

WRITING STYLE

GUIDE

ROSS HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES BUILDING

FEBRUARY 2022

"WE AT YORK MUST GIVE SPECIAL EMPHASIS TO THE HUMANIZING OF MAN, FREEING HIM FROM THOSE TENDENCIES WHICH MECHANIZE THE MIND WHICH MAKE FOR ROUTINE THINKING WHICH DIVORCE THINKING AND FEELING WHICH PERMIT CUSTOM TO DOMINATE INTELLIGENCE, WHICH FREEZE AWARENESS OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT AND ITS POSSIBILITIES."

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YORK UNIVERSITY WRITING STYLE GUIDE

Last review: February 2022

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This style guide should be the **first reference** for York University communicators, to assist in journalistic and promotional writing and communications to both the York University community and the general public. It pertains to York University's English-language publications only.

For anything that is not included in this guide, refer to *The Canadian Press (CP) Stylebook* and/or *The Canadian Press Caps and Spelling*. If what you're looking for cannot be found there, refer next to the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*.

Our guidelines for capitalization, abbreviation, punctuation, use of titles, language and other issues of style come from several sources: *The Canadian Press Stylebook*, *The Canadian Press Caps and Spelling*, the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, *Talking Gender: A Guide to Nonsexist Communication* and the *CCAE English Language Style Guide*.

The [SPELLING](#) section of this document aims to address questions of spelling that come up frequently in the Communications & Public Affairs Division and lists some of CP's exceptions to Oxford spellings. As well, this style guide deals with items of particular stylistic concern for editors of York University publications. Cross references are included to assist communicators in finding relevant information.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Only use abbreviations and acronyms (abbreviations pronounced as words) on their own if they are very familiar to most readers. (See the [ACRONYMS](#) section.)

- CBC MPP MP RCMP

If you are using an abbreviation that is not well known, spell out the full name in the first reference with the abbreviation in parentheses. Then use the abbreviation or a short form of the full name in all subsequent references.

- York is the home base for the *World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre (WECT)*. Three volumes of **WECT** have already been published and the fourth volume of **the series** is scheduled for release in the fall of 1998. (See the [ACRONYMS](#) section.)

For ease of reading and variety, a general term is often preferable to an abbreviation.

- The **encyclopedia** headquarters is located at York University.

No more than **one or two abbreviations** or acronyms should be used within the same text.

Otherwise you get a sentence that reads like this:

- AUCC voted that SCOTL should devote more time to publicizing SSHRC and NSERC awards to get CCAE's attention.

Some common York abbreviations and acronyms include:

- AMPD: School of the Arts, Media, Performance & Design
- AUCC: Association of Universities & Colleges of Canada
- CASE: Council for the Advancement & Support of Education
- CCAE: Canadian Council for the Advancement of Education
- CERIS: Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration & Settlement
- CERLAC: Centre for Research on Latin America & the Caribbean
- CFR: Centre for Feminist Research
- CJS: Centre for Jewish Studies
- COU: Council of Ontario Universities

- CRESS: Centre for Research in Earth & Space Science
- CRS: Centre for Refugee Studies
- CUPE: Canadian Union of Public Employees
- EATS: Earth & Atmospheric Science
- FGS: Faculty of Graduate Studies
- FES: Faculty of Environmental Studies
- GREF: Groupe de recherches en études francophones
- ISR: Institute for Social Research
- ISTS: Institute for Space & Terrestrial Science
- ITC: Instructional Technology Centre
- JCAPS: Joint Centre for Asia Pacific Studies
- LA&PS: Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies
- NSERC: Natural Sciences & Engineering Research Council of Canada
- OCUFA: Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations
- PPC: Policy & Planning Committee
- SCOTL: Senate Committee on Teaching & Learning
- SSB: Schulich School of Business
- SSHRC: Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council of Canada
- WECT: World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre
- WIER: Writers in Electronic Residence
- YBA: York Business Alliance
- YCAS: York Centre for Applied Sustainability
- YEC: York Executive Committee
- YFS: York Federation of Students
- YUELI: York University English Language Institute
- YUFA: York University Faculty Association
- YUSA: York University Staff Association

When abbreviations follow indefinite articles, the way the abbreviation is pronounced determines whether **a** or **an** is used.

- **a** WHO spokesperson
- **an** EKG

Abbreviations also include the shortening of items such as:

- Inc. Incorporated
- etc. (no comma before it) et cetera (and so on)
- e.g. (no comma after it) exempli gratia (for example)
- i.e. (no comma after it) id est (that is to say)

Omit periods in all-capital abbreviations unless the abbreviation is geographical or refers to a person.

- AD, CST, IPO, UBC, UFO, VIP, URL
- B.C., P.E.I., N.W.T., U.S., T.O., L.A.
- J.R. Ewing

Omit periods from currency abbreviations.

- US\$500, C\$800

Metric symbols are not abbreviations and take periods only at the end of a sentence.

ACADEMIC SUBJECTS

Academic subjects or disciplines should be **lowercased**, except for **languages or ethnicities**, which are capitalized.

- She is taking courses in **mathematics** and **psychology**, but her major is **English**.
- The **geography** class took a field trip as part of its research.
- He took an introductory **Spanish** course and a **linguistics** course.
- York is one of the few universities in Canada to offer **Jewish** studies.

If you are writing about a specific department or program using its official name, capitalize the name and use the full title on first reference. On second and subsequent references, use the short version of the proper name also capitalized or the common noun element lowercased.

- The **Department of Sociology** received nine significant grants. It was the highest number ever presented to the **Sociology Department** within a single semester. Additional **department** information can be found on the website.

If, when using the common noun element, e.g. “department,” “centre” or “program,” and other departments, centres or programs are mentioned, leading to possible confusion, capitalize the initial letter.

- The **Centre for Refugee Studies** draws scholars from around the world. The **Centre** is one of 21 research centres at York University.
- The **Department of Psychology** is one of the largest in the Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies. The **department** includes cognitive, behavioural and linguistic psychologists.

(See the [CAPITALIZING ACADEMIC SUBJECTS](#) and [CAPITALIZING DEPARTMENTS AND ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS](#) sections for more information.)

ACCENTS (FOREIGN)

Use the **appropriate accents** if a **non-English word** is being used.

- Étienne Bök, professor in the Schulich School of Business
- François Rhéaume, professor of linguistics at Glendon
- Prof. Harpin was raised in Trois-Rivières, Que.
- French studies Professor Véronique Duval
- Groupe de recherches en études francophones is the name of the French-language press based at Glendon Campus.
- York professors attended a conference at the Max-Planck-Institut für Radioastronomie in Germany.

ACRONYMS

Acronyms are abbreviations pronounced as words. They are useful for saving space, but the full name should be given on first reference unless the term is very well known. (See the [ABBREVIATIONS](#) section.)

Try to use general descriptive terms to vary the wording within a text.

- A grant of \$100,000 was awarded to the **Centre for Research on Latin America & the Caribbean (CERLAC)** at York University. Officials said **CERLAC** received the award for its work on the Guatemalan education system. **The centre** is currently developing an exchange program for faculty in Canada and Guatemala.

ALUMNI

Use the word “**alumni**” to refer to a group of people of both sexes (or where the sex of the group members is unknown) who have graduated from York University. It is the most commonly used form and is the York preference.

- Thousands of **alumni** from across the country arrived at the campus for homecoming weekend.

“**Alumnus**” refers to an individual male graduate.

“**Alumna**” refers to an individual female graduate.

“**Alumnae**” describes a group of graduates known to be comprised entirely of females. It is not commonly used. However, it should be used when the grads are known to be all female.

- The Nellie Langford Rowell Library hosted **alumnae** from the first graduating class in women’s studies.

“**Alums**” is used as an informal substitute for “alumni” in spoken English but should rarely be used in written form.

AMPERSANDS

Use when part of an **official name**: H&R Block, AT&T and in expressions such as B&B (bed and breakfast).

Use when part of the name of a **Faculty, school, department, program or centre**.

Write out “and” in all other instances, including job titles.

APOSTROPHES

Use the apostrophe before an s to indicate the possessive (i.e. something that is **of** or **belonging to** something else – the graduating class **of** York).

- York’s graduating class

If something is **descriptive rather than possessive**, it does not take an apostrophe (the guide for students, the college for teachers, the outfielder for the Jays).

- students guide
- teachers college
- Jays outfielder

Singular and plural nouns not ending in s take an apostrophe and s to form the possessive case.

- father’s pipe, women’s health, people’s food

Plural nouns ending in s take an apostrophe alone.

- teachers’ apples, the two peoples’ history, the Joneses’ daughter

Singular nouns and names ending in s (or an s sound) normally take an ’s.

- Chris’s sandwich Burgess’s novel, the witness’s testimony

But **names of two or more syllables that end with a z or eez sound** often take only an apostrophe.

- Lansens' foot, Mars' laws, Socrates' plays

Names ending in a silent s or x take an 's.

- Duplessis's cabinet, Francaix's symphony

For company and institutional names, follow the organization's preference.

Use an apostrophe with **plurals of lowercase letters**.

- Mind your p's and q's.
- Dot the i's and cross the t's.

Capital letters and numbers have no apostrophe before plural s (unless you need one to avoid ambiguity).

- She got straight As.
- We teach the three Rs.
- The 1960s was a decade of rapid growth for York University.
- A's in math and physics are hard to come by.

(See the [NUMBERS](#) and [DATES AND TIMES](#) sections.)

Do not use an apostrophe with the **possessive pronoun "its."**

- The program is in its third year.

Use an apostrophe with the **contraction meaning "it is."**

- It's a difficult course.

BRACKETS / PARENTHESES

Use brackets sparingly when other punctuation won't do the job.

Use **regular brackets** (parentheses) to indicate a **separate thought or expression** within a sentence.

- She taught the statistics course (one of the toughest in the curriculum) for 15 years.

Regular brackets can be used to offer an **explanation or definition** of a term or an **acronym** that is to be repeated within the text.

- The Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) has honoured two York professors. This year's teaching award recipients were announced by OCUFA officials at the spring meeting.

Use regular brackets to enclose a York grad's degree details.

- David Coombs (BA '72, PhD '78) retired in 2004 after 27 years as a stockbroker.

If a punctuation mark applies to the whole sentence, put the mark after the closing bracket. If a punctuation mark applies only to the words inside the parenthetical section, put the mark inside the closing bracket.

In general, a parenthetical sentence takes a capital only if it is a direct quotation.

Use **brace or square brackets** within a direct quote to indicate words of explanation that are not actually part of the original quotation.

- "Those enrolling in it [the master's program] should know that the requirement is six full credits and a thesis," said Professor Jones.

Avoid **nested parentheses** ([]), square brackets inside round brackets, whenever possible. (The exception being honorary degrees.)

BYLINES

The byline follows the headline. (See *The Canadian Press Stylebook* for general rules on when to use bylines.)

If the article or column is written by a staff writer or regular contributor to a publication whose name is already listed somewhere in the publication, one need include only the name.

- By James Dennis

If the item is submitted by a freelancer, a student, faculty or staff member from another department or area of the University or elsewhere, some additional identification should be included at the end of the article.

- By Tamara Phillips (under the headline)
- Tamara Phillips is a third-year history student at York University. (end of article)

Exception: *YFile* puts bylines at the end of articles.

CAMPUSES

The official names of the campuses of York University are:

- Keele Campus (not York campus)
- Glendon Campus
- Hyderabad Campus
- Lillian Meighen Wright Centre (EcoCampus)
- Markham Campus
- Innovation York
- York University-TD Community Engagement Centre
- Miles S. Nadal Management Centre
- Osgoode Professional Development Centre

CAPITALIZATION

York University follows a modified lowercase style. The basic rule is to capitalize all proper names, trade names, government departments and agencies of government, names of centres, departments, Faculties, universities, associations, companies, clubs, religions, languages, nations, races, places and addresses. Otherwise, lowercase is favoured where a reasonable option exists. Uppercase slows down the readability and comprehensibility of a sentence.

This section has been subdivided into sections, including:

[CAPITALIZING ACADEMIC SUBJECTS](#)

[CAPITALIZING DEPARTMENTS AND ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS](#)

[CAPITALIZING GOVERNMENT](#)

[CAPITALIZING JOB TITLES](#)

[CAPITALIZING TITLES OF WORKS OF ART](#)

[CAPITALIZING – OTHER](#)

The Canadian Press Caps and Spelling should be used for other items.

CAPITALIZING ACADEMIC SUBJECTS

In **general** use, subjects should be listed in **lowercase**.

- She is majoring in geography.
- He enjoys his mathematics course.

Exception: When you are describing a subject that is also a **language, culture or religion**, capitalize it.

- She is an English major.
- He is doing well in his Spanish course.
- York is one of the few universities in the country to offer Jewish studies.

When a subject is being described by its **official or short-form name, course or program title**, it should be capitalized.

- She teaches in the Department of Geography at York.
- He is taking a course called Elements of Discrete Mathematics.
- Space & Communications Science is one of the specialized streams of study within Earth & Atmospheric Science.

CAPITALIZING DEPARTMENTS AND ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS

Words such as department, division, centre and program are only capitalized when they are part of a formal or informal name. Proper names, titles of programs, names of Faculties, colleges and departments may be capitalized in the first reference but can be shortened and lowercased for subsequent reference.

First Reference	Subsequent References
the Division of Humanities or the Humanities Division	the division
the Department of Dance or the Dance Department	the department
Calumet College or Calumet	the college
the University Board of Governors or York University Board of Governors	the board or University Board of Governors
University Senate	the senate

Lowercase should be used when the **context is general, or in the second and subsequent references** to a department, college or body **whose full name has already been given**.

- The **humanities** courses are popular among undergraduate students.
- All **departments** must submit their budget projections next week.

- The **Department of Dance** (uppercase on first reference) is part of the School of the Arts, Media, Performance & Design.
- The **Dance Department** is unique in Canada. The **department** offers a wide range of courses related to different periods in dance history. (Lowercase in all subsequent references where it is clear which department is being discussed and where no other departments are mentioned in the same context.)
- **Calumet College** is located at the west end of the campus. (Uppercase on first reference.) The **college's** mandate is technology and the arts. (Lowercase on second and subsequent references.)
- The **York University Board of Governors** held its first annual meeting. **The board** meeting ended at 7 p.m.

In plural use, when more than one department or division is being described, use lowercase for the common noun.

- The **departments** of History and Political Science both offer ...

Exceptions:

Faculty

In the case of the word **Faculty**, where there are two meanings, use the uppercase **Faculty** when you mean the academic division. When you mean a **group of professors**, use the lowercase: the **faculty**.

- The **Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies** is the largest at York. The **Faculty** offers a wide range of courses in many subject areas.
- The York **faculty union** is YUFA.

University

When referring to **York**, or when York University is implied, the U is always capitalized, even in subsequent references.

- The **University** is located in Toronto.

The u is lowercased when referring to another university or universities in general.

- York University scientists attended a symposium at the University of Hong Kong. They said the **university** hosting the event was well equipped. (Refers to U of HK.)
- The **university** today faces the challenge of declining government funds and escalating costs. (Refers to universities in general.)

The **u** is always lowercase in the plural, when more than one university is mentioned, including York University.

- Rutgers, Yale and York **universities** were well represented at the conference.

Note: When a phrase refers to an administrative unit, it should be capitalized. When it refers to an individual’s title, it should be lowercased. (See [CAPITALIZING JOB TITLES](#) section.)

- **The Vice-President Advancement** produces the annual PBA document.
- **The vice-president advancement** chaired the meeting.

CAPITALIZING GOVERNMENT

Capitalize specific international, national and provincial government **departments, ministries, agencies, boards** etc., including short forms of the proper name.

- Ontario Ministry of Education
- B.C. Highways Ministry
- Canada Post Corp. (on first reference), Canada Post (on subsequent references)
- Liquor Control Board of Ontario

Capitalize cabinet portfolios only as part of a title directly preceding a name.

- **Health Minister** Georgia Pape

but

- Georgia Pape, **federal minister of health**

Lowercase the cabinet member’s title in subsequent reference and when it **stands alone**.

- Finance Minister Bernard Hannon addressed the House of Commons yesterday. The **finance minister** spoke again about the budget he released last week.

Capitalize descriptions of the department or ministry that **refer to their proper name**, even when they stand alone.

- The cuts will affect **Justice** and **Communications**.
- Over 25 years, she worked in **Archives, Housing** and **Natural Resources**.

Lowercase common nouns related to government ministries standing alone and in a group (plural references), and in subsequent references.

- the **department**, a **ministry** spokesperson, **board** members, the **authority**
- the **departments** of Justice and Defence

CAPITALIZING JOB TITLES

Capitalize **formal titles** – academic titles and those that are an integral part of a person’s identity – **when they directly precede the name**.

- York University **President and Vice-Chancellor** Rhonda L. Lenton
- **Vice-President Academic and Provost** Lisa Philipps
- **Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies Dean** Ananya Mukherjee-Reed
- **President Emeritus** Jeffrey Davis is a member of the York University Founders Honour Society.

When the title comes after the name, it should be lowercased (with the exception of the title “**Chair**”).

- Rhonda L. Lenton, **president and vice-chancellor** of York University
- Lisa Philipps, **vice-president academic and provost**
- Ananya Mukherjee-Reed, **dean** of the Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies
- Marshall McCall, **Chair** of the Department of Physics & Astronomy
- Murray G. Ross, founding **president emeritus** of York University

When the title is written without the name, it should be lowercased (with the exception of the title “**Chair**”).

- The **president** made a speech to the senate.
- The **dean** spoke to the new students for the first time.

An exception to the above rules are the honorific titles **Distinguished Research Professor** and **University Professor**, which are always capitalized, even after a name.

When combining a job title with an academic subject, the subject or program should not be capitalized.

- Adrienne Jones, **professor of physics**, led the seminar.

After the full name and title have been given once, use only the surname in subsequent references.

- **York University President Rhonda L. Lenton** addressed the Canadian Club last week. In her speech, **Lenton** described her university sector experience, both as an administrator and as a former student.
- **Professor Robert Darnell** is teaching an undergraduate psychology course. **Darnell** is a visiting lecturer from Australia.

Chair – always capitalize Chair when you are referring to **someone’s title** to distinguish it from other meanings.

- The **Chair** of the board of governors officially opens the meetings.
- A new **Chair** of the Philosophy Department was appointed.

But lowercase it when you are using it as a verb.

- He **chaired** the meeting.
- He will **chair** this important meeting.

Lowercase **occupational titles**. Titles of officials of companies, unions, political organizations and the like are also lowercased.

- Widget president Barbara Sansom, CAW secretary Margaret Wilson, defenceman Patrick Keenan, general manager Art Simpson, commissioner Bert Nobby, coach Guy Lebrun, astronaut John Young

Note: When a phrase refers to an administrative unit it should be capitalized. When it refers to an individual’s title it should be lowercased. (See the [CAPITALIZING DEPARTMENTS AND ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS](#) section.)

- **The Vice-President University Advancement** produces the annual PBA document.
- **The vice-president university advancement** chaired the meeting.

(See *The Canadian Press Stylebook* for more information on titles.)

CAPITALIZING TITLES OF WORKS OF ART

In titles of plays, books etc., capitalize the first and last words and all nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs and adjectives. Avoid capitalizing the prepositions, conjunctions and articles, unless they are the first or last word of the title.

- *The Merchant of Venice*
- *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*
- *To the Lighthouse*
- *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

CAPITALIZING – OTHER

Fellow

Capitalize Fellow when referring to academic titles.

- York University has many **Fellows** of the Royal Society of Canada.
- She is the senior **Fellow** in the residence.

Honours

When one is referring to a **title or degree**, always capitalize the H.

- The **Specialized Honours** program is very attractive to students.
- He earned a **BA (Honours)** in philosophy.

When referring to someone being “honoured” with an award, use the **lower case**.

- Professor Manbeck was **honoured** by the Canadian Psychological Association.

Names of Races

Capitalize the **proper names** of nationalities, peoples, races and tribes.

- Indigenous Peoples, Arab, Caucasian, French-Canadian, Inuit, Latin, Asian, Cree etc.

The

The word “the” is capitalized at the start of titles of books, magazines, movies, TV programs, songs, paintings and other compositions.

“The” is not capitalized at the start of names of such works as almanacs, the Bible, directories, encyclopedias and handbooks.

When “the” is capitalized in a geographical name, retain the capitalization: The Pas, The Hague, El Salvador. But the Netherlands, the Congo.

For consistency, lowercase “the” in all other names: companies, associations, institutions, newspapers, documents, laws, awards, ships, trains, nicknames, rock groups and so on.

COLONS

Use a colon, rather than a comma, to introduce a direct quotation longer than a short sentence.

Use a colon to introduce a list, an example or a question.

Use colons in question-and-answer formats and for interviews. Quotation marks are not used.

Generally, do not capitalize the first letter of a sentence that follows a colon, unless it’s a word that would always be capitalized or emphasis is desirable.

COMMAS

In a **series**, place commas after each item **but not before the final “and.”**

- books, pencils and rulers

In a **quotation**, commas and periods always go inside quotation marks; colons and semicolons outside. The question mark and exclamation mark go inside the quotations when they apply to the quoted matter only; outside when they apply to the entire sentence. (See the [QUOTATIONS](#) section.)

- “We need to recruit the best students we possibly can,” he said.
- The Registrar’s Office announced that the changes would be “retroactive.”

With a **long descriptive title**, put commas after the name and job description.

- EJ Janse van Rensburg, interim dean of the Faculty of Science, spoke at the meeting.
- Patrice Blanchard, federal minister of immigration, visited York.

With **degrees and long descriptive phrases**, put a comma between the name, the degree and the phrase.

- George Nelson, BA, MA, PhD, won a gold medal.
- Alice Johnson, PhD, a pioneer in genetic engineering, is a York graduate.

When writing a **specific date that includes the day of the week**, put a comma between the weekday and the month.

- Friday, Aug. 5

If **abbreviating the weekday** (but avoid), remove the comma.

- Fri. Aug. 5

Use a **comma before a list beginning in e.g. but not before etc. at the end of a list.**

- The walls were painted in a variety of colours, **e.g.** blue, green, peach, ivory **etc.**
- The abbreviated form *ibid.* is in more general use in bibliographies **etc.**

Use a **comma before a list or clause beginning with i.e.**

- Abbreviations are helpful when taking notes in a lecture, **i.e.** they can save you time and space.

COVID-19

An **epidemic** occurs when a disease moves rapidly among a specific region or population, while a **pandemic** indicates a wider spread, typically among countries and continents.

Avoid both unless and until they are declared by public health authorities. And don't write "global pandemic" – it's redundant.

SARS-CoV-2 is the virus; **COVID-19** is the disease it causes. It is acceptable to use **COVID** (dropping the "-19") when referring to the disease.

With variants, avoid stigmatizing regions or countries. **Not:** the Brazil variant; **instead:** the variant first detected in Brazil.

Greek names for variants are capitalized. Example: the Delta variant.

Other notes:

- Active cases represent the currently sick vs. total cases
- Isolation (those in hospital) vs. quarantine
- Resist referring to "**physical distancing**" as "social distancing"

Use **variants of concern** for those that are identified as dangerous; **use variants of interest** for those that are being monitored for potential danger. Avoid using abbreviations VOCs and VOIs.

The use of "**anti-vaxxer**" is generally not recommended. It is a colloquial term for someone opposed to vaccines. Avoid unless in a quote. Preferred language is person(s) opposed to vaccines or vaccinations.

DASHES

The dash should not be confused with the hyphen. A hyphen is used to break a word over two lines, or to join two compound words.

At York, we do not use the em-dash (long dash). For typesetting purposes, we use the en-dash (middle-length dash) as an em-dash, to set off mid-sentence lists or explanations. This dash can be used **instead of a pair of commas, or instead of a colon**.

- ABE York – an organization that promotes the rights of students with disabilities – is hosting the event.
or
- ABE York, an organization that promotes the rights of students with disabilities, is hosting the event.

Anything that would typically require an en-dash (joining inclusive numerals, attaching a prefix or a suffix to an unhyphenated compound or joining the names of two or more places) will get a hyphen instead.

Use **dashes to set lists apart** from the rest of the sentence.

- The visitors will discuss common problems – trade, tourism, immigration and defence – before the conference is over.

Use dashes when commas (generally preferable) would create confusion.

- The pies – meat and fruit – were cheap.

Use a dash to mark a sharp break in a word or sentence.

- "I've been laughed at, ignored – but I'm boring you."

Write dashes with a space before and after.

DATES AND TIMES

Write **specific dates** within the body of a text as follows, abbreviating the month.

- Saturday, Sept. 19, 2018

When writing specific dates, omit the year when referring to the year we're in.

- Wednesday, Nov. 25

Do not change the order of construction, e.g. do not use "Saturday, 19 Sept."

For dates that are **distant**, omit the weekday.

- Feb. 20, 2025

Note: The months of **March, April, May, June** and **July** are never abbreviated because the words are so short. They are instead written out in full.

- May 9, 1985
- Thursday, July 3, 1997

Don't use ordinal indicators (the suffixes *-st*, *-nd*, *-rd*, *-th*) when writing dates.

- Oct. 12 not Oct. 12th or Oct. 12th

(See the [ORDINAL INDICATORS / SUPERScript](#) section.)

When writing **approximate dates** within the body of a text, spell out the month in full.

- during December (month only)

Avoid commas when you are referring to a specific month within a specific year.

- Starting in **September 1999** (no comma, month spelled out in full, year listed numerically.)
- The target for completion of the project is **August 1999**.

Use commas when you are referring to a specific month, day and year within a sentence.

- Oct. 1, 2012, was a Friday. January 2015 was wet.

When writing about **decades**, use numbers.

- the 1920s, the 1980s, the '80s, the mid-1960s, the mid-'60s

When writing about **periods of time over years**, a hyphen is used to connect dates except when preceded by "from" or "between."

- the 1982-83 tax year, from January to May (not from January-May), between 1970 and 1976 (not between 1970-76)

Note: Don't drop the first two digits if the numbers are not the same: 1998-99, but 1998-2002.

When writing about **centuries**, as with numbers **spell out the first nine as words, and use digits for 10 and above**.

- the fifth century
- the 19th century

Hours are written numerically with no zeros.

- 9 a.m. (not 9:00 a.m.)
- 11 p.m. (but 11:45 p.m.)
- noon (not 12 noon. The 12 is redundant.)

A **range of times** is written using the word "**to**" in text, but with a **hyphen** in tables.

- The reception is scheduled from 8 **to** 11 p.m.
- Reception, 8-11 p.m.

Note: The above rules for dates and times apply within the body of text. In **calendars, tables, forms or graphs** where space is extremely tight, short forms and figures can be used.

- Nov. '98
- Dec. '98
- Jan. '99

DEGREES

It is acceptable to spell out the degree or to abbreviate it, depending on the context. When **describing and spelling out** a degree, use **lowercase and apostrophes**.

- There are many baccalaureate degrees.
- He earned a bachelor’s degree in physics.
- She is working towards a master’s degree.
- She has a bachelor of arts degree in English.
- The Faculty of Graduate Studies conferred 97 master’s degrees in the fall convocation.

When **abbreviating** a degree, omit periods and punctuation marks.

- BA, MA, PhD, LLB, LLD, LLM, DJur, DLitt, BJ, BSc, MES, MSW

Within the body of a text, details of a degree may be written out as follows:

- Dale Smith earned her BA (Honours) in history.
- Judy Shreiber graduated with a master’s degree last year.

Within a graduate profile, shorten degree information as much as possible, including the year of graduation.

- Dale Smith (BA Hons. ’79) now works in Guam as a consultant.
- July Shreiber (MA ’98) is now pursuing doctoral work at Harvard University.

When using **articles** with degrees, use the article appropriate when pronouncing the abbreviation.

- **an MA** in political science (not a MA)
- **an MSc** in theoretical physics (not a MSc)
- **a BA** in philosophy

Honorary degrees should follow the same rules as above. When abbreviating an honorary degree, use Hon.

- Indigenous law scholar John Borrows was recognized with an **honorary doctor of laws** degree from York University on June 22.

- John Borrows (LLD [Hon.]) spoke at the convocation ceremony last night.
- John Borrows, LLD (Hon.), spoke at the convocation ceremony last night.

ELLIPSES

Also known as dot, dot, dot or ...

Three periods (...) comprise an ellipsis, with the addition of a fourth period to end a sentence. Ellipses are used to indicate omission of text. Put spaces before and after the periods.

- In her letter of nomination, Prof. McDougall wrote, “Lynda Hoffer is one of the most exceptional chemistry students I have ever had ... exhibiting a keen love of learning.”
- In condensing text, use an ellipsis at the beginning, inside or at the end of a sentence. If it is at the end, put the punctuation before the ellipsis. Hence four periods ends a sentence.
 - ♦ “The decision is clear.... The elected representatives have reached a consensus.”
 - ♦ “What is the answer?... We must strive harder.”

EMERITUS

- emeritus (masculine)
- emerita (feminine)
- emeriti (plural)

(See the [CAPITALIZING JOB TITLES](#) section.)

FACULTY / FACULTIES

(See the [CAPITALIZATION](#) section.)

GRANT AGENCIES

- Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)
- Natural Sciences & Engineering Council of Canada (NSERC)
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)

HYPHENS

Use a hyphen when you join two words to form an adjective. This eliminates confusion.

- first-year course
- full-time equivalent
- third-year students
- part-time studies
- the government-mandated budget cut

Don't use a hyphen when the meaning is clear and there is no ambiguity.

- one half course
- a full course
- one half of the students

A hyphen should not be used to join a prefix to a root/base except to avoid doubling a vowel, tripling a consonant, duplicating a prefix or when the context is confusing or causes ambiguity.

- antibiotic

- antivirus
- antiwar

but

- anti-inflation
- anti-intellectual
- anti-ageism
- anti-racism
- anti-Semitic

Use a hyphen with the prefix *re-* where the word would otherwise be confusing.

- re-entry
- re-coiled the rope (as opposed to recoiled in horror)
- re-covered a chair (as opposed to recovered from an illness)
- re-examine

Adverbs ending in *-ly* are not followed by a hyphen. The *-ly* alerts readers that the word that follows is modified: a brightly lit room, an eagerly awaited speech.

ITALICS

Italicize the titles of books, journals, periodicals, newspapers, pamphlets, proceedings, collections, theses, dissertations, plays, movies, operas, oratorios, paintings, drawings, sculptures and other works of art.

- Margaret Atwood's novel *Alias Grace*
- Jack Granatstein's book *Who Killed Canadian History?*
- the *Toronto Star*, the *Globe and Mail*, the *Edmonton Journal*, the *Toronto Sun* (**Note:** When the full title is not used, "the Sun" it is not italicized.)
- Some of the publications produced at York University include: *Canada Watch*, produced by the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies; *Canadian Woman Studies*, produced by the Centre for Feminist Research; and *The York University Magazine*, published by the Department of Strategic Communications.
- William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*

- Frank Capra’s movie *It’s a Wonderful Life*, starring James Stewart
- Handel’s *Messiah*
- Rodin’s sculpture *The Thinker*
- *Voice of Fire*, a painting by Barnett Newman
- Ralph Beninger’s dissertation is titled *Freud: The Dream Maker*.

Note: When it comes to **poetry**, only epic poems are italicized. Regular short poems are set in **quotation marks** in the usual roman type.

- Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (an epic poem) was written well after “On His Blindness” (a short poem).

Do not italicize titles of articles, chapters in books, short stories, regular poems, radio and television programs, lectures, papers read at meetings, manuscripts in collections. Instead, **type them in roman type and set them inside quotation marks**.

- Peter Gzowski hosted his last episode of “Morningside” in 1997.
- “My Son at the Seashore, Age Two” is one of the poems in the collection *Forests of the Medieval World* by York Professor Don Coles.
- CBC Television’s program “This Hour Has 22 Minutes” is enormously popular.

Do not italicize songs, ships, aircraft or trains. **Set in roman type and capitalize initials**.

- The song Sudbury Saturday Night is a classic by Stompin’ Tom Connors.
- The staff party will take place on the Empire Sandy, which is docked at the foot of Bay Street.

Italicize foreign words and phrases, including Latin phrases.

- Staff members gathered to say *grazie* and *obrigado* to the governments of Italy and Portugal for funding scholarships at York.
- He received a doctor of laws *honoris causa* from York University.
- York’s motto is *tentanda via*. (**Note:** Do not capitalize the first letter, except at the beginning of a sentence.)

LISTS: BULLETS, NUMBERING ETC.

There are three basic types of lists:

1. lists that contain only a few words in each item, not containing a full verb phrase;
2. lists of items that combine to form one giant sentence, each item completing the partial sentence interrupted by a semicolon; and
3. lists of items that are each at least one independent sentence.

Bullets are preferred, except when the items in the list are to give the basic points that will be explained later in full. In this second case numbers or letters can be used, which will also be re-used consistently within the body where the explanation/expansion of each appears.

Type 1 – must be introduced by a grammatically complete sentence that introduces the coming list of nouns, noun phrases etc. Items are brief, of only a few words (not a clause containing a verb). Each item begins with a lowercase letter and no punctuation follows.

- York University has introduced several new programs for the academic year 1999-2000:
 - ♦ information technology
 - ♦ business and society
 - ♦ business economics
 - ♦ international studies

Type 2 – must be introduced by a grammatically incomplete sentence, and all items end with a semicolon except the final one, which has a period to end the sentence.

- The students demanded that the government:
 - ♦ take steps to end corruption among party officials;
 - ♦ institute political reforms leading to more democracy and less authoritarianism; and
 - ♦ end martial law in the capital.

Type 3 – must be introduced by a grammatically complete sentence, often containing an anticipatory word tipping off the reader that a list is to follow.

- The students made these demands:

- The students listed several demands:
- The students presented a long list of objectives:

These items are each at least one complete sentence. They can contain more than one sentence, but cannot run more than one paragraph, except possibly the final one. Each item begins with an uppercase letter and ends with a period.

- The students demanded the following of the government:
 - ♦ A meeting will be arranged between the student executive and the administration within the next two months.
 - ♦ Faculty and student executives will co-ordinate bimonthly meetings to continue developing funding initiatives.

Note: If the items are each too long and/or too complicated to match with either Type 2 or 3, the information is not suitable for bullets or numbered lists.

When to use bullets, numbers and letters:

- Each item should be identified with a number if the list is introduced with a phrase such as: “There are three reasons...”
- Items should be identified with numbers or letters if they will be expanded on and referred to in the text following. They must be consistent and clear when referencing the items given earlier.
- For all other occasions, bullets should be used to identify each item.

METRIC

The names of metric units are usually **spelled out**.

- a **20-kilogram** sack, not a 20-kg sack
- he ran **10 kilometres**, not he ran 10 km

There are no abbreviations in metric, only symbols. These symbols take periods only at the end of a sentence, never take an s in the plural and are separated from a number by a space. Metre is m, kilometre is km, kilogram is kg, Celsius is C, metric tonne is t, hour is h. Only Celsius is capitalized as C.

- He drove **10 km** to the store.
- The weather was a sunny **23 C** on Wednesday.

Use a hyphen when indicating a metric quantity as an adjective.

- a 10-kilogram sack

C (for Celsius) can be used on first reference. Other common symbols such as km/h, mm and KB should be written out on first reference but may be used on second reference when preceded by a number at 70 km/h, a 105-mm cannon, a 112-KB file.

A number less than one has a zero before the decimal.

Symbols may be used in charts, graphics, tables and the like, as well as in coverage of certain sports.

NUMBERS

Write the numbers **one to nine as words**. The same goes for **first to ninth**.

Write the numbers **10 and up as numerical figures**.

- 3,500 26 99th 10th

When the number is four digits or longer, separate with commas rather than spaces or periods.

- **100,000** not 100 000 or 100.000
- There are **1,200** students.
- a **\$430,000** grant

For **large numbers**, it is better to use words or a combination of words and numbers. **Write 1.4 million** rather than 1,400,000. Write **one million** rather than 1,000,000.

For the **plural of numbers**, including decades, **do not use an apostrophe** before the s.

- The 1960s were exciting.
- Give me all the 10s and 20s.

For numbers in official names, follow the organization's spelling style: 7Up

Do not use commas with dimensions, measurements and weights consisting of two or more elements.

- a woman is five feet 11 inches tall
- a trip of six months three weeks two days
- in two hours 21 minutes 45 seconds

When to use figures:

- in addresses, in ages standing alone after a name, in dates and years, in decisions, rulings, scores, votes and odds, in monetary units preceded by a symbol, in temperatures, in times, for latitude and longitude.

When to spell out:

- at the start of a sentence, if you must start with a number.

(For percentages, see the [SPELLING](#) section.)

ORDINAL INDICATORS / SUPERSCRRIPT

Don't use ordinal indicators (the suffixes *-st*, *-nd*, *-rd*, *-th*) when writing dates.

- Oct. 12 not Oct. 12th or Oct. 12th

Spell out if below 10.

- She placed eighth in the spelling bee.
- He finished 15th in the race.

Don't use superscript unless as a design element.

- 24th not 24th

PROFESSOR

For **captions or headings**, abbreviate the word professor.

- **Prof. Gord Bennett** named to the Order of Canada
- Three **York University profs** appointed to the Order of Canada

In text, spell out the title in the first reference. Use the last name without the title in subsequent references.

- **Professor Karen Gough** was honoured by the Canadian Psychological Association. **Gough** has been teaching at York for many years.

When the word is used **descriptively** (following a name, preceding a field of study or as a common noun) **do not capitalize and do not use period for abbreviation.**

- Gord Bennett, a **professor** of chemistry, was named to the Order of Canada.
- The **professors** met each week.
- Karen Gough has been a **professor** of biology for eight years.

(See the [CAPITALIZING JOB TITLES](#) section.)

Use the term lecturer if appropriate, **but do not distinguish between assistant professors, associate professors and full professors** unless it is relevant to the story. Faculty members are treated equally within a story, even if Professor Jones has full tenure, Professor Smith is an associate professor and Professor Johnson is an assistant professor.

- **Professors** Jones, Smith and Johnson spoke at the symposium.

PUNCTUATION

With a **short series** (list), use commas. However, do not use a comma before the final conjunction unless that avoids confusion.

- Students will need compasses, rulers and calculators.

With a **long or complex series** (list), use semicolons.

- His main research areas include: 20th-century literature and criticism; aesthetics of criticism in the postmodern era; deconstructionist criticism and French literature; and theatre history for set designers.

(See the [COMMAS](#) and [LISTS](#) sections.)

QUOTATIONS

Always use double quotation marks for speech except in headlines and quotes within a quote.

Double quotation marks frame direct quotes. Anything inside them is assumed to be exactly what was said or written. Anything else inserted for clarification or explanation should be framed in square brackets. (See the [BRACKETS](#) section.)

- He said, “We are working to improve it [the curriculum] over the summer.”
- Periods and commas always go inside closing quotation marks; colons and semicolons go outside. The question mark and exclamation mark go inside the quote marks when they apply to the quoted matter only, and outside when they apply to the entire sentence.

Single quotation marks indicate a quote or saying within a direct quotation.

- “I don’t want the phrase ‘Those who can, do, and those who can’t, teach,’ to be seen to apply to the Faculty of Fine Arts,” said the new dean.
- Do not use quotation marks to enclose slogans and headlines.
- Do not use quotation marks around single letters.
- When a sentence ends with single and double quotation marks, separate them by a space.

RESEARCH CENTRES

Here are the official names of the research centres at York:

- Centre for Atmospheric Chemistry
- York Centre for Feminist Research
- York Collegium for Practical Ethics (YCPE)
- York Centre for Public Policy & Law
- Centre for Refugee Studies
- Centre for Research in Earth & Space Science (GRESS)
- Centre for Research on Latin America & the Caribbean (CERLAC)
- Centre for Research in Mass Spectrometry
- Centre for Research on Work & Society (CRWS)
- Jack and Mae Nathanson Centre on Transnational Human Rights, Crime & Security
- Centre for Vision Research
- Institute for Social Research
- LaMarsh Centre for Child & Youth Research
- Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies
- Centre for Automotive Research
- Israel & Golda Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies
- Innovation Computing @ Lassonde
- Centre for Research on Biomolecular Interactions
- Centre for Research on Language & Culture Contact
- The City Institute at York University
- Dahdaleh Institute for Global Health Research
- Global Labour Research Centre
- Harriet Tubman Institute for Research on Africa & its Diasporas
- Institute for Research on Digital Learning
- Muscle Health Research Centre
- Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies
- Rob and Cheryl McEwen Graduate Study & Research Building
- Sensorium: The Centre for Digital Arts & Technology
- York Centre for Asian Research
- York Centre for Field Robotics
- YorkU Centre for Aging Research & Education (YU-CARE)

SEMICOLONS

Use a semicolon to separate statements too closely related to stand as separate sentences.

Use a semicolon to separate phrases that contain commas.

Use a semicolon to precede explanatory phrases introduced by “for example,” “namely,” “that is” and the like when a comma is too weak.

Semicolons go outside quotation marks.

SENSITIVE SUBJECTS AND PREFERRED LANGUAGE

As society develops, preferred language around sensitive subjects evolves with it. Age, race, sex, disabilities, religion and more are sometimes pertinent in communications but must be handled thoughtfully. The following suggestions are currently appropriate. They may not have been acceptable in the past, nor may they remain the best usage in the future.

Addiction and Dependence

Use person-forward language to de-emphasize the condition and to reduce stigmas and negative characterizations.

Addiction: treatable disease, causing compulsive yet self-destructive behaviour (substance abuse disorder)

Dependence: physical or mental, often a symptom of addiction, which usually involves both

Do not use pejoratives like “a junkie,” “a crackhead” or “a drunk,” and don’t independently characterize the condition as a problem or the behaviour as abuse. Risky, heavy, excessive and unhealthy are all permissible, and misuse can be suitable in circumstances involving prescribed medications.

Example: **Alcoholism** is acceptable for an addiction to alcohol, but don't call someone an alcoholic. Words like **user**, **addict** and **abuser** are best avoided unless a person self-identifies on the record as such.

Age and Long-Term Care

Often age is relevant as part of a personal description or for identification but should be used only if relevant. In general, give a person's age rather than imprecise and possibly derogatory terms such as senior citizen, retiree, elderly or middle-aged. When a precise age is unavailable:

Avoid euphemisms such as: senior citizen, retiree, elderly, middle-aged

Instead use: older adult

Take care to avoid stigmatizing individuals live in long-term care homes:

Avoid: patients in long-term care facilities/institutions

Instead use: residents in long-term care homes

Disability

When talking about people with **disabilities**, mention the disability only if it is relevant. If uncertain what term to use, ask the individual his or her preference. Be accurate, clear and sensitive when describing a person with a disability, handicap, illness or disease. Use people-first approach: unless a person declares otherwise, don't define a person by their disability.

Preferred language: A woman with autism

Avoid using (unless stated as preferred): An autistic woman

Lowercase **deaf** or capitalize **Deaf** depends on subject's preference (e.g. Deaf culture)

Don't presume suffering and **avoid the use of emotional descriptives**, such as "afflicted," "stricken" and "confined." The rule of thumb is: put the person before the disability. Use "persons with disabilities", "people with disabilities" etc., rather than "the disabled" or "the handicapped."

Note: "disability" is the correct term when referring to the Ontario Human Rights Code. The code prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability.

Avoid cliches: Fell on deaf ears, turned a blind eye, etc.

Learn the preferences of your sources and subjects and proceed accordingly.

Race and Ethnicity

Identify a person by race, colour, national origin or immigration status only when it is truly pertinent to the story. Coverage that deals with matters of race must reflect and showcase the ethnic diversity of the country in a natural, organic way that is free of bias.

Updates (2022) to CP Style include:

- **French Canadian:** Joint nationalities/identities are no longer hyphenated
- **Antisemitism, antisemitic:** No hyphen, no capital S
- **BIPOC:** Resist the abbreviation, but if unavoidable, explain it: Black, Indigenous and people of colour.

Take care when writing about diverse communities to avoid "othering" – fostering the implicit sense that a person or group is extrinsically different or doesn't belong. For instance:

Not: Iranian Canadian community in mourning after plane crash

But: Canadians with loved ones in Iran grieve crash victims

Capitalization of Black:

- Use Black as a proper name for a person's race
- However, white remains lowercase because: that group lacks a similar shared culture and experience
- The broad term brown remains lowercase and is best avoided except in a quote

Avoid equating bad, depressing or negative things with Blackness. For example, avoid such terms as:

- a black mood
- blackball
- blackmail
- black magic
- black market
- black sheep
- a dark/black day
- a black heart

- blacklisted
- the pot calling the kettle black

Indigenous Peoples

In Canada there are three distinct Indigenous groups under Sec. 35 of the Constitution: **First Nations, Inuit** and **Métis**. CP outlines the preference for **Indigenous people** when speaking about these groups collectively. **Indigenous Peoples** is also accepted as a term that includes all First Nations, Inuit and Métis in Canada. The word Indigenous is capitalized in all references.

Avoid stereotypes, generalizations or assumptions about ethnic or racial groups.

Respect labels preferred by specific racial or ethnic groups and only use if necessary. For example:

- Black peoples
- people of African descent
- Africans
- First Nation peoples
- Aboriginal peoples
- South Asian
- East Asian
- South East Asian
- Middle Eastern
- North African

Avoid using phrases such as “on the warpath,” “Indian giver” etc.

Avoid using words like “gestapo,” “concentration camp” and “Hitler” casually. Try to use these words only in reference to the Second World War.

Gender

Avoid male or female pronouns when referring to groups composed of both men and women or of unspecified gender. Also try to avoid the use of word combinations such as him and her, his/her, and s/he. Use of the plural form of the noun with the relevant pronoun is often the simplest way to avoid sexist language. There are many alternatives to gender-biased language.

See also *Talking Gender* by Ruth King et al., and *Handbook of Nonsexist Writing* by Casey Miller and Kate Swift.

- Chris Ratchford is the Chair (not Chairman) of the board of governors.
- Professor Latimer worked in the fishing industry (not was a fisherman) before deciding on an academic career.

When referring to two groups of opposite sexes, use **parallel language**.

- men and women/husband and wife (not man and wife)
- men’s and women’s varsity basketball teams (not men’s and girls’)

Unless the role of wife, mother, sister or daughter is important to the context, avoid identifying women in these terms. Marital status should also not be noted, unless pertinent. Gender neutral terms for marital status include partner, spouse, significant other.

Gender Identity / Expression

- **Transgender (not “transgendered” or “trans”)**: an individual whose own personal sense of their gender does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Avoid using “trans” except in a direct quote.
- **Transsexual**: clinically defined as someone who identifies as a member of the sex opposite to that assigned at birth and seeks to transition to the gender with which they identify, often with medical assistance.
- **Non-binary/gender non-conforming/genderqueer**: Use such lesser-known terms advisedly and always with a definition.
- **Two-spirit (not “two-spirited”)**: often used to represent various gender identities and sexual orientations within the Indigenous community. It is a broad term with numerous definitions. Seek clarity from the subject before using this term.
- **Cisgender**: an individual whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth.

Whenever possible, confirm with the person being written about how they wish to be described, including their pronouns.

Physical descriptions should not be included unless they are relevant to the story. Neither men nor women should be stereotyped. For instance, avoid describing women only in terms of physical attributes if men are described by mental attributes or career status.

Don't write:

- James Carrera is a respected geologist, and his wife Anna is a striking blonde.

Rather, write:

- Both the Carreras are highly respected in their fields. Anna is a well-known musician and James is a respected geologist.

Avoid stereotyping careers or jobs.

Don't write:

- Housewives are paying more.

Write:

- Shoppers are paying more.

Depict men and women equally in terms of physical prowess or mental ability. Don't automatically ascribe particular emotions or feelings to women and actions to men, or vice versa; men can be sensitive and women physically active. Depict men and women equally in the workplace.

Sexual Orientation

- A person's sexual orientation should never be mentioned unless relevant to the story.
- There are common acronyms that refer to sexually diverse communities, including LGBTQI+. Ensure you are accurately representing the community and including explanations when using acronyms.
- Don't use "gay" as a noun.
- Use "sexual orientation," not "sexual preference."

Commonly used words to avoid and suggested alternatives

Avoid: blackball

Alternatives: ostracize, disapprove, reject

Avoid: blacklist

Alternatives: condemn, ostracize, boycott

Avoid: blackmail

Alternatives: extort, threaten, demand

Avoid: black sheep

Alternatives: reprobate, backslider

Avoid: black market

Alternatives: underground economy, deals on the side

Avoid: businessman

Alternatives: business person

Avoid: chairman

Alternatives: Chair, co-ordinator, convenor

Avoid: cleaning woman

Alternatives: cleaner

Avoid: clergyman

Alternatives: clergy, deacon, minister, pastor, priest, rabbi

Avoid: coloured people

Alternatives: Black peoples, people of African descent, African people, South Asian peoples

Avoid: common man

Alternatives: average person, members of the public

Avoid: craftsman

Alternatives: artisan, craftsperson

Avoid: crippled

Alternatives: person(s) or people with a disability

Avoid: the disabled

Alternatives: persons or people with disabilities

Avoid: East Indian
Alternatives: South Asian

Avoid: fair sex
Alternatives: women

Avoid: fireman
Alternatives: firefighter

Avoid: forefathers
Alternatives: ancestors

Avoid: gentleman/gentlemen
Alternatives: man/men

Avoid: girl/girls (referring to adult females)
Alternatives: woman/women

Avoid: the handicapped
Alternatives: persons or people with disabilities

Avoid: housewife
Alternatives: homemaker

Avoid: lady/ladies (referring to adult females)
Alternatives: woman/women

Avoid: layman
Alternatives: layperson, average person

Avoid: low man/woman on the totem pole
Alternatives: lowest rung of the ladder

Avoid: man in the street
Alternatives: person in the street, public, member of the public

Avoid: man the phones
Alternatives: staff the phones, handle the phones

Avoid: man hours
Alternatives: working hours

Avoid: manpower
personnel, staff, staffing requirements, workers, workforce

Avoid: mankind
Alternatives: civilization, humanity, people

Avoid: man-made
Alternatives: synthetic, artificial

Avoid: master/mistress of ceremonies
Alternatives: host, MC

Avoid: middleman
Alternatives: wholesaler, go-between

Avoid: newsman
Alternatives: journalist, reporter

Avoid: non-whites
Alternatives: people of colour

Avoid: orientals
Alternatives: Asian peoples, East Asian peoples, Southeast Asian peoples

Avoid: physically challenged
Alternatives: person with a physical disability

Avoid: policeman
Alternatives: officer, police officer

Avoid: postman

Alternatives: postal worker, mail carrier

Avoid: primitive societies

Alternatives: non-industrial societies

Avoid: right-hand man

Alternatives: assistant

Avoid: salesman

Alternatives: clerk, sales rep

Avoid: spokesman spokesperson,

Alternatives: representative, speaker, official

Avoid: stewardess

Alternatives: flight attendant

Avoid: tribes

Alternatives: ethnic groups

Avoid: West Indian

Alternatives: Caribbean

Avoid: wives and children

Alternatives: families/family

Avoid: workman

Alternatives: worker

SPELLING

The following includes words from the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* and *The Canadian Press Caps and Spelling* with troublesome spellings. Also included are some academic words often used at York University.

For anything that is not included below, refer to *The Canadian Press Caps and Spelling* first, followed by the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*.

- 3D (not 3-D)
- Aboriginal (uppercase in all uses; Indigenous preferred)
- Aboriginal Peoples (when referring to all of Canada's Indians, Inuit and Métis)
- abscess
- accommodate
- acknowledgment
- aesthetic
- aging (not ageing)
- allotted
- alumnae – rarely used. (See the [ALUMNI](#) section.)
- alumni – most commonly used. (See the [ALUMNI](#) section.)
- alumna
- alumnus
- analyze
- anoint
- BA
- bachelor's degree
- bachelor's degrees – not bachelors' degrees and not capitalized
- battalion
- benefited
- biannual, biennial, bimonthly, biweekly
- Black – uppercase for race
- board or board of governors – uppercase only when using formal name of the board. (See the [CAPITALIZATION](#) section.)
- BSc

- buoy
- caffeine
- Canada Research Chair
- carburetor
- carry forward – when used as a verb, as in “I will carry forward this item to the next meeting”
- carryforward – when used as a noun, as in “Place this carryforward in column three”
- cemetery
- centre (not center, unless part of a proper name, usually a U.S. organization) – in past tense, centred
- chair – a verb, as in “She will chair the meeting”
- Chair – a noun; when referring to a title, capitalized to avoid confusion with other form of the word. (See the [CAPITALIZATION](#) section.)
- Calumet College - college is capitalized when referring to a specific college. (See the [CAPITALIZATION](#) section.)
- cirrhosis
- co-curricular
- college – in general use. (See the [CAPITALIZATION](#) section.)
- colour, colourize, colourist
- coloration, colorific
- compatible
- confectionery
- connoisseur
- consensus
- co-ordinate
- co-operate
- deductible
- defence – not defense, but defensive
- delicatessen
- deterrent
- dilemma
- disappoint
- DLitt
- doctor of letters, doctor of laws, doctor of medicine – avoid use of Dr. unless chiropractor, physician, psychologist, dentist, optometrist, podiatrist
- doctoral degree – not capitalized
- doctorate – not capitalized
- EcoCampus
- ecstasy
- e.g. – meaning “for example.” Avoid using, but if you must, use a comma before the abbreviation and not after.
- email – not e-mail
- embarrass, embarrassment
- emeritus – masculine. (See the [EMERITUS](#) section.)
- emoji (singular), emojis (plural)
- English – uppercase. (See the [ACADEMIC SUBJECTS](#) section.)
- enrol, enrolled, enrolling, enrolment
- ensure (make sure of) – not insure, except when referring to insurance
- etc. – meaning “and so on”
- faculty – as in, a group of professors, the professoriate
- Faculty – as in, an academic division, the Faculty of Science. (See the [CAPITALIZATION](#) section.)
- favour, favourite, favourable
- Fellow – when referring to an academic Fellow, a Fellow of the Royal Society etc. (See the [CAPITALIZATION](#) section.)
- first-hand
- First Nation(s)
- First World War (not World War I)
- focused, focusing
- fulfil, fulfilled, fulfilment
- full time – as an adverb, e.g. She works here full time (modifies a verb or sentence)
- full-time – as an adjective, e.g. He is a full-time student (modifies a noun)
- fundraiser, fundraising
- gauge
- Glendon, Glendon Campus (not Glendon College)
- Governor General – no hyphen, capitalize in all references to the Canadian incumbent; otherwise only as a title preceding a name
- grey

- harass, harassment
- Harry W. Arthurs Common
- health care (noun), health-care (adjective)
- hemorrhage
- high school (noun), high-school (adjective)
- honour, honourable but honorary and honoree
- Honours BA
- honours degree
- honorary degree
- *honoris causa* – put in italics, indicating Latin words. (See the [ITALICS](#) section.)
- hygiene
- hypocrisy, hypocrite
- idiosyncrasy
- i.e. – meaning “that is to say” (prefer that is). Do not use a comma after the abbreviation.
- impostor
- impresario
- Indigenous (uppercase in all uses)
- infallible
- innocuous
- inoculate, inoculation
- in regard to – not in regards to
- install, installation, installed – but instalment
- instil, instilled
- interdisciplinary – no hyphen
- internet
- Inuit – plural noun and adjective
- Inuk – singular noun and adjective
- iridescent
- jeweller, jewelry
- judgment
- Keele Campus
- khaki
- labour but laborious
- lead – noun, as in “pencil lead” or type of metal
- lead – verb, present tense of “to lead”
- led – verb, past tense of “to lead”
- literature – not a synonym for English (there are many different types of literature)
- library – in general terms, or in subsequent reference
- Library – as in the Scott Library; capitalize on first reference with full name
- licence – noun (as in driver’s licence, fishing licence)
- license – verb (to grant a permit to, to authorize the use of; as in, he is licensed as a chiropractor, the restaurant is licensed to serve alcohol)
- lieutenant
- lieutenant-governor – with hyphen, uppercase only when it precedes a name
- lifelong
- litre or l (no period)
- livestream
- LGBTQI+ – stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning and intersex; OK on first reference
- LL.D: doctor of laws
- LL.B: bachelor of laws
- LL.M: master of laws
- long-standing
- loonie (dollar coin)
- MA: master of arts
- master’s degree – not capitalized
- master’s degrees – not masters’ degrees, and not capitalized
- medallist
- metre or m
- mid-’90s
- midday
- midterm
- midway
- midyear
- mileage (not milage)
- millennium
- MSc (See the [DEGREES](#) section.)

- multilingual – no hyphen
- multidisciplinary
- newsfeed
- non-profit
- numbers – write one through nine as words, depict 10 and up as figures. (See the [NUMBERS](#) section.)
- occurrence
- OK (not okay), OK'd, OK'ing
- online
- organization
- Osgoode Hall Law School – on first reference. In subsequent references use Osgoode or the law school. Don't use Osgoode Hall – it confuses the school with the court in downtown Toronto.
- panel, panellist, panelling
- parallel, paralleled
- paraphernalia
- Parliament – capitalized when referring to the national legislature; not capitalized when referring to provincial or regional legislature
- parliamentary
- Parliament Buildings (Ottawa)
- part time – as an adverb, e.g. She works here part time (modifies a verb or sentence)
- part-time – as an adjective, e.g. He is a part-time student (modifies a noun)
- a part-timer
- pavilion
- perseverance, persevere, persevering
- per cent – spell out, e.g. six per cent increase (no hyphens)
- percentage
- PhD – no periods, stands for doctor of philosophy
- policy-maker
- postdoctoral
- postgraduate
- post-secondary
- pow wow
- practice (noun or adjective)
- practise (verb)
- prerequisite
- prerogative (not perog-)
- Pride (capitalized in all references to LGBTQI+ events and symbols)
- principal – noun or adjective, meaning first in rank or importance, as in the principal of Glendon Campus, the principal investigator in the research project or the principal objective of the union
- Principal – uppercase only when followed by a name, as in Glendon Principal Donald Ipperciel. (See the [CAPITALIZATION](#) section.)
- principle – noun, meaning fundamental truth or law, as in the moral principle or she has no principles
- privilege
- program (not programme), programmer, programming
- Q-and-A, question-and-answer (not Q&A)
- questionnaire
- rarefy, rarefied
- reconnaissance
- restaurateur – note the absence of an n
- resuscitate
- rhythm
- sacrilegious
- Schulich School of Business
- Second World War (not World War II)
- semifinal (but quarter-final)
- Senate – national legislature
- senate – state legislature, in second and subsequent references to the University Senate or general use. (See the [CAPITALIZATION](#) section.)
- shepherd
- siege
- startup (noun and adjective)
- Stong College
- supersede
- surmise
- surprise
- tipi (not teepee), the York Tipi

- textbook
- theatre – not theater (unless part of a proper name, especially in the U.S.)
- theatregoer
- ton (2,000 pounds, U.S. ton) – use in colloquial references like “He weighed a ton”
- long ton (2,240 pounds, British ton)
- tonne (1,000 kilograms or 2,204.62 pounds, a.k.a. metric ton)
- toonie, toonies (\$2 coin)
- trade-off (noun and adjective)
- trade off (verb)
- travel, traveller
- University – referring to York University
- university – referring to all others, or to universities in general. (See the [CAPITALIZATION](#) section.)
- University Board of Governors – in first reference. (See the [CAPITALIZATION](#) section.)
- University Senate – in first reference. (See the [CAPITALIZATION](#) section.)
- U.K. – use periods
- US – use only with dollar figures: US\$550
- U.S. – all other instances
- valour but valorous
- vapour, vapourish but vaporous, vaporize
- versus – use long form in text
- vs. – use short form only in sports schedules and law cases
- Vice-President – capitalize only when it precedes a name, as in Vice-President Advancement Jeff O’Hagan
- vice-president – lowercase in all subsequent references. (See the [CAPITALIZATION](#) section.)
- vigorous, vigour
- web page
- website
- weird
- well-being
- well-known
- world-renowned

- worldwide
- worthwhile
- Yom Kippur
- York University (avoid York U and YorkU; York or the University are OK on second reference only)
- yu link (all lowercase)

Common Problems

- its (possessive pronoun)
 - ♦ The department cut **its** budget.
- it’s contraction / abbreviation for “it is”
 - ♦ **It’s** going to be a busy semester.
- presently
 - ♦ This means **in the future, soon or after a short time**, as in “He will arrive presently.” It should not be used to mean now. (Use **currently** if you mean now.)
- entitle
 - ♦ This means to **give** or to **render**, as in “The claim **entitles** Canadian Indigenous Peoples to fish on the land.” This word should **not be used in reference to a book**, unless one is speaking of the author’s **act of giving** the book a name, as in “He decided to entitle his book *A Life in Progress*.” But the book is **titled** or **called** *A Life in Progress*.
- in regard to – not in regards to
- irregardless
 - ♦ This is not a word; don’t use it. The word is **regardless**.
- “That” versus “which”
 - ♦ Use **that** before a restrictive clause and **which** before everything else. If removing the words that follow would change the meaning of the sentence, use **that**. Otherwise, **which** is fine.
- “Comprise” versus “compose”
 - ♦ To comprise means to contain. Compose means to make up.

TITLES

(For rules on capitalization of titles, see the [CAPITALIZATION](#) section.)

With few exceptions, a title more than two words long should be set off from the name with commas.

- Rhonda L. Lenton, president and vice-chancellor of York University

A title set off from a name by commas is lowercased.

- The president and vice-chancellor, Rhonda L. Lenton, will represent York University at the talks.

Courtesy Titles

Avoid using courtesy titles **Mr.**, **Mrs.**, **Miss** or **Ms.**

Honorific Titles

Honourable, right honourable, excellency etc. are to be avoided, except in formal invitations and direct quotations.

Two exceptions to the above rule are the academic honorific titles Distinguished Research Professor and University Professor, which are always capitalized.

Professional Titles

Use **Dr.** for the following licensed health-care professionals only: chiropractors, physicians, psychologists, dentists, optometrist and podiatrists.

Do not use **Dr.** for people with doctorates outside the health-care field. Instead, list their honorary degree. (See the [DEGREES](#) section.)

UNDERLINING

(See the [ITALICS](#) section.)

WEB ADDRESSES

If providing a web address (URL), omit the “http://” and “www.” Follow uppercase and lowercase exactly.

If a company uses a variation of its internet address as its corporate name, capitalize the first letter, e.g. Amazon.com.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

This guide was last updated on Feb. 1, 2022

Grammar guides:

- quickanddirtytips.com/grammar-girl
- ucl.ac.uk/internet-grammar
- grammarly.com

Plain language reference:

- clad.tcclld.org/ClearLanguageAndDesign