



Punctuation

Apostrophe (')

- For possessive plural nouns ending in *s*, add an apostrophe after the "s": *our customers' goals, our employees' needs*
- For singular common nouns ending in *s*, add an 's: *the hostess's invitation, the witness's answer*
- For singular proper names ending in *s*, use only an apostrophe: *Chris' request, Kansas' economic climate*
- For singular proper names ending in *s* sounds such as *x*, *ce*, and *z*, use 's: *Max's ideas, the prince's life*
- Do not use 's for plurals of numbers, or multiple letter combinations: *the 1980s, ABCs*

Colon (:)

- Capitalize the first word after a colon only if it is a proper noun or the start of a complete sentence: *He promised this: The company will make good on all the deliveries. However, he had three considerations: expense, time, and feasibility*
- Colons go outside quotation marks unless they are part of the quoted material

Comma (,)

- Use a serial or Oxford comma in a list of three or more items, before 'and' or 'or': *one, two, three, and four; the engineer, sales person, or quality control professional*

Dash (—)

- Use dash in place of a comma, parentheses, or colon to help emphasize or separate a clarifying thought in a sentence. Always put a space on either side of the dash: *When the vehicle was delivered — only two months after it was ordered — the customer decided he no longer wanted the upfit he originally specified*
- Make a dash by striking the hyphen key twice

Hyphen (-)

- Use a hyphen for compound adjectives before the noun: *well-known contractor, full-time job, 20-year anniversary*
- Do not use a hyphen when the compound modifier occurs after the verb: *The customer was well known. Her job became full time. He's been there 20 years*
- Do not use a hyphen to denote an abrupt change in a sentence—use a dash

Parentheses ()

- The perceived need for parentheses is an indication that your sentence is becoming contorted. Try to rewrite the sentence, putting the incidental information in commas, dashes or in another sentence. If you do use parentheses, follow these guidelines: *If the material is inside a sentence, place the period outside the parentheses: We offer many accessories for him to choose from (for example, option A, B, or, C)*

Period (.)

- Use a single space after the period at the end of a sentence
- Do not put a space between initials: *J.J. Lewis; C.K. Charles*

Quotation Marks (" ")

- In dialogue, each person's words are placed in a separate paragraph, with quotation marks at the beginning and end of each person's speech
- Periods and commas always go within quotation marks
- Dashes, semicolons, question marks and exclamation points go within the quotation marks when they apply to the quoted material. They go outside when they apply to the whole sentence
- Use single marks for quotes within quotes: *She said, "He told me, 'They love us.'"*

Numbers

- Spell out the numbers one through nine; for 10 and up, use Arabic numerals
- Spell out numerals that start a sentence (if the result is awkward, rewrite the sentence): *Twelve new staff members were hired today. Today, The Shyft Group welcomes 12 new staff members*
- The one exception to this rule is in a sentence that begins with a calendar year: *2020 was a banner year for The Shyft Group*
- If spelling out large numbers use a hyphen to connect a word ending in *y* to another word: *twenty-one, one hundred forty-three, seventy-six thousand five hundred eighty-seven*
- Do not use commas between other separate words that are part of one number: *one thousand one hundred fifty-five*
- Spell out casual expressions: *A thousand times yes!*
- Proper names: use words or numerals according to an organization's practice: *3M, Twentieth Century Fox, Big Ten*

Abbreviations

United States

- When using as a noun, spell out United States: *I will be returning to the United States on Wednesday.*
- When using as an adjective, U.S. (no spaces): *We have 50 U.S. facilities.*
- When using as part of an organization name or location, US (no periods, no spaces): *US: 313.555.5555*

States

- Spell out the names of the states in text when they appear alone: *Our market share in the southern California region has doubled in the past year.*
- Abbreviate the state when they appear in conjunction with the name of a city, town, or village: *Charlotte, MI, Bristol, IN.*
- Place one comma between the city and the state name, and another after the state name, unless at the end of a sentence or in a dateline: *I'm traveling from Bristol, IN, to Charlotte, MI. Later in the week, I'll be heading to Charleston, SC.)*
- When abbreviating U.S. states, do so as follows:
AL, AK, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DC, DE, FL, GA, HI, IA, ID, IL, IN, KA, KY, LA, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MS, MO, MT, NC, ND, NE, NH, NJ, NM, NV, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VT, VA, WA, WY, WI, WV



Titles

- Use abbreviations without periods:
Daryl Adams, CEO; John Smith, EVP.
- When referring to a specific area, use a hyphen:
John Smith, EVP-Human Resources, announced the hiring of eight new staff members.

Dates

- Always use Arabic figures, with st, nd, rd or th
- Capitalize months
- When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate only Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec. (e.g. *Oct. 4 was the day of her birthday.*)
- When a phrase lists only a month and year, do not separate the month and the year with commas. (e.g. *February 1980 was his best month.*)
- When a phrase refers to a month, day and year, set off the year with commas (e.g. *Aug. 20, 1964, was the day they had all been waiting for.*)

Time

- Use figures except for noon and midnight
- Use a colon to separate hours from minutes (e.g. *2:30 A.M.*)
- Times should include capital A.M. or P.M.

Regions and Seasons

- Lowercase compass directions: west, east, north, south;
The warm front is moving east.
- Capitalize names of U.S. regions:
The Northeast depends on the Midwest for its parts supply.
- Lowercase "spring," "summer," "fall" and "winter" and derivatives such as "wintertime" unless part of a formal name: *the Winter Olympics.*

Headlines, Subheads, and Bullets

- For headlines and subheads use sentence case and be sure to end each with a period
- For bulleted phrases, do not end with a period

Tech terms

- Single word tech terms: *Website; Email; Internet; Online; Database; Login; Logon; Webcast; Podcast; Smartphone; Shareware; Hypertext; Hyperlink; Cyberspace*
- Two word tech terms: *Web page; Social media*
- Social Media terms: *Facebook; Twitter; LinkedIn; Instagram*

Resources

- The best reference for all place names is the "U.S. Postal Service Directory of Post Offices."
- The best reference for foreign geographic names is the most recent edition of "Webster's New World College Dictionary." The second-best reference is the "National Geographic Atlas of the World."