National **PTA**®

*every*child.*one*voice.®

Website Style Guide

A website is never done. It is a living document we will continuously tweak to enhance our brand as the #1 source for relevant information for children, their families and schools.

Our goal is to have our content consistent across PTA.org as we update our information and add new Web offerings for our members and other visitors. We also want to establish guidelines on how to update content on our website. This guide will help us achieve these goals and will be updated regularly.

Writing Content for PTA.org

Our content needs to be highly readable, so our members and other visitors can quickly digest the information. Make content easy to understand and scannable. Studies show that people only read about 28% of text on a webpage, so you need to make your point quickly. Here are some tips on how to do it:

- **Highlight key words:** Bold program or names or use hyperlinks
- **Clear sub-headings:** They break up the text
- **Use bulleted lists**
- **One idea per paragraph:** Keep it simple
- **Start with the conclusion:** Use the inverted pyramid writing style instead of telling a story
- **Say it with less:** Read the text and cut out unnecessary words. You can most likely cut it to half the word count.
- **Avoid "marketese":** Web users want the facts, not clever jargon or promotional prose.

Make a standard checklist for your updating process. Here is a sample list:
- Spellcheck
- Proofread
- Check links
- Confirm dates
- Verify spelling of names and places

(Source: Various research findings and suggestions by Jakob Nielsen, usability expert, useit.com/jakob)

Web Content Style

Refer to the National PTA Style Guide Quick Reference Sheet as a reference for detailed editorial style. In addition, for the website, we follow AP style.

Abbreviate states (in text, not for proper nouns):

Ala.	Md.	N.D.	Conn.	Mo.	S.C.	Ind.	N.J.	Wash.
Ariz.	Mass.	Okla.	Del.	Mont.	S.D.	Kan.	N.M.	W.Va.
Ark.	Mich.	Ore.	Fla.	Neb.	Tenn.	Ky.	N.Y.	Wis.
Calif.	Minn.	Pa.	Ga.	Nev.	Vt.	La.	N.C.	Wyo.
Colo.	Miss.	RI.	Ill.	N.H.	Va.			

Do not abbreviate Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas and Utah.

Buttons: You can insert a "Register" or "More" button independently in the File Management section of CMSPlus (see buttons Folder). If you need a special button, submit a web request to the Web group.

Cities: The following U.S. cities stand alone without being followed by the state:

Atlanta	Indianapolis	Phoenix
Baltimore	Las Vegas	Pittsburgh
Boston	Los Angeles	St. Louis
Chicago	*(or Hollywood)*	Salt Lake City
Cincinnati	Miami	San Antonio
Cleveland	Milwaukee	San Diego
Dallas	Minneapolis	San Francisco
Denver	New Orleans	Seattle
Detroit	New York	Washington
Honolulu	Oklahoma City	
Houston	Philadelphia	

Contact Information: Each page should contain a National PTA contact at the bottom following this format:

- Email National PTA at programs@pta.org for more information.
- For more information, contact Kisha DeSandies at kdesandies@pta.org or (800) 307-4782, ext. 1253.

Copyright: If you want to post/link a resource or article from another organization's website, get permission from the authoring body. To give full credit to the original author, cite and link them in a manner they request. In questionable instances, it is always safer to give credit and link back to the original author/content owner. This gives value and many times alerts the original owner to the use.

In most cases, because we are an educational nonprofit, we can gain permission in the category of "fair use or educational use" for no fee. Make sure your department head approves posting/linking outside content to PTA.org.

Date/Time: When using a month with a specific date, abbreviate only Jan, Feb., Aug, Sept, Oct., Nov. and Dec. Spell out when using alone, or with a year alone.

Example: 7 p.m., Wednesday, Dec. 20, 2013; December 2013

Documents: All PTA documents should contain the National PTA logo and follow the association's brand standards. Clearly name the file, so you can easily find it in the CMSPlus File Management section. Save documents in your department content folder. Please consider a standard file naming system for your department and revisions (version control).

Please do not post files larger than 2MB. We want our resources to load quickly for our visitors. You can reduce the size of a document by compressing the file or removing images. Contact the Web Group for assistance posting documents with large file sizes.

All documents should be converted to PDFs, unless the document is a template resource. For templates, highlight text (in yellow) PTAs can customize for their purposes. When saving an MS Excel or Word file, use the 97-2003 settings.

Font: Use the default "Font Family" and "Paragraph" for general body text. Use "Heading 2" for main headings and "Heading 3" for subheadings. The headings have preset colors. Do not use any color text, with the exception of red (#FF0000) for important notices.

Images: All images should be in .jpg or .png format. Sizing should not be more than 250 pixels wide. Typically, you do not need to include captions; however, you should provide alt tags for users who may not be able to view the image in their browsers. Contact the **Web Group** to create image banners, which are main photos for the top of a content webpage. Make sure you get permission to use personal images and images of children.

Numbers: For numbers one to nine, always use words; use figures for 10 and up.

Percent: Use the % sign instead of spelling out.

Spacing: There should be ONE space between sentences. You can quickly edit this in MS Word, by finding and replacing all instances.

Taxonomy: PTA's website content is categorized into 12 distinct topic areas. This is our taxonomy. When you categorize a content item, it will increase its searchability within PTA.org. It will also populate the Related Content & Resources section on content pages. PTA's content classification:

- About PTA
- Advocacy
- Arts & Education
- Conferences & Events

- Family Engagement
- For Parents
- Health & Safety
- Membership Tools

- Programs
- PTA Membership
- Support PTA
- Training & Resources

Writing Mode: Always write in third person in web content, except for blogs.

PTA Terms

- Use **Family Engagement**, instead of parental involvement.
- **Remove any references to PTOs** and instead use "unaffiliated parent groups" or "other parent groups"
- Do not use the abbreviation NPTA, **always reference us as National PTA**.

Web Vocabulary

- **Alt tags:** Alternative text that can be displayed instead of an image if a visitor to your website cannot view the images in their browser.
- **Anchors:** (also called jump links or bookmarks) Used to hyperlink two places on the same webpage or to the target of the hyperlink.
- **Application:** A highly programmable environment (website) that allows mass customization for users to fill out a form, purchase items, or conduct advanced searches.
- **Breadcrumbs:** They appear horizontally across the top of a web page, below the headers on content webpages. They provide a trail for the user to follow back to the starting or entry point.
- **Carousel:** The promotional rotating images on the PTA.org homepage.
- **CMS:** (Content Management System): A tool that allows you to make changes to Web site text and graphics easily, without the use of programming code.
- **Content:** The text and images that make up the information displayed on a website.
- **Dropdowns:** The content items listed in the menu below the headers on the PTA.org website.
- **Dynamic Content:** Content that is updated via stream or external service. For example, our Twitter feed in the sidebar of our interior pages is dynamic content.
- **Footer:** The section at the bottom of a web page. This often includes copyright information and some navigation links.
- **Header:** The top section of a website, which often includes the global navigation and dropdown content.
- **Hyperlink:** Linking text or graphics to another location so that when clicked, the user is directed to another area of the site or another site entirely.
- **Landing Page:** A single page website that lists minimal information about a company, such as contact information and single product information.
- **Navigation:** Sometimes referred to as a 'menu', navigation links let users move around your website. PTA.org navigation (and sub-navs) is on the left column of each webpage.
- **Pixels:** The basic unit of the composition of an image on a television screen, computer monitor, or similar display.
- **Redirects:** A short redirect link (e.g., pta.org/partnerships or /convention) that will immediately forward to the longer URL address.
- **Static Content Page:** Informative content that does not change over time and is (usually) available from a website's navigation, for example an About Us page is a typical example of a 'static content page'.
- **Taxonomy:** The process of organizing content into categories and subcategories, sometimes displayed in a site map.
- **WYSIWYG:** "What You See Is What You Get" is a system in which content (text and graphics) displayed onscreen during editing appears in a form closely corresponding to its appearance on a webpage.