

InsideOCULA

For and about members of the Ontario College and University Library Association

Style Guide

The InsideOCULA style guide is adapted from a guide developed in 2011 by Nalini K. Singh, Librarian, Reference Services and Web Content Coordinator, and the University of Toronto Libraries Web Advisory Committee. It is also based on the Canadian Press Stylebook.

Updated by InsideOCULA editorial team in January 2013.

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1. GENERAL

1.1) Language and spelling

- Always prefer gender inclusive language, but avoid multiple uses of ‘he/she’. S/he is also acceptable unless its use becomes unwieldy or excessive.
- Prefer Canadian spelling if there is a difference between Canadian and American spelling, e.g.,
 - Colour, not color **Exception:** Program, not programme
 - Centre, not center **Exception:** Organize, not organise
- Spell web with a lowercase w in all instances except when it is part of a formal title or official name such as Web Advisory Committee
- Avoid verbosity, clichés, jargon, redundancies, long sentences, comma splices, and other things that interfere with clarity and conciseness. Refer to **Section 3: Writing for the web.**

1.2) Punctuation

Commas	Items in a series of more than two are separated by commas. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oranges, apples, and pears • Books, periodicals, or pamphlets 	Periods	Use periods with most abbreviations. No periods at the end of bulleted sentences or phrases. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a.m. p.m. i.e. e.g. • etc. et al. Mr. Dr.
Hyphens –see also special cases	Hyphenate compound words, and modification of words. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-cultural collections • Large-scale information systems • Degree-seeking, library-related Do NOT hyphenate the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interlibrary loan • Intercampus delivery • Email 	Special cases: e–	Electronic resources: hyphenate, and capitalize only if sentence-beginning. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have e-books, and e-journals, e-resources Exception: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • email : one word, lower-case, unless sentence-beginning
Dashes	Use the en dash without spaces to show sequence. HTML tag for en dash is &ndash; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2005–2010 • May–June 	Brackets	Avoid unless necessary: work it out with sentence construction. Do not use for area codes in phone #s. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • POOR: On Halloween, students (MMSt and MI) dress up • GOOD: On Halloween, MMSt and MI students dress up

Quotation marks	<p>Double quotes ONLY for what someone has actually said.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She said, "Forward ho!" <p>Avoid use of single quotes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unless a quote is within a quote 	Colons	<p>Do not use colons in section headings unless it makes sense.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact information [no colon] • Library hours [no colon] • Requirements include: [colon]
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1.3) Measurements

Time	<p>Use the twelve-hour clock.</p> <p>Use abbreviations a.m. and p.m. with periods.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 a.m., not 11:00 a.m. • 11:30 a.m. • 9:30 a.m.–1 p.m. • 1–5 p.m. 	Days & months	<p>Always spelled out in full.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesday • February • Monday–Friday
Dates	<p>Months should be spelled out in full, when possible.</p> <p>January</p> <p>Abbreviations for months/days of the week can be used for a specific date.</p> <p>Monday, Jan. 1, 2011; Mon-Fri:</p> <p>No comma for only month and year.</p> <p>January 2011</p>	Calendar system	<p>Use the Gregorian calendar system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2011 <p>Use CE and BCE to denote eras.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 310 BCE • 800 CE
Currency	<p>CDN should be the default. Use only \$. USD and other currencies should be specified (USD XXX - no dollar sign).</p>	Temperature	<p>Always use Celsius.</p> <p>15 degrees Celcius</p>
Length, etc.	<p>Use metric measurements unless imperial measurements are required. Periods not used for these international abbreviations unless at the end of a sentence, e.g.,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • metre m • kilometer km • centimeter cm • litre L • kilogram kg • gram g 		

Numbers	<p>Cardinal numbers One to nine – spelled out. 10 to ∞ – use the number.</p> <p>Spell it out only if the number is the first word of a sentence. The dean met with 13 students. Thirteen students met with Dean Simone Cohen.</p> <p>Ordinal numbers First, second, third</p> <p>Telephone numbers Use dashes for telephone numbers. Do not use brackets around area codes. 416-978-5555</p>
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1.4) Names, abbreviations, acronyms, and symbols

Names and titles	<p>Use full name on first reference. Subsequent references use surname only.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professor Sam Pringle teaches first-year students. Pringle loves to teach. <p>Avoid courtesy titles Mr., Mrs., Miss, or Ms. Use full name, without title, on first reference, followed by surname alone in subsequent references. (see above).</p> <p>Use Dr. for licensed health care professionals only. Do not use for faculty members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dr. Jane Doe is a pediatrician. Joe Smith is a professor at Brock University.
Abbreviations, degrees, and course codes	<p>Never abbreviate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Page(s), chapter(s), paragraph(s), part, section, appendix, table, figure, professor Names of faculty member, other than in citations, e.g., Mariah W. Chen, M.W. Chen <p>Provinces and territories Canadian provinces and territories: always spell fully within sentences. However, when writing out addresses, use Canada Post abbreviations as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alberta AB British Columbia BC Manitoba MB New Brunswick NB Newfoundland and Labrador NL Northwest Territories NT Nova Scotia NS Nunavut NU Ontario ON Prince Edward Island PE Quebec QC

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saskatchewan SK • Yukon Territory YT <p>Degrees Be consistent with degree abbreviations. Use the following format:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSc for Bachelor of Science • MA for Master of Arts • PhD for Doctor of Philosophy <p>Course codes Be consistent with course codes. Put letters in uppercase. No spaces between letters and numbers. Use H and Y for half and full courses. Use four digits for sections, with two spaces between the course code and course section.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BKS1002H • INF1002H 0101 • INF1002 Y 0102 <p>In a list of courses, leave two spaces between course designator and course title.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YES: INF1320H Introduction to Bibliographic Control • NO: INF1320H Introduction to Bibliographic Control
Acronyms	<p>Spell out acronyms on first reference, followed by abbreviated form in parentheses only if it will be referred to again in the same article</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Toronto Libraries (UTL) rocks. In later years, UTL.....
Symbols	<p>Avoid the use of special characters and formatting such as superscript, ° (degree symbol), or any special word formatting.</p> <p>Symbols such as \$ or % can be used as appropriate.</p> <p>Avoid use of ampersands (&) as they are often misread by HTML.</p>

2. FORMATTING

2.1) Capitalization

<p>Places</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dublin, Ireland 	<p>Governments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government of Ontario
<p>Institutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Toronto; Faculty of Law 	<p>People, and their titles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Pierre Girard, Provost Milena Poretsky <p>Do not capitalize if their title follows their name</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pierre Girard, professor in the Chemistry Department...
<p>Seasons</p> <p>Capitalization should be used for proper nouns only.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCULA hosts a dinner event each spring • The OCULA Spring Dinner will be held on... 	<p>Bullet points</p> <p>Each bullet point within a list begins with a capital letter. Do not use periods after a bulleted point.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alpha dog owners • Beta- testing for web apps • Omega 3 farm-fresh eggs
<p>Exceptions</p> <p>Do not capitalize people's titles, or positions used in general unless it is in relation to someone's name.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The chief librarian started his term in August 2011... • In August 2011, Chief Librarian Larry Alford... <p>Do not capitalize 'librarian' unless it is a specific named position.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...librarian Nancy Pearl, <i>but</i> Chief Librarian, Larry Alford <i>and</i> Information Literacy Librarian, Denise Moran <p>Capitalize official names of organizations, departments, offices, committees, conferences etc., but not part of the name:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Faculty of Arts & Science, <i>but</i> the faculty • The Access Services Office <i>but</i> the office • The Web Advisory Committee <i>but</i> the committee • The TRY Conference <i>but</i> the conference <p>Do not capitalize words like or 'professor' or 'dean' when not used in reference to an actual person's name</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...Professor Paige Turner, <i>but</i> the professor who teaches readers' advisory courses... • ...Dean Simone Cohen <i>but</i> the faculty deans meet once a month at ... <p>Do not capitalize subjects unless it is the name of a language, or a specific named & numbered course:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LibGuides are available for courses in history, chemistry, Spanish, philosophy, German... • Here is the syllabus for History 2615Y 	

2.2) Italics

Italics are difficult to read online. Use extremely sparingly. Never use for emphasis.

Valid uses of italics include:

Book, journals, artworks, film and videogame titles

2.3) Bolding

Use sparingly, and only when **essential** for emphasis. Editors may use bolding for stylistic purposes such as highlighting the names of people in our stories, etc.

2.4) Titles and headings

Use sentence case, not title case. Maintain use of capitalization in titles for proper nouns.

- **Sentence case** **Staffing the library with liaisons at Conestoga College**
- NOT Title case Staffing the Library with Liaisons at Conestoga College

2.5) Links

Link words

Work it out with sentence construction. Avoid "Click Here", etc.

Some examples:

- Consult our [FAQ](#) for more details
- Read [instructions](#) on how to proceed
- Students must [login](#) to see course syllabi

2.6) Tables

Use tables only when it makes a big difference in the clarity of information presented.

3. WRITING FOR THE WEB: SOME POINTERS FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Use as few words as possible – be concise, clear, and direct.

Group text where possible, using sub-headings.

Avoid:

- Verbosity
- Clichés
- Jargon
- Redundancies
- Long sentences and paragraphs
- Comma splices
- Other things that interfere with clarity and conciseness

Prefer active voice over passive voice. If you're uncertain, a good resource can be found at OWL Purdue: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/539/02/>

Examples of undesirable practices vs. good practices

VERBOSITY		CLICHES	
In addition , databases can be accessed off-campus.	Databases can be accessed off-campus.	Movers and shakers	Leaders
Thus , your card is blocked.	Your card is blocked.	Ahead of the curve	Innovative
Basically , we'll demonstrate time-saving tips for you to use.	We'll teach you time-saving tips.	Going forward... no other direction in which to go!	We will proceed with this plan.
JARGON		REDUNDANCIES	
Acquire, obtain, access	Get	10 a.m. this morning	10 a.m.
Utilize	Use	Current status	Status
Individuals	People, staff, students....	On a daily basis	Daily, frequently, often
COMMA SPLICES		ACTIVE VOICE	
The building is new, students like it.	The building is new. Students like it.	Our services will be evaluated annually.	We will evaluate our services every year.

Some examples taken from:

Langley, Anne, & Jonathan D. Wallace. (2010). *A Practical Writing Guide for Academic Librarians*. Oxford: Chandos. Inforum: 808.066027 L283

NOTE to editors: Do not copy and paste text from Microsoft Word into the web editor you are using.

- Formatting will be lost anyway, and hidden characters in Word can mess up web text
- Instead, convert Word documents to unformatted modes such as rich text format
- Cut and paste the unformatted text into the web editor