



## ACQUISITION RESEARCH

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## HANDBOOK SERIES

# A Handbook to English Usage and Writing

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## **Preface**

This handbook is one of a series of four produced for the Acquisition Research Program at the Naval Postgraduate School. The series includes:

- *An Analysis Planning Handbook for Thesis, Joint Applied Project, and MBA Research Reports*
- *A Handbook to English Usage and Writing*
- *A Handbook to APA Citation Style*
- *A Handbook to Word Choice and Frequently Used Terms*

For additional copies, please visit the Acquisition Research Program Office at the Graduate School of Business & Public Policy in Ingersoll 372. Also see our website [www.acquisitionresearch.org](http://www.acquisitionresearch.org) for additional research resources.



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**Italicize\* titles of books, newspapers, magazines and other published materials, including those published online. This also applies in-text, as well.**

(\*This deviates from AP style, which places quotation marks around book titles and does not italicize.)

Lowercase the word *magazine* unless it is part of the publication’s formal title:

*Harper’s Magazine, Newsweek magazine*

Capitalize *the* in a newspaper’s name if that is the way the publication prefers to be known:

*The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times*

Lowercase *the* before newspaper names if an article mentions several papers, some of which use *the* as part of the name and some of which do not.

Italicize *FAR*, the *DFARS*, the *DoD 5000* series and *USC* when mentioned in-text.



Use a period after the lower-case abbreviations for *ante meridiem* (a.m.) and *post meridiem* (p.m.).

*3 p.m. or 6 a.m.*

For dates, always use figures, without *st*, *nd*, *rd* or *th*:

*He will arrive on October 21.*

Capitalize and spell-out\* calendar months in all uses.

(\**This deviates from AP style, which abbreviates months in some uses.*)

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.

*The conference was held in January 1982.*

*February 15, 1997, was the target date.*

For years in the same decade, use (for example):

*2003-2004, 1998-2000*

For decades, show the plural form by adding S (no apostrophe); use an apostrophe in front of the number only to indicate numerals that are left out:

*the 1890s, the '90s, the mid-1930s*

## Titles and Headings

Capitalize the principal words. DO NOT capitalize conjunctions or prepositions. But capitalize a word (including articles such as *a*, *an*, *the*) of fewer than four letters if it is the first or last word in a title.

## Usage 101—The Basics

### Sentence Structure

#### Phrase vs. Clause

- A **phrase** lacks either a subject, predicate or both (is only PART of a full sentence).
  - i.e., in a contract
- A **clause** contains both.
  - i.e., The PM drafts the contract.
- A **subordinate clause** contains both but begins with a subordinating word and is, therefore, not a sentence.
  - i.e., When PMs draft the contract...

#### Sentence Types

- **Simple sentence:**
  - Consists of a single main clause.
  - i.e., The contract was drafted.
- **Complex sentence:**
  - Consists of one main clause and one or more subordinate clauses.
  - i.e., The contract was completed **because the PM managed well.**
  - NOTE: The subordinate clause **could not stand alone**, though it has all the elements of a sentence.



- **Compound sentence:**
  - Consists of two or more main clauses.
  - i.e., The contract was **drafted, and** the vendor completed the system.
  - NOTE: It is connected by **a comma and a conjunction**.
  
- **Compound Complex sentence:**
  - Consists of the characteristics of both the compound and complex sentences and must be punctuated accordingly.
  - i.e., **Even though** the budget was **inaccurate, the** vendor completed the **system, and** the PM honored the contract.

### Sentence-specific Punctuation Errors

- **Comma Splice**
  - Two main clauses joined **only by a comma**.
    - i.e., **Not:** Budgets must be accurate, PMs must manage them well.
    - Use: Budgets must be accurate; therefore, PMs must manage them well.
    - (Use a “;” OR “, **conjunction**” OR “. **Sentence**”)

### Spacing

In general, use only **one** space after a period. However, two are acceptable if this is the researcher’s preferred style and is consistent within the text.

Use only **one** space after colons.

Remember that dashes are not surrounded by spaces.

*The contract was awarded—thanks to the PM—very quickly and to the appropriate vendor.*

For lists using bullets, numbers, dashes, etc., use one space between the bullet and the first word, and capitalize the first letter of the word. Use periods on all items only if at least one of the items forms a complete sentence.

For numbered lists within paragraphs, use parentheses around the numbers or letters. The normal rules of commas and semicolons apply.

*She wanted to attend the conference for three reasons: (1) to network with colleagues, (2) to learn about her profession and (3) to meet suppliers.*

### Technology

When describing the act of accessing a website or a link, the preferred term is “select” rather than “click on.”

Begin a website address with http:// whenever possible.

### Technology Terms

See Appendix 2: Frequently Used Terms

### Times/Dates

Do not put a 12 in front of *noon* or *midnight*.



## e. Numerical Rank

Spell-out the word “number” and the number itself (if less than 10) to indicate position or rank.\* Use a hyphen.

*It was our number-two choice.*

(\*This deviates from AP style, which abbreviates number as No. and uses figures.)

Use Roman numerals for wars and to show personal sequence for people:

*World War II, King George VI*

## f. Percentages

Use figures and decimals for all percentages except zero:

*zero percent, 0.7%, 1%, 2.5%, 10%*

For amounts less than 1%, precede the decimal with a zero:

*The cost of living rose 0.6%.*

Repeat % with each individual figure:

*She said 10% to 30% of the electorate may not vote.*

In general, do not spell-out “percent” within text. However, it is acceptable if this is the researcher’s preferred style and is consistent within the text.

## Run-on Sentence

- Two or more main clauses joined by a conjunction and **NO punctuation**.
  - i.e., **Not:** Acquisition research is important and this is critical to mission success.

## Fused Sentence

- Two or more main clauses joined by **NO punctuation**.
  - i.e., **Not:** Acquisition research is important this subject is critical to mission success.

## Sentence Fragments

- **Part** of a sentence punctuated as if a full sentence.
  - i.e., Though she managed the contract.

## General Usage

- Keep verb **tenses consistent** throughout the document.
- Verb forms:
  - Use **past tense** when referring to a **document** cited (APA guidelines).
    - i.e., Greene **mentioned** his program’s success in his text.
- The word “who” refers to people with names. “That” refers to things or anonymous people and



introduces essential information. “Which” refers to things and introduces nonessential information. Because which links nonessential information, it is usually set off by a comma.

- Patricia, who conducted the research, is coming to the base.
- The employees that worked overtime were paid \$200.
- The company that signed the agreement is based in Chicago.
- The company, which is based in Chicago, will sign the agreement next week.

▪ **Avoid** second-person pronouns.

- i.e., **NOT You** must consider...

▪ Include the article “the” in front of DoD and GAO and other acronyms when they refer to an entity—in other words, when they are used as a noun or when you could replace the acronym with “the agency” or “the department.”

- If you could write: The Department of Defense issued a memo..., then write: The DoD issued a memo...
- If you could write: The Government Accountability Office issued a memo..., then write: The GAO issued a memo...

▪ Correlative conjunctions **must** be used **together**.

- Both ... and OR both ... as well as
- Not only ... but also

Use figures with million or billion in all except casual uses:

*I'd like to make a million dollars.*

*The nation has 2 million citizens.*

*The company reported \$9 billion in revenues.*

Use decimals where practical:

*1.5 million*

**Not:** \$1,500,000 or 1 1/2 million

Do not go beyond two decimal places:

*It is worth \$4.35 million. It is worth exactly \$4,351,242.*

Do not mix *millions* and *billions* in the same figure:

*2.6 billion*

**Not:** 2 billion 600 million

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

*He is worth from \$2 million to \$4 million.*

**Not:** \$2 to \$4 million, unless you really mean \$2.

Do not use a hyphen to join figures and *million* or *billion*, even to describe something:

*The president submitted a \$300 billion budget.*



use US\$1.5 million, AUS\$10 and so on. Otherwise, the symbol should differentiate the currency (£, €, etc.)

*The book cost \$4.*

*Please give me a dollar.*

*Dollars are flowing overseas.*

*He proposed a \$500,000 budget.*

*The budget averaged \$20,000-\$30,000.*

*The total deficit came to \$5.7 billion.*

*The amount totaled US\$5.7 billion, not including the AUS\$4 billion contract.*

### c. Fractions

Use figures for all amounts less than one, using a forward slash between the nominator and denominator:

*2/3, 1/4, 7/12*

**Not:** *two-thirds, one-quarter*

Use figures for precise amounts larger than one, converting to decimals whenever practical:

*2.5, 10.25, 47.5*

### d. Millions, Billions

Spell-out the terms million and billion. Do not capitalize these terms.

*The total deficit came to \$5.7 billion.*

**Not:** *The total deficit came to \$5.7B.*

- Not ... but
- Either ... or
- Neither ... nor
- Whether ... or
- As ... as

#### ▪ Prepositions:

- When/where vs. **In which**
- i.e., **Not:** The process **where** the system was attained...
- Use: The process **in which** the system was attained...

#### ▪ Avoid pretentious voice.

#### ▪ Be concise.

#### ▪ Avoid unnecessary words such as *virtually* and *basically*, as well as overly casual language, as seen in the following example:

- **Not:** The supply manager knew that she would probably get the new system because a lot of her coworkers already had it.
- Use: The supply manager knew there was a good chance she would receive the new system because many of her coworkers had already implemented it.
- However, avoid too pretentious of language, as well. The balance is sometimes difficult to achieve.

#### ▪ If you must use an introductory phrase as a **modifier**, **include the subject** performing the function within the sentence.



- i.e., **Not:** Trying to understand the process, the contract has been extensively studied.
- Use: Trying to understand the process, the researchers have extensively studied the contract.
- An **antecedent** of a pronoun is the noun or other pronoun to which the pronoun refers.
- **Avoid mismatching pronouns with antecedents**, i.e., matching a singular antecedent with “their” or “them.” This is especially common with agencies and corporations and is incorrect.
  - **Not: The GAO** published **their** opinion in **their** recent report.
  - Use: **The GAO** published **its** opinion in **its** recent report.
- Avoid using a pronoun without an antecedent.
  - i.e., **Not: It** often happens that the budget is incorrect.

## Capitalization

- Be consistent throughout the document. Certain terms (jargon) may or may not require capitalization.
- Do not capitalize prepositions in titles.
- Never capitalize second words of compound adjectives unless the second word is a proper noun.

BS	Bachelor of Science
DBA	Doctor of Business Administration
JD	(Jurum Doctor) Doctor of Laws
LLM	Master of Laws
MA	Master of Arts
MBA	Master of Business Administration
MD	Doctor of Medicine
MS	Master of Science
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy

## Numbers

In technical writing, use numerals for statistical data. In non-technical reports, spell-out whole numbers from zero to nine; use figures for 10 and above.

*Lean Six Sigma was initiated within the company.*

*Though 10 departments incorporated the changes, only 4 succeeded (40% success rate).*

### a. Decimal Units

For amounts less than 1 percent, use the numeral zero before the decimal point: *0.03*.

### b. Dollars and Cents

Use figures and the \$ sign in all except casual references or amounts without a figure. Do not use *.00* for whole dollar amounts. For dollar-amount ranges, use \$10-\$20.

Use \$1.5 million, \$10 and so on for US dollars. If more than one type of dollar is discussed in the document,



Military rank is capitalized if used with a specific name:

*Others, such as Captain Kathy L. Johnson, will be present at the symposium.*

## Names

A person's title is capitalized if used in connection with a specific name.

*Vice President of Public Relations Kathy L. Johnson will attend the seminar.*

*Jane Covington is a doctor.*

A person's whole name is used first, then his or her last name anytime thereafter. (Use the courtesy titles *Dr.*, *Mr.*, *Mrs.*, *Ms.* and *Miss* only in direct quotations or in other special situations.)

*Michael J. Smith, PhD, CPM, will be speaking at the conference. Smith is president of Acme, Inc.*

Abbreviate junior or senior only with full names, and precede by a comma:

*Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr.*

When a person's nickname is inserted into the identification of an individual, use quotation marks:

*Maureen R. "Moe" Jackson*

Use two words with no hyphen for titles such as *vice president*, *vice chair* and *vice principal*.

The following list includes many common abbreviations for scholarly degrees and titles of respect, according to ARP style:

BA Bachelor of Arts

- i.e., Cycle-time Consistencies, anti-German warfare.

## Parallelism and Verb Voice

- **Parallelism is a similarity of form within a sentence or among sentences.**
  - i.e., The procurement was influenced by **a capable PM** and **a suitable vendor**.
  - i.e., The vendor must aspire **to complete** the contract and **to stay** within budget.
  - This is vital in **list formats**, especially. If each bullet begins with an action verb, make verb form/style consistent throughout that specific list.
  - For instance, **Not:** Be consistent; be cognizant; each presenter must be prepared.
  - Use: Be consistent; be cognizant; be prepared.
- **Verb voice:**
  - **Active:** The subject of the sentence performs the action.
  - **Passive:** The subject of the sentence is acted upon.
  - The ACTIVE is *always* preferable to the passive. However, a small amount of passive usage is fine in a document for variety...but only a small amount. Change sentences to read active if the passive voice is distracting.

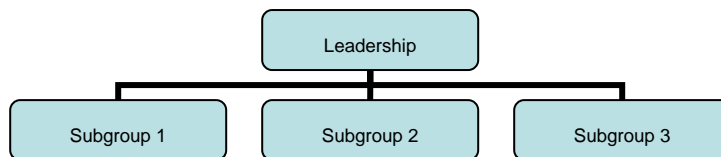


## Referencing Figures/Tables within the Text

- Always refer to Figure/Table 1 with a capital “F/T.” If referring to “the figures/tables above,” no capitalization is necessary.
- The figure/table title:
  - Appears below a figure, above a table.
  - Requires each word to be capitalized (except prepositions).
  - Must read **Figure 1. Title** or **Table 1. Title** (with the period after the number).
  - Must be bolded, though the citation following should not be bolded.
  - Must be centered on a line above the figure citation.
  - Should include a citation (Last name, date, p. #), as below.

NOTE: Page number is only necessary if they extracted the graphic or information directly from another source.

- (Bozeman, 2007). **Not:** (from: Bozeman, 2007) or (source: Bozeman, 2007). See examples below:



**Figure 1. Organizational Chart**  
(Doe, 2007, p. 42)

*Students from the West often melt in eastern humidity.*

## Gerunds

A gerund is the *-ing* form of a verb when it serves as a noun. Gerunds are not the best options as sentence subjects; try to use a true noun as the subject of each sentence:

**Not:** *Adopting a bonus program can yield further savings.*

Use: *Adoption of a bonus program can yield further savings*

**Not:** *Taking advantage of higher rates would be ideal.*

Use: *By taking advantage of higher rates, decision-makers would yield more benefits.*

**Not:** *Improving overall retention can be achieved with additional cost.*

Use: *Overall retention can be improved with additional cost.*

## Military-specific Usage

The term “Services,” when used generally, is usually capitalized. Each of the specific services is also capitalized:

*Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard.*

The terms “armed forces” and “naval” are not usually capitalized unless used with an agency or department title.



Abbreviations that consist of or end in small letters usually require periods.

*Dr., Mr., Mrs., e.g., i.e., a.m.*

Spell-out “versus” in text. The lowercase abbreviation “vs.” may be used in a headline, subheadline, table or figure.

e.g., = for example/i.e., = that is (try to avoid, but if used, must have comma after):

*Some departments (e.g., finance, accounting and marketing) may be audited.*

*He was the “keeper of the secrets”; i.e., he was responsible for safeguarding the organization’s proprietary information.*

## Articles

Use “the” with an acronym if, when that term is spelled-out, it would require one.

*The DoD (the Department...), the GAO, the OSD (the Office...)*

Use “a” before words that begin with consonant sounds.  
Use “an” before words that begin with vowel sounds.

## Cities and States

Use *US* (no space, no periods) when abbreviating *United States*.

## Compass Directions

Capitalize compass directions when they name a specific region instead of a general direction:

**Table 1. Organizational Table**  
(Doe, 2007, p. 38)

	Data 1	Data 2	Data 3	Data 4
Test 1	.1	.2	.3	.4
Test 2	.2	.4	.6	.8

## A Basic Guide to Style

The following guide is taken from *The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law*, 2007 edition. The contents were adapted from the Institute for Supply Management™ *Basic Guide to Style*, with modifications made to fit the unique needs of the Acquisition Research Program. This concise guide is meant to provide quick answers to common questions; for further explanation or more complex questions, please consult the *AP Stylebook*.

For spelling questions, consult *Webster’s New World College Dictionary* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.), the official dictionary of the Associated Press. In general, the first spelling listed in an entry is the preferred spelling. Appendix 2 includes generally accepted spellings for words that are frequently found in the Acquisition Research Program publications. This list will be updated periodically to reflect additional terms.

## Punctuation—In Detail

### Acronyms

Use **no periods** with acronyms:

*DoD, US, USAF, USA, GAO, USD(AT&L), PhD, MA, MBA*



## Ampersand (&)

Use an ampersand with in-text, parenthetical APA citations.

*Several researchers concur with this analysis (French & Brower, 2007; Brisk, Lassen & White, 2006).*

Use an ampersand only when it is part of the formal name of a publication or an organization:

*Acme & Associates, Inc.*

The ampersand should not otherwise be used in place of *and*. Exceptions to this rule include *Ts & Cs* (terms and conditions) and *R&D* (research and development); other exceptions may occur.

## Apostrophe (')

For singular nouns and plural nouns not ending in S, add an 's:

*the company's procedures, women's rights, Xerox's profits*

For singular common nouns ending in S, add an 's unless the next word begins with S, in which case add only an apostrophe:

*the hostess's invitation, the hostess' seat*

*the witness's answer, the witness' story*

For singular proper nouns ending in S, add only an apostrophe:

*Dickens' novels, Kansas' schools*

Use a semicolon if a coordinating conjunction such as *and*, *but* or *for* is not present:

*The package was due last week; it arrived today.*

Place semicolons outside quotation marks unless they are part of the quotation itself.

Use semicolons to separate elements of a series if individual segments are main clauses (complete sentences) or if individual segments contain material that also must be set-off by commas:

*The committee was created because errors were found in accounting; inventory was lacking; communication was hindered; and files were being lost.*

*The committee included John Smith, vice president of marketing for Acme, Inc.; Deborah Jones, supply manager for XYZ Corp.; and Michelle Olsen, vice president of finance for Majors Co.*

Otherwise, series elements should be separated by commas. Remember: semicolons separate; colons connect.

## Specific Usage

### Abbreviations

In general, spell-out an abbreviation the first time it is used; e.g., Internet service provider (ISP). However, some abbreviations are so common in our program that they need no explanation.



*direct questions or incorrect combinations of marks (such as a question mark and a period at the end of a sentence), it cannot do much else. (Aaron, 2004, p. 241)*

*Thus, it is critical that writers check their own work.*

Use double quotation marks (“ ”) unless quoting within a quote.

Quotes within quotes: Alternate between double quotation marks (“ ”) and single marks (‘ ’), starting with the double:

*She said, “I quote from his letter, ‘I agree with the president that “shareholder confidence is down,” but I know this situation is reversible,’ a remark he did not explain.”*

Do not use single marks unless citing a quote within a quote.

**Not:** *Delaying the delivery of the MRAP vehicle for further ballistics testing put the program manager between 'a rock and a hard place.'*

Use a single mark and a double mark together if two quoted elements end at the same time:

*He said, “She told me, ‘You deserve a raise.’”*

## Semicolon (;)

In general, use the semicolon to indicate a greater separation of thought and information than a comma can convey but less than the separation that a period implies. (See the *Associated Press Stylebook, 2007*, p. 325.)

For plural nouns (even if singular in meaning) ending in S, add only an apostrophe:

*the members’ suggestions, according to mathematics’ rules, the United States’ wealth*

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*

## For joint or individual possession:

Use a possessive form after only the last word if ownership is joint:

*Fred and Sylvia’s apartment*

Use a possessive form after both words if the objects are individually owned:

*Fred’s and Sylvia’s faces*

Use an apostrophe for omitted figures, such as:

*the class of ’62, the Spirit of ’76, the ’20s*

Use an apostrophe for plurals of a single letter:

*Mind your p’s and q’s.*

*He learned the three R’s and brought home a report card with four A’s and two B’s.*

*The Oakland A’s won the pennant.*

An exception is noted for “terms and conditions”: *Ts & Cs.*



For plural abbreviations and designations, do not use an apostrophe:

*MBAs, CEOs, IOUs, POs, VIPs*

Use an apostrophe in contractions such as *it's* (it is) and *you're* (you are). However, no apostrophe is used for possessive pronouns such as *its* and *your*.

## Brackets ([ ])

Use brackets in quotations if the researcher wishes to add words for clarity, change the capitalization of letters, or use ellipses to omit irrelevant portions of a quotation. (Note: [...] are not necessary before or after quotes.)

*Jones suggested, "You [program managers] must include [...] several conditions in the contract" (2007, p. 44).*

## Colon (:)

The most frequent use of a colon is at the end of a sentence to introduce lists, tabulations, texts, etc. Use a colon to introduce long quotations within a paragraph and to end all paragraphs that introduce a paragraph of quoted material. (See the *Associated Press Stylebook*, 2007, p. 325.)

### Use only one space after a colon, not two.

In a sentence, capitalize the first word after a colon only if it is a proper noun or the start of a complete sentence:

*She promised this: The company would offer benefits to all workers.*

*But: There were three considerations: expense, time and feasibility.*

*He asked, "How long will it take?"*

Do not use a comma following the question mark in a quotation such as:

*"Who is there?" she asked.*

## Quotation Marks (“ ”)

The period and the comma ending a sentence fall within the quotation marks, unless the sentence requires a citation:

*One researcher remarked, "The data were correct" (Black, 2008, p. 24).*

*My brother suggested that the "fruit didn't fall far from the tree."*

In other words, quotation marks indicating a direct quote come before the required citation.

Pierce explains, "He should conclude the research—now, before the text is published" (2007, p. 2).

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

Do not use quotation marks on quotes longer than four lines. Such quotes should be in long-quote format, as follows:

*Jane E. Aaron explains:*

*Do not rely on a grammar and style checker to identify missing or misused end punctuation. Although a checker may flag missing question marks after*



## Percent Symbol (%)

In technical writing, the percent symbol (%) is preferred over the word “percent.”

## Period (.)

Do not put a space between a person’s first and middle initials:

*J.F. Kennedy, L.B. Johnson*

Abbreviations using only the initials of a name do not take periods:

*JFK, LBJ*

Periods **always** go inside quotation marks unless a citation is necessary:

*She called the event a “phenomenal success.”*

*She called the event a “phenomenal success” (Jones, 2007, p. 78).*

Use a single space after a period at the end of a sentence in a paragraph. However, two are acceptable if this is the researcher’s preferred style and is consistent within the text.

For lists using bullets, numbers, dashes, etc., use periods on all items only if at least one of the items forms a complete sentence.

## Question Mark (?)

A question mark goes inside or outside of quotation marks depending on the meaning:

*Who said the mission was “not critical”?*

The colon is also effective for providing emphasis:

*He had only one hobby: eating.*

Colons go outside quotation marks unless they are part of the quotation itself:

*She approved a “quick fix”: lowering prices.*

Remember: colons connect; semicolons separate.

## Comma (,)

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.*

Also put a comma before the concluding contraction 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.*



Do not set an essential phrase off from the rest of a sentence with commas:

*David Wood's most recent memo "How to Accept Track Changes in Word" was profound.*

Set-off nonessential phrases by commas:

*The committee, regardless of the circumstances, will vote on the notion.*

Set-off appositives by commas. An appositive is a noun that renames another noun.

*The CO, CDR Benjamin, was also involved in procurement.*

Conjunctive adverbs are followed by a comma at the beginning of sentence and are surrounded by one in the middle of a sentence:

*The contract, however, was signed.*

*Therefore, they signed the contract.*

A comma is used to separate an introductory clause or phrase from the main clause:

*When he had tired of the mad pace of New York, he moved to Denver.*

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 to avoid run-on sentences:

*She was glad she had looked, for a man was approaching the office.*

*We visited Washington, and our senator greeted us personally.*

For terms using *self*, always hyphenate:

*self-assured, self-defense, self-government*

Also use a hyphen to avoid duplicated vowels or tripled consonants:

*anti-intellectual, pre-empt, shell-like*

Use hyphens to separate figures in odds, ratios, scores and some fractions:

*a ratio of 2-to-1*

When large numbers must be spelled-out (such as at the beginning of a sentence), use a hyphen to connect a word ending in *-y* to another word:

*twenty-one, fifty-five*

In cases of suspensive hyphenation, the form is:

*He received a 10- to 20-year prison sentence.*

## Parentheses ( )

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 is one 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.



Place the mark outside quotation marks when it is not part of the quoted material:

*In academic writing, writers should never use the second-person pronoun "you"!*

## Hyphen (-) (see also Dashes)

Hyphens are joiners. Use them to avoid ambiguity or to form a single idea from two or more words:

*The president will speak to small-business owners.*

*She had a know-it-all attitude.*

*He held a full-time job.*

Use hyphens to connect compound adjectives:

*She wore high-heeled shoes.*

*It was necessary to consult a subject-matter expert.*

Do not use hyphens to link the adverb *very* or any adverb that ends in *-ly* to an adjective.

If the compound adjective follows the noun, the hyphen is generally unnecessary:

*The actor is well known.*

*Many students are Spanish speaking.*

NOTE: Some compound adjectives should be hyphenated in this instance, however, for clarity.

*If the PM chooses a service that is contract-out only, the management will be cumbersome.*

Use a comma if a quoted statement would otherwise end in a period:

*"The company is based in New York," he said.*

Do not use a comma if a quoted statement ends with a question mark or exclamation point:

*"Why should I?" he asked.*

Use commas to separate names of states and nations used with city names:

*Her journey will take her from Dublin, Ireland, to Fargo, North Dakota, and back.*

*The Selma, Alabama, group saw the governor.*

Within a sentence, any element preceded by a comma should be followed by a comma as well:

*On June 25, 2007, the contract was awarded.*

*The owner of Pearson, Inc., is going to attend the conference.*

*The meeting in Washington, DC, included members of the agency.*

Use a comma for most figures greater than 999:

*He purchased 1,507 widgets.*

Commas always go inside quotation marks.

The abbreviations "i.e.," and "e.g.," are always followed by a comma (explained more in-depth below).

For lists using bullets, numbers, dashes, etc., use a comma at the end of each bulleted phrase if none of the items forms a complete sentence. The final two phrases



may be separated by a comma and a conjunction (i.e., and, or). If the listed items are only one or two words, the comma may be omitted. If the listed items form complete sentences, semi-colons and periods are more appropriate.

## Dashes (see also Hyphen)

NOTE: To insert a hyphen in text, use the hyphen key on the keyboard, located two keys to the left of the Backspace button. To insert a dash, use two hyphens without spaces—Word should auto-format them into a dash after you have typed the word and one space after the dash.

## Dash (—)

Use the dash symbol 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.*

It can also be used when a phrase that otherwise would be set-off by commas contains a series of words that must be separated by commas:

*He listed the qualities—intelligence, humor, conservatism, independence—that he liked in an executive.*

## Ellipsis ( ... )

In general, treat an ellipsis as a three-letter word, constructed with three periods (use ellipsis symbol if possible), with a space on each side of the ellipsis.

Use an ellipsis to emphasize a pause or insert an artistic break into text.

Use an ellipsis to indicate the deletion of one or more words in condensing quotes, texts and documents. Ellipses not included in the original text **MUST** be surrounded by brackets. When the material is deleted at the end of one paragraph and at the beginning of the one that follows, place an ellipsis in both locations.

*“The organization will outline five policies [...] to guide the employees’ negotiations.”*

Do not use ellipses at the beginning and end of direct quotes:

*“It has become evident to me that I no longer have a strong enough political base,” Nixon said.*

**Not:** *“... it has become evident to me that I no longer have a strong enough political base ... ,” Nixon said.*

When the grammatical sense calls for a period, question mark, exclamation point, comma or colon, the sequence is word, punctuation, space, ellipsis:

*I no longer have a strong enough political base. [...]*

*Will you come? [...]*

## Exclamation Point (!)

Avoid overusing exclamation points. Use a comma or period instead in most cases.

Place the mark inside quotation marks when it is part of the quoted material (do not use a comma or period after the exclamation point in this case):

*“How wonderful!” he exclaimed.*

