



# IABC Style Guide

*Revised 11 October 2018*

The purpose of this guide is to increase the consistency of writing style in IABC publications and communications. It is based largely on *The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual*, but differs on some topics. In cases where Associated Press style conflicts with IABC style, please follow IABC style. Where no entry occurs in this style guide, refer to Associated Press style. For spelling, consult *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. Other preferred reference works include *The Chicago Manual of Style*, *The Gregg Reference Manual* and *Words Into Type*.

IABC encourages all IABC staff members, IABC volunteers and contributing writers to consult this style guide before submitting final copy. For information on contributing articles to IABC's digital magazine, *Communication World*, please contact the IABC content division at +1 415.544.4700 or [cwmagazine@iabc.com](mailto:cwmagazine@iabc.com).

## abbreviations

- In most cases, spell out the word or words on first reference, followed by the abbreviation in parentheses: *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC)*. Thereafter, use just the abbreviation.
- Some common abbreviations do not need to be spelled out on first reference: *TV, PR, WWW, CEO*, etc. See *addresses, Canadian provinces, CEOs, D.C., electronic mail/email, IABC, Mexican states, PR, PRSA, state/province/county/country names, TV, U.S. states, VNRs* and *World Wide Web*.
- Spell out governmental services and agencies on first reference, followed by the abbreviation in parentheses: *Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)*, etc.

## ABC

- *ABC* is the abbreviation for *Accredited Business Communicator*, IABC's professional designation. [Note: The accreditation program closed in 2013.]
- See *accreditation*.

## academic courses and departments

- Capitalize the names of specific academic course titles: *He teaches Professional Communication Competencies in a Changing Environment at Towson University*.
- Lowercase the names of subjects or areas of study, unless the name contains a proper noun or adjective: *She teaches public relations and English literature*.
- Capitalize the formal names of academic departments; otherwise, lowercase unless the name contains a proper noun or adjective: *the Columbia University Department of Anthropology; the anthropology department; the English department*

## academic degrees

- Use *bachelor's degree* instead of *B.A.* or *B.S.* and *master's degree* in place of *M.A.*



- One receives *a* master's and *an* MBA.
- See *MBA*, *Ph.D.* and *doctor/M.D.*

### **accreditation**

- Use a comma and the appropriate acronym after the first reference to people who have been accredited by IABC (*ABC*), Public Relations Society of America (*APR*) and the American Society of Association Executives (*CAE*): *Elaine Chavez, ABC, director of employee communication.*
- Lowercase in references to the IABC accreditation program, which was closed in 2013: *The last accreditation exam was scheduled to take place at the World Conference.*
- See also *certification*.

### **accreditation committee**

Lowercase, as with *executive board* and all IABC committee names. The committee was dissolved in 2013. See *Global Communication Certification Council*.

### **accreditation council**

Use *accreditation committee*.

### **addresses**

- Use the abbreviations *Ave.*, *Blvd.* and *St.* only when preceded by a number: *He lived at 1820 Pennsylvania Ave.* Otherwise spell out: *He lived on Pennsylvania Avenue.*
- Always spell out *Alley*, *Circle*, *Court*, *Drive*, *Lane*, *Road* and *Terrace*.
- Use figures for an address number: *547 Willow Terrace.*
- Spell out First through Ninth as street names; use numerals with *st*, *nd*, *rd* or *th* for 10th and above: *8 Second St.*, *300 37th St.*
- Abbreviate compass points that indicate directional ends of a street or quadrants of a city in a numbered address: *349 Main St., N.W.*; *260 E. 42nd St.* Do not abbreviate if the number is omitted: *East 42nd Street.*
- When listing a city and state in text, spell out the name of the state. When listing a mailing address, use postal service abbreviations for states/provinces. See *Canadian provinces*, *state/province/county/country names*, and *U.S. states*.
- In a mailing address, do not use a comma between the postal code and the country: *Send photos for possible use in this column to The Douglass Visual Workshops, 2505 E. Carol Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85028 USA.*

### **adverbs**

Where possible, place adverbs before the verbs they modify: Yes: *You already have seen her.* No: *You have already seen her.*

### **adviser**

Not *advisor*.

### **affect, effect**

Even though either word can be used as a noun or a verb, it is preferable that *affect* be used as a verb and *effect* as a noun. *The effect of the weather will affect the travel schedule.* Occasionally,



one can use *affect* as a verb, such as *affect an accent* (to put on a false show). *Effect*, as a verb, means to bring about or execute: *The measures have been designed to effect savings....* But using *affect* in the sentence could just as easily imply that the measures may reduce savings that have already been realized: *These measures may affect savings....*" Therefore, *affect* is best used as a *verb* and *effect* is best used as a *noun*.

### **African American**

- Capitalize the first letter of each word.
- Hyphenate when using as a compound modifier: *the African-American experience*.
- Stay sensitive to changing terminology; follow individuals' preferences in relation to their heritage.
- Identify by race or ethnic origin only when relevant.
- See *Black* and *racial/ethnic/cultural references*.

### **a.m.**

- To refer to the hours of midnight to noon, use lowercase letters with periods. Do not precede with a comma: *8:15 a.m.*
- See *time*.

### **America**

Avoid the use of the word *America* in reference to the United States. Specify whether you are referring to *North America*, *South America* or both. *America* and the United States are not synonymous; the U.S. is part of North America.

### **American**

- As an adjective, avoid the use of the word *American*; it is too vague. Instead, specify the part of the Americas to which you are referring: *It was a U.S. trait. The consultant worked with some of the biggest corporations in North America.*
- As a noun, *American* refers to a citizen of the U.S.

### **annual conference**

See *World Conference*.

### **apostrophes**

See *plurals* and *possessive forms*.

### **APR**

See *accreditation*.

### **area codes**

See *telephone numbers*.

### **Asian**

- Use *Asian*, not *Oriental*.
- Capitalize.



- Stay sensitive to changing terminology; follow individuals' preferences in relation to their heritage.
- Identify by race or ethnic origin only when relevant.
- See *racial/ethnic/cultural references*.

### **attendees**

Not *attenders*.

### **audiovisual**

One word as a noun or adjective.

### **awards committee**

Not *Gold Quill Awards committee* (per change to committee name in 2015)

### **best-seller**

Per AP's update of 29 March 2005, hyphenate in all uses.

### **black**

- Stay sensitive to changing terminology; follow individuals' preferences in relation to their heritage.
- Identify by race or ethnic origin only when relevant.
- See *African American* and *racial/ethnic/cultural references*.

### **blogs**

Capitalize the names of blogs: *On her blog Fusion View, author Yang-Mai Ooi included a "Getting Publishing" series that may be turned into a book.*

### **boardroom**

One word.

### **bullets**

(adapted from *The Gregg Reference Manual*)

- Bullet points should be parallel in grammatical structure.
- Use a colon after all introductory expressions to list items that are placed on separate lines, regardless of whether those expressions are complete sentences.
- Use periods after bulleted or numbered items if the items are complete sentences or if the phrases complete the introductory sentence.

*Example of bulleted items that are complete sentences:*

The survey results were gratifying:

- More than 90 percent of respondents agreed that the strategy was clearly presented.
- Confidence in the leadership team received a mean score of 3.63.

*Example of bulleted items that complete the introductory sentence:*

To help managers and supervisors in this important role, highly effective companies:

- Provide training that improves managers' communication skills.



- Package information for easy delivery.
  - Involve managers early in the communication process to give them time to absorb the material before disseminating it.
  - Reward managers for being effective and attentive communicators.
- Do not use periods with bulleted/numbered items when the introductory statement is grammatically complete. *Example:*
- The research shows that the companies with top scores in employee communication have discovered six “secrets” that enable them to achieve communication excellence:
- Focusing on the customer
  - Engaging employees in the business
  - Improving managerial communication
  - Managing change effectively
  - Measuring the performance of communication programs
  - Establishing a strong employer brand

## **CAE**

See *accreditation*.

## **call for entries, call for nominations**

Lowercase, except in headlines.



## Canadian provinces and territories

When referring to Canadian provinces or territories in text, spell out the names.

In mailing addresses, follow Canadian postal service style:

AB (Alberta)  
BC (British Columbia)  
MB (Manitoba)  
NB (New Brunswick)  
NL (Newfoundland and Labrador)  
NS (Nova Scotia)  
NT (Northwest Territories)  
NU (Nunavut)  
ON (Ontario)  
PE (Prince Edward Island)  
QC (Quebec)  
SK (Saskatchewan)  
YT (Yukon)

Example of Canadian mailing address:

Canada Post Returns  
960-2 Walker Road  
Windsor, ON N9A 6J3 Canada

## Career Road Map

- Capitalize when referring to IABC's set of standards for mastering particular areas of expertise in a communication career.

## certification

- Use a comma and the appropriate acronym after the first reference to people who have been certified by IABC (*CMP*), Public Relations Society of America (*APR*) and the American Society of Association Executives (*CAE*): *Brad Whitworth, CMP, director of employee communication.*
- Lowercase in references to the IABC/GCCC certification program: *The next certification exam is scheduled to take place at the World Conference.*
- *See Communication Management Professional and Strategic Communication Management Professional.*

## Certification Council

- *See Global Communication Certification Council.*

## cellphone

One word, per AP guidelines.

## Central American

See *Hispanic*.



### **century**

Lowercase: *21st century*.

### **CEO**

- *CEO* is acceptable in all references.
- Uppercase all letters. Do not use periods or spaces between letters.

### **chair, chairman, chairperson, chairwoman**

- Within IABC, the title *chair* is acceptable for *chairman*:  
*The September-October 2005 issue of CW featured interviews with both incoming IABC Chair Warren Bickford, ABC, and IABC Research Foundation Chair Paul Sanchez, ABC.*
- Always use *chair* when referring to IABC's Chair's Award (per change in 2017).

### **cities**

- When referring to most cities in North America (Canada, Mexico and the U.S.) in text, follow the city name with a comma and the state or province, but not the name of the country: *Seattle, Washington; Regina, Saskatchewan; Guanajuato, Guanajuato.*
- On first reference to most cities outside of North America, follow with a comma and the name of the nation, but not the state or province: *Lima, Peru.*
- The location of some cities is well enough known to an international readership that the name of the city can stand alone without reference to state, province or country:

#### **U.S. cities:**

Atlanta  
Boston  
Chicago  
Los Angeles  
Miami  
New York City  
San Francisco  
Seattle  
Washington, D.C.

#### **Other cities:**

Amsterdam  
Baghdad  
Bangkok  
Beijing  
Beirut  
Berlin  
Bogota  
Brussels  
Buenos Aires  
Cairo  
Copenhagen  
Djibouti



Dubai  
Dublin  
Frankfurt  
Geneva  
Gibraltar  
Guatemala City  
Hamburg  
Havana  
Helsinki  
Hong Kong  
Islamabad  
Istanbul  
Jerusalem  
Johannesburg  
Kabul  
Kuwait City  
London  
Luxembourg  
Macau  
Madrid  
Mexico City  
Milan  
Monaco  
Montréal  
Moscow  
Munich  
New Delhi  
Oslo  
Ottawa  
Panama City  
Paris  
Prague  
Québec City  
Rio de Janeiro  
Rome  
San Marino  
Sao Paulo  
Shanghai  
Singapore  
Stockholm  
Sydney  
Tokyo  
Toronto  
Vatican City  
Vienna



Zurich

- Use state/country designations for lesser-known cities which have the same names as internationally recognized cities: *Paris, Texas; London, Ontario*
- See *New York City*.

### **CMP**

- *CMP* is the abbreviation for *Communication Management Professional*, IABC's professional generalist/specialist-level certification.
- See *certification*.

### **co-**

Follow AP guidelines, specifically: Retain the hyphen when forming nouns, adjectives and verbs that indicate occupation or status: *co-author, co-chairman, co-pilot*  
See AP for a complete list, as well as examples of "co" words that are closed (e.g., *coed, cooperate*)

### **Code of Ethics**

Capitalized when referring to IABC's Code of Ethics.

### **colons**

- Capitalize the first word of complete sentences following colons: *The truth of the matter was: All the programs were outdated.*
- Lowercase the first word of incomplete sentences following colons: *He ordered the following: a laser printer, a modem and a keyboard.*
- In headlines and subheads, always capitalize the first word after a colon: *2013 Gold Quill Awards: Call for entries*
- Use one space between a colon and the text that follows it.

### **commas in a series**

Do not use a comma before the last conjunction in a series, unless it is needed for clarity: *He received manuscripts from Thompson, Laney, Wilson and Maize.* Or: *I had juice, toast, and a spinach and mushroom omelet for breakfast.*

### **committees**

Lowercase the title of IABC committees: *ethics committee*.

### **communication**

- When referring to the process of communicating, use the singular form: *He studied communication in college. She was a communication expert.*
- Use the plural *communications* only when you are referring to more than one message being delivered (*She received several communications from her client.*) or when referring to communications systems or hardware (*They installed a new communications system.*)



- *Public relations* and *communication* are not synonymous. *Communication* is the broader term. *Public relations* is a form of communication.

### **company names**

For company and organization names, follow AP style, specifically:

- Follow the spelling and capitalization preferred by the company: *eBay*; *iMac*.
- Abbreviate *Corp.* and *Co.* at the end of a name: *Gulf Oil Corp.*; *Ford Motor Co.* But, spell out *Corporation* and *Company* if they appear elsewhere in the name: *Corporation for Public Broadcasting*; *Aluminum Company of America*.
- Abbreviate *Inc.* and *Ltd.*
- Do not use a comma before *Inc.*, *Ltd.*, or *LLC*.

### **composition titles**

#### **Italics and quotation marks**

- Use italics for titles of complete works that are published as separate items—for example, books, pamphlets, long poems, magazines and newspapers. Also italicize titles of movies, plays, musicals, operas, television and radio series, long musical pieces, paintings, and works of sculpture.
- Use quotation marks around titles that represent only part of a complete published work—for example, the titles of chapters, lessons, topics, sections and parts within a book; the titles of articles and feature columns in newspapers and magazines; and the titles of essays, short poems, lectures, sermons and conference themes.
- Use no quotation marks or italics for reference works or sacred works: *Oxford American Dictionary*, *the Bible*, *the Koran*.
- Use no quotation marks or italics for titles of studies. (e.g., *Towers Watson's Change and Communication ROI Study*)

#### **Capitalization**

- For magazines, periodicals, books, movies, plays, poems, programs, songs, works of art, etc., capitalize the first word and all succeeding words except articles and short (four or fewer letters) conjunctions or prepositions. Do not capitalize *to* when it is part of an infinitive. Do not capitalize the word *magazine* unless it is part of the publication's title.
- For hyphenated words in titles, follow the rules above: *What's So Great About Face-to-Face?*
- For references to articles within *CW*, follow the same capitalization guidelines noted above, even if the headline of the article is downstyle for design purposes.

#### **Punctuation**

- Periods and commas always go inside quotation marks.
- Dashes, semicolons, question marks and exclamation marks go inside quotation marks when they are part of the quoted material: *He just finished reading "Will Your Company Survive?"*
  - Dashes, semicolons, question marks and exclamation marks go outside quotation marks when they are not part of the quoted material: *Do you think he would also enjoy "My Company: Right or Wrong"?*



### **conference**

See *World Conference*.

### **currency**

- When referring to U.S. dollars, precede each reference with US: *The cost was US\$40*.
- When referring to Canadian dollars, precede each reference with CDN: *The cost was CDN\$40*.
- Indicate other countries as appropriate by country name and currency symbol (when possible): *AUS\$, British £*.

### **CW Radio**

Referring to the companion podcast to *CW* magazine. Do not italicize CW.

### **cyberspace**

One word.

### **dates**

- Spell out dates, in this order: day, month, year. Example: *22 September 1959*. Do not use numerals: *22/09/59*. [EXCEPTION: Any references to September 11, 2001, including *September 11, 2001*; *September 11*; and *9/11*.]
- When listing a time duration, e.g., 30 November through 2 December, use an en-dash (no spaces) in all cases where a numeral is touching the dash: *30 November–2 December*. Between two months, use an en-dash with a space on either side: *November – December*.
- See *decades*, *months*, *seasons* and *years*.
- Do not use a comma when naming a month and year. Example: *research undertaken in June 2003*

### **D.C.**

See *Washington, D.C.*

### **decades**

- Do not spell out decades; use numbers, even when beginning a sentence: *1990s*, *1840s*
- On first reference to decades, it is preferable to use four digits so it is clear to which century you are referring: Yes: *1990s* No: *'90s*
- When using the contracted form, put the left-curving apostrophe before the first numeral. Do not put an apostrophe before the s unless you are using the word as a possessive. Yes: *He longed for a return of the '60s*. No: *He longed for a return of the 60's*.

### **decision maker**

Two words, no hyphen.

Also: *decision making*.

### **decks**

Do not use periods with decks, even if there is more than one sentence in the deck:

*Head: Giving the CEO message a makeover*



*Deck: People stopped reading your publication's "letter from the CEO" ages ago. Don't kill the column—make it better*

### **department names**

See *formal titles*.

### **directions**

- Capitalize *East, West, North, South, Midwest*, etc. when they refer to locations: *The Far East is experiencing an economic rebirth*. Remember that you are writing for an international readership. Be careful to avoid terms that might not be understandable to an international readership: *The South will rise again*.
- Lowercase *east, west, north, south*, etc. when they are used as directions: *He headed south to avoid the economic depression*.

### **District of Columbia**

See *Washington, D.C.*

### **doctor, M.D.**

- Do not use the abbreviation *Dr.* before the name of a physician. Instead, follow the name with a comma and the abbreviation *M.D.*: *Luzviminda Balagtas, M.D.*
- Spell out if not used as a title: *The doctor told the CEO his cholesterol was high*.
- See *Ph.D.*

### **dollars**

See *currency*.

### **dos and don'ts**

#### **due in, due to**

Do not use *due to*, when you mean *because of* or *scheduled to*. Use *due* only in reference to something that is owed. Yes: *Forty dollars is due on his account*. No: *The meeting was canceled due to inclement weather*. Yes: *The meeting was canceled because of inclement weather*. No: *The plane was due in at dusk*. Yes: *The plane was scheduled to arrive at dusk*.

#### **early bird, early-bird**

- When used as a noun, do not hyphenate: *The early bird gets the worm*.
- When used as an adjective, such as in reference to deadlines or specials, it should be hyphenated: *early-bird deadline*.

#### **e.g.**

- Used in lieu of *for example*. Always insert a comma immediately afterwards: *large internet corporations (e.g., Google, Amazon.com, Yahoo!)*



### **electronic mail, email**

- Email is acceptable in all references. Lowercase the *e*.
- See *email addresses*.

### **ellipses**

Use three periods (with no spaces between them or the words they separate) to indicate missing text: *and then...the rest was history*. When using an ellipsis at the end of a sentence, place a period at the end of the sentence, and then an ellipsis, followed by a space: *I lack the required motivation.... One day...*

### **email addresses**

- Try to avoid breaking web addresses over a line. When that can't be avoided, break the address before a punctuation mark:

*Send your letters to cwmagazine  
@iabc.com*

- See *web addresses*.

### **e-newsletter**

### **ethics**

- Follow with a singular verb when referring to ethics as a field of study: *Ethics is the topic of the day*.
- Follow with a plural verb when referring to a set of principles: *His ethics are questionable*.

### **Excellence in Communication Leadership (EXCEL) Award**

In reference to the award granted by IABC to chief executives who champion communication. The award was put on hold in 2014.

### **Excellence Gala**

- Used to refer to the awards ceremony and gala at the World Conference to honor winners of the Gold Quill Awards, including special award winners, and the new class of IABC Fellows.
- Not *Excellence Awards Gala*

### **executive board**

Lowercase.

### **extensions**

See *telephone numbers*.

### **fewer, less**

Use *fewer* for individual items, *less* for bulk or quality. Yes: *Fewer than 20 people attended the seminar*. Yes: *Quantity is less important than quality to the director*. Yes: *She lent me less than \$50 (an amount)*. And: *I gave her fewer than 20 \$1 bills (individual items)*.



## food service

Two words.

## footnotes

- Use footnotes only in research reports or books, whenever a note or source reference would be too cumbersome or too distracting to incorporate into the text. For magazine and web articles, incorporate references into the text.

- To reference a footnote within the text of the article, use a superscript figure after the appropriate word, phrase or sentence. Do not put a space between the superscript figure and the preceding word. Place the superscript after punctuation marks (except an em-dash). Example:

According to “Integrating Responsibility,” part of a *European Business Forum (EBF)* report on CSR,<sup>1</sup> most companies that have initiated CSR programs have done so in response to one problem or another; for example, in the oil and mining industries, it was environmental issues.

- The footnote itself should be placed on the same page as the citation in the text, or on an adjacent page in a spread. Here, the figure should not be superscript type; it should be followed by a period and one space. Example:

1. *EBF on... Corporate Social Responsibility: A Special Report by European Business Forum*, London, Summer 2004.

- To cite source references in footnotes, follow this general style:

*Books:*

1. Author, *book title*, publisher, place of publication, year of publication, page number.

Note: If any of these elements have already been cited in the text, there’s no need to repeat them in the footnote. Also, there’s no need to cite page numbers if the reference is being made to the book as a whole.

*Magazine/Journal article:*

1. Author, “title of article in magazine or journal,” *name of magazine/journal*, date, page number.

*Newspaper article:*

1. Author, “title of newspaper article,” *name of newspaper*, date, page number.

For examples of other types of sources, consult *The Gregg Reference Manual*.

## foreign countries

Avoid references to *foreign countries*. No country is foreign to itself, and IABC has members in many countries. Try using other words as appropriate to the context, such as “other countries.”

## formal titles

- Use lowercase for a formal title when not using a name: *The managing editor didn’t agree.*

- Use lowercase for a formal title when separating it from a name by commas: *Caroline Ashbury, president, will be awarded the trophy tonight. The director of human resources, Mark Kohl, does not plan to attend.*

- Whenever possible, use formal job titles after names, not before. When used after a name, use lowercase: *Heathcliff Ferguson, director of marketing*

- Use uppercase and no comma when formal job titles precede a name.: *Director of Marketing Heathcliff Ferguson*



- Follow name and formal job title with the employing organization's name and, on first reference, city, state or province, and country (if outside North America): *Hector Harbinger, CEO, Newstoday Publications, Clearbrooke, Washington.*
- Lowercase the names of departments: *Trudy Wonder, senior director of HR communication and operations, Merck & Co. Inc.*

### **Fortune 500, Fortune 100, Fortune Global 500**

- The Fortune 500 is *Fortune* magazine's annual ranking of the largest corporations in the U.S.
- The Fortune 100 refers to the top 100 companies in the Fortune 500.
- The Fortune Global 500 is *Fortune* magazine's annual ranking of the world's largest corporations.
- *Fortune* also publishes other lists, including the 100 Best Companies to Work For (U.S.) and the 100 Fastest-Growing Companies (U.S.).

### **freelance, freelancer**

One word as noun, adjective or verb.

### **full service**

Two words. Hyphenate when used as a compound modifier.

### **fundraiser, fundraising**

One word in all cases.

### **generations**

- Lowercase *millennial*.
- Lowercase *baby boomer*.
- Lowercase *traditionalists*.
- Capitalize *Generation X, Generation Y, Generation Z*

### **Global Communication Certification Council**

- Initial caps. An independent entity from IABC. Not: *certification council, Certification Council, IABC Certification Council* or *IABC Communication Certification Council*.

### **Global Seven-point Scale of Excellence**

(not service marked)

### **Gold Quill Award**

- Capitalize the first letter of each word.
- When referring to the Gold Quill Awards program, use the singular: *The Gold Quill Awards is the preeminent benchmark of communication excellence.*



- Include “Award,” especially on first mention, for readers who may not be familiar with the program. Yes: *She won a Gold Quill Award in 2012.* No: *She won a Gold Quill in 2012.*

### **Gold Quill Awards program**

Use the plural Awards in reference to the name of the program.

### **Gold Quill Award winners**

Use instead of “Gold Quill winners.”

### **hardcover** (adj.)

- One word: *hardcover book.*
- See *softcover.*

### **health care**

Two words.

### **Hispanic**

- Capitalize.
- Be sure that *Hispanic* is the word you want to use. *Hispanic* refers to people or cultures from parts of the New World that were once part of Spain’s colonial empire. The people and culture of Brazil are not *Hispanic* because Brazil was colonized by Portugal, not by Spain. In some cases, the broader word *Latino* is more appropriate, referring to people or cultures of the New World influenced by Spain and/or Portugal. Sometimes the terms *South American*, *Central American* or *Latin American*, or references to particular countries, might be more appropriate to signify geographical location.
- Stay sensitive to changing terminology; follow individuals’ preferences in relation to their heritage.
- Identify by race or ethnic origin only when relevant.
- See *racial/ethnic/cultural references.*

### **human resources, HR**

- *HR* is acceptable in all references.
- Lowercase *human resources.*

### **hypertext**

One word.

### **hyphens**

Hyphenate measurements when they are used as part of a compound modifier: *He spoke before a 200-person group.*

- Do not hyphenate phrasal verbs (verbs that include another element like an adverb or preposition to create a specific meaning). E.g. *Be sure to back up your data.* Not *Be sure to back-up your data.* See a partial list of phrasal verbs [here](#).



## **IABC**

- In internal publications, *IABC* is acceptable in all references.
- In external publications, write out *International Association of Business Communicators* followed by *IABC* in parentheses on first mention.

## **IABC National**

IABC is an international organization, so *IABC National* is incorrect when referring to the global head office. Use *IABC world headquarters* in publications. Also acceptable: *IABC International*.

## **IABC Foundation**

On subsequent references, it's acceptable to use *the Foundation* or *the foundation* (lowercase). Not *IABC Research Foundation*.

## **IABC World Conference**

See *World Conference*.

## **IABC world headquarters**

- Lowercase *world headquarters*.
- Use *IABC world headquarters* to refer to the global IABC head office.
- Also acceptable: *IABC International*. Incorrect: *IABC National*.

## **i.e.**

• Used in lieu of *that is*. Always insert a comma immediately afterwards: IABC is offering a special “15 for 12” deal for this year’s Member Month—i.e., 15 months of membership for the price of 12.

## **in order to**

Do not use *in order to*. Instead, use only *to*. Yes: *To contact me, just phone*. No: *In order to contact me, just phone*.

## **Indian**

- *Indian* refers to people who live in or who come from the country of India.
- See *Native American*.

## **informal titles**

Lowercase informal titles, whether they come before or after names: *Next, public relations expert James Del Villar addressed the audience. Laurie Poitras, consultant for the firm, accepted the answer.*

## **internet**

- Lowercase.
- Slang usage, *the Net*, is acceptable in all references. [Per AP, *the Net* (no apostrophe) is correct]
- Not synonymous with the *World Wide Web*. See *World Wide Web*.



**intranet**

Lowercase. Refers to any internal internet; therefore it is not capitalized.

**IT**

- *IT* (for *information technology*) is acceptable in all references.
- Lowercase *information technology*.

**Latin American**

See *Hispanic*.

**Latino/Latina**

See *Hispanic*.

**Leadership Forum**

Not *Leader Forum*

**long term, long-term**

Hyphenate when used as a compound modifier: *We will win in the long term. He has a long-term assignment.*

**magazine titles**

See *composition titles*.

**MBA**

Use all capital letters and no periods to abbreviate *master of business administration*. Use after name, separated by a comma: *Theresa Riviere, MBA*.

**MC**

- *MC* is the abbreviation for Master Communicator, a lifetime achievement award bestowed by IABC/Canada.
- Use *MC* after a name, separated by a comma: *Annette Martell, ABC, MC, IABC Fellow*

**marketplace**

One word.

**media, medium**

- Use *medium* when referring to one means of communicating. Use singular verb tense: *The medium of television is here to stay.*
- Use *media* when referring to more than one means of communicating. Use plural verb tense: *The media are arriving at the conference tomorrow.*



### **Member Month**

Use initial caps when referring to IABC's semi-annual membership drive.

### **Mexican states**

When referring to Mexican states in text, spell out the names.

### **microblog, microblogging**

Do not hyphenate.

### **mind-set**

Hyphenate.

### **MIS**

- *MIS* (for *management information systems*) is acceptable in all references.
- Lowercase *management information systems*.

### **months**

- Do not use commas between months and years: *The conference was scheduled for April 1990.*
- Always capitalize and spell out months: *He arrived in February 1992. The seminar is scheduled for 21 October 2013.*
- See *dates*.

### **more important, more importantly**

(from *The Gregg Reference Manual*)

*More important* is often used as a short form of "what is more important," especially at the beginning of a sentence. *More importantly* means "in a more important manner."

- *More important*, we need to establish a line of credit very quickly. (What is more important.)
- The incident was treated *more importantly* than it deserved. (In a more important manner.)

### **Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms.**

See *names*.

### **multicultural**

Use as one word in all cases.

### **names**

- Refer to people by their full names on first reference and by their last names thereafter.
- Do not use Mr., Mrs., Miss or Ms.
- Do not use commas to set off *Jr.* or *Sr.*



### **Native American**

- Use the term *Native American* to refer to people whose ancestors occupied the New World prior to European colonization. In some cases, it is more meaningful to refer to specific tribal affiliations, such as *Quechua* or *Potowatami*, instead of using the term *Native American*.
- Stay sensitive to changing terminology; follow individuals' preferences in relation to their heritage: *American Indian*, *Native American*, etc.
- Identify by race or ethnic origin only when relevant.
- See *Indian* and *racial/ethnic/cultural references*.

### **New York City**

Use the term *New York City*, rather than *New York*, or *New York, New York*.

### **newsroom**

One word. (Be sure this is consistent throughout IABC website and press releases, e.g. *IABC Newsroom*.)

### **No.**

Use as the abbreviation for “number” in conjunction with a figure to indicate position or rank. Examples: *No. 1 man*, *No. 3 choice*, *CW is the No. 1 member benefit*.

### **non-member**

- Hyphenate.
- When capitalizing, capitalize only “non,” not “member”: *Non-member*.

### **nonprofit**

One word as a noun or adjective. Use *nonprofit* rather than *not-for-profit*.

### **North America**

North America includes Canada, Mexico and the U.S.

### **numerals**

- Always use numerals for time, percentages, measurements, dates, addresses, ages, phone numbers, and numbers 10 and higher.
- Spell out numbers nine and lower. EXCEPTION: Use numerals in headlines, charts and tables.
- Spell out numbers when they start a sentence, except numerals that identify a calendar year: *1970 was a year to remember*.
- Spell out single fractions (*one-half inch*). Use numerals when using more than one fraction (*1/2 by 2 1/2 inches*).
- See *dates*.
- Write ratios with numerals and a colon. Example: *Marketing spending of the company's clients outweighs PR spending as reflected by revenue at a rate of roughly 9:1*.

### **online**

One word. Not hyphenated.



**on-site**

Hyphenate in all uses.

**organization names**

See company names.

**over, more than**

Do not use the word *over* when you mean *more than*. *Over* refers to position. *More than* refers to an amount. Yes: *More than 900 people were at the meeting*. No: *Over 900 people were at the meeting*. Yes: *The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog*.

**page**

Lowercase (e.g., *See the chart on page 35.*)

**periodical titles**

See *composition titles*.

**periods**

- In photo captions and marginalia items, use periods only at the end of complete sentences.

*Photo caption:*

Lynne and David Hammond (left) at a wine tasting with grower Sylvain Dussort (center) of  
Domaine Sylvain Dussort in Meursault, Burgundy, France

*Marginalia:*

1,650

Number of students who were given an iPod during their freshman year at Duke University in  
North Carolina

10 million

Number of iPods sold in three years

- See *bullets*.

**Ph.D.**

Abbreviation for *Doctor of Philosophy*. Use after name, separated by commas: *Sarah Fernandez, Ph.D.* Do not use *Doctor* before the name.

**plurals**

Don't use apostrophes before the letter *s* when making numbers and words plural. Yes: *'90s, Dos, Don'ts, ABCs*. No: *'90's, Do's, Don't's, ABC's*.

**p.m.**

- To refer to the hours from noon to midnight, use lowercase letters with periods. Do not precede with a comma: *8:15 p.m.*

- See *time*.



### podcasts

Capitalize the names of podcasts: *Shel Holtz, ABC, IABC Fellow, and Neville Hobson, ABC, produce the podcast For Immediate Release: The Hobson & Holtz Report, available at [forimmediaterelease.biz](http://forimmediaterelease.biz).*

### possessive form

- Use an apostrophe to indicate possessive form, except for personal pronouns: *his, hers, its, ours, theirs, whose, yours*.
- If the word, either singular or plural, does not end with an s or a z sound, add an apostrophe and an s: *the church's needs, the ship's route, today's problems, media's requests*.
- If the plural of the word ends in an s or a z sound, add only the apostrophe: *the churches' needs, the girls' toys, the Sanchez' child*.
- If the singular of the word ends in an s or a z sound, add the apostrophe and an s for words of one syllable. Add only the apostrophe for words of more than one syllable, unless you expect the pronunciation of the second s or z sound: *the fox's den, Moses' law, the justice's verdict*.
- Compounds or joint possessions show the possessive in the last word only, except in cases of separate possession where each noun takes the possessive: *My brother-in-law's house, Joe and Susan's house* (joint possession), *Joe's and Susan's clothes* (separate possession).
- Follow the user's practice for proper names: *Actors Equity, Ladies' Home Journal*.

### PR

- *PR* is an acceptable abbreviation for public relations in all references.
- Use all capital letters, no periods.
- See *public relations*.

### professional designations

See *ABC, accreditation, certification, CMP, SCMP, MBA, doctor/M.D. and Ph.D.*

### provinces

See *Canadian provinces*.

### PRSA

- In internal publications, *PRSA* is acceptable in all references.
- In external publications, write *Public Relations Society of America* followed by *PRSA* in parentheses.

### public relations

- *Public relations* and *communication* are not synonymous. *Communication* is the broader term. *Public relations* is a type of communication.
- See *PR*.

### quotations, quotation marks

- Use quotation marks to surround someone's exact words.



- If the attribution follows the quote, end the quote with a comma before the closing quotation marks. Yes: *“I have no intention of responding,” he told the reporter.* No: *“I have no intention of responding” he told the reporter.*
- If the attribution precedes the quote, place a comma and a space before the opening quotation marks. Yes: *The CEO said, “We have not yet begun to fight.”* No: *The CEO said “We have not yet begun to fight.”*
- In quotes of two or more paragraphs, put quotation marks before each paragraph, but only at the end of the last paragraph; do not put quotation marks at the end of intermediate paragraphs. Yes: *He said, “I deplore pollution and its effect on health worldwide. “Here’s what I plan to do about it.”* No: *He said, “I deplore pollution and its effect on health worldwide.” “Here’s what I plan to do about it.”*
- Use only one attribution per quote. Yes: *He said, “I deplore pollution and its effect on health worldwide. “Here’s what I plan to do about it.”* No: *He said, “I deplore pollution and its effect on health worldwide. “Here’s what I plan to do about it,” he said.*
- When using partial quotes, don’t put quotation marks around words that the user could not have said: Yes: *The CEO said he is “not in the habit of stealing from the cookie jar.”* No: *The CEO said he “is not in the habit of stealing from the cookie jar.”* (The CEO would not say “I is not in the habit”; he would say “I am not in the habit,” so this cannot be a part of the direct quote.)
- Periods and commas always go inside quotation marks.
- Dashes, semicolons, question marks and exclamation marks go inside quotation marks when they are part of the quoted material: *She asked the Internal Revenue Service agent, “What do you want at our office?”*
- Dashes, semicolons, question marks and exclamation marks go outside quotation marks when they are not part of the quoted material: *What did she do when the IRS agent said, “We’re here to audit your books”?*
- When quoting conversation, place each person’s quotes, no matter how brief, in a separate paragraph: *“What did she say?” Frieburger asked. “I don’t know,” Smith responded. “That’s a pity,” Frieburger said.*
- Use ellipses to indicate words that you have removed from the original quote: *“I am going to go public with this news...and that is all there is to it,” the vice president told his staff.*
- For quotes within quotes, use single quotation marks. *Freidman said, “I told my manager what the client wanted and her response to me was, ‘Can we accomplish that this week?’ ”*
- For quotes in headlines, use single quotation marks: *Avoid ‘Homicide Detective Syndrome’*

### **racial, ethnic, cultural references**

- Identify by race or ethnic origin only when relevant.
- Alphabetize and capitalize: *Their clients included Asians, Blacks and Hispanics.*
- Stay sensitive to changing terminology; follow individuals’ preferences in relation to their heritage.
- Be aware that some phrases (*white-knuckled* to describe fear, *red-faced* to describe embarrassment) don’t apply to all people.
- See *African American, Asian, Black, Hispanic, Indian, Native American* and *White*.



### **résumé, resume**

Use accent marks in the word *résumé* when referring to a summary of one's experiences. Otherwise readers might think you mean *resume* (to begin again).

### **road map**

Two words.

### **round table**

Two words.

### **SCMP**

- *SCMP* is the abbreviation for *Strategic Communication Management Professional*, IABC's professional strategic adviser-level certification.
- See *certification*.

### **seasons**

- If you are writing for an international audience, remember that one reader's fall might be another's spring. Instead of using seasons, use months or time of year: *The conference was scheduled for midyear 2010.*
- Lowercase all seasons: *spring, summer, fall, winter.*
- Do not use commas between seasons and years.

### **semicolons in a series**

- Use semicolons to separate elements of a series when the individual segments contain commas.
- Use semicolons between *and* and the last item in the series. Yes: *The nominees for the award are Johnny Laser, president of LaserMasters; Marshall Duncan, director of public affairs, CompuWorks; and Cheryl Baud, sales manager, Modems 'r' Us.* No: *The nominees for the award are Johnny Laser, president of LaserMasters, Marshall Duncan, director of public affairs, CompuWorks, and Cheryl Baud, sales manager, Modems 'r' Us.*

### **search engine optimization**

Lowercase; abbreviate as SEO

### **serial comma**

See *commas in a series*.

### **smartphone**

One word per AP guidelines.

### **snail mail**

Two words, meaning postal mail.



### **social media**

Takes a plural verb: *Social media represent a sea change that will affect every aspect of an organization.*

### **softcover** (adj.)

- One word: *softcover book*.
- Note that a softcover is different than a mass market paperback.
- See *hardcover*.

### **South American**

See *Hispanic*.

### **state, province, county, country names**

Spell out these names, because in a publication with an international readership, not everyone may know the abbreviations for, say, Rhode Island or New South Wales. “U.S.” and “U.K.” can be two exceptions to this.

In mailing addresses, use postal abbreviations. The name of the country should follow the ZIP/postal code and should not be separated by a comma. Examples:

IABC World Headquarters  
155 Montgomery Street, Suite 1210  
San Francisco, CA 94104 USA

Canada Post Returns  
960-2 Walker Road  
Windsor, ON N9A 6J3 Canada

### **teamwork**

One word.

### **telephone numbers**

- Use a space after the country code, and use periods between the rest of the elements:  
+1 415.544.4700  
+44 7710.130755
- Do not use “+1” with toll-free numbers (800, 866, 877, 888):  
800.555.1212
- Use *ext.* as the abbreviation for extension.

### **time**

- Use numerals; do not spell out: Yes: *8 a.m.* No: *eight a.m.*
- When time designated is exactly on the hour, do not follow the numeral with colon (*8 a.m.*); otherwise, follow the number with a colon and minutes (*8:15 a.m.*).
- Do not use *o'clock*.
- See *a.m.* and *p.m.*



### **time frame**

Two words.

### **timeline**

One word when referring to a schedule of events and procedures.

### **titles**

See *composition titles, doctor/M.D., formal titles, informal titles* and *Mr./Mrs./Miss/Ms.*

### **too**

From *The Gregg Reference Manual*:

a. When the adverb *too* (in the sense of “also”) occurs at the end of a clause or a sentence, the comma preceding is omitted:

If you feel that way *too*, why don’t we just drop all further negotiations?  
They are after a bigger share of the market *too*.

b. When *too* (in the sense of “also”) occurs elsewhere in the sentence, particularly between subject and verb, set it off with two commas.

You, *too*, could be in the Caribbean right now.  
Then, *too*, there are the additional taxes to be considered.

### **toolkit**

One word.

### **touch point**

Two words.

### **trademarks**

- Unless you are referring to a product made by a particular company, avoid using trademarked names such as *Jell-O* and *Kleenex*. Instead, use generic terms such as *gelatin dessert* or *facial tissue*.
- When you use a trademarked name in an *editorial* context, follow the trade name’s capitalization, spacing and punctuation (e.g., Microsoft PowerPoint, eBay, A & P, AT&T, Q-tips, Mrs. Paul’s); you do not need to include the trademark symbol or otherwise specify that the name is trademarked. For example: *Many IABC chapters use Microsoft PowerPoint presentations to share information at member meetings.*
- If you are using a trademarked name in *advertising* or other commercial/sales applications, then you would need to include the appropriate symbol.

Source: International Trademark Association (<http://www.inta.org/tmcklst1.htm>)

### **TV**

*TV* is an acceptable abbreviation for *television* in all references.



### **U.K. (United Kingdom)**

- Use capital letters and periods for *U.K.*
- When using as a noun, precede with lowercase *the*: *the U.K.*
- Encompasses Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) and Northern Ireland. Ireland is independent of the United Kingdom.

### **U.N.**

*U.N.* is an acceptable abbreviation for *United Nations* in all references.

### **U.S. (United States)**

- Use capital letters and periods for *U.S.*
- When using as a noun, precede with lowercase *the*: *the U.S.*

### **videotape**

Always one word.

### **VNRs, video news releases**

- On first reference, spell out *video news release* followed by *VNR* in parentheses.
- Abbreviation with all capital letters, no periods.

### **voice mail (adj., n.)**

Two words.

### **Washington, D.C.**

Use capital letters and periods for *D.C.*, an abbreviation for *District of Columbia*.

### **Web 2.0**

The next wave of social media available through the internet. Not *the Web 2.0*.

### **web addresses**

- Try to avoid breaking web addresses over a line. When that can't be avoided, break the address before a punctuation mark:

*Join the conversation at [blogs.iabc.com/chair](http://blogs.iabc.com/chair).*

- Start URLs with initial codes such as <http://> or <https://> if needed for clarity. *Stay current at <https://iabc.com>.* Also acceptable: *Find a job or fill one at [jobs.iabc.com](http://jobs.iabc.com).*
- Do not capitalize words in web addresses unless the web address also serves to identify the organization: *For more information, visit [www.climatechange corp.com](http://www.climatechange corp.com). She writes for [ClimateChangeCorp.com](http://ClimateChangeCorp.com), a website of climate change news for the business community.*
- See *email addresses*.

### **website, web page**

- One word. Lowercase. (Refers to any given site on the World Wide Web, therefore *web* is not capitalized.)



- See *World Wide Web*.

### **white**

- Lowercase when used to refer to race: *He was the first white employee to run for the office.*
- Stay sensitive to changing terminology; follow individuals' preferences in relation to their heritage.
- Identify by race or ethnic origin only when relevant.
- See *racial/ethnic/cultural references*.

### **-wide**

Follow AP guidelines and do not hyphenate words such as *organizationwide*, *companywide*, *countrywide*, etc.

### **Wi-Fi**

Short for *wireless fidelity*. Initial caps and hyphenated.

### **wikis**

Capitalize the names of wikis: *The wiki Politicopia was created with the easy-to-use wiki platform Socialtext.*

### **workforce** (adj., n.)

One word.

### **workplace**

- As a noun, one word: *She implemented many changes in the workplace.*
- As a compound modifier, one word: *The workplace controversy was unbearable.*

### **World Conference**

Capitalize all references to IABC's annual World Conference.

### **World Wide Web**

- *WWW* and *the Web* are acceptable abbreviations for *World Wide Web* in all references.
- Three words, all capitalized. A proper noun.
- It is not synonymous with the internet; it is a part of the internet.
- See *website/web page*.
- See *web addresses*.

### **years**

- Use numbers; do not spell out: *1990*, *1840*
- On first reference, use all four digits so it is clear to which century you are referring: *1990*, not *'90*.
- For date ranges, use an en-dash rather than a hyphen (*2009–2010*) and spell out the end year (*1995–1996*, rather than *1995–96*).
- See *decades*.



### **Editor’s Note: Writing for an international readership**

IABC is an international association with members in more than 60 countries (for a list, visit the IABC website at [www.iabc.com](http://www.iabc.com)). All our written materials should be as meaningful and clear to an international readership as possible. At the same time, they should retain the flavor of the country in which they were created. This dual task is not always easy to accomplish, but it can give rise to some positive creative tension. Ask yourself if what you are writing applies to people in all countries. Not everything you write has to apply to all geographic areas, but you should be clear as to which areas it does apply. For example, do not write “employment is up” as a universal truth if you know it is not the case in some countries where our readers are. Instead, you could write “employment is up in Canada, the U.K. and the U.S.” Be specific; don’t write “the largest bank in the country.” Instead, write “the largest bank in Australia” (or Africa, Japan, etc.). Explain references that will be unfamiliar or misleading to readers in other countries such as slang terms, the names of celebrities, the titles of TV shows, etc. Be careful which pronouns you use. By “we,” do you mean to refer to a group in your department, your company, your country, your continent or the whole world? See *America, Canadian provinces, cities, currency, directions, foreign countries, Hispanic, Mexican states, North America, seasons* and *U.S. states*.

### **Typography**

To maintain the typographic consistency of IABC publications, observe the following standards:

- Use curved open and close quotation marks (“ ” ‘ ’), not uniform, straight inch marks (" ") for quotation marks and apostrophes.
- Use one Em-dash (—), not two hyphens, when you want to use a dash. Do not put spaces on either side of the dash.
- Use no spaces between ellipses and the words they separate (such as...this) when the ellipsis is separating two parts of one sentence. Use a space after the ellipsis if the ellipsis is separating one sentence from another.
- Place one space between bullets and characters (• A).
- Place only one space between terminal punctuation marks (periods, question marks, exclamation points) and the first character of the next sentence. Place only one space between colons and semi-colons and the text that follows them.