



STYLE GUIDELINES



DPSS

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE



The DPSS Style Guide is a resource created to describe brand standards from logos to how we write our materials.

Using this guide will help staff across the division ensure that our work is in compliance with University of Michigan brand standards as well as our own.

Each section of this guide contains the most important information you need to know about that topic. Links to the relevant U-M brand standards will be included as well. If you want more information and design resources, we've provided a section on graphic design tips and an appendix for your use.

Use the chapter links in the Table of Contents to go to the chapter you want to visit. From there, you can click on the Chapter Contents to go to specific information in that chapter.

Sincerely,

The Strategic Communications Team

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LOGOS

U-M CENTRAL CAMPUS LOGOS

The University of Michigan has [four official logos](#) the primary logo, the horizontal logo, the secondary mark (block M) and the University Seal. You can view and download these logos at the link.

The primary logo may be used for almost anything, while the horizontal logo and block M are for selective use. The University Seal is reserved for presidential or regent projects. If you have need of the University Seal (ex. its on our patches), please send the request to dpss-strat-comm@umich.edu.

U-M LOGO GUIDELINES

The guidelines for using U-M logos can be [found here](#). DPSS follows these guidelines for our logos. More details about using DPSS

logos according to the official guidelines are in the DPSS Logos section of this style guide.

USING U-M LOGOS

If you need an official U-M logo for a project, you can find them here. Email the Strat Comm team if you have questions about using the logos properly.



LOGO USE GUIDELINES

LOGO USE DON'TS

Do Not:

- Modify, redesign, redraw, animate, distort or alter the proportions of the logo.
- Add words, images, or other design elements or effects to the logo.
- Use the logo as part of a graphic.
- Modify the size or position relationship of any element within the logo.
- Rotate or render the logo three-dimensionally.
- Replace the official font.
- Use any U-M logo on anything that is not official university material

BLOCK M USE DONT'S

Do Not:

- Modify, redesign, redraw, distort or alter the proportions of the Block M.
- Use any part of the Block M as part of another word
- Add words, images, or other design elements or effects to the Block M, or add the mark to another graphic
- Rotate or render the Block M three-dimensionally

LOGO CLEAR SPACE RULES

x = Internal breathing space based on the size of the serif.

2x = The size of the serif is doubled to create an external safe space to aid readability and ensure no other graphic becomes visually attached to the official identity.

Horizontal Spacing Example



Vertical Logo Spacing Example



GUIDE TO MEASURING CLEAR SPACE

Step 02

Use guidelines or draw rectangle and measure the height (x) of one of the Block M serifs.



Step 02

Copy the guidelines or rectangle and paste it above the first one you drew. They should extend beyond the Block M.



Step 03

Group guidelines or rectangles together and move them to the edge of the Block M. The group should sit outside of the Block M.



Step 04

Copy your group and paste it against the vertical edge of the logo. Rotate the group 90 degrees. It should sit outside of the Block M.



Step 05

Expand and add your guides or rectangles all the way around the logo to create a grid/padding around it.



Step 06

Group the logo and the guides/padding then resize or place the logo. When done with the logo, delete the guides/padding.



LOGO PAIRING RULES

These rules apply to pairing logos with other U-M units, divisions, etc. and external partner logos.

Spacing

- The DPSS logo should be first, then the other logo.
- There should be no graphics between the two logos.
- Clear space between two logos should equal the width of the DPSS logo (x).



Size

- Other logos should never be larger than the DPSS logo.
- The other logo should be the same height (z) as the DPSS logo.



EXAMPLE LOGO PAIRING



LOGOS VS. GRAPHICS

Logos are very specific elements at U-M. Here you'll find the definition of a logo and what are not considered logos. It's important to know the difference as central branding will enforce the rules around using graphics instead of logos.

Logos

At U-M, logos are specific design elements that represent the university and its units, departments, divisions, etc. U-M logos follow [specific templates](#).



Graphics

U-M ID Standards allows for graphic elements for one-time or limited use. An example of a graphic/icon is the university's bicentennial graphic.



Graphics like this should be requested via the Strategic Communications team.

GRAPHIC PAIRING RULES

Spacing

- The DPSS logo should be first, then the graphic.
- There should be no graphics between the logo and the graphic.
- Clear space between the logo and the graphic should equal the width of the DPSS logo (x).



Size

Graphics should **never** be taller (y) than the DPSS logo.



EXAMPLE GRAPHIC PAIRING



DPSS DIVISION LOGOS

DPSS LOGO NAMING CONVENTION

Naming convention example: **DPSS_Form-LogoYL-WHI**. This means this logo is the DPSS formal logo with a Maize Block M and white text.

NAMING CONVENTION ABBREVIATIONS

When you download a logo, you'll see shortened file names. We use abbreviations to save space on Google Drive. Color abbreviations follow standard design and manufacturing conventions. The standard logo (blue text, maize Block M) won't have a color abbreviation attached. Here's what the abbreviations mean:

Logo Type	Abbreviation
Formal Logo	FormLogo
Formal Stacked Logo	FormStackLogo
Informal Logo	InformLogo
Alternate Logo	AltLogo
Alternate Stacked Logo	AltStackLogo

Color Combo	Abbreviation
Black Text & Black Block M	BK
Blue Text & Blue Block M	BL
White Text & White Block M	WHI
Maize Text & Maize Block M	YL
White Text, Maize Block M	YL-WHI

DIVISION LOGOS

You'll need to sign in with your U-M account to download logos. Each link opens a folder with Portable Network Graphic (.PNG) files for digital use, Encapsulated Postscript (.EPS) files for print, and all color variants.

Click the logo name to download the logo.

Logo	Use
Formal Logo 	External (to DPSS) materials. Can also be used internally if desired.
Formal Stacked Logo 	Internal (to DPSS) materials or when the formal logo won't fit.
Informal Logo 	When the formal or informal logos won't fit.

ALTERNATE DIVISION LOGOS

These logos should only be used when the formal, formal-stacked, or informal logos won't fit in your design.

Logo	Use
<u>Alt Informal Logo</u> 	Internal (to DPSS) materials or swag that won't accommodate the main logos.
<u>Alt Informal Logo - Security</u> 	Internal (to DPSS) materials that focus on security or swag that won't accommodate the main logos.
<u>Alt Logo</u> 	Internal (to DPSS) materials or swag that won't accommodate the main logos.

LOGOS FOR SPECIAL USE ONLY



These logos are intended only for Social Media or special use cases. If you need one of these logos, please reach out to us with the use case.

Logo
Special Use Logo - Public Safety 
Special Use Logo - Security 
Special Use Logo - Police 

DPSS DEPARTMENT & UNIT LOGOS

Each department has its own logo set for internal purposes. Some department units (but not all) also have logos. These logos are intended primarily for internal DPSS purposes. If your unit does not have a logo and you feel one is needed, contact dpss-strat-comm@umich.edu for an evaluation.

Logo sets include:

- A formal logo
- A formal stacked logo
- An informal logo

LOGO DOWNLOADS

Click on the department or unit name to download the logo files.

- [University Security Services](#)
 - [Community Outreach Unit](#)
- [UM-Dearborn DPS \(DPSS version\)](#)
- [UM-Flint DPS \(DPSS version\)](#)
- Administrative Operations Area
 - [Strategic Communications Unit](#)
 - [Technology Operations Unit](#)
- [Dispatch Operations](#)
- [Emergency Preparedness](#)
- [Enterprise Physical Security](#)
- [Guest Services](#)
- [Housing Security](#)
- [Michigan Medicine Security](#)
- [Museum Security](#)
- [Protective Security](#)
- [U-M Police Department](#)
 - [K-9 Unit](#)
 - [Parking Enforcement Unit](#)
 - [Special Victims Unit](#)



PATCHES

ANN ARBOR DPSS PATCHES

Patch	Use
<u>Police - Standard</u> 	Ann Arbor campus police officer uniforms.
<u>Police - Class A</u> 	Ann Arbor campus police officer uniforms.
<u>Police Class B</u> 	Ann Arbor Class B police uniforms.
<u>Public Safety</u> 	Ann Arbor public safety officer uniforms.

DEARBORN DPS PATCHES

Patch	Use
<u>Police - Standard</u> 	Dearborn campus police officer uniforms.
<u>Police - Class A</u> 	Dearborn campus police officer uniforms.
<u>Public Safety</u> 	Dearborn campus public safety officer uniforms.

FLINT DPS PATCHES

Patch	Use
<u>Police - Standard</u> 	Flint campus police officer uniforms.
<u>Police - Class A</u> 	Flint campus police officer uniforms.
<u>Public Safety</u> 	Flint campus public safety officer uniforms.



WRITING

DPSS WRITING PRACTICES

DPSS BRAND VOICE

- **Lead with people.** Show the human side of safety. Prioritize imagery and stories that reflect the diverse individuals we serve and the people behind the badge. Whether it's a friendly officer helping a student, or a guest services staffer offering directions, content should center human connection.
- **Be Clear, Not Clinical.** Avoid jargon and excessive formality. Use everyday language that informs without overwhelming. In design, favor clean layouts, strong hierarchy, and visuals that reinforce the message without clutter.
- **Show Safety in Motion.** Highlight active moments: officers responding, students engaging in training, security checks in progress, community members interacting. Visuals and copy should reflect that safety is something we do—not just something we have.
- **Reflect the community.** Our content should look and feel like U-M. Use familiar campus environments, people, and moments that resonate with students, faculty, staff, and visitors alike.
- **Communicate Calm Confidence.** In crises or urgent moments, our tone and visuals should be grounded, clear, and composed. In everyday moments, our content can be more warm, encouraging, and helpful—but it should always maintain a sense of readiness and reliability.

WRITE IN PLAIN LANGUAGE

At U-M and its many schools, units, divisions (including DPSS) there is a lot of work done that is highly specialized or academic. Sometimes, especially when communicating with external audiences, it's important to write in **plain (also known as common) language as much as possible.**

What is Plain Language?

[Plainlanguage.gov](https://www.plainlanguage.gov) defines it as: "Writing that your audience can understand the first time they read or hear it."

Plain language:

- Is written in [active](#), not passive, voice.
- Avoids excessive jargon.
- Avoids overuse of technical terms.
- Explains any jargon or technical terms that must be used.
- Uses "everyday language."
- Is not overly formal.
- Uses meaningful headings with key words.
- Makes lists, rather than paragraphs, when possible.
- Covers one topic per paragraph.

Example

In order to effectively utilize the resources, please complete the attached form.



In plain language

To use the resources, please fill out the form.

USE PEOPLE-FIRST LANGUAGE

It's also important, especially in public service, to write in "people-first" language. **People-first language emphasizes a person before a disability, condition, or other characteristics.**

What is People-First Language?

[The National Institutes of Health](#) defines people-first language as: "A way to emphasize the person and view the disorder, disease, condition, or disability as only one part of the whole person."

People-first language:

- Puts the person first and avoids ableist labels
- Does not define people by things outside of their control or put too much emphasis on it (i.e. disabilities, ethnicity, etc.)
- Aims to humanize who is being written about

Example

Hearing impaired people should follow the correct evacuation procedures.



In people-first language

People who are deaf or hard-of hearing should follow the correct evacuation procedures.

WRITING & ABBREVIATING UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

- Write out the complete name the first time you refer to it.
- Unless it is the first word in a sentence or part of an official title, 'the' should not be capitalized.

- Avoid referring to the university as "Michigan" as it can cause confusion with the state name.

University Abbreviations

The abbreviation for the University of Michigan, when writing about it without a campus named, is "U-M."

Using "The" in Abbreviations

Use of "the" is optional with the abbreviated name:

- John attends the U-M.
- John attends U-M.

Capitalizing "University"

It is strongly advised not to capitalize "university" when referring to the University of Michigan in a sentence without spelling out the full name.

Example: The university has many logos.

Campus Abbreviations

- Ann Arbor Campus: UM-Ann Arbor
- Dearborn Campus: UM-Dearborn
- Flint Campus: UM-Flint



Do not use "UM" by itself. Only use when part of a campus.

CAMPUS & DEGREE ACONYMS

The University of Michigan loves acronyms and there are many! [Student Life has an Acronym Decoder](#) you can use if you're unsure of what an acronym stands for.

Ann Arbor Campus Acronyms

If you use an acronym that refers to a school or location on campus, please remember:

- Spell the full name of the school or location the first time its referenced in a sentence, after that you can use the acronym.
- Write the acronym in parenthesis after the full name or location when it's written for the first time.
- Example: North Campus Research Complex (NCRC).

Plurals of Abbreviations & Acronyms

For plural abbreviations and acronyms, add a lowercase "s" without an apostrophe

Example: All of the department's MAs, PhDs, and GSIs spent several hours at the seminar.

Degree Acronyms

- For academic degrees, don't use periods (i.e. BA, BS, MA).
- Doctorates are written as PhD (not PHD or Ph.D.).
- If the degree might be unfamiliar to your audience, use a general degree acronym followed by the degree category spelled out.
- For degree names, use lowercase when spelling them out (i.e. bachelor of science, master of business administration)

A [full list of UM-Ann Arbor degrees and their abbreviations](#) can be found on the ID standards site.

CAPITALIZATION, DATES, TIMES, NUMBERS & QUOTES

Capitalization

- Job titles are capitalized only when they precede a name:
 - Vice President Jane Smith vs. Jane Smith, vice president

- Avoid unnecessary capitalization. Only proper nouns and official titles should be capitalized.

Dates & Times

- Abbreviate months with specific dates: Jan. 5, 2025.
- Spell out when the month stands alone: January 2025
- Do not use "st," "nd," "rd," or "th" with dates.
- Write out the full time and use a.m. and p.m. (lowercase with periods: 9:00 a.m., 5:00 p.m.)

Numbers

- Spell out numbers one through nine; use numerals for 10 and above. Examples:
 - Three students attended
 - The team has 12 members.
- Always use numerals for ages, percentages, and dimensions. Examples:
 - She is 5 years old
 - 7%, 6 feet tall

Quotes

- Use "double quotation marks" for quotes and 'single quotes' for quotes within quotes.
- Place punctuation inside quotation mark. Examples:
 - "We're ready," she said.
 - "When are we leaving?" he asked.

WRITING ALUMNI & ALUMS

- In situations where gender is unknown or neutral:
 - Use "Alum" or "Alums"
- In situations where gender is known/ more formal writing is required, use:

- “Alumnus”: one male alum
- “Alumna”: one female alum
- “Alumni”: more than one male or male and female alums
- “Alumnae”: more than one female alum

WRITING RESOURCES

U-M Writing Resources

- [U-M Acronym Decoder](#)
- [U-M Editorial Guidelines](#)

Non U-M Writing Resources

- [The Associated Press \(AP\) Stylebook](#)
- [Guide to Inclusive Communication](#)

ACCESSIBLE WRITING

WRITING FOR SCREEN READERS

When you write, keep screen reader users in mind from the beginning. The most important things to keep in mind for this are header/table tags, which give documents a proper reading order (hierarchy).

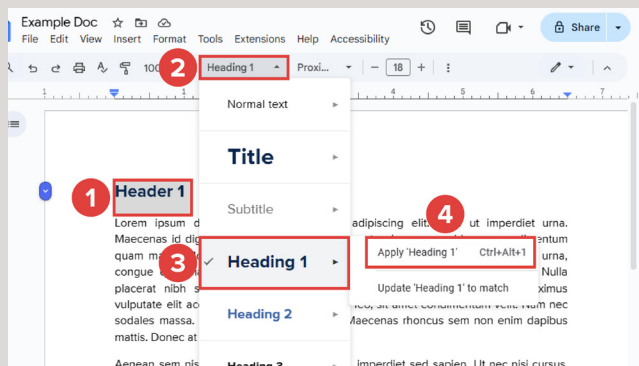
Structuring your documents properly will save time at the end of the process when you run an accessibility check by ensuring tags are already there (you won't have to add them after).

Here's how you can ensure your document will be read properly by a screen reader:

TASK: PROPERLY LABEL ALL HEADER LEVELS.

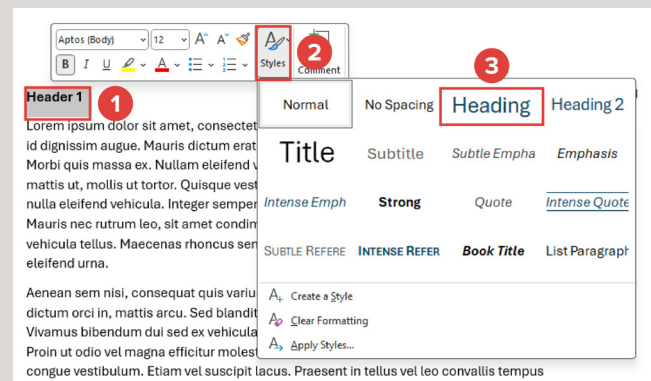
Instructions for Google Docs

1. Highlight your heading.
2. Find the **Styles tool** in the Toolbar and click on it.
3. Choose the heading type from the drop-down menu.
4. Click **Apply Heading**.



Instructions for Word

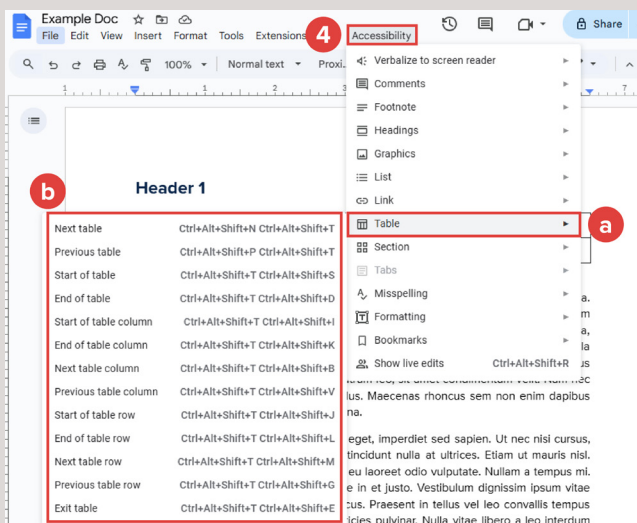
1. Double-click to highlight your heading.
2. Find the Styles tool in the popup and click on it.
3. Choose the heading type from the drop-down menu.



TASK: SET UP TABLES FOR A SCREEN READER.

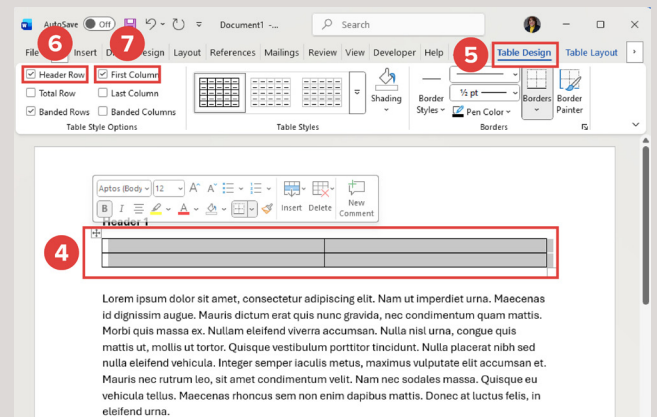
Instructions for Google Docs

1. Insert a table.
 - b. Navigate to **Insert**.
 - c. Click **Table**.
 - d. Choose how many rows and columns you want and click to insert.
2. Keep labels to one cell, **don't merge cells**.
3. Set up the content in the table to be read in a logical, left-to-right or top-down manner.
4. Use the **Accessibility** tool to check your table for logical reading order.
 - a. Navigate to **Accessibility**.
 - b. Choose from the list of table reading options to check your table.



Instructions for Word

1. Insert a table.
 - b. Navigate to **Insert**.
 - c. Click **Table**.
 - d. Choose how many rows and columns you want and click to insert.
2. Keep labels to one cell, don't merge cells.
3. Set up the content in the table to be read in a logical, left-to-right or top-down manner.
4. Click on your table.
5. Navigate to **Table Design** in the Toolbar.
6. Check **Header Row**.
7. Check **First Column**.
8. This will ensure screen readers will read your header rows properly.



COMMON ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES & SOLUTIONS

These are common accessibility issues experienced by a wide range of people with disabilities and how you can avoid them.

Issue	Solution
Large blocks of text with no clear way to tell when one topic ends and another begins.	Write in plain language.
Vague instructions.	Ensure your instructions are very clear.
Too many figures of speech or idioms.	Avoid using too many figures of speech.
No document tags or proper reading order established.	Ensure your documents have properly labeled headers, etc. to create a tagged proper reading order.

TOOLS TO HELP WRITING ACCESSIBLY

- [Narrator, Windows Built in Screen Reader.](#) This tool can be used on a Windows computer to review your text and make sure it's being read correctly.
- [VoiceOver, Mac Built in Screen Reader.](#) If you have a Mac computer, you can use this tool to review your text and make sure it's being read correctly. This is also included on Apple mobile devices.
- [TalkBack, Android Built in Screen Reader.](#) This is a tool you can use on an Android device to check your text is read correctly.



COLOR

DPSS PRIMARY COLOR PALETTE

For consistency in color across multiple media types, for each color, we've included the settings for each color's Pantone Color Matching System (PMS).

You can download an Adobe color library pack of the colors [here](#).



Maize

PMS: 7406 C

Hex: #ffcb05

CMYK: C0%,
M20%, Y100%,
K0%



Blue

PMS: 282 C

Hex: #002474c

CMYK: C100%,
M86%, Y41%,
K42%

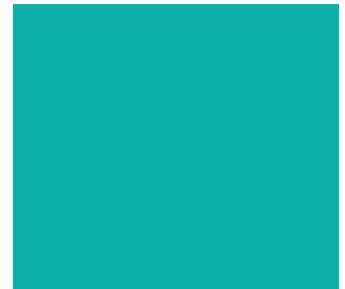


Arboretum Blue

PMS: 660 C

Hex: #3d7dca

CMYK: C76%,
M47%, Y0%, K0%

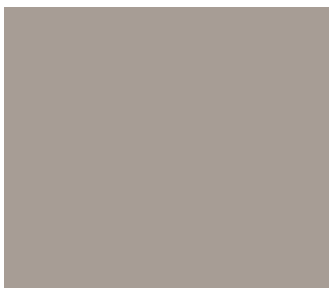


Taubman Teal

PMS: 326 C

Hex: #00afab

CMYK: C77%,
M6%, Y38%, K0%



Angell Hall Ash

PMS: Warm Gray
6 C

Hex: #a69c95

CMYK: C37%,
M35%, Y38%, K1%

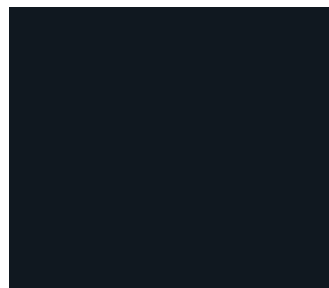


UMMA Tan

PMS: 7502 C

Hex: #d1b888

CMYK: C19%,
M25%, Y52%, K0%

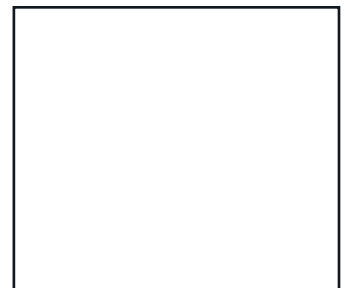


Puma Black

PMS: Black 6 C

Hex: #101820

CMYK: C82%,
M71%, Y59%,
K75%



White

PMS: 000 C

Hex: #ffffff

CMYK: C0%,
M0%, Y0%, K0%

DPSS ACCENT COLOR PALETTE

Use these colors sparingly - as accents to the primary color palette.



Tappan Red

PMS: 484 C

Hex: #9e3223

CMYK: C25%,
M91%, Y98%,
K21%



Ross Orange

PMS: 1595

Hex: #d86018

CMYK: C11%,
M75%, Y100%,
K1%



Rackham Green

PMS: 5565

Hex: #75988d

CMYK: C41%,
M46%, Y76%,
K16%



**Wave Field
Green**

PMS: 398

Hex: #asa08

CMYK: C14%,
M6%, Y100%,
K24%



**Burton Tower
Beige**

PMS: 451

Hex: #9B9a6d

CMYK: C21%,
M15%, Y54%,
K31%



A2 Amethyst

PMS: 2603 C

Hex: #722382

CMYK: C68%,
M100%, Y11%,
K2%

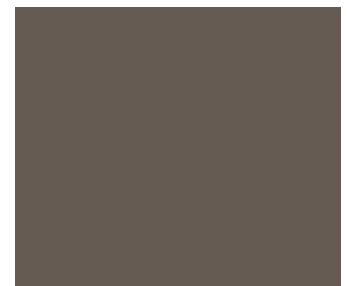


Matthaei Violet

PMS: 668 C

Hex: #624c79

CMYK: C70%,
M78%, Y28%,
K11%



Law Quad Stone

PMS: Warm Gray
6 C

Hex: #a69c95

CMYK: C37%,
M35%, Y38%, K1%

BEST COLOR PAIRINGS

These color pairings ensure accessibility & readability via contrast as well as being aesthetically pleasing. The examples shown use text on a solid background to demonstrate readability.



COLOR ACCESSIBILITY

COMMON COLOR ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES & SOLUTIONS

Issue	Solution
There are too many bright colors.	Try to minimize using too many bright colors at once.
The colors clash.	Look for balance in your color choices. Use the color wheel.
Not enough contrast between a background color and the text color.	Ensure there's enough contrast for text to be readable. Check the text contrast combos we've provided.

TOOLS TO HELP WITH COLOR ACCESSIBILITY

- [Web Disability Simulator Chrome Extension](#). It allows you to simulate a variety of disabilities in your chrome browser, including color blindness, color contrast, low vision, etc.
- [WAVE Accessibility Firefox Extension](#). This allows you to view color contrast issues, etc.



TYPOGRAPHY

U-M APPROVED FONTS

Click on the font name to download it.

IBM Plex Super Family

Aa Ee Rr **a**
Aa Ee Rr

Safety & Security

Aa Bb Bc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj
Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss
Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

[IBM Plex Super family](#) is a multi-use font.

IBM Plex Super Family has multiple language options. If you need one of these languages please let us know.

Montserrat

Aa Ee Rr **a**
Aa Ee Rr

Safety & Security

Aa Bb Bc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii
Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr
Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

[Montserrat](#) is a multi-use font, for display and body text.

Nunito Sans

Aa Ee Rr **a**
Aa Ee Rr

Safety & Security

Aa Bb Bc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii
Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr
Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

[Nunito Sans](#) is best for body text but can be multi-use.

Merriweather

Aa Ee Rr **a**
Aa Ee Rr

Safety & Security

Aa Bb Bc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii
Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr
Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

[Merriweather](#) is a multi-use font.

Playfair Display

Aa Ee Rr **a**
Aa Ee Rr

Safety & Security

Aa Bb Bc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj
Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss
Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

[Playfair Display](#) is a display font.

Oswald

Aa Ee Rr **a**
Aa Ee Rr

Safety & Security

Aa Bb Bc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn
Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

[Oswald](#) is a display font.

DPSS FONTS

DPSS PREFERRED U-M FONT PAIRINGS



Titles & Headers: All-caps Oswald, regular, medium or bold

Body Text: Nunito Sans

Titles & Headers: Proxima Nova Bold

Body Text: Proxima Nova Regular



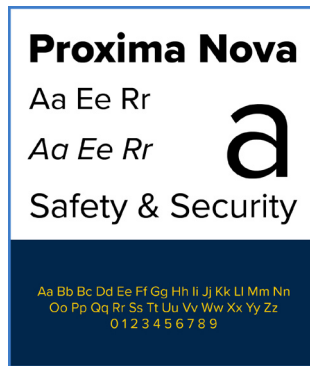
Titles & Headers: Montserrat, regular, semi-bold or bold

Body Text: Nunito Sans

Titles & Headers: Merriweather, regular, semi-bold or bold

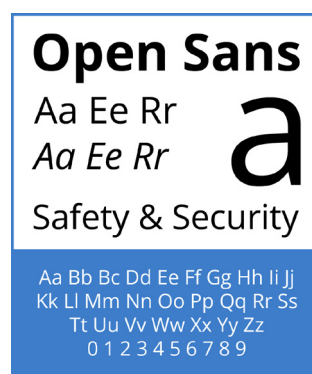
Body Text: Nunito Sans

DPSS WEB FONT

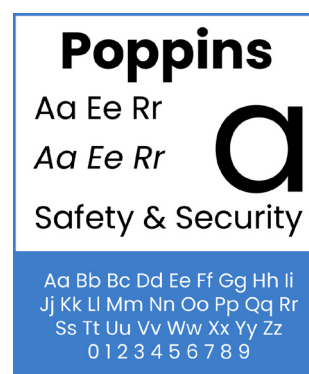


[Proxima Nova](#) is the font used on our website.

DPSS RECOMMENDED FONT ALTERNATIVES



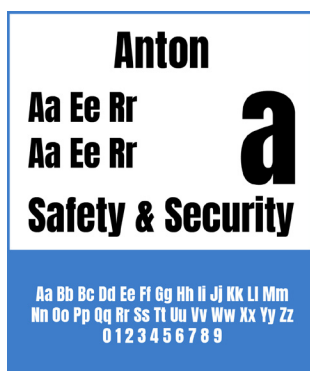
[Open Sans](#) is a good alternative to Nunito Sans.



[Poppins](#) is a good alternative to Nunito Sans.



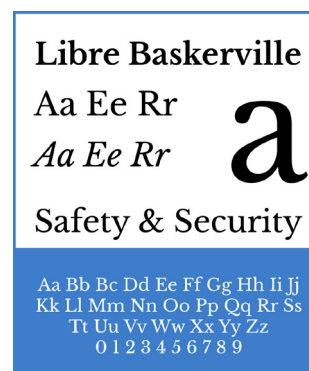
[Lato](#) is a good alternative to Montserrat.



[Anton](#) is a good alternative to Oswald.



[Bebas Neue](#) is a good alternative to Oswald.



[Libre Baskerville](#) is a good alternative to Merriweather.

FONTS & ACCESSIBILITY

COMMON FONT ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES & SOLUTIONS

Issue	Solution
Text is too small.	Avoid using anything smaller than 10 pt font size unless the font has been designed to be read at a small size (ex. Nunito Sans).
Fonts are too decorative and hard to read.	Use fonts that are easy to read and are not distracting.

TOOLS TO HELP WITH FONT ACCESSIBILITY

The simplest tool to check font readability is to print your design out at actual size.

This will allow you to see if the font is too small outside of your computer screen, which can be deceiving.



IMAGERY

DPSS LOOK & FEEL

OUR BRAND PERSONALITY

Photographs and illustrations should work together to create a distinctive visual look and feel called a “brand personality.” What is our brand personality? Here are the key words to remember when looking for images:

- **Safety & Security:** Use imagery that matches the topic. Staff demonstrating safety procedures is another great way to show this.
- **Action:** Make public safety a verb! Use

images that capture our staff in action serving the community.

- **Community:** Show our staff engaging with the community. Try to include university landmarks when possible.
- **Trust:** Choose images that reinforce trust and approachability.

PHOTOGRAPHY

What makes a good photograph? What should you consider when choosing or taking photos. Read our guidelines below.

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN A PHOTO

People

Show real students, faculty, and officers in candid moments—offering help, giving directions, leading trainings, responding to incidents calmly, etc. Reflect the full breadth of the community.



Emotion

Keep it emotionally grounded. Evoke feelings of safety, trust, and confidence—look for genuine smiles, reassurance, and visible support. Use photos with lots of energy.



WHAT TO INCLUDE IN A PHOTO

Action

Capture moments of service, such as patrols, community events, guest services, and emergency response. Include fun interactions as well.



Context

Show recognizable university landmarks or environments—residence halls, libraries, Michigan Medicine, stadiums.



WHAT TO AVOID IN A PHOTO

Children in Photos

Photos of minors require parent/guardian consent. All minors shown from the Shop with a Cop event have approved photo releases.



Copyright Infringement

Do not use images from Google or other websites, as they are typically subject to copyright.



Technical Flaws

Blurry or out of focus photos (excluding motion blur or blurred backgrounds), too dark or bright, or over/under-saturated.



USING STOCK PHOTOS

Try to use stock photos sparingly as over-using them can cause a design to feel too generic or sterile. If you find yourself in a position where you need to use a stock photo, keep this in mind:

- Use photos that don't focus on a person's face—instead, find photos that show hands, people facing away from the camera, or the camera "looking over" the person's shoulder.
- For photos of objects or equipment, make sure all the recognizable parts of the object are in frame.
- Keep locations vague. Find photos that have blurred backgrounds or look like they could have been taken anywhere.

- [Michigan Photography Complementary Collection](#)

Free Stock Photos

- [Adobe Stock](#) (all photos are free with your U-M account)
- [Pixabay](#)

Paid Stock Photos

- [iStock](#)
- [Shutterstock](#)



Strategic Communications maintains a photo archive of all photos taken at DPSS. If you don't see a photo in the "Best of DPSS" folder, reach out to us.

WHERE TO FIND PHOTOS

DPSS & U-M Photos

- [Best of DPSS Photography](#)
- [Best of U-M Photography](#)
- [Michigan Commons](#)

ILLUSTRATIONS

What makes a good illustration? Read our guidelines below.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN AN ILLUSTRATION

Icons

Cleanly designed, recognizable symbols.



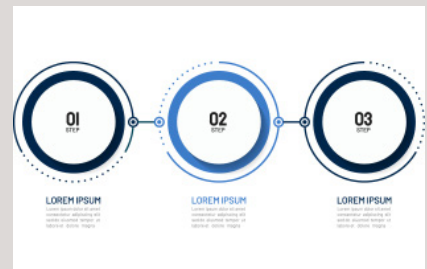
Drawings

Hand-drawn illustrations with detail or clean computer artwork.



Infographics

Designs that are easy to follow. The graphic should be very clear from start to end.



WHAT TO AVOID IN AN ILLUSTRATION

Sloppy/Grunge Art

Art that either isn't drawn very well or has so much going on that the viewer can't make out what it is. Grunge artwork can also evoke negative feelings.



The "Corporate Memphis" Style

This is an overused style of illustration with bright colors, flat shapes, and simplified figures with long limbs and short torsos. This style has become cliché, and insincere.



Overly Cartoonish Art

Cartoons have their place but they need to be used in the right context. Don't use cartoon illustrations for serious subjects.



WHEN TO USE AN ILLUSTRATION

In general, it's best to use an illustration when you're trying to show a process (infographic), represent a concept (icon) or give a playful feeling (cartoon) to a work.

As much as possible, try not to mix photographs with illustrations unless they're infographics. Using illustrations and photos interchangeably in a design can create an uneven feeling.

WHERE TO FIND ILLUSTRATIONS

Free Stock Illustrations

- [Adobe Stock](#) (all illustrations are free with your U-M account)
- [Pixabay](#)

Paid Stock Illustrations

- [iStock](#)
- [Shutterstock](#)

IMAGE ACCESSIBILITY

ALT TEXT & WHY ITS SO IMPORTANT

Alt text is one of the most important accessibility elements for digital works. Using screen reader software, users can listen to the contents of a web page or digital document. If alt text has been added, the screen reader will describe the images. Check out the [Screen Reader Demo for Digital Accessibility video](#) from 00:25-2:20 to better understand how screen readers work.

- If you fail to provide alt text, the screen reader will either skip the image entirely or describe it only as “image.”
- So what should alt text look like? Good alt text:
 - Answers the question “What do you see?” and will change depending on the image’s context.
 - Is descriptive but short. It should never be paragraphs of text. 1-2 sentences is enough.

Example Alt Text



Long, softly lit room with a high, arched ceiling and two rows of chandeliers.

HOW TO ADD ALT TEXT

- **Google Suite:** [Add or Edit Alt Text](#) (Instructions include all Google programs).
- **Microsoft Office:** [Add alternative text to a shape, picture, chart, SmartArt graphic, or other object](#) (Instructions include all Microsoft programs).
- **Other Programs**
 - **Adobe InDesign:** [Add Alt Text in InDesign](#)
 - **Adobe Acrobat:** [How to Add Alt Text in Adobe Acrobat: A Step-by-Step Guide](#)
 - **Gamma.app:** select an image in your card, look for an editing toolbar or right-click option and use the available tools to add a description, often with AI assistance, by describing the image content for accessibility.

TOOLS TO HELP WITH IMAGE ACCESSIBILITY

- **Google Chrome Extensions**
 - [Image Alt Text Viewer](#)
 - [Social Visual Alt Text](#)
- **Firefox Extensions**
 - [Alt Text Viewer](#)
 - [AltVision: Image Alt Text Viewer](#)
- **Other Tools**
 - [U-M AI Helper: Alt Text Generator](#)
 - [AI Alt Text Generator](#)

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01. 
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ACCESSIBILITY COMPLIANCE

UPDATES TO THE LAW

On **April 24, 2026** new rules will go into effect for Title II of the American's With Disabilities Act (ADA). Here's what you need to know to ensure DPSS is in compliance with the law.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE COMPLIANT

- Web content: Any digital documents or media posted online.
- Shared documents: Anything emailed or distributed digitally (even if not created by you).
- Media: Videos, social media, and other digital assets.
- Digital applications: Forms, payment tools, employee systems, and intranet content.
- Archived material

HOW TO COMPLY

General

- Provide accommodations when requested.
- Use accessible templates and train content creators to start with accessibility from the ground up.

Web

- Run accessibility scans.
- Use sufficient color contrast and alt text.
- Label forms and document language.
- Make all forms, payments, and services accessible.

Media

- Caption all videos and record events for accessibility.
- Reposted or reused social media content must meet accessibility standards.
- Maximize accessibility within platform limits. Social media can be [difficult to make accessible](#).

Documents

- Check all PDFs for accessibility before sharing.
- Do not right-click and save websites as PDFs—those create PDFs with too many accessibility issues.
- Use original formats (e.g., Google Docs) and restrict to “view only” if needed.
- Follow accessibility rules for printed materials (links, colors, etc.).

Training & Presentations

- Ensure online training is accessible (captions, text-only options, document checks).
- For in-person training, provide Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) or American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters, contact the Disability Equity Office (DEO) to request.

EXCEPTIONS

General

- Content changes would cause a fundamental alteration or [undue hardship](#).
- Secure, individualized documents may qualify.
- Equivalent accessible alternatives are

acceptable.

Web

- Technical/legal limits may apply.
- Archived content (before compliance date) may be exempt if:
 - For reference or recordkeeping only.
 - Stored in a designated archive area.
 - Unmodified since archiving.

Pre-existing Conventional Electronic Documents

- Files created before April 24, 2026, not used for U-M services, may be exempt.

Third-Party Content

- Content from outside sources (contracts, licensing, comments, secured documents) may be exempt.

Pre-existing Social Media

- Platform capabilities limit accessibility—do your best within those limits but check the content for accessibility before posting or sharing.



To determine if your content qualifies for an exception, you will need to contact the [Disability Equity Office \(DEO\)](#).

- Phone: (734) 763-0235
- Email: ecrtooffice@umich.edu

ACCESSIBILITY RESOURCES

WEB ACCESSIBILITY TOOLS

- [Web Accessibility Initiative](#)
- [Guidance on Web Accessibility and the ADA](#)
- [Web Disability Simulator Google Chrome Extension](#)

DOCUMENT RESOURCES

When you're creating a document or other design that will be printed (not just digital), you can use the built in accessibility checkers your program has:

- **Adobe Acrobat:** [Creating accessible PDFs](#)
- **Microsoft Office:** [Improve Accessibility with the Accessibility Checker](#)
- In **Google**, use the Accessibility Menu: [Learn About Accessibility in Google Drive](#)

PRESENTATION RESOURCES

- **Google Slides:**
 - [Present slides with captions](#)
 - [Make your document, presentation, sheets & videos more accessible](#)
 - [Use Google Slides With a Screen Reader](#)
- **Microsoft PowerPoint:**
 - [Make your PowerPoint presentations accessible to people with disabilities](#)
 - [Accessibility Tools for PowerPoint](#)
- **Gamma App:**
 - [Language & Accessibility](#)

U-M ECRT RESOURCES

In Person Training or Presentation Services

- [Request American Sign Language \(ASL\) Interpreters & Communication Access Real Time Transcription \(CART\) Service](#)
- [Request Service & Support Animals](#)

Trainings & Presentations

- [ECRT Disability Equity Office Workshop Series](#)
- [Short Form Presentations](#)
- [10-Week Accessibility Challenge](#)

U-M POLICY

- [U-M Policy on Accommodations](#)

OTHER ONLINE TRAINING

- [Accessibility for Web Design Online Class at LinkedIn Learning](#)
- [Creating Accessible PDFs Class at LinkedIn Learning](#)