

# VALE Website Style Guide, Version 6.0

Jim Robertson, original editor, VALE website committee  
Adopted Version 3.0: Aug 17, 2005  
Revised and approved Version 4.0: Dec 10, 2005  
Revised (Joyce Chow and Ray Schwartz) and approved Version 5.0: Jun 1, 2006  
Revised (Ann Hoang) and approved Version 6.0: Jun 6, 2007

## Purpose

With the aim of achieving a professional look and enhancing usability, the VALE Website Committee recommends the following style guide for major “repeating” elements, phrases, and so forth for VALE website <http://www.valenj.org>

There are three sections to this working document

- I. **Administrative**
- II. **Stylistic**
  - 1. down style vs. up style
  - 2. organization file, documents and directories
  - 3. file names – use lowercase, – use of underscore character, – use of blank space
  - 4. proper use of date formats
  - 5. date order for news and calendar events
  - 6. use of graphics to tag content
  - 7. use of mouse over
  - 8. use of data in tables
  - 9. use of background within tables
  - 10. use of underline
  - 11. use of proper terminology
  - 12. use of cascading style sheet (CSS) for presentation
  - 13. use of comments
- III. **Technical**
  - 1. mandatory backup of files
  - 2. mandatory elements
  - 3. Push for standards

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**I. Administrative guidelines**  
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The website committee recommended that all content updates should be sent **via email** to **Judy Avrin** (avrinj@wpunj.edu) and **Anne Ciliberti** (cilibertia@wpunj.edu).

Judy and/or Anne will forward request updates to the website committee members having access to the VALE server and its files so that updates and changes can be handled quickly and efficiently by any one of the designated committee members.

Committee member who initiates the update must email the group to inform them so and again when the updates have been completed.

The current committee members having access to the VALE server are:

- Ann Hoang
- Dave Hoover
- Jia Mi
- Ray Schwartz
- Kurt Wagner
- Yingting Zhang
- Julie Maginn

Other members of the committee are welcomed to volunteer.

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**II. Stylistic guidelines**  
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**1. Down style vs. up style**

While the left navigation bar menus are in up style, the rest of the site should be in down style, unless it is title proper. Headlines, lists, "chapter titles" and the like should be consistently "downstyle". Downstyle only capitalizes the **first** word of a phrase, headline, or list item (unless a proper noun). (Up style capitalizes each word (except "stop words") and is more traditional and formal than downstyle.)

Downstyle examples (this is the preferred style, but not in left navigation bar menus):

- Why should you join VALE?
- About the databases – FY 2004-2005
- Reciprocal borrowing agreements
- VALE brochure

Up style examples (do **not** use this style, except in left navigation bar menus):

- Why Should You Join VALE?
- About the Databases – FY 2004-2005
- Reciprocal Borrowing Agreements
- VALE Brochure

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**2. Organization files, documents and directories**

Files, documents, directories, and the organization thereof should be collated by fiscal year (or academic year periods) – Jul 1 to Jun 30 -- rather than calendar year – Jan 1 to Dec 31.

- Jul 1, 2004, to Jun 30, 2005, is noted as: **FY 2005**.

An illustration of this practice in use in both **screen display** and **file-naming** conventions is:

- `<a href="/docs/fy2003/fy2003-report.pdf">FY 2003 report</a>`

### 3. File names

For file-naming convention, an acceptable variation of the ISO standard 8601 should be used (see <http://www.iso.org/iso/en/prods-services/popstds/datesandtime.html>). The format is: **YYYYMMDD** without a “dash” separating the year, month and date.

For example:

- /docs/fy2003/minutes-20020910.pdf
- /docs/fy2003/minutes-20001115.pdf
- /docs/fy2003/minutes-20030222.pdf
- /docs/fy2003/minutes-20030408.pdf

Limit the number of characters within a filename to simplify access and reduce unnecessary clutter. For clarity, committee abbreviation should be used in place of full committee name i.e.

For example:

- Bad: `<a href="calendar/fy2007/calendar-2007-02-23-cooperative-collection-management-committee-meeting.shtml">Cooperative Collection Management Committee Meeting</a>` (Looks like this in a link: <http://www.valenj.org/newvale/calendar/fy2007/calendar-2007-02-23-cooperative-collection-management-committee-meeting.shtml>)
- Good: `<a href="calendar/fy2007/20070223-ccmc-meeting.shtml">Cooperative Collection Management Committee Meeting</a>` (Looks like this in a link: <http://www.valenj.org/newvale/calendar/fy2007/20070223-ccmc-meeting.shtml>)

#### Abbreviation for Committees

1. Executive -- Executive Committee
2. AESC -- Assessment/Evaluation/Statistics Committee
3. BCMC -- Bibliographic Control & Metadata Committee
4. CCMC -- Cooperative Collection Management Committee
5. DMC -- Digital Media Committee
6. ERC -- Electronic Resource Committee
7. PCC -- Publicity/Communications Committee
8. Reference -- Reference Services Committee
9. Resource -- Resource Sharing Committee
10. SILC -- Shared Information Literary Committee
11. Training -- Training Committee
12. Website -- Website Committee

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#### 3a. File names – use lowercase

For file- and directory-naming conventions, all files and directories should use lowercase letters only. Simplify. All lowercase only. If needed rename original files.

- Good: /news/valemeeting.shtml
- Bad: /news/VALEMeeting.shtml

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### 3b. File names – use of underscore character

For file-naming convention, no use of the underline character should be allowed. Underlines disappear when the file or subdirectory is part of a link. Use the dash character instead.

- Good: /recbor/fac-borrowing.shtml
- Bad: /reccor/fac\_borrowing.shtml (Looks like this in a link: [www.valenj.org/reccor/fac\\_borrowing.shtml](http://www.valenj.org/reccor/fac_borrowing.shtml))

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### 3c. File name – use of blank space

For file-naming convention, no use of the space character or the "%20" equivalent should be allowed. This may sometimes work in a Windows environment, but is not good practice for sustainability and consistency of access. Use a dash character if you feel the need to "separate" text.

- Good: /conferences/2005/registration-form.shtml
- Bad: /conferences/2005/registration form.shtml
- Bad: /conferences/2005/registration%20form.shtml

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## 4. Proper use of date formats

Date formats should spell out the months with an abbreviation. (Numbers only should not be used. We live in a globalize time. Does "7/3/2005" indicate July 3<sup>rd</sup> or March 7<sup>th</sup>?)

- Dates should be in the form: **Aug 9, 2005.**

We use three-letter abbreviations, without periods: Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec.

For some dates (e.g., event announcements), it may be advantageous to list the day of the week, as well. We use three-letter abbreviations, without periods: Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat, Sun.

- Day should be in the form: **Tue, Aug 9, 2005.**

The guiding principle is "maximum clarity and un-ambiguity with minimum characters and clutter."

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## 5. Date order for news and calendar events





- Items in News and Calendar should be in **descending order.**

- Items in News use posting date.
- Items in Calendar use meeting date.

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## 6. Use of graphics to tag content

Users expect hyperlinks to open HTML documents. Thus, we will “tag” links that open other file types, such as PDF files, Word documents, and Excel spreadsheets. Format will be a small icon immediately following the link, without additional explanation. The icon or graphic will be a link, in addition to the text link. Examples follow:

- VALE [brochure](#) 
- VALE [spreadsheet](#)  for FY 2005
- VALE [letterhead](#)  can be downloaded here
- *[Proposal for the Reorganization of the Council and VALE](#)* 

Images are in the VALE /images directory:

- pdf-icon.gif
- excel-icon.gif
- word-icon.gif
- ppt-icon.gif

Coding should be as:

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<li>VALE <a HREF="brochure.pdf">brochure</a> 
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## 7. Use of mouse over

Mouse over effects to highlight links should use underline, over line, font color changes, and other effects, but should **not** use bold or italic effects, as they change the letter spacing and make the text, columns, and page “jumpy”.

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## 8. Use of data in tables

Tables of **data** (as opposed to tables used for screen layout) should be consistent with regard to cell spacing and text alignment options. To achieve tight, professional look, this committee recommends

- alignment of data in cells should be specified to be **left-aligned** and **top-aligned**
- exception is for numerical, percentage, or monetary data, which should be **right-aligned** (further, all numerical, percentage, or monetary data should have the same number of digits past the decimal point)
- cell spacing of data in cells should be specified to be 0 (zero)

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**9. Use of background within tables**

Tables listing data such as committee members, phone numbers, etc., should alternate white and grey (or similar "soft" but "contrasting") background colors for increased readability.

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**10. Use of underline**

Narrative text should **never** be underlined. Reserve underlining for hyperlinks exclusively. Text should be otherwise emphasized with bold, italic, font color, or other techniques.

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**11. User of proper terminology**

The word "**website**" should be used over "web site" or "Web Site" or "Web site".

The word "**internet**" should be used over "Internet".

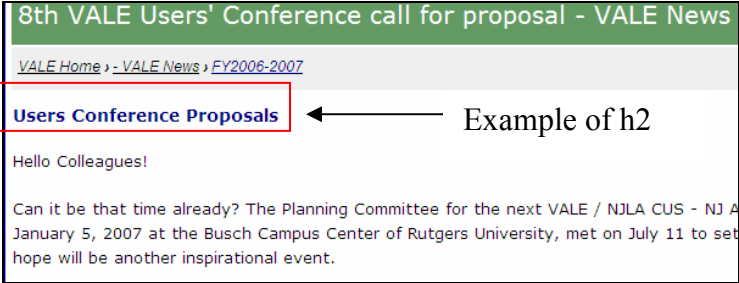
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**12. Use of style sheet (CSS) for presentation**

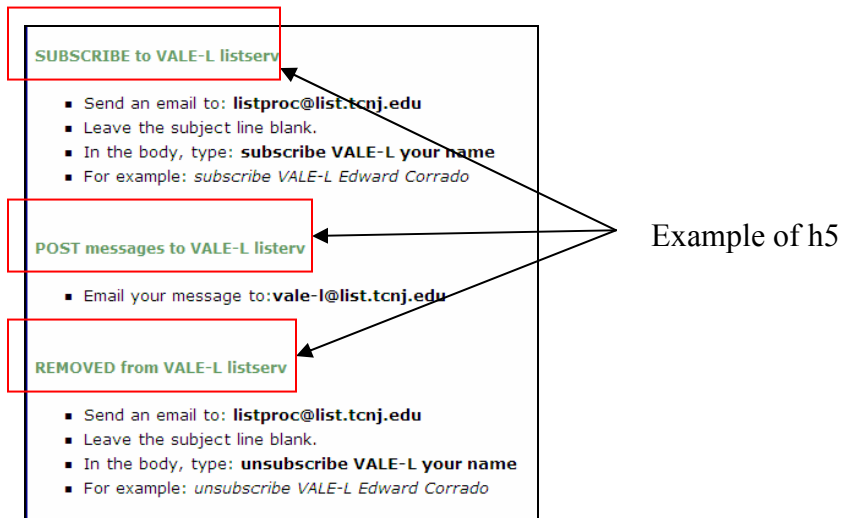
Cascading style sheets (CSS) a system for separating content from presentation resulting in a clean and easily identifiable HTML pages. CSS enables web content creator to attach style rules to HTML elements in a separate documentation. These rules define the presentation of all aspect of HTML pages.

Basic CSS definition:

- img src defines as: border:0px;
- 
- h1 defines as: font-size:20px; font-family: Verdana; color:#669966 (VALE green); vertical-align: top; text-align: left;
- h2 defines as: font-size:16px; font-family: Verdana; font-color: navy; vertical-align: middle; text-align: left;



- h3 defines as: font-size:14px; font-family: Verdana; font-color: :#669966; text-align: left;
- h4 defines as: font-size:14px; font-family: Verdana; font-color: navy; text-align: center;
- h5 defines as: font-size:12px; font-family: Verdana; color:#669966 (VALE green); text-align: center;



- h6 defines as: font-size:14px; font-family: Verdana; font-color:#669966 (VALE green); vertical-align: middle; text-align: center;



- <em> appears as: "italics", standard use in CSS, instead of <i> "italics"
- <strong> appears as: "bold" – standard use in CSS, instead of <b> "bold"
- <u> appears as: underline (should NOT be underlined; reserve underlining for links; should be italicized instead)

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### 13. Use of comments

Adding comments to web content will help other committee members or future members of what you were trying to achieve with your tags. These comments only appear when the document is opened with a text editor. They are invisible to visitors in the browser.

A good use of comments is to remind committee members what to include, remove, or update certain sections. Comments are also useful for describing the use of particular tags and the effect it might achieve.

Comments may not be nested within other comments.

- <!--add comment here-->

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### III. Technical guidelines

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#### 14. Mandatory backup of files

Make a backup copy of the file to be updated before updating files on the website. Use the backup naming standard that affixes the date you created the backup file:

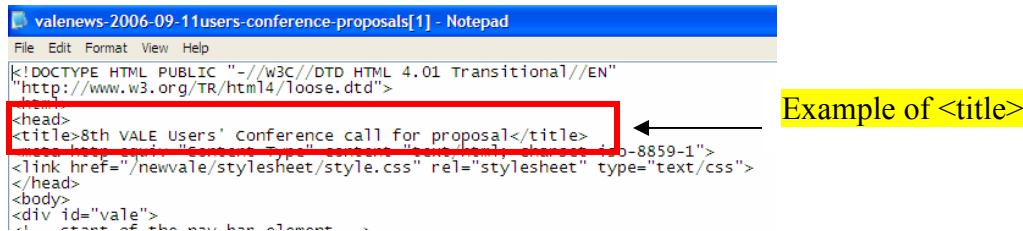
- index-backup20060503.html
- index-backup20060510.html
- index-backup20060510b.html

Only the latest backup file is needed. Committee member who initiates the update should also remove previous backup files. This will de-clutter the subdirectories and creates a more manageable set of working files.

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#### 15. Mandatory elements

<title> elements are mandatory in each web page that will utilize the server-side “includes” to automatically and dynamically generate the VALE left-side menu, top bar title, breadcrumbs “wrappers”, and footer.



- <!--#include virtual="/newvale/includes/left\_navbar.html"-->
- <!--#include virtual="/newvale/includes/breadcrumbs.php"-->
- <!--#include virtual="/newvale/includes/footer\_home.html"-->



<h1> elements should **not** be used in any web page that will utilize those "includes" to generate the VALE "wrappers". Instead, <h2> through <h6> tags should be used to markup "headline" or "sub-headline" elements.

Additional <h#> needed should be define in style.css document instead of defining it in the content page.

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## 16. Use of text editors for updating content

Do **NOT** use Notepad or WordPad to edit web content. Those programs replace line feeds with carriage returns (which are not understood as line feeds in UNIX). Dreamweaver is the "industry standard" and should be used, if available. Those with confidence may also use the vi or Pico editor directly on the server.

Do **NOT** use FrontPage to edit web content. FrontPage creates "code-bloat" through its Microsoft-centric way of marking up the files. It is difficult to edit the page in programs other than FrontPage once it has been "Front-Paged."

When creating new files, verify that the group has permission to update created files. If not, use "chmod" command to change the permissions for a file or directory.

For example to make a file fy2003-report.shtml readable and executable by the committee members, we do this:

- `% chmod u+x,g+wx fy2003-report.shtml`

To check the permissions of a file, use **ls -l** . For more information on chmod, use **man chmod**.

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## 17. Push for standards

The Web's United Nation is an organization called the World Wide Web Consortium ([www.w3.org](http://www.w3.org)), often abbreviated as W3C. Its aim is to convince the web community of the importance of universality while attempting to satisfy its thirst for beautiful looking pages.

### References

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2. Briggs, O.; Champeon, S.; Costello, E.; Patterson, M. "Cascading style sheets: separating content from presentation", 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Springer-Verlag, New York, NY, 2004.
3. Castro, E. "HTML for the world wide web: 5<sup>th</sup> edition with XHTML and CSS", Peachpit Press, 2003.
4. Krug, S. "Don't make me think: a common sense approach to web usability", New Riders Publishing, Indianapolis, IN 2000.