

Confluence style guide

Overview

This guide helps you create clear, consistent documentation in Confluence. It's based on the [Google Developer Documentation Style Guide](#), which our Product Documentation team also follows. While some of the below tips are written with Confluence in mind, the Google guide is an excellent reference for writing any documentation, whether in Confluence, GitHub Pages, or elsewhere.

These are guidelines, not strict rules! Deviate from these recommendations when it makes your content clearer for readers, but prioritize being consistent within your document.

Write for a global audience

Some team members may not speak English as their first language. Follow these principles:

- Use simple, direct sentences
- Define acronyms on first use
- Avoid idioms and cultural references that may not translate well
- Use consistent terminology throughout your document

See the Google guide on [writing for a global audience](#) for more details.

Page structure

Page titles

Your page title is the first thing people see in search results and navigation. Page titles are also displayed in Glean search results. Clear page titles help users find your content quickly.

Guidelines:

- Be specific and descriptive
- Keep titles concise; aim for under 60 characters
- Remember multiple spaces may have similarly-titled content - make sure yours stands out!

Examples:

- **Recommended:** Employee onboarding checklist

- **Not recommended:** Onboarding

Headings

Headings break content into scannable sections, help readers find information quickly, and create structure for assistive technologies.

Confluence automatically makes the title of your page an H1, the largest heading. When headings are used, Confluence can automatically generate a table of contents for your document.

Add a table of contents to your document with the `/table of contents` macro.

Guidelines:

- Use heading levels in sequential order: H1 (largest) → H2 → H3 → H4 → H5 → H6 (smallest)
- Documents usually start with an H2 (Confluence makes the title an H1)
- Don't skip levels when nesting content (going from H2 to H4 is harder for both readers and assistive technologies to follow)
- Keep headings concise and descriptive to help users find what they're looking for

Example structure:

Meeting notes (page title, automatically H1)
Decisions (H2)
 Budget approval (H3)
 Timeline updates (H3)
Action items (H2)

For more on accessibility, see [Accessibility guidelines for Confluence content](#).

Text formatting

Use formatting to highlight important information, but don't overdo it. Too much formatting makes everything look equally important.

Bold

Use bold for UI elements and to emphasize key information.

Examples:

- UI elements:

- Click **Save**.
- Important terms (on first use):
 - The **service level agreement (SLA)** defines response times.

Italics

Use italics sparingly for introducing new terms or subtle emphasis.

Examples:

- Introducing terminology:
 - This is called *technical debt*.

Code font (monospace)

Use code font for anything technical that should be read literally. Code font can be used in your documents by wrapping a word or phrase in backticks (```).

Examples:

- File names: `config.json`
- Code snippets: `const userName = "example"`
- Commands: `npm install`
- Paths: `/home/user/documents`

Lists

Lists make information scannable and easier to understand. You can create a list from the page toolbar, or with the shortcut - on a new line. Pressing Tab on any row of a list will indent that line further.

Bulleted (unordered) lists

Use bulleted lists when the order doesn't matter.

Examples:

- Features of a product
- Team members
- Requirements (when they don't need to be completed sequentially)

Numbered (ordered) lists

Use numbered lists when order matters, such as for sequential steps or ranked priorities.

Examples:

1. Instructions with steps
2. Ranked priorities
3. Procedures that must happen in order

Links

Link text should describe where the link goes. This helps readers decide whether to click and is essential for accessibility.

- **Recommended:** See the [accessibility guide](#) for details.
- **Not recommended:** For details, click [here](#).

For more on accessibility, see Accessibility guidelines for Confluence content.

Confluence features

Macros

Macros add features to your Confluence documents beyond basic formatting. For more information on macros, see Confluence quick tips and tricks.

Tables and databases

Use tables and databases to present structured data that benefits from comparison across rows and columns. For more information on tables and databases, and the differences between the two, see Databases in Confluence.

Images and media

When to use images

Use images when they genuinely add value, and skip images when text is clearer or easier to maintain. Remember that screenshots must be updated when the UI is changed, and consider if a bulleted list of steps might be easier to maintain.

Guidelines:

- Add alt text to all images (see Accessibility guidelines for Confluence content)
- Compress large images before uploading

Examples:

- Screenshots showing exactly where to click in a busy UI
- Diagrams explaining complex processes
- A default login page

Writing clearly

The Google Developer Documentation Style Guide contains resources on writing clearly, like writing in [second person](#) and using [present tense](#). The tips called out below are helpful, high-level examples.

Use active voice

Active voice makes it clear who or what is performing an action, reducing confusion.

Examples:

- **Recommended:** Click **Save** to preserve your changes.
- **Not recommended:** Your changes can be preserved by clicking **Save**.

Passive voice is acceptable when:

- The actor is unknown or irrelevant
- You want to emphasize the object over the action
- You need to be tactful (example: "An error was found" instead of "You created an error")

For more, see the [Google guide on active voice](#).

Keep it simple

- Use short paragraphs (3-5 sentences maximum)
- Put the most important information first
- Break long content into sections with headings

Define terms

Don't assume everyone knows internal acronyms or technical terms. On first use, spell out the term and include the acronym in parentheses.

Consider adding frequently used terms to our glossary.

Examples:

- The **service level agreement (SLA)** guarantees response times.

Page organization

Recommended page structure

1. **Table of contents:** *Optional*. For longer pages with multiple sections
2. **Opening paragraph:** Briefly state what this page is and why it exists, so your reader can immediately understand if it's relevant for them
3. **Main content with sections:** Make sure your content is divided into sections with clear headings
4. **Related pages or resources:** Additional and related content can be placed at the bottom

Collaboration

Comments

- **Inline comments:** Click specific text to comment on that exact point
- **Page comments:** Use the section at the bottom for general feedback
- Tag people with @mentions when you need their input
- Resolve comments when addressed to keep pages tidy

Page watching

Watch a page from the ... page setting menu, especially if you contribute to or reference the content regularly. You'll get notifications when the page is updated.

Maintenance

Keep pages current

Keep your pages up-to-date with good practices and the use of page statuses.

Guidelines:

- Review and update pages quarterly
- Add a Last reviewed: [date] note for important content
- [Archive](#) obsolete pages rather than deleting them

For more on tracking out-of-date pages, see Use Confluence page statuses.

Version history

Confluence saves every version of your page. Click the **⋮** page options menu and select **Version history** to:

- See what changed over time
- Restore previous versions if needed
- Check who made specific updates

Accessibility

For comprehensive accessibility guidance, see Accessibility guidelines for Confluence content and the [Google accessibility guide](#).