



OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

OKDHS Style Guide

Version 10-2007

Section 1.1

General Guidelines

OKDHS Style Guide

Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to help us to produce high quality documents that are coherent, literate, user-friendly and consistent in style. This style guide establishes guidelines for all documents produced by the [Oklahoma Department of Human Services \(OKDHS\)](#). It will be revised periodically, as new issues about spelling and language arise.

The main part of the guide focuses on word use, grammar and punctuation. Appendix 1 includes some basic tips to keep in mind while writing, and includes information about planning a writing task.

It also contains information that will be useful to project managers and others in the normal course of doing their jobs, such as a list of the division numbers and division account numbers. Appendix 2 includes lists of terms, acronyms and definitions that are commonly used on the OKDHS Web and in OKDHS documents.

The spelling and styles listed in this guide supersede all other reference guides. The guide serves as the basis for an evolving house style. It is based on historical OKDHS style for both print and Web. It was designed to be used as a computer-based reference with links throughout, but can also be printed.

Because of the multitude of style and writing manuals and other references readily available in print and online, we do not attempt to address all issues of style, grammar, and spelling – only the OKDHS-specific topics. For the sake of consistency, please refer to the resources below for topics not addressed in the OKDHS Style Manual.

Online Reference Sources:

For spelling, style, grammar, and definition issues that are not covered by this manual, consult the following online reference sources:

- Merriam-Webster Online Language Center (This site has both a searchable dictionary and a thesaurus) -- www.m-w.com
- Dictionary.com -- www.dictionary.com
- One Look Dictionaries -- www.onelook.com This site has a large collection of all sorts of dictionaries, from the common to the very uncommon. For general reference, stick to the common dictionaries (Webster's, American Heritage or Cambridge). However, if you are searching for a word that is very unusual or occupation-specific, you might find the appropriate dictionary on this site.

OKDHS Style Guide

- The Elements of Style by William Strunk Jr. -- <http://www.bartleby.com/141/>
- Acronym Finder -- www.acronymfinder.com Look up acronyms that are not on the style guide list.
- Purdue University Online Writing -- owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/index2.html

If you have any suggestions, questions or comments, please contact [Linda Stark](#) at the OKDHS Project Management Office (PMO) or the OKDHS Web Content Management Unit at (405) 521-3027 or by e-mail at WebContent@OKDHS.org.

OKDHS Style Guide

The Words, Grammar and Usage section of the OKDHS General Style Guide is arranged alphabetically, rather than by subject area. For example, to look up the difference between affect and effect, you would go to the A section.

The guide was for PDF format, with bookmarks as the main navigation through the sections. Each part of the guide has a hyperlinked table of contents.

Table of Contents

<u>General Words, Grammar and Usage</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>21</u>
<u>Preface Error! Bookmark not defined.</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>22</u>
<u>Online Reference Sources:.....</u>	<u>O</u>	<u>23</u>
<u>Table of Contents</u>	<u>P</u>	<u>24</u>
<u>A</u>	<u>Q</u>	<u>26</u>
<u>B</u>	<u>R</u>	<u>27</u>
<u>C</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>28</u>
<u>D</u>	<u>T</u>	<u>30</u>
<u>E</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>32</u>
<u>F</u>	<u>V</u>	<u>33</u>
<u>G</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>34</u>
<u>H</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>35</u>
<u>I</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>36</u>
<u>J</u>	<u>Z</u>	<u>37</u>
<u>K</u>	<u>Words, Grammar, Usage Index</u>	<u>38</u>
<u>L</u>		

A

a an

- Use the article *a* before consonant sound.
 - ▶ Example:
 - ◊ a historic event
 - ◊ a one-year term (*One* sounds like it begins with a *w*.)
 - ◊ a united stand (*United* sounds like *you*.)
- Use the article *an* before vowel sounds.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ an energy crisis,
 - ◊ an honorable man (The *h* is silent.)
- an 1890s celebration.

a.m. p.m.

- Use lowercase with periods.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ *Correct*—6 a.m. 6 p.m.
- Do not say 6 a.m. in the morning or 6 p.m. in the evening. It's redundant.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ *Incorrect*—My alarm clock rings at 6.a.m in the morning.
 - ◊ *Correct*—My alarm clock rings at 6 a.m.

abbreviations

- Do not use abbreviations that the reader would not easily recognize.
- Abbreviate the following titles when used before a full name outside direct quotations: Dr., Gov., Lt. Gov., Mr., Mrs., Ms., Rep., the Rev. and Sen.
- Spell out all except Dr., Mr., Mrs. or Ms. when they are used before a name in direct quotations.
- **OKDHS** – Always use *OKDHS*, not *DHS*, when referring to the *Oklahoma Department of Human Services* to avoid confusion with the federal Department of Homeland Security. Spell out Oklahoma Department of Human Services on first reference, followed by the abbreviation in parentheses.
 - ▶ **Example:** She is on staff at the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS). Her work at OKDHS includes conducting home visits.
- Also see [company names](#).

academic courses academic majors

- Lowercase in all uses except languages.
 - ▶ Example:
 - ◊ a journalism major, an accounting class, a Spanish major, an English class.

academic degrees

- When possible, avoid an abbreviation and use a phrase such as Jane Smith, who has a bachelor's in accounting.
- Lower case and use an 's for bachelor's degree, master's degree, a master's, etc.
 - ▶ Exception: associate degree, not associate's degree
- Do not use 's following the degree if it includes the full degree name.
 - ▶ Example:
 - ◊ Bachelor of Arts, Master of Science
- When abbreviated, academic degrees are capitalized and use periods.
 - ▶ **Example:** B.A., B.S., Ph.D.
- When used after a full name, academic degrees are set off by commas.
 - ▶ **Examples:**
 - ◊ Jane Smith, Ph.D., attended convention.
 - ◊ John Doe, B.A., is a member of the OKDHS planning committee.
- Do not use a courtesy title for an academic degree and follow it with the abbreviation for the degree in the same reference.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ Correct: Dr. *John Jones* and *John Jones, M.D.*
 - ◊ Incorrect: Dr. John Jones, M.D.

academic titles

- Use "Dr." before a name **only** when the person in question has a medical degree (M.D., DMD, DDS or DVM).
- Capitalize and spell out formal titles such as "president" and "chair" *only* when they precede a name: Chair Jane Smith. Lowercase elsewhere.
- The word *professor* should always be lowercase, even when preceding a name.
- *Do not* use academic and job titles together.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ *Incorrect:* Dean Dr. Jane Doe will speak to our group.
 - ◊ *Correct:* Dean Jane Doe will speak to our group.
- *Do not* use an academic title with a degree:
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ Correct: professor Jane Smith or Jane Smith, Ph.D.,
 - ◊ Incorrect: NOT professor Jane Smith, Ph.D.
- Capitalize and spell out formal titles such as *chancellor*, *professor*, *chairman*, etc., only when they precede a full name. Lowercase in all other uses.
- Lower case modifiers such as *history* in *history* Professor John Smith or *department* in *department* Chairman John Smith.

accept except

- *Accept* means to receive.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ Susan will accept the award.
- *Except* means to exclude.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ The movers took everything except the desk.

OKDHS Style Guide

acronyms

- An acronym is a word formed from the first letter or letters of a series of words.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ The word *laser* comes from *light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation*.
- Always spell out on first reference, followed by the acronym in parentheses.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ The point of contact (POC) is George.

active passive

- Always use active voice in sentences. Remember, in active voice, the subject of the sentence “does the doing.”
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ *Incorrect (passive)*—The dog was bitten by the man.
 - ◊ *Correct (active)* — The man bit the dog.
 - ◊ *Incorrect (passive)* — An analysis of the data was performed by the staff.
 - ◊ *Correct (active)* — The staff analyzed the data.

addresses

- Use the abbreviations *Ave.*, *Blvd.*, and *St.*, only with a numbered address.
 - ▶ **Example:** Ponce de Leon Avenue.
 - ▶ **Example:** 1386 Ponce de Leon Ave., NE.
- Spell out and capitalize when part of a formal street name without a number in text. Lowercase when talking about more than one street name.
 - ▶ **Example:** He lives on Pennsylvania Avenue.
 - ▶ **Example:** The shopping center is on the corner of Willow and Elm streets.
- All similar words such as *alley*, *drive*, *road*, *terrace*, etc., are spelled out. Capitalize them when part of a formal name without a number.
- Always use figures for an address number. Spell out and capitalize *First* through *Ninth* when used as street name; use figures with two letters for *10th* and *above*.
 - ▶ **Example:** Our office is on Third Avenue, but the main office is on 14th Street.
- Abbreviate compass points used to indicate directional ends of a street or quadrants of a city in a numbered address.
 - ▶ **Example:** 222 E. 42nd St. or 1386 Ponce de Leon Ave., NE

adviser

- Use *adviser*, not *advisor*.

advisory

- Use *advisory*, not *advisery*.
 - ▶ **Example:** The weather service issued a storm advisory.

affect effect

- *Affect* is generally used as a verb and means *to influence*.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ This game will *affect* their final standings.
- *Effect* is generally used as a noun and means *result*.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ She underestimated the *effect* her actions would have.
- Here’s a memory jogger: **E**ffect = **E**nd result
- **Note:** There are two less common definitions for these words. Because good

OKDHS Style Guide

writing focuses on common words and common ways of saying something, don't use these two words in the following ways.

- ▶ (*Avoid this use.* It invariably leads to a long windy way of saying it.) *Effect*, as a verb, means to cause.
- ▶ **Example:**
 - ◇ Incorrect — The team will effect a number of changes in the production process.
 - ◇ Correct — The team will change the production process.
- (Avoid this use) *Affect* as a noun is occasionally used in psychology to mean a specific emotion or feeling that is associated with some idea or mental representation. Unlike the verb form of this word, the noun form is pronounced with the accent on the first syllable (AF-fekt). It is the conscious subjective aspect of an emotion considered apart from bodily changes.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◇ He displayed a distressing lack of affect.
- Do not use *affect* as a noun unless you're writing about a psychology-related topic. In everyday use, the word *affect* as a noun is obsolete.

afterward

- Use *afterward*, not *afterwards*.

ages

- Always use figures.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◇ The boy is 5 years old.
 - ◇ Most teens can't wait to turn 21.
- Hyphenate ages expressed as adjectives before a noun or as substitutes for a noun.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◇ The event is for 3-year-olds.
 - ◇ The woman was in her 40s.
- Ages are treated differently from other numbers. Also see [numbers](#).

a lot

- Always use two words.

all ready already

- These are commonly confused words.
- *All ready* means prepared.
- *Already* means previously.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◇ The festival is all ready to begin. In fact, it's already started.

all right

- Always use two words. Do not use *alright*.

also

- The correct usage is, "She also has been invited," not "She has also been invited."

Alzheimer's disease

- Do not capitalize disease. Alzheimer's (alone) is acceptable on second reference.

OKDHS Style Guide

among between

- Generally speaking, *between* introduces two items and *among* introduces more than two.
 - ▶ **Example:** The funds were divided among OKDHS, OHCA and Department of Health.
- However, *between* is the correct word when expressing the relationships of three or more items considered one pair at a time.
 - ▶ **Example:** Negotiations on a debate format are under way between the network and the Ford, Carter and McCarthy committees.
- Pronouns that follow these words must be in the objective case.
 - ▶ **Example:** *among us, between him and her, between you and me.*

and or

- Make a decision and then use either *and* or *or*
- Do not use: *and/or*.
- If you really mean sometimes it's one way, sometimes it's another, say so.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◇ *Incorrect* — He likes a cheeseburger for lunch and often has fries and/or onion rings with it.
 - ◇ *Correct* — He likes a cheeseburger for lunch and often has either fries or onion rings with it. Sometimes he has both.

annual

- An event cannot be described as annual until it has been held in at least two successive years.
- Do not use the terms *first annual* or *second annual*. Instead, note that sponsors plan to hold an event annually. The event's *third* year is the first opportunity to use the phrase.

another

- *Another* is not a synonym for additional; it refers to an element that somehow duplicates a previously stated quantity.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◇ *Correct* — Ten people took the test; another 10 refused.
 - ◇ *Incorrect* — Ten people took the test; another 20 refused.
 - ◇ *Correct* — Ten people took the test; 20 others refused.

anybody any body anyone any one

- Use one word for an indefinite reference.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◇ Anyone can do that.
- Use two words when the emphasis is on singling out one element of a group.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◇ Any one of them may speak up.

OKDHS Style Guide

apostrophe

- Use 's to form the possessive of singular nouns and plural nouns not ending in s. Also see [plurals](#).
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ The *dog's* leash was red.
 - ◊ The *company's* logo was very colorful.
- Use an apostrophe to form the possessive of plural nouns that end in s.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ The *dogs'* leashes were red.
 - ◊ *The companies'* logos were very colorful.
- Use an apostrophe in place of the missing letters when writing contracted forms of words.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ *That's* the right way to do it.
 - ◊ She *won't* miss the train.
 - ◊ The dog's collar is too tight. *It's* probably very uncomfortable for him.
- Abbreviate *continued* as *cont'd* (to save space when used in a header).
- **Do not** use an apostrophe to form plurals of acronyms, letters, or words that are treated as nouns.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ *Incorrect* — PC's, CD's
 - ◊ *Correct* — PCs, CDs
- **Note:** Possessive pronouns (yours, theirs, its, hers) do not have an apostrophe. Often confused words:
 - ▶ (*possessive*) The car lost *its* muffler.
 - ▶ (*contracted form* – short for *it is*) *It's* going to rain again.
 - ▶ (*possessive*) *Their* project was completed on time.
 - ▶ (*contracted form* – short for *they are*) *They're* always ahead of schedule.

as well as

- Do not use *as well as* with *both*.
 - ▶ *Incorrect* — *Both the car, as well as the truck, were parked in the garage.*
 - ▶ *Correct* — *Both the car and the truck were parked in the garage.*

assure ensure insure

- You *ensure* an *outcome*. You *assure* a person. You *insure* your car and your life.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ *Fertilizing your grass will ensure a healthy lawn.*
 - ◊ *I assure you, the fertilizer is completely organic and safe.*
- *I insure* my house to ensure we can rebuild if it is damaged by a tornado.

B

back up backup

- Back up is used as a verb.
- Backup is used as a noun or adjective.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ I'll *back up* the server before I go home tonight.
 - ◊ We sent a copy of the *backup* file to the other office.
 - ◊ He is a *backup* to the full-time staff artist, but his regular duties are in the Web design department.

backward

- Not backwards.

barbecue

- Not Bar-B-Q or BBQ

because since

- Use *because* to denote a specific cause-effect relationship.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ She went to the room because she was told the paper is stored there.
- *Since* is acceptable in a casual sense when the first event in a sequence led logically to the second but was not its direct cause.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ They went to the game, since they had been given the tickets.

between you and me

- *Not* between you and *I*.

between among

- See [among](#).

biannual biennial

- *Biannual* means twice a year and is a synonym for *semiannual*.
- *Biennial* means every two years.

bimonthly biweekly

- *Bimonthly* means every other month. *Semimonthly* means twice a month.
- *Biweekly* means every other week. *Semiweekly* means twice a month.

black white

- Both are lowercase when referring to race.

book titles

- Italicize book titles in text. Also see the composition.

bulleted lists

- Introduce the series with a colon.
- Do not use periods or semicolons at the end of each item unless the item is a complete sentence (and be consistent—if one item is a sentence, make them all sentences).
- Do not set off the next-to-last item with “and.”
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ She said that several things led to her entrepreneurial success:
 - perseverance
 - a sense of humor
 - a supportive family
- If the text says there are a certain number of things, use a numbered list rather than a bulleted list.

OKDHS Style Guide

- ▶ Example
 - ◊ The first four of the nine planets are:
 1. Mercury
 2. Venus
 3. Earth
 4. Mars

C

can may

- These two words are not interchangeable. They mean two different things.
- **can** — This word refers to capability.
- **may** — This word refers to possibility or permission.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ Students *can* order a certificate of completion from the company.
 - (*capability*) They are capable of ordering a certificate. They qualify, and here’s how they get one.
 - ◊ Students *may* order a certificate of completion from the company.
 - (*permission*) Students have permission to order. Whether they are capable of doing it or they qualify, I don’t know, but they have permission.
 - (*possibility*) These students may order it from the company, or they may not. Who knows what they’ll do.
- If you were a contracting officer, which of the following would you prefer to read? See? There’s a big difference.
 - ▶ Our personnel *can* perform the required tasks.
 - ▶ Our personnel *may* perform the required tasks.

capitalization

- Capitalize the following:
 - ▶ The beginning of a sentence
 - ▶ All words in titles and captions, except articles, prepositions, and conjunctions that are three letters or less
 - ▶ A proper noun
 - ▶ Academic or professional titles

CD CD-ROM

- *CD* (with no periods) is the abbreviation for *compact disc*.
- *CD-ROM* is the abbreviated form of *compact disc, read-only-memory*.
- Use CD-ROM when generically referring to the media. When referring to a specific compact disc, use just CD.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ The company put the catalog on CD-ROM to prevent unauthorized changes to the content.
 - ◊ Put the CDs into the jewel boxes before you leave.

child care

- Two words. *Not childcare*.

OKDHS Style Guide

comma

For more information about comma use, see the Purdue OWL at owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/index.html

Use commas:

- To separate the items in a series of three or more words, phrases, and clauses.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ Be sure to bring your laptop, the working files and all your notes to the meeting.
- **NOTE: Do not place a comma before the conjunction unless the meaning would be unclear.** This is follows AP style and differs from comma use style in *The Elements of Style*.
- To link independent clauses that are linked by a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, or, nor, and sometimes so, yet, and for*). The comma goes before the conjunction.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ The temperatures were very hot, and the sky was cloudless.
- To enclose elements such as nonrestrictive clauses and parenthetical elements.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ The files, which are now stacked on the floor, should be packed away.
 - ◊ They did, of course, arrive at the airport on time.
- In dates when expressed as month, day, and year.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ The letter was signed Jan. 14, 1995, but it was never mailed.
- In addresses when written out in linear mode in a sentence:
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ He has lived at 4409 Adams St., Philadelphia, PA, for the past 20 years.
- **Note:** Commas always go inside quotation marks.

common nouns proper nouns

- Remembering these definitions can help with the “do I capitalize it or don’t I” quandary that so often happens in the middle of a writing project.
- **proper noun** — Names a specific person, place, thing, concept, action, or quality and is always capitalized.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ John, Webster’s New World Dictionary, Rottweiler, Chevrolet, English
- **common noun** — Names general classes or categories of persons, places, things, concepts, actions, or qualities. Common nouns are NOT capitalized unless they start a sentence. This category includes all types of nouns except proper nouns.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ man, book, dog, car, language
- **Note:** Some nouns can be both.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ China, china
 - ◊ turkey, Turkey

OKDHS Style Guide

criteria criterion

- The word *criteria* means *an established standard for judging*.
- *criteria* — plural
- *criterion* — singular.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ In evaluating this project, we must use three *criteria*.
 - ◊ The most important *criterion* of these three is the quality of the workmanship.

company names

- Abbreviate *company*, *corporation*, *incorporated* and *limited* when part of a name. Do not set off with commas.
 - ▶ **Examples:** the Coca-Cola Co., Rock Island Line Inc.
- **NOTE:** When referring to a company, “Co.” and “Inc.” may be omitted entirely in all but the most formal settings or when needed for clarity.
- *Ampersands (&)* are not used in running text. Use the word *and* instead.

D

- database**
- One word.
- dates**
- In text, use the *month, day, year* format. Spell out the month when using the month and the year. Abbreviate the month when used with the date or with the date and the year. The only exceptions to this rule are the months March, April, May, June and July.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - Do not use the slash format for dates. Some countries write dates month, day, year; others write them day, month, year. The slashes can cause confusion.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◇ Do not use — 10/05/99, 20/06/89, 10/01/01
- dilemma**
- The word has no *n*. Spell it *dilemma*.
 - This word is often misused to mean just *an unpleasant situation*. The word actually means *a choice between two (and only two) bad alternatives*. Very rarely it is very rarely used to mean *a hard choice between two good alternatives*. It should not be used to mean *a choice between a good alternative and bad one*.
- disk**
- **OKDHS style:**
 - ▶ Use *disk* to refer to the thin, flat plate on which computer data can be stored. Do not use as an abbreviation for *diskette*.
 - ▶ Do not use *disc*.
- diskette**
- A generic term that means *floppy disk*. Not synonymous with *disk*.

E

effect affect

- See [affect](#), [effect](#).

e.g. i.e.

- These are often confused. To ensure your writing is clearly understood, try to avoid using them. If you must use them, however, follow these guidelines to use them correctly:
 - ▶ *e.g.*—This is an abbreviation for *exempli gratia* (Latin), which means *for example*. The abbreviation *e.g.* should be followed by a partial list or an example of what you mean. Do not use *etc.* at the end of the list.
 - ▶ *i.e.*—This is an abbreviation for *id est* (Latin), which means *that is*. The abbreviation *i.e.* should be followed by an exact equivalent as a restatement or a full list.

e-mail

- It should be hyphenated.
- Use *e-mail* if the word is in a sentence.
- Use *E-mail* if it's the first word in a sentence or if it is part of a list.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ Please include your:
 - Phone:
 - Fax:
 - *E-mail*:
 - ◊ Please *e-mail* the file to me.

ensure assure insure

- See [assure](#), [ensure](#), [insure](#).

etc.

- This is an abbreviation for the Latin *et cetera*, which means *and others* or *and so forth*.
- Use *etc.* very, very sparingly. Do not use it in formal documents at all. Frequent use conveys the idea that the writer is not well acquainted with the subject or is just too lazy to provide the details.
- Do not use with the word *and*. That is repetitive.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ *Incorrect* — She brought pencils, pads, erasers, pens, and etc.
 - ◊ *Correct* — She brought pencils, pads, erasers, pens, etc.
- Do not use with *e.g.* That is also redundant.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ *Incorrect* — She brought home her writing supplies; *e.g.*, pencils, notepads, erasers, pens, pencil sharpeners, etc
 - ◊ *Correct* — She brought home her writing supplies; *e.g.*, pencils, notepads, erasers, pens, pencil sharpeners.

F

Federal federal

- Use uppercase when referring to the architectural style or for organizations or governmental bodies that use it as part of their name (proper noun).
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ Federal Express
 - ◊ Federal Reserve Board
- Use lowercase when used as an adjective, to distinguish something from state, city, county, or private entities.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ federal assistance, federal court, federal aid

fewer less

- Use *fewer* if you can count the units.
- Use *less* if you have to measure the amount.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ *Fewer* traffic tickets were issued last month because of the staffing cutbacks.
 - ◊ The container had *less* potato salad than it did the last time I bought the same brand.
 - ◊ We bid on *fewer* contracts in 1994 than we did in 1995, so we did *less* work.
 - ◊ *Less* fertilizer means *fewer* flowers.

for the purpose of

- This is a long, windy phrase. Use the simple little word *to* instead.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ *Incorrect* — They are going to Fort Leavenworth for the purpose of working on the contract.
 - ◊ *Correct* — They are going to Fort Leavenworth to work on the contract.

G

- government**
- Always lowercase and never abbreviate.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ The FBI is the government agency that was mentioned in the report.
- General Writing Guidelines**
- See Appendix 1 – General Writing Guidelines

H

- have an effect on**
has an effect on
- Too wordy. Simplify to *affect* or *affects*.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ *Don't use*—Automobile exhaust has an effect on the ozone.
 - ◊ *Use*—Automobile exhaust affects the ozone.
 - ◊ *Don't use*—The number of vehicles that use that road has an affect on how often it needs resurfacing.
 - ◊ *Use*—The number of vehicles that use that road affect how often it needs resurfacing.
 - Also see Rule 13—Omit Needless Words in *The Elements of Style* at <<http://www.bartleby.com/141/strunk5.html> - 13>.

I

i.e.

e.g.

- See [e.g., i.e.](#)

inflammable

flammable

- Historically, *flammable* and *inflammable* mean the same thing.
- The prefix *in-* has misled many people into assuming that *inflammable* means “not flammable” or “noncombustible.” The problem arises from the root of *-in*. For more information, see <<http://www.bartleby.com/61/47/F0164700.html>>. Obviously this can be very dangerous.
- For clarity’s sake, use only *flammable* to give warnings.

insure

ensure

assure

- See [assure, ensure, insure](#).

it’s

its

- *It’s* is a contraction (a shortened form) of *it is*. Do not use *it’s* in formal AST writing.
- *Its* is possessive.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ If the dog bares *its* teeth, *it’s* probably wise to retreat.

J

- join together** • The word *together* is redundant in both of these.
- link together** • When you join things, you have to join *together*. You wouldn't join *apart*.
- Remove *together*. Use just *join* and just *link* alone.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ Use wood glue to join the back of the chair and the seat.
 - ◊ A fiber optic line links the two buildings, allowing employees fast access to the server files.
- judgment** • No e. Not judgement.

K

keynote address

- Also keynote speech.

kids

- Kids are young goats, so use children unless you are talking about goats.
- *Kids* is an acceptable informal synonym for *children* in the right context.

L

- labor-year**
- See [man-year and man-day](#).
- labor-day**
- Not often used, but when it is, approach it cautiously. While it may be less sexist, it is just as vague as man-year and man-day. Both of these terms can mean very different things to different agencies. Be sure the agency clarifies what they consider to be a labor-day and a labor-year. If you use this term in your writing, be sure to follow the term with the specific number of hours you have in mind.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ They want a quote for a labor-year (1920 hours) for that position.
- lay**
- *lay* — A transitive verb; means *to set down, place or put*. (Principal parts: lay, lay, have laid, is laying).
 - *lie* — An intransitive verb; means to recline. (Principal parts: lie, lay, have lain, is lying).
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ The contractor must lay the foundation of the building one section at a time.
 - ◊ Injured employees should lie down and remain still until help arrives.
 - ◊ The injured employees have lain on the sidewalk for an hour.
- lie**
- lead**
- Often confused.
 - *lead* — To show the way by going in advance. Pronounced with a *long e* sound, as in *feed*.
 - *led* — Past tense of *to lead*. Pronounced with a *short e* sound, as in *bed*.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ The tour guide will *lead* the way through the jungle.
 - ◊ We *led* our competitors in the number of contracts we were awarded last year.
 - *lead* — A soft, malleable, ductile, bluish-white, dense metallic element. Pronounced just like *led*, but obviously has a very different meaning.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ *Lead* is used to fabricate stained glass windows that will be subject to heat and cold because it allows expansion and contraction of the glass.
- led**
- link together**
- See [join together](#), [link together](#).
- join together**
- together**

M

man-day man-year

- *man-day* — An industrial unit of production equal to the work one person can produce in a day.
- *man-year* — A unit measuring the work of one person in a year, based on a standard number of man-days.
- Be very careful when you run across either of these terms. They can mean different things to different agencies. Be sure to get the agency to define exactly what they mean.
- If you use either of these term in your writing, be sure to follow the term with the specific number of hours you have in mind. Better yet, skip the term and just state the hours.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ We quoted a man-year (1920 hours) for that position.

may can

- See [can](#), [may](#).

N

nouns

See [common nouns](#), [proper nouns](#).

numbers

- Do not follow a spelled-out number with a numeral in parentheses. The spelled out number is sufficient; using both is redundant. The reader will understand with just the first one.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ *Incorrect* — She read five (5) books in three (3) days.
 - ◊ *Correct* — She read five books in three days.
- Use cardinal numbers (numerals) in:
 - ▶ Addresses. Always use numerals in addresses: 125 S. Wilson St.
 - ▶ Ages. Always use numbers, even for days or months: 3 days old; 56 years old;
 - ▶ Aircraft and space craft. *F-4, DC-10,*
 - ▶ The only exception to this is *Air Force One*.
 - ▶ Clothes sizes: size 7
 - ▶ Dates: Always use numerals alone. Do not use *-rd-, st, - or -th* after the numeral.
- Also see [ages](#).
- Spell out numbers of less than 10; use numerals for 10 and up. If the sentence has a mix, use numerals for all.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ He ate 12 slices of pizza, 3 apples, 4 ham sandwiches, and 10 hot dogs.
- If sentence begins with a number, rewrite the sentence.
- When you refer to the proper name of something and it conflicts with these rules, always use the proper name.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ Look in Chapter 5 for the answers. (In this case, 5 is not spelled out because that is the proper name of the chapter. See [proper nouns](#) for more information.)

OKDHS Style Guide

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

O

OKDHS

- When referring to the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, spell out the name on first reference, then abbreviate it as OKDHS.
- To avoid confusion with the Department of Homeland security, do not use DHS to refer to OKDHS.

occur

occurred

occurring

occurrence

- These are commonly misspelled.

P

paragraph

- Do not uppercase the word paragraph unless it refers to a specific section of a document.
 - ▶ Example:
 - ◊ *Correct* — The company discussed that topic in Paragraph 5.3.1.
 - ◊ *Correct* — That paragraph is in Section 5.
 - ◊ *Incorrect* — The following Paragraph has no errors.

parallel structure

- Parallel structure requires that elements that are alike in function be alike in construction as well. This is particularly important in lists and numbers, but applies to general sentence structure also.
- **Example:**
 - ▶ *Incorrect* — They admired him for *his planning skills, his dedication,* and because he is so friendly.
 - ▶ *Correct* — They admired him for *his planning skills, his dedication,* and *his friendliness.*

 - ▶ *Incorrect* — Before starting the lawnmower, check the following: *the dipstick for proper oil level, the gas tank for fuel, and that there are no foreign objects under the mower.*
 - ▶ *Correct* — Before starting the lawnmower, check the following: *the dipstick for proper oil level, the gas tank for fuel, and the lawn for foreign objects.*

 - ▶ *Incorrect* — *The* seminar planning committee has confirmed that the hotel can provide the following:
 - ◊ A room that can seat 250 people for the main events.
 - ◊ Eight smaller rooms to use for breakout classes.
 - ◊ Overhead projectors and screens for all the meeting rooms.
 - ◊ Web access and computer workstations for the classrooms.
 - ◊ Ensure that all guests who pre-register will have reserved hotel rooms.
 - ▶ *Correct* — The seminar planning committee has confirmed that the hotel can provide the following:
 - ◊ A room that can seat 250 people for the main events.
 - ◊ Eight smaller rooms to use for breakout classes.
 - ◊ Overhead projectors and screens for all the meeting rooms.
 - ◊ Web access and computer workstations for the classrooms.
 - ◊ Reserved hotel rooms for all pre-registered guests.

percent

- One word.
- Spell out in text; use the % sign in tables and graphics to conserve space, if necessary. (If you use % in one graphic to save space, use it consistently in all graphics.)
- Always use numerals with the word.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ *Incorrect* — nine percent
 - ◊ *Correct* — 9 percent

plurals

- Do not use 's to pluralize an acronym or abbreviation. The apostrophe makes it possessive. Use just a lowercase s. Also see [apostrophe](#).
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ *Incorrect*—CD's, PC's, VCR's
 - ◊ *Correct* — CDs, PCs, VCRs

prior to

- *Before* is less stilted for most uses.
- *Prior to* is appropriate, however, when a notion of requirement is involved.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ *Incorrect*—Put on your coat prior to going outside.
 - ◊ *Correct*—The fee must be paid prior to the examination.
- Note: If in doubt, stick with before.

proper nouns common nouns

- See [common nouns](#), [proper nouns](#).

Q

quotation marks

- Periods and commas always go *inside* quote marks.
 - The dash, the semicolon, and the colon go *inside* the quotation marks *only* when they apply to the quoted material. If they apply to the whole sentence, they go *outside*.
 - Question marks also depend on the context. If the question *is* part of the quoted material, the question mark goes *inside* the quotation marks. If the question is not part of the quoted material, they go *outside*.
 - If both the sentence and the quote are questions, use only one question mark inside the quotation marks.
 - Exclamation marks follow the same rule as question marks.
- ▶ **Example:**
- ◊ He said, “Who cares?” (quote is question)
 - ◊ Have you read “War and Peace”?
 - ◊ Have you ever heard “What Kind of Fool Am I?” (both are questions)

R

- RFP**
- Stands for Request for Proposal.
- RFQ**
- Stands for Request for Quotation or Request for Quote.

S

section

- When referring to the proper name of a part of the proposal, uppercase. In generic reference in text, lowercase.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◇ That topic is discussed in Section 5 of the manual.
 - ◇ That section also covers hardware configuration.

state abbreviations state names

- Spell out the names of all 50 states when they stand alone in text. If used with a town, the state should be abbreviated, using the older form of abbreviations on the list below. Use the two-letter Postal Service abbreviations listed below ONLY with full addresses, including ZIP code.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◇ Sonic headquarters is in Oklahoma.
 - ◇ The General Motors Plant was in Oklahoma City, Okla.
 - ◇ The beach property is just north of Kitty Hawk, N.C.
 - ◇ Send the completed forms to Jerry Jones, 3451 Main St., St. Louis, MO 67543.
- Note: State names may be abbreviated to fit tables or other places where space is limited.
- The names of eight states are never abbreviated: Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas and Utah.
- When referring to the proper name of a state or state agency, uppercase and spell out.
- When referring to the state generically, spell out and lowercase the word *state*.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◇ the state of Kentucky
 - ◇ the state flower of Kentucky
- Always spell out Washington, D.C.
- State abbreviations are listed below. The second abbreviation is the Postal Service abbreviation, which should be used only with a full address, including the ZIP code. Do not use periods with the Postal Service abbreviations.

OKDHS Style Guide

Alabama – Ala., AL	Maine – ME	Oklahoma – Okla., OK
Alaska – AK	Maryland – Md., MD	Oregon – Ore., OR
Arizona – Ariz., AZ	Massachusetts – Mass., MA	Pennsylvania – Penn., PA
Arkansas – Ark., AR	Michigan – Mich., MI	Rhode Island – R.I., RI
California – Calif., CA	Minnesota – Minn., MN	South Carolina – S.C., SC
Colorado – Colo., CO	Mississippi – Miss., MS	South Dakota – S.D., SD
Connecticut – Conn., CT	Missouri – Mo., MO	Tennessee – Tenn., TN
Delaware – Del., DE	Montana – Mont., MT	Texas – TX
Florida – Fla., FL	Nebraska – Neb., NE	Utah – UT
Georgia – Ga., GA	Nevada – Nev., NV	Vermont – Vt., VT
Hawaii – HI	New Hampshire – N.H., NH	Virginia – Va., VA
Idaho – ID	New Jersey – N.J., NJ	Washington – Wash., WA
Indiana – Ind., IN	New Mexico – N.M., NM	West Virginia – W.V., WV
Iowa – IA	New York – N.Y., NY	Wisconsin – Wis., WI
Kansas – Kan., KS	North Carolina – N.C., NC	Wyoming – Wyo., WY
Kentucky – Ky., KY	North Dakota – N.D., ND	
Louisiana – La., LA	Ohio – OH	

statewide

- One word.

stationary stationery

- To stand still is to be *stationary*.
- Writing paper is *stationery*.
- Here's a little memory jogger:
 - ▶ A box of *stationery* often includes envelopes along with the writing paper. (Both envelope used to mail a letter and the word *stationery* have an e.)

street names

- Use the abbreviations *St.*, *Bld.* and *St.* only with a numbered address.
- Spell them out and capitalize them when part of a street name without a number.
- Abbreviate compass *points* in an address when used with a number.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ I live at 3456 W. Oak Blvd.
 - ◊ I live on Oak Boulevard.

symbols

- Do not use # as an abbreviated form of *number* in text or tables or graphics. Use *No.* instead.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ *Incorrect* — #1, #2,
 - ◊ *Correct* — No. 1, No. 2
- Do not use & in place of the word *and* unless it is part of a proper name.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ *Incorrect* — The materials & supplies will be delivered on time. (Spell out *and*.)
 - ◊ *Correct* — Wilbur Jones & Sons, Inc. (proper name)

T

that which who

- Use *that* and *which* to refer to animals that have no names and to things.
- Use *who* to refer to a person or an animal with a name.
- *that* — This word is restrictive. It should be used when eliminating the phrase would change the meaning of the sentence. It is used to introduce essential information.
- *which* – This word is nonrestrictive. It should be used when eliminating the phrase would not change the meaning of the sentence. It introduces non-essential information.
- **Note:** Clauses that are introduced by the word *which* are set off with commas. Think of a non-essential clause as an aside. This might help you to remember that the word *which* introduces a clause set off by commas, parentheses, or dashes. *That* introduces essential information and is not set off with parentheses, dashes, or commas.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◇ The lawnmower that is broken is in the shed.
 - (Essential because it tells which lawn mower.)
 - ◇ The lawn mower, which is broken, is in the garage.
 - (Non-essential because apparently there is only one lawn mower, which happens to be broken.)
 - ◇ Sadie, *who* loves fish, gets quite excited and starts meowing when I open the Tuna Delight.
 - (The adjective clause uses *who* because the cat has a name.)
 - ◇ The cat *that* was in our driveway does not belong to our neighbors.
 - (*Essential* because it defines which cat, but *that* because I do not know its name.)
 - ◇ The kitten, *which* was very playful, showed up on my front porch.
 - (Non-essential because leaving out the clause doesn't change the meaning of the sentence, but *which* because I do not know its name.)

their theirs they're there's

- Pay close attention to these. Unfortunately computer spellcheckers don't note the mistaken substitution of one of these homonyms for the other -- nor for *there's* and the plural possessive *theirs*.
- *Their* is the possessive form of the pronoun *they*.
- *They're* is a contraction of *they are*.
- *There's* is the contraction of there is.
- *Theirs* is the plural possessive.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◇ The neighbors are upset because their dog disappeared from the back yard.
 - ◇ They're pretty upset because they've had the dog for years.
 - ◇ A lady down the street told them she saw a dog that looked like theirs in the alley.
 - ◇ She just called, so there's a chance they may catch up with the dog if they immediately go look.

OKDHS Style Guide

titles, composition titles magazine titles

- Apply these guidelines to the titles of books, computer games, movies, operas, plays, poems, songs, television programs, lectures, speeches and works of art.
 - ▶ Capitalize the principal words, including prepositions and conjunctions of four or more letters.
 - ▶ Capitalize an article (the, a, an) or words of fewer than four letters if it is the first or last word in a title.
 - ▶ Put quotation marks around the names of all such works except the Bible and books that are primarily catalogs of reference material. This category also includes almanacs, directories, dictionaries, encyclopedias, gazetteers, handbooks and similar publications.
 - ▶ Italicize the names of books.
 - ▶ Do not use quote marks around software titles, such as Microsoft Excel or Adobe Acrobat.
- Also see the *Citations* entry in *Appendix 1 – General Writing Guidelines* for information about citing works used as reference.

to too two

- *To* is a preposition and usually means *in a direction toward*.
- *Too* is an adverb and it means *also*.
- *Two* is a number.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ Two of the boys walked to the soccer field. The soccer coach and the referee were there, too.

toward

- Use toward, not towards.

U

U.S.

- This is an abbreviation for United States, not an acronym; use the periods.

unique

- This means one of a kind; unlike anything else.
- Do not use *more*, *less*, *rather*, *quite*, *very*, *slightly*, or *most* to modify unique. There are no degrees of uniqueness. It either is or is not unique.

utilize

- Don't use this word. The plain, simple, and time-honored word *use* is shorter. After all, how often do you say *utilize* in everyday conversation?

- ▶ **Example:**

- ◊ *Incorrect* — *I utilize a toothbrush.*
- ◊ *Correct* — *I use a toothbrush.*

V

videotape

- One word for both noun and verb.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ Have you loaded the videotape in the player?
 - ◊ We will videotape the scenario for the training tape.

W

which that who

- See [that](#), [which](#), [who](#).

who's whose

- *Who's* is a contraction for who is. It does not show possession.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ Who's in charge of that project?
- *Whose* is the possessive.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ Whose computer is that?

woman-owned

- Do not use woman-owned to describe the business category. Just one woman owning it is enough to qualify it for the category, even when talking about several businesses that are owned by women.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ There are six woman-owned businesses listed in the directory.

work force

- Two words.

workplace

- One word.

work plan

- Two words.

work site

- Two words.

workstation

- One word.
- Consider using the simpler *desk*, if appropriate.

writing guidelines

- See Parts 4 and 5 – for writing guidelines, tips and other information.

X

No entries

- This version of the style guide has no entries under this letter.

Y

- year-end**
- Hyphenate both the noun and the adjective.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ The project is due at year-end
 - ◊ The company released its year-end sales numbers.
- yearlong**
- One word.
- year-round**
- Hyphenate.
- years**
- Use numerals without commas.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ Record heat baked the area in 1999.
 - Use an s without an apostrophe to show spans of decades or centuries.
 - ▶ **Example:**
 - ◊ *1990s, 1900s, '90s*

Z

zeros

- No e before the s.

Words, Grammar, Usage Index

- A, 1
a lot, 4
a, an, 1
academic courses, majors, 1
academic degrees, 2
academic titles, 2
accept, except, 2
acronyms, 1, 3
active, passive, 3
addresses, 3
adviser, 3
advisory, 3
affect, effect, 3
afterward, 4
ages. See numbers
all ready, already, 4
all right, 4
also, 4
Alzheimer's disease, 4
among, between, 4
and/or, 5
annual, 5
another, 5
anybody, any body, anyone, any one, 5
apostrophe, 6
as well as, 6
assure, ensure, insure, 6
- B, 7
back up, backup, 7
backward, 7
barbecue, 7
because, since, 7
between you and me, 7
biannual, biennial, 7
bimonthly, biweekly, 7
black, white, 7
bulleted series, 7
- C, 9
can, may, 9
capitalization, 9
CD, CD-ROM, 9
child care, 9
comma, 10
common nouns, proper nouns, 10
company names, 11
criteria, criterion, 11
- D, 12
database, 12
dates, 12
disc, disk, 12
diskette, 12
- E, 13
e.g., i.e., 13
effect, affect. See affect, effect
email, 13
ensure, assure, insure. See assure, ensure, insure
etc., 13
- F, 14
Federal, federal, 14
fewer, less, 14
for the purpose of, 14
- G, 15
General Writing Guidelines. See Appendix 2
Government, 15
- H, 16
have an effect on, 16
- I, 17
i.e., e.g., 17
inflammable, flammable, 17
insure, ensure, assure. See assure, ensure, insure
it's, its, 17
- J, 18
join together, 18
judgment, 18
- K, 19
kids, 19
KO, 19
- L, 20
labor-year, labor-day, 20
lead, led, 20
lie, lay, 20
link together. See join together
- M, 21
man-day, man-year, 21
may, can, 21
- N, 22
nouns, 22
numbers, 22
- O, 23
occur, occurred, occurring, 23
Online reference resources, ii
- P, 24
paragraph, 24
parallel structure, 24
percent, 25
plurals, 25
Preface, ii
prior to, 25

OKDHS Style Guide

- proper nouns, common nouns, 25
- Q, 26
 - quotation marks, 26
- R, 27
 - RFP, 27
 - RFQ, 27
- S, 28
 - section, 28
 - state names, 28
 - statewide, 29
 - stationary, stationery, 29
 - street names, 29
 - symbols, 29
- T, 30
 - Table of Contents, iii
- that, which, 30
- their, they're, there's, there's, 30
- titles, publications, 31
- to, to, two, 31
- toward, 31
- U, 32
 - U.S., 32
 - unique, 32
 - utilize, 32
- V, 33
 - videotape, 33
- W, 34
 - which, that, 34
 - who's, whose, 34
 - woman-owned, 34
- work force, 34
- work plan, 34
- work site, 34
- workplace, 34
- workstation, 34
- writing guidelines. See Appendix 2
- X, 35
 - no entries, 35
- Y, 36
 - year end, 36
 - yearlong, 36
 - year-round, 36
 - years, 36
- Z, 37
 - zeros, 37