Style Guide

This guide outlines editorial and branding requirements for Maryland SPCA materials and communications.

Editorial guidelines

The Maryland SPCA's "house style" is based on the Chicago Manual, with key exceptions outlined in this guide. Our goal is to make every MD SPCA product clean and readable.

If you have any questions that aren't addressed here, please contact Marketing and Communications Director Andy Beres (aberes@mdspca.org | ext. 139).

Referencing the Maryland SPCA and job titles

Using prepositions with our name

Always include "the" before our organization's name. The only exception is when "Maryland SPCA" is used as an adjective to modify another noun.

- Many dogs and cats pass through the Maryland SPCA.
- Many dogs and cats pass through the MD SPCA.
- Maryland SPCA staff provide excellent care.
- MD SPCA staff provide excellent care.

Word order in job titles

Maryland SPCA job titles should be formulated as follows:

- Operations director (*not* director of operations).
- Operations assistant director (*not* assistant director of operations).
- Adoption manager (*not* manager of adoption).
- Adoption counselor (*not* counselor for adoption).

Capitalization

Document titles

Always capitalize the title/headline of a document, blog post, press release, or other content item. However, keep in mind: prepositions are lowercase unless they begin a sentence.

- Training Your Pet Not to Beg.
- To Beg or Not to Beg.

Section headings within documents

Only capitalize the first word of a section title.

- Positive reinforcement strategies.

Job titles

Capitalize job titles when they *precede* a name or when they appear in a byline. *Don't* capitalize job titles *after* a name (with the exception of bylines) or when they stand alone.

- "This is a great opportunity," said Community Relations Director Katie Flory.
- Katie Flory, community relations director, said: "This is a great opportunity."
- "This is a great opportunity," said Katie Flory, community relations director.
- The community relations director said it was a great opportunity.
- By Katie Flory, Community Relations Director

Government

Governmental bodies are capitalized. Agency names are only capitalized when preceded by "Maryland" or "U.S."

- Baltimore City, city of Baltimore.
- Maryland General Assembly, the General Assembly.
- U.S. Department of Energy, the department of energy.
- Maryland Department of Energy, Maryland's department of energy, the department of energy.
- Governor Hogan, the governor, governors, gubernatorial.

Active, concise writing

Always write in an active, not passive, voice:

- The subject should precede the verb and perform its action.
  - **Active:** Kaitlyn walked Knox.
  - **Passive:** Knox was walked by Kaitlyn.
- Use prepositional phrases sparingly. Prepositions specify where, when, why, and how.
  - **Active:** Knox was the only dog adopted September 7.
  - **Passive:** Knox was the only dog who was adopted after September 6 and before September 8.
- Avoid unnecessary "to be" verbs. Examples: that was, they are, he is, she was.
  - **Active:** The smart dog knows many tricks.
  - **Passive:** He is a dog who is smart. He has knowledge of many tricks.

Contractions

We want a friendly, accessible tone in our writing. Use contractions as follows:

- **BE:** He's, she's, I'm, you're, we're, they're, it's, that's.
- **WILL:** He'll, she'll, I'll, you'll, we'll.
- **NEGATED VERBS:** Isn't, aren't, wasn't, weren't, haven't, hasn't, hadn't, won't, wouldn't, don't, doesn't, didn't, can't, let's.

There are exceptions to this rule. Do *not* use contractions when writing the following:

- **Certain fundraising content:** grant applications, gift agreements, funder correspondence, and other exceptions as determined by the development director and executive director.

- **Certain financial and administrative content:** financial reports, business-to-business communications, and other exceptions as determined by the finance director and executive director.

Hyphenation

Compound modifiers

When combining independent words into compound adjectives, use a hyphen.

- High-risk cases.
- State-funded surgeries.

Don't hyphenate phrases that consist of an adjective and an adverb ending in -ly, regardless of sentence position.

- Poorly funded shelters.
- Comically bad prose.

Compound words

These are independent terms that, when used together, create a new meaning. **Open** compounds include a space; **hyphenated** compounds include a hyphen; and **closed** compounds include neither. Because these are discrete terms, their placement within the sentence is irrelevant.

Ages (in compound form) are always **hyphenated**.

- Three-year-old dogs are energetic.
- I have an energetic three-year-old.
- The ten-year-old dog was energetic when he was three years old.

Fractions are always **hyphenated**, except when the second element of the fraction is itself hyphenated. Please note that fractions are always spelled out.

- Two-thirds.
- Three fifty-thirds.

Percentages are always **open**. Always use the word "percent" instead of the symbol. And always use an Arabic number, except at the beginning of sentences.

- Almost 50 percent of dogs are in foster.
- Fifty percent of dogs are in foster.

Proper nouns and adjectives are usually **open**. However, if the compound includes a prefix, a hyphen is appropriate.

- Asian American.
- Anglo-American.
- Baltimore City residents.

In most cases, words with prefixes don't need a hyphen. There are only two exceptions: 1) the prefix creates a repeated vowel; or 2) the prefix creates a word within a word.

- Underserved.
- Re-adminster.
- Co-delineate.

Punctuation

Spacing between sentences.

Use one space after a period.

- The dog chased the squirrel. When the squirrel got away, the dog took a nap.

Serial commas

Always use commas to separate items in a series, including the last two items.

- The cat ate, drank, walked, and slept.

Semicolons

There are two uses for semicolons:

1. **To combine independent sentences without a conjunction.**

    - Knox retired as pet ambassador; he pursued other interests.
    - Knox retired as pet ambassador, and he pursued other interests.

    Note: then, however, thus, hence, indeed, accordingly, besides, and therefore are adverbs—not conjunctions.

    - Knox retired from the Maryland SPCA; however, he stayed active in the community.
    - Knox retired from the Maryland SPCA, but he stayed active in the community.

2. **In place of commas separating parts of a sentence when a comma is already present in one or more of those parts.**

    - Knox planned to swim; hike on cool, clear days; and relax while in New Zealand.

Colons

Colons should be used before a bulleted list. Beyond that, a colon should only be used when preceded by an independent sentence (i.e., one that could stand alone grammatically).

- Knox left for New Zealand, where he planned to do three things: eat, hike, and relax.
- Knox left for New Zealand, where he planned to eat, hike, and relax.

Em dashes (—)

Em dashes can be used instead of commas to make sentences more readable and/or emphasize an idea. They can also replace parentheses. *Don't* use spaces before/after an em dash.

- Knox went to New Zealand—a fine country by any measure—to eat, hike, and relax.
- Knox ate the bones—12 in total—before bedtime.

Bulleted lists

Colons should precede a bulleted list. Every item in the list should end with a period.

- Knox did the following:
    - Swim.
    - Hike on cool, clear days.
    - Relax.
- Knox left for New Zealand, where he planned to:
    - Swim.
    - Hike on cool, clear days.
    - Relax.

Numbers

Spell out numbers nine and under. Use numerals for all numbers 10 and above. If a sentence includes a combination of numbers above and under 10, use numerals for every number.

Use numerals for percentages, but spell out "percent."

If a number begins a sentence, always spell it out. This trumps all other rules.

- We received five dogs from a nearby rescue.
- Last year, we spayed/neutered 4,000 dogs and 2,000 cats, a ratio of 2 to 1.
- Four thousand dogs and 2,000 cats were spayed/neutered last year.
- Four thousand dogs were spayed/neutered, comprising 67 percent of pets receiving this service.

With dollar figures, always use symbols and numerals. With cents, use a numeral but write out the word. *Don't* begin a sentence with a monetary figure.

- He paid $100 for transportation.
- He paid $100 and received 5 cents back.

Don't use superscript with ordinal numbers.

- 25th annual.
- ~~25th annual.~~

Dates and times

Dates

When writing dates, spell out the month. *Don't* add a suffix to the day.

- January 5, 2020.
- January 5.
- ~~January 5th.~~
- ~~January 5th.~~

Numerical abbreviations are also acceptable. Use the following formats, depending on the medium:

- **Social media:** 1/5/20.
- **All other content types:** 01/05/2020

Times

Use the following format for times:

- 9am.
- 9:30am.
- 9 – 10am.
- 9:30am – 12pm.

Acronyms

First thing's first: never write out SPCA (for reference: it stands for Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals). With that settled, our rules are as follows.

At the first of two or more occurrences, write out the full name of the organization or government agency. Include the acronym as a parenthetical. The only exception to that is *our* name; don't include the parenthetical after Maryland SPCA.

After writing out the full name once, use only the acronym in subsequent instances.

- The Maryland SPCA was founded in 1869. At that time, the MD SPCA advocated for work horses.
- The Maryland Department of Agriculture (DOA) provides grant funding for spay/neuter surgeries. Since 2010, DOA funding has helped 55,000 pets.
- I'm reminded of an event held by the American Stamp Association, which I haven't yet mentioned and of which I'll never again speak.

Italics, bolding, quotation marks, and underlining

Titles

Italicize book, magazine, and report titles. Use quotation marks for chapter or article titles as well as presentation titles.

- Deidre wrote *My Life as Deidre* to reflect on her experiences. The first chapter, "A Path Begins," was 75 pages.
- Amber and Melissa presented "Engaging Children in Reading Programs" at the 2020 Pet-Child Conference.

Editorial introductions and conclusions

Use italics to set off an editorial introduction/conclusion from the main text. Un-italicize the names of periodicals.

- *This article first appeared in* The Baltimore Sun.

Emphasis

Use italics or boldface to emphasize one word.

- They disagreed on *priorities*, not goals.
- Please **don't** use choke collars.

Use boldface to emphasize an entire sentence.

- He couldn't be happier with his new family. **Will you help us find forever homes for more pets like Norm?**

When words are words

Use quotes to indicate when words are used as words (a reference to the term *itself* instead of what it signifies) and when defining a term (and using it for the first time).

- Don't use the term "unwanted" to describe hard-to-adopt pets.
- Effective adoption services require both "trains" (counseling and information) and "tracks" (organizational infrastructure).

Underlining

Use only for linked URLs and for direct quotes of published material that features underlining.

Preferred terms

Word choice is important. Here's a list of preferred terms, along with their meanings.

- **Hard-to-adopt pets** | Pets with medical, behavioral, or other challenges.
- **Shelter pets** | Every pet currently in our care, regardless of whether they're ready for adoption.
- **Adoptable pets** | Pets currently available for adoption.
- **Homeless pets** | This refers to stray animals before they're brought to the MD SPCA.
- **Cue** | In animal training, this is a signal that prompts a certain behavior.
- **Owner-requested euthanasia** | End-of-life services for non-MD SPCA pets.
- **Vulnerable communities** | This can refer to low-income communities or communities where many people are older/homebound.
- **Underserved communities** | These are communities that lack important resources like access to veterinary care.
- **People** | When possible, use "people" instead of "individuals."

Non-preferred terms

Here's a list of terms *not* to use.

- **Unwanted pets**. Use "hard-to-adopt" instead.
- **Command.** Use "cue" instead.
- **Needy people/communities.** Use "people with low incomes," "homebound people," or "vulnerable communities" instead.

Visual identity guidelines

Fonts

Roboto is the Maryland SPCA's primary font. Don't use any other font in MD SPCA materials without permission from a director or marketing team member. Please note: materials formatted or created by the marketing team may use additional fonts and alternative sizing/spacing.

Titles

- **Font:** Roboto
- **Color:** Maryland SPCA Blue
- **Weight:** Bold
- **Size:** 16 pt.
- **Line spacing:** Exactly 18 pt.
- **Space after:** 12 pt.

Section headings

- **Font:** Roboto
- **Color:** Black
- **Weight:** Bold
- **Size:** 14 pt.
- **Line spacing:** Exactly 16 pt.
- **Space after:** 4 pt.

Sub-section headings

- **Font:** Roboto
- **Color:** Maryland SPCA Blue
- **Weight:** Bold
- **Size:** 12 pt.
- **Line spacing:** Exactly 16 pt.
- **Space after:** 4 pt.

Body copy (including emails)

- **Font:** Roboto
- **Color:** Black
- **Weight:** Regular
- **Size:** 10.5 pt.
- **Line spacing:** Exactly 15 pt.
- **Space after:** 9 pt.
- **Space before bulleted list:** 6 pt.
- **Space after end of section:** 12 pt.

PowerPoint presentations

- **Font:** Roboto only.
- **Slide titles**
  - **Weight:** Regular
  - **Size:** 48 pt.
- **Heading**
  - **Weight:** Regular
  - **Size:** 48 pt.
- **First-level descriptive text**
  - **Weight:** Regular.
  - **Size:** 30 pts.
- **Second-level descriptive text**
  - **Weight:** Regular.
  - **Size:** 24 pts.

Colors

Following is our primary color palette. We also have a secondary palette, but it's restricted to the marketing team for special events and communications. Contact your director to request access to the secondary palette.

Maryland SPCA blue

This is our **primary organizational** color. It's the default color for all materials, with the exception of branded program areas (covered below).

- **HEX:** #00a4d9
- **RGB:** 0, 165, 217
- **CMYK:** 100, 0, 5, 5

Education orange

This color is for our **humane education/training** programs.

- **HEX:** #F05C22
- **RGB:** 241, 93, 36
- **CYMK:** 0, 79, 98, 0

Veterinary services teal

This color is for our **Wellness Clinic** as well as our **spay/neuter** and **veterinary care** programs.

- **HEX:** #4CBD9F
- **RGB:** 76, 190, 160
- **CMYK:** 66, 0, 48, 0

Humane care purple

This color is for our **foster** and **shelter care** programs.

- **HEX:** #4B2883
- **RGB:** 75, 45, 130
- **CMYK:** 88, 100, 11, 3

Logos

The Maryland SPCA has two primary logos: a horizontal logo and a "stacked"/vertical logo. If space permits and it's feasible in your document design, the horizontal logo is preferred.

Horizontal logo

Minimum size | Width: **1.75in**

Stacked logo

Minimum size | Width: **0.72in**

Logo color

Our logo should only be displayed in Maryland SPCA blue, black, or white. Other colors require a director's permission.

Rules against modification

In order to maintain our visual brand, *don't* modify the logo in any way. *Don't* change the aspect ratio, skew it, add elements, change font, or change color.

Minimum safe space

The logo needs room to breathe. Use this guide to ensure no other logo, text, image, or design object compromises minimum safe space. Note that "x" represents the full height of the logo. Safe space requirements are based on that measurement. For instance, if the horizontal logo is 1-inch high, minimum safe space will be 0.5 inches.

An area of clear space should be maintained around the logo that is equal to or greater than half the distance of "X" as indicated in the diagram.
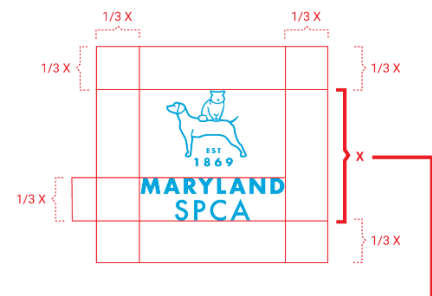
An area of clear space should be maintained around the logo that is equal to or greater than a third of the distance of "X" as indicated in the diagram.

Co-branding rules

When pairing our logo with another organization's logo, please leave *no less* than the minimum safe space.

- Horizontal version example:

- Stacked version example:

Email signature

This is the current required format for your email signature:

Name
Position title

Maryland SPCA, Inc.
3300 Falls Road
Baltimore, MD 21211
(410) 235-8826 ext. [your number]

Feel the warmth of a cold nose!
Visit **mdspca.org** to learn how we're helping pets and people.

Get social with us!

General copy

Following are mission and value statements, boilerplate text, and concise descriptions of MD SPCA program areas. This is approved copy you can use in documents, emails, grant applications, and other materials.

Mission

The Maryland SPCA improves the lives of pets and people by providing education, veterinary services, and humane care.

EDUCATION: Sharing our knowledge and experience, we empower and encourage communities to treat animals with compassion and respect.

VETERINARY SERVICES: Delivering quality pet health care, we keep cats and dogs in their homes and strengthen the bonds between people and pets throughout all stages of life.

HUMANE CARE: Providing a safety net to those in need, we save the lives of vulnerable cats and dogs while connecting people and pets through innovative programs and targeted services.

Vision

Continuing our commitment to animals since 1869, we work towards a future of compassion and care for *all* of Maryland's cats and dogs.

Values

Community

We believe in the power of working together. We will partner with others in problem solving; different perspectives will be invited and welcomed.

Compassion

We will use heart and mind in our decisions and practice acts of understanding and kindness with pets and people.

Innovation

We look for new ways to do things better.

Integrity

Our actions will be based on ethical behaviors, including honesty, fairness, and transparency.

Respect

We will celebrate the uniqueness of every individual, acknowledge their presence, and recognize their opinions.

Press release boilerplate

Founded in 1869, the Maryland SPCA improves pets' and people's lives by providing education, veterinary services, and humane care. It empowers communities to treat animals compassionately; delivers quality pet health care to keep pets in loving homes; and saves vulnerable cats and dogs with adoption, foster, and admissions services. The MD SPCA is an independent nonprofit that receives no funding from (and is not affiliated with) the ASPCA or local government. For more information, visit mdspca.org.

General boilerplate for all other purposes

Founded in 1869, the Maryland SPCA improves pets' and people's lives by providing education, veterinary services, and humane care. We empower communities to treat animals compassionately; deliver quality pet health care to keep pets in loving homes; and saves vulnerable cats and dogs with adoption, foster, and admissions services. The MD SPCA is an independent nonprofit that receives no funding from (and is not affiliated with) the ASPCA or local government. For more information, visit mdspca.org.

Education and training

Our education programs empower people of all ages to treat animals with compassion and respect. We provide pet owners with animal behavior training; engage children in humane education and literacy programs; teach first responders to safely engage animals; and support seniors' mental health and wellbeing.

Veterinary services

We keep pets healthy and in homes by providing quality veterinary care. Every pet in our shelter receives vaccinations, spay/neuter services, and other medical treatment to ensure they have healthy, happy lives. Our Wellness Center offers affordable veterinary care to members of our community.

Humane care

We provide a safety net to thousands of pets in need, offering first-class adoption, rehoming, and fostering services. Additionally, our transport team alleviates overcrowding in other shelters, saving lives throughout Maryland.

Questions?

Contact Andy Beres (aberes@mdspca.org | ext. 139).