

August 2009

Kansas Department of Agriculture

Stylebook

A

abbreviations and acronyms. A few universally recognized abbreviations are required in some circumstances. Some others are acceptable depending on the context. But in general, avoid alphabet soup. Do not use abbreviations or acronyms the reader would not quickly recognize.

BEFORE A NAME: Abbreviate the following titles when used before a full name outside direct quotations: Dr., Gov., Lt. Gov., Mr., Mrs., Rep. and Sen.

Also see **legislative titles**.

WITH DATES OR NUMERALS: Use the abbreviations a.m., p.m. and No. only with figures.

Wrong: Early this a.m. he asked for the No. of your room.

Right: Early this morning he asked for the number of your room.

ACCEPTABLE BUT NOT REQUIRED: Some organizations and government agencies are widely recognized by their initials: CIA, FBI, GOP. Let the context determine whether to use Federal Bureau of Investigation or FBI.

AVOID AWKWARD CONSTRUCTIONS: Do not follow an organization's full name with an abbreviation or acronym in parentheses or set off by dashes. If an abbreviation or acronym would not be clear on second reference without this arrangement, do not use it. Names not commonly before the public should not be reduced to acronyms solely to save a few words.

ACAP. Agricultural Commodities Assurance Program. ACAP acceptable on second reference.

acre-foot. The volume of water required to cover 1 acre of land, (43,560 square feet) to a depth of 1 foot. Equal to 325,851 gallons or 1,233 cubic meters. Also, **acre-feet**.

acts. See **laws**.

affect, effect. Affect, as a verb, means to influence: *The game will affect the standings.*

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

Effect, as a noun, means result: *The effect was overwhelming. He miscalculated the effect of his actions. It was a law of little effect.*

afterward. Not afterwards.

Agricultural Laboratory program.

altar, alter. An altar is a tablelike platform used in a religious service. To alter is to change.

a.m., p.m. Lowercase, with periods. Avoid the redundant 10 a.m. this morning.

amid. Not amidst.

among, between. The maxim that between introduces two items and among introduces more than two covers most questions about how to use these words: *The funds were divided among Ford, Carter and McCarthy.*

However, between is the correct word when expressing the relationships of three or more items considered one pair at a time: *Negotiations on a debate format are under way between the network and the Ford, Carter and McCarthy committees.*

As with all prepositions, any pronouns that follow these words must be in the objective case: *among us, between him and her, between you and me.*

ampersand (&). See entry in **Punctuation** section.

annual. An event cannot be described as annual until it has been held in at least two successive years.

Do not use the term *first annual*. Instead, note that sponsors plan to hold an event annually.

ante-. The rules in **prefixes** apply, but in general, no hyphen. Some examples:
antebellum
antedate
antemortem (postmortem)

apostrophe ('). See entry in **Punctuation** section.

area codes. See **telephone numbers**.

B _____

backward. Not backwards.

Basin Management Team. This program name was approved for use beginning May 2009. The program was previously known as the Subbasin Water Resource Management Program.

because, since. Use *because* to denote a specific cause-effect relationship: *He went because he was told.*

Since is acceptable in a causal sense when the first event in a sequence led logically to the second but was not its direct cause: *They went to the game, since they had been given the tickets.*

between. See the **among, between** entry.

bimonthly. Means every other month. Semimonthly means twice a month.

biweekly. Means every other week. Semiweekly means twice a week.

board. Capitalize only when an integral part of a proper name. See **capitalization**.

bovine spongiform encephalopathy. Not Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy. BSE acceptable on second reference. Avoid using *mad cow disease*.

bushel. A unit of dry measure equal to 4 pecks or 32 dry quarts. The metric equivalent is approximately 35.2 liters.

by- The rules in **prefixes** apply, but in general, no hyphen. Some examples:

byline

byproduct

bypass

bylaw

C _____

cabinet. Capitalize references to a specific body of advisers heading executive departments. *The governor-elect said she has not made her Cabinet selections.*

The capital letter distinguishes the word from the common noun meaning cupboard, which is lowercase.

cabinet titles. Capitalize the full title when used before a name; lowercase in other uses: *Secretary of Agriculture Josh Svaty, but Roderick Bremby, secretary of health and environment.* See **titles**.

cannot.

capital. The city where a seat of government is located. Do not capitalize.

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

capitalization. In general, avoid unnecessary capitals. Use a capital letter only if you can justify it by one of the principles listed here.

PROPER NOUNS. Capitalize nouns that constitute the unique identification for a specific person, place, or thing: John, Mary, America, Boston, England.

PROPER NAMES: Capitalize common nouns such as party, river, street and west when they are an integral part of the full name for a person, place or thing; Democratic Party, Mississippi River, Fleet Street, West Virginia.

Lowercase these common nouns when they stand alone in subsequent references: the party, the river, the street.

Lowercase the common noun elements of names in all plural uses: the Democratic and Republican parties, Main and State streets, lakes Erie and Ontario.

SENTENCES: Capitalize the first word in a statement that stands as a sentence. See **sentences** and **parentheses**.

TITLES: Capitalize formal titles when used immediately before a name. Lowercase formal titles when used alone or in constructions that set them off from a name by commas. Use lowercase at all times for terms that are job descriptions rather than formal titles.

capitol. Capitalize U.S. Capitol and the Capitol when referring to the building in Washington: *The meeting was held on Capitol Hill in the west wing of the Capitol.*
Follow the same practice when referring to state capitols: *The Kansas Capitol is in Topeka.*

carry-over.

cents. Spell out the word cents and lowercase, using numerals for amounts less than a dollar: 5 cents, 12 cents. Use the \$ sign and decimal system for larger amounts: \$1.01, \$2.50.

chairman, chairwoman. Capitalize as a formal title before a name: *company Chairman Henry Ford, committee Chairwoman Margaret Chase Smith.*
Do not capitalize as a casual, temporary position: *meeting chairman Robert Jones.*
Do not use chairperson unless it is an organization's formal title for an office.
See **titles**.

chief engineer. Lowercase unless it precedes a name. See **titles**.

citizen, resident. A citizen is a person who has acquired the full civil rights of a nation either by birth or naturalization. Cities and states in the United States do not confer citizenship. Use resident, not citizen, in referring to inhabitants of states and cities.

comma. See entry in **Punctuation** chapter.

committee. Do not abbreviate. Capitalize when part of a formal name: *the House Appropriations Committee.*
See **subcommittee**.

compared to, compared with. Use *compared to* when the intent is to assert, without the need for elaboration, that two or more items are similar: *She compared her work for women's rights to Susan B. Anthony's campaign for women's suffrage.*

Use *compared with* when juxtaposing two or more items to illustrate similarities and/or differences: *His time was 2:11:10, compared with 2:14 for his closest competitor.*

complement, compliment. *Complement* is a noun and a verb denoting completeness or the process of supplementing something: *The ship has a complement of 200 sailors and 20 officers. The tie complements his suit.*

Compliment is a noun or a verb that denotes praise or the expression of courtesy: *The captain complimented the sailors. She was flattered by the compliments on her outfit.*

compose, comprise, constitute. Compose means to create or put together. It commonly is used in both the active and passive voices. *She composed a song. The United States is composed of 50 states. The zoo is composed of many animals.*

Comprise means to contain, to include all or embrace. It is best used only in the active voice, followed by a direct object: *The United States comprises 50 states. The jury comprises five men and seven women. The zoo comprises many animals.*

Constitute, in the sense of form or make up, may be the best word if neither compose nor comprise seems to fit. *Fifty states constitute the United States. Five men and seven women constitute the jury. A collection of animals can constitute a zoo.*

Use *include* when what follows is only part of the total: *The price includes breakfast. The zoo includes lions and tigers.*

continual, continuous. Continual means a steady repetition, over and over again: *The merger has been the source of continual litigation.*

Continuous means uninterrupted, steady, unbroken: *All she saw ahead of her was a continuous stretch of desert.*

Corn Belt. The region in the north-central Midwest where much corn and corn-fed livestock are raised. It extends from western Ohio to eastern Nebraska to northeastern Kansas.

county. Capitalize when an integral part of a proper name: *Shawnee County, Finney County.*

Retain capitalization for the name of a county body if the proper noun is not needed in the context; lowercase the word county if it used to distinguish an agency from state or federal counterparts: *the Board of Supervisors, the county Board of Supervisors; the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, the county Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services.* Lowercase the board, the department, etc. whenever they stand alone.

Capitalize county if it is an integral part of a specific body's name even without the proper noun: *the County Commission.* Lowercase *the commission* when not preceded by the word county.

Capitalize as part of a formal title before a name: *County Manager John Smith.* Lowercase when it is not part of the formal title: *county Health Commissioner Frank Jones.*

Lowercase plural combinations: *Shawnee and Finney counties.*

D _____

Dairy Inspection program.

dash. See entry in the **Punctuation** chapter.

data. A plural noun, it normally takes plural verbs and pronouns.

database. One word.

dates. Always use Arabic figures, without *st*, *nd*, *rd* or *th*. See **months** for examples and punctuation guidelines.

decades. Use Arabic figures to indicate decades of history. Use an apostrophe to indicate numerals that are left out; show plural by adding the letter *s*: *the 1980s*, *the '90s*, *the mid-1930s*.

Department of Agriculture; Department of Commerce; Department of Health and Environment. Avoid acronyms when possible. A phrase such as *the department* is preferable on second reference because it is more readable and avoids alphabet soup.

The *of* may be dropped and the title flopped while capitalization is retained: *the Agriculture Department*.

Lowercase *department* in plural uses, but capitalize the proper name element: *the departments of Agriculture and Commerce*.

Lowercase *the department* whenever it stands alone.

Do not abbreviate *department* in any usage.

directions and regions. In general, lowercase north, south, northeast, northern, etc., when they indicate compass direction; capitalize these words when they designate regions.

Division of Water Resources. DWR acceptable on second reference.

E _____

effect. See the **affect, effect** entry.

either. Use it to mean one or the other, not both.

either...or, neither...nor. The nouns that follow these words do not constitute a compound subject; they are alternate subjects and require a verb that agrees with the nearer subject: *Neither they nor he is going. Neither he nor they are going.*

e-mail. Short form of electronic mail. (Also, e-commerce, e-business.) May be capitalized – E-mail – when context in which it is used requires it (when it begins a sentence or when the lowercase version would look out of place in contact information).

ensure, insure. Use *ensure* to mean guarantee: *Steps were taken to ensure accuracy.* Use *insure* for references to insurance. *The policy insures his life.*

Environmental Protection Agency. EPA is acceptable on second reference.

essential clauses, nonessential clauses. Both types of clauses provide additional information about a word or phrase in the sentence.

The difference between them is that the essential clause cannot be eliminated without changing the meaning of the sentence – it so restricts the meaning of the word or phrase that its absence would lead to a substantially different interpretation of what the author meant.

The nonessential clause, however, can be eliminated without altering the basic meaning of the sentence – it does not restrict the meaning so significantly that its absence would radically alter the author's thought.

PUNCTUATION: An essential clause must not be set off from the rest of a sentence by commas. A nonessential clause must be set off by commas.

The presence or absence of commas provides the reader with critical information about the writer's intended meaning. Note the following examples:

--*Writers who do not read the style guide should not criticize their editors.* (The writer is saying that only one class of writers, those who do not read the style guide, should not criticize their editors.)

--*Writers, who do not read the style guide, should not criticize their editors.* (The writer is saying that all writers should not criticize their editors.)

USE OF WHO, THAT, WHICH: When an essential or nonessential clause refers to a human being or animal with a name, it should be introduced by *who* or *whom*. (See the *who*, *whom* entry.) Do not use commas if the clause is essential to the meaning; use them if it is not.

That is the preferred pronoun to introduce essential clauses that refer to an inanimate object or an animal without a name. *Which* is the only acceptable pronoun to introduce a nonessential clause that refers to an inanimate object or an animal without a name.

The pronoun *which* occasionally may be substituted for *that* in the introduction of an essential clause that refers to an inanimate object or an animal without a name. In general, this use of *which* should appear only when *that* is used as a conjunction to introduce another clause in the same sentence: *He said Monday that the part of the army which suffered severe casualties needs reinforcement.*

every day (adv.), **everyday** (adj.). *She goes to work every day. He wears everyday shoes.*

except. See the **accept**, **except** entry.

exclamation point. See entry in **Punctuation** section.

F _____

FAQ. Acronym for *frequently asked questions*. Spell it out.

farther, further. Farther refers to physical distance: *He walked farther into the woods.* Further refers to an extension of time or degree: *She will look further into the mystery.*

federal. Use a capital letter for the architectural style for corporate or governmental bodies that use the word as part of their formal names: *Federal Trade Commission.*

Lowercase when used as an adjective to distinguish something from state, county, city, town or private entities: *federal government, a federal judge.*

Federal Emergency Management Agency. FEMA is acceptable on second reference.

Federal Register. Capitalize.

fewer, less. In general, use *fewer* for individual items, *less* for bulk or quantity.

Wrong: *The trend is toward more machines and less people.*

Right: *Fewer than 10 applicants called.*

Right: *I had less than \$50 in my pocket.*

Right: *I had fewer than 50 \$1 bills in my pocket.*

foodborne. One word.

floodplain. One word.

Food and Drug Administration. FDA is acceptable on second reference.

Food Safety and Lodging. Not Food Safety & Lodging. May be referred to as Division of Food Safety and Lodging in budget or legislative documents.

foot-and-mouth disease. Note hyphens. Do not use hoof-and-mouth disease.

forward. Not *forwards*.

free of, free from. Free of means void: *As far as we know, the moon is free of any life forms.* Free from means independent: *She tries to be free from all responsibility.*

full time, full-time. Hyphenate when used as a compound modifier: *He works full time. She has a full-time job.*

further. See the **farther, further** entry.

G _____

gender-specific terms. Avoid using gender-specific terms regarding a group of people. Replace these terms with gender-neutral terms: hunters and business people instead of outdoorsmen and businessmen.

government. Always lowercase, never abbreviate: *the federal government, the state government, the U.S. government.*

governor. Capitalize and abbreviate as Gov. when used as a formal title before a name. Lowercase and spell out in all other uses.

Grain Warehouse Inspection program.

Great Plains. Capitalize Great Plains or the Plains when referring to the U.S. prairie lands that extend from North Dakota to Texas and from the Missouri River to the Rocky Mountains.

Use northern Plains, southwestern Plains, etc., when referring to a portion of the region.

groundwater. One word. *Groundwater and surface water. Not ground and surface water.*

H _____

headquarters. May take a singular or plural verb. Do not use *headquarter* as a verb.

home page. Two words.

House of Representatives. Capitalized when referring to a specific governmental body: *the U.S. House of Representatives, the Kansas House of Representatives.*

Capitalize shortened references that delete the words *of Representatives*: *the Kansas House, the House.*

hyphen. See entry in **Punctuation** section.

I _____

in, into. In indicates location: *He was in the room.* Into indicates motion: *She walked into the room.*

its, it's. *It's* is a contraction for it is or it has: *It's up to you. It's been a long time.* *Its* is the possessive form of the neuter pronoun. *The company lost its assets.*

J _____

jargon. The special vocabulary and idioms of a particular class or occupational group. In general, avoid jargon. When it is appropriate in a special context, include an explanation of any words likely to be unfamiliar to most readers.

K _____

Kansas. Never KS, unless in an address.

Kansas Agricultural Statistics.

Kansas Department of Agriculture. Possessive uses: *Kansas Department of Agriculture's Dairy Inspection program. Kansas Department of Agriculture's Division of Water Resources.*

L _____

laws. Capitalize legislative acts but not bills: *The Water Appropriation Act, the Schmidt bill.*

legislative titles. Use Rep., Reps., Sen. and Sens. as formal titles before one or more names. Spell out and lowercase *representative* and *senator* in other uses.

Spell out other legislative titles in all uses. Capitalize formal titles such as assemblyman, city councilor, delegate, etc., when they are used before a name. Lowercase in other uses.

Add U.S. or state before a title only if necessary to avoid confusion.

ORGANIZATIONAL TITLES: Capitalize titles for formal, organizational offices within a legislative body when they are used before a name: *Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill, Majority Leader Robert C. Byrd, Minority Leader John J. Rhodes.*

legislature. Capitalize: *the Kansas Legislature, the Legislature.*

less. See the **fewer, less** entry.

long term, long-term. Hyphenate when used as a compound modifier: *We will win in the long term. He has a long-term assignment.*

long time, longtime. *They have known each other a long time. They are longtime partners.*

M _____

majority leader. Capitalize when used as a formal title before a name.

Meat and Poultry Inspection program. Not Meat & Poultry Inspection program.

meetings. When announcing meetings, the information should be in this order: time, day, date, location. *The Governor's Agricultural Advisory Board will meet at 2 p.m. Thursday, July 1, 2004, at the Kansas Department of Agriculture, 109 SW 9th Street, Topeka.*

mid-. No hyphen unless a capitalized word follows:

mid-America

mid-Atlantic

midyear

midseason

But use a hyphen when *mid-* precedes a figure: *mid-30s.*

milkborne. One word.

minority leader. Capitalize when used as a formal title before a name.

months. 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: *January 1972. November 12, 1962.*

multi-. The rules in **prefixes** apply, but in general, no hyphen.

multicolored

multimillion

multiyear

N _____

neither...nor. See **either...or, neither...nor** entry.

non-. The rules of **prefixes** apply, but in general no hyphen when forming a compound that does not have special meaning and can be understood if *not* is used before the base word. Use a hyphen, however, before proper nouns or in awkward combinations, such as *non-nuclear*. Follow Webster's New World Dictionary.

north, northern, northeast, northwest. See **directions and regions** entry.

numbers. Spell out whole numbers below 10. Use figures for 10 and above. Use a comma for figures greater than 999: 9,999 not 9999. Exceptions are room numbers, telephone numbers and years.

Use figures with million or billion: *1 million, 5 billion.*

Do not use a figure to start a sentence. If necessary, recast the sentence:

Wrong: *993 freshmen entered the college.*

Right: *Last year 993 freshmen entered the college.*

O _____

occupational titles. They are always lowercase. See **titles**.

over. It generally refers to spatial relationships. *The plane flew over the city.*

Over can, at times, be used with numerals. *She is over 30.* But *more than* may be better: *Their salaries went up more than \$20 a week.* Let your ear be your guide.

P _____

part time, part-time. Hyphenate when used as a compound modifier: *She works part time. She has a part-time job.*

percent. One word. Do not use percent symbol (%) in text.

periods. See entry in **Punctuation** section.

Pesticide and Fertilizer program. Not Pesticide & Fertilizer program.

Plant Protection and Weed Control program. Not Plant Protection & Weed Control program.

plants. In general, lowercase the names of plants, but capitalize proper nouns or adjectives that occur in a name.

Some examples: *tree, fir, white fir, Douglas fir, Scotch pine.*

p.m., a.m. Lowercase, with periods.

policy-maker (n.), **policy-making** (n. and adj.)

pre- The rules in **prefixes** apply. Generally, a hyphen is used if a prefix ends in a vowel and the word that follows begins with the same vowel:

pre-election

pre-eminent

pre-establish

Otherwise, follow Webster's New World Dictionary, hyphenating if not listed there.

Some examples:

prearrange

predate

pretax

prefixes. See separate listings for commonly used prefixes.

Generally do not hyphenate when using a prefix with a word starting with a consonant.

Three rules are constant, although they yield some exceptions to the first-listed spellings in Webster's New World Dictionary:

--Except for cooperate and coordinate, use a hyphen if the prefix ends in a vowel and the word that follows begins with the same vowel.

--Use a hyphen if the word that follows is capitalized.

--Use a hyphen to join doubled prefixes: *sub-subparagraph.*

presently. Use it to mean in *a little while* or *shortly*, but not to mean now.

press. In most instances, replace with news: *news release, news conference, news desk.*

prior to. Replace with *before* in most instances. Prior to is appropriate only when a notion of requirement is involved: *The fee must be paid prior to the examination.*

punctuation. Think of it as a courtesy to your readers, designed to help them understand a story. See separate **Punctuation** section for separate entries for each form of punctuation.

Q _____

question mark. See entry in **Punctuation** section.

R _____

representative, Rep. See **legislative titles**.

river. Capitalize as part of a proper name: *the Mississippi River*.
Lowercase in other uses: *the river, the Mississippi and Missouri rivers*.

S _____

seasons. Lowercase spring, summer, fall, winter and derivatives such as springtime unless part of a formal name: Summer Olympics.

secretary. Capitalize before a name only. Do not abbreviate.

semi- The rules in prefixes apply, but in general, no hyphen.
Some examples:
semifinal
semiofficial
semi-invalid

semiannual. Twice a year, a synonym for biannual. Do not confuse with biennial, which means every two years.

semicolon. See entry in **Punctuation** section.

senate. Capitalized when referring to a specific governmental body: *the U.S. Senate, the Kansas Senate, the Senate*.

senator, Sen. See **legislative titles**.

south, southern, southeast, southwest. See the **directions and regions** entry.

state. Lowercase except when referring to the whole of state government: *the State of Kansas*. When used alone, it is lowercase.

State Water Plan.

statehouse. Capitalize all references to a specific statehouse, with or without the name of the state: *The Kansas Statehouse is in Topeka. The governor will visit the Statehouse today.*

statewide. Not state-wide. Also, citywide, countywide. See **-wide**.

sub- The rules in prefixes apply, but in general, no hyphen. Some examples:

subbasement

subbasin

subcommittee

sub-Cabinet

Subbasin Water Resource Management Program. See Basin Management Team.

subcommittee. Lowercase when used with the name of a legislative body's full committee: *a Ways and Means subcommittee.*

Capitalize when a subcommittee has a proper name of its own: *the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations.*

T _____

telephone numbers. Use figures with the area code enclosed in parentheses: *(212) 621-1500*. If extension numbers are given: *Ext. 2, Ext. 364*.

The parentheses around the area code are based on a format that telephone companies have agreed on for domestic and international communications.

that (conjunction). Use the conjunction *that* to introduce a dependent clause if the sentence sounds or looks awkward without it.

When it doubt, include *that*. Omission can hurt. Inclusion never does.

that, which, who, whom (pronouns). Use *who* and *whom* in referring to people and to animals with a name: *John Jones is the man who helped me.* See the **who, whom** entry.

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

See the **essential clauses, nonessential clauses** entry for guidelines on using *that* and *which* to introduce phrases and clauses.

times. Use figures except for *noon* and *midnight*. Use a colon to separate hours from minutes: *11 a.m., 1 p.m., 3:30 p.m.*

Avoid redundancies: *10 p.m. Monday night.*

titles. In general, confine capitalization to formal titles used directly before an individual's name.

The basic guidelines:

LOWERCASE: Lowercase and spell out titles when they are not used with an individual's name: *The president issued a statement. The secretary spoke to the group.*

Lowercase and spell out titles in constructions that set them off from a name by commas:
The vice president, Nelson Rockefeller, declined to run again.

FORMAL TITLES: Capitalize formal titles when they are used immediately before one or more names: Secretary of Agriculture Josh Svaty, Chief Engineer David Barfield.

ABBREVIATED TITLES: The following formal titles are capitalized and abbreviated as shown when used before a name: *Gov., Lt. Gov., Rep. and Sen.*

toward. Not towards.

U _____

undersecretary. One word.

under way. Two words.

United States. Spell out when used as a noun. Use *U.S.* (no space) only as an adjective.

upward. Not upwards.

V _____

vice-. Use two words: *vice chairman, vice president, vice secretary.* Capitalize or lowercase depending on whether a name follows. See **titles.**

W _____

Water Appropriation program. Not Water Appropriations program.

Water Management Services.

Water Structures program.

website. Not Web site. Not Website. The only time it's capitalized is when it begins a sentence.

Weights and Measures program. Not Weights & Measures program.

which. See **essential clauses, nonessential clauses** entry; the **that, which** entry; and the **who, whom** entry.

who, whom. Use *who* and *whom* for references to human being and to animals with a name. Use *that* and *which* for inanimate objects and animals without a name.

Who is the word when someone is the subject of a sentence, clause or phrase: *The woman who rented the room left the window open. Who is there?*

Whom is the word when someone is the object of a verb or preposition: *The woman to whom the room was rented left the window open. Whom do you wish to see?*

See the **essential clauses, nonessential clauses** entry for guidelines on how to punctuate clauses introduced by *who, whom, that* and *which*.

-wide. No hyphen. Some examples:

citywide

countrywide

industrywide

nationwide

statewide

years. Use figures, without commas: *1975*. Use an *s* without an apostrophe to indicate spans of decades or centuries: *the 1890s, the 1800s*. When a year is used with a specific date, a comma follows it: *The meeting is October 12, 2004, in Topeka*.

Z _____

Punctuation

A

ampersand (&). Use the ampersand only when it is part of a company's formal name. The ampersand is not to be used in place of *and*.

apostrophe ('). Follow these guidelines:

POSSESSIVES: See the possessives entry in the main section.

PLURAL NOUNS NOT ENDING IN S: Add 's: *the alumni's contributions, women's rights*.

PLURAL NOUNS ENDING IN S: Add only an apostrophe: *the churches' needs, the girls' toys, the horses' food, the ships' wake, states' rights, the VIPs' entrance*.

NOUNS PLURAL IN FORM SINGULAR IN MEANING: Add only an apostrophe: *mathematics' rules, measles' effects*. (But see INANIMATE OBJECTS below).

Apply the same principle when a plural word occurs in the formal name of a singular entity: *General Motors' profits, the United States' wealth*.

NOUNS THE SAME IN SINGULAR AND PLURAL. Treat them the same as plurals, even if meaning is singular: *one corps' location, the two deer's tracks, the lone moose's antlers*.

SINGULAR NOUNS NOT ENDING IN S: Add 's: *the church's needs, the girl's toys, the horse's food, the ship's route, the VIP's seat*.

Some singular nouns ending in s sounds such as ce, x and z may take either the apostrophe alone or 's. For consistency and ease in remembering a rule, always use 's if the word does not end in the letter s: *Butz's policies, the fox's den, the justice's verdict, Marx's theories, the prince's life, Xerox's profits*.

SINGULAR COMMON NOUNS ENDING IN S: Add 's unless the next word begins with s: *the hostess's invitation, the hostess' seat; the witness's answer, the witness' story*.

SINGULAR PROPER NAMES ENDING IN S: Use only an apostrophe: *Achilles' heel, Agnes' book, Ceres' rites, Kansas' schools*.

PRONOUNS: Personal interrogative and relative pronouns have separate forms for the possessive. None involves an apostrophe: *mine, ours, your, yours, his, hers, its, theirs, whose*.

Caution: If you are using an apostrophe with a pronoun, always double-check to be sure that the meaning calls for a contraction: *you're, it's, there's, who's*.

Follow the rules listed above in forming the possessives of other pronouns: *another's idea, others' plans, someone's guess*.

COMPOUND WORDS: Applying the rules above, add an apostrophe or 's to the word closest to the object possessed: *the major general's decision, the major generals' decisions, the attorney general's request, the attorneys general's request*.

JOINT POSSESSION, INDIVIDUAL POSSESSION: Use a possessive form after only the last word if ownership is joint. *Fred and Sylvia's apartment, Fred and Sylvia's stocks*.

Use a possessive form after both words if the objects are individually owned: *Fred's and Sylvia's books*.

DESCRIPTIVE PHRASES: Do not add an apostrophe to a word ending in s when it is used primarily in a descriptive sense: *citizens band radio, a Cincinnati Reds infielder, a teachers college, a Teamsters request, writers guide*.

Memory Aid: The apostrophe usually is not used if *for* or *by* rather than *of* would be appropriate in the longer form: *a radio band for citizens, a college for teachers, a guide for writers, a request by the Teamsters.*

An 's is required, however, when a term involves a plural word that does not end in s: *a children's hospital, a people's republic, the Young Men's Christian Association.*

QUASI POSSESSIVE: Follow the rules above in composing the possessive form of words that occur in such phrases *as a day's pay, two weeks' vacation, three days' work, your money's worth.*

Frequently, however, a hyphenated form is clearer: *a two-week vacation, a three-day job.*

DOUBLE POSSESSIVE: Two conditions must apply for a double possessive – a phrase such as *a friend of John's* – to occur: 1. The word after *of* must refer to an animate object, and 2. The word before *of* must involve only a portion of the animate object's possessions.

Otherwise, do not use the possessive form of the word after *of*: *The friends of John Adams mourned his death.* (All the friends were involved.) *He is a friend of the college.* (Not *the college's* because *college* is inanimate).

Memory Aid: This construction occurs most often, and quite naturally, with the possessive forms of personal pronouns: *He is a friend of mine.*

brackets []. Use parentheses – () – instead.

See **parentheses**.

colon (:). The most frequent use of a colon is at the end of a sentence to introduce lists, tabulations, texts, etc.

Capitalize the first word after a colon only if it is a proper noun or the start of a complete sentence: *He promised this: The company will make good all the losses.* But: *There were three considerations: expense, time and feasibility.*

EMPHASIS: The colon often can be effective in giving emphasis: *He had only one hobby: eating.*

MISCELLANEOUS: Do not combine a dash and a colon.

comma (,). The following guidelines treat some of the most frequent questions about the use of commas. Additional guidelines on specialized uses are provided in separate entries such as **dates**.

For detailed guidance, consult the punctuation section in the back of Webster's New World Dictionary.

IN A SERIES: Use commas to separate elements in a series, but do not put a comma before the conjunction in a simple series: *The flag is red, white and blue.* *He would nominate Tom, Dick or Harry.*

Put a comma before the concluding conjunction in a series, however, if an integral element of the series requires a conjunction: *I had orange juice, toast, and ham and eggs for breakfast.*

Use a comma also before the concluding conjunction in a complex series of phrases: *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 attitude.*

See the **dash** and **semicolon** entries for cases when elements of a series contain internal commas.

USE WITH EQUAL ADJECTIVES: Use commas to separate a series of adjectives equal in rank. If the commas could be replaced by the word *and* without changing the sense, the adjectives are equal: *a thoughtful, precise manner; a dark, dangerous street.*

Use no comma when the last adjective before a noun outranks its predecessors because it is an integral element of a noun phrase, which is the equivalent of a single noun: *a cheap fur coat* (the noun phrase is *fur coat*); *the old oaken bucket, a new, blue spring bonnet.*

WITH NONESSENTIAL CLAUSES: A nonessential clause must be set off by commas. An essential clause must not be set off from the rest of a sentence by commas.

See the **essential clauses, nonessential clauses** entry in the main section.

WITH CONJUNCTIONS: When a conjunction such as *and*, *but* or *for* links two clauses that could stand alone as separate sentences, use a comma before the conjunction in most cases: *She was glad she had looked, for a man was approaching the house.*

As a rule of thumb, use a comma if the subject of each clause is expressly stated: *We are visiting Washington, and we also plan a side trip to Williamsburg. We visited Washington, and our senator greeted us personally.* But no comma when the subject of the two clauses is the same and is not repeated in the second: *We are visiting Washington and plan to see the White House.*

The comma may be dropped if two clauses with expressly stated subjects are short. In general, however, favor use of a comma unless a particular literary effect is desired or if it would distort the sense of a sentence.

WITH HOMETOWNS AND AGES: Use a comma to set off an individual's hometown when it is placed in apposition to a name: *Mary Richards, Minneapolis, and Maude Findlay, Tuckahoe, New York, were there.*

If an individual's age is used, set it off by commas: *Maude Findlay, 48, Tuckahoe, New York, was present.*

NAMES OF STATES WITH CITY NAMES: *His journey will take him from Des Moines, Iowa, to Fargo, North Dakota, and back. The Wichita, Kansas, group saw the governor.*

SEPARATING SIMILAR WORDS: Use a comma to separate duplicated words that otherwise would be confusing: *What the problem is, is not clear.*

IN LARGE FIGURES: Use a comma for most figures greater than 999. The exceptions are: street addresses, room numbers, telephone numbers and years.

dash (—). Follow these guidelines:

ABRUPT CHANGE: Use dashes to denote an abrupt change in thought in a sentence or an emphatic pause: *We will fly to Paris in June — if I get a raise. Smith offered a plan — it was unprecedented — to raise revenues.*

SERIES WITHIN A PHRASE: When a phrase that otherwise would be set off by commas contains a series of words that must be separated by commas, use dashes to set off the full phrase: *He listed the qualities — intelligence, humor, conservatism, independence — that he liked in an executive.*

WITH SPACES: Put a space on both sides of a dash.

exclamation point (!). Do not use.

hyphen (-). Hyphens are joiners. Use them to avoid ambiguity or to form a single idea from two or more words.

AVOID AMBIGUITY. Use a hyphen whenever ambiguity would result if it were omitted: *The president will speak to small-business men.* (*Businessmen* normally is one word. But *the president will speak to small businessmen* is unclear.)

Others: *He recovered his health. He re-covered the leaky roof.*

COMPOUND MODIFIERS: 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 all adverbs that end in *-ly*: *a first-quarter touchdown, a bluish-green dress, a full-time job, a well-known man, a better-qualified woman, a know-it-all attitude, a very good time, an easily remembered rule.*

Many combinations that are hyphenated before a noun are not hyphenated when they occur after a noun: *The team scored in the first quarter. The dress, a bluish green, was attractive on her. She works full time. His attitude suggested that he knew it all.*

But when a modifier that would be hyphenated before a noun occurs instead after a form of the verb *to be*, the hyphen usually must be retained to avoid confusion: *The man is well-known. The woman is quick-witted. The children are soft-spoken. The play is second-rate.*

PREFIXES AND SUFFIXES: See the **prefixes** and **suffixes** entries.

AVOID DUPLICATED VOWELS, TRIPLED CONSONANTS: Examples: anti-intellectual, pre-empt, shell-like.

parentheses (). Parentheses are jarring to the reader. The temptation to use them is a clue that a sentence is becoming contorted. Try to write it another way. If a sentence must contain incidental material, then commas or two dashes are frequently more effective. Use these alternatives whenever possible.

There are occasions, however, when parentheses are the only effective means of inserting necessary background or reference information.

PUNCTUATION: Place a period outside a closing parenthesis if the material inside is not a sentence (*such as this fragment*).

(*An independent parenthetical sentence such as this one takes a period before the closing parenthesis.*)

When a phrase placed in parentheses (*this one is an example*) might normally qualify as a complete sentence but is dependent on the surrounding material, do not capitalize the first word or end with a period.

periods. Follow these guidelines:

END OF SENTENCE: The stylebook is finished.

ENUMERATIONS: *After numbers or letters in enumerating elements of a summary: 1. Wash the car. 2. Clean the basement. Or: A. Punctuate properly. B. Write simply.*

quotation marks (“ ”). The basic guidelines:

NOT IN Q-and-A: Quotation marks are not required in formats that identify questions and answers by Q and A.

IRONY: Put quotation marks around a word or words used in an ironical sense: *The “debate” turned into a free-for-all.*

UNFAMILIAR TERMS: A word or words being introduced to readers may be placed in quotation marks on first reference:

Broadcast frequencies are measured in "kilohertz."

Do not put subsequent references to *kilohertz* in quotation marks.

PLACEMENT WITH OTHER PUNCTUATION: Follow these long-established rules:

—The period and the comma always go within the quotation marks.

—The dash, the semicolon, the question mark and the exclamation point go within the quotation marks when they apply to the quoted matter only. They go outside when they apply to the whole sentence.