



MT. SAC EDITORIAL STYLE SHEET

The purpose of this document is to provide a set of style rules to achieve editorial style consistency for campus publications, including the Class Schedule and the College Catalog as well as newsletters and press releases. This compilation blends traditional, journalistic, and contemporary style rules and certain style preferences of the college. All editorial contributors to campus publications are urged to follow these rules when editing their copy.

ABBREVIATION

Addresses: Street, Avenue, Drive, Road, and Boulevard are abbreviated in narrative text only when used with a complete address: *1100 N. Grand Ave.* But stand-alone street names are spelled out: *The center is located on Grand Avenue.* In charted data/material, abbreviations would be appropriate to save space.

Cities: Internationally known cities can stand alone without specifying their respective states: *New York, Atlanta, Los Angeles, Paris, London, Johannesburg, Moscow, Houston, San Francisco, Detroit, Chicago.* Since our publications are California-based, major cities referenced can stand alone as well: *Pasadena, Long Beach, San Diego, Sacramento, Riverside, Bakersfield, Oakland, Anaheim, Burbank, etc.*

Days of Week: For class session listings, abbreviate days of the week: *M,T,W,Th,F,S,Su.* **Do not abbreviate names of days in narrative text.**

Doctor: Abbreviate Doctor as a title: *Dr. William Scroggins.* Or the degree after the name: *William Scroggins, Ph.D.* But never: *Dr. William Scroggins, Ph.D.*

Grade Point Average: GPA is the accepted standard.

States: Spell out names of states when they stand alone in textual material. *He lives in California.* Abbreviate states when used with cities and in chart material: *He lives in Peoria, Ill.*

Weights & Measures: lb. (pounds), oz. (ounces), in. (inches) ft. (feet), mi. (miles), mph (miles per hour, no periods), ltr. (liters).

PRESIDENT'S TITLE

At Mt. SAC, the official title is: *President & CEO* (note &, not /). The full name and title can be expressed accordingly: *Dr. William T. Scroggins, President & CEO* or *William T. Scroggins, Ph.D., President & CEO.* When referencing the presidents of the Board of Trustees and the college together, refer to Dr. Scroggins as the *College President & CEO* and the sitting head of the board as *President, Board of Trustees.*

CAPITALIZATION

College/District: Generic reference is lowercased: *Many students are attending college.* Also lowercase "college" in subsequent references to Mt. SAC: *Mt. SAC's actions will benefit the college and the district.*

Departments/Divisions: Capitalize the formal names of departments and divisions: *Humanities & Social Sciences Division; the English Department.* Do not capitalize *division* or *department* in subsequent references: *The division will offer additional courses.*

Plural Entities: When referring to multiple departments, divisions, like-groups, streets, etc., the plural entity is lowercased: *English and Math departments; the corner of Grand and Temple avenues.*

State/Federal: These are lowercased unless they are part of a formal name: *He received a state grant and a contract from the Federal Communications Commission.*

Titles: Capitalize official titles before and after a name: *Music Professor Jason Chevalier is an award-winning conductor. Irene Malmgren, Vice President of Instruction, will speak at noon.* Note: *Vice President* is not hyphenated.

FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES

All universities are four-year+ institutions; therefore, it is redundant to refer to them as "four-year universities." Recast: *four-year institutions.* It is appropriate to refer to four-year colleges, because not all colleges (*i.e.*, community and technical schools) offer four-year, baccalaureate degree programs.

TIME ELEMENTS

Decades: Use Arabic figures to indicate decades of history. Use an apostrophe *before the year* to indicate numerals that are left out; show plural by adding the letter *s*: *the 1890s, the '90s (not 90's), the Gay '90s, the 1920s, the mid-1930s, the '14 semester.*

Academic/Fiscal Year: Academic: 2013-14. Fiscal year: FY14 (covering period July 2013 - June 2014).

Months: Spell out months in generic references: *Commencement is planned for August.* Abbreviate months when specifying dates: *Aug. 6 or Aug. 6, 2004.* Don't abbreviate: *March, April, May, June, July.*

Possessive: Use the apostrophe in these uses: a year's sabbatical, a week's notice, New Year's Day.

Seasons: Generic reference is lowercased: *The event takes place in the fall. The spring semester begins Jan. 3.*

Time: Express times in numerals, separated by a hyphen. Examples: *2:00-3:30 p.m.; 10:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.* Use *noon* instead of *12:00 p.m.* (which is confusing for some).

In narrative text, one has the option to use the *hyphen* or “to” or “from/to” to express a period of time.

Examples: *The counselor is available 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.* or *The counselor is available 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.* or *The counselor is available from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.* (**Don't** mix hyphen/word: *from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.*; and don't omit from/to: *available 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.*)

a.m./p.m.: Lowercase with periods. Avoid the redundant *10 a.m. this morning*. Do not repeat “a.m.” or “p.m.” when the time of day is the same: *8:00 – 9:30 a.m.* (not *8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.*). *O'clock* has become obsolete, except in printed formal invitations.

ACADEMIC DEGREES

Abbreviations: A.A., A.S., B.A., B.S., M.A., M.S., M.D., Ph.D., J.D. (*Juris Doctorate* or *Doctor of Jurisprudence*). But no periods for MBA (*business administration*). Separate degrees by a comma after the name: *The conference speaker is Jerry Nogy, Ph.D.*

Formal reference: *She earned an Associate in Arts, while he earned a Master of Science.*

Informal reference: *She earned a bachelor's degree, while he earned a master's. They earned associate degrees.*

PREFIXES & SUFFIXES

Generally, no hyphen is used to form a compound that does not have special meaning and can be understood if the prefix is used before the base word. Use a hyphen, however, before proper nouns or in awkward combinations (e.g., *non-nuclear, un-American, co-chair*). Here are some examples:

multi-: *multipurpose, multimillion, multidisciplinary, multilingual, multicultural.*

non-: *noncredit (Community and Noncredit Education), nonprofit, nontraditional, nonpartisan, nonstop, nonresident, nonstandard, nonrefundable, nondenominational, nonmajor; but non-Californian.*

-wide: *citywide, countywide, statewide, nationwide, worldwide, districtwide, collegewide, campuswide, industrywide, systemwide.*

Others: *bilingual, coeducational (but co-ed), cross-cultural, course work, decision making, extracurricular, fund raising (but fund-raising campaign and fund-raiser), home page, lifelong, marketplace, midsemester, ongoing, preschool, re-election, re-entry, socioeconomic, under way, work force workload, workplace, year-end, yearlong.*

STATS & FIGURES

Age: Always use figures. Ages expressed as adjectives before a noun or as substitutes for a noun use hyphens: *An 18-year-old student. But a student who is 18 years old. The policy is 6 years old. The instructor is in his 40s* (no apostrophe).

Currency: Always express money in numerals. If a fee is expressed only in *whole* dollars, do not add “.00”: *\$75* (not *\$75.00*).

Million/Billion: Readers don't like a long string of numbers. Preferred: *They approved nearly \$1.3 million for the project.* (vs. *\$1,283,507.16.*). *5 billion components* (vs. *5,000,000,000*).

Numbers: In chart/matrix/data material, use numerals, including course units and sports stats. For narrative text, spell out whole numbers below 10; use figures for 10 and above: *He has taken nine units and plans to take 12 more.*

Do not add a numeral in parentheses after a number that has been spelled out: *It requires six (6) units.*

Spell out a number at the beginning of a sentence, or recast the sentence. **Right**: *Seventy eight people will attend.* **Wrong**: *78 people will attend.* **Recast**: *Nearly 80 people will attend.* **Recast**: *Officials said 78 people will attend.*

Symbols (% , \$): Use % instead of *percent* (saves space and speeds up reading). Use \$ with numerals: *\$60*, but spell out *dollar* in these instances – *several thousand dollars, dollars and cents* – and when used as a compound modifier: *multimillion-dollar* or *billion-dollar project*.

Weights & Measures: Use figures: *6 feet, 5 oz., 20 miles*, except: *half-inch*.

PUNCTUATION

Ampersand (&): Use the ampersand when it's part of a company's formal name or a title: *Goldman & Sachs, Mr. & Mrs., Welcome & Remarks, Humanities & Social Sciences Division, DSP&S* (except: *Noncredit and Community Education Division; EOPS*). Do not use & in place of *and* in a sentence.

Apostrophe: Use a possessive form only after the last word if ownership is **joint**: *Fred and Sylvia's car*. Use a possessive form after both words if the objects are **individually** owned: *Fred's and Sylvia's books* (note plural).

For singular common nouns ending in s, add 's (unless the next word begins with s): *the hostess's invitation, the hostess' seat*.

For words ending in s, do not add an apostrophe when it is used primarily in a descriptive sense: *a teachers college, veterans program*.

For omitted letters, numbers, contractions: *rock 'n' roll, '50s, don't*.

For plurals of a single letter: Mind your p's and q's. He learned the three R's and earned five A's and two C's. *The UC's are accepting applications.*

Comma (in a series): Use commas to separate elements in a series, but do not place a comma before the conjunction in a simple series: *The flag is red, white and blue. He has appointed the student, faculty and staff representatives.* But put a comma before the concluding conjunction in a series if an integral element of the series requires a conjunction: *I had a sandwich, soda, and chips and salsa for lunch.*

Separate *independent* clauses with a comma: *The students are being tested, and they will perform well.*

Compound Modifiers: When a compound modifier – two or more words that express a single concept – precedes a noun, use hyphens to link all the words in the compound. These modifiers are always preceded by an article (“a,” “an,” or “the”): *a full-time job, a well-known educator, a second-year student, the three-unit class, a 20- to 40-foot ceiling, a three-week notice, a multibillion-dollar grant, a wait-and-see attitude.*

Do not separate *-ly* adverbs and other modifiers with hyphens: *recently conducted survey* (not *recently-conducted*), *newly elected trustee, internationally recognized scholar, federally funded program.*

Dashes & Hyphens: Simply put, dashes separate, and hyphens join. Examples: *We need a fixed-rate loan* (hyphen). *The Democrats – except those from California – supported the bill* (dash). Hyphens are short (-), while dashes are long (–) with no space between the words.

Quotation Marks: The period and the comma always go within the quotation marks. The dash (–), the semicolon (;) the question mark (?) and the exclamation point (!) go *within* the quotation marks when they apply to the *quoted matter only*. They go *outside* when they apply to the *whole sentence*.

Semicolons: Use semicolons to separate elements of a series when individual segments contain material that also must be set off by commas: *Presenters include John Doe, Professor of English; Jane Anderson, Director of Media Relations; and Joe Danner of Chenault Enterprises.*

WEBSITE

website is one word and lowercased. Italicize and bold-face website addresses to make them stand out: ***www.mtsac.edu***. Capitalize *World Wide Web* (www) and *Internet*.

MT. SAC

Right: *Mt. SAC* (or *MT. SAC*). **Wrong:** *Mt. Sac*, *Mount SAC*, *MSAC*.

ETHNIC REFERENCES

race: *African-American* is preferred over *black* (which is lowercased, as is *white*). *Asian* and *Pacific Islander* are widely acceptable, but not *Oriental*. *Latino* and *Hispanic* are preferred, but some prefer specific

identities: *Mexican-American, Cuban, Latin American, Guatemalan*. Keep in mind that Spaniards are Europeans and should not be referred to as Latinos or Hispanics. Use *American Indian* or *Native American*.

minority/minorities: This catchall descriptor for nonwhites is overused and is becoming increasingly unpopular. Use sparingly and do not use the term as a noun: *He is a minority* (No, he is a person!). Use *ethnic* instead whenever possible and sensible: *This will affect several ethnic communities and ethnic populations*. Other acceptable alternatives are: *people/students of color, underrepresented groups, students in the ethnic minority*.

RIGHT WORD

advice/advise: *Advice* (n) is an opinion/recommendation about a course of action. *Advise* (v) means to offer advice.

affect/effect: *Affect* is usually a verb, meaning to influence: *The game will affect the standings*. As a verb, *effect* means to cause: *He will effect many changes in the company*. As a noun, *effect* means result: *The effect was overwhelming. She underestimated the effect of her actions*.

alternate/alternative: *Alternate* functions as the adjective: *the alternate solution or method*. *Alternative* functions as the noun: *the best alternative*.

alumni: *Alumni* generally refers to a group of men and women who attended/graduated from a school. *Alumnus* refers to a male graduate (plural: *alumni*). *Alumna* refers to a female graduate (plural: *alumnae*). *Alum* doesn't refer to academia at all; it's a sulfate.

appraised/apprised: *Appraised* means to determine the value: *He appraised the property*. But *apprised* means to inform: *Keep me apprised of the situation*.

assume/presume: *Assume* means to undertake. *Presume* means to take for granted or to suppose to be true without proof.

biannual/biennial: *Biannual* means twice a year and is a synonym for the word *semiannual*. *Biennial* means every two years.

biweekly: This means every other week. *Semiweekly* means twice a week.

church: This term is uniquely Christian and should not be used as a generic reference to all religious edifices or organizations. Jews, Muslims and Buddhists worship in *synagogues, temples, tabernacles, sanctuaries* or *mosques*. The appropriate catchall reference is *houses* (or *places*) *of worship*.

complement/compliment: *Complement* is a noun and a verb denoting completeness or the process of supplementing something: *This article is the perfect complement to the book.* *Compliment* is a noun or a verb that denotes praise or the expression of courtesy: *He complimented the students on the well-written essays.*

composed of/comprise: *Composed of* means created/put together: *This library collection is composed of thousands of books.* *Comprise* means to contain, to include all or embrace: *This library collection comprises thousands of books* (always active voice). Though commonly used, ***comprised of***, is incorrect.

daylight-saving time: Not *savings*.

ensure/insure: Use *ensure* to mean guarantee: *Steps were taken to ensure accuracy.* Use *insure* for references to insurance: *The policy insures his life.*

fewer/less: Use *fewer* for individual items, *less* for bulk or quantity: *Less furniture, but fewer chairs.* *Less enrollment, but fewer applicants.* (Generally if the noun is plural, use “fewer.”)

“first annual”: Avoid this term; an event cannot be described as *annual* until it has been held in at least two successive years. Instead, note that sponsors plan to hold the event annually. After that, it would be appropriate to refer to the 6th annual event.

“first met”: This is redundant, as are *first started*, *first introduced*, *first elected*. **Right:** *We met in 1995 and reunited 10 years later. The program was started last year. He was elected in 1968 and re-elected in 1970.*

its/it’s: *Its* is possessive: *The concert series is in its third season.* *It’s* is a contraction for *it is*: *It’s going to rain.*

irregardless: Nonstandard; perhaps you mean *irrespective*. Otherwise, it’s simply *regardless*.

monies: Avoid *monies*. *Funds* is the preferred plural: *They should ask for more funds. We need more money.*

none: It usually means no single one. When used in this sense, it always takes singular verbs and pronouns: *None of the seats was in its right place.* But use a plural verb only if the sense is no two or no amount: *None of the consultants agree on the same approach. None of the taxes have been paid.*

online: One word (not: *on-line*)

over: Generally refers to spatial relationships: *The plane flew over the campus.* In the sense of “more than,” say that: *We offer more than 200 academic programs.* But: *The student is over 18.* Let your ear be your guide.

prior to: Use *before* when you can.

Plural Crossovers: *faculty, couple, police and youth* take plural verbs and pronouns when used in the sense of two or more people: *The couple were married Saturday and left for their honeymoon. The faculty have chosen their candidates.* (**Better:** *Faculty members have chosen . . .*) *The police are on their way. The youth want to be recognized.* But: *Each couple was asked to give \$10.*

saving: Singular: *We achieved a saving of \$1 million.*

that/who: *That* generally refers to inanimate objects, animals and entities; *who* refers to people. *The students who* (not *that*) *apply themselves will succeed. She is the clerk who handles this. The school that responds quickly gets priority consideration.*

their: **Right:** *The committee will announce its decision today.* **Wrong:** *The committee will announce their decision today.* **Recast:** *The committee members will announce their decision today.*

LESS IS MORE: Reducing Wordiness

“ . . . in the world/state ”: **Wordy:** *He is the best sprinter in the nation.* **Better:** *He is the nation’s best sprinter.* **Wordy:** *It is the largest college campus in the state.* **Better:** *It is the state’s largest college campus.*

“ in order to . . . ”: Simply say, *to*.

“invited to attend”: Delete “to attend” (implied): *He was invited to the luncheon.* For printed invitations: *You are cordially invited to the Students of Distinction Dinner.”*

“responsible for”: **Wordy:** *He is responsible for managing the resources of the company.* **Better:** *He manages the company resources.*

“there is/are”: **Wordy:** *There are many programs being offered.* **Better:** *Many programs are being offered.* **Wordy:** *There were 70 applicants.* **Better:** *Seventy students applied.*

“were in attendance”: **Better:** *Several students attended.*



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