



# OKLAHOMA



## Oklahoma Branding and Identity Guidelines



OKLAHOMA

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## Part 1 – Our brand

Like every robust brand, Oklahoma’s image must be carefully managed.

These guidelines ensure the correct and consistent use of our brand elements, which strengthens our state by unifying our message and strategically delivering it to our audience.

These standards apply to all state agencies and employees – yes, that means you.

Consistency is a significant component of brand creation and management. Branding requires smart reliability over time.

In this spirit, we are pleased to present the Oklahoma logo and guidelines for its use.

## Part 2 – Our visual identity

### Our core visual elements

- Logo.
- Tagline.
- Color.
- Font (typography).
- Photography.
- Graphic elements.



**The Oklahoma logo is the most important aesthetic element of our visual identity, and it functions as a powerful identifier of our state.**

The design of our logo is based on shapes and colors embedded in our history. The form is inspired by our native heritage. It reflects the earth, sky, water, agriculture and forest. The colors speak to the seasons. The white star is a powerful symbol of America that is a part of our state seal and on the original flag of the state. Chevrons acknowledge our military. These elements form a circle and direct their energy inward, dramatizing Oklahoma as a hub at the center of America. This symbol invited everyone to join us here in an embracing community, to take in countless unexpected experiences and explore genuine opportunity.

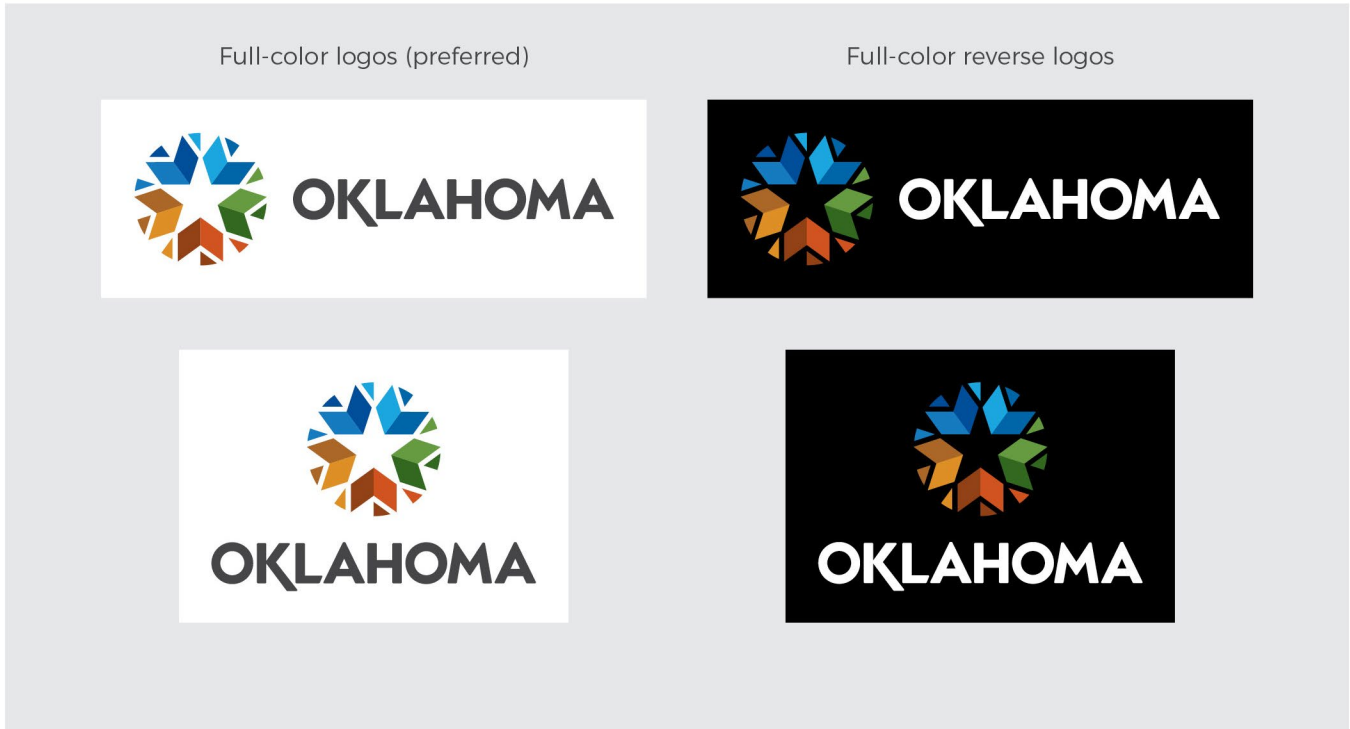
The logo is used on externally facing communications, internal employee communications, signage and fleet. It instantly presents a visual identity and signals to our audience a communication is from Oklahoma.

### Approval process

Consistent and proper use of the logo is vital for building recognition for our brand. To protect the Oklahoma brand and ensure its uses are consistent with the state's styles and standards, approval is required on all designs using this logo. Approval for one use or design does not imply general approval for the use of the logo in other applications. The process is simple and no forms are required. Email Amy Blackburn at [amy.blackburn@ltgov.ok.gov](mailto:amy.blackburn@ltgov.ok.gov) with the design and details or questions.

## The primary logo

The logo has two standard configurations – vertical and horizontal. While there are several versions of the logo, there’s only one preferred version – full color on a white background. A reverse version of the full-color logo is available for use on dark or black backgrounds. Custom configurations and colors are an option for special formats, such as signage or digital icons, but these should only be used in consultation with Amy Blackburn at [amy.blackburn@ltgov.ok.gov](mailto:amy.blackburn@ltgov.ok.gov).



## Logo do's and don'ts

**DON'T** reduce the logo in print to less than 1/4 inches.



For online and other screen applications, **DON'T** reduce our logo to less than 36 pixels tall.



**DO** use a preferred background of white when using the Oklahoma logo. If you must use a nonwhite background, **DON'T** let it hide our logo. When using the logo on a colored background or photograph, always make sure the surrounding area is simple and provides enough contrast to be visually legible and distinct.

**DO** let the logo breathe. The Oklahoma logo is most visible and effective when surrounded by open space. As you'll see in the diagram, unobstructed clear space must surround the logo in all situations. At minimum, this space must be equal to the measure of a square drawn within the star of the symbol. More clear space is ideal. In special cases, such as signage, it may be acceptable to reduce the clear space around the logo so it reproduces larger for improved legibility – please email Amy Blackburn at [amy.blackburn@ltgov.ok.gov](mailto:amy.blackburn@ltgov.ok.gov).



Here are several more **DON'Ts**:

- Substitute fonts.
- Alter colors.
- Alter the shape.
- Remove or separate elements.
- Tilt the logo.
- Distort the shape.
- Rearrange the elements.
- Add elements or decorate the logo.
- Scale individual elements.
- Substitute other words or phrases.

### **The online logo**

- Must be clearly displayed and legible.
- Must be linked to the [Oklahoma homepage](#).
- Should appear on the homepage of each Oklahoma affiliate website, but need not appear on the other pages in the site.
- Should not be animated.
- Use only the approved logo files. Do not redraw, repropotion or embellish the logo.

## Logo colors

While the full-color logo on a white background is preferred, there are also six monochrome versions, each matching a segment of the full-color logo. These are used in instances where a more serious or subtle impression is desired. They may also be used if the color conceptually relates to the subject matter, e.g., using the green monochrome logo for environmental matters.



### Black and reverse logos

Black and reverse logos can be used in two-color applications. The reverse logos may be used on colored backgrounds. Grayscale black and reverse logos show the different segments of the chevrons while the flat black and reverse logos do not. Flat versions of the logo may only be used where technical limitations prevent using another version, e.g., printing the logo on a small pen.

### Getting the logo

Email Amy Blackburn at [amy.blackburn@ltgov.ok.gov](mailto:amy.blackburn@ltgov.ok.gov) to obtain the correct logo. Specify the logo you would like and the anticipated use. The logos are available as .jpg and .png files. The .jpg and .png files can be scaled, but they must remain proportionally balanced.

Obtaining a logo is not an approval for its publication or use in a document. The final use and design must be approved by sending a second email to Amy Blackburn at [amy.blackburn@ltgov.ok.gov](mailto:amy.blackburn@ltgov.ok.gov) with the final design or screen capture of its use.

### Agency logos

When designing your agency's logo, follow these guidelines:

- Place the agency name below Oklahoma.
- Agencies may choose any one of the Oklahoma brand colors for their names.
- However, "Oklahoma" must always remain Dark Slate Gray (Page 10).
- Online agency logos must be linked to the agency's homepage.

## **Key takeaways:**

- Choose the appropriate configuration for your format.
- The full-color version is preferred.
- Make sure the logo is clear and easily readable against the background.
- Respect the protected area.
- Don't alter the logo art.
- Get approval from Amy Blackburn.

## **Type and fonts**

Clear and consistent typography improves the accessibility of information and unifies our look and feel across all state agencies and departmental touchpoints.

### **Primary font**

Montserrat is the primary font in all our marketing materials and professionally produced communications.

### **Substitute font**

As Montserrat does not come as a standard system font on all computers, Arial can be used for all internally produced correspondence. This includes any communications created using the Microsoft Office suite such as PowerPoint presentations, Word documents, Excel sheets or email messages.

### **Other fonts**

Other typefaces may be used in campaigns where Montserrat does not function to communicate the appropriate character. Other fonts should be approved by Amy Blackburn before they are implemented.

Do not distribute fonts installed in our systems, as it is an infringement of copyright law.

## **Tagline**

While our marketing efforts may use many variable campaign themes or messages within copy, "Imagine that." is the only tagline that may be used across the state for external communications.

The tagline can be used as part of headlines, in body copy or as a tagline signoff. The tagline is not to be used alone as a headline.

No matter the use, the tagline should always be in Montserrat Semibold sentence case and end with a period. Do not italicize or use all caps.



### **With a headline:**

- The tagline may be used as a response to a statement in a headline.
- The tagline must be beneath the headline.

### **Tagline signoff:**

- The tagline must be centered on the logo.

The tagline should be used on externally facing applications, such as advertising, collateral, posters, websites, trade show materials, videos and interior facility signage (see Pages 17-18 for these guidelines).

### **Tagline color**

The tagline may only be used in the color options available for the logo. The preferred color is Sky Blue (Page 10) on a white background. If necessary, a black background may be used.

### **Tagline art files**

The tagline is also available as graphic art files to ensure correct visual presentation of the tagline in documents.

## **Color**

**Next to our logo, color is the most recognizable element of our visual identity. Our colors are inviting and reflect the essence of our state.**

Each of our six core brand colors comes in two hues – bright and dark. These two hues make up the different color segments of our logo. The bright and dark hues provide a good range of color options that function on both light and dark backgrounds.

### **Color for accessibility**

The core brand palette has been designed with accessibility contrast and color standards in mind. The dark hues of each color pass WCAG AA standards for normal text on a white background. The bright hues of each color pass WCAG AA standards for normal text on a dark background.

## Color specifications

Included here are specifications for printing with four-color process (CMYK), digital presentations (RGB and HEX) and printing with Pantone inks (spot color printing). For nontraditional reproduction methods, such as embroidery and silkscreen, make a visual match to the color as it appears in the Pantone coated swatch book.

Note the CMYK, RGB and HEX values shown may not use the same formula as what Pantone provides. These values have been carefully chosen for the Oklahoma brand. Use the CMYK, RGB and HEX values shown here, and only use Pantone formulas when printing in spot color.



Sky Blue

Woodland Green

Clay Red



Prairie Gold

Water Blue

Slate Gray

## Graphic elements

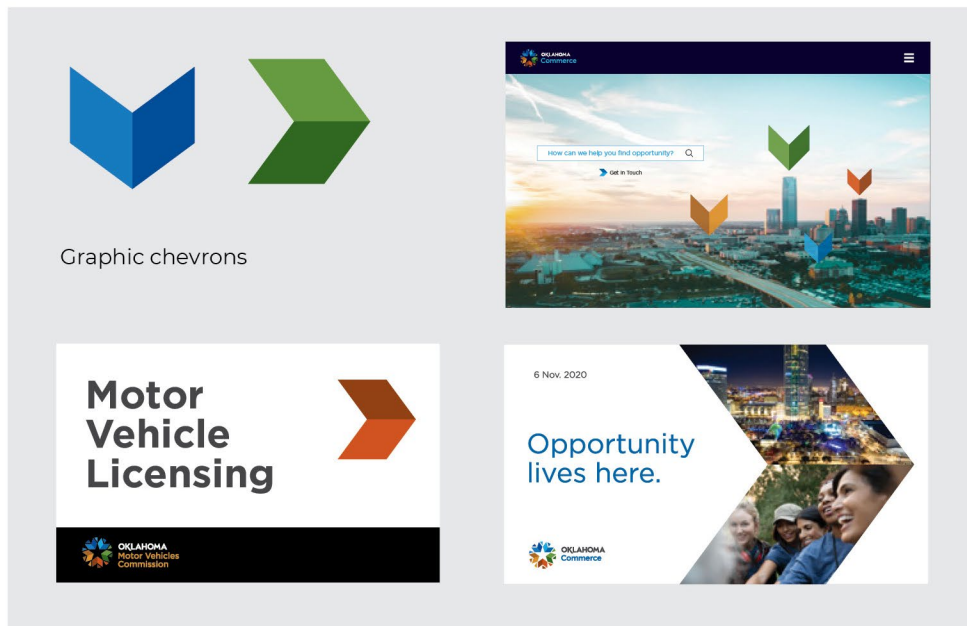
### Chevrons

Not only do our unique graphic elements create visual cohesion across our materials, they also reinforce our brand promise through communication. Our chevron graphics are design elements taken from the Oklahoma symbol. In layout, they are used to provide color and energy and to direct viewers' eyes to important elements.

The chevrons may be used in any of our core brand colors or in black and white. Colors outside of our core brand palette must not be used in the chevrons.

Use of the chevrons may be bold and overt or light and understated. Transparency may be used to make the graphic chevrons appear more subtle or to have them integrate better with backgrounds.

The chevrons may also be used as a holding shape for imagery or used in graphic patterns.



Graphic chevrons

Graphic chevrons in use

## Symbol as supergraphic

The symbol from the Oklahoma logo may be used as a supergraphic. It is used to highlight our presence and provide an energetic element in our designs.

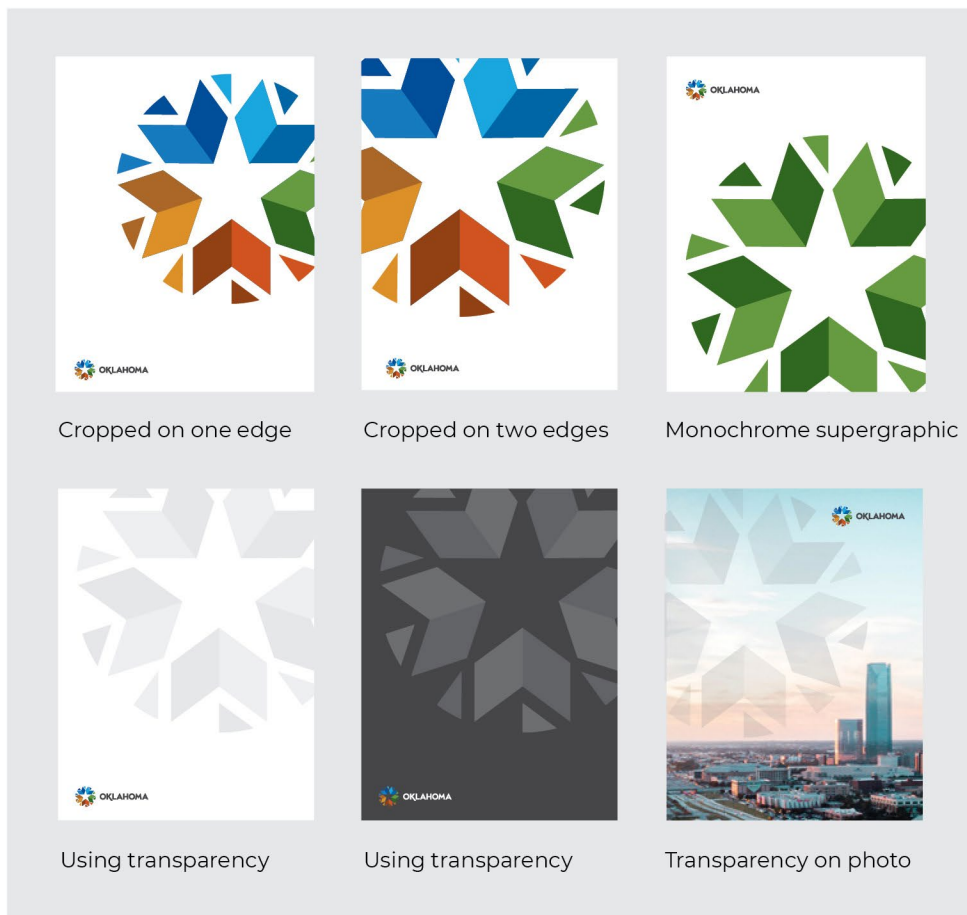
The supergraphic is not a replacement for the logo – it must always be used in addition to the Oklahoma logo.

The supergraphic is cropped on one or two edges, but never three or four sides.

This crop is consistent to ensure the star within the symbol is fully visible.

The supergraphic may be used in full color, monochrome in any of the core brand colors or in black and white.

Transparency may be used to make the graphic chevrons appear more subtle or to have them integrate better with backgrounds.



Supergraphic in use

## Part 3 – Specific standards

### Business cards

These are the three approved business card designs. Contact Amy Blackburn for information on how to obtain Oklahoma business cards.



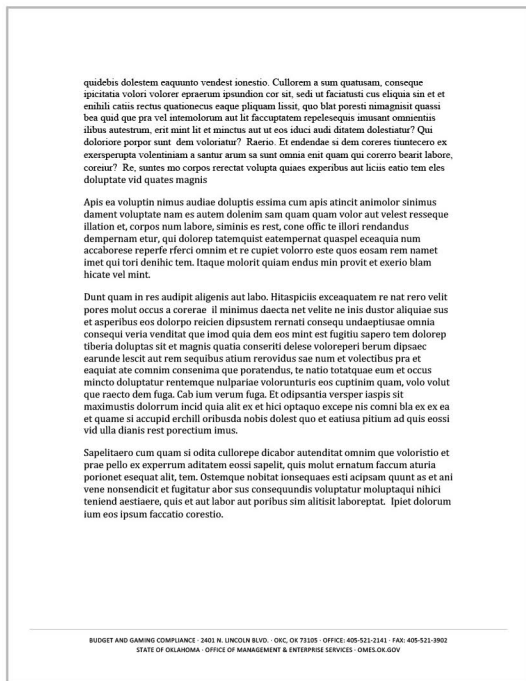
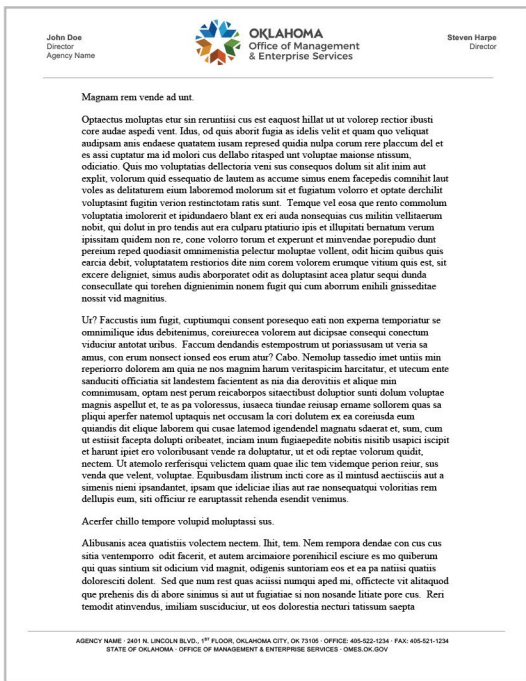
### Envelopes

This is an example of an approved Oklahoma envelope.



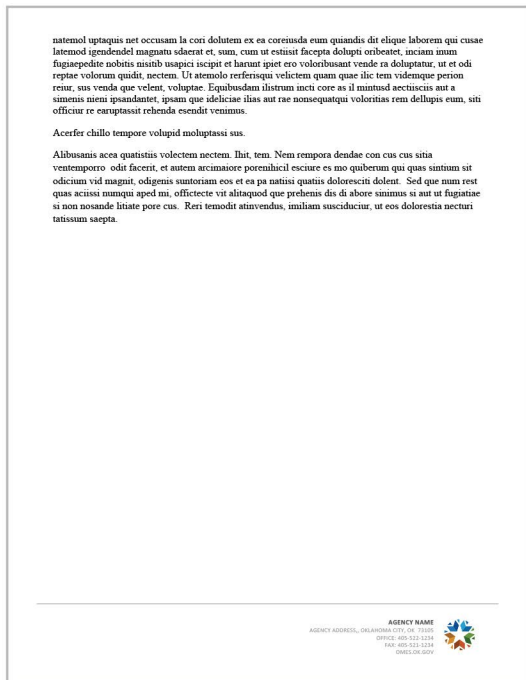
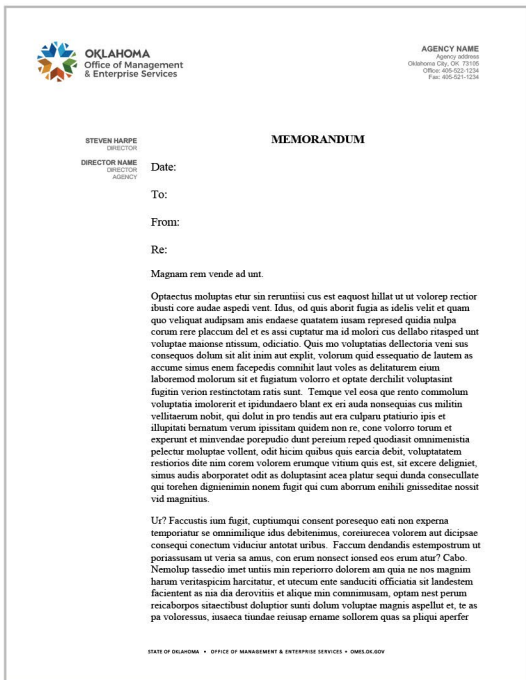
# Letterhead

The example below is an approved Oklahoma letterhead.



# Memos

Memos are meant for internal communications and should use this template with an Oklahoma closing page if more than a page in length. Below is an example of the approved memo template.



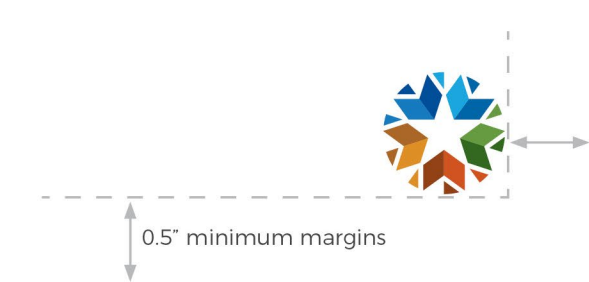
## Reports

Reports will often be seen by the public. Either the primary logo or agency logo should be placed on the bottom right of the cover page.



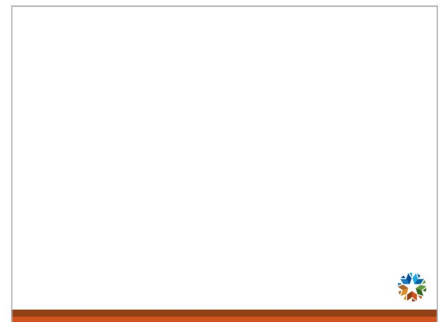
## Publications

Publications are usually meant for external audiences, and while they can be printed, they are considered digital first. These are the bigger things we do when we want to be fancy. The logo will always go on the bottom right of the cover.



## PowerPoints

There are several options for clean, open templates for electronic presentations.



## Photography

Whether you're shooting original photography or selecting shots from an image bank, keep our style and subject guidance in mind to achieve a look aligned with our brand essence.

Our photography should capture the following:

- Community.
- Opportunity.
- Culture.
- Natural beauty.
- Pioneer spirit.
- Activities.

Show moments of interaction/connection between people, communities and environments.

Show Oklahoma has much more than you expect.

Show a wide range of people, demonstrating our diversity.

## Resolution requirements

**For print:** 300 dpi recommended; 200 dpi minimum (JPG, TIFF; CMYK mode).

**For web:** 120 dpi (JPG, PNG; RGB mode).

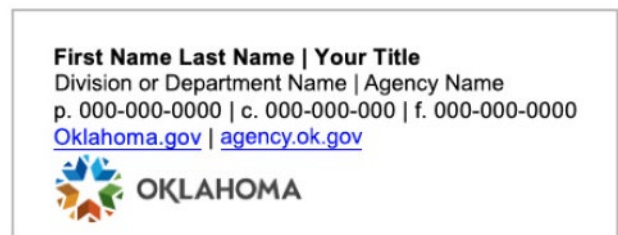
**For video:** Recommended minimum dimensions of 720 by 1280 pixels.

## Emails

Consistent email signatures deliver a visually coherent look across Oklahoma state agencies. Just as our business cards follow a standardized approach, email signatures should be consistent. Consider your email signature your digital business card and include the appropriate information.

Email signatures should include:

- Your name.
- Job title.
- Division and department or unit.
- Agency name.
- Phone number.
- Fax number (if applicable).
- Cell number (if applicable).
- Oklahoma website ([Oklahoma.gov](http://Oklahoma.gov)).
- Agency website ([agency.ok.gov](http://agency.ok.gov)).
- Oklahoma logo.



The first line of text should be 12-point Arial Bold, and the rest of the signature block is 12-point Arial.



Email signature templates and step-by-step instructions are available by contacting [branding@omes.ok.gov](mailto:branding@omes.ok.gov). The logo size, text weight and colors should not be adjusted from those templates. Do not add anything else to the signature block.

## Signage

Signage provides a means to consistently identify, locate, direct and inform across State of Oklahoma buildings and offices.

### Bulletin boards

Only State of Oklahoma or legally required material can be posted on publicly viewable bulletin boards. If a date is present on the material, the posting must be removed when that date passes.

## Trade show materials

### Display banners

The display should visually communicate what your division or department does, addressing the needs and interests of the audience. Bold graphics and effective photos will attract a person walking from one display to the next. The following standards are a starting place:

- Use your complete agency and division name to identify your display. Acronyms and most abbreviations are not appropriate.
- Headlines should be readable from at least 10 feet.
- Use only your division or department's key messages on the display. Provide the details in a takeaway piece.
- Pictures should be 5 inches by 7 inches or larger.
- The Oklahoma logo should be readable from a distance of at least 25 feet.

### Tablecloths

Tablecloths should adhere to all branding standards and guidelines and appropriately name the division or marketable program, including a website.

### Trade show booth

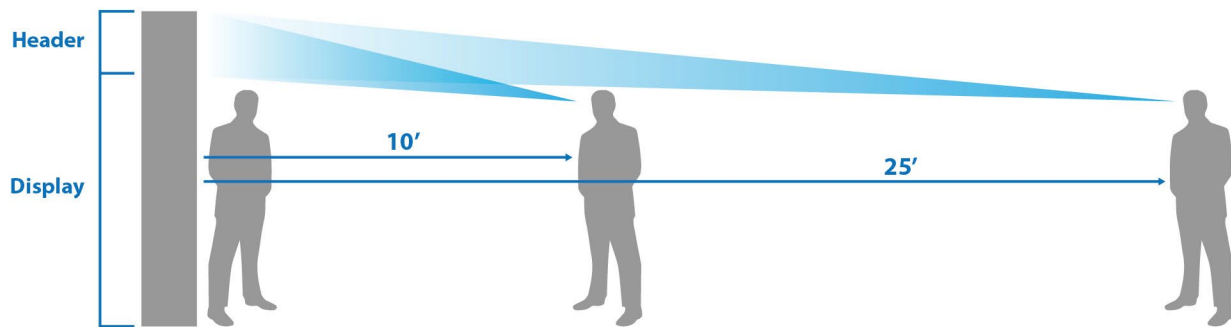
Trade shows offer an excellent opportunity for brand deployment. Customers are exposed to Oklahoma products and services, and are provided the opportunity to speak with and have their questions immediately answered by knowledgeable staff.

All appropriate supporting brand attributes, including typography, imagery, color palette, writing style and tone, should be incorporated. Booth graphics and materials are to establish brand presence and provide a backdrop for event staff.

The Oklahoma logo should be prominently displayed, and proper usage guidelines followed.

## Exhibit design

Exhibits, like ads, consist of two parts – headers and display. Oklahoma branding for a booth or banner should always appear within the header at the top of an exhibit system, just above eye level. The logo should be visible from a minimum distance of 25 feet. Headlines should be visible from a minimum of 10 feet. Detail messaging should also be readable from a minimum of 10 feet, but may appear lower than eye level as it is meant to be read at a closer distance when not blocked by other booth visitors.



## Additional considerations

There are numerous considerations when planning an exhibit booth. All of these elements should be taken into account to produce the best experience possible:

- Physical attributes of the space, e.g., carpet, furniture, workstations, countertops, storage.
- Placement of graphics and furniture and their impact on visitor movement through the booth.
- Supporting video, interactive presentations, slide shows, brochure displays.
- Safety – sharp corners, cables, outlets and plugs, or potential damage caused by tight spaces.

## Promotional items

Promotional items are used to build the Oklahoma brand and must:

- Use the approved logo colors.
- Adhere to logo clear space requirements.
- Use the appropriate file type for the application.
- Have an appropriately sized logo.
- Complement the Oklahoma brand essence.
- Be approved by Amy Blackburn.
- Be audience or culturally appropriate.

## Vehicles

Please refer to the state standard for vehicle marking, [47 O.S. 151](#). OMES Fleet Management can apply the appropriate markings for a fee. Vehicles shall not display dealers' or vendors' decals, or employees' personal license plates, emblems, stickers, mascots or decorations.

## Font usage

For letters, memos, reports, publications, electronic presentations and emails, a standard nondecorative font, particularly our primary font, Montserrat, should be used. The font size should be no smaller than 10 point and no bigger than 16 point for body copy. Headline font sizes can be larger.

Acceptable fonts include:

**Serif:** Calisto, Cambria, Georgia and Times New Roman.

**Sans-serif:** Montserrat, Arial, Calibri, Helvetica and Verdana.

## Part 4 – The written and virtual world

### Written style and grammar

Oklahoma follows The Associated Press style with a few exceptions. Referencing the most recent *AP Stylebook* or signing up to use the service’s website at [apstylebook.com](http://apstylebook.com) can prevent many a fall down the stylistic slippery slope of errors.

### Exceptions to AP style

#### Document titles

Use both italics and quotation marks when referring to works of literature and other documents. Titles of publications, reports, books, magazines, albums, movies, television shows, paintings, boats, airplanes and other large stand-alone works go in italics. Titles of smaller works such as chapters, poems, song titles and articles go in quotation marks. Titles of forms, procedural documents and webpages do not need italics or quotation marks.

**Example:** The song, “Your Favorite Song,” is on *The Best Album of All Time*.

#### Italics

Besides using italics for the titles of large works, italics can be used to cite an example. Bold is preferred over italics to emphasize words.

#### State

Uppercase state when used as State of Oklahoma or when referencing the State Capitol Building. Lowercase state when it stands alone.

### Plain language

Oklahoma is committed to communicating with language that is easy to understand. Plain language is a process that involves focusing clear, concise and easy to understand written communication on the needs of the intended audience. With everything you publish, your audience should be able to:

- Find what they need.
- Understand what they find.
- Use that information to meet their needs.

### Common stylistic and grammar errors

#### Abbreviations and acronyms

In general, avoid alphabet soup and spell out the full name if there’s a chance a reader won’t recognize the meaning of an abbreviation or acronym. A first reference should almost always be spelled out. On the first reference, the abbreviation or acronym should not follow in parentheses, especially if the shortened form is

used close to the spelled out first reference. In limited cases, if the abbreviation or acronym is more common than the long form, then use the short form (DVD, ATM, laser, scuba).

Keep in mind your audience. While some acronyms and abbreviations might be well-known to us and others within state government, outside these walls, most people would struggle to come up the meaning of the abbreviation.

### **Ampersands (&)**

Typically don't use them in place of "and." Occasional use in headlines and other headings is acceptable.

### **Capitalization**

When in doubt, don't capitalize. Do not capitalize these words: website, online, email, web, internet. Do not capitalize words just for emphasis. Do not capitalize common nouns. Do not capitalize departments and offices unless they contain a proper noun or are the official name. Do not capitalize governor when it appears alone in copy, but do capitalize Legislature when used alone and when it refers to a specific – like Oklahoma's – Legislature.

Regarding headlines, AP style for headlines is to capitalize the first word, proper names and the first word after a colon. Lowercase everything else.

### **Capitol and capital**

Capitalize Oklahoma Capitol and the Capitol when referring to the building in Oklahoma City. Follow the same practice when referring to the U.S. Capitol and other state capitols. Use capital for a city or town that is the seat of government: Oklahoma City is the capital of Oklahoma. When used in a financial sense, capital describes money, equipment or property used in a business by a person or corporation.

### **Commas (,)**

Do not use the serial or Oxford comma – the comma before the "and" in a simple series.

*This, that and the other thing.*

*We spoke with DHS, OETA and ODOT.*

Use a comma before the concluding conjunction in a series, however, if an integral element of the series requires a conjunction.

*I had orange juice, toast, and ham and eggs for breakfast.*

### **Company names and products**

Honor companies' conventions, according to their official websites (iPhone, YouTube, GlobalHealth). Refer to a company or product as "it." Refer to Oklahoma as "we." Abbreviate company, corporation, incorporated and limited when used after the name of a corporate entity: American Express Co., Carnival Corp., The Home Depot Inc., Virgin Atlantic Airways Ltd.

## Dash (-) versus hyphen (-)

Use en dashes typed with a space before and after – just like that.

To type an en dash:

- Windows: Alt + 0-1-5-0.
- Mac: Option key + minus key.

Hyphens are used to consolidate things, so to speak, and so, there are no spaces: 2-4 p.m. and 20-30 days, for example.

Hyphens also link words to form a single phrase and compound modifiers (first-time user, 500-acre farm). But don't hyphenate extremely common compounds (high school prom) or compounds containing an "-ly" adverb (quickly decided contest).

## Dates

Follow AP guidelines on which months to abbreviate. Spell out the day and abbreviate the month (if applicable) if it is used with a specific date (Sunday, Jan. 24, 2015). If just the month and year are used, spell out the month (January 2015).

## Exclamation points (!)

Do not overuse exclamation points. It causes them to lose relevance and become cliché. Use a comma after mild interjections. End mildly exclamatory sentences with a period. Use the exclamation point to express a "high degree" of surprise, incredulity or other strong emotion.

What's the difference between one exclamation point and three? There is none. One exclamation point will get your message across.

## Extreme writing

Don't use combinations of italic, bold, caps and underline: It was ***THE BEST*** report ever given.

## Numbers

It's really easier than you may think. With a few exceptions, spell out one through nine and first through ninth. Use figures for 10 and above. Here are a few exceptions:

Ages (5-year-old, 7 years old).

Dimensions (3 feet 9 inches).

Percentages. Spell out percent when used without a number (a few percent less). Use the symbol with numerals (1%, 4%).

Spell out the number and percent if at the beginning of a sentence, unless it's a headline.

Don't write "1/2." Instead spell out "half" or use "0.5" unless it's next to a whole number: 1 1/2, 3 1/2.

## Passive construction

Passive voice lengthens and confuses the sentence by using phrases to move the subject after the verb. Active sentence structure places the subject in the subject position and is preferred.

**Passive:** *Smith was appointed director by the committee.*

**Active:** *The committee appointed Smith director.*

## Purchase card

Spell out purchase card on first reference. In line with AP, if an abbreviation is used in subsequent references, P-card is the preferred form.

## Quotation marks

Periods and commas go within quotation marks.

*He said, "It was the best of times."*

*"It was the best of times," she said.*

Question marks within quotes follow logic. If the question is the quote, the mark goes inside the quotes. If it's a question that ends with a quote, the question mark goes outside the quotes.

*The teacher asked, "What makes life worth living?"*

*Who wrote the answer, "To be born with the gift of laughter and a sense that the world is mad"?*

Use single quotation marks for quotes within quotes.

*"She told me, 'I love you,'" he said.*

## Telephone numbers

Use figures with a hyphen separating numbers, e.g., 405-522-1234. If extension numbers are needed, use a comma to separate the main number from the extension, e.g., 405-522-1234, ext. 2.

## Times

Use figures except for noon and midnight. Use a colon to separate hours from minutes: 11 a.m., 1 p.m., 3:30 p.m., 9:30-11 a.m., 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

## Online presence

### Digital communications

Digital content is not the same as print content. People encounter and read it differently – they scan it, so you need to write it differently. Divide it into smaller chunks with subheadings.

## Spam

Don't unintentionally make emails to customers look like spam. This is especially important in subject lines. Avoid words like "free" and "win." Avoid misspellings, text-speak abbreviations and acronyms as these are on spam filter lists. Think about how the words will look in a customer's inbox.

## Social media

### Twitter guidelines

**Avatar:** 70 x 70 pixels.

**Background:** 1600 x 1200 pixels.

**Name:** 20-character limit.

**Bio:** 160-character limit.

**Website:** Link to [Oklahoma.gov](https://www.oklahoma.gov) or other approved marketable domain.

**Twitter URL:** Matches your account name.

### Facebook guidelines

**Profile picture:** 180 x 180 pixels.

**Facebook URL:** This can never be changed, so choose carefully.

**Page name:** No character limit.

**Page type:** Under Page, select Company, Organization or Institution and then Government Organization.

**Timeline Cover Photo:** 851 x 315 pixels.

### YouTube guidelines

**Channel art:** 2560 x 1440 pixels.

**Channel name:** Oklahoma - Imagine That.

**YouTube URL:** [youtube.com/c/OklahomaiImagineThat](https://youtube.com/c/OklahomaiImagineThat).

## Web applications

Visual elements of a web application should be customized to reflect its use to conduct official Oklahoma business. Follow the guidelines for the use of the Oklahoma logo outlined in this document.



## Websites

Good web design is essential for usability, accessibility, message clarity and reputation. Oklahoma agencies should also strive for accuracy, updating pages frequently and removing outdated pages. Follow the guidelines for the use of the Oklahoma logo outlined in this document.

**Searchability:** Write to be found. What words would people type into Google to find you? Use those words in your copy. But don't overuse the same phrase to the detriment of your writing or marketing.

**Legibility:** It's hard to read off a screen. It's 25% slower than print. Help your reader. Don't go crazy with bolding, italicizing and capitals. Never use underlining to highlight because it will make your text look hyperlinked and confuse your reader.

**Maintaining content:** Unlike print publications, web content can be edited and republished almost instantaneously. Although timeliness brings added responsibility, website visitors expect everything on the Oklahoma site to be relevant and up to date. To ensure content continues to meet the changing needs of your audience, maintaining it is a priority.

**Accessibility:** Don't exclude visually impaired or blind readers. Don't let your copy rely heavily on imagery and use tags and captions as opportunities to fully describe pictures. Remember to describe hyperlinks effectively in the text that is linked. Do not use linked text that prompts, "click here."

State of Oklahoma websites, resources and content must be accessible to users with disabilities. Oklahoma has adopted the [Information Technology Accessibility Standards](#) as our standard for accessibility, establishing that all sites should strive for conformance with the 2004 state law.

## Five quick writing tips

1. Use one space between sentences. We know your typing teacher told you two, but for the purposes of modern layout, one is enough.
2. Keep it to one thought per paragraph, especially online. Long bulky paragraphs tend to lose the readers' attention.
3. When you use "that," read the sentence again and imagine it without it. Chances are you don't need it.
4. Space and attention are limited, so get right to it. The first sentence should tell your reader exactly what to expect from the rest of the piece.
5. Use commas respectfully – they really aren't the punctuation for every situation. Sentences do not require several sprinkled about for effect.