



# STYLE GUIDE FOR WRITING

## **STYLE GUIDE FOR WRITING**

This style guide is a suggested resource for municipal employees who write for publications. It was developed to serve as a handy guide, and also to encourage consistency in publications with respect to style and word usage. It is based on references compiled from The Associated Press Stylebook (what most newspaper editors use as their editing resource), other state league style guides, and “When Words Collide: A Media Writer’s Guide to Grammar and Style.” It has been customized for League-specific usage.

Prepared by

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## A

**a lot** – not “alot”

**acronyms** – When first referencing, write out complete phrase or title and immediately follow with acronym (when each letter is pronounced separately [e.g., ACMA, GFOA]) in parentheses; then use acronym for subsequent references. Do not add an apostrophe when forming a plural. An apostrophe should be used if the acronym is used in a possessive sense.

*Examples:* PCs, RSVPs, ACMA’s corporate partner program.

**academic degrees** – When referring to degrees in general, lowercase first letter of the degree and add apostrophe.

*Example:* Anne has a master’s degree in engineering.

Capitalize specific names of academic degrees with areas of study.

*Examples:* Bachelor of Science (B.S.), Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), Master of Public Administration (M.P.A.), Master of Science in Finance (M.S.F.), Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.).

Also, when an abbreviation is used after a full name, it is set off by commas:

John Smith, Ph.D., ...

Avoid redundancy with courtesy titles and abbreviations for degrees:

*Incorrect:* Dr. John Smith, Ph.D.

*Correct:* Dr. John Smith, a researcher with the school of ...

**addresses** – In street names, do not abbreviate words like “Street” or “Avenue” unless required for space reasons, e.g., on an envelope or in a list. Use figures to denote street names only when the number is over 10; otherwise, spell out street name.

*Example:* 177 Second Street, 144 65th Avenue.

Spell out directional references, e.g., 27 East Fifth Street, unless denoting a section of a city.

*Example:* 1895 North 52nd Street, S.W.

**adopt, approve, enact, pass** – Amendments, ordinances, resolutions and rules are adopted or approved. Bills are passed. Laws are enacted.

**affect, effect** – A good general rule of thumb is to use “affect” as a verb and “effect” as a noun. “Affect” is a verb and means to influence. Avoid using “affect” as a noun – it is most commonly used in psychology to describe an emotion.

*Examples:* The meeting will affect the outcome. The weather affects his mood.

“Effect” as a verb means to cause. “Effect” as a noun can be thought of as the outcome or result.

*Examples:* He will effect change. The meetings provided a stabilizing effect for an otherwise disorganized committee.

**ages** – Always use figures.

*Examples:* A 2-year-old boy is crying. The boy is 5 years old. The boy, 7, has a sister, 10. The race is for 3-year-olds. The woman is in her 30s.

**allude, elude** – A person can “allude” to a subject. “Elude” means to escape or avoid.

**already** – Means having occurred (vs. “all ready,” which means prepared).

**a.m., p.m.** – Lowercase, with periods. Avoid redundancies such as “10 a.m. this morning.”

**among, between** – Use “between” to show relationship between two objects; use “among” when more than two objects are involved.

*Examples:* The differences between town managers and town administrators are significant. Opinions among members of the management team varied.

**ampersand** – Use only when part of a formal name; use “and” in all other instances. *Example:* Baltimore & Ohio Railroad.

**apostrophe** – Use to indicate omitted letters and figures.

*Examples:* Class of '79, the Spirit of '76, the '20s.

Also use to form plurals of single letters and possessives.

*Examples:* p's and q's, A's and B's; Gary's motorcycle is a new model.

Do not use an apostrophe to form plurals of numerals or multiple-letter combinations.

*Examples:* the 1980s, PCs.

**attorney general** – Never abbreviate. Capitalize only when used as a title before a name.

*Example:* Attorney General Tom Horne. The attorney general will be attending the conference.

**Audiovisual, A/V** – One word; no hyphen needed.

## **B**

**bad, badly** – “Bad” is an adjective and should not be used as an adverb. When describing how one feels, the adjective should be used.

*Example:* I feel bad. Her performance on the exam was bad. He was badly burned.

“I feel badly” could be understood to mean that a person has a poor sense of touch.

**board** – Lowercase when used alone.

*Example:* The board meets monthly.

**Board of Directors** – Uppercase when used as part of a formal name. Lowercase when not referencing the entire, formal name.

*Example:* The ACMA Board of Directors meets several times per year. *But:* the board of directors voted to approve the measure last week.

**bylaws** – No hyphenation needed.

## C

**capital, Capitol** – Capital is the city where the seat of government is located. Capitol refers to the building (or grouping of buildings) and is capitalized.

*Examples:* Prescott was the first capital. The League building is located by the Capitol.

**city council** – Capitalize when part of a proper name.

*Example:* the Phoenix City Council

Retain capitalization if the reference is to a specific council, but the context does not require the city name.

*Example:* After the regularly scheduled meeting in the Tempe chambers Monday night, the City Council...

Lowercase in other uses.

*Example:* the council, the Mesa and Glendale city councils, a city council.

**city hall** – Capitalize with the name of a city, or without the name of a city if the reference is specific.

*Example:* Scottsdale City Hall, City Hall.

Lowercase plural uses.

*Example:* the Chandler and Tempe city halls.

Lowercase generic uses, including: *You can't fight city hall.*

**city** – Capitalize city if part of a proper name, an integral part of an official name, or a regularly used nickname.

*Examples:* Huachuca City, New York City, Windy City.

Lowercase elsewhere.

*Examples:* an Arizona city; the city government; and all “city of” phrases: the city of Tucson.

Capitalize when part of a formal title before a name.

*Example:* City Manager Joe Smith.

Lowercase when not part of the formal title.

*Example:* city Finance Director Frank Smith.

(Same rules for “**town of**”)

**co-** – Retain the hyphen when forming nouns, adjectives and verbs that indicate occupation or status. *Examples:* co-chairman, co-defendant, co-host, co-owner, co-partner, co-pilot, co-signer, co-star, co-worker.

Omit hyphen in other combinations.

*Examples:* coequal, coexist, cooperate, coordinate.

**collective nouns** – Collective nouns, such as “committee” and “board,” take the singular pronoun “it,” not “they.”

**colons** – Used most commonly to introduce lists.

*Example:* The agenda includes sessions on: economic development, government transparency and social media.

Colons can also be used to expand on a thought or place emphasis on a particular idea.

*Example:* There were three main considerations: cost, time and feasibility.

If a colon introduces a complete sentence, capitalize the first word after the colon.

*Example:* The new mayor had a bold idea: He will eliminate policy meetings on Monday mornings.

(Also: see “semi-colons” entry.)

**commas** – In a list of three or more items, a serial comma is not required before the final “and” or “or.” *Example:* The League offers workshops, publications and a website.

**committee** – Capitalize specific committee names (e.g., Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Planning Committee). Do not capitalize when the word “committee” stands alone.

**composition titles** – Apply the guidelines listed here to book titles, computer game titles, movie titles, opera titles, play titles, poem titles, album and song titles, radio and television program titles, and the titles of lectures, speeches and works of art.

The guidelines, followed by a block of examples:

- Capitalize the main/principal words, including prepositions and conjunctions of four or more letters.
- Capitalize *the*, *a*, *an* or words of fewer than four letters if it is the first/last word in a title.
- Put quotation marks around the names of all such works *except* the Bible and works that are primarily catalogs of reference material. This category also includes almanacs, directories, dictionaries, encyclopedias, gazetteers, handbooks and similar publications.

*Examples:* “The Great Gatsby,” “The Star-Spangled Banner,” “Of Mice and Men,” the “CBS Evening News.”

*Reference works:* Encyclopedia Britannica; Associated Press Stylebook; Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language, Second Edition.

Names of most websites and apps are capitalized without quotes: *Facebook*, *Twitter*. (See AP for more information.)

**compound modifiers (a.k.a. compound adjectives)** – When a compound modifier (two or more words that describe a single concept) precedes a noun, use hyphens to link all the words in the compound *except* the adverb “very” and those ending in “-ly.”

*Examples:* a bluish-green dress, a full-time job, a know-it-all attitude, an easily remembered rule. *Note:* Phrases used as modifiers are normally hyphenated: a happy-go-lucky person, a here-today-gone-tomorrow attitude.

*Exceptions:* Foreign phrases used as a modifier are not hyphenated (e.g., a bona fide offer, a per diem allowance); also, scientific compounds are usually not hyphenated (e.g., carbon monoxide poisoning, dichromatic acid solution).

**constitution** – Capitalize when used to reference the U.S. Constitution, whether used with or without the U.S. modifier. When used in reference to state constitutions, only capitalize if used with state name, as in the formal name of the document.

*Examples:* The constitution is the governing document of the state of Arizona. The Arizona Constitution was originally drafted in 1910.

**councilmember** – one word, lowercase unless it precedes a name.

**county** – Capitalize when an integral part of a proper name.

*Examples:* Apache County, Yuma County.

Capitalize the full names of county governmental units.

*Example:* the Maricopa County Department of Air Quality.

Retain capitalization for the name of a county body if the proper noun is not needed in the context; lowercase the word county if it is used to distinguish an agency from state or federal counterparts.

*Examples:* the Board of Supervisors, the county Board of Supervisors. Lowercase *the board, the department*, etc. whenever they stand alone.

**court** – Capitalize when referring to a particular court or when referring to the specific court that decided a specific case.

*Examples:* The Arizona Supreme Court has decided several significant cases involving preemption. The Court said, in its opinion....

Do not capitalize if referring to courts in general, or to a category of courts, or generally to anything court-related other than the specific references listed above.

*Example:* We cannot predict with certainty what any court might do if confronted with this issue of first impression.

## **D**

**data** – Takes a plural verb.

*Example:* The data from the survey are clear.

**dates** – Avoid adding “st”, “nd”, “rd” or “th” after dates.

*Example:* The event is planned for May 8.

When a month and year are used alone, do not separate with a comma.

*Example:* We held the golf tournament in October 2004.

**decision making** – Two words. Hyphenate only if used as a compound modifier.

*Examples:* The decision-making process was a long one. The workshop taught him skills in decision making.

**degrees** – See “academic degrees.”

**departments** – Uppercase for formal names and lowercase when simply referenced as “department” thereafter.

*Examples:* We all work in the Communication and Education Department. Our department staff meetings are held weekly.

**different** – Takes the preposition “from,” not “than.”

*Example:* My document is different from the original in several ways.

**dimensions** – Use figures and spell out inches, feet, yards, etc., to indicate depth, height, width, length and weight. Hyphenate adjective forms before nouns.

*Examples:* He is 6 feet, 7 inches tall. I watched the 6-foot-7-inch man walk through the building.

**directions (and regions)** – Lowercase north, south, northeast, northern, etc. when indicating a compass

direction. Capitalize when designating regions.

*Example:* Arizona has great Southwestern food. The store is located northeast of my neighborhood. The West is known for its temperate weather.

**distances** – Use figures for 10 and above; spell out one through nine.

*Examples:* He ran 10 miles. He walked three miles.

**dollars** – To denote dollar amounts, always use the “\$” symbol followed by a numeral.

*Examples:* Registration is \$5. The goal is \$100 million.

## **E**

**effect, affect** – see “affect, effect” entry

**e.g., i.e.** – Use “e.g.,” when meaning “for example.” (Always follow “e.g.” with a comma.) Use “i.e.” when meaning “that is” or “such as.” In formal text, it is preferable to spell out these abbreviations.

**email** – Lowercase “e” unless word is used to begin a sentence. Do not underline email addresses in text; italics may be used for added emphasis.

**emphasized words** – In text, italicize words that need attention called to them (vs. enclosing them in quotation marks).

**entitled, titled** – Use “entitled” when referencing a right to do something; use “titled” when referencing the name of something.

*Examples:* She was entitled to a day off after working through the entire weekend. The League publishes a bi-annual magazine titled, Arizona City & Town.



**etc., et cetera** – Preceded by a comma. Etc. is usually used at the end of a list and sentence. However, if it is used at the end of a series that does not complete a sentence, it is followed by a comma.

*Example:* The room will be used for association business such as board meetings, conference calls, etc., as well regular staff meetings.

For reference, below are the meanings of four common Latin terms:

etc. (*et cetera* — and so forth); i.e. (*id est* —that is or such as); e.g. (*exempli gratia* — for example); et al. (*et alii* — and others).

**Executive Committee** – refers to the 25-member governing board of the League of Arizona Cities and Towns. Capitalize when using the full name, lowercase when just referencing “*the committee.*”

**extension** – Lowercase “e” when abbreviated as “ext.”

## **F**

**farther, further** – Farther refers to physical distance; further is an extension of time or degree.

**fewer, less** – When writing about something you can count, the correct adjective is “fewer.”

*Example:* Fewer than five employees were in favor of the early release.

When you are writing about something you can’t count, the correct adjective is “less.”

*Example:* There was less cake remaining than we had expected after the party.

**focused, focusing** – Spelled with one “s.”

**fractions** – Spell out fractions that stand alone, e.g., one-third. When spelling out fractions that include whole numbers, include the word “and” between the words representing the whole number and the fraction.

*Example:* Three and one-quarter years have passed.

**full time, full-time** – Hyphenate only when used as a compound modifier or adverb.

*Examples:* She is a full-time graphic designer. He goes to school full time.

## **G**

**government** – Always lowercase unless part of an agency or committee name; never abbreviate.

**governor** – lowercase when used without the governor’s name, e.g. *the governor said today...*

Capitalize when it precedes a name: *Governor Jan Brewer.*

**grassroots** – One word; do not hyphenate.

**gray** – Preferred spelling (vs. “grey”).

## **H**

**healthcare** – One word.

**high-level** – Hyphenate when used as a compound modifier.

*Example:* This high-level decision will affect us all.

**high school, high-school** – Two words when used as a noun, hyphenated when used as an adjective.

*Examples:* The town built a new high school. The newest member of our board is a high-school teacher.

**home page** – Two words.

**House of Representatives** - Capitalize when referring to a specific governmental body.

*Examples:* the U.S. House of Representatives, the Arizona House of Representatives.

Capitalize shortened references that delete the words *of Representatives*.

*Examples:* the U.S. House, the Arizona House.

Retain capitalization if *U.S.* or the name of a state is dropped but the reference is to a specific body.

*Example:* PHOENIX (April 17, 2012) – The House has adjourned for the year.

Lowercase plural uses.

*Example:* the Arizona and California houses...

Apply the same principle to similar legislative bodies such as: *the Arizona Senate*.

**hyphens** – Use to link compound modifiers preceding a noun (except the adverb “very” and adverbs ending in “-ly”).

*Examples:* Part-time job. Blue-green sea.

## **I**

**i.e., e.g.** – See “e.g., i.e.”

**in-house** – Hyphenated as a compound modifier.

*Example:* We have an in-house graphics team.

Hyphenation is not needed when used as a non-compound modifier.

*Example:* Most of our publications are produced in house.

**initials** – Use periods with no spaces between letters and punctuation.

*Example:* The meeting is in the J.B.A. Conference Room.

**intergov** – Usually short for intergovernmental director or intergovernmental coordinator.

**Internet** – Always capitalize. Abbreviate as Net.

**irregardless** – Nonexistent term (often misused for “regardless”).

**italics** – AP does not italicize words in news stories. Italics are used in this guideline document to highlight examples of correct and incorrect usage.

**its, it’s** – Use “its” for possessive.

*Example:* The department reached its goal.

Use “it’s” for contraction of “it is.”

*Example:* It’s a sunny day.

## **J**

**Jr., Sr., Esq.** – Commas are not required around Jr., Sr. or Esq. when used in a sentence.

*Example:* Henry Jones Jr. presented the conference session on graphic design.

If commas are used, they must appear both before and after the element.

*Example:* *Henry Jones, Jr., presented the conference session on graphic design.*

**job titles** – Do not capitalize occupational descriptions. Job titles are always lowercased when standing alone.

*Example:* *The treasurer provides financial reports each quarter. See “professional titles” for related information.*

## **L**

**laws** – Generally speaking, capitalize formal names of laws and acts, but lowercase bills.

*Examples:* Open Meeting Law. *But:* a bill on firearms.

**League** – Short for: League of Arizona Cities and Towns. Capitalize when referring to Arizona League. Lowercase when referring generically to other state municipal leagues.

**legislators, representatives, senators** – lowercase when referring generically or without a surname. Capitalize if used before a specific name.

*Examples:* Senator Smith. The representative chaired the committee.

**Legislature** – Capitalize when preceded by the name of a state.

*Example:* the Arizona Legislature.

Retain capitalization when the state name is dropped but the reference is specifically to that state's legislature:

*Example:* Both houses of the Legislature adjourned today.

Capitalize *legislature* in subsequent specific references.

*Examples:* the 50th Legislature, the state Legislature.

Lowercase *legislature* when used generically or in plural form.

*Example:* No legislature has approved the amendment.

**less (vs. fewer)** – See “fewer.”

## M

**magazine names** – Capitalize the initial letters of the name but do not place it in quotes and do not italicize. Lowercase magazine unless it is part of the publication's formal title.

*Examples:* Arizona City & Town magazine, Harper's Magazine, Newsweek magazine, Time magazine.

**mayor** – lowercase unless it proceeds a name. (See “professional titles.”)

*Examples:* Mayor Salem; John Salem, mayor of Kingman.

**months** – Spell out when space allows, e.g., January (vs. Jan.). Do not abbreviate months when they stand alone or are just listed with the year.

Only the following months are abbreviated:

Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., and Dec.

Do not abbreviate:

March, April, May, June or July

When a month is listed with a year (and not a specific date), do not separate the month and year with a comma. When a full date is listed, set off the year with commas.

*Examples:* December 2011 brought unusually cold weather. Aug. 4 was the hottest day of the month. Her birthday is June 27. Feb. 2, 2012, marked the start of the conference.

PHOENIX (Sept. 3, 2012) – Press release text...

**more than** – See “over, more than” entry.

## N

**newspaper names** – Capitalize *the* in a newspaper's name if that is the way the publication prefers to be known. Do not place name in quotes. Do not italicize name.

*Example:* The Arizona Republic

Lowercase *the* before newspaper names if a story mentions several papers, some of which use *the* as part of the name and some of which do not.

**nongovernment** – No hyphenation is necessary.

**nongovernmental organization** – Usually refers to a nonprofit, humanitarian organization. Use *NGO* sparingly and only on second reference.

**nonprofit** – Do not hyphenate.

**numbers** – Spell out one through nine, then use figures (e.g., 10, 11, 13), except if used at the beginning of a sentence. Always use figures in percentages, for money and in designating millions.

*Examples:* 2 percent; .06 percent; 6 cents, \$2.6 million.

## **Q**

**off-site** – Hyphenate when used as a compound modifier.

*Example:* The off-site meeting was relaxing and productive for all. The meeting was held off site.

**OK, OK'd, OKs and OK'ing** – do not use “okay.”

**online** – One word when used in reference to computers.

*Example:* I do my shopping online now.

**on-site** – Hyphenate when used as a compound modifier.

*Example:* The on-site meeting staff will handle logistics. Catering was provided on site.

**Open Meeting Law** – ensures public access to the governmental process; meetings of public entities must be open with notices and agendas provided to the public. Capitalize in references: Open Meeting Law.

**over, more than** – Use “over” for spatial relationships. Use “more than” for amounts.

*Examples:* I walked over the bridge. More than \$100,000 was earned.

## **P**

**parentheses (using punctuation for)** – Place period outside parentheses unless the phrase within the parentheses is a complete sentence. Avoid using parenthesis in materials intended for media, e.g. a press release.

*Examples:* (The author is a faculty member.) Mary (also a faculty member) is the author.

**percent** – Spell out (vs. using % symbol), except in headlines. Always use a figure with “percent.”

*Example:* Revenues increased 21 percent.

**principal, principle** – “Principal” means someone or something first in rank, authority or degree of importance. “Principle” means a fundamental truth, law, doctrine or motivating force.

**professional titles** – Capitalize only when the title precedes a person’s name.

*Examples:* League Executive Director Ken Strobeck presented on the council-manager form of government.

Otherwise, lowercase titles.

*Example:* Joseph Crowley is the assistant manager in the department.

**publication titles** – see “composition titles,” “magazine names” and “newspaper names.”

## **Q**

**quotation marks (punctuation with)** – Periods and commas should *always* appear within quotation marks. Dashes, semicolons, question marks and exclamation points should only appear within quotation marks when they apply to the quoted matter; they appear outside quote marks when applicable to the whole sentence.

## **R**

**regions** – See “directions.”

**right of way** – Do not hyphenate.

## **S**

**seasons** – In body text, lowercase all seasons, e.g., fall, winter, spring, summer.

**semi-colons** – Used to combine two complete, independent clauses, or convey a greater separation of thought than a comma might convey. They are also used to offer clarity in a long series, or in a series where commas are required in the individual segments.

*Examples:*

1) The speakers will include: Scott Smith, mayor of Mesa; Harvey Skoog, mayor of Prescott Valley; and Bob Rivera, mayor of Thatcher. (Notice the final “*and*” in that series takes a semi-colon before it.)

2) We will find a way to plan around the construction; we will not move the conference host hotel.

Words like *however*, *moreover* and *therefore* are conjunctive adverbs. That means that when they separate two independent clauses, a semi-colon is required.

*Example:* One of the items the committee considered was how long the applicant had been a member of the association; however, the committee ultimately decided the most important factor would be an applicant’s management experience.

**Senate** – See “House of Representatives.”

**short- and long-term** – When combining these words in a phrase, there is no need to add “term” after “short.”

**stakeholder** – One word.

**state** – Lowercase “state of” references related to a United States’ entity.

*Example:* The state of Arizona has great hiking.

Do not capitalize “state” when used as an adjective to specify a jurisdiction level.

*Examples:* state funds, state assistance, state officials.

Also, do not capitalize when used alone in reference to state government.

*Example:* Local officials look to the state for guidance on border issues.

**state names** – Spell out when standing alone or in sentences. Use postal code abbreviations (e.g., NH, MA) when state references appear in calendar listings and addresses.

The following eight states are not to be abbreviated after a city name:

*Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Main, Ohio, Texas and Utah.*

Arizona takes the following abbreviation after city names and also in press release datelines: *Ariz.*

*Examples:*

Held in Chandler, Ariz., the festival is expected to...

There are 91 cities and towns in Arizona.

TEMPE, Ariz. (March 23, 2012) – Add in press release text here...

Note: For press releases, Phoenix does not require the state name in datelines. All other Arizona cities should be listed as “CITY NAME HERE, Ariz. (Month XX, 2012).” AP has a small group of cities that are not listed with their respective states, based on their population.

*Examples:*

PHOENIX (March 23, 2012)

vs.

TUSAYAN, Ariz. (March 23, 2012)

**statutes** – State of Arizona laws are listed in the Arizona Revised Statutes (A.R.S.). There are 49 titles, each of which has multiple sections and subsections. The citation should begin with “A.R.S.” followed by the chapter number and article (and sections and subsections, if any) being cited.

*Example:* A.R.S. § 38-431.01(G) or A.R.S. § 38-431(2).

**streets** – Capitalize “street” when used in proper name (e.g., Main Street) except when two streets are named together (e.g., Park and Main streets).

## **T**

**telephone numbers** – Do not add “1” before long-distance and toll-free telephone numbers. Use hyphens to format telephone numbers – not periods.

*Examples:* (800) 111-5555, (520) 555-5555.

**than, then** – “Than” is used for comparisons. “Then” is used to denote time.

*Examples:* This example is better than that one. We will have a conference call and then decide what the agenda will be.

**that, which** – See “which, that.”

**their, there, they’re** – “Their” is a possessive pronoun. “There” is an adverb indicating direction. “They’re” is a contraction for “they are.”

*Examples:* This is their room. Put the disk over there. They’re here to learn about laptops.

**time** – Use periods to designate a.m. and p.m. In text, use 1 p.m. vs. 1:00 p.m. Say “12 p.m.” or “noon” vs. “12 noon” to avoid redundancy. Note time spans in one of the following ways: from 1 to 2 p.m.; 1–2 p.m.

**toward** – No “s” on the end.

## **U**

**upward** – No “s” on the end.

**U.S.** – Abbreviate when used as an adjective.

*Example:* John Smith retired from the U.S. Army. Spell out “United States” when used as a noun. *Example:* Arizona has the most beautiful town halls in the United States.

## **W**

**webmaster** – One word, lowercased.

**Web page, website** – Web page is two words, with “Web” always capitalized. (This relates back to the original proper name “World Wide Web.”) The latter, website, is one word and lowercase.

*Example:* The League’s website is [www.azleague.org](http://www.azleague.org).



**weights** – Denote in figures.

*Examples:* The baby weighed 7 pounds, 11 ounces. She had a 7-pound, 11-ounce boy.

**which, that** – “Which” introduces a nonessential clause and must be preceded by a comma (a nonessential clause can be eliminated without altering the basic meaning of a sentence). “That” introduces an essential clause (cannot be eliminated without changing the meaning of a sentence) and is not preceded by a comma.

**That** – restricts a sentence. *The recipes that require sugar are filed in the bookshelf.*

Avoid superfluous usage of “that.” Keep it in sentences if it is essential or adds clarity.

Otherwise, delete.

*Example:* I’m confident ~~that~~ the group will want that kind of session on the agenda.

**Which** – adds explanation and is preceded by a comma. *Splenda, which can serve as an alternative to sugar, is stored in the cabinet.*

Exception – “of which” is not preceded by a comma.

**who, whom** – Use “who” and “whom” for references to human beings and animals with names. Use “who” when someone is the subject of a sentence, clause or phrase.

*Example:* The man who rented the room left the window open.

Who is there? Use “whom” when someone is the object of a verb or preposition.

*Example:* The woman to whom the room was rented left the window open. Whom do you wish to see?

**World Wide Web** – Always capitalized (same as Internet).

## Y

**yearlong** – One word.

**years** – Use figures and months without commas. Use an “s” without an apostrophe to indicate spans of decades or centuries, e.g., *August 1990; the 1990s*; but, *the ‘90s*. Use “21st century” vs. twenty-first century.

**your, you’re** – “Your” is a possessive pronoun. “You’re” is a contraction for “you are.”

## Appendix A: Acronyms

\*ACAA – Arizona City Attorneys Association  
\*ACMA – Arizona City/County Management Association (*local*)  
ADOA – Arizona Department of Administration  
ADOT – Arizona Department of Transportation  
AG – Attorney General  
ALIS – Arizona Legislative Information Service  
\*AMCA – Arizona Municipal Clerks Association  
AMRRP – Arizona Municipal Risk Retention Pool  
ATRA – Arizona Tax Research Association  
CAAG – Central Arizona Association of Governments  
CAFR – Comprehensive Annual Financial Report  
COG – Council of Government (*MAG and CAAG are examples*)  
CSA – County Supervisors Association  
DOR – Department of Revenue  
DPS – Department of Public Safety  
GFOA – Government Finance Officers Association (*national*)  
\*GFOAz – Government Finance Officers Association of Arizona (*local*)  
GPLET – Government Property Lease Excise Tax  
HURF – Highway User Revenue Fund  
ICMA - International City/County Management Association (*national/international*)  
JLBC – Joint Legislative Budget Committee  
\*LACT – League of Arizona Cities and Towns  
MAG – Maricopa Association of Governments  
MCTC – Model City Tax Code  
NACOG – Northern Arizona Council of Governments  
\*NEO – Newly Elected Officials Training  
NLC – National League of Cities (*national*)  
PAG – Pima Association of Governments  
PIO – Public Information Officer  
SEAGO – Southeastern Arizona Governments Association  
TPT – Transaction Privilege Tax (*commonly referred to as a sales tax; however, the tax is actually on the vendor, though it is usually passed on to the consumer*)  
UAC – Unified Audit Committee  
VLT – Vehicle License Tax  
WACOG – Western Arizona Council of Governments

*\*Staffed by League employees*