



Trees Style Guide

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Titles

- Sentence case for titles and step names. Use capital letters for proper nouns. (Ex: Six tips to...)
- Spell out numbers below 10, but use figures after 10. (Ex: One, two, three ... 10, 11, 12.)
 - Possible exception for workout plans? (Sets/reps, for example)
 - Use figures for inches, feet, yards, miles, etc. and dimensions.
- Avoid question marks. Titles should be written like commands (Ex: Instead of “How do I get my bus pass” → “How to get your SMU student bus pass”).
- No need for an ampersand (&). Only use “and.”
 - Note: Do use an ampersand if a brand, website, title, etc. is listed with one. Ex: Bath & Body Works.
- Titles should have 80 characters max, spaces included.
- Do not include periods at the end of a title.
 - They should only be included if there is more than one sentence within the title. In general, though, it’s best to keep titles as condensed as possible.

Descriptions

- Rough rules for using hyperlinks—basically, when to use a colon or not.
 - “You can find the website here: [link]”
 - “Use this link: [link]”
 - “Click here to go to [link]”
- Delete periods after hyperlinks—they will usually result in 404s.
 - Otherwise, end sentences with a period.
- Plan description is 200 characters max, spaces included. (No limit for step descriptions)

Citation

- “According to (publication and/or author from publication), fact.” ← Something along these lines
- “The information in this plan was developed using these sources: [links]”
- Links on their own are also good, but it’s a good habit to include written credit if possible.
- Find copyright-free photos when using stock photos; when pulling infographics, charts, and images from websites, indicate in the step description that “the below image/chart/infographic came from [SOURCE].”
- Using articles as material for plans:
 - **When linking to an article:** Provide a brief overview of the article’s main ideas in the Plan Description. In the first Step of the plan, provide the name of the author and a one/two word description of them (e.g., “neurologist Dr. XYZ” or “nutritionist Jane

Doe”). Then link to the article. **[NOTE: We are moving away from this method for all future plans.]**

- **When transplanting an article:** Provide a brief overview of the article’s main ideas in the Plan Description. Also in the Plan Description, name the author and describe them (one/two words again), as well as link to the article. Each plan Step should then be one section or one step from the original article.

Style

- Tone:
 - The goal is to sound helpful, human, and relatable. Sounding like a computer presents a cold and distant tone, which we want to steer away from.
- Avoid saying “I.” Try to keep writing from a second, sometimes third, person perspective.
- Contractions (it’s, there’s, we’re, etc.) help create a casual tone.
- Exclamation marks help convey friendliness and excitement, but can be overwhelming if used in excess.
- Don’t be afraid to add some personality. It can help make the content easier to read and more enjoyable. Humor is always appreciated.
 - Know when to draw the line
 - Topics like stress can be serious, but might work well with some humor. However, a topic like anger management might be better off without it. It’s up to you to make the call, but maybe ask another person for input if you’re unsure.
- Be mindful of charged topics, such as mental health or eating disorders. Use gentle, non-biased language whenever possible. For example, instead of “How to beat anxiety,” consider “How to cope with anxiety” or “Tips for managing anxiety.”
- Avoid overly lengthy sentences to keep the users’ attention. If there are paragraphs, try to keep them between below 5 sentences to make the content easier to follow.

Grammar guidelines

- Use the Oxford comma (Ex: Item, item, and item instead of Item, item and item.)
- Punctuation always goes inside quotation marks, even when referencing something else, like an action plan. (Ex: Visit the plan “Relaxation tips.”)
 - There’s also no need to use a comma before introducing a title in quotation marks.
 - For example, If you’re referencing multiple plans, the punctuation would look as follows:
 - “Plan,” “Plan,” and “Plan.”
- Note: Capitalize the first letter after a colon if the sentence following the colon is complete.

- Do not capitalize if you're listing things: like this, this, and this (which isn't a complete sentence).
- You can, however, capitalize lists with proper nouns: Apple, Microsoft, and Amazon.
- Do not use a comma before the word "because."
- Using "its" vs. "their"
 - This can be tricky to distinguish, and may even go unnoticed by the reader. We commonly use both when we speak casually. Still, on this platform, knowing the difference shows we're paying attention. Singular nouns will use "its." Plural nouns will use "their."
 - Ex: The **museum** is open on Tuesdays.
 - Its hours are... (*Correct*)
 - Their hours are... (*Incorrect*)
 - Ex: The **museums** are open on Tuesdays.
 - Their hours are... (*Correct*)
 - Its hours are... (*Incorrect*)
 - What about "it's"?
 - "It's" is a contraction for "it is."
 - "Its" shows possession of a singular noun.
- For Canadian plans / plans written by Canadians: Canadian English follows British English conventions: "centre" instead of "center," "favourite" instead of "favorite," etc. Something to be mindful of when transplanting articles or cleaning up Django content.

This or that?

- **An** SMU student instead of A SMU student.
- SMU: s# is lowercase, A# is capitalized
- Use **bookstore** instead of book store.
- **Timestamp** not time stamp.
- **YouTube** not Youtube.
- Capitalize the **Internet** when referring to it as a proper noun.
- **Website** is one word; **web page** is two.
- **Covid-19** not COVID-19.
- **Wi-Fi** instead of Wifi or WiFi.
- Morning/night: Use **am** and **pm** instead of AM/PM or a.m./p.m.
- Use street abbreviations, like St., Rd., Ave., etc.

Resources

- Django does not auto-convert dashes to an em dash. Use <https://copydashes.com/> to copy an em dash if you want to use it. Or here: —

- Fixing things that are in all upper case (to sentence case): <https://convertcase.net/>
- Checking characters: <https://charactercounter.com/>
- Podcast link converter: <https://odesli.co/>
- Copyright-free images: <https://unsplash.com>
- Bullet points to copy and paste:
 - ●
 - ●
 - ●
- Open bullet points:
 - o
 - o
 - o

Transitions Content

SMU resource copy-paste:

As a Saint Mary's student, you can access free confidential counselling, mental health services, and opportunities to support your wellbeing through the Counselling Centre with in-person, over-the-phone, or video call counselling sessions.

Experienced counselors will work with you to develop a plan for addressing your concerns and goals. As an enrolled student, you are eligible for up to eight sessions a year. Book an appointment here: <https://www.smu.ca/campus-life/bookanappointment/>

Website for affiliated / external resources:

<https://mentalhealthliteracy.org/mental-disorders/>

Mental Health

General Disclaimer:

Please note: This plan is for self-education purposes only. It is NOT designed to provide or replace professional mental health support or emergency services.

Use case example: a plan that helps the user learn more about their mental health or mental illness

Disclaimer For Plans Related to Suicide Support Only:

Please note: If you or someone near you is in immediate danger of hurting themselves or others, call 911. This plan is not designed to provide or replace professional mental health support or emergency services.

Use case example: a plan that lists a suicide hotline

Disclaimer For Plans Related to Substance Abuse / Addiction Resources:

Please note: This plan is not designed to provide or replace professional medical advice, treatment, or counseling. If you need those services and care, reach out to a trained medical professional for support.

Use case example: a plan that directs the user to an addiction counseling service

Principles for Developing Content

1. Avoid sponsored content;
2. Include trigger warnings;
3. Source from reputable organizations and individuals.
 - a. Find material from licensed medical professionals (MDs, DOs, Psy.Ds, PhDs) or credible medical institutions (ex., a university / teaching hospital, a dedicated counseling center).
 - b. Avoid: bloggers / vloggers, student projects, or content from sources that are trying to sell you things (ex. “Merch in description”)

“Resource Toolkits”

The goal of these toolkits is to give us something we can easily copy and paste into the last step of action plans that discuss certain mental illnesses. These toolkits will offer users further readings and resources to help them continue their self-education, develop positive habits, or find support.

Depression Toolkit

These resources from the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) will help you build a road to wellness.

The Wellness Tracker, to help you track your moods, symptoms, medications and more, as well as record your health habits and take note of how you’re feeling:

<https://www.dbsalliance.org/wellness/wellness-toolbox/wellness-tracker/>

The Wellness Wheel, to better know your strengths in seven areas (Physical, Financial, Environmental, Intellectual, Occupational, Social, and Spiritual) and help you move towards the life you want to build: <https://www.dbsalliance.org/wellness/wellness-toolbox/dbsa-wellness-wheel/>

“Living Successfully with a Mood Disorder” course, to help you learn more about mood disorders better, find treatments that work for you, and develop a plan to live well with a mood disorder:

<https://www.dbsalliance.org/wellness/wellness-toolbox/living-successfully-with-a-mood-disorder/>

Ready to find a therapist or counselor? Start your search here:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists> (US) or
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/therapists> (Canada)

Anxiety Toolkit

Bipolar Disorder Toolkit

These resources from the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) will help you build a road to wellness.

The Wellness Tracker, to help you track your moods, symptoms, medications and more, as well as record your health habits and take note of how you're feeling:

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Ready to find a therapist or counselor? Start your search here:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists> (US) or
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/therapists> (Canada)

ADHD Toolkit

.SMU Toolkit

- Counseling Centre <https://www.smu.ca/campus-life/the-counselling-centre.html>
- Campus resources
 - https://smuhalifax-my.sharepoint.com/personal/christine_lyons_smu_ca/Documents/Communications%20Officer/Website/taoconnect.org (login w/ SMU email only)
- Non-Emergency Resources
 - Good2Talk
 - Call 1-833-292-3698
 - Text Good2TalkNS to 686868
 - Wellness Together Canada
 - Over 19 years old? Text WELLNESS to 741741

- Under 19 years old? Text WELLNESS to 686868
- Hope for Wellness Help Line
 - For Indigenous Peoples
 - Call 1-855-242-3310
 - Online chat is also available
- Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team:
 - Call 902-429-8167 or 1-888-429-8167 (toll free)

General plans for Canada & the US

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