

## FPU Publications Writing Style Sheet

Fresno Pacific University uses the following guidelines to enhance the effectiveness of written materials produced by or in cooperation with the publications staff. Effective publications communicate, and clarity of language and consistency of style are critical to communication, allowing readers to concentrate on content and increase understanding.

Most guidelines are based on the *Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual*. The university selected this manual due to its almost unanimous acceptance by the news media to which we send releases and other materials. For questions not addressed by the AP manual we turn to *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17<sup>th</sup> edition, another major authority. For Internet and related subjects we use the *The Web Content Style Guide*.

Our office dictionaries are *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary* and *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*. Standard usage and grammar texts are *The Elements of Style* and *The Gregg Reference Manual*.

This style sheet is a working document meant to help those wishing to write, edit or proofread text for university publications. Please contact Wayne Steffen, associate director of publications and media relations, with any suggestions or questions.

The following pages contain many of the common usage questions regarding university publications.

## Capitalization

When to capitalize is the question most often brought up in editing university publications. Capital letters are meant to call attention to certain words, inferring importance. On the other hand, capital letters impede the flow of text and are harder for the eye to read. A page full of capital letters actually defeats the purpose of conferring importance to words (and what they refer to) because busy readers are not likely to expend the energy necessary to sort out what is “really” important. To aid readability, and following the increasing tendency toward informality in written English, university publications use capital letters sparingly.

### Titles

Capitalize formal titles before a name, but not after.

*FPU President André Stephens*

*André Stephens, president of FPU*

### Proper names vs. generic terms

Capitalize the names of offices and departments as geographic entities since that’s what makes them unique entities. Do not capitalize when using as a generic or common name.

*The Undergraduate Admission Office*

*admission or college admission*

Centers, like offices, are considered locations.

*Center for Community Transformation*

Departments and programs are not.

*the music department (but the Music Office), the library media teacher program and*

As an exception to the general rule, schools and divisions are capitalized.

*School of Arts and Sciences*

*Pupil Personnel Division*

## **Academic subjects**

Languages are the only academic subjects capitalized when not used as a part of a proper name.

*English, Spanish*

*business, biblical and religious studies*

## **Generic terms**

Do not capitalize words such as “university,” “college,” “campus,” “office,” “department,” “division,” “center” and “program” when used alone to refer to a specific place.

*Fresno Pacific University*

*the university*

*McDonald Hall Atrium*

*the atrium*

EXCEPTION: We capitalize “the Valley” or “the Central Valley” when referring to this section of the San Joaquin Valley since that is the common regional usage.

## **Doctor**

“Dr.” before a name is reserved for physicians and dentists. In other uses note the kind of degree after the name.

*Harold Haak, Ph.D., is president of Fresno Pacific University.*

## **Degrees**

Capitalize degrees when using the complete name or the formal abbreviation, not as a generic term.

Bachelor of Arts

M.A.

bachelor's degree

## **Commas**

Do not use serial commas (commas in a series before "and" and "or") unless necessary for understanding.

*The flag is red, white and blue.*

*He specializes in the history and development of Anabaptism, evangelism and believer's baptism, and peace and justice issues.*

## **Internet references**

"email" not "e-mail"

e-newsletter (Alumni Enews)

homepage

internet, intranet or net

world wide web

web

web address

web browser

webmaster

webpage or page

website or site

## **Quotation marks**

Periods and commas always go within quotation marks. Dashes, semicolons, question marks and exclamation points go within quotation marks when they apply to the quoted matter, and outside when they apply to the whole sentence.

## **Miscellaneous**

Use the percent sign (%), rather than the word “percent.”

Use one space, not two, after a period to introduce a new sentence.

Use hyphens to separate all parts of telephone numbers.

*559-453-3677*

Sentences may end with a preposition.

Infinitives may be split by a single word *only*.

Advisor is spelled “or.” We make this exception to the style book and dictionaries due to common academic practice.

## **Proofreading suggestions**

1. Always proof read (don't depend on spell check or grammar check).
2. Proof more than once.
3. Read backwards to catch mechanical errors, such as spelling. This is especially helpful when checking your own writing, the hardest writing for you to edit since you know what it's supposed to mean.
4. Set work, especially your own, aside before proofing.
5. Have someone else look at your work. Two sets of eyes are better than one, and yes, three sets are better than two.

Compiled May 2001 (last updated February 2025) by Wayne Steffen, associate director of publications and media relations.