

## A

**abbreviations and acronyms** Abbreviations of time expressions and countries' names take periods with no space between the elements: *p.m.*, *U.K.*, *U.S.* Acronyms for job titles and names of most organizations, centers, buildings, forms, tests and other objects are generally spelled without periods: *CEO*, *CIA*, *SAT*, *TAAS*, etc. Plural forms of acronyms receive an s and no apostrophe: *She ordered two BLTs with avocado.* Acronyms that spell out a word may be spelled with periods in special cases where it is essential for clarity, for example, C.A.M.P. in the all-caps headline GO TO C.A.M.P. FOR HELP.

### **academic degrees**

- *Associate degree*
- *Bachelor's degree*
- *Master's degree*
- *Doctorate*
- *Doctoral degree*
- *BA, BAT, BAAS, MA, MSN. PhD, LLD, MD, EdD, etc.*

Do not use an apostrophe for *Bachelor of Arts* or *Master of Science*. Official names of degrees and certificates are capitalized, but informal uses, such as a *bachelor's degree in physics* and *bachelor's in physics*, are lowercase. *Bachelor of Arts in Physics* would also be correct. English, Spanish and other languages are always uppercase, such as *bachelor's in English*.

Avoid using *baccalaureate* as a substitute for *bachelor's degree*, and never couple it with the word *degree*. Baccalaureate **means** bachelor's degree. Similarly, you can use *doctoral degree*, but never use *doctorate degree*.

**academic departments** Capitalize if referring to a specific department or other academic unit by its full, proper name. Examples: the *Department of Math and Science*, the *College of Nursing and Health Sciences*. You may also use the name of the department first, but capitalize both words, as in *Math Department*. Otherwise, lowercase: *the department*, *the college*, *the nursing school*.

**academic honors:** Distinctions such as *cum laude*, *magna cum laude*, and *summa cum laude* should be lowercase and in italics.

**academic titles** Capitalize official, academic titles whether before or after a name. Before a name, give a person only one title. Do not use confusing phrases such as 'Dean of Liberal Arts and Professor of English Joe Alvarez.' (A better alternative: *Dean of Liberal Arts Joe Alvarez, who is also a Professor of English.*)

Long titles are more readable when placed after a name: *Dr. Joe Alvarez, Dean of the College of Business Administration and Graduate School of Business*. For Associate

and Assistant Professors, Professor is acceptable for informal use, but the full, proper title is preferred. Be specific when using titles that refer to faculty rank. Use *professor* only for full professors, not as a generic term for faculty titles. Refer to the college catalog for correct faculty titles.

Do not capitalize descriptive terms that precede names: *astronomer Carl Sagan*.

**addresses** Only street, avenue, and boulevard can be abbreviated but only with a specific numbered address. For example, *33 Oneway Ave.*, *666 Deadend St.*, *245 Boca Chica Blvd.*, but *the 200 block of Boca Chica Boulevard*. Never abbreviate drive, road, circle or court, even with a specific address. Abbreviate East (*E.*), West (*W.*), North (*N.*) and South (*S.*) with numbered addresses. For instance, *45 E. Chaparral St.*, but *If you want to find the ice cream parlor, take a left on East Chaparral Street*.

**adjunct** use lowercase.

**admission/admissions** Use *admissions* to refer to the department or process: *The Office of Admissions and Recruitment seeks applicants. The committee will review the admissions process.* Use *admission* for other cases: *He seeks admission to the university. Submit the admission form by March 1.*

**advisor** Use *advisor*, not *adviser*.

**affect, effect** *Affect*, as a verb, means to influence: *The exam will affect your grade.* *Affect* is rarely used as a noun, and when it is used as a noun it is usually a psychological term.

*Effect*, as a noun, means result: *The effect of the Hopwood decision on minority enrollment was substantial. He miscalculated the effect of his actions. It was a law of little effect.*

*Effect*, as a verb, means to cause: *He will effect many changes in the company.*

**alumni** This word construction is taken directly from its Latin origins. Therefore, the noun forms are gender specific:

- *Alumna*: one woman
- *Alumnae*: a group of women
- *Alumnus*: one man
- *Alumni*: a group of men or a group of men and women

It is rare to see the feminine plural form, *alumnae*. Most often the form *alumni* is used for any group of graduates.

The slang form of *alumni*, *alumnus*, and *alumna*, *alums* or *alum*, should not be used.

**a.m., p.m.** Use lowercase, with periods. Avoid redundancies such as *8 a.m. in the morning*. Also avoid unnecessary numerals when listing times: 7 p.m., not 7:00 p.m.

**ampersand (&)** Use the ampersand when it is part of a company's formal name: *Procter & Gamble, Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway*.

The ampersand should not otherwise be used in place of *and*.

**appositives** An appositive is a noun or phrase that renames a nearby noun. Nonrestrictive appositives are set off with commas; restrictive appositives are not. *Darwin's most important book, On the Origin of Species, was the result of many years of research.* The phrase "most important" restricts the meaning to one book. So the title itself is nonrestrictive and should be set off with commas. *The song "Hey Pocky Way" was blasted from all corners of Jackson Square.* The word *song* is nonrestrictive, so the appositive (the name of the song) restricts the meaning and should not be enclosed in commas.

**apostrophes** The most common error is use of the apostrophe where it is not needed. Apostrophes are never used to construct a plural form. Correct: *Two cups* Wrong: *Two cup's* Apostrophes are used in contractions: Correct: *Don't use an apostrophe in a plural.* Wrong: *She cant figure out how to use an apostrophe.*

A basic rule to remember states that apostrophes are only needed to show possession or to indicate missing letters or numbers. Correct: *It's raining. She remembers the '80s. The lizard lost its tail.* Wrong: *Its raining. She remembers the 1980's. The lizard lost it's tail.*

For more information on apostrophe usage, see Diana Hacker's *Rules for Writers*.

**associate degree** (See **academic degrees**.)

**athletic/athletics.** Use *athletics* as the adjective or noun when referring to a program or field of study, *athletic* when referring prowess as an athlete. *NNMC has an athletics program. Sue Power is an athletics instructor. She is an athletic person with well-developed muscles.*

**audiovisual** Not *audio-visual*.

## **B**

**bachelor's degree** (See **academic degrees**.)

**between/among** Use *between* to show a relationship between two objects only. Use *among* when it's more than two.

**because, since** Use *because* to denote a specific cause-effect relationship: *Because it rained, we did not need to water the field.* *Since* is acceptable in a causal sense when the first event in a sequence led logically to the second but did not directly cause it. *Since, 1909, students have attended this institution.*

**bi-** The rules in prefixes apply, but in general do not use a hyphen. For example:

**Bicultural**

- *Bifocal*
- *Bilateral*
- *Bilingual*
- *Bimonthly*
- *Binational*
- *Bipartisan*

**biannual/biennial** *Biannual* is twice a year. *Biennial* is every two years.

**building names** See the official list of building names for both campuses.

**bulleted lists** Use bullets for lists unless there is a sequence. Do not use ending punctuation unless the line is a complete sentence by itself. Use lowercase in lists unless list items are all complete sentences. Use a parallel structure in writing lists.

*We bought:*

- *apples*
- *peaches*
- *pears*

*There are many reasons to join:*

- *you want to lose weight.*
- *you want to look good.*
- *you want to tone up.*

*Each semester, follow these steps:*

1. *See your advisor.*
2. *Register for your classes.*
3. *Pay your tuition and fees.*
4. *Buy your books.*
5. *Go to class.*

## **C**

**call letters for radio and television** Use all caps and use a hyphen to separate the type of station from the call letters: KNDN-AM, KSFR-FM, KOBV-TV

**campus** It is important to remember that Northern has two campuses, so when writing about the college as a whole use *campuses*.

### **campus-wide**

### **cancel/canceled/canceling/cancellation**

**capital vs. capitol** *Capital* is the city where a seat of government is located, and when used with the name of the city, should be lowercase: *Santa Fe is the state capital*.

When used in a financial sense, *capital* refers to money, equipment, or property used in a business by a person or corporation.

*Capitol* describes the actual building where a seat of government is located.

**capitalization** Avoid using ALL CAPS in text because it connotes shouting. Official names are capitalized; unofficial, informal, shortened or generic names are not. This rule applies to offices, buildings, schools, departments, programs, institutes, centers, etc. So, phrases such as *the center*, *the institute* or *the new theater* are not capitalized:

- *Office of Admissions and Office of the Registrar, admissions office, the registrar's office*
- *School of Business, the business school, the school*
- *Center for Civic Engagement, the center*
- *Criminal Justice Institute, the institute*
- *NNMC Board of Regents, the board of regents, the board*

Lowercase college unless it is used as part of a formal name, even when referring specifically to *Northern New Mexico College: Welcome to the college*.

Capitalize official names of bulletins, forms, conventions, conferences, symposia and the like:

- *Class Schedule, the Democratic National Convention*

Capitalize the letters used for grades, as well as official grade names; do not put quotation marks around grades: *A, B, C, D, F, S/F, I, Incomplete, Pass, a grade of B*.

Names of official policies such as *Affirmative Action* and *Equal Opportunity* should be capitalized; if the concept, rather than the official name, is being discussed, lowercase is appropriate.

Names of holidays other than recurring celebrations are usually capitalized; names of seasons, academic periods and onetime celebrations generally are not:

- *Thanksgiving, Commencement, Arts Week*

but

- *registration, fall 2007, summer session, spring semester*

Titles of individuals are only capitalized before names. *Doctor Jack Kevorkian. Jack Kevorkian was a doctor.*

**century** Lowercase when used with a number, spelling out numbers less than 10: *Fifth century, 21st century.* **Avoid** using superscript letters. For proper names, follow the organization's practice: *Seventh Generation, 20th Century Fox*; hyphenate when used as an adjective: *19th-century poets*

**chair** To avoid the use of sexist language, use *chair*, rather than *chairman* or *chairwoman*.

**co-** Retain the hyphen when forming nouns, adjectives, and verbs that indicate occupation or status: *co-author, co-chair, co-pilot, co-defendant, co-signed, co-worker, co-sponsor, and co-opt.* Do not use a hyphen in other combinations: *coed, coeducation, coequal, coexist, cooperative, cooperate, and coordinate.*

**collective nouns** Nouns that denote a unit take singular verbs and pronouns when they are referred to as a unit: *class, committee, crowd, family, group, herd, jury, orchestra, and team.* For example: *The committee is meeting to discuss salary inequities.* Exceptions are *staff* and *faculty*, which are always plural. *The faculty are debating among themselves. The staff are waiting for their contracts.* You may add a plural noun, such as *members* for added clarity.

**colons** Use a colon after an independent clause to direct attention to a list, an appositive, a quotation, or a summary or an explanation.

- a list  
*Her job duties included the following: re-arranging the classroom furniture for the meeting, mopping the floor before and after the meeting, cleaning the restrooms in her area, picking up trash in the hallways, and making sure the building was locked at the end of the day.*
- an appositive  
*Our cat is guilty of two of the seven deadly sins: gluttony and sloth.*
- a quotation  
*Consider the words of Benjamin Franklin: "there never was a good war or a bad peace."*
- a summary or an explanation:  
*The novel is clearly autobiographical: the author even gives her own name to the main character.*

**colors** For a guide to Northern New Mexico College's colors and to see samples, please refer to the college's Identity Standards.

**commas** Always use the serial comma in a list of three or more items (the final comma before and, or, nor) to maintain clarity and prevent confusion.

- *Courses are offered in the spring, summer, and fall semesters.*
- *She's taking classes in consumer health, nutrition and health, and human sexuality.*

When the items in the series contain commas themselves, use semicolons between all of the items:

- *The letters in question are dated Aug. 7, 1991; June 20, 1992; and Nov. 1, 1995.*
- *The company has plants in Naples, Fla.; Bellingham, Wash.; and Santa Rosa, Calif.*

For numbers larger than 999, use a comma to mark off the thousands, millions, etc.:

- *1,001 nights; 93,000 students*

When they follow a person's name, qualifiers such as PhD and C.P.A. are preceded by a comma; a second comma follows the qualifier in running copy:

- *The opening remarks by Beth Michaels, MA, set the tone.*

However, do not set off Jr., Sr. or III with commas:

- *John Kennedy Jr.*

Set off a geographical unit's name with commas on both sides when it follows the name of a smaller geographical unit found within its borders:

*Paris, Texas, is a small community.*

The same holds true for a year, if a day of the month precedes it:

*April 1, 2008, is not an official holiday.*

but

*She knew that April 2008 was the deadline for contest submissions.*

Always set off a parenthetical (nonrestrictive) expression on both sides. In the following example, Barack Obama is parenthetical because it does not actually narrow down the meaning of U.S. president (the United States only has one president):

*The U.S. President, Barack Obama, will be there.*

When president is used as a personal title, no comma is called for:

*President Barack Obama will be there.*

The abbreviations e.g. and i.e. are always followed by a comma and are usually used in a parenthetical remark.

Commas appear after, not before, an expression in parentheses (like this), and they **always** go inside quotation marks: *It's time to leave, he said.*

**Commencement** This is the official annual end-of-the-academic-year ceremony for a college. Note: It is not called “graduation.” All references to Northern’s ceremony should be capitalized, All references to this college’s ceremony should be capitalized, but when used in a generic way, lowercase is preferred. *Northern’s Commencement is Saturday. Most commencements have keynote speakers.*

**committee names** Capitalize the names of committees. *The Security Committee will meet on Thursday.*

**compliment vs. complement** *Complement* is a noun and a verb denoting the process of completing or supplementing something: *The ship has a complement of 444 sailors and 44 officers, or the tie complements the suit.* *compliment* is a noun or verb that denotes praise or an expression of courtesy: *The President complimented the facilities staff on their fine work during Commencement or He was flattered when others gave him compliments on his new boots.*

**complementary vs. complimentary** *The beverage complemented the snack, but we received complementary tickets to see the rock show.*

**compose, comprise** *Compose* means to create or put together. It can be used in either the passive or active voices: *I composed the school’s fight song. The campus is composed of eight buildings.*

*COMPRISE* means to contain, to include all. It is best used only in the active voice, followed by a direct object. *The U.S. comprises 50 states. The zoo comprises many animals.* Do not use *...is comprised of...*

**composition titles** Apply the following guidelines to online documents, book titles, computer game titles, movie titles, opera titles, play titles, poem titles, song titles, television program titles and the titles of lectures, speeches, and works of art:

- capitalize the principal words, including prepositions and conjunctions of four or more letters
- capitalize an article – *the, a, an* – or words of fewer than four letters if it is the first or last word in a title
- use italics for the names of all books, directories, dictionaries, encyclopedias, brochures, reports, and similar publications
- do not use quotation marks around such software titles as WordPerfect or Windows

- use quotation marks and roman typeface for titles of movies, television programs, songs, lectures, and plays

**connote vs. denote** *Connote* means to suggest or imply something beyond the explicit meaning. *denote* means to be explicit about the meaning.

**continuous(ly)/continual(ly)** *Continuous(ly)* means without interruption, unbroken; *continual(ly)* means again and again.

**copyright** Reproducing another person or organization’s written, visual, musical or other works without permission is prohibited by U.S. law. Reproducing trademarks or logos without permission is similarly prohibited. Any works created by a person or organization are automatically copyrighted, even without advertising them as such or filing a copyright registration with the U.S. Copyright Office. (This very style guide, for example, is “de facto” copyrighted by NNMC.) “Fair use” of copyrighted material is far more restrictive than many believe. Therefore, to protect the college from legal action or loss of reputation, any writings, photos, logos or other materials not created by Northern employees as works-for-hire and used in college publications, including the website, should have written permission from the creators obtained and kept on file. An excellent overview of copyright law is Stanford University’s [Copyright and Fair Use](#) website.

**council, counsel, counselor** A *council* is a deliberative body, and *council members* are those who belong to it. To *counsel* is to advise, hence a counselor is one who advises, such as a guidance counselor, and admissions counselor, or a *counselor-at-law*

**couple of** The *of* is necessary; never use *a couple years* or *he played a couple new songs*. The phrase takes a plural verb in constructions such as: *a couple of students won awards*

**course names** These should be capitalized when referring to a specific class: *Autobody Refinishing I*. Lowercase might be appropriate for generic references: *He took a math class*. Capitalize names of languages such as Spanish or English: *she got an A in her Spanish class*

**course numbers** Use Arabic numerals and capitalize the subject when used with a numeral: *Philosophy 209*

**courtesy titles** In general, these are not necessary; refer to both men and women by first and last name: *Eddie Woodard* or *Julie Smith*. In cases where a person’s

gender is not clear from the first name or from the story's context, indicate the gender by using *he* or *she* in subsequent reference.

**curriculum, curricula** *Curriculum* is the singular form, while *curricula* is the plural form.

## D

**data** A plural noun that takes plural verbs and pronouns. Singular is *datum*. Wrong: *This data shows me nothing*. Correct: *These data are inconclusive*.

**database** one word

**dates** Always use Arabic figures without st, nd, rd or th. Example: *The anniversary is August 7*. When a month is used with a specific date, the following months are abbreviate: Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., and Dec. Months should be spelled out when used alone or when used with only a year and no specific day. 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, however, set off the year with commas: *January 2010 was a cold month. January 2 was the coldest day of the month. He was born March 3, 1944 in Gallup*.

Do not use "on" before dates: *The new building was dedicated August 21, 2010*.

**days of the week** should never be abbreviated

**dean's list** lowercase in all uses

**directions** (north, south, east, west) If a region is commonly known, it is capitalized. *Española is in Northern New Mexico. The original Northern Campus is located in El Rito*. Otherwise, do not capitalize. Ohkay Owingeh is north of Tesuque. Drive south on Interstate 25 to get to the airport.

**discreet vs. discrete**

**Discreet** means prudent or circumspect: *People were not discreet in complaining about their salaries*.

**Discrete** means distinct, or separate. *There are four discrete sounds produced by a bullfrog*.

**doctoral degree** *doctorate* is preferred as more succinct, and *doctorate degree* is not normally acceptable since *doctorate* is not an adjective. (See academic degrees.)

## E

**e.g., i.e.** The abbreviation *e.g.* means **for example**. The abbreviation *i.e.* means **that is or in other words**. Always follow *e.g.* and *i.e.* with a comma. These abbreviations should always be used in parenthetical situations, and they are not always considered acceptable in formal writing, in which case spelling out *that is* and *for example* is preferred.

**effect vs. affect** (see **affect vs. effect** entry.)

**email** has no hyphen. Capitalize only when used as the first word of a sentence or in a title.

**ethnic designations** Only hyphenate the following when used as adjectives: *African American*, *Asian American*, *Mexican American*, *Cuban American*, etc. Use *non-Hispanic white* rather than *white* in contexts in which there are also references to *Hispanics*, *Latinos*, etc. **Note:** *Anglo* is not a proper term when referring to a *non-Hispanic white*. The term *Anglo* refers to people of English descent and is not inclusive of people of other European descent with ancestry from France, Poland, Spain, Netherlands, etc.

**either** means one or the other, not both. Correct: *They installed security cameras on both sides of the door.* Wrong: *They installed security cameras on either side of the door.*

**either...or, neither...nor**

**ellipsis mark** Only use an ellipsis [...] mark to indicate where words are missing from a direct quotation.

**ensure/insure/assure** *Ensure* means to guarantee. *Insure* means to establish a contract for insurance of some type. *Assure* means to convince.

**entitled vs. titled** Entitled indicates a right to do or receive something. *All people are entitled to have access to decent health care.* It has an entirely different meaning from *titled*, which indicates the name of a book or other composed work. *He sang a song titled "Snowing on Raton."*

## F

**faculty** Plural when referring to more than one teacher or professor. *Many faculty were present.* *Faculty member* is preferred for individuals. *Dr. Jones is a faculty member.* *The policy was approved by a vote of the faculty.*

**farther vs. further** *farther* refers to physical distance: *He walked farther down the road.* *Further* refers to an extension of time or degree: *We will look into this further.*

**fewer vs. less** *less* is for amounts that cannot be counted singly: *you should drink less coffee.*

*fewer* is for countable amounts: *she should drink fewer cups of coffee.*

**first come, first-served** (not *first-serve*.)

**fiscal year** Abbreviated FY. Use FY only once when referring to a range of years. Example: FY 1996-2001 and not FY 1996-FY 2001.

**following, prior to** use *before* and *after*.

**fonts** For printed marketing materials, the college has approved certain fonts. Please refer to the identity standards for this information.

**forward** not *forwards*

**fractions** Spell out amounts less than one, and use hyphens between the two words: *two-thirds, one-fifth, three-fourths*. Use figures for precise amounts larger than one: *1 1/2, 3 3/4, 2 5/8*. Use decimals wherever practical, but never mix fractions and decimals.

**full-time vs. full time** Hyphenate when used as a compound modifier: *She has a full-time job and a part-time job.* Do not use a hyphen when used as an adverb: *She works full time.*

**fundraiser/fundraising** Do not hyphenate.

## **G**

**government** is always lowercase unless at the beginning of a sentence or in a headline or title; never abbreviate.

**governor** lowercase except when referring to a specific governor: *Governor DASHO* but *the state government, the federal government*

**grade point average** spell out first reference *Her grade point average was too low.*  
abbreviate second references in the same narrative *She needs to raise her GPA*

**grades** Use capital letters and do not use quotation marks. Spell out and hyphenate minus and plus. *A, B-plus, C-minus*

**graduate** Use as a noun or as a verb; when used as a verb, use graduate in the active voice: *she graduated from Northern.*

**groundbreaking** is a noun (an event), and **ground-breaking** is an adjective.

## H

**he, she** Avoid using as a generic term. maintain gender neutrality wherever possible by changing to plurals; otherwise, use *he or she*.

**health care** two words; hyphenate when using as an adjective

**homepage** one word, lowercase.

**hyphens** Do not hyphenate adverbial phrases: *Proofreaders are culturally elite people.* Do hyphenate compounds used as adjectives before a noun: *a far-reaching decision, a much-needed vacation, a thought-provoking article, a college-related program.* Close words with the following prefixes: re, pre, non, and post, unless the second element begins with the same vowel or a proper noun. *re-elect, post-Renaissance*

## I

**institutions** Always use the institution's complete name on first reference and its official abbreviation on second reference. *University of New Mexico at Los Alamos, UNMLA.*

**imply vs. infer** Writers and speakers *imply*; readers and audiences *infer*.

**Internet** Always capitalize.

**insure** Refer to this style guide's *ensure vs. insure* entry.

**its vs. it's** *It's* is a contraction for *it is* or *it has*. *Its* is the possessive form of the neuter possessive pronoun. Correct: *The college enhanced its reputation*. Wrong: *The college increased it's enrollment*.

## J

**judgment** not judgement

## L

**laptop** one word

**lay vs. lie** the active verb is *lay* and it takes a direct object. (If you can substitute the word *put* then *lay* is the correct word.) The proper form for the past tense and the past participle is *laid*. *Laying* is the present participle.

*Lie* indicates a state of reclining along a horizontal plane. It does not take a direct object. Its past tense is *lay*. Its past participle is *lain*. Its present participle is *lying*.

When the word *lie* is used to mean an untrue statement, the forms are *lie*, *lied*, *lying*. *When the boss said you would get a vacation, she told a lie. When the boss said you would get a vacation, he was lying. He lies on the beach all day. Do not lay the blame on the victim. The dog lies (not lays) in the shade all day. The dog is lying in the shade. The dog lay in the shade.*

**legislative** Do not capitalize this adjective. *That is a legislative matter*.

**Legislature** Capitalize this noun in all references to a particular legislative body, such as the *New Mexico Legislature*, which can also be referred to as the *Legislature*. Do not capitalize *legislature* when it is used in a generic way: *The lawmaking body in a democracy is called a legislature.*

**lists** *see entry for bulleted lists.*

**laypersons** not laypeople.

**lead, led** *led* is past tense form of the verb *to lead*.

**liaison**

**lifestyle** not *life style* or *life-style*

**logo** refer to Northern's identity standards

**lowercase** One word (noun, verb, adjective) when referring to the absence of capital letters.

**-ly** do not use a hyphen between an adverb and an adjective: *The event was poorly planned. It was a sparsely attended event.*

## **M**

**major** Use lowercase for names of majors when used in a sentence: *She received an associate degree in nursing. He is pursuing a bachelor's degree in business administration.*

**mariachi** is the name for both the group of musicians and the musicians themselves. *Mariachi* is the singular and plural form of the word to mean musicians but use *mariachi groups* to signify several groups of musicians.

**marshal/marshaled/marshaling/Marshall** Marshal is the spelling for both the verb and the noun: *Marilyn will marshal her forces. Erwin Rommel was a field marshal.*

Marshall is used in proper names: *George C. Marshall, John Marshall, the Marshall Islands.*

**master's degree** (See **academic degrees**.)

**media** In the sense of mass communication, such as magazines, newspapers, the news services, radio and television, the word is plural: *The news media are resisting attempts to limit their freedom.*

**memento, mementos** not *momento(s)*

**minuscule** not *miniscule*

**months** Capitalize the names of months in all uses. When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate only *Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov.* and *Dec.* Spell out when using alone or with a year alone.

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.

Examples: *January 2006 was a cold month. Jan. 2 was the coldest day of the month. His birthday is May 8. Feb. 14, 2005, was the target date.*

In tabular material, use these three-letter forms without a period: *Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec*

**Mr./Ms./Mrs./Miss** Do not use, except in a quotation.

**multicultural** Do not hyphenate.

## N

**nationwide** one word

**nonprofit** Do not hyphenate.

**noon, midnight** Use alone (do not use the numeral 12), always lowercase.

**No.** Abbreviate and capitalize and use Arabic figures to indicate a position. *No. 1, No. 10.*

**numbers** Spell out numbers one through nine. Use numerals for 10 and above. Exceptions can include temperatures, ages, percentages, physical dimensions, sports scores, ratios, and monetary amounts. *She is 4 years old, 50 percent, \$5 (not five dollars), The room is 12 feet by 9 feet, The Lady Eagles won the game 36-34.* When starting a sentence with a number, spell it out unless it represents a calendar year. *2012 was a bad year for our corn crop.*

Wrong: *200 new students enrolled this semester.*

Correct: *Enrollment increased by 200 students, or Two hundred new students enrolled.*

Large numbers: When large numbers must be spelled out, use a hyphen to connect a word ending in *y* to another word; do not use commas between other separate words that are part of one number: *twenty-one, one hundred forty-four, one million four thousand four hundred forty-four.*

Figures or Words: Spell out first through ninth when they indicate sequence in time or location: *first base, the second amendment.* Starting with 10th, use figures, except at the beginning of a sentence.

Plural numbers: Add an “s” with **no apostrophe** to form plurals: *He threw 6s and 9s. She is a relic of the 1980s music scene.*

Use numerals (*1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.*) when ordinals are assigned to an official name.

Primary examples are geographical, military, and political designations: *9th Ward, 7th Fleet, 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, 1st Sgt.*

Proper names: Follow the organization’s practice in this case: *20th Century Fox, Twentieth Century Fund.*

Centuries: The “10 and above” rule applies: Spell out centuries below 10; use numerals for 10 and above.

The word century is lowercase: *the 21st century, the fourth century.*

Commas: In numbers more than four digits long, use commas to separate the numbers into groups of three, starting from the right. In numbers four digits long, a comma is optional. *3,500 or 3500. 250,000. 1,000,000.*

Casual uses: Spell out casual expressions: *For the fourth year in a row, custodians have not received a pay raise. She walked twelve miles to buy cigarettes.*

## O

**on** is often unnecessary. Not needed: *The meeting is on Wednesday.* Better: *The meeting is Wednesday.* But, use to separate proper nouns when appropriate: *I am going to the Parade of Lights on Wednesday night.*

**online** Do not hyphenate.

**OK** not okay, o'kay, or O.K.

**ongoing** one word, no hyphen

**online** one word, no hyphen

## P

**part time/part-time** Hyphenate when used as an adjective. *Sam has a part-time job. Sam works part time.*

**percent** Always spell out the word. Always use Arabic figures. *1 percent, 55 percent.*

**person/people** Use *person* only in the singular form. Use *people* rather than *persons* for more than one.

**possessives** Generally, use an apostrophe and *s* for the possessive case.

*Have you seen Dean's Impala? It took a year's work to restore and refinish it..*

There are exceptions, most notably *its*. Words that end in *s* or an *s* sound are made possessive by adding an apostrophe and an *s*. *I have read all of John Keats's odes. Go back and study Karl Marx's writings.* It is sometimes possible to avoid this by rephrasing the sentence: *I have read all of the odes written by John Keats. Go back and study the writings of Karl Marx.*

If a plural noun ends in *s*, add the apostrophe and no *s*. *The strange noises came from the Smiths' backyard.* For compound nouns, use an apostrophe and an *s* with the last element: *He sang his mother-in-law's favorite song.*

Do not use an apostrophe to indicate possessive case for either numbers or letters. *The 1920s are considered the Jazz age. He got two Fs on his report card.* Exceptions: to avoid confusion, lowercase letters and the letters *A* and *I* take an apostrophe.

Indefinite nouns such as *everyone, no one, something* also take an apostrophe to indicate the possessive case. *Someone's car got stolen from behind the library.*

**postdoctoral** Do not hyphenate.

**postsecondary** Do not hyphenate.

**pre-** Generally, do not hyphenate unless there are two consecutive e's in the word: *re-enrollment, preregistration.*

**president** The president of Northern New Mexico College is Dr. Nancy "Rusty" Barceló.

**principal vs. principle** *Principal* is an adjective or noun meaning someone or something first in rank, authority, importance, or degree. *She is the school principal. He is the principal employee in the department.* The word can also denote a capital sum placed at interest, due as a debt, or used as a fund. *You have paid some of the interest on your student loan, but you've paid none of the principal.*

*Principle* is a noun that means a fundamental truth, law, doctrine, or motivating force: *The student signed the document but it was against his principles.*

**professor** Never abbreviate and, as with other titles, capitalize only when it precedes a name. *Professor of Teacher Education Paul Reed handed out the exam* but *Paul Reed, professor of teacher education, handed out the exam.*

**Professor Emeritus, Professor Emerita** *Professor Emeritus* is used for a retired male professor and *Professor Emerita* for a retired female professor. Use *Emeriti* for a group made of both sexes.

**punctuation** Generally, follow the guidelines in this document. You can also consult Diana Hacker's Rules for Writers. Besides existing in print and being widely distributed at the college, this reference is available online at:

[www.dianahacker.com](http://www.dianahacker.com)

Common mistakes include:

Comma splice: To join two independent clauses in one sentence, never use a comma. Always use a semi-colon.

Always use a comma before a conjunction in a series.

No comma is needed in compound modifiers when an adverb is modifying an adjective: *Steadily declining participation.*

Punctuation always goes inside quotation marks.

Please read the rules for apostrophes. Misuse of the apostrophe is one of the most common errors people make.

## Q

**Quran** The preferred spelling for the Muslim holy book. Use the spelling *Koran* only if preferred by a specific organization or in a specific title or name.

## R

**regard** No *s* is used. *In regard to your letter dated December 12.*

**renowned** not reknowned or renown.

**résumé**

**RSVP** Do not write *Please RSVP* as the acronym comes from French words that translate as “reply please,” which would be redundant.

## S

**scholarships** Uppercase when used with the full name of a scholarship: Keith A. Ferguson Scholarship Endowment for Criminal Justice.

**school** Lowercase except as part of a full formal name. *School of Nursing*. Lowercase when used informally with an academic discipline: *nursing school, veterinary school*.

**semesters, seasons** Lowercase academic periods and seasons of the year. *She will graduate in the spring semester*.

**staff** Plural when referring to employees. *Staff were present at the opening. Staff are working hard. Staff member* is preferred for individuals. *She is a staff member in our department*.

**state** use lowercase for *state of* constructions. *She has a contractor's license in the state of Florida*. Do not capitalize when referring to a state of legal or political jurisdiction. *state Senator Richard Martinez*.

**states** Spell out the names of the 50 U.S. states when they stand alone: *Texas, South Dakota*.

But, the state does not have to be used when referring to New Mexico cities and towns: *Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Ojo Caliente*

Note: Publications that may go outside of New Mexico should have the state clearly denoted.

There are two acceptable forms of abbreviation for states; however, *Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas* and *Utah* are not abbreviated.

Use the two-letter Postal Service abbreviation only with full addresses, including ZIP code: 921 Paseo de Oñate, Española, NM 87532

The other states and their abbreviations (ZIP code abbreviations in parentheses) are:

- *Alabama: Ala. (AL)*
- *Arizona: Ariz. (AZ)*
- *Arkansas: Ark. (AR)*
- *California: Calif. (CA)*
- *Colorado: Colo. (CO)*
- *Connecticut: Conn. (CT)*
- *Deleware: Del. (DE)*
- *Florida: Fla. (FL)*
- *Georgia: Ga. (GA)*
- *Illinois: Ill. (IL)*
- *Indiana: Ind. (IN)*
- *Kansas: Kan. (KS)*
- *Kentucky: Ky. (KY)*
- *Louisiana: La. (LA)*
- *Maryland: Md. (MD)*
- *Massachusetts: Mass. (MA)*
- *Michigan: Mich. (MI)*
- *Minnesota: Minn. (MN)*
- *Mississippi: Miss. (MS)*
- *Missouri: Mo. (MO)*
- *Montana: Mont. (MT)*
- *Nebraska: Neb. (NE)*
- *Nevada: Nev. (NV)*
- *New Hampshire: N.H. (NH)*
- *New Jersey: N.J. (NJ)*
- *New Mexico: N.M. (NM)*
- *New York: N.Y. (NY)*
- *North Carolina: N.C. (NC)*
- *North Dakota: N.D. (ND)*
- *Oklahoma: Okla. (OK)*
- *Oregon: Ore. (OR)*
- *Pennsylvania: Pa. (PA)*
- *Rhode Island: R.I. (RI)*
- *South Carolina: S.C. (SC)*
- *South Dakota: S.D. (SD)*
- *Tennessee: Tenn. (TN)*
- *Vermont: Vt. (VT)*
- *Virginia: Va. (VA)*

- *Washington: Wash. (WA)*
- *West Virginia: W.Va. (WV)*
- *Wisconsin: Wis. (WI)*
- *Wyoming: Wyo. (WY)*

These are the ZIP code abbreviations for the eight states that are not abbreviated in above text: *AK (Alaska), HI (Hawaii), ID (Idaho), IA (Iowa), ME (Maine), OH (Ohio), TX (Texas), UT (Utah).*

**statewide** one word, no hyphen

**student-athlete** Hyphenate to clarify that it's a student who is also an athlete, not a person studying to be an athlete.

**subjects** Use lowercase for academic subjects, unless a language.

**symbols (% , @ , ^ , # , & )** With the exception of an e-mail address, do not use %, @, ^, # and other symbols instead of words in body text. Spell the symbols out instead: *percent, at, number, and.*

Accent marks for vowels should always be used where appropriate: *é, á, í, ó.* N (n) should not be substituted for Ñ (ñ).

## T

**that vs. which** In general, use *that* and *which* when referring to inanimate objects. When choosing between the two, it is necessary to determine whether the word will be used in an essential clause or a nonessential clause. Always make your decision based on clarity.

If a clause is essential to the meaning of the sentence, it does not need commas and it takes the word *that*. *The bells that rang at noon were heard all over the village.*

If a clause is nonessential to a sentence, use *which*, and set the clause off with commas.

*The noon bells, which sounded ominous, were heard all over the village.*

**times** Use noon and midnight. It is redundant to write *12 noon* or *12 midnight*. Do not use *8 a.m. in the morning*. That is also redundant.

Use *8 a.m.* or *8 o'clock*.

Do not use *8:00 a.m.* or *eight a.m.*

The time goes before dates: *8 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 3, in the commons.*

Omit the comma when only the day of the week or numeric day is used: *The game is at 3 p.m. Friday at Towa Golf Course. The game is at 3 p.m. Jan. 24 at Towa Golf Course.*

Use hyphens in time ranges only when there is a numeral on either side of the hyphen: *8-10 a.m.* but not *8 a.m.-10 p.m.*, rather *8 a.m. to 10 p.m.*

**titles** (See also **academic titles** and **Professor Emeritus, Professor Emerita.**)

Capitalize official, formal titles, even when not before a person's name, per common practice in academia. Note that this is **not** consistent with AP, APA, MLA and Chicago styles and most English grammars.

A formal title generally is one that denotes a scope of authority, professional activity or academic activity: *Sen. Dianne Feinstein, Pvt. Joe Jones.*

See the **courtesy titles** entry for guidelines on when to use *Miss, Mr., Mrs., Ms.*

For formal copy, it is better to note a person's credential after their name rather than before, such as *Juliet V. García, PhD.*, rather than *Dr. Juliet V. García.* Besides being more elegant, this helps the reader determine whether the person has a PhD., MD or EdD, for example. However, when a person has a doctorate or medical degree, it is acceptable to refer to that person with *Dr.* preceding the name on first reference. *Dr. Juliet V. García, President of The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College.*

Note: **Avoid** using more than one title before a person's name, such as *President Dr. Juliet V. García.*

Lowercase other titles that serve primarily as occupational descriptions: *astronaut John Glenn, movie star John Wayne, peanut farmer Jimmy Carter.*

The following titles are capitalized and abbreviated as shown when used before a name outside quotations: *Dr., Gov., Lt. Gov., Rep., Sen.* and military ranks. Spell out all except *Dr., Mr., Mrs., Ms.*, when they are used in quotations.

**toward** not towards, unless you are British.

## U

**undergraduate** Undergraduates are *freshmen, sophomores, juniors* and *seniors*. *Senior* can be used for fourth- and fifth-year undergraduates.

**under way** two words, no hyphen

**United States/U.S.** *United States* is a proper noun; *U.S.* is an adjective.

*We are no longer U.S. citizens. I used to live in the United States.*

**university** Lowercase when not part of a proper name. This is a style rule of the university.

**uppercase** One word (noun, verb, adjective) when referring to the use of capital letters.

**USA** No periods in the abbreviated form for the United States of America. **U.S.** does have periods.

## V

**vice president** two words, no hyphen

**voicemail** one word

## W

**Washington, D.C.** Never abbreviate when referring to the U.S. capitol.

**web** one word, lowercase.

**web addresses** Can typically be put in their own paragraph at the end of writings to not bog down the writing and reading process. Do not use the *http://* prefix with *www*. On second reference, *web* is acceptable. Use ending punctuation for sentences that end with web addresses.

**web standards** Visit the website for the Office of Web Communications for complete UTB/TSC web standards.

**webpage** One word, lowercase. **website** One word, lowercase.

### **well-being**

**who vs. whom** *Who* is the word to use when someone is the subject of a sentence: *Who said that?*

*whom* is the word to use when someone is the object of a verb or preposition: *To whom do you wish to speak?*

**who vs. that** Use *who* only for people. For any other entity or organization, use *that*. *My company hires anyone who walks in the door. It's a company that will hire anyone.*

**World Wide Web** Since this is the official name for the system that links computer users across the world, it is a proper noun, as is Internet.

### **workforce, workload, workplace**

### **work-study**

**WYSIWYG** acronym for *what you see is what you get*

**X**

## **X-ray** uppercase X

**Xerox** is the trademarked name of a company in Rochester, New York that makes photocopiers. It is a proper noun. Don't use it as a verb; use *copy* or *photocopy*.

## **Y**

**year** (See **dates** and **months**.) Hyphenate first-year, second-year, third-year, fourth-year, etc. when used as an adjective. *The first-year student went to the mall.*

For years, use figure without commas: *1975*.

Use commas only with a month and day: *Dec. 18, 1994, was a special day.*

Use an s **without an apostrophe** to indicate spans of decades or centuries: *the 1890s, the 1800s*.

Years are the lone exception to the general rule in numerals that a figure is not used to start a sentence: *1976 was a good year.*

## **Z**

**zero, zeros** no *e* for singular or plural

**ZIP code** ZIP is an acronym meaning Zone Improvement Program, so it should be used as a whole word, without periods between each letter.