

Clemson University

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS STYLE GUIDE

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WHO NEEDS TO USE THIS EDITORIAL STYLE GUIDE?

This guide is intended for all Clemson University faculty and staff who are writing or editing text for print publications, websites, digital, mobile, promotional and other content for internal and external audiences.

With some noted exceptions, Clemson University follows the AP Stylebook (apstylebook.com), a reference guide for journalists. This editorial style guide is meant to serve as a supplement to the 2022-2024 AP Stylebook.

This guide has been approved for use by the Division of Marketing and Communications.

CLEMSON-SPECIFIC AND ACADEMIC TERMINOLOGY

Academic degrees

- Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science are capitalized in all references.
 - But bachelor's, bachelor's degree, master's degree, doctoral degree, doctorate, etc. are all lowercased.
- Master of Science, Master of Business Administration, Master of Arts, Master of Fine Arts are always capitalized.
- When used after a name, an academic abbreviation is set off by commas.
 - Example: Jane Smith, Ph.D., spoke at the conference.
- associate degree, not associate's degree
- See degree abbreviations on Page 21.

Academic semesters/terms

- Capitalize all academic semesters/terms
 - e.g., Fall 2019, Spring 2020, Summer 2020
- Capitalize when referring to semesters without the year, e.g., the Fall semester, the Spring semester. (This deviates from the AP Stylebook guidelines in which seasons are always lowercase. If referring to a season, rather than an academic term, still use lowercase.)
 - WRONG: She graduates in Spring 2020.
 - RIGHT: She graduates in spring 2020.
 - RIGHT: The Spring 2020 semester begins in January.
 - RIGHT: His scholarship was renewed for Fall 2019.
 - RIGHT: Tuition is due in August for the Fall semester.

Adviser, advisor

- Although “adviser” has been the preferred spelling for many years, we have accepted the spelling of “advisor” for consistency’s sake across communications. This is a departure from the AP Stylebook.

alumna, alumnus, alumni, alum

- Alumni is a group of persons — men and/or women — who have attended Clemson.
- Use alumnus when referring to one man who has attended Clemson.
- Use alumna when referring to one woman who has attended Clemson.

- Do not use the term alumnae.
- If a gender-neutral term is desired, alum or alums is acceptable use.

Andy Quattlebaum Outdoor Education Center

- The full name is required on first reference. Andy's is acceptable on subsequent references.

Atlantic Coast Conference

- ACC is acceptable on second reference.

baccalaureate

Bachelor, bachelor's

- See "Academic degrees" entry

The Board of Trustees

- Capitalize when referring to the Clemson University Board of Trustees.
- The University is governed by a 13-member Board of Trustees.
- There are seven trustees serving as one of those appointed under the will of Thomas Green Clemson. These seven members are known as "successor trustees," and they select their successors.
- The remaining six trustees are elected by the South Carolina state legislature.

Bridge to Clemson Program

- Not BRIDGE to Clemson Program
- Can be referred to as Bridge on second reference

Bridge students

- Not BRIDGE students

Buildings

- Refer to all buildings by their official names, rather than the colloquial names used on campus. Official names can be found on the campus map (<http://www.clemson.edu/campus-map/>).
- The Class of 1956 Academic Success Center

- The Academic Success Center is acceptable on second reference.
- The Michelin Career Center
- The Career Center is acceptable on second reference.

Call Me MISTER®

- Include registered trademark symbol in all references.

campuswide

Chandler L. Burns Hall

City names

- Consult the AP Stylebook for major city names that can be used without their state name.
- South Carolina cities: While Clemson can stand alone on all references, other South Carolina cities, such as Greenville, Columbia and Charleston, etc., should include South Carolina on first reference.

class work

- Two words, per AP

class years, graduating years

- Years within this current century are expressed with an apostrophe and two digits. Place a space before the undergraduate class year. Do not put a comma after a name.
 - e.g. John Smith '03
 - e.g., M '12, Ph.D. '20
- Use commas to separate multiple degrees.
 - e.g., Jane Smith '10, M '12
- Use four digits for graduation years of more than 100 years ago
 - M 1916

Class of

- Capitalization is acceptable in conjunction with a year.
 - e.g., The outdoor theater was a gift from the Class of 1915.

Clemson Alumni Association

Clemson alumni

- In text, follow their names with '94 for undergraduate, M '94 for master's and Ph.D. '94 for doctorate.
 - e.g., John Smith '10, M '12
 - e.g., Jane Smith Ph.D. '19
- If an alumni has an unusual nickname (i.e., not a shortened version of their regular name), write it as Fred R. "Bubba" Smith '56.

Clemson Athletics

Clemson Baseball, Basketball, Football, etc.

Clemson Children's Campus

- The name of the new child care facility on campus. Do NOT refer to it as daycare.

Clemson Experience

Clemson Cooperative Extension

- Can be shortened to Extension or Clemson Extension on subsequent references.

Clemson Family

- Capitalize and do not use quotation marks.

Clemson University Honors College

- The Honors College is acceptable on second reference or in references when including Clemson University sounds awkward to the reader.

Clemson Indoor Track & Field Complex

Clemson Ring

Clemson Tigers, the Tigers

Clemson University

- On first reference, always use the entire formal name of Clemson University.
- University is acceptable on subsequent specific references to Clemson University and is always capitalized.
- Do not abbreviate Clemson University as CU in any reference.

Clemson University International Center for Automotive Research

- Use the full name on first reference and CU-ICAR on subsequent references.

Clemson World

- The name of the University magazine

The Clyde V. Madren Center

- The Madren Center is acceptable on second reference.

Colleges, schools, departments

- Capitalize the names of Clemson's eight colleges:
 - College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences
 - College of Architecture, Art and Construction
 - College of Arts and Humanities
 - College of Behavioral, Social and Health Sciences
 - The Wilbur O. and Ann Powers College of Business
 - College of Education
 - College of Engineering, Computing and Applied Sciences
 - College of Science
- Use the full and formal department, school or college name in references, i.e., the Department of Communication, not the communication department.
- Capitalize the University's college and academic department names in all uses, whether or not they are part of the official or formal name (Note: This deviates from AP Stylebook guidelines.)
 - e.g., The Department of Accountancy is housed in the Wilbur O. and Ann Powers College of Business.
 - e.g., He is dean of the Glenn Department of Civil Engineering.
- When referring to a specific college, department or school within the University, referring to it as the College, Department or School (capitalized) is acceptable on second reference, e.g., The Department is hiring a new lecturer.
 - Lowercase in less formal usage, e.g., Our department has 150 students.

Commencement

- Uppercase the formal ceremony; lowercase for generic uses.
 - e.g., Undergraduate Commencement will be held at Littlejohn Coliseum.
 - e.g., There are three commencement ceremonies in the spring.

Core Campus

- Do not use the term Core Campus to refer to the area of campus that consists of Gressette, Cribb, DesChamps and McAlister halls. This was the name of the construction project and is no longer in formal use. It is acceptable to refer to this general area as West Campus. The West Campus area also includes the “shoeboxes” (Benet, Cope, Geer, Sanders and Young), Mickel Hall, the fraternity and sorority quad, and Holmes and McCabe halls.

coursework

- One word, per AP

credit hours

- Always use numerals, e.g., This is a 3-credit course.

curriculum

- A single plan of study. The plural is curricula.

dean

- Capitalize only when it precedes a name.
 - e.g., Dean Anand Gramopadhye spoke on Monday.
 - e.g. Anand Gramopadhye, dean of the College of Engineering, Computing and Applied Sciences, spoke on Monday.

Death Valley

- The unofficial name for Memorial Stadium

Doug Kingsmore Stadium

doctorate

- See “Academic degrees” entry

emeritus (m), emerita (f)

- An honorary title bestowed to faculty after retirement. Note that not all retired faculty are emeritus.
- plural: professors emeritus

Erwin Center for Brand Communications

Fellow(s), fellow(s); Fellowship, fellowship

- Capitalize Fellow and Fellowship only as part of a formal name/title. Use the lowercase in other uses.
 - e.g., She is part of the Watt Faculty Fellows Program. She is a fellow in the program. The fellowship is for one academic year.

First-year student(s)

- Clemson University prefers the gender-neutral term first-year student(s) instead of freshman/freshmen.

Founders Day

Fraternities, sororities

- The full, formal name should be used on first reference. Abbreviations are acceptable on second reference.

freshman (n., adj.), freshmen (n.)

- Clemson University prefers the gender-neutral term first-year student(s). Avoid using the term freshman/freshmen.

Garrison Sales Lab

Global Black Studies

- Capitalize the name of this undergraduate major and minor program.

The Graduate School

- Capitalize when referring to the Clemson University Graduate School

Gunnin Architecture Library

The Hill

Historic Riggs Field

Hoke Sloan Tennis Center

Honors

- Capitalize in the context of the Clemson University Honors College, e.g., Honors students, Honors classes, Honors classroom, etc.

Homecoming

Howard's Rock

IPTAY

- Athletic support program. Acronym for “I Pay Ten a Year.”
- IPTAY is acceptable on first reference.

Jervey Gym

The John E. Walker Sr. Golf Course

- The Walker Course is acceptable on second reference.

Johnson Study Lounge

Lake Hartwell

- Not Hartwell Lake

land-grant

- Hyphenated when used as an adjective, e.g., Clemson is a land-grant university.

Littlejohn Coliseum

The Madren Center

- Use Clyde V. Madren Center on first reference.

Majors, academic subjects and class/course names

- Majors and academic subjects are only capitalized if they contain a proper noun.
 - RIGHT: I am majoring in secondary education with an emphasis in French.
 - WRONG: I am majoring in Microbiology.
 - RIGHT: I am majoring in microbiology.
- Note: Clemson University considers the Global Black Studies program to be a proper noun.
- Official University course names can be capitalized but should be lowercased when referring to a general field of study.
 - e.g., She registered to take Law Market Analysis in the Spring.
 - e.g., Students thought the final exam for Statics and Dynamics was challenging.
 - e.g., Her degree program included courses in data science and algorithms.
- Course abbreviations are written as presented in the University’s catalog, i.e., HIST 1010, ENGL 1030, FIN 2010, etc.

- In pull quote attributions, use the following construction and lowercase majors/degree programs unless the subject is a proper noun.

- “I love Clemson!”
John Smith, history '22

OR

“I love Clemson.” —John Smith, history '22

OR

“I love Clemson!”
John Smith
history '22

OR

“I love Clemson!”
John Smith
senior history major

master's

- See “Academic degrees” entry

McWhorter Stadium

Melvin and Dollie Younts Trading Room

Memorial Stadium

Mickel Hall

- A residence hall formerly known as Stadium Suites. Renamed in summer 2019.

Office of Admissions

- Not Admissions Office

Pattillo Family Foundation Classroom

Ph.D.

- See “Academic degrees” entry

Phyfer Auditorium

postdoctoral

- No hyphen

postgraduate

- No hyphen

Prater Classroom

Presidential titles

- Below is the correct usage when referring to the president of Clemson University:
 - Informal: Jim and Beth Clements
 - Formal: President and Mrs. James P. Clements

 - Informal: The Clements Family
 - Formal: President James P. and Elizabeth S. Clements

 - Informal: President Jim Clements (preferred usage in media releases, news stories, etc.)
 - Formal: President James P. Clements, Ph.D.

President Clements is acceptable on second reference.

President, vice president, associate vice president

- Capitalize titles only when they precede a name.
 - e.g., Vice President for Student Affairs Almeda R. Jacks
 - e.g., Almeda R. Jacks, vice president for student affairs, retired this year.

Prisma Health-Upstate

- Formerly known as Greenville Health System

The Princeton Review (not Princeton Review)

Professor, instructor, lecturer

- Always refer to faculty members in the assistant professor, associate professor or full professor categories as a professor, never as a lecturer or instructor.
 - It is acceptable to capitalize professor, associate professor, assistant professor, etc. when immediately preceding a name.
 - e.g., Associate Professor Dan Brown has been at Clemson since 2009.
 - e.g., Clemson announced that Associate Professor Dan Brown received an award.
 - BUT Dan Brown is an associate professor in the School of Architecture.
- Use “instructor” or “lecturer” as appropriate, when referring to others engaged in the occupation of teaching students.
- Do not capitalize instructor or lecturer when preceding a name.

Professors

- Refer to professors by their first and last name and last name on second reference. Do not use Dr. to refer to faculty with Ph.D.s.
 - RIGHT: John Smith is a biochemistry professor.
 - WRONG: Dr. John Smith is a biochemistry professor.
 - BUT it is acceptable to retain Dr. if it is part of a direct quote: “Dr. Smith let me join his lab my sophomore year,” the student said.
- Professor can be capitalized before a name. Also capitalize Professor Emeritus as a conferred title before a name.
 - e.g., Professor Fuller teaches psychology.

Provost

- Capitalize only when it precedes a name.
 - Provost Bob Jones is a Clemson alumnus.
 - Bob Jones, provost at Clemson University, graduated in 1979.

Rankings

- Using the date is optional when discussing University rankings in context.
 - e.g., Clemson has an excellent first-year retention rate. *The Princeton Review* ranked us No. 9 for “Their Students Love These Colleges.”
- However, the date must always be used when citing the source in parentheses.
 - RIGHT: We are ranked No. 9 for “Their Students Love These Colleges” (*The Princeton Review*, 2020).

residence hall

- Clemson prefers the use of the term residence hall for on-campus living accommodations instead of dormitory or dorm.

Richardson Atrium

Ring Ceremony / Clemson Ring Ceremony

R.M. Cooper Library

- Cooper Library acceptable on second reference.

Rock Norman Outdoor Track & Field Complex

Snow Family Outdoor Fitness and Wellness Complex (effective January 2020)

Solid Orange

South Carolina Botanical Garden (not Gardens)

- Garden on second reference

State House

- Two words. The building located in Columbia, South Carolina, that serves as the seat of state government in South Carolina.

Summer Session(s)

- Name for the Summer course offerings program, including Summer I, Summer II and minimesters.

Theater, theatre

- Theater is the American English spelling recommended by the AP Stylebook. However, the Department of Performing Arts uses the British English spelling of theatre when referring to its program concentration. When not referring to this program, use the American English spelling, e.g., The Brooks Center has two theaters.
- Theatre may also be used when referring to a proper noun that includes “theatre,” e.g., the Bellamy Theatre in the Brooks Center for the Performing Arts.

Tigertown

- e.g., Tigertown Bound

Tiger Paw

- Capitalize when referring to the University mark

the Tiger

- Capitalize when referring to the mascot

U.S. News & World Report

University

- Capitalize in all instances when referring only to Clemson University.
 - e.g., The University will unveil its new capital campaign in January.
- Lowercase when referring to other universities.

Universitywide

- One word, no hyphen

The Walker Course

- Use John E. Walker Sr. Golf Course on first reference.

West Campus

- An area on campus that encompasses Gressette, Cribb, DesChamps and McAlister halls, the “shoeboxes” (Benet, Cope, Geer, Sanders and Young), Mickel Hall, the fraternity and sorority quad, and Holmes and McCabe halls.

The Wilbur O. and Ann Powers College of Business

- Full name is required on all references. Do NOT shorten to Powers College of Business.
- When referring to the new facility, it is the Wilbur O. and Ann Powers College of Business building. The full name is required on all references.

ABBREVIATIONS

-Do not use abbreviations or acronyms that a reader would not quickly recognize. Avoid abbreviating the name of Clemson colleges, departments, divisions, etc.

-Abbreviations should be avoided in headlines.

-Some general principles:

- Before a name
 - Abbreviate titles when used before a name: Dr., Gov., Lt. Gov., Mr., Mrs., Rep., the Rev., Sen.
- After a name
 - Abbreviate junior or senior after an individual's name. Do not put commas around Jr. or Sr.
 - e.g., LeBron James Jr. already has an offer from Kentucky to play college basketball.
 - Abbreviate company, corporation, incorporated and limited when used after a corporate entity.
 - e.g., The Coca-Cola Co. is headquartered in Atlanta.
- With dates or numerals
 - Use the abbreviations A.D., B.C., a.m., p.m., and No. when used with a numeral.
 - Deviation from AP Stylebook: Write out all months, no abbreviations.
 - e.g., Students who apply before December 1 will know of their acceptance status by mid-February.
- In numbered addresses
 - Abbreviate avenue, boulevard and street in numbered addresses.
 - Exception: 1 Avenue of Champions (address of Death Valley)
 - Write out drive, road, lane, court, etc.
 - e.g., The Littlejohn House is located at 114 Daniel Drive.
- States
 - Spell out full names of all 50 states, whether they stand alone or are used in conjunction with a city, town, etc.
 - WRONG: She is from Raleigh, N.C.
 - RIGHT: She is from Raleigh, North Carolina.
 - Generally, put periods in most two-letter abbreviations: U.S., U.K.
 - In headlines, do not use periods in abbreviations, unless needed for clarity.

- Latin phrases
 - e.g. [meaning: for example]
 - i.e. [meaning: that is to say]
 - et al. [meaning: and others]
 - etc. [meaning: et cetera]

- Academic degrees
 - B.S. in nursing
 - B.A. in English
 - BSN (Bachelor of Science in Nursing)
 - EdD (abbreviation for Doctor of Education, no periods)
 - Ed.S. (abbreviation for Education Specialist, use periods)
 - M.A. in architecture
 - M.S. in mechanical engineering
 - Ph.D. in history
 - M.Arch.
 - MBA (Master of Business Administration)
 - MFA (Master of Fine Arts)
 - MSN (Master of Science in Nursing)
 - BFA (Bachelor of Fine Arts)
 - DNP (Doctor of Nursing Practice)
 - DVM (Doctor of Veterinary Medicine)
 - MAC (Master of Applied Computing)
 - M.AgEd. (Master of Agricultural Education)
 - MAT (Master of Arts in Teaching)
 - M.Eng. (Master of Engineering)
 - MFR (Master of Forest Resources)
 - MCRP (Master of City and Regional Planning)
 - MCSM (Master of Construction Science and Management)
 - M.Ed. (Master of Education)
 - MHRD (Master of Human Resource Development)
 - MLA (Master of Landscape Architecture)
 - MPA (Master of Public Administration)
 - MPAcc (Master of Professional Accountancy)
 - MRED (Master of Real Estate Development)
 - MRUD (Master of Resilient Urban Development)
 - MSS (Master of Social Science)
 - MTSA (Master of Transportation Safety Administration)
 - MWFR (Master of Wildlife and Fisheries Resources)

ACRONYMS

Acronyms should be used sparingly to ensure clear communication. Avoid using an acronym for Clemson colleges, departments, divisions, etc. on first reference.

There is no need to provide the acronym if the organization is mentioned only once in your text or if the organization is not well known by its acronym.

- On first reference, give the full name of the organization. You can use the acronym in the rest of the text.
 - e.g., The College of Engineering, Computing and Applied Sciences houses the Department of Mechanical Engineering. CECAS has the highest number of students at Clemson.
- Spell out names and then use the acronym on second reference.
 - e.g., The Clemson University International Center for Automotive Research is located in Greenville. CU-ICAR has seven strategic research areas.
- Some acronyms for Clemson and University-related departments and organizations
 - CAAC: College of Architecture, Art and Construction
 - CAH: College of Arts and Humanities
 - CAFLS: College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences
 - CBSHS: College of Behavioral, Social and Health Sciences
 - CECAS: College of Engineering, Computing and Applied Sciences
 - EUREKA!: Experiences in Undergraduate Research, Exploration and Knowledge Advancement
 - Can be referred to as EUREKA! on first reference
 - IPTAY: I Pay Ten a Year
 - Can be referred to as IPTAY on first reference.
 - UPIC: University Professional Internship and Co-op Program
 - Can be referred to as the UPIC Program on second reference.

CAPITALIZATION

General guidelines from the AP Stylebook

Proper nouns

- Capitalize nouns that constitute the unique identification to a specific person, place, or thing
 - e.g., Dabo, Jim, South Carolina, Clemson, Death Valley

Proper names

- Capitalize common names such as party, river, street and west when they are an integral part of the full name for a person, place or thing
 - e.g. The Republican Party, Seneca River, Keith Street, West Virginia
- Lowercase the names in plural uses: the Democratic and Republican parties, lakes Keowee and Hartwell
 - Exception: plurals of formal titles with full names are capitalized, e.g., Presidents James F. Barker and James P. Clements
- Capitalize common nouns – e.g., department, school — when they are part of a formal name. Generally, lowercase them when standing alone in subsequent references.
 - e.g., The Department of English is hiring. The department is looking for a new assistant professor.
 - e.g., The School of Architecture is nationally recognized. The school offers undergraduate degrees in architecture and landscape architecture.
 - NOTE: If desired, it is acceptable to capitalize Department and School in more formal contexts, such as fundraising/donor proposal materials.

Academic titles

- Refer to professors by their first and last name and last name on second reference. Do not use Dr. to refer to faculty with Ph.D.s.
 - RIGHT: John Smith is a biochemistry professor.
 - WRONG: Dr. John Smith is a biochemistry professor.
- It is acceptable to capitalize professor, associate professor, assistant professor, etc. when preceding a name. Capitalize Professor Emeritus as a conferred title before a name.
 - e.g., Associate Professor Dan Brown has been at Clemson since 2009.
 - e.g., Clemson announced that Associate Professor Dan Brown received an award.
 - Dan Brown is an associate professor in the School of Architecture.

- Capitalize and spell out formal titles such as chancellor, chairman, etc. when they precede a name. Lowercase elsewhere.
- Lowercase modifiers such as department in department Chairman Atul G. Kelkar.

Buildings

- Capitalize the proper names of buildings, including the word building if it's an integral part of the proper name.

Composition titles

- Capitalize the principal words in the names of books, movies, plays, poems, operas, songs, radio and television programs, works of art, etc.
- Capitalize all words in a title except articles (a, an, the); prepositions of three or fewer letters (for, of, on, up, etc.); and conjunctions of three or fewer letters (and, but, for, or, so, yet, etc.) unless any of those words start or end the title.
- Capitalize prepositions of four or more letters (above, after, down, inside, over, with, etc.) and conjunctions of four or more letters (because, while, since, through, etc.)
- Capitalize both parts of a phrasal verb
 - e.g., "Turn Off the Lights in Silence"
- Capitalize to in infinitives
 - e.g., "What I Want To Be When I Grow Up"
- Examples of titles: "The Star-Spangled Banner," "Pride and Prejudice," "Of Mice and Men," "This Is Us," "For Whom the Bell Tolls"

Directions and regions

- Generally, lowercase north, south, northeast, northern, etc. when they indicate compass direction and capitalize when they designate regions.
 - e.g., The storm is moving west toward Clemson.
 - e.g., She decided to move to the Northeast after graduation.
 - With sections of states and cities, generally lowercase (eastern Michigan, southwest Atlanta) unless the area is widely known (Southern California, West Texas). When in doubt, lowercase.
- Capitalize the regions of South Carolina: Upstate, Piedmont, Midlands, Lowcountry.

internet

- Always lowercase internet.

Professional/occupational titles

- In general, confine capitalization to formal titles used directly before an individual's name. (A formal title generally is one that denotes a scope of authority, professional activity or academic activity: President Jim Clements, Provost Bob Jones, Sen. Lindsey Graham, Dr. Anthony Fauci, retired Gen. Colin Powell.)
- Lowercase and spell out titles when they are not used with an individual's name: The president issued a statement. The associate vice president spoke on Monday.
- Lowercase and spell out titles in constructions that set them off from a name by commas: Jim Clements, the 15th president of Clemson University, began his tenure on December 31, 2013.
- Most other professional titles serve primarily as occupational descriptions and should be lowercase in all uses whether or not they precede a name: director of marketing Jane Smith, communications coordinator Jill Smith, assistant editor Emily Baker, director of communications Joe Smith, academic adviser Jordan Smith, coach Dabo Swinney, offensive coordinator Garrett Riley.

Seasons

- Do not capitalize unless referring to an academic term (Spring, Fall, Summer) or a formal reference (the Fall 2019 issue of Clemson World)
 - e.g., Tuition for Fall 2019 is due in August.
 - e.g., The best football weather is during fall.

University

- Capitalize when referring to Clemson University on second reference. Lowercase for other universities.

See Clemson and Academic Words and Phrases section for capitalization guidelines on the following:

- Academic degrees.
- Academic semesters/terms.
- Colleges, schools, departments.
- Majors, academic subjects and class/course names.

NUMBERS, MEASUREMENTS, DATES AND TIMES

Numbers

- In general, spell out numbers from zero to nine.
- Use figures for 10 and above.
 - Exception: Spell out the number if it begins a sentence: One hundred students graduated in August.
- These rules also apply to ordinal numbers:
 - first, second, third
 - 10th, 11th, 12th
 - Don't use superscripts. Word automatically generates them, so this needs to be manually changed.
- The percent sign (%) is acceptable in graphics and breakout information, but spell out the word in text.
 - (Note: This deviates from a recent AP Stylebook change in which the % sign is acceptable in all uses.)
- The pound sign (#) is acceptable in graphics and breakout information when discussing rankings, but write No. in text.
 - e.g., Clemson is ranked No. 27 among all national public universities, according to *U.S. News & World Report*, 2020.
- Clemson style is to write phone numbers with hyphens and without a "1" before the area code.
 - e.g., 864-555-5555
- Always use figures for:
 - Academic course numbers (History 101)
 - Addresses (114 Daniel Drive)
 - Ages (Her son is 6 years old.)
 - Planes, ships and spacecraft designations (Boeing 747)
 - Court decisions
 - Credit hours (a 3-credit course)
 - Dates, years and decades (February 28, 1989, '90s)
 - Decimals, percentages and fractions with numbers larger than 1 (.08, 9 percent, 4 3/4)
 - Dimensions to indicate depth, height, length and width (4-foot fence)
 - Distances (miles, feet, yards) (5 miles, 9 feet, 6 yards)
 - Golf clubs (7-iron)

- Highway designations (Interstate 85)
 - Mathematical usage (divide by 4)
 - Military ranks, used as titles with names, military terms and weapons (1st Sgt. David Triplett)
 - Millions, billions, trillions (5 million, 3 billion, 10 trillion)
 - Monetary units (\$5 million, \$15, \$8, 5 cents)
 - Odds, proportions and ratios (16-to-1 ratio)
 - Rank (No. 1 song)
 - Political districts (6th district)
 - Sequential designations (capitalize the first letter for a single designation: Phase 1, Category 3, Stage 3, Type 2; use lowercase for plurals: verses 2 and 4, acts 1 and 2)
 - Speeds (9 miles per hour, 65 miles per hour)
 - Sports scores, standings (Clemson beat USC 56-35.)
 - Temperatures (It was 8 degrees in January and 67 degrees in April.)
 - Times (Kickoff is at 7:30 p.m.)
 - Votes (The bill was defeated by a vote of 6-4.)
- Numbers are spelled out:
 - At the start of a sentence (unless it's a year or a numeral/letter combination)
 - e.g., 2018 was a good year.
 - e.g., 3D movies are drawing more fans.
 - In indefinite and casual uses
 - e.g., He made his final decision at the eleventh hour.
 - In fanciful language
 - e.g., The Fab Four
 - In fractions less than one that are not used as modifiers.
 - e.g., He made three-fourths of his shots.

Dates and Times

- 21st century/20th century
 - No superscript.
 - Use a hyphen if it's an adjective: 21st-century challenges
- 1990s, '90s (notice the apostrophe ['], which indicates there are missing numbers)
- Do not abbreviate months.
- No st, rd or th on numbers in dates
 - RIGHT: June 1
 - WRONG: June 1st
- Time written in figures: 7:30 p.m.; 9:30 p.m.; 5 hours, 18 minutes, 20 seconds.
 - But midnight and noon are written out.

- Spell out numbers less than 10 standing alone and in modifiers, e.g., She left five minutes ago. The two-minute warning. He scored with three seconds left.
- No :00 for exact hours.
 - The game starts at 8 p.m.
- a.m. and p.m.
 - Use periods after each letter, no space between
 - Use lowercase letters
 - No need to say “in the morning” or “in the afternoon” after a.m. and p.m.

PUNCTUATION

Ampersand

- Only use the ampersand (&) symbol when it is part of an official name. Otherwise, use the word “and.”
 - RIGHT: College of Architecture, Art and Construction
 - Exception: Clemson Housing & Dining
 - Exception: U.S. News & World Report

Apostrophe

- Apostrophes indicate possession
 - Plural nouns not ending in S: add 's, e.g., the alumni's contributions
 - Plural nouns ending in S: add only an apostrophe, e.g., the students' classes
 - Nouns plural in form, singular in meaning: add only an apostrophe, e.g., mathematics' rules
 - Nouns in the same in singular and plural: treat them the same as plurals, even if the meaning is singular, e.g., the two deer's tracks
 - Singular nouns not ending in S: Add 's, e.g., the library's books
 - Singular common nouns ending in S: Add 's, e.g., campus's beauty
 - Singular proper names ending in S: Use only an apostrophe, e.g., Clements' speech
- Descriptive phrases: Do not add an apostrophe to a word ending in s when it is used primarily in a descriptive phrase, e.g., farmers market, writers guide
 - Memory aid: The apostrophe usually is not used if for or by rather than of would be appropriate in the longer form, e.g., a market for farmers, a guide for writers
 - A 's is required, however, when a term involves a plural word that does not end in s, e.g., a children's hospital
- Apostrophes also indicate missing letters, e.g., BA '14 = BA 2014

Brackets

- In general, use for editorial notes and references only
 - e.g., The ESPN pundit said that the [Clemson] Tigers are the best football team in the country.

Colon

- Capitalize the first word after a colon only if it is a proper noun or the start of a complete sentence, e.g., President James P. Clements promised this: The University will always be committed to ensuring safety on campus.
 - But: There were three considerations: expense, time and feasibility.
- Introduce lists with a short phrase or sentence and a colon
 - e.g., Our partners: or These are our partners: or Our partners are:

Comma

- In general, Clemson University does not use the serial (Oxford) comma.
 - Do not put a comma before the conjunction in most simple series.
 - WRONG: Clemson's school colors are orange, regalia, and white.
 - RIGHT: Clemson's school colors are orange, regalia and white.
 - WRONG: Favorite outdoor spaces on campus include Bowman Field, the Carillon Gardens, and the Outdoor Amphitheater.
 - RIGHT: Favorite outdoor spaces on campus include Bowman Field, the Carillon Gardens and the Outdoor Amphitheater.
 - WRONG: Jamie plays club soccer, serves on student government, and writes for the paper.
 - RIGHT: Jamie plays club soccer, serves on student government and writes for the paper.
 - In these above examples, the meaning of the sentences remains clear without using a serial comma, so including one is unnecessary.
- Sometimes, however, the serial comma is necessary for clarification purposes and to avoid ambiguity.
 - If an integral element of a series requires a conjunction, use a serial comma.
 - e.g., I had orange juice, toast, and bacon and eggs for breakfast.
 - e.g., Clemson's men sports include basketball, soccer, cross country, and track and field.
 - In the above examples, a serial comma would still be used before the final "and" regardless of the placement of the phrases "bacon and eggs" and "track and field" in the sentences.

- Include a serial comma in a simple series if omitting it would make the meaning unclear.
 - e.g., She would like to thank her parents, Dolly Parton and Elvis Presley.
 - Because Dolly Parton and Elvis Presley are not her parents, this sentence would be written with the serial comma to provide more clarity: She would like to thank her parents, Dolly Parton, and Elvis Presley.

- A comma can also be used before the concluding conjunction in a complex series of phrases. It is often a judgment call by the writer to decide when a series of phrases moves from “simple” to “complex” and when a serial comma is needed to provide clarification.
 - e.g., Her research interests include health disparities across different populations, the effectiveness of outreach efforts on seeking preventive care, and health care access in rural settings.
 - The meaning of the above sentence is still clear without a comma after the word “care,” but it does give the reader a bit of a mental pause. Therefore, if preferred, it would be acceptable to include the serial comma.

- Use commas to separate a series of adjectives equal in rank. If the commas could be replaced by the word “and” without changing the sense, the adjectives are equal, e.g., a thoughtful, precise manner.
 - Don’t use a comma when the last adjective before a noun outranks its predecessors because it is an integral element of a noun phrase, e.g., a cheap fur coat.

- When a conjunction such as and, but or for links two independent clauses that can stand alone as separate sentences, use a comma before the conjunction in most cases
 - e.g., The Wilbur O. and Ann Powers College of Business building opened in 2020, and it is Clemson’s newest academic building.
 - As a rule of thumb, use a comma if the subject of each clause is expressly stated. (The Clemson Football team visited the White House, and they had McDonald’s hamburgers.)
 - But no comma when the subject of the two clauses is the same and is not repeated in the second. (The Clemson Football team visited the White House and had McDonald’s hamburgers.)

- Before attribution (that is, identifying the speaker in quoted material): Use a comma instead of a period at the end of a quote that is followed by attribution, e.g., “Our students gather on Bowman Field on sunny days,” the campus tour guide said.
 - Do not use a comma, however, if the quoted statement ends with a question mark or exclamation point, e.g., “How many floors are in Cooper Library?” the prospective student asked.

- Use a comma to introduce a complete one-sentence quotation, e.g., Dabo said, “Tonight, it was BYOG: Bring your own guts!”
- Essential clauses, nonessential clauses
 - An essential clause **MUST NOT** be set off from the rest of a sentence by commas. A nonessential clause **MUST** be set off by commas. The presence or absence of commas provides the reader with critical information about the writer’s intended meaning.
 - e.g., Reporters who do not read the Stylebook should not criticize their editors. (The writer is saying that only one class of reporters, those who do not read the Stylebook, should not criticize their editors. If the who ... Stylebook phrase were deleted, the meaning of the sentence would be changed substantially.)
 - e.g., Reporters, who do not read the Stylebook, should not criticize their editors. (The writer is saying that all reporters should not criticize their editors. If the who ... Stylebook phrase were deleted, this meaning would not be changed.)
 - **USE OF THAT OR WHICH**
 - That is the preferred pronoun to introduce essential clauses that refer to an inanimate object or an animal without a name
 - Which is the only acceptable pronoun to introduce a nonessential clause that refers to an inanimate object or an animal without a name.

Dash

- An em dash (—) is used to make a strong break in the structure of a sentence, and it is also used to introduce a phrase or clause that summarizes, emphasizes or contrasts what has gone before.
 - e.g., The dining hall offers a variety of options — pizza, burgers, chicken sandwiches and a salad bar — for lunch.
 - Place one space on each side of an em dash.
- A hyphen (-) is used to show duration, e.g., James F. Barker was Clemson University’s president from 1999-2014.
- In accordance with the AP Stylebook, Clemson does not use the en-dash (–).

Ellipsis

- Ellipsis (...) indicate a missing word in a quotation. They are not necessary at the beginning or end of a quotation.
 - Make sure the addition to the ellipsis does not alter the original meaning of the quoted material.

Exclamation mark

- Denotes great surprise, a command, deep emotion or emphasis or sarcasm. Use sparingly in text.

Hyphen

- If a hyphen makes the meaning clearer, use it. If it just adds clutter and distraction to the sentence, don't use it.
- Avoid ambiguity: Use a hyphen whenever ambiguity would result if it were admitted.
 - e.g., He resigned on Monday versus He re-signed on Monday.

Compound modifiers

- A compound modifier is two or more words that express a single concept and precede a noun, e.g., quick-witted student, dog-friendly hotel.
 - In general, no hyphen is needed if the modifier is commonly recognized as one phrase, and if the meaning is clear and unambiguous without the hyphen. There are two-word terms, particularly those used as nouns, that have evolved to be commonly recognized as, in effect, one word.
 - No hyphen is needed when such terms are used as modifiers if the meaning is clear and unambiguous without the hyphen, e.g., third grade teacher, chocolate chip cookie, public land management, parking lot entrance, emergency room visit.
 - Use a hyphen if it's needed to make the meaning clear and avoid unintended meanings, e.g., small-business owner, little-known song, low-income workers, better-qualified candidate.
 - Think of the different possible meanings or confusion if the hyphen is removed in each of those examples.
- Hyphenate well- combinations before a noun but not after
 - e.g., a well-known professor, but the professor is well known.
- Generally, use a hyphen in modifiers of three or more words
 - e.g., black-and-white photography, a win-at-all-costs strategy
- No hyphen is needed to link a two-word phrase that includes the adverb very and all verbs ending in -ly
 - e.g., a very good season, an easily remembered rule
- Many combinations that are hyphenated before a noun are not hyphenated when they occur after a noun.
 - e.g., She works full time. She is well aware of the consequences. The children are soft spoken.
- But use a hyphen if confusion could result in confusion
 - e.g., The technology is state-of-the-art.
- AP does not hyphenate the term African American or any similar term designating dual heritage (Asian American, etc.).

Hyphen – prefix and suffixes

- Prefixes and suffixes
 - Prefixes that generally require hyphens include self-, all-, ex-, half-
 - Generally, do not hyphenate when using a prefix with a word starting with a consonant.
 - Use a hyphen if the prefix ends in a vowel and the word that follows begins with the same vowel.
 - Suffixes that generally require hyphens include -free, -based, -elect

Parentheses

- Use only when a word is truly parenthetical and not for editorial explanations.

Period

- In a bulleted, hyphenated or numbered list, use a period at the end of each sentence. Do not use punctuation at the end of a single word or a phrase in each section of a list. Use parallel construction for each list item.

Quotation marks

- Use for titles of books, movies, plays, poems, albums, songs, operas, radio and TV programs, magazine articles, lectures, academic papers, speeches and works of art.
 - NOTE: While academic paper titles are put in quotations, the AP Stylebook categorizes academic journals as “reference material,” similar to dictionaries, encyclopedias, handbooks, etc. Therefore, there are no quotation marks when referring to academic journals. Example: Last year, John Smith published “Effects of Remote Learning During COVID-19” in the Journal of Educational Psychology.
- Use double quotation marks, except for headlines and quotes with a quote, which use single quotation marks.
 - e.g., Undefeated Tigers ‘best ever,’ says Dabo Swinney
- Periods and commas go inside closing quotation marks.
- Colons and semicolons go outside closing quotation marks.
- For quotes that span more than one paragraph:
 - Use opening double quotation marks at the beginning of each paragraph; and
 - Use a closing double quotation mark only at the end of the last paragraph of the quoted remarks.

Semicolon

- Use to separate elements of a series when the items in the series are long or when individual segments contain material that almost must be set off by commas.
 - e.g., He is survived by a son, John Smith, of Chicago; three daughters, Jane Smith, of Wichita, Kansas, Mary Smith, of Denver, and Susan, of Boston; and a sister, Martha, of Omaha, Nebraska. (Note that the semicolon is used before the final and in such a series.)
- Use to link independence clauses when a coordinating conjunction such as and, but or for is not present, e.g., Most ESPN experts predicted Alabama would defeat Clemson; they were wrong.

FORMATTING

Headlines and subheadlines

- For print publications and articles posted to Clemson News, use sentence case for both headlines and subheadlines.
- Sentence case means that only the first word and proper nouns are capitalized.
 - e.g., (headline) Clemson wins second football national title in three seasons
 - e.g., (headline) Clemson debuts Deep Orange 11 in Las Vegas
(subheadline) Vehicle prototype provides glimpse into the future of mobility

Italics

- Use for publications/entities that publish rankings (e.g., *The Princeton Review*, *U.S. News & World Report*, etc.)
 - This is a deviation from the AP Stylebook, which does not use italics.
- Use for web addresses in print. There is no need to write “www” in front of most URLs.
 - e.g., Visit *clemson.edu/admissions*.

Spaces and spacing

- Always use a single space following a period to begin a new sentence, not a double space.

Web addresses/URLs

- Website (not web site), webpage (not web page)
- internet (always lowercase, not Internet)
- Write web addresses in lowercase without http:// or www.
- Note: Some Clemson webpages do not work if .html is removed at the end of a web address. If the link works without .html, then it can be removed.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Clemson University strives to create an inclusive and welcoming environment, and this commitment is reflected in the language we use to describe the members of our community. We aim to convey respect when highlighting the diverse populations of the Clemson Family and beyond by avoiding language that implies negative connotations or presents a narrow view of particular groups or people.

Clemson typically follows the AP Stylebook guidelines when considering language and terminology around race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, addiction, mental illness, religion, age or immigration or veteran status. Additional information regarding inclusive language and communication can be found in the chapter on inclusive storytelling in the AP Stylebook.

Please note that all of the terms and phrases found below are merely recommendations. When possible, ask the individual or group what terms are preferred.

Person-first language

- Clemson encourages the use of person-first language, which emphasizes an individual first and their condition(s) or circumstance(s) second — e.g., saying “people with disabilities” instead of “disabled people” or “the disabled,” “people experiencing homelessness” instead of “the homeless.” In person-first language, a person has ____ rather than is ____.
- As an exercise, applying person-first language can help communicators avoid vague terms and be more precise in their language, which leads to deeper and richer storytelling.
 - e.g., “The clinic serves high-risk, underserved communities.” → “The clinic serves populations that are at increased risk of developing diabetes due to a lack of reliable access to preventative care.”
 - e.g., “This outreach program engages underprivileged youth.” → “This outreach program engages youth who do not have as much access to quality public education.”

Addiction

- “Addiction” is the typically used term rather than “substance use disorder.” The latter might be used by medical professionals or in scientific/research contexts.
 - Alcoholism can be used when referring to an addiction to alcohol.
- When discussing addiction, emphasize the person over the disease.
 - Use language such as “he was addicted to _____,” “people with heroin addiction,” “people who use drugs,” “person with alcoholism,” rather than words like alcoholic, addict, user or abuser unless a person prefers to use those terms for themselves.

- “Addiction” and “dependence” are not interchangeable terms.
- Avoid using the term “clean” to describe sobriety.

Disability

- In general, do not describe an individual as disabled unless it is clearly relevant to the communications piece. If a description is required, try to be specific about the type of disability or symptoms.
 - Disabled or disability are general terms for a physical, mental, developmental or intellectual disability.
 - Do not describe a disability as “a handicap.”
 - Avoid descriptions that denote pity, such as “afflicted with” or “suffers from.”
 - e.g., Say “has multiple sclerosis” instead of “suffers from multiple sclerosis.”
 - Use person-centered language, which focuses on the person first, not their condition.
 - e.g., Say “person with a disability” instead of “disabled person.”
 - e.g., Say “person who uses a wheelchair” or “a wheelchair user” instead of “wheelchair-bound.”
- Deaf/deaf
 - Use the lowercase deaf when referring to the audiological condition of total or major hearing loss and for people with total or major hearing loss. Many deaf people who use sign language have a deeply ingrained sense of culture and community built around their experiences. The uppercase form Deaf can be used to signify that culture and is acceptable if used by the person or group in descriptions such as the Deaf community, Deaf education, Deaf culture, etc.
 - Do not use the uppercase form for a person; instead, use lowercase deaf, the standard style for medical conditions; e.g., Lane, who is deaf, said the Deaf community is an important part of his life.

Gender and sexual orientation

- Gender is not synonymous with sex. Gender refers to a person’s social identity, while sex refers to biological characteristics.
- The terms gay and lesbian are preferred over homosexual. Sexual orientation is not synonymous with gender.
- Gender-nonconforming (adj.) is an acceptable term in broad references to people who do not conform to gender expectations. When discussing individuals, be specific about how a person describes or expresses gender identity and behavior. Gender-nonconforming is not synonymous with transgender.
 - People are nonbinary if their gender identity is not strictly male or female. It is not synonymous with transgender.

- LGBT or LGBTQ are acceptable in all references for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning and/or queer.
- Transgender (adj.) describes people whose gender identity does not match the sex they were identified as having at birth. Use the name by which they live publicly.
- Do not use transgender as a noun, such as referring to someone as “a transgender,” or use the term “transgendered.”

Gender pronouns

- Avoid constructing sentences that have the effect of emphasizing one gender over another, e.g., defaulting to he/his/him. Usually, it is possible — and always preferable — to reword the sentence to avoid a specific gender.
 - e.g., Researchers work to protect the integrity of their studies *instead of* A researcher works to protect the integrity of his studies.
- The use of they/them/their is acceptable in limited cases as a gender-neutral pronoun when alternative wording is overly awkward and clumsy. Arguments for using they/them as a singular sometimes arise with unspecified or unknown gender, e.g., The winner will collect their prize next week. This is acceptable use.
- In stories about people who identify as neither male nor female or ask not to be referred to as he/she/him/her: Use the person’s name in place of a pronoun, or otherwise reword the sentence, whenever possible. If they/them/their use is essential, explain in the text that the person prefers a gender-neutral pronoun, and be sure that the phrasing does not imply more than one person.
- When they is used in the singular, it takes a plural verb, e.g., Taylor said they need a new car.

Mental illness

- The terms “mental illness” and “mentally ill” describe a broad range of conditions. Consult the AP Stylebook for guidance on specific conditions; many contain individual entries.
- In general, do not describe an individual as having a mental illness unless it is clearly relevant to the communications piece. If a description is required, be specific about the condition and the sourcing of the formal diagnosis if possible.
- Use person-first language when discussing individuals with a mental illness.
 - Examples include:
 - “She has bipolar disorder” instead of “She is bipolar.”
 - “He has a mental illness” instead of “He is mentally ill.”
 - “People with schizophrenia” instead of “schizophrenics.”

- Avoid descriptions that connote pity.
 - Avoid language such as “afflicted with” or “suffers from.” For example, instead of saying, “He suffers from bipolar disorder,” say, “He has bipolar disorder.”
- Avoid using pejorative terms, such as “crazy” or “insane.”

Race, ethnicity and national origin

- As of June 20, 2020, the AP Stylebook recommends the capitalization of Black when used as an adjective in the racial, ethnic or cultural sense: Black people, Black culture, Black literature, Black studies. Clemson University currently follows this guidance.
- The terms African American and Black are not necessarily interchangeable. Americans of Caribbean heritage, for instance, generally refer to themselves as Caribbean American. Follow a person’s stated preference.
- Black and white are acceptable as adjectives when relevant.
 - Do not use either term as a singular noun.
 - The plural nouns Blacks and whites are generally acceptable, but more specific phrasing such as white students, Black students, Black teachers is preferable.
- Asian American is an acceptable term for an American of Asian descent. When possible, refer to a person’s country of origin (e.g., Indian American) or follow their preference.
- American Indians and Native Americans are both acceptable terms in general references. If available, use the name of the tribe. Do not use the term Indian as shorthand for American Indians.
- Latino (or Latina) is often the preferred noun or adjective for a person from, or whose ancestors were from, a Spanish-speaking place or culture or from Latin America.
 - The Spanish language is constructed around gender with use of masculine and feminine forms. To offer a gender-neutral alternative, Latinx has emerged as an alternative to Latino.
 - Latinx, Latino and Latina can all coexist. It’s a personal choice on how one identifies. Follow a person’s stated preference.
 - It is preferable to identify people of Latin American descent first with their country of heritage and then second as “Latino/Latina/Latinx” or “Hispanic” to identify with a collective group.
 - For example, a person’s family who is from Mexico will typically identify as “Mexican American” before identifying as “Latino/Latina/Latinx” or “Hispanic.”
 - Hispanic is also generally acceptable for those in the United States.
 - When possible, use a more specific identification, e.g., Cuban, Brazilian, Puerto Rican.

- Dual heritage
 - Do not use hyphens for terms such as African American, Asian American, etc.
- People of color, racial minority
 - Person/people of color is a generally acceptable term to describe individuals of races other than white.
 - Racial minority: The term “minority” has become more scrutinized recently for lack of specificity and demographic inaccuracy as people of color become the majority population in many areas of the United States in the coming years. In general, avoid using this term to describe individuals of races other than white.
 - Alternative phrasing includes specific population language such as African American, Asian American, etc., people of color or “minoritized” populations to denote systematic denial of access for these groups as opposed to demographic status.

Immigration status

- Do not use the terms “alien,” “illegal alien,” “illegals,” “an illegal,” “illegal immigrant.”
 - Use the term “illegal” only to refer to an action, not a person.
 - e.g., illegal immigration, entering a country illegally
 - “Undocumented immigrant(s)” is the appropriate terminology to refer to a person.

Well-being/wellness

- Use the term “well-being” instead of “wellness” when applicable. Wellness generally applies to physical health, whereas well-being takes a holistic view to include multiple dimensions of health, such as physical, emotional and mental.

TITLE IX, NONDISCRIMINATION AND ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICIES

Clemson University must provide disclaimer language about Title IX and related policies in marketing and communications pieces that directly recruit prospective students and employees.

The following statement has been reviewed and approved for this purpose. Please do not alter this statement in any way:

Clemson University's Nondiscrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy prohibits unlawful discrimination, including harassment, of any employee, student, guest or visitor pursuant to Title IX and other applicable federal or state laws. Additional information and contact information for Clemson's Title IX coordinator can be found at tig.rs/title-ix. Retaliation against individuals making complaints of discrimination is prohibited.

**If you have questions about whether your piece needs to include this language, please contact Alesia Smith, Title IX coordinator and executive director of equity compliance, at alesias@clemson.edu.

WRITING ALT TEXT FOR WEB IMAGES

What is alt text?

Alt text is the copy screen readers use to describe images for the visually impaired. Search engine crawlers also use alt text to understand what is included in images on a web page. This helps the search engine to accurately index the image (Google Image Search) as well as the web page (Google Search Engine Results Page).

Thus, alt text is crucial for accessibility and search engine optimization.

How do you write alt text?

Look at the image and think about how you would describe it to someone who is blind.

All alt text should be brief, specific and descriptive.

Clemson University alt text should be written in the brand voice, using action language when possible and incorporating keywords relevant to the University or specific web page when natural. Do not force keywords into your alt text. Prioritize an accurate description of the image. Accessibility comes first. Search engine optimization comes second.

Alt Text Guidelines

1. Describe the image and be specific.
2. Keep alt text for each image under 125 characters.
 - a. Most popular screen readers stop reading alt text at this point.
3. Use keywords, but sparingly.
4. Do not use phrases like “image of” or “picture of.”
5. Always use a period after your alt text, even if it is a sentence fragment.
 - a. The period causes the screen reader to take a brief pause, which creates a better experience for the user who is listening to the contents of the page.

Alt Text Writing Examples

Bad alt text: Two women sit in a room.

OK alt text: A Clemson student and her professor work together on a project.

Best alt text: A Clemson student and her professor review a sheet of orange stickers they printed in the lab.

CONTACT Us

We welcome questions, concerns, corrections or feedback on omissions.

Email associate editor and chief copy editor [Emily Pietras Baker](mailto:epietra@clermson.edu) (epietra@clermson.edu), Marketing and Communications, to get in touch.