Answers to frequently asked about style questions and GSC’s “exceptions to the rules”

The Editorial Style Guide discusses not only style rules particular to GSC, but also commonly confused grammar rules. This tool is meant to be used in combination with other trusted and commonly used reference materials: any high-quality dictionary, the Associated Press (AP) Style Guide, other trusted guides, and the “spell check” feature on the platforms you’re using.

This guide will be updated periodically. If you have a suggestion for an addition, change, or correction to the document, or if you still are having a difficult time finding an answer to your question, contact the Communications and Marketing Department.
Abbreviations and Acronyms
Certain common abbreviations are acceptable (IRS, UNH, etc.), as are title abbreviations (Dr., Mr., Ms., Rep.). Otherwise, spell out the name or phrase in full the first time it appears, followed by the acronym in parentheses. Use the acronym for subsequent references to the name. Common abbreviations and acronyms at Granite State College include:

- **GSC** (Granite State College)
- **Post-Bacc, PBTC** (Post-Baccalaureate Teacher Certification)
- **SOE** (School of Education)
- **PLA** (Priority Learning Assessment)
- **ILC** (Independent Learning Contract)
- **R.N.** (Registered Nurse)
- **B.S.N.** (Bachelor of Science in Nursing)
- **GPS** (Graduation Planning Tool)
- **OLLI** (Osher Lifelong Learning Institute)

Academic Degrees
It is associate degree, not associate’s degree (no possessive), but it is bachelor’s degree, master’s degree (possessive). There is no possessive in Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, or Master of Science. When abbreviating academic degrees, use periods:

- Associate in Arts  A.A.
- Associate in Science  A.S.
- Bachelor of Arts  B.A.
- Bachelor of Science  B.S.
- Master of Science  M.S.
- Master of Education  M.Ed

John graduated in June with his associate degree.
Andrea graduated in May with her bachelor’s degree.
She is pursuing the M.S. in Project Management.

Academic Departments and College Offices
Capitalize all departments and college offices.

She works in the Academic Affairs Department.

Academic Programs
Capitalize the names of academic programs only when it is referencing the official program.

The student is considering our Criminal Justice program.
The student is studying criminal justice.

Academic and Professional Titles
Capitalize a title when it comes before a person’s name. Do not capitalize a title that comes after a person’s name.

President Victor Montana was GSC’s first president.
Victor Montana, GSC’s first college president, was highly respected.

Academic Terms
When referring to an academic term, capitalize the season. When referring to a season in general, it is not capitalized.

Registration for the Fall term begins on July 9, 2013.
I am looking forward to my vacation next summer.

Advisor, Academic Coach
Use advisor, not adviser.

An advisor will help you pick out your classes.

NOTE: Academic Coach is the current preferred term for undergraduate studies.
Alpha Sigma Lambda
GSC’s honor society should be capitalized. ASL is an acceptable internal abbreviation.

Alumnus/Alumni; Alumna/Alumnae
When referring to a male graduate of the college, use alumnus (alumni when plural). When referring to a female graduate of the college, use alumna (alumnae when plural). When referring to a group of male and female graduates, use alumni.

Joe is an alumnus of the college.
He and other alumni attended the event.

Board of Trustees
Capitalize “board of trustees” only when it is used as the subject of a sentence. Capitalize “trustee” only when it is used as a title before a name.

The Board of Trustees unanimously approved the decision.
He is a new member of the board of trustees.
Trustee John Doe was sworn into the board of trustees.

Campus, College
Capitalize the word campus when using it with Concord Campus, Claremont Campus, etc. Do not capitalize the word campus when used on its own.

Capitalize the word “College” when it refers specifically to Granite State College. Do not capitalize the word college when used on its own (as a common noun).

The info session was held on the Rochester Campus.
The info session was held at Granite State College.
The info session was held on campus.
The info session was held at the college.

Catalog, Course Schedule
Two distinct official GSC documents that are often confused.

The catalog is an annual document that describes the policies, programs, and procedures that are in effect at the time of the publication.

The Course Schedule is a quarterly listing of the classes being offered during the upcoming term. The following variations are incorrect and should be discontinued term flyer, course flyer, course catalog.

Commencement
Capitalize “commencement” only when referring to the specific Granite State College commencement ceremony.

Committee
Capitalize the name of the committee when part of a formal name.

The changes were approved by the Commencement Committee.
Shirley serves on several committees at Granite State College.

Course Titles
Capitalize titles of all courses. When titles have more than two words, put the title in quotations.

This semester, she is taking “Themes in World History.”

Days of the Week
Spell out all days of the week.

The concert will be held on Saturday, May 8.

SEE ALSO: DATES, MONTHS
**Dates**
When using a specific date, use Arabic numerals (figures) without the st, nd, and rd.

*The event will be held on May 23.*

**NOTE:** This does not apply to dates that appear on invitations or event communications.

**SEE ALSO:** DATES OF THE WEEK, MONTHS

**Decades**
Use Arabic numerals (figures) for decades. For plural use of decades, add “s” without the apostrophe. Use an apostrophe to indicate missing figures in a decade.

*The majority of the group was born in the 1970s.*
*She first attended college in the ’90s.*

**SEE ALSO:** YEARS

**Email**
One word, no hyphen.

*Email ask.granite@granite.edu to learn more.*

**SEE ALSO:** ONLINE, WEBSITE

**Full-time, Part-time**
Include a hyphen when using the terms full-time and part-time.

**Health Care**
Two words.

*We have several degree programs that are relevant in the health care industry.*

**Moodle**
Capitalize Moodle.

**Months**
Spell out all months.

*The event will be held on August 14.*

**NOTE:** For press releases only, when you are using a specific date, abbreviate the following months: Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., and Dec.

**SEE ALSO:** DAYS OF THE WEEK, DATES

**MyGranite**
One word, with “m” and “g” capitalized. The following variations are incorrect and should be discontinued: MyGranite and My.Granite.

*MyGranite is a launch pad for all student services including WebROCK, eLearning+, the GSC Library, and many other resources.*
Names
Use first and last names for people upon the first reference. For the second and subsequent references, use the person’s last name.

Amanda Lafaux was inducted into Alpha Sigma Lambda. Lafaux plans to pursue a master’s degree after graduation.

NOTE: In certain uses, the Communications and Marketing Department may continue to use a person’s first name in order to achieve a friendlier tone.

New Hampshire, NH
Spell out the state when it is written without a city or town. When a city or town is included, abbreviate as NH. When a city or town and NH are included in a full sentence, a comma is required after the town and after “NH.”

We are the largest public provider of online education in New Hampshire. In Manchester, NH, you can find our campus in the MillWest building.

SEE ALSO: PUNCTUATION, COMMAS

Numerals, Numbers

General numbers
Spell out numbers one through nine. Numbers 10 and higher are written numerically.

NOTE: When a number is the first word in a sentence, it is always spelled out.

Ordinal numbers
Spell out “first” through “ninth.” Use figures, starting with 10th.

NOTE: This does not apply to dates, except with invitations or event communications.

“First annual” should not be used to describe an event. An event must take place for at least two consecutive years in order to be annual.

Tip! Use “First ever” or “The Inaugural” as an alternative.

Numbers as adjectives
Numbers are hyphenated when used as adjectives.

Her oldest son is 20-years-old.

Money
List whole dollar amounts without cents.

$10 - not - $10.00

Online
One word, no hyphen

SEE ALSO: WEBSITE, EMAIL

Part-time
See full-time.
**Punctuation**

**Apostrophes**
Apostrophes are used mainly to express possession or a contraction.

*The student’s books were inexpensive.*
*She is interested in history, especially women’s studies.*
*Don’t forget to check your WebROCK account.*

**Bullets**
There is no punctuation (periods, commas) at the end of bulleted lines, except if a line is a complete sentence, in which case a period is added. Do not add the word “and” or “or” before the last bullet in the series.

**Commas**
Use a comma before the words “and” and “or” when used in a series of three or more items (serial comma or Oxford comma).

*The student has questions about classes, financial aid, and the cost of textbooks.*

The day, month, and year are set off by commas when used in a sentence.

*She shared the news on June 2, 2013, after the meeting.*

There is no comma between a month and year, or season and year, if no specific date is given.

*The conference is scheduled for spring 2015. He was hired in June 2007.*

When a sentence includes a city and state, add a comma after the state.

*Most students in Berlin, NH, take classes online.*

**Excessive punctuation**
Avoid excessive punctuation!!!!! A single explanation point suffices.

**Dashes**
When using dashes to set off a section of a sentence, do not use two hyphens. Instead, use an emdash symbol with a space.

**Quotation marks**
The comma and the period always go inside the quotation marks.

*She said, ”I’ll meet you after class.” “I’ll meet you after class,” she said.*

The colon and semi-colon go outside of quoted material.

*There are four parts to the upcoming webinar “Understanding your Benefits”: health, retirement, dental, and more.*

Question marks and exclamation points go on the inside of the quotation marks when it is part of a direct quote. It goes on the outside of the quotation mark when the question refers to the entire sentence, not just the quote.

*“Do you have previous college experience?” he asked.*

*Why am I receiving the error message “Invalid User”? “I am graduating in June!” she said.*

**Semicolons**
There are two main uses for semi-colons:

1. Use a semi-colon in a sentence to indicate a separation of thought and information between two phrases linked by a common theme.

*They called the student during financial clearance; she called back that evening.*

2. Use semi-colons to ensure clarity when a series of commas is used.

*In my online class, there are students from Manchester, NH; Lowell, MA; Biddeford, ME; and Burlington, VT.*
R.S.V.P.
R.S.V.P. is an abbreviation for the French phrase which translates to “respond, if you please.” It is redundant to say “Please R.S.V.P.”

Smarthinking
One word, capitalized, and only one “t.” The following variations are incorrect: Smart Thinking and Smarthinking.

Times
Use a.m. and p.m., lower case and with periods. Use Arabic numerals (figures) for all times except noon and midnight.

Christina’s class begins at 6 p.m. in room 102. Her babysitter is watching her son until 8:30 p.m.

Titles
(articles, books, CDs, compositions, movies, plays, poems, speeches, songs, TV shows, works of art, etc.) Italicize the names of publications. When referring to an article within a publication, use quotation marks.

Do not capitalize the following parts of speech unless they appear as the first word in the title: articles (a, an, the), conjunctions, and prepositions with less than four letters.

Students in HIS611 are reading Tousaint Louverture by Madison Smartt Bell.

Dr. Todd Leach, former president of Granite State College, was quoted in the Union Leader article, “Online Students in New Hampshire.”

URLs
(website address) For most URLs, it is safe to drop the http:// when typing an address. URLs should not be italicized or underlined when they appear in a printed document. On websites, an underline is used to show users that the text is an active hyperlink.

www.granite.edu *instead of* http://www.granite.edu

Years
Use Arabic numerals (figures) for years. When referring to a specific year, use the entire year, not just the last two digits.

He will graduate in 2018.

SEE ALSO: DECADES

WebROCK
One word, capitalize the last four letters. The following variations are incorrect and should be discontinued: WebRock, Webrock, WEBROCK, and webRock.

WebROCK is where you can register for classes, find your grades, check your financial aid information, receive unofficial transcripts, pay your bill, and more.

Website, web page
Website is one word, no hyphen. Web page is two words. Website is preferred.

You can find your curriculum maps on GSC’s website.

SEE ALSO: ONLINE, EMAIL