

CBS Language Style Guide

Where the below guidelines do not offer clarity, next consult the Chicago Manual of Style, and Merriam-Webster Dictionary (in that order).

1. Some Basic Style Rules

- Use a serial comma.
- Spell out United States as a noun; use US (no periods) as an adjective.
- Do not use periods in initialisms (NASA, URM). See below section, Columbia University School Abbreviations, for more examples.
- Spell out months.
- Spell out states (unless used with a street address, in which case use postal abbreviation).
- Spell out whole numbers one through nine; use numerals for 10 and up.
- Italicize titles of books, movies, publications (online and print newspapers, magazines, journals, etc.), TV shows, plays, albums, podcasts/webcasts, and computer games.
- Use quotation marks on titles of reports and surveys, articles and blog posts, TV show and podcast episodes, lectures and speeches, and songs.
- Do not use italics or quotation marks on software and application titles and reference material titles (dictionaries, encyclopedias, directories, etc.).

2. Additional Notes

- Lowercase titles like professor, director, and dean when they stand alone or follow a name.
 - Example: Costis Maglaras, dean of Columbia Business School, stated...
 - Example: Sheena Iyengar, professor of management, was moderating...
- Uppercase titles if they precede the name:
 - Example: The new policy, as laid out by Professor Jane Doe, takes effect tomorrow.
 - Example: The School is rolling out new offerings, said Dean Costis Maglaras.
- Exception to Chicago style: Hyphenate prefix co- for titles such as co-president, co-CEO, co-researcher, etc.
- Add an apostrophe s to singular possessive words ending in s (e.g., Burns's report) (see Chicago Manual of Style for more extensive guidelines on possessives).
- Exception to Chicago style: Capitalize School and University when referring to Columbia Business School and Columbia University. Examples:

- Example: Before coming to the School, Professor Ziv taught at a university in Israel.
- Example: Professor Ziv has taught at the University for several years. (Referring to Columbia.)
- Well-known acronyms don't need to be spelled out (e.g., CEO, CFO, HR, etc.). If an acronym is not well known, spell out on first reference and follow with the acronym in parentheses.
- Exceptions: It's preferable to not have acronyms in parentheses in ledes (just spell out if the term is not known and use the acronym on next reference or vice versa). Also eliminate the acronym in parentheses when used directly after the spelled out term (e.g., The Department of Veterans Affairs released an update on VA programs.) Do not use acronyms for company names that aren't actually acronyms (e.g., Primedia, not PRIMEDIA); internal capitalization is OK (e.g., PepsiCo). Use the word they as a singular pronoun (with a plural verb) when gender is not specified (vs. using him or her) or when a known person doesn't identify with a gender-specific pronoun.
- The word data takes a plural verb—e.g., The data are showing an increase in enrollment.
- When citing survey or study findings, use past tense—e.g., The study found that the numbers are going up. And: Survey respondents said they are worried about the economy. But use present tense when the report is attributed—e.g., The report says the numbers are going up.
- In body, capitalize the first word after a colon only if it's part of a complete sentence. But always capitalize the first word after a colon in headlines, subheads, and titles, whether it's a complete sentence or not.
- In running text, do not capitalize the word The in titles, even it is part of the proper name—e.g., the Tamer Center, the New York Times.
- When words are introduced as terms, use italics, not quotation marks (e.g., The word *asset* refers to anything of value a company possesses.)
- Use numbered lists only for those that list a specific number of things or that outline steps; use bullet lists otherwise.
- Use this format for editor's notes ("Editor's note" in bold, note in italics): **Editor's note:** *This article is part two of a three-part series.*