Guidelines for Style and Usage
The Basics

The following information is provided to help standardize common terminology used or encountered most often by editorial staff in the promotion and marketing of SUNY Plattsburgh. Members of the college community are encouraged to adapt the information when preparing copy for publications, the Web, news articles, etc.

Please note that these guidelines are not complete. For items not covered within this document, please consult the Associated Press Stylebook and/or the Webster’s New World Dictionary. Strunk and White may also be used for issues not covered in the other two places.

The Name of the College

Please observe and follow these guidelines regarding the name of our institution:

- The official name of the college is the State University of New York College at Plattsburgh.
- On second and subsequent references you may use SUNY Plattsburgh, Plattsburgh, or the college.
- If a formal reference is not required, you should use SUNY Plattsburgh.
- Plattsburgh State University or Plattsburgh State University College are not acceptable and the acronyms PSU and PSUC are also not acceptable in any form or manner.
- While Plattsburgh State should not be used in college communications, its use as a colloquialism will not be discouraged.
academic degrees
Capitalize formal names of academic degrees: Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Master of Arts, Doctor of Philosophy. It is permissible to use the abbreviations of formal degrees on first reference: B.A., B.S., M.A., Ph.D.

When referring to bachelor’s and master’s degrees, use lowercase and the apostrophe. When referring to a doctorate or an associate degree, use lower case and no apostrophe.

The word degree should not follow the degree abbreviation. For instance, the phrase a B.S. degree should not be used.

Do not capitalize majors, programs, specialization or concentrations except when their name constitutes a brand name (see below): He started out as a history major but switched to accounting with a minor in gender and women’s studies.

academic programs
Lower case all academic programs unless they constitute a “brand name”: Adirondack Experience, Redcay Honors Center, the Department of Music, the music department, the biology program.

academic titles
See “titles.”

age
Use numbers, John is 3 years old. His father is a 24-year-old student. His mother is 21, and his sister is 2. He is a 2-year-old. She is in her 20s.

alumna/ae/i/us
Use alumna (alumnae in the plural) when referring to a woman who has attended the college. Use alumnus in similar singular references to a man. Use alumni when referring to more than one alumna or alumnus.

Amitié
Amitié is the correct spelling for the monumental statue in the Angell College Center courtyard.

and
Spell it out. Don’t use the ampersand (&) as a substitute for and except when part of a company name: Johnson & Johnson. However, for the purposes of tables and charts, as well as Web headlines and links, an ampersand may be used.

ANGEL
The word ANGEL when used for ANGEL Content Management Software should be in all capital letters. It is an acronym for A New Global Environment for Learning.

annual
Avoid the common error of referring to happenings as the first annual. An event cannot be described as annual until it has been (or will be) held a second time in as many years. Instead, use inaugural or first or say that sponsors plan to hold the event annually.

at sign (@)
Use @ in e-mail addresses. Do not use @ in text in place of the word at.
Banner Web

*Banner Web* is two words. Both take uppercase.

do (committee)

Capitalize the formal names of boards, committees, councils and so forth: *Plattsburgh College Foundation Board of Directors*, *the Faculty Senate Standing Committee on Budget and Resources*, *the College Council*. But use lowercase when used alone: *The foundation board appointed its representatives to the council and to the committee debating parking fees.*

buildings (halls, programs and centers)

Capitalize buildings when used with a proper noun: *Myers Fine Arts Building*, *Kehoe Building*, *Yokum Hall*, *Claude Clark Learning Center*. But lowercase them when used alone: *The college keeps its buildings clean. You’ll find plenty to eat in the dining hall. Students have access to computer equipment in the learning center. Never abbreviate.*

bylaw

Not capitalized, except in headings, and not hyphenated.

campus

Capitalize in reference to the student affairs unit known as *Campus Life*, but lowercase in all other uses.

capital/capitol

Use capital in reference to cities that are seats of government and when used in a financial context.

Use capitol when referring to buildings.

centers

See entry on departments (and other institutional functions/divisions).

city

Capitalize as part of a proper noun (e.g., *New York City*) but otherwise lowercase (*the city of Montreal*). An exception to the rule is the *City of Plattsburgh*, which is a distinct entity from the *Town of Plattsburgh*.

do-ed/co-op

Don’t hyphenate coeducational or cooperative unless you use the abbreviated form, co-ed, co-op.

Never use co-ed to refer to a person.

computer file sizes

Use megabyte or MB; kilobyte or Kb; and Kbps or kilobytes per second; gigabyte or GB; Terabyte or TB.

classes

Class years are lowercase: freshman, sophomore, junior, senior.

Class of …

When used with a specific year, capitalize: *He belonged to the Class of 1967.*

When used with many class years, use lower case: *The reunion is for the classes of ’70, ’75 and ’80.*
college
Capitalize when part of formal name for an institution or a major unit thereof: Elmira College, Teachers College, the State University of New York College at Plattsburgh. But otherwise use the lowercase: The college's forensic team placed first in the state tournament.

committee
See "board (committee)."

days (months, years)

Do not abbreviate if the month is used alone: Classes begin in August.
Also do not abbreviate if the month is used only with a year: She will graduate in December 1992. And do not use a comma between month and year or season and year: January 1991 or summer 1992.

degrees
See "academic degrees."

dean's list
Always lowercase.

departments (and other institutional functions/divisions)
For departments, centers, offices, etc., capitalize when the formal name is used: Department of Chemistry, Center for the Study of Canada, Lake Champlain Research Institute, School of Business and Economics.

Lowercase in second reference: department, center, office, school. And lowercase when used informally: chemistry department, business school, etc.

emeritus, emeriti
This title refers to someone who is retired from professional life but permitted to retain the rank of the last office held as an honorary title. Place emeritus after the formal title of a person: Professor Emeritus of History John Doe.

Lowercase when used after the person’s name: Doe, professor emeritus of history, retired several years ago. The word emeriti is the plural of emeritus.

e-mail
The word e-mail has a hyphen. So do words like e-commerce.

ensure, insure
The former means guarantee: Buy your tickets in advance to ensure admission.

The latter refers to insurance: The policy insures her life.

entitled, titled
The former means one has the right to have or the right to do something: He is entitled to the settlement.

The latter introduces a publication, music composition and so forth: His paper was titled "How to Win a Fair Settlement."
**ethnic groups**
If you must use the terms, lowercase *black* or *white*. *African-American*, *Asian-American*, *Hispanic-American* and *Native American* are acceptable in necessary references to these specific ethnic groups.

**exclamation points**
Avoid overuse and do not use more than one. End all but the most exclamatory sentences with a period.

Place exclamation mark inside quotation marks only when it is part of the quoted statement. “*Let go!*” she shouted. “*The name of the book is ‘Walden’!*” he yelled after her.

**Faculty Senate**
Capitalize the formal name, but lowercase *senate* in subsequent references.

**Field House**
Two words. Lowercase unless used as part of the official name of a building, as in *Plattsburgh State Field House*.

**full time, part time**
Hyphenate only when used as a compound modifier: *She attends college full time*. *She is a full-time student*.

**fundraising**
Both *fundraising* and *fundraiser* are one word.

**grade point average**
*GPA* (no periods) is acceptable on second reference.

**his/her**
Try to avoid using *his/her* in constructing a sentence. Usage like the following is awkward at best: *Each student is responsible for his/her own homework*. Often, the best choice is to revise the sentence: *Students are responsible for their own homework*.

**Homecoming**
Capitalize in references of the official college activity. Also, capitalize *weekend* when used with the word, as in *Homecoming Weekend*.

**honors**
Lowercase and italicize *cum laude*, *magna cum laude* and *summa cum laude*.

**hyphens**
Use hyphens to join words together when they are needed to avoid ambiguity or to form a single idea from two or more words and modify a noun: *First-Year Experience, a well-known person, a full-time employee*.

Do not hyphenate when they come after a noun: *That experience happened in his first year*. *He is well known*. *She works full time*. In some cases hyphens are used with prefixes or suffixes.

Do not use a hyphen between adverbs ending in *-ly* and the adjectives they modify: *highly qualified faculty, fully informed student body, warmly receptive audience*.

If in doubt over whether or not a hyphen should be used in a particular word, please refer to Webster’s New World Dictionary or the Associated Press Stylebook.
**Inc.**
No comma between the business name and *Inc.*: ABC Building Inc.

**insure**
See the entry "ensure, insure."

**Internet**
Always capitalize the word Internet.

**it's, its, it is**
*It's* is a contraction for *it is*: It's a fine day for golf.

The word *its* is the possessive form of the neuter pronoun: The foursome took its time.

Avoid using *it is* to begin a sentence. “Canadian studies is a strong program,” is better than “It is clear that Canadian studies is a strong program.”

**Jr., Sr.**
No comma between name and Jr. or Sr.: John Smith Jr.

**-ly**
Do not use a hyphen between adverbs ending in -ly and the adjectives they modify: highly qualified faculty, fully informed student body, warmly receptive audience.

**measurement**
Always spell out inches, feet and other measures.

**man, mankind**
Avoid unless no other term is convenient. If you can, substitute humanity, person or individual.

**mid-**
Don’t use the hyphen unless a capitalized word follows: midsemester but mid-December. However, use the hyphen when it precedes a numerical figure: mid-90s.

**money**
Use the dollar sign and numbers, but *do not* use the decimal and zeros: $25, not $25.00.

For amounts beyond thousands, use the dollar sign, number and appropriate word: $33.6 million not $33,600,000.

For amounts less than $1 use cents: 50 cents, not $.50.

**numbers**
Spell out whole numbers below 10; use figures for 10 and higher: She needs six credits to complete degree requirements. It took her 10 minutes and 45 seconds to complete the quiz.

**offices**
See entry for "departments."

**over, more than**
Use *more than* when referring to numbers: More than 1,000 will graduate this spring. Use *over* in reference to spatial relationships: The water flows over the dam.
parentheses
The period belongs outside parentheses unless the matter enclosed is an independent sentence: *The majority of our faculty have their doctorates (although a few have a master’s degree).* Most Plattsburgh students are from New York. (*There are some from other states and several foreign nations.*)

percent
One word. Do not use % alone or with numbers in text. It may be used in a headline or in a table but only with a number.

Plattsburgh Alumni Association
The *Plattsburgh Alumni Association* (official name) is the organization of the college’s alumni. It exists as a not-for-profit, perpetual organization to enable alumni to organize, unify and direct the efforts and resources in helping to achieve the college’s goals and objectives.

Plattsburgh College Foundation
The *Plattsburgh College Foundation* raises, manages and utilizes assets to support the mission of State University of New York College at Plattsburgh and to create opportunities for the college community in accordance with donor wishes. Lower case *foundation* when used alone.

quotations
Commas and periods always go inside quotation marks, while semicolons and colons always go outside quotation marks or parentheses. Exclamation points and question marks go inside the quotation marks when they are part of the quoted matter. Otherwise, they go outside. All of the following are correct:

"Our five-year plan will require some modification," said the president, "but on the whole I feel it is sound."

The president said the five-year plan needs "a few minor adjustments"; however, he did not call for wholesale changes.

The five-year plan mandates "quality first!"

The five-year plan asks, "Where do we want to go and how shall we proceed?"

What did the dean mean when he said, "Your portion of the plan is incomplete"?

race
Names of races (Caucasian, Hispanic, Asian) are capitalized, but do not capitalize black or white.

regions
Generally, lowercase north, south, etc. when they indicate compass direction, but capitalize regions of the country: South, Northeast, Far West, etc.

seasons
Lowercase fall, winter, spring and summer unless referring to a formal name: *Winter Olympics* but spring semester.
states
When a state name stands alone, spell out the name. State names may be abbreviated in tables or graphs.

Eight states are not abbreviated, except in postal listings with full addresses, including ZIP codes: Alaska (AK), Hawaii (HI), Idaho (ID), Iowa (IA), Maine (ME), Ohio (OH), Texas (TX) and Utah (UT).
(Note: These states are the ones that have five letters or fewer or that are not part of the contiguous United States.)

Abbreviate the other states as follows, using the first abbreviation, when they are used in datelines; in conjunction with a city, town or military base; or when used in short form listings of party affiliation (i.e. D-Ala., R-Minn.):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ala. (AL)</td>
<td>Alabama</td>
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<td>Ariz. (AZ)</td>
<td>Arizona</td>
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<td>Ark. (AR)</td>
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<td>Calif. (CA)</td>
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<td>Colo. (CO)</td>
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<td>W.V. (WV)</td>
<td>West Virginia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wyo. (WY)</td>
<td>Wyoming</td>
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</table>

Use the postal abbreviations, which are in parenthesis, only when writing out mailing addresses and including the ZIP code.

Do not capitalize the word state when writing out New York state.

telephone numbers
For telephone numbers, include the area code with the full number: 518-564-2000 or 800-555-5555. Do not use parentheses. If the publication is intended for internal use, you may simply use the extension: Ext. 2000.

theater/theatre
Only use theatre when part of a formal name of a building or a group: Hartman Theatre or the Pendragon Theatre but the theater program.

time
Use the lowercase a.m. or p.m. For 12 a.m. and 12 p.m., respectively, use noon and midnight. When writing time that falls on the hour, do not use :00.

titles (for people)
The title Dr. may be used when the person holds the earned doctoral degree -- Ph.D., Ed.D., D.V.M. or M.D. It is not used on second reference.

Titles are uppercase before a name: Dean John Doe; but lowercase following the name: John Doe, dean of arts and sciences.
Courtesy titles such as *Mr.*, *Mrs.*, *Miss* and *Ms.* are generally not used in either first or subsequent references. However, they may be used to differentiate between spouses who have the same last names on second and separate references: *Bill and Jane Smith, Mr. Smith, Mrs. Smith.*

**titles (for publications)**

For the titles of books, computer games, movies, operas, plays, poems, albums, songs, TV and radio programs, lectures, speeches, articles, short stories, chapter titles and works of art, follow these guidelines:

- Do not italicize. (Please note that postings to the Web may differ as the html code used to tag titles may italicize the font.)
- Capitalize the principal words.
- Capitalize prepositions and conjunctions of four or more letters.
- Capitalize words of four or fewer letters when they are at the beginning or end of a title.
- Put quotation marks around the names of all such works except the Bible, catalogs and reference books. Do not put quotes around journals, newspapers, magazines and such software titles as WordPerfect or Windows.
- Translate foreign titles into English unless the work is famous under its foreign name.

For more information, look under the compositions entry in the AP Stylebook.

**URLs**

The college’s style is to leave out the *http://* in Web addresses.

**Web**

Always capitalize the word *Web*. Write *Web site* as two words and *Web page* as two words.