

## **Content Standards**

The following content standards build on best practices for web content and usability and on federal policies and guidelines recommended to OMB by the Interagency Committee on Government Information. All FAA Web Liaisons and staff – either FAA staff or contract staff – developing content for webpages or applications for FAA websites must follow these standards.

The Associated Press Stylebook supplements this document. For anything not specifically covered in this document, the most current revision of the stylebook ([www.apstylebook.com/](http://www.apstylebook.com/)) is the official source (a copy is available for review in the FAA Web Management Office – Washington, D.C. Headquarters, Building 10A, Room 908).

**Note:** These standards will be updated on a regular basis so check back often!

### **Know the FAA websites**

The FAA web refers to all FAA websites. The FAA has two types of websites: one for the public, and the other for FAA employees. The FAA web includes all publicly available and access-controlled websites that FAA organizations have primary content responsibility for.

Each website has its own look and feel. Even though they look different, both FAA websites are audience-centric. That means they are organized around information and services users need.

### **Know your audience**

The FAA has two distinct audiences – FAA employees and the public.

- Employees use the Employee Site to get information and tools they need to do their jobs. The site helps them understand the benefits of working for the FAA.
- The public uses the Internet site to get accurate and up-to-date information. The public is not interested in how a Line of Business operates because they probably have no idea what a Line of Business is. They are interested in the programs and services the FAA offers to the public.

### **Write for your audience**

Always keep your audience in mind when writing. Put yourself in their place. Employees want information relevant to the workplace. The same information would not be relevant to the public at large.

You can find out more about what users want by asking them. The FAA has done extensive usability testing, conducted customer surveys and focus groups and analyzed web statistics to collect best practices for web content. Contact your Web Liaison for further information not included in this section.

For more information, see:

[Web Trends](#)

2002 Usability Reports

- [Overview](#) WORD 159KB
- [Pilots](#) WORD 97KB
- [Passengers](#) WORD 105KB
- [Airport Operators](#) WORD 113KB
- [General Aviation](#) WORD 105KB
- [Vendors](#) WORD 115KB
- [Press and Hill](#) WORD 99KB

**Use Plain Language Principles**

Use unambiguous words easily understood by the audience.

Use:	Don't use:
will (to mean future)	shall (could mean will, must or should)
must (to mean a requirement)	
should (to mean a preferred action)	

Write concisely.

Use:	Don't use:
instead of	In lieu of
before	prior to
on	upon
despite	notwithstanding
because	as a result of

Avoid using foreign terms

Use:	Don't use:
In fact/actually	de facto
by, in or of itself	per se
without	sans

Avoid using jargon

Use:	Don't use:
... avoid a dangerous situation	... avoid a hairy situation

For more information, see:

- “Writing User-Friendly Documents” by the Plain Language Action & Information Network, <http://www.plainlanguage.gov/handbook/index.htm>
- FAA’s Order on Writing Standards, [http://www.faa.gov/language/docs/FAA\\_WritGuidelines4.pdf](http://www.faa.gov/language/docs/FAA_WritGuidelines4.pdf)
- [http://www.usability.gov/methods/collecting\\_writing.html#1](http://www.usability.gov/methods/collecting_writing.html#1)

**Limit your use of acronyms and abbreviations**

Limit the use of acronyms or abbreviations to those your audience will understand. For example, you can use:

- FAA to refer to the Federal Aviation Administration
- U.S. rather than United States

Spell out acronyms and abbreviations the first time you use them. Certain well-known abbreviations may be acceptable on first reference, depending on the audience. U.S. and NOTAMS are well-enough known as to be clear to FAA audiences. The FAA organizations are not. When in doubt, spell it out

**Be direct**

Online readers scan text rather than reading it word-for-word. Begin with a clear introductory sentence letting readers know what they can expect to find.

Put important information at the top of the page where it’s easier to find.

To make scanning easy, use:

- Simple sentences
- Short paragraphs
- Headings
- Bulleted lists
- Tables for statistical data
- Graphics or charts
- Boldface or linked text

## Use headings and subheads

Use short headings to direct readers to content. Use key information (keywords) from the content to allow readers to scan. Keywords not only help readers once they are on a page – they are critical for accurate search engine results.

## Organize long documents on your webpages

It's a challenge to present long documents clearly, no matter what size screen they are displayed on.

- Use headings to divide a long document into sections.
- Write to encourage readers to move to the next section. On the web, the next section may well be on another webpage, so readers need encouragement to move on to text they cannot see:
  - Signal what's coming next.
  - Use transitions to push your reader onward.
- Ideally, keep sections to a maximum of 500 words.
- Link to a table of contents to let readers jump to the part of the document they're interested in reading.

## Use links and teaser text

Usually, link text should have the same wording as the page header of the linked page whether the link appears within the content or as a bullet. For example,

- Domestic air travel should grow 30% in the coming decade, according to the [Blueprint for the National Airspace System \(NAS\) Modernization](#).
- [Blueprint for the National Airspace System \(NAS\) Modernization](#)

If the user needs more information to help understand why he or she would want to visit that link or use the information found at the link, you may use a "teaser" after the link title. Teasers should be short — never more than 2 lines.

- [Passenger's Gateway](#) helps you find which airports have flight delays.

## Organize common types of documents

Content Standards include where your content exists. Organize common types of documents to help users navigate more easily. For example, assemble your forms in one location and publications in a separate location. You can always provide a link to a form if you want to reference it within other areas.

**Be consistent**

Use consistent spellings for web-related terms and formats for times, phone numbers and dates.

**Use consistent spellings for web-related terms**

The following list provides the spelling for certain commonly used words.

- website (one word, lower case)
- webpage (one word, lower case)
- home page (two words, lower case)
- email (one word)
- online (one word)
- log in (two words when used as a verb – for example, log in to the application...)
- Internet (the publicly-available Web) is capitalized
- intranet
- web
- Web Manager (two words, both capitalized)
- Web Liaison (two words, both capitalized)
- References to the Nation’s capitol should be “Washington, DC.” Use “Washington” by itself to refer to the state of Washington.

**Format times**

For events (broadcasts, webcasts, meetings, conferences, conference calls) that span time zones, provide both the Eastern time and the Pacific time. This will help remove confusion for people living in other time zones.

Examples:

- Webcast – Air Traffic Controller Management Group: 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. EDT (8 to 11 a.m. PDT).
- Teleconference – Aviators Who Made History: Noon to 3:30 p.m. EST (9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. PST)

**Format phone numbers**

Display phone numbers as follows:

Example: (555) 555-5555

If there is an extension, display it as follows:

Example: (555) 555-5555, ext. 55

**Format dates**

All FAA webpages must include the date of the last significant change to content. Time-sensitive documents such as press releases must contain a publication date.

Display the date as follows:

Month date, year

Example: April 30, 2004

**Know when to capitalize**

- First word of every sentence (whether it is a complete sentence or not)
- Proper nouns

**Referencing FAA**

Do not put the word “the” before FAA unless you are beginning a sentence with the abbreviation. This standard eliminates wordiness in documents and complies with plain language guidance. When writing out the name of the agency in a sentence, refer to it as “the Federal Aviation Administration.”

Use:	Don't use:
The FAA created the webpage.	FAA created the webpage.
NASA and the Federal Aviation Administration completed the research.	NASA and Federal Aviation Administration completed the research.
Find more information on FAA's Section 508 website.	Find more information on the FAA Section 508 website.

**Do not use italics or underlines**

Usability research shows that plain text is easiest on the eye. Italics decrease readability for people with disabilities. Underlining regular text confuses and disappoints visitors who expect to link to another page by clicking on the underlines text.

That same research shows that plain text is easiest on the eyes and italics decrease readability for people with disabilities. The research also shows that underlining regular text confuses and disappoints visitors who expect to link to another page by clicking on the underlined text.

- For emphasis, use bold (<strong> tags) instead.
- For titles, use hyperlinks where possible to guide readers to more details

For more information, See Jakob Nielsen's usability website at <http://www.useit.com/alertbox/20040510.html>

## Use links wisely

Links are a great way to direct readers to more detailed information than you provide on a single page. Two common types are those that link to other areas of your website and those that link outside your website.

Links to other websites must be closely evaluated. For example, a link to glossary definitions that help less knowledgeable users successfully use your website adds value. On the other hand, are you sure the website supports the FAA's mission?

All links must support the FAA's mission, help the visitor understand the content, and may not duplicate other information on the FAA website. A good example of a non-federal link is [www.aopa.com](http://www.aopa.com) contains pilot (our largest audience) information.

You must review links carefully and often to ensure that they continue to add value — and that they continue to work. Never link to a website that:

- Promotes specific products or services
- Displays hate, bias or discrimination
- Endorses one political party over another (for more information, see [http://www.osc.gov/ha\\_fed.htm](http://www.osc.gov/ha_fed.htm))
- Violates federal ethics policies

We reserve the right to deny or remove any link that contains misleading information, unsubstantiated claims or conflicts with FAA's mission or policies.

## How to list links

When using a list of links, list them in alphabetical order unless:

- Links intentionally follow chronological or statistical order
- Links intentionally lead the user through a logical sequence, for example:
  - Passenger health and safety
  - Child safety seats
  - Baggage size requirements

If the list has more than seven links, break it into two or more lists.

## Test your links

You must test all links on a webpage to ensure the URL is current and the information in the linked page loads (displays) in a reasonable amount of time. Using links to sites with unusually long load times frustrates visitors who use slow modems. Therefore, avoid these load times by limiting the size of your webpages to fewer than 100kb.

### **Review your links**

You must review external links on a regular schedule to make sure they still work and that they are still appropriate.

### **Comply with information collection requirements**

The Paperwork Reduction Act requires agencies to reduce the burden on the public from information collection. The FAA must have OMB approval before collecting information from the public (for example, forms, general questionnaires, surveys, instructions and other types of collections). The collection instrument must show the current OMB control number.

For more information, see:

Paperwork Reduction Act

[http://www.archives.gov/federal\\_register/public\\_laws/acts.html#pra](http://www.archives.gov/federal_register/public_laws/acts.html#pra)

Guidance from OMB: “Paperwork Requirements”

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/inforeg/infocoll.html>

For more information about the act, contact Judy Street, FAA information clearance officer, at [Judy.Street@faa.gov](mailto:Judy.Street@faa.gov) or 202-267-9895.

### **Avoid posting personal information**

Avoid posting personal information about FAA employees on FAA public websites, with the exception of contact information. Never post photographs or biographies of contractors.

### **Comply with lobbying restrictions**

You may not post any material designed or intended to influence U.S. Senators or congressman to vote for or against legislation or appropriations.

For more information, see [http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=browse\\_usc&docid=Cite:+18USC1913](http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=browse_usc&docid=Cite:+18USC1913)