

# Institutional Editorial Style Guide

Elmhurst University's Editorial Style Guide is intended to help us adhere to consistent language and style in written materials for print and digital communications.

In most written communications, Elmhurst University follows the editorial guidelines of the *Associated Press (AP)* Stylebook and the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, with some exceptions specific to the University. Online subscriptions to the AP Stylebook are available at [apstylebook.com](http://apstylebook.com). This guide includes those exceptions, as well as some style and grammatical issues that frequently arise.

This guide is a living document and will be updated as needed, but always with respect for language and commitment to its original intent—to help us communicate as an institution in a clear and consistent way.

Questions? Contact the Office of Marketing and Communications at [marketing@elmhurst.edu](mailto:marketing@elmhurst.edu).

*\* exception to AP style*



### acronyms

Try to avoid. Spell out on first reference and include acronym in parentheses:

- Elmhurst Learning and Success Academy (ELSA)

### academic degrees

In general, do not capitalize academic degrees or programs when spelled out:

- bachelor of arts; master of science
- Do not capitalize majors except when it is a proper name such as English, Spanish, French, etc.

Abbreviations of most academic degrees include periods:

- B.A.
- Ph.D.
- *Exception:* MBA

This is our style for Elmhurst University graduate degrees: MBA, MOT, M.Ed., M.S.Ed., MSN

In event programs, on business cards and the signature line of a letter, it's OK to include the abbreviation of a person's terminal degree after the name.

- Sincerely,  
Victor E. Bluejay, Ph.D.  
Mascot  
Elmhurst University

### associate degree

Not *associate's degree*, but it's *bachelor's degree* and *master's degree*

### academic departments

- Capitalize when using a department's official title:
  - Department of Mathematics, Department of English
- Lowercase when referenced generically unless it's a proper name (e.g. a language):
  - math department, English department

### academic terms

- We call them *terms*, not *semesters*
- Capitalize the word *term* when referring to a specific term: Fall Term, Spring Term, January Term (J-Term), etc.
- The exception is that we call them semester hours in Admission materials.

### advisor

Not *adviser*

### address

- Use the abbreviations *Ave.*, *Bld.* and *St.* only with a numbered address: *1600 Pennsylvania Ave.* Spell them out and capitalize when part of a formal street name without a number: *Pennsylvania Avenue.* Lowercase and spell out when used alone or with more than one street name: *Massachusetts and Pennsylvania avenues.*
- All similar words (alley, drive, road, terrace, etc.) are always spelled out. Capitalize them when part of a formal name without a number; lowercase when used alone or with two or more names.
- Always use figures for an address number: *9 Morningside Circle.*
- Spell out and capitalize First through Ninth when used as street names; use figures for 10th and above: *7 Fifth Ave.*, *100 21st St.*
- Abbreviate compass points used to indicate directional ends of a street or quadrants of a city in a numbered address: *222 E. 42nd St.*, *562 W. 43rd St.*, *600 K St. NW.* Do not abbreviate if the number is omitted: East 42nd Street, West 43rd Street, K Street Northwest. No periods in quadrant abbreviations – *NW*, *SE* – unless customary locally.
- Use periods in the abbreviation *P.O.* for P.O. Box numbers.

### African American

No hyphen, even if it's an adjective. Same for *Asian American*, etc.

### all gender restroom

Use when referring to a restroom for both/all/specialized genders. No hyphen.

### alma mater (song)

The Elmhurst University alma mater was written by written by Class of 1920 graduates H.G. Born and Henry Schuessler.

### alumni

- *Alumni* is the general plural usage for men and women (not *alumnae*). Singular form is *alumnus* for a man and *alumna* for a woman.
- At Elmhurst, *alumni* are former students who have completed two or more consecutive terms of study. The term *alumni* is not synonymous with *graduates*.
- When being less formal, use *alum* (singular)



### Black

Capitalize when used as an adjective in a racial or cultural sense:

- "Obama was the first Black president."

### Board of Trustees

- Capitalize *Board of Trustees* when referring to the Elmhurst University Board of Trustees and names of Board committees (e.g. the Development Committee)
- Capitalize *Board* on second reference
  - The Elmhurst University Board of Trustees met over the weekend. The Board voted to approve the budget.

### bulleted lists

If using bulleted or numbered lists as a way to list items, information, etc., don't use semicolons or commas after each item. All bullets should align (either as all sentences or all not sentences); rewrite them if they don't align.

- To make an apple pie, they'll need to:
  - Buy the ingredients
  - Preheat the oven
  - Follow the recipe



### campus buildings/addresses

- In events listings, list the building first, followed by the room, *Frick Center, Founders Lounge*
- Written out in a sentence, though, the following is OK: *She met her friends in the Founders Lounge of the Frick Center.*
- The official address for any individual building on campus is the same as that of the campus itself:
  - Lehmann Hall, 190 Prospect Ave., Elmhurst, IL 60126
  - Schaible Science Center, 190 Prospect Ave., Elmhurst, IL 60126

### chair

Not *chairman* or *chairwoman*

### class year

Use a "smart" single quote, the last two digits of the graduation year and no comma; not *Class of*. **Exception:** for pre-2000 graduates, that have early grad years (1920's, 1930's) use *Class of 19XX*

- For bachelor's degree holders:
  - Sam Smith '87
- For alumni of graduate programs, offset the last name with a comma and include the specific degree:
  - Sam Smith, MBA '98
- For alumni with more than one Elmhurst degree, include both years and specify graduate degree:
  - Sam Smith '87, MBA '98

- For midyear graduates, the class year is the year in which they walked at Commencement

### co-curricular

Refers to an activity pursued in addition to the normal course of study. Generally preferred to *extracurricular*.

- Her co-curricular activities included writing for *The Leader* and playing in a jazz combo.

### Commencement

On first reference, it's *Elmhurst University Commencement*. Second reference can be *Commencement* if referring to Elmhurst University. Either *Commencement ceremonies* or *exercises* is OK.

### coursework

One word



### dates

Punctuation (comma usage):

- April 1 (not April 1st)
- April 1, 2015, in Founders Lounge
- April 2015 (not April, 2015)
- April of 2015 also OK
- Spring Term 2015 (not Spring Term, 2015)
- Generally, we add the day of the week before dates but not necessarily the year (if we're referring to a date in the current year)
  - Tuesday, December 10, 2017

Abbreviations:

- Generally, don't abbreviate months in display text (headlines, subheadlines, posters, programs)
- OK to abbreviate in lists (Note that *March, April, May, June* and *July* are never abbreviated; for *September*, make it *Sept*. For other months, write the first three letters followed by a period: *Jan., Feb., Aug., Oct., Nov., Dec.*)
- Don't abbreviate days of the week



### Elmhurst University

- Refer to the institution as *Elmhurst University* on first reference
- *Elmhurst* or *the University* with an uppercase *U* is OK on subsequent references, but avoid possible confusion of *Elmhurst* (the university) with *Elmhurst* (the city) by using *City of Elmhurst* when referring to the municipality.
- Avoid the acronyms *EU* or *E.U.*
- Elmhurst U. or ElmU are preferred

### Elmhurst University Learning and Success Academy

Spell out in text on first reference. *ELSA* is OK on subsequent references and in display (when the target audience is familiar with the program).



### first-

Hyphenate *first* (first-) when used in a compound adjective before a noun; for example:

- *first-generation* university student
- *first-year student* (also, this term is preferred to *freshman*)
- *First-Year Seminar* (also note capitalization) when referring to the Fall Term interdisciplinary course for first-year students

### Founders Lounge, Founders Medal, Founders Award

Not *Founders'* or *Founder's*, but it's *Founders' Honors Convocation*.

### fundraising, fundraiser

One word in all cases



### gender pronouns: they, them, their

Growing numbers of people use they/them/their as a gender-neutral personal pronoun.

- When using they/them/their as a singular pronoun, explain if it isn't clear in context: *Morales, who uses the pronoun they, said they will retire in June.* Rephrase if needed to avoid confusion.
- Don't refer to *preferred* or *chosen* pronouns. Instead, *the pronouns they use, whose pronouns are, who uses the pronouns, etc.*
- They/them/their take plural verbs even when used as a singular pronoun.



### Hammerschmidt Memorial Chapel

- Not *Hammerschmidt Chapel*
- OK to use *the Chapel* on second reference

### health care

Two words, not hyphenated, even as an adjective

- health care agency

### honorary degree recipients

Acknowledge honorary degrees by adding H and the year after their name:

- Jacques Paul Klein '61, H '02



### Jaypass

One word, lowercase *p*



### last vs. past

The adjective *last* means final. The adjective *past* means *most recent*.

- Correct: Over the past three years
- Incorrect: Over the last three years
- Correct: Last chance to apply for the upcoming term

### LGBTQIA+

Preferred to *LGBT*

### log in to

Not *login to* or *log into*



### majors

See *Academic Degrees*

### mascot/team name

note spelling—one word

- team name: *The Bluejays* (men's and women's teams)
- mascot name: *Victor E. Bluejay*
- Bluejays' Roost: the casual dining spot in the Frick Center basement

### Mill Theatre

Not *Theater*

### myElmhurst Campus Portal

Not *The My Elmhurst Campus Portal* or *MyElmhurst Campus Portal*; on second reference, *the Portal* is OK.



### names

- proper names: On second (and after) reference we almost always refer to a person by her or his last name only.
  - e.g. Grace Jones is here now. Jones just went to the store.
- name suffixes: Do not use a comma before *Jr.* or *Sr.*
- middle initials: We generally avoid using middle initials in names, though we have made exceptions if a person prefers it.

### numbers

- Spell out numbers from one to nine; use numerals for 10 and higher
- Spell out a number if it starts a sentence. *Forty people attended the party with 40 tickets.*
- Spell out the word *percent* except in graphics, when % is OK.\*
- Use *No.* for ranks (No. 1), except in graphics, when # is OK
- For percentages, ages and larger numbers (millions, billions) in running text, use numerals even for numbers less than 10:
  - Archie is a 4-year-old cat.
  - We have about 5 million bugs.
  - I'm in the market for an additional \$2.8 billion.
  - We spent 5 percent of our money.



### Office of Admission

Not *Admissions*

### OK

Not *Ok, ok* or *okay*



### phone numbers

- Use parentheses for area code: (630) 617-1234
- Phone extensions: x3379 is OK in internal communications; (617) 393-3939 ext. 3733 in external communications

### Presidents' Ball

Represents all of the presidents of all of the student orgs

### President's Community Breakfast

Represents a single President's event

### Presidents' Dining Room

Not *President's Dining Room*, because the room is named for all of our presidents, not just one

### punctuation

- Spaces: Between sentences, use a single space, not a double space
- Commas: Do not use the serial or Oxford comma (a comma used after the penultimate item in a list of three or more items, before *and* or *or*) except when it is a complex list and/or when it is needed for clarification:
  - We saw cats, dogs and elephants.
  - The professor talked about rules and regulations, ethics and codes, and a lot of other things.
- Quotation marks: The period and the comma always go within the quotation marks.

- The dash, the semicolon, the colon, the question mark and the exclamation point go within the quotation marks when they apply to the quoted matter only. They go outside when they apply to the whole sentence.
- Hyphen or dash (en, em dash)
  - use a hyphen (-) to combine words (compounds such as *well-being* and *advanced-level*, for example) and to separate numbers that are not inclusive (phone numbers and Social Security numbers, for example).
  - use en dash (-) to connect numbers in a range: *2013–2014*; *9:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.\**
  - use en dash to link a city name to the name of a university that has more than one campus: *University of Wisconsin–Madison*; *University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh*
  - use em dash (—) to set off text elements or to create a strong break in the structure of a sentence, usually for emphasis. Em dashes can be used in pairs like parentheses—that is, to enclose a word, a phrase or a clause—or they can be used alone to detach one end of a sentence from the main body: *I love desserts—ice cream is my favorite!*
    - Don't use a space before or after the em dash.\*



### Russell G. Weigand Career Center for Professional Excellence

WCCPE is OK informally, but we try to avoid using it in marketing materials

### RSVP

Don't use *Please* before RSVP (RSVP already includes the word *please*, albeit in French)

- RSVP by July 1 to (630) 555-1555.



### state names

- Spell out state names in almost all cases: She lives in Oakland, California.
- **Exception:** In lists, such as In Memoriam in *Prospect*, abbreviate states when used with city names: Richard W. Goelz '70 | May 28, 2025, Kennesaw, Ga.
  - In such lists, omit state names altogether for cities that stand alone in AP datelines (see “datelines” entry in AP for details).
  - For correct abbreviations, see “state names” entry in AP.



### Test-optional

Hyphenate in all uses:

“Admission at Elmhurst is now test-optional”

### theatre

Not *theater*

### time

- In running copy, use *a.m.* and *p.m.*, and include 00s, not *o'clock*
  - 4:00 a.m., 5:00 p.m.
- In display copy (posters, etc.) OK to use *AM* and *PM*
- Use *noon* and *midnight*; not *12:00 p.m.* and *12:00 a.m.*; and not *12:00 noon* and *12:00 midnight*

### titles

- People: Capitalize a professional or academic title when it immediately precedes a person’s name, but not when it follows the name or stands alone.
  - Professor Emeritus John Smith, *but* John Smith, professor emeritus
  - Dean of Students Cheryl Leoni also is director of the Frick Center, *but* Cheryl Leoni, dean of students, also is director of the Frick Center
  - The president of Elmhurst University is Troy D. VanAken, *but* President Troy D. VanAken leads Elmhurst University. Always use his middle initial because it is his preference
- Dr.: In general, do not use Dr. before the names of individuals who hold doctoral degrees other than medical, dental, veterinary, etc. But if a faculty member insists on using it, OK to make an exception.
- Also OK to end a name with their doctoral degree (but then don’t use Dr. in front):
  - *Dr. Victor E. Bluejay* or *Victor E. Bluejay, Ph.D.*, not *Dr. Victor E. Bluejay, Ph.D.*
- We don’t use *Mr.* or *Ms.* prefixes
- Do not use *Dr.* before the names of individuals who hold honorary doctorates.
- Endowed chairs should always be capitalized.
  - He is a past holder of the T.W. Mueller Endowed Chair.

- Course titles: Use title case with no quotation marks.
  - *She took Advanced Fiction in her senior year.*
  - But if it's generic, just lowercase: *She took a course in economics.*
- Religious titles: The first reference to a clergyman or clergywoman normally should include a capitalized title before the individual's name.
  - In many cases, *the Rev.* is the designation that applies before a name on first reference.
    - On second reference, OK to say *Rev. Graham* or *Graham*.
- Compositions: Italicize titles of books, movies, newspapers, magazines, musical compositions, podcasts, radio/TV shows. Italicize *The* if it's part of the entity's formal name, but not if it isn't:
  - *The New York Times*\*
  - *The Chicago Tribune*\*
  - *Hamilton*\*
- Put titles of articles, chapters, songs, TV episodes, etc. (basically, titles within the larger entity) in quotes.
  - Paul McCartney wrote "Let It Be."
  - Refer to the article titled "A Comparison of MLA and APA Style."
- Put lecture titles in title case, with or without quotes:
  - Jon Favreau presents "Tweets, Speeches and Storytelling: Messages from the 2016 Election," this year's Rudolf G. Schade Lecture



### URLs (in print materials)

Omit protocol (<http://> and [www.](http://www.)) in web addresses unless they are required for the URL to function, and use title case for the part of the URL that follows edu:

- [elmhurst.edu](http://elmhurst.edu)
- [give.elmhurst.edu](http://give.elmhurst.edu)
- [elmhurst.edu/ChooseElmhurst](http://elmhurst.edu/ChooseElmhurst):
- In call-to-action links, avoid *click here* language. Instead, hyperlink from the entire phrase. When possible, set it off as a bullet point:
  - Check out our new website
- For long or cumbersome URLs, use a vanity URL (Office of Marketing and Communications can help create):
  - [http://www.elmhurst.edu/admission/graduate/master\\_of\\_occupational\\_therapy\\_becomes](http://www.elmhurst.edu/admission/graduate/master_of_occupational_therapy_becomes) *elmhurst.edu/mot*