

McCombs School Style Guide: A brief supplement to the official writer's guide of The University of Texas at Austin

Introduction

To facilitate consistency in communications, the staff of the communications and development offices have gathered below some McCombs-specific style guidelines. These are intended as a supplement, not a substitute, for the official style guide of The University of Texas at Austin, which is prepared by the Office of Public Affairs (OPA). External communications from the University are asked to follow the OPA guide. Please consult the guide as an arbiter on style issues:

<http://www.utexas.edu/visualguidelines/styleguide.html>.

A few notes on the guidelines below:

- 1) **These are not optional.** They are to be followed for all news- and information-oriented publications from the McCombs School including Web releases, Web features, printed magazines, printed press releases and admissions brochures.
- 2) **The instructions do not apply universally to all written materials.** For example, these instructions do not apply to academic papers. Some recommendations here contradict the Chicago Manual of Style, a favorite guide for academics. English grammar and style are not written in stone. The AP Style Guide is our reference as mandated by the OPA.
- 3) **What about letters to constituents, proposals, or other non-news communications? Use these instructions as a guide.** If you deviate, then be sure to a) follow another published style guide as your source, such as the Chicago Manual of Style, and b) be consistent. *For consistency's sake, we recommend that you adopt this style guide universally across your office.*
- 4) **What about references to The University of Texas at Austin? Please use this and the OPA guide as a bible and do not deviate.** As we all know, it is worthwhile for all of us to be consistent on these points. If constituents complain, inform them that the University is attempting to follow one, unified style guide for public communications, and refer them to that guide's location online.
- 5) **What about references to the McCombs School?** Ditto.
- 6) **Complaints?** Take them to the Office of Public Affairs and the Associated Press. Remember, it's only grammar.

McCombs-specific style and usage. (See OPA guide for all matters not covered below: <http://www.utexas.edu/visualguidelines/styleguide.html>.)

Acronyms

Spell out entire name followed by acronym in parentheses.

Ex. The president of the University of Texas Investment Management Company (UTIMCO) is Bob Boldt.

Exceptions are CEO, MBA, BBA or other acronyms depending on audience.

Alumni apostrophes

Use apostrophes when giving a year of graduation. Identify past and current students by using the abbreviation for the alum's academic degree with the last two digits of the graduation year. It is important that the apostrophe points in the correct direction: down and to the left.

Ex. Allison Stevens, MBA '05, credited the Plus Program with her interest in international business.

If a person received more than one degree from The University of Texas at Austin, use both years and put a comma between them.

Ex. Bill Jones, BBA '84, MBA '89, was elected president of the New York City chapter of Texas Exes.

Bullets

There are no hard-and-fast rules for bulleted lists, and you will see many different styles of bullet lists. Select a grammatically defensible style and be consistent. We recommend

- Capitalizing the first letter in a bulleted item, even if it's not a complete sentence.
- Using periods after independent clauses, dependent clauses and phrases in a bulleted list.
- Using parallel language.
- Following standard grammar in the use of colons, meaning that you only use colons preceding a bulleted list where periods would also work. (In the following example, notice that there is no colon after "including.")

Ex. Out of 62 entrants, 14 teams made the finals representing a range of ideas, including

- A Band-Aid-sized athletic monitoring device that identifies dangerous heart rates and body temperatures for athletes under exertion.
- A handheld "X-ray vision" device that uses Ultra Wideband technology to allow people to view objects clearly through walls and other solid barriers.
- Active Voice Clarification, a technology that allows performers to hear their voices exactly as listeners do, not as they typically hear it.

- Unipeak, an anonymous browsing service that allows users to surf the Web with complete privacy and identity protection.

Ex. The school earned rankings in all 12 of U.S. News' specialty areas:

- # 2 Accounting
- # 3 Management Information Systems
- # 4 Marketing
- # 5 Finance
- # 6 Entrepreneurship
- # 7 Management
- # 7 Insurance/Risk Management
- # 8 Real Estate
- # 8 International Business
- # 8 Quantitative Analysis/Methods
- #10 Production/Ops Management
- #11 Supply Chain Management/Logistics

Chaired professorships

Capitalize the official names of honorary chaired and university professorships. For those titles that are not honorary or for references after the name of the professor, use lower case.

Ex. Ehud Ronn, who holds the Jack S. Josey Professorship in Energy Studies, coordinated the conference, which explored issues surrounding the future of energy finance.

Ex. Sanford Levinson, the W. St. John Garwood and W. St. John Garwood Jr. Centennial Chair in Law, donated his collection to the School of Law.

Classifications

Don't capitalize freshman, sophomore, junior or senior unless it is part of a formal title.

Ex. The senior finance major received a job offer from Deloitte and Touche.

Ex. The Senior Class gift was a \$5 million endowment.

Hyphenate first-year and second-year in classifications.

Ex. The second-year MBA student chaired the Women in Business Leadership Conference.

Commas

In a list, don't use a comma before "and."

Ex. Students came from all disciplines, including accounting, management and finance.

Note: While this runs contrary to academic inclinations, it is proper AP style and now University style for news and information. In letters or other formal correspondence, it is acceptable to use a comma before “and.”

Dashes

Use an “em dash” to create a strong break in the structure of a sentence. Do not confuse the long em dash (—) with the much shorter hyphen (-). Dashes can be used in pairs like parentheses—that is, to enclose a word, or a phrase, or a clause—or they can be used alone to detach one end of a sentence from the main body. Do not use a space between the text and the em dash. To create an em dash, press Alt + 0151 on the right-side number pad, with the number lock on. Or, you can create the em dash automatically by typing two hyphens in a row and correctly leaving no space between the two words.

Ex. Andrew Whinston, McCombs professor of information management and director of the Center for Research in Electronic Commerce, argues that the two worlds—business and e-business—have many characteristics that are unique from each other.

Dean

Capitalize “Dean” when it comes before a name. Do not capitalize it after the name. Follow the same rules for assistant deans and other titles.

Ex. Dean George Gau unveiled the strategic plan.

Ex. George Gau, dean of the McCombs School of Business, announced that Southwest Airlines Founder Herb Kelleher would be the commencement speaker.

Departments

Don’t capitalize “department” when it stands alone.

Ex. She’s been with the department three years.

Capitalize names of specific departments.

Ex. He’s a lecturer in the Finance Department.
She heads the Department of Accounting.

Note: Both “Department of Accounting” and “Accounting Department” are correct, just try to be consistent within documents.

Letters

Use a colon—not a comma—after the salutation.

Ex. Dear John:

Mailing

In addresses, use TX [two spaces] ZIP

McCombs School terminology

Don't capitalize "the" in "the McCombs School."

It is acceptable to write only "McCombs."

Capitalize "McCombs School."

Use lowercase "school," not "School" when it stands alone.

Capitalize "School of Business" and "Business School," even if they stand alone.

Avoid writing, "Red McCombs School." We brand like Wharton, Kellogg and other named business schools, meaning our preferred usage in all instances is the last name only, "McCombs School," with the exceptions only of official University letterhead, where it is appropriate to write out the complete name.

Offices

Capitalize when it's part of an official title. Otherwise, use lowercase.

Ex. The Office of the Dean issued the detailed report.

Ex. The dean's office sponsored the holiday festivities.

Professor titles

Avoid preceding a professor's name with his title. Instead, use the following construction:

Ex. Vijay Mahajan, professor of marketing at the McCombs School, stepped down from his post at the Indian School of Business.

Avoid: McCombs School Marketing Professor Vijay Mahajan stepped down from his post at the Indian School of Business.

Programs

Capitalize only if it's part of an official title. Note that programs, like the "McCombs MBA," only have one official title. It is not also the "MBA Program," although the "McCombs MBA" is managed in part by staff in the "MBA Program Office."

Ex. Plus Program

MBA program

MBA Program Office

BBA program

Undergraduate Programs Office

Road map

Two separate words.

Seasons

Don't capitalize seasons unless they are part of a formal title.

Ex. The Fall 2004 Advisory Council meeting will take place Sept. 14, 2004.
Ex. The students are eagerly awaiting the start of classes in the fall.

Strategic plan

Lowercase strategic plan. It is a common English phrase.

Titles

Don't use a comma after a person's first name if they have a suffix.

Ex. John Carpenter III, Shelby Carter Jr.

University abbreviations

Avoid using abbreviations for The University of Texas at Austin, but if necessary (for internal audiences), use UT Austin. You have latitude to define "internal" when addressing alumni.

Avoid: UT—Austin or UT-Austin.

University terminology

Capitalize The University of Texas at Austin.

Capitalize the University (never "The") on second reference.

Note: the OPA style guide has some latitude here, saying you can choose to capitalize or not capitalize University (in reference to UT Austin) on second reference, so long as you do it consistently. For the sake of consistency we recommend capitalization.

Web site

Two words, capitalize "W"

Lowercase web link.

What to do if you spot errors on the web or in other McCombs School communications?

You will, in fact, find errors as we backward-implement some of these style guidelines to our own press materials online. If you spot mistakes, politely alert the author or the communications office and we will correct it.