

Style and Writing Guide

**Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Environmental Assessment and Restoration
January 5, 2018**

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Contents

Introduction.....	4
How to Use this Guide	4
Section 1: General Tips for Better Writing.....	5
First Considerations.....	5
Your Audience	5
Writing Style	6
Revising and Editing	6
Word Choices	7
Sentences	7
Paragraphs	8
Punctuation	8
Using Numbers and Data	9
Section 2: Grammar, Usage, and Style	10
Capitalization.....	10
Acronyms and Abbreviations.....	11
Numbering Style.....	12
Legal and Regulatory Citations (State and Federal)	13
Useful Online References.....	14
Section 3: Formatting Reports.....	20
Word Styles	20
Cover Page	20
Table of Contents	22
Headings.....	22
Text.....	23
Lists	23
Text Citations	23
Tables	24
Figures	25
Page Headers	26
Page Footers	26
References	26
Hyphens and Dashes	27
Section 4: ADA Compliance.....	29

Section 5: Presentations.....	30
Appendix A. Proofreading Marks.....	33
Appendix B. Making Documents ADA Compliant in Word.....	34
How to Use Word Styles (Built-In and Otherwise)	34
How to Turn Off Autoformatting.....	35
How to Add Alt Tags to Tables, Graphics, and Text Boxes	36
How to Embed Hyperlinks and URLs.....	38
Appendix C: Important Links	40

List of Tables

Table 1. Grammar, usage, and style.....	15
Table 2. Sample table format	25

Introduction

This style guide addresses the unique aspects of the technical reports written and published by the Division of Environmental Assessment and Restoration (DEAR). Conventions may be added or changed from time to time, so be sure to use the latest version (available on the [DEAR intranet page](#) under Library\References\DEAR Style Guide).

The English language itself and the rules of grammar, punctuation, and style change over time. The conventions listed here may or may not match what you were taught in high school or college. The point of this guide is not to spark fierce debates over the serial comma or how to use quotation marks appropriately. You won't learn the difference between a split infinitive and a dangling participle.

Rather, the intent of this informal document is to help staff write technical reports that are more clear, precise, and consistent. Being internally consistent within a report—and from one report to the next—keeps distractions to a minimum so the reader can focus on your content and not get distracted by inconsistencies in style.

The conventions listed here should be followed when drafting letters, technical reports, and other similar documents. Rules, administrative orders, and other legal and regulatory documents may require additional or alternative formatting. Also, day-to-day email is inherently informal. Of course, all your emails will be clearer if you follow the style guide!

How to Use this Guide

Section 1 contains tips to improve your writing and **Section 2** provides guidelines for various DEAR style preferences, including spelling, grammar, punctuation, usage, capitalization, numbers, acronyms, and abbreviations. These sections contain everything you will need as the author. **Sections 3** and **4** document formatting conventions for technical editors and reviewers. **Section 3** provides formatting specifications to follow for consistency across reports, as well as formatting instructions for the various sections of a document. **Section 4** addresses how to make a document compliant with Section 508 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (often referred to as the Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA). **Section 5** provides general guidelines for preparing and formatting presentation materials, such as audience handouts and slides. The appendices contain a list of proofreading marks and other useful tools.

No one is perfect! If you find any omissions, inconsistencies, or errors in this style guide, please feel free to point them out. If you run across a tricky style or formatting question in your document, feel free to ask for guidance. Comments can be routed to [Greg DeAngelo](#) for inclusion in a revised version of the style guide or in our compendium of specific examples. This style guide represents the effort of many staff, especially Tiffany Busby, Kevin Coyne, Linda Lord, Geof Mansfield, Anita Nash, Kim Shugar, and Lisa Van Houdt. Julie Espy, Tim Fitzpatrick, Eric Hinton, Daryll Joyner, and Erin Rasnake provided additional review and input.

Section 1: General Tips for Better Writing

The principles and guidelines listed here are intended to clarify and simplify written materials, making them more interesting and appropriate for their intended audiences.

First Considerations

- Why are you writing what you're writing? If you can't answer that question beyond "it's an assignment," think again. Are you telling a story? Explaining a scientific subject to a lay audience? Or making an argument to persuade someone to do something? It makes a difference.
- Readers inevitably focus on first things and last things, whether words, sentences, paragraphs, or whole documents. If you dawdle or wander off on a tangent, they'll never get to the end, or they won't be paying attention by the time they do. If you propel them toward the end but then just fade away, they may miss the point. State your subject, build your argument, hammer it home.
- If you're asking for a decision or action, don't let that fact be a secret. Build your argument around the decision you want and re-emphasize your recommendation at the end. You can play devil's advocate, but make clear why your recommendation is the right one.
- Let your writing style emerge naturally from effective word choices and clear, concise, active sentences. Make your points and move on.

Your Audience

- Consider your audience before you write anything.
- The more informed the audience, the less detail you need to present and the more sophisticated or technical your writing can be. However, writing for a knowledgeable audience is not a license to be pedantic, opaque, or vague.
- The less informed the audience, the more explaining you have to do. However, never write down to the reader—just write simply and clearly. Adjust the amount of background you provide based on the audience's familiarity with the topic.
- Carefully consider what you want the audience to take away from your writing and what they may do with the information you provide.
- Say what you mean; mean what you say.

Writing Style

- Avoid "squidding," or overwriting by cramming in as many words as possible and repeating yourself. Aim for an economical writing style. When squid get uncomfortable and want to protect themselves, they attempt to baffle predators by emitting a lot of ink to hide their true stance. Don't use extra ink to hide behind or attempt to make yourself look smarter.
- Use strong, direct verb forms such as "is," "was," or "will" instead of complex constructions such as "have been," "would have been," or "will be." Limit the use of passive constructions such as "there is," "this is," "there are," and "it is."
- Think about words, phrases, and sentences that can be deleted, rather than added. This returns huge dividends in the form of clarity.
- Avoid contractions in formal writing.
- Don't overuse "however." Because the word "however" contradicts the previous statement, it is important to ask yourself why you are including the previous statement in the first place.
- Parallel constructions (the grammatical structure of items in a list) help make your point. Use them. **For example:** Parallel (verb, verb, and verb)—"The plan elements include the following: send staff to conferences, bring staff to meetings, and hold seminars." **But:** Not parallel (verb, noun, gerund)—"The plan elements include the following: send staff to conferences, attendance at meetings, and holding seminars."



Revising and Editing

- Always proofread, reread, and edit your own work before turning it over to someone else. **Don't assume others will improve your writing.** (However, when they do, you may be able to learn from it.)
- Before you revise a draft, let it rest for a while. If you are short on time, even a few hours will make a difference when you come back to the document.
- There is no need to start fixing spelling, grammar, syntax, passive voice, awkward phrasing, etc., until you are sure you have said what you mean.

- Think again about whom the material is for and make sure you have delivered the message you intended.
- As you edit, keep looking for extraneous and redundant material to cut. Drafts are virtually always longer than they need to be.
- Make sure your argument is cogent and compelling.

Word Choices

- Avoid jargon like the plague. Words such as "aforementioned," "notwithstanding," "whereas," "heretofore," "herewith," "thereby," "therewith," "whereas," "thereas," and "wherewithal" are generally considered obsolete and archaic.
- If scientific or other uncommon terms are essential, make them clear from context or by providing explicit definitions or examples.
- Only use an abbreviation or acronym if it is genuinely common or if the phrase you're abbreviating is long or cumbersome and is subsequently used repeatedly.
- Spice up your writing with synonyms but use them wisely.
- Never use words you cannot define if asked.
- Keep in mind that definitions of words, or at least their nuances, often change depending on context.

Sentences

- Make a habit of writing active, not passive, sentences: subject + verb + object. **For example:** "My dog ate the BMAP." **Not:** "The BMAP was eaten by my dog." Verb-driven sentences are powerful and push the reader through the material.



- Still not sure? Use the "Zombie Test" to identify a passive sentence in a document. If you can conclude the sentence with "by zombies" (and it still makes sense), it is a passive sentence. **For example:** "The BMAP was written by zombies." The sentence should be revised to "Jane Doe wrote the BMAP," which leaves no possessive opportunity for the zombies.
- Each sentence must have a subject and a verb. If the subject of the sentence is singular, the verb must be singular; a plural subject demands a plural verb. Intervening words and phrases are irrelevant. **For example:** "The BMAP, with all of its many stakeholders, funding commitments, projects and

deadlines, **is** complete." (**singular**) "The TN and TP **criteria are** listed in the table." (**plural**)

- Use adjectives and adverbs selectively. They can clutter up writing, adding little beyond length. Obviously, if you are referring to two boxes and want your reader to know the difference, blue or red, big or small, open or closed, then adjectives come in handy. However, it's important not to get carried away.

Paragraphs

- Generally, paragraphs should express a single aspect of a subject.
- Avoid single-sentence paragraphs other than for emphasis.
- It is important to remember that big ideas can always be parsed. Split long paragraphs into smaller, more focused ones. Aim for no more than six to eight sentences per paragraph. That said, if you can make your point using one or two sentences, do so. Don't feel like you need to pad out the paragraph with filler sentences. Short paragraphs are okay.
- Mix up the lengths of your sentences within paragraphs. Shorter sentences should always outnumber longer ones. They are more powerful.
- Different-length paragraphs, like varied sentences and words, help keep the reader awake.

Punctuation

- Save yourself keystrokes. Use only one space after the period in a sentence.
- There is no shortage of periods. Instead of linking multiple independent clauses or sentences with semicolons, try separate sentences instead. These are easier to read and digest.
- If you're not sure whether a sentence needs a comma or a hyphen, it's a good rule of thumb to leave it out.
- Use the serial comma! To avoid confusion, if you have a list of more than two words, phrases, or clauses, use a comma after the next-to-last item (i.e., just before the "and" or "or").
- Use a double quotation mark for short citations. For a quote within a quote, use single quotation marks.

- Punctuation usually goes inside quotation marks, but there are some exceptions. If question marks and exclamation points are part of the quotation, they go inside the final quotation mark. **For example:** "Is that alligator swimming towards us?" and "That alligator is swimming towards us!" However, if they apply to the whole sentence, then they go outside the final quotation mark. **For example:** Did you like "The Angry Birds Movie"? **Or:** It's the worst twist ending since "The Sixth Sense"! Also, colons and semicolons normally go outside the final quotation mark, unless they are part of the quote.

Using Numbers and Data

- Own every number and piece of data you use or cite, and deploy them carefully and strategically. That is, be intimately familiar with your numbers and data, and understand the assumptions, limitations, sources, and potential bias that are inherent in them.
- Think about whether you should use the numbers. Do they advance your argument? Are you comfortable defending them?
- Double-check all the numbers. Are they consistent throughout your document? Have other documents appeared on the same subject recently and, if so, did the numbers used match? If they don't match, can you defend the differences?
- Explain the numbers. The amount of explanation depends on the audience, but keep in mind that even sophisticated audiences can misinterpret data if you give them half a chance. Numbers are very potent if explained well **and** tied to the argument.
- Most people don't understand statistics. Be careful when using statistics and make sure they convey only what you intend.

Section 2: Grammar, Usage, and Style

This section describes some general DEAR guidelines and rules for grammar, usage, and style, including punctuation, capitalization, acronyms and abbreviations, numbers and data, and legal and regulatory citations. **Table 2-1** at the end of this section lists DEAR conventions and guidelines for using, capitalizing, spelling, and hyphenating some common terms, and also addresses some basic errors.

Capitalization

Less capitalization is generally better. Consult standard style guides for unusual capitalization rules, but use the following conventions for phrases that occur frequently in DEAR writing:

- Use an initial cap for the word "program" if it is preceded by a name—even if it is not the official name of a program. **For example:** TMDL Program, BMAP Program, Nonpoint Source Management Program. **But:** lowercase the "p" when "program" is not preceded by a name. For example: last year's program, the current program.
- Use initial caps for "total maximum daily load" and "basin management action plan" if either phrase is preceded by a modifier. **For example:** the Marshall Lake Total Maximum Daily Load; the Wekiva River Basin Management Action Plan. **But:** lowercase all other usages. **For example:** the lake's total maximum daily load; the basin management action plan for the Wekiva area.
- Use initial caps for the names of federal or state designations for protected areas, such as Wild and Scenic River or Outstanding Florida Water.
- Use initial caps for the name of an index. **For example:** Lake Vegetation Index, Rapid Periphyton Survey, Stream Condition Index.
- In the document's acronym list, use initial caps for everything except articles, prepositions, and conjunctions.
- Do not capitalize "state" and always capitalize Florida if referring to the state of Florida. However, it's not necessary to use both at the same time. **For example:** the Florida Department of Environmental Protection; Florida's position on the issue; growers in Florida; Florida beaches; the state's environmental department; state records; state-sponsored initiatives.
- Don't use initial caps for the term "waters of the state."
- Use initial caps for the labels of specifically numbered items that precede the number. **For example:** Phase 1, Phase 2. **But don't capitalize:** the second phase, this phase.

- When referring to counties, cities, and towns, capitalize the words "county," "city," and "town" only if you are acknowledging the official name or if the word is part of a title. Follow the same rule for references to districts, departments, divisions, and agencies. **For example:** Leon County, the City of Tallahassee, the Town of Hillsboro Beach, the State Asbestos Coordinator, Broward County's local program, the Southwest District Office, the Suwannee River Water Management District. **But:** the county initiative, the Orange County report, Tallahassee's permit, the city's MS4 program, the water management districts, the district staff, the division office.
- Once you have referred to an entity as a city, town, county, or whatever, you can drop the "City of" or "Town of" from the name. **For example:** "City of Stuart" upon first use. **But:** "Stuart" or "city" on subsequent uses.
- Capitalize "federal" only if it is part of an official name. **For example:** the Federal Water Pollution Control Act. **But not:** federal regulations, the federal Clean Water Act.
- Capitalize basin and springshed only if part of the formal name. **For example:** "the St. John's River Basin." **But:** "The river's basin includes many miles of tributaries."
- Don't capitalize the names of the seasons (spring, summer, fall, winter).
- In headings, use the recommendation from the U.S. Government Printing Office Style Manual, which is to capitalize all words in titles of publications and documents, except for a, an, and, as, the, at, but, by, for, in, nor, of, on, or, to, and up.
- If you are quoting from another source, don't change the capitalization or phrasing used, even if it is incorrect. You can sometimes insert "[sic]" after a really egregious error, but this is not always appropriate or wise. In literary terms, it's equivalent to waving a red flag on a pole while jumping up and down and pointing at the error to make sure everybody notices. Consider rewriting the sentence without the quote.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

- Define an acronym or abbreviation by spelling out the full name, immediately followed by the acronym in parentheses. **For example:** Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). **Note:** you can use "U.S." as an abbreviation for the United States without having previously defined the term.
- Try to avoid defining acronyms in the acknowledgements. Define acronyms on the first use in the executive summary. Irrespective of the executive

summary, define or redefine acronyms upon the first use in the main body of the report (beginning with the introduction or first chapter or section). Do not redefine in subsequent chapters or sections of the report. Do not redefine within appendices.

- With large documents, or those with many acronyms and abbreviations, a list of acronyms and abbreviations at the beginning provides a useful summary for the reader. Insert this list immediately after the table of contents and the lists of tables and figures. Also include it in the contents.
- Most acronyms do not include periods after the letters, but some do (such as F.A.C. or F.S.). Most acronyms use all capital letters, but some use lowercase (such as ppm or cfu). Follow the convention in common use for the acronym, and be consistent throughout the document.
- Try to avoid using possessives with acronyms. To refer to the projects listed in a particular BMAP, for example, say "the BMAP projects" instead of "the BMAP's projects."
- Use a lowercase "s" at the end of the acronym to explicitly indicate that you are referring to more than one. **For example:** BMAPs; TMDLs; SSACs.
- Use "a" versus "an" according to the **pronunciation** of the acronym. If the pronunciation begins with a vowel sound, then use "an." Otherwise, use "a." Use whichever pronunciation is more common (i.e., pronouncing the acronym as a single word, like NOAA or NASA, versus pronouncing the letters individually, like EPA).
- Do not use the abbreviation for chlorophyll *a* (chl *a*) in the text but spell out the term. Use "chl *a*" in table column headers only if space is limited.

Numbering Style

- Generally, spell out numbers from zero through nine using letters.
- The numbers 10 and greater should always be represented by numerals.
- Don't mix and match the use of numerals and spelled-out numbers—i.e., if there are any numerals that are 10 or greater in a paragraph, then use numerals even for numbers less than 10. **For example, use this:** "The BMAP area includes 3 lakes, 23 springs, and 7 streams. Nutrients are elevated in 4 of these springs." **Not this:** "The BMAP area includes three lakes, 23 springs, and seven streams. Nutrients are elevated in four of these springs."

- Very large numbers can be expressed in two ways. **For example:** 9,000,000 or 9 million.
- Don't put a numeral in parentheses after the spelled-out number. **For example, use this:** The report is due in seven days. **Not this:** "The report is due in seven (7) days."
- Use numerals to represent numbers containing a decimal.
- Use a zero before the decimal for numerals less than one. **For example:** write 0.5 instead of .5.
- The use of superscripts (1st, 2nd) or fractional characters (½, ¼) is not recommended. Some computer programs cannot display these characters. Microsoft Word will, by default, automatically insert them. Instead, use a regular font (i.e., 1st, 1/2). **Section 4** discusses how to turn off the Auto Correct option in Word documents.
- Percentages should be represented by numerals, followed by a hard (i.e., non-breaking) space and the % sign (ctrl-shift-space bar inserts a hard space in Word). If you are writing a nontechnical report for a broad audience, you can instead spell out "percent." Either representation is acceptable, so long as it is used consistently. In table cells, the % sign is preferred (even if you are using the word "percent" in the text of your document). But, if an entire column of data represents percentages, then it is okay to indicate in the header row that all the data are percentages, omitting the % sign after each number.
- For currency, use the dollar sign (\$) and numerals. **For example:** \$9 million.
- Try to avoid beginning a sentence with a numeral. Either restructure the sentence (preferred) or spell out the number. **But:** it is okay to use numerals in lists, even if the items in the list begin with a number.
- Use numerals for numbers with a unit of measurement, especially if the unit of measurement is abbreviated. **For example:** 9 mg/L, 5 mgd, 7 ppm. **But not:** nine mg/L, five mgd, seven ppm. **And not:** nine milligrams per liter, five million gallons per day, seven parts per million.

Legal and Regulatory Citations (State and Federal)

- Cite references to the Florida Administrative Code as follows:
 - o Title 62, F.A.C.

- o Chapter 62-303, F.A.C.
- o Rule (or Section) 62-303.300, F.A.C.
- o Subsection 62-303.300(1), F.A.C.
- o Paragraph 62-303.300(1)(a), F.A.C.
- o Subparagraph 62-303.300(1)(a)1., F.A.C. (note the period after the last number).
- o Subsubparagraph 62-303.300(1)(a)1.a., F.A.C. (note the period after the last letter).
- Capitalize Title, Chapter, etc., and F.A.C. Insert a hard space between the name and number (for example, between "Rule" and "62") and a nonbreaking hyphen between the title and chapter. Add a comma after "F.A.C." if it is used in the middle of a sentence.
- Cite references to the Florida Statutes as follows:
 - o Chapter 403, F.S.
 - o Section 403.121, F.S.
 - o Subsection 403.100(4), F.S.
 - o Paragraph 403.100(4)(a), F.S.
- Capitalize Chapter, Section, etc., and F.S. Use a hard space between the name and number (for example, between "Section" and "403"). Add a comma after "F.S." if it is used in the middle of a sentence.
- Cite references to the Code of Federal Regulations as follows:
 - o 40 CFR 65.44(a)(2)(iv).
- CFR paragraph numbering begins with letters. Use parentheses for all paragraphs and subparagraphs. Use hard spaces before and after the "CFR."

Useful Online References

- The following websites contain additional specifics on grammatical usage and writing:
 - o Jack Lynch, [Guide to Grammar and Style](#).

- Paul Brians, [Common Errors in English Usage](#).
- Mignon Fogarty, [Grammar Girl](#).
- The following website has a quick proofreading option: [Grammarly.com](#).

Table 2-1. Grammar, usage, and style

Word or Phrase	Comment
about, approximately, estimated, ~	Use these terms or symbols only when referring to an inexact, approximated, or rounded number. In other words, do not use these terms with numbers that contain more than three or four significant digits. Just state the actual number. For example: "The department assessed 14,454.2 miles of streams" or "52.63 % of land use is agricultural." But not: "The state assessed approximately 14,454.2 miles of streams," or "an estimated 52.63 % of land use in the watershed is agricultural."
accidentally	Use instead of "accidently" (there is no such word).
affect	Means "to have an impact on something or someone." For example: "Increased nutrient loads can affect water quality at the spring vent." "Affect" is not interchangeable with "effect." Affect is usually a verb, and effect is usually a noun. The usual adjective is effective. Using one of these words in a nonconventional way can be confusing. Try rewording the sentence instead!
areal	Means "the area encompassed by a specific boundary." For example: "The areal extent of the property contains three different soil types."
aerial	Means "flying through the air; a picture taken from the air using a plane or drone." For example: "Aerial photography allows DEP to determine existing land uses."
a lot	Use instead of "alot."
, and so	Use instead of "so" to connect two complete sentences. Or use a semicolon between the sentences; otherwise you will have a run-on sentence. Or, better yet, use two separate complete sentences.
assure	Means "to tell someone confidently that something will happen; to dispel doubt." "Assure" is not interchangeable with "ensure" or "insure."
because of; owing to; as a result of; caused by	Use instead of "due to" (unless something is actually "due" to somebody).
chlorophyll; chlorophyll a	All references to chlorophyll are assumed to refer to corrected chlorophyll. If for some reason the author needs to refer to uncorrected chlorophyll, the text should specify "uncorrected chlorophyll." While a number of abbreviations are used, DEP style is to spell out "chlorophyll a" in the text and in tables. The abbreviation "Chl a" can be used in tables if space is limited. Use a hard space before the a.
cite	Means "to reference something or someone." "Cite" is not interchangeable with "site."
close to; near	Use instead of "in close proximity to."
co-locate	Means "to exist at the same location."
collocate	Means "to place in proper order; to set side by side."
compared with	Use instead of "compared to," unless you are making a metaphorical comparison, such as "shall I compare thee to a summer's day?"

Word or Phrase	Comment
complement	Means "to work well with something else, complete it, act as a counterpart or missing piece, fulfill a potential."
compliment	Means "to express praise or admiration."
comprises; comprised	Use instead of "is comprised of; was comprised of."
criterion/criteria	Criterion is the singular form; one criterion. Criteria is the plural form; numerous criteria.
currently	Means "now; in the present." "Currently" is not interchangeable with "presently."
datum/data	"Datum" is the singular form; a single piece of data. "Data" is the plural form; more than one piece of data. For example: "Only a single datum was available over the period" (singular); "These data are compelling" (plural).
database	Use instead of "data base."
dataset	Use instead of "data set."
Delist List	Use instead of "delist list; delisting list; delisted list."
DEP	Use instead of "FDEP."
drain field	Use instead of "drainfield" when referring to the treatment component of a septic system.
effect	Means "the resulting impact from an action." For example: "The effect of higher nitrate levels was an increase in algal growth."
e.g.	Means "for example." Short for exempli gratia; e.g. and i.e. are not interchangeable.
email	Use instead of "e mail; e-mail."
eminent	Means "highly regarded." For example: "The keynote speaker is an eminent geologist." Often confused with "imminent" or "immanent."
ensure	Means "to make sure something happens." "Ensure" is not interchangeable with "assure" or "insure."
et al.	Means "and others." Short for et alia. Use in place of the names of multiple authors in text citations (e.g., "Copeland et al."), or when more than five or six authors are listed in a bibliography. Note: There is no period after "et"—this is equivalent to using a period after the word "and." There is always a period after "al."
etc.	Means "and so on." Short for et cetera. Use when there are additional examples that could be added to the end of a list, but you are not listing all of them for brevity or because you've already discussed them elsewhere. "Etc." does not mean "whatever" or "so draw your own conclusions." Do not use "etc." when omitting words from text you are citing; use ellipses (...) for that.
exceedance	Use instead of "exceedence."
from time to time	"From time to time" indicates irregular intervals. Use "periodically" to imply regular intervals.
full-time equivalent	Use instead of "full time equivalent." For example: "She works full time; it is a full-time equivalent position."
gray	Use instead of "grey."

Word or Phrase	Comment
groundwater	Use instead of "ground water; ground-water."
greater than/higher than	Use "greater than" for size and volume comparisons. Use "higher than" if you are referring to actual height. For example: "Values greater than 5,000 cfu/100mL indicate untreated human waste contributions to the waterbody."
historic	Means "historically significant or important." For example: "The historic flood of 1928 destroyed much of the town."
historical	Means "over time." For example: "Historical flood levels were much higher from 1920 to 1940 than they are today."
homepage	Use instead of "home page."
hydrologic	Means "having to do with water." For example: "The hydrologic cycle."
hydraulic	Means "relating to, or operated by, a liquid moving in a confined space under pressure." Hydraulics is the science of dealing with mechanical properties of liquids or fluids.
i.e.	Means "that is," "in other words." Short for id est; i.e. and e.g. are not interchangeable.
ibid.	Means "in the same place." Short for ibidem. Refers to the source cited in the preceding footnote.
immanent	Means "inherent." Often confused with "eminent" or "imminent."
imminent	Means "something is about to happen." Often confused with "eminent" or "immanent."
in	Use instead of "within" (unless you are referring to a sense of enclosure or an actual physical or geographic boundary).
insure	Means "having to do with insurance, or with insuring something or someone." "Insure" is not interchangeable with "assure" or "ensure."
its	Means the possessive form of it—i.e., belonging to it. For example: "That dog looks unhappy—its collar is too tight."
it's	Means "it is" or, occasionally, "it has." For example: "It's going to rain this afternoon."
its'	Never ever use this. (There is no such word).
land use	Use instead of "landuse."
led	Refers to "the past tense of the verb 'lead,' meaning 'to go before' or 'to conduct.' " For example: "The supervisor led the group discussion of the issue."
lead	Refers to "the noun or adjective pronounced ' lead ,' meaning 'first place' or 'at the front.' " For example: "The lead sled dog has the best view of the trail ahead."
lead	Refers to "the noun pronounced ' lead ,' i.e., the metal (atomic number 82, Pb)."
near; close to	Use instead of "in close proximity to."
nonattainment	Use instead of "non-attainment; non attainment."
noncompliance	Use instead of "non-compliance; non compliance."
nonpoint	Use instead of "non-point; non point. "
ongoing	Use instead of "on-going; on going. "
online; offline	Use instead of "on line; on-line; off line; off-line."
onsite; offsite	Use instead of "on-site; on site; off-site; off site."

Word or Phrase	Comment
op. cit.	Means "in the work cited." Short for opere citato. Refers to a previously cited work.
period; time	Use instead of "period of time; time period."
periodically	Use "periodically" to imply regular intervals. "From time to time" indicates irregular intervals.
Planning List	Use instead of "planning list."
principal	Means "first in rank or importance; a person who takes a leading role." For example: "She is the principal organizer of the event."
principle	Means "a fundamental law; a rule of action." For example: "His principles did not allow him to lie."
presently	Means "shortly; in a while." "Presently" is not interchangeable with "currently."
regardless; irrespective	Use instead of "irregardless" (there is no such word).
Region 4 (EPA)	Use instead of "Region IV (EPA)."
recordkeeping	Use instead of "record keeping."
recreate	Means "to engage in recreational activities."
re-create	Means "to create again."
runoff	Use as a noun. For example: "Stormwater runoff."
run off	Use as a verb. For example: "Water running off the site will cause contamination."
separate	Use instead of "seperate." The verb (separate) and the adjective (separate) are pronounced a bit differently (especially in the South), but they are spelled the same.
shapefile	Use instead of "shape file."
site	Means "to place or locate something (verb); a particular place or location (noun)." "Site" is not interchangeable with "cite."
springshed	Use this term interchangeably with "groundwater contribution area."
statewide	Use instead of "state wide; state-wide; Statewide."
stormwater	Use instead of "storm water; storm-water."
surface water	Use instead of "surfacewater; surface-water."
that	Use "that" to refer to agencies, not "who," even though people will carry out the actions you are writing about. For example: "The county environmental quality department is the agency that will manage the contract."
there	Use as an adverb referring to a place or position. For example: "The lake is over there." It is not interchangeable with "they're" or "their."
they're	Short for "they are." For example: "They're arriving today." It is not interchangeable with "there" or "their."
their	Use as a plural possessive pronoun. For example: "It was their choice." It is not interchangeable with "there" or "they're."
think; thought	Use instead of "believe; believed; belief." Belief is a matter of faith, while thought is not.
through/to	When listing a range of numbers, "through" more conclusively implies the inclusion of the last number in the range, while "to" does not make it clear whether the last number in the range is included. For example: "Answers 12 through 15 are weighted

Word or Phrase	Comment
	more heavily" means 15 is heavily weighted. "Answers 12 to 15" creates a pause; is 15 included?
to	Use instead of "in order to."
underway	Use as an adjective. For example: "Underway refueling."
under way	Use as an adverb. For example: "The boat was just getting under way when it hit the pier."
until	Use instead of "until such time as."
URL	Use instead of "url."
use, used, increased use	Use instead of "utilize; utilized; utilization."
Verified List	Use instead of "verified list; verification list."
wastewater	Use instead of "waste water."
waterbody	Use instead of "water body."
webpage	Use instead of "web page."
water quality	Use instead of "water-quality."
website	Use instead of "web site."
when	Use instead of "at the time that; at the time when. "
whether	Use instead of "whether or not."
who	Use instead of "that" when referring to people." For example: "She is a noted environmental scientist who has done significant research."

Section 3: Formatting Reports

Word Styles

- Documents must be formatted so they are ADA compliant. This task is made much easier if you use Word styles as you create the document. It is time consuming to reformat a report after it has already been created. The styles provide a basic organizational structure that allows the reading software to move through the report logically and consistently, without skipping heading levels. (They also enable you to develop an automated Table of Contents, List of Figures, and List of Tables, as well as an outline when a document is converted to .pdf format.) **Section 4** and **Appendix B** in this document contain additional details on how to make documents ADA compliant.

Cover Page

- Use the Communications Office format for the cover page (see the example on the following page):
 - Begin text 10 lines down.
 - Report title: Times New Roman, bold, italic, 28 point, centered.
 - Name of division submitting report: Times New Roman, bold, 16 point, centered.
 - "Florida Department of Environmental Protection": Times New Roman, bold, 16 point, centered.
 - **Always** include the date of the report: Times New Roman, bold, 16 point, centered.
 - DEP logo, mailing address, and website: bottom of page, flush right.

Title of Report

**Office of Your Division
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
October 9, 2015**

3900 Commonwealth Boulevard, MS 41
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000
www.dep.state.fl.us



Table of Contents

- It is not necessary to have a table of contents in every document—only if the report is longer than 15 to 20 pages.
- Tables and figures in the report should not be listed in the table of contents. Set up separate lists of tables and figures after the table of contents.
- Set up the contents to include two heading levels. Use 12-point bold Times New Roman.
- Don't use all caps or small caps.

Headings

- Use the following formats for headings:
 - Heading 1: Times New Roman, 16 point, bold, centered, upper and lower case. Use a horizontal line under first-level headings (i.e., chapter or section headings) to emphasize them. Insert a 12-point space before and a 12-point space after the heading.
 - Heading 2: Times New Roman, 14 point bold, left justified, upper and lower case. Insert a 6-point space before and after the heading.
 - Heading 3: Times New Roman, 12 point, bold italic, left justified, upper and lower case. Insert a 6-point space before and after the heading.
 - Heading 4: Times New Roman, 12 point, bold, left justified, upper and lower case. Insert a 6-point space before and after the heading.
 - Heading 5: Times New Roman, 12 point, regular, left justified, small caps, upper and lower case. Insert a 6-point space before and after the heading.
- Because headings are in boldface type, it is okay to use italics to show emphasis in the headings.
- Subsection numbering (1.0, 1.1, 1.1.1, etc.) is optional.

Text

- Use 12 point Times New Roman.
- Use left-aligned, unjustified paragraphs. Set page margins at 1 inch on the top, bottom, left, and right. Make header and footer margins 0.5 inches for the whole document.
- Use single spacing (or the default Word 2016 spacing of 1.08) for text, with 12 points between paragraphs.
- If you need a paragraph to stay together (i.e., to not break across a page), do not manually insert a page break before the paragraph. Instead, select the text you want to keep together, click Home/Paragraph/Line and Page Breaks and check the "Keep with next" option.
- Use 0.5" tab settings.
- Use quotation marks around quoted material or to call attention to the actual word itself. Use boldface type to show emphasis, not italics. Underlined blue text indicates hyperlinks.
- Italicize Latin nomenclature for animal and plant identification. Italicize and use an initial cap for the genus name, and italicize and use all lowercase letters for the epithet. For example: *Felis concolor*; *Homo sapiens*.

Lists

- For lists, use 12 point regular Times New Roman (not italics), with single spacing (or the Word 2016 default spacing of 1.08), solid bullets for individual items, and 12 point spaces between bullets. Indent the margins 0.5" on the left and right.
- For sub-bullets, use 12 point regular Times New Roman (not italics) with single spacing (or the Word 2016 default of 1.08), open bullets for individual items, and 6 point spaces between subbullets. Indent the margins 1.0" on the left and 0.5" on the right.

Text Citations

- List the author's last name and the year of publication in parentheses. It is not necessary to insert a comma between the author and the date. **For example:** (DEP 2012). For more than one author, list the first author's name and then et al. (meaning "and others"). **For example:** (Copeland et al. 1999). **Note:** There is never a period after "et" but always a period after "al."

Tables

- Number tables sequentially within each section and appendix. Use the following formatting: Table 1-1. Table title, Table 1-2, Table 2-1, Table A-1, Table A-2, etc.
- Keep table headings as brief as possible.
- To label a table, select the table, right-click on it, and select "Insert Caption."
- Format table headings in bold 12 point Times New Roman, centered. Use an initial cap for the first word and for proper nouns. Don't use italics (except for emphasis) or all caps or small caps. Insert a 6-point space before and after the table heading.
- Center each table on the page.
- Format column headings in bold 10 point Times New Roman, centered.
- Use the U.S. Government Printing Office style, which consists of initial caps except for a, an, and, as, the, at, but, by, for, in, nor, of, on, or, to, and up.
- Use shading for the header row to differentiate it from the rest of the table. Don't use italics (except for emphasis) or all caps or small caps. **Table 3-1** shows a basic sample format for tables.
- If a table has many columns, reduce the font size to 9 point or even 8 point so it will fit on the page. Switch the page layout to Landscape format if you need more width.
- If a table has notes, they should go after the table heading and before the table, not at the end of the table.
- Table formatting should be consistent throughout a document. Making and formatting tables in Word has grown in complexity; there are thousands of options for formatting. The format shown in **Table 3-1** represents the default.
- If a document is long enough to have a table of contents, the tables should be numbered and titled, and a list of tables should be inserted after the table of contents.

Table 3-1. Sample table format

Insert table notes at the beginning of the table, just below the table heading, in 8 point Times New Roman, single spaced. Don't put them after the table.

Column Header (format text so it aligns with the bottom of the row)	Insert Additional Columns as Needed
When you insert a table, under Table Properties, select "Options..." and set the top and bottom default cell margins to 0.03 inches to ensure the text is not crowded.	Adjust the column widths as necessary by clicking and dragging the column separators.
Align the table border with the text margins.	
Table text is 10 point regular Times New Roman, centered.	
Center the table on the page.	
Always use both boldface type and shading in cells to indicate emphasis in a table. Don't use color alone for emphasis, as a colorblind or visually impaired reader may not be able to differentiate the text. Use underlining only for hyperlinks. Insert a note immediately below the table heading to explain what the boldface type and shading mean.	Use a % sign instead of "percent" in tables and add a % sign to all numbers that are percentages. Or define via the column header that all the data in the column are percentages. See Section 2 for details.
Repeat header rows if the table flows from one page to another page (or pages).	
Use a single-line border around the outside of the table and a single-line grid for the interior cells.	
Adjust the row heights as necessary by clicking and dragging the row separators.	
If there is a Total row at the bottom, use boldface type and shading to differentiate it from the rest of the table.	

Figures

- Number figures sequentially within each section and appendix. Use the following format: Figure 1-1. Figure caption, Figure 1-2, Figure 2-1, Figure A-1, Figure A-2, etc.
- Center each figure on the page.
- All graphics in your documents should be captioned. The caption should go below the image.
- To caption a graphic, right-click on it and select "Insert Caption." Or you can select the figure caption and label it as "Caption" under Styles.
- Keep figure headings as brief as possible.
- Format figure headings in Times New Roman, 12 point, bold, centered. Use initial caps only for the first word and for proper nouns. Don't use italics

(except for emphasis) or all caps or small caps. Insert a 6-point space before and after the figure heading.

Page Headers

- Headers should include the document title (shortened as necessary to fit), the date, and the word "draft" or "final" if applicable.
- Headers are located at the top of the page in a separate field from the main body of the report. To access the field, go to Insert/Header and click on Edit Header.
- Use 10 point Times New Roman italics, centered.
- Insert a 0.5 point line and a vertical space under the header to separate it from the main text.

Page Footers

- Footers should consist of the current page number and total number of pages, using a "Page X of Y" format.
- Footers are located at the bottom of the page in a separate field from the main body of the report. To access the field, go to Insert/Footer and click on Edit Footer.
- Use 10 point Times New Roman italics, centered.
- Don't put a page number on the cover page of your report.
- Recommendation—use consecutive Arabic numerals for all page numbers (instead of using Roman numerals for front matter).

References

- Use 12 point Times New Roman.
- Use left-aligned, unjustified paragraphs.
- Use single spacing (or the default Word 2016 spacing of 1.08) for text, with 12 points between paragraphs.
- Insert a 12-point space between individual references.
- Spell out and embed email addresses upon first use, then can refer to the email later though whatever text makes sense. **For example:**

Linda.Lord@dep.state.fl.us, upon first use. **And:** upon subsequent use, "Please [email Linda](#) with any comments."

- For documents referenced in the report,
 - Do not provide the URL to the document.
 - Do not embed a link to the document.
 - Do not provide the URL to the main web page where the document can be found.
 - Do not embed a link to the main web page where the document can be found.
 - Do not include a "helpful links" or similar section.
 - Do include the document in the references section, following standard citation practice. If this includes citing an online reference, then cite it appropriately (web page name, "accessed on," etc.)

Hyphens and Dashes

- Hyphens are short dashes (-) that connect two closely related things, including word combinations with a single meaning (tie-in, off-site, two-thirds) or words used as a compound modifier (toll-free call, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, 50-mile-long canal). A hyphen is also used to divide a word at the end of a line if needed.
 - Words with common prefixes such as "re," "pro," or "semi," are usually unhyphenated unless the result is long and unwieldy, or there are repeated letters (non-native vs. nonnative). Common suffixes such as "wide" or "like" are generally unhyphenated (statewide, leaflike). Prefixes such as "ex-" and "self-" are generally hyphenated.
 - Words ending in "ly" are usually **not** hyphenated when used before a verb or noun. **For example:** publicly regulated. **Not:** publicly-regulated.
 - Don't insert a space before and after a hyphen.

- Use a "hard" or nonbreaking hyphen when you do not want a hyphenated word to break across a line. Hold down the Ctrl and Shift keys as you type the hyphen. Or click on "Insert," followed by "Symbol," followed by "Special Characters," and select "Nonbreaking hyphen."
- En dashes are slightly longer than a hyphen (–). These are used for ranges, such as dates (May–September, 2000–2012) or page numbers (155–164), and to connect a prefix or suffix to an open compound (pre–World War II, water quality–based regulations). In Word, you can insert an en dash by clicking on "Insert" followed by "Symbol..." followed by "Special Characters." Or use the numbered keypad: make sure the Number Lock key is selected, and then enter Alt+0150.
 - It's not necessary to insert a space before and after an en dash but if you do, be consistent throughout the document.
- Em dashes are longer than en dashes (—). They are used to set off independent clauses—meaning tangential asides like this one—from the rest of a sentence. They are flexible enough to function as commas, parentheses, or colons but should be used sparingly. In Word, you can insert an em dash by clicking on "Insert" followed by "Symbol..." followed by "Special Characters." Or use the numbered keypad: make sure the Number Lock key is selected, and then enter Alt+0151.
 - It's not necessary to insert a space before and after an em dash but if you do, be consistent throughout the document.
 - In a bibliographic listing, if an author's name is repeated in a subsequent entry, use three consecutive em dashes and a period as a stand in for the author's name.
- Sections of a document that are bulleted lists of sentences should be written as sentences with an initial capital letter and the appropriate end-of-sentence punctuation, as seen above.
- Each item in a bulleted list should end with a period.

Section 4: ADA Compliance

The most important formatting guidance for compliance with Section 508 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is as follows (we often refer to this as making documents "ADA compliant").

- **Always create and maintain your document structure using Word styles.** A document cannot be made ADA compliant unless you assign individual Word styles to parts of the document, such as different levels of headings. Word has both "built-in" styles as well as styles that you can create and name yourself. Reformatting to set up styles can be very time consuming if it has to be done after a document is created. (Word styles are also very useful in creating the Table of Contents, List of Figures, and List of Tables in a document. In addition, they provide the outline structure when a document is converted to .pdf format.)
- **Turn off autoformatting for smart quotes, apostrophes, fraction characters (½), and superscripts (1st).** quotes and apostrophes into curly marks instead of straight marks. It also converts fraction characters (½) and superscripts (1st) into regular characters (1/2, 1st). However, these characters are not part of the default character set that computers use to talk to each other. Therefore, the way in which they show up and print out on someone else's system can vary widely. They may appear as a quotation mark, or an empty white square, or a whole line converted to a different font.
- **Always insert alternative tags (also called alt tags) for tables, text boxes, and figures.** This special labeling process allows a visually challenged reader to use the software to move through a table in a logical, consistent way, to read the contents of a text box, and to understand the general content of a graphic even if the details may not be visible.
- **Always embed hyperlinks in documents, including email addresses.** **However, for print-only documents, spell out the full email address.** The software reader reads through the web address one letter at a time, which is time consuming and inefficient. The full text of all the hyperlinks in an appendix titled "Important Links" allows readers with only a hard copy of a document to find a website. ADA compliance does not require full email addresses to be included in the appendix, but it is helpful if the links in the document are embedded.

Appendix B contains additional technical details on all of these formatting issues.

Section 5: Presentations

Think about all the presentations you have seen over the years. How many were really interesting and memorable? Probably only a handful.

A slide-based presentation can be a powerful and useful tool for communicating your message to an audience. However, it also has the potential to shift the focus away from you—the person making the presentation. Rather than augmenting your presentation, for example, your slides can easily morph into an obnoxious leading character who distracts and confuses your listeners. In the meantime, your message can easily get lost.

You, the speaker, should be the focus. Be engaging. Involve the audience in your presentation. Don't spoon feed them. If a presentation is poorly organized, has no narrative flow, is uninteresting or weak, or if you simply read the text of your slides, the audience will lose interest. And if that happens, no presentation—no matter how many fancy special effects you use—will be engaging or effective.

Before you come up with any kind of presentation, ask yourself the following questions:

- Why are you creating presentation slides? Can you present without slides? If so, do!
- Can you create a handout that provides vital information and not show the presentation slides? Then do!
- Are you creating the slides simply so your audience can take hard copies of your slides with them as notes? If so, don't!

There are many good alternatives to using slides. Prepare a written report or fact sheet or other document with a more suitable format for the information you are trying to convey. Presentations and slides should be a guide to the material you have prepared and are presenting; they should not actually be the material. Presentation slides limit the information you can convey in (at least) two main ways. Their physical size prevents detailed technical information and analysis to be included in a legible manner. And their hierarchical organization forces a bullet-list cognitive style on you and the audience, when another approach could be more effective.

So if you've decided to create presentation slides, employ the following, which are similar to the general tips listed in **Section 1** for better writing.

- Why are you presenting what you're presenting? Are you telling a story, explaining a scientific subject, or making an argument to persuade someone to do something?
- Are you speaking to technical experts or to a lay audience, and what are the most important points you want them to take away from the presentation?

- Is your presentation organized, does it tell a story in a logical way, and is it concise and to the point?
- Are you advocating for a particular decision, action, or recommendation? If so, build your narrative argument around whatever you are advocating for and re-emphasize your conclusion at the end.
- Make effective word choices and use clear sentences with active verbs.
- Make your points and move on. Don't ramble or go off on tangents.

The information in **Section 2** on style, grammar, consistency, and usage for written reports also applies to presentations. In addition, there are some special formatting considerations for presentation slides.

- Follow the department's identity guidelines, using available templates.
- Your audience should be able to read the presentation from anywhere in the room without squinting. If you are in a large room, enlarge the font as much as possible.
- If the lights will be on in the room, increase the contrast by using dark text on a light background.
- Avoid using light text on a dark background, as it is hard for some people to read.
- Some color combinations—such as red/green, brown/green, blue/black, and blue/purple—are also hard to read and should be avoided.
- Don't include nonessential information, and don't crowd your slides.
- Every word and image should count. Each one should help convey your message in the strongest possible way.
- Use the minimum number of slides—just enough to contain your major points with three to five subpoints. A useful rule of thumb is one slide per minute.
- Use excerpts instead of whole paragraphs or long chunks of text.
- Alternate text-heavy slides with slides that contain more empty space or photos.
- Enhance the readability of your presentation by using a regular, easy-to-read, sans serif font. Use the same font throughout. Don't use all caps, italics, or script fonts. Punctuate sparingly, but consistently.

- Capitalize the first letter in each sentence but otherwise don't use initial caps except for proper nouns and names.
- Use "call-outs" to emphasize important pieces of information in a detailed, hard-to-read report.
- Don't just read text straight from the slides—your audience is quite capable of reading them, too. Include key ideas, phrases, and words in your presentation, and use them as a springboard for additional discussion to keep your audience engaged.
- Know your audience, and tailor your presentation to their tastes and expectations. Use humor and special effects that are appropriate to that audience.
- Use special effects sparingly. These include animations, clip art, fancy transitions, fly-ins, and sounds.
- Distribute copies of your presentation or other handouts after you have finished speaking, not before. Otherwise, they are a distraction to your audience.
- As with writing a report, once you have created your presentation, let it rest for a while (even if it is only for a few hours), and then go back and revise it.
- When revising, streamline, simplify, and cut as much as possible. Remove nonessential slides. Replace whole sentences with phrases, and replace phrases with key words. Streamline and reduce punctuation. Remove superfluous and distracting clip art and special effects.

Appendix A. Proofreading Marks

Editorial instruction	Notation in margin	Notation in text
<i>delete letter(s) or words indicated</i>		delete please from the sentence
<i>delete and close up</i>		delete and close up afterwards
<i>leave unchanged (stet)</i>		disregard all marks above the dots
<i>start new paragraph</i>		end. <u>This</u> is the beginning
<i>change punctuation</i>		change this punctuation please /
<i>insert text or character</i>		insert <u>here</u> please
<i>insert period</i>		insert period here ^
<i>insert comma</i>		comma ^ comma, comma
<i>insert apostrophe</i>		proofreaders marks ^
<i>insert colon</i>		insert colon ^ then proceed
<i>insert semicolon</i>		insert semicolon ^ please insert
<i>insert quotation marks</i>		^ insert! ^ exclaimed the typographer
<i>insert question mark</i>		was that a question ^
<i>query to author is encircled</i>		the <u>question</u> remains
<i>insert hyphen</i>		this list has been tailor ^ made
<i>insert en or em dash</i>		exclamation ^ a happy expression
<i>capitalize</i>		<u>start</u> with a capital letter
<i>change to lowercase</i>		TNS should be lowercase
<i>change to bold</i>		please bold the word <u>bold</u>
<i>wrong font</i>		please correct this <u>font</u>
<i>close up, bring together</i>		close <u>u</u> p this space immediately
<i>insert space</i>		insert space ^ here please
<i>transpose</i>		there has been a slight <u>up</u> mix
<i>move to next line</i>		avoid word breaks when <u>pos</u> -
<i>superscript</i>		superscript this number <u>1</u>
<i>run in</i>		<u>watch out</u> ^ for awkward spacing

Appendix B. Making Documents ADA Compliant in Word

How to Use Word Styles (Built-In and Otherwise)

- When you click on the Home tab in a document, there is always a section of the ruler at the top of the page dedicated to Styles. It lists the styles that are currently available in the document and shows a small alphabetical sample of each individual style.
- The list of styles in your ruler is flexible. Existing styles can be renamed or altered, new styles can be added, and styles not in use can be removed. It is much easier to work on a document if the styles shown in your ruler are the styles actually used in your document.
- To format the different parts of a document, simply select a chunk of text. Click on Home and then select one of the styles in the ruler. The format will switch over the new style. If you right-click on the style name, a drop-down menu will appear that allow you to modify the style as you wish, or to select everything in the document that is in in a particular style.
- Word already has "built-in" styles that are intrinsic to the software. This means that some specific heading names—such as Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.—are "fixed" styles. This means that you cannot create another style with the same name. If you try to do this, a message will pop up letting you know that a built-in style already exists with this name. However, you can reformat any built-in styles to your liking. Or, if you need an alternative, you can create your own styles under a slightly different name, such as Heading1, or Heading 1A, or Header 1, or Header1, or something similar.
- The process also works in the other direction. The software allows you to reformat a piece of text as you wish, right-click on a style name, and select "Update [Style Name] To Match Selection."
- Don't just format everything in "Normal" style and then increase or decrease the font size for various parts of the report. The document will not be ADA compliant.
- An existing ADA-compliant document can serve as a useful template that will save you a lot of time, because the styles are already set up and don't have to be re-created individually. Just copy and paste chunks of an existing ADA-compliant document that already contains the styles you want into the new document. Of course, this extraneous text will have to be deleted, but the styles themselves should remain and won't have to be re-created individually.

- For ADA compliance, the most important styles to set up are the different levels of headings. Depending on the length and complexity of your document, this could be as many as four or five heading levels.
- You cannot skip heading levels in a document, or it will not pass the ADA compliance check. You must set up your heading styles (Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.) and use them in consecutive order. For example, you cannot go from Heading 1 to Heading 3.
- Once you have "imported" the styles you want into your document, you can customize or alter them as needed. If you right-click on an individual style in the ruler, the drop-down box lists the different options available to you. To modify a style, right-click on the name and select "Modify" to change the desired characteristics.
- When you click on the arrow at the bottom right of the Styles section in your ruler, a drop-down list will appear listing all the available styles in Word (not just the short list in your document). To add one of these styles to your ruler, right-click on the individual style name and a drop-down menu will appear. Select "Add to Style Gallery" and click OK. There are also other options listed, including modifying the style.
- To create a completely new style, click on the arrow at the bottom right of the Styles section in your ruler, and then click on the box labeled "New Styles" at bottom left. A box labeled "Create New Style from Formatting" will pop up. Select the options you want. **Important Note:** If you are creating or reformatting a style using this approach, make sure that you do not choose a heading style for "Style based on . . ." Otherwise, the ADA compliance software will likely flag it as an error.
- While you are in the process of setting up your document, it is also useful to set up table and figure headings, as you will need these to build an automated Table of Contents, List of Figures, and List of Tables. These headings are usually labeled Table, or Table Heading, or Figure, or Caption, or something similar.
- Other useful styles to include in your available list include TOC 1, TOC 2, TOC 3, and Table of Figures. These will help you reformat the Table of Contents, List of Figures, and List of Tables as needed once they have been created.

How to Turn Off Autoformatting

- Turn off smart quotes and apostrophes under both the "AutoFormat" and "AutoFormat as you type" tabs in Word (under File/Options/Proofing/

AutoCorrect Options). Once smart quotes are turned off, do a global Find and Replace for quotation marks and another Find and Replace for apostrophes to replace any existing smart characters in the document.

- Turn off the options for fraction characters ($\frac{1}{2}$) and superscripts (1st) under File/Options/Proofing/AutoCorrect Options, under both the "AutoFormat" and "AutoFormat as you type" tabs. Once fraction characters and superscripts are turned off, scan through the document to make sure neither of these is still lurking in it.

How to Add Alt Tags to Tables, Graphics, and Text Boxes

Tables

- All tables in your documents should be alt tagged.
- An alt tag is required for the header row in each table. You cannot have more than one alt tagged row per table.
- To insert an alt tag for a table, select the first row of the table, right-click on that row, and select "Table Properties" from the drop-down menu. Under Options, check "Allow row to break across pages" and "Repeat as header row at the top of each page." Click OK. The table is now ADA compliant.
- Don't use tables for anything other than tabular data. For forms, use tabs and form fields.
- Maintain a consistent table structure. Don't include any merged cells or rows in a table. Merged cells at the top of a table or along the side of a table can be made ADA compliant by splitting the cells and repeating the information. Sometimes this information can be placed outside the table as regular text.
- Having blank cells in a table is okay.
- However, don't use multiple blank cells in summary rows. Either locate summary text outside the table, or put it in a separate table just below the first one.
- For highlighting cells in a table, use both shading (for sighted readers) and boldface font (for visually impaired readers) or an asterisk. Insert a note at the beginning of the table explaining what the shading and boldface font and asterisk mean.
- If there is absolutely no way to reformat a table to make it ADA compliant, convert it to an image, paste it into the document, and insert an alt tag. However, don't use this approach if there is any possibility of making the table

ADA compliant in Word, because a visually challenged person using the software reader has no access to the information in the table if it is converted to a graphic. In some cases, this means the table will have to be retyped if it does not exist in another format that can be converted to Word.

- Insert notes at the beginning of the table, just after the table heading, and not at the end of the table.
- Tables should flow from page to page, rather than being constructed separately on each page. To continue a header row onto subsequent pages, select the header, go to Layout, and select Repeat Header Rows.
- If your table flows over multiple pages, check the bottom row on each page to make sure it does not flow over to the next page. If it does, select that row and go to Layout/Properties/Row. Uncheck the box that says "Allow row to break across pages."

Graphics

- All graphics in your documents should have an alternative tag, or alt tag. An alt tag is a special way of labeling the contents of an image. While the software cannot read the image itself, it can read an alt tag so that a visually challenged reader has a general idea of what the image contains. Usually the alt tag consists of the entire figure caption, including the figure number, or a description of a city or county logo—for example, "Florida Department of Environmental Protection logo."
- To insert an alt tag for a graphic, right-click on the graphic and select "Format Picture" from the drop-down menu. A box will pop up on the right-hand side of your screen titled "Format Picture." In the "Format Picture" box, click on the second icon from the right (the one that looks like a box with a cross in it). Two empty boxes will appear, labeled "Title" and "Description." Insert the figure number and title, or the description of the city or agency logo, under "Description." Leave the "Title" box empty. The graphic now has an alt tag.
- The figure below contains a regular caption and has also been alt tagged.



Figure 1-1. DEP dive team examining underwater rocks/boulders

- Graphics with text overlays, charts, etc., should have a single alt tag. If the figure is a chart constructed from many separate pieces of data, save it in another format such as a .jpg or .bmp file and then label it with an alt tag.
- Alternatively, take a screenshot of the graphic, crop the borders, reinsert it into the document, and resize it. Then label it with an alt tag.

Text Boxes

- All text boxes in your documents should be alt tagged.
- To insert an alt tag for a text box, right-click on the edge of the graphic and select "Format Shape" from the drop-down menu. A box will pop up on the right-hand side of your screen titled "Format Shape." Click on the second icon from the right (the one that looks like a box with a cross in it), labeled "Format Shape." Two empty boxes will appear, labeled "Title" and "Description." Insert the complete contents of the text box under "Description" (not "Title") and click on the "X" next to "Format Shape." The text box now has an alt tag.

How to Embed Hyperlinks and URLs

- In your document, click on the link or email address you want to embed and open it up in Internet Explorer. Right click on the address box at the top. This will select the address and also open up a drop-down menu. Select Copy. Minimize the IE window. Go back to your document and select the actual text to be embedded. Click on Insert/Hyperlink. A box labeled Insert Hyperlink will pop up. The text you just selected from your document will appear in the "Text to display" box. Insert your cursor into the Address field at the bottom and use Ctrl + V on the keyboard to paste in the link. Click OK. The link will

now be embedded and should show up in blue and underlined. If it doesn't, it has not been inserted correctly.

- If possible, use broad, generic hyperlinks to improve the chances that they will work in the future. For example: refer to the TMDL Program website at instead of the link for a specific document such as the Marshall Lake TMDL report.
- List the full text of the hyperlinks in an appendix titled "Important Links." This allows readers who only have a hard copy of a document to find the website or email address.

Appendix C: Important Links

The following lists the complete addresses for websites in this document, in the order in which they appear in the text:

- **Cover page:** DEP website – floridadep.gov.
- **Introduction:** DEAR intranet page – <https://www.fldepnet.org/content/dear>.
- **Introduction:** Greg DeAngelo email address – gregory.deangelo@dep.state.fl.us.
- **Section 2:** Jack Lynch, Guide to Grammar and Style – <http://www.andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Writing>.
- **Section 2:** Paul Brians, Common Errors in English Usage – <http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/errors/errors.html>.
- **Section 2:** Mignon Fogarty, Grammar Girl – <http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/grammar-girl>.
- **Section 2:** Grammarly.com – <https://www.grammarly.com/?AT3296=1>.