

WVU Extension Service Style Quick Reference

This reference is not a comprehensive listing of all Associated Press style guidelines, but rather a collection of the most applicable rules and some exceptions to aid you in writing and editing WVU Extension materials. This list is alphabetized for ease of use. Some cross-referencing of entries is included to help you quickly find what you're looking for. If you do not find a rule, please refer to the [AP Stylebook online](#) (paid subscription required), or in hard copy. Exceptions to AP style guidelines are denoted with an asterisk.

4-H'er

4-H is always hyphenated

4-H'er is one 4-H member/participant

4-H'ers are more than one 4-H member/participant

4-H'er's is one 4-H member/participant in the possessive form

4-H'ers' is more than one 4-H member/participant in the possessive form

Do not start a sentence with 4-H. Use "The 4-H program," or "The 4-H camp," instead.

A

Abbreviation

Dimensions & Measurements — Spell out numbers zero through nine and use figures for 10 and above. Hyphenate adjectival forms before nouns.

However, for publications where space is limited and understanding is essential, use figures with their respective abbreviations consistently. Use an apostrophe and quote marks to indicate feet and inches, respectively (6'2") in technical contexts.*

Articles and web content

4-foot fence

3 yards long

9-by-12 rug

6,000 square feet

Tabular material/illustrations

4' fence*

3 yds long*

9 x 12 rug*

6,000 sq ft*

Metric Measurements — Abbreviate without periods the metric units of measurement as follows:

g = gram

mg = milligram

m = meter

t = metric ton

cm = centimeter

mm = millimeter

mL = milliliter

L = liter

States — The names of the 50 U.S. states should be spelled out when used in the body of a story, whether standing alone or in conjunction with a city, town, village or military base.

Place one comma between the city and state, and another comma after the state name unless ending a sentence.

“Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is a great weekend getaway spot for people who live in Youngstown, Ohio.”

If abbreviations must be used (e.g., datelines, lists, tabular material, etc.), use the following:

Ala.	Md.	Neb.	N.D.	Tenn.
Ariz.	Mass.	Nev.	Okla.	Vt.
Ark.	Mich.	N.H.	Ore.	Va.
Calif.	Minn.	N.J.	Pa.	Wash.
Colo.	Miss.	N.M.	R.I.	W. Va.
Conn.	Mo.	N.Y.	S.C.	Wis.
Del.	Mont.	N.C.	S.D.	Wyo.

Never abbreviate the following state names:

Alaska	Hawaii
Idaho	Iowa
Maine	Ohio
Texas	Utah

Titles and Degrees — Abbreviate academic degrees only when you include a list of credentials after a name and then set them off with commas:

“Peter White, Ed.D., Ph.D., was the keynote speaker.”

Abbreviate junior or senior directly after a name, and do not use a comma:

Justin Wilson Jr.

Acronyms

Use only universally recognized acronyms, such as NASA, FBI and CIA, on all references. Less well-known but still common acronyms, such as OSHA and NATO, can be used after you spell out the full name on first mention. In most cases, however, use a generic reference such as “the agency” or “the alliance” for all references after the first use.

Do not put unfamiliar acronyms in parentheses after the first reference: “The American Copy Editors Society (ACES) ...” Instead, either repeat the full name on subsequent references or use a generic reference, such as “the society.”

Addresses — Use figures in a mailing address: 7 Park Place. See also [Web Address](#).

Ages — Use numbers to express the age of people and animals. Spell out the number of inanimate objects. Hyphenate with the adjectival forms of words that directly follow in the text.

4-year-old cat

four-year-old car

Apostrophes

Apostrophes are used to denote a contraction or a possessive in a sentence. Do not use an apostrophe in denoting plurals, especially of acronyms, abbreviations or dates:

CDs, TVs, DVDs, FAQs, Dos and Don'ts*, How tos, the 1960s.

Use an apostrophe and spell out academic degrees: "She holds a bachelor's degree."

B

Bullet Lists — Use bullets rather than dashes to introduce individual sections of a list that are introduced in no particular order. For lists that follow a specific order, use numbers.*

C

Capitalization

Use lowercase unless a rule says to capitalize. If you can't find a rule for capitalizing a word in the stylebook, use lowercase.

Academic Titles — Use lowercase in sentences unless they precede the holder's name. When names and titles stand alone, as in lists or tables, the titles may be capitalized:

Vice President Reginald King attended the seminar.

Reginald King, vice president for University Relations, attended the seminar.

Reginald King, vice president, WVU University Relations, attended the seminar.

Assistant Professor Bob Brown gave an outstanding lecture.

Bob Brown, assistant professor of psychology, gave an outstanding lecture.

Bob Brown, assistant professor, WVU Psychology Department, gave an outstanding lecture.

Director Carol Smith won the service award.

Carol Smith, computing services director, won the service award.

Carol Smith, director, WVU Computing Services, won the service award.
Common Nouns — Capitalize common nouns when they are part of a proper name for place, person or thing:

the Democratic Party
the Monongahela River

Use lowercase when they stand alone or in subsequent references:

The party did not have a candidate for president.
She nearly drowned in the river.

Council Circle — Capitalize this proper noun in content.

Directional Indicators — Use lowercase, such as north, south, east and west, except when they refer to specific geographic regions or popularized names for those regions: the Northern Panhandle, Eastern Panhandle

Email — Use lowercase with no hyphen when used in a sentence.

Extension — Capitalize when referring to the WVU Extension Service, but not when referring to non-WVU programs or to the general concept of extension services.

WVU Extension agents provide extension services through Extension offices in all 55 counties.

Events — Capitalize community event names only when using the complete title:

State Fair of West Virginia	state fair
Mon County Farmers Market	farmers market

Formal Titles — Use lowercase when they appear on their own or follow a name (in the latter case, they should be set off by commas):

The former president arrived to speak to the students.
Jimmy Carter, the former U.S. president, arrived to speak to the students.

Capitalize formal titles that come directly before a name:

The students were delighted when they heard they would meet President Carter.

Never capitalize job descriptions: shortstop, police officer, attorney, etc.

Plural — Use lowercase for common nouns: Hampshire and Hardy counties.

Room — Use lowercase except when used with the number of the room or when it is part of the name of a specially designated room: Room 315, the Jackson Room.

Seasons — Use lowercase unless they are used in a proper name: the Summer Olympics.

Web — AP style states that web is a proper noun as the short form of the World Wide Web. However, web is more commonly used as a general pronoun that should be lowercase in text: *web page*, *web feed*, or *web address*. Capitalize only when it appears in the title of headings or at the beginning of a sentence.*

Cardinal Numbers — Spell out millions and billions: 6 billion people. Use commas to set off each group of three digits in numerals higher than 999 (except for years and addresses): 12,650.

Cents — Use figures: 8 cents

Citing Sources*

Use the latest edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style* for citing published print and online works, as the *AP Style Guidebook* does not address citation of sources in text. This online citation guide provides a quick reference for citations:

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Colon — Use colons in headings to denote a sentence structure in which a list of information will be presented.

The goals and objectives of this course are to: raise awareness of the issues, determine those in need and provide support for families.

Commas — Omit commas in sentences when their absence will not alter the meaning or cause ambiguity. This includes introductory phrases or clauses, and essential clauses and phrases.

Residents of Hardy County can purchase tomatoes, peppers and lettuce at the Farmers Market this week.

Two exceptions can be made for use of the serial comma: a) a conjunction in an integral element of the series requires a comma, or b) the sentence contains a complex series of phrases.

- a) “I had orange juice, toast, and ham and eggs for breakfast.”
- b) “The main points to consider are whether the athletes are skillful enough to compete, whether they have the stamina to endure the training, and whether they have the proper mental attitude.”

Use commas to set off non-essential phrases and clauses.

Common Nouns — Only capitalize common nouns when they are part of a proper name for place, person or thing: “the Democratic Party,” “the Monongahela River,” but use lowercase when they stand alone or in subsequent references: “The party did not have a candidate for president.” “She nearly drowned in the river.”

Council Circle — Proper noun, capitalize in content.

D

Dashes — Use dashes at the beginning of a series clauses or phrases that use internal commas, for an abrupt change in a sentence, and before an author’s name in attribution in the text. Do not use dashes in headings. Instead use colons or bullets.

Dates

Common rules for using abbreviation and capitalization and figures in text:

Month Only — Capitalize the name of the month in content. Use 3-letter forms without a period in tabular material: Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec

Month and Date — Do not use ordinals (1st, 2nd, 3rd, or 4th) in reference to dates: July 4, not July 4th. Abbreviate Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., and Dec., but always spell out March, April, May, June, July.

Month and Year — Do not separate with commas (January 1972 was a cold month.)

Plural Dates— Add an “s” without an apostrophe to a year in reference to decades: the 1980s. Use an apostrophe on a decade only if cutting off the initial numbers in the year: the ’80s.

Decimals — Use decimals (up to two places) for amounts in the millions and billions that do not require a precise figure: \$3.74 billion.

Dimensions & Measurements — Spell out numbers zero through nine, use figures for 10 and above. Hyphenate adjectival forms before nouns. However, for publications where space is limited and understanding is essential, use the numerals with their respective measurement abbreviations consistently as necessary. Use an apostrophe and quote marks to indicate feet and inches, respectively (5’ 9”) in technical contexts.*

5 foot 2 inches, 5-by-9 foot cell

Directional Indicators — Use lowercase, such as north, south, east and west, except when they refer to specific geographic regions or popularized names for those regions: the Northeast; the Midwest.

Dollars —AP style does not include a period and two zeroes when referring to an even dollar figure: \$3

E

Email — Use lowercase, and do not hyphenate.

Extension — Capitalize when referring to the WVU Extension Service, but not when referring to non-WVU programs, or to the general concept of extension services.

“WVU Extension agents provide extension services through Extension offices in all 55 counties.”

Events — Capitalize community event names only when using the complete title:

State Fair of West Virginia	state fair
Mon County Farmers Market	farmers market

F

Farmers Market — Use lowercase, except when using the complete title of the event. Do not use an apostrophe. Only use the plural form. If you have more than one market in your county, use the plural form:

Hardy County Farmers Market
Monongalia and Preston county farmers markets

Formal Titles — Use lowercase when they appear on their own or follow a name (in the latter case, they should be set off by commas). Capitalize formal titles that come directly before a name: “The students were delighted when they heard they would meet President Carter.” Never capitalize job descriptions: shortstop, police officer, attorney, etc.

Fractions — AP style calls for spelling out common fractions (one-half, two-thirds) and using figures for more complex fractions or converting them to decimals (3/8 or .375). However, this applies to newsprint, where such material is infrequent. For technical or scientific material, use figures when space constraints and scientific understanding necessitates their use.*

H

Highway Numbers — W.Va. 7, U.S. 79

Hyphenation — Often, the use of a space, hyphen or no space depends on its use as a noun (n), verb (v) or adjective (adj) in a sentence. Most often, hyphens are used with compound adjectives. These are some of the most commonly used words:

Hyphenation for Commonly Used Words		
Agri-tourism	houseplant	runoff
backup (n); back-up (adj)	hors d'oeuvres	setback
by-product	follow-up (n, a); follow up (v)	setup (n); set-up (v)
campground	leftover	sign-off
check-in (n); check in (v)	long-term (adj)	side-dress
checklist	long-standing (adj)	smartphone
childcare (n); child-care (adj)	long-lived (adj)	snowstorm
child rearing	longtime (adj)	start-up (adj)
dieback (n); die back (v)	lifelong (adj)	time-consuming
double-check	low-fat	timeline
drop-off (n)	light bulb	time frame
dropout (n); drop out (v)	makeup (n); make-up (adj)	tune-up

Hyphenation for Commonly Used Words		
e-commerce	man-made	update
email	marketplace	up-to-date
e-reader	markup (n)	website
fairgoer	mock-up	weeklong
fine-tune	mountaintop	well-being
firsthand	nearby	well-done
fund-raising; fund-raiser	ongoing	well-known
flower bed	out-of-doors	willpower
flower bud	online	window glass
flowerpot	overnight	windowpane
fruit-infused (adj)	overwinter	windowsill
grass roots (n); grassroots (adj)	payoff	workday
ground cover	parking lot	workforce
hand-held (adj)	partway	workplace
high tunnel	place mat	work sheet
homemade	riverbank	workout (n); work-out (adj)
home place	riverfront	year-round
hour-long (but, weeklong)		year-end (n, a)

Hyperlink — A link from one part of a web page to another page, should be one word when used in text. Hyperlinks as a function of web content should be underlined to distinguish their function in web pages. See also [web address](#).

I

Internet —Capitalize this proper noun in all uses.

M

Metric Measurements — Abbreviate without periods, the metric units of measurement as follows:

g = gram	cm = centimeter
mg = milligram	mm = millimeter
m = meter	mL = milliliter
t = metric ton	L = liter

Miles — He walked 5 miles. The 5K is 3.1 miles.

Mountaineer — Capitalize when referring to a WVU person or program.

N

Numbers

In general, spell out numbers one through nine, and use figures for numbers 10 and up. There are many exceptions that always use figures. Common exceptions include:

4-H — Spell out with hyphen in all uses. See [4-H](#) for guidelines on use.

Addresses — 7 Park Place

Ages — Use numbers to express the age of people and animals. Spell out the number of inanimate objects. Hyphenate with the adjectival forms of words that directly follow in the text.

4-year-old cat

four-year-old car

Cardinal Numbers — Spell out millions and billions: 6 billion people. Use commas to set off each group of three digits in numerals higher than 999 (except for years and addresses): 12,650.

Cents — 8 cents.

Dates — March 4. (Do not use ordinal numbers in dates: 4th). See [Dates](#) for complete style information.

Decimals — Use decimals (up to two places) for amounts in the millions and billions that do not require a precise figure: \$3.74 billion.

Dimensions — 5 foot 2 inches, 5-by-9 foot cell

Dollars — \$3. AP style does not include a period and two zeroes when referring to an even dollar figure.

Highway Numbers — W.Va. 7, U.S. 79

Miles — Use figures: He walked 5 miles. Cyclists covered 235 miles overall.

Plurals — Add an “s” without an apostrophe to a number to make it plural:

Horses are judged on their ability to ride figure 8s at the walk, trot and canter.

The same rule applies to decades: the 1980s. Use an apostrophe on a decade only if cutting off the initial numbers in the year: the '80s.

Percentages — 1 percent. Do not use the symbol (%) in published materials. However, if space constraints and scientific understanding warrants its use, symbols can be used as necessary in Extension materials.*

Proportions — Use figures: “1 in 3 people are at risk of diabetes.”

Speed — 80 mph

Starting a Sentence — Spell out numbers used at the beginning of a sentence:

“Ten thousand people marched on the capital.”

In AP style, the exception is never spell out years, however do not use a year (in figure form) to begin a sentence. Instead, reword the sentence, rather than use a number.*

In 2014, more than 10 percent of the world's adult population was classified as obese.

Temperatures — 24 degrees.

Time — Do not include a colon and two zeroes when referring to an even hour in content: 4 p.m. Use periods when writing a.m. and p.m. in text.

Weights — Use figures: “The baby weighed 9 pounds, 7 ounces.”

P

Percentages — 1 percent. Do not use the symbol (%) in published materials. However, if space constraints and scientific understanding warrants its use, symbols can be used as necessary in Extension materials.*

Period — Use only one space after the period in each sentence. Do not use a period after units of abbreviated units of measure in sentences: “The baby weighed 8 lbs, 4 oz and was 21 inches long.”

Plagiarism — Please refer to [Avoiding Plagiarism](#).

Plurals — Add an “s” without an apostrophe to a number to make it plural: “She kept rolling 7s.” The same rule applies to decades: the 1980s. Use an apostrophe on a decade only if cutting off the initial numbers in the year: the '80s.

Use lowercase for plurals of common nouns: Hampshire and Hardy counties.

Proportions — Use figures: “2 parts powder to 6 parts water.”

Punctuation

Punctuation is covered at length in the AP Style Guidelines. Some common punctuation marks are discussed here as they relate to writing for WVU Extension Service. If you don't find the answer you're looking for, please refer to the AP Style Guidelines.

Bullets — Use bullets to introduce individual sections of a list.*

Colon — Use colons in headings to a list of items. Use in text to introduce a quotation or to separate two clauses of which the second expands or illustrates the first.

Commas — Omit commas in sentences when their absence will not alter the meaning or cause ambiguity. This includes introductory phrases or clauses and essential clauses and phrases.

Use commas to set off non-essential phrases and clauses.

Do not use the serial comma after the second item in a series of three or more, unless a) a conjunction in an integral element of the series requires a conjunction, or b) the sentence contains a complex series of phrases:

- c) “I had orange juice, toast, and ham and eggs for breakfast.”
- d) “The main points to consider are whether the athletes are skillful enough to compete, whether they have the stamina to endure the training, and whether they have the proper mental attitude.”

Dashes — Use dashes at the beginning of a series of clauses or phrases that use internal commas, for an abrupt change in a sentence, and before an author’s name in attribution in the text. Do not use dashes in headings; instead use colons.

Quick Club Activity:

Chemical Control Methods:

Period — Use only one space after the period in each sentence. Do not use a period after abbreviated units of measure in text:

“The baby weighed 8 lbs, 4 oz and was 21 inches long.”

R

Recipe Guidelines

Recipes should be broken out into a list of ingredients with preparation instructions. Use figures for all quantities and spell out all measurements (i.e., teaspoon, tablespoon, etc.).

Provide the serving information (e.g., number of servings), then the ingredients in the order they are used, followed by directions for preparation. Provide the oven temperature for baking at the beginning of instructions, and list nutrition facts at the end.

For nutrition information, leave a space between the number and the unit of measurement (28 *grams*) and write it before the nutrient. Do not capitalize nutrients (28 *g fat*). It is acceptable to abbreviate units of measurement for nutrition information.

Strawberry Pineapple Salsa

Makes 4 servings

Ingredients:

1 Roma tomato, diced

½ pound strawberries, hulled and diced

1 cup diced pineapple

¼ cup diced red onion

1 tablespoon seeded and chopped jalapeno pepper

2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro

1 lime, juiced
Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

1. Combine ingredients.
2. Keep in refrigerator up to 3 days.

Nutrition Information per serving: 50 calories; 0 g fat; 13 g carbohydrates;
1 g protein; 3 g fiber; 0 mg sodium.

From "Style Guidelines," K-State Research and Extension, Kansas State University Agricultural and Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service. Adapted with permission.

Resources and References

Style assistance can be provided by the following sources:

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary can be used to answer questions related to words and their meanings. There's a very handy [online](#) version, but only the printed edition is authoritative. English is a living language, so make sure to use the latest edition, whether printed or online.

The Associated Press Stylebook provides comprehensive style guidelines. Use the latest print edition, or find the latest version online. Check out apstylebook.com, @APStylebook and #APStyleChat on Twitter.

The Elements of Style, by William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White, is a time-tested classic guide to writing with clarity and style (though do not follow their serial comma advice).

The Chicago Manual of Style 16th Edition (or the latest edition) can be used for citations of published and online works, as the *AP Style Guidebook* does not address citation of sources in text. The citation guide provides a quick reference for common source citations:

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html.

Room — Use lowercase except when used with the number of the room or when it is part of the name of a specially designated room: Room 315, the Jackson Room.

S

Scientific or Botanical Names

Italicize genus, species and botanical variety in scientific names. Do not italicize cultivar names. Botanical varieties are preceded by *var.* and are not capitalized. Cultivar names are capitalized and enclosed in single quote marks unless preceded by the word "cultivar" or included in tables.

Varieties occur in nature. A cultivar is a "cultivated variety" developed by humans.

Examples:

Festuca arundinacea ‘Kentucky 31’

Zea mays L. *Cercis canadensis* var. *alba*

Gleditsia triacanthos var. *inermis* ‘Sunburst’

Escherichia coli O157:H7; *E. coli* O157:H7 — Use O not zero. Because the term is common, some scientists use *E. coli* O157 without the :H7

Seasons — Use lowercase unless they are used in a proper name: the Summer Olympics.

Serial Comma — Do not use a comma after the last item in a series, except:

If an integral element of the series requires a conjunction:

“I had orange juice, toast, and ham and eggs for breakfast.”

When the sentence uses a complex series of phrases:

“The main points to consider are whether the athletes are skillful enough to compete, whether they have the stamina to endure the training, and whether they have the proper mental attitude.”

Smartphone — No space, one word.

Space After Punctuation — Professional typesetters and web editors use only one space at the end of a sentence.

Speed — 80 mph

Starting a Sentence with a Number — Spell out numbers used at the beginning of a sentence. “Ten thousand people marched on the capital.” In AP style, the exception is never spell out years, however do not use a year (in figure form) to begin a sentence. Instead, reword the sentence.*

“In 2014, more than 10 percent of the world’s adult population was classified as obese.”

States — The names of the 50 U.S. states should be spelled out when used in the body of a story, whether standing alone or in conjunction with a city, town, village or military base.

Place one comma between the city and state, and another comma after the state name unless ending a sentence.

“Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is a great weekend getaway spot for people who live in Youngstown, Ohio.”

If abbreviations must be used (e.g., datelines, lists, tabular material, etc.), use the following:

Ala.	Md.	Neb.	N.D.	Tenn.
Ariz.	Mass.	Nev.	Okla.	Vt.
Ark.	Mich.	N.H.	Ore.	Va.

Calif.	Minn.	N.J.	Pa.	Wash.
Colo.	Miss.	N.M.	R.I.	W. Va.
Conn.	Mo.	N.Y.	S.C.	Wis.
Del.	Mont.	N.C.	S.D.	Wyo.

Never abbreviate the following state names:

Alaska	Hawaii
Idaho	Iowa
Maine	Ohio
Texas	Utah

T

Temperatures — 24 degrees.

Time — Do not include a colon and two zeroes when referring to an even hour: 4 p.m

Titles and Degrees — Use lowercase in sentences unless they precede the holder's name. When names and titles stand alone, as in lists or tables, the titles may be capitalized. Abbreviate academic degrees only when you include a list of credentials after a name and then set them off with commas:

“Vice President Reginald King attended the seminar.”

“Peter White, LL.D., Ph.D., was the keynote speaker.”

Abbreviate junior or senior directly after a name, and do not use a comma:

Justin Wilson Jr.

U

United States — Abbreviate with periods (U.S.).

URL — Use a period to end the sentence when a web address is listed. Do not underline web addresses in print publications.

W

Web —AP style states that web is a proper noun as the short form of the World Wide Web. However, web is more commonly used as a general pronoun that should be lowercase in text:

web page, web feed, web address

Web address — Do not underline web addresses in print publications. Instead, use italics for addresses, and where supported, remove http:// protocol at the start of the link. If supported, the website will automatically fill in this information to display the web page. You can test this by

cutting and pasting the URL into the address line of the search engine. If the link displays the page, autofill mapping is supported.

Website — One word, lowercase, unless it begins a sentence.

Weights — Use figures: “The baby weighed 9 pounds, 7 ounces.”

West Virginia, W.Va. and WV — Spell out when used in the body of a story, whether standing alone or in conjunction with a city, town, village or military base.

Place one comma between the city and state, and another comma after the state name unless ending a sentence.

“The West Virginia State Fair is held in Lewisburg, West Virginia, every year.”

If abbreviations must be used (e.g., datelines, lists, tabular material, etc.), use W.Va.

Use the two-letter abbreviation only with full addresses, including ZIP codes.

“P.O. Box 6031, Morgantown, WV 26506-6031”

Writing Guidelines

Writing Clearly

Good writing is clear and consistent. Most of our online and print publications, brochures and websites are intended for the public and should be understandable to the lay reader.

Here are a few tips for writing clearly:

- Avoid jargon. If you must use special terminology, especially acronyms, define or explain them early in the publication. It is preferred to use only commonly known acronyms; lesser known abbreviations and acronyms can be referred to generally. For example: the Division of Water Resources, use “the division” in subsequent references instead of its acronym.
- Use the active voice (Joe won an award) rather than passive voice (the award was won by Joe).
- Revise and rewrite. Most of the time, your second draft will be shorter and clearer.
- Be sure any tables or charts clearly convey the information and coincide with the text and headings that refer to them.

Avoiding Plagiarism

According to Dictionary.com, the act of using or imitating the language and thoughts of another author without authorization, or by representing that author’s work as your own (without crediting the original author) is plagiarism. Avoid plagiarism by citing the work of others in the text, and in a reference or source list, even if you are paraphrasing. See [Copyright Permissions](#); [Citing Sources](#), and [Chicago Manual of Style](#) for how to list sources.

Avoiding Repetition

Sometimes repeating a word or phrase adds emphasis. However, too much repetition is redundant. Here are some repetitive examples (with clearer choices provided):

Repetitive	Clear	Repetitive	Clear
adequate enough	adequate	honest truth	truth
as a general rule	as a rule	joint partnership	partnership
basic fundamentals	fundamentals	new breakthrough	breakthrough
close proximity	proximity or close	on pages 20 to 30	pages 20 through 30
consensus of opinion	consensus	inclusive	correct
current status	status	precisely correct	regular meetings or weekly meetings
different varieties	varieties	regular weekly meetings	separate
disappear from sight	disappear	separate entities	surrounded
early beginnings	beginnings	surrounded on all sides	facts
empty space	empty or vacant	true facts	visible
end result	result	visible to the eye	
exactly alike	alike or identical		
final completion	completion or final		
for the sum of	for or sum		
free gift	free or gift		

Writing Concisely

Whether you are writing for a scientific journal, your county website, or local newspaper, be concise. Convey meaning without extra words.

Wordy	Preferred	Wordy	Preferred
a distance of 175 miles	175 miles	open up	open
add up	add	period of time	period
cancel out	cancel	prior to the start of	before
circulate around	circulate	red in color	red
connect together	connect	refer back to	refer to
continue to remain	remain	repeat again	repeat
cylindrical in shape	cylindrical	send out	send
during the month of July	during July	small in size	small
few in number	few	still remain	remain
finish up	finish	summer months	summer
in order to	to	the reason is because	the reason is
in this day and age	now	the reason is why	the reason is
joined together	joined	try out	try

From "Style Guidelines," K-State Research and Extension, Kansas State University Agricultural and Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service. Adapted with permission.

Avoiding Grammar Mistakes

The following list of words are commonly misused. Below is a guide to assist you with selecting the right word in the intended context.

Word	Definition and Use
Your You're	Your is a possessive: your book, your pencil You're is a contraction for you are
Their There They're	Their is a possessive: their group, their house There is a noun: He went there earlier today. They're is a contraction for "they are." "They're coming tomorrow."
Its It's	Its is a possessive: "Every dog has its day." It's is a contraction for "it is" or "it has." "It's raining today."
Who's Whose	Who's is a contraction for "who is," or "who has." Whose possessive form: "Whose folder is this?"
Affect Effect	Affect is used as a verb meaning "to influence or make a difference to" something. Effect is a noun meaning "the result or influence," or as a verb, meaning "to bring about as a result."
Who Whom	Who is used to refer to the subject of a sentence. Whom is used to refer to the object of a sentence. When in doubt, try this simple trick: If you can replace the word with "he" or "she," use who. If you can replace it with 'him' or 'her,' use whom.
Me Myself I	Use I for the subject and me for the object in a sentence. "I walked the dog." "She gave the ball to me." Use myself to refer back to the subject of the sentence (it is a reflexive pronoun). Do not use myself as a substitute for I or me. "I gave myself a bunch of flowers for my birthday."

	You can also use myself as an intensifier. “I myself don’t like knitting.”
e.g. i.e.	e.g., means “for example” i.e., means “that is,” or “in other words.”
More than Over	While AP Style has removed the distinction between “more than” and “over,” use their definitions to assist you in deciding the most accurate phrasing in context: More than (adj.): a greater amount, number or size; extra or additional; (adv.): to a greater degree or extent, more often or for a longer period of time, or in addition. Over: (adv.) in an upward and forward direction; (prep.): to, from or at a place that is higher than something.
Less than vs Fewer	Less than (adj.): smaller in amount or number, constituting a more limited number or amount; of lower rank, degree or importance; of reduced size, extent or degree; more limited in quantity. Fewer (adj.): smaller number of persons or things.

Writing Useful, Readable Content for Web Use

Most web users skim web pages rather than reading, and may not take the time to figure out how a website is supposed to work, so it is imperative that web pages are concise and navigation is user-intuitive. User-intuitive navigation means adhering to a 3-click rule: website users should be able to find the content they seek within three clicks of hyperlinks on the website.

To make a webpage user-friendly:

Content

- Keep paragraphs short, and use subheadings and bullet lists. Not all readers will scroll through a long web page.
- Avoid blocks of small print, jargon and complex sentences.
- If a title is long, put the most important ideas first.
- Sans-serif fonts, such as Helvetica, may be easier to read online than serif fonts, such as Times New Roman.
 - This is Helvetica, a sans serif font
 - This is Times New Roman, a serif font
- Black text on white background has the best contrast.
- Use concise titles and headings so web pages stand alone as web search results.

Images / Graphics

- Hyperlinks should be easy to find and positioned consistently.
- Use a single color and underline convention for linked text. If it’s not a link, don’t make it look like one.
- Do not use “click here” to indicate linked text.
- Link to a print-friendly file (PDF, for example) for easier in-depth reading.
- Use keywords or tags from the title, subheadings, links and text so that web searches will find your topic or web page.

Technical Functionality

- Avoid using spaces in file and folder names. Instead, use dashes for spaces.
- Follow a consistent naming convention for all file folders—the shorter and more accurate, the better. Follow a standard file naming convention such as subject-audience-program or area-date. Dates should follow a consistent format, such as 4 digit year-2 digit month-2 digit day:

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- Do not post scanned documents that are actually pictures of text. Use real text so search engines can locate content. To prove text is real (if necessary), copy and paste the text into a word processing program (Microsoft Word).
- Test your pages. Proofread text and check links. Display the pages in more than one web browser to ensure that they display properly.
- Check all the links on your pages regularly to ensure that broken links are repaired.
- Keep file sizes as small as possible.
- Multipage documents (such as PDFs or PowerPoint) should be less than 1MB. Large documents are slow to download.
- Use low-resolution graphics files (less than 1MB, or smaller if there are several graphics on a page).
- Embed alternate text in graphics files so search engines and accessibility applications can read them.
- If you use several photos in a rotating slide show, make sure they are exactly the same width and height. Rotating photos of different heights makes the text below the photos seem to bounce.
- Use animated graphics sparingly; these can be distracting to the user.
- For PDF files, add accurate, concise title and keywords in the document properties. Search engines use this information to retrieve results.

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