

SOUTHEASTERN
LOUISIANA UNIVERSITY

**Web Content and Style Guidelines
for Virtually Hosted sites**

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Web Content and Style Guidelines for Virtually Hosted sites

Introduction

As a public service, upon the Provost's approval, Southeastern may virtually host Web sites, using a non-standard domain name (xxx.xxxx.org) for University affiliated organizations on its Web server. University affiliated organizations are those non-profit organizations that enhance or further the University's mission, and a contractual agreement must have been established between the organization and Southeastern. University affiliated Web sites may not have Web pages that are a part of the www.selu.edu domain.

All sites virtually hosted by Southeastern are free to design their own Web pages, and will not be included in Southeastern's Content Management System. Virtually hosted Web sites must obtain permission from the University in order to include Southeastern's logo or name on the Web site.

Although virtually hosted Web sites may design their own sites, those sites must be consistent with the principles of the University as well as follow the specifications provided in the policies and procedures for the content and style of the material published on the site.

The following information will provide you with an outline of the practices acceptable on sites affiliated with Southeastern.

Web site must be consistent, coherent, and promote a positive image

The first step to creating a positive image on the Web is to develop a Web site that is consistent, coherent, and user-friendly. The Web site should address the needs of its identified audiences and provide the information and services in a format that is easy to navigate. Navigation on the Web site should be consistent in placement and style, and links should be clear and concise. Broken links and dead pages must be avoided. Page content must be easy to understand and not include terminology that might be unfamiliar to the end user.

Web site information is accurate and current

All Web pages must be accurate and current, and outdated information should be removed from the Web site immediately. The sites Web publisher should review the information on the Web site regularly to insure that information published to the Web site is accurate and current. It is recommended that the Web publisher review and update their Web site at least once every six months, and more often, if the organization sponsors events and/or provides information that references a specific date.

Web site meets accepted Web standards and protocols, including at least first-level ADA Web accessibility standards

Since the inception of the World Wide Web, the medium has continued to evolve, as the possibilities of the use of the Web have expanded. As the development continues, standards and protocols have come to be widely accepted by Web developers as well as Web users, including file and Web page naming protocols, and standard practices for linking and Web site navigation. All Web sites hosted on the Southeastern server should adhere to these standards, including those outlined by the Web Standards Group (<http://webstandardsgroup.org/>), thereby providing a better user experience and less user confusion and/or frustration. In addition, all sites must adhere to all applicable laws and regulations regarding Web site accessibility. All public Web pages should meet at least Priority 1 standards as set by the World Wide Web Consortium Web Accessibility Initiative (located at <http://www.w3.org>). Whenever possible, the Web site should meet Priority 2 and Priority 3 standards supported by the World Wide Web Consortium Web Accessibility Initiative.

Writing for the Web

Keeping Content Web-friendly

Studies show that Web audiences do not read text on a Web page word-for-word, but instead scan the page to find what they are looking for. Reading on a display monitor is quite a different experience than reading a paper or a book, and it is important to break up the page to allow the reader's eye an opportunity to rest. Long blocks of text should not be used on Web pages. Instead it is best to:

- Divide the text into logical pieces that will make the text easy to scan.
- Keep your most important facts to the top of the page.
- Use headings and sub-headings as appropriate.
- Keep the language short and to the point.
- Make sure grammar and spelling are correct.
- Keep the language easy to understand
- Keep the tone and style of writing less formal and more casual and intimate.
- Use links to supplement information, not replace it. Give a brief summary of needed information and provide a link for more detailed information on the subject.

Keeping Content Current

Not only should the content on a Web page be concise and easy to scan, the information must be current and correct. Nothing is more frustrating to a user than to find out that the information they are relying on is incorrect. It will affect the audience's perception on the reliability and credibility of your organization. This is why reviewing and updating content on the Web site must be completed at least once every 6 months.

News and Events and other Time-Sensitive Content

Time-sensitive content may need to be reviewed even more often. Units with News and Events on their site should review their Web pages on a daily or weekly basis to ensure that only the most current information is being displayed. Events that have already occurred should be removed from the Web page immediately after the event has taken place.

Typography

Certain typography, when displayed on a monitor, can be very hard to read making it difficult for users to find the information they are looking for. It is recommended that all sites use the Verdana typeface which was designed specifically for the Web. Graphical text is discouraged, as this presents problems with meeting Web accessibility standards. If graphical text must be used it should be done in a clear, easy to read typeface and should have alternative text for those users that may be using a screen reader or have their images turned off.

Images

Images used on the Web should have a small file size to lessen display and download time. If images are obtained from other Web sites, users must use caution to ensure that they are not violating any copyright laws. There are several Web sites that provide quality stock photos that are either free, or have a minimal charge to use.

URLs and Naming Conventions

As the World Wide Web has developed, certain standards and protocols have been established concerning URLs and the naming of Web page files. In line with these widely-accepted protocols, all Web sites hosted on the Southeastern server should adhere to the following standards:

- All Web page file names must be in lowercase and will not contain any spaces.
- While the underscore (_) symbol may be used, other symbols such as dash (-), ampersand (&) or percent (%) must not be used.
- File names must be short and descriptive. Use an abbreviated version of the name and make sure it is understandable, for example: *Office of Admissions: admissions; Office of Financial Aid: fin_aid.*
- Sub-domains (for example, *math.selu.edu*) are not permitted; however redirects can be created upon request (for example, *www.selu.edu/math* will redirect the page to *www.selu.edu/academics/math*).

Links

The following guidelines should be adhered to when creating links:

- Links should not be used to replace information. Instead, a brief summary of the information should be provided with a link. The link allows the user access to more details on the subject.
- Link names should be concise, informational, and easy to understand (for example use *Math Curriculum Sheet* instead of *Math Requirements* or *Get Your Math Degree*).
- Do not use “Click Here” for links included in text. For example, see the *Math Curriculum Sheet* for a listing of course requirements for a degree in Math instead of *Click here for a Math Curriculum Sheet*.
- Links should always open in the same browser window, in adherence to Web accessibility standards.
- Relative links should be used whenever linking to documents that are a part of your directory.
- Absolute links must always be used when linking to pages that are not a part of your Web site (for example, an absolute link must be used when linking to Southeastern’s Athletics Web pages: *http://www.lionsports.net*).
- Links to commercial organizations are prohibited unless there is a valid University business relationship with the entity. E.g. the Bookstore, Campus Dining, etc. As a public institution, Southeastern cannot appear to be endorsing a particular product or service. The Provost must first approve any link to a commercial organization before it can be placed on Web page located on a Southeastern Web server.

Editorial Style

The following is a list of some of the more common questions asked when writing for university audiences. As always, have a good dictionary handy for spelling, hyphenation, and basic usage questions. For a more comprehensive guide, please refer to the *AP Stylebook*.

a/an – use of “a” or “an” should be determined by the beginning sound of the word following it rather than the spelling, for example, *an honor, a historical fact*.

abbreviations/acronyms – Always spell out the term on first reference and place the acronym in parentheses following the first reference. Acronyms should be in capital letters with no periods: *ID card, IT, OSCAR*. Never use the acronym SLU or SELU for Southeastern Louisiana University. However, *Southeastern* may be used as a shortened form of Southeastern Louisiana University.

academic and administrative titles – capitalize titles when used before the name, but lowercase after the name: *Professor John Smith; John Smith, professor of math*. Occupational titles are always lowercase except in the case where the title includes a proper name: *lecturer, instructor, history professor, English professor*.

academic degrees – use an apostrophe when referring to a “bachelor’s degree” or “master’s degree.” Use “doctoral degree” or “doctorate.” Use the acronyms BA, BS, MA, or PhD (without periods) only when spelling out the name of the degrees is cumbersome.

adviser/advisor – use the “or” ending (rather than the “er” ending)

a.m./p.m. – do not capitalize time and include periods: *7:45 a.m.; 6:00 p.m.*

campus building names – refer to building names as listed in Southeastern’s General Catalogue. Names can be shortened on second reference, for instance Charles Emery Cate Teacher Education Center on second reference can be shortened to Cate Teacher Education Center, or Lucius McGehee Hall on second reference would be shortened to McGehee Hall. Buildings should never be referenced using the four-letter abbreviation system used by Class Schedules, for instance, R. Noval Garrett College of Business Building should never be referred to as CBUS. Also please note the following common mistakes that should be avoided:

- Music Annex and the Music Recital Hall are separate buildings from the Ralph R. Pottle Music Building, and should never be referred to as Pottle Annex or Pottle Recital Hall.
- D Vickers Hall does not include a period (“.”) after the D.
- North Campus Financial Aid Building should not be referred to as North Campus Building A; the same applies to North Campus Main Building – it should not be referred to as North Campus Building B.

capitalization – Words such as “department,” “office,” “college,” “committee,” or “university” should be capitalized when used with the name of the department, office, college, or committee. These words may be capitalized when used in place of the name, however when referring to a department, office, college, or committee in general, do not capitalize:

- *The College of Business consists of several departments, including the Department of Accounting, the Department of Management, the Department of General Business, and the Department of Marketing and Finance.*
- *Southeastern Louisiana University offers student support services as well as academic support services. Southeastern also offers students a variety of other opportunities, such as hands-on experience working at the University’s radio station or television station.*

catalog/catalogue – use the spelling “catalogue” when referring to Southeastern’s General Catalogue.

comma usage – use a comma before “and” and “or” in a series.

dates – dates should include a comma if the day is cited, otherwise do not use a comma: *July 11, 2005*; *July 2005*. Use four digits for the year, however it is permissible to use a two-digit abbreviation when referring to time that spans over two years: *throughout 2005*; *during the 2005-06 academic year*.

e-mail – use the lower case “e” with a hyphen (unless the word starts a sentence).

GPA – GPA is the acronym for grade point average, thus, should always be capitalized.

gender neutrality – avoid gender-specific pronouns by using plural pronouns. Instead of “*Each student must submit his application,*” use “*Students must submit their applications*” or “*Each student must submit an application.*” Also use gender-neutral alternatives such as *chairperson* instead of *chairman* or *police officer* instead of *policeman*.

grades – use capital letters and italics, with no quotation marks for letter grades. Plurals are made by adding “s,” except in the case of A, which an apostrophe is used to avoid confusion with the word “as”: *A’s, B’s, C’s, D’s*.

hyphens – refer to an up-to-date dictionary for correct hyphenation of words. Commonly used hyphenated words include: *part-time, full-time; on-campus, off-campus; three-hour course, work-study*.

i.e./e.g. – *i.e.* means “that is,” and should not be confused with *e.g.*, which means “for example.”

numbers – for easy scanning on the Web, it is permissible to use digits for numbers, except at the start of a sentence. Try to reword the sentence:

- Instead of: *923 beginning freshmen registered for classes in the fall 2004 semester.*
Reword the sentence to read: *In the fall 2004 semester, 923 beginning freshmen registered for classes.*

It is permissible to begin a sentence with a calendar year in numeric format:

- *2005-2006 enrollment numbers exceeded all expectations.*

online – one word, no hyphen.

SLU/SELU – never use the acronym SLU or SELU. Use *Southeastern* as the short form when referring to Southeastern Louisiana University. Always spell out Southeastern Louisiana University on first reference.

theater/theatre – use the “re” spelling when referring to *theatre* courses offered in the Department of Music and Dramatic Arts, or the Columbia *Theatre*

Web – capitalized except when a suffix is added: *webmaster, webcam*.

Web page – two words.

Web site – two words.