



WPI

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

- Premium
- Rigorous
- Well-rounded

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.

not:

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**.

Commas

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 through 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.

Annual tuition	\$45,000
Application fee	\$40
Late payment fee	\$50

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*.
Yesterday morning, I read the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Boston Business Journal*, and 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.

- our local community theatre
- Ed Sullivan Theater

toward

Not *towards*.

transferable

Not *transferrable*.

university

Lowercase *university* when used alone in reference to WPI.

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*.