Gazette Style Guide

Adapted from the Canadian Press Stylebook, 17th edition

Writing for Print

-Be human

Stories must be human, specific, clear, concise, imaginative and factual.

Write about people. Find the human angle in every story and write for everyday people.

Relate the news to the reader's life whenever possible. We especially have a targeted audience so relate as much as possible back to Western and student life.

Quotes give a story dimension and character. Paraphrase those that merely deliver information and keep the ones that set the scene, capture the flavour of the news or provide insight.

Perk up stories that are devoid of anything human, except perhaps some unnamed spokesman or official. Season them with examples that bear directly on the lives of readers: Just when you thought you had finally caught up with the Joneses, along came Statistics Canada on Tuesday announcing that 1.2 million households have more than one high-definition television.

-Be clear

Always organize a story in your mind before you start writing

Decide what the news is and put it in your lead.

Use plain words, but always the right words, e.g. wicked not nefarious, remaining not residual. Use specific words when details are useful, e.g. hamburger and fries instead of food, man of 87, not an elderly man.

-Be direct

Use specifics to clarify what happened. Don't use lazy terms such as fairly, really, pretty, few, etc. when you can say directly what the details are.

Avoid putting more than one thought into a sentence. In general, contents and structure rather than length itself make sentences hard to understand.

-Be concise

Keep your story tight in content as well as phrasing. Stick with truly significant angles. A full report can often mean a dull report (e.g. reporting on a full USC council meeting would be unbearably boring and just plain cruel).

Ditch the long word that says no more than the short: attempt (try), approximately (about), consequently (so), substantiate (prove), initiative (plan).

Ditch the laborious phrase: despite the fact that (although), at this point in time (now), in the event that (if), ahead of schedule (early), in the majority of cases (usually).

Ditch ponderous euphemisms and gobbledygook: correctional facility (prison), in a classroom setting (in a classroom), lower rates of infant mortality (fewer baby deaths).

Ditch words that aren't doing any work: He said (that) the cut(back)s in (the) health care (field) have put hospitals in a crisis (situation).

Active vs. Passive

Think of active verbs as power verbs — words that drive your sentences, keep the reader's attention and move them briskly along.
Not: The economy experienced a quick revival
But: The economy revived quickly.

Not: At first light there was no sign of the ship.
But: The ship vanished in the night.

Use the passive when a switch in emphasis is helpful, for instance, to put the news ahead of the source. It may also lighten a sentence by removing secondary information that can wait.

Abbreviations

Avoid abbreviations when an option exists.

An abbreviation is sometimes acceptable to avoid an unwieldy lead. But, in general, provide the full name later.

Abbreviations that have become household terms are acceptable in all references (you can still spell them out, it's just not necessary).

In general, do not put the bracketed abbreviation after the name of an organization.
Abbreviations that need this device to be clear should rarely be used.

Omit all periods in all-capital abbreviations unless it is geographical or refers to a person.

Avoid abbreviating academic degrees. Use a phrase instead: John Woo, who has a doctorate in chemistry.

Degrees: B.Sc., BA, LLB, M.Sc. MA, B.Comm, PhD.

Abbreviate Dr., Prof., Sen., Rev., Sgt., Rep. before full names on first reference: Dr. Pamela Gucci, Profs. Eva Oberast and John Green.

When an abbreviation follows an indefinite article (a, an), the way the abbreviation is pronounced determines whether a or an is used. E.g., a WHO spokesman, an EKG.

Capitalizations

Where a reasonable choice exists, we use lowercase. The basic rule:
Capitalize all proper names, trade names, government departments and agencies of government, names of associations, companies, clubs, religions, languages, nations, races, places, addresses. Otherwise lowercase is favoured where a reasonable option exists.

Capitalize formal titles directly preceding a name: Mayor Joni Baechler. Lowercase then when standing alone or set off from the name with commas: the mayor, Joni Baechler; Joni Baechler, the mayor of London. Formal titles are those that could be used with the surname alone, e.g. Prime Minister Harper, Prof. Brown, Dr. House.

Lowercase occupational titles and job descriptions: USC president Sophie Helpard, general manager Suzie Jenkins, author Susan Delacourt.
Use Dr. for licensed health-care professionals only. Where pertinent, specify: Dr. John Lucyk; Lucyk, an orthodontist.

National and provincial government departments and agencies are capitalized, e.g. Ministry of Defence.
Local (municipal) government departments and boards are lowercased, e.g. town and gown committee.

University degrees are lowercased except when abbreviated, e.g. master of arts, master's, MA, PhD.

Capitalize geographic and widely recognized descriptive regions e.g. Western Canada, Central Canada. However, write southern Ontario, eastern Quebec, southern California.

Newspaper names are capitalized; the **the** is lowercase.
magazine is only capitalized when the word is part of the magazine name, e.g. Maclean's magazine, Harper's Magazine.

Composition titles (books, broadcast programs, films, plays, poems, songs, speeches, works of art) can be written in italics to differentiate them in regular copy, when technically possible, or enclosed in quotation marks when italics are not an option. If they are already set off as a list or differentiated in some other way such as font style, there is usually no need for quotation marks or italics.

For nationalities, peoples, races, tribes and the like, capitalize. E.g. Aboriginal Peoples, Arab, African, Canadian, Hispanic, Jewish.
However, use lowercase in words like aboriginal, black, brown, white.

In quotations, capitalize the first word of a complete quotation, i.e. “McCabe replied to the lawyer’s ‘Ah, Mr. McCabe’ with an ‘Oh, hello, Mr. Trout.’ “
Use lowercase with a word or phrase that is quoted merely for discussion, when it is controversial or when it is used ironically or oddly. E.g. What does “grating” mean? / One of the words used was “scab.” / The “gift” cost $10.

Colon
Use a colon to introduce a direct quotation longer than a short sentence.

Generally, do not capitalize the first letter of a sentence that follows a colon, only if emphasis is desirable.

Use a colon to mark a strong contrast, e.g. Eating isn’t just a necessity: it’s a pleasure.

Use a colon to separate titles and subtitles unless the author’s or publisher’s form differs.

Commas
Put commas between the elements of a series but not before the final and, or, or nor unless that avoids confusion.

Use commas before clauses introduced by the conjunctions and, but, for, or, nor or yet if the subject changes. Note: Omit when the clauses are short or the subject of both is the same.

Use commas to set off an introductory clause or long phrase that precedes the main clause.

Put a comma after the main clause only if the clause that follows is parenthetical, e.g. I’m selling you this gold brick because I like your face. The doctor bought a ticket, though she didn’t expect to win.

Use commas to separate adjectives before a noun when the commas represent and, e.g. a vigorous, genial, popular man. Omit commas if they could not be replaced with and.

Use a comma to separate a short introductory clause from a short, complete sentence in quotations. Don't use a comma if the sentence is extremely short or it is an integral part of the sentence, e.g. Stop saying "I told you so."

Put a comma after locations, e.g. St. John's, N.L.,

Dates, time and numbers

-Dates

Never use tomorrow or yesterday in stories for print. Use today if it's intended for online use and events happening the day of publication. Otherwise, the day is always named to avoid confusion.

Name the day if it falls within seven days of the current date: on Tuesday, next Sunday, last Friday. For more distant dates, use the date: May 5.

For months used with a specific date, abbreviate only Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec. Spell them out standing alone or with a year alone.

For significant events, give the day and the date: The budget will be presented Friday, Nov. 4.

Friday, March 12, 1949 or March 31, 1949 (do not include st/nd/th in dates)
March 1949 (no comma separates the year and month when the date is omitted)

Use a hyphen to connect dates, except when preceded by from or between: the 1982–83 tax year, between 1998 and 2005

Drop the first two digits of a year if they are the same: 1998–99; 1998–2001

1983, '83, the 80s, the mid-80s, he's in his late 50s.

-Time

The exact time of an event is usually unnecessary. Instead, give the reader the sense of the time by describing the scene. However, give a specific time for important announcements, key votes, or other events in which time is a vital component.

Don't wrench a lead out of shape trying for a weak or phoney current-day angle. Bury the time element if necessary, and get the news in the lead.

8 p.m. not 8:00 p.m.

8:30 a.m.
fifth minute, 23rd minute

Her time was 3:45:20.6 or Her time was three hours 45 minutes 20.6 seconds

-Numbers
One, nine, 10, 1,000, 1 million, 2.5 million

A $1.2-million donation (hyphenated when an adjectival form before a noun)

21–99 when written out get a hyphen: Twenty-one, Fifty-two

Per cent not %

Use a slash mark to replace per in measurements, e.g. 80 km/h

Also use a slash mark to separate the numerator and denominator of a fraction, e.g. 3 ⅝.

Dash
It is useful, but can be overused. Sometimes, it's easier to break a sentence into two.

Use dashes to set off mid-sentence lists or when commas (generally preferred) would create confusion.

Use a dash to introduce a phrase or clause that summarizes, emphasizes or contrasts what was said before, e.g. Quiet, respectful, deferential, even obsequious — those were Mulliner's chief characteristics.

Use dashes with a space before and after (exception: sports scores).

Hyphen
Write words as compound to ease reading, to avoid ambiguity and to join words that when used together form a separate concept, e.g. first-year, once-in-a-lifetime, used-car dealer.

Generally, hyphenate compound modifiers directly preceding a noun, unless the meaning is instantly clear because of common usage. e.g. third-period goal, 40-cent coffee, multimillion-dollar project; acid rain, sales tax increase.

Its vs. It's

With these words, in no circumstances will an apostrophe ever be used outside the context of a contraction between the words “it” and “is.” **It’s** will never be used to indicate possession. Conversely, **its** will never be used to say “it is,” and will always be used to indicate possession by an inanimate or a non-gendered animate object.

So, for example: “It’s possible that this dog will never find its bone.” This is nearly the exact same sentence: “It is possible that this dog will never find its bone.” The only word that can change here is **it’s**, because **it’s** is a short form. **Its** is a fixed form and therefore cannot be changed when it is being used correctly — that is, in the context of a possessive.

If you’re ever unsure of which one to use, just ask yourself: Could I also say “it is” in place of “its/it’s” and the sentence would still make sense? If the answer is yes, then you are looking for “it’s.” If the answer is no, you’re probably looking for “its.”

Neutral Pronouns

When referring to a singular person whose gender is indeterminate, the automatic use of “he” can be problematic and exclusionary. However, replacing “he” (or “him,” “his”) with “his or her” can be too wordy and out of place, especially if it is being done multiple times in a sentence or paragraph.

In this case, try rewording the sentence to avoid this problem altogether, e.g. instead of “Whoever is promoted will have $50 added to his or her pay,” write “Whoever is promoted will get a $50 raise.”

As a last resort, “they” (“them,” “their”) is an increasingly acceptable alternative to “he” (“him,” “his”). This change works best and makes more sense if the entire phrase is reconstructed to include plurals, e.g. instead of “A retired officer is not usually referred to by their former rank,” write “Retired officers are not usually referred to by their former rank.” (Although the first sentence would still technically be accepted by the vast majority of people, die-hard grammar nerds like your devoted copy editor still find it incorrect.)

Oxford Commas!!

Put commas between the elements of a series but not before the final **and, or** or **nor** unless it avoids confusion.

> Examples: men, women, children and pets.
> The major decided he must either attack at once, await fresh troops or withdraw.
> Breakfast consisted of oatmeal, fried eggs, and bread and butter.

Remember FANBOYS. If there is more than one subject, use commas before clauses introduced by the conjunctions **F**or, **A**nd, **N**or, **B**ut, **O**r, **Y**et or **S**o.

> Example: We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars. — Oscar

Wilde

Quotations
Commas and periods go inside closing quotation marks. Semicolons and colons go outside. Question and exclamation marks go inside when they apply to the quote, outside when they apply to the whole sentence.

When a sentence ends with single and double quotation marks, separate them by a space. e.g “I heard him say ‘No.’ ”

Put each speaker’s words in a separate paragraph to make it immediately clear that the speaker has changed.

Provide the speaker’s identity quickly if a quotation is unusually long. It should either precede the quotation, follow the first sentence (or the second if it is short and closely linked to the first), or be interpolated.

Use quotation marks to begin and end each part of an interrupted quotation, e.g. “We can’t hear you,” the girl said. “The radio is on.” **NB:** Capitalize the first word of the second part of an interrupted quotation only if the second part begins a new sentence. In our example, the period after “said” indicates that the sentence is over. If that was not the case, the period would be replaced by a comma, and the continuation of the quotation would begin with a lowercase.

In a quote that begins mid-sentence, capitalize the first word if the quote constitutes a sentence, e.g. The trainmaster gave the order to “Get the hell out!”

Do not use quotation marks to enclose slogans or headlines. Use single marks in headlines.

Fragmented quotes are justifiable only when the words are controversial, add colour or give the flavour of an event or style of the speaker.

Use three periods to indicate an omission from a text or quotation. Put spaces before and after the ellipsis.

In condensing a text, use an ellipsis at the beginning, inside or end of a sentence, If it is at the end, put the punctuation before the ellipsis (four periods end a sentence). Note: Guard against distortion that might result from putting together statements that were not together in the original. The solution may be to interrupt the sentence by starting a new paragraph or renewing the attribution.

In news stories, use an ellipsis only inside a sentence, not at the beginning or end. Exception: when a quotation simply drifts away, use an ellipsis.

For technical reasons, the Canadian Press puts quotation marks around the titles of compositions, including books, computer games, movies, operas, plays, TV programs, albums and songs. **If technically possible, though, italics are recommended instead.**

Semicolon
Use a semicolon to separate statements too closely related to stand as separate sentences, to separate phrases that contain commas or to **precede** explanatory phrases introduced by “for example,” “namely,” “that is” and the like when a comma seems too weak, e.g. Some pleasures cost next to nothing; for example, reading.

Slash
Use a slash mark to separate alternatives, e.g. and/or, either/or.

Who vs. Whom
If you’re ever unsure of which word to use in a sentence, try turning the sentence into a question. If the question can be answered in a grammatically correct way by “he” (or “she”), use **who**. If it can be answered by “him” (or “her”), use **whom**.
Example: Take the sentence “He is a political candidate who/whom not everyone likes.” Turn this sentence into the question “Is he a political candidate who/whom not everyone likes?” If you were to answer this question, you would have to say “Not everyone likes **him**” — you would not say “Not everyone likes he.” Therefore, the correct form is **whom**.

Advertise (*not* -ize).

Adviser (*not* -or).

All right (*not* alright).

All-star is all lowercase when used in the middle of a sentence. Same with **first-team all-star** and **OUA all-star**.
Also, **all-Canadian**.

Affect is most commonly used a verb, meaning that *it causes* something.
Effect is most commonly used as a noun, meaning *it is the result*.

Allyn and Betty Taylor Library. Also referred to simply as Taylor. Abbreviated to TL.

Alumna (sing.), alumnae (pl.) are used for females who have attended a school.
Alumnus (sing.), alumni (pl.) are used for males who have attended a school.

Alternative Spring Break.

Arts and Humanities Building. Also sometimes referred to as Old Ivey/the Old Ivey building. Abbreviated to AHB.

Arthur and Sonia Labatt Health Sciences Building. Also called simply the Health Sciences Building. Abbreviated to HSB.

Authorize, with a z.

Bachelor is lower-case. Example: bachelor of arts, bachelor of music. BUT: abbreviations are capitalized. Example: BA, BMus.

Averse (reluctant)**, adverse** (unfavourable).

Bandana, with an n.

BMOS. Abbreviation for **Bachelor of Management and Organizational Studies**.

Board of Governors.

Book Store at Western is the full name of our campus' bookstore. Also called simply the **Book Store**.

Brescia University College. Abbreviated to BUC. Also called Brescia.

Bylaw, with no hyphen.

Chaplains' Services.

Chock-full.

CIS national championship. However, **Stanley Cup, Yates Cup, Canadian Open**, etc.

Council as in city council.
Counsel as in advice (*n.*) or to advise (*v.*).

Councillor as in a person who is on a council. Capitalized before a name for city council.
Counsellor as in a person who gives advice.

Course names are capitalized when referring to a specific course, e.g. Advanced Introduction to English, Political Biology, Sociology of Mental Health. However, when referring to general courses, use lower case, e.g. women's studies courses, philosophy courses

Dan Management and Organizational Studies.

D.B. Weldon Library. Also referred to simply as Weldon. Abbreviated to WL.

Defence (*not* defense), but **defensive.** Same with **offence.**

Departments are lower-case when referring to academic departments, as is the name of the department. Example: the department of biology. An exception to this is proper nouns, such as the departments of English or French.

Email. No hyphen.

Enquiry — *use* inquiry.

Enrol (*not* enroll), **enrolled, enrolment**

Everyday (*adj*., one word).

Extracurricular. One word, no hyphen.

Faculty is upper-case, as is the name of the faculty. Example: the Faculty of Social Science. ****** But CP style says to lower-case faculties and their names??? e.g. faculty of education ******

Farmers market, no hyphen.

First-year, second-year, third-year, fourth-year student (adjective), or **a first-year** (noun). BUT: She is in her **fourth year** of study.

The Gazette, italicized and with both the T and the G capitalized. Other newspapers follow this format at well, such as *The Globe and Mail*.

Graphic Services Building. Abbreviated to GSB.

Grey (the colour)**.**

Hip hop (*n.*), but **hip-hop music** (*adj.*).

Housing and Ancillary Services.

Hospitality Services when referring to the specific organization.

Huron University College. Abbreviated to HUC. Also called Huron.

Improve on and **improve upon** are both correct.

Information and Media Studies. No ampersand used.

Inquiry (*not* enquiry).

Instil, instilled.

Ivey Business School. Commonly referred to simply as Ivey. Also known by its longer moniker, the Richard Ivey School of Business.

Judgment (*not* judgement).

Kick-off when used as a compound noun, e.g. “Kick-off is at 1 p.m.”
Kick off when used as a verb, e.g. “The game kicks off at 1 p.m.”

King’s University College. Don’t forget the apostrophe!

Kresge Building. Abbreviated to KB. Also called Kresge.

Live blog, live blogging (*v.*), with a space.
Live-tweet/live-tweeting (*v.*), with a hyphen.

Log in (log on) as a verb, **login** as a noun and/or adjective.

Long-term (*adj.*), with a hyphen.

Major, minor, honors specialization are lower-case, as is what follows. Example: a major in science, a minor in art history. Exceptions are nouns that are supposed to be capitalized, such as languages.

Mash-up, with a hyphen (to describe two or more elements of something being combined into one).

Master’s degree, with an apostrophe.

McIntosh Gallery.

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Mustang Athletics is the name of the organisation at Western that deals with Western's sports and athletic teams. **Mustang athletics** refers to any kind of athletics dealing with Mustangs.

Natural Sciences Centre. Also referred to colloquially as Nat Sci. Abbreviated to NSC.

North Campus Building. Abbreviated to NCB.

Old-school (*adj.*).

On-campus.

Off-campus.

Offence, but **offensive.**

OK (*not* OK!) **magazine.**

OK (*not* okay), **OK'd, OK'ing**.

Old Four tournament.

Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. Abbreviated to OUSA.

Onto (*prep.*), as one word.

Organization, with a *z*.

Orientation Week, or **O-Week.**

OUA championship. However, **Stanley Cup, Yates Cup, Canadian Open**, etc.

Part time, a part-time job, a part-timer.

Physics and Astronomy Building. Abbreviated to PAB.

Program names are lower-case, e.g. the history program, the political studies program.

Relay for Life.

Resumé.

Richard Ivey Building. Also called Ivey/the Ivey building. Abbreviated to Ivey.

Saugeen-Maitland Hall Residence. Also called Saugeen Residence or just Saugeen. Abbreviated to SMHR.

Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry.

The Senate.

Set up (*v.*), but **setup** (*n.*).

Sign in/up (*v.*), but **sign-in/sign-up** (n.)

Social Science Centre. Abbreviated to SSC. Also called Social Science.

Society of Graduate Students. Abbreviated to **SOGS**.

St. Patrick's Day. Alternatively, St. Paddy's Day.

Student Support Services.

Support Services Building. Abbreviated to SSB.

Talbot Bowl.

Twitter is uppercase. A **tweet** (*n.*), or to **tweet** (*v.*), is lowercase.

University Community Centre. Abbreviated to UCC after first mention.

University Students' Council.

Vice-president, with a hyphen. We do *not* abbreviate to VP.

Western Student Recreation Centre.

Western Student Services Building. Abbreviated to WSSB.

Years: **First-year, second-year, third-year, fourth-year student** (compound adjective), or **a first-year** (noun). BUT: She is in her **fourth year** of study.