

# St. John's College Editorial Style Guide

Updated February 2022

## About This Guide

The St. John's Communications Office maintains this editorial style guide to provide consistency in all printed and online materials produced by and for the college. The guide addresses general style matters such as capitalization, spelling, grammar, and punctuation as well as commonly used phrases, and St. John's specific terms and preferences.

Additional reference for usage and clarity: [The Elements of Style by Strunk and White](#)

- x For questions regarding spelling, hyphenation, or information not found elsewhere, refer to [merriam-webster.com](http://merriam-webster.com)

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The guide is intended to evolve, as language does, so please send suggestions for improvement to the Communications Office [abmmunications@sjc.edu](mailto:abmmunications@sjc.edu)

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## A

academic degrees

Capitalize abbreviated degrees without periods (BA, BS, JD, and PhD). Lowercase cum laude, magna cum laude and with honors, as well as bachelor's, master's, and doctorate (also MALA and MAEC)

From Chicago Manual 8.29 Names of degrees, fellowships, and the like are lowercased when unless a major includes a proper noun (English major or American studies major)

academic (class) designations

Terms are lowercase: freshman/first-year student; sophomore, junior, and senior

academic year

Follow rule for range of years: eliminate the initial repeated digits

2018–19 (connected by en dash)

Note: If three or more digits will change, use the entire number for both years: ~~2000~~

It often looks better to use “to” (instead of an en dash) to connect numbers in a sentence, but either are acceptable. See more: date and *time* ranges

He attended the college from 1999 to 2003.

He attended the college 1999–2003.

acronyms, initialisms, and other abbreviations

Well-known acronyms and common abbreviations of names should be ~~to~~ without periods:

SJCC, CEO, CIA, FBI, GPA, NATO and SAT

For those not widely known to the general public, spell out on the first mention. Acronyms that will be used later should be placed in parentheses after the first mention, e.g., Graduate Institute (GI), Student Instruction Committee (SIC), Student Activities Center (SAC)

active voice

Use active voice whenever possible; in sentences with an action verb, the subject performs the action denoted by the verb. (see Chicago Manual 5.118 for more)

active:           The student read the book.

passive:          The book was read by the students.

addresses

Use commas to set off street address, town/city/location, and state; do not use a comma between the state (use USPS abbreviations)



and / & (ampersand)

Spell out "and" in all uses except for the names of firms, colleges, etc., where the ampersand is part of the formal name: We saw Jack and Jill. They attended ~~John & Wales~~ University

Annapolis Group

A group of approximately 130 independent liberal arts colleges that meet each June in Annapolis; St. John's is a member of this group (see full list of colleges at [annapolisgroup.org](http://annapolisgroup.org))

apostrophe/ possessive form of most nouns

From Chicago Manual 7.16: The possessive of most singular nouns is formed by adding an apostrophe and ~~as~~. The possessive of plural nouns (except for a few irregular plurals, like children, that do not end in ~~is~~) is formed by adding an apostrophe only. For the few exceptions to these principles, see 7.20–22. See also 5.20.

the horse's mouth

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axolotl / platypus / mascot

Although the college does not have an official mascot, it does have a few unofficial ones

campus dogs

Arcadia "Cadie" Spector, Parson Russell Terrier, was appointed the Annapolis campus dog in 2006

campuswide

Do not hyphenate; also statewide, nationwide/worldwide

capital, capitol

Most references will be for capital as a city where a seat of government is located; do not capitalize: Annapolis and Santa Fe are both state capitals.

A capitol is a building in which a legislative body meets, or where functions of state government occur; it is capitalized only when referencing the building in which the Congress meets in Washington, DC and in other related references such as Capitol Hill or Capitol Police

capital campaign

Refers to the college's intensive fundraising effort that will span a defined time period with the goal of raising a specified amount of money to meet varied needs

The capital campaign will kick off in September 2018.

capitalization

Capitalize only formal or specific names when referring to St. John's College without the full name, always use lowercase (see college entry for examples)

When in doubt, use lowercase, especially when a word's meaning is generic. Refer to Chicago Manual of Style or Merriam-Webster for specific examples; capitalizing an entire word or phrase for emphasis is rarely appropriate (see headlines entry for more)

For the capitalization of combined plural nouns used in names, lowercase the common noun elements in all plural uses:

He's worked at St. John's and Williams colleges.

The Annapolis campus is flanked by St. John's and King George streets, College Avenue connects the two streets

career services

Lowercase when used generally, e.g., St. John's provides help to students and alumni with career services; capitalize when referring to the Career Services Office in Annapolis; note the office in Santa Fe is known as the Office of Personal and Professional Development

century

Do not capitalize. Spell out first through ninth: eighth century; 20th century. Hyphenate when

used as an adjective, e.g., 19th century literature. Note:

Generally, the first word following the colon should be lowercased if the words after the colon form a dependent clause and they should be capitalized if the words form an independent clause that can stand on its own. It is advisable to not use a colon if a sentence fragment.

Johnnies have two favorite hobbies: reading and discussing what they read.

How to punctuate and capitalize the items in a list depends on whether they are individual words, phrases, or clauses (and whether any of the items contain complete sentences). For a vertical bulleted list that is treated like a sentence, use a colon to introduce the list and then commas after each lowercased item except for the last one when a period should be used. When the list is not treated as a sentence, capitalize each item listed after the colon and do not use any punctuation.

The text contained several errors:

- x sentence fragments,
- x subject-verb disagreement, and
- x misplaced or dangling modifiers.

There will be fun events held during Homecoming:

- x Reception
- x Banquet
- x Faculty and Alumni Lunch
- x Sunday Brunch

Colons are also used between the parts of a numerical expression of time in hours and minutes (as in 4:30) or in hours, minutes, and seconds (5:25:30); or in a bibliographical reference; or in a ratio where it is usually read as "to" (8:1 is read as "eight to one")

college

Lowercase, when referring to St. John's College without the full name

St. John's College was founded in 1696 as King William's School.

The college was chartered in 1784.

*College, The*

Title of the St. John's College alumni magazine; always italicize; all inquiries regarding the magazine should be referred to the Communications Office

collegewide

Also: campuswide, statewide, nationwide, worldwide



Collegium (event)

Capitalized; held each semester on both campuses, Collegium is a chance for students, faculty, and staff to perform musical numbers for the St. John's community

comma (also series comma or Oxford comma)

Standard practices to increase ease of reading should be followed for comma usage; however, Chicago Manual strongly recommends when a conjunction joins the last two elements in a series of three or more, a comma—known as the serial or series comma or the Oxford comma—should appear before the conjunction to prevent ambiguity.

She posted pictures of her parents, the president, and the vice president.

commencement

Lowercase unless in formal usage e.g., Students are looking forward to commencement.

St. John's College's ~~2016~~ Commencement in Annapolis was held indoors ~~in~~ 2018.

L



### date and timeranges

Ranges for dates and times may be signified with either from ... to or an en dash (–, shorter than an em dash but longer than a hyphen), but be consistent and do not mix the two forms.

The art gallery is open from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

The museum is open 10 a.m.–5:30 p.m.

[NOT The museum is open from 10 a.m.–5:30 p.m.]

Johnnie attended the college from 1981 to 1985.

Johnnie attended the college 1981–1985.

[NOT Johnnie attended the college from 1981–1985.]

### decades

Acceptable to either spell out (the eighties, the nineties) or use numbers (the 1980s, the 1990s); either way, be consistent and ensure the apostrophe is facing toward what is missing

### departments

Lowercase when written informally (the physics department); capitalize full name (the Department of Physics); note that some say St. John's does not have "departments"; same rules apply to administrative offices

### directions / regions

Lowercase north, south, northwestern, etc., when they indicate a compass direction: They traveled west.

Specific regions should be capitalized: They traveled to the East Coast; Santa Fe is in the Southwest.

Capitalize words such as northern, southern, eastern, and western when they refer to the people in a region or to their political, social, or cultural activities: The curriculum focuses on the most important books and ideas of Western civilization.

Do not capitalize these words when they merely indicate general location or refer to the geography or climate of the region.

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## Don Rag

Instead of receiving grades via a traditional report card, Johnnies meet with their tutors at a "Don Rag" to receive an oral report of their progress

## dormitories

Dorm is also acceptable as residence hall or residences. Dorm names are always capitalized.

In Annapolis Humphreys Hall (1837), Chase House (1857), Paca Carroll House (1857), Pinkney Hall (1858), Randall Hall (1903), Campbell Hall (1954), Gilliam Hall (2004), and Spector Hall (2006) use full name on first reference (e.g., Randall Hall, and then just Randall on second)



email (also ebook, ecommerce, and newsletter)

Preferred style to list St. John's email addresses (ES sets this up to work for all accounts)

[firstname.lastname@sjc.edu](mailto:firstname.lastname@sjc.edu)

The word email is not hyphenated and is



When used as an adjective, freshman is always singular.

All of the freshmen participate in the Freshman Chorus.

Friday night lectures

Lectures are organized by the dean's office and held Friday nights; students are strongly encouraged to attend (not mandatory); lectures are typically open to the public and free; they are known as the Formal Lecture Series in Annapolis and the Dean's Lecture Series in Santa Fe

full time / part time

Do not hyphenate when using as an adverb but hyphenate as an adjective before the noun:

She is a fulltime tutor; His cousin teaches part time.

fundraise/ fundraising / fundraising

No dash

**G**

*Gadfly, The*

The student newspaper in Annapolis; capitalize and capitalize title

Graduate Institute

Established in 1967 in Santa Fe originally as a summer program for teachers, it was established in 1977 in Annapolis; acronyms that will be used later should be placed in parentheses after the first mention, e.g. The Graduate Institute (GI) is currently enrolling students for the Eastern Classics program.

grandchild / granddaughter / grandson

Hyphenate greatgrandchild; stepgrandson

gray(not grey)

Preferred spelling is gray

Great Books

Capitalized in all uses

guerilla seminars

Small, informally organized seminars on particular works are often held with a small group of students and no tutor, although sometimes a tutor will participate





homeschool, homeschooled, homeschooling  
One word not hyphenated

honorary alumni  
Use "H" followed by class year, with no campus abbreviation; e.g., Jeremy Shamos (H03)

hyphens/ hyphenation  
Use to divide or compound words, word elements, or numbers; can be used to avoid ambiguity or prevent duplicated vowels or triple consonants

To create a compound modifier: Use to link all the words (except the adverb very and all adverbs ending inly) preceding a noun: a fulltime job, a firstsemester text, a very hot day, a doubly delicious flavor

When using a string of modifiers before a noun, put the modifier in quote marks instead of using hyphens, for clarity:

Her scientific achievements earned her the "Woman of the Year" award.

To use in suspensive form: a 10-20-year cycle; but a \$5 million to \$6 million renovation

Exceptions Unless the Merriam-Webster dictionary specifies, do not hyphenate

For numbers: Use to separate numbers but use en dash to indicate a numeric range]

Odds: He has a 3 chance.

Ratios: The student-teacher ratio is 81.

Scores and vote tabulations: The Greenwaves won 32.

Fractions that are spelled out: Three-fifths of the students participated.

When large numbers are spelled out especially at the beginning of a sentence, hyphen to connect a word ending in y to the next word: Sixty-six (but twelve hundred)

For compound proper nouns, use to designate dual heritage: Italian-American; Australian-Czech

Exceptions Native American, African American, French Canadian, and Latin American are not hyphenated

|

i.e., e.g.

Use i.e. to mean "that is" and use e.g. to mean "for example"

Use periods and set off in commas

War and Peace is a lengthy text, i.e., students need extra time to finish it.

Korean food is spicy, e.g., peppered pepper soup and hot pepper paste.

infinitives, split

Defined as an infinitive with to having a modifier between the and the verb (as in "to really start"); may be split, but should be avoided if possible

in-law

Always use hyphens around "in" (father-in-law or mother-in-law); if you're talking about more than one, the first word should be plural: brothers-in-law or sisters-in-law

Inc.

Capitalized; used as an abbreviation in place of "Incorporated" in proper business names; do not follow with a comma [same rules apply to Corp. or Co.]

Note that many business owners prefer to use a comma before "Inc." to set apart their business name so pay attention to how a business refers to themselves and be consistent in all uses

Apple, Inc. released the new iPhone.

The book may be purchased at Barnes & Noble Booksellers, Inc.

initials

Use a period followed by a space after an initial in personal names; Christopher B. Nelson when there is more than one initial, there is typically no space after a period between initials unless specified; be consistent

insure/ ensure / assure

To assure a person of something is to make him or her confident that something happens is to make certain that it does, and to insure is to issue an insurance policy (according to AP Style); other authorities, however, consider insure and insure interchangeable

intercollegiate sports

On the Annapolis campus, intercollegiate sports include: crew, croquet, fencing, and sailing; in Santa Fe, archery is an intercollegiate sport

intramurals

Acceptable way to reference intramural sports; students, staff, and faculty on each campus are assigned to an intramural sports team; teams play each other in multiple sports, including Ultimate, soccer, basketball, "reasonball," handball, and volleyball

internet

Lowercase note that the capitalized form "Internet" is still commonly seen but the lowercase form is gaining more widespread use

italics

Use as indicated in style guide, see titles sparingly for emphasis

## J

January Freshman Program (Spring Freshman Program)

Santa Fe students who matriculate January as part of the Spring Freshman Program; students are called "January Freshmen" as part of the January Freshman Program

Johnnie, Johnnies

Used to refer to St. John's College students and alumni; [Johnny]

Johnnie Chair

The same wooden chairs are used in all classrooms on each campus; called the "Johnnie Chair," each is made by E.A. Clore Sons Inc., a family-owned woodworking company in Virginia

JohnnieCast

A live community forum for St. John's College alumni held via telephone; organized and hosted by the Office of Alumni Relations

How it works: the college uses information in our database to call alumni at the landline phone number on file for each alum; to join the call, alumni simply answer the phone and stay on the line to participate; to ask a question or comment or take part in polls—instructions will be provided and listeners may use keypad prompts; those who aren't alumni may still participate by calling in or joining via a livestream on the internet

Jr. (and other suffixes)

Suffixes are not preceded (nor followed) by a comma unless specified by the individual or historical precedence

Martin Luther King Jr.

Cal Ripken Jr.

## K

King William Players

Each word is capitalized; NOT "King William's Players"; refers to the student theater group in Annapolis.



millennial

Lowercase; defined as “of or relating to a millennium”

This term is often used to reference a person reaching young adulthood in the early 21st century (also sometimes known as Generation Y) but there are not precise dates for this generational demographic cohort, they can range from birth years in the early 1980s to mid 1990s to early 2000s

millennium

Period of 1,000 years; often misspelled; millennia or millenniums are both acceptable plural forms

millions / billions

Always use with figures: \$25 million; with large numbers in the millions and billion), do not go beyond two decimal places (1.25 million people)

the Mitchell Gallery, Elizabeth Myers

Art gallery on the Annapolis campus; full name is rarely used, most often referred to as the (lowercase) Mitchell Gallery preferred the Mitchell Gallery at St. John’s College

*Moon, The*

The student newspaper in Santa Fe; italicize title

money

Always use figures; for dollars, use the \$ sign: \$5 book or \$50 million, always spell out cents, i.e., 10 cents or a 5-cent tax

more than vs. over

Use “more than” for amounts

He has more than five flowers. [NOT He has over five flowers.]

More than 250 attended. [NOT Over 250 attended.]

mph

Stands for miles per hour; mph acceptable on first reference without spelling out

MOTH

Acronym for Music on the Hill, a series of summer concerts on the Santa Fe campus; always spell out the first mention with acronym placed in parentheses, e.g., Music on the Hill (MOTH)

multicultural

Not hyphenated

N

names

Use first and last name for initial reference, last name for subsequent reference

A

Ages: a 5-year-old girl, she is 5

Dates: June 2

Decades: the '80s, the 1990s, or the seventies (see)

Millions / billions 2 billion people

Money: 3 cents, \$52.50

Percentages 4 percent

Ratios 10-1

Always spell out a number when it begins a sentence, except in the case of years

Four hundred people attended the event.

1973 was a good year.

Use commas in numbers larger than 1,000, except when referring to years

The same rules apply when numbers appear in a quote, unless the number was spelled out when it was provided as a written quotation (use quote exactly as it was provided or seek permission to edit/revise)

○



She is a fulltime tutor; His cousin teaches part time.

P.O. Box

Periods(with no spaces after) are preferred when abbreviating "Post Office

peer institutions

A list of schools that St. John's chooses to consider its "peers," such as [Colleges That Change Lives](#) (see full list at [ctcl.org](#)) also see Annapolis Group

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Proper names not ending in s

Add's: Mark's glasses

Proper (family) names ending in s

Add's: Assistant Dean Maggie McGinnis's speech

preceptorials

These classes offer students the opportunity to follow the work of a particular author more deeply or to pursue a question of philosophy to another level; seminar is suspended so that students may choose preceptorials for seven weeks in junior and senior years, sometimes referred to as being similar to "electives" but some alumni and tutors reject this comparison

premier / premiere

Often confused: premiere is a debut performance; premier means ranked first or top of the line

president

Lowercase except before a proper name

Santa Fe President Mark Roosevelt

Annapolis President Nora Demleitner

The college has two presidents, one on each campus

Mark Roosevelt, Santa Fe president

Program/ program

Capitalized when referring to the distinctive academic curriculum at St. John's or used to refer to the Outdoor Program in Santa Fe; lowercase for all other references (even for "old program")

The Program is what makes St. John's such a unique college.

The Outdoor Program in Santa Fe offers students the opportunity to explore.

Have you heard about the Great Books Program at St. John's College?

The intramural program in Annapolis has a high participation rate.



It should also be noted that we typically use directional (also known as “smart” or “curly”) apostrophes and quotation marks. “Straight” ones should only be used in reference to measurement, e.g., feet and inches (4'6" and not 4'6'), or to degrees of longitude or latitude.

## R

ratio

Always use figures separated by a hyphen: student:faculty ratio

Reality (event)

Capitalized; a party held on each campus the weekend after the last full week of classes every year; Reality features skits, videos, dancing and a general party atmosphere; sports (such as Spartan Madball) are played

register

Lowercase when used as a noun to describe the book that is signed by new students at convocation

registrar

Use after the name to avoid awkward use of the word as a formal title

John Doe, registrar of the Santa Fe campus [NOT Registrar John Doe]

## S

Saint / St.

Use “St.” for all references to St. John’s College [NOT Saint John’s College]

seasons

Names of seasons (spring, winter, summer) are always lowercase; except when referring to a semester, time to announce

semicolon (;)

Standard practices to increase ease of reading should be followed for semicolon usage, typically used to join two or more closely related ideas in a sentence (often referred to as a pause between thoughts)

Some people only read printed books; others read ebooks on tablets.

Semicolons are also used to set off items in a series that already contains commas, which might be confusing without the semicolon to clarify

She wanted bacon; eggs, over easy; and coffee for breakfast.

Semicolons can also separate long, complex phrases within the same sentence to clearly separate the ideas; however, it is typically better to make a very long sentence more readable by breaking it into shorter sentences

senior essay

Lowercase; the senior essay is the signature effort of a student, often a research paper, but it is not a work of specialized research, but the extended pursuit of a difficult question in dialogue with a great author

senior oral (oral examination)

Lowercase; each completed senior essay is assigned to a committee of three tutors, who evaluate the essay. The oral exam is a discussion of the essay with the student.

startup

One word, not hyphenated

states

Preferred In copy, always spell out the full names of the U.S. states

St. John's has campuses in New Mexico and Maryland.

Set off the state name with commas

He accepted a job in Bethesda, Maryland, after he graduated.

If the city is well known, the state name isn't necessary

She moved to Chicago.

telephone / phone numbers

Always use numerals separated by hyphens: 626-1234; do not use parenthesis, periods, or





## U

### Ultimate

Ultimate is capitalized and used to describe the non-contact team sport played with a flying disc (frisbee, which is a trademarked name)

### unique

Means “without like or equal” so there is no degree of uniqueness

It is a unique home [NOT] It is a very unique home.

### URL

Never use “http,” “https,” nor “www” when listing a URL unless it is verified that the URL won't work without them

The St. John's College website should always be referenced as sjc.edu

(Note that the actual URL is <https://www.sjc.edu> but this should never appear that way online or in any published materials.)

### U.S./ United States

Standard abbreviation of “U.S.” is acceptable in all references; always capitalized with periods; spelling out “United States” is also acceptable, especially when used as a noun

### U.S. Naval Academy (USNA or Navy)

Federal service academy and public liberal arts college in Annapolis; if using the acronym on subsequent reference, use U.S. Naval Academy (USNA); otherwise, Naval Academy (or Navy, in some contexts) is acceptable

## V

### vice president

Never capitalized, except before a proper name, and never hyphenated; avoid using “VP”

Phelosha Collaros is vice president of development and alumni relations in Santa Fe; the vice president in Annapolis, Kelly Brown, is also the capital campaign director.

### voicemail

Lowercase, one word

## W

### web, webcam, webcast, webmaster, website

Lowercase

which, that

Follow traditional rules: “Which” is used to introduce nonessential clauses and is always preceded by a comma; “that” is used to introduce essential clauses and is never preceded by a comma; see who, whom

who, whom

Follow traditional rules: “Who” and “whom” are used for references to people; while “that” and “which” are used for inanimate objects and animals without names

Who is a subject: Who is handling homecoming this year?

Whom is an object: To whom should I address this concern?

It often looks better to use “to” (instead of an en dash) to connect numbers in a sentence but either are acceptable. See more: date and time ranges