

# Website Style Guide

JANUARY 2017

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## Overview

The purpose of the Plano ISD website is to promote the district's mission, while serving as an educational and informative resource for our primary audiences: students, staff, parents, community and beyond. The reliance of our audiences on the website as a credible source of information for the district's programs, services and activities means we must ensure our site is a timely and relevant communication tool.

This guide provides everything you need to create professional and consistent web pages, while effectively maintaining the Plano ISD brand.

## Content

Website content should provide visitors with accurate and timely information about the relevant school or department. While being aesthetically pleasing helps people's enjoyment of the website, most visitors are seeking quick access to information. Be sure to prominently display contact information and timely documents as appropriate.

## Accessibility

In 1998, Congress amended the Rehabilitation Act to require Federal agencies to make their electronic and information technology accessible to people with disabilities, including visual, nervous system and physical impairments. Inaccessible technology interferes with an individual's ability to obtain and use information quickly and easily. In 2005, the Texas Legislature passed House Bill 2819, which extended this federal law to include state agencies, and other state-funded entities. Note: the ADA stipulates that federal and state funding may be withheld from institutions that fail to adhere to its rules.

Although there are many requirements, the easiest way to comply with Section 508 is to:

- Avoid text and images that blink, flash, scroll, or move in any way. Moving items may have adverse effects on people with visual disabilities and may also conflict with screen readers. Blinking images/text can trigger epileptic seizures. The Photo Gallery app provided through Schoolwires is acceptable.
- Include alternate text or descriptions on all images. This allows screen readers to read the description of the image to the user.



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- Avoid low contrast text. Images and text must appear at a high contrast so that persons with color blindness and other visual impairments are able to view information. Example: do not place yellow text on a white background.
- Make link text descriptive. Make your links as descriptive as possible so your users know where they will go when they click. Avoid using phrases like “Click Here” as links. See “Links” below for further information.

## Maintenance

Content maintenance is the responsibility of the individual teacher, department or school. Often, the frequency of updates is determined by the information itself; some content may need to be updated yearly, while other information may require weekly or monthly updates. It is the content editor’s responsibility to update the content as soon as a need is identified.

## Safety

For the safety of all Plano ISD staff and students, do not publish the following information on the web:

- Personal contact information of staff or students, including home address, phone numbers personal websites and social networking sites.
- Student’s photo or school related work if a release form has not been signed by a parent or guardian. If you are unsure, verify with the student’s school if they have a form on file. Office managers have access to this student information.

## Appropriate Content

Plano ISD is a public institution; therefore, content editors must be very careful to avoid including inappropriate content in their pages. Appropriate links are those that are relevant to the subject matter and enhance the users’ experience. Links to sites/pages outside of the Plano ISD website should be avoided or approved by appropriate district personnel.

## Political Lobbying

The use of a webpage for political lobbying activities is prohibited. Engaging in political fundraising or other political activities is also prohibited. Web pages must not contain political or lobbying messages

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and should not link to sites with similar messages. This includes PTA and booster club pages when opinions by its members are expressed toward district policies, actions and/or personnel, including action items being considered by the board of trustees.

## Commercial Use

Plano ISD web pages may not include advertisements or links to commercial websites or to non-profit websites containing advertisements. Avoid compiling and publishing lists of “helpful links” to any website outside of Plano ISD (including nonprofit) as the content on these pages may be construed as an endorsement by our district. These sites may also contain links to commercial services. Visitors have access to a variety of search engines for this purpose. Exceptions to this recommendation exist and are applied, as needed, by the appropriate service department.

## Objectionable or Abusive Material

Web pages may not include access to or contain any objectionable, obscene, defamatory, abusive, profane, sexually oriented, threatening, harassing, offensive or illegal material.

## File Naming

Broken links and missing images on the web are often due to misnamed files; when naming files, avoid using capital letters, spaces between words, and special characters. Underscores and dashes are acceptable characters and can help manage files with long names (e.g., example\_filename.pdf or example-file.doc).

## Page Formatting

### Templates

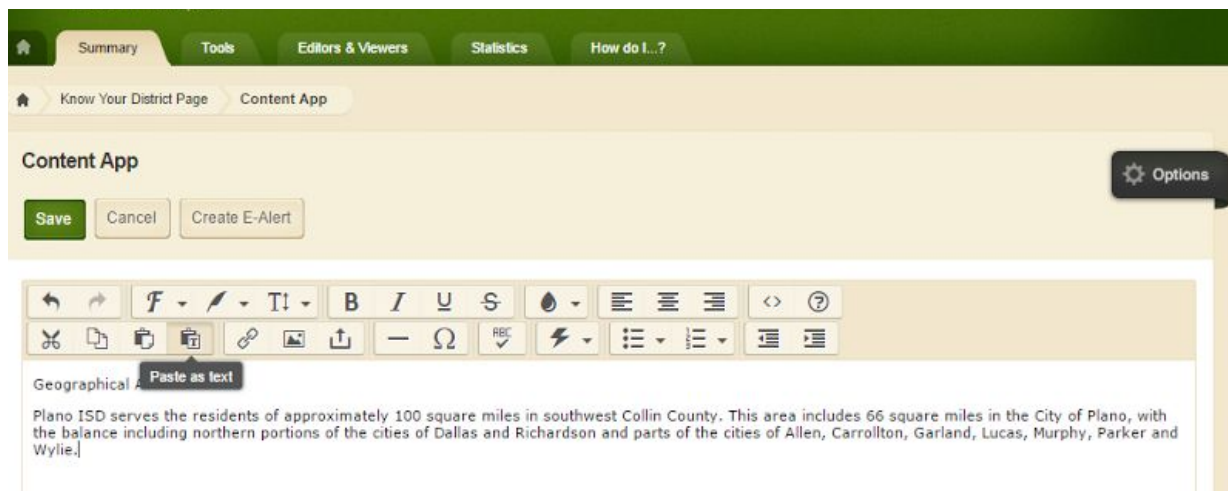
The Plano ISD website uses a stylesheet—a set of instructions that helps manage the way text displays on a website—to ensure that all pages are created using similar fonts and styles. While many font choices, sizes, styles and colors are available, users are encouraged to **maintain template defaults**. It is a goal to keep the style sheets as clean as possible and to maintain consistency between all pages on the site.

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## Typography

- In most cases, **avoid using ALL CAPITAL LETTERS**. All caps are difficult to read and often have the negative connotation of “yelling.”
- Avoid centering text. It is difficult to read in paragraph format. Set your text flush left.
- In most cases, avoid using the underline text formatting feature. Users may assume underlined text is a broken link. Italicizing is a better option for emphasis, book titles, etc.
- If you copy and paste text, the preferred method is to use the “paste as text” menu option in the content editor. This method will retain the default font and size and will deter unwanted formatting issues.

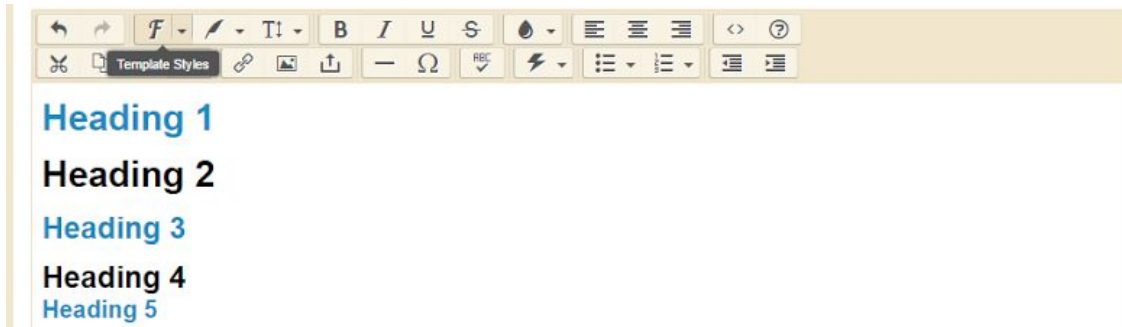


## Headings and Text

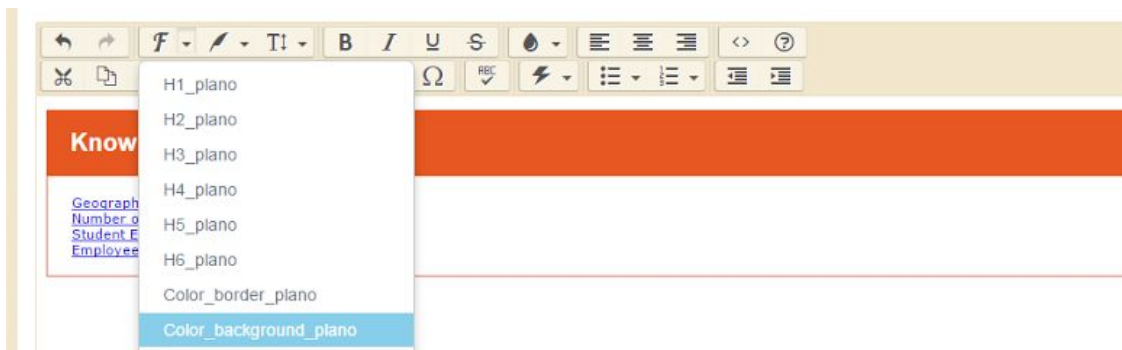
Set text and headings flush left. Use the styles provided to display text as desired. Your page should have a main heading which utilizes the Heading 1 style. In most cases, the Heading 1 style will be used only once on your page. All subsequent headings should step down in heading styles as appropriate. Be consistent so that like headings receive the same treatment. Note that using headings correctly is important for accessibility. Screen reader programs may use heading type (Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.) as part of the information communicated to users requiring this assistive access. Headings should divide the content to make it more easily understood; thus headings are not used just for aesthetic purposes.

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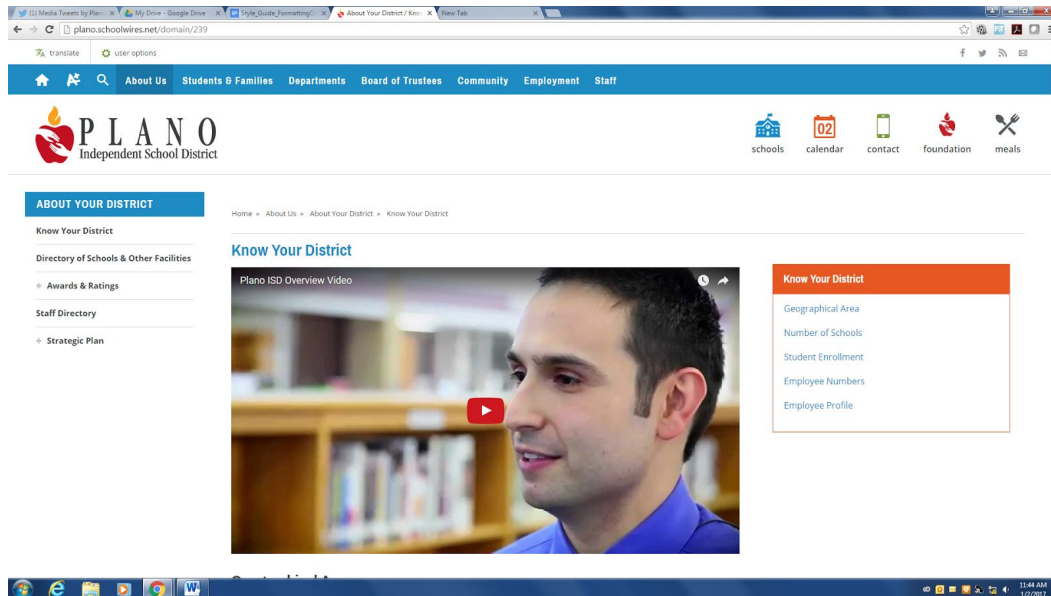
Do not change the font sizes or colors. These are determined by the stylesheet and should be changed using the template options. It is important that the colors chosen allow viewers to read the text (e.g., white text on yellow background may not be readable on all devices or by screen readers). The template takes such readability into account, which is another reason to rely on the template defaults. The template provides options for text with either color backgrounds or color borders. These are built into the template and can be used for emphasis or aesthetic as needed. Template options have been tested for accessibility helping to fulfill our legal obligation as described on page 2 of this guide.



The Color\_border and/or Color\_background styles would be appropriate for a shortcut list or other call-out feature.

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## Backgrounds

Background text is easier to read when it is black on a white background. Color backgrounds may not print well. Avoid placing text on patterned backgrounds. Use color sparingly to emphasize or highlight your material. Large documents or important information should be black on a white background. This will improve readability, works best for printing and allows for the best resolution for accessibility for users who require this assistance to access the web content.

## Colors

Please limit the number of colors used in Site Settings. The colors should coordinate with district or school colors (or related school/department logos).

## Links

Make your links as descriptive as possible so your users know where the link goes. Avoid using phrases like "Click Here" as links. This practice is not Section 508 compliant.

Examples - CORRECT: Registration form (hyperlinked) INCORRECT: Registration form click here

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When possible, indicate to users:

- That links to other sites are provided for information only and do not constitute endorsements of those other sites.
- When they are leaving the website to go to a linked site.
- What information is available at the linked site.

Due to the high turnover of websites and pages, it is recommended that links be checked quarterly to every six months. Content editors are responsible for periodically:

- Re-evaluating the appropriateness of links to other sites.
- Checking the functionality of links and removing or correcting broken links.

## Document Format Types

To share documents with the public, save in PDF format (portable document format) rather than the native format. PDF is a universal format and is available for free on all devices. PDF documents are generally smaller in size and will take less time to open. The public is unable to easily alter the content on PDF documents. Avoid linking to documents in Word, Excel, Powerpoint, etc. as not everyone has devices with access to these programs. Please note that pdf documents must be accessible prior to posting on the website. This means that documents, such as a Word or PowerPoint document for example, need to be saved to pdf rather than printed to pdf and that documents which are scanned are not allowable unless inclusive alt tags are provided that would allow screen readers to inform the user of the content. All graphic elements—photos, clip art, any non-text item - need to have “alt tags” included. Alt tags are a brief written description of a graphic element, allowing the visually impaired to discover what which would otherwise not be accessible to them in a photo or graphic. More information on creating accessible pdfs and alt tags is available in this guide.

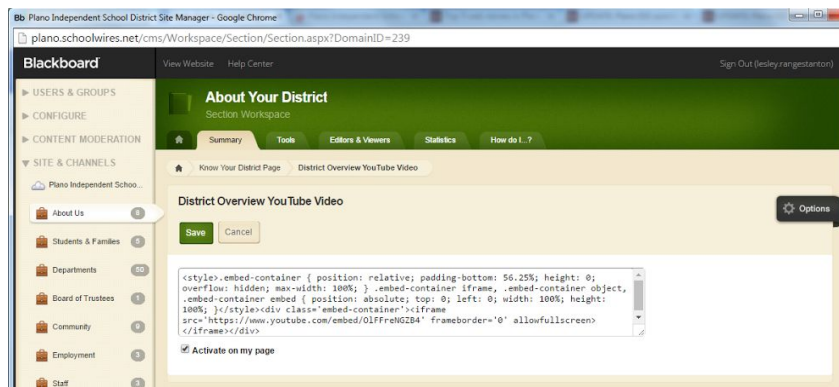
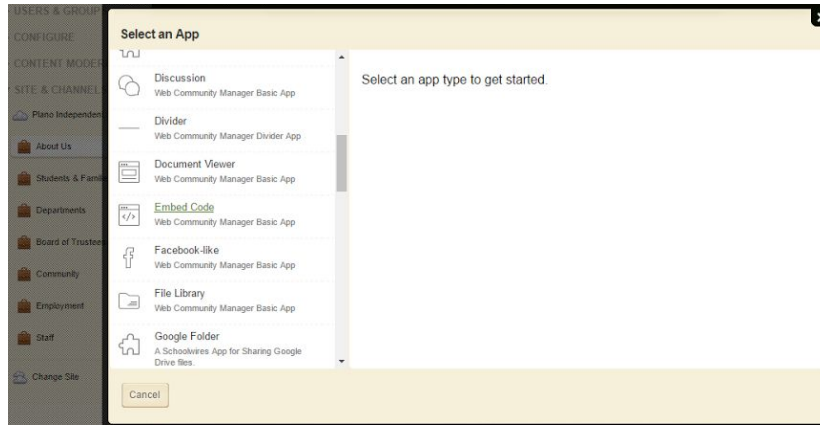
## Embedding Videos

Videos hosted on third party sites such as YouTube and Vimeo can be included on your page using the embed code from the host site and pasting it into an “Embed Code” app that you include on your page.



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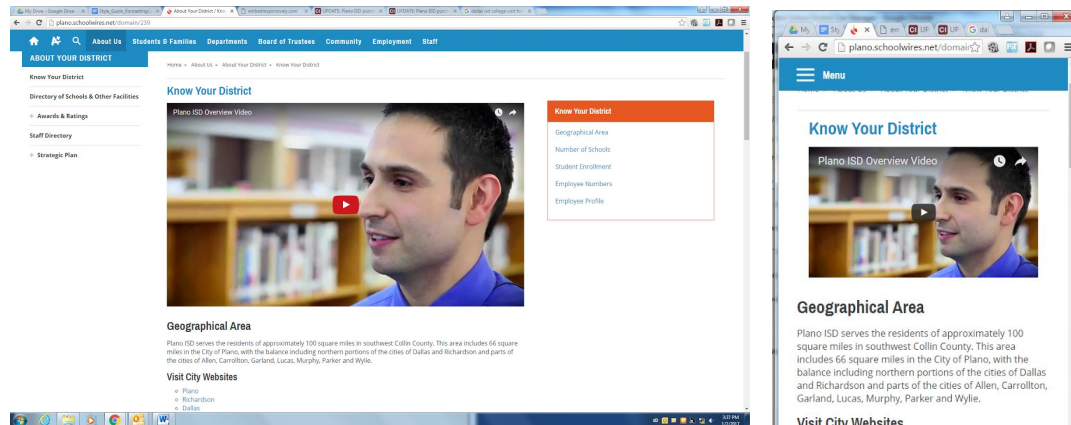
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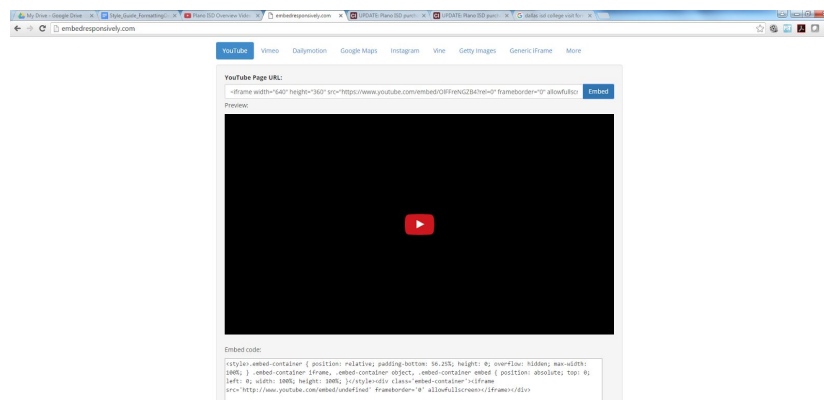
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The website, [www.embedresponsively.com](http://www.embedresponsively.com), will convert your YouTube or Vimeo embed code to be responsive, meaning the video width will automatically adjust to your desktop or mobile screen size.



Closed Captioning is available through Youtube, to assist our deaf community with accessibility.



## Images and Graphics

Photographs used on web pages for Plano ISD should reflect the district's diverse, vibrant community and should integrate with text to provide an accurate representation of the institution or program. Images are an excellent way to manage your content, add visual interest to your web page and clarify concepts. The focus of your web page should be your content, so use and select your images wisely. Remember, images should enhance your website. Photos of actual Plano ISD students and staff are preferred. Graphics such as clip art should be used sparingly.

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Image rotators (photos or graphic elements that rotate automatically) are only located on the district, department or school home pages and should contain three to five images at one time. These images may link to other pages within the website. The sizes of the rotators are:

- Large home page image rotator – 1500 x 915 pixels
- Small home page image rotator – 1123 x 618 pixels
- Headline accent images (Regions C, F & H) – 587 – 486 pixels

When selecting images, consider using the following:

- A close up photograph of a teacher or student(s). (Subjects of photographs wearing bright colors are the most effective and subjects should not wear clothing that advertises a product or brand other than Plano ISD. Make sure all students have signed publicity releases on file.)
- A landscape shot that shows students studying or enjoying school.
- An image of a building or a close-up of a building feature, such as a distinctive window or architectural element.
- Use high-quality images. Images can be used at their original file resolution. However, photo dimensions will need to be edited and cropped to fit the space allotted on the page.

Online photo editing software:

- Pixlr.com – free
- Schoolwires
- Photoshop
- Photoscape
- Canva.com – free
- Fotor.com – free
- Picmonkey.com – free
- Photoshop Elements (Windows & Mac)
- Paint Shop Pro (Windows only)
- Pixelmator (Mac only)
- Affinity Photo (Mac only)

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*(The communications and instructional technology departments do not provide technical support for photo editing.)*

If you are experiencing problems sizing or cropping an image, <http://pixlr.com> is recommended.

- On the Pixlr website, choose the *Express program* option.
- Click *Browse* and open your image.
- Click *Adjustments* and then *Resize*
- In the little box at the bottom, put in the width (do not enter height).
- Make sure the toggle for *Keep Proportions* is turned on (blue).
- Hit *Apply*
- Click *Crop* and input your image dimensions.
- Drag the box to the position on the photo that looks the best.
- Hit *Apply* and then *Save*.
- The image should be sized correctly and ready to upload to the photo gallery app.

## Technical Specifications

To ensure continuity and efficient use of size, as they relate to images, the following guidelines are recommended:

- **Image size:** No image should contain a physical measurement greater than 450 pixels wide. All images should be optimized for the web with a resolution of 72 dpi (dots per inch), which is the accepted standard for web development.
- **Image File Names:** Image file names should be descriptive, such as “asstprincipal.jpg.” File names should not contain spaces. A dash (-) or underscore (\_) should be used in place of a space. Note: ALT tags must be used on all images.
- **Image File Format:** All images used on the web should be either .gif or .jpg files. Generally, .jpg should be used for photographs and .gif for simple line art or graphics containing fewer colors such as logos.
- **Landscape:** Make sure the subject matter fits the shape of the photo. Do not try to fit a horizontal photo into a vertical shape or vice versa.

Any questions should first be directed to the website director(s) at your school, who are responsible for maintaining your website.



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## Releases & Permissions

Always make sure that a student's photo or work can be used on the website. Verify with front office staff at the student's school that a signed parental photo release form is on file allowing the district permission to publish a student's photo. Use only the student's first name when listing him or her on the website unless you have permission to use the complete name more common in secondary grades. Also, be sure to ask employees for permission before placing their photo online.

## Editorial Style Guide

In an effort to maintain a consistent style and image throughout the website, please use the following best practices when writing your webpage. If you have a question that is not answered below, contact the website director(s) at your school, who is responsible for maintaining your website.

**Abbreviations/acronyms:** If an abbreviation or acronym is widely known, such as SAT or ACT, it is acceptable on first reference. Otherwise, it should be spelled out on the first usage, and can be abbreviated thereafter.

**Academic degrees:** Use an apostrophe in bachelor's degree and master's degree, etc. but there is no possessive in Bachelor of Arts or Master of Science. Abbreviations such as B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. are also acceptable.

- When listing more than one academic degree or certification, begin with the highest level of education completed and list in decreasing order. Certifications may be listed following academic degrees.

**Awards:** Award placement should be spelled out: "third place" not "3rd place".

**Building names:** Use the correct building names, ex. Administration Center not Administration Building.

**Comma in a series:** Use commas to separate elements in a series, but do not put a comma before the conjunction in a simple series. A, B and C, not A, B, and C.

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**School names:** When a school is named after a person, use only the person's last name. Schools may use the full name of the person in the header on their school home page. Always capitalize the name of a school. Acceptable uses:

- Williams High School
- Williams HS
- WHS

**Dates:** Always use Arabic figures, without st, nd, rd or th.

- ✓ The winter holiday begins on December 19. (correct)
- ✗ The winter holiday begins on December 19th. (incorrect)

**Days of the week:** Always capitalize the days of the week and do not abbreviate.

**Months:** Capitalize the names of the months. When a phrase lists only a month and a year, do not separate the year with commas. When a phrase refers to a month, day and year, set off the year with commas. Examples: January 1972 was a cold month. He was born on Feb. 14, 1987.

**Departments:** Do not capitalize the word "department", "board" or names of departments.

**Email:** The "e" in email is lowercase and the word is not hyphenated.

- Email addresses: Use all lower case letters when writing an email address and always use the @pisd.edu domain name, i.e. firstname.lastname@pisd.edu

**Job titles:** Capitalize a job title if it comes before their name in a sentence but not after.

**Plano Independent School District:** The formal name is the Plano Independent School District; however PISD and Plano ISD are acceptable. The Plano Independent School District may also be referred to as the "district," but should not be capitalized. For example: The purpose of the Plano ISD website is to promote the district's mission. Do not use Plano I.S.D. or P.I.S.D.

**Numbers:** Spell out numbers from one through nine and when a sentence begins with a number. Use figures for 10 and above: ninth-grade, 10th grade, 11th grade. But use all numbers in mixed situations (5 out of 10 students). Numbers over a million may be rounded off.



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**Phone numbers:** Use parentheses around the area code and a space after the close parentheses; use hyphens not periods to separate the digits, i.e. (281) 634-1000.

**Room names:** Room names do not need to be capitalized, ex. board room or conference room.

**Students by Grade Number:** Use ninth-graders rather than ninth graders. When speaking about more than one grade, hyphenate as follows: “All fourth- and fifth-grade students...” Grades 10 and higher should use numerals rather than being spelled out, e.g., 10th-graders.

**Times:** Use figures except for noon and midnight. Use a colon to separate hours from minutes and put a space between the number and a.m. or p.m.

- Use p.m. or PM (a.m. or AM); either capital letters or periods are needed. Be consistent and do not mix formats on one page.

**Website:** Website is one word and begins with a lowercase w, unless it appears at the beginning of a sentence.

**Years:** Use a hyphen to separate the years: “2016-2017 school year.”

List multiple years as “2000-08” and always start with the earlier year: “1990, 2012, 2017”.

*An online version of this guide is available at [www.pisd.edu](http://www.pisd.edu). This guide will be revised periodically as needed, and updates of the guide will be made as warranted. Last updated: January 2017.*