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NCCU generally follows the Associated Press Stylebook. The NCCU ITS style guide contains common style issues, some exceptions to AP style, and NCCU spellings. If your question is not answered in this guide, refer to the Associated Press Stylebook or contact ITS.

The Purdue Owl is also a fantastic resource: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/

**ACADEMIC TERMS**

**ALMA MATER**
Do not capitalize or italicize.

**ALUMNI AND EMERITI**
Use full names of alumni, including maiden names of married alumnae.

Do not use the possessive of names with the class year of an alumni.

- alumna: one female graduate
- alumnae: group of female graduates
- alumnus: one male graduate
- alumni: group of male graduates, group of male and female graduates, or group of graduates when gender (of group) is unknown
- alum or alums: informal usage only

Capitalize Professor Emeritus or Emerita when followed by a proper name:

- Professor Emeritus: one male, e.g., Professor Emeritus of English Jackson Smith
- Professor Emerita: one female, e.g., Professor Emerita of English Mary Summers

Capitalize Chancellor Emeritus or Emerita when followed by a proper name:

- Chancellor Emeritus: The new student union will be named in honor of Chancellor Emeritus Malcolm Hughes.
- Chancellor Emerita: Chancellor Emerita Suzanne Jones attended the MEAC championship game.

**CLASS DATES**

AP style dictates the plurals of figures and acronyms take “s”; **with NO apostrophe**.

Capitalize “class” when referring to a specific class:

- Class of 2010
- The classes of the '80s, '90s, and '00s will hold a reunion in 2020.
- The classes from the 1980s listen to weird music.

When abbreviating years to two digits, put an apostrophe in front of the years:

- the Class of '76
- the summer of '66

For undergraduate degrees, do not use a comma between the name and the year:

- Erykah James '72
- David Smith of the Class of 1985
- Jaleel Johnson Class of '95

For advanced degrees, put the class date and degree abbreviation, without periods, after the graduate’s name:

- Meredith Davidson '80 MBA
- Andrew Marlowe '39 PhD

More than one NCCU degree:

- Jane Austin '65, JD '70

More than one alumni:

- Paul '76 and Patsy '74 St. John
- George Dickens '43 and his wife, Maya '45
• Oscar Lewis '87 and his partner, H. Langston

DEPARTMENTS
Capitalized the formal name of a department or school:
• the Department of Social Work
• the School of Education

DEGREES
The preferred form is to spell out degrees and avoid abbreviations:

FORMAL
• Bachelor of Arts
• Bachelor of Science
• Master of Arts
• Doctor of Philosophy

CASUAL
• bachelor's degree
• master's degree
• bachelor's
• master's

Doctorate is a noun:
• She has a doctorate in biochemistry (not a doctorate degree).

Doctoral is an adjective:
• She has a doctoral degree (not a doctor’s degree).

When academic degrees are referred to in general terms such as doctorate, doctoral, bachelor's, or master’s, they are not capitalized:
• He earned a bachelor’s degree in English.

Majors and minors are lowercase unless a proper noun is part of the name:
• She majored in music and minored in English.

The preferred form is to spell out degrees and avoid initialisms.

The casual use of initialisms for degrees require no letter spaces or periods:
• BA, Bachelor of Arts
• BS, Bachelor of Science
• BM, Bachelor of Music
• BBA, Bachelor of Business Administration
• BSN, Bachelor of Science in Nursing
• BSW, Bachelor of Social Work
• MA, Master of Arts
• MS, Master of Science
• MBA, Master of Business Administration
• MLS, Master of Library Science
• MIS, Master of Information Science
• MEd, Master of Education
• MSA, Master of School Administration
• MAT, Master of Arts in Teaching
• MPharmSC, Master of Pharmaceutical Sciences
• MPA, Master of Public Administration
• JD, Juris Doctor (NOT Doctorate)
• PhD, Doctor of Philosophy

LETTER GRADES
Place grades inside quotation marks if used in text:
• He earned an “A” in astronomy.

GPA can be used on first and subsequent references.
ACADEMIC TITLES AND NAMES

Titles
Faculty teach; however, they are not to be referred to as teachers. Use correct titles.

Instructor is a title and should only be used for those who hold that rank.

Avoid the abbreviation “Prof.”

Do not qualify the title “professor” with "associate" or "assistant" before a person's name, but do qualify it after the name:

- Professor Ann Brown
- Ann Brown, associate professor of biology

Endowed professorships are capitalized, even when the title follows a name:

- Zelda Earhart, Alumni Endowed Chair Department of Language and Literature, teaches poetry.

Capitalize chancellor in all references to the current chancellor:

- Chancellor Sam Starbuck brings 15 years of experience to the university.

Do not capitalize chancellor in references to former chancellors:

- Former chancellor LeRoy T. Walker was an Olympic track coach.

Capitalize a title when it immediately precedes a person's name:

- Chief Information Officer John Jones

The title is not capitalized when it follows a name or on second reference:

- John Jones, chief information officer
- Margaret M. Spellings, president of the University of North Carolina
- The dean of the College of Arts and Sciences agrees with the provost.

Uppercase all titles when used in an address or headline.

Use “department head,” not “chairman,” “chairwoman,” “chairperson,” or “chair.”

Names

Do not use a comma between the person's last name and Jr., Sr., II, III, IV, etc.

Refer to a woman by her full name, not by her husband's name, unless requested by owner.

Always give the full name (or two initials with surname) of persons the first time they are used:

- Valerie Smith, dean of the college
- H. V. Poor, dean of the School of Engineering and Applied Science

All subsequent references should use surname only.

Use standard courtesy titles Miss, Ms. or Mrs. for women and Mr. for men. If gender is unknown (Alex, Cameron, Taylor) use first and last name: Dear Taylor Hunter.

ACADEMIC CAPITALIZATION

When "university" stands alone, it should be lowercase, including when referring to NCCU:

- I read the news about the university today.
- The university was founded in 1910.

Incomplete designations are not capitalized:

- the program
- the department
- the professor
- the dormitory

Academic departments, divisions, and initiatives within schools and colleges are not capitalized, unless a proper noun is part of the name:
• The English department in the College of Arts and Sciences has an established reputation.

• After I graduate from the nursing program, I am attending law school.

• A degree in political science is a good foundation for future studies in the School of Business.

• The dean of the College of Arts and Sciences called a meeting with the department heads of art and biology.

Capitalize the full formal names of schools and colleges:

• The College of Arts and Sciences was reorganized.

NCCU COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS

• School of Business
• School of Education
• School of Law
• School of Library and Information Sciences
• School of Graduate Studies
• University College

THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES DEPARTMENTS

• art
• biology
• chemistry and biochemistry
• environmental, earth and geospatial sciences
• history
• language and literature
• mass communication
• mathematics and physics
• music

• pharmaceutical sciences
• theater and dance

THE COLLEGE OF BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES DEPARTMENTS

• criminal justice
• human sciences
• nursing
• physical education and recreation
• political science
• psychology
• public administration
• public health education
• social work

THE COLLEGE OF BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES INSTITUTES

• the Institute for Civic Engagement and Social Change
• the Juvenile Justice Institute
• the Institute for Homeland Security and Workforce Development

BUILDINGS AND PLACES

Capitalize the full names of buildings, residence halls, and facilities.

ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDINGS

• Alexander-Dunn Building
• Alfonso Elder Student Union
• Alumni House
• Biomedical Manufacturing Research Institute and Technology Enterprise (BRITE)
• Cooke House
• Community Engagement and Service Building
• Dent Human Sciences Building
• Edmonds Classroom Building
• Farrison-Newton Communications Building
• Fine Arts Building
• Hoey Administration Building
• Hubbard-Totten Chemistry Building
• Julius L. Chambers Biomedical Building
• Lee Biology Building
• McDougald House (Undergraduate Admissions building)
• Michaux School of Education
• Miller-Morgan Building
• New Nursing Building
• Police and Public Safety Building
• Robinson Science Building
• Shepard Library
• Student Health Building
• Student Services Building
• Summer Ventures
• Taylor Education Building
• Townes Science Building
• Turner Law Building
• Women's Center
• Whiting Criminal Justice Building
• William Jones Building
• Willis Commerce (School of Business) Building

**Residence Halls**

• Annie Day Shepard Residence Hall
• Baynes Residence Hall
• Benjamin S. Ruffin Residence Hall
• Chidley North Residence Hall

• Eagle Landing Residence Hall
• Eagleson Residence Hall
• George Street Student Apartments
• Martha Street Graduate Apartments
• McLean Residence Hall
• New Residence Hall II
• Rush Residence Hall
• Tyronza Richmond Residence Hall I

**Athletic Facilities**

• Bowling Lanes
• Basketball Courts
• McLendon-McDougald Arena
• O'Kelly-Riddick Stadium
• Tennis Courts
• Track and Field Stadium
• Walker Physical Education Complex

**Other Campus Facilities**

• Art Museum
• B.N. Duke Auditorium and Annex
• Bookstore and Parking Deck
• Centennial Chapel and Garden / Holy Cross Catholic Church
• Central Receiving
• Cottage One
• Edwards Music Hall
• Environmental Services
• Facility Services
• Health Careers Center
• Heating Plant
• Parking Deck
• Pearson Cafeteria (the Caf)
ATHLETICS

The official name of athletic teams is the North Carolina Central University Eagles.

The NCCU mascot is Eddie the Eagle.

The first NCCU sports team: baseball, established in 1911.

The official university athletic band is “Marching Sound Machine”.

North Carolina Central University is a member of the National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I. NCAA is acceptable on first reference.

North Carolina Central University is a member of the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference. MEAC is acceptable on first reference.

OFFICIAL ATHLETIC TEAMS

MEN
- Baseball
- Basketball
- Cross Country
- Football
- Golf
- Tennis
- Track and Field

WOMEN
- Basketball
- Cross Country
- Softball
- Tennis
- Track and Field
- Volleyball

EDITORIAL

LETTER SPACING

Use exactly one space after any punctuation in running text and after a colon.

A, AN, THE

“A” or “An” refers to any non-specific member of a group:

- I would like to take an art class.
  (any art class)
- She needs a cat. (any cat)

Use “A” before words that start with a consonant sound or hard “h”:

- a book
- a cave
- a helmet

Use “An” before words that start with a vowel sound or silent “h”:

- Chicken Wednesday is an exciting way to meet people.
- She was an hour late to Chicken Wednesday.

“The” refers to a specific or particular member of a group:

- I would like to take the chemistry class offered in the summer. (The chemistry class offered in the summer, not fall or spring.)
- The sorority was deeply involved with the community. (A particular sorority involved with a particular community.)
IN, ON, AT

“In”, “on”, and “at” are prepositions that refer to time or place.

PREPOSITIONS OF TIME

IN
- Parts of days
  (morning, afternoon, evening)
- Months
- Years
- Centuries
  - The dragon was awake in the morning.

ON
- Holidays with “day” (Christmas Day, Memorial Day, etc.)
- Days of the week
- Days of the month
- Specific Dates (Dec. 25, my anniversary)
  - The zombies took over the library on Tuesday.

AT
- Holidays without “day” (Easter, Halloween, etc.)
- Time
  - The children scattered at 4 p.m. when the Wampus cat screeched from hunger.

Countries
- There are many historic houses in Hayti.

PREPOSITIONS OF PLACE

IN
Prepositions in this group indicate that an object lies within the boundaries of an area or within the confines of a volume:
- Neighborhoods (Southside)
- Cities

ON
Prepositions in this group indicate that the position of an object is defined with respect to a surface on which it rests:
- Streets, avenues, lanes
- Islands (Hawaii, Fiji)
- Large vehicles (Plane, train, ship)
  - The cars skidded on the slippery road covered with leaked silicone.

AT
Prepositions in this group indicate that the noun that follows them is treated as a point in relation to which another object is positioned:
- Addresses (1910 Durham Street)
- Specific locations (the barber shop, home)
  - Let’s meet at Ponysaurus for dinner.

AND/OR
Avoid the use of “and/or” in non-scientific texts.
When “and/or” is used, “and” is typically the correct word choice. The alternative word choice is “or”.

SLASH (/) VS. BACKSLASH (\)
The slash used in running text always indicates the forward slash.
- Do not use in place of relevant conjunction (and, or).
- Do not use with fractions.
- Do use between lines of quoted poetry.
- Do use in descriptive phrases such as 24/7 or 9/11.
• Do use the slash in web URLs and path names (http://nccu.edu/news).
The backslash is primarily used in computer programming.
• Never use the backslash (\) in place of the forward slash (/).
As a memory device, imagine the cursor represents a person bending over:
• Leaning forward (/)
• Leaning backward (\)

CITY/STATES
Spell out all city and state names. Do not abbreviate city names. Do not abbreviate state names.
Place a comma between the city and state and another comma after the state name:
• The Bull City Connector only runs in Durham, North Carolina.
• I am taking a trip to Wilmington, North Carolina, to see the sea turtles.

On first mention, write out United States. On subsequent mentions, U.S. is acceptable.

DATES
For days of the month, use only numerals (cardinal numbers). Do not use ordinals (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.):
• Correct: Jan. 15, June 22, Oct. 31
• Incorrect: Jan. 15th, June 22nd, Oct. 31st
For decades of history, use numerals. Use an apostrophe to show numbers omitted:
• Don't forget the 1960s.
• I was born in June ’67, “the Summer of Love.”
Use lowercase for “century.” Spell out numbers less than ten. For numbers over ten, numerals are preferred. The use of ordinal numbers (21st, 22nd, etc.) is acceptable only with “century”:
• The time machine forged in the ninth century was not so dissimilar from the ones built in the 18th or 21st centuries.
• The time machine from the 23rd century landed in the 22nd century by accident.
Generally, follow this order: time, date, place.
• The bakery opens at 9 a.m. July 12 on Main Street in Durham.
The months March, April, May, June, and July should always be completely spelled out:
• The second half of The Walking Dead season premieres April 22.
• The first waffle was served at Dame’s new location on Aug. 28.
• Santa moved Christmas from Dec. 25 to Feb. 14.
All months should be spelled out when they stand alone or are alone with a year.
• My birthday is in October.
• December 1975 was ridiculously hot.
If a phrase lists only a month and year, do not separate the two with commas.
• July 1975 was ridiculously cold.
• Jan. 15 is Martin Luther King Jr. Day.
When a phrase lists a month, day, and year, set off the year with commas.
• Martin Luther King Jr. was born on Jan. 15, 1929, in Atlanta.
• The Homecoming step show was Friday, May 14, in McLendon-McDougald Arena.
TIME

Use a colon to separate hours from minutes, but do not use “00.”

Time of day should be abbreviated with lowercase letters and with periods: a.m. and p.m.

Do not use without a number indicating the actual time (e.g., as shorthand for “morning” or “afternoon”):

- Correct: The alarm sounded at 4:30 p.m. to warn students about the bees.
- Incorrect: Late in the p.m., we deliberated poking the bear with the stick.

Use only noon or midnight (not 12 a.m. or 12 p.m.).

Midnight is part of the day that is ending, not the one that is beginning.

Avoid time element redundancy such as 10 a.m. this morning, 6 p.m. tonight, 12:00 noon, or 12:00 midnight:

- Correct: The nurse will see you at 9 a.m. Monday.
- Correct: The psychic will see you Monday at 9 a.m.
- Correct: Don’t tell mom, but we are eloping at midnight.
- Incorrect: The bus broke down at 12:00 noon.
- Incorrect: The chancellor will see you at 9 a.m. Monday morning.
- Incorrect: We planned a romantic date for 12:00 midnight.

Do not use EST, PST, etc., as they are unnecessary identifiers that are used primarily with radio and television programming.

INITIALISMS, ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS

Do not use abbreviations or acronyms that your readers will not readily or quickly recognize or to eliminate some words in your text.

AP style dictates the plurals of figures and acronyms take “s”.

Do not use ‘-s in an acronym.

An abbreviation is a shortened or contracted form of a word or phrase used to represent the whole—for example, Dr. for Doctor, Rd. for road, lb. for pound.

Dr., Gov., Lt. Gov., Rep., the Rev., and Sen. are required before a person’s full name when they occur outside a direct quotation:

- Sen. Jesse Helms was also known colloquially as “Senator No”.
- Dr. Edgar A. Poe was a skilled bricklayer.
- Correct: Sen. Hobbs is chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee.
- Incorrect: Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Howie Hobbs.

An initialism is formed from the initial letters of a compound term and pronounced as a series of letters (Use all caps, but no periods):

- FBI for Federal Bureau of Investigation
- HTML for hypertext markup language
- HBCU for Historically Black Colleges and Universities
- UK for United Kingdom

An acronym is a word formed from the initial letters or the major parts of a compound term and pronounced as a single word (use all caps, but no periods):

- MADD for Mothers Against Drunk Driving
- GIF for graphics interchange format (pronounced “jiff”)

- Correct: The alarm sounded at 4:30 p.m. to warn students about the bees.
- Incorrect: Late in the p.m., we deliberated poking the bear with the stick.

Use only noon or midnight (not 12 a.m. or 12 p.m.).

Midnight is part of the day that is ending, not the one that is beginning.

Avoid time element redundancy such as 10 a.m. this morning, 6 p.m. tonight, 12:00 noon, or 12:00 midnight:

- Correct: The nurse will see you at 9 a.m. Monday.
- Correct: The psychic will see you Monday at 9 a.m.
- Correct: Don’t tell mom, but we are eloping at midnight.
- Incorrect: The bus broke down at 12:00 noon.
- Incorrect: The chancellor will see you at 9 a.m. Monday morning.
- Incorrect: We planned a romantic date for 12:00 midnight.

Do not use EST, PST, etc., as they are unnecessary identifiers that are used primarily with radio and television programming.
i.e./e.g./et al.

**i.e.**—equivalent to “that is.” A comma is required after i.e.

**e.g.**—equivalent to “for example.” A comma is required after e.g.

**et al.**—equivalent to “and others.” Always include a space between the two words and a period after the "I" (since the "al." is an abbreviation). A comma does not follow the abbreviation unless the sentence’s grammar requires it.

Never begin a sentence with i.e., e.g., or et al. If you choose to begin a sentence with "for example" or "therefore," always write the words out.

**GENERAL CAPITALIZATION**

Excessive and over capitalization does not confer prestige or importance. **Use rules, not ego.**

Never begin a sentence with a lowercase letter.

**DO NOT CAPITALIZE:**

- website titles
- school classification (freshman, sophomore, etc.)
  - Marie was a sophomore at the university when she met Napoleon.
- first lady, administration, presidential, first family
  - Sadly, the first lady, Michelle Obama, will not run for president in 2020.
- titles that are actually job descriptions (e.g., lawyer, mechanic, and coder)
  - The children admired astronaut Eileen Collins.

**DO CAPITALIZE:**

- formal titles before a person’s name
- Durham students support Mayor Bill Bell.

- lowercase titles if they are informal, appear without a person’s name, or follow a person’s name
  - Bill Bell, Durham’s mayor

Product and brand names should be initial-capped:

- Gap, Ikea, iPod Nano

Capitalize but don’t put quote marks around or italicize the names of software:

- Windows, iOS, Ubuntu

**USE LOWERCASE:**

Directions north, south, east, and west:

- The sun sets in the west.
- I prefer the beach down south to the frozen tundra in the north.

Directions when referring to undefined regions:

- southeast Brooklyn, east or west Durham

When referring to specific regions, then capitalize:

- the Northeast, the South, the Western Hemisphere, Southern California, West Africa, Eastern Europe
- Fried chicken is a Southern specialty.

Use lowercase for seasons, unless the season is used in a formal name:

- Winter Olympics
- The Summer Company is located in Pittsburgh.
- The frogs croak in the summer.
GENDER

The 2017 AP Style Guide entry for gender explicitly states the following:

“Gender is not synonymous with sex. Gender refers to a person’s social identity while sex refers to biological characteristics. Not all people fall under one of two categories for sex or gender, according to leading medical organizations, so avoid references to both, either or opposite sexes or genders as a way to encompass all people. When needed for clarity or in certain stories about scientific studies, alternatives include men and women, boys and girls, males and females.”

Avoid the term “sexual preference.” Preference implies a choice, and many people do not regard their sexuality as optional.

AP style previously dictated the use of “he” when gender was not known. This entry now refers to the entry on “they”, “them”, and “their” which are acceptable as singular and gender-neutral alternatives.

Use nouns that are inclusive and not gender specific to refer to roles or professions and avoid the pronoun he (including the forms him and his) to refer to people of unknown gender:

- Correct: police officer and flight attendant (gender neutral)
- Incorrect: policeman and stewardess (gender specific)
- Correct: ancestors, humankind, chair
- Incorrect: forefathers, mankind, chairman

Use parallel references to the sexes:

- women and men, husband and wife (not man and wife)

People are only boys and girls until age 18.

- Ladies and gentlemen generally are terms designating behavior.

When referring to the broader community, LGBTQ+ “people” is appropriate:

- Correct: NCCU is the second of three HBCUs to have a resource center for the LGBTQ+ community.
- Correct: The NC Pride parade in September celebrates all LGBTQ+ people.
- Incorrect: Mary is LGBTQ+.

COURTESY TITLES

Women and men should be referred to by their full name without courtesy titles on first reference. Subsequent reference, use last name without courtesy titles.

- Basie Holiday played the saxophone loudly.
- Holiday surprised the crowd with his encore.

Traditionally, Mrs. refers to married women. Miss refers to unmarried women. If marital status is unknown, Ms. is preferred. Mr. is preferred for men.

- Mrs. Grimes survived 135 zombie attacks.
- Miss Magritte wept when her fiancé perished.
- Ms. Machinery was very skilled with her machete.
- Mr. Carlson wore a very attractive hat.

For formal correspondence, use appropriate courtesy titles. If gender is unknown, use both first and last name.

- Dear Mrs. Grimes,
- Dear Mr. Carlson,
- Dear Parker Harley,
**RACE**

It is acceptable to identify by race when it is pertinent, such as stories and descriptions of events that involve significant, groundbreaking, or historic events, such as being elected U.S. president or being named to the U.S. Supreme Court:

- Barack Obama is the first black U.S. president.
- Sonia Sotomayor is the first Hispanic justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.
- Jeremy Lin is the first American-born NBA player of Chinese or Taiwanese descent.

The proper names of nationalities, people, races, tribes, etc., should be capitalized:

- Hispanic
- Lumbee
- African American (no hyphen)

African American – to hyphenate or not:

AP style recommends the hyphen. Chicago does not. Many large media entities do not hyphenate. Based on other university websites and media outlets, NCCU recommends no hyphen. Reference links below:

- [NCSU African American Student Resources](https://www.ncsu.edu/aasr)
- [UNC Department of African, African American, and Diaspora Studies](https://www.unc.edu/)
- [The Chicago Manual of Style Online: Hyphenation Table](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/chicago/01-hyphenated.html)
- [National Association of Black Journalists](https://nabj.org)
- [National Museum of African American History & Culture](https://nmaahc.si.edu/)

The use of “black” or “white” as a noun is acceptable in casual running text. Do not capitalize.

**AGE**

When referencing ages, always use numerals for people and animals, but not for inanimate objects:

- My brother is 25 years old.
- My sister, 30, is older than my brother, who is nine.
- The woman is in her 30s.
- Kindergarten is for 5-year-olds.
- My cat Bonkers is 13 today.
- The five-year-old building is ragged.

**NUMBERS**

In most instances, use Arabic numerals for numbers with two or more digits and spell out numbers less than 10:

- My auntie has three dogs and 21 cats.

Spell out numbers at the beginning of a sentence:

- Correct: Seventeen ferrets eat kibble.
- Incorrect: 17 ferrets eat kibble.

Exception: It is acceptable to use a year at the start of a sentence:

- 1910 was a milestone year in Durham.

Use words with adjacent numbers:

- twenty 16-gallon buckets

Other exceptions:

- Addresses: 6 Maple St.
- Currency: $5, 5 cents
- Dimensions: 6 feet tall, 9-by-12 rug
- Highways: U.S. Route 1
- Percentages: 4 percent
- Proportions: 2 parts water
- Speed: 7 mph
Temperatures: 8 degrees
But, zero degrees
Times: 9 a.m.

Exception: To avoid confusion, do not spell out numerals zero through nine if they are included in a range or series where at least one number is two or more digits.

On Sunday, Friday, and Thursday, he bought 6, 9, and 12 books, respectively.

Plural numbers get an “s,” but no apostrophe:

Correct: The 1920s.

In figures of more than 999, use commas to set off each group of three numerals:

177,000
1,298,490

Use figures with million, billion, or trillion. Decimals are preferred, but do not go beyond two decimal places.

I’d like to make a trillion dollars.
The nation has 1 million citizens.
I need 8 billion marbles to win the contest.
He says he has 198.39 billion dollars, but there is no proof.

Do not drop the word million or billion in the first figure of a range:

Correct: He is worth $4 million to $5 million dollars.
Incorrect: He is worth $4 to $5 million dollars (unless you actually mean he is worth only $4).

APOSTROPHE

The apostrophe (’’) has three uses: contractions, plurals, and possessives.

CONTRACTIONS

A contraction is two words made shorter by placing an apostrophe where letters have been omitted:

- Won’t (will not)
- We’ve (we have)
- They’d (they would)

PLURALS

In general:

For single letters, add -s and an apostrophe to avoid confusion:

- A’s and B’s

For most words, add -s to make plural:

- cat - cats, book - books

For words ending in -ch, -ss, -sh, -x, -z, add -es to make plural:

- match - matches (ch)
- bus - buses (s)
- business - businesses (ss)
- wash - washes (sh)
- box - boxes (x)
- buzz - buzzes, waltz - waltzes (z)

POSSESSIVES

In general:

Use the apostrophe to show something belongs to somebody:

Use -’s for singular:

- The cat’s growl was loud. (There is only one cat growling.)

Use -’s for plural:

- The cats’ have sharp teeth. (More than one cat has sharp teeth.)

Personal pronouns never take apostrophes:

- Correct: Whose glasses are these?
• Incorrect: Who's glasses are these?

**IT’S OR ITS**

**It’s** and **its** are two of the most commonly confused words in the English language. **It’s** is a contraction for “it is” (or “it has”):

- Do you think it’s going to rain Tuesday?
- It’s stopped raining.

**Its** is a possessive pronoun. It modifies a noun and is used to show ownership:

- The hungry eagle carried the tiny bunny to its nest.
- The lizard lost its tail.

**THEY’RE, THEIR OR THERE**

**They’re** is a contraction for “they are”:

- They’re very happy cheerleaders.

**Their** is a possessive pronoun. It is used to show that something belongs to someone:

- Their new home is in Durham.

**There** can be used to show that something is at or in a particular place:

- There are three cakes on the table.
- Look over there to see the hungry eagle eat the tiny bunny.

**YOU’RE or YOUR**

**You’re** is a contraction for “you are”:

- You’re going to love the new uniforms.

**Your** is an adjective that shows something belongs to you:

- Your phone just blew up.
- Please check your attitude before you leave your room.

**THAT OR WHICH**

If the sentence does not need the clause (non-restrictive) that the word in question is connecting, use **which**. If used correctly, the clause will be set off by commas.

- Our office, which has two lunchrooms, is located in Smallsbury.
- The announcement about his department’s hiring efforts, which was reported in the news, pleased the director.

If the sentence does need the clause (restrictive), use **that**. If used correctly, there are no commas used around the clause.

- We have two offices, but the office that has two lunchrooms is located in Smallsbury.
- The director was pleased with the announcement that reported on his department’s hiring efforts.

**WEB**

Spell “internet” with a lowercase “i.”

**URL /URLs**: When In text, use regular font. To cite web sources, use bold and brackets. In general, when writing a web address (www), delete the http://. However, if the URL doesn’t include www, keep the http://.

- www.nccu.edu
- https://eng519walls.com

**HYPERLINK**

Use embedded hyperlinks with anchor text to provide relevant contextual information:

- Correct: I want to learn about the history of the hyperlink.
- Incorrect: To learn about hyperlinks, click here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyperlink
SOFTWARE
Capitalize the names of software and operating systems. Do not use quote marks or italicize.

- Windows
- Android
- MS Office
- Adobe Creative Cloud

PUNCTUATION
The AP Stylebook stresses the importance of punctuation:

“There is no alternative to correct punctuation. Incorrect punctuation can change the meaning of a sentence, the results of which could be far-reaching.”

For example, not using the **Oxford comma** can lead to unnecessary ambiguity.

AMPERSANDB The ampersand (&) is the symbol for “and,” but the symbol is not interchangeable with the word “and.”

Do not use the ampersand to save space.
Use only in official names (Ben & Jerry’s).

BULLETS/ORDERED LISTS Treat all items within a bulleted or ordered list consistently throughout the document by using parallel construction.

Insert one line space before and after a bulleted list.
Do not insert line spaces before or after a bulleted item within a bulleted list.

Use bullets for items in a list that do not need to be in a particular order:

- Dog
- Cat
- Ferret

Use numbers when items need to be in a particular order:

1. Gather the eggs for breakfast.
2. Cook the eggs.
3. Eat the eggs.

Do not use periods after each item in a list if the items are not complete sentences:

The pantry contains a variety of foods:

- Apples
- Bananas
- Oranges

Use periods at the end of each bullet if it is a complete sentence:

- The registrar handles names.
- The financial aid office handles scholarships.
- The residential life office manages residence halls.

COMMA
Use a comma to offset years in dates:

- The conference occurred on July 5, 1915, and involved all the local universities.

When a geographical location has two or more parts, use a comma after each item (city, region, state, country, etc.) and follow the final item with a closing comma:

- The first meeting was in Paris, France, and was met with great success.
- The university plans to organize a similar meeting in the United States, with
• Durham, North Carolina, as the chosen location.

Use commas in numbers of 1,000 or more:

• 1,560 units
• 12,250,000 individuals

Do not use commas to indicate decimal points. Instead, use periods.

OXFORD COMMA

The Oxford comma (serial comma) is the comma at the end of a list of three or more terms used before the conjunction (typically and or or). The Oxford comma clears up confusion within a sentence and logically makes sense.

NCCU style differs from AP Style—use the Oxford comma in all writing.

• No Oxford comma: Working with the Dark Army, Elliot Alderson and Darlene, is dangerous. (Elliot Alderson and Darlene are the Dark Army.)
• With Oxford comma: Working with the Dark Army, Elliot Alderson, and Darlene is dangerous. (The Dark Army, Elliot Alderson and Darlene are separate from each other.)

DASHES/HYPHENS

Do not use hyphens (-), en dashes (–), and em dashes (—) interchangeably.

NCCU style differs from AP Style—do not leave a space on either side of the em dash.

HYPHEN

The hyphen (short length) is used to combine words and separate non-inclusive numbers:

• mother-in-law
• 919-867-5309

Compound modifiers are hyphenated when used before a noun, but not after—unless the hyphen is needed to prevent confusion:

• a well-known author
• The author is well known.

EN DASH

The en dash (medium length) is used to connect things that are related to each other:

• Closed ranges: 5–10 days, pp. 2–8
• Time: October 10–October 14, 2017
• Scores: The Bulls defeated the Mudcats, 15–3.
• Distance: Chicago–New York flight
• Relationships: the mother–child bond

EM DASH

The em dash (long length) is used to indicate emphasis or explanation or to denote a sudden break in thought. They can also be used as a substitute for something missing and to define a complementary element. The em dash can be used in place of some commas, parentheses, colons, or semicolons:

• Please call my therapist—Stanley Superfluous—at 9:00 tonight.
• There are four things needed for tonight—tape, bacon, water and music.
• The zombie cat was chewing the man’s fingers—or wait, was it his nose?

ELLIPSIS

The ellipsis can be used to show an omission of words or to indicate a pause in dialog, the passage of time, an unfinished list, or that a speaker has trailed off in the middle of a sentence or left something unsaid.

Do not use an ellipsis at the start of a sentence.
Use a space before and after an ellipsis. There are no spaces between the periods in the ellipsis itself:

- “word ... word”

At the end of a complete sentence, follow the last word with a closing period, a space, and then the ellipsis:

- “This is an example. ...”

**PERCENT (SIGN)**

Use a percent sign on both sides of a range or in scientific texts:

- 10%–20%

**PERCENT (WORD)**

Spell out percent in running text. Do not use the symbol to save space:

- One hundred percent of cats, when presented with the opportunity, will devour a mouse.

**PARENTHESES/BRA CKETS**

Parentheses and brackets cannot be used interchangeably. Use parentheses as the outer layer and square brackets as the inner layer when using both.

In most instances, use parentheses to offset text from its surroundings:

- By the time he returned home (four hours late), the puppy had shredded the new sofa.

Square brackets are used exclusively within quoted material to explain or comment on the quotation, (i.e., text that is not part of the original quotation):

- The mother of the victim said, “The prosecutor argued that he [the defendant] was guilty.”

**QUOTATION MARKS**

Always capitalize the first word in the quotation, and place commas and periods inside quotation marks:

- The drummer said, “This beat is dope, and I’m using it tonight.”

Place semicolons and colons outside of quotation marks:

- She said the chef “requested an unconventional list of ingredients”: fish, walnuts, Sriracha, and black ale.

Place question marks and exclamation marks outside of quotation marks unless they are part of the quoted text.

- Mavis asked, “Do you have any more pie?”
- Do you agree with, "Winter is coming"?

When nesting, use double quotation marks (“ ”) first and then single quotation marks (‘ ’). Include a space between double and single quotation marks for easier reading:

- The pit master said, “That’s why I said ‘yes.’”

**COPY PREPARATION**

- Files for print should be formatted in Microsoft Word.
- Files for the Web should be in HTML, Microsoft Word, or text-only format. We do not accept PDF files.
- Images should be in JPEG, GIF, or PNG format.
- File and image names should be descriptive and should reflect content.
- Each image should have an "alt text" tag associated with it in accordance with accessibility guidelines.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMONLY MISSPELLED WORDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anyway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>campuswide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cannot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cell phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>checkbox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chrome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>classwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coursework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coworker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cyberattack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>database</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>definitely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>desktop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>desktop publishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dial-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>download</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drop-down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emoji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>epub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firefox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>friending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>G</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>geolocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google, Googling, Googled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hashtag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>homepage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hotlink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HTML</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hyperlink (both noun and verb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IM, IMed, IMing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instant messenger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>internet (lowercase)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Explorer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intranet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iPad, iPhone, iPod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>J</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Java</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JavaScript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>L</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liaison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkedIn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>login (noun)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>log in (verb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>M</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mac OS X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>O</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>occurred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office 365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>P</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pop-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post-doctoral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pre-college</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| R | receipt  
   | received  
   | recur  
   | retweet |
|---|---|
| S | skill set  
   | Skype  
   | smart phone  
   | social media  
   | supposedly  
   | sync |
| T | tagline  
   | the Web  
   | timeframe  
   | timeline  
   | truly  
   | tweet, tweeted, retweet  
   | Twitter  
   | Twitter feed |
| U | unfriend  
   | university-wide  
   | until  
   | usability  
   | username |
| V | voicemail |
| W | web  
   | web address  
   | web browser  
   | web page  
   | webcam  
   | webcast  
   | webfeed  
   | webmaster  
   | website |

- WiFi  
- Windows  
- World Wide Web  
- WWW (when used without the URL in a sentence)  
- YouTube
**COMMONLY CONFUSED WORDS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Correct Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A lot</strong></td>
<td>a large number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alot</strong></td>
<td>not a word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Allot</strong></td>
<td>allocate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accent</strong></td>
<td>way of speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ascent</strong></td>
<td>move up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Descent</strong></td>
<td>move down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assure</strong></td>
<td>remove doubt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ensure</strong></td>
<td>guarantee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Insure</strong></td>
<td>insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accept</strong></td>
<td>to receive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Except</strong></td>
<td>to exclude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advice</strong></td>
<td>suggestion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advise</strong></td>
<td>to give someone advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affect</strong></td>
<td>to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effect</strong></td>
<td>a result</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Allude</strong></td>
<td>to call attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elude</strong></td>
<td>to evade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assume</strong></td>
<td>an informed guess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presume</strong></td>
<td>suppose without proof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comma</strong></td>
<td>punctuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coma</strong></td>
<td>medical condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Desert</strong></td>
<td>arid land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dessert</strong></td>
<td>food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conscious</strong></td>
<td>of surroundings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conscience</strong></td>
<td>of morality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>happiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content (as technology)</strong></td>
<td>words/images (on) web/blogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eminent</strong></td>
<td>distinguished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Imminent</strong></td>
<td>impending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explicit</strong></td>
<td>directly stated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implicit</strong></td>
<td>indirectly stated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Further</strong></td>
<td>figurative distances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Farther</strong></td>
<td>measurable distances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lose</strong></td>
<td>deprived of thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Loose</strong></td>
<td>set free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Loosen</strong></td>
<td>make less tight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Much</strong></td>
<td>uncountable nouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Many</strong></td>
<td>countable nouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perspective</strong></td>
<td>viewpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prospective</strong></td>
<td>expecting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Precede</strong></td>
<td>come before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proceed</strong></td>
<td>go forward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Precede</strong></td>
<td>not a word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quite</strong></td>
<td>maximum extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quiet</strong></td>
<td>absence of noise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who</strong></td>
<td>subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Whom</strong></td>
<td>object (human)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
COMMON HOMONYMS

**Capital** - most important city
**Capitol** - legislative building

**Cite** - to quote/refer
**Site** - location
**Sight** - vision

**Compliment** - praise
**Complement** - completes something

**Discreet** - careful actions
**Discrete** - separate/individual items

**Elicit** - to draw
**Illicit** - out/evoke illegal

**For** - indicate
**Fore** - in front
**Four** - a number

**Incite** - provoke
**Insight** - perceive

**It's** - it is
**Its** - belongs to
**Its** - belongs to

**Past** - references time
**Passed** - indicates movement

**Presence** - a state of being
**Presents** - gift

**Principle** - moral/legal
**Principal** - position of authority

**There** - in particular
**Their** - place belongs to
**They're** - they are

**To** - a direction
**Too** - additionally
**Two** - a number

**Whether** - atmosphere
**Weather** - or to endure

**Which** - particular one or ones
**Witch** - magical person

Please send any updates or changes to NCCU Web Team

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