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Description of document:	Treasury Department Style Manual, 2009(?)
Request date:	21-June-2014
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Source of document:	FOIA Request Disclosure Services Department of the Treasury Washington, DC 20220 Fax: 202-622-3895

June 30, 2014

RE: 2014-06-137

This letter is in response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the U.S. Department of the Treasury, dated June 21, 2014. You have requested a copy of the Treasury Department Style Manual.

Your request has been processed under the provisions of the FOIA. 5 U.S.C. § 552. A search was conducted within the Treasury Departmental Offices for records that would be responsive to your request. Our search located one document totaling 5 pages. After review of the documents, I have determined that they will be released in their entirety. The documents are enclosed, no exemptions have been claimed.

No fees were incurred in processing your request.

Sincerely,

Ryan Law
Director, FOIA and Transparency

Digitally signed by Ryan A. Law
DN: c=US, o=U.S. Government,
ou=Department of the Treasury,
ou=Departmental Offices, ou=People,
serialNumber=716333, cn=Ryan A. Law
Date: 2014.06.30 16:05:09 -04'00'

Enclosure

Treasury Elements of Style

I. General Notes on Style and Formatting

II. Letters

III. Effective Writing Tips

Proofread your work!!!

I. General Notes on Style and Formatting

1. **Clearance Sheets:** All documents must include clearance sheets.

2. **Margins:** One inch on all sides.

3. **Dates:**

    a. Use cardinal numbers for dates: March 15, 2009. (Do not use March 15th, 2009.)

    b. When writing only the month and day, omit the comma following the day: *Your March 15 speech was enlightening, Representative Smith.*

    c. When writing the full date, follow it with a comma: *Your letter of March 15, 2009, was insightful.*

4. **Spacing:** All documents should be single-spaced. Sometimes Microsoft Word defaults to 1.5 spacing – be aware of this and correct it. You can adjust spacing by highlighting your text, right clicking, and selecting "Paragraph . . ."

5. **Font:** Times New Roman, 12 point. Always.

6. **Page Numbers:** All documents should include page numbers, centered at the bottom of the page, in Times New Roman.

7. **TWO spaces after a period between sentences.**

8. **Serial comma:** In a list of more than two items, the item preceding "and" or "or" must also be followed by a comma:

    > The Department of the Treasury works with the Federal Reserve, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and various other entities to help regulate the financial system.
    > ↘

9. **Semicolons:** In lists where the individual items are punctuated with commas, the items themselves must be separated by semicolons:

    > The Department of the Treasury's responsibilities include managing federal finances; collecting taxes, duties, and monies paid to and due to U.S. government accounts; and managing government accounts and the public debt.

10. **Percentages:** Write out the word.

    > Example: *My memos are approved 15 percent more often than yours.*

11. **Acronyms and Abbreviations:**

    a. When an acronym is first used, it must be written out in full and then noted in parentheses. No internal quotation marks are necessary. The second time that acronym is used in a document it can be abbreviated: *The Making Home Affordable Program (MHA) is one component of the Administration's Financial Stability Plan. The Administration's foreclosure mitigation efforts are part of MHA.*

    b. Abbreviated names do not need a parenthetical note: *The American Recovery and Reinvestment is the name of the Administration's economic stimulus plan. The Recovery Act was signed into law on February 17, 2009.*

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12. **Page Breaks:** Do not let a title or heading "dangle" at the end of a page. To avoid this in Microsoft Word: Place your cursor at the end of the title or heading. Click on Paragraph in the tool bar. Click on the tab for line and page breaks. Check the box next to "Keep with next." Now your heading will stay with the next line of text.

II. Letters

1. Layout:

    a. The address block should begin on the **ninth** line of the page.

    b. The Secretary's name should be tabbed in at **three** inches.

    c. There should be **one** line of space between:

        i. The address block and the letter

        ii. The letter and "Sincerely"

    d. There should be **three** lines of space between "Sincerely" and "Timothy F. Geithner"

2. Addressing Letters:

    a. Members of Congress are either addressed as "Representative" or "Senator" – not "Congressman."

    b. House and Senate Offices have differently formatted address (U.S. vs. United States) and different ZIP codes.

        i.   The Honorable Joe Smith
             U.S. House of Representatives
             Washington, DC 20515

        ii.   The Honorable Claire Jones
             United States Senate
             Washington, DC 20510

    c. Committee Chair address block:

        i.   The Honorable Jake Brown
             Chairman
             Committee on Financial Services
             U.S. House of Representatives
             Washington, DC 20515

    d. If an incoming letter is addressed to more than one person (for example, Secretary Geithner, and Chairman Sperling), the other addressee must be cc'ed on the response.

3. Salutation and Opening:

    a. Salutations should read "Dear Representative/Senator Smith:", regardless of committee chairmanship or status, except for the Speaker of the House, addressed as "Dear Madam/Mr. Speaker"

b. Begin the text: "Thank you for your letter of February 4, 2009, . . . " (The month and day should be followed by a comma, then the year, then another comma.)

III. Effective Writing Tips

Focus on the readers—their concerns, priorities, needs:

- Give your readers what they need to know, not everything you know.

- Be direct. Answer all their questions, and put your main points at the beginning of the document; then provide your explanation and supporting information.

- Keep paragraphs and sentences short. Try to limit your paragraphs to six lines and your sentences to 17 to 20 words.

- Organize the information for the reader. Use bullets and headings for long, technical statements to make your document more readable. Begin each bulleted statement with a capital letter. Use a period at the end if each statement is a complete sentence; do not use any punctuation if each statement is not a complete sentence.

Choose words carefully:

- Write in the active voice. An active voice sentence has a subject that/who does an action to an object. "The Congress passed the bill," is an active voice sentence. "The bill was passed by the Congress," is a passive voice sentence.

- Use strong verbs—not abstract nouns. Do not write "make an announcement," just write, "announce."

- Do not use the word "ensure" without a modifier, e.g., "to help ensure." An absolute promise without caveat is rarely defensible.

- Avoid using false subjects like "it is, it was, there is, there are, there was, and there were." These words often begin a sentence and displace the true subject. For example, do not write: "It is the policy of the Treasury Department . . ." just write, "The Treasury Department's policy . . ."

- Avoid redundancies. Do not write, "joint partnerships," just write "partnerships." Do not write, "plan ahead," just write "plan."

- Use concrete words. Avoid words like "timely," which has a different meaning to different people. Avoid writing "bi-weekly," instead, write "twice a week" or "every two weeks."

- Avoid unnecessary words. Instead of "in reference to," use "about." Instead of "in the event of", use "if." Delete words such as "that," when the sentence makes sense without them. For example, instead of writing. "The book that you gave me . . ." write "The book you gave me . . ."

Create a positive tone:

- Avoid bureaucratic, technical, and legal terms. Use familiar language to create a tone that is personal, straightforward, confident, and human.

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- Use appropriate pronouns to give your document a more personal tone. For example, use "I" when referring to the signing official and "we" when referring to the agency or work group.
- Refer to a constituent or customer by name and as "he" or "she" as often as possible; avoid using impersonal phrases such as "the taxpayer" or "your constituent" when you know the person's name.