# Editorial Style Guide

*Utah State University Extension | College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences (CAAS)*
*Utah Agricultural Experiment Station (UAES)*

# Introduction

## Audience

This editorial style guide is meant for Utah State University (USU) faculty and staff serving in:

- Extension.
- College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences (CAAS).
- Utah Agricultural Experimental Station (UAES).

This official *Extension/CAAS/UAES Editorial Style Guide* provides guidelines--especially for those who write for an external or formal audience--for all print and digital USU Extension/CAAS/UAES communication and marketing materials. These may include: press releases and media alerts, website content, online courses, copy for print publications, email campaigns, newsletters, videos, reports (internal and external), and more.

## Other Resources

Designed to present USU in a consistent and professional manner, the *Extension/CAAS/UAES Editorial Style Guide* is based on the *Utah State University Editorial Style Guide* and the *Associated Press Stylebook*. Find the full USU Writing Style Guide (usu.edu/brand/standards/editorial/writing-style-guide).

This guide departs from AP style in a few instances, tailoring to USU's communication needs and preferences. For capitalization or usage questions not addressed in the AP guide, refer to *Webster's New World College Dictionary*.

Please note this guide is **not** intended to replace other writing style guides used for publications such as scholarly journals.

# General Style

## Capitalization

Capitalize official names and proper nouns. In subsequent references, lowercase any common nouns or shortened forms of official names. Use the full, official name the first time it appears in a document.

| Correct | Incorrect |
|---|---|
| Utah State University is the state's second-largest public research university. USU inspires more than 1,000 students to pursue their research projects every year. | USU is the state's second-largest public research university. |

## The Case for Lowercase

In general, avoid unnecessary capitalization. When too many words are capitalized, they lose their importance, no longer attract attention, and interfere with readability.

When peppered with initial caps or all caps, text is less readable. Using lowercase letters in no way diminishes the stature or credibility of an individual's position or a department's reputation. Even the title "president of the United States" is lowercase in running text when following the president's name.

Do not capitalize academic and administrative titles. Capitalize and spell out occupational titles, such as professor or dean, when they precede a proper name. Lowercase elsewhere.

| Correct | Incorrect |
|---|---|
| Professor of History John Doe; Dean Jane Doe; John Doe, professor of history | John Doe, Professor of History |

- Exception: Named and endowed chairs and professorships are always capitalized, as they are honorary titles and the title typically includes proper nouns that should be capitalized.
- AP Style notes that the title Dr. is used only before the name of someone with a medical degree, not a doctoral degree.

## Academic Degrees

Capitalize the full names of degrees unless they are referred to generically, as in the second example. Use an apostrophe (possessive) in bachelor's degree and master's degree, but not in associate degree or doctoral degree. Do not use apostrophes when referring to the official degree title, as in Bachelor of Arts or Master of Science.

| Correct | Incorrect |
|---|---|
| • Julie earned a Bachelor of Arts degree at Utah State University.<br>• Larry earned a master's in mechanical engineering last year.<br>• She holds a doctoral degree (or doctorate) from USU. | Larry earned a Master's Degree in Mechanical Engineering last year. |

## Utah State University, Departments and Colleges

For external audiences, write out the complete name of Utah State University and the department or college name the first time you refer to them unless the context and nature of the document require an abbreviation (for example, in an advertisement).

| Correct | Correct second use |
|---|---|
| • Utah State University | • USU |

| | |
|---|---|
| • Utah State University College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences<br>• Utah State University Extension<br>• Utah Agricultural Experiment Station | • CAAS<br>• USU Extension<br>• UAES |

## Academic Departments

References using shortened or unofficial names should be lowercase, except for proper nouns. Capitalize only when using the full, formal name for departments.

| Correct | Incorrect |
|---|---|
| • A big change comes about as John Doe announces his retirement this spring from Utah State University's Department of Physics.<br>• Jill Doe, of economics, is now an associate professor.<br>• Jane Doe, an associate professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering at USU, excels in her profession.<br>• Professor John Doe, a researcher in the Department of Animal, Dairy and Veterinary Sciences, was honored for his work with the equine program. | Jim Doe, an associate professor of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering at USU, was named professor of the year. |

## Academic and Nonacademic Units and Bodies

Capitalize only the complete and official names of colleges, schools, divisions, departments, offices, and official bodies (such as Utah Board of Higher Education, and Utah State University Student Association). Lowercase informal and shortened versions of such names (e.g., dairy science program, food science degree, etc.).

## First/Second References in Copy

Capitalize the first reference and include the entity's full name. Second and subsequent references may be shortened and are not capitalized. When referring to a person, use the full name on the first reference, followed by the last name only for subsequent references.

| Correct |
|---|
| Professor Jane Doe teaches English at Utah State University. Doe's research focuses on literary composition. |

## USU Extension Offices and Locations

Include the official names of USU Extension offices and programs in the first reference.

| Correct | Incorrect |
|---|---|
| • Utah State University Extension Davis County<br>• Utah State University Extension Sustainability<br>• Utah State University Botanical Center | • Davis County Extension<br>• Extension Sustainability |

## USU Extension 4-H

Use the official names of USU Extension offices and programs.

| Correct | Incorrect |
|---|---|
| • Utah State University Extension Davis County 4-H<br>• Utah State University Extension 4-H Equine Program | • Davis County 4-H<br>• 4-H Equine Program |

## LGBT+

The preferred term at USU is LGBT+. For a glossary of terms and more guidance on how to create fair, accurate, and inclusive coverage for the LGBT+ community, visit the GLAAD Media Reference Guide (glaad.org/reference/).

## Titles and Headlines

For items such as stories, videos, and PowerPoint presentations, capitalize the following in titles only (not general content):

- Capitalize all nouns, verbs (including short verbs, such as is, are, be), pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions of **four or more letters** (with, before, through), and conjunctions of four or more letters (that, because).
- Do not capitalize the following in titles (unless they fall into one of the previously listed categories):
    - Articles (a, an, the), unless they are part of a proper noun.
    - Conjunctions of fewer than four letters (and, but, or, for, nor, so, yet).
    - Prepositions of fewer than four letters (on, of, to, by).

For assistance, try a plug-in tool like Capitalize My Title (capitalizemytitle.com).

# Punctuation and Grammar

## Bulleted Lists

When making a bulleted or numbered list, ensure capitalization, punctuation, and structure are consistent within the list. Capitalize the first word following the bullet and use a period at the end of each section **whether or not it is a full sentence or a phrase**. Maintain consistency throughout the document.

## Colons

Use colons to indicate something follows that will complete or amplify the previous material. It is unnecessary to capitalize the word immediately following a colon unless it begins a complete sentence or is a proper noun. Do not use unnecessary colons in sentences.

| Correct | Incorrect |
|---|---|
| There are three types of muscle in the body: cardiac, smooth, and skeletal. | Visit our website at: extension.usu.edu. |

## Commas

### *Items in a Series*

The Oxford comma, or serial comma, helps provide clarity in a series. Though an exception to AP Style, the university style is to include it.

| Correct |
|---|
| • Beware of moisture fluctuations that can cause root disorders, slow leaf development, and bitterness in produce. <br> • Begin composting by using wire mesh, a scrap materials box, or a rotating barrel. |

## Dates

Dates are punctuated with commas before and after the year, i.e., January 24, 1990, is my anniversary. There is no comma if only the month and year are used. Don't use ordinals such as 1st, 4th, or 23rd in dates. Whether writing a university document or a news release, maintain **consistency** throughout.

| Correct | Incorrect |
|---|---|
| • The project is due February 20, 2021, just before the annual conference. <br> • The project is due February 2021 before the annual conference. | The project is due February 20th, 2021. |

## Numerals

The following guidelines apply to the majority of USU writing except for scientific, statistical, technical, and mathematical writing.

Spell out one to nine. Use numerals for 10 and above.

| Correct |
| --- |
| The Alumni Association recognized 10 people at the awards ceremony, including two alumni who have demonstrated extraordinary service to Utah State University. |

Use figures for percentages, decimals, credit hours, GPAs, book sections and pages, ages, distances and dimensions, quantities combining whole numbers and fractions, and when using symbols rather than abbreviations for units of measure.

| Correct |
| --- |
| In his first semester, when he carried 16 credit hours, he earned a 3.0 GPA while spending 30% of his time on a work-study job. |

Spell out large round numbers for easier reading.

| Correct |
| --- |
| She gave the museum more than two hundred thousand artifacts. |

Spell out numbers at the beginning of a sentence or rephrase the sentence to avoid beginning with a number.

## Periods

If a sentence ends with a URL or an email address, include the closing punctuation—usually a period. Use periods in bulleted lists, even including incomplete sentences. The use of periods in degree abbreviations is preferred: B.A., M.S., Ed.D., Ph.D. Note there are no spaces in the degree abbreviations. Abbreviated degrees should only be used in lists, not in main body copy.

## Publications, Presentations, and Reports

Titles of books, periodicals, journals, movies, television and radio programs, musicals, plays, long poems, works of art, museum exhibitions, and campus publications are styled in *italics* with initial caps. This deviates from the AP style. Presentation titles are enclosed in quotes.

## Quotation Marks

Place quotation marks outside of commas and periods but inside of semicolons and colons. Question marks and exclamation marks are placed inside or outside the quotation marks, depending on whether they are part of the quoted material. Avoid using quotation marks around a word to call attention to it or because there isn't a better word to use: She uses "air quotes" regularly

in her presentation. But do, on first reference, put quotation marks around a word that is likely unfamiliar to a reader.

## Time
Use numerals with a.m. or p.m. (lowercase with periods). Use noon and midnight in place of 12 p.m. and 12 a.m., respectively, for clarity.

## URLs
Do not include http:// or www before a URL in printed copy when it is clearly a web address. For online communications, make sure the link is viable. Sometimes www is still necessary before web addresses. When listing web addresses, fit the URL on a single line if possible. Don't allow a hyphenated break in the URL because that could change the address. For printed materials, use appropriate punctuation after a URL. For online communications, if a link finishes a sentence, place a period after it unless that disrupts the link function.

## Utahn
Not Utahan.

———————

# Tips and Tricks

## Accessibility
Think about all users as you create documents. Apply web content accessibility guidelines (WCAG). Use word processor tools, such as Word's Accessibility Checker, to improve access. Learn more at USU Accessibility (usu.edu/accessibility).

## Citation Help
Google Docs has a new citations tool (under the tools menu) that assists with in-text citations and bibliographies. Choose from MLA, APA and Chicago styles, fill in the information, and the citations tool will format it.

## Grammar Assistance
Install and use Grammarly, a free, online writing tool that helps you eliminate simple errors and even address style and tone issues. Find it at Grammarly (grammarly.com).