In general, spell-check uses an inferior dictionary. By all means use it to detect typos, but Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 11th edition, is the industry bible.

Executive Summary

FIVE COLLEGES REFERENCES

- On first reference, use the full name of the organization: Five College Consortium. On second reference, use Five Colleges. We now only use Five Colleges, Incorporated for official business references, such as in contracts.
- Drop the s when using the name of the organization as an adjective.
- To reduce confusion, use Five Colleges only when referring to the consortium; avoid referring to the institutions of the consortium as the five colleges. Use campuses and institutions.

PUNCTUATION

- Insert only one space after a period, question mark, colon or exclamation point.
- Do not use the serial (or Oxford) comma, unless it is necessary for clarity.
- Use a semicolon to separate a compound sentence without and, but, or.
- Use a semicolon in a series when any component contains a comma.

NAMES AND TITLES

- Abbreviate names of schools (no periods) if they’ll be readily recognized.
- In a headline or a title, capitalize any verbs and pronouns no matter how small.
- No comma before the campus of a multicampus university.
- Lowercase and spell out titles when they stand alone or follow a name.
- Capitalize and spell out a title preceding a name.
- Lowercase major or concentration.
- Do not capitalize western in western Massachusetts.
- Capitalize department and office names only when referring to a specific place.
- Capitalize the official names of organizations and programs; lowercase the generic name.
- Use the full name of the university on first reference with audiences beyond the consortium (press releases), UMass thereafter.
- Academic degrees may be abbreviated (with no periods) or spelled out.
- Use italics for books, magazines, journals, newspapers, movies, TV shows and foreign words.
- Use quotation marks for episodes of a TV show, poems, songs and for newspaper, magazine and journal articles.

NUMBERS AND DATES

- Spell out numbers one through nine and ordinals first through ninth; use figures for 10 and above and ordinals for 10th and above.
- For dates, use figures without st, nd, rd or th (e.g., June 1).
- For times, use figures except for noon and midnight. Lower case a.m. and p.m and use periods.

For examples and the remainder of the style rules we adhere to, please refer to the full Editorial Style Guide that follows.
RESOURCES

- Associated Press Stylebook (AP) (AP trumps CMS)
- Chicago Manual of Style, 16th edition (CMS)
- Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th edition (Web. 11)
- Webster's Third New International Dictionary, unabridged (Web. 3)

Wikipedia, although helpful, is not an acceptable primary source. Use it to lead you elsewhere to confirm information.

IN GENERAL

- Insert just one space after a period, question mark, colon, or exclamation point.
- Watch out for tics (such as always writing in threes).
- Attribute all quotes.

Five Colleges references

- On first reference, use the full name of the organization: Five College Consortium. On second reference, use simply Five Colleges.
- Drop the s when using the name of the organization as an adjective: “She works in the Five College Dance Department.”
- To reduce confusion, use Five Colleges only when referring to the name of the consortium; avoid referring to the institutions of the consortium as the five colleges. Campuses and institutions work. “Five campuses sent lacrosse teams to the tournament.”

PUNCTUATION

Commas

Do not use the serial (or Oxford) comma, unless it is necessary for clarity.

Mount Holyoke, Smith and Amherst Colleges and the University of Massachusetts have been associated institutions of the consortium since its beginning.

Addresses

Separate all elements of an address with commas.

Five Colleges has its offices on Spring Street, Amherst, MA. Paramus, NJ, is undergoing economic upheaval.

Note: For state abbreviations, see below.

Dates

Separate all elements of a full date with commas.

She taught at Hampshire from Tuesday, Sept. 1, 1984, until her retirement, on June 30, 2012, and now runs photography workshops.

Don’t use a comma for partial dates.

We’ll begin the program in September 2014. That article will run in the spring 2015 issue; I’m sorry for the delay.
Note: Abbreviate the month in a full date; spell it out in a partial date. For contractions, see below. For semicolons, see below.

Introductory Clauses
If you read a sentence aloud, when would you have to breathe? That’s one way to determine whether a comma is in order. Count syllables. If there are seven or more, insert a comma.
Because exam period is stressful, there’s always a huge celebration afterward.
In January 1978, the area was hit with the worst snowstorm of the century.

If there are fewer than seven syllables, no need for a comma (but fine to use one).
Because tests cause stress we need to release tension.
In March 1980 the area was hit with the worst snowstorm of the century.

If what follows a short introductory clause is long and involved, use a comma regardless of number of syllables.
Because tests cause stress, we’ve come up with a million and one ways to decompress when you’re finally finished with them.

When a clause ends in a proper noun and a proper noun follows, separate them with a comma.
In March, Dean of Students Marcia Rhodes announced an enormous bequest.

Use a comma after all “if” clauses.
If you build it, they will come.

Note: When in doubt, use a comma; it’s rarely “wrong.”

Semicolons
Use to separate a compound sentence without and, but, or.
The event was a rousing success; the venue was packed to the rafters.

Use in a series when any component contains a comma.
For the picnic we bought bread, milk and cheese; drove 30 miles; and discovered we had the wrong date.

Ellipses
Use to indicate missing words. The format is three periods with a space before, during and after.
“it’s important to think quickly and act quickly in an emergency . . . as did students when an errant Frisbee went sailing through the crowd,” read the police statement.

Use to indicate trailing off.
We on the magazine’s editorial staff congratulate our interns on making it through finals . . .

STYLE OTHER THAN PUNCTUATION

Abbreviations
Cities
Preference is for spelling out, but in quoted material, for example, use caps and period for common city abbreviations.

Los Angeles (L.A.)
New York City (N.Y.C.)
Washington, D.C. (D.C.)

*Note:* Do not use ZIP code.

Colleges and Universities
Abbreviate names of schools (no periods) if they'll be readily recognized; spell them out when confusion could exist.

UCLA, UMass, BU (because for us it’s local), MIT

No comma before the campus of a multicampus university.
University of California Northridge

*Note:* Don’t abbreviate the word *university*.

Titles
Lowercase and spell out titles when they stand alone.

The senator from New York argues persuasively.
The principal of the Springfield charter school submitted his report.

Capitalize and spell out a title preceding a last name.

Having served in the military during the Vietnam War, Secretary of State Kerry is sensitive to the needs of veterans.
The audience applauded enthusiastically when President Lash addressed the crowd.

Abbreviate a title used with a full name.

Political differences notwithstanding, the nation mourned the death of Sen. Edward M. Kennedy.
Capt. Sarah Smith is beloved by her troops.

Lowercase and spell out titles following a name.

Stan Rosenberg, Democratic representative from Amherst
Mary Elizabeth O’Brien, principal of the academy

Lowercase major or concentration; uppercase name of program.

American studies (major)
American Studies (program)

Places
Capitalize regions.

the North
the Southwest
Note: western Massachusetts is not universally recognized as a region and so not capitalized; the “western” is considered descriptive rather than a proper noun.

Lowercase the same words when they indicate a direction.

The wind blew in from the north.
He drove southwest for 200 miles, until he reached Oklahoma.

Offices and Departments
Capitalize department and office names only when referring to a specific place.

He works in the History Department at Hampshire College.
He’s applied for jobs in the history departments of all five campuses.

Capitalize the official names of organizations and programs; lowercase the generic name.

The Smith College Center for Early Childhood Education provides a challenging learning environment.
The center provides a challenging learning environment.

Use the full name on first reference with the colleges.

Amherst College

Note: Never abbreviate the Mount in Mount Holyoke College.

Use the full name of the university on first reference with audiences beyond the consortium (press releases), UMass thereafter.

University of Massachusetts Amherst

UMass Amherst is OK on first reference with consortium audiences (Newsbreaks, internal brochures). With the website, because there is really no “first reference,” use UMass throughout.

Quoted Material from an Interview
When in a quotation, spell out names of cities and states; people don’t “speak” using abbreviations.

“I’ve traveled all over the United States, but have yet to go to Michigan or New York City,” she said.

Note: For numbers in quoted material, see Numbers, below.

Months
Spell out the month when used alone and with just the year.

We were married in September.
Mark your calendar: Our 50th anniversary will be in September 2045.

Abbreviate the month when used with a day and as a complete date.

We were married on Sept. 25.
Mark your calendar: Our 50th anniversary will be Sept. 25, 2045.

Degrees
Academic degrees may be abbreviated (with no periods) or spelled out.

BA, PhD, MD (plural: BAs, PhDs, MDs)
bachelor’s degree, master’s in art history
We saw Jennifer Carter, MD, in Paris last spring.

or

We saw Dr. Jennifer Carter last spring in Paris.

*Note:* The use of MD with the title *doctor or Dr.* is redundant (see Redundancies, below).

**Numbers**

Spell out numbers *one* through *nine* and ordinals *first* through *ninth*; use figures for *10* and above and ordinals for *10th* and above.

- My family and I have been to France eight times.
- This was his third time leading the workshop. I missed my friends at home for the first month, but then I made new ones in the dorm and the homesickness passed.
- I’d been studying the language for 14 years, but it was quite different using it in everyday situations abroad.
- She just published her 18th book!

*Note:* Do not use superscript (1st) for ordinals. With numbers of four or more digits, use commas. For 1 million and above, use numeral and spell out.

Spell out numbers at the beginning of a sentence.

- Nineteen seventy-three was a great year for rock ’n’ roll.
- One hundred sixty-seven students attended.

Spell out numeral in quoted material from an interview (people don’t speak in numerals).

- “We’ve driven through thirty-nine states,” she says, “and Maine is our favorite.”

When you have large numbers, it’s fine to approximate.

- There must have been 2,000 people at the event.
- Some 2,000 people showed up.
- About 2,000 people showed up.

*Note:* Use a comma with four-digit (and larger) numbers.

With smaller numbers, if you know the exact number, use it.

- Smith offers 31 courses in English literature.

If it’s a precise number, you may not use *about or some*, as each indicates an estimate.

If it’s an estimate, follow same guidelines as for large numbers: that is, round up or down.

- Some 30 people showed up.
- Smith offers some 40 courses in English literature.

With ages, hyphenate as noun or adjective.

- A 13-year-old girl is the youngest student to matriculate at the university.
- The 36-year-old already has a lengthy résumé.
For money, use the dollar sign ($) and spell out million. Dahlia Brown, class of 1965, donated $2 million for financial aid, far exceeding last year’s record-setting anonymous donation of $750,000.

Note: $ with dollars is redundant.

Dates
Use figures (without st, nd, rd or th).
The position is available as of June 1.
We leave for Italy on the morning of August 25.

Times
Use figures except for noon and midnight. Lower case a.m. and p.m.
3:30 a.m.

Note: do not use “am” or “pm” without the periods.

Symbols
Spell out percent. Use the dollar sign ($) except in a quotation. Spell out degree when speaking of temperature.
As a result of the initiative, recycling increased 60 percent over the previous year.
“My husband and I challenge other parents to each contribute at least fifty dollars more than they did last year,” she says, “and we’ll match those donations.”
It was a broiling 100 degrees on graduation day.

Italics
Use for books, magazines, journals, newspapers, movies, TV shows, long poems and foreign words.
Catcher in the Rye
Sports Illustrated
the New York Times
the Lancet
Look Back in Anger
Iron Chef America
The Odyssey
je ne sais quoi

Note: Don’t italicize foreign words that are in common use: bona fide, pro bono—the list is endless. When in doubt, consult Web. 11.

For newspapers and journals, render the word the lowercase and not in italics.

Italicize a word used as a word. (The phrase “the word” is implicit.)
Collaboration means we work together.

Contractions
In informal writing, contractions are engaging and reader-friendly. In addition, people usually employ them when they talk. The guideline is to be consistent within a sentence.
I couldn’t be more delighted with that decision, especially because I didn’t see it coming. She says she could not be more delighted with that decision, especially because she did not see it coming.

**Quotation Marks**
Use for episodes of a TV show, songs and for newspaper, magazine and journal articles.
“Moot Court” is my favorite episode of *The Paper Chase.*

**-like as Suffix**
No hyphen with words of one or two syllables that don’t end in the letter *l.*
- snakelike (one syllable + like), businesslike (two syllables + like)

Hyphenate with words of more than two syllables and words that end in the letter *l.*
- elephant-like, snail-like

**MISCELLANEOUS**

No hyphens for “ly” words. These are adverbs formed by adding “ly” to an adjective.
- a happily married man
- a fully developed curriculum

*Note:* *Early* is not an “ly” word; it’s not formed by adding “ly” to the noun *ear.* It just happens to end in *ly.* Thus, an “early-morning rain” is correct.

Insert a comma after e.g. (and render in roman type, not italic).

*None* usually takes the singular (verb/pronoun).
- none of the men is . . .
- none of the women wants her . . .

Use acronym, within parentheses, directly after full name. Thereafter, use acronym.
- Association for Collaborative Leadership (ACL)

In a headline or a title, capitalize any verbs and pronouns no matter how small.
- Mount Holyoke Is Number One!
- *A Man and His Dog*
- “It Is What It Is”

Try to use the active voice.
- Active: UMass announces faculty appointments in the chemistry department.
- Passive: Faculty appointments are announced at UMass.

Try not to start a sentence with *And, But, So, Or.* It’s not a criminal offense, but sometimes it’s a bit lazy. The same goes for *however.*

Always hyphenate words with the suffixes *-free* and *-friendly.*
- fancy-free, computer-friendly
Render timelines in present tense.

1965  Consortium incorporates as Four Colleges, Incorporated.
1966  Ground breaking for Hampshire College takes place in Amherst field.
1966  Consortium re-incorporates as Five Colleges, Incorporated.

*Off of* is redundant.

He fell off the bed. Not: He fell off of the bed.

**USAGE**

**Word Pairs**

Whenever you have the first word or phrase of a pair, such as neither/nor, either/or, or not only/but also, but . . . you must have the second. These are called *correlatives*. Be consistent as to what part of speech each set modifies (verb/verb; adj/adj; noun/noun; adv/adv).

- neither John nor Mary (n/n)
- either happy or sad (adj/adj)
- not only happily but also quickly (adv/adv)

**Comprises/consists of/contains**

*Comprises, consists of* and *contains* are active voice; *composed of* is passive voice. We prefer the active voice.

- Our alphabet comprises 26 letters.
- Our alphabet consists of consonants and vowels.
- Our alphabet contains consonants and vowels.
- Our alphabet is composed of 26 letters.

*Note*: Comprises can only be used in the active voice as used above, not: Our alphabet *is comprised of* 26 letters.

**Includes**

The word *includes* implies there are others beyond the things mentioned.

- Our alphabet includes letters we call vowels.
- New England includes Massachusetts and Vermont.
- The committee includes three underclassmen.
- The committee consists of three seniors and four representatives of the faculty.

*Note*: Do not use “and so on” or “etc.” with include—the concept of “more” is implicit.

**Since/because**

Use *since* in relation to time; otherwise, use *because*.

- My father hoped I’d go to Amherst College virtually since I was born.
- Since the early days of “Mass Aggie,” the university’s enrollment has grown steadily, as has the number of dormitories.
- Because there are more applicants than openings, admission is highly competitive.
**Over/more than**
Try to use *over* in relation to space; otherwise, use *more than*.
- The picture hangs over the mantel.
- More than 3,000 people responded to the questionnaire.

**Allow/enable**
Try to use *allow* to mean “to give permission”; use *enable* for ‘to make possible.”
- We allow seniors to have their own vehicle on campus.
- The grant enables us to award two more scholarships.

**Almost/nearly**
To avoid repetition of the forms of the word *near* (close to, next to), try to use *almost* as the adverb; save *nearly* for a negative context.
- We’re almost ready.
- We’re not nearly ready.

**That/which**
Use *that* to introduce an essential clause.
- The library book that is on the table is long overdue.

Use *which* to introduce a nonessential clause.
- I’ve renewed the library book, which I borrowed in January, seven times.
- I’ve renewed the library book—which I borrowed in January—seven times.

*Note:* A nonessential clause contains information that we hope is interesting but doesn’t have any effect on the integrity of the sentence if you remove it. An essential clause is never enclosed by commas or em dashes. Because a nonessential clause is, well, not essential, it’s always set off by commas or em dashes. But when in doubt, use *that*; chances are you’ll be correct.

**While/although, Though, But, However or a Semicolon**
Try to use *while* in relation to mean “at the same time”; use *although* or one of the other options to mean “on the other hand.”
- She read an entire book while waiting for her appointment.
- Some professors use their time off to take courses; language teachers often travel.

**Between/among**
Use *between* when referring to two parties. Use *among* when referring to more than two parties.

**Who/that**
Use *who* for a person; use *that* for a nonperson.

**For example/for instance**
Try to use *for example*. In the English language, the word *in* and *in- as a prefix are common; to avoid too many usages, *for example* won’t be incorrect.

**Each other/one another**
Use *each other* for two; use *one another* for more than two.
Gender
When possible, avoiding structuring a sentence in such a way that requires applying a gender to a hypothetical situation, for example by using plural pronouns rather than singular.

A student should meet with his or her adviser before signing up for this program.
Students should meet with their advisers before signing up for this program.

*The Associated Press Stylebook* and *the Chicago Manual of Style* offer little guidance on this subject, but a favorite book of ours, *The Oxford Dictionary of American Usage and Style*, has this to say on the subject of gender and pronouns:

Though the masculine singular personal pronoun may survive awhile longer as a generic term, it will probably be displaced by *they*, which is being used alternatively as singular or plural. This usage is becoming commonplace—e.g.: “ Anyone planning a dissertation on Hollywood’s fling with yuppie demonology will want to include *The Temp* in their calculations.” (*N.Y. Times*)

Prefixes
Most do not call for a hyphen. When in doubt, consult *Web. 11*: It provides long lists on the page of the first entry. The following, among many others, rarely require a hyphen.

- *anti*: antislavery, antiabortion
- *co*: cofounder, cocurricular, coauthored
- *inter*: intercampus
- *multi*: multicampus, multilevel
- *non*: nonessential, nonvoting
- *over*: overrepresent, overpromote
- *post*: postcolonial, postapocalyptic, posttraumatic
- *pre*: preexisting, preprepared, preprandial
- *under*: underestimated, underemployed

*Note*: There are exceptions, specifically prefixes ending in the letter *i* attached to a word beginning with the letter *i*.

- anti-intellectual, multi-institutional

Plural Possessives
If the plural is NOT the usual “add an *s*,” in most cases form the plural, then added ‘*s*.

- child, children, children’s
- person, people, people’s

If the plural ends in *s*, add only the apostrophe.

- All the cats’ whiskers twitched in unison.

Redundant

- $45 million dollars
- Five College member institutions
- create or launch a new program
- includes Jim, Sally, Joe and others
- Dr. John Paul Jones, MD
- Dr. John Paul Jones, PhD
- collaborate on a joint project
Synonyms
- engage/collaborate/work together with/work in tandem with/join classes/courses
- features/showcases
- array/variety, a number of/ range from x to y efforts (endeavor to)
- includes/among them
- 12/dozen
- 20 years/two decades

**BONUS STYLE STUFF!!**

**En Dash**
An en dash is longer than a hyphen, shorter than an em dash: - (hyphen) – (en dash) — (em dash)

Use an en dash to indicate a range (pages, dates, temperatures, trajectory).
- pages 56–75
- May 15–June 15; May 15–30
- 30–80 degrees
- north–south (direction)

Use an en dash rather than a hyphen to form an adjective when one of the elements is more than one word.
- a Civil War–era musket
- New York–Vermont border
- Vermont–New York border

**Em Dash**
In column format, as in a newspaper, magazine or website, insert a space before and after the em dash. In a school paper or a book, there’s no need for spaces. Without spaces fore and aft, there’s little room for a good break at the end of a line. This is less of an issue when the layout is the full width of a page, as in a book.
- What an excellent idea — imaginative and inexpensive to implement. (magazine)
- What an excellent idea—imaginative and inexpensive to implement. (book, class paper)

**Faculty**
“Faculty” is a collective singular noun, referring to such things as “the whole faculty” or an action taken at a faculty meeting (of the whole college or department).
- The faculty voted to approve a new major.
- The faculty votes tonight (NOT: The faculty vote tonight.)

Individuals are faculty members.
- I am a faculty member.
- The faculty members of the department met with student representatives.

**He/She**
Try to avoid constructions that require you to use he/she.
- Avoid: I told each faculty member that he or she had to have a syllabus.
- Instead: I told each faculty member to have a syllabus for each course.
Note: Some people prefer pronouns other than he or she, such as zee or they. The colleges are uneven in their acknowledgement of preferred pronouns. We should follow whatever pronoun is preferred by the person being referenced.

Within a sentence, make sure nouns and pronouns agree (singular with singular; plural with plural).

NO: I told all members of the faculty they had to have a syllabus.
YES: I told faculty members that each had to supply a syllabus.
NO: I told each instructor we require a syllabus for every one of their courses.
YES: I told faculty members they each had to provide a syllabus for every course they teach.
NO: Every faculty member must give a final exam in their courses.
YES: All faculty members must give final exams.

Hope/hopeful/hopefully

INCORRECT: Hopefully spring will come soon.
INCORRECT: I will finish the assignment tonight hopefully.
CORRECT: I hope I will finish the assignment tonight.
CORRECT: “I will finish the assignment tonight,” he said hopefully.