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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EDUCATION ACTIVITY

# Writing for the Web A Manual

# **Writing for the Web**

## **A Manual**

**Office of Communications  
Department of Defense Education Activity  
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## Introduction

As an activity of the Department of Defense, we must comply with DoD regulations. Ever since DoDEA components began to design and post Web pages, questions have arisen as to why many of the features seen on the Web pages of other schools and school systems could not be included on DoDEA sites. While the answer rarely seems to satisfy would-be Web site creators, it's simple: *everything* we publish—and that includes anything posted on the Internet—is considered an “official” document and so must comply with the DoD regulations regarding such documents. These DoD regulations, and the DoDEA regulations that clarify their intent for schools and offices, restrict content that might have implications for the security of our students and employees, their families, and the work of various components. Thus, we are not permitted to include the names of any of our students or—except in very specific instances—employees on our official Web pages. Any personal information about students and employees is also prohibited.

In addition to DoD and DoDEA regulations, we must also comply with federal legislation passed in June 2000 requiring government Web pages to be accessible to persons with disabilities. This legislation, Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act, pertains to official, government-supported Web sites. Thus, *any* pages posted as part of a DoDEA Web site, whether or not they were created by a DoDEA employee, must fully comply with these regulations. This means that even Web pages created by students must comply if those pages are to be part of a DoDEA school Web site.

The purpose of this manual is to address the elements that you, as a Web writer, must consider when preparing information for on-screen presentation. It will explore aspects of writing that will give your copy more power online and enhance its value to your Web readers. However, this manual will *not* teach you how to write; presumably, you already know how to do that. Rather, its goal is to help you apply what you know about good writing to electronic media. It will focus on what it takes for your words to have the greatest possible impact on the audiences for whom they are primarily intended—your students, your parents, your educators, your local communities, your host commands, and the Department of Defense.

To the user, content is the most important aspect of a Web site. Unfortunately, much of current web writing does not support users in achieving their main goal, which is to find useful information as quickly as possible. It is up to you to make sure that a user's trip to your site is both productive and worthwhile.

In writing for the online world, elements such as typeface, accompanying artwork, and graphic design are all part of the writer's concern. The way the words are written, the way they hang together, and the impact they will have are dependent upon non-text elements, and so all of these elements must be considered when writing. In addition, because users do not read on the Web but rather skim or scan the pages, you must design your web document to be scannable. Conventional writing guidelines also apply, however. These include carefully organizing the information, using words and categories that make sense to the audience, using topic sentences, limiting each paragraph to one main idea, and providing the right amount of information.

Web users are critical and impatient. The quality of your site's content influences their evaluation of its credibility. Users like well-organized sites with important, factual information that is easy to find—and fast. They're coming to your site because they have something they need to find out “right

now”—whether it’s information about your school’s calendar, your student homework policy, or PCS-ing details. Help them find what they need as quickly and as painlessly as possible.

Research shows that a Web user is captured—or not—in the first 11 seconds he spends on your page. If you don’t engage him in that first 11 seconds he will click through to somewhere else. It’s your job as a Web writer to help make sure that he’s *so* captivated that he stays!

## Chapter 1—Assessing the Online Medium

In terms of getting messages across to audiences, the online medium—i.e., the Web—is inherently different from any other medium, especially print. Basically, when you read online, you are gathering information from a medium that has the following characteristics: it is non-linear, it is two-dimensional, it is interactive, and it involves multimedia.

### Non-Linear

Most online documents consist of several separate files connected by hyperlinks. There is no beginning, middle, or end. That means that, as the Web writer, you don't know where a reader will "enter" your document. He may start on your home page. A search engine such as Yahoo may drop him in the "middle" of the site (per *your* frame of reference) as the result of a search query. Or he may have personally bookmarked a "deep" internal page during a previous visit to your site.

Usually writers "push" information through various media to readers, giving readers what the writers want to give them. But in the Web environment, readers "pull" the information they need themselves. In other words, *they* take what they want from your document. This means that each separate Web page must make sense in its own context because you don't know whether or not your reader will have the context of surrounding material to help him make sense of it, particularly since you don't know just where he's entering your site.

### Two-Dimensional

A reader cannot manage an online document in the same way that he manages a printed document. He cannot judge how long it is by just looking at it. He can't thumb through it quickly to get an overview of the whole document. He can't easily browse the structure of the document, or quickly read ahead in a section of particular interest to him. It requires more time and effort on the part of the user in the two-dimensional online world to get a feel for a document to see if it's really something worth delving into. You need to make your reader *want* to spend time with your document.

### Interactive

Reading is a passive experience for the most part. Except with some children's books (e.g., pop-up books), the most interaction a reader usually has with a book is the act of turning a page. Using the Web, however, is an active experience. The user interacts with his computer and the Web pages by clicking on buttons and hyperlinks. He gets to make choices—Do I follow this link or that one? Do I click on this button or that one? Do I watch this video clip or listen to this audio clip?

It is crucial that you take this interactivity into account when you write for the Web, and not just produce flat pages that simply mimic the printing of text on paper. If you don't, you'll disappoint your audience.

### Multimedia

Print is limited in the options it has available to convey a message—basically, words and pictures. In the online world, you have a number of multimedia options available to you as part of the writing

process: audio, video, animation, and interactive graphics. You must think through your message, your audience, and the tools you have available, and decide if just words and graphics will be effective, or if you need to consider one of these multimedia tools for all or part of your message.

## Chapter 2—How Readers Read on the Web

Skimming or scanning instead of reading is a fact of the Web. Studies have shown that 79 percent of Web users scan pages; only 11 percent actually read word-by-word. Why? Primarily because it saves time. It takes 25 percent longer to read a document word-by-word on screen than in print. As a Web writer, you have to acknowledge this fact and write for scannability, or you have to make your material so compelling that people will want to take the extra time to read it word-by-word!

Because users scan, they tend to not fully read streams of text. Instead, they scan the text and pick out keywords, sentences, and paragraphs of interest while skipping over those parts of the text they care less about. Elements that enhance scanning include headings, large type, bold text, highlighted text, bulleted lists, graphics, captions, topic sentences, and tables of contents.

When a Web page first comes up, a user will focus his attention on the center of the window, where he will read the body text before he bothers to look over header bars or other navigational elements. When scanning the page, the reader's eye first scans the middle, then the left, and then the right of the page. You need to take this into account when you design your page.

## Chapter 3—Know Your Audience

Your audience should determine the design and content of your Web site. For example, a Web page targeted to an audience of parents, teachers, and administrators should not have the same presentation as a page targeted to students. If your audience is elementary school students, shorter pages with fewer activities (i.e., things to do) on each page are more “child friendly” than a long list of activities on one page. The older the students or the audience, the more diversified your Web pages can be.

You should always look at your content through the eyes of your intended audience. Don’t present your information in the way *you* understand it, but instead develop your content so that it can be understood by the people you want to reach. Try to put aside your “insider” knowledge and your preconceptions.

Each segment of your target audience has unique needs, tastes, and expectations. Thus, it usually makes sense to structure your site so that people immediately see where they should go to get exactly what they want. For example, you might want to divide your site into top-level sections that specifically reflect each target audience—“For Parents,” “For Teachers,” “For Students.” Or you might find it more appropriate to develop unique content within each section that is particularly targeted to each of your primary audiences (e.g., your calendar section might note important days for teachers and administrators, important days for parents, and important days for students). It is definitely more work to speak directly to each of your audiences, but the effort is usually worthwhile. However, don’t go overboard with customizing your content. Don’t let your structure become too complex or redundant.

Some additional points to keep in mind:

- Be sure to use the appropriate level of detail for your audience. Don’t assume that your audience knows what you’re talking about; explain everything.
- Avoid professional jargon. If you use acronyms, be sure to spell them out the first time you use them on each Web page. If you must use a word or term your audience might not understand, explain it simply. Make sure that words and phrases mean the same thing throughout your site.
- Remove anything on your site that doesn’t make any difference from your audience’s perspective. Only make the points that your audience will care about. In other words, remove any excess “fluff.”
- Try to anticipate and clearly answer all of your audience’s natural questions. Having a separate “Frequently Asked Questions” page with answers as part of your site is often helpful.
- And, finally, make sure you provide a point-of-contact for additional information.

## Chapter 4—Mechanics/Site Construction

### Organization

It is important that you have a understandable structure for your site. Keep in mind that your visitors should not be any farther away than three clicks from the information that they are looking for.

It helps to first organize your site on paper. One way is to use a tree model. The main index or home page is the trunk of the tree. Each leaf represents a Web page, and each branch is a link to that document. Another way to organize your site is by using connecting circles. A middle circle represents your home page. Secondary pages are represented by smaller circles which are connected via lines—links—to the home page circle and each other.

### Elements

Each Web page is usually made up of three components: text, graphics (i.e., images and/or pictures), and hyperlinks (i.e., links). Web page editing and graphics software which controls these three elements (e.g., Macromedia's Dreamweaver and Fireworks) can be used to create Web pages.

#### *Text Elements*

Text is put on a Web page by typing. You can put text most anywhere on a page and enhance it by using headings; changing the size of the type; using different styles of type, such as bold and italics; using different type alignments (usually left or center); changing the type color; adding lists; and using tables. Because skimming or scanning rather than reading word-by-word is the norm on the Web, your text should be short or at least broken up into pieces or chunks of information. Concise blocks of text mean shorter pages which will download faster and help alleviate the Web's most serious usability problem, slow response times.

Users do not like to scroll. They especially don't like long, scrolling pages, or pages where they must scroll from side to side to view the entire page. Ideally a Web page should be visible in its entirety in the browser window without a user having to scroll at all. A rule of thumb: avoid more than two "page downs" in order to read through an entire Web page.

You need to have a good balance of text and graphics on your page. Long, continuous blocks of text may lose the attention of your users, especially in an environment where users are accustomed to visual sensation. Shape, color, and contrast should all be considered as a means of highlighting and enhancing the presentation of your text. However, text shouldn't be lost among numerous graphics and busy backgrounds.

#### *Graphic Elements*

A Web page can contain graphics, images, and/or pictures which are usually GIF or JPEG image files. These files can come from digital cameras, scanners, clipart collections, and/or graphics software programs. Generally, simple drawings or images are GIF files, while photographic or detailed scanned images are JPEG files.

Images can be positioned in various ways on a Web page, e.g., centered or left-aligned. A table is frequently used to “lock” an image into a specific position, especially when precise image positioning and placement in relation to text is required. [Note: Tables are extremely effective in the overall formatting of a page because they keep things in specific locations or in association with matched page elements, such as keeping text matched with photos or leaving space between text and a border bar.]

Graphics that add nothing to your text are a distraction and a waste of time for users. Use graphical elements *only* if they complement your text.

### *Hyperlinks or Links*

A hyperlink transfers the user from one Web page to another, or from one area on a Web page to another area on that same Web page. Links can be used internally to join together pages on a singular Web site, or externally to transfer a user to an entirely different Web site. Links can either be attached to text or graphic elements. [Note: Read more about links in Chapter 6.]

### **Construction Considerations**

#### *Keep your site simple.*

Make your site as simple, clean, and as small as is reasonably possible. Keeping your site simple will give it a sense of uniformity and will ensure usability.

Limit your home page in size. Users can become confused by extremely busy, multiple-scrolling pages. Include a few primary items on the home page which encourage further exploration of your entire site.

Try to limit each secondary page to only one concept or idea. Use links to send users to supplemental information. Organize the pages for quick scanning. And remember, each Web page should be able to stand on its own.

If users will need particular software programs to use your site, be sure to have links to the Web sites where they can download the appropriate programs.

#### *Keep your site quick.*

No one wants to wait a long time for graphics to load. Most Web users will stop and go somewhere else unless they really need to get something from your site—and even then, they’ll dislike the wait. There are a number of ways to keep your Web pages quick to load:

- Keep graphic images on a Web page relatively small and simple. Various software is available to help minimize the size of graphic files while maintaining a high quality image (e.g., Adobe Photoshop, Macromedia Fireworks). Use the size and quality image you need for the Web: 72 dpi (dots per inch) for screen resolution and 300 dpi for media intended to be printed. Images at 300 dpi, however, shouldn’t be part of your main page because they have to be downloaded when the page is loaded; that takes up too much time. Give your

users the option to download larger graphics when they need print quality images by providing a link to the 300 dpi images on another Web page.

- If you have an especially large image or photograph for a page, put a thumbnail image (use a combination of cropping and scaling so that it resembles the actual image) on that page and then link to the full, larger image on another page. (Be sure to provide accompanying text for both the thumbnail image and the full-size image.) Provide your user with information about the size and file format (e.g., .jpg, .gif) of the image. Ideally, no image on a page with other items should be larger than 10K.
- Keep your Web pages short to make them quick loading and easier for your customers to navigate. If your pages are too long, your customers will probably give up their search and leave your site. As a general rule, make sure that your total page (i.e., the sum of the file sizes of all elements on your page including the length of the HTML page itself, the graphic files, and the background file) is less than 150K (i.e., 150,000 characters or less). Half this number is even better; a fourth of this size will usually allow your pages to really “zip” along during transmission.

### *Keep your site fresh.*

The content on your Web site is only good as long as it is maintained. If you don't keep it up to date, don't expect your users to keep coming back. The Web is a fluid medium. Update your pages continually to reflect all changes. Statistics, numbers, and examples all need to be recent or the credibility of your site suffers. Even if your site was posted a year or so ago but is still accurate, you need to say so to assure your users of its credibility. For example, if an article was posted in 1998 and is still accurate, you might state, “Posted in 1998 and reviewed for accuracy in May 2001” or “The information in this document is accurate until December 2001.”

But even if you do keep your Website “fresh,” it does no good if no one knows that it's fresh. Following are some techniques to help your users know what's new on your Website:

- Have a “What's New” section. This is a component of many corporate Web sites today, and so most Web users know that this is how to find out the latest on a Web site. Use this section to promote the items from the last 30 days. This minimizes your users have to search throughout your Web site for the latest news and information. [Caution: Don't let this section become a dumping ground for items so that what's there is no longer “new.” Pull items off after 30 days.]
- “Market” your new items. Leave no doubt for your visitors as to where they should go. Billboard your top new items right off your Home Page. Use this as a marketing tool with graphics that help show what the link offers and text that helps visitors decide quickly if they want to go to that page.
- Link off related Web pages. If you have a new item that pertains to a current Web page, put a hotlink for the new item on that page, too. By placing related links in the spots they fit best, you help ensure that your users will find the information they're looking for.

## Browsers

Much of the formatting you use when you design a print document—e.g., text wrap, “fancy” fonts, multiple columns—isn’t feasible with Web documents. Part of the reason is that (1) HTML is basically a primitive formatting language, and (2) each Web browser (i.e., the software that lets you view Web documents) interprets HTML differently. This means that even on the newest versions of the most popular browsers—Netscape Navigator and Microsoft Internet Explorer—the same page may look different. In addition, older versions of a browser may display pages differently than newer versions of that same browser. Plus, a Web page may look different on different hardware platforms (e.g., PC and Mac) even if they are using the same browser version. Finally, the width of the browser window affects column widths and how text lines wrap, and many users set their own preferred fonts and sizes.

What this means is that the Web page/site that you’ve designed is not going to look exactly like what you’ve created. Font sizes may change, columns may shift, text may appear in different fonts. Pictures and photos can also look different in different browser platforms, but that difference is usually limited to varying color hues and the amount of space around the graphic. These discrepancies can’t be avoided, but making your page designs simple will help.

*Tip:* Before you upload your pages to the Web, always view them on different browsers, on different versions of the same browser, and on different hardware platforms. If possible, also view the pages using different screen resolutions. At least look at them under a resolution of 640 by 480 pixels and 800 by 600 pixels.

## Chapter 5—Navigation

You need to plan how users will navigate throughout your site. You must determine not only how your visitors will advance from one page to the next, or go back to a previous page, but also how they will move throughout each individual page. A consistent toolbar (or button set or menu listing) is especially important—it will not only make it easy to navigate from one page to another throughout your site, but it will bring uniformity and consistency to a multi-page site.

Navigation guides in Web text are especially crucial. Text crammed on Web pages from margin to margin with no blank lines between paragraphs is *not* user-friendly. Whether a site contains long, scrolling text, or smaller blocks of text, users need a way of understanding the whole document and a way to easily find and understand particular sections.

Subheads are a good navigational tool for text. They are especially helpful with large amounts of text such as “shovelware” (i.e., printed text dumped onto a Web site without any adaptation). You can even put a list of subheads at the top of a long document as a table of contents, with each subhead being a link to a particular section in the document. That way readers can go immediately to the section they are interested in reading. Even smaller, stand-alone blocks of text can be helped by subheads. A solid mass of 100 words does not encourage reading unless it is broken up somehow with perhaps a title, two or more paragraphs, or a subhead near the middle of the block.

A point to remember: Each of your Web pages should have a link to your school, the District, or the DoDEA home page, or at least a link to the main menu page of the activity. In other words, a school home page should have a link to the District home page and the DoDEA home page; a District home page should include a link to the DoDEA home page. A classroom project page (e.g., a particular social studies project) should link back to the class’s home page which would link to the school’s home page.

## Chapter 6—Hypertext Links

Links help a user find his way through a site and tell him where to go next. They can take him to related pages or allow him to follow a particular train of thought. Until a reader is familiar with the overall structure of a Web site and some of its content, guidance is helpful. When a user is finished reading a Web page, what to read next is not as clear as it is with a paper document, where you just turn the page. In a linear, printed document the author provides guidance by ordering the pages; in a non-linear, on-line document, the author provides guidance with links.

There are a variety of types of links that can be used in Web pages. These include:

- *next/previous* links for a sequence of pages;
- *back* links to return to a page from a sub-topic;
- *top/bottom* links to move from one place to another in a document;
- *see also* links for related topics; and
- *more* links for additional or more detailed information on a topic.

Don't use too many links on your page. Links that are too close together or that are poorly organized won't stand out to your readers—they'll only overwhelm, distract, or confuse them.

Try not to break links across lines of text. For example, if a link is two words long, don't have one word on one line and the second word on the next line. One way to avoid this is to use the HTML code `<nbsp;>` between the two words that make up the link. This creates a "non-breaking space," which means that the two words of the link will not appear on two different lines of text if the link happens to fall at the end of a line in your user's browser.

### *Primary Links*

Links embedded in a document are the primary links that you want your reader to see. Since readers use links as guideposts in scanning, you want to use them correctly and write in a way that takes best advantage of them. Only the most pertinent links should actually be part of the document, i.e., part of the actual textual content. Don't let links become a distraction. Put less relevant but still meaningful links of additional information in the Web page's margin or at the end of the document under a "See Also" label.

### *Supplemental Links*

Links are the perfect tool for giving detailed information to your users. Including extra information—especially too much detail—in your main Web page(s) will confuse your readers and lose their interest. Instead, use links to provide supplemental information such as definitions of terms and abbreviations, reference information, and background reading.

One way to draw attention to supplemental links is to add sub-text to them, enhancing their meaning and explaining more about what the user will find at the destination. For example:

- Related Resources  
A list of useful and current sites
- Helping your child with homework  
Our principal, Dr. Smith, offers some advice

You can make your text short without sacrificing the depth of the content by splitting the information up into multiple parts connected by hypertext links. Each individual Web page can be brief but yet the full Web site can contain much more information than would be feasible in a printed article. Long and detailed background information can be relegated to secondary pages via links, as can information that's of interest to only a minority of users.

Links, however, should *not* be used to break up a long, linear document into multiple pages. Having to download numerous segments of one document slows down reading and makes printing out the document more difficult. The proper hypertext structure is to split the information into coherent chunks that each focus on a certain topic. Readers can then select the topics of interest to them and download only those pages.

To sum up: Use links to guide the user through your document. Think of linking as the easiest and quickest means to get the user to the most relevant information.

## Chapter 7—Writing Style

Writing for online media is somewhat different than writing for print, although there are some similarities. Understanding these differences and similarities are the key to writing successful online material.

There are a number of key points to keep in mind when writing for the Web:

- Use informal, or conversational, writing rather than formal writing when possible. Studies have shown that any text that begins with “you” or “your” (e.g., “You can get more information...”) has a 70 percent better chance of being read.
- Writing in the “news you can use” style allows users to quickly find the information they want. Web users are much more easily distracted than print readers. Provide your information directly to them; *engage* them.
- Be concise. Don’t write more than 50 percent of the text you would have used in a hardcopy publication. In other words, edit your material down to the bare bones!
- Use simple sentence structure. Convolutioned writing and complex words are even harder to understand online.
- Use active verbs. Where possible, choose verb tenses that won’t be quickly outdated.
- When moving (or linking) from one Web page to another, be careful of verb tenses, pronoun usage, and terminology to make your site consistent.
- Begin each paragraph with a topic sentence to define its purpose. If you don’t start your paragraph with a defining topic sentence, they’re going to miss your point.
- Make sure there is only one idea per paragraph. Remember that users are primarily scanning and will probably only read the first, topic sentence. If you have multiple ideas in your paragraph, they’re probably going to skip over and miss some of them.
- Try to limit each paragraph to 4–8 lines.
- Use the inverted pyramid writing style. Begin the content article on each hypertext page by telling your reader the conclusion, follow by the most important supporting information, and then end by giving the background. [Note: This writing style is just the reverse of the traditional pyramid writing style, which starts with a foundation and gradually builds up to a conclusion. In the inverted pyramid, which is also used for newspapers, readers can stop at any time and will still get the most important parts of the article. On the Web this is especially important because users don’t like to scroll and will very frequently only read the top part of an article or block of information.]
- Avoid using “marketese,” a promotional writing style with boastful subjective claims. Promotional language forces users to spend time filtering out the exaggeration to get at the facts.

- Limit the use of metaphors, particularly in headings; users might take you literally.
- Avoid clichés.
- Avoid these terms/words/phrases: CLICK HERE, FOLLOW THIS LINK, BACK, CHECK IT OUT!, CLICK, COOL, HOT, LINK TO..., NEXT, PRESS THIS BUTTON, PREVIOUS, VIEW, POINT YOUR CURSOR. Generally, if the words or phrases are specific to Web use, then they are probably words to avoid. Also avoid using the phrase “Under Construction.” Web sites are *always* under construction; they are dynamic and ever-changing.

## Chapter 8—Typography

Because the Web is all about reading information, writers need to make reading that information as easy as possible for the user. Content material on the Web must be both readable (i.e., How easy is it to read a lot of text?) and legible (i.e., How easy is it to recognize short bursts of text such as headlines?).

Fonts are either serif fonts (which have small lines, or “serifs,” finishing off the main strokes of letters) or sans serif fonts (fonts without serifs). Times New Roman and Georgia are good serif fonts for the Web; Arial, Helvetica, and Verdana are good sans serif fonts.

**For short pieces of text** (e.g., headlines; button labels; short, single paragraphs):

- Generally, use a sans serif font. It scans quickly and easily, and also makes a good contrast with text in a serif font.
- Avoid using fonts with short ascenders/descenders, fonts with non-existent ascenders or descenders, and fonts that mix capital and lower case letters together.
- Avoid setting type in all caps unless you really need the rectangular look of an all-caps word. It’s much more difficult to read because all all-caps words have the same rectangular shape, i.e., they have no ascenders or descenders and thus look very much alike.

**For large amounts of text:**

- Generally, use a serif font (Serif fonts make good, clean types for easy and pleasant reading.)
- Use a point size not larger than 14 point and not smaller than 10 point (or, if you’re typing directly onto a Web page and not using a word processing program, use a font size not larger than 3 or smaller than 2).
- Don’t set large amounts of text in bold, italic, caps, small caps, or script.
- Avoid very long lines and very short lines of text. Approximately 8-10 words per line is a good amount for on-screen reading.

### **Color**

Make sure there is a good contrast between the text color and the background color. One of the best combinations for readability is black text on a white background.

### **Special Characters**

In order to set real (i.e., “curly” rather than straight) quotes and apostrophes, it takes extra time. You must edit the HTML code by replacing the existing quote marks or apostrophe with the correct HTML code. You may not want to do this with all of your body copy—it *is* time-consuming—but at least use real quotes and apostrophes in your headlines. You can also replace double dashes with an

en (–) or em (—) dash by replacing the existing dash marks with the HTML code for these characters. To use particular symbols such ©, ®, or ™ on your Web page, you must also use HTML code.

opening single quote (‘)	<#145;>
closing single quote, apostrophe (’)	<#146;>
opening double quote (“)	<#147;>
closing double quote (”)	<#148;>
en dash (–)	<#150;>
em dash (—)	<#151;>
copyright symbol (©)	<#169;>
registered symbol (®)	<#174;>
trademark symbol (™)	<#153;>

## Chapter 9—Presentation Techniques

The following techniques apply to presenting and organizing the words and phrases you write for your Web pages:

### *Bolding/Italics*

- To make keywords stand out, highlight words by bolding. However, highlight only key information-carrying words. Avoid highlighting entire sentences or long phrases, since a scanning eye can only pick up two (or at most three) words at a time.
- Use italics to make figure captions or sentences or phrases stand out, but don't use it for large blocks of text since italic typefaces are slower to read online.

### *Underlining*

- Underlined text, especially bright blue underlined text, usually denotes a hypertext link (in fact on most browsers, bright blue underlined text is the default for a link). To avoid confusing your readers, stay away from underlining non-linkable text on your site.

### *Headings*

- Use headings to make major points. Your readers should be able to scroll down the page and read your major points without stopping. Headings need to convey the main ideas presented in the page.
- Heading text should be informative, and should be able to stand on its own and make sense without the rest of the content text. Don't try to be clever or "cute" since users rely on scanning and your headings to pick up the meaning of your content text.
- The headings should not interrupt the continuity of the page. Those users reading the entire page should rely on the headings as highlights for reinforcement in their reading.

### *Subheads*

- Use subheads to break up long stretches of text.
- Generally, make subheads bold or in color or both, with white space above and text close below.
- Avoid having subheads with only two to three lines of text following them.

### *Lists*

- Bulleted and numbered lists slow down the scanning eye and can draw attention to important points.

- User numbered lists when the order of entries is important. Use unnumbered lists whenever the sequence of the entries is not important.
- Limit the number of items in a single list to no more than nine.

*Word processor tips*

When using a word processor to write your content and then transfer it to a Web page:

- Don't use style sheets that come with the word processor. The styles will *not* translate to the Web.
- Avoid smart quotes (“ ”) and special characters (e.g., ® and ™). On the Web, such items must be created using special HTML code; the Web will not recognize the special characters from your word processing program. [See Chapter 8—Topography.]
- Turn off auto-hyphenation. If your word processor creates hyphenated text, it could result in non-standard hyphenation when transferred to the Web.

## Chapter 10—Basic Principles of Web Design

The most important part of a Web site is its content. The content is what determines if people return to your site again and again. However, the need to present that content in an attractive way is also important. Proper planning and preparation in Web design is essential to create effective and visually appealing Web sites. Following are some tips to keep in mind when designing your site so that it not only looks good but is useful for your visitors.

### **Simplicity**

Design your site to be as simple and clean as possible. Don't include large fancy backgrounds, all kinds of different font colors, numerous graphics, lots of "neat" animated GIF files, all the latest plug-ins, the latest Javascript, or text pages that go on and on. Interactive and colorful techniques can help deliver your message, but they are nothing apart from your message. If they are overused, your Web site will quickly become a sideshow circus which draws visitors for single performances.

### **Balance**

Balance aesthetics with functionality. Emphasize providing quality information, and use graphics and images to enhance your presentation. While people like pictures—i.e., "a picture is worth a thousand words"—a Web page with a thousand pictures will probably receive few hits because it takes too long to load. Use graphics only where they help most—in guiding your users to what they're looking for or to add value to your text. And keep your graphics relatively small on the page. A good rule of thumb: no graphic on a page should be larger than a 2-inch square or a 1x3-inch rectangle.

### **Consistency**

Let your users know that no matter which of your Web pages they're on, they're on your school or District's site. A consistent look and feel on all of your site's pages can help establish an identity for your site. Develop templates that you can use when you add additional pages to your site. This doesn't mean that you should stifle creativity. Just use the same graphical elements to help deliver your message on your Web pages, thus providing a "corporate" signature. A consistent navigation system (e.g., a toolbar, a button set, a menu listing) is especially important, as is having a link back to your home page on every page so that users can move smoothly through your site.

### **Layout**

Grids can be helpful when designing a Web site, but be sure to use a grid to serve your idea, not lead it. Determine what visual material will be in the space besides text (e.g., graphics, headlines, photos). Consider the order and continuity of the overall piece. To avoid monotony with symmetrical grids, use different elements on both sides (e.g., in a 2-column grid, use a photo on one side and text on the other). Odd numbered grids (e.g., a 3-column grid) allow you more flexibility in your design.

When you design your site, always keep in mind that your Web pages will be read on a computer screen. A computer screen is limited in space compared to most print pages; not all of a Web page may be visible at once. Also, the navigation elements take up space on a Web page. In a print

document, you can just flip the pages to get to the next page or the last page; in a computer document you might need “Next page” or “Last page” buttons.

When a user first calls up a Web page, he should be able to quickly understand what the page is about. He should be able to figure out in one glance what is covered on the page, and where he can go next if he doesn’t want to read any more on that page. In other words, this information should be visible without having to scroll, i.e., it should be “above the scroll” (a takeoff on the term “above the fold” in a newspaper, which is the area that you see when the newspaper sits folded on a rack). Continuing information, information that lends itself to skimming, or information that not all readers will be interested in, can appropriately be placed “below the scroll.”

### **Set-Up/Alignment**

- Create your site so that the initial visual impression, the full impact of each Web page, is visible on a 15-inch monitor (i.e., it fits in an 800 x 600 pixel space). Your user shouldn’t have to scroll sideways in order to see the page.
- Generally, choose one alignment (i.e., left, right, center) for the entire page. In other words, don’t have some text and photos centered, while others are left-aligned

### **Proximity/Spacing**

- Group items together that belong together.
- Avoid extra spacing between headings and text: use the line break code <BR> instead of the new paragraph code <P>.

### **Repetition**

- Repeat certain elements that tie the whole page, the whole site, together (e.g., a color scheme, a consistent background pattern, graphic headlines, bullets).
- Use a consistent navigation system throughout the page, throughout the site.

### **Contrast**

- Make sure there’s a good contrast between the text, graphics, and background.
- Make any contrast strong enough to be effective.
- Make good use of white space.
- Have a focal point on each page.

### **Color**

- Choose colors to create an overall feeling and “personality” for your site.

- Pick a color from your color scheme and use it in headlines and important words.
- Always have good contrast between the color of your text and the background color. Light backgrounds should have dark text and dark backgrounds should have light text. [Note: Avoid using white text on a black background. Many printers will not print pure black backgrounds.]
- Because bright blue text on the Web usually means clickable text (i.e., it designates a link), avoid using bright blue text if it's not clickable.
- Although most monitors can display at least 256 colors (i.e., 8-bit color), there are only 216 of these colors that are “browser safe” (i.e., common to the operating systems of different computers). If you use any other color besides one of the 216, the browser will convert that color to the closest color it can find in the browser-safe palette, or it will mix several browser-safe colors together to try to match the “odd” color as closely as possible. The best way to avoid any problems with your text or graphics not appearing as you'd planned, is to always use browser-safe colors. [Note: Most graphics programs have browser-safe palettes built-in.]

## Chapter 11—Accessibility for Users with Disabilities

Content is more than text. It includes photos, artwork, and other graphic elements on a Web page. It should also include elements necessary to make the site accessible for users with various disabilities. In fact, because DoDEA Web sites are official government-supported sites, all Web pages on any DoDEA site—school, District, and Headquarters—*must* be accessible to persons with disabilities per Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act.\*

### Visual Disabilities

Since most Web pages are highly visual, most of the accessibility problems on the Internet relate to blind users and users with other visual disabilities such as colorblindness.

ALT text is alternative text that appears in place of an image if the user cannot or chooses not to download the image, or if the user is using software that displays only text or reads the Web page out loud. ALT text appears when a user moves the cursor over an image. It is used with the HTML image tag `<img>`, which is used to place an image on a page (e.g., ``). [Note: ALT text does not appear on Mac computer screens, it only appears on PC screens.]

ALT text should describe the image (e.g., a photo of a spider on your Web page might have an ALT text of “spider photo”) or its significance (e.g., a photo of the New York City skyline might have an ALT tag of “Photo of NYC prior to the World Trade Center bombing”). Do not just use the file name of an image as the ALT text (e.g., “photo3a.jpg”)—it isn’t useful to anyone but the site creator. Make your ALT text descriptive but brief: many browsers display ALT text in one horizontal line that will run off a user’s screen if it is too long. Images that are *strictly* design elements (i.e., they don’t provide content or help with navigation—for example, rules or lines) do *not* need ALT tags.

When you design your site, in addition to those users who are completely blind, you should take into consideration those users who have reduced eyesight. Make sure that none of your text is extremely small or in a hard-to-read font. [See Chapter 8—Topography.] Also, check your combinations of background and foreground colors—make sure you have a great enough contrast so that colorblind users can read your pages.

### Auditory Disabilities

If you have multimedia elements (e.g., audio clips or video clips) on your site, be sure to provide a transcript or subtitles for hearing impaired users.

### Motor Disabilities

Some users have difficulty with detailed mouse movements and holding down multiple keyboard keys simultaneously. Avoid creating imagemaps that require extremely precise positioning of the mouse, or pages which include elements that require multiple keyboard strokes to execute.

### Cognitive Disabilities

Because users vary in spatial reasoning skills and short-term memory capacity, make your site easy to navigate. For example, designing easily-scannable Web pages (e.g., using headings and subheads) will accommodate those users, such as those with dyslexia, who may have difficulty reading long pages.

\* For additional, more detailed information on how to make your Web pages comply with Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act, see the *DoDEA Web Publishing Guidelines* booklet.

## Chapter 12—Copyright Issues

You should understand some basic copyright issues before you create your school or District Web pages. These include using and crediting other people’s work in your site, fair use, and getting student—and parent—permission to publish student work. In addition, you should be aware that creative work produced by federal government employees as part of their jobs, and/or creative work produced on government equipment, is not eligible for copyrighting. Also, your school and District Web sites, as “official” government sites, may not be copyrighted.

### The Basics

Basically, copyright is the legal, exclusive right of the author of a creative work to control who can make copies of that work and how they make copies. In the United States, almost everything created privately and originally after April 1, 1989, is copyrighted and protected—whether or not it has a “formal” copyright notice. (A notice strengthens the protection by warning people and by allowing the author to collect more damages, but it isn’t necessary.) A copyright lasts until 50 years after the author dies. Virtually nothing modern is in the public domain anymore unless the owner explicitly puts it in the public domain *in writing*.

What is a “creative work?” A creative work is defined by law as something that exists in tangible form—on paper, carved in stone, on disk. Virtually any kind of content or creative endeavor can be copyrighted: literary, journalistic, dramatic, artistic, musical, or other works, including software, advertising photography, technical writing, scientific papers, direct-mail copy, commentary on personal Web sites. It excludes merely factual data, unless that factual data is cleverly organized. It also excludes material that is only in your head (e.g., ideas) and words that you speak, unless they are put onto tape or written down on paper and thus become tangible.

In general, you are not allowed to modify or adapt copyrighted materials in any way, unless you have express permission from the copyright holder to do so. This includes shortening or editing text, cropping images, and changing headings or links. Copyright governs not only the use of a work; it also protects the integrity of that work.

### Getting Permission

Whenever you see content that you might want to use, assume that it’s copyrighted and that you can only republish it with permission from the copyright holder. This includes pictures (e.g., you can’t scan pictures from magazines or brochures and post them on your site without permission), textual and graphics material on the Web, and material in e-mail messages or publications. You must get permission in writing from the creator, even if only by e-mail, before you republish the work.

If you can’t definitively track down who owns the copyright of a particular work, it’s best not to use that content at all—or else, simply link to it in its original location. (Linking does *not* violate copyright law since no copying is involved when a site is linked.)

Usually you will be asked to pay for the right to republish existing content on your Web site. In addition, content creators will often limit the duration of your republication of their work, normally for six months to one year at a time.

## **Fair use**

The “fair use” exemption to copyright law allows such things as commentary, parody, news reporting, research, and teaching about copyrighted works without the permission of the author. For example, you can quote excerpts from a magazine article to show how poor the writing is, you can quote published research findings in your own publication, or you can quote lines from a poem in a teaching lesson about that poem. However, each excerpt must still be properly attributed to the original creator.

## **Accountability**

If you do publish copyrighted material without permission, you can be held accountable for that violation whether or not you knew the material was copyrighted, whether or not you tried to get permission, and whether or not your unauthorized reuse is directly commercial in nature (i.e., whether or not you’re charging for the material or making money from it). Copyright holders have the right to demand payment from you in restitution for your unauthorized use of their material—whether or not you remove it from your site, and regardless of how long it was on your site.

## **Student Permission to Publish**

If you want to post written or graphic work created by a student on your Web site, you must have the written permission of *both* the student and his parent or guardian. [Note: You must have parental/guardian permission as well as student permission to publish personal information or projects because most students are younger than the legal independent age.] Some parents/guardians are reluctant to have their child’s personal picture and written or drawn projects posted on the Internet. How can you post the material in such a way that the student’s privacy will be protected? Some guidelines:

- Never use a student’s name with his posted project.
- The contact for a posted student project should be the school, not the student.
- Don’t publish personal student Web pages with identifying information. Besides, if you let one student post his personal Web page, you open your site up to posting all personal student Web pages. Some of these pages may not be appropriate for a school Web site.

## Chapter 13—Proofreading and Testing Your Web Site

It's crucial that you proofread your Web site. Of course, you should computer spell-check every document as a matter of course, but you can't just rely on those spell checks—they won't catch such errors as an inappropriate ITS or IT'S, or THEIR, THERE, or THEY'RE. Print out the pages in your site—it's easier to read and catch errors that way.

View your site on several browsers. The HTML code may look all right on the browser *you* are using, but that doesn't mean it will look the same on *all* browsers. Use the current and last versions of Netscape Navigator and Microsoft Internet Explorer at a *minimum*. [See Chapter 4.]

Make sure your links and other HTML codes are accurate. If you link to another page or site, be prepared to revisit that link's target regularly, checking for changes and updating your links if necessary. Users find it extremely frustrating—and irritating—to click on a link that is supposed to take them to another page, and then arrive at a page with an error message.

Use “usability testing” on new designs to fine-tune their effectiveness. Usability testing is a method for finding out what works and what doesn't work in a Web site. Rather than just sending a copy of your new site to several “testers” and asking them what they think about it, give your testers tasks to complete on your site, and actually watch them to see what they do and say, and what problems they run into. Often you'll note problems they would not report to you on their own. It is important to have the subjects say what they are thinking, for you to watch where they click, and for you to note any looks of frustration. If they ask you questions as they're using the site (e.g., “Should I click on A or B?”), don't tell them the answer, but rather ask them what *they* think they should do. Their trials and errors through your site will help you fine-tune the site before you post the final version on the Web.

## Conclusion

Many schools spend a lot of time developing and launching their Web sites but only a small amount of time maintaining, updating, and improving them. Keeping timely information on a site is probably the hardest part of maintaining a site. But having out-of-date meeting notices, last semester's sports events still listed, and last month's homework assignments posted gives the impression that you don't care about keeping your site up-to-date or that nothing new is happening at your school or District. Coming up with new ideas for a Web site is also difficult; it's an ongoing process. But it's a *must* if you want a successful site, one that your audience depends on for information.

Remember that your site, especially the home page, is a reflection of your school or District. Make sure it welcomes visitors and that it projects the image you want it to. Remember, too, that the best Web pages and sites are easy to view (i.e., read, look at), uniform in appearance (from one page to another), easy to navigate, and quick to download.

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## Web Resources on Web Writing

Applying Writing Guidelines to Web Pages

<http://www.useit.com/papers/webwriting/rewriting.html>

Be Succinct! (Writing for the Web)

<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/9703b.html>

Concise, SCANNABLE, and Objective: How to Write for the Web

<http://www.useit.com/papers/webwriting/writing.html>

Content Exchange

<http://www.content-exchange.com/>

Five Essential Web Writing Guidelines

<http://www.nerds.net/fiveess.html>

How Users Read on the Web

<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/9710a.html>

Inverted Pyramids in Cyberspace

<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/9606.html>

Robot Wisdom

<http://www.robotwisdom.com/web/>

Sun Microsystems' *Writing for the Web*

<http://www.sun.com/980713/webwriting/>

Tips for Developing School Web Pages

<http://www.siec.k12.in.us/~west/online/>

Web Authoring FAQs

<http://www.htmlhelp.com/faq/html>

Web Writing Techniques

<http://www.gooddocuments.com/techniques/techniqueshome.htm>

Writing for the Web

[http://www.efuse.com/Design/web\\_writing\\_basics.html](http://www.efuse.com/Design/web_writing_basics.html)

Writing for the Web

<http://www.hud.gov/library/bookshelf15/policies/wtfwm.cfm>

## Appendix A—An Example of Writing Usability

*The following example, from a study conducted by Jakob Nielsen and John Morkes, contains five different versions of text for the same website. Users were asked to rate the usability of each writing selection. The results: the selection with the greatest usability was the one that used objective language, concise text, and a scannable layout.*

**(1) Promotional writing** using the “marketese” (overly hyped promotional writing) found on many commercial Web sites. [**“control” version**]

Nebraska is filled with internationally recognized attractions that draw large crowds of people every year, without fail. In 1996, some of the most popular places were Fort Robinson State park (355,000 visitors), Scotts Bluff National Monument (132,166), Arbor Lodge State Historical Park & Museum (100,000), Carhenge (86,598), Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer (60,002), and Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park (28,446).

**(2) Objective language** using neutral rather than subjective, boastful, or exaggerated language. [**27% usability improvement**]

Nebraska has several attractions. In 1996, some of the most-visited places were Fort Robinson State Park (355,000 visitors), Scotts Bluff National Monument (132,166), Arbor Lodge State Historical Park & Museum (100,000), Carhenge (86,598), Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer (60,002), and Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park (28,446).

**(3) Scannable layout** using the same text as the control condition in a layout that facilitates scanning. [**47% usability improvement**]

Nebraska is filled with internationally recognized attractions that draw large crowds of people every year, without fail. In 1996, some of the most popular places were:

- Fort Robinson State Park (355,000 visitors)
- Scotts Bluff National Monument (132,166)
- Arbor Lodge State Historical Park & Museum (100,000)
- Carhenge (86,598)
- Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer (60,002)
- Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park (28,446)

**(4) Concise text** with approximately half the word count as the control text. [**58% usability improvement**]

In 1996, six of the best-attended attractions in Nebraska were Fort Robinson State Park, Scotts Bluff National Monument, Arbor Lodge State Historical Park & Museum, Carhenge, Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer, and Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park.

**(5) Combined version** using all three improvements in writing style together: concise, scannable, and objective. **[124% usability improvement]**

In 1996, six of the most-visited places in Nebraska were:

- Fort Robinson State Park
- Scotts Bluff National Monument
- Arbor Lodge State Historical Park & Museum
- Carhenge
- Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer
- Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park

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Note: The reason that the scannable layout (example #3) did not score as well as the concise text version (example #4) is that the promotional language in the beginning of the scannable version slows the user down. The reader has to spend time filtering out—and often questioning—the hype and exaggeration to get to the facts.

## Appendix B—Tips for Writing a DoDEA School Web Site

So you're going to write a DoDEA school Web site! Where do you begin? What do you need to keep in mind? Here are a few tips:

**1. Who am I really writing this Web site for?** Your primary audience(s). As when writing for any Web site, you need to determine who your *primary* audiences are, and address your site content primarily to them. For all of DoDEA schools, your primary audiences are your students, your parents, your administration and staff (including potential staff), your community, your military host command, and the Department of Defense. That means you should write for those audiences, addressing *their* needs for information. But, you need to remember, too, that *anybody* that has access to the World Wide Web also has access to your site—which means virtually everybody in the world. That means you must make sure that your site is as accurate as possible and that it portrays your school in the best possible way, even to those Web visitors who have absolutely no knowledge of DoDEA and its school system. Your site may be the *only* exposure some people ever have to the Department of Defense schools; you want to make sure it's a very positive exposure!

**2. How should I organize my information? How do I know what links to use?** Be logical. Put yourself in your user's shoes. If you were trying to find something on a site, what would be the easiest way for you to find it? Most likely that would be the best way for other users, too. So lay out your pages that way. Use links to get to your key information, supplemental information, related information, and more detailed information. Key links from your home page should include:

- Contact information
- School calendar
- School curriculum and programs
- School policies
- Registration information
- School transportation
- PSC-ing information
- Community connections
- Registration information
- Handbooks
- Other information and programs
- DoDEA home page

In turn, as an example, once you linked to your contact information page, you might find the school address, phone numbers, fax numbers, and e-mail addresses; a contact for speakers for languages other than English; and links to a generic phone directory of school staff (e.g., counselors, athletic coaches, media specialists), the host military command, and employment opportunities.

**3. Do I need to put my Web pages in a certain order?** You do need to have some kind of structure for your own purposes to know just what you're putting on your site and where, and to keep track of your information. But remember that the Web is a non-linear medium, and you have absolutely no idea where a visitor is going to enter your site. You can hope that he'll enter at your home page which, from your frame of reference, is the "first" page, and then move on to the other pages, but you have no guarantee of that. He may jump in from a search engine. He may come in from a personal bookmark from a previous visit. Thus, each Web page is virtually independent and

must be treated as such. The information on each page must support itself and not feed off of information on other pages because users might not ever go to those other pages to get that information.

**4. We already have a number of printed booklets and pamphlets. Can't I just copy their text and put it right up on the Web?** The Internet is an interactive medium—so, no, don't just copy long print documents onto the Web. It's difficult to read large blocks of text on a computer screen and most readers won't do it—they scan material instead. Use bullets and lists and short blocks or chunks of text. Printed booklets can be made available in downloadable PDF format on the Web, and/or you can provide a contact number where the user can request an actual printed copy.

**5. There's lots of material available in print already and on other Web sites that relates to what we're doing and that would look great on our site. Can't we just use some of it?** In most instances, no! Unfortunately, copyright violations and plagiarism are common problems in online media. It's not unusual for entire articles, photographs, or other works to be republished or adapted on Web sites without the original creator's permission. Many online writers mistakenly believe that if something is available on the Web copyright protections don't apply. This is a dangerous misperception. A violation of copyright is theft, pure and simple. If you publish copyrighted material without permission, you can be held accountable for that violation. Be aware, too, that you must get permission *before* you republish the work.

**6. So many sites I've see have lots of graphics and animation to accompany their text. Do we have to have all that "whiz-bang" stuff for people to come to our site?** No! Your primary audience is coming to your site because they need information. It's your job to provide it for them, and in the easiest and quickest way possible. The content portion of your site is its most important aspect; graphical elements should only be used when they complement the text. Also, keep in mind that new Federal regulations now require that all graphical elements be "accessible" to the visually impaired.

**7. Our information is constantly changing. Doesn't that mean that our site is constantly out of date?** It means that your site, like the Web, is constantly changing and that you need to continually check it and update it. Be sure that you put a modified date on *each* of your Web pages so that users know when the last update occurred. If a page was created a while ago but is still good, say so: "This page was created in September 2000 and was reviewed for accuracy in June 2001."

## Appendix C—School Web Site Contents Checklist

*Following is a list of content pages for DoDEA school Web sites, including both required and suggested pages. The required pages are “musts”—the information they dispense is the primary reason every DoDEA school has a Web site, and so that information must be included. The suggested pages are information that an individual school may or may not want to include, and are based upon appropriate information that other schools—in DoDEA and throughout the U.S.—have put on their Web sites. Additional informational pages may be used as long as they follow the DoDEA guidelines for Web sites. At the bottom of the page is a brief listing of those items that cannot be included on a DoDEA Web site. [Note: Contact the DoDEA Webmaster for further clarification.]*

### **Required pages:**

#### **School home page**

- A short statement about the school or a short welcoming message from the principal
- A school mission and vision statement
- The school leadership
  - Principal
  - Assistant principal
- Links to other key pages, including
  - DoDEA Headquarters Web site
  - Community Guides
  - Search

#### **School contact information**

- APO address
- Telephone/DSN
- Telephone/commercial (from U.S., e.g., 011 + country code + city code + number)
- Fax number
- E-mail address (i.e., HTML “Mailto”)
- Generic phone directory (e.g., counselor, football coach, media specialist)
- Host military command (link)
- Employment opportunities (link to Personnel)
- A contact for speakers of languages other than English

#### **Registration information**

- Required documents (link to area)
- Immunization (link to area)
- Point-of-contact (e-mail and mailing)

#### **School policies**

- Attendance
- Discipline
- Dress code
- Homework

- Graduation requirements
- School transportation**
  - Policies
  - Safety
  - Registration
  - Points-of-contact (DSN, e-mail)
- School curriculum and programs**
  - Course descriptions
  - Link to DoDEA Curriculum Guides / Standards
  - Standardized testing and results
  - Special needs programs
  - Gifted programs
  - Distance learning
  - Athletic programs
  - Awards/commendations
- Information for PCS-ing families**
- School calendar** (with links to descriptions of activities)
- Community connections**
  - School Advisory Council / School Board
  - PTO/PTA/PTSA/Booster Club (e-mail contacts)
  - Command partnerships
  - Community organizations
  - School volunteering opportunities (e-mail contact)
- Handbooks**
  - Student Handbook (PDF / downloadable format)
  - Parent Handbook (PDF / downloadable format)
- School Improvement Plan**
- School accreditation**
- School demographics** (linked to school profile)

**Suggested pages:**

- A page of frequently asked questions and answers, with links to other pages, as required. This kind of page is a tremendous help to visitors to your site, and could include answers to questions such as school hours, the semester calendar, the lunch menu, transportation information, school supplies required, and general school policies. Consider this if you want to save yourself and your visitors time and effort.

- A page showcasing the school and highlighting its uniqueness (Possible titles: *Look at Us!*, *Spotlight On...*, *Class Act*)
- \* A page highlighting student work/projects such as:
  - Student writing
  - Student artwork
  - Photos of science projects
  - Student-created web pages
- An extracurricular activities page highlighting such activities as:
  - Athletic teams
  - Intramural sports
  - School clubs
  - JROTC
- Home/school partnership information
- School history
- \* School facilities and environs (e.g., gym, art room, library, media center)—general descriptions and photographs
- Alumni information/connections

\* Must comply with regulations re: names and certain site-specific information.

**Check to make sure that on your Web site there are:**

- No student names.
- No employee names below the second tier of administrators (e.g., Assistant Principal).
- No home addresses, home telephone numbers, or home e-mail addresses.
- No posting of printed material that includes student names or other restricted information.
- No building specifications (e.g., floor plans).
- No links to non-mission-related sites.
- No “borrowed” designs or content without written authorization and attribution.

## Appendix D—“Quick and Dirty” Web Site Evaluation Checklist

*Use the following checklist to help evaluate your Web site:*

### **Content**

- The site’s purpose is clear.
- The information is interesting, useful, and appropriate for the intended audience(s).
- Additional resource links are included.

### **Design/Format**

- The site is user-friendly, i.e., the structure is understandable, the links are clearly labeled.
- The text is easy to read.
- Graphics are relevant.
- The design is uncluttered and attractive.
- Users don’t have to scroll to the right or down to see the key aspects of a page.
- The page format is appropriate, e.g., no page is overly long.

### **Technical Elements**

- The site is easy to navigate.
- Pages, especially those with graphics, download quickly.
- Pages display correctly.
- All links work.
- All images and image maps have ALT tags.

### **Credibility**

- The site uses correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar.
- The site, including off-site links, is current and timely; the latest update is noted.
- There is a point-of-contact with an e-mail address.
- The host institutions—i.e., the District and DoDEA—are noted on the home page.

## Appendix E—Sample School and District/County Web Sites

Following are some examples of school (elementary, middle, and high school) and district/county home pages. Copies of these pages have been included in this manual *solely* to provide ideas for design and content presentation. Although all of these sample pages provide information geared to their primary audiences, are easy to navigate, have quick download times, and have designs that are attractive and interesting (indeed, some are *extremely* creative!), not all of the pages are completely 508-compliant (see Chapter 11), some were created with software other than what DoDEA recommends, some do not include items that DoDEA home pages should include (e.g., a link to their district/county site—for DoDEA, the District and Headquarters sites), and some include items that DoDEA sites should *not* include (e.g., a name and personal e-mail address for the webmaster).

The Web site address for each of these example home pages has been noted at the bottom of each page if you wish to view the page and the rest of the site as it actually appears on the Web. However, be aware that the Web is a fluid medium and sites are constantly changing. Thus, some of these sites may no longer look the same or even be active when you actually visit them.

Please keep in mind that these pages have been provided for ideas only. **You cannot copy graphic items and/or elements from these pages and use them directly on your own pages**—re-read Chapter 12 on copyright issues!

### Elementary Schools

Ashby Lee Elementary School  
Buzz Aldrin Elementary School  
Greentown Elementary School  
Scott Elementary School  
South Smithfield Primary School  
Willowdale Elementary School

### Middle Schools

Charles E. Brown Middle School  
Millard Central Middle School  
Plum Point Middle School

### High Schools

Marian High School  
Northwest High School  
Springville High School

### District/County School Systems

Fairfax County Public Schools  
Falls Church City Public Schools  
Frontier Public Schools

# Ashby Lee Elementary School

[Alt T](#) [Calendar](#) [Class Projects](#) [Staff](#) [GATE](#) [Guidance](#) [Library](#) [Online Resources](#) [PALS](#) [SOL Resources](#)



Ashby Lee Elementary School exists for the purpose of educating each student to become an effective, productive member of the community, state and nation with ideals and concepts that support and enhance the American democratic way of life.

[Read-In @ your library!](#)

*Ashby Lee Elementary School*  
480 Stonewall Lane  
Quicksburg, VA 22847  
Telephone 540 477 2927  
Fax 540 477 2844

Please email your comments to: [James W. Grimley](#), Principal

# BUZZ ALDRIN

## Elementary School

Reston, Virginia

Fairfax County Public Schools

STAFF

WHAT'S  
NEW?

WEBSITES

TEAMS

Advocates

School  
History

Parent  
Info.

School  
Calendar

PTA  
News

Homepage  
Info.



home

Fairfax County  
Public Schools



search

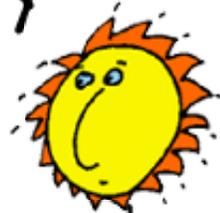
Web Curator: Tim Harazin Tim.Harazin@fcps.edu  
Click on the **Homepage Info** flag for more information.

# Greentown Elementary

North Canton, Ohio

Click Here  
to Enter

View Our Calendar



weather  
and  
News

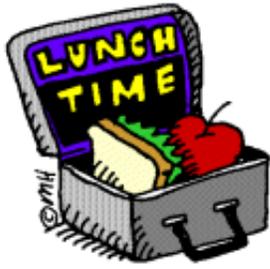
See  
what's New



© 2000 [Patricia Knox](#) - North Canton City Schools - N. Canton, Ohio

Graphics © [Mark Hicks, Illustrator/HomeroomTeacher.com](#) - not for re-distribution. Please do not copy.

Quick Menu -- Choose an item below ↕



[December Menu](#)

**NEW!** ["Cook's Corner"](#)



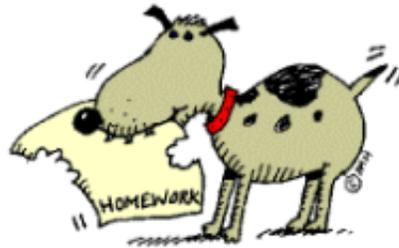
[What's New?](#)



[Winter Holiday Fun](#)



[Theme Units & Online Activities  
and  
Favorite Links](#)



[Classroom  
Pages and Projects](#)

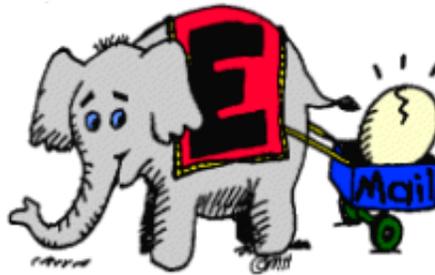


[Teacher Resources](#)



[Search Tools for Kids](#)

[Staff Search Tools](#)



[E-Mail  
Directory](#)



[Library/Media  
Center](#)





# SCOTT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



[Pledge of Allegiance](#)

- [Principal's Welcome](#)
- [Mission Statement](#)
- [Kindergarten](#)
- [1st Grade](#)
- [2nd Grade](#)
- [3rd Grade](#)
- [4th Grade](#)
- [5th Grade](#)
- [Specialist's](#)
- [Educational Links](#)
- [Calendar](#)
- [School Song](#)
- [PTA](#)



14940 Old State Rd  
 Evansville, IN 47725  
 Phone: 867-2427  
 Fax: 867-1941  
 Day Care: 867-1941



[An Indiana Four Star School For The Eighth Consecutive Year](#)

Created by Michael Horn February 24, 2001: Updated January 2, 2002



Visit our [Pre-Kindergarten Class](#)

Visit our [Kindergarten Classes](#)

Visit our [1st Grade Classes](#)

Visit our [2nd Grade Classes](#)

Visit our [Support Personnel](#)

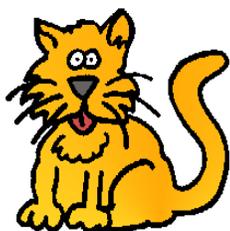
Go to our [Teacher Resources](#)

Go to the [Principal's Office](#)

Read about our [Upcoming Events](#)

How to [Contact Us!](#)

Learn about the [Internet](#)



# Willowdale Elementary

Calendar  
Classroom Connection  
Happenings  
Links  
Lunch Menu  
Paybac Partners  
Projects  
PTO  
Read Across America  
Specials  
Staff  
Welcome Message  
WillowCam



[Webmaster](#)

Last updated 12-6-2001



Last Update: December 17, 2001

Search this site

| [1st Friday Letter](#) | [Site Awards](#) | [Voice Mail](#) | [Net Search](#) | [Schedule](#) | [Guestbook](#) | [Calendar](#) | [Directions](#) |



# CHARLES E. BROWN MIDDLE SCHOOL

<a href="#">New &amp; Improved</a>	<a href="#">Administration</a>	<a href="#">Subjects</a>	<a href="#">Library</a>	<a href="#">Other Areas</a>	<a href="#">Teacher Tools</a>
<a href="#">WebQuests</a>	<a href="#">Student Tools</a>	<a href="#">Teams</a>	<a href="#">Search Engines</a>	<a href="#">P.T.O.</a>	<a href="#">Musical</a>
<a href="#">N.P.S.</a>	<a href="#">NPS online</a>	<a href="#">Tech Ed</a>	<a href="#">Triple E</a>	<a href="#">Brown TV Show</a>	<a href="#">Home</a>

WebMaster: [msylvia@mediaone.net](mailto:msylvia@mediaone.net)

# Millard Central Middle School on the web . . .



12801 L Street  
Omaha, NE 68137

## Special Announcements:

This week is a B week.

<p><b>MCMS Information</b></p>	<p><a href="#">Welcome</a> - from Mr. Sutfin, Principal.  <a href="#">Our School</a> - This Week at CMS, lunch menu, newsletter, PIVOT information, academic team calendars, student projects, sports schedules and more.  <a href="#">Millard Public Schools</a> - Information about our school district.</p>
<p><b>Classroom Resources</b></p>	<p><a href="#">iPac</a> - Search CMS (and MPS) Information Center collections.  <a href="#">Curriculum Pathfinders</a> - Collections of resources to supplement specific units of study.  <a href="#">Search Tools</a> - Recommended search engines, meta-search engines, and directories.  <a href="#">Search Tools for Students</a> - Search tools for students who are just beginning to search.  <a href="#">Research Databases</a> - Subscription databases available for CMS students at school and home.  <a href="#">Curriculum Links</a> - WWW sites selected to supplement general curriculum taught at MCMS.  <a href="#">Virtual Library</a> - Online branch of our school's Information Center. It's always open!  <a href="#">Current Events Resources</a> - Collection of resources for students and teachers.  <a href="#">Accelerated Reader Database</a> - Useful to help students locate books at appropriate level.  <a href="#">Career WebQuest</a> - Created by Mrs. Brodersen.</p>
<p><b>Useful Internet Resources</b></p>	<p><a href="#">General Reference</a> - Resources of value to all.  <a href="#">Professional Library</a> - Useful web sites for teachers and administrators.  <a href="#">Parent Library</a> - Information useful to middle school parents.  <a href="#">Multicultural Links</a> - Links useful for learning about people of other cultures.  <a href="#">"X-tra" Links</a> - Enjoyable and interesting -- not necessarily curriculum related.  <a href="#">Weather and News</a> - Web resources for local, national, and world-wide news and weather.  <a href="#">Groupwise Web Access</a></p>



Neither Millard Public Schools nor Millard Central Middle School is responsible for links beyond this page.

# Plum Point Middle School

[About Our School](#)

[Current Events](#)

[Meet Our Faculty & Staff](#)

[Main Page](#)



1475 Plum Point Road  
Huntingtown, Maryland 20639  
Phone: 410-535-7400 or 301-855-1523

Principal: [Mike Reidy](#)  
Vice Principal: Casey Duehrssen  
Counselor: Donna Jones  
Counselor: Karin Ryon  
Learning Specialist: Sally Ayres



Marian High School  
Omaha, Nebraska

**Welcome**  
**Admissions**  
**Academics**  
**Students**  
**Clubs & Activities**  
**Sports**  
**Student Advisory**  
**Student Publications**  
**Resources**  
**Calendar**  
**Alumnae**



Tradition  
Community  
Faith



[Welcome](#) [Admissions](#) [Academics](#) [Students](#) [Alumnae](#) [Sports](#) [Resources](#) [Calendar](#) [Activities](#) [Student Publications](#)  
[Student Advisory](#) [Comments](#)

Marian High School 17400 Military Ave. Omaha NE 68134 402-571-2618

Main Page Designed by Anne Forget  
[cool@marian.creighton.edu](mailto:cool@marian.creighton.edu)

Webmaster: Pota Rakes  
[pojo@marian.creighton.edu](mailto:pojo@marian.creighton.edu)

<http://marian.creighton.edu/>

# Northwest High School



8204 Crown Point Ave., Omaha NE 68134 (402) 557-3500

**Athletics**

**Clubs & Government**

**Community Support**

**Fine Arts**

**Research**

**Calendar**

**Faculty**

**Academics**



**Lunch**

**E-mail us at [haasde@ops.org](mailto:haasde@ops.org)**

Northwest Basketball teams on a roll. Check it out at the Athletic section of the Website.

All are invited to "You Can't Take it With You", Friday, December 14th and Saturday, December 15th @ 7:00 P.M.

Northwest a proud host of Ukranian students.

[\(see more\)](#)

"Little Shop of Horrors".

[\(see more\)](#)



# S H S O N L I N E



Springville High School, 1205 East 900 South, Springville, UT 84663  
(801) 489-2870

For transcripts and grade information, contact the registrar. (Debbie Thorn, [tdebbie@admn.shs.nebo.edu](mailto:tdebbie@admn.shs.nebo.edu))



---

[Student Handbook](#) | [Course Bulletin](#)  
[Alumni](#) | [Faculty](#) | [Student Life](#) | [Departments](#) | [Calendar](#)  
[Faculty Technology Resources](#) | [World Folkfest](#)  
[Mr. Haderlie's Links](#) | [Web Development](#) | [NRSEA Internet Resources](#)  
[Springville Museum of Art](#) | [Springville City](#) | [Springville Weather](#)  
[Community Services/Edu-partners](#) | [SHS Web Publishing](#) | [Springville PTA](#)  
[Springville Rotary Club](#) | [SHS Class Reunion Information](#)

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Send Comments and Suggestions to:

[hsteven@nebo.edu](mailto:hsteven@nebo.edu)



Daniel A. Domenech Superintendent  
10700 Page Avenue Fairfax, Virginia 22030 703.246.2991

alumni  
calendars  
departments/clusters  
e-mail addresses  
external links  
forms  
lunch menus  
publications  
schools & centers  
testing  
comments & questions  
web services  
what's new  
index  
search  
compliance statement  
disclaimer and  
privacy statement

## Current News

Dogwood Elementary School Recovery  
Impact Aid Federal Grant Program Survey  
News Releases  
School Events Bulletin Board  
Special Edition *Familygram*: Safety and Security

## About Fairfax County Public Schools

2001-2002 Handbook / Attendance and Enrollment / Boundaries /  
Business Partnerships / Organization / School Profiles / Services /  
Special Programs / Statistics / Transportation

## Academic Programs

Curricular Areas / Program of Studies and Standards of Learning /  
Special Instructional Programs / High School Academies / Special  
Education / Staff Resources

## Adult, Community, and Parent Education

Adult & Community Education / Parent Education

## Cable TV

Community Information Programming / Fine Tuning / Fairfax  
Network Passport Collection

## Job Opportunities

All Vacancies / Building Maintenance & Trades / Bus Drivers and  
Attendants / Substitutes / Support and Administrative Services /  
Teachers and Instructional Assistants

## Legislative Update

General Assembly Information / Richmond Update / Virginia Board of  
Education Meetings / Fairfax Delegation / Draft 2002 School Board  
Legislative Program (PDF document) / Federal Update

## School Board

Calendar (PDF Document) / General Information / Vision and Mission  
Statements and Strategic Targets / Policies, Bylaws, and Regulations /  
School Board Meeting Summary and Agendas

Text Only Menu

Updated daily: see [what's new](#) for the latest changes  
Curator : Jill Kurtz, [jill.kurtz@fcps.edu](mailto:jill.kurtz@fcps.edu)

# Falls Church City Public Schools



Falls Church City Public Schools  
803 West Broad Street  
Falls Church, VA 22046  
703-248-5600  
[E-mail](#)

[Report On School Board  
Strategic Action Plan](#)

[Alternative Calendar  
Information](#)

[School Starting Times  
Information](#)

[Facilities Plan  
Information](#)

[Special  
Announcements](#)

[What's New](#)

[Calendar](#)

[Employment](#)

[Schools](#)

[School Board](#)

[Instructional  
Programs](#)

[Community](#)

[Site Index](#)

Elementary

Middle School

High School

Administration

Resources

About the district



# Frontier Public Schools

Red Rock, Oklahoma

I hear and I forget.

I see and I believe.

I do and I understand.

Confucius (551-479 BC)

**Laptops for students program**