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Writing Sample: Documentation Style Guide

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Audience: The audience for this documentation style guide is composed of County Office of Education (COE) K-12 program coordinators and support staff. Program coordinators are experts in their field. Support staff have intermediate to expert in secretarial skills. All are intermediate to advanced writers in the educational style. None have experience in following a documentation style guide. All have intermediate to advanced computer and Microsoft Word skills. All have intermediate to advanced ability to learn new subjects and follow instructions. The style guide was designed to give all groups the information necessary to produce consistently styled documentation in a clear, organized format.



MONTEREY COUNTY SCHOOLS

DOCUMENTATION

STYLE GUIDE

by Joy Bower

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Section 1: OVERVIEW

Purpose

This style guide was created to ensure that all Monterey County Schools documentation is consistently formatted, legible, and has a professional appearance.

Who Will Use the Style Guide

All Monterey County Schools staff will use the style guide.

When to Use the Style Guide

Use the Style Guide when creating all Monterey County Schools documentation.

Section 2: SOFTWARE

Software Program

Create all documentation in Microsoft Word.

Section 3: FILE FORMATS

Microsoft Word Documents

Create all Microsoft Word documents in the *.doc* file format. DO NOT save files in the *.docx* file format. Many people use older versions of Word and cannot open the *.docx* file format.

Graphics

Save all photographs, logos, charts, graphs, and illustrations in the TIFF (*.tif*) file format. DO NOT use the JPEG (*.jpg*), GIF (*.gif*), PowerPoint (*.ppt*) or other file formats. TIFFs print legibly. Other file formats will often print illegibly.

Section 4: DOCUMENT STRUCTURE

Organize the information in your document in the following sections and order.

1. Title Page

The title page will include the Monterey County Schools logo and name, the document title, the author's name, and the date of issue.

2. Table of Contents

Create a table of contents for documentation over 8 pages in length. The table of contents follows the document title page and precedes the documentation section. The table of contents may include up to five levels of information, depending on the length and complexity of the document.

1. The main topics
2. The sections within main topics
3. The sub-sections within sections
4. The items within sections
5. The sub-items within items

3. Documentation

The documentation sections will follow the table of contents.

4. Glossary

Add a glossary in documents that include professional terminology (examples: cohort, stakeholders). Define these terms in simple, clear language. Organize the terms alphabetically. The glossary precedes the index at the back of the document.

5. Index

Create an index for documents over 12 pages in length, excluding the cover and title page. The index follows the Glossary. If there is no glossary, the index will follow the documentation sections.

Section 5: PAGE LAYOUT

Standard Template

Use the standard documentation template for all documentation projects. It is located in the *Documentation Resources Folder* on the (Name) Server. The filename is *document_template.doc*. The template is set up with the following measurements and styles.

Page Size

The size of all documentation will be 8.5 inches wide by 11 inches tall. Full-page tables, charts, graphs, illustrations, and photos may be oriented horizontally (11 inches wide by 8.5 inches tall) within the vertically oriented document.

Page Margins (White Space)

The following page margins will create sufficient white space to ensure readability.

- Top and bottom margins: 1.0 inches.
- Right and left margins: 0.75 inches.

Columns of Text

Use a one-column format for all pages. The column will span the full width of the content area.

Page Header

Add an italicized Page Header to all pages except the cover and title page. The page header will be the same as the document name. Apply the Page Header style.

Page Numbers

Number all pages, except the cover and title pages. Microsoft Word will automatically apply the page numbers in the bottom right corner of all pages.

Section 6: TEXT

Standard Font

All text in all documents will be set in Verdana. All text will be black. Use only Bold, Roman, and Italic styles. Do not use the Underlined or Strike Through styles. See individual elements (Headings, Body Text) for size and style details.

Spacing

Line Spacing

Line spacing is the vertical space between lines of text. Use the following line spacing for these text elements:

Document titles: 2 line spacing.

Headings: 1-1/2 line spacing.

Paragraphs: 1-1/2 line spacing.

Photograph captions: 1 line spacing.

Text within graphics: 1 line spacing.

Space Before and After

This refers to additional line space before or after headings, paragraphs, and lists. Use the following space before and after for these text elements:

Headings: space before and after varies depending on the type of heading. See the heading information.

Paragraphs: add one more line of space before each paragraph, and none after each paragraph.

Lists: add one more line of space before each list, and none after each list.

List items: do not add line space before or after individual items in a list.

Headings

Headings help readers to find the information they need quickly. They increase the effectiveness of documentation. Simpler documents may use levels 1 through 3. Longer, more complex documents may use Levels 1 through 5. Heading styles are located in the style palette section of the MS Word formatting palette.

Level 1: Document Title

Apply the *H1 Document Title* style to all document titles.

Font: Verdana; 16 point; Bold; black; all capital letters.

Line spacing: 2 line spacing.

Alignment: centered relative to the center of the content area.

Level 2: Section Headings

Apply the *H2 Section Heading* style to all section headings.

Font: Verdana; 14 point; Bold; black; upper and lower case letters.

Line spacing: 1.5 line spacing.

Space Before and After: 2 line spaces before the heading; no space after.

Alignment: left-align to the left margin of the content area.

Level 3: Sub-section Headings

Apply the *H3 Sub-section Heading* style to all sub-section headings.

Font: Verdana; 12 point; Bold; black; upper and lower case letters.

Line spacing 1.5 line spacing.

Space Before and After: 2 line spaces before the heading; no space after.

Alignment: left-align to the left margin of the content area.

Level 4: Item Headings

Apply the *H4 Item Heading* style to all item headings.

Font: Verdana; 10 point; Bold; Italic; black;

Line spacing 1.5 line spacing.

Space Before and After: 1 line space before the heading; no space after.

Alignment: left-align to the left margin of the content area.

Level 5: Sub-item Headings

Apply the *H5 Sub-item Heading* style to all sub-item headings.

Font: Verdana; 10 point; Roman; Italic; black.

Line spacing: 1.5 line spacing.

Space Before and After: 1 line space before the heading; no space after.

Alignment: left-align to the left margin of the content area.

Body Text

Apply the *Body Text* style to all paragraphs of text in the body of the document.

Font: Verdana; 9 point; Roman; black.

Line spacing: 1.5 line spacing.

Space Before and After: 1 line space before the paragraph; no space after.

Alignment: left-align to the left margin of the content area.

Bulleted and Numbered Lists

Use a bulleted list to organize information by priority. Use a numbered list to indicate a sequence. Apply the *Bulleted List 1* style to bulleted lists. Apply the *Numbered List* style to numbered lists.

Line spacing: 1.5 line spacing.

Space Before and After: 1 line space before the paragraph; no space after.

Alignment: left-align to the left margin of the content area.

Indented Sub-lists

Improve the comprehension of long lists by adding indented sub-lists. Apply the *Numbered List 2* style to numbered lists.

Page Breaks

Check to be sure that page breaks support the integrity of related information groupings. Adjust page breaks so that headings are with their associated text, and photos are with their captions. Eliminate widows and orphans by changing the point at which text breaks at the end of a page or by editing the text to remove or add length.

Widows

A widow is the last line of a paragraph that falls at the beginning of the following page or column, and is thus separated from the remainder of the paragraph to which it belongs.

Orphans

There are two types of orphans:

- The opening line of a paragraph that appears by itself at the bottom of a page or column.
- A word, part of a word or very short line that appears by itself at the end of a paragraph.

Section 6: GRAPHICS

Well-chosen graphics increase reader comprehension and are recommended. Add photographs, charts, graphs, or illustrations to clarify information as needed. Ensure that all elements within the graphics are legible when printed.

Logos

Logos identify their organizations and lend credibility to documentation. Include the Monterey County Schools logo on every document. Include the logos of participating organizations and programs on co-authored documentation.

Monterey County Schools Logo

Logo size: 0.5 inches wide by 0.5 inches tall.

Color: full color.

Image resolution: 300 pixels per inch (ppi).

Placement: center the Monterey County logo above the Agency name (Monterey County Schools) in the document title on title pages of all documentation.

Other Logos

Logo size: 0.5 inches wide by 0.5 inches tall.

Color: full color, if possible. Black and white is acceptable.

Image resolution: 300 pixels per inch (ppi).

Placement: center logos above or below their organization name on the document title page.

File format: TIFF (.tif). Example: cde_logo.tif.

Photographs, Charts, Graphs, and Illustrations

Add photographs, charts and graphs, and illustrations to clarify data and concepts.

Size: large enough to be legible.

Color: black and white or full color.

Image resolution: no less than 150 pixels per inch (ppi); no more than 300 ppi.

File format: TIFF (.tif). Example: mcs_superintendent.tif.

Legibility: check to be sure that the images and text within these graphics are legible when printed.

Placement: place graphics below the text that they illustrate.

Photo Captions and Text in Graphics

Font: Verdana; 9 or point; Roman.

Line spacing: 1 line spacing.

Alignment: left-align photo captions to the left edge of the photo.

Permission to Use Graphics

Documentation authors are responsible for obtaining written and signed permission from the owners of all graphics used in their documents. Attach copies of all signed permission forms to the final draft when submitting it for publication.

Section 7: NAMING CONVENTIONS

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Monterey County Schools

Spell out the full agency name on all document covers and title pages. Example: Monterey County Schools.

Spell out the first instance of the agency name in every section of the documentation, followed by the abbreviation in parentheses. Example: Monterey County Schools (MCS). You may abbreviate the agency name throughout the rest of the section. Example: MCS.

All Other Organizations

Spell out the first instance of all organization names in each section of the document, followed by the abbreviation in parentheses. Example: California Department of Education (CDE). You may abbreviate the organization name in the rest of the section. Example: CDE.

Document Filenames

Name all versions of a document consistently. Consistent filenames will make it possible to retrieve documents from the archives when needed in the future. Leave no spaces in filenames. Replace all spaces between words with underlines (_). Keep filenames simple. Choose words that identify the document clearly. Filenames will include the following components in this order:

1. The name of the document.
2. The number of the version.
3. The initials of the writer or editor of the current version.

Example: doc_style_guide_v1sr.doc

Drafts

All versions of a document will have the same document name, but will have different version numbers and writer or editor's initials.

Examples:

- doc_style_guide_v1sr.doc
- doc_style_guide_v2mb.doc
- doc_style_guide_v3jb.doc

Final Versions

The filename of the completed document will replace the version number and initials with the word "FINAL" in capital letters. Example: doc_style_guide_FINAL.doc

Section 8: ARCHIVING**Archiving**

Documentation authors will upload the final electronic versions of their documents to their self-named folder inside the final documentation folder (folder name: *final_documentation*) that is located on the (*Name*) server.

Filenames

Follow the file naming convention in Section 7: NAMING CONVENTIONS.

Section 9: REPRODUCTION AND BINDING

Paper

Copy all documentation on standard 20 pound copy paper, bright white, 8.5 inch by 11 inch size.

Copying

Copy all documentation on the front and back sides of the paper.

Binding

Staple smaller documents in the upper left corner. Bind larger documents in the standard blue document cover.

CONCLUSION

Well-organized, legible documentation will help their readers successfully complete their tasks and achieve their goals. We appreciate your participation and support in making Monterey County Schools documentation the best that it can be.