

Ferris State University

Marketing and Communications Style Guide

The following information is a copy style guide for use in Ferris State University communications. It incorporates the Associated Press style traditionally used in newspapers and in common use within the University. Please note that most third-party publishers, particularly news providers, prefer use of AP style.

Highly technical documents or reports may require special submission standards over which these general recommendations do not take precedence. Always consult guidelines provided by publishers, accreditation bodies and other document recipients in such special circumstances.

If you have a question not addressed in these guidelines or are uncertain about their application to your document, please consult *The Associated Press Stylebook*, e-mail Anne Hogenson at annehogenson@ferris.edu, or call (231) 591-2333.

A

Academic colleges

-Capitalize: *The College of Business has a new dean.*

Academic degrees (*AP Stylebook*, page 5)

-If mention of degrees is necessary to establish someone's credentials, the preferred form is to avoid an abbreviation and use a phrase.

Correct – John Jones, who has a doctorate in psychology.

Correct – She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in communications.

-Use an apostrophe in *bachelor's degree*, *a master's*, etc.

Exception – *an associate degree* (no possessive apostrophe).

-Use uppercase for specific degrees, such as *Master of Science* or *Bachelor of Arts*, lowercase for non-specific degrees, such as *bachelor's degree*. Use *doctoral degree*. *Doctorate* is a noun; *doctoral* is an adjective.

Academic degrees, concentrations and classes (University use, not AP style)

-Capitalize Ferris degrees, concentrations and classes: *Ferris offers Bachelor of Arts degrees in Biology, Communications, English, History and Mathematics. Many Applied Biology majors choose the Pre-Medicine concentration. Students in Argumentation and Debate earn three credit hours.*

Academic departments (University use, not AP style)

-In copy, capitalize the descriptive name of the department, but lower the case of the word *department* itself: *The department of History, the English department.* Only capitalize department when it is part of the official, formal name. *Department of Biological Sciences.*

Academic Titles

-Capitalize and spell out formal titles, such as *chancellor, chairman, dean*, etc. when they precede a name. Lower the case elsewhere. Lower the case of modifiers such as *department in department Chairman John Wright.*

Exception – lower the case of *professor*, even before a name, and never abbreviate. (*AP Stylebook*, pages 5, 199)

Acronyms

-On the first reference, spell out the full name of what the acronym refers to, but do not follow the name with the acronym in parentheses. On the second reference, use only the acronym: *The University Advancement and Marketing staff meets monthly. The next meeting of the UA&M staff will be June 27.*

Exception – in certain cases, acronyms are appropriate as first, or even only, reference; i.e., *NASCAR* or *NASA*.

Administrative departments

-Always capitalize the word that defines the division or department: *The Mathematics department will be closed Monday morning. The Academic Affairs division will sponsor the event.*

-However, capitalize connected words only when they form the proper department name: *The Department of Mathematics is preparing for a program review. The Division of Academic Affairs website features Ferris' general education requirements.*

Adviser (*AP Stylebook*, page 7)

-AP style uses *adviser*; however, *advisor* is commonly used in academic settings.

Ages

-Always use figures for people and animals, but not for inanimate objects. *The girl is 15 years old; the law is eight years old.* Use hyphens for ages expressed as adjectives: *A 5-year-old boy, the woman is in her 30s* (use no apostrophe with the final -s).

Alumnus

-Preferable to informal *alum*; regular capitalization rules apply: *Alumnus John Smith; John Smith, College of Business alumnus.*

Alumna (singular, female)
Alumnae (plural, female)
Alumni (plural, male and female)
Alumnus (singular, male)

a.m., p.m.

-Lower the case and use periods after both abbreviated words. Do not use an additional period if at the end of the sentence. Avoid the redundant *10 a.m. this morning.*

B

Building names

-Building names may be abbreviated to the given acronyms for mailing addresses and internal memoranda only, using the forms *Prakken 101* or *PRK 101* (no hyphen). For business cards and formal communications, use the former. On mailing labels, the correct format for an address is either of the following forms:

420 Oak Street, Prakken 101

420 Oak Street, PRK 101

-External communications, including website text, should feature the full name of the building each time, using the phrase “the...Building/Center/Commons” the first time:

Correct – The first stop on our campus tour was the Timme Student Services Center. We spent several minutes walking the grounds at Timme.

Exception – FLITE: Next we visited the Ferris Library for Information, Technology and Education. FLITE was one of our favorite stops.

-Accepted abbreviations:

<i>Alumni Building**</i>	ALU
Arts & Sciences Commons	ASC
<i>Automotive Center</i>	AUT
Birkam Health Center	BHC
<i>Bishop Hall</i>	BIS
Business Building	BUS
<i>Creative Arts Center</i>	CAC
Granger Center	GRN
<i>Heavy Equipment Center</i>	HEC
Interdisciplinary Resource Center	IRC
<i>Johnson Hall</i>	JOH
Katke Golf course	KAT
<i>Library (FLITE)</i>	FLT
Masselink Commons	MAS
<i>Michigan College of Optometry</i>	MCO
Music Activities Center	MUS
<i>National Elastomer Center</i>	NEC
Pennock	PEN
<i>Pharmacy Building</i>	PHR
Prakken Building	PRK
<i>Racquet Club</i>	RQT
Rankin Center	RAN
<i>Science Building</i>	SCI
South Commons	SCO
<i>South West Commons**</i>	SWC
Sports Complex**	SPO
<i>Starr Building</i>	STR
Student Recreation Center	SRC
<i>Swan Technical Building**</i>	SWN
Timme Center for Student Services	CSS
<i>Victor F. Spathelf Center for Allied Health</i>	VFS
West Building	WES
<i>West Commons</i>	WCO
Williams Auditorium	WIL

Bulldog(s)

-When referring to our sports teams or a collective group of people, use *Bulldogs* and not *Bulldawgs* or *the Dawgs*. *The Bulldogs have tied for first place in the GLIAC*. However, it is acceptable to use the term *Dawg* alone in copy, as in *Dawg Days*.

C

Captions

-Only put a period at the end of a photo caption if it is a complete sentence.

Composition titles (University use, not AP style)

-Italicize titles of newspapers, magazines, book and film titles. Put quotation marks around short stories, articles, television program, lectures, speeches and visual art titles.

Correct – I read it in *Crimson & Gold*.

Correct – Have you seen Robert Barnum’s “The Visionary”?

Co-

-Retain the hyphen when forming nouns, adjectives and verbs that indicate occupation or status: *co-worker, co-chairman, co-sponsor, co-signer, co-author, co-partner, co-host*.

Exceptions – coordinator, cooperate.

Courtesy titles (AP Stylebook, page 62)

-In general, do not use. Use full name on first reference and last name on subsequent references: *Robert Friar will speak at the World Conference on Sexology. Friar is our resident expert on human sexuality.*

- In cases where a subject’s gender is not clear from the first name or from the story’s context, indicate gender by using *he* or *she* in subsequent reference.

D

Dates (AP Stylebook, page 68)

-When a phrase lists only a month and a year, do not separate the year with a comma: *January 2004*. However, use commas before and after the year when listing month, day and year: *On Jan. 1, 2003, the merger took effect*. Always use Arabic figures, without st, nd, rd or th.

Correct - January 2, 2005

Incorrect - January 2nd, 2005

-When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate only Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec. (Do not abbreviate March, April, May, June, July.)

-Do not abbreviate days of the week: *Physical Plant inventory will be taken Friday, Jan. 31; Monday, March 31; Saturday, June 30 and Thursday, Sept. 30*.

-Dates by decade or century use a final s but no apostrophe and should always be given in all of their digits.

Correct – In the 1900s, by the 1980s

Incorrect – In the 60s

-Use a hyphen when connecting the word *mid-* to dates: *The mid-1920s*. However, use no hyphen with *early* and *late*: *The late 1970s*.

-Use *A.D.* and *B.C.* only in combination with dates given in numerals. Years are assumed to be *A.D.* unless *B.C.* is specified.

Dollars

-When specifying whole dollar amounts, do not add .00 to the amount: *The ticket will cost \$5; the price per cartridge is \$12.75*.

E

E-mail

-Use the hyphen and regular capitalization rules: *e-mail*.

Emeritus

-Place *emeritus* after the formal title: *Professor emeritus Samuel Morrison; Courtney Brown, professor emerita of History*.

Emerita (singular, female)
Emeritae (plural, female)
Emeriti (plural, male and female)
Emeritus (singular, male)

Ensure vs. insure

-*To ensure* means to make certain. *To insure* means to acquire or provide insurance.

Exclamation point

-Avoid overuse, which actually reduces the impact of each exclamation. As a rule, exclamation points, like italics, should be used only when word choice or context cannot create adequate emphasis.

F

Ferris State University

-In text, refer to as *Ferris State University* on first reference. Preferred subsequent references are *Ferris* or *the University*.

Ferris'

-Use only the apostrophe after the final -s.

Correct – Ferris' enrollment has increased by 6 percent this academic year.

Incorrect – Ferris's academic departments will soon complete program reviews.

Fundraising, fundraiser

-Write as one word in all cases.

G

Graduate

-Do not abbreviate to the informal *grad*.

-When identifying graduates by name to audiences within the Ferris community, provide the acronym of the graduate's college and two-digit graduation year after the reference: *Ferris graduate John Smith (EHS '89)*.

-When identifying graduates' academic programs to general audiences, use a more explanatory phrase: *John Smith, who graduated from Ferris' Criminal Justice program in 1989...*

H

Headlines

-Only the first word and proper nouns are capitalized.

Home page

-Write as two words separated by a space.

I

Internet

-Always use uppercase.

M

Mid-

-Use a hyphen when connecting a word with a numeral: *In the mid-1970s.*

More than

-Use *more than* instead of *over*. *More than 150 students attended the event.*

Multi

-In general, use no hyphen: *He is the director of multicultural affairs.*

N

Numerals (*AP Stylebook*, page 172)

-Spell out numbers one through nine; use figures for 10 and above: *Sigma Pi owns four eight-room houses, 10 nine-room houses and 12 10-room houses.*

Exception – When referring to 2-year degrees and 4-year degrees, use figures. When referring to dollar figures or other figures featuring decimal points, use numerals for efficiency. See **Percent** entry for additional guidelines.

O

Online (*AP Stylebook*, page 177)

-Write as one word in lowercase.

P

Percent

-One word. Spell out *percent* when used in copy. Use numerals. *He said 5 percent of the membership was there.* Repeat percent with each individual figure. *He said 10 percent to 30 percent of the electorate may not vote.*

Exception: Technical documents featuring multiple references to percentages should use numerals in combination with the percentage and other symbols for efficiency, unless the document will be transmitted in a way that prohibits use of symbols, such as wire service or document reader.

Plurals (*AP Stylebook*, page 190)

-Use no apostrophe in figures or multi-letter sequences unless possessive: *1920s, CDs, 747s, five size 7s, ABCs, IOUs.* Use an apostrophe with one-letter plurals to avoid confusion with two-letter words. *She received two A's and three B's.*

p.m., a.m.

-Write in lowercase with periods. Avoid the redundant *10 p.m. tonight.*

Preventive vs. preventative

-*Preventive* is an adjective; *preventative* is a noun: *Patients are increasingly interested in preventive medicine; he needed a reliable preventative.*

Program

-Write with lowercase *p*: *The Career Exploration program is helpful to many students.*

Exception – Honors Program

-Academic majors should be referred to as *degrees*, unless within the context of the sentence *degrees* could be confused with academic degrees (such as bachelor's, master's and etc.).

Proper names (*AP Stylebook*, page 39)

-Capitalize common nouns such as *party, river, street* and *department* when they are an integral part of the full name for a person, place or thing: *Republican Party, Muskegon River, State Street, Department of Public Safety*. Write these common nouns in lower case when they stand alone in subsequent references: *the party, the river, the street, the department, the college*.

Exception - subsequent references to Ferris State University: *The University has a new library*.

S

Said vs. says

-Generally, when writing a news story and attributing a quote, *said* is preferred. However, when writing a feature story, *says* is more appropriate.

Semester seasons

-Capitalize semester seasons that are year-specific. *Beginning Fall 2001, all students must register using WebCT, but Many students miss their 8 a.m. class during the winter semester*.

Spacing between sentences

-Use one space, not two, between sentences.

State names (*AP Stylebook*, page 231)

-Spell out the names of the 50 U.S. states when they stand alone in textual material.

-When writing, use The AP Stylebook abbreviations and not the Postal Service abbreviations:

Correct – Jenny Jones, of Big Rapids, Mich., received a Founder’s Scholarship.
Incorrect – Peter Smith, of Reed City, MI, graduated with honors.

-Place a comma between city and state and after the state

Such as

-Use *such as* instead of *like* to cite examples.

-*Like* excludes the compared item: *I need a class like Chemistry 121* (a class similar to but not specifically Chemistry 121.) *I need three more credit hours in a class such as Chemistry 121, 122 or 231* (any of which would be acceptable.)

T

Telephone numbers

- Use parentheses around area codes and a hyphen within the phone number: (231) 591-2000.
- An exception is Ferris' toll-free number, which should be listed as 800-4-FERRIS.
- Use "1" before an area code only in publications for international audiences who will dial from other nation codes.
- Periods may be substituted for hyphens only when writing for audiences who use different formatting standards or as part of an approved graphic design.

Times

- Use figures for all times, except for noon and midnight.
- Put a space between the hour and the a.m. or p.m.
- Do not use zeros after times on the hour, and use lowercase letters for a.m. and p.m.
- Avoid such redundancies as 10 a.m. this morning.
- Also, select time references that are consistent with the prepositions in the phrase. Words such as *from* should not be used if a symbol such as a dash will stand in for words such as *until* or *to*:

Correct – Students may register from 2 to 4 p.m. on Friday.

Correct – Students may register 2-4 p.m. on Friday.

Incorrect – Students may register from 2-4 p.m. on Friday.

Toward

Toward, not *towards*

U

University addresses

-When listed on one line, the street address appears first, then the building and room identification: *420 Oak Street, PRK 101*.

-When listed on separate lines, the address should follow this format, headed by the name of the recipient person or department:

Sam Smith
Ferris State University
420 Oak Street, PRK 101
Big Rapids, MI 49307

W

Web

-Use uppercase as an abbreviation of the proper name *World Wide Web*, but use lowercase when forming compound words that use the word *Web* more generally: World Wide Web, *the Web*, *website*, *webcast*, *webmaster*.

-List Ferris Web site as *ferris.edu* or *www.ferris.edu*.

Y

Years

-Use an -s without an apostrophe to indicate spans of decades or centuries: *the 1800s*, *the 1990s*.

Z

ZIP code

-When writing this term, use all capital letters for the word *ZIP* and lowercase for *code* in the phrase *ZIP code*. *ZIP* is an abbreviation for the proper noun *Zoning Improvement Plan*.

Punctuation Guidelines

Colons within a list

-Use a colon before a list when the list is preceded by a complete sentence.

Correct – Many degrees are offered here at Ferris State University: Applied Biology, Communication, Criminal Justice and more.

-Never use a colon to separate a preposition from its objects or a verb from its complements.

Incorrect – Education majors may choose: Biology, Business Education or Chemistry
Incorrect - Internships offer an opportunity to learn about: markets, competition and distribution

Colons within a sentence

-The word following a colon is capitalized only if it begins a complete sentence.

Correct – I know this: Next semester, I will register early.

Correct – These are the supplies you will need: a calculator, a red pencil and a spiral notebook.

Commas (*AP Stylebook*, pages 325-7)

Commas within a sentence:

-When a conjunction such as *and*, *but*, *for*, *nor*, *or*, *so* or *yet* links two clauses that could stand alone as separate sentences, use a comma before the conjunction: *Early registration begins Monday, and students should review the new rules before attempting to register.*

-Similarly, use a comma if the subject of each clause is expressly stated, but do not use a comma when the subject of the two clauses is the same and is not repeated in the second clause.

Correct – The professor visited Washington, and he also plans a side trip to Gettysburg.
Incorrect – The professor visited Washington, and also plans a side trip to Gettysburg.

Commas with essential and non-essential phrases:

-Essential phrases are critical to the reader's understanding of what the author has in mind. Do not set an essential phrase off from the rest of a sentence by commas.

Example – *Jack and Diane had dinner with their friend Tom.* Because Jack and Diane have more than one friend, the inclusion of Tom's name is essential if the reader is to know which friend is meant.

-Non-essential phrases clarify a concept from the preceding phrase but are not critical to the reader's understanding of what the author has in mind. Non-essential phrases should be set off from the rest of the sentence by commas.

Example – *Jack and Diane had dinner with their friend Tom and his mother, Clara.* Tom's name remains essential, but, as he has only one mother, the words *his mother* provide enough information for the reader to understand who is meant. For this reason, the word *Clara* is non-essential and is set off by a comma.

-However, do not place a comma after a title that precedes a name: *Executive Editor Michael Boulder died today.*

Commas in a series:

-Do not put a comma before the conjunction in a simple series: *Beginning Spanish students learn pronunciation, vocabulary and basic grammar.*

-However, use a comma before the concluding conjunction in a series of complex phrases: *The main points to consider are whether the athletes are skillful enough to compete, whether they have the stamina to endure the training, and whether they have the proper mental attitude.*

-Similarly, use a comma before the concluding conjunction in a series that features internal conjunctions: *Ferris' academic colleges include the College of Allied Health Sciences, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the College of Business.*

Miscellaneous comma rules:

-Place a comma before and after the following when they appear in the middle of a sentence:

-A year, if it follows a month and date: *She was born on Dec. 5, 1998, in Big Rapids, Mich.*

-A state, if it follows a city or county name: *She was born in Big Rapids, Mich., on Dec. 5, 1998.*

Non-essential phrases, which clarify a concept from the preceding phrase but are not grammatically necessary to complete the sentence: *I saw my boss, Harold Johnson, in the hall.*

--However, do not place a comma after a title that precedes a name: *Executive Editor Michael Boulder died today.*

-Do not use a comma before Jr.: *She recalled her work with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

Dash (–)

-Used with spaces around it in a sentence to show an abrupt change in thought or emphatic pause: *She went overseas – and loved every minute of it.*

Hyphens (AP Stylebook, page 329)

-Hyphenate between two words when they, together, serve as an adjective to a noun: *A full-time job.* Note: Many such phrases are hyphenated only when they function as adjectives: *She works full time.*

-In a sentence such as *Visitors receive free meals in the student dining center*, no hyphen is used between *student* and *dining* since *student* modifies *dining center*.

-Hyphens are used to show periods spanning years, with no spaces: *2005-2006.*

Quotation marks (AP style, page 334)

-Periods and commas always go within the quotation marks: *“The Bulldogs won.”*

-The dash, semicolon, question mark and exclamation point apply to the quote when they appear inside of the quotation marks. When they appear outside of the quotation marks, they apply to the whole sentence: *Who could believe she would write, “This class is boring!”?*

-However, do not use duplicate punctuation in other cases:

Incorrect – “This class is boring!” she wrote.

Other words and phrases in common use at the University:

-Please note the following differences in possessive naming styles. While *President* generally takes the singular form (in which the apostrophe precedes the final –s), words such as *Deans* and *Founders* take the plural form (in which the apostrophe follows the final –s).

President's Council
Deans' Council
Founders' Room
Founders' Day