

TEXAS A&M SYSTEM WRITTEN STYLE GUIDELINES

This document provides guidelines from The Texas A&M University System Office of Marketing and Communications on the written style, using the *Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual*, to be used in preparing publications, websites, correspondence, and other written works including agenda items that go before the Board of Regents. These can be found at <http://www.tamus.edu/offices/marcomm/system/>

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These pages include proper writing style such as abbreviations, capitalization, punctuation and references for terms frequently used in academic writing.

Example:

abbreviations

In general, do not use abbreviations or acronyms that the reader would not quickly recognize. Never abbreviate *university, department* or *association*.

Abbreviations of degrees, expressions of time and names of countries take periods with no space between the elements.

M.F.A., a.m., U.S.A.

TEXAS A&M SYSTEM PREFERRED USAGES AND STYLE EXCEPTIONS

Referencing the A&M System

When referencing the A&M System, use "The Texas A&M University System" on first reference (with a capital "T" in "the") and "the A&M System" or "Texas A&M System" on second reference. Do not put a space between the letters and the ampersand (i.e., A & M).

Correct: The Texas A&M University System
Second reference: A&M System or Texas A&M System

Incorrect: TAMUS
TAMU System

To prevent confusion in publications for external audiences, always use "the A&M System" or "Texas A&M System" on second reference, not just "system" alone.

In publications for internal audiences, the word "system" can be used alone on second reference. Lowercase "system" unless beginning a sentence.

- A&M System employees involved in the project were elated.
- They were proud that so many system members could pull together on a single project.

Referencing A&M System administration

Following are correct references for the A&M System Board of Regents:

- Board of Regents
- The Texas A&M University System Board of Regents
- Board of Regents of The Texas A&M University System
- the A&M System Board of Regents (on second reference)
- Texas A&M System Board of Regents (on second reference)

Lowercase "board" and "regents" if used separately.

- The Texas A&M University System Board of Regents today approved new degree programs at three A&M System universities.
- At its regularly scheduled meeting, the board discussed the importance of collaboration between A&M System universities and agencies.

Referencing specific members of the Board of Regents

Regent *first name last name*.

- Regent Jim Schwertner said the new program would be beneficial.
- Chairman Phil Adams called the meeting to order.

Referencing system executive officers and offices

The offices in the A&M System building in College Station should be referred to as "System Offices." (These offices were formerly called the "System Administrative and General Offices" or "SAGO.") "System Offices" take a plural verb.

- The System Offices provide support for the members of the A&M System.

Uppercase a title when it comes before a name, but lowercase a title when it comes after a name.

- Chancellor John Sharp
- John Sharp, chancellor of the A&M System

Uppercase names of offices.

- Office of the Chancellor
- Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

Referencing other A&M System members

When listing other universities, agencies and the health science center, always use the institution's complete name on first reference and its preferred acronym or abbreviation on second reference.

Institution	Preferred Abbreviation		Institution	Preferred Abbreviation
Texas A&M University	Texas A&M		Texas A&M International University	TAMIU
Texas A&M University at Galveston	TAMUG		Texas A&M University-Texarkana	TAMUT
Texas A&M University at Qatar	Texas A&M at Qatar		Texas A&M AgriLife Research	AgriLife Research
Prairie View A&M University	PVAMU		Texas A&M University-Central Texas	A&M-Central Texas
Texas A&M University-Commerce	A&M-Commerce		Texas A&M University-San Antonio	A&M-San Antonio
Tarleton State University	Tarleton		Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory	TVMDL
West Texas A&M University	WTAMU		Texas A&M Transportation Institute	TTI
Texas A&M University-Kingsville	Texas A&M-Kingsville		Texas A&M Health Science Center	TAMHSC
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi	A&M-Corpus Christi			

Correct: Texas A&M University-San Antonio
 Second reference: A&M-San Antonio

Incorrect: TAMU-San Antonio; TAMUSA

SELECTED AP STYLES COMMONLY USED IN ACADEMIC WRITING

abbreviations

In general, do not use abbreviations or acronyms that the reader would not quickly recognize. Never abbreviate *university, department* or *association*.

Abbreviations of degrees, expressions of time and names of countries take periods with no space between the elements.

- M.F.A., a.m., U.S.A.

To prevent awkward line breaks, do not put a space between initials used as a first name.

- B.J. Crain

Most abbreviations are spelled without periods: CFO, CIA. Add an "s" but no apostrophe to plural forms of abbreviations:

- The committee was made up of CEOs and CFOs.

The first mention of organizations, firms, agencies, groups, etc., should be spelled out.

- The Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station is the engineering research agency of the State of Texas. TEES was established in 1914.

academic degrees (also see [doctoral, doctorate](#))

Readers may not be familiar with academic degrees. It usually is better to use a phrase instead of an abbreviation.

- John Jones, who has a doctorate in psychology, said the study was flawed.

Use an apostrophe: bachelor's degree, master's degree, and so on.

Uppercase: Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts, Doctor of Philosophy, and so on.

Use abbreviations such as B.A., B.S., M.A., M.S. and Ph.D. (with no spaces between letters) only when needed to identify many individuals by degree on first reference or if usage would make the preferred form cumbersome. Spell out all others. Use these only after the person's full name, and set the abbreviation off by commas.

- John Wimberly, Ph.D., is president of the National Skydiving Association.

academic colleges/departments

Capitalize if referring to a specific department or other academic unit by its full proper name. Otherwise, use lower case.

- Mays Business School
- College of Science and Technology
- history department
- Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences
- She is a professor in the college.

academic titles

Lowercase and spell out titles when not used with an individual's name.

- The dean provided a list of students.
- The graduate assistant taught a class.
- The chancellor will speak today at noon.

Capitalize and spell out when a title precedes a name.

- Chancellor John Sharp met with Dean Jill Burk yesterday.

Very long titles are more readable when placed after a name.

- Terry Dickson, vice president for business and administration, nominated the work-study student for a national award.

adjunct

Adjunct refers to a temporary faculty appointment; lowercase.

adviser

Use the spelling that ends in *-er* (not advisor) unless the other spelling is part of an official title.

ages

Always use figures.

- The 19-year-old student took graduate-level courses.
- The student, who switched his major 11 times, is 24 years old.
- The dean is in his 50s. (No apostrophe)

alumnus, alumna, alumni, alumnae

Alumnus (*alumni* in the plural) refers to a man who has graduated from a school. *Alumna* (*alumnae* in the plural, but rarely used) refers to a woman who has graduated from a school. *Alumni* refers to a group of men and women.

- Although she was an alumna of Texas Southern University, she gave \$1 million to Prairie View A&M University.
- She joined a dating service for alumni of certain universities.

baccalaureate

In most cases, the less formal *bachelor's degree* is preferred.

capitalization

Capitalize official names; do not capitalize unofficial, informal, shortened or generic names. Do not capitalize in phrases such as *the center*, *the institute* or *the recently renovated museum*. Do not capitalize seasons or semesters (Spring Break is an exception).

- The College of Engineering, *but* the engineering school
- Texas Task Force 1, *but* the task force
- Capitalize names of celebrations, such as Founders Day. Do not capitalize seasons, semesters or academic periods. (The exception is *Spring Break*.)
- Dr. Ballard will teach the Philosophy and History of Adult Education class next semester. He will teach advanced geology.
- She enrolled in fall 2005 but decided to postpone graduate school after she won the lottery.

capital/capitol

Capital refers to the city; *capitol* refers to the building where the seat of government is housed. Capitalize when referring to the building. *Capitol building* is redundant.

- The Capitol is in Austin, which is the capital city of Texas.

chairman

Use *chairman* or *chair* in references to positions on the Board of Regents, even for female members.

- Wendy Gramm was chairman of the Committee on Academic and Student Affairs.
- She also was chair of an ad hoc committee.

class year

When referring to an alumnus in text, include the last two digits of his or her class year after the name with an apostrophe. When referring to an alumnus with multiple degrees, list the degrees in the order in which they were received. When referring to a couple who are both alumni of the same university, include the last two digits of the class year with an apostrophe after each person's name.

- Mays Business School is the namesake of Lowry Mays '57.
- "The campus has changed since I was a student," said John O'Reilly '44, '46 (MBA).
- Marvin '70 and Marlene Finkelstein Smith '70

commas

Do not use a comma before the *and* or other conjunctions in a series. Elsewhere, use commas only when the potential for confusion exists without them, such as complex sentences, or before the concluding conjunction of a series if one of the elements in the series contains a conjunction.

- She served on the committee to review scholarships, grants and financial aid.
- Texas A&M seeks students who have the skills to excel in a competitive academic environment, who bring a fresh perspective to their area of study, and who show a passion for ideas seen only in leaders.
- The lecture began with a discourse on the professor's breakfast, which consisted of orange juice, a decaf latte, and ham and eggs.

committee names

Capitalize the names of committees.

- The Academic Affairs Committee will meet tomorrow.

course work

Two words.

credit hours

Use numerals to refer to credit hours.

- 3 credit hours

date

When referring to month and year, add a comma after the year unless it ends the sentence. However, do not add a comma following the month unless a date is used. Similarly, when referring to both a city and state, add a comma after the state.

- Your memo of July 28, 2005, summarized the issue perfectly.

- She graduated in May 2002.
- After three years, she started to consider Stephenville, Texas, home.

dean's list

Lowercase.

doctor

Use *Dr.* on first reference as a formal title before the name of an individual who holds a doctorate in a medical field of study.

- Dr. Katherine Banks

If appropriate in the text, *Dr.* also may be used on first reference before the names of individuals who hold other types of doctoral degrees. Since most readers identify *Dr.* only with physicians, make sure that the individual's specialty is mentioned in the first or second reference. Do not use *Dr.* on subsequent references, but rather, use the individual's last name. Also, do not use *Dr.* before the names of people who hold only honorary degrees.

doctoral, doctorate (also see [academic degrees](#))

Use *doctoral* as an adjective and *doctorate* as a noun.

- She received her doctoral degree last Saturday.
- She received her doctorate in English.

em dash

Put a space on both sides of the dash in all uses except the start of a paragraph.

- Integrity — a Texas A&M core value — is central to the character of the university.

emeritus/emerita/emeritae/emeriti

Honorary title bestowed on select retired faculty members. Use *emeritus* when referring to men, and *emerita* for women. *Emeritae* is the plural feminine form; *emeriti* is plural for a group of men, or a group of men and women.

extension agent

Uppercase extension agent when used as a title before a name. In other uses, uppercase *Extension* (because it refers to the agency name) and lowercase *agent*.

- Extension Agent Tasha Boggs is a 2005 graduate of Tarleton State University.
- She attended the annual meeting of all Extension agents in College Station.

faculty

When used as a collective noun, *faculty* is singular.

- The faculty at Texas A&M International University is known for preparing students for graduate school.

FAQ

Frequently asked questions. Spell it out in copy. If abbreviated in a headline, use all caps, with no apostrophe to make it plural.

- The student referred to the website's frequently asked questions page for guidance.
- FAQs

fiscal year

Do not capitalize when spelled out. When abbreviated, capitalize and put a space between *FY* and the year.

- She planned to give all of her lottery winnings to the university in fiscal year 2006.
- The university's FY 2012 budget will reflect her generous donation.

fundraising, fundraiser

One word in all cases.

grade point average/GPA

GPA is an acceptable abbreviation in all references.

grade point ratio/GPR

GPR is an acceptable abbreviation in all references.

grades

Use a capital letter when referring to a grade. When pluralizing, use an apostrophe before the *s*.

- She made all A's last year.

half staff/half mast

Flags are lowered to half staff, not half mast.

international students

This phrase is preferred over *foreign students*.

Internet

Capitalize. Use *Internet* instead of *'Net* or *the Net*.

land-grant university

Hyphenate when used as an adjective.

legislation

Refer to bills as House Bill 1 or Senate Bill 1, or as H.B. 1 or S.B. 1 (periods but no space between the letters, then a space between the letters and the number).

legislative

Do not capitalize this adjective unless it begins a sentence.

- That is a legislative matter, not a judicial one.

legislative special item

Do not capitalize.

- Texas A&M AgriLife Research requested a new special item for research support.

Legislature

Capitalize in all references to a particular legislative body, such as *the Texas Legislature* or *the Legislature*. Do not capitalize when it is used as a generic term.

- The law-making body in a democracy is called a legislature.

matriculate

Matriculate means to enroll, not to graduate. Use this term sparingly in external communications since many readers outside academia may not be familiar with the term.

Nobel Prize

The correct designations are Nobel Prize in physics (as well as in physiology or medicine). But, it's the Nobel Peace Prize and Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics. A person who has received this prize is a *Nobel laureate*.

services

Offices' names ending in "services" take a singular verb.

- Computing Services is located in College Station.

Spring Break

Capitalize. (also see [capitalization](#))

state/federal

Capitalize when referring to a governmental entity, but not when referring to geographical areas or systems/theories of government.

- The current State budget is the largest in history.
- The student is from the state of Virginia.
- The city is seeking federal aid to help with rebuilding costs.
- The Federal government is not always a supporter of the federal system.

state abbreviations

Do not use the two-letter ZIP code abbreviations in text. Use the abbreviations below, as outlined by the [Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual](#). *Do not abbreviate Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas and Utah.* Use the two-letter U.S. Postal Service abbreviations only with full addresses, including ZIP code.

telephone numbers

Be consistent with usage throughout a document, however you choose to write the number.

- (979) 555-0000
- 979-555-0000
- 979.555.0000

titles

Capitalize a person's title when it precedes the name. Do not capitalize when it follows a name or stands by itself.

- President Ray M. Keck III
- Governor John Doe Jr. attended the game with his father, John Doe Sr.
- John Sharp, chancellor of The Texas A&M University System, spoke at graduation.
- The president of the faculty senate was late, but the chairman of the Board of Regents was on time.

trademarks

For the first mention of any trademarked brand, use the trade name followed by ® or ™. After the first mention, use the trade name without the ® or ™.

United States

Spell out as a noun; abbreviate (with no space between the letters) as an adjective.

- The United States is a popular destination for foreign students.
- The official U.S. policy has not changed.

-wide

Do not hyphenate *systemwide* when referring to the A&M System. Similarly, do not hyphenate *statewide* or *nationwide*. Hyphenate if the word preceding *-wide* is capitalized.

- His achievements once were known only systemwide; today they are known Texas-wide.

work-study

Lowercase and hyphenate.

years

In most cases, use the full four digits. Occasionally, the use of only the last two digits is preferred. Do not use an apostrophe to indicate spans of decades or centuries (e.g., 1980s, the 1900s).

- Enrollment for fall 2011 rose sharply.
- He graduated in the 1980s.
- The Legislature is working on appropriations for the 2005-2006 biennium.
- We have plenty of travel money for FY 2006.
- The banner read, "The Class of '72 welcomes you to Corpus Christi."