

# Translation style guide

We strongly encourage the use of clear, concise language in all county communications. In most instances, it's not only easier to understand, it's more accurate. By avoiding jargon and by using concise sentences you make it easier for all residents, regardless of education or literacy, to access essential county services.

## For Hennepin County staff

- Try to avoid department and program names because these can be difficult to translate. Instead, use "Hennepin County," "the county," or "the program."
- Spell out months in dates because different cultures use different number formats for dates. Instead, include the month name (e.g., June 1, 2016).
- When submitting text for translation, include the following to help the translator:
  - Identify your specific audience
  - State what your goal is with the communication (do you want your audience to do something? What do you want to happen as a result of your communication?)

## For the translator

Hennepin County style is clear and direct, and more conversational than formal. We prefer concise, active sentences that are easily understood by a diverse audience.

- Capitalization – we prefer lowercase style, so in most cases you should continue the capitalization style of the English language version.
- Time – use 12-hour format with "a.m." and "p.m."
- Abbreviations – in general, avoid. Do not abbreviate days of the week or months.
- Numbers – spell out number below 10; use digits for 10 and above.
- Dates – spell out months instead of using digits.
- If reproducing graphic elements, be sure to follow Hennepin County branding standards. Go to [www.hennepin.us/writingguide](http://www.hennepin.us/writingguide) for more information. For fonts, use the following:
  - Sans Serif (headings) – Myriad Pro (preferred) or Arial
  - Serif (main text) – Berkeley (preferred) or Times New Roman

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# Translating into Spanish

In most cases, Spanish speakers in Hennepin County come from a variety of backgrounds and countries. Because of this, translations should strive to be accessible to a multinational audience.

- Word selection – unless the audience is from a specific group or country, strive to use language that would be understood across country borders.
- Style and tone – avoid literal translations, and do not hesitate to break-up long sentences into smaller parts. Strive to be concise, precise and clear.
- Dates – spell out the month and use a date, month, year order.
- Pronouns – you can use the impersonal form of pronouns as needed.
  - Usted – you do not need to continue the extensive use of English personal pronouns in the translated version. If the sentence does not need “usted” – the way “you” is often needed in English – then you can remove it.