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1
GENERAL GUIDELINES
1.1. IDENTITY

We are Tarleton State University.

The preferred use of the university name is Tarleton State University.

Other name derivations that may be used:
   • "Tarleton" may be used subsequent to writing out the full name of the university in the same page.

The full address of the university must appear as follows:
   • Tarleton State University, 1333 W. Washington St., Stephenville, TX 76402

Tarleton/Tarleton State University may not be shortened to the abbreviation TSU or Tarleton State.
1.2. KEY MESSAGES

Key messages we should convey through the website are:
- Core values: integrity, leadership, tradition, civility, excellence, and service
- Family-like environment where students are treated as individuals
- Diverse and inclusive environment for all students
- Transformative experiences and engaging communities

Messages we do NOT want to communicate:
- We are everything to everybody
- We can answer your questions even though it’s not our area of expertise.
1.3. CONTENT

All content should be simple, clear, brief and scannable.

Remember:

• Get to the point. Then stop.
• Use plain English.
• Express one thought at a time.
• Let the facts speak for themselves.
• Use short words and phrases.
• Never use a long word when a short one will do.
• If it’s possible to cut out a word, cut it out.¹

Writing Examples:

The resources in the data studio give students access to a wide variety of data and allow them to use that data in novel ways. Students can tailor the data studio furniture and hardware to their liking to best promote effective teamwork. Through instruction, collaboration and hands-on experience, students are able to direct their own learning and explore familiar topics in new ways.

Use the fast computers and GIS software in the data studio for your data projects. Arrange furniture and monitors for group meetings and team tasks. We will provide help, seminars and tutorials to promote and strengthen your research skills.

¹ http://www.kerryr.net/webwriting/content_clarity-brevity.htm
Lists help to split up information and make it easier to scan content.

Writing Examples:

We offer mentoring and training in a collaborative environment where you can acquire excellent customer service and team skills as well as technology and information skills that can help you succeed in your courses and future careers.

What you experience working at the Dick Smith Library:
- Collaborative
- Active mentoring and training
- Provide excellent customer service
- Build team, technology and information skills
1.5. TONE OF VOICE

Be direct, but friendly to our visitors.

Talk the language of students, our primary audience. Talk to them. Always look for the simplest way to say what you want, avoid technical speak and acronyms. Students are stressed, and the website content should support them and make them feel motivated and inspired.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Don’t Use</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ILL</td>
<td>Document Delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patron</td>
<td>Visitor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check out resource</td>
<td>Borrow Materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>utilize</td>
<td>use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RLL</td>
<td>Housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USLI</td>
<td>University Student Launch Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSI</td>
<td>Texas Success Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHP</td>
<td>Presidential Honors Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique holdings</td>
<td>Unique Items</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Writing Examples:**

Most of our computers are in our six labs on the first and second floors. There are also open computer stations throughout the library, available to any of our patrons.

Find computers in the six labs on the first and second floor. Computers in open areas on floors one through five can be used by any visitor.
1.6. Action Words

Use action words to actively involve users in the content.

**Writing Examples:**

There are eight collaboration rooms available in the Learning Commons. Each is equipped with white board and a flat screen monitor (VGA connection with supported resolutions: 1920x1080, 1280x720), and each room seats up to eight people.

Use “fishbowls” for your group meetings.

- Seats up to eight people
- Large white board
- Flat screen monitor

Find the glass-walled collaboration rooms on the 1st floor, between The Tech Spot and Study Grounds Cafe.

Book now!
1.7. Icons

Icons allow for a more intuitive navigation of the website. They draw attention to action words and hyperlinks, but used wrong they can distract from the content.

Never use more than one icon per paragraph. Never use more than two different icons per page. Only use ones created by the Office of Web Services.

Writing Examples:

▶️ Book now! ◀️
✔️ Up to eight people
✖️ Not more than three hours
▶️ Book here

▶️ Book now!
• Up to eight people
• Not more than three hours
▶️ Book here

1.7.2. Emoticons

Do not use emoticons on the website. It has a more official tone than our social media sites, so smileys are not appropriate.
1.8. Grammar

Use proper grammar, punctuation and spelling. Avoid abbreviations, slang and questionable language.

If you use library in a sentence it’s lowercase unless preceded by Dick Smith. Do not shorten to DSL.

Dick Smith Library

1.8.1. Numbers in text

When writing figures please use the following:

For the numbers one to nine, always use words (except in dates). For 10 upwards, use figures.

Dick Smith Library has 2 fishbowls, and 8 group study rooms total.

1.8.2. Dates and times

For events, always write the date in full, with commas:

Thursday, March 25, 2013

Express the time using the 12 hour clock, separate the numbers with a colon, add am or pm without periods and without spaces behind the number:

We are open from 10:00am to 5:00pm today.
All content on the website is connected through links. For users to have an enjoyable experience, links have to be named correctly.

Do not name your links “learn more”, “click here”, “here”. It’s not a good user experience, and causes accessibility problems. Include all relevant words for the link.

Don’t overdo it: no more than two links per sentence, new words only linked once when first mentioned.

Please do not link to unreliable sources or questionable web pages.

Writing Examples:

Fifth Annual student video competition: Read more

Our research guides (click here) are made by our college librarians.

New service: VAST: Academic Video Online. VAST is cross-disciplinary. VAST is free.

Fifth Annual student video competition: How to enter?

Our research guides are made by our college librarians.

New service: VAST: Academic Video Online. VAST is cross-disciplinary. VAST is free.

The look of links is determined by our templates, and standard formatting should not be changed.

Links to within your departmental or organizational website are opened in the same window or tab, unless linking to a PDF.

Links to pages outside your departmental or organizational website open in a new window or tab.
1.10. HIGHLIGHTING

1.10.1. Typography
For highlighting, use **bold** for single words or sentences in paragraphs.

Never use *italics* or *underlined* words on web pages. Italics are hard to read, and underlined words will be mistaken for clickable links.

Never type sentences and paragraphs in all caps (Caps Lock) because it is considered rude by “netiquette” standards. It makes the reader feel like they are being screamed at and it is more difficult to read and understand than upper- and lower-case letters.

1.10.2. Colors
The template defines colors of paragraphs, headlines and other elements. Please do not highlight words/sentences with any additional colors or styles unless available within the style options of the template. Use these other colors and styles sparingly on your pages.
1.11. Images

Images are a great way to enhance a webpage’s appearance, provided that they are used correctly. You will need to consider image placement, orientation (vertical or horizontal image), file size, and content.

Use images sparingly. Best is to use images only for better explanations of the topic, **not** as “decoration”. Typically use no more than two to three images on a page, except for banner slideshows. Do not place text on the images; any accompanying text should go next to or below the image.

Banner slideshows should contain images that link to a page with more information about what is in the image(s). Web Services can assist with placement of the images in slideshows. Recommended no more than six images per banner slideshow.

Never use animated images on a website, unless approved.

The following pages provide examples of good images and bad images.
Generic résumé picture

Impersonal “empty building”, people hidden behind computers
Employee IN work environment

Open, friendly, “we are here for you”
Students working by themselves, outdated equipment, off-colors

Generic, “empty” building, dull, depressing
Active help from employees, state-of-the-art equipment, bright colors

Personal, friendly, open, building filled with life
We encourage embedding of videos from Vimeo, YouTube, or similar. Our templates also support embedding of podcasts and other audio files. Please contact Web Services for assistance with embedding.

Please do not embed content from unreliable sources, questionable web pages, or copyrighted content. Ask for help if you are unsure.
We are trying to establish a consistent naming scheme for any files you upload to the Cascade Server content management system.

Files names should be specific and descriptive rather than random or generic.

A standard way of naming folders and files reduces the time it takes to review/check updates to the website. Also, file names will help us to create titles that are needed for accessibility and SEO (search optimization) of the website.

For images and videos, please make sure you rename the file after you download it from the camera. File names created by the camera are usually generic and non-descriptive, like CP0123-567. Also be sure to size the photos down to make them easier to load in browsers.

For PDF files or similar, make sure you use a descriptive name.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Don’t Use</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CP0123-567.jpg</td>
<td>staff-daphne-hunt.jpg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David.jpg</td>
<td>student-david-rutledge.jpg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cafe.mp4</td>
<td>study-grounds-cafe.mp4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>report.pdf</td>
<td>accessibility-compliance-report.pdf</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2 CONTACT INFORMATION
2.1. WEB SERVICES TEAM

Get help with:
- Maintenance and updates of web pages
- Creation of new web pages
- Embedding video and other media
- Button/graphic creation, including banner slideshows
- Training on Cascade Server, web accessibility, and content authoring

E-Mail: www@tarleton.edu

Please submit all service requests through the Update Request form on www.tarleton.edu/webservices.
3
WRITING FOR THE WEB
3.1. Order of Content

3.1.1. Print
Readers of print materials typically read in a sequential order. Rarely users “skip” a chapter from a book, or a paragraph from an interesting article, allowing the writer to build up arguments in successive order from introduction to conclusion.

We know what they have read previously, and we know exactly what information they are going to read next, allowing us to **present information in a logical and chronological order.**

3.1.2. Web
On the web, we are confronted with impatient users browsing web content, skipping paragraphs and whole pages, following links in a random order. Details will often be ignored, along with long headlines and multi-line paragraphs.

A majority of the users scans the page instead of reading word for word, focusing on headlines, summaries and captions.

**Web readers are active, not passive.** They will not spend time searching for the right information; a quick glance at the page should present them with all valuable options already.

**Reasons for the passive reading behavior include:**
- Reading from a computer monitor is 25% slower than reading from print.
- Reading from a computer monitor increases eye strain and fatigue.
- Web users often scan center-left-right, instead of left-right.

The goal is to keep users engaged and reading through our web pages by presenting the conclusion first, then explaining the issue roughly, consequently giving more details in the last paragraphs (for the truly interested).

**Here are a few basic rules for web writing:**
- Create a scannable website:
  - Keep headlines short, create meaningful sub-headings
  - Highlight keywords
  - Use bulleted lists: but never more than nine items at once, maximum of two levels
  - Present one idea per paragraph, which are no longer than 40 - 70 words, and ideally have no more than 5 lines.

**Everybody needs to understand the content – the audience is everyone!**
It is essential that the written text on a website is understood by a multitude of users, since we do not have a known target audience.

It is important to write content for readers, not oneself, using an inclusive, positive and non-offensive tone.

- Use bold text and italics sparingly. Never underline words or headlines (might be mistaken for a link).
- Never SHOUT at the users.

**All content should be simple, clear, brief and scannable.**

Web readers are impatient, overloaded with information and options, and not interested in complicated language or dismissive tone.

- Get to the point. Then stop.
- Use plain English.
- Express one thought at a time.
- Let the facts speak for themselves.
- Use short words and phrases.
- Never use a long word when a short one will do.
- If it’s possible to cut out a word, cut it out.²

**Web content should have 50% of the word count of its paper equivalent.**

To ensure that the content is clear to the users, TEST your content. Have two people read it, a student and a staff member or friend. They have to understand all (or at least most) information.

**Other tips:**

- Don’t waste space welcoming people to the page. There is no need, and most users ignore any welcome text as filler. Get to the meat - that is what they came for.
- Name your page clearly. The page title and the navigation title should match as closely as possible. They should also clearly articulate the subject of the page. Do not use "Welcome to Marketing & Communications!" Instead, say "Department of Marketing & Communications."
- Do not tell users to "use the links on the left." Put the information or links you are referring to right there instead.
- Avoid exclamation points. We know Tarleton is awesome! We love it! But exclamation points on websites make it look unprofessional!
- Link, link, and link to relevant information
- Make your links contextual. Avoid "Click here."
- Avoid jump (anchor) links except on long pages such as FAQs.

² [http://www.kerryr.net/webwriting/content_clarity-brevity.htm](http://www.kerryr.net/webwriting/content_clarity-brevity.htm)
Unique to web design, we have to take into consideration the scrolling behavior of users browsing the Internet with different devices.

A mobile phone has a much smaller screen than a wide screen monitor, forcing the user to scroll more. Only a small part of the content area can be seen without scrolling.

![Pyramid Information Structure](image)

compare: Kerry Redshaw: [http://www.kerryr.net/webwriting/structure_content.htm](http://www.kerryr.net/webwriting/structure_content.htm)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Call to Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 second</td>
<td>In 1 second the user should understand...</td>
<td>Dick Smith Library empowers students and helps with their research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 seconds</td>
<td>In 10 seconds the user should understand... (primary message)</td>
<td>Dick Smith Library houses exciting study spaces, and provides research help to students. Visitors can borrow books, articles as well as tech materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 minutes</td>
<td>In 2 minutes the user should understand... (secondary message)</td>
<td>Dick Smith Library supports student &amp; faculty research and collaborates with several partners at Tarleton. There is a digital repository, and materials not available on-site can be ordered from across the country.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most important information should be closer to the top of the page, with less important information towards the bottom.
DESIGNING FOR THE WEB
4.1. Audience

In both print and web design, it is essential to draw the attention of the audience to your product.

You want them to sit on a page of a magazine long enough to get the main concept and message across, and you will try to involve your visitors in your website, in order to make them stay longer.

Your audience is key – always!

4.1.1. Print

In print, you know your audience pretty well.

For example, you know that the magazine Vogue is primarily read by women in their early 30s in their leisure time after work. 70% of those who buy Vogue read no other fashion magazine - they are exclusive readers! Designers have an idea of the readers’ background and personal living conditions, therefore allows them to target this audience very specifically.

Since the audience usually chooses to read or buy a certain magazine, newspaper or other print product, they are consequently more involved and interested in the content. Readers know what to expect and understand how the product “works”, since the content is presented in a certain way. The interaction is more focused.

4.1.2. Web

In web design, it is much harder to specify your user base. It is much harder to cater to individual needs when you have a less clear image. Analytic tools like Google Analytics allow for a basic characterization of the visitors.

So here is what we know about the Tarleton website audience:

- Almost 60% percent are visiting the pages from computers in Stephenville, Texas, and 32% of which visit the page from mobile devices.
- We assume that a significant part of our local users are students at Tarleton and probably staff, faculty and alumni make up a large part of our visitors as well.
- We know when they access the website on which device, but we cannot tell what exactly they are doing while checking out the online pages.

It’s more challenging to keep users interested and focused throughout.

Websites need a consistent, intuitive and usable layout to engage all users.
4.2. LAYOUT

The layout process is completely different for print and web.

4.2.1. Print
In print design, you have very specific space limitations that you can measure in inches and that will not change during the production process. All users will see the exact same product, with the intended measurements, colors, shapes and textures you chose for this specific design: What you design is what you get.

4.2.2. Web
In web design, elements are measured in pixels and percentages instead of inches.

Displays present information in a pixel raster, an exemplary display size is 1280 pixel by 1024 pixel.

Since we don’t know what kind of display (PC monitor, laptop, television, mobile phone, tablet), what resolution (number of pixels that display can display), orientation (landscape, portrait) or size the user utilizes to visit the website, we have to design a site layout that is responsive to all display technologies, and adaptable to any resolution.

Ultimately, the content must rule over the design. Websites have to be accessible and usable for all visitors.

Web designers give up control: websites NEVER look the same for everybody!
4.3. Color

4.3.1. Print
Print designers use CMYK (Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black) for their layout, since these are the colors that printers use.

In order to match the design with the actual print, you start working with CMYK in graphic design software already, identifying all used colors with a unique code that you provide to the printer. You can proof a print, and make sure colors turn out exactly they way intended.

4.3.2. Web
In web design, the color model used is RGB (Red, Green, Blue), matching the colors that are used in monitors. Display brightness and contrast can be individually set and depend on display make and model. Therefore colors differ from user to user, and influence the look of the website drastically.

Since colors are displayed differently on different devices, we cannot rely on colors transporting the message online.
4.4.1. Print

In order to get the best quality for a print design, you need to set an image to a resolution of 300dpi (digital pixels per inch), as well as a size that is appropriate for the print ad (in inches), which will ensure a clear, crisp print of an image.

Since the user will hold the printed product in his hands, designers do not have to worry about file size of an image, artwork or the whole file.
4.4.2. Web
Since users need to download images from a web server in order to see them in their browser, it is essential to use lower resolution images with 72dpi or 96dpi. Web images are rarely larger than 1200px across, since most displays cannot “fit” them anyway.

Even though many internet connections are high-speed these days, we cannot rely on the speed of the user’s connection and have to ensure that images download fast and be displayed properly.

In general, if graphics are used, make sure they support the written text. Web users generally ignore irrelevant images, especially when they are animated (so-called “banner-blindness”).

Web content needs to load quickly. Images should be low resolution compared to print.
## 4.5. SUMMARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Web Design</th>
<th>Print Design</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interactive</td>
<td>Static</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look of design depends on user’s preferences &amp; setup</td>
<td>What you design is what you get; prints will look the same everywhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inverted pyramid information structure</td>
<td>Pyramid information structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing for active readers</td>
<td>Writing for passive readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted at broad audience</td>
<td>Audience specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Browsing allows for random order of information</td>
<td>Logical and chronological order of information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single elements of information must have stand alone value</td>
<td>Information perceived as a whole, read in context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Images at low resolution (Download time)</td>
<td>Images at high resolution (To print)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RGB color model</td>
<td>CMYK color model</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Elements of design (Line, color, shape, texture, space, form)

Principles of design:
- unity, balance, hierarchy, scale, dominance, similarity and contrast

Elements of art:
- texture, form, space, shape, color, time, line

Principles of art:
- unity, harmony, variety, balance, contrast, proportion, pattern, rhythm