

FLORIDA VIRTUAL SCHOOL
PROOFREADING STYLE GUIDE

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Introduction

"No stile of writing is so delightful as that which is all pith, which never omits a necessary word, nor uses an unnecessary one."

– Thomas Jefferson

No two experts agree on literary style, punctuation, and capitalization. Because style varies and changes, style guides are written or adopted to help ensure that communication from an organization is consistent, clear, and correct.

There will always be differences of opinion on rules of style. That's why there are thousands of style, writing, and grammar books. The Florida Virtual School Proofreading Style Guide was developed to consolidate some of those rules. This guide is not intended to replace other writing style guides and is to be used as a reference document that will help FLVS adopt a style that is consistent and appropriate for school use, especially when writing for an external audience.

These guidelines use the *Chicago Manual of Style* as a primary "authority" because much of our writing is intended for external readers—prospective students and their parents, clients and prospective clients, government officials, the media, and the general public.

ICON KEY

Quotes



The Basics

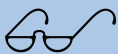


Remember



Whatever style you follow, remember that consistency and clarity are the keys to more effective communication. Make sure your preferred writing standards are consistent in all of your documents.

Just as use of the English language has changed over the years, this style guide will adapt and evolve.



"If writing must be a precise form of communication, it should be treated like a precision instrument. It should be sharpened, and it should not be used carelessly."

– Theodore M. Bernstein

Acronyms and Abbreviations



The Basics

Acronyms are abbreviations that are pronounced as a word, such as iNACOL and FEMA, or are formed

from the first letters of a series of words, such as ESOL, AP, and VLC. Omit periods between capital letters. Use periods with abbreviations that appear in lowercase letters, such as a.m., p.m., e.g., and i.e.

Spell out the abbreviation or acronym on the first use and follow with the abbreviation in parentheses only if the acronym would not be clear to the reader.

Remember that not everyone is familiar with education-related acronyms. If you are writing for non-educators, it would be best to spell out the name in the first reference with the acronym in parentheses.

Do not use the ampersand (&) as a replacement for and unless it is part of an official name, such as Barnes & Noble.

Commonly Used Abbreviations

It is best to refrain from using abbreviations outside of content context as much as possible. Please note that screen readers are not equipped to read abbreviations. For online formatting, use the full spelling of a word. For print media, here are some commonly used and acceptable forms of abbreviations:

Page: p.

For example: e.g.

Also known as: a.k.a.

Etcetera: etc.

Volume: vol.

Et alii (Latin term for “and others”): et al.

Articles (a, an, and the) With Abbreviations and Acronyms

When placing either *a*, *an*, or *the* before an abbreviation or acronym, determine how it would sound when spoken. In general, if an acronym (like iNACOL) is pronounced as a word rather than as a series of letters (the VLC), you do not need an article when the acronym is used as a noun. An article is needed when the acronym is used as an adjective (A FLVS spokesperson).

Degrees

Academic degrees are generally written out. Use abbreviations such as *B.A.*, *B.S.*, *M.A.*, *M.S.*, *M.Ed.*, *Ph.D.*, or *Ed.D.* with a person's name. It is acceptable to omit the period after each letter.

Dr. Rosemary DuRocher or Rosemary DuRocher, Ed.D. – use Dr. or Ed.D. but not both.

Note: When writing names of degrees in normal prose setting, spell out terms and use lowercase: *bachelor's degree*, *master's degree*, *bachelor of science*, *doctorate*. When naming a specific degree, capitalize the name of degree but not the specialization--*Bachelor of Science in computer science*.

Professional and Social Titles

Social titles are always abbreviated: *Mr.*, *Mrs.*, and *Ms.* It is acceptable to use the abbreviated form of doctor when preceding a name. Other professional titles should not be abbreviated. Titles may be omitted when the professional designation follows a name. *For more on the use of titles, see the section Names and Titles.*

Dr. Allen Delaney has served on the board for ten years.

Math and Science Related Terms

Because of screen readers, it is best to not use abbreviations for math or science related terms. The exception would be in the context of calculations and measurements. Do not use the percent sign (%) for percent unless it is part of an equation, chart, table, or list. Always use numerals before either the sign or the word.

For print media, the *Chicago Manual of Style* has a list of acceptable forms.

Plurals and Possessives of Abbreviations and Acronyms

To form most plural abbreviations, add an *s*: *SATs*, *CDs*, *IOUs*, *TVs*, *UFOs*. Sometimes, an apostrophe may go before the *s*: when the abbreviation has internal periods (*M.A.'s*, *M.B.A.'s*, *Ph.D.'s*) and when the abbreviation is a single letter (*A's*, *S's*). In the case of the possessive form of FLVS, it is recommended to not use the abbreviation. It is best to use the full name of the organization.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations (cont.)

State Names

Spell out the names of the 50 U.S. states when they stand alone in texts: *He retired and moved to Florida after living 20 years in Michigan.*

State names may be abbreviated in charts and tables. Use the two-letter postal form for addresses, bibliographic references, tables, and similar. For online purposes, state names must be spelled out because of screen readers.

Lowercase state when used as an adjective: *a state map, the state government. We serve students in the state of Florida and beyond.* Capitalize state when writing about the state government: *The State of Florida funds FLVS.*

United States

When abbreviating as an adjective or noun, include periods: U.S. No space between the letters in the abbreviation. The three-letter abbreviation does not use periods (USA).

Geographical Terms

Spell out street, road, boulevard, place, terrace, avenue, and court unless part of a postal address.

Dates

For dates, use BCE or CE. Do not abbreviate the names of months.



"Short paragraphs put air around what you write and make it look inviting, whereas one long chunk of type can discourage the reader from even starting to read."

— William Zinsser

Capitalization



The Basics

Official names and proper nouns are capitalized. Common nouns and various shortened forms of official names are not capitalized. Use the full, official name the first time it appears in a document or section of a document.

The silent auction will benefit the Florida Virtual School Foundation.

The foundation has already raised enough funds to purchase 10 computers.

Do not capitalize:

classes: freshman, sophomore, junior, senior

degrees: doctorate, doctor's, master's, bachelor's, baccalaureate (Capitalize official college degrees when spelled out, i.e. Bachelor of Arts in computer science.)

seasons: spring, summer, fall, winter

state of Florida, the

federal: federal government, federal agencies (Capitalize "Federal" only when used in title of organization such as the Federal Trade Commission or Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Academic Subjects

Lowercase academic subjects like *geometry*, *economics*, and *precalculus*. Languages like *Spanish* and *Latin* should be capitalized.

Capitalize official course titles with initial capitals: *Algebra II*, *AP Microeconomics*.

Do not capitalize:

Text references and numbering: part A, module 3, figure 2

Job Titles

Capitalize job or position titles used directly before a person's name: *President Barack Obama*, *Secretary of Education Arne Duncan*, and *Orange County Schools Superintendent Barbara M. Jenkins*.

Lowercase and spell out titles when they stand alone or are separated from a person's name by commas: *Arne Duncan, secretary of education, will speak at our next conference. The secretary of education will speak at our next conference. Use FLVS leadership example. Refer to other sections in Guide: See under Names and Titles*

Titles of Documents, Compositions, and Publications

Capitalize the first letter of main words in titles of books, long poems, long musical compositions, magazines, movies, newsletters, newspapers, plays, artwork, and television series; set in italics (*The New York Times*). Only capitalize words like chapter, volume, book, and act only when followed by a specific number or numbers or specific letter.

Examples:

In Book 5 of Gibbon's text

In the previous act, Romeo stated

The fourth volume of his treatise examines

An Inquiry into the Human Mind ("An" is capitalized as the first word in this lesson title. Lesson titles do not usually appear in quotes or italics.

Do capitalize:

The first word

The last word

The first word after a colon

All nouns, verbs, pronouns, adverbs, subordinating conjunctions

Do not capitalize:

Articles (*a, an, the*)

Coordinating conjunctions (*and, but, or, for, nor*)

Prepositions (*of, on, so, to, yet, over, by*)
Lowercase only the prepositions that are four letters or less.

Historical, Cultural, and Geographical Terms

Capitalize:

Nouns and adjectives designating parts of the world, region, or country. (*Asian customs, raised in the West, a Southern accent*)

Do not capitalize:

Numerical designations for dates: the sixteenth century, the eighteen hundreds, the eighties (see section on Numbers for more information)

Descriptive designations: ancient Greece, the colonial period, the Victorian era

Compass points when indicating direction or location. *Birds fly south for the winter.*

continued >

Do capitalize:

Traditional names: (to keep tradition or to avoid ambiguity) the Dark Ages, the Enlightenment, the Jazz Age, the Progressive Era, the Reformation, the Renaissance, the Roaring Twenties, Industrial Revolution

Cultural periods: the Bronze Age, the Ice Age, the Stone Age (exception: analogous terms for modern periods are best lowercased: the age of steam, the nuclear age, the information age, civil rights movement.)

Astronomical Terms

Do capitalize:

Names of planets: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Earth when used as a proper noun. Uppercase moon when referring to Earth's Moon.

Do not capitalize:

"Earth" when not used as a proper name. For example, *Where on earth have you been?*

Sun and moon: usually lowercased in nontechnical contexts and always lowercased in the plural. *Some planets have several moons.*

Miscellaneous

Do capitalize:

AP Exam

The United States (or U.S.) Capitol (in reference to the actual building)

Do not capitalize:

Capital (*Paris is the fashion capital of the world.*)

Capitol (*The group met outside of the capitol today.*)

URLs or e-mail addresses



Remember:

Using lowercase letters in no way diminishes the importance of a word. Do not capitalize

the first letter of a word simply to highlight it or because you think it's an important word; excessive, random capitalization distracts the reader and hinders reading. When in doubt, lowercase.

Hyphenated Titles

All words in hyphenated titles are capitalized except when a conjunction, article, or preposition with four letters or less is used. *Discussion-Based Assessment*

Grammar and Language Use Problems

This section is not meant to be a comprehensive treatment of standard grammar and writing rules. Examples included here represent some of the problems seen most frequently in course documents and other communications within FLVS.

Collective Nouns

Collective nouns name a group or collection of people, places, and things. They can be used in singular and plural senses.

Use singular when the term refers to the whole unit: *The selection committee is going to announce the name of the new manager. The board is electing new members.*

Use the plural form when referring to individual members: *The staff are working this weekend to prepare for the conference.* It might help to use the word "members" for clarity: *The staff members are working this weekend to prepare for the conference.*

Comma Splices

Comma splices occur when you combine two independent clauses by splicing them together with a comma. You can usually correct a comma splice by creating two separate sentences, by adding a coordinating conjunction, or by separating the two clauses with a semicolon. This will mark the end of one thought before beginning another.

Example of a comma splice: *Cynthia read the book, her friend saw the movie.*

Add a coordinating conjunction: *Cynthia read the book, but her friend saw the movie.* Change the comma to a semicolon: *Cynthia read the book; her friend saw the movie.*

Pronoun–antecedent Agreement

A pronoun must agree in number (i.e., singular or plural) with the noun it replaces. A singular noun goes with a singular pronoun, and a plural noun goes with a plural pronoun.

The following is an example of a pronoun and its antecedent that do not agree: *If a student [singular] wants to drive a car, they [plural] must pass the driver's test.*

There are a number of possible ways to revise this sentence so that the noun and pronoun agree.

Make the antecedent plural:

If students want to drive a car, they must pass the driver's test.

Restructure the sentence:

Students who want to drive a car must pass the driver's test.

Change to second person:

If you want to drive a car, you must pass the driver's test.

Replace the pronoun:

If the singular must be used, avoid using *his/her* or *s/he*. You can use both pronouns, joined by a conjunction: *If the student wants to drive a car, he or she must pass the driver's test.*

Relative Pronouns

A relative pronoun is used to join clauses to construct a complex sentence and is located at the beginning of the dependent clause. Commonly used relative pronouns are *who*, *which*, *what*, and *that*.

Use **who** and **whoever** when you can substitute he, she, they, I, or we for the "who clause."

Use **whom** and **whomever** when you can substitute him, her, them, me, or us as the object of the verb or the object of the preposition in the "whom clause."

That introduces a restrictive, or defining, clause, which identifies the person, animal, or thing being talked about: *The students in the AP Biology course want content that is easy to understand.* The clause *that is easy to understand* is a restrictive clause telling what kind of content is desired.

Which introduces a nonrestrictive, or nondefining clause, which gives additional information. In this use, it is always preceded by a comma: *The students in the AP Biology course have been complaining about the content, which is hard to understand.* The clause *which is hard to understand* is nonrestrictive; it does not indicate which content is being complained about. Even if it were omitted, we would know that the phrase *the content* refers to the content in the AP Biology course.

Lists and Assessment Items



The Basics

Lists are a good way of organizing and managing textual information and can either be within a sentence or listed vertically. Some advantages of vertical lists are as follows:

- Lists are easy to scan, improving readability.
- Lists save space.
- Lists can provide visual variety by breaking up text.

Within a sentence, separate items in a list with commas (see the Punctuation section to read about comma use in lists). Use semicolons if the items in the list are complex or include commas.

The students registered from Wheeling, West Virginia; Houston, Texas; Spokane, Washington; and Orlando, Florida.

Vertical Lists

Introduce items in a vertical list with bullets only when the order is not important. Otherwise, use numbers when steps are sequential. Use a colon to introduce a list only if a full sentence or clause comes before it. That sentence would end with *the following*: or as *follows*: or *Here are some examples*: or similar sentences. Also, there should never be only one bullet point.

Here's the procedure for registration:

1. Click on "Register for AP Test Exam Reviews."
2. Enter your information.
3. Select the tests you want.
4. Click "Submit Registration" to confirm your enrollment.

If any or all of the items in a vertical list are complete sentences, punctuate all items in the list with periods. If no items are sentences, omit punctuation at the end of each item, including the last one. Be consistent; treat similar lists within a document the same way.

The English IV course has several graded components:

- a segment project
- module exams
- discussion postings
- a final exam

Item-Writing Format

Multiple-choice questions in assessments are similar to unnumbered vertical lists. If the item is a question, punctuate the stem with a question mark. Capitalize and punctuate the options if they are complete sentences. Capitalize but do not punctuate if the options are incomplete sentences. The grammar of answer choices should agree with the stem.

Examples:

Which of the following best describes the rhetorical function of the second sentence in the passage?

- (a) It makes an appeal to authority.
- (b) It restates the thesis of the passage.
- (c) It expresses the causal relationship between morality and writing style.
- (d) It provides a specific example for the preceding generalization.

In context, the expression "to pitch upon" (line 34) is best interpreted as having which of the following meanings?

- (a) To suggest in a casual way
- (b) To set a value on
- (c) To put aside as if by throwing
- (d) To utter glibly and insincerely

continued >

If the stem is an incomplete sentence, do **not** punctuate the stem or the options and do **not** capitalize the first word in the option.

The author's tone in the passage as a whole is best described as

- (a) harsh and strident
- (b) informal and analytical
- (c) contemplative and conciliatory
- (d) superficial and capricious

In the design of this study, the researchers made sure that

- (a) some individuals had coronary artery disease
- (b) some individuals were in their thirties
- (c) the number of men and women was equal
- (d) all participants were adults

For exams in AP courses, use capital letters enclosed in parentheses in front of the answer choices. In addition, use all caps if using **except** or **not**. For all other assessments, do not use all caps but instead use bold-type to emphasize the word.



Remember:

- List only comparable items.
 - Keep the list items grammatically parallel.
 - Use only words, phrases, or short sentences.
 - Provide adequate transitions before and after lists.
 - Do not overuse lists or make them too long.
-

Names and Titles

Governmental Bodies

Capitalize the full name of governmental departments, agencies, and offices. Lowercase state if it is used in place of Florida.

*The grants are funded by the Florida
Department of Education and the U.S.
Department of Education.*

*The grants were funded by the state
Department of Education.*

Lowercase state of, city of, town of...

*The city of Orlando and the Orange County
School Board reached an agreement on the
parking garage.*

Capitalize *legislature* when it is preceded by the name of a state, or when the state name is dropped but the reference is specifically to that state's legislature.

*The Florida Legislature passed several
initiatives regarding distance education.*

*The Legislature is expected to pass the
measure that will ensure FLVS funding.*

Lowercase *legislature* for all plural references and when used generically.

*The Mississippi and Georgia legislatures
passed similar bills.*

No legislature has ratified the amendment.

Names with Degrees

Use a comma between a person's name and degree: *Sally Myers, PhD.*

Names with Initials

Use a space between two initials; no spaces between more than two initials:
T. S. Eliot; J.R.R. Tolkien

Names with Job Titles

Capitalize formal titles when they are used immediately before an individual's name.

President Barack Obama

School Board Chairman Michael Olenick

Lowercase titles when they are used after a person's name.

Barack Obama, president

Michael Olenick, school board chairman

Lowercase occupational descriptions, even when used immediately before a name.

marine sciences teacher Angela Waterman

Names with Suffixes

Do not use a comma before or after such suffixes as I, II, III, or Jr. and Sr.

*John F. Kennedy Jr.; Martin Luther King Jr.;
Jonathan Smythe III*

Bias-Free Language

Ethnicity and Race

Preferred terms include the following:

Ethnicity:

Hispanic or Latino: A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

Not Hispanic or Latino

Race:

American Indian or Alaska Native: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.

Asian: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, e.g., Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Black or African American: A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

White: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

Avoid using race as a noun such as *There were more Whites than Blacks in the class. Change to There were more white students than black students in the class.*

Medical Conditions

Avoid using a medical condition as a noun when describing a person. For example, avoid Mark is the diabetic who is presenting at the seminar this evening. Instead, use Mark is the person with diabetes who is presenting at the seminar this evening.

Gender

Avoid using he to cover both he and she. Try rewriting the sentence so that the plural pronoun they or theirs can be used or create sentence without using pronouns.

Examples:

- Sexist language: A reporter must ask himself whether or not he is being biased.
- Non-sexist language: Reporters must ask themselves whether or not they are being biased.
- Pronoun-free language: Reporters must guard against including any personal bias in news stories.

Occupational Titles

Avoid using occupational titles ending with -man, -ess or -woman. Here are some common examples and generally accepted alternatives:

congressmen – congressional

representatives, members of Congress

workman's compensation – workers' compensation

manpower – personnel, work force, staff, human resources

workmanlike – efficient, skillful

foreman – supervisor



"If the English language had been properly organized ... then there would be a word which meant both 'he' and 'she', and I could write, 'If John or Mary comes heesh will want to play tennis,' which would save a lot of trouble. "

– A.A. Milne



The Basics

Spell out numbers one through nine (single digits). Use figures for 10 or more.

The board of directors is composed of six members elected to four-year terms.

The English team has 12 full-time instructors and three adjuncts.

Exceptions:

Use numerals to express the ages of people and animals, test scores (AP scores), page numbers, percentages, ratios, decimals, credit hours, GPAs or when used in a mathematical equation, problem, or table/chart.

Many FLVS students take more than 2 credit hours and maintain a 3.5 GPA.

His father gave five dollars to the FLVS Foundation.

His mother gave \$10 million to the FLVS Foundation.

The ratio of female students to male students is 3 to 2.

Spell out numbers at the beginning of a sentence unless the number identifies a calendar year. Alternatively, rewrite the sentence.

Fifty students passed the AP exam with the highest score.

This year 50 students passed the AP exam with the highest score.

1996 marked the beginning of Florida Virtual School.

Spell out any whole number followed by hundred, thousand, or hundred thousand with the exception of the use in science.

The school anticipates serving more than one hundred thousand students within the next two years.

The population of our city is more than two hundred thousand.

The survey was administered to more than half of the city's 220 million inhabitants.

Dates

Spell out the names of months when using a month alone or a month with a year: *The virtual school project began in January 1998.* Note there is no comma between the month and the year. When using dates in a sentence, please follow these examples: January 1, 2010, or Thursday, January 1, 2010.

Except for **correspondence** and **online courses**, abbreviate *Jan.*, *Feb.*, *Aug.*, *Sept.*, *Oct.*, *Nov.*, and *Dec.* when used with a specific date: *Registration will open Oct. 15, 2005.*

It is acceptable to spell out decades or use numerals as long as the century is clear. Style consistency needs to be maintained throughout the body of work.

Use an *s* without an apostrophe to show decades or centuries: *1800s*, *1920s*, *'60s*

Ordinal Numbers

Spell out ordinal numbers *first* through *ninth*. Most ordinal numbers *10th* and above are usually not spelled out, but for online courses, please spell out when possible. *The literature course will cover material from the eighteenth century.* Please note that the “th” should be kept on the same line as the text and not in superscript form.

MS Word defaults to superscript. To change the default mode, go to Windows icon and select Word Options, then Proofing, then AutoCorrect Options, and then the tab AutoFormat as You Type. Deselect the box “Ordinals (1st) with superscript.”

continued >

Ranges

Use a short dash, called an *en dash*, to show a range of numbers (note: an en dash is not the same as a hyphen, which is shorter). *2004–05, pages 22–30, 8 a.m.–9:30 a.m., \$45–50.* (see dashes in the punctuation section) Reminder: *en dash* does NOT have a space on either side. When a range of dates is preceded by “from” or “between,” use “to” or “and” respectively.

Examples:

From 1848 to 1865 the country experienced tremendous upheaval.

The years 1943–45 were the deadliest of the war.

Mark Twain (1835–1910) was his generation’s most widely read author.

Time

Use numerals except for noon and midnight. Lowercase and use periods for a.m. and p.m., and times on the hour do not take zeros. *The hours of operation are 8:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 6 to 9 p.m.* Please note: Try to avoid using abbreviations in courses whenever possible for accessibility.

Symbols and Fractions

The symbol \times is used for multiplication only until variables are introduced. In equations involving variables, \cdot should be used to indicate multiplication. However, do not use symbols in text versions involving mathematical calculations.

Use $2 \cdot 2 + 5x = 33$ **not** two $\cdot 2$ +five $x = 33$.

In text, spell out fractions that are plural or appearing between other numbers. Fractions should appear as a numeral fraction in mathematical equations, problems, or tables/charts. When a fraction or decimal precedes a unit of measure, the unit of measure is singular.

Examples:

There are 17 one-fourths in $4 \frac{1}{4}$.

How many $\frac{1}{8}$ pieces are there in $\frac{1}{2}$?

$\frac{2}{3}$ of a foot



Remember:

There is no good reason for following the word for a number with a figure in parentheses for the same number. It’s redundant. Avoid: *The essay should consist of five (5) paragraphs.*



The Basics

Use only one space after end punctuation (periods, question marks, exclamation points) and after colons and semicolons. Use a single space at the end of a sentence and after a colon. Double spaces date back to the days of typewriters, when all characters were allotted the same amount of space. Computerized typesetting adjusts the spacing for a good fit. Extra spaces create gaps and look unprofessional.

Amperсанд (&)

Only use the ampersand when it is part of a company's name or branding, not in place of and in text. *Barnes & Noble, AT&T, Snap, Crackle & Pop*

Apostrophes

Use to show possession: *Julia Smith's next conference is in July.* No apostrophe is necessary when forming the plural of a family name: *The Jeffersons live here.*

Use to mark the omission of letters in words and contractions: *hopin', won't, the '40s.*

Apostrophes do not make a word plural but can be used to show plural letters.

She earned four A's this semester. He has two Ph.D.'s.

For singular words and names ending in s: Always add an apostrophe and s.

Euripides's tragedies

Mr. Peters's classroom

Grace's homework

The class's graduation date

Plurals ending in s: just add apostrophe. *Of the two boys' hats, I liked Mark's the best.*

Use the apostrophe and s after the second name only if two people possess the same item. *Joel and Marti's dog was running loose on the beach.*

Colons

Use a colon to introduce statements, direct quotations of any length, lists, and before a series of complex items. Capitalize the first word after a colon only if it is a proper noun or the beginning of a complete sentence. When introducing a quotation of more than six words, use a colon. When direct attention is required or anticipation is desired, a colon is preferred over a comma. For block quotations, drop to next line and indent. A colon is needed.

Lee only needs to pen a few details about Calpurnia to bring her vividly to life: "She was all angles and bones; she squinted; her hand was wide as a bed slat and twice as hard."

The soliloquy tersely begins with the question: "To be, or not to be."

To take the SAT, students are required to bring the following items:

1. admission slip
2. photo identification
3. two No. 2 pencils

Commas

Use commas to separate words, phrases, or clauses. A comma should appear before the conjunction when words, phrases, or clauses are used in a series.

This semester she is taking algebra, chemistry, and English literature.

Jeff was mowing the grass, Trent was pulling weeds, and Martha was sweeping the porch and arranging the furniture.

Set off nonrestrictive clauses, phrases, or words with commas. If the sentence is clear or the meaning is not altered without the separated clause, the clause is nonessential.

The Spanish III course, developed by the curriculum team, will be ready for uploading in one week.

The FLVS Foundation's purpose is "to support further enhancements and expansion of online learning opportunities," she said.

continued >

Use a comma to set off a direct quotation within a paragraph.

Secretary Paige said, "FLVS is the model virtual school."

Names of states or countries are enclosed in commas when they are preceded by a city or state.

The 2006 Florida Education Technology Conference was held in Orlando, Florida.

Use commas to set off words and phrases such as *however, meanwhile, in addition, therefore, for example, and as a result.*

Watch use of commas with conjunctions such as "and," "because," or "but." For example: *He thought quickly but still did not answer correctly.* If the subject appears in front of the second verb, use a comma.

When using a series of steps with a sentence beginning with conjuncts, such as *next, now, or then*, use a comma after the conjunct. For example: *First, go to the mailbox. Next, turn left. Then, follow the white fence to the house with the red door. Finally, ring the door bell.* If the sentence with the conjunct is a stand-alone sentence, it is acceptable to leave out the comma. For example: *She went to the store. Then she went home.*

Don't overuse commas.

Contractions

It is recommended that contractions never be used in instructions or in assessments or in AP courses. Cautiously use contractions in writing. It is acceptable to use contractions when transcribing a conversation among students or in the conversational style of writing. For example: *Let's go to the movies.*



Remember:

The key to punctuation in matters of preference is consistency. Be sure the style and usage is consistent across the course or document.

Dashes

There is a difference between en dashes, em dashes, and hyphens.

En dashes

An en dash is a short dash, used between inclusive numbers to show range, and between compound adjectives. It is used without spaces before or after. *1993–94 school year. New York–Boston flight.* (see also Ranges under Numbers)

Em dashes

An em dash is a long dash, used to signify a sudden break in thought or for emphasis, definition, or explanation. It is used without a space before or after.

No one—not even the CEO—expected 18,000 students to register in such a short time period.

Don't overuse dashes.

Ellipses

Ellipses should be used only to indicate the omission of a portion of a direct quotation. Efforts should be made to not begin or end quoted material with an ellipsis. When an ellipsis is used in a quotation between complete sentences include the ending punctuation before the ellipsis. Do not use an ellipsis to indicate a pause or an unfinished thought. *"What should I do? ... I won't stand for it! ... I would rather be blinded ... than see her leave me."*

continued >

Hyphens

Use hyphens to form a single idea from two or more words, or to avoid ambiguity.

After we recovered from the long vacation trip we re-covered the sofa.

Use hyphens between compound modifiers that precede a noun, except when the compound modifier includes adverbs that end in -ly.

She is a full-time instructor.

She works full time.

Our employees are well educated.

We need well-educated teachers.

The technical team had to explain the poorly documented code.

Even though the practice of hyphenating words varies, use a dictionary to check on the hyphenation of compound words. The key is to be consistent. Here are some common words used in education that are hyphenated:

co-author follow-up

non-instructional

co-worker

year-end

college-bound

These are some examples of suspensive and multiple hyphenations:

16- and 17-year-old students

full- and part-time jobs

5- to 6-paragraph essay

These are words that are often erroneously hyphenated:

bimonthly

high quality

homeschooled

midterm

postgraduate

postsecondary

pretest

statewide

yearlong

Parentheses

Parentheses are always used in pairs and may be used to separate nonessential words or phrases, or for clarity.

The figures listed (see Attachment B) support our conclusions.

Use parentheses to enclose citations within text.

Nearly 48 percent of high school students have Internet access at home and at school (Technology Survey, 2003).

Use parentheses to enclose numbers in an enumerated list within a paragraph.

Students take online classes for (1) grade forgiveness, (2) acceleration, and (3) homeschooling.

The final mark of punctuation for the sentence is placed outside the parenthesis unless the words inside the parentheses form a complete sentence.

You may order next year's calendar by calling the administrative office secretary (327-3326).

You may order next year's calendar from the administrative office secretary. (Send a check for \$1.50 payable to Jayne Gierke.)

Periods

This punctuation mark has two main uses. It ends a declarative sentence and is used with abbreviations. It is acceptable to not use periods with abbreviations but it is important to designate use and be consistent throughout a document or course. See section on Abbreviations and Acronyms.

Periods always go **inside** quotation marks.

The boy said shyly, "I need a pencil."

Use a period after an indirect question, not a question mark.

She asked what her grade was.

Put only one space after a period.

Periods should be omitted in headlines.

continued >

Quotation Marks

Put quotation marks around direct quotations. "Turn in your travel expenses at the end of the month," said the finance manager. The marketing director said, "The budget for pamphlets is increased by 50 percent this year."

Always place a period or comma inside the quotation marks.

Place a colon, dash, exclamation point, question mark, or semicolon inside the quotation marks when they apply to the quoted material only.

The students yelled, "Go team!"

What did she mean by "deferred compensation"?

Use quotation marks to suggest irony or sarcasm (use sparingly). Avoid using quotation marks to draw attention to single words, or for emphasis. Use italics if you must. And do not use quotation marks to set off clichés. In fact, don't use clichés at all.

Use single quotation marks for quotations within a quotation. "She cried, 'No!'"

Semicolons

Use a semicolon to separate closely related clauses, and to separate items in a series when the individual elements must be punctuated with commas. Also, use a semicolon between two independent clauses containing conjunctive adverbs such as *however*, *therefore*, and *consequently*. Note that semicolons often add rather than reduce confusion and should be used sparingly.

The top student was offered scholarships to colleges in Washington D.C.; Boston, MA; and Berkeley, CA.

The software for the physics course arrived today; the geometry material is on order.

The students took the test yesterday; however, the results are not expected for two weeks.

Titles

Italicize the titles of these items:

- Books: *The Great Gatsby*, *A Wrinkle in Time*
- Magazines: *Time*, *Scientific American*
- Newspapers: the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*

- Pamphlets: *Common Sense*, *Working Your Way to Fitness*
- Long Poems: *The Waste Land*, *Paradise Lost*
- Plays: *Hamlet*, *A Doll House*
- Television Programs: *Lost*, *Phineas and Ferb*
- Movies: *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark*
- Video/Board games: *Tomb Raider: Chronicles*, *Pac-Man*
- Radio Programs: *All Things Considered*
- Musical Compositions: Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*
- Works of Art: Rodin's *The Thinker*
- Comic Strips: *Calvin and Hobbes*
- Names of specific spacecraft, aircraft, ships, trains: *Challenger*, *Spirit of St. Louis*, *Queen Elizabeth II*, *Silver Streak*
- Speeches when mentioned in text: *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*

Use quotation marks around these items:

- Short stories: "The Gold Bug" "The Most Dangerous Game"
- Essays: John Ruskin in his famous essay "The Nature of Gothic" had much to say about the architecture of his time.
- Song titles: "The Battle Hymn of the Republic"
- Short poems: "The Raven"
- Sermons: "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"
- Articles in Periodicals and Parts of a Book: Michael Hastings's article "The Runaway General" appeared in *Rolling Stone* on June 25, 2010. *This includes use of online articles when referencing the article on a website.

Do not italicize or put inside quotation marks:

- the Bible or the titles of books in the Bible
- the titles of legal documents



The Basics

The following list includes easily confused words as well as the preferred spelling and

capitalization for words that are commonly used in FLVS documents. For words not included here, consult a good dictionary. For lists of additional words that fall into the easily confused or misused categories, consult one of the sources listed in the reference section.

advisor Not *adviser*.

AP (Advanced Placement) Not A.P.

assure/ensure/insure *Assure* is a verb used to convey the sense of reassuring someone of something. *Ensure* is a verb that means “to make sure that.” *Insure* is a verb used in relation to the insurance business.

I assured her that we would ensure that she was registered for all of her courses.

She ensured that her car was insured before it was registered.

Board of Directors Use the full name for first reference. Subsequent references may be styled as the *directors* or *the board*. *Board of Directors* is singular; *directors* takes a plural verb. No possessive apostrophe for the *directors meeting*.

The Board of Directors meets in the office next week. Several directors will call in via a conference call.

BrainPOP

chair Preferred over *chairman* or *chairperson*.

checklist

coursework

credit hours

cyber Forms closed words, as in *cyberspace*.

data A plural noun, although several recent style guide revisions now consider it a collective noun—i.e., it represents a unit—that can take a singular verb. According to *The New York Times* style manual, the *Associated Press Stylebook* and *Libel Manual*, *Wired Style*, and *Webster’s*, *data* may be used as either plural or singular.

The data shows an increase in enrollment for fall 2000.

The data are conclusive, Professor Zion Tific said at last week’s news conference.

database

decision making No hyphen when used as a noun. Hyphenate only when used as an adjective immediately before a noun.

Decision making is a primary responsibility of instructor.

The decision-making process is complex.

department, the

disc Use this spelling for the round disc that serves as a “ROM” medium: *compact disc*, *laserdisc*, *videodisc*.

Discussion-Based Assessment

email Capitalize the *e* only when the term appears at the beginning of a sentence, in a heading, or on a form where other entries (such as *Address*, *Phone*) are capitalized.

entitled/titled *Entitled* means to have a right to something; *titled* refers to the name of a publication, musical piece, or speech.

Ethernet

every day/everyday *Every day* is a noun; *everyday* is an adjective.

Traffic jams are becoming an everyday occurrence on I-4.

Thousands of drivers have to drive in I-4 traffic every day.

face to face Hyphenate when modifying a noun.

The board will have a face-to-face meeting this month.

The board will meet face to face tomorrow.

fax The abbreviation for *facsimile*. The noun is not capitalized except when it appears on a form where other headings (*Address*, *Phone*, *Fax*, *E-mail*) are capitalized.

federal Do not capitalize except when the term refers to an architectural style or is part of a formal name: *the federal government*, *Federal Express*, *the Federal Reserve*.

full time Hyphenate only when used as an adjective immediately before a noun.

Larry is a full-time teacher who was an adjunct last year.

Our intern goes to school full time at UCF.

continued >

GPA Need not be spelled out on first use.

high tech

home page

homeschooling, homeschoolers, homeschooled

Internet The worldwide research network of computers communicating in a common language.

internet A generic term for a network of connected networks.

intranet No capitalization for a private or in-house network.

its/it's *Its* is the possessive pronoun (remember: his, hers, its); *it's* is the contraction of "it is."

It's possible that FLVS will hire more teachers to reduce the waiting list for some of its most popular courses.

led/lead *Led* is the past tense of lead (pronounced "leed"). *Lead* (pronounced "led") is the metal.

What factors led to the fall of Rome?

Many believed that a decline in morals would lead to the fall of Rome.

log in A verb.

Don't forget to log in to the webinar five minutes early.

login/logon A noun that refers to the credentials required to obtain access.

media A plural noun.

The media have begun to cover educational issues more often.

midterm

more than/over *Over* is a preposition that generally refers to one thing being above another. *More than* is preferred when using amounts or numbers.

More than 50 students registered for courses in the past half hour.

FLVS offers more than 140 online courses.

When flying to Europe, an airplane goes over the ocean.

multicultural

online (adj, adv) One word, with no hyphen.

FLVS courses are conducted online.

An online exam is given at the end of the semester.

parentheses is plural for the opening and closing pair of marks (). One mark is a parenthesis.

part time Hyphenate only when used as an adjective immediately before a noun.

Our intern works in the office part time.

Sandra is a part-time student.

re- In general, use a hyphen in compounds beginning with *re* only if the word following the *re* prefix begins with an e or if confusion would result: *re-elect, re-establish, redo, rewrite, recover/re-cover.*

SAT Do not spell out or use periods.

Self-Check Both noun and adjective forms hyphenated, except where *self-* is followed by a suffix or preceded by *un*.

set up/setup Spell it with one word as a noun, two words as a verb.

Call your instructor to set up your account and get your password.

Course setup will be done by the client support representative.

statewide

text-only version

time frame

timeline

timetable

toward Not *towards*

U.S. Use as an adjective, with periods; spell out when used as a noun.

Web, the

web address, web browser, webmaster, web page, web site or website



My spelling is Wobbly. It's good spelling but it Wobbles, and the letters get in the wrong places.

– A.A. Milne



The Basics

Writing is work. It is a learned skill and takes a lot of practice. Good writing reflects the natural style of

speaking. Most people use plain language and concrete words when they speak. Their words are interesting because they speak directly to the listener. Written words should be the same—they should reflect the natural way you speak. Read some of your writing aloud. If it doesn't sound like the way you talk, rewrite.

Jargon

Don't use words or expressions known only to educators. Avoid jargon that is unique to the profession. If it is necessary, define terms that might be difficult to understand.

Active and Passive Voice

In most writing situations, active voice is preferable to passive for the majority of your sentences. Overuse of passive voice can cause readers to lose interest or to become confused. Sentences in active voice are generally clearer and more direct than those in passive voice. In sentences written in active voice, the subject performs the action expressed in the verb, and in sentences written in passive voice, the subject receives the action expressed in the verb.

Active: *The cat scratched the girl.* "The cat" is the subject that performs the action of "scratched."

Passive: *The girl was scratched by the cat.*

There is nothing wrong with the passive voice, but if you can say the same thing in the active mode, your text will be livelier. In scientific writing, for instance, sentences are often written in the passive voice; the authors are therefore given less importance, and the facts are made to speak for themselves.

Using Fewer Words and Varying Sentence Length

Some writers think the longer a message is, the more important it seems. But it usually works the other way. Short sentences are easier to understand, and long paragraphs intimidate readers. A 14-word sentence is the average for an eighth-grade reading ability. To avoid

monotony, vary the length of your sentences and paragraphs, and avoid a choppy style where all the sentences are short.

Choppy style:

The printer icon is on your desktop. It is in the lower left corner. It is next to the icon for your email. Double-click on the icon to open the print queue. You can see your print jobs listed. Select the print job. Choose "cancel" to stop printing.

Improved:

The printer icon is in the lower left corner of your desktop, next to the email icon. To cancel a print job, double-click on the icon to open the print queue. Select the print job and choose "cancel" to stop printing.

One way to keep sentences and paragraphs short is to use fewer words. Don't use two or more words when one will do as well. Your writing will be stronger.

Franklin D. Roosevelt once rewrote a memo that he felt was too pompous and wordy. The memo described what to do in an emergency:

Such preparation shall be made as will completely obscure all federal and non-federal buildings occupied by the federal government during an air raid for any period of time from visibility by reason of internal or external illumination. Such obscuration may be obtained either by blackout construction or by termination of the illumination.

His revision:

Tell them that in buildings where they have to keep the work going to put something over the windows; and, in buildings where they can let the work stop for awhile, turn out the lights. [Reprinted from Gobbledygook Has Gotta Go (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, n.d.), pp. 38-39.]

Concise writing expresses ideas without unnecessary wordiness. Remember to vary your sentence structure to keep your reader's interest and avoid choppiness.

continued >

Alternative Text

Images, interactive features, and other media require alternative text to ensure accessibility of content regardless of technology or individual needs. Alternative text takes multiple forms:

- An **alt tag** is text that appears upon selection of an image on a web page.
- A **long description**, or "d-link," is an extended description of an image that appears upon selection of an icon next to the image. The alternative text will open in a new window.
- A **text version** is a transcription of a video, audio recording, interactive feature, or other media. Since a text version usually provides a transcript of a person's actual speech, it should be accurate to what is spoken. Therefore, corrections for grammar or style in a transcript or any other quote within alternative text would not be appropriate.

Note that screen readers may read text in unexpected ways (i.e. "minus five" instead of "negative five" for "-5"). Therefore, be sure to seek clarification on how to best approach editing of alternative text because needs may vary by content and specific instance. In mathematical contexts, do not use symbols in alternative text.

3 times 5 equals 15 (not $3 \times 5 = 15$)

3x times 5x equals 15x squared (not $3x \cdot 5x = 15x^2$)

There is a **Copyright and Permissions handbook** available on the FLVS intranet. It is recommended that all quoted material be reviewed for accuracy and should match the original source. If punctuation or misspellings are present in the original source, the copyeditor or proofreader will leave the quoted material alone.

Use of Trademarks and College Board Intellectual Property

When referencing the College Board or any of its programs, the editorial guidelines require the following specific usages:

1. *Advanced Placement Program* should be spelled out on the first use. Subsequent reference is simply *AP* (never *APP*).
2. *Advanced Placement* capitalized refers to the College Board's program; in lowercase letters, *advanced placement* refers to the credit issued by a college or university.
3. Courses are referenced as the *AP* (subject) course or *AP* (subject) (e.g., *AP Art History course* or simply *AP Art History*).
4. *AP Exam* and *AP exams* are preferable usages to *AP Examination* or *AP examinations*.
5. When the subject is used with the word *exam*, the preferred style is *AP* (Subject) *Exam* (e.g., the *AP Human Geography Exam*).
6. *The College Board* (with a capital T) should be used as a standalone. Otherwise, *the College Board* is preferred when referring to the organization. *College Board* may be used as an adjective (e.g., *College Board AP programs benefit students who wish to prepare for college*).

References

If you need additional help, have questions that are not covered in this guide, or want more in-depth explanations, you will find many good books and online resources. Here are a few that are particularly useful.

Online sources

Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL): <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

The Chicago Manual of Style Online: <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>

The Elements of Style, by William Strunk, Jr.: <http://www.bartleby.com/141/>

Books

The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law, ed. Norm Goldstein (Perseus Books, 2005).

The Chicago Manual of Style, 15th ed. (University of Chicago Press, 1993). Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed. (Merriam-Webster, 2003).

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