

STYLE SHEET

For

ACCJC DOCUMENTS

Adapted from materials created by West Valley-Mission Community College District

Writing Style

- Be accurate.
 - Nothing else matters if your facts are not correct.
- Do not write in the first person; use third person.
- Avoid jargon in your text. Avoid Aalphabet soup@ as much as possible. Spell out the names of groups on the first reference, followed by the acronym, e.g., Governance and Planning Council (GAP). The organization=s acronym (GAP) may be used alone on second reference.
- Be specific, definite, and concrete.
 - Explicit writing holds the attention of readers.
- Use the active voice.
 - The active voice is more direct and vigorous than the passive voice.
 - Example:
 - Passive: Commencement was attended by hundreds of people.
 - Active: Hundreds of people attended commencement.
- Keep it as simple as possible. Be concise.
- Specific words:
 - Spell out Aand.@ Do not use the ampersand (&) except in lists and in company names as specified.
 - Coursework is one word.
 - Insure vs. ensure
 - Insure means to establish a contract for insurance of some type.
 - Example: Her parents told her to insure her car even though she lived on campus.
 - Ensure means to guarantee.
 - Example: Good study habits ensure better grades.
 - That vs. which
 - AThat@ is correct in restrictive clauses; Awhich@ is correct in nonrestrictive clauses. The general rule of thumb is that when a comma precedes it, use Awhich.@
 - Examples: The textbooks that are damaged should be replaced. (This means only the damaged textbooks should be replaced; it is restrictive.)
 - The textbooks, which are damaged, should be replaced. (This means all the textbooks should be replaced; it is nonrestrictive.)
 - Toward or towards
 - One takes action Atoward@ something, not Atowards@ it.

- Abbreviations

In general, it's best to avoid abbreviations. It's clearer and less distracting for readers to read full words rather than abbreviations. When in doubt, spell the word out.

- a.m./p.m.

Express divisions of the day as Aa.m.@ and Ap.m.@ with periods and lowercase.

- Percent

Use the word Apercent@ with the numeral. The percent sign (%) is used only in scientific, technical, or statistical copy.

- State Names

Spell out state names in text; abbreviate them only in addresses, lists, etc.

- Colon

Colons go outside quotation marks unless they are part of the quotation itself.

- Comma

Use a comma to separate three or more elements in a series. When a conjunction joins the last two elements in a series, use a comma before the conjunction.

Commas always go inside quotation marks. Don't use commas excessively.

- Dash

The most commonly used dash is used to indicate sudden breaks and abrupt changes in a sentence or to give added emphases or explanation. No spacing should go before or after the dash.

- Hyphen

Don't hyphenate words beginning with Anon,@ except those containing a proper noun and those in which the second element consists of more than one word.

Examples: nonresident
non-German
non-degree-seeking

Don't hyphenate words with the suffix Awide.@

Examples: districtwide
collegewide

Hyphenate Apart-time,@ Afull-time,@ Aon-campus@ only when used with a compound modifier.

Examples: a full-time student
attending school full time

Hyphenate two-word adjectives

Example: high-unit program

- Capitalization

Having too many words capitalized is distracting to readers. When in doubt, use lowercase. Upper case is more difficult to read and actually slows down reading speed. Don't use words in all capital letters for emphasis; use italics instead.

Capitalize names of academic departments only when the complete name is used.

Examples: Department of History
history department

Capitalize the discipline when citing a course

Example: History 101

Do not capitalize Acollege@ or Adistrict@ when the word is used alone.

Capitalize the first word following a colon when the word begins a grammatically complete sentence, not merely a list.

Capitalize the days of the week. Do not abbreviate them except when needed in a tabular format.

Do not capitalize Afederal@ or Astate,@ unless part of an official name.

Capitalize the names of months in all uses. When a phrase lists only a month and a year, do not separate the year with commas.

Capitalize titles that precede names but not those following names or standing alone

Examples: Mission College President Christopher O=Hearn
Christopher O=Hearn, president of Mission College
Marchelle S. Fox became president in 1996.

Do not capitalize fall or spring

Example: Enrollment in fall semester was up.

- Numbers

Spell out numbers one through and including ten; use figures for larger numbers.

Exception: numbers applicable to the same category should be treated alike within the same context. Do not use numbers for some and spell out others.

Example: There are 9 students in the philosophy department, 125 in the modern languages department, and 212 in the biology department.

Always use numbers when referring to ages.

Credit hours should be expressed as numerals.

A number at the beginning of a sentence should be spelled out. If the spelled-out number would be awkward because of its length, rewrite the sentence.

When referring to ATitle V@ use Arabic numbers. (Title 5)

\$ Bullets

Use the circle bullet, small size

Latin terms

Do not underline and do not italicize

Emphasis

Use italics, not bold

Underline

Titles of books and the Commission=s handbooks should be underlined

Formatting:

Times, New Roman 12 pt. Font

Block, left justified

Titles in Times New Roman 14 pt. Bold

Subheadings in Times, New Roman 12 pt. Bold