

Guidelines—Using bold, italics, underlining, and quotation marks

Bold, italics, and underlining can often be used interchangeably when being applied to emphasize words. Underlining shows the strongest emphasis, followed by bold, then italics. The key is to be consistent. For your company's preference, check your corporate style guide.

There are, however, specific instances to be more exact in their usage. See the following guidelines:

➤ **Bold**

Use bold for the following three situations:

1. To introduce new terms.

For example: A **toggle key** turns a particular mode on or off.

2. To make a portion of a command stand out.

For example: In the **file** menu, click **options**.

3. To denote verbatim entries into fields.

For example: Enter **Xj3Sb01** into the password field.

➤ **Italics and Underlining**

In most writing, italics and underlining are used in the same way. Just be consistent through a document or set of documents. Use either for the following three situations:

1. To refer to words as words, including foreign words.

For example: The word *integer* (or integer) will show up in many places on the screen.

2. To indicate non-verbatim entries into fields.

For example: After opening the login box, enter *user name* (or user name) and *password* (or password) into the field.

3. To indicate titles of books or articles.

For example: See the article *Understanding Text Formatting* (or Understanding Text Formatting) for more information on the subject.

➤ **Quotation Marks**

Use double quotation marks (" ") for the following:

1. A direct quote

For example: He said, "I have no idea when this project should be finished."

2. Special emphasis on technical terms or business jargon not likely to be familiar to the reader.

For example: Joe doesn't seem to have the "bandwidth" to take on the project.

3. A title that represents part of a complete work, for example, titles of chapters, lessons, topics, sections, and parts within a book.

For example: See Chapter 2, "Three Successful Strategies" on best practices.

Use single quotation marks (' ') for only one reason—to show a quote inside a quote.

For example: Then she said, "The witness made it clear that the defendant answered 'no' to the question."

