



Standards and Style Guide for Document uploaded to the ssu3a Website

This document is currently subject to revision, and may soon be modified or replaced.

Recent Changes:

17/1/2023:

- First draft for Committee discussion.

Table of Contents

1 INTRODUCTION.....	3
2 PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT.....	3
2.1 Desirable Characteristics of Documents.....	3
2.2 Applicability.....	3
2.3 Sources of Content.....	3
2.4 Exemplar.....	3
2.5 Scope of Standards.....	3
2.6 Word Processing Capability.....	4
3 STANDARDS.....	4
3.1 u3a Branding.....	4
3.1.1 Style of Name.....	4
3.1.2 Logos.....	4
3.2 Colours.....	4
3.3 Font.....	4
3.4 Critical Text.....	5
3.5 Body Text.....	5
3.6 Heading and Sub-Headings.....	5
3.7 Cross-References and Links.....	5
3.8 Quotations.....	5
3.9 Names of Works.....	5
4 GUIDELINES.....	5
4.1 Use Of English.....	5
4.2 Active And Passive Voice.....	5
4.3 Grammar.....	5
4.3.1 Misplaced and Ambiguous Modifier.....	5
4.3.2 Verbosity.....	6
4.3.3 Missing Verbs.....	6
4.3.4 Punctuation.....	6
4.4 Words Often Misused.....	6
4.5 Units.....	7
4.5.1 Metric Units.....	7
4.5.2 Imperial Units.....	7
4.5.3 Time.....	7
4.6 Graphic Elements.....	7
4.6.1 Images.....	7
4.6.2 Borders, Tables and Rules.....	7
4.6.3 Banners.....	8

1 INTRODUCTION

South Solihull u3a (ssu3a) maintains a website for the benefit of its members.

The website makes available many documents that can be viewed and downloaded by visitors. ssu3a recognise that their website is their 'shop window', and often provides potential new members with the first impression of the organisation. To this end the documents that have been uploaded to it should be consistent, readable and attractive. Ideally, all of our written materials should give the impression that they were created by the same author.

There are certain technical requirements concerning documents uploaded to the website, such as giving them uniquely identifiable file names. These aspects of documents are dealt with in the *Website Standards* and *Website Style Guide documents*. (published on the website). You are strongly advised to read the relevant sections of those documents in conjunction with this documents. However, they are concerned only with the external characteristics of document files. they do not deal with the content of the documents, such as typography or prose style.

1.1 Document vs. Website

There exists a similar document that set out standards and guidelines for material uploaded to pages on the ssu3a website. Much of the material is common to both documents, but due to technical restrictions on the website, some standards and guidelines set out here are not applicable to the website, and so the standards for the website are different. The reader should be careful to distinguish between the two sets of standards.

2 PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document provides standards and guidelines for authors of documents that will be uploaded to the ssu3a website.

2.1 Desirable Characteristics of Documents

These standards and guidelines are intended to give uploaded documents the following characteristics:

- They should share obvious common visual characteristics.
- They should be 'easy on the eye', that is to say, the typography should promote comfortable reading, even for extended periods.
- They are clearly identified as being published by ssu3a (or by the Cluster, Regional or National committees, as appropriate).
- The use of English should be plain and straightforward, avoiding common faults.

2.2 Applicability

These standards and guidelines have been written for documents destined to be uploaded to the ssu3a website, to which they should be applied as strictly as possible. There may be unusual circumstances where the strict application of these standards is either not defined, or not applicable. If an author encounters such a situation they should apply to the ssu3a committee for guidance, with a potential revision of these standards.

The contents of this document have been approved by the ssu3a committee.

Documents submitted to the Website Manager for uploading may be checked against these standards and edited as necessary before uploading.

2.3 Sources of Content

The information in this document has been assembled from various sources, including:

- The typography used in the u3a magazine.
- Preferences expressed by the ssu3a committee and Interest Group leaders.
- General information available on the internet concerning good document design practice.
- The author's own experience.

2.4 Exemplar

This document itself conforms to the documentation standards, so is an exemplar of what is required.

2.5 Scope of Standards

This document is primarily concerned with mandatory standards, that are rules that can and should be applied in all circumstances. These govern aspects such as typography and layout.

Less concrete aspects of authorship, such as writing style, are also covered as guidelines, without the mandatory force that standards have.

2.6 Word Processing Capability

It is assumed that the reader is familiar with common word-processing terms such as 'font', 'justification' etc. This document is not a training manual on word-processing, so the reader is advised to consult the internet for clarification on any terms with which they are not familiar.

3 STANDARDS

This section sets out the mandatory standards that should be applied to all documents uploaded to the ssu3a website.

3.1 u3a Branding

This section deals with aspects of the u3a identity.

3.1.1 Style of Name

The style of the name of the National organisation is 'u3a', and for the South Solihull organisation it is 'ssu3a', i.e. with lower-case letters. The name is never capitalized, even when appearing at the start of a sentence or in headings or sub-headings. In the remainder of this document, this exception to capitalisation over-rides any other standard, even if not explicitly mentioned.

The plural is u3as, and the possessive case is u3a's.

3.1.2 Logos

The principle brand identity for the national u3a is the national logo. There are several varieties, here are some examples:









The ssu3a has a modified version of the national logo as on the front page of this document.

Documents should feature one or other of these logos (as appropriate) on the front cover, or at the top of the first page if there is no cover page.

3.2 Colours

The following pallet of colours are taken from the national magazine, and should be the only colours used for text or backgrounds:

NAME	SAMPLE	RED VALUE	GREEN VALUE	BLUE VALUE	HTML NOTATION
Black		0	0	0	#000000
Red		255	0	0	#ff0000
Yellow		255	200	1	#ffc801
Light Blue		40	134	230	#2886e6
Dark Blue		0	91	184	#005bb8
White		255	255	255	#ffffff

3.3 Font

It is generally accepted that comfortable reading of text, especially for long periods, is facilitated by using a serif font¹. The preferred font for all ssu3a documents is 'Cambria', which should be used for all text, including headings.

Where Cambria is not available (for example if it cannot be installed on the author's computer) then a substitute serif font, such as 'Times New Roman' may be used.

The colour of all text should be Black, with the exceptions given below.

3.4 Critical Text

Text that is especially noteworthy, such as safety warnings, may be changed to 14 point, Bold, Red. Note that use of uppercase is not recommended as a means of highlighting critical text.

3.5 Body Text

The main body of text (i.e. paragraphs) shall be in 10 point font, fully justified, that is to say, with straight margins both left and right.

3.6 Heading and Sub-Headings

Heading shall be in uppercase and 13 point font.

Sub headings, to any level, shall have every word capitalised and be in 12 point font.

3.7 Cross-References and Links

A 'Cross-reference' is a reference to a location within the current document. A 'Link' refers to an external location such as a website.

Sections of text can be highlighted and made into cross-references or links. For example, here is a link to the GUIDELINES section of this document.

The exact format of these features depends on the word-processor used, so is not specified here.

3.8 Quotations

Direct quotations from other works shall be enclosed in double quotes. For example: "To be or not to be."

3.9 Names of Works

Names of works, such as book titles, plays etc. should be in italics. For example *Hamlet*.

4 GUIDELINES

4.1 Use Of English

All text should be written obeying the normal rules of English grammar, syntax, punctuation and spelling.

4.2 Active And Passive Voice

This is a big subject, that is best studied using on-line sources, but briefly it concerns using the active, rather than the passive, form of verbs. Contrast the passive sentence: "Meetings will be held by us every month.", with the active version: "We will hold meetings monthly". The latter is shorter, and more 'punchy'.

Although there is a place for the passive voice in certain types of writing, such as technical documents, the active voice makes for more vibrant prose wherever it is reasonable to use it. A typical case relevant to u3a might be a reports about the activities of an Interest Group: Rather than "A Cathedral was visited", better to say: "We visited a Cathedral".

4.3 Grammar

There are very many common grammatical errors. Authors are encouraged to look on the internet, read, learn and avoid them!

¹ If you have any doubt about this, pick up any novel off your bookshelf and see what font it uses.

Here are just a few of the most common:

4.3.1 Misplaced and Ambiguous Modifier

There is a difference between “a good bottle of wine” and “a bottle of good wine”. We often say the first, when in reality it is not the quality of the glass bottle, but the quality of the liquid contained therein that is of concern.

There are some good jokes based on this type of mistake, such as “Wanted: Stool for milkmaid with three legs.” Make sure the word or phrase that describes a noun is close to the noun itself.

Similarly, in a sentence such as “When Jack met John he gave him a gift”; it is not clear whether Jack or John was the giver of the gift. It needs to be something like “When Jack Met John, Jack gave a gift to John”.

4.3.2 Verbosity

Look for unnecessary words, they slow down reading without adding meaning. Here are some examples:

- Extraneous words inserted to sound erudite. Here are some common examples, with suggested snappier equivalents:
 - “in order to” = “to”.
 - “can be found located in” = “is in”
 - “on an ongoing basis” = “continually”
- Sentences starting with “And” or other conjunctions can usually have the “And” deleted.
- Stock phrases and management jargon should be translated to plain English, such as “Going forward” = “next”; “at this moment in time” = “now”.
- Tautology and pleonasm: insertion of words that mean the same thing as you have already said or implied. For example “A big giant” or “A new innovation” (is there any other kind?). “A little small tree” (little and small mean much the same thing).

4.3.3 Missing Verbs

Generally speaking, all sentences should have an object and a verb. You may get away with breaking the rule occasionally for literary effect, but you need to be skilled to do so!

4.3.4 Punctuation

Authorities differ somewhat over the rules for punctuation marks. The rules tabulated here are the variations preferred for the ssu3a documents.

Mark	Derived Marks	Rules
. [full stop]	! [exclamation mark] : [colon] ? [question mark] ... [ellipsis]	When used to terminate a sentence: No space before, two spaces after. When full-stop is used to terminate abbreviations: No space before, one space after.
, [comma]	; [semi-colon]	Used only within a sentence, not to terminate it. No spaces before, one space after.
- [dash]		Avoid if possible. One of the other punctuation marks is usually more appropriate (usually a comma). If you must use it, put one space before, one space after.
() [brackets]		Avoid if possible. Commas are usually more appropriate. Always used in left and right pairs. Left Bracket: One space before, no space after. Right Bracket: No space before, one space after.
' [single quote]		Encloses a word or phrase for special attention. Always used in pairs.
“ [double quote]		Encloses direct speech. Always used in pairs.
/ [slash]		Use in sentences to mean 'divided by', as in '2/3' for two-thirds. Also used as the separator in technical contexts, including dates and pre-decimal currency. Any other use courts ambiguity. Never used it as a substitute for “and” or “or”.

4.4 Words Often Misused

Many words or phrases in English have several distinct meanings, or shades of meaning, leading to confusion about their correct use. Also, it seems that it only takes one 'influencer' to use a word incorrectly for the rot to spread rapidly. The list below shows a few illustrative examples that seem to be prevalent currently, and the actual meaning, when used in the same context.

Word	Used to mean...	Actually means...
Blueprint	Initial plan, template	The final definitive plan or drawing
Backlash	Adverse reaction	Small amount of slack in the system
Begs the question	Makes you wonder if...	Assumes what it should be proving (circular reasoning)
Decimate	Destroy	Reduce by 10% (from the same root as "decimal".)
Epicentre	Centre	Point on earth's surface where an underground earthquake breaks out, i.e. <u>not</u> the centre
Following	After	Being lead by
Fulsome	Generous. Gushing	Excessive, over the top
Refute	Disagree	Totally disprove
Restive	Restless. Figity	Refusing to move, immovable
Scan	Read quickly (skimmed)	Read carefully
Sanction	Punish. Suppress	Law or decree (e.g to prohibit, permit or reward)
Scurrilous	Untrue. Rumour	Obscene

Let the above be a warning to check carefully that you really know the meaning of a word, especial if it has recently come into popular use.

4.5 Units

4.5.1 Metric Units

Metric units are preferred to Imperial units, except for geographical distances, which may be given in miles.

For names, abbreviations and multipliers of metric units, we will adopt the S.I. conventions. See the internet for details.

It is acceptable to use industry standard practices for technical information, for example the electronics industry uses a condensed notation for component values, e.g. 4K7 = 4,700.

4.5.2 Imperial Units

For Imperial units we will adopt the convention that names start with a lower-case letter, for example "3 miles" is correct, "3 Miles" is not.

4.5.3 Time

Time is not metric (not yet anyway!) therefore a colon, not a decimal point, is the correct separator. For example: "10:30" is correct, "10.30" is not.

For preference, use the 24-hour format, in which the minutes are always given as two digits, with a leading zero if necessary. for example "07:30", or "19:30". Do not append a.m., or p.m., but "h" or "hrs" may be appended to emphasise the 24 hour clock, e.g. "07:30 hrs" cannot be confused with "7:30 p.m.".

If the 12-hour format is used, always append a.m. or p.m. For example: "7:30 a.m.", or "7:30 p.m.".

Also acceptable, is the condensed notation common in Europe, where 'H' replaces the colon, e.g. "12H30" = "12:30 hrs". This is useful when brevity is required or space is at a premium.

4.6 Graphic Elements

In addition to textual elements (headings and paragraphs), it is permitted to introduce other elements of a graphical nature to enhance a document.

4.6.1 Images

Photographs and other graphics may be inserted wherever desired. Layout considerations such as positioning and word-wrap around graphics is at the author's discretion.

4.6.2 Borders, Tables and Rules

The author may use features such as borders, tables and horizontal ruled lines at their discretion. It is recommended that these are used only where necessary to achieve legibility, and not as mere 'decoration'.

4.6.3 Banners

For informal documents, such as newsletters, coloured bands or blocks may be inserted as headings, or to draw the reader's attention to particular text. See the u3a magazine for typical examples. The colour of the text may be changed to achieve adequate contrast or a pleasing visual effect. The colours should be selected from those listed in section 3.2 .