

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY EDITORIAL STYLE GUIDELINES



This guide is for FSU staff members who develop content for publications, newsletters, web content, social media, emails to students and other public information materials. This style guide is not relevant to academic work. For the full guide, visit brand.fsu.edu/content.

FSU follows the guidelines of the Associated Press (AP) Stylebook with a few exceptions.

FSU HOUSE STYLE GUIDELINES

Florida State University

- Referring to the university as FSU on first reference in communication is allowed.
- Refer to FSU as the university not the University or The University.

Noles

- Not 'Noles.
- Do not use Nole puns (*ExceptioNOLE*).
- Nole(s) can be used to reference students/people (*Welcome New Noles*).

phone numbers

- AP style is: (850) 644-1234

seasons / semesters

- Lowercase seasons when they stand alone (winter, spring, summer, fall), but capitalize when they refer to semesters (*Spring 2011, Fall 2011, etc.*).

TIPS FOR CLEAR AND CONCISE WRITING

- Keep it simple and write in a way that your target audience will easily understand.
- Write in the active voice whenever possible. The message's call to action is critical to capturing attention and action.
- Effective messages are student-centered and student-friendly, so don't use insider information such as acronyms or jargon.
- Think of how to best organize content in a way that will be easy to read and digest.

DESIGN EXAMPLE:

A graphic design example featuring a background of diagonal red lines. In the top right corner, there are two yellow starburst shapes. The main text is in a dark red, cursive font. Below the title, there is a yellow circle with a white number '1' inside. To the right of the circle, there is a sub-headline and a date/location line. Below that, there is a line of conversational descriptive text. At the bottom, there is a website address and phone number, and a logo for 'Hello FSU!' with a yellow sun icon.

AP STYLE GUIDELINES

abbreviations and acronyms

- Where acronyms are necessary, spell out the full term on first reference, followed by the acronym in parentheses, and use the acronym thereafter.
- View common FSU acronyms here: [FSU Lingo document](#).

academic degrees

- Use periods when abbreviating, except for degrees with three or more capital letters: B.A., B.S., MBA, EMBA, M.Ed., Ph.D.
- Use an apostrophe with bachelor's and master's degrees.

alumna, alumnus, alumni

- Singular female: alumna.
- Singular male: alumnus.
- Mixed gender group: alumni.

commas

- Do not use an oxford comma before the "and" or the "or" that precedes the final item in the series, unless one of the items in the series has an "and" or "or" within it (*She is in the SGA, Lady Spirithunters and FSU Ad Club*).

dates

- Always use numeral figures without st, nd, rd or th.
- Always capitalize months.
- When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate only Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec.

decades

- Decades should be stated as 1990s, '90s.

departments / divisions

- For academic departments, use lowercase except for words that are proper nouns or adjectives, or when the word department is part of the official and formal name. (*Exceptions include the Chemistry Department and English Department*).
- Capitalize academic divisions.

names

- Use a person's full name on first reference. On second reference, use only the last name.

numbers

- Spell out numbers one - nine.
- Use figures for 10 and up.

on campus vs. on-campus

- Hyphenate off campus and on campus when used as adjectives preceding a noun (*The off-campus students held a gathering*).
- Do not hyphenate when used as a preposition and noun (*The event was held on campus*).

quotation marks

- Use quotation marks for: books, games (*video, computer, board*), movies, operas, plays, poems, albums, songs, radio programs, TV programs, lectures, speeches or works of art.

spacing

- Use one space after a period, semicolon and colon.

times

- Use figures except for noon and midnight. Use a colon to separate hours from minutes: 11 a.m., 1 p.m., 3:30 p.m., 9-11 a.m., 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Do not use :00.
- Use a hyphen to indicate time range, not an en dash.

titles

- Capitalize before the name, lowercase otherwise.
- Use Dr. in first reference as a formal title before the name of an individual who holds a doctor of: Dental surgery, Medicine, Optometry, Osteopathic medicine, Podiatry or Veterinary medicine.
- Include terminal degrees after people's names: William Smith, MFA. Karyl Leggio, Ph.D. (*Do not use "Dr. Leggio" on second reference*).



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