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CCSF LANGUAGE STYLE AND USAGE GUIDE

1. Contractions are allowed.
2. Do not use the pronoun “we” to refer to CCSF. This works against the college’s aim of setting an inclusive tone for campus publications. Please use “CCSF” or “the College” when applicable.

Example: CCSF values the social development of its students. The college offers a variety of cultural opportunities.
3. The pronoun *you* may be used to refer to the general audience of students.

Example: Librarians are available to help you navigate research databases.
4. The pronouns *they* and *their* may be used as both a singular and plural pronoun to enable gender inclusivity.

Example: Students know that they will register for spring courses in December.

Example: A prospective student may withdraw their application before February.
5. Choose active verbs constructs over passive.

Example: Five thousand students took the exam, and 4,012 of them passed it.

(Not: The exam was taken by 5,000 students and passed by 4,012.)
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ADA ACCESSIBILITY

CCSF aims to provide ADA-compliant content on its website and online materials.

CCSF LANGUAGE STYLE AND USAGE GUIDE

Online media

1. Online videos and audio must have captions and a transcript. Archived media may have just a transcript.

Written content

1. Do not use color alone to convey information. Any color coding must be accompanied by written labels.
2. Please apply ADA guidelines to all non-HTML content (e.g., PDFs, word processing documents, Power Point presentations, Adobe Flash Player documents). If non-HTML documents cannot be made ADA accessible, please consider converting them to HTML format.

GENERAL USAGE GUIDE

Abbreviations

1. In titles

Abbreviations should be written out in their full text when they are part of website or article titles. If an abbreviation is part of an already published work, do not change it to the full text.

Example: *In Defense of American Liberties: A History of the ACLU* by Samuel Walker

2. Initial/subsequent use

The first time an abbreviation is used in a publication, the expanded form should be used in the sentence, with the abbreviated form in parentheses.

Example: The campus chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) was founded in 1978.

3. Ampersands

In running text, use *and* rather than an ampersand. Ampersands may be used in lists, charts, and graphic elements. In titles of publications and names of organizations, departments, institutes, and centers, change ampersands to *and*. Use *and* with multiple authors.

Example: She sold her AT&T stock because of the company's R&D policies.

Example: Black & Decker won the Clear Manual Award from Editor and Publisher.

Example: Bailey, Rachel. *Victorian Childhood*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003.

4. a.m. and p.m.

Use a space between the number and a.m. and p.m. Write a.m. and p.m. with periods, no spaces, and lowercase formatting.

Examples: 6 a.m., 10 p.m., from 1 to 3 p.m., from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m., from 11:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Apostrophes

1. Do not use apostrophes in pluralized numbers or acronyms.

Example: her late 20s

Example: multiple DUIs

Academic terminology

1. **Academic grades**

Always capitalize academic grades. Do not use quotes or italics. No apostrophe for the plural.

Examples: B+, C, F

Example: He got all As.

2. **Awards**

Only capitalize full official names.

Example: the Chancellor's Award for Outstanding Undergraduate Scholarship

Example: the award for undergraduate scholarship

Example: the 2018 undergraduate scholarship award

3. **Conferences**

Capitalize the full official names of conferences. Do not capitalize an initial *the*.

Example: I am attending the Fifth Annual Associated Writing Programs Conference

If a conference title is descriptive, put it in quotation marks.

Example: I attended three conferences, but my favorite was "Prose, Poetry, and Pedagogy."

4. **Course Titles**

Do not use quotation marks or italics for official course titles. Follow the rules for capitalizing book titles in which first, last, and all other major words are capitalized; articles, conjunctions, and prepositions—i.e., "small words"—are not.

Example: This semester I'm taking Introduction to European Economics.

Example: I decided to take an intro to European economics course.

5. **Degrees and majors**

When a degree is written out in running text, do not capitalize it.

Example: She earned her bachelor's degree in physics.

Always capitalize the abbreviated form of the degree.

Example: I finished my MA in 2003.

Do not use periods between letters when abbreviating a degree.

Example: an MFA in visual art, a PhD in English

Use an apostrophe, in the singular possessive form, when writing out master's degree.

Example: I have a master's in biology.

When combining name, degree, discipline, and year: Jane Doe, MA '18 history

Always capitalize class when designating a graduating class.

Example: We were in the Class of 1995.

6. Lectures

Put lecture titles in quotation marks with no italics.

Example: Today's lecture, "Poetry of the Colonial Resistance," takes place at noon.

Example: Today's lecture on colonial resistance poetry takes place at noon.

Capitalize, as you would a book title, the name of a lecture series. Do not use quotation marks, underline, or italics.

Example: The lecture on colonial poetry was part of the Poetry of Resistance series.

7. Semesters

Do not capitalize references to semesters or seasons, except with a designated year.

Example: fall semester

Example: I will graduate in Spring 2019.

8. Titles of works

Italicize (no underline or quotation marks) the following: titles of books, plays, films, blogs, journals, long poems, newspapers, radio programs, television series, games, exhibits, exhibit catalogs, and individual works of art are italicized, with no quotation marks.

Example: We played *Monopoly* all weekend long.

Example: *Beloved* is my favorite book.

Put in quotation marks (no underline or italics) the titles of songs, articles, episodes in a television series, papers presented at conferences, book chapters, panel discussions, and most poems.

Example: The students are studying the T.S. Eliot poem, "The Wasteland."

9. Universities with branches

Use a comma to designate the location of the branch after the main university name. Never use dashes.

Example: University of California, Davis

Dashes

1. En dashes and Em dashes

En dashes are most often used between two inclusive numbers. An en dash is



CCSF LANGUAGE STYLE AND USAGE GUIDE

2. Gender-neutral pronouns

CCSF prefers gender-neutral pronouns (*they* and *their*).

3. The singular *their* and *they*

their

3. Exceptions to using numerals

Do not begin sentences with numerals. Spell them out.

Example: Four thousand dollars were found in a bag.

Example: Seven out of 20 students were absent today.

People with disabilities

Avoid referring to people by their disability or any other physical attribute as though that attribute defines them.

Example: students with disabilities, visually impaired, hearing impaired, developmentally challenged (not the handicapped, the disabled.)

People with dwarfism should be described with the terms “short stature,” “little person/people,” or “someone with dwarfism.” This terminology accords with the terminology of Little People of America. Do not refer to a person with dwarfism as a “dwarf,” unless that term was used in quotation. Some people with dwarfism are fine with this term. Others are not.

Punctuation

1. Commas: In a series

5. In compound sentences

Use a comma to separate the two parts of a compound sentence.

Example: Yumi worked on her screenplay every morning before class, and Ivan worked on his novel.

Example: He worked on his novel, and she wrote her screenplay.

When you have a compound verb, do not insert a comma between the subject and a compound verb unless you have a good reason, such as a parenthetical.

Example: Yumi worked on her screenplay every morning and studied in the evening.

Example: Yumi worked on her screenplay every morning, no matter how exhausted she was, and studied every evening.

6. Exclamation points

Exclamation points should be used sparingly. Most sentences do not need them. If they do appear, it will most likely be in a line of spoken dialogue.

Example: "Look out!" he yelled.

7. Periods and colons

Use only one space after a colon or terminal punctuation (period, question mark, exclamation point).

Example: The department was founded in 2007. It continues to flourish today.

When a colon is used within a sentence, the first word following the colon is not capitalized.

Example: The department offers three minors: genetic engineering, biology, and biochemistry.

When the colon introduces two or more sentences, the first word following it is capitalized.

Example: The school has two goals: The first is to maintain a high degree of educational integrity. The second is to be as inclusive as possible.

8. Quotation marks with other punctuation

Periods and commas go inside quotation marks. Other punctuation marks go outside quotation marks.

Example: We get going "when the going gets tough."

Example: "See you in three days," she said.

Colons and semicolons go outside quotation marks.

Example: Wong decided to "go for broke"; Everett played it safe.

Example: What will follow are three lines from "Ode on a Grecian Urn":

Exclamation points and question marks that are part of the quoted material go inside the quotation marks. Otherwise, they go outside.

Example: Did he say "thank you"?

Example: I shouted "You're the bees knees!"

Example: Did you really just say "You're the bees knees!"?

Racial and ethnic terms

1. Racial and ethnic identifications should only be used when directly relevant to the material being written.
2. African American (for double-barreled terms, do not use a hyphen)
3. Latinx/Latina/Latino
4. South Asian (to refer to people who identify as being from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal)
5. Asian (to refer to people who identify as being from the Asian continent, including South Asia)
6. Asian American, Latin American, Mexican American (any regional or national identification + "American")
7. When writing about a group or an individual, ask yourself whether your descriptions or references are "othering" or exoticizing the group/individual. Make sure you are not making assumptions about the CCSF population being predominantly white or American-born. The CCSF student body and faculty are diverse, and all writing that describes and addresses them should take this diversity into account.

References to LGBTQ communities

1. Just as you avoid assuming a white/American mainstream, avoid assuming a heterosexual mainstream. Stay away from heterocentric presumptions in your writing (i.e., referring to a couple as a man and a woman).
2. CCSF materials should use the term LGBTQQI, in accordance with the terminology of the LGBTQQI Studies department at CCSF. LGBTQQI stands for Lesbian Gay

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7. Please refer to updated/current terminology below:

<u>Avoid using:</u>	<u>Instead use:</u>
A homosexual person	gay/lesbian/queer person
Homosexual relations	relationship/couple or (if necessary) gay/lesbian/same-sex couple
Sexual preference	Sexual orientation or orientation
Gay/homosexual/transgender lifestyle	Avoid this phrase altogether, unless in a quotation
Admitted/avowed homosexual	out gay man, out lesbian, out queer person Example: Tammy Baldwin was the country's first out senator.
Transgendered	Transgender/ transgender person or people
Preferred pronoun	Pronoun

Sentence fragments

1. **When sentence fragments are accepted**

Sentence fragments are acceptable in marketing material, which often requires short, catchy phrases.

Sentence fragments may also be used when quoting someone's spoken statement, i.e., in a student profile.

Example: Raj spoke highly of his fellow students: "So inspirational. All of them."

2. **Beginning sentences with *but* and *and***

Do not begin sentences with *but* or *and* unless the sentence is a quotation.

Example: "I owe them everything." She turned to look out the window. "And I've never even told them that."

Series of terms/items

1. **Order of items**

When you have several items in a series, order them shortest to longest.

Example: We brought a flask, two frying pans, an electricity generator, a tent that my brother lent me, and more food than we could have possibly eaten.

CCSF LANGUAGE STYLE AND USAGE GUIDE

Years, academic and fiscal

If a fiscal year spans two calendar years, use only the year of the final month.

Examples: fiscal year 2018

fiscal year '18

Academic years show the year of both the beginning and final month. Spell out and lowercase the words.

Examples: academic year 2018–2019

academic year 2018–19

academic year '18–'19

the 2018–19 academic year

the '18–'19 academic year

Abbreviations are appropriate in column and row headlines of charts and when the terms are used extensively in running text. Choose a format and use it consistently throughout your publication. Use en dashes between inclusive numbers (see “En dashes and em dashes,” p.7).

Examples: FY2018

FYs2018–19

FY2014 and FY2015

AY2014–15

AYs2013–15 (two academic years)