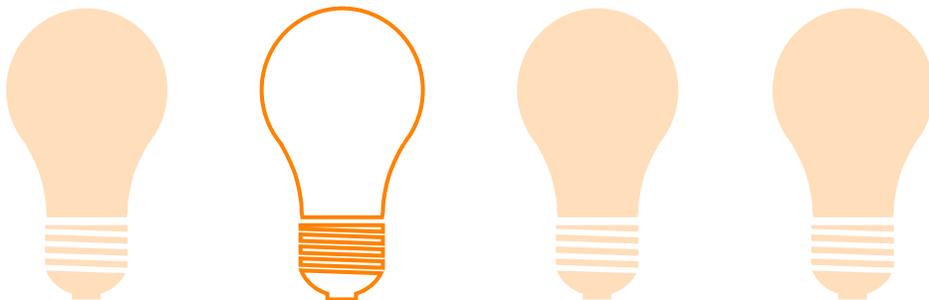




**CONTENT
STRATEGY
ALLIANCE**

EDITORIAL STYLE GUIDE EXAMPLE

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1) **INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS A CONTENT STRATEGY?**

An active Content Strategy provides the rules and guidelines for tone, voice, style and writing for a web site.

The Content Strategy for www.com described in this Editorial Style Guide is based on Web Best Practices, and also on user-research findings from studies completed by Agency on behalf of.

The purpose of this document is:

1. To provide rules on how to craft copy that provides consistency in voice, tone and nomenclature
2. To provide guidance on how to craft copy that is suited for the web

Anyone writing, editing or producing content for .com should follow the guidelines in this document to ensure a consistency throughout the site.

While this document should be referred to when creating, updating and revising content, revisions to the brand and web format guidelines may require changes to site content not outlined in this document. In cases where complete or total content sections require revision, this document should be updated to reflect possible changes in tone, style and content requirements.

2) **CONTENT STRATEGY GUIDELINES**

Members and www.com visitors should find a site that is:

- Informative and helpful
- Speaks to them in a language they understand

The site should aid users by employing clear and consistent:

- Copy
- Nomenclature
- Headings
- Voice
- Tone

3) WHAT ARE TONE AND VOICE?

Two important elements of content strategy are tone and voice.

Tone is the emotional element that conveys the attitude of a site: how upbeat, serious, humorous, etc. It's about phrasing and the words you use.

Voice is more technical such as who the audience is (size, demographics) and what the agenda is (sales, entertainment, information). It is about the execution of the content and is conveyed through the use of person (first, second or third), text and word length, etc.

Think of voice and tone as the site's personality and style. The extent of personality and style that is conveyed depends on the circumstance or environment. Just as how you speak depends on the context, different kinds of writing may have a specific voice and tone. A sales-driven product description should sound and read differently than an answer to a technical question.

4) TONE AND VOICE RECOMMENDATIONS

The tone and voice of www.com should be:

- Personal
- Friendly
- Conversational

AND ALSO:

- Trustworthy
- Helpful
- Authentic
- Approachable

But should still be:

- Informative
- Clear
- Engaging
- Concise

5) TONE/VOICE SCALE

The Tone/Voice Scale below is a way of thinking about the tone/voice of the .com site by positioning the attributes between opposing choices. The recommended tone/voice attributes are listed in the middle column.

Not Here	Here	Not Here
Spirited	Friendly	Measured
Amusing	Personal	Stuffy
Colloquial	Conversational	Formal
Sly	Trustworthy	Certain
Playful	Helpful	Leading
Specious	Authentic	Pretentious
Casual	Approachable	Distant

6) PUBLIC VS. MEMBER SITE

- The tone and voice of the public-facing site should evoke more of a marketing flavor, as it is selling products and services. It needs to speak to both novice and experienced site visitors, so more instructional copy is needed.
- The member area will employ a more personal tone, e.g., more use of 2nd person and more “to the point.” With members we can assume a certain amount of knowledge about and its services.

7) TONE & VOICE IMPLEMENTATION EXAMPLES

Below is an example of some .com content that has been re-written to be more personal, friendly, conversational and clear, with a marketing “twist.”

Original Content	New Content
<p><u>Product & Services Landing Page:</u></p> <p>'s www.com is the place for buyers and sellers in the wholesale market to conduct business 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This site gives sellers the ability to remarket their vehicles earlier in the remarketing cycle than traditional live eventss. Buyers are able to see, compare and purchase vehicles either in a "Buy Now" or online events dynamic bid environment.</p>	<p><u>Product & Services Landing Page:</u></p> <p>Why be limited to special hours, when you can conduct business 24-7 at this site. Sellers can remarket their vehicles earlier in the cycle than at traditional live events. And buyers are able to see, compare and purchase vehicles either in a "Buy Now" or online events dynamic bid environment.</p>

8) INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE & NOMENCLATURE BEST PRACTICES

Based on user research and best practices, Agency will develop intuitive and strong information architecture and nomenclature for www.com. This will allow users to find the content they need and avoid inconsistencies that can cause frustration, loops and dead-ends.

Best practices will include:

- Strong title headings so people can find the info they need
- When appropriate, using links to a new window for more extensive information for those that wish to read more, while not hindering those who want to scan
- Logical grouping within bullets to increase comprehension.
- Meaningful link descriptions rather than just a URL to add more context so users find the right information faster and more efficiently
- Using phrases and terms that are familiar to users or define them in the first use on a page

9) WEB COPYWRITING BEST PRACTICES

Usability study experts Jakob Nielsen and John Morkes found that rather than reading every word on a web page, people scan them. Based on these findings, it is the general wisdom on the web that these rules should be implemented:

- Clear instructional text so that the user knows:
 - What they can do
 - How to do it
 - Why they should do it
- Consistent and clear labels and headings
- Consistency in phrasing, spelling and punctuation
- Conveying one idea per paragraph to avoid having users miss additional points
- Using the newspaper style of the inverted pyramid (starting with the conclusion/summary of facts and adding details in subsequent paragraphs)
- Keeping information as simple as possible while still imparting important points.

Readability: In addition, the content will be written according to the Flesch-Kincaid Algorithms, a publishing industry standard for reading levels. See Appendix A for more information.

10) COPYWRITING RECOMMENDATIONS

Type of Content	Recommendations
Body copy	Try to limit body copy on a page to 500 words.
Keywords	Two to three a page. Allows search engines to rank sites according to content. Bolding key words is recommended if it doesn't distract from the message or compete with too many other bolded words on the page.
Bullets	Limit the number of bullets to 7-10 to aid comprehension.
Bullets	Logical grouping of bullet points leads to greater comprehension.
Descriptive copy under titles ("Blurbs")	Limit to 15 words.
Calls to action	Strong calls to action to make content more compelling.

11) Spelling and Punctuation

Content on the www.com web site will follow the Associated Press (AP) style and when appropriate, the Corporate Style Guide (revised 8/07/07). See Appendices B and C for some of the more pertinent details of these styles.

APPENDIX A

Readability: Flesch-Kincaid Algorithms

Readability measures are primarily based on factors such as the number of words in the sentences and the number of letters or syllables per word. The Flesch-Kincaid Algorithms are based on the Flesch-Kincaid Readability Tests. These tests are designed to show the difficulty of a particular reading passage.

Higher scores indicate material that is easier to read; lower numbers mark harder-to-read passages. Because many government agencies require documents or forms to meet specific readability levels, these test have become U.S. government standards.

In fact, these tests have become so widespread that the Flesch-Kincaid scale is bundled within Microsoft Word, Lotus WordPro and others computer programs.

APPENDIX B: ASSOCIATED PRESS STYLE HIGHLIGHTS

PUNCTUATION

Commas in a series: Do **not** put a comma before the conjunction in a simple series e.g., The flag is red, white and blue.

However, put a comma before the concluding conjunction in a series if an integral element of the series requires a conjunction e.g., I had orange juice, toast, and ham and eggs for breakfast.

Use a comma also before the concluding conjunction in a complex series of phrases e.g., The main points to consider are whether the athletes are skillful enough to compete, whether they have the stamina to endure the training, and whether they have the proper mental attitude.

GRAMMAR

- **a, an** - Use the article "an" in front of words that sound as if they begin with a vowel, regardless of how they are spelled, e.g., an honor.
- **academic degrees** - Put an apostrophe in bachelor's degree and master's degree.
- **addresses** - Abbreviate the words street, avenue, boulevard and also compass directions if they appear after a numbered address, e.g., 50 S. Court St., South Court Street.
 - Never abbreviate drive, highway, place, or any of the other words that might follow an actual street name.
- **a.m., p.m.** - Recognize that 6 p.m. tonight is redundant, e.g., 6 tonight, 6 p.m. today, 6 p.m. Monday.
- **co** - When the prefix is part of a word indicating occupation, hyphenate, as in co-worker, co-owner. There are no hyphens when the letter "o" is doubled, e.g., cooperate and coordinate.
- **composition titles** - Capitalize words that are four letters or longer. Don't capitalize "a," "an" and "the." Don't capitalize conjunctions or prepositions, unless they are four letters or longer, e.g., *The Elements of Style*, *Gone With the Wind*.
- **dimensions** - Use figures for all numbers that indicate height, weight, width, etc., even for numbers less than 10, e.g., The book weighs 2 pounds.
- **directions and regions** - Capitalize words such as North and South if they are nouns referring to regions. When referring to compass directions, such as "I am walking north," lower case them.
- **essential clauses, essential phrases** - If you use the word "which" to introduce a phrase or clause, precede it with a comma. Do not precede the word "that" by a comma. Use "which" to introduce non-essential phrases and clauses, which can be eliminated from a sentence without changing its essential meaning (such as in this sentence).
- **fewer, less** - Use fewer for things that you can count. , e.g., I have fewer quarters than you do. Use less for things you cannot count, e.g., I have less cash than you do.

- **millions, billions** - Try to avoid long numbers with lots of zeroes, e.g., 7 billion.
- **months** - Never abbreviate months when they do not immediately precede a date, e.g., We got married in September last year. However, when the name of a month immediately precedes a date, abbreviate it - but only if the month's name is six letters or longer, e.g., We got married Aug. 6 last year; We were divorced March 5.
- **numerals** - Spell out whole numbers below 10; use figures for 10 and above.
- **plurals** - Note the unusual rule that when you form the plural of a proper noun that ends in a "y," you usually add an "s," as in Kennedys, Grammys, Emmys.
- **possessives** - The main AP exception to Strunk and White's *Elements of Style* involves forming the possessive of a singular proper noun that ends in "s." AP says merely add an apostrophe, e.g., Otis' cookies, Amos' ice cream, Charles' chips.
- **second reference** - Well-known abbreviations are acceptable on second reference. Thus, Internal Revenue Service can become "the IRS" the second time you refer to it.
- **state names** - Spell out all names of states in sentences unless they are preceded by a city, county or military base name. e.g., I lived in Oklahoma. I lived in Tulsa, Okla.
- **titles** - Capitalize formal titles immediately before a name and do not separate the title from the name by a comma, e.g., I saw President Clinton.
- **United States** - Abbreviate it as "U.S." only as an adjective before a noun, e.g., U.S. hockey team; I love the United States.
- **vice president** - No hyphen.
- **years** - To indicate a decade, add an "s" to the first year in the decade. Years are never spelled out, e.g., In the 1960s, I did a lot of things I don't remember; I was born in the '60s; 1968 was a good year.

SPELLING (compiled from the AP Style & the Corporate Style Guide; Guide supersedes AP Style)

- accommodate
- adviser
- afterward
- all ready (everyone is prepared; all are ready)
- already (completed action)
- a.m.
- amid
- among
- Bidder (capitalize)
- Bid Price (capitalize)
- Buyer (capitalize)
- calendar
- canceled, cancellation
- Condition Report (capitalize)
- Dealer (capitalize)
- e-business
- e-commerce

- e-mail
- embarrass
- floorplan
- Floor Price (capitalize)
- franchised
- front-line ready
- harass
- HTML
- Internet
- intranet
- judgment
- knowledge
- livable
- login (noun, adjective)
- log in (verb)
- logoff (noun, adjective)
- log off (verb)
- marshaling
- online
- percent
- PowerSearch
- power sports
- p.m.
- principal (meaning primary or major, as in the title of the high-ranking school official)
- principle (a fundamental law or doctrine)
- privilege
- Rep (capitalize)
- RVs (no apostrophe)
- Seller (capitalize)
- trade in (verb)
- user name (general use; should have initial caps when used beside a text box. For example, in login and sign-up areas.)
- Web (referring to World Wide Web vs. generic web site)
- webcam
- webcast
- webmaster
- web page
- web site
- Wholesaler