# MCPS EDITORIAL STYLEBOOK

**style • book** **Function:** ***noun*****:** the book explaining, describing, and illustrating the prevailing and accepted editorial style in Montgomery County Public Schools.

## VISION

*We inspire learning by providing the greatest public education to each and every student.*

## MISSION

*Every student will have the academic, creative problem solving, and social emotional skills to be successful in college and career.*

## CORE PURPOSE

*Prepare all students to thrive in their future.*

## CORE VALUES

*Learning*
*Relationships*
*Respect*
*Excellence*
*Equity*


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# Preface

**The MCPS Editorial Stylebook is designed for use in preparing documents and publications for publishing. It should be used as a guide to present the message of our school system in a clear, consistent, and professional manner.**

The stylebook provides information specific to Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) documents, with examples.

## Why follow a standard style? Credibility.

We in MCPS can uphold our credibility by presenting a unified, clear, concise standardized image in the way we communicate with the community to serve the best interests of our students.

## Other helpful tools

Keep reference books close at hand. EGPS has the following available:

- *MCPS Acronyms*
- *MCPS Correspondence Manual*
- *The Gregg Reference Manual. A manual of style, grammar, usage, and formatting.*

We also recommend you get a copy of Merriam Webster's *Collegiate Dictionary, 11th edition.*

Check our website for helpful writing tools: *https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/egps/services/editorial/index.aspx.*

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The contents of this publication are subject to change and will be updated as necessary.

The EGPS Editorial Help Desk acknowledges the contributions of those in the MCPS community who have worked with us to create this compendium.

This publication is also available online at *https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/egps/services/editorial/index.aspx.*

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

# EDITORIAL STYLEBOOK


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# Abbreviations

The term "abbreviation" is used to describe all shortened forms of a word or a set of words.

Use abbreviations sparingly. Seeing too many abbreviations in a document can be distracting to readers, who may have to decipher and keep track of the "alphabet soup." Whenever an abbreviation is in order, spell out the name or term when it first occurs, with the abbreviation immediately following in parentheses—e.g., Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). Use only the acronym or initialism for later references in the document. If you are working on a lengthy report, repeat this process at the beginning of each chapter or major section.

Occasionally, you may choose to put the abbreviation first, followed by the full name in parentheses—e.g., DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills).

### Acronym

"Acronym" refers to terms based on the initial letters of their various words and read as a single word (e.g., NASA, ERSC, radar, laser).

Since acronyms are read as words, they are rarely preceded by an indefinite article, except when used as an adjective (e.g., a NASA facility).

### Initialism

"Initialism" refers to terms based on the initial letters of their various words, read as a series of letters (e.g., MCPS, FBI, PDF).

Initialisms often are preceded by an indefinite article (some employees belong to the SEIU). *Note:* MCPS is an exception to this rule.

#### ACRONYM VS. INITIALISM

These definitions are not absolute since sometimes an acronym and an initialism can be combined (as in JPEG, HVAC).

See *MCPS Acronyms* for an extensive list of acronyms and initialisms used in MCPS.

### Academic titles

Academic titles and honors that follow a name are usually lowercased in general use; abbreviations are capitalized.

*Example:*
John M. Smith, doctor of law

Put periods in abbreviation of academic degrees.

*Examples:*
Judith Fong, B.A., M.A., Ed.D.
Philip Jones, Ph.D.
Carmen Alvarez, J.D.

These titles are offset by commas when they follow a personal name.

*Example:*
Carmen Alvarez, J.D., will be our keynote speaker.

General references to academic degrees and fields of study are not capitalized.

*Examples:*
doctorate in education
bachelor's degree
master's degree
bachelor of science degree
associate degree

Descriptive titles (as opposed to formal titles) following a name are not capitalized. *Example:* Send your response to Dr. Kimberly A. Chen, director of special programs.

The abbreviation Esq. and other titles such as Mr., Mrs., Dr., M.D., should not appear with any other title or with abbreviations indicating scholastic degrees. *Example*: Marvin L. Paige, Esq, not Mr. Marvin L. Paige, Esq., nor Marvin L. Paige, Esq., M.A.

### Addresses

**United States:** U.S. (with periods) is the preferred abbreviation for United States. Use U.S. as an adjective only. Spell out United States as a noun.

*Examples:*
Noun: We are one of the largest school systems in the United States.

Adjective: Many U.S. schools offer a subsidized lunch program.

**Compass points:** Single-letter compass points that accompany a street name are followed by a period. *Example:* 1766 S. Prospect Rd. Two-letter compass points are not. When used in an address, the abbreviations NE, NW, SE, and SW remain abbreviated, even in running text. There is no comma before them when they follow a street name.

*Examples:*
We moved to 100 NE Prospect Street.
Pennsylvania Avenue SE
I saw her new house on P Street NW.

A compass point that is the name of a street or a place-name must never be abbreviated.

*Examples:*
North Avenue (not N Avenue)
Southwest Highway (not SW Highway)
South Shore Drive (not S Shore Drive)

**Numbered streets:** Usually, the names of numbered streets, avenues, etc., are spelled out, if 10 or less.

*Examples:*
Seventh Avenue
42nd Street
153rd Street

**Article with abbreviation**
When an abbreviation is preceded by "a" or "an," the choice of "a" or "an" is based on the way the abbreviation will be enunciated.

*Example:* an MCPS student (M is pronounced em)

**Periods with abbreviations**
Use periods with abbreviations that end with a lowercase letter.

*Examples:*
p., e.g., i.e., etc., Ms., Dr., D. Litt., Ed.D

Use periods for initials that stand for given names. *Example:* W. E. B. DuBois. Do not use periods for an entire name replaced with initials.

*Examples:* LBJ and JFK

Use no periods with abbreviations that appear in full capitals (except for academic degrees).

*Examples:*
NY, UK, VP, COO

**Plurals**
Make an abbreviation plural by adding an "s."

*Examples:*
CEOs, PPWs, AAs, APs

*Exceptions:*
p. (page), pp. (pages)

If the abbreviation would be confusing to the reader if you just add the s, then place an apostrophe before the s.

*Examples:*
A's, B's

Also, to avoid confusion, the plural of single lowercase letters should include an apostrophe before the s.

*Example:*
I need a word with two e's and two u's to solve the puzzle.

**States and territories**
When the state name and city name are used together (except for D.C.), spell out the state name in full.

*Examples:*
The staff members went to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to recruit teachers.
She has lived in Washington, D.C., all her life.

The U.S. Postal Service address code may be used in lists.

*Example:*
Several locations are recommended, including the following:

- Boston, MA
- Chicago, IL
- Houston, TX

**Time**
The terms "a.m." and "p.m." should be set lowercase with periods and no space between the letters. *Example:* 6:30 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

When referring to 12:00 a.m., use 12 midnight. When referring to 12:00 p.m., use 12 noon.

# Alphabetizing

When alphabetizing a list, ignore any articles that begin the title (in English and other languages). *Examples:* the, a

# Capitalization

Use *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th Edition*, for guidance on capitalization. When in doubt, use lowercase, except for proper nouns and trade names.

**Races and ethnic groups**
American Indian or Alaskan Native (AM)
Asian (AS)
Black or African American (BL)
*(no hyphen is used, even as an adjective)*
Hispanic (HI)
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (PI)
White (WH)
Two or more races (MU)

**Languages**
English, Spanish, Amharic, French, Korean, Italian, German, Swahili, Vietnamese, Chinese

**Some nationalities in MCPS**
Cajun
Chinese
French
Korean
Vietnamese
Welsh

**Language Assistance Services Unit and Translations**
The Language Assistance Services Unit works to minimize cultural and linguistic barriers for MCPS parents, families, and schools. The unit includes resources to translate and interpret the following languages: Amharic, Chinese, French, Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

# Capitalization

### Headings and titles of works

Italicize titles of books, briefs, reports, magazines, newspapers, federal and state acts, proceedings, pamphlets, movies, videotapes, plays, operas, musicals, collections of poetry or long poems published separately, and works of art.

All words that begin and end a title are capitalized, even if they are prepositions.

*Example: Words To Live By* was the book we referenced in class.

The word "*to*", when used to form an infinitive, is capitalized in a title.

*Example: How To Win Friends and Influence People* is my favorite book.

### What Words to Capitalize in a Heading

The First Word in the heading
The last word in the heading
Nouns
Pronouns
Adjectives
Verbs
Conjunctions and prepositions with more than four letters (through

*Do not capitalize*
Articles (a, an)
Prepositions (up, down, by, from)
Coordinating conjunctions (For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So)
The word "to" in an infinitive (How to Grow Herbs)

#### COMPOUND WORDS

In titles with hyphenated compound words, the first word is always capitalized and all nouns, proper adjectives, main words, and words of equal force that form the second or third parts are capitalized.

*Examples:*
"Fourteen-Year-Olds Visit London" was the Times headline.

He spoke on "The Terror Spread by Non-Christians in Rome."

Only the first word in a permanently hyphenated compound adjective (i.e., one found in *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th Edition*) is capitalized in headings and titles.

*Examples:*
Jobs for Part-time Students
Cost-effective Training Methods
Full-day Head Start
The Division of Long-range Planning

Do not capitalize such components when they are not nouns and proper adjectives, when both elements constitute a single word, or when they modify the first element.

*Examples:*
In-service
Medium-sized library
Reduced-price meals

### Titles of people

In running text, lowercase the title but use initial caps for the name of the department.

*Example:*
Mary Smith, director of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Always include the first name or initials of people the first time they appear in a document.

Use both initials, the first name, or the first name and middle initial—never only one initial.
*Examples:* J. H. Henry, John Henry, or John H. Henry but not J. Henry.

Do not use a comma between a person's name and Jr., Sr., or a roman numeral such as III.
*Example:* John H. Henry Jr.
*Exception:* If the person specifically uses it.

The title "esquire" (*Esq.*) is preceded by a comma and is never used in conjunction with another title (Rita A. Henry, Esq. not Ms. Rita A. Henry, Esq.)

Use the title "Dr." for individuals who have earned doctoral degrees, as well as for medical doctors.

If an academic degree follows the person's name, separate it from the last name with a comma. Also omit the titles *Dr., Miss, Mr., Mrs.,* and *Ms.* before the name.
*Examples:* Deanne Coons, MD, Sanjay Mohamed, Ed.D

### Course Names

The official names of courses (as listed in MCPS course catalogs) are considered proper nouns and should have initial caps.

*Examples:*
Comprehensive Health Education,
Art History A/B, Biology A/B, Algebra 2 A/B

However, the names of disciplines are considered common nouns, and so are not capitalized.

*Examples:*
mathematics, engineering, social studies, earth science, art, music

*Note:* The names of languages are always capitalized.

*Examples:*
English, French, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese

### Prefixes

Most common prefixes attached to proper nouns and adjectives are lowercased.

*Examples:*
anti-Semitism
non-Islamic
pre-Revolutionary
non-Christian
un-American
former-President Carter

### The Internet

"The Internet" is a proper noun and should keep its initial capital.

When you use web as a modifier, use a lowercase *w*. A location on the web is a web page. MCPS uses *website*.

When you use web as a prefix, lowercase the *w*. A person (male or female) who maintains a website is a webmaster.

On the other hand, MCPS and every other organization can have an "intranet"; so use a lowercase i.

#### REFERENCES TO WEBSITES

Do not put a colon before the web address.

*Examples:*
To register, visit *www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org.*

The list of offices may be found at *www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org.*

### The word *grade*

When referring to school, the word *grade* is capitalized when followed by a number, and the numeral is always used in this case.

*Examples:* Grade 1, Grade 12

When preceded by an ordinal number, the word *grade* is lowercased and the numbers first through ninth are spelled out and 10th through 12th are written as numerals. *Examples:* ninth grade, 12th grade

References to *grade* are not hyphenated when used as an adjective. *Examples:* the ninth grade teachers; first grade students

#### SPECIAL USAGE

The word *kindergarten* is not capitalized in MCPS documents, unless it is a part of a title or it starts at the beginning of a sentence.

*Examples:* children in kindergarten classes; *The Kindergarten Curriculum in Montgomery County Public Schools*

However, when shortening the word *prekindergarten*, the *k* is capitalized, i.e., pre-K.

## Lists

The following guidelines relate to display lists in a document:

- A display list is best introduced by a complete grammatical sentence, followed by a colon.
- Items carry no closing punctuation, unless they consist of complete sentences.
- A display list is either numbered or bulleted.
- Ideally, bulleted lists should have a minimum of two items, each displayed on a separate line. There is no firm rule about the maximum number of items in a list, but be aware that readers can lose track in a long list.
- Indent bullets or numbers one tab from the margin.

The text in each bulleted item must be grammatically parallel to the other bulleted items in the list (i.e., if one item is a complete sentence, they all should be complete sentences). If one item is written in the second person, the others should match.

**AN INCORRECT LIST**

- The rules should be changed so that players are not so vulnerable.
- Ejection of a player for spearing or blindsiding
- Write a letter warning of these suspect practices to the pertinent officials.

**CORRECT WAY TO LIST THE ITEMS**

- The rules should be changed so that players are not so vulnerable.
- Players should be ejected for spearing or blindsiding.
- A letter of warning about these suspect practices should be written.

There are two list styles used in MCPS documents: lists introduced by a complete sentence and lists introduced by an incomplete sentence.

### Lists introduced by a complete sentence

When a list is introduced by a complete sentence (like this one), you must do the following:

- End the introductory sentence with a colon.
- Capitalize the first word in each item.

### Lists introduced by an incomplete sentence

When a list is introduced by an incomplete sentence or an introductory phrase, it should end with either no punctuation or an em dash (—), the items (sentence fragments) begin with a lowercased letter, the items end with a comma (or semicolon), the next-to-last item ends with a comma (or semicolon), and the word *and*, and the last item ends with a period.

*Examples:*

The activities James had to do to earn an "A" in English were 1) read eight novels during the semester, 2) maintain an average score of 93, and 3) attend all classes.

The activities James had to do to earn an "A" in English were—

1) read eight novels during the semester,
2) maintain an average score of 93, and
3) attend all classes.

The school system has a high demand for educators in specialty areas such as art, theater, and dance; music; physical education; health education, and speech and language.

The school system has a high demand for educators in specialty areas such as

- art, theater, and dance;
- music;
- physical education;
- health education; and
- speech and language.

**Use of punctuation with lists**

Use no punctuation at the end of items when they are short sentence fragments and have no "extra" internal commas or semicolons.

*Example:*

The foreign office reviews the following:

1) Legal problems
2) Financial problems
3) Medical issues
4) Search and rescue operations

However, end each item with a period if it is a complete sentence (which always ends with a period).

*Example:*

The activities James had to do to earn an "A" in English were as follows:

- Read eight novels during the semester.
- Maintain an average score of 93.
- Attend all classes.

# Numbers

Spell out numbers zero through nine. Use numerals for numbers 10 and above.

*Examples:*

Eight parents joined the study circle at our elementary school; nine parents signed up to volunteer to help teachers in class.

More than 80 participants left the workshop early.

We are now in the 21st century.

Spell out ordinal numbers—first through ninth.

**Exceptions to the rule**

Use numerals, even if the number is below 10, when indicating—

- age (5-year-olds),
- decimals,
- statistics,
- number of credits in a class (a 3-credit class),
- results of voting,
- percentages (3 percent),
- sums of money ($25, $1 million),
- times of day (9:00 a.m.),
- dates of the month (May 3, 2016),
- latitude and longitude (20°N),
- degrees of temperature (76°F),
- dimensions (8½ x 11),
- measurements (4 inches),
- proportions (3:1),
- parts of a book (chapter 2), and
- sports scores.

A sentence must never begin with a numeral. Spell out the numeral or reword the sentence.
*Example:* Change 10,000 pages were submitted to
Around 10,000 pages… or Ten thousand pages…

Spell out the numbers that otherwise would be numerals to clarify back-to-back modifiers.
*Examples:* twelve 3-year-olds, 2 ninety-minute classes

Spell out numbers at the beginning of a sentence.
*Example:* Thirty-five students registered for the course this year.
Use a hyphen when spelling out numbers twenty-one to ninety-nine.

Use numerals with numbers nine and below when they are grouped for comparison about the same thing (i.e., students, prices, classes) in the same sentence or paragraph with numbers 10 and above.
*Examples:* 3 of 21 students, 6th and 12th grades

Use numerals with names and parts of reports, tables, and series.
*Examples:* chapter 2, volume 7, Grade 3

Use numerals with percentages, fractions, decimals, and ratios.
*Examples:* 1 percent, 2½ years, 1.3 times, 2 to 1 or 2:1

Use numerals to indicate time (10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.); age (5-year-olds); and course credits (a 3-credit course).

When a year begins a sentence, use The year 1997 began with the birth of her son.

### Using multiple numbers in a sentence, comparing various things

If a sentence or paragraph refers to numbers in one particular category, use numerals for all numbers in that category.

*Example:*

Recruiters from four states came to the fair: 2 from Michigan, 12 from Wisconsin, 25 from Mississippi, and 3 from Louisiana. *(The numbers refer to recruiters.)*

If the sentence or paragraph refers to numbers in differing categories, the general rule of spelling out numbers zero to nine and using numerals from 10 and above applies.

*Example:*

The new schools are now open, they include 122 elementary schools, 29 middle schools, 19 high schools, one career and technology center, and six special education program centers. *(The numbers refer to different entities—schools and special program centers.)*

### Very large numbers

Millions, billions, trillions, and other such large numbers should be written as numerals followed by the word.

*Examples:*

300 million people, $5 million

The population has grown from 8 million to 18 million over the past decade.

### Telephone numbers

Telephone numbers are written as follows: 301-555-1234.

### Fractions

Use a hyphen to express fractions when they stand alone or are used as compound adjectives. *Examples:* two-thirds, one-third red, two-tenths point

*Exception:* The rule for writing research reports and briefs is not to use a hyphen to express fractions *Example:* one third of the class, except when used as an adjective *Example:* a one-third success rate.

### Percentages

Percentages are given in numerals. In general documents, the word *percent* is used; in technical documents, the symbol % is used.

*Examples, MCPS correspondence and general documents:*

We took the class on a field trip and more than 85 percent of the students loved the butterflies.

With 80–90 percent of the work complete, we can relax.

There is a 100 percent chance that we will arrive in time for the meeting.

*Examples, technical and research documents:*

Only 25% of the students received free and reduced-price lunch.

The program resulted in a 30%–40% reduction in absenteeism. (See note under Symbols, below.)

The response rate from parents who received a survey was 28%.

Note that *percent* is not interchangeable with the noun *percentage* (1 percent is a very small percentage). Also, there is no space between the numeral and the symbol (%).

### Symbols

For expressions that include two quantities, the symbol is repeated if it is closed up to the number (i.e., if there is no space between the number and the symbol).

*Examples:*

30%–40%, 6″ x 9″, 3°C x 10°C

However, for those expressions that include two quantities, the symbol is used only once and there is a space between the number and the symbol.

*Example:*

2 x 4 cm

## Punctuation

### Ampersand (&)

The ampersand is used in the names of organizations and companies.

When an ampersand is used, the serial comma is omitted. *Example:* Editorial, Graphics & Publishing Services

### Apostrophe (')

In making the plural in numerals, do not use an apostrophe.

*Examples:*

the early 1900s
her SAT score was in the 1600s

## Number usage: Guiding principles

**Dates:** June 30, 2016 | June 30 | June 2016

**Decades:** The 1990s | the mid-2000s | the late 1990s | the 21st century

**Academic years:** 2015–2016 | 2015–2016 school year

**Abbreviations:** A.D. 200 | 2000 B.C. | a.m. | p.m.

**Inclusive pages:** pp. 2–16

**Reference:** see page 6 | see chapter 2 | see figure 10

**Currency:** $20 million | $100,000 | $200

**Percentages:** 50 percent | 50.8 percent | 0.8 percent | 2% (technical documents)

**Grade:** Grade 9 | ninth grade students | Grade 2 teachers | 11th grade

**Age:** 3-year-old students | 3 years old | 3-year-olds

**Numbers:** 4 million residents | Four million residents cast their votes today.

**Fractions:** one-third of the students (general documents) | her share was two-thirds.
one third of the students (technical documents) | two-thirds increase in price

Do not use parentheses in phone numbers; use hyphens. *Example:* 301-555-5555

*Master's* and *bachelor's degree* should always be written with *'s*. Never write *masters degree or masters' degree*, or *bachelors degree* or *bachelors' degree*.

Also, use an apostrophe to show possession.
*Examples:* Mr. Smith's office is on the first floor; MCPS's special education teachers are meeting in the auditorium.

### Brackets ([ ])

Use brackets when adding editorial explanations within a direct quote or to enclose parenthetical matter within matter already included in parentheses.
*Example:* "I've seen [employees] here as late as 9:30 p.m.," he said.

### Colon (:)

Follow a statement that introduces a direct quotation of one or more paragraphs with a colon. Also, use a colon after *as follows* or *the following*.

Capitalize the first word after a colon only if it is a proper noun or the start of a complete sentence.

*Examples:*

He promised this: The university will make good on all the losses.

*but*

There were three considerations: expense, time, and feasibility.

Do not combine a colon and a dash.

### Common misuses of the colon

To merit a colon, the words that introduce a list must themselves be a grammatically complete sentence.

*Example:*

*Incorrect:* The subjects included: English, algebra, and history.

*Correct:* The subjects included English, algebra, and history.

### Comma (,)

Serial commas—MCPS style preference is to use a comma before the conjunctions *and* and *or* in a series of three or more words, phrases, or clauses. It contributes to clarity and ease of reading.
*Example:* The teachers were from elementary, middle, and high schools.

Place a comma after numerals signifying thousands, except when reference is made to temperature or year or test scores.

*Examples:*

1,850 students
4600 degrees
the year 2011
a 1600 SAT score

Introductory words such as *including namely, i.e.,* and *e.g.,* should be preceded by a comma.

*Example:* Everyone is invited to the reception, including family and friends.

When listing names with titles, punctuate as follows:

Robert Smith, principal, Northwood High School; Dorothy Rhodes, assistant principal, Southwood Elementary School.

Place commas after both the city and state in a sentence. *Example:* He moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to start a new job.

When writing a date, place a comma after the day and after the year. *Example:* July 4, 1776, is the date the Declaration of Independence was signed.

Do not place a comma between the month and year when the day is not mentioned. *Example:* He graduated in May 1994.

Use a comma to separate an introductory phrase or clause from a main clause. *Example:* When she moved to the country, she began to write more.

Use the comma if its omission would slow comprehension. *Example:* On the square below, the students gathered.

When a conjunction such as *and, but,* or *for* links two clauses that could stand alone as separate sentences, use a comma before the conjunction. *Example:* He wanted to go to the party, but he did not feel well.

Do not use a comma between a person's name and *Jr., Sr.,* or a Roman numeral such as *III*.

*Examples:*

Martin Luther King Jr.

John Thompson III was the coach of the Georgetown University basketball team.

However, the title *Esq.* is preceded by a comma and is never used in conjunction with another title.

*Example:* Tom Escobar, Esq., not Mr. Tom Escobar, Esq.

Use a comma between two identical words.

*Example:* The way it is, is important to our students.

An appositive is a word or phrase that emphatically confirms the word or phrase before it. Don't forget the second comma when setting off appositives or interrupters:

*Incorrect:* The caller, a man from California wouldn't leave his name.

*Correct:* The caller, a man from California, would not leave his name.

*Incorrect:* The meeting will take place on June 29, 2020, in Orlando, Florida at the Hyatt Regency.

*Correct:* The meeting will take place on June 29, 2020, in Orlando, Florida, at the Hyatt Regency.

Use a comma after the following abbreviations: Inc. and Ltd. *Example:* Environmental Management Group, Inc., and PLS, Ltd., are two well-known companies.

### Dashes

The distinction between hyphens and dashes was once important mainly to typesetters. There was no em dash key on a typewriter, so writers who worked on typewriters had to improvise by typing two hyphens to make an em dash and typing one hyphen to make an en dash. Now, there is a full range of special characters at our disposal when we use word processing and desktop publishing software, but some people still key dashes as if they were using a typewriter.

Em dashes and en dashes were given names that indicate their length. The em dash is as long as the width of the capital letter M, and the slightly shorter en dash is as long as the width of the capital letter N. The actual size varies from typeface to typeface. The hyphen is shorter than both types of dashes and should not be used to replace them. Using em dashes (—) and en dashes (–) instead of hyphens (-) gives your document a more professional look.

Do not add spaces before or after em or en dashes.

### Em dash (—)

Use an em dash to denote an abrupt change in thought in a sentence or an emphatic pause.

*Examples:*

We will move to Montgomery County in June—if I get the job.

The after-school program staff members presented a plan—it was unprecedented—to increase attendance.

He came to my office—without calling in advance—and demanded to see me immediately.

When a phrase that otherwise would be set off by commas contains a series of words that must be separated by commas, use em dashes to set off the full phrase.

*Example:*

He listed the qualities—curiosity, perseverance, respect—that he admired in his students.

### En dash (–)

Use the en dash as an alternative to the word through or to with dates, times, and days of the week in text.

*Examples:*
Monday–Friday (not from Monday–Friday)
pages 224–228
8:30 a.m.–3:00 p.m.
$13–$20 per hour
2007–2017

### Ellipsis (…)

Use an ellipsis to indicate the deletion of one or more words in condensing quotes, texts, and documents. Be especially careful to avoid deletions that would distort the meaning. Leave one regular space on both sides of an ellipsis.

*Example:* I … tried to do what was best.

When an ellipsis is used after the end of a sentence to indicate deleted material, use a period, followed by a space and then the ellipsis.

*Example:* From President Nixon's resignation speech: "In all the decisions I have made in my public life, I have always tried to do what was best for the nation. …"

When deleting words from the end of a sentence, add the space and the ellipsis, followed by a period.

*Example:* However, it has become evident to me that I no longer have a strong enough political base … ."

*Note:* Keystroke for ellipsis on the PC: Hold down Alt key and press 0133 on number pad.
Keystroke for ellipsis on the Mac: Hold down option key and press ; key.

### Hyphen (-)

A hyphen is used at the end of a line to show that part of the word has carried over to the next line.

A hyphen can make for easier reading by showing structure and, often, pronunciation.

Words that might otherwise be misread (such as re-creation) should be hyphenated.

#### HYPHENATION AND COMPOUND WORDS

The hyphen is used to join words to form compound words. Compound adjectives that modify nouns are hyphenated.

*Example:* Ahmed learned decision-making skills in his management class.

Noun phrases used as adjectives are hyphenated.
*Example:* Mary decided to take a stay-at-home job.

If a compound noun is listed as closed in *Webster's* dictionary, the hyphen is unnecessary. If it is listed as hyphenated, then hyphenate it in your document.

Where no ambiguity can result and there is no danger of confusion, as in *public school administration, high school student,* and *graduate student housing*, hyphenation is not necessary. Unnecessary hyphenation can be distracting. Consult *Webster's* if you have any doubt about a word being hyphenated.

When comparative and superlative adjectives (usually ending in *er* or *est*) are used with a noun, use a hyphen.

*Examples:*
highest-achieving students
best-qualified teachers
longer-lasting friendships
very well-read child

Do not hyphenate words ending in ly (adverbs) when they are used to modify an adjective.

*Examples:*
elegantly furnished house
extremely old book
fully funded program

Do not hyphenate prefixes unless they are combined with a capitalized word, and if there is a possibility of misunderstanding or mispronouncing.

*Examples:*
bicultural
cosponsor
coworker
coteaching
midsemester, midcentury, midyear,
*but*
mid-July, mid-1990s
multistakeholders
nonprofit
nonrefundable
nontechnical
preschool
postsecondary
reuse

Use the nonhyphenated spelling of a word if either spelling is acceptable. If in doubt, check *Webster's* dictionary.

Use hyphens sparingly with compound adjectives. Hyphenate primarily to avoid confusion of meaning or to help readers grasp the thought quickly.

*Examples:*
cost of living index
balance of payments issue
*but*
old-furniture dealer
first-class school system

Hyphenate adjectives ending in *ing* or *ed* that are used to modify a noun.

*Examples:*
law-abiding citizen
agreed-upon rules
*but*
the rules were agreed upon in advance

fund-raising program
*but*
fund raising is her job

Hyphenate part-time and full-time when used as adjectives, and hyphenate any modifying word combined with well.

*Examples:*
she has a part-time job
*but*
she works part time
well-built engine
well-rounded person

Hyphenate *closed captioned, on campus,* and *off campus* only when used as a compound adjective to modify a noun.

*Examples:*
they watched a closed-captioned program on TV
*but*
the program was closed captioned
Three hundred people attended the off-campus event.
*but*
The event was held off campus.

Do not hyphenate a compound word that includes a comparative adjective.

*Examples:*
highest rated movies
less informed participants
most delicious cookies
least expensive toys

#### HYPHENATION AND NUMBERS

Hyphenate ages used as adjectives before a noun or as a substitute for a noun.

*Examples:*
the 12-year-old girl ran for club president.
*but*
the girl is 12 years old
the race was for 3-year-olds.

Leave a space between the first hyphen and *to*, and between *to* and the next number.
*Example:* The dance class is for 8- to 10-year-olds.

Use hyphens in phone numbers. Do not use the en dash. *Example:* 301-555-5555 (*not* 301–555–5555).

Always hyphenate fractions when they are used as adjectives.
*Example:* She owned a two-thirds share.

*Note:* Do not hyphenate fractions when they are used as nouns.
*Example:* His share was three fifths.

In general, hyphenate numbers and letters used to form adjectives.
*Examples*: a three-week vacation, a 24-hour day.

Exceptions to this rule include adjectives using money or the word *percent*.
*Examples:* a $10 million project, a 5 percent increase.

*Note:* See also Prefixes section on page 11.

### Parentheses( )

Parentheses enclose a phrase that the writer feels is not important enough to stand alone. This information provides extra facts, such as spelling out an acronym or providing one, explaining part of a sentence, or interjecting a thought or an aside.

Keep the following distinctions in mind when deciding whether to use parentheses, em dashes, or commas:

- *Parentheses* de-emphasize information and tell readers that the enclosed words are not vital to the meaning of the sentence.
- *Em dashes* emphasize the information and tell the reader that these words are important.
- *Commas* indicate that the information is simply part of the sentence.

#### Using Punctuation with Parentheses

If the content within the parentheses is a complete sentence, the period should come before the closing parenthesis.

*Example:* The middle school students will bake something in science class this semester. (For example, the fifth graders will make bread and the sixth graders will make cupcakes.)

If the example is included in the sentence, then the period should come after the closing parenthesis.

*Example:* The middle school students will bake something in science class this semester (e.g, the fifth graders will make bread and the sixth graders will make cupcakes).

### Period (.)

Never end a sentence with a double period.

*Example:*
The program was sponsored by Smith & Co.
*not*
The program was sponsored by Smith & Co..

Place a period outside the closing parenthesis if the material inside is not a sentence (such as this phrase).

Place a period inside parentheses if the words are a complete sentence. (We will receive our diplomas at the graduation ceremony.)

Alphabetical abbreviations of groups, organizations, or laws, such as PLC, OHR, or OCR, should be capitalized and written without periods or space.

For information on abbreviations for time, see page 2.

### Quotation marks (“ ”)

Use quotation marks for all titles of articles, chapters, television shows, songs, poems, and divisions of a publication.

Use single quotation marks (‘ ’) for quotations printed within quotations.

#### RULES FOR USING PUNCTUATION WITH CLOSING QUOTATION MARKS

Here are the rules regarding the use of punctuation with quotation marks in American English. Periods and commas go before the closing quotation marks.

*Examples:*

*Period*—The students gathered in the field to “observe the lay of the land.”

*Comma*—“Please identify the similarities in the photographs,” said the teacher.

## Why do we keep commas and periods inside of quotation marks?

In American English (unlike British English), commas and periods are kept inside closing quotation marks. This practice comes from the fact that, when type was set by hand, the delicate period or comma outside of quotation marks at the end of a sentence tended to get knocked out of position, dented, or broken, so the printers ended up keeping them inside the quotation marks just to avoid this problem. This practice has remained the same today, even though broken type is no longer an issue.

Set quotation marks before colons and semicolons.

Set quotation marks before exclamation points and question marks that are not part of the quotation.

#### MARKS FOR INCHES AND FEET

When you use symbols such as inches (“) and feet (‘) for measurement, place the mark directly after the number. *Examples:* 8½” x 11”; 212’ x 240’

Abbreviations of units of measure are the same in singular and plural. *Examples:* 1 in. x 5 in.; 2 ft. x 1 ft.

### Semicolon (;)

Use semicolons to separate items in a series when individual parts contain commas. *Example:* Rita Jones, principal; John Reems, assistant principal; and Peter Schwartz, athletic director.

Use a semicolon in compound sentences when no conjunction is present. *Example:* The supplies were due last week; they arrived on Tuesday.

Use a semicolon before an adverb that connects two main clauses. *Example:* I’ll try to attend the meeting; however, I may be late because I have a doctor’s appointment.

Place semicolons after quotation marks.

*Example:* Paula opened the door and whispered “Perfect”; the decorations were just as she wanted.

### Prefixes

**TIP:** *Webster’s* dictionary is your best resource for checking prefixes. The dictionary contains an extensive list under each prefix. When in doubt, check it out.

Only two prefixes are usually hyphenated: self- and quasi-. The prefix ex- is hyphenated with titles. *Examples:* ex-president, ex-teacher

When *non* or *un* starts off a three- or four-word adjective, it is often best to hyphenate those prefixes. *Examples:* non-school-based program, un-self-conscious students, non-diploma-bound students.

# Reference to Works in MCPS Documents

If you work with long documents and general reports, refer to the *Chicago Manual of Style, 17th Ed.* If you work with technical or research reports, refer to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 7th Ed.*

If you work wth newsletters, refer to the *AP Stylebook,* updated annually.

### Published works

Italicize book titles *(The Scarlet Letter, Business Today)* and titles of other published works, including titles of magazines and journals, newspapers, and special reports. However, the article usually should be lowercase.

*Examples:*

the *Gazette*

the *Montgomery Journal*

*but the following are exceptions*
*The Bulletin* (MCPS)
*The Washington Post*

Italicize titles of movies and plays. *Examples: Blood Diamonds, Cats, Hamlet* and ballets, musicals, and operas.

### Legal citations and legislative acts

*Brown v. Board of Education*
*No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*

### Resolutions

The word *resolved* in resolutions and legislative acts is underlined and printed all caps. *Example:* RESOLVED, That all students must complete the HSAs before being cleared to graduate.

#### Wording a Resolution

Sentences expressing a resolution in the main clause require a subjunctive verb in the clause that follows. If the verb in the dependent clause requires the use of the verb "to be," use the form "be" with all three persons (not am, is, or are).

*Example:* WHEREAS, The members met and discussed the plans for the new building, be it Resolved, That the decision be deferred until next year.

If the verb in the dependent clause is other than "be," use the ordinary present tense form, but if not, add "s" for the third person singular or plural.

*Example:* WHEREAS, The committee has submitted its report on cafeteria food, now therefore be it Resolved, That the Board approve all the recommendations for improvement.

### Policies and Regulations

When referring to policies, write—

Montgomery County Board of Education Policy ABC, *Name of Policy*, states that…

Further reference to the policy should be written as Board Policy ABC, *Name of Policy*…

When referring to regulations, write—

Montgomery County Public Schools Regulation ABC-DE, *Name of Regulation*, was revised…

Further reference to the regulation should be written as MCPS Regulation ABC-DE, *Name of Regulation*,…

### Attribute personal communications

Personal communications include letters, memoranda, some email messages, personal interviews, and telephone conversations. Give the initials as well as the surname of the communicator, and provide as exact a date as possible. *Example:* A. B. Cook, personal communication, December 21, 2006.

### Attribute articles online

Attribute material to the author or institution and give the title, URL, and date you accessed the website. (The latter information is important because web pages change frequently.)

*Example:*

"Making Schools (Seem To) Work! Hedrick Smith Makes 'Enormous' Claims. But do his claims actually work?" *www.dailyhowler.com/dh110205.shtml* (Nov. 2, 2005).

(In this example, the URL includes the date the article was published online.)

### E-readers

Since the publications read on these devices usually lack page numbers, use the following style for citation: Brown, 2011, chap. 1, para. 2.

### How to reference works in text

References mentioned in text should be written with author-date in parentheses. This helps readers identify the source of the material and be able to locate the details in the reference list at the end of the document.

*Example:* During 2007–2008, minority students in Maryland were more likely to be suspended than were White students. Across Maryland, African American students were almost two-and-one-half times more likely to receive suspensions than White students (Advocates for Children and Youth, 2009).

### Special treatments: One is enough

One special treatment is enough.

- Quotation marks should not be used with words, phrases, or titles that are italicized.
- A sentence ending with a question mark does not need a period also.
- Commas, colons, semicolons, and periods that follow a word set in italics or boldface type should be set in italics or boldface as well.
- If you must use an exclamation mark, one is enough.

### Use *they, their,* or *them* as a singular pronoun when there are no better options

MCPS allows the use of *they, their,* and *them* as gender-neutral forms of address, instead of *he/she, his/her,* and *him/her*. However, this should be done with discretion. Before you use they, their, or them as your first option, explore some of the following strategies to resolve the clumsy usage of *he/she, his/her,* and *him/her*.

**DO NOT USE THE PRONOUN**

INSTEAD OF THIS: *The secretary should update the database before he transfers the records to central office.*
USE THIS: *The secretary should update the database before transferring the records to central office.*

**REPEAT THE NOUN**
INSTEAD OF THIS: *The writer is required to review the document before she submits it, because she may have too many errors.*
USE THIS: *The writer should be careful to review the document before submitting it, because the writer may have too many errors.*

**USE A PLURAL SUBJECT**
INSTEAD OF THIS: *A student and his/her parents/guardians have the right to see a cumulative student record during a meeting with school personnel.*
USE THIS: *Students and their parents/guardians have the right to see a cumulative student record during a meeting with school personnel.*

**USE AN ARTICLE ("A" OR "THE") INSTEAD OF A PRONOUN**
INSTEAD OF THIS: *A student is counted present for a full day if he/she is in attendance four hours or more of the school day.*
USE THIS: *A student is counted present for a full day if the student is in attendance four hours or more of the school day.*

**USE "ONE"**
INSTEAD OF THIS: *An employee who writes well will do better in this position than if he struggles with writing.*
USE THIS: *An employee who writes well will do better in this position than one who struggles with writing.*

**REVISE THE SENTENCE**
INSTEAD OF THIS: *The student must submit his draft at the end of the week.*
USE THIS: *Drafts must be submitted at the end of the week.*

When none of these methods work sufficiently, you may use *they, their,* or *them* instead. For example:

*If the student does not have the book, they should still be allowed to take final exams.*

## Typing Web Addresses

The main MCPS web address is *www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org*.

It is preferable to use italics when typing a web address in a document. Never insert a hyphen when breaking a web address; since internal punctuation is part of the address, adding a hyphen when it doesn't belong can direct readers to the wrong source.

When a sentence ends with a web address, it is safe to use a period. Even if readers misunderstand and assume that the period is part of the address, browsers will ignore the end punctuation and will send you to the right place.

## Special Plural Nouns

| *Singular* | *Plural* |
|---|---|
| appendix | appendices |
| consortium | consortia |
| criterion | criteria (also criterions) |
| curriculum | curricula |
| datum | data |
| medium | media |
| memorandum | memoranda |
| millennium | millennia |
| phenomenon | phenomena |

*Examples:*

There *are* two high school *consortia*: the Downcounty and the Northeast.

The Northeast *Consortium includes* James Hubert Blake, Paint Branch, and Springbrook high schools.

The main *criterion* for selecting candidates is a good GPA—3.0 and above.

The *criteria* for sainthood include evidence of miracles.

MCPS *curriculum includes* language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and the arts.

There *are* different *curricula* for elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Test *data show* that scores have risen.

A *datum* is a reference for measurement.

The *media* are keeping the public's interest alive. (However, it is acceptable to say *the media is*.)

Instagram is a growing *medium*.

The *memorandum* served to inform staff members of the new photocopy machine available in the building.

All *memoranda* concerning human resources must come from the director.

A *millennium* is equal to 1,000 years.

Many *millennia make* up an eon.

A *phenomenon* is an observable event.

*Phenomena make* up the raw data of science.

Some information taken from *The New York Public Library Writer's Guide to Style and Usage*, 1987.

## Subject/Verb Agreement

Collective nouns require singular verbs when the group is functioning as a unit and plural verbs when the individual members of the group are considered to be acting independently. If a sentence seems awkward, the problem can be circumvented by inserting the words "members of" before the collective noun and

using the plural verb. The usage chosen should be consistent throughout the entire document.

*Examples of collective nouns:*

| | |
|---|---|
| audience | gang |
| band | government |
| chorus | jury |
| class | mass |
| committee | platoon |
| community | press |
| council | public |
| couple | staff |
| crowd | team |
| family | |

Words such as *group*, *committee,* and *variety* that denote collections of people still take singular verbs and pronouns.

*Examples:* The variety of students illustrates the makeup of the school system. A variety of students attend the annual recruitment fair.

With words like *variety, number,* and *total,* use a plural verb when the article "the" precedes the noun, and a singular verb when the article "a" is used.

## Pay Attention!

- MCPS uses email, instead of e-mail.
- Refer to the attack on the United States on September 11, 2001, as follows: September 11 *or* 9/11
- *Change of Choice* forms
- Italicize names of books, magazines, newspapers, periodicals.
- Those people who, the type of people that
- An environment in which, *not* an environment where
- The team comprises, *not* the team is comprised of
- The state of Maryland (The word "state" is not capitalized.)
- Myriad techniques *not* a myriad of techniques
- Title I (roman numeral)
- Algebra 1 (regular numeral)
- Strategic Planning Framework: *Building Our Future Together*
- MCPS Form 270-3, *Report of Serious School Incident*
- MCPS Regulation ABC-RA, *Parental Involvement*
- Board Policy ABC, *Parental Involvement*

# Word Usage Glossary

Following is a list of preferred usage of words and terms, many of which are commonly misused or misspelled.

**AB**

a—use before any word beginnng with a consonant sound
a utopian city
a sophomore class

an—use before any word with a vowel sound
an MCPS school
an honorary title

above-grade-level (adjective)

academies

Advanced Placement (AP) exams (the words Advanced Placement have initial caps)

advisor (not adviser)

affect; effect—
Affect, almost always a verb, means "to influence, have an effect on." *Example*: The adverse publicity affected the election. The noun "affect" has a specialized meaning in psychology: manifestation of emotion or mood.

"Effect", usually a noun, means "outcome, result." *Example:* The principal's anti-bullying program had a positive effect on the students. But it may also be a verb meaning "to make happen, produce." *Example:* The principal's goal was to effect a change in bullies in the school.

after-school (adjective)

a lot, *not* alot

and/or—Avoid using this. It can most often be replaced by *and* or *or*, with no loss to meaning.

between; among; amid—
*Between* indicates one-to-one relationships. *Example:* between you and me

*Between* has long been recognized as being perfectly appropriate for more than two objects if multiple one-on-one relationships are understood from the context. *Example:* Discussion between members of the employee unions.

*Among* indicates undefined or collective relationships. *Example:* honor among thieves

*Among* is used with plurals of count nouns. *Example:* … among the children

# Word Usage Glossary

*Amid* is used with mass nouns. *Example:* Panic ensued amid talk of war.

biannual; semiannual; biennial—
Biannual and semiannual both mean "twice a year."

Biennial means "once every two years" or "every other year."

bilingual (no hyphen)

Business and Operations Administrators PLC

**CD**

cancelled or canceled (use consistently within the document)

Capitol Hill or the Capitol when referring to the area or building in Washington, D.C.; nation's capital or capital when referring to Washington, D.C., or state capitals.

child care *Example:* The PTA provides child care at their meetings.

child-care center

Choice—This refers to the special program offered through the MCPS Downcounty Consortium.

classwork

college-preparatory program

college ready students

college-level (adjective)

compare—
To compare *with* is to discern both similarities and differences between things.

To compare *to* is to note a general comparison. *Example:* He compared her voice to the song of the nightingale.

comprise/compose—The whole comprises the parts; the parts compose the whole. *Examples:* The committee comprises 11 members. The committee is composed of 11 members, not The committee is comprised of 11 members.

consortium/a

continual; continuous—
*Continual* is intermittent or frequently repeated.

*Continuous* never stops—it remains constant or uninterrupted.

coursework

communitywide

countrywide

countywide

critical thinking skills

critical analysis (adj.)

data—This word is commonly treated as a mass noun and coupled with a singular verb. In formal writing, use data as a plural noun.

data set

database

day care *Example:* MCPS does not provide day care

day-care center

decision making (noun)

decision-making (adjective)

discreet; discrete—

*Discreet* means "circumspect, judicious, tactful." *Example:* There was a discreet silence when he walked into the room.

*Discrete* means "separate, distinct, individual, unconnected." *Example:* The community was composed of several discrete neighborhoods.

disinterested = impartial

districtwide

Directional words: toward (not towards), upward, forward, downward.

Downcounty

dropout (noun)

**EF**

each other; one another—

Use *each other* when two things or people are involved.

Use *one another* when more than two things or people are involved.

Earth *Example:* The Earth is round.

earth *Example:* The farmer ploughs the earth in spring.

effect, as a transitive verb, means to cause *Example:* He will effect many changes in the department.

effect, as a noun, means result *Example:* The effect was not what she intended.

English Learners (ELs)

ensure; insure; assure—
We *ensure* (make sure) that something will (or will not) happen. *Example:* I will ensure that you get to meet the principal today.

*Insure* is reserved for underwriting financial risk. *Example:* We will insure our car and boat at the same company.

We *assure* people (confirm to them) that their concerns are being addressed. *Example:* I assure you that we will be on time.

enumerable; innumerable—
What is *enumerable* is countable. *Example:* There are enumerable reasons why you have to take this class.

What is *innumerable* cannot be counted (at least not practically). *Example:* There are innumerable grains of sand on the beach.

etc.—This is the abbreviated form of *et cetera* ("and other things"); it should not be used in reference to people. *Etc.* implies that a list of things is too long to recite (it should be used only after at least two items, never just one). Two redundancies often appear with this word:
1. *and etc.*, which is poor style because et means "and."
2. *etc.* at the end of a list that begins with e.g., which properly introduces a short list of examples.

(MCPS) extended year program (no hyphen)

farther; further—
*Farther* indicates a physical distance. *Example:* We had to drive much farther to get to our new school.

*Further* implies a more figurative distance. *Example:* Let's examine the algebra problem further.

fine arts

first-year students

first grade students (students in Grade 1)

firsthand experience

flyers (notices posted to announce or advertise an event)

follow up (verb)

follow-up (adjective, noun)

forego; forgo—
To *forego* is to go before or precede. *Example:* The foregoing speaker introduced the topic. A *foregone* conclusion is one that comes before the question is even asked.

To *forgo,* by contrast, is to do without or renounce. *Example:* The class will forgo its field trips this semester.

free rein (not free reign)

fund-raising (adjective)
fund-raiser (n)

**GH**

grade-level (adjective)

gradebook

healthcare

high-quality (adjective)

Honors-level (*Honors* is capitalized)

home schooling (adjective)

**IJ**

IB Programme

imply; infer—The writer or speaker *implies* (suggests). The reader or listener *infers* (deduces). Careful writers always distinguish between the two words.

in-consortium

informational meeting

ingenious; ingenuous—
*Ingenious* refers to what is intelligent, clever, and original. *Example:* The science students developed an ingenious invention for the competition.

*Ingenuous* describes what is candid, sincere, naïve. *Example:* The student made a small but ingenuous observation about the experiment.

Internet

intranet

**KL**

kick-off (noun)

kindergarten-age children

kindergartner (*not* kindergartener)

lineup (noun)

local-area network (noun)

lowercase

**MN**

Maryland State Curriculum

12 noon (*not* noon, *not* 12 p.m.)

12 midnight (*not* midnight, *not* 12 a.m.)

multicultural

multitalented

nationwide

networkwide

non-air-conditioned spaces

non-diploma-bound students (adjective)

non-vested (adjective)

nonequivalence

# Word Usage Glossary

**OP**

on-grade-level (adjective)

online

out-of-consortium (adjective)

postsecondary (not post-secondary)

posttest

post-9/11

preapproved

pre-K

Pre-K–5

prekindergarten

preprofessional

pretest

Principals PLC (no apostrophe)

PTA co-president

**QR**

quadcluster

quad/quintcluster

quintcluster

résumé (noun)

right-most (adjective)

right-of-way (noun)

**ST**

SAT (no longer an acronym for Scholastic Assessment Test)

schoolwide

semimonthly

service-learning activities

service-learning hours, Student Service Learning

setup (noun)

set-up (adjective)

shutdown (noun)

shut-down (adjective)

since—Since generally refers to time. *Example:* Since the superintendent started his work here, many changes have been made.

social security number, but Social Security Administration

sports-related

Special Education students (note initial caps)

statewide

Stationary—Standing still, immobile

Stationery–paper and envelopes

storm water

student-produced (adjective)

supersede (not supercede)

systemwide

teaching and learning process

three-dimensional (adj.) 3-D

therefor–for it or for them. She took the dress back to the store and got a refund therefor.

toward; towards—The preferred form is *without* the "s" in American English, *with* the "s" in British English. The same is true for other directional words, such as upward, downward, forward, backward, and afterward.

time frame (two words)

till (preposition or conjunction) The store is open till 8 p.m. on Thursdays. Do note write til.

**UV**

under way (in progress)

unit (when referring to a group office in MCPS) Editorial, Graphics & Publishing Services unit.

Upcounty

user-friendly

U.S. high schools (use as a modifier) but United States (spell out as a proper noun)

Veterans Day (no apostrophe)

visual art

voice-output device

**WX**

Washington, D.C., metropolitan area

5 Florida Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C.

web (World Wide Web)

web page

website

webmaster

whole-school (refers to magnet program at Poolesville High School)

wide: all -wide (suffix) words should be one word. *For example:* systemwide, communitywide, schoolwide, countywide

wide-area networks

work group

## Why Use a Style Sheet?

- Use a style sheet to help keep your writing style consistent throughout your document, and other documents that may follow on the same issue.
- A style sheet keeps track of your treatment of numbers, dates, hyphenation, capitalization, special spellings of names, and formatting text elements such as lists, subheads, and citation style.
- Record the major and unusual style elements on a style sheet and keep it for future use.

Here is an example:

| **Name of project/job:** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **AB** | **CD**<br>child care<br>daylong | **EF** | **GH** |
| **IJ** | **KL**<br>lower-than-projected (adjective) | **MN**<br>non-profit | **OP**<br>ongoing |
| **QR** | **ST**<br>team-building (adjective) | **UV**<br>under way | **WX**<br>well-balanced |
| **YZ** | **Numbers**<br>$5 million<br>10 (not ten) | **Abbreviations**<br>ADR—Alternative Dispute Resolution | **Graphics/Layout**<br>Do not use clip art, only photographs. |
| **Special Notes** | | | |

# *Tips You Can Use*

Copy and use the sheet below for your project.

| Name of project/job: | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| AB | CD | EF | GH |
| IJ | KL | MN | OP |
| QR | ST | UV | WX |
| YZ | Numbers | Abbreviations | Graphics/Layout |
| Special Notes | | | |

# Your Questions Answered

## ABBREVIATION

***Do we write "the OCIP" or just "OCIP?"***

OCIP (noun). Do not use an article when an acronym is pronounced as a word.

***MSA and HSA—What is the norm for referring to MSA and HSA?***

When referring to the program as a whole, refer to it as singular. When referring to the individual exams, use the plural. *Example:* the algebra and English HSAs

***SSE (Summer Supplemental Employment)—Is it correct to say, "The SSE were pilot tested" or should it be "was"?***

The correct sentence should read: The SSE was pilot tested.

***How do we abbreviate the word prekindergarten?***

pre-K.

***As I collect data points from various authors, some people use ESOL and FARMS without spelling out first, others spell out then use the acronym. Since this will all be pulled together into two chapters, I have suggested editing all the data points so that they simply read ESOL and FARMS the first time they are used. Your guidance?***

Acronyms should be spelled out on first usage in each chapter, followed by the acronym in parentheses. Thereafter (within the chapter), just use the acronym.

## CAPITALIZATION

***Do we capitalize the first letter in the word white as we do African American, Asian, and Hispanic?***

Yes, "White" is capitalized when we refer to race.

***web site—How do we write out this word?***

website.

***unit—Should we capitalize the word "unit" in an office name?***

No, just use the name as listed.

***Internet—Do we capitalize Internet?***

Yes.

***Awards—Should we capitalize "awards" in the Marian Greenblatt Excellence awards?***

No, it should be awards (lowercase a) in the plural. If singular, then we would use Marian Greenblatt Award.

***Do we write Class of 2008 or class of 2008?***

Write Class of 2008.

***When do you capitalize a curriculum discipline?***

You capitalize a curriculum discipline when it is the formal name of a course. *Examples*: You would capitalize Algebra 1, because it is the formal name of a course, but you would not capitalize algebra, because it is the generic name of a subject or discipline. You would capitalize Mathematics 6, but you would not capitalize mathematics.

***Should "atlas" be capitalized in the following list?***

***Dictionary***
***Thesaurus***
***World atlas***

No.

***In the attached sample, references to appendix T and chapter 4 are made. Should they be lowercased or capitalized?***

Capitalize Appendix T (consider this the formal name of the appendix) and use chapter 4 (lowercase "c").

## GRAMMAR

**Afterschool—is this one word, two words, or hyphenated?**

The adjective is hyphenated: after-school. Otherwise, these are two separate words. It is not one word.

***Grammar and style guide—Which grammar and style guide should I order for my desk for easy reference? Would you recommend the Gregg Manual, 8th Edition?***

If you do mostly correspondence, you should have the *MCPS Correspondence Manual* and the *Gregg Manual*. For general reports and other long documents, use the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th ed. and the *MCPS Editorial Stylebook*. For technical and educational writing, use the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 7th ed.

***First come, first served—Is this the correct way of writing these words?***

Yes.

# Your Questions Answered

***Plurals—Should we say students' achievements or students' achievement?***

Students' achievements. Plural possessive should have plural noun following it.

***Rollout—Is rollout a noun or an adjective?***

It is a noun. However, when used as a modifier, it is an adjective.

***Attachments—How do we refer to attachments that are part of another attachment?***

Refer to them as sections of the attachment.

***Do we write "Teachers in Grades 1–5" or "teachers of Grades 1–5?"***

Teachers of.

***How do we avoid confusion between "a" and "an?"***

Use "an" if the first sound is a vowel. Use "an MCPS office" and "an SAT score." Otherwise, use "a."

***What is the correct format—Those of us who work at, with, or for MCPS?***

Use "Those of us who work at MCPS." Use "She was employed with MCPS for five years." "She served as a principal in MCPS for many years."

***My principal is writing an invitation to President Obama. He wants us to invite both the President and the first lady. How should we address them properly?***

Dear President and Mrs. Obama.

***Do we use MCPS' to show ownership or MCPS's?***

MCPS's.

***When working with tables, do we use total or totals to indicate the sum?***

You should use "total" to indicate the sum on a table.

***Which of the following would be correct? …the percentage of staff who responded to the question OR …the percentage of staff that responded to the question.***

Use the latter phrase.

Use *that* when referring to a class or group. For example: Mary is a member of the team that won the competition.

Use *who* when referring to humans or specific individuals. For example: Mary is the one who won the competition.

## HYPHENATION

***Should college-readiness trajectory be hyphenated?***

Yes.

***Do we write co-teaching or coteaching?***

MCPS uses coteaching (per Webster's dictionary, 11th edition).

***Which is correct? Non-diploma bound students or nondiploma bound students?***

Neither. It should be non-diploma-bound students.

***"Full pay-period check." Is this correct usage of the hyphen?***

The phrase should read "full-pay-period check," since all three adjectives describe the check.

## PUNCTUATION

***Em dash and en dash—When to use these characters?***

Em dash—Use to separate an interrupting clause from the rest of the sentence.

En dash—It is the equivalent of the word to. It is used to separate letters and numbers, especially when a range or time span is given. *Examples*: Monday–Friday, 1997–2017

*Note:* There should be no spaces before or after em and en dashes.

***Underlining—When is it good practice to use underlining in a document?***

Avoid underlining words in a document. Italics and bold are acceptable instead. Underlining was commonly used when traditional typewriters were popular.

***Bullets—Should we use a space after each bulleted item?***

It is better not to use a space after each bulleted item, unless it would look better aesthetically, for example, in a short document. If you do insert a space after each bulleted item, make this style consistent throughout the whole document.

***I'm running into many documents where folks type cotaught as co-taught (probably because [Microsoft] Word doesn't recognize cotaught).***

Always consult Webster's, 11th edition, to check the spelling of words with a prefix, such as "co." Webster's uses cotaught (no hyphen).

***Is high poverty schools hyphenated?***

Yes. It should be high-poverty schools.

***Do we put a period after a quotation that comes at the end of an incomplete sentence (e.g., "I speak…")?***

No. According to Chicago Manual of Style, "No more than three points are used, whether the omission occurs in the middle of a sentence or between sentences."

***What is the correct punctuation for the following sentence? "…for the Thomas Edison High School of Technology, John F. Kennedy, Paint Branch, Sherwood, and Watkins Mill high schools and Adventist Healthcare Inc."* Following the Edison name, would it be correct to use a semicolon or is the comma correct?**

The comma is correct in this case.

## WRITING STYLE

***What is the preferred way to write the name of an MCPS form?***

MCPS Form XXX, *This Is a Test*.

***How do you record the name of a web link in a document?***

For email documents (such as memoranda) and online reports, briefs, and the like, use a hyperlink; for print, put the name of the link in italics.

***Is it recommended not to use "So," at the beginning of a sentence?***

For official documents, use something like "Therefore," instead.

***What is the politically correct way to note a female master of ceremonies?***

Mistress of ceremonies.

***How do I cite a web address in a document?***

Place the web address in parentheses, followed by comma and the page number(s), if applicable. *Example:* Funbrain is a great website for kids to solve problems by playing games (*www.funbrain.com*).

**Note:** Do not insert a hyphen if you need to break a URL across lines; instead, break the URL before punctuation.

***Our teacher is writing material for new science curricula. The teacher likes the definitions used in another source. He ran the definitions through Google and found that the author had taken them from various online and print dictionaries. Does he need to footnote these sources or are dictionary definitions so much in the public domain that they do not require a footnote?***

Dictionary definitions are definitely part of the public domain. If all the definitions are taken from the same dictionary, you could cite the dictionary in an endnote. Otherwise, you could cite in text, for example, "…according to ABC Dictionary, [word] is defined as…"

***Does MCPS have a rule on whether or not there is a space between FY and the year?***

The MCPS style is to write FY 2019.

***Again, from various authors, I sometimes get "In 2019…" or sometimes "During the 2018–2019 school year …", etc. I have suggested using "In 2019" but again… Is there some way to abbreviate school year 2019?***

The MCPS style is to use "During the 2019–2020 school year."

# Useful Links

### Links to useful websites

- *refdesk.com/factgram.html*
  list of links
- *grammarbook.com*
  numbers, grammar, and punctuation rules
- *libraryspot.com/grammarstyle.htm*
  list of links
- *www.senate.gov*
  addresses for and important information on U. S. senators
- *https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/egps/services/editorial/index.aspx*MCPS Editorial Help Desk
- *plainlanguage.gov*
  Clear writing for easier communication
- Catalog.loc.gov
  Library of Congress catalog

### Keyboard shortcuts for punctuation

The following are a few shortcuts for inserting punctuation marks in your document. Please make sure your number lock key is engaged before you start.

**EM DASH (—)**
Hold down the alt key on your PC and simultaneously enter 0151 on your number pad.

**EN DASH (–)**
Hold down the alt key on your PC and simultaneously enter 0150 on your number pad.

**ELLIPSIS (…)**
Hold down the alt key on your PC and simultaneously enter 0133 on your number pad.

**COMMON FRACTIONS**
(½) Hold down the alt key on your PC and simultaneously enter 0189 on your number pad.

(¼) Hold down the alt key on your PC and simultaneously enter 0188 on your number pad.

(¾) Hold down the alt key on your PC and simultaneously enter 0190 on your number pad.

**HOW TO TYPE ACCENTS ON THE PC**
Press and hold the keys listed below in the order given, Release the keys, then type the letter to be accented. (Practice makes perfect.)

CTRL + (Accent above the Tab key), and the letter à, è, ì, ò, ù

CTRL + Apostrophe, the letter
á, é, í, ó, ú, ý

CTRL + SHIFT +Caret (^), the letter
â, ê, î, ô, û

CTRL + SHIFT + Tilde (~), the letter
ã, ñ, õ

CTRL + SHIFT + Colon (:), the letter
ä, ë, ï, ö, ü, ÿ

**COPYRIGHT**
(©) Hold down alt, ctrl, c simultaneously.

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Maryland's Largest School District

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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