Editorial Style Guide

Heartland Community College

August 2024

HEARTLAND
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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Frequently Used at Heartland

College Specific Information

Academic departments (see also: Capitalization)
Heartland Community College has categorized its academic areas into four divisions. Treat them like proper nouns and capitalize.

- Health Sciences
- Liberal Arts & Social Sciences
- STEM & Business
  - STEM = Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math
- Student Support Services

Do not capitalize academic subjects, except for those that are already proper nouns, *i.e. English.*

Addresses
The mailing addresses for Heartland's locations are:

- Main Campus: 1500 W. Raab Rd, Normal, IL 61761
- HCC Lincoln: 2201 Woodlawn Rd, Lincoln, IL 62656
- HCC Pontiac: 211 E Madison St, Pontiac, IL 61764

Alumni/alumnae/alumnus

- Alumni is the plural form used for a group of males or a mixed gender group.
- Alumnus refers to one male graduate.
- Alumna refers to one female graduate.
- Alumnae refers to a group of female graduates.
- Alum is always correct but also more informal.

Board of Trustees (see also: Titles)

- On first reference use full name and capitalize, *i.e. Board of Trustees.*
- On subsequent references, use simply Board and capitalize.
- When referencing a trustee, lower case unless referring to a specific trustee.
  - *Ex: Steve is serving as a trustee this year.*
  - *Ex: She asked Trustee John Doe if the budget was approved.*

Buildings

On first reference spell out the full name with abbreviation in parentheses. After first mention, you can use abbreviation.

Ex: You will speak to an advisor in the Community Commons Building (CCB). You can also find the financial aid office in CCB.

- Advanced Manufacturing Center (AMC)
  - State Farm Electric Vehicle Lab (EVL)
- Agriculture Complex (AGC)
- Astroth Community Education Center (ACEC)
  - Challenger Learning Center (CLC)
- Child Development Lab (CDL)
- Community Commons Building (CCB)
- Fitness and Recreation Center (FRC)
- Heartland Community College Lincoln (HCCL)
- Heartland Community College Pontiac (HCCP)
- Instructional Commons Building (ICB)
- Instructional Commons North (ICN)
- Instructional space at Mid Central Community Action Center
- National Guard Readiness Center (NRC)
- Physical Plant Building (PPB)
- Receiving and Storage Building (RSB)
- Student Commons Building (SCB)
- Workforce Development Center (WDC)

Campus locations (see also: Buildings)

As part of transitioning to "one college" language, do not use centers or units when referring to one of the College's locations. (see also: Addresses)

- Heartland Community College
- Heartland Community College Lincoln
- Heartland Community College Pontiac

College titles (see also: Job titles)

College voice/tone
As a general rule the College uses first person, or the "you voice" in its written communication. Tone is formal but friendly. An exception to the tone is social media, on which the tone can be more informal.

Commencement vs Graduation (see also: Commonly Misused Words)

- *Graduation* is the completion of all degree requirements as recorded on the official transcript.
- *Commencement* is the ceremony that celebrates the completion of a degree.

Committees
On first reference spell out the full name with abbreviation in parentheses. After first mention, you can use abbreviation. For example:

- Heartland Activities Committee (HAC)
- Student Government Association (SGA)
- International Education Committee (IEC)

Course titles
When referencing a course in writing, spell out the entire name of the course. Do not refer to it by course code as that means nothing to an external audience.

Credit hours
Do not abbreviate the words credit hour. Use numerals with credit hours, *i.e. That class is 3 credit hours.*

Dean's List (see also: Commonly Misused Words)

- The dean's list should be written in lowercase unless it is part of a title.
- Dean's should always be possessive.

Email signatures (see also: Online)
It is recommended that all HCC employees have an email signature. Signature should include, at minimum:

- Name
- Title
- Phone number
- Email address
- Heartland URL
- Employees may also include social media icons with links to HCC's social media pages.

Emeritus/emerita/emeriti
Emeritus is used to mean a certain rank or title from which someone has retired, and is allowed to keep that rank or title as a token of respect or honor.

- Emeritus is the male form of the word.
- Emerita is the female form of the word.
- Emeriti is the plural form of the word.

Fiscal year
Fiscal year references the budget year for the College. Fiscal years begin July 1 and end June 30.

- On first reference spell out, *i.e. fiscal year.*
- When spelling out fiscal year, it is not capitalized.
- On subsequent references it can be abbreviated in the form of capital F, capital Y and the last 2 digits of the year, *i.e. FY20.*

Parking lots
Heartland Community College identifies parking lots on its Normal campus by letter. Please refer to the campus map for information on where each parking lot is located.

Referring to the College in general
On first reference spell out the full name. After first mention, you can use an abbreviation or shortened name, *i.e. HCC or Heartland.*

When referring to HCC as the College, it is capitalized. Do not capitalize college when not specifically referring to Heartland Community College.

- Heartland Community College is the youngest community college in the state. The College was founded in 1990.
- Heartland Community College celebrates commencement once a year, in May. Approximately 250 HCC students walk in the ceremony.
- Juniors across the nation are busy deciding which college to attend.

Academic Information

Commencement

Use lower case unless it is part of a formal name.

- *Ex: It's time to start planning for commencement.*
- *Ex: Heartland Community College's 28th Annual Commencement will take place in May 2020.*

Degrees

When referring to academic degrees, the preferred form is to avoid an abbreviation and instead use a phrase, *i.e. Hunter Hawk has an associate degree.*

- Associate degree is not possessive.
- Use an apostrophe in bachelor's degree, master's degree, etc. but specific degrees are not possessive, *i.e. Bachelor of Arts or Master of Science.*
- When referring to generic degrees, there is no capitalization.
  - *Ex: She is almost done with her associate degree.*
- When referring to a specific degree, there is capitalization.
  - *Ex: She has an Associate of Engineering Science from Heartland Community College.*
- Use the following for Heartland's associate degrees:
  - Associate in Arts
  - Associate in Science
  - Associate in Applied Science
  - Associate in Engineering Science
- A.A., A.S., A.A.S. and A.E.S. may be used on second reference.

Departments
Use lower case except for words that are proper nouns or a part of a formal name.

- *Ex: The history department offices are located in the Instructional Commons Building.*
- *Ex: The Heartland Community College Department of History is a well-regarded program.*
- *Ex: The English department offers more classes than the economics department.*

Grades
Always capitalize grades. Do not put the letter grade in quotes. Use an apostrophe for clarity when referring to single letter grades.

- *Ex: She got 3 A's and 1 B.*

Semesters (see also: Capitalization)
When referring to a generic semester, use lower case. When referring to a specific semester with year, use capitalization.

- *Ex: She teaches that class during the fall semester.*
- *Ex: Heartland will be offering several new classes for the Fall 2020 semester.*

Grammar and Best Practices

Titles

Academic departments
Always capitalize the full, formal names of academic and administrative departments and offices. If a lack of capitalization on subsequent references to academic departments creates confusion, default to capitalization.

- *Ex: He represented the Department of Communications at the event.*
- *Ex: The economics department represented a majority of the attendees.*

Lowercase informal location names or incomplete designations.

- *Ex: She made stops at the library and café before heading to class.*
- *Ex: The student worker pointed the visitor down the hall to the advising offices.*

Board of Trustees (see also: College Specific Information)
Always capitalize Board of Trustees the first time it is written. For all subsequent references, uppercase the word "Board."

- *Ex: Heartland's Board of Trustees meets monthly to discuss pressing matters at the College.*

Capitalize "Trustee" only when it is used as a job title and immediately precedes the title holder's name.

- *Ex: The tie was broken by Trustee Mary Campbell.*

Conferences, events, speaking engagements
Always capitalize the key words of conference and event titles, along with other speaking engagements that have been denoted a proper name.

- *Ex: The third annual Drones in the Heartland conference is taking place in October.*

For titles of individual lectures, lectures in a series, breakout sessions, or speeches, capitalize the key words and put the title in quotation marks.

- *Ex: Drone pilot, Jonathan Ford, is presenting his talk, "Measuring Drone Data."*

Forms
Always capitalize the key words of a form if the name is written in its entirety.

- *Ex: The sophomore student was required to fill out the Program Change Form.*

Lowercase form names when they are shortened or mentioned in a general sense.

- *Ex: The high school student found the school's admission application online.*

Grants/ grant proposals

Always capitalize the key words of grant titles or grant proposal titles and put the title in quotation marks.

- *Ex: Heartland was pleased to receive GROWMARK's "Grow Fund Me" grant.*

Job and College titles: Administration, faculty, staff

Always capitalize a person's title when it immediately precedes their name.

- *Ex: Once per month, Heartland staff members are invited to participate in open office hours with President Keith Cornille.*

Lowercase a person's title when it is mentioned after their name or when it stands alone without a name.

- *Ex: At the conclusion of the Harvest 5K, the local media interviewed Keith Cornille, president of Heartland Community College.*
- *Ex: She served as an academic advisor for nine months.*

Lowercase the words "professor" and "instructor" unless mentioned directly before a name.

- *Ex: The biology department's newest professor moved from Ohio.*

Lowercase words that identify jobs as roles, but not as an official job title.

- *Ex: If you're in need of academic assistance, head to the SCB to speak with a librarian or tutor.*

When a degree is listed, separate the person's name and degree with a comma.

- *Ex: Sarah Diehl-Hunt, PhD, was in attendance at the meeting.*

Key words in a title

In a title, key words are defined as any word that is not one of the following:

- Articles: a, an, the
- Conjunctions: and, but, or, for, nor
- Prepositions: regardless of length

Media and composition

Always capitalize and italicize the titles of the following:

- Blog pages
- Books
- Journals
- Long poems
- Magazines
- Movies
- Musicals
- Newspapers
- Plays
- Podcasts
- Publications
- Radio programs
- Television programs and series
- Websites
- Works of art

Always capitalize and put in quotation marks the titles of the following:

- Academic papers (see: Writing and documentation)
- Album titles
- Blog entries
- Book chapters
- Grants and grant proposals (see: Grants/grant proposals)
- Magazine articles
- Newspaper articles
- Podcast episodes
- Radio episodes
- Short poems
- Short stories
- Songs
- Television episodes

Newspapers
Always capitalize every word of a newspaper title and italicize the title. If the word "the" precedes the newspaper name and is considered part of the official name, capitalize it.

- *Ex: Journalism students at Heartland submit monthly stories to The Spectator.*

Always capitalize the key words of the title of a newspaper article and put the title in quotation marks.

- *Ex: Heartland student Erik House shared the latest update in his February article, "Students Lead Charge to Bring Varsity Esports to Heartland."*
-

Writing and documentation
Always capitalize the key words of academic papers and put the titles in quotation marks.

- *Ex: The academic advisor was proud to submit her thesis, "A Qualitative Approach to Understanding Comforting Communication in Close Relationships."*

Capitalization

Academic departments and divisions (see also: College Specific Information, Academic departments)
Capitalize the names of academic departments, offices, and programs when the formal name is used. Also capitalize a short form of the name when not accompanied by the word department, office, or program. Use lower case in all other instances.

- *Ex: The Health Sciences division has seen many students during the open enrollment period.*

Committees
Avoid capitalizing a committee that isn't officially recognized and formally named.

- *Ex: search committee, admissions committee*

Capitalize the official, proper names of long-standing committees and groups.
Ex: Executive Committee of Professional/Technical Employees

Degrees (see also: Academic Information, Degrees)
Academic degrees can be abbreviated or spelled out. If abbreviations are used, do not use periods between initials.

- *Ex: John earned a Bachelor of Arts in journalism from Illinois State University.*
- *John earned a BA in journalism from Illinois State University.*

Certificates: In reference to certificates, capitalize the official name of the certificate.

- *Ex: Amy received a Certificate in Industrial Technology.*

Documents/forms
Capitalize the proper names of established documents. Lowercase the reference to a more general form.

- *Ex: Kay submitted a Marketing Request Form on April 12th.*
- *Ex: Students must provide their forms of proof of residency before they can begin classes.*

Seasons/semesters (see also: Academic Information)
When referring to seasons or semesters in general terms, they must be lowercase. For design purposes or titles uppercase can be used. When referring to a specific semester, capitalize the semester.

- *Ex: We can't wait to see you in the fall!*
- *Ex: Make sure your Fall 2020 semester schedule is up to date.*

Grammar and Punctuation

Ages
Use figures for ages. Hyphenate ages when they are used as adjectives before a noun.

- *Ex: Third-graders can take that Kids@Heartland class. There are additional options if your child is in second grade.*
- *Ex: Your child needs to be at least 10 years old to go to that CLC mission. The mission for the 9-year-old kids is next week.*

And / &
Spell out the word "and" unless "&" is part of an official name.

- *Ex: Barnes & Noble*

Because social media requires fewer characters, "&" is appropriate for use within social media captions.

Apostrophes (see also: Appendix, Commonly Misused Words)
Apostrophes are used to make a word possessive or to take the place of a missing letter. They are NOT to be used to make a word plural.

- A commonly-seen mistake is making a plural word possessive.
  - *Correct: Heartland's campus is made up of many buildings. That building's door is always blowing open when it is windy.*
  - *Incorrect: All the building's on campus look very similar.*
- Many people have trouble with ***it's*** versus ***its*** as the rule of correct usage contradicts the standard possessive rule. ***It's*** is a shortened form of the words ***it is*** and is not possessive. ***Its*** is the possessive form of the word and does not use an apostrophe.
  - *Ex: Heartland lost many of its trees to an insect infestation. It's such a shame that the quad looks very bare now.*

Colon vs semicolon
A semicolon is often used instead of a full stop to join two independent clauses. The clauses separated by a semicolon should have a close connection. A colon is often used before explanations, reasons, or lists.

- *Ex: Some students prefer face to face classes; others prefer an online version.*

Ex: The types of classes offered this semester include: face to face, online, and hybrid.

Commas
The following guidelines treat some of the most frequent questions about the use of commas.

- College style is to use the Oxford comma. Use commas to separate elements in a series, including before the conjunction in a simple series.
- Do not use the oxford comma before an ampersand (&).
  - *Ex. They checked books, movies & music out of the library.*
- Commas are used to separate an introductory clause or phrase from the main clause.
  - *Ex: When he had tired of working in low-paying jobs with odd hours, he decided to go back to school.*
- Use commas with nonessential clauses.
  - *Ex. The student trustee, who is graduating this semester, will speak at the event.*
- Place commas inside quotation marks
  - *Ex: "Commencement will take place in May," said the president.*
- Use commas to introduce direct quotes.
  - *Ex: The president said, "Our focus is always on the students."*

- It is best practice to break sentences up into smaller segments to avoid using too many commas.
- For detailed guidance on the use of commas, consult the punctuation section of the Webster's New World College Dictionary.

Contractions
Contractions reflect informal writing and should be used sparingly. The apostrophe is placed where the omitted letter(s) would have been.

- *Ex: aren't for are not.*

Contractions are acceptable and preferred for use on social media.

Dates
Numbers in dates should be cardinal instead of ordinal.

- *Correct: Submit applications by March 1.*
- *Incorrect: Fall semester ends on December 13th.*

Hyphens

- Hyphenate compound modifiers when they precede a noun, but not when they follow a noun.
  - *Ex: He is a full-time student but in the summer he'd like to work part time at the local pool*
  - *Ex: She met with her professor face to face in her face-to-face class.*
- Use a hyphen when not using it might cause confusion.
- Only capitalize the first word in a hyphenated word.
- All compound numbers between twenty-one and ninety-nine are hyphenated when spelled out.
- Use hyphens for ages expressed as adjectives or as substitutes for a noun.
  - *Ex: My 10-year-old niece is staying with me this weekend.*
  - *Ex: Students at HCC can learn 3-D printing techniques.*

Media and composition (see also: Titles)
Always capitalize and italicize the titles of the following:

- Blog pages
- Books
- Journals
- Long poems
- Magazines
- Movies

- Musicals
- Newspapers
- Plays
- Podcasts
- Publications
- Radio programs
- Television programs and series
- Works of art

Months
When referring to months in prose/complete sentences, spell out the month. Abbreviations are acceptable in forms, charts, tables, and other uses where space is at a premium. In the latter case, preferred format is all caps and no period, i.e. FEB, OCT

Because social media requires fewer characters, abbreviations may be used within social media captions. In this case, capitalize the first letter of the abbreviation and use a period, i.e. Jan., Feb., Aug.

Money
Make it simple – use only as many digits as is necessary.
Ex: $5 not $5.00

Numbers
Spell out numbers from zero to nine.
- Spell out numbers that begin a sentence.
- Use numerals with percentages.
- Use numerals for credit hours.

Percentages
- Use figures for percentages.
  - *Ex: Heartland's enrollment increased 4% this spring.*
- For amounts less than 1% precede the decimal with a zero.
  - *Ex: Only 0.6% of our students requested tutoring for those classes.*

- Percentages take a singular verb when standing alone or when a singular word follows an "of construction."
  - *Ex: The teacher said 60% was a failing grade. He said 75% of the membership was in attendance.*
- Percentages take a plural verb when a plural word follows an "of construction."
  - *Ex: He said 75% of the members were in attendance.*

Phone numbers
Heartland Community College's default style is to use dashes between groups of numerals and to use parentheses for the area code. In some instances the design of a piece may dictate a different format, as to be determined by the HCC design staff.

- *Ex: Call (309) 268-8000 for information on becoming a student.*

Run-on Sentences (see also: Commas)
Avoid using run-on sentences. Keep prepositional phrases to a minimum.

Spacing after periods
Use a single space after a period.

Time
- Use lowercase and periods for the abbreviations. (a.m. and p.m.).
- Use midnight and noon instead of 12 a.m. and p.m. respectively.

Widows and orphans
These typesetting issues can add "rivers of white space" to a document that interferes with eye movement and should be avoided when possible.

- A widow is a single word or short phrase appearing alone at the top of a page or column.
- An orphan is a single word appearing at the bottom of a paragraph, column or page.
- It is also good practice to avoid splitting words at the end of a line of text. If this must be done, break the word at the end of a complete syllable.

Years
- It is permissible to start a sentence with a numeral (exception to the rule) when referencing a year.
  - *Ex: 2020 was a stressful year.*
- When using an "s" with years, do not use an apostrophe.
  - *Ex: HCC was founded in the 1990s.*

Lists

Bulleted list

Use a bulleted list when the sequence of items is not important. If possible, it is best practice to begin each bullet with the same part of speech.

Ex: If you're visiting the HCC bookstore, you can expect to find:

- *backpacks and totes*
- *HCC apparel*
- *notebooks*
- *snacks*
- *techware*
- *textbooks*
- *writing supplies*

If the list is comprised of fragments, or incomplete sentences, lowercase the first letter and omit punctuation.

Ex: Each New Student Appointment will include:

- *introduction to college resources*
- *meeting with an academic advisor*
- *creating your course schedule*
- *registering for classes*

Numbered list

Use a numbered list when the sequence of items is required to be done in a certain order or if the statement prior to the list references a number amount. If possible, it is best practice to begin each bullet with the same part of speech.

Ex: In order to apply, a prospective student must do the following:

1. *Visit heartland.edu/apply.*
2. *Complete the online application form.*
3. *Schedule a date to visit campus for testing.*

Ex: Four ways to pay:

1. *Select a payment option.*
2. *Set up a payment plan.*
3. *Pay with financial aid.*
4. *Get additional assistance.*

Capitalization and punctuation
Never follow a bullet with a semicolon or comma. Periods and question marks are acceptable.

If either type of list is comprised of complete sentences, capitalize the first letter and end the sentence with punctuation.
Ex: Basic Summer Financial Aid Process

- *Register for summer and fall classes if this is your first semester at HCC.*
- *Complete and submit the Summer Application with a copy of your summer schedule attached.*
- *Check your myHeartland account.*
- *Complete any requested items on your task tile.*

In a numbered list, always capitalize the first letter, regardless of whether what follows is a complete sentence or a fragment. Lowercase the rest of the words unless they are proper nouns.
Ex: Choose one of four ways to pay:

1. *Credit card*
2. *Debit card*
3. *Check*
4. *Cash*

Online

Email addresses
When using a Heartland email address in a sentence, on printed documentation for the purposes of contact information, or on a webpage, capitalize the first letters of your first and last name, or as the given form of the email upon your hire.

- *Ex: Feel free to contact me at Shannon.Jirik@heartland.edu with any questions.*

When using an email address in a sentence or paragraph, ensure that the full address is written on one line. Insert a line break if necessary.

- *Ex: Feel free to contact me with any questions. You can reach me via email at Shannon.Jirik@heartland.edu.*

Email signatures (see also: College Specific Information)
It is recommended that all HCC employees have an email signature. Signature should include, at minimum:

- Name
- Title
- Phone number
- Email address
- Heartland URL
- Employees may also include social media icons with links to HCC's social media pages.

File types
Always capitalize the file format acronym when it is used in a sentence and acts like a noun or adjective.

- *Ex: The committee used GIF images in their presentation.*
- *Ex: The interviewee's PDF would not download.*

Always capitalize the file format acronym and remove any punctuation. This is especially important for online accessibility and accommodation purposes when a screen reader is used.

- *Ex: The committee used GIF images in their presentation.*
- *Ex: You can find the matrix (PDF) on the employee portal.*

Headings on webpages
Headings are used to outline the content of your page. Nest headings without skipping levels to format the titles of content sections. Heading formats should not be used as styling, for example to make text large or bold. When creating or updating a Heartland webpage, always capitalize key words of headings.

Login vs. log in (see also: Appendix, Commonly Misused Words)
Use "login" as a noun and "log in" as a verb.

- *Ex: She used her employee login to open her computer.*
- *Ex: Please log in using your employee email address.*

URLs
Always capitalize the term URL.

- *Correct: URL*
- *Incorrect: url*

Use the shortest URL possible. Do not include the www. or http:// unless absolutely necessary for understanding.

- *Correct: heartland.edu*
- *Incorrect: www.heartland.edu*

Do not include the trailing slash at the end of the URL.

- *Correct: heartland.edu/continuingEd*
- *Incorrect: heartland.edu/continuingEd/*

Whenever possible, rearrange the sentence syntax to avoid having a URL end a sentence. However, if the URL does end the sentence, you may still use a period or other form of punctuation following it.

- *Correct: Prospective students can visit heartland.edu/apply to start the application process.*
- *Correct: Prospective students can start the application process at heartland.edu/apply.*
- *Incorrect: Prospective students can start the application process at heartland.edu/apply*

When possible, write the full URL on one line. If necessary, insert a line break. If the URL must be split between two lines, split it after a slash.

- *Correct:*
  Interested in learning more about our liberal arts programs? Visit heartland.edu/programs/liberalArts/apply
- *Incorrect:*
  Interested in learning more about our liberal arts programs? Visit heartland.edu/programs/liberalArts/apply

On a webpage or in any digital communication (ex: email), always hyperlink words or phrases. Using descriptive phrases is best practice for accommodation and accessibility.

- *Incorrect: click here, read more*
- *Correct: Please visit our website to register.*

Always lowercase the website URL unless it is case-specific.

- *Correct: heartland.edu/adulted*
- *Incorrect: heartland.edu/AdultEd*

Always lowercase the beginning of the website URL unless it is case-specific.
Use camel case when two words are next to each other in a URL.

- *Ex: heartland.edu/adultEd*

- *Ex: heartland.edu/studentLife*

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Language

Disability language

- Acknowledge the ways in which the world has excluded individuals with disabilities without tokenizing the individual or only publicizing the accomplishment in light of their disability. In general, do not describe individuals as disabled or handicapped. If relevant to material, provide a specific description.
  - *Ex: Muhammed Ali, former Olympic champion, defied the symptoms of Parkinson's to light the torch in a rare public appearance.*
- Person-first language is often used to describe individuals with disabilities to indicate they are not defined by a disability but is not preferred by all people. In general, mirror the language someone uses to describe themselves.
  - *Correct: person with a disability*
  - *Incorrect: disabled person*

Ethnicity/race

Ethnicity and race should be mentioned only when pertinent and the pertinence is clear to the reader. As decided in 2003 by the U.S. Supreme Court, language concerning affirmative actions and the recruitment of traditionally underrepresented populations must be carefully chosen and consistent with the law. The specific language that should be used may require legal counsel and should be decided on a case-by-case basis.

- Words to describe race and ethnicity should be capitalized.
- Only describe a person's race or ethnicity if it is relevant.
- Rather than assume, you should mirror the language someone uses to describe themselves.

Gender neutral

- Avoid using gender-specific terms and titles.
  - *Ex: instead of chairman use chairperson/chair, instead of freshman use first-year student, etc.*
- When writing about a specific person, use the person's preferred personal pronouns. They, them, and their are acceptable singular personal pronouns for those who identify as gender nonbinary or who prefer a gender-neutral pronoun. Provide context that suggests that they, them, and their refer to a specific person.
- When writing about an unknown person or people, avoid guessing and mis-gendering someone.
  - *Correct: The children brought their lunch from home.*
  - *Incorrect: Each child brought his/her lunch from home.*
- Avoid using phrases like "ladies and gentlemen" and others that include binary language.

Inclusive language

- In general, descriptive words about identity should be used as adjectives and not nouns.
- Do not assume the language a person uses to describe themselves (gender/pronouns, race, etc.).
- Understand and be aware of the origin and history of the phrases you use, such as rule of thumb, having a pow wow, etc.

Appendix

Commonly Misused Words

Accept/except

- *Accept* is a verb meaning to receive something willingly.
  - *Ex: The professor made it clear that she won't accept late work.*
- *Except* is most commonly used as a conjunction that means "on any other condition."
  - *Ex: The study group can meet any day except Friday.*

Advice/advise

- *Advice* is a noun and can easily be thought of as something that can be given or received.
  - *Ex: My professor's advice was really helpful.*
- *Advise* is a verb meaning to suggest, recommend or give information about.
  - *Ex: I would advise you to take advantage of HCC's tutoring services.*

Affect/effect

- *Affect* as a verb means to influence.
  - *Ex: The test will affect her semester grade quite a bit.*
- *Affect* as a noun is rarely used, but is a psychology term for emotion.
- *Effect* as a verb means to cause.
  - *Ex: The new president will be able to effect many changes at the college.*
- *Effect* as a noun means result.
  - *Ex: The effect of her speech was that many minds were changed.*

Allusion/illusion

- *Allusion* means an indirect reference.
  - *Ex: The professor's allusion to his former lectures is usually a clue to what will be on the next exam.*
- *Illusion* means an unreal or false impression.
  - *Ex: His perfect life on social media is just an illusion.*

Altogether/all together

- *Altogether* means completely or all things considered.
  - *Ex: His hard work in English class has been impressive but his performance in biology was altogether a different matter.*

- *All together* means everyone or everything together.
  - *Ex: The softball team went all together to visit the kids in the CDL.*

Apart/a part

- *Apart* is usually an adverb that means a separation.
  - *Ex: HCC students on Alternative Student Break didn't spend much time apart for the entire week.*
- *A part* means a fraction of a whole.
  - *Ex: Labs are only a part of the chemistry class experience.*

Commencement vs Graduation (see also: College Specific Information)

- *Graduation* is the completion of all degree requirements as recorded on the official transcript.
- *Commencement* is the ceremony that celebrates the completion of a degree.

Continual/continuous

- *Continual* means a steady repetition, over and over again.
  - *Ex: Textbook prices have been a source of continual examination.*
- *Continuous* means uninterrupted, steady, unbroken.
  - *Ex: Located in the prairie, the view from Heartland's campus is continuous flatland.*

Dean's List (see also: College Specific Information)

- The dean's list should be written in lowercase unless it is part of a title.
- Dean's should always be possessive.

Emigrate/immigrate

- *Emigrate* refers to leaving a country.
  - *Ex: He emigrated from India.*
- *Immigrate* refers to entering a country.
  - *Ex: He immigrated to the United States.*

Ensure/insure/assure

- *Ensure* means to guarantee.
  - *Ex: The professor wanted to ensure his students understood the new concept.*
- *Insure* is used in reference to insurance.
  - *Ex: College students can buy policies to insure their lives.*
- *Assure* is used to mean to make sure or give confidence.

- *Ex: The student assured her professor that she'd turn in the project by the end of the week.*

Entitled/titled

- If a person or thing is *entitled*, they have been given the rights to something. There is something to be claimed.
  - *Ex: The professor was entitled to her tenure.*
- Works are *titled* to denote their given names.
  - *Ex: The professor's latest article was titled, "My Shivering in Summer."*

Face to Face/Face-to-Face (see also: Hyphens)

FAQ not FAQs

Hyphenate compound modifiers when they precede a noun, but not when they follow a noun.

- Ex: She met with her professor face to face in her face-to-face class.

Full time vs full-time (see also: Hyphens)

- Hyphenate when used as a compound modifier.
  - *Ex: He works full time and he is also a full-time student.*

Health care

- Two words unless part of a proper name that treats it as one word.

Historic/historical

- *Historic* refers to an event that is an important occurrence.
- *Historical* refers to an occurrence in the past.

i.e.

- Abbreviation for the Latin *id est* or *that is (to say)*, and is always followed by a comma.
- Use periods between letters.

It's/its

Many people have trouble with ***it's*** versus ***its*** as the rule of correct usage contradicts the standard possessive rule. ***It's*** is a shortened form of the words ***it is*** and is not possessive. ***Its*** is the possessive form of the word and does not use an apostrophe.

- *Ex: Heartland lost many of its trees to an insect infestation.*

- *Ex: It's such a shame that the quad looks very bare now.*

Lay/lie

- The action word is *lay* and it takes a direct object. *Laid* is the form for past tense and its past participle. Its present tense is *laying*.
- *Lie* indicates a state of reclining along a horizontal plane and does not take a direct object. Its past tense is *lay*. Its past participle is *lain*. Its present participle is *lying*.

Literally/figuratively

- *Literally* means in the exact sense. Though often used as slang to add emphasis, its use in this format should be avoided.
- *Figuratively* means in an analogous sense.

Log in/login (see also: Online)

- Use *login* as a noun and *log in* as a verb.
  - *Ex: She used her employee login to open her computer.*
  - *Ex: Please log in using your employee email address.*

Palette/Palate

- *Palette* is a board upon which artists mix paint.
- *Palate* is a person's appreciation of flavor.

More than/over

- Although both uses are acceptable to indicate greater numerical value, the preferred use is "more than."

Toward not towards

Swag not SWAG

Use/utilize

The meanings are interchangeable but the simpler use is the preferred term.

Valentine's Day not Valentines Day

Veterans Day not Veteran's Day

Who/whom

- *Who* is used for the subject. As a general rule, if you can substitute "he" or "she," you should use "who."
  - *Ex: Who ate lunch in the Campus Café today?*
- *Whom* is used for the object of a verb or preposition. As a general rule, if you can substitute "him" or "her," you should use "whom."
  - *Ex: Whom should I talk to about ordering lunch for the team?*

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion: Best Practices for Language Use Fall 2024

For us to truly be an inclusive campus, it is important to consider the language we use. Language is a site of struggle for marginalized populations (hooks, 2015). While we may think of language as a natural or simple function of our everyday lives, the words hold meanings and have histories behind them. Language is a way we can commit to make change and be inclusive of our different student populations. While these guidelines speak to a few issues in language usage, there are no universal rules. This document was written in April 2019 and updated in August 2024. Language evolves and changes ("Guidelines for Inclusive Language | Linguistic Society of America," n.d.); therefore, this document reflects current language practice and should be updated to reflect current practice.

- When in doubt, use words as an **adjective and not a noun** ("Core Vocabulary » The Safe Zone Project," 2019). For example, say "individual who identifies as transgender" or "transgender person" and not "a transgender". This applies beyond the LGBTQ+ community.

- **Person-first language** is used to avoid defining a person by an identity or characteristic (*Communicating With and About People with Disabilities,* n.d.). Person-first language puts the emphasis on the person rather than an attribute.

For example, you would say "person with a disability and not "disabled person"

- Certain individuals may prefer identity first language, which is the opposite of person first language ("Disability Language Style Guide | National Center on Disability and Journalism," 2018). Best practice is mirroring the language an individual uses about themselves; only ask their preference if you are familiar with the person.

- For more specific information regarding language surrounding individuals with disabilities, check ncdj.org/style-guide.

- The term **African American** refers to individuals of African descent, where the term **Black** is an identity category recognizing socio-historical context of race in America (Brown, 2019). You should not assume the language someone uses to describe themselves and should mirror the language someone uses to describe themselves and their identity.

- The term **Latinx** is a gender-neutral term to describe individuals of Latin American decent ("'Latinx' And Gender Inclusivity," n.d.). The word cannot be spoken in the Spanish language, and is therefore not always widely used and accepted (Hernandez, 2017).

- The term **Hispanic** has negative connotations for a lot of communities because of its colonial implications (Gonzalez, 1992). Since Hispanic refers to colonization by Spain and Portugal, many people prefer the term Latin or Latinx.

- Hispanic refers to Spanish speaking nations, where Latino/a/x refers to countries in Latin America ("What's the Difference Between Hispanic and Latino?," n.d.). For example, individuals from Brazil would use the term Latinx and not Hispanic because they are from Latin America but do not speak Spanish while an individual from Spain would use the term Hispanic but not Latinx.

- Refer to individuals who are undocumented as **undocumented** and *not* illegal immigrants (Antonio Vargas, 2012). Individuals themselves cannot be illegal and the term is hurtful and demeaning to undocumented individuals who often already feel unwelcomed.

- The word **queer** was often used as a slur, but the LGBTQ+ community is taking back the word ("Core Vocabulary » The Safe Zone Project," 2019). However, be careful about usage. Some people might still find this word offensive. You should not use queer as a noun or call an individual queer unless they have made it clear that is comfortable for them.

- **Gender and sex** are not the same but are often mistakenly used interchangeably ("Core Vocabulary » The Safe Zone Project," 2019). Sex is assigned at birth and does not always align with gender identity. We use the words "male" and "female" for sex, while we use the words "man" and "woman" for gender.

- Some individuals identifying as gender non-conforming or non-binary use **they/them** as their pronouns. It does not refer to plurality, but rather pronouns that are not a part of the man/woman binary. You should not use the pronoun it; that pronoun is reserved for referring to objects, not individuals ("LGBTQ- Inclusive Language Dos and Don'ts» The Safe Zone Project," 2019).

- For a full list of vocabulary terms relating to the LGBTQ+ community, check www.thesafezoneproject.com for more information.

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