University of Guelph Style Guide

(Updated Summer 2017)
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The “Write” Tone
HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The University of Guelph Style Guide is a reference tool for all University communicators. New employees may use it as an introduction to the University’s best practices and a sense of the “University voice.” For seasoned writers, this guide may serve as a resource for usage questions from grammar to inclusivity to punctuation.

To provide a consistent, professional appearance to University publications and communications, the University of Guelph uses Canadian Press style, except in the limited circumstances outlined in this document. The majority of the rules in this document can also be found in the Canadian Press Stylebook, which is available for purchase online. Its companion publication, the Canadian Press Caps and Spelling guide, lists the preferred spelling and capitalization of words that can be written in a variety of ways.

The rules in this document apply to journalistic writing only. These are the standards that we apply to external communications (i.e., for audiences outside the University). For internal communications (i.e., audiences within the University community) and marketing, this document is intended to help maintain a consistent and professional style. For marketing and internal communications, the voice may differ from that for an external audience.

A note about spelling

If you are unsure how to spell, capitalize or punctuate a word, and you cannot find the word in the University of Guelph Writing and Editing Guide, refer to the Canadian Press Caps and Spelling guide. If you can’t find the word in any of these publications, refer to the Canadian Oxford Dictionary (free online). That dictionary uses Canadian rather than American spelling, including “-our” endings (honour, not honor) and “-re” endings (not center, but centre). Exceptions are words appearing in formal American titles: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The Communications and Public Affairs department acknowledges retired editor Barbara Chance, who compiled and helped explain the many grammar rules in this guide. Other ideas are adapted from guidelines compiled by Editors Canada.
THE WRITER’S VOICE

Campus communicators are storytellers. We tell stories not only to inform readers and listeners but also to inspire and empower others. A few pointers about the appropriate voice for telling U of G stories:

1. **Write clearly.** Much academic and administrative text may contain high-level vocabulary, jargon and complex sentence structure. Campus communicators should strive for clear, plain language and text suitable for general readers on or off campus. Reserve overtly academic or formal language for specific circumstances where it meets the needs of the audience.

2. **Be conversational.** Where possible, substitute long words and sentences with short, familiar words and short sentences (fewer than 20 words, on average). At the same time, respect readers’ intelligence. Varying sentence length – even writing occasional sentences with fewer than half a dozen words -- helps prevent boredom. Try it.

3. **Prefer the active voice** to the passive voice, which may promote ambiguity or vagueness. Use the passive voice sparingly to vary sentence structure or to emphasize the important part of the sentence or story: A U of G professor was awarded the prize.

4. **Define jargon** or – better -- replace it outright with more everyday words. Avoid buzzwords, euphemisms and clichés (moving forward, world-class) like the proverbial plague.

5. **Think about the point** of the Improve Life story you are telling. What’s the desired outcome or action? Are you aiming to entice prospective students to enrol at U of G? Are you highlighting a recent success? Why are you telling the story at this time, and to this audience?

6. **Humanize the story.** Who is the main character? Show or tell why a professor’s discovery or a student’s accomplishment will make the world a better place.

7. **Make the story personal.** Why should your story matter to the audience? How does it fit their needs? Tell and show them how and why. In order to give your story real-world relevance, find ways to connect it with popular culture or current events and activities. How does this story “improve life”?

8. **Avoid overburdening stories** with data or department/college/University messaging. Use this information to write an interesting, useful story that connects to the Improve Life narrative.

For more general ideas about voice, refer to The “Write” Tone section of this guide.
CAMPUS TITLES AND NAMES

University of Guelph/U of G

In written communications including news releases or feature stories, use “the University of Guelph” or “University of Guelph” on first reference, and “the University” or “U of G” (no “the” with the abbreviation) on second reference. In brochures and annual reports or on web pages, “the University of Guelph” may appear several times, as such communications are often read in sections rather than in their entirety.

Here are some general guidelines for referring to the institution:

1. The University of Guelph
   A proper noun: The University of Guelph is unique in Canada.

2. University of Guelph
   Adjective: University of Guelph students, a University of Guelph professor

3. U of G

4. The University
   Proper noun, use on second reference: The University has a rich history. “Our University is a place that respects differing opinions,” said president Franco Vaccarino.

   Always use upper case with “University” or “the University” when referring to the University of Guelph.

5. Gryphon
   Adjective or noun, reserved for describing U of G athletes or U of G athletics, or students in the context of a team: Gryphon Athletics, football Gryphons. Gryphon runners placed first in Canada. “I am proud to be a Gryphon.” Aside from referencing the athletics teams, the term “Gryphon” should not be used to refer to U of G students in general or the University community.

6. Improve Life
   Noun and verb, capitalize when used as a proper noun, such as referring to the University’s official brand: The University’s brand is Improve Life. Lower case when used to reinforce the
University’s purpose, but not as a proper noun: The goal of our research is to improve life. Avoid overuse to prevent the term from becoming cliche. Also: It’s the U of G Food From Thought project, not Food For Thought. And use upper case for “From” (see caps guidelines below).

7. Guelph

Use “Guelph” alone only in reference to the City of Guelph or Guelph region. Do not use alone in reference to the University.

8. Other post-secondary institutions

Use upper case when writing the proper name of another post-secondary institution: University of Toronto. Otherwise, lower case when referring to universities in general or anything not U of G-specific: She transferred from another university. Many universities are increasing enrolment.

Administrative titles

1. Use lower case for titles for senior administrators, both before and after the name: president Franco Vaccarino, dean Jonathan Newman, chancellor Martha Billes. Use parentheses to indicate the specific appointment: Charlotte Yates, provost and vice-president (academic); vice-president (finance, risk and administration), associate vice-president (student affairs).

2. When writing an administrator’s title after the name, use commas before and after the title: Charlotte Yates, provost and vice-president (academic), spoke to Senate today.

Faculty members

1. Refer to a faculty member in one of the following ways: Prof. John Smith, Department of Integrative Biology; integrative biology professor John Smith. If the modifier precedes the title, write the title out. So it’s retired professor John Smith (not retired Prof. John Smith) and psychology professor Jane Doe (not psychology Prof. Jane Doe or Department of Psychology Prof. Jane Doe). If you’re talking about both faculty members together, write: Profs. Jane Doe and John Smith.

2. If referring generically to a faculty member (without mentioning department or school), prefer to spell out “professor”: professor John Doe.

3. In referring to a faculty member in generic terms (e.g., chemistry professor Bob Jones rather than Prof. Bob Jones, Chemistry), identify faculty in departments and schools that encompass two distinct disciplines by their specific discipline: If Prof. Jane Doe is a nutrition specialist within Family Relations and Applied Nutrition, call her an applied nutrition professor rather
than a family relations and applied nutrition professor. This also avoids an awkward pileup of adjectives before the name.

4. Similarly, to avoid an inelegant pileup of adjectives before an administrator’s name, write: Charlotte Yates, provost and vice-president (academic), not provost and vice-president (academic) Charlotte Yates.

5. When writing about more than one professor, follow the same rules as for a single faculty member: Profs. Jane Doe, Department of Biomedical Sciences, and Bob Jones, School of Engineering, will work on the study. If both faculty members belong to the same unit, then write: Profs. Jane Doe and John Smith, Department of Biomedical Sciences, will work on the study. Or: Biomedical sciences professors Jane Doe and John Smith will work on the study. Note commas before and after the name of the department/school when following the individual’s name.

6. Professors may be assistant, associate or full, but use only professor or Prof. for all faculty members. DO specify adjunct professor. Use the abbreviation Dr. only for someone with a medical degree or, in the OVC Crest newsletter, a veterinary degree. Otherwise, use Prof. or a generic title such as physics professor or physicist. For honorary degree holders, typically use only the name without honorific, unless the individual prefers to use Dr.

7. Generically you may refer to a faculty member as a researcher or a professor, depending on context and readership or perhaps to avoid repetition: John Smith, the physicist who…; ecologist Jane Doe.

8. Spell out the full title and name of a person on first reference. Use only the surname on subsequent reference without honorifics such as Prof., Mr., Mrs., Miss or Ms. As with references to any individual on or off campus, check to ensure correct spellings of names of individuals, titles and academic affiliations (see U of G academic units below).

**Retired faculty members**

1. When writing about retired faculty members, follow the upper and lower case rules for current faculty members as above: Retired professor John Smith is working on a new study.

2. Any faculty member may be a retired professor, but professor emeritus/emerita is a designation bestowed by a retired faculty member’s department. University professor emeritus/emerita is a designation bestowed by U of G and is conferred at convocation.

3. Professor emeritus refers to a man, and professor emerita refers to a woman. A group of men are professors emeriti, and a group of women, professors emeritae. For a mixed group of men and women (even just one man in the group), write professors emeriti.

**Students, academic degree candidates**
1. In referring to students, it’s usually relevant to name their degree program and often the year of study. Use lower case for degree, year and program names: He’s in his third year of a bachelor of science program. She worked with master of engineering student Jane Doe. Or: He’s in the third year of a B.Sc. program. She enrolled in an M.Sc. program this year. For abbreviations of both bachelor’s and master’s degrees, note mix of upper and lower case and use of periods.

2. If the program is not specified, use singular possessive: a bachelor’s degree (not: a bachelor degree); master’s student Bob Jones (not master student).

3. Refer to a doctoral candidate as a PhD student (note upper and lower case, no periods) or a doctoral student or candidate. Write: post-doctoral researcher (with hyphen) or post-doc rather than post-doctoral fellow.

Alumni

1. In referring to alumni, abbreviate degree credentials and final two digits of graduation year(s) after the individual’s name: John Doe, B.Comm. ’08, MBA ’09. Or informally: Jane Doe, a bachelor of commerce graduate. John Smith, who earned his master of business administration degree at U of G…

2. Alumnus is male, alumna is female, alumni is plural male and alumnae is plural female. Any group of men and women is alumni. Consider using “graduate” to avoid confusion.

U of G academic units

1. Other universities refer to their divisions as “faculties,” but U of G uses the term “college.” In writing college, school and department names, remember that some use “science” and others use “sciences.”

   • College of Arts
   • College of Biological Science
   • College of Business and Economics
   • College of Engineering and Physical Sciences (formerly College of Physical and Engineering Science)
   • College of Social and Applied Human Sciences
   • Ontario Agricultural College (not “Agriculture”)
   • Ontario Veterinary College
   • Department of Animal Biosciences
• Department of Biomedical Sciences
• Department of Food, Agricultural and Resource Economics (not “Agriculture”)
• Department of Human Health and Nutritional Sciences
• Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology
• Department of Pathobiology (Not “Pathology”)
• School of Computer Science
• School of Engineering
• School of English and Theatre Studies
• School of Environmental Design and Rural Development
• School of Environmental Sciences
• School of Fine Art and Music
• School of Hospitality, Food and Tourism Management
• School of Languages and Literatures

2. Always use upper case when writing out full names of departments, schools and colleges: College of Biological Science, Department of History, School of Engineering. For all units, use “and” rather than ampersand. So: Human Health and Nutritional Sciences, not Human Health & Nutritional Sciences. And: the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences, not the College of Engineering & Physical Sciences.

3. Capitalize full official names. It’s the School of Environmental Sciences but the school when standing alone. Write U of G Library and U of G Arboretum, but the library and the arboretum standing alone. Write the Arrell Food Institute, but the institute. Exception: Upper case “College” when referring to a specific U of G College without spelling out its full name: The dean has joined the College.

4. Use upper case for names of non-academic departments on campus: Physical Resources, Hospitality Services, Student Affairs.

5. Capitalize the names of U of G departments and schools but not the programs they offer: the Department of Psychology, the psychology program. Identify U of G departments and schools by their full name (Department of Psychology versus Psychology, School of Environmental...
Sciences versus Environmental Sciences, etc.) to clearly differentiate between the academic unit and the program it offers.

6. Any common noun capitalized as part of a proper name is normally lower case when standing alone. So it’s the Presidential Task Force on Accessibility but the task force report, the Graduate Students’ Association but the association’s mandate, and the Ministry of the Environment but a ministry spokesperson.

7. The University’s Senate and Board of Governors are always capitalized. Also capitalize Board and Senate alone. When talking about members of these governing bodies, use lower case: senators and governors.

8. Capitalize “University” for U of G but lower case units or program in generic reference: The University has seven colleges, University priority, University program.

9. In most cases, the common-noun elements of proper nouns are lower case when used in plural: York and Queen’s universities, the departments of Physics and Psychology, the ministries of Education and Defence.

**Buildings and places**

Here are some commonly misspelled places and buildings on campus. Watch for Mac vs. Mc in place names.

- Art Gallery of Guelph (formerly Macdonald Stewart Art Centre)
- Bullring
- W. F. Mitchell Athletics Centre (or simply Athletics Centre)
- J.D. MacLachlan Building
- Johnston Hall and Green
- MacNaughton Building
- MacKinnon Building
- Macdonald Institute, Macdonald Hall
- McLaughlin Library
- MacNabb House
- McGilvray Street
• Ridgetown Campus
• Thornbrough Building
• University of Guelph-Humber (U of G-H; not UGH)

Other common misspellings or misappropriations involve U of G organizations and awards, and external organizations, as follows:

**Organizations and awards**

• Central Student Association
• Computing and Communications Services
• Graduate Students’ Association
• Gryphs Sports Lounge
• R.P. Gilmor Student Life Award

**External organizations**

OCGS — Ontario Council on Graduate Studies (not “of”)
IDRC — International Development Research Centre (not “Council”)
OCUFA — Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (not “Council”)
Universities Canada (formerly Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada)
Ontario Universities’ Application Centre (not Universities)
Ontario Universities’ Fair (not Universities)
Humber College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning
Canada Foundation for Innovation (not “Canadian”; not “of”)
Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC)
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)
Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)
INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Gender-inclusive language

1. Be diligent about using gender-inclusive language. An exclusive word is exclusive whether it strikes you that way or not.

2. Avoid gender-specific words, a lot of them containing “man.” Most are simple to replace: letter carrier or postal worker for mailman, fisher for fisherman, humankind or humanity for mankind, fair play for sportsmanship, workforce or staff for manpower, artificial or synthetic for man-made, staffed or ran for manned, modern society for modern man, first-year student for freshman.

3. In several instances, the suffix “-man” may simply be dropped: chair, news anchor, ombud.

4. Avoid gender-specific words related to women: actress (use actor), waitress (server), mother tongue (first language), maiden name (birth name).

5. Use “fellow” in appointments such as Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, but otherwise avoid. Instead of fellow students, staff or faculty, use peers, colleagues, co-workers, associates, etc. Or use “other”: The Guelph professors are working with other researchers across Canada.

6. Instead of post-doctoral fellow, use post-doctoral researcher or post-doc whenever possible.

7. Don’t use “girl” unless referring to a female 15 or younger. From 16 up, use “woman” or “young woman.” If an interviewee uses “girl” or “girls” inappropriately, paraphrase. Don’t use “lady” or “ladies” unless they’re part of the name of an organization or publication. You can write “ladies and gentlemen” for a speech or other formal gathering.

8. Avoid using “alumnus,” “alumna,” etc. when possible (“graduate” is a good alternative). Alumnus is male, alumna is female, alumni is plural male and alumnae is plural female. Any group of men and women is alumni.

Pronouns

1. A common challenge in striving for gender-neutral language involves finding ways to avoid using gender-specific pronouns that may be exclusionary or ambiguous. Often writers tackle this by writing something like: A student must declare their major before the start of their third term.

2. This doesn’t work because of the singular “student” and plural “their.” One solution is to use “his or her” instead of “their,” but that can be awkward and redundant. In this case, it would be: A student must declare his or her major before the start of his or her third term.
3. A better solution is to make the subject plural: Students must declare their major before the start of their third term.

4. Another solution is to eliminate the reference to gender-specific pronouns: A student must declare a major before the start of third term.

5. With animals, use the pronoun “it” rather than “he” or “she” unless it’s in a quote or it’s the kind of story where it seems appropriate to humanize the animal.

6. Often, masculine nouns and pronouns precede the feminine equivalent (husband and wife, his and hers). Look to alternate your word order within a story.

Stereotypes

1. Avoid off-topic personal details such as appearance and marital status in writing about people, including stereotypical words that traditionally define men or women. Generally avoid references to an individual’s sex, as in woman doctor, female police officer, male nurse. Is it necessary in the story to mention race, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, age, ethnic affiliation, disability or personal appearance?

2. Do not assume that wives and husbands use the same surname.

3. Avoid any hackneyed phrases or words to describe members of a particular group: thoughtless teenagers, ignorant peasants.

4. Don’t condescend in describing people (helpless, oppressed victims; fragile seniors; plucky survivors of domestic violence).

5. Check photographs and illustrations to avoid visually stereotyping people in predictable ways.

6. Don’t bundle all members of a particular group into a single category as though all individuals bear the same characteristics or act in the same ways. Members of identifiable groups are still individuals.

Sexual orientation

1. Sexual orientation refers to a person’s innate sexuality. It is not synonymous with “sexual preference,” which should be avoided as it implies that orientation is a matter of choice. Sexual orientation may involve issues of identity (including self-identity), inclusiveness and terminology, and it may invite misinterpretation.

2. Certain words and terms that began among outsiders as insults or slander may have been appropriated by groups for their own use; that doesn’t mean outsiders are welcome to use them.

3. Consider asking individuals from within various communities – including LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning) people -- how they wish to be referred to in writing. By default,
use common personal pronouns: he, she, him, her, they, etc. However, some institutions use gender-neutral pronouns such as “ze” for “he” or “she.”

**Disabilities**

1. Focus on the person rather than the disability. A disability is a condition but it’s not the whole person. Write: “people with disabilities” or “a person with a disability,” not “disabled people,” “a disabled person” or “the disabled.” Don’t say a person “suffers” from a disability or “is confined” to a wheelchair. Say the person “has” a disability and “uses” a wheelchair. Or someone is “living with” a particular disability. Avoid using “handicapped” in your writing.

2. Avoid clichés that imply victimhood: “afflicted with,” “stricken by,” “suffering from,” “needs crutches” or “is confined to a wheelchair.” Say: “affected by” or “with” or “moves with a wheelchair.”

3. Don’t use “normal” to refer to people without a particular disability.

4. Disability or impairment is not the same thing as disease. A person who cannot walk because of a spinal injury has a disability but not necessarily an illness.

5. Mental illness, mental health or intellectual impairment are terms that often invite stigma and misunderstanding. If you use specific clinical terms such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, psychosis and psychopathology, be sure to use them accurately.

6. As with any disability, avoid labelling the person as “a schizophrenic,” “a manic-depressive,” or “a paranoid.” Use more specific possibilities: those coping with schizophrenia; a person showing paranoid symptoms.

7. The term person with an intellectual (or developmental) disability is preferred. As with physical disabilities, avoid using a noun to describe a person’s disability, as in “a dyslexic” or “she is learning disabled.” Instead, use a person with dyslexia or a woman with a learning disability.

8. The general term deaf refers to people with a range of hearing loss. As with “hearing-impaired,” “deaf” does not mean that people communicate by speech or sign. Those who are hard of hearing have some hearing loss but still communicate primarily through speech.

9. The term Deaf (with a capital) may be used by deaf people who communicate mostly through sign language. Members of the Deaf community view deafness not as a disability but as a characteristic of their cultural identity.

10. The term blind or partially sighted is a respectful term that covers people with all degrees of vision loss. The Canadian National Institute for the Blind no longer uses terms like “visually impaired,” “visually challenged” or “people with vision/sight problems.”

**Ethnicities**

1. Don’t hyphenate Chinese Canadian, African Canadian, Japanese Canadian, etc.
2. Avoid the use of “native” unless you’re talking about something related to Aboriginal Persons. Instead of saying someone is a Guelph native, say the person is Guelph-born, originally from Guelph, hails from Guelph, was raised in Guelph, etc. Use upper case for Indigenous and Aboriginal as adjectives: an Indigenous program, an Aboriginal student. Use caps for both words in Aboriginal Persons.

3. Don’t capitalize black or white or similar references to someone’s ethnicity, unless it’s part of the proper name of a group or program.

4. Prefer “ethnicity” to “race.” But be careful in using the word ethnic, which does not mean someone outside of the mainstream. An ethnic group is one that individuals are identified with, or identify themselves with, based on cultural characteristics associated with a common origin. Every Canadian has at least one ethnic origin, although not all Canadians identify themselves strongly with a particular ethnic group.

5. Although an ethnic group may be a minority group, not all minority groups in Canada are ethnic groups, and ethnic groups are not always minorities. The term visible minority may refer to various groups, depending on where they are and the ethnic makeup in that place. A majority in one place may become a visible minority in another.

6. The words anglophone and francophone refer to language use (English speakers and French speakers), not ethnic origins.

7. Write permanent resident rather than landed immigrant for someone legally residing in Canada without Canadian citizenship.

8. Immigrants to Canada are emigrants from another country.

Graphics

1. Visual materials should not consistently exclude representation of women, Indigenous people, members of visible minorities and persons with disabilities. Members of all groups should be depicted with equal dignity. Members of the designated group should be portrayed at all levels of authority and participation, and not in stereotyped roles or activities.
CAPITALIZATION

Headlines

1. For external communications written for an audience outside the University such as the media, use title case (capitalize only initial letters, everything else lower case) in headlines: Prof Discovers Ways to Help Heart Failure Patients.

2. For internal communications written for the University community, use either sentence case (capitalize only the initial letter of the first word) or title case, but be consistent. Sentence case: Prof discovers ways to help heart failure patients.

3. In headlines, capitalize principal words (nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and the first and last words of the title). Capitalize even small verbs and nouns: Is, Are, Be, It, etc. Also capitalize prepositions and conjunctions of four letters or more: Food From Thought, Prof Speaks With Media.

4. In a headline, don’t capitalize articles (a, an, the) or prepositions and conjunctions of fewer than four letters: Food for Thought. Capitalize these short words (for, to, at, in) only when they appear as the first or last word in a title or when they appear immediately after a colon or semi-colon.

5. If a headline is in French, only the first word is capitalized.

6. If a headline contains two hyphenated words, capitalize both words: New Book Tells Story of History-Filled Guelph Guitar (not History-filled).

Academic degrees

1. Academic degrees aren’t capitalized when they’re written out: bachelor of science, master of landscape architecture, doctor of philosophy. Use an apostrophe only for generic reference to a degree program without reference to the specialty: master’s degree, bachelor’s program. Don’t write: master’s of landscape architecture.

2. Abbreviations that are all caps don’t take periods: BA (bachelor of arts), BLA (bachelor of landscape architecture), MA (master of arts), DVM (doctor of veterinary medicine), MBA (master of business administration).

3. Most lower-case and mixed abbreviations take periods: B.Sc., B.A.Sc., B.Sc.(Agr.), B.Comm., D.V.Sc. Periods go at the end of abbreviations like B. Comm., B.Sc., Dr., Aug., Wed., but not abbreviations that begin and end with a cap: PhD, PoW, MiG, U of T.

4. Degrees starting with M have a beginning vowel sound. So if Bob just got his MA, he is an MA graduate, not a MA graduate.
Campus phone extensions
Abbreviate and capitalize “extension” in front of a phone number, and include commas before and after the extension: Call 519-824-4120, Ext. 56580, for more information. Note hyphen after 519.

Creative works
1. For titles of books, plays, movies, songs, academic papers, journal articles, theses, lectures and book chapters, follow capitalization rules as above for headlines when writing principal words and prepositions and conjunctions.
2. Italicize titles of books, plays, movies, magazines, journals, newspapers, CDs, songs, symphonies, artworks, video games, and TV and radio shows. Also names of ships, spacecraft, aircraft and trains. Also scientific names of organisms (Homo sapiens, E. coli). Titles of academic papers and journal articles, book chapters, theses, courses, lectures and seminars, etc., are not italicized but are enclosed in quotation marks. Long sacred works such as the Bible and the Qur’an are not italicized.

Government titles
1. Capitalize formal government titles when they precede a name: Premier Kathleen Wynne, President Donald Trump, Minister of Energy Glenn Thibeault, Mayor Cam Guthrie.
2. Use lower case when the title follows the name, stands alone or is plural: Glenn Thibeault, minister of energy, the prime minister, premiers Kathleen Wynne and Philippe Couillard.
3. Titles preceded by former, late, etc., are also lower case: former prime minister Joe Clark, late president Richard Nixon.
4. When a title precedes a name but is set off by a comma, it is lower case: The minister of agriculture, food and rural affairs, Jeff Leal, visited campus last week.
5. All references to the current Governor General and the Queen are capitalized.
6. Don’t capitalize “government” in Ontario government and Canadian government, but as official entities, they are the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada.

U of G administrative titles
1. Use lower case for titles for senior administrators, before and after the name: president Franco Vaccarino, dean Jonathan Newman, chancellor Martha Billes. Use parentheses to indicate the specific appointment: Charlotte Yates, provost and vice-president (academic); vice-president (finance, risk and administration), associate vice-president (student affairs).
2. When writing an administrator’s title after the name, use commas before and after the title: Charlotte Yates, provost and vice-president (academic), spoke to Senate today.
**Geographic regions**

1. Capitalize regions that are known as specific geographical areas: Western Canada, the North or Far North, the West (region of Canada or the world), East Coast, Niagara Escarpment, the Prairies, the Western Hemisphere.

2. Use lower case for derivatives of these specific areas or if the words indicate mere direction or position: southern or northern Ontario, the western provinces, the western world, eastern Europe, the east coast (the shoreline).

3. Arctic is capitalized both as a noun and as an adjective.

**Seasons**

Spring, summer, fall and winter are not capitalized.

**Military**

1. Canada’s military forces are capitalized: Canadian Forces, the Forces, Canadian Navy.

2. For other forces, use lower case when army, navy and air force are preceded by the name of the country: British air force, U.S. navy, German army.

**Places**

1. Capitalize “city” only when referring to the incorporated entity: The City of Guelph has introduced a new bylaw. He lives in the city of Guelph.

2. Capitalize Earth when referring to the planet: The space shuttle returned to Earth. Otherwise, it’s lower case: earth science. Mars is the red planet, not the Red Planet.

3. Lower case north, south, east and west unless part of a street address.

4. No initial cap on “province” unless part of the formal governmental title: the Province of Ontario. Otherwise, province and provincial take lower case.

5. Capitalize street, road, etc., in addresses, but use lower case with plurals: She lives on College Avenue and works at Edinburgh and Stone roads.

**Numbers**

1. Capitalize a noun followed by a number denoting place in a numbered series: Room 447, Day 1, Part 2, Grade 3, Phase 1, Act 2, Chapter 10. Use lower case in plural: phases 2 and 3, grades 9 to 12.

2. Page, paragraph, sentence, size, verse and line are all lower case when followed by a number.

**Religion**
All the names of religions are proper names and take an initial cap: Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Baha'i, etc.

**ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

1. All-cap abbreviations of geographical locations take periods: P.E.I., U.S., U.K. But a hundred American dollars is written as US$100.

2. When used as adjectives, geographical locations may be abbreviated: the B.C. premier, the U.S. president. But when used as nouns, write them out.

   **INCORRECT:** He moved from the U.K. to the southern U.S.
   **CORRECT:** He moved from the United Kingdom to the southern United States.

3. **Exception:** You can use the abbreviated form in a headline.

4. **Note:** CP style is to also write out United Nations as a noun but to use the abbreviation UN as an adjective with well-known organizations such as the UN Security Council.

5. Metric symbols such as km, m and mm aren’t abbreviations, so they don’t take periods except at the end of a sentence.

**Addresses**

1. Use abbreviations in addresses where the number is used: 24 College Ave. E.

2. If there’s no number, the street name is written out: Stone Road West.

**Locations**

1. When mentioning Guelph or a major Canadian or U.S. city whose location is widely known, don’t add the province or state: He lived in Vancouver for three years before moving to Chicago. For other communities, however, add the province or state and abbreviate it: She lived in Embro, Ont., for three years before moving to Hudson, Mich.

2. Use the traditional abbreviation, not the two-letter capped one without periods used by Canadian and U.S. postal services.

3. **Note:** Nfld. is no longer used. The abbreviation is N.L. for Newfoundland and Labrador.

**Dates and times**

1. For dates, use only numerals: Jan. 1, not Jan. 1st.

2. For months used with a specific date, abbreviate only Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec. Spell out standing alone or with a year alone: Convocation was held Nov. 17, 2006. The course lasted through January 1991.
3. No :00 for exact hours: The service will begin at 11 a.m. (not 11:00 a.m.).

4. Say noon and midnight (rather than 12 a.m. or 12 p.m.).

5. Write a.m. and p.m. without spaces or caps.

6. Use initialisms (CFI, COU, CFIA, AAFC) or acronyms (NATO, OMAFRA, CIDA) in brackets after the full name only if used again in the article.

**Common acronyms**

AAFC – Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

CAUT - Canadian Association of University Teachers
CCAE - Canadian Council for the Advancement of Education
CFI – Canada Foundation for Innovation (Canada, not Canadian; for, not of.)

CIHR - Canadian Institutes of Health Research (of, not for)
CIS - Canadian Interuniversity Sport (singular)
COU - Council of Ontario Universities (of, not on)
NSERC - Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (Natural, not National, and plural Sciences)
NCE - Networks of Centres of Excellence (note two plurals)
OCE - Ontario Centres of Excellence
OMAFRA – Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

OUA - Ontario University Athletics
OCUA - Ontario Council on University Affairs
OCUFA - Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations
OFS - Ontario Federation of Students
SSHRC - Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council
NUMBERS

1. Write out numbers from one to nine and use figures from 10 on.

2. Some exceptions to the number rule: Always use figures for temperature (20 C, -20 C), time, money, dates and addresses. No decimals (.00) with even dollar amounts. Write $20-million project with a hyphen, but a project worth $20 million (no hyphen). Spell out $20 million rather than $20M.

3. If a sentence begins with the number 10 or higher, write out the number as a word.

4. Use figures when fractions are involved: 2½ days, NOT two-and-a-half days; 2.5 per cent, NOT two-and-a-half per cent.

5. Use figures when age stands alone after a person’s name: Timmy, 2, has two brothers, four and six.

6. Use figures in sequential designations, whether the noun is capped (Grade 7, Article 3, Highway 6) or lower case (page 3, paragraph 9, size 8). **Note:** If someone is the best at something, he or she is number 1 or No. 1, NOT number one. And it’s Day 1, not day one.

7. Refer to decades as the 2010s, not the 2010’s. In short form it’s the ’30s, NOT the 30s or 30’s. When writing about something that happened in the middle of the 1930s, use mid-1930s or shorten to mid-’30s. BUT a person who is 35 is in his/her mid-30s.

8. Check CP Style for metric symbols and usage.
PUNCTUATION

Colon

1. Use a colon to introduce more information, including an example or list.
   The conference has three themes: global warming, climate control and energy alternatives.

2. Colons also introduce examples, illustrative details and formal questions, taking the place of “for example,” “namely” or “that is.”
   There’s only one solution to your problem: a new job.

3. Generally, don’t capitalize the first letter of a sentence that follows a colon, but it can be capitalized when the sentence is long or needs emphasis.

4. Note: Colons go outside quotation marks.

Semicolon

1. Sentences can be linked by a semicolon when they are closely related.
   The man tripped over the footstool; he’d been drinking.

2. Although closely related, these are both complete sentences. If the second sentence can’t stand on its own, use a colon, a dash or a comma.
   INCORRECT: Both worked for the University of Guelph; he as a research scientist and she as a biologist.
   CORRECT: Both worked for the University of Guelph; he was a research scientist and she was a biologist.

3. Semicolons must be used to separate phrases if any of the phrases contain a comma.
   The speakers were U of T biologist John Smith; Harry Jones, head of psychiatry at Michigan State University; Queen’s University philosopher Marian Wilkes; and University of Guelph sociologist Belinda Leach.

4. Note the last semicolon before “and.”

5. Note: Semicolons go outside quotation marks.

Comma
Oxford Comma

1. When writing lists of three or more items, some publications use an Oxford comma (also called a serial comma) before the last item in the list: She has a BA, an MA, and a PhD.

2. Journalistic writing at U of G and CP style do not use an Oxford comma before “and,” “or” or “nor” in a list unless it’s needed for clarity. So write: She has a BA, an MA and a PhD.

3. If “and” is used with a multi-part item in a list, use a comma where appropriate: Researchers will study food choices, advertising, and purchasing and consumption. Here “purchasing and consumption” together make up the final item in the three-part list. Compare with this: Researchers will study food choices, advertising and purchasing, and consumption. (“Advertising and purchasing” now comprise an item distinct from consumption. Without the final comma, the meaning is unclear.) And this: Researchers will study food choices, advertising, purchasing and consumption. (They are studying four things, not three.)

Dates

1. Put commas between the day of the month and the year and after the year.

    INCORRECT: Aug. 20, 2011 is the last day to enrol.
    CORRECT: Aug. 20, 2011, is the last day to enrol.

2. If a weekday is mentioned, it also takes a comma: Saturday, Aug. 20, 2011, is the last day to enrol.

3. There’s no comma when the day of the month isn’t used: August 2011.

Places

Put commas between a city and its province or country and after the province or country.

    INCORRECT: He was born in Wiarton, Ont. and moved to London, England at age five.
    CORRECT: He was born in Wiarton, Ont., and moved to London, England, at age five.

Telephone Numbers/Email Addresses

    INCORRECT: Call 519-824-4120, Ext. 56580 to be placed on the guest list.
    CORRECT: Call 519-824-4120, Ext. 56580, to be placed on the guest list.

    INCORRECT: Send email to Lori Bona Hunt, lhunt@uoguelph.ca or call Ext. 53338.
    CORRECT: Send email to Lori Bona Hunt, lhunt@uoguelph.ca, or call Ext. 53338.

Numbers

Use a comma to separate thousands, hundred-thousands, millions, etc.
INCORRECT: The event drew 1200 people.
CORRECT: The event drew 1,200 people.

**Professional Titles**

1. When putting a person’s title in front of his or her name, the form of the title will determine whether commas are required.

2. **NO COMMAS:** President Alastair Summerlee and Linamar CEO Linda Hasenfratz announced the creation of the Linamar Engineering Design Scholarships.

3. **COMMAS NEEDED:** The president of the University of Guelph, Alastair Summerlee, and Linamar’s CEO, Linda Hasenfratz, announced the creation of the Linamar Engineering Design Scholarships.

   INCORRECT: CSA president and former astronaut, Steve MacLean, says the top 16 candidates represent a well-rounded and diverse group of Canadians.
   CORRECT: CSA president and former astronaut Steve MacLean says the top 16 candidates represent a well-rounded and diverse group of Canadians.

   INCORRECT: He will join the Office of Research as director, Animal Care Services April 1.
   CORRECT: He will join the Office of Research as director, Animal Care Services, April 1.

**Miscellaneous comma issues**

1. The word “too” should normally be preceded and, in some cases, followed by a comma.

   He is a doctor, too.

   He, too, is a doctor.

2. Use a comma before “such as” when the words that follow aren’t essential to the meaning of the sentence: I am a fan of English rock bands from the 1960s, such as the Beatles and the Dave Clark Five. Here, the meaning would be clear without mention of the two groups.

3. Don’t use a comma before “such as” when what follows defines or limits what went before: He doesn’t like bands such as Iron Maiden. In this case, Iron Maiden is essential to explain what kind of bands he doesn’t like.

4. Use a comma before “including” when the words that follow aren’t essential to the meaning of the sentence: The talks will focus on a range of environmental topics, including climate change and water conservation.
5. Do NOT put a comma after “including”: The talks will focus on a range of environmental topics, including, climate change and water conservation.

6. Use of a comma with the word “so” also depends on whether or not the words that follow are essential to the sentence’s meaning. Here are two sentences that are the same except for a comma, and the comma totally changes the meaning.

   The office is closing at 4 p.m. today so I can get to the bank before it closes.
   The office is closing at 4 p.m. today, so I can get to the bank before it closes.

7. The first sentence says the office is closing early specifically so I can get to the bank before it closes. The “so” clause is necessary to explain that meaning, so there is no comma. The second sentence says the office is closing early and, because of that, I can get to the bank before it closes. This “so” clause is independent and requires a comma.

8. Use commas to indicate omission. In the following sentences, the word omitted is “that”: The problem is, we don’t know how to get the word out to students.

9. In the following sentence, the words omitted are “was elected”: Smith was elected president; Williams, vice-president; and Armstrong, treasurer. Note the semicolons, needed because the second and third phrases contain commas.

10. Note: Commas (and periods) always go inside quotation marks, even if the quotation marks are around a single word. He said he felt “bewildered.”

**Relative Clauses**

1. Relative clauses that are essential to the meaning of a sentence do not take commas. Relative clauses that are not essential and merely add information are set off with commas.

2. “That” and “which” - “That” starts a clause that is essential to the noun it defines or narrows the topic, and no comma is used. “Which” starts a clause that is not essential, and a comma is always required.

3. Essential clause: The Wednesday class that Prof. John Smith teaches is cancelled this week.

4. Non-essential clause: Prof. John Smith’s Wednesday class, which I never miss, is cancelled this week.

   INCORRECT: The study is the first to examine the effects of saturated fat and caffeinated coffee on blood-sugar levels using a novel fat cocktail which contains only lipids.
   CORRECT: The study is the first to examine the effects of saturated fat and caffeinated coffee on blood-sugar levels using a novel fat cocktail that contains only lipids.
INCORRECT: The most visible evidence of the one-health approach is the $70-million Pathobiology/AHL building that supports the growing role of veterinarians and scientists in research and educational initiatives related to public health.
CORRECT: The most visible evidence of the one-health approach is the $70-million Pathobiology/AHL building, which supports the growing role of veterinarians and scientists in research and educational initiatives related to public health.

5. “Where” can start both essential and non-essential clauses, so use of commas will vary.

   Essential clause: After years of travelling the world, the tenor returned to Canada last month to perform at the school where his singing career began.

   Non-essential clause: After years of travelling the world, the tenor returned to Canada last month to perform at the Randolph Academy for the Performing Arts, where his singing career began.

6. “Who/whom” and “whose” also start both essential and non-essential clauses.

   Essential clause: My friend who lives in California is coming to visit next week.

   Non-essential clause: My mother, who lives in California, is coming to visit next week.

   Essential clause: The co-worker whose car I borrowed wasn’t happy that I got a ticket.

   Non-essential clause: My brother Dick, whose car I borrowed, wasn’t happy that I got a ticket.

INCORRECT: After her education in Jamaica, she went to England where she completed a PhD.
CORRECT: After her education in Jamaica, she went to England, where she completed a PhD.

INCORRECT: The Gryphon men were led by Kyle Boorsma who won gold medals in the 1,300m and 1,500m.
CORRECT: The Gryphon men were led by Kyle Boorsma, who won gold medals in the 1,300m and 1,500m.

Words in Apposition

1. Apposition is a construction in which a noun or noun phrase is placed with another as an explanatory equivalent. When the explanatory phrase is not crucial to the meaning of a sentence, it is set off with commas. If it is crucial, don’t use commas.

2. Here is an example where the words in apposition weren’t crucial to the sentence’s meaning, so commas should have been used.
INCORRECT: She launched her debut album *The Small Things* in November.
CORRECT: She launched her debut album, *The Small Things*, in November.

3. Note how removing the words in apposition above would remove some information from the sentence but still leave a sentence that makes sense: She launched her debut album in November.

4. Here is an example where the words in apposition are vital to the meaning of the sentence and should NOT have been set off with commas.

   INCORRECT: The series begins with the critically acclaimed film, *The Hurt Locker*, at 7 p.m.
   CORRECT: The series begins with the critically acclaimed film *The Hurt Locker* at 7 p.m.

5. Removing the words in apposition takes out essential information, particularly if the title is not repeated elsewhere.

6. Some of the most common mistakes in punctuating words in apposition involve relationships.

   Mary’s husband, Larry, is a farmer. (Commas are needed because he’s her only husband, so his name isn’t necessary to the meaning of the sentence.)

   Her daughter Amy lives in Toronto. (Commas would be wrong in this case if Mary has three daughters, so Amy’s name needs to be there to identify the daughter.)

   Mary’s youngest daughter, Katie, is living in New Zealand. (Commas are used here because the name Katie isn’t necessary to identify the daughter discussed.)

7. **Note:** When interviewing someone who talks about a daughter, a brother, a dog, etc., ask the person if that’s the only daughter, brother or dog he or she has. That will determine whether commas are needed when mentioning the name of the daughter, brother or dog.

**Compound Sentences**

1. A compound sentence with two independent clauses joined by a co-ordinating conjunction (and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet) should normally have a comma before the conjunction.

   Classes have been cancelled for the rest of the day, and the University has decided to send all employees home.

   The weather doesn’t look promising, but the team is heading for Florida anyway.

2. If two clauses joined by “and” are short, sometimes the comma can be omitted, but if there’s any chance of confusion, keep it in.
Susan shot the intruder and her brother hid. (A comma after “and” would keep the reader from momentarily thinking that Susan shot her brother.)

3. When the second of two independent clauses does not have a subject in front of the verb, don’t use a comma.

   The University has cancelled classes for the rest of the day and has decided to send all employees home.

   The team is heading for Florida but will turn back if the weather is bad.

**Consecutive Adjectives**

1. Commas are not always necessary between consecutive adjectives. Adjectives that refer to age, size, colour or location are generally not set off with commas when combined with other adjectives.

2. To determine whether there should be a comma between adjectives, mentally place an “and” between the adjectives or switch their order. If doing that makes it sound awkward or wrong, there shouldn’t be a comma.

   The pretty red dress (“The pretty and red dress” and “the red pretty dress” both sound wrong, so there should be no comma.)

**INCORRECT:** harsh, Arctic environment; wide, oak desk; small, niche market

3. **Introductory Phrases**

4. Introductory phrases should generally be set off with a comma, although short ones and single words (“in recent months,” “on Saturday,” “suddenly,” etc.) can go without a comma if the meaning is clear.

**INCORRECT:** A team led by Guelph researchers discovered that for some male birds travelling to areas with lighter rainfall comes at the cost of attracting a female when they return home.

**CORRECT:** A team led by Guelph researchers discovered that for some male birds, travelling to areas with lighter rainfall comes at the cost of attracting a female when they return home.

**Period**

1. Rely on periods and strong writing instead of sprinkling exclamation points throughout your writing in efforts to generate excitement. You may use exclamation points in promotional materials, but – cliché – less is more.
2. Remember to add a period after a URL at the end of a sentence: For information, visit www.uoguelph.ca.

Quotation marks

1. Use double quotation marks around dialogue or quoted sentences, phrases and words. Single quotation marks enclose quotations within quotations: John said, “Tell me again about your ‘earth-shattering moment’ today.”

2. Use double quotation marks around words used as irony, slang or jargon: The “giant snake” in the UC turned out to be a baby ball python.

3. Place a period or comma inside a closing quotation mark, not outside. In dialogue, the quotation mark always goes outside the final punctuation: He said, “Bring the mace to the convocation ceremony.”

4. Place titles of research papers inside quotation marks.

5. Use single, not double, quotation marks in headlines.

Apostrophes

“Its” is a possessive pronoun; “it’s” is the contraction of “it is.”

Singular Nouns and Names

Singular nouns and names ending in “s,” “ss” or an “s” sound form the possessive by adding an apostrophe and “s”: the boss’s office, Marcus’s computer, Fritz’s pen.

Plural Nouns and Names

1. Plural nouns and names take only an apostrophe: the teachers’ meeting, the universities’ deficits, the Joneses’ house.

2. Names ending in a silent “s” or “x” take an apostrophe and “s”: Duplessis’s cabinet, Malraux’s paintings.

3. Where the usage is more descriptive than possessive, omit the apostrophe: the Board of Governors meeting, the Gryphons coach.

Letters

Use an apostrophe and an “s” to form plurals with small letters (p’s and q’s). With capital letters, don’t use an apostrophe (the three Rs) unless the reader would be confused (write I’s and U’s to avoid appearing as Is and Us). Omit apostrophes in capped abbreviations (PhDs, UFOs) and numbers (1970s, 747s).
Amounts of Time
When referring to lengths of time, if someone worked at the University of Guelph for 25 years, she has “25 years’ service” or “25 years of service,” NOT “25 years service.” But someone is three months pregnant, not three months’ pregnant.

Ownership
If ownership is joint, the last noun is possessive and takes an apostrophe: Mary and Larry’s farm.

If ownership is separate, each noun takes an apostrophe: Mary’s and Lori’s offices.

Organizations
When writing the name of an organization such as the Writers’ Trust of Canada or the Ontario Coloured Bean Growers Association, check the organization’s official website and follow its style.

Hyphens

Compound Adjectives
1. Compound adjectives are often hyphenated before the noun they modify: eight-member team, $5-million project, first-year student, post-secondary education.

2. But you don’t need to hyphenate if the meaning is instantly clear because of common use: high school teacher.

3. Hyphenate words to avoid ambiguity: large-animal veterinarian.


5. Most well-known compounds of three or more words are hyphenated: two-year-old.

Amounts
When numbers are quantifiers, not modifiers, no hyphen is needed.

INCORRECT: One-million litres of milk, 35-million people.

Adverbs
Adverbs ending in “ly” are generally not followed by a hyphen because the “ly” eliminates ambiguity.

INCORRECT: Highly-skilled actor, newly-created committee, genetically-modified food.

Prefixes
In general, use a hyphen to avoid duplicating two vowels in words with a prefix: pre-eminent, co-operate, anti-inflammatory.
Refer to the Canadian Press *Caps and Spelling* for proper hyphenation of words with prefixes. If a word is not listed in *Caps and Spelling*, refer to the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*.
GRAMMAR RULES

Parallelism

1. Parts of a sentence that are similar must have the same structure. Faulty parallelism occurs when pairs or series of nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc., aren’t balanced.

   INCORRECT: I enjoy tennis more than playing baseball. This is faulty because “tennis” is a noun and “playing baseball” is a verb phrase.
   CORRECT: I enjoy tennis more than baseball OR I enjoy playing tennis more than playing baseball.

   INCORRECT: He always has and always will be a hero to his kids.
   CORRECT: He always has **been** and always will be a hero to his kids.

2. One of the most common parallelism errors writers make is mixing nouns and verb phrases.

   INCORRECT: The researchers found that males that did not migrate had better breeding sites, a higher status and attracted more females than the migrating males did.
   CORRECT: The researchers found that males that did not migrate had better breeding sites and a…

3. Another common error occurs when some of the nouns or verbs in a series are grouped together but aren’t set off properly from the rest of the list.

   INCORRECT: Shane’s wealth of knowledge in veterinary medicine, client communications and familiarity with OVC will enable him to further develop the work that has been done.
   CORRECT: Shane’s wealth of knowledge in veterinary medicine **and** client communications **and** his familiarity with OVC will enable him to further develop the work that has been done.

4. Mixing adjectives and a verb phrase:

    INCORRECT: That approach can be costly, time-consuming and ultimately affect a child’s nutritional well-being.
    CORRECT: That approach can be costly **and** time-consuming **and** can ultimately affect a child’s nutritional well-being.

**Paired conjunctions**

When you use paired conjunctions, the sentence construction that follows the first half of the pair should be balanced by the construction that follows the second half of the pair.
Either . . . or

INCORRECT: Either you’re with me or against me.
CORRECT: Either you’re with me or you’re against me.

The following illustrates how moving “either” to different positions in a sentence affects the subsequent sentence construction:

You can either get there by taking public transit or get there by taking a cab.
You can get there either by taking public transit or by taking a cab.
You can get there either public transit or by taking a cab.
You can get there by either taking public transit or a cab.

Neither . . . nor

INCORRECT: I have neither the time nor do I have the inclination to discuss the issue.
CORRECT: I have neither the time nor the inclination to discuss the issue.

Both . . . and

INCORRECT: The co-op program is popular both with students and employers.
CORRECT: The co-op program is popular both with students and with employers.
ALSO CORRECT: The co-op program is popular with both students and employers.

INCORRECT: He is working both in London and Guelph.
CORRECT: He is working both in London and in Guelph
ALSO CORRECT: He is working in both London and Guelph.

Not only . . . but also

When using “not only” in a sentence, it should be succeeded by “but also.” Writers often leave out the “also” in their copy.

INCORRECT: He is not only a teacher but a financial adviser.
CORRECT: He is not only a teacher but also a financial adviser.

Note: Substituting “just” for “only” doesn’t eliminate the need to use “but also.”

He is not just a teacher but also a financial adviser.

“Not only . . . but also” constructions are prone to faulty parallelism.
INCORRECT: I not only studied chemistry but also French literature.
CORRECT: I not only studied chemistry but also studied French literature.
ALSO CORRECT: I studied not only chemistry but also French literature.

INCORRECT: Not only are her parents paying for her education but also for her trip to Europe.
CORRECT: Not only are her parents paying for her education, but they’re also paying for her trip to Europe.

Comparisons

1. When making comparisons, be sure the things compared are similar logically as well as grammatically.

   INCORRECT: Ontario’s funding levels are lower than the rest of Canada.
   CORRECT: Ontario’s funding levels are lower than those in the rest of Canada.

2. INCORRECT: They have a climate similar to Haiti.
   CORRECT: They have a climate similar to Haiti’s.
   ALSO CORRECT: They have a climate similar to that of Haiti.

3. Some sentences that contain a comparison sound logical without being fully parallel.

4. She likes coffee more than tea.

5. Although the meaning is clear in this case, it may not be so clear at other times.

6. She likes coffee more than her husband.

7. Does this mean she likes coffee more than she likes her husband or more than her husband likes coffee? If it’s the latter, write: “She likes coffee more than her husband does.”

8. In a similar vein, here’s another common mistake people make:

9. INCORRECT: He’s a lot taller than me but shorter than her.
   CORRECT: He’s a lot taller than I (am) but shorter than she (is).

Dangling modifiers

When beginning a sentence with a modifying phrase, it must be linked to the noun that immediately follows it. So be sure that the noun that immediately follows is the one meant to be modified, unlike these unfortunate examples:

   Rolling in the dirt, Jane watched the pigs.

   Hanging from the balcony, I saw a torn Canadian flag.
At the age of five, my father bought me a dog.

Equipped with cameras, infrared sensors and an innovative arm capable of gripping and cutting the most fragile fruit, he designed the robot with the Canadian greenhouse industry in mind.

Modifying phrases that begin with “to” also tend to dangle but are less obvious.

**INCORRECT:** To ensure financial security, it’s important to start saving when you’re young.
**CORRECT:** To ensure financial security, you must start saving when you’re young.

**ATTRIBUTION**

1. Using “according to” in attribution can cast doubt on the source’s credibility, so use it sparingly.

2. Don’t overuse attribution. Use “he said/she said” just enough to ensure the reader knows who’s speaking and to avoid editorializing. Every direct quote doesn’t need attribution if it’s clear who’s talking. And rely on “said” rather than variations: exclaimed, noted.

3. For feature stories, use present-tense “says” and “say” with a quotation: “The athletic centre was closed,” he says. Reserve past-tense “said” for news releases: “The athletic centre was closed,” he said. Although use “said” when referring to someone’s statement without direct attribution: He said the athletic centre would be closed.

4. When using a direct quote of more than one sentence, put the attribution after the first sentence. The reader is left hanging if the attribution doesn’t come until the second sentence or later. Putting the attribution later may be confusing when the piece refers to one person and then a quote from someone else is introduced.

   Among his many accomplishments, Winegard has been a cabinet minister, president of the University of Guelph and a professor of engineering. He earned his PhD in 1952.

   “In the 1940s, there were no women in Canadian engineering programs. It was unheard of for women to apply to such programs, and I doubt they would have been accepted even if they had applied,” said Prof. Val Davidson, Engineering.

   In this case, leaving the attribution until after the second sentence misleads the reader into thinking the quote is from Winegard.

5. It’s also confusing for the reader when a piece has two quotes in succession from two people without immediately indicating that the speakers have changed.
“In the 1940s, there were no women in Canadian engineering programs,” said Davidson.

“It was unheard of for women to apply to such programs at that time, and I doubt they would have been accepted even if they had applied,” added Winegard.

The reader’s initial confusion over the change in speakers would have been eliminated by starting the second paragraph with “Added Winegard:” or using some other transition.

6. Are words or sentences editorializing? Check your writing to ensure that you’ve attributed opinion to someone, rather than leaving an opinion masquerading as a fact.

7. Avoid saying the same thing twice – first in paraphrase and then in quotation.
Misused and ambiguous words

That versus which

1. He entered the lab that researchers use to conduct their experiments. Here, “that” introduces a restrictive clause with essential information about this particular lab.

2. He entered the lab, which was located on the second floor, in order to conduct the experiment. Here, what’s between the commas adds information but is not essential to the meaning of the sentence. A test: Remove everything between the commas, and the sentence still makes sense, even if it contains less information. “Which” (or “whose”) introduces a non-restrictive clause.

3. Always place a comma before which to set off the non-essential or extra information. Don’t use a comma before the restrictive clause introducing essential information:

   He entered the lab that was on the second floor.

   He entered the lab, which was on the second floor.

Include

1. “Include” implies that a complete list is NOT provided. When providing a complete list, use “is,” “consists of,” “is composed of,” “comprises,” “is made up of,” etc.

   INCORRECT: Guelph’s colleges include CBS, OAC, OVC, CPES, CME, CSAHS and the College of Arts. “Include” is incorrect because all seven colleges are listed.

   CORRECT: Guelph’s colleges are consist of CBS, OAC, OVC, CPES, CME, CSAHS and the College of Arts.

   CORRECT: Guelph’s colleges include CBS and OAC.

2. Because “include” tells the reader there are other colleges, there’s no need to end the sentence with words that suggest the same thing.

   INCORRECT: Guelph’s colleges include CBS and OAC, among others. Guelph’s colleges include CBS and OAC, to name a few. Guelph’s colleges include CBS and OAC and four others.

Comprise

The word “comprise” means to “contain,” “consist of” or “embrace.”
CORRECT: The book comprises 10 chapters.
INCORRECT: The book is comprised of 10 chapters.
INCORRECT: Ten chapters comprise the book.

Also and as well
Also tends to be used redundantly:

**Besides** working for his brother, he **also** trains horses.

**In addition to** writing prose, he **also** writes poetry.

The same mistake occurs with “as well”.

**In addition**, *C. jejuni* and *C. difficile* affect animals **as well**.

Only
Placement of “only” can change the meaning of a sentence, so to avoid ambiguity, put it directly before the word or phrase it modifies.

**Only** I am nominating Bob Smith. (I alone am nominating him.)

I’m **only** nominating Bob Smith. (I am nominating him but not campaigning or voting for him.)

I’m nominating **only** Bob Smith. (He’s the only person I’m nominating.)

While and since
1. “While” and “since” can be ambiguous. If they are used with their time-related meanings, it’s not a problem. It’s when “while” is used to mean “although” or “whereas” and when “since” is used to mean “because” that there’s room for confusion.

2. Here are some examples with “while”:

John was a teacher in Toronto while his brother was the mayor of Hamilton.

3. Does that mean John was a teacher only during the period his brother was the mayor of Hamilton, or does it mean that, in contrast to his brother, John was a teacher? If it means the latter, “whereas” would eliminate confusion.

While he was a star athlete, he didn’t have any friends.

4. Does that mean he didn’t have any friends during the time he was a star athlete or even though he was a star athlete? If it’s the latter, “even though” or “although” would eliminate confusion.
5. “Since” is commonly used as a synonym for “because,” but be aware of any potential for confusion. If it exists, use “because,” “as,” “given that,” etc.

Since I decided to retire, I’ve been working on a collection of writing errors.

6. This could mean that I’ve been working on a collection of errors from the time I decided to retire or because I decided to retire.

Due to
1. Use “due to” only if “caused by” or “ascribed to” could be substituted.

   The crash was due to ice.
   NOT: Due to ice, the plane crashed.
   And NOT: The plane crashed due to ice.

2. “Due to” is used incorrectly in the following sentences:

   It could take another 10 years before vaccines make their way to consumers, due to the long and demanding regulatory approval process.

   The first-year seminar program was suspended in 2008 due to funding constraints.

Feel
1. Use the word “feel” when referring to senses, emotions and perceptions.

   I feel happy, I feel sick, I feel the table, etc.

2. Don’t use “feel” with an opinion; use “think,” “argue” or “believe” instead.

   Jane thinks her interview went well, and she feels good about her chances of getting the job.

3. And don’t use “feel” with a conviction or principle; use “believe” instead.

   Jane believes there is life after death.

First events
When someone holds what they anticipate will become an annual event, there’s no guarantee that it will, so call it the “first event” or the “inaugural event” rather than the “first annual event.”
Presently
Although “presently” is often used as a synonym for “currently” and “now,” its original meaning is “soon,” so it’s best to avoid using it altogether to prevent misunderstanding.

Last and next
Be careful with the words “last” and “next” when talking about “last fall,” “last summer,” “next winter,” etc., to avoid confusion about which season/date/event you mean. If it’s July 2011 and the reference is to April 2011, say this spring or this past spring, not last spring.

Bi-
“Bi-” is ambiguous in biweekly, bimonthly, biennial, etc. Better to say twice a week, every two weeks, semi-annually, etc.

Loan
Don’t use “loan” as a verb. Use “lend” and “lent.”

Older/elder and oldest/eldest
If a father has two kids, the first-born is the older or elder child, not the oldest or eldest. A parent must have at least three children to call the first-born the oldest or eldest.

Who versus that/which
1. When writing talking about people, use the relative pronoun “who.”

   INCORRECT: The professor has a lot of students that don’t show up for class.
   CORRECT: The professor has a lot of students who don’t show up for class.

2. When you’re talking about objects, including animals, use “that” and “which.”

3. Confusingly similar words are première (first public performance) and premier (first in rank or leading as an adjective, head of government as a noun). So Guelph is one of Canada’s premier research universities, not “première research universities.”

Affect versus effect
1. Most commonly, “affect” is used as a verb and “effect” is used as a noun.

   The earthquake had a life-changing effect on the people of Haiti, and the repercussions will affect them for decades.

2. But “effect” can also be a verb, and “affect” can be a noun. As a verb, “effect” means to bring about or accomplish. As a noun, “affect” means a feeling or emotion.
Compared to versus compared with
1. “Compared to” is synonymous with “liken to”.

   He compared her to a rose.

2. “Compared with” refers to similarities and differences.

   I’m a great swimmer compared with my sister.

3. “Compared with” is the term usually wanted.

Emigrate versus immigrate
“Emigrate” means to move from one country to live in another. “Immigrate” means to move to another country.

Every Day versus everyday
   I get up every day and look forward to doing everyday things.

Enormity versus enormousness
“Enormity” means monstrous wickedness or serious error. “Enormousness” means great size.

Continual versus continuous
“Continual” refers to something that is frequently repeated (a dripping tap). “Continuous” refers to something that is uninterrupted (Niagara Falls).

Historical versus historic
“Historical” refers to whatever happened or existed in the past and to the study of the past. “Historic” refers to something important or famous in history. Note: Use the article “a” before these words, not “an.”

Farther versus further
Use “farther” when referring to physical distance and “further” for everything else:

   Let’s walk a little farther before we talk further about our problems.

Home in versus hone
To “home in” is to focus on a target, goal or destination. To “hone” is to improve a skill or sharpen something.
Alternate versus alternative
As a verb, “alternate” means to take in turns, first one and then the other. As a noun, it means substitute. “Alternative” means a choice between two or more things (usually the word wanted).

Over versus more than
Although the dictionary lists “more than” as one of the many meanings of “over,” the preferred style is to use “more than” with numbers and dollar figures. To avoid repetition in a story, you can use alternatives such as “in excess of,” “at least,” “upwards of,” “some” and “about.” In some cases, however, “over” may be less awkward:

He is over 40.

Famous versus notorious
These are often used interchangeably but shouldn’t be. A notorious person is well-known for something bad.

Economic versus economical
“Economic” relates to economics. “Economical” means thrifty.

Dilemma versus difficulty
A “dilemma” is a choice between two equally pleasant or unpleasant things, not a synonym for “difficulty.”

Titled versus entitled
Use “titled” for books and “entitled” when referring to having the right to something.

Regimen versus regime and regiment
“Regimen” refers to a schedule or fixed process. “Regime” refers to governments or periods of rule. A “regiment” is a large group of soldiers. Someone who exercises regularly has a fitness regimen, not a fitness regime.

Specially versus especially
“Specially” means for a particular purpose. “Especially” means to a great degree.

Uninterested versus disinterested

A while versus awhile
1. “While” is a noun.
They had to wait for a while (note use of “for”).

2. “Awhile” is an adverb.

They had to wait awhile.

Any more versus anymore
I don’t want any more coffee because I don’t want to get headaches anymore.

Between versus among
Use “between” with two objects and “among” with three or more.

Imply versus infer
“Imply” means to suggest or hint at. “Infer” means to deduce or conclude. A speaker or writer implies; a listener or reader infers.

As versus like
1. “As” introduces clauses:
   
   It tastes good as chocolate should.

2. “Like” introduces a noun or pronoun not directly followed by a verb:

   She swims like a fish.

Different from versus different than
“Different from” is used with a noun or pronoun. “Different than” introduces a clause.

Fewer versus less
Normally, “fewer” is used with plurals (fewer people), and “less” is used with singulars (less money).

Number versus amount
Normally, “number” is used with plurals (number of people, number of books), and “amount” is used with singulars (amount of money, amount of coffee).

Fortunate versus fortuitous
“Fortunate” means lucky. “Fortuitous” means accidental or happening by chance.
Nauseated versus nauseous
“Nauseated” describes the experience of nausea. “Nauseous” describes something that is causing nausea because it’s sickening or disgusting.

However versus nevertheless
1. When using “however” to mean “nevertheless” in a sentence, preferred style is to not use it at the beginning.

   INCORRECT: However, the U of G team has found an alternative.

2. Use “but” instead or incorporate “however” later in the sentence.

   CORRECT: The U of G team, however, has found an alternative. The U of G team has, however, found an alternative. The U of G team has found an alternative, however.

Impact
The Canadian Oxford Dictionary says “impact” has become acceptable as a verb but can sound jargony and can lead to imprecise sentences. Other options are “affect,” or “influence”.

Author and co-author
Don’t use “author” and “co-author” as verbs.

Veteran
A veteran is someone who has served in the military or a person of long experience. So avoid such descriptions as “a veteran of four football seasons at U of G.”

Couple
Follow the noun “couple” with “of”.

   I put a couple of books on the table.

Dropping the “of” to use “couple” as an adjective is considered casual and slang.

Unique
Don’t modify the word “unique.” It is incorrect to write “somewhat unique” or “very unique.” Something is either unique or not.

Excess words
1. When proofreading, check how many times the word “that” appears in the piece. More often than not, it isn’t necessary: He said (that) he wanted to go.
2. If there’s any chance of misleading the reader, however, leave “that” in: The premier said that on July 1 he would be heading to China.

3. There’s rarely a need to use “in order to” because “to” usually suffices: I’m participating in the race (in order) to raise money for charity.

4. “Within” is also rarely needed because “in” usually suffices: I enjoy working (with)in a university environment.

5. There’s no need to put “on” in front of a date or day of the week: The agriculture minister will arrive (on) May 5.

6. There’s often no need to add “to” after “help” as a verb: Volunteers are helping the first-year students (to) move in.

7. And it’s often not necessary to write “all of” because “all” usually suffices: All (of) the answers are at the back of the book.

8. Save a couple of words and sound less stuffy by using “developing” instead of “the development of,” “producing” instead of “the production of,” “establishing” instead of “the establishment of,” etc.

9. You rarely need to use “a” or “the” in a headline.

10. “Currently” and “now” are often not needed in a sentence. “He is currently a teacher in Toronto” can just as easily be written: “He is a teacher in Toronto.”

11. Here are various phrases that aren’t necessary, as indicated by the brackets:

   The play involves 14 people between (the ages of) 18 and 22.

   He came to Guelph when he was 21 (years old).

   The economist will be on research leave during (the months of) June and July.

   Members of the Armed Forces are separated from their families for long periods (of time).

   The researchers conducted their study over (a period of) eight weeks.

   The office is (in the process of) establishing a new protocol.

12. Many wordy or redundant phrases can be replaced with one word:
A project to grow and plant an endangered thistle has the potential to rejuvenate the species.

SHORTER: A project to grow and plant an endangered thistle may rejuvenate the species.

13. Variants of the verb “to be” often add words and also weaken sentences. Look to write as directly as possible.

She will be testing the impact and cost-effectiveness of home interventions.

BETTER: She will test the impact…

14. “To be” variants such as “is” and “are” can weaken or flatten a sentence, making it passive or excessively wordy. Look for more active verbs or recast the sentence.

One highlight this year is that chefs are on board the ship.

BETTER: This year, chefs will travel on the ship. Or: … join the voyage.

15. It’s redundant to use “could,” “may” or “might” in the same sentence with “possibly.”

INCORRECT: He might possibly join U of G in 2018.
CORRECT: He might join U of G in 2018.

16. It’s redundant to say “the reason” and “because” in the same sentence. Instead of writing: The reason I’m here is because I’m unhappy.

17. Write: The reason I’m here is that I’m unhappy OR I’m here because I’m unhappy.

18. It’s also redundant to say: “The reason why I’m here is that I’m unhappy.”

19. It’s redundant to use “estimated” and “about” together.
INCORRECT: We estimate about 50 people will attend.
CORRECT: We estimate 50 people will attend OR We think about 50 people will attend.

20. Adjectives and adverbs are often excess verbiage. Strong verbs and nouns don’t need to be modified. Qualifiers such as “very,” “quite,” “really,” “rather” and “fairly” are rarely needed. They’re vague and add little information.

**Complex versus simple words**

1. When you have a choice of words, go short and simple and choose familiar over formal.
   - about rather than approximately
   - use rather than utilize or employ
   - try rather than attempt
   - help, ease or guide rather than facilitate
   - call for rather than necessitate
   - send rather than transmit
   - start or begin rather than commence
   - met rather than held a meeting
   - program or plan rather than initiative
   - serve, fit or house rather than accommodate
   - improve rather than ameliorate
   - get or buy rather than acquire
   - on or about rather than regarding, concerning, relating to or pertaining to
   - before rather than prior to
   - give rather than provide with
   - buy rather than purchase

**Active versus passive verbs**

Use active verbs rather than passive, although see note above about using passive verbs occasionally to vary sentences or to emphasize an aspect of the sentence.

Write: “U of G drama students are staging Waiting for Godot” rather than “Waiting for Godot is being staged by U of G drama students.”

**Parenthetical nouns, dependent clauses**

Parenthetical nouns inside commas or dashes have no impact on the verb form of the sentence.

INCORRECT: Prof. Lisa Duizer, along with master’s student Matt Rietberg and undergraduate student Derek Vella, are laying the groundwork.
CORRECT: Prof. Lisa Duizer, along with master’s student Matt Rietberg and undergraduate student Derek Vella, is laying the groundwork.
**Compound subjects**
Some compound subjects are considered a single unit and take a singular verb (e.g., bread and butter is included), but in most cases, compound subjects take plural verbs.

INCORRECT: More information and a complete schedule of events is available online.
CORRECT: More information and a complete schedule of events are available online.

INCORRECT: His passion and dedication to the archives has affirmed his legacy at U of G.
CORRECT: His passion and dedication to the archives have affirmed his legacy at U of G.

**Collective nouns and plural nouns**
1. A collective noun (class, family, audience, group, team, etc.) takes a singular verb if it’s seen as a unit (the audience was silent) and a plural verb if it’s thought of as a collection of individuals (the audience were stamping their feet).

2. “Couple” usually takes a plural verb (the couple were hurt in the crash) but is singular on the rare occasion when it’s treated as a unit (a couple pays $10 a ticket).

3. When “number,” “total” and “variety” are preceded by “the,” they take a singular verb. Preceded by “a,” they take a plural verb.

   A variety of foods are available.
   The variety of foods is impressive.

4. Be careful with plural nouns like data, media, bacteria, criteria and graffiti. They should not be paired with singular verbs.

   INCORRECT: That data shows the test was accurate.
   CORRECT: The data show the test was accurate.

   INCORRECT: Everyone in the room nodded their heads in agreement.
   CORRECT: Everyone in the room nodded their head in agreement.

   INCORRECT: The company has announced that they will be moving their head office to Guelph.
   CORRECT: The company has announced that it will be moving its head office to Guelph.
THE “WRITE” TONE

Provocative, inspiring, bold

What we mean: thought-provoking, challenging, encouraging, courageous, empowering, clear

What we don’t mean: inflammatory or disrespectful. We don’t sensationalize or use prescriptive language. We don’t preach or trivialize.

How does it sound: We make statements and promises that challenge others and ourselves. We seek to catalyze change and work to enable others to make change. We use clear statements and ask intelligent and relevant questions.

• Examples: Tweet: What's the future of meat? Where will we source our protein from in 2050? #UofG profs debate the options on @TheAgenda: http://tvo.org/video/programs/the-agenda-with-steve-paikin/the-future-of-protein

• Additional descriptors: uplifting, stimulating, exciting, motivating, inciting

Aspirational, future-forward, passionate

What we mean: energetic, ambitious, big-thinking, engaging, spirited

What we don’t mean: pushy, without substance or concern. We don’t get lost in the future without consideration of the now.

How does it sound: We push forward in pursuit of our lofty goals. We aren’t afraid to share our vision with the world and entice others to join us.

   Additional descriptors: in pursuit, keen, with foresight and purpose, energized

Collaborative, compassionate, thoughtful

What we mean: inclusive and respectful, dedicated to our communities (local and global), intelligent, intensely collaborative

What we don’t mean: arrogant or exclusive. We don’t brag or fixate on the negative. We don’t lack focus or conviction.

How does it sound: We are committed to ensuring a welcoming, open and connected atmosphere. We care deeply about empowering the next generation and encouraging thought leadership on issues of importance to our world. We think about the words we use, the things we say and their impact on others.
Inquiring, layered for depth, pragmatic

What we mean: inquisitive, thought-provoking, knowledge-seeking. Dedicated to proven and practical solutions that are both simple and complex.

What we don’t mean: boring, uninspired or one-dimensional. We don’t “dumb down” content and are never lacking in substance.

How does it sound: We seek new knowledge, are inquiring and inspirational but pragmatic. We bring a multi-dimensional approach and rigorous exploration to problem-solving.

Additional descriptors: Problem-solvers, focused on impact, sustainable, stewardship, translational, responsible

Resilient, experienced, credible

What we mean: genuine, strong, irrepressible. True to our history, ourselves, our research and our strengths.

What we don’t mean: Dated, rooted in sameness, arrogant, inflexible

How does it sound: We reflect on the past, our experiences and our strengths when tackling issues. We recognize and are true to our history while embracing the future.

Additional descriptors: true, positive, genuine, dedicated, trustworthy, knowledgeable