Dear Colleagues,

Communicators have important work to do on behalf of UBC. The speed at which communications now move means we must be highly effective at expressing the value we create in the world and delivering on that promise in all we communicate. The work of creating a world-renowned UBC brand depends upon a collective, tireless effort to communicate, engage and deliver exceptional experiences for all those we come into contact with each and every day.

Our goal is to ensure that UBC is well known, highly valued and deeply connected in British Columbia, Canada and around the world. Our identity is often the most immediate representation of our institution, people and brand to our many audiences. Having a strong brand guideline system allows us to tell our collective story with the power of one voice.

We appreciate your respect and collaboration in maintaining UBC’s brand guidelines. We hope this site and guide are helpful for you. I thank all of you for your dedication to supporting UBC.

Rick Hart
Director, Brand and Marketing Communications
Communications and Marketing
Editorial Guide for UBC Communicators

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Please note that the style guide will be updated as the need arises. Please check the UBC brand site regularly to ensure that you are following the latest guide.
Introduction

1.0 This editorial guide offers a definitive resource for UBC in-house writers and communicators for print and online publications by providing a consistent approach to how we write for our many external and internal audiences.

Uncertainty in writing creates uncertainty in the reader. Understanding the rules of writing (and there are many) allows you to write with more confidence and in turn, creates confidence and trust in your reader.

The guide is largely based on principles and technical guides published by the Canadian Press (CP) — Canada’s national news agency. Other reference sources include the Canadian Oxford Dictionary and the Chicago Manual of Style (CM).

In general, any material not covered in this edition can be referenced in the Canadian Press Stylebook and its companion CP Caps and Spelling.

The style guide is meant for general use and not for specialized writing, such as medical or scientific journals or thesis presentations. Writing in professional communications must be accessible to a wide audience and as such, this guide seeks to make it easier for you to meaningfully connect with your audience.
Notes on Writing and Editing

2.0 If you are a professional communicator at UBC you will wear many ‘hats’, two of which will likely be that of writer and editor. As an editor, you are the final defence against weak, limp and uncertain writing. You may also be a coach for novice writers that have sent on their precious copy to you in the hope you will like it, publish it and perhaps even pay them for it.

The following section clarifies the various roles and responsibilities that you may inhabit or manage directly in your writing work at UBC.
2.1 WRITING AND EDITING ROLES

2.1 ONE WRITER FOR ALL

It would be wonderful if the word writer encompassed editor, copy editor and line editor but it most assuredly does not.

These various roles have different skills sets and play alternating roles in the process of writing through to publication.

WRITER

The person with the ‘big idea’. This person creates the hook for the piece, has the idea of a specific way to tell the story, be it in a press release, newsletter, advertisement or video script. They create, out of the ether, the precious first draft, the overall structure and the feel and tone of the piece. The writer is first and foremost the storyteller and is a key and instrumental leader in successful communications.

EDITOR

The editor will assess the ease with which the language conveys the ‘big idea’. Does it make sense? Does it flow from one paragraph to the next? Does it have a natural tension that is resolved satisfactorily at the end for the reader? Is the tone, style, language consistent throughout? The editor will advise the writer on structure, murky facts, incorrect or ‘lazy’ language, and likely catch any overt spelling or grammar issues. At UBC, editors should be well-versed in our grammar and editorial rules and processes.

COPY OR LINE EDITOR

This is the person who will nitpick the double-spaces, clumsy misuse of a semicolon or catch subtle spelling errors. They should be a Canadian Press Stylebook expert and ensure the writing is well and worthy for publication. The line editor is looking at the facts, periods, quotes, titles and typos, and not so much the substance of the content. If you don’t have access to a copy editor, please ask someone who is known to be a stickler for details to do a line edit (literally, line by line) and mark up the copy before publication. Your reputation (and UBC’s) will be the better for it and so will the writing.
2.1 Writing and Editing Roles

Working with Freelancers

Your role as a communicator is to make the copy interesting, concise, complete and correct and ensure it sounds like ‘UBC’. Conversely, the role of editor is not intrusive and should not attempt to alter the writer’s ‘voice’ or attempt an extensive rewrite without first consulting the writer.

Good writing is clean, vigorous, specific and direct. Writing in UBC communications should not contain jargon, murky language, ‘PR speak’ and the passive voice. Do not be afraid to be a stickler for all factual, grammatical and structural errors. If your freelancer has a strong style that overshadows the content, ask them to dial it back and let the UBC research, discovery, event, or personality shine instead.

Never alter copy unless such a change is buttressed by a creditable, explainable reason. Don’t inflict your own viewpoints on the copy, don’t over-edit or rewrite unfamiliar yet capable writing styles simply to fit your own parameters. This hurts your relationship with your writer and begs the question Why didn’t you just write it yourself?

Never guess or assume. Get into the habit of checking all and any important facts before publication. If something is unclear, query the writer. If you don’t fully understand a story or sections of it, do not publish it.

At UBC, we support our colleagues so try and always keep your editorial comments professional and positive. Finding a good writer is a start; helping them write on brand is a process so bear this in mind when hiring and working with freelancers.
2.2 WRITING CONSIDERATIONS

The following are editorial suggestions informed by a storytelling and a human-centered approach to communications in order to engage readers. Whether you’re a new communicator at UBC or need a refresher on UBC style, the following will provide helpful insights when writing for UBC.

STARRING THE PEOPLE OF UBC

UBC communications focus on our people and keep them at the heart of our writing. By placing a human at the core of your story, you bring it to life and make it relatable to a wider audience. Be wary about shortening a story by eliminating the colourful details, interesting quotations and other attention grabbers. Instead, remove any unnecessary wordiness or secondary details and/or move this material into a complementary, secondary sidebar.

Make use of quotes for design purposes: Pull quotes and sidebars provide a wonderful relief to the eye on mobile devices and work well in digital stories as a graphic element. Use them as a secondary ‘narrative’ through-line and encourage your freelancers to highlight these in their work.

NOW IS NOT THE TIME FOR YOUR PERSONAL OPINION

As a professional communicator, you are responsible for representing UBC in the most professional manner possible. Inserting your own political or religious beliefs into UBC brand writing has no place in professional communications. It is important to be meticulously aware of any potentially libelous material or material that could be deemed as being in bad taste, racist or otherwise unacceptable. If you are unsure of how to write about something that is potentially sensitive or that you feel too ‘close to’, review our inclusive language section at the end of this guide or ask a seasoned work colleague to evaluate it.

The Breath Test: Writing is like music. Except you can’t repeat notes and usually don’t see your audience. For this reason, if you want to test whether your writing is easily understood and not overly wordy, simply read the sentence or paragraph out loud. If you repeatedly run out of breath, consider editing until it reads with ease.
2.2 WRITING CONSIDERATIONS

HAVE COURAGE
The coldly blunt saying, “Murder your darlings”, is attributed to American writer William Faulkner who believed a writer should ruthlessly ‘kill’ any extraneous or ‘darling’ word, paragraph or section that is unclear, wandering or verbose—in other words, anything that was not critical to the story at hand.

In order to write well, we have to learn to cut our ‘darlings’ — words, ideas, or phrases we think are simply marvelous but do not serve the story. This may require letting them go off to story pasture where perhaps one day they’ll find their way into another piece. Keeping our writing focused, clear and accessible to a wide audience is a job requirement, so while it may be painful to let your story darlings go, hit delete again and again until the clutter is culled and an articulate communications piece has emerged.

It takes some courage but your writing will be the better for it.

If you are tasked with being the editor on a piece, then your cruel (or enjoyable depending upon the person) job will be to cut, cut, cut all the frothy, florid language that does not get to the point of the story. If you are both writer and editor, do these activities on different days to help you be objective about your writing and necessarily merciless.

Ensure that the story is fair and balanced on all sides (objective) and that any unusual or technical terms are explained. Have courage and don’t hide behind legalese-sounding copy or what you imagine to be ‘formal’ writing that ends up sounding stilted and keeps the audience at arms’ length.

THE ‘IMPACT’ OF SLOPPY ENGLISH
Avoid popular yet fuzzy babble-speak; default to the short and concise. For examples, ‘now’ instead of ‘at this point in time’ and ‘contact’ instead of ‘reaching out’. Instead of non-specifics such as ‘adverse weather event’, use ‘storm’ or ‘ice-storm’ or ‘hurricane’ and so forth.

Unless referring to a physical blow, avoid the word ‘impact’ and its derivatives such as ‘impactful’, ‘impacting’ and the like. Instead, use ‘effect’, ‘consequence’, ‘result’ or similar words.

Sweeping generalizations of any kind are not on brand. Vague, generic statements such as learning is a powerful vehicle for growth or the world is changing all the time or all the students in first year were really excited should be eliminated and replaced with specific examples, concrete ideas and active, compelling imagery.

As a leading research university, our writing is often a vehicle for complex ideas, inventions, patents and myriads of innovations. It is our job as communicators to synthesize and distil these down into simple yet engaging, thought-provoking language. Today, information is primarily consumed digitally. Because of this, extra attention should be given to writing that is sharp, smart and interesting.

Sloppy, imprecise writing simply doesn’t reflect well on the university or increase equity in the brand. Take the time to properly serve the story. You’ll have an asset of which you can be proud and your message will ‘land’ better for your audience.
UNIVERSITY TERMS
3.1 University Name

What's in Our Name?

Well, as it happens, a lot. We were the first provincial university in British Columbia and our first students, staff and faculty were passionate about what that represented.

The name brought with it tremendous hope and opportunity for the future. It was everything to them and it should be everything to us.

Formal Name
- The University of British Columbia

Formal Name with Specific Location
- The University of British Columbia Vancouver campus
- The University of British Columbia Okanagan campus

Less Formal Names
- UBC
- UBC Vancouver
- UBC Okanagan

And in secondary references
- UBC-V
- UBC-O
- the university

Faculty, Unit or Department Level
- UBC Faculty of Education
- UBC education faculty
- education faculty

The formal names of UBC faculties and their respective departments and institutes can be found at: www.ubc.ca/our-campuses/vancouver/directories/faculties-schools.html

Use in a Story, Article or News Release
Spell out 'University of British Columbia' in its first reference. In following references, UBC is acceptable except in very formal instances.

Remember: Never use periods when writing UBC. Write it out as UBC, not U.B.C.
3.1 UNIVERSITY NAME

**USE OF 'UNIVERSITY’**
In certain circumstances and when referring to UBC as a specific formal/legal entity, the stand-alone word ‘university’ may be capitalized but do so sparingly. Capitalizing ‘University’ puts a distance between ourselves and our students, faculty, alumni and partners; it smacks of the ‘ivory-tower’ attitude which we avoid in UBC communications.

This works:

- **In 2015, the University celebrates its centennial.**

This does not:

- **We, the University, see fit that the new bylaw be implemented in September.**

Suggestion: use ‘UBC’ instead of ‘University.’

- **UBC will implement the bylaw in September.**

In all other occasions and especially where ‘university’ is used as an adjective or modifier, use lowercase:

- university-level
- university-wide
- university faculties
- our university

**USE OF ‘CAMPUS’**
The word ‘campus’ should not be capitalized, unless used in a headline or title.

In body text, please refer to the campuses as ‘Vancouver campus’ or ‘Okanagan campus’.

- **UBC Campus Security supports the university community to ensure the Okanagan campus is a safe place to work, study, and reside.**

Please note that there are only two official campuses; other learning sites, such as UBC Robson Square or the UBC Learning Exchange, are treated as locations.
3.2 People

UBC wouldn't exist without our students. Whether directly or indirectly, almost all other members of the UBC community — administration, faculty members, staff, alumni — are dedicated to serving our students. When referring to our community, students come first.

Staff, faculty members, alumni and friends of UBC often come with titles; respect and attention should be given to how we list these people and titles. The following useful tips will help avoid confusion, misrepresentation or inadvertently diminish the people who make up the diverse UBC community.

The UBC Community

The UBC community is comprised of students, faculty, staff and alumni (listed in that order when grouped). When appropriate to the message, include or reference all or some of the above groups (in order). For example:

- Students, faculty, staff and alumni are invited to attend Imagine Day.
- Faculty and staff can try a variety of instructor-led classes at no cost during UBC Recreation’s Free Week.
- Students and alumni are eligible to sign up for a UBC email forwarding address.

To avoid confusion when referring to the people within a faculty, use a term such as ‘faculty members’ rather than the overarching ‘faculty’.

Names and Titles

As professional communicators, it is crucial we don’t assume titles or the correct spelling of names. If at all unsure or unfamiliar, check the UBC website or contact the individual’s department directly for the correct spelling and formal titles.

In the first written reference, use the person’s full name and academic title. In general, subsequent references to the person should be by surname only.

In general, in the first reference or as soon as possible in the text, cite the department or university affiliation to the person.

Use this:

- John Doe, director of risk management, safety and security

Not this:

- Director of Risk Management, Safety and Security, John Doe
3.2 PEOPLE

TITLE CAPITALIZATION
Capitalize an academic or formal title when it directly precedes the person’s name:

- UBC President Frank F. Wesbrook
- UBC Professor John Doe

Do not capitalize an academic or formal title when it follows a person’s name:

- Frank F. Wesbrook, UBC president
- John Doe, UBC professor

Exception: In formal contexts (e.g., a list of professors in an annual report or the title in a closing signature for a letter) titles are usually capitalized even where they do not directly precede the person’s name. Also, as a specific courtesy, the rare exception may be made in promotional or communication contexts.

Do not capitalize occupational titles:

- UBC events manager John Doe
- John Doe, manager of UBC events

TITLE ABBREVIATIONS

- Professor
  Prof.
  Example: Prof. Jane Doe

- Associate Professor
  Assoc. Prof.
  Example: Assoc. Prof. John Doe

- Assistant Professor
  Asst. Prof.
  Example: Asst. Prof. Jane Doe

- Professor Emeritus
  Prof. Emer.
  Example: Prof. Emer. John Doe

Remember to use periods in the abbreviation.
3.2 PEOPLE

THE VICES OF TITLES
The titles ‘vice-chancellor’ and ‘vice-president’ and titles of similar administrative officers are hyphenated with areas of responsibility.

- vice-president, development
- vice-president, finance

However, when referring to two similar positions at UBC, use specific campuses, use parenthesis:

- associate vice-provost (Okanagan)

In a sentence, use this:

* Professor John Doe, vice-president research, was appointed to the board.

Not this:

* Professor John Doe, Vice-President Research, was appointed to the Board.

When the title precedes the name, or when it is a stand-alone title referring to an office, it is capitalized:

- Vice-President John Hepburn is leading a new international strategy.

- The Office of the Vice-President, Students (VPS) is responsible for shaping the experience and learning environment for UBC undergraduate and graduate students.

MEDICAL DOCTOR VERSUS DOCTORAL TITLES
As with CP Style, the title ‘doctor’ or ‘Dr.’ is used only for medical doctors or doctors of dental medicine (i.e., those with MD or DMD degrees and not academics or faculty with doctoral [i.e., PhD] degrees).

If meant for ‘outside’ publication and material sent to the media, do not use ‘doctor’ or ‘Dr.’ when referring to non-medical faculty. Instead, use the academic title:

- Professor Jane Doe and not Dr. Jane Doe

However and where applicable for use within the UBC community and as a courtesy, the term ‘doctor’ or ‘Dr.’ may be used to refer to faculty with doctoral degrees.

Those holding a postgraduate degree but with no PhD, MD, etcetera, the preferred title is ‘Professor’ or ‘Prof.’ (with period).

In running text, use academic ranks (e.g., full professor, assistant, associate etcetera) guardedly and only when the context demands it.
3.3 UBC DEGREES

Throughout any given day in the life of a communicator, we add academic degrees into the mix of our writing.

In formal, academic context (e.g., degree lists in graduation programs and campus calendars) UBC Vancouver and UBC Okanagan use periods in the abbreviations of academic degrees: Bachelor of Arts, B.A.; Doctor of Philosophy, Ph.D. and so forth.

However, in public and internal communications UBC favours the more modern, informal and accessible trend to eliminate the periods and otherwise unnecessary punctuation as per the CP Style guide: Bachelor of Arts, BA; Doctor of Philosophy, PhD.

The following pages contain examples for a variety of familiar abbreviations for UBC degrees. While not exhaustive, it will provide a point of reference when abbreviating various levels of degrees and titles.

Note that UBC offers dozens of different courses of study and degree programs. Within each program, successful graduates are awarded specific degrees and academic designations, each with its own proper abbreviation ranging from the relatively simple and familiar to the more complex: e.g., Master of Arts (MA) and Master of Arts Asia Pacific Policy Studies with Master of Business Administration (MAAPPS/MBA).

If uncertain of a degree and its abbreviation, always check and depending on the context, opt for either the formal (with periods) or informal abbreviation.

Visit the Vancouver Academic Calendar for the complete list of UBC Vancouver faculties, schools and their degrees, postdoctoral graduate studies, diploma and certificate studies and formal abbreviations.

Information for UBC Okanagan can be found in the Okanagan Academic Calendar.
3.3 UBC DEGREES

EXAMPLES OF DEGREES AT UBC AND THEIR (INFORMAL) ABBREVIATIONS

- Bachelor of Applied Science BASc
- Bachelor of Arts BA
- Bachelor of Business in Real Estate BBRE
- Bachelor of Commerce BCom
- Bachelor of Computer Science BCS
- Bachelor of Environmental Design BEnD
- Bachelor of Dental Science BDSc
- Bachelor of Education BEd
- Bachelor of Fine Arts BFA
- Bachelor of Human Kinetics BHK
- Bachelor of International Economics BIE
- Bachelor of Kinesiology BKin
- Bachelor of Management BMgt
- Bachelor of Media Studies BMS
- Bachelor of Medical Laboratory Science BMLSc
- Bachelor of Midwifery BMw
- Bachelor of Music BMus
- Bachelor of Science BSc
- Bachelor of Science in Forestry BSF
- Bachelor of Science in Nursing BSN
- Bachelor of Social Work BSW
- Doctor of Dental Science DMD
- Doctor of Education EdD
- Doctor of Medicine MD
- Doctor of Pharmacy PharmD
- Doctor of Philosophy PhD
- Executive Master of Business Administration EMBA
- Juris Doctor JD
- Master of Advanced Studies in Architecture MASA
- Master of Applied Science MASc

>
3.3 UBC DEGREES

EXAMPLES OF DEGREES (CONT.)

- Master of Architecture
  MArch
- Master of Archival Studies
  MAS
- Master of Arts
  MA
- Master of Arts in Planning
  MAP
- Master of Business Administration
  MBA
- Master of Education
  MEd
- Master of Engineering
  MEng
- Master of Engineering Leadership
  MEL
- Master of Food and Resource Economics
  MFRE
- Master of Food Science
  MFS
- Master of Forestry
  MF
- Master of Health Administration
  MHA
- Master of Health Leadership and Policy
  MHLHP
- Master of Journalism
  MJ
- Master of Land and Water Systems
  MLWS
- Master of Landscape Architecture
  MLA
- Master of Laws
  LLM
- Master of Laws (Common Law)
  LLM(CL)
- Master of Management
  MM
- Master of Music
  MMus
- Master of Nursing (Nurse Practitioner)
  MN-NP
- Master of Occupational Therapy
  MOT
- Master of Physical Therapy
  MPT
- Master of Public Health
  MPH
- Master of Science
  MSc
- Master of Science in Nursing
  MSN
- Master of Social Work
  MSW
- Master of Software Systems
  MSS
- Master of Urban Design
  MUD
3.4 UBC FACULTIES, DEPARTMENTS, ORGANIZATIONS, BUILDINGS AND VENUES

3.4 FACULTIES, DEPARTMENTS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND BUILDINGS

FACULTIES, DEPARTMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Capitalize titles of faculties, departments and units except when referring to more than one. Do not abbreviate ‘department’ when referring to more than one.

Do not capitalize faculties, schools, departments, or offices when referring to more than one.

Only capitalize the proper names of faculties, departments and organizations, not the description of them:

- the Faculty of Arts
  the arts faculty
- the Department of Applied Chemistry
  the applied chemistry department
- the University of British Columbia Board of Governors
  the UBC board of governors
  the board

BUILDINGS AND VENUES

Refer to buildings and other university venues named after people by using either the family name or the person’s full name, but use one or the other convention consistently within the text. Once the formal name is established and assuming there is no ambiguity, the informal usage is allowed.

- St. John’s College
  St. John’s
  the college
- the Alma Mater Society Student Nest
  the AMS Student Nest
  the Nest
- the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre
  the Barber learning centre
  the centre
- Graduate and Non-Traditional Students Collegium
  the graduate collegium
  the collegium

Please visit Know My Campus for the formal, official names of university buildings and venues.
3.5 OTHER TERMS FOUND AT UBC

THE UBC MOTTO: TUUM EST
In UBC’s first year, Dr. Henry E. Young, then B.C. minister of education, and Dr. Frank F. Wesbrook chose our motto: Tuum Est meaning ‘It is Yours’.

The spirit of this motto held tremendous promise for the university. It continues to do so for each new generation of students who arrive at UBC to pursue their educations. As such, Tuum Est is always italicized to show emphasis and respect.

We do not shorten, abbreviate, alter or create conjunctions out of our motto. It is never ‘It’s Yours’.

UBC THUNDERBIRDS
UBC Thunderbirds is the formal title of the varsity athletics program at UBC Vancouver, and is capitalized. After first reference, it can be shortened to just Thunderbirds.

Note that Thunderbirds is always plural when in reference to the varsity athletics program.

Use this:

ocado In all, 241 UBC Thunderbirds athletes have competed at the Olympics.

Not this:

ocado In all, 241 UBC Thunderbird athletes have competed at the Olympics.

UBC HEAT
UBC Okanagan Heat is the formal title of the varsity athletics program at UBC Okanagan, and is capitalized. In the first reference use the full title and ‘the Heat’ thereafter.

ALUMNUS, ALUMNA AND ALUMNI
• alumnus
  Individual male

• alumna
  Individual female

• alumni
  Group/plural

When an alumnus or alumna is mentioned, follow his or her name on the first or second reference with her or his degree in brackets.

• UBC Alumna Rika Wright, born October 9, 1911 (BA 1933 and Diploma in Social Work 1935)
4.0 WRITING STYLE GUIDE

4.1 ACRONYMS

UBC is smitten with acronyms. We love them in sentences, titles, speeches, newsletters — but if we are communicating and want to be readily and easily understood, avoid them at all costs. Use only when necessary to clarify multiple references or if the organization/department/program etcetera is commonly known by its acronym.

In general, try to avoid introducing an unfamiliar acronym if it is used only once or twice in the copy.

When using an acronym, spell it out in the first citation and place the acronym in parentheses immediately or shortly after. For example:

- It was named TRI University Meson Facility (TRIUMF) when founded in 1968.

Remember to avoid using periods within well-known acronyms:

- RCMP; CPR; CBC; GPA

4.2 AMPERSANDS

Use only when part of a formal name.

- Tiffany & Co.
- Technology & Science Quarterly

Otherwise, spell it out.

- Calvin and Hobbs
- The Globe and Mail

Some UBC unit names use ampersands in their formal titles. Others do not. If in doubt, contact the specific unit for the correct punctuation.

Note: When an ampersand is used, the serial comma is omitted.

In graphs, tables, charts and more visual mediums such as ads, social media or other ‘tight’ communications (e.g., headlines) where space is limited, ‘space savers’ such as the ampersand are allowed.
4.3 APOSTROPHES
Use an apostrophe in plurals of lowercase letters:

- mind your p’s and q’s

In general, plurals of capital letters or numbers do not take an apostrophe:

- the ABCs
- Canada’s CF-18s

Exception: To avoid confusion, use an apostrophe with plurals of capital letters:

- She graduated with straight A’s in science and philosophy.

**PLURAL USE**
Know the correct use of apostrophes to indicate a plural acronym or decade.

Use this:

- URLs and the 1930s

Not this:

- URL’s and the 1930’s

If the apostrophe is used, it indicates the possessive.

- Point out the URL’s location in the text document.

4.4 CAPITALIZATION
In recent years there is a growing trend to move away from more formal styles heavy in capitalization and punctuation, and towards greater informality and inclusiveness involving less capitalization and ‘looser’ punctuation.

UBC favours the ‘lowercase style’ as it improves readability and increases the prominence of the words that do warrant capitalization. In no way does the use of lowercase reduce the importance nor credibility of a department or an individual’s position or reputation.

Rather than weigh the writing down with unnecessary and excessive capitalization (which quickly wearies the reader’s eye and attention), the adept use of white space, em-dashes, typestyle and typeface can — and will — achieve a more modern, lighter style that works well across print and digital mediums.

**WHEN TO CAPITALIZE: GENERAL RULES**
Capitalize all proper nouns, government and university departments, trade names, formal titles when preceding a person’s name, names of associations, clubs, companies, religions, languages, nations, races, addresses and places.

Do not capitalize proper nouns that have entered the popular vernacular such as: brussels sprouts, french fries, portland cement, manila paper, scotch whiskey.

Capitalize formal and widely accepted acronyms such as: AIDS, HIV, NASA, CSIS.
4.0 WRITING STYLE GUIDE

WHEN TO CAPITALIZE: AT THE UNIVERSITY
Capitalize the proper names of university faculties, schools, departments, units, associations and clubs.

Do not capitalize schools, offices, faculties and departments when referring to more than one:

- The faculties of journalism and law

Do not capitalize fields of study/program names or areas of concentration:

- UBC’s new general biological sciences program

Do not capitalize the program when referring to a student studying a particular program/field:

- The nursing students studied with the journalism students.

Only capitalize the proper names of courses, not the description of them:

- Chemistry 202
  The 200-level chemistry course

Do not capitalize academic subjects. Exception: when the subject is also a proper noun:

- He studies history, biology, physics and law. She studies English, French, Spanish and Latin.

Capitalize honours, awards and decorations:

- Governor General’s Award, Order of Canada

Use lowercase common-noun references when the reference stands alone:

- the award, the prize

WHEN TO CAPITALIZE: HEADLINES AND TITLES
In headlines or composition titles, capitalize the first word, any nouns, verbs and conjunctions of four or more letters. Prepositions are only capitalized if they are used adjectivally or adverbially.

- The Battle for Land in Brazil
- Path to Research
- From Seed to Science

If there is a colon, capitalize the first word after the colon.

- Pride and Prejudice: A Romantic Disaster

Special considerations: When considering your headline, examine how it will look on a mobile device. This will, in nearly all cases, necessitate a shorter headline for better readability. Challenge yourself to keep your headlines brief whenever possible and ensure they deliver a punch with a clever tie-in to your story. The reader should be intrigued, engaged and curious when they read it any context.

- The Robots are Coming
- Good Soil, Good Humans
- Data meets Deity
- Synapse of Discovery
4.0 WRITING STYLE GUIDE

WHEN TO CAPITALIZE: PEOPLE

There are many titles at UBC. As communicators, we bump into them all day long. Getting them right is important — it demonstrates respect for both the role and the person.

Capitalize full proper names and titles on the first instance, lowercase in subsequent use. When writing informally however, or where the reasonable option of using lowercase exists; use lowercase: it’s more conversational and ‘human’.

Capitalize formal titles but only when the title directly precedes the name.

- **Prime Minister Justin Trudeau**
- **Premier Christy Clark**

Use lowercase when the titles are stand-alone or when the name is set apart by commas.

- **Justin Trudeau, prime minister**

Use this:

- **Contact the dean of graduate studies for more information.**

Not this:

- **Contact the Dean of Graduate Studies for more information.**

Capitalize the proper names of professorships and chairs. Canada Research Chair positions are always capitalized:

- **Canada Research Chair in Public Opinion, Elections and Representation**

If you need to add the particular tier (there are two), specify it in brackets:

- **Canada Research Chair (Tier 1)**

Use lowercase for job descriptions and ‘unofficial’ or occupational titles preceding a name:

- **arbitrator John Smith**
- **criminal lawyer Jane Doe**

Unless the title is especially relevant to their expertise (e.g., a medical doctor speaking about medicine or medical research), do not refer to a professor as ‘Dr.’ but instead, use the appropriate academic title: Assistant Professor, Professor.

Avoid the use of courtesy titles such as Mr., Ms. and the like.

Write ‘doctorate’ or ‘doctoral student’ and not ‘PhD student’.
4.0 WRITING STYLE GUIDE

WHEN TO CAPITALIZE: GEOGRAPHY
Capitalize widely recognized descriptive geographic/political regions:
• the West Coast, the Far North, Eastern Europe
More generalized locations, use lowercase:
• southern Ontario, northern British Columbia
Capitalize common nouns when they are part of a complete formal name and use lowercase in subsequent informal or partial forms:
• the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean
• the Atlantic and Pacific oceans
Note the difference between a formal entity and its informal counterpart:
• the Government of Canada
  the Canadian government
• the Government of British Columbia
  the B.C. government
• the University of British Columbia Board of Governors
  the UBC board of governors
• the UBC Faculty of Law
  the law faculty
Note: Do not confuse the formal entity (capitalized), with lowercase physical entity: the ‘City of Vancouver’ (the abstract, represented by the civic government), as opposed to ‘the city of Vancouver’ (the physical streets, buildings, people).

4.5 COLONS AND SEMICOLONS
COLON
Rather than a comma, use a colon to preface a complete direct quotation or a complete, full sentence. The colon also introduces lists, formal quotations, summations or ideas that complete an introductory sentence.
• UBC Imagine Week is full of activities: tours, workshops, orientations and fun.
Note: Unless it’s a quote or where extra emphasis is required, do not capitalize the first letter of the sentence that follows a colon: it’s unnecessary.
A colon signals to the reader that something important is coming: pay attention! It brings the writing to a halt and introduces a new idea. There must be a complete sentence before a colon. However, you can bend this rule a bit for headlines. For example:
• Synapse and Memory: Not a Simple Case of Neurons

SEMICOLON
Use a semicolon to link two ‘buttressing’ statements (clauses) or ideas that are too closely related to stand on their own yet shouldn’t be connected by a simple comma.
Avoid the overuse of the semicolon; it can affect the rhythm of a piece and on the web page, when there is limited space, it can feel clunky and tiresome to read.
4.0 WRITING STYLE GUIDE

4.6 COMMAS AND SERIAL COMMAS

COMMAS

Commas provide the brakes for your writing; think of them as polite police officers directing traffic in order to keep the speed of your writing sane, legible and easy to consume. Read your writing out loud and you will immediately hear where to pause (add a comma) or remove one to prevent the copy from lurching, stumbling, and pausing unnecessarily.

Use a comma when introducing a time or place.

• In the first 100 years of its history, UBC showed itself to be an entrepreneurial powerhouse.

• At the end of University Boulevard, you’ll find a great place to eat sushi at lunch.

Always use a comma after adverbs such as recently, previously, accordingly. If the adverb ends in an *ly* and you’re starting a sentence with it, use a comma.

• Recently, it came to light that the owls behind the Museum of Anthropology were sleeping for most of the day.

Do not place a comma after a conjunctive in a simple series of nouns or phrases.

• The UBC Farm sells kale, carrots and cabbage.

SERIAL COMMAS

Used judiciously, the serial or series comma helps avoid ambiguity. Also called the ‘Oxford’ or ‘Harvard’ comma, it is a comma placed immediately before the coordinating conjunction (and, or, nor) in a series of three or more terms.

This works:

✔️ This book is dedicated to my parents, Lady Gaga, and God.

This does not:

❌ This book is dedicated to my parents, Lady Gaga and God.
4.0 WRITING STYLE GUIDE

4.7 DATES AND TIMES

DATES
Use the month-day-year format in formal writing:
• The event will be held on June 25, 2016.

In instances where numeric date forms are preferred (e.g., charts with space limitations or where storing data is important), use ISO style with full numbers to represent the year, the month and the day. Separate each number with a hyphen:
• 2016-6-25

Do not use ordinal suffixes: st, nd, rd, th.

Use this:
.byId July 14, 2012

Not this:
 bidi July 14th, 2012

TIMES
Use lowercase and periods for the abbreviated Latin modifiers ante meridiem and post meridiem or a.m. and p.m.:
• Classes start at 8:00 a.m. and will end at 6 p.m.

Although wordy, the term ‘o’clock’ is allowed.
• 3:00 p.m. or three o’clock in the afternoon

To avoid ambiguity, ‘noon’ and ‘midnight’ are allowed.

Do not use the 24-hour ‘military’ clock.

ACADEMIC YEAR
Indicate the academic year by the initial full year, backslash, last two digits of the following ‘partial’ year:
• 2014/15

MONTHS
Where space restrictions apply, certain months can be abbreviated:

Do not abbreviate the following:
• March, April, May, June, July

When indicating month and year only, do not use commas or other punctuation.

Use this:
.bid August 1953

Not this:
 bidi August, 1953
4.0 WRITING STYLE GUIDE

**Decades**
When written in numerals, decades have no possessive apostrophe before the ‘s’:
- the 1990s (not the 1990’s)

Where the century is clearly understood, specific decades may be spelled out or written in numerals:
- the ‘Roaring Twenties’
- the ‘Dirty Thirties’

In this allowed shortened numerical form, an apostrophe precedes the form:
- the ‘90s

**Centuries**
When denoting centuries, spell out the first nine centuries as words; use digits and superscript for 10 and above.
- the sixth century
- the 20th century

**Seasons**
Seasons are always lowercase:
- The fall semester saw an increase in student activities.
- In the autumn, hardwood trees begin their ‘hibernation’.

4.8 Ellipses
Use three periods (with spaces before and after) … to indicate a deliberate omission or excised text within the sentence or quotation.

Avoid beginning or ending a quotation with ellipses, even when the quotation is a fragment.

When a quotation is included within a larger sentence, do not use ellipsis points at the beginning or end of the quoted material, even if the beginning or end of the original sentence has been omitted.

Use this:

☐ When Henri Matisse said that “creativity takes courage”, he introduces an idea that writers often forget in their pursuit of the path with the least resistance.

Not this:

☒ When Henri Matisse said that “… creativity takes courage”, he introduces an idea that writers often forget in their pursuit of the path with the least resistance.
4.9 EMPHASIS
Use quotation marks, italics or bold text or switch fonts when referencing the title of a web page, menu items, buttons and so forth. Thus:

• Click UBC Scholarships & Bursaries to find out more.

In running or body text and unless it’s a recognized legal acronym (e.g., NASA, CSIS, RCMP etcetera) NEVER USE FULL CAPS; UBC does not shout at our audience.

Use exclamation marks sparingly, if at all! UBC does not breathlessly gush at our readers!

Sentence structure, pacing, creative language — all of these do far more to engage a reader than leaning on exclamation marks or caps for emphasis.

In general, refrain from using italics to sway your reader to a particular point of view. Instead, be creative and inventive and write clearly to engage their hearts through storytelling.

Use this:

 Disorderly conduct — it is the act of intentionally disturbing the peace.

Not this:

 “Orderly conduct — it is the act of intentionally disturbing the peace.”

4.10 HYPHENS AND DASHES
To the reader’s eye, hyphens and dashes make for easier reading. They’re less pretentious, more inviting and active than having to work through a thicket of colons, semicolons and ellipses or a jarring stumble of commas.

HYPHENS
The hyphen (-) joins words to create adjectival modifiers. Hyphens help avoid ambiguity. Use a hyphen to join two or more words serving as a single adjective modifying a noun.

• The multi-million-dollar building houses a five-ton sculpture in the foyer.

Two-word nouns are not hyphenated when by themselves but in general, when they become descriptive, hyphenate:

• By itself:
  machine diagnostics,

• Descriptive:
  machine-diagnostics systems

Use hyphens with ex-, self-, all-, post- and -elect. Some words that begin with co- also take a hyphen, such as co-respondent, or when a hyphen avoids doubling a vowel, such as co-operate and co-ordinate.

The hyphen also creates ‘full’ words: co-worker, co-design and co-development.

Where the last letter of a prefix is the same as the first letter of the second word, use the hyphen to improve readability. Thus: anti-intellectual and not antiintellectual, pre-existing and not preexisting.
4.0 WRITING STYLE GUIDE

HYPHENS (CONT.)
To avoid confusion and for easier reading, separate double vowels with a hyphen. Thus: co-exist and not coexist.

Hyphenate compound adjectives to avoid confusion or ambiguity: first-year student, two-year program and per-credit basis.

Do not use a hyphen with words ending in -ly; the -ly suffix is adequate notice that the next word is being modified: fully involved team and utterly banal meeting.

Where the second part of a hyphenated expression is omitted, retain the hyphen and follow it by a space.

Use this:
- The 200- and 300-level courses will be taught over several two- to four-hour sessions.

Not this:
- The 200 and 300-level courses will be taught over several two to four-hour sessions.

To indicate joint titles, use the hyphen and not the back slash. Thus: writer-researcher and not writer/researcher.

EN-DASH
The en-dash or ‘short’ dash (–) is typically used to indicate numerical sequences, times or dates and to connect associated years, and adjectival phrases holding two-word concepts.

- Read chapters 15–20.
- the 2015–2016 school year
- the Vancouver–Toronto flight

To get an en-dash, type ‘option’ + ‘-‘ (hyphen) on a Mac keyboard, or ‘Ctrl’ + ‘-‘ (minus key in numeric key pad) on a PC keyboard.

Note: Do not use a space before or after the en-dash. Close it up.

In running text and when specifying ranges of number or dates, do not use dashes. Instead, use ‘between/and’ or ‘from/to’.

- She attended classes between 2012 and 2015.

Exception: In running text dashes are allowed in parenthetical material.

- The professor was hired in the 2012–2013 academic year.
4.0 Writing Style Guide

**Em-Dash**

The em-dash or ‘long’ dash (—) is often used around modifying clauses — a useful way to avoid using brackets or semicolons — or to set off a subsequent ‘orphan clause’ or a non-essential element that warrants special emphasis, or to indicate an abrupt change or a parenthetical thought or ellipsis.

- UBC researchers developed solar-powered robotic sailboats — which were quickly dubbed ‘sailbots’ — to cross the Atlantic Ocean.

*Note for designers:* Em-dashes are to be given a full-word space on either side in web typography and programs such as Word or PowerPoint, but in programs such as InDesign, Quark or Illustrator, it is recommended that designers adjust it to a half-space on either side by either +kerning from no word space or -kerning from a full-word space.

When used for emphasis, the em-dash is a powerful tool but when overused, it quickly becomes an affront to the reader. Use the ‘long’ dash sparingly — and judiciously — to avoid lessening its effect.

To get an en-dash, type ‘option’ + ‘shift’ + ‘–’ (hyphen) on a Mac keyboard, or ‘Ctrl’ + ‘Alt’ + ‘–’ (minus key in numeric key pad) on a PC keyboard.

4.11 Italic

Italicize the titles of books, magazines, songs, musical compositions, movies, computer games and similar art and literary works.

- Vogue
- McLean’s
- The Godfather
- The Simpsons
- Waiting for Godot

In the first usage within the text, italicize unfamiliar foreign words or phrases or set them apart with single apostrophes. In all subsequent references, use regular font.

If there is an exclamation mark or question mark that is part of the italicized phrase, put it in italics.

- My favourite movie is *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

Many previously ‘foreign’ words and phrases are now commonplace. As such, don’t italicize or otherwise highlight them. Stick to the running font in all instances. Examples: *de facto, QED, et al, raison d’être, tsunami.*
4.12 Lists

Where the list is short and simple, write it out in sentence form and especially so where the introduction and items listed form complete and proper grammatical sentences.

Otherwise, use vertical lists. To avoid long, dangling, ‘skinny’ lists, short items may be arranged in two or more columns.

Any list should be introduced by a complete grammatical sentence followed by a full colon. All items or elements in the list must be constructed similarly (e.g., single words, all noun forms or phrases, etcetera).

Unless letters or numbers serve a purpose (e.g., indicate task order or chronology) they should be omitted.

If the items are not complete sentences or are phrases without internal punctuation, begin each item with a lowercase letter. Do not use capitals or ‘ending’ punctuation such as periods at the end of each item; let them sit ‘naked’.

Use of ‘bullets’

If the bulleted items are complete sentences, use normal and full punctuation.

In a bullet vertical list that completes the introductory sentence or sentence that begins with an introductory element and consists of sentences or phrases with internal punctuation, semicolons may be used to ‘end’ the items but with a period to end the final item and complete the list. In such a list, each item should begin with a lowercase letter.

Numbered vertical lists

Begin with the numeral (in sequence), followed by a period. Each item begins with a capital letter.

Where the vertical numbered list completes a sentence began as the introductory element and where the items consist of phrases or sentences without internal punctuation, do not use periods or closing punctuation marks after each item.

Where the vertical numbered list consists of phrases or sentences with internal punctuation, semicolons may be used to ‘isolate’ each item, with a period used on the final item to close off the list. As before, each item begins with a lowercase letter.
4.13 NUMBERS
Spell out whole numbers zero, one through nine.

- Although only five people attended the meeting, nine proposals were carried.

Use numerals for 10 and above and when referring to ages, when preceding a unit of measurement, monetary amounts and academic courses.

- the 18-year-old building
- the 15-metre jump
- Chemistry 101
- the $3-million donation

Exception: spell out causal expressions.

- The face that launched a thousand ships.
- A picture is worth a thousand words.

Where a sentence starts with a number, spell it out (or rework the sentence so it doesn’t begin with a number).

- Three hundred students crammed into Wade Davis’s inaugural lecture.

Fractions
Spell out simple fractions that are not mixed numbers.

- Only two-thirds of the six groups attended the 11 sessions during the first quarter of the year.

When a fraction is seen as a single quantity, it is hyphenated.

- He read three-quarters of the manual.

However, when the individual parts of a quantity are unclear, spell out the fraction without the hyphen.

- The pizza was cut into four quarters.

To avoid readers’ confusion when denoting fractions, avoid the use of full-size numerals separated by a back slash and whenever possible, use fraction characters (or superscript/subscript).

- Letter-size paper is 8½ x 11 inches, not 8 1/2 x 11 inches.

Decimals
If a numeral is less than one, use a zero before the decimal point.

- The weight of the substance is 0.55 grams.

Telephone Numbers
To be consistent with UBC stationery standards, telephone numbers should be separated by single spaces instead of hyphens or periods. Do not use parentheses around area codes.

- 604 822 2211
- 1 877 807 8521 (toll free)
4.0 WRITING STYLE GUIDE

CURRENCY AND FRACTIONAL NUMBERS
When denoting Canadian money, use the $ symbol.

- *the $250-million grant.*

If denoting foreign dollar currencies (e.g., American, Australian) use the appropriate symbol (e.g., US$, A$) and convert to Canadian dollars in brackets.

Informal context: when referring to denominations smaller than a dollar, it makes sense to write cents.

- *At the AMS Nest, they were selling hamburgers for 99 cents.*

Formal context: Fractional amounts of more than one dollar are expressed in numerals plus decimal point.

- *$3.39 for postage*
- *the $5.7-million donation*

Whole-dollar amounts are set with double zeros after the decimal point only when they appear in the same context as fractional amounts.

- *The cost of lunch was $18.45 for the meal and $3.00 for the tip.*

4.14 PARENTHESES
Use parentheses to enclose faculty pedigrees, sections and subsections.

Use this:

- *Section 15(2)(a)(ix)*

Not this:

- *Section 15 2a, ix*
4.15 PER CENT
The American ‘percent’ (one word) is the version used most frequently in media. However, the English version is ‘per cent’ (two words) and as such, is preferable for a Canadian university.

However, use this:
- percentage, percentile

Not this:
- per centage, per centile

In text, use numerals and write ‘per cent’ and avoid the % sign.

• More than 65 per cent of alumni responded.

Exception: In graphs, tables, charts and more visual mediums such as ads, social media or other ‘tight’ communications (e.g., headlines) where space is limited, the per cent sign and other ‘space savers’ such as the ampersand are allowed. There is no space between the numeral and the % symbol.

4.16 PERIODS AND PLACES
According to CP Style, geographical/national abbreviations should receive periods. For example, U.S.A. is the abbreviation for the United States of America and B.C. denotes the province of British Columbia. However, modern, everyday usage increasingly does away with the periods and the abbreviations are simply USA, US, BC and the like. Both usages can be considered correct for our purposes.

Please note that if you are referencing other ‘period-less’ acronyms in your copy, you should use periods in geographical abbreviations to avoid any confusion. For example, to distinguish the province from the chronological ‘Before Christ’ designation: In 500 BC, First Nations inhabited what’s now B.C. and other provinces.

Note: In general, avoid abbreviating the name of a country, nation, province and the like where the name is used in a stand-alone context or adjectivally. Write it out.

Use this:
- the United States elections, the Newfoundland oil patch.

Not this:
- the U.S. elections, the Nfld. oil patch.

However, certain abbreviations (with periods) may be used adjectivally and judiciously to reflect causal, spoken usage: the B.C. education system, rival U.K. political parties.

Official names: As with UBC, most business and similar entities in B.C. do not use periods in their names: BC Ferries, BC Transit, BC Hydro.

Do not use periods in certain abbreviations or acronyms. Thus: UBC and not U.B.C.

If uncertain, never assume. Always check.
4.17 Possessives
Singular and plural nouns not ending in ‘s’ take an apostrophe and ‘s’ to form the possessive.

- the people’s university

Plural nouns ending in ‘s’ take an apostrophe alone.

- the students’ meeting

Where the singular noun ends in a single or double ‘s’, the apostrophe precedes the possessive ‘s’.

- the mistress’s denouncement

Where the usage is more descriptive than possessive, omit the ‘s’.

- The board of governors meeting is being held at the Student Union Building.

4.18 Quotations
Direct quotes add colour and life to a story. However, the quotations must be exacting, the ‘on record’ rendition of someone’s spoken or written words. To ensure you don’t misquote someone, use a recording device (there are many good apps on your smartphone for this purpose).

If the grammar is questionable and/or the clarity is obscured, it’s allowable to ‘clean up’ the quote but do so judiciously. Lawsuits await the unwary. If in doubt, paraphrase the content and avoid the problematic quote.

Unless absolutely necessary or to protect a vulnerable source, all quotations must be attributed. Typically, you would run the piece by the person quoted to ensure that he or she acknowledges the end result.

Formatting Large and Small Quotes
Quotations of fewer than 100 words should be inserted into the text and contained by double apostrophes.

For quotations of 100 plus words from a single source, set it up in complete paragraphs.

First, break the copy block into suitable paragraphs for easier reading. Use double apostrophe marks at the start of each successive paragraph but keep its ‘tail’ free. At the end of the final paragraph, close it off with a double apostrophe mark to delineate the complete multi-paragraph quotation.
4.19 QUOTATION MARKS
Single quote marks are used to emphasis a non-attributed word or phrase. Double quote marks denote a direct, attributable quote.

- Course ‘gear’ includes waterproof boots, jacket and pants or poncho and a waterproof notebook.
- “Having a new, community embedded ‘field to fork’ facility helps our students to become more literate about the ways that all parts of the food system work together, from community gardens to global agricultural trade regulations,” explains Wittman.

Whether single or double, quotation marks act as ‘containers’ for the text in question. Pay special attention when applying punctuation.

In full and complete sentences, punctuation marks go inside the quotation marks.

In unattributed stand-alone words or short phrases singled out within a sentence, the punctuation marks go outside quotation/ apostrophe marks.

- At the culmination of ‘the Great Trek’, one student said: “The enthusiasm was really unbelievable.”

Do not place quote marks (single or double) around letter grades and admissions/ regulations terminology.

- failed standing and not ‘failed’ standing
- B grade and not ‘B’ grade

4.20 SINGULAR VERSUS PLURAL
Collective ‘stand-alone’ entities such as a group, corporation, business, association, school, university and the like are singular.

Use this:

- The union said it will address the issue.
- StatsCan presented its latest data.

Not this:

- The union said they will address the issue.
- StatsCan presented their latest data.

Note for designers: CP Style dictates that unless punctuation is within a full and complete quote, punctuation marks go outside the quotation marks. Please follow these rules for web typography and programs such as Word or PowerPoint. However, in programs such as InDesign, Quark or Illustrator, you may kern the punctuation marks so they are directly underneath the quotation marks.
4.21 TENSES AND PERSONS

Nothing is more confusing to a reader than when a writer switches in and out of tenses for no apparent reason.

TENSES: GENERAL RULES

In storytelling, we generally use past tense.

• Once upon a time, there was a group of students who decided to trek to Point Grey.

TENSES: RESEARCH STORIES

We frequently discuss research findings at UBC but careful attention should be paid as to whether the research findings are in the past or are positioned to be discovered in the future.

• Past: In 1982, Professor Galady discovered a cell that had long-term implications for cancer research.

• Present: According to Professor Galady, the cell he has discovered has long-term implications for cancer research.

In general, if you are discussing the potential of something, use future tense. If writing about the past as in findings, data collected, quotes or events, use past tense.

PERSONS

How we use personal pronouns dictates our ‘point of view’ in a story. In nearly all cases, we would use the third person because we are writing on behalf of UBC and not representing our personal point of view (first person). Note that we write in third person not to be ‘stiff’ or distant in our writing but rather to be professional as befitting to a global university.

FIRST PERSON

This point of view uses ‘I’ as the singular and ‘we’ as the plural.

• I joined the team on October 20th. We were hard-wired for success after that.

SECOND PERSON

This uses ‘you’ and can be singular or plural, just depending on how many people are being addressed. This tense should be avoided or used sparingly and only for a particular narrative purpose such as putting the reader into a particular experience so they can feel they’re really ‘there’.

• You don’t realize how big the Pep Rally is until you’re in it. You know what I’m saying; you’ve been going there for years.

THIRD PERSON

This is our preferred pronoun when writing at UBC. It demonstrates objectivity and professionalism and avoids any confusion for the reader as to whether the writer is expressing a personal bias or opinion.

Third person employs the following pronouns: he, she, it, him, her, himself, herself, himself, his, her, hers, its, they, them, themselves, their, and theirs.

• Their dedication, talent and commitment to graphic standards was impressive.
4.0 WRITING STYLE GUIDE

4.22 THE WEB

GRAMMAR AND SPELLING

If you are using the word ‘Internet’, capitalize the word when referring to the global system, and use lowercase when referring to an internal system.

- We use our new internet-capable devices to access the Internet.

Word Wide Web or the Web are proper names and capitalized. Use lowercase for website, webcast, podcast, webmaster, web page.

E-MAIL OR EMAIL?

The term e-mail is abbreviated from ‘electronic mail’ and technically e-mail is the correct form. However, email is now so commonly known and used that we can now refer to electronic mail more simply as email and do away with the hyphen.

However, use this:


Not this:

- ebusiness, etransfer, ebanking, elibrary, eservices, ebook e-tcetera (sic)

WEB ADDRESSES

When denoting web addresses in text for printed communication pieces, do not include ‘http://’ or ‘https://’ or the backslash at the end of the URL.

For text that will be displayed online, ‘http://’ or ‘https://’ may be required for the link to function, and it is recommended that the notation is left in.

Where the URLs or email addresses appear in printed text, use a bold font for easier spotting. For web documents, include the full URL or hyperlink an appropriate term that makes it ‘live’. Do not waste space by including a ‘click here’ URL.

In general, unless deliberately meant to inform the reader, do not include a website address within the text for printed material.

LINKS

Be cautious when inserting links in web copy; you may run the risk of unintentionally promoting websites involving special-interest groups, political entities and/or commercial products. This could be potentially damaging to your own site’s reputation and UBC’s credibility.

Always check the source to which you are linking before publishing in any digital medium.
EDITORIAL GUIDE FOR UBC COMMUNICATORS

SPELLING GUIDE
5.0 SPELLING GUIDE

5.1 SPELLING PREFERENCES

English ‘robs’ from other languages, constantly incorporating new words and making them its own. Canadian English is based on the Queen’s English but with certain exceptions, it borrows from American English.

In general, follow the rules and principles set forth in *The Canadian Press Stylebook* and its companion *Caps and Spelling guide*. Unless otherwise specified, use the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*.

Although UBC follows CP Style in general, UBC has preferred spelling for certain words and phrases.

Some UBC preferences include:

- co-worker
- colour (not color)
- data (always plural)
- defence (not defense) but defensive
- e-business (not ebusiness)
- email (not e-mail)
- enrol, enrolled, enrolment (not enroll, enroled, enrollment)
- ensure (make sure of)
- focuses, focussed, focussing
- fulfill
- government (note the lowercase; not the Trudeau Government)
- governor general, lieutenant governor
- Gray (the surname)
- grey (the colour)
- harbour (not harbor, unless denoting an American port by its formal name e.g., San Francisco Harbor)
- honour and honourable (not honor and honourable) but honorary (not honourary)
- inquire, inquiry
- jewellery (not jewelery)
- labour (not labor)
- manoeuvre
- mold (to shape, form)
- mould (the fungus)
5.0 SPELLING GUIDE

- Native (when referencing First Nations) and as an adjective (Native cultural artifacts)
- organization (not organisation)
- program (not programme)
- realize (not realise)
- sceptical
- signal, signalled, signaller
- theatre (not theater, unless in a formal name)
- toward, backward, forward (not towards, backwards, forwards)
- travel, travelling, traveller (not travell, traveling, traveler)
- The First World War or the Great War, the Second World War (not World War I, World War II)

5.2 CANADIAN AND AMERICAN SPELLING

There are certain words that are considered interchangeable across borders that are, in fact, not interchangeable.

CENTRE AND CENTER
‘Centre’ denotes a building, mall, place or similar structure. ‘Center’ is the equidistance mid-point.

- The office is near the center of the sports centre.

CHEQUE AND CHECK
‘Cheque’ denotes the bank document to transfer a specific amount of money.
Whereas ‘check’ is a sudden stoppage of forward motion, an attack on the king in chess, or the act of evaluating or inspection.

PRACTICE AND PRACTISE
In the many countries in the English-speaking world (Canada, the U.K., Australia, South Africa), ‘practice’ is the noun and ‘practise’ is the verb. In the U.S.A., the spelling ‘practice’ is used as both noun and verb.

- The doctor is practising her administrative skills prior to opening her new practice.
5.0 SPELLING GUIDE

5.3 SPelling and Usage of Ambiguous Words

IT’S AND ITS
‘It’s’ is the correct spelling for the contraction for ‘it is’; ‘its’ is the possessive singular.
- Our mascot? It’s high time that its cage was cleaned.

E.G., AND I.E.,
As abbreviations for the Latin terms exempli gratia (‘for the sake of example’) and id est (‘that is’), the correct usage of e.g., and i.e., are often confused.
i.e., is a short form of ‘in other words’ and specifics or makes more clear.
- At the UBC gala, gentlemen should dress in formal attire (i.e., white shirt, tie, tuxedo and black leather shoes).
e.g., is short form of ‘for example’ and sets up an abbreviated list.
- Each month UBC holds a number of professional development workshops (e.g., Writing Professional Minutes).

FARTHER AND FURTHER
‘Farther’ denotes physical distance.
- How much farther is it to the SUB?
‘Further’ denotes metaphorical or figurative distance.
- How much further along is the business relationship?

MOMENTARILY
Momentarily means ‘only for a moment’. The word is synonymous with ‘briefly’, not with ‘soon’ or ‘shortly’.
- When the airline pilot cheerfully announced that “We’ll be taking off momentarily”, the ESL teacher fainted.

IMPACT
Unless referring to a physical blow, avoid the word ‘impact’ and its derivatives such as ‘impactful’, ‘impacting’ and the like. Instead, use ‘effect’, ‘consequence’, ‘result’ or similar words.

EFFECT AND AFFECT
‘Effect’ is a noun; ‘affect’ is a verb.
- What sort of an effect did the impact of the giant meteorite have on the city?
- How does this catastrophe personally affect you?
INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE:
BEST PRACTICES
In any text or usage, where it’s necessary to reference a person’s race, age, sex, religion, appearance, physical or mental challenges or any other criteria that might cause offense and have that person feel slighted or adversely singled out — take the time to thoughtfully and carefully find the correct language that is inclusive and respectful.

In general, UBC follows The Canadian Press Stylebook guidelines for inclusive language. If you have further questions regarding inclusive language practices, please contact the UBC Equity and Inclusion office.
6.0 INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

6.1 RACE, ETHNICITY, NATIONALITY AND RELIGION
Capitalize the proper names of nationalities, peoples, races, bands and tribes. For example:

- Aboriginal
- Amish
- Arab
- Caucasian
- First Nations
- Inuit
- Indigenous
- Latin
- Asian
- Chinese
- Indian (from the sub-continent of India)

Note: ‘black’ and ‘white’ are not races and are written in the lowercase.

In general, hyphenated descriptions such as German-Canadian or Jamaican-Canadian should be avoided as they may put an inappropriate emphasis on the person’s ethnic background. However, if such a description is relevant to the piece and if the individual prefers it, it may be used.

Again, unless it’s critical to the story, avoid any descriptor of a person’s race, skin colour, religion, ethnicity and identifiable ‘racial’ background.

6.2 INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
UBC Communications and Marketing has worked with the UBC First Nations House of Learning to create the Indigenous Peoples: Language Guide.

Please download and refer to this separate guide on brand.ubc.ca.
6.3 SEX AND GENDER

Unless it’s truly necessary and germane to the story, avoid language that signals gender. Also, especially in such a diverse place as UBC, never assume gender from a person’s first or given name. Always check with them and use their preferred pronoun.

When writing in general terms, be non-specific in terms of gender.

Use these:
- police officer; fire fighter; mail carrier; flight attendant etc.

Not these:
- policeman; fireman; mailman; stewardess etc.

If uncertain, use common sense, keep an eye open for evolving common usages (e.g., spokesperson) and avoid awkward hybrids such as ‘alderperson’ for the civic title alderman, ‘fisher’ or ‘fisherperson’ for fisherman. Unless the official title is known, chairman or chairwoman, use the nonspecific ‘chair’ to refer to the head of a committee.

To some, the use of ‘he’ (him, his) as a word of indeterminate gender is sexist. In turn, ‘her or his’ and ‘he and she’ and so forth can be substituted but it can prove to be awkward at times. To avoid this, reword the sentence if possible.

As a final option, the nonspecific word ‘they’ (them, their) can be used as an alternative to ‘he’ (him, his) but note that ‘they’ is technically plural and not singular; when possible, modify the copy to reflect the change.

As a modern, diverse and inclusive university we listen to what our community feels most comfortable with and increasingly ‘they’ is being used to refer back to a singular pronoun:

- If your child is thinking about university, they can get started early by coming to summer camps at UBC.
- A researcher has to be completely committed to their field of study.
6.0 Inclusive Language

6.4 Gender Identity
In general, the term ‘transgender’ is the preferred term to use for people whose gender identity, expression, or behaviour is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth, and should be used over ‘transsexual’. If you use the term ‘transsexual’, please treat it as an adjective as in ‘transsexual woman’ or ‘transsexual man’. Avoid the blanket term ‘trans’ as this could be misunderstood and is not precise.

Whenever possible, ask transgender people what pronoun they prefer, use it and respect it.

The term ‘two-spirit’ may be used to describe non-heterosexual or gender-variant Aboriginal, First Nations and Indigenous people. As a cultural and social term, it may also have religious connotations.

Transgender is an adjective and as such cannot have ‘ed’ added to the end of it. For instance, you wouldn’t refer to someone as ‘gayed’ or ‘lesbianed’ nor should you use ‘transgendered’.

6.5 Sexuality
Unless it’s truly necessary and germane to the story, avoid language that signals sexuality. If it must be used, ask and defer to the person’s preference.

Avoid the blanket use of ‘gay’ or ‘gays’ as a singular or plural noun. Instead, be specific and “put the person ahead of the label”. Thus: ‘gay men’, ‘gay people’, ‘lesbian women’. Other preferred terms: ‘bisexual’, ‘bi’, ‘lesbian’, or ‘queer’.

LGBTQIA+ is an acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans (transgender, transsexual, trans-identified, genderqueer), Queer, Two-Spirit, Intersex and Asexual. The plus sign (+) is used in place of additional letters to reference the inclusion of other terms not mentioned herein. It is sometimes abbreviated to LGBT or LGBTQ+.

For additional resources, please visit positivespace.ubc.ca/terminology.

For additional resources, please visit positivespace.ubc.ca/terminology.
6.6 ABILITY AND DISABILITY

As always, put the person ahead of the disability. In most instances, it’s unnecessary to refer to the disability, either physical or mental. If it’s crucial to the story, never assume; ask and defer to the person’s preferences.

Avoid defining or depersonalizing people by their disorders and avoid turning the descriptors into overall catch-all dismissive nouns, e.g., ‘the blind’, ‘paraplegics’, ‘the disabled’ and so forth.

The more sensitive ‘is’, ‘with’ and ‘has’ phrases help put the person ahead of the disability.

- Joe has vision loss.

Avoid loaded and judgmental terms as ‘victim’, ‘suffer’, ‘sufferer’ and the like. That person with that certain condition might not see him or herself as either a victim or a sufferer. Rather than use others’ value-laden or negative references, defer to the factual.

Acceptance is growing and norms are slowly changing but mental illnesses or disabilities can, to some, carry a social stigma. Rather than using any terms that either casts the person as a victim or as a medical case and a specific condition, use more neutral terms as ‘mental health difficulties’ or ‘mental health conditions’.

Special thanks to the UBC Equity and Inclusion office for a discerning eye and edits on this guide.
EDITORIAL GUIDE FOR UBC COMMUNICATORS
RESOURCES
7.0 RESOURCES

RESOURCES
- **Canadian Oxford Dictionary**
- **Canadian Press:** For additional writing resources, you can purchase *The Canadian Press Stylebook* or pay a small monthly fee and have online access year-round to the latest style-guide information.
  - Canadian Press Stylebook
  - CP Caps and Spelling
- **UBC Style Guide:** A more general guide to writing at UBC; it is a useful resource if you want additional examples.
  - UBC Writing and Style Guide
- **UBC Brand:** For other helpful guides, such as the Indigenous language guide or the *Social Media Best Practice Guide*, visit this site.
  - UBC Brand

WRITING COURSES
Did you know there are excellent writing courses available through UBC Continuing Studies?
Search the options here.