



## Red Rocks Community College Style Guide

### Abbreviations and acronyms

An abbreviation is a shortened or contracted form of a word or phrase used to represent the whole: RRCC, SRC, FYE, IPE, TRiO, STEAM, IDEA course prefixes should follow the same format. An acronym is an abbreviation that is read as a word.

Use abbreviations and acronyms in moderation. When using uncommon abbreviations or acronyms, on first use spell out the full name and follow it by the abbreviation or acronym in parentheses. (If the abbreviation or acronym is not used after the first mention, do not abbreviate it.) Do not assume readers are as familiar with our college as we are.

#### EXAMPLE:

Red Rocks Community College (RRCC) is hosting an art exhibit in the Susan K. Arndt Art Gallery. Exhibits hosted by RRCC are free to all students.

### Academic degrees:

Do not use periods when abbreviating academic degrees: AAS, AA, AS, AGS, BA, AADWD, ASDWD, etc.

### Articles (a, an, the) with acronyms and abbreviations

Use the article that you would use when speaking. Sometimes, no article is necessary.

#### EXAMPLES:

an AA degree, a PhD degree

### Dates:

Per AP style, spell out month names that stand alone. Abbreviate month names when used with a specific date: September 2019; Dec. 14, 2019

For all month abbreviations, see MONTHS in the AP Style Guide.

### Street names:

Per AP style, spell out street names without a number and abbreviate street names in a complete address: Grant Street; 1350 Lawrence St.

### Academic degrees:

Instead of courtesy titles (Dr., Prof., etc.), use degree names. Do not capitalize the names of degrees. Use an apostrophe in bachelor's degree, associate's degree, etc. Do not use an apostrophe in associate of arts, associate of science or bachelor of science.

Areas of study (e.g. music, genetics, physical therapy, electrical engineering) are not capitalized unless used as part of a proper name.

### EXAMPLES:

He is working toward a bachelor of arts degree in Water Quality Management.

She earned an AA in biology last year. They all had associate's degrees in engineering.

For academic degree abbreviations, see ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS.

### Commas

Please use a serial/Oxford comma in a series or list, as needed for clarity or understanding: students, faculty, and staff

### Composition and publication titles

Per AP style, use italics for publication names (newspapers, periodicals, academic journals) and quotation marks for composition titles (books, movies, music, etc.).

### EXAMPLES:

*The Denver Post*, *American Journal of Sociology*, *U.S. News & World Report*

"Casablanca," "The Catcher in the Rye," "Let It Be"

### Course titles

Capitalize all important words. Do not use quotation marks or italics.

### EXAMPLES:

She took the Astronomy of Ancient Cultures course in an Associate of Arts program.

Introduction to Creative Writing is offered in the fall.

### Dashes

Use an en dash with a character space on either side to mark a break in thought or to indicate a range, replacing the words "through" or "to."

### EXAMPLES:

He will travel to Europe this summer – if he passes all of his classes. They rated the course on a scale of 1 – 10.

NOTE:

Mac keyboard shortcut: Option + Minus sign

PC keyboard shortcut: Control + Minus sign on numeric keypad (not hyphen)

## Hyphens

Use hyphens in compound modifiers (two or more words that modify the same noun), to avoid ambiguity or if the word that follows a prefix begins with a capital letter. Do not hyphenate words with prefixes and suffixes (exception: pre-health).

EXAMPLES:

world-class college, full-time student

small-business owner, special-education teacher

un-American, mid-March

campuswide, nonresident

303.315.2157

## Job titles

Whether preceding a name or not, job titles should be capitalized. Longer titles should be placed after the name. Use degrees instead of courtesy titles.

EXAMPLES:

President Michele Haney

John Smith, Director of Emergency Services

Jane Smith, PhD, Professor of Education

## Numbers

Per AP style, spell out numbers one through nine; use figures for numbers 10 and up.

For times, denote a.m. or p.m. with lower-case letters with periods, no spaces between. Use a colon to separate hours and minutes. Do not add a colon and zeros for on-the-hour times: 10 a.m., 4:30 p.m.

Use periods in phone numbers with no spaces on either side.

## Spacing

Do not double space at the end of a sentence; please use a single space at the end of a sentence.

## College names

Capitalize only the official and complete names of colleges, schools, departments, divisions, offices, buildings, and official bodies. Do not capitalize semester names or seasons. Do not capitalize college unless using the complete proper name of the college. To conserve space, whenever possible omit terms like “Office of” and “Department of.”

For schools and colleges, use full official name on first reference (some use an ampersand and some use “and”). Subsequent references may use the appropriate school abbreviation or acronym, which should be indicated in parentheses after the full name.

**EXAMPLE:**

Physician Assistant Program (PAP)

Capitalize the educational facility and organization Lakewood Campus and Arvada Campus

For more on abbreviations and acronyms, see **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**.

## Gender

In order to operationalize our value of inclusion, we do our best to honor the pronouns of each member of our community.

When writing about a specific person, first use their name. In successive references, you can use “he” or “she” if you are clear on the person’s gender identity, or use whichever the person’s preferred pronouns are. If the pronouns may be unfamiliar to your readers, consider also putting in a brief parenthetical explanation.

If you are not certain of the person’s gender identity, you have several options.

1. Ask. If you are writing about someone, it is likely that you may have asked other questions, such as the spelling of their name. In the same series of questions, you can ask what pronouns they use.
2. Rewrite. Use the person’s name in place of a pronoun, or otherwise reword the sentence
3. Use They. In some cases, using the singular they would be the best option. As with any unfamiliar pronouns, you may need to clarify the use for the reader as singular.

If you have any questions about which pronouns to use in a piece of writing, you may contact Jen Macken, Director of Inclusion and Diversity, at 303.914.6309 or [jen.macken@rrcc.edu](mailto:jen.macken@rrcc.edu).

## Voice and Tone

### **What is Voice and Tone?**

At RRCC, we speak with a consistent voice across all publications and platforms. This voice is how we convey our brand and our personality to the world. Our tone adapts to our audience and the purpose of writing. For example, social media writing may be more conversational and use shorter sentences, while writing for a potential foundation donor may call for longer, more dynamic sentences. However, it should always sound as if the same person is speaking. This consistency is the RRCC voice.

## **The RRCC Voice and Tone**

The voice of RRCC is friendly, familiar, optimistic, helpful, and straightforward. Our words are simple, concise and conversational. Less is more — we say what we mean in the simplest way. Our priority is to help our audience get the information they're looking for and the support they're seeking.

In writing, our voice is created through our word choice, sentence structure, and point of view. When writing in the RRCC Voice, a few key things to remember are:

### **Be inclusive**

After first reference, use first person plural pronouns such as we, our, and us.

Instead of "RRCC offers degrees and certificates," say "We offer degrees and certificates."

### **Be personable**

Create closeness to your audience by speaking directly to them. Use pronouns such as you and your.

Instead of "Students can register today," say "You can register today."

### **Be helpful**

You may be an expert, but avoid coming across as bossy.

Instead of "You must login to The Portal to register for classes," say "Trying to register for classes? Login to The Portal."

### **Be positive**

Instead of "You can't sign up for classes without taking the online orientation," say "Take the online orientation to get started on your course registration."

### **Be friendly**

Create friendliness through the use of warm, conversational words. Though informal words are great, carelessness such as spelling and grammar errors are not.

Use our Style Guide to help answer any questions.

### **Be simple**

When possible, choose simple, easily understandable words.

In the world of academia, there are many institutionalized words that should be used, even if they are a bit more "complex." Don't dumb down the language. Instead, provide context to make it understandable.

Use our Style Guide to help determine the correct academic words to use.

### **Be clear**

Use clear language. Avoid jargon and idioms, which may be confusing to your readers. Write in the active voice, avoiding the passive voice when possible.

Instead of “Club applications will be collected by Student Life,” say “Student Life will collect club applications.”

### **Be Empathetic**

Your goal as a content writer is to help users complete their tasks and understand information. When writing, be aware of this and make sure what you are saying is helping them reach that goal.

Consider why users are reading your content and how they are likely to be feeling. Are they current students, frustrated because they can’t figure out which classes to take? Are they new students, excited because they just finished applying to RRCC? Perhaps visiting community members, confused about where to park. When writing, adjust your tone to be conscientious of the wide range of emotions your readers are probably experiencing.

### Commonly used words

advisor (not adviser)  
campuswide (no hyphen)  
campus’s (possessive, apostrophe and “s”)  
fundraising (no hyphen or space)  
health care (two words, unless part of a proper noun)  
OK (not okay)  
post-baccalaureate (hyphenated)  
pre-health (hyphenated)  
semester hours (not credit hours)  
collegewide (no hyphen or space)

### Web and electronic references

e-commerce, e-book, e-newsletter (all compound e-words, other than email, are hyphenated)  
email (lowercase, no hyphen)  
email addresses all lowercase (first.last@rrcc.edu)  
login (noun); log in (verb); log in to RRCC Portal  
internet (lowercase)  
online (one word)  
Twitter (uppercase), tweet (lowercase), retweet (lowercase, no hyphen)  
website, webcam, webcast, webmaster (single word, lowercase, no space or hyphen)  
the Web (capitalized, short for the World Wide Web)