



# Style Guide

## Introduction

Welcome to the Seattle Urban Farm Company Style Guide. There are many like it, but this one is ours.

This guide will help us maintain a consistent voice and brand throughout all of our content.

Our content includes website copy, blog posts, newsletters, social media posts, emails, marketing materials, lectures, and books.

The guide contains very specific things, such as how to write dates (2/14/17), and when to use the serial comma (always!). It cautions against using too many exclamation points.

Style is a choice. We choose to use Title Case whenever possible and believe in the subtle humor of the ellipse. These choices help define our voice and brand identity.

The Style Guide is a living document. This means some things will change over time. These changes will not be willy-nilly. They will be thoughtful and purposeful.

### **For example:**

Once upon a time, our company tagline was “*Food Grown Right, In Your Backyard.*” Then we decided to use that as the title of our first book. We created a new tagline, “*Creators of Beautifully Productive Landscapes*” to avoid confusion and to reflect a change in our focus from small backyard gardens to large estate and commercial projects.

Many other changes have happened through the years. We’ve redesigned our logo and adopted new terminology in our service contracts.

If you have an idea and would like to propose changes to the guide, please do. We know there are many great things yet to come.



# Style Guide

## Color

### Brand

#3A9E4F

rgb(58,158,79)

cmyk (63, 0, 50, 38)

### Supplemental Colors

#1C4249

rgb(28,66,73)

cmyk (62, 10, 0, 71)

#EC4C24

rgb(236,76,36)

cmyk (0, 68, 85, 7)

#26819C

rgb(38,129,156)

cmyk (76, 17, 0, 39)

### Neutral Colors

#88898D

rgb(136,137,141)

cmyk (4, 3, 0, 45)

#0D0D0D

rgb(13,13,13)

cmyk (0, 0, 0, 95)

#777777

rgb(119,119,119)

cmyk (0, 0, 0, 53)



# Style Guide

## Typography

### CAPTAIN HOWDY

OUR LOGO IS WRITTEN IN CAPTAIN HOWDY. IT HAS A WESTERN, RURAL FEEL, BUT IT'S A BIT OVER THE TOP. WE SHOULDN'T USE THIS FONT FOR ANYTHING ELSE

### Helvetica Neue

Even though this font is well-worn and controversial, our primary font for content is Helvetica Neue.

Some may say it is boring, but all of the readability tests we performed say “use this font, people like reading it.”

### American Typewriter

We use American Typewriter for supporting text.

Use sparingly in marketing materials.

## Document Type Scale

Document Headings: 18pt

Document Subheadings: 14pt

Document body text: 11pt



# Style Guide

## Writing Goals and Principles

All Content Should:

**Educate:** Sufco is all about sharing knowledge and lowering the barriers to entry for aspiring gardeners.

**Empower:** Give our audience the tools they need to take action.

**Respect:** Our business cannot exist without the support of our clients and our readers. Remember that all of these people care about us and we care about them.

Rules for Content Editing:

**Purposeful:** Make sure there is a reason for your content to exist.

**Concise:** After you write a draft, review it with the intention of removing any unnecessary or extra words.

**Conversational:** Write like people talk. Don't use esoteric words (esoteric is esoteric, it literally means that most people will not understand. Not everybody knows what it means). Use the most common and easy to understand word you can think of.

**Clear:** Make the content serves its original purpose and that it helps people achieve their goals.



# Style Guide

## Voice and Tone

To communicate effectively with our audience, it is important to be aware of our voice and our tone.

Difference between voice and tone: You always have the same voice, but your tone changes depending on the situation. For example, you may use a different tone when talking with your best friend than you do when talking with a police officer.

When creating content, it is important to adjust the tone to match the situation. A tone that works for a light-hearted blog post, may not be appropriate for a client email.

### Voice

At Seattle Urban Farm Company (SUFCo), we have fun growing fruits and vegetables. However, we also take our work seriously. We are always courteous and respectful. We educate people without patronizing them.

Our books and blog posts carry a very conversational voice. We crack occasional jokes which may or may not actually be funny. We present information in a clear and concise manner with authority. We do not disparage other ways of doing things. We display humility while still making a clear point.

- We are always honest and sincere.
- We do not upsell.
- We admit when we have made a mistake and take corrective action on our own initiative.
- We inspire confidence with clear and concise content.

### Tone

Our tone is typically semi-formal, conversational yet professional. When writing, consider the reader's state of mind. Are they concerned about the health of their garden? Worried about an invoice? Excited for the start of the season? Adjust the tone of your writing to accommodate the reader's emotional state.

### Best Practices

- Use active voice. Avoid passive voice.
- Avoid slang and jargon. Write as clearly as possible.
- Use positive language rather than negative language.



# Style Guide

## Grammar and Mechanics

- Group related ideas together.
- Lead with the main point.
- Be concise. Use short words and sentences.
- Be consistent. Stick to the rules outlined in this guide.

### Abbreviations and Acronyms

If using an abbreviation or acronym, spell it out the first time you mention it. Then use the short version for all other references.

First use: Seattle Urban Farm Company (SUFCo)  
Subsequent uses: SUFCo

### Use Active Voice / Avoid Passive Voice

In active voice, the subject of the sentence does the action. In passive voice, the subject of the sentence has the action done to it.

Active: Kathy harvested carrots.  
Passive: The carrots were harvested by Kathy.

### Capitalization

Title case capitalizes the first letter of every word except articles, prepositions, and conjunctions. Use title case for:

Email subject lines  
Blog post titles and subtitles  
Website titles and subtitles

Sentence case capitalizes the first letter of the first word. Use sentence case for:

Social media posts  
Email body text  
Blog post body text

When writing out an email address or website URL, use all lowercase.

carl@seattleurbanfarmco.com  
seattleurbanfarmco.com

## **Contractions**

Use as appropriate. They can give your writing a more conversational tone.

## **Emoji**

We like emoji, but use them sparingly.

## **Numbers**

Spell out numbers between 1-10. For larger numbers, use the numeral.

I ate nine sun golds today.

Just kidding, I ate 36 sun golds today.

Use commas for numbers with more than three digits: 10,545 sun golds

## **Dates**

Write as follows: 5/24/18

## **Decimals and Fractions**

Write fractions in numerical form:  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup bone meal

Use decimal points if necessary, only up to two places: 3.14

## **Percentages**

Use the % symbol.

## **Ranges and Spans**

Use a hyphen (-) to indicate a range or span of numbers: 50-60 days to maturity

## **Money**

Use the dollar sign before the amount. Include a decimal and number of cents:

\$40.00

\$1.99

## **Telephone Numbers**

Use dots without spaces between numbers and no parentheses: 206.123.1234

## **Temperature**

Use the degree symbol and capital F for Fahrenheit: 98.6°F

## **Time**

Use numerals and AM or PM, with a space in between. Always use minutes:

8:00 AM

9:30 PM

Use a hyphen between times to indicate a time period: 8:00 AM - 9:30 PM

Specify time zones in three letters when necessary: PST

Be specific about centuries and decades:

the 1970s

the 1880s

## **Punctuation**

### **Apostrophes**

The apostrophe's most common use is making a word possessive. If the word already ends in an "s", do not add an extra "s":

I found Sam's truck keys.

I found Chris' truck keys.

### **Colons**

Use a colon to start a list: Ready to harvest: spinach, lettuce mix, beets.

### **Commas**

When writing a list, always use the serial comma (aka Oxford comma):

With comma: Brad eats lots of potatoes, spinach, barley, and mustard.

Without comma: Brad eats lots of potatoes, spinach, barley and mustard.

### **Dashes and hyphens**

Use a hyphen (-) with spaces to indicate a span or range: Monday - Friday

### **Ellipses**

Ellipses (...) can be used to indicate that you're trailing off before the end of a thought. We like to use them to add humor to otherwise challenging situations.



## **Periods, Question Marks, Exclamation Points**

Periods, question marks, and exclamation points go inside quotation marks. They go outside parentheses when the parenthetical is part of a larger sentence, and inside parentheses when the parenthetical stands alone.

Brad said, "I found my keys."

Brad ate a carrot (and he ate tortilla chips).

Brad ate carrots and tortilla chips. (The carrots were purple.)

Leave a single space between sentences.

Be careful with exclamation points. Never use more than one at a time.

## **Quotation marks**

Use quotes to refer to words and letters, titles of short works (like articles and poems), and direct quotations.

Periods and commas go within quotation marks. If a question mark is part of the quotation, it goes within. If you're asking a question that ends with a quote, it goes outside the quote.

Use single quotation marks for quotes within quotes.

Who was it that said, "A fool and his carrot are easily parted"?

Brad said, "A wise man once told me, 'A fool and his carrot are easily parted.'"

## **Semicolons**

Semicolons may indicate that you are writing long sentences that could be simplified. See if you can break it up into a few short phrases.

## **Ampersands**

Ampersands are cool, but only appropriate in headings and names that already include them.

## **Pronouns**

If gender is unknown or irrelevant, use "they," "them," and "their" as a singular pronoun. Use "he/him/his" and "she/her/hers" pronouns as appropriate.

## **URLs and Websites**

Capitalize the names of websites and web publications. Don't italicize.

Avoid spelling out URLs when possible. If writing a web address, leave off `http://www.`

seattleurbanfarmco.com

## **Text Formatting**

Use italics to indicate the title of a long work (like a book, movie, or album) or to emphasize a word.

*High-Yield Vegetable Gardening*  
Those tomatoes are *epic*.

Left-align text. Use center align if necessary for titles and very short pieces of content.

Leave one space between sentences, never two.

Use positive language rather than negative language.

## **Names and Titles**

The first time you mention a person in writing, refer to them by their first and last names. On all other mentions, refer to them by their first name.

Capitalize individual job titles when referencing to a specific role. Don't capitalize when referring to the role in general terms.

Our new Maintenance Manager starts today.  
All of the farmers ate carrots.

## **States, Cities, and Countries**

Spell out all city and state names. Don't abbreviate city names.

Per AP Style, all cities should be accompanied by their state, with the exception of: Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Honolulu, Houston, Indianapolis, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Miami, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, New Orleans, New York, Oklahoma City, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Salt Lake City, San Antonio, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, Washington.

On first mention, write out United States. On subsequent mentions, US is fine. The same rule applies to any other country or federation with a common abbreviation (European Union, EU)



## Style Guide

# Writing about Seattle Urban Farm Company

Our company's legal entity name is: Seattle Urban Farm, LLC

Our trade name is: Seattle Urban Farm Company

Abbreviate our name as: SUFCo

Refer to SUFCo as “we,” not “it.”

## Writing Blog Posts

A blog post can be written by any member of the Sufco team. If you are interested in a subject or passionate about an idea, you are the right person to write the post.

All blog posts end up in the same library. Refer to the list of tags within the library to make sure your post is easy to find and categorized correctly.

We can never have too many blog posts. Ideally a new post will go up at least once per week.

### Guidelines

**Be Enthusiastic:** Readers need to know that we love what we do and that gardening is supposed to be fun, even when it's hard or disappointing.

**Be Specific:** Provide readers with information they can use, such as specific crop variety names and vendors for preferred products.

**Keep it Short:** Keep paragraphs limited to one idea and the whole post limited to 1,000 words or less. Most posts should be 300-500 words.

**Add Links:** Link to other posts or outside sites that we like.

**Add Tags and Keywords:** Keywords and tags can make your post easier to find. Don't overuse them, but do use them.

**Add Photos:** We are fortunate to have a huge photo library. Use as many photos as are relevant, it's hard to have too many. Make sure to use alt text.



## Style Guide

### Writing Newsletters

We try to send a newsletter by email once a month. It doesn't always happen, which is okay. It's better to send fewer, better newsletters than more frequent and pointless ones.

Newsletter Content May Contain:

- Seasonal tips
- Profiles of existing or new gardens
- Crop profiles
- Podcast episode updates
- Promotional information about our books
- Calendars of upcoming events

Newsletter templates have been created in our Mailchimp account. Use these templates whenever you create a newsletter. If you see an issue with the template, say something.

Make sure your newsletter has a subject line. We've missed this before and it's pretty embarrassing. Subject lines should be in title case and highlight the key story in the newsletter.

Use alt text: Some email clients disable images by default. Include an alt tag to describe the information in the image for people who aren't able to see it.

Test your campaigns: Use the preview mode to begin. Read your campaign out loud to yourself, then send a test to make sure everything works. Have someone else read through the newsletter before sending (when possible).



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## Writing Emails

Our clients are always referred to as clients (never customers).

Always include a subject line.

Maintenance email subject lines should include the client's name and the date of the visit.

When drafting an email, leave the recipients name empty until you have finished, reread, and made edits. It is easy to accidentally send a partially written email. We don't want to do this.

Make sure your email includes a signature. For example:

Thanks!  
Carl

Check out our weekly podcast on edible gardening. It's called Encyclopedia Botanica and it's free! Subscribe on iTunes or your favorite podcast player so you never miss an episode!

Seattle Urban Farm Company  
[www.seattleurbanfarmco.com](http://www.seattleurbanfarmco.com) | 206.816.9740  
Our Books | Instagram | Facebook | Newsletter | Podcast



## Style Guide

### Writing For Social Media

We use social media to build relationships with clients, readers, and other urban farmers.

It also creates opportunities to say things people may misinterpret or disagree with. We've been trolled on social media before and it is not fun.

Sufco has a presence on most major social media platforms. Here are our most active accounts and what we usually post on each:

-Instagram: Our most active channel. Share tips, promote the podcast and books. Post jobs and events.

-Facebook: Functions as a backup to Instagram. We post here, but it has a much smaller reach.

-Twitter: Facebook posts are automatically reposted on twitter. We haven't used it much beyond that.

-Pinterest: We have used this for client specific pages and projects and have a few public boards. It could be more active in the future.

When appropriate, tag the subject of your post on Instagram or Facebook.

Avoid directly tweeting at or otherwise publicly tagging a post subject with messages like, "Hey, we wrote about you!" Never ask for retweets, likes, or favorites.

We have a list of hashtags that can be added to social media posts. Check the Google Drive document titled "Social Media Hashtags."



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## Writing for Accessibility

We want our content to be available to any and all readers.

We want our content to be accessible to people using a screen reader, keyboard navigation, or Braille interface. It should be accessible to users of all cognitive capabilities.

As you write, consider:

- Would this language make sense to someone who doesn't think about vegetables all day?
- Could someone quickly scan this and understand what its about?
- If someone can't see the colors or images, is the message still clear?
- Does this work well on mobile devices?

### **Avoid Directional Language**

Try not to use language that requires the reader to see the page. This is helpful for many reasons, including layout changes on mobile devices.

### **Employ a Hierarchy**

Put the most important information at the beginning. Create a new paragraph for each new idea. Separate different topics with headings.

Create an outline before writing the content.

### **Write How People Talk**

Write short sentences and use familiar words. Avoid jargon or technical words. If you need to use an abbreviation or acronym, explain what it means the first time you use it.

### **Use Alt Text**

The alt tag describes an image. It should be included on all images.

Each browser handles alt tags differently. Use captions when possible.



# Style Guide

## Word List

Basic terminology to keep in mind:

- clients (not customers)
- farmer
- gardener (not as good as farmer, but often necessary)
- grower (a good replacement for a professional or experienced farmer)
- edible landscaping
- annual vegetables
- perennial vegetables
- maritime climate
- empower (people to grow food)
- sharing knowledge