

**Lehman College**  
**Communications Style Guide**

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## About this Guide

Whether you are communicating with an internal or external audience, this editorial guide is designed to help you make decisions that are in keeping with the College's overall style for print and the Web.

From when to capitalize courtesy titles to the correct spelling of Lehman's various buildings, this guide attempts to answer, in brief, some of the most common uncertainties that can arise. A few frequent grammatical questions are also included.

The principal purpose of the guide is to assist those who write for the College's website. Unlike its print counterpart, the Web lends itself more easily to informality, but standards of basic grammar and word usage still need to be followed.

Most recommendations are taken directly from *The City University of New York Style Book*. Recommendations on spelling are taken from the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. Please consider this guide a "work in progress." Please direct questions or suggestions for items to be included in the next edition to Yeara Milton, web content editor ([yeara.milton@lehman.cuny.edu](mailto:yeara.milton@lehman.cuny.edu)).

## A

### Academic Degrees

B.A., B.S., M.A., M.S. and Ph.D. are expressed with periods. With most other degrees, don't use periods, e.g., MFA, MBA.

### Academic Departments

Capitalize formal references to a department: Lehman College School of Natural Sciences, but lower case general references. Lower case all except proper nouns/adjectives (history department, English department).

Capitalize names of academic departments. Following is a list of all Lehman's academic departments:

African and African American Studies  
Anthropology  
Art  
Biological Sciences  
Chemistry  
Counseling, Leadership, Literacy, and Special Education  
Early Childhood and Childhood Education  
Economics and Business  
English  
Earth, Environmental, and Geospatial Sciences  
Health Sciences  
History  
Journalism, Communication, and Theatre  
Languages and Literatures  
Latin American, Latino, and Puerto Rican Studies  
Mathematics and Computer Science  
Middle and High School Education  
Music  
Nursing  
Philosophy  
Physics and Astronomy  
Political Science  
Psychology  
Social Work  
Sociology  
*Note use of hyphen:* Speech-Language-Hearing Sciences

### **Interdisciplinary Programs:**

American Studies  
Business and Liberal Studies  
City and Humanities  
Comparative Literature  
Disability Studies  
Italian-American Studies

Linguistics  
Middle Eastern Studies  
Urban Studies  
Women's Studies

**Special Projects and Programs:**

Adult Degree Program  
Bridge to the Baccalaureate Program  
Bronx Institute  
CUNY Institute for Irish-American Studies  
CUNY Institute for Health Equity  
CUNY Mexican Studies Institute  
Geographic Information Sciences Program  
Institute for Literacy Studies  
Lehman Scholars Program  
Minority Access to Research Careers (MARC)  
Minority Biomedical Research Support (MBRS)  
School/College Collaboratives  
Tutoring and Academic Support

**Academic Majors**

Most often cited in lower case, e.g., history major, with the exception of words spelled with a capital, E.g. English major.

**Academic Titles**

In general, capitalize formal titles—e.g., "professor," "chancellor"—when they appear before names of individuals, and lowercase them following names of individuals.

Lowercase descriptive or occupational titles—"a department chair," "a history professor"—in all cases.

**Acronyms and Abbreviations (period or no period?)**

(1) Use periods when abbreviating names of countries.

U.S.                      U.K.

(2) Use periods when abbreviating academic degrees.

B.A.                      M.A.                      Ph.D.

(3) Use periods with abbreviations for states:

N.Y.                      N.J.                      C.T.

(4) Use periods with abbreviations that appear in lowercase letters.

e.g.                      a.k.a.                      p.m.

(5) Do not use periods in university or college abbreviations.

CUNY                      BMCC                      CSI

In general, with the exception of CUNY, the first reference to an organization, institution, initiative, etc. (even those within The City University of New York) should be the full name. Thereafter, the abbreviation/acronym alone generally is sufficient.

At CUNY, pronounceable abbreviations (acronyms) do not use periods, as well as — in a difference from AP style — many unpronounceable abbreviations.

If there are numerous different abbreviations in a long story, each first reference should be followed by its common abbreviation/acronym in parentheses; in long, complex pieces, readers usually welcome a reminder occasionally of the organization's partial name or purpose, if it isn't widely known.

### **Adviser/advisor**

Use the “or” ending at all times.

### **Affect, effect**

Affect as a verb means to influence: Will a warming earth affect storm patterns? Effect as a verb means to cause. The new administration will effect changes in the system. As a noun, effect is a result. The effect was stunning. Affect as a noun is used much less often, but has a distinct meaning in the study of psychology.

### **African-American**

with the hyphen as noun or modifier. A hyphen is used with dual heritage, e.g., Mexican-American, Japanese-American.

### **Alumni**

Use “alumnus” for an individual male; “alumna” for an individual female; “alumni” for a group of males; “alumnae” for a group of females; and “alumni” when referring to a group composed of males and females.

### **a.m./ p.m.**

Always lowercase and set with periods.

a.m./ p.m.

### **Ampersand/ &**

In general, when written in running text, spell out the symbol for the word *and*:

Use it when provided as part of the formal title of a unit (company, firm, institution, e.g., Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation) or event, lecture, etc.

### **Apostrophe**

With singular formal names ending in s, e.g., Jones, we now use AP style: only an apostrophe, not Chicago style with the apostrophe and an s. So, it's John Jones' bicycle and no longer John Jones's bicycle.

### **Assistant Professor, Associate Professor**

See “academic titles”

### Association

is not abbreviated as part of a formal name; on subsequent reference in text the organization can be referred to as the association, with a lower case a.

### Avenues and Streets

First through Ninth for Avenues and Streets, figures beginning with 10th.

## B

### Bachelor of Arts

### Bachelor's Degree

B.A., bachelor's

### Backward

Not backwards

### Buildings

Capitalize the proper names of campus buildings. Following is a list of all campus buildings:

*Note all caps:* APEX

Bookstore

Carman Hall

Lehman College Center for the Performing Arts

Davis Hall

Gillet Hall

Leonard Lief Library

Science Hall

Shuster Hall

Student Life Building

*Note the forward slash:* Speech/Theatre Building

Music Building

Old Gym Building

Fine Arts Building

*Note the forward slash:* T3—Nursing/ Student Health Center

## C

### Campus

Lowercase in all instances.

### Campuswide, citywide, statewide

-wide in most uses now is without the hyphen, e.g., campuswide, systemwide, universitywide. However, we still avoid what appear to be clunky uses, often with proper nouns, e.g., CUNYwide, Universitywide, Lehmanwide, etc.; use the hyphen, CUNY-wide, etc.

## **Campus Musical and Performance Ensembles**

Refer to these groups as follows:

- Lehman Big Band
- Lehman Brass Quintet
- Lehman Chamber Players
- Lehman College Community Band
- Lehman College and Community Chorus
- Lehman Jazz Combo
- Lehman Latin Jazz Ensemble
- Lehman Percussion Ensemble
- Lehman Woodwind Quintet
- Lehman Stages
- The Lehman Players

## **Chair**

Convert chairman or chairwoman to chair.

## **Cellphone**

## **Centuries**

Spell out the first through ninth; use numbers above ninth, 10th century. Do not use the superscript th, e.g., 10<sup>th</sup>. In Word.doc, to eliminate in superscript call up Tools, select autocorrect, select autoformat as you type, remove the check in box for: Ordinals 1<sup>st</sup> (with superscript).

## **CEO**

for chief executive officer is suitable on first reference, but other corporate or organizational positions, e.g., chief financial officer and chief operating officer, should be spelled out, with the subsequent use of initials, CFO, COO.

### **Chairperson, Vice Chairperson**

The titles of the two top appointed positions to the Board of Trustees are designated by state law as Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. All University material follows this format when the titles appear before the names. After the names or standing alone in other instances the titles will be in lower case. For consistency, they should be used for heads of any CUNY committees, groups, etc., that are so designated. For non-CUNY organizations, use whatever designations those groups officially apply to the positions.

### **Chancellor**

Capitalized when appearing before the name, and when standing alone if referring to the Chancellor of The City University of New York.

### **Chief Financial Officer, CFO**

The title is always spelled out on first reference, with capital letters before a name.

### **Child Care**

Without a hyphen both as a noun and a modifier.

### **City**

Lower case when standing alone, including as a reference to New York City

### **Class Year**

From any college, John Smith '98; when following immediately after the name, the year refers to an undergraduate degree. It does not require the full, four-digit year, but two digits need to be preceded by an apostrophe, not a single opening quote. For a master's degree earned from a college, John Smith, M.A., '98. It must be clear what school or college the graduate is from, either in text preceding the name, or following the name, such as John Doe, Hunter College, B.A., '98.

### **Co. and Inc.**

The abbreviations are used in company names in the first reference and are NOT preceded by a comma: XYZ Inc. not XYZ, Inc.

### **comma**

Use a comma to separate all items in a series:

The department offers students the opportunity to study health, nutrition, recreation, and health services administration.

Use a comma to enclose years:

The legislation was passed by Congress on July 14, 1914, and signed by the President the next day.

### **Committee Names**

Use capitals for first letters of each word (exemptions are always prepositions and articles of 3 letters or less).

### **Colon**

(1) A colon introduces an element or a series of elements. Unless it is a proper noun, lowercase the first word following the colon.

Students are required to present three forms of identification: driver's license, passport, and birth certificate.

(2) If the colon is introducing two or more sentences, uppercase the first word following the colon.

Henrietta was faced with a hideous choice: Should she reveal what was in the letter and ruin her reputation? Or should she remain silent and compromise the safety of her family?

### Copyright Issues

Use of all images (and content, if not original) on the Web must contain copyright information. Use photo credits where credit is due.

### Course Titles

Use bold, roman (standard) type, and capitals for course titles. A period ends the phrase.

Ex. ANT 250 (IAS 304): The Italian-American Community.

### Courtesy Titles

Do not use Mr., Mrs., or Ms. Use a person's full name on first reference and surname on subsequent references. For promotional material, advertisements, brochures, flyers, invitations, etc., such titles can be used when needed.

## D

### Dates and Days

Use a comma to separate days and years: July 14, 1914

Do not use a comma to separate a month and year: July 1914

In general, spell out the day of the week: Monday, Tuesday, etc.

### Dash

See *em* and *hyphen*

## E

### Em Dash

The width of an “m,” the em dash is used to amplify or further explain a thought within a sentence. There should be no space before and after the dash:

How much trash do you think 12,000 college students—plus faculty and staff—produce in one day?

## Email

### e.g.

Means “for example;” do not confuse with i.e., which stands for “that is.” Requires comma both before and after: "He showed her the different colors he had in stock, e.g., blue, green, and yellow."

## Emeritus

Place emeritus after the formal title: Professor Emeritus Jean Dayan or Jean Daylan, professor emeritus of chemistry.

## F

## Facebook

## Faculty

The word will be treated as a plural noun in references to the University, without adding the word "members" to follow. There may be occasions when the collective sense is so distinct that a singular verb may seem more appropriate. In that case, be flexible.

## Fall

Seasons are not capitalized except as part of formal titles and specific CUNY semester designations: Spring 2012

## First Name, Last Name

Use first names in subsequent references for children through age 17, last names for adults age 18 and above. If more than one child has the same first name, or more than one adult has the same last name, use their full names. If that doesn't clarify who's who, add some other distinguishing bit of information (Girl Scout Chris Jones, football quarterback Chris Jones).

### First-year student

Preferred by some to freshman when referring to a specific individual, but freshmen and freshman continued to be used as a class designation.

### Follow-up, follow up

Noun and adjective; follow up as verb form

## G

### Grade Point Average

GPA, no periods

### Great Recession

The recession that began in December 2007 and officially ended in June 2009, according to the National Bureau of Economic Research.

## H

### Headlines

Generally capitalize the first letter of each word except articles, prepositions and conjunctions of less than four letters — a, an, and, of, the, to — and also cap the first letter in those words when they begin a line (as a rule, they shouldn't end a line).

- **Decks/dropheads** - are treated like sentences, whether they have a verb or not; capitalize the first word and proper names. But don't put a period at the end unless more than one sentence is used.

### Historic

It's "a" historic event. Use the article "a" before consonant sounds that exist in common American usage - e.g., a house, a hospital, a history book. Use the article "an" before American vowel sounds e.g., an hour, an heir. A few words, notably herb, swing both ways.

### Hyphen

Use a hyphen to separate numbers, such as telephone numbers, Social Security numbers, and ISBN numbers.

718- 960-5555      121-34-5555

Use a hyphen to link words with prefixes.

ex-wife      ex-factor

Use a hyphen to link the elements of compound modifiers.

early-sixteenth-century music in France

## I

### i.e.

Means “that is” and requires a comma both before and after a comma. Do not confuse with e.g., which means “for example.” "He found the topic provocative, i.e., it caused heated discussion in the class."

### Internet and Website

(1) Capitalize Internet and Web

(2) Use one word and lower case for website:

The department’s website is under construction.

### iPad

### Institutes and Centers

Bronx Data Center  
Bronx Institute  
Center for School/College Collaboratives  
CUNY Institute for Health Equity  
CUNY Institute for Irish American Studies  
CUNY Institute for Mexican Studies  
Institute for Literacy Studies  
Public Service Leadership Institute

### Its and It’s

*its* is a possessive pronoun. “*It’s*” is a contraction, which stands for *it is*.

*It’s* time to do the laundry.

The college and all *its* associated entities report to the university.

### Italics

Titles of books, journals, magazines, newspapers, films, television programs (specific episodes are set in quotation marks), and collections of poetry may be set in italics.

### *(See CUNY Policy on Composition Titles: Composition Titles)*

Book titles are in *italics* in most print publications; Most other compositions, movies, plays, poems, speeches, lectures, songs, albums, works of art, titles of panel discussions, etc., are enclosed in quotation marks; Some works listed by AP stand alone without quotation marks. For example, the Bible and books that are primarily catalogs of reference material. In addition to catalogs, this category includes almanacs, directories, dictionaries, encyclopedias, gazetteers, handbooks and similar publications.

Academic and scientific journals also stand alone without quotation marks.

In headlines: Book titles and other composition titles are enclosed in single, not double, quotation marks.

## **Journals**

Academic and scientific journals stand alone without the quotation marks that are used with a number of other compositions.

## **L**

### **Login**

When used as a verb, it is spelled as two words “log in.” When used as a noun, it becomes login or logon.

## **M**

### **Macaulay Honors College**

On subsequent reference, the Honors College

### **Midnight**

Not 12 p.m. or 12 midnight

## **N**

### **Name of Institution**

Lehman College, Herbert H. Lehman College, or Lehman College, CUNY

### **Namesake**

Herbert H. Lehman

## **O**

### **Non-**

In general, no hyphen when used as a prefix.

### **Online**

One word in all cases when referring to the computer communication term.

## **OK**

Not Okay

## **P**

### **Percent**

Not “per cent.” Avoid use of % except in charts and other graphics.

### **Period**

Use a period to mark the end of a complete sentence.

Topics and credits will vary and be announced each semester.

If a complete sentence is enclosed in parentheses, place the period inside the parenthesis.

(Fill out the application and return it to Shuster Hall, Room 300.)

If the sentence is included within another sentence, place the period outside the parenthesis.

Students must apply for admission before November 15 (don't forget to print out the application).

## Plurals

Most nouns form the plural by adding “s.” If they end in ch, j, s, sh, x, or z, add “es.” Some nouns ending in “y” receive an “ies” ending. If uncertain, consult a dictionary.

For proper nouns, add “s” or “es” to form the plural.

Jones—Joneses / Afghan—Afghans

For years and acronyms, just add “s,” with no apostrophe.

Ex. 1990s, CPAs, MRIs

## Possessives

Form the possessive singular of nouns by adding apostrophe and “s.”

Ex. The cat's meow

The same rule applies to proper nouns, letters, and numbers.

Ex. Phyllis's car, Stacey's shoes

Exceptions to the general rule are nouns in plural form, but singular in meaning. These take an apostrophe with no “s.”

Ex. Politics' true meaning, economics' forerunners

The same rule applies when the name of a place or an organization is a plural form ending in “s.”

Ex. Veterans and Reservists Affairs' website

## Punctuation

For punctuation, consult *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

## R

### Room

In general, spell out and capitalize.

## Q

## Quotation Marks

In general, place punctuation inside quotation marks.

## S

### Said or Says

The nature of the material dictates the choice. The best guideline: There should be consistency within an article, avoiding the back and forth of past and present. A news item or announcement will most often use "said" for attribution, while a feature story in a CUNY magazine such as Salute to Scholars, may be better served by present-tense attribution. At CUNY, we can have multiple choices dealing with the same information. A news story, for instance, would use "said," when quoting someone, but a promo blurb for a video of the individual making the statement would use the present tense.

### Spacing

Spaces between sentences: Use one space, not two, between sentences and other punctuation.

### Subscripts/Superscripts

avoid both sub- and superscripts for st, th, rd, nd. The preference is 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th with the same size font size as the number.

## T

### Telephone Numbers

Use a hyphen. Never use parenthesis to set off the area code.

718-960-5555.

### Time

Always use figures and set in lowercase type with periods. Ex. 2 p.m.

When giving a range of time, if the event begins and ends at the same time of day, only note the time of day once. Ex. 9:30-11:30 a.m. (NOT 9:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.)

There should be NO spacing between the en dash or hyphen.

### That, Which

Both are relative pronouns. Use "that" to introduce an essential clause. Use "which" to introduce a non-essential clause.

The Lehman College Art Gallery has launched a new website that will help educators.

Besides reaching the finish line, the most memorable part of the experience was enjoying the music and cheers, which gave the race a relaxed vibe.

### **The**

Capitalize if part of a composition title: *Ex. The New York Times*. Lowercase when used with organizations: *Ex. Based on the bylaws that govern the City University of New York...*

### **Theater**

Use this spelling unless the proper name is Theatre. *Ex. Lovinger Theatre*.

### **Toward, Towards**

In American English, the preferred usage is without the “s.” This also applies to other directional words, such as *upward, downward, forward, backward, and afterward*.