

# Formatting Web Content Guidelines

## Headings:

- Using headers to separate out content allows for quick scanning and proper hierarchical page structure. Use the H1, H2,...H6 tags as indicators of section headings and subheadings within the document, not just as formatting elements as these are used by screen readers for persons with disabilities or sight difficulties. (We recommend reserving H1 for the page title, H2 for major headings and H3 for major sub headings.)
- The format of the page or navigation titles/headings and any subtitles/subheadings should be in the following format:
  - Capitalize all “major” words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and pronouns) in the title/heading, including the second part of hyphenated major words (e.g., Self-Report not Self-report); and capitalize all words of four letters or more.
  - Lowercase should only be used for “minor” words of three letters or fewer, namely, for conjunctions (words like and, or, nor, and but), articles (the words a, an, and the), and prepositions (words like as, at, by, for, in, of, on, per, and to), as long as they aren’t the first word in a title or subtitle.
  - Do not use all caps

## Bold Text:

- Bold text highlights the most important message in a paragraph. It is not necessary to have bold text in every paragraph or even on every page. Be careful to not overuse the bolding of text. If you are bolding whole paragraphs or most of the page, you are defeating the purpose of bolding important text. **Bold less instead of more.**

## Italicize Text

- You should italicize the text you would normally italicize in print, such as book titles. In addition, you can italicize when you want something emphasized such as catch phrases or taglines, embedded quotations, definition terms or unique phrases. Try not to overuse italics. A sentence can be acceptable, but overusing italics can have the same negative consequences as overusing bold and makes text hard to read. *Italics should be used very sparingly.*

## Underline

- Underlined text on a webpage is usually reserved for links to more information. Text links that are in a different color from the rest of the text and underlined to achieve the best clickable results.

## Text Color

- Text color for headings is predefined in our style sheets. Do not change it without asking. Using red text or bold does not announce to a colorblind person, or person with vision issues, that this is important. Always use text to announce an important message.

## Links

- Links to PDF documents should open in a new tab/window so that you are not taking the user away from the primary navigation of the website. This also applies to links to external websites. Links that direct users to other pages on the NECC website can open in the same window.

## Link Structure

- Use short and simple URLs with the hyperlink added to the text. Try to make the text as short and simple as possible.
  - Good link example: To find out more visit the [Food Service Frequently Asked Questions](#).
  - Bad example: <http://www.necc.mass.edu/food-service-frequently-asked-questions>

## E-mail Addresses

- E-mail address listings should be linked as follows:
- Email: `<a href="mailto:amcphersonmesa@necc.mass.edu">amcphersonmesa@necc.mass.edu</a>`
- Professional e-mail addresses (i.e. @necc.mass.edu) should also always be used.
- If the email is not in a table with a header defined as Email, use the word “Email” before the link to announce to a screen-reader user they will leaving the page.  
Email: [amcphersonmesa@necc.mass.edu](mailto:amcphersonmesa@necc.mass.edu)