



***U.S. MASTERS
SWIMMING***

USMS Publications Style Guide

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Introduction

This publication gives guidelines for writing USMS print and Web documents. It is based on “The Associated Press Stylebook” (Goldstein, Norm, ed., Basic Books, 2004), but is not identical to it. It is not intended to cover every question that could arise, but rather the most common ones. If you have a question not covered in this guide, please consult the AP guide, or contact the USMS publications and communications director at editor@usms.org.

In this guide, examples are shown in a different font and bulleted:

- This is an example.

Words used as words are printed in *italics*:

- Don't use *hopefully* when you really mean *I hope*.

Numerals

When should you use a numeral (1, 57, 197, etc.) and when should you spell the word out (one, fifty-seven, one hundred ninety-seven, etc.)? In general, spell out numbers less than 10, and use numerals for 10 or more:

- You can swim three events at nationals.
- I bought 12 caps.

When you use a numeral, do **not** include the spelled-out alternative in parentheses after the numeral, or vice versa:

- **WRONG:** You can swim three (3) events at nationals. I bought 12 (twelve) caps.

Age

Always use numerals for people and animals, but spell out for inanimate objects:

- Michael Phelps first swam in the Olympics when he was 15 years old.
- The Kentucky Derby is a race for 3-year-olds.
- The rule change is two years old.

EXCEPTION: Use numerals for any age 10 or greater for inanimate objects:

- The rule book is 16 years old.

Dimensions

Use numerals with inches, feet, yards, etc. (but spell out the unit of measurement instead of abbreviating) to indicate depth, height, length, and width:

- Short course is 25 yards or 25 meters long.
- Swimmers may not dive into 3-foot-deep pools.
- She swam 4 miles before dawn.

Money

Use numerals with the \$ sign:

- The entry fee is \$25.

Note that when stating a dollar amount, with no cents, it is not necessary to include a decimal point and two zeros:

- \$25 not \$25.00 (but \$25.25)

Use numerals and the \$ sign and the word *million* (or *billion*, *trillion*, etc.) for amounts of \$1 million or more. Use numerals and the word *cents* for amounts less than \$1:

- \$1 million, \$5 billion
- 25 cents

Fractions

Spell out fractions less than one, and use hyphens:

- two-thirds, five-eighths

Use numerals for fractions larger than one, and convert to decimals whenever practical:

- 1 3/8, 1.5, 3.75

Do use a space between the whole number and the fraction:

- WRONG: 1-3/8, 13/8
- RIGHT: 1 3/8

Time of day

Use numerals for time of day, except for *noon* or *midnight*:

- The meet starts at 7 a.m.

Note that when stating the top of the hour, it is not necessary to include the colon and two zeros:

- 7 a.m. not 7.00 a.m. (but 7:25 a.m.)

Do **not** put a *12* in front of *noon* or *midnight*.

At the beginning of a sentence

Do **not** start a sentence with a numeral; spell it out, even if the rules would ordinarily call for a numeral:

- Seven hundred twenty swimmers participated in Elizabethtown Nationals.

It's better to rephrase the sentence so you don't begin it with a number:

- Elizabethtown Nationals had 720 swimmers.

EXCEPTION: Use numerals if the first word in a sentence is a year:

- 1956 is the year I was born.

Capitalization

Avoid “random acts of capitalization.” The trend in modern writing is to avoid capitalization unless absolutely necessary.

Proper names

Always capitalize proper names

- Janet Evans, Mark Spitz, Tracy, Michael

The following are considered proper names for USMS purposes and are always capitalized:

- Masters
- Board of Directors
- names of standing committees (Rules Committee, for example)
- Internet
- World Wide Web, the Web
- Nationals

The following are not capitalized:

- email (also note the lack of a hyphen—this is an exception to AP style)
- webmaster, website
- freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, individual medley

Titles of books, movies, plays, etc.

Capitalize the principal words, including prepositions and conjunctions of four or more letters:

- “Gone With the Wind”
- “It’s Not About the Bike”

Use quotation marks, not italics, with these titles.

Capitalize *convention* as part of the formal name of a meeting:

- U.S. Aquatic Sports Convention

Otherwise, lowercase:

- I attended the convention.

Titles of people

Only capitalize titles if they come before a person’s name:

- The president appoints committee chairs.
- The meeting was called to order by President Nadine Day.

Directions

Lowercase compass directions (north, south, northwest, etc.), but capitalize when they designate regions:

- Indianapolis is northwest of Lexington.
- Water polo is popular on the West Coast.
- Southerners eat more fried foods than Northerners.
- The climate is wet in the Northwest.

Earth

Lowercase *earth* unless it's used as the proper name of the planet:

- Where on earth did you go?
- Someday astronauts will travel from Earth to Mars.

Seasons

Do **not** capitalize *spring*, *summer*, *fall*, *autumn*, or *winter* unless part of a formal name:

- The NCAA considers swimming a winter sport.
- The next Summer Olympics will be held in Beijing.

Geographic terms

Capitalize terms such as *river*, *county*, and *valley* if part of a formal geographic name:

- Mississippi River
- Red River Valley
- Fayette County

Also capitalize plurals (this is an exception to AP style):

- The Ohio and Mississippi Rivers
- Fayette and Jessamine Counties

Abbreviations

Frequent abbreviations (a shortened form of a word) are distracting to the reader and should be avoided. They are more acceptable in technical material (such as the rule book) that is intended for a swimming-savvy audience. They should be avoided in marketing and promotional materials intended for people who might not be familiar with swimming terminology.

Acronyms and initialisms

An acronym is a word that is created with the first letters of several other words, such as *START* for *Strategic Tactical and Response Team*. Notice that *START* is an actual word, so it is an acronym. *USMS* is **not** an acronym; it is an initialism, since there is no such word as *USMS*.

If you use an acronym or initialism, spell it out on first use, and then use the acronym or initialism thereafter. Do **not** include the acronym or initialism in parentheses after the first use; you are underestimating your readers' intelligence if you assume they cannot figure out, for example, that *USMS* stands for *U.S. Masters Swimming* when the initialism appears in the next paragraph.

State names

Abbreviate all state names **except for** *Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas, and Utah* when used with cities:

- Nashville, Tenn.

Well-known cities, such as *Chicago* and *Los Angeles*, do not require a state name.

Acceptable state abbreviations are:

Ala.	Ariz.	Ark.	Calif.	Colo.	Conn.
Del.	Fla.	Ga.	Ill.	Ind.	Kan.
Ky.	La.	Md.	Mass.	Mich.	Minn.
Miss.	Mo.	Mont.	Neb.	Nev.	N.H.
N.J.	N.M.	N.Y.	N.C.	N.D.	Okla.
Ore.	Pa.	R.I.	S.C.	S.D.	Tenn.
Vt.	Va.	Wash.	W.Va.	Wis.	Wyo.

Do **not** use postal abbreviations except with a mailing address:

- 838 Summerly Dr., Nashville, TN 37209

Acceptable postal abbreviations are:

AL	AK	AZ	AR	CA	CO
CT	DE	FL	GA	HI	ID
IL	IN	IA	KS	KY	LA
ME	MD	MA	MI	MN	MS
MO	MT	NE	NV	NH	NJ
NM	NY	NC	ND	OH	OK
OR	PA	RI	SC	SD	TN
TX	UT	VT	VA	WA	WV
WI	WY				

Fort

Do **not** abbreviate in names of cities and military bases:

- Fort Lauderdale, Fort Knox

Mount

Do **not** abbreviate in names of mountains or cities:

- Mount Rainier, Mount Vernon, Ky.

Inc.

Abbreviate *Incorporated* in a company name and do **not** set off with commas:

- Satchmo Publishing Inc.

Initials

If a person uses two initials instead of a first name, use periods and do **not** put a space between the initials:

- B.B. King

Jr., Sr.

Use the abbreviations with full names and do **not** set off with commas:

- Gary Hall Jr.

Months

Abbreviate *January, February, August, September, October, November, and December* when used with a specific date:

- Oct. 13, 1956

Spell out when used alone or with only a year:

- The convention is usually in September.
- She was born in October 1956.

Do **not** use the ordinal form of the number (adding *st*, *th*, or *rd*) with dates:

- WRONG: The deadline for entries is May 31st.
- RIGHT: The deadline for entries is May 31.

Percent

Do **not** use the % symbol except in tables (and only if space is an issue).

- WRONG: 75% of swimmers say they hate breaststroke
- RIGHT: 75 percent of swimmers say they hate breaststroke

a.m., p.m.

Use *a.m.* and *p.m.* (lowercase, with periods) to indicate morning and afternoon. Do **not** use the redundant *7 a.m. in the morning*.

Prefixes and Suffixes

The trend in modern writing is away from using hyphens with prefixes and suffixes. For prefixes, the general rule is **not** to use a hyphen when combining with a word starting with a consonant:

- bypass

Do use a hyphen if the prefix ends in a vowel and the word it's combined with begins with the same vowel:

- anti-inflammatory

Also use a hyphen if the word following the prefix is capitalized

- anti-Nixon

or to join doubled prefixes

- sub-subparagraph

co-

Use a hyphen when forming a word that indicates occupation or status

- co-host, co-worker

Otherwise, do **not** use hyphen

- coexist, coed

-elect

Always use a hyphen with this suffix:

- President-elect Jim Miller

ex-

Do **not** use a hyphen if it means *out of*:

- excommunicate

Do use a hyphen if it means *former*:

- ex-wife, ex-president

great-

Always hyphenate:

- great-grandfather

-like

Do **not** use a hyphen unless the letter *L* would be tripled or the first word is a proper noun:

- businesslike, bell-like, Rastafarian-like

mid-

Do **not** use a hyphen unless followed by a capitalized word:

- midterm, mid-American

mini-

No hyphen:

- miniskirt, minivan

non-

Do **not** use a hyphen unless it is followed by a proper noun or if the combination is awkward:

- nonjudgmental
- non-nuclear
- non-British

over-

No hyphen:

- overextend
- overrate

pro-

Use a hyphen when indicating support for something:

- pro-chocolate

Otherwise, do **not** use a hyphen:

- pronoun
- prorate

self-

Always use a hyphen:

- self-important
- self-defense

semi-

Do **not** use a hyphen unless the word it is being combined with begins with an *i*:

- semisweet
- semi-ignorant

super-

Do **not** use a hyphen unless the word it is combined with is capitalized:

- superpower
- super-Democrat
- EXCEPTION: Super Bowl

ultra-

No hyphen:

- ultralight
- ultraviolet

under-

No hyphen:

- underdog
- underground

-up

For nouns or adjectives, consult a dictionary, but here are some common examples:

- breakup
- checkup
- cover-up
- follow-up
- grown-up
- holdup
- makeup
- mix-up
- pileup
- push-up
- runner-up
- shake-up
- warm-up
- warm-down

As verbs, spell as two words:

- What time does warm-up start? (Noun)
- I never warm up much. (Verb)

up-

No hyphen:

- uptown
- upstairs

vice

Use as two words:

- vice president
- vice chair

-wide

No hyphen:

- nationwide
- worldwide

wide-

Usually hyphenated:

- wide-awake
- wide-open
- EXCEPTION: widespread

Grammar

A or an?

You're thinking: I learned this in grammar school—*a* before a consonant and *an* before a vowel. But it's actually a bit trickier. Use *a* before the **sound of a consonant** and *an* before the **sound of a vowel**:

- a swim meet
- a USMS sponsor (the U in USMS sounds like it begins with the letter Y)
- an open water event
- an award
- an NCAA championship (the N in NCAA sounds like it begins with the letter E)

Split infinitives

You may not remember from grammar school what a split infinitive is, but you remember you're not supposed to do it! An infinitive is the form of the verb combined with the preposition *to*, as in *to swim*; the infinitive is split when a modifier is inserted between *to* and the verb:

- WRONG: to rapidly swim
- RIGHT: to swim rapidly

Although it's true you should avoid splitting an infinitive if it sounds awkward, sometimes it sounds more awkward if you don't split. Which sounds better?

- To boldly go where no one has gone before
- To go boldly where no one has gone before

Ending a sentence with a preposition

You were also probably taught not to end a sentence with a preposition. Don't worry about it! Rewriting a sentence to avoid ending with a preposition usually results in a more awkward-sounding sentence than if you'd just left it alone. Which sounds worse?

- Ending a sentence with a preposition is something with which I will not put up.
- Ending a sentence with a preposition is something I won't put up with.

Dangling modifiers

Make sure a modifying phrase has a subject in the sentence to modify:

- WRONG: As a swimmer, water temperature is very important to me. (The subject of this sentence is *temperature*, so *as a swimmer* can't logically modify it.)
- RIGHT: As a swimmer, I'm concerned about water temperature.

Punctuation

That pesky punctuation! But it's not just something your English teacher nagged you about. It's necessary to help your readers find their way through your sentences. Punctuation serves the same function for the written word that pauses and voice inflection serve for the spoken word.

Apostrophes (')

Apostrophes have several uses:

To indicate possession

Add an 's to a singular noun to make it possessive:

- the cat's toy

Add only an apostrophe to plural nouns ending in *s*:

- the girls' dresses.

Add 's to singular proper names ending in *s*:

- Bridget Jones's diary (this is an exception to AP style)

Add 's to singular nouns ending in *s*:

- the witness's response

Do **not** use an apostrophe with the following possessive pronouns:

- ours
- yours
- his
- hers
- its
- theirs
- whose

Do **not** use an apostrophe with a word ending in *s* when its use is descriptive, and not possessive:

- Masters Swimming
- Beatles music
- Titans game

Contractions

You may have been told not to use contractions in writing, but strictly avoiding them can make your writing seem stiff, so use contractions to improve flow. Use an apostrophe to form contractions:

- don't, won't, can't

and to indicate omitted letters or numerals:

- rock 'n' roll
- class of '74

Decades and centuries

Do **not** use an apostrophe to indicate more than one decade or century:

- WRONG: the 1990's
- RIGHT: the 1990s

Colon (:)

Use a colon to introduce lists, long quotations, and for emphasis:

- These are the competitive strokes: freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, and butterfly.
- The swim coach said: “We knew we had to swim perfectly to win the meet, and maybe we weren’t perfect, but we were pretty darn good. And we were good enough to win tonight.”
- Michael Phelps: one of the greatest Olympians of all time.
- Jason Lezak: The name is synonymous with a come-from-behind victory.

Do **not** capitalize the first word after the colon unless it’s a proper noun or the beginning of a complete sentence.

Commas (,)

When to use them

Before and after a state name when used with a city:

- Nashville, Tenn., is my hometown.

To separate adjectives that are equal in rank:

- a stretched-out, transparent, threadbare suit

But do **not** use a comma before the last adjective if it is critical to the meaning:

- a stretched-out, transparent team suit (not just any suit, but the suit designated for team members)

To set introductory phrases off:

- When we arrived at the pool, we were overcome by chlorine fumes.

To set off two phrases joined by a conjunction when each phrase could stand alone as a sentence:

- She came to Savannah to score points, but the highest she placed was the dreaded 11th place.

To introduce short quotations:

- Phelps said, “I’m pleased with my time.”

In numbers greater than three digits:

- The attendance was 2,060.
- EXCEPTION: 1000, 1650, 1500 freestyle events

In a series before the conjunction (*and, or, but*). This is known as the *serial comma*:

- The strokes in the medley relay are backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, and freestyle.

When NOT to use them

To separate months and years:

- October 1956 (**not** October, 1956)

With *Inc.*:

- Satchmo Publishing Inc. (**not** Satchmo Publishing, Inc.)

With *Jr.* or *Sr.*:

- Gary Hall Jr. (**not** Gary Hall, Jr.)

When using month, date, and year, however, put commas before and after the year:

- October 13, 1956, is an important date.

Dashes (–, —)

There are two types: en dashes and em dashes. An en dash (so called because it's the width of the letter *n*) is used to connect continuing words or numbers:

- I usually swim 2,000–3,000 yards at a workout.

An em dash (so called because it's the width of the letter *m*) is used to indicate a sudden break in thought:

- The race—or what was left of the race—finally finished after midnight.

Do **not** put spaces before or after either dash.

Ellipses (...)

An ellipsis is used to indicate that one or more words have been omitted from quoted material. It is not meant to indicate a break in thought, so do **not** use instead of an em dash.

- Age groups for relays for short course yards competition are 18+, 25+, 35+ ... 95+ (10-year increments as high as necessary).

Do use spaces before and after an ellipsis.

Hyphens (-)

The main use for hyphens is to join two or more words used as a unit to modify a word:

- This is a timed-final event

Do **not** use hyphens with *very* or words ending in *-ly*:

- This is a very competitive heat
- She is a highly successful coach

Also use hyphens to prevent doubled vowels and tripled consonants:

- anti-intellectual
- well-liked

See the separate section on prefixes and suffixes for more guidance on the use of hyphens.

Quotation marks (“ ”)

Use double quotes (“ ”) for the primary quotation and single quotes (‘ ’) for quotations within quotations:

- She said, “I knew it was time to buy a new suit when he asked, ‘Is that the USMS logo tattooed on your butt?’”

Periods and commas always go inside quotation marks. All other punctuation goes outside unless part of the quoted material:

- “I love swimming relays the best,” she says, adding, “Especially at Nationals.”
- “I’ll never swim the 200 fly again!” she said after her disastrous performance at Nationals.
- The winner is “Million Dollar Baby”!
- Did you say, “I won’t do it”?

Problem Words

additionally, in addition

See entry for *hopefully*. When you start a sentence with *additionally*, it is almost always a misplaced modifier. Use *in addition* instead.

- WRONG: Additionally, I entered the 500 free.
- RIGHT: In addition, I entered the 500 free.

affect, effect

In general, *affect* is the verb and *effect* is the noun:

- Location affects the size of a meet.
- The new rule has not had an effect on Masters meets.

compliment, complement

Compliment is to politely praise or congratulate someone. It also can be used to express regards or greetings or to indicate something that is given for free:

- When we finished the race she complimented me on my new racing suit.
- Please send my compliments to your father.
- After we won the meet the bartender sent us a pitcher of beer, compliments of the house.

Complement is something that completes or perfects something, or a number that makes something complete:

- Her new racing goggles were the perfect complement to her shiny, red racing suit.
- Our club has a full complement of distance swimmers, but hardly any sprinters.

comprise, compose

Comprise means “to contain, to include all, or embrace.” Therefore, it’s incorrect to use “comprised of.” You probably mean, “composed of.”

- WRONG: USMS is comprised of eight zones.
- RIGHT: USMS comprises eight zones.
- RIGHT: USMS is composed of eight zones.

continual, continuous

Continual means “a steady repetition, over and over again”:

- We continually argue about time standards.

Continuous means “uninterrupted”:

- She swam continuously for an hour.

different

Use *different from* not *different than*.

dive, dived, diving

Do **not** use *dove* for the past tense.

equal

It means all amounts are the same, so something cannot be *more* or *less equal*.

farther, further

Farther refers to distance:

- She walked farther away.

Further refers to time or degree:

- I will consider it further.

fewer, less than

Use *fewer* for individual items

- fewer calories, fewer entries, fewer people

and *less than* for a group of items, or amounts than can be subdivided into fractional portions

- I had less than 10 minutes to finish the race. He had less than 5.5 liters of water.

good, well

Good is the adjective (*good swim*) and *well* is the adverb (*I swam well*). But *good* is still being used as an adjective in the sentence “*I feel good.*” If you say “*I feel well*” you’re really saying your sense of touch is working well. The same principle applies to *bad* and *badly*. “*I feel bad*” is correct (to indicate sickness) and “*I feel badly*” is incorrect, unless you mean your sense of touch is not working well.

gray, grey

Use *gray* instead of *grey* (which is British usage).

hopefully

This means “in a hopeful manner.” If you say:

- Hopefully, she finished the 200 butterfly

what you really mean is:

- I hope she finished the 200 butterfly

not that she was hopeful while she was swimming (in fact, she was probably despairing!).

however

When used as a conjunction, it must be preceded by a semicolon and followed by a comma; otherwise, you have a run-on sentence:

- WRONG: I did my best, however I still lost.
- RIGHT: I did my best; however, I still lost.

I, me

This one is easy if you remove the other subject from the sentence.

- RIGHT: Keefe and I missed the relay because we were shopping for goggles. (Remove Keefe, and the sentence still makes sense: I missed the relay...)
- WRONG: The lecture Coach Rick gave Keefe and I was long and loud. (You would not write The lecture Coach Rick gave I...)
- RIGHT: The lecture Coach Rick gave Keefe and me was long and loud. (Again, remove Keefe, and the sentence makes sense: The lecture Coach Rick gave me...)

includes

This means you are listing only part of the whole:

- The individual medley includes backstroke and breaststroke.

If you are in fact listing **all** elements, use *comprises*, *consists of*, or *is composed of*:

- The individual medley is composed of butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, and freestyle.
- The Dixie Zone comprises the Florida, Florida Gold Coast, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Southeastern, and Southern LMSCs.

The phrase *including but not limited to* is redundant and not necessary except in legal documents.

Do **not** use *includes* as a synonym for any form of the verb *to be*.

Internet

The *Internet* (note capitalization) is not synonymous with *World Wide Web*. The Web and email are components of the Internet (literally, a network of computers).

irregardless

No such word. You mean *regardless*.

it's, its

It's is the contraction for *it is*. *Its* means “belonging to it.”

like, as, such as

Use *like* to compare two things:

- You swim like a little torpedo.

Use *as* to introduce a phrase:

- Winston tastes good as a cigarette should.

Use *such as* to list examples:

- Many fitness organizations, such as U.S. Masters Swimming and USA Swimming, emphasize safety.

Do **not** use *like* when you're listing examples, as those examples are then excluded. In the sentence above, if you were to use *like*, then U.S. Masters Swimming and USA Swimming would be excluded from the organizations emphasizing safety; you would be referring to organizations *like* them, but not *actually* them.

myself

Do **not** use instead of *me* or *I*:

- WRONG: Jane and myself went to the meet.
- RIGHT: Jane and I went to the meet.

over, under

Do **not** use instead of *more than* or *less than*:

- WRONG: Over 1,200 swimmers competed in Omaha.
- RIGHT: More than 1,200 swimmers competed in Omaha.

people, person

Use *person* for one person and *people* for more than one person. Avoid using *individual* to refer to a person, unless you're distinguishing an individual from a group.

- Only one person showed up.
- Many people came to the meet.

percent

Spell out in text; do **not** use the % symbol.

principal, principle

Principal means “first in rank, authority or importance”:

- principal of the school, principal ballerina

Principle is something you believe in:

- I believe in the principle of free speech.

record

Do **not** use the redundant *new record*. If it's a record, it's got to be new. Hyphenate *rec-ord* for the noun, *re-cord* for the verb.

- Laura Val once broke six records in one event.
- Be sure to record the time to two decimal places.

swim, swam, swum

Swim is used in present tense:

- I will swim with fins until they pry them from my cold, dead feet.

Swam is past tense:

- I swam in practice without fins once.

Swum, which is used in present perfect and past perfect tenses, must be preceded by “has”, “have”, or “had”:

- I have swum in several open water races, but only ones that allow fins.

regimen, regime

A *regimen* is a systematic plan, often referring to diet, therapy, or medication. A *regime* is a form of government.

- I adopted a new training regimen to prepare for the 5K national championship.
- The distance swimmers finally overthrew the sprinter regime that had ruled the club for decades.

that, which

Use *that* for essential phrases (essential to the meaning of the sentence) and *which* for nonessential phrases (merely conveys additional, nonessential information). Say *the fruit that was rotten* if the fact that the fruit is rotten distinguishes it from other fruit, and *the fruit, which*

was rotten, if the fact that the fruit is rotten is only an interesting sidelight. *Which* should be preceded by a comma.

their, there, they're

Their means “belonging to them”:

- It's their problem.

There means “a direction”:

- It's over there.

They're is a contraction for *they are*:

- They're coming home tomorrow.

under way, underway

Spell as two words unless referring to ships:

- The convention got under way.
- The fleet is underway.

unique

It means “one of a kind,” so something **cannot** be *more unique* or *very unique*.

while

While indicates a passage of time; only use it when that's what you mean. Use *although* to mean *even though* or *in spite of*:

- RIGHT: She fell in the pool while she was timing.
- WRONG: While some are sprinters, others are distance swimmers.
- RIGHT: Although some are sprinters, others are distance swimmers.

who's, whose

Who's is a contraction for *who is*:

- Who's going to the meet?

Whose means “belonging to whom”:

- Whose comb is this?

who, whom

Who is always the subject of a sentence or phrase:

- The spy who came in from the cold.

Whom is always the object of a verb or preposition:

- For whom the bell tolls

Miscellaneous

Double-spacing

If you learned how to type on a typewriter, you were taught to double-space after periods. That was to give the reader a visual pause at the end of a sentence. Back then, all the letters were fixed-width—the letter “l” was the same width as the letter “m,” so a larger space was needed to distinguish between sentences. This is no longer necessary with proportional-space fonts used with word processing software. Do **not** double-space after periods or colons or anywhere else.

Because the computer already puts the appropriate amount of space between letters and words and sentences, extra spaces after periods cause ugly gaps in the type, which are distracting to the reader. The extra spaces also interfere with automatic hyphenation.

Gender-neutral terminology

Avoid using masculine pronouns to refer to both men and women. If you know the chair of a committee is a man, then it’s OK to use *chairman*. Likewise, if you know the chair is a woman, you may use *chairwoman*. But if you don’t know the gender, use *chair* (not *chairperson*). It’s OK to use mankind, humanity, or manmade, because these words don’t presume one gender or another.

Try not to resort to “his/her” constructions. Do **not** use the plural pronoun “their” in an attempt to be gender-neutral when a singular pronoun is called for. Usually the best strategy is to reword the sentence so that you can use the plural pronoun.

- **WRONG:** Every swimmer is responsible for providing their own counter.
- **TECHNICALLY CORRECT, BUT FROWNED ON:** Every swimmer is responsible for providing his or her counter.
- **RIGHT:** All swimmers are responsible for providing their own counters.

Medical and academic degrees and titles

Do **not** use the prefix *Dr.* when describing a person if you are also giving their medical specialty, if their specialty requires a medical degree. And do **not** capitalize specialties.

- **WRONG:** Dr. Jonathan Wong is a Cardiologist at the University of Chicago Medical Center.
- **RIGHT:** Jonathan Wong is a cardiologist at the University of Chicago Medical Center.

When **not** giving a specialty, use the prefix *Dr.* only if the person is a medical doctor, dentist or other degreed medical professional (osteopath, optometrist, chiropractor, podiatrist, etc.). Do not use *Dr.* when identifying someone with an honorary or nonmedical doctorate. Do not use M.D.

- **WRONG:** Jonathan Wong has been studying the effects of chlorine on the heart muscle for 10 years.
- **WRONG:** Jonathan Wong, M.D., has been studying the effects of chlorine on the heart muscle for 10 years.
- **CORRECT (but not preferred):** Dr. Jonathan Wong has been studying the effects of chlorine on the heart muscle for 10 years.
- **BETTER:** Cardiologist Jonathan Wong has been studying the effects of chlorine on the heart muscle for 10 years.

Once you have identified the person as Dr., do not continue to do so in subsequent attributes; use last name only.

Do **not** capitalize or abbreviate college degrees or specialties when using them in a sentence.

- WRONG: Cheryl, who has a BS in Engineering, was curious about how the device worked.
- RIGHT: Cheryl, who has a bachelor of science degree in engineering, was curious about how the device worked.
- WRONG: Dr. Chip Pierce is a Professor of Anthropology at the University of California.
- RIGHT: Chip Pierce is a professor of anthropology at the University of California.

Quotes

Don't overuse them. Paraphrase more and save quotes for something dynamic that adds to the story. *Says* goes after the name of person being quoted:

- WRONG: "I was having a terrible year," says Jones.
- RIGHT: "I was swimming well that season," Jones says.

Use present tense; we assume that if we interview sources again, they'll say the same thing.

- WRONG: "I always shave down before a big meet," Jones said
- RIGHT: "I always shave down before a big meet," Jones says

There are exceptions, such as when the interview is part of the story:

- At the meet, Jones was hard on himself. "I went out too fast," he said right after the 200 butterfly.

Trade names

Avoid using trade names when you really just mean a generic term:

- *swimsuit*, **not** *speedo*
- *flippers* or *fins*, **not** *zoomers*

But don't be afraid to use a trade name if it's relevant:

- Speedo suits are more comfortable than TYR suits for me.

Tricky Spellings

- a lot (not alot)
- adviser (not advisor)
- all right (not alright)
- any more (not anymore)
- barbecue (not barbeque)
- dietitian (not dietician)
- email (not capitalized, no hyphen—an exception to AP style)
- exclusivity (not exclusativity)
- livable (not liveable)
- nowadays (not nowdays)
- online (not on-line or on line)
- percent (not per cent)
- preventive (not preventative)
- teenager, teenage (not teen-ager or teen-age)
- tendinitis (not tendonitis)
- toward (not towards)
- upward (not upwards)
- Web, website, webmaster

Swimming/USMS Terms

Club, workout group, and team

Often used interchangeably, these terms actually mean different things for USMS. A *club*, according to the glossary in the USMS rule book, is “an organization or group of permanent character that is a member of USMS, registered through an LMSC.” A swimmer competing in Nationals must be affiliated with a club, or compete as unattached. There are two types of clubs for purposes of scoring at Nationals: *regional* and *local*. A *regional club*, according to article 104.5.6B(1), is composed of “swimmers who represent a club at Nationals, but at competitions within their LMSC ... compete for a ... *workout group* that is different than the one they compete with at Nationals.

For example, Swim Kentucky Masters is a *regional club* composed of members who train with separate *workout groups* located throughout the Kentucky LMSC. A *local club* is defined as a club that is not a regional club (no kidding); it is composed of a group of swimmers who always swim for the same club.

A *team* is “a group of swimmers representing the same club in a competition.” The group of swimmers who are all members of the same club or workout group and compete at a national or local meet comprise a *team*. So club members traveling together to nationals may be referred to as that club’s *national team*.

Common swimming terms

- Age-group swimmers (with hyphen)
- All-American (with hyphen)
- armstroke (not arm stroke)
- butterflyer (not butterflyer)
- cross training (noun)
- cross-training exercises (adjective)
- dryland training (singular when adjective), drylands (plural when noun)
- Go the Distance (not Go The Distance)
- kickboard (not kick board)
- lane line (not laneline)
- lanemate (not lane mate)
- nose clip (not noseclip)
- pull buoy (not pullbuoy or pull-buoy)
- pulldown (not pull down or pull-down)
- streamline (not stream-line or stream line)
- Top 10 (not Top Ten or top ten)
- usms.org (not USMS.org)
- wetsuit (not wet suit, unless referring to a suit that is wet)