

La Follette School of Public Affairs Editorial Style Guide

These notes are based largely on the *Turabian/Chicago Manual of Style*, with some nuances from *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, fifth edition

For the Chicago Manual of Style, see
http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Another source is the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Writing Center's guide online at www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/

This document and more resources are at www.lafollette.wisc.edu/publications/resources.html

Contents

How to avoid plagiarism	2
Quality research.....	2
Be sensitive.....	2
Works cited/reference list: A few notes	3
Parenthetical citations: A few notes.....	3
Sample parenthetical citations and references.....	4
1. Book.....	4
2. Journal article	4
3. Chapter in book	5
4. No date on source	5
5. Agency or organization as author.....	5
6. Two authors	5
7. Three, four or five authors	6
8. Newspaper article with author	6
9. Newspaper article without author	6
10. Presentation slides, agency as author.....	6
11. Presentation slides, person as author	7
12. Article reprinted on web site	7
13. Article with no author published on web site with no publication date.	7
14. Web site with no person as author and no report.....	7
15. Personal communications.....	8
16. Report by a U.S. House committee	9
17. Report by a U.S. Senate committee	9
18. Federal statute	9
19. State statute.....	9
20. City ordinance.....	10
21. Data generated by a kind person at another agency and sent via e-mail	10
22. Differentiate between federal and state agencies.	11
23. Reference list.....	11
24. More than one reference from the same author in the same year.	12
General notes.....	13
Use typography to your advantage	13
Be specific, complete, clear, consistent, and accurate	15
Time element.....	15
Use complete names	15

Avoid second person (“you”).....	15
Define terms.....	15
Weed out abbreviations	16
Be consistent on details	16
Do the math.....	16
Don’t embarrass yourself	16
Be concise.....	17
Get technical	19
Periods and commas and more. Oh my.	19
Numerals, figures, and numbers.....	19
Currency.....	20
Percent, %, and percentage.....	20
Capitalization: avoid Capital Letters when They are not needed.....	20
Hyphens and dashes	20
Careful wording	21

How to avoid plagiarism

Text taken word for word from another source must be put in quotation marks, and the source must be credited with a citation and listed in the references.

When paraphrasing text and ideas, they must be attributed to the source where you found the information. Ideas taken from several sources and combined should be attributed.

Do not copy text from an electronic source into another electronic document without immediately putting the text inside quotation marks and including a citation. Do this even if you plan to rewrite it later. When on deadline, one might forget to go back and rewrite.

Quality research

When researching a topic, do not rely just on a Google or Bing search of the Internet. To find current academic research, consult academic journals through databases and the campus library system. See <http://www.library.wisc.edu/#journals> and <http://www.library.wisc.edu/#databases>

Be sensitive

In general, do not use “America” when referring to the United States. Many people in Canada, Mexico, and Central and South America find this colonialist term offensive.

Use gender neutral language: her or his, he or she, etc.
Or, make the sentence plural, and use their and them.

Think about the use of the word “citizens.” Its use may exclude people who are not citizens, whether they are in the country legally or illegally. “Residents” might be preferable.

Works cited/reference list: A few notes

APA vs. Chicago: To follow an editorial style more like Chicago, a good way to start is to eliminate the comma between the author and year in the parenthetical citations. Then, in the works cited list, eliminate the parentheses around the year. If using endnotes, the first note for each source must include full bibliographic information, and a full works cited list must be included.

Chicago uses first names in the reference list and APA style uses only initials. If using APA, authors should keep first names in their records because some academic journals have editorial style that requires first names. The first names also help when searching for more information related to that person.

For sources on the internet, use the specific URL, not the home page, so the reader can easily find the specific document cited.

A period ends every item.

From item to item, be consistent in punctuation, capitalization, order. Use lowercase for all titles (except for proper nouns). Titles of books, journals, reports are lowercase and italicized. Titles of articles, chapters, presentation slides and other smaller documents are lowercase and not in quotation marks.

The first word of the reference must correspond to the first word in each citation.

Publication date must be included in the works cited (reference) list. Do not use date of download or date web page was updated. If no publication date is given with the downloaded document, use “n.d.” for “no date.”

The date a document was accessed from internet is not required by the La Follette School. However, the editing process requires checking that all URLs are active.

Parenthetical citations: A few notes

Be consistent in how the citations are punctuated. No commas between author and year with Chicago/Turabian: (Faster 2003).

The first word of the citation must be the same as the first word of the corresponding item in the reference

The parenthetical citation goes at the end of the sentence, before the period: (Faster 2003).

For a specific part of a source, include the page or chapter number after the year.
Put a comma after the year: (Faster 2003, 543) (Smith 2006, chap. 3)

If a citation stands for an entire paragraph, put it at the end of the paragraph, before the final period.

For a direct quote, the citation goes outside the closing quotation mark.

If at the end of the sentence, the period follows the closing parenthesis:

“The news coverage led to a 10 percent increase in the approval rating” (Faster 2003).

If the sentence needs attribution for different parts, put the appropriate parenthetical citation after each part, in the middle of the sentence. In a list, the comma goes after the closing parenthesis:

Sustained depression may increase the risk of other diseases including stroke (Everson 1998), diabetes (de Groot 2001; and Lustman 2000), myocardial infarction (Smith 1993), cardiovascular disease (Penninx 2001), congestive heart failure (Vaccarino 2001), and HIV (Ickovics 2001).

If author’s name is in sentence, no need for name in parentheses:

Faster (2003) argues that ... OR In 2003, Faster argued that ...

If several authors said the same thing, put all the attribution in the same set of parentheses, separated by commas:

Parental depression creates substantial risk for depression in offspring and more so if both parents are depressed (Rohde 2005, Williamson 2004, Zahn-Waxler 2004).

Sample parenthetical citations and references

1. Book

Body of paper: (Brintnall-Peterson 2003)

Reference list

Brintnall-Peterson, Mindy. 2003. *Family caregiving is everybody’s business*. Madison: University of Wisconsin-Extension.

NOTE: Lowercase book title.

2. Journal article

Body of paper (Smith 2004)

Reference list

Smith, Patsy. 2004. Elder care, gender, and work: The work-family issue of the 21st century. *Berkeley Journal of Employment and Labor Law*, 25, 351-399.

NOTE: Lowercase article title; do not put article in quotation marks; capitalize and italicize name of journal and volume number. Don’t put “pp.” before the page numbers in the reference list. APA does indeed italicize the volume number.

If the journal article was found through a database search, no URL is needed. However, if article is from the internet, then include the full URL.

3. Chapter in book

Body of paper (Rowles, chap. 6, 1996)

Reference list

Rowles, George D. 1996. Nursing homes in the rural long-term care continuum. In *Long-term care for the rural elderly*, eds. Debra B. Smithers, Johanna E. Beaulieu, and Walter W. Myers, 109-131. New York: Springer Publishing Company.

NOTE: Lowercase chapter and book titles.

4. No date on source

Body of paper: (Ofstead n.d.)

Reference list

Ofstead, Carlos. n.d. The census report: Wisconsin is changing. Madison: Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. Retrieved from http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/aging/age_news/NO119/census.htm.

5. Agency or organization as author

Body of paper, first reference, if abbreviation is familiar to reader and report uses it frequently throughout:

(Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services [WDHFS], 2004)

Body of paper, second reference, if abbreviation is familiar to reader and report uses it frequently throughout:

(WDHFS, 2004)

If the author is the publisher -- in this case, the agency published its own report on its own web site -- give the location and say the author was the publisher:

Reference list

Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. 2004. Medicaid overview briefing: expenditure and enrollment. Presentation slides. Madison: Author. Retrieved from http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/medicaid4/presentations/overview/expend_enrollment.ppt. OR

Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services (WDHFS). 2004. Medicaid overview briefing: expenditure and enrollment. Presentation slides. Madison: Author. Retrieved from http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/medicaid4/presentations/overview/expend_enrollment.ppt.

6. Two authors

Body of paper: (Smith and Jones 2005)

Reference list: Smith, Barnabas, and Jones, Harriet. (2005). *Title of book ...*

7. Three, four or five authors

Body of paper, *first* reference: (Smith, Jones, and Brown, 2005)

Body of paper, *second* reference: (Smith et al., 2005)

Reference list:

Smith, Barnabas, Jones, Harriet, and Brown, Montrose. (2005). *Title ...*

NOTE: For six and more authors, use just the surname (family name) of the first author followed by et al. and the year for first and subsequent citations. In reference list, give initials and surnames for the first six and use et al. to refer to additional authors.

8. Newspaper article with author

If retrieved through a database, include the section and page numbers.

If retrieved from the internet, include the full URL.

Body of paper: (O'Driscoll 1994)

Reference list

O'Driscoll, Peter. 1994, February 20. Baggage conveyor takes suitcase taste test. *Denver Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.denverpost.com/news/5689563890.php>.

OR

O'Driscoll, Peter. 1994, February 20. Baggage conveyor takes suitcase taste test. *Denver Post*, B3.

9. Newspaper article without author

Body of paper ("Odd Trend," 2009) OR

"... as the Los Angeles Times reported on January 8, 2009, ..."

Reference list (you don't have to include if enough information is in report's body)

Odd trend noted. 2009, January 8. *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.latimes.com/news/2478463890463.php>.

OR

Odd trend noted. 2009, January 8. *Los Angeles Times*, D2.

NOTE: In citation, capitalize article title and put it in quote marks
(because there is no author)

In reference, lowercase article title and don't use quote marks.

10. Presentation slides, agency as author

Body of paper (Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services 2005a)

Reference list

Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. 2005a. Family Care. Presentation slides. Madison: Author. Retrieved from <http://dhfs.wisco>

11. Presentation slides, person as author

Body of paper (Washington 2011)

Reference list

Washington, Garrett. 2011. How a bill is processed. Presentation slides. Madison: Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau. Retrieved from <http://lrb.wisconsin.gov> ...

12. Article reprinted on web site

include name of original publication, name of web site, and URL.

Body of paper (Tyagi 2003)

Reference list

Tyagi, Rachel. 2003, January. Apparel globalization: the big picture. *Apparel*. Reprinted on *New Century News* web site published by the Natural Fibers Information Center at the University of Texas at Austin. Retrieved from <http://www.utexas.edu/centers//Feb.2003.ncn.htm>.

NOTE: Lowercase article title. Do not put in quotation marks

13. Article with no author published on web site with no publication date.

Body of paper: (“The Guide to Leasing: How Leasing Works” n.d.)

OR

(Guide to Leasing, n.d.)

Reference list

The guide to leasing: how leasing works. n.d. Retrieved from <http://www.leaseguide.com/lease07.htm>

NOTE: In citation, capitalize article title and put it in quote marks (because there is no author)

In reference, lowercase article title and don't use quote marks.

14. Web site with no person as author and no report

Body of paper: (U.S. Census Bureau 2009)

Reference list

U.S. Census Bureau. 2009. Geographic terms and definitions. Retrieved from http://www.census.gov/popest/geographic/estimates_geography.html

NOTE: In reference, lowercase web page title and don't use quote marks.

15. Personal communications

Personal communications include unarchived, interviews, telephone conversations, e-mails, text messages, electronic bulletin boards, letters, memos.

Approach 1: does not include entry in reference list, citation notes “personal communication.”

Body of paper: (Susan Robert, human resources administrator, University of Wisconsin–Madison, personal communication, February 6, 2005) OR
Write in body of paper: “University of Wisconsin–Madison human resources administrator Susan Robert said in a February 6, 2005 interview/e-mail/telephone conversation/text message ...” OR
“The outcome surprised staff members, according to University of Wisconsin–Madison human resources administrator Susan Robert ...”

NOTE: Citation gives exact date of communication plus first (or initials) and family name of person.

Reference list

Do not include in reference list because these are not “recoverable data,” according to APA.

Approach 2: includes entry in reference list

A) Interview

Body of paper: (Robert 2005)

Reference list

Robert, Susan. 2005, April 19. In-person interview with researcher from the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Social Work by InterviewerA Name and InterviewerB Name. Notes in possession of InterviewerA Name.

B) Telephone Interview

Body of paper: (Flable 2008)

Reference list

Flable, Stan. 2008, April 19. Telephone interview with researcher from the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Social Work by Interviewer Name. Notes in possession of Interviewer Name.

C) E-mail

Body of paper (Steeffel 1995)

Reference list

Steeffel, Genevieve. 1995, November 30. E-mail from Reno, Nevada, Women’s League president to Daisuke Kitagawa, researcher from the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Social Work. E-mail in possession of Author Name.

16. Report by a U.S. House committee

Body of Paper: House of Representatives Report No. ###-### year OR
(H.R. Rep. No. ###-### year)

NOTE: The report number is the year of the Congress followed by a hyphen and the number of the report. It ends with the calendar year.

For example:

House of Representatives Report No. 112-222, 2011, noted that the sky is not blue. OR The sky is not blue (H.R. Rep. No. 112-222 2011).

Reference list

H.R. Rep. No. ###-### year

17. Report by a U.S. Senate committee

Body of Paper: Senate Rep. No. ###-### (year) OR (H.R. Rep. No. ###-### year)

NOTE: The report number is the year of the Congress followed by a hyphen and the number of the report. It ends with the calendar year.

For example:

Senate Report No. 112-222, 2011, noted that the sky is not blue. OR
The sky is not blue (S. Rep. No. 112-222 2011).

Reference list: S. Rep. No. ###-### year

18. Federal statute

For more on legal references, see APA and *The Blue Book: A Uniform System of Citation*, likely available in libraries' reference sections.

Body of Paper: (Mental Health Systems Act 1988) or Mental Health Systems Act of 1988 or federal Mental Health Systems Act of 1988, etc.

Reference list: Mental Health Systems Act, 42 U.S.C. § 9401 1988.

19. State statute

However, Wisconsin does not use common names for its laws, so just use something like this: Wis. Stat. § 287.01(9).

Body of Paper: (Mental Care and Treatment Act 1983, 1992)

Reference list

Mental Care and Treatment Act, 4 Kan. Stat. Ann, §§ 59-2901-2941 1983 & Supp. 1992

NOTE: The section symbol § is in Microsoft Word's Insert: Symbol in the line with the cent, copyright and registered trade mark symbols. One § is one section, two §§ is for two or more sections. However, "sec." is acceptable, but capitalize it after a period.

20. City ordinance

Body of paper: (Private Transportation Reimbursement ordinance 2005)

Reference list

Private Transportation Reimbursement ordinance, Milwaukee Code of Ordinance, sec. 350-183. 2005. Retrieved from <http://cc.milwaukee.gov:81/isysnative/RTpcQ09ERVxWb2x1bWUzXENIMzUwLVNVQjkucGRm/CH350SUB9.pdf#xml=http://199.196.84.35:81/isysquery/irl9133/1/hilite>

The section symbol § is in Microsoft Word’s Insert: Symbol in the line with the cent, copyright and registered trade mark symbols. One § is one section, two §§ is for two or more sections. However, “sec.” is acceptable, but capitalize it after a period.

21. Data generated by a kind person at another agency and sent via e-mail

See real-life example at See page 6, footnote 7 of the 2007 report, Complying with Act 141,” <http://www.lafollette.wisc.edu/publications/workshops/2007/renewable.pdf#page16>

Body of paper

In report’s narrative, data can be attributed to the individuals who sent e-mail with data or to their employers:

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, blah blah. OR

According to Jane Jones of the U.S. Census Bureau, blah blah

Then use a footnote to explain the generation of the statistics and the time period in which they were generated (e.g., March 2009 or spring 2009).

If the name of the individual sending the e-mail can be used in the report, a parenthetical citation may be helpful, in addition to the “According to” attribution: (Jane Jones, personal communication, March 31, 2009).

Reference list

Does not need to be included because it is a personal communication, unless professor or client otherwise says so — does either want personal communications included in the works cited list. See “personal communication” section in this style guide.

If the report is not including personal communications in the works cited, ensure that the attribution and footnote convey the source of the data and when it was generated.

Otherwise, the works cited list would include something like this:

Jones, Jane. (2009, March 31). E-mail from U.S. Census Bureau chief statistician to Author Name, researcher from the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Social Work. E-mail in possession of Author Name.

22. Differentiate between federal and state agencies.

Use “U.S.” (as an adjective) with federal agencies to differentiate from state agencies, even if names are different. Use “Wisconsin” with state agencies to differentiate from federal or county agencies, even if names are different. Only use an abbreviation on second reference if it is familiar to the reader and is used frequently throughout the report.

Body of paper, first reference:

(Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services [WDHFS] 2004)
(U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS] 2002)
(Wisconsin Department of Health Services, [WDHS] 2009)

Body of paper, second reference:

(WDHFS, 2004)
(USDHHS, 2002)
(WDHS, 2009)

23. Reference list

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2002. *State wage pass-through legislation: an analysis*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/daltcp/reports/wagepass.htm>.

Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. 2004. *Medicaid overview briefing: expenditure and enrollment*. Madison: Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. Retrieved from http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/medicaid4/presentations/overview/expend_enrollment.ppt.

Wisconsin Department of Health Services. 2009. *Why Gov. Doyle Created the DHS*. Madison: Wisconsin Department of Health Services. Retrieved from <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/fictitious>.

NOTE: The first letters of the abbreviation **MUST** correlate to the reference list, unless doing so contradicts the clients’ wishes.

The reference list could include the agency abbreviation:

Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services (WDHFS). 2004. *Medicaid overview briefing: expenditure and enrollment*. Madison: Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. Retrieved from http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/medicaid4/presentations/overview/expend_enrollment.ppt.

24. More than one reference from the same author in the same year.

In the reference list, order the items chronologically with earliest work first, then, for each year, alphabetically by title of the article, chapter, report, etc. Put a lowercase letter right after the year, without a space. A lowercase “a” is assigned to the first item by that author for that year. Group all the “no date” documents together and alphabetize in the reference list. Place at end of list. The assumption is that reports and information on the internet are published. If a paper includes references to unpublished reports from an agency, include them in the ordering with the published items from the same agency and note that they are unpublished, as shown below.

Body of paper: (Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services 2005a)
(Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services 2005b)
for *second* reference authored that year by that agency.
(Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services 2005c)
for *third* reference authored that year by that agency.
(Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services 2004a)
(Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services 2004b)
(Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services n.d.a)
(Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services n.d.b)
(Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services n.d.c)

References below alphabetically list *Family Care*, *Home...*, and *Tax ...* for 2005; then *Alzheimer’s ...* and *Way ...* for 2004; then *Direct ...*, *Medicaid ...*, and *Most* for no date.

Reference list

- Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. 2005a. *Family Care*. Presentation slides. Madison: Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. Retrieved from http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/medicaid4/family_care.ppt#3.
- Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. 2005b. *Home and community based waivers*. Madison: Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. Retrieved from [home_community.pdf](#).
- Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. 2005c. *Tax implications of higher human services funding*. Unpublished report.
- Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. 2004a. *Alzheimer’s family and caregiver support program*. Madison: Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. Retrieved from [http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/aging/ ...](http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/aging/)
- Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. 2004b. *Way cool graph*. Unpublished figure.
- Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. n.d.a. *Direct care worker initiatives in Wisconsin*. Madison: Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. Retrieved from <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/aging/Genage/initiatives.pdf>.
- Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. n.d.b. *Medicaid overview briefing: expenditure and enrollment*. Presentation slides. Madison: Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. Retrieved from <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/enrollment.ppt>.
- Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. n.d.c. *Most excellent results*. Unpublished key findings.

General notes

Spell-checking IS NOT editing.

Don't use a correctly spelled word when it is the wrong word.

If you, the author, cannot remember what an abbreviation means, don't use the abbreviation. If the abbreviation only appears once in the report, spell it out.

Editing steps

- Print out your paper and edit it with a red pen.
- As each change is made on the computer, cross off the corresponding red-ink mark with a highlighter.
- Then print the paper again and compare the hard copies. As you check that each change has been made, mark it off with a different color highlighter. For any changes you missed, or new changes to make, mark the newer printout in red and then start over.
- If a report includes appendices, go through the body of the paper and compare each reference to an appendix to its letter and title in the back of the report. Be sure that each appendix is lettered correctly and in the right order. The body of the report should refer to Appendix A first, Appendix B second, etc.
- Go through the body of the paper and ensure that each work that is cited is in the references list. Suggestion: Highlight each citation in the body of the paper and check it off in the references list. Do this until every citation in paper is highlighted.
- Make sure the table of contents titles are consistent with the titles of each section and appendix.
- Use the editing checklist to your advantage:
http://www.lafollette.wisc.edu/publications/checklist_for_editing.pdf

Use typography to your advantage

Align type left (don't justify).

Use 12-point type for body copy. Don't make your reader squint -- that might give her/him a headache.

Use a serif type like Times New Roman. Serif type is easier to read.

For reports that are bound, use at least a 1.5-inch margin on left and right sides, 1-inch margin on top and bottom.

For emphasis, avoid underlining type. Use bold instead.

Avoid lots of italic type because it is hard to read.

Always have at least one sentence between every heading. If at a loss for words, see if a heading can be eliminated, or write a few sentences that foreshadow what the upcoming section or subsection is going to do. Draw on the subheads for guidance.

bold underline italic is redundant.

Don't USE ALL CAPS, they are hard to read.

Just bold is emphasis enough.

Bold is best for subheads.

Put white space before subheads:

text text text text text text text. text text blha blah blah text texttext text text
text. text text text text. text text text

Subhead

text text text text text text text. text text blha blah blah text texttext text text
text. text text text text. text text text text. text blah blah blah blah blah blah
blah.

Be specific, complete, clear, consistent, and accurate

Be timely

Give specific dates instead of saying, for example, “recently” or “last year.” This provides context for people, including historians, reading your work months and years after it was written. Instead of “The head of intelligence wrote recently that ...” write “The head of intelligence wrote in July 2003 that ...”

Words like “currently” and “presently” nearly always can be eliminated. Note that “currently” means “now” and “presently” means “soon.”

Use complete names

Always give person’s first and last name on first reference and say who person is in context of the report (governor, president of the board, etc.). Be consistent in how people are referred to on second reference. Just the last (or family) name is usually fine.

When referring to a state agency, use the name it had when it took the action being written about. When citing an agency document, use the name the agency had at the time of publication. If the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services took an action in 2004, use that name, not the Department of Children and Families or Department of Health Services. If you have to, include a footnote that explains the agencies were reorganized in whatever year it was.

Make sure all proper nouns are spelled consistently.

Avoid second person (“you”)

First person singular (“me” and “I”) and plural (“we”) are preferable to awkward sentences, but only use it when writing in the active voice of the first person and when the identity of “we” is clear. For example, when a multiple-author paper describes its methodology, writing “We used an analysis that ...” is the best choice. When writing about an interview, using “I” or “we” is also appropriate, depending on the number of authors and interviewers.

Define terms

Especially if the report is making recommendations to improve a system that is inefficient and uses different terms throughout the system’s processes, define the terms the report is using and then be consistent in their use.

Weed out abbreviations

Fun fact: An acronym is a word formed from the first letter or letters of a series of word (“snafu”). An abbreviation is not an acronym.

Avoid abbreviations. Especially to people outside your agency, the rampant use of abbreviations creates the appearance of a coded language that inadvertently excludes readers or makes them feel ignorant. Only use abbreviations common to everyday language or that are familiar to your reader.

Spell out on first reference. If used a second time in close juxtaposition, follow the first reference with the abbreviation in parentheses. If only used once, do not include the abbreviation in parentheses because that is redundant. If the second reference is in the next sentence, consider using a lowercase noun instead of an abbreviation: “the bureau” instead of “the FBI,” for example. If the second reference is a page or more after the first reference, don’t use the abbreviation, just spell it out.

Use “the” before an abbreviation if someone would do so when speaking. For example, most people say “the FBI,” but not “the UW-Madison.” Make reading and comprehension easy.

Do not include an abbreviations list unless the report follows the above criteria AND uses more than 10 uncommon abbreviations more than five times each.

Be consistent on details

Make sure capitalization, use of commas, etc., are consistent. Pick a style and stay with it.

Do the math

If a table totals figures, make sure they add up.

Don’t embarrass yourself

Search for the word pubic and eliminate it (probably).

Be concise

Do not use adverbs unless necessary.

Adverbs are words ending in “ly” that describe verbs.
Do not hyphenate an adverb with the word following it.

Almost never use “currently” or “presently,” since immediacy is evident in the verb tense. The two words are not interchangeable: “presently” means “soon”; “currently” means “now.”

Almost never use “previously” or “in the past” because the verb tense conveys that something occurred in the past.

Often, “future” and “past,” when used as adjectives, can be deleted.

“... *predicted future actions* ...” is redundant: “predict actions”

“... *repeat past mistakes* ...” is redundant: “past mistakes”

Avoid starting sentences with the word “there.”

This practice will lead to use of strong nouns and verbs:

There are seven dogs barking.

Seven dogs bark.

There would be more agreement.

More would agree.

There are several objections.

Several objections exist.

Tip

Use the Editing: Find command in the Home ribbon to look for the word “There.”
When cursor pauses, recast the sentence or phrase so it starts with a concrete noun.

Tighten language and use stronger verbs by deleting phrases such as:

* is responsible for

The board is responsible for approving the budget.

The board approves the budget.

* is intended to

The increase in cost is intended to reduce the number of commuters.

The increase in cost would reduce the number of commuters.

* the goal of

The goal of the program is to increase homeownership.

The program will increase homeownership.

* is designed to

The program is designed to increase homeownership.

The program increases homeownership.

Avoid passive voice

Start a sentence or phrase with the noun taking the action:

The use of planes by terrorists was unexpected by the CIA.

The CIA did not expect terrorists to use planes.

Tuition was raised by the regents.

The regents raised tuition.

Notice how nicely putting the actor first holds the actor accountable: Terrorists, CIA and regents.

Tip

Use the Editing: Find command in the Home ribbon to look for the word “was.” When cursor pauses, see if the actor is first (or identified -- sometimes passive voice leaves out the actor). Then look for the word “were.” Then look for the word “by.”

Don’t use “unique.” Instead state why the program (or whatever) is unique.

Using unique is TELLING the reader. Instead, SHOW the reader why the program is unique.

The program is unique. vs.

The program is the only one in the state that has mentors continue working with the teens after they graduate from high school and start jobs or college.

Almost never use “in order.”

“and also” is redundant

Strengthen verbs by avoiding “is” and “are”:

Change “is providing” to “provides.”

Change “are offering” to “offer.”

Get technical

Periods and commas and more. Oh my.

One space after a period ending a sentence.

Periods go inside quote marks and before footnote numbers.

Put periods in U.S. as an adjective. Spell out United States as noun.
Same for United Nations.

The U.S. plan ...

The plan for the United States ...

Use a serial (or “Harvard”) comma between elements in a series of three or more.

...the taxi, the bus, and the airplane ... *...the book, the CD, or the cassette...*

Use a comma before “and” or “or” if what follows could stand on own as a complete sentence.

The taxi turned right, and the bus and the car turned left.

We could go to the store first, or we could stop at the park.

Commas and periods go inside quotes marks and before footnote numbers.

The period goes after the closing citation parenthesis at the end of a sentence.

... the latter program produces the best outcome (Faster, 2003).

Semicolons go outside quotation marks.

Source: Authors’ calculations

workers’ compensation (per Associated Press) lowercase, apostrophe after the s

Numerals, figures, and numbers

Use figures for 10 and more; spell out nine and less.

Use figures for all measurements, even if less than 10: 5%, 8 degrees, 6 years old.

Write numbers greater than 999,999 like this: 1 million; 1.6 billion

Use Arabic (1, 2, 3) numerals for footnotes, not Roman (i, ii, iv).

For page numbers, use lower-case Roman (iii, iv) for the front matter (From the List of Tables through the Executive Summary) and Arabic (1, 2, 3) numerals for the body of the report (Introduction through the Works Cited).

Round up and avoid using more than one or two numerals after the decimal point

Currency

lowercase the names of currency: dollar, rand, won, renminbi, euro

\$1.5 million or, if necessary, \$1.5 million U.S. or \$U.S. 1.5 million

Use the \$, but write out cents: \$4; 40 cents

800R = 800 rand 50 euro
to be consistent, one could write 5 dollars.

Percent, %, and percentage

Spell out % as “percent” in text.

% is OK in table headers

Percentage is the noun:

The percentage of the population... vs.

Of the overall population, 8 percent...

Don't forget to round up.

Capitalization: avoid Capital Letters when They are not needed

Lowercase job titles that do not precede a person's name, including those that stand alone.

Do not randomly capitalize Nouns.

Hyphens and dashes

Examples from *Chicago Manual of Style*, courtesy of professor Manion, with a few Easterisms.

Use a hyphen to connect related words

decision-making process, kilowatt-hour, ill-favored

But note the *Chicago Manual* advises: “For some years now, the trend in spelling compound words has been away from the use of hyphens; that is, there seems to be a tendency to spell compounds solid as soon as acceptance warrants their being considered permanent compounds. . . . It should be emphasized that this is a trend, not a rule.” In other words, *policymaker* and *decisionmaking process* are acceptable, but not *illfavored* or *kilowatthour*.

Use a hyphen to link two words that are operating together as an adjective to describe another word. This usage is called a compound modifier.

part-time job but *I work part time*

In Word, the hyphen is the lower-case key beside the plus/equal (+=) key.

Whether to hyphenate

citywide

full-time *as adjective*

long-term *as adjective*

longtime *as adjective*

markup *as noun*

part-time *as adjective*

pickup *as noun*

write-up *as noun*

Dashes

“There are several kinds of dashes, differing from one another according to length,” per the *Chicago Manual of Style*. “There are en dashes, em dashes, and 2- and 3-em dashes. Each kind of dash has its own uses. The most commonly used dash is the em dash.” The em dash is the important one to know. Next is the en dash, which most people don’t know. “Em” and “en” are good words to know for Scrabble.

The length of an em dash is the width of a capital M, while an en dash is the width of an N.

Em dash

Use an em dash for pauses, much in the same way one uses a comma. Note there are no spaces on either side of the dash. In Word, the em dash is available under “insert symbols.”
Will he—can he—obtain the necessary signatures?
He could forgive every insult but the last—the snub by his former office boy.
Ives, Stravinsky, and Bartók—these were the composers she most admired.

En dash

The en dash is one-half the length of an em dash and is longer than a hyphen. Use the en dash to connect capitalized words in proper nouns and to connect numbers, with no spaces around it.
1968–72, May–June 1967, pp. 38–45, University of Wisconsin–Madison

The en dash is available at Insert: Insert symbols

Careful wording

Use correct verb and pronoun for singular subject and watch for pronoun with no antecedent, for example, use of “it” without a specific noun before it.

“Taliban,” “committee,” “board,” “the Legislature” and “Congress” are singular, so each takes a singular verb and be referred to as “it,” not “they” and “their”:
The Taliban controls Afghanistan. It plans to “It” refers to “Taliban.”

Watch parallelism -- in a list, use all verbs or all nouns

Not (two verbs and a noun): *The council will consider purchasing cars, an economic development director, and extending library hours.*

Do this (all verbs): *The council will consider purchasing cars, hiring an economic development director, and extending library hours.*

Avoid partial quotes, especially when the fragment requires addition of explanatory text in parentheses. Paraphrased statements can be footnoted or otherwise attributed in the same manner as material that is directly quoted.

Use “would,” not “will,” for possible or proposed action.

“Will” means action is a certainty, while “would” keeps it hypothetical.

Use “among” rather than “between” when more than two entities are involved:

The dispute was between the two state and local agencies. The matter needs to be worked out among representatives of Bolivia, Colombia, and Ecuador.

“which” requires a comma before it, when a sentence uses it to begin a phrase to qualify something or to add information that is not essential to the meaning of the sentence.

The council supported changing the policy, which was adopted in 1966.

This means that the fact that the policy was adopted in 1966 is not essential to the meaning of the sentence, and “which was adopted in 1966” could be deleted without causing confusion or creating an inaccuracy.

If the phrase is essential, then use “that” with no comma:

The council supports the policy that was adopted in 1966.

Impacted is never a verb unless “wedged” is meant. Use affected instead.

These are one word:

Caregiving, caregiver

Policymaker

Workforce (in violation of the Associated Press style book and some dictionaries)