

***Los Angeles Unified School District***

*PERSONNEL COMMISSION*

*Organizational Excellence Classified Training  
Achieving Excellence Through Merit*

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# STYLEBOOK

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**This Style Handbook was originally developed in the late 1980s by now retired staff of the Office of Communications – under direction of William C. Rivera, retired Special Assistant to the Superintendent for Communications – to assist Direct staff in preparing written communications.**

## CAPITALIZATION

- CAPITALIZE titles when they precede a name but not when they follow: Superintendent of Schools John E. Deasy and Board President Mónica García, but Dr. John E. Deasy, superintendent of schools, and Mónica García, board president. Titles of all others should follow the name, Tom Jones, deputy superintendent of schools (or deputy superintendent). Titles of authority standing alone should be in lower case – principal, counselor – with two exceptions, Superintendent or Board President, when referring to the two LAUSD positions.
- Occupational or “false” titles are in lower case: bus driver Tom Jones, teacher assistant Tom Jones, teacher Tom Jones, counselor Tom Jones, singer Ton Jones.
- CAPITALIZE when reference is to the existing correct title: Board of Education, Division of Special Education, Belmont Cluster, but city board, board, special education division.
- Proper reference to our employer is the Los Angeles Unified School District. Proper reference to the governing board is the Los Angeles City Board of Education.
- CAPITALIZE standing committees and subcommittees by exact title: Business and Facilities Committee, but energy committee, personnel committee or subcommittee, ad hoc committee or sub committee.
- CAPITALIZE common nouns or generic terms when part of a name, but use lower case when used with more than one name: Hollywood High School, but Hollywood and Belmont high schools.
- Write in lower case, when they stand alone: nation, administration, state, federal, city, county, board and government. Capitalize State Legislature, State Department of Education, the District (us), the Superintendent (ours).
- Write in lower case: seasons of the year, compass directions (except in addresses), a.m. and p.m., school classes such as junior or senior, course subjects such as mathematics (except languages – Spanish or French classes). But capitalize seasons when used with a year (Spring 1995), and course titles when they are specific (History 2).
- CAPITALIZE holidays, historic events, ecclesiastical feasts, special events: Mother’s Day, Labor Day, Good Friday, Passover, Christmas, Halloween, National Education Week, New Year’s Day or Eve (but not in “What will the new year bring?”).
- CAPITALIZE specific geographic regions: Gulf States, Far East, East Los Angeles, Bay Area, Southern California, South Central Los Angeles. Write in lower case adjectives which indicate direction or general geographic regions: southern Los Angeles County, “I am going south;” but “I am going to visit the South.”

- CAPITALIZE names of professional, religious and fraternal organizations and recognized employee organizations: B'nai B'rith, Phi Delta Gamma, United Teachers-Los Angeles; but teachers union.
- CAPITALIZE names and races of ethnic groups as identified by the District: African American, Mexican American, Asian American, American Indian, Pacific Islander and Other White. Also Black, White, Caucasian, Native American. Identification by race or ethnic group should be made only when it pertinent.
- CAPITALIZE specific trade names and registered trademark names: Super Sabre Jet (but Boeing 747 jet since "jet" is descriptive and not part of the name), Coca-Cola (make certain the hyphen is included) Coke, Xerox, but cola, photocopier, or copier.
- CAPITALIZE titles of books, plays, hymns, poems, songs, etc., and place in quotation marks.
- CAPITALIZE the first word of a quotation making a complete sentence after a comma or colon: "A penny saved is a penny earned."
- CAPITALIZE names of organizations and expositions: Girl Scouts of America, Girl Scouts (when referring to the organization but not the members), Red Cross, Career Expo; but scout, boy scouts (referring to the members) or expo.
- CAPITALIZE specific decorations and awards: Teacher of the Year, Nobel Peace Prize; but second place or honorable mention.
- CAPITALIZE legislative acts: Elementary and Secondary Education Act, but lower case bills (before legislation is signed into law), Hayden bill.
- CAPITALIZE specific names of schools within a university: School of Education, School of Journalism, but education department or journalism department.

## ABBREVIATIONS

- ABBREVIATE months of six or more letters when used with dates: Sept. 11, Jan 14; spell out those with five or fewer letters, March 18, May 3. Spell it out when a month is used alone or with the year only: last February, in October 1994.
- SPELL OUT days of the week.
- ABBREVIATE and CAPITALIZE the following when used with a specific numbered street addresses:

Street (St.)	Drive (Dr.)	Highway (Hwy.)
Avenue (Ave)	Road (Rd.)	Parkway (Pkwy)
Boulevard (Blvd.)	Place (Pl.)	
Lane (Ln.)	Terrace (Ter.)	

Example: 1750 Wilshire Blvd. Do not abbreviate when the street name only is used: The Grand Avenue entrance is next. SPELL OUT the following words if used as part of a street name, with or without the address: Circle, Plaza, Point, Way, Hill(s), Square.

- ABBREVIATE and PUNCTUATE compass directions in street addresses: 202 W. First St., 1701 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
- ABBREVIATE standard title when used before names: Mr., Mrs., Ms., Dr., Sen., Gov.
- SPELL OUT the names of organizations or institutions when used the first time if the abbreviated version would not be instantly recognizable. Examples of exceptions: USC, UCLA, PTA, UTLA. Spell out the name when used the first time if it is not familiar, use abbreviation in parenthesis immediately after: Comprehensive Training and Employment Act (CETA).
- Do not use periods in all-capital letter abbreviations – PDT, SOS, PTA, TV – except when referring to nations, the United Nations, states or cities: U.S., U.N., U.S.S., N.Y., L.A.
- Lower case abbreviations usually take periods: p.m., m.p.h. Use periods as shown in: Ph.D., B.A., LL.B., M.A., Ed.D.
- ABBREVIATE business designations when used with a specific company name: Rand Corp., Texaco Inc., Warner Bros.
- Do not abbreviate names (Chas., Sue) unless person abbreviates his or her name that way.

## PUNCTUATION

Punctuation in the written word serves the same purpose as voice inflections, pauses, and emphasis in speaking. Proper phrasing avoids ambiguity, insures clarity and lessens the need for punctuation.

### PERIOD

- The period is used after all sentences.
- The period is used for an ellipsis to indicate deleted material, and within stylized, informal listings, such as, “Your office...takes the cake.” Use three periods for an ellipsis and a fourth one to indicate the end of a sentence: “Esther Williams gets the role...John Hay signed a new contract.” Normally, avoid using the ellipsis.
- Use the period in certain abbreviations: U.S., U.N.

### COMMA

- The comma separates words or figures to eliminate confusion: “What the solution is, is the question.” May 1, 1995, 1,395,430.
- The comma is used to separate a series of three or more thoughts or numbers, except before the “and” and the “or”: John, Harry and Mary; 1, 2 or 3; he, she or them. However, use the comma to separate the final part of the series to avoid confusion: “On the team are Tom Smith, Mary Jones, and Bob and Chuck Henry.
- The comma may be used before “and” or “or” for clarification: Fish abound in the lake, and the shore was lined with deer.
- Do not use the comma before “of” unless the meaning would be unclear without it: Juan Gonzales of Los Angeles.
- The comma is used to set off attribution: The work, he said, is exciting, and so, according to her, is writing a book.
- The comma is used to separate an appositive or contrast: Dr. Jones, second in command, is a nice guy.
- Do not use the comma before Roman numerals, in persons’ names, with an ampersand or dash, in street addresses or serial numbers: King James III, John Smith Jr.
- Commas must be used between two independent clauses in the same sentences: Paul skipped lunch, and he went home. It is unnecessary if it’s a simple compound verb: Paul skipped lunch and went home.

## SEMICOLON

- The semicolon separates, to avoid confusion, complete sentences phrases containing commas and separates statements of contrast, closely related statements, or listings containing commas within each item:

The school, built in 1906, is falling apart; the principal's office, which has been rebuilt, looks new.

The group included Dr. John Deasy, superintendent of schools; Mónica García, board president; Michelle King, deputy superintendent; and Megan Reilly, chief financial officer. (Without the semicolon, one could conclude the group consisted of eight persons)

- The final semicolon in a series should not be replaced by a comma.

## APOSTROPHE

- The apostrophe indicates the possessive case of nouns, omission of numbers, and contractions:
  - It is Mary's turn. It is Tom's glove. With words ending in "s," just add the apostrophe: Jones' house (preferable to "Jones's" house).
  - It is the '94-'95 budget.
  - It's time to go.
  - Where a plural is involved. It is the Smiths' turn (not the "Smith's" turn).
- With capital letters, it is, "The A's team members..." and "The PTA's leaders..."
- Follow the official name of a group, program or institution: Johns Hopkins University or Los Angeles Classified Employees Credit Union (in both cases, apostrophes are not used).

## COLON

- The colon introduces listings, statements, and text, and takes the place of an implied “for instance.” Do not use the colon following a verb.
  - There were three items to consider: salaries, books and personnel.
  - The categories are salaries, books and personnel.
- Use the colon to indicate exact clock time – 8:17 a.m. – but not on-the-hour-times, 4 p.m.

## EXCLAMATION POINT

- It is used to indicate strong emotion, such as surprise, incredulity or great joy. **As a general rule, avoid using it!**

## QUESTION MARK

- The question mark follows a direct question or marks an uncertainty that is set off by parentheses:
  - What happened to the good old days?
  - It was April 13 (?) when it happened.

## PARENTHESES

- Parentheses set off material or an element of a sentence:
  - That topic generally thought (by district administrators) to be a silly question.
- Parentheses set off a location identification needed for clarification but is not a part of an official title or name:
  - The Springfield (Ohio) Historical Society is alive and well.
- They can also set off letters of figures in a series:
  - The order of presentation was (a) meat, (b) potatoes and (c) bourbon.
- Place question marks and exclamation points inside the parentheses but all other punctuation outside:
  - (He was absolutely surprised!)
  - He uses two words interchangeably (preventative and preventive).However, place a period inside the parentheses when it is part of a complete sentence which is inside the parentheses:
  - (The foregoing was taken from an essay.)

When two or more paragraphs of parenthetical material are used, place the opening parentheses at the beginning of each paragraph, but the closing parentheses is used only at the end of the final paragraph, with the punctuation mark inside.

## QUOTATION MARKS

- Quotation marks enclose direct quotations; phrases in ironical uses and slang expressions; misnomers; titles of books; plays, poems, songs, brochures, lectures or speeches when the full title is used, hymns, movies, and television specials. Do not use quotation marks on newspaper and magazine titles or television serials.
- Place commas and periods inside quotation marks. Other punctuation is placed according to construction:
  - He said, "Let's make a deal."
  - Why call it a "gentleman's agreement"?
  - I said to him, "How do you know?"

## DASH

- The dash indicates a sudden change or separate phrase. It may be used in place of parentheses and commas set around a phrase. There should always be two dashes – one pair at the beginning of the phrase and one pair at the end – unless the phrase completes the sentence. There should be no space between the dashes (double hyphens) and the words preceding and following them.

## HYPHEN

- In general, the hyphen is used properly to form compound words and to separate double vowels that occur when a prefix is added to a word and when a hyphen is needed for clarification:
  - It is reelect, not re-elect
  - You record a list of expenditures, but you re-record a window sash.
  - You resign from a job or position, but you re-sign a contract.
- Adjectival use must be clear:
  - A 6-foot man, eating shark, was killed. (The man was.)
  - A 6-foot, man-eating shark, was killed. (The shark was.)
- Suspensive hyphenation:
  - The sixth- and eighth-grade students are here.
- The hyphen separates a prefix from a proper noun: un-American, pre-World War II.
- The prefix "ex" is hyphenated: ex-principal. It is preferable to use "former" principal.
- Do not use the hyphen in weekend, worldwide, nationwide, districtwide, citywide, schoolwide, communitywide and compound words which are spelled as one word in the dictionary. Do not use the hyphen in ethnic designations: African American, Mexican American, Asian American.

## NUMBERS

- SPELL OUT one through nine and use figures for numbers 10 and higher:
  - One principal, eight teachers, 14 students.
  - Spell out age and other numerical characteristics of inanimate objects when the number is under 10: The four-year-old school had a nine-pound trophy.
- Use the figures for human and animal ages and exact weights and heights:
  - The girl was 6 years old and weighed 41 pounds, and she was 4 feet and 7 inches tall.
- Use figures for exact times, measures, dates, scores, votes, temperatures and ratios.
- Money guidelines: 10 cents, 79 cents, one dollar, \$1.01, \$4 ticket, \$10, \$1,327.50, \$1.25 million, \$3 billion.
- Round off millions and billions to one or two decimal points if exact figures are not necessary: \$4,247,305 could be \$4.25 million, 6,716,890,574 cubic yards of dirt could be 6.7 billion cubic yards. **(Please note – Use of “\$1 million” or \$.325 billion takes an “are” after it. It is “\$1 million are missing...” not, “\$1 million is...”)**
- SPELL OUT percent, percentage and percentile as one word.
- SPELL OUT and HYPHENATE fractions used alone: two-thirds, seven-eighths. If used with specific figures: 17  $\frac{2}{3}$  hours, 24  $\frac{7}{8}$  gallons.
- Be consistent in a series using parallel forms. Either of the following would be correct:
  - There are 10 twenty-room buildings, 5 fifteen-room buildings and 6 four-room buildings.
  - There are ten 20-room buildings, five 15-room buildings and six 4-room buildings.
- Grade levels and periods of instruction should be treated as follows: first grade, seventh grade, grade 4, grades K-6, 11<sup>th</sup> grade, fourth period, six-period day. Be consistent: “the bus carried 1<sup>st</sup> graders, 7<sup>th</sup> graders, 10<sup>th</sup>-graders and 12<sup>th</sup>-graders.”
- Do not use an apostrophe when making plurals of numbers: the 1960s; the high 80s: His bowling average is generally in the 180s.
- SPELL OUT numbers used casually in quotes:
  - “If I told her once, I told her a thousand times.”

## SPELLING

- A consonant after a vowel and ending in a final accented syllable is generally doubled: Corral, corralled; abut, abutting.
- A consonant after a vowel usually is not doubled when the accent falls on an earlier syllable: Total, totaled; kidnap, kidnapped; channel, channeled; cancel, canceled; bus, buses, busing. One exception: program, programmed.
- Spell out one through nine and use Arabic numerals for 10 and higher: One, first; two, second; 11, 11<sup>th</sup>; 50, 50<sup>th</sup>.
- In compounding words, meaning should be the guild. A great grandfather means he is terrific. A great-grandfather is someone's fathers' father's father.
- In general:
  - PREFIXES which are hyphenated: all, ex, out, pro, self, vice.
  - PREFIXES used with proper nouns are hyphenated.
  - PREFIXES which are used without hyphens: ante, anti, bi, co, counter, down, electro, extra, hydro, hyper, in, infra, intra, mal, micro, mis, multi, non, over, poly, post, pre, re, semi, sub, super supra, trans, tri, ultra, un, under, uni, and up.
  - SUFFIXES usually hyphenated: designate, elect, in, odd, off, to, and up.
  - SUFFIXES which are used without hyphens: down, fold, like, over, ward, wide, and wise.
- CHECK YOUR DICTIONARY! Don't guess. There are many easily accessible websites that you can use to make sure you are using the correct word for your intended meaning.

## MISCELLANEOUS

- Male and female students under the age of 18 should first be referred to by full name. Depending on the age of the student and circumstances, it is permissible to use just the first name in second and subsequent references:
  - Tony Smith and Nancy Brown will be in the school play at Denker Elementary. Tony will play Moses and Mary will play Rachael.
- The legal name of the school district is the Los Angeles Unified School District. After the first identifying reference, the District can be referred to as: city schools, school system, system, school district or District.
- “New record” is redundant. If a record is set, it is new. Also, “true facts,” “help alleviate” and “new innovations” are redundant.
- Compound adverbs used as adjectives with a specific object may be hyphenated:
  - He is well known.
  - He is a well-known teacher.
  - She is sure footed.
  - She is a sure-footed gymnast.
- When written out, the B.A. is the bachelor of arts degree or bachelor’s degree (also applies to master’s degree). A Ph.D or Ed.D is a doctoral degree or doctorate.
- When a single letter is to be a plural, add an ‘s: A’s, B’s, F’s.
- It is preferable to use “approved,” “agreed,” “concurred,” “consented” or another appropriate word – not “okayed.”

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