

Guidelines for Writers

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Introduction

In order to present Texas Tech University to the world as a quality institution, all written materials must be of the highest quality. To accomplish that goal, adherence to a consistent editorial style is essential.

Writers should speak with one voice, present information clearly and communicate precisely the messages of the system and its two universities.

Texas Tech University uses “The Associated Press Stylebook” as a basic style guide. In certain instances, however, journalistic style may not be appropriate. When writing for a specific discipline or journal, it is appropriate to use that discipline’s preferred style manual.

Before submitting copy for publication, writers and editors should read copy for accuracy and check thoroughly for errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation. Remember, the spell-check option such as on Microsoft Word will check only for correct spelling of a word; the program does not check for proper use of a word. It is expensive to correct errors in later stages of production.

Proper Names at Texas Tech University

First Reference

Texas Tech University is one of three institutions that make up the Texas Tech University System. Also in the system are Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center and Angelo State University. The full name of the institution should be used on first reference:

- Texas Tech University
- Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center
- Angelo State University
- Texas Tech University System

Subsequent References

After the first reference, Texas Tech may be used to refer to Texas Tech University. Because the word university can apply to all three entities of the Texas Tech University System, it must be clear that it refers only to the academic campus. If “university” is used in this manner, use lower case letters. Avoid all uses of “Tech” alone as this implies a technical institution.

For Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center: Never use “Texas Tech” on second reference to mean the Health Sciences Center. Never use “Texas Tech Health Sciences Center” on any reference. The proper name, Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, must be used on first reference. On second reference, Health Sciences Center may be used. Health Sciences Center is always capitalized.

Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center has regional campuses in Amarillo, Dallas/Ft. Worth, Abilene, El Paso, and the Permian Basin, as well as in Lubbock. Use a hyphen and the location when referring to the campus in general, for example, “Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center – El Paso.”

For Angelo State University: On second reference using Angelo State or ASU is acceptable.

For Texas Tech University System: When writing about the comprehensive organization that includes Texas Tech University, Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center and Angelo State University, it is acceptable to use “the system” on second reference.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations such as TTU, TTUHSC, HSC, ASU and TTUS are permissible. Never use TTHSC to refer to the Health Sciences Center. Acronyms should be used sparingly and only when the university name must be used multiple times.

Do not abbreviate the names of colleges or schools.

Titles for Individuals

Academic Degrees

For Texas Tech University: Degrees are not used after a person’s name. The person’s specialty should be stated in the first or second reference. Using the last name alone is acceptable after the first reference. For example:

- Howard Small will lecture to the class. Small is an associate professor in the Department of English at the University of Tulsa.
- Keith Edwards, a professor of genetics, will lecture on the Texas Tech University campus tonight. Edwards will answer questions after his lecture.

The Health Sciences Center and Angelo State may have differing style requirements. The writer should follow the style used at his/her institution.

Institutional Titles

A formal title is capitalized when it precedes a name, but is not capitalized when it follows a name. For example:

- President John Smith
- John Smith, president

“Professor” may be used as a formal title when a person holds that distinction. When the title precedes a proper name, it is capitalized and never abbreviated. When “professor” follows a proper name, it is preceded by appropriate rank, i.e., “assistant” or “associate” and is not capitalized.

Courtesy Titles

“Mr.,” “Mrs.,” “Miss” and “Ms.” are social or courtesy titles and should be avoided. On second reference, refer to people, men and women, by their last name only. In cases of sensitive development publications, if a courtesy title is used, always use the individual’s preference. Avoiding social titles can help lessen chances for sexism in writing.

Group Designation

“Faculty” and “staff” are collective nouns that may be used in the singular or in the plural. Whether the writer chooses singular or plural, antecedents should agree.

Abbreviations

In publications, writers and editors should avoid abbreviations wherever possible. Abbreviations should be understood by the general public.

Acronyms

If acronyms are used, do so sparingly and only when the institution or organization's name must be used multiple times in a document. If an acronym is to be used, follow the name of the institution or organization with the abbreviation or acronym in parentheses. An acronym should only be used if it is commonly used for the institution or agency. Do not make up an acronym when one is not commonly in use.

For example: The Institute of Environmental and Human Health (TIEHH).

Names of States

In press releases, the following style should be used when state names follow a city name:

Ala.	La.	Ohio
Alaska	Maine	Okla.
Ariz.	Md.	Ore.
Ark.	Mass.	Pa.
Calif.	Mich.	R.I.
Colo.	Minn.	S.C.
Conn.	Miss.	S.D.
Del.	Mo.	Tenn.
Fla.	Mont.	Texas
Ga.	Neb.	Utah
Hawaii	Nev.	Vt.
Idaho	N.H.	Va.
Ill.	N.J.	Wash.
Ind.	N.M.	W.Va.
Iowa	N.Y.	Wis.
Kan.	N.C.	Wyo.
Ky.	N.D.	

Months

Spell out the names of months in text material when they stand alone.

The following abbreviations are used when providing a date, as in Jan. 13.

Jan.	July
Feb.	Aug.
March	Sept.
April	Oct.
May	Nov.
June	Dec.

Businesses

Use “Co.,” “Cos.,” “Corp.” or “Inc.” for businesses that use “Company,” “Companies,” “Corporation” or “Incorporated” after their names.

Spell out the word if it falls within a business name, for example, “Aluminum Company of America.”

Time of Day

For times, use “a.m.” and “p.m.” with the hour.

Use “noon” instead of “12 p.m.”

Use “midnight” instead of “12 a.m.”

Do not use “12 noon” or “12 midnight” as these terms are redundant.

Capitalization

Titles

Use lower case for professional titles unless they immediately precede a name. When a person is identified strictly by title on second or subsequent references, the title is not capitalized. For example,

- John Smith, president, spoke Friday.
- President John Smith awarded staff excellence awards Monday.
- The president spoke to the Lady Raiders after the team’s win.

Degrees

Capitalize academic degrees as follows:

- Ph.D., M.D., M.S., M.A., B.S., B.A.
- Always include the periods.
- Use these abbreviations only after a complete name. Do not use with only a last name.
- In news releases, limit designations to only two degrees.

Generic terms for degrees are not capitalized, for example: “doctoral degree” or “doctorate,” “master’s degree,” “bachelor’s degree.” If you are using the formal name of a degree, it is capitalized, for example: he earned a Master of Science degree from Texas Tech University.

Academic Subjects

Avoid capitalizing an academic subject when it is used as a general field of study. Capitalize academic subjects when they are part of the official title of a university entity, when they are the name of a language, and when they are the official title of a course or a short title that includes the course number. For example:

- “The College of Mass Communications offers programs in advertising, journalism, telecommunications and public relations.”
- She majored in chemical engineering and minored in Russian.
- Department of Chemical Engineering

- Department of English
- School of Law
- Area of Accounting
- Women's Studies Program
- He teaches Sociology 3350.

Other University-Related Uses

Capitalize "institute," "center," "program," "division" or "office" when it is part of the formal name, but not when used alone or informally. For example:

- The Center for Applied International Development Studies is the sponsor.
- The center uses advanced technology in research programs.

It is appropriate to refer to a center, institute, program, division or office by the appropriate designation, in lower case letters, on subsequent references. For example:

- The International Center for Arid and Semiarid Land Studies received a major grant today. The center will use the money to start a new project.

Avoid capitalizing such words as "freshman," "senior" or "graduate" when the words refer to a stage of study or the classification of a student rather than to the group. For example:

- She was a freshman, majoring in agricultural communications.

Government

Avoid capitalizing the words "city," "government," "federal" or "state." For example:

- United States government
- federal government
- the state Legislature
- Texas Legislature
- the state of Texas, unless referring to the state government, then State is capitalized
- the city of Lubbock, unless referring to the city government, then City is capitalized

Capitalize the formal names of federal or state agencies. For example:

- U.S. Department of Defense
- Texas Department of Agriculture

Seasons and Location

Use lower case for seasons. For example:

- Transfer students may begin studies in the spring, summer or fall.
- The spring semester begins Wednesday.

Capitalize "west" and other compass points when referring to a region: For example:

- In architecture and lifestyle, Texas Tech University reflects the American West.
- The people of West Texas were determined to have their own university.

Use lower case for compass points when indicating a direction. For example:

- Many students travel west to the recreation areas of New Mexico.

Racial and Ethnic

Capitalize the proper names of nationalities, peoples, races and tribes. For example:

Arab	Asian
Hispanic	Cherokee
Arabic	Lakota
Jewish	Chinese
African-American	Eskimo
Latin American	American Indian on first reference, Indian on 2nd
Japanese	
Caucasian	

Lower case “black,” “white” and other racial designations, whether used as adjectives or nouns.

Numbers

General Use

Spell out numbers one through nine and first through ninth.

Use figures for numbers 10 and greater. Also use figures to refer to a numerical ranking, a unit of scientific measurement, a percentage or a unit of money. For example:

- Two
- 300
- No. 1
- 10
- 5 percent
- 10th
- 1,040
- 45 kg
- \$5 million
- 7 degrees Celsius or Fahrenheit

Treat numbers consistently within a category. For example:

- “Texas Tech awarded 2,000 bachelor’s degrees, 857 master’s degrees, 74 doctoral degrees and 3 honorary degrees.”

Starting a Sentence

Always spell out a number at the beginning of a sentence. A better approach is to rewrite the sentence to avoid using a number at the beginning. For example:

- **INSTEAD OF:** Eight hundred and eighty five architecture majors are included in Texas Tech University’s total enrollment of 28,000.”
- **TRY:** Of Texas Tech’s total enrollment of 28,000 students, 885 are architecture majors.

Percentages, Fractions, Large Numbers

Use numerals for percentages and spell out percent. For example:

- 90 percent
- 3 percent

Spell out fractions in text material. Hyphenate fractions when they are used as adjectives or adverbs. For example:

- The book is three-fourths complete.

Use a comma in numerals of 1,000 and above except for temperatures, years, street addresses, broadcast frequencies, room numbers, serial numbers and telephone numbers. For example:

- 2,354
- 3818 degrees Celsius
- 2000 B.C.
- (806) 742-2011

Punctuation

Serial Comma

A comma is not required before “and” or “or” in a series of three or more items unless it improves clarity. For example:

- Required courses include English, history and economics.
- Women’s sports now include basketball, softball, golf, tennis and soccer.
- Will you take your tests on Monday, Tuesday or Thursday?
- The departments of Surgery, Obstetrics and Gynecology, and Family and Community Medicine will have representatives at the job fair.

Commas and Multiple Adjectives

Use a comma to separate two or more adjectives equal in rank preceding a noun. For example:

- The summer was a long, hot season. (equal)
- She wore a cheap wool coat. (unequal)

Commas in Dates

Use commas in full dates, but not between month and year or season and year. A comma also should follow the year when used with a month and day in the middle of a sentence. For example:

- The building will be completed in July 2004.
- He was on sabbatical during summer 2001.
- Nov. 22, 1963
- June 6, 1944, was D-Day.

Commas in Names

Associated Press style requires that a comma not be used to separate a name and “Jr.” or “Sr.” or a name and a numeral. For example:

- John D. Rockefeller III

Hyphenation

Hyphenate compound words used as adjectives, but not those that include an adverb ending in “ly.” For example:

- The newly appointed director discussed the fund-raising program with her staff.
- Fund raising is challenging.
- Students need high-tech skills.

Apostrophe for Possession

Use the apostrophe to indicate possession. Note however, that “its” is a possessive pronoun that lacks an apostrophe. “It’s” is a contraction of “it is.”

Apostrophe for Plurals

When words designate a word, do not use ’s (apostrophe s) to indicate plural. For example: No ‘ifs,’ ‘ands’ or ‘buts.’

Plurals of figures add an s not an ’s (apostrophe s). For example:

- 1920s
- 727s
- low 20s

For plurals of single letters, use ’s: For example:

- Mind your p’s and q’s
- Three R’s
- Four A’s and a B

For plurals of multiple letters, including acronyms, add s. For example:

- ABCs
- IOUs
- VIPs

Composition Titles

Composition titles are the names of books, movies, operas, plays, poems, songs, television programs, lectures, speeches, works of art, etc. Associated Press style requires that these titles are enclosed in quotation marks and are never italicized. For example:

- “Time” magazine
- “Washington Post”

Quotation Marks

Do not use quotation marks, bold font or italics casually or for emphasis.

Commas, periods, question marks, bold font, underline or italics and exclamation points always go within quotation marks.

Exclamation Marks

Avoid exclamation marks for emphasis. Use them only sparingly for emotion or a strong feeling.

General Style

The following words have more than one spelling. These are preferred versions:

- Acknowledgment
- Adviser
- Judgment
- Percent
- Counselor

- Catalog

For publications, the names of companies and corporations that support Texas Tech programs should be spelled and punctuated as they appear on their letterhead or corporate statements. For example:

- E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Co., Inc.

When referring to equipment that has been donated to Texas Tech, give the proper trade name and spell the company correctly. For example:

- Microsoft Windows software

Avoid redundancies. For example:

- INSTEAD OF: most unique.
- USE unique

Avoid passive voice. For example:

- INSTEAD OF: The increase in salaries was approved by the regents.
- TRY: The regents approved the increase in salaries.

Avoid beginning sentences with “There are” and “It is.”

In formal writing, avoid first person (I, we) and second person (you).

In less formal documents, first and second person sometimes may be used to create a more personal tone.

Diversity

Every effort should be made to include women and minorities in photographs and copy. Access for persons with disabilities is often best illustrated in photographic images.

Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Language

It is recommended that publications and letterhead from the Texas Tech University System, Texas Tech University and the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center should include some form of Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action statement.

At a minimum, it is recommended that you use: “An EEO/Affirmative Action Institution” on your publications.

For other wording, or for questions, please contact Julio Llanas in the Equal Employment Opportunity Office at (806) 742-3627.

Terminology

Re-read copy carefully to avoid racist, sexist or insensitive implications.

“Handicapped,” “disabled” and “impaired” should be used carefully and only when clearly pertinent and appropriate for your material. Keep in mind the following meanings and choices:

- Disabled is a term describing an individual’s ability to do something independently.
- Impaired implies difficulties in handling certain tasks.

- Handicapped should be avoided to describe a disability. The best way to describe disabled individuals is “persons with disabilities.”

Gender-Specific Language

Writers of Texas Tech publications should avoid suggestions that programs and aspects of general university life are limited to or directed at a specific gender.

Do not use “he” when the intent is “he or she” or “she or he.” For example:

- **INSTEAD OF:** A student applying for financial aid should file his application for admission by Jan. 1.
- **TRY:** Students applying for financial aid should file their applications for admission by Jan. 1.
- **INSTEAD OF:** The student must have an overall grade-point-average of at least 3.0 to satisfy the requirements of his school.
- **TRY:** A 3.0 grade-point-average is required to satisfy the requirements of the school.

Though “he or she” or “he/she” may be used occasionally, careful attention to writing will avoid awkward language and the over-use of these terms.

In some cases, the male and female references can be alternated. In other cases, no gender-specific word need be used at all.

Proper Gender Use

When reference to a specific gender is necessary, “men” and “women” generally are the preferred titles. For example:

- Texas Tech University men may belong to several Greek and service organizations.
- Texas Tech University women have built an enviable reputation on the basketball court.

Sometimes “male” and “female” may be appropriate. For example:

- Male students are housed in Sneed Hall, while females occupy Horn and Knapp halls.
- Numbers of female faculty are increasing.

“Boys” and “girls” properly refer to children.

“Alumnus” (“alumni” in the plural) refers to a man who has attended a college or university. “Alumna” (“alumnae” in the plural) refers to a woman who has attended a school. “Alumni” is the correct Latin plural for use when referring to both men and women who have attended a school.

More Information

If you have questions about style, please contact [Margaret Lutherer](#), executive director, [Office of Communications and Marketing](#), or [Sally Logue Post](#), associate director, [Office of Communications and Marketing](#) at (806) 742-2136.