

Exhibit A – Content and Style Guide

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Why Do We Need a Content and Style Guide?

This guide is used in support of and in concert with the policies, procedures and standards set forth in the *Old Bridge Church Communications Plan*. The Plan helps communicate the vision, mission and values of Old Bridge Church with one voice in print, electronic and online media. By focusing on content – the message itself – and style –how the message is presented, - we achieve effective communications that drive action and produce results.

Content Essentials

Communicating effectively involves delivering the right message to the intended audience in a way that produces the desired result in a timely manner. Writers should adhere to the principles below when drafting their communications. *Addendum 1, Communications Checklist for Ministries*, is a helpful tool to check your message prior to submission for publication. Effective messages will follow the guidelines below.

Clear

Be sure to answer the basics: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? Avoid jargon and churchy language that guests might not understand. Don't leave out essential information such as who to contact or how to sign up. Be specific, not general.

Example: Youth Pizza Party May 5th at 6 p.m.

Example: Room 105 vs. New Turn Class room.

Example: Call the church office by Tuesday noon to reserve your spot.

Concise

Be brief and avoid flowery and unnecessary language. Don't clutter up the message with extraneous material. Remember that people are busy. Short, sweet and complete works best. 50 words or less.

Example: NOT “Our lovely and highly energetic senior members will once again meet for lunch...” Instead, say “Senior luncheon is Tuesday at noon.”

Compelling

Create interest in the event. Give the target audience a reason to attend, support, give, or tell others about the event. Issue a call for action!

Example: “Join us for free BBQ this Sunday after worship. One hundred percent of donations received go directly to community missions.”

Example: “Become a spiritual millionaire this Saturday evening...”

Correct

Use correct English and check your spelling. Spellcheck in Word is good but not foolproof. Use idioms and jargon sparingly. Double-check key facts such as date, time, room number, etc. See **Things to Watch** below for common errors and usage guidance.

Targeted

Is your message written for the entire congregation, the community or for a specific ministry or small group in the church? The words you choose and the call to action should differ based on your intended audience. The more specific you are in your messaging, the greater your chances of positive results.

Connected

Nothing is more frustrating than wanting to participate in an event and not knowing how to connect or who to contact. **All messages should include point of contact (POC) information.** It can be a phone number or email address, but it must be clear whom to contact for more details.

Example: Contact Bill at 770-543-1234 for more information.

Example: missions@oldbridgechurch.org

Channeled

Consider the most effective media to reach the target audience. Messages for rolling digital slides, pulpit announcements, or Facebook require a different approach. Deadlines are also different. **See Table 1**, Old Bridge Communication Tools and Priority Impact Levels, in the Communications Plan for available tools and deadline information.

Vision and Mission Focused

The Communications Plan calls for a focused, unified messaging approach that supports the vision and mission of the church. Look for ways to include language from the vision and/or a mission area in your message. This may not be possible for

every message, but it is a priority of the Old Bridge Church communications strategy.

The Vision: A community transformed by the love of Christ.

The mission: Serving Christ. Loving Neighbors. Inviting People. Building Community.

Example: “Join us in *servicing* the homeless *community* meals the first Monday of each month.”

Example: “*Neighborhood* trash cleanup day is Saturday at 9 a.m. Get involved in making our *community* a cleaner place to live and worship.”

Things to Watch

There are several areas of writing that are neither right nor wrong but should still be consistent. This section summarizes Old Bridge Church’s grammar, style and spelling conventions.

Abbreviations	Avoid abbreviations in general, particularly when referring to events or groups. Example: Old Bridge Church (not Old Bridge). It’s ok to use “ExDir” or “Assoc. Pastor”—especially in tight spaces.
Sentences	Choose active versus passive writing. Active voice has the subject perform the action, and passive voice has the subject acted upon. Passive voice lowers the readability and clarity. Example: Mark decided. (Not “It was decided.”) The department head presented the budget to the staff. (Not “The budget was presented to the staff by the department head.”)
Titles	Italicize all titles for easier readability (rather than underlined or with “quotes”). Example: Brain McLaren’s <i>More Ready Than You Realize</i>
Dates	Drop reference to year when appropriate. Don’t abbreviate. Example: Tuesday, October 9 (not Tues., October 9, 2009).
Email	In printed text, email should be regular and always lowercase. Don’t hyphenate email addresses. Don’t underline email addresses in electronic text unless the document forces it. The word email should be used without a hyphen.

Example: sward@oldbridgechurch.org (not sward@Old BridgeChurch.org or Sward@Old BridgeChurch.org).

Note: Don't publish volunteers' email addresses without permission. Use an oldbridgeumc.org email address if possible.

Phone

Phone numbers should be separated with dashes instead of periods. Use lowercase "x" for extension with one space before but not after.

Example: 703-745-1030 x107 (not 574.243.3500, ext. 394).

Note: Never publish volunteers' phone numbers without permission.

Times

Times should be written consistently and concisely. Use a.m./p.m., lowercase with periods. However, in posters or stylized pieces, it may be written as AM/PM or in accordance with the style.

Example: 6 p.m. (not 6:00 pm), 7-8:30 p.m. (not 7:00 to 8:30 PM)
12 p.m. (not 12 noon), 10 p.m. (not 10:00 P.M. tonight)

Web

Use lowercase for all web addresses. Internet addresses should not be underlined. Keep www. In body copy, addresses should be bold. Don't hyphenate. Don't include http://.

Example: www.youthspecialties.com (not youthspecialities.com).

Note: Website and homepage are both one word. Do not capitalize web, internet, homepage or website.

Wordiness

Eliminate unnecessary phrases or adjectives. If the sentence makes sense without it, you should take it out. A clear, concise writing style is preferred over a wordy, flowery style.

Example: Phrases like "for more information" and "a time of" can generally be omitted.

Punctuation, Spelling and Grammar

Most of us know the difference between a subject and a verb; however, errors continue to appear in our writing. This section describes the grammar, word choice, punctuation and spelling errors that occur most often.

Apostrophe

Avoid using apostrophes in plurals.

Example: CDs, URLs, FAQs, 1990s, etc.

Bullets

Maintain consistency in the type of bullets used. A bulleted list needs at least two points. Do not bullet one point as a sentence or a paragraph. Indent bullet text to where the text started on the first line with the bullet. Do not wrap text under a bullet. For consistency, use the black filled-in circle bullet listed first under the bullet tab. Size does not matter.

Example: (Of bullet style as well).

The following are names of students in VBS this summer:

- Timmy Lewis
- Susan Allan
- Lily Jones
- Anthony Morgan
- John “winner of the prized best student award four years running” Smith

Capitalization

Avoid all caps, except for emphasis. It gives the impression of YELLING. Capitalize pronouns when referencing the Deity (God, Father, Holy Spirit, etc.). When referencing titles, capitalize all principal words except for articles, conjunctions and short prepositions. Capitalize prepositions if they consist of five or more letters or if they are the first or last word of a title or heading.

Example: *The Bourne Identity, Fiddler on the Roof, Going Through Changes, Moving Up*

Commas

Omit the serial comma (the final comma in a series of words or phrases) unless the list is complicated or omission of the serial comma could cause confusion.

Example: He went to the store, post office and dry cleaner. (Not “He went to the store, post office, and dry cleaner.”)

Example: The children were offered tuna, turkey, ham and cheese, and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. (Not “The children were offered tuna, turkey, ham and cheese and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.”)—Were the children offered cheese and peanut butter sandwiches? Use a serial comma in cases like these.

Dashes

Use em dashes (a special character in the Symbol section of most programs) instead of two dashes.

Some programs auto-fill an em dash when you use two dashes. Do not put a space between the words and the em dash.

Example:

Correct: The crowd—even the children—was amazed.

Incorrect: The crowd -- even the children - was amazed.

Exclamations

Do not overuse exclamation points!!!!!!!

Hyphens

Make every effort not to hyphenate words. Add hard return if necessary to avoid. Never hyphenate website addresses, email addresses or phone numbers.

Numbers

Spell out numbers one through nine, and use numerals for 10 and above.

Example: One, two, three (not 1,2,3). Or 10,11,12 (not ten, eleven, twelve).

Example: six-week series (Not six weeks, or 6 week or 6-week.)

Be consistent in use of numerals or text. If you use numerals because a number is larger than 10, use numerals for all items in that category or list.

Example: My 10 cats fought with their 2 cats.

Example: If four students can sell 10 tickets, then two students can sell 5 tickets. (Students counted with text; tickets counted with numerals.)

Avoid wording two numbers back-to-back. If this is necessary, spell one number out and use a numeral for the other. Spell out numbers if they begin a sentence unless the number is a year.

Periods

Use one space after periods at the end of sentences. Omit periods in bulleted lists for incomplete sentences.

Punctuation with Quotations

The period and the comma always go inside the quotation marks. The dash, semicolon, the quotation's question mark and the exclamation point go within the quotation marks when they apply to the quoted material only; they go outside when they apply to the whole sentence. A good way to decide when to punctuate inside or outside the

quotation marks is to ask the question, “Who’s asking the question? Is it the author (outside) or the person being quoted (inside)?”

Example: She said, “Hurry up.” (Periods always go inside quotation marks).

Example: Did she say, “May I go?” (Even though there is a question outside the quoted material and inside the quoted material, you use only one question mark and put it inside the quotation mark).

Example: Do you agree with the saying, “All’s fair in love and war”? (The question mark goes outside the quotation mark because the question is outside the quotation. “All’s fair in love and war” is not a question by itself).

Words to Watch For

accept/except	Accept is a verb meaning, “to agree to receive or do.” Except is a preposition meaning, “not including.”
advice/advise	Advice is a noun meaning, “recommendations about what to do.” Advise is a verb meaning, “to recommend something.”
affect/effect	Affect is a verb meaning, “to influence.” Effect is a noun meaning, “result.”
all together/altogether	All together means “all in one place, all at once.” Altogether is an adverb meaning, “completely or on the whole.”
allude/refer	These two words are not interchangeable. Allude means “an indirect mention.” Refer means “a direct mention.”
altar/alter	Altar is a noun referring to the area where religious worship occurs. Alter is a verb meaning, “to change something.”
among/between	Among is used when comparing more than two things, and between is used in connection with two persons or things.
assure/insure/ensure	Assure means to “convince” or “promise.” Insure means “to provide insurance for,” which is the only meaning of this word. Ensure means “to make clear or certain.”

continual/continuous	Continual means “an action that occurs with pauses and intermissions.” Continuous means “an action that occurs without pauses.” Example: The computer continually breaks down. (It happens a lot, but the computer is not always broken down). The roar of the waterfall was continuous. (It never stopped).
council/counsel	Council is always a noun and refers to an assembly of people brought together for discussion or deliberation. Counsel is usually used as a verb and means “to advise.” However, counsel can be used as a noun meaning, “the act of exchanging ideas or giving advice,” or “a lawyer or group of lawyers giving legal advice.”
disinterested/uninterested	Disinterested means “impartial, showing no preferences or prejudices.” Uninterested means “bored or lacking interest.”
eager/anxious	Eager means “fervent or enthusiastic,” but anxious means “full of anxiety or worry caused by apprehension.” Eager is often positive, and anxious is often negative.
e.g./i.e.	e.g. means “for example” and precedes an example. i.e. means “that is” and simply restates what was just said. Always place a comma directly after e.g. and i.e.
fewer/less	Fewer refers to individual units or numbers—you can count how many. Less is used for quantities that you can’t count. Example: There is less money in the account than last month. (But we don’t know how much.) You need to make fewer mistakes on this report. (We can count how many mistakes are there.)
foreward/forward	Foreward is a noun that refers to the preface or introductory note of a book. Forward is the common adjective and adverb meaning, “near the front, going toward the front, or tending to the front.”
imply/infer	To imply is “to suggest or indicate, although never to express.” To infer is “to conclude from evidence.”
irregardless	Irregardless is not a word. The correct term is “regardless.”
its/it’s	Its is the possessive form of the pronoun “it.” It’s is a contraction of “it is.”
who/that	Who is used for people. That is used for everything else.

who/whom

Who refers to the subject of a sentence (one who does the action), and whom refers to the object of the sentence (one who is acted upon). If unsure of which to use, ask if you could replace the word with “he” or “him.” If it’s “he,” then use “who.” If it’s “him,” then use “whom.”

Example: Who asked the question? (You could say, “He asked the question.”)

Whom do you love? (You could say, “I love him.”)

which/that

Which is used with commas for phrases that are not necessary to identify the noun before it. That is used without commas for phrases that are necessary to identify the preceding noun.

Example: The river that runs through Dallas is muddy.

Example: The Trinity River, which runs through Dallas, is muddy.

Common Misspellings

General

- a lot (not alot)
- all right (not alright)
- annually
- awkward
- backup
- calendar (not calender)
- cannot (not can not)
- carefully
- catalog
- CD or CDs
- definitely
- email (not e-mail)
- FAQ or FAQs
- Flyer
- fulfill (not fullfill or fulfil)
- HotSpot
- information about (not information on)
- internet
- noticeable

- occurring (not occurring)
- online
- received
- recommend
- rhythm
- snail mail
- voicemail
- website
- web address

Proofreading and Editing

Copy without proper proofreading and editing can potentially turn off readers. It's important for a member of the proofing team and/or an editor to review every communication piece. These team members (preferably who are unfamiliar with the material) will check even the most minor of details.

Accuracy	Cross-reference days of the week with a calendar. If you're using a table of contents, make sure the page numbers listed match the pages of the document.
Audience	Does the copy answer the most important question our audience asks: "What's in it for me?" Leo Burnett, a leading advertising executive, says, "Don't tell me how good you make it. Tell me how good it makes me when I use it."
Basics	Does the copy include the necessary basics: who, what, where, when, why and how (call to action)? Does the call to action include the appropriate contact information (e.g., complete address, phone with extension, email, website addresses, etc.)?
Consistency	Look for consistency in punctuation, style and formatting throughout the piece. Compare with our Style Guide. Include review of capitalization, indents, type size, type face, leading, alignment, page breaks, bullets, hyphens, etc.
Names	Double-check accuracy on names, phone numbers and extensions directly with the name owner, or cross-reference with more than one proofer.
Spelling	Spelling is critical. A single misspelling can convey to readers that they or the information is not important or valued. Do not rely on your computer's spelling and grammar checkers.
Terminology	Step into the shoes of new guests and consider what their reactions may be to certain phrases and the appearance of the piece. Do certain words sounds " cliché " or " too implied " ? If so, the message may not be understood by the reader.

Tone	Does the overall feeling of the piece—text, design and point of view—reflect our vision and goal for it?
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Proofing Hints

Try the techniques below for improved proofing:

- Work from a printout, not the computer screen (but use computer shortcuts below).
- Read aloud. You'll hear problems you may not see when reading silently.
- Use a blank sheet of paper to cover up the lines below the one you're reading. This technique keeps you from skipping ahead of possible mistakes.
- Use the search function of the computer to find mistakes you're likely to make. Search for "it," for instance, for "its" and "it's," and search for opening parentheses or quotation marks. (People tend to leave out closing ones.)
- End by spell checking. Use a computer spell checker or read backwards word-by-word. Remember that a spell checker won't catch mistakes with homonyms (e.g., "they're," "their," "there") or certain typos (like "he" for "the").
- Replace the long blocks of text with easier-to-read bulleted lists.
- Do not underline or bold for emphasis. Less is more.

References

When in doubt, we follow these resources (in addition to this guide):

- **Old Bridge Church Communications Plan, dated June 1, 2018.**

Graphic Standards

The Old Bridge Church logos illustrated below may be used in official church communications. The logos are available from the communications team at communication@oldbridgechurch.org.

Our church logos have the following restrictions. They:

- May not be modified, re-arranged, or manipulated in any way

- Can be printed in color or black and white
- May be reduced in size to fit space so long as the text is legible



Additional Information

For answers to anything not included in this guide, contact:

The Old Bridge Communications Team at communications@oldbridgechurch.org.