Have something to say, and say it as clearly as you can. That is the only secret of style.

Matthew Arnold
Serving 112 California community colleges gives the Chancellor’s Office a very visible and responsible presence; we are the official voice for higher education to many audiences. All of us strive to inspire our readers by providing information about the critical role community colleges play in California’s future. As such, it is important to serve the goal of effective communication in a common voice and with consistent visual branding.

The Office of Communications created the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office Style Guide as a reference for all who write and edit documents for our external audiences. Its primary resource is The Associated Press Stylebook 2010. We reviewed and analyzed numerous educational and editorial guides and based style choices on this research.

Choosing AP means using fewer capitals than many are used to. The case for lowercase is that too many capitalized words in running text results in losing (rather than gaining) importance. Lowercase letters in no way diminish a subject’s credibility or distinction; rather, lowercase letters promote readability and therefore, communicating.

As a companion to the style guide, we present a new e-column, Crisp and Clear Communication, written by Associate Editor of Publications Phawnda Moore. Plan to visit our website: home page, Chancellor’s Office, Reports and Resources.

Please contact Phawnda at pmoore@cccco.edu with any questions about the style guide’s use or applications, or if you wish to offer an idea or example for consideration in its future updates.

Best,

Terri M. Carbaugh
Vice Chancellor for Communications

March 2011
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CHANCELLOR’S OFFICE STYLE as a quick Top Ten List:

1. **Board of governors** – Lowercase *board of governors* when referring to the California Community Colleges Board of Governors alone in text, or when *board of governors* precedes California Community Colleges: *board of governors of the California Community Colleges*.

2. **Chancellor** – In text, capitalize titles, including *chancellor*, only when they precede the name: *Chancellor Jack Scott*. Lowercase titles when used alone or when following names: *the chancellor. Jack Scott, chancellor*.

3. **California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office** – To shorten: *The California Community Colleges* (the system) or *the Chancellor’s Office* (replaces system office). Not CCC or CCCCO. Do not use “system” with *California Community Colleges*, which is a singular system.

4. **Divisions** – Refer to the divisions consistently by their full name. Do not abbreviate, replace “and” with an ampersand, or use acronyms. When the division name is used alone, it retains its capitals: *Government Relations*. If *division* alone refers to a specific division, it is not capitalized: *The division’s staff will respond to the green jobs proposal.*

   - **Academic Affairs**
   - **College Finance and Facilities Planning**
   - **Economic Development and Workforce Preparation**
   - **Government Relations**
   - **Internal Operations**
   - **Legal Affairs**
   - **Office of Communications**
   - **Student Services and Special Programs**
   - **Technology, Research and Information Systems**
5. **112 California Community Colleges** – When referring to the colleges: *the California community colleges, the campuses or California’s community colleges*. Use college with the names of the colleges: *Mendocino College*, not Mendocino. Use the full name of the college: *College of the Sequoias*, not Sequoia College.

6. **Programs, services, initiatives, and committees** – Capitalize only when part of a formal name: *The Chancellor’s Office Steering Committee is listed on the agenda*. When mentioned alone in text, no capitals: *The steering committee is on the agenda*.

7. **Academic year** – Use a slash for an academic/fiscal year: *2010/11*.

8. **Numbers** – Spell out one through nine, except as noted on page 50.
   a. Following dates, omit th, rd, st, nd: not December 21st, *December 21*.
   b. Use periods to separate numbers in zip codes, phones, etc.
   c. In bulleted lists, numbers and percent symbols (*8%*) may replace words, especially for data.

9. **Apostrophes** – Be sure that one is needed; many words are simply plural.

10. **Sentence length** – Aim for an average of 8 to 18 words, but vary length.
**CHANCELLOR’S OFFICE LANGUAGE**

**Mission Statement**

The mission of the California Community Colleges Board of Governors and the state Chancellor’s Office is to empower the community colleges through leadership, advocacy and support.

**Vision Statement**

The California Community Colleges Board of Governors and the chancellor share a vision of a better future for Californians by exemplifying exceptional leadership, advocacy and support on behalf of the community colleges. Their guidance provides access to lifelong learning for all citizens and creates a skilled, progressive workforce to advance the state’s interests.

**Boilerplate**

The California Community Colleges serve more than 2.76 million students and is the largest system of higher education in the nation. The state’s 112 colleges provide workforce training, teach basic math and English, and prepare students for transfer to four-year universities and colleges.
**E-MAIL: Brief Business Exchanges**

Reader-friendly format includes:

- descriptive subject lines
- numbers for multiple steps
- bullets for clarity
- shorter sentences written in clear, understandable language

All business writing rules apply to e-mails. Use capitals where appropriate; avoid both all lowercase and all capitals.

Send “TO” to the person/s that are expected to take action.

Send a “CC” (courtesy copy) to those who need to be informed of your request.

Before forwarding an e-mail, always get permission from the writer.

Generally, it’s best to cover one topic per e-mail because it helps in filing and retrieving them later. If you cover multiple topics in one e-mail, then indicate that in the subject line: *Three steps required for travel to SF.*

E-mails are the property of the Chancellor’s Office and are public documents. They are subject to court subpoena in legal proceedings. As it’s said, an e-mail is about as private as a postcard, so think twice before expressing yourself in a way you might later regret.

**SAMPLE E-MAIL SIGNATURE BLOCK to personalize:**

your name  
your title  
California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office  
1102 Q Street | 4th Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95811.6549  
phone: 916.XXX.XXXX | fax: 916.XXX.XXXX | e-mail: yourname@cccco.edu
WEB: Succinct Brevity

Perhaps the most critical publishing format is the Web. Visitors scan text, impatiently roaming for information. Often they click from page to page, so anticipate this as you create text:

- Consider using a table of contents with links, instead of scrolling.
- Place key information at the top of each page.
- Highlight key words in bold type or color.
- Use descriptive subheads and bulleted lists.
- Use an informal, conversational writing style; use contractions.
- Sentences should be crisp, clear, and to the point.
- Write short paragraphs to communicate a single idea.
- Avoid underlining anything, as it can be confused with a hyperlink.
LETTERS: Brief, Personable, Sincere, Positive

Letter writing has become more conversational in business because:

*USA Today* says the average person reads at eighth- to tenth-grade level.

Fewer words and more contractions make messages easier to read and understand.

Simpler expressions save space – a one-page letter (or less) is ideal.

Use one space after a period. Computer fonts differ from typewriters. The image below, courtesy of Creative Commons Attr. 3.0 and designed by Garenthlwalt, shows “proportional” vs “monospace” spacing. Most computer fonts are proportional and have different spacing than typewriter fonts. An extra space is not only unnecessary, it’s a visual distraction. People generally find proportional typefaces nicer-looking and easier to read, so they appear more often in professionally published material.

If you have been using two spaces (and that includes many), transition comfortably but steadily to what is current. (This spacing applies to everything, not just correspondence.)

There is power in simplicity. Many political leaders are remembered for their simple, one-syllable word sentences:
Ronald Reagan: “Tear down this wall.”
Martin Luther King: “I have a dream.”
Richard Nixon: “I am not a crook.”

The body (message) of the letter should always be single spaced. And many people have larger signatures than what’s allowed in the traditional four lines. So, make it three, five or six if necessary. The guide is to be consistent; when adding space, do so consistently; if tightening, do so consistently on the page.

If you don’t have your reader’s name, write to their title, “Dear Human Resources Manager.” Repeat the title and department on the envelope to assist proper delivery.
**U.S. STATE, ABBREVIATION AND POSTAL CODE CHART**

On letters and envelopes, always use the U.S. Post Office two-capital postal code (for example, California is CA, not Ca.), followed by the five-digit zip code. Notice that there are eight states that are never abbreviated: the names of the two states that are not part of the contiguous United States and of the continental states that are five letters or fewer. (This does not affect their postal code.)

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The Office of Communications works with division authors to produce about 40 professional, interesting, easy to read Chancellor’s Office (legislative) reports a year. A flow chart on page 15 explains the procedure.

Please review the legislative requirements for your report. Then, compose a **draft of about 15-25 pages maximum, at least 3 months before it is due.** If you’d like assistance, please make an appointment with the associate editor of publications; it’s often very helpful to have a first-time meeting. If you have questions please call, we’re here to work with you.

You can see some of the latest reports on the website (home page, Chancellor’s Office, Reports and Resources) for guidance. Generally, the following sections are in a report, but not all reports have all of them, and some have sections not listed.

**Cover** – all reports use a similar design so they look related. Usually the Office of Communications designs the cover, but we can work with authors’ ideas, too. Please call.

**Chancellor’s Letter** to the governor – send a paragraph or two that is unique to your report. Don’t reference the specific legislative bill here.

**Executive Summary** – one page. Begin with the Chancellor’s Office boilerplate (page 7) and reference the Education Code or legislative requirements, if appropriate, or overall sources of funding, grants, etc. Mention the purpose of the report and include some highlights.

**Background / Introduction** – one to three pages. Briefly cover relevant history to provide a better understanding of what follows. Explain how the program or service works, and how it relates to education, etc.

**Reporting Requirements** – please provide the text of the Education Code, etc. from the source that requires the report.

**Methodology** – one page or less. Describe how data or findings were gathered: on site visit, meetings, surveys, cohort groups, research, Chancellor’s Office data, etc.

**Key Findings** – length varies. This is the essence of the report. Organize the information so it is interesting and follows a logical sequence.

**Tables / Charts** – when showing these, provide numbers (check accuracy) and sources. If explaining a grant, state how much, etc. Create headings that explain the numbers.
Conclusions / Recommendations – one page or so. What do the findings tell the reader? If appropriate, what are your recommendations?

Acknowledgments – about one page. List all who assisted on the report, check spelling. The Office of Communications has a standard paragraph and just needs the names, titles, division.

Appendix / Exhibits, etc. – varies.

Following these guidelines will help expedite reports:

- Prepare your report in Word. We can only use Word documents, text and charts.
- Check your draft against what the Legislature is asking for. Keep information current to the year/s of the reporting time.
- Write simply, using a minimum of acronyms. Generally, these would be your report acronym and those that are frequently repeated in the report. Leave out the others.
- Aim for sentences to be 8-18 words in length; vary length. Begin paragraphs with a main idea and expand on it. Write in third person. The text explains “who, what, when, where, why, how.”
- Use bullets for emphasis.
- Edit repetitious words or phrases. Focus on results; minimize details. Tone should be objective, not promotional. Remember that the reader is not necessarily your colleague, so write for the larger audience, a “101” version. Explain unfamiliar terms.
- Save photos as JPEG, send as an attachment.
In order to edit, layout, and print your reports, please submit:

- A hard copy, delivered to the vice chancellor for communications.
- An electronic version, sent to both the vice chancellor for communications and the associate editor of publications.

**Contact info:**
Vice Chancellor for Communications Terri M. Carbaugh
tcarbaugh@cccco.edu

Associate Editor of Publications Phawnda Moore
pmoore@cccco.edu

Division vice chancellors need to approve the report and then sign off on the form below and attach it to the hard copy.

Name of Report______________________________________________________________

Date Due___________________________ Is there a supplement?____________________

Author/Contact for questions/proof____________________________________________

Approved by ___________________________ Date________________________
STEP 1
Division authors review procedure and prepare their report. The Executive Vice Chancellor for Programs sends a reminder to the division.

STEP 2
Three months before due date, division authors submit their report with signed release form and send electronic copies to the Office of Communications:
Vice Chancellor for Communications
Associate Editor of Publications

STEP 3
The Office of Communications edits, designs, proofs and manages printing. Division may be asked to clarify or modify text and confirm print quantity.
Edited / print proofs are approved by:
Chancellor, Executive Vice Chancellor for Programs, Office of Communications, Division Author / Vice Chancellor / Dean

STEP 4
The Office of Communications delivers. Printed copies go to:
Government Relations, Executive Office, Board of Governors.
Electronic copies go to the division to post link to their website.
Web developer posts PDF to the Chancellor’s Office report page.
EDITING and PROOFING: both Content and Consistency

It is recommended to proofread for both content and consistency, each item separately.

**Content Editing** – Read only for content, analyzing if what is being said is clear.

Body (main) text:
- spelling (don’t rely totally on spell-check!)
- punctuation
- grammar
- paragraph organization
- active voice

**Consistency Editing** – On the final pass, check just the layout and formatting, one at a time.

Body (main) text:
- margins
- typeface and point size
- leading/line spacing
- space between paragraphs

Headings:
- typeface and point size
- alignment
- space before and after

Lists:
- typeface and point size
- indents
- space between bullet/number/text
- leading/line spacing
- sequential numbering in procedures
- bullet size

Tables, Charts and Graphics:
- shading in table headers
- indents
- borders
- typeface and point size
- alignment
- space before and after
Lines (rules):
- weight
- lengths
- color
- alignment
- space before and after

Index:
- accurate
- complete

URLs:
- accurate (physically test each site)
- remove links
- no underline, black text

Avoid widows and orphans: It’s often said that "an orphan has no past; a widow has no future." Orphaned lines appear at the start of paragraphs; widowed lines appear at the bottom of paragraphs. Some acceptable solutions to avoiding widows and orphans:

- Forcing a page break early, producing a shorter page
- Rewriting a portion of the paragraph

Watch for rivers and uneven spacing: Random chance can cause a series of lines having word spaces that stack one on top of another. This causes a distracting white streak through the text, called a river. It is easier to see this in a printed proof than on a screen. Rivers, two spaces after sentences, and justified type can create very unattractive, uneven spaces in text and make it harder to read.
“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion it has taken place,” said George Bernard Shaw. Aim to write in a style that connects to the reader.

WRITE FOR THE READER

Practical Considerations:

WHO is your audience? Who will read your report, letter, brochure or flier? What’s the purpose of the information? What is the reader to do with it? Write with intention. Give information, then direction. Work hard so your reader doesn’t have to.

WHAT is the “life” of the piece? Is it a brochure that will be used for two months or an entire year or longer? Be sure to write with its life in mind. Avoid, for example, “next week” or “last year,” use the actual date.

WHEN are your deadlines? Set them, then work backward, so you can proudly say, “Done and done well!”

WHY the reader may ask. Anticipate questions and provide answers.

WHERE and HOW will the information be released? What can you do to ensure its excellence?

Composing the Text: Limit sentences to 8 to 18 words; vary the length of the sentences. In the first 50 words, make your point. Have ONE idea per sentence and ONE MAIN idea per paragraph.

The Office of Communications’ writing references are Associated Press Stylebook (AP) and The Elements of Style by Strunk & White, both classic authorities to writers and editors. Additional references are The Chicago Manual of Style, Garner’s Modern American Usage, Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace, The Elephants of Style, and any current dictionary.
WRITING STYLE: Clear, Concise, Conversational, Inclusive

Write in active voice as much as possible. Below are examples of active voice; it performs the action:

The board approved the request.
John Smith requested his transcripts.
The technology firm leases laptops.

Below are the same sentences in passive voice:
The request was approved by the board.
The transcripts of John Smith were requested.
Laptops are being leased by the technology firm.

Write in the third person (avoid using we, you, or I).

Write in the present tense.

Write with simplicity. Say what you need to say in the simplest terms.

Write inclusively, that is, without bias to race, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, stereotypes. Avoid language that singles out any group, such as those listed below.

Race or ethnicity. The following terms are used by the U.S. Census Bureau:

Asian American – origins in Far East, Southeast Asia, or Indian subcontinent including Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Brunei, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Laos (includes Hmong, Mien-Khmu, Thai Dam and Lao), Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Black or African American (includes Kenyan, Nigerian, or Haitian).

Hispanic and Latino American – origins in the Spanish-speaking nations of Latin America (includes Mexico, Puerto Rico, or Cuba).

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (includes Fijian, Guamanian or Chamorro, Hawaiian, Melanesian, Micronesian Polynesian, Samoan, or Tongan).
American Indian or Alaska Native (includes any of the original peoples of North and South America who maintain tribal affiliation or community attachment, at present 36 tribes).

White American – European descent, Middle East, or North Africa (includes Irish, German, Italian, Near Easterner, Arab, Mexican, Jewish or Polish).

**Age range.** Be as specific as possible and type ages in a hyphenated form (e.g., 18 - 22) rather than under 22.

*Boys and girls* should be used for people of elementary school age and younger.

*Young men or young women* refer to adolescents.

*Men and women* should be used for people over 18.

*Older person* is preferred to elderly.

**Gender.** *They* or *their* is a better choice than pronouns. Avoid he/she or him/her. Avoid using he to mean he or she: The user should enter *their* (or the) password.

**Sexual orientation.** Use *gay, lesbian* or *bisexual* instead of homosexual.

**Disabilities and handicaps.** “People with disabilities are not conditions or diseases. Example: a person is not an epileptic, but rather, a person who has epilepsy. Use *person with a disability* instead of disabled person. Use *person who has had a stroke* instead of stroke victim or stroke sufferer. Use *deaf* (total loss of hearing) or *hard of hearing* (partial loss, from slight to severe).

A handicap is a physical or attitudinal constraint that is imposed upon a person, regardless of whether that person has a disability. Example: Some people with disabilities use wheelchairs. Stairs, narrow doorways, and curbs are handicaps imposed upon people with disabilities who use wheelchairs.” (Adapted from *Disability Etiquette Handbook*, City of San Antonio Disability Access Office, State of California.)

**Stereotypes.** Do not write with a stereotype in mind, whether it is absent-minded professors, ditzy blonde students, or authoritative administrators. For professional roles: *police officer*, not policeman; *mail carrier*, not mailman; *chair*, not chairman, chairperson, or chairwoman.

**REPETITION AND REDUNDANCY**

Grammar Girl says she gets e-mails from readers who complain about wordiness and repetition. Unfortunately they go hand in hand, an example of why “more” may not be better. Prune your writing just as you would your garden. As you refine your thoughts, choose the words that allow communication to take place.
This chapter reviews capitalization, tricky grammar and punctuation and presents the style used at the Chancellor’s Office.

CAPITALIZATION

The starting point is Bryan Garner’s rule, “Use lowercase unless a rule calls for capitalization.” He adds, “Some writers overuse capitalization for emphasis. That’s bad style.” AP also simplifies by eliminating unnecessary capitals to improve readability. Referencing both AP and Garner’s style: a general usage is not capitalized, a specific usage is. This is the criteria for choosing capitalization, not that a word is always capitalized.

Capitalize proper nouns, the unique identification for a person, place, or thing.


Capitalize most abbreviations and acronyms: DSPS. (no periods between letters)

Capitalize specific laws: No Child Left Behind but not the names of generic laws, theories, and hypotheses: law of effect.

Capitalize titles only when used immediately before a name in text.

Chancellor Jack Scott will arrive at noon. When the title follows: Jack Scott, chancellor, will arrive at noon. When referenced without a name: the chancellor.

Capitalize specific courses, programs, initiatives and department titles, such as Anthropology 101, Algebra II, Yoga for Relaxation, French for Travel, English as a Second Language.

Sierra College has an English as a Second Language Division to assist students. (a specific division/department)

Students who qualify for EOPS often take Business English as a Second Language to succeed in the program. (a specific course title)

Do not use quotes around names of courses.
Capitalize formal names of tests and models.

*California Basic Educational Skills Test*, but not when generic: *Students will be given a basic skills test to establish competency in reading, writing and mathematics.*

Do not capitalize generalities: any department, any course such as geography, biology, science, language course titles, such as English as a second language. (as an area of study)

*Sierra College is offering several levels of English as a second language (ESL) classes in advanced writing in the fall. (generic)*

*Students who qualify for EOPS often take an English as a second language course to succeed in the program. (generic)*

**Capitalize**

- U.S. History to 1865
- Intro. to English as a Second Language  
  *(a division or course title)*
- Oregon State
- Western Hemisphere
- Summer Semester 2010
- U.S. Postal Service
- Room 16
- President Lincoln
- Sacramento County
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Star-Spangled Banner
- Bachelor of Arts
- Department of Marine Biology
- Office of Admissions and Records
- Democrat *(refers to the political party)*

**Don’t Capitalize**

- American history *(and other subjects of study)*
- English as a second language, English for speakers of other languages
- state of Oregon
- western United States
- summer semester
- I went to the post office.
- We will assign a room.
- Lincoln was president.
- Placer and Sacramento counties
- the federal government
- the national anthem
- bachelor’s degree in art
- the biology department
- OAR, the admissions office
- democrat *(general philosophical term)*

**TRICKY GRAMMAR**

**ME, MYSELF, and I**

*I* is used as a subject, while *me* is used as an object in a sentence. *Myself* can be used as a compound with *I*, or for emphasis after *I*, but *not* as a substitute for *I* or *me*. When using *I* or *me* as one of two subjects or objects, an easy tip is to use the one that makes sense when the other subject is omitted.

Incorrect: The chancellor recognized Susan, Morgan, and myself.

If there was only one person in the sentence, it would be *me*. That doesn’t change if more people are added.
Correct: The chancellor recognized Susan, Morgan, and me.
Incorrect: Please copy Erik, Marlene, Terri, Chris, and myself on the e-mail.
Correct: Please copy Erik, Marlene, Terri, Chris, and me on the e-mail.

PRONOUNS
Must agree in number and gender with the noun it replaces (singular or plural). Intensive pronouns, ending in self (singular) or selves (plural), are used to emphasize words that precede them in the sentence.

The secretary herself collected all the facts. I myself will handle all the details.
They will file their tax returns themselves. We blame ourselves for not seeing it sooner.

WHO/THAT/WHICH
Use who for human beings and that or which for animals and things.

The dean, who had once taught history, offered to be the historian.

Another guide for which or that is:

which – information that follows that is not essential to the sentence. (use commas)
that – information is essential to the sentence. (no commas)

The cat, which wore a jeweled collar, sat by the window. (adds information)
The cat that wore a jeweled collar and two other cats sat by the window. (tells which one)

SUBJECT/VERB AGREEMENT
The phrases number of, total of, variety of and majority of may take a singular or a plural verb, and depend on whether the writer intends to refer to the group as a whole or to the members of the group. Many words—including faculty, committee, staff, board, team, class, public, group, e-mail, and data—can be both singular and plural.

In general, when number, total, variety or majority is preceded by a, it takes a plural verb: A number of penguins are expected to gather.

In general, when number, total, variety or majority is preceded by the, it takes a singular verb: The number of employees expected to attend is 650.

If percent of is followed by a plural word, it takes a plural verb: More than 60 percent of teachers are voting for the amendment.

With staff, use a singular verb if you are considering the group as a unit: The entire staff is contributing to the charity. If, however, you’re speaking of the staff as individuals, the sentence would read: Staff (members) are notified about an opportunity to study abroad.
Staffs (plural form) should be used when referring to multiple members of a single personnel support group: *The staffs of several departments volunteered to help.*

PREPOSITIONS at the end of sentences
This “don’t” rule once forced people into saying and writing incredibly convoluted sentences. It is now realized that having a sentence end with a preposition is often the simpler and clearer choice. Good examples, some from the stylistically conservative Theodore M. Bernstein, author of *The Careful Writer*, include the following:

- *Where did the quoted material come from?*
- *It’s nothing to sneeze at.*
- *You don’t know what I’ve been through.*
- *Whom shall I ask for?*

PUNCTUATION

*AP* says, “Using punctuation is to make clear the thought that is being expressed. If punctuation does not help make clear what is being said, it should not be there.” Let that thought be a guide in using the following marks.

APOSTROPHE (’)
Use an apostrophe to show missing letters or numbers, plurals and possession. It is often overused.

Use an apostrophe for contractions: *won’t. I’ll. she’ll.*

Use an apostrophe for possessives: *Frances’ minutes.*
*Hers, ours, yours, and theirs show possession, therefore there is no apostrophe.*
*Who’s is the contraction of who is: *Who’s leading the meeting?*
*Whose shows possession: Whose coat was left on the tour bus?*

When single letters and abbreviations form a plural, add an apostrophe and an s: *The student received three A’s, two B’s and several C’s.*

For multiple letters and numbers, including years, add only an s (no apostrophe).
*VIPs. Remember the 1990s. PhDs.*

For plural nouns not ending in s, add ’s: *The women’s loud voices were heard by all.*
For plural nouns ending in *s*, add only an apostrophe to a singular name: *James’* or *es’* to plural names: *the Joneses’, the Harrises’*.

For compound possession, use apostrophes appropriately. When two people share something, they share an apostrophe. When two people have separate things, they each need their own apostrophe.

*You can drop off your gift basket in Yvonne and Chantee’s area. Yvonne’s donation will be cookies and Chantee’s is tea.*

**BRACKETS [ ]**

*Use brackets to correct, explain or comment within quoted material.* Brackets may also be used as parentheses within parentheses. The main test of whether parenthetical construction works is whether the rest of the sentence makes sense without it.

> “Fred must determine whether each campus will be visited [and then decide the order of visitation] before it is presented to the board,” Scott said.

**BULLET (.)**

*Use a bullet to draw the eye quickly to items of assigned equal importance.* There are three accepted ways to use bullets:

1. Begin bulleted entries with a capital and end each with a period. Don’t worry about the capitalized entry containing sentences and /or fragments, consistency is more important.
2. If the listing is very short (one to three words or so), begin with a small letter and use no period.
3. Begin bulleted entries with a small letter, end each item with a semi-colon; use *and* at the end of the next to last entry, put a period at the end.

**COLON (::)**

*Use a colon to promise the completion of something just begun.* Use a colon to introduce a formal statement, a premise, or a conclusion. The first word following the colon should be capitalized if the statement that follows is a complete sentence. Otherwise, make it lowercase.

> *Editing has one guiding principle: Be consistent throughout the document.*

*Use a colon to introduce a list or series.* Numbers are best to either signify an order or to indicate quantity. Otherwise, don’t number (such as when a series completes a sentence).

> *To get organized and bake cookies:*
> 1. Make a shopping list.
> 2. Assemble tools and ingredients.
> 3. Preheat the oven.*
New employees are asked to bring three items: paper, pencil, and a sweater.

A colon follows a salutation: Dear Mr. Perry:

Use a colon to separate elements such as a book’s title and its subtitle.

Jack Scott: My Days as Chancellor

A colon is used to introduce quotations within text. They go outside of quotation marks unless they are part of the quotation itself.

This statement is from an article called Good Advice: “Before you decide to marry a man, check out his relationship with his mother.”

COMMA (,)

Use a comma to signify a slight pause in text, to separate, and to clarify. Use a comma to separate words in a series. Two schools of thought emerge as to whether a comma should be used before the final conjunction (and, or, nor, but). Called a serial comma, or an Oxford or Harvard comma (after the Oxford University Press and Harvard University Press – both prominent advocates of this style), this “most popular punctuation question” has been debated for decades. Most American English authorities, including The Chicago Manual of Style and The Elements of Style, recommend the serial comma.

However . . . newspaper style guides, including AP, once advised against it as a space-saving measure. And so it was taught in the classroom, “When in doubt, leave it out.” Thus, some writers and editors went too far in omitting commas that would aid clarity.

Perhaps bowing to public pressure, AP currently strikes a balance: “Commas in a series are for clarity and prevention of ambiguities. In a simple series, AP doesn’t use a comma before the last item. If the elements are complex, uses commas for all.”

The sentences below are a good example of not needing a serial comma:

Chancellors, presidents and deans were invited.

The menu for the employee picnic included hero sandwiches, pasta salad, chips, cookies and assorted drinks.

All were invited. A menu of familiar items. Here a simple comma is best, especially in shorter sentences where an additional comma doesn’t aid clarity.

However, compare how the use of commas in these sentences gives two different meanings:

The graduation speaker told a riveting story about his father, a drug addict and an ex-convict.

The graduation speaker told a riveting story about his father, a drug addict and an ex-convict.
The first sentence reads as if one person, the father, was a drug addict and an ex-convict. Adding the serial comma in the second sentence clarifies that there were three people.

Legal cases also document the power of a single, missing comma. In one famous case, the omission of a serial comma in a will allowed a judge to divide an inheritance three ways instead of four: “Divide property equally between George, Mary, Ron and Amber.”

Not using a serial comma here raised the question of two people and a couple – or four people – and the legal interpretation may or may not have been what was intended. A vote for clarity.

**Use a comma to set off parenthetical information.**

Terri M. Carbaugh, vice chancellor, will speak at the conference.

**Use a comma to separate days from years in dates.** As for commas after the year in text, the Office of Communications defers to Bryan A. Garner’s flexibility in not making a date an adjective, therefore not needing excessive commas in most cases. Some examples:

- Paige said the deadline is June 1, 2011 for campus press releases. (no comma after year)
- Faye will send the invitations during May 2011 to those on the master list. (no comma)
- September 2010. (not September of 2010 or September, 2010)
- On July 1, 2010, we began a new fiscal year. (comma after year because of the introductory clause)
- But not: The meeting of October 21, 2011 has a full agenda.
- Jerry, a twin, was born April 1, 1944, in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. (One less comma, after the year, would improve the readability of this comma-heavy sentence.)

**A comma is used to set off quoted material.**

Professor Anderson says, "You should know how to use a comma."

**Commas are used to separate parts of geographical references, such as city and state.**

Dallas, Texas, or city and country: Paris, France.

**Commas are used when writing names that are presented surname first:** Miller, Adria.

They are also used before many titles that follow a name: John Lewis, Ph.D.

**Commas are placed before, after or around a noun or pronoun used independently in speaking to some person, place or thing:** I hope, Mark, that your article is published on the cover.

**Commas are often used to begin introductory clauses:** after, although, as, as if, because, before, even, even though, if, since, unless, until, when.

- After the rain stopped, a beautiful rainbow appeared.
- Before you leave the office, you should log off on your computer.
Commas may be used to indicate that a word has been omitted.  
*The cat was white; the dog, brown.* (Here the comma replaces *was.*)

**Use a comma and a conjunction to connect two independent clauses.** The seven conjunctions (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) can be remembered with the acronym FANBOYS. They glue together sentence elements that are equal.  
*He struck out, yet he ran toward first base.*  
*The student applied for financial aid, and she was able to live at home.*

Do not use a comma before Junior or Senior in a name: *Hank R. Henderson Jr.*

**DASHES (—, –)**

**Use dashes to mark an interruption in a sentence.** Dashes are often underused and can clarify a sentence that is clogged up with commas.

**Em dash (—)**

**It is acceptable to use two hyphens instead of an em dash.** Use an em dash to denote a sudden break in thought that causes an abrupt change in sentence structure.  
*Will he—can he—obtain the necessary signatures?*

Do not use a space on either side of an em dash.

**En dash (–)**

**It is acceptable to use one hyphen to serve the place of an en dash.** The en dash is used to indicate continuing or inclusive numbers, such as dates, times or reference numbers. The en dash is also used in place of a hyphen in a compound adjective, one element of which consists of two words or of a hyphenated word: *They decided to catch the New York–London flight.*

**ELLIPSIS DOTS (…)**

**Use ellipsis dots for quotations and pauses.** An ellipsis can be inserted in text by alternating a period with a space, directly after one another.

**Use ellipsis dots to indicate the deletion of one or more words in quotations.** If deleting words would distort the meaning of a quote, do not delete them. In direct quotations, refrain from using ellipses at the beginning or end of a statement.  
*“Going to a community college was the best decision I’ve ever made… I wouldn’t have chosen any other path for my life,”* said the proud alumna.

**Use ellipsis dots to express hesitation or pause within a sentence.**  
*Jacob thought about updating his software… but then he decided to do it later.*
EXCLAMATION POINT (!)

Use an exclamation point to stop, to express amusement, disappointment, or surprise. Use sparingly (try to write expressively rather than use exclamation points). Don’t use in formal text.

HYPHEN (-)

Use a hyphen to join, to form a single idea from two or more words. This mark has been called “the pest of the punctuation family” (Sophie C. Hadida, Your Telltale English 133). Lynne Truss, author of Eats, Shoots and Leaves, goes further. She quotes an old style guide: “If you take hyphens seriously, you will surely go mad.” Woodrow Wilson and Churchill also critiqued them. Yet, we sometimes need hyphens to avoid letter collision: shelllike or shell-like? Coworker or co-worker? When in doubt, check a current dictionary.

Use a hyphen with a compound modifier when it follows the noun it modifies.

Chancellor Jack Scott is a well-known speaker.

Do not use a hyphen when the same word follows the noun it modifies.

The position is full time. (adverb) The class is for the hearing impaired. (noun)

Use a hyphen with prefixes. The following words have a hyphen:

- all- Always hyphenate when it is an adjective: all-star team.
- anti- Hyphenate only if the next word begins with an i or is capitalized: anti-inflammatory.
- co- Hyphenate only if the next element starts with an o: co-organizer, except cooperate, coordinate. Use a hyphen with co-worker, otherwise the brain “sees” coworker.
- half- Sometimes hyphenated, check the dictionary for specific examples.
- pro- Hyphenate in words that denote support for something, as in pro-ecology.

Use hyphens in what are called suspended combinations: fifth- and sixth-grade students, as well as in joining nouns: nineteenth- and twentieth-century.

Use a hyphen in spelled-out fractions: two-thirds, four-fifths.

The word up-to-date is always hyphenated except at the end of a sentence.

Do not use hyphens in open compounds. These are widely considered as single concepts and are not hyphenated, even when they precede a noun they modify: high school, high school student; civil rights, civil rights leader; blood pressure, blood pressure medicine; credit card, credit card debt; ice cream, ice cream cone; real estate, real estate transaction.
Do not use a hyphen to designate dual heritage, whether the terms are used as nouns or adjectives: *African American, Asian American*, etc. (an exception to AP).

**PERIOD (.)**

*Use a period to denote the end of sentences that aren’t questions or exclamations.*

*The sky is cloudy. Kathy asked what time it was.*

If a sentence ends with a word or abbreviation that already has a period, do not use an additional period: *In addition to her clothes, Valerie packed a toothbrush, toothpaste, lotion, shampoo, etc. The meeting starts at 2 p.m.*

*Use a period in abbreviations and lowercase acronyms.* In uppercase acronyms of more than two letters, do not use periods between letters. Use a period between letters in initials and state abbreviations (not postal codes) in text. Do not use spaces after the periods within acronyms to avoid line breaks: *c.o.d. 7:00 a.m. NAACP. U.S.*

Do not use a period with headlines, table headings, brief captions (fragments), signatures, or addresses.

**QUESTION MARK (?)**

*Use a question mark at the end of a direct question.* A question mark follows every question for which an answer is expected. A question mark is not necessary after an indirect question.

*“He asked me ‘Why are you here?’ A foolish question.”*  
*What shall I read? Peter asked what he should read.*

*Use a question mark with quotation marks:* Place question marks within quotations if the question is part of a direct quotation. Otherwise, the question mark goes outside of the quotation.

*Coleen asked, “What time is the meeting?”*  
*Who said “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country”?*

**QUOTATION MARKS (“ “)**

*Use quotation marks to set off direct quotations and for introducing new words or phrases.* Use quotation marks when you’re quoting someone.

*Jose said, “Let’s meet at noon.” “Of course,” LeBaron said, “I will be there tomorrow.”*

*Use quotation marks for partial quotes,* but avoid unnecessary fragments.

*“I refuse to wear that potato sack of a dress.”*
Sandy refused to wear the “potato sack of a dress.”

Use quotation marks for indirect quotes. Do not use quotation marks around single-word indirect quotes, such as yes, no, and why: Tracie could never say no to a friend in need.

Use quotation marks when introducing an unfamiliar phrase, but only for the first reference. Foster youth are “emancipated” when they exit the system. However, emancipated youth are often not prepared to support themselves.

Use quotation marks once to introduce a “spoken” program or a new term; thereafter omit them. “I Can Afford College” is a campaign that delivers a practical and encouraging message to students about applying for financial aid. I Can Afford College representatives explain how to fill out the forms and provide funding options.

Use quotation marks with other punctuation. Commas and periods are always placed inside quotation marks. Colons, semicolons, question marks, and exclamation points are placed inside quotation marks when they are part of a direct quotation; otherwise, place them outside. “Carla didn’t shout ‘Fire!’; she did, however, say that she smelled smoke.” Single quotation marks are used for quotes within quotes, as above.

SEMICOLON (;)
Use a semicolon (kind of a super comma, but not a substitute for one) to link independent clauses that are too closely related to be separate sentences. Semicolons create a more distinct break than commas. Use a semicolon to unite closely connected sentences that usually have no conjunction: The package was sent last week; it arrived today.

Use a semicolon in a series to separate elements that contain an internal comma. He leaves a son, Marc Whalen, of New York; two daughters, Sandra Donahue, of Davis; and Amy Moore, of Boston; and a cousin, Bernard Miller, of Chicago.

SLASH (/)
Use a slash minimally and selectively in business writing: http://www.cccco.edu
You may leave a message on my cell phone 24/7.
This section includes a bit of grammar, punctuation, and commonly misspelled or misused words, as well as the style used at the Chancellor’s Office. For lengthier discussions, refer to the previous chapter, The Rules: a Refresher. The Office of Communications’ style defers to AP and its listed resources, not MS Word Spell Check.

**a, an**

Use *a* before a consonant sound: *a* historical time. *a* one-year employee. *a* universal theme. Use *an* before a vowel sound: *an* energy crisis. *an* honorable administrator. *an* 1840s invention.

**a lot, not alot**

**abbreviations**

These are similar to acronyms; if there’s a chance of misunderstanding, spell out. Do not abbreviate titles before an individual’s name, except Mr., Ms., Mrs., and Dr.

Company/organization names: In text, abbreviate Co., Inc., and Ltd. Spell out association, corporation.

**academic degrees**

If mentioning degrees to establish someone’s credentials, it is best to avoid the abbreviation and use words: *John Jones, who holds a master of arts degree*, rather than *John Jones, MA*. Use a comma to separate the name and degree.

Use abbreviations such as BA, MA, EdD, and PhD only after a full name, never after a last name only. Use periods or not, but be consistent with your choice.

Either say “bachelor of arts” or “master of arts” (no apostrophe) or “bachelor’s degree” or “master’s degree,” *not* bachelor’s of arts or master’s of arts. Associate degree has no apostrophe or *s*. 
When the degree mentioned is specific: *Master of Business Administration*, both the degree and the field are capitalized. However if the word *degree* is used, then it is *not* capitalized: *master of arts degree in business administration*.

*Dr.* refers only to someone in the medical profession (*AP*). Do not use both *Dr.* and *MD* in the same reference: *not Dr. Wally Smith, MD, but Wally Smith, a pediatrician, or Dr. Wally Smith.*

- associate of/in arts: AA
- associate of/in science: AS
- bachelor of arts: BA
- bachelor of science: BS
- master of arts: MA
- master of science: MS
- master of social work: MSW
- master of teaching: MT
- juris doctor: JD
- doctor of education: EdD
- doctor of medicine, medical degree: MD
- doctor of philosophy: PhD
- doctor of public health: DrPH

**academic majors**
Lowercase all majors except those that are proper nouns: a country (European History), a language (German, French, English, Spanish), etc. when used with the word degree.

*She has a bachelor’s degree in history.*

If the major accompanies a specific degree, it is capitalized.

*Master of Science in Education. Bachelor of Science in Nursing.*

**academic programs**
Academic programs, such as career development and college preparation or career technical education, are not capitalized when used generically. (as an area of curriculum)

*The division is considering several new pathways in career development and college preparation.*

If specific, capitalize: *The Career Technical Education Initiative made it possible to expand courses at multiple campuses.*

**accept, except**
*Accept* mean to receive. *Except* means to exclude.

*I only accept written excuses. The office is open daily except Sunday.*
**accompany**

**according to**
Avoid; say instead, “said” or “announced.”

**acknowledgment, not acknowledgement**

**acronyms**
In general, avoid using acronyms for identity. Some readers (especially those outside the Chancellor’s Office) find unfamiliar acronyms confusing, so when writing for the community use acronyms sparingly; don’t make “alphabet soup.” Think of acronyms as an option, not a requirement.

If you use acronyms, do so minimally and in the proper order. The first mention of a proper noun is spelled out, and if there is subsequent reference to it the acronym follows in parentheses: *Telecommunications and Technology Infrastructure Program (TTIP)*.

Thereafter, the acronym, *TTIP*, may be used consistently in place of the full words, no parentheses. If however, a proper noun is followed by minimal, subsequent reference to it, there is no point in using an acronym.

Never use an acronym without first spelling out the words; an acronym is also shared by any other proper noun using the same letters.

**AD**
Acceptable for anno Domini (in the year of the Lord) or “after death,” follows year: 2009 *AD*.

**addresses**
When used as an address, abbreviations are fine for Ave., Blvd., St., Dr. and Rd. Spell out Room, Suite, and Way.

Capitalize and spell out first through ninth that are street names: *606 First St.* or *77 Eighth Ave*.

Use numbers that are an address, even if lower than ten: *7 Orchid St.* or *2 Ocean Ave*.

Use periods to abbreviate post office box: *P. O. Box 200*

Abbreviate compass points that follow numbers: *215 N. 24th Ave.* or *502 199th Ave E*.

Do not abbreviate compass points if there’s no number, or if they precede a number.
*North 24th Ave.* or *West Main St.*
administrator
Do not abbreviate.

adviser, not advisor

advocate
As a verb, “to plead in favor of.”

aesthetic, esthetic
Aesthetic is the preferred spelling.

affect, effect
Garner’s Modern American Usage states: “Using affect (as a verb) means to influence.” “Effect (as a noun) means result.”
   Attendance will affect a student’s grades.
   The effect of his perfect attendance and diligent studying was a 4.0 GPA.

afterward, not afterwards, backwards, towards

“a-g” course requirements

aid, aide
Aid is assistance. An aide is a person who serves as an assistant.
   Jan is an administrative aide in the financial aid office.

all right, not alright

allude, refer
To allude to something is to speak of it without specifically mentioning it. To refer to something is to mention it directly.
   I would like to allude to a comment I heard last week.
   Phuong referred to the ARCC 2006 Report in her methodology.

allusion, illusion
An allusion is an indirect reference. An illusion is an unreal or false impression.
   The writer’s newest novel contains an allusion to a story she wrote years ago.
   The photo of Bonnie with five children gives the illusion that she is taller than she really is.

alma mater
Refers to the school one graduated from or the song of the school attended.
altar, alter
An altar is a table-like platform, typically one used in a religious service. To alter is to change.
    The altar was placed at the front of the stage.
    The tablecloth was too big and had to be altered before the event.

a.m., p.m.
Lowercase, with periods.

amid, not amidst

among, between
Use between for two items; use among for more than two.

ampersand
Best to avoid in text unless part of a proper noun.

and/or
Better to spell out: The penalty for talking on cell phones while driving is a $250 fine or 3 days in jail or both.

annual, inaugural
Something is annual if it has occurred in at least two successive years. When referring to the first occurrence of an event, use inaugural.

annual meeting, annual report
Lowercase unless part of a proper name.

anti-
Do not hyphenate the following, which have their own specific meanings: antibiotic. antibody. anticlimax. antidote. antifreeze. antigen. antihistamine. antiknock. antimatter. antimony. antiparticle. antipasto. antiperspirant. antiphon. antiphony. antiseptic. antiserum. antithesis. antitoxin. antitrust. antitussive.

Consult a current dictionary for specific instances not addressed here.

anticipate, expect
Anticipate means to expect and prepare for something. Expect does not include preparation.
    The state fair expects record attendance at next year’s event.
    They have anticipated it by adding more support staff.

appendix, appendixes
Appendixes is preferred over appendices as the plural of appendix.
arch
No hyphen after this prefix unless it precedes a capitalized word: archbishop.

assembly
Capitalize when part of the proper name for the lower house of a legislature, the California Assembly, the General Assembly, the assembly. Retain capitalization if the state name is dropped but the reference is specific: SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) The state Assembly . . .

awards
Capitalize them: Classified Employee Award, Teacher of the Year.

backward, not backwards

based on
Something is based on or upon something else, not based around or based off of.
   The movie is based on a true story.

basic skills
Not capitalized unless part of a proper noun.

BC
Before Christ, follows the year: 200 BC.

behalf of
In behalf of means for the benefit of or as a champion or friend. On behalf of means as an agent of or in place of.
   The association raised a lot of money in behalf of charity.
   The attorney pleaded on behalf of the defendant.

benefit, benefited, benefiting

Berkeley

beside, besides
Beside means at the side of; besides means in addition to.
   The instructor was beside the student for the demonstration.
   Besides dance, they are considering taking yoga and Pilates.

biannual, biennial, bimonthly, biweekly
Biannual means twice a year.
Biennial means every two years.
Bimonthly means every other month.
**Biweekly** means every other week.

**Bible, bible**  
Capitalize if referring to *The Holy Bible*, lowercase in generic use: *a bible for web design*.

**birth date, not birthdate**

**board, board of directors, board of trustees**  
Capitalize only when part of a proper name: *California Community Colleges Board of Directors*.

**Braille**

**Budget Act**  
Capitalized, with or without a year.

**California**  
Lowercase “state of,” except when it is a part of the official name of a government agency. It is preferred to spell out *California* in text, rather than Calif. Don’t use CA in text.

**California State University**  
Always spell out the official name of a California State University on first reference.

The following campuses are officially “California State University, [campus].” On second reference, these campuses may be referred to as “CSU [campus]” or “Cal State [campus]”: Bakersfield, Channel Islands, Chico, Dominguez Hills, East Bay (formerly Hayward), Fullerton, Los Angeles, Monterey Bay, Northridge, San Bernardino, San Marcos, and Stanislaus

The following campuses are officially “[campus] State University.” On second reference, they may be shortened to “[campus] State”: Humboldt, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, and Sonoma.

The following campuses are exceptions to the rules above: California State University, Fresno (Fresno State); California Maritime Academy (Cal Maritime); California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo (Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo); California State Polytechnic University, Pomona (Cal Poly, Pomona); California State University, Long Beach (CSULB); and California State University, Sacramento (Sacramento State).

**can, may**  
*Can* means able to do something. *May* means having permission to do something.  
*You can register online for the event.*  
*You may ask for a waiver for the county residency requirement.*
**capital, capitol, Capitol**

*Capital* is the city where government is located and is not capitalized.

*Sacramento is our capital.*

*Capitol* can be a generic statement that applies to many.

*Many state capitols are historic landmarks.*

*Capitol* is the building that houses the seat of government and is capitalized.

*We will meet downtown in the lobby of the Capitol for the event.*

**captions**

If a caption is a full sentence with a subject and verb, punctuate it appropriately with a period.

**catalog**

**category**

**child care, not childcare**

**cities**

Do not capitalize “city of” unless it is part of a proper noun.

*I was born in the city of Sacramento. The City of Sacramento is hiring clerks.*

**citywide**

**co-**

Use a hyphen when forming nouns, adjectives, and verbs that indicate occupation or status: *co-author. co-pilot. co-worker. co-star. co-chairman.*

In other combinations, do not use the hyphen unless a new word would be formed: *coed. coeducation. coequal. coexist. coexistence. cooperate. cooperative. coordinate. coordination.* But *co-op.*

Consult a current dictionary for instances not mentioned above.

**codes and regulations:** (Examples are italicized for style guide formatting only.)

**State codes**

*Education Code section 70901*

*Education Code section 70902(b)(4)*

In parens, as a reference, not within a sentence:

*(Ed. Code, § 70901) or (Ed. Code, § 70901.)*

*(Ed. Code, § 70902(b)(4)) or (Ed. Code, § 70902(b)(4).)*
. . . the Sex Equity in Education Act. *(Ed. Code, § 66250 et seq.)*

**State regulations**

*California Code of Regulations, title 5, section 55002*

*California Code of Regulations, title 5, section 55002(a)*

In parens, as a reference, not within a sentence:

(Cal. Code Regs., tit. 5, § 55002) or (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 5, § 55002(a))

**Federal codes**

*42 United States Code section 12131*

In parens, as a reference, not within a sentence:

(42 U.S.C. § 12131) or (42 U.S.C. § 12131.)

. . . the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. *(42 U.S.C. 12111 et seq.)*

**Federal regulations**

*36 Code of Federal Regulations section 1194.24*

In parens, as a reference, not within a sentence:

(36 C.F.R. § 1194.24) or (36 C.F.R. § 1194.24.)

. . . the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. *(20 U.S.C. § 1232g)*

**California session laws**

*Statutes 1919, chapter 178, section 7, pages 267-268*

In parens, as a reference, not within a sentence:

(Stats. 1919, ch. 178, § 7, pp. 267-268)

**collective nouns**

Use singular verbs and pronouns with nouns that represent a unit.

*The team wins more often than they lose.*

Nouns that are plural in form become collective nouns and take singular verbs when regarded as one unit: *A thousand bushels is a good yield. A thousand bushels were created.***

**colleges**

When referring to a California community college in the system, always use the proper full name: *The college is in the Los Rios Community College District.*

If a college name is officially “College of [blank],” do not transpose to “[blank] College.” Do not omit “community” or “city” if a college’s official name is “[blank] Community College” or “[blank] City College.” Do not capitalize college when the word stands alone.

*Dan will attend a seminar at Sacramento City College.*
commit, committed, committing, commitment

committee, group
Unless a committee or group is officially recognized and formally named, avoid capitalizing. Do capitalize the official, proper names of long-standing committees and groups. Do not capitalize subsequent references to these terms.

complement, compliment
Complement means to fill out, make complete or supplement. Compliment means to praise, an expression of courtesy.

  The interior decor complements the architecture.
  Many colleges complimented the tech department for their excellent customer service.

comprises, composed of
Comprise means to contain or include: The Chancellor’s Office comprises 72 districts. (The office contains the districts, not 72 districts contain the office; not The Chancellor’s Office is comprised of 72 districts.) Another option: composed of.

council, counsel
A council is a specific, organized group; counsel is to give advice or guidance.

countywide

course work, but classwork

cut off, cutoff
Cut off is a verb; cutoff is a noun and adjective.

  The river cut off near a neighboring town.
  The cutoff date for the application is August 1.

data
Data takes a plural verb: “The data are current and reflect that the program’s services are beneficial,” Catharine said.

database, data bank

dates
No comma after the year in a date in text: September 2, 2009 is reserved for your event.

decathlon

definitely
**department**
Capitalize department only when part of a proper name. No capital on second reference.

*The California Department of Education will provide the information.*
*The department funds the TANF-CDC program.*

---

**desirable**

**different from, different than**
*Different from* is preferred.

**digital immigrant**
An individual who grew up without digital technology and adopted it later.

**digital native**
An individual who grew up with digital technology.

**dissociate, not disassociate**

**dumbbell**

**e.g.**
*e.g.* means for example: *She organized her sock drawer by length, e.g., ankle, crew, knee-high.*

**e-mail**
*E-mail* is hyphenated and lowercased within a sentence.

**each other, one another**
Use *each other* when there are two people. Use *one another* when there are more than two.

*Mary and Rosa relate well to each other about legislative matters.*
*The accounting team works well with one another.*

**Education Code** (see also codes)

**embarrass**

**emerita, emeritas, emeriti**
*Emerita* means single feminine.
*Emeritas* means single masculine.
*Emeriti* is for plural masculine/feminine/both.
entitled, titled

Entitled means to have the right to something; titled refers to the name of something.

Patty is entitled to retirement benefits after five years of full-time employment.
The Chancellor’s Office produced a new video titled “Partnering with Corporations for Expanded Educational Opportunities.”

every day, everyday

Every day is a noun; everyday is an adjective.

Robert turns on his computer every day.
Gary says it’s an everyday opportunity to welcome visitors.

farther, further

Farther refers to distance; further refers to a greater degree or extent.

Auburn is farther east than Sacramento.
To navigate further, please enter your password.

fax

Not an acronym, not capitalized, an abbreviation for facsimile.

federal

Not capitalized unless part of a proper noun.

The Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development.
A federal officer represented their position.

female, woman

Female can be an adjective or a noun; woman/women is only a noun.

Female administrators are gaining recognition.
Los Angeles County has forty women applying for the position.

first family, first lady

Always lowercase, even when used before the individual’s name.

fiscal, monetary

Fiscal is used for budgetary matters; monetary is used for money supply.

Receipts must be processed before the end of the fiscal year.
She was monetarily needy, but emotionally satisfied.
-fold
No hyphen when using this suffix: twofold, fourfold.

follow up, follow-up
*Follow up* is the verb; *follow-up* is the noun and adjective.
- *Chelle followed up with the vendor to confirm the delivery time.*
- *The team scheduled a follow-up meeting two weeks after the event.*

full-time, full time
Hyphenate only when used as an adjective preceding a noun.
- *Linda is a full-time vice chancellor.*
- *We considered having an intern full time, but four days worked better.*

general apportionment

government
Always lowercase and never abbreviated. The exception is proper nouns.
- *The Government Accountability Office issued a report on community college funding.*

governor
Same capitalization as titles: *California Governor Jerry Brown, the governor’s initiative.*

harass

health care, not healthcare

high tech

hygiene

i.e., e.g.
Neither is a good choice for text: *i.e* means that is, *e.g.* means for example. Both are better for references and tabular matter.

initiatives
Capitalize when used specifically, as a proper noun. Both specific and generic examples, below.
- *The Green Jobs Initiative has gathered support from many local businesses.*
- *Many colleges offer green job training because of the high demand.*
- *President Bush signed the Green Jobs Act.*

inoculate
in regard to, not in regards to
Regarding is OK.

insure, ensure, assure
   Insure is for insurance.
   Life and disability policies insure one’s income.
   Ensure means guarantee.
   The company ensures the accuracy of their testing.
   Assure means to set the mind at ease.
   I assure you the fingerprints don’t match.

Internet, internet, intranet
   Internet is the worldwide research network and is capitalized.
   internet is used as a generic term.
   intranet is a private network; if specific, the Chancellor’s Office Intranet.

italic type
Italicize titles of publications (books, magazines, newspapers), names of ships or trains, movie titles, works of art, foreign phrases, legal case names, or for emphasis. If, inside an italicized name, an article (for example) is quoted, the article is set off with quotes. If type is already italicized, then it is un-italicized for emphasis.

its, it’s
Its is one word, shows possession and doesn’t always have an apostrophe. It’s is a contraction of two words, it is.
   It’s likely that Accounting will expand its division soon.
   Francesca knitted a scarf that was treasured by its new owner.

judgment

junior, senior
Abbreviate Jr. or Sr. and use as a full name, with no comma. Each is a unique, separate person.

laser

laws
Capitalize legislative acts but not laws: Budget Act, not the Kennedy bill.

lay, laid, lie
   Lay (present or future tense) is an action word.
   He lay the blame on someone else. I will lay the paper on the table.
Laid (past tense): He laid the blame on his sister. I laid the paper on the table.
Lie (present or future tense) is a state of reclining: If you lie down, you’ll feel better.
Lay (past tense): After I lay down, I wasn’t dizzy.

left-handed

legislative

Legislature
Capitalize legislature when preceded by the name of a state: California Legislature. Retain capitalization if the state name is dropped but the reference is specific: SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) The state Legislature . . .

liaison

license

lifelong (adjective)

log in, log on, log off
When used as an adjective, a hyphen is added: I want to log in. Please give me the log-in code.

long-range (adjective)

long-term (adjective)

low-income families

maintenance

manageable

memento

millennium

miniature

minuscule

misspell
modifiers
Don’t misplace modifiers: I only eat chocolate. (The only thing I do with chocolate is eat it.)
I eat only chocolate. (I eat nothing but chocolate.)

more than, over
The preferred term in reports for numbers is more than, not over.
Enrollment was predicted at more than 45,000 students.
Over is a better choice for spatial relationships: The plane flew over the city.
Over is more commonly used for ages: Seniors are over 62 years.

multicolored, multimillion, multilateral, multicampus, multilingual, multilanguage

nationwide

necessary

nickel

ninth, ninety

noncredit

nondegree-seeking student

nondiscrimination

nonpreregistered

nonprofit

no-host

Northern California

noticeable

numbers
In text, spell out numbers one through nine. Exceptions:
Grade numbers (unless they begin a sentence): She passed 7th grade.
Age of student/s: Welcome seminars are primarily geared for new students over 18.
Amounts of money: Healthy treats cost $1.25 and up.
Dimensions: The basketball player is 6 feet 4 inches tall.
Highways: Most Northern California visitors have traveled on I-5.
Fact sheets (text or otherwise): numbers may be appropriate.
Phone numbers: use periods (no area code parentheses).

occurred, occurrence

off campus, on campus
As adverb, no hyphens; as adjective, hyphens.
   The two had rented an apartment off campus for the summer.
   On-campus housing was impossible to find during fall semester.

online

on-site
Hyphenate as adjective or adverb.

organizations and institutions
Capitalize the full names. Use lowercase for internal elements when they have widely used
generic terms: board of directors of the American Medical Association.

page numbers
Use figures and lowercase page. The abbreviations are p. for page and pp. for pages. Do not
abbreviate in running text: The table is on page 47.

paragraph
The abbreviation is para.

parallel, paralleled, paralleling

pastime

people, persons
People is preferred to persons in all plural cases. Use person/s when speaking of an individual.
   One person made the difference. The Missing Persons Bureau.
   The American people are becoming more interested in other cultures.

percent
Express percentages as a figure unless they appear at the beginning of a sentence. Spell out the
word percent, except in charts and bulleted items.

perseverance
personifications
Capitalize them: Old Man Winter, Mother Nature

plurals

Most words: Add s. colleges. books.

Words ending in ch, s, sh, ss, x, and z: Add es. dresses. matches. fixes. Exception: monarchs.

Words ending in is: Change is to es. parentheses. analyses.

Words ending in y: If y is preceded by a consonant or qu, change y to i and add es. armies. cities. soliloquies. Exception: proper names. For all other words ending in y, add s. donkeys.

Words ending in o: If o is preceded by a consonant, es is usually added to create a plural. See a dictionary for exceptions. potatoes. echoes. heroes. pianos.

Words ending in f: In general, change f to v and add es. leaves. selves. Exceptions: roofs. chiefs.

Latin endings: Latin-root words ending in us change to i. Those ending in a change to ae. For words ending in um, add s. alumni. alumnae. memorandums.

Form change: Some words change forms when they become plural. men (man). feet (foot). children (child). Note that when an s follows these plurals, it is meant to show possession and thus needs an apostrophe. men’s. children’s.

Words as words: Add an s. No ifs, ands, or buts.

Proper names: Add es to proper names ending in es, s, or z. The Evances went on vacation. Add simply s to those ending with a y: the Kennedys. Exceptions: Alleghenies. Rockies.

Figures: Add s. the 1920s. 747s.

Single letters: Add ’s to a single lowercase letter to make it plural. To make a single uppercase letter plural, add s: the three Rs. p’s and q’s.

Multiple letters/acronyms: Add s. VIPs. MVPs. ABCs. FAFSAs.

p.m.
policymaker, policymaking

political parties and philosophies
Capitalize both the name of the party and the word party if it is used as part of the organization’s proper name. Lowercase when the words refer to a political philosophy.

They believe democracy and communism are incompatible.

postsecondary

precede, preceding

pre-law, pre-medicine

preregistration, preregistered

principal, principle
A principle is a rule or guide. Principal can be used as a noun or adjective to describe something or someone as first in importance.

High school principals from California attended the school planning workshop. They are working to instill the principles of honesty and hard work in the classrooms.

prior to, before
Before is preferred, unless a notion of requirement is involved.

The fee must be paid prior to scheduling the examination.
Steven gathered the facts before making a decision.

privilege

professor
Not abbreviated.

program
Capitalize the name of an educational program, but not program unless that is its title.

Economic and Workforce Development program. (acronym can indicate: EWD vs EWDP)

The Honors Program is designed to provide special educational opportunities for highly motivated students. The program began in 1950.

pronunciation
questionnaire

recommend

referred, reference

relevant

rhythm

schedule

seasons, semesters, and terms
Lowercase unless with a year: spring semester, summer session, spring break, Winter 2010.

semi-
No hyphen is used after semi unless it is connected to a word beginning with i.

    semiconducting, semi-intelligent.

separate

shall, will
First person sentences can use either. Second- and third-person constructions use will unless determination is stressed: We shall overcome the latest challenge.

should, would
Use should to express obligation: We should help the hungry. In most other cases, use would.

Social Security
Always capitalized (U.S.).

Southern California

statewide

subhead

supersede

systemwide

tax-deductible
Below is a list of commonly used computer and Internet terms, acronyms, and software programs. For definitions and expanded information on the terms listed here, consult a computer/Internet dictionary or style guide, such as *The Elements of Internet Style*, published by EEI Press.

Adobe Dreamweaver
Adobe Fireworks
Adobe Flash
Adobe Freehand
Adobe GoLive
Adobe Illustrator
Adobe ImageReady
Adobe InDesign
Adobe PageMaker
Adobe Photoshop
America Online (AOL)
ASCII (pronounced As-kee)
AutoCAD
backbone
backup
BinHex
bit map (or bit-mapped)
BITNET
blog (Web log)
CAD (computer-aided design)
CADD (computer-aided design and drafting)
CD-ROM
chat room
ColdFusion
CompuServe
computer-assisted instruction (CAI)
database
download
e-business, e-commerce, e-learning (generic usage)
E-mail or e-mail
EPS (encapsulated PostScript)
Ethernet
Eudora
Flash Player
firewall
ftp or FTP (file transfer protocol; capped when referring to a specific set of rules that comprise an ftp)
GIF (Graphics Interchange Format)
GUI (Graphical User Interface) home page
HTML (HyperText Markup Language)
HTTP (HyperText Transport Protocol)
information superhighway
Internet/internet (lowercase when used informally to refer to a group of LANs connected by means of a common communications protocol); intranet
Internet2
Internet Explorer
JPG or JPEG (joint photographic experts group)
keyword
LAN (local area network)
laptop computer
listserv
log on
mainframe
Microsoft PowerPoint
MINITAB (the software program; but the company name is Minitab, Inc.)
MS-DOS
Mozilla
multimedia
NCSA Mosaic
Netscape
newsgroup
offline, online (solid as both adjective and adverb)
PC
PNG (portable network graphic)
pop-up menu, pull-down menu
PostScript
Prodigy
QuarkXPress
reboot, reformat
screen saver (two words)
Shockwave Player
spreadsheet
startup disk, startup screen
Sun SPARCstation
TIFF (tagged image file format)
time-sharing
troubleshooting
URL (uniform resource locator)
UNIX
UseNet
user ID (two words)
website; webcast
World Wide Web, Web, WWW
WordPerfect

time
Use lowercase a.m. or p.m. with periods. Noon and midnight are acceptable and preferred to 12 noon or 12 midnight (both repetitious). Use times of just hours to read 10 a.m., not 10:00 a.m.

title 5
Not title V, not capitalized unless at the beginning of a sentence or caption.

toward, not towards

University of California
On first reference, always spell out University of California. UC is acceptable in subsequent references. When referring to a specific campus, use a comma followed by the campus name. University of California, Davis, not University of California at Davis or University of California - Davis. The campuses and their preferred abbreviations are: Berkeley (UC Berkeley), Davis (UC Davis), Irvine (UC Irvine), Los Angeles (UCLA), Merced (UC Merced), Riverside (UC Riverside), San Diego (UC San Diego), San Francisco (UCSF), Santa Barbara (UC Santa Barbara), Santa Cruz (UC Santa Cruz).

Do not say “Universities of California” as the plural. Instead, use University of California campuses.

upward, not upwards
vegetarian

veterans benefits
No apostrophe in either word.

vice chancellor

vice president

villain

who, whom
Use who to refer to a subject; use whom to refer to an object. Another tip: who=he; whom=him. (Sometimes it can be tested by rearranging the sentence.)

“Who will send the e-mail invitation?” Njeri asked.
To whom does the board respond? (The board responds to him.)

workforce, workplace, workstation; but work site

X-ray
The colors were created to complement each other (shown in pairs, below) and coordinate with our logos. (RGB is used for Web and color laser printing; CMYK and Pantone are for commercial printing.) Also you’ll find proofreader’s symbols and books to teach and inspire communicators.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color Code</th>
<th>RGB Values</th>
<th>CMYK Values</th>
<th>Pantone Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>0x96004B</td>
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<td>0.0, 0.76, 0.99</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>712778</td>
<td>0x712778</td>
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<td>0.85, 0.76, 0.27</td>
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<tr>
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<td>100, 100, 22, 14</td>
<td>464</td>
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Some of the Chancellor’s Office logos are shown below. Please contact the Office of Communications staff for assistance in choosing and downloading the correct resolution for your project. We can also assist with outside printing projects.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTRUCTION</th>
<th>MARK</th>
<th>RESULT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>delete</td>
<td>Chancellor’s Office</td>
<td>Chancellor’s Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>delete and close up</td>
<td>Chancellor’s Office</td>
<td>Chancellor’s Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>replace</td>
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<td>California Community Colleges</td>
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<td>transpose</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>close up extra space</td>
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<td>California Community Colleges</td>
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<td>delete line space</td>
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<td>Chancellor’s Office</td>
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<td>California Community Colleges</td>
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<tr>
<td>new paragraph</td>
<td>Today it snowed. Friday began.</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Friday began.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>California Community Colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSTRUCTION</td>
<td>MARK</td>
<td>RESULT</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>move up</td>
<td>California Community Colleges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>move left</td>
<td>California Community Colleges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>let stand (ignore change)</td>
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<td>Chancellor's Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spell out</td>
<td>5 percent made the difference.</td>
<td>Five percent made the difference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abbreviate or use symbol or number</td>
<td>Enrollment increased by 14 percent.</td>
<td>Enrollment increased by 14 percent.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>lower case</td>
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<td>California Community Colleges</td>
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<tr>
<td>period</td>
<td>Visit 112 colleges this year</td>
<td>Visit 112 colleges this year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comma</td>
<td>Yes, there are now 112 colleges.</td>
<td>Yes, there are now 112 colleges.</td>
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<tr>
<td>colon</td>
<td>The following ideas are great</td>
<td>The following ideas are great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>semi-colon</td>
<td>There are 72 districts; however</td>
<td>There are 72 districts; however</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSTRUCTION</td>
<td>MARK</td>
<td>RESULT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
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<td>-----------</td>
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<tr>
<td>quotation marks</td>
<td>&quot;College Fact Sheet&quot;</td>
<td>“College Fact Sheet”</td>
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<td>Chancellor’s Office</td>
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<td>delete the <a href="http://from">http://from</a> URLs</td>
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<td>hyphen</td>
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<td>Sacramento-Auburn region</td>
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<tr>
<td>spelling error</td>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>Initiative</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
RESOURCES

References reviewed in the preparation of the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office Style Guide include:


Strunk & White, *The Elements of Style* (Fourth Edition), Longman, 1999


*A Glossary of Legislative Terms*, California State Legislature

Additional resources, including the style books of other higher educational institutions and organizations:

American Management Association; Bloomsburg University; California Dept. of Education; California State University, Sacramento; City of San Antonio Disability Access Office; Foundation for California Community Colleges; Grinnell College; Los Angeles County Office of Education; Ragan Communications; St. Norbert College; United States Census Bureau; United States Postal Service; University of California, Davis; University of California, Los Angeles; University of Colorado at Boulder; and University of Connecticut.