Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Website Editorial Style Guidelines

Please note: updates to the style guidelines are currently in progress
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Introduction
This document is an editorial style guide designed to help you develop consistent, accurate, and appropriate content for the Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) website. It provides a set of guidelines on issues of style and usage frequently encountered in higher-education web content. In addition, this guide will help you develop a relevant and functional user experience for time-pressed users, while upholding the WPI brand and advancing its message.

Global References
When questions of style arise that this guide does not address, consult the most recent editions of these reference works in the order listed:

For style and usage:
WPI Editorial Style
The Associated Press Stylebook
The Yahoo! Style Guide
The Chicago Manual of Style

For spelling:
The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary

Messaging
The following elements serve as a checklist to ensure that all external communications are consistent in providing concrete evidence of WPI’s messaging. These elements drive tactical decisions in content and the organization and presentation of information online.

Smart
WPI students are exceptionally smart and driven, applying innovative thinking to significant real-world challenges.

1. Exceptional
   - Curious
   - Forward-thinking
   - Accomplished
2. Hands-on
   - Pragmatic
   - Engaging and collaborative
   - Resourceful
3. Hard-working
   - Determined and passionate

Global
WPI’s timely global approach and cutting-edge research guide remarkable learning and discovery, providing a high-quality education that really can change the world.

1. Timely
   - Current, in-touch
   - Cutting-edge
   - Technological
2. Optimistic, positive
3. Transformative
   - Rewarding and surprising
4. High-quality
People-centered

WPI is a caring, supportive community that provides a personal, encouraging, high-touch student experience.

1. Community-oriented
   - Caring and accepting
   - Service-oriented
   - Personal
2. Helpful
   - Supportive
   - Approachable, accessible
   - Responsive, high-touch
3. Accommodating, flexible
   - Encouraging
   - Convenient
   - Customized

Confident

WPI’s vibrant, eclectic culture—full of proud and quirky traditions—breeds confidence and makes serious learning fun and exciting.

1. Eclectic
   - Serious and fun
2. Vibrant
   - Active
   - Exciting
3. Quirky
   - Proud
   - Historied
4. Bold

Voice and Tone

The voice, or personality, of a site’s content helps users determine whether or not they can relate to and trust what the site tells them. Tone is the attitude or feeling expressed by the site’s voice.

Although different areas of the site may call for variations in voice, aim for the overall WPI brand voice to be approachable, positive, informative, dynamic, and straightforward. Specific sections within the site will stress certain voice characteristics over others.

- **Approachable**
  WPI is accessible and friendly. Use a professional yet inviting voice that emphasizes the helpful nature of the site and the dedicated, supportive culture of the WPI community. This voice should help establish a friendly, caring tone.

- **Positive**
  WPI wants to make users feel self-assured and to impart confidence in the university’s brand. Use a positive voice that shows readers how being a part of the WPI community will help them meet their educational and professional goals. This voice should help establish an inspiring, confident tone.
• **Informative**  
WPI offers practical information that is genuinely helpful to users. Use a voice that’s knowledgeable but not intimidating or overly academic. This voice should help establish a sincere, helpful tone.

• **Dynamic**  
WPI encourages readers to want to learn more. Use a dynamic voice that shows WPI is enthusiastic about its community, academics, extracurricular opportunities, and so on. (Flat, listless text will serve only to make the university seem lifeless itself.) This voice should help establish an energetic, compelling tone.

• **Straightforward**  
WPI gets to the point using simple, direct language. Communicate your message using carefully chosen words that give a lot of information clearly but briefly. You’re trying to share information with a busy audience who doesn’t have time to wade through volumes of text. This voice should help establish a sensible, reliable tone.

These elements also contribute to the voice and tone of the site:

**Active vs. Passive Voice**
Favor the active voice to make stronger, more direct statements in keeping with the straightforward message you want to communicate.

- Advisors will help you choose your classes.
- not: You will be helped in choosing your classes.

However, the passive voice is acceptable and even preferable when you want to stress the person or thing acted upon or when the actor in the sentence is unimportant, unknown, or implied.

- WPI was founded on the revolutionary concept of blending classroom learning and practical application. (The emphasis is on WPI, not who founded it.)

**Point of View**
In general, use the first-person plural we to refer to the representatives of WPI. By doing so, you’ll be more likely to write in the active rather than in the passive voice.

**Sentence Length**
In page copy, aim to be clear and concise. Your sentences shouldn’t ramble. To keep sentences from running wild, don’t overwhelm readers with too many ideas packed into a single sentence, and don’t go on longer than necessary. However, don’t write monotonous, short sentences just to avoid longer ones; this will make your sentence rhythm choppy. If you can only explain a complex idea with a long sentence, write a long sentence.

Why is this important? For your time-pressed audience, content that demands their attention for more than a couple seconds must be readable and should “pull” them through the message. Vary your sentence structure. A little variety adds interest and energy, which will help keep your reader’s attention.

**Tense**
Use the present tense unless past tense is necessary. The present tense sounds livelier and more immediate, making events and activities seem contemporary and ongoing instead of finite.

- Project-based learning is an integral part of the WPI educational experience.
- not: Project-based learning has been an integral part of the WPI educational experience.
Word Choice
Favor modern spellings (webpage instead of Web page, email instead of e-mail, etc.), and choose short, simple words and phrases when they’ll do the same job as long, overblown terms. This helps drive home the genuine and helpful nature of the site while keeping descriptions brief and providing clear writing for students and other site visitors.

Examples:
• use not utilize
• cause not effectuate
• because not due to the fact that
• while not during the time that
• when not at a time when
• for not for the purpose of
• if not in the event that
• mention not make mention of
• represents not is a representative of
• emphasize not put emphasis on

In addition, when calling users to action, avoid unnecessary words that stray from the instruction.

Contact us to set up an appointment. (The phrase Contact us links to the contact page.) not: Click the “Contact us” link below to set up an appointment.
GRAMMAR AND USAGE

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Acronyms
Spell out acronyms the first time you use them on a page or in a page section, followed by the acronym in parentheses.

The objective of the Interactive Qualifying Project (IQP) is to help graduates understand, as citizens and professionals, how their careers will affect society at large.

Commonly recognized acronyms (e.g., CNN, NATO, VP, etc.) do not need to be spelled out on first reference.

Do not include acronyms in headers and page titles—even if they have been introduced earlier on the page—unless the acronym is a common term such as BA.

Center for Heat Treating Excellence Awards
not: CHTE Awards
The Healthcare Delivery Institute Living Lab
not: The HDI Living Lab

Form plurals of acronyms by adding s without an apostrophe.

resident advisors (RAs)
FAQs

Addresses
Abbreviate compass points in a numbered address. Use periods when abbreviating North, South, East, and West.

721 E. 42nd St.

Do not use periods when abbreviating quadrants (NE, NW, SE, SW).

630 SW 10th Ave.
not: 630 S.W. 10th Ave.

Spell out and capitalize Avenue, Street, Road, Drive, and so on when part of an address or name. Lowercase these words when they are used collectively following two or more proper nouns.

100 Institute Road
Institute and Hackfeld roads

See also Numbers (Addresses).

Days, Months
Do not abbreviate names of days or months in running text.

Maria graduated last Saturday.
Classes begin at the end of August.
If abbreviations must be used due to space restrictions in charts or tables, use the following abbreviations without periods.

**Days:** Sun, Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat  
**Months:** Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, Jun, Jul, Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec (Do not abbreviate May.)

**Inc.**  
Abbreviate and capitalize *incorporated* when used as part of a company’s name. Do not use commas before and after *Inc.* in running text.

Haruki began working for Environmental Technologies Inc. after graduating with an environmental engineering degree from WPI.

**Initials**  
Use periods and no space with initials standing for given names.

J.D. Salinger

However, don’t use periods for names reduced only to initials.

FDR

**Jr. / Sr.**  
Abbreviate after an individual’s full name, and use a period after the abbreviation. Do not precede or follow with a comma.

Martin Luther King Jr. was born in Atlanta, Georgia.

**States**  
Do not abbreviate names of states when they stand alone.

The session will focus on international opportunities for businesses in Massachusetts.

When a state appears with the name of a city or town, use the state abbreviations listed in the AP Stylebook. Note that this style uses periods with the abbreviations.

I’m going home to Hartford, Conn., for winter break.  
She graduated from the Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Worcester, Mass., last May.

Use the two-letter, all-caps postal code abbreviation only with a full address.

Miriam lives at 123 Main Street, Waltham MA 02451.

Note: Do not use periods with state postal abbreviations (AL, CT, NY, PA, etc.), and omit the comma between the city and state when writing full addresses in running text.

See also **Punctuation (Commas).**

For additional information about abbreviations and acronyms, see **Academic Degrees,** **Time of Day,** and **Word List.**
**Academic Degrees**
Do not use periods for abbreviations of degrees.

BA, BS, MBA, MS, PhD, ScD

Use an apostrophe in *bachelor’s degree*, a *master’s*, etc., but do not add an apostrophe plus s to full degree names, such as *bachelor of arts*, *master of science*, etc.

Samuel has a bachelor’s degree in interactive media and game development.
Samuel has a bachelor of science in interactive media and game development.
*not:* Samuel has a bachelor’s of science in interactive media and game development.

The word *degree* should not follow a degree abbreviation or the full name of a degree.

She earned an MBA from WPI last year.
*not:* She earned an MBA degree WPI last year.
He plans to graduate with a bachelor of arts.
*not:* He plans to graduate with a bachelor of arts degree.

Use *bachelor’s degree*, not *baccalaureate*.

Amelia has a bachelor’s degree in aerospace engineering.
*not:* Amelia has a baccalaureate in aerospace engineering.

Use full degree names in primary page headers (H1).

Master of Science in Robotics
*not:* MS in Robotics

A year without a degree abbreviation refers to a WPI undergraduate degree. Do not use a comma to set off the name from the class year. The apostrophe before the year should face out (’), not in (’).

Edward Chen ’26
*not:* Edward Chen, ‘26

To identify WPI alumni with advanced degrees, follow the class year with the degree abbreviation in parentheses.

Rosa Gomez ’25 (MS)

For alumni who have earned both an undergraduate and a graduate degree from WPI, identify them as follows.

Ahmad Balafrej ’15, ’21 (PhD)

If the last two digits of a class year might be misunderstood, use the full year to avoid confusion. For other class years, use an apostrophe and the last two digits of the year.

Margaret Yang ’22
William Baxter 1995

Include maiden names in parentheses.
Maria (Almodovar) Crowley ’76

If adding a title after a name and class year, use a comma after the year.

Jamal Taylor ’94, professor of ecology

Set off academic degrees with commas when used after a name.

Violet Brown, MBA, spoke to our class last week.

For people with PhDs, do not use the courtesy title Dr. or refer to them as doctors. Instead, add PhD after the name or use the title professor if the person holds that title. (Refer to people as doctors only if they are medical doctors.)

Mario Esposito, PhD, teaches in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry.
Professor Mario Esposito teaches in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry.

See also Capitalization (Degrees) and Word List (class).

Academic Rank
Regardless of rank, all faculty may be referred to as professors in running text; however, in formal lists, be sure to include specific titles.

Melissa Anderson, associate professor of data science
Ahmad Mohammadi, assistant professor of materials process engineering
Nina Cain, instructor of computer science

Ampersands
Ampersands (&) may be used in webpage menus, titles, and headers and in charts and tables. Do not use ampersands in running text; use and instead unless part of an official name.

The Division of Academic Affairs and Student Activities is a partner in the educational process, promoting intellectual development, interpersonal effectiveness, and life management. not: The Division of Academic Affairs & Student Activities is a partner in the educational process, promoting intellectual development, interpersonal effectiveness, & life management.

Capitalization

Academic Names
Capitalize the full formal names of centers, departments, offices, programs, buildings, institutes, committees, associations, clubs, organizations, prizes, grants, awards, scholarships, and so on. Use lowercase when the names are shortened or when used as a generic term. When the word the precedes a name, do not capitalize it in running text, even when part of the official name.

the Chinese Student Association, the association
the Actuarial Math Club, the math club, the club
the Dearborn Foundation Scholarship, the Dearborn scholarship, the scholarship
the WPI Award for Distinguished Service; the distinguished service award, the award

Exception: the George C. Gordon Library, the Gordon Library, the library
See also specific entries in this section for **Centers, Degrees, Departments, Offices, and Programs**.

**Centers**
Capitalize the full names of centers, including the word center when part of the official name. Lowercase center when part of an unofficial name or when used alone in subsequent references.

the Morgan Teaching and Learning Center, the learning center, the center

**Course Names**
Capitalize official course names, with or without the course number. When referring to a subject in general, use lowercase.

CS 534 Artificial Intelligence
biotechnology class
Next semester, I will be taking Chemical Reactor Design, as well as Experimental Photochemistry.

**Degrees**
Lowercase both the full name of a degree and general references to the degree.

bachelor of arts; a bachelor’s degree
master of science; a master’s

Lowercase the subject of a degree that a student has earned or is working toward earning. However, capitalize the subject of a degree when referring to a program name.

Lola has master of engineering in power systems engineering.
not: Lola has a master of engineering in Power Systems Engineering.
Our Master of Engineering in Power Systems Engineering program prepares electrical engineers for professional practice in the electric utility industry.

See also the entry for **Programs** in this section.

**Departments**
Capitalize the full names of departments, including the word department. The preferred reference for departments is Department of.

the Department of Physics, the physics department, the department

**Festivities and Events**
Capitalize the full names of WPI celebrations and events.

Family Weekend, Project Presentation Day, Greek Week, New Student Orientation, Winter Carnival

Also capitalize words such as commencement, reunion, and homecoming when referring to a specific WPI event.

Do you know who the speaker will be at Commencement next month?
She has spoken at several commencement ceremonies.
Fields of Study
Do not capitalize fields of study, majors, and minors unless they are proper nouns, such as English or French.

Simon is a liberal arts and engineering major and a nanoscience minor.
Nora is an assistant professor of American literature.

not:
Simon is a Liberal Arts and Engineering major and a Nanoscience minor.
Nora is an assistant professor of American Literature.

Offices
Capitalize the full names of offices, including the word office. The preferred reference for offices is Office of.

the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education

Programs
Capitalize degree-program names and the names of other academic programs. Do not capitalize the word program unless part of the official name of a non-degree program.

the Master of Science in Bioinformatics and Computational Biology program, the Bioinformatics and Computational Biology program, the program the Trustee Mentor Program, the mentor program, the program

Title Case
Use title case for webpage titles and for level-2 and level-3 headers (H2 and H3) on the WPI website. Also use title case for titles of books, movies, journals, newspapers, radio and television programs, book chapters, speeches, news headlines, etc.

Capitalize:
• The first and last words in the title
• All nouns, pronouns, verbs (including the to in infinitives), adjectives, and adverbs regardless of length
• Prepositions (e.g., with, among, from) and conjunctions (e.g., since, than, because) of four or more letters
• Both parts of phrasal verbs, which are multiword verbs consisting of a verb plus a preposition or adverb (e.g., turn off, pick up, catch on, see to)

Lowercase:
• Articles (a, an, the)
• Prepositions of three or fewer letters (e.g., in, on, to)
• Coordinating conjunctions (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so)

Examples:
Realize Your Goals With WPI
Beyond the Classroom
We Are Future Oriented
WPI Professor Wins Award for Her Research
Bringing In the New Academic Year (Here, “in” is part of the phrasal verb “bringing in.”)
Careers in Management Information Systems (“In” is functioning as a preposition here.)

Follow these rules for hyphenated compounds in title case:
• Always capitalize the first element of a hyphenated compound.
• Capitalize all subsequent elements unless they are articles (a, an, the), prepositions of three or fewer letters (e.g., in, on, to), or coordinating conjunctions (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).
• If the first element is a prefix that can’t stand alone (e.g., anti, non, pre), don’t capitalize the second element unless it’s a proper adjective or noun.

Examples:
Up-to-Date Information
Solutions-Focused Framework
Pro-education Interests
Two-Thirds of Undergraduates Live on Campus
Word-of-Mouth Marketing

See also Titles of Works.

Titles of People
Capitalize titles (such as Dean, President, Governor, etc.) only when used as part of a person’s name. Titles are not capitalized when they stand alone or follow a name.

Professor Murakami is at a conference in London this week.
The professor of my biotechnology class is at a conference in London this week.
Yoshi Murakami, professor of biotechnology, is at a conference in London this week.

Lowercase titles in sentences that use commas to set off the title from a name.

The university’s president, Sarah Smith, will speak at the ceremony tomorrow.
but: Tomorrow, President Sarah Smith will speak at the ceremony. (Here, president is being used as part of Smith’s name.)

Do not capitalize informal descriptive or occupational titles used before a person’s name.

I’d be happy to introduce you to attorney Jane Wilson.
We saw environmental engineering professor Eli Landon at the mall.

Separate long titles from names by using constructions that require a comma.

Alexis Wright, associate vice president of XYZ Communications, attended the meeting.

Exception to the rules above: Named professorships and full formal titles denoting academic honors are always capitalized, even when following a person’s name or standing alone.

Marie Liston, the John E. Sinclair Professor of Mathematical Sciences, lectured on optimal design in continuum mechanics.
She was recently named the John E. Sinclair Professor of Mathematical Sciences.

See also Names of People.

Captions
All photos (other than banner photos) should include descriptive captions to make them contextually relevant to on-page content. Write captions in the present tense. A caption may be a complete sentence or a sentence fragment. Captions do not require end punctuation unless they are complete sentences.
Professor Elizabeth Rutledge
Professor Alexander Bennet lectures on biofuel development.
Students doing lab work in robotics engineering
Jasper Stevens ’25, winner of the Robert Fellman Memorial Scholarship Prize
Helen Jones ’24 wins this year’s Charles O. Thompson Scholarship.

Identify the people in a photo from left to right.

Orientation leaders (from left, Kaylee Rodgers ’27, Theo Marquam ’25, and Elena Chandran ’25) welcome incoming students.

If there are only two people in a photo, use left or right but not both.

Leif Anderson, left, and Melissa Gomez discuss cryptography and data security.

**Contractions**
It is acceptable to use contractions versus extended forms of verbs (e.g., don’t versus do not). The contraction is more informal and concise.

**Course Numbers vs. Course Titles**
Always use course titles when addressing external audiences. Course numbers are not adequately descriptive.

All majors must complete Introduction to Thermodynamics.
All majors must complete ES 3001 Introduction to Thermodynamics.
not: All majors must complete ES 3001.

**Directional Language**
When possible and appropriate, avoid using following or below to refer to elements on the page when the layout of the page itself provides those signals.

**OK**
You should attend the following sessions:
- Session A
- Session B
- Session C

**Better**
You should attend these sessions:
- Session A
- Session B
- Session C

**Ethnic and National Designations**
Use specific references when possible.

African American, Asian American, Mexican American

If specifics are not known, use person of color. Avoid the word minority and focus instead on diversity. When speaking demographically, use the term traditionally underrepresented groups. National-origin identifiers do not require hyphens, even when used as modifiers.
Polish American newspaper  
not: Polish-American newspaper

**Formatting Contact Information**
For consistency, use this format when providing contact information including a street address, phone number, fax number, email address, and website (or combination thereof):

Office of the Provost  
Worcester Polytechnic Institute  
100 Institute Road  
Worcester, MA 01609  
508-000-0000  
Fax: 508-000-0000  
provost@wpi.edu  
www.wpi.edu

While it’s necessary to distinguish fax numbers from phone numbers (as shown in the previous example), the preferred style is to omit labels with phone numbers, email addresses, and websites:

*Incorrect*  
Office of the Provost  
Worcester Polytechnic Institute  
100 Institute Road  
Worcester, MA 01609  
Phone: 508-000-0000  
Fax: 508-000-0000  
Email: provost@wpi.edu  
Website: www.wpi.edu

**Geographic Locations**
Lowercase general compass points and terms derived from them if they simply refer to direction. Also lowercase directions when referring to part of a city or state.

We hiked east through the hills and then north past the lake.  
western Massachusetts, eastern Chicago

Capitalize compass directions when they indicate regions.

the Southern states, the East Coast, the Northeast, a Western accent, the South

**Inclusive Language**
Avoid the use of *s/he* and *his/her*. The best way to avoid gender bias in pronoun reference is to make nouns and pronouns plural. You might also rephrase to eliminate the pronoun. If you must use a singular pronoun, use both pronouns joined by a conjunction (e.g., *she and he, his or her*).

**OK:** Each student needs to submit his or her application to the Office of Admissions.  
**Preferred:** Students need to submit their applications to the Office of Admissions.

**OK:** Everyone in East Hall is studying for his or her final exams.  
**Preferred:** All the students in East Hall are studying for their final exams.
OK: When discussing your schedule with an advisor, double-check with her or him that you’ve completed all required courses.

Preferred: When discussing your schedule with an advisor, double-check that you’ve completed all required courses.

Note that in the first two example sets above, each and everyone take a singular verb and singular pronouns. The preferred construction was obtained by changing each and everyone to plural forms.

Masculine nouns and pronouns are not generic: Chairman, forefather, sportsman, mankind, he, his, and so on should not be assumed to include women. Try to use generic nouns instead: e.g., camera operator instead of cameraman, chair instead of chairman, humankind instead of mankind, etc.

Lists
Introduce bulleted and numbered lists with either a complete grammatical sentence or a sentence fragment, followed by a colon. Capitalize the first word of each list item. Do not use end punctuation unless the items in the list are complete sentences. Avoid long, narrow lists by arranging short items into two or more columns.

Your application should include these documents:
- A completed application form
- Two letters of recommendation
- An official transcript

Reasons to choose Worcester Polytechnic Institute:
- We guide remarkable learning and discovery.
- We engage in innovative technology solutions.
- We make serious learning fun and exciting.

Do not use end punctuation if the listed items complete a sentence fragment that introduces the list.

Your end-of-term project will involve:
- Interviewing a community leader
- Writing a 15-page paper
- Presenting your paper to the class

To receive extra credit, you can:
- Write an extra paper
- Conduct an interview
- Give an extra presentation

(Note: Even though the items here could stand on their own as complete sentences outside the context of this list, they should not end with a period since they complete the sentence fragment that introduces the list.)

Make the items in a list parallel. For example, here is the first list above but in non-parallel and, therefore, incorrect form. Notice that the last item in the list is a complete sentence, but the first two items are sentence fragments.

Incorrect:
Your application should include these documents:
- A completed application form
- Two letters of recommendation
- You should also send an official transcript.
Do not use lists for fewer than three items.

- See the course catalog for major and minor requirements.
- See the course catalog for specific requirements:
  - Major and minor requirements

Keep list items short; aim to limit each list item to two lines of text.

**Names of People**

After a person’s name has been given in full, use that person’s last name only on second and subsequent references. Use Jr., II, and so on with complete names only. Avoid courtesy titles: Dr., Ms., Mrs., and Mr.

See also **Abbreviations and Acronyms (Initials, Jr./Sr.)** and **Capitalization (Titles of People)**.

**Numbers**

**General Rule**

Spell out whole numbers from zero through nine; use figures for 10 and above.

- David has worked at the same company for seven years.
- The workshop attracted 32 students from 22 different countries.

Use a combination of figures and words for numbers in the millions and above.

- 3 million, 5.2 billion, 14 billion

**Exceptions to the General Rule**

Spell out a number beginning a sentence unless the number is a calendar year.

- Twenty-four people attended the event.
- 2014 was an eventful year.

When two numbers fall side by side, spell out the first number.

- The program offers twelve 4-credit courses.

Use figures with abbreviations, symbols, ages, percentages, temperatures, decimals, dimensions, credits, chapter numbers, and page numbers.

- 30 mph, 5’ 4”, $9, 8 years old, 5%, 3 degrees Fahrenheit, 7.9, 6 x 8 feet, 4 credits,
  - Chapter 6, page 7

Use figures in scores, court decisions, and legislative votes.

- a 10-7 win, a 5-4 ruling, a vote of 52-48

Use figures for coordinates in tables and charts and for parts of documents and worksheets.

- See row 7, column 3.
Refer to lines 1–9 on page 12 of this document.

Spell out numbers used in casual reference.

I can think of a thousand reasons why you should finish your homework on time.

**Addresses**
Use figures for address numbers and numbered street names.

1163 5th Ave.
701 19th St.

See also [Abbreviations (Addresses)].

**Dates, Years**
Use cardinal numbers (1, 2, 3, etc.) for specific dates even though these numbers may be pronounced as ordinals (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.).

August 20 is the day of our next meeting.
**not:** August 20th is the day of our next meeting.

Format dates in a month-day-year sequence, and spell out the name of the month instead of using all numerals. This practice avoids confusion for international audiences since countries do not all use the same order when formatting dates.

October 9, 2014
**not:** 10/9/14

When citing a day, date, and time in running text, day-date-time is the preferred order. (See also [Punctuation [Commas] and Time of Day].)

Saturday, November 15, 8 a.m.

Use commas to set off years when used with a month and day. However, when listing only a month or season/semester and a year, do not separate them with a comma. (Note: Do not capitalize winter, spring, summer, or fall.)

September 6, 2010, was the publication date of our first newsletter.
Our first newsletter was published in September 2010.
I’m taking Introduction to Algorithms in spring 2015.

In a range of years in the same century, drop the first two digits in the second year and use an en dash, not a hyphen.

the 2015–16 academic year
**not:** the 2015–2016 academic year

Use an s without an apostrophe to indicate spans of decades or centuries. Shortened versions of decades with an apostrophe and an s are also acceptable; use an apostrophe to indicate omitted numerals. Note: The apostrophe should face out (‘), not in (’).

1900s, 1960s, the Roaring ’20s, the ’80s
Avoid using a dash with *from or between* in a range of dates.

from June 1 to July 15  
**not:** from June 1–July 15

It is not necessary to repeat the month when citing a range of dates.

May 7–14

Use these formats to indicate date and year ranges. (Note the use of the en dash.)

Sept. 1–9, 2013  
March 25–June 10, 2014  
the Classes of ’05–09  
the winter of 1999–2000

**Fractions**

Spell out fractions less than one in running text, using hyphens between words.

three-fourths, four-fifths

Use figures for amounts over one, converting to decimals if practical.

Acceptable: 1½  
Preferred: 1.5

**Money**

Use figures and the dollar sign except in casual references, and eliminate zeros when possible

Karima loaned me a dollar.  
My textbook costs $9.  
Sean’s textbooks cost $10.50 and $12.  
**not:**  
My textbook costs $9.00.  
Sean’s textbooks cost $10.50 and $12.00.

**Multiple Numbers**

When a sentence contains two or more numbers belonging to the same category of information, apply the general guidelines.

I met with 11 students this morning, 14 this afternoon, and nine this evening.

**Ordinals**

Spell out ordinals from first to ninth. Use figures for *10th* and above.

A team of WPI students won first place in the competition.  
He was one of the great engineers of the 19th century.

Do not use superscripts for the letters in ordinal numbers.

11th edition  
**not:** 11th edition
Percents
Use figures and the percent symbol (%) with percents. Do not spell out the word percent.

9%, 120%
not: 9 percent, 120 percent

Phone Numbers
Separate the area code with a hyphen instead of parentheses. Also use hyphens for toll-free numbers. Do not include the 1 before the area code or the 800 prefix.

123-456-7890
800-456-7890

Format phone numbers with extensions like this:

123-456-7890 ext. 11

Proper Names
In the case of proper names, use words or figures according to an organization’s practice.

7-Eleven, L-3 Communications

Thousands
Place a comma after digits signifying thousands.

2,350 students

Plurals

Single Letters
To form plurals of single letters, add ‘s.

She received all A’s this semester.

Multiple Letters
For plurals of multiple letters, add s.

Awards are made to juniors and seniors who maintain GPAs of 3.2 or higher.

Numbers
For plurals of numbers, add s.

The women’s suffrage movement began in the late 1840s.
The school I’m applying to looks for quantitative GRE scores in the 160s.

Proper Names
For plurals of proper names ending in es, s, or z, add es.

Joneses, Lyonses, Martinezes
Words Referred to as Words
For plurals of words referred to as words, add s.

- Ifs, ands, and buts
dos and don'ts

To avoid confusion, sometimes it is necessary to add 's.

- yes's and no's

Punctuation

Apostrophes
When used before a graduation year, apostrophes should face out (').

- Ruthie Parrish '86
  not: Ruthie Parrish '86

Add 's to form the possessive of most singular common nouns.

- the school’s career counselor
- my class’s textbooks

For nouns that are plural in form but singular in meaning, add an apostrophe only.

- mathematics’ formulas
- the United States’ foreign policies

Add 's to form the possessive of singular proper nouns ending in s.

- Honduras’s economy
- Henry James’s novels

Add only an apostrophe to form the possessive of plural nouns ending in s. For plural nouns not ending in s, add ‘s.

- the students’ homework
- the Jacksons’ family business
- the alumni’s efforts

To show joint possession, use an apostrophe with the last noun only.

- Estelle and Leo’s presentation was fascinating. (Estelle and Leo both gave the presentation.)

To show individual possession, use the possessive form with all elements.

- Marie Curie’s and Jonas Salk’s discoveries (Curie and Salk made separate discoveries.)

Be sure to use the apostrophe symbol (’), which curls, and not a prime mark (’), which is straight, or an open single quotation mark (‘). Computer programs sometimes default to prime marks or open single quotation marks instead of using apostrophes.

See also Plurals.
Colons
Capitalize the first word following a colon only if it is the beginning of a grammatically complete sentence or a proper noun.

The implications of her speech were clear: It was time for decisive action.
WPI has a lot to offer: extraordinary students, world-renowned faculty, and state-of-the-art research facilities.

When using a colon to introduce a series or a list in running text, make sure the words that introduce the series or list constitute a grammatically complete sentence.

You must take these prerequisites: biology, chemistry, and calculus.
or: The required prerequisites include biology, chemistry, and calculus.
not: The required prerequisites include: biology, chemistry, and calculus.

Note: You may, however, use a colon after a sentence fragment when introducing a bulleted or numbered list. See Lists.

Commases
Place a comma before the coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) used to join the items in a series. (This comma is known as the serial comma.)

Summer courses at WPI allow students to accelerate their studies, keep on track, or learn about a new subject in a more relaxed atmosphere with smaller classes.

When a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) joins two independent clauses, or clauses that could stand alone as separate sentences, use a comma before the conjunction.
Note: Do not use a comma to separate independent clauses joined by because.

The International House serves as a hub of activity for international students and scholars, and its staff hosts a variety of social events throughout the year.
not: We engage our students in challenging programs, because we know they want to be pushed and rise to the level of our expectations.

If the independent clauses themselves contain commas, use a comma before the conjunction, not a semicolon.

WPI’s founders had different ideas about how best to educate technological professionals, and in merging their visions, a new, influential model of higher education emerged.
not: WPI’s founders had different ideas about how best to educate technological professionals; and in merging their visions, a new, influential model of higher education emerged.

Use a comma to separate an introductory phrase or clause from the main clause. You may omit the comma after short introductory phrases if no misreading will result.

On Wednesday we will meet in the computer lab.
After break we discussed our reading.
Before presenting, the speakers met in the library. (The phrase Before presenting the speakers could be misread without a comma after presenting.)

Use commas to set off too only when emphasizing a sudden change of thought.
He enjoys studying not only industrial engineering but organizational leadership too. I too enjoy studying industrial engineering and organizational leadership. She didn’t know what courses she wanted to take, but then, too, she hadn’t even read through the course listings.

Use commas to set off state and country names following the name of a city. Also use commas to set off individual elements in addresses that are used in running text. (Note: With full addresses in running text, omit the comma between the city and state.)

    Henrik works in Worcester, Mass., but lives in Boston.
    Sarah will be interning in Beijing, China, next year.
    Nyla sent her application to Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Graduate Admissions, 60 Prescott Street, Worcester MA 01609-2280.

Set off the year with commas when stating a specific date (month, day, and year).

    The committee set July 5, 2024, as the start date for the project.

Set off a date with commas when it follows the day of the week it refers to. (The preferred format is day-date-time.) Omit the comma when only a day or date is used with the time.

    The premiere is Friday, October 24, at 8 p.m. in the Little Theatre.
    The premiere is October 24 at 8 p.m. in the Little Theatre.

**Dashes**

For the standard dash, use an em dash (—) rather than two hyphens (--). Do not add a space before and after an em dash.

    We don’t just believe in making the world a better place though science, technology, the arts, and humanities—we actually do it.

Use an en dash (—) for inclusive numbers unless the numbers are preceded by the word from or between.

    See Chapters 11–15.
    from 10 to 12 students
    between 20 and 25 points

Also use an en dash instead of a hyphen in a compound adjective when one or more of its elements are open compounds.

    pre–World War I years
    non–Worcester Polytechnic Institute link
    Nobel Prize–winning author

**Ellipses**

Ellipses consist of three periods ( ... ). Put a space on both sides of an ellipsis but not in between the periods. Use an ellipsis to indicate the deletion of one or more words in quoted material.

    “Our professors are committed researchers and scholars who bring their love of research into their classrooms and labs and give students countless opportunities to ... solve real-world problems.”
If a grammatically complete sentence precedes an ellipsis, use a period after the last word before the ellipsis.

“WPI's campus is teeming with activity throughout the academic year. From New Student Orientation in the fall to Commencement in the spring, there is always something happening on campus.”

If an ellipsis is used at the end of a sentence, add a final (fourth) period to indicate the end of the sentence.

“Our academic departments offer more than 50 undergraduate and graduate degree programs leading to bachelor's, master’s, and PhD degrees.”

**Exclamation Points**
Use a single exclamation point only when needed to convey emphasis, but use sparingly.

Congratulations on your acceptance to WPI!

**Hyphens**
Hyphenate compound modifiers that precede the noun they modify.

- student-centered support
- career-focused curriculum
- 17th-century painter

Do not hyphenate compound modifiers that follow the noun they modify

- The student was well known.
- Her work is awe inspiring.

Also, do not hyphenate compound modifiers when one of the elements is an adverb ending in *ly*.

- a completely new course
- an incredibly helpful resource

Hyphenate prefixes that stand alone as part of a pair or group.

- full- and part-time students
- micro- and macronutrients

**Periods**
Use a single space after a period at the end of a sentence.

**Quotation Marks**
Use curly/smart quotes (""), not straight/dumb quotes (""). Periods and commas at the end of quotations always go inside the quotation marks. Place question marks, exclamation points, colons, and semicolons inside quotation marks only if they are part of the quoted material.

- Evelyn exclaimed, "I got an A on my exam!"
- Who said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has"?
Room Location
State the name of the building, followed by the room number. Use a comma in between the building name and the room number. Capitalize room when used in conjunction with a room number.

Fuller Laboratories, Room 112

Tables
Use sentence case (capitalize only the first word and proper nouns) for row and column heads.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual tuition</th>
<th>$45,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Application fee</td>
<td>$40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late payment fee</td>
<td>$50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Time of Day
Use a.m. and p.m. (lowercase with periods) to indicate the time of day. There should be a space between the number and a.m. or p.m. Do not use :00 or o’clock for times on the hour. Use midnight and noon instead of 12:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m.

4:30 p.m., 9 a.m., noon
not: 9:00 a.m., 9 o’clock, 12:00 p.m.

It is not necessary to repeat a.m. or p.m. when citing a length of time. (Note the use of an en dash instead of a hyphen.)

2:30–4 p.m.

Use to instead of an en dash with from or between in a length of time.

The meetings will take place from 8 to 11:45 a.m.

Avoid redundancies such as 11 a.m. this morning or 7 p.m. Friday night; instead use 11 a.m. or 7 p.m. Friday.

See also Punctuation (Dashes).

Titles of Works
Italicize titles of books, movies, plays, radio and television programs, periodicals (newspapers, magazines, journals), and other longer works. Do not italicize titles of reference works or websites.

All Things Considered
USA Today
WPI Journal
New Technology Magazine
The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology
Facebook

Put quotation marks around titles of chapters, essays, short stories, TV and radio episodes, articles and features in periodicals, speeches, lectures, songs, and other shorter works.
John Muir’s essay “Among the Animals of Yosemite” ...
“The Lottery,” a short story by Shirley Jackson, ...
The article “Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail in ’72” ...

Capitalize and italicize the in the name of a newspaper, magazine, or website if that is the way the publication prefers to be known. Do not capitalize or italicize the before names if listing several publications, some of which use the as part of the name and some of which do not.

This morning, I read *The New York Times*.

See also Capitalization (Title Case).

**Worcester Polytechnic Institute Names**

These are the approved names and abbreviations for WPI:

- the Worcester Polytechnic Institute
- WPI
- the Institute (capitalize *Institute*)
- the university (lowercase *university*)

Either the full name of the university or the abbreviation *WPI* should be used on first reference in running text. On subsequent references, *the Institute* or *the university* are acceptable. Do not use the in front of *WPI*. Lowercase the in *the Worcester Polytechnic Institute* unless it begins a sentence.

**Word List**

a, an

Use a before consonant sounds and an before vowel sounds. Use an before *MS, MA, MBA*, and other master’s degree abbreviations.

- a historic day
- an MS in chemical engineering

**advisor**

Not *adviser*.

**African American**

Do not hyphenate, whether used as an adjective or a noun. This style applies to other compound proper adjectives and nouns designating dual heritage (e.g., Asian American literature, Mexican Americans on campus). *Black* is an acceptable alternative; follow a person’s preference. Lowercase *black* when using as a racial designation.

**alumna, alumnus, alumnae, alumni**

*Alumna* is the singular, feminine form, and *alumnus* is the singular, masculine form. *Alumnae* is the feminine plural, and *alumni* is the plural for a group of graduates or former students made up either of men only or of both men and women. Do not capitalize any of the above forms.

**campuswide**

One word.
catalog
Not catalogue.

chair, chairperson
Use instead of chairman or chairwoman.

chapter
Capitalize when used with a figure in reference to a book chapter (e.g., Chapter 17).

city
Capitalize in reference to Worcester.
  • City of Worcester

class
Capitalize when referring to a graduating class.
  • The Class of ’85 produced several influential graduates.

cocurricular
One word.

college and university names
Use full names on first reference; on subsequent references, abbreviations are acceptable.
  • Massachusetts Institute of Technology (first reference)
  • MIT (subsequent references)

commencement
Capitalize when referring to the ceremony at WPI.
  • Commencement 2023
  • Will you be attending Commencement next Saturday?

commonwealth
Lowercase in commonwealth of constructions.
  • the commonwealth of Massachusetts

course, class
When referring to a course, use the word course rather than class. It is best to reserve the word class for the meeting time and for the people taking a course together.
  • The course is offered by the Department of Mathematical Sciences; classes meet twice a week.

course work
Two words.

dean’s list
Do not capitalize.

dining services
Do not capitalize.

**Earth**
Capitalize when referring to the proper name of the planet; otherwise, use lowercase.

- How far is Earth from Mars?
- He has a bachelor’s degree in earth science.

**emerita, emeritus, emeritae, emeriti**
*Emerita* is the singular, feminine form, and *emeritus* is the singular, masculine form. *Emeritae* is the feminine plural, and *emeriti* is the plural for a group made up either of men only or of both men and women. Lowercase except when used before a name or when the word is an official part of a named professorship. Place *emerita* or *emeritus* after the title *professor*. (Note that these are honorary designations bestowed on only some retired faculty and do not simply mean “retired.”)

- Professor Emerita Jane Smith
- John Smith is a professor emeritus of physics.

**extracurricular**
One word.

**faculty, staff**
*Faculty* and *staff* can be used in both singular and plural senses. Use a singular verb when the term refers to the whole group.

- The computer science faculty **meets** once a week.
- The staff **is** planning to meet tomorrow.

Use a plural verb when the term refers to individual members within the group.

- The faculty **disagree** among themselves.
- The staff **are** conflicted on how to proceed.

**fellow, fellowship**
Lowercase except when used as part of a proper name.

- a research fellow, a Hertz Fellow, a Teaching Technology Fellow
- a prestigious fellowship from the American Association of University Women
- a Hertz Fellowship, a Teaching Technology Fellowship

**fieldwork**
One word.

**first-year student**
Preferable to *freshman*.

**full time, part time**
Hyphenate when used as an adjective before a noun; otherwise, leave as two words.

- Carlos is a full-time student.
- Sasha goes to school part time.

**fundraiser**
One word.

**George C. Gordon Library**
Capitalize *library* both when using the full name and the shortened name, *Gordon Library*.

**GPA**
No periods.

**Homecoming**
Capitalize when referring to the event at WPI.

- WPI alumni felt right at home during last weekend’s Homecoming.

**Institute**
Capitalize when used alone in reference to WPI.

- Worcester Polytechnic Institute’s 80-acre campus sits high on a hill in historic Worcester, Massachusetts. The Institute’s convenient central location puts students close to all the best the city has to offer.

**international students**
Use instead of *foreign students*.

**Little Theatre**
Not *Little Theater*.

**lab work**
Two words.

**Latina/Latino vs. Hispanic**
*Latina* and *Latino* refer to people of Latin American descent. *Hispanic* refers to a person who came from a Spanish-speaking country or whose ancestors came from a Spanish-speaking country. If possible, use the person’s preferred term. *Latina* is feminine; *Latino* is masculine; *Latinos* is plural for both male-only groups and for mixed-gender groups; *Latinas* is plural feminine.

**Native American**
Do not hyphenate, whether used as an adjective or a noun. *Native American* and *American Indian* are both acceptable when referring to indigenous people of North America. Follow the person’s preference. When possible, be precise and use the name of the tribe. Do not use *Indian* in reference to American Indians.

**nontraditional students**
Use instead of *older students*.

**off campus, on campus**
Hyphenate when used as an adjective before a noun; otherwise, leave as two words.

- The program includes an off-campus internship.
- Otto lives on campus.

**okay**
Not *OK*. 
**orientation leader**
Do not capitalize.

**Parents Fund**
No apostrophe. Capitalize both words.

**Parents Weekend**
No apostrophe. Capitalize both words.

**persons with disabilities**
Use instead of *disabled*. Do not use *handicapped*. The term *accessible* is preferred over *handicap accessible*. (For more information, see the AP Stylebook entry for *disabled, handicapped, impaired.*)

**professor**
Capitalize when used as part of a name. Do not abbreviate.

- Professor Banerjee
- She is a professor of environmental engineering.

**QuadFest**
Capitalize both the *Q* and the *F*.

**residence hall**
Use instead of *dorm* or *dormitory*.

**resident advisor**
Do not capitalize. May be shortened to RA on second reference.

**scholar**
Capitalize when referring to named scholarships.

- a Marshall Scholar, a Rhodes Scholar

**scholarship**
Lowercase except when used as part of a proper name.

- a four-year scholarship
- a Marshall Scholarship, a Rhodes Scholarship

**school**
Capitalize as part of a proper noun; in all other references, *school* should be lowercased.

- The School of Business at WPI is known for developing innovative and entrepreneurial leaders for a global technological world.
- The school emphasizes innovative and project-based education.

**seasons**
Lowercase names of the seasons unless they are part of a proper name.

- When does registration for fall 2024 begin?
- the spring 2023 issue of *WPI Journal*
- the Summer Olympics
semesters
Do not capitalize.

- fall semester, spring semester

technical terms
In general, choose modern forms of words to underscore the progressive nature of WPI. For example, email has evolved from e-mail and is the newer, condensed form of electronic mail.

- cellphone
- database
- ebook
- email
- enewsletter
- homepage
- internet
- JPG
- log in, log in to (verbs); login (noun, adj.)
- log out, log out of (verbs); logout (noun, adj.)
- MP3
- offline
- online
- page view
- password
- PDF
- pop up (verb), pop-up (noun, adj.)
- sign in (verb), sign-in (noun, adj.)
- sign out (verb), sign-out (noun, adj.)
- screen name
- screen reader
- social network (noun), social-network (adj.)
- smartphone
- username
- URL
- web
- webcast
- webpage
- website

that vs. which
Use that for restrictive clauses, or clauses that are essential to the meaning of a sentence. Use which for nonrestrictive clauses, or clauses that can be removed from a sentence without changing the sentence’s meaning. (Note: Nonrestrictive clauses are set off by commas.)

- Our research in the life sciences and bioengineering is fueling breakthroughs that improve lives and advance new understandings of biological processes.
- The food court, which is located on the first floor of the Rubin Campus Center, is where I’ll be after class.

theatre
Use theatre instead of theater unless theater is part of a proper noun.
At the Worcester Polytechnic Institute, students apply the fundamentals of science and engineering to solve real-world problems. The university’s innovative approach to education has produced several generations of graduates who have helped build a better world.

upper-level students
Use instead of upper-class students or upperclassmen.

US
No periods; use only as an adjective, not as a noun.
  • A US senator will speak at WPI tomorrow.
  • Headquartered in Massachusetts, the company has local offices across the United States.

USA
No periods. Use only as a noun.

very
This is often an unnecessary adverb or adjective. Use sparingly.

Washington, D.C.
Use a comma and periods.

work-study
Hyphenate and use only as an adjective, not as a noun.
  • To learn more about work-study opportunities, stop by the Office of Financial Aid.
  • not: To learn more about work-studies, stop by the Office of Financial Aid.

zip code
Not ZIP code.