

# Style and Grammar Guidelines

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## Comma (,)

Use commas to separate words and word groups with a series of three or more.

*The ceremony was attended by family, friends, dogs, and parents.*

Use a comma to separate two adjectives when the word **and** can be inserted between them.

*He is a competent, reliable ice cream salesman.*

Use a comma when an **ly** adjective is used with other adjectives. To test if an **ly** word is an adjective, see if it can be used alone with the noun. If it can, use the comma.

*The spouse was a lonely, young man.*

*He is a newly commissioned officer.*

Use a comma to separate the day of the month from the year and after the year. If any part of the date is omitted, leave out the comma.

*The troops deployed on September 15, 2005, from Fort Benning, Georgia.*

*The essential personnel arrived in March 2006.*

Use a comma to separate two strong clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction: **and, or, but, for, nor**. You can omit the comma if the clauses are both short.

*I have filled out the request form, but it is still pending approval.*

*I dust and he sweeps.*

If the subject does not appear in front of the second verb, do not use a comma.

*He thought quickly when asked that difficult question but still did not answer correctly.*

Do not use a comma between two parts of a compound predicate.

*The results contradicted the hypothesis and indicated that the effect was nonsignificant.*

Do not use a comma to separate parts of a measurement.

*8 years 2 months*

*3 min 40*

## Semicolon (;)

Use a semicolon in place of a period to separate two independent clauses, i.e., sentences that are not joined by a conjunction.

*Call me tomorrow; I will give you my answer then.*

Use a semicolon before introductory words such as *namely*, *however*, *therefore*, *that is*, *i.e.*, *for example*, *e.g.*, or *for instance* when they introduce a complete sentence; and use a comma after the introductory word.

*The commander issued the order; namely, all troops will be in attendance.*

*The review was finished on time; however, it did not meet publication requirements.*

When words such as *therefore* and *however* are used as “interrupters,” use commas.

*I do, however, disagree with the decision.*

Use semicolons to separate units of a series when one or more of the units contain commas.

*This school has students from Seattle, WA; St. Louis, MO; and Houston, TX.*

Use a semicolon between two sentences that are joined by a conjunction, but already have one or more commas within the sentences.

*If he can, he will compete in the event; and if his supervisor is able, he will be there to see him.*

## Colon (:)

Use a colon between a grammatically complete introductory clause, i.e., one that could stand alone as a sentence, and a final phrase or clause that illustrates, explains, or amplifies the preceding thought; and no coordinating conjunction is being used to connect the clauses.. If the clause following the colon is a complete sentence, it begins with a capital letter.

*The author wrote of two surges: A surge toward defeating the enemy and a surge toward uniting the populace during the war.*

*They have agreed on the outcome: Informed soldiers perform better than do uninformed soldiers on the battlefield.*

*I enjoy reading: Histories about the Civil War are among my favorites.*

Use the colon after a complete sentence to introduce a list of items when introductory words such as *namely*, *for example*, or *that is* do not appear.

*You may be required to bring many items: sleeping bags, pans, and warm clothing.*

A colon should not precede a list unless it follows a complete sentence.

*If a student wants to make a good impression on their supervisor and peers, they should*

- a) dress appropriately,*
- b) work competently, and*
- c) be courteous to others.*

*There are three ways a student can make a good impression on his supervisor and his peers:*

- a) Dress appropriately.*
- b) Work competently.*
- c) Be courteous to others.*

(notice the periods at the end of each list portion)

Capitalization and punctuation are optional when using single words or phrases in bulleted form. If each bullet or numbered point is a complete sentence, capitalize the first word and end each sentence with proper ending punctuation. The rule of thumb is to be consistent.

Use a colon to delineate ratios and proportions.

*The proportion (salt : water) was 1:8.*

In references, place a colon between the city of publication and publisher.

*Fort Leavenworth, KS: CSI Press.*

## Hyphen (-)

Do not use a hyphen unless it serves a purpose. If a compound adjective cannot be misread or its meaning is established, a hyphen is not necessary.

*covert operation procedures*  
*health care reform*  
*grade point average*

Phrases that have verb, noun, and adjective forms should appear as separate words when used as verbs and as one word when used as nouns or adjectives.

*The tank's engine will eventually **break down**.* (verb)

*The president had a **breakdown** in communication.* (noun)

*Students will **clean up** their work areas.* (verb)

*Hazardous materials require special **cleanup** procedures.* (adjective)

When adverbs other than *ly* adverbs are used as compound words in front of a noun, hyphenate. When the combination of words is used after the noun, do not hyphenate.

*The **well-respected teacher** accepted the award.*

*The teacher who accepted the award was **well respected**.*

*The hippy had his **much-needed** haircut yesterday.*

*His haircut was **much needed**.*

Hyphenate all compound numbers from twenty-one through ninety-nine and all spelled-out fractions.

*The class had **twenty-four** soldiers in attendance.*

***One-half** of the students were from the same township.*

Hyphenate compounds in which the base word is:

capitalized: *pro-American*

a number: *post-1970*

an abbreviation: *pre-UCMJ hearing*

more than one word: *non-performance-based instruction*

Hyphenate all "self-" compounds whether they are adjectives or nouns, except for selfish and selfless.

*self-addressed*

*self-esteem*

*self-paced*

Use the hyphen with the prefix *re* when the *re* means again, and omitting the hyphen would cause the word to be misunderstood.

*The soldier recovered from his wounds.*

*I re-covered the wall with a second coat.*

Hyphenate prefixes that end in the same vowel the root word begins with, specifically *a* and *i*.

*meta-analysis*

*anti-intellectual*

*ultra-ambitious*

When a prefix ends in one vowel and a root word begins with a different vowel, generally attach them without a hyphen.

*antiaircraft*

*proactive*

Prefixes ending in and roots beginning with *e* and *o* are generally attached without a hyphen.

*preemployment*

*coordinate*

Write most words formed with prefixes as one word instead of hyphenating.

*extracurricular*

*multiphase*

*socioeconomic*

When two or more compound modifiers have a common base, omit the base in all except the last modifier and retain the hyphens.

*Long- and short-term memory*

*2-, 3-, and 10-minute trials*

## Slash (/)

A slash (or virgule) is used to separate alternatives such as *and/or*.  
A slash is also used to represent the word *per* as in *miles/hour*.  
Do not use a slash when a phrase would be clearer.

*Each soldier handed the report to his First Sergeant or Commander.*

not

*Each soldier handed the report to his First Sergeant/Commander.*

Do not use a slash for simple comparisons; use a hyphen or dash instead.

*test-retest criteria... instead of... test/retest criteria*

## Dash (–)

An **en dash**, which is a little longer than a hyphen, is used for periods of time in place of the word *to*.

*The years 1999 – 2001. January – July.*

An **em dash**, used in informal writing, may replace commas, semicolons, colons, and parentheses to indicate added emphasis, an interruption, or an abrupt change of thought. Use sparingly in formal writing where the correct punctuation is more appropriate.

*Please call my supervisor–Mr. Pohlman–for a recommendation.*

(In this example, parentheses or commas would be used in formal writing.)

## Ellipsis (. . .)

If a sentence is meant to trail off, use ellipsis marks without any ending punctuation.

*The commander, after conferring with his unit, considered . . .*

If words are omitted at the end of a quoted sentence, use ellipsis marks followed by the necessary ending punctuation mark.

*The regulation states, “All civilian employees must document overtime . . . .”*

If words are omitted within a quoted sentence, use ellipsis marks in place of the word(s).

*“According to the records, he received . . . awards for outstanding performance.”*

If sentences are omitted between other sentences within a quotation, use ellipsis marks after the ending punctuation mark of the preceding sentence.

*The regulation states, “Agencies may risk losing federal funds. . . . All agencies will be audited annually.”* (The first period has no space before it because it is the ending punctuation mark for the first sentence. After the ellipsis marks, one space follows before the next sentence.)

If quoted material begins with the middle of a sentence, use the ellipsis marks at the beginning of the quotation.

*President Abraham Lincoln, in the Gettysburg address, said, “. . . our fathers brought forth . . . a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that ‘all men are created equal.’”*



## Quotation Marks (“ ”)

Use quotation marks to set off a direct quotation.

*The student asked, “When can I go to the bathroom?”*

*The student asked when he could go to the bathroom.*

Commas and periods are placed inside quotation marks.

*The threat level changed from “Elevated,” to “High,” to “Elevated” again within hours.*

*The lunch lady said, “only two napkins, please.”*

Question marks are placed inside or outside of quotation marks depending upon logic.

*The principal asked, “Will you be at the meeting?”*

*Do you agree with his assessment, “The test is too lengthy”?*

Use quotation marks to introduce a word or phrase used as an ironic comment, as slang, or as an invented or coined expression. Use quotation marks the first time the word or phrase is used; thereafter, do not use quotation marks.

*The student did not display “normal” behavior. Normal behavior would have resulted...*

Use single quotation marks for quotes within quotes.

*Lincoln said, “. . . dedicated to the proposition that ‘all men are created equal.’”*

When quoting material that has grammatical or spelling errors, use [*sic*] italicized in brackets within the quote. *Sic* means **thus : so** and is used in written text to indicate that the original material is to be read as stands.

*The author wrote, “Something better than [*sic*] this has to be ahead.” (then should be than)*

Use quotation marks to set off the title of an article or chapter in a periodical or book when the title is mentioned in the text.

*The author addressed this issue in the chapter, “Wars and Campaigns.”*

## Parentheses ( )

Use parentheses to enclose words or figures that clarify or are used as an aside.

*He finally decided (after talking with the coach) to join cross country.*

*The battle lines were drawn south of the river (See Map 1).*

Periods go inside parentheses only if an entire sentence is inside the parentheses. Otherwise, periods are placed outside the parentheses.

*Please read the meeting minutes. (I enclosed it as Attachment A.)*

*Please read the meeting minutes (Attachment A).*

(When a complete sentence is enclosed in parentheses, place the punctuation inside the parentheses.)  
If only part of a sentence is enclosed in parentheses (like this), place punctuation outside the parentheses (like this).

Half parentheses may be used to enclose numbers of listed items within a sentence.

*The Army needs warriors who can 1) think quickly, 2) adapt to change, and 3) handle adverse situations effectively.*

## Brackets [ ]

Use brackets to enclose parenthetical material that is already within parentheses.

*(The results from the testing [as agreed upon by the state board] are presented in Appendix B.)*

Do not use brackets if the material can be set off easily with commas without confusing the meaning.

*(as the Commander [3rd Squadron] later concluded)*

*(as the Commander, 3rd Squadron, later concluded)*

Use brackets to enclose material inserted in a quotation by someone other than the original writer.

*“It was during the inspection when [the garrison and regiment’s] soldiers were notified.”*

Note: In mathematical material, the placement of brackets and parentheses is reversed; i.e., parentheses appear within brackets.

## Apostrophe (')

Use the apostrophe with contractions. The apostrophe is always placed at the spot where the letter(s) has been removed.

*don't, isn't, can't, I'm, he'll, could've, it's\**

*You're right.*

*She's a great student.*

\*An apostrophe is used for *it's* when it is a contraction for *it is* or *it has*. Otherwise, the word *its* is a possessive pronoun.

Use the apostrophe to show possession.

To show singular possession, place the apostrophe before the *s*.

*The vendor's uniform*

*Robert Jones's office*

To show plural possession, make the noun plural then add the apostrophe.

*Two vendors' uniforms*

Never use an apostrophe with possessive pronouns: *his, hers, its, theirs, ours, yours, whose*. They already show possession so they don't require an apostrophe.

Use the apostrophe and *s* after the second name only if two people possess the same item.

*John and Paul's room passed inspection.* (joint ownership)

*John's and Paul's rooms passed inspection.* (separate ownership)

Use an apostrophe for possessive case in front of a gerund (*ing* verb).

*The teacher's counseling was a great help.*

The plurals for capital letters and numbers used as nouns are not formed with apostrophes.

*The ABCs of being an outstanding student.* (not *ABC's*)

*The 1990s.* (not *1990's*)

The exception is when the meaning would be unclear, for example:

*Dot your I's (not Is) and cross your T's.*

## Expressing Numbers

The numbers *one* through *nine* should be spelled out; use numeric figures for numbers *10* and above.

*We'll need five students to retrieve their books.*

*Please make 15 copies for each of the participants.*

Spell out a number if it begins a sentence, and hyphenate all compound numbers from *twenty-one* through *ninety-nine*.

*Twenty-four students participated in the event.*

Spell out simple fractions and use hyphens with them.

*A two-thirds majority is required for a decision to pass through the Senate.*

A mixed fraction can be expressed in figures unless it is the first word of a sentence.

*We expect a 5½ percent reduction in pudding pops.*

*Three and one-half percent is the approved wage increase for this year.*

Write decimals in numeric figures. Put a zero in front of a decimal unless the decimal itself begins with a zero.

*An additional charge of 0.65 percent will be added to the overhead budget.*

*We expect a minimal .07 deviation in the test results.*

Be consistent in expressing large numbers within a sentence.

*The cost of new equipment will range from two million to five million dollars.*

*The cost of new equipment will range from \$2,000,000 to \$5,000,000.*

Spell out the time of day in text even with half and quarter hours. With *o'clock*, the number is always spelled out.

*I take my dog out for a walk at four thirty every morning.*

*Students eat at five o'clock in the afternoon.*

Use numerals with the time of day when exact times are being emphasized.

*The flight leaves at 9:22 a.m. and is scheduled to arrive at 12:35 p.m.*

Note: Use noon and midnight rather than 12:00 a.m. or 12:00 p.m.

Military time is expressed in a group of four digits ranging from 0001 to 2400. The word *hours* is not used in conjunction with military time.

*Reveille will sound at 0430 in preparation for field day.*

*The flight leaves at 0942 and is scheduled to arrive at 1337.*

Decades can be expressed with 1) lowercase letters, 2) incomplete numerals, or 3) complete numerals. Express decades using incomplete numerals with an apostrophe before the number. When expressing decades in complete numerals, do not use an apostrophe between the year and the *s*.

*During the eighties and nineties, the U.S. Army upgraded its weapon systems.*

*During the '80s and '90s, the U.S. Army upgraded its weapon systems.*

*During the 1980s and 1990s, the U.S. Army upgraded its weapon systems.*

Dates can be expressed as follows:

*The fight is scheduled for July 21.*

*The fight is scheduled for the 21<sup>st</sup> of July.*

## General Grammar Rules

### Use of *i.e.* and *e.g.*

The abbreviation for the Latin *id est* is *i.e.*, meaning “that is” or “in other words.” It is used to clarify a preceding statement by restating the idea more clearly or expanding upon it.

When the abbreviation *i.e.* is used, it will be followed by a comma in the same manner that *that is* would be followed by a comma if spelled out.

*Peaceful organizations, i.e., NATO, the UN, and ISAF are forming at various locations throughout the world.*

*The increased expenses have drained the school’s budget, i.e., there is less money for operating costs.*

The abbreviation for the Latin *exempli gratia* is *e.g.*, meaning “for example.” It is used to clarify a preceding statement by listing examples.

When the abbreviation *e.g.* is used, it will be followed by a comma in the same manner that *for example* would be followed by a comma if spelled out.

*Separate peaceful organizations are now combining, e.g., NATO, the UN and ISAF.*

*The school’s operating expenses have increased, e.g., utilities, administration, and computer requisition.*

Since *e.g.* indicates a partial list, it is redundant to add “*etc.*” at the end of a list introduced by this abbreviation.

Note: In order to avoid confusion in remembering the proper use of each abbreviation, think of *e.g.* as “Example Given,” and *i.e.* as “In Effect.”

## **a vs. an**

Use “a” when the first letter of the word following has the sound of a consonant.

*a fighter*

*a hotel*

Use “an” when the first letter of the word following has the sound of a vowel.

*an FBI agent (pronounced ef)*

*an honor code*

*an unusual situation*

## **Who vs. Which vs. That**

*Who* refers to people. *That* and *which* refer to groups or things.

*The teacher is the one who recommended the idea.*

*He is in the class where the majority got an A.*

*That* introduces essential clauses; *which* introduces nonessential clauses. Essential clauses do not have commas surrounding them; nonessential clauses do contain commas.

*I do not read material that speaks negatively of school lunches.*

*The article on awesome yo-yo trick, which appeared in Pohlman Quarterly, was very interesting.*

If *this*, *that*, *these*, or *those* has already introduced an essential clause, use *which* to introduce the next clause, whether it is essential or nonessential.

*That is a decision which only the principal can make.*

*Those recommendations, which we have proposed, will need to be decided upon.*

## Who and Whom

Use the *he/him* method to decide which word is correct.

he = who  
him = whom

*Who/Whom wrote the memorandum?* **He** wrote the memorandum. Therefore, Who is correct.

*For who/whom should I vote?* Should I vote for **Him**? Therefore, whom is correct.

## Whoever and Whomever

Use the *-ever* suffix when who or whom can fit into two clauses in the sentence.

*Give the report to whoever/whomever asks for it first.* Give the report to Him (not He). He (not Him) asks for it first.

Because we can substitute *him* and *he* in both clauses, we must use the *-ever* suffix. To determine whether to use *whoever* or *whomever*, use this rule:

him + he = whoever  
him + him = whomever

Therefore, *Give the report to whoever asks for it first.*

*We will hire whoever/whomever you recommend.*

We will hire *him*. You recommend *him*.  
him + him = whomever

*We will hire whoever/whomever is most qualified.*  
We will hire *him*. *He* is most qualified.  
him + he = whoever



## Adjective and Adverb Comparison

**Adjectives** are words that describe nouns or pronouns. They may come before the word they describe or they may follow the word they describe.

**Adverbs** are words that modify everything but nouns and pronouns. They modify adjectives, verbs, and other adverbs. A word is an adverb if it answers *how*, *when*, or *where*.

When comparing two things, add the suffix *-er*; three or more things, add *-est*.

One	Two	Three or more
strong	stronger	strongest

Generally, for words of three or more syllables, don't add *-er* or *-est*. Use *more* and *most* effective more effective most effective.

## Prepositions

**Prepositions** are words such as *at*, *by*, *in*, *to*, *from*, *with*, etc. You may end a sentence with a preposition.

*How many students can we count on?*

*We have so much to be thankful for.*

**Between** refers to two. **Among** is used for three or more.

*Divide the work between the two of you.*

*Divide the work among the three of you.*

The word **like**, when used to show comparison, is a preposition, meaning that it should be followed by an object of the preposition but not by a subject and verb. Use the connectors *as* or *as if* when following a comparison of two pairs of subjects and verbs.

*He looks like a professional soldier.*

*You look as if you are upset.*

## Affect vs. Effect

Use **effect** when you mean “bring about” or “brought about,” “cause” or “caused.”

Use **effect** when you mean “result.”

Use **effect** whenever any of these words precede it: *a, an, any, the, take, into, no.*

*What effect did the presentation have on the audience?*

*The book had a lasting effect on my beliefs.*

*Has the experience produced any adverse effects?*

Use the verb **affect** when you mean “to influence” rather than “to cause.”

*How do the budget cuts affect the school’s staffing?*

Use the noun **affect** to mean “emotional expression.”

*The football player showed little affect when told of the accusation.*

## Lay vs. Lie

	<u>Present Tense</u>	<u>Past Tense</u>	<u>Participle</u>
To recline	lie, lying	lay	has/have/had lain
To put or place	lay, laying	laid	has/have/had laid
To tell a falsehood lie,	lying	lied	has/have/had lied