

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

WRITING STYLE GUIDE

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Mount Wachusett
Community College

MWCC Writing Style Guide

Mount Wachusett Community College strives to present written material that is consistent, grammatically correct and adheres to widely accepted style usage. This reference guide identifies some common grammar and style uses at MWCC, however is not a substitute for *The Chicago Manual of Style*, one of the standard writing guides for publications; the *Associated Press Style Guide*, which is used by most news media outlets; *The Gregg Reference Manual*, for business/academic communication; or the *APA Style Guide* used in academic programs.

A

academic degrees: Capitalize full degree title when using the proper name: *Associate of Science*; *Bachelor of Arts*, *Bachelor of Science in Business Administration*, *Accounting Certificate*, *Master of Business Administration*. However, *doctorate in English* (note lowercase). Lowercase and use apostrophe in the short form: *bachelor's degree*, *master's degree*. Abbreviate degrees when identifying a list of individuals or to conserve space. Use periods after all the letters (with the exception of MBA): *A.A.*; *A.S.*; *B.A.*; *B.S.*; *M.A.*; *M.S.*; *Ph.D.*, *MBA*, *M.D.*

academic years: Always lower-case freshman, sophomore, junior, senior.

acronyms: Do not use periods in acronyms. *MWCC*, *GEAR UP*. Spell out entity on first reference with acronym in parenthesis. *Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC)*. If entity is cited once in text, spell out full name, no acronym.

advisor: Spell as advisor, not adviser.

addresses: Use the abbreviations Ave., Blvd., Rd., St., and Dr., etc., only with a numbered address: *444 Green St.* Spell out and capitalize when they are part of a formal name without a number: *Green Street*. Lowercase and spell out when they are used alone or with more than one street name: *corner of Green and Matthews streets*. Always use figures for an address number.

ages: Always use numerals. *A 6-year-old boy*; *the student is 18 years old*. *He is in his 30s*.

alma mater: do not capitalize or italicize.

alumni: Alumni refers to a group of males or a group of males and females. An individual male is an alumnus; an individual female is an alumna; and a group of females is referred to as alumnae. Avoid the casual reference alum or alums.

alumni association: Capitalize as the formal name of the MWCC Alumni Association.

B

bachelor's degree: See academic degrees.

biannual, biennial: Do not hyphenate. Biannual means twice a year; biennial means every two years.

Board of Trustees: Capitalize when it refers to MWCC's governing body: *The Board of Trustees will meet on Wednesday*. Lowercase when referring to *the board*. Also Board of Directors.

buildings and facility names: Capitalize when part of a formal name.

- The Arthur F. Haley Academic Center
- The Raymond M. LaFontaine Fine Arts Center
- The Robert D. Wetmore Center for Innovation in Design, Technology and Resource Development (also the Robert D. Wetmore Center)
- The Garrison Center for Early Childhood Education
- The Leo and Theresa LaChance Library (or the LaChance Library)
- The Mount Wachusett Community College (or MWCC) Fitness & Wellness Center (housed in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Physical Education Complex)
- Theatre at the Mount
- The East Wing Gallery
- The Green Street Café

C

campus: Capitalize when referring by name: *Devens Campus, Leominster Campus*. Lowercase general reference, *the campus*.

cancelation/cancellation: While are technically correct, MWCC uses *cancelation*.

capitalization: Avoid unnecessary capitalization. Capitalize the formal names of departments and centers; use lowercase for the generic terms. Capitalize the names of specific courses. Capitalize formal titles that precede a name: *President Daniel M. Asquino*. Do not capitalize titles that follow a name: *Daniel M. Asquino, president of MWCC*.

captions: When identifying people in a photograph, write *from left*, rather than *from left to right*.

catalog: This is the preferred spelling, not *catalogue*.

clubs: Capitalize the names of all MWCC clubs: *Art Club, International Club, The Green Society*.

college name: Always capitalize as a proper noun unless you are using a generic term: *Mount Wachusett Community College; the college* (not *the College*). Use the full name on first reference, then abbreviate as MWCC or the college in subsequent references. *The Mount* is acceptable for informal publications and usage. Avoid the abbreviation *Mt.* whenever possible, especially as the formal name.

commas: When following the *Chicago* style for publications, MWCC uses the serial comma, meaning the comma precedes the words “and” or “or” before the final item in a series of more than two: *Automotive Technology, Business Administration, and Clinical Laboratory Science*. When following the AP style for newspapers, the serial comma is not included: *Automotive Technology, Business Administration and Clinical Laboratory Science*.

commencement: Capitalize when referring to the event held each May.

costs: \$5 not \$5.00 (unless in tables aligned with figures that are not even amounts).

course listing/titles: Always capitalize unless you are using a generic term. *She is enrolled in History of World Civilization. She is enrolled in history.*

course numbers: No space between course and number: *ENG101*.

courseload/coursework: One word.

D

dates/years: Use month-day-year sequence (omit the year if it’s obvious). Abbreviate January, February, August, September, October, November and December when referring to a specific date, but do not abbreviate the months of March, April, May, June or July. *The fall semester begins Sept. 3, 2014; Spring break is the week of March 17*. Spell out each month for the general references to a month and a year and do not separate month and year sequence with a comma: *September 2014*.

days of the week: Do not abbreviate days of the week unless necessary for a tabular format.

departments and divisions: See **organizational titles**.

E

e.g./i.e.: “e.g.” replaces the words “for example” and i.e. replaces the words “that is.” Always follow with a comma. Avoid use in formal communication or correspondence.

email: Do not hyphenate.

emeriti: Note usage by gender: *emeritus* (male); *emeriti* (plural male and plural all genders); *emerita* (female) *emeritae* (plural female).

events: Capitalize formal titles, but do not capitalize generic events: *MWCC hosts many career fairs. The annual NEACAC College Fair will take place next week.* Present information about an event in the following order date/time/location: *Commencement will take place Thursday, May 17 at 6 p.m. in the Fitness & Wellness Center.*

F

faculty/staff: These are singular nouns, referring to groups en masse: “The faculty is granted certain privileges under the charter.” To make it plural, or to refer to individual professors, use faculty members: “Faculty members expressed concern over the proposal.” The same is true of staff: “the staff is,” but “staff members are.”

farther, further: Farther refers to physical distance; further refers to a non-physical distance and can also mean “more.” *That bus is farther away than I thought. We are moving further toward our goals.*

fees and forms: Do not capitalize form names: admissions application

federal: Capitalize as part of an official name, but lowercase in general usage. *The Federal Emergency Management Agency; the federal government.*

fiscal year: MWCC’s fiscal year runs July 1 through June 30 and carries the numerical designation of the latter year, e.g., July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014 is FY14.

foundation: Mount Wachusett Community College Foundation, Inc. or MWCC Foundation, Inc.

fractions: Write out and hyphenate in text: *two-thirds, three-fifths.*

full time/part time: Hyphenate when used as an adjective: *I have a full-time job.* Two words when used as a noun: *I work full time.*

G

grades: No apostrophes for As, Bs, Cs.

H

honors: Lowercase and italicize: *cum laude*, *magna cum laude*, and *summa cum laude*.

I

i.e./e.g.: i.e. replaces the words “that is” and “e.g.” replaces the words “for example.” Always follow with a comma. Avoid use in formal communication or correspondence.

Internet: Capitalize

italics: Place in italics: newspapers and sections of newspapers published separately (*New York Times Book Review*), periodicals, titles and subtitles of published books, pamphlets, plays, operas, movies, ships.

J

job titles: Spell out job titles, rather than abbreviate.

junior/senior: Abbreviate with full name. In contemporary usage, no longer preceded by a comma, unless requested.

L

legislative titles: Use Rep., Reps., Sen., and Sens. as formal titles before one or more names in text. *We expect a visit from Sen. Jennifer Flanagan.* Spell out and lowercase representative and senator in other uses. *The senator spoke at the event.*

M

majors: use lowercase when referring to specific majors and minors.

N

numbers: Spell out numbers below 10 (one, two, three) and use figures for 10 and above. For ordinals, spell out first through ninth; use figures for 10th and above. Spelling out numbers for consistency is acceptable: “Five or ten years from now.” Spell out numbers used at the beginning of sentences: “Twenty students are in class.”

O

online: One word, no hyphen. Lowercase when used to mean “connected to the Internet.”

organizational titles: Capitalize the full names of specific departments, divisions and offices. Use lower case when used in the general sense. *Division of Lifelong Learning and Workforce Development; School of Business, Science, Technology and Mathematics; Math Department; Office of the President; the Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement; workforce development; student services.*

P

part time/part-time: Hyphenate when used as an adjective: *I have a part-time job.* Two words when used as a noun: *I work part time.*

percent: Spell out. Unless in a table, do not use %.

periods: Just one space at the end of a sentence, not two.

phone numbers and extensions: Use hyphens, not parenthesis, for telephone area codes. 978-632-6600. After the phone number, use a comma before the extension. Extensions are not capitalized: 978-632-6600, ext. 110 or extension 110. College publications always use direct extensions for faculty and staff members. 978- 630-9[extension].

professor/associate professor/assistant professor: Capitalize before a name, lowercase after. See also academic titles.

program: Capitalize only if the word is part of the formal title: *Visions Program*; *Gateway to College program*.

Q

quotations: Place in quotation marks: chapters of books, article headlines, unpublished manuscripts, songs, poems, television shows. Periods and commas always go inside quotation marks: “*affordable*,” or “*affordable*.” Semicolons and colons always go outside quotation marks: “*affordable*”; or “*affordable*”: Question marks and exclamation points may go either inside or outside, depending on whether the phrase is part of the quoted material.

R

résumé: Use accent marks.

rooms: Capitalize formal places and room names unless using a generic term. The James D. Murphy Conference Room; the Fitness & Wellness Center; room 225; the center.

S

seasons: Do not capitalize seasons and semesters unless part of a formal name: *fall semester*, *spring semester*, *Summer Olympics*.

social media: Capitalize and spell social media sites in accordance with their official names: *Facebook*, *LinkedIn*, *Twitter*, *YouTube*.

states: Spell out when the state’s name stands alone: *Massachusetts*. Use postal abbreviations only in mailing addresses. When using state names within text, abbreviate only when listed with a city: *Gardner, Mass*. Abbreviate states as follows: Ala., Ariz., Ark., Calif., Colo., Conn., Del., Fla., Ga., Ill., Ind., Kan., Ky., La., Md., Mass., Mich., Minn., Miss., Mo., Mont., Neb., Nev., N.H., N.J., N.M., N.Y., N.C., N.D., Okla., Ore., Pa., R.I., S.C., S.D., Tenn., Tex., Vt., Va., Wash., W.Va., Wis., Wyo. Do not abbreviate Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, and Utah.

T

titles: Capitalize a professional title if it comes before the name. Lowercase a professional title if it follows the name. President Daniel M. Asquino; Daniel M. Asquino, president of MWCC.

Abbreviate the following titles when they precede a name: Dr., Mr., Mrs. Ms., Fr., and all military titles. Abbreviate courtesy titles, such as Mr. Mrs., Ms., and Dr., but do not use them in combination with any other title or with abbreviations indicating scholastic or academic degrees: Daniel M. Asquino, Ph.D. - not Dr. Daniel M. Asquino, Ph.D.

theatre/theater: MWCC uses the spelling theatre, to be consistent with our Theatre at the Mount.

time: Except for noon and midnight, use figures. Use lowercase for a.m. and p.m. with periods following each letter. Format after the colon should be parallel (two numbers after the colon or none): 4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.; 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. For certain publications, e.g. college schedules etc., that originate from the BANNER system, we use uppercase AM and PM without periods.

U

United States: Spell out the name of the country when it stands alone. Use U.S. when it is a modifier: U.S. Department of Education.

V

versus: abbreviate as *vs.*

vice: use two words without a hyphen: *vice chair*, *vice president*.

W

Washington, DC: Do not refer to DC with periods.

web/website: Capitalize World Wide Web; lowercase *web* and *website*.

wind turbines: not windmills

Y

year-end: Adjective.

yearlong: One word.

year-round: Hyphenate.

years: Use figures: 2005. Refer to centuries and decades without apostrophes: 1900s or 1980s.

Need help with spelling, grammar or style? Consult these websites:

www.merriam-webster.com Includes a dictionary, thesaurus, and other helpful resources.

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