

# Tip Jar for PHSA web & POD editors

## In this issue

Learn the dos and don'ts of emphasizing content on your web page.

## People don't read

In 1997, usability experts Nielsen and Norman conducted the [How People Read Online](#) study. Through eye tracking tests, they found that online users typically scan web pages and hardly ever read word for word. They repeated the study again in 2020, more than 20 years later, and found the same thing: people don't read online content completely.

In fact, you probably skipped the paragraph above and started scrolling through the message to get to the good parts ... 10 points if you're still here!

Users skim pages for noticeable titles and formatting. Highlight the most important elements on your page so your readers can find the information they want right away and don't get lost in confusing formatting.

Here are a few dos and don'ts to get you started. For more tips around headings styles, lists, and more, check out Tip Jar #2: [Layout: make pages readable](#).

## Do: Use bold and italics

### Bold text

Bold text catches the eye and helps readers find key info while scanning a page. It should be used minimally to be effective. Do not use bold text for long paragraphs or hyperlinks as it can affect readability.

Here's an example of bold text used correctly.

"Registration for the nursing webinar closes on **June 24 at noon**. Please register early to secure your spot."

and incorrectly:

"Registration for the nursing webinar closes on June 24 at noon. Please register early to secure your spot."

## Italicized text

Use italics for scientific terms and publications/works of art only. For example:

- Scientific terms. Ex: *salmonellosis*, *E. coli*, *V. cholerae*

## Don't: Underline text or write in all caps

### Underlining text

Most users associate underlined text with hyperlinks even if the underlined text is not blue or purple, which is the typical colour for hyperlinks. Avoid underlining text so your readers don't get confused.

Also, certain letters like “y”, “p”, “q” and “g” can be difficult to read when underlined.

### Capitalized text

Never use fully capitalized text. Reading capitalized text can slow a reader down as it takes more time and focus to differentiate words and letters. Lowercase letters are more varied, making them easier to identify.

Compare the two examples below. Which is easier to read?

“Join us at our next general meeting in Vancouver on July 26. Register now on Eventbrite.”

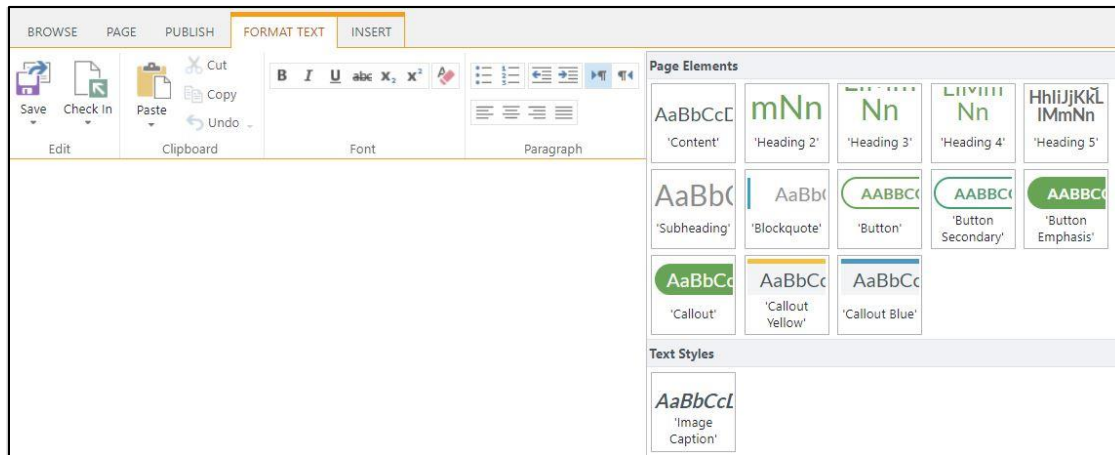
“JOIN US AT OUR NEXT GENERAL MEETING IN VANCOUVER ON JULY 26. REGISTER NOW ON EVENTBRITE.”

Keep in mind: users may [perceive capitalized text as shouting or aggression](#). Using lowercase text helps to keep your tone more neutral, friendly and professional.

## Call-out styles and alerts

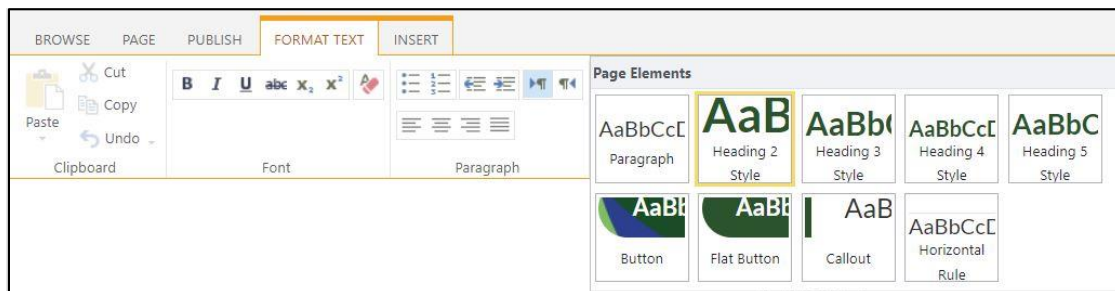
SharePoint has built-in styles you can use to highlight text on your page. Please use the “Content” or “Paragraph” style for most of your text.

You will see all formatting options in the ribbon at the top of the page you're editing.



[Formatting styles available in POD.](#)

For short, temporary messages on POD, use the [green callout style](#) at the top of the page to get a reader’s attention. Make sure to remove the message when it is no longer relevant.



[Formatting styles available for external sites.](#)

To emphasize quotes or important messages on a program website, use the [inset text and block quotes style](#).

For emergency or timely messages meant for all POD or website visitors, reach out to your [communications representative](#) – they can help set up a home page alert or announcement if appropriate.

## Your action this month

Go through one of your pages and scan for any bold, capitalized, underlined or italicized text. If your formatting doesn’t meet the guidelines above, revise your page to make it more scannable.

Created by the Web Strategy Team (PHSA Communications)

No longer a POD or web editor? Questions or comments? Please email [webhelp@phsa.ca](mailto:webhelp@phsa.ca)

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