word Usage
4. Grammar and Punctuation Conventions
5. Writing for an International Audience

Each chapter of this document will expand on the principles and concepts of each topic and will equip readers with the knowledge and understanding of how to be better technical writers at UCF. The style guide will lead readers through a map of writing style and conventions that will lend itself toward professionalism, clarity, intent, and integrity. It is a valuable tool, accessible to any writer representing UCF.

Readers will learn about fundamental elements of design, including how to identify the audience, how to create consistency and learnability, and how to address balance. They will learn about standards of the industry pertaining to graphics, accessibility, AI, and data visualization, and they will gain an understanding of how to effectively incorporate tone, language, and word use for successful writing. Finally, readers will gain knowledge about the basics of grammar and its proper usage, and they will grasp the essential components of writing for cultural awareness and diversity in all settings of writing. After reading this guide, technical writers will have the skills and information necessary to achieve a newfound awareness of what it takes to be a successful, effective writer.

Happy reading and happy writing.

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# Chapter 1: Document Design

## Introduction

Document design is an important aspect of proper communication. It involves the strategic arrangement of text, images, and other elements within a document to enhance clarity, usability, and overall impact. This chapter will explore essential principles and practices to achieve effective document design, as insight on proper design choices can improve audience engagement and can ensure a successful dissection of information. This chapter will be useful for technical writers, graphic designers, and other professionals who create documentation. Key elements will include contrast, alignment, proximity and repetition. When applied correctly, these techniques make information more accessible and visually appealing. Ethical consideration is important for representing data accurately, ensuring accessibility for a diverse audience and avoiding misleading design strategies. Focusing on these elements will allow the functional and ethical aspects of document design to be addressed. Through the application of these principles, document creators can produce materials that are not only visually engaging but also ethically sound for their intended purpose.

## Principles of Document Design

Standard principles of document design are utilized to uphold professionalism and organization within company documentation. The fundamentals of effective document design include the CRAP principles - contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity, as coined by Robin Williams in *The Non-Designer's Design Book* (1993).

## Contrast

Contrast is defined as the use of visually different elements to emphasize areas of importance within a document. This is useful for locating specific areas of information, regardless of whether the document is read thoroughly or quickly skimmed. Appropriate headings are useful in this regard, and typefaces and fonts are crucial in avoiding visual conflicts.

## Designing Effective Headings

Headings organize a document into its most important components, and assist readers in quickly scanning a document for meaningful information. A heading should be the proper length - not too vague, but also not overdrawn. Table 1.1 below displays an example of an ineffective vs. effective heading length.

Ineffective	Effective
Style Guides	Creating Style Guides for University Settings

Table 1.1 Ineffective vs. Effective Headings.

Table 1.1 also demonstrates the importance of using keywords within headings. For example, imagine a document that compiles information on style guide standards for different industries. If a reader was specifically searching for how to write a style guide in a university setting, they would likely be looking for the key word “university.” In this case, the heading on the right-hand side of the table would provide the reader with the information they desire.

## Typefaces, Fonts, and How to Use Them

Before explaining the various fonts within a typeface, it is important to note that the two terms are not synonymous. A typeface is a particular style of lettering, and often falls into one of four main

categories: serif, sans-serif, script, and decorative. A font is a variation of a typeface that includes size and weight. Table 1.2 below highlights each typeface and some corresponding fonts.

<b>Serif</b>	A typeface <i>with</i> a small line or stroke extending off each letter	Times New Roman Georgia Playfair Display
<b>Sans-Serif</b>	A typeface <i>without</i> a small line or stroke extending off each letter	Roboto Montserrat Avenir
<b>Script</b>	A typeface that mimics the appearance of handwritten writing	<i>Pacifico</i> <i>Lobster</i> Croissant
<b>Decorative</b>	A typeface that is highly embellished and primarily ornamental	CINZEL DECORATIVE SILKSCREEN MONOTON

Table 1.2 Typefaces and Fonts.

With typefaces and fonts defined, the next step is deciding appropriate design choices. Each typeface performs a different function, and a document should avoid using more than one of each typeface. The purposes of each typeface are as follows:

- **Serif** → body text and printed documents
- **Sans-Serif** → headings and short lines of text
- **Script & Decorative** → titles, logos, and branding; used in small quantities

To achieve a high degree of contrast between typefaces and fonts, multiple aspects must be taken into consideration. Firstly, the size difference between fonts must be a minimum of 4 points. For example, a heading written in an 18 point font should be followed by text written in a 14 point font or smaller.

Secondly, font weight should be considered. The variations of font weights are thin, light, normal, medium, and bold.

## **Repetition**

While contrast involves creating distinct features to separate sections of information, repetition serves the opposite purpose. Repetition is defined as establishing a design feature continuously throughout a document with the intention of visual consistency. These features may include, but are not limited to: font choices, color schemes, illustration styles, general layouts, etc. For example, if a heading is designed to utilize a specific font style, size, and color, then each succeeding heading of this type should be formatted exactly the same. This is a general rule of thumb for illustrations embedded within a document as well. You may even choose to incorporate colors from an illustration into the colors of your text. Another example is indentation. If you indent the first paragraph within a document, ensure that the following paragraphs are also indented.

## **Alignment**

A document will always have two sets of lines that connect objects on a page - visible and invisible. This is called alignment. When designing a document, the placement of information creates a hierarchical structure that determines the order of importance. The center or left-aligned placements on a document will typically contain the most general information, such as titles, while more specific information tends to be right-aligned. A great example of alignment would be a standard restaurant menu. Aligned at the top center of the page would be the restaurant logo, while a vertical line splits the page into two columns. The food offering categories, such as appetizers, main courses, and desserts, are left-aligned in their respective columns, and may even include a short description or price point underneath. While this is a simple structure, it is clean and easy to read. Figure 1.3 below demonstrates this idea. You will read more about the hierarchy of information later in this chapter.

Ship to Shore  
DINNER

**STARTERS**

- YELLOWFIN TUNA STACK**  
Sesame crusted, cast iron seared, stacked with avocado, crisp wontons, sriracha, soy 19
- SEARED HUDSON VALLEY FOIE GRAS**  
Seared Hudson Valley foie gras, sundried cherry-bourbon demi 23
- GRILLED OCTOPUS**  
Soy and ginger marinated octopus, wakame salad, wasabi mayo 23
- COCONUT CRUSTED SHRIMP**  
Basil-citrus glaze 14
- JUST SIMPLE STEAMED CLAMS**  
Dozen little neck clams, roasted garlic, white wine, country butter, mixed herbs 15
- CRISPY SQUID**  
Sauce pomodoro and saffron aioli 18
- SEA SCALLOP GRATINEE SKILLET**  
Skillet seared sea scallops, smoked pancetta, crimini mushrooms, cream, romano bread crumbs 24
- NEW ZEALAND LAMB LOLLIPOPS**  
Lightly breaded, seared, local green kale, ceci beans, romano, butter, natural jus, grilled lemon 23
- BIG BOWL OF THAI RED CURRY PEI MUSSELS**  
Big bowl of steamed PEI mussels, thai red curry broth 12

**PASTA**

- ANGEL HAIR POMODORO**  
Sauce pomodoro, basil, fresh mozzarella 24
- RIGATONI ARRABIATA**  
Pomodoro, pancetta, onions, pepper flakes, touch of cream 26
- RIGATONI SAUSAGE**  
Grilled sweet sausage, green kale, crimini mushrooms, roma tomato cream sauce 28
- THAI RED CURRY SHRIMP STIR FRY**  
Shrimp, shrimp shumai, ginger, garlic, scallions, veggie stir fry, thai red curry, noodles 29
- KRUPA BROS. SWEET CHEESE PIEROGI**  
Sweet cheese pierogi, baby leaf spinach, pecorino romano cheese, mixed herb butter, candied walnuts 27
- SHRIMP SCAMPI & RIGATONI**  
Shrimp, garlic, grilled lemon, rigatoni, green kale, country butter, romano cheese 28

\*NOTE FROM CHEF: WE CAN SUBSTITUTE ALL WHEAT PASTAS WITH GLUTEN FREE PASTA FOR ALL OF OUR GLUTEN FREE FRIENDS

**FISH**

- PAN SEARED BRONZINO**  
Semolina dusted, braised kale, ceci beans, kalamata olives, grilled lemon 32
- FISH & CHIPS**  
Cod fish, chips, tartar, coleslaw, veggies 29
- GRILLED ATLANTIC SALMON**  
Grilled sweet potatoes, asparagus, orange-basil glaze 30
- SEARED SEA SCALLOPS & WAKAME SALAD**  
Seared sea scallops, deglazed with soy, ginger, green onions, wakame salad, veggie of the day, crisp wontons 34
- TWIN 4 OZ. COLD WATER LOBSTER TAILS**  
Grilled twin cold water tails, grilled lemon, country butter, garlic mashed, asparagus M/P
- TUNA NICOISE**  
Seared rare, mixed greens, grilled sweet potatoes, olives, cucumbers, lemon vinaigrette 32

**SALADS**

- HUDSON VALLEY MARKET GREENS**  
Beefsteak tomato, country croutons, cherry vinaigrette 10
- SHIP TO SHORE CHOP CHOP SALAD**  
Green kale, mixed greens, ceci beans, tomatoes, red onion, feta, olives, cucumbers, lemon thyme vinaigrette 14
- MOZZARELLA TOWER**  
Beefsteak tomato, fresh mozzarella, sweet balsamic glaze, basil, virgin olive oil 18
- CLASSIC CAESAR SALAD**  
Romaine, pecorino romano cheese, classic caesar dressing, country croutons 12
- BISTRO STEAK CHOP CHOP SALAD**  
NY strip over our most popular chop chop salad 28
- BABY LEAF ARUGULA & ARTICHOKE HEARTS**  
Baby arugula, tossed with red wine vinaigrette, romano cheese, over artichoke hearts 17

**ENTRÉES**

- ROMANO CRUSTED CHICKEN BREAST**  
Tomato cream sauce, garlic mashed potatoes, asparagus 29
- JERK SPICED SEARED DUCK BREAST**  
Jerk rubbed seared duck breast, orange glaze, roasted sweet potatoes, asparagus 36
- STEAK FRITES**  
Grilled flank steak, garlic butter, french fries, asparagus 36
- BBQ GRILLED BONELESS PORK LOIN**  
Grilled pork loin, cilantro bbq, asparagus, roasted sweet potatoes 29
- ROASTED NEW ZEALAND RACK OF LAMB**  
Crimini mushroom ragout, garlic mashed, asparagus half 25/ full 46
- 12 OUNCE BROILED FILET MIGNON**  
Black pepper Chianti, garlic mash, asparagus 48 (ala carte 43)
- 16 OUNCE NEW YORK STRIP**  
Country butter, garlic mashed, asparagus 49 (ala carte 44)
- 32 OUNCE "BONE IN RIBEYE AU JUS"** Ala carte 58

**SURF YOUR TURF**

(\*AVAILABLE FOR ALL STEAKS & CHOPS ONLY)

- LOBSTER TAIL** M/P    **SHRIMP SCAMPI** 12  
**SEA SCALLOPS** 14    **HUDSON VALLEY FOIE GRAS** 15

**SIDES**

- GARLIC MASHED** 6  
**ASPARAGUS** 8  
**BRAISED KALE** 7  
**SAUTÉED SPINACH** 7  
**ONION RING STACK** 8  
**STEAK FRIES** 8  
**BAKED POTATO** 8  
**MACARONI & CHEESE** 8  
**ROASTED SWEET POTATOES** 8

**SAUCES**

- BLACK PEPPER CHIANTI** 5  
**AU POIVRE** 5  
**BLUE CHEESE** 4  
**BEURRE BLANC** 5  
**SEASONAL MUSHROOMS** 8  
**CARAMELIZED ONIONS** 5

*Sorry, we cannot split checks more than four ways*

**AN AMERICAN BISTRO**  
With a Taste of Old New York Steak House  
Chef Owner Samir Hrichi ♦ Catering Available

*20% gratuity added for parties of 8 or more*

Figure 1.3 Alignment as Demonstrated by a Restaurant Menu (Source: Ship to Shore American Bistro).

## **Proximity**

A well-designed document should group elements together based on relationship and relevance, which is where the principle of proximity is important. Proximity is a combination of white space and chunking to help readers understand how ideas relate to one another. Headings should be closer to their corresponding paragraphs than to previous text, and there should be a chunk of empty space between sections of information. Larger chunks are used for separating major sections, and smaller chunks for separating subsections. This is called block paragraph format.

## **Document Design Concepts**

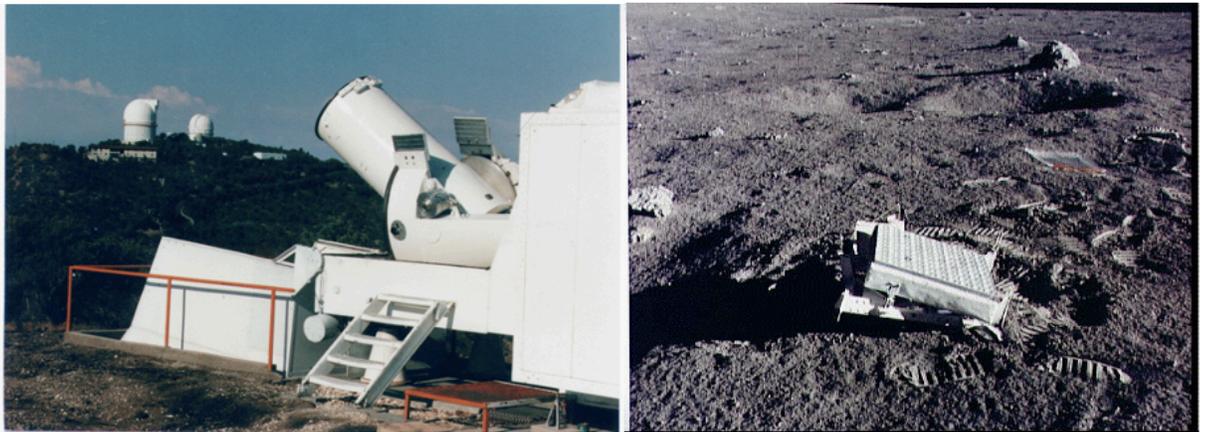
Concepts of document design outline the overall purpose of the document, as well as the ideas and goals behind the document's structure. This section will highlight basic document design concepts that will allow you to create effective documentation, specifically elaborating on design concepts for functionality and how to effectively implement these techniques.

## **Clarity**

Documentation must be clear and concise. Clarity in a document means that the information being conveyed is clear and easy to understand. A consistent layout - using headings, subheadings, and bullet points, for example - allows the intended audience to move quickly through the document. Using simple language and defining technical terms or jargon ensures that the information is understandable for any audience, regardless of their prior knowledge.

## Credibility

To enforce professionalism in documentation, credibility is essential. Remaining truthful when creating documentation for UCF is important, using proper citations and relevant information. Standard citation guidelines, such as APA and MLA, must be used correctly. Images, charts, and graphs must be high quality, containing credible and relevant information. All graphics must be labeled, placed near the relevant text, and include clear captions explaining their purpose. Figure 1.4 shows an example of correct labeling.



**Fig 1 (a)** Lunar laser telescope at McDonald Observatory. **(b)** Apollo 14 retroreflector array on Moon.

Figure 1.4 Labeled Graphic Example.

## Learnability

Documentation should be designed so users can easily grasp its structure and purpose. Learnability measures how easy it is for users to understand something. Complex ideas must be simplified so that the audience is able to understand them. The document should be intuitive, following a clear structure that allows its users to easily navigate and understand the information. This can be achieved by prioritizing key information and following a logical progression, ensuring that content flows naturally. Content should be engaging and the users personal experience should be prioritized.

## **Consistency**

Content should adhere to the UCF brand's established voice and tone. A consistent design throughout the university's brand ensures that documentation throughout the university is clear, concise, and easy to understand. Headings, subheadings, and numbering should be consistent throughout the document to help guide readers through the document, allowing them to focus on the content itself, not the overall design. By following brand guidelines and using specific elements such as logos, colors, and typography the document reinforces the university's brand identity, making the document easily recognizable.

## **Accessibility**

When designing a document, the content must meet the necessary standard for inclusivity, catering to all audience members including those with disabilities. An accessible document should be easy to read by users who are visually impaired and may have to navigate the document using a screen reader software (University Center for Teaching and Learning). By using easy-to-read font sizes, and headings/subheadings that are colored to provide contrast, the document will fit the needs of all users.

## **Readability**

The document should be easy to read, using clear text that flows logically. Readable font styles should be used, keeping in mind the format of the document: digital or print. For readability, fonts like Times New Roman or Garamond are often preferred for printed publications (Mehra). For digital content, it is important to prioritize readability on screen. Fonts such as Arial and Helvetica are popular options. Line spacing, margins, and white space enhance readability by making documentation easy to follow and visually comprehensible. It is important to remain consistent with font size in both headings and general text.

## Hierarchy of Information

When designing a document using a hierarchy of information, content should be organized so the most important information is prioritized. A hierarchy of information refers to the organization of information into a flow based on the importance of the user (Hieber). To signify the importance of certain content, visual cues such as page breaks or section dividers should be used. The arrangement of elements and content in the document reveals an order of importance (“Design Principles: Hierarchy of Information”). Headings and subheadings should be used to divide sections, as well as larger or bolded font types. Reading patterns can be used to properly order document information. Patterns usually fall into two categories: F and Z. Figure 1.5 represents these two patterns.

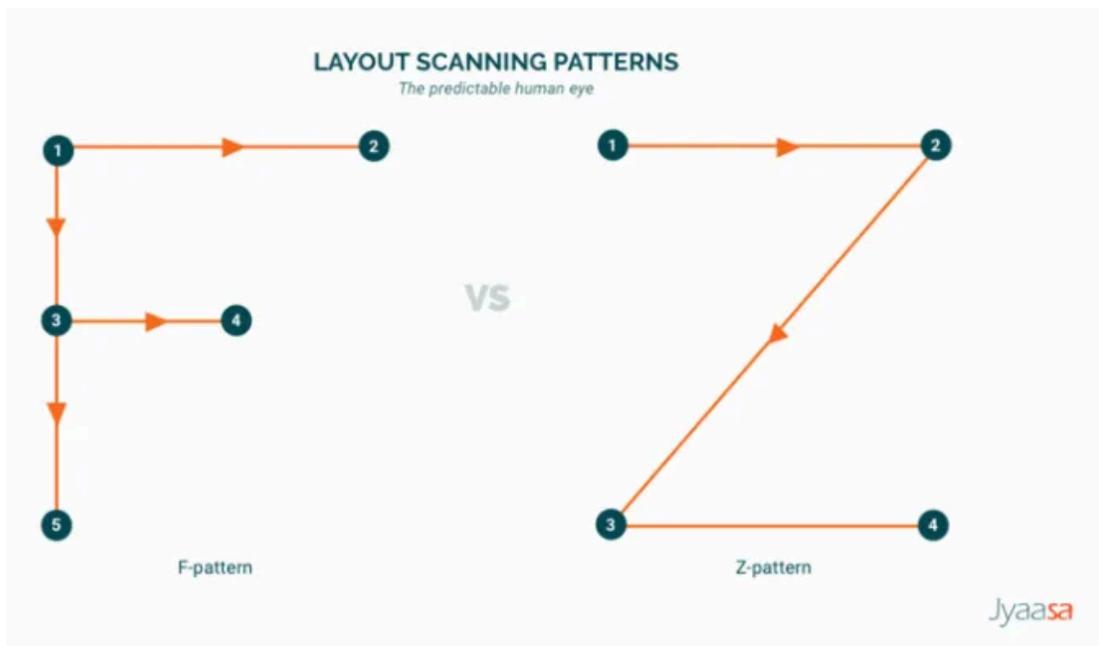


Figure 1.5 Reading Patter F and Z (Source: Medium).

The F pattern “allows readers to scan naturally” (Lanre), whereas the Z pattern “attempts to get ahead of the user, abstracting any distraction and presenting encouraging action as quickly as possible” (Lanre).

## Balance and Proportion

The layout of a document should be visually proportionate, where images, text, and white space are balanced. Balance refers to an even distribution of elements. There are two basic types of balance:

- Symmetrical: layout elements of equal weight on either side of an imaginary center line (Chapman and Lidwell)
- Asymmetrical: uses elements of differing weight, often laid out in relation to a line that is not centered within the overall design (Chapman and Lidwell)

Proportion refers to the idea that these elements are spaced and sized appropriately in relation to one another. Properly proportioned fonts and visual elements improve document readability and understanding (Fabien). By using white space, alternative text size, alignment, and visuals such as charts and images, a document can become more appealing for the reader, preventing any unnecessary clutter and making the document easy to follow.

## Audience

Understanding an audience plays a crucial role in documentation. It is important to identify who the document is aimed towards so the document can be adapted to meet the needs of its intended audience. When analyzing an audience, it is important to consider expectations, prior knowledge, experience, and characteristics.

## Identifying the Audience

UCF is home to a diverse audience of students, faculty, staff, alumni, donors, and external partners. Each audience type may have different technical knowledge, expectations, and purposes for engaging with the document. To effectively communicate, it is important to know who you are communicating to. Audience types can fit into these categories:

- Experts and Technicians: high degree of knowledge and familiarity with the topic; writing for this audience can use more jargon and complex terms (Davor)
- Executives and Non-Specialists: writing should be straightforward and simple, not assuming that they have pre-existing knowledge of the topic (Davor)

## **Audience Analysis**

Completing an audience analysis ensures that the document is tailored to their needs. Essentially, an audience analysis is a way for writers to get to know their audience. It is important to consider audience characteristics such as age, background, technical knowledge, and reasoning for engagement. Understanding an audience allows you to structure the content of the document correctly.

### **Demographics**

“Demographic factors of an audience include age, gender, religion, ethnic background, class, sexual orientation, occupation, education, group membership, etc.” (Department of Communication). It is important not to stereotype an audience based on demographic information. Use demographic information to determine what information is most important for members of each group.

### **Prior Knowledge**

Determine the level of familiarity audience members have with the topic to determine the amount of explanation required. Be sure to properly explain important terms and concepts. Providing a brief review can refresh the audience's knowledge or inform less familiar members. “Audience knowledge of a topic can vary widely on any given occasion.” (Department of Communication).

## Reason for Engagement

Why is the audience reading the document? They could be reading to be informed, learn something new, or take action. Understanding the audience's reason for engagement will determine what and how information is conveyed.

## Checklist

When creating documentation for the UCF, ask yourself the following questions:

- Are headings clear and logical?
- Is there contrast to provide readability?
- Do logos and colors align with brand guidelines?
- Are text, visuals, and white space balanced?
- Is font size and style appropriate and consistent?

## Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as, “the act of using another person’s words or ideas without giving credit to that person.” It is not limited to the deliberate act of presenting someone else’s work as one's own; it can also happen unintentionally when sources are not properly cited or when a writer fails to credit information that isn’t widely known.

Plagiarism is regarded as a serious offense in both academic and professional settings. At UCF, students found guilty of plagiarism may face penalties such as receiving zero credit for an assignment. In more serious cases, consequences can include academic probation, loss of credit for a course, expulsion, or even the revocation of a degree. With the availability of plagiarism detection tools like Turnitin.com, which is commonly used by UCF instructors, even minor instances of plagiarism can be easily identified.

## Types of Plagiarism

Textual Plagiarism: occurs when someone uses another person's written content without giving proper credit. It can include copying large sections of text, summarizing someone else's work without citation, or using unique ideas without acknowledgment. Even if the wording is changed slightly, if the original source isn't credited, it is still considered plagiarism. Common forms include:

- Direct Plagiarism: copying text verbatim from a source without quotation marks or citation
- Paraphrasing Plagiarism: rewriting someone else's ideas or text in different words but failing to cite the original source
- Mosaic Plagiarism: piecing together phrases or ideas from different sources without proper citation
- Self-Plagiarism: reusing one's own previously published or submitted work without permission or disclosure

Visual Plagiarism: involves using visual materials such as images, graphs, charts, infographics, or designs without appropriate credit. This can include copying or modifying someone else's original artwork, using a photo without permission, or recreating a design or layout. Just like textual plagiarism, visual plagiarism requires proper attribution to acknowledge the original creator's work. Examples include:

- Copying Images or Graphics: using visuals found online without permission or attribution
- Replicating Design Elements: duplicating the look and feel of someone else's design without credit

- **Altering Visuals Without Credit:** making minor changes to an image or graphic and passing it off as original work

## Consequences

**Academic and Professional Repercussions:** plagiarism is a violation of academic integrity and can lead to severe consequences. In an academic setting, penalties can range from receiving a failing grade on an assignment, to academic probation, suspension, or even expulsion. Institutions often have strict policies to maintain educational standards and deter dishonest practices. In the professional world, plagiarism can damage one's reputation and lead to job termination. Other potential impacts include:

- **Loss of Academic Credit:** students may receive a zero or reduced grade for plagiarized work.
- **Academic Disciplinary Actions:** plagiarism may lead to suspension, probation, or expulsion from an academic institution.
- **Damage to Professional Reputation:** professionals found plagiarizing can lose credibility, suffer damage to their careers, and face disciplinary action from employers.
- **Loss of Certifications or Degrees:** in severe cases, plagiarism can result in the revocation of academic degrees or professional certifications.

**Legal Issues:** in addition to academic and professional consequences, plagiarism can have legal ramifications, particularly when copyrighted material is involved. Using someone else's copyrighted work without permission can be considered copyright infringement, leading to lawsuits, fines, or other legal actions. The severity of the legal consequences depends on the extent of the plagiarism and the value of the original work. Legal consequences may include:

- Copyright Infringement Lawsuits: the original creator may take legal action for the unauthorized use of their work.
- Financial Penalties: monetary fines or settlements may be imposed to compensate for damages.
- Restrictions on Future Work: legal judgments may limit the plagiarizer's ability to publish or use the infringing material in the future.

## Avoiding

Proper citation is crucial to avoid plagiarism. It involves acknowledging the original creator for any borrowed text, image, design, or idea. When using information that is not common knowledge or including visual elements from another source, always provide a clear and accurate citation according to the required style guide (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago). Citing not only gives credit to the original author but also helps the reader find the source for further study. To effectively cite sources:

- **Follow Citation Guidelines:** use the appropriate citation style as specified by your institution or publisher and be consistent throughout the document.
- **Include Complete Reference Information:** provide all necessary details like the author's name, publication date, title of the work, and page numbers where applicable.
- **Use In-Text Citations and Bibliographies:** make sure to include both in-text citations for specific references and a complete bibliography or reference list at the end of the document.

Tools and software can help manage references and avoid unintentional plagiarism by automatically generating citations and organizing references. Popular citation tools, such as Zotero, Mendeley, and EndNote, allow for easy management of sources and integration with word processing

software. Online citation generators like EasyBib or Citation Machine can also assist in creating properly formatted citations. When using these tools:

- **Double-Check Generated Citations:** ensure the accuracy of automatically generated citations, as citation tools may occasionally make errors.
- **Organize References Effectively:** use the tool to keep track of all references used in a project, making it easier to cite them correctly in the document.
- **Export Citations in the Correct Format:** choose the appropriate citation style before exporting references, to match the document requirements.

Paraphrasing involves expressing someone else's ideas in your own words while still giving credit to the original source. This requires more than simply changing a few words; it involves rephrasing the entire idea or concept and integrating it into your own writing style. Proper paraphrasing ensures that the original meaning is maintained while avoiding direct copying. To paraphrase effectively:

- **Fully Understand the Original Source:** read the material thoroughly to grasp the main ideas before rewording them.
- **Use Your Own Words and Sentence Structure:** rewrite the information in a way that reflects your voice while avoiding any direct phrases from the original text.
- **Provide a Citation:** even if you have paraphrased the content, you must still cite the original source to credit the author for their ideas.

# Prevention

## Originality in Design

Creating original visuals or layouts is essential in order to maintain integrity in design work. Original design involves crafting your own images, graphics, charts, and layouts from scratch or using licensed elements and ensuring that they align with your unique style or project requirements. When using elements from other creators, you should confirm that they are appropriately licensed. Licensing allows for legal use and modification of these materials, ensuring that no copyright laws are violated. By prioritizing originality, designers not only avoid plagiarism but also contribute to a more authentic, personal aesthetic in their work. In cases where original content creation isn't feasible, selecting resources from reputable, copyright-friendly sites like Unsplash, Pixabay, or licensed stock image providers is crucial.

## Proper Attribution

Whenever you borrow or adapt an image, graphic, design element, or layout created by someone else, it's essential to include clear, accurate attribution. Proper attribution typically means crediting the original creator through captions, credits, or a references section, depending on the context of the work. This acknowledgment should include details such as the creator's name, the title of the work, and the source. Providing this information ensures that the original creator's contribution is respected and that your own work transparently reflects where certain ideas or visuals came from. Proper attribution not only supports ethical standards, but also builds credibility and trust with your audience.

## Documentation Style

Documentation style is a standardized approach used to create, organize and format documents, maintaining consistency across all forms of written communication. In professional fields, adhering to a

specific documentation style is important to establishing credibility, maintaining professionalism, and making complex information easier to understand. Documentation style has different aspects, including citation practices, heading structures, page layouts, and integration of graphics. These factors promote uniformity and help readers navigate documents, especially in settings like research and technical manuals. Ethical considerations are important when it comes to documentation style, such as intellectual honesty and avoiding plagiarism. By adhering to a clear and ethical documentation style, writers ensure their documents are communicated effectively and respect intellectual property.

## Conclusion

Effective document design requires balancing visual appeal, clarity, and ethical practices such as proper citation and avoiding plagiarism. The CRAP principles—contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity—are essential for structuring documents professionally and enhancing readability. Understanding the audience is crucial, as their knowledge, expectations, and expertise shape the tone, language, and layout. Tailoring documents this way ensures information is accessible, engaging, and impactful.

Consistency in design is another key element. Uniform formatting, use of headings, and proper alignment create a cohesive visual identity, guiding readers through the document logically. Adhering to brand guidelines or institutional standards reinforces professionalism and builds trust. Purposeful integration of visuals, like charts and graphs, enhances clarity by making complex data more digestible, provided they are relevant, high-quality, and well-placed.

Ethical considerations are critical to maintaining credibility. Proper citation of sources and avoiding plagiarism show respect for intellectual property and establish trust with readers. A well-designed document not only looks professional but communicates its message clearly, fostering

engagement and ensuring its value to the audience. Whether for academic, business, or technical purposes, the goal is to convey complex ideas professionally, ethically, and effectively.

# Chapter 2: Graphics and Graphic Conventions

## Overview

### **The purpose of graphics in technical writing**

The purpose of graphics in technical writing is to visually emphasize information communicated in written documents, such as user manuals, reports, proposals, and guides. Graphics assist in the simplification of information by providing a visual representation of written information and concepts. Information that may be more challenging for the audience to grasp solely through text can be reinforced through graphics.

### **Why UCF Needs Graphic Guidelines**

As graphics are an essential element of technical writing, appropriate guidelines must be implemented and exercised for technical writers of the University of Central Florida to meet a high standard of writing and documentation design. Graphic guidelines ensure consistency in quality and formatting, as well as the maintenance of accessibility in one's writing. Technical writers need to utilize graphic guidelines to support professionalism and information communication efficiency.

### **Addressing the Audience**

A UCF technical writer's audience will consist primarily of University of Central Florida students, faculty, and staff.

## Implementing Graphics for Students

The UCF student body consists of undergraduates with an average age of 22, and graduates with an average age of 31 years old. There are 240 degree programs offered by UCF. A technical writer's use of graphics will be geared toward adults of varying levels of education and majors. For example, depending on the documentation written, the writer may implement graphics for an undergraduate engineering course, or they may have to implement a graphic for a graduate-level biology report.

## Implementing Graphics for Faculty and Staff

UCF employs 13,004 faculty and staff members. This number includes, but is not limited to, professors, instructors, administrators, counselors, and library staff. Graphics on company-wide standards processes to guide operations may be used in technical writing for this audience.

All in all, a UCF technical writer will be implementing both data-related graphics and UCF brand-specific graphics in their writing, maintaining clear communication and consistent style through visual integration.

## Graphics Standards

This chapter will refer to graphics standards as guidelines which ensure inclusivity, accessibility, and usability as key components in the use of graphics in technical writing.

## Practicing Inclusivity

Inclusivity means ensuring that audiences of different abilities, backgrounds, and cultures can engage with content and information, such as graphics. To foster inclusivity in graphics usage, it is crucial to consider diversity in the context of accessibility and usability. By doing so, an equal experience is

provided for everyone, making inclusivity an essential standard to uphold in the use of graphics in technical writing.

## Addressing User Diversity

### Individuals with disability

For individuals with visual impairments, incorporate accessibility features such as alt text for images and color contrast between text and background. For individuals with mobility impairments, ensure that interactive graphics are keyboard navigable.

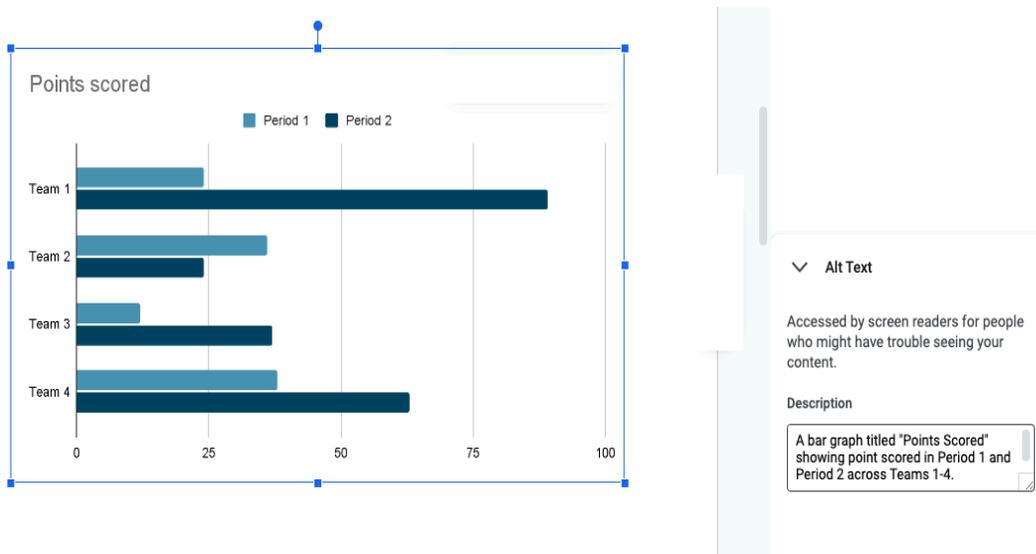


Fig 1. Google Docs allows the user to create an alt text description on a bar graph.

Figure 1 shows the alt text feature in Google Docs. This feature allows readers with visual impairments to be able to listen to a detailed description of the graphic using a screen reader.

## Language

The language used within graphics is an essential part of information comprehension. Use clear and plain-spoken language to assist in the intake of information for non-native speakers and individuals with cognitive or learning disabilities. Avoid niche jargon to encourage understanding from a diverse audience.

## Culture

Avoid cultural alienation or cultural stereotypes by using neutral color schemes and backgrounds in your graphics. Different colors can hold different meanings in other cultures. Use icons that are universally recognized to ensure that your graphics are easily understood by any cultural background the audience may have.

## Gender and Race Considerations

Avoid using graphics that enforce gender and racial stereotypes or bias. Represent gender and race in your graphics neutrally. For example, use a neutral color scheme rather than pink for women and blue for men to not indicate the audience's gender or race. Additionally, when representing diversity in graphic imagery, ensure that it serves to promote inclusivity.

## Incorporating Accessibility

Accessibility is the practice of designing content that enables people with disabilities to use such content effectively. This aspect of graphic conventions is essential to technical writing because it ensures the inclusion of one's entire audience, including people with disabilities. Disabilities and limitations include cognitive disabilities, physical disabilities, and visual and auditory impairments. By incorporating

accessibility in graphics, the UCF technical writer ensures that their audience can access and comprehend the graphic information at hand.

## **Implementing ADA guidelines**

Accessibility is often a legal requirement. The ADA guidelines can be applied in tandem with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) to graphics in technical writing to ensure visual elements are accessible through the appropriate use of text, color, and design elements.

There are four principles of accessibility: perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust.

### **Perceivable**

The audience must be able to perceive the graphics, including individuals with sensory impairments. Use alternative text to allow individuals with visual impairments the ability to perceive the graphic information presented. Use contrasting colors between the text and the background. This will allow individuals with color blindness or other visual impairments to be able to distinguish the text from the backgrounds with ease. In addition to color, utilize shapes and symbols to allow for color-blind individuals to easily differentiate between subjects.

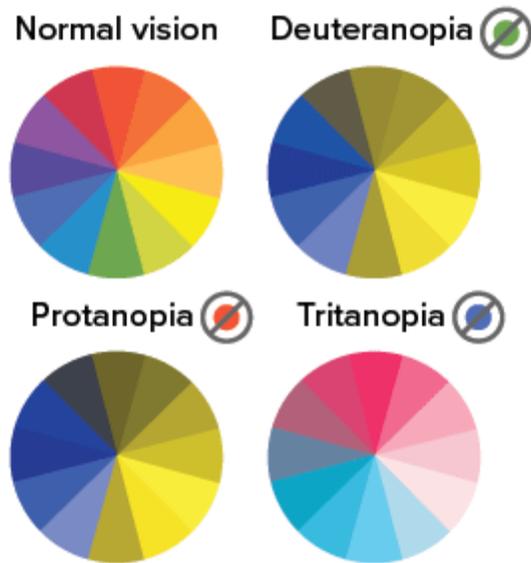


Fig. 2. The three different types of color blindness: Deuteranopia, Protanopia, and Tritanopia. (Woods, 2021)

The graphic above shows how colors may appear to individuals with color blindness. It is important to keep in mind how your selected color palette may appear to individuals with visual impairments.

## Operable

Graphics must be functional and navigable for the audience, including individuals with physical disabilities. Interactive graphics must be accessible via keyboard. A computer mouse may not be accessible to an individual with a mobility impairment.

## Understandable

Ensure that the audience can comprehend the graphics. Labels and titles used within graphics must be legible and written in plain language. Captions must be included for complex graphics to provide supplemental descriptions and explanations.

## Robust

Graphics must be accessible and adaptable across a wide range of technology. Use a high-quality format such as scalable vector graphics to ensure the image's ability to render clearly on a wide range of devices and screen sizes. Use vector graphics to scale without losing quality. For high-quality raster images, use PNG to retain quality. This will allow the image to appear legible when zooming into the graphic. Ensure that graphics are accessible to individuals who use assistive technologies designed for individuals with disabilities, such as voice recognition software or screen readers. Provide clear alternative text for screen readers.

## Ensuring Usability

Usability is defined by The Interaction Design Foundation as “a measure of how well a specific user in a specific context can use a product/design to achieve a defined goal effectively, efficiently and satisfactorily,” (Interaction Design Foundation, 2016). Usability focuses on effective user experience design. Sufficiently designed documents and media will encourage accessibility for a diverse audience, including people with disabilities and different backgrounds

Practicing usability in graphics entails designing and implementing visuals that are easy to understand, view, and read. A UCF technical writer must incorporate graphics with the audience in mind, ensuring clarity, consistency, and efficiency for a diverse range of students, teachers, and faculty.

## Ensuring Clarity

To ensure clarity, graphics must be void of distraction from the information and data at hand. All elements of the graphic must serve to support the main idea. This includes text, shape, and color, and content. To avoid distraction and promote clarity, use minimalistic and informational graphics. Simplicity

allows for clear communication of information, as it includes only the elements of graphics necessary to convey information.

Incorporate labels in one's graphics. Labels serve to reduce ambiguity and to clearly communicate the information presented. Titles and/or captions are to be used when presenting a graphic. The use of titles and captions will also allow for the audience to understand the main message of the graphic presented.

Points Scored	
Team 1	52
Team 2	41

Example 1

<i>Points!!!</i>	
<i>Team 1???</i> 🤔	52
<i>Team 2<sup>100</sup></i>	41

Example 2

Fig 3. The difference between a clear graphic and an unclear, distracting graphic.

Figure 3 shows two examples of a table. Example 1 is a correct example of how a clear and minimalist graphic should look. It labels all parts of the table thoroughly and in a simple font. The use of color is present to encourage the differentiation of sections. Example 2 shows an example of a disorganized and distracting graphic. The use of emojis has nothing to do with the data and distracts from the information being presented. The colors used are unnecessary and excessive. The labels do not clearly describe what information is being presented.

## **Maintaining Consistency**

Maintaining consistency involves using the same design elements such as similar color schemes, fonts, and labeling within one's graphics. The use of consistency in one's graphics helps the audience engage with the information more easily. Keeping the same style in graphics will allow the audience to gain familiarity, making the intake of information swift and seamless.

## **Maintaining Efficiency**

Maintaining efficiency involves conveying information through graphics in the most straightforward way possible. Efficient graphics will be clear and consistent to ensure the quickest intake of information. Visual hierarchy should be used to aid in the streamlining of information to encourage efficiency. By implementing efficiency in the inclusion of graphics in your writing, the audience will only need to use the bare minimum effort to understand the information being conveyed.

## **Graphic Elements and Components**

### **Visuals**

#### **Role of Visuals in Technical Documents**

Visual components in technical documents serve to enhance the reader's experience in many ways. For instance, they provide alternate means of conveying a message in case the text confuses a reader. They also make the document more accessible to disabled/handicapped individuals. UCF has an international reach and audience; visuals can also help cross the inherent language barrier where translated text may be confusing for a reader. Visuals are a necessary supplement and should be included in moderation and organized in a hierarchy to aid the reader in the comprehension of your document.

## **Communicating Importance Through a Visual Hierarchy**

Though the following sections are increasingly specific on the design and implementation of each visual element, it is important to follow a visual hierarchy when laying out all of your elements. A hierarchy is a guide for the reader to follow that highlights the most important pieces of your document. A visual hierarchy entails manipulating the arrangement and presentation. You are likely imagining a typographical hierarchy, where headings are the biggest and the text body is one of the smaller elements. This is important but only one style of a visual hierarchy. You may opt to apply scaling to your visual elements to make one appear larger, you may add spacing to draw attention to each element rather than the piece as a whole, or you may also bring people/objects together to show unity. The human attention span is increasingly short; by applying elements of a strong visual hierarchy you can hook the reader while simultaneously furthering their understanding.

## **Aligning Visual Element Style**

### **Shape**

When deciding on the shape of graphical elements, you should opt for a geometric shape rather than an organic one. Geometric shapes are your typical shapes: triangles, rectangles, circles, etc. that add a sense of order and control. Organic shapes are more natural and irregular in their design.

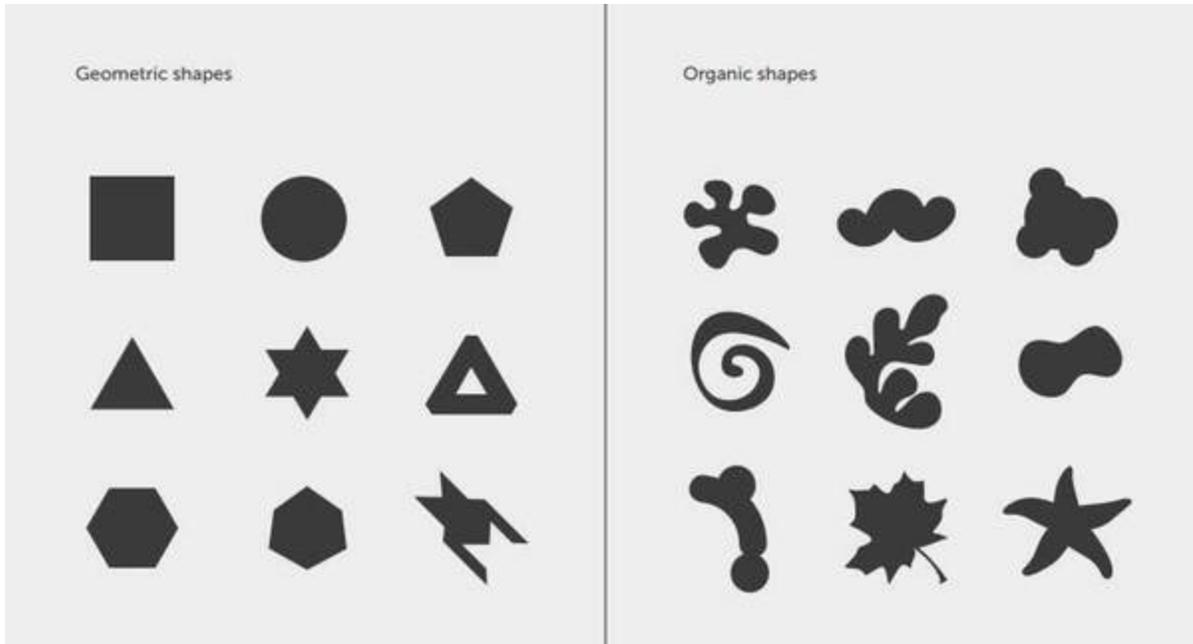


Fig 4. Geometric vs Organic Shapes in Visual Elements.

## White space

White space provides many benefits, such as increasing the legibility of a document, helping readers to focus, and avoiding overwhelming the reader. White space does not need to necessarily be white, but it needs to be the absence of elements in a document. When creating technical documents for UCF, you should use ample white space to take advantage of the listed benefits.

## Color Palette

UCF already has an established color scheme that should be followed when building elements to represent its brand. The primary colors are as follows: Hex #000000, Hex #FFC904/#FFCC00, and UCF metallic gold. The specific color code varies for whichever medium you are designing. When incorporating elements into your document that are not directly representative of the UCF brand you should adhere to the color theory. This theory provides guidelines on the specific color schemes that are optimized to work together.

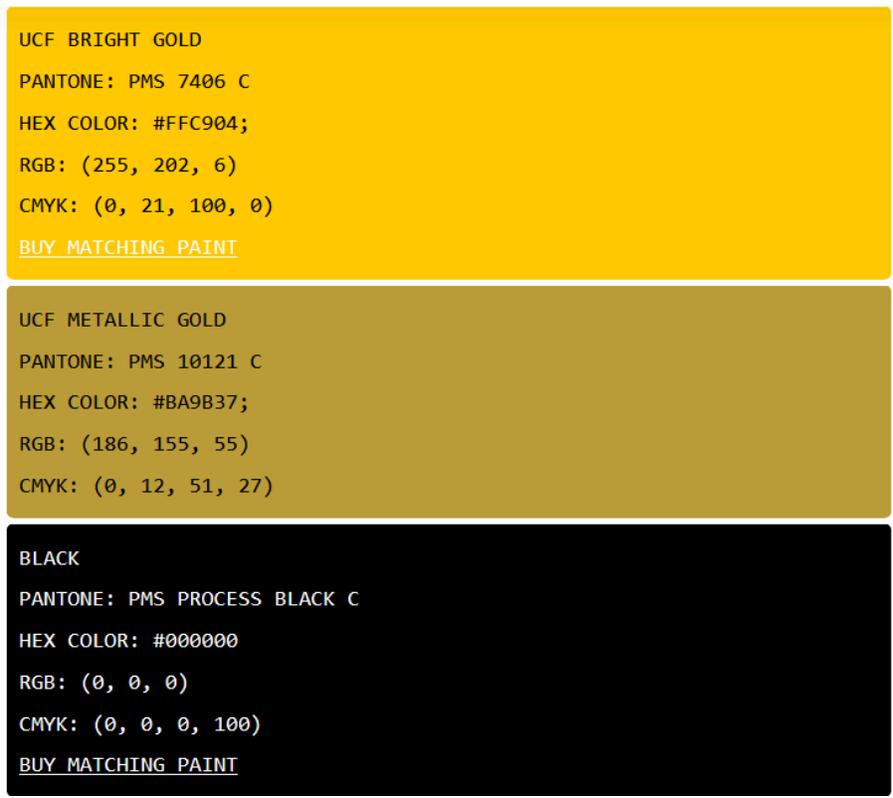


Fig 5. UCF Color Palette.

## Typography/Font

Graphical elements should use the “Gotham” and “Knockout” fonts when adding text to elements. These fonts provide a bold and geometric appeal that will grab a reader’s attention and keep it there.

## Data Visualization

### How to Present Structured Information

Consistency and readability is key when presenting structured information. Data visualizations should be considered the evidence that aims to reinforce an argument or the topic of discussion entirely.

You should limit the number of comparisons in a visualization and use contrasting adjacent colors to make interpretation of the information in your data visualization easier for the reader.

## Tables and Graphs

When designing graphs, it is important to avoid variable scaling to avoid added bias. Across tables and graphs, you should be using a consistent font and style for all your text. Avoid adding too much text to your visualizations. If more discussion is required to convey your point, please move the elaboration into the text of your document to avoid crowding out the data visualization.

## Charts

Avoid 3D charts when presenting information. You should strive to use contrasting colors throughout a chart, especially for items adjacent to each other. Chart legends should be apparent if they are needed at all. If you are presenting one metric, a legend is not needed. You should strive to label data directly, if possible. Bar charts should start at zero.

## Labels and Titles

Though you may vary the font choice between titles and labels, you should never vary the font within each. If you choose Arial for titles, you should use Arial for every title. This ensures your document is consistent and avoids highlighting a particular element. You should only vary from a consistent design when it furthers a narrative; this should be used sparingly to avoid a cluttered visual.

## Diagrams/Illustrations

As stated previously, creating a consistent and legible style is paramount. This carries over into this section by limiting the color palette for any diagrams or illustrations. Additionally, you should consider the mood that your illustrations convey through stroke weight and artistic style.

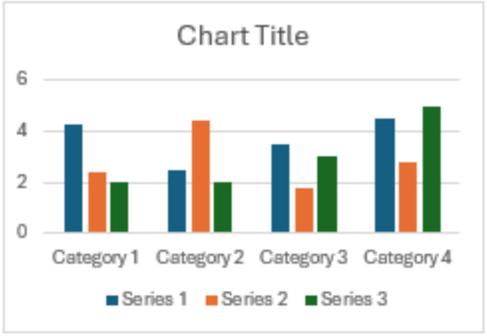
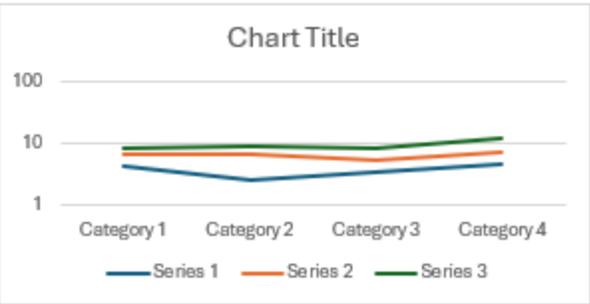
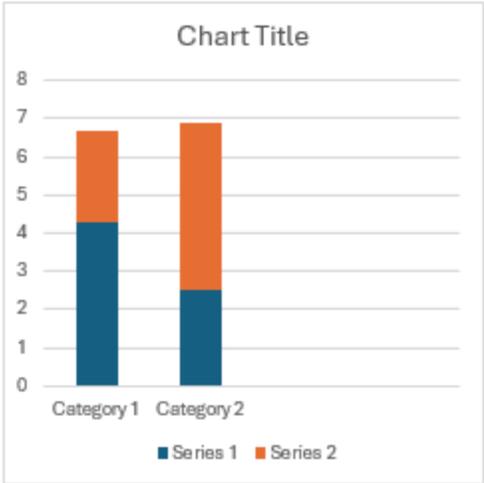
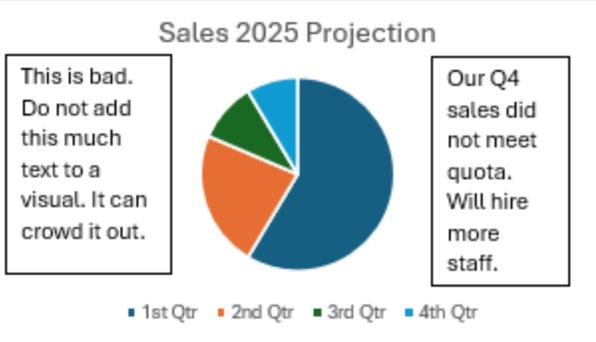
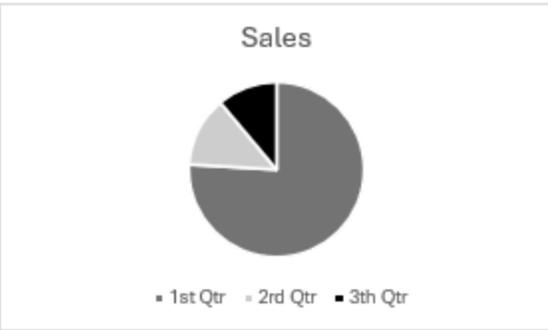
Do	Don't
<p><b>Use a consistent font and style</b></p> 	<p><b>Use variable scaling</b></p> 
<p><b>Use the full axis</b></p> 	<p><b>Use too much text</b></p> 
<p><b>Ensure the visualization is legible in greyscale</b></p> 	<p><b>Use 3D effects</b></p> 

Fig. 6 The left side features examples of graphs and charts that follow guidelines, while the right side features examples that do not.

# Integrating AI graphics

## Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the use of advanced algorithms and computer systems to carry out complex tasks such as processing problem solving and data processing. AI can be used to enhance and generate content and graphics tailored to one's needs.

## Using AI for Graphics

With AI, graphics such as tables, charts, and complex illustrations can be generated based on data provided by the user by analyzing data sets the algorithm can automatically generate visual representations of the information in the same way a human designer would. By automating the process, AI can be used to save time designing graphics and ensure consistency throughout one's use of visuals in their writing.

AI can also improve existing graphics by automating tasks like image optimization and adjustment. Consider using AI for adjusting aspects such as brightness and contrast, or resizing lower-resolution images to make them clearer and easier to read. The use of AI can ensure your graphics uphold professionalism and meet high-quality standards.

## Utilizing AI Tools for Graphic Creation

AI-powered graphic creation tools can make creating graphics much more efficient and improve the quality and consistency of the graphics in your writing. There are many AI tools available for use to enhance the graphics. For example, DALL-E is an AI model developed by OpenAI. This system can create unique and tailored visuals according to the user's preferences. To use DALL-E, input a description of the image you want, and the system will generate an image that aids in the presentation of written

information. Also developed by OpenAI, ChatGPT can assist in generating data visuals like tables and graphs. To use ChatGPT to generate graphics, input your data and your desired visualization format. ChatGPT generates the Python code that uses a data visualization library called Matplotlib to create the graphic.

## **Ensuring Quality in AI Graphic Utilization**

AI may miss subtleties in how information affects the quality of presentation. When integrating AI in your graphic creation, include a review process. Ensure that graphics align with the theme of UCF branding and are consistent with the other graphics in your writing. Always check that your graphic adheres to accessibility and remains culturally sensitive to a diverse audience.

## **Addressing Ethical Concerns in AI Graphics**

While integrating AI into graphic creation, one must uphold responsibility. Openness of your use of AI in graphic creation is essential. Ensure that AI graphics are clearly labeled as produced by AI. This promotes professionalism and transparency in your writing. Additionally, AI systems work off of potentially biased datasets. This runs the risk of graphics being socially harmful with the presence of stereotypes. Be conscious of algorithmic bias; review and refine all AI-generated graphics before publishing them in your writing.

## **Following UCF Brand-Specific Guidelines**

### **Apply Print Guidelines**

Print is the most flexible way to engage and communicate with a variety of audiences. These include, but are not limited to, magazines, brochures, viewbooks, and annual reports. Print is most

effective when combined with engaging content and attention-grabbing visuals. Guidelines for print generally include telling an important story, powering up your headlines, using quality imagery, utilizing white space, creating multiple entry points, and respecting trademarks and logos when applicable (About Our Brand, 2021). Using a cluttered design, having low-quality imagery, and not telling your story clearly, or having an unclear call-to-action, can be detrimental when using print to communicate with an audience.

## **Optimize for Web Usage**

Communicating and engaging with an audience over the Internet has never been easier and has become increasingly popular again and again. When creating a website specifically there are several aspects to keep track of and several more when representing the UCF brand. When creating a website you need to first identify your desired outcomes and think about what challenges will come along the way. To achieve these outcomes you should have a communication strategy and make sure to prioritize your target audience. Writing for the web is different from print because users register the content differently; it is important to keep writing on the web simple, short, and, most importantly, accessible. Visual elements can be very effective when used online but must be of high enough quality that it does not distract the user. Every UCF website should: “Represent the core ideals of the university, be mobile optimized/responsive, load in less than 1000 ms, be ADA and WCAG2 compliant, work in the newest versions of Chrome, Firefox, and Edge, and have a detailed content manager who’s responsible for keeping the site updated” (About Our Brand, 2021).

## **Manage Trademark and Licensing**

When using name-brand logos like the UCF logo, you need to abide by the trademarks and licensing rules. UCF requires that all marketing of its merchandise be consistent with the goals of the university and be consistent with its legal responsibilities. There are a few positions held at UCF that can

use UCF trademarks without prior approval. These positions consist of the UCF Board of Trustees; UCF colleges, departments, and units; UCF Student Government Association; UCF Direct Support Organizations; and UCF faculty and staff for official university-related business. If you do not have a part in any of these positions, you need to obtain written permission in advance from Business Services and UCF Athletics.

## **Select Appropriate Photography**

Photography can significantly enhance the human feel of a product when communicating with your audience. UCF's photography style uses a more youthful and modern personality, with outcomes focused on being entrepreneurial and innovative (About Our Brand, 2021). UCF offers a variety of campus photography with differing resolutions through MediaGraph, which acts as a public, online library of sorts for campus photography. Some good guidelines when using photography include focusing on framing and the message, involving the audience in the experience, highlighting life outside the classroom, acting naturally, and presenting new perspectives. You should avoid having a cluttered composition and using formal group portraits whenever possible.



Fig 7 Example of Photography from the UCF Marketing Photography Collection.

## Select Appropriate Video Content

Video can be used to enhance the storytelling aspects of your presentation. Any UCF videography should be natural, emotional, and inspiring. Guidelines for selecting appropriate video content include having high-quality audio as well as high-quality video, sufficient camera work, exposing properly for your surroundings, and having an idea for overall composition and feel. External film production at UCF is welcome but can be limited or prohibited during emergencies and extenuating circumstances. If you wish to film at UCF, you are encouraged to contact UCF Communications.

## Engaging on Social Media

Social media has become one of the most effective ways to reach out and communicate with any audience. There are several important guidelines when it comes to social media because of how fast the information can spread, which influences public perception as well. All UCF-related logos and graphics on social media are still required to follow UCF graphic standards as well as trademark and licensing rules.

Three areas to note when considering social media are etiquette, management, and transparency. In terms of etiquette, you should always be mindful about what you're posting, what information you are giving out, and remember the social impact a post could have. Make sure not to disclose any confidential information about UCF faculty or students. The management aspect is fairly simple and may be reduced to make smart business and social decisions. Lastly, be transparent. Be consistent in what you post and what you represent, pay attention to public outreach and audience comments, and remember to be human.

## **Following Writing Guidelines**

When writing on behalf of UCF, ensure that you follow the guidelines outlined in the style guide, particularly regarding tone, style, and content. The tone should embrace the UCF brand and ensure that the UCF story is relayed through excitement toward a bright future with our students and our community. In most cases, the style should follow AP Style and should be consistent in aspects such as punctuation, terminology, and other elements of style. "Content that aligns with UCF's strategic plan helps illustrate our contributions to areas we're committed to making a difference in. Sharing the most current and accurate information about UCF is imperative" (About Our Brand, 2021).

## **Finding and Using Cross-Platform Graphics**

### **How to Use and Where to Find Assets**

#### **Utilize Logos**

When considering implementing logos in your cross-platform media, it is important to utilize both primary and secondary logotypes. The primary logotype is the most commonly used brand icon. The secondary logotype can be implemented perhaps when there is an issue with rendering the first logo on a different platform. An example of this would be in mobile app development, you might not have as much

room to display your logo and would have to opt for a condensed version. This would be the secondary. Placement is also key to ensuring a consistent image. Opt to place the primary logo in the top right of documents and media when possible to convey a consistent image. Do not crowd out logos either; ensure whitespace is included in the logo design itself.

## Utilize Video Assets

When considering the use of video assets for cross-platform applications you'll need to consider how the video will materialize on each device and account for subpar viewing platforms. This includes ensuring your videos use contrasting colors when illustrating and using less text in the video itself and instead supplementing with more detail communicated through audio. Video assets should be able to be downscaled but still legible. 720p is considered HD video, and a large portion of the world still watches content below this threshold. View your content through different resolutions to verify it is accessible to as many as possible.

## Utilize Photography Assets

Photography assets, in the scope of cross-platform graphics, possess much of the same qualities as video assets when being considered for cross-platform applications. As a technical professional, you'll need to use contrasting colors as opposed to complementary colors to ensure data visualizations are not misinterpreted and verify that your content can be understood when viewed on a less-than-HD resolution. Photography assets should complement the material at hand. Do not use overly emotional or special effect assets.

## Implement Writing Standards

Writing standards should adhere to the same standards as if it were viewed on a typical desktop when possible. However, if something cannot be directly translated between platforms you should adopt a

complementary style instead. Attempting to recreate the original style might lead to a sense of your work being illegitimate. Overall, being consistent in your application of either style is paramount to align with all other style guide elements and features.

## Using Stationery and Business Cards

If you wish to utilize a business or stationary card, you'll need to place an order through UCF using one of our available templates. This ensures all UCF cards are created with the same quality and follow the same style. Students and administration shall use the same format, with the contents adjusted for each role.



Fig 8 Example of Stationery and Business Cards.

## Use Templates Effectively

### Design in Canva

Canva is a third-party tool that allows users to create many forms of infographics such as presentations, posters, and social media graphics. UCF has an enterprise Canva platform that allows you

access to UCF-branded templates to help students stay on-brand. To use these templates on the platform, you need to acquire them via a paid subscription plan. It is \$130 per user per email address for one year. With these templates, you can add what you need to represent via image or text to complete your design.

## Format an Electronic Letterhead

The electronic letterhead template is only to be used in a non-printed, digital application. For any print application, you should always use the official printed UCF letterhead and envelopes. The template uses the fonts Helvetica and Cambria, but Arial can be used as a substitute. If you wish to use the Gotham font and have it downloaded feel free to do so as well, but you need to be aware that sharing your Word document with someone who does not have the Gotham font downloaded will not display it correctly for the recipient. The electronic letterhead is shown here:

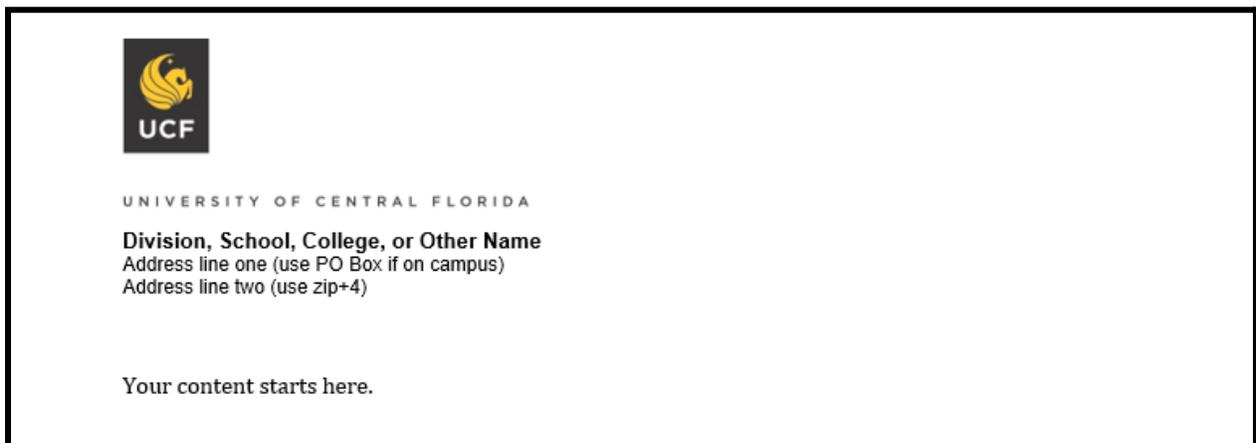


Fig 9 Example of Electronic Letterhead.

## Use Email Signatures

Email signatures for UCF are fairly straightforward with well-defined requirements. You need to limit the use of unnecessary logos and graphical elements. They need to be simple and concise, having it decorated and personalized to work against your message. Here is an example of what it should be like:

---

**Name Name, Jr., Ph.D.**

UCF Title

UCF Department Name

University of Central Florida

P.O. Box 0000 (optional)

Orlando, FL 32000-0000 (optional)

Office: 407.823.0000

Other: 000.000.0000 (optional)

name@ucf.edu

**ucf.edu**

***We unleash the potential of people and ideas to positively change the world.***

*Please note:* Florida has a very broad open records law (F.S. 119). Emails may be subject to public disclosure.

---

It should follow these specifications:

- **Entire font:** Helvetica or Arial
- **Name line:** 12pt. Helvetica or Arial bold
- **Title, address, contact information:** 10pt. Helvetica or Arial regular
- **Public records notification:** 9pt. Helvetica or Arial italic and regular
- **Name line, web address, shortened mission statement:** colored black
- **All other text:** colored dark gray.

## Format Cover Sheet

Below can be seen 2 single-page cover sheet examples. You can download them as Word documents or in other formats [here](#). The templates use the font Gotham by default. If you do not have the font downloaded then you may use any other pre-approved UCF font.

## Prepare Powerpoints

There are four PowerPoint templates available from UCF that can be found [here](#). Each template has instructions and recommendations based on the style. All of them have the same layout and design elements but have different fonts. The fonts in order are Gotham, Arial, Helvetica, and Montserrat. If you use a font that is not widely available like Gotham and share it to someone who does not have it downloaded then the fonts may not display correctly.

## Prepare Brochures

Below can be seen 2 template examples for brochures. You can download them as InDesign documents [here](#). The templates use the font Gotham by default. If you do not have the font downloaded then you may use any other pre-approved UCF font. You can add your photos or use the UCF photos mentioned previously.

# Troubleshooting 101 for Students and Faculty

## Department-Specific Guidelines

### Colleges of Sciences, Engineering, and Computer Science

The UCF College of Sciences—alongside the College of Engineering and Computer Science—boasts many of UCF’s largest departments. Although two separate colleges, they are put together here for convenience due to their similarities in graphics use and department standards. The colleges feature programs involving but not limited to biology, chemistry, anthropology, mathematics, psychology, aerospace engineering, civil engineering, information technology, and more. These departments tend to utilize more complex graphics that specialize in analyzing and communicating data, such as tables, charts, and graphs. Students and faculty associated with our science department are expected to adhere to graphic

standards as detailed in our “Data Visualization” section, as well as correct visual misinterpretations of data or formatting errors that have been published.

- The “Social Media Directory” page under the “About” tab on the UCF College of Sciences webpage will lead you to social media accounts for specific science programs in which graphics inquiries and issues can be submitted.

## College of Arts and Humanities

The UCF College of Arts and Humanities is the creative department center of UCF for all things literature, language, history, performing arts, and visual arts and design, among many other programs. Naturally, the graphics for these departments tend to be more in line with the traditional forms of visual media, such as photography, film, and illustrations either hand-drawn or digitally constructed. Students and faculty who encounter issues with graphics for this department can go to the UCF website and search for the College of Humanities and Arts.

- On the webpage, there is a link to “Communication Resources” beneath the “Newsroom” header. This link leads to another webpage that provides links for social media accounts and managers of the individual programs focused on their areas, as well as a photographer request form and Mediagraph storage folder with pre-approved visual assets and photos that can be used for UCF content freely.
- For online inquiries and graphics concerns, the contact information for Web Content Manager Matthew Dunn is provided. You must reach out to the correct contacts for all department and/or program-specific graphics errors.

## College of Business Administration

UCF’s College of Business Administration features accounting, marketing, management, economics, and all other business-related programs. Because these fields tend to combine mathematics

with creative enterprises, a vast and diverse array of graphics, from charts and graphs to all types of visual media used for advertising are relevant to this department. The College of Business Administration adheres to both data and marketing guidelines by the UCF brand. As mentioned in our “Following “UCF-Brand-Specific Guidelines” section, graphics for the College of Business Administration must be:

- A reflection of the university’s core ideals,
- Easily accessible for mobile devices
- Under 1000 ms
- ADA and WCAG2 compliant
- Working in the latest versions of Chrome, Firefox, and Edge
- Updated regularly by a content manager

## **Solving Potential Issues**

### **Identifying and Avoiding Common Graphics Errors**

Perfection is not required (nor truly possible), but there are both minor and major errors that are easily avoidable. When utilizing visuals for content, it is important to be able to identify these common mistakes that do not align with UCF’s vision.

#### **Poor Labeling**

All visuals should be labeled correctly and effectively to provide context for the audience’s focus. Be sure to avoid over-labeling more than necessary, the label should provide just enough information to describe what may not be obvious to the viewer at first glance. Being too wordy can take away from the intended effect of the visual.

## **Misleading Graphs**

Also known as truncated graphs, they do not start at 0 on the y-axis, thus making them appear shorter. While these graphs can be useful for saving space on a document, we discourage them because they are often misleading and can make insignificant changes in data appear staggering. See “Data Visualization” for further details regarding UCF’s standard for graphs.

## **Inadequate White Space**

Also known as negative space, a lack of white space around both visuals and text can result in a cluttered, disorganized appearance. Just as in a room of a house, you wouldn’t want a piece of furniture filling every open space, similar principles of interior design can be applied to graphics on a document. White space improves readability and gives the viewer a point of focus. One simple way of fixing a visual or larger text that takes up too much space is by aligning it in the center/middle, especially if surrounded or followed by smaller text. Utilize the enter bar on your keyboard or apply double spacing to aid in creating natural-looking negative space.

## **Low Contrast**

Contrast is a necessary part of graphic design, and just as you wouldn’t use a white font color on this white document, it is important that your color choices not only follow the standards as set in the “Color Palette” section but have visible color contrasts without being overly bright or harsh on the eyes. Avoid combinations such as white text on a gold background that is lower contrast and can be difficult to see, and choose a black background with gold or white text, if not a white background with black text.

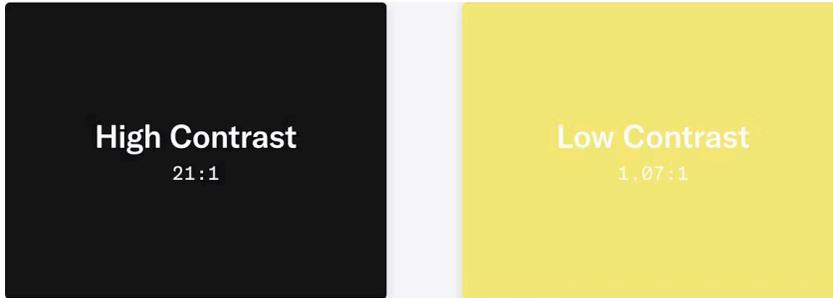


Fig 10. Example of high contrast vs. low contrast.

## Arbitrary Alignment

The placement of your graphics and their elements matters and goes hand in hand with acquiring adequate white space. However, just having white space is not enough. To avoid randomly placing visuals on a document in an incohesive way, utilize gridlines on Microsoft programs such as Word, PowerPoint, and Excel. To show the gridlines, click the View tab and then check the Gridlines box (*Show or Hide Gridlines in Word, PowerPoint, or Excel*).

## Fixing Basic Program Malfunctions

UCF utilizes a variety of programs for graphics and visuals, among them software such as Adobe Creative Cloud, Canva, and CDL Graphics—the college’s very own service that provides visuals for online courses. Here are some standard fixes for program malfunctions.

## Adobe Creative Cloud

Adobe Creative Cloud is a collection of Adobe software applications that includes Photoshop, Premiere Pro, Illustrator, InDesign, After Effects, Lightroom, Premiere Rush, XD, Animate, Dreamweaver, Dimension, Audition, and InCopy provided by all UCF Libraries Public PC desktops, as well as UCF Library MacOS computers.

- Programs may crash if they have not been recently updated. To check for updates, click the Updates screen in the Creative Cloud desktop app, select Update for the app/program, and then attempt to open the program again.
- Use the Creative Cloud Cleaner tool to clean corrupted installation files and delete old, outdated software.
- Disk space may need to be cleared, especially if you receive a file system error. If you are using a UCF Library Public PC or renting a laptop, please contact the LibTech Desk located on the second floor of the John C. Hitt Library with your troubleshooting issues.
- Firewalls and proxies can also block download processes, so if you are using a UCF Library Public PC or renting a laptop, contact LibTech to check the computer's firewall or proxy information.
- For more specific program malfunctions or errors, utilize the Adobe website's Help Center or search the Adobe Support Community.

## **Canva**

As detailed in our "Design In Canva" section, UCF provides a subscription feature with access to UCF-branded design templates and toolkits. You will need a supported browser\ such as Google Chrome, Microsoft Edge, or Mozilla Firefox to use this program.

- Designs have a limit of 50 videos/GIFs and 300 elements. If your design requires more, consider splitting the design into parts.
- Try using the app on a different device, such as your phone, if it is not loading on a computer.
- Close any apps running in the background before restarting the app.
- Search Canva's Help Center on their website for more solutions to specific problems.

## CDL Graphics

UCF's Center for Distributed Learning (CDL) provides graphics and visuals for online courses upon request. Therefore, all issues regarding their graphics can only be resolved by contacting

Webcourses@UCF Support:

- **Phone:** 407-823-0407
- **Email:** [webcourses@ucf.edu](mailto:webcourses@ucf.edu)
- [Online Support Form](#)

## Conclusion

### Summary

The purpose of incorporating graphics is to enhance understanding of information with visuals that support the text, as well as illustrate it for UCF students and faculty that may have disabilities such as dyslexia. Here at UCF, we value inclusivity, accessibility, and usability while maintaining the core aesthetic and professionally personable tone of our University. By adhering to the standards of our brand not only published on our website and courses but across social media platforms, you will be accurately representing our diverse educational community.

# Chapter 3: Tone and Company-Specific Word Usage

## An Introduction to Tone and Word Usage

Word usage and tone are essential for effective communication. The purpose or intention of a document is defined by the clarity and style of its content. This is established through inclusive and professional language, relevant word usage, appropriate grammar and sentence structure, and proper document design. Communication and design must be developed with the audience in mind and directed in such a way that the identity and integrity of the University of Central Florida (UCF) is maintained.

Word usage in a document or as means of communication helps keep the presentation clear. Professionalism and inclusive language must remain at the forefront of the document to ensure that the information being discussed is considerate of the audience reading the document and an appropriate representation of the University. Proper word usage clears up any confusion there may be on what words to use when writing or corresponding, and sets a standard for the tone of the document.

Tone in a document helps the audience establish an attitude toward the writing. Depending on the tone, there will be an instant connection or disconnection from the audience, so it is important that the writing adapts to the correct audience for the most concise interpretation of the information. Tone must bring about a professional and inclusive experience so the audience clearly understands the purpose of the document. Successful use of tone will also help the audience relate to the subject and develop genuine interest in the content.

## Reviewing Historical Context of Word Usage and Tone

Word usage and tone has roots in all languages and was first seen referenced in the Middle English period. It has long been used to establish clarity within writing, and to differentiate grammatical

or textual concepts for varying audiences. It has developed over time to fit into modern language and to create a sense of consistency in communication. It has always remained an important element of writing, being used to represent professional and inclusive language across time. As words have developed over time, so has their usage. This must be considered in developing documents because it is necessary that the audience understands what is being written. Grammar, abbreviations, and acronyms are all examples of areas of writing where mistakes happen often. These components of writing have changed drastically over time, so a general understanding of their use, relating to word usage and tone, is required.

Transitioning to modern writing includes many elements that were not around centuries ago. The adoption of technology and AI has changed the way people write and read. There are resources that people may use to help with writing, but the guidelines in this document must be followed to represent UCF appropriately. The cultural background of people will also influence the way words should be used. For example, formatting different pieces of writing, such as numbers or dates, will be different when communicating with someone of European background compared to someone from the United States of America. These factors must be reviewed and adjusted accordingly. Other things that have changed in more modern times that should be considered in documents through word usage and tone are gender inclusive and accessible language, as well as avoiding biased wording and cultural references.

Before starting a document, understand the historical context of word usage and tone and then become familiar with the University's styles of writing, word preferences, and references. From there, begin to recognize differences in grammar, punctuation, and design to make the document readable for the intended audience. Word usage and tone is specific and particular, so you must pay attention to documents and correspondence while they are being developed.

## **Recognizing Grammar Basics**

Grammar creates the foundation of style and word usage in writing. This has a direct impact on tone and will influence the way readers understand the purpose of a document. It is important that

grammar is used well and prioritized so the intention is clear. If grammar is used incorrectly, the potential for miscommunication, in regards to tone and word usage, is greater. A document must be well thought out and developed, and edited appropriately to address concerns of grammar misuse. The credibility of a document, as well as the represented University, relies on the careful attention the author gives it. Understanding professional and proper usage, as outlined in this chapter, will provide structure and transparency for the entire document and its objective.

## Language and Intent

Language and intent play a large part in everyday life, especially in a company setting. The words used to participate in a discussion, or to write a document, all lead with intention and purpose. This is why it is important that motives behind the words selected are understood and play a part in a professional environment. This section will provide guidelines on how to maintain consistency within your documents and ensure that your communication aligns with not only the field you choose to apply yourself in, but with the University of Central Florida as well.

## Using Tone In Company-Specific Documents

The tone of a company's language shapes the customer's perspective and overall interaction with the organization. When using tone in a company setting, it is important to understand why certain words or phrases are applied above others. Utilizing the right tone of voice to a certain audience professionally can set the boundary between the writer and the reader and allow them to comprehend what is being stated clearly and concisely. To understand the true value of tone in a company setting, you must define what professionalism means to a business, highlighting the importance of communication, morals, work ethic, and acting appropriately. Maintaining professionalism throughout different careers will guide the tone and word usage regardless of what field is chosen.

When taking a closer look at company specific word usage for the University of Central Florida, it is important to use the educational skills provided by the University to execute professional language accordingly. This also means upholding a certain consistency to the University, in order to maintain a fair image and brand for the school. By following professional guidelines, using consistent word usage, and striving to provide a respectful boundary between reader and writer, you will ensure success in the overall document and execute the text properly.

## **Utilizing Viewpoints To Maintain Professionalism**

To maintain a professional tone throughout a set document, it is important to keep a consistent and neutral voice to get the point across as clearly and concisely as possible. Make sure that all documents are written from the third-person perspective, which will guide you to only assert facts and ensure that information is getting across to the reader in the most effective way possible. This will also prevent any unnecessary and casual language that can stray from the actual text.

## **Working With Inclusive/Offensive Language**

When keeping a professional and informative tone throughout a company document, it is key to stay away from offensive language and tones that may confuse or offend readers. This includes using slang, generational lingo, or any unnecessary filler words. It is important to note that words used by a certain group of people may not be accepted by other cultures or students, so be mindful of not only what you are writing, but how you are getting the text across as well. Stick to clear, prescriptive language. This will minimize the chances of implying any cultural or religious disrespect. A determining factor to keep in mind, while writing for company specific purposes, is upholding the brand of the company. In terms of UCF, what is being written does not only reflect the university, but the professors, students, and staff as well.

## Applying Context to Proper Communications

As previously mentioned, you must keep a precise and professional tone throughout the entirety of your document to reflect company values and ensure clarity in all areas of your text. While doing so, keep the context of the overall document accurate while providing a proper voice for the overall writing achieved. Failing to do this may cause miscommunication for your readers and the ability for them to take words out of context.

## Word Usage

Effective word usage throughout company documents includes correct capitalization, selecting your words carefully, and using phrases and transition words effectively. By utilizing appropriate word usage, it will provide your document with clear and precise language and present your company in its proper light.

## Outlining Capitalization Usage

Word usage regarding capitalization is essential when speaking about academic and industrial concepts. Using proper capitalization ensures clarity for readers and gives them insight on what is being referenced. It is important to remember the necessary capitalization usage needed for professional documents and for UCF. You must always capitalize:

- The name of the company
- Universities
- Names of professors, students, and staff
- Names of courses

- Document titles
- Events and programs
- Official names of locations

## Using Transition Words and Phrases Appropriately

Using transition words and phrases will enhance and guide readers from one idea to the next.

Effective transition words can include:

- Furthermore
- In addition
- Therefore
- As a result
- However

Using negative or ambiguous transition words will cause the reader to stray away from the topic at hand and will portray a more causal tone. Examples of these types of transitions words include:

- Obviously
- So
- Like
- Basically
- Anyway

Utilizing professional and proper transition words will improve the research within your document and enhance the tone you are trying to present. It will help clarify specific points between relationships and provide a smooth and efficient guideline for your readers.

## **Avoiding Inappropriate Words and Phrases**

By avoiding inappropriate words or phrases in a company document, you are also maintaining and enforcing a safe and respectful space for your readers. Some words are overly casual, like slang, cause miscommunication or misunderstanding for your readers, and are meant to be avoided within a professional document. Using words that are inclusive and offer a moderate tone will help ensure your professionalism and your respect for all readers.

## **Grammar**

As previously stated, grammar plays an important role in conveying tone. Incorrect usage creates confusion and leaves an unprofessional impression on the audience that is reading the UCF-affiliated work. Grammar's role in word usage is in placement, which can change the tone of the sentence. This section will discuss the specifications of grammar's role in tone and word usage and how to apply each specification for appropriate use.

## **Understanding Connotations and Denotations**

The connotation and denotation of words are often mixed up in common use, which leads to a slow and subtle change in how that word is defined from then on. It is important to highlight in your document what specific usage of the word you are using to prevent confusion.

Denotation is the literal definition of the word that is used. However, some commonly used words have multiple definitions depending on the context used, so it is important to establish what specific definition you are using either through the context or through clarification when necessary.

Connotation is “an idea or feeling a word invokes in addition to its literal or primary meaning,” according to Oxford Languages. This is due to the changing nuances and implications of the word’s use over time, along with personal emotions, investments, and societal influences. All these factors lead to misunderstandings of the word’s use when not specified. For example, the words “consequences” and “discipline” are often used with negative associations due to the common usage of the words relating to negative situations when their definitions are neutral and can be used in both positive and negative ways. The term “manipulation” used to be in the same situation, meaning to handle or control, before another definition was added to supplement the contextual use of the word today to also mean to control a situation or person deceptively. It is best to keep in mind similar situations so that the application of these types of words is not misconstrued.

## **Using Subjects, Verbs, and Action**

Subjects and verbs make up the clause, which is the base of a sentence. How they are used changes the tone of a sentence, which impacts overall quality. Two of the most common tones used in writing are active and passive. Throughout this style guide, an active tone has been used to direct you in how you should format and write to UCF’s standard. An active tone is made through the placement of subjects and verbs. If a passive tone was to be used, the intent of the specifications would be less clear.

To summarize, an active voice is made when the subject performs the action while a passive voice is made when the action is performed on the subject. Not to be confused with cause and effect and vice versa, but rather how the sentence is written for the subject to act with the verb that is performed.

A passive voice example:

“The proposal is being considered by the board.”

An active voice example:

“The board is considering the proposal.”

The different placements not only make the directness of the statement professional, but the change in verb tense makes the intent clearer.

Verb tenses are also a point of conflict; depending on the context, the way the verb is written will not convey the usual meaning. In the example sentence above, the use of “being considered” is present tense despite the verb being written as past tense. On its own, there is minimal confusion, but when sentences like that are written continuously throughout the document, the intended clarity blurs, which leaves room for confusion and error.

## Delving into Pronouns to Define Word Usage

Pronouns are identifiers that are used either in place of or to represent a noun. Grammatically, they aid in preventing a sentence from becoming repetitive by preventing the repeated use of the noun. When there is a discrepancy in noun and pronoun agreements, like which noun belongs to which pronoun, misinterpretations and misunderstandings are likely. If mishandled when used in specifically sensitive topics, it can lead to unprofessional and even discriminatory tones. Throughout this section, you will be guided on the proper use of pronouns and what to avoid to prevent confusion and potentially offensive tones and pronoun usage.

### Using Pronouns as Identifiers Properly

<b>Sentence Subjects</b>	<b>Sentence Objects</b>	<b>Possessions</b>
I	Me	My (Mine)
You	You	Your (Yours)
He	Him	His
She	Her	Her (Hers)

<b>Sentence Subjects</b>	<b>Sentence Objects</b>	<b>Possessions</b>
I	Me	My (Mine)
You	You	Your (Yours)
He	Him	His
It	It	It (Its)
We	Us	Our (Ours)
They	Them	Their (Theirs)
Who	Whom	Whose

3.1 Table of pronoun categories and examples.

Some of the same pronouns are used for different purposes and are mixed up. Surrounding context and clarity may minimize the opportunities for mix-ups in your writing. By using sentences as examples, we can place each respective noun with its respective pronoun while understanding where confusion can occur. Consider the sentence below:

“Professor Nguyen looked over the thesis twice, as she was informed that it had several errors.”

This example places “Professor Nguyen” as the noun, and “she” as the respective pronoun, as well as “the thesis” as the object and “it” as its respective pronoun. This sentence is written clearly with the identifiers in the first and second parts of the clauses respectively. Also, since objects do not have gendered pronouns in the English language, it is easy for the reader to conclude which noun goes with which pronoun.

However, when multiple subjects and nouns are thrown into place, using singular pronouns can throw sentences off balance and they become hard to follow. For example:

“The truck crashed into the railing and it took considerable damage.”

The “it” is ambiguous here. What is the “it” referring to, the truck or the railing? This ambiguity can also be found even when using plural nouns and plural pronouns together. For example:

“When Cameron, Parker, and Alex were introduced to their new colleagues, they were apprehensive.”

To which group does the plural pronoun refer to? The three names introduced or the new colleagues? By clarifying which noun is being specified, the meaning of the sentence is clearer. To prevent repetition, use a descriptor that fits one of the nouns or subjects that can easily be inferred or reformat the sentence so that it is clear which noun is being referenced. Example corrections:

“The truck took considerable damage as it crashed into the railing.”

“Cameron, Parker, and Alex were apprehensive when introduced to their new colleagues.”

Mistakes such as these seem harmless at first and are when isolated. However, when these mistakes are repeated in paragraphs and throughout essays, it gives the reader the impression that the writers, and UCF in turn, are careless and superficial to not clarify their intent through their writing. This is especially important to consider in using gendered and gender-neutral pronouns.

## Pronouns and Gender

As varying and changing gender identities are becoming more accepted, their applications in writing are also advancing. Many academic writers now have accepted using “they” as a singular noun, and as UCF is an inclusive university, using gender-neutral pronouns such as zir/ze, ve, and zhey, etc., is a valid practice when identifying those who wish to use them as their identifiers.

Purposefully using the wrong pronouns about someone is offensive and discriminatory, regardless of whether intentions are good-willed or not. In informal and casual settings, mistakes will occur and can be remedied through practice and good intent. However, according to UCF standards, misgendering can cause emotional and mental stress, so avoiding such mistakes is heavily encouraged in professional environments and work. If you are confused as to which pronoun should be used and cannot contact the person in question, it is best to use gender-neutral terms rather than specifying a pronoun. For example:

“Robin wants the burger rather than the egg sandwich, so the student will have to wait until lunch to order it.”

By referring to Robin as the student rather than using a pronoun, the sentence prevents misgendering while also preventing repetition by using Robin's name again.

## They as a Singular Noun

Using "they" as a singular noun has been used more commonly to prevent gendered usage at all, like in the instance of "his or her" or "he/she." However, with the rise of using "they" as a singular pronoun, the possibility of confusion increases when there is inadequate clarification as to what type of noun "they" is being used. Academic institutions such as Purdue and Walden University insist on using direct clarification to encourage the normalization of "they" as a single-use pronoun; while UCF does not have a direct statement regarding this, following their example has no setbacks and creates a more positive atmosphere with those who use these pronouns.

## Common Mistakes Involving Pronouns

The most common mistakes involving pronouns are when they are mixed up with contractions, and writers use one for the other and vice versa. Oftentimes, it is due to pronunciation when speaking. For example:

- "The corporation is deciding to terminate you; it's policies are clear."
- "It doesn't matter who's contraband they belong to; they must be confiscated."
- "They're house; they're rules."

In the first two sentences, it can be misinterpreted that the contractions are possessive pronouns. An apostrophe followed by an s is often used as a pronoun when in front of a name. However, by remembering that an apostrophe followed by an s represents a contraction "is" (except for a name), these mistakes can be avoided. The third sentence's contraction can also be remedied by remembering that "they're" stands for "they are." Even though it can be argued that the "they" is a correct pronoun standing in for a noun, using the proper pronoun prevents the need for this argument.

## Emphasizing Punctuation Efficiently

Punctuation's effect on tone is minimal, but no less important to address. With the evolving changes that come with language, the same can be applied to how the writing is structured. Punctuation's role in formatting is especially relevant, as it changes the clause within the sentence, which can change the meaning and interpretation readers will have. Common punctuation errors are comma splices, fused sentences, and sentence fragments, all of which are structural breaks that can be interpreted very differently than intended, regardless of context.

### Exclamation Points in Tone

Exclamation point usage has changed since the rise of texting and online messaging, leading to the unnecessary and repeated use of them to show emphasis or excitement. This is fine for informal or casual writing, but it should be reserved for such because it would be considered excessive in formal and academic writing. In fact, UCF's standard on exclamation points is not to use them in headings and not to use them more than once per page. Appropriate usage of exclamation points is to show astonishment, excitement, or as an exclamation. When used in conjunction with a question mark, place the exclamation mark after. Avoid using the interrobang (?) due to diminishing use and accessibility in different fonts. Uncommonly, exclamation marks have been put in the middle of sentences for dramatic effect in place of a comma, but will not be used here. Visual examples are listed below.

Inappropriate uses:

- Hello!!!!!!
- !! Oh wow!!
- Did you see how big that bug was?!

Appropriate uses:

- Boo!

- Stop!
- What do you mean we have a pop quiz?!

## Other Punctuation Errors that Impact Tone

The most common consequence of punctuation misuse is determining the independent clause of the sentence, which impacts the rest of the structure. Structure changes in a sentence can cause confusion and misunderstandings, so understanding the proper usage of the different breaks in a sentence will provide more clarity of the writer's intent.

One of these mistakes is known as a comma splice, where two independent clauses are put together with just a comma. Some comma splices add a transitional phrase before or after the comma, but this is still insufficient. Strange breaks such as these leave an unfavorable impression on the readers when caught, so you must correct these to prevent an unfavorable impression towards UCF. An example of this includes:

“Dana got a bad grade on this test therefore, he should review the material again before the midterm.”

To fix this sentence, add a semicolon before the transitional phrase to clarify that the clauses are independent, although related. If you have no use for the transitional phrase or deem it unnecessary, write the clauses as two separate sentences.

A fused sentence, more commonly known as a run-on sentence, is a sentence where multiple independent clauses are joined without any punctuation or a conjunction, such as: and, or, but, yet, so, for, and nor. Fused sentences give the impression that a lot of information is being given at once. There are no stops or breaks, and no time for the reader to process it all, even if the reader can take their time to read the documents that have these mistakes. As the goal is to be clear and direct, allowing the reader to feel that they can take their time is important. An example of this type of sentence includes:

“The car’s tire went flat on the way here it’s why we took so long to get the late pass let alone get to class.”

There are multiple ways to fix this sentence. To separate the first two clauses, you can add a period between “here” and “it’s” while capitalizing “it’s” to begin the next sentence. For the third clause, we can make it a dependent clause and pair it with the second clause with the conjunction and. With the corrections added, the phrase looks like this:

“The car’s tire went flat on the way here. It’s why we took so long to get the late pass and get to class.”

A sentence fragment is when a sentence is missing a component that makes it a sentence in the first place. In informal or narrative writing, it is often used stylistically. However, in a professional setting, missing information leads to misinterpretations and miscommunication. After all, when encountering a sentence fragment, the reader can either fill in the information themselves through the surrounding context or miss the meaning of the sentence entirely, both of which are detrimental to communication. For example:

“The administration, who are looking through this year’s metrics, which is on enrollment.”

The sentence is structured in a way that implies there is a reason that the administration is looking at the metrics that are on enrollment, but that reason is not present. Either rewrite the sentence to state clearly that they are looking at enrollment metrics or write in the action. Examples of possible revisions include:

- “The administration, who are looking through this year’s metrics, notice a discrepancy in enrollment.”
- “The administration is looking at this year’s enrollment metrics.”

By altering the sentences in this way, the fragment is filled in.

# Outlining

Outlining a document provides an opportunity for clarification within writing and communication. The subjects are the main ideas and an overview of the purpose, while the subheadings give a description of each main heading. You can write a document without outlining, but communication will be less effective. Conveying tone and choosing suitable words is more accessible and successful through the structure of an outline. It lays out a foundation and allows more time to be spent on the creation of content, therefore creating more clarity in a document. Outlining also helps organize content, leading to professional and inclusive language, and making the potential for miscommunication less likely.

## Understanding the Principles of Outlining

It is important to develop an outline for any document or piece of writing so tone and word usage can be defined and clarified for the intended audience. An outline should start with a prompt and continue with support for the direction of the subjects. Main ideas should be explained before supportive ideas, which should be explained sequentially. It is important to look at how ideas are arranged and connected so the topic or subject remains clear. Seeing the topics and details listed together gives a glimpse of how your audience will read and interpret a document.

The outline will act as a guide for how to transition your document appropriately and with consistency. This will make the document easier for readers to digest, as details are filled into the flow of subjects, and keep the tone transparent throughout. The subheadings and supportive details must be lettered or numbered in listed format to maintain connection with main headings. This is also a good time to provide a list of resources to refer back to for further development of the subject matter. Outlining provides flow before writing a document and helps the tone stay in clear focus.

## Acknowledging Descriptions and Usage of Outlines

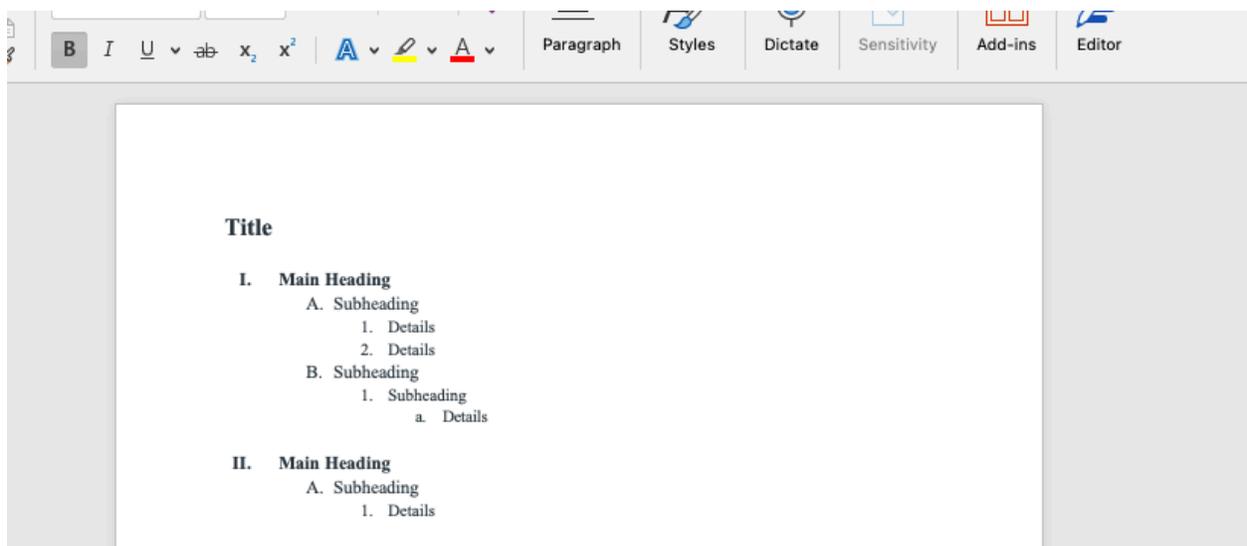
Before beginning any outline, it is important to have a clear picture of the audience a document is intended for. Style, voice, and tone must all fit appropriately into the details that will make up the main points of a piece of writing. When these elements align, the purpose of the document will be successfully shared. As you begin creating the outline, consider word usage to enhance clarity. In technical writing, there is typically a goal to simplify a document within a style of writing that promotes plainness. This helps the audience understand the technicality of something in a way that is more user-friendly. Through specific word choices and grammatics, the attitude of the author is identified. For example, if the intention is to direct or teach your audience how to effectively complete a task, using task-based headings for each of your subjects will be most fitting. Be direct and clear in your heading descriptions by using bare infinitives, or the base form of verbs. Examples of this are listed below:

- You should...
- You must...
- Follow this...

The grammar make-up of the heading is important here, as it further conveys the tone and sets a level of professionalism and inclusivity. Acknowledging the descriptive nature of an outline provides an overview of the content of a document as one entire piece. It is a process that gives consideration to the audience and the author. It groups ideas together and keeps you on track to stay connected with the main points so the message remains in focus and the document is well received. If a document needs authorization to be published, outlining also provides a good example as a source of communication for the person who can make that happen.

## Organizing Documents and Outlines with Tone Appropriate Style

Organizing outlines is a critical part of developing tone throughout a written document. The structure and design must be priority and include roman numerals, letters, and numbers. Ideas need to be organized in hierarchical fashion, with first points representing the opening or purpose of the document. Roman numerals must be used for the main heading and will indicate the main subjects of your document. Further subheadings and details will continue the sequential order of information while filling in gaps for content. Do not use underlines for any headings or titles, as it lacks strength in organizational aesthetics.



3.2 Image of an appropriate structure for outlining.

As you work from your outline, research may continue and your knowledge of the subject may evolve or increase. This is expected and encouraged. Fill in relevant information or take out parts that no longer serve the purpose of the document. Detailed sections of the outline must be filled in with complete sentences to provide clarity on the direction of subject matter. This will make it easier to identify sections that need to be adjusted, as well as maintain a consistent tone through the development of the document.

As a technical writer at UCF, it is important to remain professional and inclusive when writing for an audience. Being considerate of word usage and tone while making and structuring your outline will help keep this balance. Structuring the outline as mentioned above appropriately organizes material and allows for quick, efficient understanding of the document's intent. Knowing how to outline is fundamental to being a good technical writer. Many documents succeed through an outline-type structure as their whole development. This could include how-to documents, instructional documents, or manuals. A table of contents, which is found in a variety of technical documents, is another example of where an outline-type structure may be used. Understanding how to create an effective outline is necessary for success in technical writing.

## Numbers

When writing professionally, it is important to understand how to use numbers in addition to other grammar rules set by different institutions. Since numbers can represent things such as quantity, time, date and more, writers should refer to this section to familiarize themselves with the rules and formats that should be used when writing numbers in technical documentation. The way you use numbers in writing can vary depending on the context of the subject matter as well as the discretion of the writer.

### Numbers vs. Words

Spell out whole numbers from zero through nine, and use numerals for numbers 10 or greater.

Examples of this include:

- five laptops
- 20 cars

Do not start sentences with numerals. If a sentence must start with a number, make sure to spell out the number. Alternatively, modify the sentence so that the number appears later. Examples of this include:

- Two cars were stolen that night.
- The thieves ended up stealing two cars.

## Exceptions

There will be times when numerals should be used even with numbers that are less than 10. Similarly, there will be other times where using words for numbers greater than 10 is more appropriate. Determining whether to use words or numerals to represent numbers depends on how the numbers will be used as well as what you deem most appropriate for your specific documentation.

## Using Numerals

Below is a table which shows situations in which numerals should be used, even if the numbers are less than 10.

Use numerals for...	Examples
Version numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• version 4</li></ul>
Technical quantities such as amount of memory, disk space, usage limits, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 60 Mbps</li><li>• 32-bit</li><li>• 2 queries</li></ul>
Page numbers, chapter numbers, sections, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 16 pages</li><li>• chapter 5</li></ul>
Prices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• \$3.99.</li></ul>
Numbers without units (e.g. numbers in mathematical expressions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One of the equations was <math>y = 5x + 7</math>.</li></ul>

Numbers less than 10 if they appear in the same sentence with numbers greater than 9 (the numbers must be referring to the same type of subject (more on this after the table))	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Though the quiz had 10 questions, he only got 5 questions right.</li> </ul>
Negative numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The temperature dropped to <math>-3^{\circ}\text{F}</math>.</li> </ul>
Decimal numbers (for decimal numbers less than 1 and greater than -1, put a zero before the decimal point)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11.065</li> <li>• 0.34</li> <li>• <math>-0.798</math></li> </ul>
Percentages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20%</li> </ul>
Dimensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <math>2 \times 8</math></li> </ul>
Measurements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 mg</li> </ul>
Numbers in a range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2012-2022</li> <li>• <math>7^{\circ}\text{C}</math> to <math>52^{\circ}\text{C}</math></li> </ul>

3.3 Table showing when to use numerals.

Note: Though numerals should be used for numbers less than 10 if they appear in the same sentence with numbers greater than 9, this should only be the case if the two numbers are of the same type. If two numbers that refer to different things must appear in the same sentence, use a numeral for one and spell out the other. Examples of this include:

- Three 500-page books.
- Four 6-foot planks.

## Using Words to Represent Numbers

There are a few situations in which using words for numbers greater than nine may be more appropriate. Below is a list of situations where using words to represent numbers is preferred:

- Ordinals
- Fractions (if you choose to spell them out)
- When a sentence must begin with a number
- Compound numbers (if you deem it most appropriate to be spelled out)

## Commas in Numbers

Use commas in numbers that have four or more digits. Examples of this include:

- 2,397 MB
- \$3,500,000

## Exceptions

For baud, pixels, or years, only use commas when the number has five or more digits. Examples of this include:

- 7500 baud
- 15,000 baud
- 1280 × 720 pixels
- 11,520 pixels
- 1000 B.C.
- 11,000 B.C.

## Ordinal numbers

Ordinal numbers should always be spelled out. Compound numbers should be hyphenated.

Examples of this include:

- twenty-first century
- the second column

## Exception

Do not use ordinals for dates, such as “October first”. Instead, use numerals to represent the date’s numbers, such as “October 1st.”

## Numbers in Dates

As stated before, numerals should be used to represent dates. However, there is more information about expressing dates that is worth mentioning. For instance, the names of months and days of the week should be spelled out in full. Similarly, years should be the full, four-digit number rather than a two-digit abbreviation. If the day of a week is to be included in a date, add it before the month. Examples of this include:

- January 1, 2022
- Friday, October 18, 2024

## Partial Dates and Abbreviations

If only the month and year of a date is being written, do not use a comma. For example:

- He was fired in May 2016.

Generally, abbreviating dates is not recommended. However, abbreviating the month and the day of the week to their three-letter abbreviations is acceptable if the purpose is to conserve space for things like headings or tables. If the abbreviation of a date is necessary, you must do so for the entire date. It is important to remain consistent with where abbreviations are applied. For example, if a date is abbreviated to fit in a table cell, all dates must be abbreviated in all table cells. For example:

- Mon, Sep 3, 2018

When writing dates, always try to spell them out in full. This is because different regions of the world use different orders for numeric date formats. For example, the date 12/02/24 means December 2, 2024 for people in the US. However, this date means February 12, 2024 for people in the UK. If representing a date in numerical format is absolutely necessary, use the format “YYYY-MM-DD” as stated in the ISO 8601 international standards for numerical date format.

## Expressing Dates and Times Together

If date and a time must be expressed together, mention the date first and then the time. Examples of this include:

- 2015-03-18 at 2 PM
- July 20, 2004, at 7 AM

## Fractions

Fractions can be expressed as decimals, as symbols, or in words, whichever is deemed most appropriate. However, do not express fractions with a slash between the numerator and the denominator unless an equation has to be written in text. If Microsoft Word or Google Docs is being used, fractions can easily be implemented in text. For Microsoft Word, click on the “Insert” tab, then click on the “Equation” button, and then click on the “Fraction” drop down to select the appropriate fraction type to be inserted. For Google Docs, click on the “Insert” tab, then click on the “Equation” tab, and then click on the “Math operations” drop-down menu and select the fraction option. For decimal fractions less than one, add a zero before the decimal point. Examples of this include:

- 0.6
- 0.0102

When spelling out fractions, connect the numerator and the denominator with a hyphen unless either contains a hyphen already. Examples of this include:

- One-third of the document
- Two-thirds completed
- Four sixty-fourths

## Currency

There are many different currencies and understanding the differences is essential. Not only do you need to research which symbols different currencies use, but you also need to consider that there are currencies that use a different number of digits after the decimal separator. Something else to consider is that some cultures use a comma instead of a decimal point, and vice versa. There are even some currencies that share the same currency symbol. With these things in mind, the rules designed to aid you in writing currencies are found below.

### Decimals with Currency

If an amount of money does not have cents, or the equivalent for other currencies like pence or paise, including the decimal place is optional. Examples of this include:

- £100 GBP
- £100.00 GBP

However, it is important to keep in mind that not all currencies adhere to the same rule of having two digits after the decimal point. Examples of this include:

- \$1 CLP
- BD 2.103 BHD

For example, the Bahraini dinar uses three decimal digits when representing fils, which is Bahrain's equivalent of US cents. Meanwhile, the Chilean peso does not have cents, or an equivalent of cents, meaning that this currency does not use decimals at all. Be sure to research about a country's currency to ensure proper representation in writing.

### Symbols

Always write the currency's symbol before the amount of money is shown. Leave no space between the currency symbol and the amount of money. Examples of this include:

- \$5.00 USD
- £50 GBP
- ¥1,000 JPY
- ₹3,000,000 INR

## Currency Identifiers

The currency examples shown previously always contain a three-letter acronym next to the money amount. This is from the ISO 4217, which is an international standard that declares codes for the representation of currencies, enabling clarity and reducing errors. The purpose of using these codes is to distinguish certain currencies that use the same symbol. As an example, the Chinese yuan and the Japanese yen both use the same symbol. Using their country code, CNY for the yuan and JPY for the yen, as established by the ISO will clear any ambiguity that arises with certain currencies.

In cases where your writing features few, easily distinguishable currencies, these country codes should be used. However, they only need to be used once. This means that if your document talks about the US dollar and the British pound, you should use their respective three-letter acronyms for the first time that the currencies appear, and subsequent use of these currencies within the document will no longer require these acronyms. However, if your document contains currencies that share the same symbol, like the US dollar and the Australian dollar, for example, then the country code must be used throughout the entire document, even if you use other currencies that have unique symbols. The purpose of this is to maintain clarity as well as consistency.

## Tech Terms & Jargon

As a technical writer, you are responsible for conveying information clearly, even to those that may not be familiar with the topics you write about. Since technical writing may involve many terms and acronyms that usually only experts in the field know, you must implement a strategy for conveying

information that any novice can digest and learn from. Due to the fact that both experts and novices may read your documents, maintaining clear definitions for tech terms and jargon while maintaining a neutral tone is key to successful publications.

## **Writing For Experts and Novices**

When writing documents that get highly technical, dedicate a portion of your introduction to informing the reader about any tech terminology or jargon that will be used throughout the document. These terms can range from a variety of different types of technology such as file types, programs or software, hardware, AI, etc. If your document has details about any of these or other technology-related topics, consider telling the reader about what you are going to discuss in your documentation, and clearly defining any technology related jargon prior to proceeding with the body of your work.

## **Software for Technical Writing**

While part of being a technical writer involves the ability to write professionally to a wide range of audiences, it is also your responsibility to stay up to date with writing tools and technology to maintain a high level of competence. By constantly learning about new technologies, you increase your level of expertise, thus allowing you to more effectively adjust your writing tone as well as the way you define technology jargon in your work. The Microsoft 365 family of products and the Google Online Workspace family of apps are great tools that all writers should be familiar with. These applications offer a wide variety of functionality that allows you to cater to the needs of almost any audience by providing you with the necessary software for different purposes. Of these groups of apps, Microsoft Word and Google Docs will likely be the most relevant applications for technical writers, which is why you should take the time to learn how to use these apps at a high level. By learning how to use things like Styles within these two apps, you will maximize your ability to cater your writing tone to your target audience by making the document easier to digest through visuals.

## Abbreviations/Acronyms

Abbreviations are shortened forms of words or phrases, while acronyms are a type of abbreviation that consists of the initials of the words or phrases. UCF's standards in using abbreviations and acronyms are to spell them out on the first reference except for those that are universally recognized, as they can be abbreviated on the first reference. All universal acronyms will have the term "universal" in parentheses denoting such. A second exception is the UCF specifications, which are noted in the lists below. If the abbreviation or acronym needs to be pluralized, follow it with a lowercase s. It is unnecessary to follow that first reference with the abbreviation or acronym in parentheses. If the abbreviation or acronym is not clear on the second reference, do not use it, as a different identifier can be used instead.

### **Understanding the General and Common Use of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

As UCF's relations expand beyond education and its trademarks, the listed abbreviations and acronyms are broken down into different sections to specify the relations that apply to different audiences you will write to. The educational and degree lists apply to students, parents or guardians of students, and so on, while the Florida-affiliated acronyms and more generalized abbreviations can apply to corporations, administrations, marketing, etc.

## List of General/Common Use abbreviations and acronyms.

### **Educational Terms**

- American College Testing, ACT. Use only initials when referred to. (Universal)
- Co-educational, Coed. Use only as the adjective, no hyphen. (Universal)
- End-of-course, EOC
- Grade Point Average, GPA (Universal)
- Graduate Record Examination, GRE
- Massive open online courses, MOOC (Universal)
- Scholastic Aptitude Test, SAT. Use only initials when referred to. (Universal)
- Student Government, SG (SGA). A for Association when applicable. (Universal)
- Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, STEM (STEAM). A for Art when incorporated. (Universal)

### **Relevant University and University-Affiliated Acronyms**

- Association of American Universities, AAU
- Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, Florida A&M, FAMU
- Florida Atlantic University, FAU
- Florida Gulf Coast University, FGCU
- Florida International University, FIU
- Florida State University, FSU
- National Collegiate Athletic Association, NCAA (Universal)
- New College of Florida, NCF
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, SASCOC

- University of Central Florida, UCF
- University of North Florida, UNF
- University of South Florida, USF
- University of West Florida, UWF

Note: Seminole State College of Florida does not use SSC, as there is a Seminole State College in Oklahoma.

## **Degree and Career Abbreviations and Acronyms**

UCF has specific guidelines regarding degree abbreviations. For degrees, those with two capital letters are written with periods and no spaces between the letters, and those with three or more capital letters are written with no periods and no spaces between the letters. When referring to people who hold degrees, writing out the specific degree is preferable (associate degree, bachelor's degree, Master of Arts, doctorate, etc.). The abbreviations should only be put after a full name when necessary to identify them. Other specifications are listed below.

- Administrative and Professional employment classification, A&P (Universal)
- Bachelor of Arts, B.A. (Universal)
- Bachelor of Science, B.S. (Universal)
- Doctor, Dr. Use only when referring to Dr. Phillips. Use formal titles instead when referring to a title (professor, doctor, researcher, etc.). (Universal).
- Master of Arts, M.A. (Universal)
- Master of Business Administration, MBA (Universal)
- Master of Science, M.S. (Universal)
- Other Personal Services employment classification, OPS (Universal)
- Doctor of Philosophy, Ph.D., Ph.D.s. Use abbreviations only when names are listed. (Universal).
- Teaching English as a Foreign Language, TEFL (Universal)

- Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, TESOL (Universal)

### **Florida-affiliated Abbreviations and Acronyms**

- Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, FCAT
- Florida Interactive Entertainment Academy, FIEA
- Florida Space Institute, FSI
- Florida Standards Assessment, FSA
- United Faculty of Florida, UFF

### **Non-specific General and Common Use Abbreviations and Acronyms**

- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, FERPA
- Free Application for Federal Student Aid, FAFSA
- Fair Labor Standards Act, FLSA
- Kennedy Space Center, KSC
- Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Questioning/Queer, LGBTQ+ (Universal)
- Network Identification Number, NID (Universal)
- Public Broadcasting Service, PBS (Universal)
- Personal Identification Number, PID (Universal)
- Universal Support Personnel System, USPS (Universal)
- Voluntary Prekindergarten Program, VPK (Universal)
- Reserve Officers' Training Corps, ROTC (Universal)

## **Elaborating on UCF-Specific Abbreviations and Acronyms**

As UCF has created these abbreviations and acronyms themselves, the standards they follow are entirely up to UCF and may be subject to change at any point. With that said, most of the general and

common use standards apply to these acronyms as well. However, the exceptions for universal abbreviations and acronyms apply to common use ones relative to UCF and how often they are known with students, administration, and other affiliations. To remain consistent with the lists above, the UCF common use abbreviations and acronyms will have universal in parentheses to denote them.

## List of UCF-Specific Abbreviations/Acronyms.

### UCF Affiliations and Buildings

- Center for Research and Education in Arts, Technology and Entertain, CREATE (Universal)
- Center for Research and Education in Optics and Lasers, CREOL (Universal)
- Center for Autism and Related Disabilities, CARD
- Center for Initiatives in STEM, iSTEM
- Florida Technological University, FTU, former name of UCF
- Office of Student Involvement, OSI
- Student Academic Resource Center, SARC

### Non-specific UCF Abbreviations and Acronyms

- Bridging the Innovation to Development Gap, BRIDG (Universal)
- Knight Experience Team, kNEXT (Universal)
- Leadership Enrichment and Academic Development, LEAD Scholars (Universal)
- Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, LEED (Universal)
- UCF-supported jazz radio station, WUCF FM (Universal)
- UCF-operated PBS TV station, WUCF TV (Universal)

# Chapter 4: Grammar and Punctuation Conventions

## Introduction

This chapter discusses clarity and accuracy in written communication by highlighting the significance of grammar and punctuation. Correct grammar and punctuation are important for technical writers to implement in their writing as they will be communicating with other professionals throughout their careers; these professionals will expect formal communications to be correctly written. Accessibility in writing, another topic important for technical writers, is also discussed. Accessible writing is important for communicating with other individuals with disabilities. Finally, technical writers may have a need to communicate with individuals with different backgrounds, from other cultures, or with different language knowledge; therefore, this chapter covers language and how the ability to translate can be beneficial.

## Punctuation and Intro to Grammar Basics

### Introduction to Punctuation

Punctuation, put simply, is the symbols we use to mark specific points in a sentence. Such symbols are used in various locations throughout writing. Examples include periods, which mark the end of sentences, and commas, which can mark pauses, lists, and more. Read on for more information and examples.

## Background Information

Throughout this major section, various types of punctuation as well as grammatical devices. Some of the punctuation descriptions will also contain mentions of grammatical devices. All of the major grammatical devices mentioned throughout this section are:

- Subject: The topic or noun a sentence is about.
- Verb: The action taken in a sentence.
- Object: The thing that receives the action.
- Independent clause: A clause that has both a subject and verb, which is a complete sentence in itself.
  - Example: The room is large.
- Dependent clause: A clause that has a subject and verb but cannot stand alone, which is not a complete sentence.
  - Example: To do what you want...
- Conjunction: Words which link other words. Conjunctions can be remembered by the mnemonic (memory device) FANBOYS: For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So.
  - Example in a sentence: She couldn't reach the top shelf, so she asked for help.
- Appositive: Noun or pronoun which identifies another noun.
  - Example: Your dog, *Spot*...

## Types of Punctuation

Common types of punctuation are as follows, along with brief descriptions of their functions:

- Periods, question marks, and exclamation marks are used to mark the end of sentences. Which mark to use depends on the tone of the sentence.
- Commas are used:
  - after an introductory or prepositional phrase.

- between coordinate adjectives (which are equal and reversible).
- after a transitional word or phrase.
- to introduce or end a quotation.
- between the day and year in a date.
- in numbers 4 or more digits (1,000 or higher).
- in a personal title (such as Ph.D. or MD).
- to separate city from state or state from country.
- to set apart appositives.
- to join two clauses.
- to separate items of a list with three or more items.
- to separate nonessential information, similar to parentheses.
- Semicolons are used to separate two related independent clauses without a coordinating conjunction. They are also used to separate items in a list when an individual list item also contains a list.
- Colons are used:
  - to join two independent clauses when emphasis is placed on the second.
  - after an independent clause when it is followed by a list or by another idea directly related to the clause.
  - at the end of a business letter greeting.
  - to separate the hour and minute of time.
  - to separate the chapter and verse in a Biblical reference.
- Parentheses are used to emphasize content while separating nonessential content. Parentheses place more emphasis on this content than commas.
- Dashes are used:
  - to set off an appositive phrase which includes commas (i.e. a list).
  - to emphasize content that follows a singular dash.

- to set apart content between two dashes.
  - Content can be nonessential, but dashes place more emphasis than parentheses.
- Quotation marks are used for direct quotes. According to the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL)'s article on punctuation, “commas and periods are placed inside the closing quotation mark, and colons and semicolons are placed outside. The placement of question and exclamation marks depends on the situation.”
- Apostrophes are used to show ownership (Example 1 below). They are also used for a direct quote within a direct quote (Example 2 below).
  - Example 1: Sarah’s chair, Chris’ tree
  - Example 2: “When she finished reading, she said, ‘Wow, this book is great.’”

## Proper and Improper Use of Punctuation and Grammar

Proper use of punctuation and grammar are extremely important in formal or business settings. Improper use of punctuation is very pervasive. The goal of this section is to leave you with a better understanding of proper versus improper use of grammar.

### Apostrophes

Apostrophes are one of the most often misused punctuation devices. Often, they are used in the plural forms of nouns when they should not be. Note that apostrophes do not ever pluralize a noun; they only show that noun’s ownership of something else.

Some words have slightly different spellings when singular or when plural. The word *leaf*, for example, becomes *leaves*; it does not become *leafs* or *leaf’s*. Some words that end with -y change to -ies for their plural form, and some do not. Words whose spellings stay the same do not gain an apostrophe

for their plural form. The word “dog” does not become “dog’s.” The word *dog’s* shows ownership, as in “the dog’s treats,” where *dogs* shows that there is more than one dog being referred to. The only time a plural noun receives an apostrophe is when the plural form is in ownership of something. Going back to the last example, to show that more than one dog is in ownership of something, you would write “the *dogs’* treats.”

When writing contractions (two words which have become one) such as can’t or don’t, apostrophes *replace* one or more letter(s). The same is true when writing years: instead of writing 2024, one could write ‘24. A common mistake occurs when a person places the apostrophe in the incorrect place. Examples:

- 2024, written as 24’
  - Because the apostrophe replaces the first part of the written year, it goes in front of the number.
- have’nt
  - Because the apostrophe replaces the “o” in “not,” it goes in the same place between the “n” and the “t.”
- ya’ll
  - The apostrophe here replaces the “ou” in “you.” Therefore, it goes before “all.”

## Commas

Commas are also commonly misused. One example is in sentences where an appositive is used. The following are examples of proper/accepted use of a comma in a sentence containing an appositive:

- Her friend, Mary, wrote a book.
- Her friend Mary wrote a book.

The following shows an example of improper use of this comma:

- Her friend, Mary wrote a book.

Another common misuse of commas is in lists containing only two items. For example:

- Proper: I want to visit Spain and France.
- Improper: I want to visit Spain, and France.

If you were to use a comma here, the sentence would need to be changed to form two independent clauses:

- I want to visit Spain, and I want to visit France.

A third misuse of commas is between two dependent clauses/sentence fragments. For example:

- May every wish, come true.
- Not all who wander, are lost.

Neither phrase on either side of the comma can stand alone; therefore, a comma does not belong here.

## Semicolons and Colons

Semicolons are also often misused. Most commonly, they are incorrectly used in place of a comma or a colon; sometimes, however, this occurs in reverse. The following examples contain proper and improper use of semicolons and colons, as well as how to correct improper use:

- Improper: She introduced the group’s argument, he expanded on her introduction.
  - Proper: She introduced the group’s argument; he expanded on her introduction.
  - Also proper: She introduced the group’s argument, and he expanded on her introduction.
- Improper: This is what she said; “I read that book.”
  - Proper: This is what she said: “I read that book.”
- Improper: The dog ran into the park: she saw her best friend and became excited.
  - Proper: The dog ran into the park; she saw her best friend and became excited.

- Also proper: The dog ran into the park, for she saw her best friend and became excited.

## Periods

Even periods are sometimes misused. The most common misuse occurs in abbreviations or initials.

When writing abbreviations or initials, the letters should be capitalized. It may be acceptable to use periods to go in either after all letters in an abbreviation or no letters in an abbreviation. However, according to the University of Portland periods should be used in “abbreviations that end in lowercase letters (a.m. or Mrs. or etc.) but use no periods for abbreviations that include one or more capital letters (MBA or PhD).” A common mistake is to place periods after all letters in an abbreviation except for the last letter.

- The name Jane Marie Doe
  - Incorrect: J.M.D or J.D
  - Correct/accepted: J.M.D. or JMD; J.D. or JD

## Singular Versus Plural

Mistakes can be made in other aspects of grammar as well. As mentioned previously, one of these mistakes is mistyping plurals. Some words have spellings which change slightly when changing form from singular to plural—that is, from denoting one of a particular thing to multiple. According to Yale’s Center for Teaching and Learning, “Words that end in a consonant and a -y need to have their -y changed to an -i, with -es added on.”

Some examples of spelling changes include:

- Baby → babies
- Woman → women
- Cactus → cacti

Most words do not change spellings and only add an “s” at the end. One of the most common mistakes occurs when writers write plural forms of words which end in “t”: they do not add an “s” where an “s” is required. One example is the word “guests.” When spoken, it may be difficult to distinguish that there is an “s” added to the word “guest” to change the word from singular to plural. However, the “s” is necessary to add when talking about more than one guest.

## Word Classes

A word class is a category of words which “determine how words are used in grammar,” according to Grammarly. They are separated mainly into two groups: form and function. Form includes word groups such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Function includes auxiliary words, prepositions, pronouns, determiners, conjunctions, and interjections.

### Form

A noun is a person, place, or thing. Nouns can be concrete (able to be detected by the 5 senses) or abstract (representing a nonphysical idea). They can be proper (something or someone specific; a name) or improper/common (a general reference to someone or something). Examples:

- Proper:
  - University of Central Florida
    - Note: words known as articles, which include words such as “the,” “and,” and “of,” are not capitalized within names or titles. These are only

capitalized if used as the beginning of a name or title, at the beginning of a line.

- *Star Wars*
- Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Improper/Common:
  - person
  - dog
  - book

A verb is an action.. Verbs are necessary to make a complete sentence. Examples:

- Forms of “being” (is, were, are, will be)
- Run
- Live
- Buy

An adjective is a word which modifies or details a noun.

- Example: That is a *large* house.

An adverb modifies or details a verb, adjective, or another adverb. These contain the suffix -ly.

- Example: He wrote *thoughtfully*.

## Function

An auxiliary verb is used with another verb to show tense, ask a question, or similar. Examples:

- Will
- Could
- Would
- Might

A preposition is used to show time or place and to introduce the object of a verb. Prepositions include words such as:

- On
- At
- In
- Behind
- During
- Among

A pronoun is a word (noun) which refers to or takes the place of a different noun. Examples:

- I
- She
- He
- They
- You
- It
- That

A determiner is a word which *determines* what is being referred to. Examples:

- The
- My
- Those

Conjunctions are words which link other words. Includes coordinating and subordinating.

- Coordinating: link two of a kind: words, phrases, or independent clauses.
- Subordinating: link an independent and dependent clause.

Interjections: Words which show a sudden emotion and are used in informal communication. They are often followed by an exclamation mark when in writing. Examples:

- Hey
- Wow
- Yikes

## Phrases

Sometimes, phrases can act as one word class, despite containing words from multiple classes. Grammarly uses the example phrase “my huge yet adorable puppy,” in which this phrase acts as a noun.

## Tense

Writers must pay attention to consistency in their tense. It is surprisingly easy to switch between tenses while writing, even if the writer does not intend for this to happen. There are multiple tenses in writing, which include past, present, and future tense, which can then be broken down further into simple and perfect forms of each tense. Purdue OWL uses the following examples:

- Simple Present: They walk.
- Present Perfect: They have walked.
- Simple Past: They walked.
- Past Perfect: They had walked.
- Future: They will walk.
- Future Perfect: They will have walked.

In the Present Perfect form, the verbage represents that the action (walking) began in the past but continues to the present. In Past Perfect, the verbage represents that the stated action was completed before another action was taken. In Future Perfect, the verbage indicates that the action will be taken at a specific time.

# Accessibility in Writing

## Accessibility in Communication

### Definition of Accessibility

Accessibility is the practice of making sure everyone can access and use information, products, and environments, regardless of their ability. Accessibility goes beyond physical barriers: creating spaces that are easy to navigate, providing information in a clear and easy-to-understand way, and technology which supports all users are all great forms of accessibility. The goal of accessibility is to remove barriers so everyone has a fair chance to engage in their interests, and writing must be accessible too.

### The Importance of Accessible Writing

Accessibility in writing means providing content that is clear, inclusive, and easily usable by individuals with a disability. This involves not only the language and structure used but also the format in which information is presented. For individuals with cognitive disabilities, such as autism, reading comprehension can be challenging due to processing differences in the brain. Complex sentences, overly detailed information, and excessive use of figurative language may make it more difficult for a person with a disability to grasp essential messages. By actively participating in accessible writing, readability is drastically improved for those that rely on:

- Screen Readers - A tool for visually impaired readers to have their text read aloud to them.
- Alt Text - Descriptive text of images displayed for visually impaired readers to understand the visual content.

- Captions/Transcripts - Written forms of audio/video content for individuals that are Deaf or hard of hearing.

## Examples of Accessibility in Writing

There are plenty of online sources to learn how to write in an accessible manner. Many websites break the concept down into simple, more digestible language to enable writers to make their content accessible to all. The following websites are a great place to get started:

- [Writing for Web Accessibility](#)
- [Accessible Writing is Just Good Writing](#)
- [Plain Language Writing — An Essential Part Of Accessibility](#)
- [Write Accessible Content](#)

## Techniques to Make Writing More Accessible

### Word Choice for Clarity

Word choice is a critical element when it comes to improving the clarity of writing and ensuring that writing is accessible to all. Creating a clear understanding of text can be drastically improved by choosing to use simple, everyday language. Using straightforward terms and keeping writing concise helps convey ideas effectively. Complex vocabulary can easily create barriers to comprehension. Some examples of effective word choices would be:

- “Start” instead of “Initiate”
- “Build” instead of “Construct”
- “Ask” instead of “Inquire”

In addition to utilizing simple word choice, it's important to avoid slang and figurative language that not every reader may know the meaning of. Phrases such as “spill the beans” or “give it a shot” can confuse those who do not share the same social comprehension. It's better to use clear, literal language that is not open for interpretation. For example, instead of:

- “Break the ice,” say “Start a conversation”
- “On the same page,” say “In agreement”
- “Call the shots,” say “Make a decision”

By utilizing straightforward language and avoiding ambiguous language, writers can create more accessible content. This ensures that everyone will be able to easily read and understand it.

## Sentence Structure

Effective sentence structure is crucial not only for clarity but also for accessibility in writing. A wide variety of people—not just those with impairments but also those who do not speak English as a first language—may understand sentences with greater ease if they are well structured. Clear sentence construction, paired with the previously mentioned straightforward language, can help ensure that the key ideas stand out to readers. For example, avoid writing complex sentences such as:

“The research team investigated various factors that influence academic performance, including study habits, classroom engagement, and access to resources.”

This can be changed to:

"The research team investigated several factors that influence academic performance. They focused on study habits, classroom engagement, and access to resources.”

By breaking up the sentence into two parts, readers are allowed to process the two parts of the sentence separately, improving reader comprehension. Not only will effective sentence structure provide clarity,

but it will reinforce the relationships between ideas, ensuring that readers will be able to easily grasp connections.

## Formatting for Accessibility

Another way to ensure your writing is accessible is to properly format your written content. Thoughtful design choices make all the difference when it comes to enhancing readability and, ultimately, user experience.

### Headings and Subheadings

Headings and subheadings are used to organize content and guide readers through written material. Providing a clear structure, and allowing the reader to skim the text and locate important sections quickly, is important in grasping and keeping reader attention. Using a hierarchical format (Heading 1 for main headings, Heading 2 for subheadings, etc) aids in creating a logical flow, and it also provides support for assistive screen readers to navigate the content more seamlessly. Additionally, avoid using generic or vague titles when titling sections. Instead, try using headings that clearly indicate what the sections' content will contain.

### Fonts

Selecting an appropriate font is crucial when ensuring content is accessible. A font that has overly decorative styles, such as comic sans or cursive fonts, can cause difficulty in reading with those with dyslexia or visual impairments.

- Use san-serif fonts such as Arial, Calibri, or Roboto as these are more simplistic and often easier to read on screens.

- Use at minimum a font size of at least 12 points, to ensure readability for those with visual impairments.
- Ensure that there is enough contrast between the text and background colors. Use dark text on a light background, and use light text on a dark background.

## **Bullet Points and Numbered Lists**

When sharing large amounts of complex information, use bullet points or numbered lists if applicable. Rather than writing large walls of text, break it up into smaller, more easily digestible bullet points that readers can easily skim and read. This ensures that readers will be able to comprehend the text more easily.

## **Alternative Text for Images**

When using charts, images, or graphs, always include alternative text (also called “alt text”) describing the visual content. This is highly important for readers who rely on screen readers, as it provides description of the imagery, providing context and further information that they would otherwise miss. Alternative texts ensure that all parts of your content is accessible to everyone.

# **Languages and Translations**

## **Introduction**

Language is a fundamental element of human communication. It connects people through words, expressions, rules, and even slang. Language supports people not only in sharing basic ideas but also in explaining complex ideas, emotions, and cultural nuances. English has been evolving as the most widely

spoken and utilized language. It is a useful language across diverse fields, such as education, business, science, technology, and international travel.

From business corporations to academic institutions, English is often the common language around the globe, making it an essential language for those who inspire a future worldwide.

For non-native speakers, translations play an important role in the starting stages of learning English. Translation is a fundamental bridge between unfamiliar English words and their native language. Grammar and punctuation can be hard for beginners, as English has a variety of unique sentence structures, articles, and punctuation rules.

Translations also assist people with clear comprehension and communication. As new beginners practice and frequent the English language, they could think and comprehend directly in English. This plays an important role in language acquisition and can help the learning process, enhance fluency, and build confidence.

## **Multilingualism**

Being multilingual is a powerful skill that gives opportunities in one's personal and professional lives. Being multilingual means having the skill to understand and communicate in multiple languages and have learned the language's unique grammar and punctuation rules. This skill helps with clarity and precision in communication. Multilingual people might be able to find grammar or punctuation differences between languages.

Multilingualism can be useful when translating or interpreting for other people because it involves accurate conversations across different languages without losing grammatical nuances. This skill can help family members, communities, and more.

In the job market, multilingualism is usually seen as a competitive advantage. Many employers give credit to employees who can help clients or colleagues in multiple languages. This skill grows the company's reach and improves international relations.

In social and work environments, multilingual individuals frequently become more conscious of grammar and punctuation variants, which enhances the precision and impact of their contributions. Multilingual individuals possess the ability to truly transform and ease humanity through their ability to communicate.

## **Challenges in Language Acquisition**

Language acquisition is a process that requires mastering components such as grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Each of these demanding processes requires attention, patience, and practice. New learners often face challenges that can make the journey difficult, such as expressions, accents, and the complexity of grammar and punctuation rules. English grammar can be very challenging due to its irregular verb conjugations or punctuation. These challenges can lead to confusion, irritation, and even missed opportunities for academic success.

Situations in which an individual may struggle vary, based on one's background, language learning environment, and personal dedication. It can be helpful to expose oneself to real-life situations. Building vocabulary through everyday interactions can help one face the challenges of learning a language. Consistency in one's attention to grammar and punctuation can benefit one's improvement in their writing and speaking accuracy.

## **Effectiveness of Languages and Translations**

Translations can be an incredible tool in the start-up stages of language acquisition; they aid with vocabulary building and helping gather the basic concepts of a language. Translation tools can help clarify complex grammar and punctuation rules which could be difficult.

A recurrent reliance on translation could result in a slowed learning progress. Focusing on the engagement of any language, without constantly reverting to translation, results in more efficient engagement, with a boost in fluency and confidence.

Thinking in one's goal language can help learners internalize grammar and punctuation rules more effectively. Some strategies, such as frequent speaking practice and the use of visual clues, often prove more effective in language mastery.

Technology is a fundamental part of society and is a great help in language education, offering a variety of resources that enhance the experience. There are also language-learning websites and applications like Duolingo, Memrise, Drops, and many more. Other websites, such as Khan Academy, Coursera, and more, provide language-learning education. These apps and websites provide interactive lessons depending on the skill levels of any individual. This could be helpful as they include grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, pronunciation, and more to improve any language skill. There are also virtual classrooms with real professors to facilitate language learning, allowing individuals to connect worldwide and gain language acquisition anytime and anywhere.

## Using AI as a Tool for Writing

### Tools for Writing

Today, there are multiple AI tools available to aid you with writing, whether it is for emails, formal letters, academic papers, or any other type of written text. These tools can also assist with punctuation, grammar, and style, helping to refine your work. However, AI is not a substitute for your efforts; it should only be used to enhance and polish your final product, particularly in areas such as grammatical accuracy and punctuation clarity.

### Recommendations for AI tools

Microsoft CoPilot <https://copilot.microsoft.com/>

ChatGPT <https://chatgpt.com/>

Grammarly <https://app.grammarly.com/>

Claude <https://claude.ai/>

# How to Use AI in a Work Setting

## Correct Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling

Grammar and punctuation are essential in any written document. Errors in these areas can lead to miscommunication or reduce the professionalism of your work. AI tools, such as Grammarly or Microsoft Office's Editor, are invaluable for identifying and correcting these mistakes. For instance, spelling errors are often flagged with a red squiggly line, but grammar and punctuation issues might require closer inspection.

You can use AI to perform a grammar, punctuation, and spelling check on your work, ensuring that even the smallest details—such as the correct use of semicolons or commas—are accurate. Many tools also provide explanations for their corrections, offering an opportunity to learn and refine your grammar skills.

## Correct Tone, Tense, and Voice

Beyond basic corrections, AI tools are instrumental in adjusting tone, tense, and voice. For example, if a sentence is written in passive voice when active voice would be clearer, an AI tool can suggest a revision. This not only improves the readability of your work but also enhances the grammatical structure, ensuring that subject-verb relationships are clear and concise.

## Refine Conciseness in Sentences

Run-on sentences or overly complex structures can obscure your message. Using AI tools like Grammarly, you can refine sentence structure for conciseness while maintaining grammatical accuracy.

For example, asking the AI to make a sentence more concise will often involve adjusting punctuation, such as replacing a comma splice with a semicolon or breaking a long sentence into two grammatically correct ones.

## Work with AI to Create Study Guides

While AI tools are excellent for improving grammar and punctuation, they can also assist in creating resources like study guides, which often require clarity and correctness in sentence structure and formatting.

### Identify the Key Topics

Start by providing the subject you want to create a study guide for. Clearly list the key topics or concepts you need to cover, ensuring proper grammar in headings and descriptions.

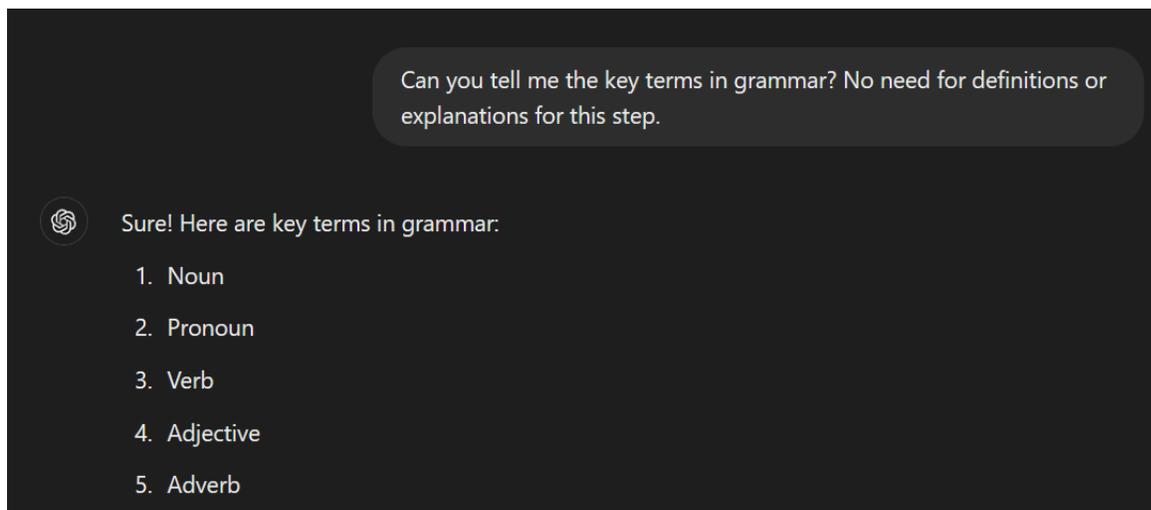


Figure 1: Screenshot from ChatGPT identifying Key Terms for a Study Guide (not all are pictured).

## Summaries or Explanations

When asking for summaries, AI tools often break down complex topics into simpler terms. Be mindful of punctuation and grammar in the generated summaries, ensuring consistency with your document's style.

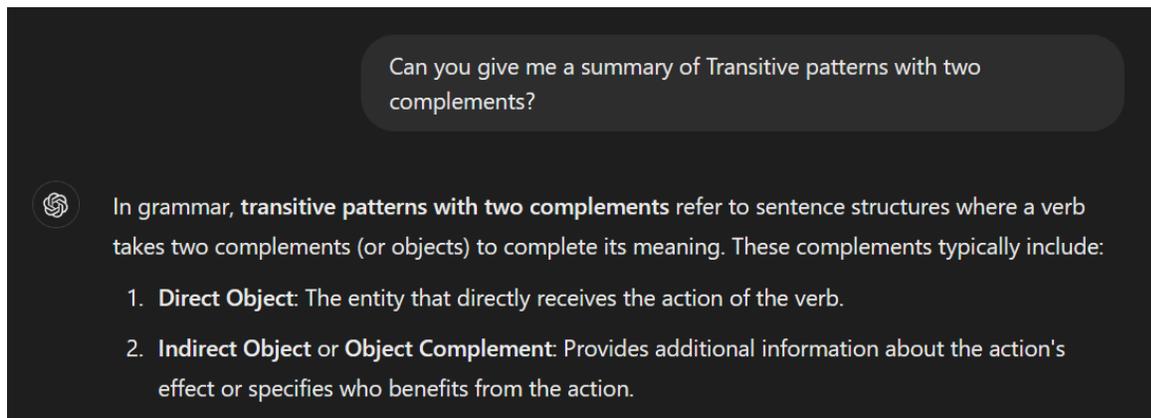


Figure 2: Screenshot from ChatGPT summarizing transitive patterns with two complements.

## Request Definitions

Definitions provided by AI can sometimes lack nuance, so it's important to check for grammatical correctness and proper sentence structure. AI tools can also create examples to clarify terms, demonstrating how grammar and syntax shape meaning.

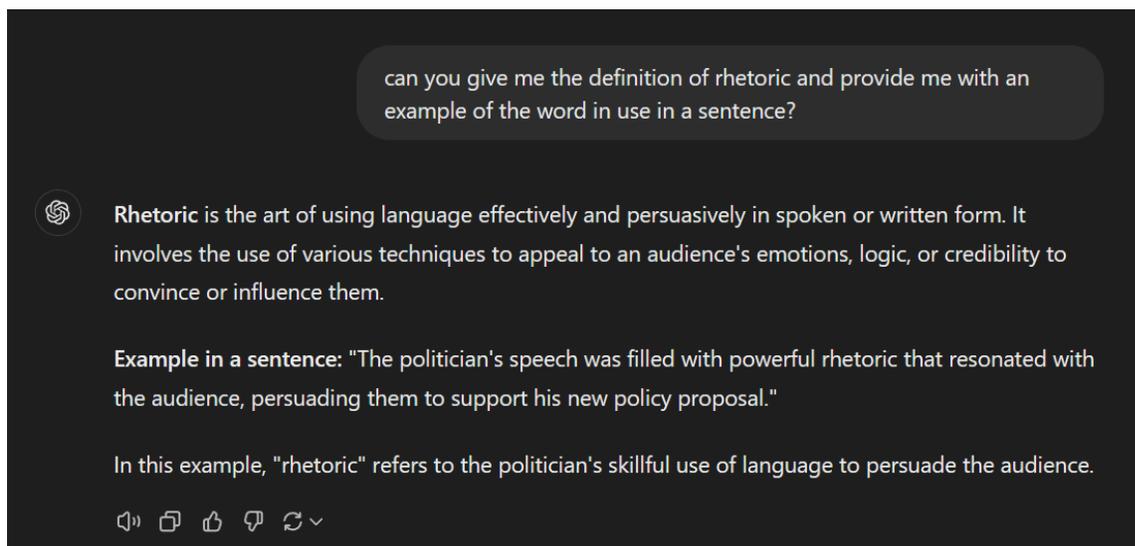


Figure 3: Screenshot from ChatGPT while making a Glossary of Terms for a Study Guide.

## Generate Practice Questions

Ask the AI tool to generate practice questions to test your understanding. These could be multiple-choice, short-answer, or essay questions—the choice is yours. Be sure to review the questions for grammatical correctness and proper punctuation, especially if you plan to share them with others or use them in study groups. This ensures clarity and professionalism in your study materials.

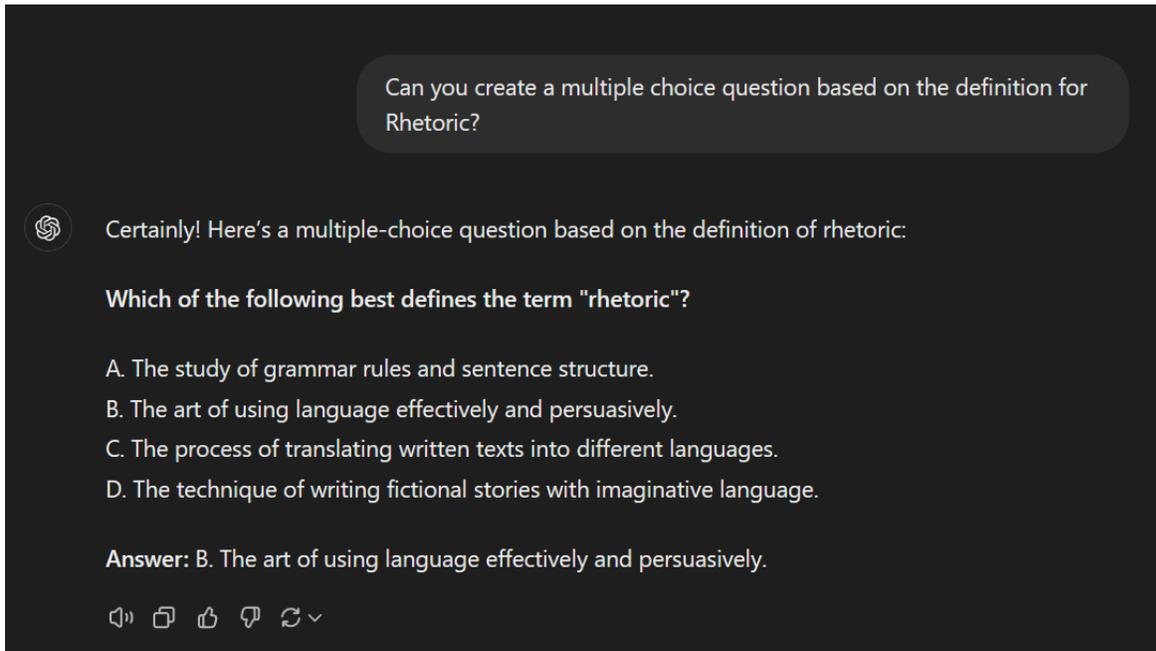


Figure 4: Screenshot from ChatGPT after it created a multiple-choice practice question for a Study Guide.

## Create Study Tips or Memory Aids

Ask the AI tool to help you create mnemonic devices or other memory aids to retain the information you are studying. For example, you might use a mnemonic to remember grammar rules, such as the difference between "affect" and "effect" or the order of punctuation marks in a series. This approach can make learning and applying grammar rules easier and more engaging.

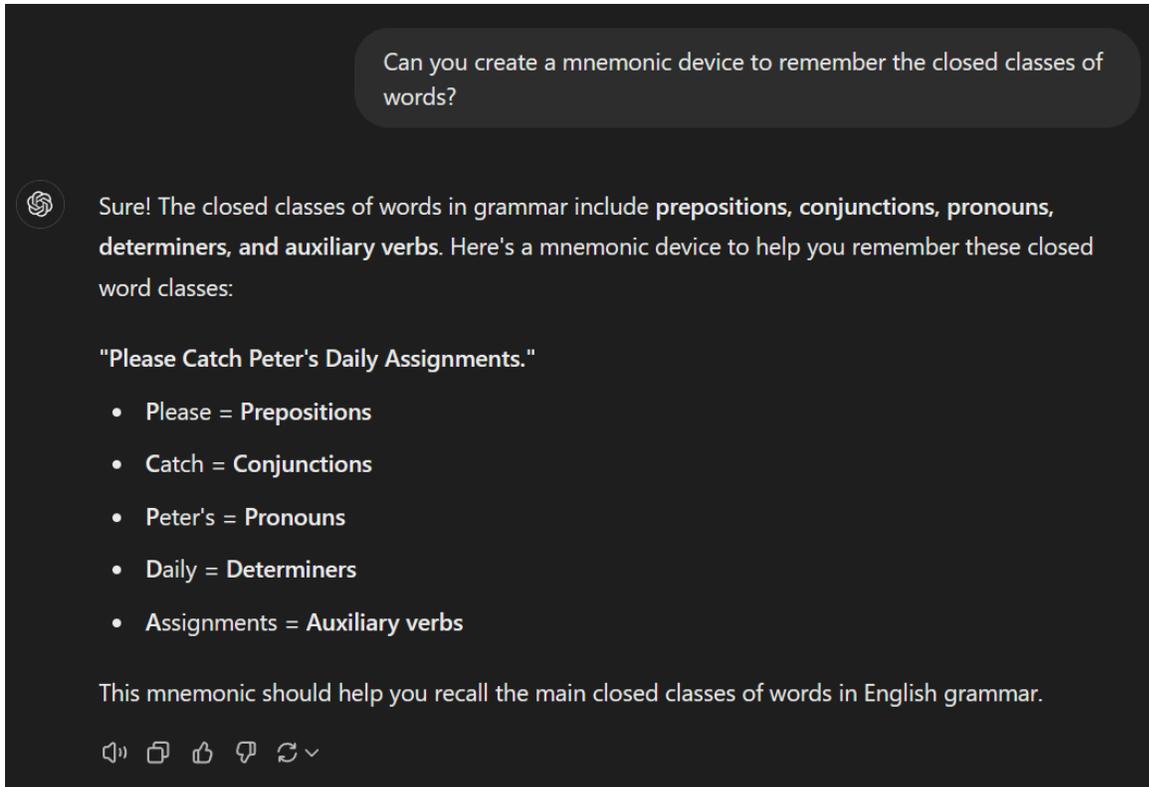


Figure 5: Screenshot from ChatGPT after it created a mnemonic device to remember the closed classes of words.

## Ways to Write Effective AI Prompts - For the Best Results

Using AI tools can help with homework—whether it is creating an outline for a creative writing piece, helping you understand what a professor is asking in an assignment, or refining grammar and punctuation in your work. But how do you get the best results from the AI tool you have chosen?

Consider the following:

### Understanding Prompts and Their Role in AI Communication

“AI prompts are the text instructions a user provides to an AI model to get the desired output” (Grammarly). While this may seem straightforward—type what you are looking for, hit enter, and the AI tool generates an answer—some prompts require more clarity and specificity. To refine aspects like

grammar, punctuation, or tone, clear and precise instructions are essential to guide the AI in producing a polished response.

## Your Writing Style and Tone

When working with an AI tool, your writing style and tone can significantly influence how the AI interprets your request. This is particularly important when asking it to improve your grammar, punctuation, or sentence structure. Use clear and precise language to help the AI tool understand your request. Remember, AI tools are not perfect—they may make assumptions and provide incorrect answers. Writing detailed prompts will improve your chances of getting accurate, grammar-checked, and punctuated results.

## Provide Context to Your Question

Adding context ensures that your grammar-related questions are properly understood by the AI. For instance, if you want to check the tone of an email, specify the purpose and intended recipient to avoid ambiguous suggestions.

**Example:** Instead of asking, “Is the tone in this (copy and paste text) okay?” Add context: “I am writing an email to a professor, can you check this (copy and paste text) and make sure my tone is friendly while remaining formal?”

## Keep the AI Bot on Track

Short, grammatically clear prompts are more effective. Avoid run-ons or vague language that might confuse the AI. Instead of asking, “How do I make this better?” try specifying, “Can you help me refine the punctuation in this sentence?”

# Chapter 5: Writing for an International Audience

## Introduction

In today's interconnected world, effective communication with an international audience is essential for fostering understanding and building relationships across cultures. UCF aims to provide practical guidance on how to craft content that is culturally aware, inclusive, and accessible to readers from diverse backgrounds. Whether you are addressing global business partners, international colleagues, or a multicultural audience, understanding the values, norms, and preferences of your readers is crucial for creating meaningful connections.

Explore key strategies, such as recognizing and respecting cultural differences, simplifying language for clarity, and using inclusive and neutral terminology. Additionally, focus on standardizing formats for global readability, planning for accurate translations, and ensuring multimedia content is universally accessible. The importance of tone, formality, and adherence to legal and ethical considerations will also be covered, helping to avoid potential missteps and build trust with international audiences.

Applying the techniques outlined in this chapter, creating content that resonates globally while maintaining respect for cultural diversity and ensuring clarity across language barriers.

## Cultural Awareness

Understanding different cultural values and adjusting your communication to respect those values is key. Cultures may differ significantly in the values they each hold, so it is important to be mindful of that when writing your content. For example, Western cultures, especially in the U.S. and parts of Europe,

often place more value on individual achievements. However, unlike Western cultures, many Asian cultures prioritize community and group harmony over independence. When communicating to a multicultural audience, use as much inclusive language as possible to help your content be received well by a wider range of people.

Language is another key area where cultural sensitivity is crucial. What may be appropriate for some cultures may not translate well for others. Take holiday greetings as an example. Saying “Merry Christmas” may be acceptable in Western cultures, but it excludes people who do not celebrate that holiday. “Happy Holidays” is a more inclusive phrase that acknowledges the diverse traditions and beliefs of your audience. Ensuring no one you are addressing in your content is left out is the goal.

Cultural awareness also pertains to your use of images, colors, and symbols in your content. These elements may have different meanings across all cultures. A thumbs up image may not bother people from North America, but that same image may offend people of Middle Eastern cultures. The same notion goes for colors. Depending on what culture someone is from, they will associate colors with certain meanings, and some meanings may be unacceptable to a certain culture (Kennesaw Writing Center, Question 7). White, for example, represents purity in some Western countries, but in other places like China, it is associated with mourning. Green may mean luck for some cultures, yet envy for others. Black may be associated with elegance for some, but also darkness for others, and so forth. Always research the cultural significance of your visuals according to the audience you are addressing to avoid misunderstandings.

## **Research Different Cultures**

Establishing trust with your audience starts with careful research into the different cultures that may make up your audience. The more you understand their cultural values, communication styles, and cultural practices, the more credibility you build within your content. With credibility, your audience can trust you more, especially when you are addressing sensitive topics such as privacy and personal data.

Always speak with honesty when dealing with these topics to maintain your relationship with your audience, and address any concerns they may have.

If you are unsure how to begin conducting research on different cultures, a good place to start is by searching for websites that provide guides on the cultural and business etiquette for a multitude of countries. Websites like these give helpful insight into understanding key cultural differences like individualism vs. collectivism, direct vs. indirect communication, and what is formal vs. informal. Another strategy to follow when researching is looking into interviews, studies, and focus groups that contain individuals from the culture you are researching in order to gain information about that culture from firsthand accounts. Using these cultural analysis tools gives you a clearer direction on where to take your content.

For example, if you know that a part of your audience comes from Japan, researching Japanese culture will show you that their preferred method of communication is indirect. This may cause you to alter your content to be more polite, avoiding direct and blunt statements. However, if more of your audience comes from Western cultures, such as the U.S., your research will teach you that straightforwardness is more valued with them. Unlike Japanese culture, people from the U.S. usually prefer more direct, assertive statements within their business communication. View table 5.1 below for examples that compare and contrast indirect and direct methods of communication.

Indirect	Direct
"It may be helpful to consider..."	"This is what you need to do..."
"You may want to explore these options..."	"Steps X, Y, and Z, must be done..."

Table 5.1 Using Direct Methods of Communication.

You want to avoid any misunderstandings within your communication to your audience, and research. This includes assumptions of cultures, stereotyping, and casting cultures into a limited category.

Doing research will help you gain knowledge of diverse cultures from a multitude of sources, and this will help you avoid potentially offending your audience. By investing time in understanding your audience's cultural background and avoiding generalizations, you are then able to create content that feels inclusive, respectful, and tailored to their specific values.

## Clear and Simple Language

When writing for an international audience, it is essential to use language that is easily understood by readers whose first language may not be English. Simplifying language ensures that the message is clear and avoids potential misinterpretations. Here are key strategies for achieving clarity and simplicity in your writing:

- Avoid idioms and jargon:

Idioms, slang, and culturally specific references may not translate well or could confuse non-native speakers. Instead, use straightforward, literal language.

*Example:* Instead of "hit the nail on the head," say "accurately described."

- Simplify complex ideas:

Break down complex concepts into clear, concise points. Use short sentences and paragraphs to improve readability.

*Example:*

Before:

"To complete the setup process, first open the settings, then navigate to the network section, select your preferred network, and finally save the changes."

After (using bullet points):

- Open the settings.
- Navigate to the network section.
- Select your preferred network.

- Save the changes.
- Maintain a neutral tone and appropriate formality:

Tone and formality may vary depending on cultural expectations, but a neutral, respectful tone works well across most audiences. Avoid overly casual or excessively formal expressions that may not translate well.

*Example:*

- Casual: "Hey guys, let's get this done real quick!"
  - Neutral: "Please ensure that this task is completed by the assigned deadline."
  - Formal: "Esteemed colleagues, we must proceed posthaste in order to meet the designated deadline."
- Use direct, active voice:

Writing in the active voice makes sentences clearer and more direct. This helps non-native speakers easily understand who is doing what.

*Example:* Instead of "The meeting was scheduled by John," say "John scheduled the meeting."

- Consider the reading speed of non-native English speakers:

Non-native speakers may read slower in English, so keep sentences short and avoid unnecessary complexity. Include transitional phrases to guide readers through the text smoothly.

*Example:* Instead of "The proposal, which was written after months of deliberation, was finally submitted," say "After months of deliberation, the proposal was submitted."

- Avoid ambiguous phrasing:

Be specific and avoid using vague words or phrases that could have multiple meanings. This prevents misinterpretation across different languages.

*Example:* Instead of "The project will begin soon," specify "The project will begin in two weeks."

- Use universal terminology:

Opt for words that have clear, widely recognized meanings across cultures. Stay away from localized terms or colloquialisms. Certain terms and phrases may seem common in one region or culture but could confuse others. Avoid using sports metaphors like "knock it out of the park" or "drop the ball."

*Examples:*

- Avoid: "Let's table this discussion." (Common in U.S. business meetings but confusing in other places)

Replace with: "Let's pause this discussion for now."

- Avoid: "We need to cover all our bases."

Replace with: "We need to consider all aspects."

- Avoid: "He's a real team player."

Replace with: "He works well with others."

Following these guidelines, ensures writing is accessible and understandable to a broad international audience, helping you communicate your ideas effectively across cultural and linguistic barriers.

## Inclusive Language

One of the most important elements to consider in reaching a global audience is inclusive language. This can be largely defined as the deliberate use of vocabulary that is all encompassing and which does not discriminate against members of your audience. By not extending favorable recognition to any one gender, race, or religious group over others, you can help to ensure that all demographics feel equally seen and heard. The use of inclusive terminology, especially in cases when you are addressing your audience directly, can help to reinforce the idea that all readers are a valuable part of the UCF community.

Inclusive language relies on attentiveness to technical details that can be easily overlooked at the time of writing, but which can make a large difference in the perception of readers. Please see a list of examples below for how to consider these types of details.

- Use gender-neutral terms to refer to larger groups of people. View table 5.2 below.

<b>Do Not Say...</b>	<b>Say...</b>
Policemen or policewomen.	Police officers.

Table 5.2 Using Gender Neutral Terms.

- Use appropriate language when discussing different racial or ethnic groups by avoiding common stereotypes and mischaracterizations. Do not use out-of-pocket slang terms or dialects when trying to appeal to a certain demographic.
- Avoid language that carries unsupported assumptions about your audience.
- Avoid generalizations that do not reflect reality, especially as they pertain to cultural norms. View table 5.3 below.

<b>Do Not Say...</b>	<b>Say...</b>
Asian students typically excel in math.	Many students, regardless of background, demonstrate strong ethical abilities in math.
As it pertains to sports, more white people tend to like baseball, and more black people tend to like basketball.	The sports of baseball and basketball attract a widely diverse player base.
Everyone in America celebrates Christmas.	Many people in America celebrate Christmas

Table 5.3 Avoiding Generalizations Pertaining to Cultural Norms.

- In the case of commentary on religious or political events, employ language that adopts a neutral stance and presents the content in a purely objective manner, free of personal bias.

This accounts for the wide-range of opinions that are held by audience members. View table 5.4 below.

<b>Do Not Say...</b>	<b>Say...</b>
The leader of the organization is correct in his assertion.	The leader of the organization asserts that he is correct.

Table 5.4 Using Neutral and Objective Language for Religious or Political Topics.

These strategies will assist you in your effort to incorporate inclusive language within your text.(Weiss).

## Standardizing Formats For Global Consistency

When writing for an international audience, it is important to adhere to a universal style of formatting that underlines a sense of consistency. Time zones, currency designation, and units of measurement may vary across a multitude of cultures and regions. There should be a clear, systematic reference point that acts as a thorough line for how information is presented. In order to do this, you as the writer must establish a base reference. Knowing how to make certain conversions and adjustments based on local requirements is also important.

### Time

Because UCF is located in the state of Florida, times for local events will be given in Eastern Standard Time (EST). Times should also be provided in the Coordinated Universal Time Zone, in cases where an event is relevant to multiple time zones and regions.

The Coordinated Universal Time Zone is the global standard by which all clocks and time zones are regulated across the world. Employing this format speaks to a desire to reach a larger, global audience, by making it easier for readers to make conversions through a universal reference point. View table 5.5

below.

<b>Hypothetical</b>	<b>Example</b>
An event on the UCF main campus is set to be broadcast online and begins at 4:00 local time. Rather than assuming that readers located in different time zones will be familiar with how to make conversions from Eastern Standard Time, the writer should also provide the time in the Coordinated Universal Time Zone formatting, in order to make it more suitable for conversion.	“The charity event on the UCF main campus will be broadcast, starting at 4:00 pm EST (8:00 pm UTC).”

Table 5.5 Using UTC Time Formatting for Easier Conversions.

There are also certain standards of time formatting that can make the information more compact and easier to read for a global audience. Use numbers for times, rather than spelling them out.

Additionally, use AM and PM designations to specify the time of day, rather than verbal clarification.

Finally, use the abbreviations for the appropriate time zone, rather than listing the full name of the time zone. View table 5.6 below.

<b>Do Not Say...</b>	<b>Say...</b>
The fundraiser starts at ten o'clock in the morning, Eastern Standard Time.	The fundraiser starts at 10:00 am EST.

Table 5.6 Using Time Formatting for Easier Readability.

When an event is relevant to a specific region and time zone outside of the Eastern Standard Time and Coordinated Universal Time Zones, include the designation of the specific time zone. View table 5.7 below.

Hypothetical	Example
<p>A joint fundraiser that is being promoted by UCF will take place on a certain date in California. Because the event is happening in a region outside of UCF’s local timezone, you should include the appropriate abbreviation and specify that the time given is in Pacific Standard Time (PST) which is California’s designated time zone.</p>	<p>“The joint fundraiser will be held in California on Saturday, October 7th, at 10:00 am PST.”</p>

Table 5.7 Using Time Formatting for Specific Time Zones.

## Money and Currency Values

UCF will typically default to using the American dollar sign to denote currency and items of monetary value. When providing dollar amounts, use the \$ symbol as opposed to spelling out the word “dollars.” View table 5.8 below.

Do Not Say...	Say...
10 dollars	\$10

Table 5.8 Using Proper Formatting for Currency.

You may need to make monetary conversions when discussing information that is relevant to other regions. Provide the amounts both in local currency and the approximate equivalent in U.S. dollars. An example of this follows down below:

“This item sold in England for 20 pounds, which is approximately \$26.”

Be approximate with your conversions rather than exact, unless exactness is important. In most general cases, round up or down to the nearest whole dollar. View table 5.9 below.

Do Not Say...	Say...
<p>The item sold in England for 20 pounds, which converts to \$25.92.</p>	<p>The item sold in England for 20 pounds, which is approximately \$26.</p>

# Numbers and Measurements

UCF should default to using the International System of Units for measurement, also known as the metric system. Although America widely uses the imperial system, which includes inches, feet, ounces, etc. as units of measurement, the majority of countries around the world use the metric system. This makes it particularly relevant when discussing familiarity and appeal to an international audience.

The metric system is generally favored for its consistency and held to a higher standard of professionalism. For this reason, it is used in American medical and scientific fields, and is legally required to be the standard measuring system for trade and commerce within the U.S.

Conversions within the metric system are easier to make. The process of changing meters to centimeters, for example, is a simple figure. A centimeter is one one-hundredth of a full meter.

The imperial system presents less uniformity. There are several inconsistencies, such as the difference between liquid ounces and ounces that designate weight. For example, eight ounces of liquid is equal to a single cup, whereas sixteen ounces of weight is equal to a single pound. Those that are not familiar with this system and its conversions may struggle to understand the information that is presented to them. Thus, the metric system is both easier to use and more favorable in the eyes of an international audience (Christensen).

Numerical data that is directly relevant to dates, values, and measurements should be presented with numerical figures, rather than spelling out the names of numbers. This helps to ensure simplicity of information that is more readily accessible to an international audience. View table 5.10 below.

<b>Do Not Say...</b>	<b>Say...</b>
The first of September.	September 1st.
Two hundred dollars.	\$200
Three meters.	3 meters.

# Translation Planning

It is important to plan how a text will be translated into different languages, as part of the effort to reach a larger global audience. Building on the principles of simple language will naturally lend itself to translation. Although you may not be required to personally translate a text, you can make it more readily adaptable by adhering to a clearcut style of communication that helps to minimize obstacles presented by language barriers. A text that can be distributed across multiple languages automatically becomes more valuable, for the fact that it is more widely accessible.

Languages are deeply rooted in their respective cultures, making it practically impossible to achieve a perfect translation that carries the full, undisputed meaning of the original text. However, there are multiple things you can do during the writing process to make this effort easier (Weiss).

## Accounting For Translation

Following these guidelines while writing or editing will help you to prepare a text for translation:

- Employ frequent repetition of nouns.
- Place modifier words close together with the words they modify. View table 5.11 below.

Do Not Say...	Say...
The clouds dotted the afternoon sky, and they were fluffy.	The fluffy clouds dotted the afternoon sky.

Table 5.11 Using Modifier Words.

- Use optional relative pronouns, such as *that* and *which*.
- Use all articles across tables, lists, and diagrams,
- Favor the most common definition of homographic words. View table 5.12 below..

Do Not Say...	Say...
We must pay attention to the minute (small) details.	We must get our point across in one minute or less.

Table 5.12 Using the Most Common Definitions of Homographic Words.

- Avoid homographic words in which the meaning can potentially be unclear without context. For example, *secretive*, which can refer either to *secrets* or *secretions*.
- Avoid use of parentheses, dashes, underscored words, word breaks at the end of lines, and other features that could make it difficult for translation software to work with a text.

Using these simple tips can help to make the text more suitable for translation down the road (Weiss).

## Input From Native Speakers

If possible, collaborate with native speakers of other languages while in the process of reviewing your text. People who are bilingual can be utilized as a resource in the interest of adding clarity to your writing, which will help to make it more suitable for translation. Have someone who designates English as their second language proofread a draft of your text to get a sense for how it may translate into their native language. They may offer advice on elements related to literal translation, such as sentence structure and word choice. However, they may also offer insight into cultural interpretation of the subject matter that is contained within your text, which can be equally important for consideration.

## Multimedia

When writing for an international audience it is important to not overlook the multimedia aspect of the content you are creating. Multimedia can be classified as anything that supports the main text such

as images, graphs, and charts to visually explain the content of any body of text. When creating a type of multimedia for a document it is important to take into account three areas. Cultural Sensitivity and localization, Language simplicity and clarity, and technical compatibility and accessibility.

Cultural sensitivity and localization is important to consider when writing for an international audience. Elements such as videos, images, and symbols may contain cultural connotations that can be perceived as offensive or confusing to certain individuals. Localization means that the content should not just adapt to the respective language but also match the target audience and cultural norms of that audience.

Language simplicity and clarity is also important to consider when writing for an international audience. Because multimedia can include things such as captions or voice overs, it is important to make sure that any language used is clear for non-native English speakers.

A good baseline to follow is to select media that contains content which is universally recognizable across a wide-ranging, international audience. View a set of examples below for how to choose images that communicate depictions that transcend cultural barriers.



This example shows a celebration with a diverse group of people, displaying neutral and happy facial expressions that are universally recognizable.



This example shows what to avoid in portraying a non-diverse group of people. It is also better to avoid depictions of alcohol, as drinking is prohibited in some cultures

<p>Image 5.1  <a href="https://www.pexels.com/search/people%20celebrating/">https://www.pexels.com/search/people%20celebrating/</a></p>	<p>Image 5.2  <a href="https://www.pexels.com/search/people%20celebrating/">https://www.pexels.com/search/people%20celebrating/</a></p>
	
<p>This example shows two people greeting one another with a handshake, which is a universally recognizable form of greeting.</p> <p>Image 5.3  <a href="https://www.pexels.com/search/people%20handshaking/">https://www.pexels.com/search/people%20handshaking/</a></p>	<p>This example shows two people greeting each other with a cheek kiss, which is common in many countries, but not a universal practice.</p> <p>Image 5.4  <a href="https://www.pexels.com/search/cheek%20kiss%20greeting/">https://www.pexels.com/search/cheek%20kiss%20greeting/</a></p>
	
<p>This example shows a bowl of salad, which is not universally recognizable.</p> <p>Image 5.5  <a href="https://www.pexels.com/search/salad/">https://www.pexels.com/search/salad/</a></p>	<p>This example shows a poke bowl, which is not universally recognizable.</p> <p>Image 5.6  <a href="https://www.pexels.com/search/poke%20bowl/">https://www.pexels.com/search/poke%20bowl/</a></p>

Table 5.13, Principles of Utilizing Content in International Media

Using complex grammar or slang may not translate well to other languages. Using simple language will help make sure that the content can be understood by a larger audience.

Lastly, it is important to consider both technical compatibility and accessibility when writing for an international audience. You should make sure that the multimedia elements within your document are compatible on various internet speeds and devices. It is also important to make sure that users with disabilities have the proper accessibility tools to properly access the documentation. Both these points ensure that the content can be consumed by a diverse amount of people with different backgrounds and technological skills.

## Tone and Formality

When writing for an international audience it is important to keep your tone and formality in check. There are three things to keep in mind when it comes to tone and formalities. Firstly is ensuring that you convey a neutral and professional tone. This will ensure that your target audience does not think the content is unprofessional and ensure that the content does not offend them. Next is making sure that there is consistency in the formality that you use. Not having consistency throughout your documentation can confuse the audience. Lastly, make sure to avoid jargon and ambiguous language. Using these types of language can make it more difficult for non native English speakers to understand what is being said.

Let us go further into what type of neutral language and professional tone is required. It is important that the tone avoids being overly casual or humorous as it will not translate well across different types of cultures. A respectful and professional tone is also important as it helps make sure that the message being said is clear and appropriate for a diverse audience. You should avoid using anytype of humor or colloquialisms that may not be understood globally.

Making sure you are consistent in not just tone and formality, but all the other aspects of writing for an international audience is important as well. Being consistent can help to ensure that readers have a professional understanding of what you are writing and increase your reputation. Additionally, it can help to ensure that there are no mismatched tones contained in whatever document you are creating. Below is a list of examples for how to adhere to principles of tone and formality.

- Use neutral and professional language to establish the proper tone. View table 5.14 below.

<b>Do Not Say...</b>	<b>Say...</b>
Do not sweat bro, we got you!	We are here to help you

Table 5.14 Establishing Proper Tone Through Language.

- Ensure that the same level of formality is found throughout the entire document. For the purpose of consistency, avoid switching between two different levels of language. View table 5.15 below.

<b>Do Not Say...</b>	<b>Say...</b>
“Bro, over here,” and “Sir, please look here.”	“Let us wait to have this conversation until the meeting starts,” and “Thank you for your time in joining us today.”

Table 5.15 Maintaining Consistency Through Formality and Tone.

- Avoid jargon and ambiguous language. Favor clear and simple language over complex terminology that may alienate your audience. View table 5.16 below.

<b>Do Not Say...</b>	<b>Say...</b>
Our Saas solution has robust capabilities for vertical integration.	We provide assistance with technical issues. Technical support is available 24/7.

Table 5.16 Avoiding use of Jargon and Ambiguous Language.

Lastly it is important that any jargon and ambiguous language is avoided. This makes sure that any terms that could be unfamiliar with the readers does not confuse them. If there are technical terms or terms that are not always used, it is best practice to provide clear definitions for them or explain them to make sure that misinterpretation is avoided.

## Legal Considerations

### **Adherence to International Laws**

When dealing with a global audience, it is important to ensure your content does not interfere with any international content laws. Each country's privacy, copyright, and censorship laws vary. While some countries are more strict regarding what is publicly acceptable in their communication, other countries may have more room for flexibility in those areas. Failing to comply with a certain country's laws can lead to serious legal repercussions such as fines or bans of your content, so familiarizing yourself with your audience, where they are from, and what laws they adhere to in their region will help avoid this.

### **Copyright Laws and Proper Citations**

Take into account the rules and regulations regarding copyright of each different country you are communicating to in your content. Again, these laws differ across regions so adapting your content to adhere to proper guidelines on citations when using others' work is necessary. While the U.S. is flexible in permitting limited unlicensed use of copyrighted material under certain conditions with the Fair Use law, this law is not universal. It is always best to explicitly give credit from material you have used, using citations appropriately formatted to your target audience's region.

## Ethical Considerations

### **Avoiding Bigotry and Xenophobia**

Make sure your content is free of prejudiced language or imagery that could offend someone based on their ethnicity, religion, or nationality. This includes stereotypes or xenophobic rhetoric that might reinforce harmful ideas of a culture or display intolerance of a foreign culture. Your goal is not only

to maintain a positive reputation, but to also foster a mutually respectful relationship with your audience. Putting effort into considering what may upset them shows that you care and that your content is credible.

Avoid making assumptions about individuals based on nationality, religion, or ethnicity. For instance, do not assume that all individuals of a certain culture follow the same customs or traditions. Even if people come from the same region, their experiences in the way they practice their culture can vary widely. Making broad generalizations can result in offending your audience. Review your content's word choice and rhetoric with the goal of inclusivity in mind. Aim to use language that acknowledges the diversity within any given group.

## **Acknowledging Mistakes**

Even with thorough research, it is still possible for you to make mistakes despite your efforts to avoid that. In the event of this, whether the issue is related to a translation error or an offensive comment, it is necessary to take action as quickly as possible. Address the mistake, correct it, and seek feedback from your audience to understand the impact of your errors. For instance, if a section of your content was mistranslated and it altered the meaning of a message, promptly issue a corrected version and apologize for the oversight. Show open-mindedness instead of defensiveness, learn from your mistakes, and demonstrate to your audience you are capable of taking accountability for your mistakes in a considerate way.

Word choice heavily affects the way your apology is received. Do not say “I apologize *if* I have offended anyone,” since the use of the word “if” downplays the effects of your mistakes. Instead, say “I apologize for any offense resulting from my mistakes,” to show that you understand the weight of your actions and display compassion towards those offended by them.

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# TECHNICAL WRITER'S STYLE GUIDE

“Technical Writer’s Style Guide: A Comprehensive Guide for University-Level Success”

Created by the students of ENC 4293 under the guidance of Professor Jane Vaughan in the fall of 2024, this guide is an essential resource for mastering technical writing at the University of Central Florida. Designed to equip aspiring writers with the skills needed to excel in both academic and professional settings, this guide offers in-depth lessons on core writing principles and practical strategies.

Inside, you’ll find detailed coverage of important topics, including Document Design, Graphics and Graphic Conventions, Tone and Company-Specific Word Usage, Grammar and Punctuation Conventions, and Writing For an International Audience. Each section will help you understand not only the “how” but also the “why” behind effective communication, ensuring clear, professional, and impactful writing.

Whether you’re a student refining your writing skills or a professional enhancing your technical communication, the “Technical Writer’s Style Guide” provides the tools and insights you need to succeed.



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