



This is the Point University identity

STYLE GUIDE v. 4

Style and Usage

When crafting the message for your publication, it is important to be consistent. Many of the University's stakeholders receive multiple communications from us, often within the same short period of time. One household might receive an issue of the University magazine, an email from the Advancement Office, a student's tuition statement, and an invitation to a departmental special event on campus – all in one week! Imagine the confusion that could be created if each of those publications has a different look and a different writing style. Our stakeholders may wonder if we are all working for the same university! Consistency in style, as in graphic design, helps build an effective identity for Point.

WHAT IS STYLE?

E-mail or email? Should you put a comma before the “and”? BA or B.A.? Does it even matter?

It *does* matter – consistency in writing style allows the reader to focus on the content of a publication, rather than being distracted by discrepancies in punctuation or spelling. Adhering to a certain style gives each campus publication, as another institution's style guide states, “a voice that harmonizes with those from other areas of the University, and makes their use by other media as easy as possible.” Style rules are in place to ensure consistency from one publication to the next.

This style guide is not comprehensive, nor is it intended to be. It is simply a reference for nonscholarly publications and correspondence written for and about Point University. (Scholarly publications are exempt, as they must adhere to another set of style rules, e.g., MLA or APA.)

Like many other colleges and universities, Point University adheres to Associated Press style. The AP is the nation's largest news agency, and adhering to its stylebook means that the content of Point publications and press releases can easily be reformatted for use by mass media.

If you have questions this guide does not answer, please contact the Communications Office or refer to the *Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law* as a guide. The stylebook is available in most bookstores. The Communications Office also keeps a copy on hand for reference. In some areas, Point style diverges from AP style. These instances are noted with an asterisk.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation in following these guidelines.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations and acronyms

Do not use abbreviations unfamiliar to most readers. When in doubt, spell out the word. On first reference, include the shortened form of an organization or other entity's name in parentheses after the full name. (This is not necessary if there is no second reference.) On second reference, use only the abbreviation or acronym.

Right: Point University is a member of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). The NAIA is made up of member institutions from across the United States.

Wrong: The CCCU, NAICU and NACUBO headquarters are in Washington, D.C.

Use academic abbreviations sparingly; the preferred form is to reword the sentence to avoid having to abbreviate: "John Jones, who has a doctorate in psychology." The following abbreviations are commonly used at Point:

B.S.	bachelor of science
B.A.	bachelor of arts
B.Th.	bachelor of theology
A.A.	associate of arts

The word "degree" should not follow an abbreviation.

Right: He has a B.A. in history.

Wrong: He has a B.A. degree in history.

Do not precede a name with a courtesy title for a degree and follow it with the abbreviation for the degree in the same reference.

Right: Dr. John Jones

Right: John Jones, Ph.D.

Wrong: Dr. John Jones, Ph.D.

When used after a name, an academic abbreviation is set off by commas.

Right: John Jones, Ph.D., spoke at the ceremony.

With dates or numerals

Use the abbreviations like A.D., C.E., B.C., B.C.E., a.m., and p.m. in conjunction with a date or numeral, not alone.

Right: In 450 C.E.; at 9:30 a.m.

Wrong: This a.m. she lectured on Laban's system of movement.

In numbered addresses

Abbreviate street, road, avenue, etc., in numbered addresses only:

Right: He lives on West 10th Street.

Wrong: He lives on West 10th St.

Right: He lives at 507 West 10th St.

Spell out first through ninth in an address; starting with 10th, use figures. Also, spell out directions of the compass in an address.

Right: She works at 507 West 10th Street.

Wrong: She works at 507 W. Tenth St.

Right: She works on Ninth Street in West Point.

Months

Abbreviate a month only if you include a specific date. Do not abbreviate a month if it is used alone or with a year only. Never abbreviate March, April, May, June or July.

When a phrase lists only a month and a year, do not separate the year with commas. When a phrase refers to a month, day and year, set off the year with commas.

Right: January 1972 was a cold month.

The coldest day of the month was Jan. 2.

Wrong: Jan., 1972 was a cold month.

The coldest day of the month was January 2.

Right: Her birthday is March 5.

Wrong: Her birthday is Mar. 5.

Right: Feb. 14, 1987, was the target date.

Wrong: Feb. 14, 1987 was the target date.

State names

Spell out the names of states in text.

Right: Point is a university in Georgia.

Right: The student will be living with her parents in Montana for the summer.

Use the two-letter Postal Service abbreviations only with full addresses, including ZIP code.

Right: The mailing address of the University is 507 West 10th St., West Point, GA 31833.

Note that in AP style, state/territory names with fewer than five letters and the names of states outside the continental U.S. are never abbreviated.

ACADEMIC TERMINOLOGY

Academic titles

For more about academic titles, including proper usage and capitalization, see **TITLES** later in this guide. Academic degrees should not be capitalized in text. Use an apostrophe + s when referring to a bachelor's or master's degree. Note that the correct terminology is “associate degree,” not “associate's degree.”

Right: He earned an associate of arts degree in 1993, and a bachelor of arts degree in 1995.

Wrong: She graduated with an associate's degree several years ago.

Right: She earned an associate degree in business and a bachelor's degree in music.

Note that a person either holds a doctorate or a doctoral degree. Do not use the incorrect phrase “doctorate degree.”

Academic honors such as *cum laude* (with distinction), *magna cum laude* (with great distinction) and *summa cum laude* (with highest distinction) should be italicized.

Right: A *summa cum laude* graduate of Point, she majored in music.

CAPITALIZATION

General

In general, avoid unnecessary capitals. Sentences read more smoothly if the eye isn't stopped by frequent capital letters. When too many words are capitalized, they lose their importance and no longer attract attention.

**The University*

On second reference, capitalize “University” when referring specifically to Point. Do not capitalize the word when it is used in a general sense or to describe another institution. (*This is a divergence from Associated Press style.*)

Right: The University enrolled a record number of students last fall.

Right: Point is one of several private universities in central Georgia.

Locations

In reference to the University's locations, only refer to West Point as a campus or the main campus. Other locations should only be referred to as “locations” or “off-site locations.”

Right: Traditional student housing is located at the West Point campus.

Wrong: Point offers a dual-credit enrollment program at its Savannah campus.

Right: Point offers a dual-credit enrollment program at its Savannah location.

Academic majors and degrees

Except for languages (English, French, Norwegian, etc.) and other proper nouns, the names of academic disciplines should not be capitalized.

Right: He is a music major who also pursued studies in Spanish.

Right: She had intended to major in Asian studies, but decided to study business instead.

*Academic and administrative departments, offices, divisions, programs and committees

Capitalize the formal names of academic departments, divisions and programs, as well as administrative offices; lowercase casual references. (*This is a divergence from Associated Press style.*) Do not capitalize the names of academic disciplines. Avoid capitalizing committee, center, group, program or initiative names unless using the full formal name. **Exception:** In address blocks, directories and tabular formats, casual names may be capitalized.

Note that the formal names of academic departments begin with “Department of”; the formal names of administrative offices, departments and divisions end with “Office” or “Division.”

Right: the Department of History

Right: She teaches mathematics, but he teaches English.

Right: She will visit the Global Missions Institute this afternoon.

Right: She will visit the institute this afternoon.

Right: He is the chair of the Curriculum and Educational Policies Committee.

Right: He has served on the committee for five years.

Right: The staff in the Advancement Office is very helpful.

Right: His work in alumni relations is very satisfying.

Bible and Scriptures

Capitalize the names for the Bible and its sections and of other sacred works. Capitalize references to God, Jesus, Christ, etc.

Right: Old Testament, New Testament

Right: King James Version, New International Version

Right: Talmud

Right: the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, the Word

Lowercase “bible” as a nonreligious term. Lowercase “biblical” in all uses.

Right: The Associated Press Stylebook is the bible of most newspapers and journalists.

**AP style does not dictate the use of capitalized pronouns in reference to God (e.g. “He,” “His,” “Thy,” “Thou”), but in Point publications, this is considered a matter of personal preference.*

Board of trustees, faculty, president

Lowercase board of trustees and trustee as a title before a name. Do not capitalize faculty or president (except when referring to the President of the United States or before a name, e.g., President Smith). Exceptions are formal uses, such as invitations, name tags or addresses.

- Right:** She has been a trustee since 1988.
- Right:** The board sets policy for the College.
- Right:** The president spoke at the meeting.

Buildings

Capitalize the formal names of campus facilities in text. On second reference, do not capitalize “hall,” “center,” “building,” etc. Do not include Point University in front of building names.

- Right:** The Scott Fine Arts Center is located across the street from the Lanier Academic Center.
- Right:** The concert is in the Scott Fine Arts Center. The center has limited seating, so please arrive early.
- Right:** Basketball games are held in the West Point Park Gym.

Centuries and decades

Use numerals when describing centuries and decades. Lowercase the word “century” except when it is part of a title. Be sure to use a hyphen when “century” is modifying a noun.

- Right:** the 20th century
- Right:** 18th-century literature; in the course Survey of 19th-Century British Literature

Classes and courses

Use lowercase when you refer to classes and courses, unless you are using the specific name of a course or the course uses a proper name or numeral. (A course is semester-long; a class is an individual meeting of a course.)

- Right:** I had math class this morning and English class this afternoon.
- Right:** I’m taking two courses, Calculus II and Introduction to American Literature.

Events

Capitalize the formal names of specific events occurring at the college: Commencement 2026, Open House, Homecoming. Do not capitalize general uses of these words.

- Right:** We have selected a speaker for Commencement 2026.
- Right:** Point has previously held commencement ceremonies at Unity Baptist Church.

Geographical terms

Capitalize north, south, east and west when they are part of specific geographic regions or official names of organizations. Don't capitalize general compass directions.

<i>Specific</i>	<i>General</i>
the Far East	the east entrance
the Western hemisphere	the western United States
the South	a southern Florida beach

*Publications and other titles

Italicize the names of newspapers and magazines and the titles of books, journals, movies, operas and long musical compositions when they are in text; enclose article, chapter, story, song or short musical composition titles in quotation marks. (*This is a divergence from AP style.*) In general, follow the rule that the whole is italicized, but the part is in quotation marks.

Capitalize the principal words of a title, including prepositions and conjunctions of four or more letters. Capitalize any word that is the first or last in a title.

- Right:** *Of Mice and Men*, *Gone With the Wind*
Right: *The Marriage of Figaro*, Handel's *The Messiah*
Right: "My Girl," Pachelbel's "Canon in D"
Right: *Atlantic Monthly* published his article titled "Life in a Small Town" in January.
Right: Her *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* article was titled "Small Banks Weigh Going Private."

Seasons, days of the week

The names of seasons and all derivative words are not capitalized unless they are part of a formal name: a fall wedding, the Winter Olympics, springtime.

State and federal

Always lowercase "state" and "federal," unless the words are used as part of the formal names or titles of organizations.

- Right:** federal loans; a Federal Parent PLUS Loan

Student classifications

Do not capitalize individual class designations: freshman, sophomore, junior, senior. Do not capitalize generic references: the junior class. Do capitalize the formal names of organized entities: the Class of 1979.

Titles

In text, titles are capitalized only if they directly precede the name of the individual. A title following the name of an individual or a title by itself is not capitalized. (For specific information about academic, courtesy, legislative, military and religious titles, see **TITLES** later in this guide.)

Right: President John D. Smith will speak at the event.

Right: Sue Jones, professor of biblical studies, will speak at the event.

When used as part of a mailing address, the title is capitalized, whether it appears in text or block address form. When used in a directory listing or similar situations, a title may be capitalized whether it precedes the name, follows the name or appears in tabular form.

Right: Send your comments to: Tasha Johnson, Director of Alumni Relations, Point University,
507 West 10th St., West Point, GA 31833.

Right: Send your submissions to:
Tasha Johnson
Director of Alumni Relations
Point University
507 West 10th St.
West Point, GA 31833

Exception: Titles of the holders of named professorial chairs are always capitalized in full, whether they appear before or after the holder's name:

Right: Jane Smith, the John B. Doe Professor of Music

Right: Doe Professor of Music Jane Smith

Some words identifying occupations or professions should not be capitalized even if they precede the name, such as: attorney, pianist, faculty member, coach, trustee, etc.

TECHNOLOGICAL TERMINOLOGY

Listed below are common computer and internet terms and their preferred spelling and capitalization.

email

Always use “email” without a hyphen. Do not capitalize the word unless it appears at the beginning of a sentence. When including an email address in text, it is preferable to set the address in lowercase letters and italicize.

Right: Send an email message to *admissions@Point.edu*.

home page

“Home page” is two words and is spelled in lowercase letters except at the beginning of a sentence.

internet

Lowercase the word “internet” in all instances.

online

“Online” is one word and used in lowercase letters, except when it begins a sentence.

smart phone

The phrase “smart phone” is two words, not hyphenated and used in lowercase letters except when it begins a sentence. Similarly, a phone that is not “smart” would simply be a “cell phone.”

social media

This term, always used as two words, refers to online tools that people use to connect with one another, including social networks like Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

URLs, web addresses

When writing web addresses in print and on the web, do not use “http://”; start with “www” instead. Italicize web addresses in text. Use abbreviated, redirecting URLs in place of longer ones wherever possible.

Try not to start or end a sentence with a web address. If a web address breaks to the next line, do not use a hyphen. Break the line after a “/” in the address, before the “.” or between syllables.

Right: Point has a new presence on the World Wide Web. To visit us on the web, go to *www.Point.edu*.
Right: For the basketball schedule, visit *www.Point.edu/athletics/Men/basketball/schedule.htm*.

web page

The phrase “web page” is two words, not hyphenated and spelled in lowercase letters except when it begins a sentence.

website

The phrase “website” is one word, not hyphenated and spelled in lowercase letters except when it begins a sentence.

NUMBERS/NUMERALS

In text, spell out whole numbers below 10; use figures for 10 and above. Do the same with ordinals – spell out first through ninth, and use figures for 10th and above. Spell out numerals that begin or reword a sentence.

The only exception is this: a calendar year may be used to start a sentence.

Right: There were 12 students in the course, but three dropped after the first week of classes.

Ages are an exception to these guidelines. Always use figures to indicate the age of a person, except at the beginning of a sentence. Ages expressed as adjectives before a noun or as a substitute for a noun should use a hyphen.

Right: They have a 5-year-old son and a daughter who is 2 years old.

Right: Two-year-olds are known for their high activity level.

Wrong: 2-year-olds are known for their high activity level.

Right: The professor is a woman in her 50s.

Grade levels are another exception. Always spell out grade levels; do not use figures.

Right: She is in the third grade.

Days, months and years

For dates, always use figures, without “st,” “nd,” “rd” or “th.” (An exception is any reference to the events of Sept. 11, 2001; in those cases, it is acceptable to use Sept. 11th.)

Right: Applications are due on Oct. 14.

Wrong: Applications are due on Oct. 14th.

When using two years to show a period of time, separate the numbers with a hyphen or an “en” dash (a punctuation mark that is longer than a hyphen, but not as long as an “em” dash — see [PUNCTUATION](#) for more details). Do not repeat the century and do not insert an apostrophe. (Exceptions include anything spanning two centuries.)

Right: the 2020–21 academic year, the 1999–2000 academic year

Wrong: the 2020–2021 academic year

Wrong: the 2020–’21 academic year

In a sentence, use the words “from” and “to” or “between” and “and,” not a hyphen or en dash.

Right: She worked here from 1998 to 2000.

Wrong: She worked here from 1998–2000.

Right: American culture changed greatly between 1950 and 1960.

When referring to decades, insert an apostrophe before the two-digit number when omitting the first two numerals.

Right: the 1920s, the Roaring ’20s

Right: the ’50s, ’60s and ’70s

Wrong: the 50’s, 60’s and 70’s

Right: Point was established in the late 1930s.

Measurements

Always spell out inches, feet and other measures. In a table, graph or chart, it is permissible to use markings such as ’ for feet and ” for inches. Do not use “smart quotes” for measurements; always use “straight quotes.”

Money

In text, use the dollar sign and numbers only: \$15, \$1,500. For dollar amounts beyond thousands, use the dollar sign, number and appropriate word: \$14 million.

Numbers in class years

When identifying current students or alumni by their class years, the two-digit year is preceded by an apostrophe. Do not insert a comma before the year. Most word processing programs will automatically insert the apostrophe curling the wrong way, e.g., '01. You may have to force the apostrophe to curl the correct way, e.g., '01. Use these keystrokes: Option + SHIFT +] in the Macintosh OS; Control + ' (strike twice) on PCs.

Right: John Smith '87; Jane Doe '00

Wrong: John Smith, '87; Jane Doe '00

Identify alumni who have changed their names since birth, through marriage or otherwise, as follows: first name/birth name/present last name/class year. Do not set off birth names with parentheses.

Right: Jane Doe Smith '70

Wrong: Jane (Doe) Smith '70

Identify alumni couples who share a last name as follows: husband's first name/birth name (if different from wife's married name)/class year, followed by wife's first name/birth name/the couple's present last name/wife's class year.

Right: John '68 and Jane Doe Smith '70

Wrong: John and Jane Doe Smith '68, '70

Right: John Smith '90 and Jane Doe-Smith '92

If a person has more than one degree from Point, place a comma between the class years.

Right: John Smith '78, '79 is the commencement speaker.

Identify an alumnus who attended, but did not graduate from, the University by including the years he or she attended in parentheses following the name.

Right: Jane Smith ('66-'67)

Percentages

Spell out the word "percent" except in scientific, technical or statistical text, or in a table or graph.

*Telephone numbers

In text, telephone numbers are written with hyphens: 706-385-1000. Do not use parentheses to set off the area code. (*This is a divergence from AP style.*)

Times

Use figures except for noon and midnight. Do not put a 12 before noon or midnight. When writing a time that falls directly on the hour, simply use a figure with a.m., p.m. or o'clock. Use a colon to separate hours from minutes, if designating the minute proves necessary. Do not capitalize a.m. or p.m., and do not omit the periods. ("AM" is a radio frequency designation, not a time of day.)

Right: 11 a.m., noon, 1 p.m., 3:30 p.m., midnight

Wrong: 2:00 p.m., 5 pm, 10:00 AM

When writing out a schedule in a list or column, use :00 with the hour if there are times listed with :15, :30, etc.

Right: 8:00 registration

9:15 coffee break

Wrong: 8 registration

9:15 coffee break

PUNCTUATION

Ampersand

Use the ampersand (&) only when specified, such as when it is part of an organization's formal name. Do not use an ampersand in a sentence place of the word "and."

Right: Black & Decker

Wrong: Her focus was missions & evangelism.

Right: Her focus was missions and evangelism.

Apostrophe

Apostrophes indicate where letters or figures have been omitted in contractions and class years.

Right: rock 'n' roll, John Smith '70

Colon

Use a colon to introduce a formal statement. Capitalize the first word after a colon only if it is a proper noun or the start of a complete sentence.

Right: The policy is this: Students must pay tuition expenses prior to registration.

Use a colon to introduce a series.

Right: There were four menu options: chicken, pork, beef or fish.

Use a colon with no spaces to separate chapter and verse in scriptural references.

Right: Mark 4:2–6, Exodus 2:1–5

Comma

Use commas to separate elements in a series, but do not put a comma before the conjunction in a simple series.

Right: The flag is red, white and blue.

However, put a comma before the concluding conjunction in a series if an integral element of the last item of the series requires a conjunction. This helps avoid confusion.

Right: I had orange juice, toast, and ham and eggs for breakfast.

Also use a comma before the concluding conjunction in a complex series of phrases.

Right: The main points to consider are whether the athletes are skillful enough to compete, whether they have the stamina to endure the training, and whether they have the proper mental attitudes.

Use a comma to separate an introductory clause or phrase from the main clause, especially when confusion would result if the comma were omitted.

Right: When he graduated from Point, he moved to North Carolina.

When “etc.” is used at the end of a series, set it off with commas.

Right: The professor discussed required readings, exams, extra help sessions, etc., during class.

Use a comma for most figures greater than 999. The major exceptions are: street addresses, broadcast frequencies, room numbers, serial numbers, telephone numbers and years.

Dash

A dash is a single long mark (—), not two hyphens (--). A dash can be inserted into a document using the following keystrokes: Alt/option + - (hyphen) in the Macintosh OS; Alt + - (hyphen) on PCs. In many word processing programs, two hyphens with a space on either side are automatically reformatted to a shorter dash known as an en dash; this is an acceptable substitute. The dash should always have a space on either side.

Right: The students grumbled — this was not unusual — about the increase in tuition.

Right: I will buy a house next year — if I get a raise.

Right: Family Weekend — an event for students and their families — is March 26-28.

Ellipsis

Use an ellipsis to indicate the deletion of one or more words in condensing quotes, texts and documents. Leave one full space on both sides of an ellipsis.

Right: I . . . tried to do what was best.

Hyphen

Hyphens are single short marks, used to join words or numbers. Use them to avoid ambiguity or to form a single idea from two or more words. Consult a dictionary for usage in specific words. Use a hyphen whenever confusion would result if it were omitted.

Right: When he recovered his health, he re-covered the leaky roof.

When a compound modifier — two or more words that express a single concept — precedes a noun, use hyphens to link all the words in the compound except the adverb “very” and any adverbs that end in “ly.”

Right: a first-quarter touchdown, a well-known author, a full-time job

Right: a very good time was had by all

Right: an easily remembered rule

When a compound modifier that would be hyphenated before a noun occurs after a form of the verb “to be,” the hyphen is usually still required to avoid confusion.

Right: The author is well-known.

Right: The children are soft-spoken.

Use a hyphen to avoid duplicated vowels or tripled consonants. Do not hyphenate between “non” or “pre” and a word except when a double letter would be created.

Right: anti-intellectual, pre-empt, non-negotiable

Right: nontraditional student, premedical studies

Do not use a hyphen with “vice”:

Right: vice president

Use a hyphen, a space and the word “to” when joining two or more hyphenated phrases ending in the same word.

Right: The 18- to 19-year-old students are generally freshmen.

Parentheses and brackets

Do not place a period or other punctuation inside parentheses unless the enclosed words form an independent sentence.

Right: Most Point students are from the South. (Of course, there are exceptions.)

Wrong: Many professors have terminal degrees in their fields (often doctoral degrees.)

Period

Use only a single space after a period (or question mark, exclamation point or other sentence-ending punctuation). Yes, you were taught differently in typing/keyboarding class. The old rule of two spaces after a period was designed for use with typewriters. Modern word processing software offers proportional spacing, so double spaces are not needed and often create awkward white space in a body of text.

Plurals

Plurals can be complicated in the English language. Consult a dictionary when in doubt.

Form the plural of single letters by adding an apostrophe + “s”:

Right: He brought home a report card with four A’s and two B’s.

Form the plural of figures by adding “s”:

Right: The college was founded in the 1930s.

Right: Temperatures will be in the high 80s all summer.

Form the plural of multiple letters by adding “s”:

Right: She knows her ABCs.

Right: I gave him five IOUs.

Form plurals of family names that end in “s,” “ch,” “sh,” “x” or “z” by adding “es”: Joneses, Williamses, Diazes.

Possessives

With singular or plural nouns not ending in “s,” add an apostrophe and an “s”:

Right: the donor’s contributions, women’s rights

With plural nouns ending in “s,” add only an apostrophe:

Right: the churches’ support, states’ rights

With singular common nouns ending in “s,” add an apostrophe + “s” unless the next word begins with “s”:

Right: the hostess’s invitation, the hostess’ seat; the witness’s answer, the witness’ statement

With singular proper nouns ending in “s,” use only an apostrophe:

Right: Jesus’ teachings, Kansas’ schools, Charles’ opinion

With joint possession, use a possessive form after just the last word if ownership is joint. If the objects are individually owned, use a possessive form after both words.

Right: Bill and Susan’s apartment

Right: Karen’s and Elizabeth’s cars are in the same shop.

Quotation marks and italics

Use quotation marks to surround the exact words of a speaker or writer.

Use quotation marks around the names of articles, poems, songs, one-act plays, television programs, series of books and sculptures. Italicize the names of books, newspapers, journals, films, full-length plays, symphonies, eras, and airplanes.

Commas and periods are always placed inside quotation marks.

Right: She added, “Remember your appointment, Harry.”

Right: “I have class after lunch,” he explained.

Semicolons and colons are placed outside quotation marks. If the quoted material ends in one of these marks, the colon or semicolon is dropped.

Right: He was advised to “never look a gift horse in the mouth”; he rarely followed this advice.

Exclamation points and question marks go inside quotation marks when they are a part of the quoted phrase or sentence. Otherwise, they go outside quotation marks.

Right: The professor ordered, “Drop your pencils!”

Right: What did Martin Luther King Jr. mean when he said, “I have a dream”?

Semicolon

In general, use the semicolon to separate two clauses that could otherwise stand alone as independent sentences.

Right: The package was due last week; it arrived today.

Use semicolons to separate elements of a series when individual segments contain material that includes commas, thereby avoiding excess confusion. Note that the semicolon is used before the final “and” in such a series.

Right: He is survived by a son, John Smith of Chicago; three daughters, Jane Smith of Wichita, Kansas, Mary Smith of Denver, and Susan King of Boston; and a sister, Martha Blackaby of Omaha, Nebraska.

TITLES (ACADEMIC, COURTESY, LEGISLATIVE, MILITARY AND RELIGIOUS)

In text, titles are capitalized only if they directly precede the name of the individual. A title following the name of an individual or a title by itself is not capitalized. On second reference to a person, use the last name only, unless another person mentioned in the document has the same last name. In that case, use first name and last name to avoid confusion.

Right: Pastor Bruce Benson gave the sermon. Benson focused on the issue of forgiveness.

Right: Tenure was granted to Professor of Biology George Smith and Professor of Computer Science Angela Smith. Angela Smith was also promoted to department chair.

When used after a name, a title is set off by commas:

Right: John Smith, professor of mathematics, will teach the course.

Titles such as CPA (certified public accountant) and APR (accredited in public relations) should be preceded by a comma and written in full caps with no periods.

Academic titles

Academic ranks and titles are specific and not interchangeable. A person is “Professor of,” “Associate Professor of,” “Assistant Professor of” or “Instructor of” a discipline, or “Lecturer in” a discipline.

Right: Associate Professor of Biology Jane Doe

Right: Jane Doe, associate professor of biology, will teach the course.

Right: Instructor of English Robert Franklin

Exception: Titles of the holders of named professorial chairs are always capitalized in full, whether they appear before or after the holder’s name:

Right: Jane Smith, the John B. Doe Professor of Music

Right: Doe Professor of Music Jane Smith

Courtesy titles

Use courtesy titles (“Mr.”/“Mrs.”/“Ms.”/“Miss”) only in formal materials, such as invitations. “Miss” is appropriate only for women age 18 and under, unless a woman expresses a specific preference for that title.

Doctor

The title “Dr.” may be used when the person holds an *earned* doctoral degree, such as a Ph.D., Ed.D. or M.D. A juris doctorate (J.D.) is not considered a doctoral degree. A title is **never** used for an honorary degree.

Legislative titles

Use the abbreviations “Rep.” and “Sen.” as formal titles before names in regular text. Spell out and lowercase “representative” and “senator” in other uses. Use only the last name on second reference.

Capitalize titles for formal, organizational offices within a legislative body when they are used before a name: Speaker of the House Jane Doe, Majority Leader John Smith.

Military titles

Capitalize and abbreviate a military rank when used as a formal title before an individual’s name. (See the lists in the *Associated Press Stylebook* for the appropriate abbreviations.) On second reference to a person, use the last name only. Spell out and lowercase a title when it is not used with a name, as follows: An aide said the general would review the troops.

Religious titles

The first reference to a clergy person normally should include a capitalized title before the person’s name. In many cases, “Rev.” is the designation that applies. Use “the Rev. Dr.” only if the individual has an earned, rather than honorary, doctoral degree and if reference to the degree is relevant to the context in which it is used.

Members of the clergy are typically known as “ministers.” “Pastor” applies if a minister leads a congregation. Consult the Associated Press section on religious titles for the preferred titles of denomination-specific clergy and rabbis.

TRoublesome Words and Terms

The following words and terms are often misused.

A, an

Use the article “a” before consonant *sounds*, even though the word/phrase may not begin with a consonant.

Right: a historic event, a one-year term, a united stand

Use the article “an” before vowel *sounds*, even though the word/phrase may not begin with a vowel.

Right: an energy crisis, an honorable man, an NBA record

Affect, effect

“Affect,” as a verb, means “to influence” or “to make a show of or pretend.”

Right: Enrollment affects tuition.

Right: She affected cheerfulness to hide her concern.

“Effect,” as a verb, means “to bring about or execute.”

Right: He will effect many changes in policy.

“Effect,” as a noun, means “result.”

Right: The effect was awe-inspiring.

Right: His warning had no effect.

A lot

This is an informal and overused phrase. Try using “often” or “frequently” instead. There is no such word as “alot.”

All right

Preferable to “alright.”

Adviser, advisor

“Advisor” is the preferred Point spelling.

Alumnus, alumna, alumni

“Alumnus” indicates a man who has attended or graduated from a school. “Alumna” is a woman who has attended or graduated from a school.

The word “alumni” refers to a group of men, or men and women, who have attended or graduated from a school. The word “alumnae” refers to a group of women who have attended or graduated from a school.

Do not use the phrase “alumni/ae” to refer to mixed groups. Use “alum” or “alums” only in informal text.

And/or, he/she

Avoid these constructions if at all possible. Use “he or she” instead.

Borrow, lend

“Borrow” means “to obtain or receive something on loan.” “Lend” means “to give out or allow the use of something temporarily.” Rule of thumb: you borrow from, but lend to.

Different from

Use this phrase, not “different than.”

E.g. or i.e.

The Latin abbreviation “e.g.” (for *exempli gratia*) means “for example.” It is often confused with “i.e.” (for the Latin *id est*), which means “that is.” Both should be followed by a comma in text.

Right: She liked all types of music, e.g., classical, bluegrass, jazz and rock.

Right: She liked all types of music — i.e., she didn’t limit herself to one genre.

Ensure, insure, assure

“Ensure” means “to guarantee or make certain.” “Insure” means “to establish a contract for insurance of some type.” “Assure” means “to inform with the intention of removing doubt.”

Right: She is responsible for ensuring that all funds are used properly.

Right: He insured the diamond for its full value.

Right: The professor assured the student that the course would not fill up in preregistration.

Entitled, titled

“Entitled” means “having the right to something.” Use “titled” to describe the name of a publication, musical composition, etc.

Etc., et al.

“Etc.” (*et cetera*) refers to objects; “et al.” (*et alia*) refers to people.

Farther, further

The word “farther” is used only for physical distance, such as “farther down the road.” The word “further” is used in most other instances: further in debt, further proof.

Fewer, less, less than

“Few” and “fewer” are correctly used in writing only before a plural noun, typically referring to individual items that can be counted.

Right: fewer than 15 applicants, fewer than 10 items

“Less” is used before a mass noun.

Right: less music, less salt

“Less than” is used before a plural noun that denotes a measure of time, amount or distance.

Right: less than \$50, less than three weeks

First-come, first-served

Avoid using this cliché if possible.

Fund raising, fund-raising

Hyphenate “fund-raising” if using it as a compound modifier.

Right: Fund raising can be difficult.

Right: Our fund-raising campaign was a success.

Hopefully

This word is best used to mean “in a hopeful way.” It should not be used to mean “it is to be hoped” or “let us hope,” although that usage is common in popular speech.

Imply, infer

To “imply” is to state indirectly; to “infer” is to draw a conclusion.

It’s, its

“It’s” is a contraction for “it is” or “it has.” “Its” is possessive.

Right: It’s been a long time.

Right: The University will soon celebrate its 100th anniversary.

Wrong: Its up to you to succeed.

Wrong: The train slowed as it reached it’s destination.

Irregardless

“Irregardless” is nonstandard. Use “regardless.”

On campus, on-campus, off campus, off-campus

Hyphenate “on-campus” or “off-campus” when used as compound modifiers. Do not hyphenate when using “on campus” or “off campus” as a noun (to show location).

Right: Students are required to live in on-campus housing as freshmen. Off-campus housing is an option for older students.

Right: Students live on campus as freshmen, and may live off campus as upperclassmen.

Over, more than

When referring to a quantity, use “more than,” not “over.” Use “over” for spatial relationships.

Right: I have more than \$5 in my wallet.

Right: The ball sailed over the fence for a home run.

Part time, part-time, full time, full-time

Hyphenate each phrase when using it as a compound modifier.

Right: She attends Point full time.

Right: He is a part-time student at Point.

Résumé

The preferred spelling is résumé. Most word processors have a keystroke option which will add the accent marks. It is acceptable to spell the word without the accent marks, but try to be consistent throughout your publication.

Theater, theatre

Use the American spelling “theater,” except where a formal name uses the British spelling “theatre,” e.g., The Fox Theatre.

Till, until

Either spelling is fine. Do not use “til.”

Toward, towards

Use “toward.”

Unique

Don’t use qualifiers (“most,” “very,” “less”) with “unique.” It means “without equal” or “the only one of its kind.”

Who, whom, that, which

Use “who” and “whom” in referring to people and to animals with a name.

Right: John Smith is the man who helped me. He has a dog named Fido who also helped me.

Right: She didn’t notice to whom the package was addressed.

Use “that” and “which” in referring to inanimate objects and to animals without a name.

Right: She smiled at the puppy, which was chewing on a toy.

Right: The grants came from foundations that were based in New York.

“That” is used in a restrictive or defining clause. “Which” is nonrestrictive. The rule of thumb is that when a comma can be inserted, the word following the comma is “which,” and the words following it may be removed without damaging the primary meaning of the sentence.

Right: The department that offers grammar-intensive courses is superior.

Right: The department, which offers grammar-intensive courses, is superior.

Note that in the second sentence, the phrase “which offers grammar-intensive courses” can be removed without damaging the sentence’s meaning: “The department is superior.”

ZIP code

Use all caps for “ZIP” but lowercase the word “code” unless it is being used in a title. (ZIP is an acronym for Zoning Improvement Plan.)

USAGE

Alumni

Identify past and current students by their class years, with an apostrophe (’ instead of ‘) before the year. Do not include a comma. (See the section *Numbers in Class Years* in this guide for more detailed information.)

Collective nouns

The collective nouns “faculty,” “class,” “group,” “team” and “staff” can be used in both singular and plural senses.

Correlatives

both ... and
either ... or
neither ... nor
not only ... but (also)
whether ... (or)
though ... yet

Jr. and Sr., II and III

“Jr.” and “Sr.” are not preceded by a comma. When using “II” or “III” (or another Roman numeral) after a name, the comma is optional, but is generally not used.

Right: John Smith Jr., John Smith III

Weak words and phrases to avoid if possible

one of the (most, best, etc.)	first ever	along these lines
in the final analysis	nice	personally
utilize	interesting	literally
meaningful	ironically	great
awful	awesome	actually
sort of	hopefully	like
unique	in this day and age	thus
there is/there are	prioritize	



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