

O'NEILL INDIANAPOLIS COMMON STYLE GUIDE

Note for the user: *This is not an exhaustive list. Style guidance changes regularly via institutional updates and on-going discussions with multiple parties. As a result, this is a living document that is updated whenever a change occurs. There are times when AP and IU Styles may not be clear or when exceptions to both sets of rules apply. In these cases, the O'Neill Communications team discusses and makes the final decision. These are done on a case-by-case basis and are the exception, not the rule.*

Link to IU Style Guide: <https://www.iu.edu/brand/brand-expression/verbal-language/editorial-style/style-guide.html>

If it is not directly stated in the IU Style Guide, we default to AP Style or any exception that has been approved by O'Neill Communications. Our director of communications has access to the most current AP Style guidelines.

Goal:

- The reader/audience is the most important consumer. Write everything in a way that ensures they can easily understand it the first time they read it.

Our name: *Please direct questions to the director of marketing or director of communications.*

- O'Neill:
 - o Official school name: Paul H. O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs at IU Indianapolis
 - o Approved shortened version: O'Neill Indianapolis
 - You can also say the "O'Neill School in Indianapolis"
 - o Do not use: O'Neill Indy, O'Neill IU Indy
- The university:
 - o First reference:
 - Indiana University Indianapolis
 - IU Indianapolis
 - This is also the preferred second reference and beyond.
 - o IU is an acceptable acronym for IU Indianapolis.
 - o Please avoid IU Indy. While some university accounts use "IU Indy,"—and UCM's position on this has changed a couple times—O'Neill's style preference is to use "IU Indianapolis" to avoid confusing us with UIndy and to emphasize our location in Indianapolis.
 - When IU Indy is used (again, by others, not O'Neill) it should only be used in informal, conversational references to IU Indianapolis. Example: An internal email to staff
 - o Using "Indy" to reference Indianapolis is different and its use should be based on your audience:
 - "Welcome to Indy. Home to the state's capital, fortune 500 companies, professional sports teams, thousands of hard-working Hoosiers, and IU's Indianapolis campus."

Active voice > passive voice

- Always try to make writing active rather than passive.
 - o Passive: The phone was dropped.
 - o Active: Leslie dropped the phone.
 - o When you don't know who did it: The phone fell.

Abbreviations/acronyms:

- You must first use the full name prior to using an abbreviation or acronym

- The United States Postal Service, then the USPS
- There are select widely known exceptions where abbreviations are allowed on first use:
 - FBI, CIA, NASA, NATO, COVID, IRS, etc.

Addresses

- IU addresses should follow this format:
 - O’Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs
IU Indianapolis
Business/SPEA Building 3025
801 W. Michigan Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202
- In the term ZIP code, ZIP is always capitalized.

Capitalization:

- We most often use sentence case rather than title case, though there are some exceptions.
 - This is sentence case vs. This is Title Case
 - To work around this, you can also use all caps.
- Lowercase the common noun elements of a name when they stand alone. O’Neill School → the school, The Marion County City-County Council → the council, etc.,
- The city of Indianapolis. AP Style rule is below:
 - Capitalize city if part of a proper name, an integral part of an official name, or a regularly used nickname: Kansas City, New York City, Windy City, City of Light, Fun City.
 - Lowercase elsewhere: a Texas city; the city government; the city Board of Education; and all city of phrases: the city of Boston.
 - Second reference would be “the boar,” “the city,” etc.
 - Job titles: Capitalize when part of a formal title before a name: City Manager Francis McGrath. Lowercase when not part of the formal title: city Health Commissioner Frank Smith.
 - Use of “doctor”
 - The title of “Doctor” should be used with care and with context. While commonly used in academic circles, the general public associates the term with a medical doctor.
 - The preference is to use the person’s title (Professor, Lecturer, etc.) when referencing them.
 - If “Doctor” must be used, the person’s name should be followed by Ph.D. (or their appropriate degree title). “Dr. Bob Smith, Ph.D., said”
 - Faculty bio pages are an exception as they are written within an academic context.

Caps after a colon:

- Defer to AP Style. Capitalize the first letter after a colon IF what follows the colon is a complete sentence. IU Style does not specify but one of its examples does not capitalize. Talked to Michael and we decided to defer to AP moving forward (October 2020).

Course listings/titles:

- Each course has a course number and course title, which is always capitalized (even if the course is referred to without the number). No punctuation is used between the course number and course title.
 - SPEA-J 101 American Criminal Justice System
 - Students loved O’Neill’s new American Criminal Justice System course.
- Per IU Style, credit hours are always a numeral and not hyphenated

- A 2 credit hour course

Dashes and hyphens:

- The two dashes most commonly used by typesetters are the em dash and the en dash. The em dash is what is usually meant by the word dash—a long mark with no space on either side. The en dash is shorter than an em dash; it is simply a specialized, slightly elongated hyphen that looks like this: –.
- Dashes separate; hyphens join. The distinction usually holds true for em versus en dashes, too.
 - EM: The building—one of our oldest—will be reroofed.
 - EN: 2007–08, chapters 12–17, pages 3–10, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.
 - To make the en dash, press/hold Ctrl while hitting + then - on the number keypad.
 - Hyphen: dual-degree programs
- We no longer generally use a hyphen with these prefixes: out-, post-, pre-, re-, co-, etc. Consult Merriam-Webster for specific words.

Dates and seasons:

- Spell out months and days of the week; use numerals for years. Use no punctuation if listing just the month (or the season) and the year but set the year off with commas if using the day of the month as well.
 - May 2016; spring 2015; a February 5, 2017, deadline
 - Join us on Thursday, April 28, for a celebration.
 - Seasons are only capitalized if part of Spring Break, Fall Break, Summer Break, Winter Break.

Degrees and majors:

- IU Style does not specifically address majors, but it does reference how to manage degree titles when the name is used in its entirety.
 - Official degree names with discipline are capitalized, but the word ‘degree’ is not
 - She earned a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice
 - He earned a Bachelor of Science in Public Affairs
 - She completed her Master of Public Affairs degree
 - Unofficial degree names are not capitalized. Only master’s and bachelor’s include ‘s
 - She received her master’s degree
 - He earned his bachelor’s degree
 - She earned an associate degree
 - He earned a doctoral degree (or his doctorate)
- Abbreviations of degrees, time expressions, and countries’ names have periods. Note that there are no spaces between their elements. (B.A., B.S., M.B.A., Ph.D., Ed.D., A.D., R.N., C.P.A., p.m., U.S.A.)
- To stay consistent with IU Style on degree and program titles as proper nouns, we will also capitalize the names of our majors. Other IU entities may opt not to do this.
 - An O’Neill Criminal Justice student ...
 - O’Neill’s Public Affairs major

General notes:

- The term data is always singular.
- Black and Brown are capitalized while white is not.
- Healthcare is one word. (Approved by IU Style team)
 - o We are also breaking from IU Style on policymaker and decisionmaker and policymaking and decisionmaking. Only hyphenate when these terms are used as adjectives (policy-making process).
- Latinx is an acceptable alternative to Latino/Latina. This term is evolving and there is a movement toward Latine to better reflect how Spanish is spoken.
- Per IU Style, only use U.S. when it is being used as an adjective.
 - o The U.S. economy vs. The economy of the United States
- Use the serial comma, or Harvard comma (i.e., the final comma before and, or, or nor) in a list of three or more items.
 - o Example: red, white, and blue ribbons
- Only use an ampersand if it's part of a proper noun.
- Single space after a period.
- Paragraphs are not indented.
- Do not alter the format of text (bold, italics, underlining) to emphasize a point. The writing should be clear enough on its own to provide emphasis and understanding.
- Past vs. last: Past is preferred. Last can imply a finality.
 - o "Past three months" > "Last three months"
- Over vs. during: During is preferred. Over implies a physical location.
 - o "During the past three months" > "Over the past three months."

No S on the end of these words:

- https://www.apstylebook.com/ap_stylebook/toward
- https://www.apstylebook.com/ap_stylebook/backward
- https://www.apstylebook.com/ap_stylebook/afterward
- https://www.apstylebook.com/ap_stylebook/forward

Numbered in-text list with colon

- Use a colon to introduce an item or list, if the list comes after a complete sentence or independent clause. For example:
 - o There are three things every dog needs: food, water, and healthcare.
 - o This year I want to visit four amazing cities: Paris, London, New York, and Barcelona.
- Use a comma to separate items in the list.
 - o There were a few factors to keep in mind when going about the benefit cost analysis: (1) technologies that were going to stay, (2) those that were going to stay but be upgraded, (3) things

that were going to come to the new house, (4) technology that will be taken to the new house and upgraded, and (5) things that would be disposed of.

- Replace the comma with a semicolon if any of the items in the list have a comma within them.
 - o The list includes (1) tasks, including job descriptions; (2) a list of priorities; and (3) emergency contact numbers.

Numbers:

- When using numbers in a sentence, spell out numbers one through nine, and use digits for 10 or greater. There are exceptions to this, such as percentages, (45%), ages (a 4-year-old child) and time (9 a.m.).
 - o Other examples: five-year survey NOT 5-year survey. This has been discussed with IU Style (VP Michelle Watson).
- Spell out all numbers if they start a sentence. This includes percentages. However, we recommend restructuring the sentence to avoid starting with a percentage.
 - o Example: We found 45% of students said yes.
 - o Example: Forty-five percent of students said yes.
- Ratios: When using a ratio, use numerals. Only spell out the word if it starts a sentence.
 - o Example: Our study found 4 in 10 people like ice cream.
 - o Example: Our study found 1 in 3 people like ice cream.
 - o Example: Two out of 3 people surveyed like ice cream
- Maintain consistency among items of the same category within each sentence. Generally, if any number of the group has a value of 10 or more, use all numerals. Admittedly, this is a complicated rule that can be argued in multiple ways.
 - o The organization said there were 13 children who **agreed** while nine **disagreed**.
 - In this example, the category is not children but rather agreement and disagreement.
 - o She read 4 of the 14 required **books**.
 - This example has only one category provided: books.
 - It could have been: The 14 books included five that were nonfiction and nine that were fiction.
- However, always spell out “one” per IU Style.
 - o We’re one of the top 15 schools in that ranking.
- Per IU Style, spell out street names First Street through Twelfth Street.
- Year span:
 - o When using a span of years, use an en dash (Ctrl + -) between years.
 - o If using a series of years, then 2019–20 can stand on its own because the other years provide the context to understand the abbreviation without the reader thinking it is a mistake.
 - In the 2018–19 and 2019–20 school years
 - o Otherwise, if the 2019–20 span is used on its own without other years around it, then use 2019–2020.

- Research from 2019–2020 shows that
- Ordinals:
 - Always spell out ordinals from first to ninth.
 - *While IU Style wants us to spell out all ordinals from one hundred and smaller, we'll stick with ninth and smaller.*
 - Do not use ordinals with dates. February 1 not February 1st

Percentages:

- IU Style approved using % symbol in body of text, tables, and charts
- Use whole numbers in the body of the text.
 - If you MUST use decimal points, provide us with a reason and stay consistent throughout the paper. The only exception is if you have a percentage that ends in .0, drop the .0.
 - Example: 30.0% should be written as 30% in text.
 - Example (for tables): 39.3%, 42.1%, 36.4%, and 48% NOT 48.0%.
- Use percentage/percentage of—not percent—when *not* paired with a specific number.
 - Example: The report showed that 15% of respondents said they use soap daily. The report showed the percentage of people who said they use soap daily has risen from 12% to 15%.
 - For tables/figures, use “Percent change” when a specific number is provided in the data.

People vs. persons:

- The word people is preferred to persons in all plural uses.
 - Example: Thousands of people attended the fair. There were 17 people in the room.
- Persons should be used only when it is in a direct quote or part of a title as in Bureau of Missing Persons.
- Use person when speaking of an individual: One person waited for the bus.
- People should be referred to as who, not that.
 - Example: “Respondents who said....” NOT “Respondents that said...”

Regions and directions

- In general, follow AP Style guidelines, however, for Indianapolis-specific areas:
 - northeast side, northeast area, Northeast Indianapolis

Representing large amounts (thousands, millions, billions):

- Use figures in all except casual cases.
- For charts/tables/news release headlines: 100K, 100M, 100B
 - The letter is uppercase, no space after the number
- For body copy: \$100 million, \$100 billion, 1 million people, 8 million doses, etc.

Quotation marks

- You can use either quotation marks to set off a word you are discussing or explaining. HOWEVER, only do this if the word/phrase is something the reader isn't familiar with.
 - o No one is certain about the origin of the word "Peristeronic."
- Quotation marks: When not used to mark what someone is saying, typically make the sentences more visually messy and cluttered (not as easy to read), especially when there are a lot of terms in quotation marks in the same sentence. Avoid using quotation marks around responses.
- Usually responses like yes and no don't need them. In other cases, you can turn it into just a regular sentence by rephrasing it.
- Commas and periods ALWAYS go inside quotation marks.

State names and abbreviations

- Use [postal codes](#) for abbreviations in tables. This is a deviation from AP Style but approved by O'Neill OMC for consistency.
- The names of the 50 U.S. states should be spelled out when used in the body of a story, whether standing alone or in conjunction with a city, town, village or military base.
 - o Example: City council members in Jacksonville, Florida, are paid \$49,974 per year.
- ZIP is always capitalized

Times

- Use numerals in all cases. Omit the colon and zeros for on-the-hour times. Use periods and lowercase for a.m. and p.m. Exceptions may be made in more decorative layouts and on social media for character count.
 - o 9 a.m., 11:15 p.m., noon, midnight, 3–4:30 p.m. or 3 to 4:30 p.m., 9 a.m.–6:30 p.m.

Visuals in body of text

- Avoid visual clutter in the body of text, such as using a lot of parenthesis, commas, quotation marks, or several in-text citations. It makes it difficult for the reader to understand and stay with the thought of the sentence.
- Instead, split divergent thoughts using em dashes (—) and split complex sentences into ones that are more easily digestible. The goal is that the reader clearly understands.
 - o If the parenthetical phrase comes at the end of a sentence, only one dash is needed to set it off—like this. If it is inserted into the middle of the sentence—like this—you need dashes on both sides.