Editorial Style Guide

Murray State University

Murray State University follows the grammar and punctuation guidelines from the latest edition of the Associated Press (AP) Stylebook, which is the standard guide for most U.S. newspapers, magazines and public relations firms. The editorial style guidelines for Murray State discussed within this document should be applied in all University materials to create a single style to be used consistently and appropriately. This guide is organized alphabetically and demonstrates correct usages for common style questions, including references to titles, quotes, dates and more.

For more tips on AP Style, we recommend Purdue Owl and Grammar Girl, both accessible online, as excellent resources.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Please use the official names and check your spelling of University colleges, buildings and scholarships. Examples include the Arthur J. Bauernfeind College of Business, Susan E. Bauernfeind Wellness Center and Jesse D. Jones College of Science, Engineering and Technology.

Acronyms

In general, avoid using acronyms if possible. Only use acronyms if they will be used again throughout the document. If an acronym is necessary, use the full name on first reference followed by the acronym in parentheses.

EXAMPLE:

She was awarded a grant by the National Science Foundation (NSF).

Advisor

Do not use "adviser."

Ampersands

The ampersand (&) is not a substitute for "and." Use only when included as part of an official name, such as the Town & Gown Partnership.

Capitalization

Capitalize sparingly. In general, avoid unnecessary capitalization and resist the urge to use capitalization to signify importance. See "colleges and departments," "degrees" and "titles" in this guide.

Colleges and departments

Capitalize the official names of Murray State colleges, schools, departments and offices. Lowercase program names, majors, areas, minors and informal names (e.g., biology department) except in the case of proper nouns, such as English, Spanish, Chinese, etc. Use the formal department name whenever possible (e.g. Department of Journalism and Mass Communications).

EXAMPLES:

Arthur J. Bauernfeind College of Business

Department of History

nonprofit leadership studies

chemistry department

an accounting major with an English minor

Commas

Do not use the Oxford (a.k.a. serial) comma, which is the comma that comes before conjunctions like "and" and "or" in a series of three or more items.

EXAMPLE:

The students purchased notebooks, pens and folders before the semester started.

Dashes

Use a hyphen (-) for number ranges, including dates and times. Using "to" is also acceptable when referencing ranges.

EXAMPLE:

May 2-5

10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

pages 128-135

Use an em dash (—) with a space before and after it — just like this — to call out important information.

EXAMPLE:

Murray State University received numerous accolades — including a "Best Bang for the Buck" designation from Washington Monthly — throughout the summer.

Dates and times

When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate the following: Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec. Spell out when using alone or with the year alone.

EXAMPLE:

The event takes place Jan. 2, 2019. Example: She started classes in August 2018.

When a phrase refers to the month, date and year, offset the year with commas.

EXAMPLE:

The seminar begins Sept. 1, 2018, in Lovett Auditorium.

Use periods and lowercase letters for "a.m." and "p.m." Do not use ":oo" when referencing a time that is on the hour. Spell out "noon" and "midnight" instead of using the numeral "12."

EXAMPLE:

The movie begins at 7 p.m. Example: His class is at 9:30 a.m.

Use cardinal numbers (e.g., April 1) rather than ordinal numbers (e.g., April 1st).

Degrees

Casual references to degrees require a possessive apostrophe and 's' for "bachelor's" and "master's" degrees but not "associate" or "doctorate" degrees. Do not capitalize academic degrees in general text except when referencing proper nouns like English or Spanish. This is the preferred usage.

EXAMPLE:

The student first earned an associate degree before attending Murray State to graduate with a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering.

Capitalize the formal name of the degree if referencing.

EXAMPLE:

"Bachelor of Arts" or "Master of Science." This style should be used sparingly.

When listing degrees by their initials, do not use periods. This style should be used sparingly.

EXAMPLE:

BS, MS, MFA and PhD

Email

Use email rather than e-mail in all instances, in keeping with Associated Press style.

Faculty and staff

Faculty and staff is an acceptable singular construction when referring to both groups of university employees.

Freshman

The term "freshman" should be used to refer to an individual first-year student or a collective freshman class, while "freshmen" refers to one or more first-year students.

EXAMPLES:

Abdul is a freshman at Murray State University.

The three freshmen were chosen to participate in this year's conference.

Murray State University's freshman class saw significant growth this fall.

Grade point average, GPA

GPA is acceptable to use on first reference when referring to a grade point average.

Names

Use first and last names on first references. If an individual holds a doctorate, include "Dr." before their first and last name on first references. In all subsequent references, use only the individual's last name. When writing a story with multiple people that share the last name, referring to the individual by their first name is acceptable.

EXAMPLE:

The class was taught by Dr. Kelly Jones. The students enjoyed the conversational approach Jones used at her classroom discussions.

Numbers

Spell out numbers one through nine or if a number begins a sentence. Use the numeral for numbers 10 and up or when referencing percentages, times, dates, ages and monetary amounts. Use a comma in numbers higher than 999.

EXAMPLES:

There are eight students on the intramural team.

The auditorium holds 200 people.

More than 1,500 individuals attended last night's event in the CFSB Center.

Percentages

In text, use numerals and write out "percent" rather than using the % symbol.

EXAMPLE:

At the meeting, 65 percent of students agreed with this initiative.

Quotes

Punctuation goes inside the quotation mark. Always use "said" when writing quotes.

EXAMPLES:

"Murray State University provides opportunities for students," said Dr. Bob Jackson, president.

John Smith referred to Murray State as an "incredible value."

When writing press releases, quotes should stand alone in individual paragraphs. Attribution should come at the end of the quote's first sentence.

EXAMPLE:

"The lecture was very informative," Smith said. "I'm glad I decided to attend."

References to Alumni

Follow the names of Murray State graduates with the year(s) of graduation offset by commas on first reference.

EXAMPLE:

John Smith, '95, returned to campus for Homecoming.

If referencing a former student who did not graduate, list the years of attendance and offset with commas.

EXAMPLE:

Sally Jones, attd. '01– '03, won a national award.

Spaces

Use only a single space after a period at the end of a sentence.

States

The names of states should always be spelled out when used in a body of text. Offset the state with commas if paired with a city.
EXAMPLES:
He grew up in Mayfield, Kentucky, before deciding to attend Murray State.
Several incoming students from Ohio attended the Summer O session.

Telephone numbers

Use 10-digit numbers with hyphens as separators: 270-809-XXXX. Do not use parentheses around the area code.

That, which

Use "that" for essential clauses. If the clause in question can be omitted without changing the meaning of the sentence, use "which" and offset the clause with commas. "That" and "which" are not interchangeable.
EXAMPLES:
I remember the day that we first met while visiting Pogue Library.
The team, which finished in second place last year, is stronger than ever.

Titles

Capitalize professional titles only when they appear before a person's name. Make titles lowercase if they are informal, appear without a person's name or are offset by commas.
EXAMPLES:
"This is great news," said Murray State President Dr. Bob Jackson.
The provost attended the event.
John Smith, program director, organized the event.

When referencing composition titles — such as books, movies, plays, poems, lectures, articles, etc. — place the title within quotation marks. Do not italicize. Newspapers, magazines and journals are not placed in quotation marks or italicized.
EXAMPLE:
The theatre students performed "Crazy for You" in September 2017.

University name usage

Do not use "MSU." Always spell out the University's full name in the first instance and use "Murray State" and "the University" in subsequent references. Capitalize the "U" when referring to Murray State as "the University."

Website (URL) addresses

Use the shortest version of a URL. Delete the "http://" and "www." portions of the address. Include a hyperlink for digital content. Make certain the link is functional and takes users to the correct webpage.

EXAMPLE:

murraystate.edu/programs

If you have additional questions, please contact the Public Relations within the Office of Branding, Marketing and Communication.

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