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## Proofreading and Quality Control Guidelines

A proofreader should conduct a full read on each proof unless indicated otherwise. A full read consists of reading the proof word for word against the original manuscript. A full read begins at the top left of the front cover and ends at the bottom right of the back cover. Differences between the original copy and the first proof are marked using standard editorial marks (or track changes if marked electronically). A document must be proofed each time any text has to be reflowed into a design or more than just simple edits have been made. The proofreader checks the document for punctuation, design consistency and legal compliance. The standard reference guide for proofreading is *The Associated Press Stylebook*.

### Proofreading Guidelines

- Review designer layout against original copy.
- Check for any words that have dropped off or changed during the edits.
- Conduct general read-through for grammar, spelling and style.
- Make sure legal line is included, if needed, and trademark/copyright information is complete and accurate.
- Ensure consistency in font type, size and color across all heads and subheads.
- Ensure consistency of punctuation across all heads and subheads.
- Ensure consistency of leading in body copy.
- Check that styles are consistent across text.
- Check pagination.
- Check spacing – heads and subheads should be close to the text that it refers to.
- Make sure fonts and styles comply with publication standards.

### Quality Control Guidelines

Note - definitions and use of most punctuation can be found in the Punctuation section of the Editorial Guide.

- No two-letter hyphenations at the beginning of a line (at least three letters must carry over); they are permissible at the end of a line.
- No hyphens between pages.

- No hyphens between columns.
- No hyphens in a ragged right line measuring over 20 picas.
- No more than three hyphens in a row at the beginning or end of a line.
- Use en dashes to separate numbers and hyphens to separate compound words.
- No widows, if possible; no hyphenated widows ever. (Widows are allowed in justified copy if necessary). A widow is a word or portion of a word that is left alone on a line at the end of a paragraph.
- No double-spaces after periods.
- No double hyphens; use em dash.
- At least two lines of text must overrun to next column/page; a single line cannot stand alone at the top or bottom of a column or page.
- Keep numerical sequences, such as phone numbers, on one line if possible.
- On numeral lists, align at decimal.

## Fairness Guidelines / Diversity Terminology

### Fairness Guidelines

All material should comply with the following six guidelines:

1. Treat all people with respect.
2. Minimize the effects of construct-irrelevant knowledge or skills.
3. Avoid material that is unnecessarily controversial, inflammatory, offensive or upsetting.
4. Use appropriate terminology to refer to people.
5. Avoid stereotypes.
6. Represent diversity in depictions of people (photos).

### Diversity Terminology

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:** The country where you were born or which holds the most identity with a person.

**CULTURAL IDENTITY:** The context of one's life experience as shaped by membership in groups which can be based on ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, abilities, age, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographic region.

**CULTURE:** The sum of a group's socially transmitted behavior patterns, thoughts and experiences, and its perceptions, values, and assumptions about living that influence behavior and how those emerge with interactions and communications with other cultures.

**DIVERSITY:** Understanding and valuing the range and variety of characteristics and beliefs of individuals (including those who provide services to exceptional children, youth and adults) who demonstrate a wide range of characteristics. This includes ethnic and racial backgrounds, language, age, abilities, family status, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religious and spiritual values, geographic location, and country of origin.

**ETHNIC OR MULTICULTURAL GROUP:** Any group which, because of racial or ethnic origin, constitutes a distinctive and recognizable entity in our society. Examples of such groups include Blacks or African Americans; American Indians, Alaskan Natives, or First Nations; Hispanics, such as Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Central and South Americans; Asians; and Pacific Islanders.

**ETHNICITY:** Takes into consideration people's national origin, religion, or language. When applied to a group, it refers to a community within a larger society that is set apart by others or who identifies itself primarily on the basis of cultural characteristics such as national origin, religion, beliefs, language or tradition, that can be influenced by racial identity.

**GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION:** A physical place where a person is regarded as established.

**MULTICULTURAL:** An understanding pertaining to, and respect for the range and variety of social, political, economic, academic, and historical constructs of ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, age, abilities, language, religion, sexual orientation, geographic location, or country of origin.

**RACE:** A social construction, traditionally based on biological/physical features, which may also include an individual's cultural identity.

## Punctuation

As a general rule, use the minimum amount of punctuation necessary for clarity and accuracy. The following are punctuation guidelines; the standard reference guide is *The Associated Press Stylebook*.

### Colon

- Use a colon after an independent clause to introduce a list of particulars  
*Your basic emergency kit includes: bandages, antiseptic, gauze and tape.*
- Join two independent clauses with a colon if the second interprets or amplifies the first  
*The squalor of the streets reminded him of a line from Oscar Wilde: "We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars."*
- A colon is often used in the salutation of a letter, *Dear John Q. Sample:*, however, if the communication is less formal, a comma will suffice, i.e., *Dear John,*

### Comma

- In a series of three or more terms with a single conjunction, use a comma after each term except the term before the conjunction.  
*Red, white and blue.*
- Enclose parenthetical phrases between commas  
*He opened the letter, read it, and noted its contents.*
- The abbreviations etc., i.e., and e.g., as well as abbreviations for academic degrees, and titles that follow a name are parenthetical and should be punctuated accordingly:  
*Letters, packages, etc., should go here.*

*Horace Fulsome, Ph.D., presided.*  
*Rachel Simmonds, Attorney*  
*The Reverend William Forbes, S.J.*

- No comma, however, separates a noun from a restrictive term of identification:  
*Billy the Kid*  
*The novelist Toni Morrison*  
*William the Conqueror*  
*James Wright Jr.*
- Place a comma before a conjunction introducing an independent clause:  
*The early records of the city have disappeared, and the story of its first years can no longer be reconstructed.*
- Do not join independent clauses by a comma. If two or more clauses are grammatically complete, and are not joined by a conjunction, the appropriate punctuation is a semicolon.  
*Stevenson's stories are entertaining; they are full of exciting adventures.*
- If a conjunction is inserted, the proper mark is a comma  
*Stevenson's stories are entertaining, for they are full of exciting adventures.*

### **Dash**

To separate words or clauses in text, use em dashes and insert one space on either side of the dash. *We will take a vacation this year - if I get a raise.*

### **Ellipsis**

Treat an ellipsis as a three-letter word. Separate an ellipsis from other words by a space on each side. Use an ellipsis to indicate the deletion of one or more words in condensing quotes, texts and documents.

### **Em dash**

Used to signify a change or interruption in the train of thought expressed in a sentence or to set off an explanatory comment. The length of the letter M. *No one – not even the teacher – knew the correct answer.*

### **En dash**

Used to indicate a range of dates or numbers or to separate the elements of a compound adjective, one part of which is hyphenated or consists of two words. The length of the letter N. *The explanation can be found on pages 1-5.*

### **Exclamation point**

When writing corporate communications, avoid using exclamation points unless they are used to convey the emphasis of a direct quote. For advertising and marketing materials, exclamation points may be used as needed.

### **Hyphen**

- Use a hyphen to join two or more words to form a compound adjective preceding a noun to ensure clarity. *The chairperson will speak to small-business women.*
- Some instantly recognizable compound adjectives can stand on their own as long as the absence of a hyphen won't create confusion. Some terms that might otherwise take a hyphen don't if they are proper nouns.

- Hyphenate when modifiers occur after a form of the verb to be. Use a hyphen when its absence would change meaning. Use hyphens for phone numbers appearing on the web. 1-XXX-XXX-XXXX

### Parentheses

Avoid parentheses, which distract the reader by raising another line of thought in a single sentence. Consider commas, dashes or breaking the sentence in two.

### Quotation marks

Generally, save quotation marks for quote use. Don't use quotation marks to mock or express disbelief or skepticism. Periods and commas go inside the quotation mark. *—I do not agree,* *she said,* *—with anything the newspaper reported.* Dashes, question marks, and exclamation points go inside the quotation mark if they are part of the quoted material. Use quotation marks when referring to letters or words. In headlines, use single quotation marks.

### Semi-colon

Use a semi-colon to indicate a greater separation of thought and information than a comma can convey but less than the separation a period implies. It can also replace a conjunction such as and or but. *The package was due last week; it arrived today.*

Avoid using semi-colons on the web, as they are difficult to read. Use a period instead.

### Serial comma

- Use commas to separate elements in a series, but do not put a comma before the conjunction in a simple series: *The flag is red, white and blue.*
- Put a comma before the concluding conjunction in a series, however, if an integral element of the series requires a conjunction: *I had fruit punch, salad, and a turkey and cheese sandwich for lunch.*
- Use a comma also before the concluding conjunction in a complex series of phrases: *The factors affecting her decision when to leave are whether the bus will be on time, whether there will a seat available, and whether the train stops in the city.*

### Spaces

Use only one space between end punctuation and the next clause or sentence.

### Thin space

Thinnest space normally used to separate words, equal to 1/5 of an en space or 1/4 of an em space.

### Vertical lists with bullets

Do not use *and* between items in a list.

Use a colon after such terms as *the following* and *such as*.

If any bulleted items are complete, stand-alone sentences, or if they include complete sentences:

- Make sure items are consistent and parallel with the full sentences in the list.
- Every item in a list that includes a full sentence should begin with a capital letter and end with a period.
- If a partial sentence begins an item, it's best to rephrase the item so that it, too, is a complete sentence.

If bulleted items are partial sentences completing the thought of the introductory sentence:

- Make sure the bulleted sentence follows the syntax of the introduction

- Lowercase the initial letter
- Omit end punctuation

All bulleted items should be parallel in structure.

## Editorial Guidelines

The following are style guidelines; our standard reference guide is *The Associated Press Stylebook*.

NERA has chosen Associated Press style because it is simple, accessible, appropriate for much of the work we do, and familiar to readers of newspapers and news-oriented websites, which also rely on it. In addition to being a style guide, the AP Stylebook also contains a business-writing guide and a punctuation guide. The AP also publishes a separate Guide to Punctuation, which we use in conjunction with the Stylebook. Our standard dictionary reference is *Webster's Collegiate® Dictionary*, 11th Edition. For those occasions in which neither AP nor Webster's provide an answer, we look to two other widely used guides, *The Chicago Manual of Style* and *The Elements of Style*, the former in part for its comprehensiveness and the latter for its simplicity and clarity.

Finally, all editorial work should adhere to the *Fairness Guidelines found earlier in this guide*.

### A

**Academic degrees:** Avoid identifying people by academic degrees unless it's relevant to the text. When spelling it out, it's bachelor's degree, master's degree and doctorate. Abbreviate as B.A., M.A. and Ph.D.

**Academic departments:** Lowercase common nouns and adjectives: department of economics, math department. Uppercase proper nouns and adjectives: department of French, German department. Uppercase common nouns or adjectives when part of the title of the department University of Massachusetts Department of Linguistics.

**Acronyms:** In general, avoid acronyms except the most recognizable ones, particularly on first reference. Avoid using more than one acronym in a sentence. Avoid using balky acronyms. The Center for Education in Assessment (CEA) maintains a list of ETS acronyms on its website.

When using an unfamiliar acronym, use the full name on first reference and put the acronym in parentheses immediately following. The Education Commission of the States (ECS) issued its long-awaited report today.

Do not cite the acronym if the entity to which it refers isn't repeated elsewhere in the document after the first reference. Whether to use acronyms on first reference is often a judgment call, given that our audiences may already be familiar with the terms behind the letters. But the more general the audience, the greater the need to avoid confusing the reader with unfamiliar acronyms.

Some ETS product names are acronyms with registered trademarks, but when spelled out the name is only trademarked. In this case, the name that is a registered trademark goes first: TSE® (*Test of Spoken English*<sup>TM</sup>) test scores are accepted by more than 6,000 institutions worldwide.

**Act:** Uppercase when used as part of the name of pending or enacted legislation. Patriot Act, No Child Left Behind Act.

**Acting:** Lowercase when used in a title. John Smith is the acting CEO of Amalgamated Consolidated Testing & Assessment Service, a lesser rival to ETS.

**Active voice:** Use the active voice for direct, clear writing. For example: The board approved the policy. **Passive voice:** The policy was approved by the board. (Avoid this.) In reports, proposals or policy matters, however, it may be unavoidable or expedient to use the passive form. The passive voice may also be better when the subject of the sentence isn't very important. The eclipse can be viewed in the early morning. What's most important is the eclipse, not who can view it.

**Addresses:** Use numerals for street addresses. Abbreviate as Ave., St. and Blvd. when used with a street number; spell out otherwise. Spell out Drive, Road, Way, Court, etc. He lives at 122 Oak Ave. She lives on Oak Avenue. They live at 6 Oak Court. Lowercase the roadway when citing more than one. The company has offices on Birch and Elm roads. Make a right at the intersection of Mulberry and Broad streets.

Spell out and capitalize First through Ninth when used as street names. Use ordinals for 10th and above. The hotel is on Sixth Avenue. The tunnel entrance is on 10th Avenue. Abbreviate and capitalize compass points when used as part of a street address: 10 W. 12th St. But do not abbreviate any elements if no street number is used. East 12th Street. West Fourth Street.

**Ages:** Use numerals unless the age begins the sentence. Hyphenate modifiers and implied modifiers. A 6-year-old boy. Ten-year-olds go fishing. She was 6 at the time.

**a.m./p.m.:** When citing time of day, do not use :00 for minutes. The event will be held at 2 p.m. The speech will run from 2-3:30 p.m.

**And/or:** Avoid this construction. Choose one or the other. And others: Should appear as et al.,

**Annual:** Use only after an event has been held for two consecutive years. There is no such thing as a first annual event.

**AP Check-in:** However, initial cap the "I" in a headline (AP Check-In).

**A while, awhile:** Use a while after a preposition. We'll run for a while, then rest awhile.

## **B**

**Back up, backup:** One word as noun or adjective, two words as verb. A backup system. You need to back up your files.

**Board:** Capitalize when part of the formal name of a body and when using the full name of the body. The GRE Board met in June. Second reference: The board's decision will have a lasting impact on the program.

**Book titles:** Italicize book titles, i.e., *The Old Man and the Sea*

**Buildings, facilities, landmarks:** Always spell out building. Capitalize words like building and park when part of a proper name. The Empire State Building. Z Building. Lowercase on second reference. The building will be closed for repairs. Central Park is in Manhattan. People use the park for recreation.

**Bullets:** Use bullets to break up a long series of items, especially on websites. Generally, bulleted lists should be no less than three items and no more than five.

## C

**Clichés:** Avoid them like the plague. If you weaken and end up using a cliché, don't compound the error by putting it in quotation marks. It's already a cliché, so there's no need to —point out the irony.

**Co- Hyphenate:** When using a hyphen to form words indicating occupation or status. They were co-authors. If a formal title, lowercase co- but capitalize the noun. Smith was co-Director.

**Company names:** Abbreviate or spell out company, corporation, limited and incorporated according to the company's official name. Federal Deposit Insurance Corp., Aluminum Company of America. The Limited. Set off Inc. or Ltd. with a comma only when consistent with the company's official name.

**Comprise, compose:** Comprise means to embrace or surround individual elements. Something is composed of various parts. The United States comprises 50 states. The United States is composed of 50 states.

**Conjunctions:** Starting sentences with And or But is acceptable.

**Contractions:** Acceptable to convey a conversational tone, though be careful about context and overuse. Often preferable in web copy to avoid sounding stilted and overly formal.

## D

**Database:** One word.

**Data words:** Generally, no hyphens since they're so common. Data entry activities, data control systems, data management needs.

**Dates:** Use a comma between the day of the week and the date (Monday, Feb. 11); between the date and the year (Feb. 11, 2002); and between the year and the rest of the sentence (March 11, 2002, was a cold day.). Abbreviate certain months when used with a date. President Kennedy was shot on Friday, Nov. 22, 1963, while traveling in Dallas. He was shot in November 1963.

**Decision maker, decision making:** Two words unless used as a modifier. We want to reach decision makers. We want to be part of the decision-making process.

**District of Columbia** Use Washington, D.C., on first reference. Use D.C., with periods, on subsequent references. Separate D.C. with a comma on each side.

**Double-click:** Hyphenate.

**Download** - One word.

## E

**Each other, one another:** Use each other when referring to groups of two. Use one another when referring to more than two.

**e-business, e-commerce:** Lowercase unless starting a sentence. Use initial capitals in headlines.

**e-mail:** Lowercase unless starting a sentence or in a headline. Use a hyphen.

**Etc.:** Avoid as imprecise and unnecessary. Spell out in a direct quote: et cetera.

**ETS's:** not ETS'

**Ex:** Hyphenate to indicate former. Don't capitalize ex, even before a full name and title, unless starting a new sentence or in a headline.

## F

**Federal:** Lowercase unless part of an official name or title. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. The federal government. The federal No Child Left Behind Act.

**Fiscal year:** Spell out and uppercase when using the full year on first reference. FY is OK for headlines and in tables. Lowercase in generic references. Fiscal Year 2002. FY '02. The fiscal year isn't over yet.

**Fonts:** Use bold for subheads and other section headings to break up blocks of text. Italicize titles of published works, including books, manuals, brochures and bulletins. Put quotation marks around titles of articles, book chapters, fact sheets, posters and fliers.

**Former:** Lowercase, even when used before a name. Among those who spoke was former President Bill Clinton.

**For-profit:** Hyphenate.

**Fractions:** Spell out and hyphenate numbers less than one in stories and headlines. Two-thirds. One-half. Use figures in tables.

**Fundraising/Fundraiser:** One word, no hyphen.

## G

**Grade, grader:** Use numerals to indicate grades. The law affects students in grades 3-8. But spell out first through ninth, and use ordinals above. Hyphenate and spell out single- word noun and modifier: first-grader, third-grade student. The boy is in second grade, which means he's a second-grader. His sister is in 10th grade.

## H

**Headings:** Italicize titles of published books, manuals, brochures and bulletins. Put quotation marks around titles of articles, book chapters, fact sheets, posters, and fliers.

**He/she:** Avoid this construction, which is awkward. Recast the sentence instead.

**Home page:** Two words.

## I

**Idioms:** Avoid idioms when writing for readers who may be unfamiliar with them, especially readers in other countries.

**Impact:** Never use as a verb unless in a direct quote. Wrong: The program will impact ETS's plans. Right: The program will affect ETS's plans. The program will have an impact on ETS's plans.

**Internet:** Capitalize, there is only one Internet.

**Intranet:** Lowercase, there are many intranets.

**Italics:** Italicize titles of published books, manuals, brochures and bulletins.

## J

**Junior, senior:** Abbreviate when used after a full name. Do not set off with a comma. John Smith Jr.

## L

**Legislative titles:** On first reference, use Rep., Reps., Sen. and Sens. before one or more full names unless in a quotation. Spell out if accompanied only by the last name and in a quote. Sen. Ted Kennedy discussed education funding. Sens. Ted Kennedy and Frank Lautenberg are from New Jersey. Senators Kennedy and Lautenberg. "Senator Smith demonstrated his support for education reform," President Schmertz said.

The legislative title is not necessary on subsequent references. However, if you do use the title on later references, spell it out and capitalize if followed by the person's name. It was Senator Smith's first public comment on the matter. It was Smith's first public comment on the matter. It was the senator's first public comment on the matter.

Add U.S. or the legislator's state before the title to avoid confusion or if relevant to the context. U.S. Senator John Smith spoke with Maryland Sen. Jane Jones.

**Like, such as:** Use like to compare nouns and pronouns. This green apple tastes like a lemon. Use such as to give an example. Countries such as the United States have constitutions.

**Log in vs. Login:** "Log in" is used to denote the action of logging in to a system. "Login" is used to denote a user's login name or ID. Enter your login ID. Log in to the system. Long-term Hyphenate.

## M

**Mid:** Hyphenate when followed by a formal noun or figure: mid-September, mid-Atlantic, mid-30s. No hyphens otherwise - Midterms.

**Million, billion:** Use numerals except for casual uses. We process 2.4 million forms a year. I'd like to make a billion dollars.

**Months:** Abbreviate the following months when used along with a date, with or without the year, and in tables and charts: Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec. Spell out all others. Richard Nixon resigned on Aug. 9, 1974. March 15 is the Ides of March.

**Multi-:** Write as one word, i.e., multifaceted, multicultural, multinational. Multiple-choice: Hyphenate when used as a modifier. A multiple-choice test.

## N

**Nationalities and races:** Follow the ETS Fairness Review Guidelines. Generally, avoid such identifiers unless critical to the context of the material. The same holds for identifiers indicating ethnicity, cultural heritage, gender, sexual orientation, or physical disability.

Capitalize the proper names of nationalities, peoples, races, etc.: Arab, Arabic, African American, Caucasian, Cherokee, Chinese (both singular and plural), Eskimo, (plural Eskimos), French Canadian, Japanese (singular and plural), Jewish, Latin, etc.

**NERA:** The correct acronym for the organization. Use only in familiar communications or in formation communications if the full name has been used previously. No periods between letters (Incorrect: N.E.R.A.)

**NERA's, not NERAs'.** The correct possessive for "NERA" is NERA's (with the 's).

**Nonprofit:** One word. NERA is a nonprofit organization.

**Northeastern Educational Research Association:** The official name of the organization. Preface with "the" when used in a sentence.

**Numerals:** Spell out one through nine except when referring to grades. Use figures for 10 and above. Spell out numbers that begin a sentence unless the number is a year. Four hundred people signed up. 2003 was a good year. Hyphenate to join numbers ending in a y to the next

word. Ninety-five. Four hundred and sixty-three. Spell out casual references to numbers. I told you a thousand times.

## O

**On:** Do not use on before a date or day of the week unless its absence would create confusion. The meeting will be held July 17.

**Online:** One word.

**On-site:** Hyphenate.

## P

**Party affiliation:** Identify partisan affiliations only if necessary to the story. Massachusetts Sen. Ted Kennedy visited ETS. The Democrat said he hoped to work with Republicans on the bill. If party affiliation is relevant to the context, use either the general form, Republican Sen. John Smith; the short form, Sen. Mary Jones, D-N.J., with the affiliation set off from the name by commas; or work the party affiliation into the sentence. John Smith, the Republican senator from New Jersey, said the vote was close.

**Percent:** One word, spell out in text; use the % symbol in headlines, charts and tables. Exception for PowerPoint presentations: use % symbol exclusively.

**Plurals:** Don't use an apostrophe to form plurals for numbers and years. The 1960s were years of upheaval. The temperature has been in the 90s all week. They're learning their ABCs. But do use them here: They sent thank you's to everyone who sent a gift. All we have left is to dot our i's and cross our t's.

**Policymaker:** One word.

**Policy-making:** Hyphenate.

**President:** When referring to the president of a country or of a company, cite the name of the company as part of the person's title on first reference: ACME President Joseph Blow. Drop the title on subsequent references. The name without the title is acceptable in headlines if the person is instantly recognizable. Landgraf Briefs Business Leaders. Bush Outlines Education Plan.

**Publications:** Italicize titles of published books, manuals, brochures and bulletins. Put quotation marks around titles of articles, chapters, fact sheets, posters and fliers.

## Q

**Quality control:** Generally, no hyphen. Quality control measures. Quality control monitors.

## R

**Rhetorical questions:** When posing a rhetorical question within a sentence, set the question off with a comma and use initial caps for the question. Do not use quotation marks. The question we have to ask is, Are we willing to accept those costs? Use quotation marks if a direct quote. He asked the question we were all thinking: –When will this meeting end?||

## S

**Said, says:** Use the present tense when quoting or attributing thoughts or remarks that are being announced for the first time, as in a press release or news story. “There is no better reflection of the commitment we bring to education reform,” says Landgraf. Use said when reporting remarks previously made, as at a press conference or in testimony. “There is no better reflection of the commitment we bring to education reform,” Landgraf said in his testimony.

**Seasons:** Lowercase the names of seasons unless part of a proper noun, as in Winter Olympics. Uppercase in headlines.

**Self words:** Self words, even when standing alone, usually take hyphens. Self- assessment, self-centered.

**Short-term:** Hyphenate.

**Since, because:** Since can be used as both a time reference and to mean because. Be careful not to use since in a way that creates confusion. Since the moon is full, I haven’t been the same. It’s unclear whether I haven’t been the same since the time the moon became full or because the moon is full.

**State names:** Spell out state names when they stand alone. Abbreviate when used with a town or city. Always spell out Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas and Utah. States are abbreviated differently depending on whether the abbreviation is for postal or non-postal use.

**State abbreviations** are as follows, with the postal abbreviation in parentheses: Note: Use postal codes when citing references

**State of:** Lowercase, state of New York State is generally not necessary when referring to a state agency or government entity. Wrong: The contract was with the Ohio State Department of Education. Right: The contract was with the Ohio Department of Education.

**Subheads:** Use bold subheads to break up blocks of text and as transitions, particularly in web writing. Only the initial letter of the first word should be uppercase unless the other words are proper nouns. Use single quotation marks in subheads.

**Superscript:** Do not put text in superscript unless required by the formal name of an entity. Superscript tends to disrupt line formatting, particularly on websites, and is distracting.

## I

**Test taker:** Two words when used as a noun, but hyphenated as a modifier. Time of day: When citing a time of day, do not cite :00 minutes. The event will be held at 2 p.m.

**Titles:** Capitalize current titles before and after names. Kurt Landgraf, the ETS President and CEO. Do not capitalize a job function that is not an official job title. Project manager John Smith.

**Tone:** The tone of a piece will depend on the context – the medium, the message and the audience. As a general rule, NERA’s print and online communications should aim for business casual: reader friendly but serious.

## U

**Underline:** Do not underline. Underline URL only in web copy.

**URL:** An acronym for Uniform Resource Locator, this is the address of a resource on the Internet. The URL is the only text that is underlined on web documents.

**U.S.:** In general, use the abbreviation as adjective, but not as noun.

## V

**Very:** Avoid. It’s very overused.

**Vice president:** Two words, no hyphen.

## W

**web, web page, website, webinar**

**-wide:** As a suffix, usually no hyphen. Companywide. Citywide.

**Work words:** One word, as in: workflow, workforce, workload, workplace, workstation, workweek.

**www:** In web copy, do not italicize URLs since they will appear in blue underline. In hard copy, bold the URL, and if it completes a sentence, end with unbolded punctuation.

## Y

**Years:** Use numerals without apostrophes when referring to the years in a decade or century. The 1700s. The 1980s. But The ’90s have come and gone. It’s acceptable to begin a sentence with the numerals for the year, although it is preferable to recast the sentence.

## Z

**ZIP code:** Use initial capitalization for ZIP (it's an acronym for "Zoning Improvement Plan."); lowercase code.

### Referenced sources adopted

ETS Style Guide  
CEC Style Guide  
The Associated Press Stylebook  
Webster's Collegiate® Dictionary  
The Chicago Manual of Style  
The Elements of Style