

EDITORIAL STYLE GUIDELINES

Grammar and Language Use for the FSU Division of Student Affairs



This guide is for use by Florida State University DSA staff members who develop content for publications, newsletters, web content, social media, e-mails to students and other public information materials.

This style guide is not relevant to academic work. For the full guide, visit studentaffairs.fsu.edu/communications-office.

University Communications and the DSA follow the guidelines of the Associated Press (AP) Stylebook with a few exceptions.

FSU HOUSE STYLE GUIDELINES

Florida State University

- Always use Florida State University on first reference in communication other than social media. Referring to the university as Florida State and/or FSU is acceptable on all subsequent references.
- Refer to FSU as the university not the University or The University.

Noles

- Not 'Noles.

phone numbers

- AP style is: (XXX) XXX-XXXX

semesters

- The first letter of the term can be capitalized if it is followed by the year.

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 digest.

DESIGN EXAMPLE:

The design example is a vertical card with a white background. At the top, there is a decorative header with diagonal maroon lines and two yellow starburst graphics. Below this, the title 'Concise Event Description' is written in a maroon cursive font. Under the title, there is a yellow circle containing a white number '1'. To the right of the circle, the text 'Sub-head providing more info' is in bold maroon, followed by 'April 30 | 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. | Location' in a smaller maroon font. Below this, the text 'Conversational descriptive text that summarizes key details!' is in a smaller maroon font. At the bottom left, the text 'web.address.fsu.edu' and '(850) 644-1234' is in maroon. At the bottom right, there is a yellow and maroon logo that says 'Hello FSU!'.

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.
- To view common FSU acronyms, reference the [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..

alumna, alumnus, alumni

- Singular female: alumna.
- Singular male: alumnus.
- Use alumni when referring to a group no matter the gender.

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 Student Government Association, Lady Spirithunters and FSU Ad Club).

dates

- Always use numeral figures without st, nd, rd or th.
- Capitalize the names of months in all uses.
- When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate only Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec. Spell out when using alone, or with a year alone.

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.

seasons/semesters

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

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 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, Veterinary medicine.
- Include terminal degrees after people's names: William Smith, MFA. Karyl Leggio, Ph.D. (Do not use "Dr. Leggio" on second reference.).

