

Quick Guide to Writing Great Content for SharePoint Sites

Good Practices for Great Content

Topic	Recommendation
Tone	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overall, the tone should be smart, concise and helpful, as well as promote corporate values.• Copy should be consistent and appropriate for the target audience. Headline copy should be direct.• Use plain language to make your copy crisp and easy to consume.
Keep Your Pages Fresh	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage return visits by giving users something new to learn.• Keep your site current with value-added information.• Check and update your page regularly and review all document content at least every 6 months, deleting or updating content that is no longer relevant.
Spelling Counts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check your page for spelling and grammatical errors every time new information is added or changed.
Limit Your Message	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Online attention spans are short. Limit your message to 3 key ideas within a content “block.”• In Calendar and Announcement entries, keep the content short. If you need to reference more information, write a document, upload it to your document library, and put a hyperlink in your calendar or announcement entry.
Remember Your Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When creating content for your page, be sure to consider the user. When structuring your content, group ideas that are relevant to the specific audience.• Site users are in search of information and tools for specific tasks. Before creating any type of content, think about:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ What would the user want or expect to find?○ Are there common requests for information from your department or team? If so, make sure that this content is easy to find on your page.○ Is there an obvious path to and from content that users would look for?○ Are the headlines and copy written in an engaging, concise and relevant manner?
Start with the Main Topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Think like a journalist when you add text to a page.• Start with your main point, follow with supporting information, and end with a link to more detail on a subsequent web page or attached document. Users who are scanning your site will quickly see what is on the site and will then be able to click through for more information.
Put the Important Information at the Top – Use Hyperlinks Wisely	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Users do not always scroll down to see the rest of the page.• Be sure the points you want to convey are within the part of the screen that displays when you arrive at the page. Do not make the user navigate to find important content.• Do not say “refer to the xxx section on this page for more information.” If you refer to content either on your site or on another site, make a direct hyperlink to the content.
Write Concisely	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• People read differently when looking at a computer screen.• Make the content in your Calendar and Announcements easy to scan, using short bullet points whenever possible.• Do NOT WRITE IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS.• Do not use <u>underline</u> to emphasize a point. On the internet, an underline implies that the content is a hyperlink. Use bold if you need to emphasize a point, but don’t use it too much.• Italics do not display well in a browser. They should also be used sparingly, for example, to refer to proper names or to emphasize text.

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Watch the Fonts and Rich Text ... less is more!	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't go overboard using all the features, colors, and capabilities of rich text fields. Refer to the corporate style guide for specific font and color requirements.• Live the mantra "just because you can, doesn't mean you should" when you are putting content in rich text fields. Be very mindful about using multiple colors and highlights on text. Less is more when you are writing for the web.• Use the default standard font for content where ever possible.
Use Numerals – Don't Write Out Numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The best practice for the web is to write numbers with digits, not letters (23, not twenty-three).• For the most part, use numerals even when the number is the first word in a sentence or bullet point.
Write Effective Hyperlinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write links like you would write a heading – use 8 words or less.• On any one page, every link should be unique, independent, and separate. As a best practice, have just one link to a particular piece of content on each page so that you don't confuse your users.• "Lead with the need" – If you have a guide to on how to install a widget, write the link: "Installation instructions." Don't write: "How to install this widget." Otherwise, you have a lot of links beginning with "How to."• Use the following guidelines to create hyperlinks:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ OK: Click here for the latest application form○ Better: Download the latest application form○ Best: Latest Application Form
Always Add a "User Friendly" Description for SharePoint Hyperlink Columns	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write a user-friendly description for all hyperlink site columns (in lists and libraries) or fields (on articles and other pages). Enter the URL in the URL field and a "friendly" name for the description. <div data-bbox="500 1136 1321 1276"><p>Type the Web address: (Click here to test)</p><input type="text" value="http://www.google.com"/><p>Type the description:</p><input type="text" value="Google"/></div>

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Good Practices for Document Naming Conventions

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File Names	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Names should be topical and meaningful to your users.SharePoint 2016 and Office 365: Use spaces to separate words in file names. They will make your documents easier to scan in views and since the URLs in “modern” links are filled with lots of unintelligible characters, a few %20’s separating words in your file name won’t matter!If you are still using SharePoint 2013 or below, it can be helpful to separate words in file names with underscores or dashes to make hyperlinks more “readable.”
Version Numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Do not include version numbers in file names.Use document versioning to store multiple versions of a document.
Document Titles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">SharePoint supports both File Names and Document Titles.Use the Title field to provide a user-friendly, descriptive title for documents and to improve “findability” search.Titles of documents and pages are weighted very highly in search so the better the title, the easier it is to find your document!
Special Characters	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Don’t use any of the following special characters in file/document names: \\ : * ? < > { } ~ (Note: # % & are all valid in Office 365)

Good Practices for Using Images on Pages

Topic	Recommendation
Choose the Best Image Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Images add richness and interest to your site, but large images take a long time to load over slow internet connections and images that take up a lot of room can make it harder to find content.All images that you load to SharePoint should be “optimized for the web” (which may mean reducing the quality of the image) so that they do not take an inordinately long time to load.If you are saving an image to upload to SharePoint, choose .jpg for photographic images and .png for other images such as logos, drawings, or icons.Use image renditions to help optimize experiences for users.
Avoid Dancing Images	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Try to avoid the use of animated .gif images unless they provide instructional or added value to the user. Don’t animate just because it’s “cute.”
Align Image Colors with the Branding for Your Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none">If you are using images as navigation links or as a main image on your page, make sure that the image colors are aligned with your branding.To ensure a consistent user experience, Images that are used for navigation should be aligned with the color palette used on your site. In other words, choose colors and a tone that work with rather than distract from your branding.
Don’t Over-Use Promoted Links Lists	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Promoted links lists are a great feature of SharePoint 2013, but they should not be used to replace all links lists.Some good uses for Promoted Links:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Guiding users through a series of steps (i.e. for training).Showcasing key topics on a page that aggregates content.
Use icons for the right reasons – and when they make sense	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Before you decide to use icons for navigation, read this article from NNGroup about Icon Usability. (http://www.nngroup.com/articles/icon-usability/)