**abbreviations and acronyms** Stop! Before reading the rest of this item, ask yourself: "Do I want to abbreviate or shorten a word or phrase to aid me as the writer and typist, or do I want to aid the reader?" If your answer is "the reader," you're on the right track. Must you abbreviate *continued, additional, average* or *attorney*?

Use abbreviations and acronyms only when they will help your readers by making written text simpler and less cumbersome. If you're trying to save yourself time and energy as the writer or typist, your priorities are a mess. Do not use an abbreviation or acronym that would confuse your readers, that they would not recognize quickly. When in doubt, spell it out. (An abbreviation is a shortened version of a word or phrase, like *Mr.* and *Corp.*; an acronym is an abbreviation formed from the first letter or letters of a series of words, like *AIDS, Garbl, NAACP* and *radar*.)

Always spell out terms, common names and the complete proper names of organizations, projects, programs or documents the first time you use them, and repeat the complete term or name at the beginning of sections in longer documents. Although the abbreviation or acronym is capitalized for some common or generic nouns and terms, lowercase the spelled-out form. See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization).

If an abbreviation or acronym of the term or name would not be clear on second reference, avoid using it. Instead, use a shortened version of the name or a generic word, such as *the agency, the committee, the department* or *the company*.

If using unfamiliar abbreviations and acronyms is necessary, follow the complete name with the shortened form set off between commas: *The Endangered Species Act, or ESA, has had a positive effect.* Later references could use the abbreviation, a shortened version of the name or a generic word.

When possible, avoid following the name of an organization, project or program with an abbreviation or acronym in parentheses or set off by dashes: *Endangered Species Act (ESA)*.

Do not provide an abbreviation or acronym after spelling out a term if the shortened version isn't used elsewhere in the document.

Sometimes, when an abbreviation is likely to be more familiar than the spelled-out term, try putting the longer version in parentheses after the abbreviation. Or introduce the longer term once soon after using the abbreviation.

When placing either *a* or *an* before an abbreviation or acronym, determine how it would sound when spoken; see [**a, an, the**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#a, an) entry above.

In direct quotations, spell out (don't abbreviate) all words and phrases if that's they way they were expressed by a speaker or writer: *"We were in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on October 6."* Similarly, use abbreviations in quotations as expressed by a speaker or writer, but make sure its meaning is clear--or spell it out before or after the quotation. See [**dates**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dates), [**quotations**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#quotations), [**state names**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#state names).

***Acronyms:*** When each letter is pronounced in most acronyms, capitalize every letter. Capitalize only the first letter in most acronyms with more than six letters. Leave out periods in most acronyms unless the result would spell an unrelated word. Check your style manual or dictionary for exceptions to these guidelines. Don't use *the* before acronyms pronounced as words instead of letter by letter: *OSHA, CAD*.

***Abbreviations:*** Put a period after each letter in most two-letter abbreviations: *U.N., U.S., M.A.* When each letter is pronounced in longer abbreviations, capitalize every letter but don't include periods: *NBC, EIS, NEA*. Check your style manual or dictionary for exceptions to these guidelines. Use only one period when a sentences ends with an abbreviation that includes periods. Use *the* before abbreviations only when you would use *the* before the full name (usually as a noun, not an adjective): *the ESA, ESA requirements, the state DOT, DOT funds, IBM*.

To form most common plural abbreviations, add an *s*: *ABCs, CDs, chaps., Drs., IOUs, TVs, UFOs*. Sometimes, an apostrophe may go before the *s*: when the abbreviation has internal periods (*M.A.'s, M.B.A.'s, Ph.D.'s*), when the abbreviation is composed of lowercase letters (*pdf's*), when the abbreviation is a single letter (*A's, S's*) and when the abbreviation would be confusing if only the *s* were added (*OWS's* instead of *OWSs*). In the last example, if your readers might misinterpret an abbreviation like *OWS's* as showing possession, leave out the apostrophe.

Abbreviations and acronyms may be used in [**charts, tables**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#charts) and certain types of technical writing.

If the meaning is clear, abbreviations and acronyms may be used in headlines and headings. See [**headlines, headings**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#headlines).

Avoid using [**e.g., i.e.**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#e.g., i.e.); [**et al.**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#et al.); [**etc.**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#etc.)

Before a name: See [**legislative titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#legislative)**;** [**Miss, Mr., Mrs., Ms.**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#Miss)**;** [**titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#titles).

After a name: See [**junior, senior**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#junior)**;** [**academic degrees, titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#academic degrees)**;** [**company names**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#company names).

With dates or numerals: See [**dates**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dates)**,** [**days of the week**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#days of the week)**,** [**months**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#months)**,** [**No.**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#No.)**,** [**numbers**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#numbers)**,** [**time**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#time).

For addresses and locations: See [**addresses**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#addresses)**,** [**highway designations**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#highway designations)**,** [**state names**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#state names)**,** [**United States**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#United States)**,** [**ZIP codes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#ZIP code).

**ability, capability, capacity** Sometimes confused. *Ability* is a person's mental skill or physical power to do something. *Capability* is the general power or ability of a machine or organization to do something or be used to do something. *Capability* also can apply to people, but *ability* is usually the simpler choice. *Capacity* is the amount that something can get, hold, contain, produce carry or absorb. Figuratively, it describes a person's physical or mental power to learn something. It also refers to a person's *job, position* or *duty*, though those words are simpler and clearer.

**about,** **around** *About* is preferred to *around* in mentioning numbers. Use *about* for round numbers, not specific figures: *About 50 people volunteered. Forty-eight people volunteered.* If saying a figure is an *estimate*, also using the word *about* is redundant. Use one or the other, not both. *About* is also redundant when giving a range. Incorrect: *She estimated the crowd at about 5,500*. *A crowd of about 100-200 showed up*. *Around* is more common than *about* in other uses: *beat around the bush, strewn around the parking lot, all around the state*. See [**approximately**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#approximately)**,** [**at about**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#at about).

**above** Avoid using to mean "more than" or "longer than." Use those phrases instead, or consider *over*. *Men 18 and over could be drafted*, instead of *Men 18 and above could be drafted*. Better yet: *Men 18 and older could be drafted*. Even better: *Don't draft anyone*! See [**over, more than**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#over).

**aboveground** One word.

**academic degrees, titles, subjects** Avoid an abbreviation and use instead a phrase such as *Clark Kent, who has a doctorate in communications, a bachelor's degree, a master's degree*. Don't abbreviate or capitalize. If using abbreviations such as *B.A., M.A.* or *Ph.D*., place them after a full name and set off with commas: *Clark Kent, Ph.D., spoke*. Also, capitalize and spell out formal titles like *professor* when they go before a name, but don't capitalize modifiers: *journalism Professor Bill Chamberlin*. Lowercase elsewhere. See [**doctor**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#doctor).

As noted above, lowercase academic subjects like *microbiology, journalism* and *political science*. Languages, of course, should be capitalized: *Japanese, English, Spanish*. See [**course names and numbers**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#course_names).

**accede, exceed** Occasionally confused or misused. To *accede to* is "to give in and accept a proposal" and "to take on the duties of an office." It doesn't mean *agree* or *allow*. Try using simpler *give in* or *take office* instead, depending on what you mean. To *exceed* is "to be more than or greater than" and "to go beyond a legal or official limit." See [**agree to, agree with, agree on**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#agree)**;** [**allow, enable, permit**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#allow)**;** [**exceed**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#exceed).

**accent, accentuate** Subtle difference in meaning of these verbs. Use *accent* literally, to emphasize a word or part of a word. Use *accentuate* figuratively, to emphasize something or make it easier to notice: *She accentuated her green eyes with her scarf*--or think about using simpler *emphasize, stress* or *highlight*.

**accent marks** Use of accent marks (or diacritical marks) varies for names like *Renee* and some foreign words that have joined the English language, like *cliche* and *resume*--or *RenaÃ©*, *clichÃ© and resumÃ©*. If you use them, use them consistently and correctly. Follow individual preferences for names, and follow the first-listed spelling in your dictionary for other words and phrases. See [**foreign words and phrases**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#foreign).

**accidentally** Commonly misspelled as *accidently*. Remember that you're adding an *ly* to *accidental*. Also, by definition, an accident is not intentional. Avoid writing that something happened *accidentally*, such as a car crash, when it obviously did not happen on purpose.

**accommodate** Often misspelled. Two *c*'s and two *m*'s. May be overstated if the meaning is *fit*. Simplify. Try replacing with *fit, hold* or *adapt (to)*--or try *help, give, provide, serve, house, hold, handle* or *allow*.

**accommodation(s)** Formal and overstated. Simplify. Use a more precise, descriptive word like *room*, *rooms* or *seats*. instead.

**accompany, accompanying** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try *go with, escort* or *with*.

**accomplish** Overstated. Simplify. Try a form of *do, succeed, carry out* or *finish*.

**accordingly** Overstated. Simplify. Cut or try *so, then, hence* or *thus*.

**according to** *According to* means "as stated in" or "reported by," but avoid using: It suggests doubt in the truthfulness or accuracy of a statement. Think about using forms of *show* or *say* instead. See [**attribution**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#attribution).

**accumulate** Commonly misspelled. Also, think about using simpler *collect, amass, gather* or *increase*.

**accustomed to** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try *used to*.

**achieve** Overstated unless you're writing about getting something done after making an effort to overcome obstacles or conquer difficulties. A 21-year-old doesn't *achieve* the drinking age, for example; he or she *reaches* it. Simplify. Try *do* or *succeed*, if that's what you mean; or try *get* or *reach*, if that's what you mean.

**acknowledge, acknowledgment** Avoid using the verb as formal business jargon in correspondence: *Thank you for writing us about our product* is friendlier than *This letter acknowledges your letter about our product*. For the noun, preferred spelling is to drop the *e* from *acknowledge* when adding *ment*. And don't forget the *d* in both words.

**acoustic** Commonly misspelled. Only one *c*.

**acquire** Overstated. Simplify. Try a form of *get, buy* or *win*.

**acre** See [**dimensions**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dimensions).

**acronyms** See [**abbreviations**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#abbreviations and acronyms) [**and** **acronyms**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#abbreviations and acronyms).

**act** Capitalize when part of the name for pending or existing legislation: *the State Environmental Policy Act*. Also capitalize -- and use figures -- when giving act (and scene) numbers for a drama or opera: *Act 3, Scene 2*. But lowercase and spell out in these uses: *the third act, the second scene*. See [**law**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#law)**;** [**adopt, approve, enact, pass**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#adopt, approve)**;** [**motion, ordinance**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#motion).

**act, action** Often confused and overused. As nouns they overlap in meaning, but use *action* as the broader term about a process that includes several acts and *act* as a particular action or type of action. Also, simplify and try omitting *action*: *prevention*, not *preventive action*; *discipline*, not *disciplinary action*. In addition, *act* is a strong, clear and concise verb: *The department acted on the complaint. She acted quickly after getting the work order*. Simplify. Avoid using the bureaucratic *take action*. And better yet, describe the action: *The department changed its hiring process after getting the complaint. She quickly repaired the transmission.*

**acting** Lowercase *acting* and capitalize any formal title that may appear before a name: *acting Administrative Manager Calvin Hobbes*. See [**titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#titles).

**active vs. passive verbs** A verb is active when it shows the subject acts or does something: *The clown caught the bouquet*. *The board approved the contract unanimously*. A verb is passive when the subject of the verb is acted upon: *The bouquet was caught by the clown.* *The contract was passed unanimously by the board.*

The active voice is simpler, more direct and more forceful than the passive voice. Passive voice may be acceptable when the person or thing receiving the action is more important than the person or thing doing the acting.

Also, avoid shifts between active and passive within a sentence. Change: *The new website manager majored in English and was employed by the city as an editor.* To: *The new manager majored in English and worked at the city as an editor*. See [**headlines**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#headlines).

Rita Mae Brown, *Starting from Scratch*, 1988: "Avoid the passive voice whenever possible. University term papers bleed with the passive voice. It seems to be the accepted style of Academia. Dump it."

**activity** Often unnecessary and wordy. Try deleting *activity* when used this way: *storm activity, earthquake activity*.

**actually** Vague, overused adverb. Avoid, even delete. Change: *They actually met while updating the manual.* To: *They met while updating the manual.* And don't replace with wordier, redundant [***in actual fact***](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#inactual). Also see [**in fact**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#in fact).

**ADA** See [**Americans with Disabilities Act**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#Americans with Disabilities Act)*.*

**adapt, adopt** Occasionally confused. To adapt means "to change something to fit a new situation or purpose." To *adopt* means "to approve, add and accept a new idea, plan, method or child." See [**adopt, approve**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#adopt, approve)*.*

**added** See [**attribution**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#attribution)*.*

**added bonus** Redundant. Simplify. Drop *added*.

**additional** Overstated. Simplify. Change to *more, added, extra* or *other*.

**address**. Formal and vague when used as a verb meaning "to find a way to solve a problem or answer a difficult question" and "to speak directly to a person or a group." Simplify. Instead, use *deal with, consider, handle* or *tackle* for the first defintion and *speak to* for the second definition.

Abbreviate only *avenue*, *boulevard* and *street* as *Ave., Blvd.* and *St.* in a numbered address: *Main Street Center is at 100 Main St.* See [**mail stops**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#mail stops).

Spell out and capitalize words such as *alley, drive, road, terrace* and *way* when part of an address or name: *His son worked on Cavanaugh Road Northwest and lived at 200 Ballinger Road N.W.* Lowercase them when used alone or in plural forms: *The project will close Cavanaugh and Ballinger roads for two weeks.*

Spell out and capitalize *First* through *Ninth* when used as a street name: *The cement truck drove down Fourth Avenue South.* Use numerals with two letters for *10th* and above: *The artist lives on 81st Street Northeast.*

When first used without a number, always spell out and capitalize the full name of a street, avenue, road or boulevard: *He lived on Southwest Harbor Boulevard.* Also spell out compass points (*South, Northwest*, etc.) if omitting the number: *The building is on Southwest 32nd Street.*

If the location is clear, common names (*Avenue, Street*, etc.) and compass points (*East, Southwest*, etc.) may be left off in later references.

Lowercase *street, avenue, boulevard* or *road* and the compass point when using the plural form: *The shopping center is between 35th and 37th avenues southwest on Southwest 10th Street.* But don't lowercase those words when the form is not plural: *You can catch a bus on Second or Third Avenue*. Also, lowercase and spell out *avenue, boulevard, road* or *street* when used alone: *He drove down the tree-lined boulevard.*

Use a ZIP code in mailing addresses, but don't include a ZIP code when giving the location or street address of a meeting, event, building or other structure. See [**ZIP code**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#ZIP code).

For post office boxes, use periods in the abbreviation *P.O.* when giving P.O. Box numbers: *P.O. Box 4311*. Also, lowercase *post office* in all uses.

**adequate, enough, sufficient** Sometimes confused. Use *adequate* when writing about something acceptable (but barely so) for a particular purpose: *an adequate performance*. Use *enough* to describe the amount of something in bulk or number of individual items: *enough music, enough guitars*. Use *sufficient* to describe only things in bulk: *sufficient music,* but *enough* (or *plenty*) is usually simpler and less formal. See [**amount, number**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#amount, number)**.**

Also, *adequate number of* and *sufficient amount of* are wordy and formal. Simplify. Replace with *enough.* *Adequate enough* is also wordy. Use one word or the other. And replace *sufficient enough* with simpler *enough*.

**adj**. Abbreviation for *adjective* in this style manual. See [**adjective**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#adjective)**.**

**adjacent to** Pompous. Simplify. Replace with *next to, beside*, *by*, *near* or *close to*.

**adjective** An adjective is a word or words that describe a noun or pronoun. See [**bad, badly**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#bad, badly)**;** [**comma**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#comma)**;** [**compound words**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#compounds)**;** [**good, well**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#good, well)**;** [**hyphen**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#hyphen)**;** [**more, most**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#more, most)**;** [**real, really**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#real)**.**

**ad-lib** (n., v., adj.) Not *adlib* or *ad lib*.

**administration** Lowercase unless it's part of an agency name: *Social Security Administration*. And check to make sure it has three *i*'s, including one before the *s*.

**ad nauseam** Often misspelled. Not *ad nauseum*. Also, think about replacing the Latin term with a clearer phrase: *to a sickening extreme, to the point of disgust, to a ridiculous degree*.

**adopt, approve, enact, pass** Governmental bodies *adopt* or *approve* amendments, motions, ordinances, resolutions, rules; *pass* bills; and *enact* laws. See [**adapt, adopt**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#adapt)**;** [**law**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#law)**;** [**motion, ordinance**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#motion)**.**

**adv.** Abbreviation for *adverb* in this style manual. See [**adverb**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#adverb).

**advance** *Advance planning* is redundant. *Planning* means laying a future course. Simplify. Drop *advance*. Also, *advance notice, advance warning* and the like are redundant. See [**preplanning**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#preplanning).

**advance, advanced** Sometimes confused. You order *advance-purchase tickets*, not *advanced-purchase tickets*, even if you buy them in advance with high-tech equipment. Use *advanced* to write about the most modern ideas or a higher level.

**adverb** An adverb is a word that describes or adds to the meaning of a verb, an adjective or another adverb. Place an adverb as close as possible to the word or phrase it modifies. In compound verbs, the adverb usually goes before the main verb: *He will probably attend, she has already finished, the book did not clearly describe*. See [**bad, badly**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#bad, badly)**;** [**good, well**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#good, well)**;** [**hyphen**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#hyphen)**;** [**Myths and Superstitions of Writing**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/myths.htm#verbphrase)**;** [**only**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#only)**;** [**real, really**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#real).

**adverse, averse** Occasionally confused adjectives. Use *adverse* to describe things, conditions or circumstances that are unfavorable, harmful or hostile: *adverse weather, adverse publicity*. Use *averse* to describe a person's feeling of reluctance, distaste or opposition: *He was averse to the proposed budget cut*.

**advertise, advertisement, advertising** Commonly misspelled. Not *advertize, advertizement, advertizing*.

**advice, advise** Often confused and misused. *Advice*, a noun, is "an opinion or guidance about how to handle a situation." *Advise*, a verb, means "giving an opinion or guidance about how to handle a situation." Also, *advise* is often overstated and vague. Simplify. Try *tell, mention* or *explain*; *recommend*; or *warn*.

**adviser** Preferred spelling. Not *advisor*. But the adjective *advisory* is correct, not *advisery*.

**advisory committee** See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization).

**aesthetic** Preferred spelling. Not *esthetic*.

**affect, effect** Often misused, confused or overused. Usually used as a verb, *affect* means "to influence, to have an effect on, to change": *The pesticide will affect the stream. The new feature should affect sales.* Better yet, use a verb that's describes the effect more precisely, like *pollute the stream* or *stimulate sales*. Avoid using *affect* as a noun that sometimes means "emotion" to psychologists. *Effect* is usually a noun, meaning "result," "reaction" or "consequence": *The effect of the project was disappointing.* Avoid using *effect* formally as a verb, meaning "to cause, to bring about, to produce": *She will effect many changes in the group.* Instead, use simpler, less formal *bring about* or *cause*. See also [**effect many changes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#effect many changes)**,** [**have an effect on**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#have an effect on)**,** [**impact**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#impact)**.**

**(in the) affirmative** Formal, legalistic jargon. And silly if you mean "yes." Simplify. Use *yes* instead. Or use an action verb: *The council approved the contract*; not *The council voted in the affirmative for the contract*.

**affirmative action** An organization may have an *Affirmative Action Program*, but the organizations take *affirmative actions* in recruiting minorities, women and people with disabilities. Don't abbreviate.

**afflict, inflict** Commonly misused or confused verbs. People (and other living things) are *afflicted* with or by distress, pain or suffering. But distress, pain or suffering is *inflicted* on people.

**African American** Acceptable to use interchangeably with *black* when writing about black people in the United States. Don't hyphenate as a noun. Don't use *Afro-American*. When in doubt about how to refer to a person's race or cultural or ethnic identity, ask the person in question what is preferred. Some may prefer *black*, others *African American*. See [**black**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#black)**,** [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization)**,** [**race**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#race).

**afterward** Not *afterwards*.

**agencywide** One word.

**agenda** It takes singular verbs and pronouns: *The agenda is ready to print. It is three pages long*. The plural is *agendas*.

**ages** Use a numeral when giving the age of a human being or other animal in years or months. Spell out the age for inanimate objects. When using ages as adjectives before a noun or as substitutes for a noun, use hyphens: *A 6-year-old boy. The boy is 6 years old. She's 4 months old. The race is for 4-year-olds. The five-year-old car. The car is five years old. The woman is in her 40s* (no apostrophe). *Classes are for children 6-12 years old* (or *6 to 12 years old*). This rule is one of the exceptions to the general rule for [**numbers**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#number). Also see [**hyphen**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#hyphen).

**aggravate** Often confused with *annoy* or *irritate*. Use *aggravate* to mean "to make a bad situation worse, worsen, exacerbate": *Getting a speeding ticket while racing to his wedding only aggravated the situation.* Or think about using simpler, clearer *make worse* or *worsen*: *Getting a speeding ticket while racing to his wedding only worsened the situation*. Circumstances get aggravated, not people. And some people get annoyed, even irritated, when they hear *aggravate* misused.

**agnostic, atheist** Sometimes misunderstood. An *agnostic* believes people cannot know for certain whether God exists. An *atheist* does not believe God exists.

**agree to, agree with, agree on** Choose the preposition *to* or *with* or *on* depending on what you're writing. Use *agree to* when expressing consent to do something: *He agreed to fix the broken window*. Use *agree with* to express similar opinions *on* or *about* something: *He agreed with his neighbor about the speed limit*. Use *agree on* when writing about the subject of the agreement: *They agreed on the window repair. They agreed on the speed limit reduction*.

**aid, aide** *Aid* is "help." Consider using less formal *help*. An *aide* is "a person who helps someone or works as an assistant." See [**assist**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#assist).

**AIDS** Acceptable in all references to *acquired immune deficiency syndrome*. See [**disabled**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#disabled)**,** [**HIV**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#HIV).

**aka** Abbreviation of *also known as*. For informal use. Lowercase, no periods, no spacing: *George W. Bush, aka Bush II*.

**alcoholic** Use *recovering*, not *reformed* or *former*, when writing about people who are dealing with their alcoholism.

**alibi** Commonly misused. Use the noun *alibi* to write about a legal defense used by an accused person to state that he or she was elsewhere than at the scene of a crime. Avoid using *alibi* informally to mean *excuse*. Use *excuse* instead.

**align** Often misspelled.

**alignment** See [**justification**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#justification).

**all, any, most, some** These words can be singular or plural. If the word means "general amount or quantity," it's singular: *All the fuel was delivered Wednesday. Some of his report was quoted in the article*. If you can read "individual and number" into the sentence, use a plural verb: *All the passengers were treated and released. Have any of their relatives been told*? See [**any and all**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#anyall)**,** [**more, most**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#more, most)**.**

**alleged** Often misused. Don't use this adjective to describe something that is true or already verified. For example, if the police have verified that a burglary happened, it's simply a burglary; it's *not* an alleged burglary, even if they don't have a suspect in the crime. And when they arrest someone for the crime, he *is* a suspect; he's *not* an alleged suspect. Drop *alleged*. The person accused of the burglary, however, is an *alleged* burglar. And if he's convicted of the crime, he's no longer the alleged burglar; he *is* the burglar in that crime.

**alleviate** See [**ameliorate**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#ameliorate).

**all of** Wordy. Simplify. Drop *of* unless followed by a pronoun: *all of them*.

**allot, allotted, allotting** Commonly misspelled. Not *alloted* or *alloting*. See [**a lot**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#a lot).

**allow, enable, permit** *Enable* means "to help, make possible, practical or easy": *The new trucks will enable the company to provide better service. Allow* and *permit* suggest power or authority to give or deny. *Permit* suggests formal sanction, approval, consent or authorization. *Allow*, in contrast, suggests merely the absence of opposition or refraining from banning actions: *The city permitted the TV station to broadcast from the park.* *Our supervisor allows us to dress casually on Fridays.*

Also, think about using simpler *help* for *enable* and *let* for *allow*: *The new trucks will help the company provide better service. Our supervisor lets us dress casually on Fridays*. See [**lets, let's**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#lets).

**all ready, already** Commonly confused. Use *all ready* to say someone is prepared to do something. Use *already* to say something happened earlier: *The contractor is all ready to begin work; in fact, it's already started.*

**all right** Commonly misspelled. Two words. Not *alright*.

**all-round** Commonly misspelled. Not *all-around*.

**all-terrain vehicle** Hyphenate *all-terrain*. *ATV* OK on second reference.

**all time** Avoid using this word unless your crystal ball is objective and always right: *all-time greatest chocolate chip cookie*. Try using *record* instead.

**allude, elude** Sometimes confused. See use of *allude* below. *Elude* means "to escape capture by tricking someone" and "to escape notice or understanding": *She drove to the police station to elude the road-raging SUV driver. Popularity eluded the Seattle band*.

**allude, refer** Sometimes confused. Use *allude* to mention something or someone in an indirect way, by suggestion. Use *refer* to mention someone or something directly.

**allusion, delusion, illusion** Sometimes confused. An *allusion* is "the act of writing or speaking in an indirect way about something, an indirect reference." A *delusion* is "a belief or notion about something that's contrary to fact or reality." An *illusion* is "a mirage, hallucination, unreal image, or trick" and "a false perception of reality."

**almost** Sometimes misused. To prevent ambiguity, put this word immediately before the word or phrase it modifies. If you mean *Almost all of them were ready to go*, for example, don't write *All of them were almost ready to go*.

**almost all** Wordy. Replace with simpler *most*. See [**majority, most**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#majority).

**alongside of** Wordy and redundant. Drop *of* or replace with simpler *beside* or *next to*.

**along with, together with** Wordy. Simplify. Try cutting *along* or *with*, or omitting those phrases. Change: *Plant operators, together with process control analysts, attended the meeting*. To: *Plant operators and process control analysts attended the meeting.* Or: *Plant operators attended the meeting with process control analysts.*

Also, in both expressions, *with* does not govern the verb: *The new student, along with another student, was being questioned.* Not: *The new student, along with another student, were being questioned.*

**a lot** Commonly misspelled as *alot*. The phrase *a lot of* takes a plural verb with countable items--*A lot of people are waiting to buy concert tickets*--and a singular verb with uncountable concepts--*A lot of work has gone into the project*. *A lot* may be too casual or too imprecise for some writing. If so, try replacing with *many* for countable items or *much* for uncountable concepts--or be more specific about the amount or number. Also, try replacing *a lot of (the) time* with simpler *often*. See [**allot, allotted, allotting**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#allot)**;** [**many, much**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#many, much).

**already exist** Redundant. Drop *already*.

**alright** Nonstandard. Use *all right* (two words) instead, like you would use *all wrong*, not *alwrong*.

**also** To prevent errors in meaning, place *also* as close as possible to the word it modifies. Usually, that's directly before the word. *Also* usually goes before the main verb in compound verbs (separating the main verb from its auxiliary or helping verb): *He is also threatening to run for reelecton*.

**altar, alter** Sometimes confused or misspelled. The noun *altar* is "a table or raised structure used in a religious ceremony." The verb *alter* means "to partially change something." But simplify. Try using *change* instead.

**altercation** It's a verbal quarrel, a noisy fight or brawl--using words, not fists.

**alternate, alternative** Often misused or confused. As a verb, *alternate* means to occur in turns--first one, then the other--or every other one in a series: *Day alternates with night.* As an adjective, it means arranged by turns: *The chefs worked on alternate weekends.* As a noun, it means a substitute: *He's my alternate to the convention.* As a noun and adjective, *alternative* means a choice between two things or among several things: *They preferred an alternative landscape plan for the park. The alternatives are native Northwest plants and (*not *or) imported plants.* Think about using simpler *choice* as a noun and *different* or *other* as an adjective.

**although, though** These words are interchangeable as conjunctions. Some people think *although* is more formal or more emphatic. *Though* also works as an adverb meaning "however" at the end of a sentence: *She promised to do her homework, though*. *Though* also is used in the idioms *as though* and *even though*.

**altogether, all together**. Sometimes confused. Use the adverb *altogether* to mean "completely, or the whole amount or number of something." Use the adjective phrase *all together* to describe everything or everyone together at once or in one place. Also, if people are *in the altogether*, they're nude.

**alumni, alumnae, alumnus, alumna** Commonly confused. Use the plural *alumni* when writing about a group of men or a group of men and women. Use the plural *alumnae* when writing about a group of women. Use the singular *alumnus* for a man and the singular *alumna* for a woman. For informal use, *alum* (not *alumn*) avoids the gender distinction.

**a.m.** See [**time**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#time).

**ambience** Preferred spelling. Not *ambiance*.

**ambiguous, ambivalent, indifferent** Sometimes confused. Use *ambiguous* to describe a word or statement that is unclear because it could have more than one meaning. Use *ambivalent* to described contradictory ideas or mixed feelings about something. Or try using clearer, simpler *mixed feelings* instead. Don't use *ambivalent* to mean "indecisive." Use *indifferent* to describe someone who has no interest, feelings or opinions about a subject. See [**disinterested, uninterested**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#disinterested).

**ameliorate** Formal and overstated, unless you're referring to an unacceptable or intolerable condition. Simplify. Use *make better* or *improve* instead. Don't use to mean "appease, counteract, mitigate" or "lessen." And don't confuse with *alleviate,* which means "lessen or make less painful." Also, try substituting simpler *lessen* or *reduce* for *alleviate*.

**amenity** Usually plural as *amenities*, it's vague and overused. Simplify. Think about using *conveniences* or *features* instead, or be more specific: *The new park features a wading pool and climbing toys.*

**America, American** Though often used as a description for residents of the United States, *American* also may be applied to any resident or citizen of nations in the Caribbean and North, Central and South America. And *America* may be applied to any of those geographic areas. When possible, use a more precise term: *United States* or *U.S.* instead of *America*; *U.S. citizen* or *U.S. resident* instead of *American*; *history of the United States* or *U.S. history* instead of *American history*. Because they are used only in the United States, terms such *African American, Asian American* and *Mexican American* may be used. See [**African American**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#African American); **American Indian, Eskimo** below; [**Asian, Pacific Islander**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#Asian); [**Hispanic, Latino**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#Hispanic); [**race**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#race); [**United States**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#United States).

**American Indian, Eskimo** *American Indian* and *Native American* are synonymous. Preferences differ among indigenous people in the United States and Western Hemisphere. When in doubt about how to refer to a person's race or cultural or ethnic identity, ask the person in question what is preferred. But beware that *Indians* also refers to people who live in India. When possible, use national (or tribal) affiliation rather than generic *American Indian* or *Native American*: *Navajo, Hopi, Muckleshoot*. For Eskimos and Aleuts in Alaska, *Alaska Native* is preferred to *American Indian*. Don't use such disparaging words as *wampum, warpath, powwow* and *squaw*. To specify someone was born in the United States but isn't Native American, use *native-born*. Lowercase *native* when it stands alone. See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization)**,** [**race**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#race)**,** [**tribe**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#tribe)**.**

**Americans with Disabilities Act** Spell out and capitalize on first reference. *ADA* (all caps, no periods) may be used on later references.

**amid, amidst, among** Avoid outdated *amidst*. Try using less formal *in* or among instead of *amid*. Use *among* with plural, countable nouns -- *among friends, among passengers* -- and save *amid* for use with uncountable mass nouns -- *amid a crowd, amid congestion*.

**among, amongst, between** *Between* introduces two items. *Among* introduces more than two: *The host divided the pie between Don and Phil. The host divided the pie among Peter, Paul, John, George, Gordon and Mary.* *Amongst* is archaic and pretentious; use *among* instead.

*Between* may be used to express the relationships of three or more items considered one pair at a time--when the action described can take place between only two of the several at once: *Officials scheduled meetings between the community college and the Lake Washington, Bellevue and Issaquah school districts.* See [**Myths and Superstitions of Writing**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/myths.htm#between).

Also, note the correct use of *between ... and* in this sentence: *They had a choice between wide shoulders and sidewalks*. Using *between ... or* instead is incorrect: *They had a choice between wide shoulders or sidewalks*.

**amoral, immoral** Commonly misused adjectives. *Amoral* means "neither moral (right) nor immoral (wrong)" or "incapable of knowing the difference." *Immoral* means "morally wrong and not accepted by society; wicked; improper sexual behavior." If you must judge someone's morals as worse than yours, you probably mean *immoral*. See [**moral, morale, morals**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#moral)**.**

**amount, number** Sometimes confused. Use *amount* with singular, uncountable mass nouns or things that are measured in bulk; use *number* with plural nouns and individual items that can be counted: *a large amount of asphalt, a large number of speed bumps*; *a number of people*, not *an amount of people*. *Amount* refers to "how much," *number* to "how many." See **amount of** below; [**a number of**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#a_number_of)**;** [**fewer, less**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#fewer)**;** [**many, much**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#many, much)**;** [**number**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#number)**.**

**amount of** Wordy. Think about omitting, or try replacing *in the amount of* with *for* or *for the*. Change: *The dealer got a check in the amount of $239.* To: *The dealer got a check for $239.* If necessary, use *amount of* to refer to a general quantity: *There was a terrifying amount of work to be done.* See [**number**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#number).

**ampersand (&)** Use the ampersand when a company uses it is part of the company's full name. Do not use the ampersand to replace *and* in other text. The ampersand may be used in tables and abbreviations.

**Amtrak** Don't use *AMTRAK*.

**amuse, bemuse** Often confused. *Amuse* means "to make someone smile or laugh" or "to entertain." *Bemuse* means "to confuse" or "to be lost in thought, preoccupied."

**an** See [**a, an**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#a, an).

**analogous** Formal. Simplify. Unless you're making an analogy or describing a partial resemblence, try using *similar* or *like* instead.

**and** (conjunction) When joining two or more nouns or pronouns with *and* to form a compound subject, use a plural verb: *The community college and the City of Vancouver are planning a joint performing arts center. Rain, hail and wind have caused about $3,400 damage.* Singular verbs are OK for routinely combined phrases, such as *fish and chips* and *law and order*, but even then a plural verb would be OK. See [**or**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#or)**,** [**plus**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#plus)**.**

**and also** Redundant. Simplify. Use either *and* or *also*, not both.

**and, but** Some teachers wisely taught us not to begin every sentence or fragment of a sentence with *and* (or *but*). And others taught us mistakenly not to begin any sentence with those conjunctions. Whatever the lesson, the result has been a common misunderstanding that it's incorrect to begin sentences with conjunctions. Ignore that myth!

*And* and *but* are simple, clear and correct transition words between related (*and*) and contrasting (*but*) sentences. Go ahead and use 'em--*And* instead of *Additionally, Furthermore, In addition* or *Moreover,* and *But* instead of *However*. But don't overdo it. They'll lose their punch. A comma is unnecessary following *And* and *But* at the beginning of a sentence. See [**also**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#also); [**beside, besides**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#beside); [**so**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#so); [**yet**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#yet); and [**Myths and Superstitions of Writing**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/myths.htm#andbut).

**... and I, ... and me** See [**I, me**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#I-me).

**and/or** Jargon. Avoid this ambiguous, awkward, overused phrase. Change: *Use gold and/or purple beads in your project.* To: *Use gold beads or purple beads or both colors in your project*. Or simply use *or* alone. See [**virgule (/)**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#virgule).

**anecdote, antidote** Sometimes confused. An *anecdote* is "a short, entertaining and usually true story about a person or event." An *antidote* is "a remedy to the effects of a poison" and "something that makes an unpleasant situation better."

**an estimated** Wordy. Replace with simpler *about, nearly, almost* or *more than*. See [**approximately**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#approximately).

**animals** Use *it* or *its* with an animal unless it has a name or its sex is known: *The horse was injured; it limped. The horse, Lady Godiva, was injured; she limped. The bull charged his tormentors.* Lowercase the common names for types of animals, capitalizing only proper nouns and adjectives--or check a dictionary or specialized reference for specific animals: *rhesus monkey, Boston terrier*. For scientific (Latin) names of animals, see [**taxonomy**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#taxonomy).

**announced** See [**attribution**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#attribution).

**annual** Don't describe an event as *annual* until it has taken place at least two consecutive years. Don't use *first annual*. Say: *Sponsors plan to hold the event annually* [or simpler *yearly*].

**annual meeting** Lowercase in all uses.

**antennae, antennas** Insects may feel things with two long, thin *antennae* on their heads, but cars and radios may pick up signals with two or more *antennas*.

**anti-** Follow your preferred dictionary, hyphenating if not listed there. But use a hyphen if the word begins with the letter *i: anti-inflammatory*. See [**prefixes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prefixes).

**anticipate, expect** Commonly confused. *Anticipate* means to expect and prepare for something; *expect* does not include the idea of preparation: *Planners expect a record attendance. They have anticipated it by providing more service.*

**antidote** See [**anecdote, antidote**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#anecdote).

**a number of** Wordy and vague. Be specific, delete or try *a few, some, several, many* or *most*. See [**amount, number**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#amount, number)**;** [**number**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#number).

**anxious, eager** Often confused. *Anxious* means "to be worried, apprehensive, feeling anxiety." An unpleasant sensation, *anxious* is followed by *about* or *for*: *The project lead is anxious about the expense*. *Eager* means "wanting something very much." Denoting pleasant feelings, *eager* is followed by *to*: *The group is eager to begin work*.

**any and all** Wordy. Simplify. Try using either *any* or *all*, not both. Also see [**all, any, most, some**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#all, any).

**anybody, any body, anyone, any one** *Anybody* and *anyone* are interchangeable as indefinite references "to any person,"; *anyone* is used more often, and *anybody* is considered informal. They take singular verbs and pronouns: *Anybody can ride the bus. Anyone can do that. I don't think anyone was prepared for the lesson.* *Any one* means "any single person" or "any single thing." Use two words to single out one element of a group: *Any one of them may speak at the meeting.* *Any body* means "any human form" or "any group."

**anymore, any more** These two terms differ in meaning. Usually as one word in American English, *anymore* is an adverb that refers to time, typically in a negative sense or with the word *not*. It means "now," "any longer," "from now on": *Alice doesn't live here anymore. I won't do that anymore.*

As *any more*, the two words work together using their separate dictionary definitions. The term refers to number or quantity, meaning "any additional." Here, *any more* is an adverb modifying an adjective: *I don't want any more pie*. And here, *any more* is an adjective modifying a noun: *I don't want any more.* The term also is used mostly in a negative sense.

Here's a good example using both terms in a single sentence: *I don't buy ties anymore because I don't need any more ties*.

**anyplace, anywhere** *Anywhere* (one word) is the preferred adverb meaning "in or to any location when it doesn't matter where.": *I'm willing to fly anywhere*. Use *any place* (two words) when *place* is a noun: *Do you know of any place that sells red galoshes?*

**anytime, any time** One word as an adverb meaning "at any time": *You're welcome to visit anytime* But use two words if including the word *at*: *You're welcome to visit at any time.*

**anyway, anyways** *Anyway* is the standard word, meaning "as I was saying" at the beginning of a sentence (followed by a comma) and "in any event (or case)" at the end of a sentence. Consider dropping *anyway* as unnecessary. And save *anyways* for those uses when writing dialect.

**AP** See [**Associated Press**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#Associated Press)**.**

**apostrophe (')** This punctuation mark has two main uses: First, it often shows possession: *Dan Lindler's appointment.* And second, it often marks the omission of letters in contractions and other words or numbers in years and decades: *he'll, won't, finger lickin' good, the class of '68, the '90s*.

Apostrophes never make a word plural, but they may be used to mark the plural of single letters and abbreviations with internal punctuation: *Dot your i's. She got straights A's on her report card, M.A.'s Ph.D.'s*. Don't use it in forming plurals of decades: *the '70s, the 1980s*, not *'70's, the 1980's*.

See [**abbreviations and acronyms**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#abbreviations and acronyms)**,** [**contractions**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#contractions)**,** [**it's, its**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#it's)**,** [**plurals**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#plurals)**,** [**possessives**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#possessives).

**app** Short for *application*. Lowercase unless part of a proper name; no period. Acceptable on second reference.

**append** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try *add* or *attach*.

**appendixes, appendices** Except for scientific documents, *appendixes* is the preferred plural for *appendix*.

**appreciate** Often misused or overused. Use *appreciate* to express value, admiration or gratitude for a thing, behavior or action. Also, simplify. Try using *thank you, please, admire, enjoy, like, prize, value* or *grateful* instead.

**appraise, apprise** Often confused. To *appraise* means "to estimate the value of something or someone." To *apprise* means "to tell someone about something that interests the person." Also, *apprise* is overstated and formal. Simplify. Try changing to *tell*.

**appropriate, apropos** Sometimes confused. Use *apropos* as an adjective to mean "relevant and timely"--or use those words instead. *Apropos (of)* also means "about" and "by the way," but try using one of those simpler terms instead. Use *appropriate* or simpler *right, correct* or *acceptable* when writing about behavior or clothes. Also use *appropriate*--or substitute *suitable*--when describing the qualities of something for a particular purpose or situation. *Appropriate* may be more emphatic than *suitable* in some uses.

**approximately** Overstated. Replace *approximately* with simpler *about, nearly, roughly* or *almost*. *About approximately* is redundant. Drop *approximately*.

**April Fools' Day** The apostrophe goes after the *s*.

**apt, likely** Subtle difference in meaning. Use the adjective *apt* to describe a natural or habitual tendency or inclination to do something. Use the adjective *likely* to describe something that's probable or expected to happen. See [**liable, likely**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#liable)**;** [**likelihood, likely**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#likelihood)

**arbitration, mediation** Sometimes confused. *Arbitration* involves settling a dispute using a third party who hears evidence from opposing sides and makes a binding decision. *Mediation* involves settling differences using a third party who helps opposing sides agree through reason, persuasion and friendly or diplomatic intervention.

**archaeology** Preferred spelling. Not *archeology*.

**area** Overused, vague and redundant in phrases like this: *She's skilled in the area of fund-raising. The program shows the area where you'll be staying*. Simplify, delete or try using *in, of* or *about* instead: *She's skilled in fund-raising. The program shows where you'll be staying*. See [**field**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#field)**.**

**area codes** See [**telephone numbers**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#telephone)**.**

**argument** Commonly misspelled.

**armed forces** Lowercase when writing about the *U.S. armed forces* or *armed forces* of other countries. But capitalize *Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines, Navy, National Guard* and *Reserve* when writing about U.S. forces. *U.S.* is not required before the names of U.S. forces if the affiliation is clear. Don't use abbreviations for the armed forces: *USAF, USA, USCG, USMC* and *USN*.

**around** See [**about, around**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#around)**.**

**arrive** It needs the preposition *at*: *She will arrive at Sea-Tac Airport by 4 p.m. Friday.* Do not omit.

**as a means to (of, for), as a way to (of, for)** Wordy. Simplify. Try *to* or *for*.

**as a result** See [**so**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#so)**;** [**thus**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#thus).

**ascend** See [**climb down, climb up**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#climb).

**ascertain** Pompous. Simplify. Replace with *find out, discover, learn, check* or *be sure.*

**as far as** Wordy and often misused. Unless you're writing about distance, it must be followed by *that's concerned, that goes, I know* and so on. But simplify. Replace with *as for*: *As for human rights, they must be protected.* Not: *As far as human rights are concerned, they must be protected.* Or worse: *As far as human rights, they must be protected*. Correct: *I'm riding the train as far as it will take me*.

**Asian, Pacific Islander** A person having origins in any of the original people of East Asia, Southeast Asia, the Asian subcontinent or the Pacific islands. When in doubt about how to refer to a person's race or cultural or ethnic identity, ask the person in question what is preferred. When identifying U.S. citizens, specific terms like *Japanese American* or *Korean American* may be appropriate. Many people think *Asiatic* is offensive when applied to people. See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization)**,** [**Oriental**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#Oriental)**,** [**race**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#race).

**as if** Use *as if* instead of *like* when followed by a clause with its own verb: *She typed as if her life depended on it*. Though interchangeable with *as though*, *as if* is preferred. See **as, like** below.

**ask a question, ask the question** Wordy and redundant. Simplify. Use *ask* instead or *question* as a verb.

**as, like** Often confused when comparing things. Both mean "equally" or "the same as." Use the conjunction *as*, however, to introduce a clause (a group of words with its own subject and verb), *he should* in this example: *Jennifer saves her computer work as she should.* Use *like* as a preposition to make a direct comparison of nouns or pronouns. It needs an object, *an expert* in this example: *Jennifer saves her computer work like an expert.* Memory tip: *As* is followed by a noun and a verb while *like* is followed by only a noun. See **as if** above; [**including, like, such as**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#including).

**as long as** Wordy. Replace with simpler *if* or *since*.

**as of (now)** Wordy. Replace with simpler *now* or *today*, or give a date: *on Jan. 28, from Nov. 16*.

**as of yet** See [**as yet, as of yet**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#as yet).

**as per** Jargon. Simplify. Replace with *according to*, or reword phrases to eliminate *per*: *As per our instructions ... As we instructed. As per usual ... As usual.* Avoid substituting wordy and legalistic *in accordance with*. See [**according to**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#according to).

**as regards** Pompous. Simplify. Use *about* or *as for*.

**assist, assistance** Overstated and formal. Try simpler *help* unless someone has special skills to *assist* someone else.

**assistant** Do not abbreviate. Capitalize when part of an official title before a name: *Engineering Assistant Teresa Gustafson*. Lowercase when set off by commas after a name: *Colin Healy, assistant supervisor, gave essential information.* See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization)**,** [**titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#titles).

**Associated Press, The** Use *The Associated Press* on first reference. *AP* may be used on second reference. This style manual follows styles recommended in the easy-to-use *Associated Press Stylebook*.

**as soon as**. Acceptable but wordy and vague. Simplify. Try *when* or *once* or be more specific.

**assuming that** Wordy. Simplify. To begin a clause in a sentence, try *if* instead.

**assure** *Assure* means "to state confidently *to another person or group* that something has been or will be done": *The director assured the council that staff will act on the resolution.* See the [**ensure, insure**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#ensure, insure).

**asterisk (\*)** Often misspelled. Use this symbol in texts, charts and graphs to refer readers to footnotes, omissions, references and source information. Avoid putting important information in notes that readers may overlook. Also called a *star*, it's the symbol on the pushbutton in the lower left corner of the dialing pad on a standard pushbutton telephone--*the star key*.

**as though** See [**as if**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#as if).

**as to** Pretentious jargon. Simplify. Except when using *as to* to begin a sentence, replace it with *about* or *on*. *As for* is a less formal phrase than *as to* at the beginning of a sentence.

**as well as** Wordy. Simplify. Use *besides, and* or *also*. If you do use *as well as* as a conjunction or to begin a parenthetical phrase, it does not affect the following verb: *Gary as well as Greg loves her beauty. Tully's, as well as Starbucks, is expanding in the area*.

Also, do not use *as well as* with the word *both*. Drop *both* or use *and* instead of *as well as*. Incorrect: *Both Tully's, as well as Starbucks, is expanding in the area. Both Gary as well as Greg loves of her beauty.* Correct: *Tully's and Starbucks are expanding in the area. Both Gary and Greg love her beauty.* See [**both**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#both)**;** [**both ... and**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#both and).

**as yet, as of yet** Wordy. Simplify. Use *yet* alone, *so far* or *still*.

**at about** Redundant*.* Simplify. Depending on what you're saying, drop either *at* or *about*. If you're being precise, drop *about*: *They used to meet at 7:15 a.m. in his office*. And if you're not being precise, drop *at*: *They used to meet about 7:15 a.m. in his office*. See [**about**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#about)*.*

**at all times** Wordy. Simplify. Try *always*.

**atheist** See [**agnostic, atheist**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#agnostic)**.**

**ATM** Abbreviation for *automated teller machine*, not "*automatic* teller machine." *ATM machine* is redundant.

**a total of** See [**total, totaled, totaling**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#total, totaled)**.**

**attain** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try *succeed, meet, reach* or *arrive at*.

**attempt** (v.) Overstated. Simplify. Use *try* or *take on* instead.

**at the end of** Wordy. Simplify. Try *after*.

**at the present time, at this point in time, at this particular time, at this point** Wordy and pompous. Try *now* or *today*, which are shorter and less obtrusive if repeated. Or leave out the phrase.

**at the time** Wordy. Simplify. Try *when*.

**at this juncture** Formal. Use only when writing about a significant or critical activity or time. *Critical junction* is redundant. Pompose and comical if misused. Try using simpler *now* instead.

**at this time** Wordy, vague and pompous. Simplify. Use *now* instead.

**attired** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try *wore* or *dressed*.

**attractive in appearance** Wordy and redundant. Simplify. Drop *in appearance*.

**attorney, lawyer** Not always interchangeable. Lawyers have law degrees; attorneys may have law degrees. An attorney (usually, but not necessarily, a lawyer) is a person empowered to act for another. Don't capitalize either word unless it's at the beginning of a sentence or it's part of an officeholder's title: *District Attorney Eileen Delaunay.*

**attribution** When identifying the source of information, especially for quotations or indirect quotations, avoid putting the attribution at the beginning of a sentence. Put the attribution in a less prominent position, unless the source is important or the preceding paragraph quoted another source. Include enough attribution so readers will know clearly who said what. See [**quotations**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#quotations)**.**

The verb *to say,* usually in the past tense, *said*, is used most commonly in effective speech tags and attribution. It is inconspicuous, unobtrusive and short, and the meaning is clear.

Special situations may call for the careful use of verbs with special meanings; for example, *testified* in trials, public hearings and other official proceedings; *cried out* when quoting an injured person; *pointed out* if the statement is a fact. Save formal verbs like *stated* and *announced* for formal and important occasions. Be wary of words with meanings that readers could misinterpret: *admitted, claimed, confessed, conceded, contended, refused, revealed.* Don't use *added*, *concluded* or *went on to say* unless presenting statements in the same order used by the speaker. Also, *went on to say* is wordy. See [**according to**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#according to)**,** [**state**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#state)**.**

The most straightforward word order for speech tags is subject first, verb second: *Assaud said, President Santos said, the manager said, she said.* But put *said* first if other words, such as long titles or descriptions of the speaker, would separate the verb and the speaker's name too widely: *said David Koyama, manager of the Personnel Division*; *said Donna Nelson, first-place finisher in the annual golf tournament.* See [**comma**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#comma)**,** [**quotation marks**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#quotation marks)**.**

**ATV** See [**all-terrain vehicle**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#all-terrain).

**audiovisual** One word.

**auger, augur** Sometimes confused. An *auger* is "a tool for boring holes in wood or the earth." An *augur* is "a fortuneteller or prophet."

**augment** Formal. Consider replacing with simpler form of *increase*.

**aural, oral** Pronounced alike and sometimes confused. The adjective *aural* is about the ear and sense of hearing. The adjective *oral* is about the mouth, voice and speaking. See [**oral, verbal, written**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#oral)**.**

**author** Male and female authors *write* books, articles and stories. Authors also *compose* and *create*. Although some authors may be pretentious, *author* as a verb is pretentious. Don't use it.

**automated teller machine, automatic teller machine** See [**ATM**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#ATM)**.**

**auxiliary** Commonly misspelled.

**avenue** Abbreviate only with a numbered address. See [**addresses**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#addresses).

**average** If you're wondering how to abbreviate it, ask yourself, "If I don't know to abbreviate it, will my readers understand the abbreviation?" But if you insist on using an abbreviation, use less confusing *avg* instead of *av*, which has other meanings.

**average, mean, median, mode, norm** Often confused in writing about statistics. *Average* and *mean* are similar. An *average* is the result of adding various quantities together, then dividing the sum by the number of quantities. A *mean* is an amount, figure or value for the midway point between two extremes. It may be calculated like an average, with the result being the midway point between two extremes. A *median* is the middle number in a set of numbers arranged in order of size; half the numbers are above the median, and half are below. A *mode* is the value or number that occurs most often in a series. A *norm* is the standard for the average performance or behavior of a large group.

**average of** This phrase takes a plural verb when used in this way: *An average of 20 CDs are missing from the store every week.*

**average person** Imprecise. *Average* is best used in mentioning numbers. Think about using *typical person* instead.

**averse** See [**adverse, averse**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#adverse)**.**

**awards** Capitalize the specific names of awards. Do not capitalize *award* if it is not part of the award's name. *2003* *Editor of the Year, 2004 Platinum Award, certificate of merit*. *The charity gave the company an award. His son earned a first-place certificate.*

**awesome** Cliche. Depending on your point, try *good, inspiring, wonderful, impressive, serious* or *difficult*. And better yet: Give details about why you think something is "awesome."

**awhile, a while** The prepositions *for* and *in* go before the noun phrase *a while*, not before the adverb *awhile*: *He rested awhile.* *He rested for a while.* Also, think about replacing either with more specific information: *He rested 15 minutes.*

**ax** Preferred spelling. Not *axe*.

**baby boomer** Two words, no hyphen, lowercase. The post-World War II population surge, or baby boom, ran from 1946 to 1964. The terms, though not the people they refer to, are approaching triteness.

**bachelor of arts, bachelor of science** A bachelor's degree is acceptable in any reference. See [**academic degrees, titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#academic degrees)**.**

**back** Sometimes used redundantly after verbs like refer, repay, return and revert: He referred back to the events on Tuesday. Drop back.

**backfill** One word.

**backslash** See [**virgule**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#virgule).

**back up** (v.), **backup** (n. and adj.)

**backward** Not backwards.

**bad, badly** Often confused. Use bad as an adjective to describe a noun: The truck looked bad after the accident. The driver felt bad about what happened. Use badly as an adverb to modify a verb--to describe an action: The equipment ran badly until the mechanic repaired the control board. Bad is usually the correct choice with verbs like feel, smell, taste and look. If you write feel badly, you're saying someone's sense of touch isn't working right. See [**good, well**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#good, well)**.**

**baleful, baneful** Sometimes confused adjectives with overlapping meanings. Use baleful to describe something that is threatening or ominous. Use baneful to describe something that is destructive.

**baloney, bologna** Sometimes confused or misspelled. Baloney is foolish or exaggerated talk. Bologna is sausage or lunch meat.

**B&B** See [**bed-and-breakfast**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#bed-and-breakfast)**.**

**band names** See [**collective nouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#collective nouns)**.**

**barbecue** Preferred spelling. Not barbeque, bar-b-cue, bar-b-que or bar-B-Q.

**barrel, barreled, barreling**

**based on, based upon** Wordy. Simplify. Consider deleting or change to by, for, from, because of, after, in, on, through or with. Or use based on, not based upon--and not based around either. Also, avoid phrases like based on my personal opinion or based on the fact that. Instead, use phrases like I contend and I believe, if necessary, or terms like because, considering, for, given, in that and since.

**basically** Overused and often unnecessary. Simplify. Delete or try mainly, most, mostly, chiefly or largely. And if you must use it, spell it right. Basicly is not a word.

**basis** Wordy, pompous jargon in phrases like on the basis of, on a day-to-day basis and on a regular basis. Simplify. Replace on the basis of with because of, by or for. Also, use daily, regularly, part-time and similar adverbs instead of on a day-to-day basis, on a regular basis, on a part-time basis and so on.

**bay** A clear, simple word. An embayment is a bay with two more syllables and six more letters; use embayment only when you're paid, graded or judged superficially on the number of letters you use in a document

**bazaar, bizarre** Sometimes confused. A bazaar is "an event where people sell things to raise money for a good cause, or a marketplace of shops and street vendors selling various things." A bazaar -- and many other things -- could be bizaare, which means "unusual, odd, weird and strange."

**B.C.** See [**British Columbia**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#British Columbia).

**be advised that** Wordy, formal, negative phrase. Simplify. Delete or change to note that or please note that.

**because** The "rule" against beginning sentences with because is a myth. Use because to introduce dependent clauses; that is, the clause beginning with because could be dropped from the sentence, and a complete sentence would remain. See [**and, but**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#and, but); [**Myths and Superstitions of Writing**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/myths.htm#because).

A comma is not always needed before because. Negative wording, however, often need the comma to clarify which part of the sentence because modifies, as in these examples: He didn't go to the workshop, because it conflicted with his work schedule. He didn't go to the workshop because he had to; he went to it because it met his needs. In the first example, you can drop the clause, and the sentence is still true. In the second example, the sentence's meaning depends on the clause. See [**due to**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#due to)**.**

**because, since** Both words can be used to mean "for the reason that." Because is the stronger conjunction for pointing out a direct cause-effect relationship: They went to the concert because they had been given tickets. Since is milder in suggesting a cause-effect relationship: Since I love folk music, I went to the concert. When readers might confuse since with its meaning "from the time that," use because. See [**Myths and Superstitions of Writing**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/myths.htm#since).

**beck and call, beckon** The idiom beck and call means "at the services of" or "ready to obey the wishes of." Sometimes misspelled as beckon call. To beckon means "to summon or signal using a silent gesture, like a wave" and "to lure or attract."

**bed-and-breakfast** Include hyphens. *B&B* is OK on second reference.

**bedrock** One word.

**before** This word, or ahead of, is preferred to prior to. See [**prior to**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prior to).

**begin, commence, start** Begin and start have subtle differences in meaning. Usually preferred, begin means merely a setting into motion of some action, process or course: They planned to begin holding retreats in January. She began her evaluation. Start is more precise. Use it to write about physical movement or leaving a point of departure: They started a journey. The boulder started a landslide. Also use start when writing about making a machine work or making something begin to exist: He started the car. She started her own beadwork business. Avoid using the stilted, formal commence to mean the same thing as begin.

**beg the question** Often misused or confused. Use this cliche only when you're questioning the logic of another statement--that it assumes as true the very point someone is trying to prove. This statement, for example, begs the question: We had to attack first to prevent him from attacking us. Don't use beg the question to suggest that someone is evading an issue or raising another question. But reduce confusion by avoiding the phrase. Instead, explain why you question the logic.

**behalf** See [**on behalf of, in behalf of**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#on behalf of)**.**

**behavior, behaviors** Behaviors is pompous and unnecessary. Simplify. A behavior is the particular way a person or animal does something. Behavior is also all the things that a person, animal, machine or substance does.

**being that, being as, being as how** Awkward and wordy. Try using simpler because, since, given or in that instead.

**belie, betray, reveal** Sometimes confused verbs. Belie means "to give a false idea about something; to mislead, disguise or misrepresent" and "to contradict or prove something false." Betray means "to be disloyal by disclosing something" and "to unintentionally reveal something." Reveal means "to disclose something or make known something that was hidden or secret."

**belief, believe** Commonly misspelled or confused. Belief is a noun. Believe is a verb.

**bemuse** See [**amuse, bemuse**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#amuse)**.**

**benefit, benefited, benefiting** Commonly misspelled. Don't double the t when adding ed and ing.

**benthic, benthos** Excellent examples of jargon. Benthic organisms, or benthos, rest on or live in the bottom sediment of a water body. Call them bottom-dwelling organisms.

**beside, besides** Beside means "next to, at the side of or alongside": She placed her guitar beside mine. Besides means "in addition to or also": He noticed three guitars besides mine in the studio. Don't use besides to name an alternative. Instead, use other than or instead of: The thief must have been looking for a guitar other than mine. Not: The thief must have been looking for a guitar besides mine. See [**in addition to**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#in addition to).

**best-seller** Include the hyphen.

**betray** See [**belie, betray, reveal**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#belie).

**between** See [**among, between**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#among), [**Myths and Superstitions of Writing**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/myths.htm#between).

**between ... and, from ... to** Don't mix these phrases like this: daily wages between $118 to $176 or from 1993 and 1996. It's either between $118 and $176 or from $118 to $176 and from 1993 to 1996 or between 1993 and 1996. Also, avoid replacing the to with a hyphen or em dash in from ... to phrases: He was chair from 1994-98. Instead: He was chair from 1994 to 1998. The hyphen or em dash substitute is OK in adjectival uses: his 1994-98 stint as chair, her Jan. 10-15 trip to Europe. See [**dash**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dash).

**between you and I, between you and me** Between you and me is both preferred and correct. Why? Because between is a preposition, and grammar rules say objective pronouns, not nominative pronouns, must follow prepositions--or be the object of the preposition. Me is an objective pronoun, and I is a nominative pronoun. See [**I, me**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#I-me)**;** [**pronouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#pronouns).

**bi**- The rules in prefixes apply, but usually, no hyphen. See [**bi-, semi-**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#bi-, semi-)**;** [**prefixes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prefixes).

**biannual, biennial** Biannual means "twice a year"; so does semiannual. Biennial means "every two years." But to avoid confusing readers, use twice a year instead of biannual (and semiannual), and use every two years instead of biennial.

**biased language** Don't mention disability, age, race, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, or sex unless relevant. See [**disabled**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#disabled)**,** [**elderly**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#elderly)**,** [**homosexual**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#homosexual)**,** [**race**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#race)**,** [**religious affiliation**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#religious)**,** [**sex**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#sex).

**Bible, bible** Capitalize as a proper noun when giving the name of the holy book used by the Protestant, Jewish and Catholic religions. Lowercase the common noun bible in other uses. Also lowercase biblical in all uses.

**big in size** Redundant and wordy. Simplify. Drop in size.

**billions** See [**numbers**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#numbers)**,** [**ranges**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#ranges)**.**

**bills** See [**law**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#law).

**bimonthly** Does not mean twice a month. Semimonthly means twice a month. To avoid reader confusion, use every two months or every other month instead of bimonthly (and twice a month instead of semimonthly).

**biosolids** The nutrient-rich organic material produced by treating wastewater solids. It can be beneficially recycled as a fertilizer and soil conditioner. Biosolids takes a plural verb.

**biota** Jargon meaning "the plants and animals living in a region." Simplify. Try calling them plants and animals.

**bi-, semi-** Often confused prefixes. Bi- usually means "two," while semi- means "half." But to reduce confusion among readers, consider alternative words or phrases that don't use these prefixes. For examples, see **bimonthly** above and **biweekly** below.

**biweekly** Does not mean twice a week. Semiweekly means twice a week. To avoid reader confusion, use every two weeks or every other week instead of biweekly (and twice a week instead of semiweekly).

**bizarre** See [**bazaar, bizarre**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#bazaar).

**black** A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa. African American (without a hyphen when used as a noun) may be preferred when writing about black Americans. When in doubt about how to refer to a person's race or cultural or ethnic identity, ask the person in question what is preferred. See [**African American**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#African American)**,** [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization)**,** [**race**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#race)**.**

**blatant, flagrant, fragrant** Often misused or confused. Use blatant to describe something that's both very noticeable and offensive, especially if it's loud and noisy. It has a negative meaning and does not simply mean "obvious." Use flagrant to describe something even worse; it's shocking and breaks laws and trust. Also, blatantly obvious is redundant. Use either blatant or obvious, depending on the point you're making. And be careful not to confuse or mistype flagrant and fragrant. Use fragrant to describe something that smells nice.

**blog** Short for *Web blog* but acceptable in all uses. Lowercase as a common noun: *The county blog is popular.* Capitalize when part of a proper name: *Eat Your Spinach Blog, Billy's Blog*. Verbs are *blog, blogged, blogging.*

**blue in color** Redundant and wordy. Simplify. Drop in color.

**board** Capitalize only when an integral part of a proper name: Mukilteo School Board, the board decided.

**board of directors, board of trustees** Always lowercase.

**boldface** Boldfaced type is best used for two purposes: to highlight words and phrases within paragraphs and to strengthen headlines, headings and subheads for articles, chapters and sections within a document or Web page. Boldfaced type can add contrast or emphasis to a document--breaking up pages or columns of gray text and calling attention to key words, phrases and ideas.

But boldfacing everything or boldfacing too many words and phrases ends up doing just the opposite of what it's intended to do: Nothing gets special treatment. Too much boldfacing is also distracting and tiring to read.

**bologna** See [**baloney, bologna**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#baloney).

**bona fide** Formal two-word Latin phrase. Sometimes misspelled and misused. It means "in good faith, done honestly without fraud or deceit." Consider using simpler in good faith or genuine. Don't spell it as bonified.

**book titles** See [**composition titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#composition titles).

**both, each** Usually followed by a plural noun or phrase, both applies to two people or things considered together: She gave both girls a lecture. Use each to describe two or more things considered separately: She gave each girl $25. Consider dropping both as redundant: Both the Bellevue School Board and the Issaquah School Board decided. Both school boards decided. The school boards decided. Also, both agree is redundant; the word agree suggests two (or more) people or groups. Use they agree instead. Both is also redundant before alike, equal, share and together. See [**as well as**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#as well as)**,** [**each**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#each).

**both ... and** When used together, both and and should link grammatically similar things. If a verb immediately follows both, a verb should immediately follow and. If both immediately comes before a noun, then so should and: The president is deaf to both facts and reason, or He is deaf both to facts and to reason. Incorrect: He is both deaf to facts and reason. This rule applies to other similar pairs, including either ... or and neither ... nor. See [**either ... or, neither**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#either or) [**nor**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#either or); [**not only ... but also**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#not only).

**(the) bottom line** Business jargon, cliche. Unless you're writing about an organization's profit or loss, try conclusion, outcome, result or upshot; or the crux, essence or main point.

**bought, boughten** Bought is a word, the past tense of buy. Boughten is not a word. Something bought from a store is store-bought, not store-boughten. See [**purchase**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#purchase).

**boulevard** Abbreviate only with a numbered address: 3238 Cavanaugh Blvd. See [**addresses**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#addresses).

**boundary** Sometimes misspelled.

**Boy Scouts** See [**Scouts**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#Scouts).

**brackets ([ ])** Avoid using. Use commas, dashes or parentheses instead. In quotations, however, brackets may be used to show the words in brackets were added or changed by the editor to clarify the meaning. Avoid altering quotations. If a speaker's words are clear and concise, use the full quotation. If cumbersome language can be paraphrased accurately, use indirect wording: "We strongly disagree with the [Lincoln County] council's decision," she said. Square brackets also may be used occasionally to insert words into a statement that's already enclosed in parentheses. See [**quotation marks**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#quotation marks), [**[sic]**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#sic).

**braille** Lowercase.

**brand names** When using them, capitalize the first letter in each word. Nothing requires you to follow odd capitalization in brand names. But use brand names only if essential to an article. Consider using a generic equivalent instead. See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization)**,** [**service mark**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#service)**,** [**trademark**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#trademark).

**brand-new** (adj.) Hyphenate. But consider simpler new.

**breach, breech, breeches** Often confused. A breach is "an act of breaking a law, custom, rule, contract, promise or agreement" and "an opening, gap or breakthrough in a wall, barrier, fort or line of defense, especially during an attack." A breech is the "buttocks or rump" and "the lower or back part of something, such as in a pulley block or gun barrel." A breech birth happens when a baby's buttocks or feet are delivered first. Breeches (not britches) are "pants or trousers that reach or touch the knees." The phrase "too big for his [or her] breeches" means someone is too forward or presumptuous for the status or position that person holds.

**break in** (v.), **break-in** (n. and adj.)

**breakthrough** See [**major breakthrough**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#major_breakthrough).

**breath, breathe** Often confused. Breath is a noun: Sarah took a breath of the fresh mountain air. Breathe is a verb: Zachary could hardly breathe in the smoggy city.

**bridal, bridle** Sometimes confused or misused. Use bridal as an adjective to describe weddings and marriage ceremonies. A bridle is something that restrains or controls things, such as the harness on a horse

**bridge** Capitalize when part of a formal name. Lowercase when used alone or with two or more names. Do not abbreviate: Hardy Bridge construction is under way. Improvement projects were scheduled for Hardy and Laurel Hill bridges. We'll cross the bridge when we get there.

**bring, take** Often confused. Their meaning is similar, but their points of view are different. Bring suggests motion toward the speaker or writer: We bring in the mail. If something is coming to your home or office or city, someone is bringing it. Take suggests motion away from the speaker or writer: We take out the recycling. If something is leaving your home or office or city, someone is taking it. Usually, the distinction is easy to make. But it might be best just to say what feels natural to you if you are offering dessert for a potluck dinner: You'll be bringing it to the potluck (its destination), but you'll be taking it with you from home (its origin). Either way, it'll probably be delicious!

**britches** See [**breach, breech, breeches**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#breach).

**British Columbia** In the Pacific Northwest, it's OK to abbreviate as B.C. after the name of well-known cities in the province: They toured the Vancouver, B.C., park system. Elsewhere, spell out on first reference. See [**provinces**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#provinces).

**broadcast** The past tense also is broadcast, not broadcasted: The TV station broadcast from the shopping mall.

**broccoli** Commonly misspelled.

**building** Capitalize the proper names of buildings, including the word building, if it is an integral part of the proper name: The Belvidere Building is on Third Avenue. Lowercase building when used separately from the full name: The building is on Third Avenue. Do not abbreviate Building or building unless used in charts and tables. See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization).

**bullets** See [**lists**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#lists).

**Burlington Northern & Santa Fe Railway** Use on first reference. BNSF or the railroad is acceptable on second reference.

**burnout** One word when used as a noun: She was suffering from burnout after a week of 12-hour workdays.

**bus, buses** The verb forms: bus, bused, busing for the transit vehicles. Save buss, busses, bussed and bussing for kissing your sweetie before he or she boards a bus.

**business** Commonly misspelled.

**bus stop**  Two words.

**busywork** One word.

**but** See [**and, but**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#and, but).

**but rather** Wordy and redundant. Simplify. Change to but or try rather.

**by itself** Wordy. Simplify. Change to alone.

**buy** See [**bought, boughten**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#bought).

**by means of** Wordy. Simplify. Shorten to by, using or with.

**byproduct** One word, not hyphenated.

**by the way** Wordy. Simplify. Consider deleting this phrase and the parenthetical or tangential information that follows it

**cache, cachet** Sometimes misused or confused nouns. A *cache* (pronounced "cash") is "a hidden supply of weapons, valuables and other things"; "a secret place for hiding things"; and "memory for computer data." A *cachet* (pronounced "ca-shay") is "a quality that people admire," "an official seal," and "a commemorative mark."

**CAD** An acronym for computer-aided design. Spell out on first reference.

**calendar** Commonly misspelled.

**call letters** Use all caps when referring to TV and radio stations and networks. Use hyphens to separate the type of station or network from the basic call letters: *KMTT-FM, KIRO-AM, KING-TV, CBS-TV*. Don't italize call letters or put them in quotation marks. Use these formats for other types of stations that mix numbers and letters: *WXY12*, *N3OPQ*. See [**channel**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#channel)**,** [**citizens band**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#citizens band)**,** [**station**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#station).

**callous, callus** Sometimes confused. *Callous* is an adjective meaning "hardened and uncaring of others' suffering." *Callus* is a noun for "an area of hard, thick skin."

**calvary, cavalry** Often confused. Capitalized, *Calvary* is "the place where Jesus was crucified." Lowercased, *calvary* is "an outdoor depiction of the crucifixion" and "an experience involving intense suffering." *Cavalry* is a noun for "military troops on horseback or in armored vehicles."

**camaraderie** Commonly misspelled. Don't confuse with spelling of *comrade*.

**cancel, canceled, canceling, cancellation** Commonly misspelled.

**can, could** Use *can* to express certainty or willingness in being able to do something. Use *could* when there's less certainty or when doing something depends on something else. See **can, may** below; [**may, might**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#may, might)**;** [**will, would**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#will, would).

**can, may** Commonly confused. Use *can* when writing about capability, physical or mental ability, or the power to do something. Use *may* when writing about authorization or permission and sometimes possibility: *They can finish the report by November. May we have an extra month to finish the report? You may lead the horse to water, but you can't make it drink.* *May* is almost always the correct word to use in a question. See **can, could** above; [**may, might**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#may, might).

**cannon, canon** Often confused. A *cannon* is a "a large, mounted piece of artillery; a big gun." A *canon* is "a law of a church," "an accepted rule or principle of behavior," and "a set of literary works."

**cannot** One word.

**can't hardly** Incorrect. "Not" is implied in *hardly*. Use *can hardly*, instead, or drop *hardly*: *His daughter can hardly wait. His daughter can't wait.* Also see [**hardly**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#hardly).

**canvas, canvass** Sometimes confused or misspelled. A *canvas* is "a heavy, closely woven, coarse cloth used for tents, sails, bags, oil paintings and other things." To *canvass* is "to examine or discuss something (like votes) in detail," "to go through an area asking people for votes or opinions," and "to sell something house to house."

**capability** When writing about a person's mental or physical power to do something, think about using simpler *ability*. See [**ability, capability, capacity**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#ability).

**capacity** See [**ability, capability, capacity**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#ability).

**capital, capitol** Often confused or misspelled. *Capital* is a city, the seat of government. Do not capitalize: *Salem is the capital of Oregon*. *Capital city* is redundant. *Capital* also refers to money. *Capitol* is the building in which the U.S. Congress or the state Legislature meets. Capitalize *U.S. Capitol* and *the Capitol* when writing about the building in Washington, D.C., and do the same when writing about state capitols: *The California Capitol is in Sacramento*. *Capitol building* is redundant. See [**Capitol Hill**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#Capitol Hill).

**capitalization** Rule No. 1: Use capital letters to begin proper nouns, sentences, headings, some abbreviations and acronyms, and the important words in composition titles. Proper nouns are the particular names of people, places and things. Rule No. 2: Do not capitalize the first letter of a word (or words in a phrase) simply to highlight it or because you or someone else think it's an important word. Excessive, arbitrary capitalization distracts the reader and hinders reading.

Check this or another style manual for capitalization of a particular word or type of word. If not listed there, check your dictionary. And if still in doubt, lowercase.

Except for acronyms and some abbreviations, avoid capitalizing all the letters in a word, sentence, heading, headline or phrase--including brand names, logos and trademarks. For emphasis, try other typographical uses instead, such as **boldfacing**, *italics*, color, type size and different but complementary typefaces. Also see [**headlines, headings**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#headlines)**;** [**underlining**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#underlining).

Capitalization of abbreviations and acronyms varies. For guidance, see [**abbreviations and acronyms**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#abbreviations and acronyms), entries in this style guide for specific words and terms, and your dictionary. Although the abbreviation or acronym is capitalized for some common or generic nouns and terms, lowercase the spelled-out form; for example, see [**environmental impact statement**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#environmental impact statement).

Capitalize the first word of every sentence, heading and headline, including quoted statements and direct questions. Even if a person, business or organization begins its name with a lowercase letter, capitalize the first letter of the name at the beginning of sentences, headings and headlines: *Gary de Shazo won the design award. De Shazo expressed appreciation for the support of his colleagues.* Also see [**composition titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#composition titles).

Capitalize proper nouns that specifically name a person, place or thing, unless a person, business or organization requests a lowercase first letter. If a name begins with a lowercase letter, capitalize the first letter of the name at the beginning of sentences and headlines.

Capitalize common nouns such as *party, river* and *street* when they are an integral part of the full name for a person, place or thing: *Ballinger Street, Rheinard River, Queens County, Democratic Party, Puget Sound.* Lowercase those common nouns when they stand alone in later references: *the party, the river, the county, the street, the sound.*

Lowercase common noun elements of names in all plural uses: *Democratic and Republican parties, Ackley and Messer streets, 154th and 156th avenues southeast*. But don't lowercase the common nouns when the form is not plural: *Your sister can catch a bus on First or Third Avenue.*

Capitalize the proper names of nationalities, peoples, races, tribes and so on: *African American, American Indians, Arab, Asian, Jewish, Latino, Muckleshoot, Tulalip, Puyallup.* Lowercase *black, white, red* and so on. See [**race**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#race).

Organizations should adopt specific capitalization guidelines for their governing boards, facilities, job titles and descriptions, organizational structure, and programs, projects and plans. It's efficient to develop styles consistent with a standard, readily available, published reference source. For recommended capitalization guidelines, check individual items in this style manual or see the items below: [***committees***](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#council committees)***,*** [***facilities***](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#facilities)***,*** [***job titles and descriptions***](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#job titles and descriptions)***,*** [***organizational structure***](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#organizational structure)***,*** and [***programs, projects and plans***](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#programs, projects and plans).

***committees*** On first reference, spell out and capitalize the full name of committees: *the Neighborhood Action Committee*. Refer to *the committee* (preferred) or abbreviate on later references (all caps, no periods): *NAC*. Lowercase *committee* when it stands alone: *The committee voted to endorse the recommendation*. See [**subcommittee**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#subcommittee)**,** [**task force**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#task force).

***facilities*** Lowercase facilities when the name describes only what the facility does: *parking lot, substation*. Capitalize proper nouns that are part of the facility's name: *Southgate parking lot*. See [**facility**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#facility).  
When using part of a facility's name, capitalize only the proper noun. Lowercase the common nouns when shortening the name: *Sunset Maintenance Center, the maintenance center, the center*. See [**courthouse**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#courthouse).

***job titles and descriptions*** Consistency is key. Capitalize official job titles when used immediately before a name as part of a name: *Finance Department Director Virginia Schwieterman, Accounting Manager Billie Burke, Budget Planner Mary Munchkin, Computer Technician George Bailey, Media Specialist Tim Wright*.  
Lowercase titles when used alone or when set off descriptively from a name by commas, often after a name; when applicable, capitalize only the names of departments, divisions and other groups: *Virginia Schwieterman, Finance Department director; Billie Burke, manager of the Accounting Division; Billie Burke, accounting manager; Mary Munchkin, budget planner; George Bailey, computer technician; Tim Wright, media specialist.* Also see [**titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#titles).

***organizational structure*** Capitalize the official (proper) names of all organization departments, divisions, sections, offices, units and groups: *the Englehart Department of Finance, Accounting Division*, *Customer Services Section, Property Tax Information Office, Marketing Unit, Documentation Group*. Use the whole name on first reference.  
For later references, shortened versions of organizational names--without the common nouns *department*, *division*, *section* and so on--are acceptable. Capitalize the "proper" name part of full names when using only that part of the name and dropping the common noun: *Finance, Accounting, Customer Services*. Don't capitalize those words, however, when describing the general function or work of a group. Also, lowercase the "common" (or generic) name part of the full name when using only that part of the name: *the department, the division, the section*. Be sure the context makes clear the organizational unit the common name is mentioning. See [**cities and towns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#cities and towns)**,** [**county**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#county)**,** [**governmental bodies**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#governmental bodies)**,** [**office**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#office).

***programs, projects and plans*** Capitalize the full name of official programs, projects or plans*.* Otherwise, avoid capitalizing them. Always lowercase *program, project* or *plan* when the word stands alone or when using only part of the formal name.

**Capitol Hill** Not *Capital Hill,* for the Seattle district or site of the U.S. Capitol. See [**capital, capitol**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capital).

**carat, caret, carrot, karat** Often confused or misspelled. A *carat* is "a unit for measuring the weight of jewels," while a *karat* is "the unit for measuring the purity of gold." A *caret* is "a mark [like this *>* symbol but pointing up] used in editing and proofreading to show where something is to be inserted." A *carrot* is "a long, thick, orange vegetable."

**cardiopulmonary resuscitation** See [**CPR**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#CPR).

**careen, career** Sometimes confused verbs. To *careen* is "to lean or tilt sideways, especially a ship in high winds or on a beach for cleaning and repairs" and "to sway or lurch from side to side." To *career* is "to move at full speed ahead, to rush wildly."

**carpool** One word. It may be used as a noun, verb or adjective: *Her neighbors formed a carpool to save gas and money. They carpooled to work to save gas and money. She requested some carpool information*. See [**high-occupancy**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#high-occupancy)**,** [**vanpool**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#vanpool).

**cast** The past tense of this verb is also *cast*, not *casted*.

**catalog, catalogue** Both are correct, but *catalog* is commonly preferred.

**catch-22** Sometimes misused. A *catch-22* is not any simple *catch*, or any tricky situation with a hidden complication. From the excellent antiwar novel of the same name by Joseph Heller, a catch-22 is an absurd or paradoxical situation in which the desired outcome is impossible because of built-in illogical rules: *The experienced editor couldn't get promoted to supervisor because he didn't have any experience as a supervisor.*

**catchup, catsup** See [**ketchup**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#ketchup).

**category** Overstated. Simplify. Try replacing with *group*.

**cavalry** See [**calvary, cavalry**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#calvary).

**CB** See [**citizens band**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#citizens band).

**CBD** See [**central business district**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#central business district).

**CD-ROM** Acronym for *compact disc read-only memory*. The acronym is acceptable on first use. *CD-ROM disc* is redundant.

**cease, seize** Sometimes misused. To *cease* is "to bring something to an end." To *seize* is to "take hold of something or someone suddenly and forcibly," "capture a place or assume control using force," "confiscate," or "take initiative eagerly." The saying is *seize the day*, not *cease the day*. Also, *cease* is overstated and formal. Simplify. Try *stop, end* or *finish* instead.

**ceiling** Sometimes misused. Before using this word, look up. You're looking at the *ceiling*. As the upper limit on something, *ceiling* is also a useful metaphor for *maximum* or *limit*: *a ceiling on taxi rates*. You can *raise a ceiling*, *lower* it or even *remove* it. But you could mangle a ceiling if you try *increasing* it, *decreasing* it or *waiving* it. See [**target**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#target).

**cellphone, cellular phone, cellular telephone** *Cellphone* (one word) is acceptable on first reference. Also, *smartphone* is one word.

**Celsius** Use this term instead of *centigrade* for the temperature scale that is part of the metric system. Spell out and capitalize on first reference. The abbreviation *C* (capitalized, no period) may be used on second reference with a numeral: *The temperature dropped to 5 C Monday night*. See [**Fahrenheit**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#Fahrenheit)**,** [**temperatures**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#temperatures).

**cement, concrete** Often confused. *Cement* is dry, powdery ingredient of *concrete*. *Concrete*--a mixture of cement, water and sand or gravel--is used to form *pavement, blocks, walls, driveways, sidewalks* and so on.

**cemetery** Commonly misspelled. Memory aid: Almost every other letter is an *e*.

**center around** Illogical and redundant. Substitute *on*, *in* or *at* for *around*, or use *revolve around*. Avoid *center upon*.

**center stage** Cliche. Omit, or try *prominent, center of attention* or *focus of interest* instead.

**central business district** Usually, *downtown* is preferred. If necessary, spell out *central business district* on first reference. *CBD* is acceptable on second reference. See [**downtown**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#downtown).

**cents** Spell out and lowercase *cents* using figures for amounts less than a dollar. Use the *$* sign and decimal system for larger amounts: *33 cents, $2.04, $3.47*. Do not use zeros if there are no cents: *$8,* not *$8.00*. Avoid using the cent symbol: *Â¢*. But if you must use it, be careful not to use the redundant *.33Â¢* or *$.33Â¢*. See [**dollars**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dollars).

**century** Lowercase. Spell out numbers less than 10: *the first century, the 20th century, the 21st century*. See [**decades**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#decades)**,** [**millennium**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#millennium).

**CEO** Abbreviation for *chief executive officer*. Acceptable on first use before a name or standing alone, if spelled out somewhere in a document. Spell out less familiar *chief operating officer* and *chief financial officer*.

**chair,** **chairman, chairperson, chairwoman** Use *chair* as the title for the heads of councils and committees, unless the person in the position prefers *chairman, chairwoman* or *chairperson*. Capitalize as a formal title before a name. Do not capitalize as a casual, temporary position.

**chaise longue** Sometimes misspelled (and mispronounced). It's French for "long chair," with a back support and seat long enough to support outstretched legs. Don't spell it *chaise lounge* (And don't pronounce it "chase lounge." Say "shayz long.")

**changeable** Commonly misspelled

**changeover** One word, no hyphen.

**channel** Capitalize when used with a figure. Lowercase elsewhere: *He preferred watching the news on Channel 5. No channel will broadcast the one-sided documentary.* See [**call letters**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#call letters)**,** [**station**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#station).

**chapter** Capitalize when used with a number to name a section of a book or legal code: *Chapter 11*. Lowercase when standing alone.

**character** Commonly misspelled.

**charts, tables** Charts and tables are useful in reports to present information concisely. Abbreviations not typically used in text are acceptable in charts and graphs because of limited space. But abbreviations must still be clear to the reader and consistently used. Also, charts and graphs should have titles. Capitalize the first letter of proper nouns and key words in the titles and headings of charts and tables. Type styles and formats used in charts should be consistent throughout a publication. When using several charts or tables, assign numbers. When mentioning a chart or table in the text, capitalize the word *chart* or *table* and use the numeral: *As Table 6 shows, traffic congestion has gotten worse since they built the football stadium.*

**chat room** Two words.

**chauvinism** Sometimes misused or confused. It used to mean only "excessive, unreasoning, or blind devotion to one's country, a fanatical patriotism." But it's now commonly applied to excessive pride in a person's group, race or sex, especially males. If you must use this derogatory word, be clear about whom or what you're describing.

**check in** (v.), **check-in** (n. and adj.)

**check out** (v.), **checkout** (n. and adj.)

**check up** (v.), **checkup** (n.)

**Chicano** See [**Hispanic, Latino**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#Hispanic).

**chief** Capitalize as an official job title before a name: *Facility Maintenance Chief Suzanne Zentin*. Lowercase when used alone or after a name between commas: *She called Leif Elliott, customer services chief, about the complaint.* See [**titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#titles).

**chief executive officer** See [**CEO**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#CEO).

**child care, child-care** Hyphenate as an adjective: *He uses a child-care agency in downtown Olympia.* Don't hyphenate as a noun: *He searched everywhere for the best child care.*

**childish, childlike** Sometimes confused or misused adjectives for describing behavior typical of children. Use *childish* to describe unfavorable qualities like immature and silly. Use *childlike* to describe favorable qualities like sweet, innocent and trusting.

**children** Usually, use first names on second reference for children 15 or younger. For older children, the last name is usually suitable. Although it may not assure mature behavior, treat people 18 and older as adults; use their last names on second reference.

**children's** The apostrophe always goes before the *s* when showing the possessive: *the Children's Home Society*. Don't use *childrens'* (with the apostrophe after the *s*); *children* is already plural.

**chinook salmon** Lowercase *chinook* in all uses (unless it's the first word in a sentence or in a title). See [**fish**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#fish).

**choice between, choose between** When *between* follows *choice* or *choose*, use *and*, not *or*, between the choices: *The students had a choice between taking a midterm exam and finishing another homework assignment.* *We had to choose between a helicopter ride and a catamaran ride.*

**chord, cord** Often misused nouns. A *chord* is "a combination of three or more musical notes played at the same time." A *cord* is "a piece of wire covered with plastic for carrying electricity," "a measure of wood cut for fuel," "a ribbed cloth," "a piece of thick string or thin rope," and "a part of the anatomy resembling a cord": *vocal cords*.

**Christmas** See [**holidays**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#holidays).

**cite** Sometimes confused with *site*. Use *cite* "to name the source of information or proof," "to order someone to appear in a court of law," or "to praise someone publicly." See [**sight, site**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#sight).

**cities and towns** Capitalize the names of cities and towns in all uses. Capitalize *city* as part of a proper name: *New York City, Kansas City.*

Lowercase *city* when used as an adjective or noun: *the city budget, mayor of the city.* Capitalize *city* when mentioning the proper name of a governmental unit: *He worked for the City of Kennewick.* But lowercase *city*--or omit the redundant *city of*--when naming cities in other uses: *They visited the city of Edmonds. They visited Edmonds.*

Lowercase general descriptions such as *north Seattle*. Capitalize widely recognized names for the sections of a city: *Laurelhurst, Magnolia, West Seattle, Rainier Beach* and *the University District*.

**citizen** A *citizen* is a person who has the full civil rights of a nation through birth or naturalization. Cities and states in the United States do not grant citizenship. Use *resident* to include noncitizens as inhabitants of states, cities and communities. See [**public**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#public).

**citizens band** Don't put an apostrophe after the *s*. *CB* is acceptable on second reference. See [**call letters**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#call letters).

**city council** Capitalize when part of a proper name: *The Langley City Council scheduled a meeting.* Also capitalize if the name of the city is clear: *The City Council passed a motion.* Lowercase in other uses: *the council, the Langley and Coupeville city councils.*

**citywide** One word.

**class** See [**collective nouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#collective nouns)**.**

**clean bill of health** Cliche. Try *good report, good condition, doing well, fine, healthy* or *strong* instead.

**clean up** (v.), **cleanup** (n. and adj.) *The cleanup lasted three months. It took three months to clean up the river.* Also, think about dropping *up* from *clean up*.

**clearly** Vague. A fact is no more evident when it is *clearly evident*. Use sparingly to mean "obviously" or "undoubtedly." Drop *clearly*--or just use *clear*. See [**obviously**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#obviously).

**cliche** William Safire, *Fumblerules*, 1990: "Last but not least, avoid cliches like the plague." And if you must use a cliche, don't put quotation marks around it.

**climatic, climactic** Occasionally confused adjectives. Use *climatic* when describing the climate or changes in the weather. Use *climactic* when describing a climax, key dramatic moment or highest point.

**climb down, climb up** *Climb up* is usually redundant, and *climb down* seems illogical. So use *climb* alone to mean "going up" and *climb down* as an acceptable idiom for "going down." Both terms are preferable to the formal *ascend* and *descend*.

**close proximity** Redundant and wordy. Simplify. Use *near* or *close to* instead. Also, *closeness* and *nearness* are both preferred to the formal *proximity*.

**clothes** Sometimes misspelled as the soundalike *close*. Memory aid: *Clothes* are made of *cloth*, which wears a *th*.

**co-** Hyphenate when forming nouns, adjectives or verbs that show occupation or status: *co-host, co-pilot, co-signer, co-worker.* Omit the hyphen in other combinations, including *coordinate, coordination, cooperate, cooperation, cooperative*. See [**prefixes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prefixes)**.**

**coast** Lowercase when writing about the physical shoreline: *Atlantic coast, Pacific coast.* *High winds battered the Atlantic coast.* Capitalize when writing about regions of the United States lying along such shorelines: *The Atlantic Coast states all supported the Democratic candidate. The Pacific Coast states all had sunny weather.*

Do not capitalize when writing about smaller regions: *She loves the Oregon coast in November.*

**coed** Don't use the outdated, sexist *coed* (or *co-ed*) as a noun to refer to a *female student*. *Coed* and *coeducational* are fine as adjectives to note that both sexes are involved.

**coho salmon** Lowercase *coho* in all uses (unless it's the first word in a sentence or in a title). See [**fish**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#fish).

**coliform bacteria** Bacteria common to the intestinal tract of people, other mammals and soil. Always lowercase.

**collaborate, corroborate** Occasionally confused verbs. To *collaborate* means "to work together for a special purpose" and "to cooperate with an enemy." To *corroborate* means "to confirm one statement by referring to another statement."

**collectible** This spelling more often preferred than *collectable*. Both spellings carry the same meaning.

**collective nouns** Collective nouns name a group or collection of people, places, things, ideas, actions or qualities, including *board, class, committee, crowd, family, group, herd, jury, panel, public, orchestra, staff, team*. Nouns that show a unit take singular verbs and pronouns: *The board is electing its committee chairs. The crowd is eager to march.* To stress individuals in a group, use *members of: Staff members answered questions. Some members of the panel left before lunch.* See [**it**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#it).

Some nouns are both singular and plural in meaning, including *corps, chassis, deer, fat, fish, grease, moose, oil, public, sediment, sheep, soil, water* and *waste*. The use of a singular or plural verb in a particular sentence conveys the meaning. Because these words are already plural, avoid adding *s* or *es* to make them plural: *Scientists studied sediment from Charger Bay. The geologist took samples of soil from the site*. When mentioning various types or species, however, plural spellings may be used: *Scientists studied Fox Lake and Lake Roosevelt sediments. The site contained both glacial and sandy soils.*

Follow the rules of subject-verb agreement when using the proper names of athletic teams and musical bands or groups: *The Seattle Mariners are on the road. The Seattle Storm is an event sponsor. The Beatles were wonderful at the old Seattle Center Coliseum and so were the Rolling Stones. The Who is still terrific.*

**college names** See [**university names**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#university names)**.**

**collide, collision** Two objects must be moving before they can collide. An accident involving a moving car and a stationary telephone pole is not a collision, for example; it's a crash. See [**near miss, near-miss**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#near miss).

**colon (:)** The colon has three main uses, all of which involve pointing the reader toward the words that follow the colon. The colon always follows a whole sentence in these uses. Don't combine a dash and a colon.

The most frequent use is to introduce a list, often after expressions such as *the following* or *as follows*: *Loretta Schwieterman appointed three people to the committee: David Allen, Greg Edwards and Jean Rheinhard. The Parks Department has scheduled open houses in the following communities: Valley View, April 5; Gantry, May 6; and Sierra Hills, Aug. 7.*

Don't use a colon immediately after a verb. Incorrect: *Loretta Schwieterman appointed: David Allen, Greg Edwards and Jean Rheinhard to the committee.* Correct: *Loretta Schwieterman appointed David Allen, Greg Edwards and Jean Rheinhard to the committee.* For more information on creating lists, see [**lists**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#lists)**,** [**semicolon**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#semicolon).

Second, the colon can be used to stress the word, words or sentence that follows it: *He had only one thing on his mind: flowers. The news was good: No one would be laid off.* When used this way, the colon replaces such words as *that is*, *namely* and *for example*. Capitalize the first word after a colon if it is a proper noun or the start of a whole sentence.

Third, use a colon to introduce a quotation longer than one sentence within a paragraph and to end a paragraph that introduces a quotation in the next paragraph. Use a comma, however, to introduce a quotation of one sentence that stays within a paragraph. See [**attribution**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#attribution), **comma** below, [**quotations**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#quotations), [**quotation marks**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#quotation marks).

Also, use a colon to separate numbers in [**times**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#time) (*7:15 a.m.*), to separate a [**title and subtitle**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#composition titles), and after a greeting in business correspondence (*Dear Mr. Hyde:*).

**color** Usually redundant and wordy when naming a color. Simplify. Try dropping *in color, colored* and *the color* from phrases like *blue in color*, *red colored*, *the color green*.

**combine together** Redundant and wordy. Simplify. Drop *together*.

**coming** Often misspelled. It has one letter *m*, not two.

**comma** **(,)** The following guidelines treat frequent questions about eight essential uses of the comma.

First, in a series of three or more terms with a single conjunction, use a comma after each term: *She opened the closet, grabbed a coat, and picked up an umbrella.* In a complex series of phrases, the *serial comma* before the final conjunction aids readability. In a simple series, the comma is optional before the conjunction: *The van is economical, roomy and dependable.* Also, put a comma before the final conjunction in a series if an integral element of the series needs a conjunction: *He likes folk, rock, and rhythm and blues.* Don't put a comma before the first item in a series or after the *and* in a series. See [**lists**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#lists)**,** [**semicolon**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#semicolon)*.*

Second, use a comma to join two independent clauses with a conjunction. An independent clause is a group of words that could stand on its own as a complete sentence; it begins with its own subject. The most common conjunctions are *but, and, for, nor, or, so* and *yet*: *The council's Water Resources Committee will go over the resolution Jan. 12, and the full council is scheduled to act Feb. 11.* Don't create run-on sentences by combining two or more independent clauses with only commas. Either insert conjunctions after the commas or break the clauses into separate sentences. See [**sentence length**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#sentence).

Third, use a comma to separate an introductory phrase or clause from the rest of the sentence: *After graduating from college, he joined AmeriCorps.* It may be omitted after short introductory phrases (less than three words) if no ambiguity would result: *On Thursday the Kennewick City Council will decide the issue.* When in doubt, use the comma, especially when it separates two capitalized words.

Fourth, enclose parenthetic expressions between commas. Parenthetic expressions are word groups that are not essential to the meaning of a sentence. If a parenthetic expression is removed, the sentence would still make sense: *The social services manager, who toured the Snoqualmie Valley last week, will make her recommendations today. They took one of their sons, Leif, to the concert. His wife, Donna, is a middle school teacher.* As shown in the examples, commas always go both before and after a parenthetic expression within a sentence. If you'd prefer to stress a parenthetic phrase, put it between [**dashes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dash); you can play down such a phrase by placing it between [**parentheses**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#parentheses). Also see [**this, that, who whom**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#that, which).

Also use commas to set off a person's hometown when it follows the name: *Rachel Solomon, Danbury, opened a new restaurant.* If using a person's age, set it off by commas: *Tom O'Rourke, 69, opened a new restaurant.*

Do not use commas to set off an essential word or phrase from the rest of a sentence. Essential words and phrases are important to the meaning of a sentence: *They took their daughter Jennifer to school. Their son Nils works at Ticketmaster.* (They have more than one daughter and more than one son.)

Fifth, use commas to set off words and phrases such as *however, meanwhile, in fact, in addition, moreover, nevertheless, as a result, thus, therefore, for example, finally* and *in other words*. Usually, place a comma after such expressions when they begin a sentence, and place commas before and after the expressions when they are within a sentence. See [**however**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#however)**,** [**in fact**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#in fact)**,** [**in addition to**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#in addition to)**,** [**moreover**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#moreover)**,** [**nevertheless**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#nevertheless)**.**

Sixth, use commas to separate a series of adjectives equal in rank. If the adjectives could be rearranged without changing the meaning of a sentence or if the word *and* could replace the commas without changing the sense, the adjectives are equal: *A sleek, new car. A thick, black cloud.* See [**hyphen**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#hyphen)*.*

Use no comma when the last adjective before a noun outranks its predecessors because it is an integral element of a noun phrase: *a silver articulated bus.*

Seventh, use a comma to set off a direct one-sentence quotation within a paragraph: *Theodore Roosevelt said, "It's not the critic who counts."* Use a comma before the second quotation mark in a quotation followed by attribution: *"No comment," said Jerry Carson.* See [**attribution**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#attribution)**,** [**punctuation**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#punctuation)**,** [**quotations**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#quotations)**,** [**quotation marks**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#quotation marks).

And eighth, use a comma to separate the parts of numbers, dates and addresses. Use a comma for figures higher than 999: *More than 5,000 people attended the event.*

Use commas to set off the year in complete dates: *The department released its report Nov. 16, 2002, for public review.* But don't separate the month from the year when not using a date. *They held their first retreat in January 1994.*See [**dates**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dates)**.**

Use commas to set off cities from names of states or nations: *She went to Vancouver, Wash., to tour the bridge retrofit program. He traveled to Paris, France, on vacation.*

**commence** See [**begin, commence, start**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#begin)**.**

**commitment** Commonly misspelled. Remember the root word, *commit*, with two *m*'s and one *t*.

**committee** Commonly misspelled. Capitalize if part of the proper name: *the Langley City Council's Human Services Committee.* Lowercase when used alone: *The committee passed the motion.* See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization)**,** [**collective nouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#collective nouns)**,** [**subcommittee**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#subcommittee)**.**

**common, mutual** They have a subtle difference in meaning. Use *common* to describe something shared by two or more people or things: *a common goal, common interests*. Use *mutual* to describe a feeling or action that's exchanged or reciprocal between two or more people or things: *mutual respect, mutual efforts*. See [**mutual**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#mutual)**.**

**common noun** See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization)**,** [**noun**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#noun)**.**

**community action grant** Lowercase. Avoid abbreviating *CAG*.

**compact disc** *CD* is acceptable on later references.

**company names** When using a company (or product) name, you have no obligation to help a company market itself (or its products). For most proper names, capitalize the first letter of each word, or capitalize a different letter if preferred by a company: *eBay*. But capitalize the first letter if it begins a sentence. Do not use all capital letters unless the letters are individually pronounced: *IBM* and *BMW* but *Subway* and *Ikea* (not *SUBWAY* and *IKEA*). Don't use exclamation points, asterisks and plus signs that some companies use in logos and marketing materials for their company (and product) names: *Yahoo*, not *Yahoo!*; *Toys R Us*, not *Toys "R" Us*. Unless it's part of a company's formal name, replace the ampersand (&) with *and*.

Abbreviate *company, corporation, incorporated* and *limited* when using them after the name of a corporate entity: *the Boeing Co.,* *American Broadcasting Cos., Chevron Corp.* Don't use a comma before *Inc.* or *Ltd.* even if it's included in the formal name. Do not abbreviate those words in business correspondence. In business correspondence, spell out those words when part of the proper name: *the Boeing Company.* See [**firm**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#firm)**,** [**incorporated**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#incorporated).

If *company*, *companies* or *corporation* appears alone in second reference, spell out and lowercase the word: *The company showed a loss in the third quarter.*

The forms for possessives: *the Boeing Co.'s profits, American Broadcasting Cos.' profits, Chevron Corps.' profits.*

**comparable** Commonly misspelled.

**compare and contrast** Probably one of your first school lessons in writing redundantly involved essays to compare and contrast things. To compare things is to discover and describe their similarities and differences. You don't also have to contrast them.

**compared with, compared to** Often confused. The more common phrase, *compared with* means "to examine the similarities or differences of two or more things": *He averaged 23 points a game in 2001 compared with 17 points a game last year. The speaker compared Congress with the British Parliament.* The less common *compared to* means "to liken two or more things, say they are similar or show a resemblance": *The backhoe operator compared her work to climbing Mount Everest. He compared life to a battle.* Memory tip: *Compared to* is metaphorical while *compared with* is statistical.

**compass directions** See [**directions and regions**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#directions and regions)**.**

**compatible** Commonly misspelled. Remember the relationship is not *able*, it's *ible*.

**compensate** Unless you're paid by the syllable or letter, simplify and use *pay*, if that's what you mean.

**complacent, complaisant** Sometimes confused adjectives. Use *complacent* to describe someone who's satisfied and content with his or her accomplishments. Use *complaisant* to describe someone who's willing and eager to please.

**complement, compliment** Often misused or confused. *Complement* is a noun or verb for "something that fills up or completes"*: The company has a complement of 250 drivers, 75 mechanics and 10 office workers. The two ideas complement each other well.* A hat may complement a suit, but you would compliment the wearer on her or his hat. A related term: *full complement*.

*Compliment* is a noun or verb for "praise or a flattering remark" and "something free": *The supervisor complimented the staff for a job well done. The supervisor's compliment boosted morale.*

**complete** (v.) Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try replacing with *end* or *finish* unless you're writing about filling in missing or defective parts. Or try replacing with *fill in* or *fill out*.

**completely** This adverb is often *completely* redundant. Simplify. Don't use *completely* before *full* and words like *dedicated, destroy, devoted, eliminate, perfect, silent, superfluous, unanimous* and *unique*--and *redundant*.

**comply with** Try replacing with simpler *follow, keep to, meet* or *obey*.

**component** Overstated. Simplify. Change to *part* or *ingredient*.

**compose, comprise, include** *Compose* is not synonymous with *comprise*. *Compose* means to create or put together: *The division is composed of six sections.* *Compose* takes *of*, but *comprise* never does.

*Comprise* means to *contain, consist of* or *embrace*. The whole *comprises* the parts. Use it in the active voice and name all the parts that make up the whole after the verb: *The division comprises six sections. The zoo comprises mammals, reptiles and birds.* Don't use *comprised of.* Think about using simpler *consist(s) of* or *contain(s)*.

Use *include* when what follows is only part of the whole: *city government includes the Parks and Human Services departments.* See [**constitute**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#constitute).

**composition titles** Capitalize the first letter of main words in titles of books, long poems, long musical compositions, magazines, movies, newsletters, newspapers, plays and works of art such as paintings and sculpture. Italicize the names of such works, or underline them if italic type is not available.

Use a colon between a book's title and its subtitle: *Woe is I: The Grammarphobe's Guide to Better English in Plain English*.

Capitalize the first letter of main words and enclose in quotation marks the titles of dissertations, essays, lectures, short musical compositions, short poems, short stories, songs, speeches, radio and television programs, articles in periodicals and chapters of books. If the title is part of a sentence, commas and periods go inside the closing quotation mark. Other punctuation, such as the question mark and the exclamation point, goes inside the quotation mark if it's part of the title; if it applies to the entire sentence, it goes outside the quotation mark.

Capitalize--but don't italicize, underline or enclose in quotation marks--the names of brochures, bulletins, forms, reports, software, websites, and catalogs of reference material, such as almanacs, directories, dictionaries, encyclopedias, gazetteers and handbooks.

When capitalizing hyphenated words in a title, choose a style and follow it consistently. Simplest is to capitalize only the first word unless later words are proper nouns or adjectives: *Unique benefits for part-time violinists, All-American flag-waving techniques.* Second is to capitalize all words except articles, short prepositions and short conjunctions: *Over-the-Counter Acid Reducers for Sale Here, A Matter-of-Fact Approach to Guitar Tuning, A New Park-and-Ride Lot for Commuters*. Optional exceptions to the second style are to lowercase the word after a prefix unless it is a proper noun or adjective and to lowercase the second word in a spelled out number: *Anti-intellectual Conduct, Twenty-first Century Values*.

Also see [**entitled**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#entitled)**,** [**magazine names**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#magazine names)**,** [**newspapers**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#newspapers).

**compound words** Compound words are formed differently for different parts of speech. When forming a compound, such as *start up* or *start-up*, first determine the part of speech you want, such as a noun, adjective or verb. Then check your dictionary and style manual for the correct spelling. If not listed in either source, follow these guidelines (also see [**hyphen**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#hyphen)**,** [**initial-based terms**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#initial-based)):

Except for compound nouns formed with a verb and preposition, use two words for unlisted compound nouns: *car stop, blood pressure, attorney general*.

Use a hyphen for unlisted compound nouns formed with a verb-plus-preposition: *start-up*.

Hyphenate unlisted compound verbs.

Though there are exceptions, use a hyphen for most unlisted compound adjectives (or compound modifiers): *rush-hour service, well-kept secret, blue-green emblem, 15-year loan, 2-inch border*.

No hyphen is necessary within a single proper noun (*a Lincoln Park project*), a single expression contained in quotation marks: (*a "better than promised" attitude*), foreign-language phrases (*the ad hoc committee*), percentages (*the 3 percent tax increase*) and dollar amounts (*a $7 million budget*).

**conceal** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try replacing with *hide*.

**concept** Overstated. Simplify. Change to *idea* or *design*.

**concerning** Overstated and formal. Try replacing with *about*.

**concise** (adj.), **concisely** (adv.), **conciseness** (n.) Means "brief and to the point, short and clear." To be *concise*, write only what you must to make your point, removing all unnecessary words and details. *Succinct* writing is clear and precise using the fewest words possible. *Pithy* writing is compact but also meaningful and witty. *Terse* writing is concise and polished but potentially curt in its brevity. *Laconic* writing is brief but also rude or ambiguous, mysterious and uncommunicative.

Writing that is not concise may be *wordy* (more words than necessary) and *verbose* (obscure and tedious), *rambling* (aimless) and *diffuse* (loose and weak), *long-winded* (tiresome) and *prolix* (trivial and boring), *redundant* (repetitious), or all of the above. See [**defuse, diffuse**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#defuse)**;** [**plain English, plain language**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#plain English)**;** [**redundancy**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#redundancy)**;** [**verbiage**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#verbiage). Also see [**Garbl's Concise Writing Guide**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/betwrit.htm)**;** [**Garbl's Fat-Free Writing Links**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/writing/concise.htm)**;** [**Garbl's Plain Language Resources**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/writing/plaineng.htm)**.**

**concluded** See [**attribution**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#attribution).

**confidant, confident** Sometimes confused. You tell secrets or intimate details to a trusted friend or *confidant*. If you're self-assured or certain about something, you're *confident*.

**confute** See [**refute**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#refute).

**congress** Capitalize *U.S. Congress* and *Congress* when writing about the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. Lowercase when used as a synonym for convention or in second reference to a group that uses the word as part of its formal name. Lowercase *congressional* unless it's part of a proper name.

**congressional districts** See [**districts**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#districts).

**congressman, congresswoman** Use only when writing about members of the U.S. House of Representatives.

**connote, denote** Sometimes confused. *Connote*, like *connotation*, suggests or implies a feeling or secondary meaning besides the actual meaning of a word. *Denote* refers to the explicit or literal meaning of a word. See [**denote**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#denote)**.**

**connoisseur** Commonly misspelled. Double the consonants inside the word; two *n*'s and two *s*'s.

**conscience,** **conscious** Commonly misspelled or confused. *Conscience* is a noun for "a person's feelings about doing something that is morally right or wrong." *Conscious* is an adjective meaning "awake and aware or intended and planned."

**consensus** Commonly misspelled. Its first letter is the only *c*. Means "general agreement or opinion of all or most of the people concerned." It does not necessarily mean unanimous agreement. Avoid using the redundant *consensus of opinion* and *general consensus*. Simply use *consensus* or *agreement*. *Broad consensus* is acceptable.

**consequently** Overstated. Simplify. Try replacing with *so*. See [**so**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#so).

**conservation, conservative** Subtle difference in emphasis, unfortunately. *Conservation* is an action that protects, preserves and restores works of arts, natural things like forests and wild animals, and other resources like water, gas and electricity. *Conservative* describes a preference for preserving established traditions or institutions and resisting or opposing any change in them--to keep doing things the traditional way despite changes in modern society. See [**liberal**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#liberal), [**progressive**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#progressive).

**consolidate** Try replacing with simpler *combine, merge* or *join*.

**constitute** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try replacing with *form* or *make up*: *Two women and 10 men make up the jury.* See [**compose, comprise, include**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#compose)**.**

**constitution** Capitalize references to the U.S. Constitution, with or without the *U.S.* modifier: *Congress is considering an amendment to the Constitution*. If you're writing about the constitution of other countries or states, capitalize constitution only if the name of the country or state comes before it: *the Norwegian Constitution, the country's constitution, the Oklahoma Constitution, the state constitution*. Lowercase *constitution* in other uses: *the chapter constitution*. Also lowercase *constitutional* unless it's part of a proper name.

**construct** Try replacing with simpler *build* or *erect*.

**consul, council, counsel** Sometimes confused nouns. A *consul* is "an appointed government representative for aiding citizens and businesses in a foreign country." A *council* is "a group of people elected to represent residents of a town, city or county" and "a group of people who make decisions for an organization." Usually used as a verb meaning "to advise," a *counsel* is "a lawyer or group of lawyers who give legal advice and represent clients in court.

Also, *council* is a singular noun that should take singular verbs; the articles *a* or *the* should usually come before *council*. *Counsel* can be either singular or plural, followed by the appropriate verb form. The articles *a* and *the* are not usually needed before *counsel*.

Correct uses: *We received the legal opinion from counsel. Counsel has suggested we go to trial on Tuesday. The company brought this matter before the council. The council advised the representatives of its position.* Incorrect uses: *The company brought this matter before council. Council advised the representative of their position. We go before council at noon.*

**contact** Preferred verb meaning *get in touch with* or *communicate with*--through email, fax, telephone and postal mail. But if you mean *call, write*, *see* or similar actions, use the specific verb.

**contemptible, contemptuous** Sometimes confused adjectives. Use *contemptible* to describe something or someone that deserves contempt, scorn or lack of respect; that's despicable, worthless or disgraceful. Use *contemptuous* to describe a person's feelings or expressions of contempt, scorn and disdain.

**content, contents** These words have a subtle difference in meaning. Use *content* to write about the topic or subject of a book, letter, article, advertisement, speech, commercial or other written or spoken material--or to mention a single item that something contains, if necessary: *Beans have a high protein content* (or better: *Beans have a lot of protein*). Use *contents* to list the ingredients or items in a recipe, room, book and so on.

**contiguous to** Commonly misused and pompous. Does not mean "close to" or "near" but "touching and sharing a boundary." Think about using *next to* or *bordering* instead.

**continual, continuous** Often misused or confused. *Continual* means "repeatedly, often recurring or intermittent, with breaks in between": *She has to repair the car continually.* *Periodically* or *intermittently* are useful, clear synonyms for *continually* to describe something that starts and stops. *Continuous* means "uninterrupted, in an unbroken stream": *Sales have been growing continuously for the past five years.*

**continue to remain** Redundant and wordy. Simplify. Use *remain* or *continue*, not both, or try *be still* or *stay*.

**continued** Don't abbreviate. *Continued*, *Continued on Page X*, *Continued from Page X*, and even *To be Continued* are clear, concise statements. But if you must abbreviate *continued* for some questionable reason, use *contd.*, without an apostrophe. Other abbreviations for *continued* also are abbreviations for other words.

**contractions** Used occasionally, contractions can speed reading and assure accuracy. They can soften the tone of your writing by making it more personal and conversational. In most writing, consider using common contractions like *aren't, can't, don't, doesn't, he'll, I'll, it's, she'll, shouldn't, that's, they'll, they're, they've, you'll, you're, wasn't* and *won't*. Avoid excessive use of contractions with dual meanings, like *I'd* and *he'd*, because they can mean both *I had* and *I would, he had* and *he would*. Other awkward or uncommon contractions to avoid in writing: *it'd, I've got, should've, who're, would've* and *you'd*. See [**could of, may of, might of, must of, should of, would of**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#could_of)**;** [**Myths and Superstitions of Writing**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/myths.htm#contractions).

**contradict** See [**refute**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#refute) below.

**contribute, contribute to** Overstated. Simplify. Try *give* for *contribute* and *add to* for *contribute to*.

**control, controlled, controlling**

**controversial** See [**noncontroversial**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#noncontroversial)**.**

**conversate** Not a word. Replace with *converse*. Better still, simplify. Replace with *speak, talk* or even *chat*.

**convince, persuade** Often confused. *Convince* involves thought, trying to affect a person's point of view. *Persuade* involves action, trying to get a person to do something. *Convince* usually goes with *of* or *that*: *He convinced his boss of his value to the company. She convinced her colleague that she was right*. *Persuade* usually goes with *to*: *The students persuaded their teacher to extend the deadline.*

**cooperate** Think about replacing with simpler *help*.

**copy edit, copy editing, copy editor** Two words each.

**copyright** Sometimes misspelled as *copywrite*. Use the verb and noun to describe a legal right to produce, publish and sell a book, play, song, photograph, print and so on. It's not only about writing. The adjective is *copyrighted*.

**cord** See [**chord, cord**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#chord)**.**

**corp., corporation** See [**company names**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#company names)**.**

**Corps of Engineers** On first reference, use *U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*. *Corps of Engineers* is acceptable on later references.

**corroborate** See [**collaborate, corroborate**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#collaborate)**.**

**cost-effective** Jargon, cliche. Think about substituting with *economical* or *efficient*.

**could** See [**can, could**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#can, could)**.**

**could (not) care less** If you care somewhat about something, drop the *not*. But if you don't care at all, keep it.

**could of, may of, might of, must of, should of, would of** Frequent misspellings of *could have* or *could've, may have, might have* or *might've, must have, should have* or *should've*, and *would have* or *would've*. Also, avoid using those awkward contractions in writing. See [**contractions**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#contractions)**.**

**council, counsel** See [**consul, council, counsel**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#consul)**.**

**council districts** See [**districts**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#districts).

**councilmember** Use the non-gender word *councilmember* instead of *councilman* or *councilwoman*. Capitalize only when used as a formal title before a person's name: *Ellensburg City Councilmember Steven Fujita attended the meeting.* Lowercase when it stands alone: *The councilmember spoke at the meeting*. See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization).

**county** Capitalize when part of a proper name: *Clark County.* Capitalize the full name of county governmental units: *Clark County Personnel Department.*

Always lowercase *county* when standing alone as a noun or used as an adjective: *Population is increasing in the county. The county budget is scheduled for adoption.* Lowercase plural combinations: *Benton and Franklin counties*. See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization)**,** [**districts**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#districts)**,** [**governmental bodies**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#governmental bodies).

Capitalize as part of a formal title before a name: *County Executive Mary Gustafson.* Lowercase when it is not part of the formal title: *county Utilities Director Arnold Beck.*

**county council** Capitalize the full name on all references: *Benton County Council*. Also capitalize *County Council* if the reference to a particular county is clear. Lowercase *council* when used alone: *The council will meet next Thursday*. Capitalize *chair* when used as a formal title before the name of a person in a council or committee position*: Benton County Council Chair Isaac Washington*. Capitalize *councilmember* when used as a formal title before a person's name: *Benton County Councilmember Joyce Klein*. Lowercase *chair* and *councilmember* when they stand alone or after a name: *Kathleen Williams, a councilmember, said ...*. See [**chairman, chairperson, chairwoman**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#chairman, chairperson, chairwoman)**; county** above.

**countywide** One word.

**couple of** Follow the noun *couple* with the preposition *of* in most writing: *He left a couple of style manuals in the lounge*. Dropping the *of* and using *couple* as an adjective is still considered casual and slang.

**course of** See [**in the course of**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#in the course of)**.**

**course names and numbers** Capitalize the subject when used with a numeral: *Geometry 2, U.S. History 101*. Lowercase subjects that aren't proper names when used without a numeral: *algebra, geography, Spanish*.

**court decisions** Use numerals and a hyphen: *The Supreme Court ruled 3-6, a 3-6 decision.*

**courtesy titles** See [**Miss, Mr., Mrs., Ms.**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#Miss)**,** [**names**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#names).

**courthouse** Capitalize with the name of a jurisdiction: *the Kittitas County Courthouse, the U.S. Courthouse*. Lowercase in other uses: *the county courthouse, the courthouse*. See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization).

**court names** Capitalize the full proper names of courts. Also capitalize the name if the county name, city name, state name or *U.S.* is dropped: *Clark County Superior Court, Superior Court; Cannon Beach Municipal Court, Municipal Court; state Supreme Court, Supreme Court, U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit, Court of Appeals*. Lowercase *court* when standing alone. See [**judge**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#judge).

**CPR** Acceptable (capitalized) in all references to *cardiopulmonary resuscitation*.

**create, creative, creativity, creation** The verb, adjective and nouns for a powerful human behavior, trait, process and act. To *create* is "to cause something or someone to exist" and "to produce or invent something using imagination and artistic skill." *Creative* describes someone who "produces or uses new and effective ideas" and "is good at using the imagination." *Creativity* is "the ability to use the imagination to develop, produce or use new and original ideas and things." *Creation* is "the act or process of inventing, producing or making something" and "something that has been invented or produced using the imagination, such as a work of art or piece of clothing." See [**Garbl's Creativity Resources Online**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/writing/creative.htm).

**credible, credulous** Sometimes confused adjectives. *Credible* means "believable because evidence and logic support it." *Credulous* means "tending to believe too readily, gullible."

**crisis, crises** Sometimes misspelled, misused and overused. *Crisis* is singular and takes singular verbs. *Crises* (not *crisises*) is plural and takes plural verbs. A *crisis* is "a significant coming together of events -- a turning point -- in which the impending outcome will make a decisive or abrupt change." Avoid referring to -- and responding to -- every difficult situation as a *crisis*, be it an *identity crisis, midlife crisis, environmental crisis, financial crisis, economic crisis* or the suppposed "bankrupty" of the successful 70-year-old U.S. Social Security system nearly 40 years from now.

**criteria, criterion** Often confused. As the plural form of *criterion*, *criteria* is a plural noun that takes plural verbs and pronouns: *The criteria are listed on the board; we will use them to test the product.* Don't use *the criteria is*. *Criterion* is a singular noun that takes singular verbs and pronouns: *One criterion is ease of maintenance; it is first priority for mechanics.*

**criticize** Commonly misspelled.

**criticize, critique** *Criticize* and its various forms are becoming more negative in meaning, suggesting disapproval. Consider using *critique* as a neutral verb for judging both the good and bad qualities of something or someone. Its other tenses are *critiqued* and *critiqueing*, not *critiqed* and *critiqing*.

**crosstown** One word.

**crowd** See [**collective nouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#collective nouns)**.**

**cul-de-sac** Always hyphenate and lowercase. *Cul-de-sacs* is preferred plural form.

**currant, current** Sometimes confused nouns. A *currant* is "a small round red or black berry." A *current* is "a flow of water or air in one direction" and "a flow of electricity through a wire."

**currently** Redundant, overstated or imprecise. Unless you're contrasting the present with the past, omit *currently*, change to *now* or *today*, or be more specific about time element. See [**presently**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#presently).

**customary** Think about replacing with simpler *usual* if no meaning is lost.

**cut and cover** Hyphenate when used as an adjectival phrase: *Using the cut-and-cover method was less expensive than tunneling.*

**cut back** (v.), **cutback** (n. and adj.) *He cut back spending. The cutback will require increased efficiency.* Also, think about simplifying the verb form by dropping *back*.

**cut off** (v.), **cutoff** (n. and adj.) *The other car cut off the truck. The cutoff date for permits is the last Friday of the month.*

**cutting edge, on the** Cliche. Think about replacing with *advanced, innovative, new, original* or *unconventional*.

**cyber-** Usually, no hyphen after this prefix: *cyberbullying, cybercafe, cyberspace*. See [**prefixes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prefixes).

**cynic, skeptic** A *cynic* is a disbeliever. A *skeptic* is a doubter. *Skeptics* may be good journalists; *cynics* never are

**Dad and Mom** Capitalize when used as names: *"Did you hear that Dad now insists we study two hours every school night?"* But lowercase in other uses: *The student's mom met with the teacher. "My mom asked my teacher about homework."* This same rule applies when using *Father* or *father* and *Mother* or *mother*. See [**family names**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#family names).

**dangling modifiers** Avoid modifiers that do not refer clearly and logically to some word in the sentence. Dangling: *Holding the paper to the light above the table, it cast an image on the wall*. *Holding* does not refer to the subject of the sentence, *it*. As written, the sentence suggests that *it* (*the paper*) was holding itself (as well as casting its image)--an extraordinary feat! To eliminate the dangling participle, the first words following that introductory phrase should be the name or description of the person (or thing) holding the pape: *Holding the paper to the light above the table, Benjamin made it cast an image on the wall*. The participle is no longer dangling; it's held in place by Benjamin--or, the subject of the sentence.

Another way to fix dangling participles is to put the original subject of the sentence in the introductory participle phrase, then refer to the object of the action as the replacement subject of the sentence. Thus: *As Benjamin held the paper to the light above the table, it cast an image on the table.* The pronoun *it* could still be confusing to some readers, however: Is it the paper or the light? If that's a problem, replace *it* with *the paper*. Here's another way to rewrite the sentence: *As Benjamin held it to the light above the table, the paper cast an image on the wall*. See [**this, that, these, those, it**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#this) entry.

**dash** **(--)** Long dashes, called *em dashes*, have three main uses. In these uses, em dashes are usually less formal but more emphatic substitutes for other typical punctuation marks. To preserve the impact of dashes, avoid overusing them.

First, use an em dash to explain, justify or stress in the second part of a sentence something in the first part: *Fans filled all the seats--the concert hall was packed! The new shopping mall will open Tuesday--if the air-conditioning works. The project was finished on time, within scope--and under budget. The manager was new to the agency--brand new.*

Second, use a pair of em dashes to make an emphatic pause or abrupt, parenthetic change in thought within a sentence: *The new auditorium--opening six months behind schedule--is getting praise from both critics and audiences*. If you'd prefer to play down such a phrase, consider placing it between [**parentheses**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#parentheses) instead, or between [**commas**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#comma).

Third, use a pair of em dashes to set off a phrase that has a series of words separated by commas: *Leif Nelson described the qualities--intelligence, a sense of humor and compassion--he wants in a manager.*

As shown in the examples above, do not put a space before or after an em dash (an exception to the rule followed by the Associated Press for newspaper use). Avoid using more than one pair of em dashes in a sentence.

A short dash, called *en dash*, may be used to mean *up to and including* when placed between numbers, times, dates and other uses that show range: *1993-96, $25-50, $432,000-$560,000 (*but *$25 million to $50 million), 55-65 years, 7:15-7:30 a.m. (*but *9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.), ages 15-20, pages 167-78.* It also may be used to replace *to* and *versus* in capitalized names: *the Chicago-New Orleans train, the Huskies-Cougars game.* Do not put spaces before and after the en dash. See [**between ... and, from ... to**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#between, from)**,** [**dates**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dates)**,** [**ranges**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#ranges).

*Note:* A hyphen (-) is not a dash. Most current word processing and design software can create em dashes and en dashes. If not possible, use two hyphens to create an em dash, and substitute a hyphen for an en dash. In Microsoft Word, if you don't space after the second hyphen, the two hyphens become an em dash. See [**hyphen**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#hyphen).

**data** Normally a plural noun, it takes plural verbs and pronouns when writing about individual items: *The data have been analyzed thoroughly.* *Data* may take singular verbs when the group or quantity is considered a unit: *The data is accurate.* Stick with the plural verb after *data* if you're not sure which one to use.

Also, use *data* to refer to evidence, measurements, records and statistics from which conclusions can be inferred, not as a simple synonym for facts, knowledge, reports or information. If suitable, consider using simpler *information* or *facts*.

**database** One word.

**data processing** (n. and adj.) Don't hyphenate the adjective.

**date back to** Wordy. Simply. Change to *date to* or *date from*.

**dates** Except for correspondence, abbreviate *Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec* when used with a specific date: *We opened a second retreat center Feb. 11, 1994, after three months of planning.* Spell out those months in correspondence. Spell out the names of months when using a month alone or with a year alone: *We opened the first center in January 1994.*. Also, avoid using virgules (or hyphens) with numerals to give dates, especially if your readers could confuse the order of the day and month: *2/11/94, 11-16-1993*.

When not including a specific date, do not separate the month and year with a comma. Including the year is not always necessary in documents with a limited shelf life; however, noting the month and year of publication in an inconspicuous place may be useful. Do not follow numerals used with dates by *nd, rd, st* or *th.* See [**century**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#century)**,** [**comma**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#comma)**,** [**days of the week**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#days of the week)**,** [**decades**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#decades)**,** [**months**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#months)**,** [**time**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#time)**,** [**years**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#years).

Here are examples of the preferred styles for punctuating times and dates (in correspondence, spell out the names of months):

Classes begin *Monday, Sept. 2, 2003,* at the high school. [Note commas after the day of the week and the year.]

Classes began *Sept. 3* last year.

Classes began *Tuesday* in Benton County.

Classes began in *September* throughout the school district.

The most recent course changes took place in *September 2000* in Benton County. [No commas separating the year from the month and the rest of the sentence.]

The road closure begins at *10 a.m. Monday, June 16, 2003,* near Silverdale. [No comma after the time, but note commas after the day of the week and the year.]

The road closure begins at *10 a.m. Monday* near Silverdale.

The road closure begins at *10 a.m. June 16* near Silverdale.

The road closure will run from *Monday through Friday, June 16-20*, except during rush hours. [If possible, use an [*en dash*](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dash) instead of a hyphen when giving a range.]

The road closure from *May 15-19, 2000,* did not disrupt rush-hour traffic. [If possible, use an [*en dash*](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dash) instead of a hyphen when giving a range.]

The road closure in *May 2000* did not disrupt rush-hour traffic.

**day care, day-care** Hyphenate as an adjective: *His sister uses a day-care center in downtown Philadelphia.* Don't hyphenate as a noun: *She searched months for affordable day care.*

**daylight saving time** Not *savings*. No hyphen. Always lowercase. FYI, daylight saving time starts at 2 a.m. on the second Sunday of March and ends at 2 a.m. on the first Sunday of November, except in areas that exempt themselves.

**days of the week** Always capitalize days of the week. Don't abbreviate unless needed in a chart or table: *Sun, Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat* (no periods). See [**dates**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dates).

**daytime** One word.

**dead end** (n.), **dead-end** (adj. and v.) *The street is a dead end. Comedian Stephen Wright lived on a one-way dead-end street. The street dead-ended at an empty lot.*

**decades** Use numerals to show decades of history. Use an apostrophe to show numerals are left out. Show plural by adding the letter *s* (no apostrophe): *the '50s, the 1990s, the mid-1930s*. See [**century**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#century)**,** [**millennium**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#millennium).

**decease, deceased** Formal, euphemisms. Consider using *die, death* or *dead* instead.

**decimals** Avoid going beyond two places after the decimal point. For amounts less than 1 percent, put the numeral zero before the decimal point: *0.07*. See [**fractions**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#fractions).

**decimate** Commonly misused. Remember that the Romans used this word centuries ago to mean killing only one in every 10 of their enemies. They didn't use it to mean killing all their enemies. To *decimate* now means "to destroy *a large part of something* or to kill *many* people." Don't use it to mean simply *destroy* or *annihilate, demolish* or *wipe out*, all of which imply doing away with something completely. And don't use *decimate* to mean something less significant, such as *break, damage, defeat, hamper, kill* or *reduce*. Use one of the stronger or weaker alternative words if that's what you mean. See [**demolish, destroy**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#demolish).

**decision-maker** (n.), **decision-making** (n., adj.)

**deductible** Commonly misspelled. You may be able to deduct expenses, but use *ible* when describing them.

**deem** Overstated, old-fashioned and formal. Simplify. Try *consider, judge, think* or *treat as*.

**defamation** See [**libel, slander**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#libel)**.**

**defendant** Commonly misspelled.

**definite, definitive, definitely** Commonly misspelled or misused. *Definite* means "certain, clear, exact, precise." *Definitive* means "conclusive, final." *Definitely* is overused and often redundant. Try dropping it or even using *yes*, if that's what you mean.

**definitions** See [**spelling**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#spelling)**.**

**defuse, diffuse** Sometimes confused. *Defuse* means "to stop a bomb from exploding," "to make something harmless," and "to reduce tensions in a difficult situation." *Diffuse* means "to spread out or scatter widely" and "to be wordy or long-winded and unclear." See [**concise**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#concise)**.**

**degrees** See [**academic degrees, titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#academic degrees)**;** [**Celsius**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#celsius)**;** [**Fahrenheit**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#Fahrenheit)**;** [**temperatures**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#temperatures)**.**

**delegate, relegate** Sometimes confused verbs. To *delegate* is a positive action, giving a task or authority to someone else. To *relegate* is a negative action, demoting someone or something and exiling or banishing someone.

**delete** Consider replacing with simpler *remove, cut* or *drop*.

**delusion** See [**allusion, delusion, illusion**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#allusion) **.**

**Democrat, Democratic Party** Many members of the *Democratic Party* (not *Democrat Party*) believe in "priming the pump" to stimulate the economy by aiding workers directly, instead of stimulating corporate profits that might "trickle down" to workers. Lowercase *democrat* and *democratic* when not referring to the political party and members of the party. See [**party affiliation**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#party affiliation)**;** [**political parties and philosophies**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#political parties)**.**

**demolish, destroy** Both mean"to do away with something completely." *Totally demolished* and *totally destroyed* are redundant. See [**decimate**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#decimate).

**demonstrate** Overstated. Simplify. Use form of *prove, show, describe* or *explain*. But if you want to join with other people to protest or support something in public, go ahead and *demonstrate*. You have a right to be a *demonstrator* and take part in *demonstrations*!

**denote** Consider replacing with simpler *represent, mean, show* or *say*. See [**connote, denote**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#connote, denote)**.**

**deny See** [**refute**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#refute) **below.**

**depart** Formal word. Consider using *leave* or *go* instead. But if you use *depart*, follow it with a preposition: *She will depart from Portland International Airport. He will depart at noon.*

**dependent** Commonly misspelled.

**depth** See [**dimensions**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dimensions).

**deputy** Capitalize as part of an official title before a name: *Deputy Director Brian Watts, Snohomish County Sheriff's Deputy Matt Earp*. See [**titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#titles)

**descend** See [**climb down, climb up**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#climb).

**desert, dessert** Sometimes confused or misspelled. As a noun, a *desert* is a dry, barren, sandy, often hot region. A *desert* (often *deserts*) is also a deserved reward or punishment: *She got his just deserts.* As a verb, *desert* is to abandon or leave one's post without permission. Somewhat like this definition, a *dessert* is a tasty treat that comes at the end of a meal.

**designate** Consider replacing with simpler *show* or *point out; choose, appoint, name* or *set*.

**desirable** Commonly misspelled. Drop the *e* from *desire* when adding *able*.

**desire** Formal. Depending on what you mean, consider simpler, more direct *long for, wish, want* or *crave*.

**desirous of** Wordy. Simplify. Use a form of the verb *want*.

**desist (from)** Formal and overstated, unless you're referring to an action that is annoying, harmful, futile and so on. Simplify. Try *stop*.

**despite, in spite of** Interchangeable in meaning. But use simpler *despite*.

**despite the fact that** Wordy. Simplify. Change to *although*.

**destroy** See [**demolish**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#demolish).

**detain** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try *hold*.

**determine** Overstated. Simplify. Try *decide, settle, find out, figure out, work out, learn* or *fit.*

**deterrent** Commonly misspelled.

**detrimental** Formal. Simplify. Try *harmful*.

**device, devise** Often confused or misspelled. A noun, *device* is "a tool for doing a special job--or a plan or scheme for carrying out a specific task." A verb, *devise* means "to plan or create a way of doing something."

**devoid of** Formal. Simplify. Try *without* or *empty*. Redundant: *completely devoid, totally devoid*.

**diacritical mark** See [**accent marks**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#accent marks)**.**

**diagnose** Doctors *diagnose*, or *identify*, diseases and illnesses, not people: *He diagnosed Janelle's ailment as acid reflux*, not *He diagnosed Janelle as having acid reflux*. *Janelle's ailment was diagnosed as acid reflux*, not *Janelle was diagnosed with acid reflux*.

**diagonal mark** **(/)** See [**virgule**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#virgule) for punctuation mark.

**dialogue** Preferred spelling. Not *dialog*. Can be pompous, overstated jargon if you simply mean *talk, discuss, chat, speak* or *exchange ideas*. Simplify. Use one of those words instead. Avoid the cliche *meaningful dialogue*.

**dictionaries** See [**spelling**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#spelling)**.**

**dietitian** Preferred spelling. Not *dietician*.

**difference, differential** Sometimes confused. *Difference* and *differing* are usually correct for describing the ways people or things are not alike. Save *differential* for writing about precise mathematical differences.

**different from, different than** *Different from* is almost always the correct choice--particularly before nouns and pronouns: *My car is different from hers. Dogs are different from cats*. *Different than* is usually wrong. But either phrase can be used before a clause (a group of words with both a subject and a verb): *How different things appear in Houston than they appear in Boston. How different things appear in Houston from how they appear in Boston.*

**differ from, differ with** When you mean two items are unlike, use *differ from*. One thing *differs from* another. When people disagree or are in conflict, they *differ with* one another. *Stan insisted that his left eye differed from his right. His wife, however, differed with him.*

**diffuse** See [**concise**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#concise)**;** [**defuse, diffuse**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#defuse)**.**

**dilemma** Commonly misspelled and misused. A *dilemma* is a difficult choice between two unpleasant or unappealing alternatives, not just any difficulty, problem or predicament. Remember: You can't be caught in the horns of a dilemma with only one horn. See [**alternate, alternative**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#alternate)**.**

**dimensions** Use numerals and spell out *inches, feet* and*yards* to show depth, height, length and width. Also use numerals and spell out the descriptive word for area, size, volume and other units of measurement: *5 acres, 7 gallons*. Hyphenate when used as adjectives before a noun*: The fish is 8 inches long. The 6-by-7-foot room. The company is planning a 14,600-square-foot building. The stream is 3 inches below normal.* Use an apostrophe to show feet and quotation marks to show inches (*5'8"*) in only very technical documents or charts. See [**distances**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#distances)**.**

**directions and regions** Lowercase *north, south, northeast, northern* and so on when they show compass direction. Capitalize the words when they name well-defined regions: *He walked west toward the sunset. Too many people are moving to the Northwest. The commission included members from throughout Eestern Washington.*

Lowercase directions when joined with a proper name unless used to name a politically divided nation: *southern United States, northern Canada, North Korea.*

Lowercase compass points when they describe a section of a state, county or city: *eastern Oregon, north Kittitas County, south Los Angeles, southern Texas.* But capitalize compass points when part of a proper name: *South Carolina*. Or when used to show widely known sections: *Western Washington, Southern California, the Lower East Side of New York*. When in doubt, lowercase, or be more precise in naming the geographic area.

See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization)**,** [**cities and towns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#cities and towns)**.**

**director** Capitalize as an official title before a name, but lowercase after a name between commas: *Director of Operations Brian Jardine; Brian Jardine, director of operations, said. ...* See [**titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#titles).

**dis-** Don't use a hyphen with this prefix: *disservice, disassemble, dismember*. See [**prefixes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prefixes).

**disabled** People with disabilities have the same rights as other people, including the right to privacy. Treat them as you would treat other people. If in doubt about mentioning a person's disability, ask him or her. A person who is blind, for example, may prefer to be called *blind* instead of *partially sighted* or *visually impaired*.

Avoid mentioning a disability when it is not pertinent. When necessary to mention a disability, put the person first, not the disability: *The man who is blind.* *The child who is paralyzed. The woman with a mental illness.* Also, instead of using broad terms like *a person with a mental* [or *cognitive*] *disability* or *a person with a physical* [or *mobility*] *disability*, consider using a useful phrase that describes the effect of the disability, if appropriate: *She has a disability that makes it easy for her to become lost.* Don't say *the paraplegic, the schizophrenic, the arthritic, the brain-damaged person.*

*Disability* and *disabled* are preferred to *handicap, handicapped, impairment* and *impaired*. Avoid impersonal phrasing such as *the handicapped* or *the disabled*. Instead, say *people with disabilities*, using person-first language. Avoid condescending euphemisms when writing about people with disabilities; for example, *handicapable, physically challenged* and *special*.

Avoid the use of *disabled* or *crippled* when mentioning inanimate objects such as a *disabled truck*. Try *stalled truck* or change the sentence structure: *The truck with mechanical problems blocked the intersection for 30 minutes*.

Treat people with disabilities with respect. Here are some reminders when writing about people with disabilities:

***confined to a wheelchair*** People with disabilities are not *confined to wheelchairs* or *wheelchair-bound*. Instead, say a person *uses a wheelchair, has a wheelchair* or *gets around by wheelchair*. Stress abilities, not limitations.

***cripple*** Considered offensive when used to describe a person with a disability.

***deaf and dumb, deaf mute*** Most people who are deaf have functional vocal cords. Say *a person who is deaf, a person with a hearing disability.*

***disease*** Most people with disabilities are healthy. Use *condition*.

***handicapped parking*** Use *accessible parking* or *disability parking* instead.

***invalid*** Do not use. It means *not valid.*

***suffers from*** Don't say a person with a disability *suffers from the disability*. Say the *person has a disability*. *Suffers* reflects a judgment and pity.

***unfortunate*** An adjective that describes someone with bad luck, not a person with a disability. Like *suffers*, this term reflects pity.

***victim*** Having a disability does not make a person a victim. Also, a person with AIDS is not an *AIDS victim*. See [**AIDS**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#aIDS).

**disagree (with)** See [**refute**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#refute).

**disburse, disperse** Sometimes confused. *Disburse* means "to pay out money." But simplify and try using *pay* or *pay out* instead. *Disperse* means "to break up and spread widely." The correct noun forms are *disbursement* and *dispersal*.

**discreet, discrete** Often confused. *Discreet* means "careful about saying, writing or doing things; trustworthy with secrets": *At work, they were discreet about their relationship*. *Discrete* means "separate, distinct, unattached, unrelated": *He prefers discussing discrete issues, not general ideas*.

**disc, disk** Use *disc* for *compact discs, laser discs, videodiscs, disc jockeys* and phonograph records. Use *disk* for computer terms like *hard disk, disk drive* and *disk space*. A *floppy disk* is a *diskette*.

**discontinue** Overstated unless referring to a usual or habitual activity or practice. Simplify. Try replacing with *stop, end* or *give up*.

**diseases** Don't capitalize the names of diseases--*leukemia, pneumonia*--but capitalize the name of a person identified with a disease: *Parkinson's disease*. Also lowercase the names of diseases derived from scientific (Latin) names for organisms; see [**taxonomy**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#taxonomy).

**disinterested, uninterested** Commonly confused. *Disinterested* means "impartial, objective and unbiased." *Uninterested* means "not interested": A *disinterested* person has no personal stake in the outcome of an event. An *uninterested* person doesn't care. See [**ambiguous, ambivalent, indifferent**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#ambiguous).

**diskette** A generic term for *floppy disk*. Not synonymous with *disk*.

**disperse** See [**disburse, disperse**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#disburse) above.

**disprove** See [**refute**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#refute).

**disrespect** Best used as a noun meaning "lack of respect or courtesy." Using it as a verb to mean "showing a lack of respect" may seem unusual or incorrect to some readers.

**disseminate** Overstated. Simplify. Replace with *spread, give, send* or *send out.*

**distances** Use numerals for *10* and above. Spell out *one* through *nine*: *He biked three miles to work. She ran 15 miles every Saturday.*

**districts** When mentioning congressional, council and legislative districts, capitalize district when joined with a number: *the 7th Congressional District, the 34th Legislative District, the 3rd District, City Council District 9.* Lowercase *district* when it stands alone. Don't spell out the numeral with districts. See [**legislative titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#legislative).

**ditto marks** Used in lists or tables to "repeat" the word, number or term above. Make them with quotation marks, but avoid using them because they can confuse readers.

**dived, dove** Both are correct as the past tense of *dive*, but *dived* is preferred as the most commonly used. Save *dove* for writing about the bird of peace and people who advocate peace.

**doctor** Readers often identify *doctor* and *Dr.* with physicians. Use *Dr*. on first reference as a formal title before the name of a person who holds a doctor of medicine degree. Drop the title before the name in later references. *Dr.* also may be used for people with other types of doctoral degrees if the context is clear, such as in an academic setting or reference to an academic specialty or position. See [**academic degrees, titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#academic degrees); [**titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#titles).

**dollars** Always lowercase. Use figures and the *$* sign in all except casual references or amounts without a figure: *The CD cost only $7*. *Dollars stopped flowing into Rhode Island*. Beware of accidentally using the word *dollars* and the dollar sign with the same amount: *$783 dollars*. The form for amounts less than $1 million: *$3, $42, $803, $4,392, $538,502*. For amounts of more than $1 million, use the *$* and numbers up to two decimal places; do not link the numbers and the word with a hyphen: *The project will cost about $3.75 million. It is worth exactly $8,304,336. He proposed a $530 million project.* See [**cents**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#cents)**,** [**money**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#money)**,** [**numbers**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#numbers).

For specific amounts of money, use a singular verb: *The task force said $348,986 is needed*. For vague sums of money, use a plural verb: *Millions of dollars were wasted.*

**dominant, dominate** Sometimes confused. Similar in meaning, both words are about "being strongest, most important or most noticeable" and "having power or control over other people and things." Use the adjective *dominant* to describe someone or something that's like that. And use the verb *dominate* to write about someone or something acting that way.

**donate** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try *give*. See [**gift**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#gift).

**"don't ask, don't tell"** The U.S. Congress finally repealed the outdated "don't ask, don't tell" policy in late 2010.

**donut** See [**doughnut**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#doughnut).

**DOS** An acronym for *disk operating system*. Spell out (all caps, no periods).

**do's and don'ts**

**dot-com** (n., adj.) Hyphenate. No period or "dot."

**double-click** Hyphenate.

**double negative** See [**negative**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#negative).

**doubt that, doubt whether, doubt if** Sometimes confused. Use *doubt that* when expressing disbelief or skepticism or when making a negative statement (using *no* or *not*): *He doubts that the Easter Bunny exists. I don't doubt that you mean what you say. There's no doubt that she will make the deadline.* Use *doubt whether* when expressing indecision or uncertainty: *She doubts whether he'll find his car keys. He doubted whether he could make the best choice*. Choose one of those two phrases instead of the vague conditional *doubt if*.

**doughnut** Preferred spelling. Not *donut*.

**Douglas fir** See [**plants**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#plants).

**dove** Doves are great, especially when they symbolize and advocate peace. But for the past tense of *dive*, see [**dived**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dived).

**download** One word.

**down payment** Two words.

**downriver, downstream** One word.

**downtown** Lowercase unless part of a formal name: *the Downtown Denver Association.* See [**central business district**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#central business district).

**dragged** See [**drug**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#drug) below.

**dramatic, drastic** Sometimes confused. Use *dramatic* to describe something sudden and noticeable, exciting and impressive, or filled with action and emotion. Use *drastic* to describe something extreme and sudden, especially if it's violent or severe: *The dramatic change in the weather brought drastic results for people living in the floodplain.*

**drier, dryer** Sometimes confused. You use an appliance called a *dryer* to dry things like clothes: *a clothes dryer, a hair dryer*. You use that appliance to make things less wet or *drier*: *My hair is drier now*.

**-drive, drive** Use two hyphens when describing a type of vehicle: *two-wheel-drive cars, front-wheel-drive van, all-wheel-drive vehicles*. But use one hyphen when using the term as a noun: *Many drivers prefer four-wheel drive to two-wheel drive*.

**drive-in** (n.) Hyphenate.

**driver's license, driver's licenses** Generic spelling. In Washington, the official name of this document is the the *Washington State driver license* and *driver license* (lowercase and no *'s* or *s'*).

**drive-thru** (n. and adj.) Hyphenate.

**drug** Often misused or abused. As a noun, a *drug* is a legal medicine, an illegal substance, or a legal substance that's not a medicine (think caffeine and nicotine), the differences supposedly based on potential risks and benefits. As a verb, *drug* (and *drugged* and *drugging*) applies to only the use of drugs. Just say "no" to using *drug* as the past tense of *drag*. Use *dragged* instead.

**dry dock**  (n.), **dry-dock** (v.)

**dual, duel** Sometimes confused or misspelled. Use *dual* to describe having two of something, two parts or two purposes. Use *duel* when you or someone wants to fight another person or group with swords, pistols, semiautomatic assault weapons, or weapons of mass destruction--or less violent debating or verbal skills.

**due to** Often used incorrectly to mean *because of* or *through*: *She fell because of* [not *due to*] *the icy sidewalk. We canceled the show because of* [not *due to*] *poor ticket sales.* Usage hint: If a sentence begins with *due to*, it's probably wrong, like this one: *Due to poor ticket sales, the show was canceled*. Correct: *Because of poor ticket sales, the show was canceled*.

Use *due to* only as an alternative to *caused by* or *resulting from*. Those phrases are usually preceded by a *be* verb such as *is, are, was* and *were*: *Her fall was caused by the icy sidewalk. The show cancellation was due to poor ticket sales.* See [**because, since**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#because)**.**

**due to the fact that** Incorrect, overstated and wordy. Simplify. Try replacing with *because*

**during the time, during the course of** Wordy. Simplify. Use *during*, *while* or *when* instead. Also, if something happened as part of an activity, try using *in*, not *during*: *He carried a protest sign in the march,* not *He carried a protest sign during the march.* It's shorter, stronger and clearer.

**DVD** Acronym for *digital video disk* or *digital versatile disk*. Acronym is usually acceptable on first reference

**e-** Lowercase the *e* (unless it begins a sentence or heading) and include the hyphen in terms like *e-book*, *e-business*, *e-commerce* and *e-reader*. But do not include a hyphen in *email*. See [**email**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#email) **and** [**initial-based terms**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#initial-based).

**each** It applies to one person or thing in a group and takes a singular verb when each is the subject of a sentence: Each of us was asked to testify. When each comes before the noun or pronoun it refers to, make the verb singular: Each candidate wants to speak. When each follows the noun or pronoun, make the verb plural: They each were asked to testify. See [**both**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#both)**;** [**either, neither**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#either).

**each and every (one)** Wordy and trite. Use either each or every (one)

**each other, one another** Two people look at each other. Three or more people look at one another. Either phrase may be used when the number is indefinite: Group members help each other. Group members help one another. Add 's to make these plural terms possessive: each other's guitars, one another's hands.

**eager** See [**anxious, eager**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#anxious).

**earth, Earth** Lowercase when used as a common noun: Our boss is down to earth. Construction crews moved tons of earth. Capitalize when used as the proper name of our planet: The space shuttle returned to Earth. Mercury is smaller than Earth. The article the is usually omitted when using Earth as a proper noun.

**Eastern Washington** Capitalize the name of the region in the state.

**e-book, e-business, e-commerce, e-reader** See [**email**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#email)**.**

**ecology** The relationships between plants, animals and people and their surroundings. Not synonymous with environment, which refers to our surroundings.

**economic, economical** These adjectives have distinct meanings. Use economic to describe the large-scale production, distribution and consumption of wealth in finance, business, industry, government and community: local economic conditions. Use economical to describe using resources such as money, time and labor without wasting them: economical office procedures. Try using simpler thrifty instead of economical.

**ecosystem** Lowercase, one word. It means "the system in which all the plants, animals and people in an area exist."

**ecstasy** Commonly misspelled. Not ecstacy.

**editor** Capitalize before a name only when it is an official corporate or organizational name. Do not capitalize as a job description, when standing alone or after a name between commas. See [**titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#titles).

**eerie** Preferred over eery.

**effect** See [**affect, effect**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#affect, effect).

**effect many changes** Formal and wordy. Simplify. Think about replacing with change. See [**affect, effect**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#affect, effect).

**effectuate** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try carry out, cause, put into effect or try.

**effluent** See [**sewage, sewerage, sewers, wastewater, effluent**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#sewage).

**e.g., i.e.** Quickly, what are the Latin words for the abbreviation e.g.? Don't know? Then don't use e.g. Use English instead. Same for i.e. Both abbreviations are overused and often confused.

The abbreviation e.g. is the abbreviation for exempli gratia, a Latin phrase meaning "for example." The abbreviation i.e. is the abbreviation for id est, a Latin phrase meaning "that is." I.e. rephrases or clarifies the words that come before it. But even if you know Latin, simplify when writing in English! Unless you must use Latin in pompous scientific or academic documents, use for example and that is. Commas or semicolons usually go before the Latin and English forms, and commas usually follow both. Or phrases containing the abbreviations may be contained in parentheses.

**either, neither** Use either when writing about one or the other of two people, places or things: I've visited both Los Angeles and Chicago, but I wouldn't enjoy living in either city. Use neither when not including one or the other of two people, places or things: Neither city appeals to me. When used as the subject of a sentence, both words take singular verbs: Neither of the candidates was found guilty. When used as adjectives, the nouns they modify always take a singular verb: Either answer is correct. See [**each**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#each).

Also, either means "one or the other," not "both": Either plant will look good in the garden. And be careful where you put either in a sentence. It should go just before the first thing you're comparing: They wanted to honeymoon in either Hawaii or Mexico. Not: They either wanted to honeymoon in Hawaii or Mexico.

**either ... or, neither ... nor** The nouns that follow those words don't make a compound subject. They are alternative subjects and need a verb that agrees with the nearer subject; a singular verb if the nearer subject is singular and a plural verb if the nearer subject is plural: Neither his sisters nor he is going. Either he or they are going. See [**both ... and**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#both and)**.**

**elderly** Use this word carefully and sparingly. It is suitable in generic phrases that don't refer to specific people: support for elderly people, programs for the elderly. Try older and phrases like older person or people in their 70s and older instead. Apply the same principles to terms such as senior citizen.

**elder, older** Sometimes misused. Older, an adjective, has the broadest, most common use for describing or comparing the age of people, animals and things. Use older when describing only two; use oldest when describing three or more. Save the adjective elder for describing or comparing only people, especially if they're in the same family; elder for only two people, and eldest for three or more: eldest brother. Elder is also used as an adjective and noun to describe or name an older, influential person in a family, tribe, church or community: an elder stateman, an elder in a church, village elders.

**Election Day** Capitalize, in the United States, for the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. And remember: Your vote matters.

**elicit, illicit** Sometimes confused. Elicit is a verb meaning "to reveal information or provoke a reaction, draw out." Illicit is an adjective for describing something that's unlawful, forbidden or improper.

**eliminate** When writing about something that exists, think about using simpler defeat or get rid of, cancel, cut, drop, end, erase or remove. When writing about something that doesn't exist, use prevent.

**ellipsis** **( ... )** Avoid. An ellipsis is usually used to show the deletion of one or more words in condensing quotations, texts and documents. It also shows hesitation or trailing off in a quotation: "I wonder what I will say after we ..."

Treat an ellipsis as a three-letter word, with three periods and a space on each end. Some software can create an ellipsis that can replace three separate periods.

**elude** See [**allude, elude**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#allude_elude).

**email** A shortened version of electronic mail. OK to use email (no hyphen, lowercase) in all references, including first. Capitalize as Email only to begin sentences, headings and headlines. Include a hyphen for words like e-book, e-business and e-commerce. Also, see [**initial-based terms**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#initial-based).

Acceptable to use as a verb: Jennifer Lopez emailed her phone number to Gary. When used alone as a noun, email refers to email in bulk. It takes singular verbs and singular pronouns: He got so much email it overloaded his in-box. All her email was about the construction project.

When writing about email messages, it's acceptable to refer to an email and several emails: She wrote an email telling friends about her new email address. He read eight emails about the project.

Write out email addresses in all lowercase, following Web convention: theodore.roosevelt@whitehouse.gov. Email addresses are not case-sensitive. See [**Internet**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#internet), [**intranet**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#intranet), [**online**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#online), [**World Wide Web**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#World Wide Web).

**embarrass, embarrassment** Commonly misspelled. Use two r's and two s's.

**embattled** Save this word for describing brave troops ready for battle or already battling in a terrible war. For the politicians who sent them there or other people, companies and organizations having problems, try attacked, troubled or harassed.

**embayment** Jargon. Simplify. Use bay instead.

**emigrate/emigrant, immigrate/immigrant** Often confused or misspelled. An emigrant leaves or emigrates from or out of one country to live in another. An immigrant moves into or immigrates to another country to live there. Memory tips: Emigrate=Exit; Immigrate=Into. Emigrate/emigrant=from or out (of); immigrate/immigrant=to or in(to). An immigrant in the United States may be an emigrant from Norway.

**eminent, immanent, imminent** Often confused or misspelled. The most common of the three words, eminent means "famous, distinguished or admired by many people." Imminent means "threatening or likely to happen very soon." A philosophical and theological word, immanent means "existing within someone or something" and "present throughout the universe" (God, supposedly).

**empathy, sympathy** Sometimes confused. Use empathy to describe personal understanding of another person's feelings, problem or situation. Use sympathy to describe support and compassion for another person's feelings, problem or situation.

**employ** Overstated and formal if you mean "use." Simplify. Try use instead.

**employee** Preferred spelling. Not employe.

**enable** See [**allow, enable, permit**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#allow).

**enact** See [**adopt, approve, enact, pass**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#adopt, approve)**.**

**enclosed** Wordy and archaic in these phrases: enclosed please find, please find enclosed, enclosed herewith and enclosed herein. Simplify. Replace with here are, here is, I've enclosed or I am enclosing.

**encounter** Formal. Simplify. Try meet or run into.

**endeavor** (v.) Overstated and formal. Simplify. Replace with try or carry out.

**endnotes** See [**footnotes, endnotes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#footnotes).

**end product** Redundant and wordy. Simplify. Try product instead.

**end result** The end result of using this phrase is one extra word, one extra syllable, three extra letters and no extra meaning. Simplify, drop the redundant end.

**end user** (n.), *end-user* (adj.) *They enhanced the product for the end user so the end-user experience would be pleasant.*

**enervate, energize** Sometimes confused. Similar sounding verbs with opposite meanings. Enervate means "to deprive of strength, vitality, force, vigor or vitality." Energize means "to activate and invigorate."

**enormity, enormousness** Sometimes confused as synonyms. Use enormity to label a wicked, monstrous or outrageous act or crime. Use enormousness to label something that exceeds what's normal or usual in size, amount or degree.

**enough** See [**adequate, enough, sufficient**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#adequate).

**enquiry, inquiry** See [**inquiry, enquiry**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#inquiry).

**en route** Always two words. Also, try using clearer on the way instead.

**ensure, insure** Commonly confused, though ensure is usually the correct choice. Use ensure to mean guarantee or make certain of something, or try using simpler be sure or make sure. Use insure for references to insurance. See [**assure**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#assure).

**enthuse, enthused** Avoid these informal words in serious writing. Depending on what you mean, try one of these verbs instead of using enthuse: inspire, motivate, stimulate, rave, gush, excite, energize, admire or even express enthusiasm. Instead of enthused as an adjective, use enthusiastic or excited: She was enthusiastic about the R.EM. show, not ... enthused about the R.E.M. show. Better yet: Explain why she was enthusiastic or describe her enthusiasm.

**entitled** Means "a right to do or have something." Do not use it to mean titled: "The famous Thornton Wilder play is titled Our Town." Note the lack of a comma between titled and the title.

**enumerate** Formal. Think about replacing with simpler name, list, number or count.

**environment** See [**ecology**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#ecology).

**environmental impact statement** Spell out on first reference. Capitalize only when used as part of a proper title: The Brown Street Tunnel Project Environmental Impact Statement. EIS (all caps, no periods) is acceptable on second reference. Avoid overuse of the abbreviation by substituting impact statement. Always spell out draft, final or supplemental when used with the document: The project staff published printed the draft EIS in August. The supplemental impact statement is posted on the Web. Not: The project staff published the DEIS in August. The SEIS is posted on the Web.

**Environmental Protection Agency** Spell out on first reference: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. EPA (all caps, no periods) is acceptable on second reference.

**envy, jealousy** Sometimes confused. Use envy or envious to describe feelings of desire for someone else's qualities or things. Use jealousy or jealous to describe unhappy or angry feelings about not having someone else's qualities or things--or fear that someone else wants something you have.

**epigram, epigraph, epitaph, epithet** Sometimes confused. An epigram is a short, witty saying or poem. An epigraph is an inscription on a building or statue and a relevant quotation at the beginning of a book or chapter. An epitaph is an inscription on a gravestone or a tribute to a dead person. And an epithet is a short descriptive term or label for someone. It can be either positive or negative, but use epithet carefullly because some readers may think of it as only an abusive term, slur or insult.

**equal employment opportunities** Employers (should) provide equal employment opportunities. Avoid abbreviating except in second references to the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission: EEOC.

**equally as** Redundant phrase. Use either equally or as, not both, to express the same meaning.

**equitable** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try replacing with fair. And don't use fair and equitable.

**-er, -est** See [**more, most**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#more, most).

**err** Formal word meaning "to make a mistake." or "to violate an accept standard of conduct." Traditionally, err has been pronounced like the word "purr." But because it's similar to error, pronouncing it like "air" is becoming more common and acceptable.

**eruption, irruption** Sometimes confused nouns. An eruption is "an outburst" and "a violent release of material from a volcano." An irruption is "the sudden, often violent appearance of something" and "a rapid increase in numbers."

**espresso** Most Seattle residents probably know that a double-tall nonfat latte contains espresso, not expresso (even when served to commuters at a park-and-ride lot).

**establish** Overstated. Simplify. Try replacing with set up, set, start, begin or find out.

**esthetic** See [**aesthetic**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#aesthetic).

**estimated** See [**about**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#about).

**et al.** Abbreviation for et alibi or et alii, meaning "and elsewhere" or "and others." You're probably writing in English, so avoid using this abbreviation for Latin words. And be specific, if possible. Et al. may be used in technical reports as a reference citation: Light rail uses 34 BTUs of energy (Healy, et al., 1984).

**etc.** Abbreviation for et cetera, a Latin phrase meaning "and other things," "and so on," "and so forth," "and the rest." It's used for things, not people; the Latin et al. is the correct abbreviation for mentioning people. But avoid using the abbreviations; except for charts and tables, use the simpler English words instead. Also, don't use etc. if introducing a list with for example or such as. And if you must use etc., don't precede it with a redundant and. List at least two things before etc., and set it off with commas at both ends (unless it ends a sentence).

**ethnic** See [**race**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#race).

**ethnic slurs** See [**obscenities, profanities, racial or ethnic slurs**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#obscenities).

**euphemisms** Avoid subtituting vague, unnecessary, sometimes misleading euphemisms for clear, simple words: tax increase, not revenue enhancement; died, not passed away; disabled, not differently abled; fired, not terminated; crash, collision or accident, not unintended impact; I or we, not this office or this company. Call things by their most common names. See [**war**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#war).

**Europe** If you need a break from writing, like I did in summer 2004, take a trip of [**22 Nights and Dazed in Europe**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/europe/).

**eventuate** Formal and pompous. Simplify. Change to come about or happen.

**eventuality** Formal and pompous. Simplify. Replace with event, possible event, result, possible result, possibility or outcome.

**everyday** (adj.), **every day** (adv.) Use every day (two words) to mean "all days": She goes to the gym every day. Use everyday (one word) to mean "commonplace, ordinary": He wears everyday clothes even when going to church.

**everyone, every one, everybody** Everyone and everybody are interchangeable, though everyone is used more often. Use every one to refer to each individual item: Every one of the stocks was worthless. Use everyone (or everybody) as a pronoun meaning "all people": Everyone supported the proposal. Everyone and everybody take singular verbs and pronouns: Everyone is expected to do his or her part. Some writers use plural pronouns to avoid awkward or sexist use of singular pronouns, but it's still considered ungrammatical: Everyone is expected to do their part.

**evident** Think about replacing evident with simpler noticed, understood, clear or obvious. See [**clearly evident**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#clearly evident).

**every time** Two words, every time.

**evoke, invoke** Sometimes confused verbs. Evoke means "to produce or arouse a strong memory, mental image or reaction by stimulating emotions." Invoke means "to cite a law, principle or other authority to support opinions or actions" and "to call on god or other higher power for help": He invoked the name of God.

**ex-** Don't hyphenate words that use ex- to mean out of: excommunicate. Hyphenate when using ex- to mean former: ex-director. See [**prefixes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prefixes).

**exacerbate, exasperate** Sometimes confused or misused. To exacerbate is "to make a bad situation worse, to aggravate the situation." To exasperate is "to greatly irritate or annoy another person." See [**aggravate**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#aggravate).

**exaggerate** Often misspelled. And don't be redundant by overexaggerating.

**exalt, exult** Often confused or misspelled. Exalt means "to praise, glorify, or raise the stature of someone." Exhalt and exhault are misspellings. Exult means "to rejoice or celebrate."

**exceed** The phrase exceed more than is redundant. Simplify. Drop more than. See [**accede, exceed**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#accede)**.**

**except** See [**accept, except**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#accept)**.**

**except for** Wordy. Simplify. Think about dropping for, depending on the context.

**exceptionable, exceptional** Sometimes confused. Use exceptionable to object to or take exception to something--if you must use the word. Try objectionable instead. Use exceptional to describe something that's much above average or unusual and not likely to happen again.

**except when** Wordy. Simplify. Try unless.

**exclamation point (!)** Use sparingly and only to express a high degree of surprise, disbelief or other strong emotion. The exclamation point goes within the quotation marks when it applies to the quoted matter only.

F. Scott Fitzgerald: "Cut out all those exclamation marks. An exclamation mark is like laughing at your own joke."

**excessive number of** Wordy. Simplify. Replace with too many.

**exhilarate, exhilaration** Often misspelled. Not exhilerate or exhileration.

**existence** Commonly misspelled. Not existance. Our existence begins and ends with an e, and we live with it in between.

**exit numbers** Capitalize them when writing about freeway exits: Exit 6, Exit 52.

**exorbitant** Commonly misspelled. Also, try using simpler excessive.

**expatriate, ex-patriot** Commonly misspelled or confused. An expatriate is "a person who lives in a foreign country, who lives abroad." An ex-patriot is a person who no longer loves or loyally supports his or her native country. An expatriate might continue to be patriotic to his or her native country.

**expect** See [**anticipate, expect**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#anticipate).

**expedite** Overstated and commonly misspelled. Simplify. Replace with hasten, hurry, rush or speed up.

**expenditure (of money)** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try replacing with spending, cost or expense.

**experience** (v.) Overstated. Simplify. Try replacing with feel, have, go through, see or suffer.

**explicit, implicit** Sometimes confused adjectives. Use explicit to describe something that's clear and obvious or definite. Use implicit to describe someting that's implied and understood, though not expressed. See [**imply, infer**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#imply).

**exponential** Often misused. Don't use it to describe rapid growth. Instead, use it to describe growth that increases over time at a particular rate

**Facebook** One word. Capitalize only the first letter.

**facility** Unless part of a proper name, avoid this word when possible, especially as a bureaucratic euphemism for *building*. Be more specific by naming or describing individual facilities, such as *base, building, factory, hotel, jail, laboratory, museum, office, plant, restroom, stadium, warehouse* or even *toilet*: *The council appointed her director of the new jail* [not *facility*, or worse, *jail facility*].

**facsimile, fax** As a noun, verb or adjective, *fax* may be used in all references, including first. Don't capitalize as *FAX*; the word *fax* is neither an acronym nor a proper noun. See [**reproduce**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#reproduce)**,** [**telephone numbers**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#telephone).

**fact** Use this word only if a statement can be verified as accurate, true or correct, not for matters of judgment. Also, a *true fact* is redundant; drop *true*. See **factoid** below.

When possible, avoid using the phrase *the fact that.* Omit needless words: *since* or *because*, not *because of the fact that*; *even, though, despite* or *although*, not *despite the fact that*; *please note, remind you* or *tell you*, not *call your attention to the fact that*; *we were unaware that* (or *did not know that*) instead of *we were unaware of the fact that*; *her success* instead of *the fact that she had succeeded*; and *our* *arrival*, not *the fact that we had arrived*. See [**in fact**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#in fact).

**factoid** Confusing. A *factoid* is a single possibly interesting "fact" that's either unverified and unconfirmed or trivial and useless. To be clear, consider using *facts* or *statistics* when writing about something significant and *trivia* or *useless facts* when writing about something that's not. See **fact** above.

**fact-finding** (adj.)

**factor** Hackneyed if used to mean a thing to be considered, an event or action. Instead, use *influence, cause, reason, part, fact, feature, condition* or *circumstances*. Or be specific and name the specific factor that contributed to a particular result.

**Fahrenheit** In texts, on first reference use numerals and spell out degrees. Also, spell out and capitalize *Fahrenheit*: *The mercury hit 86 degrees Fahrenheit*. On later reference if the context is clear, the degrees may be dropped and the abbreviation for Fahrenheit used: *The mercury hit 86 F yesterday* (space before and no period after the *F*). See [**temperatures**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#temperatures).

**fairly** Vague adverb meaning "more than a little but much less than very." Huh? Eliminate that word, be more precise, or rethink what you're writing about: Change *fairly hot* to *hot* or *warm*--or be specific: *78 degrees*.

**family** A singular noun, *family* takes singular verbs. To make it possessive, add apostrophe *s*: *The family's fortune is tied up in real estate. The family's gifts are in the closet.* Also an adjective: *The family fortune is tied up in real estate* (family is modifying the noun fortune). *The family gifts are in the closet*. Also see [**collective nouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#collective nouns).

**family, genus, species** In scientific or biological names for plants or animals, capitalize the broad Latin family name and generic Latin genus name. But lowercase the specific species name: *Homo sapiens, Tyrannosaurus rex*. Italicize the genus and species names when possible. See [**fish**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#fish); [**species**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#species); [**taxonomy**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#taxonomy).

**family names** Capitalize family names like *dad, mother, son* and *grandmother* only when they are before the name of a person or when they substitute for the name of a person: *He sent an email message to Aunt Larson. She sent an email message to Father. She sent an email message to her dad. "Would you hand me the spatula, Son?"* Also see [**Dad and Mom**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#Dad and Mom).

Also, when making family names plural, don't change their spelling. And don't add an apostrophe. Simply add *es* to most proper names ending in *es* or *z*: *the Gonzalezes, the Jameses, the Edwardses*. And add *s* to other proper names, including most proper names ending in *y* even if a consonant comes before it: *the Clintons, the Kerrys*, not *the Kerries*. When making a plural family name possessive, put an apostrophe after the final *s*: *the Jameses' car, the Clintons' home, the Abernathys' holiday greeting* (but *Bob Abernathy's holiday greeting*). See [**plurals**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#plurals)**,** [**possessives**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#possessives).

**FAQ** Abbreviation of plural *frequently asked questions*; it doesn't end with a redundant *s*. Except in headings, spell it out on first reference; *FAQ* is fine for later references.

**farebox** One word.

**far-ranging** (adj.)

**farther, further** Often misused or confused. *Farther* suggests measurable physical distance: *The plant was farther away than they thought.* Memory aide: The *far* in *farther* refers to physical distance.

As an adjective, *further* means "more" or "additional" in time, degree, amount or quantity: *She had further news.* But consider using simpler *more* instead. *Further* is also used as an adverb meaning "in addition" or "moreover." As a verb, *further* means to "advance or promote": *She worked to further his career.* But consider using simpler *help*.

**fast, fastly** *Fast* is both an adjective meaning "quick" to modify a noun or pronoun and an adverb meaning "quickly" to modify a verb, adjective or other adverb: *She has a fast car, and she likes to drive fast*. Don't use *fastly* as the adverb, as in *drive fastly*.

**fatal, fateful** Sometimes confused adjectives. Use *fatal* to describe something that will cause or has caused death or disaster: *a fatal disease, a fatal mistake, a fatal flaw*. Use *fateful* to describe something that will have or has had a momentous consequence or decisive significance: *a fateful decision*.

**father See** [**family names**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#family names) **above,** [**Dad and Mom**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#Dad and Mom)**.**

**Father's Day**

**fats** See [**collective nouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#collective nouns).

**fax** See [**facsimile, fax**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#facsimile, fax).

**faze, phase** Commonly confused. *Faze* is a verb meaning "to confuse or disturb someone." As a verb, *phase* means "to do something gradually, in stages." As a noun, a *phase* is "one part of a process in which something develops or changes."

**feasible** Sometimes misspelled as *feasable*. Means "capable of being done or achieved, or capable of being used or handled to good effect." Consider using less ambiguous *can be done* or *can be achieved*. If you mean "reasonable or likely," use *possible, likely to work, workable* or *probable* instead.

**fecal coliform bacteria** A group of organisms common to the intestinal tracts of people and animals. Its presence in water is an indicator of pollution.

**federal** Use a capital letter for corporate or governmental bodies that include the word as part of their formal names: *Federal Express, the Federal Trade Commission*.

Lowercase when used as an adjective: *federal aid, federal government, federal judge*.

Always lowercase the phrase *federal courts*. Use the proper name of the court on first reference.

**Federal Emergency Management Agency** *FEMA* is acceptable on second reference.

**feedback** Jargon. Try rephrasing with *advice, comments*, *response* or *opinions*.

**feel, think** Not interchangeable. If ideas are based on feelings or emotions, use *feel*. But if ideas are based on perception, memory and judgment, use *think* (or *believe*). See [**I**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#I). Also see [**bad, badly**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#bad, badly) for *feel badly*.

**feet** See [**foot**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#foot).

**female, male** Best used as adjectives, if necessary to refer to the sex of a person or occupational title. For nouns, use *woman, man, girl* and *boy* instead. *Female* and *male* are OK as nouns when writing about animals, when it's not known if a person is an adult or a child, and when writing about a group that includes both adults and children. See [**sex, sexism**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#sex).

**ferryboat** One word. *Ferry* is acceptable as both a noun and a verb. Plural is *ferries*.

**fewer, less** *Fewer* (or *few*) stresses number, and *less* stresses degree or quantity. Use *fewer* for plural nouns and individual items that can be counted, *less* for singular nouns and a bulk, amount, sum, period of time or idea that is measured in other ways: *Fewer than 10 applicants called. I had less than $50 in my pocket. Fewer dollars, less money. Less food, fewer calories*. See [**amount, number**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#amount, number)**;** [**less than, under**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#less than)**.**

**few in number** Redundant. Drop *in number*. Or replace with *infequent, limited, meager, not many, rare, scant, scarce, sparce* or *uncommon*.

**(the) field of** If someone works in a field of wheat or corn, wonderful! We need family farmers. But if someone works in *the field of* accounting or journalism, simplify and drop *the field of* as redundant and unnecessary. *The area of* is also unnecessary. See [**area**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#area).

**finalize** Pompous and often misused. Use only to mean "make final" or "put into final final form." Otherwise, simplify. Replace with *finish, end, complete, settle* or *wrap up*, depending on your point. Change: *I will finalize the report.* To: *I will finish the report.*

**final outcome, final result** Wordy. Redundant. Simplify. Drop *final*.

**fire, fired** Consider using this verb instead of the formal euphemism *terminate* or *terminated* when writing about someone who's dismissed from a job for poor performance or breach of ethics. But use *lay off* or *laid off* -- and not *downsize* or *downsized* -- when writing about someone who's been dismissed to cut costs or for lack of work. See [**laid off, lay off, layoff**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#layoff)**;** [**terminate**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#terminate).

**firm** (n.) A *firm* is a business partnership: *She rose quickly within the law firm*. Use *company* or *corporation* for an incorporated business entity.

**first-** Include a hyphen when used as a part of a compound adjective modifying a noun: *first-class service, first-degree murder, first-quarter touchdown*. Otherwise, use two words: *first line of defense, murder in the first degree, scored in the first quarter, service that's first class*.

**first began, first started** Wordy and redundant. Simplify. Drop *first*.

**first-come, first-served** Use hyphens when used as a modifier before a noun: *a first-come, first-served policy*. But don't include hyphens after a verb: *The policy was first come, first served*. Note the comma after *come* and the letter *d* in *served*.

**first, firstly, first of all** Simplify. Just use *first*. And drop the *ly* from *secondly, thirdly* and so on.

**firsthand** One word.

**first names** See [**names**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#names).

**first person** See [**I**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#I).

**fiscal, monetary** *Fiscal* applies to budgetary matters. *Monetary* applies to money supply.

**fiscal year** The 12-month period that a governmental body or corporation uses for bookkeeping. Spell out phrases like *the 1999 fiscal year* on first reference. For later references, use *fiscal 1999*, not *fiscal year 1999*. Don't capitalize. Avoid *FY 1999*.

**fish** Lowercase the name of all fish species, such as *chinook, coho, silver, blackmouth* and *spring*. Do not capitalize *salmon* or *trout* when used either alone or with the species name (such as *chinook salmon* or *bull trout*). However, capitalize the Latin family name, if you are using it: *chinook Salmonidae*). See [**family, genus, species**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#family, genus)**;** [**species**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#species).

**flagrant** See [**blatant, flagrant, fragrant**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#blatant).

**flair, flare** Commonly confused. *Flair* is "a person's natural ability or sense of style." A *flare* is "a bright light used as a distress signal; a flame or burst of unsteady light; an emotional outburst; and part of something that spreads outward, as on a skirt." Things can *flare up* and *flare out*.

**flammable, inflammable, inflammatory, nonflammable** Sometimes dangerously confused. *Flammable* and *inflammable* both mean "combustible or burns very easily." But use less ambiguous *flammable* when making a safety warning. Use *nonflammable* to mean "will not burn." *Inflammatory* means "tending to inflame or excite the senses, or tending to incite anger or disorder."

**flaunt, flout** Commonly confused verbs. To *flaunt* is "to show off something vainly." To *flout* is "to mock, treat with contempt or deliberately disobey a rule or law."

**flex-time** Lowercase and hyphenate this word used to describe flexible working hours.

**flesh out, flush out** Sometimes confused. Use *flesh out* to mean "add details, give more substance, elaborate." Use *flush out* to mean "reveal something that's been hidden, force someone out of hiding, push something into the open." If there's a chance readers might misunderstand those phrases, use their definitions instead.

**flier, Flyer** *Flier* is the preferred spelling meaning "a bulletin, handbill, pilot or someone who travels on a plan": *Staff members delivered fliers about the public meeting.* *Flyer* is a proper name of some buses and trains.

**flood plain** Two words.

**floodwaters** One word.

**floppy disk** Use *diskette*.

**flounder, founder** Commonly confused verbs. To *flounder* is "to struggle with saying or doing something" and "to struggle awkwardly, as in water, mud or snow." To *founder* is "to fail and collapse" and "to fill with water and sink."

**flout** See [**flaunt, flout**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#flaunt).

**fluorescent** Commonly misspelled.

**flush left, flush right** See [**justification**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#justification).

**flush out** See [**flesh out, flush out**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#flesh_out).

**Flyer** See [**flier, Flyer**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#flier).

**following** Usually a noun, verb or adjective: *She has a large following. He is following his conscience. The committee is considering the following projects.* Also, *after* is clearer and more precise as a preposition: *He spoke after dinner.* Not: *He spoke following dinner.*

**follow up** (v.), **follow-up** (n. and adj.) Did Sasha ever *follow up* on her idea? We need to schedule a *follow-up*. Let's plan a *follow-up* session on Sasha's idea.

**foot** Use figures and spell out in texts: *She jumped 5 feet. The wall panel is 8 feet long.* Use the singular *foot* and hyphenate when used as a compound adjective before a noun: *The 4-foot box is heavy.* *Foot* or *feet* may be abbreviated to *ft.* in tables. See [**dimensions**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dimensions).

**footnotes, endnotes** Often confused, misused and overused. *Footnotes* go at the foot, or bottom, of pages; *endnotes* go at the end of chapters, articles and books. But avoid using them, except for bibliographic references or citations. They force readers to look somewhere else on a page or another page for the information they contain. That interrupts reading and can cause reader distraction, confusion and frustration. Instead, try putting the information in parentheses within the text. If you must use them, consider footnotes first.

**forceful, forcible** Commonly confused or misspelled. The adjective *forceful* means "powerful and strong." The adjective *forcible* means "done using (physical) force." The adverbs *forcefully* and *forcibly* have similar differences in meaning.

**forecast** Use *forecast* also for the past tense, not *forecasted*.

**forego, forgo** Often confused verbs. To *forego* is "to go before." To *forgo* is "to do without something for expediency or altruism."

**foreign, international** Use *foreign* to describe *foreign cars, cities, governments, languages, markets, money, names, products, trade, words* and other foreign people, places and things (not in or from the United States). *Foreign-made* (or *imported*) and *foreign-born* are acceptable adjectives. Use *international* when writing about activities, groups, operations, people and relations involving more than one country.

**foreign words and phrases** Before using an unfamiliar foreign word or phrase, consider the needs and interests of your readers. If your readers may not understand the words, consider using an English alternative, defining the foreign words or suggesting the meaning of the words within the context of your document.

Don't italicize (or define) foreign words and phrases commonly used in English and listed in English dictionaries: *bon voyage, versus*. Also, don't italicize foreign language names of cities, buildings, streets, organizations and other proper nouns.

Italicize truly foreign words and phrases the first time they're used in a document. If they're used again in the document, use roman (or regular) type. Truly foreign words and phrases have not become part of the English language; they're not listed in English dictionaries, or they're identified as foreign in English dictionaries. Translations are typically put in quotation marks and set off with parentheses immediately after the foreign words or phrases they translate. See [**accent marks**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#accent marks).

Complete sentences or long phrases in a foreign language are not usually italicized. If they're direct quotations, place them between quotation marks instead. And again, if using an untranslated foreign-language statement would confuse, annoy, frustrate or insult many of your readers--and make you look foolish, pompous or arrogant--don't use it.

**foreword, forward, preface** Commonly confused and misspelled. *Foreword* is an introductory statement at the beginning of a book or other document, usually written by someone other than a book's author or authors. *Forward* means "at or toward the front" or describes movement toward a point in time or space. A *preface* is an introduction usually written by a book's author. See **forward** below.

**formal** Formal writing, formal language and formal words have their place, but it's not usually a place where communication is clear, concise and friendly. Be wary of visiting such a place when you want others to take the time to read, understand and even act on the words you write. If you want to put distance between you and your readers, use formal writing. It'll surely be cold and univiting for your readers and lonely for you. This style manual suggests simpler alternatives to formal, pompous and pretentious words and phrases. See [**simple, simplistic**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#simple).

**formally, formerly** Sometimes confused adverbs. *Formally* means "orderly, stiffly and officially." *Formerly* means "in earlier times, in the past."

**former** Always lowercase. But capitalize an official title used immediately before a name: *former Redmond Mayor Wesley Charles.*

**former, latter** Avoid forcing your readers to reread something by using these words. Instead, restate the item. If you must use these words, they apply to only two things; *former* is the first, and *latter* is the second. Also see [**later, latter**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#later).

**formulate** Overstated. Simplify. Replace with *develop, create, work out, devise, plan* or *form*.

**forte** A *forte* is "a person's special skill or strong point" and "the strongest part of a blade." But simplify and try using *strength* or *specialty* instead. In music, *forte* means "loud or loudly." (Pronounce both as "**for**-tay," ignoring outdated, pretentious claims about how to say the word when mentioning a person's strength.)

**for the purpose of** Overstated and wordy. Simplify. Delete or replace with *for* or *to*.

**for the reason that** Overstated and wordy. Simplify. Replace with *because, since, for* or *why*.

**fortuitous, fortunate** Sometimes confused. Use *fortunate* to mean "lucky." Use *fortuitous* to mean "happening by chance or accidental," especially if the circumstances are positive, "a happy accident." A *fortuitous accident* is redundant, and calling a bad accident fortuitous would confuse people.

**forward** Not *forwards*. See **foreword, forward** above.

**for your information** Consider dropping this overused, potentially insulting phrase, or replace it with something more original or precise.

**founder** See [**flounder, founder**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#flounder).

**fractions** Spell out amounts less than *one* in stories, and hyphenate between the words: *two-thirds,* *four-fifths*. Use numerals for precise amounts larger than one: *5 2/3, 59 5/8*. Whenever practical, convert fractions to decimals: *5.5, 43.5, 8.25.*

If using a whole number with a fraction, do not hyphenate: *4 3/8, 15 4/5.*

Avoid numerals separated by a slash--*5 1/2*--when the typeface has case fractions as special characters, such as Ã‚Â½. The fractions *1/4*, *1/2* and *3/4* are usually available as special characters in word processing and desktop-publishing programs.

With phrases like *three-fourths of X*, the verb agrees with *X*: *Three-fourths of the project is done. Three-fourths of the visitors are from Andorra.*

In charts and tables, always use numerals. Convert to decimals if the amounts involve extensive use of fractions. See [**decimals**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#decimals).

**fragrant** See [**blatant, flagrant, fragrant**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#blatant).

**free** As an adverb, *free* means "for nothing." So *for free* is usually redundant; drop *for*. Also redundant is *free gift*; drop one word or the other.

**freelance** (v. and adj.) The noun: *freelancer*.

**French dip** When preparing the menu for your restaurant, don't offer *French dip au jus* or *French dip with au jus*. It's redundant. Either phrase is like offering *a house with roof*. And since *au* means "with" in French, *with au jus* is even more redundant. Simply list your tasty *French dip*. Also redundant is *soup du jour of the day.* *Soupe du jour* means "soup of the day" in French.

**frequently** Consider using simpler *often*.

**frequently asked questions** See [**FAQ**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#FAQ).

**freshman** (n. and adj.) Don't use the plural noun, *freshmen*, as an adjective. It's *freshman class, freshman volleyball* and so forth; similarly, *sophomore adviser, junior class, senior English*. Also, *first-year* as in *first-year student, first-year class and first-year volleyball* is a useful, unbiased alternative.

**from ... to** See [**between ... and, from ... to**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#between, from).

**from whence** See [**whence**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#whence).

**front line** (n.), **front-line** (adj.)

**FTE** See [**full-time equivalent**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#full-time equivalent).

**fulfill, fulfilled, fulfilling** Commonly misspelled. One *l* in the middle of *fulfill*, two at the end.

**full-** Hyphenate when used to form compound modifiers: *A full-length film. A full-scale attack.*

**full-time equivalent** Refers to a full-time employment position. Spell out on first reference. *FTE* is acceptable on second reference.

**full time, full-time** Hyphenate when used as a compound modifier: *He works full time. She has a full-time job.*

**fulsome** Commonly misused, as in *fulsome praise*. Use it to describe something that's disgusting or offensive, excessive or insincere, not abundant or very full. If you need a positive adjective, try *full, ample, lavish, generous* or *whole-hearted* instead. And note: *Fulsome* has only one *l*.

**fun** In serious writing, *fun* is only a noun. It's not an adjective, so it lacks comparative/superlative forms, as in *funner* and *funnest* or *more fun* and *most fun*. Incorrect: *This year's event was more fun than last year's. Your party was the funnest one I've been to all year.* But as a noun, *fun* can be modified with the adjectives *more* and *most*: *We had more fun at this year's event than we did at last year's event. I think I had the most fun of anyone at the party.* In casual, informal communication, *fun* is sometimes used as an adjective: *That was a fun thing to do. It's always funner this time of year. That was the funnest part.*

**fundamental** Overstated. Simplify. Cut or change to *basic, important* or *needed*.

**fundraising, fundraiser** No hyphen or space betweeen *fund* and *raising*. *Fundraising for charity is a good cause. The committee planned the annual fundraising campaign. The division sponsored a fundraiser.*

**further** See [**farther, further**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#farther).

**furthermore** Formal and overstated. Simplify. Try using *also, and* or *besides*.

**future** Wordy, if used with the words *in the near ...* or *in the not too distant ...*. Simplify. Use *soon*, *shortly* or even be specific: *tomorrow, this Saturday, in a week, next month* and so on.

**future plans** Redundant. Simplify. Drop *future*. See [**advance planning**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#advance planning).

**gaff, gaffe** Sometimes misspelled and confused nouns. A *gaffe* is "an embarrassing mistake, a social blunder." A *gaff* is "a strong hook or steel point on equipment used in fishing and power-line work" and "a pole or spur attached to the mast on a ship."

**Garbl** Acronym for [*Gary B. Larson*](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/resume.htm), webmaster for this online style manual and [**Garbl's Writing Center**](http://garbl.home.comcast.net/). He means "to untangle and clarify misunderstood or incomprehensible rules and guidelines of grammar, style and usage." Avoid garbling with the unrelated creator of the excellent "The Far Side" cartoons. Also see [**garble**](http://www.dictionary.com/cgi-bin/dict.pl?term=garble).

**Gas Works** Two words when writing about the park on Lake Union in Seattle.

**gay, lesbian** Identify a person's sexual orientation only when it is relevant. Do not refer to "sexual preference" or to a gay, homosexual or alternative "lifestyle." Use *gay* (n. and adj.) to describe men and women attracted to the same sex, though *lesbian* is the more common term for women. Avoid using *homosexual* except in clinical contexts or references to sexual activity. Instead of referring to *lesbians and gays*, consider using *gay women and men* or *lesbians and gay men*. Lowercase *gay* and *lesbian* except in names of organizations. Don't refer to gays with disparaging, offensive terms. Use *gay* and *queer* carefully in other contexts. Do not use *gay* as offensive, incorrect adolescent slang meaning "stupid." See [**sex, sexism**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#sex)**.**

**gelato**

**gender** *Gender* has become an acceptable term for writing about differences between males and females, especially their social, psychological and cultural traits--or who we are. *Sex* is more often used when writing about physical and biological traits--or what we do. Stay tuned. See [**sex, sexism**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#sex).

**general manager** Capitalize as an official title before a name, and lowercase when standing alone or after a name between periods: *General Manager Ron Burton; Ron Burton, general manager, said ...* See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization)**,** [**titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#titles)**.**

**general public** See [**public**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#public).

**gentleman** A man is a *man*. When there's more than one man, they are *men*. Save *gentleman* and *gentlemen* for noting a man or men who are especially polite or gracious. See [**lady**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#lady)**.**

**genus** See [**family, genus, species**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#family, genus); [**taxonomy**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#taxonomy).

**get** *Get* is good English. It's an acceptable, simpler substitute for formal words like *obtain, receive, become* and *procure*. And so are its verb forms: *got* and *gotten*: *He got a digital camera for his birthday. I have gotten really tired of pulling morning glory.*

**get-together** (n.)

**GIF** Acronym for *graphics interchange format*. Acronym (capitalized) is usually acceptable on first reference. Lowercase *gif* in file names.

**gift** To *give* one is a wonderful thing to do. Just don't *gift* it. If you must, you can *present* a gift, *donate* it or *contribute* it. But *giving* it is simpler, less formal and just as nice. See [**donate**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#donate).

**Girl Scouts** See [**Scouts**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#Scouts).

**give and take** Cliche. Use sparingly. Consider replacing with *compromise, concession, exchange* or *discussion.*

**glamour, glamorous**

**go-between** (n.)

**gobbledygook** Complicated, highfalutin, obscure, pompous and wordy language and jargon that's especially useful in official letters and technical documents you don't want your reader to understand. See [**highfalutin**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#highfalutin), [**jargon**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#jargon).

**goes without saying, needless to say** Well, what more can I say? Omit needless words and information. Either phrase may be useful to stress a common bond with your audience, but think about clearer, stronger ways to do that. If you still want to make say something, simplify. Consider using *clearly, naturally, obviously, of course* or *plainly* -- but avoid insulting your reader by stating the obvious in condescending ways. And accept that your reader may ignore or question your words. See [**clearly evident**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#clearly evident).

**goodbye** Not *goodby*.

**good Samaritan** Lowercase *good* unless used in a title: *Good Samaritan Recovery Center*.

**good, well** As a modifier, *good* is always an adjective for writing about the quality of someone or something, which means it describes nouns and pronouns (or people, places and things): *good English, good guitarist, a good many.* As a modifier, *well* is usually an adverb for writing about the way something is done, which means it describes verbs, adjectives and other adverbs: *to play well, well-paid employee*.

*Well* also can be an adjective but usually when describing someone's health, as in "not sick": *She is well*. When asked the unavoidable question "How are you?" a reply like "I am well" refers to your health. But replies using "good" or "fine" or a similar adjective (or "bad" or "terrible" or a similar adjective) refer to your situation, thoughts, feelings and so on. And if the question is "How are you doing?" a reply like "I'm doing well" refers to your actions. See [**bad, badly**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#bad, badly)**;** [**well**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#Well).

**good will** (n.), **goodwill** (adj.)

**Google, Googled, Googling** *Google* is the trademark for a Web search engine. Using the trademark symbol -- TM -- is unnecessary unless Google is named in advertising materials. Always capitalize the name and the verb forms. Unless use of Google is essential, use a generic equivalent (lowercased): *browser search tool, searched the Web, Web search engine*.

**got, gotten** See [**get**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#get).

**gourmand, gourmet** Sometimes confused nouns. A *gourmand* is "a person who really likes good food and drink but tends to eat and drink too much." A *gourmet* is "a person with expert knowledge about food and drink who appreciates subtle differences in flavor or quality."

**government, governmental** Always lowercase the noun *government*, never abbreviate: *city government, state government, the U.S. government.* Use *governmental* as the adjective: *a governmental agency*. Also, lowercase the branches of governmnent: *the legislative, executive and judicial branches of the federal government*.

**governmental bodies** Capitalize the full, proper names of federal, state and local governmental agencies, departments and offices: *the U.S. Department of State, the state Department of Ecology, Portland Department of Transportation, the county Department of Adult Detention.* Also, capitalize the shortened version: *the State Department, the Ecology Department, Transportation Department.* But lowercase *the department.*

**governor** Capitalize and abbreviate before a name: *Gov.* Lowercase after a name and when standing alone. See [**titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#titles).

**GPA** The abbreviation (capitalized, no periods) for *grade-point average* is acceptable in all uses.

**grade, grades** Hyphenate both the noun forms (*second-grader, 10th-grader*) and the adjective forms (*a second-grade student, a 10th-grade student*). But a student is in *the second grade* or *the 10th grade*. When mentioning letter grades, use *B-plus, C-minus* and so forth, not *B+* or *C-*. Don't enclose grades in quotation marks. Use an apostrophe with plurals of single letters: *straight A's, all B's and C's*.

**graduate, graduated** Commonly misused. People *graduate from* high school or college, they don't *graduate* high school or college. Remember that they received their diploma *from* some place; they graduated *from* that place.

**grammar** Commonly misspelled. Both its vowels are *a*'s. Don't end with *er*. Also see [**spelling**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#spelling)**.**

**grant-in-aid, grants-in-aid**

**grass roots** (n.), **grass-roots** (adj.) Cliches. Consider rephrasing to avoid these expressions.

**gray, grey** *Gray* is the preferred spelling.

**grease** See [**collective nouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#collective nouns).

**Great Britain** See [**United Kingdom**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#united Kingdom)**.**

**grisly, grizzly** Sometimes confused. *Grisly* means "terrifying or horrible." A *grizzly* is "a large brown bear that lives in west North America."

**ground breaking** (n.), **ground-breaking** (adj.)

**ground cover** Two words.

**groundskeeper** One word.

**groundwater** One word.

**ground zero** Often misused. Use it to identify the site of a devastating nuclear bomb blast or the location of the tragic World Trade Center attack in New York on Sept. 11, 2001. Don't use it to describe the beginning of something. Instead, use phrases like *the beginning, starting point* or *start from scratch*.

**group names** See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization)**,** [**collective nouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#collective nouns).

**grow** Unless you're writing about growing crops or a beard, use less trendy *expand, develop, build* or *increase*: *expand your business*, not *grow your business*.

**guarantee** See [**warrantee, warranty**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#warrantee).

**guardedly optimistic** Wordy cliche. If you can't simply write that you're *optimistic*, don't bother writing anything. Delete *guardedly* or replace the phrase with *confident, encouraged* or *hopeful*.

**guardrail** One word.

**guerrilla** Often misspelled. Two *r's* and two l's. Not *guerilla*

**hairbrained** See [**harebrained**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#harebrained) below.

**half of the** The preposition *of* is not necessary in this usage: *half the time*. But *half of the time* is not wrong.

**half-mast, half-staff** On ships and at naval stations ashore, flags are flown at *half-mast*. At other government facilities and elsewhere ashore, flags are flown at *half-staff*.

**handheld** (n.), **hand-held** (adj.)

**handicapped** See [**disabled**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#disabled).

**hangar, hanger** Sometimes confused or misspelled. Airplanes go in *hangars*. That's the only use of *hangar*. Clothes and other things go on *hangers*.

**hanged, hung** Sometimes misused. *Hung* is the past tense of *hang* for most uses. Pictures, coats and sometimes juries are *hung*. When writing about capital punishment (but not accidents, murders or suicides), use *hanged.* When *hanged* by the government, a person is "put to death by tying a rope around the neck and suddenly suspending the body to snap the neck or strangle the person."

**harass, harassment** Commonly misspelled. One *r* and two *s's*.

**hardly** Commonly misused. A negative meaning is built in to *hardly*. So drop the redundant *'t* from *can't hardly* and *not* from *not hardly*--or try using *barely* or *scarcely*. No *not* before those words either. Also, change *without hardly* to *almost without*. And consider using simpler *cannot* instead of *can hardly*. Also, see [**can't hardly**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#can_hardly).

**hardy, hearty** Sometimes confused. Use *hardy* to describe someone or something that's strong, healthy and able to handle difficult conditions. Use *hearty* to describe someone who's very cheerful and friendly or likes a lot of food. Some common, correct phrases with these words are *hardy plants*, *hale and hearty* (meaning "healthy and full of energy"), *hearty appetite* or *meal*, and *hearty welcome*. See [**healthful, healthy**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#healthful) below.

**harebrained** Commonly misspelled. Not *hairbrained*.

**has no** Wordy. Simplify. Try replacing with *lacks*.

**have an effect on** Wordy. Simplify with a form of the word *affect*. See [**affect, effect**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#affect, effect).

**he, him, his** Lowercase these pronouns when writing about God, Jesus and other deities. Also see [**pronouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#pronouns).

**headlines, headings** Preferred style for *headlines* is to capitalize only proper nouns and the first word. Think of headlines as sentences, with a subject and a verb. Document *headings* may be capitalized like composition titles: capitalizing proper nouns and key words. For consistency, choose either a headline style or a heading style.

Headings, subheads and headlines benefit readers of all documents, not just reports, brochures and newspaper articles. Use them in letters, memos and email messsages to guide readers and highlight information. To improve readability, avoid capitalizing all the letters in more than one or two words in headlines and headings. For emphasis, other typographical uses may be more effective: a different typeface, *italics*, color, **boldfacing**, larger type.

For headlines, state or imply a complete sentence in the present tense. Avoid using passive voice. Omit most "helping" and "to be" verbs: *Road improvements planned for Belvidere Avenue Southwest* instead of *Road improvements are planned for Belvidere Avenue Southwest*. Cut articles (*a, an, the*): *School distsrict schedules open house on proposed curriculum changes* instead of *School district has scheduled an open house on the proposed curriculum changes*. Infinitive is preferred to future tense: *City Council to consider budget recommendation* instead of *The City Council will consider the budget recommendation*. In headlines with more than one line, avoid separating verbs of more than one word, modifiers from the words they modify and prepositions from the phrases they introduce.

Figures may be used for numbers in headlines. If the meaning is clear, abbreviations may be used in headlines and headings. See [**abbreviations and acronyms**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#abbreviations and acronyms)**,** [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization)**,** [**numbers**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#numbers).

Punctuate headlines like sentences. Some exceptions: Commas may substitute for the word *and*. Use semicolons instead of periods to show sentence breaks within the headline. But put no period after the headline. Use single quotation marks instead of double quotation marks. In attribution, colons may substitute for *said* after the speaker's name (before a statement), and dashes may substitute for *said* before the speaker's name (after a statement). Don't hyphenate words in headlines and headings.

**head-on** (adj., adv.) Hyphenate.

**headquarters** May take a singular or a plural verb. Do not use *headquarter* as a verb.

**health care** (n.), **health-care** (adj.)

**healthful, healthy** Though the distinction between these adjectives is blurry, it's worth considering. Use *healthful* to describe something that promotes good physical or mental health: *a healthful diet, a healthful environment*. Use *healthy* to describe a person or animal in good health or to describe something in good mental or physical condition: *a healthy family, a healthy outlook*.

**heart-rending** Sometimes misspelled. Not *heart-rendering*.

**hearty** See [**hardy, hearty**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#hardy) above.

**height** Sometimes misspelled as *heighth*. Unlike *wide* and *width* and *deep* and *depth*, *high* doesn't transform to *heighth* as a noun. Also, *height*, like *weight*, is an exception to the "i before e except after c" rule. See [**dimensions**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dimensions).

**henceforth** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try *from now on* or *from today*.

**he or she, he/she** In avoiding the outdated use of the generic *he*, *he or she* is much preferred over *he/she*, as are *his or hers* over *his/hers* and *him or her* over *him/her*. Of course, the pronoun order can be reversed: *she or he, hers or his, her or him*. To avoid overuse of *he or she* and its other forms, use a plural construction: *All participants must supply their own tools* instead of *Each participant must supply his or her own tools*. See [**his, his/her**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#his) entry below; [**pronouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#pronouns).

**her** Do not use this pronoun to refer to nations or ships, except in quotations. Use *it* instead. Also see [**his, his/her**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#his)**;** [**pronouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#pronouns)**;** [**sex, sexism**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#sex).

**hereafter, herein, heretofore, herewith** Formal and legalistic. Simplify. Replace *hereafter* with *from now on, in the future* or *later*; *herein* with *here, here is (are), in here, in this place, in this matter* or *included*; *herewith* with *along with this, with this* (letter) or *enclosed is (are)*; *heretofore* with *earlier, until now* or *before this*.

**heroin, heroine** Sometimes confused. *Heroin* is "a highly addictive narcotic drug derived from morphine." A *heroine* is "a woman of outstanding courage," "a woman admired for her achievements," and "the main female character in a novel or play."

**hesitant** See [**reluctant, reticent**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#reluctant).

**hi-fi** Hyphenated, lowercase.

**high-** Hyphenate compound adjectives using *high-* before a noun: *high-class studio, high-definition TV, high-impact development, high-priority project*. See other examples below, [**low-**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#low-).

**highfalutin** Ridiculously pompous or pretentious, often expressed in high-flown unimportant or meaningless language. If you want to communicate well, banish highfalutin language (and behavior).

**high-occupancy** Buses, carpools and vanpools are *high-occupancy vehicles*. They can travel in *high-occupancy-vehicle lanes*.

**high-occupancy-vehicle lane** Spell out on first reference. *HOV lane* is acceptable on second reference. *Bus and carpool lane* is also acceptable*.*

**high-rise** (n. and adj.) Two words, hyphenated: *high-rise building*.

**high-tech, high tech** As an adjective, use *high-tech* or *high-technology*. As a noun, use *high tech* or *high technology*. It's never *hi-tech* or *hi tech*.

**highway designations** For highways identified by number, spell out and capitalize on first reference: *Highway 99, U.S. Route 2, Interstate 5, State Route 520.* On second reference, interstates and state routes may be abbreviated. Capitalize and use a hyphen: *I-405, I-5, SR-520.* Don't abbreviate *Highway*.

**hillside** One word.

**hippie, hippy** Although followers of the counterculture in the '60s and '70s are now middle-aged, they probably prefer *hippie* to *hippy*. Save *hippy* for writing about someone with big hips, whatever the chosen lifestyle.

**his, her, his/her** Avoid using the singular pronouns *his* or *her* in generic references. Also avoid the awkward construction *his/her.* Instead, rewrite the sentence. Changing singular pronouns to plural pronouns often works well. Change: *A chef should taste his/her creations before serving them.* To: *Chefs should taste their creations before serving them.* See [**he or she, he/she**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#he or she) entry above; [**pronouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#pronouns).

**Hispanic, Latino** Both terms refer to a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American or other Spanish culture or origin. Some people and style guides prefer *Hispanic*. On the U.S. West Coast, many people prefer *Latino*. In the U.S. Northeast and Southwest, more people use *Hispanic*. Still others use the two terms interchangeably or prefer a term noting national origin, such as *Puerto Rican, Cuban* or *Mexican American*. People of Brazilian and Portuguese origin are not *Hispanic*. Unless requested, avoid using *Chicano* to refer specifically to *Mexican Americans*. Don't use *Spanish-speaking* as a synonym for Hispanic, Latino or Chicano. When in doubt about how to refer to a person's race or cultural or ethnic identity, ask the person in question what is preferred. See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization)**,** [**race**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#race).

**historic, historical,** **history** Use *historic* for places, things and events of great significance, that stand out in history. Any occurrence in the past is a *historical* event. Avoid using *historic* to describe events that have little or questionable historical importance. *Past history* is redundant. Also, because the consonant *h* is typically sounded in these words, the article *a* comes before them, not *an*. See [**a, an**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#a, an).

**hit-and-run** (n. and adj.) *The accident was a hit-and-run. The truck was struck by a hit-and-run driver.*

**HIV** It's the abbreviation for *human immunodeficiency virus*, so *HIV virus* is redundant. Referring to it as the *AIDS virus* is correct. See [**AIDS**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#AIDS).

**hoard, horde** Often confused. Use *hoard* as a verb to mean "collecting things and hiding them." Use *hoard* as a noun to mention "a group of things that's hidden for safekeeping." Use the noun *horde* when writing about "a large crowd often moving in an uncontrolled way."

**hoi polloi, hoity-toity** Sometimes confused or misused. Use *the hoi polloi* to refer to "the common people," though it's considered patronizing and contemptuous. People who are *hoity-toity* -- arrogant and condescending -- are likely to refer to the hoi polloi.

**holidays and holy days** Capitalize all holidays and holy days: *Chinese* [or Lunar] *New Year*, Christmas, Columbus Day, Easter, Groundhog Day, Halloween, Hanukkah, Independence Day, Labor Day, Memorial Day, Thanksgiving, Year of the [Rat], etc. Punctuate these holidays as shown: *New Year's Day, New Year's Eve, Martin Luther King Jr. Day* (no comma before *Jr.*), *St. Patrick's Day, Washington's Birthday, Presidents Day* (no apostrophe), *Valentine's Day, Veterans Day* (no apostrophe).

Because various religions use differing rituals in December and January (and throughout the year), it's often useful to refer to *the holiday season*, *a holiday party* or a similar phrase. *Christmas*, for example, is a Christian celebration not recognized by all religious beliefs. Government agencies cannot promote religious practice. See [**religious affiliation**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#religious).

**hold a meeting** Wordy. Replace with *meet* or describe a particular action. Change: *The committee will hold a meeting Nov. 16.* To: *The committee will meet Nov. 16,* or *The committee will consider the proposal Nov. 16*.

**holocaust, the Holocaust** Lowercase when writing about any event with vast or total destruction of things and people, especially by fire. Capitalize when writing about the methodical Nazi killing of more than 6 million European Jews before and during World War II.

**home, house** Not interchangeable, or as the saying goes: "A house is not a home." *House* is more precise when referring to a building in which people live, while *home* is more precise when referring to households or places of residence--which can include apartments, trailers, condominiums and bridge underpasses.

**home in, hone** Sometimes misspelled or confused. To *home in* is "to focus on a target, goal, or destination or be guided toward it." To *hone* is "to improve a skill" or "to sharpen something."

**home page** Two words. It's the "front" page or main page of a website; it's not synonymous with *Web page* or *website*. See [**Internet**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#internet), [**intranet**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#intranet), [**online**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#online), [**World Wide Web**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#World Wide Web).

**homosexual** See [**gay, lesbian**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#gay)**;** [**sex, sexism**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#sex).

**hone** See **home in, hone** above.

**hopefully** Many writers, editors and style guides think it is incorrect to modify the meaning of an entire sentence by beginning it with the adverb *hopefully*. But others note that other adverbs (such as *apparently, fortunately* and *obviously*) are used correctly to modify entire sentences. So use care in using *hopefully*. Cautious writers and editors use it to mean "hopeful or with hope or in a hopeful manner" only when describing how the subject of a sentence feels: *Hopefully, the dog sat by the dinner table.* (The dog is hopeful.) *Hopefully, Carlos emailed his request for a vacation*. (Carlos is hopeful.) But others writers and editors use it to mean "it is hoped, let us hope, we hope" or "I hope" when describing feelings toward the entire sentence: *Hopefully, the war will end quickly with few civilian casualties. Hopefully, this ambivalent guideline won't frustrate readers.*

**horde** See [**horde**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#hoarde).

**hors d'oeuvre** Commonly misspelled. Plural spelling in English: *hors d'oeuvres*.

**horsepower** Spell out on first reference. It may be abbreviated *hp* on later references and in tables.

**host, hosted** Acceptable as a verb but consider using synonyms like *organize, hold, give* and *entertain*.

**hotine** One word.

**house** See [**home, house**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#home, house).

**HOV lanes** See [**high-occupancy-vehicle lanes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#high-occupancy).

**how come** For most serious writing, use *why* instead of casual *how come*.

**however** When using *however* to mean "nevertheless" at the beginning a sentence, always follow it with a comma: *However, an alternative solution might be better*. Using *but* instead is simpler **and** correct, but no comma is necessary after *but*. Also consider pausing early in the sentence and inserting *however* between commas: *The buses, however, carried more people than they did last year.* See [**and, but**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#and, but)**;** [**comma**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#comma)**.**

When using *however* to mean "in whatever way" or "to whatever extent", do not follow it with a comma at the beginning of a sentence: *However most people think, he'll probably do what his advisers suggest*. See [**nevertheless**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#nevertheless).

**HTML** Acronym for *hypertext markup language*. Spell out on first reference. Lowercase *html* and *htm* in Web addresses. See [**World Wide Web**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#World Wide Web).

**HTTP** Acronym for *hypertext transfer protocol*. Lowercase in Web addresses. See [**World Wide Web**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#World Wide Web).

**hung** See [**hanged, hung**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#hanged).

**hurdle, hurtle** Sometimes confused verbs. To *hurdle* is "to overcome a difficulty or obstacle" and "to jump over a barrier." To *hurtle* is "to move or travel at very high speed."

**hygiene** Commonly misspelled.

**hyphen** (-) Hyphens are joiners. They link words. Use a hyphen to avoid ambiguity or to form a single idea from two or more words: *His boss recovered her health. Her son re-covered the torn seat. He is a small-business man. She is a foreign-car dealer.* Unclear: *He is a small businessman. She is a foreign car dealer.* Also see guidelines at [**composition titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#composition titles), [**compound words**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#compounds), [**initial-based terms**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#initial-based), [**race**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#race).

Don't hyphenate most compound nouns--two or more words that work together as a noun: *Agent training is running late.* But consult this style manual or your dictionary for preferred or commonly excepted terms: *president-elect, sister-in-law, good-for-nothing*.

Compound adjectives, compound modifiers:

To avoid ambiguity, use hyphens to link words in compound adjectives (compound modifiers) before nouns. The words in compound adjectives work together to describe the noun. If you can insert *and* between the modifying words before a noun and make sense of the new construction, you do not have a compound adjective: *And* would make sense in *a sunny, warm day*; *sunny, warm* is not a compound modifier. But *and* would not work in *a well-rounded employee*; *well-rounded* is a compound modifier. Another test: If your sentence would make sense if you reversed the order of the modifying words or even removed one of them, don't connect the words with a hyphen.

Here are other examples of two or more consecutive words that make sense only when linked with a hyphen as a single idea modifying a noun that follows: *better-qualified woman, credit-card application, first-class stamp, 5-ton truck, high-frequency sounds, know-it-all attitude, little-known man, long-range plan, minimum-height requirement, minium-height requirement, pilot-testing schedule, short-term solution, special-interest money, 250-square-mile area, two-zone system, used-record store, a well-prepared plan.*

Leave out hyphens in compound modifiers only when no reader confusion would result from their omission--or if the modifying words are commonly considered as a unit: *post office box, high school classes, real-estate agent*. Also, rewrite sentences to avoid stringing together a long, potentially confusing series of modifying adverbs and adjectives before nouns.

When a number and a noun form a compound modifier before a noun, use a singular noun in the phrase and hyphenate the phrase. Drop the hyphens and use plural nouns in other uses: *The room measured 6 by 9 feet,* but *a 6-by-9-foot room. The building has 3,300 square feet of usable space,* but *a 3,300-square-foot building. The container held 10 gallons,* but *a 10-gallon container. The type size is 18 points,* but *18-point type. Her shift lasted 10 hours,* but *a 10-hour shift. She was on vacation for three weeks,* but *a three-week vacation.*

Hyphens are unnecessary after *already, least, less, most* and *very* and after all adverbs that end in *ly*: *already named manager, an easily remembered rule, less expensive project, least liked alternative, most used service, randomly selected addresses, a very good time.* See [**comma**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#comma)**,** [**very**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#very).

Don't hyphenate most compound modifiers if they occur after the noun being modified, even if hyphenating them before the noun: *The proposal was well documented. The actor was little known. The older woman was better qualified. His boat is 42 feet long,* but *He has a 42-foot-long boat*.

Here's the form for suspensive hyphenation: *The students recommended a 15- to 20-minute break between third and fourth periods.*

Hyphenate *co-* when forming nouns, adjectives or verbs that show occupation or status: *co-chairman, co-pilot, co-worker.* See [**prefixes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prefixes) and [**suffixes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#suffixes) and separate entries for the most often used prefixes and suffixes.

A hyphen is not a dash. For example, this organization mail stop, *KSC-NR-0505,* has hyphens, not dashes. And this phone number has hyphens, no dashes: 206-456-7890. See [**dash**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dash) for preferred punctuation between phrases and numbers, times, dates and other uses that show range, such as *1993-94, $23-42, the Seattle-Spokane train*. Also see [**between ..., from ... to**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#between, from)**,** [**ranges**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#ranges).

A hyphen may be used to divide a word at the end of a line, especially to remove large gaps at the end of an adjacent line. Here are some guidelines for hyphenation to aid readability and reduce reader confusion (see [**justification**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#justification)):

Divide words only between syllables, but don't add a hyphen to a word or phrase that already has a hyphen, such as *decision-maker* or *re-election*. Instead, break the word or phrase at the existing hyphen.

Avoid ending more than two consecutive lines with hyphens.

Don't hyphenate a word at the end of a line unless you can leave a syllable of at least three characters on both the first and second lines. Avoid dividing words with fewer than six letters.

Don't divide the last word in a line when the second part of the word would be the only "word" on the second line.

Don't hyphenate abbreviations, contractions and numbers. Also, don't hyphenate words in headlines and headings.

Avoid hyphenating proper nouns.

Don't hyphenate words that jump from one page to another page.

Avoid hyphenating words that jump from one column to another column or that jump over a graphic image or photo.

Also see [**numbers**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#numbers).

**hypocrisy** Commonly misspelled

**-I- |** [-J-](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#-J-)

**I** It's often OK to refer to yourself as *I* (and *me*) in your writing and speaking. It's called writing in first person. It can add credibility and personality, and it can eliminate passive, wordy sentences. But don't overdo it or write about yourself as though you're another person. If you've made it clear you're describing your feelings, beliefs and opinions, avoid overusing *I feel*, *I believe* and *I think*. Simply state your feeling, belief or thought without introducing it with those words. And when expressing your opinion or describing your actions or feelings, squelch the use of inane terms like *this writer, the author, one*, and *we* (when *we* is only *you*). The same guidance applies to using *me*. Also see [**active vs. passive verbs**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#active vs. passive); **I, me** below; [**Myths and Superstitions of Writing**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/myths.htm#firstperson)**;** [**personally**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#personally); [**we**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#we); [**you**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#you).

**iced tea** *Iced tea* is tea with ice in it. It's not tea made of ice. Add the *d* to *ice* and drop in a lemon and perhaps some sugar.

**ID** Abbreviation for *identification*. If the meaning is clear, OK to use in first reference. Capitalized, no periods.

**idiosyncrasy** Commonly misspelled. Not *idiosyncracy*.

**i.e.** See [**e.g., i.e**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#e.g., i.e.).

**if** See [**was, were**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#was, were) for correct use of *were* with *if* in describing hypothetical situations.

**if and when** Wordy, contradictory. Simplify. Use one or the other, not both. Use *if* to express uncertainty that something will happen and *when* to note that something will happen, the unknown being the time or date.

**illicit** See [**elicit, illicit**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#elicit).

**illusion** See [**allusion, delusion, illusion**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#allusion).

**I, me** Often confused. The pronoun *I* (like *he, she, we* and *they*) is always the subject of sentences and clauses. And the pronoun *me* (like *him, her, us* and *them*) is always the object of verbs and prepositions. In other words, *I* is more likely to be at the front of a sentence or clause (typically before the verb). And *me* is more likely to be at the back of a sentence or clause (typically after the verb): *I hugged her. He talked to me. She hugged him. We talked to them. They talked to us.*

Also, please remember these correct uses when the sentence has a conjunction (such as *and* or *or*): *He talked to Linda and me. Linda and I talked to him. The horse carried Debbie and me. Debbie and I rode the horse.* Incorrect: *He talked to Linda and I. Linda and me talked to him. The horse carried Debbie and I. Debbie and me rode the horse.* To be polite, *me* or *I* usually follows the conjunction.

To test for correctness: Remove the other person's name and the conjunction from the sentence, leaving the pronoun; if it sounds incorrect, it probably is. For example, you wouldn't want to be heard saying, "He talked to I" or "Me talked to him" or "Me rode the horse." Also see [**between you and I, between you and me**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#betweenyou); **I** above; [**it's I, it's me**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#it's me); [**myself**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#myself); [**than I, than me**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#than I); [**was, were**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#was, were).

**immanent, imminent** See [**eminent, immanent, imminent**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#eminent)**.**

**immigrate, immigrant** See [**emigrate/emigrant, immigrant/immigrate**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#emigrate)**.**

**immoral** See [**amoral, immoral**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#amoral)**;** [**moral, morale, morals**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#moral)**.**

**impact** Formal and vague. Do not use as a verb to mean "affect." Instead, consider using simpler *affect* or *influence*--or be more descriptive: *The tax cut will affect* [or *reduce*] *human services*. As a verb, *impact* means "to force tightly together, pack or wedge, or to hit with force." Reserve *impacted* for wisdom teeth: *impacted tooth*. See [**affect, effect**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#affect, effect)**;** [**have an effect on**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#have an effect on).

As a noun, *impact* means "a forceful contact or collision." It also means "the force of impression or operation of one thing on another," but consider using simpler *effect* or *influence* instead: *The uncertainties of the Bush economy had a negative effect* [instead of *impact*] *on consumer confidence.*

*Impactful* is not a word. To replace that business jargon, use an adjective like *influential, powerful, effective* or *memorable*.

**impeach** Often confused and sometimes misused. To *impeach* means "to charge a public official with misconduct in office." It does not mean "to remove an official from office." When an official is impeached, he or she is formally accused of misconduct. The official must then go through a legal (and probably political) process that may lead to removal from office if found guilty of misconduct. *Impeach* also means "to challenge a person's motives or discredit a reputation."

**implement** Jargon. Don't overuse this word. Instead, try a form of the verbs *begin, carry out, follow, fulfill, do, put in place, put into use, put into effect, start* or *set up,* or the noun *tool*.

**implicit** See [**explicit, implicit**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#explicit).

**imply, infer** Often confused. *Imply* means "to show, hint at or suggest," not to express. *Infer* means "to conclude or deduce from evidence or facts." Writers or speakers *imply* in the words they use. A listener or reader *infers* something from the words: *He implied in his speech. I inferred from her comment.* Also, consider using simpler *show, hint at* or *suggest* instead of *imply*.

**import, important, significant** Sometimes confused. As synonyms, they refer to the state or quality of being influential or worthy of note or esteem. But *important* has a broader meaning. *Import* and *significant* are more precise, suggesting an importance because of a special meaning that may not be obvious. To reduce potential confusion with *important* and other definitions, use *significant* instead of *import*.

**impostor** Preferred spelling. Not *imposter*.

**in-** No hyphen when it means *not*: *inaccurate, intolerable*. Some words take a hyphen: *in-depth, in-group, in-house, in-law*. See [**prefixes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prefixes)**.**

**in actual fact** Pompous, redundant and wordy. Simplify. Delete, or use *actually, in fact* or *really*, if necessary. See [**actually**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#actually)**,** [**in fact**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#in fact) **and** [**really**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#really).

**in addition to** Wordy. Simplify. Try *besides* or *and*. See [**beside, besides**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#beside).

**inadvertent** Commonly misspelled. Also, consider using simpler *unintentional, accidental* or *unplanned*.

**in a ... manner** Omit needless words. Simplify. Try dropping this phrase and making an adverb of the other word: *carelessly* instead of *in a careless manner.*

**inaugurate** Formal and pompous. Simplify. Use *begin* or *start* instead.

**in behalf of** See [**on behalf of, in behalf of**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#on behalf of)**.**

**inbox** One word, no hyphen. Also, *outbox*.

**incent, incentivize** *Incentive* is a fine noun. *Incent* and *incentivize* are inane business jargon. Instead, use the verbs *motivate, stimulate, encourage* and *inspire*--or use *provide incentives*.

**inception** Formal. Simplify. Consider using *start* or *beginning* instead.

**incidence, incidents** Often confused or misspelled. *Incidence* is a formal word for "the number of times, the rate or the frequency that something happens." *Incidents* is the plural of *incident*, which is "a relatively minor event, happening or conflict."

**include** See [**compose, comprise, include**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#compose)**.**

**including, like, such as** Use *including* and *such as* when listing examples or when the items that follow are only part of the total; don't list everything or end the list with words such as *and more*, *and others*, *etc.*: *He's a fan of British rock groups such as The Beatles and The Rolling Stones.* [He's a fan of British groups that include The Beatles and the Stones.] Use *like* when listing similar things or similarities: *He's a fan of British rock groups like The Beatles and The Rolling Stones.* [Though he's a fan of groups that resemble The Beatles and the Stones, he might not be a fan of The Beatles and the Stones.] See [**as, like**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#as, like)**.**

If the words that follow *including, like* and *such as* are essential to the meaning of a sentence, do not put commas before (or after) the phrase. But if the words that follow these terms are not essential, commas are appropriate. (Words are nonessential if they can be removed without changing the meaning of the sentence.) Also, if a nonessential *like, such as* or *including* phrase is short (just three or four words), it's OK to drop the comma. If you use a comma before a nonessential phrase, you also must end the phrase with a comma before continuing the sentence.

**in color** See [**color**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#color).

**in conjunction with** Wordy. Simplify. Try *with* or *and*.

**in connection with** Wordy and vague. Simplify. Try *on, for* or *about*.

**incorporated** Abbreviate and capitalize as *Inc.* when used as part of a corporate name. *Inc.* is usually not needed in company names, but when it is, don't set it off with commas: *I.M. Riche Co. Inc.* Spell out *Incorporated* in business correspondence.

**incredible, incredulous** Sometimes confused and misused adjectives. Use *incredible* to describe something that's "too unusual or improbable to be possible" or to describe something that's "unbelievable or hard to believe." Avoid using *incredible* to simply praise something. Use *incredulous* to describe a person as "unwilling or unable to believe something; skeptical."

**incur, incurred, incurring**

**indebtedness** Overstated. Simplify. Change to *debt(s)*.

**indeed** Vague adverb meaning "in fact." Use sparingly unless you must clarify that something is true. See [**in fact**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#in fact).

**index,** **indexes** Not *indices*.

**Indians** See [**American Indian, Eskimo**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#american Indian).

**indicate** Overstated, unless you mean "to give a signal, to point out, to point at." Otherwise, simplify and replace with *show, say, tell* or *suggest*.

**indication** Overstated. Simplify. Try *sign, clue* or *hint*.

**indifferent** See [**ambiguous, ambivalent, indifferent**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#ambiguous)**;** [**disinterested, uninterested**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#disinterested).

**indispensable** Commonly misspelled. Ends in *able*, not *ible*.

**individual, individuals** Overstated. Try *person* or *people*. Use *individual* only if you're trying to distinguish one person from a group. See [**people, persons**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#people).

**indoor** (adj.), **indoors** (adv.) *She plays indoor tennis. He went indoors.*

**in excess of** Verbose. Simplify. Try *more than* or *exceeding* instead.

**in fact** Usually unnecessary unless you must confirm the accuracy of what you're writing. Use sparingly.

**infant** An *infant* is formal, a *baby* is not. Simplify. And stay young.

**infer** See [**imply, infer**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#imply)**.**

**infinitives** See [**split infinitives**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#split infinitives); [**Myths and Superstitions of Writing**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/myths.htm#infinitives)

**inflammable, inflammatory** See [**flammable, inflammable, inflammatory, nonflammable**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#flammable)**.**

**inflict** See [**afflict, inflict**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#afflict).

**inform** Formal. Simplify. Try *tell* or *write* instead.

**in general** Wordy and often unnecessary. Use sparingly.

**in harm's way** Pretentious, wordy euphemism. If a politician sends troops to war, those brave men and women are *in danger, exposed, unprotected, vulnerable* or *unsafe*, not *in harm's way*.

**in-house** Hyphenate.

**in, into, in to** *In* shows place or position within: *She was in the shoe store.* *Into* shows motion or movement toward a location: *She went into the shoe store.* Use *in to* when *in* is an adverb that modifies a verb, adjective or other adverb*: He turned himself in to the police.* Beware this type of absurdity: *He turned himself into the police* (despite what a vigilante might want to do). Usage tip: If you can drop the *in* without losing the meaning, the term you want is *in to*: *Bring the candidates [in] to me, then we'll all go [in] to the examination room*.

**initial-based terms** Except for *email*, all initial-based terms separate the initial from the base word with either a space or a hyphen: *A-frame, B-movie, C ration, D-day, e-book, e-business, G-string, H-bomb, I-beam, J-school, L-shaped, N-word, O-ring, T-shirt, U-boat, X-ray, Y chromosome*. Capitalization varies. Check your dictionary or style manual for specific terms. See [**email**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#email)**,** [**T-shirt**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#T-shirt)**,** [**X-ray**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#X-ray).

**initial, initially** Overstated. Simplify. Try *first* or *at first*.

**initials** Don't put a space between initials: *T.S. Eliot.* See [**middle initials**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#middle initials).

**initiate** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try *introduce, arrange, begin, open, start, cause* or *set up*. Save *initiate* for writing about taking the first step in an important matter.

**in lieu of** Pompous jargon. Simplify. Try *for*, *rather than* or *instead of* but not *in view of* or *in place of*.

**in most cases, in most instances** Wordy. Avoid. Think about replacing with *often, mostly, usually* or *most of these.*

**innovate** Commonly misspelled.

**inoculate, inoculation** Commonly misspelled. No double *c* and no double *n*.

**in order to, in order for, in order that** Wordy. Simplify by droping *in order*. For *in order that*, also try *for* or *so*.

**in other words** Wordy. Simplify. Try *namely* or *that is*. Or consider rewriting the earlier statement in plain English so this phrase and the additional explanation are not needed. See [**plain English, plain language**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#plain English).

**in place of** Wordy. Simplify. Try *for*.

**input, output, throughput** Avoid these words. They may be used as nouns in certain technical fields, such as computer processing, electricity and economics. Depending on the context, *information* may be a good synonym for all three words. Instead of *input*, try *ideas, advice, comments, thoughts, views, opinions, money, effort* or *power*. Instead of *output*, try *work, goods, product, byproduct* or *result*. Instead of *throughput*, try *material*.

**inquire** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try *ask*.

**inquiry, enquiry** Synonymous, but *inquiry* is more commonly used in at least the United States--and thus the preferred choice. Also consider using simpler *question*.

**in reference to** Wordy jargon. Simplify. Try *about, for* or *on*.

**in regard to** Wordy and formal. Try *about, on* or *for*.

**inside of** Wordy. Simplify. Drop *of*.

**insofar as** Wordy, formal and sometimes incorrect. Simplify. Try *because* if you mean "because" or *so far as* if you mean "to the extent that"; or change to *in, of, on, for* or *about*.

**in spite of** Wordy. Try replacing with simpler *despite*.

**in spite of the fact that** Wordy. Simplify. Change to *though, although* or *yet*. See [**yet**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#yet).

**institute** (v.) Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try using *introduce, start, begin* or *set up*.

**insufficient** Overstated. Simplify. Try *not enough* or *inadequate*.

**in support of** Wordy. Simplify. Change to *for*.

**insure** See [**assure**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#assure); [**ensure, insure**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#ensure, insure).

**intense, intensive** These adjectives overlap in meaning but have subtle differences in use. Use *intense* to describe the strong, serious, energetic or passionate feelings and focus of a person or group: *intense pleasure, intense pain, intense loyalty, intense actor*. Inanimate objects, like the sun and heat, can also be *intense*. Use *intensive* to describe a strong, concentrated effort on an activity: *intensive bombing, intensive training, intensive farming, intensive marketing, capital-intensive, labor-intensive*.

**interface** Jargon. Acceptable as a computer term only when a more specific word is not available. Don't use as a verb. Try using a form of *interact, meet, collaborate, work with* or *work together.*

**inter-, intra-** The rules in prefixes apply, but usually, no hyphen. Some examples: *interagency, inter-American, intercommunity, interracial, intramural.*

**in terms of** Wordy. Simplify. Try *as, by, in, of, for about, with, under* or *through*, or omit by rewriting sentence: *The job was appealing in terms of salary. The salary made the job appealing.*

**international** Abbreviate as *intl.*, but avoid using except in charts and maps with limited space. Ending period preferred. Do not include an unneeeded, silly apostrophe: *Int'l*. Capitalize if it's an abbreviation of a proper noun. See [**abbreviations and acronyms**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#abbreviations and acronyms); [**foreign, international**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#foreign_international).

**International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers** Use the full name on first reference. *IBEW* is acceptable on second reference. See [**local of a union**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#local of a union).

**International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Warehousemen and Helpers of America** *Teamsters union* is acceptable in all references. Capitalize *Teamsters* and *the Teamsters*. See [**local of a union**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#local of a union).

**International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers** The shortened form *Professional and Technical Engineers union* is acceptable in all references. See [**local of a union**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#local of a union).

**Internet** Capitalize. In later references, *the Net* is acceptable. Also see [**email**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#email), [**home page**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#home page), [**intranet**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#intranet), [**online**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#online), [**World Wide Web**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#World Wide Web).

**interpret, interpretate** *Interpret* is a verb. *Interpretate* is a mistake. Use *interpret*. *Interpretation* is a noun based on *interpret*.

**interstate** See [**highway designations**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#highway designations).

**in that regard** Wordy. Delete, or try *about that*.

**in the amount of** Wordy. Consider omitting, or try replacing with *for*. Change: *She got a check in the amount of $300*. To: *She got a check for $300*. If necessary, use *amount of* to refer to a general quantity: *They had a large amount of work to do*. See [**number**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#number).

**in the context of** Cliche. Try omitting, or use *in* or *about*.

**in the course of** Wordy. Simplify. Try *during, while, in* or *at.* Incorrect: *Both opinions were given in the course of the debate.*

**in the event that** Wordy. Simplify. Replace with *if*.

**in the final (last) analysis** Wordy cliche. Simplify. Delete or try *finally*.

**in the (very) near future** Wordy and vague. Simplify. Change to *soon* or *shortly*, or be specific about the time or date.

**in the neighborhood of, in the region of, in the vicinity of** Wordy. Simplify. Replace with *about, nearly, in, near* or *close to*.

**in the wake of** Wordy cliche. Simplify. Try *after, immediately after, behind* or *following*.

**intimate** (v.) Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try using *suggest* or *hint*.

**into** See [**in, into, in to**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#in, into, in to)**.**

**intranet** Usually lowercased. While there is one Internet, there are many *intranets* within companies, organizations, government agencies and other computer networks. When naming the unique internal computer network of an organization, *intranet* may be capitalized: *The Goodnuff Co. Intranet is well-liked by employees.*

Though not always possible, avoid using *the Web* or, especially, *World Wide Web* when writing about an *intranet*. An *intranet page* or *intranet site* can look like an Internet page or site, but it's not on the World Wide Web. See [**email**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#email), [**Internet**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#Internet), [**online**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#online), [**World Wide Web**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#World Wide Web).

**intravenous** See [**IV**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#IV).

**inverted pyramid** A writing format used by journalists that puts the most important, interesting or essential information at the beginning of an article. Other details follow in order of lessening importance. Very effective for most other types of writing. See [**lead**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#lead); [**Writing news articles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/writing/action.htm#news).

**in view of (the fact that)** Wordy. Simplify. Replace with *although, as, because* or *since*.

**invoke** See [**evoke, invoke**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#evoke).

**IQ** Abbreviation for *intelligence quotient*. Acceptable in all references, including first. Capitalized, no periods.

**irony, sarcasm** Sometimes confused. Both terms (as well as *ironic* and *sarcastic*) describe situations or use words that are directly opposite of what's expected or meant. And both can involve use of humor. But *sarcasm* and *sarcastic* jokes usually mock and ridicule in a hurtful way.

**irrelevant** Commonly misspelled.

**irregardless** A redundant, nonstandard combination of *irrespective* and *regardless*. *Regardless* is correct, or try *even if*.

**irresistible** Commonly misspelled. Ends with *ible*, not *able*.

**irruption** See [**eruption, irruption**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#eruption).

**island** Capitalize *island* or *islands* as part of a proper name: *Vashon Island, Whidbey Island, the San Juan Islands, the Hawaiian Islands.* Lowercase when they stand alone or refer to the islands in a given area: *the Puget Sound islands.*

**issue** Overstated to mean a "problem or difficulty." Simplify. Use one of those words instead, and save *issue* for discussing a controversial topic or matter in dispute. That topic or matter is *at issue*, not *in issue*. You could also call it a *dispute* or a *controversy*. See [**noncontroversial**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#noncontroversial).

**it** When writing about a company, a business, a university, a country, a department within a company or another organization, use *it* (not *they*) and singular verbs: *The Acme Advertising Agency won the Distinguished Achievement Award for its creative TV commercials. It also earned a Certificate of Merit in the radio commercial category.* See [**collective nouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#collective nouns), [**this, that, these, those, it**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#this)**.**

**IT** Abbreviation for *information technology*. Spell it out.

**it appears, it would appear that** Wordy and weak. Simplify. Leave out or try *it seems* or *apparently*.

**it is important (interesting) to note (mention, realize, recognize, remember, say, understand) that** Wordy. Simplify. Delete, or drop *it is important (interesting) to*.

**it is probable** Wordy. Simplify. Replace with *probably*.

**It's I, It's me, It is I, It is me** The debate goes on. *It is I* or *It's just Mike and I* is favored in formal, grammatically correct writing. But *It is me* or *It's just Mike and me* is favored in casual, informal writing. Writing authorities aren't unanimous in recommending one or the other. Most acknowledge that *It is I* sounds stuffy and stilted. And some say that *It is me* is so common in our living, changing language--especially in conversation--that we should accept it as correct. Also, consider rewriting sentences so they don't begin with the wordy, weak *It is*, especially in formal or business writing; that would eliminate the *I/me* question: *Just Mike and I are still in the office*. See [**pronouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#pronouns).

**its, it's** Often confused or misspelled. *Its* is the possessive form of the pronoun *it*, meaning "belonging to it." The possessive *its* never takes an apostrophe: *Mary had a little lamb; its fleece was white as snow.* *It's* is a contraction that means "it is" and sometimes "it has." The contraction always takes an apostrophe: *It's a beautiful day. It's gotten out of hand*. If you often mix up these words, consider using only *it is* or *it has* and *its*; drop *it's*. Finally, use *its'* only when you're trying to show poor spelling skills or confuse your readers. It's not a word, and no one will know its meaning.

**IV** Abbreviation (all caps, no periods) for *intravenous*. Acceptable in all references.

**-ize** Avoid creating awkward, unneeded verbs like *incentivize* by tacking *ize* onto the end of a noun or adjective. A useful, simpler verb may exist: *motivate* or *encourage* for *incentivize*; *end* or *finish* for *finalize*; *order, rank* or *set priorities* for *prioritize*. Use a dictionary or thesaurus to find better synonyms.

**jargon** Avoid jargon, the special or technical words, phrases and idioms of a particular class, profession or occupation. Example: *The biota exhibited a 100 percent mortality response.* Rewrite: *All the fish died.* When jargon is necessary, explain or define terms that will be difficult for most readers to understand.

**jeopardy** Commonly misspelled.

**Jew** Too often misused and abused. When pertinent, use the noun *Jew* (always capitalized) to mention a person whose religion is Judaism or whose family descended from the ancient Hebrews. Using it as a verb or adjective is insulting and offensive. *Jewish* is the correct adjective.

**jewelry** Commonly misspelled. Not *jewelery* or *jewellery*.

**join together, link together** Both are redundant. Remove *together* or try *unite* or *connect* instead.

**JPEG, JPG** Acronyms for *joint photographic experts group*. Acronyms (capitalized) usually acceptable on first reference. Lowercase in file names.

**judge** Capitalize before a name when it is the formal title for a person who presides in a court of law. Don't use *court* as part of the title except to reduce confusion: *District Judge Douglas Brennan; Superior Court Judge Sandra Black; the District Judge ruled.* Lowercase *judge* as an occupational or temporary description: *contest judge Edward Prince.* See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization)**,** [**court names**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#court_names).

**judgment** Preferred spelling. Not *judgement*.

**junior, senior** Abbreviate *Jr.* and *Sr.* only with full names. Do not use separate the abbreviations from the name with a comma: *Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Joseph P. Kennedy Jr.* Also, do not use a comma to separate Roman numerals from names: *Larry Moe IV, M.D., is losing his patience. Larry Moe V is in the nursery. Pope John Paul George Ringo IV.* .

**jury** It takes singular verbs and pronouns: *Judge Paulson sequestered the jury until it reaches a verdict.* See [**collective nouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#collective nouns).

**just** Like *only*, placement of *just* can change the meaning of a sentence. To avoid confusion, place *just* directly before the word or phrase it modifies. See [**only**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#only).

Also, think about deleting or replacing *just*. It can be vague, redundant or meaningless: *exactly* instead of *just exactly*; *about, almost* or *nearly* instead of *just about*; *recently* instead of *just recently*; *only* instead of *just*.

**justification** Often misused. It's one way to align text in documents. *Justification* involves adding spaces between words so the words fill each line of text from the left margin to the right margin. When a body of text--such as a paragraph, newspaper column, or chapter in a book--is *justified*, both the right and left margins are aligned. A body of text is either justified or aligned in some other way: *left aligned* (or *ragged right* or *flush left*), *centered*, or *right aligned* (or *flush right*). Most word-processing and publication-design software offers those choices.

Opinions vary on which alignment is most readable. *Centered* text is OK for special effects, headings and headlines. Save *right alignment* for special effects. Many favor *left alignment* (*ragged right*) as less formal, less official and less like a form letter. Others favor *justification*, with its even margins, as neater and more attractive. Be careful when justifying text--to prevent excess white space between words and a ribbon of white running through the lines. Breaking long words at the end of some lines--using hyphens between syllables--can make both justified and right alignment more attractive.

**K- |** [-L-](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#-L-)

**K** Abbreviation for *kilobyte*. It means 1,024 bytes. Leave no space between K and the preceding number: *128K of storage.* Don't use *K* to mean *1,000* as in *$25k*.

**karat** See [**carat, caret, carrot, karat**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#carat)**.**

**ketchup** Preferred spelling. Not *catchup* or *catsup*.

**kidnapped, kidnapping** Preferred spelling, with two *p*'s. Not *kidnaped* and *kidnaping*.

**kilowatt-hour** A kilowatt-hour is the electrical energy consumed when 1,000 watts are used for one hour. Use *kilowatt-hour* to measure production or consumption. The abbreviation *kwh* is acceptable on second reference.

**kindergarten** Often misspelled; not *kindergarden*. Also, *kindergartner* is preferred to *kindergartener*.

**kind of, sort of** Wordy and vague. Delete. If you must qualify (weaken) your writing, replace those phrases with *rather, slightly* or *somehow*: *It's kind of (slightly) cloudy today. I'm sort of (rather) tired*. *Kind of* and *short of* are acceptable to mean "a species of" or "subcategory of": *That is the kind of development our region needs*.

**King Jr., Martin Luther; Martin Luther King Jr.** Don't include commas before or after *Jr.*, and don't drop *Jr.* when giving his complete name. Use *King* on second reference. Including the titles before King's name is optional. The federal holiday honoring *the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.* is on the third Monday in January.

**knickknack** Preferred spelling. No hyphen.

**know-how** Hyphenate.

**kudos** It means "credit or praise for an achievement. The word is singular and takes singular verbs. There's no such thing as *a kudo*. *Praise* is simpler, less pretentious synonym.

**lackadaisical** Sometimes misspelled. Not *laxadaisical*. Also, consider using simpler words like *indifferent, lazy* or *uninterested*.

**laconic** See [**concise**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#concise)**.**

**lady** Don't use this word as a synonym for *woman* or when it would sound outdated or patronizing. Reserve for writing about nobility. See [**gentleman**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#gentleman)**.**

**laid, lain** See [**lay, lie**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#lay)**.**

**laid off, lay off** (v.), **layoff** (n., adj.) Use these terms when writing about reductions in work force to cut costs, not for dismissals because of job performance. See [**fire, fired**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#fired).

**lake** Capitalize as part of a proper name: *Lake Washington, Green Lake.* Lowercase in plural form: *The report included* *lakes Washington and Sammamish.*

**laptop** (n., adj.) One word.

**LAN** Acronym for *local area network*. Spell out (lowercased) on first use.

**large size(d)** Usually redundant. Drop *size(d)*.

**last, latest, past** Avoid using *last* to mean "most recent"; use *latest* instead. Use *last* to mean "after all others, after everyone or everything else." OK: *The last time it rained, I forgot my umbrella.* But: *He made the last announcement at noon today* may leave readers wondering whether the announcement was the final announcement or whether others will follow. Substitute *latest* for *last*. Other times, *past* may be a better word. Change: *They worked together the last five months*. To: *They worked together the past five months*. Also see [**past, previous, prior**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#past).

The word *last* can also be confusing to mean "most recent" when using the name of a month or day; does *last April* mean April this year or April last year? Preferred: *It happened in April. It happened Wednesday.* Or: *It happened last week. It happened last month.* Redundant: *It happened last Wednesday.*

**(the) late** Think of *the late* as meaning "recently dead." If you think readers will no longer feel a person's death is recent -- or if you think most readers will know a person is dead -- don't use *the late*. And don't use *the late* to describe the former wife or husband of someone who's still alive! Use *former* or *ex-* (hyphenated) instead.

**later, latter** Sometimes confused or misused. Use the adverb *later* to describe when: after a particular time, after the present time, or after the time being discussed: *I will see you later today*. As a noun and adjective, *latter* is "the second of two people or things that have been mentioned." Also see [**former, latter**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#former, latter).

**Latino** See [**Hispanic, Latino**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#Hispanic).

**latte** See [**espresso**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#espresso).

**laxadaisical** See [**lackadaisical**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#lackadaisical) above.

**lay, lie** Often confused. The action word is *lay*, which means "to place, put or deposit." It is followed by a direct object*: I will lay the agenda on the desk. I laid the agenda on the desk. I have laid the agenda on the desk. I am laying the agenda on the desk.* Use *lay, laid* or *laying* if *place, placed* or *placing* would substitute correctly.

*Lie* means "to be in a reclining position." It does not take a direct object. It is often followed by *down* or a prepositional phrase: *The mechanic decided to lie down. The wrench lies on the workbench. The wrench lay on the workbench all day. The wrench has lain on the workbench all day. The wrench is lying on the workbench.*

When *lie* means to make an untrue statement, the verb forms are *lie, lied* and *lying.*

**lay off, layoff** See [**laid off, lay off, layoff**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#layoff).

**layover** (n.), **lay over** (v.)

**lay the groundwork (for)** Wordy cliche. Simplify. Try *prepare, arrange, plan* or *ready*. See [**set the stage**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#set_the_stage)**.**

**law** Capitalize legislative *acts* but not *bills* or *laws*: *the Taft-Hartley Act, the Kennedy bill.* See [**motion, ordinance**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#motion).

**lawyer** See [**attorney, lawyer**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#attorney, lawyer).

**lead** (n.) The first paragraph or sentences of a news article, infrequently spelled as *lede*. Used by journalists to capture the attention of readers and listeners, leads contain the most important, interesting or essential details of the article. An effective method for other types of writing. Pronounced "leed." See [**inverted pyramid**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#inverted).

**lead, led** Often confused and misspelled. Pronounced as "led" (like "head"), *lead* is a noun for the marking substance in a pencil and the metal a pipe may be made of. But pronounced as "leed" (like "heed"), *lead* is both a noun and a verb with the broad meaning of "being in front or in charge": *She will lead the investigation. His favorite horse has taken the lead in the race. The reporter quickly wrote a lead for the article.* *Led*, pronounced as it's spelled (like "head"), is the past tense of the verb *lead*: *She led the investigation.* Don't confuse spelling and pronunciation of *lead* with verb forms of *read*. It follows different rules. See **lead** above.

**least, less** See [**more, most**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#more, most).

**leave, let** Sometimes confused. *Leave* means "to go away from a place or person." It has other meanings, but don't use it to mean "allow" or "permit." Use *let* instead. *Let* means "to allow someone to do something; to allow something to happen." *Leave alone* is OK for telling someone "to go away" or "to stop bothering another person." Use *let alone* to mean "not to mention or much less": *She isn't old enough to crawl yet, let alone reach the counter.* See [**allow, enable, permit**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#allow)**;** [**lets, let's**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#lets) below.

**lectern, podium** Often confused. A speaker stands behind a *lectern* on a *podium*.

**left off** Informal. Consider rephrasing with a form of *stop*.

**legislative districts** See [**districts**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#districts).

**legislative titles** In texts, on first reference use *Rep., Reps., Sen.* and *Sens.* as formal titles before one or more names. Spell out and lowercase *representative* and *senator* in other uses. Add *U.S.* or *state* before a title if necessary to avoid confusion: *U.S. Rep. Warren Jackson spoke with state Sen. Henry Magnuson.* Do not use legislative titles before a name on second reference unless they are part of a direct quotation. Also, lowercase *legislative*. See [**councilmember**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#councilmember), [**party affiliation**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#party affiliation).

**legislature** Capitalize when the name of a state comes before it*: the Washington Legislature*. Keep capitalization when the state name is dropped, but the reference to the state's legislature is clear: *the state Legislature, the Legislature today*.

**legitimate** Commonly misspelled.

**leisure** Commonly misspelled.

**lend, loan** Sometimes misused. Use *lend* and its verb forms, *lent* and *lending* when writing about lending things. Avoid using *loan* as a verb unless it's about loaning money. Use *loan* as a noun. Correct: *Key Bank gave me a $10,000 loan. Key Bank loaned me $10,000. I lent her my car*. Avoid: *I loaned her my car.*

**length** See [**dimensions**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dimensions).

**lens** Often misspelled as *lense*. Add *es* to make *lens* plural: *lenses*.

**lesbian** See [**gay, lesbian**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#gay)**;** [**sex, sexism**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#sex).

**less** See [**fewer, less**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#fewer).

**less, least** See [**more, most**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#more, most).

**less than, under** If you mean a lesser quantity or amount, use *less than*. Use *under* to mean physically underneath. See [**fewer, less**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#fewer)**;** [**over, more than**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#over).

**lets, let's** Both are correct, depending on how you're using the word. If you mean *let us*, the correct spelling for the contraction is *let's*: *Let's finish the job*. But *lets* is correct as a present tense form of the verb *let*: *He lets them get away with murder*. See [**leave, let**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#leave) above.

**leverage** Business jargon used by financial consultants to increase their return on the time they're investing in you by making you feel indebted to them for their understanding of the jargon they're using. For everyday, clear use, *influence* is a powerful word.

**liable, libel, likely** Sometimes confused. Both *liable* and *likely* express probability of something happening, but *liable* suggests exposure to something undesirable or unpleasant. See **libel, slander** below for definitions of the noun and verb *libel*. See [**apt, likely**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#apt)**;** [**likelihood, likely**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#likelihood).

**liaison** Commonly misspelled. Not *liason* or *laison*. Also, the verb *liaise (with)* is jargon. Though wordier, *act as a liaison, exchange information, work together* or even *communicate* is clearer.

**libel, slander** Sometimes confused and misused. Both involve *defamation*, or an attack on or injury to the reputation or honor of another. But *libel* is written (or printed), and *slander* is spoken. Court decisions and varying state laws in the United States further define each term concerning truth, opinion, fault, public figures, private individuals, and other constitutional and legal issues.

**liberal** Ignore misleading uses of this honorable word. Used accurately, *liberal* implies tolerance of others' views and open-mindedness to ideas that challenge tradition and established institutions. To be liberal means to be willing to understand or respect the different, even unorthodox behavior and ideas of other people. A liberal person supports changes and reform in political, social or religious systems that promote democracy and individual freedom. To be liberal is to be generous and plentiful. Be liberal proudly. See [**conservation, conservative**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#conservative); [**progressive**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#progressive).

**lie** See [**lay, lie**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#lay).

**license** Commonly misspelled.

**lieu** Commonly misspelled.

**life cycle** Two words.

**life-size** Hyphenate.

**lifestyle** One word.

**lift-equipped** Hyphenate.

**light, lighted, lighting** But *lit* is acceptable as the past tense verb form. *Lighted* is preferred for the adjective form: *a lighted candle.*

**lightning, lightening** Commonly misspelled or confused. *Lightning* is an electrical discharge in the sky. *Lightening* is making something less serious, less heavy or less dark.

**light rail** Two words. Hyphenate when used as a compound adjective: *They considered two light-rail alternatives for the region.*

**likable** Commonly misspelled. Not *likeable*.

**like** See [**as if**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#as if)**;** [**as, like**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#as, like)**;** [**including, like, such as**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#including)**.**

**likelihood, likely** Commonly misspelled. Also, when using *likely* as an adverb to modify a verb, precede it with *most, quite, rather* or *very*: *The council will very likely approve the plan*. Those qualifying words aren't needed with *probably, in all likelihood* and *is likely to*: *The council will probably approve the plan. The council is likely to approve the plan*. See [**apt, likely**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#apt)**;** [**liable, likely**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#liable).

**limited** (adj.) Formal and vague. Simplify. Consider using *few, little, rare, scarce* or *small* instead.

**link together** See [**join together, link together**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#join together)**.**

**liquefy** Commonly misspelled. Not *liquify*.

**liqueur, liquor** Often confused or misspelled. *Liquor* is usually a distilled alcoholic beverage. *Liqueur* is a type of liquor, usually sweet and flavored, typically served after dinner. Memory aid for *liqueur*: It has two *u*'s separated by an *e*, one after the *q* and one before the *r*.

**Listserv, listserv** Don't use this registered trademark for a brand of software when writing about an *email list*, *Internet mailing list*, *email forum* or *Internet discussion group*. Use a version of those terms instead.

**lists** Lists are useful in texts to save space and improve readability. To use this technique most effectively

List only comparable items.

Keep the list items grammatically parallel.

Use only words, phrases or short sentences.

Provide adequate transitions before and after lists.

Do not overuse lists or make them too long.

When listing information in paragraph form, use commas to separate items in the list if the items are brief and have little or no internal punctuation. If the items are complex, separate them with semicolons. To stress sequence, order or chronology of list items, each item may be preceded with a number or letter enclosed in parentheses or followed by a period.

Use a colon to introduce a list only if a full sentence or clause comes before it. That sentence would end with *the following:* or *as follows:* or *Here are some examples:* or phrases like that. Don't use the colon after phrases like *The problems include* ... or *The members of the task force are*. ...

Here are two examples:

We think he should (1) increase his administrative skills, (2) get more education and (3) increase his production.

You should expect your vendor to do the following: train you in the care of your system; offer regular maintenance, with parts replacement when necessary; and respond quickly to service requests.

When listing information in a column, follow these guidelines:

End the introduction to the list with a colon if it is a complete sentence, as shown above.

Capitalize the first word in each item if one or more of the items are complete sentences.

Don't end list items with a semicolon. And don't use periods or other ending punctuation on items in the list unless one or more of the items are complete sentences.

Put a period after the final item in all lists.

Avoid ending the introductory phrase with a verb. If that cannot be avoided

don't use any end punctuation after the introductory phrase before the list (as shown above).

each item in the list should finish the sentence, beginning with a lowercase letter and ending with a period.

don't put the word *and* after the second-to-last item in the list.

Here are some guidelines for using bullets and dashes in the list:

Use bullets before each item in the list when rank or sequence is not important.

Avoid using an asterisk (*\**) or dash (*--*) to stand for bullets; most word processing and graphic design programs create bullets easily.

If using numbers to introduce items in a list, don't enclose the numbers in parentheses, but follow each with a period and a space.

Here are some guidelines for indenting a list:

Indent each item in the list if one or more of them develop a complete thought or contain more than one sentence.

If an item extends beyond one line, align the beginning of each line with the first word of the item after the number or bullet.

Here are some more examples:

*The team is studying three alternatives:*

*expanding the existing plant*

*building a new facility*

*improving all facilities.*

*Here's the procedure for typing a three-column table:*

*Clear tab stops.*

*Remove margin stops.*

*Find the precise center of the page.  
Set a tab stop at center.*

*The vendor for your system should*

*train you in the care of your system.*

*offer regular maintenance,  
with parts replacement when necessary.*

*respond quickly to service requests.*

**lit** See [**light, lighted, lighting**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#light, lighted, lighting).

**literally** Overused and misused. It means "actually or in fact," not "figuratively." No politician, rock band or cult, for example, can *literally sweep the Earth*. In other words, use *literally* only when describing reality, or consider dropping the word.

**livable** Not *liveable*.

**loan** See [**lend, loan**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#lend).

**loath, loathe** Often confused or misspelled. Use the adjective *loath* (pronounced like "both") to describe someone who's reluctant to do something. The verb *loathe* means "to dislike something or somebody intensely."

**local area network** See [**LAN**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#LAN).

**locality** Formal and overstated. Simplify or be more specific. Replace with *area, place, neighborhood, site* or *district*.

**local of a union** Always use a figure and capitalize *local* when giving the name of a union subdivision: *Local 587 of the Amalgamated Transit Union.* Lowercase *local* standing alone or in plural uses: *The local will vote Tuesday. Many employees are members of locals 17, 77, 117, 174 and 587.*

**located** Usually unnecessary when giving a location: *The plant is in Renton*. Not: *The plant is located in Renton*. Or: *Their office is on Bourbon Street*. Not: *Their office is located on Bourbon Street*. For other uses, consider using simpler verbs *place* or *find*.

**login/log in, logon/log on, log off, log out** Use one word as nouns, two words as verbs: *Have you been told your login yet? She was told to log on to her computer. He logged in to the database program. Everyone was logging off the network.* Verb use is more common. *Log in* and *log on* are interchangeable; so are *log off* and *log out*. Don't *log into* or *log onto*.

**long distance, long-distance** Always use a hyphen when writing about telephone calls: *We keep in touch by long-distance. He called long-distance. She took the long-distance call.* In other uses, use a hyphen only when used as a compound modifier: *She made a long-distance trip. He traveled a long distance.*

**long range, long-range** Hyphenate when used as a compound adjective before a noun: *long-range plan*.

**long-term, short-term** Hyphenate when used as compound adjectives: *The team developed a long-term regional plan.*

**long-standing** Always hyphenated.

**longtime, long time** One word (with no hyphen) as an adjective modifying a noun or pronoun: *longtime companion*. Two words when *long* modifies *time*: *He's worked in Hawaii a long time*.

**long-winded** See [**concise**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#concise)**.**

**loose, lose** Sometimes confused or misspelled. Use *loose* (pronounced "looss") to describe things that aren't attached firmly (*loose buttons*), that aren't tied tightly (*loose shoelaces*), that are too big (*loose clothes*), that are out of control (*loose prisoners*). Use *lose* (pronounced "looz") to say someone no longer has something (*lose a job*), can't find something (*lose car keys*), doesn't win something (*lose a game*), has less of something (*lose weight*) or wastes something (*lose time*). Some common, correct phrases: *loose translation, loose ends, loose cannon, on the loose, loose-leaf, loosen up, have nothing to lose, lose touch, lose it, lose your head*.

**lose out (on)** Wordy. Simplify. Drop *out* and *out on*.

**low-** Hyphenate compound adjectives using *low-* before a noun: *low-density district, low-frequency speaker, low-impact aerobics, low-income housing, low-water mark*. See [**high-**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#high-).

**lowercase** One word. It refers to letters and words that are not capitalized.

**luncheon** Formal. Simplify. Try *lunch* instead.

**-ly** A hyphen is unnecessary and redundant between an adverb ending in *ly* and the adjective it modifies: *an easily remembered rule, randomly selected addresses*. See [**hyphen**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#hyphen).

**lying** See [**lay, lie**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#lay).

**made a statement** Wordy. Simplify. Try *said*. See [**attribution**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#attribution)**,** [**state**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#state).

**magazine names** Capitalize the name but do not place it in quotations. Italicize magazine names if possible; underline them if not. Lowercase *magazine* unless it is part of the formal title. See [**composition titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#composition titles).

**magnitude** Overstated. Simplify. Try *size, importance, influence* or *greatness* instead. Also, try substituing simpler *most important* or *greatest importance* for *of the first magnitude*.

**mail stops** Two words.

**mainframe** One word.

**maintenance** Commonly misspelled. Not *maintainence*. If appropriate, consider using the simpler *upkeep*.

**major** Vague. Consider deleting or be more specific: *main, important, large, great* or *big*. See **major breakthrough** below.

**major breakthrough** Redundant, wordy cliche. A *breakthrough* is an important new discovery. By definition, it's already major. Simplify. Drop *major*.

**majority, most** Often confused. Use *majority* to describe "more than half a total or amount" and "the group, party or faction with more than half the votes": *A majority vote of only 51 percent is no mandate to make changes that affect everyone.* Use simpler *most* to mean "greatest in amount, quantity, number, extent or degree." Also, use simpler *most* instead of *almost all*. And simpler *most* may replace these wordy phrases: *vast majority, the great majority, a significant majority* and *the overwhelming majority.* Or be more specific about the details.

Use *majority* for describing the larger of two clearly divisible things: *A majority of the councilmembers voted for the resolution.* Or be specific: *Fifty-two percent of the councilmembers were for the resolution*. When *majority* is used alone, it takes singular verbs and pronouns: *The majority has made its decision.* If a plural word follows an *of* construction, the sense of the sentence will determine use of either a singular or plural verb: *A majority of three votes is not enough to control the committee. The majority of the houses on the block were destroyed.*

**-maker** Check this style manual and your dictionary for adding this suffix. If the word combination isn't listed, hyphenate any adjective or noun form, and use two words for the verb form.

**make reference to** Wordy. Simplify. Replace with *refer to.*

**male** See [**female, male**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#female); [**sex, sexism**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#sex).

**man** See [**man, manned, manning**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#man) below. Also see [**female, male**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#female); [**sex, sexism**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#sex).

**manageable** Commonly misspelled.

**manager** Capitalize when used as an official title before a name: *Social Services Division Manager David Koyama* or *Social Services Manager David Koyama*. Lowercase when standing alone or between commas after a name: *David Koyama, Social Services Division manager, toured the facility,* or *David Koyama, social services manager, toured the facility.*See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization).

**mandatory** Beware of redundancy when using this word, as in *Washington law requires mandatory use of seat belts*. Instead, *Washington law requires use of seat belts*, or *Use of seat belts is mandatory in Washington*.

**M&M's** Preferred punctuation, capitalization.

**maneuver** Commonly misspelled.

**man-made** Outdated term. Use *artificial, handmade, synthetic* or *manufactured* instead. See [**sex, sexism**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#sex)**,** [**staff**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#staff).

**man, manned, manning** Do not use *man* as a verb. Use *staff* instead or forms of *use, operate, worked* or *run*. Change: *Three employees man the office.* To: *Three employees staff the office*, *Three employees run the office.* See [**female, male**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#female)**;** [**gentleman**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#gentleman)**;** [**sex, sexism**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#sex)**;** [**staff**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#staff).

**manner** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try *way*.

**manpower** Outdated word. Use *workers, labor, staff, staffing, physical strength, human effort* or *work force* instead. See [**sex, sexism**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#sex).

**mantel, mantle** Sometimes confused. A *mantel* is the shelf above a fireplace. A *mantle* is a loose cloak or cape and anything the cloaks, covers or hides something: *a mantle of snow*. A *mantle* is also a particular duty or responsibility: *Their oldest daughter took on the mantle of parent after the accident.* *Mantles*, with other meanings, are also found in lanterns, furnaces and the earth.

**many, much** Use *many* with numbers, things that can be counted, and things that comprise several separate entities: *many buildings, many cars, many dollars*. Use *much* with mass or abstract nouns and nouns that refer to amounts or quantities instead of numbers: *much salt, much courage, much help*. See [**amount, number**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#amount, number)**;** [**much, muchly**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#much).

**marginal, marginally** Formal. Consider using simpler *small, slight* or *barely* instead.

**margins See** [**justification**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#justification)**.**

**marijuana** Hey man, like put a *j* in your *marijuana*. And keep the *h* out of it. Using *marihuana* is a bummer.

**marshal** Often misspelled as *marshall*. In the United States, don't double the *l* when using other forms of the verb. Correct: *marshaled*, *marshaling*.

**marshland** One word.

**Martin Luther King Jr.** See [**King Jr., Martin Luther King; Martin Luther King Jr.**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#Martin_Luther_King_Jr.)

**Master of Arts, Master of Business Administration, Master of Science** Abbreviate as *M.A., MBA, M.S.* Lowercase *master's degree* and *master's*. See [**academic degrees, titles, subjects**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#academic degrees).

**masthead, nameplate** A *masthead* is a box or section printed in a publication that gives the names of the publisher, owner and editors; the location of the offices; subscription rates; and other information. A *nameplate* gives the name of a newspaper, newsletter or magazine as it appears on the front page or cover.

**match up** Wordy. Simplify. Drop *up*.

**materialize** Simplify. Try *happen, appear, occur, develop, take place* or *turn up.*

**maximal** Vague. Simplify. Try *greatest, most, biggest, highest* or *largest.*

**maximize** It means "to increase to the maximum, to enlarge as much as possible." But if you mean only *increase, raise, enlarge, enhance* or *intensify*, simplify and use one of those words instead.

**maximum** Vague. Simplify. Try *greatest, most* or *largest.*

**may, might** Both words suggest possibility. One meaning of *may* suggests a likelihood that something will happen. *It may rain.* *Might* suggests a remote possibility or a possibility that once existed but no longer does: *I might as well be the man in the moon. I might have married her if our circumstances had been different.* Consider using *might* if using *may* could imply permission instead of possibility: *The graduating seniors might skip classes on Friday*. See [**can, could**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#can, could)**;** [**can, may**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#can, may)**;** [**could of, may of, might of, must of, should of, would of**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#could_of).

**may perhaps, might perhaps** Redundant and wordy phrases. Drop *perhaps*. And drop *possibly* from *may possibly* and *might possibly*.

**MB** Abbreviation for *megabyte*, which is 1,048,576 bytes. Leave no space between *MB* and the preceding number: *5MB of storage.*

**me** See [**I**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#I)**;** [**I, me**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#I-me)**;** [**myself**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#myself); [**Myths and Superstitions of Writing**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/myths.htm#firstperson).

**mean** See [**average, mean, medium, mode, norm**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#average).

**meaningful** Vague and overused, as in *meaningful action, meaningful discussion, meaningful dialogue, meaningful experience* and *meaningful relationship*. Delete or try *serious, useful, important* or *easy to understand* instead. Or add meaning by describing what you mean by *meaningful*.

**measurements** See [**dimensions**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dimensions)**,** [**numbers**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#numbers).

**medal, meddle, metal, mettle** Sometimes confused or misspelled. A *medal*, often made of metal, is a prize for winning a competition or award for doing something brave. To *meddle* is to get involved in someone else's business without an invitation to do so. *Metal* is a hard, often shiny substance such as bronze, gold and silver that's often simulated in medals. And *mettle* is the courage and stamina a person shows, often before earning a medal.

**media** *Media* takes plural verbs and pronouns when it refers to more than one *medium* of communication, such as TV, radio and newspapers: *Radio and television are popular entertainment media. The Internet is now a major news medium.* But it's becoming acceptable to refer to the mass media or communications media or news media as a singular entity that takes singular verbs and pronouns: *He's convinced the local news media is out to get him*. See [**press**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#press)*.*

**mediation** See [**arbitration, mediation**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#arbitration).

**medium** See [**average, mean, medium, mode, norm**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#average).

**member of the public** See [**citizen**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#citizen).

**memento, mementos** Not *momento, momentos*.

**memo, memos, memorandum, memorandums**

**men** See [**sex, sexism**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#sex).

**mendacity, mendicity** Sometimes misspelled or misused. *Mendacity* is a noun meaning "lying or untruthfulness." *Mendicity* is an obscure noun that means "begging."

**methanol** Lowercase.

**methodology** Formal, jargon. Simplify. Use *method, methods* or *way* instead.

**metrics** Include metric terms when they are relevant. Use metric terms when they are the primary form in which the source of information has given statistics. Follow the metric units with equivalents in terms more widely known in the United States. Usually, put the equivalent in parentheses after the metric figure, or make a general statement, such as: *A kilometer equals about five-eighths of a mile.* Except for references to computer memory storage and *mm* for *millimeter* in film widths, do not use metric abbreviations, such as *kg* for *kilogram*.

**microphone, mike** Abbreviate as *mike*, not *mic*.

**mid** *Mid* is both an adjective and a prefix (or combining form) that means "middle." It can stand alone without a hyphen to modify a noun but is often joined with the following noun: *midday, midsize.* *Mid-* (with a hyphen) typically goes before a capitalized word and figure: *mid-Atlantic, mid-70s.* Check your dictionary for preferred uses. Also see [**prefixes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prefixes).

**midday** One word.

**middle initials** Use middle initials when they are an integral part of a person's name (as typically used by the person named): *John F. Kennedy.* Also, use middle initials in stories or reports where they help identify a specific person, such as in casualty lists and accident reports. See [**initials**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#initials).

**midnight, noon** Don't capitalize, and do not put a redundant *12* in front of either word. Use *midnight* and *noon* instead of misleading, confusing and inaccurate *12 a.m.* and *12 p.m.* Although equipment like clock radios may need to be programmed using *12 a.m.* for midnight and *12 p.m.* for noon, readers likely won't know the difference between *12 a.m.* and *12 p.m.* in other uses.

Also, *midnight* is part of the day that is ending, not the one that is beginning. A 24-hour day begins immediately after midnight and runs until midnight. When writing about the beginning and end of a day, say it runs *from midnight Thursday to Friday at midnight* or *from midnight Jan. 28 to Jan. 29 at midnight.* An alternative is to write that an event begins *after midnight, Jan. 28*, and that something is due or ends *by midnight, Jan. 29,* or *before midnight, Jan. 29*. See [**time**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#time).

**might** See [**could of, may of, might of, must of, should of, would of**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#could_of); [**may, might**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#may, might); [**may perhaps, might perhaps**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#may_perhaps).

**miles** Use figures for amounts under *10* in dimensions, formulas and speed: *The land measured 2 miles by 3 miles. The truck slowed to 8 miles per hour. The coach gets 6 miles per gallon.* Spell out below *10* in distances: *He drove eight miles.*

**miles per gallon** The abbreviation *mpg* (lowercase, no periods) is acceptable on second reference.

**miles per hour** Abbreviation as *mph* (lowercase, no periods) is acceptable in all references.

**millennium** Commonly misspelled. Two *l's* and two *n's*. The millennium was neither 2000 nor 2001. A millennium is a 1,000-year period, not a year. The *year 2000* was the start of the 2000s. Despite what many people celebrated, Jan. 1, 2001, was the first day of the "new millennium." See [**century**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#century)**,** [**decades**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#decades)**,** [**years**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#years).

**militate** See [**mitigate, militate**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#mitigate).

**millions** See [**numbers**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#numbers)**,** [**ranges**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#ranges).

**minimal, minimum** These adjectives have subtle differences in meaning. *Minimal* means "extremely small in number, amount or degree ... and not worth worrying about": *with minimal support, minimal objectives, minimal amount of pain*. *Minimum* means "the smallest number, amount or degree that is possible, necessary, acceptable or lawful to have": *Of any one in his family, he had minimum contact with his father. Minimum wage. Minimum payment.*

**minimize** Overstated. It means "to make as small as possible, to reduce to a minimum." But if you mean only *decrease, lower, reduce* or *lessen*, simplify and use one of those words instead.

**minority, minorities** These words refer to racial, ethnic, religious or political people or groups. Use care when writing about specific types of minorities. See [**race**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#race).

**minuscule** Often misspelled. Not *miniscule*. Memory tip: Think *minus*. Also consider replacing with simpler *tiny*.

**minus sign** Use a hyphen, not a dash, but use the word *minus* if confusion is possible. Use a word, not a minus sign, to show temperatures below zero: *minus 10* or *5 below zero*.

**miscellaneous** Commonly misspelled.

**mischievous** Commonly misspelled. Not *mischievious*.

**misnomer** Often misused. Use it to note that a person, place or thing has been given a wrong or inappropriate name. Don't use it to identify something as a popular misconception or misunderstood concept. Memory aid: *Nomer* is from *name* in Latin, but don't then misspell the word as *misnamer*.

**Miss, Mr., Mrs., Ms.** In texts, do not use the courtesy titles *Miss, Mr., Mrs.* or *Ms.* Instead, use the first and last names of the person. On second reference, use only the last name. Courtesy titles may be used in business correspondence. Plural forms of these titles: *Misses, Messrs., Mmes., Mses.* See [**names**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#names).

**misspelling** Commonly misspelled.

**mitigate, militate** Often confused or misused. To *mitigate* is "to moderate, lessen, or make something milder, less severe, less unpleasant, less painful, less intense, less harsh or less hostile." If possible, consider using a simpler word for *mitigate*, such as *lessen, moderate, ease, soften, relieve* or *reduce* -- or define the word: *The department will mitigate, or reduce, the environmental impacts.* To *militate* is "to exert influence, usually against but sometimes for something." Correct terms include *militate against, militate for* and *militate in favor of*. Don't use *mitigate* in those terms.

**mock-up** (n.) Include hyphen.

**mode** See [**average, mean, medium, mode, norm**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#average).

**modern** Don't overdo it when describing something as *modern*. Simplify these redundant, wordy phrases: *modern* instead of *modern-day*; *modern world* instead of *modern world of today*; *modern* instead of *modern, state-of-the-art*. Also see [**state-of-the-art**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#state-of-the-art).

**modifications,** **modify** Consider replacing with simpler *changes* or *change*, or *improvements* or *improve*, or *adjustments* or *adjust*.

**Mom and Dad** See [**Dad and Mom**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dad and Mom).

**money** If you must note foreign currencies, don't put spaces between the abbreviation and the currency symbol and between the currency symbol and the number: *US$60, Can$35* or *C$35*. If you don't use the dollar sign (or the suitable symbol for other currencies), a space goes between the abbreviation and the number: *Fr 40 million, DM 501.23*. Avoid using the symbol for foreign currencies that may be unfamiliar to your readers. Also see [**between ... and, from ... to**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#between, from)**,** [**cents**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#cents)**,** [**dash**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dash)**,** [**decimals**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#decimals)**,** [**dollars**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dollars)**,** [**fractions**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#fractions)**,** [**numbers**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#numbers)**,** [**ranges**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#ranges).

**monies, moneys** Don't use this jargon for the plural of *money*. Replace it with simpler *cash, funds* or even *money*. But if you must sound like a bureaucrat, use the preferred spelling *moneys*, not the illogical spelling *monies*.

**Monorail** Capitalize on all references to the unique, effective public transportation system in downtown Seattle.

**months** Capitalize the names of months in all uses. In documents, reports and Web pages, abbreviate the following months when used with a specific date: *Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.* Spell out when using a month alone or with a year alone: *The committee met in August. The committee met Aug. 23, 1995. The committee met in August 1994.* Do not abbreviate months in datelines of business letters.

When using the month, day and year, set off the year with commas: *The committee met Aug. 23, 1994, at the Seattle Center.* See [**dates**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dates).

Also, don't insult your readers by noting that a month is a *month*. Simplify. Drop *the month of*: *in the month of January*.

**monthlong** One word, no hyphen.

**moot, mute** Sometimes confused. Use *moot* to describes a question that hasn't been decided or resolved. *Moot* also describes a situation that isn't likely to happen or is no longer important. *Mute* is usually about speech or sound and the lack of it. The correct phrase is *moot point*.

**moral, morale, morals** Sometimes confused, misused or abused. A *moral* is "a practical lesson about how to behave, learned from a story, fable or personal experience." *Morale* is "the confidence, enthusiasm and mental conditions and feelings of a person or group." *Morale* can be good or bad, positive or negative, high or low. *Morals* (plural) are "principles or standards of good and bad, right and wrong behavior, often involving sex." See [**amoral, immoral**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#amoral).

**more than half** See [**majority**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#majority).

**more and more** Wordy cliche. Avoid. Try *often*.

**more, most** Most one-syllable adjectives and adverbs add the suffixes *-er* or *-est* to show comparison with other items--as in *strict, stricter* and *strictest*. And most adjectives and adverbs with two or more syllables are preceded by *more* (or *less*) and *most* (or *least*), like *logical, more logical* and *most logical*, and *difficult*, *less difficult* and *least difficult*. Using both the suffix and *more* (*less*) or *most* (*least*) to form the comparison is redundant. When comparing only two items, use the comparative *-er* or *more* (*less*). When comparing three or more items, use the superlative *-est* or *most* (*least*). Be aware of irregular forms (like *bad*, *worse* and *worst*), and check your dictionary when in doubt.

**moreover** Overstated. Simplify. Try *besides, in addition, also* or *and*.

**more than** See [**over**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#over).

**most** See [**all, any, most, some**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#all, any)**;** [**majority, most**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#majority)**;** [**more, most**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#more, most).

**most unique** See [**unique**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#unique)**.**

**mother** See [**family names**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#family names), [**Dad and Mom**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#Dad and Mom).

**Mother's Day**

**motion, ordinance** A city council may adopt *motions* and *ordinances*. A *motion* lacks the power of law but is used to request information. An *ordinance* is a law and has the power of law. Capitalize *motion* and *ordinance* when writing about a specific council motion or ordinance, but do not use *Number* or *No*.: *The council will consider Ordinance 1112 and Motion 4119 Thursday.* Lowercase when standing alone. See [**adopt, approve, enact, pass**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#adopt, approve)**;** [**law**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#law)**;** [**ordinance, ordnance**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#ordinance).

**mount** Always spell out, including the names of communities: *Mount Rainier, Mount Si, Mount Baker*.

**mountains** Capitalize as part of a proper name: *Cascade Mountains, Olympic Mountains, Rocky Mountains*. Or simply: *the Cascades, the Olympics, the Rockies*.

**mouse** If you have more than mouse looking for cheese in your house, you have *mice*. If you have more than one mouse for your computer, you have *mouses*.

**moustache** See [**mustache**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#mustache).

**mph** See [**miles per hour**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#miles per hour)**.**

**Mr., Mrs., Ms.** See [**Miss, Mr., Mrs., Ms.**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#Miss).

**much, muchly** Avoid using substandard *muchly*. Instead, use *much*, *very much* or other adverbs, such as *very* and *highly*. See [**many, much**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#many, much).

**multi-** The rules in [**prefixes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prefixes) apply, but usually, no hyphen. Some examples: *multicolored, multilateral, multimillion.*

**must** See [**could of, may of, might of, must of, should of, would of**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#could_of).

**mustache** Preferred spelling, not *moustache*: *The editor's 34-year-old mustache hasn't turned completely gray yet.*

**mute** See [**moot, mute**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#moot).

**mutual** Sometimes misused or used redundantly after words like *and, between, both* and *two*: *The two candidates reached a mutual understanding about the debate*. Drop *mutual*. It means "two-way or reciprocal," not "common." See [**common, mutual**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#common, mutual)**.**

**myriad** Acceptable as both a noun (*a myriad of*) and an adjective: *She supported the candidate for a myriad of reasons. She supported the candidate for myriad reasons*. But simplify and save some words by using the adjective form.

**myself** Often misused. Use this word to refer to yourself or for emphasis: *I dressed myself. I'd rather do it myself.* But don't use it self-consciously as a substitute for *me*. Incorrect: *He asked Tina and myself for a ride home. Give it to him or myself. He talked to Tina and myself. The horse carried Tina and myself.* Correct: *He asked Tina and me for a ride home. Give it to him or me. He talked to Tina and me. The horse carried Tina and me.*

To test for correctness: Remove the other person's name and the conjunction from the sentence, leaving *myself*; if it sounds incorrect, it probably is. For example, you wouldn't want to be heard saying, "He asked myself for a ride home. Give it to myself. He talked to myself. The horse carried myself." See [**I, me**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#I-me)**.**

**MySpace** One word; capitalize as shown

**N- |** [-O-](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#-O-)

**n.** Abbreviation for *noun* in this style manual. See [**noun**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#noun).

**nameplate** See [**masthead, nameplate**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#masthead) entry.

**names** People are entitled to be known however they want to be known, if their identities are clear. In publications, use a person's full name on first reference, last name only on second reference. Don't repeat a person's title before the last name on second reference. See [**brand names**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#brand names)**;** [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization)**;** [**Dad and Mom**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dad and Mom)**;** [**junior, senior**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#junior)**;** [**middle initials**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#middle initials)**;** [**Miss, Mr., Mrs., Ms.**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#Miss)**;** [**nickname**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#nickname).

**National Environmental Policy Act** Spell out on first reference. *NEPA* is acceptable for later references.

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration** Spell out on first reference. *NOAA* is acceptable for later references.

**nationalities and races** See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization)**,** [**race**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#race).

**National Public Radio** See [**NPR**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#NPR).

**nationwide** One word.

**Native Americans** See [**American Indian, Eskimo**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#American Indian)**;** [**tribe**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#tribe).

**nauseated, nauseous** A subtle distinction, commonly confused. Use *nauseated* to describe the experience of nausea -- somone's suffering from nausea and ready to vomit: *I felt nauseated after eating that hamburger*. Use *nauseous* to describe something that's causing nausea because it's sickening or disgusting: *The news of his election is nauseous*.

**naval, navel** Commonly misspelled or confused. Use the adjective *naval* when writing about the navy. Use *navel* when writing about the belly button or *navel oranges*, which have a small navel-like depression in the outer skin.

**near miss, near-miss** A *near miss* (without a hyphen) is a miss that is near, like a blue jacket is a jacket that is blue. But *near-miss* (with a hyphen) is a hit. Avoid confusion by using *near-collision* (with a hyphen) instead of *near miss* when describing a narrowly averted collision. See [**collide, collision**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#collide).

**near, nearly** *Near* is sometimes used incorrectly instead of *nearly*. Use *nearly* as an adverb meaning "almost" to modify a verb: *The dog is nearly* [not *near*] *finished eating its food*. Use *near* as an adjective meaning "close to" or "next to" to modify a noun: *Edmonds is near Seattle*.

**necessary** Vague. Try *needed* or *essential*.

**necessitate** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try *need, call for, cause* or *have to*.

**needless to say** See [**goes without saying, needless to say**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#goes without saying).

**negative** Except in informal writing, avoid using double negatives--two or more words with negative meanings--in a single sentence: *I don't want nothing. He couldn't hardly walk.* Common negative words include *neither, no, nobody, none, no one, not, nothing* and *nowhere*, contractions such as *couldn't* and *don't*, and words such as *barely, hardly* and *scarcely*.

Double negative can distract people who think they're ungrammatical and uneducated or awkward and odd. They can confuse readers and slow down understanding. They add unnecessary words. They usually end up stating a positive by canceling the negative meaning. And they can confuse writers who may unintentionally end up making a positive statement when they mean to be saying *no* or *not*.

**Negro** See [**African American**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#african American)**,** [**black**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#black)**,** [**race**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#race).

**neither** When used on its own without *nor*, make the verb singular: *Neither of the men was ready.*

**neither ... nor** See [**either ... or, neither ... nor**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#either or)*.*

**NEPA** See [**National Environmental Policy Act**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#NEPA).

**nevertheless** Overstated. Simplify. Try *even so, but, yet, still* or *however*.

**new development, new improvement, new initiative, new innovation, new introduction** Redundant and wordy. Simplify. Drop *new*.

**news conferences** See [**press**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#press)**.**

**newsgroup** One word when writing about an Internet discussion group.

**news media** See [**media**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#media).

**newspapers** Capitalize all proper nouns that are part of the official title. Italicize them if possible; underline them if not. Capitalize *the* in a newspaper's name if that is the publication's preferred title. Don't use quotation marks. See [**composition titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#composition titles).

**news releases** See [**press**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#press).

**newsstand** Commonly misspelled. Like in *misspelled*, two *s*'s. Not *newstand*.

**New Year's, New Year's Day, New Year's Eve** But *the new year*.

**nice** It has many meanings, including "finicky," "precise and subtle," "delicate," and "scrupulous." And it's commonly used to mean "friendly, pretty, courteous, respectable or good." If you mean one of those words -- or any of the other definitions of *nice* -- be nice to your readers and use one of them. Or describe why you think something is "nice" *He volunteers at the dog shelter*; not *He's nice*. *Their house has indoor plumbing*; not *Their house is nice*.

**nickel** Commonly misspelled.

**nickname** Use instead of a person's given name if the person prefers to be known by the nickname. When including a nickname in the identification of a person, use quotation marks, not parentheses. But omit the quotation marks when using a nickname without the person's real name: *Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt* but *Teddy Roosevelt*. See [**names**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#names).

**nighttime** One word.

**9/11** Commonly used reference to terrorist attacks on the United States, Sept. 11, 2001.

**911 call** Emergency call number in the United States. Acceptable in all references.

**No.** Use as the abbreviation for *number* when used with a figure, in both singular and plural forms: *the No. 3 choice, invoice Nos. 4311 and 5207, lot No. 23, apartment No. 6.* Don't use the number symbol or sign, *#*, to stand for *No.* or *number.*

**NOAA** See [**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#NOAA).

**nobody,** **no one** *Nobody* is one word; *no one* is two words. Interchangeable, but *no one* is considered more formal. They take singular verbs and adjectives.

**noisome, noisy** Often confused adjectives. Use *noisome* to describe something that's disgusting, offensive, harmful, or foul-smelling. Use *noisy* to describe something that's loud, making a lot of noise, full of noise or raucous.

**non-** The rules in [**prefixes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prefixes) apply but usually, no hyphen.

**noncontroversial** All issues are controversial. A *noncontroversial issue* is impossible. A *controversial issue* is redundant. See [**issue**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#issue).

**none are, none is** Both phrases are correct, depending on the noun that follows them (or the understood noun if you're not naming it). If that noun is plural, use a plural verb; if it's singular, use a singular verb. Thus: *Of the eight applicants, none of them are qualified. Every child went to the haunted house, and none [of them] are returning. None of the applicant's proposal was persuasive. None of it is safe for children.* If the noun form is unclear, use a singular verb.

**none at all** Redundant. Replace with *none*.

**nonflammable** See [**flammable, inflammable, inflammatory, nonflammable**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#flammable)**.**

**nonmotorized** Don't hyphenate.

**nonpreventable** Acceptable alternatives are *not preventable* and *unpreventable*. See [**prefixes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prefixes).

**nonprofit** One word, no hyphen.

**noon** See [**midnight, midnight**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#midnight)**,** [**time**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#time).

**no one** See **nobody, no one** above.

**norm** See [**average, mean, medium, mode, norm**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#average).

**normalcy, normality** *Normality* is the preferred noun for a situation in which things happen in the normal or standard way.

**northwest, Northwest** See [**addresses**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#addresses), [**Pacific Northwest**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#Pacific_Northwest).

**notable, noticeable** Commonly misspelled or confused. *Notable* means "important, interesting or unusual enough to be noticed." *Noticeable* means "easy to see, feel or hear, or likely to be noticed." Drop the *e* when adding *able* to *note*, but keep the *e* when adding *able* to *notice*.

**not hardly** See [**hardly**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#hardly).

**notify** Formal. Simplify. Use *tell* instead.

**not only ... but also** Balance the sentence grammatically when using this phrase. If a prepositional phrase follows *not only*, for example, a prepositional phrase should follow *but also*. Correct: *The fall in the birthrate varies not only from city to city but also from area to area.* Incorrect: *Not only does the fall in the birthrate vary from city to city but also from area to area.* See [**both ... and**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#both and).

**notwithstanding** Formal. Simplify. Use *despite, although, even though* or *even with* instead.

**NPR** Abbreviation for *National Public Radio*. Acceptable in all references, including first.

**noun** A noun is a word or group of words used to represent a person, place, thing, object, quality, idea, activity, action or emotion. A proper noun names a specific or unique person, place or thing and is capitalized: *Jennifer Lopez, Hollywood*, The Wedding Planner. A common noun is not specific when naming people, places, things, qualities, ideas or emotions. Do not capitalize common nouns: *the actress, the city, the movie, beautiful, creativity, desire*. See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization)**,** [**hyphen**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#hyphen).

**nuclear, nuke** Potentially misused. George W. Bush and some other U.S. presidents have mispronounced *nuclear.* But just because presidents say something doesn't make it true or correct. (Think WMD in Iraq.) It's "noo-klee-ar," not "noo-kyuh-lar." And spell it correctly too; it's not *nucular*. Also, casual use of the slang word *nuke* for *nuclear* minimizes the death and destruction that would come after use of nuclear weapons. Avoid using *nuke* whether you're writing about attacking with nuclear weapons or cooking with a microwave oven. See [**weapons of mass destruction**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#wmd).

**number** *The number* always takes a singular verb. *A number* always takes a plural verb and plural noun: *A small but increasing number of people were using the shortcut. The small but interested number of engineers was essential to the success of the workshop.* Use *number* to refer to items that can be counted. See [**amount, number**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#amount, number)**;** [**amount of**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#amount of)**;** [**a number of**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#a_number_of)**;** [**No.**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#No.)**;** [**total number**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#total number).

**numbers** Spell out most whole numbers below *10*. Use figures for *10* and above: *five, nine, 15, 650*. See cross-references below for exceptions to those guidelines. If you're not already doing so, use the number *1* key on your computer keyboard to create the number 1. Don't use the old-fashioned, potentially odd-looking lowercase *L* key to create the number *l*.

In amounts more than a million--unless the exact amount is essential--round off up to two decimal points. Write out the word *million, billion* or *trillion*, and use numbers in all but casual uses: *4 million, 31.6 million, a $6.25 million investment, a million bucks.* Always include the words *million, billion* or *trillion* when giving ranges: *The project could cost $35 million to $41 million*, not *$35-$41 million*. Some readers may think you mean only *$35*.

When numbers must be spelled out, use a hyphen to connect only two-digit numbers *twenty-one* through *ninety-nine*. Don't use either a hyphen or the word *and* when spelling out numbers in the hundreds and thousands: *fifty-two, fifty-two thousand, fifty-two million, nineteen fifty-two, one hundred fifty-two students, two thousand fifty-two trips, two thousand two*.

Also, spell out ordinal numbers *first* through *ninth* when they show sequence in time or place: *first base, Third Avenue*. Exceptions include county, legislative and congressional districts: *She lives in the 2nd District*. See [**districts**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#districts).

Most ordinal numbers *10th* and above (*21st, 215th* and so on) are usually not spelled out. When particular ordinals must be spelled out, use a hyphen to connect two-digit numbers *twenty-first* through *ninety-ninth*: *twenty-fifth anniversary*.

Avoid beginning a sentence with a number. If unavoidable, spell it out. Also, spell out casual expressions: *thanks a million, a thousand bucks*. See [**years**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#years).

Avoid following the word for a number with a figure in parentheses for the same number. It's redundant. Avoid: *The contract will run out in eight (8) days.*

For exceptions and other uses, see [**act**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#act)**,** [**addresses**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#addresses)**,** [**ages**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#ages)**,** [**between ... and, from ... to**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#between, from)**,** [**cents**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#cents)**,** [**chapter**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#chapter)**,** [**dash**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dash)**,** [**dates**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dates)**,** [**decimals**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#decimals)**,** [**dimensions**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dimensions)**,** [**distances**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#distances)**,** [**dollars**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dollars)**,** [**fractions**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#fractions)**,** [**headlines**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#headlines)**,** [**highway designations**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#highway designations)**,** [**hyphen**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#hyphen)**,** [**miles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#miles)**,** [**money**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#money)**,** [**No.**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#No.)**,** [**page numbers**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#page numbers)**,** [**percentages**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#percentages)**,** [**ranges**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#ranges)**,** [**ratios**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#ratios)**,** [**room numbers**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#room numbers)**,** [**route number**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#room numbers)**,** [**scores**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#scores)**,** [**size**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#size)**,** [**speeds**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#speeds)**,** [**telephone numbers**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#telephone)**,** [**temperatures**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#temperatures)**,** [**time**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#time)**,** [**votes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#votes)**,** [**weight**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#weight).

**number sign (#)**. See [**pound sign (#)**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#pound sign).

**numerous** Overstated. Simplify. Try *many*, or be specific.

**-O-**

**objective** Think about replacing with simpler *aim, purpose* or *goal*.

**obscenities, profanities, racial or ethnic slurs** Avoid using offensive and derogatory terms unless there are compelling reasons to include them. For example, they might be essential to show the intensity or meaning of a statement or direct quotation or to document specific communication in a conversation or speech. Consider your intended audience and the purpose of the document when evaluating a quotation containing offensive or derogatory language.

Try to find a way to give a sense of a person's statement without using a specific offensive word or phrase. If a full quotation containing an offensive term must be included, consider using only the first letter of the term followed by hyphens to replace the other letters: *s---, m-----------*. Don't substitute a less offensive alternative in direct quotations: *darn it* instead of *damn it*. If used, lowercase *damn, damn it, god, goddamn it*.

**obligated** Try replacing with simpler *bound*.

**obligation** Consider replacing with simpler *duty, debt, bond* or *contract*.

**obtain** Overstated and formal. Simplify. See [**get**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#get).

**obviously** Often unnecessary and condescending. If something is obvious, why mention it? But if you do state the obvious, don't insult your readers. Drop *obviously*. See [**goes without saying, needless to say**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#goes without saying).

**occasion** Commonly misspelled. Uses two *c*'s but only one *s*.

**occur, occurred, occurring, occurrence** Formal, and commonly misspelled. Double the *r* when adding to the root word, *occur*. Use *occur* or simpler *happen* to refer to "an accidental or unscheduled event." Use *take place* to refer to "a planned event": *The power outage occurred about 5 p.m. The opening ceremony will take place at 2 p.m. Friday.* Instead of the general, formal word *occurrence*, try using *event* for a significant occurrence or *incident* for an event with relatively minor significance.

**of all** Wordy. Try omitting: *Nils Johansen is the most careful driver.* Not: *Nils Johansen is the most careful of all drivers.*

**off-, -off** Follow your preferred dictionary. Hyphenate if not listed there.

**offensive language** See **obscenities, profanities, racial or ethnic slurs** above.

**office** Capitalize when part of an agency's official name: *Customer Assistance Office, Clark County Sheriff's Office, U.S. Attorney's Office*. Lowercase all other uses: *the analyst's office, the sheriff's office, the attorney's office.* See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization).

Also, *office* as a verb is business jargon. Use *have an office* instead.

**officeholder One word.**

**official, officious** Sometimes confused adjectives. Use *official* to describe something done or approved someone in authority, especially by the government. Use *officious* to express disapproval, describing someone who offers advice and service that's unwelcome and annoying, who interferes, who meddles.

**offline** No hyphen.

**off of** Wordy. Change: *Stay off of the highway.* To: *Stay off the highway.* Or use *from.* Change*: She moved off of the campus.* To*: She moved from the campus.*

**off-peak** Hyphenate.

**off-ramp, on-ramp** Hyphenate.

**off-site** Hyphenate.

**of major importance** Wordy. Simplify by replacing with *is* *important, are important* or *was important.*

**oils** See [**collective nouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#collective nouns).

**OK, OK'd, OK'ing, OKs** Preferred spelling. No periods.

**old** Sometimes used redundantly after words like *adage, cliche, maxim, proverb* and *saying*: *She often used old cliches when giving advice*. Drop *old*.

**older, oldest** See [**elder, older**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#elder).

**omitted** Commonly misspelled.

**on** Avoid using *on* before a date or day of the week, unless its absence would lead to confusion. Change: *The council will meet on Dec. 12.* To: *The council will meet Dec. 12.* Use *on* to avoid an awkward juxtaposition of a proper name and a date: *Peter met Tina on Tuesday.* See [**on, onto, on to, upon**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#on, onto).

**on account of** Wordy. Simplify. Use *because of* or *caused by* instead: *She was hired because of her excellent writing skills*. Not: *She was hired on account of her excellent writing skills*.

**on behalf of, in behalf of** Sometimes confused. *On behalf of* means "as the agent of" or "in place of," often in a formal relationship: *The attorney spoke on behalf of her client*. Think about substituting the simpler *for, representing* or *speaking for* for *on behalf of*. *In behalf of* means "in the interest or for the benefit of," typically acting as friend or defender: *The character witness gave evidence in behalf of the defendant*. Consider using simpler *supporting*.

**onboard** One word, no hyphen.

**one another** See [**each other, one another**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#each other).

**one time, one-time** *They arrived early one time* (or *once*). But: *She is a one-time winner. They were one-time colleagues.*

**one of the** Verbose. Drop *of the* or use *a* or *an* instead. Change: *One of the purposes of the meeting was to choose a new chair.* To: *One purpose of the meeting was to choose a new chair.* Or: *A purpose of the meeting was to choose a new chair.* Also, Don't use the illogical *one of the only*; instead, choose *one of the few*.

**ongoing** Overstated and bureaucratic. Omit, or try using *continuing, current*, *developing*, *under way* or *active*.

**online** One word, no hyphen, in all uses. See [**email**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#email), [**Internet**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#internet), [**intranet**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#intranet)**,** [**World Wide Web**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#World Wide Web).

**only** Placement of *only* can change the meaning of a sentence: *Only David said he was hungry.* (David alone said.) *David only said he was hungry.* (He was not hungry, but he said he was.) *David said he was only hungry.* (He was not also thirsty or tired or dirty or angry.) To avoid confusion, place *only* directly before the word or phrase it modifies. Any words separating *only* from the word or phrase it's intended to modify can lead to ambiguity and confusion.

**on, onto, on to, upon** Use *onto* when two elements work as a compound preposition to mean "movement toward and then over": *He jumped onto the horse.* But use *on to* where *on* is an adverb: *We moved on to the next subject.* Avoid using *upon* instead of the simpler *on*. See [**on**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#on).

**on-site** Hyphenate.

**on the part of** Wordy. Simplify. Replace with *among, by, of* or *for*.

**OPEC** See [**Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#Organization of Petroleum)**.**

**operational** Try replacing with simpler *working, running, active, live* or *operating*.

**oppress, repress** Often confused. Always a negative term, *oppress* means "to treat people in an unjust, harsh and cruel way." *Repress* means "to restrain feelings" and "to keep under control."

**optimum** Overstated. Simplify. Think about replacing with *best, greatest, ideal* or *most suitable*.

**or** When all the elements of a conjunction using *or* are singular, use a singular verb. When all the elements are plural, use a plural verb. When the subject has a mixture of singular and plural elements, make the verb agree with noun or pronoun nearest it. See [**and (conjunction)**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#and (conjunction)); [**either ... or, neither ... nor**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#either or).

**oral, verbal, written** Use *oral* to refer to spoken words: *The planner gave an oral presentation*. Or be less formal and more specific: *The planner gave a talk ... The planner spoke about ... The planner talked about ....* Use *verbal* to compares words with some other form of communication: *His facial expression revealed the ideas that his limited verbal skills could not express*. Use *written* to refer to words on paper: *The two jurisdictions had a written agreement*. See [**aural**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#aural)**.**

**ordinance, ordnance** Occasionally confused or misspelled. An *ordinance* is a law of a city, town or county. *Ordnance* is all the artillery, weapons, ammunition, combat vehicles and other equipment used by a military branch or unit. See [**motion, ordinance**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#motion)**.**

**organisms** See [**taxonomy**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#taxonomy).

**Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries** Use the full name for first reference. *OPEC* is OK for later references.

**organizations and institutions** Capitalize the full names of organizations and institutions. Lowercase the internal elements of an organization when the names are widely used generic terms: *board of directors, history department of the University of Washington*. But see [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization).

**Oriental** *Asian* or *Asian American* is preferred when writing about inhabitants or descendants of Far East nations of Asia. See [**Asian, Pacific Islander**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#american Indian)**;** [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization)**;** [**race**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#race).

**orientate** Simplify. Use *orient* instead.

**other than** Wordy. Simplify. Try using *except* or *besides*.

**ought to** Always follow *ought* as well as *ought not* with the infinitive *to*. *Ought to* and *should* are similar in meaning, though *ought to* is stronger (but less commonly used) for describing a sense of duty. See [**should, would**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#should, would).

**our** See [**we**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#we).

**outbox** One word, no hyphen. Also, *inbox*.

**outbreak** For disease references, reserve for large numbers of an illness or a larger number of illnesses than typically expected.

**outgoing** Be careful in using this word as an adjective describing people. It has two differing meanings: One is *going away, retiring or withdrawing from a place* or *position*, and the other is *friendly* or *responsive*.

**output** See [**input, output, throughput**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#input, output, throughput).

**over, more than** *Over* usually refers to one thing being above another thing: *The plane flew over Bellevue.* *More than* is preferred when using figures, numbers and amounts: *More than 300 people attended the meeting. The document had more than 40 pages.* But *over* may be less awkward in some uses: *He is over 40.* Let your ear be your guide. See [**above**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#above)**,** [**less than, under**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#less than).

**over-** Usually, don't use a hyphen: *overexpenditure, override, overspend*. But see [**prefixes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prefixes).

**-over** Follow your preferred dictionary. Hyphenate if not listed there.

**overall** Hackneyed. Simplify. Delete or try *total, complete* or *general*.

**over and over** Wordy. Simplify. Try *again* or *repeatedly*.

**overexaggerate** Redundant and overstated. Drop *over*.

**overly** Wordy and almost always unneeded. Delete or use the suffix *over-* instead: *overeager*, not *overly eager*. Alternative words: *too* or *very*.

**oversight** Potentially misleading euphemism that means both *watchful, responsible care* and *an unintentional omission or error*. Think about using *supervision* as an alternative for the first meaning

**Pacific Islander** See [**Asian, Pacific Islander**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#asian)**.**

**Pacific Northwest** Capitalize. Also capitalize *Northwest* when referring to the *Pacific Northwest* region. See [**addresses**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#addresses).

**page numbers** Use numerals and capitalize *page* when used with a figure: *Page 1*. Spell out and capitalize the page number in business correspondence: *Page Five*.

**pair** A *pair* is a group of two or something with two similar parts. The singular noun takes a singular verb: *The pair of scissors is in the drawer. His pair of black dress shoes is in the closet.* The preferred plural is *pairs*: *She took three pairs of pants on the trip.* Also, using *a pair of* when writing about one set of twins, scissors, shoes and so on is often redundant. Simplify. Try dropping *a pair of*.

**palate, palette, pallet** Sometimes confused or misspelled. A *palate* is "the roof of the mouth" and "a person's sense of taste." A *palette* is "a board with a thumbhole that an artist uses to hold and mix paints." It's also "the range of colors used on a particular painting." And a *pallet* is "a low portable platform that holds stacks of goods, often in a warehouse."

**paradigm** Obscure, pompous jargon. Unless you're trying to impress and confuse readers simultaneously, use simpler *pattern, model* or *example*. Instead of *a paradigm shift*, try *a new idea* for doing something or *a new way* of viewing something.

**paragraph** Long paragraphs--like long sentences--can intimidate readers. To improve readability and appearance (which affects readability), try to limit most paragraphs to seven lines containing no more than four or five sentences. And think about turning some paragraphs into bulleted lists of parallel points. See [**lists**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#lists).

One-sentence paragraphs aren't used often in formal, academic and business writing. But they can be effective to stress a single point, to mark a major transition between other paragraphs, to summarize what's already been expressed in a single strong statement or to introduce a new topic with a single strong statement. Journalists often use them; the narrow newspaper columns make long paragraphs look uninviting to readers. One-sentence paragraphs also can be useful in technical writing. See [**inverted pyramid**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#inverted); [**Myths and Superstitions of Writing**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/myths.htm#paragraph).

**parallel** Commonly misspelled. Double the *l* in the middle, not the *r*.

**parameter(s)** Jargon. If you're not using this term to mention the variable(s) in a mathematical equation, don't use it. Instead, try *perimeter* or *boundary* if you're writing about the border around an area of land or outer boundary of a geometric figure. Usually better in business writing are *limits, feature, dimensions, extent* or *scope*. Other useful choices are *properties*, *rules, conditions*, *barriers*, *guidelines* or *characteristics*.

**paraphrasing** See [**attribution**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#attribution)**,** [**quotations**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#districts).

**parentheses** **( )** Parentheses may be used to surround words, phrases or even whole sentences that are relatively unimportant to the main text. But they can distract the reader from your main point. Think about deleting the unimportant text. If a sentence must contain incidental information, setting off the information with a pair of commas or a pair of dashes may be more effective. Also try placing the extra information in a separate sentence--with no parentheses. See [**abbreviations and acronyms**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#abbreviations and acronyms), [**comma**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#comma), [**dash**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dash).

Parenthesis marks always come in twos, one opening and one closing *( )*. Don't use one without the other, including if they're used in numbered or alphabetized lists. See [**lists**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#lists).

Place a period outside a closing parenthesis if the material inside is not a sentence *(such as this fragment).* If a parenthetical sentence *(here is one example)* is part of a sentence, don't capitalize the first word or end the parenthetical sentence with a period. But if the parenthetical sentence ends with a question mark or exclamation point, put a period after the closing parenthesis *(here's another example!).* If the material in the parentheses is an independent sentence, capitalize the first word and place the period before the closing parenthesis. *(Here is an example.)*

**partially, partly** These adverbs have subtle but useful differences in meaning. Use *partly* to mean "in part," when a whole can have distinct parts--usually of a physical object: *They built the shelter partly of wood and partly of aluminum.* Use *partially* to describe the whole but only "to some extent or some degree"--especially when writing about a condition or preference: *I'm partially resigned to it.* If the difference isn't clear, use simpler *partly*.

**participate, participation** Formal. Simplify. Try using *take part* or *taking part* instead.

**particular** Often redundant and wordy when used with *this* or *that*: *He praised this particular book*. Simplify. Drop *particular*.

**part time, part-time** Two words when used as a noun. Do not hyphenate. Hyphenate when used as a compound modifier: *He worked part time. She has a part-time job.*

**party** Silly legal jargon for "person." A *person* may go to a party, belong to a party or be part of a party -- and be involved in a lawsuit. See [**people, persons**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#people).

**party affiliation** If mention of political party affiliation is necessary, follow these examples:

*Republican Sen. Jerry DeSoto of Oregon said ...*,

*Rep. Edmund Ballinger, D-Auburn, said ...* (for Washington state representatives)

*Rep. Virginia Westerland, R-Idaho, said ...*

*Clark County Councilmember Shirley Cannon, D-District 3, said. ...*

See [**districts**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#districts)**,** [**legislative titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#legislative).

**pass** See [**adopt, approve, enact, pass**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#adopt, approve).

**passable, passible** Sometimes confused or misspelled. Use the adjective *passable* to describe something that's barely good enough to be acceptable or something that's clear of barriers. An adjective used in theology or religious study, *passible* describes someone who's capable of feeling or suffering.

**passed, past** Sometimes misused or confused. *Pass* is the past tense of the verb *pass*, which has multiple meanings including "to move forward, hand to others, go beyond, elapse, complete successfully, pronounce formally, enact, emit, refuse to act, exceed, or spend time." *Past* refers to time or distance as an adjective, adverb, noun, preposition and adverb. It's never a verb.

**passer-by, passers-by**

**passive verbs** See [**active vs. passive verbs**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#active vs. passive).

**past** See **passed, past** above; **past, previous, prior** below; and [**last, latest, past**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#last).

**past due** No hyphen after the noun it modifies; hyphenate before the noun: *a past-due bill. The payment was past due*.

**pastime** Commonly misspelled. Not *pasttime*.

**past, previous, prior** Redundant and wordy when used with words like *achievement, experience, history, performance* and *record*: *After the merger, they often talked about their prior experience with the agency*. Drop *prior*. Also, in other uses, *before, earlier* or *last* are simpler alternatives to *previous*.

**pat-down** (n. and adj.), **pat down** (v.)

**patrol, patrolled, patrolling**

**pavilion** Commonly misspelled.

**PCBs** Spell out on first reference--*polychlorinated biphenyls*. The abbreviation *PCBs* (all uppercase, no apostrophe) may be used on second reference.

**PDF** Abbreviation for *portable document format*. The abbreviation is acceptable on first use when noting the format of a file on a website: *(PDF file, 1.2MB)*. Lowercase when giving a document name: *brochure.pdf*. To aid readers on the Web, consider linking to free downloadable *PDF reader software* or *PDF reader*, such as [Adobe Reader](http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html).

**peaceable, peaceful** Sometimes confused and often ignored, unfortunately. Use *peaceable* to describe a person or nation that doesn't like to argue or cause fights. Use *peaceful* to describe a person, place, relationship or situation that is calm, tranquil, quiet, or not at war or in violent conflict.

**peak hour** (n), **peak-hour** (adj.) Also known as *peak period.* Use *rush hour* if possible.

**penultimate** A useful word for confusing your readers, if not yourself. It means "next to last," but if you mean "next to last," simplify and use *next to last*. It does not mean "the best, the last, the ultimate," or "the quintessential." If you mean one of those words, use one of those words or a simple phrase like *the very last* or *the perfect example*.

**people, persons** Use *person* when speaking of an individual: *One person waited for the bus.* Use *people* instead of *persons* in plural uses: *Hundreds of people attended the open house. Five people were hurt in the accident.* *People* takes a plural verb when used to refer to a single race or nation: *The American people are united.* Also, when forming the possessive of *people*, *people's* is almost always correct. See [**individual, individuals**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#individual)**;** [**party**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#party).

"Participants who need participants are the most wonderful participants in the world." "Members of the community who need members of the community are the most wonderful members of the community in the world." "Those who need those are the most wonderful those in the world." "Others who need others are the most wonderful others in the world." Try *people* instead!

**per** Avoid using Latin words when English phrases are available: *10 tons a year* or *10 tons yearly* instead of *10 tons per annum*; *$4 rate an hour* instead of *$4 rate per hour*. Also, avoid mixing Latin and English: *10 tons per year*. Use of *per* may be acceptable to avoid awkward phrases: *They produced 10 tons a year per worker.* See [**as per**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#as per)**, per diem** below.

**percent** Preferred spelling. Not *per cent*. It takes a singular verb when standing alone or when a singular word follows an *of* construction: *About 25 percent of the department was absent.* It takes a plural verb when a plural word follows an *of* construction: *She reported that 60 percent of the councilmembers were present.* Though the symbol *%* in easier to read, most style manuals prefer the word. Whatever you choose, use it consistently. The symbol may be used in charts, tables and scientific papers.

**percentages** Use numerals with decimals--not fractions: *3 percent, 6.7 percent, 33 percent*. For amounts less than 1 percent, precede the decimal with a zero--*0.3 percent* --or spell out the fraction--*three-tenths of 1 percent*. Do not hyphenate when used as a compound adjective: *Staff reported a 5 percent increase.* Round off percentages to the tenths point: *45.8 percent*, not *45.87 percent*. Try using *half* instead of *50 percent* if you're not using the figure alongside other percentage statistics.

**per diem** Avoid using this Latin phrase. Instead, use *a day, daily* and *daily allowance*: *She will be paid the daily rate. Participants will get a daily allowance and salary.*

**perform** Unless you're writing about entertainers, athletes or, perhaps, politicians, think about deleting or using a form of *do* or a more accurate word.

**perimeter** See [**parameter**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#parameter).

**period** **(.)** This punctuation mark has two main purposes. It ends all sentences that are not questions or exclamations, and it's used in some abbreviations.

Use periods to break up complicated sentences into two or more readable sentences. "There's not much to be said about the period except that most writers don't reach it soon enough." William Zinsser, *On Writing Well: An Informal Guide to Writing Nonfiction*, 1980. See [**sentence length**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#sentence).

Use a period, not a question mark, after an indirect question: *He asked what the score was.*

Don't put a space between two initials: *T.S. Eliot.*

Use periods after numbers or letters in listing elements of a summary: *1. Wash the car. 2. Clean the basement.* Or: *A. Punctuate properly. B. Write simply.*

Periods always go inside quotation marks.

Put only one space after a period (and other sentence-ending punctuation, including *colons*).

See [**abbreviations and acronyms**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#abbreviations and acronyms)**,** [**ellipsis**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#ellipsis)**,** [**lists**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#lists)**,** [**punctuation**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#punctuation)**,** [**quotation marks**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#quotation marks).

**period of time** Wordy and overstated. Simplify. Use either *period* or *time*. See [**time frame**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#time frame).

**permissible** Commonly misspelled.

**permit** See [**allow, enable, permit**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#allow).

**per se** Latin for "I'm trying to sound superior to you by using this vague legal jargon." Instead, use clearer, less pretentious, less formal *in itself, by itself* or *of itself*. Commas usually go at both ends of those terms: *Higher pay, by itself, is not usually the reason people form unions*.

**persecute, prosecute** Occasionally confused, misused or abused. To *persecute* is "to oppress or coerce someone, often for political or religious beliefs" or "to harrass or annoy someone." To *prosecute* is "to conduct criminal or legal proceedings against someone in courts."

**persevere, perseverance** Commonly misspelled. Not *perservere* and *perserverance*.

**persistent** Commonly misspelled.

**personally** Usually redundant and unnecessary when used by the person speaking or writing: *Personally, I like Pearl Jam*. Using *personally* may be appropriate for emphasis when other people are involved: *Instead of waiting for her boss to do it, she personally signed the form. The representative voted against the resolution, though he personally favors it.* See [**I**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#I).

**personnel** Commonly misspelled. Also think about using simpler *people, staff* or *workers*.

**person, persons** See [**individual, individuals**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#individual)**;** [**people, persons**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#people).

**perspective, prospective** Sometimes confused. A noun, *perspective* is "a person's way of thinking about things," "a person's point of view," and "a method of drawing that shows distance and depth." An adjective, *prospective* describes someone who's likely to do a particular thing or something that's expected or likely to happen.

**persuade** See [**convince, persuade**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#convince, persuade).

**pertain to, pertaining to** Wordy and formal. Simplify. Change to *is about*, *about, for, of* or *on*.

**peruse** Pompous, formal and often misused. It means "to read carefully." Use *read carefully, read thoroughly* or *study*, if that's what you mean. Use *skim, scan* or simply *read*, if that's what you mean.

**phase** See [**faze, phase**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#faze).

**phenomena, phenomenon** You might notice a single *phenomenon* while waiting at a bus stop, but if you use that stop often enough, you could see two or more or many *phenomena*. Correct usage: *this phenomenon* (singular form), *these phenomena* (plural form). *Phenomenons* (plural) is used informally when describing two or more people with extraordinary talents and qualities, each a *phenomenon*.

**phone numbers** See [**telephone numbers**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#telephone).

**pickup** (n., adj.), **pick up** (v.)

**pile, piling** Sometimes confused. A *pile* is a long, slender column of timber, steel or reinforced concrete driven into the ground to support a bridge, dock or other load. A *piling* is a structure of piles.

**pileup** (n., adj.), **pile up** (v.)

**PIN** Abbreviation for *personal information number*. *PIN number* is redundant.

**pipeline** One word.

**pithy** See [**concise**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#concise)**.**

**place** (v.) Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try *put*.

**plain English, plain language** A method of writing that matches the needs of the reader with your needs as a writer, leading to effective and efficient communication. It stresses using [**familiar words**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/words.htm); cutting [**useless words**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/phrases.htm); avoiding or explaining [**jargon**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#jargon) and technical words; using [**abbreviations**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#abbreviations and acronyms) carefully; using [**inclusive language**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#sex); writing in [**active voice**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#active vs. passive); keeping [**sentences**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#sentence) short; avoiding [**double negatives**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#negative); using [**punctuation**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#punctuation) correctly; using [**lists**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#lists); and using [**headings**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#headlines) consistently. Also see [**concise, concisely, conciseness**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#concise); [**simple, simplistic**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#simple); [**Garbl's Plain Language Resources**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/writing/plaineng.htm); [**Garbl's Fat-Free Writing Links**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/writing/concise.htm).

**planner** Capitalize this job title before a name: *Environmental Planner Hillary Roosevelt*. Lowercase it when standing alone or after a name between commas: *Hillary Roosevelt, environmental planner, explained the change.*

**planning** Avoid the redundant *future planning*.

**plans, projects, programs** Capitalize the full name of programs, projects or plans adopted formally by an organization*.* Otherwise, avoid capitalizing them. Always lowercase *program, project* or *plan* when the word stands alone or when using only part of the formal name: *The project is under way.* Avoid interchanging the words *program, project* or *plan* within a text.

**plants** Usually, lowercase common nouns in the names of plants, capitalizing only proper nouns and adjectives--or check a dictionary or specialized reference for specific plants: *salal, Oregon grape*. For scientific (Latin) names of plants, see [**taxonomy**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#taxonomy).

**playwright** Commonly misspelled. Not *playwrite*.

**Plexiglas** Note the capital *P* and single *s*. A trademark for plastic glass.

**plurals** Follow the rules below for forming words to show more than one of the things named:

For most words, add *s: books, guitars*. Except when making a plural of single letter, do **not** add an apostrophe to words or numbers to make them plural.

Add *s* to compound words written as single words: *cupfuls, handfuls*. For compound words that use separate words or link the words with a hyphen, make the most significant word plural: *assistant attorneys, attorneys general, daughters-in-law, deputy chiefs of staff*.

Add *s* to figures: *General Motors built the car in the 1940s. The Boeing Co. sold 12 more 767s*.

Don't change the spelling of proper nouns when making them plural. Add *es* to most proper names ending in *es* or *z*: *Gonzalezes, Jameses, Joneses, Parkses*. Add *s* to other proper names, including most proper names ending in *y* even if preceded by a consonant: *the Clintons, the Abernathys*, not *the Abernathies*.

Add *es* to most words ending in *ch, s, sh, ss, x* and *z*: *churches, buses, foxes, fuzzes, glasses*.

Change *is* to *es* in words ending in *is*: *parentheses, theses*.

Add *es* to most words ending in *o* if a consonant comes before *o*: *echoes, heroes.* There are exceptions: *pianos*.

Words with Latin roots: Change *us* to *i* in words ending in *us*: *alumnus, alumni*. Change words ending in *on* to *a*: *phenomenon, phenomena*. Add *s* in most words ending in *um*: *memorandums, referendums* but not *addenda, curricula, media*.

Avoid using a possessive name as a plural: *The free passes are available at four McDonald's restaurants*. Not: *The free passes are available at four McDonald's*.

Do not use '*s* when writing about words as words: *His speech had too many ifs, ands and buts*.

To avoid confusion, add '*s* to single letters: *Dot your i's. She earned two A's and three B's on her report card.* Add *s* to multiple letters: *He knows his ABCs*. *They have three color TVs.*

When providing both the singular and plural forms of a noun, a common style is to put the plural ending in parentheses: *truck(s), glass(es)*. An alternative style is to separate both forms with a slash: *truck/trucks, glass/glasses*. That style works well if a word must be spelled differently when it becomes a plural, like singular words ending in *y (city/cities),* singular words ending in *f* or *fe* (*wife/wives, calf/calves*) and odd words like *mouse/mice, woman/women*. Both styles can produce awkward, confusing sentences, however, and should be avoided unless necessary. Less confusing could be using only the singular form and letting the context show that your statement can apply to more than one thing.

When a number and a noun form a compound modifier (or compound adjective) before a noun, use a singular noun in the phrase and hyphenate the phrase. Drop the hyphens and use plural nouns in other uses: The room measured 6 by 9 feet, but a 6-by-9-foot room. The building has 3,300 square feet of usable space, but a 3,300-square-foot building. The container held 10 gallons, but a 10-gallon container. The type size is 18 points, but 18-point type. Her shift lasted 10 hours, but a 10-hour shift. She was on vacation for three weeks, but a thtree-week vacation. See dimensions, distances, hyphen. See [**dimensions**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dimensions)**,** [**distances**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#distances)**,** [**hyphen**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#hyphen)

For plurals not covered here, check your preferred dictionary. Also see [**abbreviations and acronyms**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#abbreviations and acronyms)**,** [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization)**,** [**collective nouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#collective nouns)**,** [**possessives**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#possessives) below.

**plus** *Plus* is a preposition, not a conjunction, meaning *with the addition of*. It does not influence the number of the verb: *Two and two are four,* but *two plus two is* [or *equals*] *four*. The plural is *pluses*, not *plusses*. See [**and (conjunction)**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#and (conjunction))**.**

**p.m.** See [**time**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#time)**.**

**PMSA** See [**Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#Primary Metropolitan)**.**

**P.O. Box** See [**addresses**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#addresses).

**podium** See [**lectern, podium**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#lectern).

**point** Do not abbreviate. Capitalize as part of a proper name: *Alki Point, Point Roberts*.

**pointed out** See [**attribution**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#attribution).

**point of view** Wordy. Simplify. Try *attitude, opinion, belief, standpoint, view* or *viewpoint*.

**police, police department** When writing about a group of police officers, treat police as a plural noun with a plural verb: *Denver police are investigating. The police should adhere to tough ethical standards*. Refer to individuals as *police officers*: *Six police officers were near the accident*. Not: *Six police were near the accident*. When writing about a police organization, use a singular verb: *The Police Department is reviewing its standards.* Capitalize *Police Department* with or without the name of the community when writing about a particular police department. Use a singular verb with *Police Department*: *The Bellingham Police Department is working with the Sheriff's Office.* Lowercase in plural use, and lowercase *department* when standing alone. See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization)**;** [**sheriff**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#sheriff)**;** [**titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#titles).

**policy-maker** (n.), **policy-making** (n., adj.)

**political parties and philosophies** Capitalize the name of the party and the word *party* when used as part of an organization's proper name: *Democratic Party, Republican Party*. Capitalize *Democrat, Republican, Socialist* and so on, when they refer to members of a specific party: *The committee contains Democrats and Republicans*. Lowercase those words when they refer to a political philosophy: *The rebels are fighting for a democratic government.* See [**party affiliation**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#party affiliation).

**political divisions** Use figures and capitalize the accompanying words when used with figures: *3rd Precinct, 22nd Precinct*, but *the Burton precinct, the precinct*.

**politics** Usually it takes a plural verb: *Your politics are your business*. As a study or science, it takes a singular verb: *Politics is an uncertain profession.*

**pop** See [**soda, soft drink**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#soft_drink)**.**

**populace, populous** Often confused. *Populace* is a condescending noun for the "common people" who live in a country, its *population*. Use *the public, people* or *population* instead. *Populous* is a formal adjective for describing a heavily populated, or *crowded*, area.

**pore, pour** The verbs are sometimes confused. You *pour* delicious maple syrup over your buttermilk pancakes. But you *pore over* your physics textbook (or "study or read it intently") so you won't flunk the difficult class. As a noun, a *pore* is a tiny hole in skin or a leaf that liquid can pass through.

**portable document format** See [**PDF**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#PDF)**.**

**portion** Overstated to mean "part of a whole." Simplify. Use *part* instead: *part of an interview, part of a city*. Use *portion* when writing about a share or something cut from the whole: *a portion of the estate, a portion of food*.

**positive benefits** Redundant and wordy. Simplify. Drop *positive*.

**possess** Pretentious. Use simpler *have* or *own* instead.

**possessives** Follow these rules for forming nouns and pronouns to show possession:

Add '*s* to singular nouns not ending in *s*: *the church's members, the girl's parents, Xerox's profits*.

Add '*s* to singular common nouns ending in *s* unless the next word begins with *s*: *the bus's engine, the bus' seats, witness's answer, the witness' story*.

Use only an apostrophe for singular proper names ending in *s*: *Drakes' decision*. And add only an apostrophe to plural proper names ending in *s*: *the Parkses' home*.

Add *'s* to plural nouns not ending is *s*: *children's passes, men's bike, women's rights, women's room*.

Add only an apostrophe to plural nouns ending in *s*: *the girls' books, boys' bike, plants' supervisors, families' cars*.

When a plural noun is possessive but each person "owns" only one item, the item should also be listed in plural form. To confirm correctness, rephrase the possessive relationship as an *of* phrase: *the children's brains* or *the brains of the children*; *the teachers' hands* or *the hands of the teachers*.

Follow the rule above (and its test for correctness) when using plural nouns and possessive pronouns: *The children became upset when their mothers left the room* or *the mothers of the children*. *Gerry and Lena took their dogs for a walk* or *the dogs of Gerry and Lena*.

When two or more people jointly own an item, put the apostrophe after the noun closest to the item: *Gary and Gina's car* (they jointly own car), *Gary and Gina's cars* (they jointly own more than one car). But when two or more people separately own items, put an apostrophe or an *'s* after each noun: *Gary's and Gina's cars*.

When writing about a family in the plural, add *s* and then an apostrophe: *the Abernathys' Christmas greeting* (but *Bob Abernathy's Christmas greeting*). See [**plurals**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#plurals) above.

Add only an apostrophe to nouns plural in form, singular in meaning: *mathematics' rules, United States' wealth*.

Treat nouns that are the same in singular and plural as plurals, even if the meaning is singular: *the two deer's tracks*. See [**collective nouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#collective nouns)**.**

Many pronouns have separate forms for the possessive that don't use an apostrophe: *yours, ours, his, hers, its, theirs, whose*. Use an apostrophe with a pronoun only when the meaning calls for a contraction: *you're (you are), it's (it is)*. Follow the rules listed above in forming the possessives of other pronouns: *another's plan, others' plans, one's rights, someone else's umbrella*. See [**contractions**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#contractions).

Do not add an apostrophe to a word ending in *s* when using the word as an adjective--describing the following noun. If the prepositions *for* or *by* would be more appropriate than the possessive *of*, do not use an apostrophe: *a radio band for citizens, citizens band radio; a guide for writers, a writers guide; a day for veterans, Veterans Day; a union for carpenters, a carpenters union.* Add *'s*, however, when a term involves a plural word that does not end in *s*: *a children's hospital*. If you're giving the proper name of an organization or other item, try to respect the style it uses--even if that style differs from these guidelines: *the Metropolitan Teacher's Association, The World-Class Speller's Guide*.

Follow the rules above for possessive words that occur in such phrases as *a day's pay, two weeks' vacation, four years' experience, your money's worth*.

Avoid excessive personalization of inanimate objects. Use an *of* construction instead when appropriate: *the rules of mathematics* instead of *mathematics' rules*.

**possibility** Try replacing with simpler *chance*.

**postgame** One word, no hyphen. Same with *pregame*.

**post office boxes** See [**addresses**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#addresses).

**potentially dangerous, potentially hazardous** Redundant. By definition, *dangerous* and *hazardous* imply potential harm, injury or loss. Drop *potentially*.

**pound sign (#)** Avoid using as the symbol for a pound as a unit of weight. It's also the symbol on the pushbutton in the lower right corner of the dialing pad on a standard pushbutton telephone--*the pound key*. Also called the *number sign*, don't use to stand for *number* or *No*. It's also called *hash mark* and, rarely, *octothorp* or *octothorpe*. See [**No.**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#No.)

**pour** See [**pore, pour**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#pore).

**ppm** Abbreviation for *parts per million*. Spell out on first reference unless in charts and tables. The abbreviation *ppm* (lowercase, no periods) may be used on second reference.

**practically** Overused. Simplify. Think about using *almost* or *nearly* instead.

**pre-** See [**prefixes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prefixes).

**precedence, precedent(s)** Sometimes misspelled or confused. Something (or someone) has *precedence* if it's more important or more urgent than something (or someone) else; it takes priority. A *precedent* is "an event, action or decision that's used as a standard, example or justification for similar events, actions or decisions in the future." *Precedents* is the plural of *precedent*. Typical, correct terms: *take precedence, have precedence, set a precedent, precedent-setting*.

**precede, preceding** Often misspelled as *preceed* or confused with *proceed*. *Precede* means "to be, come or go before; to happen or exist before something else": *She preceded him as division manager.* Try using simpler *come before* or *go before* instead. See [**proceed**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#proceed).

**precipitate, precipitous** Often confused. As both a verb and adjective, *precipitate* is about sudden and swift actions or movements. Use the adjective to describe an action that's done hastily or abruptly without careful thought. Use the adjective *precipitous* to describe a sudden and headlong drop of something, like off a steep, sheer cliff or precipice.

**predecessor** Commonly misspelled.

**predesign** No hyphen.

**predominant, predominate** Often confused or misused. *Predominant* is an adjective that means "more power, more frequent or more noticeable than others": *He had the predominant role in organizing the group*. But simplify. Try using *main, chief, almost all, nearly all* or *most* instead of *predominant* and *mostly, mainly, chiefly* or *largely* instead of the adverb form, *predominantly*. *Predominate* is a verb meaning "to have authority or influence over others or to be the most in number or amount." Follow *predominate* with a preposition like *in*, *on* and *over*: *She predominated in the discussion*.

**preface** See [**foreword, forward, preface**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#foreword).

**prefixes** Usually, follow these rules for adding a prefix: Do not hyphenate when using a prefix with a root word that begins with a consonant. Use a hyphen if the prefix ends in a vowel and the root word that follows begins with the same vowel. When in doubt, check for specific prefixes and words in this style manual. If not listed here, check your preferred dictionary for specific words, and follow its advice for the first listing of the word. If not listed there, don't hyphenate.

Also, use a hyphen when capitalizing the root word. And use a hyphen to join doubled prefixes: *sub-subcommittee*. At times, a hyphen is necessary for clarity of meaning: *He will reform* (correct or improve) *the congregation. She will re-form* (change the shape of) *the clay figure.*

**preliminary to, preparatory to** Each has two words, six syllables and 13 letters. Wordy and pretentious jargon. Simplify. Change to *before*. See [**prior to**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prior to).

**pregame** One word, no hyphen. Same with *postgame*.

**preload** One word.

**premier, premiere** Sometimes confused and misused. As a noun, a *premier* is a prime minister or leader of a country. As an adjective, premier means "first in importance or rank, or earliest." (Or use either *first, chief* or *leading* as a less pretentious synonym.) *Premiere* is a noun meaning "first public performance of something, such as a movie or play." *Premiere* is occasionally used as a verb in referring to making a first public appearance or performance, especially in entertainment advertising and other promotional material. But its use as a verb is rejected as jargon by various style guides.

**preparatory (to)** Pompous jargon. Simplify. Replace with *prepare, prepare for* or *plan*, and use *before* instead of *preparatory to*.

**preplanning** Planning means laying a course. *Preplanning* is redundant. Replace *preplanning* with *planning*. See [**advance planning**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#advance planning).

**prerogative** Commonly misspelled.

**prepositions** A preposition is a word or group of words that links a noun or pronoun to a verb, adjective, or another noun or pronoun. The most often used prepositions are *at, by, for, from, in, of, on, to* and *with*. Others include *according to, ahead of, because of, in spite of, next to* and *out of*. A prepositional phrase (a preposition followed by a noun or pronoun) modifies verbs, nouns and adjectives.

Don't overuse prepositions in a single sentence. To provide clarity, rewrite and shorten long sentences containing many prepositions. It's correct to end a sentence with a preposition, but doing so could weaken the point of the sentence. Consider alternatives. See [**Myths and Superstitions of Writing**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/myths.htm#preposition). Also see [**Wordy Phrase Replacements**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/phrases.htm) for alternatives to many overused prepositional phrases.

Rudolf Flesch, *Say What You Mean*, 1972: "Avoid all prepositions and conjunctions that consist of more than one word. Aside from *inasmuch as*, this includes *with regard to, in association with, in connection with, with respect to, in the absence of, with a view to, in an effort to, in terms of, in order to, for the purpose of, for the reason that, in accordance with, in the neighborhood of, on the basis of,* and so on. There's not a single one of these word combinations that can't be replaced by a simple word like *if, for, to, by, about* or *since*."

**prescribe, proscribe** Sometimes confused. To *prescribe* means "to order or recommend a medicine or medical treatment for a patient" and "to impose rules or give directions." To *proscribe* means "to prohibit or forbid the existence or use of something."

**present** (v.) Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try *give*.

**presently** Ambiguous, overstated and misused. Simplify. Use *soon, in a little while, in a short time* or *shortly* instead, or be precise about the time element. It does not mean *now*, *at present* or *currently*. See **present time** below and [**currently**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#currently).

**present time** Try replacing with simpler *present* or *now*.

**preserve** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try *keep* or *protect*.

**president** Capitalize as a formal title before a name. Lowercase in all other uses, including the president of the United States and the president of your company.

**Presidents Day** Not *President's Day* or Presidents' Day. See [**Washington's Birthday**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#Washingtons).

**press** Don't refer to the print and broadcast news media as the *press*. Use *news media* instead: *The news media are invited.* Organizations produce *news releases*, not *press releases*, and hold *news conferences*, not *press conferences*. See [**media**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#media).

**presumptive, presumptuous** Often confused or misspelled adjectives. Use *presumptive* to describe something that's probable or reasonable to believe: *the presumptive nominee*. Use *presumptuous* to describe someone who's too bold, too confident or arrogant. Don't spell as *presumptious*.

**pressurized** Gases, liquids and foods can be *pressurized* or compacted into containers under pressure. People are *pressed* or *pressured*.

**pretty** Vague and overused. Use it to describe women, girls, sights and sounds. But delete it, be more specific, or try words like *almost, fairly* or *very* in other uses. See [**fairly**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#fairly)**,** [**very**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#very).

**preventative** Not a word. Replace with *preventive*.

**previous** See [**past, previous, prior**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#past).

**primary** (adj.), **primarily** (adv.) Overstated. Simplify. Try *main, mainly, most* or *mostly*.

**Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area** Spell out on first reference. Abbreviate in later references as *PMSA*: *the Boston PMSA*.

**prime time** (n.), **prime-time** (adj.)

**principle, principal** Commonly confused. *Principal* is a noun and adjective meaning someone or something first in rank, authority, importance or degree: *She was the principal player on the team.* *Money is the principal problem.* Think about using simpler adjectives *main* or *chief*. *Principal* is also the amount of debt, investment, stock or bond.

*Principle* is a noun that means a basic truth, belief, understanding, law, doctrine or motivating force: *They fought for the principle of free speech.*

**prior** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try replacing with *before*. See [**past, previous, prior**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#past).

**priorities** Priorities can be high or low, and we can have many of them. If you're going to make something a high priority, call it a *high priority*, not just a *priority*.

**prioritize** Pompous. Avoid this term. Instead say *order, set priorities* or *rank*.

**prior to** Pretentious, clumsy and wordy. Simplify. Use *ahead of* or *before* instead.

**privatize, privatization** Sometimes misused. To *privatize* is "to make something private, especially when transferring a government service operated for the benefit of the public to private control, private ownership or private interests": *The administration proposes to partially privatize the Social Security system by allowing some workers to divert some funds to private accounts.*

**privilege** Commonly misspelled. Its two *i*'s come first, then its two *e*'s.

**proactive** An adjective meaning "in anticipation of future problems, needs or changes." Though considered jargon by some, it's a useful antonym to *reactive*. Use sparingly, delete or try replacing with *active*, *assertive* or *aggressive*.

**problem-solving** Two words, hyphenated.

**procedure** Commonly misspelled.

**proceed** Often misspelled or confused with *precede*. Means "to go ahead, to continue": *They proceeded into the hall.* But overstated and formal. Try rephrasing with a form of simpler *continue, do, go ahead, go on, move, run, try* or *walk*. *Proceed* is one of only three English words that end in *-ceed*. (The others are *exceed* and *succeed*). See [**precede**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#precede).

**pro-choice** See [**abortion**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#abortion).

**procure** See [**get**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#get).

**profanities** See [**obscenities, profanities, racial or ethnic slurs**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#obscenities).

**professor** Never abbreviate. Capitalize when used as a formal title before a full name. See [**academic degrees, titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#academic degrees)**.**

**profit sharing (n.), profit-sharing (adj.)**

**progressive** Sometimes misused as a negative reference to a person, idea, program or action. Used accurately, *progressive* applies to people who favor progress and reform in politics, education and other fields. It means supporting or openness to new or modern ideas, methods and programs. A *progressive* person is more inclined to direct action than a *liberal* person. See [**conservation, conservative**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#conservative); [**liberal**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#liberal).

**pro-life** See [**abortion**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#abortion).

**prolix** See [**concise**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#concise)**.**

**prone, supine** Sometimes confused. *Prone* means "lying face down." *Supine* means "lying face up." If clarity is essential, substitute the pertinent definition for *prone* or *supine*. See [**prostate, prostrate**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prostate).

**pronouns** Often confused and misused. The "nominative" pronouns *I, he, she, we* and *they* are always the subject of sentences and clauses (groups of words with a subject and a verb). In other words, *I* and the other nominative pronouns are more likely to be at the front of a sentence or clause (typically before the verb). And the "objective" pronouns *me, him, her, us* and *them* are always the object of verbs and prepositions. In other words, *me* and the other objective prounouns are more likely to be at the back of a sentence or clause (typically after the verb). Also follow those rules when joining pronouns (and other nouns) with conjunctions like *and* and *or*.

Examples: *I hugged her. He talked to me. She hugged him. We talked to them. They talked to us. We and Alex debated him and her. He and I considered them and Amanda. She or they would attend with me or us.* See [**between you and I, between you and me**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#betweenyou)**;** [**I, me**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#I-me)**;** [**It's I, It's me, It is I, It is me**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#it's me)**;** [**us, we**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#us, we).

**pronunciation** Sometimes misspelled. Not *pronounciation*.

**prophecy, prophesy** Sometimes confused. *Prophecy* is a noun for "a statement that predicts something, supposedly with religious or magical power; a prediction." *Prophesy* is a verb meaning "to use religious or magical knowledge to predict something."

**proportions** Always use numbers: *3 parts powder to 7 parts water*.

**proscribe** See [**prescribe, proscribe**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prescribe).

**prosecute** See [**persecute, prosecute**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#persecute).

**prospective** See [**perspective, prospective**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#perspective).

**prostate, prostrate** Sometimes confused. The *prostate* is a male gland. *Prostrate* means "lying flat" and "overcome or weak": *The body was prostrate on the ground. She was prostrate with grief*. See [**prone, supine**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prone).

**protester** Preferred spelling. Not *protestor*. However you spell it, you have a constitutional right to do it--to march, to picket, to petition!

**proved, proven** *Proved* is preferred as a verb: *The prosecutor has proved the defendant's guilt. So far, both teams have proved unbeatable.* *Proven* is best used as an adjective (to modify a noun): *a proven remedy, a proven failure, proven oil reserves.*

**provide(d) that** Wordy and formal. Simplify. Try *if*.

**provide with** Wordy and overstated. Simplify. Try *give*.

**provinces** Use commas to set off names of provinces from community names: *They went to Halifax, Nova Scotia, on their vacation.* Do not capitalize *province*. See [**British Columbia**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#british Columbia).

**provisions** Formal. Simplify. Use *rules* or *terms* if that's what you mean.

**proviso, provisos**

**proximity** See [**close proximity**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#close proximity).

**pseudonym** Commonly misspelled.

**public** *General public* is redundant. Simplify. Replace with *public* or more personal *citizens*, if appropriate. See [**citizen**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#citizen)**,** [**collective nouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#collective nouns).

**publication titles** See [**composition titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#composition titles)**,** [**magazine names**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#magazine names)**,** [**newspapers**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#newspapers).

**publicly** Sometimes misspelled. Not *publically*.

**public information document** Avoid using the abbreviation *PID*.

**Puget Sound** Use *Puget Sound* on first reference. Lowercase *sound* on future references when the word stands alone: *The study focused on Puget Sound. Scientists sampled the sound during November.*

**punctuation** Use common sense. Punctuation should help reading--to make clear the thought being expressed. If punctuation does not help clarify the message, it should not be there.

When more than one punctuation mark (not including quotation marks, parentheses or brackets) could be used at the same place in a sentence, use only the "stronger"--or more necessary--of the two. Question marks and exclamation points, for example, are stronger than commas and periods: *"Have all the ballots finally been counted?" asked the reporter.* (The question mark fills the role of the comma.) *The topic of his speech is "We demand justice now!"* (No period following the exclamation point.)

See entries for specific punctuation marks:

[**ellipsis ( ... )**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#ellipsis)

[**virgule (/)**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#virgule).

Also see [**asterisk (\*)**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#asterisk)**,** [**headlines**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#headlines)**,** [**pound sign (#)**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#pound sign)**,** [**sentence length**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#sentence).

**puns** To quote the *New York Times Manual of Style and Usage*: "A pun should be a surprise encounter, evoking a sly smile rather than a groan and flattering the intelligence of a reader who gets the joke. ... The successful pun pivots on a word that fits effortlessly into two elements ..."

**purchase** To *purchase* is to make a bad buy. You're using two syllables and six letters for *purchase* but getting no more meaning than you get with *buy*. Simplify. Use the verb *buy* instead.

**purposely, purposefully** Often confused. Use *purposely* to mean "on purpose, intentionally or deliberately": *She stopped the equipment purposely* (or *intentionally* or *on purpose*). Use *purposefully* when you have a specific purpose in mind, or have a clear idea for getting a specific result: *She ran the equipment purposefully, like she planned to meet her quota by lunchtime*.

**pursuant to** Pompous. Unless you're pretending to be a corporate lawyer, simplify and use *according to, by* or *under* instead.

**push-button** (n., adj.)

**Q- |** [**-R-**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#-R-)

**quantum leap** Ironically, a *quantum leap* (or *quantum jump*) in its technical sense from physics is only an abrupt change (within an atom or molecule), not necessarily a significant or large change. But as used in the cliche, it's a sudden and important change or improvement. Clarify your words by replacing with an explanation of the change or improvement. If you mean "large" or similar adjectives about size, use *large* or similar adjectives about size.

**quarter** Lowercase *spring, summer, fall* and *winter* when writing about academic quarters and *first, second, third* and *fourth* quarters when writing about fiscal periods. Don't separate the quarter and the year with a comma: *Travis plans to graduate from culinary school at the end of summer quarter 2005. Their budget analysis is due by spring quarter 2005.*

**question mark (?)** Direct questions always take question marks: *Who is going with the reporter? Did Samuel ask you if you were going?* Indirect questions never take question marks: *She would like to know who's going with the reporter.* For multiple questions, either use a single question mark at the end of the complete sentence: *Did Josephine plan the project, manage the budget and supervise the staff?* Or stress each element by breaking up the sentence: *Did Josephine plan the project? Manage the budget? Supervise the staff?* Also, put only one space after a question mark (and other sentence-ending punctuation).

The question mark replaces the comma normally used when attributing a quotation: *"Who is going with the reporter?" she asked.* The question mark may go inside or outside quotation marks depending on the meaning: *Who wrote "Everybody's Got Something to Hide Except Me and My Monkey"? She asked, "How long will it take?"* Also, use a single question mark, inside the quotation mark, in sentences like this: *Did you hear him say, "Who ate all the doughnuts?"* See [**punctuation**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#punctuation).

**questionnaire** Commonly misspelled. Double the *n*.

**queue, queued, queuing** Remember the double *ue* in the first two forms. But drop the second *e* when adding *-ing*. Also, consider using simpler *list* or *line up*.

**quiet, quite** Often mistyped or possibly misspelled. Use *quiet* as an adjective to describe something that's calm, silent, motionless or subdued. *Quite* is an adverb meaning "completely, really or very." But see **quite** below.

**quite** *Quite* may be redundant, imprecise and unnecessary to mean "entirely, completely or very." Where emphasis is needed, use stronger, more descriptive words or be more precise: *He performed all his hits with energy*, instead of *His performance was quite good*. See **quiet, quite** above.

**quotation marks (" ")** Put quotation marks around direct quotations: "*No comment," the director said. The manager said, "Complete your time sheets by the end of the day Thursday."* If a full paragraph of quoted material comes before another paragraph that continues the quotation, do not put quotation marks after the first paragraph. But do put quotation marks before the second paragraph.

Avoid fragmented quotations. Do not use quotation marks to report a few ordinary words used by a speaker or writer.

Don't put the words of one person into the mouths of many: *Witnesses at the accident said there was "a tremendous bang, and then all hell broke loose."*

Also, put quotation marks around single words or terms for the following uses, but don't overdo it: to suggest irony or a double entendre, *The "tycoon" turned out to be a pauper*; to note an unfamiliar or unusual term on first reference; and to refer to a word as a word, *He tried to explain what he meant by "knowns" and "unknowns"* (or use italics instead). Avoid putting single words or terms in quotation marks to draw attention to them as slang, informal or cute.

Quotations within quotations: Use single quotation marks for passages contained within a direct quotation *("She said, 'Ouch!'").*

Punctuation: The period and comma always go within the quotation marks. The dash, question mark and exclamation point go within the quotation marks when they apply to the quoted matter only. Colons and semicolons go outside quotation marks. Also see [**punctuation**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#punctuation), **question mark** above, **quotations** below.

In headlines, use single quotation marks: *Man cries 'Fire!' in theater, causes panic*

See [**attribution**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#attribution), [**composition titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#composition titles), [**nickname**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#nickname).

**quotation, quote** *Quotation* is the preferred noun form. Use *quote* as a verb: *Don't quote me on this. He recited a quotation from Hamlet.* Also see [**epigram, epigraph, epitaph.**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#epigram)

**quotations** Quoting another writer adds authority to your writing and speaking and strengthens your thoughts and feelings--especially if the reference is recognized by your audience. When possible, quote the other writer directly rather than paraphrasing all his or her words. Try mixing strong direct quotations, paraphrasing that summarizes the other writer's words, suppporting facts and figures, and your perspective or analysis if appropriate.

Introduce full-sentence quotations with commas. Introduce multiple-sentence quotations with colons. When using partial quotations and the titles of books, movies and other publications, punctuate as if the quotation marks weren't there. See [**attribution**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#attribution)**,** [**colon**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#colon)**,** [**comma**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#comma)**,** [**composition titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#composition titles), **quotation marks** above and [***sic***](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#sic).

Spell out (don't abbreviate) all words and phrases in direct quotations if that's they way they were expressed by a speaker or writer: *"We were in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on October 6."* Similarly, use abbreviations in quotations as expressed by a speaker or writer, but make sure its meaning is clear--or spell it out before or after the quotation. Follow standard style guidelines for [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization) [**punctuation**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#punctuation), and [**spelling**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#spelling) when quoting a speaker. See [**dates**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dates), [**state names**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#state names).

**race** Name a person's race only when it is relevant. When an ethnic reference is necessary to identify U.S. citizens, don't hyphenate terms when used as nouns: *a Japanese American, an African American, a Norwegian American*. But hyphenate the terms when used as adjectives: *a Mexican-American organization*.

Be aware of stereotyping words, images and situations that suggest all or most members of a racial or ethnic group are the same: *flashy, aggressive and happy-go-lucky blacks,* *inscrutable Asian, conservative Briton, cold Dane, hearty German, exuberant Italian, sleepy Mexican, tight Scot, fiery Spaniard*. See [**obscenities, profanities, racial or ethnic slurs**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#obscenities).

Avoid using qualifiers that reinforce racial and ethnic stereotypes: *Betty Wong is quiet and reserved* might suggest that Asians are shy and docile*.* Avoid using ethnic cliches: *fiestas* when writing about a Hispanic.

Be aware of possible negative connotations of color-symbolic words: *a black reputation, yellow coward*.

Be aware of language that might have questionable racial or ethnic connotations: *Culturally disadvantaged* suggests superiority of one culture over another.

Avoid patronizing and tokenism toward racial or ethnic groups. But make sure publications represent all groups fairly--in articles and photographs.

See [**American Indian, Eskimo**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#American Indian)**;** [**Asian, Pacific Islander**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#Asian)**;** [**black**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#black)**;** [**Hispanic, Latino**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#Hispanic)**;** [**white**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#white).

**racial slurs** See [**obscenities, profanities, racial or ethnic slurs**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#obscenities).

**racket, racquet** *Racket* is the preferred spelling.

**rack, wrack** Sometimes confused. Think of the torture device called a *rack*, used to cause great physical pain and torment. Use the verb *rack* to mean "to trouble, torment, afflict or oppress." And think of wreck that damages a car so badly it can't be repaired. Use the verb *wrack* to mean "to utterly ruin--or wreck." Some related, correct terms are *nerve-racked, rack your brains, wrack and ruin*.

**radio station** See [**station**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#station).

**"ragged right"** See [**justification**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#justification).

**railroad** Capitalize when part of a name. Lowercase when using *the railroad*. See [**Amtrak**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#amtrak).

**rainstorm** One word.

**rambling** See [**concise**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#concise)**.**

**ranges** Use the form: *$8 million to $11 million*. Not: *$8 to $11 million*. See [**dash**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dash).

**rank** Consider using this simpler word instead of the pompous *prioritize*. See [**prioritize**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prioritize).

**rank and file** (n.), **rank-and-file** (adj.) But think about dropping that wordy, vague cliche. Simplify. Try using *members*, *workers* or *followers* instead.

**rarely** It means seldom. *Rarely ever* is redundant (drop *ever*), but *rarely if ever* is correct.

**ratepayer One word. Same with *taxpayer*.**

**rather** Vague adverb. Usually adds little. Omit, or be more precise: *The train was rather late. The train was 15 minutes late.* See [**unique**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#unique)*.*

**rationale** Formal and overstated. Simplify. Try *reason(s), thinking* or *explanation* instead.

**ratios** Use numerals and a hyphen: *The ratio was 3-to-1. A 3-to-1 ratio.*

**ravage, ravish** Sometimes confused. They're both about violent acts, but *ravage* applies to places and things -- "to destroy, ruin or damage something badly." And *ravish* applies mostly to humans, especially women -- "to seize and carry away, to rape or violate." But avoid using *ravish* because it also has a confusing, contradictory meaning: "to enchant, to overwhelm with joy or delight, to enrapture."

**re-** See the rules in [**prefixes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prefixes). Otherwise, the sense often determines whether to use a hyphen: *recover* (to regain or get back), *re-cover* (to cover again); *re-collect* (rally, recover), *recollect* (remember).

**reach (a) an agreement (conclusion, decision, etc.)** Wordy. Simplify. Change to *agree, decide* or *settle*.

**real,** **really** Sometimes confused. Both refer to truth, fact or reality, but *real* is an adjective for modifying nouns: *a real illness, a real friend, real diamonds*. And *really* is an adverb for modifying verbs, adjectives and other adverbs: *really sorry, a really hot day, it really rained today*. A vague word, use *really* sparingly, substitute *very* or be more precise. Instead of *The assignment was really difficult*, write *The assignment took two days longer than expected*.

**real time** (n.), **real-time** (adj.)

**Realtor** Use the term *real estate agent* instead. Use the trademarked word *Realtor* (uppercase) only if there is a reason to note the person is a member of the National Association of Realtors.

**reason why, reason is because** Redundant. Omit needless words. *They canceled the contract because ...* Not: *The reason they canceled the contract is because ...* Also: *The reason for the decision is ...* Not: *The reason why the decision was made is ...* Other simpler alternatives: *is caused by, is that*.

**rebound, redound** Sometimes confused. *Rebound* is a verb meaning "to bounce back" or "to recover in value, amount or strength." *Redound* is a formal verb meaning "to contribute greatly to."

**rebuff, rebut** See [**refute**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#refute) below.

**receive** Formal, and commonly misspelled. Remember the "*i* before *e* except after *c* rule. Also, consider replacing with forms of simpler *get*. See [**get**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#get).

**recent, recently** Avoid in news copy. News is recent by definition. Be specific. Change: *The School Board recently decided ... .* To*: The School Board decided Monday ... .*

**recipes** Always use figures. Spell out words like *teaspoon* and *tablespoon*. If abbreviations needed to save space, use them consistently in all recipes.

**reckless** Often misspelled as *wreckless*. *Reckless* driving causes *wrecks*.

**record** Avoid the redundant: *The team set a new record*. Omit *new*. Records are new by definition. Other redundant uses: *all-time record, a record high*: *This summer's temperatures may have set a record high*. Drop *high*.

**recommend** Commonly misspelled. Uses one *c* and two *m*'s.

**recur, recurred, recurring, recurrence** See [**reoccur, reocurrence**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#reoccur).

**redound** See [**rebound, redound**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#rebound) above.

**redundancy** Unnecessary repetition can annoy readers, take up space, annoy readers, waste time, cause confusion, hinder readability and annoy readers. See [**concise**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#concise)**;** [**Garbl's Redundant Phrase Replacements**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/redundant.htm).

**reek havoc** See [**wreak havoc**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#wreak_havoc).

**re-elect, re-election**

**refer** See [**allude, refer**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#allude).

**referable** Commonly misspelled.

**refer back** Redundant and wordy. Drop *back*.

**refer to (as)** Delete, or consider using simpler *mention, write about, talk about, call, name* or *term*--or use *look at, about* or *send to*.

**reflect back** Redundant and wordy. Drop *back*.

**refute** Commonly confused with other words: *challenge, contradict, deny, disagree (with), dispute, rebuff, rebut, reject* or *repudiate*. Use *refute* to mean "prove that a statement or idea is incorrect." Consider using simpler though somewhat weaker synonym *disprove*. Avoid using stronger but more formal, less common synonym *confute*. If the proof is weak or questionable, use *rebut* instead, to mean "counter, argue against, contradict or reject an argument." Don't misspell as *rebutt*.

**regard** *As regards*, *in regard to* and *with regard to* are pompous. Simplify. Replace with *about*, or try *as for, for, in, of, on, over, respecting, to, toward* or *with*.

**regarding** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try replacing with *about, for* or *on*.

**regime, regimen, regiment** Sometimes confused. Use *regime* to mean "a government that has not been elected or approved, an authoritarian government." Use *regimen* to mean "a special plan for eating, exercise or medical treatment to improve health or skills." Use *regiment* to mean "a large group of soldiers with several battalions."

**regions** See [**directions and regions**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#directions and regions).

**regretful, regrettable** Sometimes confused. Use *regretful* to describe a person who's sorry or sad--feeling regret. Use *regrettable* to describe an error or undesirable event--causing regret.

**reign, rein** Often confused, especially in phrases like *free rein, to give rein, holding the reins* and *keep a rein on*. Those phrases are metaphors built on the use of leather straps -- or *reins* -- to control or restrain a horse. Use *reign* as a noun or verb about the period when a king or queen rules a country or a particular force is dominant: *a reign of terror*.

**reimburse** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try *repay* or *pay back* instead.

**reiterate again** Redundant and wordy. Simplify. Drop *again*. Also, try using less formal *repeat* or shorter *iterate* instead of *reiterate*.

**reject** See [**refute**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#refute) above.

**relate** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try *tell*.

**relate(d) to, relative to** Wordy and formal. Simplify. Try *about, for, of* or *on* instead.

**relegate** See [**delegate, relegate**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#delegate).

**relevant** Commonly misspelled. Consider replacing this overused word with more original wording.

**religion** Capitalize proper names that refer to a supreme being, other deities, prophets and saints: *God, Allah, Jesus, Christ, Buddha, Neptune, Krishna, Venus, Jehovah, Satan*. Lowercase personal pronouns that refer to the deity: *he, him*. And lowercase such words as *goddamn, godliness, heaven, hell, devil and nirvana*.

**religious affiliation** Name a person's religious affiliation only when it is relevant. See [**holidays**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#holidays).

**reluctant, reticent** Often confused. Use *reluctant* to describe someone who's unwilling and slow to do something. Use *reticent* to describe people who are quiet and unwilling to talk, especially about themselves. Also, *hesitant* is a more common word to describe people who are not willing to do or say something because they are uncertain or worried.

**remain** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try *stay*.

**remainder** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try *the rest, surplus, balance* or *what is left*.

**remittance** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try *payment* or *money* instead.

**remove** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try *take away* or *haul off*.

**remunerate, remuneration** Formal and commonly misspelled. Simplify. Use *pay* instead of *remunerate* and use *payment, reward, pay, salary, wages* or *money* instead of *remuneration*. Also, *remuneration* commonly misspelled as *renumeration*.

**renaissance** Commonly misspelled.

**render** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try *make, give, deliver, hand over, present* or *do* instead.

**renown, renowned** Commonly confused. *Renown* is a noun and synonym for fame, distinction, prestige and eminence. *Renowned* is an adjective and synonym for famous, notable, celebrated and distinguished. *Reknown* and *reknowned* are misspelled words.

**reoccur, reocurrence** Unnecessary words. Simplify. Replace with *recur* and *recurrence* to mean "happening again" or "happening several times."

**repeat again (and again), repeat back, repeat over again, repeat the same** Redundant and wordy. Drop everything except *repeat*.

**repetitious, repetitive** Commonly confused or misspelled. They both mean doing something the same way many times, but *repetitious* suggests the action is tedious or unnecessary, and *repetitive* is neutral in its judgment of the action.

**Rep., representative** See [**legislative titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#legislative)**,** [**party affiliation**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#party affiliation)**.**

**repress** See [**oppress, repress**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#oppress)**.**

**reproduce** Consider replacing with simpler *copy*.

**republican, Republican Party** See [**party affiliation**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#party affiliation)**;** [**political parties and philosophies**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#political parties)**.**

**repudiate** See [**refute**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#refute).

**request** (v.) Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try *ask, seek* or *question*.

**request for proposals** Spell out (lowercased) on first reference. *RFP* acceptable on second reference.

**require** Overstated. Simplify. Try *need* or *want* instead.

**reroute** One word.

**reside** Pompous. Use a form of *live* or *stay*.

**residences** Use simpler *homes* or *houses* instead.

**resident** See [**citizen**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#citizen).

**resistant** Commonly misspelled.

**resolution** See [**motion, ordinance**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#motion).

**restaurateur** Commonly misspelled. Not *restauranteur*.

**restful, restive, restless** Commonly misused or confused adjectives. Use *restful* to describe an experience that has a quiet or soothing quality. *Restive* and *restless* are similar, but use *restive* to describe a person (or horse) that's impatient and uneasy under restraint and hard to control. And use *restless* to describe a person or animal that can't relax because of boredom or anxiety.

**restroom** One word.

**result in** Overstated. Use a form of *lead to*.

**retain** Formal and overstated. Consider replacing with simpler *keep, continue, hold* or *save*.

**reticent** See [**reluctant, reticent**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#reluctant).

**retrofit** (n. and v.) One word.

**refer back** Redundant and wordy. Drop *back*.

**reveal** See [**belie, betray, reveal**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#belie).

**RFP** See [**request for proposals**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#request for proposals)**.**

**rhythm** Commonly misspelled.

**right-of-way** Hyphenate. The plural is *rights-of-way*.

**river**  Capitalize as part of a proper name: *Columbia River, Snake River*. Lowercase in other uses: *the river, the Columbia and Snake rivers*.

**river bank** Two words.

**road** Capitalize when part of a formal name. Lowercase when used alone or with two or more names. Do not abbreviate: *We drove down Holman Road. The crew will pave Altamont and Pine roads.* See [**addresses**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#addresses)**,** [**highway designations**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#highway designations).

**rock 'n' roll** The Beatles and The Rolling Stones are two of the greatest *rock 'n' roll* bands.

**roommate** One word. Two *m's*.

**room numbers** Use figures and capitalize room when used with a figure: *Room No. 5*, *Room 911*, *conference Room 3D*. But *fifth floor conference room*. See **rooms** below, [**No.**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#No.)

**rooms** Capitalize the names of specially named rooms: *Willamette Room*. See **room numbers** above.

**root beer** Two words.

**round trip** (n.), **round-trip** (adj.)

**round up** (v.), **roundup** (n.)

**R.S.V.P.** The abbreviation for the French *repondez s'il vous plait*, it means *please reply*. To avoid confusion, miscommunication, disappointment and frustration, use *Please reply* instead. And if you must use *R.S.V.P.*, don't put a redundant *please* in front of it.

**runoff** One word, no hyphen.

**rush hour** (n.), **rush-hour** (adj.)

**sacrilegious** Commonly misspelled. Not *sacreligious* or *sacriligious*. Remember by thinking of the noun *sacrilege*, not the adjective *religious*.

**safe-deposit box** Not *safety-deposit box*. Include the hyphen.

**said** Vague legal jargon if you mean *the, this, that, these* or *those*. Simplify. Change to one of those words.

**said, say** See [**attribution**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#attribution), [**state**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#state).

**safe haven** Redundant. Simplify. Drop *safe*.

**salmon** See [**chinook salmon**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#chinook salmon)**,** [**coho salmon**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#coho)**,** [**fish**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#fish).

**sanguinary, sanguine** Sometimes confused. Use *sanguinary* to describe something "involving or causing much bloodshed." Or try simpler *bloody* to describe something that's "covered with blood or are made up of blood." Use *sanguine* to describe something that's "the color of blood or blood-red" or to describe someone who's "cheerfully optimistic."

**sans** Archaic unless you're writing about a typeface. Change to *without*.

**sarcasm** See [**irony, sarcasm**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#irony).

**sat** See [**set, sit**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#set) below.

**save** Archaic if you mean *except*. Avoid. Use *except* instead.

**scan** Scan used to mean "examining something carefully to find a particular person or thing." But it now commonly means just the opposite: "reading something quickly to get its main meaning or find a particular detail."

**scenario** Overused cliche. Avoid, unless writing about the outline of a plot, play or film. For other uses, delete or try *chain of events, plan* or *situation*.

**scheme** Do not use as a synonym for *a plan* or *a project*.

**scores** Use numerals when giving game scores, separating the scores with a hyphen: *The Seattle Mariners won 12-4*. Use commas to separate team names and scores: *Mariners 12, Yankees 4*.

**Scouts** Depending on their age, boys involved in *Cub Scouting*, *Boy Scouting* or *Exploring* are *Cub Scouts* or *Cubs*, *Boy Scouts* or *Scouts*, and *Explorers*. Girls can also be *Explorers*. Depending on their age, girls involved in *Girl Scouting* are *Brownie Girl Scouts* or *Brownies*, *Junior Girl Scouts* or *Juniors*, *Cadette Girl Scouts* or *Cadettes*, and *Senior Girl Scouts* or *Seniors*.

**screen saver** Two words.

**sea level** Two words.

**seasonable, seasonal** Sometimes confused. *Seasonable* applies to things that are suitable or appropriate for a particular season: *seasonable weather*. *Seasonal* applies to things that happen, are available or are needed only during a particular season: *The store usually hires seasonal help for the Christmas rush.*

**seasons** Lowercase *spring, summer, fall* and *winter*. Don't separate the season and the year with a comma: *The report is scheduled to come out in summer 2004.*

**SeaTac** A city in King County, Washington. No space between *Sea* and *Tac*.

**Sea-Tac** See [**Seattle-Tacoma International Airport**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#Seattle-Tacoma).

**seat, seated, seatting** See [**set, sit**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#set) below.

**Seattle-Tacoma International Airport** Including *International* is optional. *Sea-Tac Airport* is acceptable on second reference. To avoid confusion with the city of *SeaTac*, avoid using *Sea-Tac* alone.

**second of all** Wordy. Simplify. Drop *of all*.

**second reference** In this manual, this term applies to all later references to an organization or person named in an article or publication.

**secretary** Capitalize before a name if is an official organization title. Do not abbreviate. See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization)**,** [**titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#titles).

**section** Capitalize the name of the department's organizational sections: *Environmental Planning Section*. Also capitalize when used with a numeral to name part of a law or bill: *Section 201 of the U.S. Clean Water Act*. See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization).

**secure** (v.) Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try *get* or *set*.

**seeing that, seeing as, seeing as how** Awkward and wordy. Try using simpler *because*, *since*, *given* or *in that* instead.

**seize, seize the day** See [**cease, seize**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#cease)

**seizure** Commonly misspelled. An exception to the "*i* before *e* rule."

**semi-** Rules in [**prefixes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prefixes) apply. Also, see [**bi-, semi-**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#bi-, semi-).

**semiannual** Means "twice a year." To avoid reader confusion, use *twice a year* instead of *semiannual*. see [**bi-, semi-**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#bi-, semi-).

**semicolon** **(;)** The semicolon has three main uses, although the first use below is the most common. The semicolon shows a greater separation of thought and information than a comma but less separation than a period.

First, use semicolons to separate parts of a series when at least one item in the series also has a comma. A semicolon also goes before the final *and* in such a series: *Attending were Tina Lopez, 223 Main St.; Ron Larson, 1414 Broadway; and Robert Zimmerman, 1976 E. Pine St.*

The following two uses can add variety, eliminate a word or two, and closely link contrasting or related ideas. But breaking a long sentence with a semicolon into two or more shorter sentences can aid readability and clarity.

Second, use a semicolon to link two (or more) closely related statements that could stand alone as independent sentences (or clauses): *The train arrived on time; the passengers were overjoyed.* If a coordinating conjunction such as *and*, *but* or *or* separates the two independent clauses, a comma would replace the semicolon: *The train arrived on time, and the passengers were overjoyed.*

Third, use a semicolon between two independent clauses when the second clause begins with transition words such as *therefore*, *however*, *thus* and *for example*: *The department had planned to drop the service; however, overwhelming customer demand persuaded officials to keep it.*

Place semicolons outside quotation marks. Put only one space after a semicolon.

**semimonthly** Means *twice a month*. See [**bi-, semi-**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#bi-, semi-)**;** [**bimonthly**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#bimonthly).

**semiweekly** Means *twice a week*. See [**bi-, semi-**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#bi-, semi-)**;** [**biweekly**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#biweekly).

**senior** See [**junior, senior**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#junior).

**senior citizen** Use this term sparingly. See [**elderly**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#elderly)**.**

**sensual, sensuous** Sometimes confused. Use *sensual* to describe enjoying physical pleasure, especially sexual gratification. Think "sexy": *sensual desires*. Use *sensuous* to describe something pleasing to the senses; it applies to aesthetic pleasures such as art, music and food and doesn't involve sexual stimulation: *sensuous music.* And if one leads to the other, wonderful!

**sentence length** Varying sentence length makes writing more interesting and easier to read. Include only one idea in a sentence, with an average length of 20 to 25 words. Shorter sentences, 10-15 words or less, are good for emphatic, memorable statements. Try including a short sentence every three or four sentences. Longer sentences, no more than about 30 words, are good for detailed explanation and support. See [**lists**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#lists)**,** [**period**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#period). Also see [**Myths and Superstitions of Writing**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/myths.htm).

**separate** Commonly misspelled. Remember that two *a*'s go in the middle, and the two *e*'s near the ends.

**serve, service** Sometimes misused, especially *service*. *Serve* has the broader use, especially for providing goods and services that people want or need. Use it when writing about fulfilling a duty or working for, helping or obeying someone. Use *service* to describe installation and maintenance of things: *Mechanics service trucks*. Also, try using simpler *repair* instead of *service*.

**serviceable** Commonly misspelled.

**service mark** A brand, design, phrase, symbol or word used by a service supplier and protected by law to prevent inappropriate use by a competitor. If you must use a service mark, capitalize it. Unless use of a service mark is essential, replace it with a generic term (lowercased): *real estate agent*, not *Realtor*. You don't have to use the service mark symbol--SM. See [**brand names**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#brand names), [**trademark**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#trademark).

**set, sit** Sometimes confused. Use *set* when you're putting something down. An object usually follows *set*: *He set the book onto the table. She set the child into the crib*. Use *sit* when you're putting yourself into a chair or others are putting themselves into a chair. An object doesn't have to follow *sit*: *He will sit there all day if we let him*. Other verb forms of *set*: *set, setting*. Other verb forms of *sit*: *sat, sitting, seat, seated, seating*. Use *sat*, not *sitted*.

**set the stage** Wordy cliche. Simplify. Try *prepare, arrange, plan* or *ready*. See [**lay the groundwork**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#lay_the_groundwork)**.**

**set up** (v.), **setup** (n., adj.)

**7-Eleven** Trademark for the neighborhood convenience store.

**sewage, sewerage, sewers, effluent, wastewater** *Sewage* is the collective term for household and commercial wastewater that contains human waste. *Sewerage* is obscure jargon for the entire system of pipes, pump stations, tanks and so on that collects, transports, treats and discharges both sewage and other kinds of wastewater. Instead, call it a *sewage system*, *sewer system* or *wastewater system*. *Sewers* are the pipes or pipelines that carry sewage. *Wastewater*, usually interchangeable in meaning with *sewage*, is all the waste treated by sewage treatment plants, including human waste, industrial waste and liquid waste from other sources. *Effluent* is treated sewage and wastewater discharged into the environment.

**sex, sexism** Base communication on relevant qualities of men and women, not on their sex or sexual orientation. See [**gay, lesbian**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#gay)**;** [**gender**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#gender).

Avoid the outdated use of words that restrict meaning to males. Include all people in general references by substituting unbiased, asexual words and phrases: *informal agreement* for *gentlemen's agreement*, *homemaker* for *housewife*, *employees and their spouses* for *employees and their wives*.

Here are other examples: *hours worked, staff hours* or *working hours* for *man-hours; people, men and women, human beings, the human race, civilization* or *humanity* for *mankind; physical strength, resources, human effort, staff, workers* or *work force* for *manpower; artificial, synthetic, manufactured* or *handmade* for *manmade;* and *large, big, generous* or *formidable* for *man-sized.* Also, think about using *sewer access, pipeline opening, utility maintenance hole* or *utility access hole* for *manhole.* See [**man**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#man).

Avoid using *man* or *woman* as a suffix or prefix in job titles: Substitute *business executive, business leader* or *businessperson* for *businessman; worker, laborer* or *employee* for *workman; camera operator, videographer* or *cinematographer* for *cameraman; firefighter* for *fireman;* letter carrier, mail carrier or postal worker for *mailman;* and *sales representative, agent* or *clerk* for *salesman.* Use generic titles or descriptions for both men and women. Avoid writing about *woman managers, male secretaries, men's work, women's interests such as recipe swapping, sewing and fashion*. See [**chairman, chairperson, chairwoman**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#chairman, chairperson, chairwoman).

Reword sentences to drop unnecessary gender pronouns, especially the outdated generic *he* and *his* but also *she* and *her*. Here are some alternatives:

Try dropping use of any pronoun.

Substitute the articles *a* or *the* for the pronoun where suitable.

Use the plural pronouns *they* and *their* with plural nouns: *Workers ... they*. Not *The worker ... he*. Using plural pronouns with singular nouns is not, yet, widely accepted: *The worker ... they*. See [**their, them, their**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#their_them_they)**.**

Use *he or she* and *his or hers*--but don't overdo it. Alternate between using those phrases and other alternatives. See [**he or she, he/she**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#he or she); [**his, his/her**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#his).

Repeat the original noun or use synonyms for second references to nouns like *the worker* or *workers*. But don't overdo that either. Make sure it's clear to readers the synonyms refer to the same person or people.

Alternate male and female expressions and examples. This style manual uses examples involving both males and females.

Refer to women and men equally and consistently: *Middle school teachers Larry Carson and Emily Johnson won the awards*. Not: *Middle school teachers Larry Carson and Mrs. Gus Johnson won the awards*. See [**Miss, Mr., Mrs., Ms.**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#Miss).

Use parallel language when mentioning people by gender: Substitute *husband and wife* for *man and wife, ladies and gentlemen* for *ladies and men* (or *gentlemen and ladies*, for variety). Neither men nor women over the age of 18 are *boys* or *girls*. Usually, use *woman* and *man* as the noun and *female* and *male* as the adjective. See [**female, male**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#female).

Give equal respect to women and men. Do not describe men by mental qualities or professional position and, simultaneously, describe women by physical features. Only refer to appearance, charm, intuition or physical strength when relevant.

**shall** Avoid this formal, ambiguous, pretentious word. Use *is* when something is fact: *The senior editor is* [not *shall be*] *responsible for reviewing all documents for clarity and consistency.* Use *may* instead to give permission: *Members may borrow up to three CDs a month*. Use *must* instead to express legal obligation: *Tenants must pay rent by the 15th of each month*. Use *have to, must, need to* or *required* instead to express other requirements: *Each student is required to take the exam*. Use *should* when recommending a course of action: *We should move ahead with the project by Friday*. Use *will* instead to express what someone plans to do or expects: *I will be there. We will meet. You will like it. She will not be pleased.* See [**can, may**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#can, may); [**may, might**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#may, might); [**should, would**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#should); [**will, would**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#will, would).

**share, sharing** Sharing is wonderful, but don't use it redundantly: *sharing together, sharing the same office* or *sharing the same birthday*. Drop *together* from the first example, and reword the others: *using the same office, sharing an office, having the same birthday, sharing a birthday*. Also redundant: *both share* and *share in common*. Use *they share* instead, and drop *in common*.

**Sheetrock** A trademark for a brand of gypsum wallboard. Use *plasterboard* instead.

**she** Do not use this pronoun to refer to ships or nations. Use *it* instead.

**sherbet** Sometimes misspelled. Only one *r*. Not *sherbert*.

**sheriff** Commonly misspelled. Capitalize when used as an official title before a name: *Benton County Sheriff Wyatt Dillon, county Sheriff Wyatt Dillon*. Do not abbreviate *sheriff*. Capitalize *Sheriff's Office* with or without the name of the county when referring to a particular sheriff's office.

On first reference, capitalize an officer's rank when used as a formal title only before the name of a sheriff's officer (as well as before the name of police officer or firefighter). Except in direct quotations, abbreviate most military-style titles used before the name of a person: *Lt., Capt., Sgt., Maj.* Add *police* or *fire* before other titles if needed for clarity: *county Sheriff Sgt. Smitty Williams, police Capt. John Davidson*. Spell out *detective* and other titles not used in the military. Don't continue using the title with the name in later references. Use only the last name.

Also see [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization); [**police, police department**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#police department); [**titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#titles).

**shopworn**

**short-term** See [**long-term, short-term**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#long-term).

**should, would** Use *should* to express an obligation (meaning "ought to"), a condition (an "if" statement) or an expectation: *We should help the needy. If I win the lottery, I should give at least 10 percent to charity. They should be back in 15 minutes*. Use *would* to express a usual action, a hypothetical situation or a preference: *In the summer we would spend hours by the seashore. She would do it if she could. I would like to see you.* See [**could of, may of, might of, must of, should of, would of**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#could_of); [**ought to**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#ought).

**shut down** (v.), **shutdown** (n.)

**shut off** (v.), **shut-off** (n., adj.)

***sic*** This Latin word means "thus" or "so." Usually bracketed and in italics, it's used after quoted material to show that an error, odd usage or misspelling is in the original document. But avoid using unless you must keep the error for historical or technical accuracy--or want to appear snide. Think about paraphrasing the mistaken word, phrase or statement instead.

**sightseeing, sightseer** No hyphen.

**sight, site** Somtimes confused. *Sight* is about seeing, from "the ability to see" to "things you see, can't see or should see." We go *sightseeing*. And we *set our sights* on something we look forward to doing. *Site* is about a place, "a place where something happened," "a place where something could be built" or "a place on the World Wide Web." *Site* is also a verb for "putting something in a particular place." Don't confuse with *cite*. See [**cite**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#cite).

**significant** See [**import, important, significant**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#import)

**signs** When giving the words of a sign in text, capitalize the words; don't italicize them or place them in quotation marks: *Police said many drivers ignore the Yield to Pedestrians signs*.

**similar** Often misspelled or mistyped. Not *similiar*.

**simple, simplistic** Too often confused. Simplicity is a virtue, especially in communications. *Simple* means "not complex or complicated, easy (as in *easy to understand*), unembellished, not ostentatious." *Simplistic*, best used when referring to complex problems and usually used in a negative way, means "unrealistically simple or oversimplified." See [**concise**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#concise); [**plain English, plain language**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#plain English); [**Garbl's Concise Writing Guide**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/betwrit.htm); [**Garbl's Fat-Free Writing Links**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/writing/concise.htm).

**simple, simply** *Simple* is unnecessary and wordy in phrases like *simple reason, simple truth, simple purpose*. *Simply* is often redundant and wordy when used to mean "absolutely" or "extremely": *The Rolling Stones concert was simply thrilling.* Simplify. Drop *simple* and *simply*.

**since** See [**because, since**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#because_since); [**Myths and Superstitions of Writing**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/myths.htm#since).

**single-occupant vehicle** Spell out. Avoid abbreviation *SOV*.

**sink down** Redundant. Drop one of the words.

**sit, sitting** See [**set, sit**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#set) above.

**site** See [**sight, site**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#sight) above.

**situation** Trite. Delete, or find a more concrete, descriptive word: *a crisis situation*. Drop *situation*.

**sizable** No *e* after the *z*.

**size** Lowercase *size* and use figures to give sizes: *waist size 36, 10 1/2 shoes, size 9 dress*

**-size** Something may be *small, medium-size* or *large*. Size is inherent in the meaning of small and large.

**skeptic** See [**cynic, skeptic**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#cynic)**.**

**Skid Road, Skid Row** The term *Skid Road* started in Seattle, where dirt roads were used to skid logs to the mill. It later became a synonym for the area where loggers gathered, usually among rooming houses and saloons. In other cities, *Row* has replaced *Road* in many references to areas that are havens for derelicts.

**skillful** Commonly misspelled. Two *l's* in the middle, one at the end.

**sky-high** Hyphenate in all uses, as an adjective and adverb, before and after a noun: *sky-high ticket prices; trees grown sky-high*.

**slander** See [**libel, slander**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#libel).

**slant, slash (/)** See [**virgule**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#virgule) for punctuation mark.

**sleight of hand** Sometimes misspelled. Not *slight of hand*.

**slide show** Two words.

**slough (off), sluff** The correct spelling is *slough*, not *sluff*.

**slow, slowly** *Slowly* is the more common adverb to modify a verb, adjective or other adverb, but *slow* is also acceptable as an adverb (as well as an adjective to modify nouns and pronouns). Let your ear be your guide: *He complained that his computer runs slowly. Her car is really slow, but her children say she drives slow*.

**small-sized** Wordy and redundant. Change to *small*.

**smartphone** One word. Also, *cellphone* is one word. See [**cellphone, cellular phone, cellular telephone**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#cellular)**.**.

**snowfall, snowflake, snowman, snowplow, snowstorm** Each one word.

**so** Like the conjunctions *and, but* and *yet*, *so* is a useful, correct transition word at the beginning of sentences--instead of *as a result, consequently* and *therefore*. For emphasis, *so* may be followed by a comma. See [**and, but**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#and, but)**;** [**thus**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#thus)**;** [**yet**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#yet).

**so as to** Wordy. Change to *to*.

**Social Security** Capitalize all references to the U.S. system.

**soda, soft drink** *Soft drink* is probably the most common term for carbonated, flavored and sweetened nonalcoholic drinks in the United States. Usually called *pop* in the Midwest and West and *soda* in the Northeast and around St. Louis, Missouri. In the South, soft drinks are called *cold drink*, *drink* and *Coke*, even when it's not Coca Cola. And around Boston: *tonic*.

**software** *Software* is a mass (or non-count) noun, like *postage, research, machinery, hardware, cash, advice* and *mail*. Mass nouns take singular verbs. To refer to *software* in countable or measurable--and plural--terms, add countable phrases or use *software* as an adjective: *Three types of software are available. Three software products are available.* Capitalize software titles like *Windows* and *PageMaker*. Use quotation marks around only computer game titles: *"Where in the World is Carmen San Diego?"*

**soil** See [**collective nouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#collective nouns).

**some** See [**all, any, most, some**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#all, any).

**some of the** Wordy. Simplify. Replace with *some*.

**some time, sometime, sometimes** Sometimes confused. Use *some time* (two words) to refer to "an unspecified period or time": *He had hoped to meet her for some time. They met some time ago.* Use *sometime* to mean "at an unstated time or an indefinite time in the future": *She'll meet you sometime after work. Let's get together sometime.* It also means "former": *The sometime colleagues hadn't seen each other for years*. Use *sometimes* to mean "occasionally": *They now write each other sometimes*.

**something, somewhat** Sometimes confused. Avoid using the weak word *somewhat*. But if you must use it, use it only as an adverb to describe a verb, adjective or other adverb. *Somewhat* means "a little, slightly": *somewhat scary, somewhat boring*. Don't use *somewhat* as a noun; use *something* instead: David may be *somewhat hungry*, but he can't be *somewhat of pest* about eating. He can be *something of a pest* about eating, however.

**soup of the day** See [**French dip**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#Frenchdip).

**sort of** See [**kind of, sort of**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#kind of).

**sound** See [**Puget Sound**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#puget Sound).

**SOV** Abbreviation for *single-occupant vehicle*. Avoid use of this abbreviation.

**spacing** Put only one space after all punctuation marks--unless no space is needed, such as between adjacent punctuation marks and before and after a [**dash**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dash) and a [**hyphen**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#hyphen). This guideline applies to the [**colon**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#colon), [**period**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#period) and other punctuation marks at the end of a sentence: [**exclamation point**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#exclamation point), [**question mark**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#question mark).

To prevent a person's initials from splitting between two lines of type, don't put a space between them: *T.S. Eliot*. Also, don't put spaces before or after [**hyphens**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#hyphen), [**dashes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dash) or [**virgules**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#virgule). But treat an [**ellipsis**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#ellipsis) like a word, with a space before and after it.

Either put one space between paragraphs or indent paragraphs; doing both is usually redundant.

**spade, spayed** Sometimes confused or misspelled. You use a *spade--a* shovel--to dig a hole in the ground. It's also one of the two black symbols in a deck of cards. After you sterilize your pet to prevent unwanted offspring, she's been *spayed*.

**Spanish-speaking** See [**Hispanic, Latino**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#Hispanic).

**species** Same in singular and plural. Unless writing about coined money, don't use the substandard *specie* as the singular form. Use singular or plural verbs and pronouns with *species* depending on the sense: *The species has been unable to maintain itself. Both species are extinct.* See [**family, genus, species**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#family, genus); [**fish**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#fish); [**taxonomy**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#taxonomy).

**speeches** Capitalize and use quotation marks for formal speech titles. See [**composition titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#composition titles)**.**

**speechmaker, speechmaking**

**speech tags** See [**attribution**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#attribution)**.**

**speeds** Use figures: *The taxi slowed to 7 miles per hour*.

**spelling** Frequently misspelled words are listed alphabetically throughout this style manual. Also listed are preferred spellings for words with more than one possible spelling. Based in the United States, this manual prefers American spellings to British spellings, except for names of British publications and organizations. For more guidance, see [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization)**,** [**collective nouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#collective nouns)**,** [**compounds**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#compounds)**,** [**hyphen**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#hyphen)**,** [**plurals**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#plurals)**,** [**possessives**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#possessives)**,** [**prefixes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prefixes)**,** [**suffixes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#suffixes)**,** [**verbs**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#verbs).

For spelling and definitions not covered in this manual, check a dictionary, such as [*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*](http://www.m-w.com/dictionary.htm). The Associated Press prefers *Webster's New World College Dictionary*. If two (or more) spellings are listed, use the first one unless this manual lists a specific exception. If your dictionary provides different spellings in separate entries (*gray* and *grey*, for example) use the spelling followed by a full definition (*gray*). If a dictionary entry is listed as *usually* or *often*, use that entry.

Use computerized spelling checkers carefully; they don't catch mistyped words that are spelled correctly--*not* instead of *now*--or words that sound alike but are spelled differently--*too, two, to*.

**spell out** Hackneyed. Use *explain*, *specify*, *show*, *describe* or *detail* instead. And don't *spell out in detail*.

**spiritual, spirituous** Sometimes confused. *Spiritual* is an adjective for describing things related to or affecting the human spirit or soul rather than things that are material or physical. *Spirituous* is an adjective for describing things containing alcohol, especially distilled beverages.

**split infinitives** Avoid awkward sentence constructions that split the infinitive forms of a verb, such as *to leave* or *to help*, as in this sentence: *Try to not awkwardly or incorrectly split infinitives*. But splitting infinitives is grammatically correct--and even useful if it helps strengthen the meaning of a sentence by placing the modifier before the word it's modifying: *He wanted to really impress the council.* Unfortunately, split infinitives can distract some readers who think they're incorrect. See [**Myths and Superstitions of Writing**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/myths.htm#infinitive).

**sport-utility vehicle** No *s* at the end of sport. Hyphenate. *SUV* is acceptable on second reference: *SUVs are vehicles that combine sport and utility while using too much gas and endangering smaller cars*.

**spousal unit** Ridiculous euphemism. Simplify. Swap in *wife* or *husband*, *spouse*, or *partner*.

**spreadsheet** One word.

**springtime** One word, no hyphen. But unless you're being poetic, *spring* is simpler.

**square feet, square foot** See [**dimensions**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dimensions)**.**

**square** Do not abbreviate. Capitalize when part of a proper name: *Pioneer Square*.

**stadium, stadiums** Capitalize only when part of a proper name: *Husky Stadium*.

**staff** Collective noun, it takes singular verbs: *The staff is working on the project.* *Staff members* may be used, if needed: *Staff members are working on the project.* See [**collective nouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#collective nouns)**,** [**man**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#man)**.**

**stalactite, stalagmite** Sometimes confused or misspelled. A *stalactite* hangs from the celing of a cave. A *stalagmite* rises from the floor. Memory aide: A *stalactite* is stuck *tight* to the ceiling.

**stanch, staunch** Sometimes misused or confused. The verb *stanch* means "to stop or restrict (a flow of blood)." Use the adjective *staunch* to describe someone as "loyal and committed" or something as "strong or firm."

**stand-alone** (adj.) Two words, hyphenated.

**standard transmission** See [**transmission**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#transmission).

**start** See [**begin, start**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#begin).

**start off, start up** Wordy. Simplify. Change to *start*.

**startup** (n., adj.), **start up** (v.)

**state** (v.) *Say* or *said* is often a better word than *state* or *stated* in most writing. *Tell us* or *write* are other choices. *State* sounds formal or stilted, unless you're stating something officially and specifically: *The school's complaint policy states that all letters will be researched thoroughly. The school's complaint policy states, "All letters will be researched thoroughly."* See [**attribution**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#attribution).

**state names, states** Spell out the names of the 50 U.S. states when they stand alone in texts: *He moved to Washington after living 20 years in New York.* State names may be abbreviated in charts and tables.

Except in business correspondence, abbreviate most state names when used with the names of U.S. cities, counties, towns or villages. Spell out the names of the two states that are not part of the continental United States and the six continental states that have five or fewer letters: *Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas* and *Utah*. These states may be abbreviated in charts and tables. If documents or websites have large audiences outside the United States, consider spelling out all state names. Always spell out the state name in business correspondence.

For punctuation, place one comma between the city and the state name and another comma after the state name, unless ending a sentence: *She moved to Portland, Ore., from Portland, Maine.* Do not use ZIP code spellings for state names in written text unless part of an address. See [**ZIP code**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#zero).

Use *state of Washington* or *Washington state*--with lowercase *state*--when necessary to distinguish the state from the District of Columbia.

Lowercase *state* when used as an adjective: *a state map*, *the state government*. *They visited the state of Washington*. Capitalize state when writing about the state government: *He worked for the State of Washington.*

Do not capitalize *state* when used simply as an adjective to specify a level of jurisdiction: *state Rep. Ellen Berger, state Department of Social Services, state funds, state Department of Ecology*. But capitalize the full name of state governmental units: *Washington State Department of Ecology.* See [**ecology,**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#ecology) [**Ecology**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#ecology)**;** [**governmental bodies**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#governmental bodies)*.*

See [**ZIP code**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#ZIP code).

**state-of-the-art** Cliche. Try *modern, up-to-date, newest* or *innovative* instead--or explain why it's so "state-of-the-art." See [**modern**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#modern).

**state route** See [**highway designations**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#highway designations).

**state with confidence** Stock phrase. Think about omitting or rephrase with a form of *be confident*.

**station** The call letters alone are often enough for radio and television stations, but when needed, lowercase the description: *radio station KMTT, television station KING*. See [**call letters**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#call letters)**,** [**TV**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#tV).

**stationary, stationery** To stand still is to be *stationary*. Writing paper is *stationery*. Memory tip: Both *stationery* and *paper* contain *er*.

**staunch** See [**stanch, staunch**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#stanch).

**still remain** Wordy and redundant. Simplify. Drop *still*.

**stockbroker** One word.

**storm event** Wordy. Redundant. Simplify. Drop *event*. See [**weather**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#weather).

**stormwater** One word.

**storm weather** (n.), **storm-weather** (adj.)

**strait, straight** Sometimes confused or misspelled. Think of *strait* as narrow, tight or confined, like a narrow channel between two bodies of water, a *straitjacket* to confine a person's arms, and a *strait-laced* family with strict moral views. And think of *straight* as something that's not bent, curved, leaning or dishonest. Someone who's *straight and narrow* follows a law-abiding, moral path. And someone who's in *dire straits* is passing through a distressing time.

**stream bank** (n.), **stream-bank** (adj.)

**streambed** One word.

**street** Abbreviate only with a numbered address. See [**addresses**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#addresses).

**sub-** Usually, no hyphen: *subculture, subtotal, subdivision, subcommittee,* but *sub-subcommittee*. See [**prefixes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prefixes).

**subcommittee** Lowercase when used with the name of a legislative body: *a City Council subcommittee*. Capitalize when a subcommittee has a proper name of its own: *the City Council's Long-Range Planning Subcommittee.*

**subsequently** Overstated and formal. Four syllables and 12 letters. Simplify. Try *later*, *after, next* or *then*.

**subsequent, subsequent to** Pompous. Try *after, next, later, following* or *resulting*.

**substitute** People *substitute* one thing *for* another. Don't use *substitute by* or *substitute with.*

**succeed** Commonly misspelled. It's one of only three English words that end in *-ceed*. The others are *exceed* and *proceed*. See [**exceed**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#exceed)**,** [**proceed**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#proceed).

**successfully** Often unnecessary: *She finished the assignment successfully* means the same as *She finished the assignment*.

**succinct** See [**concise**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#concise)**.**

**such as** See [**including, such as**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#including).

**suffice** Formal. Simplify. Think about replacing with *be enough, do, satisfy, meet* or *answer*: *A few hours of your time will be enough [*or *will do]*.

**sufficient number of** Overstated and wordy. Simplify. Consider replacing with *enough* or *plenty*. Also see [**adequate, enough, sufficient**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#adequate).

**suffixes** See separate listings for commonly used suffixes. Usually, do not hyphenate words formed with the suffixes *wide, down, less*. If in doubt, follow your preferred dictionary. If it does not list a word combination, use two words for the verb form and hyphenate any noun or adjective forms. See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization)**,** [**titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#titles).

Here are some general rules:

The suffix *-able* is more common than *-ible*, and it is used mostly with complete root words: *workable, dependable, changeable, noticeable*. The final *e* is dropped in some root words: *desirable, excusable, indispensable, usable*.

Only *-able* follows *g, i* and the hard *c* ("k" sound): *navigable, amiable, irrevocable*.

The suffix *-ible* is commonly used after double consonants (like *11*), *s, st,* some *d* sounds and the soft *c* ("s" sound): *infallible, divisible, credible, forcible*.

The *-ance/ant* and *-ence/ent* suffixes don't follow any firm rules, so use your memory: *attendance, maintenance, relevant, resistant; existence, independence, persistent, superintendent*.

**summertime** Janis Joplin and others sing a powerful "Summertime." But *summer* is simpler.

**summon** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try *send for, call, order, call up* or *call on*.

**sum total** Wordy and redundant. Simplify. Drop *sum* or *total*.

**superintendent** Do not abbreviate. Capitalize as an official job title before a name. See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization)**,** [**titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#titles).

**supervisor** Capitalize as an official job title before a name: *Division Three Supervisor Connie Tyler*. Lowercase when standing alone or between commas after a name: *Keith Jagger, motor pool supervisor, thanked his crew.* See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization)**,** [**titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#titles).

**supersede** Commonly misspelled. Not *supercede*. It's the only English word that ends with *-sede*. Also, think about using the simpler *replace*.

**superstitions** See [**Garbl's Myths and Superstitions of Writing**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/myths.htm).

**supine** See [**prone, supine**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prone).

**supplement** Simplify. Try *add to* or *go with* instead of *supplement*. Also, think about using simpler *extra, more, added, another* or *spare* for *supplementary* and *supplemental*.

**support** Vague verb with multiple meanings. Be more precise if possible: consider *hold up* or *carry*, *help* or *encourage*, *uphold* or *agree with*, *maintain* or *provide for*, *prove* or *confirm*, *endure* or *tolerate*, *keep up* or *sustain*.

**supposably, supposedly, supposingly** Sometimes confused. *Supposedly* is usually the correct choice. Use it to mention something that might be true or real though you may not believe it. If you must use *supposably*, first find a dictionary and then try to figure out what it means. You'll find *supposingly* in a dictionary of words that don't exist.

**suppose to, supposed to** Commonly misused. Meaning "expected to," the correct phrase is *supposed to*, not *suppose to*. See [**used to**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#used to).

**surprise** Commonly misspelled.

**surrounded** *Completely surrounded* is redundant. Simplify. Drop *completely*.

**SUV** See [**sport-utility vehicle**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#sport-utility vehicle).

**symbols** Avoid using symbols in texts, especially on first reference. Symbols may be used in charts and tables. See [**percent**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#percent)**,** [**pound sign (#)**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#pound sign)**,** [**temperatures**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#temperatures).

**sympathy** See [**empathy, sympathy**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#empathy).

**syndrome** Jargon. Avoid this term unless the meaning is medical. Try *pattern, conditions* or *characteristics* instead.

**synergy** "I don't know what it means, and I don't have time to look it up." If your readers might respond like that, don't use that word--or at least explain it.

**systemwide** One word, no hyphen.

**task force** Capitalize the full name of a task force set up by an organization. Lowercase when using only part of the name.

**taught, taunt, taut, tout** Sometimes confused or misspelled. Use the adjective *taut* to describe something that's "stretched tight" or someone who's "tense" or "controlled." Use the verb *taught* as the past tense of *teach* to mean "gave lessons in a school or college" or "showed someone how to do something." Use the verb and noun *taunt* to describe "making people upset or angry by teasing, insulting or mocking them." And use the verb *tout* to "praise someone or something and promote its worth or importance to other people."

**tax-deductible,** **tax-exempt,** **tax-free** Include the hyphen in these compound adjectives.

**taxpayer** One word, no hyphen. Same with *ratepayer*.

**taxonomy** The scientific classification of plants, animals and other organisms into a hierarchical groups based on structure and origin--their presumed natural relationships. Organisms fall into five kingdoms: Animalia (animals); Plantae (plants); Fungi (fungi); Prokaryotae (bacteria); and Protoctista (algae, molds, protozoans).

From the broadest to the specific, here are the groups and an example (the common domesticated dog) showing correct style for Latin names of organisms within each group: kingdom, Animalia (animals); phylum, Chordata; class, Mammalia; order, Carnivora; family, Canidae; genus, *Canis* (italicized); and species, *familiaris* (italicized, lowercase). In botany, *division* is used instead of *phylum*. Organisms in intermediate groups--such as subspecies, suborders and subfamilies--have the same style as the base group. In most writing, only the genus and species names are used. The name of the genus always goes before the name of a species: *Canis familiaris*; in later references, the genus may be abbreviated, using only its first letter, capitalized: *C. familiaris*.

Nouns and adjectives derived from scientific names are lowercased: the phylum Protoza, protozoan. The Latin names for infectious organisms are treated like other taxonomic terms, but the names of diseases or pathological conditions derived from such names are lowercased and not italicized. See [**animals**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#animals), [**plants**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#plants).

**TDD** Abbreviation for *telecommunications device for the deaf*. Use *TTY* instead. See [**TTY**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#TTY).

**teachers college** No apostrophe.

**teammate** One word.

**team, team names** See [**collective nouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#collective nouns).

**teaspoon, teaspoonful, teaspoonfuls** Use numerals when giving amounts, and spell out *teaspoon*. Three *teaspoons* equal one *tablespoon*.

**tee ball** Not *T-ball*. This version of baseball for young children got its name because the ball is placed on a *tee*, which looks nothing like the letter *T*.

**teen, teenage** (adj.), **teenager** (n.) No hyphen. Don't use *teenaged*. See [**youth, youths**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#youth)**.**

**tee shirt** See [**T-shirt**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#T-shirt).

**telecommunications device for the deaf** See [**TDD**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#TDD)**;** [**TTY**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#TTY)**.**

**telephone numbers** Recommended forms for the United States: 206-937-XXXX, 800-XXX-XXXX, 937-XXXX, NU2-XXXX, FOR-FREE (367-3733). Using periods (or dots) instead of hyphens is trendy and potentially confusing.

For metropolitan areas with multiple area codes, put the suitable area code before all telephone, cellular phone, pager and fax numbers.

For extension numbers, abbreviate and lowercase *extension*, and separate it with a comma from the main number: *263-XXXX, ext. XXX.*

For organization telephone numbers in internal publications, neither the area code nor the prefix may be necessary: *Call 987-6543 for more information. Call ext. 210 for more information*.

Refer to *toll-free number* instead of *800 number*: *800-XXX-XXXX (toll free)*. Including the number *1* for long-distance and toll-free numbers is unnecessary. See [**contact**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#contact)**;** [**facsimile, fax**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#facsimile, fax)**;** [**pound sign (#)**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#pound sign).

**teletypewriter** See [**TTY**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#TTY).

**television** Capitalize the titles of television programs and put them in quotation marks. See [**station**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#station)**,** [**TV**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#TV).

**temperament** Commonly misspelled.

**temperatures** Use numerals for all except *zero*: *It's 31 degrees Fahrenheit*. Use a word--not a minus sign--to show temperatures below zero: *It's 8 degrees below zero*. Also, temperatures get *higher* or *lower*, not *hotter*, *warmer*, *cooler* or *colder*. See [**Celsius**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#celsius)**,** [**Fahrenheit**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#Fahrenheit).

**tenant, tenet** Sometimes confused or misspelled. Use *tenant* to name "someone who rents or leases a house, apartment or property." Use *tenet* to mention "a principle or belief of a person or group." And consider using simpler *principle* or *belief* instead of *tenet*.

**terminate** Overstated and formal. Simplify. Try *end, stop, finish, wind up, limit* or *fire*. See [**fired**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#fired).

**terse** See [**concise**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#concise)**.**

**than I, than me** Because of words understood or not stated, these phrases have different, potentially confusing meanings. "My girlfriend likes peanut butter better *than I*" means "My girlfriend likes peanut butter better *than I* like peanut better." "My girlfriend likes peanut butter better *than me*" means "My girlfriend likes peanut butter better *than* she likes *me*." To prevent unfortunate misunderstandings, use the correct pronoun and consider using all the words necessary. See [**I, me**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#I-me).

**thankfully** Like *hopefully*, using *thankfully* to modify an entire sentence is common but not recommended in respected writing manuals. Avoid using it in writing to mean "thank goodness" or "I am thankful ... We are thankful ... He feels grateful ...." Use phrases like those instead. It may be used to modify a verb or adjective, expressing thanks or meaning "gratefully": *They responded thankfully after retrieving the found passport*. See [**hopefully**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#hopefully).

**Thanksgiving, Thanksgiving Day** Capitalize the name of the annual U.S. and Canadian holidays. Consider using *Thanksgiving Day* when mentioning the specific day and not the general celebration.

**than, then** Often confused or misspelled. Use *than* when you're comparing things: *No one is more aware of local driving behaviors than bus drivers*. Use the adverb *then* when you're writing about time -- if one thing follows or results from another, suggesting a logical conclusion, or meaning "soon afterward": *If this, then that. First they toured the vehicle maintenance shop; then they visited the sign shop*.

**that, this, these, those, it** These pronouns must always refer clearly to a specific noun or other pronoun--or to a complete idea. Avoid using them alone to refer to the complete sense of an earlier statement. The result may be unclear and imprecise. Instead, first ask yourself, "This what?" (or "That what?" or "These what?"). Then repeat a key word from the earlier sentence or clause, or include a word that refers to the earlier sentence or clause. Change: *This helps prevent reader confusion*. To: *This rule helps prevent reader confusion.* Change: *If the dog leaves any food in the bowl, throw it out.* To: *Throw out any food the dog leaves in the bowl.* Or: *If the dog leaves any food in the bowl, throw out the leftovers.* See [**these kind of, those kind of ...**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#these_those).

Use *this* when writing about something near, such as *this pencil I'm using or this feeling I'm experiencing.* Use *that* to mention something farther away or more remote in distance, time or thought: *that pencil in the desk or that feeling I had this morning.* Apply the same distinctions to *these* as the plural of *this* and *those* as the plural of *that*.

Also, use *this, that, these, those* or *the* when writing about something already mentioned instead of the formal, vague and legalistic *said, above* and *abovementioned*: *That agreement*, not *said agreement* or *the abovementioned agreement*.

**that, which, who, whom** *That* is the defining, or restrictive, pronoun for essential clauses: *The camera that is broken is in the shop* (tells which one). *Which* is the nondefining, or nonrestrictive, pronoun for nonessential clauses: *The camera, which is broken, is in the shop* (adds a fact about the only camera in question).

In the examples above, note the correct use of commas: *Which* clauses are always set off with commas (or sometimes dashes or parentheses), and *that* clauses aren't. Essential *that* clauses cannot be cut without changing the meaning of a sentence. Don't set off an essential clause from the rest of a sentence with commas. Nonessential *which* clauses can be dropped without altering the meaning. Set off a nonessential clause with commas.

James J. Kilpatrick, *The Writer's Art*, 1984: "Rule of thumb: If the qualifying phrase is set off by commas, use *which*; if not, use *that*."

In addition, *that* is the preferred pronoun to introduce clauses that refer to an inanimate object*: Greg remodeled the house that burned down Friday.* *Which* is the only acceptable pronoun to introduce a nonessential clause that refers to an inanimate object: *The house, which Greg remodeled, burned down Friday.*

When an essential or nonessential clause refers to a human being or something with human qualities (such as a *family*), introduce it with *who* or *whom*. *That* -- but not *which* -- also may be used to refer to human beings, as well as inanimate objects. Dont't use commas if the clause is essential to the meaning. Use them if it is not. See [**who, whom**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#who).

Theodore M. Bernstein, *The Careful Writer*, 1977: "*Which* normally refers to things, *who* to persons, and *that* to either persons or things."

**the** See [**a, an, the**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#the).

**theater** Preferred spelling, unless the word is spelled as *Theatre* in a proper name.

**their, them, they** The day may come--and should--when these plural pronouns are accepted as singular pronouns that don't note a person's sex. Some respected writing authorities now suggest this change in language as we eliminate the outdated use of *he, him* and *his* as references to both men and women. This updated usage would be similar to use of the pronouns *you* and *your* for both one person and more than person, taking a plural verb even when mentioning one person.

Still, for now, consider the potential reaction of your audience--and the reaction you would prefer as the writer or editor--before applying this use. Meanwhile, try other acceptable uses, especially using the plural pronouns to refer to plural nouns. See [**he or she, he/she**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#he or she)**;** [**his or hers, his/hers**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#his)**;** [**pronouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#pronouns)**;** [**sex, sexism**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#sex)**.**

**their, there, they're** Commonly confused, misspelled or mistyped. And computer spellcheckers won't catch the mistaken substitution of one of these homonyms for the other--nor for *there's* and the plural possessive *theirs*. *Their* is the possessive form of the pronoun *they*, meaning "belonging to them." Don't misspell it as *thier*. *They're* is a contraction of *they are*. (And *there's* is a contraction of *there is*.) *There* (like *here*) refers to place. But see below for more on *there*.

**then** See [**than, then**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#than, then) above.

**there is, there are, there's, there was, there were** Avoid beginning sentences with these often unnecessary, wordy phrases. Try rewriting the sentence. Change: *There were two native rhododendrons at the nursery*. To: *Two native rhododendrons were at the nursery*. Also, *there's* is a contraction for *there is*; it refers to a single noun: *There's one signal at the intersection*. Do not use it with plural nouns. Incorrect: *There's better ways to write this sentence.* There sure *are*!

**therefor, therefore** Unless you're an attorney who loves legal jargon, you'll never use *therefor*, which means "for that, for it" Use *therefore*, or better yet, simplify and use *so, then* or *thus* instead. See [**so**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#so).

**these kind of, those kind of; these sort of, those sort of; these type of, those type of** In this use, *these* and *those* are plural adjectives that must modify plural nouns: *kinds, sorts* and *types*. Or use singular adjectives *this* and *that* instead with singular nouns *kind, sort* and *type*. See [**that, this, these, those, it**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#this).

**they** See [**their, them, they**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#their_them_they) above.

**the total of** See [**total, totaled, totaling**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#total, totaled).

**thing** Consider replacing with stronger, more direct wording that specifies an object or fact, idea, statement, action or event.

**think** See [**feel, think**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#feel).

**though** See [**although, though**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#although).

**three-D, 3-D** Use *3-D*. Short for *three-dimensional*.

**(the) three R's** Capitalize *R* and follow with an apostrophe. They're the fundamentals of an elementary education: *reading*, *'riting* and *'rithmetic*.

**threshold** Commonly misspelled. Not *threshhold*.

**throes, throws** Sometimes misused or confused. Use *throes* in the phrase *in the throes of* to describe the act of struggling with a very painful or difficult problem, situation, event, decision or task. Use *throws* as the present tense of the verb *throw* when describing the act of causing something to move through the air by a rapid propulsive movement of the arm.

**throughput** See [**input, output, throughput**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#input, output, throughput).

**through, thru** *Through* is the much-preferred spelling.

**thus** A simple, useful substitute for *as a result, consequently* and *therefore*. Or use even simpler *so*. For emphasis, a comma may follow *thus* (and *so*) at the beginning of sentences and other clauses. Also, adding *ly* to *thus* is a waste of time, space, finger energy and eye movement. Simplify. Also, see [**so**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#so).

**ticketbook** One word.

**till, 'til, until** *Till* and *until* are interchangeable. Some consider *until* as more formal. Don't use *'til* or *'till*. See [**until such time**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#until such time).

**time** Lowercase and use periods for *a.m., p.m.* Use numerals except for *noon* and *midnight*. Don't use *12 p.m.* or *12 a.m*. (In Latin, *a.m.* stands for *ante meridiem*, or "before noon," and *p.m.* stands for *post meridiem*, or "after noon.") Times on the hour do not take zeros. Use a colon to separate hours from minutes: *2:15 p.m., 7 a.m.,* not *7:00 a.m.* Here's the style for giving ranges of time: *The hours are 9:30-11 a.m. and 6-8 p.m.* (or *9:30 to 11 a.m. and 6 to 8 p.m.*).

Avoid redundancies such as *12 noon* or *12 midnight* and *8:30 a.m. this morning* or *8:30 p.m. Monday night*. Instead, use *noon, midnight, 8 a.m. today, 8:30 p.m. Monday*. The construction *2 o'clock in the afternoon* is acceptable but wordy.

See [**dash**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dash)**;** [**dates**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dates)**;** [**midnight, noon**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#midnight)**; time zones** below; [**tomorrow, yesterday**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#tomorrow).

**time frame, time period** Two words. Jargon. Consider replacing with simpler *period, time, age, era* or *interval*. See [**period of time**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#period of time)**.**

**time line** Two words.

**timetable** One word.

**time zones** Capitalize the full name of the time in a particular zone: *Pacific Standard Time, Eastern Standard Time*. Capitalize the region but lowercase *time zone* and *time* in shorter uses: *Pacific time zone, Pacific time*. Use time zone abbreviations (without periods) only when giving a time: *noon EST, 7:15 a.m. PST*. Don't put the abbreviations between commas or parentheses. See **time** above.

**titles** Abbreviate these position titles when using them before a full name outside direct quotations: *Dr., Gov., Lt. Gov., Mr., Mrs., Rep., Sen., the Rev.* Spell out all except *Dr., Mr., Ms.* and *Mrs.* when using them before a name in direct quotations. See [**academic degrees, titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#academic degrees)**;** [**legislative titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#legislative)**;** [**Miss, Mr., Mrs., Ms.**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#Miss)

Capitalize job or position titles used directly before a person's name: *Attorney General Michael Wonder, Store Manager Aretha Turner, Camera Operator George McCartney, Water Quality Planner Paul Starkey*. Lowercase job descriptions and informal designations in all uses.

Lowercase and spell out titles when they stand alone or are separated from a person's name by commas: *Sue Chin, attorney general, spoke at the meeting. The attorney general, Sue Chin, spoke at the meeting. The attorney general spoke at the meeting.* Long titles are less awkward after a person's name.

If a title applies to only one person in an organization, include the word *the* if the title is between commas: *The store manager, Aretha Turner, addressed her staff*. Or *Aretha Turner, the store manager, addressed her staff*. Use this construction to set off a long title from a name: *Tina Hope, the manager of the long-range service planning project, said ...*

See [**capitalization**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#capitalization).

**titles of compositions, documents, publications** See [**composition titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#composition titles)**,** [**entitled**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#entitled)**,** [**magazine names**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#magazine names)**,** [**newspapers**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#newspapers).

**to a certain degree** Wordy. Consider using a simpler phrase, such as *in part, less often, less so, partially* or *some*. See [**partially, partly**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#partially).

**to all intents and purposes, to all practical purposes** Wordy. Simplify. Delete or consider replacing with *effectively, essentially, in effect* or *in essence*.

**tobacco, tobaccos** Sometimes misspelled, misused and overused. A legal drug that's very likely to kill its addicted users and annoy if not harm people who breath its second-hand smoke.

**today, tonight** Avoid using these words except in direct quotations, documents meant for reading on the day of publication, and nonspecific uses: *Many baby boomers prefer golden oldies over today's music.* See **tonight** and **tomorrow, yesterday** below.

**to-do** Include the hyphen when used as either an adjective or noun: *She prepared a to-do list. The new product caused a major to-do at the convention*.

**together** Usually redundant when used with words like *blend, combine, connect, consolidate, couple, group, join, link* and *merge*: *After the reorganization, all engineers were consolidated together on the fifth floor*. Drop *together*.

**together with** See [**along with, together with**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#along with).

**toll-free number** See [**telephone numbers**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#telephone).

**tomorrow, yesterday** Use only in direct quotations and in phrases that do not refer to a specific day: *The world of tomorrow must be more peaceful. Yesterday when we were young.* Use *Monday, Tuesday*and so on for days of the week within seven days before or after the current date: *The advisory committee will meet Thursday.* Use the month and a figure for dates beyond that range. See [**months**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#months). Using *today* in a dated publication is OK: *The Americorps team today visited the regional headquarters*. See **today, tonight** above.

**tonight** Avoid the redundant *6:30 p.m. tonight*. Instead, use *6:30 tonight* or *6:30 p.m. today*. See **today, tonight** above.

**too** When using *too* to mean "also," no comma is necessary before *too* at the end of a clause or sentence: *She finished her first task and her second task too.* But set off *too* with commas elsewhere in a sentence: *He, too, finished both tasks.* See [**to, too, two**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#to, too) below.

**tortuous, torturous** Occasionally confused adjectives. Use the more common *tortuous* to describe something that's winding and full of twists, turns and curves, or someone who's not straightforward, who's devious and deceitful. Think *torture* when using *torturous* to describe something that's painful or painfully difficult: *torturous instructions*.

**to take this opportunity** Wordy. Simplify. Delete from sentences like this: *I would like to take this opportunity to delete that unnecessary phrase.*

**total number** Redundant. Drop *total*.

**total, totaled, totaling** The phrase *a total of* often is redundant. It may be used, however, to avoid a figure at the beginning of a sentence. *A total of 322 people applied for the three jobs.* Also, *a total of* takes a plural verb, and *the total of* takes a singular verb: *A total of 22 days were spent on the trip. The total of 22 days was spent on the trip*.

**to the point of (that, when, where)** Wordy. Simplify. Delete or consider replacing with *so (that), so far (that), so much (that), to, to when* or *to where*.

**to, too, two** Computer spellcheckers won't note the mistaken substitution of one of these homonyms for the other.

**touch-tone** Now a generic term for a push-button phone.

**tout** See [**taught, taunt, taut, tout**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#taut)**.**

**toward** Don't use *towards*.

**towns** See [**cities and towns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#cities and towns)**.**

**to whatever extent** Wordy. Consider using a simpler phrase, such as *however*. See [**however**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#however).

**toxic, toxicant** *Toxic* is an adjective meaning "poisonous": *The shop technician got rid of the toxic materials. Toxicant*, used as a noun, means "a poison": *The shop technicians got rid of the toxicants safely.* Don't use *toxic* as a noun.

**trademark** A brand, design, phrase, symbol or word used by a manufacturer or dealer for its products and protected by law to prevent inappropriate use by a competitor. Unless use of a company's trademark name is essential in a document, use a generic equivalent (lowercased): *facial tissue*, not *Kleenex*; *photocopy*, not *Xerox*; *cola*, not *Coke*. When using a trademark or proper name of a product, capitalize the first letter of each word. Unless the trademark owner is paying you to follow a different style, capitalizing the first letter is your only obligation in using a trademark; do not capitalize every letter unless the word is an acronym or abbreviation: *Subway*, not *SUBWAY*. You do not have to use the trademark and registration symbols--TM and Â® -- unless, perhaps, commercial products of another company are nemed in advertising. See [**brand names**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#brand names)**,** [**service mark**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#service).

**trade off** (v.), **trade-off** (n. and adj.)

**trade show** Two words.

**transcripts** In transcripts, identify the speaker at the beginning of each paragraph, followed by a colon. Give the speaker's full name and identification on first use. Use only the last name of a speaker in later references. When using a question-and-answer format, begin each paragraph with either a *Q:* for *question* or an *A:* for *answer*. Don't put quotation marks around transcripted comments. Instead, put quotation marks around only words or phrases that were quoted by a speaker. Follow other standard style guidelines for capitalization, spelling and abbreviations. See [**ellipsis**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/e.htm#ellipsis).

**transfer, transferable, transferred, transferring** Commonly misspelled. *Transferrable* is OK. Also, consider using forms of simpler *move, change* or *give*

**transmission** When writing about vehicle transmissions, use *manual transmission* instead of *standard transmission*, or specify *a four-speed* or *a five-speed* or *a stick shift*. An automatic transmission is now often standard equipment on many vehicles.

**transmit** Overstated jargon, unless you're writing about sending out radio or television signals. Simplify. Use *send* when writing about passing something from one place or person to another. Other simpler choices, depending on what you're writing: broadcast, relay, transfer, pass on, bear, carry.

**transpire** Formal and pompous when misused to mean simpler *happen* or *occur*. Correctly used to mean "to become known or leak out": *Reports on the conference never transpired*. See [**occur, occurred, occurring, occurrence**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#occur).

**travel, traveled, traveler, traveling** No doubled *l's*.

**tribe** Capitalize when used with a proper name: *Cherokee Indian Tribe*, *Hopi Tribe*, *Snoqualmie Tribe of Indians*. Lowercase when used alone and in plural form: *the tribe, the Cherokee and Hopi tribes, Indian tribes, the tribes.* Lowercase the adjective *tribal* unless its part of a proper name: *tribal art, Hopi tribal leaders, Muckleshoot Tribal Council*. Add an *s* when making a tribal name plural: *Cherokees*, *Snoqualmies*. See [**American Indian, Eskimo**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#American Indian)**;** [**race**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#race).

**trolley bus** Two words.

**troop, troupe** Sometimes confused. They're both groups, but a *troop* is an organized group of people, animals or soldiers, and a *troupe* is a working group of singers, actors, dancers or other performers. *Troops* (plural) applies to more than one troop or a large number of individual soldiers in a troop: *Forty-nine troops were killed in the insurgent attack*.

**trouble call** (n.), **trouble-call** (adj.)

**trout** Lowercase *trout* in all uses (unless it's the first word in a sentence or in a title). See [**fish**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#fish).

**true fact** Redundant and wordy. By definition, a fact is true. If a fact is not true, it's not a fact. Drop *true* immediately.

**try** **and** *Try and* is colloquial. Write: *Try to attend the meeting*, not *try and attend the meeting*.

**try out** (v.), **tryout** (n.)

**T-shirt** Not *tee shirt*. So named because it resembles the letter *T* when spread out. Also, if a shirt or undershirt is sleeveless, don't call it a T-shirt.

**TTY** Abbreviations for *TeleTYpewriters*. *TTY* is preferred on first reference when used with a phone number. The following is a recommended format for stating a TTY telephone number: *(206) 666-XXXX (for TTY users only)*.

**tune up** (v.), **tuneup** (n. and adj.)

**turbid, turgid** Sometimes confused. Use *turbid* to describe a liquid or water that's cloudy, muddy, unclear and thick or language that's confused. Use *turgid* to describe something that's swollen or inflated and language that's pompous.

**TV** Abbreviation for *television*. Acceptable in all uses. See [**call letters**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#call letters)**,** [**station**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#station)**,** [**television**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#television).

**24/7** Trendy term for "24 hours a day, seven days a week." Save for informal writing.

**Twitter** Capitalize the proper name; lowercase the verb forms: *tweet, tweeted, tweeting*. Also lowercase the term for a Twitter message: *tweet*.

**two-by-four** Spell out and hyphenate when writing about a piece of lumber that's about 2 inches thick and 4 inches wide. It's actually 1Â½ by 3Â½ inches, a potentially unfortunate discovery for people new to carpentry.

**UFO, UFOs** When you write about seeing one, the abbreviation *UFO* for *unidentified flying object* is acceptable on first use. No apostrophe in *UFOs* when you write about seeing or riding in more than one alien spacecraft or flying saucer.

**ukulele** Commonly misspelled.

**ultimate, ultimately** Overstated. Simplify. Try *most, final, last, best, crowning, perfect, supreme* or *eventual* for *ultimate* and *at last, in the end, finally, lastly, supremely* or *eventually* for *ultimately*.

**ultra-, un-** See [**prefixes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prefixes).

**U.N.** See [**United Nations**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#United_Nations).

**unanimous** Everyone agrees or votes the same way in a unanimous decision. *Completely unanimous* and *entirely unanimous* are redundant.

**unaware, unaware** Sometimes confused. Use *unaware*, an adjective, to describe someone who doesn't know about a situation or fact. Use *unawares*, an adverb, to mean "by surprise, suddenly or unexpectedly": *She was caught unawares of the change in plans. They were taken unawares of the decision to evacuate.*.

**under** See [**less than, under**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#less than).

**under-** Usually, don't use a hyphen: *underexpenditure, underground, underspend*. But see [**prefixes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prefixes).

**under fire** Cliche. Save this phrase for writing about brave police officers and soldiers in battle. When politicians, business leaders, athletes and celebrities are being attacked, censured, criticized, scolded or reprimanded, say they're being *attacked, censured, criticized, scolded, reprimanded* or other similar terms.

**undergraduate student** Redundant. Simplify. Drop *student* or be more specific: *first-year student, sophomore, junior, senior*.

**underlining** When possible, use *italic* type instead of underlining for certain types of compositions. See [**composition titles**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#composition titles). Also, avoid underlining text in publications and on the Web to stress words and phrases. Instead, use other options, including *italics*, **boldface**, color and size. Underlining cuts through the tails of several letters and punctuation marks--the comma, semicolon and letters *g j p q y*--making them harder to read. Also, on the Web people expect underlined text to be a hyperlink.

**under the provisions of** Wordy. Simplify. Replace entire phrase with *under* or *by*. Or use simpler *rules* or *terms* instead of *provisions*.

**under way, underway** Both are correct. But *under way* is commonly listed first in dictionaries and preferred in style manuals -- for no logical reason: *Construction is under way. Construction is underway.* Choose one way or the other and use it consistently.

**undoubtably** Not a word. Use *undoubtedly* instead.

**unidentified flying object** See [**UFO, UFOs**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#UFO).

**uninterested** See [**ambiguous, ambivalent, indifferent**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#ambiguous)**;** [**disinterested, uninterested**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#disinterested).

**union names** The formal names of unions may be shortened to conventionally accepted names: Change: *United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America.* To: *United Auto Workers union*. The short forms may be capitalized, except for the word *union*. Capitalize *union* when part of the formal name: *Amalgamated Transit Union*. See [**local of a union**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/kthrul.htm#local of a union)**.**

**unique** By definition, *unique* must be used sparingly. It means "one of a kind, without like or equal." It does not mean "unusual" or "uncommon." There can be no degrees of uniqueness. Nothing can be *more, less, sort of, rather, quite, very, slightly* or *most unique*. If you're describing more than one person, place or thing, none of them are unique. Remember: *Uni-* means one -- and only one.

**United Kingdom** It's Great Britain and Northern Ireland. *Ireland* is not part of the United Kingdom. *Great Britain* (or *Britain*) consists of England, Scotland and Wales. If naming the location of specific places in any of those entities, be specific: *London, England*, not *London, Great Britain*; *Edinburgh, Scotland*, not *Edinburgh, Britain*; *Belfast, Northern Ireland*, not *Belfast, United Kingdom*.

**United Nations** Sometimes misused and ignored. Include periods (with no space) when abbreviating as a noun or adjective: *U.N.* Look to this essential international organization to maintain international peace and security; to develop friendly relations among nations; to achieve international cooperation in solving economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian problems and promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; and to be a center for harmonizing the actions of nations.

**United States, U.S.** The abbreviation is accepable as both a noun and adjective--but consider spelling it out on first use in documents for international audiences. Include the periods in the abbreviation (except in headlines). No space between the letters in the abbreviation: *No U.S. president of any political party can or should speak for all citizens of the U.S.* See [**America, American**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#America, American).

**uniform resource locator** See [**World Wide Web**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#World Wide Web).

**university names** If a university (or college) has only one campus, use *in* to name the city: *Green River Community College in Auburn*. But if an institution has multiple campuses, use *at* to refer to a specific place: *the University of Washington at Bothell*.

**University of Washington** Spell out and capitalize on first reference. *UW* (all caps, no periods) or *the* *university* (lowercase) may be used on second reference.

**unless or until** Wordy. Simplify with either *unless* or *until*.

**unnecessarily** Overstated. Simplify. Change to *needlessly*.

**until** Commonly misspelled. Also, see [**till, 'til, until**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#till); [**up until (till)**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#up until) below

**until such time (point) as** Wordy. Simply. Replace with *until*.

**up** Idiom sometimes dictates use of *up*: We *look up* a word in the dictionary. Hard workers hope to *move up* in their careers*.* But don't use *up* when it's not necessary: We plan to *tighten up* the style guidelines. She *ate up* all the apple pie*.* Avoid those uses and others, such as *buoy up, loosen up, ring up, use up, phone up* and *climb up.* Also, if using an *up* term, avoid separating *up* from the base word with other words. See [**climb down, climb up**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#climb)**;** [**up until (till)**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#up until)

**up-** See [**prefixes**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#prefixes).

**-up** Follow your preferred dictionary for adding this suffix to the end of nouns or adjectives. If not listed there, hyphenate: *The oil cleanup lasted two weeks. The new movie is for grown-ups.* Use two words when using the terms as verbs. See **up** above.

**up close and personal** Wordy, redundant cliche. Simplify. Use *close* or *personal*, not both.

**upon** See [**on, onto, on to, upon**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#on, onto)**.**

**uppercase** One word.

**upriver, upstream** One word.

**upstage** One word.

**up-to-date** Hyphenate as an adjective to modify a noun.

**up until (till)** Wordy. Simplify. Drop *up*. See [**until such time (point) as**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#until such time)**.**

**URL** See [**World Wide Web**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#World Wide Web).

**U.S.** See [**United States**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#United States).

**usage, use, utilize, utilization** *Use* is the preferred all-purpose word as a noun and verb. *Usage* means "habitual or preferred practice in certain fields, such as grammar, law and diplomacy." *Utilize* means "putting something to practical, effective use," but *use* is usually less pretentious and formal. Simplify. Try using *use*: *He used the dishwasher.* Not: *He utilized the dishwasher.* Need there be an explanation for using *use* instead of *utilization*?

**U.S. armed forces** See [**armed forces**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#armed_forces).

**used to** Correct spelling when you mean "did at one time" or "formerly did": *He used to watch silly TV shows*. But it's *use to* in a question or a negative statement: *Did Bernie use to watch silly TV shows? Bernie didn't use to avoid silly TV shows*. *Did use* is another way of saying *used*.

**user interface** The abbreviation *UI* is acceptable on second reference.

**user friendly** Vague jargon. Be more descriptive. For example: *The instructions are easy to follow,* not *the system is user friendly*.

**use up** Wordy. Simplify. Try *use*. See [**up**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#up).

**us, we** Sometimes confused. *We* and other "nominative" pronouns--including *he, I, they* and *who*--typically go before a verb as the subject of a sentence or clause (a group of words with a subject and a verb). *Us* and other "objective" pronouns--including *her, him, me, them* and *whom*--typically come after a verb or preposition. Be careful when writing sentences with two clauses (a clause has both a subject and a verb), like these: *Please help us who are your children. This is a grand day for us who are your children*. The word ending the first clause should be the "objective" pronoun *us*, not *we*. *Us* is the object of the verb *help* and the preposition *for*. Also, the word beginning the second clause should be the "nominative" pronoun *who*. See [**pronouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#pronouns); [**we**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#we); [**who, whom**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#who).

Also follow those rules when joining pronouns and other nouns with conjunctions like *and* and *or*. Examples: *We contacted them. They responded to us. He cooperated with Tish and us. Federal officials will explain the new policy to state agencies, including us in the Department of Ecology*.

**utilize** See [**usage, use, utilize**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#usage).

**U-turn** (n. and adj.)

**v.** Abbreviation for *verb* in this style manual. See [**verbs**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#verbs).

**valley** Capitalize as part of a full name: *the Red River Valley*. Lowercase in plural uses: *the Red River and Stilawonder valleys*.

**vanpool** One word. See [**carpool**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#carpool)**,** [**high-occupancy**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#high-occupancy).

**VCR** See [**videocassette recorder**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#videocassette).

**VDT** Abbreviation for *visual display terminal*. Spell out.

**vehicle** Overstated, vague jargon. Simplify. Be specific if possible. If it's a car, write *car* or even *Toyota Celica*. If it's a bus, write *bus* or *trolley bus* or *Greyhound bus*. If it's truck, write *truck* or *pickup truck* or *tow truck*. And so on.

**venal, venial** Sometimes confused adjectives with distinct differences. Use *venal* to describe someone who can be bribed or corrupted easily (*a venal politician*) and something affected by bribery or corruption (*a venal tax break*). Use *venial* to describe a minor offense that may be forgiven or an error or fault that may be excused or overlooked.

**vendor** Commonly misspelled.

**venue** Pretentious, vague jargon, unless you're using the legal expression *change of venue*. Simplify. Be specific when possible. If it's a theater, write *theater*. If it's a stadium, write *stadium*. And so on, or use words like *location, place, setting* or *site*

**verbal** See [**oral, verbal, written**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#oral)**.**

**verbiage** Sometimes misused and misspelled. It's "an excess of words," not simply "words, diction" or "wording." Consider using simpler *wordiness* instead. But if you must use it, don't misspell it as *verbage*, and don't use the redundant *excess verbiage*. See [**concise**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#concise)**,** [**redundancy**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#redundancy)**.**

**verbose** See [**concise**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#concise)**.**

**verbs** A verb is a word that expresses existence, action or occurrence.

Follow this spelling rule when adding *ed* and *ing* to form the present participle and past tense of a verb: If the stress in pronunciation is on the first syllable, do not double the consonant: *offer, offered, offering*. If the stress in pronunciation is on the second syllable, double the consonant unless confusion would result.

Use a singular verb form after *each, either, everybody, everyone, neither, nobody, no one, somebody, someone*: *Although both candidates oppose the tax cut, neither has said much about it. No one in my work group likes his policies.* See [**none**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#none)*.*

Use a plural verb when the word *and* joins two or more nouns in a compound subject. Exceptions to this rule include compound subjects qualified by *each* or *every* and certain familiar compound phrases, often cliches: *Every engineer and planner in the company is getting a bonus. Fish and chips is one of his favorite meals.*

A singular subject takes singular verbs even if it is connected to other nouns by *along with, as well as, at least, besides, except, in addition to, no less than, together with* and *with: The artist, together with her roommates, is donating her earnings to the charity.* See [**as well as**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#as well as)**;** [**in addition to**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#in addition to)**;** [**along with, together with**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#along with).

See [**active vs. passive verbs**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#active vs. passive)**;** [**headlines, headings**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#headlines)**;** [**Myths and Superstitions of Writing**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/myths.htm#verbphrase)**;** [**split infinitives**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#split infinitives).

**versus** Spell it out in ordinary speech and writing: *The committee talked about the proposal to revise the project versus proposals to reevaluate the entire construction program*. In short expressions, however, the abbreviation *vs.* is OK: *The issue of taxes vs. services has long been with us*.

**very** Use *very* only when its emphasis isn't already suggested in the word(s) it's modifying. Using it may be redundant, if not silly: *Her death was very tragic.* Where emphasis is necessary, use stronger, more descriptive words or be more precise: *Her death at age 17 was tragic*. See [**hyphen**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#hyphen)**;** [**real, really**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#real).

**Veterans Day** No apostrophe according to the U.S. statute establishing the legal holiday. The *U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs*, formerly the *Veterans Administration*, also takes no apostrophe.

**veto, vetoes** (n.); **vetoed, vetoing** (v.)

**via** It means "by way of" [a place], not "by means of." Use *via* (or simpler *through* or *by*) to show the direction of a journey: *Their trip went from Seattle to Cancun via Houston*. Don't use *via* to show the means by which someone makes a journey: *She made the trip via train*. Instead: *She made the trip by train*. See [**by means of**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/b.htm#by means of).

**viable** It means "capable of living." Overused and misused in references to options, alternatives, plans, products and actions. Instead, consider dropping it or using *feasible, lasting, workable, possible, practical* or *promising*.

**vice** Use two words and no hyphen when naming a position: *vice president, vice principal*. Capitalize the title only when it comes directly before the name of a person: *Vice Principal Jay Laplander, Vice President Dick Chicanery; Jay Laplander, vice principal; the vice president, Dick Chicanery*.

**vice versa** Two words. Sometimes misused. It means "just the opposite" or "the other way around," not "something different." If your readers could misunderstand the Latin phrase, try try using *in reverse, just the opposite* or *the other way around*.

**videocassette recorder** Use on first reference. *VCR* is acceptable on second reference.

**videodisc** One word.

**video game** Two words.

**videotape** (n. and v.) One word. Largely replaced by digital recording.

**Vietnam** Preferred spelling. Not *Viet Nam*. See [**war**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#war).

**villain** Sometimes misspelled as *villian*.

**VIP, VIPs** Acceptable in all references for *very important person(s)*.

**virgule (/)** Avoid using the virgule--also called a *slash*, *forward slash*, *diagonal* or *slant*--to stand for omitted words or letters. Examples include *per* in *33,000 tons/year, to* in *price/earnings ratio*, *or* in *his/her* and *oral/written tests*, *versus* in *parent/child issues, with* in *table/mirror*, *w/o* for *without* and *c/o* for *in care of*. The virgule may replace *and* in some compound terms: *the Vancouver/Portland area, the January/February issue, an active classroom/laboratory*. Using *and*, however, may be less ambiguous. When using the virgule, don't separate the punctuation mark from adjacent words or numbers with spaces. Also, avoid using virgules (or hyphens) with numerals to give dates, especially if your readers could confuse the order of the day and month: *2/11/94, 11-16-1993*.

The virgule may be used to separate the numerator from the denominator in numbers containing fractions.

Use the virgule --or forward slash--in Internet addresses: *http://www.garbl.com.* Use the *backslash* (one word)--\--for writing commands in DOS and computer directories. See [**World Wide Web**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#World Wide Web).

**virtually** Overstated. Try omitting, or use simpler *almost* or *nearly* instead.

**vis-a-vis** Vague foreign term. Simplify. Replace with *face to face, opposite, compared with, against* or *about*.

**visible to the eye** Visualize this redundant phrase without *to the eye*.

**vitamins** Lowercase *vitamin*, capitalize the type, and put a hyphen before the number when used: *vitamin C, vitamin B-6*.

**voice mail** Two words. Hyphenate when used to modify a noun: *Thirty people left voice-mail messages about the project*.

**voluptuous** Sometimes misspelled as *volumptuous* or *voluptious*. *Volumptuous* is not a word.

**votes** Use numerals and a hyphen for pairs of votes: *The board voted 4-1 for the contract*. Spell out numbers under 10 in other uses: *The opponents won by a three-vote margin.*

**vs.** See [**versus**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#versus)**.**

**vulgarities** See [**obscenities, profanities, racial or ethnic slurs**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#obscenities).

**waiter** The person who takes orders and brings food in a restaurant is a *waiter* or *server*, not a *waitress, waitperson, waitron* or member of the *waitstaff*. Neither the job title nor the quality of the service depends on the sex of the server.

**waive, waiver, wave, waver** Sometimes confused. The verb *waive* and noun *waiver* are about "voluntarily giving up a right, claim, privilege or advantage." Use the verb *wave* to describe the motion of a hand or flag. The verb *waver* means "to be uncertain, indecisive or unsteady."

**walkie-talkie** Not *walky-talky*.

**war** "War is hell," said Civil War General William T. Sherman, no matter what it's called. Avoid euphemisms like *armed conflict, armed intervention, a military solution, police action, uprising, use of force*. Capitalize the word when part of the name for a specific war: *World War I, World War II, the Cold War, the Korean War, the failed Vietnam War, the endless Gulf War*. Also, if one country invades or attacks another country, there's no war until the other country starts defending itself, as it has a right to do.

**warrantee, warranty** Often confused. A *warranty* is a written *guarantee*, but don't confuse the spellings. A *warrantee* is the person who's given a *warranty* or *warrant*. Also, although *guarantee* can be used a verb, *warranty* is only a noun.

**warn in advance** Redundant. Simplify. Delete *in advance*. See [**advance**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#advance planning).

**wary, weary, leery** Sometimes confused. Use *wary* to mean "cautious about problems or dangers" Use *weary* to mean "very tired or worn-out" and "bored with." A synonym of *wary*, use *leery* (not *leary*) to mean "worried and unable to trust someone or something; suspicious."

**Washington's Birthday** Capitalize *birthday* when naming the official U.S. holiday, sometimes called *Presidents' Day* to also honor President Lincoln and other presidents. The holiday is the third Monday in February. See [**Presidents Day**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#Presidents Day).

**wastebasket** One word.

**wastewater** See [**sewage, sewerage, sewers, wastewater, effluent**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#sewage).

**was, were** Use *was* to state a fact: *He was planning a vacation trip to Kauai. I was hoping to go too.* But use the subjunctive verb *were* to express a nonexistent, desirable, hypothetical or far-fetched condition--even with a singular subject like *I* or *he*. *If I were a rich man, I'd move to Kauai. If he were to plan a vacation trip, he'd go to Kauai.*

**water body** Two words.

**waters** See [**collective nouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#collective nouns).

**waterway** One word.

**wave** See [**waive, wave**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#waive) above.

**waxed paper** Not *wax paper*.

**we** Use the editorial *we* (as well as *us* and *our*) when those words stand for the authors of a collaborative work. Use of those words is also acceptable to refer to an organization and its organizational elements and programs, especially in quotations, opinion pieces and informal publications, and to avoid redundancy and wordiness. Make sure it's clear who *we, us* and *our* is. Don't use the pretentious *we* when writing about yourself or for one person. Instead, use *I, me, my* and *mine*. See [**I**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#I); [**pronouns**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/p.htm#pronouns); [**us, we**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#us, we); [**you**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#you).

**weapons** Other guidebooks provide more than enough advice for using weapons and weapons terminology appropriately.

**weapons of mass destruction** Potentially misused. If used, these nuclear, biological or chemical weapons would cause overwhelming devastation and loss of life among both civilians and military personnel. The United States and at least eight other countries build, sell and threaten to use them to boost the egos of their leaders, enrich the bank accounts of arms manufacturers, and overthrow countries that have natural resources they desire. Avoid using the abbreviation *WMD*; it minimizes the death and destruction that would come after use of these deadly weapons. Instead, shorten the phrase using *nuclear weapons*, *chemical weapons* or *biological weapons*. See [**nuclear, nuke**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#nuclear).

**weather conditions** It'll be pleasant, hot, stormy or pouring buckets whether called *weather* or *weather conditions*. Simplify. Drop *conditions* or try *climate*. See [**storm event**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#storm event).

**weatherman** They're not all men, and few if any are girls. Use *weather forecaster* instead.

**Web, Web address, Web browser, webmaster, Web page, website** See [**World Wide Web**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#World Wide Web)**.**

**weekday, weekend, weeklong** Each one word.

**weight** Use figures: *He weighed 10 pounds, 3 ounces at birth. She had a 10-pound, 3-ounce baby.* See [**dimensions**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dimensions).

**weird** Commonly misspelled. An exception to the "i before e" rule.

**well** Hyphenate as part of a compound modifier before the noun it's describing: *He is a well-dressed man.* But the hyphen may be eliminated when the modifying words come after the noun they're describing: *She is well dressed.* See [**good, well**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/fthrug.htm#good, well)**;** [**hyphen**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/h.htm#hyphen).

**went on to say** Cliche. Consider using a less wordy phrase. See [**attribution**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#attribution).

**Western Washington** Capitalize the name of the state region west of the Cascade Mountains. Also capitalize the region east of the Cascades: *Eastern Washington*.

**wet, whet** Often confused or misused. Use *whet* to mean "sharpen" or "stimulate": *to whet a knife* (with a *whetstone*) or *to whet an appetite* -- even when your mouth is watering for something tasty. As a verb, *wet* means "to moisten." When someone *wets his whistle*, he's having a drink.

**what** Sentences, clauses and phrases beginning with the pronoun *what* commonly take singular verbs when *what* is about "the thing that." They may take plural verbs, however, when *what* is about "the things that": *What I long for is butterflies*--if you're longing for butterflies as a group. *What I long for are butterflies*--if you're longing for butterflies in all their beautiful variations. Also, beginning a sentence with *what* adds needless words. Delete it and simplify: *I long for butterflies*. *I long for the butterflies*. Finally, because *what* is often the first word in a question, beginning a sentence that's not a question with *what* may confuse some readers.

**wheelchair** One word. See [**disabled**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#disabled).

**when and if** See [**if and when**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#if and when).

**whence** Formal. Try using *from where* or *from which* instead. But if you use *whence*, drop the redundant *from*; it's included in the meaning of *whence*.

**where ... at, where ... to** Adding the prepositions *at* or *to* is redundant. Drop the unnecessary prepositions in sentences like these: *Do you know where the hammer is at? He doesn't know where the concert is at? Where do you think you're going to?* The phrase *where it's at* is slang best used when talkin' with your buddies about what's cool, what's in and what's happenin', man!

**whet** See [**wet**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/vthruz.htm#wet) above.

**whether or not** The words *or not* are not always necessary--because they're suggested in *whether*. When writing about a choice between doing something and not doing something, drop *or not*--or use *if*: *She does not know whether the candidate will support the proposal. She does not know if the candidate will support the proposal.* To stress the alternative, however, adding *or not* can be useful: *The City Council will consider the offer whether or not it is cost effective.* Usually, it's best to keep *whether or not* together, especially if *or not* would be separated from *whether* by a long description of the alternative: *The City Council will consider the offer whether it is cost effective or not*.

**which** See [**that, which, who, whom**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#that, which).

**while** Avoid the indiscriminate, ambiguous use of this word for *and, but* and *although*. *While* is best used to mean *when* or as a simpler word for *at the same time* or *during the time that*. See [**awhile, a while**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#awhile).

**while at the same time** Redundant and wordy. Simplify. Change to either *while* or *at the same time*.

**white** Lowercase when writing about a person having origins in any of the original people of Europe, north Africa or the Middle East. See [**race**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#race).

**who, whom** Often confused. *Who* does something, and *whom* has something done to it. Use *whom* when someone is the object of verb or preposition: *The man to whom the car was rented did not fill the gas tank. Whom do you wish to see?*

A preposition (such as *to, at, by, for, from, in, toward, upon* and *with*) often comes just before *whom*: *Who* does something *to whom*. *Who* is the word in all other uses, especially when someone takes an action as the subject of a sentence, clause or phrase: *The man who rented the car did not fill the gas tank. Who is still here?*

To test for correctness: *Who* equals *he, she* or *they* while *whom* equals *him, her* or *them*. Replace *who* or *whom* in the sentence with one of those pronouns. If it sounds wrong, it probably is. See [**that, which, who, whom**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#that, which); [**us, we**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#us, we).

**who's, whose** *Who's* is a contraction for *who is* or *who has*, not a possessive: *Who's using the cellular phone? Who's been eating my radishes?* For the possessive, use *whose*: *I do not know whose galoshes these are.* *Whose* may refer to things as well as people: *The shopping mall, whose customers come from miles around, began charging for parking.*

**-wide** No hyphen: *citywide, nationwide, statewide*.

**widow** *Widow of the late ...* is redundant. Instead, use *widow of ...* or *wife of the late ...*.

**wield** Commonly misspelled.

**willful** Commonly misspelled.

**will, would** Often confused. Use *will* when expressing a certainty. Use *would* when noting that something is conditional, that it will happen if something else happens first. *The stadium will cost $362 million* means the stadium has been approved by taxpayers, or the stadium board is omniscent and knows it will be approved by taxpayers (a real leap of faith). *The stadium would cost $362 million* means taxpayers haven't decided yet if building the stadium is worth $362 million. See [**can, could**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/c.htm#can, could).

Also, beware of saying something *will* happen unless you have total control or a crystal ball: *The meeting is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m.* or *The meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m.*, not *The meeting will begin at 7 p.m.* *They plan to leave on Friday*, not *They will leave on Friday*.

-**wise** No hyphen when the word means "in the direction of, in the manner of" or "about": *lengthwise, otherwise, slantwise, clockwise*. Avoid contrived combinations: *The department rates high efficiencywise.* Instead, say: *The department has a high efficiency rate.* Or: *The department is very efficient.*

**withhold** Commonly misspelled.

**with reference to** Wordy jargon. Change to *about, for, of* or *on*.

**with regard to** Wordy jargon. Change to *about, for, in, of* or *on*.

**with respect to** Wordy jargon. Change to *about, for, of, on* or *with*.

**workday** One word.

**work force** Two words.

**workout** One word.

**workplace** One word.

**work plan** Two words.

**work site** Two words.

**workstation** One word. Consider using simpler *desk*, if appropriate.

**workweek** One word.

**worldwide** One word.

**worn-out** Hyphenate.

**worthwhile** One word.

**wreak, wreck** Sometimes confused or misused. Use *wreak* to mean "bring about or cause (harm)" and "to inflict (vengeance)." Use *wreck* to mean "destroy or tear down."

**wreak havoc** Overstated, vague, wordy and sometimes misspelled. Simplify. Omit and describe the damage, problems, confusion and chaos instead. Or try using *demolish, injure* or *ruin* instead. And don't spell it *wreck havoc*, *work havoc* or *reek havoc*.

**wreckless** See [**reckless**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/qthrur.htm#reckless).

**year-end** Hyphenate both the adjective and the noun. But *year's end*.

**yearlong** One word.

**year-round** Hyphenate.

**(in the) year 2002** Wordy and redundant. Change to *in 2002*.

**years** Use numerals without commas: *In 2004 a disastrous earthquake hit the region.* Use an *s* without an apostrophe to show spans of decades or centuries: *1790s, 1900s, '90s.*

Years are the one exception to the rule against beginning a sentence with numerals: *1994 was a wonderful year*. See [**dates**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/d.htm#dates)**,** [**months**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/m.htm#months)**,** [**numbers**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/nthruo.htm#numbers).

If it's necessary to spell out a year, avoid using *and* within the number: *two thousand one, nineteen sixty-eight*.

**yet** Like the conjunctions *and, but* and *so*, *yet* is a useful, correct transition word at the beginning of sentences--instead of *regardless* and *in spite of*. For emphasis, *yet* may be followed by a comma. See [**and, but**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/a.htm#and, but)**;** [**in spite of the fact that**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/ithruj.htm#in spite of the fact that)**;** [**so**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/s.htm#so)**;** [**thus**](http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/tthruu.htm#thus).