WSBA Sections Newsletter Style Guide and 12 Common Edits

abbreviations

Use the following abbreviations in the following form: e.g., i.e., J.D., LLC, LL.M, PC, PLLC, P.O. Box, PS, U.S., WSBA. (Note: a comma always follows the use of "e.g." and "i.e.") Use the following abbreviations only after a person's full name: B.A., M.A., LL.D., Ph.D., LL.M., J.D. When using an abbreviation or acronym for an organization, always use the full name first with the acronym following in parentheses: The Washington State Bar Association (WSBA) is located in Seattle.

access to justice

Three words. Do not hyphenate.

affinity bar association

Instead of "minority bar associations" or "MBAs," use "affinity bar associations" or "affinity bars." We are making this change to recognize the power of affinity spaces as opposed to minoritizing members who have been marginalized and underrepresented.

Board of Governors

Capitalize when referring to the WSBA's Board of Governors. In general, avoid using the term BOG. Instead, use Board after the first reference.

capitalization

- **Act:** capitalize when used as a subsequent reference to a specific act that has been named in full.
- **bar/bar association:** do not capitalize unless they refer to a particular bar association, e.g., "He is an employee of the Bar."
- **board:** capitalize when used as a subsequent reference to a specific board that has been named in full.
- **bylaws:** one word. Capitalize only when used as a subsequent reference to specific bylaws that have previously been named in full.
- **committee:** lowercase unless it is used as part of the full name of a specific committee.
- **courts:** capitalize the full proper names of courts at all levels. Otherwise lowercase (e.g., appellate court, municipal court), with the exception of the Supreme Court. When referring simply to "the court" in text, always lowercase with the exception of the United States Supreme Court. For circuit courts identified by an ordinal, spell out the name (e.g., Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals). For divisions of the court of appeals, use roman numerals (Court of Appeals Division II). Use Washington Supreme Court, not Washington State Supreme Court.
- **emeritus:** lowercase. Do not italicize.

- **job titles:** only capitalize a job title if it is a formal title appearing directly before a person's name. Executive Director Jessica Smith accepted the award. Jessica Smith, executive director, accepted the award.
- **law school:** lowercase unless it is part of the formal name of a law school. E.g., University of Washington School of Law, but UW law school.
- **legislature:** capitalize when preceded by the name of a state. Retain capitalization when the state name is dropped, but the reference is specifically to the state's legislature. Lowercase "legislature" when it is used generically.
- **practice areas:** lowercase. E.g., family law, business law, litigation.
- **pro bono:** lowercase. Do not italicize.
- **sections:** capitalize when used as a subsequent reference to a specific WSBA section that has been named in full. Otherwise, use lowercase.
- **trustees:** generally lowercase, unless used in reference to the Lawyers' fund for Client Protection Board of Trustees (can be abbreviated as "Board" or "Trustees").
- **Washington state:** use "state of Washington" or "Washington state" when necessary to distinguish this state from the District of Columbia.

case law

Two words.

chair

Use instead of chairman to denote the leader of a committee or other group. Write chairperson only if necessary for clarity. Do not capitalize unless it comes directly before a person's name. E.g., Editorial Advisory Committee Chair Marc Lampson.

citations

Main text should not contain citations. Use endnotes instead. Case names in endnotes should not be italicized. When a case name is grammatically part of the main-text sentence in which it appears, it should be italicized. The Bluebook as modified by the Washington Office of Reporter of Decisions Style Sheet: Wn. 2d not Wash. 2d; Wn. App. Not Wash. App. Do not italicize RCWs in the main text or in endnotes. For more information, see the Washington Office of Reporter of Decisions style sheet.

compositions titles

Capitalize principal words and prepositions and conjunctions of four or more letters. Capitalize a, an, the, and other words of fewer than four letters if they are the first or last word in a title or the first word after a colon.

Italicize book, magazine, journal (including law reviews), movie, opera, play, song, poem, TV, and lecture titles. When citing a specific portion of a composition, such as a chapter of a book, put quotation marks around the chapter title and italicize the book title. Book example: The best chapter in *Martha's Favorite Places* is "Entering the Garden."

Put quotation marks around all article titles, including articles in law reviews.

deskbook

When referring to a deskbook generically as a resource guide in any state or location, do not capitalize. When referring specifically to WSBA Deskbooks, capitalize.

diverse/diversity

Be aware of how these words are being used. Don't say things like "a diverse person/candidate."

emphasis

In ordinary roman type, emphasize text using *italics*, not **bold**, underscore, or quotation marks.

governor-at-large

When the title comes directly before a name, capitalize and hyphenate. E.g., "Governor-at-Large Jordan Couch." The "a" in "at" should always be lowercase. In all other instances, "governor-at-large" should be lowercase and hyphenated. E.g., "The governor-at-large position is currently open."

In some cases, "at-large" may be used alone, without the word "governor." In all of these instances, "at-large" should be lowercase and hyphenated. E.g., "Applications for the at-large position are due today."

health care

Two words.

immediate past-president

Hyphenate only between "past" and "president."

intellectual property

Do not hyphenate when used as a compound adjective followed by law, lawyer, or attorney; otherwise hyphenate when used as compound adjective, e.g., intellectual-property case law.

Jr./Sr.

Do not put a comma before Jr. or Sr. (e.g., Ken Griffey Jr.)

judge

The correct designation for impartial news copy. Use Hon. in photo captions.

land use

Do not hyphenate when used as a compound adjective followed by law, lawyer, or attorney; otherwise hyphenate when used as a compound adjective, e.g., land-use planning.

lawyer/attorney

Only use these words when talking specifically about individuals with the lawyer license status. For all references to the entire WSBA membership, "licensed legal practitioners" is the preferred term. We also use "legal professionals."

In addition, within a single article or document, be consistent—use either "lawyer" or "attorney." Do not interchange the terms unless one or the other is being used in a title, as a term of art (e.g., attorney-client privilege), or in a quotation. In the regulatory context, there is a preference for "lawyer" because that is what is used in regulatory rules (e.g., RPC, ELC).

marijuana/cannabis

A 2024 state law strikes the word "marijuana" from the Revised Code of Washington and replaces it with "cannabis." In addition, the term "marijuana" is considered to have racist, anti-Mexican roots.

Do not use the word "marijuana." Instead use the word "cannabis."

midyear

One nonhyphenated word when used adjectivally (midyear conference) or elliptically as a substantive adjective (1999 WYLD Midyear). Hyphenate the adverbial form: Our conference will be held mid-year.

months, years, dates

When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., and Dec. E.g., Sept. 23, 2019. Spell out the month when using alone or with a year. E.g., January 2005. Do not put a comma or “of” between the month and the year: March 2015. Avoid using the form “3/1/2019,” because it doesn’t mean the same thing to everyone. Use the form “March 1, 2019.” When a specific date is used in main text, place a comma after the year: On March 1, 2019, the meeting will go forward as planned. Do not use “th” after dates, so “The meeting is scheduled for March 8, 2020,” not “March 8th.”

Native

Capitalize. Use only in the context of Indigenous people. Do not say things like “A native of Seattle, Washington."

nonprofit

One nonhyphenated word.

numbers

Spell out numbers one through nine, and write numerals 10 and above. Do not superscript the suffix of ordinals, e.g., 12th, not 12th. Spell out “plus” in such forms as 20-plus year.

ODC

Use the abbreviation the ODC in second reference to the WSBA Office of Disciplinary Counsel. Include the definite article “the” whenever possible, even though WSBA staff leave it out of their own conversations, e.g., the ODC examines each grievance to determine if it alleges an ethical violation.

OK/okay

Use OK.

percent

Always spell out this word. Do not use the symbol %. Exception: Charts, tables, and classifieds.

pleaded, pled

The past tense of plead is pleaded, not pled.

punctuation

- **company names:** as a general rule, punctuate company and product names the way the company does. Exceptions: Drop the exclamation point in names such as Yahoo.
- **dashes:** the em dash is a long dash (—) printed without a space on either side that is used to signal abrupt change, as one option to set off a series within a phrase, before attribution to an author or composer in some formats, after datelines, and to start lists.
- **ellipsis:** Omission of a word or words is generally indicated by the insertion of an ellipsis, three periods set off by a space before the first and after the last period (“ … “), to take the place of the word or words omitted. An ellipsis should never be used to begin a quotation. Be especially careful to avoid deletions that would distort the meaning. See Bluebook Rule 5.3 governing omissions and the use of ellipses.
- **exclamation point:** avoid overuse. Use a comma after mild interjections. End mildly exclamatory sentences with a period.
- **hyphens:** generally, do not hyphenate when using a prefix with a word starting with a consonant. Except for cooperate and coordinate, use a hyphen if the prefix ends in a vowel and the word that follows begins with the same vowel. Use a hyphen if the word that follows is capitalized. Use a hyphen to join doubled prefixes such as sub-subparagraph.
- **semicolons:** Use a semicolon to separate items in a series when elements in that series contain commas: Positions are available at Levy & Associates, PS; Campbell, Dille & Barnett, PLLC; and Brown Davis and Roberts, PLLC. Use semicolon when a coordinating conjunction such as and, but, or for is not present. The phrases on both sides of the semicolon must be independent clauses: The package was due last week; it arrived today. Semicolons should be placed outside quotation marks (unless the semicolon is part of the quoted material).
- **serial comma (also known as Oxford comma):** place a comma after the penultimate item in a list of three or more items, before “and” or “or.” E.g., I bought carrots, bread, and chocolate.
- **spaces:** put **one** space between sentences and after colons and semicolons.

quotation marks and parentheses

When introducing an acronym or nickname, do not use quotation marks; only use parentheses. E.g., “The case involved Big Company USA LLC (Big Company) and John Alexander Smith (Smith).”

real estate

Two words.

regions

lowercase when indicating a compass direction (e.g., The cold front is moving east). Capitalize when indicating a region (e.g., The system will bring showers to the East Coast this week). When

using Eastern/Western Washington, capitalize and treat as a proper noun when referring to the major geographic areas of Washington state east and west of the Cascades.

respectful language (also known as "people-first language")

RCW 44.04.280 states:

Avoid references to: disabled, developmentally disabled, mentally disabled, mentally ill, mentally retarded, handicapped, cripple, and crippled.

In general, try to recognize and eradicate insensitive language, including ableist language and gendered or binary language. A good rule is to always prioritize humanizing language and pay attention to how people describe themselves. Examples include:

Avoid "differently abled person, special needs person" (instead use person *with* disabilities, autism, a cognitive disability, etc.).

Avoid "addict" (instead use person with substance use issues; do not use phrases like "chocolate addict").

restrictive/nonrestrictive clauses

The difference between a restrictive and nonrestrictive clause is helpful in determining whether a comma is appropriate. Generally, if the clause is necessary in order to understand the sentence, commas are not used. Example:

- My husband, Elmer, was born in 1910. (Nonrestrictive: I have only one husband.)
- My daughter Winifred is a teacher. (Restrictive: I have six daughters.)

résumé

Acute accent over each e. On PCs, use ALT+0233 to type an é, or select from the Insert Character menu.

retired justices

"Richard P. Guy, (Ret.) Chief Justice, Washington Supreme Court," or "Richard P. Guy, Chief Justice, Washington Supreme Court (Ret.)."

rule of law

lowercase, unless referring to something like the WSBA's Rule of Law Ambassador Program.

specialize/specialty

According to RPC 7.4, this term may not be used in any lawyer advertising (including but not limited to Displays, Announcements, Professionals, and ads in Classifieds seeking or offering legal services). Synonymous terms such as emphasize, concentrate in, focus on, and limit practice to are acceptable. The term may be used in non-attorney advertising (e.g., services software, etc.).

telephone numbers

Always include area code, separated with a hyphen, not with parentheses or a period: 206-727-8200. Omit the '1' at the beginning of long-distance numbers, including toll-free numbers: 800-366-2255. Verify numbers whenever possible before publication.

time

Use figures for all times except noon and midnight. Use a colon to separate minutes from hours. Use periods with a.m. and p.m. Omit ":00." (The class meets from noon to 2 p.m.)

timely

Although timely is an adjective in general usage (the forms must be returned in a timely manner), in legal writing it is also used adverbially: the forms were not completed timely; failure to timely file will result in substantial penalties.

Tribal/Tribe

Capitalize the words Tribe and Tribal, regardless of whether they appear as part of a proper noun. Example: "The United States is home to 574 federally-recognized Tribes." Or, "Pearl Walker-Swaney is actively working to protect her Tribal homelands."

That said, when writing about a specific Tribe or individual, pay attention to how they refer to themselves. Be as specific as possible.

This entry is borrowed from the Native Governance Center: https://nativegov.org/resources/terminology-style-guide/.

URLs

Don't underline or italicize URLs. Do not include the http:// tag unless the URL does not include www.

website

One nonhyphenated, non-capitalized word. Material can be found at a website, not on a website. (E.g., "Find more information at www.wsba.org.")

WSBA

Abbreviation for the Washington State Bar Association. May be used as an adjective (e.g., the WSBA Service Center) or as a noun (The WSBA has proposed new legislation). In general, "the" should precede WSBA. Acceptable alternatives include "the State Bar" and "the Bar," which reflects how our readers usually refer to us.

WSBA address

In general, write the WSBA address as 1325 Fourth Ave., Ste. 600, Seattle, WA 98101-2539. Spell out Avenue and Suite when the address appears in more "formal" locations—letterhead, masthead, business cards, etc. If Avenue is abbreviated, Suite should be abbreviated also; never abbreviate one and not the other.