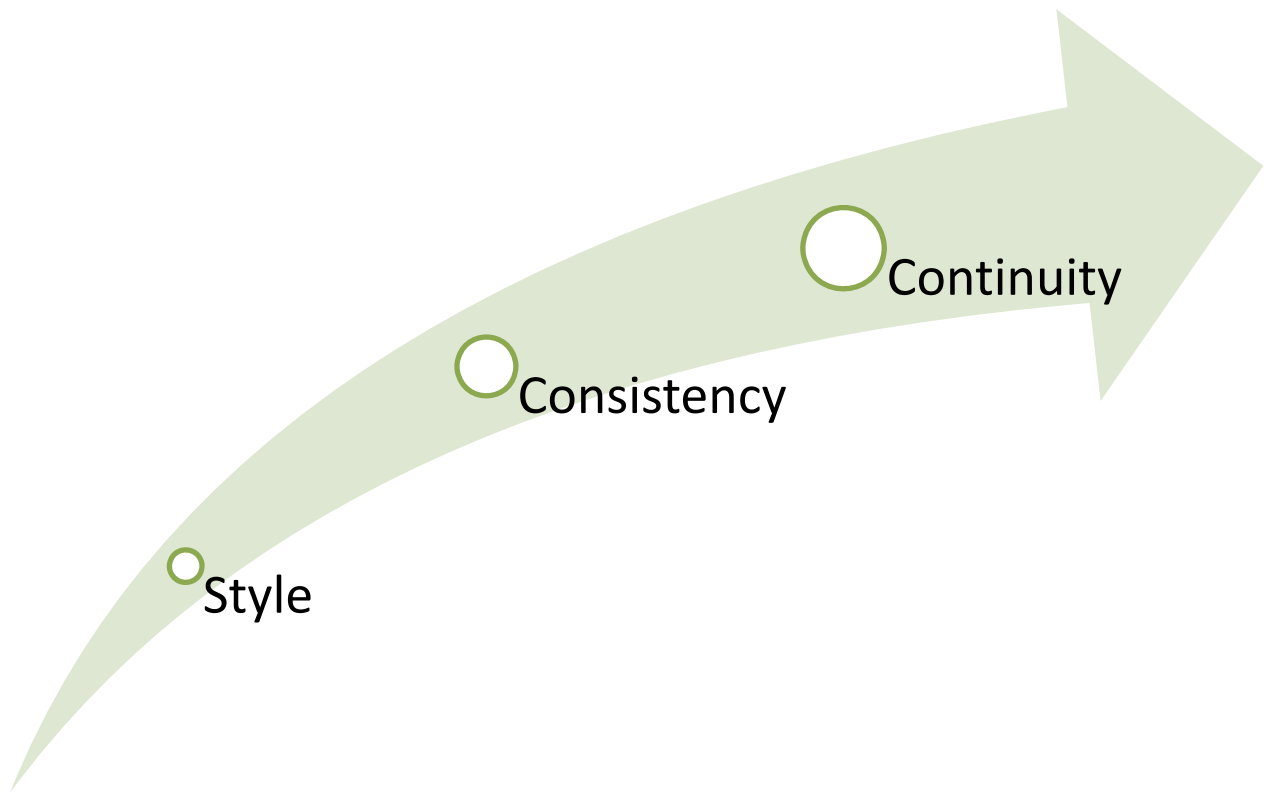


POLK STATE

COLLEGE

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STYLE GUIDE



Revised January 25, 2011

Polk State College is committed to and encourages equal opportunity/equity/access for its programs, services, and activities.

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Polk State College Style Guide

The purpose of this guide is to foster writing-style consistency in Polk State College publications, so writers should follow it for college-wide continuity. It is based largely upon the conventions of *The Gregg Reference Manual* (to which writers should refer for material not contained herein). Some conventions listed in this guide have been modified to better fit Polk State College publications. In these cases, please follow this guide.

The website **dictionary.com** can be useful for determining word-usage consistency in a document, particularly when there are several forms of a word that are commonly used.

A note on font, capitalization, embellishments, italics, and bold-faced lettering: In general, writers should be selective about using these applications to draw the attention of the reader. The overuse of embellishments can make a document look busy and hinder readability.

(Note: terms/words being discussed are **bold-faced** rather than *italicized* in order to avoid italics-use confusion.)

A

a.m./p.m.

Use lower case with periods and no spaces: a.m. and p.m.

Notes: A. Add a space between the final number and the a.m./p.m.

Example: 8:00 a.m. instead of 8:00a.m.

B. Avoid redundancy: We will meet at 9:30 a.m. ~~in the morning~~.

abbreviations

Punctuation and capitalization practices vary.

A. Some abbreviations require periods or special consideration of capitalization:

a.m., p.m., A.D., B.C. (or C.E. for Common Era)

B. The College no longer uses periods in academic degrees. Do not place a space between the letters: AA, AS, AAS, BA, BAS, MA, MBA, MFA, MD, DDS

C. Academic degrees following a person's name should still contain periods:

President Eileen Holden, Ed.D.

D. Use periods with business abbreviations: L.L.C., P.A., Ltd., Inc., Corp.

Note: Some companies choose to omit the periods, so follow the company's preference.

E. Some abbreviations do not use periods: TV, CD, DVD, RSVP

F. In less formal documents, avoid abbreviations based on Latin terms such as **i.e.** and **e.g.**

These abbreviations can be used in formal documents such as DBOT rules, Polk State College procedures, and reference documents such as those created for SACS where references and documentation can be extensive.

The abbreviation **i.e.** means *that is*; **e.g.** means *for example*. These abbreviations are not interchangeable.

G. Use common sense with acronyms. Write out the acronym the first time it is used:

The Academic Quality Council (AQC), the curriculum committee for the College, contains faculty representatives across all disciplines.

Note: Acronyms rarely contain periods. Abbreviation usage may vary according to documents; consistent usage within the document is essential.

academic advisor

Note Polk State College's preferred spelling of **advisor**; capitalize both words when used as a title for a particular individual.

Academic Advisor Robert Smith is also a volunteer for the United Way. Students can visit with an academic advisor to get assistance with registration.

academic degrees and titles

- A. Use an apostrophe for bachelor's degree, associate's degree, a master's in chemistry, and so on. Do not use an apostrophe for the following usages: **associate degree program** and **baccalaureate degree program**.
- B. Capitalize specific degree forms: Bachelor of Applied Science in Supervision and Management or Master of Arts in Applied Mathematics. Do not capitalize the generic associate in arts, associate in science, associate in applied science, or bachelor of applied science.
- C. Titles: At Polk State College, anyone providing instruction is a professor.
1. Use a degree or courtesy title before or after a name, never both: ~~Dr. Maria Jimenez-Rivera, M.D.~~
Dr. Maria Jimenez-Rivera lives in the house next to mine.
Maria Jimenez-Rivera, M.D. will present the award at the banquet.
 2. Capitalize and spell out formal titles: **Professor, Dean, Provost, President,** and **Chair** when these terms refer to a specific person:
Professor Ashvin Patel teaches for the Science Department.
 3. The College has a hierarchy of leadership levels including academic and district deans, provosts, and vice presidents. In general, do not capitalize freestanding titles:
I asked the dean to look into the problem.
Exception: Always capitalize President when referring to Eileen Holden.
 4. Use the abbreviation **Dr.** rather than **Mr., Ms.,** or **Mrs.** for a person with a doctorate or medical degree.

See also **courtesy titles**.

Academic Year

This term is capitalized when referring to specific years:

The survey indicated improvement for Academic Year 2009/2010.
A survey is given each academic year to allow for student feedback.

This term can be abbreviated **AY** if the acronym is spelled out with its first use.

See also **dates**.

accept/except

Accept is the most commonly used verb form of these two words, meaning to receive or agree with:

She **accepted** the committee's proposal.

Except is most commonly used as a preposition, meaning the exclusion of/but for:

He accepts the committee's proposal **except** for the wording of the second paragraph.

acronyms

See **abbreviations**.

addresses

Use numerals for the number of an address: 30 Lincoln Road.

Spell out and capitalize **First** through **Ninth** when used as street names: **144 Seventh Street**. Use numerals and **-th** or **-nd** for **10th Street** and above: **401 42nd Street**. (This is an exception to the rule against using **-th** and **-nd**.)

See also **numbers**.

advisor

This is spelled with an **o** at Polk State College: **advisor**.

address

Polk State College's address is written in the following manner (note the absence of periods or commas in **Avenue H NE**):

Polk State College
999 Avenue H NE
Winter Haven, FL 33881-4299

affect/effect

Affect is the most commonly used verb form of these two words, meaning to cause influence or change:

The new policy **affects** everyone at the College.

Effect is most commonly used as a noun, meaning a result:

The harmful **effects** of sleep deprivation have been well documented.

age

Avoid referring to a specific person as **elderly** or **a senior citizen**. Refer to age only when relevant:

The program welcomes **senior citizens**.

a lot

A lot is always two words.

all right

All right is always two words.

alumni/emeritus

Use appropriate Latin terms according to gender, number, and case:

- A. Use **alumna** (singular) for a female graduate.
Use **alumnus** (singular) for a male graduate.
Use **alumni** (plural) when referring to more than one graduate, regardless of sex.

- B. Use **emerita** (singular) for a distinguished female.
Use **emeritus** (singular) for a distinguished male.
Use **emeriti** (plural) when referring to more than one person, regardless of sex.

among/between

In general, use **between** for two items or people and **among** for three or more people or items:

- The fruit was divided **between** both families.
The money was divided **among** the four groups.

Use the objective case after **between** and **among**: between him and her, between you and me, among us.

ampersand

Avoid using the ampersand (&) unless it is part of an organization's name: AT&T. When necessary, check the company's website for verification.

and

- A. Use a comma with **and** in lists of three or more items:

The server brought us ice cream, cake, and coffee.

- B. Use a comma to join two sentences with **and**:

I finished the report, and I will fax it this afternoon. CORRECT
I finished the report and will fax it this afternoon. CORRECT
I finished the report, I will fax it this afternoon. INCORRECT—This is a comma splice.

apostrophes

Follow standard usage for possessive words and contractions.

- A. Use 's in possessive words that are already plural: **people's** or **women's**.

- B. Do not use apostrophes to signify plurals unless they are necessary for clarity:

Life was difficult for Americans in the 1930s.
The library has an extensive selection of CDs and DVDs.
I visited the Smiths last week.

- C. Add an 's when a possessive word ends with s:

The **business's** policies about promotions have changed over the years.

Note: Some writers add only an apostrophe for the possessive of names ending in s: Jean **Reynolds'** office. Whichever process is selected, it is important to remain consistent throughout the document.

- D. Possessive pronouns never contain apostrophes: **its, his, hers, ours, yours, theirs**.

E. Also use an apostrophe in possessives with inanimate objects:

That maple's leaves are beautiful in the fall.

F. **It's** means **it is**.

attention line

An attention line is a general form of address and should be used cautiously. Whenever possible, address correspondence directly to the person who will be reading it. Instead of: **To Whom It May Concern** or **ATTEN: Sales Manager**, use **Dear Sir or Madam** or be more specific to the individual(s) intended.

An attention line should only be used when the writer is unsure of the person's name or the letter can be passed on to another person in the department. In important correspondence, the author should call or visit the company's website to find the person's name and title and the correct spelling.

B**brand names**

Always capitalize brand names and trademarked words: **Xerox, Band-aid, Coke, Kleenex, Jello**. In general, use generic terms without capital letters whenever possible: photocopy, adhesive bandage, facial tissue, gelatin dessert.

See also **Xerox**.

bulleted lists

Bullets are a practical way to present a list of information.

- Introduce bullets with a useful heading.
 - Often the heading will be followed by a colon.
- Capitalize each item in the bulleted list and make the list consistent.
- Avoid mixing fragments and complete sentences.
- Use the same part of speech as the first word for each item of a bulleted list (for example, all items should start with a noun or verb, rather than alternating between parts of speech).
- Use a period if the bullets are complete sentences or complete a thought with the opening line of text; omit the period if the bullets are sentence fragments.
- Use a numbered system for the list only if the order in which information is presented is relevant.

business letters

See **greetings** and **complimentary close**.

For issues not covered in this style guide, refer to the latest edition of *The Gregg Reference Manual*.

C

capitalization

Capitalize administrative areas including **office** when applied to a specific division or location: **Human Resources Office, Student Services Office, Liberal Arts and Sciences Division, Math Department.**

See also **abbreviations, academic degrees and titles, courtesy titles, majors and academic subjects.**

catalog

Note the spelling: **not catalogue.**

Capitalize **Catalog** when it is used to refer to the specific college publication:

Polk State College Catalog 2009/2010 (italicize specific publication)

The information regarding registration for courses is located in the catalog.

CD-ROM

Use all capital letters and a hyphen.

chair/chairman/chairperson

The nonsexist term **chair** is the preferred term at the College. However, respect the choices made by other institutions and organizations.

child care

Following suit with the state of Florida, Polk State College uses two words for this term.

Christmas

To show sensitivity to those who may celebrate other holidays or do not celebrate at all, the terms **the holidays, winter holidays, and Season's Greetings** are preferable when addressing groups or unfamiliar persons.

college

A. Capitalize **College** when it is part of the full name of an educational institution:

Florida Southern College is located near Lake Hollingsworth.

B. Capitalize **College** when it refers to Polk State College as an entity and as a replacement for the proper name **Polk State College**:

The College has finalized its review of all rules and procedures for the site visit.

C. Do not capitalize **college** when the term is being used as modifier:

Taking college classes and working full time is challenging.

college-wide

Polk State College uses the hyphenated form of this word when it precedes a noun:

Distributing a syllabus the first class meeting is a **college-wide** policy.

colon

A. Use only one space after a colon. Follow a colon with a lower-case letter for a list or an incomplete sentence. Use a capital letter for a new sentence:

Be prepared for cold weather: You'll need gloves, a warm coat, and a covering for your head.

Be prepared for cold weather: gloves, a warm coat, and a covering for your head.

B. Use a colon after the greeting in correspondence: Dear Search Committee:
However, a comma may be used in some instances to set a friendly tone: Dear Student,

C. Use a colon to introduce a list or an explanation:

You'll need several items for this course: a spiral notebook, two highlighters, and two colored folders. CORRECT

You'll need: a spiral notebook, two highlighters, and two colored folders.

INCORRECT

You'll need a spiral notebook, two highlighters, and two colored folders.

CORRECT

commas in a series

A. In a list of three or more items, use a comma before the words **or/and**:

We had breadsticks, salad, and minestrone soup at the Olive Garden.

He had trouble deciding whether he wanted to order the pie, cake, or ice cream.

B. Use a comma where the use of more than one conjunction makes interpretation ambiguous:

The material covered includes management of paperwork and filing, and writing reports.

C. Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction (**and, so, for, but, yet, or, nor**) when joining two sentences together:

We have finished editing the final draft of the report, so now we can send it to the committee.

complimentary close

Appropriate complimentary closings for correspondence include **Sincerely yours**, **Yours truly**, **Cordially yours**, and similar phrases. Do not insert an **e** into **truly**.

Notes: Capitalize only the first word in a complimentary close, never the second. Do not use **Thank you** as a complimentary close to a formal letter. Consult *The Gregg Reference Manual* for additional suggestions.

complement/compliment

Complement is a verb, meaning to complete:

The graphics complement the style and purpose of the poster.

Compliment is a verb, meaning to flatter or praise:

The professor complimented the student for the quality of his work.

Continuing Education

Polk State College capitalizes this term when it is used to denote a group of courses in a program of study.

The Corporate College offers Continuing Education courses for professional development.

contractions

Contractions should not be used in writing for policies, legal documents, grant proposals, and other formal writing. However, contractions (words such as **it's**, **don't**, **can't**, and **I'm**) can make writing sound more natural in less formal documents than the more formal **it is**, **do not**, **cannot**, **I am**, etc.

controlled

The preferred spelling has a double **I**. Be consistent in the document.

coursework

This refers to specific classes taken in an academic program of study.

courtesy titles

- A. Use courtesy titles when addressing envelopes and in the greeting of a letter. Mr. Donald Jones, Ms. Grace Barton. Otherwise, avoid **Mr.** or **Mrs.** in front of a person's full name.
- B. Do not refer to a woman's marital status (**Miss** or **Mrs.**) unless it is relevant. When a courtesy title is necessary for women, use **Ms.** if the woman's marital status is unknown.
- C. Use **Dr.** for a person with a doctoral or medical degree.

See also **academic degrees and titles**.

criterion

Criterion is a singular word. The most frequently used is the plural form: **criteria**.

D**data**

Data is generally the plural form and **datum** is the singular form that refers to a single number or value. Watch verb use with each term:

The data are clear.

The datum indicates a change should be made.

dates

- A. Use numerals and commas. Avoid **-nd** and **-th** endings: 2, 1, and 5 instead of 2nd, 1st, and 5th.

The deadline is March 2. CORRECT

The deadline is March 2nd. INCORRECT

- B. Do not use a comma when a month is followed by a year: December 2007.

- C. Use a comma after the year in complete dates when the sentence continues:

The meeting was held **April 8, 2009**, in LAC 1235.

- D. Dates for fiscal and academic years are listed as follows:

During Academic Year 2008/2009, the College began its latest review of the General Education curriculum.

During Fiscal Year 2009/2010, state funding cuts to the nonrecurring budget necessitated the tabling of many planned improvements to facilities.

See also **numbers**, **Fiscal Year**, and **Academic Year**.

decision making/decision-making

When followed by a noun, use the hyphenated version of the word:

Nursing requires excellent decision-making skills.

When used as a noun, do not hyphenate:

Decision making is an important part of administrative work.

departments/offices/programs

Polk State College capitalizes all specific units within the College: the Student Services Office, the Radiography Program, the English Department.

Desire2Learn

This is the proper way to write out the title of the software program used to manage PAL, the College's learning management system. It is placed in italics: *Desire2Learn*.

dialogue

Note the spelling of this word; do not use **dialog**.

different from

The correct phrasing is **different from**, not **different than**.

directions/regions

- A. Capitalize regions (places on a map): **the North, the South, the Far East**.
- B. Capitalize regions in Florida: **Central Florida, Southwest Florida, North Florida**.
- C. Do not capitalize directions: Drive east for two miles and turn right on Carter Road.

disability/disease

- A. The term **disabled** is preferable to **handicapped**. The phrase **people with disabilities** is preferable to **the disabled**. Do not use **afflicted with** or **is a victim of** or **wheelchair-bound**:

He has tuberculosis. CORRECT
She uses a wheelchair. CORRECT

- B. Do not use a disease to describe an individual. For example, *He has diabetes* is preferable to *He is diabetic*.

See also **sensitivity**.

disk/disc

At Polk State College, **disk** is the preferred spelling.

District Board of Trustees

The **Polk State College District Board of Trustees** is capitalized as seen and can be abbreviated **DBOT**. When specifically referenced, **the Board** is capitalized. General boards for organizations are not capitalized:

Polk State College's Board recommended the name change in 2009.
All rules at Polk State College are ratified by the District Board of Trustees.
Many college boards have struggled with the decrease in state funding allocations.

dual enrollment

Polk State College does not hyphenate this term.

The Dual Enrollment Program at Polk State College provides an avenue for high school students to concurrently complete high school and an AA degree.

There are several dual enrollment opportunities at Polk State College.

E

e-book

Hyphenate; do not capitalize.

e-mail/email

Use the hyphenated form **e-mail** in more formal Polk State College publications and documents. If you choose to not hyphenate **email** in other forms of communication, be consistent in use.

emeritus

See also **alumni**.

ensure/insure

Ensure means **to guarantee**; **insure** refers to the insurance business.

F**face-to-face**

Hyphenate this term. See also **one-to-one**.

Fallfest

Polk State College's fall festival is written as one word and is capitalized: Fallfest.

FASTRACK

A term that describes accelerated courses at Polk State College. Capitalize the entire word and spell as one word with only one t.

Fiscal Year

This term is capitalized; it can be abbreviated **FY** after the first usage.
See also **dates**.

Florida statutes

Florida State Statutes are referenced in formal documents as follows:

Section 112.313, Florida Statute, *Standards of Conduct for Public Officers, Employees of Agencies, and Local Government Attorneys*, specifies the behavior expected of the President of the College and all Board members.

Note the order of information and use of italics for the title.

The acronym **FS** can be introduced as follows:

Section 112.3143, Florida Statute (FS), *Voting Conflicts*, provides instruction to members of the Board when a conflict of interest arises during a vote of the Board.

fractions

- A. In correspondence and reports with only a few numbers, spell out fractions less than a whole, such as one-third or three-eighths, and use a hyphen:
He spends three-quarters of his time working directly with students.
- B. Use numerals for fractions greater than a whole: 1¾.
- C. Use numerals throughout financial and statistical correspondence and reports.

full time/full-time

- A. Write as two words without a hyphen after a verb:

He works full time.

- B. Use with a hyphen when followed by a noun:

She's a full-time librarian.

fundraising

This is always written as one word.

G

General Education

This should be capitalized when referring to the specific curriculum mandated by the state and the Polk State College courses comprised in this program.

GPA

The accepted abbreviation for **grade point average** is **GPA** (capitalized).

grades

Letter grades are placed in italics at Polk State College.

In the plural form, apostrophes are not used; the letter grade is italicized, but the “s” is not:

The test resulted in 61% of students earning *As, Bs, and Cs*.

greetings

A. Whenever possible, use the person’s name and a courtesy title. Make a telephone call or check the company website to verify the spelling if necessary.

B. Use a colon after a formal greeting. But a comma may be used for a friendlier tone:

Dear Student,

C. **Dear Sir or Madam** is accepted when the person’s identity is not known. It is preferred, however, to be more specific whenever possible:

Dear Search Committee Members:

D. When the recipient is a woman but her name is unknown, use **Dear Madam**—but still make the effort to find her name.

E. Do not use the old-fashioned greeting **To Whom It May Concern** when it is avoidable.

For more information, check the latest *Gregg Reference Manual*.

See also **courtesy titles**.

H

his/her, his or her

- A. These constructions are necessary with singular pronouns like **everyone, everybody, someone, somebody, each, either**:
- Does each student have his or her book? CORRECT
Does each student have their book? INCORRECT
- B. To avoid sexism, do not use **his** in situations that apply to both sexes:
- Does each student have his book? INCORRECT
Does each student have his or her book? CORRECT
- C. Clumsy **his/her** constructions can often be avoided by revising the sentence:
1. Try to make the sentence plural with a word like **all** so that the word **their** is correct: Do all of the students have their books?
 2. Try to leave out the possessive word (**his, her, their**) altogether by substituting **the**: Does each student have the book?
 3. In lengthy writing projects with many examples, switch back and forth between masculine and feminine pronouns. Use **he/him/his** in the first example, and switch to **she/her/hers** in the second example. Repeat so that males and females are equally represented. Dr. Benjamin Spock used this approach in later editions of his bestselling book *Baby and Child Care*.

See also **sensitivity**.

healthcare

Polk State College uses the one-word form: **healthcare**.

Helpdesk

This is written as one word, capitalized. It is also referred to as the Student Helpdesk.

homepage

This term is written as one word with no capital letter.

hyphen

This useful punctuation mark can create difficulties because practices tend to change as time passes. When in doubt, use a spellchecker or visit **www.dictionary.com**.

- A. Use a hyphen when a two-part adjective **precedes** a noun: I lost my back-door key.
Polk State College is an open-access institution.
- B. Do not use a hyphen when a two-part adjective **follows** a noun: I locked the back door.
- C. Do not use a hyphen with an **-ly** word (adverb): This is a fully developed proposal.

- D. Follow dictionary usage when using a hyphen to split a word at the end of a line:
Arthu-rian (not Arthur-ian).
- E. The College's use of **world class** is not hyphenated: Polk State College aspires to be a world class institution.
- F. Hyphens tend to disappear over time. **To-night** is now **tonight**; **week-end** is now **weekend**. Some writers prefer **email** to **e-mail** (though the College uses **e-mail** for more formal publications). Expect more changes in the future.

I

Internet

Capitalize the Internet.

Italics

- A. Some writers mistakenly use quotation marks when italics are more appropriate.

Use italics when pointing out a word or letter:

Many people incorrectly use apostrophes with the letter **s**.

Be sure to spell ***all right*** as two separate words.

- B. Use italics for titles of Polk State College rules and procedures, as well as legal documents such as Florida Statutes:

This information can be found in Polk State College Procedure 101, *Orientation to the College*, and DBOT Rule 1234, *College Management*.

- C. The College has chosen to use italics for course titles when they are used within the course description of another course (see the **majors, academic subjects, and courses** section of this document), or when the sentence contains jargon that could confuse the delineation between the course title and the sentence content (such as in the Catalog or a SACS document).

Example: This lecture/laboratory course provides an introductory study of the neurological, musculoskeletal, and cardiovascular basis for application of therapeutic exercise, and is sequential in its progression of study from *Therapeutic Exercises in Physical Therapy I* (PHT 2220C). This course describes the general aspects of therapeutic exercise including, but not limited to, effects of medications on exercises, stages of rehabilitation...

- D. Use italics for the titles of full-length books, magazines, and newspapers:

Psychology Today ***War and Peace*** ***Polk State College Student Handbook***
Polk State College Catalog 2010/2011 ***The Ledger***

- E. Use quotation marks for shorter works such as songs, short stories, newspaper articles, and subsections within a formal document:

I reread "The Gift of the Magi" every December.

it's/its

- A. **It's** is a contraction that means **it is**:

It's time to go.

- B. **Its** is a possessive pronoun:

The class enjoyed its field trip.

J

JD Alexander Center

Note the spelling and punctuation: No periods.

journalism

Many journalistic practices, such as those that apply to Polk State College publications such as *Polk State College PRIDE* and press releases for *The Ledger*, are different from the recommendations in this style guide. Refer to the latest edition of *The Associated Press Stylebook* for guidance when writing press releases and articles for newsletters such as *Polk State College PRIDE*.

Jr./Sr.

Use without a comma after a name: **John F. Kennedy Jr.** and **Thomas Brown Sr.**

L

like

Like is permissible to introduce examples, but **such as** or **including** is preferred in more formal documents:

Students like Jenny Smith and Harold Clarkson are good candidates for scholarships.

Polk State College collaborates with many academic institutions and businesses, such as Polk Works, Polk Vision, the University of South Florida, and Florida Southern College.

Such as can also be used to introduce examples:

Citrus fruits, such as oranges and grapefruits, are good sources of Vitamin C.

limited admission

Polk State College does not use a hyphen in this term.

log in

This is a two-word verb referring to the action of accessing the features on a computer:

I will log in to Outlook in a minute.

login

This is a noun referring to a username and password:

Remember that your login is case sensitive.

M**majors/academic subjects/courses**

Except for languages, capitalize academic subjects and majors only for departments and the titles of specific courses. Otherwise use lower case: science, algebra, Math Department, Intermediate Algebra, English, Spanish, and Music Theory I.

Please note, when referring to a course for SACS reporting, the title of the course is placed in italics after the numerical code:

She enrolled in BSC 1930, *Biological Issues*, to fulfill the science requirement.

Please note, when referring to a course title within the text of another course description (such as in the College Catalog), the course title is placed in italics and the course number is placed in parentheses:

This lecture/laboratory course provides an introductory study of the neurological, musculoskeletal, and cardiovascular basis for application of therapeutic exercise, and is sequential in its progression of study from *Therapeutic Exercises in Physical Therapy I* (PHT 2220C). This course describes the general aspects of therapeutic exercise including, but not limited to, effects of medications on exercises, stages of rehabilitation...

marshal

This individual assists at graduation. Note the spelling with one I: **marshal**.

money

- A. In texts with only a few references to money, omit the decimal and zeroes: A ticket to the concert costs **\$25**.
- B. Do not use the **\$** symbol and the word **dollar** in the same sentence as this would be redundant.

Clear Springs donated \$12 million to the College that will be eventually be used to fund the PSC@ClearSprings building.

Multi-Services Building

Note the hyphen and capitalization.

MyMathLab

Note the use of capitalization and italics for the title of this software program:
MyMathLab.

N

non

In general, do not hyphenate after **non**: He chose a noninvasive medical procedure. When in doubt, use **dictionary.com** or a spellchecker as a guide.

numbers

- A. Spell out numbers **one** through **nine**.
- B. Spell out fractions less than one whole.
- C. Use numerals for numbers 10 and above.
- D. Use numerals rather than words in tables, letters, e-mails, and reports that deal extensively with statistics and finances.
- E. In ordinary business writing, spell out **million** rather than using a string of zeroes: 1.5 million.
- F. Use a hyphen when spelling out a fraction that is less than a whole: seven-eighths.
- G. Use numerals without **-nd**, **-st**, or **-th** for dates and years: May 31, 1980.

See also **dates**, **fractions**, and **percents**.

0

online

This is one word with no hyphen.

one-to-one

This form is preferable to **one-on-one** except when referring to an athletic competition.

only

Position the word **only** carefully. Notice how the meaning changes as **only** is moved about in these sentences:

Only I kissed her.

I only kissed her.

I kissed only her.

P

PAL

Use all capital letters when referring to Polk State College's online learning management system: **PAL**. Italicize the full title of the learning management system: *Polk Access to Learning*.

paragraphs

- A. In **reports and formal writing**, paragraphs should usually be at least three sentences long. In rare instances, a one-sentence paragraph can be useful for emphasis.
- B. In **business writing**, one-sentence paragraphs are acceptable and often useful. They can help avoid wordiness, and the white space can make a letter more attractive and readable.

parentheses

- A. This is a plural word. The singular form is **parenthesis**.
- B. Parentheses are a useful way to include explanatory information.
- C. Never place a comma in front of parentheses. A comma can be placed after the second parenthesis:

Florida's state tree, the cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*), is often pruned badly.

- D. Place a period inside the parentheses only when the following two conditions are met: (1) there is a complete sentence inside the parentheses, and (2) the sentence begins with a capital letter:

I use the computer in my classroom for many purposes (what a great teaching tool it is). DO NOT USE A PERIOD

I often find myself thinking about Jacques Derrida's provocative approach to language. (There is nothing outside the text.) USE A PERIOD

- E. Do not overuse parentheses. Unless the piece is a formal document, the author may consider using an em dash (two hyphens, no spaces) instead of parentheses for emphasis:

The TLCC—a great resource for students and professors—is open on most Saturday mornings.

Note that em dashes should not be overused either.

- F. When placing reference material in parentheses, as with documentation used in a formal narrative, place the parentheses at the end of the sentence as follows (note that the period is placed outside the parentheses):

General and program-specific admission policies are reiteratively vetted in various committees, including the Academic Quality Council (see AQC meeting minutes dated September 18, 2008).

part time/part-time

Write as two words without a hyphen after a verb: He works part time. Use with a hyphen when followed by a noun: She is a part-time librarian.

PASSPORT

Use all capital letters (**PASSPORT**) when referring to Polk State College's online registration service: **Personal Access to Student Services Polk Online Registration Tool**.

percent

- A. This is written as one word. Use the % symbol with numerals or in documents with frequent statistical references: 12%.
- B. Spell out **percent** with words: two percent.
- C. The word **percent** is preferred in texts containing only a few numbers, statistics, and financial amounts:

Revenue was up almost five percent last year.

periods

Use the space bar only once after a period.

Note: When writing an abbreviated name, space once after each capital letter: C. S. Lewis.

See **abbreviations**.

phenomenon

This is a singular word; the plural is **phenomena**.

point of view

- A. All formal and academic documents should use the third-person point of view. This means pronouns such as **us, we, our, I, me, my, mine, you, and your** should be avoided.

Instead of: Our library provides students with many resources.

Use: The library provides students with many resources.

B. With the exception of instructional manuals or materials with a list of directions, avoid “you implied” second-person point of view statements:

Instead of: See the professor for assistance.

Use: Students should seek the assistance of the professor.

The first-person and second-person points of view are permissible in some less formal documents such as personal letters, marketing items, and advertisements.

A document’s point of view should be consistent throughout.

Polk State College/PSC

While the use of the **PSC** acronym is acceptable, the use of **Polk State College** is preferred, particularly in advertising/ marketing materials, in order to further familiarize the community with the college’s new name.

postsecondary

Polk State College and the Florida Department of Education do not hyphenate this term.

President

Always capitalize when referring to Polk State College’s President, Dr. Eileen Holden.

prerequisite/co-requisite

Prerequisite is not hyphenated; **co-requisite** is.

procedures

The following describes how to reference Polk State College procedures in a formal document:

Polk State College Procedure 1018, *Student Complaint Procedure*, describes the process by which a student can record a grievance against a classroom policy or pursue due process with issues related to grading practices in a particular course.

Note the order of information, capitalization, and italics used for the title of the procedure.

professor

Capitalize this term only when placed in front of a person’s name: Professor Janet Brown. Do not abbreviate.

Q

quotation marks

Use standard American English practices.

- A. Always place commas and periods **inside** quotation marks:

Roosevelt said, "We have nothing to fear but fear itself."
"We have nothing to fear but fear itself," said Roosevelt.

- B. Place quotation marks **after** colons and semicolons:

We need to prepare students for combat against the debilitating effects of "fear itself"; courage and persistence are formidable weapons.

- C. Use single quotation marks (also called "inverted commas") only for a quotation within a quotation:

Jack said, "I've always wondered whether Franklin Roosevelt, who lived in frightening times, really did 'fear nothing but fear itself.'"

- D. Do not use quotation marks to hedge, cast doubt, emphasize, or apologize:

The "improved" policy isn't any better. **INCORRECT**
The revised policy needs more changes. **CORRECT**

- E. Use quotation marks for the titles of short creative works:

I once memorized "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe.
"You Were on My Mind" by We Five is one of my favorite songs.

See also **titles**.

quotations

- A. In quoted dialogue, start a new paragraph each time the speaker changes.

- B. The noun **quotation** is preferable to **quote**:

This quotation from Kahlil Gibran is perfect for the conclusion of my speech.

See also **quotation marks**.

R

references

See also **quotations, parentheses, titles, procedures, rules, and Florida Statutes.**

rooms

Building acronyms and room numbers contain a space between the acronym and the number: LAC 1235; WAD 178

RSVP

Proper usage includes all capitals with no periods.

rules

District Board of Trustees rules are referenced in formal documents as follows:

According to DBOT Rule 1.02, *Board Meetings*, all meetings of the District Board of Trustees are open to the public.

Note the order of information, capitalization, and the use of italics for the title.

S

seasons

Usually lower case, but capitalize in titles, terms, and holidays: Fall Schedule, Summer Semester, Fall Term, Spring Break.

semicolon

Use a semicolon instead of a period whenever two sentences are closely connected in meaning. Follow the semicolon with a lower-case word unless the next word is a proper noun:

It's going to rain today; let's not go shopping.
It's going to rain today; I've decided to stay home.

One situation in which semicolons are required is when one or more items in a list contain commas:

The box in the attic was full of forgotten items. I found a bundle of old letters, some still smelling of perfume; a half-filled photo album; a pair of cotton gloves, yellow with age; and a picture frame, broken beyond repair, with a faded wedding picture behind the glass.

sensitivity

Avoid referring to a person's gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, age, or physical condition unless necessary. Use gender-neutral terms: **servers**, **mail carriers**. Avoid gender-specific words and expressions like **policewoman** and **male nurse**.

Guidelines to follow when such references are necessary include:

- A. Describe rather than label people: **deaf people** rather than **the deaf**.
Correct: They are building a shelter for homeless people.
Incorrect: They are building a shelter for the homeless.
- B. Most persons with same-sex orientations prefer the terms **lesbian** for women and **gay** for men rather than **homosexual**. **Sexual orientation** is a more acceptable term than **sexual preference**.
- C. Use appropriate terms when references to race, color, and ethnicity are necessary. **African American** and **Black** are preferred when referring to black Americans. **Asian** is preferred to **Oriental**. **White** is capitalized when referring to Caucasians as an ethnic group. **Native American** is the preferred term when referring to American Indians. **Latino**, **Hispanic**, and **Chicano** are acceptable terms, but it's better to refer to the place of origin: **Cubans**, **Mexicans**, and **Puerto Ricans**. **Muslim** is preferred to **Moslem**.

See also **age, disability and disease, and his/her.**

sex/gender

In general, **sex** refers to biological terminology, and **gender** refers to language and culture:

They are having an ultrasound to determine the baby's sex.
Old English words had three genders: male, female, and neutral.
Some American companies still practice gender discrimination.

sexism

See **greetings, sensitivity, his/her.**

spacing

Use the following guides for spacing:

- A. Use one space after a colon (:).
- B. Use one space between sentences (after the period).
- C. Use one space after a comma (,) or semicolon (;).
- D. Do not place a space between em dashes or hyphens:
She works as a full-time professor. (hyphen)
The Teaching/Learning Computing Center—TLCC—is an important resource provided to students. (em dash)

Note: To create an em dash, hit the dash key twice without any spaces added; when the second word is completed and the space bar is hit, a smooth line will appear. Em dashes are generally considered less formal and should be used sparingly.
- E. Indentation or line-spacing between paragraphs should be used, but not both simultaneously.
- F. There are no spaces placed around / marks:
The Teaching/Learning Computing Center

split infinitive

The reputed rule against split infinitives, which prohibits phrases like “to boldly go where no man has gone before,” is of dubious origin, and many writers disregard it.

Spring Break

Capitalize both words: **Spring Break.**

states

- A. Abbreviate names of states only in addresses.
- B. Spell out in sentences: Florida has a diverse population.
- C. Capitalize the word **State** only in formal and legal usage when referring specifically to the government, or when it appears in a published document or an organization:
 - Student Services monitors State regulations carefully.
 - The Florida State Statutes are the basis for the District Board of Trustees' rules.

T

tense

A. In general, use verb tenses consistently: Stick to past or present without jumping back and forth.

B. Present tense is preferred in published and formal documents such as course descriptions, the *Polk State College Catalog*, and SACS documentation letters.

I woke up before my alarm clock went off. It's a beautiful morning, and I'm happy to be alive. INCORRECT

I woke up before my alarm clock went off. It was a beautiful morning, and I was happy to be alive. CORRECT

C. However, tenses may be mixed when necessary. Verbs such as **say, think, regard, believe, deny, and hope** can often be used with a mixture of tenses:

I hope Jamal will be able to retire next year. CORRECT

Jill is denying that she pushed Jack and his pail down the hill. CORRECT

teenager/teenage

No hyphen is needed; avoid **teenaged**.

telephone numbers

When writing out phone numbers, use hyphens, not periods: 863-297-1010, ext. 5304.

thank you

Do not use **thank you** as a complimentary close except in informal writing such as e-mails. At the end of a letter, **Thank you** should be followed by a period and a standard complimentary close, such as **Sincerely yours** or **Cordially**.

that/which

Use **that** and **which** for things. Use **who** and **whom** for people. In general, **that** is used without a comma, and **which** is used with a comma:

I decided to buy the book that John Brown told me to read.

Students needing to take the CPT should go to the TLCC, which is located on the first floor of the LLC Building.

See also **who/whom**.

theatre/theater

While the American spelling for the building itself is **theater**, many American companies use the British spelling (**theatre**) when naming their buildings, for example, Polk Theatre, Tampa Theatre. Follow the spelling the company prefers.

Polk State College uses the spelling **theatre** in all cases:

Polk State College's **Theatre** Department presents plays in the Main Stage **Theatre** or the Black Box **Theatre** in the Fine Arts Building on the Winter Haven campus.

titles

A. Capitalize the first word, the last word, and other words except articles (**a, an, the**), conjunctions (**and, but**), and prepositions of four or fewer letters (**in, of, with, for**).

B. Capitalize and italicize all titles of Polk State College procedures and DBOT rules.

This information can be found in Polk State College Procedure 101, *Orientation to the College*, and DBOT Rule 1234, *College Management*.

C. Capitalize and italicize titles of books, movies, periodicals, plays, television shows:
Gone with the Wind *Newsweek* *Law and Order* *Hamlet*

D. Capitalize and use quotation marks around titles of articles, short stories, poems, and songs:

"The Road Not Taken" "Amazing Grace" "The Lottery"

See also **italics** and **quotation marks**.

TLCC

This is the acronym for the **Teaching/Learning Computing Center**. Spell this out the first time it appears in a document.

TOEFL

This is the acronym for the **Test of English as a Foreign Language**. Spell this out the first time it appears in a document. Use all capitals with no periods for the acronym.

To Whom It May Concern

Avoid this archaic expression whenever possible. **Dear Sir or Dear Madam** is preferable. An even better practice is to use the person's actual name.

See also **greetings**.

traveled

The preferred spelling has one l.

t-shirt

A hyphen should be used; do not capitalize: **t-shirt**. **Tee** is also accepted.

typeface/font

Polk State College has chosen to use Arial 11 for its formal documents, narratives, and business letters.

U

underrepresented/underprepared/underserved

All of these terms are used without a hyphen.

URLs

Capitalize; there is no apostrophe in the plural: **URLs**.

W

Web

Capitalization varies, and some compounds are one word, while others are two or three: **World Wide Web; webmaster; the Web; web page, website.**

website

This is one word, with no capital letter and no hyphen: **website.**

who/whom/whoever/whomever

A. Use **who** as the subject and **whom** as the object. A trick to help choose the correct word quickly: substitute **he** for **who** and **him** for **whom**:

Who will pick up this box? (**He** will pick up this box.)

To whom should I give this box? (I should give this box to **him**.)

When in doubt, use **who**.

B. **Whomever** is often misused, as in the following example:

Give this box to **whomever** is willing to sign for it. INCORRECT

To find the correct word, think **He is willing to sign for it:**

Give this box to **whoever** is willing to sign for it. CORRECT

workforce

This term is always written as one word.

X

x-ray

This term is written in lower case.

Xerox

Spell Xerox with a capital letter. Unless referring to the Xerox brand of machines, use the generic words **photocopy** and **photocopier**:

I need to photocopy this report for Dr. Holden.

Your photocopies are ready.

I photocopied and filed your letter.

The Xerox machine in the TLCC isn't working today.