

Hotmail Documentation Style Guide

Version 2.2

This Style Guide exists to ensure that there is a consistent voice among all Hotmail documents. It is an evolving document—additions or changes may be made at any time. Changed sections are indicated by an asterisk (*).

This document was written for end user documentation—the Help Center, Context Sensitive Help, and Customer Service Autorespond Messages. The last section of the document contains the specific style guidelines for internal documentation and for the Hotmail Web site.

Much of this document is based on the *Microsoft Manual of Style for Technical Publications*. Parts of this document are based on or taken directly from *The Chicago Manual of Style 14th Edition*. Definitions and usage notes are based on or taken directly from *The American Heritage Dictionary Third Edition*.

A

Abbreviations & Acronyms*

Do not abbreviate the word “message.”

Incorrect: msg.

In general, the only acceptable abbreviations are:

a.m.	PC
bps	p.m.
IP	UK
K	US
MB	

Do not spell out “megabyte,” use “MB.”

Spell out an acronym the first time it is used in a document, if it is necessary that a user knows what the acronym stands for.

Internet Service Provider (ISP)

Other acronyms are located at the end of this document.

Use editorial judgment when determining whether or not an acronym should be spelled out.

Note: Technically, an abbreviation is a shortened form of a word, an acronym is a pronounceable word, and an initialism is an abbreviation formed from the initial letters of words in a phrase, pronounced as individual letters (for example, SDK). In this guide, acronym is used to refer to an initialism.

Above

Do not use to mean earlier in a book or online document; use “previous,” “preceding,” or “earlier” instead.

Try not to use “above” as an adjective preceding a noun, as in “the above section.” To show a cross-reference to another Web page, use a specific HTML hyperlink. Do not make assumptions about a user’s path through a site. Even if you refer to a location on the same scrollable Web page, make the reference itself a link. Do not use “above.”

See What Is a Copyright?

You can also use “earlier” to refer to a chapter or section heading.

See also “Cross-references”

Access

Acceptable to use in the sense of accessing data or a process, especially in programming documentation. Otherwise, avoid as a verb, as in “access a program.”

It’s technical jargon. Use “log on to,” “start,” or another similar term instead.

It is OK to use the terms “email access” and “Internet access.”

You may also use to describe Hotmail’s universal access.

You can access your Hotmail from anywhere in the world.

Accessible Writing

Avoid directional terms (left, right, up, down) if possible. Individuals with cognitive impairments may have difficulty interpreting them as do blind users relying of screen-reading software.

Do not rely solely on images to explain a procedure.
Highlight key information and put it near the beginning of text.
Keep the number of steps in a procedure short, less than seven if possible.
Keep sentence structure simple.
Provide clear, concise descriptions of the product and initial setup.
Use accepted standards for accessible Web pages.

- Always provide alt text for graphic images. For simple images a brief but accurate description is enough. Use an asterisk (*) for bullets and leave blank information about invisible placeholders. For more complex images, provide a link to a separate page with more details.
- Provide text links in addition to image maps.
- Write link text that is meaningful but brief. Do not use phrases such as “click here.” Use links that can stand alone in a list.
- Use the <TITLE> tag to distinguish links and names in image maps from ambiguous or duplicate text.
- Plan links and image map links so that navigation with the TAB key moves from left to right and top to bottom, not randomly.
- If you use frames, provide alternate pages without them.
- Make sure tables make sense when read from left to right, top to bottom. Note that Microsoft Internet Explorer versions 3 and 4 have some different and strict requirements.
- Provide very simple alt text for images used as icons, such as “bullet” or “,” not “Little blue ball.”

Use bullets or headings to emphasize important points.
See also the Microsoft Accessibility and Disabilities site at
<http://www.microsoft.com/enable>

Actions

Use “sort by” not “sort on.”

You can sort by date, sender, or size.

A user chooses a command from a menu.

From the **Edit** menu, choose **Preferences**.

A user goes to a page when he or she enters a URL.

Go to <http://www/hotmail.com>

A user is “taken to a page” (or “taken back to a page”) when he/she clicks a button or hyperlink.

Click the **Options** button. You are taken to the Options page.

See also “Click,” “Choose,” or “Select.”

Active Voice vs. Passive Voice

Use the active voice, which tells who or what is performing the action of the sentence. Avoid the passive voice, except when necessary to avoid an awkward or wordy sentence; when the subject is unknown or is not the subject of the sentence; or in error messages, in which the user is the subject and may feel blamed for the error.

Correct: You can store as many messages as you need in your account.

Incorrect: Your account can store as many messages as you need.

Use the active voice for column headings in tables that list user actions.

Active vs. Current

Use “active” or “open,” not “current,” to refer to open and operating windows, programs, documents, files, devices, or portions of the screen (such as an “open window” or “active cell”).

Use “current” to refer to a drive, directory, folder, or other element that does not itself change.

Affect vs. Effect

The spellings of these words are often confused.

“Affect” is a verb meaning “to influence.”

“Effect” is a noun meaning “a result.”

affect (v): influence on or effect a change in

The time of day at which you check you email may affect the speed of the connection.

effect (n): something brought about by a cause or an agent; a result. 2. The power to produce an outcome or achieve a result; influence

Spam has a terrible effect on network traffic.

Anthropomorphism

In general, avoid giving hardware or software human characteristics or emotions. It’s acceptable to say that programs or commands do things, but avoid using words that convey emotions (refuses, wants), behavior (allows, forces, tries), and intellect (knows, realizes).

Incorrect: The server refuses to let you in.

Correct: The server denies access.

Incorrect: Hotmail knows who you are.

Correct: Hotmail recognizes your Login Name.

Words to watch out for:

allow	interested in
answer	know
assume	own
behave	persist
capture	prevent (OK when describing security)
decide	realize
demand	recognize
discard	refuse
ignore	remember
impersonate	think
inherit	understand
	wait

In some cases, giving a program human characteristics is all right, as long as it’s intentional.

The electronic janitor empties the trash.

D

Document Conventions*

Acronyms—all uppercase

a.m., p.m.—all lowercase, with periods

Buttons—quoted or bold, initial caps

Plain Text: The “Compose” button

HTML: The **Compose** button

Checkboxes—plain

Code—monospace. This includes parameters, keywords, and variables.

Commands—quoted or bold

Plain Text: From the “Edit” menu, choose “Preferences.”

HTML: From the **Edit** menu, choose **Preferences**.

Dialog Box Titles—bold, initial caps

Plain Text: The Preferences dialog box

HTML: The **Preferences** dialog box

Fields—single quotes

The ‘To:’ field

File Extensions—all lowercase, unless referring to an actual filename or the file type.

You can attach GIF and JPEG files to your messages.

The file has a .gif extension.

Folders—italicized, initial caps

Plain Text: The Drafts folder

HTML: The *Drafts* folder

The Hotmail Help Center—initial caps

The Hotmail Help Center

Links—quoted or bold

Plain Text: The “Compose” link

HTML: The **Compose** link

Menus—quoted or bold

Plain Text: The “Edit” menu

HTML: The **Edit** menu

New Terms or Emphasis—italicized or all caps

Plain Text: Hotmail does NOT sell email lists.

HTML: Hotmail does *not* sell email lists.

Pages—capitalized

The Compose page

Placeholders (in code and in user input)—monospace, italics

User Input—monospace, indented ½ inch from the margin if necessary

Type: robyn

URLs—All lowercase; break long URLs before a forward slash, if necessary; do not hyphenate

I

International Considerations

50% of Hotmail users are international.

Avoid jargon.

Avoid long and complex sentences.

Define and use the appropriate terminology, according to the software and this guide.

Do not use colloquialisms.

Follow standard English word order.

Symbols and metaphors do not always translate well.

Some symbols common in the United States may not be recognized in other countries. A U.S. style mailbox, for instance, may not mean the same thing in other places.

Text expands in length during translation. In most cases, text increases by 10-15%; in some languages, localized text can be as much as 30-35% longer than the source text.

Use commas correctly.

Use correct terminology and consistent wording.

Use only one term to name a concept.

“Create a folder” and “add a folder” mean the same thing, but use different words. Stick to one term throughout.

Use verbs as verbs and nouns as nouns.

Correct: Edit your personal profile.

Incorrect: Make edits to your personal profile.

Use words and phrases consistently.

When using scenarios, use only those that can be translated into other countries. For example, certain items that are perfectly “normal” in the U.S. may be considered luxury items in other countries.

L

Localization vs. Translation

“Localization” refers to the process of making a program appropriate for the countries or part of the world in which it will be used. It includes changing the software itself as necessary. For example, sorting tables may have to follow a different character order in different languages.

“Translation” refers to the process of translating words or documents only into another language. Translation is just one part of localization.

See also “International Considerations.”

S

Spam

We do not want to use the word “spam” by itself (Hormel has pursued others).

Use “unsolicited bulk email” instead.

If you receive unsolicited bulk email (aka “spam”), forward it to abuse@hotmail.com

Microsoft Word Styles

This section lists the Microsoft Word styles, their properties, and their shortcuts. Do not use a style that is not listed here.

The Styles

Body Text Indent

Normal + Indent Left .5
Shortcut: Alt + [

Body Text Indent 2

Normal + Indent Left 1
Shortcut: Alt + Shift + {

Body Text Indent 3

Normal + Indent Left 1.5
Shortcut: Ctrl + Shift + {

Default Paragraph Font

Character style.
The font of the underlying paragraph style. Word created. Cannot modify or delete.

Footer

Normal + Font: 10 pt, Tabs 3" centered, 6" right flush

Letter

Normal + Font: 16 pt, Bold, Keep with next
Shortcut: Alt + L

List Bullet

Normal + Indent: Left .25", Hanging .25", Bulleted, Tabs: .25".
Shortcut: Alt + B

Normal

Garamond, 12 pt, English (US), Char scale 100%, Flush left, Line spacing single,
Widow/orphan control, Body text
Shortcut: Alt + N

Numbered

Normal + (FE) English (US), Indent: Left .25", Hanging .25", Numbered, Tabs:
.25"

Page Number

Character Style.
Default Paragraph Font + Font: Garamond

Plain

Character Style
Default Paragraph Font + Font: Courier New 10pt
Shortcut: Alt + T

Plain Text

Normal + Font Courier New 10pt, Left

PlainI

Plain + Italic
Shortcut: Alt + I

Section

Subtitle + Font: 12pt
Shortcut: Alt + S

Subtitle

Normal + Font: 14 pt, Bold, Space after 3pt, Keep, Level 2
Shortcut: Shift+ Alt + S

Title

Normal + Font: 18pt, Bold, Kern at 14pt, Centered, Space before 12 pt after 3 pt,
Level 1

Undo Character

Character Style
Plain + Font: Garamond, 12 pt
Shortcut: Alt + U