

## writing style guide

University Communications at Minot State University includes all University publications including Connections Magazine, The President's Report, Campus Highlights, Inside Newsletter, and Daily Announcements as well as all University website features, the online calendar, and press releases.

The goals of the University Communications Writing Style Guide is for accuracy and consistency in all publications. The University follows Associated Press style as noted below, which addresses common grammar and punctuation issues, and contains Minot State-specific information. For questions or feedback, please contact University Communications at [publicinformation@MinotStateU.edu](mailto:publicinformation@MinotStateU.edu).

### **A**

**A, an:** Use the article a before constant sounds. Use the article an before vowel sounds.  
Example: An MSU student walked to a Minot State event.

**Academic degrees:** Academic degrees should be lowercase unless the full name of the degree is used. Use associate degree, bachelor's degree, master's degree, doctoral degree (or doctorate), Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Master of Arts, Master of Science. The correct abbreviations are: B.A., B.S., M.A., M.S., Ph.D.

**Academic years:** Academic years should always be lowercase: freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, graduate.

**Active voice:** Use an active, rather than passive, voice in sentences.

**Addresses:** Abbreviate Ave., Blvd., and St. when used in a specific address. Spell out when no specific address is used. Always spell out Road, Drive, Lane and any other such words.  
Examples: Minot State's address is 500 University Ave. W. Minot State is located on University Avenue.

**Advisor:** Minot State uses advisor in formal job titles when referring to someone who advises students.

**Affect, effect:** Affect, as a verb, means to influence. Effect, as a noun, means result.

**All-American, All-America:** Use All-American when referring to one individual; All-America when referring to a team.

**All right:** Never alright.

**Alumnus, alumni, alumna, alumnae:** Use alumnus (alumni in the plural) when referring to a man who has attended a school. Use alumna (alumnae in the plural) for similar references to a woman. Use alumni when referring to a group of men and women.

**Alumni year:** When possible, include the alumni or alumna's graduation year. Example: Jane Doe, '06, has built a successful business.

**And vs. &:** Do not use an ampersand in place of the word "and" unless it is part of an organization's formal name. Example: Red & Green Newspaper.

## **B**

**Benefited:** It is only one "t" under AP style.

**Books, musical compositions, movies, plays, poems:** Never use italics. Quotations should be used for all of the following: single radio or television programs, articles and features, chapter titles, titles of short stories, essays, short poems, poetry collections, dissertations and theses, songs and short compositions, stage/play titles, opera titles, movie titles, television series, book titles, computer game titles, album titles, lectures, speeches, paintings and works of art. No quotations for the following: magazine and newspaper titles, software titles, catalogs, journals, periodicals or reference books (almanacs, directories, encyclopedias, handbooks, and gazetteers). When a work is referenced within a quote, use single quote marks. Examples: Her favorite Summer Theatre play is "Beauty and the Beast." "My favorite movie is 'Beauty and the Beast,'" said the student.

**Buildings, auditoriums, gymnasiums, lounges, rooms:** Uppercase building, auditorium, hall, center, when used in the full, formal name of the structure: Minot State Dome, Hoffman Auditorium. Lowercase room, ballroom, lounge and other generic building units: Minot State pool.

## **C**

**Capital vs. Capitol:** Capital is the city where a seat of government is located. Do not capitalize. Capital is also used to mean "money." Uppercase Capitol when referring to "U.S. Capitol" or state capitols. Example: The North Dakota Capitol is located in Bismarck.

**Comma:** Use commas to separate elements in a series including the penultimate item in a list of three or more items. This is also referred to as the Oxford comma. Example: The president likes cookies, caramel corn, and ice cream. In part of a series that includes "and" in it, place a comma before the concluding conjunction in a series. Example: The man had orange juice, toast, and ham and eggs for breakfast. Also, use commas to separate two thoughts in one sentence that can stand alone as individual sentences.

**Course listings:** In an official listing, use caps. Example: Introduction to Biology. Do not use quotation marks. For subject titles, use lowercase (art, criminal justice, music, education).

## **D**

**Dashes and hyphens:** There is one type of dash used in AP style in addition to the hyphen. The em dash (—) is named for the amount of space a capital M once occupied in a line of lead type. It is used for parenthetical remarks, abrupt changes of thought, epigraphs, and datelines. A space is included before and after the em dash. The hyphen is used for continuing or inclusive numbers or words. Do not include spaces before or after the hyphen. For example: 1995–96, 1998–2002, Monday–Friday, Minnesota State University-Moorhead.

**Dates:** Separate by commas instead of parentheses. Example: Monday, Dec. 3, 1973. Refrain from using “th,” “nd,” or “rd.” Spell out when day stands alone. Omit the comma when using just the month or season and year. Example: December 1973 or fall 2019. When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate only Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., and Dec. Spell out March, April, May, June, and July. Spell out all months when using alone or with a year alone: Example: December or December 2013.

**Decades:** Use a letter “s” without an apostrophe to indicate the spans of decades or centuries. Example: the 1990s or the ‘90s. Use hyphen (in place of “to”) to indicate a span of years, and within a decade use the style 1940–41; across decades, use the style 1943–1953.

**Degree and program names:** Program names are not capitalized, unless it includes a proper name, in a sentence. Example: She thought about majoring in Earth science but decided to pursue her bachelor’s degree in communication disorders. She now has a Bachelor of Science in Communication Disorders.

**Dollars:** Correct usage when stating money is the sign, plus the amount. Example: The Minot State University Development Foundation received a \$3 million donation.

**Dr.:** Use only if the individual is a health care professional. You may indicate an advanced degree after the name, “Laurie Geller, Ph.D.” Never use more than one title, such as “Dr. Doogie Howser, M.D.” Refer to faculty members as professors in print.

## **E**

**Ellipsis:** A series of three dots in a row, used to represent omitted text in a quotation or to signify a dramatic pause for emphasis. Minot State style is to add a space after an ellipsis.

**Email:** Do not hyphenate and use lowercase, this is a recent change in AP style. Example: email.

**Email, Minot State:** Capitalize the MSU in University email references. Example: steven.shirley@MinotStateU.edu

## **F**

**Fundraising, fundraiser:** Each is one word; no hyphen.

## **G**

**Governor:** Gov. Burgum, former Gov. Hoeven. Use the same with presidents. Use President Trump. Former is lowercased when saying “former President Obama or former President Bush.”

## **H**

**Health care:** It is two words unless it is part of an official title.

**Historic, historical:** In the United States, use “a” to modify these words: “The moon walk was a historic moment.” A historic event is an important occurrence, one that stands out in history. Any occurrence in the past is a historical event.

**However:** Most effective when used as a conjunctive adverb in a compound sentence, punctuated with a semicolon, and set off with a comma. Example: He left for work late; however, he was still able to attend the meeting.

## **I**

**Inc.:** AP Style does not use the comma before “Inc.” unless it is used as the office title of a company.

**It’s, its:** It’s is short for “it is.” Its is used as a possessive: “The puppy lost its way.”

**It, they:** Use it when referring to a company or team. Use “they” when referring to a group of people.

## **L**

**Lie, lay:** Lie means to recline, lay means to put down or set.

## **M**

**More than vs. Over:** Use more than rather than over when describing amounts. Example: LeBron James makes more than \$35 million a year, rather than LeBron James makes over \$35 million a year.

## **N**

**Numbers:** Spell out numerals zero through nine. Use numerals for 10 and above. Exceptions: Use numerals when referring to age: The boy is 5 years old. The boy turned 4 today. When the numeral is used as an adjective, use hyphens: He is a 5-year-old boy.

## **P**

**Percent:** Symbol (%) is used on all references with no space. Example: 100%.

**Possessive:** Singular proper names ending in “s” only need an apostrophe to take the possessive form, while ones that end in an “s” sound need an apostrophe before the “s.”

## **Q**

**Quotations:** Place periods and commas within quotation marks. Place colons and semicolons outside quotation marks. Other punctuation, inside or outside quotation marks, depends on the sentence.

**Regardless:** Not irregardless.

**Regions:** Uppercase Southwest, Northeast or the West/East regions in states. Example: Northwest North Dakota.

**Residence halls:** Do not refer to them as dormitories or dorms. Minot State has five residence halls: Cook Hall, Crane Hall, Dakota Hall, Lura Manor, and McCulloch Hall.

## **S**

**Says vs. said:** AP style recommends using said for magazines, newspapers, and other publications. Refrain from using says.

**Season:** Do not use “of” when referring to the academic semester. Minot State’s style is to capitalize the season when used in conjunction with date. Example: Fall 2019.

**State names:** In lists, use AP style abbreviations instead of United States Postal Codes. Complete list includes: Alabama: Ala., Arizona: Ariz., Arkansas: Ark., California: Calif., Colorado: Colo., Connecticut: Conn., Delaware: Del., Florida: Fla., Georgia: Ga., Illinois: Ill., Indiana: Ind., Kansas: Kan., Kentucky: Ky., Louisiana: La., Maryland: Md., Massachusetts: Mass., Michigan: Mich., Minnesota: Minn., Mississippi: Miss., Missouri: Mo., Montana: Mont., Nebraska: Neb., Nevada: Nev., New Hampshire: N.H., New Jersey: N.J., New Mexico: N.M., New York: N.Y., North Carolina: N.C., North Dakota: N.D., Oklahoma: Okla., Oregon: Ore., Pennsylvania: Pa., Rhode Island: R.I., South Carolina: S.C., South Dakota: S.D., Tennessee: Tenn., Vermont: Vt., Virginia: Va., Washington: Wash., West Virginia: W.Va., Wisconsin: Wis., and Wyoming: Wyo. Do not abbreviate Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas, Utah, or Canadian provinces. In stories, cities and states should be spelled out. Example: Billings, Montana. Minot State style is just the city name within the state of North Dakota.

## **T**

**Telephone numbers:** Use 701-858-3065 for standard numbers and 1-800-777-0750 for toll-free numbers.

**Time:** Omit :00 when referring to a time of day: Examples: 1 p.m., 10 a.m.; but: 1:30 p.m., 9:15 a.m. Use noon and midnight instead of 12 a.m. and 12 p.m. to avoid confusion, except in calendar listings. For time ranges, it is 9-10 a.m.; noon-1 p.m. or 3-5 p.m. Use the AP style when going from a.m. to p.m., except in calendar listings. Example: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Titles:** Personal titles should be capitalized when they come before a name. When a title is listed after a name, it should be lowercase. Examples: Minot State Vice President for Advancement Rick Hedberg addressed the crowd. Rick Hedberg, Minot State vice president for advancement, addressed the crowd.

## **U**

**University:** Minot State style is to uppercase University when referring to Minot State at all times. When used as part of an official title, Minot State University and used alone, the University. Minot State University should be used in first reference and Minot State in subsequent references. Use MSU sparingly.

## **W**

**World Wide Web:** The term website is now lowercase and one word, while Web page, Web feed, the Internet, the Net, are capitalized. When listing an address for information, eliminate the understood prefix, “http://”. Instead, www.google.com should be used. For Minot State’s website, MinotStateU.edu is the preferred style.

## **Content information for marketing and website materials**

### **Hints**

- Speak directly to the reader. Most of the content should be written in second person. For example, instead of typing “when a student comes to Minot State,” try “when you come to Minot State.” Use the words you or your instead of students or their when possible.
- Use Minot State instead of MSU or Minot State University.
- Avoid statements that use the word if. For example, instead of typing “if you decide to join a student organization,” use “when you join a student organization.”
- Avoid using negatives. Your website is selling your program or area of campus. Words like can’t and don’t can subconsciously leave a negative connotation in the reader’s mind.
- Fit words from our taglines in where possible! Be seen. Be heard. Be empowered. Be inspired. Belong. Be you.

### **Strong words to consider**

achieve	advancement	amid	amplify
collective	connection	creative	curate
demonstrate	embark	endeavor	envision
gauge	holistic	inclusivity	intentional
logic	minted	mitigate	morph
navigate	opportunity	perseverance	perched
plethora	revamped	seize	significance
spring	spur	staggering	streamed
synergy	transcends	uptick	ushered
value	high-quality	affordability	engage
shape	belonging	curious	wisdom

### **Sentences**

Feel free to use these as printed, mixed and matched, or group together words that work for your respective area.

- We pride ourselves on the connections we make with you.
- Your success will be a result of hard work, relationship, and inspiration.
- Learn about our vibrant student life and the 250+ activities a year, academic learning services, holistic well-being, financial opportunities, and more.
- From arts to student government to community outreach to intramural sports, it is easy to explore new interests and get involved.

- With over 60 student clubs and organizations, there is a place or two for everyone to belong.
- Build a fulfilling life outside the classroom while building your resume.
- Minot State is a campus on the move.
- Our campus is located in a vibrant, growing community.
- Visit our campus calendar, [MinotStateU.edu/calendar](http://MinotStateU.edu/calendar), to stay connected with campus activities, deadlines, and opportunities.
- Our faculty connect and collaborate with you, developing your skills — and your confidence — through real-world opportunities.
- The best way to begin your college career is to start building relationships with your professors.
- Deeper connections with faculty will give you more confidence in the future.
- We focus on programs that will take you further in life.
- This will be the best four years of your life.
- We promote a strong community, where your accomplishments matter.
- Relationship building is a key factor to your success.
- Explore and take charge of your future.
- Minot State is a place for you to be seen, be heard, and belong.
- This is one of the best times to be at Minot State.
- Minot State puts learning into action.
- You'll thrive through Minot State's small class sizes, dynamic learning environment, and the ability to work closely with quality professors.
- We're the perfect size to be a part of something big.
- We are the perfect size for you to engage.
- Earn a high-quality education at the right price.
- We are affordable.
- Health and well-being are the foundation of your happiness and success at Minot State and beyond.
- Advocate for your personal and education development.
- We want your experiences at Minot State to be positive and growth promoting.
- It's the perfect time to apply for the record number of scholarships now available at Minot State.
- Apply today!
- Living on campus is an exciting, engaging, and safe first step towards independence.
- Our residence halls are a short walk from all campus facilities, including on-campus events and activities.
- Living on campus provides a great opportunity to live and learn from day one.
- You're an alum from day one.
- We provide flexible, high-quality learning options on campus and online.
- Minot State offers in-state tuition for all, making us the third most affordable university in the U.S.
- 57% of Minot State's grads from last year graduated with no debt.

## Proof Points

Proof points give the reader very specific information at a glance. Below are proof points that are available for your use. If your department/division has facts that would make a great proof point, please let the marketing team know so an image can be created for you.

### Quality and value proof points:

#### Quality



#### Value



### Affordability and campus activity proof points

**Total Annual Estimated Costs 2018-2019**

 \$7,064  
Tuition and Fees

+

 \$6,479  
Room and Board

**= \$13,543**

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ALL STUDENTS PAY IN-STATE TUITION.

 **1,000+**  
campus activities  
each year

 **60+**  
student clubs  
& organizations

 **3** Greek  
chapters

 **Intramurals: 10+ events**  
**500+** participants

Be seen. Be heard. Be inspired.