

Writers' Style Guide

Carnegie Mellon University

Expressing and Protecting the Carnegie Mellon University Identity

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I. Style references

The Associated Press (AP) Style is Carnegie Mellon's preferred standard for grammar and punctuation rules. Hard copies of the current AP Stylebook and a digital service is available at www.apstylebook.com. If you are unable to purchase an AP Stylebook, Marketing & Communications has hard copies available. For more information, call 412-268-1613.

The AP Stylebook should be your guide for:

- acronyms and abbreviations
- business guidelines
- capitalization dates and times
- governmental terms
- numbers
- places
- plurals
- possessives
- punctuation (commas, dashes, hyphenation, quotations)
- sports guidelines

Some frequently used technical terms include:

- cybersecurity, email (no hyphen)
- high tech (no hyphen) internet (lowercase i)
- log off (verb) logoff (noun)
- log on (verb)
- logon (noun)
- multimedia (one word, no hyphen)
- offline (one word, no hyphen)
- online (one word, no hyphen)
- startup (one word, no hyphen)

In all references to the web use a lowercase w:

- webcam
- webcast
- webinar
- webmaster
- website

II. University references

The Carnegie Mellon University wordmark is the official logo of the university. It has been created specifically for use as a wordmark and **cannot be typed**. For details on how to obtain and use the wordmark correctly, see the Brand Guidelines website at www.cmu.edu/marcom/brand-standards/.

When writing, the first time you refer to the university — whether in print or on the web — use “Carnegie Mellon University.” In all subsequent references, use either “Carnegie Mellon” or “CMU.” Neither Carnegie Mellon nor CMU should be used on first reference.

Use lowercase when using “the university” as a reference. Example:

- The university has campuses and programs all over the world.

When referring to university programs and campuses outside of Pittsburgh, use the following as a guide:

- Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar (first reference)
 - Carnegie Mellon Qatar (second reference or abbreviation below)
- Carnegie Mellon University in Africa (first reference)
 - Carnegie Mellon Africa (second reference or abbreviation below)
 - Carnegie Mellon University Africa in Rwanda (optional)
- Carnegie Mellon University in Australia (first reference)
- Carnegie Mellon Australia (second reference or abbreviation below)
- Carnegie Mellon University in Silicon Valley (**NOT West Coast**) (first reference)
- Carnegie Mellon Silicon Valley (**NOT West Coast**) (second reference or abbreviation below)

When using the abbreviation in reference to programs and campuses outside of Pittsburgh, use the following as a guide:

- CMU-Q (Qatar)
- CMU-Africa (Africa)
- CMU-A (Australia)
- CMU-SV (Silicon Valley)

For external documents, include Carnegie Mellon University in first reference of any college or school. It is the preferred style to write “Carnegie Mellon University’s College of Engineering” or “Carnegie Mellon University’s School of Computer Science” when introducing one of the university’s seven colleges and schools.

You should also include the college or school name that is connected to an academic program or department. For example, write “College of Fine Arts” or the “School of Drama” on first reference.

For second references, using only the school, college or department name is acceptable.

III. About Carnegie Mellon

Official boilerplate text

About Carnegie Mellon University: Carnegie Mellon www.cmu.edu is a private, internationally ranked research university with programs in areas ranging from science, technology and business, to public policy, the humanities and the arts. More than 13,000 students in the university's seven schools and colleges benefit from a small student-to-faculty ratio and an education characterized by its focus on creating and implementing solutions for real problems, interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation.

Statement of assurance

The Statement of Assurance must be placed in all graduate and undergraduate admission publications and all other publications where such a statement is necessary or appropriate. It may be omitted on some internal publications, including: campus memos, flyers, invitations, limited distribution departmental publications (including many departmental newsletters), posters and/or programs/event signage. It does not need to be included on the following: alumni publications (those not also distributed to faculty and staff), donor recognition publications and fundraising publications.

Policy statement

Carnegie Mellon University does not discriminate in admission, employment or administration of its programs or activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, handicap or disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, creed, ancestry, belief, veteran status or genetic information. Furthermore, Carnegie Mellon University does not discriminate and is required not to discriminate in violation of federal, state or local laws or executive orders.

Inquiries concerning the application of and compliance with this statement should be directed to the university ombudsman, Carnegie Mellon University, 5000 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213, telephone 412-268-1018.

Obtain general information about Carnegie Mellon University by calling 412-268-2000.

In addition to the statement above, please insert the paragraph below in all communications to prospective graduate and undergraduate students as well as communications to prospective employees.

Carnegie Mellon University publishes an annual campus security and fire safety report describing the university's security, alcohol and drug, sexual assault and fire safety policies, and containing statistics about the number and type of crimes committed on the campus, and the number and cause of fires in campus residence facilities during the preceding three years. You can obtain a copy by contacting the Carnegie Mellon Police Department at 412-268-2323. The annual security and fire safety report also is available online at www.cmu.edu/police/annualreports.

For more information regarding the statement of assurance please visit www.cmu.edu/policies/administrative-and-governance/statement-of-assurance.html.

IV. Common university terminology

Academic degrees

Spell out and use lowercase for bachelor's degree, master's degree, doctor's degree or doctorate. Bachelor of arts degree, bachelor of science degree, master of arts degree or master of science degree also is acceptable, but not preferred. For a doctor's degree you may use Ph.D. and for a master's degree in business administration you may use MBA.

You can receive a doctorate OR a doctor's degree, but NOT a doctoral degree. Dr. should only be used in first reference as a formal title for a doctor of medicine. Examples:

- He received a master's degree in engineering.
- She earned a master of science degree in engineering.
- He earned a bachelor's degree in architecture.
- She received a bachelor of arts degree in music.

Academic departments

Capitalize the full names of departments. Examples:

- The Admission Office is pleased with the number of applicants.
- The Office of University Events organizes commencement.

Use lowercase for the word "department" when it stands alone. Example:

- She's been with the department for three years.

Capitalize the academic field when it's used to mean the department. Use lowercase for the field when it's used in a general sense. Examples:

- She's a professor in the Department of Physics.
- She's a physics professor.
- She majored in physics.

Use lowercase for majors with the exception of languages, which are proper nouns. Examples:

- Her major is physics.
- He's an English major.

Acronyms

Spell out the full name for colleges, schools, departments, buildings, offices, etc. on the first reference followed by the acronym in parentheses. Use the acronym for every subsequent use. Example:

- The Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) Department, located in the Facilities Management Services (FMS) building, provides important safety training for the university community. Training information is available on the EHS website and training sessions are often held in the FMS building.

Some common Carnegie Mellon acronyms include:

ACS	Andrew Carnegie Society
BCSA	Bachelor of Computer Science and Arts
BHA	Bachelor of Humanities and Arts
BSA	Bachelor of Science and Arts
BXA	Intercollege Degree Programs
CFA	College of Fine Arts
CMARC	Carnegie Mellon Advising Resource Center
CTTEC	Center for Technology Transfer and Enterprise Creation
DC	Marianna Brown Dietrich College of Humanities and Social Sciences (Dietrich College acceptable after first reference)
DSSC	Data Storage Systems Center
EHS	Environmental Health and Safety
ETC	Entertainment Technology Center
FMS	Facilities Management Services
FSO	Fellowships and Scholarships Office
HNZ	Heinz College of Information Systems and Public Policy (Heinz College acceptable after first reference)
INI	Information Networking Institute
MCS	Mellon College of Science
PSC	Pittsburgh Supercomputing Center
RAs	Resident assistants (use lowercase for this title)
SCS	School of Computer Science
SEI	Software Engineering Institute
SHS	Student Health Services
TAs	Teaching assistants (use lowercase for this title)
TPR	David A. Tepper School of Business (Tepper School acceptable after first reference)
URO	Undergraduate Research Office

Alumni

This word construction is taken directly from its Latin origins. Therefore, the noun forms are gender specific: “alumna” refers to one woman; “alumnae” refers to a group of women; “alumnus” refers to one man; “alumni” refers to a group of men or a group of men and women. It’s rare to see the feminine plural form, “alumnae.” Most often the form “alumni” is used for any group of graduates.

Alumni designations

See indicia section on page 8.

Board of trustees

Board of trustees should be capitalized only when referring to Carnegie Mellon's board, but "board" by itself is not capitalized, nor is "trustees." Examples:

- Carnegie Mellon University's Board of Trustees will meet in November.
- The board will meet in November with most trustees attending.

Buildings

All proper names of buildings, such as Jared L. Cohon University Center, should be capitalized. Terms such as "north wing" and "new residence hall" should not be capitalized, unless they are used in the title. Examples:

- The Gates Center for Computer Science and Hillman Center for Future-Generation Technologies are connected to the Purnell Center via the Pausch Bridge.
- The centers were dedicated in September 2009.

Buggy

The proper name for this traditional event is "Sweepstakes," but it is more commonly known as Buggy. The races are held every year during Spring Carnival.

Centers, institutes and programs

The formal names of centers, such as the Center for Bioimage Informatics, should be capitalized, but "center" by itself should be in lowercase. The same rules apply to institutes and programs. Examples:

- The Software Engineering Institute hosts seminars.
- The institute will welcome dozens of affiliates.
- The Center for Behavioral Decision Research was founded in 2005.
- The center supports and promotes research on decision-making.
- The Bachelor of Humanities and Arts Degree Program allows students to combine their interests.
- The program is sponsored by the Dietrich College and the College of Fine Arts.

Collective nouns

The collective nouns "faculty" and "staff" are singular nouns. If you wish to use a plural construction, use "members of the faculty/staff" or "faculty/staff members." Examples:

- The faculty is represented by Faculty Senate.
- Members of the faculty are dedicated researchers and teachers.
- The Carnegie Mellon staff is a dedicated group.

Commencement

The Pittsburgh campus ceremony in May is the only Carnegie Mellon commencement and should be referred to in lowercase. All other campus/program ceremonies should be referred to as “graduation ceremonies,” and events in which graduates receive their diplomas can be called “diploma ceremonies.”

Committees

Capitalize the formal names of groups and committees, such as Faculty Senate, Long-Range Planning Committee, President’s Student Advisory Council. Use lowercase for the words “committee” or “council” when they stand alone.

The Cut and the Fence

Capitalize the “C” and “F” only: the Cut and the Fence.

Donor designations

Many buildings, centers and rooms are named for Carnegie Mellon donors. It is important to use the full name for each of these spaces on first reference. For example, write “The Robert L. Preger Intelligent Workplace” first, and use the common name of “Intelligent Workplace” thereafter.

Honors

Use lowercase for cum laude, magna cum laude and summa cum laude.

Indicia

When referencing the **college** and year of graduation for alumni, use the appropriate college code (these may be different than the college acronyms listed) and four digits of the graduation year in parentheses after the name. There should be a space between the college code and graduation year. Please use the college indicia, not degrees or programs.

In writing for all audiences other than alumni, please avoid using college codes and indicias. Write out the graduation year, major and college if needed. Examples:

- Zachary Quinto (A 1999) played Spock in the Star Trek movie. **(for alumni audiences only)**
- Stephen Schwartz, a 1967 graduate of the College of Fine Arts, received the Isabelle Stevenson Award at the June 2015 Tony Awards ceremony.

For alumni who have earned multiple degrees from the same college, list the college followed by the graduation years. Example:

- John Green (A 1999, 2001, 2003) was the recipient of the Alumni Distinguished Service Award.

For alumni who have earned multiple degrees from different colleges, list the college and graduation year(s), followed by the second college and graduation year. Example:

- Daniel Nagin (TPR 1971, 1971; HNZ 1976) received the 2014 Stockholm Prize in Criminology.

College acronyms when using indicia **for alumni audiences only**:

A	College of Fine Arts
CMU	Joint College Programs
CS	School of Computer Science
E	College of Engineering
H	Honorary Doctorate
HNZ	Heinz College of Information Systems and Public Policy
DC	Dietrich College of Humanities and Social Sciences
MM	Margaret Morrison Carnegie College
S	Mellon College of Science
TPR	Tepper School of Business

Mascot

Carnegie Mellon's mascot is a Scottish terrier named Scotty.

Office of undergraduate admission

The Office of Undergraduate Admission prefers usage of "admission" in the singular form. Examples:

- The Office of Undergraduate Admission will host an information session in New York.
- Carnegie Mellon's holistic admission process is about more than just admitting a group of students who have the potential to succeed academically.

Note: CMU does not handle graduate admission centrally. Each graduate program handles its own admission process.

Semesters

Do not capitalize semesters in text.

Example: Spring Carnival takes place during the spring semester; Homecoming occurs in the fall semester.

Student classifications

Do not capitalize "first-year," "sophomore," "junior," "senior," "postdoctoral fellow" or "graduate student." Capitalize only when using a class designation in a formal title. (The term "first-year" is preferred over "freshman.") Examples:

- He's a senior engineering major.
- The Senior Class gift was the clock.

For graduate students, use the degree they are pursuing. Examples:

- He's a master's degree candidate in engineering and public policy.
- She's a Ph.D. student in English.
- He's a doctoral candidate in computer science.

Tartans

Carnegie Mellon athletic teams are nicknamed the "Tartans" as a nod to Andrew Carnegie's Scottish heritage. Tartan is a twilled woolen fabric with a very specific plaid design.

Titles

A person's title is capitalized only when used before the name. When using a capitalized title immediately before the name, try to keep it short. Do not capitalize an occupational designation, only a true title. Examples:

- We met President Farnam Jahanian.
- The president will speak at the dinner.
- Our speaker will be artist and professor Ayanah Moor.

Titles following a person's name should be lowercase; however, the name of the specific division or area should be capitalized. Use lowercase when a title is used alone. Examples:

- The president of Carnegie Mellon University will address the group.
- Gina Casalegno, dean of Student Affairs, will host the reception.
- Rodney McClendon is the new vice president for Operations.

Chaired professorships appear in uppercase. A University Professor, the highest distinction faculty can receive, also should be uppercase. Examples:

- Andres Cardenes, the Dorothy Richard Starling and Alexander C. Speyer Jr. Professor of Music, donated his Stradivarius violin to the School of Music.
- Her years of hard work were acknowledged when she earned the rank of University Professor.

V. The “write” stuff

Six tips for success in writing news and features

1. DRAW THEM IN

Get your reader’s attention with a provocative, clever headline and lead paragraph.

2. BE A NUT

In the second or third paragraph, summarize the essence of the story in a nutshell (this is often called the “nut graph”). Explain why the story is relevant.

3. BE CONCISE, CLEAR AND CONVERSATIONAL

Delve into the story, explain the details, but make it concise and clear — avoid jargon and “academic speak,” language that you’d expect to read in an academic research paper. Tell the story like you’re telling it to a friend.

4. IT TAKES TWO

Use at least two sources for direct or indirect quotes.

5. THINK VISUALLY; PACKAGE MAKES PERFECT

A photo is the bare-minimum must for any story. Look for ways to enhance the words using video, graphics and photo galleries, even if you’re embedding non-in-house media elements.

6. FINISH STRONG

Close how you started. Be provocative and clever, and leave the readers wanting more.