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Introduction

The Oregon Department of Human Services and the Oregon Health Authority use the most recent versions of the following style manuals to guide all business writing:

- DHS|OHA Style Manual
- American Heritage Dictionary
- The Associated Press Stylebook
- The Gregg Reference Manual

These manuals are listed in priority order. Because the English language is ever evolving, these manuals are updated every few years and may not always agree. Where there is disagreement among these reference manuals, follow the usage recommendations provided in the highest priority manual on the list.

DHS|OHA uses the most recent versions of the following style manuals for specialty writing:

- Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (for client and patient evaluations)
- Council of Science Editors’ Manual for Authors, Editors and Publishers (for scientific reports and for tables, charts and indexes)
- Vancouver system for citations and bibliographies. Vancouver style is used by the National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health. For more information on the Vancouver system, see https://www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/uniform_requirements.html. You can also find a short guide here: http://library.vcc.ca/downloads/VCC_VancouverStyleGuide.pdf.
- For policy style, please see https://inside.dhsoha.state.or.us/asd/hr/administrative-support-home/administrative-support-articles/3973-policy-writing-tips.html.

The purpose of using these manuals is to ensure that all written materials produced by DHS|OHA staff represent the department in a professional, consistent and grammatically accurate manner. Shared Services policy 130-010-001 defines the role of Publication and Creative Services in creating materials for OHA|DHS.

You can email DHS-OHA.PublicationRequest@dhsoha.state.or.us with any questions or suggestions about this guide. You may also use this email to sign up for our email list to receive updates to this guide as they happen.
Quick guide

Audience

Most writing in OHA or DHS is for a general audience — the public, clients, partners, employees, the media. Identify your audience first, then write or edit. Try to see through their eyes when it comes to text and presentation. Some general guidelines for grade level are eighth grade for general audiences (including legislators), 10th grade for internal DHS or OHA audiences and 12th grade for expert audiences. For health literacy purposes, a sixth grade level is recommended. OHA and DHS use the Flesch-Kincaid Readability Test to measure grade level. However, readability goes beyond this test to consider layout and design and what terms are familiar and understandable to your audience.

Bullets

Try to make each bulleted item a complete sentence and use a period at the end. Simple “shopping list” types of bulleted items should not have any punctuation. See entry on bullets in the punctuation chapter for more information.

Capitalization of terms

The actual title of the document can be in title case (capitalize first and last word and each principal word). See the entry below — Headlines, headings, title of document — for more information.

Only proper names or titles are capitalized. A person’s job title is not capitalized unless it precedes their name. Director is always capitalized when talking about the OHA or DHS agency leader. See Capitalization section for other examples.

Childcare, daycare, health care and home care

Per the American Heritage Dictionary, the proper spelling is childcare, daycare and health care. Home care and health care are treated as two separate words, not combined and not hyphenated.

Commas

We DO NOT use a comma before ‘and’ or ‘or’ in a series. (This is also referred to as the Oxford comma.) For more information on using commas, please see the section in Punctuation.

Composition titles and names of forms

The title of a composition, such as a book or a journal, is italicized. Titles of reference material are capitalized but not italicized. A form name is capitalized but not italicized. Section and chapter titles should be in quotation marks to distinguish from the composition title.

Dashes

We use hyphens in words that require hyphenation. We use the en dash in ranges such as dates or page numbers. We use the em dash in the body of text to substitute for the phrase “that is” or to
serve as parentheses. An em dash gets spaces on both sides; the hyphen and en dash do not have any space before or after them. See the section in Punctuation for more information.

Fonts (see the OHA Graphic Standards, DHS Graphic Standards or Shared Services Graphic Standards for more information)

DHS|OHA uses the following fonts for all standard business writing (e.g., reports, correspondence and testimony):

- 14-point Times New Roman (serif) or Arial (sans serif). Arial Narrow can be used when space is tight.
- Official brand fonts for OHA are Baskerville (serif) and Helvetica Neue (sans serif). Official brand fonts for DHS are AGaramond (serif) and Helvetica Neue (sans serif). These fonts are licensed and most likely will NOT be available. However, use these fonts if they are available to you. Substitute fonts are Times New Roman and Arial.

Headlines, headings, title of document

The only words in headlines, section headings and subheadings that should be capitalized are the first word and any formal names or titles. The actual title of the document should be capitalized.

One space between sentences, NOT two.

This holdover from the days of the typewriter is no longer necessary. Modern word processing and desktop publishing software allows us to have much more control over type spacing. Please be sure to use just one space between sentences.

They / s/he / other options

The use of “they,” or “their” as a singular personal pronoun of indeterminate gender is common in spoken English and is gaining acceptance in written English: “Each student should bring their own notebook.” At this writing, at least one major media organization has changed its style guide to reflect this. This use of “they” or “their” can be confusing, however, unless the context is very clear.

It is often possible to rewrite a sentence as plural: “All students should bring their own notebooks” is better than “Each student should bring his or her notebook.” Do not use constructions such as he/she or s/he.

If a rewritten sentence is too awkward, or if you end up with multiple uses of “he or she” and “she or he” in one passage, use of the “singular they” is permissible. Always make sure, however, that the context of who “they” or “their” refers to is clear. (Consider adding a footnote to the first use of this construction to let the reader know it was intentional.)

The singular they also can be used when referring to individuals who do not identify as male or female — it should be used if that is an individual’s preference.
URLs

Use the full URL when writing a Web address, including the http:// or https://. If the URL appears at the end of the sentence, place a period after the URL without a space between the URL and the period.

URLs are treated the same as physical addresses in terms of prepositions. This also applies to email addresses. Do not use the phrase “log on to” unless you must enter credentials to gain access to the website.

The abbreviation “URL” is always capitalized. “URL” stands for “uniform resource locator.”

- The information is available at http://www.oregon.gov/DHS.
- If you need more help, contact us at https://secure.oregon.gov.
- You can reach the service desk by email at service@state.or.us.

Website, Web

OHA|DHS follows current Associated Press usage, spelling “website” as one word in lowercase unless it begins a sentence. Capitalize all references to the Web, however; it is a shortened form of World Wide Web.

- You will find it on the OHA website.
- I couldn't find it anywhere on the Web.
Plain language - avoid jargon

Oregon law requires all state agencies to prepare public communications in language that is as clear and simple as possible (ORS 183.750). This includes publications, forms and instructions, licenses, agency notices, and administrative rules. HB 2702 specifies an additional standard for written documents. A document or communication meets the plain language standard if it, whenever possible:

- Uses everyday words that convey meanings clearly and directly
- Uses the present tense and the active voice
- Uses short, simple sentences
- Defines only those words that cannot be properly explained or qualified in the text
- Uses type of a readable size
- Uses layout and spacing that separate the paragraphs and sections of the document from each other


DHS|OHA jargon and plain language

“Jargon” as defined by the American Heritage dictionary is, “The specialized language of a trade, profession, or similar group, especially when viewed as difficult to understand by outsiders.” Avoid jargon when writing for the general public. Here are some resources on other words to use:

http://www.plainlanguage.gov/howto/wordsuggestions/index.cfm


In order to / to

“In order to” can almost always be removed without changing the meaning of the sentence. Use just “to.”

In the process of

“In the process of” can almost always be removed.

- DHS is in the process of revising its policies. (incorrect)
- DHS is revising its policies.

Ize / the world

The nature of the English language is to turn nouns into verbs. This sometimes starts by adding “ize” to the ending of nouns. You can use “ize” if you are using it in a well-established sense, but don’t get ahead of the common usage by tacking it onto a word not yet commonly “ized.”
• I realized my dream using the TANF JOBS program. (JOBS made my dream become real.)
• OHA's TPEP report humanizes the struggles of people who are trying to quit smoking. (The report makes the struggles seem more human.)
• If possible avoid using incentivize, operationalize

Of its / of the
In most cases you can make your writing more concise by avoiding “of.” Use a possessive instead.
• The council strives to reflect a variety of concerns and goals of its members. (incorrect)
  The council strives to reflect its members’ concerns and goals.
• The meeting of the board will be held Monday. (incorrect)
  The board meeting will be held Monday.

That are and who are / nothing
In almost all cases the words “that are” and “who are” are superfluous and should be deleted from a sentence. This also holds true for “that is” and “who is.”
• The people who are going to the concert left earlier. (incorrect)
  The people going to the concert left earlier.
• The programs that are most important are being funded. (incorrect)
  The most important programs are being funded.
• The person who is in the waiting area is a woman. (incorrect)
  The person in the waiting area is a woman.

The reason is / because
These terms mean the same thing. Use either “the reason is” or “because,” but not both. Using both is redundant.
• The reason we are doing this is because evidence shows it works. (incorrect)
  We are doing this because evidence shows it works.
Word usage

A / an

To determine whether to use “a” or “an” before a word or term that does not begin with a vowel, pronounce the phrase out loud. If the next word begins with a vowel sound, use “an.”

• An 11th grader asked me a question about history.
• It was an $8 million program.
• He is an honorable man.
• Hurricane Katrina was a horrible event.
• The holiday was created to recognize a historic event.
• His insurance won’t pay for an MRI.

About / approximately

“About” is used when making a generalization or an estimate; “approximately” is used for data or statistics, and conveys the sense of “almost exactly.”

• Salem, Oregon, is about 50 miles south of Portland.
• Oregon’s bonus was an increase of approximately $13.4 million over the state’s 2009 award.
• It’s about a block from here.

Adverse / averse

“Adverse” = harmful or hostile; “averse” = opposed to.

• The child was born into an adverse home environment.
• I am averse to this legislation.

Affect / effect

“Affect” used as a verb means to change something.
“Affect” used as a noun means a person’s demeanor or facial expression.
“Effect” used as a noun means the result or outcome of something.

• Their testimony will affect the decision.
• She had a sad affect.
• The decision will have a positive effect on the program.

Affect / impact

“Affect” means to change something. “Impact” means to hit or strike; as a noun, it means the effect of one thing on another. It is best to avoid using “impact” as a verb. Avoid using “impact” in business writing; use “affect” as a verb, and “impact” or “effect” as a noun.

• The budget cut will significantly affect the program.
• The budget cut had a major effect on the program.
• The budget cut had a major impact on the program.

**Afterward, forward, backward and toward**

Use this form of these words. Do not use the form with a final “s”.

**Aid / aide**

“Aid” = help or assist; “aide” is the person who does the helping.
• His aide will aid the cause.

**All right (not alright)**

“All right” is always two words. Do not use alright.
• It’s all right to take that action.
• He said, “All right, I’ll do it.”

**Alternate / alternative**

Current usage (including in the AP Stylebook) for a choice between two or more options is “alternate,” as in this example: “Savior – Use this spelling for all senses, rather than the alternate form, saviour.” “Alternative” is mostly used in its noun form:

• He had no alternative but to leave.
• He had an alternate plan.

**Assure / ensure / insure**

“Assure” goes with a pat on the back.
“Ensure” makes sure something happens.
“Insure” is what insurance companies do.

In almost all cases, you should use “assure” only immediately before a reference to a person or group.
• I assure you I will ensure your safety when I insure your car.
• I assure you this is correct.
• We can assure the public they are safe.

**Backward, toward, forward and afterward** ([see afterward, backward, forward and toward](#))

**Because / since**

“Because” denotes a cause-and-effect situation. “Since” implies the passage of time.
• He took that action because the rules required it.
• It has been a long time since the rules were implemented.
Before (not prior to)
“Before” as a preposition is preferred to “prior to” in all instances. Prior can be used as an adjective (prior engagement).

- If you plan to attend, please notify the secretary at least 24 hours before the meeting.

Believe / think
“Believe” = to accept as true or real. “Think” = to reach a decision via reason or logic. The preferred term to use in business writing is “think.” An alternative to “think” in many business contexts is “estimate.”

- Department staff think approximately 100,000 people are eligible.
- Department staff estimate approximately 100,000 people are eligible.

Between
When using the construction “Between a and b,” always use “and,” not “to.”

- Between 1,000 and 2,000 people attended the rally.
- The item will cost between $500 and $600.
- It will last between six and 12 months.

Between / among
“Between” = two; “among” = more than two.

- There was agreement between the two of us.
- There was disagreement among the three of us.

Biannual / biennial / semiannual
“Biannual and semiannual” = occurring twice a year, like the equinox. “Biennial” = occurring every two years, like the legislative session.

For clarity, use “semiannual” instead of “biannual” when you mean something occurs twice a year.

- The Legislature used to meet on a biennial basis.
- I get my teeth cleaned on a semiannual basis.

Capital / capitol
“Capital” = cash, money, power, importance and greatness; therefore having capital means having money, capital punishment is a powerful punishment, capital letters are important letters, capital ideas are great ideas, and the capital city of Oregon is Salem. Capitalize when referring to the building by its proper name.

“Capitol” = the building, which has a dome.

- It took a lot of capital to build the capitol.
- The Legislature meets in the Oregon State Capitol.
Chair / chairman / chairwoman / chairperson
Associated Press prefers “chairman” and “chairwoman,” but common usage in government and business has favored “chair” for quite some time. The best rule is to follow the usage of the organization or group. Capitalize only when used as a formal title before a person’s name.

- The committee chairwoman is Jane Doe.
- The committee chair is Mary Jones.
- The hearing was called to order by Steering Committee Chairman John Doe.

Compared to / compared with
“Compared to” shows the likeness between items; “compared with” shows the differences.

- “They compared her tennis to Serena’s” means she plays at Serena’s level.
- “She’s short compared with Serena” means their heights are different.

Complement / compliment
“Complement” makes something complete or goes along with something; “compliment” says something nice and polite. Complimentary is something free.

- The new program complements the department’s mission.
- I compliment you on your writing.

Comprise / compose
“Comprise” = consist of; “compose” = make up.

- The Pac-12 comprises teams from 12 schools.
- Fourteen teams compose (make up) the American League.

Continual / continuous
“Continual” = occurring regularly, like loan payments; “continuous” = occurring without interruption, like a waterfall.

- We process paychecks on a continual basis.
- We fed a continuous form into the printer.

Counsel / council
“Counsel” = advice (a noun) and advise (a verb). Because lawyers give advice, “counsel” and “counselor” also are used to refer to an attorney.

“Council” = a group of people. “Council” is always a noun.

- The city council provided counsel to the mayor.
- The Portland City Council passed the resolution. (Capitalized because it is a formal title.)
Data
Data is plural, datum is singular. To test, replace with facts to see if it make sense in sentence.

Effect / affect (see affect / effect)

E.g and i.e.
“e.g.” = exempli gratia = examples given = for example. “i.e.” = id est = that is.
Always use these terms in lowercase with both periods and followed by a comma. Use “i.e.,” to explain the preceding noun. Use “e.g.,” to show some examples of the preceding noun.

• The director (i.e., John) says to do this.
• Many writers, e.g., Twain, Alcott, Vonnegut, say to do this.
• She wore her favorite color (i.e., red).

Emigrate/emigrant / immigrate/immigrant
“Emigrate/emigrant” = exiting from; “immigrate/immigrant” = incoming to.

• Many people who emigrate from California immigrate to Oregon.
• He is an emigrant from Canada.
• The program asks if you are a native-born Oregonian or an immigrant.

Ensure / assure / insure (see assure / ensure / insure)

Entitled / titled
“Entitled” is a verb that means to name something or have a right to something. “Titled” is a noun that refers to the name of something (e.g., a book, movie or report). When referring to the name or title of something, used “titled.”

• His book is titled, “The Importance of MOEs.”
• The most recent report was titled, “The Importance of Creativity.”
• She felt entitled to be mentioned as a co-author of the report.

Farther / further
“Farther” = a physical distance; “further” = to a greater degree.

• The town is 10 miles farther down this road.
• After yesterday's hearing the Legislature is even further from agreement on this issue.

Fewer / less
“Fewer” is used with plural nouns; “less” is used with singular nouns.

• There are fewer pieces; there is less pizza.
Fewer than / over, above / more than/under

“Fewer than,” is used for numbers. “Over” = physically on top of something.
- There are fewer than 100 lights over the floor.

The same is true of “above” and “under,” which show physical location, and “more than,” which is used for numbers.
- More than 10 squirrels were under the tree and above the rocks.

First / third person

Always refers to itself in the third person in all written materials produced for external audiences. This includes correspondence, reports and legislative testimony. When writing about the department’s programs or activities or positions on issues, never say “we,” “us” or “our” if the audience is external.
- DHS supports this proposal.
- The Oregon Health Authority’s success in this effort is encouraging.

Forward, toward, backward and afterward (see afterward, backward, forward and toward)

Gender / sex

Gender is a social identity. Sex is a biological identity. When referring to male/female in text or charts, sex is the correct term. See Culturally sensitive language for more guidance.

Good / well

“Good” is an adjective that describes nouns and pronouns; “well” is an adverb that describes verbs.

“I feel good” means I’m healthy; “good” describes me.

“I feel well” means my fingers work; “well” describes “feel” (the verb).
- The soup tastes good. (“Good” describes the soup.)
- The car runs well. (“Well” describes “runs.”)

Historic / historical

“Historic” = something or someone important or famous in history; “historical” = whatever happened in the past, whether it was important or not.
- Creation of the Oregon Health Plan was a historic event.
- The historical use of this service has been minimal.
Hopefully / hoped
“Hopefully” is how dogs wag their tails and children eye candy. In pretty much all business writing, use “hoped.”
- It is hoped the new system will improve customer service.
- The new system has delivered the hoped-for results.

However / however
This word is its own worst enemy. The easiest thing to do in business writing is to stop using this word in any way other than at the start of a sentence. Always use a comma after “however” when you start the sentence.
- I like Bob. However, I don’t like his driving.

I / me / myself
“I” is the subject; “me” is the object; “myself” is the reflexive. To choose among “I,” “me” and “myself” in a sentence use a simple test. Eliminate the other person(s) and see if the sentence sounds right.
- [Joe and] me went out. “Me went out?” Wrong.
- [Joe and] I went out. “I went out?” Right.
- [Joe, Mary and] myself went to a movie. “Myself went to a movie?” Wrong.
- [Joe, Mary and] I went to a movie. “I went to a movie?” Right.

Use “myself” in a sentence only when I am doing something to myself. The same usage pattern is true of all words that are reflexives.
- I buy clothes for myself.
- My son feeds himself.
- She dresses herself.
- You drive yourself to work.
- They purchased a home for themselves.

ID / I.D.
The correct term for identification is “ID” in upper case without periods. I.D. is an abbreviation for inside diameter.
- She was asked to provide an ID when she entered the building.
- She pulled out several IDs.

I.e. and e.g. (see e.g and i.e.)

Immigrate/immigrant / Emigrate/emigrant (see emigrate/emigrant / immigrate/immigrant)
Impact / affect (see affect / impact)

Imply / infer

“Imply” = to suggest, “infer” = to assume.

• She implied (suggested) the bill would pass.
• I inferred (assumed) she had inside information.

Insure / assure / ensure (see assure / ensure / insure)

Irregardless

“Irregardless” is not a word. “Regardless” is correct.

• I took a walk regardless of the weather.

Last / past

“Last” = final or ultimate. “Past” = gone by or earlier.

The correct use of these words depends on whether you use “the” in front of them. Use “the past” to refer to the past week, month or year. Using “the last” can be confusing because it implies that it was the final occurrence. Without “the” it’s OK to say “last.”

• This event took place during the past year.
• It was the last year the event was held.
• I went to a movie last year.

Lead / led / lead

“Lead” when pronounced “leed” is the present tense of the verb. The past tense is “led.” When the noun “lead” is pronounced like “led,” it’s a metal.

• She will lead the committee.
• She led the committee.
• Eating lead is bad for you.

Less / fewer (see fewer / less)

Lie / lay

“Lie” = to rest or recline, or tell a falsehood; “lay” = to place or put an object somewhere.

• The dog lies in his bed most of the day.
• Was that the truth or a lie?
• Please lay the completed tests on the table.
• I laid the book on the table.
Loan / lend
“Loan” is a noun; “lend” is a verb.
You apply for a loan; the bank lends you money.

Log in / login
- You log in to a computer. (Log in is a verb.)
- You use your login to access a program. (Login is a noun.)

Moneys / monies
Use “moneys” when referring to the plural of “money.”
- The program is supported by General Fund moneys.

More than/under / over/above / fewer than (see fewer than / over, above/more than/under)

None
When used to mean “no one” or “not one,” “none” takes a singular verb.
- No one is going.
- None of them is going.

Otherwise, the choice between singular or plural construction depends on the effect you want to convey.
- None of the clients (has or have) been paid yet.
- None of the drivers’ cars have been fixed.

OK / okay
The correct term is “OK” with no periods.
- It’s OK to attend the meeting.

On / nothing
Do not use “on” before a day or date. Nothing is sitting on that day.
- We met on May 3. (incorrect)
- We met May 3. (correct)
- The meeting will take place on Friday. (incorrect)
- The meeting will take place Friday. (correct)

Only
Use the word “only” immediately before the exact word you are describing, or you risk altering the meaning of the sentence.
- Only clients can attend the January event. (No one but clients is allowed to attend.)
• Clients only can attend the January event. (They can’t do anything else regarding the event, such as read about it.)
• Clients can attend only the January event. (They cannot attend an event any other month.)
• Clients can attend the January event only. (Who knows what this means, because “only” has nothing after it.)

Orient (not orientate)
The correct term is “orient.”
• The tour guide will help orient you.
• There is a group orientation to help you get oriented.

Over, above / more than/under / fewer than (see fewer than / over, above/ more than/under)

Past / last (see last / past)

Preventive (not preventative)
“Preventive” is correct.
• We support preventive medicine.
• We will take preventive measures.

Principal / principle
“Principal” is an adjective; “principle” is something you believe in. In modern usage “principal” also refers to a person, because the word “administrator,” “partner” and other nouns that used to follow the word “principal” have been dropped and the adjective is used as a noun. It also references money.
• The principal administrator stood on principle.

Prior to (see before (not prior to))

Proved / proven
“Proved” and “proven” are both acceptable as the past participle of “to prove.” Use “proven,” however, as an adjective before a noun.
• He was innocent until (he was) proved or proven guilty.
• After that he was a proven killer.

Recur / reoccur
“Recur” is correct to describe something that occurs at regular intervals. Reoccur is just something that happens again and not regularly
• The staff meeting recurs every Tuesday.
• The violation reoccurred later that month.
Semiannual / biennial / biannual (see biannual / biennial / semiannual)

Sex / gender (see gender / sex)

Since / because (see because / since)

Stationery / stationary
“Stationery” is paper; “stationary” is when you stand still.
- I bought new stationery for writing letters.
- The car is not moving; it is stationary.
- I wrote a letter on my new stationery about my stationary car.

Than / then
“Than” is used for comparisons. “Then” is a time.
- If I stand on a stool, then I will be taller than you…

That / which
“That” introduces essential clauses; “which” introduces nonessential clauses.
- Say “the report that Clyde prepared” if there are lots of reports and it is essential to mention you’re looking for the one Clyde wrote. In most cases “that” can be eliminated and the sentence still will make sense.
- Say “the report Clyde prepared, which I read last week, is very thorough” because the fact that I read it isn’t really essential to the message. The real message is that the report is thorough. A comma usually precedes “which” in a sentence, and the sentence won’t make sense if “which” is eliminated.

That / which / who
“That” and “which” refer to places, objects and generic animals.

“Who” refers to a person or persons. “Who” is also used for named animals.
- Many of the people who receive OHA services have low incomes.
- The legislators who serve on the committee are interested in this.
- Timmy was saved by Lassie, who pulled him out of the well.

They / s/he / other options
The use of “they,” or “their” as a singular personal pronoun of indeterminate gender is common in spoken English and is gaining acceptance in written English: “Each student should bring their own notebook.” At this writing, at least one major media organization has changed its style guide to reflect this. This use of “they” or “their” can be confusing, however, unless the context is very clear.
It is often possible to rewrite a sentence as plural: “All students should bring their own notebooks” is better than “Each student should bring his or her notebook.” Do not use constructions such as he/she or s/he.

If a rewritten sentence is too awkward, or if you end up with multiple uses of “he or she” and “she or he” in one passage, use of the “singular they” is permissible. Always make sure, however, that it is clear from the context who “they” or “their” is referring to. (Consider adding a footnote to the first use of this construction to let the reader know it was intentional.)

- The singular they also can be used when referring to individuals who do not identify as male or female — it should be used if that is an individual’s preference.

In any case, be consistent throughout the document.

Think / believe (see believe / think)

Titled / entitled (see entitled / titled)

Toward, forward, backward and afterward (see afterward, backward, forward and toward)

United States / U.S.

Use “United States” when the term stands alone. Use “U.S.” with both periods as an abbreviation only when it is used as an adjective.

- The United States is changing its foreign policy.
- U.S. policies tend to change with each administration.
- The U.S. Department of Justice occasionally audits state agencies.

Use (as a verb – “yooze”) / utilize

Except for times when “utilization” is appropriate (specific medical subjects such as hospital occupancy rates and reports on the frequency with which physicians prescribe certain medications), the preferred word is “use.”

- The project will use a variety of experts.
- This technique uses several state-of-the-art technologies.
- The drug utilization review (DUR) covered research on the quality of drug therapy and on cost containment.

Use (as a noun – “yooce”) / usage

Except for times when “usage” is appropriate (a measure or quantification of use, or the accepted rules for speaking or writing a given language), the preferred word is “use.”

- Illegal drug use is a societal problem.
- Hospital officials released a report on drug usage by ward.
• The new meters will measure water usage.
• I looked in the dictionary for the proper usage.

Versus / vs. / v

Spell out “versus” when used in a sentence.

Use “vs.” in headings and titles, as shown throughout this style guide.

Use “v” when referring to court cases.
  • It’s a question of efficiency versus effectiveness.
  • The “Smith v Jones” case was settled last week.

Well / good (see good / well)

Which / that (see that / which)

Which / that / who (see that / which / who)

Who / whom

“Who” = he/she (subject). “Whom” = him/her (object).

Who asked whom = she asked him.

To know whether to use “who” or “whom,” try answering the question the sentence asks. Only use “whom” if you could answer “him” (or “her”). If your answer would be “he” or “she,” use “who.”

  • Whom did you ask? (I asked him.)
  • Who went to the dance? (He went to the dance)
  • I know who did it. (I know she did it.)
Capitalization

OHA\DHS capitalizes proper names and titles. This includes the title of the document. Only the first word in the section headings and subheadings is capitalized. This is also the case for titles (including axis titles) of graphs, tables, figures and charts. See Figures, graphs, tables section for examples.

Bullets

When using a bulleted list in text, always capitalize the first word of each bulleted item.

She likes:

• Peas and corn
• Beans and rice
• Grapes, cherries and plums

There are several options considered in our business continuity plan:

• Require staff to meet at a designated location to conduct work.
• Enable staff to work from home or to work irregular schedules.

Compass directions and regions

Use designations such as “north” and “eastern” in lowercase when referring to a compass direction. Capitalize these terms when referring to a region.

• He lived southwest of Salem.
• He lived in Southwest Oregon.

Countries and tribes

Capitalize “tribe” only when it is part of the official name. In all other cases use “tribe” in the same lowercase format as you would use “country.”

• The Coquille Indian Tribe and the Burns Paiute Tribe support this bill.
• The tribe supports this bill.
• Both federal and tribal officials attended the meeting.
• Representatives of several tribes and countries attended the meeting.

Federal / federal

Always use “federal” in the lowercase unless it is part of a formal title.

• The new federal policies have been published.
• The Federal Bureau of Investigation issued a report.

Funds and fund types

See government terms section.
Graphs, tables, figures and appendices

When referring to a graph, table, figure or appendix in a document, capitalize “graph,” “table,” “figure” and “appendix” only when referring to it by its specific name or number. See Figures, graphs and tables for more guidance.

• See the figure below for specific rates.
• See Graph 1 or the table in Appendix F for the top 10 issues.

Headlines, headings, title of the document

The only words in headlines, section headings and subheadings that should be capitalized are the first word and any formal names or titles. The actual title of the document should be capitalized.

Internet

Internet is capitalized. Use “website” as one word and not capitalized.

• The Internet is a rich source of information.
• The information can be found on the OHA website.

Intranet

Do not capitalize “intranet.”

• The intranet is a rich source of information.
• If you cannot find it on the OHA intranet, try the Internet.

President / president

Always capitalize “President” when referring to the U.S. President. It is lowercase in all other uses unless used in a formal title before a name.

• The President threatened to veto the spending bill.
• The U.S. Senate president contributed to the President’s campaign.
• Oregon Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, supports the bill.
• Peter Courtney, president of the Oregon Senate, supports the bill.

State / state

Refer to Oregon as “Oregon” or “state,” not the “State of Oregon” or “State.”

• Oregon supports the federal decision.
• Does the Oregon tax code make sense?
• Does the state tax code make sense?
• The state takes no position on the legislation.
• The state of Oregon works with the tribes and counties to provide community-based services.
Titles

When using a full, formal title in front of a person’s name, capitalize the title. Capitalize the title of the OHA or DHS director in all references. In all other uses a title is lowercase.

• OHA Director Jane Doe supports the bill.
• Jane Doe, OHA Director, spoke in support of this bill.
• John Doe, chief operating officer, approved the budget.
• The Office of Human Resources administrator needs to be involved.
• The human resources administrator needs to be involved.

NOTE: If the title is used in a list, such as a list of speakers at a conference, the title can be capitalized.

Titles upon first, subsequent references / acronyms

Upon first reference use the full name or title, and place the acronym in parentheses after it, if you are going to refer to the name later in the text. In subsequent references use the acronym. If you are not going to use the term again after the first reference, do not list the acronym.

• We will ask the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to change the requirements. The decision will be up to CMS. The Oregon Health Authority (OHA) is changing its requirements. By doing so, OHA hopes to improve customer service.

In a news release, simply use the acronym on second reference, omitting the parenthetical acronym on first use.

Note that the appropriate use of the acronym is “OHA” or “DHS” and not “the OHA” or “the DHS.”

Website, Web

Follow current Associated Press usage, spelling “website” as one word in lowercase unless it begins a sentence. Capitalize all references to the Web, however; it is a shortened form of World Wide Web.
Numbers

Dates/days

Do not use nd, th, rd or st in dates. Use only the number.

- We met May 2.

Do not use the word “on” before a day or date, unless its omission would lead to confusion, or at the beginning of a sentence. Abbreviate months (except May) when part of a full date (month, date, year).

- We met Monday.
- We met Dec. 2, 2011, in a four-hour session.
- The manager hired his secretary on Friday.
- On Tuesday, the Legislature passed the bill.

Dollar amounts

Do not use any digits after the decimal point when writing whole dollar amounts in text. Use digits after a decimal point for a whole dollar amount only in charts and tables.

- The ticket cost $10.
- The ticket cost $10.50.

Fractions

Spell out fractions in text unless the fractions are combined with a whole number. When using numerals for a whole-number-and-fraction combination, place a hyphen between the whole number and the fraction. When you are referring to half of something, just say “half,” not “one-half.”

- Two-thirds of the staff attended.
- The meeting room was three-fourths full.
- The speech lasted 8-1/2 minutes.
- Half the audience fell asleep.

Numbers

In most uses spell out the numbers “one” through “nine” and use numerals for the numbers “10” and higher. The exceptions to this are when you are referring to a person’s age, a percent, a dollar amount or a measurement. In these cases always use numerals. Also see Specialty writing section.

- She is 6 years old.
- We saw seven 7-year-olds.
- The 6-year-old lives in a three-year-old building.
- More than 50 percent of U.S. residents were born after 1968.
- Just two of us went to the movie.
- Just 4 percent of the movie’s audience was younger than 10.
• We paid $4 for a coffee.
• By the next day the price had risen to $4.25.
• The room was 9x27 feet.
• The speech lasted 8-1/2 minutes.
• I worked there for three years.
• The 5-year-old boy is 5 years old.
• The woman is in her 30s.
• There were 4 out of 10 girls in the club. (Use figures for ratios for context.)

Use commas for numbers 1,000 and higher, except for years.
• We sent 1,200 invitations.

Spell out numbers at the start of sentences. If it is a long number, reword the sentence. You can use the actual number if it is the start of a bullet.
• The meeting was held in the auditorium. Fourteen people attended the meeting.
• There were 4,275 people at the conference.
• 879 out of 900 people were using the service. (This example is for number use in a bullet.)

Write “million” instead of using zeros.
• The program cost $10.5 million.
• There are approximately 3 million people in Oregon.

When using a dollar sign ($) do not write “dollar” or “dollars” after the amount. The dollar sign always goes before the number.
• We considered buying a $4,000 software program.

**Numerical suffixes**

When referring to dates in text, do not use “rd,” “th,” “st” or other suffixes. The numbers stand alone. Use these suffixes only when referring to a school grade above ninth grade or a ranking or place in a contest, or in tables. In text, these references follow the same guidelines as general number references (spelling out ninth and lower grades, and using numerals for 10th and higher grades). Numerals are always acceptable in tables.
• We met May 10.
• The meeting consisted of 1,500 ninth and 10th graders.
• The tests took place in the third, eighth, 10th and 12th grades.
• Oregon’s bonus award was fourth highest.
Percent / %

When writing for general audiences, spell out percent but use figures for the number before percent. For publications written for scientists, statisticians and research analysts, use the symbol for percent when it is preceded by a numeral.

- Only 40% to 50% of HIV/AIDS patients survived at least five years among cases diagnosed in Oregon from 1981 through 1992.

Percent / Percentage (this is for general audiences)

Use “percent” when referring to a specific number. Use “percentage” when a number is not given.

- In Oregon, 13 percent of children are uninsured.
- A growing percentage of children in Oregon are insured.

Time of day

When referring to a time always use “a.m.” and “p.m.” in lowercase with periods and a space after the number. Do not use “:00” when referring to a whole hour. When listing a range of times, such as for a meeting, either use “from” and “to” or a dash with spaces on either side between the times, but not a combination of “from” and a dash.

- We were supposed to be at work at 8 a.m., but we arrived at 8:04 a.m.
- She likes to take a walk at 3:30 p.m. every day.
- We met from 3:30 to 5 p.m.
- We met 3:30–5 p.m.
- The next day we met noon–2 p.m.

Years

Offset a year with commas only when the full date is being used. Do not use a comma before a year when it follows a month without the exact date. Use the full four digits for both years when referring to a biennium or other multiyear span of time.

- She was born in 1999.
- She was born in December 1999.
- She was born Dec. 1, 1999.
- She was born Dec. 1, 1999, in Salem.
- She was born during the 1999–2001 biennium.
Punctuation

Academic degrees, certifications, licenses
You do not need to use periods when identifying a person’s academic or professional credentials.
- John Doe, MD
- Casey McGraw, CPA

Ampersands
Always use “and” rather than ampersands (&) in your writing. The only exception is when the ampersand is part of the actual formal title.
- The DHS Children, Adults and Families Division
- Oregon Health & Science University
- U.S. News & World Report

Apostrophes (possessives / contractions)
Apostrophes are used to show possessive case or to create a contraction.

Apostrophes and nouns
- A singular or plural noun that does not end in ‘s’ – add ‘s (committee’s plan, agency’s policy, children’s parent)
- A singular noun that ends in ‘s’ – add ‘s only if next word does not begin with ‘s’ (boss’s idea, boss’ suggestion)
- A singular proper noun that ends in ‘s’ – add ‘ after s (DHS’, United States’)
- A plural noun that ends in ‘s’ – add ‘ after s; do not add ‘s (agencies’ agree, bosses’ meeting)

Apostrophes can show there is something missing (rock ‘n’ roll, music of the ‘60s, O’clock = of the clock)

Apostrophes do not always belong in plural nouns. When used with numbers and abbreviations they only show possession.
- 1960s = the decade; 1960’s = something that belongs to the year 1960 (e.g., “1960’s styles”)
- PCs = a lot of computers; PC’s = something that belongs to a specific computer (e.g, “the PC’s capacity”)

Its / it’s
- “Its” is a possessive.
- “It’s” is a contraction of “it is.”
- It’s time we took off its lid.

Their / they’re / there
- “Their” is the possessive equivalent of “our/your.”
• “They’re” is a contraction of “they are.”
• “There” is a place.
• They’re at their home over there.

Your / you’re
• “Your” is the possessive equivalent of “our/their.”
• “You’re” is a contraction of “you are.”
• You’re your best friend.

Single apostrophe-Overruling the Microsoft Word programmers

When you need to use a single apostrophe at the start of a word for a purpose other than to begin a quote within a quote, the apostrophe always appears with the tail down (’). Don’t be fooled by the programmers of MS Word, who make all apostrophes before words appear tail-up (‘). This is not correct. The way to get around this programming is to type a letter, then the apostrophe, then go back and delete the letter. It’s cumbersome but it works.

• ’Twas the night before Christmas.
• Most people who lived through the ’60s don’t remember them.

Always place a space between a single quotation mark and a double quotation mark (as shown in the first example under “Single quotation marks / double quotation marks”). Again, however, MS Word programmers make a double quotation mark after a space appear tails-up. To get around this, type the single apostrophe, then a space, then a letter, then the double apostrophe, then go back and delete the letter.

Bullets

Try to make each bulleted item a complete sentence and use a period at the end. Simple “shopping list” types of bulleted items should not have any punctuation. If there is only one choice to be made from a list, use “or” after the next to last bullet.

She likes:
• Peas and corn
• Beans and rice
• Grapes, cherries and plums

To qualify for these services, you must be:
• At least 65-years-old
• An Oregon resident for six months or
• Earning less that 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

There are several options considered in our business continuity plan:
• Require staff to meet at a designated location to conduct work.
• Enable staff to work from home or to work irregular schedules.
Commas and semicolons

We DO NOT use a comma before “and” or “or” in a series, except where it would help avoid confusion. (This is also referred to as the Oxford comma.) See [commas and semicolons in a series](#).

Commas and time

Do not place a comma at the end of a dependent time-related clause unless it separates two numbers. You can also rewrite the sentence so the dependent clause is at the end.

- Some time during the next few years we will take a vacation.
- During the 1990s we used to take vacations.
- In 1996 we took a vacation.
- In 1996, 100 people took the same vacation.

Commas and dates

Use commas to offset a year in a month-day-year format, but not in a month-year format.

- We met May 3, 2007, for two hours.
- We met in May 2007 for two hours.

Commas and addresses

Use commas to offset a state when you mention a city and state in a sentence.

- She has lived in Beaverton, Oregon, for the past 20 years.

Commas and semicolons in a series

When you list a series of items, the use of commas and semicolons is determined by the complexity of the items in the series.

In a simple series, only the “and” or “or” appears before the last word. In that instance there is no comma before the final “and” or “or.”

- Dogs, cats, sheep and horses
- Dogs, cats, sheep or horses

When at least one of the items in the series includes the word “and” or “or,” then you place a comma before the final “and” or “or.”

- Dogs and cats, sheep, and horses
- Bats, mice or rats, and fleas

When the items in the series are groups of items that contain commas, you separate the groups of items with semicolons and place a semicolon before the final “and” or “or.”

- Dogs, cats and rabbits; sheep and horses; and mice
Semicolons between clauses

Use semicolons to link two related clauses of a sentence when each clause could stand alone as a separate sentence, but the two clauses share a common thought. When in doubt, it’s easier to use two sentences.

- Most of the men liked the new colors; the women did not.
- Most of the men liked the new colors. The women did not.
- Most of the men liked the new colors, but the women did not.
- Most of the men liked the new colors. However, the women did not.

Hyphens and dashes

Hyphens

A hyphen (-) is a punctuation mark used to join words and to separate syllables of a single word. It is different from a dash and has different uses.

A hyphen connects parts of a word that has been split, such as at the end of a line of type, or two or more words that are being combined. Typically this occurs when the combined words are being used as an adjective that appears immediately before the noun being described.

- That is a high-impact issue.
- The out-of-state move occurred when they moved out of state.
- In Spanish-speaking households most members are Spanish speaking.
- The 5-year-old boy is 5 years old.
- Use 10- or 11-point type for footnotes.

Note in this last example that rather than repeating “point” you can eliminate the first use of “point.” If you do this, be sure to leave a space after the hyphen. This is the only situation in which there is a space before or after a hyphen.

Do not hyphenate numeral-word combinations except for compound adjectives. Do not use a hyphen when one of the compound adjectives ends with “ly”.

- The budget for that program is $5 million. (Not “$5-million.”)
- The program is 10 years old. (Not “10-years old.”)
- The boiling point of water is 210 degrees F. (Not “210-degrees F.”)
- Today is the first 80-degree day this year.

Dashes

There are two main kinds of dashes, the em dash and the en dash.

En dash

The en dash is used to designate a range of numbers or years.

- 23–27 types of homes
- The outbreak was from 1980–1984
Em dash

An em dash has two primary uses. Used alone, it substitutes for the phrase “that is.” Used as a pair, em dashes substitute for parentheses. Put a space on both sides of it.

- Em dashes have two key uses — substituting for the phrase “that is” and serving as parentheses.
- She wore her favorite color — red.
- The course — Diversity in the Workplace — is mandatory for all employees.
- The course (Diversity in the Workplace) is mandatory for all employees.

Dashes and colons

Use either an en dash or a colon before a list that doesn’t use bullets. The less formal or complex the list, the better it is to use an en dash. Use a colon for all bulleted lists. When using bulleted lists, follow the guidelines for using commas and semicolons in a series to decide which mark should be used with each bulleted item.

- He liked three animals – dogs, horses and cats.
- He liked many animals – dogs and cats; horses, ponies and mules; and rabbits.
- He liked many animals:
  » Dogs and cats
  » Horses, ponies and mules
  » Rabbits

Punctuation marks within quotations

Periods and commas

Periods and commas always go inside single and double closing quotation marks.

- “This is an important issue,” she said.
- Bob said the report is due “no later than June 30.”
- Jim’s book, The Importance of MOEs, will be printed next week.
- Sue said, “I sent you an email labeled ‘high priority.’”
- The email was labeled “high priority,” but I still didn’t read it.

Semicolons and colons

Semicolons and colons always go outside single and double closing quotation marks.

- She said this is an “important issue”; I think we need a report.
- Bruce said the report is due “no later than June 30”; I think it’s late.
- Clyde said, “There were two components to the email labeled ‘high priority’: funding sources and expenditure patterns.”
- The email was “high priority”; it was about MOEs.
Question marks and exclamation points

Question marks and exclamation points go inside the closing quotation marks if they apply directly to the quote, and outside the marks if they apply to the sentence outside the quote. When the question mark or exclamation point appears inside the quotation marks, you do not use a comma.

• “Did you read my report?” the director asked.
• “I loved the report!” Jim exclaimed.
• When will others say, “We loved the report”?
• They all said it was a “great report”!

Use exclamation points sparingly, and never more than one at the end of a sentence.

Single quotation marks / double quotation marks

The only times you use single quotation marks are as apostrophes or as quotations within quotations. Use double quotation marks in all other uses (around quotes and to highlight unusual or incorrect words). Do not use quotation marks to show emphasis or importance.

• Dorothy Parker once said, “Whenever the doorbell rings I ask, ‘What fresh hell is this?’”
• Try not to “upsise” the project.
• He called for more “nukular” weapons.
Spelling

acknowledgment
addenda (needs plural verb)
anytime (adverb meaning “at any time”); any time (adjective and noun)
backup (noun and adjective)
bloodborne
breastfed, breastfeed
caregiver
casework/caseworker
childcare
copay and copayment
cosponsor/ed
course work
coworker
criteria (takes plural verb)
cross-cultural
data (plural only)
database
daycare
decision-making
email
every one (meaning each individual item, singular); everyone (meaning all persons, singular)
fact sheet
fax
framework
fundraiser
hand-washing
health care
home care (except for Home Care Commission that spells it “homecare” in text but not in its name)
internet
intranet
judgment
land use (no hyphen when used as noun or adjective)
lifelong
long-term
low-fat
media (plural verb)
mid/mid- (No hyphen unless a capitalized word follows, e.g., midair, mid-America, or when mid precedes a figure, e.g., mid-30s.)
non- (Hyphenate only when forming a term that has special meaning or cannot be understood if “not” is used before the base word. Use hyphen before a proper noun or in awkward constructions such as non-nuclear.)
nonprofit (adj.)
offsite/onsite
online
policymaking
preschool
problem-solving
self-concept
self-confidence
self-directed/self-direction
self-esteem
short-term
socioeconomic
task force
time frame
timeline
toll-free
underway
v-mail/voicemail

web (web is the short form of World Wide Web, it is a service, or set of standards, that enables the publishing of multimedia documents on the Internet. The web is not the same as the internet, but is a subset; other applications, such as email, exist on the internet.

web page, web feed

website, webcam, webcast and webmaster

well-being

workday

Workers’ Compensation (when citing the program)

workers’ compensation (when citing as a practice, service); same rule applies to Food Stamps/food stamps

workforce

work group

workload

workplace

worksite

workspace

workstation

workweek
Culturally sensitive language: race, ethnicity, disability, gender, other groups

This section is being developed.

For OHA, please see:
- http://www.oregon.gov/oha/oei/

For DHS, please see:
Government terms

20 Keys
A registered trademark for a worksite process improvement strategy, employed by Office of Continuous Improvement.

Continuous improvement
Written in lowercase except when it is part of the official name.

• Our work unit has embraced continuous improvement strategies.
• The Office of Continuous Improvement includes Lean-trained staff.

Coordinated care organizations/dental care organizations
These term are not capitalized or hyphenated. The acronym for coordinated care organizations is CCO and is DCO for dental care organizations.

Emergency Board
Refer to the legislative Emergency Board as “Emergency Board” with both words capitalized, and not by the term “E-Board.”

• OHA presented its request to the June Emergency Board.

Fund types
Always capitalize the terms “General Fund,” “Lottery Funds,” “Other Funds” and “Federal Funds.” These are the formal names of the funding sources. Note that “General Fund” is always written as a singular item, while the other fund types are always written as plural items.

• The program is supported by General Fund moneys.
• Funding sources include Other Funds and Federal Funds.
• Lottery Funds help pay for program activities.

Governors and legislatures
Always capitalize “Governor” and “Legislature” when referring to Oregon’s Governor or Legislature. Use lowercase when referring to the legislature or governor of another state. Always spell out the word “Governor” in all uses.

Use the term “Oregon Legislature,” not “Oregon Legislative Assembly.”

• The Oregon Legislature sent the bill to the Governor.
• The bill was passed by the 2011 Oregon Legislature.
The word “legislative” is lowercase in all uses, even when referring to the Oregon Legislature. The word “session” is lowercase in all uses.

- The 2007 legislative session ended after six months.
- The committee was in session for two hours.

House, Senate and Congress

Always capitalize “House” and “Senate” when referring to the Oregon chambers or to the U.S. Congress. Capitalize “Congress” and “Congressional” in all uses. Always use “Oregon” or “U.S.” before “House” and “Senate” to clarify which body you are referencing.

- The Oregon Senate president voted in favor of the bill.
- The U.S. House supported the bill.
- Ask a member of Congress for assistance.
- The Congressional representatives held a public hearing.
- Oregon House members supported the bill.

Lean

Capitalize only when used as a proper noun. Lean is lowercase otherwise. Lean is not an acronym.

- We practice continuous improvement in our work unit using the Lean Daily Management System.
- Lean Coach Pete Process will meet with us Monday.
- The lean approach focuses on streamlining and improving work processes.

Lean Daily Management System (LDMS)

Upon first reference, use the full name and place the acronym in parentheses after it, if you are going to refer to the name later in the text. All subsequent references use the abbreviation. Lean Daily Management System and LDMS are registered trademarks of Kaufman Global.

Legislators

Always capitalize “Senator” and “Representative” before the names of Oregon legislators. Use the title and full name upon first reference. Use the abbreviation and last name in all subsequent references.

- Senator Jane Doe
- Representative John Doe
- Sen. Doe
- Rep. Doe

Use the following style if you want to show a legislator’s affiliation upon first reference:

- Senator Jane Doe, R-Salem
- Representative John Doe, D-Portland
OAR and ORS
Capitalize all references to Oregon Administrative Rules or Oregon Revised Statutes whether singular or plural. If the word “Oregon” is not used, do not capitalize the terms. Use the abbreviations “OAR” and “ORS” when listing the specific numbered reference.

- You will find it in the Oregon Administrative Rules.
- You will find it in OAR 137-055-1060.
- The administrative rules are clear about this.
- This is covered in the Oregon Revised Statutes.

Office of Continuous Improvement (OCI)
Originally the Transformation Office. Part of DHS and OHA Shared Services.

Rules and statutes
When writing the full number of an Oregon Administrative Rule or Oregon Revised Statute, use the abbreviation “OAR” or “ORS” and place a space after “OAR” or “ORS,” but do not place spaces anywhere else in the reference.

- Please see OAR 137-055-1060(2)(a)-(4)(b) for more information.
- ORS 468.075(1)-(3) provides the information you are seeking.

Triple aim
Term used by OHA to describe goals of better health, better care and lower costs. This term is not capitalized unless it begins a sentence.
Specialty writing – public health

Audience

Most writing in OHA is for a general audience — the public, clients, partners, employees, the media. Public Health Division materials often are written for scientists, statisticians and research analysts rather than the general public. Style guidelines for these publications also differ. Identify your audience first, then write or edit.

When a publication’s audience includes legislators, however, write and edit as if writing and editing for the general public.

Adolescent health well-visit

Adolescent health well-visit is always hyphenated.

Numerals / words

In scientific writing, arabic numerals should be used when the number designates a quantity.

- 12 hypotheses
- 4 times
- 25 mm
- 328 amino acids
- The rate of infections reached a high of 4 cases per 100,000 persons.
- 3 years

However, when two numeric expressions are adjacent in a sentence, the number easiest to express in words should be spelled out and the other left in numeric form; or the sentence should be recast to separate the numbers. In general it is preferable to retain the numeric form with units of measurement.

- The sample was divided into eight 50-g aliquots.
- The sample was divided into 8 aliquots of 50 g each.

If a number starts a sentence, spell it out or rewrite the sentence. The need to rewrite is especially true when larger numbers are used to start the sentence. You CAN use a number to start a bullet.

- Thirteen hundred and two people attended the conference. (as a sentence in text)
- 1,302 attended the conference (as a bullet)
- There were 1,302 people at the conference.

Spell out zero and one in most cases. Use the figures when directly connected to a unit of measure or specific, calculated value. Also use figures when part of a series or linked with other numbers.

- 1-digit number
• 1 mm
• 0 of 4 subspecies
• 1, 3, 5, 7

Percent / %
For publications written for scientists, statisticians and research analysts, use the symbol for percent when it is preceded by a numeral.
• Only 40% to 50% of HIV/AIDS patients survived at least 5 years among cases diagnosed in Oregon from 1981 through 1992.

Person / people
“People” appears to lump or label human beings and not recognize them as individuals. “Persons” may imply more concern for individuals who are affected by disease:
• The 29 members of his travel group and all 27 hotel staff were interviewed; 38 persons without adequate evidence of immunity received MMR vaccine. Passenger manifests were obtained to contact persons seated within one row of the index patient.

Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT)
Always spell out and capitalize on first reference.

Taxonomy
Taxonomy is a classification of organisms in an ordered system that indicates natural relationships. For editing purposes, the names of all taxa are italicized (see Council of Science Editors’ Manual for Authors, Editors and Publishers, for general descriptions and exceptions). Capitalize and italicize the genus name; lowercase and italicize the species name.
• Genus: *Leptospira*
• Species: *Leptospira interrogans* (or *L. interrogans*)

Many organisms are referred to by their common rather than species names. Common names are usually not capitalized or italicized. For example: “influenza virus.”

There are exceptions to these rules. Salmonella nomenclature is one example in which serotypes alter genus-species designations. See the link here: [http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/page/scientific-nomenclature](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/page/scientific-nomenclature) or consult the author or subject matter expert when editing questions arise.
Abbreviations

If there is room, we prefer to spell out all words in tables, figures, etc. Think about what your audience will or won’t automatically understand. If there is any doubt, spell out or use a legend.

Examples:

• Diseases of circulatory system
• Chronic lower respiratory disease

If there simply is no room, we should be consistent in abbreviations so that they are all treated alike in a document.

Example:

• Diseases of circulatory sys.

Diseases of the genitourinary sys. (but avoid spelling out a word in one instance and abbreviating in another in the same document)

Capitalization

For graphics’ titles, subheads, column and row titles as well as text within graphics — capitalize only the first word except for proper names. Be careful of proper (or formal) names; for example, many diseases appear to be capitalized but are not. If in doubt, we use the American Heritage Dictionary or a medical dictionary.

Examples:

• Diseases and conditions:
  » Alzheimer’s disease; Alzheimer’s is capitalized because it’s a person’s name but disease is not capped.
  » Diabetes-chronic
  » Overweight/obese

• Row titles:
  » Live births
    ◊ Number
    ◊ Crude rate
    ◊ Fertility rate

• Figure title:
  Number of births by race and ethnicity of mother, Oregon residents, 1995–2012
Citations

OHA and DHS use the Vancouver style for text and endnote citations. Our one exception to Vancouver style is to spell out journal names.

Here are some examples of how to format citations within the text and as endnotes.

**In text:** Citations are in numerical order. Note that when you repeat a source within the text, you use the source’s original citation number.

The theory’s originator, Jacqueline Jones, says that heart attacks are reversible.(8)

[followed by text and new citations for 9, 10, 11, followed by:]

Jones (8) has argued that … a new definition.(13, p111–2)

Note: Use page numbers with a text citation when it is important to point to the exact place, such as in a definition.

**In endnotes:** Sources are listed at the back of each chapter or the entire document, depending on the author’s style. They are numbered as they appeared in the text.


**Commas**

In a simple series, do not put a comma before the last item (before “and” or “or”). The comma actually stands for “and” or “or,” so it’s usually redundant to add a comma. The exception is when NOT putting a comma before the last item in a series would confuse the reader or change the meaning, such as when at least one of the items in the series includes the word “and” or “or.”

Example:

- Table title:
  - Deaths, maternal deaths, infant deaths, neonatal deaths and fetal deaths …”
Series:
- Bats, mice or rats, and fleas

En dash in ranges

When you have a range of years or numbers, use an en dash instead of a hyphen. The en dash takes the place of “to” or “through.” You can find the en dash in the symbol library or use alternate keypad ALT+0150. (Hold down the “Alt” key and type “0150” on the number keypad then release the “Alt” key.)

- Oregon births, 2012–2015
- see pages 45–57

Sequence of symbols for tables, graphic footnotes

You may want to use one or more symbols within the graphic to indicate footnotes. We use footnotes for added information, whereas endnotes are for references.

Use this sequence of symbols when you have more than one footnote:
(text in parenthesis is the extended keyboard command for symbol)

- asterisk
- † dagger (alt+0134)
- ‡ double dagger (alt+0135)
- § section (alt+21)
- ‖ parallels
- ¶ paragraph (alt+20)
- †† two daggers (alt+0134, alt+0134)

Titles

Table, figure, graph and footnote titles should allow the reader to understand the basic topic without referring to the text. The title should be a single phrase with sentence-style capitalization and no closing period.

Consistently format the title of tables and figures in documents with several similar tables and figures.

You can use a generic initial phrase in a title, followed by a colon and a specific phrase that identifies the individual table or figure.

E.g., Table 1. Infectious diseases in Oregon: incidence by socioeconomic class

Table 2: Infectious diseases in Oregon: incidence by county
### Table 2-38: Planned attendant by planned place of birth, Oregon occurrence, 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planned birth attendant</th>
<th>Total births</th>
<th>Planned hospital birth</th>
<th>Planned out-of-hospital birth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Intrapartum</td>
<td>Transfer to hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>transfer to hospital</td>
<td>Neonatal transfer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total births</td>
<td>45,591</td>
<td>43,624</td>
<td>1,876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### All gestation periods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>M.D.s and D.O.s</th>
<th>Certified nurse midwives</th>
<th>Licensed direct-entry midwives</th>
<th>Unlicensed direct-entry midwives</th>
<th>Naturopathic physicians</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45,591</td>
<td>35,604</td>
<td>8,316</td>
<td>966</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Under 37 weeks</td>
<td>3,467</td>
<td>3,228</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>37–38 weeks</td>
<td>9,378</td>
<td>7,646</td>
<td>1,515</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>73</td>
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<tr>
<td>39–40 weeks</td>
<td>27,339</td>
<td>21,107</td>
<td>5,193</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>164</td>
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<tr>
<td>41 weeks and over</td>
<td>5,363</td>
<td>3,590</td>
<td>1,394</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>41</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figures, graphs, tables and citations
Years of potential life lost (YPLL) before age 75 and leading causes of death, Oregon, 2012

Source: Oregon Death Certificate Data

- Commas used to show thousands
- Axis labels: sentence case
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(click on page number to go to entry)

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