THEGLOBEPROGRAM
Style Guide and Tips for GLOBE.gov

The GLOBE Program bases its web content style guidelines on the [Associated Press (AP) Stylebook](#), with a few specific exceptions to ensure web content is easy for GLOBE users to both create and digest.

Table of Contents

Plain Language and Third-Person Active Voice

Content should be presented in a simple manner so that readers can quickly skim through a page to find answers to their questions. This means using plain writing principles – short words, short sentences and short paragraphs – and keeping pages focused on a single topic.

GLOBE.gov text uses the third-person professional voice, meaning writers should avoid I/you/we/our and be clear about the subject of each sentence. The first-person voice should only be used in blog posts, or otherwise when the writer is an integral and clear part of the topic. In addition, content creators should try to use the active voice, and cut up sentences that have more than two clauses.

GOOD *(third person, active voice, simple sentence structure)*	BAD *(first person, passive voice, too many clauses)*
European teachers created the Turbidity Campaign to help students gather better turbidity data from oceans.	Our campaign was created by European teachers, who had found that there was not enough data for water turbidity in oceans and wanted to create a better method that helped students, who had told use they were having troubles.
The GLOBE Program organized a successful event and scheduled another one for next year.	The event was organized by us and proved to be such a grand success that a similar event was scheduled for next year, and we expect that one to be even better.

Common GLOBE Phrases and Issues

- **Acronyms**: Acronyms are poor practice for accessibility, translation and general comprehension. Define acronyms on first use in the body text, even when they are used in a page title (though, avoid using them in titles). Also, never use latin abbreviations. For example, instead of "i.e." or "e.g.", use "that is to say" or "for example".
    - *If many readers* know a phrase or group by its acronym, then use it with a parenthetical definition on first mention: "The United Nations (U.N.) assists GLOBE in some activities."
    - *If all readers* primarily know a phrase or group by its acronym, use it on first mention without definition: "NASA scientists participated in the event."
    - *STEM*: This acronym is acceptable, but it should always be defined on first use and capitalized: "This protocol includes several Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) topics for students."

- **Ampersand (&):** Only use as part of an official/trademarked title. Do not use in page titles or subheadings, or as a substitute for "and" in sentences.
    - "Latin America and Caribbean" not "Latin America & Caribbean"

- **Bold, Italics and Underlining**: Special formatting can be useful to add emphasis, but only when used sparingly:
    - **Bold**: Best to use at the beginning of sentences or item lists. Do not use it for entire sentences or paragraphs.
    - *Italics*: Avoid using in general, other than for photo captions.
    - <u>Underlining</u>: Never use for web content, as underlined text can be mistaken for a link.

- **Commas/Semicolons**: Only use the serial/oxford comma when necessary for comprehension. For more complex sentence lists, use semicolons:
    - "I like apples, pears and dates."
    - "My favorite sandwiches are ham, turkey, and peanut butter and jelly."
    - "Research touches on several fields, including: how insects fly; why larger mammals are unable to dance; and whether grass is truly greener on the other side."

- **Contractions**: Do not use English contractions, such as "don't" and "can't".

- **Font Type and Size**: Use only the default/preset font types and sizes for body text on GLOBE.gov.

- **Homonyms:** Avoid homonyms – words that have multiple meanings but are spelled the same way. Many GLOBE.gov visitors use an auto-translator through their browser, and

homonyms often lead to incorrect translations. Homonyms that are common on GLOBE.gov include current, rose, fly and wind.

- **Linking:** Never use a "naked" link label that shows the URL. Instead, put links on unique descriptive phrases. If you offer the same link multiple times on a page, use the same link label each time. Descriptive links help users find a page better through search, while also helping people who use screen readers to navigate through a page.
  - For document links, use the document title as the link label and note the document type in lowercase letters at the end of the label. For example: "How to Read Soil: A Learning Activity (pdf)"
  - When possible, avoid linking to for-profit websites. Instead, only link to government, non-profit and academic sites.

- **Program/Protocol/App/User Names**: Generally, capitalize on all mentions. User names may be lower-cased when speaking generally, not specifically in reference to a GLOBE user group ("Teachers and students worldwide understand the importance of environmental science." Capitalize protocol names, but not "protocol".
  - The GLOBE Program
  - The GLOBE Program's app, GLOBE Observer
  - Teachers/Formal Educators; Informal Educators; Students; Country Coordinators
  - Carbon Cycle protocol

- **Slang and Government-speak**: Be careful not to use slang terms and other cultural or organizational jargon. Phrases like "par for the course" or "rightsizing" can be confusing to people with different cultural or professional backgrounds, especially if they are using an auto-translator to read the website.

Page and Paragraph Formatting

- **Captions and Credits:** Captions – for photos, graphic images or illustrations – should be brief, helping to explain what may not be easily/immediately apparent from just looking at the image. This is not the same as alt text, which is used as a substitute for the image for people with vision impairments. Do not start captions with "A photo/image/illustration of…" Instead, just describe/highlight the point the image is making: "Meteors hitting the earth create tremendous waves of energy."
  - *Photo Credits*: Only provide credit for images that were not created by GLOBE staff. Only use non-GLOBE images if you know a person or organization to credit. A credit should be in italics, aligned right, and immediately below an image:

Credit: Tom Jane

- **Lists:** Lists can present related items in an easily skimmed format, but they are most effective when there's a lead-in sentence and a clear connection. Do not use lists in place of entire paragraphs, to just organize unrelated separators.
  - *Bullets/Numbers*: Most lists should use bullets. Only use a numbered list for step-by-step instructions, or when the lead-in sentence notes a specific number of items, for example: "Before doing this activity, students will need to be familiar with three protocols:"

- **Paragraphs:** Paragraphs should be short, with no more than three sentences. Longer paragraphs can be difficult for readers to digest, especially on mobile view.

- **Spacing:** Only put one space between sentences, and one line (standard spacing) between paragraphs.

- **Subheadings:** Subheading sizes should be hierarchical, with each proceeding subheading in a section one level smaller than its predecessor. No subheading should be as large as the page title.

Numbers and Data

- **"Data":** This word is plural in most uses ("The data are interesting"). When treated as a collective noun it takes a singular verb (""The data is sound").

- **Latitude/Longitude**: Use the degree symbol closed up, for example: "30°N" (in nontechnical writing, 30° north).

- **Measurements:** Do not use abbreviations for measurements when mentioned in sentences. Abbreviations may be used in data lists, tables and charts, but try to define all abbreviations for readers.

- **Metric Units**: Use the metric system for all measures. Do not provide imperial units.
  - [National Institute of Standards and Technology: Metric (SI) Prefixes](#)

- **Numbers:** Write out numbers "one" to "nine" (and "first" to "ninth"), except in the following cases, when you should always use numerals:
  - Ages
  - Decimals and percents
  - Distances
  - Dimensions (height/length/width)
  - Mathematical usage ("divide by 4")
  - Speeds
  - Temperatures

- **Percent:** Use the percent sign (%) and a numeral. For example: "25%".

- **Phone numbers:** Do not use parentheses. Use the format "xx-xxx-xxx-xxxx". For example: "01-324-555-3211".
  - Include the two-digit country code for all numbers, including U.S. numbers ("01").

- **Temperature/Degrees:** Spell out "minus" and "degrees" when possible, but abbreviate the type of measure used. For example, "20 degrees C".

- **Time:** There are different styles for technical (data notations) and non-technical (event) times. Be sure to note the time zone (abbreviated) in parentheses. Also, use hyphens or "to" for ranges:
  - Technical: Use the 24-hour format. For example: "13:00 (MST)"; "04:45 (GMT)"
  - Non-technical: Use the 12-hour format, without unnecessary zeros, with a lowercase "a.m./p.m." For example: "1 p.m. (MST)"; "4:45 a.m. (GMT)"

- ○ Ranges: "The office will be open 4 p.m. - 5 p.m." OR "The office will be open from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m."

Dates, Locations, Personal Information

- **Dates:** Use the international format with no commas. Do not include the year unless necessary for comprehension, and do not include the day of the week. For example: "30 June 2022"; "30 June".

- **Degrees and Dr.:** Avoid noting academic degree abbreviations after names, instead mentioning credentials when important for context ("... who holds a doctorate/masters in…"). Use "Dr." in first reference as a formal title before the name of an individual who holds a doctor of dental surgery, doctor of medicine, doctor of optometry, doctor of osteopathic medicine, doctor of podiatric medicine, or doctor of veterinary medicine.

- **Email Address:** When possible, provide an alias or group email account instead of a personal address. Do not use spaces in an address (this has previously been a strategy to avoid email harvesting, but it no longer is effective), and always put an email link on an address. For example: "globehelp@ucar.edu".

- **Locations/Addresses**: For U.S. locations, "City, State, USA"; for other countries, "City, Country". Only provide complete addresses when necessary for mailing purposes. When providing an event location, the format should be "[number and street], [city], [state], [country]". For example: "32 Henderson Street, Los Angeles, California, USA".
  - ○ Country Names: When referring to it in a sentence, not as part of an address, use "the United States" (or "the U.S." on second reference). Otherwise, use the standard country names as defined by the United Nations.
  - ○ Washington, D.C.
  - ○ "ZIP code"

- **Names/Titles:** There are different guidelines for referring to young people and adults. For people younger than 18, use their full name on the first mention, then just their first name on the rest of the page. Do not use courtesy titles (Mr./Ms./Mrs.). For people older than 18, use a courtesy title and their last name on section mention:
  - ○ "After Mr. Abram led the class in some learning activities, James did a presentation about what he had learned."

Writing and Grammatical Tips

The clearest writing is the simplest writing. Choose a simpler word, a shorter sentence and a more direct way of writing content, whenever possible.

Here are some more tips for writing clear and grammatically correct content for GLOBE.gov:

- **Dashes and Hyphens**
  - *Hyphen*: Use a hyphen for compound modifiers – two words that are combined to form a single adjective before a noun. For example, "This was a long-term solution." Hyphens may also be used for ranges, with no spaces on either side, ("Use 2-4 feet of rope"), but using words instead of hyphens can be easier to read ("Use between 2 and 4 feet of rope").
  - *Em Dash*: Use the long em dash (—) as an alternative to parentheses, a comma or a colon, setting off an amplifying or explanatory element. Use a space on both sides of an em dash ("Use a hyphen for compound modifiers — two words that are combined to form a single adjective before a noun."
  - *En Dash*: Do not use en dashes (–) on GLOBE.gov.

- **Exclamation Points:** As with bold and italics, the more an exclamation point appears on a page, the less effective it is. Use these sparingly, to highlight information that most readers will find exciting. In those instances, only use one exclamation point at a time.

- **Rhetorical Questions/FAQs:** Avoid asking questions in content. Instead, use subheadings to state a topic, then provide the information directly. This is a more efficient way to provide information. For example, for a page about a Pedosphere protocol, use "Activities" as a subheading, not "What Activities Work with this Protocol?" Also, instead of FAQ pages, clearly explain the information on pages organized by topic and subheadings.

Additional Resources on Style

- [GLOBE Style and Accessibility Checklists](#) (pdf)
- [Purdue University: AP Style Explained](#)
- [Poynter: AP Style Updates Since 2014](#)
- [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)](#)