

WSU Writing Style Guide

Standards for consistency in Wichita State University communications

Wichita State University follows the Associated Press Stylebook for all public communications, with a few university-specific modifications. In general, however, any material sent out to the masses in an effort to inform – whether news releases covering an event, publicly viewed features online, business writing, social media or marketing materials – should be based on the AP Stylebook. Copies of the AP Stylebook are available through the Shocker Store in the Rhatigan Student Center.

The goal of the WSU Writing Style Guide is to provide help on that which is not addressed in AP style and that which is an exception to AP. Some common style issues that are addressed in AP also bear repeating here.

academic titles - Capitalize and spell out formal titles such as “president,” “provost,” “professor” or “dean” when they precede a person’s name (College of Fine Arts Dean John Doe). Otherwise, formal titles should be all lower case (John Doe, dean of the College of Fine Arts).

abbreviations, acronyms, initialisms - Some abbreviations are universally recognized on first reference (FBI, CIA). In general, spell out on first reference the actual names of most entities, including universities, colleges and programs. On subsequent references, use an accepted shortened version, acronym or initialism (Wichita State University; Wichita State; WSU).

addresses - Use abbreviations in street addresses (1845 Fairmount St.; 5015 E. 29th St.), but not for locations (North Hillside, East 17th; 17th and Hillside; 29th and Oliver). In Wichita, numbered streets (1st Street; 17th Street; 21st Street) are not spelled out.

alumna, alumnae, alumnus, alumni - Use “alumna” for singular female, “alumnae” for plural; use “alumnus” for singular male, “alumni” for plural; Use “alumni” for a group including both men and women.

campus expansion - (see “innovation campus, innovation university” entry)

campuses - (see “community locations” entry)

center, college, department, university - Lowercase uses of these words after the initial reference in a story. “Wichita State University” on first reference, but “the university” on second reference. “Department of Physician Assistant” on first reference; in casual references, “physician assistant department.”

checkin, checkout -- But use as two words in verb form: Check out a book from Ablah Library. Check in at the Rhatigan Student Center.

commas - AP style is not to use a comma before the last item in a serial list, e.g., "red, white and blue." Use for clarity, however, in some complex sentences (The flag is red, white and blue, and revered as a national symbol).

compose, comprise - "Compose" means to create or put together: She composed a song. The United States is composed of 50 states; the zoo is composed of many animals. "Comprise" means to contain, include all or embrace. Thus, the whole comprises its parts: The United States comprises 50 states. The jury comprises five men and seven women; the zoo comprises many animals. The phrase "comprised of" is never correct.

composition titles - AP uses straight type, with no quotation marks, for titles of academic journals, catalogs, magazines, newspapers, directories and dictionaries (The Wichita Eagle; Webster's New World Dictionary). Use quotes around the titles of lectures, papers, books, computer games, movies, operas, plays, poems, albums and songs, radio and television program titles, and works of art ("Aida;" "The Wizard of Oz;" "If I Only Had a Brain;" "The Bob Newhart Show"). Capitalize principal words, including prepositions and conjunctions of four or more letters. Capitalize articles - the, a, an - or words of fewer than four letters if used as the first or last word in a title.

courtesy titles - In writing, avoid Mr., Mrs., Miss, Dr. (Dr. should be used only in reference to a medical doctor.) Use full names on first reference, last name on subsequent references.

degrees - When listing a major or degree program, only the official diploma title is capitalized (Bachelor of Arts), not the program or concentration (Bachelor of Arts in history). Use "bachelor's degree," "master's degree" or "doctoral degree," not "B.A." or "M.S." or "Ph.D."

email - Not "e-mail."

emeritus, emeriti - Use "emeritus" for singular female or male, "emeriti" for plural group. Capitalize when used before a name (Professor Emeritus Mary Doe); lower case after (Mary Doe, professor emeritus). Emeriti is plural (The faculty emeriti share an office).

events - Not listed in AP, but widely taught as a memory trick to event planners and journalists: Use time, date and place, in that order (The event will be from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Monday, May 1, in Rhatigan Student Center, Room 208). Add admission, whether free or for cost, and you'll answer most readers' questions.

GPA - Capitalize all, no periods and include the hundredths place, i.e., 2.00, not 2.0.

hyphens, dashes - Use hyphens with no spaces, dashes with a space on either side (1-4 p.m. Monday-Friday; "this sentence - not that one - makes the most sense")

internet - Not "Internet."

italics - Avoid italicized text. It is difficult to see on browsers, especially for anyone who has visual difficulties.

login, logon, logoff - But use as two words in verb form: I log in to my computer

numbers - Numerals under 10 should be spelled out; 10 and above, use figures.

online - Not "on-line."

percent - Spell out, do not use the symbol unless for tables.

Postbaccalaureate - Not post-baccalaureate.

spacing - One space after all punctuation, including colon.

telephone numbers - Separate area code from the phone number with a dash. Ex: 316-978-6000. Do not use parentheses around the area code.

time - Use a.m. and p.m., lowercase, periods, with a space (9:15 a.m.). Extra zeroes are not necessary for events that start on the hour (10 a.m.). For 12 a.m. and 12 p.m., use “noon” and “midnight.”

website, web page - Use “website” as one word with a lowercase “w.” A lowercase “w” is used for single word usage, i.e. the “web,” “web page,” or “webmaster.” The full proper name is still capitalized, “World Wide Web.”

UNIVERSITY STYLE

Wichita State has its own style on certain terms and areas of emphasis, listed below.

advisor - Not adviser. WSU departs from AP Style in this instance.

commencement - Use all lower case in casual reference (The university’s commencement ceremonies are a time of celebration). Capitalize as part of an official title (the university’s 109th Commencement Ceremony).

community locations - Wichita State has a main campus and five community locations. The community locations should never be referred to as “campuses.” The correct names for community locations are WSU West, WSU South, WSU Old Town, WSU Haysville and the Eugene M. Hughes Metropolitan Complex. (The latter facility may also be referred to as the “Metropolitan Complex” or “Hughes Metropolitan Complex.” Never use “Metroplex” unless referring to the WSU Shuttle System route.)

faculty - Use as plural, not singular collective (The faculty are starting a new school year).

Go Shocks! Shocks - Both are acceptable in casual reference to Wichita State athletics. Go Shox or Shox are not.

Innovation Campus, Innovation University - Innovation Campus and Innovation University refer to an overarching idea of Wichita State as a place where innovation and creativity are valued and pursued. When referring to the actual physical location, use directions. (“The Experiential Engineering Building on the south side of campus facing 17th Street,” not “The Experiential Engineering Building on the Innovation Campus.”)

Kansas Board of Regents - Formal name on first reference; KBOR or regents on following references.

Location - For external communications use building name, then room number (Rhatigan Student Center, Room 225). Use the same structure for facilities within buildings (Duerksen Fine Arts Center, Miller Concert Hall). For internal communications, the room number may precede the building (225 Rhatigan Student Center).

myWSU - Not “MyWSU,” “My WSU” or “my WSU.”

non – Use “noncredit,” “nondegree,” “nonaccredited.” Not “non-credit,” “non-degree” or “non-accredited.”

OneStop - Not “One Stop” or “Onestop.”

pre-session - “Not pre-session.”

Shockers - All WSU faculty, staff, students and alumni are considered Shockers, capitalized.

University Police - Not “Campus Police.”

Wichita State University - Use proper name on first reference. On second reference, use “Wichita State” or “WSU.”

workforce - Use as one word, not two.

WSU Foundation - Use proper name on first reference, the “foundation” on second reference with lowercase “f.”

WSU Shuttle System - The WSU Shuttle System comprises three routes: the “Campus Route,” “Metroplex Route” and the “WSU South Route.”

WuShock - One word, capitalize “W” and “S” for Wichita State’s lovable mascot.

WSU facts, history and traditions

When citing facts, history and traditions about WSU, check:

- About WSU: wichita.edu/about/index.php
- Fast Facts: wichita.edu/about/fast_facts/ff_home-list.php
- History and traditions: wichita.edu/about/history_and_traditions.php
- History and location of WSU buildings: wichita.edu/about/maps_directions/map_interactive.php

PROGRAM TERMINOLOGY

For terms specific to academic and professional and other information within colleges, departments and programs, go to the appropriate website.