

Website Style Guide and SEO Best Practices

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Tone of Voice

The tone of CCSNH website copy should be welcoming and inviting. The goal is for students, each website's primary audience, to feel comfortable and a sense of connection to a college while reviewing its website. Speaking directly to students, not at them, is an effective way to achieve this goal. (See the discussion below on Use of Person.) Language choices should reflect this welcoming tone and should be more conversational than "academic".

Use of Person

Writing in the first person (*I, we*), second person (*you*) or third person (*he, she, they, student, students*) determines how close you want to get to your audience. Use of *I* indicates an individual's perspective (e.g., a college president), while *we* indicates a group's perspective (e.g., the college, Academic Advising Center, Registrar's Office) in speaking to readers.

Using *you* allows you to speak directly to your audience. Depending on the context, use of *you* may indicate that *you* refers to students. In some instances, you may indicate your audience with an introductory phrase: *As a student, you...* (students) or *If you have a student applying to...* (parents or guidance counselors).

Using *he, she, they, student, or students* creates the greatest distance between you and your audience and is the least welcoming. If you want to speak generally or about a serious issue, and creating a connection with your audience is not important, the third person may be used.

Use of Person Recommendations

1) Use of first person and second person:

Copy for most CCSNH web pages should be written in the first person (*I, we, our*) and second person (*you, your*) to establish a warm, friendly tone.

RECOMMENDED EXAMPLES:

Great Bay Community College Student Life

As a student at Great Bay, you are unique in your goals, time demands and work ethic. The Student Life Office offers many opportunities to enhance the quality of your education and your connection to fellow students and the college through your involvement in a range of activities. Our staff understands the importance of a well-rounded educational experience and is committed to assisting you in reaching your academic and personal potential.

NHTI Residence Life Program

The Residence Life program at NHTI is designed to provide a safe and comfortable environment where students may live, grow and study within a community of peers. If you live on campus, you are responsible for what takes place in your room and consequently may live the way you choose, as long as you abide by state and federal laws, as well as NHTI policy and philosophy, and do not interfere with the rights of others.

2) Use of third person:

The third person (*he, she, they, their, student, students*) should be reserved for the discussion of serious issues, such as policies, disciplinary action or legal issues.

RECOMMENDED EXAMPLE:

Academic Requirements

All students earning the associate degree shall earn a minimum cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of 2.0 for graduation. All courses taken at the institution will be used to calculate the CGPA.

Further Discussion of Person and Examples

1) Use of first person:

Using the first person in its plural forms (*we, our*) to represent a college, department or center establishes ownership and authority in speaking to your audience. Coupling the first person with use of the second person (*you*) can draw the audience in closer.

RECOMMENDED EXAMPLE:

Use of first person (*we, our*) and second person (*you*):

At Nashua Community College, our Academic Advising Center team is committed to providing personalized, developmental academic advising to each student. Our staff takes great pride in ensuring your academic success. If you need assistance in registering for classes or with coursework, please call us to set up an appointment.

2) Use of second person:

To convey a welcoming tone, web copy should be written directly to students using the second person (*you*) whenever possible.

RECOMMENDED EXAMPLES:

- a) Address students directly or use an introductory phrase such as, *As a student at...* or *If you are a student...* to indicate your intended audience:

Great Bay Community College Student Life

As a student at Great Bay, you are unique in your goals, time demands and work ethic. The Student Life Office offers many opportunities to enhance the quality of your education and your connection to fellow students and the college through your involvement in a range of activities. Our staff understands the importance of a well-rounded educational experience and is committed to assisting you in reaching your academic and personal potential.

b) In other instances, you may begin by speaking generally of students and then transition to using you to speak directly to students:

Welcome to Manchester Community College!

For 67 years, MCC has been the choice for thousands of students seeking a better life for themselves and their families. As MCC's president, my goal — shared by everyone here at MCC — is to help you achieve your academic goal. Whether you plan to transfer to a four-year college, upgrade your skills, or begin a new career, our faculty and staff are committed to helping you succeed.

**c) In the following example, *you* is understood through use of the imperative:
Come to one of our Info Sessions!**

- Tour our campus
- Meet admissions staff
- Learn about the admissions process — from application to registration
- Get info on more than 30 associate degree and certificate programs
- Learn about transfer options, financial aid and more

3) Use of third person:

Use of the third person (*he, she, they, student, students*) establishes the greatest distance between the speaker and reader and is best used in more formal discussions, such as discussions of policies, disciplinary actions, legal issues or other serious topics.

RECOMMENDED EXAMPLES:

Academic Requirements

All students earning the associate degree shall earn a minimum cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of 2.0 for graduation. All courses taken at the institution will be used to calculate the CGPA.

Residency Requirement

For a diploma or professional certificate, a student must complete at least nine (9) credits or 25 percent of the credits, whichever is greater, required for the diploma or professional certificate at the institution from which it is awarded.

Course Repeat Policy

For purposes of calculating the cumulative GPA (CGPA), when a student repeats a course at the same CCSNH institution, the grade achieved in the most recent course will be the grade used in the CGPA calculation.

Usage, Capitalization and Punctuation Guidelines

This guide generally reflects usage, capitalization and punctuation rules outlined in the latest version of the *Associated Press Stylebook* and *Briefing on Media Law*, except where the CCSNH style is mentioned. The latest edition of *Webster's New World College Dictionary* or *The American Heritage College Dictionary* can be consulted for information on specific words and phrases.

Usage Guidelines

academic degrees

- associate degree, bachelor's degree, master's degree, professional certificate
- AA, AS, BS, BA, MA, MS, PhD (The CCSNH style is to not use periods in order to create a cleaner look, particularly on the web.)
- Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science
- AA degree, AS degree in Accounting, Associate of Applied Science degree in Automotive Technology, Associate of Arts in Psychology, Associate of Science with a major in Business Administration (NHTI), Associate of Science in Computer Engineering Technology (NHTI)
- He earned a master's in English.
- John Smith, PhD, specializes in conducting marketing research. (A degree credential that follows a name should be set off by commas.)

academic titles

Titles that precede a name have initial capital letters, but titles that follow a name should be in lower case and set off by commas. Generic titles should be in lower case. See the Capitalization section for further guidance.

- CCSNH Chancellor Ross Gittell; Ross Gittell, CCSNH chancellor; Ross Gittell, system chancellor; the chancellor
- President Jordan; Lucille Jordan, Nashua Community College president; the president
- Communications Director Jane Smith; Jane Smith, communications director; the communications director
- Marketing Department Chair John Jones; John Jones, chair of the Marketing Department, the chair (*See department names* for guidance on capitalization.)
- the vice president of Academic Affairs
- Carol Jones, developmental services coordinator, oversees that program.
- He is vice president of development and a director of ABC Company.

agreement: noun-pronoun

- *Every student* and *each student* are singular constructions. The pronouns *they* and *their* should not be used to refer back to either of these phrases. To ensure agreement, recast a sentence using a plural form or revise the sentence:
 - *Incorrect*: Each student should speak with their advisor before they select classes.
 - *Correct*: Students should speak with their advisors before they select classes.
 - *Correct*: Each student should speak with an advisor before selecting classes.
 - *Correct*: Before selecting classes, you should meet with your advisor.
- Do not use *they* (plural) to refer back to *he/she* (singular). Avoid *he/she* constructions.
 - *Incorrect*: Each student should consult with an advisor before selecting classes. He/she should make sure they have taken all prerequisite courses. (*He/she* in this sentence actually refers back to *advisor*, the noun *he/she* is closest to, making this construction doubly confusing.)

- *Correct*: Students should consult with an advisor before selecting courses and should make sure they have taken all prerequisite courses.

(Also see *inclusive language*.)

allow vs. enable

The word *allow* means to let do, let happen or permit, whereas *enable* means to provide the knowledge, means, or opportunity.

- Your academic advisor may allow you to take additional courses if your GPA is a 3.0 or above.
- Taking online classes enables students to schedule coursework around their work schedules.
- Completing an associate degree enables you to apply for higher-level positions.

amount vs. number

Use *amount* with things that cannot be counted (e.g., homework, praise, success) and *number* with items that can be counted (e.g., students, courses, books).

- This course requires completing a large amount of homework each week.
- Then number of courses required to complete an associate degree may vary by program.

and vs. &

An ampersand (&) should be used only in business or organization names that include it and not as a substitute word for *and* in running text. A CCSNH accepted use of an ampersand includes Advanced Technology & Academic Center. An incorrect usage is *business & industry*.

acronyms and initialisms

Acronyms (pronounced as a word, e.g., CLEP) and initialisms (each letter is pronounced, e.g., ESL, GPA, MBA) are both capitalized abbreviations that include the first letter of each word represented. If the original word phrase is not a proper name, do not use capital letters when writing out the full phrase (e.g., GPA is an abbreviation for grade point average).

Acronyms typically are not preceded by an article, unless the acronym acts as an adjective (e.g., a CLEP meeting). Initialisms are typically preceded by an article. The indefinite article “an” comes before abbreviations with a vowel sound, even if that sound is formed by a consonant (e.g., an MBA program sounds like “an em-b-a program”).

chair vs. chairman/chairwoman/chairperson

In the interest of using inclusive language, use of *chair* or *chairperson* is preferable to *chairman* or *chairwoman*.

Community College System of New Hampshire

the Community College System of New Hampshire, CCSNH, the system
(See the Capitalization section for other examples.)

contractions

Contractions (e.g., *aren't*, *didn't*, *you're*) are considered informal language and can be helpful in creating a conversational tone. Contractions may be appropriate when addressing students directly, but don't overuse them. If a more formal tone is desired, such as on web pages that discuss policies, disciplinary, legal or other serious issues, then use the full forms (e.g., *are not*, *did not*, *you are*).

course names

Course names should be capitalized:

- Introduction to Automotive Service will be offered fall semester.
- College Composition is a General Education course required of all students.

cyber security vs. cybersecurity

The AP Stylebook recommends using the closed form: cybersecurity.

dates

- Never use “st,” “nd,” “rd” or “th” with the date and month:
 - Registration starts July 1 and ends August 30.
 - Registration is held on the 1st of the month.
 - Registration is held on the first Monday of the month.
 - *Incorrect:* July 1st or July 1st, 2013
- When a month and year are listed together, do not separate them with a comma:
 - *Incorrect:* September, 2013; *Correct:* September 2013
- When a month, day and year are listed together, separate the day and year with a comma:
 - Classes begin on September 3, 2013.

degree programs

Capitalize the names of degree programs and programs of study:

- Associate of Science in Business Administration
- Business Administration Program
- Associate of Science in Computer Engineering Technology
- Advanced Manufacturing Technology Program

NOTE: when referring generically to a course of study, use lower case:

- Computer science remains one of the fastest growing fields.

department names

The CCSNH style is to capitalize the names of departments:

- Department of Business Studies, Criminal Justice Department

(See the Capitalization section for other examples.)

email vs. e-mail

Use *email* without a hyphen. With technology-related words, the trend is to eventually close closely associated words after their initial appearance with a hyphen or as two words. (Also see *online* and *website*.)

fewer vs. less

Use *fewer* with items that can be counted (e.g., students, courses, books) and *less* with things that cannot be counted (e.g., course time, financial aid).

- Fewer students are completing two-year programs in two years.
- Less financial aid is available following cuts in the state budget.

fiscal year vs. FY

Use of *fiscal year 2013-14* and *FY 2013-14* are both acceptable. The full form should be used in running text and the abbreviated form in charts and graphs. In referring to a single fiscal year, *fiscal year 2013* and *FY 2013* may be used.

full-time

Use a hyphen when *full-time* is used as an adjective or adverb:

- He is a part-time student now but plans to attend full-time later. (adjective, adverb)
- 14,600 are enrolled full-time or part-time in a degree or certificate program (adverb)

health care vs. healthcare

The *AP Stylebook* recommends using *health care*, whereas *The American Heritage College Dictionary* accepts both forms. The trend, as seen with many New Hampshire hospitals, is to use the closed form: *healthcare*, as in *healthcare providers* and *healthcare needs*. CCSNH recommends using *healthcare*.

his/her

Avoid the cumbersome *his/her* usage. Instead, use the plural *they* if you need to use the third person. (Also see *inclusive language*.)

- Students are responsible for what takes place in their rooms and consequently may live the way they choose, as long as they abide by state and federal laws, as well as NHTI policy and philosophy, and do not interfere with the rights of others.

inclusive language

When using the third person (*he, she, his, her, him*), avoid cumbersome *he/she* constructions and use the plural *students* and *they* whenever possible to be inclusive. Or, use the second person (*you*) for a friendlier tone.

- *Avoid*: Each student is responsible for what takes place in his/her room and consequently may live the way he/she chooses.
- *Revised*: Students are responsible for what takes place in their rooms and consequently may live the way they choose.
- *Revised*: You are responsible for what takes place in your room and consequently may live the way you choose.

Internet

the Internet, the Net, an intranet (Also see *website*.)

italics

Avoid using *italics* in web copy because it is harder to read on a screen.

its vs. their (for institutional references)

Use *it* or *its* and not *them* or *their* to refer to inanimate objects, institutions, or a group of objects or individuals.

- The college released its catalog for the 2013-2014 academic year.
- SNHU will waive its application fee for students participating in this program.
- The Business Management Department released its updated course offerings for fall semester.
- The board of trustees voted to change its meeting date.

numbers

- Numbers from one to nine should be spelled out, except as noted below. Numbers 10 and above may be written as numerals.
- Numbers less than 10 may be written as numerals in lists or links if space is limited (e.g., 8-week course) or if two numbers are used consecutively (e.g., two 3-credit courses).
- When beginning a sentence with a number, spell it out: Sixty-two percent of students are enrolled full time in a degree or certificate program.

online vs. on-line

Use *online* without a hyphen. The trend is to eventually close closely associated words after their initial appearance with a hyphen or as two words. (Also see *email* and *website*.)

percent vs. %

In running text, use *percent*. In graphs and charts, % may be used.

semesters and terms

In running text, use *fall semester* and *spring semester* to indicate a semester. In the headlines of charts and graphs, *Fall Semester* and *Spring Semester* may be used. The same is true for uses of *fall term* and *spring term*.

service learning

The term *service learning* should appear in lower case, unless it is part of a named program or department (e.g., Center for Service Learning). If *service learning* precedes a noun, then the phrase is hyphenated:

- Service learning pairs community service with classroom instruction.
- Engaging in a service-learning project can enhance your understanding of what is taught in the classroom.

space between sentences

Use only one space between sentences. In the age of computers and proper kerning between letters, including two spaces between sentences is unnecessary and creates a “river” of white space that distracts readers.

staff

Staff is a singular noun that takes a singular verb:

- Student Life staff understands the importance of a well-rounded educational experience.

telephone numbers

Use hyphens, not periods, to separate items in a telephone number: 603-230-3500. To include an extension, add a comma after the main number: 603-230-3500, ext. 123

that vs. which

That and *which* are used to refer to inanimate objects. Use *that* with clauses that are essential to the meaning of the sentence. Use *which* with clauses that provide additional information and are not essential to the sentence’s meaning. Set off nonessential *which* clauses with commas. (Also see *who vs. that*.)

- Earning an associate degree that advances your understanding of a subject can advance your career.
- Earning an associate degree in Business Management, which explores a range of business topics, can help propel your business career.

time

- Use numerals except for *noon* and *midnight*. Use *a.m.* and *p.m.* to indicate morning and evening, respectively. The full form is needed only for time of less than one hour: 9:30 a.m., 4:30 p.m.
 - Classes begin at 9 a.m. on September 6.
 - Final registration runs from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. the week before classes begin.
 - The course is scheduled to meet from 9:30 to 11 a.m.

trademarks

If a program is trademarked (Project Lead the Way®), use the appropriate trademark symbol (® for registered trademarks and ™ for unregistered trademarks) with the first use in a headline or subhead, if so used, and first use in body copy on that web page. After these first uses of a trademarked phrase on this web page, the trademark is not needed again on this page with this phrase. If the trademarked phrase is used on another web page, repeat this process.

underlining

Do not underline web text because it can be confused with a hyperlink.

website vs. web site

the World Wide Web, the web, website, web page

The trend is to eventually close closely associated words after their initial appearance with a hyphen or as two words. (Also see *email and online*.)

website links

- Links in running text on a website should be capitalized only if the link is a proper noun. Otherwise, use lower case text.
- Instead of using the phrase *click here* to indicate a link, highlight the linkable text itself with a different color.

who vs. that

The word *who* should be used to refer to a person, whereas *that* refers to a person, animal or thing. (Also see *that vs. which*.)

- *Incorrect:* At each college, academic programs are supported by industry advisory groups who help ensure our curriculum is well-aligned with industry and employment needs.
- *Correct:* At each college, academic programs are supported by industry advisory groups that help ensure our curriculum is well-aligned with industry and employment needs.
- *Correct:* She is a professor who is well-known for her research in environmental science.

-wide

Close the space and use no hyphen in words that include a *-wide* suffix if they appear this way in the dictionary (e.g., statewide, countrywide, worldwide). If a compound word including *wide* is not in the dictionary, then include a hyphen when the compound word appears before or after a noun.

- These new college-wide policies go into effect on July 1.
- CCSNH saw 14 percent growth in student enrollment system-wide 2007 – 2012.

wide-

In compound words that include *wide-* as a prefix, add a hyphen (e.g., wide-open schedule, wide-angle lens). NOTE: *widespread* is an exception.

work-study

When *work-study* precedes a noun, use a hyphen with this compound adjective (e.g., work-study job). Otherwise, use *work study*.

years

With a range of years, use the full form (2013 – 2014) if space allows. If space is limited, the abbreviated form may be used if within the same century: 2013-14. If the range spans different centuries, always use the full form: 1998 – 2013.

Capitalization Guidelines

Capitalization and lower case (Also see academic titles under Usage Guidelines.)

- Capitalize a proper noun and use lower case when referring to the proper noun with a single word or phrase. Do not use all caps unless it is an abbreviation (e.g., CCSNH):
 - the Community College System of New Hampshire, CCSNH, the system
 - New Hampshire's community colleges, New Hampshire's community college system, NH's community colleges, NH community college, the community colleges
 - Manchester Community College, the college
 - NHTI, Concord's Community College
 - Dr. Goldie Crocker Wellness Center, the Crocker Center, the center
 - CCSNH Chancellor Ross Gittel; Ross Gittel, CCSNH chancellor; Ross Gittel, system chancellor; the chancellor
 - President Lucille Jordan; Lucille Jordan, Nashua Community College president; the college president; the president
 - *CCSNH Board of Trustees, the board of trustees, the board, the trustees
 - *Paul Holloway, CCSNH Board of Trustees chair; CCSNH Board of Trustees Chair Paul Holloway; chair of the board of trustees; board of trustees chair; the board chair
 - *Finance Committee Chair Ned Densmore; Ned Densmore, chair of the Finance Committee; chair of the Finance Committee; Finance Committee chair; the committee chair
 - Professor Smith, John Smith, the professor, professor of Business Administration
 - *Samuel Jones, chair of the Liberal Arts Department; the chair; Professor Jones
 - *Marketing Department Chair John Jones
- * CCSNH recommends that named departments and committees begin with an initial capital letter but that initial caps not be used with *board of trustees* when the name of the organization does not precede it.
- Capitalize named programs: Project Lead the Way, Project Success, Career Exploration Summer Program, Efficiency Training Program
- Capitalize only the named program in a phrase: Advising Office staff, Running Start program
- Capitalize named places: Academic Advising Center, Center for Academic Planning and Support, Bennett Library, the Career Center, Business and Training Center, White Mountains Community College Bistro
- Capitalize the names of departments, offices, associations: Admissions Office, Academic Affairs, Bursar's Office, Criminal Justice Department, Department of Business Studies, Financial Aid Office, Registrar's Office, Student Life Office, Student Government Association, Student Senate
- Capitalize the names of specific classrooms: Room 106
- Capitalize course names: Introduction to Automotive Technology, College Composition
- **Capitalize web page titles as follows:
 - Capitalize first and last words and all other major words (nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs)
 - Lowercase articles (*a, an, the*), prepositions (e.g., *under, above, through*) and conjunctions (e.g., *and, but, for, or, nor*)
- **Capitalize web page headlines and box headlines as follows:
 - Capitalize first and last words and all other major words (nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs)

- Lowercase articles (*a, an, the*), prepositions (e.g., *under, above, through*) and conjunctions (e.g., *and, but, for, or, nor*)
- **Capitalize web page subheads as follows:
 - Capitalize only the first word and proper nouns
- **These capitalization rules for headers and subheads reflect CCSNH web style.

Use lower case with generic terms

- associate degree (NEVER Associate degree), associate degree programs, professional certificate, certificate, certificate programs, baccalaureate program
- college presidents
- board of directors, board, board of trustees, trustees, commission
- vice president of Student Affairs
- faculty, academic advisor, college counselor, department chair, communications director
- admissions staff, admissions process, independent study
- library, gymnasium, cafeteria

Punctuation Guidelines

Bullets

Use bullets for lists of items. Use numbered lists only for processes that contain steps that must be performed in a specific order.

1) If bulleted or numbered items are short phrases, no punctuation is used at the end of each bullet:

Benefits of Computer Technology Program

- Upgrade technical skills
- Integrate new processes
- Enhance customer service

NOTE: Each bullet within a list should begin with the same part of speech (a verb in the example above). If capitalization is desired, for ease of reading only the initial word should begin with a capital letter.

2) A vertical list that completes an introductory sentence should begin with a lowercase letter and *may* include a semi colon at the end of each bullet and a period after the final bullet, although these end punctuation marks are not required.

NOTE: Use a colon at the end of the introductory statement. Remove the end punctuation after each bullet for a less formal style that can make the bullets easier to read.

Living in a residence hall can help you:

- get more involved with campus activities;
- utilize campus resources, such as the library, more often;
- enjoy an environment designed to support your academic success; and
- increase the likelihood of your graduating on time.

3) If each of the bullets is a complete sentence, a period may be added at the end of each bullet:

Please see your academic adviser to discuss your pathways to transfer:

- NHTransfer.org, a partnership between the University System of New Hampshire and the Community College System of New Hampshire, shows how courses from NCC transfer to participating institutions.
- If you plan on applying to Keene State College, UNH, UNH Manchester, Plymouth State University or Granite State College, complete the NH Transfer Form.
- If you plan on completing your two-year degree at NCC and then transferring to SNHU, you may complete a one-page application to be in a dual enrollment program.

NOTE: If a bullet contains two complete sentences, use a period after each sentence or use a semi colon to connect the two complete thoughts.

- If you plan on applying to Keene State College, UNH, UNH Manchester, Plymouth State University or Granite State College, complete the NH Transfer Form. If you plan on completing your two-year degree at NCC and then transferring to SNHU, you may complete a one-page application to be in a dual enrollment program.

Colons

A colon introduces a list or additional information. Use a single space following a colon within a sentence. Capitalize the first word following the colon only if it is a proper noun or begins a complete sentence.

- Admission to this program requires completion of a number of items:
 - completed application
 - official copy of high school transcript
 - computer placement testing
- Admission to this program requires completion of a number of items: completed application, official copy of high school transcript and computer placement testing.
- Admission to this program includes multiple requirements: You must submit a completed application, an official copy of your high school transcript and computer placement testing.

Commas

- Use a comma to separate items in a series, but do not use a comma before the conjunction (e.g., *and, or, but*) in short sentences :
 - The program helps you become an expert on patient data that physicians, nurses and other providers rely on to perform their jobs.
- Use a comma in a series and before the conjunction if it is necessary to avoid confusion:
 - The nursing program includes courses in Microbiology, Human Growth and Development, and Anatomy and Physiology.
- For clarity, add a comma after introductory statements:
 - For information on any of the colleges, dial toll-free 1-800-247-3420.
 - As a health information management professional, you are the expert on patient data that physicians, nurses, and other providers rely on to perform their jobs.

Dashes

An em dash — a long dash — can set off an interruption or provide additional information, as well as add clarity by setting off a longer interrupting series of words punctuated with commas:

- As MCC's president, my goal — shared by everyone here at MCC — is to help you achieve your academic goal.
- The Student Center's added activities — recreation, club, intramural sports, performances and workshops — are creating excitement on campus.

An en dash — a slightly shorter dash than an em dash — is used to indicate a span of years:

- 2013 – 2014

Exclamation points

Exclamation points should be used rarely, if at all, in order to draw attention to a special statement or information:

- We are excited to have you join us!
- Ninety-five percent of our recent graduates were employed full time with one month of graduation!

Hyphens with compound words

Generally, when two words work together to modify a noun and *precede* the noun, use a hyphen to connect the modifiers:

- two-year degree, four-year college, full-time enrollment, three-week program, college-sponsored event, industry-specific employee training, student-centered environment
- performance-based learning; cost-effective training; cutting-edge technology; high-wage, high-skill employment
- transfer-focused and career-oriented programs, degree-granting program
- real-world applications, real-life experience, up-to-date course offerings, well-known professor

NOTABLE EXCEPTIONS:

Some exceptions include:

1) Adverbs ending in *-ly* that precede a participle or adjective are not hyphenated:

- highly acclaimed researcher
- stunningly beautiful campus

2) Compound words that include *well* and that follow the noun being modified should also include a hyphen:

- The well-known professor is respected by peers and students alike.
- The professor is well-known for her research in this field.

Parentheses

Parentheses can be used to add additional information and create a more noticeable interruption than commas or dashes.

If information placed within parentheses creates a complete sentence, place a period inside the final parenthesis:

- The associate degree prepares students for immediate employment or the opportunity to further their education. (The curriculum provides students with the tools to think critically, reason, compute, communicate and adapt to change.)

If information placed within parentheses is not a complete sentence, place the period outside the final parenthesis:

- The associate degree prepares students for immediate employment or the opportunity to further their education (and adapt to change).

Quotation Marks

Commas and periods are placed **INSIDE** quotation marks.

- “You will be remembered,” the president said, “as one of the college’s most dedicated employees.”

Colons and semi colons are placed **OUTSIDE** quotation marks.

- The president commended Karen for being “one of the college’s most dedicated employees”; he then presented her with a special citation.
- Karen displayed solid evidence of being “one of the college’s most dedicated employees”: she arrived early and stayed late every day.

Question marks and exclamation points are placed depending on the message.

Place them inside the quotation marks if the quoted material is a question or exclamation:

- Dave asked, “Have you finished the project?”
- “I’ve finally finished the project!” Mike yelled.

Place them outside the quotation marks if the quoted material is not a question or exclamation:

- Did the president say Karen is “the college’s most dedicated employee” or “one of the college’s most dedicated employees”?
- I am thrilled the president said Karen is “one of the college’s most dedicated employees”!

If a quoted word or phrase is included in a headline or subhead, use single quotation marks, not double quotation marks.

Semi Colons

A semi colon indicates a break in thought between two independent clauses, but creates less of a break than a period:

- The employment status and salaries of students upon graduation reveals very little; the number of internships may have an effect on employment, but it is an indirect measure at best.

Use a semi colon to separate items within a series that includes commas:

- Members of the committee include John Smith, chair, board of trustees; Ron Swanson, chair, Department of Business Management; and Susan Wright, chair, Department of Business Communication.

SEO Overview

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the practice of promoting a website to **increase the number of visitors** a site receives via search engine results. Outlined in this document are some SEO best practices to consider while executing everyday web page updates. Although there are many steps to take to achieve good rankings, **keyword rich content is one of the more important SEO components**. Without strong keywords and content, SEO tricks will only provide a temporary boost in a site’s ranking. If a search engine sees that a site is updated often with relevant content, that site automatically gets a boost on Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs.)

Most web traffic is driven by major search engines such as Google and Bing. **Search engines provide targeted traffic which can generate revenue and exposure like no other marketing tool.** Being visible to customers and prospects at the time they are looking for you is imperative for continued growth.

Keywords

Getting found on search engines starts and ends with keywords and directly tie to how you get found. Although it is impossible to rank well for every keyword you deem important, there are tools available to help you decide which might give you the most benefit.

Keyword Exact Match	Competition (0.0 low - 1.0 high)	Monthly Searches (United States)
[associate degree]	0.5	9900
[business programs]	1	480
[business training]	0.96	720
[certificate programs]	0.96	2400

For example, in the chart above it is obvious that the term “associate degree” might be the best keyword to rank for in that grouping based on the fact that it has the highest search volume and the lowest relative difficulty. Simply put – it has more people looking for it, and less competitors trying to rank for it.

This chart is available using Google’s **Keyword Planner** tool.

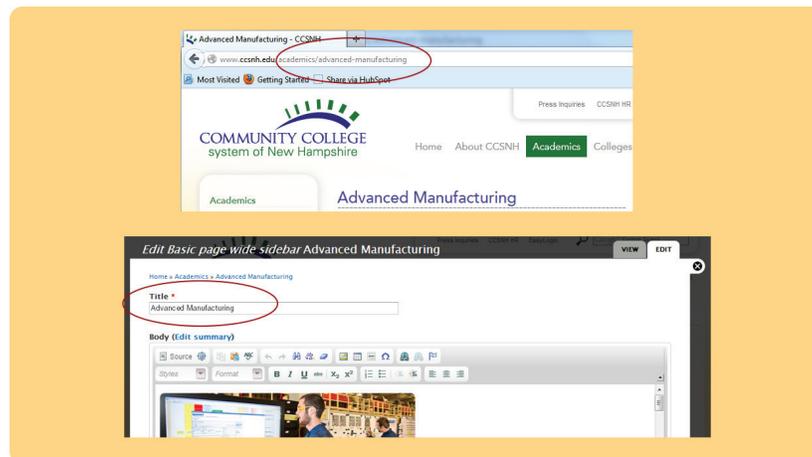
Naming Web pages

A **proper name is important for search engines to determine the type of content** that resides on your pages. Therefore titles should include key words and characters search engines can understand. Best practice is to **use full words and hyphens as spaces when needed to separate words**. It is also a good idea to keep the naming short as studies have shown users are less likely to click a long URL on a Google results page.

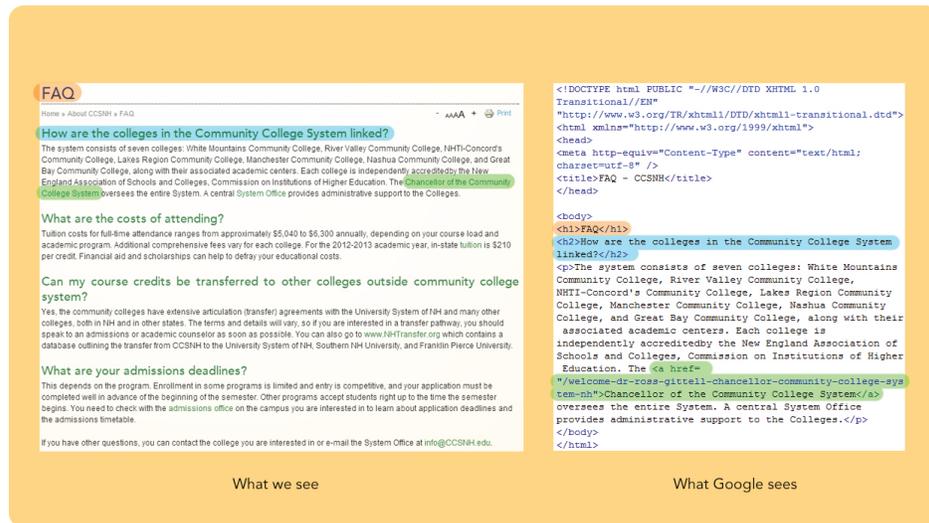
www.mysite.com/keywords-go-here

Drupal names a webpage based off the title given, and path of where the page lives:

www.ccsnh.edu/academics/advanced-manufacturing



Anatomy of a web page



The diagram illustrates the anatomy of a web page, comparing what a user sees in a browser window with what a search engine like Google sees in the underlying HTML code.

What we see (User Perspective): This view shows the rendered content of the page. Key elements include:

- FAQ** (highlighted in orange): The main heading of the page.
- How are the colleges in the Community College System linked?** (highlighted in blue): A sub-heading or headline.
- What are the costs of attending?** (highlighted in blue): Another sub-heading.
- Can my course credits be transferred to other colleges outside community college system?** (highlighted in blue): A third sub-heading.
- What are your admissions deadlines?** (highlighted in blue): A fourth sub-heading.
- Body text:** The main content of the page, including descriptions of the system and details about costs and admissions. Key phrases are highlighted in green, such as "The system consists of seven colleges: White Mountains Community College, River Valley Community College, NHTI-Concord's Community College, Lakes Region Community College, Manchester Community College, Nashua Community College, and Great Bay Community College, along with their associated academic centers. Each college is independently accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education. The Chancellor of the Community College System oversees the entire System. A central System Office provides administrative support to the Colleges."

What Google sees (Search Engine Perspective): This view shows the raw HTML code of the page. Key elements include:

- <h1>FAQ</h1>** (highlighted in orange): The main heading tag.
- <h2>How are the colleges in the Community College System linked?</h2>** (highlighted in blue): The sub-heading tag.
- <h2>What are the costs of attending?</h2>** (highlighted in blue): Another sub-heading tag.
- <h2>Can my course credits be transferred to other colleges outside community college system?</h2>** (highlighted in blue): A third sub-heading tag.
- <h2>What are your admissions deadlines?</h2>** (highlighted in blue): A fourth sub-heading tag.
- Body text:** The raw HTML code for the main content, including the same green-highlighted text as seen in the user view.

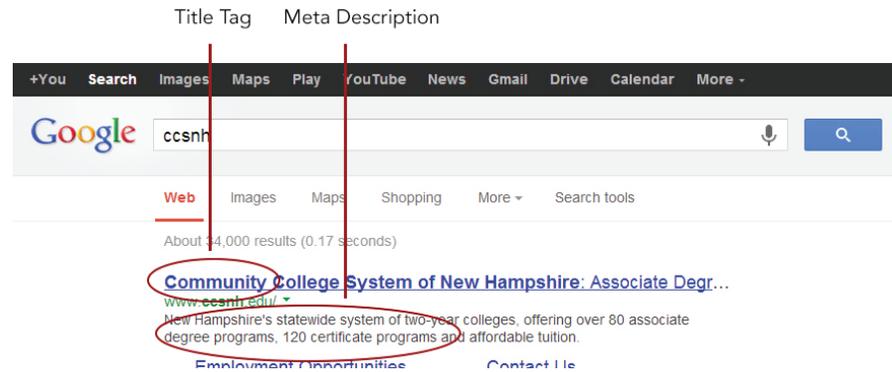
There are many elements of a webpage to consider when optimizing with keywords. The yellow highlighted text known as the title can usually be seen at the top of a browser window. **The title will also show up in search results making it important for SEO purposes.** The orange and blue highlighted text are known as headlines. More specifically the orange text being a Headline 1 (H1) and the blue being a Headline 2 (H2). The H1 is the main headline on the page and H2 a sub-headline. **These headers are particularly important for SEO since they give an indicator to search engines of relevant page content and thus should be made up of keywords.**

Keyword rich body copy and text links (highlighted in green) are also important areas to consider when optimizing. **Focus on one or two keywords that you want to rank for per page, and be sure to include these words three to four times in these strategic areas.**

Title Tags:

Title tags define the title of a web page and are one of the most important SEO elements. Creating a descriptive keyword rich title tag is important for increasing overall ranking in search engines. Title tags appear in a couple key places: search engine results and browsers. Google has a limit of 70 characters per title tag, anything exceeding may be truncated.

```
<title>Page Title Text Goes Here</title>
```



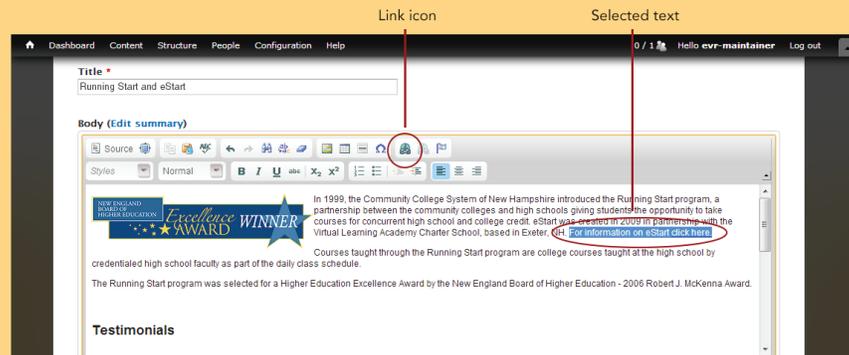
Meta Description:

Meta Description tags are **short paragraphs used to advertise content** to searchers letting them know if the content on the page is what they are looking for. These shortened paragraphs are **displayed under search engine results** and help search engines know what pages are about. It is best practice to keep Meta Descriptions to 150 characters or less and use keywords **at least twice** in this space.

```
<meta name="description" content="Your Description Text Goes Here">
```

Drupal Tip: Meta Data

To apply Meta Data in Drupal, be sure to be in the **edit page view**. Select the **"Meta Tags"** box at the bottom of the page and fill in the blanks.



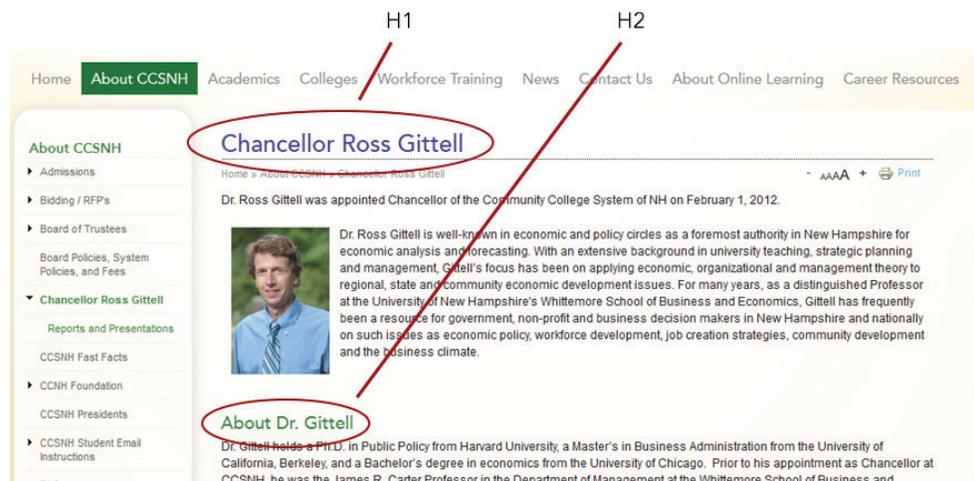
Headline Tags (H1, H2, H3)

Headline tags are used to differentiate sections of a webpage. **They have an impact on SEO and usability. Search engine spiders check keyword consistencies within headline tags and other parts of the page for ranking purposes.** In order for the headline structure to be SEO friendly the hierarchy should not be broken:

<h1>Heading 1</h1>

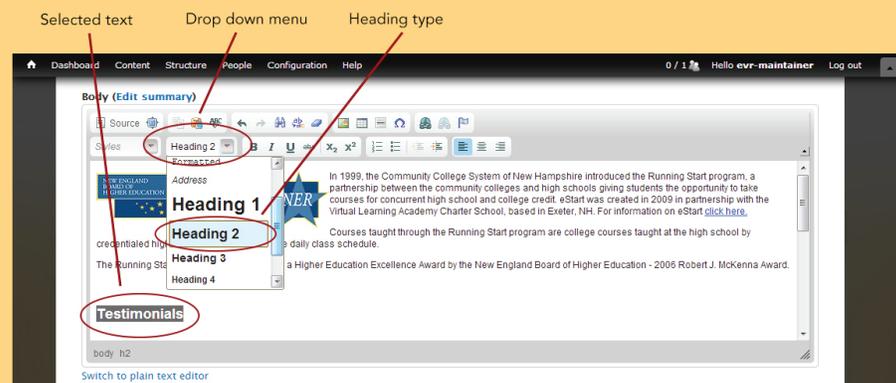
<h2>Heading 2</h2>

<h3>Heading 3</h3>



Drupal Tip: Headlines

Enter your title text and highlight it. Click the drop down menu and choose a heading type. Remember to follow the hierarchy, h1, h2 and h3.



Body Copy

Quality body copy is there to satisfy both the visitor and the search engine. Placing specific keywords near the top of the body will increase ranking.

Word Count

Recommended word count is at least 250 words giving search engines the opportunity to understand what the topic of each page is about. It is possible to rank with fewer words, and always a bad idea to have unnecessary text on a page.

Images

Images need descriptive alt tags and file names. Search engines find images by their alt tags and file names among other factors. Try to be descriptive when naming images, but don't over do it. Being spammy about this can trigger an over optimization penalty.

keyword-rich0file-name.jpg

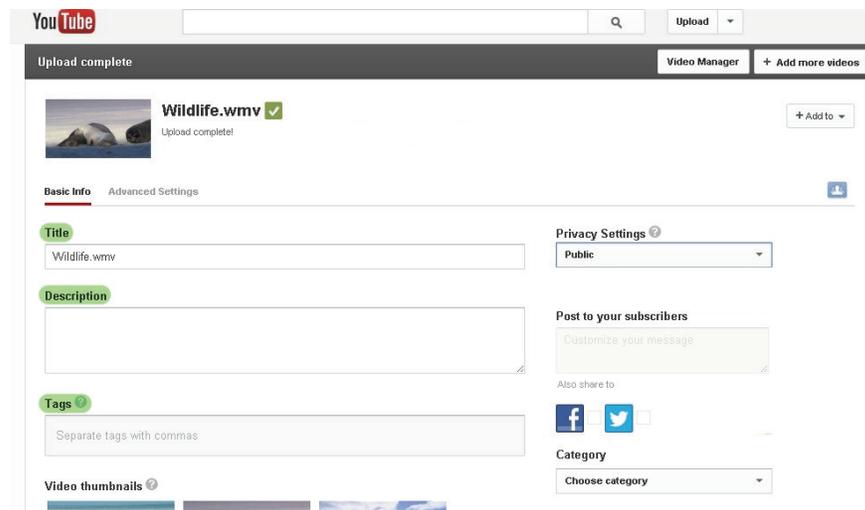
```

```

Video

When uploading a video to YouTube, add keywords to the title and description. This information will be seen when the video is searched. Next enter a few descriptive tags (keywords) separating them by space. When the video is uploaded it can be embedded on a webpage with similar code to what is below

```
<iframe width="640" height="360" src="//www.youtube.com/embed/mSQPUbIn0QU?rel=0"
frameborder="0" allowfullscreen></iframe>
```



Internal Links

An internal link is one that points to another page on the same website. Make sure to **use descriptive keywords** in anchor text that give a sense of the topic or keywords the source page is trying to target. **Search engines need to have access to a crawlable link structure** allowing their spiders to find all pages within the site.

```
<a href="http://www.ccsnh.edu" title="descriptive text goes here">Your link text goes here</a>
```

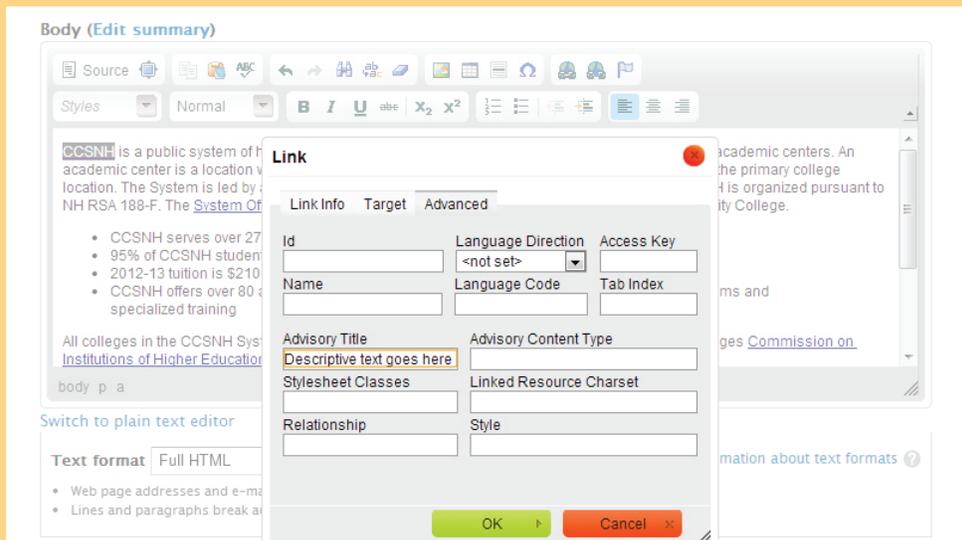
External Links

External links are hyperlinks that point at any domain other than the domain the link exists on. As with Internal links, it is also important to **use descriptive keywords** in anchor text on External Links.

```
<a href="http://www.external-domain-example.com" title="descriptive text goes here">Your link text goes here</a>
```

Drupal Tip: Descriptive Keywords

When creating a link click on the “Advanced” tab where you’ll find a text box labeled “Advisory Title”. This area is where you’ll input some descriptive keywords.



Off-Site SEO

We've covered many tactics for helping your "On-Site SEO" but what about "Off-Site SEO"? Although the three following factors cannot be directly manipulated, website owners still have to seriously consider these, as they play big roles in determining search engine rankings.

1) Links

Having plenty of quality links is on par with creating great content in terms of increasing rankings. Building links with authority websites weighs more than just building links with a lot of websites that have little to no authority. In layman's terms, it's always beneficial to request a link back to your website when possible.

2) Credibility

Establishing a website as a place where one is sure to get great content takes a considerable amount of time and effort. But it is all worth it as once it has gained a good reputation, it will rank higher and gain more traffic.

3) Social Media Influence

Search engines have begun integrating social network activity in ranking websites. And it's easy to understand why, considering that social media is fast becoming the Internet's hub for spreading content. Creating social media accounts for businesses have become a necessity nowadays with the amount of traffic they can drive to a website. Share your content on social networks regularly and have faculty, staff & students do the same.

Summary

SEO is an ongoing process. Along with a sound content marketing strategy, these optimization tips will position your websites for SEO success.

SITE OPTIMIZATION CHECKLIST

- Webpage URL path (use dashes to separate words)
- Title Tags (70 character limit)
- Meta Descriptions (keep to about 25 words max)
- Headline Tags (H1, H2, H3)
- Body Copy (at least 250 words)
- Image and Video Tags (keyword rich alt tags)
- Internal Link Tags (keyword rich alt tags)
- External Link Tags (keyword rich alt tags)
- Claim your website username on other major directories and social networks
- Used 301 redirects for duplicate content
- Link check with Xenu – fix all 404 and 505 errors