

NIJ

NIJ.gov

- Format
- Process
- Grammar
- Usage
- Spelling

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Questions?

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Author Guidelines and Editorial Style

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NIJ Style Guide

The comprehensive NIJ Style Guide serves as a resource for NIJ content providers across all media.

NIJ publications adhere to *The Associated Press Stylebook*, with exceptions noted in this manual. Web-based and digital content require additional editorial considerations.

This guide outlines editorial standards for the following:

- Print Documents
- Notes and References
- Web Writing
- Multimedia
- 508 Compliance

Please consult Jolene Hernon, Director of NIJ's Office of Communications, with any questions or comments: jolene.hernon@usdoj.gov; 202-307-1464.

Author Guidelines and Editorial Style

Section 1: General Editorial Guidelines

Over the past few years, NIJ transitioned from Government Printing Office (GPO) to Associated Press (AP) style. This section highlights the main differences between the two, details NIJ exceptions to AP style, and outlines key style features used to produce NIJ materials.

For spelling, compounding, style and usage questions that the *AP Stylebook* does not cover, AP recommends consulting *Webster's New World College Dictionary* (4th ed.). As a rule of thumb, use the first spelling listed in that dictionary unless the *AP Stylebook* provides a specific exception.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

- Acronyms are words formed from the first letter or letters of a series of words (*laser is light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation*).
- Abbreviations are shortened words (*co. for company*).
- Abbreviations and initials of personal names that are followed by periods are set without spaces (*U.S., A.B. Carter*).
- Abbreviations of contractions and initials or numbers retain a space (*S. 116, op. cit.*).
- Use periods for most two-letter abbreviations, e.g., D.C. (except in addresses), *U.S., U.K., U.N.*, but *AP, GI, EU* are exceptions.
- U.S., U.N., U.K. are acceptable on first reference and as both nouns and adjectives.
- Use all capitals, but no periods, for longer abbreviations and acronyms when individual letters are pronounced: *FBI, DOJ, DHHS, CDC*.
- For abbreviations and acronyms of more than six letters, use an initial cap only.
- Abbreviate the following formal titles when they appear directly before a person's name: *Dr., Gov., Lt. Gov., Rep., Sen.* For example:
 - *Gov. Martin O'Malley*
 - *former Lt. Gov. Michael Steele* (note that "former" is not capitalized)
 - *Sen. Benjamin Cardin*
 - *Rep. Chris Van Hollen* (note that Rep. or Representative is the preferred term, not Congressman or Congresswoman)

All other formal titles are spelled out in all uses (*President, Vice President, Attorney General*).

- Place acronyms in parentheses after the full term on first use. *Note: This is an exception to AP style, which does not use acronyms on first reference. Instead, AP allows use of the acronym without the full term on the second reference.*
- AP style lists a number of acronyms and abbreviations that can be used on first reference without definition. Some examples: *CIA, FBI*.
- Do not use an article in front of an acronym used as a noun, unless the usage is generally accepted (*the FBI, the CIA, the IRS*, but *DOJ, NIJ, BJS, ONDCP, EPA, BOP, CDC*).

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Addresses

- Use the abbreviations *Ave.*, *Blvd.* and *St.* with a numbered address in both text and mailing lists: *1600 Pennsylvania Ave.* Otherwise, spell out the full word in text: *Pennsylvania Avenue.*
- Spell out other words used as street designations in both text and mailing lists (*alley*, *circle*, *drive*, *road*, *highway*, *pike*, *place*, *terrace*, *turnpike*).
- Capitalize street designations only when referring to a specific formal street name: *New York Avenue*, but *the avenue*.
- Lowercase street designations when referring to two or more streets: *Massachusetts and Pennsylvania avenues*.
- Abbreviate compass points used as directional indicators in numbered street addresses: *N.*, *E.*, *S.*, *W.*, *N.E.*, *N.W.*, *S.E.*, *S.W.*, *810 Seventh St. N.W.*, *1500 N. Lee Highway*. Do not use commas between the street name and directional indicator.
- Spell out directional indicators if the street name is used alone without a number: *Seventh Street Northwest*, *South Washington Street*.
- Use two-letter postal abbreviations for states only when they are followed by a ZIP code:
810 Seventh St. N.W.
Washington, DC 20531

Otherwise, use the AP standard abbreviations for states both in text and in notes and references. The following states are not abbreviated per AP style: Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas, and Utah. Other state abbreviations are in the *AP Stylebook*.

- Use periods with *P.O. Box*.

Capitalization

- In general, avoid unnecessary capitals.
- Capitalize all job titles or official titles of federal officials before or after the person's name or if the title stands alone. *Note: This is an exception to AP style.* For example:
 - *President Barack Obama*
 - *Barack Obama, President of the United States*
 - *The President gave the State of the Union address.*
 - *Director John H. Laub*
 - *John H. Laub, Director*
 - *The Attorney General*
- Capitalize names of government departments and offices when they are not widely used or generic (*Office of Research and Evaluation*). Lowercase widely used or generic names of government agencies and offices (*communications division*), unless used in reference to a specific office (NIJ's Office of Communications). Capitalize subsequent references to proper names of government departments (*Agency*, *Institute*). For example:
 - *Office of Investigative and Forensic Sciences*
 - *Office of Science and Technology*
 - *community outreach divisions*

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- adult protective services
- Capitalize *act* only when it appears as part of the formal title of enacted or pending legislation: *the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Act*, but *the act*. The term *bill* is not capitalized.
- Do not capitalize prepositions and conjunctions in titles and headings, including *to* as part of an infinitive, unless they have more than three letters:
 - *Convicted by Juries, Exonerated by Science*
 - *Police Integrity: Public Service With Honor*
 - *Policing Neighborhoods: A Report From St. Petersburg*
 - *Battered Women and Their Children*
- Some common capitalization uses to note include:
 - *Congress*, but *congressional*, *congressionally*
 - *federal*, *state*, *territory*, *tribe*, *nation*
 - *federally*, *statewide*, *territorial*, *tribal*, *national*, *nationwide*
 - *government*, not *Government*
 - *Web* (as short for *World Wide Web*, *Web feed*, and *Web page*, but *website*, *webcam*, *webcast*, *webmaster* (Note that compounds beginning with *web* are one word and lowercase.)
 - *PDF*, not *pdf*
 - *URL*, not *url*
 - *email* in text; capitalize *Email* in an address/telephone list
 - *First Amendment*, *14th Amendment*
 - *U.S. Constitution*, *the Constitution* (always capitalized when referring to the U.S. Constitution), *Massachusetts Constitution*, but *state constitution*
 - *Legislature* when referring to a specific state legislature (*Kansas Legislature*, *the Legislature*), but *legislature* when used generically or when referring to more than one legislature (*the Kansas and Colorado legislatures*)
 - *Senate* (for *U.S. Senate* and a *state senate*), but *the Virginia and Maryland senates*

Compounding and Unit Modifiers

- In general, AP style suggests using hyphens unless the meaning is clear and the hyphen does not improve readability. Do not hyphenate two-word phrases when the first word is an adverb that ends in “ly.” However, predicate adjectives following a form of the verb “to be” are hyphenated if they would be hyphenated as a unit modifier preceding a noun. When in doubt, check the *AP Stylebook* for individual prefixes and suffixes. For compounding, AP style generally follows *Webster’s New World College Dictionary*.
- Note some of the following uses in AP style:
 - words beginning with *anti-* are hyphenated, except for words with specific meanings (see the list in the *AP Stylebook*)
 - *cease-fire* (n.), *cease fire* (v.), but *Operation Ceasefire* or *CeaseFire* (depending on the city of the program)
 - *child care* (n., u.m.)

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- *cross-examine, cross-examination, cross section* (n.), but *crossover* (n., adj.)
- *day care* (n., u.m.)
- *email*, but hyphenate other *e-* terms: *e-book, e-commerce, e-publication*
- *front line* (n.), *front-line* (adj.)
- *follow-up* (n., u.m.), *follow up* (v.)
- *health care* (n., u.m.)
- *in-depth* (u.m.)
- *re-entry*, but *Reentry Initiative*
- *under way*
- In general, do not hyphenate prefixes that appear before a word starting with a consonant. Except for coordinate and cooperate, hyphenate prefixes that end with the same vowel as the vowel that begins the word they precede: *re-elect, pre-existing*. Some of these may be exceptions to first listed spellings in *Webster's New World College Dictionary*.
- Prefixes that generally do not need a hyphen include the following, noting some exceptions:
 - *bi*
 - *co* (except when forming words that indicate occupation or status: *co-author, co-defendant, co-signer, co-worker*)
 - *counter*
 - *fore*
 - *infra*
 - *inter*
 - *intra*
 - *mid*, but *mid-America, mid-1990s*
 - *mini*
 - *multi*
 - *non*
 - *pre*, but *pre-empt, pre-existing, pre-convention, pre-dawn*
 - *re*, but hyphenate before words beginning with "e" or if the word would have a different meaning as one word, e.g., *re-cover* (cover again), *re-sign* (sign again)
 - *semi*
 - *trans*
 - *ultra*
 - *un*
 - *under*
- *After*, as a prefix, is printed solid when used to form a noun, but is hyphenated when used to form a unit modifier: *aftereffect, afterthought*, but *after-school activities*.
- *Post*, as a prefix, should be hyphenated if not listed in *Webster's New World College Dictionary*. Some exceptions: *postdate, postelection, postgraduate, postoperative, postwar*, but *post-bellum, post-mortem*.
- Use a hyphen for unit modifiers beginning with "all": *all-around* (not *all-round*), *all-inclusive, all-out, all-time*.

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- For suffixes, generally follow *Webster's New World Dictionary*. If a combination is not listed there, use two words for the verb form and hyphenate nouns and unit modifiers. Some common examples:
 - *breakup, buildup, checkup, crackup, pileup, setup, smashup, speedup, tuneup*
 - *businesslike*, but *bill-like, shell-like* (to avoid tripling a consonant)
 - *citywide, communitywide, countrywide, statewide, nationwide*
 - *childless, tailless, waterless*, but *shell-less* (to avoid tripling a consonant)
 - *clockwise, lengthwise, otherwise*, but *penny-wise, street-wise*
 - *crossover*
 - *cutoff, liftoff, playoff, standoff, showoff, takeoff*, but *rip-off, send-off, shut-off*
 - *fallout, flameout, pullout, sellout, walkout, washout*, but *cop-out, fade-out, hide-out*
 - *holdover, stopover, takeover, walkover*, but *carry-over*
 - *shutdown, slowdown*
 - *standoff, standout*
 - *takeout, takeover*
 - *twofold, fourfold*

Dates

- In text, write out months in full when they appear alone or with the year only. Use the following forms for months as part of a month, day and year.

○ <i>Jan.</i>	<i>Feb.</i>	<i>March</i>	<i>April</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>June</i>
○ <i>July</i>	<i>Aug.</i>	<i>Sept.</i>	<i>Oct.</i>	<i>Nov.</i>	<i>Dec.</i>
- Also use the above forms with periods and the year (all four digits) on the covers and title pages of NIJ publications: *Sept. 2011, April 2012*.
- When a phrase lists a month and year, do not separate with commas: *February 2008*.
- When a phrase lists a month, day and year, place a comma before and after the year: *Feb. 14, 2008, is the target date*.
- In tables and figures only, use the following forms for months without a period:

○ <i>Jan</i>	<i>Feb</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>Apr</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Jun</i>
○ <i>Jul</i>	<i>Aug</i>	<i>Sep</i>	<i>Oct</i>	<i>Nov</i>	<i>Dec</i>
- In text, write out days of the week in full. Use the following forms without periods in tables:

○ <i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
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Italics

Within text, use italics for the titles of books, online publications, journals, magazines and other periodicals. However, place articles, chapters, etc., within a publication in quotations. Titles of NIJ grant reports are also in quotations.

Use italics for pull quotes, a graphic element that cites or emphasizes special text within a publication. In general, do not use italics to emphasize words or sentences in main text. Before

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placing word(s) in italics, ask the following questions: Why is this word/sentence more important than the others? Will the audience discern its importance, or can it only be conveyed through italics?

Numbers

- Spell out numbers one through nine except for units of measurement (dimensions), degrees, decimals, money, percentages or proportions; use figures for 10 and above. The ordinals first through ninth are also spelled out, except in political, geographical and military designations:
 - *The suspect was accused of four robberies.*
 - *The gang was linked to 17 shootings.*
 - *first floor*
 - *Seventh Street*
 - *1st Congressional District*
 - *8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, the 8th Circuit*
- When using numerals for second and third, use *2nd* and *3rd*, not *2d* and *3d*, except as part of a legal citation: *2nd ed.*, but *214 F.3d 417*.
- Spell out all numbers except for years at the beginning of a sentence. Spell out numbers one through nine when they appear in the same sentence as a number 10 and above:
 - *The group of sex offenders interviewed included eight rapists, 16 child molesters, and 14 whose victims comprised both adults and children.*
 - *Thirteen inmates escaped from the state penitentiary.*
 - *1974 saw the passage of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act.* Avoid this construction if possible. Instead, write *The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act was enacted in 1974.*
- Use figures for time of day and dates, but write out one through nine when referring to durations of time: *8 a.m.*, *8:30 p.m.*; *Feb. 14, 2008*, but *one day, two weeks, three months, four years, five decades, six centuries*.
- Use figures to denote percentages. Do not use the % symbol in text; however, it may be used in exhibits.
- Use figures for units of dimension: *5 feet, 6 inches, 4 yards, a 6-foot-4-inch man*.
- Always use figures for ages.
 - *The incest victim was 6 years old.*
 - *The USA PATRIOT Act is 9 years old.* Suggest rewriting to avoid this construction. Instead, write *The USA PATRIOT Act passed nine years ago.*
 - *a 5-year-old boy, a 7-year-old girl, a 35-year-old woman*
 - Fractions standing alone or followed by *of a* or *of an* are generally spelled out: *three-fourths of an inch, a quarter of a mile*. Don't mix percentages and fractions: *20 percent of the men and three-fourths of the women.*
 - Use hyphens in number ranges in text: *a 5-4 vote*. Also use hyphens for telephone numbers: *800-851-3420*.

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Preferred Terms and Usage

- *al-Qaida*
- *although*, not *while* (unless noting a period of time)
- *American Indian, Alaska Native or Native American*, not *Native, Indian, AIAN, AI/AN, AI&AN*
- *compared to* when pointing out resemblances, often unexpected, between essentially dissimilar objects; use *compared with* to point out differences, often unexpected, between essentially similar objects.
- *conducted energy device*, not *Taser*
- *correctional officers*, not *prison guards*
- *crime laboratory(ies)*, not *crime lab(s)*
- *data set*
- *decision-maker, decision-making*
- *intimate partner violence*, not *domestic violence*
- *exhibit* for tables, figures and charts.
- *firearm* when referring to the actual weapon (*shot by a firearm*); *gun* when referring to crime (*gun violence*)
- *http://* at the start of a Web address: *http://www.ncjrs.gov* but *NIJ.gov* and *DNA.gov*
- *human remains*, not *dead body*
- *law enforcement officer*, not *police officer*
- *more than* when referring to quantity (*more than five people*); *over* when referring to a physical comparison (*over the bridge*)
- *Muslim*, not *Moslem*
- *offenders*, not *ex-convicts*
- *offline, online*
- *Operation Ceasefire*, or *Operation CeaseFire* may be acceptable depending on the city. Confirm the proper spelling with the individual program. Chicago's program is *Operation CeaseFire*, but Boston's is *Operation Ceasefire*
- *or*, not *and/or*; avoid *and/or* in any case
- *Pan-American*
- *percent* when a number appears in a sentence; *percentage* when no specific number is mentioned
- *policymaker, policymaking*
- *postconviction*
- *prostituted women*, not *sex workers* or *prostitutes*
- *protection orders* or *protective orders*; either is acceptable
- *Sept. 11* and *9/11* are both acceptable.
- *staff* is a collective noun that takes a singular verb. *NIJ staff is reviewing ...*
- *victim advocate*
- *Web. Web feed and Web page*, but, *website, webcam, webcast, webmaster*

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Punctuation

The *AP Stylebook* has a complete punctuation guide, but you can refer to the list below for guidance on common questions.

- **Apostrophe:**

Use only to indicate possession, not to form the plural or contraction of a figure, symbol or combination of letters: *1920s, OKs, YMCAs*.

Omit the apostrophe after a word ending in “s” when it is used primarily in a descriptive sense: *citizens band radio, teachers college, writers guide*.

Proper names that end in “s” use only an apostrophe, as follows:

- *Harris’ hat*
- *Chalmers’ house*
- *Higgins’ presentation*
- *Brahms’ symphonies*

- **Comma:**

Do not use a serial comma before *and* in a simple list: *The flag is red, white and blue*.

Use a comma before the concluding conjunction in a series if an integral element in the series requires a conjunction: *He had orange juice, toast, and ham and eggs for breakfast*.

Use a comma before the concluding conjunction in a complex series of phrases: *The main points to consider are whether the athletes are skillful enough to compete, whether they have the stamina to endure the training, and whether they have the proper mental attitude*.

Use a comma before a conjunction that connects two independent clauses if the subject of each clause is expressly stated: *We visited Washington, and our senator greeted us personally*. Omit the comma, however, if the subject of the clauses is the same and is not repeated: *We are visiting Washington and plan a side trip to Williamsburg*.

Use a comma before and after explanatory phrases, appositives and identifiers:

- After a state when using a city and state: *In Newark, N.J., the police department ...*
- In a complete date within a sentence: *On May 1, 1995, President Clinton signed the bill*. Do not use a comma if only writing the month and year (*June 1994*).
- In city/state lists, use commas between individual cities and states: *Portland, Ore.; Tucson, Ariz.; and Springfield, Mass.*

- **Colon:**

Use a colon at the end of a sentence to introduce lists, texts, tabulations, etc. Capitalize the text following the colon only if it forms a complete sentence.

- **Dash:**

Use an em-dash to set off a phrase that contains a series of words set off by commas or to indicate an abrupt change in thought. Place a space before and after an em-dash in a

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sentence: *He listed the qualities — intelligence, humor, independence — that he liked in an executive.*

AP style does not use en-dashes. Use hyphens in number ranges, including page ranges; telephone numbers; and acronyms and abbreviations: *a 5-4 vote, 202-307-2942, CD-ROM.*

- **Ellipsis:**

Treat an ellipsis as a three-letter word with spaces before and after: *I ... tried to do what was best.* Do not place spaces between the dots in an ellipsis.

- **Period:**

Use only one space after a period.

- **Quotation marks:**

Place periods and commas inside quotation marks. Colons, semicolons, question marks, dashes and exclamation points are placed outside quotation marks unless they are part of the material being quoted.

Quotation marks are not necessary for nonliteral terms that have a commonly accepted meaning in the criminal justice field: *hot spot, broken windows.* However, when quotation marks are used for such a term, they should be used only the first time.

- **Semicolon:**

Use a semicolon to separate a complex series of major elements when those elements also contain commas: *the country's resources consist of large ore deposits; lumber, waterpower, and fertile soils; and a strong, rugged people.* Do not use a semicolon when a comma will suffice.

Trademarks

Do not use the symbol with a trademark name. Capitalize the word when referring to a trademark brand, word, etc. When possible, use the generic equivalent unless the trademark name is necessary. For example:

- *Taser* is the widely known trademark for *conducted energy device*. Use *conducted energy device*, unless referring specifically to *Taser*.

Section 2: Print Documents

Audience

NIJ recognizes the need to translate research for a nontechnical audience of readers at all levels — from the chief of police to street officers, from the elected state’s attorney to assistant district attorneys, from the Governor to members of the Governor’s task force on public safety. The people who read NIJ publications are like the people who read *Newsweek*, the *Harvard Business Review* and the *New York Times*. They are intelligent and busy individuals who may or may not know much about methodology or NIJ. They want accurate information that is timely, easy to read and helps them do their job better.

The Inverted Pyramid

NIJ editors follow the newspaper industry’s inverted pyramid rule: We put the most important part of the story at the beginning. The introductory sentences tell the reader what the finding is, why it is significant, and why it is relevant to the field. Newspaper editors cut text from the end of the story because they know few people read all the way to the end. NIJ editors are less ruthless about space, but still follow the newspaper rule of thumb: Put the most important information at the beginning and cut from the end.

Manuscripts must be clear, concise and well-structured. Headings, subheadings, lists, tables, graphs and illustrations should be presented in such a way that a busy reader can scan the report and still get the main points.

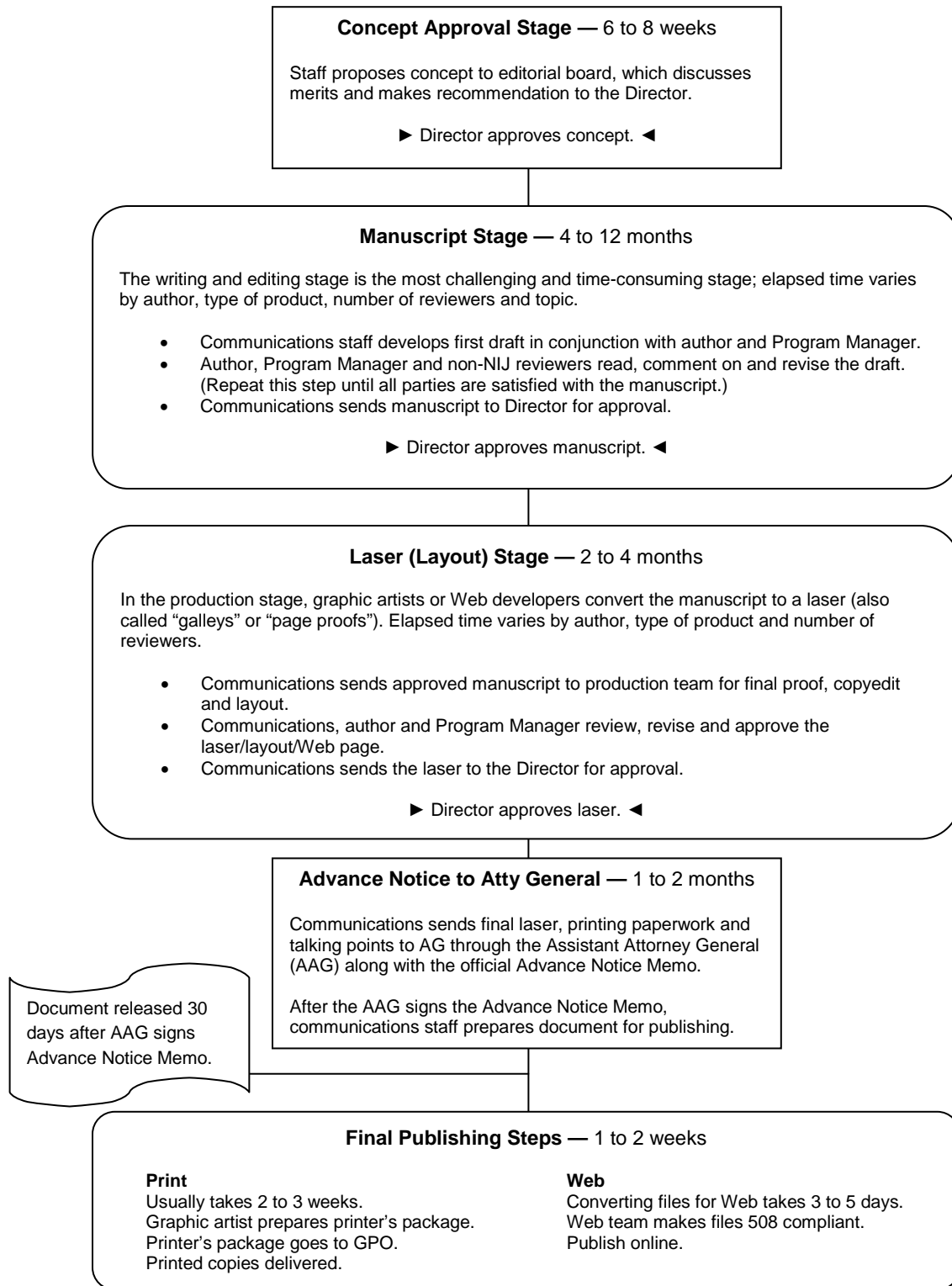
The Process

The NIJ Editorial Board reviews proposals to publish. It assesses the rigor of the science and the value to the field. The Board makes recommendations to the Director, who approves all communications products before work on the product begins. On average, publications take six to 12 months to produce after the director approves the grant manager’s request to publish the findings. The production time for each publication varies depending on its length and issues that are unique to the document. See the flowchart on the next page for the NIJ publishing steps.

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NIJ's Publishing Steps

Updated September 2011



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Peer Reviews

All final reports and summaries submitted to NIJ are sent to an external peer review panel whose comments are a major factor in NIJ's dissemination decision.

The peer review panel concentrates primarily on the substance of the research methodology and findings but frequently addresses the editorial quality and the contribution to the field. Peer reviewers forward their comments to program managers who then help authors address concerns raised during the review period.

After the external and internal reviews, program managers present their ideas about dissemination to the NIJ Editorial Board, which makes recommendations to the NIJ Director regarding publication. After the Director approves the Editorial Board's dissemination recommendations, NIJ's Office of Communications begins editorial and production work.

Manuscript

After the director authorizes NIJ's Office of Communications to begin work, an NIJ editor reviews the manuscript and assesses what needs to be done to prepare the manuscript for publication.

Working closely with the author and the program manager, the editor often rewrites sections of the manuscript to conform with NIJ's requirement to present research in plain language. Sometimes the author will redraft sections. Some reports require more than four drafts before the manuscript is ready for review by the Director.

We strongly encourage authors to make all revisions at the manuscript stage because changes made at this point are the least expensive and time-consuming.

Laser

Once the director approves the manuscript, the report is laid out in pages. Usually two sets of lasers are prepared (the initial laser and the final laser). Changes made at this stage are expensive and time-consuming.

Camera-Ready

When all revisions are complete, the document is prepared for the printer. Changes at this stage are very expensive and time-consuming.

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Other Considerations

- **Quoted material:** Quoted material exceeding 10 lines should be set off in a left-indented paragraph introduced by a colon and followed by the note number or citation.
- **Photographs:** Manuscripts that contain photos must also contain contact information for the photographers. NIJ will arrange to get photo permission and correct crediting information.
- **Pull quotes:** Pull quotes, which can be a paraphrased or shortened version of body text, are used with some publications to add design interest and to draw readers' attention to text highlights. Pull quotes are usually developed by the editor at the time a document goes to graphics for production; however, the author is encouraged to provide suggested pull quotes (generally one per page).
- **Charts and graphs:** Manuscripts that present visual data must be accompanied by the raw data so a graphic artist can prepare accurate charts and tables.

Section 3: Notes and References

The guidelines listed in this section will be used in the notes and reference section for both print and Web documents, with one exception — on the website, do not italicize a link when linking to a publication with an italicized title.

NIJ follows the conventions in the *United States Government Printing Office Style Manual* (2008 ed.) and *Chicago Manual of Style* (15th ed.). NIJ uses endnotes rather than footnotes, and it does not use the American Psychological Association (APA) style of embedded text references (e.g., Wilson, 1995) with a list of citations at the end of the document. In long documents, however, such as Special Reports or Science and Technology Reports, references may be used instead of or along with endnotes.

Endnotes and bibliographic entries have basically the same format, with two differences: Notes often include page numbers while bibliographic entries do not. Also, almost all note components are set off by commas, and almost all bibliographic components are set off by periods.

For a shorter work or for a Special Report by a single author, endnotes should generally be consolidated at the end of the document and listed sequentially (not by chapter or section). Endnotes may appear at the end of each chapter of multiauthor works.

Notes to exhibits should be placed at the bottom of the exhibit. If an exhibit has only one note, use an asterisk to designate it.

Notes to sidebars should be placed at the end of the sidebar. If a sidebar has more than one note, use letters of the alphabet to designate notes. However, in the *NIJ Journal* print edition, notes to sidebars are placed at the end of articles, along with the other notes. In the Web version, sidebar notes are kept with the sidebar. Sidebar notes in the *NIJ Journal* use numerals, not letters, to designate notes.

Books

Notes: Author (last name, first name), *Title in Italics*, Place of publication: Publisher, year of publication: page number(s) cited. Note that in all NIJ citation forms, a space appears between the colon and page number(s). For place of publication, if city and state are used, AP abbreviations for states should be used in both notes and references.

Examples:

Jones, John, *History of Criminology*, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1992: 10.

Laub, John H., and Robert J. Sampson, *Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives: Delinquent Boys to Age 70*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Author Guidelines and Editorial Style

References: Author (last name, first name). *Title in Italics*. Place of publication: Publisher, year of publication.

Examples:

Jones, John. *History of Criminology*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1992.

Laub, John H., and Robert J. Sampson. *Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives: Delinquent Boys to Age 70*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Electronic Sources

Styles for citing electronic sources are still in flux. These guidelines are based on styles for citing electronic sources used by the APA, the Modern Language Association (MLA), the Library of Congress and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), whose style is supported by the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

Follow the style for the type of publication, such as a chapter in a book or an article in a journal. Include the “retrieved” statements below, which are loosely based on APA’s 1999, online revision of the fourth edition of its style guide. APA and MLA do not require a retrieval or access date when the source is a CD-ROM.

Web-based databases: Retrieved [month, day, year]. From [source]. Database [name of database], [item number if applicable] on the World Wide Web: [URL].

Example:

Schneiderman, Ronald. “Librarians Can Make Sense of the Net.” *San Antonio Business Journal* 11 (1997) (31): 58. Retrieved January 27, 1999, from EBSCO database, Masterfile, on the World Wide Web: <http://www.ebsco.com>.

Electronic correspondence: Cite electronic correspondence from bulletin boards, e-mail messages and discussion groups as personal communications in a reference list:

Example:

S.T. Smith, personal communication, July 18, 1999.

Periodicals

Notes: Author (last name, first name), “Title of Article in Quotation Marks (initial capitalize all words except articles and most prepositions),” *Title of Periodical in Italics* (no comma) volume number (month and year of publication in parentheses): page number(s) cited/of article.

Example:

Jones, John, “Crime in the Community,” *Journal of Crime* 10 (June 1992): 3-4.

When citing an online article in a note, list the same information, but add the Web address and (date accessed) in parentheses.

Example:

Jones, John, “Crime in the Community,” *Journal of Crime* 10 (June 1992): 3-4, <http://www.crime.org> (accessed March 15, 2010).

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If no volume number is given, omit this item after the periodical title: *Crime*: 3-4.

If the issue number is given, it is placed in parentheses after the volume number.

Example:

Jones, John, "Crime in the Community," *Journal of Crime* 10 (2) (June 1992): 3-4.

Citations to newspaper articles are as follows: Author (last name, first name) (if known), "Title of Article in Quotation Marks (initial capitalize all words except articles and most prepositions)," *Title of Newspaper in Italics*, date of newspaper, page (including section).

Examples:

Jones, John, "Crime in the Community," *Washington Post*, June 10, 1992, B1.

Editorial, "Crime in the Community," *Washington Post*, June 10, 1992, A22.

References: Author (last name, first name). "Title of Article in Quotation Marks (initial capitalize all words except articles and most prepositions)." *Title of Periodical in Italics* (no comma) volume number (month and year of publication in parentheses): page number(s) cited/of article.

Example:

Jones, John. "Crime in the Community." *Journal of Crime* 10 (June 1992): 3-12.

When using an online article as a reference, list the author of the article (last name, first name). Year it was published. Article title. *Title of Journal* issue number: inclusive page numbers if available. Web address (date accessed) in parentheses.

Example:

Jones, John. 1992. Crime in the Community. *Journal of Crime* 10. <http://www.crime.org> (accessed March 15, 2010)

If no volume number is given, omit this item after the periodical title: *Crime*: 3-4.

If the issue number is given, it is placed in parentheses after the volume number.

Example:

Jones, John. 1992. Crime in the Community. *Journal of Crime* 10 (2): 3-4.

Citations to newspaper articles are as follows: Author (last name, first name) (if known). "Title of Article in Quotation Marks (initial capitalize all words except articles and most prepositions)." *Title of Newspaper in Italics*, date of newspaper, page (including section).

Example:

Jones, John. "Crime in the Community." *Washington Post*, June 10, 1992, B1.

Editorial. "Crime in the Community." *Washington Post*, June 10, 1992, A24.

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Series

Notes: Author (last name, first name), *Title of Publication in Italics*, Title of Series in Initial Capitalization (except for articles and most prepositions), volume and number, Place of publication: Publisher, year of publication: page number(s) cited.

Example:

Chapman, Jefferson, *Parental Care*, Illinois Biological Monographs, vol. 22, Champaign: University of Illinois, 1975: 13-14.

References: Author (last name, first name). *Title of Publication in Italics*. Title of Series in Initial Capitalization (except for articles and most prepositions), volume and number. Place of publication: Publisher, year of publication.

Example:

Chapman, Jefferson. *Parental Care*. Illinois Biological Monographs, vol. 22. Champaign: University of Illinois, 1975.

If the series is accessed online, place the URL after the year followed by the (date accessed) in parentheses.

Example:

Chapman, Jefferson. *Parental Care*. Illinois Biological Monographs, vol. 22. Champaign: University of Illinois, 1975. <http://www.southeasternarchaeology.org/vol23-25.html> (accessed March 15, 2010).

NIJ and other government series. NIJ and other government series should follow the same format as other series, except the month should be given with the year of publication, and the NCJ number should be given at the end of the citation. Note also in the following example how the publisher is cited: first the Cabinet department, then the lowest-level agency/office. The example is a note.

Example:

Visher, Christy A., *Pretrial Drug Testing*, Research in Brief, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, September 1992, NCJ 137057.

Please note that the Government Printing Office is not to be named as the publisher, and both the government office and department/agency are to be named.

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Unpublished Documents

See *Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed., 17.210-17.218.

Notes. Use commas.

Example:

Rose, Dina R., and Todd R. Clear, "A Thug in Jail Can't Shoot Your Sister: Incarceration and Social Capital," paper presented to the American Sociological Association, New York, August 13, 1997, 25.

References. Use periods.

Example:

Rose, Dina R., and Todd R. Clear. "A Thug in Jail Can't Shoot Your Sister: Incarceration and Social Capital." Paper presented to the American Sociological Association, New York, August 13, 1997.

Final Grant Reports

Final grant reports available from NCJRS are treated as unpublished documents; NCJRS is the distributor, not a publisher. Citations of such documents should include the grant number, if applicable, and should provide the NCJ (i.e., accession) number.

Example of Note:

Smith, Michael R., Robert J. Kaminski, Geoffrey P. Alpert, Lorie A. Fridell, John MacDonald and Bruce Kubu, "A Multi-Method Evaluation of Police Use of Force Outcomes," Final report to the National Institute of Justice, grant number 2005-IJ-CX-0056, July 2010, NCJ 231176, available at <http://www.ncjrs.gov>.

Example of Reference:

Garner, J., T. Schade, J. Hepburn, J. Fagan and J. Buchanan. 1995. "Understanding the Use of Force By and Against the Police." Final report for National Institute of Justice, grant number 92-IJ-CX-K028. NCJ 158614, available at <http://www.ncjrs.gov>.

Repeating a Citation

In notes, if the source is the same as the previous note, use *ibid.* with a comma and a page number: *ibid.*, 3.

If the source has been given a full citation earlier (two or more notes previously) in the notes, use the author's last name; the title of book, document or article; and the page number.

Example:

Jones, "Crime in the Community," 5. (an article in a periodical)

Visher, *Pretrial Drug Testing*, 2. (a document in a series; the same style would apply to a book)

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Several citations in one endnote. Separate each citation by semicolons. If the items have been previously cited, they can be cited as: See Jones, "Crime," 3; Miller, "Jails," 5; and Thomas, *Prisons*, 6.

Author Issues

If there are multiple authors, the first author should be listed last name first, but the other(s) should be listed first name first: *Winterfield, Laura A., and Sally T. Hillsman*. If there are no authors, only editors, the editors go in the author slot: *Jamieson, K.M., and T.J. Flannegan, eds.* (Editors are often referred to by the first and middle initials only.) If an agency or institution is both the author and publisher, use the agency designation for both.

Example of a Note:

Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Uniform Crime Reports*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1984.

Chapters in a book. When a chapter has an author and the book has editors, use this note format: Author (Last name, first name), "Title of Chapter in Quotation Marks," in *Title of Book in Italics*, ed. editors' names (first names first), Publication place: Publisher, year of publication: page numbers cited (or if in a reference list, all page numbers of the chapter).

Example:

Smith, Robert, "Crime and the Cities," in *A Review of Criminal Justice*, ed. E. Tomes and E. Bock, New York: Wiley, 1990: 25-26.

Note that in this format, the singular *ed.* precedes the names of the editors. If the abbreviation for editors follows the names, it is plural: *eds.* (See "Author Issues.")

Section 4: Web Writing

Introduction

In this section, you will find a “guide” for writing for the NIJ website. It includes some specific rules but does not cover everything. The guide walks you through the Web writing process at NIJ, covers best practices for Web writing, and provides guidance on common Web style issues and issues specific to NIJ. The overall goal for NIJ is to keep all products consistent, but there are certain Web writing exceptions to note.

This section draws from a number of sources that include more detailed guidance, some of which are directly cited, including:

- *AP Stylebook* (NIJ follows AP style)
- *Letting Go of the Words* by Ginny Redish
- *The Research-Based Web Design & Usability Guidelines* (<http://www.usability.gov>)
- *The Energy Information Administration’s Web Editorial Style Guide*, draft April 9, 2009
- U.S. Department of Energy’s *Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy Communication Standards and Guidelines* (http://www1.eere.energy.gov/communicationstandards/content/alt_text.html)
- *Improving Communication from the Federal Government to the Public* (<http://www.plainlanguage.gov>)

Your goal is to create well-organized and readable pages. Most topics contain related Web pages called a “websitesite.”

Getting Started: The Process

Kickoff Meeting

Before any new pages are written for the NIJ website, participants will attend an official kickoff meeting. The following people should attend:

- Program staff — Program Manager and subject matter experts
- Content writers
- Web Manager (optional)

The purpose of the meeting is to gather as much information as possible, including:

- **Defining the project.** What exactly are we trying to accomplish, and how can we do this on NIJ’s website?

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- **Define target audiences.** Who are they and what do they need, and in which format? (i.e., HTML text, PDF) If they were searching for this type of content on the Web, what terms might they type in a search engine?
- **Gathering content.** Ideally, the Program Manager and subject matter expert will bring source material to the kickoff meeting. During the meeting they will explain the source material, or at least tell you how to find the information.
- **Establishing an outline.** Based on the content, we can develop an outline to identify pages and define page flow. If appropriate, the Program Manager or subject matter expert can draft an outline prior to the meeting to facilitate more productive discussion.
- **Naming points of contact.** A main goal of the kickoff meeting is to establish a partnership between writers, program staff and subject matter experts. Establishing rapport early in the process contributes to the long-range goal of creating a complete and accurate first draft via feedback between writers and program staff.

Prior to the meeting, the meeting organizer will ask the Program Manager and subject matter expert to bring source materials and a basic understanding of what they want on the Web pages. To facilitate the process, the Kickoff Meeting Form (Attachment A) will be filled out during the meeting.

Kickoff Meeting Form

A kickoff meeting form will be completed at every kickoff meeting. Following the meeting, the form will be sent to the Program Manager for approval. This document will serve as a guide for the writer to develop a formal outline, timelines and content for the pages. The goal of the form is to help define the following points:

- Type of Page
- Audience(s)
- Initial Outline
- Page Goal (for every page)
- Review Process

The official form is Attachment A.

Before Writing: The Considerations

Six Types of Pages

Every NIH Web page will fall into one of the following page categories. Identifying and understanding the type of page you are writing will keep the content focused and help to design the outline.

- **Top-level pointer page.** Most of these pages are already established on the NIH site. They have a simple, short introduction with a bulleted list linking users to more details. Think

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of these pages as the main lobby at a hospital — you go there for directions to where you really need to go.

- **Process page.** These are pages that describe how NIJ “does things.” These are specialized pages that link directly from the top-level pointer page and are not frequently written.
- **Sublevel pointer page.** These pages provide a brief description and link to other pages for more detailed information. Using the “lobby” example at a hospital, these pages represent the lobby of the actual department users want (oncology, for example), before reaching the actual “room” or “destination.”
- **Destination page.** These are the “meaty” pages, as they contain much of the information users want. We hope that users will land on these pages when conducting a search — reaching their “destination.”
- **Subpage.** These are pages that will link from destination pages and will provide more detailed information that users may or may not want to pursue. This typically is where users will land if they click “see also” links from destination pages.
- **Exhibit page.** These are pages that call out images, tables or exhibits. There is a text tab on these pages to ensure 508 compliance. You are responsible for writing the text for the tab. See page 32 for more about linking to exhibit pages.

See Attachment B for a page flow diagram.

Developing an Outline

At each kickoff meeting you will discuss a preliminary outline for the Web pages. Organizing the information not only helps you conceptualize the content flow, but also guides NIJ’s Web Manager when coding the pages. The outline should be included as the first page of the package delivered to NIJ and is intended as an internal resource only. The outline should include:

- A list of pages organized by number
- A very brief summary of the page
- The goal for every page

See Attachment C for a sample outline.

General Page Template

When possible, limit the content of a page to what can appear on one screen (without scrolling). If this is not possible, try to keep the information brief and concise by using headings, short sentences and lists, and present the main points at the top of the page [1]. Remember, users do not mind scrolling down a page to find what they are looking for, as long as they can find it quickly.

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For longer pages, especially destination pages with more than one subheading or when a subheading falls below the first screen, a bulleted list at the top of the page can show the reader what to expect and link to content. For example:

- **Page Title**

On this page find:

- [Subhead \(or Heading Level 2-1\)](#)
- [Subhead \(or Heading Level 2-2\)](#)
- [Subhead \(or Heading Level 2-3\)](#)

- **Summary/Introduction/Description**

This is the brief introduction to the page. The next headings will provide more detailed information. This section may also have links jumping down to the sections below.

- **Subhead (or Heading Level 2-1)**

Content

Elements of Effective Web Writing

This section discusses the following guidelines for writing effective Web pages:

- **Consider the Audience.**
- **Follow the “Page Principle.”**
- **Use Plain Language.**
- **Use Familiar Words.**
- **Be Brief.**
- **Organize Content by Chunking.**
- **Start Thinking About Links.**
- **Create Pages for Scanning, Not Reading.**
- **Use Lists.**
- **Use Active Voice.**
- **Consider Search Engine Optimization.**

Consider the Audience

You will define the audience at the kickoff meeting. By elaborating on the following questions, the purpose of each page will become more clearly defined:

- Who are they? Think of the audience as individual people, not vague institutions.
- What tasks are they trying to accomplish?
- What questions do they have?
- What answers do we have?

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Follow the “Page Principle”

- **Each page should live on its own:** Users will not necessarily follow the logical progression of the suite outline. You should write each page as if it will be the only page a user will visit. In other words, content should include enough information so that a first-time reader will understand the message. Use links to other pages to avoid repeating concepts so much that the main subject of the page is buried.
- **Each page should contain one main topic:** Ginny Redish emphasizes “think ‘topic,’ not ‘book’” [2]. Using this guiding principle, limit each Web page to just one main topic, with subtopics, if appropriate. Users will scan the page to find what they need — they don’t want a book. By limiting the page to just one main point, the site will be much more effective. If the page has too many subtopics, consider breaking the page into more sections, or adding additional pages.

Use Plain Language

All NIJ Web pages must be written in plain language. Writing in plain language is not the same as “dumbing down” the content. It means writing so the intended audience can:

- Understand the first time they read or hear it.
- Find what they need.
- Understand what they find.
- Use what they find to meet their needs.

Consider the intended audience of the page — language that is plain to one set of readers may not be plain to others. If your reader needs specific technical or legal details, put them in, but think carefully about what's really necessary. Make sure you're not including information just because you always include it. [3]

Consider the guidance below from Plainlanguage.gov regarding plain language and the sciences and technical content:

“It is important for scientists to use plain language not only to reach the public; but also to reach one another. Indeed, scientific information conveyed in plain language invariably reaches bigger scientific audiences than information conveyed in technical language.” [4]

‘What do we mean by jargon? Jargon is unnecessarily complicated, technical language used to impress, rather than to inform, your audience.

‘When we say not to use jargon [unnecessarily complicated, technical language used to impress, rather than to inform, your audience], we’re not advocating leaving out necessary technical terms; we are saying to make sure your other language is as clear

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as possible. For example, there may not be another correct way to refer to a brinulator valve control ring. But that doesn't prevent you from saying 'tighten the brinulator valve control ring securely' instead of 'Apply sufficient torque to the brinulator valve control ring to ensure that the control ring assembly is securely attached to the terminal such that loosening cannot occur under normal conditions.' The first is a necessary use of a technical term. The second is jargon.' [5]

Use Familiar Words

Use words that are familiar to, and used frequently by, the target audience for the page. Words that are more frequently seen and heard are better and more quickly recognized. [6]

Use Active Voice

In general, NIJ prefers using active voice over passive voice. Active voice means the subject is doing the action of the verb. Passive voice means the object is doing the action [7]. For example:

- **Active voice:** NIJ funded the study.
- **Passive voice:** The study was funded by NIJ.

Create Pages for Scanning, Not Heavy Reading

Use descriptive headings, links and lists to easily inform and grab the reader's attention while scanning. Users that scan generally read headings and scan the first couple of sentences of the paragraph — not full text — and may miss information when a page contains dense text. Summarize the main point of your paragraph in the first couple of sentences [8].

Organize Content by "Chunking"

"Chunking" is the process of dividing information into small, clearly written paragraphs. Summarize the primary theme of the paragraph in the first sentence. Remember:

- Sentences should not have more than 20 words.
- Paragraphs should be no longer than six sentences, [9] and it is acceptable to have a paragraph of only one or two sentences.

A well-organized page should:

- Focus on a main idea.
- Be self-contained because text may be read out of order.
- Flow logically from one chunk to another.

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Use Descriptive Headings and Subheadings

Since Web users like to scan, quickly direct them by using descriptive headings and subheadings. Remember:

- Headings should provide strong cues to users about page organization and structure.
- Headings also help classify information on a page.
- Each heading should be descriptive enough for users to find the desired information [10].

See page 29 for guidelines on headings.

Use Lists

Lists allow users to scan information quickly. List entries should:

- Have a descriptive heading.
- Be related in some way (steps, factors, products, questions, etc.). [11]

See page 29 for guidelines on formatting lists.

Start Thinking About Links

Incorporating links is an excellent way to organize content. There is a wealth of information on NIJ's site and the Web, and finding ways to link to this information may save space and help to avoid redundancy. Links can connect users to other or additional content such as background information, references or definitions of complex terms. However, links may obstruct the flow of content and should be used sparingly.

- Too many links can make text difficult to read.
- Links can distract users and send them off the site.

The following are examples of information that can become effective links:

- Background and explanatory information. Removing this information from a main page makes the page shorter and allows users who are familiar with the material to move more quickly through the document. Users who want more detail may read it at their discretion.
- Related concepts. Link to an idea that is featured in another part of the site.
- Footnotes. Linking notes should be done in two steps. First, link the note number or in-text citation to the full citation (and vice versa):
 - *These recommendations apply to staff training, inmate orientation, inmate observation, direct supervision and policymaking. [\[1\]](#)*

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Then, in the full citation, link the title of the document to the actual document if it is available online:

- [\[1\]](#) *Recommendations are summarized on pages 261-267 of the report. See [Fleisher and Krienert, 2006](#).*
- Cross-references to other sections of the pages on the site (“See the [Additional Reading](#) list for more information.”).
- Partner agencies’ websites, preferably to specifically-related pages, not simply a home page

See pages 31-34 for more information on linking.

Consider Search Engine Optimization

Search engine optimization means creating content that is easily found by search engines. Your first priority should be creating clear, useful content. At the same time, you can take a few steps to “optimize” your content to ensure users are finding NIJ’s Web pages with search engines.

Identify one term per page that you think your target audience(s) might use if they were searching for this content. This is known as your target search term or your keyword(s). Try to include the target search term in the following places on your page, when editorially appropriate:

- Web Page Title Tag or “H1 Tag” (The blue bar at the top left of your browser. Ensure that your title tag is the target search term, even if the page is a PDF document.)
- The URL or Web Address
- Headings or Subheadings
- Paragraph Text
- Page Links

The Child Abuse and Maltreatment page [<http://www.nij.gov/topics/crime/child-abuse/welcome.htm>] uses ideal search engine optimization. “Child abuse” is a natural search term, and the term appears in the title tag, URL, heading, paragraph text and link text. The search engine optimization blends naturally into the page, and the content first and foremost is clear to readers.

Writing: The Specifics

Abbreviations

In general, try to avoid using abbreviations and acronyms, unless they are widely used (e.g., FBI). Remember that Web readers are looking for information quickly and may not read the entire page. In other publications, NIJ will use abbreviations or acronyms after the first

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reference. Web readers may scroll down a long page for specific information and may not see the original reference.

Bulleted or Itemized Lists

- For each list, use the same grammatical structure for each bullet.
- There are two ways to introduce a list: an introductory phrase or sentence with a colon or a simple heading with no colon. You can bold the simple heading. Two examples:

Gun violence prevention and intervention starts with problem solving. Problem-solving policing pushes police officials to:

- Identify concentrations of crime or criminal activity.
- Determine what causes these concentrations.
- Implement responses to reduce these concentrations.

Prevention Programs

- Operation Ceasefire
 - Directed Police Patrols
 - Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiative
 - Project Safe Neighborhoods
- Use the same types of bullets within each list throughout the page. Be consistent when you punctuate each line within a list:
 - Capitalize the first word in each bullet. If the bullet is a sentence or long phrase, do not capitalize each word. If the bullet is a simple phrase, you can use initial caps. Consistency is key, so use the same style on each page.
 - For simple phrases, do not use punctuation after each bullet (exception to AP style).
 - For bullets that are complete sentences, end each bullet with a period (not a semicolon or comma).

Headings/Subheadings

The main heading for each page should summarize the content of the page in a few words or a short phrase. The main head will also be included in the left navigation, but will need to be cut to fewer than four words. General rules for headings and subheadings:

- Always use initial caps, but do not capitalize prepositions and conjunctions including “to” as part of an infinitive, unless they have more than three letters. For example:
 - Convicted by Juries, Exonerated by Science
 - Police Integrity: Public Service With Honor
- Headings and subheading should describe or summarize the following content, convey information and not be “teasers” like many news headlines.

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Italics

Generally, limit the use of italics in Web writing. When using italics is the preferred style, however, you can apply italics to regular Web text, but not in link text. For example:

- **In regular text:** The *NIJ Journal* features an article on elder abuse.
- **In link text:** See the article on [elder abuse in the NIJ Journal](#).

Punctuation

The following list highlights some common punctuation issues:

- Use a dash (em dash or long dash: “—”) to indicate a break in thought or to separate examples within the sentence. Em dashes have one space on either side [12]. For example:
 - The FBI’s computerized database contains criminal justice information — including missing persons and unidentified decedent cases — and is available to law enforcement agencies.
- Use hyphens (the minus key on the keyboard) as “joiners” [13]. For example:
 - NIJ-sponsored study
 - Abuse of a 7-year-old girl
 - 800-555-1212

Writing “Alt Text”

Alt text (short for “alternative text”) describes images on the Web for visitors who use screen readers to access websites [14].

Alt text is added in the html in the “alt” attribute of an image and is used by visitors who are using screen readers to view a site.

All alt text should follow these guidelines:

- Your alt text should describe what a sighted user would see, read and understand from looking at that image. A general guide is to describe the photo or table as if you were talking to someone over the phone.
- Alt text should never duplicate information that is provided in the content of the page or in the caption.
- All alt text should begin with a word that describes what type of image it is, such as, “Photo of,” “Illustration of” or “Graph of.” For more information, see: http://www1.eere.energy.gov/communicationstandards/content/alt_text.html.

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For more complicated images that convey more information than can be captured in a simple alt tag, create a separate exhibit page and draft more comprehensive alternative text. See “Linking to Exhibits.”

Writing Links

Links are a critical element to your page. Some considerations addressed in this section are:

- **Writing Link Text**
- **Linking to Glossary Terms**
- **Linking to Exhibits**
- **Linking to Non-HTML Pages**
- **Linking to Notes and Works Cited**
- **Linking Policy**
- **Linking To Publications**
- **Writing Message Boxes**

Writing Link Text

Link text is the clickable words on the page. In general, highlight in blue and underline all links except when they are part of an obvious list of links (such as left navigation). When writing link text, consider the following government suggestions [15]:

- Use text that is meaningful, understandable and easily differentiated by users. Accurately describe the link’s destination.
- Make the text consistent with the title or headings on the destination page. Closely matched links and destination targets help users know when they have reached the intended page.
- Make text long enough to be understood, but short enough to minimize wrapping. A single-word text link may not describe the link’s destination but a longer link may be difficult to read. It is best to limit links to one line.
- Avoid linking from within a paragraph. Write a separate “see also” link directly following the paragraph. If a “see also” link is not feasible or is disruptive, highlight and underline only the text that you want to be linked.
- Do not use terms like “click here” and “select this link.” Include enough text within the link to give a clear indication of what the user will get. For example:
 - **Use:** [Learn more about gun safety.](#)
 - Do not use: [Click here](#) to learn more about gun safety.

Linking to Glossary Terms

Glossary terms are words that will be linked to a “pop-up” box that provides its definition. Glossary terms are indicated on the website with a blue link and a dashed underline. To

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indicate a glossary term to the Web Manager in your manuscript (the Word document you submit to the NIJ Web Manager), follow this example:

- A critical issue in [domestic violence](#) [Pop-up link to Glossary Term: subpage.htm].

Linking to Exhibits

Some pages will use graphs, illustrations, charts or other types of exhibits. You can use a separate page for these exhibits that provide more than just “visual appeal” and link from the main page with a “thumbnail” image of that same element. You should also include a caption. Follow this example:

- Scientists have access to mobile laboratories. [Image X attached here with caption “Caption.”]

For exhibit pages, you will also need to write “alternative equivalent text” to ensure we are complying with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. You will write text to describe an illustration in detail (for a user who cannot see the image, for example) and provide that text to the Web Manager. Tabs are located at the top of each exhibit page. One tab is for this text description. Indicate this page in your outline.

When providing tables with your document, submit them in basic table formatting as the Web Manager will create the Web version. If possible, avoid complex tables with multiple heading levels. Also, when providing a table, authors must include a general description of the table. Please see pages 39-42 for more details.

Linking to Non-HTML Pages

When linking to any non-html file, it is important to:

- Alert users to file type.
- Alert users to the file size of large files — file size can be indicated by the number of pages or the byte size of the file depending on the type of file.

The following examples include most file types linked from the NIJ website:

- Read the complete report Full Title Here (pdf, 36 pages). Read the transcript (doc, 20 pages).
- Download the spreadsheet (xls, 240 KB).
- Download the presentation (ppt, 4 MB).
- Download the audio file (mp3, 12 MB).

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Linking to Notes

Similar to using notes in print documents, you should use numbers after the referenced item. Do not use superscripts; put the number in brackets: [1], [2], etc. This number will correspond to the Notes section at the bottom of the Web page.

If you are converting an *NIJ Journal* article to the Web, keep in mind that the notes may need to be renumbered if there is a sidebar that contains notes. On the Web, this sidebar will be a separate page and the original numbers used in the print version will no longer apply.

When referencing a source document, you should provide the link (if available) to the source, and follow the same NIJ rules for citations (see “Section 3: Notes and References,” for details), except:

- Do not use italics in link text, even for titles that require italics.

Linking Policy

You should tell users if they are leaving NIJ’s site. If you link to another federal government website (.gov, .us, .mil), the surrounding text should clearly indicate where users are headed. For example:

- [The National Institute of Standards and Technology offers additional information.](#)

All links to non-federal-government websites (including state and local governments) must include an exit notice. The “exit notice” lets users know the link will take them to a nongovernmental site and that NIJ is not responsible for the content. In a manuscript, the “exit notice” should be indicated with brackets. This can be included following the link text, which should include the name of the target site or agency. For example:

- The IACP has drafted [guidance on using EMDTs \[Exit Notice\]](#).

The exit notice can also be included in a footnote. For example:

- The IACP’s website has advice on incorporating EMDT into use-of-force policies. [\[1\]](#)
[\[1\] Using EMDT’s \[Exit Notice\]](#), IACP, June 2006

Linking to Publications

When linking to a publication or report, always use the full title within the link text. Regarding the destination of the link, follow these basic rules for:

- **NIJ publications:** Always link to the publication summary page.

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- **NIJ final reports:** At NCJRS, link to either the full PDF version or the abstract database page (using the link provided at the bottom of the abstract).

Writing Message Boxes

Message boxes appear in the right column of NIJ Web pages and present links to additional content that is not in the left-hand navigation. Text in these boxes should be as short as possible — ideally presenting link options in a short bulleted list.

Message boxes should use one of the following headings based on the content:

- **Watch and Listen:** Links to audio and video content.
- **Training:** Links to related training and closes with “See All Training From NIJ” link.
- **Funding:** Links to related funding program(s) or current open solicitation(s) and closes with “See all current funding” link.
- **Priorities and Planning:** Links in a bulleted list of pages or documents that show NIJ processes, procedures, priorities or planning materials.
- **See Also:** Links to information related to the content on the page. These links typically are to non-NIJ content. Links to related NIJ content typically are included in the left navigation.
- **Are You a Victim?:** Presents contact information or links for immediate assistance or victim services.
- **Statistics:** Bulleted list of links to Bureau of Justice Statistics or other statistics related to the page’s subject.
- **Related Publications:** Lists and links to recent publications related to the page’s subject. NOTE: This is automatically generated by the Content Management System; the editor does not draft.
- **Get Updates:** Presents available options for receiving updates or subscribing to NIJ information.
- **Print This Article/Publication/Report:** Used for publications presented in html that have a PDF-formatted equivalent formatted for printing, e.g., *NIJ Journal* articles.

After Writing: The Delivery

Questions to Ensure a Web-Friendly Document

After finishing the first draft, ask yourself the following questions before submitting for review:

- Did your content achieve its main purpose?
- Did you target your content to your audience?
- Does your lead tell users what your content is about?
- Is your message clear?
- Does each paragraph present one idea?

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- Will the page title of your document remind users of the document's contents?
- Do headings and subheadings communicate your message?
- Have you used active verbs?
- Did you overdo links within the text?
- Do your links tell users what to expect?
- Did you delete the "click here" links?
- Did you cut excess words and sentences?
- Is there a good flow between the chunks of your document?
- Did you create vivid pictures in the reader's mind?
- Did you test your writing by reading your copy out loud?
- Will bullets get your message across faster than sentences?

NIJ Quality of Web Writing Form

NIJ uses a Quality of Web Writing Form to evaluate the overall quality of Web pages. The form uses a rating scale of 1 to 5 to ensure the:

- Target audience is clear and unambiguous.
- Purpose of the page is clear, unambiguous and appropriately limited.
- Writing is clear and unambiguous.
- Content is formatted and organized efficiently.
- Page title and link titles are clear and effective.
- Content is consistent.
- Spelling and punctuation are accurate.
- Obvious questions are addressed within the page.
- Links and graphics add value.
- Page meets NIJ's publication standards.

The official form can be found at Attachment D.

Section 5: Multimedia Guidelines

NIJ produces a full suite of products that includes videos, podcasts, presentations and more. Text that appears in a multimedia file must adhere to the general guidelines outlined in the General Editorial Guidelines of this manual.

All content on the NIJ website must be made accessible to users with disabilities. Creating accessible multimedia content is a complex task, and the instructions below are general and do not include all of the details required to make multimedia content accessible. Developers should refer to specific accessibility guidance and best practices for the tool being used (e.g., Adobe's Accessibility Resource Center for Flash files).

Below are a few multimedia-specific guidelines:

Transcripts

All audio and video files require a transcript, which should:

- Translate all audio verbatim, including audience laughter, questions from the audience and unexpected interruptions.
- Translate the speaker's words, but not include stuttering, overly repeated words or fillers (such as *um* or *and*), or obviously mispronounced or misstated words that would embarrass the speaker.
- Include offending words that are stated, but edit them so they are not explicit (i.e., use asterisks to omit letters: *sh***).
- Include the official title of the presentation that is included in the NIJ program or announcement, even if the speaker refers to it as something else.
- For video, the transcript also must include descriptions of relevant actions or expressions. In other words, include anything that a sighted user gets that those using a screen reader will not. For example, if the speaker motions toward an object as part of the presentation, include that in the text.
- All transcripts must include the following disclaimer:
Opinions or points of view expressed are those of the author(s)/presenter(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Transcripts can be submitted to NIJ as word-processed or html files.

Summaries

A short summary must be provided for all multimedia content. The summary should be no more than two paragraphs and include, as applicable:

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- Participant names
- Short description of the content
- Participant affiliation
- Context ("*... an interview from the 2009 NIJ Conference*")

This summary will be used to advertise the content on the NIJ and other sites and in e-mail alerts.

Audio

Audio files may be edited for length and content. A subject matter expert is consulted during the editing process to ensure content accuracy.

- Final audio files are formatted and delivered in the mp3 format along with a separate transcript

Video

Video files may be edited for length and content. A subject matter expert is consulted to ensure content accuracy. Video files are closed-captioned. The text is embedded in a flash player for Web playback. All video includes a title slate that displays the NIJ logo as well as partner agency logos when applicable. The slate also includes the speaker's name and the presentation title. Final video files are formatted and delivered as follows:

- Flash-compressed file for use with NIJ's player
- Transcript formatted as xml to be synchronized with the flash player
- DVD or CD with:
 - Original raw media
 - Source files needed to create the final presentation as shown online

Disclaimer

Multimedia files include a standard disclaimer (Attachment E). Essentially, the disclaimer establishes that the material:

- Is in the public domain, rather than copyright-protected.
- Contains opinions expressed that are solely those of the speakers and do not necessarily represent the positions of the U.S. Department of Justice (or any other federal entity).
- Is for informational purposes only — and is not intended to serve as either an endorsement or the basis for any claim of right.

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Approval Process

First-cut multimedia files are submitted to NIJ in a timely manner. In general, the process follows the following steps:

- NIJ routes first cuts to the appropriate NIJ subject matter expert, who reviews the first cut and forwards it to the speaker.
- NIJ submits edits to the multimedia file preparer.
- The multimedia file preparer submits a revised cut to NIJ.
- NIJ communications staff member routes the revised cut to the Communications Office Director and the Agency Director for approval.
- Upon approval, the preparer submits final files, including transcripts, to the NIJ Web Manager for publication.

Section 6: Accessibility for Users With Disabilities — 508 Compliance

The term “508” refers to the Section 508 Amendment to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. In 1998 the U.S. Congress amended the Rehabilitation Act to require federal agencies to make their electronic and information technology accessible to people with disabilities. Section 508 was enacted, in part, to provide new opportunities for people with disabilities to access information from their government. When drafting content for the NIJ website:

- Every graph, figure or picture must include a corresponding text description to explain it to visually impaired users. This text is often referred to as “alt text,” or “alternative text.” A general guideline for writing alt text is to describe the photo or table as if you were talking to someone over the phone. For additional guidance on writing alt text, consult the U.S. Department of Energy’s website: http://www1.eere.energy.gov/communicationstandards/content/alt_text.html. Also refer to pages 30-31 for alt text guidelines.

Alt text is different from captions, which authors should also submit. Captions should complement the alt text, and should benefit both the sighted viewer and viewers using a screen reader. Refer to the website above for more information.

- All data tables need to be formatted in a way that screen readers (screen reading software) can interpret them. NIJ follows the guidelines established by Jim Thatcher at <http://jimthatcher.com/webcourse9.htm>. More information can also be found from the U.S. Department of Energy’s website <http://www1.eere.energy.gov/communicationstandards/technical/tables.html>.
- Any multimedia file must have accompanying transcripts or captions (depending on the file type).

The NIJ Web Manager ensures the technical elements are met. For writers and editors, familiarizing yourself with the requirements ahead of time and providing alternative text in advance is helpful.

Multimedia

The following guidelines are suggestions to help writers create source materials to minimize the time and effort needed for 508 remediation. Although they do not make materials 508 compliant automatically, they do affect “508 readiness” significantly. For multimedia products:

- Provide a one-sentence description of content to be used for the html file context.
- Ensure that the document file name does not contain spaces or special characters.
- If captioning video or animation, check to ensure that captioning is synchronized to the actions and dialogue.

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- Provide accompanying transcripts for audio and video files.

For audio with presentation slides:

- Provide alt text for all charts and graphics within the presentation.
- If captioning audio with slides, ensure that any captioned audio remains in sync with slide videos.
- Provide an audio transcript to be integrated with slides.

For video interviews:

- Provide a transcript for captioning video. The transcript also must include descriptions of relevant actions or expressions. In other words, include anything that a sighted user gets that those using a screen reader will not. For example, if the speaker motions toward an object as part of the presentation, include that in the text. For more information on transcripts, please see “Section 5: Multimedia Guidelines.”
- Ensure that graphics, animations, movies or other objects avoid strobing, flickering or flashing effects.

PDFs

The following guidelines are suggestions intended to help writers create PDFs that minimize the time and effort needed for 508 remediation. Since PDFs often begin as Word or other MS Office documents before PDF conversion, it is generally helpful to begin by following the guidelines for Word and PowerPoint documents above. Then, if creating a PDF using Acrobat, the following guidelines apply:

- Document file name does not contain spaces or special characters and is no more than 20 characters. (Use NCJ number as file name, if applicable.)
- Document properties for Title, Author, Keywords, and Language are properly filled out.
- If the edit function of Acrobat was used, all Comment and Markup items must be deleted.
- Complete a visual check to ensure no hidden data from Word or other applications used to create the original document are present.
- All images and/or nontext elements have alternative text descriptions.
- All charts and graphs have either an alternative text description or provide a description in the text immediately below the chart/graph.
- Files of 10 pages or more have bookmarks.
- Color is not used to convey important information (Do not say: *See red text below*)
- Data tables identify row and column headers.
- Data cells in tables are associated with row and column headers.
- All tables read from left to right and top to bottom.

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- All hyperlinks are active and use the full Web address, (<http://www.ncjrs.gov>, not simply www.ncjrs.gov).
- Pages with multicolumn text, tables or call-out boxes have been checked for correct reading order using the Adobe Acrobat Professional “Read Aloud” function.
- All necessary accessibility tags have been added, and a full Accessibility Report has been run in Adobe Acrobat Professional 8 or higher showing no errors are present. (Note: NIJ uses Jaws Screen Reader as the benchmark for quality control.)
- A separate text-only version has been provided when there is no other way to make the content accessible (e.g., an organizational chart must have a text-only version).

Notes:

- If content will be available as html, it is not required that the accompanying PDF file be 508 accessible.
- A PDF created by scanning a paper document in TIFF or another image format is not 508-compliant. A text-only version must be provided.
- PDF forms require a specialized accessibility review because they present an additional degree of complexity.

Presentations

NIJ’s general policy is not to post PowerPoint presentations on the NIJ site.

Relevant content from presentations by NIJ staff should be included on new or existing Web pages.

In exceptional circumstances, NIJ will create 508-compliant versions of PowerPoint presentations from outside speakers with approval from the NIJ Editorial Board. If an exception is granted, the following guidelines help make PowerPoint presentations “508 ready.” If followed, they reduce the amount of time and effort required to make presentations compliant:

- Ensure that all text can be viewed in Outline View.
- Avoid using animated text or create a version without animated text.
- Provide alt text describing all graphics and charts. Again, alt text (short for “alternative text”) describes images on the Web for visitors who use screen readers to access websites. Alt text is the text added in the html in the “alt” attribute of an image and is used by visitors who are using screen readers to view a site. See pages 30-31, Writing Alternative Text.
- If you have charts, include Title, Legend and Axis (X and Y) labels.
- Tables:
 - Use tables to create a tabular structure (not tabs or spaces).
 - Describe and label all tables.

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Word-Processed Documents

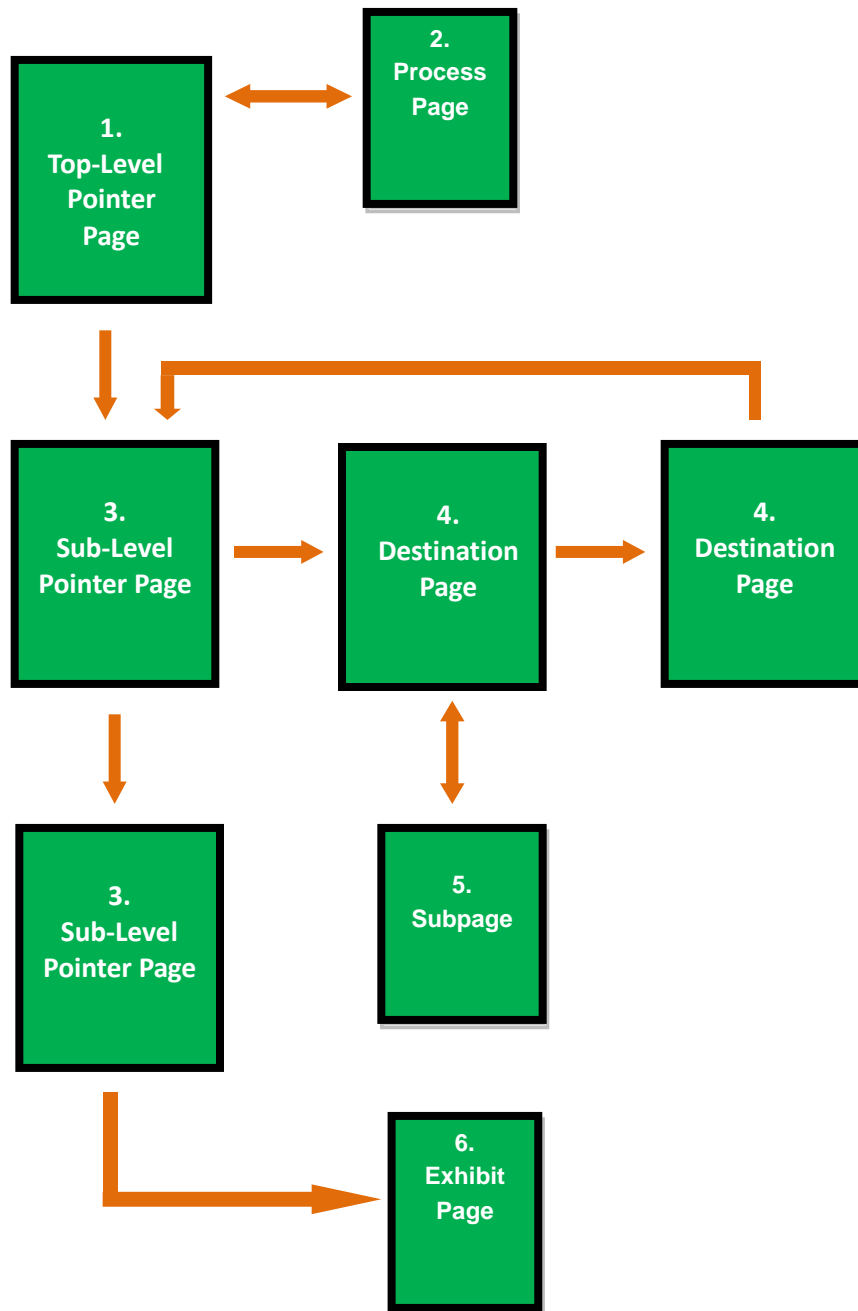
NIJ's general policy is to post Word-processed files as PDFs. To help make conversion to PDF simpler, use the following guidelines to ensure Word documents are 508 compliant:

- Use style elements (*Heading 1, Heading 2*) and outline in a hierarchical manner (*Heading 1 to Heading 2 to Body Text*).
- Use common fonts (Helvetica, Times, Arial and Tahoma are best).
- Use page numbering feature rather than manually typing page numbers.
- Use formatting features (*tabs, bullets, numbers*) rather than manually typing paragraph spaces, characters, hyphens, etc.
- If color is used to emphasize the importance of selected text, also use an alternate method (such as styles).
- Tables:
 - Use tables to create a tabular structure (not tabs or spaces).
 - Use Microsoft-family table tools to create the data tables — tables from other sources usually cannot be made accessible.
 - Describe and label all tables.
 - Data tables should have the entire first row designated as a “Header Row” in table.
- If the document contains a Table of Contents (TOC), create it using the TOC Command.

Attachment A. Kickoff Meeting Form

NIJ Web Kickoff Meeting Form	
Topic:	Types of Pages:
Primary Audience(s): Secondary Audience(s):	
Initial Outline: Where do the pages fit? Within what main topic/subtopics?	
Page Goal (for every page): What is “success” for this page? What should the user know or be able to do when they are finished?	
List of Related Content: What existing content can be linked to/from?	
Rounds of Review: Who must review the pages? In what order will review occur? What is the number and schedule for rounds of review?	

Attachment B. Page Flow Diagram



1. **Top-Level Pointer Page:** Main topic page on NIJ site.
2. **Process Page:** Pages dedicated to NIJ processes. Links from top-level pointer page.
3. **Sub-Level Pointer Page:** Introduces users to more detailed pages on the topic.
4. **Destination Page:** Information pages. Pages that have the most content. There can be several on a specific topic.
5. **Subpage:** Pages that link from destination pages and contain content related to that page only.
6. **Exhibit Page:** Graphs, charts, illustrations, exhibits. Can be linked from any other page.

Attachment C. Outline Example

Data Resources Program Outline

- Page 1. Home — Brief intro and point to subsections.
Goal: Let users know what the program is and why we do it. Get users to the three main action pages.
 - Page 1.1. About the Data Resources Program
Goal: Give some more background on the program and its importance.
- Page 2. For Applicants — For applicants to the DRP solicitation.
Goal: Give users specific information on applying for funding under the data resources program — mechanics plus specifics — including in particular the data archiving and dissemination strategies.
 - 2.1 Data Archiving Strategies — All applicants must include this in their proposals. Good to have as a separate page too so we can link all solicitations directly to this.
Goal: Get users to more carefully think through this requirement.
 - 2.2 Dissemination Strategy — Describe what makes up a good strategy.
Goal: Show users what we are looking for and get them thinking outside of the CJ box.
 - 2.2.1 Dissemination Strategy Examples — Organizations grantees have used in the past.
Goal: Same as 2.2

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Attachment D. Quality of Web Writing Form

Page reviewed: URL: /nij/ Instructions: Rate each standard on a scale of 1-5, 5 being the best.					
Topics			Ratings		
1. Target audience is clear and unambiguous. The page does not attempt to serve all audiences. A page written to teach policymakers the critical findings of a study should not also go into details on methodology and background.	5	4	3	2	1
Comments/suggestions:					
2. Purpose of the page is clear, unambiguous and appropriately limited. It is obvious what the page is intended to do from the heading and opening lines.	5	4	3	2	1
Comments/suggestions:					
3. Writing is clear and unambiguous. Words and terminology are appropriate to the target audience; content is conversational; no inappropriate jargon or acronyms.	5	4	3	2	1
Comments/suggestions:					
4. Content is formatted and organized efficiently. Text is broken into short segments; uses headings and subheadings to get people to what they want; layers information.	5	4	3	2	1
Comments/suggestions:					
5. Page Title and Link Title are clear and effective. Page title conveys the overall purpose and clearly describes the content of the page. The link title, if applicable, provides enough information for a user to reasonably predict the content and purpose of the destination page.	5	4	3	2	1
Comments/suggestions:					
6. Content is consistent. Content doesn't contradict other information on the page or site; avoids duplication except where it's needed to address different audiences or provide background to readers coming directly to the page; words/phrases mean the same thing throughout the page/Web site.	5	4	3	2	1
Comments/suggestions:					
7. Spelling and punctuation are accurate. One misspelling must be rated no higher than 4, two misspellings must be rated no higher than 3; three	5	4	3	2	1

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misspellings must be rated no higher than 2.					
Comments/suggestions:					
8. Anticipates obvious questions. The content shows that the writer(s) understand what the audience wants and needs.	5	4	3	2	1
Comments/suggestions:					
9. Links and graphics add value. Links to external sites follow DOJ/NIJ linking policies. Writer has considered what other pages on the site have related, relevant content and included appropriate link text. If no links or graphics are included on the page, rate this "5."	5	4	3	2	1
Comments/suggestions:					
10. Page meets the agency's publication standards. Page follows AP style in general but follows NIJ's exceptions and addendums.	5	4	3	2	1
Comments/suggestions:					

Attachment E. Multimedia Disclaimer

Disclaimer: Permission to Reuse or Repost This Video

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See additional Legal Policies and Disclaimers for all U.S. Department of Justice Web content at <http://www.justice.gov/legalpolicies.htm>.

Author Guidelines and Editorial Style

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