



Communications Guide

The Way Woodstock Communications Guide

Style, Values, Best Practices, and Tips

The Way Woodstock Communication Guide helps teams throughout our church communicate consistently and professionally. Think of it as a savvy friend you can lean on. You don't have to memorize everything; you just need to know when to consult your copy. It's a good idea to follow these guidelines in all but the most informal communication. (Speed and brevity win in quick email exchanges with other staff members, personal texts, online chat, and, in some cases, social media posts.)

These guidelines are based on a combination of sources, with the majority coming from the Associated Press Stylebook.

Looking for a fast answer? Use the Quick Reference Guide towards the end of this booklet. And if you want to save a copy on your desktop or print it out and laminate it, we'll be giddy with delight.

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Why Does Communication Matter?

If you use words, you communicate for The Way Woodstock. Any time we send an email, post on social media, put together a flyer, interact with a servant, etc., we represent! And we're not just representing our church—many people are making judgments about Christianity based on our actions. It's worth our time and effort to communicate with excellence.

Good Communication Removes Roadblocks

Whether it's getting people to take part in an event or just try out The Way Woodstock for the very first time, communication can help you reach your goals. These values, best practices, and guidelines are here to help you remove as many obstacles as possible that might get in the way of people taking their next steps with Christ.

Our Communication Values

- **We're advocates for our audience.** Our communication makes people's lives easier, not more difficult. We're on their side and put their interests before our own.
- **We do our best.** If it's worth putting into words, it's worth getting right. We communicate with excellence.
- **We're user-friendly.** We answer: who, what, when, where, why, and how? We include easy-to-find information for any next steps. Clear beats clever.
- **We avoid insider lingo.** We won't use words that are hard to understand. We explain The Way Woodstock terms and any phrases that may be confusing to someone who has never stepped inside a church.
- **We say less to communicate more.** We keep it brief, knowing people are much more likely to engage with concise content.
- **We don't sell.** We understand people tune out advertising and manipulation. We inform, cast vision, and share experience. We describe real outcomes that can benefit our audience.
- **We'll communicate what we want for people, not what we want from them.** We're not giving people to-dos. We're presenting them with opportunities.
- **We've got personality.** We let it shine through in our communication as we're authentic, informal, sincere, positive, and fun.

Best Practices

- **Get a second set of eyes on it.** Have a qualified proofreader look over your piece. If there are typos and misspelled words, you can undermine a beautifully crafted piece. Not only is this a best practice, **it's a must practice.**
- **Have a goal.** For every piece of communication, before you do anything else, determine the goal. Do whatever you need to do to gain clarity about the desired outcome and keep it in front of you during the entire creation process.
- **Add an evaluation step.** Once the piece goes out, it's important to look back and ask whether it met its intended goal. What can we learn for future pieces?
- **Know your audience.** The group we're talking to determines how we approach our communication. What is their experience with us? Put yourself into their shoes and communicate based on their perspective.
- **Don't load people down with too much at once.** Maybe you need to delay communicating one message so another has a better chance of getting through. Or it might mean you only present the first step in a process instead of five action items.
- **Choose the right channel.** Your message and your goal should determine the communication channel you use, whether it's a video, email newsletter, Facebook post, etc. For example, if people need to take action online, an online method of communication might be the best choice.
- **Consider context.** Where is your content going to live? What else is being talked about there? Does what you're communicating conflict with that? Does it duplicate that? Is it out of place there?
- **Lead with the most important thing.** Don't bury key information under several sentences or paragraphs. Use an inverted pyramid style, keeping the most important, foundational information at the top.
- **Cut, cut, cut!** Avoid redundancy and wordiness. Once you write a piece, see how much you can eliminate without losing meaning.
- **Use an active voice when possible.** It is more direct and stronger than the passive. In active voice, the subject takes the action. Example: "Thousands attended the event," rather than "The event was attended by thousands." Or: "The Way Woodstock partners with community organizations," instead of, "Community organizations are being partnered with by The Way Woodstock."
- **Avoid overused words.** Tired phrases and words that are used too often fail to communicate anything at all since we start tuning them out.

A Matter of Style

When expert opinions don't agree about usage, it's called a style issue. In those cases, it's up to an organization to determine what it will do—and stick to it. Please use the guidelines below in all The Way Woodstock communication.

Times

- **Correct: 6:00pm, 7:00-8:30am, 8:00am-5:00pm.**
- Always include the numbers after the colon. (Do: 8:00-9:30pm.)
- am/pm has no periods, and no spaces between the numbers and letters. (Do: 9:00-10:30pm.)
- Use a hyphen (-) with no spaces. (Do: 8:00-9:30pm.)
- Use noon or midnight, not 12:00am or 12:00pm.
- Avoid redundancies like morning or evening. (Don't: 8:00am in the morning or 7:00pm Tuesday evening.)
- When listing experience times, use singular for the day. (Do: Sunday at 11:00am. Don't: Sundays at 11:00am.)
- Time Zones: When your audience is in multiple time zones, include the time zone abbreviation. (Do: 9:00am EST.) These vary with the daylight saving time schedule (for example: EDT or EST), so use a search engine to find the current abbreviation.

Dates

- **Correct: Tuesday, April 28.**
- Use the day number only. (Do: 28. Don't: 28th.)
- Include the day of the week where possible so people don't have to look it up.
- Replace "from" with a comma and "to" with a hyphen. (Do: Thursday, 8:00-9:30pm. Do: May 31-June 1. Don't: Thursday from 8:00 to 9:30pm.)
- Do not abbreviate days or months. (Do: Wednesday. Don't: Wed.)
- Drop the year unless needed.

Numbers

- Spell out numbers one through nine and use numerals for 10 and above, except when referring to ages. (*Because of You* is a two-week series. Each weekend, more than 300 people attend The Way Woodstock.)
- Write out numbers at the beginning of sentences. (Three hundred people participated in *The Chazown Experience*. Thirty-five students gave their life to Christ.)

Ages

- Always use numerals. (The girl is 5 years old.)
- Use hyphens for ages expressed as adjectives *before* a noun or as *substitutes* for a noun. (A 5-year-old boy. The boy is 5 years old. The ministry is for 3-year-olds. The woman is in her 30s.)

Grades

- Use numerals (5th grade, 6-12th grade students).
- Hyphenate if you're substituting for a noun (5th-graders).

Titles

Use italics on series titles, message titles, movie titles, and publications like books, magazines, and newspapers. When two titles appear together, use *publication*, "article." (*Outreach Magazine*, "Top 10 Churches.")

Formatting

- Use bold or italics to emphasize words. Underlining is only appropriate for hyperlinks.
- Bullets: Use consistent bullets and indent spacing throughout your document. Be consistent within each list about whether or not there is punctuation at the end of bullet items.

Capitalization

- Avoid using all caps. It's the written equivalent of yelling. Would you yell that word you're capitalizing?
- Do not capitalize random words, only proper nouns.
- Lowercase seasons (spring, summer, winter, fall) unless it's part of a proper noun (Winter Carnival). Don't use seasonal references with a global audience.
- When to capitalize:
 - Bible: always (because it's a proper noun).
 - biblical: never (because it's an adjective).
 - Scripture: always (because it's a proper noun).
 - scriptural: never (because it's an adjective).
 - He, Him, His, You, Your when referring to God (unless you're quoting Scripture and the translation you're using doesn't capitalize it).

Quoting Scripture in Print or Online

- Do not abbreviate books of the Bible. (Do: Galatians. Don't: Gal.)
- Bible verses are always italicized. (Do: *For God so loved...*, Don't: For God so loved..)
- Always include the version references.
- Use an ellipsis (...) if it is not a complete sentence. In the following example, note the space between the last letter and the ellipsis:
For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, ... John 3:16 NIV

Punctuation

- No double, triple, or more punctuation (!! or ?!). Avoid using exclamation points in two sentences in a row or several sentences in the same paragraph.
- Spaces: Use one space between sentences, not two.
- Commas: In lists of three items or more, use a comma before and/or. (The event will feature games, food, and prizes.)
- Quotation marks: Use for words spoken by someone else, in reference to the word itself, or for words used in an ironic sense. Do not use quotation marks to soften the meaning of words or to indicate an unconventional usage. (Do: The “short” meeting lasted from 1:00-6:00pm. Don’t: We want people to “own” their development.)
- Punctuation in Quotes: The period and the comma always go within the quotation marks. The dash, the semicolon, the question mark, and the exclamation point go within the quotation marks when they apply to the quoted matter only. They go outside when they apply to the whole sentence.
- Hyphens (-): should be used for hyphenated words, times, date ranges, and phone numbers. Do not allow websites or email addresses to become hyphenated; keep the entire address on one line.
- Dashes (–): When used within a sentence for emphasis, do not use spaces. (Do: When Jesus taught us to pray, He wanted us to remember and acknowledge the fact that we are fully dependent on God—even for our next meal.)
- Apostrophes: Avoid using apostrophes in plurals. (Do: FAQs, 30s, DVDs, LifePacks)
- Colons: Use to clarify or expand what came before the colon. Only use them after statements that are complete sentences. (Paul wrote several books of the New Testament: Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians to name a few.)
- Semicolons: Use to separate two main clauses that are closely related to each other but that could stand on their own as sentences.

Common Slip-Ups

Correct	Incorrect
A lot	Not <i>alot</i>
All of a sudden or suddenly	Not <i>all of the sudden</i>
All right	Not <i>alright</i>
A part = (noun) belonging to	Apart = (adverb) set aside, separate
Board = wood plank or a committee	Bored = the result of something uninteresting or dull

Cannot	Not <i>can not</i>
Compliment = “You look nice today.” Remember: I give compliments (“i” in compliments).	Complement = work together well. Remember: We work together (“e” in complements and we).
Effect = noun, means result	Affect = verb (usually), to influence
Every day = daily	Everyday = common
It’s = it is	Its = belonging to it
Led = past tense of to lead	Lead = present tense of to lead
Login = (noun) login name	Log in = (verb) log in to the website
Peek = sneak peek	Peak = summit, top
Regardless	Not <i>irregardless</i>
Signup = (noun) signup form	Sign up = (verb) sign up for a class
Than = comparison	Then = reference to time
Their = belonging to them	They’re = they are
	There = a place
Would’ve or would have	Not <i>would of</i>
Your = belonging to you	You’re = you are

A Little Shot of Grammar

- Fix fragments. (Fragment: Lessons like persevering when times are rough, standing up for what is right, and honoring God alone. Correct: Kids will learn lessons like persevering when times are rough, standing up for what is right, and honoring God alone.)
- Make sure your subjects and verbs agree. When prepositions are involved, look at the word at the beginning of the prepositional phrase. (Do: Several *formats* of the file *are* available.)
- Ending sentences with a preposition is okay, unless it is an unnecessary preposition. (Do: We have a lot to think about. Don’t: Where are they at? Do: Where are they?)
- Use the right preposition. (Do: Information about. Don’t: Information on. Do: Questions about. Don’t: Questions around.)
- It’s fine to use contractions since we favor a casual writing style.

- When two words are used together to modify another, hyphenate the words unless the first word ends with the letter *y* (age-appropriate, culturally relevant teaching).
- Write in an active voice, not passive. Get rid of “there are” phrases as often as possible by rewriting your sentence. (Do: You won’t want to miss out on our three new series. Don’t: We have three new series that are available that you won’t want to miss out on.)

Online Information, Email Addresses, and Phone Numbers

Email

- Email or email, not e-mail.
- Email addresses: always lowercase and never hyphenate. (Do: name@thewaywoodstock.com Don’t: Name@thewaywoodstock.com)

Phone numbers

- Use 10-digit numbers with hyphens instead of parenthesis or periods. (Do: 405-580-5433. Don’t: (405) 580-5433 or 405.580.5433.)
- Provide your direct line or extension whenever possible.

Websites and Links

- Links: Avoid using “click on” or “click here.” Make the subject the link. (Do: Register for Open Door. Don’t: Click here to register for Open Door.)

URLs

- When using electronic communication channels, always hyperlink the website so it is a clickable link.

Logos, Branding, and Graphics

Names

- The name of the church is The Way Woodstock.
- The Way I Woodstock may also be used.
- Our Next Generation ministry is NextGen. (No space)
 - o Students - The Way Students or The Way I Students
 - o Kids - The Way Kids or The Way I Kids
 - o Choir - The Wav

Graphics

- All official logos can be found at www.thewaywoodstock.com/admin.
- Official The Way Woodstock colors are: Black-RGB #000000, Gray-RGB #a7a7a7, White-RGB #ffffff
- All graphic church and ministry branding, logos, and title treatments questions can be directed to the Director of Communications.

Other

- We use the term “servant” not “volunteer” in all communications.
 - We use the term “worship experience,” not service and use “worship experiences” not “worships” as such is not a word.
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The Way Woodstock Communications Quick Reference Guide

	Do	Don't
Times	8:00am, 8:30pm 6:00-8:00pm, 8:00am-5:00pm	8AM, 8:30 p.m. 6-8pm or from 6:00 to 8:00pm
Dates	Tuesday, April 28 February 23 May 31-June 1	Tuesday, April 28 th February 23 rd
Numbers, Ages, Grades	One, two, three 10, 12, 13 Six-week series 5-year-olds 5 th grade or 5 th -graders Ages 5 years-5 th grade	1, 2, 3 Ten, twelve, thirteen 6-week series Five year olds Fifth grade
Message Titles	<i>At the Movies</i>	At the Movies or "At the Movies"
Exclamation Marks	Sign up today!	Sign up today!!!
Commas	The event will feature games, food, and prizes.	The event will feature games, food and prizes.
Quotation Marks & Punctuation	She said, "We're going to the party."	She said, "We're going to the party".
Hyphens	The well-meaning children. 6:00-8:30pm March 16-20	Do not hyphenate websites or email addresses.
Apostrophes	To show ownership or contractions. FAQs, DVDs, The dog's collar, 30s, etc.	FAQ's, DVD's, 30's, 1950's, etc.
Capitalization	Avoid all caps Bible & Scripture Pronouns referring to God: He, Him, His	People will think you're YELLING.
Quoting Scripture	<i>Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men ...</i> 1 Corinthians 3:13 NIV	"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart." 1 Cor 3:13
Email or email	Email or email name@thewaywoodstock.com	e-mail name@thewaywoodstock.com
The Way Woodstock	The Way Woodstock or The Way I Woodstock	

Editing Checklist

When reviewing material, ask...

- Does the piece meet its goal?
- Who is the target audience? Is the communication tailored to them?
Do I need to remind them why they're getting it?
- Have I answered: Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How?
- Have I eliminated misspelled words, typos, and grammar errors?
- Would someone who is new to The Way Woodstock be able to understand all the words and names I've used?
- Does my message fit the context of where people will read and experience this material?
- Is this the right communication channel for this message?
- Is it easy for people to take action on the information? Are there too many options that might overwhelm the reader?
- Did someone else review this?
- Is the key information at the beginning of the piece?
- What can I cut? Are there redundant or unnecessary words?
- Is it written in the active voice?
(Active: God so loved the world.... Passive: The world was so loved by God...)
- Did I find substitutes for tired words or overused phrases?
- Does the piece follow The Way Woodstock style guidelines?
- Have I read the piece aloud?