



Style | Guide

Office of Public Relations
McMaster University





Style Guide for publications

Publications produced by the Office of Public Relations use Canadian Press Style (CP) for abbreviations, acronyms, capitalization, dates and times, spelling, type styles and usage, with the following house style guides.



CP uses the Oxford Canadian Dictionary as its standard reference.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Follow Canadian Press style:

- Omit periods in all-caps abbreviations or acronyms, e.g., COU, MAPS, NSERC, BA, MA, LLD, unless the abbreviation is geographical, such as U.S., P.E.I., B.C., or a single letter, such as E. or p.
- Use periods in lower-case or mixed abbreviations, such as e.g., i.e., B. Comm., etc. Periods go at the end of abbreviations like B. Comm., B.Sc., Dr., Aug., Wed., but not abbreviations that begin and end with a cap, e.g., PhD, PoW, MiG, U of T, etc. Metric symbols are not abbreviations and are followed by a period only when they are at the end of a sentence, e.g., km—singular and plural. “Ms” as a title of address is not abbreviation for anything, so do not use a period. [Note: CP uses a period.]
- Put a space between a person’s initials when listing the name: vice-president administration Jackson Street
- Do not abbreviate “professor” even as a title of address; do not call McMaster “Mac” except in the *Times*; the same is true for the word “grad”—use it in the *Times* but use “graduate” elsewhere; do not abbreviate March, April, May, June, July (CP); do not abbreviate “department.”
- Some common academic degree abbreviations and what they mean:

PhD	Philosophiae Doctor	Doctor of Philosophy
LLD	Legum Doctor	Doctor of Laws
D. Litt.	Doctor Litterarum	Doctor of Letters (or Literature)

ACRONYMS

- Many organizations are known more familiarly by their acronyms, e.g., COU for the Council of Ontario Universities; the MSU for McMaster Students Union; etc. On first reference to the organization, give the full name followed by the acronym in brackets. In the rest of the copy the organization can be referred to by the acronym. Note that there is no need to supply the acronym if the organization is never mentioned more than once in a story, or if the organization is not well known by the acronym.

- Avoid using acronyms in headlines.

- Some common acronyms:

AUCC	Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada
CAUT	Canadian Association of University Teachers
CCAE	Canadian Council for the Advancement of Education
CHEPA	(Pronounced cheppa, <i>not</i> cheepa) Centre for Health Economics and Policy Analysis
CIHR	Canadian Institutes for Health Research
CIS	Canadian Interuniversity Sport
COU	Council of Ontario Universities (of, <i>not</i> on)
CUEW	Canadian Union of Educational Workers
IRC	Inter-Residence Council
IUTS	Inter University Transit System
MSU	McMaster Students Union (<i>no apostrophe on Students</i>)
NSERC	Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (Natural, <i>not</i> National, <i>and s on Sciences</i>)
NCE	Networks of Centres of Excellence (note two plurals)
OCE	Ontario Centres of Excellence Inc.
OUA	Ontario University Athletics
OCUA	Ontario Council on University Affairs
OCUFA	Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations
OFS	Ontario Federation of Students
OISE	(oy zee) Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
OUA	Ontario Women's Interuniversity Athletic Association
P&P	Priorities and Planning
SOCS	Society of Off-Campus Students
SRA	Student Representative Assembly
SSHRC	(shirk) Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
SWHAT	Student Walk Home Attendant Team
TRIO	Telecommunications Research Institute of Ontario

DATES AND TIMES

- No st, nd, rd, or th on numbers in dates: Jan. 1, not Jan. 1st.
- For months used with a specific date, abbreviate only Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec. Spell out standing alone or with a year alone.
 - Convocation was held Nov. 17, 2006.
 - The Peace Camp lasted through January 1991.
- Days of the week are abbreviated only in tabular matter. (CP)
- No :00 for exact hours
 - The service will begin at 11 a.m. (not 11:00 a.m.)
- 12 noon and 12 midnight (rather than 12 a.m. or 12 p.m.)
- a.m. and p.m. Use periods after each letter, no space between. Use lower-case; never use caps.

INITIAL CAPS

■ Alumni Association

Caps in the *Times*

■ Board of Governors

Cap B and G when referring to McMaster's Board of Governors. Cap B on second reference:
The Board's decision will affect the outcome.

■ Bookstore

The McMaster University Bookstore. Cap B on second reference when referring to the University Bookstore.

■ Departments (history or History?)

Initial caps when the reference is expressed as it would be in the *Undergraduate Calendar*: Department of History, Department of Chemical Engineering. Lower-case when the reference is informal: history department, chemical engineering department, and when referring to more than one department: "The departments of biology and bio-chemistry present"

Disciplines other than English, Latin, French, Spanish, etc., do not take an initial cap: "completion of her degree in chemical engineering"; "history professor Dr. John Weaver."

■ Faculty or faculty?

Initial cap when referring to the academic divisions, e.g., Faculty of Science; "the Faculty secretaries attended a conference"; "each Faculty presented a strategic plan."

Lower-case when referring to academic staff: "the faculty appealed the pension decision"; "there will be many faculty positions available in the late 1990s."

■ government

No initial cap unless it's the formal name of a government: the Government of Canada, the Government of Ontario. Otherwise: the federal government; the provincial government; the Ontario government; government funding; etc.

■ Human Resources

Cap on Human Resources when we mean McMaster's administrative department, in order not to confuse it with the generic term:

A memo was circulated by Human Resources describing pension benefits.

■ Humanities or humanities

As with departments, the Faculty names take an initial cap in their proper reference with "Faculty," e.g., "the Faculty of Engineering," but not in informal constructions, e.g. "Dr. Mo Elbestawi, dean of engineering."

INITIAL CAPS *continued*

■ internet

No initial cap. It doesn't matter what *Wired* magazine says about this! There's no way anyone is confusing the internet with an intranet or LAN.

■ Level

Cap L on Level when referring to the year of a program: "She is in Level II of the history program."

■ Library

Cap L when referring to the McMaster Library: "The collection in Mills is part of the University's Library."

■ McMASTER

When "McMaster" is in upper case for stylistic reasons, the "c" remains lower-case.

■ north, south, east, west

Lower-case unless part of a street address.

■ province

No initial cap unless part of the formal governmental title: "the Province of Ontario." Otherwise, "province" and "provincial" take the lower-case.

■ religion

All the names of religions are proper names and take an initial cap: Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Baha'i, etc.

■ seasons of the year

Do not put initial caps on seasons of the year unless they are in a formal reference, such as "the Fall 1991 issue of the *Times*"

■ Senate

Cap S when referring to the McMaster Senate.

■ titles of papers

Use upper- and lower-case: "War and Peace in Bertrand Russell's Thought." Capitalize all words in a title except articles (a, an, the), prepositions, and conjunctions of fewer than four letters. Capitalize even these short words when they are the first or last word in a title or when they fall after a colon or semi-colon. Always capitalize the prefix or first word in a hyphenated word within a title. Capitalize the second word only if it is a noun or an adjective or is as important as the first word.

"How to Apply Stage Make-up"

Through the Looking-Glass

- **titles of people**

Titles of address:

Initial cap when the title precedes the name as a form of address; lower-case when it follows the name as a modifier.

Dr. James Street, but Stuart MacLeod, doctor of medicine

Dean McDonald, but Samantha Jones, dean of graduate studies

Professor Lomas, but Graham Petrie, professor of English

President, Vice-Chancellor, Chancellor, Chair of the Board of Governors:

These four titles always have an initial cap when they refer to the McMaster offices and officers, including former Presidents and Chancellors. Lower-case when referring to university presidents in general: “The presidents of all Ontario universities discussed funding.” Other offices and titles are lower-case all the time.

- **Third World**

Use “developing world.”

- **University**

Cap U when we mean McMaster; lower-case when referring to universities in general or anything not McMaster-specific.

- **Website**

Use Web when www is meant.

- **X-ray**

Upper-case (CP)

ITALICS

- Expressed in copy sometimes as underlining
- Used for titles of books, long poems, plays, periodicals (including newspapers), pamphlets, published speeches, long musical works, movies, television and radio programs, works of visual art, names of ships, aircraft, space craft and trains, foreign words and phrases that are not part of the English language, (except *alma mater*—leave plain).

War and Peace

Paradise Lost

Hamlet

The Toronto Sun

the *Montreal Gazette*

Swan Lake

Gone with the Wind

60 Minutes

the *Mona Lisa*

Apollo XI

The scientific name for the brown trout is *Salmo trutta*.

Try pronouncing unique New York 10 times fast.

McMaster Times, but the *Times*, (not *The Times*)

MEASUREMENTS

- **money**

- No .00 with even dollars

- Tickets are \$5 at the door. (not \$5.00)

- When using the dollar sign, don't repeat the word dollars and vice versa.

- The government will give McMaster \$450 million. (not \$450 million dollars)

- The 50-million-dollar project...or...the \$50-million project...(not \$50-million-dollar project...)

- In general, spell out terms such as pound(s), square feet (foot), metre, inch, etc.

- Metric symbols and usage are covered thoroughly in the *CP Stylebook*.

NUMBERS

- Spell out numbers from one to nine; use figures for 10 and above. This includes ordinal numbers: first, not 1st; 20th, not twentieth, unless in an official title.
- Use figures for school grades, e.g., Grade 3 (note cap G on Grade):
Students start thinking about university in Grade 9.
- Use figures in ages standing alone after a name:
Dr. Smith has a daughter, Jessica, 5.
- Note that Level designations take Roman numbers:
The student is in Level III.
She just finished Level I.
Here is the Level I handbook.

PUNCTUATION

■ Colon

Use a colon to introduce an amplification, an example or a formal question or quotation.

■ Comma

The *CP style book* covers commas thoroughly. However, note the need for commas around non restrictive modifiers:

WRONG: Dr. Thode's wife Sadie stood with the president for photos.

RIGHT: Dr. Thode's wife, Sadie, stood with the president for photos.

If there are no commas around "Sadie," it is implied that Dr. Thode has more than one wife.

A subject should not be divided from its verb by a comma no matter how lengthy the subject:

WRONG: The student sitting at the top of the pile, asked if she...

RIGHT: The student sitting at the top of the pile asked if she...

Following CP, do not use the serial comma (the comma before "and" in lists of three or more items: "The colours of the U.S. flag are red, white and blue.")

■ Dash

One space on each side of an em-dash: The name is Bond — James Bond.

■ Ellipsis

Ellipsis indicates something has been edited out of a direct quotation. It is unnecessary at the beginning or end of the quotation, but is necessary when parts of the middle are missing. "Few things are impossible.... Great works are performed not by strength, but by perseverance." –Samuel Johnson

■ Parentheses

Use only when a word or phrase is truly parenthetical, and not for editorial explanations or clarification. Use brackets [] for the latter and try to keep them to a minimum.

■ Quotation marks

Titles of papers should be enclosed in quotation marks. Dr. Henry Jacek recently gave a paper titled, "War and Peace in Bertrand Russell's Thought," at a Russell symposium in New York.

■ Semi-colon

The main test for the correctness of a semi-colon is whether or not the items on either side of the mark are complete sentences. The ideas in each part should also be related.

WRONG: Faculty will be unhappy with a wage freeze; and angry. [The item following the semi-colon is not a complete sentence.]

RIGHT: Faculty will be unhappy with a wage freeze; staff will be unhappy, too. [Complete sentence on both sides.]

The semi-colon is also correct when separating phrases that contain commas.

SPELLING

General principles: Do not make single words out of commonly paired words, e.g., workstation, shuttlebus, etc., until they are listed in *Oxford* or CP that way.

- **aesthetics**, not esthetics

- **accommodate**

Two c's, two m's

- **affect/effect**

Most of the time “affect” is the appropriate verb, but “effect” does occasionally operate as a verb meaning “to bring about.”

Most of the time “effect” is the appropriate noun.

We were not affected by the strike. (v)

The strike affects everyone. (v)

The postal strike could effect major changes in union/government relations. (v)

Beer and wine have the same effect on blood-alcohol levels. (n)

The effect of underfunding is under-education. (n)

- **advisor** (not –er) Note: this is a different spelling than CP's

- **apostrophes**

The apostrophe indicates missing letters or possession. Therefore, the apostrophe is used with possession, not plurals:

Andrea Farquhar's pen

Visiting the Farquhars

Feeding the Farquhars' dog

The 1920s

The MP's speech

The MPs were present

The most common possessives that do not have apostrophes are the pronouns: his, hers, its, ours, whose, theirs, etc. No letters are missing, therefore, no apostrophe. Frozen possessives, such as McMaster Students Union or Teachers College do not have an apostrophe because the possession is continuous and understood.

Contractions:

'62 (for 1962)

it's (for it is)

o'clock (for of the clock)

who's (for who is)

SPELLING *continued*

- **archeology**, not archaeology
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- **Bourns** (no e) after former McMaster President Arthur Bourns
- **catalogue**, not catalog
- **cheque**, not check
- **co- words**
Keep the hyphen in words beginning with “co,” such as co-operate, co-ordinate, co-educational, co-chair, etc., for ease of reading.
- **coliseum**, not colliseum
- **day care** (CP)
Note, however, day-care centre; day-care legislation (see *Hyphens*)
- **doubling the final consonant**
Words of one syllable and a short vowel double the final consonant with inflectional suffixes: batted the ball, banned the mini-skirt, barred the windows, bussed the children, etc. Words of more than one syllable also double the final consonant if the accent falls on the final syllable: regretted, coquettish, etc. Words of more than one syllable which do not take the accent on the final syllable do not double the consonant: benefited, balloting, ticketed, etc. All words ending in -l double the consonant with the inflectional endings, e.g., labelled, levelling.
- **enroll**
Spell enroll and its various forms with “commit” as the model, that is: enroll, enrolment, enrolled, enrolling.
Note: this is not the same as CP spelling.
- **e-mail**
For electronic mail, not e’mail or email.
- **genealogy**, not geneology
- **high school**
Two words; therefore, hyphenate when the phrase is modifying:
Student Liaison has a high-school liaison program.

SPELLING *continued*

■ **hyphens**

Hyphenate co- words and any words with a prefix that creates a double vowel, such as pre-eminent.

Hyphenate vice- with any of the compounds, such as Vice-Chancellor, vice-president, vice-chair, etc.

When two or more words serve together as a single modifier before a noun, the hyphen forms the modifying words clearly into a unit:

Well-known actor

Out-of-date statistics

40-year-old volunteers

There is a fine-paper drive Monday.

When the same compound adjectives follow the noun, hyphens are unnecessary and are usually left out.

The actor is well known.

The statistics are out of date.

We need volunteers who are 40 years old.

They are collecting fine paper for recycling.

Hyphens are unnecessary in compound modifiers containing an -ly adverb, even when these fall before the noun. The -ly adverb's function as a part of speech is to modify other adverbs, adjectives and nouns.

She gave us clearly defined terms.

They are a happily married couple.

They will establish a broadly based research center.

When the main part of a compound adjective appears only once in a pair or a series of parallel compound adjectives, hyphens indicate which words the reader should mentally join with the main part.

Healthy eight- to 10-year-old volunteers are needed.

Hyphens join the numerator and denominator of fractions: three-fourths, one-half, etc.

■ **fundraising** (*no hyphen*)

■ **Hedden** (*not-on*)

■ **knowledgeable** (*with the e before able*)

SPELLING *continued*

■ led

The past tense of the verb lead is led.

Dr. George led the group in prayer.

■ master's degree

Always has an apostrophe.

He has a master's degree in science.

She's graduating with her master's in the fall.

■ -our/-or endings

Always use "Canadian" spellings (labour, behaviour, flavour, etc. *but* honorary *not* honorary)

■ per cent (*not* percent) (CP) but percentage

■ post-doctoral (*use the hyphen*)

■ Procter & Gamble (*er not or; ampersand*)

■ program (*not* programme) (CP)

■ Rathskeller (*not* -ar)

■ Stationery/stationary

Noun: Stationery refers to the items at a work station, like paper and pens; compare **cutlery** (items at the dinner table) and jewellery (items needed to accessorize).

Adjective: Stationary describes something that is not moving; compare "complimentary" or "fiduciary."

■ theatre, not theater

■ Wilfrid Laurier University (*not* Wilfred)

USAGE

■ addressing divines and politicians

The Rev. John Smith

The Right Honourable Brian Mulroney

■ addressing multi-titled people

It is correct to say, “President of the University Dr. Peter George,” “McMaster President Dr. Peter George,” “president of the faculty association Dr. Ian Hambleton,” or “director of the McMaster Manufacturing Research Institute Dr. David Wilkinson.”

However, on second reference, choose one title or the other: “President George spoke to the press” or “Dr. George spoke to the press”; do not say “President Dr. George.”

■ alum

Never use it; use alumnus or alumna

■ alumna, alumnae, alumnus, alumni

alumna = one female graduate

alumnae = more than one female graduate (e.g., Moulton College alumnae)

alumnus = one male graduate

alumni = plural for a group of male graduates or plural for a mixed group of male and female graduates

■ ampersand

Use the ampersand instead of “and” in the names of departments and groups that are to be understood as a unit:

Department of Clinical Epidemiology & Biostatistics

Arts & Science Program

Department of Physics & Astronomy

Department of Electrical & Computer Engineering

Department of Materials Science & Engineering

Department of Mathematics & Statistics

Institute for Molecular Biology & Biotechnology

Psychiatry & Behavioural Neurosciences

USAGE continued

■ Arts & Science Program

Use upper-case A and S and the ampersand for “and” to distinguish the program from casual references to arts and science as fields of study.

■ Burke Science Building (no s on Science)

■ e.g., i.e.

Note that there are periods after both letters and no space between.

e.g. stands for *exempli gratia*, “for example”

i.e. stand for *id est*, “that is”

■ ext.

University extension numbers should always be preceded by ext.

For more information, call James Street, ext. 4073. (not James Street, 4073)

■ Grad years in the *Times*

If a graduate has more than one degree from McMaster, use only the year for the last degree. A graduate’s year follows the name with no punctuation; an apostrophe shows the missing “19.”

Joe Smith '75 is a geologist.

Joe Smith '75, age 60, returned to campus.

Joe Smith III '75 is a corporate executive.

■ Health Sciences Centre

This building is often called MUMC (for McMaster University Medical Centre) or “the hospital” because that is half its function — it is the McMaster site of Hamilton Health Sciences, Hamilton’s five general hospitals. But as far as the University is concerned, it is an academic building, so in our publications it is always called the Health Sciences Centre.

■ *McMaster Times*

Not *The McMaster Times*.

■ “over” vs. “more than”

“Over” means “above” in a physical context:

The plane flew over the house.

Therefore, when estimating the number of people at an event, for example, say “more than 250” rather than “over 250.”

USAGE continued

■ % sign

Use the per cent sign only in financial listings, graphs and charts. In text, spell out the words “per cent.”

■ Room numbers

When abbreviating, use the designated building abbreviation joined to the room number with a hyphen.

CNH-321

TSH-505

HSC-1A1

Otherwise, use the building’s full name followed by a comma, and the room number preceded by the word “Room” (cap R).

Chester New Hall, Room 321

Health Sciences Centre, Room 1A1

■ Second World War

Not World War II. (CP)

■ Telephone numbers

No parentheses around the area code: 416- 525-9140.

■ Titles

Don’t use academic titles in the Daily News, and only sparingly in the Times for all faculty members.

Use the title Dr. only for medical doctors, dentist, eye doctors and chiropractors and only upon first reference.

Do not use the courtesy titles Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms, etc. It is customary to use surnames for nonacademics after the first reference in the Daily News, e.g., “Marnie Spears” becomes “Spears” in subsequent references; and first names for nonacademics in the Times, e.g., “Roger Trull” becomes “Roger” after the first reference. Media releases should follow CP style.

■ Vice-presidential designations

No commas, no parentheses.

Vice-president administration K. S. Belaire

Provost and vice-president academic Alfred Jones

■ vs.

“Vs.” is the abbreviation for “versus,” which means “against.” Use a period. (CP)

TERMS FOR INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND IMAGERY

[From the April 24, 1990 *Courier* with Board of Governors emendations]

At its April 11, 1992 meeting Senate approved the proposed *Policy Statement and Guidelines on University Communications* developed by the President's Executive Committee in conjunction with the Employment Equity Office.

The approved *Policy Statement on Inclusive Communications* states:

“McMaster is committed to the use of inclusive language and imagery in all University communications.

“The use of language or visual material that may bias perceptions by excluding or stereotyping individuals or groups is unacceptable. This policy is in keeping with McMaster's commitment to promoting a place of work and study that is free of discrimination and harassment.

“All new materials must be prepared in accordance with this policy. All existing documents, publications and visual materials originated by the University must be reviewed as they are updated and revised as necessary to conform to this policy. This process must be completed by December 1992.”

The introduction to *Guidelines on University Communications* explains that it is “intended as a resource to assist the students and employees of McMaster in developing an approach to written, oral and visual communication that is accurate and free of bias.”

It then lists the following series of general guidelines designed to ensure that communications generated by the University do not “stereotype or exclude.”

Titles of Address

Designations of sex and marital status (Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms), for example, on forms, in correspondence or minutes, are often unnecessary in addressing or referring to individuals and should be omitted, unless specified by the individual or called for by the situation. First name or initial and last name should be used.

When it is appropriate to use academic titles they should be used in a parallel and consistent manner. For example, use “Dr. Smith and Prof. Jones” or “J. Smith and H. Jones” rather than “Dr. Smith and H. Jones.”

Generic forms of address commonly used in correspondence or oral presentations include “colleague,” “associate,” “members,” “faculty,” “staff,” “students.”

Occupational Titles

Job titles should describe the role or responsibility of the position, not the sex of the incumbent.

For example, “firefighter,” “custodian,” “mail carrier.” The use of the words “man” or “woman” as suffixes (for example, “foreman”) reinforces occupational stereotypes and should be avoided.

Pronouns

Since the English language lacks a singular pronoun that is gender-neutral, the masculine pronoun has traditionally been used to refer to a neutral noun. However, the generic use of masculine pronouns is exclusionary, confusing and ambiguous.

TERMS FOR INCLUSIVE... continued

Preferred alternatives include repetition of the noun, the use of the plural nouns and pronouns, rewording to eliminate the reference to sex, the use of the passive voice or the use of double or alternate pronouns (for example, “hers/his”).

Terminology

The use of prefixes, suffixes, words or expressions that exclude or stereotype individuals or groups should be eliminated and inclusive terms substituted. For example, “Level I student” should be substituted for “freshman”; likewise, “given name” for “Christian name.”

Word Order

Masculine nouns and pronouns commonly precede the feminine equivalent (for example, “husband and wife,” “his and hers”). It is preferable to alternate word order.

Graphics

Visual materials should not consistently exclude representation of women, Native people, members of visible minorities and persons with disabilities.

Members of all groups should be depicted with equal dignity. Members of the designated group should be portrayed at all levels of authority and participation, and not in stereotyped roles or activities.

Note:

(1) Senate passed a separate resolution to use the word “chair” instead of “chairman” in all University communications on Jan. 10, 1990.

(2) Academic titles, such as professor, are used in the *Review* and the *Times* for all faculty members, but the preceding guidelines do not dictate that other forms of address, such as “Mr.,” “Mrs.,” “Miss,” “Ms” etc., must be used. The point the guide is making is that academic titles should be kept parallel.

