Introduction: Why Consistency Is Important

The West Chester University Style Guide is produced by the Office of Publications and Printing Services, one of the departments in the Advancement Division. The office oversees official West Chester University publications that are printed off campus and supervises those done in the on-campus Graphics and Printing Department to assure consistency among all University publications. As stated in the Publications Policy, all publications that are intended for off-campus audiences must be channeled through the Office of Publications and Printing Services for approval.

The style guide has been published so that you can help us in our goal to achieve consistency. Why is consistency important? Style consistency is beneficial because it helps us to convey the same image and message in all of our recruiting, advertising, and promotional materials. This is the basis of an effective communications effort. It makes us credible in the eyes of our many publics, especially since some of those audiences overlap and see materials from various sectors of the University; as an institution, we should be communicating with the same "voice."

Editorial consistency also enhances readability. If publications are not consistent from beginning to end and related publications are not consistent with each other, the reader can become confused. We look as if we do not care enough about our readers to be clear in our message.

We know that many of the "rules" of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and usage are not hard and fast. English is a constantly growing and changing language, rich in stylistic and grammatical variations and choices. We use words today in ways that would have been unthinkable 25 years ago; to some people they still are. This style guide may not address all of your writing issues, and it was prepared not to be the absolute word on what is right or wrong but to create a framework for consistency. Please follow it, no matter how strongly you may feel about a particular guideline, whenever you are writing material that will be interpreted as an official University document, including catalog copy and brochures, to our many audiences. You can even use it as a guide for letters or department handbooks.

We have used many sources to produce this set of guidelines, most notably *The Chicago Manual of Style*, which is what the University has used when writing its Middle States reports, and some elements from the *Associated Press Stylebook*. We also thank colleagues at Carnegie Mellon University and Rowan University for setting style guide standards from which we borrowed. However, we reserve the right to change our mind, so we are open to comments and suggestions for future edits to this guide. Let us know whether you agree or disagree, what points we have not addressed and should, and anything else you think is relevant. Send your comments to the Office of Publications and Printing Services, 13/15 University Ave., room 301, call x2231, or send an e-mail note to Cynthia Bednar (cbednar@wcupa.edu), director of publications and printing services.

Writing Style Guidelines

Abbreviations

As a general rule, when it doubt, spell it out.

Academic degrees

Spell out and use lowercase letters with the apostrophe: bachelor's degree, master's degree, doctor's degree, doctoral degree, or doctorate.
NOTE: The apostrophe is needed with the names of degrees.

Use capital letters for degree abbreviations. While *The Chicago Manual of Style* used to add period after the letters, it now recommends omitting them unless required for tradition or consistency: B.A., B.S., B.S.Ed., M.S., M.B.A., Ph.D, or BA, BS, BSEd, MS, MBA, PhD. Whichever style is used, be consistent within the document.

The word *degree* should not follow a degree abbreviation:

Wrong: He has a B.A. degree in history.
Right: He has a B.A. (or BA) in history.

Acronyms

Spell out the full title, name, or phrase on first reference with the initials following in parentheses, unless it is a commonly recognized acronym (e.g., FBI, CIA). Subsequent references can use the acronym only.

Wrong: The NEA has been criticized for some of its grants.
Right: The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) has been criticized recently.

Generally, two-letter abbreviations are set with periods; three or more letters are without periods: a.m., U.S., U.N., but GPA, SAT, WCU.

Addresses

Use street abbreviations such as *Ave.*, *Blvd.*, *Rd.*, *Dr.*, and *St.* in text only when including a numbered address.

Wrong: Applications should be sent to the Office of Admissions at Rosedale Ave.
Right: Applications should be sent to the Office of Admissions at Rosedale Avenue.
Right: Applications should be sent to the Office of Admissions at 100 W. Rosedale Ave.

NOTE: Single-letter compass points in a street name are followed by a period (100 W. Rosedale Ave.), but those with two letters are not.
Example: He lives on Oregon Avenue SW (no comma before SW).

Spell out and lowercase the word *street* when referring to more than one.

Wrong: McCarthy Hall is on the corner of Church and Sharpless Sts.
Right: McCarthy Hall is on the corner of Church and Sharpless streets (note lower case *s* when plural).

Ampersand

Avoid using the ampersand symbol (&) in place of *and*. Use the ampersand when it is consistent with the style of a company's name.

Wrong: College of Arts & Sciences
Right: College of Arts and Sciences
Wrong: Procter and Gamble
Right: Procter & Gamble

Contractions

While contractions often make text easier to read and are more conversational, they are usually avoided in formal, academic writing. If the tone is meant to be more nonacademic, the use of contractions is acceptable. However, if contractions are used in the copy, use them consistently.
NOTES: The contraction *it's* means *it is*. The possessive form – *its* – does not take an apostrophe, the same as other possessive pronouns ending in *s* (*his, hers, yours, ours, theirs*). When in doubt, substitute *it is* for *it's* to see if both words make sense in the context of the sentence.

Wrong: Its apparent that the story has lost it's impact. *(. . . the story has lost it is impact is not correct grammatically. And the misuse of its leaves the sentence without its main verb.)*
Right: It's apparent that the story has lost its impact. *(It is apparent . . .)*

Days and Months

Capitalize the days of the week and do not abbreviate except when in tabular form.

Abbreviate months if the date is included. Do not abbreviate months when used alone or with a year. Do not abbreviate *March*, *April, May, June,* or *July*.

Wrong: Aug., 2005
Right: August 2005 (no comma)
Right: Aug. 15, 2005
Wrong: Classes start this year in Aug. instead of Sept.
Right: Classes start this year in August instead of September.

Semester Hours

Do not abbreviate *semester hours* in text. In lists or tables abbreviate semester hours with lowercase and periods.

Wrong: Susan completed 36 s.h. last year.
Right: Susan completed 36 semester hours last year.
Right: Freshmen   0-31.99 s.h.
              Sophomores   32-63.99 s.h.

States

In text, spell out names of states when they stand alone and use formal abbreviations, not postal rules, when a state is listed with a city. Use two-digit postal abbreviations with addresses followed by a zip code.

Ala. – Alabama
Alaska (no abbreviation)
Ariz. – Arizona
Ark. – Arkansas
Calif. – California
Colo. – Colorado
Conn. – Connecticut

Del. – Delaware
Fla. – Florida
Ga. – Georgia
Hawaii (no abbreviation)
Idaho (no abbreviation)
Ill. – Illinois
Ind. – Indiana
Iowa (no abbreviation)
Kan. – Kansas
Ky. – Kentucky
La. – Louisiana
Maine (no abbreviation)
Md. – Maryland
Mass. – Massachusetts
Mich. – Michigan
Minn. – Minnesota
Miss. – Mississippi
Mo. – Missouri
Mont. – Montana
Neb. – Nebraska
Nev. – Nevada
N.H. – New Hampshire
N.J. – New Jersey
N.M. – New Mexico
N.Y. – New York
N.C. – North Carolina
N.D. – North Dakota
Ohio (no abbreviation)
Okla. – Oklahoma
Ore. – Oregon
Pa. – Pennsylvania
R.I. – Rhode Island
S.C. – South Carolina
S.D. – South Dakota
Tenn. – Tennessee
Texas (no abbreviation)
Utah (no abbreviation)
Vt. – Vermont
Va. – Virginia
Wash. – Washington
W.Va. – West Virginia
Wis. – Wisconsin
Wyo. – Wyoming

Use Washington, D.C. (comma and periods are necessary). Don't abbreviate to D.C. or DC.

Wrong: The University is located in West Chester, PA.
Right: The University is located in West Chester, Pa.
Right: The University's main address is West Chester, PA 19383.
Right: The West Chester, Pa., native came for a visit. (NOTE: A comma separates the city and state and also follows the state name or abbreviation in text.)

Spell out *Pennsylvania* when using the full PASSHE or University name.

Wrong: West Chester University is a member of the PA State System of Higher Education.
Wrong: West Chester University is a member of the Pa. State System of Higher Education.

Right: West Chester University is a member of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.
Wrong: West Chester University of PA is about 25 miles west of Philadelphia.
Right: West Chester University of Pennsylvania is about 25 miles west of Philadelphia.

Time of Day

Use lowercase letters and periods with a.m. and p.m. Use *noon* and *midnight*, not 12 a.m. or 12 p.m.; avoid using 12 noon and 12 midnight, which are redundant. In text, dashes (not hyphens) can be used to express time sequences, unless preceded by the words *from* (which then takes the word *to*) or *between* (which takes the word *and*). Dashes are acceptable in columns and tables.

Wrong: The meeting runs from 8:00 AM–12:00 p.m.
Right: The meeting runs from 8 a.m. to noon.
Wrong: The electrician will arrive between 3 p.m.–5 p.m.
Right: The electrician will arrive between 3 and 5 p.m.
Right: Join us Tuesday, 11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m., for the luncheon.
NOTE: The double zeros are unnecessary in text when time expresses the whole hour. Use the double zeros in a
             table that aligns with fractions of time, such as 8:15. No spaces are necessary before or after the dash, but if
             spaces are used, be consistent within the document.

Avoid other redundancies, such as "I had to get up at 5 a.m. in the morning just to be on time!" When else would a.m. be if it were not in the morning?

Titles

A civil or military title may be abbreviated when it precedes a full name; when it precedes a surname only, it is spelled out.

Right: Capt. James T. Kirk, Captain Kirk; Prof. Charles W. Kingsfield, Professor Kingsfield; Rep. Mary Richards,
             Representative Mary Richards

Abbreviate *Rev.* and *Hon.* when *the* does not precede the title; spell them out when *the* is used.

Right: The Reverend Elmer Gantry, Rev. Elmer Gantry; the Honorable Harold T. Stone, Hon. Harold T. Stone

Always abbreviate social titles (Mr., Mrs., Ms., Dr.) when they come before a full name or the surname only.

Capitalization

As a general rule, avoid the overuse of capital letters. When in doubt, do not capitalize unless it is a proper noun.

Academic Degrees

When referring to degrees in general, lowercase the first letter. Note the use of the apostrophe.

Right: She received a bachelor's degree in nursing.
Right: He completed his master's degree in May.
Right: The professor had doctorates in both biology and chemistry.

NOTE: Academic degrees can be capitalized when used in an itemized list of majors (not text), as in admissions publications.

Academic Departments/Offices

Capitalize the name of a department and the words *department*, *office*, and *college* only when they appear as official divisional names, such as Department of English, Office of Admissions, School of Music, or College of Education.

Do not capitalize these words when used in a general sense. NOTE: The above is the preferred reference in formal writing to departments and offices at WCU, rather than English Department or Admissions Office.

Wrong: I sent the student to the Physics Department. The Department's chair has to sign his schedule.
Right: I sent the student to the Department of Physics. The department's chair has to sign.
Right: The college is composed of four academic departments.

Academic Majors

Lowercase except for words that are proper nouns or adjectives.

Right: She was a history major.
Right: She majored in history but has an English minor.

Addresses

Capitalize formal street names, but use lowercase for *street*, *avenue,* or other road designations when there is more than one name. Use lowercase when road words have no proper name.

Right: McCarthy Hall is on the corner of Church and Sharpless streets.
Right: The expressway is always busy.

Alma Mater

Use lowercase for alma mater.

Buildings

Use the official name of campus facilities with capital letters in formal communications. On second reference, if a partial name is used, it may be shortened with the appropriate designation. When the proper name is omitted on second reference, lowercase *hall*, *center*, and *building*. Do not use these words interchangeably.

Right: Philips Memorial Building houses the Office of the President.
Right: The Multicultural Center is in Sykes Union. The center also serves as the Office of Multicultural Affairs.
NOTE: The correct names are Philips Memorial Building (*not* Hall), Lawrence Center (*not* Hall), Hollinger Field House (*not* Fieldhouse), and Ehinger Gymnasium (*not* Ehringer, *not* Gym). Use the full name of the concert hall located in Philips: Emilie K. Asplundh Concert Hall (*not* Asplundh Auditorium).

Campus Activities

Capitalize the formal names of annual campus activities: Homecoming, Alumni Weekend, Presidential Scholarship Gala, Greek Week, Parents' Weekend.

Capitalize Annual Fund when it refers to the University's specific fund-raising appeal.

Classes and Courses

Use lowercase when you refer to general courses and classes unless it uses a proper noun or adjective. Use uppercase when it is the exact name of a course or uses a number with the department prefix.

Right: I had a biology class and an English class.
Right: I had American Literature, Advanced Russian II, and History of Africa.
Right: SPK 208 Public Speaking is a general education course.

Commencement

Do not capitalize *commencement* in text.

Committees

Capitalize the name of specific committees, associations, councils, and advisory groups and lowercase second references when the full name is not used.

Right: Faculty Senate, Long-Range Planning Committee, Academic Advisory Board
Right: The President's Council met on Thursday. Not all council members report directly to the president.

Computer References

Capitalize Internet and World Wide Web as well as the shortened reference to the Web. Also capitalize it when using it with other nouns: Web homepage, Web site, Web user, but webmaster (job title).

Council of Trustees

Capitalize *Council of Trustees*, but *council* and *trustee* used alone are not capitalized.

Right: The Council of Trustees generally meets once a month.
Right. The council chair is trustee Ben Cartwright. He has been a trustee for two terms.

Courtesy (Social) Titles

Do not put a courtesy title before a person's name if a degree title follows it. Use the abbreviations only after a full name, never after just a last name. Always include the first name or initials of the persons the first time they are referenced in copy. Second and subsequent references generally use last names only. Do not use *Mr.*, *Mrs.*, *Miss*, or *Ms.* in written copy. (Courtesy titles are generally used in obituaries, however, as a means of showing respect.)

Wrong: Mr. Perry Mason, Esq., Dr. Emma Peel, Ph.D.
Right: Perry Mason, Esq., Emma Peel, Ph.D.
Wrong: Mr. Perry Mason was the defense lawyer. During the trial, Mr. Mason asked for an extension.
Right.   Perry Mason was the defense lawyer. During the trial, Mason asked for an extension.

Dean's List

Use lowercase with references to the dean's list.

E-mail

Since *e-mail* is simply an abbreviation for *electronic mail*, use lowercase, unless the word comes at the beginning of a sentence or an address line (such as on a business card).
Note: The hyphen should be used after the *e*.

Right: Let me give you my new e-mail address.
Right: E-mail: jbond@wcupa.edu

Fax

Lowercase this word when using it in text. Use an initial cap if providing a fax number in a listing or on a business card.

Right: You can either mail or fax the letter to me.
Right: Office of Publications and Printing Services
          Phone: 610-436-2231
          Fax: 610-436-2790

General Education

Use lowercase when referring to the required general education courses needed for graduation in West Chester's curriculum.

Geographic (Regional) Designations

Use capitals when referring to a region. Use lowercase when referring to geographic location or compass directions.

Right (region): the East Coast, the Midwest, Western Europe
Right (geographic location): West Chester University is in the southeastern part of the state.
Right (direction): He drove north.

Government Branches

Lowercase *state* in all references. Use a capital letter for *federal* as part of corporate or government bodies that use the word as part of their formal names. Lowercase it when used as an adjective.

Right: our state universities
Right: the federal loans
Right: the state of Delaware
Right: the Federal Bureau of Investigation

Historical and Cultural Periods

Lowercase the descriptive designations of historical and cultural periods (except for proper nouns) although some names remain capitalized because of tradition or to avoid ambiguity. Many historical events are capitalized, but lowercase more generic descriptions; when in doubt, use lowercase. Spell out first through ninth centuries and use the number for 10th and above with *century* in lowercase.

Right (descriptive): ancient Greece, the colonial period, the Victorian era
Right (traditional/less ambiguous): the Age of Reason, the Renaissance, the Middle Ages (but the medieval era)
Right (events): the New Deal, Prohibition, the civil rights movement, the cold war
Right (centuries): ninth century, 20th century

Honors

Use lowercase and italicize *cum laude*, *magna cum laude*, and *summa cum laude*.

Majors and Programs

Do not capitalize majors, programs, specializations, or concentrations of study in text. They may be capitalized when used in an itemized list, such as on a poster of majors at West Chester University for the Office of Admissions.

Right: He received a bachelor of arts in history.
Right: She majored in economics.
Right: honors program, pre-medical program

Race, Religion, and Nationalities

Capitalize names of races (African American, Caucasian, Latino), but do not capitalize *black* and *white* when used to refer to races.

Capitalize the names of ethnic and religious groups (e.g., Amish, Jews, Catholics, Baptists, an Episcopal church).

Rooms

Lowercase *room* unless it is an official or formal name. The word *room* can be dropped and just be used with a building, but be consistent with the treatment throughout a document.

Right: The meeting is in Anderson Hall room 201. We'll gather in room 200 ahead of time.
Right: The class is in 21 Anderson Hall. The class is in Anderson Hall 21.
Right: We'll be in the choral room.
Right: The ceremony was held in the John F. Kennedy Room.

Seasons

Lowercase *spring*, *summer*, *fall*, and *winter*, and all words derived from them, such as *springtime*. Capitalize only when part of a formal name.

Right: fall semester, summer sessions
Right: Next weekend is Spring Festival.
Right: The program began in spring 2006. (Note: No comma between season and year)

Semesters

Do not capitalize *semesters* in text: fall semester, spring semester, summer semester.

Student Classifications

Do not capitalize *freshman*, *sophomore, junior*, or *senior*. Capitalize them as a class designation.

Right: He is a senior communications major.
Right: The Senior Class trip has been canceled.

Tabular List

Only capitalize the first word in tabular listings of events, unless it is a proper noun.

Right: 8:00 a.m. – Conference registration
        9:00 a.m. – Welcome from President Bartlet
        9:15 a.m. – Sessions begin

Time Designations (a.m./p.m.)

Do not capitalize a.m. or p.m. Periods must follow.

Titles (people)

Capitalize a person's title only when it precedes a personal name and is used as part of the name (usually replacing the person's first name), and try to use only short titles. Do not capitalize an occupational title. Do not capitalize designations of officers of a class, social organization, or group.

Right: We met President Bartlet.
Wrong: We met Josiah Bartlet, President of the College
Right: We met Josiah Bartlet, president of the college
Right: The president spoke at the dinner.
Right: Ted Baxter, vice president of communications and external relations, issued the statement.
Right: Dobie Gillis, professor of chemistry; Professor Gillis
Right: The class was taught by professor Dobie Gillis.
Right: Our special guest was newspaper writer Clark Kent.
Right: Jane Hathaway was elected treasurer of the Student Government Association.

Vice president has no hyphen. When used after a name, a title is set off by commas.

The title *Dr.* may be used when the person holds an earned doctoral degree, such as a Ph.D., Ed.D. D.V.M., or M.D. A juris doctorate (J.D.) is not considered a doctor's degree. Do not use *Dr.* when a person has received an honorary degree. Honorary degrees may be acknowledged by adding the abbreviation after the name.

Example: Victor Sifuentes, LL.D. (*doctor of laws*)

Wrong: Mr. Bartlet, Ph.D.
Wrong: Dr. Josiah Bartlet, Ph.D.
Wrong: College President Dr. Josiah Bartlett
Right: Josiah Bartlet, Ph.D. *(with comma after name)*
Right: college president Josiah Bartlet
Right: Dr. Josiah Bartlet, college president

Do not capitalize unofficial titles.

Right: poet Alfred E. Newman

See **Courtesy Titles** above for additional information.

Titles (literature, music, movies, and works of art)

Capitalize the first word, last word, and each important word in the title of a book, magazine, newspaper, short story, article, chapter, poem, play, movie, musical composition, and work of art. Important words are all nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and subordinate conjunctions. Lowercase articles (a, an, the), conjunctions (and, but, for or, nor), and prepositions (to, of, in, on, by, for, from, into, etc.), unless they are the first or last word, or they are stressed.

Right: *Gone with the Wind,* but *A River Runs Through It, What's Up, Doc? (Prepositions <u>Through</u> and <u>Up</u> are stressed, but <u>with</u> is not.)*
Right: *National Geographic*
Right: He subscribes to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. (Note: *the* is not capitalized or italicized, even when part of the title)
Right: Carl Sandburg's famous poem, "The Road Less Traveled"
Right: *A Man for All Seasons*
Right: *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*
Right: Mozart's "The Magic Flute"
Right: Monet's painting, *Water Lilies*
NOTE: Capitalize Graduate Catalog and Undergraduate Catalog when referring to the University's publications (no italics or quotation marks).

University

Capitalize the word *University* when it stands for West Chester University; do not capitalize in other cases.

Numbers and Dates

Date/Year

Only the following months should be abbreviated in text:
        January (Jan.)
        February (Feb.)
        August (Aug.)
        September (Sept.)
        October (Oct.)
        November (Nov.)
        December (Dec.)
The following months have no abbreviation:
        March
        April
        May
        June
        July

Do not abbreviate the name of a month when using it by itself or with a year. Do not separate the month and the year with a comma when there is no date.

Wrong: His appointment for Oct. was canceled.
Right: His appointment for October was canceled.
Wrong: The information was dated Nov. 2004.
Right: The information was dated November 2004.
Wrong: The report was issued April, 2006.
Right: The report was issued April 14, 2006.

Do not use *on* with dates unless its omission would lead to confusion. For time sequences or inclusive dates and times, use a dash (–), as opposed to a hyphen (-); *from* (which then takes the word *to*); or *between* (which takes the word *and*). Dashes are acceptable in columns and tables.

Wrong: The grading period ends on May 2.
Right: The grading period ends May 2.
Right: The grading period ends in May.
Right: Late registration runs from September 2 to 5, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Right: Late registration runs September 2–5, 8 a.m.–4 p.m.

Do not use suffixes *st*, *th*, *nd*, and *rd* with dates.

Wrong: Your report is due by June 15th.
Right: Your report is due by June 15.

Use an *s* without the apostrophe to indicate spans of decades or centuries (a plural). Use an apostrophe for omitted numbers in dates and class years.

Right: The 1960s was a turbulent time in our nation's history.
Right: The '60s were a turbulent time.
Right: He was in the Class of '55.

Fractions

Spell out fractions less than one in text, and use hyphens between words. Use figures for those larger than one; convert to decimals when appropriate. Quantities of both fractions and whole numbers are cumbersome written out and should be expressed as figures.

Right: one-half, three-quarters
Right: 2 ½ or 2.5 gallons (*not* two and a half gallons)
Right: Use an 8 ½ x 11 sheet of paper.

Measurement

Spell out *inches*, *feet*, and other measurements in text. They can be abbreviated in tabular form. Use figures to indicate measurements.

Right: He is 6 feet tall.
Right: The flyer will be printed on standard 8 ½ x 11 inch paper.

Money

Use the dollar sign and numbers. Do not use a decimal and two zeros in text; they can be used in tables, charts, and graphs.

Wrong: The commencement fee is $15.00.
Right: The commencement fee is $15.
Right: With tax you owe $15.90.

For dollar amounts beyond thousands, use the dollar sign, number, and appropriate word.

Wrong: The budget was $15,000,000.
Right: The budget was $15 million.
Wrong: The film cost $75,600,000 to produce.
Right: The film cost $75.6 million to produce.

Numbers

Spell out numbers *one* through *nine* (and *zero*) in text (not in charts, tables, or graphs). Use digits for numbers 10 and above. Use figures for dimension, percentages, ages, distances, page numbers, sums of money, and computer storage capacity. Always spell out grade levels. Avoid starting a sentence with a number if possible; if not, spell it out. Hyphenate numbers under 100 if they are spelled out for any reason (e.g., at the beginning of a sentence).

Right: eight professors, 12 professors
Right: 37 houses
Right: 5 inches
Right: She teaches fourth grade.
Right: He has a daughter, Susan, 7.
Right: Twenty-five students failed the test.
Right: 64 megabytes, 256 RAM

Percentages

In text, use numerals and spell out the word *percent* except in scientific, technical, and statistical copy. In tables, write percentages with the numeral and % symbol. Percent takes a singular verb when standing alone or when a singular work follows an "of" construction. Use a plural verb when a plural word follows an "of" construction.

Wrong: He answered 70% of the questions correctly.
Right: He answered 70 percent of the questions correctly.
Right: We did the experiment again with a 10% water reduction.
Right: She feels certain that 50 percent of the membership is coming.
Right: She feels certain that 50 percent of the members are coming.

Telephone Numbers

For publications intended for internal campus use, the area code and prefix can be omitted, only using the extension with a lowercase *x* and no spaces before the digits.

Right: Call the Office of Publications at x2231.

If the publication is intended for outside audiences, include the area code and prefix. Do not put the area code in parentheses since it is no longer optional; instead, separate it from the rest of the number with a hyphen. Preferred style is to use hyphens rather than the more trendy separation with periods.

Preferred: You can write or call the Office of Publications at 13/15 University Ave., West Chester University, West Chester, PA 19383, 610-436-2231, *not* . . . 19383, (610) 436-2231.

If you include more than one extension, use a slash (/) or the word *or* between numbers.

Right: The Office of Public Relations can be reached by calling 610-436-3383/3384.
Right: The Office of Public Relations can be reached by calling 610-436-3383 or 3384.

Time

When writing whole hours for time, do not use *:00* unless it is in a table or tabular format where the column would look awkward without the *:00*. Simply state the hour with *a.m.*, *p.m.*, or *o'clock*. Use *noon* instead of *12 p.m.*, and *midnight* instead of *12 a.m.*; do not use both since it is redundant.

Wrong: Little Ricky awakened at 4:00 AM.
Right: Little Ricky awakened at 4 a.m.
Right: The concert didn't begin until 8:10 p.m.
Wrong: Lunch will start promptly at 12:00 noon.
Right: Lunch will start promptly at noon.

Plurals and Possessives

General Guidelines

Form the majority of plurals by adding *s* or *es*. Check the dictionary when in doubt.
- Also, a word ending in
    is becomes *es*
    Right: thesis, theses
    us becomes *i*
    Right: alumnus, alumni
    on becomes *a*
    Right: criterion, criteria

- Other preferred plurals:
    data, not datums
    memoranda, not memorandums
    millennia, not millenniums

symposia, not symposiums
Note: Both appendixes and appendices, as well as indexes and indicies, are acceptable.

In a compound word, the most significant word receives the plural.

Right: mothers-in-law, attorneys-at-law, masters of arts (note that there is no apostrophe when it is plural)

Plurals

Form plurals of family names that end in *s* by adding *es*.

Right: The Williamses just bought a new car to keep up with the Joneses. (Or rephrase the sentence: The Williams family just bought a new car to keep up with the Jones neighbors.)

Form plurals of the following – single or multiple letters used as words, hyphenated nouns, and numbers (spelled out or figures) – by adding *s* alone.

the three Rs
thank-yous
the early 1940s
several YMCAs
CODs and IOUs
in twos and threes

Form plurals of the following – abbreviations with periods, lowercase letters used as nouns, and capital letters that would be confusing if the *s* alone were added to form the plural – by adding '*s*.

M.A.'s and Ph.D.'s
x's and y's
S's, A's, and I's
SOS's

Possessives

The possessive case of singular nouns is formed by the addition of '*s*; for plural nouns ending in *s*, add just an apostrophe.

Right: He carried the girl's books. *(the books belonging to one girl)*
Right: He carried the girls' books. *(the books belonging to more than one girl)*

HINT: When unclear about where the apostrophe goes with plural nouns, remember to make the word plural first. If it does not end in *s*, add '*s*. If it does end in *s*, then the apostrophe goes after the *s*.

Right: the student's science project *(one student has a science project)*; the students' science project *(more than one student did a science project together)*.
Explanation: The plural of *student* is *students*. Since that word ends in an *s*, simply add the apostrophe to make it possessive: students' science project.

Right: the child's toys *(one child has toys)*; the children's toys *(more than one child has toys)*
Explanation: The plural of *child* is *children*. Since children does not end in an *s*, add an '*s* to make it possessive.
The same holds true in the following often-misspelled words:
  • lady's hat *(singular – one woman has a hat)*; ladies' hats *(plural possessive)*
  • man's suit *(singular – one man has a suit)*; men's suits *(plural possessive)*
  NOTE: *Mens'* is ALWAYS incorrect (no such word), as is *mens*.
  • woman's dress *(singular possessive)*; women's dresses *(plural possessive)*

NOTE: *Womens'* and *womens* are ALWAYS incorrect, although they frequently appear on department store signs. The signs are simply wrong.

For proper names, the general rules given above for possessives apply. Add *'s* if the name is singular. For plural possessives, make the word plural first. Then add *'s* if no *s* exists, or add an apostrophe after the *s* if it does.

Right: Anderson's house *(owned by one person with the name of Anderson)*
Right: Andersons' house *(owned by more than one person named Anderson)*
Right: James's car *(owned by one person with the first or surname of James)*
Right: Jameses' car *(owned by more than one person with the surname James)*
Right: the car belonging to the James family, the James family owns the car (reword to avoid awkward pronunciations)

Form possessives of proper names that end with *s*, *x*, and *z,* like any other possessive, by adding an apostrophe and an *s*:

Right: George Burns's comedy
Right: Groucho Marx's cigar
Right: Mark Spitz's seven gold medals

Expressions of duration or amounts take an apostrophe. (Similar to a possessive, the use of the apostrophe implies *of*.)

Right: a week's pay
Right: one day's labor; five days' time (Note: *days* is plural, so the apostrophe comes after the *s*.)
Right: two cents' worth

A note about possessive pronouns: While *his*, *hers*, *yours*, *theirs*, and *its* are possessive pronouns, they do not take apostrophes. *It's* is the contraction for *it is*. When in doubt about its use in a sentence, substitute *it is* in place of the pronoun. Example: Substitute *it is* in the preceding sentence. *When it doubt about it is use . . . .* Obviously, *it's* is not the correct usage in the above sentence, since substituting *it is* does not make sense, so there is no apostrophe even though the pronoun is possessive. There is no word *its'*. Never use *its'*.

Punctuation

Colons, Semicolons

Use a colon after an introductory statement with the words *as follows* or *the following*. Do not use a colon between a verb or preposition and its direct object or after words such as *namely*, *for example*, or *includes*.

Wrong: Rob Petrie's talents included: acting, singing, dancing, and perfect timing for comedy.
Right: Rob Petrie's talents were as follows: acting, singing, dancing, and perfect timing for comedy.
Right: Rob Petrie's talents included acting, singing, dancing, and perfect timing for comedy.

Colons also are used to introduce a list or a series, but again, do not separate a verb or preposition from its direct object.

Wrong: Her favorite food groups consisted of: chocolate, pizza, and Diet Coke.
Right: Her favorite food groups consisted of three main ones: chocolate, pizza, and Diet Coke.
Right: Her favorite food groups consisted of chocolate, pizza, and Diet Coke.

A colon is used to introduce a formal statement or quote. Lowercase the first word after a colon when it is used within a sentence, unless it is a proper noun, introduces speech in dialog, or has more than one sentence.

Right: The tour was scheduled for these cities: Philadelphia, Chicago, and Los Angeles.
Right: The speech ended with these unforgettable words: "Use sunscreen."
Right: His message was perfectly clear: believe in yourself above all else.
Right: His message was perfectly clear: Believe in yourself above all else. Listen to your instincts. Don't let others sway you.

Use a colon to separate hours from minutes with time references.

Right: 3:10 p.m., 2:45 a.m.

Use a colon after the salutation of a business letter; use a comma with a friendly letter.

Right: Dear Mr. Doe:
Right: Dear John,

A semicolon connects two closely related independent clauses (complete sentences). Technically, it has the same function as a period since it separates two thoughts, but it ties those thoughts together more closely than two separate sentences would do. In a sense, the semicolon takes the place of a coordinating conjunction and comma.

Right: I already started the proceedings; there's no turning back now.
Right: I already started the proceedings. There's no turning back now.
Right: I already started the proceedings, and there's no turning back now. *(coordinating conjunction and comma instead of a semicolon or period)*

Often similar sentence constructions contain connective words (usually adverbs that serve as conjunctions) – accordingly, also, besides, consequently, furthermore, hence, however, indeed, instead, moreover, nevertheless, otherwise, similarly, still, therefore, thus, for example, for instance, that is, in fact – that also require a semicolon before and a comma afterwards.

Wrong: I already started the proceedings, consequently there's no turning back now.
Right: I already started the proceedings; consequently, there's no turning back now.

However, be careful that the connector does indeed separate two independent clauses (contains a subject, verb, and expresses a complete thought).

Wrong: He's going to continue; however, with the case. *(<u>With the case</u> is a prepositional phrase, not an independent clause, so it cannot stand on its own and should not be separated with a semicolon.)*
Right: He's going to continue, however, with the case.

Use a semicolon to avoid confusion between the items of a series that contain internal commas.

Right: One of Benny Goodman's smaller chamber groups included Goodman, clarinet; Teddy Wilson, piano; and Gene Krupa, drums.
Right: The test scores were as follows: Moe, 84; Larry, 78; Curly, 26.

Commas

City, State
Place a comma between the city and state name, and another one after the state when used in text, unless it is the end of a sentence.

Right: West Chester, Pennsylvania
Wrong: He takes a trip to Miami, Florida once a month on business.
Right: He takes a trip to Miami, Florida, once a month on business.
Wrong: He takes a trip to Miami, FL once a month on business. *(Do not use postal abbreviations in text.)*

Right: He takes a trip to Miami, Fla., once a month on business. *(Use formal abbreviations in text; see the "Abbreviations" section of this guide.)*

Compound Sentences
Use a comma between independent (main) clauses joined by a conjunction (and, but, or, so, yet). An independent clause has a subject (noun or pronoun) and a predicate (verb) and expresses a complete thought, so it can stand on its own independently.

Right: I saw what happened, and I do not want to discuss it.

However, no commas are used between compound subjects or verbs.

Wrong: I saw what happened, and do not want to discuss it.
Right: I saw what happened and do not want to discuss it.

When two independent clauses are short and closely related in thought, the commas can be eliminated.

Right: We must go or we'll be late.

NOTE: A comma should never separate the subject from the predicate. People sometimes make this mistake with long or complex sentences.

Wrong: Any change made to the course schedule after November 15, must go through the dean.
Right: Any change made to the course schedule after November 15 must go through the dean.

However, if you add an interrupter in that sentence, offset by commas, that would be correct. But both commas must be present to make the sentence correct. (See "Interrupters" below.)

Right: Any change made to the course schedule after November 15, which is not encouraged, must go through the dean.

Digits
Place a comma after digits signifying thousands, except when the reference is made to temperature or year.

Right: 11,400 students, 4200 degrees Fahrenheit, in 1960

Direct Address
Use a comma to offset a person's name when addressed directly.

Right: Steve, go to your room. Go to your room, Steve, and stay there. Go to your room, Steve.

Direct Quotations
Use a comma to introduce a direct quotation, or offset a direct quote with commas if it comes in the middle of a sentence.

Right: At the start of his show, Jackie Gleason always said, "And away we go."
Right: "And away we go," said Jackie Gleason at the start of his show.
Right: Jackie Gleason always said, "And away we go," at the start of his show.

If a quotation is introduced by a word like *whether* or *that*, no comma is necessary.

Right: Didn't manager Jimmy Dugan, in *A League of Their Own*, say that "there's no crying in baseball"?

Interrupters
Use commas to set off expressions that interrupt a sentence. Be sure to use a comma before and after the interrupter when it falls in the middle of a sentence.

1. Appositives – a word or phrase that follows a noun or pronoun and refers to the same thing. It gives further information or explanation about the noun or pronoun.
    Right: Don Corrleone, the Godfather, was a memorable character in the movie.
    Right: His English teacher, Mr. Novak, never missed a day of school.

2. Parenthetical expressions – expressions that serve as explanations or qualifications but do not affect the grammatical construction of a sentence. That is, they can be omitted from the sentence, and it will still be grammatically correct and make sense.
    Right: You are, most certainly, a good student. *(You are a good student is the key meaning.)*
    Right: It's Mama Rose, of course, who has the show-stopping song in *Gypsy*. *(It's Mama Rose who has the show-stopping song still makes sense without the parenthetical element.)*

3. A nonrestrictive clause or phrase – a subordinate clause (one that has a noun and a verb but does not express a complete thought) or a participle phrase (no subject or verb and no complete thought) that serves as an explanatory part of a sentence but is not essential to the meaning of a sentence.
    Right: Tommy Lee Jones, who was Al Gore's college roommate, won an Oscar for *The Fugitive*.
    (who was Al Gore's college roommate is a subordinate clause)
    Right: The police commissioner, glaring at the reporter, was upset by the question.
    (glaring at the reporter is a subordinate phrase)

NOTE: Nonrestrictive clauses and phrases, which are unnecessary to the meaning of a sentence and can be omitted, are offset by commas; restrictive clauses and phrases are necessary and cannot be offset by commas or the meaning of the sentence will change. Note the change in meaning with the following:
    Right: The driver, who was caught drinking, will receive a heavy fine. *(nonrestrictive, indicates this one driver only)*
    Right: The driver who was caught drinking will receive a heavy fine. *(restrictive, indicates more than one driver but only one who was caught drinking)*
    Right: Drivers who are caught drinking will receive a heavy fine. *(restrictive)* If commas were added around the clause *who are caught drinking*, it could not be taken out of the sentence without changing the meaning: *Drivers will receive a heavy fine* is not accurate; it is restricted to the drivers who are caught drinking. Hence, there are no commas.

Introductory Words
Use a comma after introductory words, such as *oh*, *no, yes, well,* and *why*, when used at the beginning of a sentence.

Right: Yes, we have no bananas.

Introductory Phrases and Clauses
Short introductory phrases such as *last year* and *in 1965* do not need commas unless it causes confusion. When in doubt, leave it out.

Right: In 1983 West Chester obtained university status.
Right: To David, Charles was a mystery.

However, longer introductory phrases and dependent clauses (has a subject and verb but does not express a complete thought) do take a comma, especially if a pause is intended.

Right: On the other hand, I can see her point of view.
Right: Until Congress passes the bill, the courts cannot take action.
Right: If you want my opinion, he should get the job.

The comma is not necessary when the phrase or clause comes at the end of a sentence if it is restrictive (essential to the meaning of the sentence). If it is parenthetical (can be left out of the sentence without changing the meaning), then the comma is necessary.

Right: The courts cannot take action until Congress passes the bill.
Right: He should get the job, if you want my opinion.
Right: I can see her point of view, on the other hand.

Names

Chicago Manual of Style no longer recommends using a comma before *Jr.* or *Sr.* in a name. Do not use a comma for Roman numerals or numbers following names.

Right: John F. Kennedy Jr., Henry VIII, Mario 2nd

Parentheses

When a sentence needs a comma and includes words in parentheses, the comma goes after the end parenthesis, not before. The exception is a run-in list that uses numbers or letters.

Right: When she finally made the decision (with few viable options available), it came as no surprise.
Right: His statement, while passionate (almost too much so), did not seem to sway any opinions.
Right: The class requirements are (1) a research paper, (2) mid-term and final exams, and (3) a team project requiring an oral presentation. (Note: There is no colon after the verb *are*. See "**Colons, Semicolons"** above.)

Personal Names and Place Names

Use commas to offset a place of residence following a person's name unless it is essential to the sentence meaning.

Right: John Carter, of Chicago, is a doctor who does humanitarian work in Africa.
Right: Andy Taylor, from Mayberry, served as sheriff for many years.
Right: The Bradys of Los Angeles are not related to Alan Brady, who also had a TV comedy show in New York.

Words in a Series

Chicago Manual of Style, which this style guide follows most closely because it is more academic than some style guides, adds a comma before the conjunction in the last item of a series. The *AP Style Guide*, which is most often used in journalism, does not. Preferred style for University publications is to use the final comma to eliminate any confusion about the number of items in the series.

Unclear: We offer the following areas of concentration in psychology: clinical, general, industrial/organizational, group, psychodrama and sociometry. *Are psychodrama and sociometry two concentrations or one?*
Unclear: Choose one breakfast meal: cereal, pancakes, French toast, ham and eggs. *Is ham and eggs one choice, or are they two separate dishes?*

Better: We offer the following areas of concentration in psychology: clinical, general, industrial/organizational, group, psychodrama, and sociometry.
Better: Your breakfast choices are cereal, pancakes, French toast, ham, and eggs. Alternate: Your breakfast choices are cereal, pancakes, French toast, and ham and eggs.

Hyphens

Hyphenate all compound numbers between twenty-one and ninety-nine. Hyphenate fractions when used as adjectives.

Right: Sixty-five percent voted for the amendment.
Right: The bill had to pass by a two-thirds majority.
Right: His lecture filled three quarters of the auditorium. (*three is an adjective modifying quarters*)

Hyphenate a compound modifier (words that function as a unit) when it precedes the noun it modifies.

Right: She is a part-time student.
Right: She attends WCU part time.

Right: He was a well-known actor in the 1940s.
Right: He was well known as an actor in the 1940s.
Right: The Office of Development handles all fund-raising activities.
Right: Development did a good job with the fund raising.
Right: The assignment was a 10- to 20-page paper. *(both 10 and 20 are compound modifiers with page)*
          Note the space after *10-* before the next word.
HINT: When in doubt about when to hyphenate, try using each part of the adjective by itself with the noun to see
          if it makes sense. If it does not, a hyphen is probably necessary.
Example: He is a high-ability student. (*He is a high student. He is an ability student.* Neither makes sense by itself,
          so the two words together form the modifier and should be hyphenated.)

However, do not hyphenate when the first modifier is an adverb that ends in *–ly*.

Right: They had a beautifully furnished home.
Right: It's a commonly known fact.
Right: He gave his speech in labor-friendly territory.

Use hyphens for age terms.

Right: six-year-old; eight-year-old child; 45-year-old man
Right: The class was designed for three- to five-year-old children.

Use a hyphen with the prefixes *ex-, self-, all-,* and the termination *-elect.* Do not use a hyphen between other
prefixes and a noun or pronoun, unless it is a proper noun or pronoun.*

Right: ex-president, self-evident, all-consuming, governor-elect, *but* vice president *(no hyphen)*
Right: noncredit, extracurricular, multilevel, proactive, sublevel, cooperation, cooperative (adjective), *but* co-op
          when used as a noun, as well as nouns, adjectives, and verbs that indicate occupation or status: co-chair, co-
          owner, co-star, co-worker, etc.
Right: un-American, mid-July, anti-Russian sentiment

However, do hyphenate prefixes to avoid awkward double vowels or triple consonants, or to avoid confusion with
another word similar in spelling.

Right: semi-invalid, non-negotiable, bill-like features, re-cover the chair (as opposed to recover a lost item)

*NOTE: While the *Chicago Manual of Style* recommends that hyphens not be used, *AP Stylebook* does use them.
          Preferred style with official publications is not to use hyphens. As always, it is best to be consistent within
          copy when using one style or the other.

Italics

Italicize names of books; newspapers; magazines; movie titles; television shows; long plays, poems, and musical
compositions; and paintings, statues, and other works of art (except older works with unknown creators). Many
instrumental works are known by generic names – symphony, concerto, quartet – and are capitalized but not
italicized.

Right: *Gone with the Wind* (book or movie)
          Philadelphia Inquirer (newspaper)
          Don Giovanni (opera)
          Long Day's Journey Into Night (play)
          Grant Wood's painting, *American Gothic*
          Rodin's sculpture, *The Thinker.*
          Venus de Milo
          the Sixth Symphony, Bach's Mass in B Minor

Quotation Marks

Use quotation marks to enclose a speaker's exact words. Do not use them for indirect quotes.

Right: Sergeant Esterhaus said, "Let's be careful out there."
Right: The sergeant said that we should be careful out there.

Commas and periods are placed within the quotation marks. Semicolons and colons are placed outside quotation marks. Question marks and exclamation points are placed inside the quotation marks if they belong with the quotation; otherwise, they are placed outside.

Right: She said, "I went shopping today, but I didn't buy a thing."
Right: "I went shopping today," she said, "but I didn't buy a thing." *(Note the comma before and after the interrupter, and two sets of opening and closing quotes.)*
Right: Greg said, "I'll let you know tomorrow"; however, that was two weeks ago.
Right: "What a terrible thing to say!" he exclaimed.
Right: Didn't you say, "I'll never do that again"?

Use single quotation marks to enclose a quotation within a quotation.

Right: "How did you interpret her remark, 'We'll see'?" Tom asked. *(Note the placement of the question mark. Tom's quotation is the question, not hers, so it is placed outside the single quotes but inside the double.)*

Use quotation marks for the titles of articles, chapters, one-act plays, song titles, television episodes, short stories, short poems, cartoons or comic strips, and other divisions of a publication.

Right: Patsy Cline's famous song, "Crazy," was written by Willie Nelson.
Right: We read Ernest Hemingway's short story, "Hills Like White Elephants."
Right: He quoted from Edgar Allen Poe's poem, "The Raven."
Right: The writers on TV's *Ellen* called her coming-out show "The Puppy Episode" to maintain its secrecy.

Spelling

When in doubt, look up a word in the dictionary. Remember that spell check is a friend and is available with most computer software; use it! But also be aware that spell check will not underline *on* when the writer means *in*.

The following general rules apply for doubling consonants when forming the present participle or past tense.
  • If the stress is on the first syllable, do not double the consonant.
    Right: counsel, counseled, counseling

  • If the stress is on the second syllable, double the consonant.
    Right: refer, referred, referring

  • If there is only one syllable, double the consonant unless confusion would result.
    Right: bar, barred, barring; bare, bared, baring

The following are preferred spellings for WCU style:
    adviser, *not* advisor
    catalog, *not* catalogue
    chair or chairperson, *not* chairman or chairwoman
    coeducational, *not* co-educational
    cooperative, *not* co-operative (but *co-op* is preferred when abbreviating the word)
    course work, *not* coursework
    dialog, *not* dialogue

employee, *not* employe
extracurricular, *not* extra-curricular
multipurpose, *not* multi-purpose
noncredit, *not* non-credit
nonprofit, *not* non-profit
percent, *not* per cent
theatre (when referring to WCU's Department of Theatre or University Theatre); *theater* in all other instances
TV, *not* tv

Usage

The following are general grammar rules, as well as West Chester University style, to use when writing.

And/Ampersand

Do not use the ampersand (&) in formal copy unless it is the actual name of a company, such as Johnson & Johnson. Spell out *and* in all other places.

Wrong: College of Arts & Sciences; Geology & Astronomy
Right: College of Arts and Sciences; Geology and Astronomy

Alumna/Alumnae/Alumnus/Alumni

Use these distinctions: alumna (female), alumnae (female plural), alumnus (male), alumni (male plural or mixed gender plural).

Alumni Class Year Abbreviations

Identify past and current students by designating their class year with an apostrophe to indicate dropping the first two numerals. Note there is no comma after the person's name, and the date is not in parentheses. However, if a person receives two degrees from West Chester University, use both years and put a comma between them. No designation in front of the year indicates baccalaureate degree; the <u>M</u> indicates master's.

Right: Victoria Barkley '37
Right: Frank Furillo '68, M'72

Collective Nouns

A collective noun, such as faculty, staff, family, audience, etc., may take either a singular or plural verb and often depends on its usage in the sentence. When the speaker/writer uses the word as a single unit, it takes a singular verb; when referring to individual parts or members of the group, it takes the plural.

Right: The faculty has the time off during spring break, but the staff does not.
Right: Faculty who are card holders get in for free, but staff do not have these cards.

Nouns expressing quantities or amounts, such as time, money, weight, length, volume, etc., generally take singular verbs.

Right: Ten years is a long time to hold a grudge.
Right: Twenty dollars was a lot to pay.

Dangling Modifiers

Try to place a modifier close to the object it is modifying. Misplaced modifiers can result in some awkward constructions and amusing images. As Groucho Marx once said, "This morning I shot an elephant in my pajamas. How it got in my pajamas I'll never know!"

Wrong: I chased the cat dressed in my new suit. *(It sounds like the cat is dressed in the new suit.)*
Right: Dressed in my new suit, I chased the cat.
Wrong: Looking up from the street, the ladder seemed too formidable for him to climb.
Right: Looking up from the street, he saw the ladder as too formidable to climb. *(Or turn the participle phrase at the beginning of a sentence into a clause to make it clearer: When he looked up from the street, the ladder seemed too formidable to climb.)*

Writers can often avoid dangling modifiers by making a sentence active instead of passive voice (see "Passive Voice" below).
Passive voice: When dashing for the train, Pat's books and papers were scattered by her fall. *(It appears that the books and papers were dashing for the train. Pat is doing the action – dashing and falling – which scatters the books and papers.)*
Active voice: When dashing for the train, Pat fell and scattered her books and papers.

Emeritus/Emerita/Emeriti

Use the following distinctions: emeritus *(honorary status given to a male professor)*; emerita *(female)*; emeriti *(two or more of either gender)*.

Passive Voice/Active Voice

If the subject of the sentence performs the action denoted by a verb and has a direct object, that sentence is in the active voice; when the direct object is converted into a subject, then the verb is in passive voice. Passive voice is generally denoted by a form of the verb phrase *to be* followed by a past participle. Avoid passive voice whenever possible. It is often imprecise and can lead to misleading prose.

Passive: Mary's classes were taught in the evening. *(The meaning is unclear. Taught by whom? Is Mary the student or the teacher?)*
Active: Professor Kingsfield taught Mary's classes in the evening.
Or: Mary taught her classes in the evening.

Passive: The ball was thrown by Cole Hamels.
Active: Cole Hamels threw the ball.

Passive voice is generally weak because it is usually wordy and often sounds pretentious. Strong verbs that show action are more vivid and use fewer words. However, passive voice is acceptable if the performer of the action is not known or not the focus of the sentence.

Passive: Those involved in the crime will be punished severely.
Passive: The new worker was hired yesterday.
Passive: George Jefferson has been named president.

Policies (Nondiscrimination/Affirmative Action, Sexual Harassment, ADA Compliance, Student Code of Conduct)

The University's complete policy statements can be found in the printed and Web versions of the Graduate and Undergraduate Catalogs. These include the Nondiscrimination/Affirmative Action Policy, Sexual Harassment Policy, and ADA Policy and Accommodations, as well as the University's Mission Statement and Values Statement. These statements appear in all major University publications, such as the catalogs, recruiting materials and

applications for the Admissions and Graduate Studies offices, official course listings, and the *Ram's Eye View* student handbook. They generally are not included on minor publications where space is limited.

<u>A statement on accessibility is required</u>, however, when publishing an event where the public is being invited onto the campus, in compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). The Office of Social Equity suggests language such as the following be used on posters, brochures, and other printed materials when an event is being advertised: "Accommodations for individuals with disabilities are available on request by calling _____ (name and number of office or department holding the event). Please make your needs known as soon as possible, but not less than one week in advance of the event, to allow time to make the necessary arrangements."

The complete Student Code of Conduct is published in the *Ram's Eye View* student handbook.

Pronoun/Antecedent Agreement

A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number and gender.

Wrong: A professor has the final word on which books to use in their classes.
Right: A professor has the final word on which books to use in his or her class.

In order to avoid the awkward *his or her* or *his/her* constructions, make the subject plural whenever possible so *they* or *their* fits appropriately. It also avoids gender-biased language problems with male and female pronouns.
Better: Professors have the final word on which books to use in their classes.

The following antecedents take singular pronouns: *each, either, neither, one, everyone, everybody, no one*, *nobody, anyone, anybody, someone, somebody.*

Right: Andy Warhol said everyone wants his or her *(not <u>their</u>)* 15 minutes of fame.

A prepositional phrase after the antecedent does not change the number for that antecedent.

Right: Each of the contestants on *Jeopardy* wins some kind of prize. *(<u>each wins</u>, not <u>contestants win</u>)*

Nouns representing a single entity take a singular pronoun.

Wrong: West Chester University stands by their nondiscrimination policy.
Right: West Chester University stands by its nondiscrimination policy.

Subject/Verb Agreement

Be sure that singular subjects take singular verbs, and plural subjects take plural verbs. This often becomes tricky when prepositional phrases follow the subject. Remember, the subject of a sentence (or a dependent clause) is NEVER in a prepositional phrase.

Wrong: One of the boys want to go with us.
Right: One of the boys wants to go with us. *(<u>One</u> is the subject, not <u>boys</u>, which is the object of the preposition <u>of</u>.)*
Wrong: The signs at the top of the building was barely visible. *(<u>Signs</u> is the subject, not <u>building</u>.)*
Right: The signs at the top of the building were barely visible.

The following words are singular and take a singular verb: *each, either, neither, one, everyone, everybody, no one, nobody, anyone, someone, somebody.*

Right: Neither of those lame excuses sounds plausible to me.

Some, all, and *most* may be either singular or plural, depending on whether they refer to a quantity of something (singular) or to a number of things (plural).

Right: Some of the money was missing.
Right: Some of the quarters were missing.
Right: All of the food looks appealing.
Right: All of the desserts look appealing.

None and *any* may be either singular or plural, depending on whether the writer is thinking of one thing or several.

Right: None of the employees was fired. *(Not one of the employees was fired.)*
Right: None of the employees were fired. *(No employees were fired.)*
Right: Any of these employees is reliable. *(Any one is reliable.)*
Right: Any of these employees are reliable. *(All are reliable.)*

Collective nouns that denote a unit take singular verbs and pronouns, such as *class, committee, crowd, family, group, jury, orchestra,* or *team*.

Right: The team was upset by its loss.

NOTE: Some words in plural form become collective nouns and take singular verbs when regarded as one unit.
Right: A hundred tons is a lot of trash. *(a unit)*

Sentences usually have a *subject, verb, complement* construction. Be careful when the subject is inverted that the verb agrees with it, particularly if a contraction is involved.

Wrong: Where's my hat and coat? *(Where's is the contraction for where is, which is singular. The inverted plural subject – hat and coat – is at the end of the sentence.)*
Right: Where are my hat and coat?
Wrong: If you must know, there's lots of reasons why I don't want to attend. *(lots of reasons are there)*
Right: If you must know, there are lots of reasons why I don't want to attend.

Tenses

Be consistent with the use of tenses. If a sentence begins with the present, stay with the present; do not switch suddenly to the past. For example, if the sentence begins with "he said," do not change to "he says."

That, Which, Who

Which refers to objects only, *that* refers to either people or objects, and *who* refers to people (or an animal with a name) only.

When referring to an object or nameless animal with a restrictive clause – an essential clause that makes the sentence complete – use the word *that* to introduce the clause. Do not offset the clause with commas.

When referring to an object or nameless animal with a nonrestrictive clause – a nonessential clause that can be left out of a sentence without changing its meaning – use *which* to introduce the clause. Nonrestrictive clauses, especially those that appear in the middle of a sentence, are offset with commas.

Hint: After writing a sentence, read it without the clause. If it still makes sense, then the clause should be introduced by *which*; if the meaning changes drastically without the clause, it should be introduced by *that*.

Right: Her math class, which is held in Anderson Hall, was canceled. *(The reader knows which class this is, so the phrase which is held in Anderson Hall can be omitted from the sentence without changing the meaning: Her math class was canceled.)*

Right: The math class that is held in Anderson Hall is canceled. *(There must be more than one math class, but only the one in Anderson is canceled.)*

Right: The math class held in Anderson is canceled. *(Since <u>held in Anderson</u> is essential, <u>that</u> is not even needed.)*

Right: Van Gogh's *Starry Night*, which may be his most famous painting, is worth a fortune.

Right: The painting that inspired Don McLean's song was Van Gogh's *Starry Night*. *(<u>that</u>, not <u>which</u> since the phrase is essential to show which painting inspired the song)*

Right: She is the kind of friend who *(or that)* will never let me down.

Who/Whom

While *whom* is rarely used in every day, colloquial speech, the word should be used correctly in formal writing. *Who* is the nominative form of the pronoun, comparable to other nominative forms of personal pronouns (I, he, she, we, they), and *whom* is the objective form, comparable to other objective pronouns (me, him, her, us, them). Use *who* whenever *he* or another nominative pronoun can be substituted; use *whom* whenever *him* or another objective pronoun can be used in its place.

Right: Who is responsible for this mess? *(<u>He</u> can be substituted for <u>who</u> in this sentence – he is responsible for this mess – so the pronoun is nominative.)*

Right: To whom were you speaking? *(You were speaking to him. Since <u>him</u> can be substituted for <u>whom</u>, the pronoun has to be objective.)*

Pet Peeves

General annoyances – not to mention incorrect usage – include the following:

alot

There is no such word as *alot*. It is either *a lot (two separate words)* meaning many, or *allot*, meaning to parcel out.

alright

There is no such word. It should be *all right*.

between you and I

This phrase is ALWAYS INCORRECT. *Between* is a preposition that needs an object; hence, it requires the objective pronoun *me*, not the nominative pronoun *I*. *Between you and me (or him, or her, or them)* is always correct.

for him and I

This phrase is always incorrect for the same reason as above. *For* is a preposition and requires an objective pronoun as an object: *for him and me (or her, or them)*.

irregardless

There is no such word as *irregardless*. Do not use it. It is simply *regardless*.

its'

There is no such word as *its'*. *It's* is a contraction meaning *it is*. *Its* is the possessive pronoun.

-wise as a suffix

Do not use this suffix to make up words like *weatherwise*.

pretentious language and wordiness

These words and phrases have, in many cases, become cliches because they are so overused. The following are suggestions for using more precise language instead of pretentious wording.

Awkward/wordy	Better
A	
absolutely essential	essential
adequate enough	enough
adjacent to	next, to
afford an opportunity	allow, let
a large number/part	many/most
a number of	some
a variety of	many/different
appreciable	many
as a means of	to
at the present time	now
B	
basic fundamentals	basics
be responsible for	handle
C	
capability/capable of	ability/can
center around	center in, at, or on
comes into conflict	conflicts
commitment to excellence	quality
comply with	follow
comprise	form, include, make up
constitutes	is, forms, makes up
construct	build
cutting edge	forefront, frontier
cutting-edge	leading, pioneering, progressive
D	
designate	appoint, choose, name
determine	decide, figure, find
do not hesitate to call	call
due to the fact that	due to, since
E	
equitable	fair
evidenced	showed, shown
exhibit	show
exhibits a tendency to	tends to
F	
facilitate	ease, help
factor	reason, cause
feedback, input	opinion, reaction
foreign imports	imports
for the purpose of	to
furnish	give, send
future prospects	prospects

G

generate	do, make, create
gives consideration to	considers

H

head up	head, lead
holds a belief	believes

I

if at all possible	if possible
impacted	affected, changed, hit
implement	carry out, do, follow
in accordance with	by, following, under
in addition	also, besides, too
in an effort to	to
inception	start
in conjunction with	with
initiate	start
in order to	to
in the near future	soon
input	comments, advice, response

J

joint cooperation	cooperation
just exactly	exactly

L

legislation	law

M

makes an attempt	attempts, tries
maximize	increase, enlarge, expand, broaden
minimize	decrease, lessen, reduce
modify	change

N

necessary prerequisites	prerequisites
new innovations	innovations
numerous	many, most

O

objective	aim, goal
optimum	best, greater, most
output	comment, idea

P

past experience	experience
personnel	people, staff
preplanning	planning
prior to	before
provides guidance for	guides
possibly might	might
postpone until later	postpone

Q

qualified expert	expert

quite unique	unique

R
refer back	refer
retain	keep

S
send a communication to	notify
similar to	like
solicit	ask for
state-of-the-art	latest

T
try and fix	try to fix

U
utilize, utilization	use

V
very unique	unique
viable	practical, workable

W
warrant	call for, permit
whereas	since
without further delay	now, immediately
with the exception of	except for

<u>Commonly Misused Words</u>

accept/except

Accept means to receive. *Except* means to exclude.

adverse/averse

Adverse means unfavorable. *Averse* means reluctant.
Example: Adverse weather made travel slow. He was averse to driving that night.

affect/effect

Affect, used as a verb, means to influence, change, or produce an effect, or to pretend. *Effect*, as a verb, means to accomplish, complete, cause, make possible, or carry out. *Effect*, however, is most commonly used as a noun meaning result.
Example: The behavior he affected in the courtroom had no effect on our decision. (*Affected* is a verb; *effect* is a noun.)

afterward

not afterwards

all right

not alright

allude/refer

Allude means to speak of without mentioning. *Refer* means to speak of directly.

allusion/illusion

An *allusion* is an indirect reference. An *illusion* is a false impression or image.

around/about

Around should refer to physical proximity or surrounding. *About* indicates an approximation.

author

Try to use as a noun, not a verb.
Example: The author wrote a book, *not* the writer authored a book.

beside/besides

Beside means at the side of, a comparison, or apart from. *Besides* means furthermore, in addition to, or otherwise.

Examples: You can sit beside me. Look at him beside other students. That's beside the point.
Examples: Besides, I just don't want to. She chose roses and violets besides. No one is here besides you and me.

between/among

Use *between* to show a relationship between two objects. Use *among* when it is more than two.

Examples: Just between you and me, the decision will be made among the three vice presidents.

biannual/biennial

Biannual is twice a year. *Biennial* is every other year. Since *semi-* means *half*, using *semiannual* in place of *biannual* may avoid confusion since both mean twice a year, and using *once every two years* is less confusing than *biennial*.

bimonthly/semimonthly

Bimonthly is every other month. *Semimonthly* means twice a month.

chair

Try to use as a noun, not a verb
Example: The chair presided over the meeting, *not* he chaired the meeting.

complement/compliment

Complement is something that supplements or goes together. *Compliment* is praise.

compose/comprise/constitute

Compose is to create or put together. *Comprise* is to contain, include all, or embrace. *Constitute* is to make up or be the elements of.

Examples: The whole comprises the parts.
                    The parts constitute the whole.

The whole is composed of parts. *(not <u>is comprised of</u>)*

The office comprises 14 employees.
Fourteen employees constitute the office.
The office is composed of 14 employees. *(not <u>is comprised of</u>)*

continual/continuous

Continual is a frequent repetition, over and over again. *Continuous* is uninterrupted, steady, unbroken.

Examples: He finally learned his lines from continual rehearsals.
          As she drove through Iowa, she saw a continuous stretch of highway and cornfields.

curriculum, curricula

Curriculum is singular. *Curricula* are plural.

data

Data is a plural noun and takes a plural verb, although it is often used as a collective noun, which takes a singular verb, such as *the data is irrefutable*.

daylight-saving time

not daylight-savings time (note hyphen with compound adjective)

different from

not different than

disinterested/uninterested

Disinterested means impartial. *Uninterested* means lacking interest, bored.

farther/further

Farther refers to physical distance. *Further* refers to an extension of time or degree.

fewer/less

Use *fewer* for individual items and *less* for bulk, amount, or quantity.

Examples: We had fewer than 10 applicants for the job. *(individuals)*
          I had less than $20 in my wallet *(an amount),* but I had fewer than five $20 bills in my
          wallet. *(individual items)*

hopefully

The correct use of *hopefully* is as an adverb modifying a verb, not as a conditional phrase.

Wrong: Hopefully, he'll get the job.
Right: He hopes he will get the job.
Wrong: Hopefully, the president will address the issue.
Right: It is hoped that the president will address the issue.

imply/infer

Imply means to suggest or indicate indirectly. *Infer* is to conclude or decide from something unknown or assumed. Generally, if you *imply* something, you are sending out a message; if you *infer*, you are interpreting a message.

in regard to

not in regards to

insure/ensure

Insure means to establish a contract for insurance of some type. *Ensure* means to guarantee.

irregardless

The word is *regardless*. There is no such word as *irregardless*. Do not use it.

-ize or -wise

Do not coin words with these suffixes (such as *weatherwise*), and avoid words that already have the suffix, such as *finalize (use end or conclude)* or *utilize (substitute use)*.

lay/lie

Lay means to put or place and requires a direct object; the past tense of lay is *laid*. *Lie* means to rest or recline and does not take a direct object; the past tense of lie is *lay*.

Right: I was so tired I had to lie down; I lay there asleep for two hours.
Right: Lay that file on the desk where I laid the others yesterday.

lectern/podium

A person stands on a *podium* and behind a *lectern*.

let/leave

To *let alone* means to leave something undisturbed; to *leave alone* means to depart from or allow to be in isolation.

like/as

Use *like* to compare nouns and pronouns. Use *as* to introduce a subordinate clause. (*Like* is followed by a noun or pronoun, not by a verb.)
Examples: He runs like the wind. Do as I say, not as I do.

located (at)

For the most part, you do not need this word in sentence constructions. Instead of saying, "The bookstore is located in Sykes," simply say, "The bookstore is in Sykes." Even worse is the sentence that ends with an unnecessary *at*: *Where are you located at?* Simply say, *Where are you?* or *Where is your office?*

me/myself

Avoid using *myself* for the objective pronoun that should be used instead.

Wrong: You can either tell the teacher or myself.
Right: You can either tell the teacher or me.

Right: I, myself, don't think the rumor is true.

nor

Use *nor* whenever use *neither* is used.

Example: Neither his mother nor I know what to do.

oral/verbal

Oral refers to spoken words. *Verbal* refers to either spoken or written words but most often means the process of putting ideas to writing.

Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education

When writing an abbreviated version after first reference, use the acronym PASSHE (*not* SSHE).

people/persons

Use *person* when speaking of an individual. *People*, rather than *persons*, is preferred for plural use.

premier/premiere

A *premier* is the prime minister of government, or it means principal; a *premiere* is a first performance.

presently/currently

These words are not interchangeable. *Presently* means for the time being, temporarily, but since it is imprecise, it's better to use *at present, now*, or *soon*. *Currently* means now. Most often *currently* can be eliminated from writing. Instead of saying, "We are currently working on the report," simply say, "We are working on the report."

pretense/pretext

Pretense is a false show or unsupported claim to a distinction or accomplishment. *Pretext* is an excuse or cover-up, a false reason or motive put forth to hide the real one.

principal/principle

As a noun, *principal* is a chief person or thing; as an adjective it means primary importance. *Principle* is a noun meaning a fundamental truth, doctrine, or law; a guiding rule or code of conduct; a method of operation.

rebut/refute

Rebut is to argue to the contrary. *Refute* is to prove wrong by argument or evidence.

regardless

Use this and not *irregardless*, which is not a word.

shall/will

Shall expresses determination, first-person future tense, or legal language: *We shall persevere. I shall attend the wedding. The party shall pay within 90 days.* However, in American English *will* is now used most frequently for all future constructions, as well as expressions of determination or consent: *I will not attend the meeting under any circumstances. She will not like the changes you made.*

student body

Use *students* instead.

that/which

See "that, which, who" under "Usage" above.

theater/theatre

Theater is the preferred spelling in the United States (*theatre* is British) unless the reference is to WCU's Department of Theatre or the University Theatre.

towards/towards

Toward is correct.

unique

An overused word, *unique* means one of a kind or without equal. Therefore, *very, quite, rather,* or *truly* are unnecessary modifiers. It is either unique or it is not.

use/utilize

Use *use*. *Utilize* is the awkward verb form of an obsolete adjective, *utile*.

West Chester University

Use the school's full name, West Chester University of Pennsylvania, as its first reference in text or on the cover of a publication, and then West Chester University subsequently, or the University (with initial capital letter). Use WCU (no periods) in more informal writing.

who/whom

See "who/whom" under "Usage" above.

-wise

Do not add this suffix to coin words such as *businesswise*.

Xerox/photocopy
Xerox is the brand name of a copy machine and should not be used as a verb or noun to mean duplicate. Use *photocopy* instead. (The same applies to *Kleenex*, a brand name; use *tissue* instead.)

Guidelines for Avoiding Gender-Biased and Other Inappropriate Language in University Communications

Policy

Concomitant with its policy on affirmative action, West Chester University seeks to provide an environment in which students, faculty, staff, and guests experience no unfair treatment as a result of gender-biased or other improper language. The University, therefore, discourages any use of language that reinforces stereotypes or inappropriate attitudes concerning gender, sexual orientation, and people with disabilities. All official University communications, either written or oral, shall be free of unsuitable language.

Guidelines

The following guidelines are adapted from
Guidelines for Equal Treatment of the Sexes (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1972);
"NCTE Guidelines for Nonsexist Language" in *Sexism and Language,* Nilson et al. (Urbana, Ill: NCTE, 1977); and
Guidelines for the Use of Nonsexist Language (Durham, New Hampshire: University of New Hampshire, 1984).

Generic Use of Man

The word "man" has long been used not only to denote a person of male gender but also to denote humanity at large. However, because of this dual meaning, many no longer consider "man" or other words with masculine markers broad enough for this generic use. Alternative expressions should be considered whenever such substitutions can be made without producing an awkward or artificial construction.

Example of common usage
1. Man's search for knowledge has led him into ways of learning that bear examination.
   Consider meaning. An alternative may be better.
2. The search for knowledge has led us into ways of learning that bear examination.
   People have continually sought knowledge. The search has led them . . . .
3. man, mankind
   Alternative: people, humanity, human beings, humankind, human species
4. man's achievements
   Alternative: human achievements, achievements of the human species
5. the common man, the average man
   Alternative: the average person, ordinary people
6. the best man for the job
   Alternative: the best person for the job
7. man-made
   Alternative: synthetic, manufactured, crafted, machine-made
8. man a project
   Alternative: staff a project, hire personnel, employ staff
9. manpower
   Alternative: work force, personnel, workers

Masculine Pronoun for Generic Singular

Because English lacks a true generic singular pronoun signifying "he or she," it used to be acceptable to use masculine pronouns in expressions such as "the student . . . he." Since this construction can subtly suggest the secondary importance of the female, it is no longer widely used. In general, plural usage is the simplest, cleanest way to avoid the pronoun problem. Various alternatives may be considered.

Example of common usage
1. Give each student his paper as soon as he is finished.
   Consider meaning. An alternative may be better

Give students their papers as soon as they are finished.
Give each student his or her (her or his) . . . (Use sparingly to avoid monotonous repetition.)
2. Almost every student is worried about his grades.
    Alternatives: Almost every student is worried about grades. Almost all students worry about grades. Grades are a concern of almost every student.

Occupational Terms
Neutral terms should be used in occupational titles. Caution also should be taken to avoid linking certain types of work exclusively with the female or male. Similarly, avoid the assumption that an audience is all of one gender.

Example of common usage
1. chairman
    Consider meaning. An alternative may be better.
    chairperson (of a department); moderator (of a meeting); presiding officer; chair
2. businessman
    Alternative: business executive or manager
3. fireman
    Alternative: firefighter
4. mailman
    Alternative: mail carrier
5. policeman
    Alternative: police officer
6. foreman
    Alternative: supervisor
7. authoress, poetess
    Alternative: author, poet
8. housewife
    Alternative: homemaker
9. usherette, aviatrix
    Alternative: usher, aviator
10. cleaning lady
    Alternative: housekeeper
11. A secretary makes efficient use of her time.
    Alternative: Secretaries make efficient use of their time.
12. Doctors often neglect their wives and children.
    Alternative: Doctors often neglect their families.
13. The professor . . . he; the supervisor . . . he;
    Alternative: he or she
14. The nurse . . . she
    Alternative: he or she
15. You and your wife
    Alternative: You and your spouse
16. Exception: freshman/freshmen

The University continues to use these words, rather than the sometimes confusing term first-year student(s) because they are academically recognized nationwide, referring to a category determined by the number of credits earned. Students can be in their second year but still have fewer than 31 credits (freshman status). In addition, it also avoids confusion with transfer students, who may have upper-class status, but it is their first year at West Chester University.

Parallel Treatment
Parallel language should be used for women and men. Women should not be described by physical attributes when men are being described by mental attributes or professional positions. Women should be referred to by name in the same way men are. Both should be called by full names, by first or last names only, or by titles. Avoid identifying

women by their roles as wives, mothers, sisters, or daughters, unless that information is significant to the text. Consider whether men would similarly be identified as husbands, fathers, brothers, or sons.

Example of common usage
1. Running for student government president are Bill Smith, a straight-A sophomore, and Kathy Ryan, a pert junior.
   Consider meaning. An alternative may be better.
   Running for student government president are Bill Smith, a straight-A sophomore, and newspaper editor Kathy Ryan, a junior.
2. Secretary Cohen and Mrs. Albright
   Alternatives: William Cohen and Madeleine Albright; Mr. Cohen and Ms. Albright; Secretaries Cohen and Albright
3. men and girls; men and ladies; man and wife
   Alternatives: men and women; ladies and gentlemen; girls and boys; husband and wife

Patronizing Terms and Stereotypes
Women and men should be treated with the same respect, dignity, and seriousness. Neither should be trivialized. Avoid the stereotypes of the logical, objective male and the emotional, subjective female. Women should not be portrayed as helpless nor be made the figures of fun or objects of scorn. It is best to eliminate unnecessary references to gender.

Examples of common usage
1. gal Friday
   Alternative: assistant
2. I'll have my girl do it.
   Alternative: I'll ask my secretary to do it.
3. career girl
   Alternatives: professional woman; attorney Carol Jones; market analyst Sarah Smith
4. coed
   Alternative: student
5. the little woman; the better half; the ball and chain
   Alternatives: wife or spouse
6. sweet young thing
   Alternative: young woman
7. woman doctor, lady lawyer, male nurse, woman driver
   Alternatives: doctor, lawyer, nurse, driver
8. ladies chattered
   Alternative: women talked
9. Judy's husband lets her work part time.
   Alternative: Judy works part time.

Person First: A Lexicon Affirming Those With Disabilities on College Campuses
As greater numbers of persons with disabilities take advantage of the opportunities open to them in higher education, it becomes increasingly important that colleges and universities promote an environment that is positive for persons with disabilities. One of the strongest and easiest ways is appropriate language usage.
The recommended manner is known as "person first" language. This means that the person is emphasized first, the disability second. For example,

Use
person with a disability
Not disabled or handicapped person

individual without speech
Not mute, dumb

woman who is blind or visually impaired
Not blind woman or "the blind"

student who is deaf or hearing impaired
Not deaf student or "the deaf"

man with paraplegia
Not paraplegic

woman who is paralyzed
Not paralyzed woman

individual with epilepsy
Not epileptic

student who has a learning disability or specific learning disability
Not slow learner, retarded, learning disabled

person with a mental disability, cognitive impairment
Not crazy, demented, insane

person with a developmental disability
Not mentally retarded

congenital disability
Not birth defect

It is important to describe the person, not the disability. Persons without disabilities should be referred to as "nondisabled," not "normal" or "able-bodied." Rather than using words such as "confined," "bound," "restricted," or "dependent," the most appropriate phrasing is "a person who uses a wheelchair" or "a person who walks with crutches." Again, the emphasis is on the person.

The word "handicap" should only be used in reference to a condition or a physical barrier. Reference should not be made to the person as being handicapped. Examples: "The stairs are a handicap for her," or "He is handicapped by the inaccessible bus."

It is important to avoid labeling or group categorizations that begin with "the" (i.e., "the disabled," "the deaf," "the blind"). Also to be avoided are euphemisms such as "the physically challenged," "partially sighted," "handicapable," and "special." The use of the word "disabled" is discouraged without referring to the person first. Office of Services for Students with Disabilities, Office for Students with Disabilities, or the Office of Disability Services are recommended titles for programming for persons with disabilities.

Sexual Orientation
Use the term "sexual orientation," *not* "sexual preference." Generally, "gay" or "lesbian" is preferred to "homosexual." Avoid the term "gay lifestyle" and other slang words or language considered derogatory.

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