

# *The Gilded Quill Style Guide*



## **Preface:**

The Gilded Quill Style Guide is a Canadian style guide serving to guide which grammar, spelling, and mechanical style choices are generally preferred in Canada and recommended by Gilded Quill Communications. This guide focuses more on contentious facets of grammar and punctuation that may have multiple standards based on region or setting, rather than established basics. For brevity, layman elaboration may be minimal at times. This guide does not cover communication strategy.

The Gilded Quill style more closely follows “logical punctuation” standards with some reasonable exceptions. This guide is catered more toward Canadian English, but, with some few adjustments that are pointed out throughout the guide, it can be applicable to British and American environments as well.

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## Spelling and Usage:

### Doubling Consonants

The Gilded Quill style more closely follows British convention on whether or not to double consonants in the conjugation of verbs. When conjugating a multi-syllabic base word (e.g. “travel”) that ends on the pattern of consonant-vowel-consonant, the final consonant is usually doubled if pronounced emphasis falls on the final syllable of the base word. One exception to this pattern is in base words that end with an L — these words usually call for a doubling of the final “L” regardless of where syllabic stress falls.

Mono-syllabic base words (e.g. “open”) ending with the pattern of consonant-vowel-consonant typically only have their final consonant doubled in conjugation if its final vowel is a short.

Multi-syllabic examples:

- Travelled, labelled, counselled, cancelled, controlled, marvelled, patrolled

*[Double the “L” when conjugating regardless of stress.]*

- Occurred, referred, repelled, rebutted

*[Syllabic stress falls at the end of the base words. Double the consonant.]*

- Targeted, marketed, focused, happened

*[Syllabic stress falls at the beginning of the base verbs. Do not double the consonant]*

Mono-syllabic examples:

- Blurred, spurred, fitted, knitted, grabbed, rubbed

*[Doubling is required when the final vowel before conjugation is long.]*

Example of exceptions:

- Programmed, outfitted, kidnapped, transferred

*[There is a variety of unusual exceptions to the general rule.]*

### Spelling — Ending Variants

#### A: ize vs. ise

Some words vary regionally in how they are spelled. For words that end in “ize” or “ise” depending on where the writer or reader is, “ize” versions are to be used in North America. Normally, both forms are acceptable in the UK, while “ise” is not well accepted in Canada nor the US.

Examples:

Apologize, categorize, pulverize, realize, italicize, civilize, criticize, organize

Universally “ise” words:

Surprise, revise, improvise, despise, arise, advise, supervise, exercise, televise, franchise

**B: yze vs. yse**

For words that end in either “yze” or “yse”, the “yze” form is to be used in Canada and the US.

Examples:

Analyze, catalyze, breathalyze, paralyze

**C: re vs. er**

Where a “re” or “er” ending is contested, the Canadian and British “re” form will be used.

Examples:

Theatre, centre, fibre, litre

**D: our vs. or**

Between the “our” and “or” endings, the Canadian and British “our” preference will normally be used.

Examples:

Honour, colour, favour, behaviour

**E: ce vs. se**

A small selection of words that have noun and verb forms, where the noun form ends in “ce” and the verb form in “se”, are more strictly differentiated in British and Canadian English than in the United States English. We advise the following:

“Licence” is a noun, and “license” is a verb. This is the standard in UK and Canada, whereas “license” is used as both a noun and verb in the US. “Licence” as a verb is expanding in acceptance.

“Practice” is a noun, and “practise” is a verb. This is the standard in the UK and Canada. In the US, only “practice” is used. Though “practice” is increasingly acceptable as a verb in Canada.

“Advice” is only used as a noun, and “advise” is the verb form. Similarly, “device” is used as a noun, and “devise” is a verb. These are *not* interchangeable.

“Offence” and “defence” are preferred over “offense” and “defense”. The latter forms are more often used in the US. All forms are nouns.

**Themselves or Themselves**

“Themselves” may be used as the singular reflexive form of the pronoun “they”. “Themselves” should be used as the plural form for multiple subjects.

Examples:

- Plural: Those people are hungry. Tell them they need to feed themselves.
- Singular: This person is hungry. Tell them to feed himself.

## Spelling — British Diphthongs

With words that use the diphthongs “ae” and “oe” in British convention where American convention uses only an “e”, the American style is usually but not always preferred.

Examples:

“Encyclopedia” instead of “encyclopaedia”, “diarrhea” instead of “diarrhoea”, “leukemia” instead of “leukaemia”.

Exceptions:

“Archaeology” instead of “archeology”, “aesthetic” instead of “esthetic”.

## Double Negatives

The use of double negatives is standard and very much correct in some instances, but confusing and inadvisable in others. The presence of two negatives should normally result in a positive meaning, where the former negative negates the latter.

Two negatives may be used without issue when the meaning is clear and the double negatives serve a purpose, such as stress or deliberate vagueness. The majority of these cases occur when one of the negatives is in the form of a prefix.

Correct examples:

- It is not impossible.

*[The intended meaning of this sentence is clear. Something is possible, but the focus is on the fact that it is not impossible.]*

- Well, what they said isn’t untruthful.

*[Negative prefixes (e.g. “un”) typically do not obscure the meaning of a sentence when paired with another negative. The meaning, while indirect, is clear. What was said was not false, meaning that it should have at least some truth to it.]*

The following examples are instances where the double negative seen should *not* be used. Rephrasing is necessary to provide a clear meaning.

Incorrect examples:

- He didn’t eat no ravioli.

*[The proper interpretation of this sentence is that the subject ate some ravioli, since what he didn’t do is eat none. A suitable rephrasing of this message could be that “he ate at least some ravioli”.]*

- I won’t cut no more melons.

*[The only acceptable meaning of this confusing and incorrect sentence is that the subject will cut at least some melons, because they will not cut none. If the intended meaning is that the subject will not cut more melons, the rephrasing should be as follows: “I won’t cut any more melons.”]*

## Good or Well

The decision of using either “well” or “good” in a sentence can typically be reduced to and determined by whether you require an adjective or an adverb.

Examples:

- I have been doing well these past few days.  
*[In this example, “well” serves as an adverb modifying the verb “doing”. The adjective “good” cannot be used as an adverb, and so it cannot replace “well” in this context.]*
- I am good.  
*[“Am” functions as a linking verb, facilitating the application of the adjective “good” to the subject. Since adverbs cannot modify nouns, “well” would not be suited for this unless the intention is to indicate how the subject is doing, and the verb “doing” is omitted but implied. Such omission is permissible in informal writing, but less so in formal text.]*
- It used to hurt, but it is quite good now.  
*[As with the example previous to this one, “good” is the appropriate selection, as it is an adjective that modifies the pronoun “it”. “Quite” functions as an adverb modifying “good”.]*

## Lie or Lay

To “lay” is to place something down. To “lie” is to be reclined. “Lay” is transitive, and “lie” is intransitive. The forms are as follows:

To Lay:

- I will lay it down. *[Future tense, present form]*
- As you see, I’m laying this down now. *[Present continuous tense, present participle]*
- It has been laid down. *[Past tense, present perfect participle]*

To Lie:

- I will lie down. *[Future tense, present form]*
- I am lying down currently. *[Present continuous tense, present participle]*
- I’ve lain around too long. *[Past tense, past perfect participle]*
- I lay down. *[Past tense, past form]*

Confusion arises due to the simple past participle of “to lie” having an identical spelling and pronunciation to the simple present participle of “to lay”. “Lied” cannot be used as the simple past form of “to lie” (recline). “Lied” is only to be used as a past tense form of the identical word “lie”, meaning to tell a falsehood.



## Nor

The word “nor” is normally paired with “neither” to complete a correlative conjunction pair. “Nor” can be used without “neither” so long as it introduces a secondary negative element. The preceding negation is not restricted to “neither”, and may instead be a different negation such as “not”.

Examples:

- It has not snowed nor rained this month.  
*[“Nor” cannot be replaced with “or”.]*
- He hadn’t yet sampled the new nor the old!
- I won’t speak, nor will I sit.

A comma should be placed before “nor” only if what follows can be classified as a complete clause in that it possesses a subject and predicate, even if the clause is dependent.

Examples:

- It has not snowed, nor has it rained this month.  
*[The different between this example and the similar one above is the addition of the second instance of “it”, which serves as the subject for what is now a complete but dependent clause following the comma.]*
- He hadn’t yet sampled the new, nor had he sampled the old!  
*[This clunky construction is not advisable.]*

## How Many Spaces after Terminal Punctuation

Only one space character should be placed after the terminal punctuation of a sentence and before the beginning of another. A second empty space character is not necessary with modern technologies. If one space appears insufficient, space settings in the medium being used should be examined to ensure that the single space is not compressed.

## Peoples and Persons

Outside of specific legal circumstances that mandate the use of the words “peoples” and “persons”, both words should be avoided. “People” is to be used as the plural of “person” in reference to a known cluster of people, unknown numbers of people, and specific groups such as ethnicities and religions.

## Miscellaneous

- “Toward” is used instead of “towards”.
- “Advisor” is used instead of “adviser”. This selection is more compatible with its Latin origin, and it matches the spelling of “advisory”.
- “Commenter” is used instead of “commentor”, but “commentator” is used.
- “Math” is used instead of the British-preferred “maths”, but “mathematics” must be spelled as so.
- “Judgement” is used instead of “judgment”.
- “Enroll” is used instead of “enrol”. The double “L” is carried over to conjugations.
- “Prophecy” is used as a noun, while “prophesy” and “prophesied” are verbs.
- The word “internet” is not capitalized.
- “None” may be used in a singular or plural sense, and is dependent on context. Both of these examples are correct: 1: “None of the apple is eaten.” 2: “None of the cars are here.”
- The word “irregardless” should not be used. “Regardless” is the correct choice.
- It is absolutely acceptable to start a sentence with “however”.
- “Cheque” is used instead of the US-preferred “check” for bill or method of payment.
- As with “none”, “either” and “neither” are compatible with singular or plural verb agreement. Context determines whether they are treated as singular or plural.
- “Percent” is preferred over “per cent”, but both are acceptable.
- “Bullet point” should not have its space omitted.
- Both “manoeuvre” and “maneuver” are equally accepted.
- “Sceptic” is preferred in Canada and most of the English-speaking world, while “skeptic” is used in the US.
- “A historic”, “not “an historic”, unless the text is intended to be read in a dialect that does not pronounce the “h” in “historic”.
- “Speciality” and “specialty”, the latter of which omits the second “i”, are accepted spellings. The former is preferred in British environments.
- The word “appreciate” should be avoided when functioning to mean “to understand/acknowledge” in reference to negative events, due to common misunderstanding. The standard reader is likely to be unaware of the secondary definition of the word that is not tied to satisfaction, and they may interpret that the writer is satisfied by the event or fact.
- “Plow” is preferred over “plough”.
- “Okay”, “ok”, “OK”, and “O.K.” are all in-use forms of the same word, which originated as an initialism. “O.K.” is not used, as per the recommendations on using periods in initialisms in this guide. All other forms are accepted, but “okay” and “ok” are preferred.
- “Defendable” and “defensible” can both be used to mean that a place or thing can be defended, but “defensible” should be used when referring to an argument or position.
- “Mould” is used over “mold”.
- “Moustache” is used over “mustache”.
- “Grey” is preferred instead of “gray”.
- “Catalogue” is preferred over “catalog”.
- “Inquiry” is preferred over “enquiry”.

## Possession:

### Plurals and Apostrophes

When indicating possession with a singular noun, add both an apostrophe and an “s”. For plural nouns that already end in “s”, only use an apostrophe. Plural nouns that do not end in “s” do take both an apostrophe and an “s”. If this practice results in a potentially confusing or unsightly phrasing, reconstruction of the sentence is recommended.

Examples:

- The potato’s skin.  
*[The skin of a single potato.]*
- The potatoes’ skin.  
*[The skin of multiple potatoes.]*
- A bus’s engine is usually full of potatoes.  
*[Singular bus.]*
- The buses’ engines are usually full of potatoes.  
*[The engines of multiples buses. Spoken, this is pronounced the same as “buses’”. Consider rephrasing.]*
- The United States’s potato farms are plentiful.  
*[While “states” is plural, “the United States” is a single entity.]*
- Mr. Rogers’s sweater is made of potatoes.  
*[Singular nouns ending with “s” still require another “s” for possession.]*

### Possession by Multiple Subjects

When meaning to express that multiple people share ownership of either a single thing or multiple things, include the full apostrophe and “s” only on the final name in the list of owners. Where multiple people in a list separately own things, affix an apostrophe and “s” on the names of all owners.

Examples:

- Myra and Aera’s cat is extraordinarily fluffy.  
*[Myra and Aera own a cat together.]*
- Myra and Aera’s cats are extraordinarily fluffy.  
*[Myra and Aera own multiple cats together. Misinterpretation that Myra is fluffy too is possible in this instance, so rephrasing is recommended: “Myra and Aera have cats that are extraordinarily fluffy.”]*
- Myra’s and Aera’s cats are extraordinarily fluffy.  
*[Myra and Aera own separate fluffy cats. Whether they each own one or more is not revealed.]*

## Multiple Subjects — Possessive Pronouns

When there are multiple possessive pronouns (e.g. “his”, “mine”, “ours”) or possessive determiners (e.g. “her”, “my”, “their”) listed as owners, each should take the form that they would if they were written as the only owner. Possessive pronouns are not interchangeable with possessive determiners (e.g. “hers” with “her” or “my” with “mine”).]

Example: His and my house is composed entirely of meatloaf.

*[This sentence speaks of a single shared house. If each were to have their own house, one would write “His house and my house [...]” with an optional “both” at the head of the sentence. It should be noted that the names or pronouns of others are customarily placed before the writer’s own.]*

In a series of owners, if the final owner in the list is expressed by a possessive pronoun or possessive determiner, the possessive indicator (’s) falls to the last listed proper noun in the list if there is one.

Example: Mike’s and my house is composed entirely of meatloaf.

*[It is not acceptable to write “Mine and Mike’s house” or “Me and Mike’s house”. The first-person possessive determiner is required, not a possessive pronoun or standard pronoun.]*

## Possession of Gerunds

Gerunds do not always require that the noun or pronoun before them take on a possessive form, but it is often the more clear and formal approach. When the lack of a possessive form on the preceding noun could allow for misinterpretation, indicating possession is highly recommended.

Examples:

- James’s sprinting is impressive.

*[This sentence clearly expresses that what is impressive is the sprinting performed by James. If the possessive form is removed, and the sentence changes into “James running is impressive”, it could mistakenly be interpreted that either James himself is impressive while running, or that a direct address comma has been lost in writing and somebody is telling James that sprinting is impressive.]*

- I appreciated James’s helping.

*[This sentence shows that the appreciation is directed at the gerund, “helping”. Removal of the possessive apostrophe and “s” allows for the interpretation that James himself is what is appreciated instead of his act of helping.]*

- The guest’s dancing is annoying.

*[If what is annoying is the dancing, this is the correct way to express this. If what is annoying is the guest who is currently dancing, the apostrophe and “s” must be removed, and “annoying” becomes a participle instead of a gerund.]*

## Noun Phrases — Possessive Indicators

Noun phrases that consist of multiple individuals are to have one possessive indicator affixed to the end of the noun phrase, as it is treated as a single entity. This rule persists even when the final word of a noun phrase typically could not take on possession, as shown in the first example below.

When potential confusion arises from a possessive indicator on a noun phrase, consider rephrasing by using an “of” phrase to express possession.

Examples:

- The cat that died’s funeral was terribly sad.  
*[“The cat that died” is a noun phrase. The possessive apostrophe and “s”, while appearing affixed to “died”, is affixed to the entire noun phrase by attachment to its end. Better constructions, for clarity’s sake, could be “The funeral for the cat that died was terribly sad” or “The dead cat’s funeral was terribly sad”.]*
- The most touching speech was Fred and Jim’s.  
*[“Fred and Jim” is treated as a noun phrase. Add the possessive indicator to the end of the noun phrase, not each person that it is comprised of. A more clear construction could be “The most touching speech was the one by Fred and Jim”.]*

## Stacked Apostrophes

There are instances where apostrophes can stack in sequence. While these occurrences may appear odd, they are grammatically correct, albeit not recommended. If the situation may be read with confusion, steps should be taken to reconstruct the sentence to avoid superfluous apostrophe stacking. Below are instances of apostrophe stacking.

Examples:

- Dough Rollin’s special menu item today is olive bread.  
*[“Dough Rollin’”, ending with an apostrophe to indicate the omitted “s”, is a hypothetical bakery. To make this noun possessive, another apostrophe and “s” is added.]*
- I heard him say that he “likes the sourdough from ‘Dough Rollin’”s new location”.  
*[Note the three stacked apostrophes after the bakery name. The first one is part of the proper noun, the second closes the nested quotation, and the third pairs with the “s” to indicate possession. Functions do not share the same apostrophes.]*

## Notes

- For use of apostrophes with numbers and acronyms/initialisms, see the chapter “[Spelling and Usage](#)”.



## Hyphens:

### Compound Adjectives

Hyphens can be used to link together many different types of words in order to create one compound adjective. Words other than adjectives can be combined to create compound adjectives.

Examples:

- This **four-pound** potato will be delicious.  
*[Here we have a determiner (number) pairing with a noun to become a compound adjective.]*
- That **well-grown** potato is quite impressive!  
*[The adverb “well” is joined to the participle “grown” to form an adjective.]*
- The **now-massive** potato has surpassed all expectations.  
*[“Now” is an adverb, and “massive” is an adjective.]*
- The **New York-Based** company is branching out to potato farming.  
*[Multi-word nouns that normally are not connected by hyphens do not have hyphens added where they were never originally present. No hyphen is placed between “New” and “York”.]*

### Compound Adjectives Placed After the Noun

When a compound adjective comes after what it modifies, hyphenation is rarely used, as it is not commonly required for clarity. In instances where it could provide clarity, hyphenation should be applied.

Examples:

- That ravioli is **well heated**.  
*[A hyphen will not add clarity, so it is not used.]*
- The ravioli decree is detailed and **all-encompassing**.  
*[Without the hyphen, it may not be immediately clear that the last two words are intended as one compound adjective.]*

### Adverbs Ending with “ly”

It is not necessary to hyphenate words with adverbs that end in “ly” due to it being rare that a hyphen would offer clarity in these cases. It is also recommended to not use a hyphen for the adverb “very”.

Examples:

- This **slightly seared** tuna is seared slightly too much.  
*[The lack of a hyphen after “slightly” is not detrimental to understanding.]*
- A **quietly muttering** demon is on the porch.  
*[As with the other example, a hyphen would add no value.]*

## Affixes

Hyphens are not exclusive to adjectives, adverbs, and nouns. It is sometimes useful to use hyphens when adding a prefix or suffix to a word. This practice should only be used when the hyphen adds real clarity.

Examples:

- James and I **co-operate** this crane.  
*[Adding the hyphen prevents confusion with the word “cooperate”.]*
- James is an **ex-member** of the Crane Guild.  
*[“Ex” is a prefix joined to the noun “member” as a modifier.]*
- James is **uneducated** and dangerous.  
*[No hyphen is required between “un” and “educated” because “uneducated” is an established word that is clear.]*
- If you have any care for **self-preservation**, don’t work with James.  
*[The connecting hyphen clearly shows this to be a compound word.]*

## Compound Nouns

As with other types and pieces of words, nouns can be compounded with the use of hyphens. The rules around compound nouns are more loose and situational than that of compound adjectives. Many compound nouns have up to three acceptable forms. The three options are “closed” (e.g. “whiteboard”), “hyphenated” (e.g. “white-board”), and “open” (e.g. “white board”).

Examples:

- This **stone-holder** is incredibly sturdy.  
*[The compound noun in this sentence benefits from using a hyphen. Without it, it may be misinterpreted that the holder is made of stone, rather than that the holder holds stones.]*
- We ordered ten **corkboards**.  
*[While “cork” does specify the substance of the board, it serves as part of the noun in this example. “Corkboard” is a compound noun. It is acceptable to write this word in either of the three forms, as all are clear.]*
- Do you like my new **hair-do**?  
*[The compound noun “hair-do” benefits from having a hyphen joining its two parts. Without it, the sentence is susceptible to a possible misinterpretation where “do” may be read as its own word. This error would likely be quickly corrected in the reader’s mind, but avoiding it entirely is preferable.]*

## Notes

- For details on dashes, see the [Parentheses, Brackets, and Dashes](#) section.

## Commas and Conjunctions:

### Oxford Commas

The Oxford comma (also called the serial comma) should consistently be used for the sake of clarity. Place a comma between the last and second-to-last item in a list.

Examples:

- I'll pick up the apples, oranges, and pears.
- Have you met my best friend, my mother, and my sister?  
*[The last comma prevents the message from suggesting that the mother is also the sister.]*

An argument against the Oxford comma is that an item in a list may be misinterpreted as being an appositive for another item. This issue is uncommon and easily avoided.

Example: "Jim, the rat, and Phil."

*[This list should be interpreted as listing three nouns. If "the rat" is meant to be an appositive for "Jim", it should be phrased with "who is" preceding "the rat".]*

### Comma Splices

Comma splices should always be avoided. Two independent clauses cannot be separated with only a comma.

**Incorrect examples:**

- Mike jumped off of the diving board, he immediately regretted this decision.
- Once upon a time, Myra ate lots of ice cream, Mike did not approve of ice cream.

**Correct examples:**

- Mike jumped off of the diving board; He immediately regretted this decision.  
*[A semicolon could also be used to separate these independent clauses.]*
- Once upon a time, Myra ate a lot of ice cream. Mike did not approve of ice cream.  
*["Mike" is a new subject for a new predicate.]*

**Alternative correct examples:**

- Mike jumped off of the diving board, and he immediately regretted this decision.  
*[When separating two independent clauses, a comma can be used with a coordinating conjunction.]*
- Once upon a time, Myra ate a lot of ice cream, while Mike did not approve of ice cream.  
*[In this example, "while" is a subordinating conjunction functioning with the meaning of "whereas". When subordinating conjunctions are placed at the start of a clause, the clause becomes subordinate/dependent.]*



## Run-On Sentences

Run-on sentences should always be avoided. Run-on sentences are multiple clauses that are merged together without proper punctuation.

### Incorrect examples:

- William ran over the barrier and James screamed in shock.  
*[The lack of proper punctuation will often lead to initial misinterpretation. A reader reading up until “James” can interpret the sentence as meaning that William ran over both the barrier and James.]*
- I would like a burger and fries I don’t like salad.  
*[Misinterpretation is not as likely in this example, but the lack of a natural pause is jarring and incorrect.]*

### Correct examples:

- William ran over the barrier, and James screamed in shock.  
*[Add a comma before a coordinating conjunction bringing in a new clause. One could also write “William ran over the barrier. James screamed in shock”.]*
- I would like a burger and fries; I don’t like salad.  
*[Add a period between two independent clauses. Semicolons may be used to show close relation between the two clauses.]*

## Introductory Phrases

When a subordinate phrase is placed before the main clause that it is dependent on, a comma should be inserted after the subordinate. It is occasionally acceptable to omit the comma after short introductory phrases that do not necessarily have the pause in natural speech. When there appears to be two adjacent introductory phrases, any after the first should be treated as parenthetical phrases. (See the [Parentheses, Brackets, and Dashes](#) section).

### Examples:

- **In the afternoon**, the dog turns into a demon.  
*[Temporal prepositional phrase]*
- **Running in circles**, the dog transforms.  
*[Participle phrase]*
- **Quickly**, Mariana jumps on the couch  
*[Adverb. While part of the predicate, it has been detached from what it modifies and placed as an introductory element.]*
- **Relating to the job**, at the moment, I’m working hard.  
*[“At the moment” would be considered the introductory phrase of this sentence if “Relating to the job” was not present. There cannot be multiple introductory phrases to one sentence, so two options present themselves. If the second phrase is short and can lose the right-hand comma, this can be done. If the second phrase is longer and would absolutely require the comma after it if it were the only introductory phrase, it can instead be treated as a parenthetical expression, and its comma can remain.]*

When an introductory phrase begins with a preposition, the comma may be omitted if the text remains clear and if intended spoken flow does not require the pause.

Example: **Onto the roof** he jumped.

Introductory prepositional phrases do not require a comma when they are only being paired with a complement via a linking verb.

Example: When the rain falls is when we will start.

*["Is" functions as a linking verb, connecting the prepositional phrase, "when the rain falls", to its complement, "when we will start".]*

### Commas — Contrast and Clarity

While seemingly contradictory to other comma rules, it is acceptable and often advisable to include commas in cases of negation or contrast in order to improve clarity of meaning.

Examples:

- Ravioli is not for lunch, **but rather dinner**.

*[Commas are not normally added before a dependent clause/phrase that is located after the main clause. For this phrase of contrast, it follows the natural flow of speech.]*

- We were supposed to go the park, **not the beach**.

*[It can be thought that there is an omitted but implied duplication of the subject after the comma.]*

- They ate ravioli, **didn't they?**

It is often useful to add a comma after negative clauses that are elaborated on with "because". However, rephrasing is more advisable in the below examples.

Examples:

- I did not eat the ice cream because Jill wanted me to.

*[The subject ate the ice cream, but not because Jill wanted them to.]*

- I did not eat the ice cream, because Jill wanted me to.

*[In spite of Jill wanting the subject to eat ice cream, they did not.]*

In sentences that list two items separated by the coordinating conjunction "and", but where at least one of the items is lengthy and/or complex, a comma may be placed before the coordinating conjunction in order to prevent misinterpretation and ensure clarity.

Examples:

- The problems are Greg eating all of our donuts, and the lizards on the ceiling.  
*[The first of the two items in this list is a gerund phrase. Without the addition of a comma after “donuts”, the second problem in the list (lizards on the ceiling) may be read as something that Greg eats in addition to donuts. The items may be swapped to avoid both the confusion and the necessity of the comma.]*
- On my morning walks, I like to see those big old spruce trees with mossy branches, and playful puppies.  
*[The first of the two items in this list includes a prepositional phrase modifying it. Without the placement of the comma after “branches”, it could be confusingly misinterpreted that the “playful puppies” item is part of the preposition phrase, and an aspect of the spruce trees.]*

### Conjunctive Adverbs

When using a conjunctive adverb to link two independent clauses, there are two standard approaches. If the conjunctive adverb follows a coordinating conjunction, the required punctuation is only a comma before the coordinating conjunction. If there is no coordinating conjunction before the conjunctive adverb, a semicolon should be placed before it, and a comma should be placed after it.

Examples:

- I ate the hot dog, **and therefore** I am no longer hungry.
- I ate the hot dog; **therefore**, I am no longer hungry.
- I didn't eat the hot dog; **besides**, I don't even like hot dogs.

### Starting with Conjunctions

Sentences may start with conjunctions, despite the mistaken widespread expectation against such usage.

Examples:

- **Before** I jump, make sure the trampoline is ready.  
*[Subordinate conjunctions function just fine at the head of a sentence.]*
- **Until** next time!  
*[Another subordinating conjunction.]*
- Be careful at the camp! **And**, as I said, remember to change your socks!  
*[Traditional prescriptivism rejects the usage of coordinating conjunctions to start sentences. It is acceptable to do this, but usually advised against in highly professional settings.]*

## Single Subjects with Multiple Predicates

Normally, when a sentence contains one subject and two predicates, there is no comma separating the predicates. When there are three or more predicates, they are separated by commas, as is done with standard lists.

### Correct examples:

- I will eat some ravioli and swat some flies.
- You killed the man and hid the body.
- Daniel swam quickly, splashed heavily, and continued going.

In instances where the lack of a comma between the first and second predicate can lead to misinterpretation or awkward phrasing, the text should be rephrased. Simply adding a comma will not usually suffice.

### Incorrect examples:

- I'm about to head out to the pool to go for a swim and get my pants tailored.  
*[In this example, we have one subject and two predicates. The lack of a comma as mandated by the above rules causes possible confusion and misinterpretation. This may mistakenly be interpreted that the subject intends to get pants tailored at the pool. The original text can be transformed into two sentences, or a subject can be added to the second predicate and a comma added before "and".]*
- I'll eat this steak sandwich and fries and fish for salmon.  
*[When the first predicate lists two items, the second predicate can occasionally be mistakenly be read as a continuation of the first predicate's list. This particular example may have the verb "fish" read as the noun of the same spelling.]*

## Correlative Conjunctions with Commas

Correlative conjunctions normally do not require commas between their coordinate elements. Two common exceptions to this rule are for "not only / but also" pairings that include a subject in the second part and when non-restrictive phrases are present, as seen below.

### Examples:

- **Not only** is he in critical condition, **but** he also cannot undergo surgery.  
*[The inclusion of the subject "he" after "but" causes the second part to be a complete clause, requiring a comma before its coordinating conjunction.]*
- He can **not only** jump out of this plane **but** also land right on the mark.  
*[A comma would be necessary if the second part were formed as a complete clause such as "but he can also land right on the mark".]*
- He will **either** run, which I suggested, **or** swim, which you suggested.  
*[The presence of the commas is to enclose the two non-restrictive phrases.]*

## Direct Address

Names or name substitutes used in direct address require commas, as is shown below:

Examples:

- I will not eat that, Mike.  
*[The placement of the comma makes clear that “Mike”s is being used in direct address rather than the object that is not to be eaten.]*
- No, Mike, I will not eat that.  
*[“No, Mike” could be treated as its own sentence, and a period could be added after “Mike”. In the form above, “Mike” is treated as non-restrictive to a sentence that could otherwise be written as “No, I will not eat that”.]*
- Mike, I will not eat that.  
*[A comma is required after a direct address that starts a sentence.]*

This rule applies to the greetings of letters and emails. “Hello, Mike.” is a complete sentence, and should be terminated with a period — never a comma. A colon may replace the period in suitable instances of high formality. An exclamation mark is an acceptable alternative for non-formal greetings with a boisterous or friendly inflection.

## A Comma before “Too”

There is no simple rule mandating the inclusion or omission of a comma before “too”. When there would be a distinct pause in speech before the instance of “too”, a comma should be included. This will more often be the case when “too” is written in the middle of a sentence in the meaning of “as well”. When “too” is placed at the end of a sentence or is meaning “in excess”, it would not normally benefit from a comma. Do not include the comma when no pause is present.

Examples:

- I specialize in making ravioli, but I can make spaghetti too.  
*[A comma placed before “too” here would not emulate speech, and it would not provide any additional clarity.]*
- You intend to eat that ravioli? I, too, have this goal.  
*[When spoken, there would normally be a pause in each end of “too” in this example, which is meaning “as well” rather than “in excess”.]*

## Between Two Modifiers

A comma should be placed between two prenominal coordinate modifiers that modify the same thing (adjectives that come before what they modify). It can often be determined if the modifiers are coordinate and warrant a comma if it sounds natural and appropriate to include the brief comma pause in speech. One can also insert “and” between the adjectives; if this appears and sounds correct, it is likely that the modifiers are coordinate.

Adjectives will not be coordinate if they are of distinctly different ranks or classes. As an example, an adjective that provides information on age will not be coordinate with another adjective that relates to color.

A common term for modifiers that are not coordinate is “cumulative modifiers”. Cumulative modifiers normally cannot be rearranged without it resulting in either awkwardness or an unwanted change in meaning. There may be instances where it seems appropriate and clear to place a comma between cumulative modifiers, just as there are opposite instances where coordinate modifiers work better without a comma. In such an event, write it in line with how it naturally sounds and how it is best expressed.

Examples:

- We will feast on hot, steamy ravioli.

*[Spoken aloud, there is a clear comma pause between these adjectives. More certainty can be had by testing this sentence by placing “and” between the adjectives. If it sounds appropriate to do so, so a comma will be used.]*

- We will feast on fresh Italian ravioli.

*[“Fresh” and “Italian” are not coordinate. They are of different ranks, modifying different aspects of the object.]*

## Notes

- For restrictive and non-restrictive elements, see the next chapter, “[Parentheses, Brackets, and Dashes](#)”.
- For commas with parenthetical clauses/phrases, see the next chapter.

## Parentheses, Brackets, and Dashes:

### Types of Brackets

- Square brackets [Brackets] — **[]**:

Also referred to simply as “brackets”, these are normally used for inserting elements external to the text, such as comments, corrections, translations, and more.

- Round brackets [Parentheses] — **()**:

Typically called “parentheses”, these are commonly used to enclose words or elements that are more connected. Parentheses can be used in a similar fashion to commas and em dashes when functioning to include parenthetical elements such as additional information or thoughts.

- Curly brackets — **{}**:

Curly brackets have a very limited set of uses and should be avoided unless it is certain that they are appropriate to the technical setting, such as mathematics. An especially large curly bracket can be used in margins of a page to enclose multiple lines for the purpose of indicating where a hand-written note applies to.

- Angled brackets [Chevrons] — **<>**:

Similar to curly brackets, chevrons should not be used in formal writing unless it is being used correctly in the context of a specific field. As with curly brackets, one application of chevrons is in mathematics.

### Square and Round Brackets with Periods

When text within parentheses/brackets serves as a part of a larger sentence, its first letter is not capitalized unless it is a proper noun, and it cannot have a final terminating period within the parentheses. If text within parentheses is placed on its own and not part of another sentence, its first letter should be capitalized, and it must have terminating punctuation within the parentheses. See the “[Capitalization](#)” section for more information.

Examples:

- I ate the cookies (but I didn’t like them).
- I ate the cookies. (They were chocolate chip.)
- I’m Jim. I’m on your guest list. [Jim entered the building.]

### Options for Parentheticals

Commas should be used to enclose parenthetical elements unless em-dashes or parentheses are better suited to the specific instance. A limited explanation of which form of punctuation to use is that commas are used when the flow is more fluid, parentheses when it is a detached aside, and em-dashes when it is a stronger interruption. Commas should not be used for parentheticals that are complete independent sentences.

Em dashes may be used with or without spaces on either side. When ample space is present in the medium of writing, we recommend including the spaces.

Examples:

- Did you hear about the secret (soon to be formerly secret) entrance?
- The secret entrance, which isn't so secret anymore, is under the tree.
- The secret entrance — the real one — is actually in the shed.

Parenthetical elements may also be placed at the beginning or end of a sentence, as seen below.

Examples:

- He would eat ravioli, of course.
- Now, where are you hiding?
- I will eat your spaghetti — ferociously.

## Em Dashes

A proper em dash character should be used whenever possible, as opposed to one or two hyphens. Em dashes should have a space on either side, rather than directly joining words together. If the writing medium is especially small and limited, these spaces may be removed. Text introduced after an em dash does not receive first-letter capitalization unless it is a full quotation or a proper noun.

Examples:

- I will never — never in my life — eat your ravioli.  
*[Each em-dash should have a space on either side. This provides better readability and prevents it from being mistaken as a hyphen.]*
- I will never eat your ravioli — not ever.  
*[Parentheticals offset at the beginning or end of a sentence by an em dash need only the single em dash. None are required at the end or beginning of a sentence.]*

## En Dashes

An en-dash is used between two items to indicate range. Spoken, the word “to” would normally fall in the place of the en dash. Is it recommended to avoid the en dash in negative number ranges, to avoid confusion.

Examples:

- You will earn roughly \$5000–\$6000.
- Let me know when you get on the Victoria–Toronto flight!

Do not use “from” or “between” before ranges using the en dash. A range following “from” should use “to” instead of an en dash, and “between” requires “and” instead of an en dash.

Note: For more on capitals with dashes, see the “[Capitalization](#)” section.



## Non-Restrictive Phrases

Non-restrictive phrases (also called non-essential phrases), such as appositive or adjective phrases, should normally be enclosed or offset by commas. Parenthetical phrases are considered to be non-restrictive.

Examples:

- Cole Johnston, **the founder of Gilded Quill Editing**, wrote this style guide.  
*[The highlighted appositive noun phrase restates the subject.]*
- Myra swam through the lane, **exhausted and cold**.  
*[The underlined is an adjective phrase, modifying the subject. It adds to the sentence but is not required for it to be understood properly.]*
- Myra ran away from the ravioli, **hair blowing in the wind**.  
*[The underlined is a non-essential absolute phrase.]*
- Bill's son, **Bob**, has arrived.  
*[Regardless of whether or not Bill has more sons, the commas are acceptable. The commas indicate the parenthetical state of "Bob", and not that it is restrictive. The inclusion or omission of the commas is up to the author.]*

## Notes

- See the parentheticals part of the "[Commas and Conjunctions](#)" chapter for details on using commas with parenthetical clauses and phrases.
- Brackets are not made to be italic or bold when enclosing italic or bold text. They should remain consistent with the font outside of what is enclosed.

## Capitalization:

### Proper Nouns

As a general guideline, only proper nouns are capitalized. The following section will attempt to clarify the grey areas of this simple rule.

Examples of proper nouns:

- Jeffrey *[A person's name.]*
- Walmart *[An organization or entity name.]*
- Band-Aid *[A brand. Common nouns such as “bandage” are not capitalized.]*
- Northern Ireland *[“Northern” is part the country’s official name. One would not capitalize “northern” in “northern Scotland, though.]*

### Shortening Proper Nouns

When using what would normally be a common noun (e.g. office, board, committee, province) to refer to a proper noun, it can be considered a proper noun, and thus capitalized, if the word is part of the original name and/or if it is understood as an official shortened term for the proper noun.

Examples:

- When you get to the **Department of Human Resources**, ask for Jill.  
*[Full official names of offices, departments, and other locations, entities, and bodies are capitalized.]*
- When you get to **Human Resources**, ask for Jill.  
*[The core component of the name remains, and it is still understood as that particular department. This refers to a proper noun, and capitalization is retained.]*
- When you get to the right **department**, as for Jill.  
*[In this instance, “department” is used in a general sense, as evidenced by “right” modifying it.]*
- When you get to the **Department**, give me a call.  
*[In a setting where a specific department is regularly referred to in such a way and there are no other departments to confuse it with, this capitalization may be acceptable, but it is best to err on the side of cautious clarity.]*
- I used to work in **communications**.  
*[The lack of capitalization on “communications” indicates that the word is being used in a general sense, referring to the field of communications. If it were capitalized, it would be in reference to a related entity with “Communications” either as its name or as the key word in its name.]*
- You are the leader of the **Province**, are you not? I live in the **province**.  
*[The capitalized instance of “province” refers to “The Province of British Columbia”, being the proper name of the government body. The lowercase instance refers to the general area of the province.]*

## Compass Directions

Cardinal direction nicknames for proper nouns and areas may be capitalized despite not being an original or official name, as long as it is a generally accepted term that would be understood in context. Cardinal directions are not capitalized when generally referring to a direction.

Examples:

- Have you ever had sweet tea from the **South**?  
*[While in the US, “the South” is an accepted term for the southern United States, despite its boundaries not being clear, and the name not being official. When the context ensures understanding, such a nickname may optionally be capitalized.]*
- There’s quite a nice view while flying over **northern** Vancouver Island.  
*[In this example, “northern” is generally and vaguely used. It is not used to refer to a particular proper noun location, and it is not a standard term that would qualify for capitalization.]*
- Run down **south**, and you’ll find the old bridge.  
*[Here, “south” is used more as a direction, and not a name for a place.]*

## Common Nouns Derived from Proper Nouns

Many words derived from or referencing proper nouns are capitalized, such as adjectives denoting a religious affiliation or nationality. Common species names are not capitalized unless the term is derived from a proper noun, such as a planet name.

Examples:

- Kira is a **Scottish** human, and John is **Klingon**.  
*[While the species of “human” is not capitalized, the species of “Klingon” is, as the word is derived from a proper noun: a planet’s name. “Scottish”, being a nationality and derived from “Scotland”, is capitalized.]*
- These **Terrans**, also called humans, are unaware of the existence of **Martians**.  
*[“Martian” is derived from “Mars”, and “Terran” is derived from “Terra”, which is a common term used as the proper noun for Earth in science fiction. Both “Terran” and “Martian” can be used nouns and adjectives, and both are derived from proper nouns.]*
- Have the **Buddhists** come to the market yet?  
*[This adjective comes from the proper noun, Buddhism. Religion modifiers are capitalized.]*

Some words, despite originating from a proper noun, are not capitalized. In some cases this is due to a gradual loss of association with their origin, or simply a changing convention in writing. What follows are examples of proper-noun-derived words that can be written without capitalization.

Examples:

french fries, brussel sprouts, swiss cheese, satanic

## Personal Titles

This section applies to numerous types of titles that can be applied to a person, such as personal, royal, occupational, military, religious, civil, and more. Firstly, it must be determined if a title is in fact a formal or significant title, or if it is a standard occupational descriptor. Standard occupational titles and descriptors are not capitalized.

Proper titles are capitalized when used in direct conjunction with a name or when they are alone and serving in replacement of a name. When a title following a name is separated from it by a comma, it may still be capitalized unless it is intended to be used descriptively.

### Examples:

- I met with Archbishop Thomas Grey.  
*["Archbishop" is a formal granted title. It should be capitalized.]*
- I met with Thomas Grey, Archbishop.  
*[When a recognized title is placed in apposition to a name, but it is meant to serve as a direct title instead of a descriptor, it can be capitalized.]*
- I met with Thomas Grey, the archbishop.  
*[The inclusion of the definite article "the" transforms "archbishop" into a descriptor rather than a direct title. Descriptors are not capitalized.]*
- I slew the Professor.  
*["Professor" is a legitimate and earned title. When a proper title is used in the place of a name without any modifiers other than "the", it is capitalized.]*
- I slew our professor before he could slay me.  
*[Titles are not capitalized when used with determiners other than "the", such as "your", "their", or "my".]*
- I slew the former professor.  
*[Titles are not capitalized when modified with qualifiers such, as "former", "future", or "late", even after a "the".]*
- I slew the professor, Edward Mewcats.  
*[When a person's name is used in apposition after their title, the title is not capitalized. While the title is recognized as proper, it is used as a descriptor in this construction.]*
- Bobby "the Shiv" Bobbins is an agile adversary.  
*[Nickname titles of this sort can be capitalized along with the name.]*
- I offered ravioli to police officer Dan.  
*["Police officer" is common job title, and so it is not capitalized. Some other common job titles are "social worker", "supervisor", and "manager".]*
- Justin Trudeau holds the position of prime minister.  
*[When referencing a title or position on its own, it is not capitalized, even if unique.]*
- Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau drinks maple syrup from the bottle.  
*[The adjective "Canadian" takes "prime minister" for itself and renders it lowercase. The title is no longer part of the subject's name, and it becomes a descriptor.]*

- Phil works for the Canadian government.  
*["Canadian" is used to modify and elaborate on "government", which is not used as a proper noun here.]*
- Phil works for the Government of Canada.  
*["The Government of Canada" is the true name for Canada's government.]*

Do not capitalize a title in plural form when referencing multiple individuals: "I see the directors coming."

Signature lines in emails and letters provide an exception to the above title capitalization rules. Such instances permit the capitalization of common titles and descriptors within reason.

Example: John Doe, Social Worker

### Direct Address

Names and proper titles used in direct address are to be capitalized. Do not capitalize terms of endearment, common occupational terms, or standard honorifics. Honorifics will only be capitalized when they are official titles.

Examples:

- Hey, assistant!  
*[Common occupational descriptors in the place of a name are not capitalized.]*
- Would you come over here, General?  
*["General" is a legitimate, proper title.]*
- Get out of here, asshole!  
*[Direct address pejoratives are not proper titles or names.]*
- Certainly, love.  
*[Such terms of endearment are not capitalized.]*
- I'll get right on that, sir.  
*["Sir" is used as a common honorific used to show respect. Such terms are not capitalized unless they are also proper titles (see next example).]*
- I'll get right on that, Sir.  
*[One would only capitalize "Sir" in such a case if the subject has also been royally granted the title.]*
- I'm here to inform you that Her Majesty is waiting.  
*[Some official titles include pronouns that should be capitalized, such as "Her Majesty", "His Highness", "Your Honour", or "Your Grace".]*
- I'll do the dishes, Mom.  
*[Familial titles are capitalized when used in direct address or as a replacement to a name. These terms are not capitalized when following determiners.]*

## Titles, Headings, and Works

In the case of documents, works, publications, and headings, all nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs are capitalized. If the first word in a title or heading is something that would not be capitalized if it were elsewhere in the title, it will still be capitalized. Relative and standard pronouns are included in the “all nouns” rule. Parts of hyphenated words follow the same rules. Articles, prepositions, and coordinating conjunctions are not capitalized. The article “the” may be capitalized when it is part of a proper noun, and not simply functioning as a determiner. “To” is not capitalized even when it serves as an adverb or infinitive marker. If words that can function as prepositions, such as “up”, are used as adverbs or adjectives, they should be capitalized.

Examples:

- The Comprehensive Guide to Bacon  
*[“The” is capitalized as it starts the title. If found elsewhere, it would be lowercase.]*
- Bacon Is Delicious  
*[“Is” is a verb, regardless of its short length, and it should be capitalized.]*
- The Fate of Jim in the Double-Murder  
*[“Of” and “in” are prepositions, and thus are lowercase. As for “murder”, hyphenation does not exempt words from capitalization.]*
- Ravioli until Death  
*[“Until is used as a preposition. Word length does not affect whether or not words are capitalized.]*
- A Follow-Up Argument  
*[Here, “up” services as an adjectives, not a preposition, and so it is capitalized.]*

## Capitalization with Punctuation

Text that follows an em dash, colon, or semicolon should not have its first letter capitalized unless it is a proper noun or if it is a quotation that is originally capitalized. See the “Quotations” section for more information on this rule exception.

Examples:

- I need some items from the store: ice cream, cat fur, and dried bark.  
*[Lists after colons should not start with capitalization unless the first item is a proper noun.]*
- I will conquer the world — but not today, I don’t think.  
*[The subordinate phrase introduced by the em dash does not start with a proper noun, nor is it a quotation, so it is not capitalized.]*
- Remember Father’s mantra: “I will only eat spaghetti when I’m a good boy.”  
*[The quoted material following the comma retains its original capitalization.]*
- This mongoose is rabid; it will probably eat your fingers.  
*[The clause following the semicolon does not require capitalization.]*

Text within parentheses should not begin with capitalization if the text is located within another sentence, regardless of position. If not located within a sentence, it is to be capitalized and terminated as if it were not parenthetical. Refer to the “Parentheses and Brackets” chapter for more information on this matter.

Examples:

- I did not say (not verbally, at least) that I was going to be there.  
*[The parenthetical aside requires no capitalization or period.]*
- I did not say (not even remotely!) that I was going to be there.  
*[Quotation and exclamation marks are not omitted, as they bring meaning.]*

### Degrees and Certificates

Terms referencing fields and concepts are not capitalized. However, when these terms are part of proper nouns such as departments or diplomas, they are capitalized.

Examples

- I have a Bachelor of Engineering degree specializing in bridges.
- I’m an engineering student. I study in the Engineering Department. I’m looking to get my bachelor’s.

### Skin Colour

Unlike nationality adjectives, which are capitalized due to their being derived from proper nouns, “white”, “black”, and other skin tones are common nouns that should not be capitalized. In circumstances where an organization is unaware of this and mandates capitalization, equal treatment must apply across the palette.

## Subjects and Objects:

### Than

The word “than” can be used as a preposition or a conjunction. When it is used as a conjunction, the following phrase or clause should use the subjective case (me, him), followed by a predicate. When “than” is used as a preposition, the following text should use the objective case (I, he). Whether or not it should be treated as a conjunction or preposition is situationally dependent, as shown below.

Examples:

- He is stronger than me.

*[In this example, “than” is used as a preposition of comparison. “Me” functions as an object, where the subject that it is being compared to is “he”. This usage is considered to be less formal to some.]*

- He is stronger than I am.

*[In this example, “than” is used as a comparison conjunction, causing the following pronoun to require a subjective case. It is acceptable in less formal writing to omit the “am” after “I”, and leave it implied.]*

- Myra sees Mike more than me.

*[In this example, with “than” being used as a preposition, the meaning is that Myra sees Mike more often than she sees “me”. When this is the intended meaning, clarification is useful. “Myra sees Mike more than she sees me.”]*

- Myra sees Mike more than I do.

*[Here, “than” is treated as a conjunction. The understanding of the sentence has changed, and now means that Myra doesn’t see Mike as often as “I” do.]*

### Relative Pronouns Serving Two Roles

When the relative pronouns “who”, “whom”, “whoever”, and “whomever” conflictly serve as both the object and the subject in a sentence, the word’s role within the specific clause or phrase takes precedent to how it functions on the larger scale.

Example:

- Give this pie to **whoever** eats pies.

*[The noun phrase “whoever eats pie” is acting as the object of “Give this pie to [...]”. “Whoever” is serving as the subject for “whoever eats pies”, where “[...] eats pies” is the noun complement in the noun phrase.]*

- I will give this pie to **whomever**.

*[As the relative pronoun is alone, there is no conflict. It serves only as the object, and so the object form, “whomever”, can be used.]*



## Determiners with Pronouns

When a sentence consists only of a determiner, linking verb, and pronoun, the pronoun may either use the subjective or objective case. Both options are correct.

Examples:

- This is him.

*[This sentence is commonly used for answering a phone call. Both “this” and “him” refer to the subject, being the person answering the call. The contentious issue behind this usage is that “him” is exclusive to being used as an object. Aside from its validity from common acceptance, it can be considered as being properly constructed as an object if there is an omitted but implied “speaking” at the tail end of the sentence, which would force the subjective case.]*

- This is he.

*[This phrasing is considered to be more in line with traditional, strict English. “He” is the correct subjective form pronoun that is serving as a subject complement to “this”, which also refers to the speaker.]*

## Quotations:

### Double vs. Single Quotation Marks

In line with standard American and Canadian convention, the double quotation mark [“”] is to be used for primary quotations. The single mark [‘’] is to be used for quotations within quotations. For quotes that are further embedded, alternate the use of double and single.

Single quotation marks should not be used for any other purpose, including the common but incorrect usage where they enclose words used in a sarcastic or doubtful sense.

### Quotation Capitalization

Capitalization from original text is retained in quotation of it. Where an original piece of text contains sentence-beginning capitalization, this is brought forward when the text is quoted in another sentence. When beginning a sentence with a quotation that does not originally start with capitalization, the first letter can optionally be capitalized and placed within brackets to indicate that an alteration was made. When quoting a single word or fragment that was originally capitalized by its placement at the head of a sentence, capitalization can be removed.

Examples:

Original Quotation: “Tempting, these things are, but they are wrong.”

- I heard him say, “Tempting, these things are, but they are wrong”.  
*[Original capitalization is carried over.]*
- He once said, “Tempting, these things are [...]”  
*[Even when the sentence is not complete, it retains original capitalization.]*
- He once said that these things are “tempting”.  
*[When what is being quoted is only a word or two, or if it is paraphrasing, capitalization should be removed. In these cases, removing the quotation marks is often an option.]*
- His wise words: “Tempting, these things are, but they are wrong”.  
*[Colons and semicolons do not alter how quotations are capitalized.]*
- “[...] [B]ut they are wrong”, he said, speaking of the tempting things.  
*[In informal text, the brackets around the “B” may be removed. They are recommended in formal writing, as they provide information to the reader. In this case, the information is that the quotation starts mid-sentence, and that the ellipsis is omitting the start of the sentence.]*
- He continued, “but they are wrong”.  
*[What is quoted was not originally capitalized, and it is not starting a sentence.]*

Original Quotation: “It is their job to pet every single lizard here.”

- Mr. Meow clearly stated that “it is their job to pet every single lizard here”.  
*[Quotations that are syntactically dependent on / integrated with the main sentence lose first-letter capitalization if it originally possessed it.]*

## Introductory Commas

More often than not, a comma or colon will introduce a quotation to a sentence. This conveys the natural pause of spoken English. When natural spoken flow does not have such a pause, such as when the quotation and larger sentence are syntactically dependent, there will be no comma. This dependence is often apparent by the presence of the word “that” directly preceding the quotation.

Examples:

- I like ravioli, but Myra said that “it will be the doom of us all”.  
*[Matching spoken English, there is no pause between “that” and the quotation.]*
- I like ravioli, but as Myra said, “It will be the doom of us all”.  
*[With the removal of “that”, the lead-in to the quotation is no longer syntactically integrated, making a comma or colon necessary.]*

## Altering Quotations

When altering quotations, whether it’s adding a word, correcting an error, removing content, or simply clarifying, these edits are to be enclosed in square brackets. Indicate the omission of parts of a sentence with ellipses. Use the Latin “sic” to show that something incorrect was part of the original quotation so that it is not attributed to the quoting writer who is repeating the error.

One space is placed between bracketed content and words native to the quotation.

Examples:

- Original: “Back in the house, Myra said that he wouldn’t eat it.”
- Revised: “[...] Myra said that he [sic] wouldn’t eat [ravioli].  
*[“Back in the house” was removed and replaced with an ellipsis to indicate that something was removed. “[sic]” is placed after “he” because this is an error, as Myra is a woman. “It” has been replaced with “[ravioli]” because with this quotation excerpt taken out of context, readers may not know what “it” refers to.]*

Ellipses may be typed using either the specific unicode character or by typing three periods without spaces.

## Adjacent Quotation Marks

Where a quotation mark happens to be situated adjacent to another quotation mark, such as when a nested quotation is placed at the end of the host quotation, no extra space is to be placed between the immediately adjacent quotation marks.

Example: As he said, “After backflipping, he exclaimed ‘raviolitastic!’”

*[The closing single quotation mark is adjacent to the closing double quotation mark.*

*Only*

*one space is required. Take note how the exclamation mark in a nested quotation terminates the host quotation and larger sentence.]*

### Inside or Outside Quotation Marks: Termination

When a quotation is independent (i.e. not within another sentence), its terminal punctuation is placed within the quotation marks. Complexity arises when quotations are within another sentence, at its end.

A single point of punctuation may be shared to terminate a quotation and its host sentence. When a quotation that originally ended with a period is placed at the end of a host sentence that intends to end with a period as well, one of the two periods is omitted.

When a sentence that requires only a period to terminate it is ended by a quotation that terminates with either a question mark or exclamation mark, the period is omitted. In this case, the quotation and the sentence share termination, but the quotation's exclamation mark or question mark only applies exclamation or inquiry to the quotation.

When a period is competing with a question mark or exclamation mark in termination of a sentence, the period will always lose and be omitted in favour of the latter. When an exclamation mark is competing with a question mark, neither will be omitted, as their meaning must be retained.

When a host sentence and a quotation within are both questions or exclamations, the quotation's mark is shared by both, applying meaning and termination to both.

Examples:

- He said, "I eat ravioli".

*[The sentence and the quotation both require only a period, so one is shared outside the marks.]*

- Did he say, "I eat ravioli"?

*[This is a question sentence containing a non-question quotation. The inquisitive inflection is applied only to the host sentence.]*

- He said, "Do I eat ravioli?"

*[This is a non-question sentence containing a question quotation. The inquisitive inflection applies only to the quotation.]*

- Did he say, "Do I eat ravioli?"

*[Both the host sentence and the quotation are questions. The quotation's mark is shared to terminate both, and inquisitive meaning/intonation is applied to both.]*

- He said, "Do I eat ravioli?"!

*[This is an exclamation sentence containing a question quotation. Both marks are retained, as neither can be removed without losing meaning.]*

Quotations placed after a colon are terminated within the marks.

Example: Ah, the renowned old saying: "If you eat ravioli, you become ravioli."

### Inside or Outside the Marks: Commas

Commas are placed outside of quotation marks unless they belong to the quotation. If a quotation is broken for author attribution, but then continues again immediately afterward, both commas are placed outside of the quotation marks unless there is a comma originally in the quotation at the point of its attribution break, in which case the first comma is placed inside the quotation as shown below.

Examples:

- “I will be there shortly”, said Charlie.  
*[Contrary to popular US style, logical comma usage (more common in the UK) is used and recommended. The comma does not belong to the quotation, and it is better applied outside of it.]*
- “I have been chopping wood”, James started to say, “since before you were born.”  
*[There would not have been a comma between “wood” and “since” in the original quotation, so the commas are placed outside.]*
- “Until the support arrives,” Michael said, “we will not advance.”  
*[The original quotation would have a comma after “arrives”, and so it is kept within the quotation and shared with speaker attribution. The comma after speaker attribution must stay outside of the marks.]*

### Notes

- See the [“Italics”](#) section for instances where italic quotations might be appropriate.
- Words used in an ironic sense or in a way expressing disagreement with its suggested meaning can be wrapped in double quotation marks (not single).

## Dates and Times:

### Writing Dates

When writing dates, the numeral characters should be used, instead of written-out words, for the day and year. Dates should normally be written using ordinal numbers (1<sup>st</sup>) instead of cardinal numbers (1), which is in line with how the date is intended to be read and spoken.

Superscript suffixes on numbers are optional (1st vs 1<sup>st</sup>).

Example: I'll arrive by January 10<sup>th</sup>.

*[The ordinal number "10<sup>th</sup>" is used instead of the cardinal number "10", as it would be spoken in the ordinal form. Using the cardinal number adds an unnecessary step of mental translation.]*

When including the year in a written date, the year should be enclosed by commas as a parenthetical. Without the year, no commas are added.

Examples:

- The last time I had ravioli was on May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

*[Years in dates, as with parentheticals, do not require a second comma when placed at the end of a sentence.]*

- May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018, was the last time I ate ravioli.

*[In a date that includes the month, day, and year, the year is enclosed in commas.]*

- It occurred during November 2015. Perhaps November 6<sup>th</sup>.

*[When the written date is only a month and year, the year is not enclosed or offset by commas.]*

### Avoiding Confusion with Dates

The year in a date should always be written in full using four numbers, and never only the last two numbers; this is to avoid the potential for the year to be mistaken for the day of the month. It is not recommended to write a month using numerals.

Recommended format:

- January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019

Acceptable formats:

- January 1, 2019
- Jan 01, 2019
- Jan 1, 2019
- 1<sup>st</sup> of January, 2019
- 01 Jan 2019
- 2019 Jan 01

In instances where one is required to use only numeral character to write a date, effort should be made to avoid confusion between the numeral designating the month and the day. The clearest option is year-month-day. The year must be written in full, as abbreviation may further confuse it with month and date. Either slashes or hyphens can be used between the day, month, and year.

If the order were to be month-day-year or day-month-year, the reader may not be certain which of the two orders are in use. Starting with the year ensures confidence.

Example: 2018/01/10 or 2018-01-10

*[With the month always in the centre, and the year written in full, confusion is successfully prevented.]*

## Times

While standard initialisms and acronyms are capitalized and written without periods, the Latin abbreviations “a.m.” (“ante meridiem”) and “p.m.” (post meridiem) are written in lowercase and with periods after each letter in following the standard for Latin abbreviations, such as “i.e.” and “e.g.”

Other style guide may recommend using capitalization or omitting periods. Take note that this is reasonably acceptable due to common usage and ease of understanding. It is not acceptable, however, to omit the minutes after the hour when the minutes are zeros.

Example: He had arrived at 6:00 p.m. yesterday.

*[It would also be acceptable by standard conventions to write 6:00pm, 6:00 pm, 6:00p.m., 6:00PM, 6:00 PM, 6:00P.M., and 6:00 P.M]*

## Eras

It is advised to use the BCE (before common era) and CE (common era) initialisms that are unaffiliated with religion, as opposed to BC (Before Christ) and AD (Anno Domini). “BCE”, “CE”, and “BC” are placed after the year, whereas “AD” is placed before the year, as shown in the below examples.

Following the abbreviation recommendations, no periods are used in these initialisms. One space is placed between the year and the initialism.

Examples:

- I predict that in the year 2451 CE, cats will colonize the moon.
- Alexander the Great became ruler of Macedonia in 336 BCE.
- The US Constitution was signed on AD 1787.

## Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Initialisms:

### Differentiating

Acronyms and initialisms are subsets of the abbreviation. In this guide, we only will refer to shortened words such as “etc.” (etcetera) as abbreviations. An acronym is an abbreviation of multiple words coming together to form a new pronounceable word, normally from the first letters of the original words it is comprised of, such as “NASA”. An initialism is an abbreviation where each letter is individually pronounced, such as “FBI”.

### Periods between Letters

The Gilded Quill Style advises writing acronyms and initialisms without periods after each letter due to the simplicity and cleanliness of this practice. Periods should be used for abbreviations where a word is cut short, but not for acronyms or initialisms, as their capitalization dually functions to prevent confusion.

Examples:

- I’m waiting for NASA to hire me to perform ravioli testing in space.  
*[NASA is an acronym since it is spoken as a word as opposed to having each letter pronounced individually. No periods are used.]*
- I burned that episode of Avatar onto a CD for you.  
*["CD" is an initialism, as each letter is pronounced individually.]*
- Turn on the jukebox and play track no. 2, please.  
*["No." is the abbreviation for "number". Since this is a single-word abbreviation, a period is placed where the word is cut off.]*
- My dog’s name is Meatloaf Sr.  
*[The abbreviation period for "Sr." (senior) also terminates the sentence.]*
- He lives in AB, and I live in BC.  
*[These geographical initialisms refer to Alberta and British Columbia. An exception is not given to multi-word geographical initialisms. Consistency is preferred. Where periods are used is in lowercase Latin multi-word abbreviations.]*



## Abbreviations Ending Sentences

When a sentence ends with an abbreviation that ends with a period, said period dually serves as terminal punctuation for the sentence. If the sentence requires terminal punctuation other than a period, such as an exclamation mark or question mark, this mark will be added.

Examples:

- I did A, B, C, etc. Which did you do?  
*[The first sentence ends after “etc.” The start of the second sentence is made clear by the capitalization of “Which”.]*
- Is he still eating ravioli, potatoes, pine needles, etc.?  
*[The question mark cannot be omitted from the sentence, as meaning/intonation would be lost. The abbreviation’s period is not used to terminate the sentence.]*

## Capitalization

Some acronyms use lowercase characters either by deliberate design or gradual change of convention. If a particular acronym is consistently used by the authority responsible for it (such as a corporation with a product named with an acronym), this form should be used.

Prepositions, articles, and conjunctions are often omitted in the creation of an acronym. When they are retained, it is inconsistent whether their contributing characters are capitalized or in lowercase form. It is recommended to follow the standard convention used for specific acronyms.

Examples:

- WoW (World of Warcraft)  
*[Title case capitalization is retained in the lowercase “of”.]*
- Epcot (Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow)  
*[Rather than acronym capitalization, this is capitalized as if it were a proper noun.]*
- FOREX (Foreign Exchange Market)  
*[All letters that were originally lowercase (o, r, x) are capitalized for this acronym.]*

## Apostrophes with Acronyms and Numbers

Apostrophes are never used to indicate plurality. When the plural form has the potential to cause confusion, use another method to prevent it.

Examples:

- The 1950s were a simpler time.  
*[Indicating multiple years in the 50s. Not indicating possession.]*
- 1950's inflation rate was higher than 1951's.  
*[Referring to a single year. Possession requires an apostrophe.]*
- The iPhone XSs are quite small.  
*[“XS” is part of the noun name. The subsequent lowercase “s” indicates plurality. When possible, it is often preferable to use the singular form and refer to the model generally: “The iPhone XS is quite small.”]*
- The iPhone XS's screens are tiny.  
*[Unlike the previous example, possession is intended here. An apostrophe is required for this.]*
- The “iPhone 6s” is a newer model.  
*[Due to the unusual nature of this specific example with its lowercase “s” as part of the model name, placing the name in quotation marks helps to prevent confusion. The “6s” portion of the name can be wrapped in quotation marks without “iPhone” as well. This confusion would not take place if the model name used a capital “S”.]*
- The iPhone 6s's information page is unavailable.  
*[The above phrasing works as is. The apostrophe and following “s” prevent the first “s” as being interpreted as an indication of plurality.]*

## Omitting the Definite Article

While the definite article “the” is typically used before initialisms, it is not usually used with noun acronyms.

Examples:

- I ate a zebra burger while on vacation in the US.  
*[“US” is the United States’ initialism, as the letters are individually pronounced.]*
- After eating my zebra burger, I took a tour of NASA.  
*[“NASA” is an acronym, as it is spoken as one word, not individual letters. No definite article is used.]*
- When they learned about my burger, the FBI interrogated me.  
*[Like “US”, “FBI” is an initialism.]*
- After my interrogation, I returned to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.  
*[When the name’s full form is used, articles are used normally. This is in contrast to “NASA”.]*
- The NASA employees asked where I got my burger.  
*[Here, “NASA” is being used as an adjective. The definite article is paired with the noun, “employees”.]*

## First Occurrence

When using an initialism or acronym in a text, it is to be spelled out in full on its first occurrence, following by the initialism or acronym form that will be subsequently used, enclosed in parentheses. When the item is in a plural form in this first occurrence, the parenthetical initialism/acronym is to be written as a plural as well.

If the text in question will only be viewed by those who are fully familiar with the acronyms/initialisms used, they do not need to be spelled on in their first occurrence.

There being an acronym or initialism used for a particular word or phrase does not in itself qualify the word or phrase to be written with proper noun capital letters when written in full.

Examples:

- The mechanical ferret tails (**MFTs**) are placed in this bin.  
*[As opposed to “(MFT)” without the plural-indicating “s”.]*
- It is Sir Buff Dude’s (**SBD’s**) mandate that all non-mechanized ferrets be hunted.  
*[As opposed to “(SBD)” or “(SBD)’s”.]*
- The Council of Ferret Hunters (**CFH**) takes this matter seriously.  
*[This noun phrase, despite it ending in a plural form of a word, is singular.]*

## Notes

- Refer to the “[Dates and Times](#)” section on the “a.m.” and “p.m.” initialisms.
- The choice of which indefinite article to use before an acronym or initialism can be decided by how it is meant to be spoken. If “LPS” is meant to be read as initialism, “an” is to be used. If “LPS” is meant to be read as “leprous plant spore”, “a” is to be used.

## Italics:

### Titles of Works

Names of works such as books, poems, movies, plays, journals, academic papers, podcasts, music albums, paintings, court cases, and more should be written in italics. Regulations, as opposed to legislative acts, are not italicized. Do not italicize nicknames or other terms not directly derived from a work's original name. For segments of larger works, such as chapters, episodes, or songs from an album use quotation marks instead of italics if necessary.

Examples:

- *Tarzan* (1999) was a popular animated movie.  
[Dates, authors, or other auxiliary information is not capitalized unless it is part of the name.]
- Are you reviewing the “Italics” section in the *Gilded Quill Style Guide*?  
[Smaller components of larger works should be capitalized but not italicized. Quotation marks are optional and used when clarity benefits from their use. Punctuation adjacent to titles of works, such as the above question mark, are not italicized.]

The names of small, short, or unremarkable works can be written without italics if they are subjectively deemed to not qualify to pass the threshold of what is a “work”. This is course an undefined grey area.

The names of fillable forms or documents are not commonly italicized, but are capitalized. If you're writing about your office's Disclosure of Criminal Record Information form, do not italicize.

Some religious texts, such as the Bible or Quran, are not italicized due to uncontested tradition.

### Names of Travel Vessels

The proper names of travel vessels, such as aircraft and naval ships, are written in italics, and they are also capitalized as proper nouns. When a vessel is named after a commonly recognized person or place, an effort should be made to prevent the vessel being misinterpreted as its namesake.

Examples:

- The spacecraft *Orion* is meant to carry a crew of four.  
[Prefacing “Orion” with “spacecraft” grants the necessary clarity, as would context surrounding the text.]
- The USS *Arizona* was bombed during the Pearl Harbor attack.  
[The prefix abbreviation “USS” is not italicized, as it is not part of the ship's proper unique name.]
- The Mars rover *Curiosity* is a good boy and deserves a treat.  
[“Mars rover” is not part of the unique name, and so this part is not italicized.]

**Quotations**

In bodies of text, such as novels, where there is a rapid appearance of quotations in a small area, quotation marks can be substituted for the practice of italicizing quotations. This should only be exercised when using quotation marks would appear excessively cumbersome and unsightly. When using this practice, words within a quotation that would normally be italicized will be de-italicized.

**Foreign Languages**

The practice of italicizing words or phrases from other languages is not mandatory. If using italics in a particular instance prevents confusion, it should be used. Common Latin abbreviations and phrases are not italicized.

**Emphasis**

A common practice in novels, but less so in technical writing, is to write words in italics when deliberate stress is intended for that word. This is an effective way of drawing attention to a word, or conveying spoken stress, but it should not be overused, and it should not normally be used in formal writing.

## Bullet Points:

### Capitalization and Punctuation:

Recommendations and rules regarding the punctuation of bullet point text varies depending on some factors such as if the bullet is a fragment or if it is syntactically linked to the introducing sentence or surrounding bullets.

The beginning of bullet items are not capitalized unless they are full sentences or proper nouns.

Example:

[...] and in summary, I recommend the following types of ravioli:

- beef chipotle
- Italian spice
- poisonous frog bladder

A period is only placed at the end of a bullet if the bullet is a complete sentence or if it is the syntactically dependent continuation of the sentence that introduced the bullet(s). If at least one bullet item contains a comma (that isn't separating bullets), semicolons will replace the commas at the end of the bullets.

Example:

His Lordship decrees that:

- no lake-swimmer may drink lake water,
- no sea-swimmer may step on crabs,
- and no pond-splasher may get their shoes wet.

Where clarity and flow do not suffer for it, it is recommended that bullet items not be syntactically dependent on the introducing sentence (i.e., the introducing sentence should be complete). Below is a version of the above example fitted to this format.

Example:

His Lordship decrees the following:

- No lake-swimmer may drink lake water.
- No sea-swimmer may step on crabs.
- No pond-splasher may get their shoes wet.

### Sub-Points and Spacing

Bullet dots can be replaced with a descending series of numbers, lowercase letters, or Roman numerals if this is preferred or better suited to the occasion. In contrast to bullet dots, where a space after the dot is not absolutely necessary, these alternatives more strictly require space before the text.

Example:

His Lordship decrees the following:

1. No lake-swimmer may drink lake water.
2. No sea-swimmer may step on crabs.
3. No pond-splasher may get their shoes wet.

Bullet items with sub-points should be indented as a clear indicator of branching. Sub-points can use the same style as their parent point, or they can use a different style (dot, number, letter, Roman numeral) to more crisply stand out.

Example:

His Lordship decrees the following:

- No lake-swimmer may drink lake water.
- No sea-swimmer may step on crabs
  - a. unless the crab is inordinately aggressive,
  - b. larger than two feet across,
  - c. or chanting demonically.
- No pond-splasher may get their shoes wet.

Bullet dots, letters, number, and roman numerals can be italicized and/or coloured grey if clarity and appearance benefit. Sub-point bullets are italicized or coloured grey more often than primary bullets.

Example:

His Lordship decrees the following:

- No lake-swimmer may drink lake water.
- No sea-swimmer may step on crabs
  - a. unless the crab is inordinately aggressive,
  - b. larger than two feet across,
  - c. or chanting demonically
    - I. in Latin,
    - II. Greek,
    - III. or Klingon.
- No pond-splasher may get their shoes wet.

## Parallel Structure:

Parallelism can provide cleanliness, order, and clarity to writing. This practice aims to have the same forms and types used throughout lists and sentences where appropriate. Breaking parallelism is not always an infraction on what is grammatical, but it is best avoided nonetheless.

### Lists

Lists should remain consistent in what they consist of. A list of adjectives should not contain a stray noun in the same way that a list of verbs should not contain a gerund, and so forth.

Examples:

**Not Parallel:**

He spoke about the social, economic, and **infrastructure** concerns.

**Parallel:**

He spoke about the social, economic, and **infrastructural** concerns.

*[Two adjectives, “social” and “economic”, start the list. To keep with clean parallel structure, all items in the immediate list should be adjectives. In the non-parallel example, “infrastructure” is a noun awkwardly functioning as an adjective.]*

**Not Parallel:**

My dog loves eating, barking, and **sleep**.

**Parallel:**

My dog loves eating, barking, and **sleeping**.

*[In the parallel example, gerunds are consistently used. The non-parallel structure breaks the pattern with a noun.]*

### Infinitives

When a list within a sentence begins with an infinitive, verbs that follow in the list do not need to use their infinitive form, but they may. If the items in the list are lengthy phrases instead of individual words, it is more common to preface each with the preposition “to” if the list began in this manner.

Examples:

She continued to ramble, to yell, and to stomp.

*[“To” can be omitted from the second and third verb without detriment.]*



## Correlative Conjunctions

Aim to keep correlative conjunctions in their original form and order. As a reminder, correlative conjunctions are sets of two conjunctions working together (e.g. either/or, neither/nor, not only / but also, etc.)

Examples:

### Not Parallel:

He wants to either watch a movie or he wants to go for a swim.

### Parallel:

He wants to either watch a movie or go for a swim.

*[The subject does not need to be repeated for this correlative conjunction. Allow the two possibilities to be listed simply as shown.]*

### Not Parallel:

Both Madeline as well as the other lady voted in favour of it.

### Parallel:

Both Madeline and the other lady voted in favour of it.

*[The conjunction that “both” is paired with as a correlative conjunction duo is “and”. Keep to established correlative conjunctions when possible.]*

## Vertical Lists

When constructing vertical lists, such as bullet points, one should aim for consistency. Lists of noun phrases or lists of verb phrases are preferable to lists consisting of both. In lists of verbs and verb phrases, keeping to one tense preferable.

### Non-Parallel Example:

- Assisting divers with equipment
- Maintained station supplies
- Repair oxygen equipment
- Dolphin petting

### Parallel Example:

- Assisted divers with equipment
- Maintained station supplies
- Repaired oxygen equipment
- Petted dolphins gently

## Miscellaneous:

### Phone Numbers

Phone numbers are written in the format of “250-555-1234”. The often-seen parentheses around the area code should only be used in the few areas where the area code is optional for successfully dialing the number. In these cases, this is the recommended formatting: “(250) 555-1234”. Country codes, when it is necessary to include them, will appear like this: “1-250-555-1234”.

### Split Infinitives

Splitting infinitives (i.e. inserting other words between the infinitive marker “to” and the verb) is indeed permitted. The antiquated and unnecessary rule rejecting this practice is defeated and not accepted.

Examples:

- I love **to** quickly **swim**

*[The adverb “quickly” is cleaving the infinitive “to swim” in two. Although “I love to swim quickly” may be advisable, the former form is entirely acceptable.]*

- To honestly say that is to be lying or oblivious.

*[This form is equally acceptable to “To say that honestly [...]”.]*

### Subjunctive Mood

The subjunctive case, which is used for hypotheticals, wishes, demands, and other similar instances, should still be used despite its fading recognition and consideration as necessary. The subjunctive mood uses the “bare form” of a verb.

Examples:

- “I recommend that he **be** hanged, and I ask that I **not be** hanged.” “So **be** it.”

*[Triple subjunctive example.]*

- If he **were** hanged, I would be quite displeased!

*[The subjunctive past-tense uses “were” instead of “was”.]*

- I insist that he **see** me at once.

*[The final “s” that would normally be seen on a verb in other moods is dropped in the subjunctive’s present tense of the third-person singular.]*

### Sentences Ending on Prepositions

It is acceptable and normal to end sentences with prepositions so long as other basic sentence requirements are met, despite the widespread and oft-debunked rule against this.

Examples:

- What will you put that pineapple **on**?

- What is this mess all **about**?

- As for these two, would you please place this one **on top**?

- Which apple is the worm **in**?

## Scientific Nomenclature

In biological scientific nomenclature, the genus and species name are italicized along with any more precise terms such as variety or subspecies. Higher categories such as kingdom and class are not italicized. If the surrounding text is already italicized, or if using italics is not possible, underlining may be used instead of italics.

Names for all categories at and above the genus must be capitalized. When writing the genus name alone and not in reference to a species, it still must be capitalized.

When referencing a specific species or subcategory of species using the scientific terminology, it must be written in full using the genus name. The genus name may be abbreviated to its first letter after it is written in full for the first instance in a particular document.

Common names (e.g. cat, duck, polar bear) are not written in italics. Common names will only be capitalized when they start a sentence or when part of the name is derived from a proper noun, as seen below.

Examples:

- human: *Homo sapiens*
- polar bear: *Ursus maritimus*
- The following is the full classification of the Siberian salamander, from Kingdom to Species: Animalia, Chordata, Amphibia, Lissamphibia, Caudata, Hynobiidae, *Salamandrella keyserlingii*.  
*[Classifications above the genus (*Salamandrella*) are separated with commas, as they are not directly part of its name. They are not italicized, but are capitalized.]*
- Siberian tiger: *Panthera tigris tigris*  
*[In the common name, “Siberian” refers to the proper noun “Siberia”, so it is capitalized. In the binomial scientific name, the second instance of “tigris” refers to its subspecies.]*

## Periods after Email Addresses and URLs

When a sentence ends with an email address or URL, an effort should be made to ensure that the terminating punctuation does not appear to be part of it. A simple and effective approach is to either hyperlink or underline the email address or URL, leaving the following period not underlined and not included in the link. An extra space should not be added between the address and the period.

Examples:

- Please write to me at [MyName@email.com](mailto:MyName@email.com).  
*[The sentence’s termination period is not linked, not blue, and not underlined.]*
- I recommend visiting “Google.com”.  
*[If no hyperlink is desired for the link, the URL can be underlined or enclosed in quotation marks.]*

## Address Blocks

Below are examples of a recommended address block format. If the placing of the postal code or zip code on a separate line is too space-consuming in the specific instance, it should be placed on the above line, after the province or state, separated by a comma.

Recipient Name  
 Organization Name  
 1234 Street Address  
 City, Province  
 Postal/Zip

Cole Johnston  
 Gilded Quill Editing  
 123 Sample Street  
 Victoria, BC  
 V0V V0V

If the recipient holds a formal title, it should usually be included in the same line as their name. If the title is especially long, it can be placed on its own line below the name. If the recipient holds a position (as opposed to a title) that should be acknowledged, it can either be placed in apposition to their name on the same line or it can be placed before the organization name, on the same line, separated by a comma.

Lord Bananabread Loaf  
 CEO, Toasty Corp.  
 555 False Avenue, Unit 4  
 Stormwind, AZ  
 V8X 1E9

The Honourable Philip Slippery  
 Minister of Pizzas and Bricks  
 101 Downtown Road  
 Block 4, Unit A, Floor 100  
 Red Deer, AB  
 V8R 0P0

Unit numbers or other specifications can be placed before or after the street address, on the same line. Long or multiple specifications can be placed together on the line above the street address.

## Numbers

Numbers can either be spelled out in name or written using numeral characters as befits a particular situation. It is recommended to spell out single-digit numbers and to use numeral characters for 10 and above. Where it is desirable or with purpose, multi-digit numbers can be spelled out.

When writing an ordinal number, the suffixes (“rd”, “nd”, “st”) can be either superscript (small and justified to the top) or not. The superscript form is recommended but not required.

Using ordinal numbers in dates is recommended. See the “[Dates and Times](#)” section for more information on numbers in dates.

A period is used for a decimal point, and a comma is used to separate groups (e.g. 90,000.05).

## Clarity

Unclear wording should always be adjusted to improve clarity when possible. In the below example, it is not clear which person was wearing jeans. See the revised versions that could be used with the two meanings.

Example: I punched a guy wearing jeans.

Revision 1: I punched a gear who was wearing jeans.

Revision 2: I punched a guy while wearing jeans.

*[If often requires minimal effort to minimize possible misinterpretation. In revision 1, the punch recipient wore jeans, while it was the puncher in revision 2.]*

## Figures

Fractions should be spelled out when practical to differentiate from division.

Example: One-quarter of a pizza

Monetary amounts less than one dollar are preferably written out in full instead of using numerals with the cent symbol (¢).

Example: The candy used to cost 5 cents, but now it’s 10!

## Ellipses

Ellipses (singular being an “ellipsis”) can be written using the designated character (...) of three dots together or with three individual periods (...). If using individual periods together, do not add spaces between them. It is standard to use an ellipsis immediately after the preceding word or instead after one added space. Ellipses have three common uses, as seen below:

- in quotations, to express that original content is not shown in full
- in literary work, to indicate that words were interrupted to otherwise ceased
- colloquially, to express displeasure, acquiescence, or sarcasm

Examples:

- He said, “[...] I will remain steadfast in my pursuit.”  
*[In this quotation, we only see the end of the full sentence. Such severances can occur in the middle of a sentence as well.]*
- “I will never die! Not next year, not tomorrow, and not....”  
*[In this example, the speaker may have suddenly been killed before saying “today”. It may also be that he simply stopped speaking due to a distraction. Which case is taking place would be made clear in the subsequent sentence. A termination period is still added after an end-sentence ellipsis.]*
- Yes, I’ll get the chores done...  
*[No content was cut, and no interruption took place. One might see this type of ellipsis use in a text message from their teenager.]*

## **Style Guide Differences:**

*This section is under construction and will be added to the Gilded Quill Style Guide when a presentable version is finished.*