

SMU Editorial Style Guide Updated July 2021

SMU generally follows AP style for its communications, with some exceptions listed below. If you cannot find your specific issue listed in this guide, adopt [AP style](#). (If you do not have an online AP stylebook account, please visit [SMU Libraries](#) for access with your faculty, staff or student ID.)

For style guidance for academic writing, contact your school or department.

For grammar questions, the [Purdue University Online Writing Lab](#) is an excellent resource.

If you have further style questions that are not addressed in this guide, please contact styleguide@smu.edu.

A

abbreviations

In text, do not use abbreviations except in special publications and sports schedules that call for abbreviated months/dates, with company names because of space considerations, and with addresses as they actually appear on mailings.

academic degrees

SMU uses the style of no punctuation in academic degree abbreviations. This is an exception to AP style. (Universities and style guides vary widely in their use of periods in academic degrees; a careful review of SMU's needs calls for uniformly omitting them.)

Examples:

- BA, BS, Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science.
- MA, MS, Master of Arts, Master of Science.
- PhD, Doctor of Philosophy.

Lowercase and use an apostrophe in nonspecific uses. Capitalize the name of a full degree.

Examples:

- He has a bachelor's degree in journalism.
- She has a master's.
- They earned a doctorate.
- He has a Bachelor of Arts in journalism.
- SMU has awarded 1,182 bachelor's, 678 master's and 76 doctoral degrees.

Do not add the word "degree" after an abbreviation of the degree or after the full name of the degree. "She earned a BS in biology."

academic titles

Capitalize and spell out formal titles such as “professor,” “chancellor,” “chair” and “dean” when they precede a name:

- Dean Craig C. Hill.
- Assistant Professor Vishal Ahajua.

Lowercase when the title follows a name, unless the title is an endowed chair or professorship.

Examples:

- Jennifer Collins, dean of Dedman School of Law.
- Dinesh Rajan, chair of the Department of Electrical Engineering.
- David D. Blackwell, W.B. Hamilton Professor of Geological Sciences.
- Thomas DiPiero, dean of Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences.

When using “dean,” notation should read as “the dean of”: “Holly Jeffcoat, of SMU Libraries.”

See **titles**.

acronyms

Avoid the use of acronyms, particularly in communications with external audiences. Acronyms may be used on second reference, but try to use “the center,” “the institute” or simply a shortened version of the center or institute’s name if possible: “The Bridwell Institute for Economic Freedom is a research institute in Cox School of Business. The institute studies...” See **centers and institutes**.

When you do need to use acronyms (such as in longer internal documents), use them only after the full name has been used at least once previously.

addresses

Keep mailing address style consistent with postal regulations, using no punctuation:

Office of Public Affairs
PO Box 750174
Dallas TX 75275-0174

Within narrative copy, use commas and spell out the state in an address. “Visit the George W. Bush Presidential Center at 2943 SMU Boulevard, Dallas, Texas.”

Admission

Singular, not plural, when it refers to SMU Admission.

advisor

Preferred to “adviser,” contrary to AP style.

African American

See **race** entry.

A-LEC

Use the hyphen when abbreviating Altshuler Learning Enhancement Center.

alumni

- Alumni is used for both male and female (plural) graduates.
- Alumnus is used for a single male graduate.
- Alumna is used for a single female graduate.
- Alumnae is used for plural female graduates.
- Alum or alums is acceptable in casual usage.

ampersand

In general, not a substitute for the word “and.” In narrative copy, always spell out. Use only when part of a formal name: “AT&T,” “Barnes & Noble.” The only formal name at SMU with an ampersand is “Robson & Lindley Aquatics Center.”

apostrophes

Always use “smart” (or curly) quotes and apostrophes. Occasionally, computer systems will automatically insert straight quotes or apostrophes, which should be corrected.

Athletics

Always capitalize when referring to the SMU department. It is “Director of Athletics” or “Athletics Director” (not “Athletic Director”) when used before a name and “director of Athletics” following a name. As a general term, “athletics” is lowercase.

archaeology

B

benefited, benefiting

Black (updated May 2021)

The Associated Press changed its style on June 19, 2020, to capitalize the “b” in “Black” and explained its reasoning [here](#).

Following the lead of the AP and other major news organizations, SMU now capitalizes the “b” in “Black” when the word is used in a racial, ethnic or cultural context. The modification aligns “Black” with long-standing identifiers such as Latino, Asian American and Native American.

Do not use “Black” as a singular noun. Use the capitalized term as an adjective in a racial, ethnic or cultural sense: Black people, Black culture, Black literature, Black studies, Black colleges. African American is also acceptable for those in the U.S. The terms are not necessarily interchangeable. Americans of Caribbean heritage, for example, generally refer to themselves

as Caribbean American. Follow an individual's preference if known, and be specific when possible and relevant.

- Minneapolis has a large Somali American population because of refugee resettlement.
- The author is Senegalese American.

Use of the capitalized "Black" recognizes that language has evolved, along with the common understanding that especially in the United States, the term reflects a shared identity and culture rather than a skin color alone.

Board of Trustees

References to SMU's Board of Trustees are in uppercase:

- He is on the Board of Trustees.
- She is on the Board.
- She is a member of SMU's Board of Trustees.
- But: He is an SMU trustee.

boards, committees

Capitalize when part of a proper name:

- Simmons School Executive Board.
- Campaign Leadership Council.
- Campaign Steering Committee.

buildings

Use the names listed on the [interactive campus map](#).

George W. Bush Presidential Center

Use the full name for first reference to the entity that includes the library, museum and institute. Alphabetize under "B" instead of "G" on campus maps.

- "Bush Presidential Center on second reference.
- "Bush Center" for more informal contexts after first and second references.

George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum

Use on first reference when referring only to that joint entity. Alphabetize under "B" instead of "G" on campus maps, etc.

- "Bush Library and Museum" on second reference.
- Use "library and museum" in casual contexts after first and second references. See **centers and institutes**.

The library and museum should generally be treated as a single entity.

George W. Bush Institute

Use on first reference to the institute alone. Alphabetize under "B" instead of "G" on campus maps, etc.

- “Bush Institute” on second reference.
- Use “the institute” in more informal contexts after first and second references.

C

campaigns

Italicize the names of SMU’s fundraising campaigns:

- *SMU Unbridled: The Second Century Campaign.*
- *Pony Power.*

centers and institutes

Spell out the full name on the first reference:

- The Cary M. Maguire Center for Ethics and Public Responsibility.
- The John Goodwin Tower Center for Public Policy and International Affairs.

chair

According to SMU guidelines on the use of nonsexist language, use chair – not chairman or chairwoman – for SMU Board members and department heads. Follow the corporation’s nomenclature for positions outside of SMU.

Collegiate Georgian architecture

The architectural style of SMU buildings. Capitalize “Collegiate” and “Georgian.”

commas

AP style does not use the serial comma, e.g. “Professor Smith teaches economics, market behaviors and statistics,” NOT “Professor Smith teaches economics, market behaviors, and statistics.”

composition titles

Apply these guidelines to titles of books, movies, operas, plays, poems, songs and television programs, as well as lectures, speeches, exhibitions and works of art, including sculptures (an exception to AP style).

Capitalize the principal words, including prepositions and conjunctions of four or more letters. Capitalize an article – the, a, an – or words of fewer than four letters if it is the first or last word in a title.

Titles of books, including reference books, and periodical titles are italicized, except for the Bible.

- *Journal of Air Law and Commerce.*
- *To Kill a Mockingbird.*

Use italics for titles of movies, television programs, songs, operas, exhibitions and work of art.

- *The Sound of Music.*
- *The Walking Dead.*
- *Varsity.*
- *The Magic Flute.*
- *Bach's Suite No. 1 for Orchestra.* (This is an exception to AP style.)

course titles

Use Arabic numerals and capitalize the subject when used with a numeral. Do not use quotes. Capitalize full, formal names of SMU-specific courses.

- He took Philosophy 209 last term.
- The professor teaches The Arts in Their Cultural Context: The City of the Imagination.

coursework

One word.

courtesy titles

In general, do not use courtesy titles such as Dr., Miss, Mr., Mrs. or Ms. except in direct quotations. When it is necessary to distinguish between two people who use the same last name, use the first and last name.

The exceptions are on first reference to: professors, clergy such as “the Rev. Dr.” or “the Rev.,” and with elected officials such as Sen., Congresswoman, etc.

- The Rev. Dr. Michael Waters.
- Professor Mark Chancey.

(Exceptions may include individual preferences, particularly in development and donor publications/lists. Cultural dictates may also override SMU style in some cases.)

When it is necessary to distinguish between two people who use the same last name, as in married couples or brothers and sisters, use the first and last name.

See **religious titles**.

curriculum, curricula

Curriculum is the singular form, while curricula is the plural form.

cyber security

Two words (a variation from AP style).

D

***D* magazine**

Capitalize and italicize only D.

Dads' Club

Dallas

When used in datelines, the city name stands alone with no state.

degrees

Visit the smu.edu [list of SMU degrees](#) offered for the most up-to-date listing. See **academic degrees**.

department, division

Capitalize when referring to a specific academic department (or division in Meadows School of the Arts), no matter the order of the sentence:

- The Department of English.
- The English Department.
- The Division of Theatre.

However, lowercase when plural:

- The Anthropology and Biological Sciences departments are sponsoring a forum this afternoon.
- The divisions of Advertising and Theatre are part of Meadows School.

Dr.

Do not use “Dr.” before a name, even in a medical context. See **courtesy titles**.

E

email addresses

If an email address comes at the end of a sentence, punctuate accordingly. “For more information, email Joe Smith at jxsmith@smu.edu.”

Do not break email addresses across two lines.

emeritus/emerita

This word often is added to formal titles to denote that individuals who have retired retain their rank or title. Do not italicize. When used, place “emeritus” after the formal title:

- Darwin Payne, professor emeritus.
- Professor Emerita Alessandra Comini.

en dash

An en dash (–) is wider than a hyphen (-) and narrower than an em dash (—). Use an en dash with spaces for explanatory breaks in thought:

- Gould’s lifework focuses on the concept of punctuated equilibrium – the idea that evolution is not a gradual process.

Use an en dash without spaces for continuous numbers or dates:

- 1974–1982.
- Pages 7–10.
- June 12–15.
- June 15–July 7.

endowed chairs and professorships

Capitalize, including when listed after the name of the professor:

- Matthew B. Myers, Cox School dean and Tolleson Chair in Business Leadership.

F

faculty

A collective noun that takes a singular verb. Refers to an entire group of educators who staff a department or school. When not referring to the whole group, use “faculty members.”

Examples:

- The faculty is meeting here.
- Faculty members are meeting here.
- The faculty is discussing the issue.
- The Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences faculty has considered the proposal.
- Faculty members of Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences have made a decision.

Faculty in Residence

Abbreviated FIR.

Faculty Senate

First Lady

Capitalize when used as a title before Laura Bush’s name. Otherwise, lowercase in all uses.

- First Lady Laura Bush.
- Laura Bush, the first lady during George W. Bush’s presidency.
- They recognized former first lady Lady Bird Johnson.

first-year, first year

Use first-year student in all references to a student in his or her first year of studies. Do not use the gendered term “freshman.”

Hyphenate as an adjective:

- Most first-year students live in Residential Commons.

No hyphen when used as a noun:

- All first years are encouraged to meet with their academic advisors.

Flagpole

This gathering space is south of the Main Quad.

foreign words

If a foreign word is listed in *Webster's New World College Dictionary, Fifth Edition's* English-language portion, it is not necessary to italicize.

Founders' Day

Founders' Day is the annual University celebration marking the creation of SMU. As this has become a spring homecoming, the series of events is referred to as Founders' Day Weekend. Founders' Day is acceptable when referring to the designated Friday. Examples:

- The groundbreaking will be held on Founders' Day.
- All alumni are invited to Founders' Day Weekend.

G

Golden Gala

The culminating event of Reunion Weekend for 50-year reunions.

grade-point average

Spell out on first reference:

- His grade-point average is 3.8.

Abbreviate on second reference:

- His high GPA earned him many awards.

graduation years

- All SMU alumni and current student names are followed by two-digit class year preceded by a "smart" apostrophe, e.g. "Joe Smith '99 and Janet Jones '79, '82."
- Use only the abbreviated year; do not name the degree.
- In printed text, make sure the degree year does not break to a separate line from the name.

Greek(s)

Capitalize when used in reference to a Greek-letter fraternity or sorority.

H

Hilltop Society

Recognizes donors who make gifts and pledge payments two fiscal years in a row.

Jr., Sr.

Abbreviate as “Jr.” and “Sr.” only with full names. Precede by a comma (a variation from AP style):

- Paul B. Loyd, Jr.
- Edwin L. Cox, Sr.

The notation “II” or “2nd” also may be used if it is the individual’s preference. Use a comma before II and III, etc., unless the subject requests that no comma be used.

I**Insiders Letter****L****lecture titles**

Capitalize and use quotes (no italics) for their formal titles:

- Archaeology Professor Mike Snyder will present “A Study of Iron Age Inhabitants of the Northeast Texas Area.”

M**“M” Award**

Initial-cap the M and A, and put the M in quotation marks.

Main Quad

Capitalize the names of school quadrangles, including the Main Quad, the Law Quad, etc.

Martha Proctor Mack Grand Ballroom, The

“The” is part of the name.

Meadows Foundation, The

“The” should always be capitalized no matter its placement in the sentence.

Mothers’ Club**months**

Always spell out. Do not abbreviate. This is a variation from AP style.

- August 5, 1976.
- September 11.

- Monday, January 5.
- Registration begins in September.

my.SMU.edu

When referring to the resource in copy, use “my.SMU.” When referring to the web address rather than the name of the site, use my.smu.edu without the capitalization used in the resource name.

N

numbers

In text, and in general, spell out numbers one through nine. Use numerals for 10 and above.

Some exceptions are percentages, ratios, monetary amounts, temperature readings, ages, physical dimensions, millions and billions, and sports scores:

- 9%.
- \$4.
- 4 degrees Celsius.
- They won the baseball game 4–2.
- She is 4 years old.
- There were 6 million people.
- The porch is 9 feet by 11 feet.
- Use a 9-by-12 pan.

on-campus, off-campus

Hyphenate only when used as a compound modifier:

- She used the sources available from the on-campus libraries.
- He decided to live off campus.

P

phone numbers

Phone numbers are written with area code preceding and divided by hyphens: 214-123-4567.

Pony Up!

President’s Associates

Recognizes donors who make gifts and pledge payments of \$1,000 or more toward current-use funds during a fiscal year.

President’s Scholars

Singular possessive; apostrophe before s.

professor

Never abbreviate and, as with other titles, capitalize only when it precedes a name:

- Professor of Journalism Joe Smith praised the student for his excellent feature story.
- Joe Smith, professor of journalism, praised the student for his work.

However, capitalize the formal name of an endowed chair or professorship whether it is placed before or after the name:

- Harold W. Stanley, Geurin-Pettus Distinguished Chair in American Politics and Political Economy, gave the lecture.

R

race

Include racial or ethnic details only when they are clearly relevant and that relevance is explicit in the text.

religious titles

The first reference to a member of the clergy normally should include a capitalized title before the individual's name. In many cases, "the Rev." is the designation that applies before a name on first reference. Only use "the Rev. Dr." if the individual has an earned doctoral degree and reference to the degree is relevant.

Research One

The designation of a top-tier research institute using the Carnegie Classification system, a framework for classifying colleges and universities in the United States by their research activity. Use "R-1" on second reference.

Residential Commons

- Capitalize "Residential Commons" as a phrase and as individual Residential Commons names.
- The 11 Residential Commons are:
 - Armstrong Commons.
 - Boaz Commons.
 - Cockrell-McIntosh Commons.
 - Kathy Crow Commons.
 - Crum Commons.
 - Loyd Commons.
 - Mary Hay-Peyton-Shuttles Commons (includes three buildings: Mary Hay Hall, Peyton Hall and Shuttles Hall).
 - McElvaney Commons.
 - Morrison-McGinnis Commons.
 - Virginia-Snider Commons.
 - Ware Commons.
- Singular/plural: "Kathy Crow Commons is" but "the 11 Residential Commons are."

- Use “the Commons” (initial capitalized) without the donor name to refer to an individual Residential Commons or Dining Commons on subsequent references.
- Don’t start a sentence with “Commons” – use “The Commons” or “Residential Commons” or “The Residential Commons” instead.
- Don’t shorten to “Res Commons,” and avoid “RCs” in formal communications.
- “Faculty in Residence” should be capitalized and not hyphenated, as shown. The acronym “FiR” can be used after being defined on the first reference, when using the acronym is appropriate, such as when “Faculty in Residence” would appear frequently in a document.

Reunion Weekend

Robson & Lindley Aquatics Center

Spelled with an ampersand.

ROTC

Acceptable for all references to the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps, a nationwide program offered at more than 1,700 colleges and universities across the country that prepares young adults to become officers in the U.S. military. While ROTC courses are not offered on the SMU campus, SMU partners with the University of North Texas and the University of Texas at Arlington for Air Force ROTC and Army ROTC.

S

said, says

Attribute with past-tense “said” in gift announcements. Present-tense “says” is preferred in other uses.

school names

The degree of formality required should dictate use. For example, in most cases, “Cox School of Business” is acceptable upon first reference, though in more formal situations, “Edwin L. Cox School of Business” may be preferred. “Cox School” is acceptable on second reference.

Examples:

- Plays and concerts are produced regularly at Meadows School of the Arts.
- He earned an MBA at Cox School in 2010.
- She is a member of the faculty at Simmons School of Education and Human Development.
- The program is a partnership among Toyota USA, the West Dallas community, Dallas ISD and Simmons School.

NOTE: It is possible that individual schools may make different decisions regarding usage on their own sites and publications.

seasons

Lowercase all seasons and seasonal terms such as fall, spring, winter, wintertime, etc., unless they are part of a formal title:

- SpringFest.
- Winter Olympics.
- Fall Festival.

Sentence case

Headlines, subheads and email subjects should be in sentence case.

- A message to University faculty, staff and students
- Mustangs stay Mustang Strong
- Smithsonian has extended 'Sea Monsters Unearthed'

Dr. Bob Smith Health Center

Do not abbreviate. The whole name must be used in every instance. On second reference, may be referred to as "the health center."

SMU Dads' Club

SMU-in-Taos

SMU Mothers' Club

spring break

Not capitalized.

Student Senate

subject

Lowercase subjects, unless a language or followed by a Roman numeral:

- He took English.
- She took French.
- They studied algebra, taking Algebra I in the fall.

T

TEDxSMU

term

In general, use instead of semester.

the

When including "the" to begin a title or proper name, "the" should not be capitalized unless it is part of an official title or the beginning of a sentence.

theater vs. theatre

Use “theater” when making a generic reference:

- I am going to the theater.

When used with a proper name, spell in accordance with the correct title of the facility:

- Bob Hope Theatre.
- Margo Jones Theatre.
- Greer Garson Theatre.
- Hughes-Trigg Theater.

Programs in Meadows School:

- Division of Theatre.
- Theatre Studies.

times

Use figures with all times except for noon and midnight, which should stand alone. When using times for events that occur at the start of the hour, do not include :00. For example:

- The meeting will begin at 11 a.m., and should last until 4 p.m.

For times that must include both the hour and the minute, use a colon:

- 8:30 a.m.
- 4:45 p.m.

Use lowercase a.m. and p.m., with periods between the letters. Do not use AM, A.M., PM, P.M. Also, avoid such redundancies as 4 a.m. in the morning, 8 p.m. at night, etc. If necessary, use 4 a.m. today or 8 p.m. Monday, etc.

SMU does not have a rule of listing time, date and place in that order, but choose a consistent order throughout the piece.

titles

In general, lowercase professional titles unless they precede a proper name. SMU generally does not use courtesy titles such as Dr., but does use titles for clergy and elected officials on first reference, such as Bishop, Pastor, the Rev., the Rev. Dr.; Sen., President.

However, when titles are after a name in signatures or display text such as in a pull quote or a listing in a program, capitalize the title.

- Elizabeth G. Loba, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
- K.C. Mmeje
Vice President for Student Affairs

- Maria Dixon Hall, Chief Diversity Officer and Senior Advisor to the President for Cultural Intelligence

U

University

When referring to SMU, use “SMU” or “the University.” In news releases, use “Southern Methodist University” on first reference and “SMU” on subsequent references.

When referring to an institution in general, use lowercase: “There are many fine universities in the state of Texas.”

University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, The

“The” is part of the name.

University-wide

AP style calls for the hyphen with the suffix “-wide” to be used only with proper nouns.

V

vice

Use two words with no hyphen:

- Vice president.
- Vice chair.

W

website

If a website comes at the end of a sentence, punctuate accordingly. “For more information, visit our website at smu.edu.”

Do not break website addresses across two lines.

white

The Associated Press, which declared its policy on uppercasing “Black” and “Indigenous” on June 19, 2020, announced the following month it would continue to lower-case “white” in racial, ethnic and cultural contexts. SMU will follow this policy.

-wide

Generally use as a suffix without a hyphen.

- campuswide.
- statewide.

Use a hyphen with proper nouns, including “University-wide” in reference to SMU.

- That is a University-wide policy.
- The uniform requirement is Army-wide.

Y

years

Use figures without commas: 1991, 2005, etc. When referring to decades or centuries, use an s without an apostrophe: the 1890s, the 1920s, the 1960s, etc.

Years are the lone exception to the general rule that numbers should not be used to start a sentence: 1989 was an extraordinary year. But try to avoid this construction.