editorial style guide

capitalization

(See also the Names and Titles section.)

In General
Capitalize official names and proper nouns. Do not capitalize common nouns and shortened forms of official names. Use the full, official name the first time it appears in a document or section of a document.

- The President’s Donor Challenge was launched last fall. The challenge has already raised over $30 million.

A Note on Capitalization
These guidelines on using initial capitals for university-related terms differ from what has been the standard practice at U-M. In general, we recommend a lowercase style because:

- Standard style guides, including the Associated Press Stylebook and The Chicago Manual of Style, require lowercase letters in running text for such things as job descriptions and unofficial department names. Lowercase is becoming the standard at other institutions as well. Therefore, it is familiar to many readers, especially those
outside the university setting. Because it is the preferred style in much of the business and professional world, we recommend that U-M writers adopt this style.

- Lowercasing everything except full, official names simplifies decisions about when to capitalize shortened forms of official names.
- Too many capitalized words cause them to lose importance and no longer attract attention.
- Readability studies have shown that the use of initial caps or all caps makes copy more difficult to read.
- The use of lowercase does not diminish stature or credibility. For example, the title "president of the United States" is lowercased in running text when it doesn't immediately precede the individual's name.
- When producing promotional or marketing materials, the skillful use of white space, typeface, and color is a much more effective way to emphasize copy points than the excessive use of initial caps or all caps.

Do Not Capitalize:

- the administration
- the city of Ann Arbor (but the City of Ann Arbor when referring to the governmental entity)
- classes: freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, first-year, second-year, etc.
- the college
- degrees: doctorate, doctor's, master's, bachelor's, baccalaureate
- the department
- unofficial or generic form names: admissions form, drop/add form
- orientation
- the program
- seasons: spring, summer, fall, winter
- the school
- spring break
- the state of Michigan (but the State of Michigan when referring to the governmental entity)
- the university (when it stands alone in reference to the University of Michigan)

Academic and Nonacademic Units and Bodies

Capitalize only the complete and official names of colleges, schools, divisions, departments, offices, and official bodies (such as Board of Regents, Michigan Student Assembly, School of Information). Lowercase informal and shortened
versions of all such names. (See also Department Names in this section.)

- The College of Literature, Science, and the Arts has over 60 academic departments and units. These departments and units of the college are housed in many different campus buildings.
- The provost’s office sponsors a large number of programs and awards. The Office of the Provost is located in the Fleming Building.
- Many people call the School of Art & Design the art school.
- The Board of Regents consists of eight members. The regents meet once a month.
- The School of Education and the School of Social Work have increased enrollment in the last year. Both schools have added new course sections to accommodate the growth.

Committee, Center, Group, Program, and Initiative Names

Capitalize the official, proper names of long-standing committees and groups, and formally developed programs, centers, and initiatives. Do not capitalize an ad hoc or temporary committee’s name.

- The Center for Research on Learning and Teaching promotes excellence and innovation in teaching and learning at U-M. The center is located in Palmer Commons.
- The Lloyd Hall Scholars Program provides a living-learning environment for undergraduate students. The program focuses on writing and the arts.
- The Space Utilization Initiative explores facility use on the Ann Arbor campus. The initiative was launched in July 2006.
- The vice presidential search committee met last Tuesday.

Course Titles

For official course titles, use initial capitals and quotation marks.

- “Topics in Comparative Literature” is a three-credit course.
Degrees
Capitalize abbreviations of degrees (see Abbreviations section) but not the spelled-out versions and not when referring to them generically.

- Jun Tae Cho received a doctor of law degree from U-M.
- Jablonski family members hold a total of five doctor's, three master's, and ten bachelor's degrees.
- David Cohen, PhD, earned his bachelor of science degree from U-M in 1998.

Department Names
Capitalize official department names in running text. Lowercase shortened or unofficial names. Refer to the individual department, office, or unit for its official name.

- Faculty members from the geography, anthropology, and ethnic studies departments are cooperating on this project.
- James Elias, associate professor in the Department of Biological Chemistry, will deliver the first lecture of the conference.
- The School of Kinesiology publishes a newsletter.

Do not use capitals when the department affiliation serves as an adjective rather than as a noun:

- The dean announced that electrical engineering Professor Pat Mendez had been promoted.

Geographical and Related Terms
Capitalize geographical terms commonly accepted as proper names. Do not capitalize descriptive or identifying geographical terms that do not apply to only one geographical entity or are not considered proper names. In general, lowercase cultural or climatic terms derived from geographical proper names.

- the Upper Peninsula, the Thumb, Metro Detroit, the South, southern, southwestern (direction), the Southwest (U.S.), the West, western Europe, the West Coast, the Middle East, the Midwest (U.S.), west, western, westerner
Grades
Capitalized grade letters and use one numeral after the period in GPAs.

- She got a C in "CAD Fundamentals," which brought her overall GPA from 3.7 down to 3.2.

Job and Position Titles
Capitalized job titles only when they immediately precede the individual’s name or when they are named positions or honorary titles (as in the last two examples).

- The Board of Regents appointed President Mary Sue Coleman to a second term.
- The president of the University of Michigan, Mary Sue Coleman, accepted the offer to serve on the exploratory committee.
- The president of the United States serves a four-year term of office.
- Sergei studied with Professor LaPointe. LaPointe, a music professor, does not teach in the summer.
- Search committee Chair Edmund Roth received only 12 applications for the job.
- Former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was the first woman to serve in that position. She was President Clinton’s second secretary of state.
- The U-M vice president and general counsel provides legal advice about a broad array of issues that face the university.
- Mark Johnson has been promoted to associate professor at the medical school.
- Professor Spencer was named the Myron E. Wegman Distinguished University Professor of Public Health.
- Sonya Vargo will be Honorary Artist-in-Residence at the Residential College this summer.

Long Titles
Put a very long title after the name to avoid clumsy syntax and excessive capitalization.

- Kathy Myers, assistant to the associate vice president for development and interim director of alumni special projects, moved her office to Wolverine Tower.
Descriptive Job Titles and Occupational Descriptions

Unlike formal, academic, or administrative titles, do not capitalize descriptive job titles and occupational descriptions whether before or after a name:

- Project manager Tamara Boyar and Lawrence Wilson, a web programmer, presented their proposal to the client.
- Michigan chicken farmer Tom Kaufman and his wife Monica, a master beekeeper, have written a cookbook/memoir called The Poultry Diaries.

Titles in Addresses

When a title is part of an address or headline (or other display type), capitalize the title even if it appears after the name.

John Smith, Director of Housing
University of Michigan
Housing Administration
1500 Student Activities Building
515 E Jefferson St
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1316

Medical and Scientific Terms

Capitalize proper names but use lowercase for other words when referring to diseases, syndromes, theorems, laws, etc.

- Parkinson’s disease
- Hodgkin’s disease
- Down syndrome
- Lou Gehrig’s disease
- Pythagorean theorem
- non-Euclidean geometry
- Moore’s law
- Newtonian mechanics
- Planck’s constant

Publication and Other Titles

When writing for general readerships, set book, journal, brochure, pamphlet, long poems, TV series, operas, long musical compositions, artwork, and movie titles in italics; set chapter and article titles in roman and enclose them in quotation marks; set names of forms in roman.
Capitalize the following in titles:

- the first word
- the last word
- the first word after a colon
- all nouns, verbs (including short verbs, such as is, are, be), pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, subordinating conjunctions (if, because, as, that)

Do not capitalize the following in titles (unless they fall into one of the previously listed categories):

- articles (a, an, the), unless they are part of a proper noun
- coordinating conjunctions (and, but, or, for, nor)
- prepositions (on, between, because of, to, so, yet, by, before, over, under, through, etc.)

For example:

- *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C. S. Lewis has been by a popular children’s book for many years.
- The film *Citizen Kane* stars Orson Welles.
- Time magazine's article “A Giant Leap for Mankind” described the first lunar landing.

For special cases in which an author officially uses lowercase letters as a stylistic choice (as in the case of poet e. e. cummings), use the preferred capitalization.

**Seasons and Semesters**

Lowercase seasons, semesters, and terms.

- spring semester
- fall 2003
- the winter term

**Structures and Places**

Capitalize the full official names of buildings and formally designated places on campus.

- Central Campus
- North Campus
- BUT Ann Arbor campus, Dearborn campus, Flint campus
- Michigan Stadium
- the Diag
Students
Do not capitalize freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, first-year student, second-year student, etc., unless they appear at the beginning of a sentence or in a headline.

Trademarks
Many words and names are trademarked and should appear with initial capitals to acknowledge that fact. Owners of such trademarks also have a legal right to restrict the use of those trademarked terms to their specific product. Try to avoid using trademarked names, like Kleenex and Xerox, as generic terms. Instead, use facial tissue and photocopier, unless you intend to refer to the trademarked brand name.

The symbols @ and ™ often appear on product packaging and advertisements. Standard practice is to include the symbol on first use on a piece, but not in subsequent use. The United States Patent and Trademark Office has more information and searchable databases on trademarks, copyrights, and patents.

See the Graphics Standards section of this guide for information specific to U-M trademarks.

The University
There is considerable debate about whether to capitalize university when the word refers to the University of Michigan. Use of a capital or a lowercase u in university when the reference is to one’s own institution is divided; some institutions capitalize while others do not. It has been customary at U-M to capitalize university when referring specifically to the University of Michigan or one of its campuses. We recommend using lowercase for these reasons:

• Doing so eliminates confusion and puts the practice in line with using lowercase for other shortened or generic versions of official names.
• Non-university communication preferences in publishing, the news media, and the non-academic business world are for lowercasing university, even when it refers to a specific institution. U-M writers communicate often and widely with external audiences and materials originally intended for internal distribution might later be distributed to external audiences.
• In almost all cases, context will clearly indicate when university refers to the University of Michigan. When there might be ambiguity, writers can easily substitute our university, U-M, the Flint campus, etc.

Every current, reputable style guide (including The Chicago Manual of Style, which tends to use more capitals than AP newspaper style) subscribes to the general rule that subsequent references to proper nouns that use a part of that proper noun (such as street, hotel, building, company, university, association, etc.) should be lowercase. In the University vs. university argument, we can compare usage in similar cases:

• The Ford Motor Company is holding a stockholders’ meeting next week. The company is expected to announce record-breaking losses.

In this example, although company in the second sentence refers to the Ford Motor Company (which is capped when it appears in the full, proper name of the company), in the second sentence company serves as a common, lowercase noun.

• The Michigan Supreme Court will not rule on this case until next year. The court has an exceptionally heavy caseload this year.

In this example, although court in the second sentence refers to the Michigan Supreme Court (again, capped when it appears in the full, proper name), in the second sentence court serves as a common, lowercase noun. (Note that the only exception in this context is the U.S. Supreme Court, which is traditionally referred to as the Court.)