

Lehman College
Communications Style Guide

Office of Media Relations and Publication
Lehman College
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About this Guide

Whether you are communicating with an internal or external audience, this editorial guide is designed to help you make decisions that are in keeping with the College's overall style for print and the Web.

From when to capitalize courtesy titles to the correct spelling of Lehman's various buildings, this guide attempts to answer, in brief, some of the most common uncertainties that can arise. A few frequent grammatical questions are also included.

The principal purpose of the guide is to assist those who write for the College's website. Unlike its print counterpart, the Web lends itself more easily to informality, but standards of basic grammar and word usage still need to be followed.

Most recommendations are taken directly from *The Chicago Manual of Style, 15th edition* (The University of Chicago Press). Recommendations on spelling are taken from the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. Please consider this guide a "work in progress." Please direct questions or suggestions for items to be included in the next edition to Yeara Milton, web content editor (yeara.milton@lehman.cuny.edu).

Writing for the Web

Here are some tips to keep in mind when writing copy for the Web.

- Keep it simple. Keep it brief. People don't like reading long-winded missives, especially on the Web. So keep instructional content simple and brief.
- Content is king, so make sure yours is accurate. This is especially true when it comes to dates, times, locations, and fees.
- Headlines are important. Visitors to your site will scan the page before reading it. One of the things they're scanning for are headlines. Make sure your headlines are on point and not misleading.
- Use bullets. People like them. They're easy to spot and easy to read. And they help keep content digestible.
- Just the facts, please. Don't make content personal. Telling readers about your latest research is one thing, telling them that you love to take long walks and cuddle with your cats is irrelevant.
- Links are good, but only when they work. Make sure yours work, and that they're connecting to the right information. Also, Lehman has a policy that any links leading to most non-Lehman or non-CUNY related sites, must be accompanied by a notice that visitors are leaving the Lehman College website.

- Use link placement in running text judiciously. Avoid adding too many links to one piece of text.
- Terms to avoid: “Click here,” “this website,” and anything else that is self-referential.

abbreviations and acronyms (period or no period?)

(1) Use periods when abbreviating names of countries.

U.S. U.K.

(2) Use periods when abbreviating academic degrees.

B.A. M.A. Ph.D. M.S.W.

(3) Use periods with abbreviations for states:

N.Y. N.J. Ct.

(4) Use periods with abbreviations that appear in lowercase letters.

e.g. a.k.a. p.m.

(5) Do not use periods in university or college abbreviations.

CUNY BMCC CSI

(6) To introduce an acronym, place it in parentheses following the initial mention of the complete name. No periods. *(Note that in the past, the Office of Media Relations has used periods with acronyms; however, new recommendations have caused a change in this policy. Going forward, we will eliminate the use of periods in agencies and organizations.)*

New York State Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC)

SEEK (Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge)

academic degrees

It is preferable to spell out the names of degrees

bachelor's degree master's degree

academic departments

Capitalize names of academic departments. Following is a list of all Lehman's academic departments:

African and African American Studies

Anthropology

Art

Biological Sciences

Chemistry

Counseling, Leadership, Literacy, and Special Education

Early Childhood and Childhood Education

Economics and Business

English

Environmental, Geographic, and Geological Sciences

Health Sciences

History

Journalism, Communication, and Theatre
Languages and Literatures
Latin American and Puerto Rican Studies
Mathematics and Computer Science
Middle and High School Education
Music
Nursing
Philosophy
Physics and Astronomy
Political Science
Psychology
Sociology
Social Work
Note use of hyphen: Speech-Language-Hearing Sciences

Following is a list of our Interdisciplinary Programs:

American Studies
Comparative Literature
Italian-American Studies
Linguistics
Urban Studies
Women's Studies

academic majors

(1) Lowercase all majors.

biology chemistry

(2) Uppercase those portions of majors using proper nouns.

Latino and Puerto Rican studies

academic titles

In general, capitalize formal titles—e.g., "professor," "chancellor"—when they appear before names of individuals, and lowercase them following names of individuals.

Lowercase descriptive or occupational titles—"a department chair," "a history professor"—in all cases.

adviser/advisor

Use the "er" ending at all times.

alumni

Use "alumnus" for an individual male; "alumna" for an individual female; "alumni" for a group of males; "alumnae" for a group of females; and "alumni" when referring to a group composed of males and females.

a.m./ p.m.

Always lowercase and set with periods.

a.m./ p.m.

ampersand/ &

In general, when written in running text, spell out the symbol for the word *and*:

The architectural firm Gamble and Gamble has won the bid on the City's new multimillion-dollar convention center.

assistant professor, associate professor

See "academic titles"

buildings

Capitalize the proper names of campus buildings. Following is a list of all campus buildings:

Note all caps: APEX

Bookstore

Carman Hall

Lehman College Center for the Performing Arts

Davis Hall

Gillet Hall

Leonard Lief Library

Shuster Hall

Student Life Building

Note the forward slash: Speech/Theatre Building

Music Building

Old Gym Building

Fine Arts Building

Note the forward slash: T3—Nursing/ Child-Care Center/ Student Health Center

campus

Lowercase in all instances.

campus musical and performance ensembles. Refer to these groups as follows:

Lehman Big Band

Lehman Brass Quintet

Lehman Chamber Players

Lehman College Community Band

Lehman College and Community Chorus

Lehman Jazz Combo

Lehman Latin Jazz Ensemble

Lehman Percussion Ensemble

Lehman Woodwind Quintet

Lehman Stages

The Lehman Players

chair

Convert chairman or chairwoman to chair.

comma

Use a comma to separate all items in a series:

The department offers students the opportunity to study health, nutrition, recreation, and health services administration.

Use a comma to enclose years:

The legislation was passed by Congress on July 14, 1914, and signed by the President the next day.

colon

(1) A colon introduces an element or a series of elements. Unless it is a proper noun, lowercase the first word following the colon.

Students are required to present three forms of identification: driver's license, passport, and birth certificate.

(2) If the colon is introducing two or more sentences, uppercase the first word following the colon.

Henrietta was faced with a hideous choice: Should she reveal what was in the letter and ruin her reputation? Or should she remain silent and compromise the safety of her family?

copyright issues

Use of all images (and content, if not original) on the Web must contain copyright information. Use photo credits where credit is due.

course titles

Use bold, roman (standard) type, and capitals for course titles. A period ends the phrase.

Ex. **ANT 250 (IAS 304): The Italian-American Community.**

dates and days

Use a comma to separate days and years: July 14, 1914

Do not use a comma to separate a month and year: July 1914

In general, spell out the day of the week: Monday, Tuesday, etc.

dash

See *em* and *hyphen*

em dash

The width of an “m,” the em dash is used to amplify or further explain a thought within a sentence. There should be no space before and after the dash:

How much trash do you think 12,000 college students—plus faculty and staff—produce in one day?

e-mail

Lowercase e, with a hyphen

e.g.

Means “for example;” do not confuse with i.e., which stands for “that is.” Requires comma both before and after: "He showed her the different colors he had in stock, e.g., blue, green, and yellow."

emeritus

Place emeritus after the formal title: Professor Emeritus Jean Dayan or Jean Daylan, professor emeritus of chemistry.

hyphen

Use a hyphen to separate numbers, such as telephone numbers, Social Security numbers, and ISBN numbers.

718- 960-5555 121-34-5555

Use a hyphen to link words with prefixes.

ex-wife ex-factor

Use a hyphen to link the elements of compound modifiers.

early-sixteenth-century music in France

i.e.

Means “that is” and requires a comma both before and after a comma. Do not confuse with e.g., which means “for example." "He found the topic provocative, i.e., it caused heated discussion in the class."

internet and website

(1) Capitalize Internet and Web

(2) Use one word and lower case for website:

The department’s website is under construction.

login

When used as a verb, it is spelled as two words “log in.” When used as a noun, it becomes login or logon.

institutes and centers

Bronx Data Center
Bronx Institute
Center for School/College Collaboratives
CUNY Institute for Health Equity
CUNY Institute for Irish American Studies
Institute for Literacy Studies
Public Service Leadership Institute

its and it's

its is a possessive pronoun. "*It's*" is a contraction, which stands for *it is*.

It's time to do the laundry.

The college and all *its* associated entities report to the university.

italics

Titles of books, journals, magazines, newspapers, films, television programs (specific episodes are set in quotation marks), and collections of poetry may be set in italics.

name of institution

Lehman College, Herbert H. Lehman College, or Lehman College, CUNY

namesake

Herbert H. Lehman

non-

In general, no hyphen when used as a prefix.

online

One word in all cases when referring to the computer communication term.

percent

Not "per cent." Avoid use of % except in charts and other graphics.

period

Use a period to mark the end of a complete sentence.

Topics and credits will vary and be announced each semester.

If a complete sentence is enclosed in parentheses, place the period inside the parenthesis.

(Fill out the application and return it to Shuster Hall, Room 300.)

If the sentence is included within another sentence, place the period outside the parenthesis.

Students must apply for admission before November 15 (don't forget to print out the application).

plurals

Most nouns form the plural by adding “s.” If they end in ch, j, s, sh, x, or z, add “es.” Some nouns ending in “y” receive an “ies” ending. If uncertain, consult a dictionary.

For proper nouns, add “s” or “es” to form the plural.

Jones—Joneses / Afghan—Afghans

For years and acronyms, just add “s,” with no apostrophe.

Ex. 1990s, CPAs, MRIs

possessives

Form the possessive singular of nouns by adding apostrophe and “s.”

Ex. The cat’s meow

The same rule applies to proper nouns, letters, and numbers.

Ex. Phyllis’s car, Stacey’s shoes

Exceptions to the general rule are nouns in plural form, but singular in meaning. These take an apostrophe with no “s.”

Ex. Politics’ true meaning, economics’ forerunners

The same rule applies when the name of a place or an organization is a plural form ending in “s.”

Ex. Veterans and Reservists Affairs’ website

punctuation

For punctuation, consult *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

room

In general, spell out and capitalize.

quotation marks

In general, place punctuation inside quotation marks.

There is no category at the College entitled “leave of absence.”

spacing

Spaces between sentences: Use one space, not two, between sentences and other punctuation.

telephone numbers

Use a hyphen. Never use parenthesis to set off the area code.

718-960-5555.

time

Always use figures and set in lowercase type with periods. Ex. 2 p.m.

When giving a range of time, if the event begins and ends at the same time of day, only note the time of day once. Ex. 9:30-11:30 a.m. (NOT 9:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.)

There should be NO spacing between the en dash or hyphen.

that, which

Both are relative pronouns. Use “that” to introduce an essential clause. Use “which” to introduce a non-essential clause.

The Lehman College Art Gallery has launched a new website that will help educators.

Besides reaching the finish line, the most memorable part of the experience was enjoying the music and cheers, which gave the race a relaxed vibe.

the

Capitalize if part of a composition title: *Ex. The New York Times.*

Lowercase when used with organizations: *Ex. Based on the bylaws that govern the City University of New York...*

theater

Use this spelling unless the proper name is Theatre. Ex. Lovinger Theatre.

toward, towards

In American English, the preferred usage is without the “s.” This also applies to other directional words, such as *upward, downward, forward, backward, and afterward.*