

W&M Email Link Style Guide

SPIRIT PALETTE

Rules and examples for hyperlink treatment across all William & Mary email — Marketing Cloud, Emma, Slate, and one-off sends. Colors match the official W&M Spirit palette.

Quick reference			
Where	Treatment	Weight	Color
Inline body link (light bg)	Underlined	Regular	Dark Moss #597537
Inline body link (Dark Green bg)	Underlined	Regular	Moss #789D4A
CTA text link (“Read more”)	Underlined + chevron	Bold	Dark Moss #597537
Primary CTA button	Solid fill, white text, ALL CAPS	Bold	Web Moss #607E3B
Article heading link (light bg)	Heading style — no underline	Bold (heading)	W&M Green #004E38
Article heading link (Dark Green bg)	Heading style — no underline	Bold (heading)	Spirit Gold #FDB714
Top nav links	No underline	Semibold, uppercase	W&M Green #004E38
Footer / utility links	Underlined	Regular	Dark Silver #565858
Bold black text	Editorial emphasis — never a link	Bold	Soft Black #212220

The rules

1. Every inline body link needs two signals — color is not enough

WCAG AA requires links be distinguishable from surrounding text by more than color alone. This is why underline is required in addition to moss.

2. Bold is for emphasis, moss + underline is for links

Reserve bold text for emphasis in body copy. Reserve moss + underline for “this is clickable.”

3. Bold weight is only added when prominence is the goal

CTAs get bold. Inline body links do not.

4. Headings that link stay styled as headings

Wherever possible, don't make headings clickable. When you must, never apply moss + underline to the heading itself — style the heading in W&M Green on light backgrounds or Spirit Gold on Dark Green, make the surrounding block clickable, and pair with an explicit CTA text link underneath.

5. Match the color to the background

Dark Moss on white. Moss on Dark Green. Spirit Gold for headings on Dark Green. Web Moss for primary CTA button fills. Never Moss on white — it fails contrast.

6. W&M Green backgrounds are buttons-only — never link surfaces

W&M Green `#004E38` is a valid background for sections that contain only buttons, but it fails accessibility for inline links and text-link CTAs. When a section needs a dark background *and* contains any inline or CTA text link, use **Dark Green** `#183028` instead.

7. Consistency across platforms

The same rules apply in Marketing Cloud, Emma, and Slate.

Important — dark backgrounds: W&M Green does not pass WCAG AA as a background with link text (inline links or CTA text links). W&M Green can be used as a background — but only for sections that use buttons and no text links.

Live examples — Light backgrounds

INLINE BODY LINK · DARK MOSS #597537

Learn more about the [Reves Center for International Studies](#) and how it supports faculty research across campus. Applications for the fall cohort are open through August.

CTA TEXT LINK · DARK MOSS BOLD + CHEVRON

Our new alumni mentorship program pairs current students with W&M grads in their field of interest.

[Read the full story ›](#)

PRIMARY CTA BUTTON · WEB MOSS #607E3B WITH WHITE TEXT

Reserve your seat for the 37th Lord Botetourt Affair.

REGISTER NOW

ARTICLE HEADING WITH PAIRED CTA — RECOMMENDED PATTERN FOR HARK!

Jill Ellis '88 reflects on this summer's World Cup

The FIFA Chief Football Officer returned to campus in June to speak with student-athletes about leadership on the global stage.

[Read the story ›](#)

NAVIGATION LINKS (HEADER) · W&M GREEN, NO UNDERLINE

[NEWS](#) [EVENTS](#) [GIVE](#) [ALUMNI](#)

FOOTER / UTILITY LINKS · DARK SILVER, UNDERLINED

[Update preferences](#) · [Unsubscribe](#) · [View in browser](#)

Live examples — Dark Green backgrounds

When email sections use **Dark Green** #183028 backgrounds (common in headers and callouts), swap Dark Moss for **Moss** #789D4A on inline links and CTAs. For article headings on Dark Green, use **Spirit Gold** #FDB714 — it sings against the green and lets the heading do the work headings are supposed to do.

INLINE BODY LINK ON DARK GREEN · MOSS

Read the latest from [President Rowe's summer update](#) on the state of the university and this year's incoming class.

CTA TEXT LINK ON DARK GREEN · MOSS BOLD + CHEVRON

Join us for Homecoming Weekend, October 23–26.

[View the schedule ›](#)

ARTICLE HEADING ON DARK GREEN · SPIRIT GOLD WITH PAIRED MOSS CTA

Jill Ellis '88 reflects on this summer's World Cup

The FIFA Chief Football Officer returned to campus in June to speak with student-athletes about leadership on the global stage.

[Read the story ›](#)

Live examples — W&M Green backgrounds (buttons only)

W&M Green #004E38 works as a background for sections that contain only buttons. It does **not** pass contrast for inline links or CTA text links — use Dark Green for those.

BUTTON-ONLY SECTION ON W&M GREEN — PERMITTED

Ready to see campus for yourself?

SCHEDULE A VISIT

Do / Don't

DO

Applications are open for the [2026 Summer Research Fellowship](#). Faculty across all departments are encouraged to apply.

Dark Moss + underlined. Body copy stays clean and readable.

DON'T

Applications are open for the **[2026 Summer Research Fellowship](#)**. Faculty across all departments are encouraged to apply.

Bold on inline link competes with editorial emphasis. Save bold for CTAs.

DO

The registration deadline is **Friday, August 8**. Don't miss out — [reserve your spot](#) today.

Bold-Soft-Black draws editorial emphasis. Dark-Moss-underlined signals the click. Two separate signals, zero conflict.

DON'T

The registration deadline is **[Friday, August 8](#)**. Don't miss out — **[reserve your spot](#)** today.

Everything is bold-moss — reader can't tell what's the CTA. The date isn't even a link.

DO

Jill Ellis '88 reflects on the World Cup

Full story below · [Read now >](#)

Heading styled as a heading in W&M Green. Article block is clickable. Explicit CTA carries the link style.

DON'T

Jill Ellis '88 reflects on the World Cup

Moss + underlined heading looks like a phishing email. Heavy, dated, hurts scan-ability.

DO (ON DARK GREEN BG)

Registration is open for [Homecoming 2026](#). Reserve your tickets by September 15.

Moss #789D4A on Dark Green #183028 . 4.51:1 contrast — Pass AA. Matches brand.

DON'T (ON W&M GREEN BG)

Registration is open for [Homecoming 2026](#). Reserve your tickets by September 15.

Moss on W&M Green fails AA (3.13:1). Move link content to a Dark Green section, or keep W&M Green button-only.

Approved colors & contrast

Token	Hex	Use in email	Contrast ratio	WCAG AA
 W&M Green	#004E38	Headings, nav links, top borders, button-only background sections. Not a valid background for inline or text links.	9.78:1 on White	Pass AAA
 Dark Green	#183028	Section backgrounds for any section containing inline links or CTA text links. Footer band.	14.07:1 on White (as text)	Pass AAA
 White	#FFFFFF	Text on W&M Green and Dark Green backgrounds. Also a section background.	9.78:1 on W&M Green / 14.07:1 on Dark Green	Pass AAA
 Dark Moss	#597537	Link text on White / light backgrounds. CTA text links, inline links.	5.22:1 on White	Pass AA
 Web Moss	#607E3B	Primary CTA button fill only. White text on Web Moss. Not for link text or body copy.	4.62:1 (White text on Web Moss)	Pass AA
 Moss	#789D4A	Link text on Dark Green backgrounds only. Never use on White or on W&M Green.	3.12:1 on White / 4.51:1 on Dark Green	Fail on White · Pass AA on Dark Green
 Spirit Gold	#FDB714	Article headings on Dark Green backgrounds. Use for the “title” treatment inside dark sections. Not for body links.	8.02:1 on Dark Green	Pass AAA on Dark Green*
 Soft Black	#212220	Body copy, editorial bold-for-emphasis	15.97:1 on White	Pass AAA
 Dark Silver	#565858	Footer links, timestamps, secondary text	7.16:1 on White	Pass AAA

Token	Hex	Use in email	Contrast ratio	WCAG AA
Lightest Silver	#F0F1F2	Section backgrounds	—	Background use

* may not apply in all cases

Critical color rules for the Spirit Palette:

- **Dark Moss** #597537 is the approved link/button color on White and Lightest Silver backgrounds.
- **Web Moss** #607E3B is reserved for **primary CTA button fills**. White text only.
- **Moss** #789D4A is approved for links on Dark Green backgrounds only. It fails contrast on white and on W&M Green.
- **Spirit Gold** #FDB714 is approved for article-heading treatment on Dark Green backgrounds. Do not use Spirit Gold for body links or on light backgrounds.
- **W&M Green** #004E38 is a valid background only for button-only sections. Do not place inline links or CTA text links on W&M Green — use Dark Green #183028 for those.

Approved fonts

Two fonts, chosen because they render reliably in every major email client — including Outlook desktop, which silently drops custom web fonts.

Font	Use for	Rendering stack
Arial Sans-serif	Default for all standard email — body copy, headings, CTA buttons, navigation, labels, UI text	Arial, Helvetica, sans-serif
Georgia Serif	Longer-form editorial contexts (e.g., Hark! feature stories) when a more traditional feel is warranted	Georgia, "Times New Roman", Times, serif

Why only these two? Georgia and Arial are pre-installed on every major operating system and email client. Custom web fonts (Adobe Fonts, Google Fonts, self-hosted `@font-face`) work in some clients but silently fall back to system defaults in Outlook desktop, Gmail app, and older clients — meaning an email can look correct in preview but broken to a third of recipients.

Don't use in email

- Custom web fonts (Adobe Fonts, Google Fonts, self-hosted)
- System font stacks (`-apple-system` , `BlinkMacSystemFont` , `"Segoe UI"`) — render inconsistently across clients
- Times New Roman as a primary — it's the Georgia fallback only, never the intent

Code snippet

```
<!-- Body copy -->
<p style="font-family:Georgia,'Times New Roman',Times,serif;
  font-size:16px; line-height:1.6; color:#212220;">Body text.</p>

<!-- Heading -->
<h2 style="font-family:Arial,Helvetica,sans-serif;
  font-size:22px; font-weight:700; color:#004E38;">Heading</h2>
```

Code snippets (email-safe)

Inline body link — on white / light background

```
<a href="..." style="color:#597537; text-decoration:underline; text-underline-offset:2px;">link text</a>
```

Inline body link — on Dark Green background

```
<a href="..." style="color:#789D4A; text-decoration:underline; text-underline-offset:2px;">link text</a>
```

CTA text link — on white / light background

```
<a href="..." style="color:#597537; text-decoration:underline; text-underline-offset:3px; font-weight:700;">Read more &rsaquo;</a>
```

Article heading on Dark Green — Spirit Gold

```
<a href="..." style="color:#FDB714; text-decoration:none; font-weight:700; font-size:22px; line-height:1.2; display:block; margin-bottom:8px; font-family:Arial,Helvetica,sans-serif;">Article title</a>
<p style="color:#ffffff;">Dek or summary in white.</p>
<p><a href="..." style="color:#789D4A; text-decoration:underline; font-weight:700;">Read the story &rsaquo;</a></p>
```

Primary CTA button — Web Moss (bulletproof)

```
<table cellpadding="0" cellspacing="0" border="0"><tr><td
  style="background:#607E3B; border-radius:4px;">
  <a href="..." style="display:inline-block; padding:12px 26px;
    color:#ffffff; text-decoration:none; font-weight:700;
    font-size:14px; text-transform:uppercase; letter-spacing:0.08em;
    font-family:Arial,sans-serif;">Register now</a>
</td></tr></table>
```

Article heading + CTA pattern (light bg)

```
<a href="..." style="color:#004E38; text-decoration:none;
  font-weight:700; font-size:22px; line-height:1.2;
  display:block; margin-bottom:8px;">Article title here</a>
<p>One-line dek or summary of the story.</p>
<p><a href="..." style="color:#597537; text-decoration:underline;
  font-weight:700;">Read the story &rsaquo;</a></p>
```

Accessibility checklist

- Link text describes the destination — never use “click here” or “learn more” alone.
- Two visual signals minimum (color + underline, or color + weight + chevron).
- Link text contrast at least 4.5:1 against background (WCAG AA normal text).
- Contrast ratio at least 3:1 between link color and surrounding body text.
- Touch targets at least 44×44 px on mobile — apply padding to CTA links.
- Underline offset at least 2px so it doesn't merge with text at small sizes.
- Buttons include descriptive `alt` text if image-based; prefer live text.
- Match the link color to the background — Dark Moss on light, Moss on Dark Green, Spirit Gold for headings on Dark Green.
- Never place inline or CTA text links on a W&M Green background — use Dark Green.

Client compatibility notes

- **Outlook desktop** strips `text-underline-offset` — plan for tight underlines on Windows. Consider `border-bottom` as a fallback for CTAs.
- **Dark mode** (Apple Mail, Outlook mobile) may invert colors. Moss and Spirit Gold on inverted backgrounds may need testing for critical sends.
- **Font weight** renders inconsistently — Outlook renders `font-weight:700` lighter than most clients. Bold-vs-regular contrast will look weaker there.
- **Buttons**: always use table-based bulletproof buttons for Outlook compatibility.

Governance

This spec applies to all UMARK and UCOMM-managed email including Marketing Cloud, Emma, and Slate communications. Individual departments running one-off sends should follow the same rules. Color values pull directly from the W&M Brand Hub official palette.

Questions or exceptions: creative@wm.edu

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Aligns with the William & Mary web design system and Brand Hub color standards.