



Style Guide and Tips for GLOBE

Editorial Content

This is a living version of the style guide, where new updates will take effect before being moved to the GLOBE website. [View the public version of this file.](#)

The GLOBE Program bases its editorial style guidelines on the [NASA Stylebook and Communications Manual](#), which relies heavily 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.

NOTE: View this [Style Guide](#) for styles re: GLOBE website formatting.

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Terminology (Quick View)

NOTE: Underlines below emphasize use of uppercase (or capital) letters

2024 GLOBE <u>A</u> nnual <u>M</u> eeting (actual title of meeting); the <u>A</u> nnual <u>M</u> eeting	internet
country coordinator (CC)	mentor trainer (changed from master trainer in 2024)
data (plural) dataset (1 wd)	preservice protocols; GLOBE protocols; <u>P</u> edosphere protocols, GLOBE protocol bundle (see more below)
<u>E</u> arth science <u>E</u> arth system science (singular system) educator (use instead of “teacher”)	<u>R</u> egional <u>C</u> oordination <u>O</u> ffice (RCO) regional coordinator <u>R</u> egional <u>M</u> eeting
GLOBE Clouds protocol; the GLOBE protocols (lc) GLOBE Clouds observations GLOBE community (lc) GLOBE database (lc) GLOBE educator (lc) GLOBE Observer app GLOBE <u>P</u> rogram; the GLOBE <u>P</u>rogram (lowercase “the”) GLOBE partner GLOBE system science (singular) GLOBE trainer, mentor trainer (not master trainer)	Stars <u>S</u> tory STEM <u>S</u> tory <u>S</u> tudent <u>E</u> xperience (when referring to Annual Meeting) subcommittee
help desk; GLOBE help desk	Teacher’s Guide
in-service	utilize (change to “use”) web (the web) web-based website, GLOBE website <u>W</u> orking <u>G</u> roup, Science Working Group, Science WG

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 be used only in personal blog posts, when a story or article is authored by GLOBE, or 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 (<i>third person, active voice, simple clauses</i>)	BAD (<i>first person, passive voice, too many sentence structure</i>)
European educators created the Turbidity Campaign to help students gather better turbidity data from oceans	Our campaign was created by European educators, who 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 us 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 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 (&):**
 - **WEBSITE:** Use only as part of an official/trademarked title. Do not use in page titles or subheadings, or as a substitute for “and” in sentences. Ex. “Latin America and Caribbean” not “Latin America & Caribbean”
 - **OTHER:** OK to use in headings in the News Brief.

- **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.
 - Underlining: Never use for web content, as underlined text can be mistaken for a link.
- **Capitalization of Protocols:** Protocol topics are capitalized when talking about the actual protocol (but not if talking just about “clouds” or “soil” in general), but the terms “protocol” and “bundle” are always lowercase.
- **Commas/Semicolons:** Always use the serial/oxford comma. For more complex sentence lists that use commas within list items, use semicolons between list items:
 - “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.”
 - “Sam bought apples, pears, and dates for Sue; a cantaloupe for Amal; and a watermelon for Ze.”
- **Colons:**
 - Use colons preceding a bulleted list.
 - Do NOT use colons preceding a list in paragraph form.
- **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 and Constant Contact.
- **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, link only to government, nonprofit, and academic sites.

- **Program/Protocols/Campaign/App**
 - the GLOBE Program
 - the GLOBE Program's app, GLOBE Observer
 - Carbon Cycle Protocol
 - the Mission Mosquitos Campaign; the campaign
- **Pronouns:** For instances when gender is unknown for a singular pronoun, use "they/them" with the appropriate verb forms. (Ex. A student can access the resource easily, helping them to collect the required data.)
- **Seasons:** Avoid using the names of seasons on the website because GLOBE has participating countries both north and south of the equator, so seasons will not be the same for everyone.
- **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:**
 - 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."
 - Provide credit only for images that were not created by GLOBE staff. Use only non-GLOBE images if you don't know a person or organization to credit.
 - A credit should be in italics, aligned right, and immediately below an image, and should include first and last name.



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 vs. 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:"
 - *Format of bulleted list:*
 - Do not put periods, or any punctuation, at the ends of bullet points EXCEPT when every bullet is a complete sentence, as shown within this section of the style guide.
 - Conjunctions such as and/or should not be used at the end of bullet points.
 - Always capitalize beginning of bulleted line.
 - All bulleted text should be consistent in format and parallel in structure.
 - Bullet points are preferable for lists as opposed to items in series separated with semicolons. The only acceptable top-level bullet is the traditional black circle.
- **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](#)
 - The principal abbreviations, for reference in the event they are used by a source, are: *g* (gram), *kg* (kilogram), *t* (metric ton), *m* (meter), *cm* (centimeter), *km* (kilometer), *mm* (millimeter), *L* (liter, capital L to avoid confusion with the figure 1) and *mL* (milliliter). Do not use a period after the abbreviations. Always have a space between the number and the abbreviation.

- **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 (ex. miles, kilometers)
 - Dimensions (height/length/width)
 - Mathematical usage (“divide by 4”)
 - Speeds
 - Temperatures
 - Time (ex. 5 years, 3-day meeting)
 - Weights
- **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:
 - When announcing the time of an event, use the UTC time using a 24-hour clock and add the local time and time zone, 12-hour clock (e.g., 2 pm MT in parens afterwards, ex: The webinar will begin at 19:00 UTC (2 pm ET).
 - For posted website events, use only UTC time in the form field (using a 12-hour clock; this is an exception to our rule) and add local time in the body of the event.
 - Remove “standards” and “daylight” from the time zone (ET, PT). When using a 24-hour clock, add the 0 before the times prior to 10:00 (ex. 09:00 UTC).

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.

When listing a person’s degree(s), lowercase the type of degree and uppercase the major(s). For example: NASA astronaut Joe Acaba has a master of science in Geology.

- **Names/Titles:** There are different guidelines for referring to young people and adults. For people younger than 18, ONLY their first name (for privacy reasons). Do not use courtesy titles (Mr./Ms./Mrs.). For people older than 18, use a courtesy title and their last name on first mention, and just their last name thereafter:
 - “After Mr. Abram led the class in some learning activities, Jared McDavid did a presentation about what he had learned.”
- **Job Titles:**
 - Lowercase all uses of student and educator.
 - Capitalize Country Coordinator, GLOBE Trainer, and GLOBE Mentor Trainer.
 - Capitalize official titles (Professor, President, Prime Minister) before names but not informal titles (e.g., Professor James Dixon; educator Samsi Buolongo)
- **Email Address:** When possible, provide an alias or group email account instead of a personal address. Do not use spaces in an address and always put an email link on an address. For example: help@nasaglobe.org
- **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 a country in a sentence, not as part of an address, use “the United States” (or “the U.S.” with periods on second reference). Otherwise, use the [standard country names as defined by the United Nations](#).
 - Washington, DC
 - ZIP code

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.”
 - *En-dashes.* Use an en-dash for number ranges with no spaces on either side, (“Use 2–4 feet of rope”), but using words instead of dashes may be easier to read. En-dashes should NOT be used when a range is preceded by “between” (“They used 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. Do not use spaces on either

side of an em dash.

- **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.
- **Pronouns**
For instances when gender is unknown for a singular pronoun, use “they/them” with the appropriate verb forms. (Ex. A student can access the resource easily, helping them to collect the required data.)
- **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.

Abbreviation Glossary

CC: Country coordinators

CUNY: City University of New York

DIS: Data information systems

EMDE: Email data entry (used by DIS)

GIO: GLOBE Implementation Office

GISN: GLOBE International STEM Network

GLE: GLOBE Learning Expedition: student focused

GLOBE: Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment program

GPO: Globe Program Office

GSV: Globe Student Vlogger program

IOP: Intensive observation period

IRT: Infrared thermometer

IVSS: International Virtual Science Symposium

LifeRay: Backend platform of the website

MGRS: Military Grid Reference System

NASA OSTEM: NASA's Office of STEM Engagement

NASA OIIR: NASA Office of International and Interagency Relations

RCO: Regional Coordination Office

SMD: Science Mission Directorate

SRS: US office, Student Research Symposium

STEPE: Science, Training, Education, Program Engagement (at CUNY)

SUNY: State University of New York, Fredonia (GLOBE partner)

Virtual School: A “school” for someone who got trained but does not belong to a permanent GLOBE school

Additional Resources on Style

- [Purdue University: AP Style Explained](#)
- [Poynter: AP Style Updates Since 2014](#)