



Guide on the Side

Style Guide

color

COLOR



When using colors not specified by the Guide on the Side software, use these.

text

When formatting body text, follow these guidelines.

Use the default fonts for headings, body text, etc. When in doubt, use Helvetica/Sans Serif/Arial family fonts.

Use **bold** to emphasize keywords or concepts that are core content (e.g. vocabulary that will be part of the self-check or ideas that the user must have mastered in order to meet the tutorial objectives). Use a definition box to define vocabulary.

Use *italics* for journal titles, book titles, documentary titles, program names, database names, and website titles.

Use “double quotation marks” for journal article titles, chapter titles, the titles of articles or posts on a website, and direct quotations.

Use ‘single quotation marks’ to identify text that appears on a website or piece of software. So, for instance, tell the user to click on the ‘File’ menu or the ‘Next’ button. Always include the button label when describing a button: “Click the orange ‘Search’ button at the top of the page” rather than “Click the orange button at the top of the page”

In general, put concluding punctuation inside quotation marks. When this introduces ambiguity or confusion, place concluding punctuation outside quotation marks. For instance, if a user must type an exact phrase, place the concluding punctuation outside of the quotation marks.

Use the Oxford comma: “apples, pears, and avocados.”

Use a single space after a period.

writing

There are several guidelines for the actual textual content on each slide:

Avoid idiomatic expressions or technical diction, except where this technical diction is core content for the Guide or where knowing it is necessary to the use of the tool

Avoid contractions.

Avoid unnecessarily complex grammar.

Be sure that there is an obvious main idea on each slide.

Be as concise and clear as possible.

directions

When giving directions:

Address the user in the imperative case: for example, you might tell the user to “Click on the link”, “Find the author’s name”, or “Type the name of the article in the search field.”

When this is not possible, use second person address. For instance, rather than writing “In order to select the advanced search, I will click on the ‘builder button,’” write “In order to select the advanced search, you will click on the ‘builder button.’”

Describe actions in adequate detail that someone who is not looking at the software, website, article, or program would be able to follow the directions at a later time.

Break tasks into discrete steps.

Use images to illustrate written directions, not as a substitute for them. Do provide images for important buttons or icons.

unordered lists

Bullets are usually better than paragraphs. In order to keep bullets well-organized and consistent across tutorials, follow these style guidelines:

Use circular solid black bullets for unordered lists. This is the default style in the Guide on the Side software.

Capitalize the first letter of each bullet point unless the bullet points form a complete sentence when taken together.

When listing content using bullets, terminate each bullet with a period only if the content for that bullet point is a complete sentence; if the content for the bullet point is a phrase or keyword, do not use a terminal period. If some points in a list are complete sentences and end in periods, try to use parallel construction to make all points on that list complete sentences.

Keep phrases in bullet points brief.

Avoid using more than four or five bullet points per slide.

When possible, introduce bullet points with a phrase that describes the bullets that will follow (like “In order to ... guidelines:” above). Follow this phrase with a colon.

chapters

In order to avoid overwhelming users, it is generally best to minimize content on each page. As a consequence, a single sequence of tasks may span across several pages. One good way to approach this is to communicate a single task, skill, or idea per page.

Whenever possible, group related pages together into a single chapter.

So, for instance, if you are creating instructions for using the “builder search” on APA PsycNET, you will probably have several pages for each of the discrete tasks that need to be undertaken, but all of these pages will be part of a single chapter called “Using the Builder Search.”

Introductory Slide

The purpose of the introductory slide is to make the tutorial seem inviting and easy to use by introducing the basic content or skills covered and connecting this basic content to knowledge the user is expected to have mastered or understood before undertaking the tutorial.

The bottom of the introductory slide should include the logos.

concluding slide

Before advancing to the quiz, provide the user with a concluding slide that serves the following purposes:

Summarize the main skills or concepts just covered.

Suggest related skills or concepts that the user may want to learn next.

Contratulate the user for completing the tutorial.

quiz

The quiz functions as a self-check for the students and, in some cases, as a means for the instructor to assess whether students are making the best use of the tutorials.

It is generally a good idea to include a question about any new vocabulary or idea that has been introduced in a tutorial.

So, for instance, if a tutorial on the Journal Citation Index introduces the term “impact factor,” you will want to test to be sure the student has understood this term. Likewise, if a tutorial on the Library of Congress subject headings introduces the term “controlled vocabulary,” be sure to test to be sure the student understands what this term means.

When developing the quiz questions, be sure to:

- Create questions that correlate directly to the learning objectives for the tutorial and the content used to meet those objectives.

- Reinforce each main point from the tutorial.

- Be succinct and avoid ambiguity.

- Set the correct answer.