Style Sheet

This business proposal style sheet provides two types of stylistic guidelines for your proposal writers and editors to follow:

* The ***Standard*** column presents your company’s preferred conventions of language and format, and are usually distilled from your corporate style guide or, if your company doesn’t have one, from an established standard such as Chicago Manual of Style or the Associated Press Style Book. They apply to all documents you create.
* The ***Custom*** column identifies those conventions that apply only to the proposal you’re currently writing or editing. You should listen closely to your sales rep as he or she explains the preferences of your customer. Or, if that information is limited, check out your customer’s website to understand its preferred conventions. Add those conventions to this column and review with your writers during your kickoff meeting.

This example style sheet was developed using real standards from a real company, but is in no way meant to be comprehensive. You should use it as a guide for creating your own style sheet with the conventions your company uses to create consistent, professional documents.

editorial style sheet

*Proposal* *Name*: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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| --- | --- |
| Standard Elements | Custom Elements |
| **General Style** | **Special Style Issues** |
| * Write mostly in active voice. (Subject – Verb – Object) * Avoid overuse of passive voice. (Object – “Be” Verb – Past Participle – [“by” Phrase] – Subject) * Try to make human actors the subjects of your sentences. * Make each paragraph about a single idea. * Write a mixture of short and longer sentences. * Use concrete nouns and descriptive verbs. * Write in positive language as much as you can. * Eliminate long strings of nouns. | * This customer prefers a more formal tone:   + Use company names in third person as required.   + Avoid contractions. |
| **Punctuation** | **Legal Terms** |
| * Use comma before “and“ preceding last item in a series * Eliminate end punctuation on bulleted lists unless item is a complete sentence. * Always place end quotes outside punctuation. * Hyphenate all compound adjectives. | * Make sure you eliminate the words “partner” and “partnership” from all responses. The customer’s legal team takes these terms as commitments beyond the contracted terms. |
| **Spelling** | **Local Terms** |
| * Receipt * Hypertext * Collocation | * Customer refers to campus as “the cluster.” * Executives at customer “want the best to provide the best” – a phrase we’ve heard in every meeting. |
| **Capitalization** | **Key Abbreviations** |
| * Capitalize all brand names. * Lowercase “company” whether referring to ours or theirs. * Capitalize the first word in all bullet list items. * In a title, capitalize every word except for articles, prepositions, and coordinating conjunctions. * In headings, capitalize only the first word and proper nouns. | * ABR – Available Bit Rate * AES – Advanced Encryption Standard * ANSI – American National Standards Institute |
| **Numbers** | **Category** |
| * Write out all numbers one – nine; use Arabic numerals for 10 and above. * Avoid starting a sentence with a number. * If some numbers in a sequence are greater than nine and others less, use numerals for all. * Use numerals for all dates, using *Month Date, Year* format. * Make numerals plural by adding a lowercase “s.” |  |
| **Usage** | **Category** |
| * Data is singular – preferred engineering usage. |  |
| **Troublesome Words** | **Category** |
| * Data is singular – preferred engineering usage. * Ability, Capability   + Ability – having the physical, mental, financial, or legal power to perform an act.   + Capability – having features that you can develop or use. |  |
| **Visual Elements** | Category |
| * Number all figures with chapter and sequence: Figure 1.3. * Bulleted lists feature a solid black circle. * Sub-bullets feature an “en” dash. |  |
| **Typeface and Layout** | Category |
| * Use Times New Roman 11pt for body text. * Use Arial Bold for titles, headings, and figure labels.   + Volume Titles: 20pt   + H1: 18pt   + H2: 16pt   + H3: 14pt * Italicize and bold instead of underlining. * Use the following color conventions.   + Blue (RGB#008500) for headings & subheadings   + Black for text (RGB#050B05)   + White background * Use 8"x11 ½" as standard page size. * Create 1" margins on the top, bottom, and sides of each page. * Single-space all text. * Headings should be left-aligned over related column; 12 pts before, 3 pts after. |  |