

Writing Style Guide

Your guide to
writing digital
and print content
for UCLA Health





UCLA HEALTH WRITING STYLE GUIDE

Your guide to digital and print content at UCLA Health

Last updated: July 2025

The UCLA Health Writing Style Guide is a grammar and style reference for anyone writing or publishing digital or print copy for the organization. The writing style guide is intended to guarantee consistency across internal and external communications. All UCLA Health content needs to go through an official review. To request a review, go to requests.uclahealth.org/.

Introduction

The UCLA Health Writing Style Guide is a reference guide for anyone who wishes to write or publish digital or print copy for the organization.

Much of what you will find in this style guide is from the *AP Stylebook*, as it has been the policy of the organization to use its style guide. We have changed some of the guidelines to be more relevant to our organization's needs. This guide is a supplement to the *AP Stylebook* and does not replace it.

If you have questions about spelling, punctuation or other fine points of grammar, refer to this guide. Use it like a dictionary as well as a guideline for how to write for UCLA Health's publications — digital or print. Items are listed alphabetically.

UCLA Health Mission, Vision and Values

Our **goal** is to provide the best patient experience with every patient, every encounter, every time.

Our **mission** is to deliver leading-edge patient care, research and education.

Our **vision** is to heal humankind, one patient at a time, by improving health, alleviating suffering and delivering acts of kindness.

UCLA Health employees are committed to the **UCLA CICARE** approach with every patient, family or employee interaction. The CICARE approach adheres to the following:

- **Connect** with the patient, family and colleagues by addressing them by their preferred names and pronouns.
- **Introduce** yourself and your role.
- **Communicate** what you are about to do, how long it will take and how it will affect the patient, family or colleague.
- **Ask** and anticipate questions from the patient, family and colleagues.
- **Respond** with immediacy to questions and requests from the patient, family and colleagues.
- **Exit** every encounter with empathy and share what will come next.

Updated 07/18/25

Legally Usable Content

- Everything you write should be your own writing. If you quote another source, insert the source as well as the source URL so Marketing and Communications can evaluate the original content and, if appropriate, provide readers with a direct link to it.
- Only use medically reviewed information from reliable sources, such as .edu, .org and .gov sites.
- Never post pictures that you find using Google images or a similar search engine, or use photos pulled from Facebook, X or other social media channels without permission. We may not have the usage rights and posting such pictures could pose legal problems.

Voice and Tone

When we communicate with our audiences, we want to use a voice and tone that establishes our brand but varies based on context.

- **Voice** = what our brand means to consumers
 - We want to provide people with health-related information and empower them to make informed decisions about their health.
 - We are a team of passionate, dedicated, collaborative experts who support and serve patients and their diverse needs.
 - Our voice is our connection to the audience.
 - Strike a balance of expertise and approachability.
 - Communicate in a way that inspires the curiosity to know more.
 - While we want to make the world aware of all the amazing breakthroughs we continue to achieve, we have to spread those messages in a way that's accessible and relevant to our audience's everyday lives and challenges.
- **Tone** = how we change the sound of "our voice" based on the context of the communication
 - Genuine, heartfelt, and inspiring

Updated 07/18/25

- Conversational but not casual, informative but not academic
- Our tone embraces familiarity over formality when conveying our innovative spirit
- Whether we're speaking to external audiences such as patients, local communities, donors, the academic community — or internally to faculty and staff, our tone needs to remain consistent. Since those audiences are very different, there will be room for interpretation.
- Staying true to the “Keep on rising” ethos will still allow for striking the right balance tonally with each of our specific audiences.
- *Examples:*
 - On a web page about cancer, we will have the same voice about our brand, but we may be softer and more reassuring.
 - On a web page about having a baby, we will be more excited and congratulatory.

Writing Tips

While most of us possess some technical writing skills, we can all use a refresher course in good writing before preparing text for a publication. Here are some tips that will help you write clear, concise copy to communicate your message to your audience.

Consider your audience

Keep in mind your audience's reading level and knowledge of the subject. Two brochures on the same surgical procedure — one for patients and the other for physicians — require different writing styles. Put yourself in your audience's shoes — write in a way that draws the reader's attention to the substance of the writing.

Write at the appropriate reading level for the appropriate audiences; please try not to write higher than a sixth-grade reading level. [Flesch-Kinkaid](#) is a free tool to test the readability of your work.

Determine your purpose

Decide what you want your readers to do, think or feel after reading the publication. You may want them to register for a conference, understand more about a service or

Updated 07/18/25

procedure or feel comfortable coming to UCLA Health. Keep your purpose in mind throughout the entire piece.

Begin with an outline

Think about the main points in your message and how you want the information to flow. Draft an outline of your main ideas to help you get started. You may want to share the outline with a colleague for feedback before you begin writing.

Write, rewrite and write again

Revising is part of writing. After you've compiled your first draft, review it with a critical eye and edit it using the guidelines in this manual. Ask co-workers to critique the copy; be willing to incorporate suggestions. Consider reading it aloud to yourself to see if it makes sense. When you're done writing, read through it again as an objective editor. Ask yourself: If you were the reader would this appeal to you? Is it clear and easy to understand? Is there any information missing?

Proofread/spell-check

Proofread carefully in addition to using your computer's spell-check.

Check your facts

Fact checking your work is essential for good writing. Make sure that you are using reliable sources to confirm what you are writing is factual and accurate. Provide links to sources if appropriate.

Active voice and positive form

Write in active voice, not passive.

- *Examples:*
 - "The department sponsored a lecture," rather than "The lecture was sponsored by the department."
 - "We treat condition X," not "The condition is treated."

You can check use of passive voice using the grammar check in Word:

1. Go to Tools > Spelling and Grammar > Options > Settings.
2. Check for passive sentences.

Updated 07/18/25

There are occasional instances where passive voice is unavoidable. *Example:* You can say “When you are discharged,” not “When we discharge you.” However, when in doubt, err on the side of active voice.

Keep it specific and concise

Most people have a great deal of reading to do each day. Keep your text as concise as possible to make your piece more readable. Use details rather than generalities to explain a main point. Include concrete examples when possible. Eliminate repetition, remove unnecessary words and condense long phrases.

Follow these best practices for breaking text into properly sized paragraphs:

- Try to limit chunks, or paragraphs, to 2 sentences. Limit sentences to 14-20 words. Break up compound sentences.
- Include up to 2 paragraphs (or chunks) under a heading for page symmetry. Three may be acceptable, especially if the preceding paragraphs are short.
- When the topic changes, create a new paragraph.

Avoid jargon, clichés and wordy prepositional phrases.

Avoid

Use instead

as a matter of fact

in fact

at this point in time

now, today

in close proximity

near

true facts

facts

past history

past

mutual cooperation

cooperation

is in the process of

is

utilized

used

Avoid using formal or scholarly tone unless necessary

A conversational tone is more readable and usually more effective. Technical documents may require a more formal tone. Again, consider your audience. Avoid Latinisms such as e.g., i.e., etc.

Choose verbs carefully

Strong, descriptive verbs add color to copy and eliminate the need for wordy phrases.

Avoid

Use instead

have a need for

need

take into consideration

consider

announcement was made

announced

have a tendency

tend

take action

act

made a statement

stated

Avoid verbs ending in –ing

Avoid

Use instead

is planning to hold

plans to hold

will be leading the committee

will lead the committee

Updated 07/18/25

Do not use nouns as verbs

Avoid

This policy will affect patients.

The hospital and the company are partners.

Use instead

This policy affects patients.

The hospital partnered with the company.

Use bullets effectively

Bulleted text helps highlight information and makes the text more readable. Overuse of bullets, however, can make brochures and similar pieces look awkward. Bullets and lists are especially useful for digital content.

- When the order isn't important, list the items alphabetically.
- Always capitalize the first letter of each bulleted item.
- If the list includes any fragments, do not end items with periods.
 - *Example:* The job duties include:
 - Monitoring patients
 - Taking vital signs
 - If the list comprises complete sentences, use periods at the end of each item.
- Use no more than 7 bullets, including sub-bullets. If you find that your list is longer than 7, see if you can break up the information into a separate h3 paragraph. Exception: A list of symptoms may be longer than 7 items.
- Bullets should have parallel structure, such as all full sentences or all phrases. And each bullet should start with the same part of speech: a noun, verb, noun phrase or verb phrase.
- Do not start each bulleted phrase with the same words. *Example:* When explaining a procedure, do not use "we will" again and again.
- Do not include articles, such as "A" or "An." Write "Experienced team," not

Updated 07/18/25

“An experienced team.”

Examples:

No: When you come for your evaluation, you will meet with your team, including cardiologists, cardiac surgeons, interventional cardiologists and cardiac anesthesiologists.

Yes: When you come for your evaluation, you will meet with members of your team, including:

- Cardiologists
- Cardiac surgeons
- Interventional cardiologists
- Cardiac anesthesiologists

Calls to Action (CTA)

Every page should include at least one call to action (CTA). This section invites the reader to “do something,” such as find a doctor, make an appointment or register for a class. A CTA should include the information necessary for the reader to take the action:

- Phone numbers should be formatted as 888-888-8888. Do not include parentheses. Add a hyperlink for mobile usage.
- Link (online appointment, physician finder, class registration)
- Form to download

Let the reader know what to expect from the link they are about to click. For example, it’s better to use “Read more mental health stories” instead of “Read more”.

If you have a landing page with multiple links to subpages, do not use “learn more about...” every time. Vary the CTA with:

- Explore more
- Find out more
- Read more

Updated 07/18/25

- Discover more

CTA buttons

Follow these guidelines:

- Text in a CTA button should be actionable.
- Users should be able to cover the rest of the text on the page and still understand the CTA button.
- Do not use any punctuation in CTA buttons.
- Use title case in the CTA button copy. In email CTAs, use sentence case.
- Only two buttons should be listed in the same section.

Capitalization

Title case

Capitalize the first word of the title/heading and any subtitle/subheading and all “major” words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and pronouns).

When to use title case:

- Webpage and print h1s and h2s: You should capitalize:
 - Principle words, including prepositions and conjunctions of 4 or more letters
 - *The, a, an* – or words of fewer than 4 letters if they are the first or last word in a title
 - Both parts of hyphenated words
- Search tags, category and filter options such as provider search result filters
- In the universal navigation on uclahealth.org (top, navy blue navigation/section of website). Also, use ampersand when connecting two topics (Community & Equity)
- In the global navigation of uclahealth.org (white navigation): Title Case; Lower-case for connector words (with, and, in); use ampersand

Updated 07/18/25

- In the Footer navigation

Example:

[h1] Find a Doctor Near You - <https://www.uclahealth.org/providers>

Sentence case

Capitalize the first word of the title/heading and of any subtitle/subheading; and capitalize any proper nouns. Use lowercase for everything else.

When to use sentence case:

- Webpage and print h3s and h4s: Use sentence case for all headers except the h1s.
- Articles, blog posts, news releases, email content: In all headers (h1s, h2s, h3s, and so on), capitalize the first word of the title/heading and of any subtitle/subheading and capitalize any proper nouns. Use lowercase for everything else.
- In-text call-to-action links: Use sentence case and don't include punctuation.
- Call-to-action buttons and headers: Follow CTA button guidelines and use sentence case.

Example:

[h1] UCLA Health's early use of electronic records system aids in curbing the spread of deadly fungus - <https://www.uclahealth.org/news/ucla-healths-early-use-electronic-records-system-aids>

Exceptions

- News, blogs, email content use sentence case for all headers.
- *U Magazine* uses title case.
- Capitalize the entire specialty name on the hyperlinks within the [Medical Services page](#).

Additional guidelines

Capitalize:

- Complete official names of departments, clinics or programs. *Example:* At the

Updated 07/18/25

Pituitary Disorders Center, we provide centralized care for you.

- Compositions, including names of publications, music, works of art, television programs. Capitalization of compositions should match that of the original publication. When writing an original publication, use sentence case capitalization for the title.
- Derivatives of proper nouns such as American, Marxism.
- Formal titles when they immediately precede a physician's name. *Example: Medical Director, Jane F. Doe, MD or Chief of Cardiothoracic Surgery, John R. Smith, MD*
- Proper names (such as the Democratic Party, Fleet Street)
- Proper names of all UCLA properties
- Proper nouns (official names of places, people or companies)
- Some common names. A common name is used when there is no official name for an area or place, but it has a well-known moniker. *Examples: The Green Zone; Ground Zero.*
- Specialties when they are part of the official name of the department, clinic or program. *Example: The Division of Maternal Fetal Medicine provides expert care for high-risk pregnancies*
- The first word after a bullet
- The first word of a sentence
- Titles, including but not limited to, Dr., Mrs., Mr. and Ms. With the exception of Dr., use titles only on the first reference to a person. On second and subsequent references, use only the last name.

Use lowercase:

- Specializations that are not part of a department name. *Example: Dr. Smith, who specializes in endocrinology, leads our team.*
- Titles that do not immediately precede the physician's name. *Example: Dr. Doe, the director of our cardiothoracic surgery program, has decades of experience performing minimally invasive heart surgery.*

Updated 07/18/25

- Unofficial program titles. *Example:* Dr. Doe, the director of our cardiothoracic surgery program, has decades of experience performing minimally invasive heart surgery.

Always use numerals in headlines and titles, even for numbers one through nine.

Example: Against all odds, 3 siblings were born with the same genetic disorder.

Punctuation

Apostrophes

Use to indicate possession (*the doctor's, the nurse's*), or omitted letters or figures (*don't, '50s*). Do not use to indicate plurals in numerals or acronyms: *1990s, HMOs, RNs*.

Commas

In a series

Use commas to separate elements in a series, but do not place a comma before the conjunction in a simple series of three or more: *We invited all patients, visitors and staff.*

Put a comma before the concluding conjunction in a series, however, if an integral element of the series requires a conjunction: *I had orange juice, toast, and ham and eggs for breakfast.*

Use a comma before the concluding conjunction in a complex series of phrases: The main points to consider are whether the athletes are skillful enough to compete, whether they have the stamina to endure the training, and whether they have the proper mental attitude.

Parenthetical expressions

Sentences with brief descriptive phrases must use the apposition comma. The Employee Survey, coordinated by a multidisciplinary task force, will be fielded in September 2020.

With dates

Use a comma between the day and year and after the year: *July 18, 2018, is the last day to submit research proposals.* Do not use a comma between the month and year: *July 2020.*

With quotes

Commas and periods always go within quotations: *"Don't leave the gurney in the hall,"*

Updated 07/18/25

the orderly said.

With states

Use commas before and after state names when used with city names: Phoenix, Ariz., and Tucson, Ariz.

Ellipses (. . .)

(sing. ellipsis)

In general, treat an ellipsis as a three-letter word, constructed with three periods and two spaces. Use an ellipsis to indicate the deletion of one or more words in condensing quotes, texts and documents. Be careful to avoid deletions that distort the original meaning. (As a general rule, try to avoid using ellipses in a quote – it is better to find a quote that works in its entirety.)

Em dash (—) and en dash (–)

An em dash is roughly the length of a lowercase letter m and is generally used to replace colons, commas, hyphens, semi-colons and parentheses. Our style includes a space on either side of em dashes.

Use em dashes:

- Abrupt change: To denote an abrupt change in thought or an emphatic pause.
- Series within a phrase: When a phrase that otherwise would be set off by commas contains a series of words that must be separated by commas.

Example: Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center — an academic medical center in Los Angeles — is respected around the world for research and patient education.

An en dash is roughly the length of a lowercase letter n and is typically used to denote a span of time or in the place of a colon to create compounds (see example below). Follow these guidelines:

Use en dashes:

- To create compounds: like *the California–Mexico border*.
- To denote a span of time, if space is limited. *Example:* Monday – Thursday or 9 – 11 am. In all other cases, use *to*: Monday to Thursday. Refer to the Time entry for further clarification.

Updated 07/18/25

To insert an em or en dash in Word, choose Symbol from the Insert menu, click the Special Characters tab, highlight the dash and click Insert.

Hyphen (-)

Hyphens are joiners. Use them to avoid ambiguity or to form a single idea from two or more words.

As compound modifier

When a compound modifier — two or more words expressing a single concept — precedes a noun, use hyphens to link all the words in the compound except the adverb *very* and all adverbs that end in

—ly: a first-quarter touchdown, a bluish-green dress, a full-time job, a 2-year-old girl, an easily remembered rule.

However, omit the hyphen when the phrasal adjectives are commonly used and understood without the hyphen and the meaning is quite clear without one: *a high school student, an affirmative action program, a primary care physician, the intensive care unit.*

Use with a two-thought compound — *socio-economic.*

Periods

Only use one space after a period. Only use at end of bulleted items if the bulleted item is a complete sentence on its own. Do not use at the end of headlines.

Quotations

Periods and commas go within quotation marks; dashes, semicolons, question marks and exclamation points go within the quotation marks when they apply to the quoted matter only.

For quotes within quotes, alternate between double quotation marks (“or”) and single marks (‘or’):

Example: She said, “I quote from his letter, ‘I agree with Kipling that “the female of the species is more deadly than the male” but the phenomenon is not an unchangeable law of nature,’ a remark he did not explain.”

Use three marks together if two quoted elements end at the same time:

Example: She said, “He told me, ‘I love you.’”

Updated 07/18/25

Semicolons

Use in a sentence to separate two complete and related thoughts, or to separate items in a series when at least one of the items includes a comma. Think of a semicolon as a half pause that connects two sentences that could grammatically stand on their own.

Examples:

Dr. Smith went to Florida; it was her first vacation there.

The surgical team was made up of Dr. Kennan, who has served as department chair for three years; Dr. Jones, who has been with the hospital two years; and Dr. Johnson, who just transferred from an Atlanta hospital last month.

Spacing

Avoid unnecessary spaces:

- Use only one space after a period.
- When creating a bulleted list, the list should be flush to the intro line.

Linking policies

Include internal hyperlinks within the copy if it helps the user find the information they need. Internal hyperlinks should never open in a new window if they are keeping the user on the uclahealth.org domain.

Digital content on our public-facing website or Mednet may link to external websites that meet the criteria below (ultimately determined by UCLA Health Digital Marketing team.)

Please have links to external websites open in a new browser window.

- Websites that are owned by nonprofit health organizations and end in .org, such as the American Cancer Society ([cancer.org](https://www.cancer.org))
- Websites of official UCLA content partners (i.e., content that is linked throughout the site)
- Any website that ends with “ucla.edu”
- Websites of businesses or organizations that are official marketing/community partners with UCLA Health (Bruin KidsClub, UCLA Athletics)

Updated 07/18/25

UCLA Health will not link to external websites that fall within any of the following criteria:

- Websites that are owned or managed by a political party, candidate or special-interest group or are of a political nature
- Websites containing any materials that may reasonably be considered offensive (sexual content or images or slurs against race, religious or political beliefs, age, gender, sexual orientation, national origin or physical attributes)
- Websites endorsing or selling products or services not sanctioned by UCLA Health
- Websites soliciting donations or funding

Links may be made to UCLA's website by outside contacts. All hypertext links should point to UCLA's homepage, uclahealth.org, unless another URL is otherwise agreed upon. We do not have control over websites that link to us, and the information about UCLA on these websites can become outdated. If you run across such a website, please contact the Content Manager, who will attempt to contact the other website and ask for the information to be updated or removed.

When in doubt about the content on an external website, please err on the side of caution to protect UCLA. Please feel free to contact the Marketing Department at requests.uclahealth.org for clarification.

Important: All links on uclahealth.org that point to external websites should open in a new tab.

Linking in Print Material

In print, exclude “<http://www>.”

Example: uclahealth.org, not <https://www.uclahealth.org/>

Check that URL functions without “www” before publishing. Also, make sure the link is active and sends the reader to the correct website.

In print material, use a QR code for important links and also provide the URL written out in case the reader needs to type it into a browser.

If a URL is long and must be written out, consider requesting a vanity URL.

Avoid writing out bitly links as they are hard to type into a browser correctly.

Updated 07/18/25

Naming Conventions for UCLA Health

Facility and department names

- UCLA Health
 - Don't refer to the UCLA Health System, uppercased. You can refer to UCLA Health as a health system where appropriate.
- Broad Stem Cell Research Center
 - Use *Eli and Edythe Broad Center of Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research at UCLA*.
 - Second reference can be UCLA Broad Stem Cell Research Center.
- David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA
 - Second reference can use "David Geffen School of Medicine," "medical school," "school of medicine" or "UCLA's medical school"
- Doheny Eye Institute
 - Includes three "Doheny Eye Center UCLA offices"
 - When referring to UCLA Stein Eye Institute and Doheny Eye Institute together:
 - UCLA Stein Eye and Doheny Eye Institutes (preferred)
 - UCLA Stein and Doheny Eye Institutes (acceptable when in context of *U.S. News & World Report* rankings)
- Doris Stein Eye Research Center
- Jane and Terry Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior at UCLA
 - Second reference can be shortened to UCLA Semel Institute
- Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center
- Simms/Mann UCLA Center for Integrative Oncology
 - Second reference can use Simms/Mann Center

Updated 07/18/25

- Stein Plaza buildings
 - Jules Stein Building
 - Doris Stein Building
 - Edie & Lew Wasserman Building
- The Stewart and Lynda Resnick Neuropsychiatric Hospital at UCLA
 - Also referred to as Resnick Neuropsychiatric Hospital at UCLA
 - Second reference can be RNPH
- UCLA Faculty Practice Group
- UCLA Health/Motion Picture Television Fund (MPTF) medical clinics
 - Do not use
- UCLA Health Calabasas Primary & Specialty Care
 - Do not use MPTF Calabasas Primary Care
- UCLA Health Hollywood Primary Care
 - Do not use MPTF Bob Hope Primary Care
- UCLA Health Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center
 - Second reference can use UCLA Health JCCC
 - Do not use just *JCCC*
- UCLA Health Santa Clarita Primary & Specialty Care
 - Do not use MPTF Santa Clarita Primary Care
- UCLA Health Toluca Lake Primary Care
 - Do not use MPTF Toluca Lake Primary Care
- UCLA Health Westside Primary Care
 - Do not use MPTF Westside Primary Care

Updated 07/18/25

- UCLA Mattel Children’s Hospital
- UCLA Medical Plaza buildings and locations
 - Peter Morton Medical Building — 200 UCLA Medical Plaza
 - Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Building — 100 UCLA Medical Plaza
 - Wendy and Leonard Goldberg Medical Building — 300 UCLA Medical Plaza
- UCLA Santa Monica Medical Center
- UCLA Stein Eye Institute
- UCLA West Valley Medical Center

Affiliation references

- California Rehabilitation Institute
 - Second reference can be Cal Rehab.
 - Partnership between UCLA Health and Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and managed by Select Medical
- UCLA Health at home with AccentCare, home health services
- UCLA Health Medicare Advantage Plans
- UCLA Health Sports Performance, powered by EXOS
- UCLA Health Training Center, home of the Los Angeles Lakers

Clinics, centers and programs

- If needed, you can add the word clinic after a proper name, lowercased. *Example:* Welcome to the UCLA Health Porter Ranch Cancer Care clinic.
- Only capitalize clinic if it’s in the proper name of the place. *Example:* The Men’s Health Clinic.
- Only call something a *center* or *program* if it is officially designated as one.

Acronyms

Updated 07/18/25

UCLA Health has its own particular alphabet shorthand. Recognizing that it's not always practical to write out the full name of our facilities, we offer this guide to acceptable acronyms to use (on second reference). Generally, we use these in internal correspondence only though some exceptions are noted below for external material.

- DGSOM: David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA
- FPG: UCLA Faculty Practice Group
- MCH: UCLA Mattel Children's Hospital
- RNPH: Resnick Neuropsychiatric Hospital at UCLA
 - OK for external use on second reference
- RRUCLA: Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center
- SMUCLA: UCLA Santa Monica Medical Center
- UCLA Health JCCC: Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center
 - OK for external use on second reference
- WUCLA: UCLA West Valley Medical Center

Grammar, spelling and style

A

Abbreviations

An abbreviation is the shortened form of a written word. In most cases, only abbreviate names on the second reference. Avoid using abbreviations that would not be easily recognized by most readers. Try to use abbreviations sparingly. Avoid using more than one abbreviation in a sentence. For information about how to abbreviate specific items, refer to their particular entry in this guide or the *AP Stylebook*.

Abortion

Use *anti-abortion* (not pro-life or anti-choice), *abortion rights* (not pro-abortion, anti-life or pro-choice) and *abortion doctor* or *abortion practitioner* (not abortionist).

Academic degrees/credentials

Only include highest-earned degree, with the exception of "MD, PhD," when both should be listed. When the second-highest credential is relevant to the communication message, a second credential may be used. Use at the end of a full

Updated 07/18/25

name on the first reference only and in captions. Always use initials.

Do not use technical certifications or memberships after a name. Technical certifications include certifications around a technical skill set, such as ACLS, BLS, PALS and others.

Only credentials that have been earned should be included. Do not include credentials that the individual is working toward but has not yet earned.

Use commas when multiple credentials are listed.

When trying to establish someone's position as an expert in a story, refer only to his or her specialty rather than using the initials of his or her degrees.

Do not use periods between letters of academic degrees: MD, not M.D.; PhD, not Ph.D. If the subject is an MD, PhD or DO, refer to him or her as "Dr." on second reference.

Examples: John Smith, MD, seen here, with his patients; Jennifer Conner, BSN, joined UCLA General Pediatrics in 2016.

Academic departments and divisions

Lowercase the names of academic departments and divisions, except when used as a proper noun or when part of the official and formal name.

Examples:

- Does UCLA have a marketing department?
- the UCLA Department of Neurology
- the dean of the division of social sciences
- the UCLA Division of Humanities
- the UCLA College of Letters and Science's Division of Life Sciences

Accept, except

Accept has several different meanings but in general means one of three things: to willingly receive something, to give permission or approval to or to regard as proper or an ultimate truth.

Except refers to an exclusion or something outside of the ordinary.

Updated 07/18/25

Acronyms

An acronym is a word formed from the first letter(s) of a series of words. Omit periods between the letters. Generally, capitalize acronyms when the series of words form a proper name, such as CDC for Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or the individual letters are pronounced, such as HMO for health maintenance organization. On first reference, spell out the acronym with the acronym appearing in parentheses.

Examples: The word laser is an acronym for light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation.

UNESCO (pronounced you-Ness-co) is an acronym for the United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization.

The University of California Office of the President (UCOP) issued a letter today to chancellors. UCOP requests all campuses to submit their institutional goals by noon tomorrow.

Act

Capitalize when using act as a piece of legislation.

Example: The Dream Act

Addresses

Use abbreviations for street, avenue, boulevard and parkway when writing numbered addresses. All other street designations (lane, circle, alley, and so on) should be spelled out.

Do not spell out numbers in addresses. Only use the numeric form for the house or building number. However, street names that use ordinal numbers 1-9 should be spelled out and capitalized.

Examples:

- 1234 Main St.
- 7654 Willow Circle
- 745 Fifth Ave.

Affect, effect

Affect is most commonly used as a verb, meaning *to influence*. There is seldom a need to use affect as a noun in daily language, unless describing an emotion. Use *affect* rather than *impact*, when illustrating the influence one thing has on another.

Updated 07/18/25

Example: Supporting local businesses affects the local economy.

Effect can be used as either a verb or a noun. As a verb, it means *to cause*. In its noun form, it means *a result*.

Example: The fall of the regime was the effect of widespread protests.

Ages

Numerals should always be used for living things. For inanimate objects or when used at the beginning of a sentence, spell out the number. When expressed as an adjective before a noun or as a substitute for a noun, use a combination of numerals and hyphens.

Examples: John Doe, 35, is a rising star in the organization. John Doe is 35 years old.

Thirty-five-year-old John Doe is on the fast-track to success in the organization.

The five-year-old building is already in need of repairs.

AIDS, HIV

AIDS is acceptable in all references to “acquired immune deficiency syndrome.” *AIDS* is caused by the human immunodeficiency virus, or HIV. *HIV* is acceptable in all references.

All-

Use a hyphen when using this as a prefix.

Examples: all-around; all-encompassing

Alumnus, alumni; alumna, alumnae

Alumnus is the singular, masculine form of alumni. Alumna is the singular, feminine form of alumnae. Use alumni when referring to a group of men and women.

Alzheimer's disease

Lowercase *disease*. Second reference can be shortened to *Alzheimer's*.

American Medical Association

Use AMA on second and subsequent references.

Ampersand (&)

Use only when it is part of the name of an organization or a composition. Also see Capitalization for additional guidelines on when to use it in titles and for navigation.

Examples: U.S. News & World Report; House & Garden Magazine

am/pm

Not a.m. or AM. See Time entry.

Annual

Describes an event that happens once every year. Events cannot be considered annual unless they have been held for at least two successive years. If reporting on an event that is the first of an event to be held annually, note that rather than labeling it as an annual event. Do not use the description “first annual.” Use *inaugural*.

Another

Do not use as a synonym for additional. Only use when it doubles the original amount mentioned.

Examples: Twenty people have signed up for classes; another 20 are expected to sign up soon.

Fifteen people agreed with the decision while another 15 dissented.

Wrong: Three stores were severely damaged in the flood. Another 10 suffered only minor damages.

Ante-

The rules in Prefixes apply.

Anti-

Generally, all words containing this prefix should be hyphenated, except those below. Note that all physics terms that use this prefix should not be hyphenated.

- Antibiotic
- Antibody
- Anticlimax
- Antidepressant
- Antidote
- Antifreeze
- Antigen
- Antihistamine
- Antiknock
- Antimatter
- Antimony
- Antiparticle
- Antipasto
- Antiperspirant
- Antiphon
- Antiphony
- Antiseptic
- Antiserum
- Antithesis
- Antitoxin
- Antitrust
- Antitussive

Anti-racism

Active process of identifying and opposing racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies, practices and attitudes to provide equitable opportunities for all people on an individual and systemic level.

Anticipate, expect

When one anticipates something, there is an implied element of preparation for the coming event. *Expect* does not imply that preparations have been made for what is to come.

Anybody, any body, any one, anyone

Generally, use one word. When the emphasis is placed on a single element, use two words.

Examples: The right smoking cessation program can help anyone kick the habit.

Any one of the many programs available could help you quit smoking.

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

No hyphens or slashes. Second reference can be *ADHD*.

Autism, autism spectrum disorder

Autism is appropriate for first and successive references. The term *autism spectrum disorder* is appropriate for first reference, if dictated by the research or faculty member, but on second reference use *autism*. Avoid using *ASD* in all references.

Updated 07/18/25

Award-winning

B

Baby boomer

Refers to the generation born after World War II and in their late teens and early 20s during the 1960s and 1970s. Always lowercase and only hyphenated when used as a compound modifier.

Examples: He is a baby boomer; He is of the baby-boomer generation.

Bachelor of Arts/Science

Bachelor's degree can be used rather than the full title. See Academic degrees entry.

Bi-

The rules in Prefixes apply.

Biannual, biennial

Something that occurs biannually occurs twice each year. An event that occurs biennially occurs once every two years.

Bimonthly, biweekly

Bimonthly and biweekly refer to events that occur once every two months or once every two weeks, respectively. Semimonthly and semiweekly refer to events that occur twice each month or twice each week.

BIPOC

Collective term used to describe people who self-identify as Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC).

Black/African American

Black is a general term based in social constructs that describes diverse populations of African descent. African American is a term to identify people who are descendants of enslaved African people brought to the U.S during the transatlantic slave trade.

Breastfeed

One word

Broadcast

Use this for both present and past tense. *Broadcasted* is unacceptable.

By-

The rules in Prefixes apply.

Updated 07/18/25

C

California Department of Public Health

Use *CADPH* upon second and subsequent references.

Capitalization

See Capitalization entry.

Caregiver

Caregiver is preferable to *caretaker* when referring to the care of people.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Second reference can use the abbreviation *CDC*. The abbreviation takes a singular verb.

Certified registered nurse practitioner

The abbreviation *CRNP* is acceptable in all references.

Cesarean section

Second reference can be C-section. In patient materials, Cesarean birth is preferred.

Example: Whether you have a vaginal birth or a Cesarean birth, UCLA Health is here for your recovery.

City

Follow rules of capitalization. When using more generalized terms, always lowercase.

Click here

Avoid. Most web users intuitively know to “click” at a hyperlink. The link should be the part of the text that describes the function. Use term *Learn more*.

Clinical trial phases

Lowercase *phase*. Use the Arabic numeral, not Roman numeral.

Example: phase 2 clinical trial

Co-

Hyphenate when creating a word that indicates status. In other combinations, do not hyphenate.

Examples: co-pilot; co-author; coexist; cooperation

Note that *cooperation* and similar words are exceptions to the rule that prefixes should be hyphenated when the following word begins with the same vowel.

Updated 07/18/25

Coinsurance

Not *co-insurance*.

Complementary/Complimentary

Complementary refers to the ability of a person or item to enhance or add to another.

Complimentary is in reference to something that is free of charge.

Composition titles

Except for books that are primary catalogs of reference material (such as dictionaries, directories, encyclopedias), put quotation marks around titles of books, magazine articles, lectures, seminars, films and TV shows, computer games, poems and songs.

Examples: "Prescription for Excellence"; "The Mary Tyler Moore Show"; The Washington Post; New England Journal of Medicine

Comprise vs. compose

Comprise is a verb that means "to include or contain" or "to consist of." Therefore, *comprised of* is incorrect. Use *comprise* to introduce the complete list of items that make up a whole.

Example: UCLA Health comprises Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center; UCLA Santa Monica Medical Center; UCLA Mattel Children's Hospital; Resnick Neuropsychiatric Hospital at UCLA; David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA; UCLA Faculty Practice Group and more than 200 community health clinics.

Compose means "to make up or form the basis of."

Examples: A team composed of UCLA oncologists and geneticists discovered a new gene associated with breast cancer.

The cloth is composed of cotton and polyester.

Comma

See Punctuation entry.

Coordination of benefits

Spell out initial reference. May be shortened to *COB* upon subsequent references in the same article.

Comparison of benefits

Always spell out.

Copay

No hyphen. Not *copayment*, *co-pay* or *co-payment*.

Updated 07/18/25

COVID-19

Use COVID-19 on all mentions, not Coronavirus. Shortening to COVID is also OK. All variants of the original SARS-CoV-2 virus are lowercase. *Example:* delta, omicron. Long COVID is not written as “long COVID” when not at the beginning of a sentence or in a title case title. SARS-CoV-2 is the name of the virus that causes COVID-19. Note capitalization and hyphenation.

Because the disease’s name is hyphenated, hyphenated phrases like *COVID-19-related* should use an en-dash between the disease name and the linked term. When in doubt, simply rewrite to avoid. *Example:* decisions related to the COVID-19 outbreak.

CT scan

The abbreviation is acceptable for all references. The abbreviation stands for *computerized tomography*. Never write *CAT scan*, which is the popular pronunciation.

D

Dates

Only abbreviate the following months: Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec. Always capitalize all months. Always use the cardinal number, not ordinal (1st, 2nd, 3rd, and so on).

Example: Oct. 3, 2011

Days of the week

Always capitalize. Never abbreviate unless they are used in a tabular calendar.

Densely populated

Use this instead of inner urban.

Diabetes

Lowercase *diabetes*. Uppercase Type 1 and Type 2. Lowercase prediabetes and gestational diabetes.

Example: The patient was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes after managing prediabetes for several years.

Dialogue

Always use dialogue spelling even when you are writing about a dialog box.

Disability

A physical, mental, cognitive or developmental condition that impairs, interferes with or limits a person's ability to engage in certain tasks or actions or participate in typical

Updated 07/18/25

daily activities and interactions. Use disability instead of outdated terms such as handicapped, differently-abled, victim, special-needs or unfortunate. Refer to “a person with a disability” as opposed to a “disabled person.”

Disabled, handicapped, impaired

Never mention a person’s disability unless it is crucial to the story. Of the three terms mentioned, the preferred term is *disabled*. If used, refer to the person as a *person with a disability*, not as a disabled person.

Diseases

Never capitalize unless they are known by the name of the person who identified the disease or they come at the beginning of a sentence.

Examples: arthritis, not Arthritis; Alzheimer’s disease

Doctor

Abbreviate to Dr. when describing those with doctorate degrees. Academic credentials follow their names on the first reference only. The abbreviation should be used only on second and subsequent references. Never write *Dr. John Smith, MD*. See MD entry.

Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine

The abbreviation *DO* is acceptable in all references. See Academic Degrees and Doctor entries.

Doctor of Dental Surgery

The abbreviation *DDS* is acceptable in all references. See Academic Degrees and Doctor entries.

Doctor of Podiatric Medicine

The abbreviation *DPM* is acceptable in all references. See Academic Degrees and Doctor entries.

Download

One word.

Drug addiction

Do not refer to someone as a “drug addict.” Use “someone with a drug addiction” or “someone experiencing a drug problem.”

Drug references

In general, trade or brand names of drugs or products must be avoided. Use the generic name whenever possible. Refer to the [Physicians' Desk Reference](#) to

Updated 07/18/25

determine a drug's generic name. Only refer to the trademark name if it is essential to the story. When a trademark name is used, capitalize it.

E

Each other, one another

Two people look at each other, more than two look at one another. When the number is undefined, either phrase can be used.

ED

Emergency department. Do not use emergency room, or ER.

Either ... or; neither ... nor

The nouns that follow these words do not constitute a compound subject; they are alternate subjects and require a verb that agrees with the closer subject.

Examples: Neither they nor he is going; neither he nor they are going.

Elective v. essential procedures

Elective procedures and surgeries can be scheduled in advance and are not for a life-threatening condition. Urgent or emergency surgeries and procedures, also known as essential, are for an acute or life-threatening condition, such as appendicitis.

Email

Never hyphenate.

Everyone/every one

Two words when it means each individual item. One word when used as a pronoun meaning all persons.

Extra-

The rules in Prefixes apply.

F

Facebook

When posting to Facebook, follow all grammatical and spelling standards as explained in this guide and *the AP Stylebook*.

Face covering/face mask

A face covering is what people should wear outside of a medical setting; a face mask is what providers will wear in the clinic.

First quarter/First-quarter

Updated 07/18/25

Hyphenate when used as a compound modifier.

Examples: The company released a financial statement for the first quarter; The company released a first-quarter financial statement.

Food and Drug Administration

Second reference can be FDA. Note: It is not the Federal Drug Administration.

Form titles

Use the proper name at the top of the form to name the PDF document for online posting. Avoid spaces in file names and use dashes or hyphens if needed to separate words.

Examples: ReleaseofInformation.pdf; RegistrationandPrescriptionOrderForm.pdf=

Also, ensure the revision date appears at the bottom left of the document for easy identification. Use the Adobe Acrobat icon or label with [PDF], so users know they will download a document.

Full-

Hyphenate when used to form compound modifiers

Examples: full-dress; full-page; full-fledged; full-scale; full-length

Fully funded

Commercial health plans. Use only when necessary. Do not hyphenate -ly adverbs. Avoid *fully-funded* and *fully-insured*.

Full time/full-time

Hyphenate when used as a compound modifier.

Fundraise, fundraiser, fundraising

G

Governor

Capitalize and abbreviate as *Gov.* (singular) or *Govs.* (plural) when used as a formal title before one or more names.

Grade, -grader

Hyphenate in combining forms: a fourth-grade pupil, a 12th-grade student, a first-grader, a 10th-grader.

Groundbreaking

Updated 07/18/25

One word.

H

Hand-washing

Health care

Two words.

Headlines

See Capitalization entry.

Health Equity and Inclusive Excellence (HEIE)

Do not use Health Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (HEDI).

High-tech

HIPAA

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996. Not HIPPA.

Hispanic, Latinx or Latino

Use Latino unless the word is part of a proper name of a project, program or organization. The term Latino is widely accepted within academia and beyond and the term Latino aligns with our centers within the health sciences, UCLA campus and government agencies. Some people may prefer one term over another when referring to themselves, so it is best to ask.

HMO

Widely used acronym for *health maintenance organization*, a health plan product.

Holidays and holy days

Always capitalize the name of the holiday or holy day.

Hospitals

Write out the full name of each UCLA Health hospital, except in internal documents that consumers will never read. See Naming Conventions for UCLA Health entry.

Hospital units, divisions, floors

Capitalize when presented as part of the full and official name. In UCLA materials, this typically means “UCLA” is included in the name. Otherwise, units, floors, divisions and departments should be lowercase.

Examples: Please direct Helena Hall to the pediatric intensive care unit.

Updated 07/18/25

The UCLA Health Neonatal Intensive Care Unit was recognized by The Joint Commission for best practices in maternal and neonatal care.

The medical intensive care unit (MICU) is located on the fifth floor.

Exception: However, when presented as part of a cover title for a floor/unit brochure, the floor/unit name should always be capitalized, even without the UCLA Health qualifier as it is presented within the clear context that we are talking about UCLA Health. The rest of the title still follows sentence case capitalization.

Example: Your guide to the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit

Hours of operation

Spell out days of the week, followed by a colon. Use an en dash to denote a time span. Follow rules in the Time entry.

Example: Monday – Thursday: 10 am – 4:30 pm

Hyper-

The rules in Prefixes apply.

I

Immediate Care

Due to contractual obligations, we do not have urgent care clinics. We call them Immediate Care clinics, but we provide urgent care services in our immediate care clinics.

Impact

While grammatically correct to use its verb form when referring to something that has had an effect on one's life, avoid using it in this manner. It can cause confusion in the medical setting as it has a medical definition (when something is *impacted*, it is either blocked or there is something lodged in a bodily passage; it can also mean that two pieces of bone have been driven together or that a tooth is wedged between the jawbone and another tooth).

Instead, use *affect*.

Do not use impactful, which is considered jargon.

In/into

In indicates location. *Into* indicates movement.

Examples: She was in the ED; Her family walked into her room from the hall.

Updated 07/18/25

In-network

Hyphenate when used as an adjective.

Innovative

Avoid this term in all health plan content unless it can be sourced to a specific, non-UCLA Health document identifying the program, facility or project noted as innovative.

Inoculate**Inquire/inquiry**

Never *enquire* or *enquiry*.

Insurance, insurance plan

Use *health plan* or *health plan product*, avoid *insurance product* except where required by law.

Intensive care unit

Second reference can be ICU.

Inter-

The rules in Prefixes apply.

Internet/intranet

Lowercase *internet* and *intranet*.

Intrauterine device

Abbreviate only on second reference to *IUD*.

J**The Joint Commission**

Second reference can be *Joint Commission*.

Junior/senior

Only abbreviate at the end of a full name. Do not put a comma before Jr. or Sr.

Example: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

L**Languages**

Capitalize the proper names of languages and dialects.

-less

Never use a hyphen before this suffix.

Updated 07/18/25

LGBTQ+

Use as an acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning” with a “+” sign to recognize and include the diverse sexual and gender identities experienced within our community, including intersex and asexual people.

Liaison

Likable

Never *likeable*.

-like

Do not precede this suffix by a hyphen unless the letter *L* would be tripled.

Examples: Businesslike; shell-like

Like

Follow with a hyphen when used as a prefix meaning *similar to*.

Examples: Like-minded; like-natured

Like v. as

Use *like* as a preposition to compare noun and pronouns. It requires an object.

Example: Jim blocks like a pro.

The conjunction *as* is the correct word to introduce clauses.

Example: Jim blocks the linebacker as he should.

Like v. such as

Like is used to compare an object to something similar.

Example: The meeting included a group of doctors like Barbara (indicating Barbara was not in the group, but the doctors were similar to her).

Such as should be used when explaining an object that is included in a group.

Example: The meeting included a group of doctors such as Barbara, Marisol and Jesus (indicating Barbara was among the doctors in the group).

Login, logon, logoff

Write as two words when using as verbs. As they are written in this entry, they are nouns.

Examples: The login is 12345; Please log in to your computer.

Updated 07/18/25

Long term, long-term

Hyphenate when using as a compound modifier.

Examples: We will win in the long term; He has a long-term assignment

Los Angeles

Referring to LA is OK, no periods.

Downtown LA can be capitalized in reference to a proper name that includes Downtown LA. In general reference, lowercase downtown LA. DTLA can be used on second reference.

San Fernando Valley can be referred to as *the Valley*.

When referencing a coast or region, they can be capitalized when appropriate for marketing reasons or to refer to a specific region. When referring to coasts or regions generally, lowercase.

Examples: Bringing World-Class Cancer Care in Northern San Luis Obispo County (ad headline)

We drove to the west coast.

We are adding new clinics in the South Bay.

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

In a story with multiple references to the department, second reference can be *LACDPH*.

M

MD

The acceptable abbreviation on all references for *medical doctor*. Although the abbreviation is acceptable in all references, only use this abbreviation on the first mention of a medical doctor after their full name. For subsequent references, use the abbreviation *Dr.* before their last name. Do not use periods with degrees, as in M.D., Ph.D.

Example: First mention: John Smith, MD; second mention: Dr. John Smith

Medicaid

Always capitalized, as it is a proper noun.

Medicare

Updated 07/18/25

Always capitalized, as it is a proper noun.

Mid-

The rules in Prefixes apply, except when followed by a figure, such as mid-40s.

Military titles

Capitalize a military rank when used as a formal title before an individual's name. On the first reference, use the appropriate title before the full name of a member of the military. Subsequent references should use only the service-member's last name.

Months

See Dates entry.

Multi

Prefix rules apply, but in general, no hyphen. *Examples:* multicolored, multimillion, multilateral, multimillionaire

myUCLAhealth (MyChart)

Name of the portal patients use to look up their medical records, make appointments and contact their doctor. The mobile app for the portal is called MyChart. Use myUCLAhealth (MyChart) on first use. Second reference can be shortened to either half, whichever is more relevant for the material.

N

N95 masks

National Institutes of Health

Note that *Institutes* is plural. Second reference can be *NIH*. The agency is a part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Nationalities and races

Capitalize the proper names of nationalities and races. Uppercase Black, lowercase white. Never use yellow, red or mulatto to describe a person's ethnicity.

No.

Use *No.* as the abbreviation for *number* in conjunction with a figure to indicate position or rank.

Example: UCLA Health hospitals rank No. 1 in Los Angeles.

Non-English-speaking

Hyphenated as an adjective.

Updated 07/18/25

Nonstudent

One word.

Numerals

Spell out numbers one through nine or at the beginning of a sentence. Use ordinal numbers (1st, 2nd, 3rd and so on) when the sequence has been assigned in forming names (the 4th Ward). When writing out a headline or a chapter name, always use the numeral, even for numbers one through nine. When referring to money, use numerals. For cents or amounts of \$1 million or more, spell the words cents, million, billion, trillion and so on.

Examples: \$26.52, \$100,200, \$8 million, 6 cents.

O**OB/GYN**

The acceptable abbreviation for *obstetrician/gynecologist*. The abbreviation is acceptable in all references including the name of the department and specialty.

One

Hyphenate when used in writing fractions.

Examples: one-half; one-third

Ordinal indicators

st, nd, rd, and so on. Do not superscript.

Example: Mr. Pence was the 10th Republican governor to approve Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act.

Online

Not *on-line* or *on line*. Use only when necessary as it is usually implied.

Orthopedics/Orthopaedics

Use *orthopedics* for consumer-facing material: brand advertising; acquisition campaigns; patient-facing emails; consumer/patient-facing blog; and consumer web pages.

Use *orthopaedics* for peer-to-peer material: awareness and referral campaigns; reputation marketing; targeting peer-to-peer emails; and department/division web pages.

Outpatient

Not *out-patient*.

Updated 07/18/25

Out-of-network

Out-of-network (adjective), not *non-network*.

Out-of-pocket

As an adjective.

Overall

A single word when used as an adjective or adverb.

P**Page numbers**

Never abbreviate *page* as *pg*. Follow with figures. Page should be uppercase.

Example: Page 13

PCP

Primary care physician. Spell out on initial reference.

PDF

Portable Document File. Use the abbreviation *PDF* in all references.

Percent

Use the % symbol after a number, with no space. Do not use the word percent.

Example: The number of cases declined 10% compared to the year prior.

Period

Only use one space after a period at the end of a sentence.

Personifications

Always capitalize.

Examples: Mother Nature; Old Man Winter

Phone numbers and extensions

Always use hyphens to separate the area code, the prefix and the last four digits. Do not use parentheses.

Example: 310-825-2585 x1057.

Photo captions

Do not italicize photo captions.

Include highest-earned academic degree at the end of a full name on first reference

Updated 07/18/25

only. See Academic degrees entry.

Captioning a single photo:

- If photo includes only two subjects, add “left” after name of subject on left; subject on the right does not require location tag
- If there are more than two photo subjects, start caption with “From left:”
- *Examples:*
 - Pamela Jacobs, RN, left, reviews her department’s annual agility test results with Peggy Casey, BSN.
 - From left: Pamela Jacobs, RN; Peggy Casey, BSN; Sheila Shirazi, physical therapist; and J-Way Poserio, respiratory therapist.

Captioning photos that appear in a grid

- Bold directional (such as Top right, Bottom right) and add colon.
- If the photo includes only two subjects, add “left” name of subject on left; subject on the right does not require location tag. Do not bold “left.”

If photo includes more than two subjects, include “From left:” at start of caption. Do not bold “From left:”

Examples:

- Top right: Jennifer Chang, MD, left, offers support to a patient.
- Bottom left: From left: Ardis Moe, MD, reviews a chart with Margrit Carlson, MD, and Jessica Mits, RN.

Physician assistant

Second reference can be the abbreviation *PA*.

pm

Not *p.m.* or *PM*. See Time entry.

Portal

Point of entry for a website or section of a website.

POS

Acronym often used to identify a *point of service* health plan product.

Updated 07/18/25

Post-mortem

Hyphenate.

Postoperative

Do not hyphenate.

Post-traumatic stress disorder

Hyphenate *post-traumatic*. Second reference can be *PTSD*.

Pre-authorization

Hyphenate. Do not use pre-certification.

Pre-existing conditions

Not *preexisting* or *preex*. Always hyphenate, never shorten.

Prefixes

In general, do not hyphenate when using a prefix with a word starting with a consonant. The three following rules are consistent, but do have some exceptions:

1. Except for *cooperate* and *coordinate*, use a hyphen if the prefix ends in a vowel and the word that follows begins with the same vowel.
2. Use a hyphen if the word that follows is capitalized.
3. Use a hyphen to join doubled prefixes (*sub-subcommittee*).

For exceptions to any of the above rules, check the specific entry in this guide.

Preventive

Not *preventative*.

Primary care doctor, primary care specialty

Do not hyphenate *primary care*.

Pro-

Use a hyphen when coining words that denote support for something.

Examples: Pro-labor, pro-peace, pro-business

Pronouns

Use the person's preferred pronouns. In stories about people who identify as neither male nor female or ask not to be referred to as he/she/him/her, use the person's name in place of a pronoun or use they/them/their. Be sure that the phrasing does not imply more than one person.

Updated 07/18/25

Provider

Do not use in place of physician or doctor. Use provider when the reference is more generic or could be someone besides a physician/doctor, like a physical therapist.

R**Referral**

Occurs when a participating primary care physician refers a covered member (patient) to a participating specialist. Not the same as *pre-authorization*.

S**Says/said**

Both *says* and *said* can be used to attribute direct quotes and paraphrased comments, but it's important to be consistent throughout a document or article. Pick one and stick with it throughout. *Says* is less formal, so as a general rule, use *says* when wanting to set a more casual tone. For attributions directly related to something that happened in the past, use *said*. *Example:* During his meeting with family, Dr. Robinson *said* the patient's prognosis looked good.

Seasons

Lowercase unless part of a formal name or at the start of a sentence.

Stages of cancer

Lowercase *stage*; use numerals 1-4.

Example: stage 4 cancer

States

Spell out the names of states when listed alone in textual material. State names may be abbreviated if they appear in datelines, photo captions and lists, or to fit typographical requirements for tabular material. Be consistent with whichever format is chosen throughout the publication.

The following states are never to be abbreviated: Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas and Utah.

Students of color

Use this phrase instead of minority students.

Systemwide

One word, no hyphen

T

Updated 07/18/25

T cell (n.), T-cell (adj.)

Capitalize *T*. No hyphen for the noun form. Hyphenate when used as an adjective.

Examples: He had a healthy number of T cells; His T-cell counts increased over time.

Telehealth/telemedicine

Do not use. See Virtual care entry.

That/which (pronouns)

Use *that* and *which* in referring to inanimate objects and to animals without a name.

Use *that* for essential clauses, important to the meaning of a sentence, and without commas: *I remember the day that we met.* Use *which* for nonessential clauses, where the pronoun phrase is less necessary, and use commas: *The team, which finished last a year ago, is in first place.*

Time

Use figures except for noon and midnight. Use a colon to separate hours from minutes. Avoid redundancies, such as *11 am this morning*. Never use the *o'clock* construct. When describing a span of time that lasts for an hour or more, follow these guidelines:

1. If the span of time falls completely within the morning or completely in the afternoon, only place the time designations on the last time noted.
Examples: 9 to 11 am; 4:30 to 6 pm
2. If the time period spans noon or midnight, place time designations on both times.
Examples: 10 am to 2 pm; 11:30 pm to 1 am
3. 24/7 — indicates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
4. PT — If needed, refer to the Pacific time zone as PT, not PDT or PST.
Wherever possible, such as in reference to local events where the audience is also local, omit the time zone.

See Hours of Operation entry.

Titles

In general, confine capitalization to formal titles used directly before an individual's name. Otherwise, lowercase titles, regardless of the importance of the position.

Examples: The committee told President Obama that they disagreed with him; The financial director of the hospital, Bob Smith, released the quarterly financial report.

Updated 07/18/25

Titles of compositions and broadcasts should always be capitalized. For more guidance, see the following entries: Capitalization; Composition titles.

Trauma center levels

Use Roman numerals.

Example: Level III trauma center.

Tumor grades

Use numerals 1-4.

U

Underrepresented minority (URM)

An underrepresented racial or ethnic minority.

Underrepresented in medicine (URiM)

Use this instead of underrepresented minorities when referring to people of color in medicine. Underrepresented minorities is an older term that inappropriately describes people of color without acknowledging that certain racial groups are not represented in medicine due to decades of systemic racism that has led to more educational and social barriers for certain racial groups to be equally represented in medicine and other STEM fields. Therefore, the most appropriate term is "underrepresented in medicine" or URiM.

Urgent care

Do not use. See Immediate care entry.

URL

The address of a web page. See Linking policies entry.

U.S. News & World Report

U.S.

Username

One word.

V

Veterans Affairs

Not *Veterans Administration*. Second reference can be *VA*.

Virtual care

Use to refer to virtual medicine. Do not use telehealth or telemedicine.

Updated 07/18/25

W

Washington, D.C.

On second reference, use *Washington* or *District of Columbia*.

web page

Two words with lowercase *w*.

Website

One word with lowercase *w*.

Weeklong

Well-being

Who/whom

Who is the pronoun used for references to human beings and animals with a name. It is grammatically the subject (never the object) of a sentence, clause or phrase.

Examples: The woman who rented the room left the window open; Who is there?

Whom is used when someone is the object of a verb or preposition.

Examples: The woman to whom the room was rented left the window open; Whom do you wish to see?

Word-of-mouth

World Health Organization

Use the abbreviation *WHO* on second and subsequent references.

X-Y-Z

X

When posting to X, feel free to abbreviate and truncate words as necessary. Take care to maintain the original meaning of the tweet and to avoid confusing or uncommon abbreviations.

X-ray

Capitalize *X*. Not *xray* or *x-ray*.

Year-end

Yearlong

Updated 07/18/25

Years

Use figures without commas: *2011*. Use commas only with a month and day: *Nov. 30, 2011*. Use an s without an apostrophe when referencing spans of decades or centuries: *1900s, 1870s*.