



EMU Editorial Style Guide

This *EMU Style Guide* is just that — “a guide” to consistency in capitalization, punctuation, use of professional titles, and other questions that arise almost every day as we write our emails, letters, brochure copy, and other materials aimed at public consumption. The EMU guide is based largely on the *Associated Press Stylebook*.

This guide is not intended to replace other writing style guides — such as Chicago, MLA, or APA — often specified for academic papers, non-EMU periodicals, and other publishing venues.

The EMU editor-in-chief and the marketing and communications editorial committee maintain this guide. Have a question or concern that isn't addressed here? Email it to marketing-editorial@emu.edu

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A

Academic degrees: Do not capitalize names of degrees in narrative text. (Examples: *Jane Doe has a bachelor of science degree in nursing*, or *Jane Doe has a bachelor's degree in nursing*.) Capitals may be used in a list or headline, or when it is otherwise awkward not to capitalize. Use an apostrophe in *bachelor's degree* and *master's degree*. Bachelor of arts and master of science, however, are written without the "s." See also Professional titles.

When abbreviating names of degrees, do not use periods. Correct abbreviations are as follows: BA, BS, MA, MDiv, PhD, MD, etc. (This is a deviation from the Associated Press Stylebook, which calls for periods. AP style is used in EMU news releases.)

Academic year: 2009-10, not 2009-2010.

Acronyms: Multiple acronyms tend to confuse readers and clutter copy. Use acronyms only when you need to refer repeatedly to an entity that has a long title, otherwise find a way to refer to the entity using a word from its name.

With multiple acronyms, a paragraph could look as cluttered as this:

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and Church World Service (CWS) helped Afghan employees of UNICEF come to Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) to receive training in courses at the Summer Peacebuilding Institute (SPI) and in Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR).

For multiple references, spell out the full name of an organization or program the first time it is used, followed by the acronym in parenthesis. Refer to the acronym throughout the rest of the document.

Example: *The Adult Degree Completion Program (ADCP) is growing by leaps and bounds. Students in ADCP often have a wonderful experience.* [This assumes you will continue referring to ADCP in the text. If not — if you will only refer to the program once or twice in the text or if there are other acronyms in the text — omit "ADCP" and simply say, *Students in the program often have a wonderful experience.*].

On the web: Spell out the full name in the first reference on each page, even if it has been spelled out on a previous link.

Addresses:

Name

Street address

City (no comma) State abbreviation (two letter, see States) Postal Code

Example:

EMU

1200 Park Rd.

Harrisonburg VA 22802-2462

Ampersand: Avoid the use of “&” in sentences and program names, unless essential, as in a tight-fitting headline. This includes program or departmental names, such as “Conferences & Events” [Should be *Conferences and events*. See Capitalization entry below.]

Exception: Ampersands *should* be used in website navigation, to provide more space, particularly in the left column.

Athletics: *Athletics department*, not the athletic department (a department cannot be athletic).

B

Bold: Use bold if you need an item to *particularly* stand out (web addresses in copy are often put in bold). Generally, however, if you want to emphasize something within a line of text, italicize it rather than using bold, as we did in the preceding sentence.

Exception: Use bold within the content of select web pages to increase readability and draw attention to key phrases.

Book titles: Capitalize the principal words, including prepositions and conjunctions of four or more letters. Capitalize an article — the, an, a — or word of fewer than four letters if it is the first or last word in a title. Italicize the title, unless the piece is intended for the outside media (in which case, follow AP style, which calls for using quotation marks around the titles of most published materials).

Buildings and places: Capitalize the full official names of buildings and formally designated places on campus. Examples: *Campus Center, Park Woods*.

Example: *The art gallery is located in Sadie Hartzler Library. I wonder if he'll go to the library after eating at the dining hall?*

C

Capitalization: Official names (*Appalachian Log Structures, General Electric*) and proper nouns (*John, Mary, American, Boston, Christianity*) are capitalized. Common nouns and various shortened forms of official names are not capitalized.

Do not capitalize title names or department names within paragraph text. In copy, titles are lowercase unless it is a formal one denoting authority, preceding the name.

Examples: *President Loren Swartzendruber* and *Provost Fred Kniss*, but *editor Bonnie Lofton*, *news director Mike Zucconi*, and *Loren Swartzendruber, president of EMU*.

As a general rule, only capitalize when a title is used in stand-alone copy, such as business cards, web headers, job titles on personnel web pages, and name badges.

Do not capitalize the names of undergraduate majors and minors except when the name is proper (*Bible, Spanish*) or the first letters are often used as an abbreviation (*Adult Degree Completion Program*, abbreviated as *ADCP*). More examples:

- *He is an English major, with a minor in psychology.*
- *The students are part of the language and literature department.*
- *Summer Peacebuilding Institute (SPI) brings a lot of people to EMU.*
- *I work for the marketing and communications department.*

In general, beware of over-capitalization, which can result in a paragraph as ridiculous as this:

The Task Force welcomes a new Dean, beginning Spring Semester 2011. Everyone from the Executive Secretary to the Chair of the Department is invited to a Welcoming Reception in the President's Room, where the Assistant Professor of Nonsense will make our University proud.

Why EMU favors lowercase style in most instances:

- Standard style guides require lowercase letters in running text for such things as job descriptions and unofficial department names. Most mainstream media favor lowercase style, making it the style most familiar to non-campus readers.
- Because official EMU publications already use the lowercase style, and because it is the preferred style in much of the business and professional world, we recommend that all EMU writers adopt this style.
- Keeping almost everything lowercase — except official names and proper nouns — also simplifies decisions about when to capitalize shortened forms of official names.

Chairperson vs. chairman: We use “chair.” Use gender neutral terms whenever possible.

Examples: *firefighter, mail carrier, police officer.*

Colors: EMU logo colors are blue (PMS 300) and white. Links on EMU website are royal blue (PMS 300). Use of other colors on the website is discouraged except where specific colors have been approved. (An updated university style guide will be published in November 2011.)

Commas: To ensure clarity use commas to separate elements in a series of multi-word phrases, including before the “and.” If the series is a listing of related short items — such as *I made a fruit salad with pears, apples, peaches, strawberries and oranges* — then the comma before the conjunction can be safely omitted.

Examples: *EMU is fun, pretty and friendly.* BUT: *EMU is fun for international graduate students, pretty when the sun is setting, and friendly to most visitors. Our university is noted for its Center for Justice and Peacebuilding, excellent biology and education departments, and spiritually challenging chapel services.*

Committee, center, group, program and initiative names:

Unless a committee, center, group, program, or initiative is officially recognized and formally named, avoid capitalizing it. An ad hoc committee's name, for example, would not typically be capitalized. Do capitalize the official, proper names of long-standing committees and groups and formally developed programs and initiatives.

Examples:

The Menno Simons Historical Library contains a wealth of intriguing materials. The collection is located on the third level of the Hartzler Library.

The Creation Care Council is in charge of environmental initiatives on campus.

The presidential search committee, appointed by the university's board of trustees, met in closed executive session.

The Center for Justice and Peacebuilding offers courses for academic credit and non-credit trainings.

Course titles: For course titles in running text, follow the capitalization guidelines for book titles. It is not necessary to capitalize course titles in other contexts. Examples: *Students should consider taking Conflict and Organizational Management.*

Courses include:

- *Organizational management*
- *Family and consumer science*

D

Dates: Abbreviate month names in copy only when accompanied by an actual date. If a year follows the date, separate the year with commas on each side. Example: *We will meet Dec.12, 2012, to discuss strategic planning, but not meet in November.*

Degrees: Capitalize abbreviations of degrees (see academic degrees) but not the spelled-out versions and not when they're referred to generically.

Examples:

Lawrence Detweiler received a master's in conflict transformation from EMU.

Miller family members hold a total of five doctoral, three master's, and 10 bachelor's degrees.

James Miller, PhD, earned his bachelor of science degree from JMU.

Department names: Lowercase department and office names in running text, except in cases where capitalization is needed for clarity. References using shortened or unofficial names should be lowercase.

Faculty members from the biology, chemistry and psychology departments are meeting this afternoon.

Members of the Information Services staff are available to assist you.

Mary Miller of the music department has been promoted to associate professor.

Dashes: A dash within copy should be separated from the nearest word(s) by a space. Dashes can be indicated by two hyphens in a row or by an em-sized dash mark.

E

Email: No longer hyphenated, according to the 2011 Associated Press Stylebook.

Exclamation points: Use only one at a time as an *occasional* punctuation device.

H

Headlines: EMU's designers vary in the headline styles employed, but a general guideline is to capitalize the first word of every line and all other nouns, verbs, and modifiers, plus all prepositions of four or more letters. Lowercase articles (a, an, the), "to" in infinitives and two- and three-letter conjunctions and prepositions, unless they begin a line (in a headline) or are used as a verb substitute or part of a verb phrase. Examples: *Black Defeated by White* and *White Projected to Win Election* but *White Gets By Black*

Hyphenation: Avoid ending a line with a hyphenated word, even if it means rewriting the sentence. Use hyphens to combine words that make an adjective.

Example: *She works in a part-time position. He does not work part time.* (In the first sentence "part-time" is an adjective; in the second it is not.)

I

Internet: Still capitalized.

Italics: Be guided by the Modern Language Association (MLA) in italicizing titles. (News releases would be the exception — they should adhere to AP style, which calls for quotation marks around most so-called composition titles.) In MLA style, the following titles are italicized: magazines, books, newspapers, academic journals, films, television shows, long poems, plays, operas, musical albums, and works of art. In comparison, the following titles should be put in quotation marks: short or minor works (including book chapters and articles in periodicals), songs, short stories, essays, short poems, one-act plays, and episodes in a TV series.

Italics can also be used for emphasis, but do not combine this with another graphic element such as bold or underline.

M

Mennonite jargon: Do not assume that your audience is Mennonite. Spell out references to common Mennonite acronyms in the first reference, followed by the acronym in parenthesis. A helpful list of Mennonite-related acronyms can be found in the Mennonite Yearbook.

Example: *EMU alumni sometimes serve with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). MCC is the relief, development and service agency of Mennonites in Canada and the United States.*

If linking or footnoting items pertaining to Mennonites, refer to gameo.org, rather than Wikipedia.org

Months: See Dates

N

Names: Use initials with a name (first or middle) in the first reference to the person as often as possible. This helps to distinguish between the many current students and alumni who share last names.

Numbers: Spell out numbers one through nine at the beginning and within a sentence. Beginning with 10, use numerals, except when the numeral begins a sentence. Use numerals for all ages. All academic credit hours should be represented by numerals. For large monetary sums, write, for example, \$2 million, not \$2,000,000. For percentages, use the numeral followed by the % sign. (This diverges from AP style, which calls for using the word “percent” rather than a % sign; AP style is to be used in news releases.)

Example: *Thirty adult college students, ages 25 to 40, rode in two vans to participate in the Virginia Mennonite Relief Sale. They spent 16 hours there, earning 3 academic credit hours and helping to sell \$1 million worth of quilts. This amounted to 90% of all funds raised..*

O

Online: one word, no hyphen.

P

Professional titles: In cases where we wish to note a person's academic credentials, it is best to put the abbreviation of the degree after the first mention of the person's full name (not after just the last name). Set off the degree with commas, without periods within it (i.e. write *Stan Yoder, PhD*, not *Stan Yoder, Ph.D.*). This is preferable to writing *Dr. Stan Yoder*, since "Dr." can mean anything from a chiropractic doctor to a doctor of ministry.

We do not use Mr./Mrs./Miss/Ms.

In general, list the full name (including any initials; see Names) in the first reference and use the last name in subsequent references. Capitalize **job titles** only when they immediately precede the individual's name or when they are named positions or honorary titles, as in *Roman J. Miller, Daniel B. Suter Endowed Professor of Biology*.

It's common knowledge that President Loren Swartzendruber loves to golf.

The president, Loren Swartzendruber, is in his third term at EMU.

The president of EMU travels frequently.

Have you taken a course from Professor Byler?

See more under Capitalization.

Q

Question marks: Is one enough? (The answer is "yes!")

Quotation marks: Always put the period inside the closing quotation marks, even if the quote is not part of the sentence.

Example: *The professor said, "I am a tough grader."*

Do the same for single quotations: *The professor said, "The students have joked that I am 'heavy with the marking pen.'"*

S

Seasons and semesters: Lowercase seasons, semesters, and terms. Examples: *spring semester, fall 2008, the summer 2007 term.*

Spaces between sentences: Use one space between sentences. Word processing systems manage spacing properly between sentences when you key in only one space.

STAR: Acronym for Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience

States: Below, alphabetically, find (1) the standard abbreviations and (2) the postal codes. Standard abbreviations are what you find in newspapers and magazines. This is what the communications department uses in news releases and in *Crossroads*. In addresses always use the two-letter, uppercase abbreviation (no comma between city and state see Addresses).

Postal codes should be used only in addresses at the top of a business letter, on an envelope, and so on. In the body of a business letter, in official documents, etc., spell out all state names.

STATE	IN TEXT IN ADDRESS	
Alabama	Ala.	AL
Alaska	Alaska	AK
Arizona	Ariz.	AZ
Arkansas	Ark.	AR
California	Calif.	CA
Colorado	Colo.	CO
Connecticut	Conn.	CT
District of Columbia	D.C.	DC
Delaware	Del.	DE
Florida	Fla.	FL
Georgia	Ga.	GA
Hawaii	Hawaii	HI
Idaho	Idaho	ID
Illinois	Ill.	IL
Indiana	Ind.	IN
Iowa	Iowa	IA
Kansas	Kan.	KS
Kentucky	Ky.	KY
Louisiana	La.	LA
Maine	Maine	ME
Maryland	Md.	MD
Massachusetts	Mass.	MA
Michigan	Mich.	MI

Minnesota	Minn.	MN
Mississippi	Miss.	MS
Missouri	Mo.	MO
Montana	Mont.	MT
Nebraska	Neb.	NE
Nevada	Nev.	NV
New Hampshire	N.H.	NH
New Jersey	N.J.	NJ
New Mexico	N.M.	NM
New York	N.Y.	NY
North Carolina	N.C.	NC
North Dakota	N.D.	ND
Ohio	Ohio	OH
Oklahoma	Okla.	OK
Oregon	Ore.	OR
Pennsylvania	Pa.	PA
Rhode Island	R.I.	RI
South Carolina	S.C.	SC
South Dakota	S.D.	SD
Tennessee	Tenn.	TN
Texas	Tex.	TX
Utah	Utah	UT
Vermont	Vt.	VT
Virginia	Va.	VA
Washington	Wash.	WA
Washington, D.C.	D.C.	DC
West Virginia	W.Va.	WV
Wisconsin	Wis.	WI
Wyoming	Wyo.	WY

Within copy, spell out state names that stand alone. Within copy, use the abbreviations as listed in AP style after a city name: First letter uppercase, subsequent letters lowercase, followed by a period and comma (or semicolon).

Example: Development staff will travel this week to Bluffton, Ohio; Souderton, Pa.; Chesapeake, Va.; and Illinois. Next week's itinerary includes Hagerstown, Md., and Hickory, N.C.

An editor may make exceptions to this rule for certain stories or uses, such as spelling out state names in copy where the audience may be heavily international and thus unfamiliar with the state abbreviations.

Students: Do not capitalize freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, or first-year student in running text.

First-year is the preferred adjective for students at EMU instead of *freshmen*.

Submitting articles for publication: Use Word format, make page flush left, ragged right. End each paragraph with a return, then double-space before next paragraph. Do not indent the first line on the next paragraph. This kind of uniform formatting makes it easier for our copyeditors and designers to do their jobs.

Example:

EMU is a great place to be. We have fun athletics, comfortable dorm rooms, inspiring chapels, engaged professors, and state-of-the-art library resources. We wish everyone would come to EMU. Wouldn't that be great?

But if everyone came to EMU, our dorms would be overflowing and our classes might get large and impersonal. Then we would not have the close-knit, caring community that we all enjoy. That might cause us to lose some valuable distinctives that make us stand out from other colleges.

T

Telephone numbers: 540-432-4000; not (540) 432-4000 or 540/432-4000

Drop the "1-" prefix from phone numbers where the area code is included, unless writing for an international audience.

Theater vs. theatre: The former is the standard U.S. spelling, the latter is the British one. The EMU marketing and communications department uses "theater." Most university communications departments do this as well. Some people in the field prefer "theatre."

Time: Cut out unnecessary 0s. Use lowercase a.m. and p.m. (note use of periods)

Examples:

The meeting will be at 9 a.m. (not 9:00 a.m. and definitely not 9:00 a.m. in the morning)

It's noon, not 12 noon; *it's midnight*, not 12 midnight.

It's 8 to 9 a.m. or 8-9 a.m. (not 8 a.m. – 9 a.m.)

U

Underscore/Underline: Underscore copy judiciously as emphasis on an important word or phrase. See Bold and Italics

Also, be aware that web page links are usually underlined in browsers, so avoid underlining text that is not a “clickable link.”

United States: It’s *United States* (spelled out) when used as a noun. Use *U.S.* as an adjective.

Example: *Most EMU students are from the United States. As U.S. citizens, they often pay taxes.*

University: Use no capital unless you are spelling the full name of the university.

Example: *Eastern Mennonite University is the university of choice in town.*

URLs: Do not include “http://” before a website address in print, unless necessary for clarity. The www is often appropriately dropped in ad, brochure or poster copy. URLs in copy should be italicized.

Example: *Find out more about EMU by taking a virtual tour at: www.emu.edu/virtualtour/*

In email, do not add any treatment like italics to the URL and do not remove the “http://” or any other part of the URL. Doing so would reduce the likelihood of being able to click through to the actual website.

W

Web/website: Capitalize World Wide Web. Lowercase web and website (one word). See **Writing for the Web**.

Web headers or headlines: Capitalize web page titles and H2 tags – the same rules that apply to standard headlines apply to these. However, only capitalize the first word when a subheader, or H3 tag.

Words to avoid: The following words are often overused, especially in academic settings. Think carefully if there is a better word choice (communications department avoids these!):

- networking
- learnings
- imaging
- impacted
- resourcing
- prioritize

- facilitate
- partner
- reference (as a verb)
- enable

In general, avoid making nouns into verbs.

Widows: Do not leave one word stranded on its own at the beginning of a line or at the top of a column of text. Rewrite the sentence or change formatting to eliminate the stranded word. This can be difficult on the web, because different browsers and screen sizes will wrap text differently. One trick that often works is to replace the space before the last word with a non-breaking space in the code. (Example: *word widow*)

Writing for the web: Given the mixture of text, images, sounds, and video competing for the online reader's attention, writing for the web takes particular skills. Here are seven tips, culled from our [Web Publishing Guide](#).

1. **Keep your info up to date.** Content has to be necessary, meaningful, and kept current. Prospective students will quickly drop a school from their list if information is outdated or hard to review! Dump outdated content if you can't make it current.
2. **Put the most important info in the top-left triangle of your page.** If readers don't notice relevant content, they'll move on to another page, or even exit the site. Make sure the first two paragraphs succinctly state the most important information.
3. **Make each page easy to scan.** On primary pages, paragraphs should be two to three sentences – only 70 words total. Provide visual cues, like meaningful headlines (h3), to introduce paragraphs. The first two words of your headlines are especially important.
4. **Use the EMU vocabulary list.** These words are part of the EMU identity. Use them to keep the style and tone of the site consistent, and to increase our search rankings by making our information easy to find.
5. **Use bulleted lists.** When you have more than three items to cover, consider bullets, or organize your items into a simple table or grid.
6. **Address your audience in a conversational tone.** And favor active (rather than passive) verbs.
7. **Write at a high-school grade level, using everyday language.** Unless your content is relatively deep within the site, you should write sparingly and resist ponderous academic words.

Y

Years: 1990s not 1990's. Use an apostrophe when shortening a reference to a decade such as the '90s.

Example: *The air temperature was in the 80s throughout the '80s.*