Preparing Your Manuscript for Submission

The Office of Communications and Marketing wants the process of getting your publication printed or added to the website to go smoothly and painlessly. To help, we have identified general guidelines and specific information you can use — before, during, and after writing — that will help us turn around your project more quickly.

Six Important Guidelines

Guidelines are explained in more detail in the sections that follow.

1. **Use Microsoft Word.** See Basic Document Setup.

2. **Submit all files.** Make sure you have all files ready to upload before submitting a job. See Submitting Your Manuscript.

   **Note:** If submitting a peer-reviewed publication, the signed paperwork must be uploaded at the same time as the job request.

3. **Submit final versions of your documents.** Please, no drafts or unapproved manuscripts. See Submitting Your Manuscript.

4. **Avoid inserting Word’s automatic “Style” function or any layout/design.** See Basic Document Setup.

5. **Do not embed graphic elements**, including text boxes, tables, figures, photos, charts, graphs, etc., in the document. See Graphic Elements.

6. **Cite all references in the text; reference all text citations.** See References.

Basic Document Setup

- **Use MS Word only.** We cannot edit PDF, Excel, Publisher, PowerPoint, or any other types of files. Jobs submitted in formats other than Word will not be accepted, which will delay your project’s completion.

- **Set up a 1-inch margin on all sides.** Do not make margin changes within the document.

- **Set the line spacing to 2.0 or double-space.** Hit <return> twice for new paragraphs and before/after headings.

- **Choose a basic font, like Arial or Times.** (No fancy or obscure fonts, please.) Use **12-point** font size for your text.

- **Use one column of text, left justified.** Don’t indent new paragraphs; use a double <return> instead.

- Include each author’s full name, job title, department, and affiliation, – e.g. Virginia Tech, Virginia Department of Forestry, etc. – under the publication’s title.
• Allow our graphic designers to design your publication. If you have ideas about layout, feel free to include an additional file with your suggestions, or document your ideas when you submit the job.

• Avoid Word’s “Style” function, which automatically applies formatting (text sizes, fonts, colors) to headings and text. We have to remove pre-established formatting, which causes delays in turnaround.

• Do not set up **headers or footers** except for page numbering.

• Avoid footnotes, if possible. If footnotes are critical, do not use Word’s automatic numbering and placement feature. See A Note About Notes.

## Formatting Your Word Document

### Spacing

• Use *one space between sentences* and after colons and other punctuation. Please avoid font sizes smaller than 12 point.

### Headings

• Indicate heading levels using boldface and text size. For example:

**Main Heading (16 point, boldface)**

Second-Level Heading (14 point)

Third-Level Heading (12 point, boldface)

General text (12 point)

Or, indicate headings and subheadings by numbering the levels within slanted brackets. For example:

<1>Main Heading

<2>Second-Level Heading

<3>Third-Level Heading

### Format

• Use boldface or italics for emphasis — not all caps or underlining. Avoid overusing these elements, especially quotation marks.

### Punctuation

• Virginia Tech uses the serial (or Oxford) comma, which is the comma placed before the conjunction (and, or) in a list of three or more items. The serial comma’s purpose is to clarify the number of items listed.

For example, in the following sentence, the serial comma is the one after “dean.”

*Mary took a photograph of her parents, the dean, and the vice dean.*

The serial comma tells readers that Mary took a photograph of four people — her mother and father, the dean, and the vice dean. Without the serial comma, the sentence could be interpreted to mean that Mary’s photo contained two people because her parents are the dean and vice dean.
Style Guides

The Office of Communications and Marketing uses four style guides, in the following order.

1. Virginia Tech’s University Style Guide – Supersedes others.
2. CALS Style Guide – Items specific to CALS and Virginia Cooperative Extension.
4. “Chicago Manual of Style” – For references, text citations, notes, captions, and other items not covered by the AP.

A Note About Notes

In general, we discourage the use of footnotes because of the additional time it takes to place them correctly on the page. We prefer text citations that correspond to references instead.

If you think a few footnotes are critical, number them manually rather than using Word’s automatic footnote feature. Use superscript to insert a footnote number in the text, then add directions to the designer that what follows is a footnote. For example:

<footnote>
1Reprinted with the author’s permission from XYZ publication.
</footnote>

• Don’t worry about the position of your footnote directions; we will move the note to the bottom of the appropriate page.

Graphic Elements

Please do not embed text boxes, tables, figures, photos, charts, graphs, or other elements in the document. It adds considerable time to our process to remove them. Instead, put them in their own Word, JPG, or Excel files and upload those files when you submit the job.

• Be sure to name additional files so they are easy to identify. For example:

  figure 1.jpg
  tables 1-3.docx

• Because you will not be including figures and tables in your Word document, please add the appropriate caption or title in the approximate location where you would like it to appear in the final publication. For example:

  Figure 1. Example of a constructed wetland.
  Table 3. Wine sales in the U.S. by state, 2012.

• Refer to tables and figures in your text. For example:

  Table 2 documents the results of XYZ.
  The results of XYZ (fig. 5) suggest ...
• Indicate instructions to designers by typing them on a separate line and placing them between slanted brackets. For example:

<keep table 2 on one page if possible; don’t split, please>

**Formats for Artwork**

• Usable formats include JPEG/JPG, TIFF, EPS, and GIF. Upload the images as separate files in the job system, clearly labeled as to their content. For example:

figure1.jpg

• Do not submit PowerPoint slides or Publisher files.

**Original Artwork**

Our designers have the ability to create original artwork as needed for Extension publications. Authors should provide reference materials that clearly show the features required in the finished product.

• Publications that require original artwork take more time to produce, so take that into consideration when scheduling these jobs.

**Submitting Artwork**

Authors may submit existing photographs, slides, images downloaded from the Internet, etc., for inclusion in publications. It is the author’s responsibility to obtain permission from the work’s original creator to reproduce their artwork. The author’s approval of the final proof indicates that appropriate permission has been obtained.

• When possible, submit original artwork or a high-resolution scan of 300 dpi or more. Low-resolution images of 100 dpi or less or those downloaded from the Internet are usually unsuitable (blurry or pixelated) for most media applications. If the author determines that low-resolution images are critical, they may require digital enhancement for the best possible outcome. We will return original artwork to the author once it has been scanned.

• When submitting artwork with your job, please provide the original source(s) and any additional info, such as when and where the image was previously published so we can credit the source.

• Photocopied images are not suitable for inclusion in publications.

**Other Types of Files**

**Excel Files**

An Excel spreadsheet may be submitted when a publication contains a large amount of tabular data. Generally, if the data take up one or more pages of the publication, an Excel file can be used. Excel files are not acceptable for text or images. Upload the spreadsheet to the job system as a separate Excel file. Clearly indicate in the manuscript where the file is to be inserted.

**PowerPoint Slides**

PowerPoint slides cannot be used as manuscripts or original artwork. If the primary content of the publication is in PowerPoint format, the author will need to retype or copy and paste the text into Word.
Third-Party Publications

Occasionally, authors may wish to convert a publication obtained from another source (purchased from another agency or borrowed from another extension service) into a Virginia Cooperative Extension publication. Authors who wish to do this should contact the publications coordinator early in the process to discuss file format, software used, etc.

It is the author’s responsibility to obtain electronic copies in a format we can use. We reserve the right to make editorial changes as well as changes to the layout, design, and style of the publication to meet VCE standards.

References

Peer-reviewed publications usually include a list of references.

It is very important that there be at least one text citation for every reference listed and a reference for every text citation. They need to match. Please verify this before submitting your publication.

Formatting References

Every discipline and journal has its own formatting guidelines for reference lists and text citations. For consistency, our office uses the author-date style documented in “The Chicago Manual of Style,” 16th edition. For example:


• Alphabetize the reference list by the last name of the first author listed. The “author” can be an agency, organization, or company if individual names are not provided.

• Text citations include the author’s last name and the year of publication, with no punctuation between them. For example:

  (Johnson 2010)

  (Johnson and Jones 2010)

  (Johnson, Jones, and James 2010)

Use “et al.” for text citations with four or more authors. For example:

  *(Johnson et al. 2010)*

• If you are unsure how to format a reference, provide all the publication information available so we can format it for you.

For books, provide:

- Book title (and subtitle, if applicable).
- Name of all authors and/or editors.
- Year of publication.
- Edition, volume, or chapter, if applicable.

- Publisher.

- City/state of publication.

- Page numbers for quoted material and chapters.

For journal articles, provide:

- Article title (and subtitle, if applicable).

- Name of all authors and/or editors.

- Full title of journal (not abbreviated).

- Date of publication.

- Volume number (and issue number, if applicable).

- Page numbers of the article.

For other types of references, such as websites, conference proceedings, dissertations, etc., please provide as much information as possible and we will format them.

Resources

If you choose not to include text citations to indicate where particular sources were used, we cannot call the sources “references.” Instead, they can be listed as resources.

- Alphabetize a resource list by the first author’s last name.

Submitting Your Manuscript

- Have all files ready to upload to the job system before submitting a job. Our office cannot accept incomplete jobs. Files include the basic document and any files containing tables, photos, figures, graphs, or other elements.

- Submit a copy of the signed peer-review form when submitting peer-reviewed publications. This should be uploaded at the same time as your other files because the job cannot be accepted without it.

- We expect all manuscripts to be submitted in final form. Extensive revisions during the editing and design process will cause delays in completion of your project. The job may be closed and have to be submitted as a new job when final documents can be uploaded.

- Upload final, approved materials only. No drafts or multiple versions, please.

- Please do not add new versions of the manuscript or other files after your job has been accepted unless you (1) check to see where the project is in the design/editing process and (2) provide explicit instructions to the project request. Make sure that newer versions of files are named to make it obvious which file we should use. If the project is already in the design phase, changes to the manuscript will not be made until the design has been completed.
Writing Tips

• Keep your audience in mind when writing your publication. Will readers be familiar with technical terms, abbreviations, and acronyms? Do they need to be defined?

• Set aside your publication for 24 to 48 hours or longer before your final read-through. You will see things you missed earlier.

• Check the spelling and accuracy of names, companies, organizations/agencies, locations, publication titles, technical terms, etc.

• Check URLs.

• Ask someone to read your work when you are finished. A second set of eyes can be valuable.

Questions?

All these guidelines can seem a bit daunting at first, but we can help you with that. If you have any questions regarding your job, contact the VCE communications manager (vceeditor@vt.edu).