

ESL Library Style Guide

Prepared by Tanya Trusler, editor at Red River Press
Last Updated: January 14, 2016

Dictionary: *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th edition

Style Guide: *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th edition

Abbreviations

- a.k.a. not aka
- am/pm not a.m./p.m.
- e.g. not eg
- i.e. not ie
- vs. not vs
- Mon/Tues/Wed not Mon./Tues./Wed.
- Jan/Feb/Mar not Jan./Feb./Mar.
- BA/MA/PhD not B.A./M.A./Ph.D.
- PS. not PS (note: MW says PS without period, but we think it looks better to separate the abbreviation from the text by using a period)
- Mr./Mrs./Ms. Not Mr/Mrs/Ms

Capitalization

- all titles (lesson, blog post, etc.) should follow headline-style capitalization
- i.e., everything is capitalized except articles and prepositions, regardless of length
 - BUT capitalize “The” if it’s the first word in the title and the title is italicized (I watched *The Lord of the Rings*.)
- hyphenated words with prefixes such as “non” have initial caps on the prefix and the adjoining word (Non-Emergency, Non-Count, etc.)
- phrasal verb prepositions should be capitalized (Start Off with This)
- words following a hyphen should be capitalized (Warm-Up)

- capitalization of civil titles only when directly preceding a name (no capitalization with a descriptive phrase)
- President Obama, the US president
- former president Clinton
- ocean names are capitalized (South Pacific Ocean)
- page 1 not Page 1 BUT Exercise 1 not exercise 1, Chapter 1 not chapter 1, Unit 1 not unit 1
- sports teams are capitalized but not italicized (the Green Bay Packers, the Packers)
- the not The in running text (a song by the Beatles)
 - BUT capitalize “The” if it’s the first word in the title and the title is italicized (I watched *The Lord of the Rings*.)
- Third World, First World not third world, first world
- initial capital letter after colon
- “earth” is lowercased when preceded by “the” (People used to believe the earth is flat.) or in idioms (down to earth)
- capitalize “Earth” when used as the proper name of our planet and omit “the” (The rocket has returned to Earth.)

Dates

- July 21, 2013 not July 21st, 2013
- BC not B.C., AD not A.D.
- BC comes after date (35 BC), AD comes before date (AD 1256)
- use en dash between dates for “to” (1956–1964)
- 1960s not 1960’s
- ’60s not 60’s or 60s (watch direction of the apostrophe)
- mid-1960s not mid 1960s
 - BUT mid ’60s not mid-’60s
- Mon/Tues/Wed not Mon./Tues./Wed.

- Jan/Feb/Mar not Jan./Feb./Mar.
- 20th century not twentieth century
 - BUT in adjective position, twentieth-century not 20th-century
- mid-20th century not mid 20th century or mid-twentieth century

Directions

- not capitalized (west, to the west, western, westward, a westerner)
- regions are capitalized (the West, the West Coast, Western [for culture])

Distances

- use imperial but have metric in parentheses (It is 14 miles (about 22.5 kilometers) long.)
- round up or down, but .5 is okay
- use “about” when rounding off
- make spelling note on kilometers/kilometres, meters/metres, etc. in Teachers’ Notes

En Dash (–)

- for “to-from” cases (Jan–Mar, 9:00–5:00, 9 am–5 pm)
- no spaces on either side
- for activity titles (Vocabulary Review – Matching)
- space on either side

Em Dash (—)

- for joining clauses together (where a period or semicolon could be used)
(She wondered about him—he wasn’t what he appeared.)
- no spaces on either side

Geographical Names

- place names spelled out (or use common abbreviations with no periods)

- New York City or NYC
- United States or US
- Northern Hemisphere, Southern Hemisphere
- ocean names are capitalized (South Pacific Ocean)
- Third World, First World not third world, first world

Hyphen (-)

- for compound words (left-handed, in-laws)
- with the prefix mid- (mid-March, mid-1700s, mid-20th century)
- for multi-word adjectives before a noun (a well-known artist BUT the artist is well known)
- for fractions (two-thirds)
- when joining two hyphenated word with a conjunction, use a hyphen only for the second item (short and long-term memory loss, not short- and long-term memory loss)

Numbers

- one to ten spelled out
- 11 or over use numerical forms
- comma for numbers over one thousand (5,000)
- if a number is the first word in the sentence, it is always spelled out (except in blog post titles)

Personal Names and Initials

- initials followed by a period and space (Franklin D. Roosevelt, M. F. K. Fisher)
- names comprised of only initials have no spaces or periods (FDR, MLK)
- Jr. for junior and Sr. for senior, followed by a period but not preceded by a comma (Martin Luther King Jr.)

- capitalization of civil titles only when directly preceding a name (President Obama, the US president)
- no capitalization with a descriptive phrase (former president Clinton, New York senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand)

Plurals

- for capital letters, add -s with no apostrophe (the three Rs, all As and Bs, URLs)
- for lowercase letters, add apostrophe -s to add reading (dots your i's and cross your t's)
- for dates, add -s with no apostrophe (the 1980s, the '60s)

Possessives

- for singular words ending in -s, use 's (Hayes's father)
- for plural words ending in -s, use s' (teachers' notes)

Prefixes

- non-emergency not nonemergency (use British, not American, spelling in this case to make it easier for students to understand the meaning)
- re-elect not reelect (use British, not American, spelling in this case to make it easier for students to understand the meaning)
- but redo, reinvent, etc. (some words are always joined; see *Oxford Canadian Dictionary of Current English*)
- mid-20th century not mid 20th century or mid-twentieth century

Punctuation

- one space after period
- punctuation goes **inside** end double quotation marks for one word or short phrase but **outside** end double quotation marks for complete sentence (Use the word "feather". Look up "under the gun". She said, "I tried to tell

- you.”)
- use comma not semicolon in all vocabulary definitions (hit – to punch, to strike)
 - BUT use semicolon if definitions are all very long in one exercise (such as Living in English Government lesson: e.g., political party – a group of people with similar political ideas; an organization formed to gain political power)
 - no comma before too, either, neither at end of sentence (Me too. / I like movies too.) except for emphasis (You’ll have fun and learn a lot, too!)
 - comma before though (adv) at end of sentence (I called her. She didn’t answer, though.)
 - comma after hi, hello (Hi, John.)
 - comma after date and place within sentence (He was born on June 14th, 1965, in Dallas, Texas, during a storm.)
 - Teachers’ Notes not Teacher’s Notes or Teachers Notes
 - comma after introductory adverb phrases to make it easier for students to see the main clause (However, / In the morning, / In Vancouver,)
 - slash (/) used with no space on either side in running text BUT with space on either side for choices in exercises (Bring food and/or something to drink. BUT Circle the odd one out: hot / warm / muggy / cold)
 - ellipsis has three dots and no space on either side (Let’s see...there are five other books available.)
 - no periods for most abbreviations (US not U.S.) except time (a.m. not am) and a.k.a.
 - see *also* hyphen, en dash, em dash

Quotation Marks

- use double quotation marks, not single, for quoted speech (My teacher asked me, “Did you hand in your homework?”)
- use double quotation marks for emphasis or to highlight any words or

- phrases of text (We learned the definition of “verbing.”)
- periods and commas goes **inside** end double quotation marks for one word, short phrases, and complete sentences (Use the word “feather.” Look up “under the gun.” She said, “I tried to tell you.” The US and Canada call it “soccer,” but the rest of the world calls it “football.”)
 - other punctuation (? ! ; :) goes outside end double quotation marks unless part of the quoted material (Who said “All the world’s a stage”? Who said “Are you coming?”)
 - use single quotation marks within double quotation marks (He said, “We will be learning the word ‘application’ today.”)

Quotes

- Enclose quotes in double quotation marks
- For quotes within quotes, use single quotation marks
- Use an em dash with no space after followed by the name of the speaker, can be smaller font size and on line beneath, if desired (“A good snapshot keeps a moment from running away.” —Eudora Welty)

Spelling

- % not percent
- aka not a.k.a.
- am not a.m. for time
- anyway not anyways
- auto-billing not auto billing
- auto-renewal not auto renewal
- bye-bye not bye bye
- canceled not cancelled (BUT cancellation not cancelation)
- coed not co-ed
- cooperation not co-operation

- cut-up = Adj, cut up = V
- e.g. not eg
- email not e-mail
- flashcard not flash card
- full-time not full time for Adj and Adv
- gap fill = N, gap-fill = Adj
- goodbye not good-bye
- health care = N, health-care = Adj
- i.e. not ie
- Internet not internet
- log in to not log into (verb)
- login not log-in (noun/adj)
- midday not mid-day
- mini-biographies, mini-debates, mini-lessons
- non-religious not nonreligious
- okay, not ok or OK or Ok
- oneself not one's self
- part-time not part time for Adj and Adv
- pm not p.m. for time
- podcast (one file), podcasts (all files)
- postsecondary not post-secondary
- protester not protestor
- PS. not PS
- re-elect not reelect
- resume not résumé or resumé
- role-play for N and V
- sign-in not signin or sign in (noun/adj; verb = sign in)
- sign-up not signup or sign up (noun/adj; verb = sign up)
- sister site not sister-site

- thank you not thank-you
- Third World, First World not third world, first world
- toward not towards
- UK not U.K.
- US not U.S.
- warm-up = N and Adj, warm up = V
- web not Web
- website not Website
- voice mail not voicemail (updated Dec 2015 to reflect reformatted English at Work lessons)
- vs. not vs
- *use a hyphen with most words starting with the prefixes re- and non- (re-election, non-profit)

Time

- am/pm not a.m./p.m.
- 6:00 not 6 or six o'clock
- 6:00 pm not 6 pm or six o'clock pm (if space is an issue then 6 pm is acceptable—e.g., 10 am–6 pm—but be consistent throughout lesson)

Titles

- all titles (lesson, blog post, etc.) should follow headline-style capitalization i.e., everything is capitalized except articles, conjunctions, and prepositions, regardless of length
 - BUT capitalize “The” if it’s the first word in the title and the title is italicized (I watched *The Lord of the Rings*.)
 - Otherwise, “the” is lowercased in running text (I like the Beatles.)
- hyphenated words with prefixes such as “non” have initial caps on the prefix and the adjoining word (Non-Emergency, Non-Count, etc.)

- song titles enclosed in double quotation marks (“Man in the Mirror” by the Beatles)
- album titles in italics (*Kind of Blue* by Miles Davis)
- book titles in italics (*The Lord of the Rings* by J. R. R. Tolkien)
- movie titles in italics (*Gone with the Wind*)
- magazine titles in italics
 - BUT the word “magazine” is only italicized when it is part of the official name of the magazine (The article was in *Time* magazine. / The article was in the *New York Times Magazine*.)
- poem titles in roman with double quotation marks (“On the Pulse of Morning” by Maya Angelou)
- artist/author titles in roman (an album by the Beatles, written by Stephen King)
- TV and radio programs and series in italics (*Breaking Bad*)
BUT single episodes in roman and double quotation marks (“Blood Money”, an episode of *Breaking Bad*)
- website names in roman (IMDb is a good site for movie ratings.)
- titled sections, features, or pages of a website in roman and double quotation marks (Google Maps has a great section called “Google Maps Help Center”.)
BUT if the website also has a print version, title in italics (*The Chicago Manual of Style Online*)
- sports teams are capitalized but not italicized (the Green Bay Packers, the Packers)