



UNIVERSITY of  
**SOUTH FLORIDA**

# Editorial Guide to Style and Usage

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## WHY CREATE AN EDITORIAL STYLE GUIDE FOR USF?

Units throughout the university independently produce content to communicate with internal and external audiences. A style guide ensures a high level of professionalism across these communications.

To be effective, written materials should be clear and consistent. While individual publications convey distinct messages, a reader often receives communications from a number of USF sources in print and in digital formats. Just as [brand management](#) provides a “look and feel” for visual design across the university, this guide is designed to help create a common voice that further enhances USF’s credibility and professionalism.

## WHEN TO USE THIS GUIDE (AND WHEN NOT)

Follow these guidelines when creating non-academic, non-technical documents that are intended for university and general public audiences. This includes communications for a university-wide audience as well as prospective students, alumni, donors, legislators, businesses and the general public.

Specialized kinds of writing, such as professional papers, dissertations, technical publications and academic works should conform to the accepted style of the respective discipline.

This guide is primarily specific to USF and includes terms common throughout higher education. University Communications and Marketing follows Associated Press style and several items from the AP Stylebook are included in this guide. For example: Use *Dr.* in first reference as a formal title before the name of an individual who holds a doctor of dental surgery, doctor of medicine, doctor of optometry, doctor of osteopathic medicine, doctor of podiatric medicine, or doctor of veterinary medicine. Do not use *Dr.* before the names of individuals who hold other types of doctoral degrees. (Note: Italics are used throughout this guide only to highlight examples.)

The [AP Stylebook](#) is available for free to faculty and staff through the USF Libraries.

## A

**AAU** An association of 71 leading research institutions in the U.S. and Canada. USF accepted an invitation to join the AAU in 2023. Use *Association of American Universities* on first reference and *AAU* on subsequent references.

**academic degrees** Avoid abbreviations, use lowercase and spell out the degree:

*bachelor's degree in*

*bachelor's in*

*master's degree in*

*master's in*

*doctoral degree in*

*doctorate in (NOT doctorate degree)*

*associate degree (not possessive)*

However, capitalize specific degrees:

*Bachelor of Arts degree*

*Bachelor of Science degree*

In running text (paragraph form in brochures, newsletters, magazine articles, flyers, news releases), academic degrees are not used with a person's name.

*Mary Smith is the dean of the law school.*

*NOT: Mary Smith, JD, is the dean of the law school.*

**Dr./PhD in text** Only use *Dr.* in first reference as a formal title before the name of an individual who holds a doctor of medicine, doctor of dental surgery, doctor of optometry, doctor of osteopathic medicine, doctor of podiatric medicine, or doctor of veterinary medicine: *Dr. Jonas Salk.*

The form *Dr.*, or *Drs.* in a plural construction, applies to all first-reference uses before a name, including direct quotations. Do not continue the use of *Dr.* in subsequent references.

Do not use *Dr.* before the names of individuals who hold other types of doctoral degrees. Instead, when necessary or appropriate: *Jane Doe, who has a doctorate in mathematics, was lead researcher.*

**academic departments and schools** Capitalize the official name of an academic department or school.

**academic journals** Do not italicize journal titles or place in quotes.

**academic majors** See capitalization

**academic papers** Capitalize the principal words of academic papers and journal articles, including prepositions and conjunctions of four or more letters. Put quotation marks around the name of the article.

### **academic titles**

- Capitalize and spell out formal titles when they directly precede a name. *Ex. Professor Jane Smith*
- Lowercase title and uppercase formal department designation when following a name or when appearing without a name. *Ex. John Doe, chair of the Department of Chemistry. The chair of the Department of Chemistry.*
- Do not capitalize occupational descriptions or identifiers, even if they appear directly before a name. *Ex. The honor was awarded to oceanographer Jane Smith*
- Only use an individual's full name and title on first reference. On subsequent references, use only the last name. If an individual has a multiple last name, follow their preference.

**accreditation** The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is the recognized institutional accrediting body in Florida.

*The University of South Florida is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award associate, baccalaureate, masters, specialist, and doctoral degrees. The University of South Florida also may offer credentials such as certificates and diplomas at approved degree levels. Questions about the accreditation of the University of South Florida may be directed in writing to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033-4097, by calling (404) 679-4500, or by using information available on SACSCOC's website ([www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org)).*

*Normal inquiries about the institution, such as admission requirements, financial aid, educational programs, etc., should be addressed directly to the institution and not to the Commission's Office.*

*For more information on Accreditation, visit <https://www.usf.edu/ods/accreditation/accreditation.aspx>.*

**acronyms** Avoid the use of most acronyms. This applies to all colleges and units. Unless the acronym is clear on second reference, do not follow an organization’s full name with an abbreviation, acronym in parentheses or set off by dashes. Note: USF is acceptable on second reference, as are BOT (Board of Trustees) and BOG (Board of Governors). A few universally recognized acronyms are acceptable on first reference, such as CIA, FBI, IRS, NASA and NATO. Entrance examination titles, such as ACT, SAT, LSAT, GMAT, GRE, MAT and MCAT usually do not need to be spelled out, even on first reference.

**adjuncts** Part-time, temporary instructors

**administration** Lowercase; faculty and staff are also lowercase.

**admissions office** Office of Undergraduate Admissions, Office of Graduate Admissions, USF Health Office of Admissions.

**alma mater** Lowercase.

**alumni association** See **USF Alumni Association**.

**assistant/associate professor** See **professor**.

## B

**Board of Governors** The Board of Governors is the governing body for the State University System of Florida. On first reference, use the Florida Board of Governors. On subsequent references, *BOG* is acceptable.

**Board of Trustees** On first reference, acceptable ways to refer to the university’s governing body include: the University of South Florida Board of Trustees and the USF Board of Trustees. Use capital letters on first reference. On subsequent references, *BOT* is acceptable. The board has five committees:

- Academics and Campus Environment
- Finance
- Governance
- Audit & Compliance
- Strategic Initiatives

**boilerplate** Public relations/marketing term that refers to a standard description about an organization that is used for a variety of purposes: for example, as the last paragraph of a news release. USF’s boilerplate is as follows:

## About the University of South Florida

*The University of South Florida, a high-impact research university dedicated to student success and committed to community engagement, generates an annual economic impact of more than \$6 billion. With campuses in Tampa, St. Petersburg and Sarasota-Manatee, USF serves approximately 50,000 students who represent nearly 150 different countries. For four consecutive years, U.S. News & World Report has ranked USF as one of the nation's top 50 public universities, including USF's highest ranking ever in 2023 (No. 42). In 2023, USF became the first public university in Florida in nearly 40 years to be invited to join the Association of American Universities, a prestigious group of the leading universities in the United States and Canada. Through hundreds of millions of dollars in research activity each year and as one of top universities in the world for securing new patents, USF is a leader in solving global problems and improving lives. USF is a member of the American Athletic Conference. Learn more at [www.usf.edu](http://www.usf.edu).*

**building names** Capitalize and spell out *building* when it is part of a proper name, but not when it stands alone or is used collectively.

Capitalize formal building names or accepted formal references to a building. On second reference, lowercase when proper name is not used. Also lowercase when using as a generic description.

*The Empire State and Chrysler buildings are in New York City.*

*My class is in Cooper Hall.*

*The tour group walked past the David C. Anchin Center.*

*I walked to the library.*

*They had coffee in the USF Bookstore.*

*I'm working in an engineering lab.*

Names of buildings are available on the respective campus's map:

[USF Tampa campus](#)

[USF St. Petersburg campus](#)

[USF Sarasota-Manatee campus](#)

**Bulls, USF Bulls** Commonly refers to USF's athletic teams. Always capitalize. References to teams and programs should be lowercase: *the Bulls football team, the women's basketball program.*

## C

**campus** Use the lowercase word “campus” after referring to the geographic location.

For example:

- *The group will perform on the USF Sarasota-Manatee campus.*
- *I’m teaching a biology course this semester on the USF Tampa campus.*
- *Joe Smith is a USF student who lives in a residence hall on the USF St. Petersburg campus.*
- *Christine Ruva, a psychology professor on USF’s Sarasota-Manatee campus, conducted an extensive study of pre-trial publicity.*

After establishing you are talking about the University of South Florida on first reference, it’s acceptable to use Tampa campus, St. Petersburg campus or Sarasota-Manatee campus or simply “campus” on second reference, without “USF.”

For example:

- *Seth Morano knows that he wants to pursue a writing career, but he hasn’t figured out exactly what form that should take. Fortunately for the University of South Florida student studying at the Sarasota-Manatee campus, there’s plenty of time to declare a major.*

**campuswide** One word. Also: *citywide, countrywide, statewide, nationwide* and *worldwide*.

An exception to this rule is if the word becomes long and cumbersome, as in *university-wide*.

**capitalization** In general, avoid unnecessary capitals by capitalizing only when referring to an official name.

**university, college:** Capitalize university and college when they are part of an official name: the *University of South Florida, New York University, Muma College of Business*. Lowercase when used as plurals.

*Princeton and Yale universities.*

*The colleges of nursing and engineering.*

Lowercase university and college on second references.

*I earned my bachelor’s degree at the University of South Florida.*

*The university has a strong liberal arts program.*

*The College of Marine Science offers a rigorous curriculum.*

*The college has an outstanding faculty.*

**titles:** Capitalize formal titles for positions when used immediately before a name. Lowercase formal titles when used alone or when set off by commas. If the formal name of a department is part of a title, capitalize even if it follows the name:

*The president spoke.*

*Jane Doe, director of the Division of Patents and Licensing, is here.*

*Director of Patents and Licensing Jane Doe has arrived.*

An individual's full name and title are used only on a first reference. On subsequent references, use just the last name.

**classes and courses:** Use lowercase when you refer to classes and courses, unless you use the specific (and complete) title or the name carries a proper noun or numeral.

*She registered for Biology 101.*

*Her History of Civilization class is cancelled.*

*My chemistry class is fascinating.*

**majors, minors, programs:** Lowercase majors, minors and programs of study except for words that are proper nouns or adjectives:

*Mary is a music major.*

*Greg earned a degree in biology.*

*I'm a French major.*

*She was accepted into the environmental chemistry program.*

*USF offers a master's program in women's studies.*

**chair** Chair is preferred as a title, not chairman or chairwoman. This differs from AP style. Capitalize as a title only when used before a name as an official title and lowercase when used after the name.

**colleges** Use the official name of a USF college or school on a first reference and then lowercase the word *college* or *school* on second reference. USF has 13 colleges:

College of the Arts

College of Arts and Sciences

College of Behavioral and Community Sciences

Muma College of Business

College of Education

College of Engineering



Patel College of Global Sustainability  
Judy Genshaft Honors College  
College of Marine Science  
USF Health Morsani College of Medicine  
USF Health College of Nursing  
USF Health Taneja College of Pharmacy  
USF Health College of Public Health

**commencement** Capitalize when referring to USF.

**composition titles** Put quotation marks around the titles of books, movies, plays, poems, albums, songs, operas, radio and television programs, lectures, speeches, works of art and webinars. Do not use quotation marks around software titles, apps, or around names of video, online or analog versions of games.

**curricula, curriculum, curricular** Curriculum is the singular form for a program of academic courses or learning activities (*the mathematics curriculum*). *Curricula* is the plural for curriculum. *Curricular* is the adjective form of curriculum as in *the Chemistry Department's curricular philosophy*.

**curriculum vita, curricula vitae** *Curriculum vita* is singular, *curricula vitae* is plural.

## D

**degrees** See **academic degrees**.

**doctor, doctorate** See **academic degrees**.

**dormitory/dorm** See **residence halls**.

**dual degree** Dual degree, without a hyphen, is the noun. Dual-degree is the adjective.

## E

**emeritus, emerita** Place *emeritus* (masculine, singular) or *emerita* (feminine, singular) after the formal title. Use *emeriti* for plural, both masculine and feminine and *emeritae* for plural, feminine.

*Professor Emeritus Howard Smith*

*Susan Jones, professor emerita*

## F

**faculty** Lowercase. Refers to tenured educators holding the rank of professor, associate professor or assistant professor; and library professional staff holding the ranks of librarian, associate librarian or assistant librarian; and central administrative officers, deans and directors, if they also hold regular faculty status. Faculty can take a plural or a singular verb depending on how the word is being used – either to refer to a group as a whole (singular) or to refer to members individually (plural)

*The faculty is present.*

*The faculty agree to meet tomorrow.*

For the sake of clarity, rewrite the sentence to avoid a plural verb or use faculty members. When writing about individuals, use *a faculty member*.

**FTIC** Stands for *first time in college*.

**Fulbright** Capitalize Fulbright, lowercase subsequent word: *a Fulbright research grant*, *Fulbright scholar*

## G

**GPA** Acceptable in all references for grade-point average.

**graduated** Graduated from is the correct usage.

*He graduated from USF in 1991.*

*(NOT: He graduated USF.)*

**GRE** Stands for Graduate Record Examination. *GRE* is acceptable on a first reference. Do not use periods.

## H

**headlines** Only the first word and proper nouns are capitalized. Use numerals for all numbers and single quotes for quotation marks.

**health care** Two words.

**homecoming** Always capitalize when referring to *USF Homecoming* as a noun or as an adjective, i.e., *Homecoming week*, *Homecoming activities*. Homecoming is scheduled

during football season.

**housing** See **residence halls**.

## L

**Living Learning Communities** Residential student communities with emphasis on academic major or an area of special interest. The list of Living Learning Communities on the Tampa campus is available [here](#). Housing & Residential Education offers [Residential Community Programs](#) on the St. Petersburg campus.

## N

**nondegree** One word. Use a hyphen in **nondegree-seeking**.

**numerals** In general, spell out one through nine: Use figures for 10 or above and whenever preceding a unit of measure or referring to ages of people, animals, events or things.

### Use figures for:

ACADEMIC COURSE NUMBERS: *History 6, Philosophy 209.*

ADDRESSES: *210 Main St.* Spell out numbered streets nine and under: *5 Sixth Ave.; 3012 50th St.; No. 10 Downing St.* Use the abbreviations Ave., Blvd. and St. only with a numbered address: *1600 Pennsylvania Ave.* Spell them out and capitalize without a number: *Pennsylvania Avenue.*

AGES: *a 6-year-old girl; an 8-year-old law; the 7-year-old house.* Use hyphens for ages expressed as adjectives before a noun or as substitutes for a noun. *A 5-year-old boy, but the boy is 5 years old. The boy, 5, has a sister, 10. The race is for 3-year-olds. The woman is in her 30s. 30-something, but Thirty-something to start a sentence.*

PERCENT, PERCENTAGES: Use the % sign when paired with a number, with no space: *Average hourly pay rose 3.1% from a year ago; her mortgage rate is 4.75%; about 60% of Americans agreed; he won 56.2% of the vote.* For amounts less than 1%, precede the decimal with a zero: *The cost of living rose 0.6%.* For a range, *12% to 15%, 12%-15% and between 12% and 15%* are all acceptable.

## O

**off campus, on campus** Two words, but hyphenate before a noun.

*He lives on campus.*

*She lives in an off-campus apartment.*

### **organizational titles**

*Rhea Law is the president of the University of South Florida.*

USF has both multi-campus deans and campus deans. For example:

- *Anthony Rolle is the dean of the College of Education.*
- *Paul Kirchman is the Sarasota-Manatee campus dean of the College of Arts & Sciences.*

## P

**p.m., a.m.** Lowercase, with periods. Avoid the redundant *8 a.m. this morning*.

### **postdoctoral**

### **postgraduate**

### **prelaw**

### **premed**

### **preprofessional**

**president** In text, the word president is capitalized only when it appears as a formal title before the name.

*USF President Rhea Law spoke at the ceremony.*

On a second reference, it is lowercase.

*The president also answered questions from the audience.*

*She is running for president.*

**presidents of the University of South Florida** Terms of service:

John Allen – 1957-1970

Cecil Mackey – 1971-1976

John Lott Brown – 1978-1988

Francis T. Borkowski – 1988-1993

Betty Castor – 1994-1999  
Judy Genshaft – 2000-2019  
Steven Currall – 2019-2021  
Rhea Law – 2021-present

**professor** Capitalize only if it precedes a proper name. Lowercase if it refers to a generic description and is not an actual title. Treat *associate professor* and *assistant professor* in the same manner.

## R

**rankings** Use as the abbreviation for number in conjunction with a figure to indicate position or rank: *Times Higher Education ranks USF No. 4 in the U.S. for its efforts to eliminate poverty.*

**residence halls** Use the term *residence halls*, not dorms or dormitories. Residence hall should not be used after the proper name of the hall.

*Jane Thomas lives in Endeavor Hall.*

## S

**SAT** Stands for Scholastic Aptitude Test. *SAT* is acceptable on first reference. Do not use periods.

**scholar** Lowercase except when used with named scholarships.

*USF Presidential Scholars Award*  
*National Hispanic Scholars*

**scholarship** Lowercase except when used with proper names.

*Joe applied for the USF Honors College Scholarship*  
*Mary received a scholarship.*

**seasons** Lowercase *spring*, *summer*, *fall*, *winter* and derivatives such as *springtime* unless part of a formal name, i.e., *Winter Olympics*.

**semesters** Lowercase references to semesters in text.

*She will teach during the fall semester.*

**study abroad** Do not hyphenate study abroad.

*USF offers many study abroad programs.*

*Next summer I will study abroad.*

*She is going to study abroad for a semester.*

*USF's study abroad program is extensive.*

**SUS** Refers to the State University System of Florida, which consists of 12 public universities throughout the state. The universities are:

Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University

Florida Atlantic University

Florida Gulf Coast University

Florida International University

Florida Polytechnic University

Florida State University

New College of Florida

University of Central Florida

University of Florida

University of North Florida

University of South Florida

University of West Florida

**syllabus, syllabi** Syllabus is singular. Syllabi is plural.

## T

**tenure, tenured** *tenure* is a noun; *tenured* is an adjective.

**trustee** Capitalize when used before a name as a title. Lowercase when used as a generic description or after a name.

## U

**University of South Florida/USF** Refers to the singular entity that includes campuses in Tampa, St. Petersburg and Sarasota-Manatee. Spell out on first reference. Use USF Tampa campus, USF St. Petersburg campus and USF Sarasota-Manatee campus to reference the geographic location when necessary.

**USF Alumni Association** Capitalize on first reference. Lowercase on subsequent references when referring to the alumni association.

**USF Foundation** Capitalize on first reference. Lowercase *foundation* on second reference.

**USF Health** The overarching organization for the health disciplines, including the multi-disciplinary faculty practice plan consisting of doctors and allied health professionals. USF Health is based primarily on the Tampa campus; some programs involve facilities, clinical sites and campuses throughout Tampa Bay. They include:

The USF Health Morsani College of Medicine MD program is based in the 13-story USF Health Downtown, which opened in 2020 as a key anchor of the Water Street Tampa redevelopment. The facility also houses the Heart Institute and the USF Health Taneja College of Pharmacy will move there in 2023.

The South Tampa Center for Advanced Healthcare, a clinical facility offering multi-specialty care for patients close to USF's primary teaching hospital, Tampa General Hospital.

The Morsani Center for Advanced Healthcare, which offers multi-specialty care on the Tampa campus.

The Center for Advanced Medical Learning and Simulation (often referred to as CAMLS), located in downtown Tampa, is one of the world's largest free-standing simulation facilities dedicated exclusively to training health care professionals.

The USF Health College of Nursing has most of its programs on the Tampa campus, but also offers courses on the St. Petersburg and Sarasota-Manatee campuses.

Use the full names of USF Health colleges on first reference:

USF Health Morsani College of Medicine  
USF Health College of Nursing  
USF Health Taneja College of Pharmacy  
USF Health College of Public Health

If for a national audience, identify USF Health as part of the university:

*University of South Florida Health, Northwell Health, Formlabs and Tampa General Hospital join forces to create 3D- printed nasal swabs to test for COVID-19.*

OR

*University of South Florida Morsani College of Medicine.*

**USF System** This term was retired when the three campuses consolidated on July 1, 2020. Examples of alternative wording include: *university-wide, One USF, all three campuses.*