

Style Guide Outline for Pikes Peak State College

Summer 2024

1. Introduction

- **Purpose:** Establish clear guidelines for creating consistent, high-quality content that reflects the Pikes Peak State College brand.
- **Scope:** Applies to all types of content, including web content, social media, printed materials, and emails.

2. Understanding the Audience

It's critical to know who the message is targeted to. PPSC caters to various students with different experiences and expectations of the college. For example, non-traditional, first-generation, military, and Hispanic students may need different information and perceive the same information differently. Take pause to consider your audience.

3. Brand Values and Attributes

- **Core Values:**
 - Innovation
 - Inclusivity
 - Academic excellence
- **Brand Attributes:**
 - Friendly
 - Authoritative
 - Forward-thinking

4. Brand Voice

- **Voice Characteristics:**
 - Clear, simple, and brief
 - Friendly, kind, encouraging, and inspiring
 - Matter-of-fact, but not direct, unnecessarily detailed, or robotic
 - Human and playful, but not patronizing, judgmental, or pretentious
- **Voice Guidelines:**
 - Use clear and concise language, avoiding jargon

- Include conversational elements to make the content engaging
- Flesch Kinkaid score: 70-80 and 8th-9th grade reading level

5. *Tone for Different Contexts*

Consider the purpose of the content and adjust tone accordingly. For example, an invitation to an event should be fun, engaging, and conversational while a notice of a student bill should be formal and precise.

In all cases, we should avoid academic jargon and abbreviations to ensure content is clear.

- **Web Content:** Friendly and informative, not overly academic. We aren't writing to accreditation professionals; we are writing to potential students and parents of students.
- **Academic and Enrollment Notifications:** Formal and precise.
- **Social Media:** Engaging and conversational, the point of social media is to be social!
- **Emails:** Professional and courteous or engaging and conversational, depending on the content within.

6. *Visual Branding Guidelines* should be followed at all times.

7. *Content Guidelines*

- Always use inclusive language.
 - Avoid non-literal words and phrases, including colloquialisms and slang like “shot through the roof” or “up for grabs” or “when it rains, it pours”
 - Avoid the use of contractions like “don’t” and even shortened versions of words like “gonna.”
 - Use gender-neutral terms like “chair” instead of “chairman” or “workforce” instead of “manpower”
 - Use singular “they” instead of “he or she” when referring to a singular student
 - Avoid terms that place a negative connotation on a group, like “at-risk” or “minority”
 - Use People-First language like “people with a disability” instead of “disabled people”
- **Using emojis** can enhance the conversational and engaging tone of your writing but ensure you use discretion. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Certain emojis can carry double-meanings. It's best to avoid these.
- Emojis depicting people have a spectrum of skin tones. Make sure to switch it up and include all of them or stick to using the default.
- **Writing Style:**
 - In general, PPSC uses the Associated Press Style Guide, otherwise known as [AP formatting](#). The guiding principles for AP style are consistency, clarity, accuracy and brevity. AP style does not utilize the Oxford comma.
 - **Degrees:** In general, "associate degree" is written in lowercase unless it is part of a proper noun or title. For example:

She earned her associate degree in nursing.
He received an Associate of Arts degree.

When referring to the specific name of a degree, you would capitalize it:

Associate of Science in Computer Science

Otherwise, it remains lowercase:

She has an associate degree in business administration.

The same applies for "bachelor's degree" with the possessive form and lowercase "degree." For example:

She earned her bachelor's degree in psychology.

When referring to the specific name of the degree, you would capitalize and not use the possessive form:

Bachelor of Arts
Bachelor of Science

- **Programs:** Capitalize the full title of the program:

Bachelor of Science in Engineering
Associate of Science in Engineering

When referring to the program in a general sense, use lowercase:

The engineering program at Pikes Peak State College

She is enrolled in the engineering program.

Always capitalize the formal names of degrees and certificates:

Associate of Science in Engineering

Bachelor of Science in Engineering

Certificate in Engineering Technology

Capitalize the specific course titles:

Introduction to Engineering

Engineering Mechanics

Advanced Thermodynamics

Capitalize the names of specific departments and offices:

Department of Engineering

Office of Admissions

Use lowercase for general academic references:

She is a student in the engineering department.

The admissions office can provide more information.

- **Second Person:** Remember, our audience is often students or parents of students, so we want our calls-to-action to be clear and concise. This means we want to write directly to our audience using second person as much as we can, when appropriate.

Use “*you will find the library on the first floor*” instead of “*students will find the library on the first floor.*”

- **Times, Dates, Phone Numbers and Website**
 - Use numerals for times and lowercase "am" and "pm." Do not include ":00" for times on the hour.
 - When writing specific dates, write out the day, use numerals and abbreviate the month (if it has more than five letters) followed by the date. Do not use st, nd, rd, or th with dates. If only the month and year are mentioned, do not abbreviate the month.

Tuesday, Jan. 5, 2024; August 2024 (no specific date)

- Use numerals and separate the area code with a hyphen and no parentheses around the area code.
719-715-3297
- **Do not include** "[http://](#)" or "[https://](#)" or "www." in URLs unless the URL does not work without it. Lowercase all the letters in the URL.

[pikespeak.edu/admissions/advising](#)

- **Formatting:**

- Use headings and bullet points to break up content and allow for quick skimming.
 - **Bullet points** should be used for non-sequential lists, highlighting multiple options or emphasizing key points.
 - **Numbering** should be used for sequential steps, prioritizing and ranking or referencing specific points.
- Always [follow accessibility standards](#) for things like nesting headings to ensure content is accessible for all stakeholders.
- When referring to email addresses, use lowercase rather than camel case. I would refer to the contact information as [financialaid@pikespeak.edu](#), rather than [FinancialAid@PikesPeak.edu](#).
- Images can be a nice touch, but remember, not everyone may be able to view them. When using an image, always add alt text and include a brief description of the image.
- Providing a link is a good way to encourage your audience to take the next step or action. Avoid using unnecessary phrases like "click here" or copying and pasting the url directly into the email body. Instead, link the action words in your email.

Do: [Explore tips for how to write a successful Financial Aid appeal statement.](#)

Don't: Click [here](#) to see tips for how to write a successful Financial Aid appeal statement.

And especially don't: Go to <https://www.pikespeak.edu/costs-scholarships-aid/financial-aid/sap-and-appeals/appeal-letter.php> for

tips on how to write a successful Financial Aid appeal statement.

- Do not use em dashes.

What is an em dash?

An em dash (—) is a long dash often used in informal writing to indicate a pause, add emphasis, or separate additional thoughts within a sentence. It's wider than a hyphen (-) or en dash (–) and often appears without spaces on either side. Screen readers often don't handle them well, making them less accessible.

- Example (not acceptable):

We offer flexible class options—day, evening, weekend, and online—to fit your busy life.

Instead of using em dashes, rewrite the sentence for clarity or use appropriate punctuation like commas, parentheses, or colons.

- Commas: For light pauses or listing.

We offer flexible class options, including day, evening, weekend, and online.

- Parentheses: For side comments or supporting info.

Our advisors (who are available online or in person) are here to help.

- Colons: To introduce a list or an explanation.

You have options: day, evening, weekend, or online classes.

Important: ChatGPT and other AI platforms often use em dashes as a default for sentence breaks. When copying content from AI-generated text, double-check and replace em dashes with approved punctuation. All content must be reviewed for tone, grammar, clarity, and formatting before publishing.

8. Appendix

Appendix A: Spanish Glossary

[View common PPSC terms and the agreed-upon Spanish translation of these terms.](#)

Always use these translations to ensure a cohesive experience for students.

Appendix B: Examples and Templates

- **Tailoring messaging to your audience**

First-Generation Student -

Hi Krissy,

Navigating your return to college can bring up a mix of feelings from excitement to uncertainty about the path forward. Just know, it's normal to feel this way, and you're not alone. At Pikes Peak, we've got your back every step of the way!



It's never too late to dream!

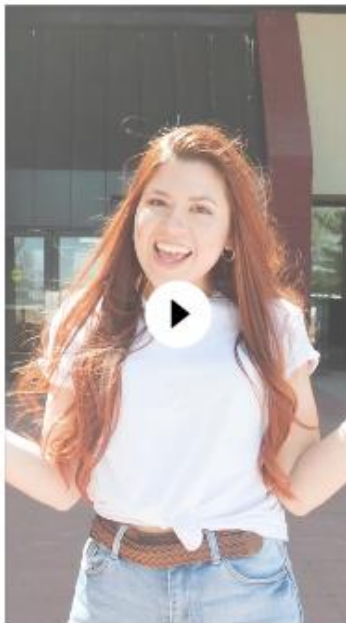
Many of our students start again after time away from school! Whether you finish what you started or explore a new path, we have a place for you.

You have what it takes!

Your life experience is the foundation for your success. Our [tutoring team](#) will help you add new skills and the confidence you need to succeed.

Education you can afford!

Most students qualify for financial aid! [Single Stop](#) and [BetterMynd](#) give you access to even more resources!



Ready to get started? [Schedule an appointment](#) with us to create a plan that works for you or [review your path to return](#) to Pikes Peak now!

SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT

Non-Traditional Students -

Hi Krissy,

Navigating your return to college can bring up a mix of feelings from excitement to uncertainty about the path forward. Just know, it's normal to feel this way, and you're not alone. At Pikes Peak, we've got your back every step of the way!



 You have what it takes!

Your life experience is the foundation for your success. From advising and tutoring to basic needs services, our team will help you add new skills and build confidence to succeed!



Ready to get started? [Schedule an appointment](#) with us to create a plan that works for you or [review your path to return](#) to Pikes Peak now!

SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT

- **Tailoring the tone of your message**

Formal -

Important dates are approaching.

You are receiving this email because you are registered for **one or more full-semester classes at Pikes Peak State College.**

If you need to drop from a class, the drop date for full-semester classes at PPSC is Thursday, June 6. The drop date is the last date to receive a tuition refund.

If you wish to drop from a class, log into your [myPikesPeak Portal](#) and select the "Course Planning & Add/Drop/Withdraw" icon from the Dashboard. Per the PPSC catalog, "Instructors or other College staff are not responsible for dropping you from classes." [Watch our video tutorial for how to drop classes.](#)

If you are taking additional PPSC classes that are not full-semester classes, the drop date will vary. Check your Detailed Student Schedule in the Registration section of your [myPikesPeak Portal](#).

It is never too early to begin planning for next semester!

Class registration for fall is open! Meet with an Academic Advisor now to make your plan for the next semester or [view registration tips and resources.](#)

Conversational and Engaging -

Health Sciences Welcome Reception and Resource Fair

Thursday, August 15

9:00AM - 12:00PM

Center for Healthcare Education & Simulation

Kick off the fall semester with Health Sciences Deans, faculty, student services staff, and fellow Health Sciences students!

At this event, you will:

- 🎉 Celebrate kicking off the fall semester
- 👕 Pick up your free PPSC Health Sciences t-shirt and tote bag
- 🍽️ Enjoy some food and meet fellow students & faculty
- ★ Learn what you can do to have a successful semester
- 🗣️ Speak with support offices at our resource fair
- 🇺🇸 And more!

Don't miss this opportunity to set yourself up for success. RSVP to attend, and we will see you soon!

[RSVP TO ATTEND](#)