

# OUR WRITING STYLE

## TONE AND VOICE

People will see and think about the Library as the go-to place for powering possibilities when we are clear about what we say. To make that happen, our tone, voice, and words should be:

- Easy to understand
- Factual
- Straightforward
- Written at a 5th grade reading level
- Playful
- Friendly
- Fun

## WRITING ABOUT THE LIBRARY

Here are some tips to think about when you are writing about the Library.

### 1. Understand your audience.

- What do they want to know?
- What do you want them to do?
- What's in it for them?
- Why should they care?

### 2. Put your most important information first.

People want information **quickly**. They want to know the big picture first, so include the basics: **what, how, where, when,** and **why**. Begin with strong statements; don't ask questions.

### 3. Be clear. Be specific.

Write for a 5th grader because that makes it easy to follow and understand. Be careful with jokes unless you're absolutely sure your target audience will get them. If you want our customers to do something, tell them what you want them to do. Make it as easy as possible for them to do it.

### 4. Write for people who scan and skim.

- Make it easy to read
- Write a catchy headline/title that will get their attention
- Use "active voice" instead of passive voice. It conveys more excitement.
- Use bullets to cut down on the wordiness
- Keep it conversational—Use the words *you, I, we, us*
- Use short paragraphs and short sentences
- Just use a single space after periods. Like this.

### AVOID

- Unnecessary words, jargon, and gobbledygook
- The past tense—Write about it as if it's happening today, not yesterday

- Needless repetition
- Lots of exclamation marks

### 5. Pick a good title to promote a library event.

- Use a catchy title to invite someone who's never been to this event before. Think "Knitting Club" instead of "Strings Attached," and "Baby Storytime" instead of "Babytime." You could also say something like "Strings Attached: Knitting Club," or use its "real" name in the description.
- Think about the terms people use when they ask about something. For example, if people often ask about "pottery classes," don't call it a "clay-shaping educational program."
- If some people call it "pottery," and others call it "clay-shaping," pick the most obvious one for the title, and use the other in the description. Use synonyms instead of repeating words. This helps people find it in search, and makes it more fun to read.

### 6. Write a good event description.

Make sure that you lead with the most important information. When you're writing a description,

you have three goals:

### **Explain what's going on. Get to the facts.**

Does the description have all the facts? Does it say what's going on, who it's for, what people should do in advance, where in the library should people go?

### **Make people want to go.**

### **Market the event.**

Does your description make people want to go? Would you go to this event? If not, try something else.

### **Be clear and professional. Watch your spelling, capitalization, and grammar.**

Is it clearly written with no errors? Try showing it to someone else, and see if anything is underlined

in red by spell-check.

### **7. Talk to the person who's coordinating it.**

If you don't know enough about an event to write a good title and description, you can learn a lot by talking to the coordinator. You can also see if another branch is doing something similar that you can copy.

## **WORDS AND TERMINOLOGY**

*There are countless words, names, terms, or phrases that we can use to write about the Library—and our services and resources—in publicity materials, events descriptions, website content, social media, and traditional media tools like news releases.*

*The following guidelines and standards are intended to help us be consistent and uniform in presenting our brand by using one voice.*

### **LIBRARY NAMES**

When referring to the name of our library system, use these terms:

Pima County Public Library

Pima County Public Library system

Pima County Public Library locations

- The full name Pima County Public Library should be used for the first mention or where we need to be distinguished from another library.

- Use the abbreviation PCPL only after the full name Pima County Public Library has been mentioned first.
- Use the term the Library for all mentions that follow the Pima County Public Library.

When referring to any of our libraries, use the full official name of each library. Do not include the word Branch as part of the name in publicity materials.

Caviglia-Arivaca Library

Dewhirst-Catalina Library

Dusenberry-River Library

Eckstrom-Columbus Library

El Pueblo Library

El Rio Library

Flowing Wells Library

Himmel Park Library

Joel D. Valdez Main Library\*

Joyner-Green Valley Library

Kirk-Bear Canyon Library

Martha Cooper Library

Miller-Golf Links Library

Mission Library

Murphy-Wilmot Library

Nanini Library

Oro Valley Public Library

Quincie Douglas Library

Sahuarita Library

Salazar-Ajo Library

Sam Lena-South Tucson Library

Santa Rosa Library

Southwest Library

Valencia Library

Wheeler Taft Abbett Sr. Library

Woods Memorial Library

\*The Joel D. Valdez Main Library is a special exception to the general guideline.

- The first reference should be the Joel D. Valdez Main Library. Subsequent references should be Main Library.
- e.g., The first program will take place on Tuesday at the Joel D. Valdez Main Library. Another program will take place at the Main Library the following Monday.

## LIBRARY VENUES

Here are the names that we'll use for venues located at the Joel D. Valdez Main Library:

- 101 at Main, 2nd Floor
- Boardroom, 4th Floor
- Café, 1st Floor
- Catalina Room, 2nd Floor
- Children's Meeting Room, 1st Floor
- Children's Room, 1st Floor
- Gallery, 1st Floor
- Glass Exhibit Gallery, 1st Floor
- Idea+Space, 2nd Floor
- Jácome Plaza
- Lobby
- Lower Level Meeting Room
- Rincon Room, 3rd Floor
- Santa Rita Room, 2nd Floor
- Tucson Room, 3rd Floor

## LIBRARY EVENT NAMES AND DESCRIPTIONS

We have created standard event descriptions for certain programs and services that the Library offers, including:

- Citizenship Classes
- Community Meetings
- Computer Classes
- Drop-In Help
- English Language Classes
- GED/HSE Classes
- Homework Help
- Job Help
- Master Gardener
- ReadStrong
- Storytimes

The complete descriptions that

we use for these events are provided on the Library's intranet in the section called Event Descriptions for the Calendar.

## FREQUENTLY USED WORDS AND TERMS

This list includes the recommended spelling of words and terms that we frequently use.

USE	DON'T USE
Bookbike	Book bike, bookbike, BookBike
check out, check in (verb) <small>e.g. Our staff can help you check out your books. e.g. You can check in your books by Friday.</small>	(Don't use the verb form as a noun.)
checkout, check-in (noun) <small>e.g. The self checkout computer is on the first floor.</small>	(Don't use the noun form as a verb.)
county	County (unless you're referring to Pima County)
city	City
database	data base
DVDs, CDs	DVD's, CD's
ebooks, ereader*	Ebooks, e-books, e-Reader, eBooks, eReader
email	e-mail
Facebook	facebook
fax	FAX

USE	DON'T USE
1980s	1980's
afterschool (as an adjective as in "afterschool program")	after-school
am, pm	a.m., p.m.
app	application
audiobook	audio book, audio-book
bestseller	best-seller
book drop	book chute, book return

USE	DON'T USE
Flickr	Flicker, flickr
flyer, flyers	flier, fliers
Infoline	InfoLine
internet	Internet
LEGOs	LEGOS, legos, Legos
login, logout (noun) <small>e.g. Your login is ...</small>	(Don't use the verb form as a noun.)
log in, log out (verb) <small>e.g. Please log in to your account.</small>	(Don't use the noun form as a verb.)
nonfiction	non-fiction
nonprofit	non-profit
online	on line
patron vs. customer	(both are fine)
Pima County Public Library Advisory Board	Pima County Public Library Board of Directors
pm	p.m.
preschool	pre-school
reopened	re-opened

USE	DON'T USE
résumé (noun)	resume
school-age	school age children
sign up (verb) <small>e.g. Be sure to sign up for the class.</small>	sign-up
smartphone	smart phone
southern Arizona	Southern Arizona
Storytime	Story time, story time
systemwide	system-wide
Twitter	twitter
URLs	urls
username	user name
voicemail	voice mail
website	Web site, web site
wifi	Wifi, wi-fi, Wi-Fi, WiFi
YouTube	You Tube, youtube

\* Capitalize words like ebooks, wifi, etc. at the beginning of sentences.

## WRITING NUMBERS

- Spell out numbers 0-9 (zero, one, two, three, four...).
- For numbers 10 and above, use 11, 300, 72, 1,000.  
e.g. Attendance at the program included nine boys and 12 girls.
- Write phone numbers in this format, including the area code: 520.594.5600

## DATES AND TIMES

- When writing dates, they must be accompanied by the day of the week.
- If a series of dates is listed, do not include the days of the week.

- Truncate the day of the week and the month to three letters and do not use a period.
- For upcoming events in the same calendar year, do not list the year.

USE	DON'T USE
Monday, August 1 <small>For <b>printed</b> publicity materials like flyers, posters, postcards, handouts For <b>website</b> content, social media, news releases, and articles</small>	Aug. 1st Aug. 1, 2015 August 1st, 2015 August 1, 2015 22 Aug 2015 8/22/2015 08-22-2015
August 22–24 <small>(use an en dash ALT+0150 between dates)</small>	Aug 22-24 Aug 22-Aug 24, 2015 August 22- August 24, 2015 August 22- August 24 8/22-8/24 08-22-08-24
August 22– September 14 <small>(use an en dash ALT+0150 between dates)</small>	August 22- September 14 Aug 22-Sep 14, 2015 Aug 22-Sep 14 8/22-9/14 08-22-09-14 <small>(wrong hyphen)</small>

USE	DON'T USE
December 22, 2015–January 14, 2016 <small>Include the year only when the series of dates cross a year (use an en dash ALT+0150 between dates)</small>	December 22, 2015-January 14, 2016 <small>(wrong hyphen)</small> Dec 22, 2015-Jan14, 2016 Dec 22-Jan 14 12/22-1/14 12-22-01-14
9am	9AM 9:00am 9 a.m. 9a.m.
9:30am	9:30 a.m. 930am
9–11:30am	9am-11:30am 9:00am-11:30am
9am–1pm	9am to 1pm 9:00 am-1:00 pm
6–8pm	6pm-8pm 6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.
USE	DON'T USE
Monday, August 22 • 7pm Monday, August 22 • 7-8pm Monday, August 22 • 11am-1pm <small>For <b>printed</b> publicity materials like flyers, posters, postcards, handouts (Use Alt+7 to make the •)</small>	Mon, Aug 22 -7pm Mon, Aug 22 at 7pm Monday, August 22 @ 7pm
Monday, August 22, 7pm Monday, August 22, 7-8pm Monday, August 22, 11am-1pm <small>For <b>website</b> content, social media, news releases, and articles</small>	

## OTHER RESOURCES FOR GRAMMAR QUESTIONS

The Chicago Manual of Style, the American Library Association's guide of choice, provides preferred styles of punctuation and writing titles, among other grammar questions.