Texas Education Agency
Web Style Guide

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About This Guide

The Texas Education Agency is a trusted source of information about public education in Texas. Because our customers depend on us for educational leadership, guidance, and resources, the information we provide on our website and in related publications must be concise, clear, and accessible.

This guide defines rules and guidelines for all digital publications produced by the agency, including the main TEA website (**tea.texas.gov**), reports and documents posted to the website, and all websites and applications produced by or in partnership with this agency (**related sites**).

> **MISSION STATEMENT**
>
> *The mission of TEA is to provide leadership, guidance, and resources to help schools meet the educational needs of all students and prepare them for success in the global economy.*

Examples in this guide will focus on the main agency website and its content management system (Ektron), but our style rules apply to all web content associated with TEA.

Role of TEA

All organizations and businesses have a brand archetype – an identity that resonates with people. TEA's archetype, the Sage, uses intelligence and analysis to understand the world. TEA is a combination of two subtypes of the Sage archetype:

- The Investigator, who researches and gathers information
- The Mentor/Teacher, who shares that wisdom with the world

TEA's role is to gather and analyze educational data and to share agency expertise with its customers.

Website Objectives

TEA relies on credible, impartial data and to fulfill its role as Sage. The agency website is the primary source of this data, so it is critical that our website be consistent, accessible, and informative.

Maintain a Consistent Voice

TEA publications should maintain a consistent visual identity and voice. The TEA brand should be reflected in all agency websites and digital publications.

Provide Accessible Content

Agency staff should provide content that is accessible to all users, regardless of disability. Accessibility standards improve the web experience for everyone and are required by state and federal law.

Write Informative Content

Content on our site should be concise and clear. Our standards require a clean layout and the use of plain language so that visitors can easily identify and understand the information they need on any given page.

What follows are TEA's rules and standards for visual identity, website structure, page design, web accessibility, and web content. We recommend you refer to this guide when creating content for the agency's main website, producing digital documents such as PDFs, and developing any outside websites that are owned or endorsed by TEA.

Contact Us

If you have any questions about or suggestions for this guide, please email the Communications Division (**Communications**) at webpostings@tea.texas.gov.

If you have technical questions, email Website Administration (**Web Admin**) at WebAdmin1@tea.texas.gov.

Visual Identity

TEA Brand · *Site Structure* · *Page Design*

The TEA Brand

A brand is both the unique identity of an organization and the customer's experiences of that organization. Everything a person remembers about that experience becomes part of the organization's brand.

TEA's brand should communicate the agency's dual role as investigator and mentor. We developed the following brand standards to clearly establish the agency as both a gatherer and a trusted source of information about public education in Texas.

The TEA Logo

The TEA logo is the focal point of our brand and is used on all communications material, including our main website, related websites and partnerships, letterhead, and business cards.

The TEA logo defines our brand.

Permission to Use Our Logo

All agency staff must get permission from the Communications division to use the TEA logo on all documents and web properties produced by outside vendors. Send requests to teainfo@tea.texas.gov. Include the following:

- A detailed explanation of the request, including where the logo will be used and what type of file you need (eps, png, or gif).
- Your contact information, including name, phone number and e-mail address.

Once we approve your request, we will forward it to the graphics office, which will send you the appropriate file. You do not have to request additional permissions for internally produced documents and websites. Otherwise, permission is for one-time use.

Logo Treatment

The following guidelines apply to TEA employees and divisions who plan to use the logo on printed material, web documents, and websites created by outside vendors:

- The logo is available in four formats: full color with text (shown on Page 9), full color without text, grayscale dark, and grayscale light. Do not alter logo colors.

TEA logo - color, no text   *TEA logo - grayscale dark*   *TEA logo - grayscale light*

- You must include the logo in the top left corner of every TEA web property produced internally. Use the full color with text format and link the logo back to the tea.texas.gov home page.
- Outside vendors must include the logo either in the top left corner or in the footer of every page on the sites they produce. Logos on these site must link back to the tea.texas.gov home page.
- Include the logo on the cover page of printed material.
- You can resize logos proportionally, but don't scale to less than 100px wide.

The TEA Color Palette

TEA's main colors, those used in our logo, are sky blue and orange. These colors, coupled with a set of complementary colors, make up TEA's color palette. The colors we selected help visually establish our website as both welcoming and informative.

COLOR PALETTE

Bullseye	Orange	Dark Goldenrod	Goldenrod
R:191	R:240	R:184	R:214
G:51	G:96	G:134	G:186
B:51	B:57	B:11	B:59
Hex: #bf3333	Hex: #f06039	Hex: #b8860b	Hex: #d6ba3b

Pea	Seafoam	Sea Green	Ocean Blue
R:233	R:114	R:63	R:0
G:227	G:198	G:164	G:180
B:167	B:161	B:120	B:203
Hex: #e9e3a7	Hex: #72c6a1	Hex: #40a478	Hex: #00b5cc

Sky Blue	Mid Blue	Dark Blue	Purple
R:22	R:13	R:0	R:130
G:130	G:108	G:87	G:77
B:197	B:185	B:134	B:148
Hex: #1482c5	Hex: #0d6cb9	Hex: #00486e	Hex: #824d94

GRAYSCALE PALETTE

White	Light Grey	Steel	Graphite
R:255	R:238	R:128	R:68
G:255	G:238	G:130	G:68
B:255	B:238	B:133	B:68
Hex: #ffffff	Hex: #eeeeee	Hex: #808285	Hex: #444444

Listed with each color are its name and RGB and hexadecimal values. The RGB values should be used in Microsoft Office and Adobe documents that will be published on the website. Hex values are specifically for web use.

Agency Typefaces

The main TEA website uses the Open Sans and Open Sans Condensed typefaces. Content editors cannot change fonts on the main site.

We have no strict typography policy for non-html documents and for sites produced by external vendors, but we offer the following guidelines to keep agency publications consistent and readable:

We recommend Open Sans or Open Sans Condensed for header text and a 14 px sans serif font for body text. Usability research suggests sans serif text is easier to read on back- lit monitors, and 14px is considered the minimum size for readable text on the web. Open Sans, Arial, and Helvetica are all acceptable body text fonts.

OPEN SANS - SANS SERIF TEXT

OPEN SANS LIGHT
Texas Education Agency

OPEN SANS LIGHT ITALIC
Texas Education Agency

OPEN SANS REGULAR
Texas Education Agency

OPEN SANS REGULAR ITALIC
Texas Education Agency

OPEN SANS SEMIBOLD
Texas Education Agency

OPEN SANS SEMIBOLD ITALIC
Texas Education Agency

OPEN SANS BOLD
Texas Education Agency

OPEN SANS BOLD ITALIC
Texas Education Agency

OPEN SANS EXTRABOLD
Texas Education Agency

OPEN SANS EXTRABOLD ITALIC
Texas Education Agency

OPEN SANS CONDENSED LIGHT
Texas Education Agency

OPEN SANS CONDENSED LIGHT ITALIC
Texas Education Agency

OPEN SANS CONDENSED BOLD
Texas Education Agency

Open Sans can be downloaded for free in both desktop and web font formats from Google. Visit www.google.com/fonts, search for 'open sans' and follow the instructions to download or embed the fonts in your website.

In addition to body text and header standards, we ask that you adhere to the following typography standards:

- Use a sans serif font for body text in documents that are intended to be read on-line and either sans serif or serif fonts for body text in documents intended to be downloaded and printed; both font types are readable in printed documents.
- Don't use novelty fonts, such as Comic Sans, in content published on our website.
- Many font families include bold and italic versions. When available, use these versions in your documents, rather than the 'bold' and 'italic' buttons included in your word processing software.
- Don't alter the character spacing or kerning of your font. These types of changes can decrease text readability.
- Make sure text color complements TEA's color palette. Do not alter text color in **tea.texas.gov** content.
- Never use inline CSS to alter font family, text decorations, or text color.

Icons and Buttons

All the icons and buttons on tea.texas.gov were custom designed for our website. Please request copies from the Communications Division if you want to use them in your publication or website.

Category Icons

We use category icons in our main navigation and in the "Latest TEA News" section on our home page.

About TEA	Curriculum & Instruction	Finance & Grants	Reports & Data	Student Testing & Accountability	Texas Educators	Texas Schools

If you use any of these icons, please do not alter them without prior approval.

Buttons

We have a standard button style for links to contact forms, search tools, and similar documents. If you'd like to use a button on your web page, please contact the Communications Division, and we'll create one for you.

Standard button style
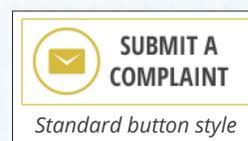
Site Structure

Site structure is the layout of elements on a web page. Much of the tea.texas.gov structure is fixed, but there are a few elements that can be changed by content editors. There are also a few structural requirements for TEA related sites.
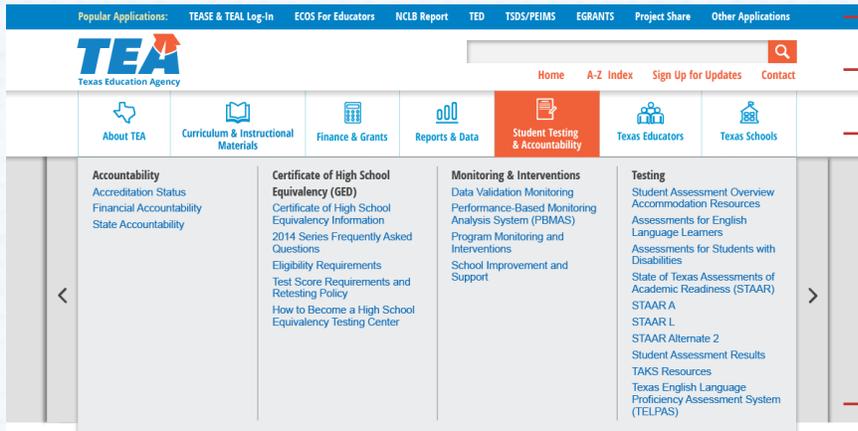
Header - *Includes utility bar - with links to frequently used applications, logo, search tools, and contact links.*

Navigation - *Site navigation is divided into seven main categories, which include multiple subcategories. The dropdown menu, known as a "megamenu" displays second- and third-level navigation..*
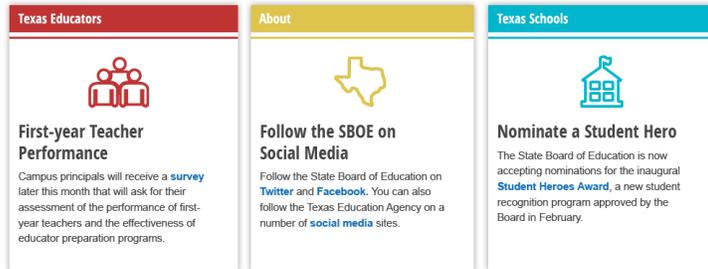
Latest News - *The three most recent announcements are displayed in boxes we refer to as "monopoly cards."*

Resources - *Contains links to the pages most frequently visited by teachers and administrators. Also includes a link to the commissioner's blog and the TEA correspondence page.*

Connect - *Displays icons that link to TEA's Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, and Instagram accounts.*

Footer - *Includes TEA seal, contact information, and a number of links that are mandated by the state legislature.*

Header

The header on tea.texas.gov contains four elements: a brand bar; the TEA logo; a search box; and quick links to our home page, A-Z Index, mailing lists, and contact page.

Brand Bar

The brand bar on tea.texas.gov contains links to TEA applications, including AskTED, ECOS, eGrants, TEASE, TEAL, and TSDS. All TEA-related sites, including internal content not hosted in Ektron, must use a brand bar that contains the agency logo and links to the TEA website home page, our contact page, and our GovDelivery sign up page:

Email webadmin1@tea.texas.gov to get the brand bar HTML and CSS.

Navigation

The content on tea.texas.gov is divided into seven main **categories**: About TEA, Curriculum & Instructional Materials, Finance & Grants, Reports & Data, Student Testing & Accountability, Texas Educators, and Texas Schools. These categories are divided into **subcategories**, each of which contains a number of **subjects**. Much of the subject-level content is further divided into **types** and sometimes **subtypes**.
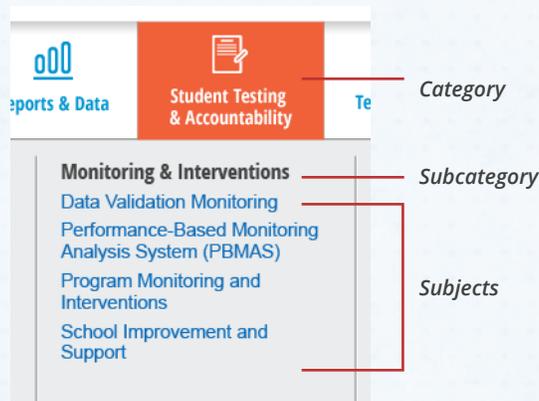
Our website uses a "megamenu" style for its primary navigation, which allows site visitors to see all of our category, subcategory, and subject-level links, rather than having to navigate into the site to find these pages.

Footer

The footer on the main TEA website includes the agency seal, contact information, and a collection of links, many of which are mandatory. Sites created for or in partnership with TEA must include all state-mandated links (see Texas Administrative Code §206.54) as well as our contact information, our logo, and a link back to the TEA home page.

Templates

The main TEA website includes two Ektron templates, one for standard content and another for large data tables.

interiorpage.aspx

This template should be used for most pages on tea.texas.gov. It has a right hand side-bar, which includes secondary navigation and several optional fields.

Secondary Navigation

All category, subcategory, and subject pages have a secondary menu in the right side-bar. Side navigation is optional on all pages lower than subject-level content. If you need to add, change, or update a sidebar menu, contact Web Admin.

Related Content

This field is for links to TEA web pages, documents, and links to external websites that are related to your page content. It isn't visible on the mobile version of the site.

Contact Information

Use this box for division and area contact information. Please use this format:

Communications Division

Phone: (512) 463-9000

Email: TEAINFO@tea.texas.gov

Additional field

The interiorpage.aspx template includes a third optional field for charts, graphs, and other images related to your content. Communications will need to approve any images you use in this field.

interiorpage_wide.aspx

Our wide template has no sidebar, which allows content to fill the browser window. This template is reserved for large data tables.

Ektron CMS Requirements

If you create content in Ektron, please do the following before publishing your pages:

Fill Out Template Tabs

Ektron templates have various tabs directly above the content area. Fill out the **Summary**, **Metadata**, and **Comment** tabs before you publish your pages.

Summary

Use this tab to provide a brief description of the content on your page. You can reuse the introductory paragraph on your page.

Metadata

This tab includes a variety of fields, including **subject**, **keyword**, and **menu_id**.

The **subject** field is currently required; you cannot publish your page without filling it out. Use it to briefly describe the main topic of your page. For example, the subject for the site policies page on tea.texas.gov is "Terms and conditions for use of the TEA website, downloadable material and web applications."

The **keyword** field is optional. If you use it, include program names and other words site visitors might associate with your content.

The **menu_id** field is also an optional field. Use it to add secondary navigation to the right sidebar of your pages. You can find the correct menu ID for your content at stage.tea.texas.gov/megamenutest.aspx.

Comment

Use this tab to describe page revisions or to convey scheduling requests.
Update the Comment tab every time you make changes to a page—this information helps us identify changes so we can quickly review your pages. Delete old comments and add the current date and your initials to new comments.

Structure Tables Correctly

Use tables to format tabular data, not to adjust page layout. In general, use Ektron's built in table wizard to create tables. If you need to import a large table from Excel or Word, use the **Paste From Word** button. Keep in mind that tables built in Word and Excel can contain extra HTML tags that can cause annoying problems in Ektron.

Meet TEA Image and Document Standards

Upload all image files, spreadsheets, Word documents, and PDFs to the appropriate subfolder in Ektron's **MainSite/Files** folder. Give images and documents a descriptive file name and use the same name for their Ektron title.

We ask that you avoid using images on your tea.texas.gov pages unless they help readers understand your content. If you use images, provide alternative text for screen readers using the **Set Image Properties** tool.

Communications must approve all images uploaded into Ektron.

Keep Hyperlinks Updated

Check your content for broken links before submitting. If a link breaks because a URL has changed, track down the new URL and update your link. If the page you are linking to has been deleted, remove the hyperlink from your page.

Use descriptive text for outside links and DMS documents. If you link to another page on tea.texas.gov, use text that matches the title of the linked page.

Don't Mess With the Code

Although Ektron provides a code view, we ask that you do not make changes to the code on your pages. Do not use inline CSS to modify text color or to make any other modifications. Never use Javascript on your pages without assistance from WebAdmin. Changing the page code and adding Javascript can create conflicts with the existing code base.

Occasionally, Ektron's editor will cause problems that can only be fixed by tinkering with the page's HTML. If you are experienced at writing HTML, you can fix these problems yourself; however, if you improperly format your HTML, Ektron will throw an error and you'll lose your changes.

We recommend you contact Communications or WebAdmin for help fixing HTML.

Page Design

The structure and organization of website content greatly affects a user's experience of that site. The spatial organization of graphics and text on the web page will either engage visitors and help them find the information they need or clutter the page and confuse them. The following standards are intended to create a visual logic and make the user's interaction simple and pleasant:

Visual Hierarchy

Visual hierarchy guides the reader through the page, presenting the most important information first, then filling in the details. Hierarchy also involves breaking content into chunks and separating each using headers and white space.

Inverted Pyramid

Use the inverted pyramid method when structuring content. This method, sometimes referred to as "front-loading," structures content in descending order of importance - the first few paragraphs should answer most questions readers have.

The inverted pyramid is particularly useful in web writing, where site visitors tend to have especially short attention spans. Giving them important details up front helps them find what they need quickly, rather than forcing them to read the entire page.

INVERTED PYRAMID

Most important content:
who, what, where, why, when

Supporting details

Background info
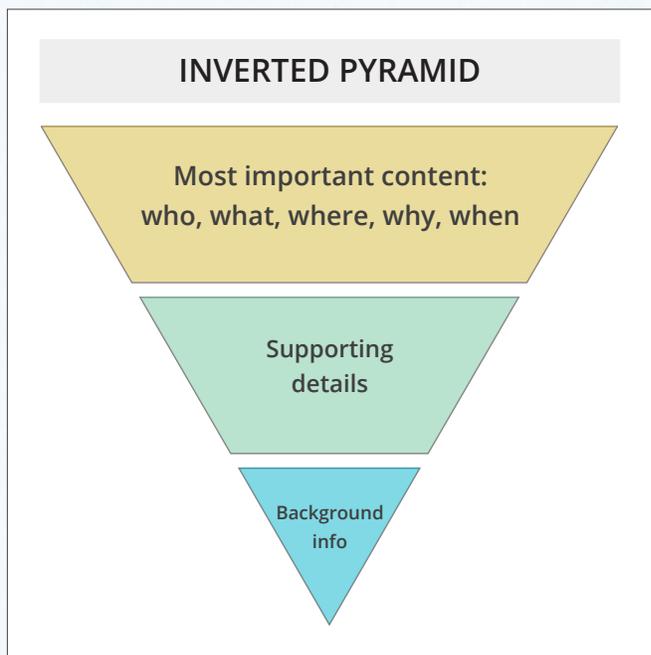
Chunking

Break your page content into meaningful "chunks" to help readers scan for specific information rather than forcing them to read the entire page. Create a chunk at logical divisions, for example each separate policy on the Site Policies page of tea.texas.gov.

Headers

Set chunks apart with headers. Keep headers short, but make sure they clearly describe the content that follows. If you can further divide content within larger chunks, use

headers in descending numeric order:

Header 2

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

Header 3

Nam at enim non urna pretium tempus. Nullam aliquam dolor mi.

Header 4

Ut ac ex sit amet dolor posuere faucibus sit amet iaculis mauris.

Typography

Typography is the intersection between verbal and visual communication. When readers encounter a page, they process the patterns on the page first and then start parsing the language. Good typography declutters the page and helps the reader navigate through the content.

Alignment

Text can be aligned one of four ways: left-justified, right-justified, centered, and justified. Left-justification, also called "ragged right," is the most readable alignment; centered and right-justified text force readers to search for the start of each line, and justified text compresses or expands text, which can cause awkward spacing and hyphenation.

Body text on all electronic publications should be left-justified.

Typeface

TEA uses sans serif fonts for body text on tea.texas.gov. Sans serif fonts are thought to be more legible on screen than serif type. We use a 14px font size and a 24px (approximately), because larger type and appropriately spaced lines are easier to read.

Emphasis

When adding emphasis to text, use **boldface**. Use *italics* only for citations, examples, and foreign words. Do not use <u>underlines</u> unless you're recreating legal documents or statutes. Don't use all caps for emphasis; there is never a reason to yell at your readers.

Use emphasis sparingly. Avoid bolding entire blocks of text—If everything is important, nothing is important. Color is another method for adding emphasis, but we request that you not change the color of body text on tea.texas.gov.

Page Elements

In this style guide, when we say "page elements," we mean images, graphics, tables, graphs, and forms. Each of these elements has a set of standards for web publications.

Photos

Photos on tea.texas.gov must be approved by Communications before publication. Photos should be in JPEG format, optimized for the web, and sized at a maximum width of 620px. Our site is responsive, so it will adjust image size to fit the user's device.

Graphics

Diagrams, illustrations, graphs, and charts help readers visualize and digest concepts. Ektron editors are welcome to use graphics, but we request that you do not create your own. If you need a graphic, contact Communications and we'll create one for you.

Developers of related sites should make sure that graphic text is readable and that image files have text alternatives. Make sure graphics are optimized for the web. Acceptable file types for graphics are PNG and SVG (preferred) or GIF.

Tables

Tables are excellent tools for breaking up page content and displaying graphic data. Size tables on tea.texas.gov using a percentage width so that the table will scale with the user's device. We recommend 100%, which will fill the content area.

Tables should never be used for page layout, only for tabular data:

Header 1	Header 2	Header 3
Subhead 1	Data 2, 1	Data 3, 1
Subhead 2	Data 2, 2	Data 3, 2
Subhead 3	Data 2, 3	Data 3, 3
Subhead 4	Data 2, 4	Data 3, 4

• list item 1	• list item 5
• list item 2	• list item 6
• list item 3	• list item 7
• list item 4	• list item 8

Correct - use tables to structure data   *Incorrect - don't use tables to lay out content*

Developers of related site should use CSS to structure content. Editors of the main TEA website can use Ektron's image properties tool to align an image to the top right of the content area. This tool will automatically wrap text around your image.

Forms

Editors of tea.texas.gov are welcome to use forms to gather information from visitors; however, Ektron has specific requirements for interactive content. We ask that you contact Web Admin for help building forms.

Accessibility

Overview · Laws · Web · Documents

Accessibility Overview

Accessibility means providing equal access to information and services regardless of a user's physical or developmental abilities or impairments. Just as state agencies must provide wheelchair access to building entrances, we must provide electronic information resources that are accessible to everyone.

Who Benefits?

Accessibility laws are designed for people with disabilities, but they really benefit everyone. Accessibility makes documents easy to understand, applications more efficient, websites compatible with more devices and browsers, and information easier to find. Specific accessibility standards benefit:

- People who have difficulty using their hands
- People with intellectual disabilities
- People with blindness, low vision, or color blindness
- People who are deaf or hard of hearing
- The aging workforce

What is Covered?

All electronic information resources developed, procured, maintained, or used by the agency are subject to accessibility requirements. These resources include:

- Software applications
- Web sites and applications
- Audio and video
- Telecommunications products

The main TEA website, related sites, and anything posted to these websites, including Adobe PDFs, PowerPoint presentations, and Word documents must meet TEA accessibility standards.

Who Sets the Standards?

TEA uses accessibility standards developed by The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). These standards are commonly known as **WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) 2.0**. For more information about these standard, visit the WCAG 2.0 website.

Accessibility Laws

Both the federal government and the state of Texas have rules for electronic information accessibility. These laws require government institutions to provide electronic and information resources that are accessible to people with disabilities.

Federal Law

Electronic and information resource accessibility standards are defined in **Section 508 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act**. This law is in the final stages of revision, and will use WCAG 2.0 AA as its technical standard. TEA, therefore, requires that the WCAG 2.0 AA be used as the standard for new websites, new applications, and all redesigns.

State Law

As a state employee, you are required by law to ensure that any electronic information or technology resources you create or purchase will provide full access to agency information and services, as defined in the following statutes:

> ### ACCESSIBILITY LAWS
>
> *Federal accessibility regulations are outlined in Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.*
>
> *State accessibility laws are outlined in Chapter 206 of the Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 2054, Subchapter M of the Texas Government Code, and Title I, Chapter 213 of the Texas Administrative Code.*

- **TGC 2054.451**, enacted in 2005, requires that all state agencies and institutions of higher education provide state employees and members of the public access to and use of electronic information resources.
- **1 TAC 206**, aligns state web accessibility standards with the federal regulations set forth in Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
- **1 TAC 213** enacts state standards for procurement, development, or usage of EIR for people with disabilities and also aligns accessibility standards with the federal regulations set forth in Section 508.

Agency Policy

In addition to federal and state requirements, all electronic documents produced by or for TEA must meet the agency requirements outlined in TEA Operating Procedure 10-15. Note that in some cases you can apply for an accessibility exception.

Making Information Accessible

To meet accessibility standards, agency staff must provide employees and members of the public with disabilities "comparable access" to electronic information resources. Access must be:

- **Timely –** Information and data is available for individuals with disabilities at the same time as for individuals without disabilities.
- **Accurate** – Information and data reflects the intended meaning even when converted to other forms.
- **Complete** – No critical information or data is missing.
- **Efficient** – Information and data is as user friendly for individuals with disabilities as it is for users without disabilities.

Web Accessibility

The following requirements apply to tea.texas.gov and all TEA external sites:

Use of HTML

HTML is always the most accessible option. Whenever possible, create an HTML version of PowerPoint, Excel, and other non-html documents.

Semantic Markup

Developers of sites created for or in partnership with TEA should use semantic markup on all web pages.

Headings: Use headings to structure content and apply them hierarchically. Start with `<h1>` and use tags in order for lower degrees. Structure headers so that lower degree tags are contained within the headings of the next highest degree. Don't skip heading levels. The following is an example of a properly formatted hierarchy.

- Heading 1
  - Heading 2
    - Heading 3
    - Heading 3
  - Heading 2
- Heading 1

Use headings correctly. Don't use text formatting, such as larger fonts and boldface, to create the appearance of headings; use the actual header tags. Likewise, do not use headers for visual results only. Use CSS or the <strong> tag to add emphasis to text.

Lists: Use HTML tags (`<ul>`, `<ol>`, `<dl>`) to structure lists, not asterisks or ASCII symbols. Unordered lists should be used when there is no order of importance. Use ordered or numbered lists when list items need to appear in a particular sequence. Definition lists should be used explicitly for presenting a structure for definitions.

Keyboard Accessibility

People with visual and motor impairments may not be able to use a mouse to navigate a website or web application. These people use keyboards or assistive technologies, such as screen readers or airflow devices, that mimic keyboard functionality.

Keyboard accessibility issues to watch for include:

- **Focus indicators**: Sighted keyboard users need a visual indicator of what element currently has keyboard focus. Avoid turning focus indicators off using CSS.
- **Navigation order**: Structure source code so that navigation order follows the general flow of the page, left to right and top to bottom. If you want to change the visual presentation of the page, use CSS.
- **Scripted elements**: Content that is controlled by a script must be built to support keyboard accessibility. You can use Accessible Rich Internet Applications (ARIA) in your HTML to make your dynamic content more accessible to people with disabilities.

Use of Color

Accessibility standards require careful use of color in our web documents. This is to make sure that people who can't see the page and those with color vision deficiencies are still able to get the same information as those with normal sight.

- Ensure sufficient contrast between foreground and background colors.
- Do not use color as the only way to convey meaning.
- Do not use color exclusively to indicate numeric value.
- Do not use color alone to indicate required fields on electronic forms.

There are several resources available to help you test color for accessibility, including the WebAIM Color Contrast Checker. For additional resources, contact Web Admin.

Links

A web user should be able to access and select hyperlinks using only a keyboard. **Tab**, **Shift**, and **Enter** keys should be sufficient to navigate and activate hyperlinks. Avoid empty links (typically those that use a javascript event handler to trigger a dropdown menu) or provide an actual link destination that lists the same links that are available in the dropdown menu.

Use concise, descriptive link text that makes sense out of content. Phrases like click here are useless to people using screen readers. Links with text like Latest TEA News are much more accessible.

Images

Don't use images instead of text. Provide text alternatives for all non-text content:

- Use alt tags (`alt="image description"`) to describe images, icons, buttons, and image map hot spots. Use clear, complete descriptions, not just a word or two. For example, if you include an image of a chart depicting dropout rates, list all the chart details in the alt text, not just "chart of dropout rates."
- Hyperlink images also need alt text. This text should describe where the hyperlink will take the user.
- Use `alt=""` (a null alt tag) for images that do not convey content, are decorative, or contain content that is already conveyed.

Tables

Structure tables with screen readers in mind:

- Avoid using tables for layout.
- Include a caption and summary with your table. Developers of related sites should use the `<caption>` tag and the `summary` attribute of the `<table>` tag. Ektron editors can add a caption and summary from the **Accessibility** tab in Ektron's **Set Table Properties** tool.
- Use column and row headers. Developers of related sites should use the `<th>` tag for header cells and `<td>` for the remaining data cells. Ektron editors should specify the number of header cells in the **Heading Rows** and **Heading Columns** fields on the **Accessibility** tab of the **Set Table Properties** tool.
- Developers of related sites should use the `scope` attribute of the `<th>` tag to identify whether a table header is a column header or a row header.

Forms

There are many types of forms, and each have their own accessibility requirements. We recommend that you use **Adobe LiveCycle** to create forms that can be completed online. Adobe LiveCycle has built in features to enhance accessibility.

General accessibility requirements for all types of forms:

- Place instructions above the form, not below it.
- Provide a separate page for instructions when possible.
- Use actual form fields, not lines and boxes.
- Make sure form elements are labeled above or to the left of the form fields.
- Add help text to Word form fields.
- Group and label elements that have multiple options such as radio buttons and check boxes.
- Ensure that the forms can be completed using only the keyboard.
- Make sure the tab order is correct.

For a full list of LiveCycle form accessibility requirements, see **Appendix D**.

Multimedia Files

Under current Texas Law, you can post multimedia presentations and provide alternatives upon request. However, Federal 508 standards require captioning of videos.

TEA recommends you provide a transcript of all audio recordings and synchronized caption **and** audio description for video presentations.

Document Accessibility

In addition to websites themselves, accessibility laws apply to all electronic documents linked from websites. The accessibility requirements for non-html content are similar to those for html, but the means of meeting the requirements differ.

Microsoft Word

If possible, post a PDF version of your document in addition to or instead of the Word version. Make sure you've done the following before posting a Word document to the web:

- Give the page a correct title.
- Provide appropriate alternative text tags for all images.

- Structure pages with relevant headings using the heading styles rather than just changing font size and color.
- Control white space with styles rather than the enter key.
- Set up columns using the column tool, not tabs or spacing.
- Create lists with the list function, not with dashes or asterisks.
- If using a table of contents, create it using Word Table of Contents command, not by manually typing.
- Summarize graphs and charts with text descriptions.
- Make sure all information conveyed with color is available without color.
- Do use text boxes or Word Art.
- Make sure hyperlinks make sense when read out of context. Don't use "more info" or "click here."
- Create tables using the table tool, not tabs and spacing.
- Give data tables row headers and do not use merged cells.
- If you're working in Word 2007, add the bookmark **Title** to the cell where row and column headers meet, the bookmark **RowTitle** to any cell containing row headers, and the bookmark **ColumnTitle** to any cell containing column headers.

Excel

Excel documents are rarely accessible and are difficult to fix. If you need to post an Excel document, you should have an exception request on file. Otherwise create an alternative version, preferably in html. See **Appendix E** for a full list of Excel guidelines.

PowerPoint

PowerPoint is not accessible to users of screen readers. The best practice is to provide an HTML version in addition to or instead of the PowerPoint presentation. WebAim has a great tutorial on how to convert PowerPoint to HTML. Your PowerPoint presentation can also be saved as a tagged PDF if the original files is fully accessible. For a list of PowerPoint accessibility standards, see **Appendix F**.

More Information

Much more accessibility information is available on the iTEA Web Accessibility page. You can also contact Web Admin for help with accessibility issues.

Editorial Standards

Plain Language · Style Rules · Punctuation · Grammar

Plain Language

Plain language is communication your audience can understand the first time they read or hear it. Web documents written in plain language make it easy for users to find, read, and act upon information.

Plain language is not about dumbing down content. Dumbing down involves oversimplifying ideas or leaving out complex information thought to be too difficult for the reader. Rather, plain language is about identifying your audience and using language they feel comfortable with.

Plain language is also a requirement for federal agencies, and is the standard for TEA. All TEA web content must meet plain language standards before it's published.

The Plain Language Process

The process of writing content in plain language is not unlike preparing a research paper in high school; you have to research and organize your content first, then write and structure it, and finally review it.

Follow these steps when preparing content for the web:

Identify Your Audience

Who is reading your content, what do they already know, what do they need to know, and what do they want to do? Guide your audience from what they already know about a topic to what they need to know.

Use language that is audience appropriate. Content written for a general audience will require different language than content written exclusively for school administrators.

Organize Your Content

Organize your content with your audience's needs in mind:

- Introduce each page with a sentence describing the purpose of that page.
- Address separate audience groups separately. If you've got content about a new education law that applies to both parents and educators, write chunks of content for each audience, either as separate sections on a page or on separate pages altogether.
- Organize information in a logical order. We recommend that you use the

inverted pyramid method (See Page 19) – start the page with your main message and follow with supporting details and background information.

- If your content involves steps in a process, organize it **chronologically**. If it's a list of terms or links with no particular order, organize it **alphabetically**.

Write Your Content

Once you've got an outline, write your content using plain language techniques. Keep sections and sentences short. Use a consistent tone throughout your pages.

Because TEA's archetype is the mentor, we recommend an informal tone using personal pronouns to address the audience directly. We also recommend policy neutrality, which means you should avoid words that could be interpreted as biased. For example, say "reduced funding" instead of "slashed funding."

Design Your Content

Create a user-friendly layout:

- Separate sections with informative headings and subheadings.
- Keep content left-aligned and ragged right.
- Use bulleted or numbered lists.
- Use tables for tabular data.
- Include white space to improve readability.

Test Your Document

Test your document to make sure it is easy to read and complies with TEA's plain language requirements. Read your own document and have another person test it. Look for naïve readers as well as experts when you seek feedback.

Plain Language Techniques

Communications reviews all content for web publication and returns pages to the editor for revision when their pages don't meet plain language standards. Use the following writing techniques to avoid content rejection. A full PowerPoint presentation on plain language standards is posted on the Web Admin Sharepoint site.

Use Simple, Well-Placed Words

Simple words are understood quickly and easily. Anglo-Saxon words tend to be simpler than their Latin derivatives. Avoid jargon and bureaucratic expressions unless you're

quoting a citation or the content is legally mandated.

- **More complex**: This award was developed to afford an opportunity for school districts to recognize individuals who have been instrumental in improving education on their campuses.
- **Simpler**: The TEA developed this award to let school districts recognize people who have improved campus education.

See **Appendix G** for a list of simple word suggestions.

Eliminate Extra Words

Cut out wordy phrases, extra prepositional phrases, unnecessary adjectives, clutter words, and empty subjects.

- **Wordy phrases**: During the period when…
  Correction: When…

- **Extra prepositional phrases**: The opinion of the agency about the education of students in the state of Texas…
  Correction: The agency's opinion about the education of Texas students…

- **Unnecessary adjectives**: Plain language makes text very easy to read.
  Correction: Plain language makes text easy to read.

- **Empty subjects**: It is the policy of the TEA that an actual or suspected breach of confidential information must be reported.
  Correction: TEA employees must report an actual or suspected breach of confidential information.

Use Active Voice

Active voice sentences take the form subject-verb-object, describing who did what to whom. The object becomes the subject. With passive voice, the doer of the action (the usual subject) disappears, or moves to the end of the sentence in a "by" phrase.

- **Passive voice**: The school district **was visited** by the commissioner.
- **Active voice**: The commissioner **visited** the school district.

While we recommend active voice for most content, there are situations in which passive voice makes sense, such as when the doer is unknown or when the law is the doer.

> **Example**: The rule was repealed in 2009.

Use Present Tense

Present tense is the simplest form of a verb, and in most cases is the best option. Documents written in present tense are less complicated and easier for your audience to parse. Only use past tense or future tense when present tense could complicate your sentence.

- **Correct**: Applications are due in January.
- **Incorrect**: Applications will be due in January.
- **Correct**: Applications are due January and reviewed in February. TEA announces awardees in May (recurring event).
- **Correct**: Applications were due in January (single event).
- **Correct**: TEA will review applications in February (single event).

Avoid Hidden Verbs

Changing a verb into a noun hides the action and substitutes a weaker verb.

- **Hidden verb**: Let's make a **decision**.
- **Action verb**: Let's **decide**.

Break Up Noun Chains

Noun chains are strings of nouns that can make a sentence difficult to read. Reducing chained nouns can make your sentences longer, but your meaning will be clearer.

> **Chained**: This style guide illustrates noun chain reduction methods.

> **Unchained**: This style guide illustrates methods for reducing chained nouns.

Writing for the Web

People read differently online than they do when they read printed material. Web visitors generally have an objective in mind when they visit a web page, and do not have the time or inclination to read every word on that page.

On the web, visitors

- read more slowly,
- Scan the page rather than read every word, and
- Are focused on a task rather than an immersive experience.

Good web writing takes plain language a step further. Beyond organizing and simplifying your text, try to remove anything that isn't immediately important to your target

audience. Background on an education law might seem like useful information, but your visitors are more likely looking for what that law requires of them right now.

Web writing rules of thumb:

- Write a first draft and then cut it by one third. If you want to keep peripheral content like background information, put it at the end of the page.
- Stick to one main topic per page, and break that topic into individual ideas separated by concise, descriptive headers.
- Don't just front load the page, front load each section of the page. That means every chunk on the page should have its own hierarchy.
- Use links to direct readers to related information and source material.

Style Rules

The Texas Education Agency does not derive its style rules from any one style guide. Our main source is the Associated Press Stylebook, but we deviate from AP Style when a different rule improves clarity. The style rules below reflect what works best for TEA.

If your division has its own writing style guide, you can defer to that guide for print documents. Use this guide for any document published on the web.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations include acronyms, initialism, and abbreviated words.

Acronyms are words formed from the first letter of other words, for example, TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills). Acronyms are pronounced as words rather than separate letters.

An **initialism** is a term that is read as a sequence of letters, for example, TEA.

Abbreviated words are any word that is shortened from a longer word or phrase, for example, RSVP.

Spelling out Acronyms

Spell out acronyms on the first instance on each page unless the acronym is universally recognizable. Include the acronym in parentheses after the spelled out instance. See **Appendix H** for a list common TEA acronyms.

> **Example**: Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)

Punctuating Abbreviations

Most abbreviations are written without periods, particularly those pronounced letter by letter. Never use periods with acronyms, initialisms, or the names of laws.

> **Examples**: TEA; kg (kilogram); HR (house resolution)

'A' or 'An' Before Abbreviations

Use word sound rather than letter when choosing *a* or *an*. Use *a* if the abbreviation begins with a consonant sound and *an* if it begins with a vowel sound.

> **Examples:** A TEA policy (T consonant sound); An SBEC meeting (ess vowel sound)

Plural Abbreviations

Add an *s* without an apostrophe to uppercase abbreviations with two or more letters. Use an apostrophe with abbreviations that use a single letter or are lowercase.

- **Correct**: FAQs
- **Incorrect**: FAQ's
- **Correct**: She got straight A's.
- **Correct**: The first graders recited their abc's.

Possessive Abbreviations

Use an apostrophe before the *s* for singular and after the *s* for plural possessives.

> **Examples**: TEA's style guide; the CDs' contents

Months

Abbreviate January, February, August, September, October, November, and December when followed by the day or day and year. Spell out the names of months when they stand alone or are followed by only the year.

- **Correct**: Feb. 14, 2015
- **Incorrect**: February 14, 2015
- **Correct**: May 5, 2015
- **Correct**: The application is due in February.

Time

Use a.m. and p.m. to designate time and noon and midnight (not 12 noon or 12 midnight) for 12 p.m. and 12 a.m., respectively. Do not include o'clock with the time.

Addresses

Use abbreviations for street types (St., Blvd., Ave.) when giving a complete address. Spell them out and capitalize when part of a formal street name without a number. Spell out and lowercase when used alone or with more than one street name.

- **Correct**: 1701 N. Congress Ave.
- **Incorrect**: 1701 N. Congress Avenue
- **Correct**: Our building is on Congress Avenue.
- **Correct**: We have parking garages are on both Brazos and Colorado streets.

Unites States

Spell out United States when it's used as a noun and abbreviate it when it's used as an adjective.

- **Correct**: Education policy in the United States
- **Correct**: U.S. education policy

State Names

Spell out the names of states when you use them alone. Use postal code abbreviations when the state is part of a mailing address.

- **Correct**: TEA helps deliver education to more than 5 million Texas students.
- **Incorrect**: TEA helps deliver education to more than 5 million TX students.
- **Correct**: 1701 N. Congress, Austin, TX 78701

Titles

Abbreviate the following formal titles as shown: Dr., Gov. Lt. Gov., Mr., Mrs., Rep., the Rev., Sen.

> **Examples**: Gov. Greg Abbott, Sen. Kirk Watson

Abbreviate junior or senior after an individual's name. Do not precede this title with a comma.

> **Example**: John F. Kennedy Jr.

i.e. and e.g.

The Latin abbreviation e.g is short for *exempli gratia*, which means "for example." The abbreviation i.e. is short for *id est*, which means "that is." These two terms are often mistakenly interchanged. To avoid confusion, use the full English translation. If you do use these abbreviations, use a comma to set them off from the text that follows.

- **Correct**: Some content is exempt from our style rules, e.g., statutes.
- **Preferred**: Some content is exempt from our style rules – for example, statutes.

Academic Degrees

Academic degrees should include periods.

> **Example**: Ph.D.

Corporate Entities

Abbreviate company, corporation, incorporated and limited (Co., Corp., Inc., Ltd.) when used after the name of a corporate entity.

Capitalization

Proper names are always capitalized. Terms that provide context or additional description are generally lowercase. Never use all caps for any reason.

Names of Places

Capitalize a common noun or adjective that forms an essential part of a place name.

> **Examples**: City of Austin, State of Texas

Capitalize the name of a building or monument.

> **Example**: William B. Travis Building

Titles

Capitalize civil, military, religious, and professional titles when they immediately precede a person's name. Lowercase and spell out titles in constructions that set them off from a name by commas.

- **Correct**: Commissioner Mike Morath
- **Incorrect**: Mike Morath, Commissioner of Education
- **Correct**: Mike Morath, commissioner of education, approved three new charter applications this week.
- **Correct**: Mike Morath is the commissioner of education.

Do not capitalize titles that primarily serve as occupational descriptions.

Education-Specific Terms

For prekindergarten, Pre-K is acceptable on second reference.

Capitalize the name of a specific course.

> **Example**: Algebra I; Band II

Do not capitalize the name of an academic subject unless it is a proper noun.

> **Example**: science, math, English

Do not capitalize the word "grade" when it immediately precedes a grade number.

> **Example**: grade 8; eighth grade; 10th grade

Documents

Capitalize only the proper name of a document.

- **Correct**: Texas Constitution
- **Correct**: state constitution
- **Correct**: The constitution of Texas
- **Incorrect**: State Constitution

Capitalize the proper name of a legislative act. Lowercase the word *act* when it stands alone in subsequent reference to the proper name of a legislative act.

> **Example**: The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was signed into law in 1965 by President Lyndon Baines Johnson. Congress reauthorized the act in 2002, and President George W. Bush renamed it No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

Capitalize a word describing part of a document only when the word is followed by a designation.

> **Example**: Chapter 9; this chapter.

Web Page Titles and Headings

There are two types of capitalization commonly used for page titles and headings: **sentence case**, in which the first letter of the first word is capitalized, and **title case**, in which all major words are capitalized. Use title case for all web page titles and headings, according to the following rules:

- Capitalize the first and last words in the heading.
- Capitalize the first word after a colon.
- Capitalize all nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and adverbs regardless of length.
- Capitalize all verbs, including *is* and *are.*
- Capitalize the word *to* when it precedes a verb (to award, to review).
- Do not capitalize articles (*a*, *an*, and *the*) unless they begin the title or heading.
- Do not capitalize conjunctions that are four letters or shorter (*and*, *but*, *or*, *so*, *for*, *nor*, or *yet*).

Ethnic Groups

Capitalize only the name of an ethnic group. Do not capitalize a racial designation such as black or white.

> **Examples**: African American; Hispanic; Asian; American Indian

Funds, Plans, and Programs

Capitalize only the proper name of a fund, plan, or program.

- **Correct**: The Permanent School Fund was created by the legislature in 1854.
- **Incorrect**: The Fund was created by the legislature in 1854.

Governmental References

Lowercase federal, national, or state except with the word is part of a proper name.

- **Correct**: Texas graduation rates are higher than the national average.
- **Incorrect**: Texas graduation rates are higher than the National average.
- **Correct**: Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

Capitalize the official name of an organization, including a division within TEA, and the official name of a legislative or judicial body. Do not capitalize a generic term used to refer to the entity.

Official Name	Generic Reference
Texas Education Agency	the agency
Communications Division	the division
State Board of Education	the board
Committee on Instruction	the committee
Texas Legislature	the legislature
Austin Independent School District	the district
Region IX Education Service Center	the education service center

Capitalize the names of laws, acts, and historical epochs.

> **Examples**: House Bill 72; Paleozoic Age.

Note: On second reference of laws, you can use the abbreviated version: HB 72.

Publications

Use title case for all formal publication titles, but lowercase generic references to a publication.

- **Correct**: 2015 Customer Satisfaction Survey
- **Incorrect**: The 2015 Survey
- **Correct**: the 2015 survey

When referring to a numbered or lettered section of a publication, capitalize the word describing the section.

> **Examples**: Chapter 3, Appendix A

Internet-Related Words

There has been much debate about capitalization rules for internet-related words. Generally, if the word refers to a specific entity, it is a proper noun and should be capitalized. If it refers to a collection of things or is a generic term describing a technology, the word should be lowercase.

TEA's standards are based on ease of typing and ease of reading. In most cases, internet-related words can be left lowercase. Refer to this list for guidance:

- **internet** – While "the Internet" originally referred to a specific system of network, the term has come to describe a medium rather than a specific thing, much like "radio" or "typewriter."
- **World Wide Web** – This term is the proper name of a system of interlinked hypertext documents and is therefore capitalized. The Web is also capitalized.
- **website and web page** – These terms are both generic references and should remain lowercase. "Web" and "page" are still considered separate words.
- **email** – We no longer capitalize or hyphenate the "E" in email.
- **webcast**, **webinar** – These are generic references and should be lowercase.

Seasons of the Year

Do not capitalize a season of the year.

- **Correct**: School starts in the fall.
- **Correct**: She registered for the spring semester.
- **Incorrect**: She registered for the Spring semester.

Lists

Because the use of lists is prevalent in web writing and because lists have standards that span multiple grammar and style categories, we've grouped list rules together in this section.

Introducing Lists

Introduce lists with a sentence or phrase that clearly describes the information in the list. The list should still make sense outside of the rest of the page content.

When possible, use a complete sentence to introduce the list. Use a colon after the introductory text.

Top Browsers

The TEA website is most frequently viewed on the following browsers:

- Chrome
- Safari
- Internet Explorer 11
- Firefox

Without an introductory sentence, the example above is more difficult to interpret:

Top Browsers

- Chrome
- Safari
- Internet Explorer 11
- Firefox

What does "top browsers" mean? Is this a list of the most used browsers in the world across all user groups or are they the most used among a subset of all website visitors? An introductory sentence provides context for the list items that follow.

An exceptions to this rule is a list of links with a purpose that is clear in any context.

Texas Laws and Statues

- [Texas Constitution](#)
- [Texas Education Code](#)
- [Texas Administrative Code](#)
- [Texas Government Code](#)

Parallel Structure

Begin each list item with the same part of speech. If you begin list items with a verb, use the same tense in every list item.

Correct:

The primary responsibilities of the SBOE include:

- Setting curriculum standards (*gerund*)
- Reviewing and adopting instructional materials (*gerund*)
- Establishing graduation requirements (*gerund*)
- Overseeing the Texas Permanent School Fund (*gerund*)

Incorrect:

The primary responsibilities of the SBOE include:

- Setting curriculum standards (*gerund*)
- Reviewing and adopting instructional materials (*gerund*)
- Graduation requirements (*noun*)
- To oversee the Texas Permanent School Fund (*infinitive*)

Use **either** complete sentences **or** sentence fragments in your list. Do not use both in the same list.

Correct:

There are several ways to contact the Communications Division:

- Call us at (512) 463-9000. (*complete sentence*)
- Email us at webpostings@tea.texas.gov. (*complete sentence*)
- Visit us in person on the second floor of the William B. Travis Building. (*complete sentence*)

Incorrect:

There are several ways to contact the Communications Division:

- Call us at (512) 463-9000. (*complete sentence*)
- Email us at webpostings@tea.texas.gov. (*complete sentence*)
- In person on the second floor of the William B. Travis Building (*incomplete sentence*)

List Punctuation

Use periods at the end of list items that are complete sentences and no punctuation with items that are not complete sentences.

Complete Sentences:

TEA leadership includes both appointed and elected officials:

- The governor appoints the Commissioner of Education.
- Texas voters elect the 15 State Board of Education members.
- The governor appoints 11 voting members of the State Board for Educator Certification. The governor, the commissioner of education, and the commissioner of higher education also each appoint one non-voting member.

Incomplete Sentences:

TEA leadership includes:

- An appointed commissioner of education
- Fifteen elected members of the State Board of Education
- Fourteen appointed members of the State Board for Educator Certification

Do not use commas unless the list is a complete sentence broken into bullets for readability.

Example:

TEA leadership includes:
- the Commissioner of Education,
- the State Board of Education, and
- the State Board of Educator Certification.

List Capitalization

Capitalize the first word of each list item even if the listed items are not complete sentences. Lowercase the first word of each item if the list is a complete sentence broken into bullets.

List Order

When determining a list order, put yourself in the place of your readers and choose an order that would make the most sense to them.

Numbered Lists

If your list items follow sequential steps or indicate ranking, use a numbered list instead of a bulleted one. Don't use numbered lists if the order of list items is unimportant.

Example:

There are five requirements to become a certified teacher:

1. Obtain a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university.
2. Complete an approved educator preparation program. If you don't have a college degree, you must complete a university program. Otherwise, you can contact an alternative certification program or post baccalaureate program.
3. Pass appropriate teacher certification exams.
4. Submit a state application for certification. Do not apply until you have verified with your program that you are eligible.
5. Complete the fingerprinting requirement that is part of your national criminal background check.

Numbers

In general, spell out numbers below 10 and use numerals for numbers 10 and above, including ordinal numbers. Spell out any number that begins a sentence.

- **Correct**: On Wednesday the commissioner will meet with five school administrators and 20 teachers.
- **Correct**: Texas ranks third in 2013 graduation rates.
- **Correct**: Eleven student musicians performed at the state board meeting.

Very Large Numbers

Write numbers containing seven or more digits using numbers and words.

Examples: 1 million students, $50 billion.

Text With Three or More Numbers

If a sentence contains three or more numbers and at least one of those numbers must be expressed as a numeral, use numerals for all numbers.

Example: Last week, 5 districts, 20 campuses, and 3 charters closed due to flooding.

Percentages

Always use a numeral when writing a percentage, even if the number is below 10.

> **Examples**: 10 percent; 2 percent, 12%

In most cases, spell out the word "percent" following the numeral. Percentages in tables should use the % glyph.

Do not use a hyphen in a percentage that is being used as a modifier.

> **Example**: 3 percent gain

Write whole percentages without a decimal point. For percentages that require a decimal point, keep them to no more than four digits if possible. For amounts less than one percent, precede the decimal with a zero. Example: 0.621%.

> **Examples**: 8 percent; 15.63 percent; 0.621%

School Grades

If using ordinal numbers (first, second, etc.) to designate grade levels, spell out the ordinal numbers for grades below 10th grade. Use a combination of numerals and letters for grades 10 through 12.

> **Examples**: first grade; eighth grade; 10th grade; 11th grade

If using cardinal numbers (one, two, etc.) to designate grade levels, do not capitalize the word grade, and use a numeral.

> **Examples**: grade 1; grade 11

Year Spans

In general, when writing years, we prefer the form that uses four digits for the first year listed and four digits for the second year listed.

> **Examples**: 2013–2014 school year; 2012–2013 fiscal year

Dates

Use all four digits of a year; don't omit the first two digits.

- **Correct**: Class of 2015
- **Incorrect**: Class of '15

When writing decades, use four digits. It is not necessary to use an apostrophe before the *s*.

- **Correct**: 1990s
- **Incorrect**: 1990's

Avoid using ordinal numbers when writing a specific date, even if you would use an ordinal number when saying the date aloud.

- **Correct**: Please return the form by May 15.
- **Incorrect**: Please return the form by May 15th.

Use commas between groups of three digits, starting from the right, to show thousands, millions, etc. both in text and on graphs.

- **Correct**: There are 1,237 school districts in Texas.
- **Incorrect**: There are 1237 school districts in Texas.

Decimals

Use a zero before a decimal point if there is no value in the first place to the left of the decimal.

- **Correct**: District enrollment increased by 0.4 percent.
- **Incorrect**: District enrollment increased by .4 percent.

Use the same level of decimal places in a comparison.

- **Correct**: 2015 student enrollment by ethnicity was 29.0 percent white, 12.6 percent black, 52.0 percent Hispanic, and 6.4 percent other.
- **Incorrect**: 2015 student enrollment by ethnicity was 29 percent white, 12.6 percent black, 52 percent Hispanic, and 6.4 percent other.

Punctuation

This section provides guidance on using common punctuation marks.

Periods

Use a period in the following places:

- At the end of a declarative sentence
  Example: The Communications Division reviews web content.
- At the end of an imperative (command) sentence (a sentence with an implied subject of you)
  Example: If you have style questions, contact Communications.
- After an abbreviation if that abbreviation is pronounced like a word.

Use one space after a period or any other end punctuation.

Parentheses

If the content inside parentheses is a phrase, put the period outside the close parenthesis. If it is a complete sentence, put the period inside the close parenthesis.

- **Correct**: For help with this guide, contact Communications (or Web Admin for technical issues).
- **Correct**: Contact Communications for help with this guide. (You can contact Web Admin for help with technical issues.)
- **Incorrect**: Contact Communications (unless you need technical help.)

Lists

Use periods at the end of list items only if they form a complete sentence. See the List Punctuation section on Page 45 for more information.

Commas

Use commas to separate three or more items in a series. Include a comma before the final conjunction (*and*, *or*, *nor*) in the series. This punctuation is known as an **Oxford comma** or **serial comma**.

> **Example**: The SBOE will review algebra, history, and English textbooks at its next meeting.

Use a comma after introductory words, phrases, or clauses.

- **Example**: During the SBOE meeting, the board took comments from the public.
- **Example**: Although web content editors have rewritten most of their pages in plain lanugage, Communications will continue to review submissions.

Use a comma before parenthetical elements - words and phrases that add extra information to a sentence without altering its basic meaning.

When setting off parenthetical elements, keep in mind that *which* and *that* are not interchangeable. *Which* is used before parenthetical elements and is set off by a comma. *That* is used before clauses that cannot be removed without changing the meaning of the sentence.

Example: The SBOE, which meets quarterly, sets policies and standards for Texas public schools.

Example: The SBOE committee that deals with curriculum and instruction will meet next week.

Use commas to set off the date and year. Do not use a comma between the month and year when no specific date is given.

Example: The meeting will be held Jan. 15, 2007, in Austin.

Example: He started at the agency in October 1999.

In addresses, use a comma after every item except before the zip code.

Example: 201 E. 11th St., Austin, TX 78701.

Use a comma to separate a name from a title.

Example: Mike Morath, commissioner of education, approved three charter school applications this month.

Colons

Colons are used primarily to introduce a formal statement or a dialogue.

Example: After four years of teaching English, I have finally come to a conclusion: Students love writing essays.

Colons are also used to introduce a list at the end of a sentence.

> **Example**: The responsibilities of superintendents include the following: instruction, planning, staff development, finance, and community relations.

Use a colon after a complete sentence or fragment to introduce a vertical list that begins on a new line. Use a complete sentence before such a list whenever possible.

> **Example**:
> The responsibilities of superintendents include the following:
>
> * Instruction
> * Planning
> * Finance
> * Community relations

Semicolons

Use a semicolon in place of a period to separate two sentences where the conjunction has been left out.

> **Example**: The allotment for 2013–2014 was $41,306; the estimated allotment for 2014–2015 is $44,171.

to separate items in a list when the items contain internal punctuation

> **Example**: We received correspondence dated December 29, 2011; March 14, 2012; and April 30, 2012.

Use either a semicolon before introductory words such as *namely*, *however*, *therefore*, *that is*, *i.e.*, *for example*, *e.g.*, or *for instance* when those words introduce a complete sentence.

> **Example**: Students must pass three of five end-of-course exams to graduate; however, students must get a testing waiver if they fail to pass all five exams.

Use a semicolon to separate units of a series when one or more of the units contain commas.

> **Example**: This conference panel includes representatives from Boise, Idaho; Los Angeles, California; and Nashville, Tennessee.

Hyphens and Dashes

Hyphens, en dashes, and em dashes look similar, but they serve different purposes. Hyphens connect words, en dashes indicate a range, and em dashes set words apart. The following table demonstrates how to make hyphens and dashes in various contexts. The Windows alt codes will work in Ektron on a PC.

SYMBOL	NAME	WINDOWS	MAC	HTML
-	hyphen	-	-	-
–	en dash	alt + 0150	option + hyphen	–
—	em dash	alt + 0151	option + shift + hyphen	—

Hyphens

Use a hyphen in a compound adjective that appears before the noun it modifies unless meaning is clear without the hyphen and the hyphen will not aid readability.

- **Correct**: full-time employees
- **Correct**: high school students

Don't use hyphens in compound modifiers whose first word is an adverb ending in -ly.

- **Correct**: properly completed form
- **Incorrect**: properly-completed form

Use hyphens in the spelled-out forms of the numbers twenty-one through ninety-nine and in fractions, whether the fraction is used as a noun, adjective, or adverb.

> **Examples**: thirty-three; two-thirds majority

It is usually not necessary to use a hyphen after a prefix. (If in doubt, consult a dictionary.) However, do use a hyphen after the following:

- a prefix used before a numeral
  Example: mid-1990s

- a prefix used before a proper noun
  Examples: pre-Katrina mid-Pacific

- a prefix used before a hyphenated compound
  Example: non-English-speaking students

- a prefix that ends with an *a* when the word following it begins with an *a* or a prefix that ends with an *i* when the word following it begins with an *i*.
  Examples: semi-instructional purposes; extra-administrative duties

En dashes

Use an en dash between two numbers indicating a range, including years. Write years according to the form shown in these examples (four digits used for each year). Note: If you use the word from to introduce a range, do not use an en dash. Instead, use the word *to* or *through*.

- **Correct**: 2013–2014 school year
- **Correct**: The investigation lasted from 2010 to 2013.
- **Incorrect**: The investigation lasted from 2010–2013.

Em dashes

Use an em dash to set off text. Em dashes are frequently used in place of colons or semicolons to introduce a clause that amplifies what comes before the dash or to separate two related clauses.

> **Example**: This agency works with three entities—the commissioner of education, the State Board of Education, and the State Board for Educator Certification.

You can also use an em dash to set off an interrupting phrase or clause.

> **Example**: The three basic variables that influence funding—number of students, property values, and tax rates—are not likely to change.

Note: An en dash with spaces on either side is an acceptable substitute for an em dash.

Quotation Marks

Use quotation marks with direct quotes, to indicate a word is being used as a term (Italicizing the term is also acceptable), or to enclose the name of a part of a document.

> **Example**: "Across the board, student groups in the Texas Class of 2013 easily outpaced the national graduation rate of their counterparts in other states," said Commissioner of Education Mike Morath.

> **Example**: In this style guide, "we" means the Texas Education Agency.
> **Also acceptable**: In this style guide, *we* means the Texas Education Agency.

Quotes and Ending Punctuation

Ending periods and commas go inside the quotes, while semicolons and colons always go outside the quotation marks.

> **Example**: While this version of the report is referred to as "final," its figures may still change.

> **Example**: This version of the report is referred to as "final"; however, its figures may still change.

Questions, Exclamations, and Interruptions

When a question, exclamation, or interruption is part of the quotation, the punctuation goes inside of the quotation marks.

> **Example**: The senator asked, "How many Texas students graduated in 2013?"

When a question, exclamation, or interruption applies to the whole sentence, the punctuation goes outside.

> **Example**: Where do I find the subsection entitled "Before Submitting Your District's Application"?

Setting Off Quoted Text

Use a comma to set off quoted text when the quote is a complete sentence but omit the comma when the quote is a fragment.

> **Example**: The commissioner said, "Congratulations to all 2015 graduates."

> **Example**: The Student Heroes Award honors students who "display strong character and integrity by helping other students."

Block Quotes

When a quotation is longer than a text line or two, remove the quotation marks and indent the quoted text.

Symbols

In general, avoid the use of symbols, such as ampersands, asterisks, ellipses, or exclamation points, unless the symbol is part of an organization's name.

Grammar and Usage

Grammar is the system of a language. It describes how words, clauses, and sentences should be structured to convey meaning. Grammar can either be **prescriptive**, essentially a set of hard and fast rules, or **descriptive**, a dynamic set of conventions that describe how a language is constructed at that point in time.

Usage refers how people use words in every day speech and writing.

The grammar topics in this style guide do not fall entirely in one category or the other. Instead, we have established grammar rules we think will be the most accessible both to writers and to readers of TEA web content.

A vs. An

Use *a* when it precedes a consonant sound when spoken aloud and *an* when it precedes a vowel sound.

> **Examples**: a historic event; an honorable mention

Collective Nouns

Collective nouns are nouns that may be considered singular or plural depending on whether you are emphasizing the unit as a whole or the individual members of the unit. Some collective nouns are board, council, group, majority, number, and percentage.

- **Correct**: The committee disagree on the proposal. (*individual members*)
- **Incorrect**: The committee disagrees on the proposal. (*individual members*)
- **Correct**: The committee includes four members. (*group as a whole*)

If using a collective noun with a plural verb sounds awkward, consider changing the noun or revising the sentence. For instance, you might use the phrase *The committee **members** disagree* instead of *The committee disagree*.

If a collective noun is followed by the preposition *of* and a plural noun (*number **of** errors*), the article used before the collective noun determines whether a singular or plural verb is used. If *a* or *an* is used, use a plural verb. If *the* is used, use a singular verb.

> **Example**: A number of staff members are speaking at the board meeting;

> **Example**: The number of staff members at the meeting is surprising.

Data

Treat the word data as a plural noun.

> **Example**: The data show that the number of students graduating is increasing.

Ending a Sentence with a Preposition

It is acceptable to end a sentence with a preposition.

> **Example**: The board chair asked what the funds were used for.

Modifiers

A modifier is a word or phrase that modifies, or describes, another word or phrase.

Dangling

Avoid using dangling modifiers. If you begin a sentence with a modifying phrase, make sure the noun that follows it is what the phrase is meant to modify.

- **Correct**: To apply for the program, a district must submit an application.
- **Incorrect**: To apply for the program, an application must be submitted.

Placement Of

Place a modifier as close as possible to the word or phrase that it is modifying.

- **Correct**: The figures that you are interested in appear at the end of the report.
- **Incorrect**: The figures appear at the end of the report that you are interested in.

Parallelism

When forming a list of items in a sentence, make sure each list item are in the same grammatical form.

- **Correct**: The SBOE's responsibilities include reviewing curriculum standards, setting graduation requirements, and adopting textbooks.
- **Incorrect**: The SBOE's responsibilities include reviewing curriculum standards, setting graduation requirements, and to adopt textbooks.

This rule also applies to items in bulleted and numbered lists. See the Parallel Structure section on Page 44 for more information and examples.

Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that replaces a noun in a sentence. Pronoun types include:

- **Personal Subjective Pronouns** act as the subject of a sentence (*I*, *he*, *she*, *it*, *they*, *we*, and *you*).
- **Personal Objective Pronouns** act as the object of a sentence (*me*, *her*, *him*, *it*, *you*, *them*, and *us*).
- **Possessive Pronouns** attribute ownership to someone or something (*mine*, *yours*, *ours*, *theirs*, *his*, *hers*, and *its*).
- **Demonstrative Pronouns** identify and replace a noun (*this*, *that*, *these*, *those*, and *such*).
- **Interrogative Pronouns** are used to ask questions (*who*, *whom*, *which*, *what*, *whoever*, *whomever*, *whichever*, and *whatever*).
- **Relative Pronouns** link a clause or phrase to a noun or pronoun (*who*, *whom*, *which*, *whoever*, *whomever*, *whichever*, and *that*).
- **Indefinite Pronouns** do not point to any particular nouns, but refer to things or people in general (*few*, *everyone*, *all*, *some*, *anything*, and *nobody*).
- **Reflexive pronouns** end in *self* or *selves*. They are object pronouns that are used when the subject and the object are the same noun.

Pronouns can be tricky because there are so many types, each with its own set of standards for usage. The following rules cover the most common pronoun issues:

I or Me

There is some confusion about which pronouns to use when there are two subjects or two objects in a sentence, for example, *She and I spoke to the committee*.

The best way to figure out whether to use *I* or *me* (or *her/she* and *him/he*) is to write the sentence with one pronoun at a time:

- **Correct**: She will review all web content before it is published.
- **Incorrect**: Her will review all web content before it is published.
- **Correct**: I will review all web content before it is published.
- **Incorrect**: Me will review all web content before it is published.

Now put both pronouns back together in the sentence:

> **Correct**: She and I will review all web content before it is published**.**

Its vs. It's

While most possessives have an apostrophe before the *s*, pronouns do not. This rule can be tricky when it comes to the possessive form of *it*. Use *it's* as a contraction for *it is* and *its* when you want to demonstrate possession.

Possessive Adjectives vs. Possessive Pronouns

Possessive adjectives include *my*, *your*, *our*, *their*, *his*, *her,* and *its*. These are similar to the possessive pronouns *mine*, *yours*, *ours*, *theirs*, *his*, *hers,* and *its*, but they perform different functions. Possessive adjectives modify a noun that follows them.

> **Example**: *Her* speech was fairly short.

Possessive pronouns, on the other hand, refer to a previously named noun.

> **Example**: *My* (possessive adjective) speech was shorter than *hers* (possessive pronoun).

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

In most cases, pronouns refer to a noun mentioned earlier in text or conversation. This noun is known as an antecedent. Make sure pronoun and antecedent are either both singular or both plural.

- **Correct**: The *district* (antecedent) submitted *its* (pronoun) request last week.
- **Incorrect**: The *district* submitted *their* request in last week.

Which and That

Which and *that* are not interchangeable. Use the word *which* when you want to add information that is nonessential to the meaning of a sentence and *that* before clauses that cannot be removed without changing the meaning of the sentence.

- **Example**: The form, which can be submitted online, is due next week.
- **Example**: The form that is due next week can be submitted online.

Who vs. Whom

One of more confusing pronoun rules is whether to use who or whom in a sentence, but the difference between the two is pretty straightforward: *Who* always refers to the subject of a sentence and *whom* always refers to the object of a sentence.

The trick to remembering the difference is to first answer your question using *he* or *she* and *him* or *her*. If the answer is *he* or *she*, use *who*:

- **Answer***: He* submitted the form to human resources.
- **Question**: "*Who* submitted the forms to human resources?"

If the answer is *him* or *her*, use *whom*:

- **Answer**: We should submit the form to *her*.
- **Question**: To *whom* should we submit the form?

Shall

Avoid using *shall*. Use *must* to indicate an obligation.

- **Correct**: The district must submit its application before 5 p.m. on Friday.
- **Incorrect**: The district shall submit its application before 5 p.m. on Friday.

Split Infinitives

Split infinitives, separating *to* from its verb in an infinitive phrase, are perfectly acceptable in cases where not doing so would make a sentence awkward. You can also avoid the whole conundrum by rewording the phrase without the infinitive.

- **Acceptable**: To boldly go where no one has gone before...
- **Awkward**: To go boldly where no one has gone before...
- **Also Acceptable**: The starship Enterprise will boldly go where no one has gone before...

Appendices

Checklists · Accessibility · Simple Words · Acronyms

Appendix A

Content Maintenance Checklist

Just like any information resource, TEA web content needs to be kept up-to-date to remain useful. Everyone who creates content for **tea.texas.gov** or any **TEA-related site** should set a regular schedule for content maintenance. Use the following checklist when reviewing your content:

- ☐ Spell check your pages.
- ☐ Scan your text to make sure it still adheres to TEA editorial guidelines.
- ☐ Check hyperlinks and remove or update broken links.
- ☐ Remove NEW and UPDATED icons if content is no longer new or recently updated.
- ☐ Delete pages that are out-of-date.
- ☐ Check analytics for information on page views. Delete pages that get very little web traffic. If you cannot delete a low-traffic page, consider changing its location in our navigation or updating its text to make it easier for users to find and read the page.
- ☐ Delete links to outdated PDFs and other non-HTML documents and remove the files from Ektron.
- ☐ Review accessibility waivers and fix accessibility issues or renew expiring waivers.
- ☐ Keep pages reasonably short, ideally no more than a couple of pages when printed. If your pages have grown as content is added, identify logical break points and split your content into multiple pages at those points. Multiple pages are easier for visitors to navigate than single pages that are very long.
- ☐ Consolidate pages that duplicate information.

Appendix B

Ektron Content Checklist

Print and keep this checklist handy when you're writing web content for TEA websites. It includes all the requirements necessary to get your content approved for publishing. This checklist is primarily for people creating and updating pages in Ektron, but anyone writing content for TEA-related sites should adhere to these requirements.

Use the Concepts of Plain Language

- ☐ Avoid use of passive voice.
  Correct: "The staff is required to watch a safety video every year." (active)
  Incorrect: "A safety video will be watched by the staff every year." (passive)
- ☐ Avoid hidden verbs: "To trace the missing payment, we need to ~~carry out a~~ review ~~of~~ the Agency's accounts to gain an understanding of the reason the error occurred."
- ☐ Avoid unnecessary adjectives: ~~advance~~ planning, ~~end~~ result, ~~absolutely~~ necessary.
- ☐ Reword excessive prepositional phrases: "…was to explore the ~~leadership qualities of the~~ principals' leadership qualities."
- ☐ Use headings, subheadings and lists to break apart dense blocks of text.
- ☐ Use the simplest word for a concept, for example, *use*, not *utilize*.
- ☐ Use proper word order: subject-verb-noun.

Ensure content meets TEA standards

- ☐ Make short documents web pages rather than attachment files.
- ☐ Avoid text in all caps and long passages in bold or italics.
- ☐ Make the message simple.
- ☐ Make web page titles concise and descriptive.
- ☐ Start your page with a summary of the content it contains.
- ☐ Keep the most important content at the top of the page.
- ☐ In most cases, introduce lists of links with a brief summary.
- ☐ Spell out acronyms in first mention, except in page titles.
- ☐ Do not use underlines or italics for emphasis (exception: government code or legal documents that must stay true to the original document).
- ☐ Include the file type when a link points to a non-HTML document.

- ☐ Make sure important keywords appear in text.
- ☐ Open a new window for links that point to content external to the TEA site. Do not open other TEA website pages in a new window.
- ☐ Use the most current Associated Press rules (copy located in Communications) for grammar and spelling, with the exception of agency-specific rules.

Accessibility Requirements

- ☐ Use `alt=""` when graphic content is also repeated as text.
- ☐ Write descriptive text for the `alt` tag when graphics are not repeated as text.
- ☐ Always use table header tags (`<th></th>`).
- ☐ Use descriptive link text for hyperlinks: Texas Education Code, not "click here for the Texas Education Code."
- ☐ Do not use color as the sole method to convey meaning.
- ☐ Make sure all attachments and forms pass accessibility standards.

Ektron Usage Standards

- ☐ Place a short description of your content in the Summary tab.
- ☐ Provide information in the **Subject** and **Keyword** fields in the **Metadata** tab. Include program names and other keywords users might associate with this content.
- ☐ Use these same keywords in your web copy. Tell search engines exactly what your page is about.
- ☐ Use the **Comment** tab to describe page updates or to convey scheduling requests.
- ☐ Use tables to format tabular data, not to adjust page layout.
- ☐ Check your content for broken links before submitting.
- ☐ Do not use colors or styles that are inconsistent with TEA website standards. Absolutely no inline CSS styles.
- ☐ Size images to fit your template.
- ☐ Use keywords in your page titles.
- ☐ Use descriptive filenames for photos, PDF files, Word documents, PPT presentations, etc.
- ☐ Use the same name for attachment filenames and Ektron document titles.
- ☐ Use link text that matches the page title to which it links.

Appendix C

External Website Checklist

This checklist includes specific requirements for Texas Education Agency web properties produced by outside vendors.

- ☐ Include the TEA logo either in the header or the footer of your website or web application and link the logo back to tea.texas.gov.
- ☐ Use only approved logo colors and sizes.
- ☐ Avoid color palettes and web typography that are not consistent with the TEA brand.
- ☐ Include the TEA brand bar at the top of every page on your website.
- ☐ Include all state required links in the footer of your website.
- ☐ Follow best practices for page design – use chunking, headers, and white space to increase readability.
- ☐ Keep text left-aligned and avoid using italics for emphasis. Never use underlines for anything but hyperlinks.
- ☐ Check websites and web applications for compliance to Section 508 accessibility rules. Use Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 AA standards:
  - ◦ Provide text alternatives for non-text content.
  - ◦ Use semantic markup.
  - ◦ Make sure there is sufficient contrast between foreground and background colors.
  - ◦ Make all website functionality available from keyboard.
  - ◦ Make sure tables are accessible.
  - ◦ Caption all videos.
- ☐ Meet TEA plain language requirements.

Appendix D

LiveCycle Accessibility Guidelines

Accessible LiveCycle forms files must meet the following requirements:

- All images have appropriate text equivalents. This text is entered in the Custom Screen Reader Text area on the accessibility palette.
- The page is structured with relevant headings using the roles section in the accessibility palette.
- All information conveyed with color is available without color.
- Hyperlinks make sense when read out of context. There are no "more info" or "click here" descriptions.
- Tables are only used for data, not for formatting.
- Data tables have appropriate row and column headers.
- All form field cells in the table have Custom Screen Reader Text added. This is necessary because screen readers don't read table headers in forms mode.
- When possible, form instructions are on a separate page.
- Form controls have labels that identify what the form control represents. For most controls having a descriptive caption is sufficient.
- Text objects (not text fields) need to have a small read only text field without a caption added to the text object with custom screen reader text. This is because screen readers skip text only fields when in forms mode.
- Compound controls such as radio buttons and checklists have custom screen reader text that describes the object. This information is set in the accessibility palette.
- The default target Adobe Reader or Acrobat version is set to 7.0.5 or later. This is set in Form Properties > Defaults.
- The form is saved as a PDF form with accessibility tags. This is set in Form Properties > Save Options.
- The form is saved as a static PDF unless it has dynamic form controls.
- All form controls can be accessed using the only the keyboard.
- The reading and tab order are correct.

Appendix E

Excel Accessibility Guidelines

Accessible Excel files meet the following requirements:

- Each worksheet has a descriptive title on the tab.
- Each worksheet begins in cell A1.
- Help text is places in the first cell, A1, using an input message.
- All tables in a single worksheet begin in Column A.
- Tables do not contain any empty rows or columns.
- One empty row separates each table.
- There are no merged cells in any table or anywhere on the worksheet.
- All column headings are located in the same column as the corresponding data.
- All row headings are located in the same row as the corresponding data.
- Graphs and charts are created as separate worksheets.
- Color is not used as the sole means of identifying information.
- The first worksheet in a multi-sheet workbook contains a table of contents that includes the location of all tables, graphs, and charts.
- Named regions are used in tables to identify major sections of data and to provide other descriptive information.
- Text boxes are NOT used.
- The name **Title** is defined in the cell where row and column headers meet.
- The name **RowTitle** is defined in the cell range containing row headers.
- The name **ColumnTitle** is defined in the cell range containing column headers.
- Hyperlinks have titles describing the purpose and target of the link. There are no "more info" or "click here" descriptions.
- For public facing documents, save as version 97-2003.

Excel documents are rarely accessible and are difficult to remediate. If you wish to post an Excel document because you need to share it as a functional template, you should have an exception request on file. Otherwise you should have an alternative version available, preferably html.

Appendix F

PowerPoint Accessibility Guidelines

PowerPoint presentations that are posted on the web are not available to users who do not have the PowerPoint program unless they download a free viewer from Microsoft. If you post a PowerPoint presentation online, you must include the link to the plug-in.

PowerPoint Alternatives

When possible, do one of the following instead of publishing a PowerPoint presentation on your web page:

Convert to HTML

PowerPoint is not as accessible to users of screen readers as HTML. The best practice is to provide an HTML version instead of, or in addition to, the PowerPoint presentation. WebAim has a great tutorial on how to convert PowerPoint to HTML.

Save as a PDF

HTML is the most accessible option; however, PowerPoint can be saved as a tagged PDF. In order for the PDF to be as accessible as possible, the original PowerPoint presentation must be built using the guidelines below. See Convert Word or PowerPoint to PDF for specific information on how to save Microsoft documents as accessible PDF's.

Accessible PowerPoint

If you have to publish your presentation as a PowerPoint, follow these guidelines to improve accessibility:

- Content of the presentation should be clear and simple with clear uncrowded slides.
- Use a sans serif fonts of at least 32 pt. for live presentations. Studies have shown that these combinations improve readability for most audiences.
- Use the built-in slide layouts in PowerPoint. This ensures that the slides can be read by assistive technologies. Do not use blank slides.
- Check the outline view. Make sure that all relevant information in the presentation is in the outline view. Make sure the outline view has the correct reading order. The outline view is the order screen readers will read the presentation.
- All images must have appropriate alternative text tags ("alt") tags. For images that

are purely decorative, make sure there is no alternative text. Note: by default, PowerPoint will put the name of the source file in the "Alternative text" field. This field should be empty if the image is purely decorative.

- Tables and charts will not appear in the outline, and will not be read by screen readers. If the tables and graphics add to the understanding of the presentation, describe the image or graphic in the Notes Pane.
- Do not use text boxes or Word Art. Text boxes and Word Art act like graphics and do not show in the outline view. Instead, use the built in slide layouts. If you must use text boxes, add alt tags to them.
- Don't use color as the only way to convey information.
- Make sure that your text and background have high color luminosity contrast. See Color and Contrast for more information on color and luminosity contrast.
- Hyperlinks must make sense when read out of context. The purpose of each link should be able to be determined from the link text alone. There are no "more info" or "click here" descriptions.
- Minimize the use of animations and moving transitions in the presentation.
- Avoid using media in a presentation to be posted on the web. Most media files are not integrated into the presentation file and require a separate download. Media files also do not convert well to other formats such as text-only and PDF.
- Don't insert audio files without transcripts for the hearing impaired. Video files included in the presentation should have synchronized captions and should be audio described.
- Presentations posted on the web should be saved as a 97-2003 .ppt presentation. This will ensure that more users can view it. Do not password protect the file. Some Screen Readers cannot access password-protected files.
- Even if you have made the PowerPoint as accessible as possible, you still need to provide an alternative version. You can save a text version of the presentation, a PDF version, or convert the presentation to an HTML version.
- If saving as a PDF make sure it is saved as a PDF tagged for accessibility. If there are notes in the Notes pane, be sure to convert the speaker notes when saving.

Appendix G

Alternatives to Complex Words

The following table lists complex words and jargon frequently found in TEA web documents and suggests plainer alternatives. For a full list of complex words and their alternatives, visit the PlainLanguage.gov [simple words and phrases page](#).

COMPLEX WORDS AND JARGON	PLAIN LANGUAGE ALTERNATIVES
acquire	get
additional	more
adjacent to	beside
advantageous	helpful
advise	recommend, tell
anticipate	expect
ascertain	find out, learn
assist, assistance	help
at the present time	now
attain	meet
benefit	help
cognizant of	know
commence	begin, start
comply with	follow, meet
component	part
comprise	include
conceal	hide
concerning	about
consequently	so
consolidate	combine
constitutes	is, forms, makes up
convene	meet
disseminate	give, send

COMPLEX WORDS AND JARGON	PLAIN LANGUAGE ALTERNATIVES
due to the fact that	because
during the period	during
elect	choose
encounter	meet
endeavor	try
ensure	make sure
enumerate	count
equitable	fair
evidenced	showed
evident	clear
exhibit	show
expedite	speed up
expend	spend
expertise	skill, ability
expirations	end
facilitate	help
finalize	complete, finish
frequently	often
function	act, role, work
furnish	give, send
herein	here
heretofore	until now
herewith	below, here
impacted	affected, changed
implement	carry out, start
in a timely manner	on time, promptly
in accordance with	by, following, per, under
in addition to	also
in an effort to	to
in lieu of	instead

COMPLEX WORDS AND JARGON	PLAIN LANGUAGE ALTERNATIVES
in order that	for, so
in order to	to
in regard to	about, concerning, on
in the amount of	for
in the event that	if
inasmuch as	since
inception	start
incumbent upon	must
individual	person
initiate	begin, start
interface	meet, work with
it is requested	please, we request, I request
methodology	methods
modify	change
necessitate	cause, need
notwithstanding	in spite of, still
numerous	many
objective	aim, goal
obtain	get
parameters	limits
preclude	prevent
prior to	before
proficiency	skill
promulgate	issue, publish
provided that	if
pursuant to	by, following, per, under
regarding	about, of, on
renumeration	pay, payment
shall	must
solicit	ask for, request

COMPLEX WORDS AND JARGON	PLAIN LANGUAGE ALTERNATIVES
state-of-the-art	latest
subsequent	later, next
subsequent to	after
subsequently	after, later, then
sufficient	enough
therefore	so
therein	there
transmit	send
until such time as	until
utilize	use
validate	confirm
viable	practical, workable
warrant	call for, permit
whereas	because, since
with reference to	about
with the exception of	except for
witnessed	saw

Appendix H

Common TEA Acronyms

These acronyms are frequently found in TEA web publications. On first reference, spell out the full name followed by the acronym in parentheses. Use the acronym alone in all other references.

A

ADA – Average daily attendance

AEIS – Academic Excellence Indicator System

AMAO – Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives

AP – Advanced Placement

ASF – Available School Fund

ASKTED – Texas Education Directory

ATPE – Association of Texas Professional Educators

B

BTIM – Beginning Teacher Induction Mentoring Program

C

CCLC – 21st Century Community Learning Centers

CCSSO – Council of Chief State School Officers

CIS – Communities In Schools

CLEP – College-Level Examination Program

CSH – Coordinated School Health

D

DAEP – Disciplinary Alternative Education Program

DAP – Distinguished Achievement Program

E

EDA – Existing Debt Allotment

ELL – English language learners

EMAT – Educational Materials And Textbook System

ESC – Education service center

ESEA – Elementary and Secondary Education Act

ESL – English as a second language

ESY – Extended School Year

F

FASRG – Financial Accountability System Resource Guide

FERPA – Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

FIRST – Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas

FSP – Foundation School Program

G

GED – General Educational Development

I

IB – International Baccalaureate

IDEA – Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

IFA – Instructional Facilities Allotment

ISD – Independent school district

L

LEA – Local educational agencies

LEP – Limited English proficient

M

MOE – Maintenance of effort

MOU – Memorandum of understanding

N

NAEP – National Assessment of Educational Progress

NCLB – No Child Left Behind

NIFA – New Instructional Facility Allotment

O

OCR – Office for Civil Rights

OEYP – Optional Extended Year Program

P

PBMAS – Performance Based Monitoring Analysis System

PEG- Public Education Grant

PEIMS – Public Education Information Management System

PIA – Public Information Act

PID – Person Identification Database

PSF – Permanent School Fund

R

RFP – Request for proposals

RFQ – Request for qualifications

RFI Request for information

RFA – Request for application

RTI – Response to Intervention

S

SAI – Special Accreditation Investigation

SBEC – State Board for Educator Certification

SBOE – State Board of Education

SCE – State Compensatory Education

SHARS – School Health & Related Services

SIP – School Improvement Program

STAAR – State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness

T

TAC – Texas Administrative Code

TAKS – Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills

TANF – Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

TAPR – Texas Academic Performance Reports

TASA – Texas Association of School Administrators

TASSP – Texas Association of Secondary School Principles

TCDD – Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities

TCTA – Texas Classroom Teachers Association

TEC – Texas Education Code

TED – Texas Education Directory

TEKS – Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills

TELPAS – Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System

THECB – Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

TPEIR – Texas PK-16 Public Education Information Resource

TREx – Texas Record Exchange

TSBVI – Texas School for the Visually Impaired

TSD – Texas School for the Deaf

TSDS – Texas Student Data System

TSTA – Texas State Teachers Association

T-STEM – Texas Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Initiative

TxVSN – Texas Virtual School Network

U

UIL – University Interscholastic League

USDE – United States Department of Education

W

WADA – Weighted Average Daily Attendance