Web Writing Style Guide

Helpful guidance for writing useful and usable content for our audiences.

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Introduction

Oregonians prefer the web as the primary means to contact or get information from state agencies. As such, it is vital the Oregon Department of Transportation's website be as clear and easy to use as possible. The purpose of this Web Writing Style Guide is to help us write useful and usable content for our audiences.

Our Governance Plan and Content Strategy serves as an overarching guide for our website.

Vision

Our vision is to have a mobile-first, useful and usable website that improves the agency's ability to communicate with our audiences (customers and stakeholders), helps people find needed information and complete tasks, reduces risk and improves transparency. Our site conveys and amplifies the agency's mission, goals and work.

Goal

Aligning with ODOT's mission, ensure our internet website provides current, efficient, effective, accurate, consistent and quality information, resources and services for customers, stakeholders and employees.

Core Strategies

- **Audience first:** The key to creating good web content is to understand our intended audiences and to design information based on their specific wants and needs.
- **Task oriented:** People come to our website for content that they think (or hope) is there. They want information that answers a question or helps them complete a task.
- **Quality vs. quantity:** To provide useful and usable information for our audiences we must carefully select and edit the information that we choose to post.
- **Consistent brand:** Our internet website maintains a consistent experience across pages. ODOT's web pages conform to agency standards for communication and branding, while still allowing for division brand identity.

How to Use This Guide

Important Notes

Important notes provide information that must be considered when creating content.

Tips

Tips provide information to make creating content easier.

Writing for the web is Different

Most web users are very busy people who want to read only as much as they need to satisfy the goal that brought them to the web.

Web users skim and scan.

- Only 16 percent of your audience is going to read your web content word for word.
- Think of your web content as part of a conversation.

We are required to follow the ODOT plain language standard; for more examples, see the DAS Editorial Style Guide.

Select the Right Content for the Right Audience

Think about your audience before writing or posting one word. Before you write:

- **Know your audience and your purpose**.
- **Write for your specific audience, not for everyone**.
- **Use the ODOT personas list to help your write for your audience**. Personas are brief character sketches representing specific audiences.
- People come to our site to complete a task. They need information. They need to complete a transaction. They need to comply with a rule or law. There is something that they need or want to accomplish. We call these top tasks. **Use the ODOT top task list to ensure your content meets specific audience needs**.

> *Tip:* *Your reader says – Tell me what I need to know. Write to me, not to a group. Anticipate my questions. Don't confuse me.*

Voice and Tone

The site's tone is conversational and customer-friendly, using language commonly understood by our audiences.

- We are positive and professional.
- We write clearly and concisely.
- We respect our audiences' time.

Keep it Simple

Our website should make sense to our audience and to us. We follow Plain Language Guidelines. Plain language is communication your audience can understand the first time they read it or hear it. We are required by state and federal law to use plain language in all of our external communications aimed at the public. ODOT's Plain Language Guidelines and Plain Language Training are essential resources for web editors and content writers.

In addition to using plain language:

- Present the main or essential message first. What is the most important thing you want your audience to walk away with? Start with that. Put benefits first. Focus on your audiences' needs first, and then follow up with your organization and its services and programs.
- Layer information. Start with the most important point that the majority of your audience needs and then add details in successive paragraphs/sections.

> *Important:* *DAS Web Guidelines recommend writing at no higher than eighth-grade level.*

This is also called the 10-30-2 rule. Much of your audience wants to grab and go: give them the brief overview (10 seconds), then provide short additional details (30 seconds) and then provide more in-depth information (two minutes).

Write Visually

The majority of web users skim and scan web pages instead of reading. Write in a style that accommodates that behavior. Most users will glance over a page to try to find what they are looking for before they start reading. Help your audiences:

- Use simple, descriptive headings.
- Use bulleted or numbered lists.
- Use white space to separate chunks of information.
- Use pictures, videos or diagrams to make complex information easier to understand.

Links are your Friends

Great links are useful pathways that help people get information they need.

Create useful links

Follow DAS Web Guidelines for creating useful links.

Make link text unique. When you have several links on a page that link to the same thing, use the same link text. Links to different URLs should have unique text.

Example:

Apply now for *Connect*Oregon funds. Download the application (PDF) and instructions (PDF). You have until May 29 to submit your application.

*Connect*Oregon application process:

1. Download the application (PDF) and instructions (PDF).
2. Fill out the application.
3. Gather letters of support.

Example:

Wrong: Read more about the latest Winter Driving Guide (PDF).

Wrong: Read more about chain and traction tire rules.

Right: Tips, resources and safety information are in the latest Winter Driving Guide (PDF).

Right: Learn how to comply with Oregon chain and traction tire rules.

Linking to laws, rules and bills: When referencing Oregon statutes, link to the Oregon Legislature's Oregon Revised Statutes site. Link to the most current version of the law.

Pass a vision screening as defined in ORS 735-062-0050.

If you need to link to pending or recently passed legislation, link to the Oregon Legislature's Regular Session Bills (Oregon Legislative Information Section) for the appropriate year. Make sure you are linking to the most current version of the bill. If you need help, contact Government Relations.

When referencing Oregon Administrative Rules, link to the Secretary of State's Administrative Rules site. Link to the most current version of the rule.

Requirements for traction devices and chains are defined in OAR 734-017-0005.

When an OAR or ORS is linked in a sentence, add this reference below the sentence or paragraph:

"Note: In using the links above, you may need to scroll down to find the correct OAR and/or ORS reference."

Linking to forms: When hyper-linking to forms, try to list the official form name as a link followed by the work "Form" and a form number in parentheses as follows:

Dismantler Application (Form 735-305)

However, if this format does not make sense for specific content you may use another format. Just be consistent within the page and/or group of related pages.

Don't recreate the wheel

Use links to connect to content on other pages or sites rather than posting the same materials on your page.

Take care before linking to a non-governmental entity's website. Follow DAS Web Guidelines for links.

Find a buddy

Test your pages with actual audience members so you can be sure real people can understand what you've written. The ODOT web content strategist and web leaders coordinate usability testing with our audiences on a regular basis. Contact them for help testing brand new content.

Test your pages with people from different areas of the division or agency. You can trade with another web editor. You can also ask your community affairs or public information representative to test your pages.

Avoid common pitfalls

Proofread everything before you post it on the web. Be wary of typos, spelling and grammatical errors. Use this guide to assist you as you write and edit content.

PDF vs. web page

Create a web page if content is -	Create a PDF if content is -
-Time sensitive information.	-A large document or manual.
-Intended for online reading.	-Meant to be printed.
-A list of links.	-A document with a layout that needs to remain as it is.
-Information that changes frequently.	
-Going to be shared via email or social media.	-A document that includes special symbols or mathematic equations.
	-Filled with charts or graphs.

Editorial Style Guidelines

Materials aimed at the public should follow the overall guidance of the Associated Press Style Manual. The following content, arranged alphabetically, covers: 1) Exceptions to AP style and 2) Some of the more common errors encountered when writing, and how to handle them correctly.

Jargon & Acronyms

The website should make sense to those who use it. As a general rule, avoid technical or business related acronyms and terms that are not readily known to your entire audience.

Limit technical language to technical audiences. Most web writing will need to follow plain language, which means using simple words that are familiar to your readers. If you must use technical terms, either define them in the text or include links or definitions.

> Examples – instead of _____ = use _____:
>
> Luminaires = lights
>
> Delineators = markers
>
> Bridge bents = bridge supports
>
> Promulgate = issue, publish
>
> Validate = confirm, check

If appropriate, create a cheat sheet for you and your unit/section with technical and replacement terms so everyone is consistent.

Avoid creating "alphabet soup," which occurs when too many acronyms appear in a document/on a page. Do **not** put an abbreviation or acronym in parentheses right after the spelled out organization/program. (This is an exception to DAS Web Guidelines.) Instead, spell out the name of organization/program every time you use it. The ONLY time you can use an acronym after spelling it out

on first use is if it is universally known to designate that organization/program, such as DMV. Here are some examples of correct acronym usage:

> The Oregon Transportation Plan is a long-term planning document. Updated periodically, the Oregon Transportation Plan guides statewide policy making.

> Oregon's Driver and Motor Vehicle Division provides excellent customer service. At DMV, customers can expect to speak with a representative within five minutes of arrival.

> The Oregon Transportation Commission, or OTC, meets regularly in Salem. OTC members include...

> CDL - Where it appears, write "commercial driver license" the first time it appears on the page, then for each subsequent occurrence, only use "CDL." May be capitalized when spelled out if the context is appropriate.

> MCO - A "manufacturer's certificate of origin," can also be abbreviated to "MCO."

> OAR - The first time it appears on a page, write "Oregon Administrative Rule," then after that you may just use "OAR." If identifying a specific OAR number, then only use OAR followed by the number.

> ORS - The first time it appears on a page, write "Oregon Revised Statutes." For each occurrence following, just write "ORS." If identifying a specific ORS number, then only use ORS followed by the number.

> VIN - Where it appears, write "vehicle identification number" the first time it appears on the page, then for each subsequent occurrence, only use "VIN."

General Style

Addresses

Ave., Blvd. and St. - Abbreviate only with a numbered address. Spell out and capitalize without the numbered address: Meet me at 123 Oregon St. or ODOT crews repaved Oregon Street.

Road, Drive, Court, Terrace, etc. - Always spell out.

First through Ninth - Spell out and capitalize when used as street names. Use figures for 10 and above. The project affected Third Street and 21st Avenue

Abbreviate compass points in a numbered address: 222 E. 42nd St., 562 W. 43rd St., 600 K St. NW

Do not abbreviate if the number is omitted: East 42nd Street, West 43rd Street, K Street Northwest

No periods in quadrant abbreviations: NW; SE

Apostrophes

Apostrophes are used to denote possession and are used in contractions.

Do not add an apostrophe to a noun ending in *s* when it isn't denoting possession.

> Wrong: The committee made the decision years' ago.

Wrong: The guard rail was made in the 1980's.

Add an **'s** to singular nouns not ending in **s**.

Right: We processed the customer's application.

Right: Marx's research shows drivers slow to read wordy signs.

Add an **'s** to singular nouns ending in **s** unless the next word begins with **s**.

Right: The witness's address was on the accident form.

Right: The witness' story was different than the driver's story.

Add only an apostrophe for singular proper names ending in **s**.

Right: Mr. Jones' car was damaged in the crash.

Wrong: The Williams's property is adjacent to the highway.

Add only an apostrophe to plural nouns ending in **s**.

Right: The committee will review all of the applicants' documentation.

Right: We respect our customers' privacy.

"Its" is possessive. **"It's"** is a contraction for it is.

Commas

In a series, use commas to separate elements in the series, but do not put a comma before the conjunction in a simple series:

The flag is red, white and blue.

Our mission is to help travelers, move freight and increase safety.

If there is a new subject or the old subject is restated, use the comma. If the second clause shares a subject with the first, don't use the comma:

Mike looked in the boys' room but didn't find anything. (One subject; no comma.)

Mike looked in the boys' room, but he didn't find anything. (Because he is a restatement of the subject; use comma.)

Contractions

Stay away from contractions if you can. Some editing interfaces like to convert a contraction like "you're" to "you´re," in the background code which looks like "you ' re" when the page is served to the public (note the excessive spaces added).

Dashes

Use long dashes — known as em dashes — with one space on either side to denote an abrupt change in thought:

The project will start in June 2018 — if we get funding.

The stakeholder group offered a plan — it was unprecedented — to raise revenues.

Use in a series within a phrase:

She always does a safety check — helmet, lights and tires — before starting her bike ride.

Use for attribution:

"We are committed to efficient use of funds." — Commissioner Smith.

Hyphens are smaller and are used to denote ranges, with no spaces on either side:

We are looking for 3-5 volunteers.

But: The loan applicant wants to borrow from $3 million to $5 million.

Data Entry Forms

Email forms developed via SharePoint, PDF or customer programming should follow the guidelines listed below:

- Required entry fields should be designated with light blue shading.
- Instructions should explain how to identify required fields.
- Forms should not be submittable without the required fields.
- Common field names and structures should be used whenever possible.
- Detailed instructions should appear when the cursor is placed in a field entry area whenever possible.
- Submitted form should be routed to a shared group email box that many people can access vs. a single employee's email address.

Dates

Always use figures without st, nd, rd or th.

We were married June 25, 1910. (NOT June 25th.)

With a specific date, abbreviate only Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec.

It reached 60 degrees on Jan. 25. It reached 80 degrees on April 2.

Spell out the month when used alone or with a year and no date. Do not separate the month and year with a comma.

We often have snow in January. January 2003 had unusually mild weather.

Separate the date and year with commas when using a full date (month day, year). In text, include a comma after the year when used with a date.

A big storm on Jan. 25, 1972, dumped 3 feet of snow in the valley.

Dimensions

Use figures and write out inches, feet, yards, etc. (Do not use (") for inches.)

The storm dumped 4 inches of rain in two hours.

Hyphenate when a dimension is used an adjective.

The landslide washed out a 12-foot section of road.

Directions and Regions

Compass directions: lowercase and spell out in text.

The storm is moving east. The river follows a southern route.

Capitalize to designate national regions. Lowercase for state regions.

High winds and rain will affect the entire Northwest.

Citizens in eastern Oregon like the new highway.

One word for descriptors: northbound, southbound, eastbound and westbound.

One mile south of the crash, northbound freeway traffic was detoured to Highway 99W.

Capitalize exit when it is a proper noun:

Take Exit 243 North to reach the event. You'll see another exit in one mile on the right; take it.

The SUV rolled off Interstate 25 near Exit 223.

Use these forms for highways identified by number (this is an ODOT exception to AP Style):

U.S. 101, U.S. 20, Oregon 34, Oregon 217, Oregon 99W, Interstate 5, Interstate 405. On second reference only for Interstate: I-405.

There was a crash on Oregon 217. It was not on U.S. 26 as reported earlier.

Always spell out state names. Do not abbreviate.

U.S. and Oregon highway names: Because we are writing official content, we want to identify whether it's an Oregon highway or a U.S. highway:

Trees are blocking U.S. 26 at Welches.

Downed wires have closed Oregon 20 at milepost 41.

Interstate: Spell out and capitalize (if proper noun) on first reference; abbreviate subsequent references:

Noon on Thursday, Interstate 5 northbound will be closed at Wilsonville for emergency repairs. By 6 a.m. Friday, I-5 will be open. Motorists will be detoured off the interstate during the work.

Common names: Use common highway names only after identifying official name, using dashes where needed.

Oregon 99W — Pacific Highway West — is now open to trucks. This section of the Pacific Highway West was once a thriving…

Expressing Urgency

To draw closer attention to certain text on a page, the situation should dictate which of the following methods to use. Use the techniques below sparingly, as too much bold, capitalized or italicized text can be distracting:

- **Bold** may be used in many situations, especially in part of a sentence with text that is not already emphasized, or in a standalone sentence that is critical. For example:
  - We do **not** allow dogs in the office.
  - DMV offices **only accept cash or checks** and do not accept credit or debit cards.
- **Bold** and ALLCAPS can be used in moderation for special situations that need to draw the users attention or differentiate a part of the text like:
  - **IMPORTANT:** this is a very critical note.
  - Do **NOT** send cash.
  - **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES** can be found in all manuals.
- *Italics* and ***bold italics*** can be used in most cases as a lighter form of emphasis or differentiation, and is less distracting to the user. For example:
  - We do *not* allow dogs in the office.
  - ***Documents must have a raised seal.***

Hyphens

Use sparingly according to AP. Here are some acceptable uses:

right-in, right-out.

over-crossing.

Hyphenate compound modifiers before a noun - except the adverb "very" and adverbs ending in "ly."

She is a full-time worker. She works full time. He had a very good time by following an easily remembered rule.

Also, do not confuse suspensive hyphenation (There were 5- and 6-year-olds in the class.) with ranges.

HOWEVER, after forms of the verb "to be," the hyphen should usually be retained to avoid confusion:

The children were soft-spoken. The play is second-rate.

Meeting Notices

TIME, then the DATE, followed by the LOCATION or PLACE:

ODOT will hold an open house at 6 p.m. Friday, Aug. 27, 2017 in the Tykeson Room of the Eugene Public Library, 100 W. 10th Ave.

Money

Write dollar amounts as follows:

$72 or $72.50

$6.75 million

Notations/Notes

Notations may be used to interject important information into content when simply including the text within the body of the content is not enough. The general format for inserting notations is as follows:

Note: SSN cards may not be laminated.

Note: SSN cards may **not** be laminated.

IMPORTANT: Not all DMV offices offer all services.

NOTE: Not *all* DMV offices offer ALL services.

IMPORTANT: READ INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY.

Tip: Remember that overuse of notes, italics, capitalization and bolding can be very distracting for the reader.

Notations should appear as stand-alone sentences with the same indentation as the preceding text.

In most cases, notations should not be embedded within tables or vertical lists. This can make these structures very confusing for the reader.

The most important guideline is to keep it simple and be consistent within a given page or series of related pages.

Numerals

In general, spell out numerals less than 10 and use figures for 10 and above.

Spell out amounts less than one using hyphens between the words: one-half, one-third, one-fourth, three-eighths.

Spell out numbered streets nine and under: First Street, not 1st Street.

Here are some special cases where you use figures for numbers less than 10:

- Addresses: 6 Maple St.; 5 Ninth Ave.
- Cents: 5 cents.
- Dimensions: 6 feet tall, 9-by-12 rug.
- Highways: U.S. 8.
- Percentages: 4.5 percent.
- Speed: 7 mph.
- Mileage: 8 mpg.
- Temperatures: 8 degrees.
- Times: 8 a.m.

For distances, always use figures.

He drove 4 miles. The town is 20 miles away.

Use "No." as the abbreviation for number in conjunction with a figure to indicate position or rank: No. 1 car, No. 3 choice. (Do not use the # sign!)

Parentheses

You may use parenthetical data (i.e., clauses within parentheses) to add terms, details or context to sentences. However, there should only be one clause (term, sentence or phrase) within the parentheses, not multiple sentences, a paragraph, or a bulleted list:

> Right: John Smith (the owner) was the one who called the police.

> Wrong: John Smith (John Smith is the registered owner. He maintains insurance on the vehicle.) was the one who called the police.

Do not use a period to end a clause within parentheses. It is an adjunct clause to the sentence in which it appears, not its own sentence:

> Right: DMV (a division within ODOT) is responsible for the project.

> Wrong: DMV (a division within ODOT.) is responsible for the project.

Parenthetical clauses are part of the sentence in which they appear, so punctuation ending the sentence goes after the parentheses, not before:

> Right: The wolf never gets Little Red Riding Hood (a fictional character).

> Wrong: The wolf never gets Little Red Riding Hood. (a fictional character)

Prepositions

Though this is a common grammatical error, it is worth mentioning that a sentence or clause should not end with words like "to, of, through, over, under, around, with, at, in." Rewriting the sentence is the easiest way to avoid this problem.

Quotation Marks

Periods go inside the closing quotation mark as shown:

> Please send your check to "Oregon DMV."

> Sign your name wherever you see an "X."

The period and the comma always go within the quotation marks. Other punctuation marks go inside the quotation marks when they apply to the quoted matter; outside if they don't. The semicolon always goes outside the quotation marks.

> He said, "I recommend making a change to the process." She replied, "OK."

> Is the material in the "Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan"?

Ranges

The form: $12 million to $14 million. Not: $12 to $14 million or $12 – 14 million.

Also: A pay increase of 12-15 percent. Or: A pay increase of between 12 and 15 percent.

Semicolons

In general, use a semicolon to clarify a series or to link independent clauses.

> Right: The committee includes John Smith, rail compliance specialist; Fred Jones, planner; Tracy Ross, public information representative and Sue Cooper, traffic engineer.

> Right: The report was due June 1, 2016; it was submitted to the Oregon Legislature on May 30, 2016.

State Names

The names of the 50 U.S. states should be spelled out when used in the body of a story, whether standing alone or in conjunction with a city, town, village or military base.

> We live in Oregon.

> They drove from Anchorage, Alaska, to San Francisco, California, in a van.

Place one comma between the city and the state name, and another comma after the state name, unless ending a sentence.

Telephone Numbers

Write telephone numbers as follows:

> 503-555-1234

> 800-555-1234

Temperatures

Use figures for all except zero. Use a word, not a minus sign, to indicate temperatures below zero.

> Right: The day's low was 10 below zero.

> Wrong: The day's low was -10.

> Right: The day's high is expected to be 9 or 10.

Also: 5-degree temperatures, temperatures fell 5 degrees, temperatures in the 30s (no apostrophe).

> ☞ **Important:** *You don't always need to include the word 'degrees' when reporting temperatures.*

Temperatures get higher or lower, but they don't get warmer or cooler.

> Wrong: Temperatures are expected to warm up in the area Friday.

> Right: Temperatures are expected to rise in the area Friday.

Time

All non-DMV divisions write time as follows:

> Style for time: a.m., p.m.

Style for radio: AM, FM

Use figures except for noon and midnight.

Use a colon to separate hours from minutes: 11 a.m., 1 p.m. (not 11:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m.), 3:30 p.m., 9-11 a.m., 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Avoid the redundant 9:30 a.m. this morning or 10 p.m. Monday night.

For DMV, write time as follows:

11:00 AM

7:30 PM PST

8:00 AM – 4:00 PM, Monday thru Friday

Noon

Midnight

☞ *Important: The DMV time standard differs from the rest of ODOT.*

Use the days of the week, not today or tonight.

Within seven days before or after the current date: use Monday, Tuesday, etc., without a date or year. Avoid writing last Tuesday or next Tuesday. The past, present or future tense used for the verb usually tells readers which Tuesday is meant. Don't include the month and date in parentheses.

On Tuesday, Dec. 10, 2018 the commission will consider new rules.

Commissioners will review the contract in August 2018. OR: Commissioners will review the contract at their Aug. 10, 2018 meeting.

Title Case and Capitalization

Two rules: 1) Capitalize proper nouns including titles before names but not after names. Divisions, sections, units, branches and offices are capitalized only when part of a proper noun. 2) Capitalize the first word in a sentence.

Examples:

Senator Peter Courtney called the meeting. Courtney, a senator who represents District 11, called the meeting.

He said Commissioner Smith was intelligent. Even the new commissioner denied the appeal. And the entire commission agreed. But the Salmon Commission abstained.

Many engineers work in Technical Services Branch. The chief bridge engineer oversees the Bridge Unit.

Page titles, headings and subheadings that are not punctuated as a sentence are considered title case. While using title case, conjunctions like "or" and "and" are not capitalized. Use the "&" in place of "and" only when space is limited. Prepositions (to, over, through) are not capitalized. Articles such as "a," "an" or "the" are not capitalized. Conjugations of "to be" are not capitalized (are, were, will be etc.).

Examples:

Change Your [Address](#) or [Name](#)

[Renewing a CDL](#)

[Replacing a Lost or Stolen CDL](#)

[Suspensions & Revocations](#)

[New to Oregon?](#)

Vertical Lists (Numbered & Bulleted Lists)

Use parallel construction and parallel punctuation in all lists. Capitalize the first word in each list.

Bulleted lists may be introduced by a grammatically complete sentence followed by a colon. When all of list items are required use a semicolon at the end of all but the last bulleted point. Use a period for the last item in the series.

To change your business address with DMV, submit the following on company letterhead:

- Previous address;
- New address;
- Signature of owner.

Use a period at the end of each list item when each item stands alone as an independent sentence.

Here are some tips on chaining up and driving with chains:

- Check your vehicle operator's manual for the right type and size of chains to use. Follow the manufacturer's installation instructions.
- Ensure chains are the proper size. Don't deflate tires to install chains.
- Pull over to a safe and level area to mount or remove chains.
- Carry a waterproof tarp or plastic sheet to help keep you dry.

Use **numbered lists** in the following three circumstances:

1. When the preceding text names a specific number of items in the list that follows.
2. When the listed items must follow a specific sequence.
3. When the list sets a chronology.

When all of list items are required steps in a process use a semicolon at the end of all but the last bulleted point. Use a period for the last item in the series.

The application steps are as follows:

1. Complete the form;
2. Submit it via email;
3. Wait for a response.

Weights

Always figures: 12 pounds, 4 ounces, 6 tons.

Terms, Acronyms and Commonly Misused Words

Areas of Oregon - Lowercase directional or area descriptions when referring to a section of a state or city: western Oregon, the northern Oregon coast.

Only capitalize compass directions and regions when used as a proper noun: the Pacific Northwest; the Midwest; the West Coast.

At-Risk - DMV's mandatory and voluntary unsafe driver program is to be called the DMV At-Risk Driver Program. Drivers who fall into the category are called "at-risk" drivers.

Bus - A bus is a vehicle; its plural is buses.

Buss - A buss is a kiss; its plural is busses.

Cellphone – One word (exception to Webster's.)

Class - A "Class C license" is written in that form, not "class C license." Class is always upper case when used in a title of an object, as in "non-commercial Class C."

Commissioner(s), commission - Capitalize commissioner when it's a title immediately followed by a name; lowercase otherwise. Commission is capitalized only when it's a proper noun.

> He said Commissioner Smith was intelligent. Even the new commissioner denied the appeal. And the entire commission agreed. But the Salmon Commission abstained.

Contractor, consultant - Architects, engineers, etc. are referred to as consultants and their businesses as firms. The words contractors and companies are used in construction:

> The design firm CH2M Hill worked on many bridge projects.
>
> The consultant on the project was CH2M Hill.
>
> Hamilton Construction was the contractor on this project.
>
> Hamilton Construction, an Oregon-based company, worked on the project.

Crash - Use instead of wreck or accident when reporting transportation stories. Avoid using casual terms such as fender-bender, except in direct quotes.

> A rush-hour crash involving four vehicles slowed traffic to a crawl on Interstate 5 near Wilsonville.
>
> The MAX train was going 10 mph when it crashed into a safety barrier at the end of the line.

Crew member - Two words, just like crew chief.

Design-build - No caps, no quotations, use hyphen.

Email- No hyphen.

> Email: WebServiceCenter@odot.state.or.us.

Contact us via email at: WebServiceCenter@odot.state.or.us.

Flier, flyer - Flier is the preferred term for an aviator or a handbill.

Form - Generally, you should list the official capitalized form title followed by the word "form" and a form number in parenthesis, such as "Dismantler Application (Form 29)."

However, if this format does not make sense for specific content you may use another format. Just be consistent within the page and/or group of related pages.

Geo-Hydro - Unit in ODOT; not GeoHydro.

High-speed rail - Hyphenate; do not capitalize (unless in a composition title or part of a proper name); do not abbreviate.

internet – Lowercase in all uses. (This is new in 2016.)

intranet – Lowercase in all uses.

Lanes - Don't use A-lane or B-lane, etc.; it is ODOT internal jargon.

Refer to a highway lane as left, right, center or middle, far left or far right. Add compass directions as needed:

> The far left lane of northbound Interstate 5 is closed for repairs; two lanes remain open to traffic.

Legislature - Capitalize when the reference is specific, as in a proper noun.

> The Oregon Legislature was in session today. The 2010 Legislature passed HB 2041. In Oregon, it's always up to the legislature.

Milepost - One word, lowercase, normally followed by a figure.

Round milepost figures to one digit right of the decimal point: milepost 61.15 becomes milepost 61.2.

Use 0 when the milepost figure is less than one mile: milepost 0.7

The abbreviation MP is acceptable only in charts and graphs.

Don't use mile point or milepoint.

Miles - Use figures for amounts under 10 in dimensions.

> The property measures 5 miles by 4 miles.

For distances, always use figures.

> He drove 4 miles. The town is 20 miles away.

Miles per gallon - The abbreviation mpg is acceptable in all uses. Always use figures with mpg:

> My car averages 22 mpg.

Miles per hour - The abbreviation mph is acceptable in all uses. Always use figures with mph:

The car slowed to 7 mph.

Multimodal – One word.

ODOT Divisions –

        Central Services

        Driver and Motor Vehicles

        Highway

        Motor Carrier Transportation

        Rail and Public Transit

        Transportation Development

        Transportation Safety

Always use full division name on first reference; division is acceptable thereafter. Do not abbreviate division names except for DMV. Spell out Driver and Motor Vehicles Division on first reference, the division or DMV are acceptable on follow-ups.

ODOT Regions –

Region 1:	Portland metro and Hood River.
Region 2:	Willamette Valley and northwest Oregon.
Region 3:	Southwestern Oregon.
Region 4:	Central Oregon.
Region 5:	Eastern Oregon.

Offices - Write "DMV office" when talking about a general office in a sentence. When writing about a specific office, please use the specific name of the office and DMV, for example: "Lebanon DMV" or "Grants Pass DMV".

Off-ramp, on-ramp – Hyphenate in all uses.

Online, offline – One word, no hyphen.

Oregon Driver License - When writing the words "driver license," leave the 'd' and 'l' in lower case unless the word Oregon is in front of it, as in "Oregon Driver License." Also, it's "driver license," not "driver's license."

Correct:	Incorrect:
driver license	Driver License
Oregon Driver License	Driver's License

Oregon Commercial Driver License	Driver's license
commercial driver license	Oregon driver license

Oregon ID Card - When writing "identification card" it is acceptable to shorten it to "ID card." Also, 'card' is not capitalized unless written as "Oregon Identification Card" or "Oregon ID Card."

Over - Acceptable in all uses to indicate greater numerical value.

> The crop was valued at over $5 billion.

> Motor Carrier related terms: Hyphenate only over-dimension. All others don't use a hyphen.

>> overwidth

>> overheight

>> overweight

> Overpass – One word.

PDF - The correct way to identify the Portable Document Format is simply "PDF."

Pop-up Park & Ride - Pop-up Park & Ride (for consistency!)

Post/Snail Mail - When writing about standard hardcopy mail, use "U.S. Mail," unless referring to a "mailing address."

Pre – No hyphen.

> precast

> preclearance

> prestressed

Rail car – Two words.

Rest area – Capitalize if part of name (ex. French Prairie Rest Area.)

Right-in, right-out – Hyphenate.

Right of way, rights of way - Capitalize only at the beginning of a sentence or when referring to the ODOT section; no hyphens!

Rightsizing – One word.

Roadwork – One word.

Rockfall – One word.

Short line, short-line - Railroad terms: short line (n.); short-line (adj.).

In the railroad industry, short lines suffered during the recession.

There are several short-line railroads operating successfully in Oregon.

Signs - Preferred over signage in all uses. Use the simple word instead of the more complex: The project includes new road signs and marked crosswalks.

Storm water – Two words for transportation use.

Turnout - One word in the following transportation uses:

A place where something turns out or branches off: It's on the highway just beyond the turnout to the white church.

A widened space in a highway for vehicles to pass each other or for parking.

A track arrangement enabling locomotives and cars to pass from one track to another and consisting of a switch and frog with all connecting and operating parts.

Underway - One word in all uses.

Web/website/web page - Short form of World Wide Web, it is a service or set of standards that enables the publishing of multimedia documents on the internet. The web is not the same as the internet, but is a subset; other applications, such as email, exist on the internet.

Web, website, webcam, webcast and webmaster are all one word, lowercase. Web page and web feed are separate words.

Weight units - Use "pounds" instead of "lbs" whenever possible.

Work - One word in all uses. (Workforce is an exception to Merriam-Webster Unabridged.)

Examples:

Workbook

Workday

Workforce

Workplace

Workstation

Workweek

Work zone - Two words in all uses.

Frequently Asked Questions

There are two primary types of frequently asked question formats. The first is when both the question and the answer are listed together. The standard format for this is listing the question first in bold italics, followed below by the answer in normal text, such as:

What is the duration of a dismantler certificate?

Dismantler certificates are valid for one year from the date of issuance.

The other FAQ type is when only the question is listed, and the answer is accessed via links embedded in the question text. These are usually in bulleted lists. The standard format for these is as follows:

How do I get a <u>permit</u> or <u>driver license</u> if I am under 18 years of age?

<u>How do I renew my CDL?</u>

Driving Directions (DMV only)

Driving directions should be consistent in style and format, and they should be validated via an online mapping tool prior to being published.

Abbreviate the road type and omit the period (Ave, Rd., St…). For example:

Hawthorne St vs. Hawthorne Street or Hawthorne St.

Avoid relying solely on local landmarks; use them to augment specific directions. For example:

"Turn RIGHT (north) at Market St, just after the railroad tracks"

vs.

"Turn RIGHT (north) just after the railroad tracks"

To draw attention to each turn, use ALL CAPS for the direction, like:

"Veer LEFT (south) onto Market St, just after the bridge."

A compass direction (north, southwest…) should be given in parenthesis directly after a turn direction (RIGHT, LEFT…) for clarification whenever possible, like;

"Turn RIGHT (east) on Grover St."

You may use only a compass direction (i.e., omit the turn direction) if you are referring to a single maneuver from the perspective of either of two directions (i.e., where it would be a left or right-hand turn depending upon the direction being traveled, like:

"From eastbound or westbound Grand Ave, turn east on Park Pl"

Use the appropriate preposition after a direction related verb. Use a strong "on" if making a directional turn to a different road or heading a specific direction. Use a softer "onto" if a direction change is more subtle, like a merge or veering at a fork. For example:

"Head north on I-5" vs. "Head north onto I-5"

"Turn RIGHT (north) on Jones St" vs. "Turn RIGHT (north) onto Jones St"

"Veer LEFT (south) onto Smith Ave" vs. "Veer LEFT (south) on Smith Ave"

"Follow the off-ramp LEFT (south) onto Smith Ave"

vs.

"Follow the off-ramp LEFT (south) on Smith Ave"

Try to indicate the distance someone should keep going on a certain route whenever possible, like:

"Continue north on I-5 for about 8 miles"

"Continue north on Palm St for about 2 blocks"

"Continue south on OR-22 for several miles"

"Continue north on 5th St until you reach I-5"

For numeric names, use whatever format (Fifth St, 5th St…) is most prevalent on road signs and maps. Default to spelling it out if the most common designation is unknown.

Interstate highway numbers are to be defined as the letter I followed by a dash and then the number, like "I-405." You may also add a direction indicator, like "I-84E" for east.

Exit numbers are to be defined as the name of the exit, like "the Corbett Rd/OR-26 exit," followed by a space and then the number in parenthesis, like (Exit 285)." Do not insert the number sign (#), like "Exit #225."

If you list an exit name or number, be sure the roadway from which you are exiting is clearly identified in the current or previous sentence/bullet, like "From I-5, take the Smith Rd exit (Exit 87)," or "Take the Bend exit (Exit 12) from I-84." Do not assume the roadway is clearly implied.

Apply variable options consistently within a page, and a set of related pages.

Appendix A – Style & Standards Guide Sources

1. Web Governance and Plain Language

- **ODOT Web Governance Plan and Content Strategy**

  http://transnet.odot.state.or.us/odot/home/Web%20Toolkit%20%20Standards/Oregon%20Department%20of%20Transportation%20Web%20Governance%20Plan.pdf

- **DAS Web Style Guide**

  http://www.oregon.gov/docs/state_web_guidelines.pdf

- **ODOT Plain Language**

  http://intranet.odot.state.or.us/comm/plain_language.html

- **Federal Plain Language**

  http://www.plainlanguage.gov/

2. Accessibility & Usability Guidelines

- **AP Style (journalism style)**

  http://www.apstylebook.com/online/
- **Strunk & White – the Elements of Style**

  http://www.bartleby.com/141/
- **Merriam Webster's online dictionary**

  http://www.merriam-webster.com/
- **Federal Usability Guidelines**

  http://www.usability.gov/
- **Federal Accessibility Laws**

  http://www.section508.gov/

3. Writing for the web

- *Content Strategy for the Web*, 2nd edition (2012), Kristina Halvorson and Melissa Rach
- *Don't Make Me Think: Revisited* (2014), Steve Krug
- *Rocket Surgery Made Easy* (2010), Steve Krug
- *Letting Go of the Words* (2012), Janice (Ginny) Redish
- Jakob Nielsen's *Alertbox*
  http://www.useit.com/alertbox/