Contents

ACADEMIC TERMS........................................................................................................................................5
ALMA MATER.................................................................................................................................................5
ALUMNI AND EMERITI ...............................................................................................................................5
CLASS DATES ...............................................................................................................................................5
DEPARTMENTS ..............................................................................................................................................6
DEGREES .......................................................................................................................................................6
FORMAL .........................................................................................................................................................6
CASUAL ..........................................................................................................................................................6
LETTER GRADES ........................................................................................................................................6
ACADEMIC TITLES AND NAMES ............................................................................................................7
TITLES ............................................................................................................................................................7
NAMES ..........................................................................................................................................................7
ACADEMIC CAPITALIZATION ..................................................................................................................7
NCCU COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS ............................................................................................................8
THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES DEPARTMENTS ................................................................8
THE COLLEGE OF BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES DEPARTMENTS .......................................8
THE COLLEGE OF BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES INSTITUTES .............................................8
BUILDINGS AND PLACES .......................................................................................................................8
ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDINGS ...............................................................................8
RESIDENCE HALLS ....................................................................................................................................9
ATHLETIC FACILITIES ............................................................................................................................9
OTHER CAMPUS FACILITIES ................................................................................................................9
ATHLETICS ..................................................................................................................................................10
OFFICIAL ATHLETIC TEAMS ..................................................................................................................10
MEN ............................................................................................................................................................10
WOMEN .......................................................................................................................................................10
EDITORIAL ..................................................................................................................................................10
LETTER SPACING .....................................................................................................................................10
A, AN, THE ..................................................................................................................................................10
IN, ON, AT ...................................................................................................................................................11
PREPOSITIONS OF TIME ..........................................................................................................................11
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepositions of Place</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And/or</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slash (/) vs. Backslash ()</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City/States</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dates</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initialisms, Abbreviations, Acronyms</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.e./e.g./et al.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Capitalization</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apostrophe</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contractions</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plurals</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessives</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It's&quot; or &quot;Its&quot;</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They're, Their or There</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You're or Your</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That or Which</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web URL</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyperlink</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ampersand</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BULLETS/ORDERED LISTS</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMA</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OXFORD COMMA</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DASHES/HYPHENS</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HYPHEN</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN DASH</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EM DASH</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELLIPSIS</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERCENT (SIGN)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERCENT (WORD)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARENTHESES/BRACKETS</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUOTATION MARKS</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COPY PREPARATION</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMONLY MISSPELLED WORDS</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMONLY CONFUSED WORDS</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMON HOMONYMS</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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
• alumnæ: 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
Capitalize “class” when referring to a specific class:

• Class of 2010
• Classes of the ’80s, ’90s, and ’00s will hold a reunion.

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

Capitalize 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 abbreviations. Initialisms for degrees, 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 Swift.

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**

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

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

**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
• Edwards Music Hall
• Bookstore and Parking Deck
• Centennial Chapel and Garden / Holy Cross Catholic Church
• Health Careers Center
• Pearson Cafeteria (the Caf)
• Shepard House
• Facility Services
• Central Receiving
• Cottage One
• Environmental Services
• Heating Plant
• Parking Deck
• Physical Plant

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.

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

- Countries
- There are many historic houses in Hayti.

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 in the signoff (credit) in photo captions.
• Do use the slash in web URLs and pathnames (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, US 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, May 3
• Incorrect: Jan. 15th, June 22nd, Oct. 31st, May 3rd

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.

Add -s to make plural.

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.
• Sen. Hobbs is chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Not: 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”)

**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
  - The first lady, Michelle Obama, will probably 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 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+.

**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, peoples, races, tribes, etc., should be capitalized:

- African American (no hyphen)
- Hispanic
- Lumbee

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.

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, -s, -ss, -sh, -x, -z, add -es to make plural.
• match - matches (ch)
• bus - busses (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's 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.

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.

AMPERSAND

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/BRACKETS**

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.
COMMONLY MISSPELLED WORDS

A
a lot
anyway

B
beta

C
campuswide
cannot
cell phone
checkbox
Chrome
classwork
coursework
coworker
cyberattack

D
database
definitely
desktop
desktop publishing
dial-up
download
drop-down

E
e-book
e-reader
e-mail
emoji
ePub

F
Facebook
Facebook page
FAQ
Firefox
friend
friending

G
golocation
Google, Googling, Googled

H
hashtag
homepage
hotlink
HTML
hyperlink (both noun and verb)

I
IM, IMed, IMing
instant messenger (use on first reference, then IM for subsequent)
internet (lowercase)
Internet Explorer
intranet
iPad, iPhone, iPod

J
Java

L
liaison
LinkedIn
login (noun)
log in (verb)

M
Mac OS X
Microsoft Office

O
occurred
Office 365
online

P
pop-up
post-doctoral
pre-college

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)

Y
YouTube
COMMONLY CONFUSED WORDS

**A lot** - a large number
**Alot** - not a word
**Allot** - allocate

**Accent** - way of speaking
**Ascent** - move up
**Descent** - move down

**Assure** - remove doubt
**Ensure** - guarantee
**Insure** - insurance

**Accept** - to receive
**Except** - to exclude

**Advice** - recommendation
**Advise** - assistance

**Affect** - to change
**Effect** - a result

**Allude** - to call attention
**Elude** - to evade

**Assume** - an informed guess
**Presume** - suppose without proof

**Comma** - punctuation
**Coma** - medical condition

**Conscious** - of surroundings
**Conscience** - of morality

**Eminent** - distinguished
**Imminent** - impending

**Explicit** - directly stated
**Implicit** - indirectly stated

**Further** - figurative distances
**Farther** - measurable distances

**Much** - uncountable nouns
**Many** - countable nouns

**Perspective** - viewpoint
**Prospective** - expecting

**Precede** - come before
**Proceed** - go forward
**Preceed** - not a word

**Quite** - maximum extent
**Quiet** - absence of noise

**Who** - subject
**Whom** - object (human)
COMMON HOMONYMS

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

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

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

**Content** - happiness  
**Content (as technology)** - words/images  
(on) web/blogs

**Desert** - arid land  
**Desert** - leave abruptly  
**Dessert** - food

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

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

**For** - indicate  
**Fore** - an object/front  
**Four** - a number

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

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

**Lose** - deprived of thing  
**Loose** - set free  
**Loosen** - make less tight

**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 (dnollan@nccu.edu)

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