UW College of Engineering style guide



The College of Engineering primarily follows 1) [UW style](https://www.washington.edu/brand/editorial-elements/style-and-punctuation/) and 2) [AP style](https://www.apstylebook.com/) (subscription required). Common issues and exceptions are listed below.

**abbreviations and acronyms**

* Spell out for first citation and follow with the abbreviation or acronym in parentheses: *The Center for Engineering Learning & Teaching (CELT) adopted new procedures. CELT focuses its research on …*
* Avoid overuse of acronyms; include only if necessary to clarify multiple references in copy or if the organization/program/etc. is more commonly known by an acronym.
* Common abbreviations and acronyms used in the College of Engineering:
	+ BARC – Boeing Advanced Research Center
	+ BPC – Business Plan Competition
	+ CSNE - Center for Sensorimotor Neural Engineering
	+ Departmental abbreviations:
		- AA – Aeronautics & Astronautics
		- BioE - BioEngineering
		- ChemE – Chemical Engineering
		- CEE – Civil & Environmental Engineering
		- CSE – Computer Science & Engineering
		- EE – Electrical Engineering
		- HCDE – Human Centered Design & Engineering

* + - ISE – Industrial & Systems Engineering
		- ME – Mechanical Engineering
		- MSE – Materials Science Engineering
	+ DO-IT - Disabilities Opportunities Internetworking Technology
	+ EAB – executive advisory board
	+ EIC – Environmental Innovation Challenge
	+ EIM – Engineering in Medicine (course)
	+ EHI – Engineering and Health Initiative
	+ HIC – Health Innovation Challenge
	+ MSEP - Minority Scholars Engineering Program
	+ PEERs - Promoting Equity in Engineering Relationships
	+ STARS – Washington STate Academic RedShirt program
	+ VIP – vertically integrated projects
	+ WiSE – Women in Science and Engineering

**active voice vs. passive voice**

* Use active voice whenever possible: *Mr. Husky gave the gift to the College of Engineering* (active) instead of *The gift was given to the College of Engineering by Mr. Husky* (passive).

**adviser**

* Not advisor. (Note exception: UW Medicine uses patient advisors.)

**alumna, alumnae, alumni, alumnus**

* Use alumnus (alumni in the plural) when referring to a man who has attended a school, alumna (alumnae in the plural) for a woman.
* Use alumni when referring to a group of men and women.
* If degree information is essential to the story, use description in the text rather than listing degree information: *Before completing her bioengineering degree in 2012, Jane Husky…*
	+ If space is too limited for description, such as in a photo caption, include the graduation year after the name with commas on either side: *Joe Husky, ’79 MS, accepted the award.*
	+ See “Degrees” below for more details.

**a.m., p.m.**

* Lowercase with periods.
* Include a space between the numeral and *a.m.* or *p.m.*: *10 a.m.*

**ampersands**

* Use only if part of a formal name. Otherwise spell out *and*: *Aeronautics & Astronautics, UW Professional & Continuing Education, computing and software systems*.

**campus references and UW brands**

* Spell out the University of Washington on first reference.
	+ When used as a noun, always include the article (the): *This year, the University of Washington will host the conference. Researchers at the UW are working to cure diseases.*
	+ When used as an adjective, omit the article (the): *University of Washington students traveled to Olympia to meet with legislators. Renowned for international collaboration, UW researchers are leading the way.*
	+ Acceptable second references are the UW, the University and Washington.
	+ Capitalize University when referring specifically to the UW: *The University will host HuskyFest this weekend. At the meeting, University leaders discussed …*
* Use the University of Washington when referring to the Seattle campus or all three campuses as a whole. Never use UW Seattle or main campus.
* Spell out College of Engineering on first reference. The College is an acceptable second reference (capitalize C in College). “*It is a social justice issue that economically and educationally disadvantaged students be given every opportunity to pursue high-value UW degrees, such as those offered by the College of Engineering,” said Eve Riskin, the College’s associate dean for diversity and access.*
	+ Do not use COE or CoE in external communications.

**capitalization**

* In general, avoid unnecessary capitalization.
* Academic course titles are capitalized (do not enclose in quotation marks): *Rocket Propulsion, Entrepreneurial Design*
* Academic/professional titles - Lowercase formal titles when used alone or when set off from a name by commas: *Mike Bragg, dean of the College of Engineering, will open the meeting.*
	+ Capitalize formal titles when they precede a name: *Dean Bragg*
	+ Avoid degree abbreviations if possible. If degree information is essential to the story, try to embed more descriptive, humanizing language in the text: *UW orthotist Jane Husky addressed the group* instead of *Jane Husky, M.D., addressed the group.*
	+ See also: “Degrees” below.
* Boards, committees: Lowercase terms such as executive board (*Joe Husky serves on the executive board at ABC Corp.*) unless it’s part of a proper name (*Joe Husky serves on the* *UW College of Engineering Executive Board*).
* Centers, programs - Capitalize center or program only if it is part of the formal name: *Center for Sensorimotor Neural Engineering; students in the professional master’s programs will…*
* Certificate, certificate program - Capitalize the formal name of a certificate program: *Certificate in Project Management.*
	+ Do not capitalize program unless part of the formal name.
	+ Unless using the full certificate name, do not capitalize the area of study nor the word certificate in narrative text: *The Certificate in Editing program begins this fall. The editing certificate program includes a number of guest speakers.*
* Departments: Capitalize the formal name of an academic department (*the University of Washington Department of Mechanical Engineering*); lowercase the informal name except for words that are proper nouns or adjectives (*the mechanical engineering department*).
* Headlines: Capitalize only the first word and any proper nouns (also referred to as sentence case).
* Locations: Capitalize places, buildings and monuments such as Suzzallo Library, Mary Gates Hall, the Ave, the Quad, University Bridge, etc.
* Majors/minors - Lowercase except for proper nouns or adjectives: *The award recipient majored in mechanical engineering and minored in mathematics.*
* Quarters: Lowercase academic season and quarters: *fall quarter, winter quarter 2016*.
* State: Lowercase *state* when referencing the *state of Washington* or *Washington state.*

**commas (serial comma)**

* Do not use the serial comma in a simple series of nouns or phrases: *red, white and blue* (no comma before and).
* Use the serial comma before the terminal conjunction in a complex series or in other cases where the serial comma will provide clarity and improve readability: *UW Medicine provides primary and specialty care to patients throughout the Pacific Northwest, trains medical professionals and scientists, and conducts biomedical and health services research.* (Use comma before *and conducts*.)

**composition titles**

* Capitalize principal words in composition titles, including prepositions and conjunctions of four or more letters.
* Do not italicize or put quotation marks around newspaper names. Capitalize *the* in a publication’s name if that is the way the publication prefers to be known: *The Trend in Engineering*
* Put quotation marks around titles of books, songs, computer games, movies, operas, plays, poems, long musical compositions, television programs, specific episodes of television programs, lectures, speeches and works of art.

**contractions**

* Contractions are okay to use to maintain a conversational tone when it’s appropriate for the audience and platform.

**dashes**

* Use an en dash (named because it is the width of the letter “n”) between ranges of numbers or dates and between adjectival phrases containing two-word concepts: *2011–2014*, *pages 226–229*, *Seattle–San Francisco flight*.
	+ Do not use spaces before or after the en dash.
	+ In text, use the words *from* and *to* instead of a dash: *He attended every Diamond Awards ceremony from 2010 to 2016*.
* An em dash (named because it is the width of the letter “m”) can be used for many different reasons, including: to set off a nonessential element that requires special emphasis, to set off a series with commas within a phrase or to indicate an abrupt change. *Shyam Gollakota, an assistant professor in the wireless lab at the UW, is developing battery-free devices — some just half the size of a credit card — that can reflect and absorb surrounding radio signals.*
	+ Use a space on either side of the em dash.

**dates**

* Use cardinal, not ordinal, numbers: *April 1*, not *April 1st*; *July 4*, not *July 4th*.
* Use a comma before and after the year if placing a full date (month + day + year) within a sentence: *The board met on September 25, 2015, to review the report*.
	+ While AP style uses abbreviations for months (Sept.), it is also acceptable to spell out the entire month in text when space permits.
* Do not use a comma if only listing the month and year: *The board will meet in December 2015.*

**degrees**

* Use an apostrophe in bachelor’s degree, a master’s, etc. This less formal usage is preferred over Bachelor of Science in X, Master of Science in X, etc.
* Use periods when abbreviating: B.A., B.S., M.A., M.S., M.D., Ph.D. (Note: no periods on MBA.) Use abbreviations only when it is necessary to identify many individuals by degree on first reference and the preferred descriptive method is too cumbersome.
* Use abbreviations only after a full name and set the abbreviation off by commas: *Jane Husky, Ph.D., spoke at the conference.*
* Do not combine a courtesy title with an academic degree.
	+ Incorrect: *Dr. Jane Husky, Ph.D.*
	+ Correct: *Jane Husky, Ph.D. or Dr. Jane Husky.*

**gender-specific language**

* Avoid language that indicates gender unless it is truly necessary; never assume gender.
* Avoid the use of he as a generic singular pronoun.
	+ Avoid: *Every student must pay his tuition in full by October 1.*
	+ Alternatives: *Students must pay their tuition in full by October 1.*

*Every student must pay this quarter’s tuition by October 1.*

*October 1 is the deadline for full payment of tuition.*

*Tuition must be paid in full by October 1.*

* Use *chair* to refer to the head of a committee unless the official title is chairman or chairwoman: *Was a new chair elected at the meeting?*
* Use *spokesperson* instead of *spokesman/spokeswoman*, unless gender is known.

**headlines, headings and subheads**

* Capitalize the first word and any proper nouns (also referred to as sentence case).
* If there is a colon, capitalize the first word after the colon.

**numerals**

* Spell out *one* through *nine*.
* Use figures for *10* and above and whenever preceding a unit of measure or referring to ages: *the 9-year-old building*; *the 5-year-old boy*. Also use figures for academic course numbers: *History 6*, *Philosophy 101*.
* Spell out numbers that begin a sentence (or recast the sentence so it doesn’t begin with a number): *Forty people attended the lecture*.

**percent**

* In text, use figures and write percent rather than using the % sign: *45 percent of students agree with the initiative.*
	+ In charts, graphs and more visual mediums (such as ads), social media or communications where space is limited, the percent sign is permissible: *33% of Huskies are first-generation college students*.
* *Percent* takes a singular verb when standing alone or when a singular word follows an *of* construction: *The professor said 70 percent was a passing grade*. It takes a plural verb when a plural word follows an *of* construction: *He said 50 percent of the attendees were female*.

**photo captions**

* Use present tense: *Jane Husky poses with Dubs during Discovery Days festivities.*

**professor**

* Do not abbreviate.
* Lowercase before a name. One exception is Professor Emeritus – capitalize it as a conferred title before a name: *A dinner was held in honor of* *Professor Emeritus John Husky*.
* Do not continue in second reference unless part of a quotation. Use first OR last name only, depending what is appropriate for tone. See “secondary references,” below.

**rankings**

* Use No. as the abbreviation for number to indicate position or rank: *The UW is ranked No. 1 in XYZ.*
* For rankings where the UW does not rank first, the preferred usage is: *According to XYZ, the UW ranks third in …*

**secondary references (people)**

* In narrative text, use a person’s full name on first reference.
* In subsequent references, it is acceptable to refer to the person using just the first name. Note that this is a more casual convention than the journalistic standard of using just the last name for secondary references. Determine which is most appropriate for the audience and platform and remain consistent throughout the communication.

**serial comma**

* See “[commas](https://www.washington.edu/brand/editorial-elements/style-and-punctuation/#commas)” above.

**trademarks**

* The symbols ® and ™, often used in ads and product packaging, should be noted on the first reference but are not necessary on subsequent references.

Common Terms

One word

* Startup
* Multimedia
* Campuswide
* Yearlong
* Nonprofit
* Underrepresented
* Webpage
* Voicemail

Two words (no hyphen)

* Health care
* 3-D print
* Student athlete

Hyphenated

* University-wide, College-wide (adjective)
* Work-study