



# Content Development Best Practices

Municipal Websites Central

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# Introduction

## Purpose

The CivicPlus Internal Best Practices Guide is a checklist for implementing accessibility principles within the Municipal Websites Central content management system (CMS) to achieve Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) conformance and optimize content usability. Content Editors apply the guide to client content during Content Migration and Optimization. Application of the guide is reviewed during Quality Control.

## Compliance

The CivicPlus Internal Best Practices conform to ADA, Section 508, and WCAG 2.0, [2.1](#), and [2.2](#) level A and AA guidelines.

### Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) is a civil rights legislation that was created to ensure people with disabilities have equal access to commercial, state, and local government facilities; it does not define technical standards for web accessibility. Website based ADA lawsuits, complaints, and Department of Justice settlements reference WCAG 2.0 Level A and AA compliance.

### Section 508

[Section 508](#) requires electronic and information technology of Federal agencies is accessible to people with disabilities. To be compliant with Section 508 electronic content must conform to WCAG 2.0 Level A and AA.

### Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) were developed to make content accessible to people with disabilities and users in general. WCAG accounts for accessibility on various devices and considers many different disabilities. WCAG is based on four principles of web accessibility: accessible content must be perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust.

Three levels of conformance are used in WCAG:

- A – ensures users can access web content
- AA – ensures users can easily access web content
- AAA – ensures easy access to web content for specific users (not applicable to all content)

## Sources

This guide was created using the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.1](#) and [WCAG 2.2](#). Supplementary information interpreting WCAG was derived from [WebAIM](#). Additional resources include the [CivicPlus Help Center](#).

## Accessibility

Content can be compliant and technically accessible, but functionally inaccessible. Content Editors are advised to use this guide and their best judgement to ensure content is compliant and accessible. For situations that cannot be addressed by this guide use the sources provided or the recommendations of the Web Content Specialists or Content Quality Analysts to ensure content is accessible. Any deviations from the guide should be properly noted during development.

For more information, visit the [WCAG Web Accessibility page](#).

## Overall Best Practices (BPs)

These Best Practices (BPs) should be applied to all migration whenever possible. Additional BPs pertaining to Widgets and Modules can be found in those sections, but the Overall BPs should also be applied. All Best Practices have either been established to follow WCAG 2.1 and 2.2 Level A and AA guidelines or to ensure consistency across the site.

## Site Navigation

- Pages and Linked Pages are listed alphabetically on the site (see the [Pages section](#) for Page Title BPs). **Note:** There are some exceptions to this rule, such as content that is clearly ordered in a different logical manner (Examples: Steps in a process, phases of constructions, or pages that would be better ordered chronologically).
- Bucket pages should be created when necessary to group pages with similar content (or topic) together beneath them as subpages (can be used to shorten long left-hand navigation lists). They normally use a [Pages Widget](#) on them to increase access to their subpages.
- See the [Board & Commission \(B&C\) Pages section](#) to see where in the navigation B&C pages should live.
- Do not recreate A to Z sections/pages on a site. Move pages to their actual departments/sections and order them appropriately.
- Pages with many subpages that are just links can have those linked subpages (websites or documents) replaced with a Related Documents or Quick Links widget on the parent page. Aim for site consistency.

## Images

### All Images (Whether in a Slideshow or Not)

[WCAG 1.1.1 Non-text Content](#) (Level A)

[WCAG Images Tutorial](#)

These BPs apply to all images. Exceptions are noted in the [Types of Images & Their Additional BPs](#) section.

- Alt text
  - All images have short, descriptive [alt text](#) that relays the contents or function of the image. **Note:** The Image Widget's alt text cuts off at 100 characters. Ensure you reword any longer alt text to fit within 100 characters. Alt text for images in the Editor widget can have a longer alt text if you add it in the Code View (only do this for a few additional necessary words).
  - Alt text should not be redundant for a screen reader. Do not use phrases such as "image of" or "graphic of" or "link to," as images and links are already identified by assistive technology.
  - Alt text for each image must differ from one image to the next. (If unable to differentiate in a very large collection of images [without just rewording the same thing over and over], it's best to add numbers like "City Park 1" and "City Park 2".)
- Images in an Editor Widget
  - Ensure the image code is not inside of a paragraph, sentence, or subhead to prevent assistive technology from announcing an image unexpectedly within text content. In general, you should click at the beginning of a paragraph and then insert inline images to prevent this. On the HTML side the image will be just after the <p> tag. Please check the HTML to ensure it is placed correctly. Example:  

```
<p>Here is an example of where the image should be.</p>
```
  - Adjust the width to a percentage so that the image is mobile responsive.
  - On the front end, ensure the placement does not impede the scannability of the page or shift subheads from their left alignment. Aligning inline images to the right prevents odd text and subhead breaks on the front end.
  - For more information view [CivicPlus Help Center Create Mobile-Responsive Images](#).

## Types of Images & Their Additional BPs

- Banner Images:
  - Description: Located at the top of every page there is a sort of "banner" spanning the width of the page that contains the department's name and perhaps a graphic.
  - BP: Although this is a common practice, these images are considered decorative and impede accessibility to all users. The recommendation is not to use them unless they are part of a design element for a Department Header Package (DHP).
- Decorative:
  - Description: Purely for decoration and gives no information or data (it is not helpful, functional, or complex).

- Decorative Image Examples:



- BP: The recommendation is not to add these images as they clutter the page for sighted users. If necessary to create a tone or mood mark the alt text as “null” when uploading them so that assistive technology can ignore them.
- Helpful:
  - Description: An image that is helpful to the user (gives an example, shows how to do something, etc.) or is specific to your community (shows people, places, or things in the community)
  - BP: Migrate and display.
  - Helpful Image Example (Gives examples of moderate water use plants):



- Logos:
  - Description: An image of a product or company logo
  - BP: Logos count as Helpful images and should be migrated and displayed. **Exception:** Social Media logos can be redundant, and oftentimes have low/bad resolution. We recommend for department/program related social media logos that the images are replaced with text links, generally in the Quick Links widget. This does not apply to any icons created during the design phase of your website that are in your header/footer/home page. Additional Resource: [WebAIM Alternative Text - Logos](#).
- Functional Image (linked image):
  - Description: Used to initiate actions rather than to convey information
  - BP: Migrate and display. The alt text should convey the action being initiated rather than a description of the image. Images linked to documents should include the document’s file extension at end of alt text (Example: “Park Map (PDF)”). **Exception:** Images of document cover pages that open the documents are not necessary to migrate as they are considered decorative. The recommendation is to replace the linked images with text links.

- Complex Images (chart, graph, map, or text):  
[WCAG 1.4.5 Images of Text](#) (Level AA)
  - Description: Image with text or relaying information to the user
  - BP: Migrate and display. Alt text should describe the general content of the image. If it is a linked image, follow the BPs for a functional image. If it is an image of text, a chart, or a graph, you will need to provide an accessible text version of the image in a readable document or replace the image with text on the page for WCAG compliance. Images that cannot be described in text, such as maps, do not require accessible text equivalents.
- Animated:  
[WCAG 2.2.2 Pause, Stop, Hide](#) (Level A)
  - Description: An image that moves or flashes
  - BP: Do not migrate or display. Animated images are not WCAG compliant.

## Slideshows

### [WCAG 2.2.2 Pause, Stop, Hide](#) (Level A)

- Ensure Next/Previous Arrows and Pagination options are enabled (should be by default) so users can access these options to pause or stop the slideshow.
- Complex images (charts, graphs, maps, or images with text) are not used in slideshows unless they can be linked to larger versions of those images for user accessibility.
- Limit slideshows to 6 images. Larger amounts of photos should go into the Photo Gallery and be linked to from the page/module. **Note:** Smaller slideshows are recommended as most users will not wait through a lengthy slideshow and it will decrease the loading time of the page.
- Slideshows in an Editor Widget
  - Ensure the slideshow code is not inside of a paragraph, sentence, or subhead. In general, you should click at the beginning of a paragraph and then insert inline slideshows to prevent this. On the HTML side the image will be just after the <p> tag. Please check the HTML to ensure it is placed correctly. Example:  

```
<p>Here is an example of where the slideshow should be.</p>
```
  - Adjust the width to a percentage so the image is mobile responsive.
  - On the front end ensure the placement does not impede the scannability of the page or shift subheads from their left alignment. Aligning inline slideshows to the right prevents odd text and subhead breaks on the front end.
  - For more information view [CivicPlus Help Center Create Mobile-Responsive Images](#)

## Text

### Abbreviations & Acronyms

#### [WCAG 3.1.4 Abbreviations](#) (Level AAA)

Although we are only required to follow WCAG A and AA requirements at this time (and abbreviations and acronyms are AAA) we will still adhere to the following BPs for user accessibility and site consistency.

- Punctuation should not be used as a substitute for a word (abbreviation). Examples:
  - Hours are 8 am – 9 pm → Should instead be “Hours are 8 am to 9 pm”
  - Approved garage sale signs are 3’ x 2’ → Should instead be “Approved garage sale signs are 3 feet by 2 feet.”
  - Cost is \$40/hour → Should instead be “Cost is \$40 per hour”
  - Asterisks or other punctuation used for notations should have these symbols replaced with text, as assistive technology will not read out these punctuation symbols.

#### Example of the Asterisk Used for Notation

##### Trash Schedule

Find your street in the list below. Streets marked with \* are picked up on Mondays. Tuesday routes are marked with \*\*.

- First Street\*
- Oak Road\*\*
- Pine Avenue\*\*
- State Street\*
- Timber Turnpike\*

#### Example of How to Replace the Asterisk

##### Trash Schedule

Find your street in the list below. Streets marked with (M) are picked up on Mondays. Tuesday routes are marked with (T).

- First Street (M)
- Oak Road (T)
- Pine Avenue (T)
- State Street (M)
- Timber Turnpike (M)

## Example of Using Text Notations in a Table With Limited Cell Space

### Poll Information

View the table for information on your polling location.

Table Key:

- (E) - Early Voting Location (starting Monday, January 1)
- (6) - Polls at this location open at 6 am
- (7) - Polls at this location open at 7 am

Polls close at 7 pm.

County	District	Location
Adams (E) (6)	1	123 Main St. City A, KS 66502
Blair (6)	1	456 Not Main Avenue City B, KS 66502
Cass (E) (7)	2	789 Secondary Street City C, KS 66502
Douglas (7)	3	50290 Beverly Hills Terrace City D, KS 66502

- Dates within text content should be written out as: Month Day, Year. Example: December 31, 2023. Do not abbreviate months or use two digits for years for accessibility and clarity.

## Bulleted Lists

### [WebAIM Making Web Content Accessible to People with Cognitive Disabilities](#)

Bulleted lists are used to make long lists scannable for the sighted user and more accessible to people with disabilities.

- Use the bulleted or numbered list tools in the Editor tool ribbon. Do not use the bullet symbols or dashes that can be added with a keyboard or in programs such as Microsoft Word as they will not mark up the bulleted list in the code of the page. This means that assistive technology will not inform a user that there is a list, which may confuse the user.
- Lists must be introduced by a subhead, sentence/paragraph, or sentence fragment (that ends with a colon) that tells the user what type of information is in the bulleted list. If the only thing on a page is a bulleted list, the page title will act as its intro.
- Each bullet must start with a capital letter.
- If you have a long list in a sentence and you're breaking it up into a bulleted list: clean up any leftover punctuation that was necessary when the information was in a sentence

(commas, semicolons, and periods). If necessary for legal items, the “and” or “or” at the end of bullets should be maintained so that the information agrees with any legal documents.

- Do not bullet one item/sentence. This makes the information more difficult for assistive technology users as they must listen to the list's structure to access information that is not a list. It requires more time on their part to access the information and may confuse them as they are expecting more than one item to be read.

## Contact Information

- Addresses:
  - Use consistent formatting sitewide for how abbreviations are (or are not) used in addresses. WCAG does recommend against using [abbreviations \(Level AAA\)](#).
- Phone / Fax Numbers:
  - Use a consistent format sitewide for how to format phone numbers. During CivicPlus' migration process we use the format xxx-xxx-xxxx, ext. xxx. **Note:** in the Staff Directory module the separate field for extension numbers is used.
  - If there are letters in the phone/fax number, use the letters and then follow the phone number with the numbers the letters represent in parentheses. Example: “800-CALLNOW (800-115-5669)”
  - Phone and fax numbers need to be clearly labeled. Examples:
    - Surrounding text within sentences works as a label “... or call us at xxx-xxx-xxxx”.
    - A clearly marked subhead for a list of contact info such as “Contact Numbers”
    - In a contact block “Phone:” or “Fax:” should be added before the number(s).
- Times / Hours of Operation:
  - Use a consistent format sitewide for times or hours of operation. During CivicPlus' migration process we do not display minutes when there are full hours (Example, you would display: 8 am to 4:30 pm). We also use Noon and Midnight in place of 12 am and 12 pm.

## Address Blocks

Prominent contact information should be added to an appropriate module (Staff Directory, Info Advanced, Resource Directory, etc.). When it is not appropriate to place in a module and you need to add contact info to a page, we follow the same order of information as is displayed in the Staff Directory widget and mock it up in the Editor widget. Leave out anything from the example that you do not have; do not leave placeholders.

Examples:

Patti Plus  
Department / Title  
Email Patti Plus  
Phone: xxx-xxx-xxxx

Patti's Electronic Recycling  
Phone: xxx-xxx-xxxx  
Appointments: xxx-xxx-xxxx  
123 Main Street



Cell or Fax: xxx-xxx-xxxx  
123 Main St.  
P.O. Box 123  
Civic City, KS 12345  
Map to Building/Office Name  
Patti Plus Website

Civic City, KS 12345  
Patti's Electronic Recycling Website

**Hours** ← Use bold instead of a subhead2  
Monday through Friday  
8 am to 5:30 pm

## Fonts & Styles

In text fields use the default fonts available in your Editor drop-down menu. If you need to apply emphasis to text, you may use **bold** on a few important words (not an entire sentence).

- Do not apply color to text ([WCAG 1.3.3 Sensory Characteristics](#) [Level A])
- Underlined text is used only for hyperlinks and will automatically underline as links are added. WCAG requires links to appear differently than text that is not linked for accessibility. As the most commonly used way to differentiate, underlining can confuse users as they will expect the text to be linked.
- ALL CAPS should be used for acronyms only
- Do not use italics to prevent their overuse ([Understanding WCAG Guideline 3.1](#) [Level A])
- Do not use subhead fonts on anything that is not a subhead as this font is coded as a navigational tool for users of assistive technology. It is against WCAG guidelines to use it as a decorative tool. View more information in the [Subheads](#) section.
- Do not adjust the alignment of text (default is left alignment).

## Language

[WCAG 3.1.1 Language of Page](#) (Level A)

[Label text](#) other than English in editor widget using the HTML attribute. Example, for Spanish text you would add this to the code (in the Code View) before the Spanish text: `<span lang="es">` and then after the text you would add the code: `</span>`

There are options in the Editor ribbon to mark up languages without going into the Code View and editing there.

## Numbers & Symbols

### Numbers

- Use a comma every third digit. Example: 123,456

- For decimal numbers less than one include a 0 before the decimal point. Otherwise, assistive technology will treat the decimal point as a period. Example: 0.13
- Postscript and subscript numbers should be added using the Editor toolbar options
- To create a fraction, go to the Code View and enter `&frac1;2`; in between the 2 numbers in the fraction (do not use any spaces). Example: `1&frac1;2` would display on the front end as  $\frac{1}{2}$ .

## Symbols

[WebAIM Designing for Screen Reader Compatibility](#)  
[Deque Punctuation and Typography Symbols](#)

Symbols and punctuation cannot stand in for words or be used to note something to a user. Not all symbols are read by assistive technology, and some are difficult to understand for those with low vision. **Punctuation used as punctuation** is okay. See the [Abbreviations section](#) for examples of how to write out punctuation standing in for words.

Acceptable symbols from your keyboard include:

@	\$	%
Only for social media; write out if replacing the word	When used with numerical numbers; write out otherwise	When used with numerical numbers; write out otherwise
#	&	+ and =
Readable and acceptable. If used for social media use Camel Case like #CivicPlus	In subheads and page or category titles only	When used with numerical numbers; write out otherwise

Within the Editor Widget there is also a Special Characters button with approved symbols that will code correctly to be read by assistive technology.

Other symbols may be added using HTML in the Code View of a page. Any HTML Code or HTML Entity listed on Toptal can be used. Frequently referenced are:

- [Toptal Math Symbols](#)
- [Toptal Currency Symbols](#)
- [Toptal Other Symbols](#)

## Punctuation

Punctuation should be used to help construct a sentence and indicate how it should be read.

- A dash or slash can be used to mark a break in a sentence, or within a page title, subhead, or module category title when there are spaces on either side. Example: “Early Voting – Seniors & Active Duty Military”.
- Quotes should be [labeled with the HTML attributes](#). For quotes, remove the quotation marks, highlight the text of the quote, and select the Quote tool in the Editor Widget’s

tool ribbon. This will insert the HTML for quotes in order for them to be read appropriately for screen readers. ([WCAG 1.3.1 Info and Relationships](#) [Level A])

Resources:

- See the [Abbreviations section](#) for how to write out punctuation that is standing in for words.
- View information on [Symbols that are not punctuation](#).
- WCAG Supplemental Guidance for Cognitive Accessibility: [Use Clear, Unambiguous Formatting and Punctuation](#)

## Sensory Characteristics

### [WCAG 1.3.3 Sensory Characteristics](#) (Level A)

- Instructions should not rely upon shape, size, or visual location (example: "Click the square icon to continue" or "Instructions are in the right-hand column"). You must rewrite the text to remove these cues and, if possible, link directly to the resource they are leading the user to.
- Information is not relayed through any other visual clues such as bold, color, or punctuation, such as the asterisk.

#### Example of a Noncompliant Table

##### Poll Information

View the table for information on your polling location. Bold locations have early voting starting Monday, January 1. Polls close at 7 pm. Green indicates polls open at 6 am and yellow polls open at 7 am.

County	District	Location
Adams	1	<b>123 Main St. City A, KS 66502</b>
Blair	1	456 Not Main Avenue City B, KS 66502
Cass	2	<b>789 Secondary Street City C, KS 66502</b>
Douglas	3	50290 Beverly Hills Terrace City D, KS 66502

#### Example of the Noncompliant Table Redone

## Poll Information

View the table for information on your polling location.

Table Key:

- (E) - Early Voting Location (starting Monday, January 1)
- (6) - Polls at this location open at 6 am
- (7) - Polls at this location open at 7 am

Polls close at 7 pm.

County	District	Location
Adams (E) (6)	1	123 Main St. City A, KS 66502
Blair (6)	1	456 Not Main Avenue City B, KS 66502
Cass (E) (7)	2	789 Secondary Street City C, KS 66502
Douglas (7)	3	50290 Beverly Hills Terrace City D, KS 66502

## Subheads

### [WCAG 2.4.10 Section Headings](#) (Level AAA)

Although subheads provide a visual cue to sighted users, they are also programmed specifically for anyone using assistive technology to access the page's structure. Subheads should only be used to break up and organize page content.

- Subhead Wording:
  - Subhead wording should describe the content that follows it. If a Subhead1 section is long or confusing, break up sub-topics within that section with Subhead2 headings.
  - Subheads should be title cased, use the ampersand (&) instead of “and,” and not end in punctuation.
  - Use a space on either side of / (slash) to help the subhead break well when using a mobile device (Example: Parks / Recreation Division)
  - Do not duplicate headings on the same page so those using assistive technology can tell the difference between sections. Example: There are 2 job openings on a page and the job title is in subhead1 for each. Both sections need a subhead2 for How to Apply as they have different applications / processes. Both Subhead2 headings should not be “How to Apply”. Instead, reword the subhead2 headings like “How to Apply for [Insert the name of the job title]”.

- Never use the Headline font (an <h1> in the Code View) on a page as a subhead. This font is only available for designers to access when creating page titles. Multiple <h1> elements cannot be used on a page per WCAG.
- Use subheads in a hierarchical order: Subhead1 (which is an <h2>), Subhead2 (which is an <h3>, then Bold can be used to break up a Subhead2 section further if necessary (they will not act or read as subheads so do this sparingly). This means that a Subhead2 cannot be used before a Subhead1 heading. Multiple Subhead1 and Subhead2 headings can be used on a page since neither is an <h1>.
- Do not link subheads as they are then labeled as a navigation tool and an interactive element to assistive technology and that can confuse users.
- If a page is getting very long or you find you need more levels of subheads than are available, you should move larger topics to sister or subpages.

## Time Sensitive Information

This is content that CivicPlus does populate during migration as the information will be outdated quickly or should be added to a module/widget that Content does not populate during migration:

- Alert Center
- Calendar
- Community Voice
- Graphic Links
- News Flash
- RSS

Please visit the [CivicPlus Help Center \(Municipal Websites – Central\)](#) for information on how to populate these modules.

## Links

For all links on the site, including Pages and all Module content:

- Links to internal production site pages or modules/module items should be relative. Example: <https://cp-contenttraining.civicplus.com/860/Testing-random-stuffs-Nicky> should be /860/Testing-random-stuffs-Nicky
- Links to internal or external pages should open in the “same” and not a “new” window. This includes forms housed in the Form Center Module, as these are not actual files.
- Links that open files should open in a “new” window no matter if they link to an internal file or a file on a third-party site. The linked text needs the file extension added to the end of the linked text or the end of the alt text for a linked image. Examples include: PDF, DOC, MP4, etc.
- mailto: links are used for email links

## Linked Text

[WCAG 2.4.4 Link Purpose \(In Context\)](#) (Level A)

[WebAIM Links and Hypertext](#)

- Use descriptive link text when possible. The purpose of each link can be determined from the link text alone, or from the link text and its context (e.g.: bulleted list intro, subhead or table headers). **Do not** link to words such as “click here” or “more information”. Reword the text as necessary, using appropriate punctuation.
- Masked email links must use a form of the word “email” in the linked text. Examples: “[Email x department](#) for more information.” or “You can get more information by [emailing the x department](#).” This way a user knows that if they click the link their email app or program will open.
- Ensure that you are not using the same linked text to describe different links. Example: Do not use “View Map” “on the same page for multiple links that go to different addresses / locations. Instead, use descriptive text like “View a map to City Hall” and “View a map to the Courthouse”.

## Linked Images

Please see the information on Functional Images in the [Types of Images & Their Additional BPs](#) section.

## Tables

[WCAG 1.3.1 Info and Relationships](#) (Level A)

[W3C Tables Concepts](#)

[W3C Tables > Tips and Tricks](#)

Tables are used to organize sets of repetitive or related information. They **should not** be used solely for a neat appearance on the page (separate Editor or other widgets can create this effect instead). Due to difficulties in editing and linking within tables in the Table widget it is recommended you use the Table in the Editor widget instead.

Please follow these guidelines:

- Turn on the Header Row in the table’s options (necessary for those using assistive technology to access the table in a usable manner). The header row cells should describe the contents of each column and be unique (no repeats).
- Turn on the alternate rows in the table’s options to assist visual users. The alternate row colors do not relay any information, so they are WCAG compliant.
- Going from left to right along a row, all information in this row should relate to whatever is in the first cell of that row.

- If images are related to their Header Row's topic and have appropriate alt text they may be inserted into cells (other than the Header Row) if they have a percent width that doesn't break the table's format.
- Text in each cell should start with a capital letter
- Do not:
  - Alter the font in a table (color, size, italics, alignment). You may use bold as long as the bold does not relay information to a user (see [Sensory Characteristics](#) for more information).
  - Alter a cell's color (other than to turn on alternating rows)
  - Leave a cell blank. Use "N/A" in blank cells so those using assistive technology know there is no data here instead of only hearing a slight pause.
  - Split or merge cells vertically or horizontally or nest a table inside of the main table. Doing any of these makes it very difficult to understand the table with assistive technology.
  - Use rows as headings, topics, subheads. If these rows are present, you will need to rework the wording in column 1 for that row so the heading is included or break the table out into separate tables. They will otherwise read incorrectly for assistive technology.

**Please Note:** WCAG 2.4.4 Link Purpose (In Context) (Level A) addresses how to mask links appropriately. We have determined from the [Understanding of SC 2.4.2](#) that links within a data table do not have to have individualized names as the table headers should give the user the context of the link. So, we no longer need to make sure all links **inside a data table** are unique.

## Pages

- **Page Description:** All pages must have a complete sentence page description that describes the content on the page (or its subpages if the page functions as a "bucket" to organize subpages). Appropriate grammar and punctuation should be used.
- **Page Title:**  
[WCAG 2.4.2 Page Titles](#) (Level A)
  - Page titles should be title cased, use the ampersand (&) instead of "and", and not end in punctuation.
  - They should describe the contents of the page or subpages (if the page functions as a "bucket" to organize subpages).
  - Use a space on either side of / (slash) or – (dash) to prevent breaking in left-hand navigation and mega menus (example: "Parks / Recreation Department")

## Linked Pages

- Linked pages link directly to a resource, not to another linked page that goes to that same resource. That would be like creating a chain of links. If one of the links is changed, unpublished, or deleted, the chain will break and result in broken links.

- Linked pages do not have subpages (subpages under a linked page are not accessible on the front end).
- Linked pages that link to files have the file extension in parentheses at the end of the page title and open in a new window.

## Board & Commission (B&C) Pages

To ensure consistency please follow these guidelines:

- Aim for consistency from one B&C page to the next. This includes the order of information, whether the same type of info is displayed the same, etc. During migration in Content Development we use this template for non-governing boards and commissions. Linked names go to their Staff Directory entries with their contact info and/or bio.

### Meetings

- 8 pm
- 1st Thursday of every month
- City Hall  
123 Main Street  
Room 303  
Civic City, KS 12345

### Agendas & Minutes

Agendas are available before the meetings. Minutes are available and approved.

[View Most Recent Agendas and Minutes](#)

### Members

- Jane Smith, Chair  
Term Expires: December 2022
- John Smith, Vice Chair  
Term Expires: December 2022

### Overview

The mission of the Content Analyst Board of Content is to enforce compliance and consistency in the imagination of the Content Training website. The board was named thusly in 2022 in order to repeat words as clients like to do.

For Main Governing Bodies we follow the same order of information but display the members differently. We leave the Members subhead1 at the bottom of the Editor widget and then beneath that widget add a Staff Directory widget for each member to showcase their photo, name, title, and the link back to the Staff Directory module with their contact info and/or bio for a streamlined look. (Header text for each Staff Directory widget should be removed for this look).

## Meetings

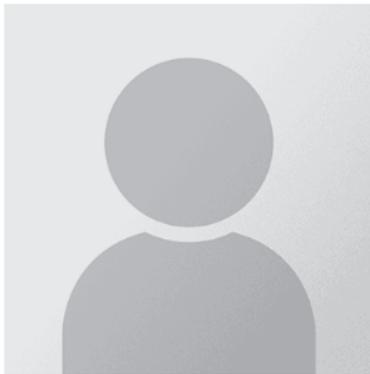
- 8 am
- 1st Thursday of every month
- City Hall  
123 Main Street  
Room 303  
Civic City, KS 12345

## Agendas & Minutes

Agendas are available before the meetings. Minutes are available and approved.

[View Most Recent Agendas and Minutes](#)

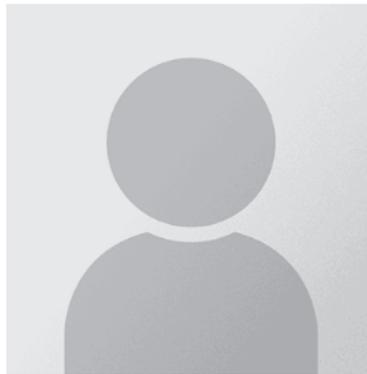
## Members



**Jane Smith**

Here's My Title

[More Information](#)



**John Smith**

Here's My Title

[More Information](#)

## Overview

The mission of the Content Analyst Board of Content is to enforce compliance and consistency in the imagination of the Content Training website. The board was named thusly in 2022 in order to repeat words as clients like to do.

On all B&C pages the order of members is by rank and then any remaining members are alphabetized by last name. Other orders can be followed if they make sense, such as ordering members by their district number, etc.

- Add all members, whether or not they have contact information, to the Staff Directory. Do not add vacancies. See the BPs for the [Staff Directory](#) for specific guidelines on that module.
- The main governing body for the city/county should be housed as a direct subpage of the Government (or similar) global. Under this same global, another subpage titled “Boards & Commissions” should be added as a “bucket” page to house all other non-governing B&Cs as subpages or linked pages. Any non-governing B&C pages found outside of a Board and Commission section on the existing site should remain under the departments or sections where they were found and linked to under the “Boards & Commissions” bucket. Pages that combine department and B&C info should not be split

up; when possible, sections on the combined page should use formatting or wording to follow the B&C templates.

## Modules & Widgets

**Note:** If a module or widget is not listed in this guide then it is one we do not use in Content during development:

- Alert Center
- Calendar
- Community Voice
- Graphic Links
- News Flash
- RSS

Please visit the [CivicPlus Help Center \(Municipal Websites – Central\)](#) for information on how to populate these modules.

## Modules

### Category Naming

Category titles follow the same guidelines as page titles and subheads: They are named descriptively, use title case, and use the ampersand (&) instead of the word “and”. If you have a module that will contain several categories for any one department (FAQs or Quick Links) your category titles will need to be more specific. In this case, use consistent naming conventions following the pattern: “Department – Topic”.

**Example:** Use “Police Department” (for the main category with items that are important for the whole department or main department page) and then, to alphabetically group the other categories with the main department one, you would do “Police Department – Fingerprinting” or “Police Department – Conceal Carry Permits”. This helps identify which department or office is responsible for maintaining that category or where the categories may be present or linked on the site. It also helps users understand the context of the module categories.

### Agenda Center

[CivicPlus Help Center: Agenda Center](#)

This module houses agendas, minutes, and other meeting materials for boards, commissions, committees, etc. (B&Cs).

- The description for a meeting is the text that will display on the front end of the site. View the CivicPlus Help Center article [Agenda Center Naming Conventions and Examples](#) for instructions on how to name your agendas.

- When uploading files/documents for **complex agendas** they do not have to be renamed. This includes not adding the file extension as the Agenda Center automatically adds those to document names.
- Minutes documents should be added separately from the agenda. View instructions on how to [Add Minutes to an Agenda](#).

## Archive Center

### [CivicPlus Help Center: Archive Center](#)

This module houses all recurring date-based documents that come out on a regular basis (monthly, annually, quarterly, every Friday, etc.) that are not related to B&C meetings (these belong in the Agenda Center). Unlike the Document Center, the Archive Center is date-based so users can easily search for the documents they want and can see previous versions of those documents. Examples include: Annual budgets, newsletters, police blotters, etc.

- “Simple” Archive Center Items (one document/file per item):
  - The Display Name is the name/title of the document on the front end of the website.
    - The Display Names must be consistent within each category (Example: “Monthly Report – October 2014 (PDF)” and “Monthly Report – November 2014 (PDF)”). The date and type of document can be switched around as long as it’s consistent within the category.
    - Do not abbreviate months or years (use four digits for years). Example: January 1, 2024
    - Add file extensions to the end of each Display Name.
    - Each item should be set to open in a new window just like links to documents/files on pages.
- “Complex” Archive Center Items: If you have multiple documents for one time period you will use the [Online Editor](#) to group them into one “item” that should be named for the time period (year, quarter, etc.). For example: If you have an annual budget for each department and want to provide access to all annual budgets in one place you can use the Online Editor to bullet and link to each document pertaining to that year.
  - The Display Name is the name/title of the collection of documents/files on the front end of the website.
    - Display Names for items that use the Online Editor should not have a file extension added to the end as the link to the collection of documents/files opens a “page” of content and not a file.
    - Do not abbreviate months or years (use four digits for years). Example: January 1, 2024
    - Do not set these items to open in a new window.
  - Do not add images, iframes, or other content to the Online Editor. If there is information like this that you need to display along with the documents, you will need to create a content page with that information and then link to the archive’s category in the Archive Center.
- Archive Date field should be set (for a monthly or annual document just mark the 1<sup>st</sup> of that month or year)

## Document Center

[CivicPlus Help Center: Document Center](#)

This module houses all documents and all other file types that do not meet the requirements for the Agenda Center or Archive Center modules.

- Apply the requirements for category naming to folder names
- For all files: Apply title case, write out any punctuation standing in for a word, and add the file extension to the end of the file name in parentheses

## Facilities

[CivicPlus Help Center: Facilities](#)

This module houses city/county/municipality-run facilities, their images, their contact information, any sub-facilities, and all other related information. Facilities can include parks, ballfields, pools, community centers, anything reservable such as meeting rooms (perhaps for a library or community center), even fire stations can be added. Items you may have added to the Staff Directory module, such as a community center or fire departments, can also be added to the Facilities module so they are available to tag in Calendar items as locations for events.

**Third-party facilities** such as lists of hospitals, schools, internet or utility companies and their contact information should be added to the [Resource Directory](#) module instead.

**Note:** If you do not have a full address, you can add cross streets to the Address 1 field.

BPs:

- Do not add third-party facilities; they should be added using the Resource Directory or left on a page if they contain too many links, images, or other details that require a Rich Text Editor.
- Use the appropriate fields on the back end to add details such as contact information, hours of operation, admission fees, max occupancy, documents, and images.

### Special Notes:

- You need to add "Phone: " in front of the number in the phone number field as this module does not automatically label it like the Staff Directory does.
- The Contact Name field is also used to mask the Contact email address when there is one. When there is an email you will use the word "Email" in the masking per our link BPs. You do not have to have an email address to use the field to display the name of a Contact person/department.
- Images:
  - If only one photo is uploaded, pagination and arrows should be turned off (they are automatically turned on)
  - Complex images can be added if they link to a larger version so users can see the detail in the images
  - Follow all standard BPs for [Images](#) (and slideshows)

- Features (aka amenities):
  - It is recommended that features are populated in a singular manner (such as “Softball Field” instead of “Softball Fields” or “2 Softball Fields”). This way Features can be used for more than one facility and the list of Features users can filter Facilities by isn’t too long/confusing.
- Description area:
  - For some reason, the Rich Text Editor in this module does not use the same spacing between paragraphs that all other Rich Text Editors on our sites do. You will need to add an extra “Enter” between paragraphs, so the paragraphs are not stacked on top of one another on the front end. It will look like too much spacing on the back end. We recommend checking the entry on the front end to ensure the spacing looks appropriate.

## FAQs

[CivicPlus Help Center: FAQs](#)

This module houses question and answer formatted content.

- Do not add the word “FAQs” to the end of your category title to prevent redundancy (users should be aware that they are in the FAQs module per the breadcrumbs and module name at the top of the page).
- The question field has a character limit so ensure that the question isn’t being cut off prematurely. If it is, then shorten the question in the question field and in the Answer field put “**Full Question:** <insert the original question>” and then put “**Answer:**” in front of the answer.
- Avoid using several images displaying inline in an answer as it is common for the answer to break incorrectly on the front end. The image or text content from that FAQ can overlap or push the info for the FAQs that follow it. If there are issues with images you may link to the images or move the content to a hidden page and link to it from the FAQ answer field.

## Form Center

[CivicPlus Help Center: Form](#)

This module is used to create fillable forms on the site.

**Note:** Any form that needs to be encrypted (contains Personally Identifying Information (PII)) must be created inside of an encrypted category after it is set up. You cannot move a form from another category into an encrypted category. View information on [Encrypted Forms on the Help Center](#).

If you are creating a very long form it is recommended to save your progress often so the system does not time out and cause you to lose any work.

BPs

- Each department should have its own category, and all forms found within that department should be housed in that category.
- Labels
  - Use uniform font text and colors for labels. View information on how to [change the appearance of fields](#) on the CivicPlus Help Center.
  - If it is a question, statement, or fragment intro, use sentence case and appropriate punctuation. If it isn't, then the label should use title case like a heading would.
- Do not use placeholder text in short or long answer boxes (Source: [Form Instructions on W3C](#))
- Text and Instructions areas use the Editor we use on pages. All regular BPs apply here.
- **All links** within the form should open in a **new window** to ensure information added to the form is not lost if the user clicks a link.
- Do not create fields on forms that require any [Personal Identifying Information \(PII\)](#) / Personal Protected Information (PPI) unless you have purchased Platinum Security and have an [encrypted category](#) set up on your site.
- Alphabetize lists and drop-downs.
  - Options such as “Other” or “None of the Above” should be used at the end of the list as they indicate alternative choices from the set of options.

## Info Advanced (IA)

[CivicPlus Help Center: Info Advanced](#)

Think of this as an Editor Widget that's a module. You edit the Rich Text Editor inside the module and then are able to display that information on one or many pages. Only use this module to:

- Display **third-party** contact information when it is the main contact for a page/section of pages. The format and order of information should be the same as within the Staff Directory widget. Example of third-party contact: Trash collection is outsourced to someone outside of the city/county departments and users need to contact them directly for services.
- Highlight a short bit of information in the Feature Column, especially when that information is useful on more than one page or may be updated more often than a page. Example: Display a list of due dates for different types of taxes. Now, those due dates only need to be updated within the Info Advanced module and the Info Advanced widget will update on any page(s) where it is displayed.

## Photo Gallery

[CivicPlus Help Center: Photo Gallery](#)

This module houses collections of images in categories that can be linked to from your page content or navigation.

- All images should have titles and alt text; caption text can be populated but is not required.

- Links should be created to Photo Gallery categories whenever possible to ensure their visibility.
- For large event albums where it is time consuming and repetitive to try and create unique alt and caption text you may number them. Example: “4th of July Parade 1” then “4th of July Parade 2”.

## Quick Links

[CivicPlus Help Center: Quick Links](#)

This module holds a list of important or common links (to sites, pages, or files) for departments, offices, or programs. Not all links should be Quick Links. Lists of links under subheads in the Editor should most likely stay on the page that way. Good candidates for QLs include:

- The most used/repeated throughout the section
- Links that should be displayed in a feature column or other like area
- Linked subpages to important resources or files (to clean up navigation when the left-hand navigation gets really long)

BPs:

- If creating Quick Links based off links within the text content, **do not remove** the links from the text.
- If a description is used for a Quick Link, it should not be more than a few sentences. If you have paragraphs of text for Quick Links, they need to be placed on a page in a bulleted list with their text.

## Resource Directory

[CivicPlus Help Center: Resource / Business Directory](#)

This module houses the contact information for third-party resources, grouped by topic into categories, that can be linked to from a page or linked page.

**Note:** If the resources contain too many links, images, or other details that require a Rich Text Editor (or would make the Resource Directory category really scrolly), the resources should be left on a page.

BPs:

- If no address is listed, remove the city, state, and zip code information
- Select yes to “link to map” for all entries with an address. (Mailing addresses alone do not count and should not be mapped.)
- The Editor for this module is **not** a Rich Text Editor so any formatting needs to be done with HTML.
  - If you are **adding images**, they need a specified percent width so they do not break the display of information on the front end. Check the normal and mobile views on the front end to verify that the images display correctly.

- **Tip:** You can add content/image to an Editor widget, copy the code, and add it to the Description field for that resource. You will **not** want to have any images displayed Inline with the text content in your code as the Description field is not wide enough for this to display well.

## Staff Directory

[CivicPlus Help Center: Staff Directory](#)

This module is used to house all contact info for your city/county/municipality's departments/offices and employees (including biographies). Items you may have added to the Facilities module, such as a community center or fire departments, can also be added to the Staff Directory module so they can be found in the listing of contact info. View the [Contact Information section](#) for how to format addresses, phone numbers, etc.

- Structure:
  - All categories should be in alphabetical order. Employees / Items should be alphabetized by last name (as they appear in the backend list).
  - To mimic the B&C page BPs, the main governing body should be added as a main category and be listed alphabetically within the list of other main categories (such as departments). A bucket category named "Boards & Commissions" should be created so contact info for each B&C can be added to their own subcategories beneath it.
- Categories
  - If you do not have a complete address for the Physical or Mailing address fields, delete the default city, state, and zip code information
  - Map & Directions: select Display a Map option whether or not you have a Physical Address (this way if an address is added the map will populate).
  - Phone Field: There is a long character limit so you can add things after the phone number, such as: "xxx-xxx-xxxx or xxx-xxx-xxxx after hours"
  - Emails / Contact Forms: If using an email address mask the link in the Show Email as field with "Email Name of Department". If using a form instead, mask the link with the word "Contact" in place of "Email".
  - Link field: Add a relative link to the main page of this department/office/etc. page masked as "Name of Department Page". This is to assist mobile device users as many times it is difficult to hit a "back" button to return to the department's page.
  - Brief Description: Department or office hours or any additional information that cannot be placed in other fields (examples: additional phone numbers or fax numbers, after-hours numbers, or a link to a Holiday Closures list)
    - Hours formatting:  
Hours (Subhead 2)  
Day through Day  
Time am to Time pm
- Items (Employees)
  - Add all employees and board/commission members even if they have no contact or other information. Do not add vacant positions.

- If you are missing any part of a name, you can use a “space” in that field until you can update the field with the appropriate info. If you have something other than a title like “, PhD” you can add it after the last name in the Last Name field. If you have a middle name or two-word name like “Billie Jean” you can add both to the First Name field.
- Phone Field: There is a long character limit so you can add things after the phone number, such as: “xxx-xxx-xxxx or xxx-xxx-xxxx after hours”
- Emails / Contact Forms: If using an email address mask the link in the Show Email as field with “Email First Name Last Name”. If using a form instead, mask the link with the word “Contact” in place of “Email”.
- Link field: This **does not** have to be populated for Items/Employees (there is a link already to go to their Staff Directory category where a link back to the department page can be found). If they have a link to a third-party bio or site, you may add that here.
- Description Area: Add bio info or contact info that doesn’t have a field, such as a mailing or physical address. All BPs apply to this field.
- Photograph upload:
  - Images need to be 200 pixels wide or smaller.
  - If resizing, any notes about the image’s size can be added to the image’s Display Name (and not the alt text) in the backend. Example: “Bob Smith – Original” and “Bob Smith – SD” for Display Names but both images would have “Bob Smith” as their alt text.
  - The alt text should be the person’s full name (when possible) and should not include resizing notes like “small”. We recommend not adding titles in case the employee changes positions within the city/county/board.

## Widgets

The following widgets are **not** used by content editors during migration so they have no set BPs:

- [Anchor](#)
- Google Translate
- List
- Search
- Share
- Site Tools
- [Table](#)
- Text

Neither do we populate or establish BPs for those that correspond with modules we do not use:

- Alert Center
- Calendar
- Community Voice
- Graphic Links
- News Flash
- RSS

Information on these [widgets](#) and [modules](#) can be found on the CivicPlus Help Center. We recommend following Best Practices that apply to text, format, and linking wherever possible in these widgets/modules.

## Feature Column

[CivicPlus Help Center: Feature Column](#)

In general, the Feature Column (FC) should be utilized to highlight "quick access / quick info" widgets like Staff Directory, Quick Links, FAQs, and Related Docs. If this makes the FC a lot longer than the rest of the page, some of those widgets can be moved to the main content area. Aim for consistency from department to department. **Note:** If a widget is used for contact information (Staff Directory or Info Advanced) it must be placed at the top of the FC. If you consistently use multiple different widgets in the FC (for example Quick Links and Related Documents), ensure that the order of these different widgets is consistent throughout the site.

## Anchor

During content migration we do not use the Anchor Widget so there are no Best Practices for its use. View information on how to [Add Anchor Links to a Page](#) on the CivicPlus Help Center (requires use of HTML).

## Carousel

[WCAG 2.2.2 Pause, Stop, Hide](#) (Level A)

[CivicPlus Help Center: Carousel Widget](#)

Ensure both the arrows and pagination are turned on for WCAG compliance.

## Custom HTML

[CivicPlus Help Center: Custom HTML Widget](#)

All iframes need to be added to this widget.

- Ensure the width is set to 100%. If your code does not include a width, you will add this inside of the iframe code: `width="100%"`
- Do not add other page content/text to this widget. Use any other appropriate widget.

## FAQs

[CivicPlus Help Center: FAQs Widget](#)

This widget should be used to display content that follows the format of "question and answer" that has been added to the [FAQs Module](#).

- The header text should be "FAQs" unless you have more than one category to display and need to differentiate between them.
- Check the box for "Expand question to show answer"

- Do not remove the text in the View All Link Text field so the View All button displays (in case more FAQs are in that category than what you want displayed on the page and to provide access to any you add to the category over time).

## Image

[CivicPlus Help Center: Image Widget](#)

This widget can be used to show images outside of an Editor widget. It is inherently mobile responsive.

There is one BP: Check the box to “Remove background styles from the image”.

## Info Advanced (IA)

[CivicPlus Help Center: Info Advanced Widget](#)

This widget should only be used in the Feature Column. If it contains contact information use the default Header Text “Contact Us” and, just like the Staff Directory widget, it should be the first widget in the Feature Column. If it contains other information, use Header Text that describes the content in the widget just as you would if it were a subhead1 heading. If not used for contact information there are no requirements for its placement in the Feature Column.

## Quick Links (QL)

[CivicPlus Help Center: Quick Links](#)

The QL widget can be used on a page to replace subpages that link to internal or external pages and/or documents. If there are a lot of document links that make the list of Quick Links long, it can be utilized along with the Related Documents (RD) widget. Follow these BPs:

- The header text should be “Quick Links” unless you have more than one category to display and need to differentiate between them.
- Do not remove the text in the View All Link Text field so the View All button displays (in case more Quick Links are in that category than what you want displayed on the page and to provide access to any you add to the category over time).

## Pages Widget

[CivicPlus Help Center: Pages Widget](#)

This is used for landing pages or bucket pages to give users access to information about the subpages of that page. It is generally used to fill a page that has little or no content of its own.

- Display Options:
  - Use Format 2 - Depth 1 to display links and page descriptions

- Use Format 3 - Depth 1 for pages with repetitive page descriptions (as they are then not displayed)
- Use Format 3 - Depth 2 for bucketed global pages such as How Do I
- Use Format 4 - Depth 1 if you want to display images or icons for subpages
- Other BPs:
  - Paragraph content can be added above a Pages Widget when needed (use your best judgement on whether the page has enough information without the Pages Widget on it)
  - Pages with the Pages Widget on them may have a feature column and a maximum of two or so small paragraphs of text above the Pages Widget.

## Related Documents (RD)

[CivicPlus Help Center: Related Documents Widget](#)

This widget can be used to display lists of documents on a page. The RD widget can be used on a page to replace subpages that link to files/documents. If there is a mixture of documents and links to pages or third-party resources the Quick Links module may be used in addition to or in place of the RD widget.

- If you want the widget to automatically display any documents/files added to a folder in the Document Center, you can checkmark the option “Select Folder (contents of widget will be populated dynamically)” when selecting the folder you want to display.
- The header text should be “Related Documents” unless you have more than one category to display and need to differentiate between the lists of documents.
- Use the sub-header fields if listing more than one topic’s worth of documents.
- If your list is long you need to display the documents in more than one column in the options.

## Slideshow

[WCAG 2.2.2 Pause, Stop, Hide](#) (Level A)

[CivicPlus Help Center: Slideshow Widget](#)

This widget can be used to show images outside of an Editor widget. It is inherently mobile responsive.

There is only one BP: Ensure both the arrows and pagination are turned on for WCAG compliance.

## Staff Directory (SD)

[CivicPlus Help Center: Staff Directory](#)

This widget should always be at the **top of the Feature Column** unless it is being used to display members for a main governing body on a B&C page. See the [Boards and Commission information](#) to learn how to use this widget on B&C pages.

BPs:

- If you are displaying employees/staff, they should be added above any category that is displayed (department/office/etc.)
- Staff:
  - For SD widgets in the Feature Column (FC) of department landing pages, include the department head and the main department's contact information. It is not necessary to clutter the FC on the production site with all staff. They will be accessible by clicking the "Directory" link in the SD widget (if that option is checked for the category).
  - **Never** select the All Employees option, even if the only employees currently in the category are the ones you intend to display in the widget.
  - Never select "Biography" for staff members. If you have information in their Description field you should select the "Link to staff in Staff Directory" option so users can see their entire entry.
  - Select to display any options that you have information for (Title, Email, Phone, Additional Phone). **Note:** If you display the phone number and they do not have one the "Phone:" label will show on the front end with no phone number following.
- Departments:
  - Select to display any options you have information for (phone, address, etc.)
  - Display link to Directions when a physical address is present. If you do not see the View Map button next to the Physical Address in the widget then you need to go to the module and turn the map function on.
  - Select "Description" if there is information in the Brief Description text box in the module, like Hours information.
  - Display a link to the Staff Directory when department information is displayed. This link should be turned on for each department/category that you display so users can access staff lists and other info for each department/category displayed.
  - If displaying a department/category and several subcategories (example: divisions in the department), the most important contact info (the main category/department should display above the subcategories.

## Tabbed

[CivicPlus Help Center: Tabbed Widget](#)

- Only the stacked accordion position should be used as it is the easiest option to navigate with assistive technology.
- **Do not** use a tabbed widget if you only have one tab.
- Do not drag widgets from one tab to another tab as this can lead to a Tabbed widget malfunction that "breaks" the page



## **Table**

[CivicPlus Help Center: Table Widget](#)

Due to difficulties in editing and linking tables in this widget it is recommended you use the Table in the Editor widget instead of using this widget.