



LINFIELD.EDU WEBSITE STYLE GUIDE

PURPOSE

The Linfield University brand is much more than a logo. It is what students, parents, faculty, alumni, peers and the community all think, feel and respond to when they encounter anything and everything Linfield. Our public website is oftentimes someone's first impression of the Linfield brand. Maintaining consistency through language, tone, messaging, design elements and visuals is imperative to strengthening our brand and sharing it with others.

This document is intended to be used as a resource for understanding the 'why' behind our online presentation, as well as the 'how.' It is supplemental to Linfield's [brand guidelines](#) and [editorial style guide](#).

CONTENT OVERVIEW

Online messaging should meet the needs of the intended audience rather than our own. Online readers want to gather information quickly and efficiently. Think of the content on a page like a phone conversation rather than a filing cabinet. Why is someone visiting your website? What do they need? Are you answering the most frequently asked questions of your department? Is the presentation accessible? Does it display well on mobile devices? What task should the user perform while they are here? Online visitors don't come to read; they come to *do* something (register for an event, learn about the faculty, purchase tickets).

The following strategies will help shape your online content:

1. The first step is defining your audience and framing the task of your page. Utilize our [web content questionnaire](#) for guidance.
2. Less is more. Understand your topic and talk about it in as few words as possible. Consider it your elevator pitch and keep it conversational.
3. Clear, user-friendly language. Avoid internal-facing language that users (i.e., prospective students) may not understand.
4. Avoid acronyms as much as possible. If you have to use them, introduce the full phrase or meaning in the first instance.
5. Write with an active voice and with the use of pronouns.

6. Lists and bullet points are ideal for organizing information and supporting quick absorption.
7. Our new website is very visual. Use images and videos to support the text on the page (see section on imagery).

Writing content for the new website will be a collaborative effort. Use the following guidelines to begin. The Office of Strategic Communications is here to help refine with a web-friendly, user-focused tone and brand voice.

General guidelines:

- There is only one heading per page and serves as the title of your page. Keep it 45 – 60 characters.
- Sub-headings are used to organize and introduce the content on the page. They are ideally 45 characters or less.
- Limit content to three blocks of information or less – a block being a sub-headline followed by one or two descriptive paragraphs.
- A good rule of thumb for structuring web copy: less than 20 words per sentence, and no more than five sentences per paragraph. Descriptive paragraphs should generally be around 150-250 characters.
- Reduce your copy. Web readers scan information and will only absorb 28% of what’s on the page. Shorten it; then shorten it again.
- Buttons, or calls to action (CTAs), are descriptive action items and limited to three words or less.

While retaining the character of each department, the Office of Strategic Communications reserves the right to modify and make final edits in order to meet Linfield’s brand guidelines, brand voice, [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#) standards and [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG 2.1\)](#).

STRUCTURING A PAGE

Our new site offers three page templates:

- [Primary page](#): reserved for the top-level pages of the site. They introduce broad sections of information for the institution – About Linfield, Academics, Admission & Aid, Life at Linfield.
- [Secondary level page](#): this will serve as the landing page to your section. The “page name” field should be “index.”. The header space will include a large scenic photograph of campus and a student portrait image, both taken by our university

photographer and approved by the Office of Strategic Communications. The blocks of content generally include an overview with two or three key aspects highlighted, followed by department contact information.

- [Tertiary page](#): serves as an interior page or child page to your section. On a tertiary page, you will elaborate on one of the key aspects of your department. The most commonly used row type for this type of page is custom HTML.

Refer to the [Cascade Content Management System \(CCMS\) row type key](#) for more information.

How content is structured on a page is particularly important for accessibility. Remember, web users want quick and easy information, so the page layout and content should make this as easy as possible. This can be done by adhering to the following guidance:

- A page description must be included in the “Description” box. This is a one-sentence description of the content on the page, which will show up as the description in search results and on social shares.
- Add breadcrumbs to your page (available in the Page Header options). This helps users know where they are on the site.
- There is only a single heading one (H1) per page. This is an imperative rule for accessibility. In CCMS, this appears in the header space of the page on top of the image and serves as the title. Styling format is Heading 1.
- Sub-headings (H2, H3) are nested and used to organize information, introduce the blocks of content on the page and guide the reader’s eye. Styling format is Heading 2, which is the sub-heading for H1. Styling format Heading 3 is the sub-heading under Heading 2. [See example page](#).
- Limit content to three blocks of information or less – a block being a sub-headline followed by one or two descriptive paragraphs.
- Styling format for body copy is paragraph.

Using images

A picture is indeed worth a thousand words. Linfield University is a vibrant community of people set on two radiant campuses surrounded by the beauty of the Pacific Northwest. We are truly fortunate to have a full-time photographer on staff who has visually captured our uniqueness from every angle.

Where applicable, secondary pages showcase a portrait-style image along with a shot of our campuses. These moments work together providing our online visitors a glimpse into what life is like at Linfield.

See the [brand guidelines \(page 36\)](#) for more information on our photography styling.

When choosing photos for the web it is important to keep in mind the CCMS container for the photo. The photo should match the orientation of the container. For example, if the container is a landscape aspect ratio, the photo used should be a landscape orientation.

Pre-loaded for selection into CCMS are image galleries of Linfield’s professional photography based on content containers of the page. If you have specific needs unavailable in these asset galleries, please reach out to the Office of Strategic Communications for assistance.

Under the assets folder in CCMS, you will find images organized as follows:

- Header images: `_Assets > images > std-masts`. These photos are cropped to 1400 x 787 px and will fit both secondary and tertiary page headers
- Portrait images: `_Assets > images > secondary-images`. These portrait-style photos are cropped to 500 x 500 px square to fit in the “small right image file” field in the page header section of CCMS
- General use images: `_Assets > images > General`. These images are loosely organized by general shots, academics, scenic and life at Linfield. They generally range in size from 600x400 px to 500 px square depending on their placement. Please refer to the [CCMS row type key](#) for guidance on appropriate dimensions based on placement.

When adding an image to your page, you must always:

- Add the image description (also referred to as “alt text”). This is for accessibility purposes. Screen readers will read this description to visually impaired site visitors. Examples of appropriate descriptions include the person’s name or building on campus. This is essential for images that are delivering information; decorative images that offer no relevant information to the page can be marked as “decorative” and therefore do not require a description. When in doubt, add a description. Review our page on [accessibility best practices](#) for more information.
- Keep an eye on the file size. Smaller is better for web (100kb or less); the larger file sizes will impact load times on a page. The photo editor in CCMS will allow you to resize once uploaded, if necessary.
- The image should support the content on the page and help tell Linfield’s story.
- In most circumstances, images or graphics built that include text will not be accepted to comply with accessibility guidelines. For more information, contact Jill King in the Office of Strategic Communications.

ADDING A NEW PAGE

If your department needs a new page of information for your section of the website, submit your request to Jill King in the Office of Strategic Communications. We will build your new page template for you and alert you when it's ready for you to add your content.

An estimated timeline will depend on the scope of work; ample notice is strongly recommended.

REVIEWING CONTENT

Once you submit your edits in CCMS, the workflow process will begin. Content will be reviewed by the Office of Strategic Communications for accessibility assurance, content accuracy, brand voice and tone, web-friendly language, duplicate resources, adherence to university style, acceptable images and typos. It's always good to have a second and even third set of eyes.

You are not expected to be a web-expert; that's our role. You are the experts on the subject matter, and the communications team is here to help format it for our online audience.

Additionally, there are select sections of our website that will be translated in Spanish. In order to keep track of necessary revisions to the translated pages, the workflow serves as an alert for possible edits for the communications team.

Things you can do to review your content before submitting to CCMS:

- How does it look on mobile? More than 60% of our users are here.
- Consider typing up the copy in Word first and reviewing for accuracy. This is a good time to also have a colleague review before you enter it in CCMS.
- Once in CCMS and before submitting your page edits in the workflow, run another spell check (tools > spellcheck)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A few sites worth visiting for more information on writing for the web.

- [Usability.gov](https://www.usability.gov)
- [Nielson Norman Group](https://www.nielson-norman-group.com/)
- [“Letting Go of the Words” by Janice Redish](#)



QUESTIONS?

Thank you leading the charge on your subject matter. Please don't hesitate to reach out!

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