



**Nova Scotia
Agricultural
College**

NSAC. Embrace Your World.



Style Guide



Why a Style Guide?

This Style Guide is to be used as a reference to establish a consistent standard for written communications with NSAC’s external and internal audiences.

Every year Nova Scotia Agricultural College produces many publications that are used to recruit students, promote programs and events and generally profile the university to large and varied audiences. It is important that we be accurate and present the university in a consistent and clear manner in all of our written communications, both printed and electronic, to eliminate confusion, increase readability and enhance the professional image of the publication and the university.

This Style Guide is to be used as a reference to establish a consistent standard for written communications with NSAC’s external and internal audiences. It outlines the standards for language and suggests common terminology and grammar usage that best suit the needs of a variety of published materials in a university environment. Standards for visual presentation can be found in the Graphic Standards Manual.

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Abbreviations/ Acronyms

Abbreviations

Only use abbreviations that are familiar to ordinary readers.

When referring to provinces, use these abbreviations:

AB, BC, MB, NB, NL, NT, NS, ON PE, QC, SK

For months used with a specific date, abbreviate only Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec.

Oct. 1, 1999 was a Friday.

Spell out months that are standing alone or with a year.

January was wet.

January 1998 was wet.

In a tabular form, all months may be abbreviated, but periods are not to be used.

Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Aug, Sept, Oct, Nov and Dec

Days of the week are only to be abbreviated in tabular form and without periods.

Sun, Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat

NOTE: For abbreviations for academic degrees, refer to the “Academic Degrees and Honours” section.

Acronyms

The acronyms used for Nova Scotia Agricultural College are NSAC and AC. No periods are used and the word “the” should not appear before the acronym.

Only use acronyms that are familiar to ordinary readers.

CTV, NATO

Acronyms formed from only the first letter of each word are all capitals.

NATO (North American Treaty Organization), AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)

Acronyms formed from initial and other letters are in caps and lowercase.

Dofasco (Dominion Foundries and Steal Corp.), Nabisco (National Biscuit Company)

Acronyms that have become common words are not capitalized.

scuba (self-contained underwater breathing apparatus), laser (light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation)



Capitalization

General

The proper names of nationalities, peoples, races and tribes should be capitalized.

Aboriginal Peoples, Arab, Arabic, African, African-American, Asian, Caucasian, Chinese, Hispanic, Indian, Jewish, Latin

The first word of a complete quotation should be capitalized.

Poirier asked, “Did you expect to hear shouts of ‘Well done’ and ‘Good luck?’”

The word “the” is capitalized at the start of titles of books, magazines, movies, TV programs, songs, paintings and other compositions.

The Journal, The Sports Network, The Truman Show

The word “the” is not capitalized at the start of the names of such works as almanacs, the Bible, directories, encyclopedias and handbooks.

the Canadian Almanac, the Reader’s Encyclopedia, the Oxford Dictionary, the Canadian Press Stylebook

Capitalize animal names derived from proper nouns except where usage has established the lowercase.

Angus cattle, Canada goose, Clydesdale horse, Guernsey cow, mandarin duck

In plant names, capitalize proper nouns and adjectives derived from proper nouns.

Scotch pine, Kentucky blue grass, Douglas fir, white Dutch clover

In botanical names, capitalize the first word and lowercase others.

Primula japonica (Japanese primrose), Taraxacum officinale (dandelion), Acer rubrum (red maple)

Capitalize the names of fruit and vegetable varieties.

McIntosh, Delicious (apples), Yukon Gold (potatoes)

Capitalize specific international, national and provincial government departments, ministries, agencies, boards, etc.

Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, World Health Organization



Capitalization

Job Titles

When the title comes before the name, it should be in capital letters.

NSAC **President** Chris Rutherford
Vice President Academic Meghan Tufford
Dean of Student Services Chelsea Steele

When the title comes after the name, it should be in lowercase (with the exception of the title “Chair”).

Chris Rutherford, **president** of Nova Scotia Agricultural College
Meghan Tufford, **vice president academic**

When the title is written without the name, it should be lowercase (with the exception of the title “Chair”).

The **president** made a speech to the senate.
The **dean** spoke to the new students for the first time.

When combining a job title with an academic subject, the subject or program should not be capitalized.

Michael Brown, **professor of physics**, led the seminar.

After the full name and title have been given once, use only the surname in subsequent references.

NSAC **President Chris Rutherford** addressed the Rotary Club last week. In his speech, **Rutherford** described his university sector experience, both as an administrator and as a former student.

When a phrase refers to an administrative unit, it should be capitalized. When it refers to an individual’s title, it should be written in lowercase.

The Vice President University Advancement produces the annual PBA document.

The vice president university advancement chaired the meeting.

Always capitalize “Chair” when you are referring to someone’s title.

The **Chair** of the board of governors officially opens the meetings.

A new **Chair** of the Engineering Department was appointed.

Lowercase “chair” when using it as a verb.

He **chaired** the meeting.

He will **chair** this important meeting



Capitalization

Administrative Offices

Capitalize the names of departments.

The [Department of Business and Social Sciences](#) offers many technical and degree courses.

Lowercase “office” when referring to administrative offices.

The Development and External Relations [office](#) offers many services.

Lowercase the words “department,” “division” or “office” when they stand alone.

This year, the [department](#) met all of its goals.

Capitalize the field when it’s used to mean the department, division or office specifically. Do not capitalize the field when it’s used in general.

She works in the [Student Affairs office](#). (The university office)

She works in [student affairs](#). (The field)

Academic Departments

Capitalize the names of departments except when used in a person’s title.

The [Department of Plant and Animal Sciences](#) carries out research.

The [director of admissions](#) is pleased with the number of applicants.

Use lowercase for the word “department” when it stands alone.

She’s been with the [department](#) for three years.

Capitalize the field when it’s used to mean the department. Use lowercase for the field when it’s used in a general sense.

She’s a professor in the [Department of Physics](#).

She’s a professor in the [Physics Department](#).

She’s a [physics](#) professor.

She majored in [physics](#).

Use uppercase when presenting the formal name of a program at NSAC and for subsequent program-specific reference.

NSAC’s [Environmental Sciences Program](#) is unique and covers many disciplines.

When referring to NSAC, “[the university](#)” is never capitalized.



Capitalization

Programs & Subjects

Do not capitalize the names of program subjects and disciplines in general reference, with the exception of program references that are also proper names or languages.

*history, chemistry, biology, business
English, French, Canadian Studies*

The student needed two or more *history* and *French* credits for a degree.

When referring to school subjects or the names of particular courses, they should be capitalized.

She passed with a "B" in *History* this semester.
He is taking *Chemistry* 1000.

Always capitalize the following:

*Major, Minor, Honours, Concentration, Specialization,
Combined Honours, Combined Major*

References to year, term and types of study should be lowercased.

*first year, second year, third year
fall term, winter term, spring term
undergraduate, graduate, full time, part time*

Buildings

The proper names of university buildings should be uppercased.

Cumming Hall, Cox Institute, Ruminant Animal Centre

General terms standing alone, in plurals or in descriptive uses, should be lowercased.

the *cafeteria*, the *lab*, the *pub*, the *garden*

Awards, Honours & Decorations

Capitalize awards, honours and decorations.

*Alumni Volunteer of the Year, Distinguished
Alumnus Award, Most Valuable Player*

Lowercase common-noun references when they stand alone.

the *award*, the *prize*

Internet

Capitalize specific Internet proper names.

World Wide Web, Internet, the Net

Lowercase descriptive or generic Internet terms.

e-mail, home page, intranet, web, website



Numbers

General

In general, spell out whole numbers ten and below and use figures for 11 and above.

three batters, the fifth inning, nine minutes, 12 guests, the 16th hole, the 22nd day, the sixth Earl of Hodderston.

Spell out whole numbers at the start of a sentence if you must start with a number, in figures of speech, in common fractions below one.

two birds with one stone
half a cup

For numbers in official names, follow the organization's spelling style.

7Up, the film 7 Fathers

Use figures for ages, dates and years, in decimals, in heights, in monetary units preceded by a symbol, in temperatures.

Use arabic numerals unless roman numerals are specified as below.

Use roman numerals to indicate sequence for people and animals and in proper names where that is the widely accepted style.

Queen Elizabeth II, Pope John XXIII,
The Godfather, Part II

Round numbers in the thousands are usually given in figures.

They took 2,000 prisoners.
\$3,500
375,000 francs

Except for monetary units preceded by a symbol, round numbers in the millions and billions generally follow the rule of spelling out numbers 11 and below.

two million bushels, 2.5 million bushels, ten billion cubic metres, five billion marks, \$1 billion.

Use figures for numbers up to 999,999. Above that, switch to words.

a loss of \$100,000
a \$1.2 million project

When using a percentage, the proper spellings are as follows:

per cent, percentage, six per cent increase (no hyphens)

Use hyphens, not spaces or brackets to break up telephone numbers.

416-228-6262, 1-888-268-9237

Use figures for all numbers with fractions, but spell out and hyphenate common fractions when they stand alone 9 -three-quarters



Punctuation

Addresses

Use figures in addresses.

2 Newgate St., 3A Western Ave.

Spell out "First" through "Tenth" as street names.

37 Fifth Ave.

23 59th St.

Do not spell out a street address at the start of a sentence.

General

After the second-last item in a series of items, do not use a comma before the word "and."

Italicize all book, magazine and exhibit titles. Use quotation marks for poems and articles. *Italicize* non-English words such as *alma mater*.

Place commas and periods within the final quotation mark, not after.

We live by the tagline, "Embrace Your World."

To show class year, use an apostrophe.

John Smith ('78) or Jane Doe — class of '84

Only use one space after periods and commas.

Do not use a hyphen in *Vice President*.

Use an apostrophe to form the possession.

Did you see the Rams' soccer game?

When referring to the Rams as a noun, do not put an apostrophe before or after the "s."

The Rams controlled the ball better than in the previous championship games.

Hyphenate multiple nouns when used as adjectives.

NSAC recently opened a *state-of-the-art* Poultry Centre.



Punctuation

Do not use an apostrophe with plurals of capital letters or numbers.

Straight *As*, the three *Rs*, the *ABCs*, two *VIPs*, in the early *'30s*

When referring to morning or afternoon, place periods between *a.m.* and *p.m.*

When writing the time, minutes are not necessary. Simply write *8 a.m.* instead of *8:00 a.m.*

Place a comma before the beginning of a quotation in a sentence.

The prime minister replied, "I have nothing to add to what I said in the House."

Place a comma at the end of a quotation before identifying the speaker.

"My education at NSAC prepared me for my career today," said Mr. Smith.
"NSAC has a beautiful campus," she says.

Academic Degrees & Honours

In general, avoid the abbreviation and use a phrase instead.

John Woo has a *doctorate in chemistry*.

If the degree is well-known, an abbreviation can be used.

He earned his *BA* while working part time at a restaurant.

Pauline Regan, *MA*, and Ann Bullock, *B.Sc.*, spoke to the homeless about educational programs.

Use the following abbreviations for academic degrees:

B.Sc., BA, M.Sc., MA, B.Comm., PhD, P.Eng.

When referring to a bachelor's degree or a master's degree, use the following rules:

Bachelor of Arts, bachelor's degree, bachelor's, Master of Arts, master's degree, master's, doctor's degree or doctorate

Spell out and use the lowercase: *bachelor's degree, master's degree, doctor's degree or doctorate*. You can receive a *doctorate* OR your *doctor's degree*, but NOT your doctoral degree.



Sexism

Do not precede a name with a title of an academic degree and follow it with the abbreviation for that degree.

Use “Dr.” in first reference as a formal title before the name of a person who holds a doctor’s degree. Do not use “Dr.” in the second reference, unless the person holds a doctor of medicine degree.

Do not use “Dr.” before the names of those who hold honorary degrees only. References to honorary degrees must specify the degree was honorary.

The last name may be used with no titles at all, which is often preferable to maintain consistency.

NOTE: Use of “professor” is preferred. Professor is an academic rank or title. A doctor (in academics) is one who has earned the highest academic degree (PhD). Not all professors have doctorates and not all holders of doctorates are professors.

Sexism

Never assume that a family of four always consists of a man, a woman and their two children. Don’t write as if every married couple consists of a man and woman.

Never assume that a woman uses her husband’s last name. Check.

Use parallel references to the sexes. Not the men and the ladies, but the men and the women.

When writing in general terms, prefer police officer to policeman, fire fighter to fireman, mail carrier to mailman and flight attendant to stewardess.

If sex is pertinent, masculine and feminine forms are proper: postman, policewoman and stewardess.

The generic “man” is regarded by some as excluding women. Instead of man or mankind, you can write people, human beings, humanity or human race. Alternatives to “manmade” include artificial, constructed, manufactured and synthetic. However, writing human energy instead of man power is being hypersensitive.



Spelling

Spelling

Use a hyphen in the word **e-mail**.

Spell fundraising as one word.

fundraising, fundraiser, fundraise

Use Canadian conventions such as **flavour, colour, labour, favourite** and **honour**. Also, **theatre** and **centre**.

Website should be one word.

Do not hyphenate the word **online**.

Use **“z”** not **“s”** for words such as **theorize**, **apologize** and **capitalize**.

Honorary, unlike **honours** and **honoured**, has no **“u.”**

Use only one **“l”** in **traveled** but two **“l”s** in **enrollment**.

For emerita/emeritus:

Professor emeritus, retired male professor
(granted special status by the university)

Professor emerita, retired female professor
(granted special status by the university)

Emeritae is the plural feminine form.

Emeriti is the plural masculine form.

For alumni/alumnus:

Use the word **alumni** to refer to a group of people of both sexes (or where the sex of the group members is unknown) who have graduated from NSAC. It is the most commonly used form and is NSAC preference.

Alumnus refers to an individual male graduate.

Alumna refers to an individual female graduate.

Alumnae describes a group of graduates known to be comprised entirely of females. It is not commonly used. However, it should be used when the grads are known to be all female.

Alums is used as an informal substitute for **“alumni”** in spoken English, but should rarely be used in written form.



Sports

Avoid using sports clichés such as “taking it one game at a time” or “giving it 110 per cent.”

When writing game copy, be concise. There’s no need to describe every scoring play. Focus on the key play or performer and build the story around it.

Limit game-over stories to 400 words.

Capture the mood and size of the crowd and its impact on the game.

The sport involved must be identified early in every story.



Writing for the Web

Web

For most of us, the World Wide Web has been a part of our lives for less than a decade. But it has dramatically changed the way we find information, get access to services and talk to people. It has also changed the way we read.

Research on web use says that people read from computer screens 25 per cent slower than they do from paper, while most users scan the text instead of reading it word-by-word.

So that means we need to write differently for the web than we would for the printed page.

Write in what journalists call the inverted pyramid style. Present the most important messages first — including your conclusion — and put the rest of the information below.

Web content should be half the size of something written for a print publication. Write everything you want to say — then cut it by 50 per cent.

Follow the basic principles of good writing:

Keep it simple

Be concise

Use familiar language — not technical lingo

Choose active voice over passive voice
(subject-verb-object)

Resist the urge to tell your readers everything on one page. Details and background information can be presented through links to new pages, allowing readers to decide how much to take in at a time.

Make it easy for a reader to scan your text.

Highlight words that are important.

Create clear headings for each section.

Put information into bulleted lists.

Put one main idea in each paragraph.

Use quotes in stories as supporting material or to break up copy.

Keep it current and remove old content regularly.

Do not place a period at the end of a website address if it is at the end of a sentence.



Common Style Questions

Quick Reference for Common Style Questions

nsac.ca

Please remove the “www.” when referring to NSAC’s website.

NSAC

When referring to NSAC, please do not put the word “the” in front of the name or acronym.

University or College

NSAC is a university, so it should never be referred to as “the College.” Instead it should be referred to as “the university.” Note that “university” is not capitalized.

NOTE

When a phrase refers to an administrative unit it should be capitalized. When it refers to an individual’s title it should be written in lowercase.

The Vice President **University Advancement** produces the annual PBA document.

The vice president **university advancement** chaired the meeting.



Quick Reference

AC—An accepted acronym for Nova Scotia Agricultural College. Do not put the word ‘the’ in front of the acronym.

advertise (*not—ize*)

adviser (*not—or*)

alumna, alumnae (*fem.*)

alumnus, alumni

a.m., p.m. (*lowercase*)

Awards—Capitalize specific awards.

[Governor General’s Awards](#)

[Nobel Peace Prize](#)

Board—Uppercase when using the formal name of a board. Otherwise, lowercase.

[Colchester Regional School Board](#)

cancel, cancelled, cancelling

Centennial Year, the Centennial (2005)

centre, centred, centring

Class—Lowercase school classes, except languages

[class of ‘61](#), [biology class](#), [English class](#)

co-ordinate, co-ordinator

data (*plural*), databank, database

Departments—Capitalize the names of departments.

[The Department of Business and Social Sciences](#)

e.g. (for example)

e-mail, electronic mail

enroll, enrolled, enrollment

full time, a full-time job, working full time

fundraiser, fundraising, fundraise

Hall of Fame

i.e. (in other words)

Internet—Capitalize specific proper names.

[Internet, the Net](#)

[World Wide Web](#), *but the web*

—Lowercase descriptive or generic terms.

[electronic mail](#), [e-mail](#), [blog](#), [chat room](#), [cyber-space](#), [home page](#), [hyperlink](#), [instant messaging](#)

intranet (*lowercase*)

label, labelled

maritime, Maritime provinces, the Maritimes

MC (master of ceremonies), MCs, MCing, MCed

Months—In dates, abbreviate except March, April, May, June, July:

[Jan. 13, 1936](#); [April 2, 1981](#), was a Thursday; *but* [January 2005](#), *no commas*.



Quick Reference

NSAC—Do not put the word “the” in front of the name or acronym.

online

organize (*not -ise*), organization

part time, a part-time job, a part-timer

paycheque (*one word*), payday (*one word*), payroll (*no hyphen*)

per cent, percentage, six per cent increase (*no hyphens*)

PhD (doctor of physiology)

postdate (v.), postdated cheque

president

the president said—

former president Chris Rutherford

Seasons—Lowercase for spring, summer, fall or autumn, winter

Speaker—Capitalize in all references to avoid ambiguity

Speaker Martha Lim, the Speaker, former Speaker

syllabus, syllabuses

Telephone numbers—Use hyphens, not spaces or brackets to break up:

1-902-893-7247, 1-800-268-9237

travel, traveller, travelled

University—Capitalize the names of universities and colleges.

Nova Scotia Agricultural College

Dalhousie University

Nova Scotia Community College

University Degrees

Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.)

Master of Science (M.Sc.)

Doctor of Biology (PhD)

vice president (*no hyphen*)

voice mail

web, web browser, webcam, webcast, webmaster,

web page, weblog, web server, website *but* World

Wide Web

Web Addresses—Remove the “www.” when referring to NSAC’s website

nsac.ca

It is not necessary to include <http://>. But do

include less familiar common forms such as <ftp://>.



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