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**National Wildfire
Coordinating Group**



NWCG Style Guide

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Introduction

This Style Guide exists to save time, reduce stress, and brand NWCG publications and documents with a professional, consistent look.

Refer to the NWCG Publication and Web Portal Management page, <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/publication-and-web-portal-management>, for complete guidance on publications development, revision, and technical considerations.

For help using Styles and other features of Word, or creating Section 508 Accessible documents, reference the *NWCG Guidelines for Creating Accessible Electronic Documents*, <https://www.nwcg.gov/notices#accessibility>.

For questions on proper form and style not included in this document, NWCG follows the U.S. Government Publishing Office (GPO) Style Manual, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-STYLEMANUAL-2016/pdf/GPO-STYLEMANUAL-2016.pdf>.

NWCG General Style Guidance

Writing Style

Tone of Voice

- Informative – NWCG strives to instruct and inform by focusing on standards and qualifications needed to perform critical tasks in wildland fire operations. Information disseminated is accessible, of the highest quality, useful, and current.
- Confident – NWCG is committed to safe, effective, and coordinated wildland fire operations. Our brand embodies the mission of interagency collaboration, teamwork, honesty, and professionalism in complex and often high-stress environments.
- Effective – NWCG evaluates historical wildland fire events to identify patterns and improve processes in order to provide clear direction. Information should be factual, using plain language, and not based on interpretation.
- Active – NWCG communicates in active voice to make information concise and clear, which keeps sentences from becoming too complicated or wordy. The active voice conveys energy, is straightforward, and is easy to read.

Active versus Passive Voice – Examples

- Passive voice: The brakes were slammed on by them as the vehicle sped downhill.
- Active voice: They slammed on the brakes as the vehicle sped downhill.
- Passive voice: Your bicycle has been damaged.
- Active voice: I have damaged your bicycle.

Capitalization

NWCG always capitalizes the following:

- Proper names (e.g., places, names)
- Names of specific positions or references to a position (e.g., Operations Section Chief)
- Derivations of proper names (e.g., Alaskan)
- Names of organized bodies (e.g., Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of Agriculture)
- Civil, professional, military titles when immediately following the person's name or used alone as a substitute
- Names of specific positions (e.g., Division/Group Supervisor, Incident Commander)
- Named locations (e.g., Division A, Structure Protection Group, Branch X)
- The word "Tribal"
- NWCG forms and plans are usually capitalized (e.g., Incident Action Plan)

The following *are not* capitalized:

- Cardinal directions (i.e., north, south, northerly, northern) – if a cardinal direction is included in a proper name, it is then capitalized.
- Non-named locations such as division/group when used generally (e.g., attend division/group briefing versus attend Division A briefing)

NWCG capitalizes words in headings using the following rules:

- Capitalize the first and last word (e.g., Build the Team).
- Capitalize nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, verbs, and helping verbs (e.g., Felling a Large Diameter Tree).
- Do *not* capitalize short prepositions, articles, or short coordinating conjunctions (e.g., the, of, and)
- Capitalize the first letter after a hyphen in title case. Do not capitalize the first letter after the hyphen if the sentence merely starts with a hyphenated word (e.g., Ignition-Resistant Structures)

Many terms used by the wildland fire community are capitalized only depending on usage – for example, Operations is capitalized when it is referring to the Operations Section Chief, but not when general firing operations are being discussed.

Compound Adjectives

- NWCG hyphenates many compound phrases when they are being used as an adjective, but not when used as a verb.
 - The intent of IPTM is to move learning to on-the-job training. **on-the-job is used as an adjective to describe the kind of training*
 - On the job, it is expected that trainees will reference the Incident Position Standards. **on the job is used as a verb*
 - When checking in, list all crewmember names. **checking in is used as a verb*
 - During the check-in process, list all crewmember names. **check-in is used as an adjective to describe the process*

Punctuation

- NWCG utilizes Oxford commas.
- Type only one space between sentences.

Acronyms

- Acronyms should be spelled out the first time they are utilized in a document. Phrases that have acronyms are typically capitalized (e.g., Position Task Book (PTB)).
- First occurrence of positions, plans, or forms should be spelled out followed by the acronym in parentheses. Second occurrences should only be the acronym, e.g., Incident Action Plan (IAP), Incident Management Team (IMT).
- Include common acronyms even if it is only used once.

Numerals

Numbers can be written as figures or words (e.g., 2 vs two).

- A figure is used for numbers equal to or over 10, with the exception of the first word of a sentence.
- If 2 or more numbers appear in a sentence and 1 of them is 10 or greater, figures are used for all the numbers (e.g., Division A needs 4 staple guns and 500 staples).
- Time, money, percentages, and measurements are always expressed as figures and do not affect use of words for other numbers in the sentence (e.g., Five firefighters walked 50 miles).
- Commas are utilized in numbers four digits or greater (e.g., 1,500 feet).

Time

- NWCG typically uses 24-hour or military time, however if a.m. or p.m. indication is needed, lower case is utilized (e.g., a.m. or p.m.).
- Colons are utilized (e.g., 12:30, 17:00).

Lists

- If there is only one bullet below a stem sentence, do not use the bullet. Instead, merge with the stem sentence to make a full sentence.
- Utilize consistent punctuation within each list (punctuation can vary between lists in a document).
- If any of the items in a list are a complete sentence, utilize periods at the end of all items.
- Lists of items or short phrases do not require periods at the end of each item.
- Numbered lists (versus bulleted) should be utilized only when the list is identifying steps that must be completed in a specific order, identify prioritization, or similar. Otherwise lists should be bulleted.
- For learner facing materials such as a PowerPoint presentations, Position Task Books, or asynchronous web-based training unit:
 - Use at least three bulleted or numbered list items and not more than five, when possible.
 - Start with an active verb, when possible.
 - Include a stem sentence before beginning a bulleted or numbered list.

Other Style Notes

- Stay away from using the same word multiple times in a sentence or paragraph.
- Do not include text such as “in the next module” or “on the previous page,” or in some other way referencing what happened somewhere else in the document – this is not Section 508 compliant.
 - **Exception:** Instructor Guides. It is acceptable to say, “in Unit X,” referencing the specific title of the unit rather than its location or number.

- Use “that” when you cannot remove the subsequent clause without changing the meaning of the sentence. Use “which” if you can remove the clause from the sentence (e.g., The dozer that has a broken track is in staging. The excavator, which is fully operational, is on the line.)
- Do not end a sentence in a preposition (e.g., at, by, for, in, of, on, per, to).

Citations

NWCG Products

- NWCG Publications: *Title (italicized)*, PMS number – e.g., *NWCG Standards for Aerial Ignition*, PMS 501
- Courses: Course number, course title – e.g., S-190, Introduction to Wildland Fire Behavior
- WFSTAR Modules: Course number, course title (course acronym): module name – e.g., RT-130, Wildland Fire Safety Training Annual Refresher (WFSTAR): Grant West
*When WFSTAR is mentioned the second time in a product/unit, this can be shortened to RT-130, WFSTAR: Module Name
- ICS Forms: Form name (ICS number) – e.g., Activity Log (ICS 214)
- GSA Forms (OF and SF forms): Form name, form designator (OF/SF) and number – e.g., Incident Time Report, OF 288; Emergency Equipment Shift Ticket, OF 297
- Job Aids: *Title (italicized)*, job aid number – e.g., *Felling Operations and Tree Analysis Job Aid*, J-212

Other Citations

- GSA Forms: Crew Time Report (CTR), SF 261
- All other citations not listed above follow the GPO Style Manual

URLs

- When referencing a website, include the full URL.
 - Correct: Visit <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications> for a full list of NWCG publications.
 - Incorrect: Visit the NWCG [website](#) for a full list of NWCG publications.
- NWCG publications should link to the attributes page (e.g., <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/pms461>), not directly to the PDF.

Glossary

NWCG products do not include a separate glossary. The *NWCG Glossary of Wildland Fire Terminology*, PMS 205, <https://www.nwcg.gov/glossary>, is the sole source for NWCG-approved terms.

Incident Position Names

NWCG incident position naming follows the following convention, with official names as written in the *NWCG Standards for Wildland Fire Position Qualifications*, PMS 310-1.

- Incident position names including a “Type” are the position name followed by the Type with no commas. “Type” is capitalized.
 - Public Information Officer Type 3
 - Incident Commander Type 5
 - Incident Commander Complex
- Incident position names including a descriptor are the position name, comma, followed by the descriptor.
 - Resource Advisor, Fireline
 - Helicopter Manager, Single Resource
- The only incident positions to include parenthesis in the names are Firefighter Type 2 (Crewmember) and Firefighter Type 1 (Squad Boss).
- Incident position names are always capitalized.

NWCG Document Creation

Formatting

In general, all new or updated NWCG publications or products should be created using an approved NWCG template. Contact the NWCG Publications Manager for the correct template prior to beginning work. Built into these templates are the following formatting guidelines for NWCG Publications:

- Font: Times New Roman, size 12
- Text color: black (hyperlinks excepted)
- Margins: right and left .75”; top .5”; bottom 1”
- Cover page: title font size 28 – 36 (best fit)
 - Images: committee logos okay; no single-agency photos or images.
- Title page: title font size 28
- Footers: left align full publication title and right align page number X of Y, size 10
 - Straight black line above, 1.5 point width
- Header: none
- Watermark: none
- Justification: left (not full)
- Pages: no blank pages in electronic documents
- Columns: single column (lists of items are a reasonable exception)
- Table of Contents: sentence case, not in all caps

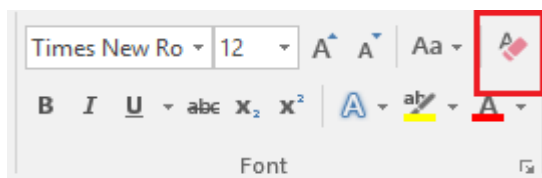
How to Use NWCG Templates

1. Read all the instructions.
2. Save as a new document. This will leave the template intact to reference later.
3. Avoid merging or pasting other document content into templates.
 - a. If doing so is the easiest thing to do, the best practice is to remove all formatting before copying and pasting into the template.

To Remove Styles

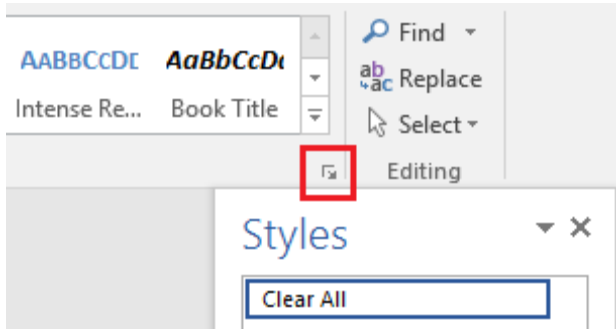
1. Create a copy of the original document. Open the copy, select all, and select the Clear Formatting button. Set this document aside for now.

Figure 1: Clear Formatting Button in Font Group



2. Working in the newly saved template document, and after reading all the instructions, delete all sections except the final page. The document is now ready to type or paste content on the blank pages between the Table of Contents and the final page.
3. Next, open the **Styles Group** (click on the double-down arrow) and start applying the correct headings and styles to the text.

Figure 2: Styles Panel in Styles Group

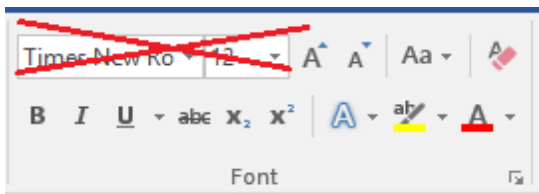


Styles

NWCG publications use simplistic styles to achieve accessibility for those using assistive technology and to create consistency of the layout, appearance, and readability for all users. Templates have very carefully set Styles. Do not modify the styles or alter fonts, sizes, or positions.

Use the Styles found in the Styles Group for Headings, Body Text, etc. A wide variety of styles have been created and should be sufficient for any NWCG publication. If the existing options do not work for the publication under revision, contact the NWCG Publications Manager to address concerns and discuss options. Do not use the Font Group in the menu bar to edit the font style, size, or position, as this will affect the document's accessibility.

Figure 3: Font Group



Headings

Follow the numeric sequence below for Headings; do not skip heading styles. This enables the automatic creation of the Table of Contents (TOC), creates uniformity and consistency in the document, and assists with accessibility. Numbering or lettering can be applied to headings but should be avoided in small documents. If unfamiliar with the process to apply such sequencing, seek assistance to avoid creating a convoluted mess.

For help using Styles and other features of Word, reference the *NWCG Guidelines for Creating Accessible Electronic Documents*, <https://www.nwcg.gov/notices#accessibility>.

Heading 1

Heading 2

Heading 3

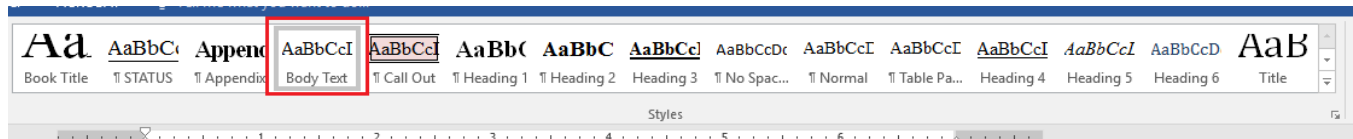
Heading 4

Heading 5

Limit the use of Heading 5 as readers can wind up losing their place in the document as it goes further down the hierarchy.

To return to a regular **Body Text**, select it from the **Styles Group**.

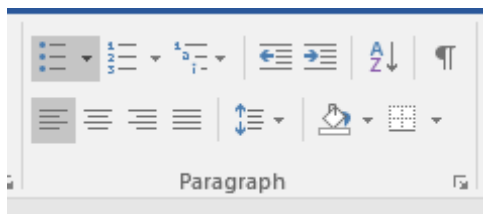
Figure 4: Body Text selection in Styles Group



Lists

- When you are ready to start typing a numbered or bulleted list, place the cursor in the location you want to begin the list. Select the appropriate style (**list number** or **list bullet**) from the **Styles Group**. This will automatically begin your list at the first level. Use the increase and decrease indent buttons in the paragraph menu or the tab key to set a new level bullet.
 - The second and third bullets are set.
 - Limit going beyond the third bullet.
 - ❖ Use the fourth bullet only if necessary.

Figure 5: Paragraph Group



Only use automatic numbering when there are at least two levels. Numbered lists follow this sequence, which can be chosen from the Multi-level Lists:

1. Level one
 - a. Level two
 - i. Level three
 - (1) Level four

If you already have text in the document that you want to convert to a list, simply select the text and then select the type of list you want. You can then adjust the list levels with the tab key or the increase and decrease indent buttons in the paragraph menu.

Do not adjust bullet margins by using the indent features on the ruler. This can misalign the indents on other pages if not done carefully and will result in a disorganized looking document.

Special Features

Call Out Box

Use to highlight a particularly important section of information, to make a fact stand out, or to otherwise draw the reader’s attention to something significant. Do not overuse the call out box, as this will make it less important.

Quotes

The quote style can be utilized if a quote is being inserted into material.

Care should be taken to ensure that the quote is properly attributed and permission has been given to utilize the quote. Quotes should not be edited without the speaker’s permission. If the speaker wishes to be anonymous, utilize an identifier such as “Firefighter A”.

Images, Figures, and Tables

Use captions and place above images and tables. Alternative Text is required on all images for accessibility. Indexes can be set after the document is complete. They do require individual linking of specific words and are time consuming, so use only if necessary.

Tables do not require a table summary if the table has been set up correctly and includes a sufficient title and/or caption. A table summary describes how data is organized in a table, and is required if there is no title, the table structure is complex, or if data is laid out in an unusual order. All tables must have a header row. Avoid colored cells simply for color’s sake – save for tables and charts where color is truly a necessary component, as in Risk Analysis or certain aircraft forms, and include a pattern for accessibility. Do not allow rows to break across pages. Do not insert images of tables.

Figure 6: Example of what a caption and image look like together.



Table 1: Example of a table with a caption. A title could be used as well.

Name	Qualification	Phone Number
Joe Smith	CRWB, ICT3, DIVS	(123) 456-7890
Sue Doe	FFT1, HECM	(123) 456-7891
Bill Johnson	FFT1, EMTF	(123) 456-7892

For more detailed information on properly setting up tables, reference the Word or Excel chapters of *NWCG Guidelines for Creating Accessible Electronic Documents*:

<https://www.nwcg.gov/notices#accessibility>.

Glossary

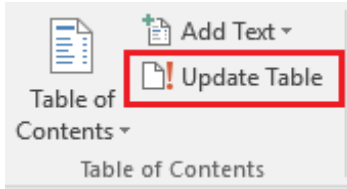
Do not include a separate glossary. The *NWCG Glossary of Wildland Fire*, PMS 205, <https://www.nwcg.gov/glossary>, is the sole source of NWCG-approved terms.

Updating the Table of Contents

Do not type in the Table of Contents or try to manually make changes there or it will break.

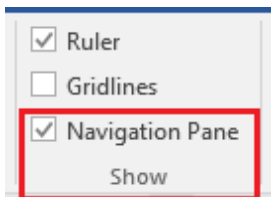
1. Once the content of the document is finished, with all text formatted, graphics or tables captioned, and styles applied, place the cursor in the word Contents (do not type or delete).
2. Go to the References tab on the ribbon bar and in the **Table of Contents Group** select **Update Table**. Select **Update Entire Table** when prompted.

Figure 7: Update Table selection in Table of Contents Group



3. Go to View on the Ribbon Bar and select the **Show Group** checkbox.

Figure 8: Navigation Pane selection in Show Group



All the headings will be listed in the left-hand panel as well as in the TOC. If headings are not showing up or seem out of place, go to that line of text in the document and make sure the correct style is selected.

Document Specific Guidelines

Draft Documents Style

- Draft documents are indicated by adding “_DRAFT” to any of the below naming conventions.

NWCG Publications (PMS, PDFs)

- PMS Naming Convention: PMS XXX_YearMon
- File Properties:
 - Title: full publication title, properly capitalized, and PMS number
 - Author: NWCG
 - Subject: same as title
 - Keywords: full publication title, PMS number, subcommittee (if applicable), and committee, all separated by commas and properly capitalized

Classic Position Task Books

- PTB Naming Convention: PMS 311-XX_YearMon_mnemonic
- File Properties:
 - Title: full PTB title, properly capitalized, and PMS number
 - Author: NWCG
 - Subject: same as title
 - Keywords: full PTB title, PMS number, position mnemonic(s), subcommittee (if applicable), and committee, all separated by commas and properly capitalized

Next Generation Position Task Books

- PTB Naming Convention: PMS 311-XX_YearMon_mnemonic
- File Properties:
 - Title: full PTB title, properly capitalized, and PMS number
 - Author: NWCG
 - Subject: same as title
 - Keywords: full PTB title, PMS number, position mnemonic(s), subcommittee (if applicable), and committee, all separated by commas and properly capitalized

Incident Position Standards

- IPS Naming Convention: PMS 350-XX_YearMon_mnemonic
- File Properties:
 - Title: full IPS title, properly capitalized, and PMS number
 - Author: NWCG

- Subject: same as title
- Keywords: full IPS title, PMS number, position mnemonic(s), subcommittee (if applicable), and committee, all separated by commas and properly capitalized
- IPS numbers should utilize the same -XX as the corresponding position PTB

Training Materials

- All training materials should follow applicable guidance contained in this Style Guide, including complete Section 508 accessibility.

PowerPoint Slides

- PowerPoint Naming Convention: course identifier-course number-unit.ppt (e.g., s-190-01.ppt)
- File Properties:
 - Title: course number, unit number, and full unit title, properly capitalized
 - Author: NWCG
 - Subject: same as title
 - Keywords: course number, full course name, unit number and full unit title, properly capitalized, subcommittee (if applicable), and committee, all separated by commas and properly capitalized

Instructor Guides

- Instructor Guide Naming Convention: course identifier-course number-igunit.ppt (e.g., s-190-ig01.pdf)
- File Properties:
 - Title: course number, unit number, and full unit title, properly capitalized
 - Author: NWCG
 - Subject: same as title
 - Keywords: course number, full course name, unit number and full unit title, properly capitalized, subcommittee (if applicable), and committee, all separated by commas and properly capitalized

Handouts

- Handout Naming Convention: course-identifier-course number-ho unit _ handout number.pdf (e.g., s-190-ho01_1.pdf)
- File Properties:
 - Title: handout name, course number, and unit number (if applicable), properly capitalized
 - Author: NWCG
 - Subject: same as title

- Keywords: handout name, course number, full course name, unit number and full unit title (if applicable), properly capitalized, subcommittee (if applicable), and committee, all separated by commas and properly capitalized

Activity Packets

- Activity Packet Naming Convention: course-identifier-course number-apunit_activity packet number.pdf (e.g., s-190-ap01_1.pdf)
- File Properties:
 - Title: activity packet, course number, and unit number (if applicable), properly capitalized
 - Author: NWCG
 - Subject: same as title
 - Keywords: activity packet, course number, full course name, unit number and full unit title (if applicable), properly capitalized, subcommittee (if applicable), and committee, all separated by commas and properly capitalized

Job Aids

- Job Aid Naming Convention: J-XXX_YearMon
- File Properties:
 - Title: full job aid title, properly capitalized, and J number
 - Author: NWCG
 - Subject: same as title
 - Keywords: full job aid title, J number, position mnemonic(s), subcommittee (if applicable), and committee, all separated by commas and properly capitalized

Publications Tools

Microsoft Spelling/Grammar

It is expected that all documents and written material produced in Microsoft Office by NWCG staff will be run through the Microsoft Office Spelling/Grammar tool.

Microsoft has tools built in to assist with grammar and usage. For example, in Microsoft Word, you can add additional checkpoints when completing spelling and grammar checks. To do so, open the desktop version of Microsoft Word and use the following steps:

1. Select the Review menu tab >> Language >> Set Proofing Language - Ensure “Check spelling and grammar” is unchecked.
2. File menu tab >> Options >> Proofing - The box for “Frequently confused words” is checked.
3. File menu tab >> Options >> Proofing >> Grammar & Refinements >> Settings:
 - a. Under Clarity, ensure:
 - i. Passive Voice is checked.
 - b. Under Conciseness, ensure:
 - i. Wordiness is checked.
 - c. Under Punctuation Conventions, ensure:
 - i. The Oxford Comma box is checked.
 - ii. Set Punctuation required with quotes to “inside.”
 - iii. Set Spaces required between sentences to “1.”
4. Scroll to the very bottom of the window and make sure “Hide spelling errors in only this document” and “Hide grammar errors in only this document” are unchecked.

PerfectIt

NWCG utilizes PerfectIt software as an additional proofreading step. PerfectIt does not capture all errors, and diligent proofreading is still essential. It is expected that all documents and written material produced in Microsoft Word by NWCG staff will be run through PerfectIt utilizing the most current PerfectIt Style Sheet, as provided by the NWCG Publications Manager.

NWCG Guidelines for Creating Accessible Electronic Documents

All materials published to the NWCG website, or the Wildland Fire Learning Portal must meet Section 508 guidelines of the Rehabilitation Act.

A comprehensive overview of how to create accessible electronic documents is available on the NWCG website, <https://www.nwcg.gov/notices#accessibility>.

Microsoft Office and Adobe products have built in Accessibility Checkers that can help ensure documents meet Section 508 guidelines.

Section 508 Resources:

- Adobe Accessible Color Palette Generator Tool: <https://color.adobe.com/create/color-accessibility>
- Contrast Ratio Checker: <https://contrast-ratio.com/>

NWCG Branding Guidelines

NWCG Style and Branding Guidelines are found at <https://www.nwcg.gov/nwcg-branding-guidelines>. This document outlines colors, logos, and typography appropriate for NWCG usage.

NWCG Proofreading Checklist

- Proof all material(s), including associated appendices or supplements.
- Assure numbered and lettered paragraphs are in correct order.
 - Only use automatic numbering where there are at least two levels, such as 1 and 2 or A and B.
- Check that correct styles are applied.
- Check document formatting and layout according to NWCG standard templates.
- Verify web addresses online.
- NWCG publications should link to the attributes page (<https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/pmsxxx>), not directly to the PDF.
- Check cross-references and other verifiable details.
- Check publication, course, and form names as well as the associated numbers.
- Check for grammatical and punctuation errors.
- Check acronym use and ensure consistency within a document.
 - First occurrence of positions, plans, or forms should be spelled out followed by the acronym in parentheses, e.g., Incident Action Plan (IAP), Incident Management Team (IMT). Second occurrences should only be the acronym.
 - Include common acronyms even if it is only used once.
- Assure page breaks are placed appropriately (no widows or orphans).
- Check all images, graphics, and tables.
 - Provide appropriate alternative text for all images.
 - Table summaries are only required if the table does not have enough context provided through titles, headers, or other existing content.
- Run spell check.
- Run PerfectIt.
- Check Table of Contents; ensure links work.
- Check page numbers for accuracy.

Common Spellings, Capitalizations, and Terms

The correct way to spell, capitalize, hyphenate terms is included in the NWCG PerfectIt Style Sheet, which should be utilized by all NWCG employees during document creation. The below list is not all terms, but is included as an easy reference for common errors.

Correct	Incorrect
backburn	back burn
burnover	burn over, burn-over
check-in *when used as a noun	check in
check in *when used as a verb	check-in
closeout	close out, close-out
copilot	co-pilot
crew member	crewmember
dipsite	dip site
Division/Group Supervisor (DIVS) *person/position*	DIVSs, Division Supervisor
division/group *location*	Division/Group, division *when talking about a location or group of resources, division/group is not capitalized unless a named division/group (e.g., Division Alpha)
en route	enroute
firefighter	fire fighter
fireline	fire line
fixed-wing	fixed wing, fixedwing
flare-up	flare up
go/no-go	go/no go
hand crew	handcrew
handheld radio	hand-held radio, handheld-radio

home unit	home-unit
hot loading	hotloading
in-brief	inbrief
Incident Within an Incident	incident within an incident, Incident within an Incident
on-site	onsite
on-the-job *when being used as an adjective	on the job *when being used as an adjective
pre-course	precourse
pre-position	preposition
rappellers	rapelers
short-haul	shorthaul
sizeup	size-up
Tribal	tribal