

Assorted Style Notes

This stylebook outlines basic, time-honored rules on grammar, punctuation, usage and journalistic style, but it also reflects changes in common language. The goal is to ensure accuracy, correctness, readability and consistency.

Be aware that we generally defer to bishops who may ignore these guidelines.

Addresses

- Spell out and capitalize *First* through *Ninth* when used as street names; use figures with two letters for 10th and above: *792 Fifth Ave.*, *100 21st St.* Use abbreviations Ave., Blvd. and St. only with a numbered address: *1600 Pennsylvania Ave.*
- *Highway*, *Drive*, *Road*, *Terrace* and *Alley* are spelled out.
- Spell out *Fort*, instead of Ft. Example: *Fort Lauderdale*, *Fort Pierce*, *Fort Bragg*.

Church

- The word *church* is lowercase when it stands alone. When *church* is preceded by *Catholic*, *church* is uppercase when referring to the institutional Catholic Church, or lowercase when referring to a Catholic church building.
- Except as a formal title, *heaven* (*Our Lady Queen of Heaven Catholic Cemetery*), *hell* and *purgatory* are lowercase.
- Use *Father* instead of Fr. or the Rev. before a priest's name in all references. Example: *Father Albert Dello Russo*. An exception is monsignor, which is abbreviated before a name: *Msgr. John Hannigan*.
- *Pope*, *Bishop*, *Father*, *Deacon*, *Sister* and *Brother* are also spelled out when preceding the name of a pope, bishop, priest, deacon, religious sister or religious brother. Lowercase all when not used with their name.
- Abbreviate Saint as *St.* in proper names of saints and the places and

institutions named after them: *St. Patrick*, *St. Anne Church*, *St. Jude League*, *St. Louis* (the city), *St. Croix River*.

- Capitalize *Benediction* when referring to the Catholic religious service, usually with the Eucharist exposed. The term *blessing* is preferable to benediction (lowercase) when referring to other rites or acts of blessing.
- *Stations of the Cross* is capitalized.
- Spell out *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* on first reference. *RCIA* is acceptable on second and further references.
- Identify women and men religious by their religious order or community, generally on first reference, but do not use initials after their name to identify their religious order or community: Mercy Sister Theresa Ann Jones; Sister Theresa Ann Jones, a member of the Sisters of Mercy; or Jesuit Father Robert Frost; Father Robert Frost, a Jesuit; Father Robert Frost, a member of the Society of Jesus. If the order's name is more than one or two words, do not use before the name; use in a subsequent reference.
- Clergy members of other denominations should be referred to as *the Rev.* William Smith on first reference. On succeeding references, use *Rev. Smith*.

Diocese

- *Diocese* is the standard term in the Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican churches for an ordinary territorial division of the church headed by a bishop. The chief diocese of a group of dioceses usually is called an *archdiocese*.
- Capitalize *diocese* only as part of a proper name: *the Diocese of Palm Beach*, *the Archdiocese of Miami*, *the Palm Beach Diocese*, *the diocese*.
- In Catholic usage worldwide, a diocese ordinarily takes its name from the *see city*, the community where the bishop resides and his cathedral is located.
- Some Orthodox and Eastern Catholic churches may call a diocese an *eparchy* or *archeparchy*.

God and Jesus

- Capitalize *God* or words that mean *God* in reference to the divine being of all monotheistic religions. Capitalize all nouns used as names for this being: *God the Father, God the Son, Holy Ghost, Holy Spirit, Our Lord, Yahweh, Elohim, Jehovah, Allah*, etc. Lowercase personal pronouns: *he, him, thee, thou*.

- *Jesus Christ, the Christ, Christ, Son of God, God the Son, the Messiah, One, Good Shepherd, Christ Child* and a variety of other titles, depending on context, may be used in stories referring to the person Christians consider the lord and savior of the world.

- For nouns or phrases other than those given above in italics (for example: *redeemer, savior, lord, son of man, the word*): Treat the words as descriptive (lowercase) if one of the primary names of Jesus appears within the sentence; treat them as proper nouns if they appear alone: *She believes that the redeemer is Christ, the Son of God. Jesus is our lord and savior.* BUT: *Christmas marks the birth of the Redeemer. He said the Son of Man was born in Bethlehem.* For consistency, if a sentence has a pronoun referring back to Jesus in the previous sentence, do not capitalize secondary titles in the second sentence: *They believe in Jesus. He is their savior.*

Mary

- In general, avoid titles such as *the Blessed Virgin, Star of the Sea, Queen of Peace, Our Lady*, etc., except in direct quotes and names of places and institutions. When it is necessary to use honorific or devotional titles that stand for Mary's name, capitalize them.

- Do not, however, capitalize descriptive references in sentences that use Mary's name or a pronoun referring back to her: *Catholics believe that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a virgin. They consider her the spiritual mother of the church.*

Sacraments

- The only sacrament that is capitalized is *Eucharist* (or *Communion*). The rest are lowercase: *baptism, confirmation, reconciliation (penance or confession), matrimony, holy orders and anointing of the sick*.

- Capitalize all references to *Communion*, but not adjectives modifying it or nouns it modifies: *first Communion, holy Communion, a Communion*

service, the Communion cup.

- Lowercase *communion* for all uses outside the church service, the sacrament or proper names: *the communion of Anglican churches, the communion of saints, the Catholic principle of communion with Rome, churches in communion with one another, the communion of spouses in marriage.*
- The proper name for laypeople who assist at Communion is *extraordinary minister of holy* (lowercase) *Communion*. Not Eucharistic minister.

Numerals

- In general, spell out numbers one through nine: *The Yankees finished second. He had nine months to go.*
- Centuries: Use figures for numbers 10 or higher: *21st century*. Spell out for numbers nine and lower: *fifth century*. For proper names, follow the organization's usage: *20th Century Fox, Twentieth Century Fund.*
- Times: Use figures for time of day except for noon and midnight: *1 p.m., 10:30 a.m., 5 o'clock, 8 hours, 30 minutes, 20 seconds, a winning time of 2:17:3 (2 hours, 17 minutes, 3 seconds).*
- Millions, billions, trillions: Use figures with million, billion or trillion in all except casual uses: *I'd like to make a billion dollars. But: The nation has 1 million citizens. I need \$7 billion. The government ran a deficit of more than \$1 trillion.*
Don't go beyond two decimal places: *7.51 million people, \$256 billion, 7,542,500 people, \$2,565,750,000.*
Decimals are preferred where practical: *1.5 million*. Not: *1½ million*. Don't mix millions and billions in the same figure: *2.6 billion*. Not: *2 billion 600 million*.
Don't drop the word million or billion in the first figure of a range: *He is worth \$2 million to \$4 million*. Not: *\$2 to \$4 million*, unless you mean \$2.

Punctuation

- Use commas with large numbers: *Jesus walked the earth 2,000 years ago.*
- When referring to *Washington, D.C.*, use periods and commas.

- When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate only *Jan.*, *Feb.*, *Aug.*, *Sept.*, *Oct.*, *Nov.* and *Dec.* Spell out when using alone, or with a year alone: *January 2016*. When a phrase refers to a month, day and year, set off the year with commas: *Feb. 14, 1987, was the target date.*
- Use commas to separate elements in a series, but do not put a comma before the conjunction in a simple series: *The flag is red, white and blue.* *He would nominate any Tom, Dick or Harry.*
- Titles of books, movies, operas, plays, poems, songs, TV shows, computer games and artwork are separated by quotation marks, not in italics: “Gone With the Wind,” “60 Minutes,” the “Mona Lisa,” “La Boheme,” etc.
- Names of publications such as newspapers, magazines, newsletters and websites run without quotation marks or italics.
- Use an apostrophe (*It’s* or *it’s*) when using a pronoun contraction for *it is*. Use *Its* or *its* (no apostrophe) when referring to something that belongs to or is associated with a person, animal or thing: *turn the camera on its side* or *a baby in its mother’s womb.*

Miscellaneous

- Refer to both men and women by first and last names: *Susan Smith* or *Robert Smith*. Use the courtesy titles *Mr.*, *Miss*, *Ms.* or *Mrs.* only in direct quotations. When it is necessary to distinguish between two people who use the same last name, as in married couples or brothers and sisters, use their first names on second reference.
- For one who has a medical doctorate, use *Dr.* as a formal title before the full name on first reference only: *Dr. C. Everett Koop, Koop; Dr. Joyce Brothers, Brothers.*
 Except in quoted matter, do not use *Dr.* as a formal title before the name of those with doctorates in fields other than medicine. If the person’s academic credentials are relevant to the story, describe them as part of the narrative: *John Smith, a philosophy professor; Smith, who has doctorates in philosophy and European history.*
 For clergy and religious who have academic doctorates, the religious title takes precedence. Do not use *Dr.* as part of or in place of the formal religious title before such names, even if the person is widely known that

way, except in quoted matter.

WRONG: *the Rev. Dr. Joan Brown Campbell, Dr. Campbell; the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Dr. King.*

RIGHT: *the Rev. Joan Brown Campbell, Rev. Campbell; the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Rev. King.*

WRONG: *Dr. Rowan Williams, archbishop of Canterbury; Dr. Williams.*

RIGHT: *Archbishop Rowan Williams of Canterbury, Archbishop Williams.*

- If mention of academic degrees is necessary to establish someone's credentials, the preferred form is to avoid an abbreviation and use instead a phrase such as: *John Jones, who has a doctorate in philosophy.*
- *United States* is a noun. *U.S.* is an adjective. Example: *U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.*
- More than one person should be called *people* not persons. Example: *Two people went to the store.*
- States with six or fewer letters are spelled out, not abbreviated: *Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas* and *Utah*. The abbreviation for Florida is *FL*.
- *Over* generally refers to spatial relationships: The plane flew over the city. *More than* or *less than* is preferred with numerals: Their salaries went up more than \$20 a week.
- For decades, use an apostrophe to indicate numerals that are left out; show plural by adding the letter "s": *the 1890s, the '90s, the Gay '90s, the 1920s, the mid-1930s.*
- Use *that* and *which* in referring to inanimate objects and animals without a name. Use *that* for essential clauses, important to the meaning of a sentence, and without commas: *I remember the day that we met.* Use *which* for nonessential clauses, where the pronoun is less necessary, and use commas: *The team, which finished last a year ago, is in first place.* (Tip: If you can drop the clause and not lose the meaning of the sentence, use *which*; otherwise, use *that*. A *which* clause is surrounded by commas; no commas are used with *that* clauses.)

- In general, put non-English words in italics: *ad limina* visit; he bid *sayonara* to his family; she said, "*Hola, senor,*" to the man.