



## University Communications

### MINOT STATE WRITING STYLE GUIDE

University Communications at Minot State University includes all University publications including Connections Magazine, The President's Report, Campus Highlights, Inside Newsletter, and Daily Announcements as well as all University website features and press releases.

The goals of the University Communications Writing Style Guide is for accuracy and consistency in all publications. The University follows Associated Press style as noted below, which addresses common grammar and punctuation issues and contains Minot State-specific information. For questions or feedback, please contact University Communications at [publicinformation@minotstateu.edu](mailto:publicinformation@minotstateu.edu).

#### **A**

**Academic degrees:** Academic degrees should be lowercase unless the full name of the degree is used. Use associate degree, bachelor's degree, master's degree, doctoral degree (or doctorate), Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Master of Arts, Master of Science. The correct abbreviations are: B.A., B.S., M.A., M.S., Ph.D.

**Active voice:** Use an active, rather than a passive, voice in sentences.

**Addresses:** Abbreviate Ave., Blvd and St. when used in a specific address. Spell out when no specific address is used. Always spell out Road, Drive, Lane and any other such words. Examples: Minot State's address is 500 University Ave. W. Minot State is located on University Avenue.

**Advisor:** Minot State uses advisor in formal job titles when referring to someone who advises students.

**Affect, effect:** Affect, as a verb, means to influence. Effect, as a noun, means result.

**All-American, All-America:** Use All-American when referring to one individual; All-America when referring to a team.

**All right:** Never alright.

**And vs. &:** Do not use an ampersand in place of the word “and” unless it is part of an organization’s formal name. Example: Red & Green Newspaper,

## **B**

**Benefited:** It is only one “t” under AP style.

**Books, musical compositions, movies, plays, poems:** Never use italics. Quotations should be used for all of the following: single radio or television programs, articles and features, chapter titles, titles of short stories, essays, short poems, poetry collections, dissertations and theses, songs and short compositions, stage/play titles, opera titles, movie titles, television series, book titles, computer game titles, album titles, lectures, speeches, paintings and works of art. No quotations for the following: magazine and newspaper titles, software titles, catalogs, journals, periodicals or reference books (almanacs, directories, encyclopedias, handbooks, and gazetteers).

**Buildings, auditoriums, gymnasiums, lounges, rooms:** Uppercase building, auditorium, hall, center, when used in the full, formal name of the structure: Minot State Dome, Hoffman Auditorium. Lowercase room, ballroom, lounge and other generic building units: Minot State pool.

## **C**

**Capital vs. Capitol:** Capital is the city where a seat of government is located. Do not capitalize. Capital is also used to mean “money.” Uppercase Capitol when referring to “U.S. Capitol” or state capitols. Example: The North Dakota Capitol is located in Bismarck.

**Comma:** Use commas to separate elements in a series including the penultimate item in a list of three or more items. Example: The president likes cookies, caramel corn, and ice cream. If part of a series that includes “and” in it, place a comma before the concluding conjunction in a series. Example: The man had orange juice, toast, and ham and eggs for breakfast. Also, use commas to separate two thoughts in one sentence that can stand alone as individual sentences.

**Course listings:** In an official listing, use caps. Example: Introduction to Biology. Do not use quotation marks. For subject titles, use lowercase (art, criminal justice, music, education).

## **D**

**Dashes and hyphens:** There are two types of dashes, with different lengths and different purposes, in addition to the hyphen. The em dash (—) is named for the amount of space a capital M once occupied in a line of lead type. It is used for parenthetical remarks, abrupt changes of thought, epigraphs, and datelines. The en dash (–) represents the space a capital N took in a line of lead type. It is used for continuing or inclusive numbers or words. Do not include spaces before or after the dash. For example: 1995–96, 1998–2002, Monday–Friday, Minnesota State University-Moorhead.

**Dates:** Separate by commas instead of parentheses. Example: Monday, Dec. 3, 1973. Refrain from using “th,” “nd,” or “rd.” Spell out when day stands alone. Omit the comma when using just the month or season and year. Example: December 1973 or fall 2019. When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate only Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov.,

and Dec. Spell out March, April, May, June, and July. Spell out all months when using alone or with a year alone: Example: December or December 2013.

**Decades:** Use a letter “s” without an apostrophe to indicate the spans of decades or centuries. Example: the 1990s or the ‘90s. Use an en dash (in place of “to”) to indicate a span of years, and within a decade use the style 1940–41; across decades, use the style 1943–1953.

**Dollars:** Correct usage when stating money is the sign, plus the amount. Example: The Minot State University Development Foundation received a \$3 million donation.

**Dr.:** Use only if the individual is a health care professional. You may indicate advanced degree after the name, “Laurie Geller, Ph.D.” Never use more than one title, such as “Dr. Doogie Howser, M.D.” Refer to faculty members as professors in print.

## **E**

**Ellipsis:** A series of three dots in a row, used to represent omitted text in a quotation or to signify a dramatic pause for emphasis. Minot State style is to add a space after an ellipsis.

**Email:** Do not hyphenate the word and use lowercase, this is a recent change in AP style. Example: email.

## **F**

**Fundraising, fundraiser:** Each is one word; no hyphen.

## **G**

**Governor and President:** Gov. Burgum, former Gov. Hoeven. Use the same with presidents. Use President Biden. Former is lowercased when saying “former President Obama or former President Bush.”

## **H**

**Health care:** It is two words unless it is part of an official title.

**Historic, historical:** In the United States, use “a” to modify these words: “The moon walk was a historic moment.” A historic event is an important occurrence, one that stands out in history. Any occurrence in the past is a historical event.

**However:** Most effective when used as a conjunctive adverb in a compound sentence, punctuated with a semicolon, and set off with a comma. Example: He left for work late; however, he was still able to attend the meeting.

## **I**

**Inc.:** AP Style does not use the comma before “Inc.” unless it is used as the office title of a company.

**It’s, its:** It’s is short for “it is.” Its is used as a possessive: “The puppy lost its way.”

**It, they:** Use it when referring to a company or team. Use “they” when referring to a group of people.

## L

**Lie, lay:** Lie means to recline, lay means to put down or set.

## M

**More than vs. Over:** Use more than rather than over when describing amounts. Example: LeBron James makes more than \$35 million a year, rather than LeBron James makes over \$35 million a year.

## N

**Numbers:** Spell out numerals zero through nine. Use numerals for 10 and above. Exceptions: Use numerals when referring to age: The boy is 5 years old. The boy turned 4 today. When the numeral is used as an adjective, use hyphens: He is a 5-year-old boy.

## P

**Percent:** Symbol (%) is used on all references with no space. Example: 100%.

**Possessive:** Singular proper names ending in “s” only need an apostrophe to take the possessive form, while ones that end in an “s” sound need an apostrophe before the “s.”

## Q

**Quotations:** Place periods and commas within quotation marks. Place colons and semicolons outside quotation marks. Other punctuation, inside or outside quotation marks, depends on the sentence.

**Regardless:** Not irregardless.

**Regions:** Uppercase Southwest, Northeast or the West/regions in states. Example: Northwest North Dakota.

**Residence halls:** Do not refer to them as dormitories or dorms. Minot State has five residence halls: Cook Hall, Crane Hall, Dakota Hall, Lura Manor, and McCulloch Hall.

## S

**Says vs. said:** AP style recommends using said for magazines, newspapers, and other publications. Refrain from using says.

**Season:** Do not use “of” when referring to the academic semester. Minot State’s style is to capitalize the season when used in conjunction with date. Example: Fall 2019.

**State names:** In lists, use AP style abbreviations instead of United States Postal Codes. Complete list includes: Alabama: Ala., Arizona: Ariz., Arkansas: Ark., California: Calif., Colorado: Colo., Connecticut: Conn., Delaware: Del., Florida: Fla., Georgia: Ga., Illinois: Ill., Indiana: Ind., Kansas: Kan., Kentucky: Ky., Louisiana: La., Maryland: Md., Massachusetts: Mass., Michigan: Mich., Minnesota: Minn., Mississippi: Miss., Missouri: Mo., Montana: Mont., Nebraska: Neb., Nevada: Nev., New Hampshire: N.H., New Jersey: N.J., New Mexico: N.M., New York: N.Y., North Carolina: N.C., North Dakota: N.D., Oklahoma: Okla., Oregon: Ore., Pennsylvania: Pa., Rhode Island: R.I., South Carolina: S.C., South Dakota: S.D.,

Tennessee: Tenn., Vermont: Vt., Virginia: Va., Washington: Wash., West Virginia: W.Va., Wisconsin: Wis., and Wyoming: Wyo. Do not abbreviate Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas, Utah, or Canadian provinces. In stories, cities and states should be spelled out. Example: Billings, Montana. Minot State style is just the city name within the state of North Dakota.

## **T**

**Telephone numbers:** Use 701-858-3065 for standard numbers and 1-800-777-0750 for toll-free numbers.

**Time:** Omit :00 when referring to a time of day: Examples: 1 p.m., 10 a.m.; but: 1:30 p.m., 9:15 a.m. Use noon and midnight instead of 12 a.m. and 12 p.m. to avoid confusion, except in calendar listings. For time ranges, it is 9-10 a.m.; noon-1 p.m. or 3-5 p.m. Use the AP style when going from a.m. to p.m. Example: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Titles:** Personal titles should be capitalized when they come before a name. When a title is listed after a name, it should be lowercase. Examples: Minot State Vice President for Advancement Rick Hedberg addressed the crowd. Rick Hedberg, Minot State vice president for advancement, addressed the crowd.

## **U**

**University:** Minot State style is to uppercase University when referring to Minot State at all times. When used as part of an official title, Minot State University and used alone, the University. Minot State University should be used in first reference and Minot State in subsequent references. The acronym MSU can be used in second reference, but it is preferred to be used in third and subsequent references.

## **W**

**World Wide Web:** The term website is now lowercase and one word, while Web page, Web feed, the Internet, the Net, are capitalized. When listing an address for information, eliminate the understood prefix, "http://". Instead, www.google.com should be used. For Minot State's website, all lowercase letters with the .edu is the preferred style. Ex: minotstateu.edu.

 **Be seen. Be heard. Be you.**