

Web Style Guide

Writing Effective Content

- Use short paragraphs. Large blocks of text can look like walls, and act as such to the user. Research has shown that short, concise paragraphs and bulleted lists work best.
- Your first paragraph is the most important one; it should be brief, clear and to the point in order to quickly engage the user.
- Write in an inverted pyramid style. Place the most important information at the top, extra info toward the bottom.
- Keep your content up to date. If you put up info that needs to be updated later, mark it on your Outlook calendar so you don't forget.
- Out-of-date content reflects poorly on the user's overall opinion of the website and the College. It also degrades the trust of the user to later find information on the website.
- Name your page clearly. The page title and the navigation title should match as closely as possible. They should also clearly articulate the subject of the page.
- Use subheadings to clarify the subject of various sections on a page. Users want to skim and scan for information. Headings help this process exponentially. This also helps your page be more ADA compliant.
- Use headings rather than bold. Too much bold makes text harder, not easier, to read and differentiate. It is not ADA complaint to use bold.
- Italics should also be used sparingly. Italics on the web are also hard to read. Try to avoid making long paragraphs italic – you are making the text harder to read, not giving it emphasis. Exceptions are book titles and other grammar styling as outlined in the AP style guide or in our editorial short guide. (see below)
- Do not underline text. On the web, underline = Hyperlink. Giving a sentence an underline for emphasis is misleading.

- Use all caps very sparingly. Some of our sub-headings are set to All Caps, used them instead.
- Don't try to emphasize too much. If you use bolded headings, short paragraphs, and bulleted lists, you should not need to rely on italics, all caps, or underlining for emphasis. These styles can make a page look messy and compete for the user's attention.
- Avoid exclamation points. We know CCD is awesome! We love it! But exclamation points on websites can make it look unprofessional! Let the content speak for itself.

Links

- Link, link, and link to relevant information. If you mention the academic advising, link to it. If you include an email address, make it an email link. This makes it easier for the user.
- Do not tell the users to "use the links on the left." Make the information or links easy to find.
- Avoid "Click here." Use part of the actual referencing sentence as the link. Research shows that users like them to be 4-8 words in length.
Do not use: For commencement information for graduating students, click here. **Use:** Commencement information for graduating students is now available.
- Avoid jump (anchor) links except on long pages such as FAQs. Research shows that today's web users don't mind scrolling if the content is useful and easy to scan. Anchor points just make pages longer, and are used too often on pages that are a reasonable length.

Editorial Style Guide

The following guidelines are intended to enhance consistency and accuracy in CCD's written communication, with particular attention to local peculiarities and frequently asked questions.

For additional guidelines on the mechanics of written communication, see The AP Style Guide.

If you have questions about the style guide, please contact Christa Saracco or Sarah Scott.

Using “Community College of Denver” vs. “CCD”

The first mention of the college in a written document, the college name should be written out, with (CCD) in parenthesis after; in subsequent mentions, the acronym can be used.

Never use the word “the” in front of Community College. We are not The Community College of Denver; we are just Community College of Denver. The phrase, “the College” is appropriate. Additionally, when referring to a specific department or program, it’s appropriate to use “the” before CCD, for instance, “The Community College of Denver Office of Human Resources” is fine, as the “the” is referring to the office, not the College.

Academic Degrees

A.A., A.A.S. B.A., M.F.A., M.B.A., M.S.W., Ph.D., B.S., J.D., etc. When spelled out, capitalize: Associate of Art. However, general degrees should be lower-case, as in “associate degree in history” or “doctorate in philosophy” or “bachelor’s degree” or “master’s degree”.

Correct: associate degree, bachelor’s degree, certificate

NOT correct: associate’s degree, it is never plural or capitalized

Academic Terms

fall term, January term, spring term

Areas of Study

Lower-case, as in “he is in the dental hygiene program” or “She holds a master’s degree in chemistry.”

Buildings

Capitalize official names of buildings (Cherry Creek Building, Confluence Building)

Spell out completely: Cherry Creek Building, Room 102

College

When “the College” is used as a stand-in for CCD, College should always be capitalized. (The College will be closed on Friday.) When college is used as a general term, it is not capitalized. (Many young people continue on to college after high school.)

Centers

Capitalize when part of full formal name (Center for Math & Science). Use lower case when used informally: "The center will open ..."

Committees

Lower case when used informally (finance committee, educational policy committee, the committee on reappointments and promotions). Upper case as part of formal name (the CCD Diversity Committee).

Dates

"December 2007" not "December of 2007"

Acceptable:

January 2007 was cold. January 24, 2007, was cold.

He graduated on May 20. He graduated on the 20th of May.

Do NOT use terms such as "today" or "tonight" in publicizing events. Use the exact date.

Geographical Terms

Capitalize only when identifying a region or political entity (the Northeast, West Coast, Eastern Europe, Middle East). Lower case when designating a direction (traveling northeast).

Numbers

Spell out numbers one through nine (one, two, etc.) unless when referring to an age or percentage. Above that, use the number (10, 65, 106, etc.) except when number is at the beginning of a sentence. When a number starts a sentence, it is always written out ("Sixty-four students came to the meeting.") Significant round numbers (fifty, thousand) may be written out.

Use 1990s (not 1990's unless possessive or to clarify meaning).

Nineteenth century, twentieth century = beginning of a sentence

Otherwise you may use: 19th century, 20th century.

Use zeros with figures under one dollar but not stated as cents (\$0.75 or 75 cents, NOT \$.75).

Write out "percent." Do NOT use "%" after a number (11 percent, not 11%).

Time

5:00 p.m.; 10:30 p.m., etc.

1 - 5:00 p.m., not 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.

6:30 in the evening, not 6:30 p.m. in the evening.

Use noon and midnight, not 12 a.m. or 12 p.m.

Use commas with numbers more than one thousand, e.g., \$1,000.

Dollar sign replaces the word "dollars," as in: \$ 12 million dollars, but not \$12 million dollars.

Offices

Lower case (financial aid office, "Feel free to contact the financial aid office ...").

Upper case when part of a formal name (The CCD Financial Aid & Scholarships is located ...).

We usually prefer to refer to the office name without using the word "office", such as, "Contact Financial Aid" or See Student Life"

Spaces

In all published matter or computer generated correspondence, place one space only between sentences.

Telephone numbers

In College publications and on the website, telephone numbers are written with dots rather than dashes: 413.559.0000.

Titles

Job Titles - When the title precedes proper name, capitalize (President Everette Freeman). When title follows proper name, use lower case (Everette Freeman is our president). Then title alone is used, use lower case (dean, vice president).

Center Names - Ampersand: Use an ampersand when referring to a center "Center for Arts & Humanities," for headings; write out "and" in a sentence.

Punctuation

Comma - Do NOT use serial commas after all members of a series (history, sociology or biology). There are exceptions to this rule if the sentence meaning is changed without the comma.

Ellipses - If you shorten someone's quote, signify this by using ellipsis. The result should look like the following sample, with a space before and after dots:

"I'm studying computer programming ... with a great professor."
Similarly, an EM dash also has a space before and after it per AP Style.

Hyphens - These are used to join words together, e.g., "world-class runner." The hyphen makes reading easier by demonstrating that "world-class" is a compound word used as an adjective describing the noun "runner." More examples: disability-rights organization, ten-year career, 50-year-old house.

Do not hyphenate adverb modifiers preceding nouns, as in "highly developed," "fully realized." When hyphenated adjectives are used as nouns, the hyphen is usually dropped. ("This is a short-term project," but "Do this in the short term.") Do not put a space on either side of the hyphen.

In general, the trend is to minimize the use of hyphens and to substitute solid or open compound words. Also keep in mind that when a hyphenated word has become commonplace through frequent use, a hyphen is no longer necessary (e.g. "filmmaker" and "nonprofit"). When in doubt on hyphenated words, check the dictionary.

Italics - Words in foreign languages should be italicized, as should genus/species names. Also, book and magazine titles should be italicized, as in *War and Peace* and *Newsweek* and film titles: *The War* by Ken Burns.

Quotation Marks - Commas and periods should appear inside quotation marks. For example: "It was," he said, "a good place to be."

Colons and semicolons should be placed outside quotation marks.