



Olds College

Web Writing Style Guide

September 2009

SPELLING AND OTHER MATTERS OF STYLE

To maintain consistency in web publications at Olds College, our standard reference books will be :

- [The Canadian Style](#)
- [Gage Canadian Dictionary](#)

If a word is not found in CS, we will consult the *Gage Canadian Dictionary*. For scientific and technical words not in *Gage*, check *Webster's International Dictionary*. Nevertheless, where the Web Style Guide disagrees with the listed books, the Web guide will rule.

A

a lot (not alot)

abbreviations (*see also* money; place names)

- In general, abbreviate words only when the short form is instantly recognizable.
- Do not use periods in all-caps abbreviations unless the abbreviation refers to a place or a person.
 - lab, flu, CBC, CP, TV, IBM, MIT, MLA, RCMP, NDP, YMCA, UN, U.S., P.E.I, C.S. Lewis
- When abbreviating the name of a college department, on first usage write the name out in full with the abbreviation following in parentheses. Abbreviations familiar to Olds College people may be unfamiliar to people off campus.
- However, do not include abbreviations in parentheses after a name unless you actually plan to use the abbreviation later on in the piece.
 - Olds College School of Innovation (OCSI), Duncan Marshall Place (DMP)

acknowledgment

acronyms

- Unless they are instantly recognizable, spell out acronyms in full on first use, and indicate the acronym in parentheses. Use acronyms sparingly unless they are better known than the full term.
 - AIDS, CD-ROM, laser, NATO, OAC, OSAP, PAC, scuba, URL
- Do not use periods in acronyms.
- Do not use an apostrophe to form the plural of an acronym.
 - URLs, not URL's

acquire

advertise, advertisement, advertising

advisor, advisory

aesthetic

affect, effect

- affect (v.): to have an effect on or influence; to move emotionally
- effect (n.): the result of an action
- effect (v.): to bring about or accomplish
 - The war affected his view of life, but had no effect on his health. Their mandate is to effect change in the education system.

agribusiness

Alberta government: lowercase government when not part of a formal name, but Government of Alberta

already (beforehand), all ready (set to go)

all right (not alright)

alternate, alternative

- alternate: in turns, first one and then the other
- alternative: providing a choice
 - a day of alternate sunshine and rain; this highway or an alternative route

altogether

alumna (female, sing.); alumnae (female, pl.)

alumnus (male, sing., or neutral); alumni (male, pl., or a mixed group)

amiable: friendly, of people; amicable: friendly, of situations or relationships

- an amiable fellow, an amicable agreement

analysis, analyses

analyze

anesthesia, anesthetic

anyway (*not* anyways)

appendix, appendixes

avocation: a hobby or secondary activity; vocation: a career or calling

B

bachelor degree

a bachelor's degree

Bachelor of Applied Science

barbecue

barbecuing

behaviour

benefited, benefiting

BlackBerry, BlackBerrys (*but*: blackberries)

Botanic Gardens

bookkeeper

bookkeeping

born: came into being; borne: carried or endured

bound (eastbound, northbound)

bylaw

byproduct

C

café

Canadian government (lowercase government when not part of a formal name), but Government of Canada

cancel, cancelled, cancelling

cannot

canvas: a strong piece of cloth; canvass: to go about asking for votes, donations, etc.

capitalized

CD-ROM

cellphone (one word)

centimetre

center, centered, centering (but use Centre when it is part of a proper name: e.g., Natural Fibre Centre)

cliché

coed

coexist

co-chair

co-worker

college-wide

colour, colourful, coloration

commercialize, commercialized, commercialization

commitment

committee

common sense (n.), common-sense (adj.)

- Use your common sense. He used a common-sense approach

compel, compelled, compelling

complement, compliment

- complement: something that completes something else; or, the full number needed to work an office, ship, etc.
- compliment: an expression of praise
- complimentary: free of charge, or expressing praise
 - The normal complement of this office is nine. Her technical knowledge complemented his writing skills. She complimented him on his quick reflexes and offered two complimentary tickets to her show.

compose, comprise, include

- composed of: made up of
- comprise: contain all the parts (*not* comprised of)
- include: contain some of the parts
 - The panel is composed of students and faculty. The plan comprises five sub-sections. The book includes many photos.

compound modifiers: *see CP Style Book*

- Compounds including a word ending in *-ly* are not hyphenated.
 - a well-known fact, a two-year-old child, environmentally friendly policies

computerized

continual: constantly repeated; continuous: uninterrupted

coop, cooperate, cooperative

coordinate, coordinator

copy editing

copy editor

copy writing

copyright (*not* copywrite)

councillor: a member of a council;

counsellor: an advisor. counsel, counselled, counselling

courses

- Capitalize course names; do not enclose in quotation marks.
- Avoid using course codes (HORT 106) in materials intended for general audiences.

crisis, crises (plural)

curriculum (s.), curricula (pl.)

curriculum vitae (s.), curricula vitae or vitarum (pl.)

customize, customized

D

dates

- Do not use ordinals in dates. (July 2, not July 2nd)
- Do not abbreviate days or months in body text. (... meeting was held Tuesday, February 15... *not* Tues., Feb. 15)
- Set off the year from the month with a comma.
- Use this form for decades: 1960s (no apostrophe). When omitting the century, use inverted apostrophe: the '60s
 - Monday, September 3, 2002; August, 2005; 2000-01; class of '89

defence (not defense)

defenceman

defensive

definitely (*not* definately)

degrees

Do not include punctuation in abbreviations of university degrees and do not leave spaces between the letters. Capitalize only the beginnings of words.

- BAppSc BA, BEd, BMath, MASC, OD, PhD

dependant (noun), dependent (adjective)

different

- Use *different from* when a noun or pronoun follows.
- Use *different than* when a clause follows.
 - His tastes are different from yours. He is a different person than he was a year ago.

disc, disk

- Use disc for compact disc, disc jockey, slipped disc, etc.
- Use disk only for certain computer-related terms: disk drive, floppy disk.

discreet: tactful; discrete: separate

disinterested

- Disinterested means impartial or without bias. It is not a synonym for uninterested.
 - a disinterested critic

domain

due to

- Prefer *because of* when referring to cause.

E

east (lowercase direction or position, but capitalize known regions) eastern Alberta, but Eastern Canada, and East Kootenays

eastbound

an easterner

effect: see affect

e-commerce

e-learning; Bell eLearning Centre

email (not e-mail)

email addresses

- Use the following form for email addresses: jdoe@oldscollege.ca
- Do not use upper case in email addresses.
- If the address appears at the end of a sentence, include end punctuation. No extra space is necessary between the address and the end punctuation.

eminent: prominent; imminent: near at hand; immanent: indwelling, pervasive

emphasize

encyclopedia (but, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*)

endeavour

e-newsletter

enormity: monstrous wickedness or (of an error) extreme seriousness; enormousness: hugeness

enrol, enrolled, enrolling, enrolment

ensure: make certain something happens; insure: provide insurance

entrepreneur, entrepreneurship

especially: outstandingly; specially: for a particular purpose

exhausting: causing exhaustion; exhaustive: complete

- He told the story in exhaustive detail.

extension

extracurricular

F

famous: very well known (celebrated); infamous: very well known for being bad (notorious)

favour, favourable, favourite

faze: disturb or upset (*not* phase)

February (*not* Febuary)

federal government (lowercase when not part of a formal name)

first annual

Avoid. No event can be described as annual the first time it takes place.

first-hand (adj. and adv.) (*but*, at first hand)

first-year student

flair: a knack or talent; flare: a flame or a widening

flaunt: show off; flout: scoff at or refuse to obey

flounder: move clumsily; founder: sink (a ship) or fail (a plan)

flyer (*not* flier)

focus, focused, focuses, focusing

forgoing (doing without); foregoing: preceding

- He spent the summer forgoing sweets to make up for the excesses of the foregoing term.

freelance, freelancer

fulfil, fulfilled, fulfilling, fulfilment

full time or full-time

- full-time position, full-time job
- He works full time; his position is full-time.

fundraise, fundraiser, fundraising

furor

G

gardener

gauge (*not* guage)

Grade 7, but seventh grade (capitalize grade when used with a numeral)

grey (colour)

grisly: gruesome; grizzly: greyish

H

handmade

hanged: killed by hanging; hung: suspended

harass, harassment

harbour

high school

- Because this compound is so well established, no hyphen is needed when used as a compound modifier.
 - a high school student

historic, historical

- historic: famous or important in history, or potentially so
- historical: about or based on history
- preface with “a,” not “an”
 - today’s historic event; a historical look at stage design; historical monuments

hoard: an amassed store, a cache; horde: a large group

- a hoard of money, a horde of students

home page

home-made

honorarium

honorary, honorific

honour, honourable

humorist, humorous

humour, humourless

hurdle: leap over; hurtle: move or throw swiftly

- He hurdled the fence and hurtled across the tarmac, but still missed the plane.

I – J – K

imply: suggest or hint at; infer: deduce or conclude

- He implied that she was lying. After hearing all accounts, he inferred that she had told the truth.

in depth, in-depth (adj)

index, indexes

infamous: see famous

install, installed, installation, instalment

instil, instilled

Internet

inquire, inquiry (not enquire, enquiry)

italics (*See also* titles)

- Use italics for non-English words, unless they have become part of the English language.
 - à la carte, a priori, ad hoc, bistro, bona fides, carte blanche, communiqué, de facto, et al., ex officio, façade, gratis, habeas corpus, ibid., non sequitur, per se, resumé; *schadenfreude*, *sangerfest*. In Paris, we stayed at a little *pension*.

its, it's (*see also* possessive pronouns)

- its is a possessive and does not take an apostrophe
- it's is a contraction of "it is" and does take an apostrophe
 - It's a shame that the cat lost most of its whiskers.

jewel, jeweller, jewellery

jibe (not jive): agree; gibe: jeer

- Your opinion jibes with mine.

judgment, judgments (not judgement)

kilometre

L

label, labelled, labelling

labour, laborious

lay, lie

- lay is a transitive verb: it takes a direct object. Its past tense is laid.
- lie is an intransitive verb: it does not take a direct object. Its past tenses are lay and lain.
 - Wrong: They found him laying on the ground. He laid in the sun.
 - Right: She lies around all day. They found him lying on the ground. He lay in the sun. They left the rock where it had always lain.
 - Right: The hen lays eggs each morning. He laid his pack on the table. Lay your burden down.

lay off (v.), layoff (n.)

lead (past tense: led)

lend (past tense: lent)

liaise (not liase), liaison

licence (n.); license (v.), licensed, licensing

literally

- Means word for word, or exactly as stated. Do not use when you really mean figuratively.
 - We were literally roasting, it was so hot. (Wrong) The poem was translated literally from the Greek. (Right)

litre

loath: reluctant; loathe: to detest

- He loathes pizza but is loath to admit it.

log in (v.), login (n. or adj.)

log on (v.), logon (n. or adj.)

loonie (dollar coin)

loony (slg. insane)

M

Maclean's magazine

manoeuvre

media (pl.); medium (s.)

- The news media are blamed for creating panic. He expressed himself through the medium of music.

meter: a device that measures; metre: a measurement of 100 centimetres

metric

- Metric symbols are not abbreviations and do not take periods.
 - m, l, mcg

millennium

model, modelled, modelling

money

- When referring to amounts of money, use a singular verb.
- Do not use unnecessary zeroes.
- Don't use *over* or *under* to describe money. Use *more than* or *less than*.
- Don't use periods in national currency designations.

- Hyphenate millions of dollars when part of a compound modifier.
 - \$7 (not \$7.00). \$65 Cdn, \$52 US. More than \$5 million was raised for the fund for unemployed writers. Construction of the new \$70-million building. The \$33-million donation.

mould (not mold)

Ms

- Unlike Mrs. or Mr., Ms is not an abbreviation and does not take a period.
 - Mr. Black introduced Ms Jones to Dr. Smith.

multimedia

N

neighbour, neighbourhood

north (lowercase direction but capitalize know regions)

northbound, a northerner, northern Alberta, Northern Canada

northeast, northwest

numbers (*see also* dates, money, per cent)

- Spell out all numbers under 10; use figures for any number 10 or over, except at the beginning of a sentence.
- Follow the same rule for ordinals.
- Age is shown as a figure, even if less than 10. John, age 6, started school today.
- Use figures for decimals or compound fractions.
- Numbers in the millions should be written out as a combination of words and figures.
- Don't use *over* or *under* to describe numbers. Use *more than* or *less than*.
- Use figures in sequences such as chapters, acts of a play, school grades, highways, etc.
 - first-year students: teams of 16; 20 million people; more than \$4.5 million in sales; 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ weeks to go; children in Grade 4; Act 2, Scene 3 of *Hamlet*.

O

occur, occurred, occurrence, occurring

off campus, on campus

- Use a hyphen when the phrase is being used as an adjective, but not when it's being used as an adverb.
 - off-campus housing list. She lived off campus for two years, but preferred to eat on campus. On-campus eateries are convenient.

offence

offensive

Olds College

- Olds College and formal references to all Olds College departments and associations will be capitalized when the entire phrase is used
- Olds College Student Association, Olds College School of Innovation, School of Horticulture

ongoing

online

organize, organization

P

parallel, paralleled

part time, part-time job (see full time)

pavilion

peak: mountaintop or apex; peek: a quick or furtive look (*see also* pique)

- peak experience, sneak peek

peddle: sell; pedal: cycle

pediatric

per: Don't use in body text.

- He earned \$40,000 annually (*not* per year). The camp stocks two towels for each child (*not* per child).

per cent, percentage, percentile

per cent

- In body copy, always spell out the word per cent: do not use the symbol.
- Use figures with percentages. Do not use hyphens.
 - the 3 per cent solution

perquisite: a special privilege (a perk); prerequisite: a necessary condition

perplex (v.) to engage or arouse (*not* peak or peek); pique (n.) resentment or bad temper

- The short talk piqued his interest in nanotechnology.
- The insult threw him into a fit of pique.

place names

- In body text, abbreviate place names sparingly.
- When it is necessary to abbreviate place names, use periods.
 - jobs in the United States; a home in Prince Edward Island; “We’re moving to B.C.,” he said.

playwright (*not* playwright)

postdoctoral, postgraduate, post-secondary

possessive pronouns

- Possessive nouns take an apostrophe. Most possessive pronouns do not.
 - a mouse’s tail, its tail; the fault was yours; the students’ marks, their marks; the house was hers and John’s; whose is this?
 - *but*: it’s anyone’s guess; nobody’s fool

practicum, practicums

practice (n. or adj.)

practise (v.) practising

pre-registration

prerequisite (*see* prerequisite)

prerogative (*not* prerogative)

principal, principle

- principal: main, chief or leading; the head of a school
- principle: a tenet, a matter of belief or ethics; a law of science
 - Fong was the principal investigator. A man of high moral principle. The uncertainty principle.

professor emeritus (m.); professor emerita (f.); professors emeriti (pl)

program

prone: lying face downward; supine: lying face upward

programs

- Capitalize titles of programs, but not general references to degrees, diplomas and programs
 - Bachelor of Applied Science, part of the applied degree program

provincial government

punctuation (*see also* quotations)

- Periods and commas always go inside quotation marks; colons and semi-colons outside.
- The question mark and exclamation mark go inside quotation marks when they apply to the quoted matter only, outside when they apply to the entire sentence.
- There is no space between initials. H.L. Mencken, C.S. Lewis.
- There is no space around a slash (oblique). But use sparingly in body text. n/a, c/o
- Use an em dash — like this — with a space at each end. Use dashes sparingly. Do not confuse an em dash with the shorter en dash, which is not normally used in body text.
- An ellipsis . . . three spaced periods . . . has a space at each end. When condensing a written text, put other required punctuation before the ellipsis. An ellipsis at the end of a sentence will have four periods, with no space between the first period and the last word. We must try harder, . . . produce more, . . . lower our expectations. . . .
- If elements in a list of three or more items contain internal punctuation, use semicolons to separate the elements.
- Use quotation marks (extremely sparingly) to set off ironic or unfamiliar words and phrases.

Q

questionnaire

quotations

- Use double quotation marks. Reserve single quotation marks for quotations within quotations.
- When quoting from speech, use an ellipsis within the quote, but not at the beginning or end, to indicate that a substantial part of a quotation has been left out.
- When it's necessary, for clarity of meaning or grammatical correctness, to add or replace a word or phrase within the quote, enclose the inserted words in square brackets.
- Capitalize the first word of a quote when it is a complete sentence; not when it is partial.
- Make sure the pronouns in a sentence with a partial quotation still make sense.
 - He said, "There is no time to lose." He said there was "no time to lose." He said, "The time is out of joint, and . . . there is no time to lose."
 - "To meet my sister." *Or*: He said he would like them all to meet his sister.

R

rack: to trouble or torture; wrack: seaweed or shipwreck

- rack your brains, nerve-racking

rational (sensible)

rationale (statement of reasons)

re-accredited

realize, realized, realization

redundancies and tautologies

- Do not use words or phrases such as added bonus, advance planning, AIDS syndrome, ATM machine, basic fundamentals, close proximity, completely destroyed, end result, excess verbiage, free gift, GST tax, GTA area, HIV virus, hot-water heater, irregardless (*use* regardless), ISBN number, LCD display, major breakthrough, NDP party, new innovation, PIN number, please RSVP, RAM memory, unexpected surprise, very first, very last, very unique

re-enter

re-examine

reapply

readmit

reinstate

reopen

reuse

refer, referred

rein: harness; reign: monarch's rule

- He tried to rein in his enthusiasm. The warlord perpetrated a reign of terror.

resumé

rigor mortis

rigour, rigorous

roommate

rumour

S

secondary school (n.), secondary-school (adj.)

seize

self-educated

self-employed

semi-annual

semi-weekly

SIN, Social Insurance Number

socialize

someday

somehow

someone

something

sometime, sometimes (*but* at some time)

somewhat

south (lowercase direction or position but capitalize known regions), southbound, A southerner, southern Alberta, the South, southeast, southwest

speciality (special or particular character)

specialty (special line of work, profession or trade)

a spin off (v.); spinoff (n. and adj.)

splendour

stationary: not moving;

stationery: writing material

storey, storeys (of a building)

Student Alumni Centre (not Students' Alumni Centre)

T

teammate

telephone numbers

- Use this form: (403) 888-4567, ext. 5719

thank you

- There is no hyphen in thank you unless it is used as an adjective.
 - Thank you for the music. A hasty thank-you note.

that, which

- That introduces an essential clause: one that defines the noun and cannot be omitted without loss of meaning.
- Which introduces a non-essential clause: one that adds information but could be omitted without loss of meaning.
 - The house that Jack built fell down. (That house and no other.)
 - The house, which was often cold in winter, got new insulation this spring. (Adds information but does not define the house.)

theatre

time of day

- Time is written in figures. Exceptions: noon or midnight.
 - 10 a.m., 10:30 a.m., noon, 2 to 4 p.m., midnight.
- Acceptable: 9 o'clock this morning; 8 in the evening
- Redundant: 8 p.m. tonight

titles of people

- In a first reference, give an individual's full appropriate title. In the second and subsequent references, use his or her surname only.
- Try to avoid long job-title pile-ups in front of people's names.
- Reserve "Dr." for medical doctors.
 - Dr. Jane Doe of Rockyview General Hospital; Professor John Doe, animal science.

titles of publications

- Use italics for the titles of books, newspapers, magazines, plays, films, dance works, works of music, videos, TV and radio programs, and conferences, except in news releases to external media.
- Use quotation marks around the titles of articles, academic papers, short stories, poems, and book chapters.
 - *Hamlet*, *War and Peace*, the *Globe and Mail*, Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach," "Into the Midnight Sun," an article by Barbara Aggerholm

travel, travelled, traveller, travelling

tremor

troop: a group of soldiers or other military personnel; troupe: a group of dancers or actors

try to (*not* try and)

tumour, tumorous

U

upcoming

usable

usage

urbanized

utilized

URL not url

V

Vice-President (hyphen always and title case when used as a title)

vice-president

- GM Vice-President John Doe
- John Doe, vice-president of GM

W

waive, waiver (not wave, waver)

- waive: to forgo, refrain from, or decline to take advantage of
- waiver: a document absolving someone of responsibility
- waver: to falter; to move to and fro

web addresses

- Use the following form for most web addresses: www.oldscollege.ca
- Most web browsers automatically add `http://` to web addresses, so it is not usually necessary to include this prefix when the address begins with `www`.
- In cases where the web address does not include `www`, add the `http://` prefix as a way of signalling to readers that this otherwise anonymous-looking string of letters is a web address.
- If the URL comes at the end of a sentence, include end punctuation and do not leave a space between the URL and the punctuation.

web (adj) web address, web page, web application, web form, web site

World Wide Web (the Web)

webmaster

weekday

weekend

weird

well-known (adj.)

well-read (adj.)

well-off (adj.)

west (lowercase direction or position, but capitalize known regions), westbound, western
Alberta, Western Canada, West Kootenays, a westerner

wet: soaked or moistened; whet: to sharpen (a knife or an appetite)

work term (n.), work-term (adj.)

worldwide