



**ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION  
OF SCHOOL BOARDS**

*Lighting The Way To Excellence  
In School Governance*

# Style Guide

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Updated May 17, 2016

*<http://staff/Communications/style-guide.pdf>*

## Introduction

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This style guide is intended for use in all written materials prepared by employees of the Illinois Association of School Boards. We hope that it will be a useful resource when writing or editing content for publications and communications that are distributed to IASB members and other audiences.

This guide is neither exclusive nor comprehensive. There is no “official” IASB style that requires rigid enforcement or review. It is, as the title suggests, a “guide” to many common style and usage issues that you may encounter.

A variety of well-known sources were used to develop this guide and a list of those references is included here for those who want additional assistance. We also reviewed frequently published IASB materials to identify the most common style questions and issues. Current practices and preferences were also considered.

This guide should address most applications regarding IASB specifics, information standards, capitalization and punctuation, common words and phrases, citations and resources, and format and fonts. Where possible, the guide offers examples of do’s and don’ts, and the rationale for the preference. Updates will be made to this document as new questions arise and new mediums are added to our communications toolkit.

Staff members are encouraged to contact the IASB communications department with additional questions or suggestions. We are also available to review the content of any publication or communication prior to production or distribution.

James Russell  
Associate Executive Director  
IASB Communications and Production Services

**Note:** As IASB styles continue to develop, this document will be updated to include additional guidelines for specific executions throughout IASB communications. Please check the IASB staff website, under Production Services, for the latest version available.

## Using the IASB Style Guide

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**Who should use the style guide?** Anyone who writes anything for IASB.

**What is a style guide?** A common, agreed-upon set of guidelines for written communication. Many common words and phrases can be written in different ways and still be understood and correct (email, e-mail, or Email). Spelling and punctuation change over time as language develops. Different subject areas functionally require different communication styles (legal writing is different from magazine writing, which differs from a workshop flyer). Within IASB, we have departmental distinctions and personal preferences. A style guide distills these differences to ensure clarity, quality, and consistency.

**What is a style guide not?** It's not meant to dismiss a communicator's voice or diminish creativity. It's not being graded. It's not meant to complicate things, although it might seem to at first. It's also not a writing guide, but we have resources for that, too.

**When should I use the style guide?** Once you've familiarized yourself with the basics — and more importantly the style points you use frequently — use the style guide any time you are not sure about the correct capitalization, punctuation, grammar, format, word, phrase, etc. If you don't find the answer, email the communications department. We can find an answer and update the style guide.

**Why do we need a style guide?** To improve quality, consistency and clarity, both within a single document and across the Association. IASB writers are probably already doing most of this; this guide tackles tricky questions and puts everyone on the same page.

**How should I use the style guide?** We are more than happy to print you a paper copy for your reading pleasure. However, for maximum efficiency, refer to it online rather than on paper:

- A style guide is best used as a reference to find (Ctrl+F) the words you're looking for.
- Links throughout the style guide will provide specifics and/or take you to more information.
- The style guide will be a dynamic document. As new questions arise, titles are added, language evolves, or we simply change our minds, we will update the live document.
- Prose is typically paragraph writing, as in the *Journal* or a newspaper. In literature, the contrast to prose would be verse or poetry. But for IASB purposes, we occasionally make a distinction between prose and formatted publications such as workshop materials, flyers, infographics, etc.

### The Associated Press (AP) Style Guide is the starting point for IASB style.

We have AP Stylebooks available for reference in both offices.

Here is a good introduction to AP Style:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/735/02/>

You can always query anyone in the communications department.

Due to the nature of our work, not everything we do follows AP Style, which is one of the primary reasons we have this IASB Style Guide.

## IASB Specifics

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This is where, for the idiosyncrasies of our work, we deviate from AP Style. Note some IASB departments have different standards. When quoting, maintain the original format, and cite the appropriate publication.

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For clarity, we have chosen to use the Oxford comma, aka the “serial comma.” Here’s why:

~~I’d like to thank my parents, Ayn Rand and God.~~

I’d like to thank my parents, Ayn Rand, and God.

This week, he travelled to Vienna, Athens, Marseilles, Milan, and San Jose.

See the punctuation section for more on the comma.

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Joint Annual Conference is capitalized as a proper noun.

- Always capitalize Conference when referring to the Joint Annual Conference.
- For consistency, also capitalize Pre-Conference Workshop (referring to JAC)

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Capitalize the word Association, when referring to IASB.

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Always use “the” in front of the Illinois Association of School Boards. When referring to IASB by initials, omit the “the” unless IASB is a modifier.

~~How long have you worked for the IASB?~~

How long have you worked for IASB?

The Board of Directors adapted the IASB mission statement.  
(second “the” refers to mission statement)

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Lower-case the words school board, board of education, school district, unless part of full title.

She served 12 years on the Hillsboro school board.

He is a current member of the Sycamore CUSD 427 Board of Education.

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Use Title Caps for event titles, including panels, presentations, workshops, and programs:

General Sessions

Board Presidents’ Roundtable

Service Associates

Members Only (when referring to the website, note **no** hyphen)

Fall Division Dinner Meeting

Dinner Meeting

## IASB Specifics continued

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For pamphlets, brochures, panels, etc., for consistency and professionalism, we will use Title Caps for IASB personnel titles. In prose, maintain AP standards:

Barb Akew, a field services director, will lead the discussion. (prose)

Briefing for Candidates

This session will give potential first-time board members and overview of their roles ...

Chris P. Bacon, Field Services Director (this is from a flyer)

See the capitalization section for more on this.

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For IASB purposes, the correct title of each member school district is in the IASB Membership Directory. For clarity, when necessary, add the mailing location.

Rochester CUSD 3A

THSD 214 (Arlington Heights)

Arlington Heights-based THSD 214

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Regarding the “the,” not all publications – for better or worse – have a “The” in their title. When citing or referencing, include the “The” if it’s in the title, and italicize it as part of the title. If it’s not, leave it out.

*The Illinois School Board Journal*

*Illinois School Law Survey*

*The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*

*Death by Meeting*

*Foundational Principles of Effective Governance*

## Information Standards

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These are specific items, a mix of AP and IASB style, which we adhere to in IASB work.

<b>Academic year</b>	2014-2015
<b>Centuries</b>	1900s 21st century (Vision 20/20 capitalizes 21st Century Learning)
<b>Copyright</b>	<p>Everything we hand out or create at IASB is already “copyrighted.” But marking it with the © symbol creates notice to others that says “IASB owns this content, please ask to use it.” When generating content, ask “Will we be handing out material with ideas or other content that our department or IASB does not want stolen and/or used by another person or entity without our permission.” If the answer is yes, copyright materials like this:</p> <p>Copyright © 2015 Illinois Association of School Boards. All Rights Reserved.</p> <p>(You can find the © symbol in Word using Insert/Symbol, or by holding down the Ctrl and Alt keys and typing C. Holding down the Alt key while typing 0169 on the numeric keypad also works when using a PC.)</p> <p>If you have questions about whether or not to use a ©, ask your immediate supervisor or please call the Office of General Counsel.</p>
<b>Dollars and cents</b>	\$29.75      \$45      \$4 billion
<b>Numbers</b>	<p>Spell out one through nine. Use figures for 10 and above.</p> <p>Exceptions:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Use figures for ages: 5-year-old boy.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">For large numbers, use a figure followed by the word: 3 million, \$4 billion</p> <p>Use commas in larger numbers: 1,104 attendees, but not in addresses, years</p>
<b>States</b>	<p>Spell out Illinois in prose.</p> <p>Follow AP Style. Example: <a href="http://staff/Communications/state-abbreviations.pdf">http://staff/Communications/state-abbreviations.pdf</a></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Some cities, including St. Louis, do not require the state.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Some states, including Iowa, are spelled out in AP style.</p> <p>When referring to any town within Illinois, do not add Ill. or Illinois — it’s assumed. Use (Ill.) only if, in context, it would be unclear.</p>
<b>Phone numbers</b>	217/528-9688, ext. 1136
<b>Time of day</b>	<p>9:30-11 a.m. (do not use 00; do not use a.m. or p.m. twice, no spaces around the hyphen)</p> <p>9 a.m.-noon (lowercase noon)</p> <p>10 a.m.-3:45 p.m.</p>
<b>Time of year</b>	<p>Lowercase spring, summer, fall, winter</p> <p>Unless referring to a specific timeframe, as in Spring 2015 (note no comma)</p> <p>In most prose usage, spell out the month: The first meeting was held in October 2005. (note no comma)</p> <p>When writing a full date, punctuate: December 25, 2013</p>

## Capitalization and Punctuation (also see IASB specifics, above)

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### Capitalization

**Publication titles** – Titles include books and magazines, panels, presentations, workshops and programs, and subheads within any of the above.

Book and magazine titles are italicized.

Use Title Caps, which means capitalizing the first letters of the first, last words, and main words. Lowercase articles (a, an, the), prepositions (to, at, for) and most conjunctions (and, but, or).

*Foundational Principles of Effective Governance*  
Key Message #2: Abiding by the Majority Decision  
Fall Division Dinner Meeting  
Dinner Meeting

*Foundational Principles of Effective Governance* is singular and italicized when referring to the publication title. There is no “The” in the title.

*Foundational Principles of Effective Governance* is a helpful resource.

The title is capitalized, but **not** italicized, when referring to the principles themselves and is preceded with “the.”

When board members work through conflict, the Foundational Principles of Effective Governance help them make decisions.

**Personal titles** – For prose, when a person’s title comes before the name, it is capitalized. If not, then lower case. But for pamphlets, brochures, panels, etc., for consistency and professionalism, we will capitalize IASB titles.

IASB President Jane Smith attended the meeting. (prose)

Jane Smith is the president of the IASB Board of Directors. (prose)

Chris P. Bacon, field services director, will lead the discussion. (prose)

Discussion Leader: Chris P. Bacon, Director, Field Services (this is from a brochure)

Presenters: Victor E. Lapp, Consultant, Targeting Achievement through Governance, Illinois Association of School Boards, Lombard; Chris P. Bacon, Director, Field Services, Illinois Association of School Boards, Springfield (this is from a program)

**Acronyms and Abbreviations** – In prose, spell out on first reference, even IASB and JAC.

- Abbreviations are acceptable in a headline, but spell it out somewhere near the top.
- For IASB flyers or pamphlets, the official IASB logo with positioning statement is sufficient, and IASB is fine for all references.

A list of commonly-used acronyms and abbreviations can be found at:

<http://www.iasb.com/pdf/Acronymslist.pdf>

## Punctuation

Use one space after a period.

Do not tab to indent. Set your style to indent automatically.

**Commas** – For clarity, we have chosen to use the Oxford comma, aka the “serial comma,” which means a comma after the conjunction in a list of items.

Because we want to avoid constructions like this classic example:

I’d like to thank my parents, Ayn Rand and God.

And because we do a **lot** of writing like this:

This included school board members, superintendents, and principals from partner districts, community college leaders, mayors, municipal boards, police and fire chiefs, county officials, and state legislators.

Everything from capitalization to commas, styles to sources, and so much more is included in the style guide.

Use a comma with a conjunction between two independent clauses.

Some schools significantly outperform expectations set by their demographics, and some underperform, but no open-enrollment public school in Illinois can escape the reality of demographics determining academic performance.

Use a comma after introductory phrases:

Every other year, the Illinois Association of School Boards offers New Board Member Workshops.

Use a comma where it’s necessary for understanding and to avoid ambiguity:

~~Let’s eat Grandpa!~~      Let’s eat, Grandpa!

**Hyphens and Dashes** – A hyphen connects related words for clarity: president-elect Hyphens can be tricky. Please ask, or Google, or trust your editors. But generally, compound modifiers get a hyphen while nouns do not:

consensus building (noun); consensus-building (adjective)

An IASB policy consultant will work with your district to develop a new and **up-to-date** local school board policy manual. (hyphenate phrase when it precedes the noun it modifies)

A full maintenance policy service helps you keep your manual **up to date** with changes in law (no hyphens when the phrase functions as a predictive adjective coming after what it modifies, or functions adverbially)

**Goal setting** is important. Let’s do some **goal-setting** exercises.

Local boards can develop a community-based vision for their district.

To set off clauses in prose, when not using a comma, an em-dash (—) is called for and takes a space before and after. Find the em-dash in Word by using Insert/Symbol or on a PC by holding down the Alt key and typing 0151 on the numeric keypad.

Most people — school board members included — like cookies.

## Frequently-Used Words and Phrases

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- board/superintendent relationship (in this case, the slash is clearer than a hyphen)
- bylaws (no hyphen)
- chairperson or chair (not chairwoman or chairman)
- data is plural (Tip: Replace “data” with “the facts”)
- decision-maker, decision-making
- email
- extracurricular
- flier vs. flyer: AP says flier; IASB uses flyer more.
- fundraiser, fundraising (no hyphen)
- high school (two words, capitalized only if part of full title of school)
- Illinois Association of School Business Officials (Illinois ASBO) (~~IASBO~~)
- internet, (lowercase)
- Joint Annual Conference (JAC)
- netFORUM
- Nonprofit (no hyphen)
- Not-for-profit (hyphenated)
- online
- Policy Reference Education Subscription Service (**PRESS**)
- Pre-Conference Workshop (when referring to those at JAC)
- Publicly (~~publically~~)
- self-evaluation in general, but the title of the workshop is School Board Self-Evaluation
- social media (capitalize Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Google and even Googling)
- vice president (no hyphen)
- web, website (lowercase, one word)

## Citations and Resources

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When citing or otherwise crediting resources is necessary, IASB will use a modified APA style.

**We will modify APA style by using full names, as a courtesy to our resources (many of whom are people we know).** When in doubt, use formal APA citation style:

[www.easybib.com/reference/guide/apa/general](http://www.easybib.com/reference/guide/apa/general)

### Resourcing a book:

James B. Fritts (2012). *Essentials of Illinois School Finance, A Guide to Techniques, Issues and Resources*, Sixth Edition. Springfield, Ill.: IASB.

### Resourcing a periodical:

Glenn Wood and Thomas Hernandez (March/April 2015). “Connecting Common Core with the community.” *The Illinois School Board Journal*, p. 12-16.

### Resourcing a website:

Illinois State Board of Education. (2015, March). Illinois school finances continue to show impact of economic downturn and fewer state education dollars. Retrieved from ISBE website <http://www.isbe.net/news/2015/mar19.htm>

When listing resources, use APA style if applicable, and if listing links, offer a brief description.

## Notes on Format and Font Styles

Note some IASB departments have different standards. When quoting, maintain the original format, and cite the appropriate publication.

<b>Emphasis</b>	<p>Best practice is to choose words that do the emphasizing for you.</p> <p>But where you need more emphasis, <b>bold</b> is fine if used consistently.</p> <p>Consistently use your standard font for content, and if necessary use bold for headings and subheadings, and indents, rules and spacing to make difference sections stand out.</p> <p>Do <b>not</b> underline for emphasis (underlining has come to indicate links).</p> <p>Do <b>not</b> use all caps for emphasis.</p>
<i>Italics</i>	<p>We italicize website links in print, publication titles, and long quotations.</p>
Quotations	<p>Italicize a long quote (and use quotation marks). Credit the quote at the end, right justified, with an em-dash.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“The Board delegates authority to the Superintendent to manage the district and provide leadership for the staff. Such authority is communicated through written Board policies that designate district ends and define operating parameters.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">— <i>Foundational Principles of Effective Governance</i></p>
Bullet Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use standard word processing software bullet points (shown here). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ To achieve this, highlight the text to be bulleted and then choose the bullet option.</li> <li>○ Add tabs and/or change list level accordingly.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Punctuation in bullet points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When introducing bullet points, do not use a colon unless the introduction is a complete sentence. Do not use ellipses.</li> <li>• Always capitalize bullet points.</li> <li>• End punctuation for bullet points is recommended as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Use no punctuation if it is a link such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Names</li> <li>▪ Items</li> <li>▪ Links</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Use a semicolon if the full list reads like a complete sentence; and</li> <li>○ Use a period if any bullet point is a complete sentence.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Different bullet formats may work best in different documents, so whatever you choose, use it consistently throughout the document.</li> </ul>
Outlines	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Use standard word processing software outline points (shown here) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) To achieve this <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) highlight the text to be outlined, then choose the first outline option.</li> <li>ii) Add tabs and/or change list level accordingly.</li> </ol> </li> <li>b) Technically <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) if you have a 1) you have to have a 2)</li> <li>ii) and if you have an a) you have to have a b), etc.</li> </ol> </li> </ol> </li> <li>2) An outline that lists dozens of levels might need restructuring.</li> </ol>

## Identity Standards

### Logo

Any reproduction of the IASB logo must be consistent with the [IASB Logo Guidelines](#).



The approved colors for the IASB logo are Pantone 2945 (blue) and Pantone 122 (gold, flame only). In addition to blue and gold, IASB's logo may be reproduced in all blue, in black, or reversed out of a solid background (white). Optimum is the official IASB logo font.

Solid Blue (Pantone 2945)



Black



Reverse



### Color Palette

	Pantone	Process	RGB
	PMS 2945 C	C 100 M 52 Y 2 K 12	R 0 G 84 B 159
	Web	006699 (websafe)	
	Pantone	Process	RGB
	PMS 122 C	C 0 M 14 Y 80 K 0	R 252 G 212 B 80
	Web	Ffcc66 (websafe)	

Note: The colors displayed in this document may not be accurately represented due to varying monitor, printer, hardware, and software configurations. (PMS codes are registered trademarks of Pantone, Inc.)

## Typography

Optimum is the official typeface for the IASB logo and is used within IASB’s official identity materials including business cards, letterhead and envelopes. It may be used sparingly in IASB collateral print materials, as to not dilute the IASB logo. It is best suited for titles, headlines, callouts and/or sidebars — it is not ideal for the main body text.

Optimum Regular

**Optimum Bold**

*Optimum Italic*

The default font for the IASB website is Verdana.

If you are creating a document that doesn’t require design and typesetting by the production services department, here are some recommended font choices:

<u>SERIF FONTS</u>	<u>SANS SERIF FONTS</u>
Times New Roman	Arial
Garamond	Calibri
<b>Georgia</b>	Gill Sans
	Verdana

*“The best font choices are the ones where the reader does not notice the font, but the message”.*

– Urbanfonts.com

A word of caution: If you plan to share your document with other users, or if you will need to open it on another computer, be careful of the fonts you choose. Use a common font available in both the Mac and Windows operating environments, such as Arial, Verdana, Georgia, and Times New Roman. This helps ensure the characters in your document will appear the way you want.

Here are additional fonts commonly seen on IASB printed materials:

Helvetica – Narrow	Caslon 224 Bk – Regular
Helvetica – Medium	<i>Caslon 224 Bk – Regular</i>
<b>Helvetica – Bold</b>	<b>Caslon 224 Bk – Bold</b>
Castle T – Regular	ITC Souvenir – Light
<b>Castle T – Bold</b>	<i>ITC Souvenir – Demi</i>
	<b><i>ITC Souvenir – Demi Italic</i></b>
Gill Sans MT – Regular	<b>Minion – Bold Cond</b>
<b>Gill Sans MT – Bold</b>	Minion – Regular
	<i>Minion – Italic</i>
<b>Sans Black Condensed</b>	<b>Minion – Bold</b>
	TRAJAN

Font consistency is an important visual cue that reinforces our brand. While there are a variety of decorative fonts to choose from, keep legibility in mind. Here are some best practices:

- Try to keep all text fonts at a size of 8-12 points.
- Don't use too many fonts. Using too many typefaces (combined with different sizes, weights, and styles) creates a chaotic look.
- Choosing one serif font and one sans serif font is an effective way to bring contrast to your work. Select one for the body text, the other for heads, subheads, and supporting material. You can also add contrast by using variations of the same font (bold, italics) for headlines and subheads.

### Serif vs. Sans Serif

Generally, serif fonts have been perceived to be more readable, particularly in large blocks of printed text, because it's thought that the serifs help the eye move along more quickly. The simple lines of sans serif fonts are thought to make text more legible in small sizes or on computer screens, but can work just as well in print.



## Email Signatures

Email signatures should comply with the styles set in this document. While we italicize (not underline) email addresses and websites in print, it is okay to use the web-standard format when writing for websites and email (underlined and hyperlinked).

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#### SAMPLE EMAIL SIGNATURE FORMAT

**Terra Dactyl**  
 Style Goddess  
 Illinois Association of School Boards  
 2921 Baker Drive  
 Springfield, Illinois 62703-5929  
 217/528-9688, ext.1104  
[www.iasb.com](http://www.iasb.com)

## Mission and Vision Statement

In 2014, the IASB Board of Directors adapted the IASB mission statement to the following:

**The vision** of the Illinois Association of School Boards is excellence in local school board governance supporting quality public education.

**The mission** of the Illinois Association of School Boards is to *Light the Way* for its members by developing their competence and confidence through a robust toolkit designed to build excellence in local school board governance, including

- Premier training experiences;
- Networking opportunities for mutual support;
- Valuable benefits, pooled services, information, and expertise;
- Advocacy on behalf of public education; and
- A platform for a strong collective voice on common interests and concerns.

Whenever possible, the complete mission and vision statement should be incorporated on printed material, as displayed in this document (note the use of bold, italics and bullets). Size and space limitations will determine when it is appropriate to use the shorter format (vision statement only). In cases where only the vision statement is used, like on the back of your business cards or in prose, the first two words do not need to be bolded.

## Links and Style Resources

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### IASB

- This style guide: <http://staff/Communications/style-guide.pdf>
- AP Style state abbreviations and city exclusions: <http://staff/Communications/state-abbreviations.pdf>
- IASB and ISBE abbreviations: <http://www.iasb.com/pdf/Acronymslist.pdf>
- IASB Letterhead Formatting Standards: <http://staff/production/graphic-standards-letterhead.pdf>
- IASB Logo Use Guidelines: <http://staff/production/Logo%20Guidelines.pdf>
- IASB Membership Directory: <http://www.iasb.com/directory/>

### External

- AP Style Guide starting point for basics and common usages: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/735/02/>
- APA style for resources and citations: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/05/>

### Further reading for grammar geeks:

- <http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/grammar-girl>
- <http://www.dailywritingtips.com/7-grammatical-errors-that-aren%E2%80%99t/>
- <http://www.grammarly.com/blog/2015/what-is-the-oxford-comma-and-why-do-people-care-so-much-about-it/>
- <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/language-blog/>

### Further reading for font fanatics:

- <http://writingspaces.org/wwsg/serif-and-sans-serif-fonts>
- <http://www.urbanfonts.com/blog/2013/02/serif-vs-sans-the-final-battle/>
- <http://www.comicsanscriminal.com/>
- <https://designschool.canva.com/blog/typography-mistakes/>

### Microsoft support:

- Change or set the default font: <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Change-or-set-the-default-font-20f72414-2c42-4b53-9654-d07a92b9294a>
- Change a theme and make it the default: <https://support.office.com/en-in/article/Change-a-theme-and-make-it-the-default-c846f997-968e-4daa-b2d4-42bd2afef904>
- How to add a custom dictionary in Word: <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/322198>
- Best practices for working with Windows: <https://support.office.com/en-za/article/Best-practices-for-working-with-Windows-b58519e8-6ac8-4609-8785-3d0434d16afa>

### Logos and art:

- Facebook logos and other assets and how to use them: <https://www.facebookbrand.com/>
- Twitter brand assets and guidelines: <https://about.twitter.com/press/brand-assets>
- Using the YouTube logo: <http://www.youtube.com/yt/brand/using-logo.html>
- Finding free stock images: <https://designschool.canva.com/blog/free-stock-photos/>
- Color tips: <http://www.creativepro.com/article/10-color-tips-graphic-designers>