

# NCBA *Stylebook*

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Communications Guidelines

NORTH CAROLINA  
BAR ASSOCIATION  
SEEKING LIBERTY & JUSTICE



# foreword

The goal of the NCBA Stylebook is to provide a standard by which we publish the written word and offer a resource to the good writers who contribute to our many publications. This publication mirrors and reprints significant portions of the Associated Press 2013 Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law, which should be deferred to in the event that you have a question this guide does not address.

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**a, an** | Use the article *a* before consonant sounds: *a historic event*, *a one-year term* (sounds as if it begins with a *w*), *a united stand* (sounds like *you*).

Use the article *an* before vowel sounds: *an energy crisis*, *an honorable man* (the “*h*” is silent), *an NCBA member* (sounds like it begins with the letter *e*), *an 1890s celebration*.

**abbreviations, acronyms** | In general, avoid alphabet soup. Do not use abbreviations or acronyms that the reader would not recognize without introducing them first. *This year the NCBA will hold its Professionalism for New Admittees (PNA) program in May and September.*

Abbreviate titles when used before a full name: *Dr.*, *Gov.*, *Lt. Gov.*, *Mr.*, *Mrs.*, *Rep.*, *the Rev.*, *Sen.*, and certain military designations listed in **military titles**.

After a name: Abbreviate Junior or Senior after an individual’s name, omitting the comma between the two: *John Jones Jr.* rather than *John Jones, Jr.*

With dates or numerals: Use the abbreviations *A.D.*, *B.C.*, *a.m.*, *p.m.*, *No.*, and abbreviate certain months when used with the day of the month. RIGHT: *In 450 B.C.*; *at 9:30 a.m.*; *in Room No. 6*; *on Sept. 16*. WRONG: *Early this a.m. he asked for the No. of your room.* The abbreviations are only correct with numerals.

**academic degrees** | Use only if necessary to establish someone’s credentials. The preferred form is to avoid an abbreviation and say instead: *John Jones, who has a doctorate in psychology.* Use an apostrophe in *bachelor’s degree*, *a master’s*, etc.; there is no possessive in *Bachelor of Arts* or *Master of Science*. Use abbreviations as *B.A.*, *M.A.*, *LL.D.*, *Ph.D.* only after a full name, never after just a last name, and only on first reference. Set the title off by a comma: *John Snow, Ph.D.* Do not precede a name with a **courtesy title** for an academic degree and follow it with the abbreviation for a degree in the same reference.

**accent marks** | Do not use any diacritical or accent marks because they cause garble for some users.

**accept, except** | *Accept* means to receive; *Except* means to exclude.

**act** | Capitalize when part of the name for pending or implemented legislation: the *Taft-Hartley Act*. Lowercase in all subsequent references to just *the act*.

**acronyms** | Spell out on first reference, followed by the acronym in all caps and in parentheses. Quotation marks are not necessary: *The Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) issued its decision on Monday. Representatives of the OAH declined to comment on the ruling.*

**addresses** | Use the abbreviations *Ave.*, *Blvd.* and *St.* only with a numbered address: *1600 Pennsylvania Ave.* Spell them out and capitalize them 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 should be spelled out (*alley, drive, road, terrace, etc.*). Always use figures for an address number: *9 Morning Dove Circle*. Spell out and capitalize *First* through *Ninth* when used as street names; use figures for 10th and above: *7 Fifth Ave.*, *100 21st Street*. Abbreviate compass points without periods unless the street number is omitted: *562 W. 43rd St.*, *East 42nd Street*. No periods in quadrant abbreviations: *NW, SE*.

**administration** | Lowercase: *the administration, the president's administration, the governor's administration, the Obama administration*.

**administrator** | Never abbreviate. Capitalize when used as a formal title before a name.

**administrative law judge** | Capitalize when used as a formal title before a name. Spell out on first reference: ALJ is acceptable in subsequent references.

**Administrative Law Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1989.

**Administrative Lawyer** | The newsletter of the Administrative Law Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

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

**adviser** | Not advisor.

**Advocate, The** | The newsletter of the Young Lawyers Division of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**affect, effect** | *Affect*, as a verb, means to influence. *The game will affect the standings.* As a noun, *affect* is best avoided. *Effect*, as a verb, means to cause. *He will effect many changes as a council leader.* As a noun, *effect* means result. *The effect was overwhelming.*

**African-American (adj.)** | Acceptable for an American black person of African descent. Black is also acceptable, however the terms are not necessarily interchangeable. African American (no hyphen) as a noun.

**afterward** | Not afterwards.

**ages** | Always use figures. *The law is 8 years old.* When the context does not require *years* or *years old*, the figure is presumed to be years.

Ages expressed as adjectives before a noun or as substitutes for a noun use hyphens. *A 5-year-old boy, but the boy is 5 years old. The boy, 7, has a sister, 10. The woman, 26, has a daughter 2 months old. The race is for 3-year-olds. The woman is in her 30s* (no apostrophe).

**all caps** | Do not run words, sentences, headlines or subheadings in all capital letters. Bold or italics are preferred when emphasizing a word or group of words in textual material.

**a.m. and p.m.** | Lowercase, with periods.

**amendments to the constitution** | Use *First Amendment, 10th Amendment*, etc. Colloquial references are best avoided, but where appropriate: *He took the Fifth seven times.*

**American Bar Association** | Spell out on first reference. ABA is acceptable on second reference. Also, *bar association, the association.*

**amid** | Not amidst.

**among, between** | *Between* introduces two items, *Among* introduces more than two. *Between* expresses the relationships of three or more

items considered one pair at a time: *Negotiations are underway between the network and the Ford, Carter and McCarthy committees.*

**ampersand (&)** | Use the ampersand when it is part of a group's formal name or composition title. It should not otherwise be used in place of *and*, except for some accepted abbreviations: *B&B*, *R&B*.

**annual** | An event cannot be described as annual until it has been held in at least two successive years. There is no first annual event.

**annual meeting** | Lowercase, except when part of a proper title: the *2014 Construction Law Section Annual Meeting*.

**anticipate, expect** | *Anticipate* means to expect and prepare for something; *expect* does not include the notion of preparation:

*They expect a crowd. They have anticipated it by adding more seats to the auditorium.*

**Antitrust & Complex Business Disputes Law Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1990. Formerly known as the Antitrust & Trade Regulation Section.

**Antitrust & Complex Business Disputes** | The newsletter of the Antitrust & Complex Business Disputes Law Section (ACBD) of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**app** | Short for *application*. A program that runs inside another service. Many cell phones allow applications to be downloaded to expand their functions. App is acceptable on the first reference.

**Appellate Practice Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 2013.

**Appellate Practice** | The newsletter of the Appellate Practice Section (AP) of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**article titles** | When citing the names of articles in journals or similar publications, use quotation marks around the name of the article and italicize the name of the journal. "Examining the Limited Liability Company," *North Carolina Law Review* (Vol. 14, No. 2).



**Asian-American (adj.)** | Whenever possible, use country of descent.

**assembly** | Capitalize when part of the proper name for the lower house of a legislature: *the California Assembly*. Retain capitalization if the state name is dropped but the reference is specific. Lowercase all plural uses: *the North and South Carolina assemblies*.

**assemblyman, assemblywoman** | Do not abbreviate.

**assistant** | Do not abbreviate. Capitalize only when part of a formal title before a name: *Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher*. Whenever practical, an appositional construction should be used: *Richard Boucher, assistant secretary of state*.

**association** | Do not abbreviate. Capitalize as part of a proper name. *The North Carolina Bar Association*; never *the North Carolina Bar Assoc.*

**assure, ensure, insure** | All three words can be used to mean “to make sure or certain,” although *assured* is most often used in this sense.

*Assured* can also mean “to set one’s mind at rest” and also “to remove doubt or to reassure” when it is used to refer to people.

*Ensure* means “to make secure from harm” or “to guarantee” when referring to a performance.

*Insure*, however, should be used only with references to insurance.

**attorney, lawyer** | In common usage, the words are interchangeable. Do not abbreviate. Technically, an *attorney* is someone (usually, but not necessarily, a lawyer) empowered to act for another. Such an individual is occasionally called an *attorney in fact*. A *lawyer* is a person admitted to practice in a court system. Such an individual is occasionally called an *attorney at law*.

**attorney general, attorneys general** | Never abbreviate. Capitalize only when used as a title before a name: *Attorney General Eric Holder*. *The attorney general is the lead contact in that matter*.

**awhile, a while** | *He plans to stay awhile. He plans to stay for a while.*



**baby boomer** | No hyphen.

**backward** | Not backwards.

**bar** | Capitalize when used as part of a formal name: *the N.C. Bar Association, the American Bar Association, the N.C. State Bar*. Lowercase when speak-

ing more generally about a group of attorneys: *the bankruptcy bar, the organized bar*.

**Bar Center** | The offices of the management and staff of the North Carolina Bar Association. It is the site of most NCBA committee meetings and many CLE programs. Formerly located on Annapolis Drive in Raleigh, the Bar Center moved to Weston Parkway in Cary in August 1994.

**BarCARES®** | BarCARES of North Carolina, Inc. is a separate 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The NCBA adopted the program as a member benefit in 2013.

**Bankruptcy Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1979.

**because, since** | Use *because* to denote a specific cause-effect relationship. *He went because he was told*. *Since* is acceptable in a casual sense when the first event in a sequence led logically to the second, but was not its direct cause: *The went to the game, since they had been given tickets*.

**Bill of Rights** | The first 10 amendments to the Constitution.

**biannual, biennial** | *Biannual* means twice a year and is a synonym for the word *semiannual*. *Biennial* means every two years.

**biweekly** | Means every other week. *Semiweekly* means twice a week. Same rules apply to *bimonthly* and *semimonthly*.

**BlackBerry, BlackBerrys** | Brand of smartphone manufactured by Research in Motion Ltd. (RIM), who plans to change their name to BlackBerry in 2013.

**blog** | A website where short entries are usually (but not always) printed in reverse chronological order, with the newest entry first. Can be news, commentary, photos, video or any combination of the above and other items. An update to a blog is a *blog post* or *blog entry*. Blogs can also be distributed outside the website context via RSS feed.

**Bluetooth** | A standard for short-range wireless transmissions, such as in headsets, that enable hands-free use of cell phones.

**boldface** | Boldface type should only be used in textual material with case citations: The court cited **Johnson v. Smith** when making its decision.

**board** | Capitalize only when an integral part of a proper name.

**board, board of directors, board of trustees** | Always lowercase.

**board of governors, the** | Lowercase unless used in formal name of the body: *North Carolina Bar Association Board of Governors*, but the *board of governors decided Tuesday to approve the proposal*.

**book titles** | Italicize: *Gone With The Wind*. Do not use quotation marks. See **composition titles**.

**break up (n.) versus breakup (adj.)**

**build up (n.) versus buildup (adj.)**

**Business Law** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1979.

**Business Lawyer** | The newsletter of the Corporate Counsel Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**bylaw** | One word.



**call letters** | Use all caps. Use hyphens to separate the type of station from the base call letters.  
*WRAL-TV5, FOX-22, WRAZ-FM.*

**capitalization** | In general, avoid unnecessary capitals. When working with proper names (Tax Section, Ethics Committee, Bankruptcy Institute, etc.), lowercase the common nouns when they stand alone in subsequent references (the section, the committee, the institute, etc.). Lowercase the common noun elements of names in plural uses: *the Democrat and Republican parties.*

### **carry-on and carry-over**

**case names** | Bold typeface, no italics in the case name (including v.). Italicize all procedural phrases, such as *in re* and *ex rel.*

**CD** | See **compact disc**.

**CD-ROM** | CD-ROM disc is redundant.

**cellphone** | One word, lowercase.

**century** | Lowercase, spelling out numbers less than 10: *the first century, the 20th century.* For proper names, spell out the organization's practice: *20th Century Fox, Twentieth Century Limited.*

**chair** | The general rule for NCBA officials is to use chair instead of chairman, chairwoman, or chairperson as that officer's formal title should be referred to as such in NCBA publications. Capitalize only as a formal title before a name: *Special thanks should be given to Chair Thomas Smith.* Lowercase in all other uses: *Thomas Smith, chair of the Education Law Section* or, *As chair of our section, Thomas Smith has accomplished a great deal.*

**Change Order** | The newsletter of the Construction Law Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**channel** | Capitalize when used with a figure; lowercase elsewhere: *She turned to Channel 3.* No channel will broadcast the game.

**chief justice** | Capitalize only as a formal title before a name: *Chief*

*Justice John G. Roberts Jr. The officeholder is the chief justice of the United States, not of the Supreme Court. See **judge**.*

**circles** | The central organizing principle of **Google Plus**. Users group each other into circles so they can control, on a case-by-case basis, who can see their posts.

**city** | Lowercase in all city of constructions: *the city of Raleigh, the city of Wilmington*. Uppercase when referring to the formal government body: *He is employed by the City of Greensboro*.

## **citywide**

**CLE** | Acronym for Continuing Legal Education. CLE is acceptable on first reference. (MCLE: Mandatory Continuing Legal Education.)

**click-thrus** | A way of measuring how many people click a link online to see its destination site; often used to set advertising rates.

**commas** | See the AP Stylebook for extensive punctuation guidelines. The most common rule to remember is the one pertaining to items in a series: Do not put a comma after the second-to-last item and before the and: *The annual meeting will feature golf, tennis and live entertainment*.

**commission** | Do not abbreviate. Capitalize only when part of a formal name: *Commission on the Status of Women in the Legal Profession*. *A representative for the commission will call you back*.

**commissioner** | Do not abbreviate. Capitalize only when used as a formal title.

**committee, committees** | Do not abbreviate. Capitalize only when part of a formal name: *the Publications Committee*. *The committee will vote at their next meeting*.

**compact disc** | CD is acceptable in all uses.

**compared to, compared with** | Use compared to when the intent is to assert, without the need for elaboration, that two or more items are similar. *She compared her work for women's rights to Susan B. Antho-*

*ny's campaign for women's suffrage.* Use *compared with* when juxtaposing two or more items to illustrate similarities and/or differences: *His time was 2:11:10, compared with 2:14 for his closest competitor.*

**compound modifiers** | When a compound modifier – two or more words that express a single concept – precedes a noun, use hyphens to link all the words in the compound except the adverb *very* and all adverbs that end in *-ly*: *a first-quarter touchdown, a well-known man, a very good time, an easily remembered rule.*

**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: Capitalize an article: *the, a, an,* or words of fewer than four letters if they are the first or last word in a title. Put quotation marks around the names of all such works except the *Bible* and books that are primarily catalogs of reference material, including almanacs, directories, dictionaries, encyclopedias, gazetteers, handbooks and similar publications. Do not use quotation marks around software titles such as *Windows* or *PowerPoint*. *"The Star-Spangled Banner," "Of Mice and Men," "For Whom the Bell Tolls," the NBC-TV "Today" program, the "CBS Evening News," Encyclopedia Britannica, Webster's New World Dictionary.*

**collective nouns** | Nouns that denote a unit take singular verbs and pronouns: *class, committee, crowd, family, group, herd, jury, orchestra, team.* *The committee is meeting to set its agenda.*

**company names** | Do not use all-capital-letter names unless the letters are individually pronounced: *NCBA. ABA. Not WCATL (wa-cac-tyl); spell out Wake County Academy of Trial Lawyers.*

**Congress** | Capitalize *U.S. Congress* and *Congress* when referring to the *U.S. Senate* and *House of Representatives*. Although *Congress* sometimes is used as a substitute for the *House*, it properly is reserved for reference to both the *Senate* and the *House*.

**congressional** | Lowercase unless part of a proper name: *congressional salaries, the Congressional Quarterly, the Congressional Record.*

**Constitution** | Capitalize references to the *U.S. Constitution*, with or without the U.S. modifier: *The president said he supports the Constitution*. When referring to constitutions of other nations or states, capitalize only with the name of a nation or a state: *the French Constitution, the Massachusetts Constitution, the nation's constitution, the state constitution, the constitution*.

**constitutional** | Lowercase in all uses unless part of a proper name.

**Constitutional Rights & Responsibilities Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1995.

**The Constitutionalist** | The newsletter of the Constitutional Rights & Responsibilities Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**Construction Law Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1987.

**Corporate Counsel Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1989.

**council** | Capitalize only when used as part of a formal name: the Real Property Law Section Council, the council voted to sponsor the bill.

**Course & Scope** | The newsletter of the Workers' Compensation Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**court** | Lowercase when referring to the decision-making body: *The court ruled in a 5-4 decision, the court remanded the case*. Capitalize when used as part of a formal name: *the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals, the District Court*.

**court cases** | Boldface type. **Johnson v. Dimitri**. Italicize subsequent procedural phrases: *in re, ex rel, etc*.

**court decisions** | Use figures and a hyphen: *The Supreme Court ruled 5-4, a 5-4 decision*. The word *to* is not needed but use hyphens if it appears in quoted matter: *"The court ruled 5-to-4; the 5-to-4 decision."*

**courtesy titles** | Refer to men and women by first and last name on first reference, without courtesy titles. Subsequent references should refer only to last name. It is the NCBA's policy to eliminate the use of courtesy titles before names in publications. Mr. should only be used when combined with Mrs.: *Mr. and Mrs. John Smith*. See **Mr./Mrs.**

## **courthouse, courtroom**

**court names** | Capitalize the full proper names of courts at all levels. Retain capitalization if *U.S.* or a state name is dropped: *the U.S. Supreme Court, the Supreme Court, the state Superior Court, the Superior Court, Superior Court clerks*.

For courts identified by a numeral: *2nd District Court, 8th Circuit Court of Appeals*.

**Criminal Justice Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1989.

## **cross section (n.) versus cross-section (v.)**

## **cut back (v.) versus cutback (n., adj.)**

**cyber** | Always lowercase: *cybercast, cyberspace*. When used as an adjective, do not hyphenate: *cyber etiquette*.

**d**

**damage, damages** | Damage is destruction: Authorities said damage from the storm would total more than \$1 billion. Damages are awarded by a court as compensation for injury, loss, etc.: *The woman received \$25,000 in damages*.

**dates** | Always use arabic figures, excluding *st, nd, rd, or th*. When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate *Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov.* and *Dec.* Spell out *March, April, May, June* and *July*. *The annual meeting will be held on Oct. 13. Registration forms must be submitted by July 18.* When a month stands alone or is used with a year alone, do not abbreviate and do not put a comma before the month and the year. *We expect to receive a response*



to our inquiry in February. The new officers will assume their duties in July 2011. When a phrase refers to a month, day and year, set off the year with commas. *Feb. 18, 1989, was the target date for completion.* When referring to an era do not use an apostrophe. *The disco 70s, the roaring 20s.*

**daylong** | One word. Same applies to *weeklong, monthlong, yearlong.*

**days of the week** | Do not abbreviate days of the week unless written in tabular format. When writing a day and date, set off with commas: *The reception will be held at the NCBA Annual Meeting, Friday, June 24, at the Hilton Wilmington Riverside.* Do not set off days or dates with commas when they stand alone. *The awards ceremony will be held Friday at the Hilton Wilmington Riverside.*

**day-to-day, day to day** | Hyphenate when used as a compound modifier: They have extended the contract on a day-to-day basis.

**dean** | Capitalize when used as a formal title before a name: *Dean John Jones, Deans John Jones and Susan Smith.*

**decades** | Use Arabic figures to indicate decades of history. Use an apostrophe to indicate numerals that are left out; show plural by adding the letter s: *the 1890s, the '90s, the mid-1930s.*

**defendant** | Precede with an article, such as the. Do not refer to parties as plaintiff or defendant. Do not capitalize.

**defense attorneys** | Always lowercase, never abbreviate.

**designations** | Include credential designations such as CLAS, RN, NCCP, and Ph.D. at first reference only. Omit from bylines. It is NCBA policy to omit the use of Esq.

**dictionaries** | For spelling, style and usage questions not covered in this stylebook or the AP Stylebook, consult Webster's New World College Dictionary, Fourth Edition, published by Wiley. Use the spelling that is followed by a definition listed in Webster's New World College Dictionary unless a specific exception is listed in this styleguide.

**differ(ent) from** | Take the preposition from, not than.

**differ with** | Meaning to disagree.

**direct message** | A personal message sent via Twitter to one of your followers. DMs differ from mentions and @ replies in that they can only be seen by the recipient.

**directions and regions** | In general, lowercase *north*, *south*, *north-east*, *northern*, etc., when they designate regions. *He drove west. A storm system that developed in the Midwest is spreading eastward. South Korea, but eastern Canada.*

**disc** | Use this spelling for computer-related references: laserdisc, videodisc, but hard disk.

**Disclosure Statement** | The newsletter of the Bankruptcy Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**Dispute Resolution Section** | The formal name of the section does not incorporate the word alternative. The section was authorized by the Board of Governors in 1993.

**District Court** | Capitalize.

**district attorney** | Do not abbreviate. Capitalize only when used as a formal title before a name: *District Attorney Carl Fox*. Use *DA* (no periods) only in quoted materials.

**divisions, sections** | The NCBA currently has four divisions (Law Students Division, Paralegal Division, Senior Lawyers Division, Young Lawyers Division) and 28 sections. Each division and section publishes its own newsletter. Do not capitalize unless used as part of the formal section/division title: *The Bankruptcy Section Chair John Smith*. Or *The section chair held a council meeting last week*.

**doctor** | Use Dr. in first reference as formal title before the name of an individual who holds a doctor of medicine or a doctor of osteopathic medicine degree: Dr. Jonas Salk. Do not continue to use Dr. in subsequent references.

**dollars** | Always lowercase. Use figures and the \$ sign in all except casual references or amounts without a figure: *The book cost \$4. Dad, please give me a dollar.* Do not use decimal points: \$2.50, but \$2. \$500,000, \$1 million. For amounts of more than \$1 million, use two decimal places: \$5.25 million.

**domain names** | The address used to locate a particular website or reach an email system. In email addresses, it is the portion to the right of the @ sign.

**do's and don'ts**

**double-click**

**download** | To get information from another server or computer.

**DVD, DVR**



**e-bar** | The weekly electronic newsletter of the NCBA.

**e-book** | The electronic (non-paper) version of a publication consumed on an e-reader, such as Amazon's Kindle.

**east, eastern** | See **directions, regions**.

**editor** | Capitalize editor before a name only when it is an official corporate or organizational title. Do not capitalize as a job description.

**Education Law** | The newsletter of the Education Law Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**Education Law Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1987.

**either...or, neither...nor**

**Elder & Special Needs Law Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1996. Formerly *Elder Law Section*.

**email** | The shortest form of electronic mail, no hyphen. *The N.C. Bar Center's general email address is ncba@ncbar.org.*

**emoticon** | A typographical cartoon or symbol generally used to indicate mood or appearance, as :-) or '8) . Often looked at sideways.

**e-reader** | Devices such as Amazon's Kindle, Barnes & Noble's Nook and Sony's Reader used to display electronic books and other digital publications. Devices, including laptops and iPads, often have software that performs similar functions.

**endnotes, footnotes** | Avoid if at all possible. Citations should be incorporated into the text.

**end user (n.) / end-user (adj.)** | A phrase commonly referred to by technology developes when imagining the audience for an application, software or hardware. *End-user experience.*

**ensure** | See **assure, ensure, insure**

**entitled** | Used to mean a right to do or have something. Not interchangeable with titled. *Correct usage: She was entitled to the promotion. The book was titled Gone With the Wind. Incorrect usage: The essay was entitled A Closer Look at Gone With the Wind.*

**Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Law Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1996.

**Environmental News** | The newsletter of the Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Law Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

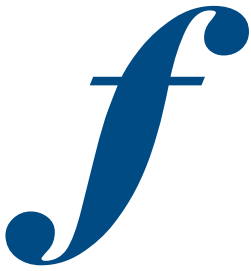
**Estate Planning & Fiduciary Law Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1979.

**Equal Employment Opportunity Commission** | EEOC is acceptable on second reference.

**ex-** | Use no hyphen for words that use ex- in the sense of out of: *excommunicate, expropriate.* Hyphenate when using ex- in the sense of former: *ex-convict, ex-president.*

**exclamation point** | Avoid the use of the exclamation point whenever possible. It should only be used to express a high degree of surprise, incredulity or other strong emotion.

**executive branch** | Always lowercase.



**Facebook** | Social media service where users communicate with friends and other users via private and public messages. Posted profiles, photos, lists of personal interests and privacy settings are key elements. Find the NCBA on Facebook at [NCBAorg](https://www.facebook.com/NCBAorg).

**fact-finding** | (adj.)

**Family Forum** | The newsletter of the Family Law Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**Family Law Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1980.

**fan, follow, friend** | Actions by which users connect to other users on social networks. Friend and fan are typically used on Facebook, while Twitter uses follow and has followers. Acceptable as both nouns or verbs.

**farther, further** | Farther refers to physical distance: *He walked farther into the woods*. Further refers to an extension of time or degree: *She will look further into the mystery*.

**Fastcase** | The online legal research tool of the NCBA, offered as a free member benefit.

**fax** | Acceptable as a short version of facsimile or facsimile machine.

**feed** | A stream of constantly updated material.

**federal** | Capitalize when used in part of a formal name: *Federal Express, the Federal Trade Commission*.

Lowercase when used as an adjective to distinguish something from state, county, city, town or private entities: *federal assistance, federal court, the federal government, a federal judge.*

**federal court** | Always lowercase. The preferred form for first reference is to use the proper name of the court.

**fewer, less** | In general, use fewer for individual items, less for bulk or quantity: *Fewer than 10 applicants called. (Individuals.) I had less than \$50 in my pocket. (An amount).*

**fiscal year** | The N.C. Bar Association's fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30. FY is acceptable on second reference.

**flier, flyer** | *Flier* is the preferred term for an aviator or a handbill. *Flyer* is the proper name of some trains and buses. *The Western Flyer.*

**friend, follow, like** | Acceptable as both nouns and verbs. Actions by which users connect to other users on social networks. Friend and like (formerly fan) are typically used on Facebook, while Twitter users follow and have followers.

**follow up (n.) versus follow-up (adj.)**

**forward** | Not forwards.

**FourSquare** | A location based social network where users check in at certain places or businesses, collect rewards for visits and track friends who use the service.

**fractions** | Spell out amounts less than one in stories, using hyphens between the words: *two-thirds, four-fifths, seven-sixteenths, etc.* Use figures for precise amounts larger than one, converting to decimals whenever practical.

**Front Row, The** | The newsletter of the Sports & Entertainment Law Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**fundraising, fundraiser** | One word.



**General Assembly** | North Carolina's state legislature is called the General Assembly and should be referred to as such on first reference. It may be called the legislature on second reference.

**Generally Speaking** | The newsletter of the Solo, Small Firm and General Practice Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**Google, Googling, Googled** | *Google* is a trademark for a Web search engine. *Google*, *Googling*, and *Googled* are used informally as a verb for searching for information on the Internet. Always capitalized.

**Google Hangout** | A function within Google Plus that allows users to have live, face-to-face, multi-person video chats with chosen participants with webcams. Google Hangouts On Air are Hangouts in which the video stream displays publically on the Google Plus profile page of the user who launched the chat. They can also be displayed on the user's YouTube channel or website.

**Google Plus** | A social network owned by Google in which users can share text updates, videos, photos or other content, and organize fellow users into circles based on relationships or other factors.

**government** | Always lowercase, never abbreviate: the federal government, the state government, the U.S. government.

**governor** | Capitalize and abbreviate as Gov. or Govs. when used as a formal title before one or more names.

**Government & Public Sector Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 2002.

**Governmental Affairs, Department of** | The proper name for the office which handles the NCBA's legislative affairs and coordinates its lobbying efforts. The office is located at the Bar Center in Cary.

**governor** | Capitalize and abbreviate as Gov. or Govs. when used as a formal title before one or more names in regular text. Capitalize and spell out when used as a formal title before one or more names in

direct quotations. Lowercase and spell out in all other references.

**Gray Matters** | The newsletter of the Elder & Special Needs Law Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**grand jury** | Always lowercase: *a Los Angeles County grand jury, the grand jury.*

**h**

**hashtag** | The use of a (#) sign in Twitter to convey the subject a user is writing about so that it can be indexed and accessed in other users' feeds. If someone is writing about the Super Bowl, for example, the use of *#superbowl* could be an appropriate hashtag. No space between # and the accompanying search term.

**he/she, his/her, he or she, his or her** | Avoid these constructions if at all possible. The best solution is to make the whole thing plural. Instead of *An attorney should respond to his or her clients*, use *Attorneys should respond to their clients*.

**Health Law Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1984.

**high-tech**

**historic, historical** | A historic event is an important occurrence, one that stands out in history. Any occurrence in the past is a historical event.

**home page** | (two words) The "front" page of a particular website.

**Honorable, Most Honorable, etc.** | Do not use before the name of a judicial official. Judge (or similar designation) before the name is sufficient.

**honorary degrees** | All references to honorary degrees should specify that the degree was honorary.

**hopefully** | It means in a hopeful manner. Do not use it to mean it



is hoped, let us hope or we hope. Correct: *It is hoped that we will complete our work in June. We hope that we will complete our work in June.* Incorrect: *Hopefully, we will complete our work in June.*

## hotline

**hot spot** | Two words, for descriptions of the area where computers can connect wirelessly, or for global trouble spots, or areas of intense heat in general.

**House Bill, Senate Bill** | Refers to a piece of legislation, as House Bill 640 or Senate Bill 35 on first reference. HB 640 or SB 35 is acceptable in subsequent references.

**HTML** | HyperText Markup Language (lowercase in Web addresses). Web programming language.

**HTTP** | HyperText Transfer Protocol (lowercase in Web addresses). The starting point of all website addresses. When spelling out a URL, do not include `http://` unless the URL does not begin with `www`.

**hyperlink** | A link from one part of a Web page to another page, as a restaurant home page with a link to its menu.

**hypertext** | A system of linking electronic documents.



**Id.** | Italicize. Do not bold or underline. Avoid over-use.

**i.e.** | Abbreviate for the Latin *id est* or *that is* and is always followed by a comma.

**IM** | Abbreviation is short for instant message; sometimes used as a verb *IM'ing*, *IM'ed*. Acceptable on second reference for instant messaging.

## inasmuch as

## inbox

**Inc.** | See **incorporated**.

**incorporated** | Abbreviate and use as part of a corporate name. Do not set off with commas: *Time Warner Inc. announced ...*

**initials** | Use periods and no space when an individual uses initials instead of a first name: *H.L. Mencken*. This format has been adopted to assure that in typesetting the initials are set on the same line.

**Instagram** | A social network in which users share photos they've taken, usually on a smartphone or other phone, with people who have chosen to follow them. Filters can be applied to make images appear old or otherwise stylized, and hashtags are sometimes used to help users find photos related to a particular topic. Frequently shared on other social networks. (Acquired by Facebook in 2012).

**insure** | See **assure, ensure, insure**.

**Insurance Law** | The newsletter of the Insurance Law Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**Insurance Law Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 2013.

**Intellectual Property Law Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1989.

**Internal Revenue Service** | *IRS* is the preferred form on second and subsequent references.

**International Law & Practice Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1992.

**Internet** | The Internet is a decentralized network of host computers that are linked by high-speed lines; Internet-connected.

**intranet** | A private network inside a company or organization, only for internal use.

**"Introduction"** | Do not include as a subhead at the beginning of your story/article.

## iPad

**IP address** | *Internet Protocol address*, a numeric address given to a computer connected to the Internet. Spell out on first reference. Traditional addresses take the form of four numbers from 0 to 255 connected by dots: xx.xx.xx.xx. See **domain names**.

**IP Links** | The newsletter of the Intellectual Property Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

## iPhone

## iPod

**IT** | Abbreviation for information technology. IT is acceptable on the second reference.

**its, it's** | *It's* is a contraction for it is or it has: *It's up to you. It's been a long time.* *Its* is the possessive form of the neuter pronoun: *The company lost its assets.*



**JPEG, JPG** | One of two common types of image compression mechanisms used on the World Wide Web (along with GIF). Acronyms acceptable in all references (*Joint Photographic Experts Group*).

**judge** | Capitalize before a name when it is the formal title for an individual who presides in a court of law. Do not continue to use title in second reference.

**judge advocates** | The plural: *judge advocates*. Also: *judge advocate general, judge advocates general*. Capitalize only as a formal title before a name.

**judgment** | Not *judgement*.

**judicial branch** | Always lowercase.

**Judicial Conference of the United States** | This policymaking body

for the courts of the judicial branch meets twice a year. Its 27 members are the chief justice of the United States, the chief judges of the 12 regional circuit courts of appeals, the chief judge of the Federal Circuit Court of Appeals, a district judge from each of the regional circuits, and the chief judge of the Court of International Trade.

Day-to-day functions are handled by the Administrative Office of the Courts.

**junior, senior** | Abbreviate as *Jr.* and *Sr.* only with full names of people or animals. Do not precede by a comma: *Joseph P. Kennedy Jr.* The notation *II* or *2nd* may be used if it is the individual's preference. Note, however, that *II* and *2nd* are not necessarily the equivalent of junior – they are often used by a grandson or nephew. If necessary to distinguish between father and son in second reference, use the elder Smith or the younger Smith.

**jury** | The word takes singular verbs and pronouns: The jury has been sequestered until it reaches a verdict. Do not use awkward phrases such as seven-man, five-woman jury. Make it a jury of seven men and five women. Do not capitalize: a U.S. District Court jury, a federal jury, a Massachusetts Superior Court jury, a Los Angeles County grand jury.

**justice** | Capitalize before a name when it is the formal title. It is the formal title for members of the U.S. Supreme Court and for jurists on some state courts. In such cases, do not use judge in first or subsequent references.

**Juvenile Justice** | The newsletter of the Juvenile Justice & Children's Rights Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**Juvenile Justice & Children's Rights Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1997.



**Labor & Employment** | The newsletter of the Labor Law Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**Labor & Employment Law Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1982.

**Land Use Law Quarterly** | The newsletter of the Zoning, Planning & Land Use Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**Law Practice Management & Technology Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1983. Formerly *Law Practice Management Section*.

**Law Student Division** | An NCBA division, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1985.

**laws** | Capitalize legislative acts but not bills: *the Taft-Hartley Act, the Kennedy bill*.

**lawsuit** | *Civil lawsuit* is redundant.

**lawyer** | A generic term for all members of the bar. Do not use *lawyer* as a formal title.

**Legislative Bulletin** | An annual publication of the NCBA's Governmental Affairs Department, summarizing new laws affecting lawyers in North Carolina.

**legislative titles** | Members of the N.C. House of Representatives should be designated by the use of Rep. before their names. Designation of members of the state Senate should be as Sen. In stories dealing with both U.S. senators or representatives, all names should include the level on which the elected official serves: *U.S. Sen. Ralph Smith, R-N.C.; U.S. Rep. Michael Jones, D-N.C.; N.C. Sen. Ralph White, D-Chatham; N.C. Rep. John Smith, D-Orange*.

**legislature** | The formal name of the state's legislative body is the North Carolina General Assembly. Use General Assembly on first reference. Lowercase assembly or legislature in any subsequent references to that body. *The Nebraska Legislature is a unicameral body. The Arkansas and Colorado legislatures are considering the amendment.*

**liaison**

**lieutenant governor** | Capitalize and abbreviate as Lt. Gov. or Lt. Govs. when used as a formal title before one or more names in regu-

lar text. Capitalize and spell out when used as a formal title before one or more names in direct quotations. Lowercase and spell out in all other uses.

**LinkedIn** | A social media site used mainly for professional networking. Users create contact networks for information exchanges, job searches and business opportunities. The NCBA supports LinkedIn pages for the association, the Young Lawyers Division, the Paralegal Division and the Sports & Entertainment Law Section.

**ListManager**

**LISTSERV**

**Litigation Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1981.

**Litigator, The** | The newsletter of the Litigation Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**log in (v), login (n) / log on (v), logon (n) /**

**-ly** | Do not use a hyphen between adverbs ending in -ly and adjectives they modify: *a badly damaged island, fully informed.*



**magistrate** | Capitalize when used as a formal title before a name.

**mention** | On Twitter, an @ mention tags an account in a tweet someone else is publishing. It often appears in the place of the actual name. Example: *I refer to the @APStylebook as I edit stories.*

**metadata** | Data about data. Examples of include descriptors indicating when information was created, by whom and in what format.

**microsite** | A tightly focused group of Web pages typically dedicated to a single topic, product, or service.

**midnight** | Do not put 12 in front of it. It is part of the day that is ending, not the one that is beginning.

**million, billion** | Use figures with million or billion in all except casual uses. Correct: The state received \$3 million in funding. Incorrect: *The state received \$3,000,000 in funding.* Correct: *I'd like to make a million dollars.*

**Military Titles** | for the Army: *Gen., Lt. Gen., Maj. Gen., Brig. Gen., Col., Lt. Col., Maj., Capt., 1st Lt., 2nd Lt., Sgt.*, for the Navy or Coast Guard: *Adm., Vice Adm., Rear Adm., Capt., Cmdr., Lt. Cmdr., Lt., Lt. j.g.*, for the Marines: *Sgt. Maj., Sgt., Cpl., Pfc., Pvt.*, for the Air Force: *Sgt.* Do not use the abbreviated *Ret.* for retired military personnel, instead use retired just as former would be used before the title of a civilian: *They invited retired Army Gen. John Smith.*

Plurals: add s to the principal element in the title: *Majs. John Jones and Robert Smith.*

**modified tweet** | A tweet amended before forwarding uses the abbreviation MT.

**months** | Capitalize the names of months in all uses. When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate only *Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov.* and *Dec.* Spell out when using alone, or with a year alone. When a phrase lists only a month and a year, do not separate the year with commas.

Examples: *January 1972 was a cold month. Jan. 2 was the coldest day. His birthday is May 8. Feb. 14, 1987, was the target date. She testified that it was Friday, Dec. 3, when the accident occurred.*

In tabular material, use these three-letter forms without a period: *Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec.*

**monthlong, monthslong**

**more than/over** | Use over to describe spatial relationships: *The airplane flew over the mountain.* Use more than with figures: *The cost was more than \$300.*

**MP3** | A popular audio compression format on the Internet.

**Mutli-Disciplinary Practice** | Can be MDP in all references after the first.



**Native American** | One of the descendants of the indigenous peoples of North America. Avoid the potentially derogatory term Indian.

**names** | On first reference, use the person's full first name, last name and title (where necessary). Do not use a courtesy title, except for medical doctors and then only on first reference. On second reference, use only the last name without title and without courtesy title.

**nationwide**

**newspaper, newsletter names** | Capitalize; do not italicize.

**nicknames** | A nickname should only be used in place of a person's given name in news stories only when it is the way the individual prefers to be known: *Jimmy Carter*; *Bec* (*Charles Becton*). When a nickname is inserted into the identification of an individual, use quotation marks: *Sen. Henry M. "Scoop" Jackson*.

**non-** | In general, do not use a hyphen when forming a compound that does not have a special meaning and can be understood if *not* is used before the base word. Use a hyphen, however, before proper nouns or in awkward combinations, such as *non-nuclear*.

**nonprofit** | No hyphen.

**noon** | Do not put a 12 in front of it.

**no one**

**North Carolina** | Spell out when used as a noun. Use *N.C.* (no space, with periods) only as an adjective. As a postal abbreviation, do not use periods: *8000 Weston Parkway, Cary, NC 27513*.

**North Carolina Bar Association** | North Carolina Bar Association. Avoid references to the NCBA as *the bar*, or *the association* whenever possible. NCBA is acceptable on second reference.

**North Carolina Bar Association Foundation Inc.** | Incorporated organization which functions as a 501(c)3 charitable and education



organization, its interests being exclusively limited to professional and public service, education, research and information. *NCBAF* or *NCBA Foundation*.

**North Carolina General Statutes** | When making reference to these state statutes, the acronym *N.C.G.S.* is preferred. Do not use *N.C. Gen. Stat.* in citations or elsewhere.

**North Carolina Lawyer Referral Service (LRS)** | The North Carolina Lawyer Referral Service is a nonprofit public service project sponsored by the N.C. Bar Association. Clients can call a toll-free number from anywhere in the state. Their call will be answered by a referral service specialist. Based on the information they provide, a referral will be made, matching the client's legal problem with an attorney who practices in that field or near their town. LRS is acceptable on the second reference.

**North Carolina Lawyer** | A publication of the North Carolina Bar Association, mailed quarterly to the membership of the NCBA.

## **notaries public**

**Notes Bearing Interest** | The newsletter of the Business Law Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**numerals** | Spell out one through nine. Starting with 10, use figures. Same applies to ordinals: spell out first through ninth; starting with 10th, use figures.

**numerical lists** | When numbering lists within textual material, designate as follows: *the board decided to (1) adopt the resolution, (2) honor its outgoing officers, (3) elect a new slate of officers and (4) select a date for next year's meeting.* Do not use Roman numerals, i-iv, etc.



## officeholder

**offline** | One word in all cases.

**Office of Administrative Hearings** | Spell out on first reference, but follow with (OAH). In all subsequent references, OAH is sufficient.

**OK, OK'd, OK'ing, OKs** | Do not use okay.

**oral, verbal, written** | Use oral to refer to spoken words: He gave an oral promise. Use written to refer to words committed to paper: *We had a written agreement.* Use verbal to compare words with some other form of communication: *His tears revealed the sentiments that his poor verbal skills could not express.*

## one-sided

**one time, one-time** | He did it one time. She is a one-time friend.

**online** | One word in all cases for the computer connection term.

**oral, verbal, written** | *Oral* refers to spoken words. *Verbal* compares words with some other form of communication. *Written* refers to words committed to paper.

**out of court, out-of-court** | They settled out of court. He accepted an out-of-court settlement.

**over/more than** | Use over to describe spatial relationships. *The airplane flew over the mountain.* Use more than with figures: *The cost was more than \$300.*

**over-** | A hyphen is seldom used; refer to the dictionary for definitive answers.



**PAC** | Political Action Committee.

**page numbers** | Use figures; capitalize *page* when used with a figure. When a letter is appended to the figure, capitalize it. Do not use a hyphen:

*Page 1, Page 20A. Their contact information is listed on page 11.*

**Paralegal Division** | An NCBA division, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1998.

**Paralegal Perspectives** | The newsletter of the Paralegal Division of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**Passport** | The newsletter of the International Law & Practice Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**past president** | Capitalize (both p's) only as a formal title before a name: *The past president of the North Carolina Bar Association is John Wester. The featured speaker is Past President Charles Becton.* See also, **president**, **president-elect**.

**PDF** | Abbreviation for *Portable Document Format*. A file format that allows a document to be shared among several types of computers without losing its formatting. Abbreviation is acceptable in all references.

**Peacemaker, The** | The newsletter of the Dispute Resolution Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**people/peoples/persons** | The preferred plural to the word *person* is *people* in all uses: *Thousands of people attended the fair. What will people say? There were 17 people in the room.* *People* is also a collective noun that takes a plural verb when used to refer a single race or nation: *The American people are united. The peoples of Africa speak many language. Persons* should only be used when it is in a direct quote or part of a title as in *Bureau of Missing Persons*.

**Pinterest** | A social network in which users collect and share images from the Web in theme-based collections, known as *pinboards* or simply *boards*. Images that are shared on Pinterest (or pinned) are sometimes referred to as pins. Find the NCBA at [pinterest.com/ncbaorg](https://www.pinterest.com/ncbaorg).

**plaintiff** | Precede with an article, such as *the*. Do not refer to parties as plaintiff or defendant without the article.

**percent** | One word. Use the word rather than the symbol (%).

**percentages** | Use figures: 1 *percent*, 2.5 *percent* (use decimals, not fractions), 10 *percent*. For amounts less than 1 percent, precede the decimal with a zero: *The cost of living rose 0.6 percent.*

**Per Curiam** | The newsletter of the Appellate Practice Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**Ph.D., Ph.D.s** | The preferred form is to say a person holds a doctorate and name the individual's area of specialty: *John Smith holds a doctorate in marine biology.*

**p.m., a.m.** | Lowercase, with periods. Avoid redundancy: 10 p.m. tonight.

**podcast** | A downloadable audio program.

**policymaker (n), policymaking (n. and adj.)**

**politicking**

**Practice Management** | The newsletter of the Law Practice Management Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**Practice Management, The Center for** | Can be referred to as CPM.

**pre-** | In general, no hyphen is needed, except in those situations where a prefix ends in a vowel and the word that follows begins with the same vowel: *predate, precook, prejudge, but pre-election, pre-empt, pre-eminent.*

**president** | Capitalize president only as a formal title before a name: *The committee was surprised by a visit from President-Elect Larry B. Sitton.*

**president-elect** | The preferred plural to the word person. Persons should only be used as a legal "term of art."

**pro bono** | Do not capitalize unless part of a formal name. No need

to italicize. *The Pro Bono Committee*; the section planned a *pro bono* project.

**professor** | Never abbreviate. Capitalize when used as a formal title before a full name. Do not continue in second reference unless part of a quotation.

**Prognosis** | The newsletter of the Health Law Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**Property Line, The** | The newsletter of the Real Property Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**Public Servant, The** | The newsletter of the Government & Public Service Sector Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).



**Q-and-A**

**questionnaire**

**quotation marks (punctuation with)** | Periods and commas always go inside

quotation marks. With question marks, it depends upon the meaning: *Who wrote "Gone With the Wind"?* or *He asked, "How long will it take?"*



**RAM** | Random Access Memory.

**ranges** | The form: \$12 million to \$14 million. Not \$12 to \$14 million.

**ratios** | Use figures and hyphens: *the ratio was 2-to-1, a ratio of 2-to-1, a 2-1 ratio*. As illustrated, the word *to* should be omitted when the numbers precede the word *ratio*.

**Real Property Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1979.

**real-time (adj.)**

## re-elect, re-election

**reference works** | Capitalize their proper names. Do not use quotation marks around the names of books that are primarily catalogs of reference, to include almanacs, directories, encyclopedias, gazetteers, handbooks and similar publications.

**representative** | See **legislative titles**.

**retweet** | The practice, on Twitter, of forwarding a message or link from someone else to your followers. Spelled out in all references, though common usage on Twitter abbreviates it to RT.

**RSS** | An abbreviation for *Really Simple Syndication*. A protocol for subscribing to and distributing feeds that notify people of new entries on news sites, blogs, podcasts or other online information sources. RSS is acceptable in all references; also *RSS feed*.



**seasons** | Lowercase *spring, summer, fall, winter* and derivatives such as *springtime* unless part of a formal name: *Dartmouth Winter Carnival, Winter Olympics, Summer Olympics*.

**secretary** | Capitalize before a name only if it is an official corporate or organizational title.

**secretary of state** | Capitalize only as a formal title before a name.

**section** | Capitalize only when used as part of a formal name: *the Real Property Law Section Council, the Dispute Resolution Section, members of the section; section membership is on the rise*.

**section symbol** | Use § in citations only. Spell out, such as *Section 34-B*, in the text of the story.

**server** | A computer program that responds to requests from remote computers on a network. A Web server, for instance, hosts websites and delivers pages to users upon demand. A file server, in a nother example, stores and delivers documents to users on a network. A server typically runs on a specialized computer, though most of today's PCs are capable of running such software.

**Senate** | It is acceptable to refer to the N.C. Senate as *the Senate* when it is clear that reference is being made to that particular state institution.

**senator** | See **legislative titles**.

**Senior Lawyers Division** | An NCBA division, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1990.

**Senior Lawyer, The** | The newsletter of the Senior Lawyers Division of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**shall/will** | Use *shall* to express determination: *We shall overcome*. You and he shall stay. Either *shall* or *will* can be used in first-person conjunctions that do not emphasize determination. *We shall hold a meeting*. *We will hold a meeting*. In second or third person conjunctions, use *will*.

**sign-up (n, adj) / sign up (v)**

**SmartForms** | Use for both plural and singular references.

**smartphone** | An advanced cellphone that allows for email, Web browsing and downloadable applications. One word, lowercase.

**SMS** | An abbreviation for *Short Message Service*. Text messaging is preferred.

**social media** | Online tools that people use to connect with one another, including social networks.

**social networks** | Online networks such as Facebook or Twitter where people share personal and professional content, and connect with friends and colleagues.

**social media** | Online tools that people use to connect with one another, including social networks.

**Social Security** | Capitalize all references to the U.S. system. Lowercase generic uses such as: *Is there a social security program in Sweden?*

**Solo, Small Firm & General Practice Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1984.

**Sports & Entertainment Law Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 2000.

**state** | Lowercase in all state of constructions: *the state of North Carolina, the state of Georgia and Alabama*. Do not capitalize state when used simply as an adjective to specify a level of jurisdiction: *state Rep. William Smith, the state Transportation Department, state funds*.

**state abbreviations** | The following are acceptable state abbreviations (except in mailing addresses, which should use postal abbreviations): *Ala., Ariz., Ark., Calif., Colo., Conn., Del., Fla., Ga., Ill., Kan., Ky., La., Md., Mass., Mich., Minn., Mo., Mont., Neb., Nev., N.H., N.J., N.M., N.Y., N.C., N.D., Okla., Ore., Pa., R.I., S.C., S.D., Tenn., Vt., Va., Wash., W.Va., Wis. and Wyo.* States not listed here, such as *Texas and Iowa*, should be spelled out. Postal abbreviations are as follows: *AK, AL, AZ, AR, CA, CO, CT, DE, FL, GA, HI, IL, IA, ID, IN, KS, KY, LA, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, MS, MT, NC, ND, NE, NH, NJ, NM, NV, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VT, VA, WA, WV, WI, WY.*

**status** | A short string of words used on social networks to alert followers to a user's recent activities or point them to something of interest.

**streaming** | A method of processing and delivering media in real time over the Internet. Videos on YouTube are an example of streaming content, as are many on-demand services like Netflix and Hulu.

## stylebook

**subcommittee** | Capitalize only when the subcommittee in question has a proper name of its own: the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations.

**subscribe** | A method of keeping track of public updates from Facebook users without necessarily adding them as a friend. The feature must be enabled by a user to allow other users to subscribe to his or her updates.

## summertime



## supra

**Supreme Court of the United States** | Capitalize U.S. Supreme Court and also the Supreme Court when the context makes the U.S. designation unnecessary. The chief justice is properly the chief justice of the United States, not of the Supreme Court: Chief Justice John G. Roberts, Jr. The proper title for the eight other members of the court is associate justice. When used as a formal title before a name, it should be shortened to justice unless there are special circumstances: Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.

## sync (not synch)



**tag** | To identify someone or something in a post or piece of content. Photos are often tagged to identify people and objects in them.

**Tax Assessments** | The newsletter of the Tax Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**Tax Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1979.

## T-shirt

**telephone numbers** | Use figures. The form: 212-621-1500. For international numbers use 011 (from the United States), the country code, the city code and the telephone number: 011-44-20-7535-1515.

Use hyphens, not periods. The form for toll-free numbers: 800-111-1000. If extension numbers are needed, use a comma to separate the main number from the extension: 212-621-1500, ext. 2.

## text, texting, texted (v)

**that, which** | Use *that* and *which* in referring to inanimate objects and to animals without a name. Use *that* for essential clauses, important to the meaning of a sentence, and without commas: *I remember the day that we met.* Use *which* for nonessential clauses, where the pronoun is less necessary, and use commas: *The team, which finished last a year ago, is in first place.*

TIP: If you can drop the clause and not lose the meaning of the sentence, use *which*; otherwise, use *that*. A *which* clause is surrounded by commas; no commas are used with *that* clauses.

**their, there, they're** | *Their* is a possessive pronoun: *They went to their house.* *There* is an adverb indicating direction: *We went there for dinner.* *There* also is used with the force of a pronoun for impersonal constructions in which the real subject follows the verb: *There is no food on the table.* *They're* is a contraction for they are.

**times** | Use figures except for *noon* and *midnight*. Use a colon to separate hours from minutes: *11 a.m., 1 p.m., 3:30 p.m.* A colon and two zeros are not needed at the top of the hour (*four o'clock in the afternoon is properly written as 4 p.m., not 4:00 p.m.*)

**time sequences** | Spell out: *50 hours, 23 minutes, 14 seconds* rather than *50 hrs., 23 min., 14 sec.*

## **titleholder**

**titles** | Capitalize only formal titles used directly before an individual's name.

**trending** | Used to indicate that a particular topic is getting a lot of attention on a social network, search engine or website. Often used as a verb. Do not use without context and explanation, including describing the location of users where the topic is trending. *The topic of the Oscars is trending on Twitter today.*

**True Bill** | The newsletter of the Criminal Justice Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**trustee** | A person to whom another's property or the management of another's property is entrusted. Do not capitalize if used before a name.

**toward** | Not towards.

**town** | Lowercase, even before a name.

**24/7**

**touch screen (n.) / touch-screen (adj.)**

**tweet** | A public message of up to 140 characters on Twitter. Also useable as a verb: *to tweet*.

**Twitter** | A message-distribution system that allows users to post continual updates of up to 140 characters detailing their activities for followers or providing links to other content. The verb is to tweet, tweeted. A Twitter message is known as a tweet.



**underway** | One word in all uses.

**unfollow, unfriend** | To remove an account from the list of accounts populating a feed, usually on Twitter, Facebook.

**United States** | Use periods in the abbreviation, U.S.

**upward** | Not upwards.

**URL** | Uniform Resources Locator, an Internet address. When the URL does not fit entirely on one line, break it into two or more lines without adding a hyphen or other punctuation mark.

**USA** | No periods in the abbreviation for United States of America.

**U.S. Court of Appeals** | The court, divided into 13 circuits, does not always sit in the cities where they are based. A phrase such as a *federal appeals court* is acceptable on first reference. On first reference to the full name, use *U.S. Court of Appeals* or a full name: *8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals* or *the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit*. U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals without a district number is a misnomer and should not be used.

In shortened and subsequent references: *the Court of Appeals, the 2nd circuit, the appeals court, the appellate court(s), the circuit court(s), the court. U.S. Court of Appeals in San Francisco*, not the San Francisco Court of Appeals.

The formal title for the jurists on the court is *judge. U.S. Circuit Judge Homer Thornberry* is preferred to *U.S. Appeals Judge Homer Thornberry*, but either is acceptable.

## U.S. Customs Court

**U.S. District Courts** | There are 94. In shortened and subsequent references: *the District Court(s)*, *the court*. *Judge* is the formal title for District Court jurists: *U.S. District Court Judge Frank Thompson*.

**U.S. Postal Service** | Use *U.S. Postal Service* or *Postal Service* on first reference. Retain capitalization of *Postal Service* in subsequent references to the agency. Lowercase *service* when it stands alone. Lowercase *post office* in generic references to the agency and to an individual office: *I went to the post office*.

**U.S. Supreme Court** | See **Supreme Court of the United States**.

## U.S. Tax Court

**USS** | USS for United States Ship, Steamer or Steamship, preceding the name of a vessel: *the USS North Carolina*.



### vendor

**versus** | Spell it out in ordinary speech and writing. For court cases, use *v*: *Marbury v. Madison*.

**vice** | Use two words: *vice admiral*, *vice chairman*, *vice president*.

**vice chair** | Two words, no hyphen. Capitalize only as a formal title before a name: *Vice Chair John Smith reported on the section's progress*.

**vice president** | Capitalize or lowercase following the same rules that apply to president. Do not drop the first name on first reference.

## VIP, VIPs

**VoIP** | *Voice over Internet Protocol*. A method of transmitting sound as data over the Internet, allowing for inexpensive phone conversations. *VoIP* is acceptable on second reference.

**vote tabulations** | Always use figures for the totals: In a 5-4 decision, the court ruled that the plaintiff ... . Spell out below 10 in other phras-

es related to voting: *by a five-vote majority, with three abstentions, four votes shy of the necessary two-thirds majority.*

**voice mail** | Two words.



**Web** | Short form of World Wide Web. It is a service, or a set of standards, for publishing content on the Internet. It is not the equivalent of the Internet, but a subset, or application housed on the Internet. Always capitalized and usually two words when used as a modifier: *Web page, Web feed, the Web, web browser.*

Exceptions: *webmaster, webcast, webcam, website.*

**website**

**weeklong**

**well** | Hyphenate as part of a compound modifier: *She is a well-dressed woman.*

**well-being**

**who, whom** | Who is the word when someone is the subject of the sentence, clause or phrase: *The woman who rented the room left the window open. Who is there?* Whom is the word when someone is the object of a verb or preposition: *The woman to whom the room was rented left the window open. Whom do you wish to see?*

**whose (possessive), who's (who is)**

**widget** | A small module with a specific purpose that appears on a website, desktop or other interface and allows access to content or functions.

**Wi-Fi** | For the wireless networking standards.

**wiki** | Software that allows a group of users to add, delete, edit and share information on an intranet or Internet website.

**word-of-mouth**

**word processing** | Do not hyphenate.

**work force**

**Workers' Compensation Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1995.

**worldwide**

**World Wide Web** | Can be referred to in shorthand as the Web. Do not refer to the World Wide Web as WWW. See **Web**.

**worthwhile**

**Will & The Way, The** | The newsletter of the Estate Planning & Fiduciary Law Section of the North Carolina Bar Association (no italics).

**write in (v.) / write-in (n. and adj.)**

**wrongdoing**

**x**

**XML** | For Extensible Markup Language, used to sort, search and format information.

**y**

**year-end (adj.)**

**yearlong**

**years** | Use figures, without commas: 1986. Use an s without an apostrophe to indicate spans of decades or centuries: the 1890s, the 1900s.

Years are the lone exception to the general rule in numerals that a figure is not used to start a sentence: 1976 was a very good year.

**yesterday** | Use only in direct quotations and in phrases that do not refer to a specific day: *Yesterday we were young.*

**YouTube** | A video-serving network owned by Google Inc. that allows users to upload their own videos for access by anyone with a network connection.

**Young Lawyers Division** | An NCBA division, authorized by the Board of Governors in 1953.



**zero, zeros**

**ZIP code** | Use all-caps ZIP for Zoning Improvement Plan, but always lowercase the word code. Do not put a comma between the state name and the ZIP code: New York, NY 10020.

**Zoning, Planning & Land Use Section** | An NCBA section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 2005.

**Zoning, Planning & Land Use Quarterly** | Newsletter published by the Zoning, Planning & Land Use Law Section, authorized by the Board of Governors in 2005.





# a guide to punctuation

There is no alternative to correct punctuation. Incorrect punctuation can change the meaning of a sentence, the results of which could be far-reaching.

Even if the meaning is not changed, bad punctuation, however inconsequential, can cause the reader to lose track of what is being said and give up reading a sentence.

The basic guideline is to use common sense.

- Punctuation is to make clear the thought being expressed.
- If punctuation does not help make clear what is being said, it should not be there.

“The Elements of Style” by William Struck Jr. and E.B. White is a bible of writers. It states:

“Clarity, When you become hopelessly mired in a sentence, it is best to start fresh; do not try to fight your way through against terrible odds of syntax. Usually what is wrong is that the construction has become too involved at some point; the sentence needs to be broken apart and replaced by two or more shorter sentences.”

This applies to punctuation. If a sentence becomes cluttered with commas, semicolons and dashes, start over.

These two paragraphs are full of commas and clauses; all of it equals too much for the reader to grasp:

*The Commonwealth Games Federation, in an apparent effort to persuade other nations to ignore the spiraling boycott, ruled Sunday that Budd, a runner who has had a storied past on and off the track, and Cowley, a swimmer who competes for the University of Texas, were ineligible under the Commonwealth Constitution to compete for England in the 10-day event to be held in Edinburgh, Scotland, beginning July 24.*

*The decision on Budd, who has been the object of a number of dem-*

onstrations in the past, and Cowley followed an earlier announcement Sunday by Tanzania that it was joining Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana and Uganda in boycotting the games because of Britain's refusal to support economic sanctions against South Africa's government.

## **apostrophe (')** — Follow these guidelines:

### **POSSESSIVES:**

**PLURAL NOUNS NOT ENDING IN S:** Add the 's: *The alumni's contributions, women's rights.*

**PLURAL NOUNS ENDING IN S:** Add only an apostrophe: *the churches' needs, the girls' toys, the horses' food, the ships' wake, states' rights, the VIPs' entrance.*

**NOUNS PLURAL IN FORM, SINGULAR IN MEANING:** Add only an apostrophe: *mathematics' rules, measles' effects.* Apply the same principle when a plural word occurs in the formal name of a singular entity [But see **INANIMATE OBJECTS**]: *General Motors' profits, the United States' wealth.*

**NOUNS THE SAME IN SINGULAR AND PLURAL:** Treat the same as plurals, even if the meaning is singular: *one corps' location, the two deer's tracks, the lone moose's antlers.*

**SINGULAR NOUNS NOT ENDING IN S:** Add 's: *the church's needs, the girl's toys, the horse's food, the ship's route, the VIP's seat.*

Some style guides say that singular nouns ending in s sounds, such as ce, x, and z, may take either the apostrophe alone or 's. See **SPECIAL EXPRESSIONS**, but otherwise, for consistency and ease in remembering a rule, always use 's if the word does not end in the letter s. *Butz's policies, the fox's den, the justice's verdict, Marx's theories, the prince's life, Xerox's profits.*

**SINGULAR COMMON NOUNS ENDING IN S:** Add 's unless the next word begins with s: *the hostesses's invitation, the hostess' seat; the witness's answer, the witness' story.*

**SINGULAR PROPER NAMES ENDING IN S:** Use only an apostrophe: *Achilles' heel, Agnes' book, Ceres' rites, Descartes' theories, Dickens' novel.*

**SPECIAL EXPRESSIONS:** The following exceptions to the general rule for words not ending in s apply to words that end in an s sound and are followed by a word that begins with s: *for appearance's sake, for conscience's sake, for goodness's sake*. Use 's otherwise: *the appearance's cost, my conscience's voice*.

**PRONOUNS:** Personal interrogative and relative pronouns have separate forms for the possessive. None involve an apostrophe: *mine, ours, your, yours, his, hers, its, theirs, whose*. Caution: If you are using an apostrophe with a pronoun, always double-check to be sure that the meaning calls for a contraction: *you're it's there's who's*. Follow the rules listed above in forming the possessives of ... other pronouns: *another's idea, others' plans, someone's guess*.

**COMPOUND WORDS:** Applying the rules above, add an apostrophe or 's to the word closest to the object possessed: *the major general's decision, the major generals' decisions, the attorney general's request, the attorneys general's request*. Also: *anyone else's attitude, John Adams Jr.'s father, Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania's motion*. Whenever practical, however, recast the phrase to avoid ambiguity: *the motion by Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania*.

**JOINT POSSESSION, INDIVIDUAL POSSESSION:** Use a possessive form after only the last word if ownership is joint: *Fred and Sylvia's apartment, Fred and Sylvia's stocks*. Use a possessive form after both words if the objects are individually owned: *Fred's and Sylvia's books*.

**DESCRIPTIVE PHRASES:** Do not add an apostrophe to a word ending in s when it is used primarily in a descriptive sense: *citizen's band radio, a Cincinnati Reds infielder, a teachers college, a Teamsters request, a writers guide*. Memory aid: The apostrophe usually is not used if for or by rather than of would be appropriate in the longer form: *a radio band for citizens, a college for teachers, a guide for writers, a request by the Teamsters*. An 's is required however, when a term involves a plural word that does not end in s: *a children's hospital, a people's republic, the Young Men's Christian Association*.

**DESCRIPTIVE NAMES:** Some governmental, corporate and institutional organizations with a descriptive word in their names

use an apostrophe; some do not. Follow the user's practice: *Actor's Equity, Diners Club, the Ladies' Home Journal, the National Governor's Association.*

**QUASI POSSESSIVES:** Follow the rules above in composing the possessive form of words that occur in such phrases as *a day's pay, two weeks' vacation, three days' work, your money's worth.* Frequently, however, a hyphenated form is clearer: *a two-week vacation, a three-day job.*

**DOUBLE POSSESSIVE:** Two conditions must apply for a double possessive – a phrase such as *a friend of John's* – to occur: 1. The word after *of* must refer to an animate object, and 2. The word before *of* must involve only a portion of the animate object's possessions. Otherwise, do not use the possessive form of the word after *of*: *The friends of John Adams mourned his death.* (All the friends were involved.) *He is a friend of the college.* (Not *college's*, because *college* is inanimate.) Memory aid: This construction occurs most often, and quite naturally, with the possessive forms of personal pronouns: *He is a friend of mine.*

**INANIMATE OBJECTS:** There is no blanket rule against creating a possessive form for an inanimate object, particularly if the object is treated in a personified sense. See some of the earlier examples, and note these: *death's call, the wind's murmur.* In general, however, avoid excessive personalization of inanimate objects, and give preference to a construction when it fits the makeup of the sentence. For example, the earlier references to *mathematics' rules* and *measles' effects* would better be phrased: *the rules of mathematics, the effects of measles.*

**OMITTED LETTERS:** *I've, its, don't rock 'n' roll, 'tis the season to be jolly. He is a ne'er-do-well.* [See **contractions.**]

**OMITTED FIGURES:** *The class of '62. The Spirit of '76. The '20s.*

**PLURALS OF A SINGLE LETTER:** *Mind your p's and q's. He learned the three R's and brought home a report card with four A's and two B's. The Oakland A's won the pennant.*

**DO NOT USE:** For plurals of numerals or multiple-letter combinations.

**brackets [ ]** — Use parentheses or recast the material. [See parentheses.]

**colon (:)** — The most frequent use of a colon is at the end of a sentence to introduce lists, tabulations, texts, etc. Capitalize the first word after a colon only if it is a proper noun or the start of a complete sentence: He promised this: *The company will make good all the losses. But: There were three considerations: expense, time and feasibility.*

**EMPHASIS:** The colon often can be effective in giving emphasis: *He had only one hobby: eating.*

**LISTINGS:** Use the colon in such listings as time elapsed (1:31:07.0), the time of day (8:31 p.m.), and biblical or legal citations (2 Kings 2:14; Missouri Code 3:245-260).

**DIALOGUE:** Use a colon for dialogue. In coverage of a trial, for example:

*Bailey: What were you doing the night of the 19th?*  
*Mason: I refuse to answer that.*

**Q AND A:** The colon is used for question-and-answer interviews:

*Q: Did you strike him?*  
*A: Indeed I did.*

**INTRODUCING QUOTATIONS:** Use a comma to introduce a direct quotation of one sentence that remains within a paragraph. Use a colon to introduce long quotations within a paragraph and to end all paragraphs that introduce a paragraph of quoted material.

**PLACEMENT WITH QUOTATION MARKS:** Colons go outside quotation marks unless they are part of the quotation itself.

**MISCELLANEOUS:** Do not combine a dash and a colon.

**comma (,)** — The following guidelines treat some of the most frequent questions about the use of commas. Additional guidelines on specialized uses are provided in separate entries such as dates. For detailed guidance, consult the punctuation section in the back of Webster's New World College Dictionary. (See **semicolon**)

**IN A SERIES:** Use commas to separate elements in a series, however, if an integral element of the series requires a conjunction: *I had orange juice, toast, and ham and eggs for breakfast.* Use a comma also before the concluding conjunction in a complex series of phrases: *The main points to consider are whether the athletes are skillful enough to compete, whether they have the stamina to endure the training, and whether they have the proper mental attitude.* See **dash** and **semicolon** for cases when elements of a series contain internal commas.

**WITH EQUAL ADJECTIVES:** Use commas to separate a series of adjectives equal in rank. If the commas could be replaced by the word *and* without changing the sense, the adjectives are equal: *a thoughtful, precise manner; a dark, dangerous street.* Use no comma when the last adjective before a noun outranks its predecessors because it is an integral element of a noun phrase, which is the equivalent of a single noun: *a cheap fur coat (the noun phrase is fur coat); the old oaken bucket; a new, blue spring bonnet.*

**WITH NONESSENTIAL CLAUSES:** A nonessential clause must be set off by commas. An essential clause must not be set off from the rest of a sentence by commas.

**WITH NONESSENTIAL PHRASES:** A nonessential phrase must be set off by commas. An essential phrase must not be set off from the rest of a sentence by commas.

**WITH INTRODUCTORY CLAUSES AND PHRASES:** A comma is used to separate an introductory clause or phrase from the main clause: *When he had tired of the mad pace of New York, he moved to Dubuque.* The comma may be omitted after short introductory phrases if no ambiguity would result: *During the night he heard many noises.* But use the comma if its omission would slow comprehension: *On the street below, the curious gathered.*

**WITH CONJUNCTIONS:** When a conjunction such as *and*, *but* or *for* links two clauses that could stand alone as separate sentences, use a comma before the conjunction in most cases. *She was glad she had looked, for a man was approaching the house.* As a rule of thumb, use a comma if the subject of each clause is expressly stated: *We are visiting Washington, and we also plan a side trip to Williamsburg. We visited Washington, and our senator greeted us personally.* But no

comma when the subject of the two clauses is the same and is not repeated in the second: *We are visiting Washington and plan to see the White House.* The comma may be dropped if two clauses with expressly stated subjects are short. In general, however, favor use of a comma unless a particular literary effect is desired or if it would distort the sense of a sentence.

**INTRODUCING DIRECT QUOTES:** Use a comma to introduce a complete one-sentence quotation within a paragraph: *Wallace said, "She spent six months in Argentina and came back speaking English with a Spanish accent."* But use a colon to introduce quotations of more than one sentence. See **colon**. Do not use a comma at the start or an indirect or partial quotation: *He said the victory put him "firmly on the road to a first-ballot nomination."*

**BEFORE AN ATTRIBUTION:** Use a comma instead of a period at the end of quote that is followed by attribution: *"Rub my shoulders," Miss Cawley suggested.* Do not use a comma, however, if the quoted statement ends with a question mark or exclamation point: *"Why should I?" he asked.*

**WITH HOMETOWNS AND AGES:** Use a comma to set off an individual's hometown when it is placed in apposition to a name (whether of is used or not): *Mary Richards, Minneapolis, and Maude Findlay, Tuckahoe, N.Y., were there.* If an individual's age is used, set it off by commas: *Maude Findlay, 48, Tuckahoe, N.Y., was present.*

**WITH YES AND NO:** *Yes, I will be there. No, she cannot attend.*

**IN DIRECT ADDRESS:** *Mother, I will be home late. No, sir, I did not take it.*

**SEPARATING SIMILAR WORDS:** Use a comma to separate duplicated words that otherwise would be confusing: *What the problem is, is not clear.*

**IN LARGE FIGURES:** Use a comma for most figures greater than 999. The major exceptions are: street addresses (1234 Main St.), broadcast frequencies (1460 kilohertz), room numbers, serial numbers, telephone numbers, and years (1876).

**PLACEMENT WITH QUOTES:** Commas always go inside quotation marks.

**WITH FULL DATES:** When a phrase refers to a month, day and year, set off the year with a comma: *Feb. 14, 1987, is the target date.*

**compound adjectives — See hyphen.**

**contractions —** Contractions reflect informal speech and writing. Webster’s New World College Dictionary includes many entries for contractions: Aren’t for are not, for example. Avoid excessive use of contractions. Contractions listed in the dictionary are acceptable, however, in informal contexts where they reflect the way a phrase commonly appears in speech or writing.

**dash (—) — Follow these guidelines:**

**ABRUPT CHANGE:** Use dashes to denote an abrupt change in thought in a sentence or an emphatic pause: *We will fly to Paris in June – if I get a raise. Smith offered a plan – it was unprecedented – to raise revenues.*

**SERIES WITHIN A PHRASE:** When a phrase that otherwise would be set off by commas contains a series of words that must be separated by commas, use dashes to set off the full phrase: *He listed the qualities – intelligence, humor, conservatism, independence – that he liked in an executive.*

**ATTRIBUTION:** Use a dash before an author’s or composer’s name at the end of a quotation: *“Who steals my purse steals trash.” – Shakespeare.*

**IN DATELINES:** NEW YORK (AP) – The city is broke.

**IN LISTS:** Dashes should be used to introduce individual sections of a list. Capitalize the first word following the dash. Use periods, not semicolons, at the end of each section, whether it is a full sentence or a phrase. Example: *Jones gave the following reasons:*

– *He never ordered the package.*

– *If he did, it didn’t come.*



**WITH SPACES:** Put a space on both sides of a dash in all uses except the start of a paragraph and sports agate summaries.

**ellipsis (...)** — In general, treat an ellipsis as a three-letter word, constructed with three periods and two spaces, as shown here. Use an ellipsis to indicate the deletion of one or more words in condensing quotes, texts and documents. Be especially careful to avoid deletions that would distort the meaning. An ellipsis also may be used to indicate a thought that the speaker or writer does not complete. Substitute a dash for this purpose, however, if the context uses ellipses to indicate that words actually spoken or written have been deleted. Brief examples of how to use ellipses are provided after guidelines are given. More extensive examples, drawn from the speech in which President Nixon announced his resignation, are in the sections below marked **condensation example** and **quotations**.

**SPACING REQUIREMENTS:** Leave one regular space on both sides of an ellipsis. *I ... tried to do what was best.*

**PUNCTUATION GUIDELINES:** If the words that precede an ellipsis constitute a grammatically complete sentence, either in the original or in the condensation, place a period at the end of the last word before the ellipsis. Follow it with a regular space and an ellipsis: *I no longer have a strong enough political base . ...* When the grammatical sense calls for a question mark, exclamation point, comma or colon, the sentence is word, punctuation mark, regular space, ellipsis: *Will you come? ...* When material is deleted at the end of one paragraph and at the beginning of the one that follows, place an ellipsis in both locations.

**CONDENSATION EXAMPLE:** Here is an example of how the spacing and punctuation guidelines would be applied in condensing President Nixon's resignation announcement:

*Good evening.*

*In all the decisions I have made in my public life, I have always tried to do what was best for the nation. ...*

*However, it has become evident to me that I no longer have a strong enough political base in Congress.*

*As long as there was a base, I felt strongly that it was necessary to see the constitutional process through to its conclusion, that to do otherwise would be ... a dangerously destabilizing precedent for the future.*

**QUOTATIONS:** In writing a story, do not use ellipses at the beginning and end of direct quotes:

*"It has become evident to me that I no longer have a strong political base," Nixon said. Not "... it has become evident to me that I no longer have a strong enough political base ... ," Nixon said.*

**SPECIAL EFFECTS:** Ellipses also may be used to separate individual items within a paragraph of show business gossip or similar material. Use periods after items that are complete sentences.

### **exclamation point ( ! ) — Follow these guidelines:**

**EMPHATIC EXPRESSION:** Use the mark to express a high degree of surprise, incredulity or other strong emotion.

**AVOID OVERUSE:** Use a comma after mild interjections. End mildly exclamatory sentences with a period.

**PLACEMENT WITH QUOTES:** Place the mark inside quotation marks when it is part of the quoted material: *"How wonderful!" he exclaimed. "Never!" she shouted.* Place the mark outside quotation marks when it is not part of the quoted material: *I hated reading Spenser's "Faerie Queene"!*

**MISCELLANEOUS:** Do not use a comma or a period after the exclamation mark:

Wrong: *"Halt!", the corporal cried.*

Right: *"Halt!" the corporal cried.*

**hyphen ( - ) — Hyphens are joiners. Use them to avoid ambiguity or to form a single idea from two or more words. Use of the hyphen is far from standardized. It is optional in most cases, a matter of taste, judgment and style sense. But the fewer hyphens the better; use them only when no using them causes**

**confusion. (Small-business owner, but health care center.) See individual entries in this book. If not listed here, use the first listed entry in Webster's New World College Dictionary. (Amended example from small-businessman, in line with entry below.)**

**Some guidelines:**

**AVOID AMBIGUITY:** Use a hyphen whenever ambiguity would result if it were omitted: *The president will speak to small-businessmen.* (Businessmen normally is one word. But the president will speak to small businessmen is unclear.) Others: *He recovered his health. He re-covered the leaky roof.*

**COMPOUND MODIFIERS:** When a compound modifier – two or more words that express a single concept – precedes a noun, use hyphens to link all the words in the compound except the adverb *very* and all adverbs that end in *-ly*: *a first-quarter touchdown, a bluish-green dress, a full-time job, a well-known man, a better-qualified woman, a know-it-all attitude, a very good time, an easily remembered rule.* Many combinations that are hyphenated before a noun are not hyphenated when they occur after a noun: *The team scored in the first quarter. The dress, a bluish green, was attractive on her. She works full time. His attitude suggested that he knew it all.* But when a modifier that would be hyphenated before a noun occurs instead after a form of the verb *to be*, the hyphen usually must be retained to avoid confusion: *the man is well-known. The woman is quick-witted. The children are soft-spoken. The play is second-rate.* The principle of using a hyphen to avoid confusion explains why no hyphen is required with *very* and *-ly* words. Readers can expect them to modify the word that follows. But if a combination such as *little-known man* were not hyphenated, the reader could logically be expecting *little* to be followed by a noun, as in *little man*. Instead, the reader encountering *little known* would have to back up mentally and make the compound connection on his own.

**TWO-THOUGHT COMPOUNDS:** *serio-comic, socio-economic.*

**COMPOUND PROPER NOUNS AND ADJECTIVES:** Use a hyphen to designate dual heritage: *Italian-American, Mexican-American.* *No hyphen, however, for French Canadian or Latin American.*

**PREFIXES AND SUFFIXES:** Except for *cooperate* and *coordinate*, use a hyphen if the prefix ends in a vowel and the word that follows begins

with the same vowel. Use a hyphen if the word that follows a prefix is capitalized. Use a hyphen to join doubled prefixes: *sub-subparagraph*. If a word combination is not listed in Webster's New World College Dictionary, use two words for the verb form; hyphenate any noun or adjective forms.

**AVOID DUPLICATED VOWELS, TRIPLED CONSONANTS:** Examples: *anti-intellectual, pre-empt, shell-like*.

**WITH NUMERALS:** Use a hyphen to separate figures in odds, ratios, scores, some fractions and some vote-tabulations. When large numbers must be spelled out, use a hyphen to connect a word ending in -y to another word: *twenty-one, fifty-five, etc.*

**SUSPENSIVE HYPHENATION:** The form: *He received a 10- to 20-year sentence in prison.*

**parentheses ( )** — In general, be sparing with parentheses. They are jarring to the reader and can be easily misinterpreted. If a sentence must include incidental material, then commas or two dashes are frequently more effective. Use these alternatives whenever possible. There are occasions when parentheses are the only effective option. When they are necessary, follow these guidelines:

**WITHIN QUOTATIONS:** If parenthetical information inserted in a direct quotation is at all sensitive, place an editor's note under a dash at the bottom of a story alerting copy desks to what was inserted.

**PUNCTUATION:** Place a period outside a closing parenthesis if the material inside is not a sentence (such as this fragment).

(An independent parenthetical sentence such as this one takes a period before the closing parenthesis.)

When a phrase placed in parenthesis (this one is an example) might normally qualify as a complete sentence but is dependent on the surrounding material, do not capitalize the first word or end with a period.

**MATERIAL FROM OTHER AREAS:** If a story contains information from

outside the datelined city, put the material in parenthesis only if the correspondent in the datelined community was cut off from incoming communications.

**INSERTIONS IN A PROPER NAME:** Use parentheses if a state name or similar information is inserted within a proper name: *The Huntsville (Ala.) Times*. But use commas if no proper name is involved: *The Selma, Ala., group saw the governor*.

**NEVER USED:** Do not use parentheses to denote a political figure's party affiliation and jurisdiction. Instead, set them off with commas, as shown under party affiliation. Do not use (cq) or similar notation to indicate that an unusual spelling or term is correct. Include the confirmation in an editor's note at the top of a story.

### **periods ( . ) — Follow these guidelines:**

**END OF DECLARATIVE SENTENCE:** *The stylebook is finished.*

**END OF A MILDLY IMPERATIVE SENTENCE:** *Shut the door.* Use an exclamation point if greater emphasis is desired: *Be careful!*

**END OF SOME RHETORICAL QUESTIONS:** A period is preferable if a statement is more a suggestion than a question: *Why don't we go.*

**END OF AN INDIRECT QUESTION:** *He asked what the score was.*

**MANY ABBREVIATIONS:** For guidelines, see **abbreviations, acronyms**.

**INITIALS:** John F. Kennedy, T.S. Eliot (No space between T. and S., to prevent them from being placed on two lines in typesetting.) Abbreviations using only the initials of a name do not take periods: JFK, LBJ.

**ELLIPSIS:** See **ellipsis**.

**ENUMERATIONS:** After numbers or letters in enumerating elements of a summary: *1. Wash the car. 2. Clean the basement.* Or: *A. Punctuate property. B. Write simply.*

**PLACEMENT WITH QUOTATION MARKS:** Periods always go inside quotation marks. See **quotation marks**.

**SPACING:** Use a single space after a period at the end of sentence.

**question mark ( ? ) — Follow these guidelines:**

**END OF A DIRECT QUESTION:** *Who started the riot? Did he ask who started the riot?* (The sentence as a whole is a direct question despite the indirect question at the end.) *You started the riot?* (A question in the form of a declarative statement.)

**INTERPOLATED QUESTION:** *You told me – Did I hear you correctly? – that you started the riot.*

**MULTIPLE QUESTION:** use a single question mark at the end of the full sentence: *Did you hear him say, “What right have you to ask about the riot?” Did he plan the riot, employ assistants, and give the signal to begin?* Or, to cause full stops and throw emphasis on each element, break into separate sentences: *Did he plan the riot? Employ assistants? Give the signal to begin?*

**CAUTION:** Do not use question marks to indicate the end of indirect questions: *He asked who started the riot. To ask why the riot started is unnecessary. I want to know what the cause of the riot was. How foolish it is to ask what caused the riot.*

**QUESTION-AND-ANSWER FORMAT:** Do not use quotation marks. Paragraph each speaker’s words:

Q: *Where did you keep it?*

A: *In a little tin box.*

**PLACEMENT WITH QUOTATION MARKS:** Inside or outside, depending on the meaning:

*Who wrote “Gone With the Wind”?*

*He asked, “How long will it take?”*

**MISCELLANEOUS:** The question mark supersedes the comma that normally is used when supplying attribution for a quotation: *“Who is there?” she asked.*

**quotation marks ( " " ) — The basic guidelines for open-quote marks (") and close-quote marks ("):**

**FOR DIRECT QUOTATIONS:** To surround the exact words of a speaker or writer when reported in a story:

*"I have no intention of staying," he replied.*  
*"I do not object," he said, "to the tenor of the report."*  
*Franklin said, "A penny saved is a penny earned."*  
*A speculator said the practice is "too conservative for the times."*

**RUNNING QUOTATIONS:** If a full paragraph of quoted material is followed by a paragraph that continues the quotation, do not put close-quote marks at the end of the first paragraph. Do, however, put the open-quote marks at the start of the second paragraph. Continue in this fashion for any succeeding paragraphs, using close-quote marks only at the end of the quoted material. If a paragraph does not start with quotation marks but ends with a quotation that is continued in the next paragraph, do not use close-quote marks at the end of the introductory paragraph if the quoted material constitutes a full sentence. Use close-quote marks, however, if the quoted material does not constitute a full sentence. For example:

*He said, "I am shocked and horrified by the incident.*  
*"I am so horrified, in fact, that I will ask for the death penalty."*  
*But: He said he was "shocked and horrified by the incident."*  
*"I am so horrified, in fact, that I will ask for the death penalty,"*  
*he said.*

**DIALOGUE OR CONVERSATION:** Each person's words, no matter how brief, are placed in a separate paragraph, with quotation marks at the beginning and the end of each person's speech:

*"Will you go?"*  
*"Yes."*  
*"Thursday."*

**NOT IN Q-and-A:** Quotation marks are not required in formats that identify questions and answers by Q: and A:; see **question mark** for examples.

**NOT IN TEXTS:** Quotation marks are not required in full texts, considered texts or textual excerpts. See **ellipsis**.

**COMPOSITION TITLES:** See **composition titles** for guidelines on the use of quotation marks in book titles, movie titles, etc.

**NICKNAMES:** See **nicknames**.

**IRONY:** Put quotation marks around a word or words used in an ironical sense: *The “debate” turned into a free-for-all.*

**UNFAMILIAR TERMS:** A word or words being introduced to readers may be placed in quotation marks on first-reference: *Broadcast frequencies are measured in “kilohertz.”*

**FOREIGN WORDS:** If a word or phrase is needed that is not understood universally or recognized in specific communities (medical, legal), place it in quotation marks and provide an explanation: *“ad astra per aspera,” a Latin phrase meaning “to the stars through difficulty.”*

**AVOID UNNECESSARY FRAGMENTS:** Do not use quotation marks to report a few ordinary words that a speaker or writer has used:

*Wrong: The senator said he would “go home to Michigan” if he lost the election.*

*Right: The senator said he would go home to Michigan if he lost the election.*

**PARTIAL QUOTES:** When a partial quote is used, do not put quotation marks around words that the speaker could not have used. Suppose the individual said, “I am horrified at your slovenly manners.” *Wrong: She said she “was horrified at their slovenly manners.”* *Right: She said she was horrified at their “slovenly manners.”* Better when practical: use the full quote.

**QUOTES WITHIN QUOTES:** Alternate between double quotation marks (“or”) and single marks (‘or’):

*She said, “I quote from his letter, ‘I agree with Kipling that “the female of the species is more deadly than the male,” but the phenomenon is not an unchangeable law of nature,’ a remark he did not explain.”*



Use three marks together if two quoted elements end at the same time:  
*She said, "He told me, 'I love you.' "*

**PLACEMENT WITH OTHER PUNCTUATION:** Follow these long-established printers' rules:

- The period and the comma always go within the quotation marks.
- The dash, the semicolon, 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.

See **comma**.

**semicolon ( ; )** — In general, use the semicolon to indicate a greater separation of thought and information than a comma can convey but less than the separation that a period implies. To basic guidelines:

**TO CLARIFY A SERIES:** Use semicolons to separate elements of a series when the items in the series are long or when individual segments contain material that also must be set off by commas:

*He is survived by a son, John Smith, of Chicago; three daughters, Jane Smith, of Wichita, Kan., Mary Smith, of Denver, and Susan, of Boston; and a sister, Martha, of Omaha, Neb.*

Note that the semicolon is used before the final and in such a series. Another application of this principle may be seen in the cross-references at the end of entries in this book. Because some entries themselves have a comma, a semicolon is used to separate references in multiple entries. as in *See the felony, misdemeanor entry; pardon, parole, probation; and prison, jail.*

See **dash** for a different type of connection that uses dashes to avoid multiple commas.

**TO LINK INDEPENDENT CLAUSES:** Use semicolon when a coordinating conjunction such as and, but or for is not present: The package was

due last week; it arrived today. If a coordinating conjunction is present, use a semicolon before it only if extensive punctuation also is required in one or more of the individual clauses: *The pulled their boats from the water, sandbagged the retaining walls, and boarded up the windows; but even with these precautions, the island was hard-hit by the hurricane.*

Unless a particular literary effect is desired, however, the better approach in these circumstances is to break the independent clauses into separate sentences.

**PLACEMENT WITH QUOTES:** Place semicolons outside quotation marks.

# proofreader's marks

delete space <sup>n</sup><sub>u</sub>

insertspace <sup>#</sup><sub>u</sub>

delete a word ~~word~~

insert<sup>a</sup> word

transpose <sup>ij</sup>

move <sup>as</sup> shown

inset<sup>r</sup> a letter

delete a letter <sup>n</sup><sub>u</sub>  
and close up

change a letter <sup>l</sup>

change a word ~~word~~

add<sup>ing</sup> on to a word

insert a comma or you can add a period <sup>,</sup>

add an apostrophe: the auditor's record <sup>'</sup>

insert<sup>q</sup> quotation marks <sup>”</sup>

insert a hyphen: full<sup>-</sup>time job

insert a dash<sup>--</sup> or change  
a hyphen<sup>-</sup> to a dash

spell out: <sup>(5)</sup>times

~~Use~~ ~~Lowercase~~

capitalize

(insert parentheses)

insert underscore

delete underscore

¶ start a new paragraph

no ¶ remove paragraph break

ss [ single  
space

ds [ double  
space

indent  
☐ two spaces

move to the right ☐

☐ move to the left

raise above the line<sup>2</sup>

drop below the line: CO<sup>2</sup>

~~stet~~ (don't change) or just write "stet"

align horizontally: re:

== cost analysis

|| align  
vertically



# a writer's checklist

- One space after a period, not two.
- Use subheads within the article to break up the copy. Do not submit your article in outline form; avoid use of Roman numerals in headings. Wherever possible, these notations will be removed.
- Do not use ALL CAPS for textual material. This also applies to headlines, subheads, bylines and bio lines. When editing/typesetting, we will recognize the content.
- Use indent settings, not tabs, to change margin widths.
- Avoid hard returns at the end of lines, unless a new paragraph follows. The text formatting that you do before you submit the articles is often reflected differently – or sometimes not translated at all – in layout due to different program/version translation requirements. NCBA newsletters are laid out in graphics-based programming, rather than in word processors.
- All dates should be written as Jan. 15, 2001, not 15 January 2001. The months requiring abbreviation (per AP Style) are as follows: Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., and Dec.
- Do not underline anything.
- Apply boldface (ex. case citations: *Roe v. Wade*) or italic (ex. See xyz, or *Id.*) attributes as necessary.
- Consult the NCBA Stylebook for any style questions. (A copy of the stylebook can be found on the website, or obtained by contacting your editor or the NCBA communications department.)
- Always remember to spell check your article if your word processing program offers such a feature.

## When Citing a Source:

- DO NOT USE FOOTNOTES or ENDNOTES. Whenever possible, incorporate all citations into the text. Footnotes do not translate well into electronic document presentation, and should be avoided/incorporated at all costs.
- Boldface case names (not italicized, not underlined).
- Italicize journal titles, book titles, etc.
- Put quotations around titles of articles within journals and books.
- Refer to North Carolina's General Statutes as "N.C.G.S." Do not abbreviate the statutes as "N.C. Gen. Stat."
- Avoid overuse of the citation "Id."
- The section symbol (§) is used in citations only. Spell out (Section 34-B) in the text of the story.

## Finishing Your Written Article

- Type in a suggested headline (and optional subhead) at the top of the article. Do not type any content – headings, subheadings, biography statements, etc. – in ALL CAPS. The content will be recognized and formatted appropriately.
- Type in your name below the headline (and before the text) as you wish it to appear in the publication.
- At the end of the article, include a condensed biography which describes where you work (firm name, location, partner or associate) and any other relevant information or credentials. If a bio statement is not submitted, an abbreviated one will be included based on membership information based solely on your practice and location. If such information cannot be located in membership files, bio lines will be omitted. Lengthy bios are subject to editorial review.

## **When Submitting Your Article to the Editor:**

- Simply attach the article to an email. If you are including images to be included in the layout, please send them as separate files rather than embedding them in a word document.
- Include a cover letter/brief memo describing what you have written.
- Make sure that the cover letter includes a current email/phone number where you can be reached if the editor has any questions about your article.

## **If in Doubt:**

Contact your volunteer editor or the assistant director of communications/publications at the NCBA at 1-800-662-7407 or local/direct (919) 657-1557 for more information.

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