



Writing Style Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1 WHY STYLE GUIDES MATTER

- 2 NUMBERS AND SYMBOLS

- 3 DATES AND TIMES

- 4 SPELLING

- 5-7 CAPITALIZATION

- 7-8 PUNCTUATION

INTRODUCTION

One West Creative follows the Chicago Manual of Style, but this style guide serves to handle exceptions to the rule, highlight common issues, and clarify certain guidelines. If questions of spelling arise that are not covered in CMOS, Merriam-Webster will serve as the go-to dictionary.

WHY STYLE GUIDES MATTER

A style guide is a reference point that sets standards for writing materials of any kind within an organization. Their focus is not usually on correct or incorrect grammar or style but rather providing guidance for instances when many possibilities exist.

Style guides offer the chance to present your brand in a consistent, professional way. They help to ensure that multiple authors use one tone. And they help save time and resources by providing an instant answer when questions arise about preferred style. They also come paired with a preferred dictionary, so if spelling questions arise that are not addressed in the style guide, you know where to go to find an answer.

NUMBERS AND SYMBOLS

Spelling out numbers: Following the CMOS alternative rule, only single-digit numbers (0–9) will be spelled out in running text. All other numbers will use numerals unless being used as the first word in a sentence. Try to avoid this where possible.

Number consistency: Where multiple numbers appear in a single paragraph (or other predetermined amount of text), some that would normally be numerals and some that would be spelled out, maintain consistency.

There are 89 residents, 8 of whom form the safety committee.

In addition, if copy contains many spelled out numbers, numerals can be used to avoid cluttered text.

Percentages: Use symbol (e.g. 80%)

Phone Numbers: Use either all dots or all dashes.

541.555.8765 OR 541-555-8765

Toll free numbers use all dashes. If you are placing another phone number in the same document as a toll free number, maintain consistency.

DATES AND TIMES

When referring to a specific date where the year is needed:

She became a resident on April 14, 2013.

When calling out a date without the year where the month directly precedes the day:

Join us June 28 for a meet and greet.

When the month and day are separated or the month is not referenced at all:

The June seminar is on the 28th.

He arrives on the 19th.

When using the day of the week with the date, commas must appear on both ends of the date.

Join us Sunday, April 1, at 1 pm.

Lowercase am/pm, no periods. This creates a cleaner look and helps minimize character count when space is limited.

Join us at 12 pm.

The luncheon begins at 11:30 am.

When referring to a time range, use an en dash, not a hyphen or em dash.

When & Where

March 3 • 2 – 4 pm

If preceded by the word “from,” use the word “to” in lieu of a dash.

Join us March 3 from 2 to 4 pm.

SPELLING

Healthcare is one word.

On-site is hyphenated.

Wi-Fi is hyphenated with both segments capitalized.

Best-selling is hyphenated in all instances.

Possessives: If a word or name ends in an s, and the s is pronounced, drop the s after the apostrophe.

Ross' aunt admired the grass' vibrant green color.

If the s is silent, keep the s after the apostrophe.

Alexandre Dumas's writing is brilliant.

If an acronym ending in s is possessive, retain the s.

CBS's line-up is the best this year.

Plurals: Acronyms ending in s, add es to the end. Otherwise simply add an s—no apostrophe.

You can never have too many TARDISes.

The new residents became BFFs.

Names ending in s, add es; all other names simply add s, even if the name ends in y.

Keeping up with the Joneses

There were four Henrys in the class.

NOTE: Do not use an apostrophe to make a name plural.

Abbreviations: Do not use abbreviations in running text unless design or purpose necessitates it. Exceptions would be prefixes and suffixes such as Dr., Mrs., Jr., etc.

On floor plans, either abbreviate square footage as sq. ft. or spell out square feet. Whichever you choose, stay consistent.

CAPITALIZATION

Continuing Care Retirement Community can be capped in short-form writing and when needing emphasis but should be lowercase in most running text.

Life Plan Community is capitalized. This follows LeadingAge’s example and will help the term stand out and gain ground.

Terms such as “board of directors,” “committee,” and “executives” do not need to be capitalized unless part of a proper noun.

The PRS Board of Directors held their semi-annual conference at the central office.

Our board of directors is currently making some important decisions.

Job titles and statuses (executive director, copywriter, healthcare administrator, etc.) should not be capitalized unless being used as part of the person’s name or on a business card/in an attribution.

Executive Director Joe Jones welcomes residents to join the open house

The chief operations officer will be speaking at the next conference.

Names of teams and departments are lowercased in all instances for consistency with job titles and statuses.

We met with human resources to deliberate a solution to the recruitment issue.

The words “resident,” “employee,” and other such nouns should not be capitalized. Only proper nouns are capitalized.

Degrees (bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, juris doctor) should be lowercased in running prose.

Academic subjects are not capitalized unless they form part of a department name or an official course name or are themselves proper nouns (e.g. English, Latin).

He majored in comparative literature.

She is pursuing graduate studies in English and creative writing.

Jones is chair of the Committee on Comparative Literature.

CAPITALIZATION CONT.

When using headline style (all words initial capped), only prepositions and articles are lowercase, unless they are the first word. Prepositions are only capitalized when used adjectivally or adverbially.

Don't Miss the Epic Fun at PRS

Retirement Is Life after Labor

The Goat Caught Up with Joe

The Mouse Ran up a Hill

NOTE: The length of the word does not determine whether it is capitalized. "Is" will always be capitalized because it's a verb.

Company and publication names: If the word "the" is an integral part of the company or publication name, it should remain capitalized (and italicized, for publication names).

NOTE: The name of a company should be written exactly as it appears in the logo. If the word "the" appears in the logo, it is part of the name and should be capitalized.

Regions of the world: Terms that denote regions of the world or a particular country are often capitalized, as are a few of the adjectives and nouns derived from such terms. As a general rule, if an area is commonly known as a region (Southern California), it is capitalized; if you are simply referring directionally to an area (northern Utah), it is lowercased. Examples (from CMOS):

the East, eastern, an easterner (referring to the eastern part of the United States or other country); the Eastern Seaboard, East Coast (referring to the eastern United States); the Far East, Eastern (referring to the Orient); the Eastern Hemisphere; eastern Europe (but Eastern Europe when referring to the post–World War II division of Europe); east, eastern, eastward, to the east (directions)

the Midwest, midwestern, a midwesterner (as of the United States)the North, northern, a northerner (of a country); the North, Northern, Northerner (in Civil War contexts); Northern California; North Africa, northern Africa; the North Atlantic, northern Atlantic; the Northern Hemisphere; the Far North; north, northern, northward, to the north (directions)

the Northeast, the Northwest, northwestern, northeastern, a northwesterner, a northeasterner (as of the United States); the Pacific Northwestthe South, southern, a southerner (of a country); the South, Southern, a Southerner (in Civil War contexts); the Deep South; Southern California; the South of France; Southeast Asia; South Africa; southern Africa; south, southern, southward, to the south (directions)

the Southeast, the Southwest, southeastern, southwestern, a southeasterner, a southwesterner (as of the United States)

CAPITALIZATION CONT.

Regions of the world continued:

*the Upper Peninsula (of Michigan); the upper reaches of the Thames
the West, western, a westerner (of a country); the West Coast; the West,
Western (referring to the culture of the Occident, or Europe and the Western
Hemisphere); west, western, westward, to the west (directions)*

Names of fees: Entrance fee, monthly fee, etc. are not proper nouns and therefore not capitalized.

PUNCTUATION

Serial comma: Yes, yes, and YES. Include the final comma before the word “and” at the end of a list.

Em dashes: No spaces around em dashes—just jump straight to text.

End periods: When using sentence-style headlines (only first word is initial capped), be consistent with end periods in any given project. Either use them everywhere or nowhere.

Spaces after periods: There should only be one space after a period. No exceptions.

Parentheses: Avoid them wherever possible. This includes when introducing acronyms and in phone numbers.

Quotation marks: Always use curly, double quotation marks. The only exception is headlines, in which case curly, single quotation marks are preferred. Periods and commas should always fall inside the quotation marks. For other punctuation, determine if it is directly tied to what is being quoted. If so, punctuation goes inside.

Correct: She asked, “Where is the event being held?”

Correct: How did she come up with the term “advertainment”?

Incorrect: What was the meaning of “freemium?”

NOTE: Quotation marks are NOT to be used to imply emphasis.

PUNCTUATION CONT.

Formatted lists: A vertical list is best introduced by a complete grammatical sentence followed by a colon. Items carry no closing punctuation unless they consist of complete sentences.

We were rated five stars based on several factors:

- *Our first-rate healthcare*
- *Our delicious dining options*
- *Our friendly staff*

Simply follow these instructions:

- *Unwrap the Pop Tart.*
- *Insert the pastry into the toaster.*
- *Wait for it to pop up.*

Acronyms: Leave out periods except when this might cause confusion, such as if something is written in all caps.

Exceptions to the rule:

- a.k.a.
- i.e.
- e.g.

Spell out country names unless using as a descriptor.

Many of our residents vacation in the United Kingdom.

The US government has decided to raise property taxes.

If you have any questions about this style guide,
please contact Holly Searcy at hsearcy@retirement.org