



Writing and Design Style Guide

Vocabulary and punctuation

For matters not handled in this document, we refer to the [Chicago Manual of Style](#).

acronyms: On first use, spell out the phrase followed with the acronym in parentheses, then use the acronym throughout. For example: Philip Glass Ensemble (PGE). For especially long documents, include an acronym list.

ampersand (&): Only use the ampersand character as a last resort for lowest character counts (such as with Twitter). Otherwise, spell out the word *and*. If you use the ampersand for stylistic reasons, be sure to apply it consistently.

and: See *comma* and *ampersand*.

assure, ensure, insure: Use *assure* when you are convincing someone of something: “I assure you that it will work.” Use *ensure* when you are making sure of something: “Save your work to ensure that it will not be lost.” Only use *insure* when talking about insurance: “I paid State Farm to insure my boat.”

case/capitalization: Capitalize only proper nouns, such as the names of people, days, countries, companies, etc. Do not capitalize merely to emphasize words. See *heads/subheads* and *bullets*.

comma (,): In a series of words or phrases separated by commas, always use a comma before the conjunction. For example: cats, dogs, and mice.

i.e., e.g.: Use *for example*, *in other words*, or other phrases instead of these abbreviations. However if you must use them, they are typically set preceded by a colon, with a period after each letter, and followed by a comma: “Do the usual routine: e.g., eat, clean, and sleep” You would use e.g. instead of “for example,” and use i.e. instead of “in other words.”

ellipsis (...): There should be only three dots in an ellipsis. If the ellipsis appears at the end of a sentence, follow it with a period. Also see *period*.

email: Common noun. Never refer to this as electronic mail. Spell it as a single word with no hyphen. Unless specifically directed to do otherwise, email addresses are generally typed using all lowercase letters.

ensure: See *assure*, *ensure*, *insure*

farther, further: Use *farther* for physical distance: “I drove farther than she did.” Use *further* to mean *additional*: “For further discussion, see me later.”

hanged, hung: People are hanged, objects are hung.

hyphen: When a combination of words creates an adjective phrase, use hyphens where necessary to clearly convey meaning. However, when the meaning is clear without the hyphen, omit it. For example: *Centrally located vault* is clear without a hyphen. However, *small business advertisement* should be hyphenated to *small-business advertisement* if it refers to an ad for a small business, or *small business-advertisement* if it refers to a business ad that is small. Also see *email* and *multicore*.

i.e.: see *i.e.*, *e.g.*

internet: Common noun: do not capitalize.

lay, lie, laid, lain: Lay and laid mean to set something down. Lie, lay, and lain mean the subject is setting itself down.

lay (laying): present-tense verb, subject is acting on the object: "I lay the book down." Past-tense of this word is laid: "I laid that down yesterday." The past-participle of this word is also laid: "She must have laid the book down."

lie (lying): present-tense verb, subject is doing the action: "I lie down to sleep." The past-tense of this word is lay. "I lay on that couch all night." The past-participle of this word is *lain*: "She would have lain in bed all day."

insure: See assure, ensure, insure

multicore: Common noun. Spell it as a single word with no hyphen.

MB, W, etc: Always place a single space between numbers and the abbreviation to denote what is being described, such as MB for megabyte or W for Watt. For example, 15 MB.

numbers/units: Always use numerals when citing quantities. The value of a quantity is written as a number followed by a space and a unit symbol. For example: 2.5 kg, or 6 MB. When used in a sentence, either spell out all numbers, or spell out numbers from zero to ten, and use numerals for numbers 11 and higher.

period (.): Always place only one space after the period or other ending punctuation at the end of a sentence. Also see *ellipse* and *space*.

quotation marks ("): Always place the terminating punctuation of a sentence inside the quotation marks: "This is a sentence." In cases where you included quoted content in a sentence, place the ending punctuation inside the quotation marks unless it is a nested quotation: I will sing "Let it Be." "He was singing the song 'Let It Be'."

space: Always place just one space after a period or other punctuation at the end of a sentence. The "two spaces" rule is only applicable with non-proportional type such as with older typewriters.

toward, towards: Both are acceptable, however favor *toward* for American audiences.

tradeshow: Common noun. Spell as one word.

versus, vs.: Except for very formal writing, use the abbreviation, always with a period after the second letter: "cats vs. dogs."

web, website, web page: Common nouns. *Website* should be spelled as a single word, however continue to split *web page* into two words. Refer to “the web,” not to “the worldwide web.”

white paper: Spell as two words.

worldwide: Spell as a single word.

Document design: Look and feel

bullets: In lists, use bullets to delineate each item. Use numbers only if the specific order of the items is important. Nest bullets when necessary, using a different symbol at the beginning of nested items. Limit lists to no more than three levels. Ideally the items should be written in a similar voice, tense, and structure. Use sentence case for each item unless it is only one or two words per item. See *case/capitalization*.

colors: Specify your company colors in all four of the following methods so that you have adequate control over how your color looks in different uses:

Pantone number (PMS): Mainly used for merchandising. Example: 2208 C

CMYK: Used for process color printing. Example: 69,42,31,4

Hex: Used for online applications. Example: #578096

RGB: 87,128,150

heads/subheads: Heads and subheads should be designed such that the size, color, and weight of the text will graphically inform the reader where they are in the hierarchy of the document. There are four general styles of capitalization, as shown below. Case the heads/subheads consistently throughout the document, typically using sentence case.

sentence case: Capitalize only the first word (and proper nouns).

title case: Capitalize every word except articles (a, the), conjunctions (and, to).

lower case: Set every word entirely in lower-case letters.

upper case: Set every word entirely in upper-case letters.

hyperlinks: Any item that is clickable should be set in a style that visually sets it apart from normal text, such as underlined. The wording of hyperlinks should be active and inform the reader what will happen if the link is clicked (verb-based link text), or what content the click will make available (noun-based link text). Whether verb- or noun-based, apply a linking style as consistently as possible. Examples:

Verb-based link: [Download the report](#) today

Noun-based link: Download the [Music Review Report](#) today.