**BU Law Grammar Tool Kit**

In order to align BU Law’s communications with that of the overall style of Boston University and the BU Law Branding Guidelines [http://www.bu.edu/law/faculty-and-staff/logos-and-brand-standards/], the school has created the following guide demonstrating the accepted grammar, punctuation, and presentation of text in communications.

Please reference BU's Editorial Style Guide [http://www.bu.edu/brand/voice-and-tone/editorial-style-guide/] as a general guide. Some notable style points include:

- Capitalize “School of Law,” but keep “the law school” in lowercase.
- Please use “BU Law complex” when referring to the law school campus as a collective.
- Titles should be capitalized when used before a name, but lowercase when they appear after. For example:
  - Dean Maureen O'Rourke, of BU Law
  - Maureen O'Rourke, dean of BU Law
- Omit periods in academic degree abbreviations (e.g., JD, LLM). Please also omit periods in abbreviations that appear in full capitals, such as US, but use them in abbreviations using lowercase letters, such as a.m./p.m.

Please find additional punctuation and style points, which may be useful for the law school community, below.

**Style & Usage**

**Ages**
Numerals, i.e. He is 26 years old, vs. spelling out, i.e. one month old

**Alumni**
When referring to a group of people who have attended a school
*Alum or Alums*
For gender-neutral references to a person or group of people who have attended a school

**Alumni graduation year**
Follow the alum’s name with his/her graduation year(s) in parentheses. If the graduation year might cause confusion (for example, Class of 1918 vs. 2018), use the full year.

John Smith ('83)
Elizabeth Holloway Marston (1918)

Omit “LAW” unless the alum attended another School within the University
John Smith (CAS’80, LAW’83)
*note there is no space between the school and the graduation year*
Indicate degrees separated by a comma when the alum has obtained two degrees from the law school

John Smith (JD’83, LLM’84)

When specifying which LLM degree the alum has obtained, do not use a comma

John Smith (LLM in Taxation’84)

**American Bar Association**

Use ABA on second reference or the bar association or the association

Capitalize specific state associations, but lowercase general references

The Massachusetts State Bar Association

She is a member of the bar

The bar association meets every Tuesday

**Annual**

Can only be used if an event has been held in two successive years

*Use “inaugural” rather than “first annual”*

**At a room, in a building**

An event is at the ballroom in the Kansas Union.

**Board of directors, board of trustees**

Always lowercase

**Boston University School of Law**

BU Law

BU School of Law

law school

Sumner M. Redstone Building; the Redstone Building

law tower, *but* BU Law tower

On second reference, don’t capitalize the word “school,” “college,” “institute,” “center,” “department,” and similar, even when referring to a specific BU entity.

The School of Law welcomed... The school hosted alumni...

**BU Law complex**

When referring to the law campus as a collective (please note that “complex” is lowercase).

**Cities**

Do not use Mass. after Massachusetts towns unless they are likely to be confused with big cities in other states

**Court names**

Capitalize the full proper names of courts at all levels, but lowercase general references

The US Supreme Court or the Supreme Court or the state Superior Court
But, she appeared in federal court.

US Court of Appeals or 8th US Circuit Court of Appeals (US Circuit Court of Appeals without a circuit number is incorrect)

On second reference: The 8th Circuit or the appeals court or the circuit court

Curricula
Plural of curriculum (not curriculums)

Dates
It is from Dec. 15 to 25, not from Dec. 15–25
Use Arabic figures, without st, nd, rd, or th
1950s, 1860s—no apostrophe

Email
Short for electronic mail (do not hyphenate or capitalize)

Ethnic and National Groups and Associated Adjectives
Names of ethnic and national groups are capitalized. Adjectives associated with these names are also capitalized. Do not hyphenate African American or other compound nationalities.

Terms such as black and white, when referring to ethnicity, are lowercased. When choosing between African American or black, use the descriptor the subject prefers. If a preference cannot be determined, use black.

Homepage
One word without a hyphen

Internet
Capitalize when used in a sentence

LGBTQIA
Unless it is part of a formal title, use LGBTQIA rather than LGBTQ

Numbers
write out one through nine; numerals for 10+
spell out round numbers or approximations

Online
Write online as one word, lowercased

Percent
Express all percentages as figures. Spell out “percent” except in tabular matter and always use numerals

  5 percent
  80 percent
**Pronouns/ Gender-neutral language**
Do not use “he” for generic references to a single, unspecified person. Instead, reword the sentence to omit the pronoun, use a plural antecedent, or use an article rather than a pronoun.

It's acceptable to use they/their to refer to nonbinary people or to mean “his or her” in a singular context when the gender of the person is unspecified or not known.

> A student left their project on the lab bench.

When writing about nonbinary and transgender students, faculty, and staff, ask the individuals which pronoun, and what name, to use.

Avoid gender-specific language
- chair or chairperson *not* chairman or chairwoman
- police officer *not* policeman
- representative, senator *not* congressman
- student *not* coed

**Seasons/semesters**
Generally lowercased, but for clarity when referring specifically to the academic year, capitalize the semesters
- fall 2014
- Fall Semester, Spring Semester, Summer Term

**Telephone numbers**
Dashes to separate rather than periods: 617-353-0423

**Titles**
Lowercase titles when they are not used before an individual's name
- The president issued a statement.

Lowercase titles when set off from a name with commas
- The vice president, Mary Moore, did not vote in the election.

Capitalize formal titles when they are used before a name
- Vice President Mary Moore

Lowercase titles that are occupational descriptions
- defense attorney Jimmy Jones

**Website**
Write website as one word, lowercased
**Punctuation**

**Bulleted lists**
Uppercase first letter. No semi-colons.
We offer the following fruits:
- Apples
- Peaches
- Oranges

**Law firms**
Day, Berry & Howard LLP or Day Berry & Howard PC
- No comma between Howard and LLP or PC
- No periods after LLP or PC
- No comma after LLP or PC unless the sentence requires it; e.g., it appears at the end of a phrase that requires a comma

**Quotation marks with surrounding punctuation**
The period and the comma always go within the quotation marks.
The dash, the semicolon, the question mark and the exclamation point go within the quotation marks when they apply to the quoted matter only. They go outside when they apply to the whole sentence.

**Serial comma**
Use a comma before a conjunction in a simple series
The flag is red, white, and blue.
We ate apples, oranges, and bananas.
*But*, omit the comma when using an ampersand
We ate apples, oranges & bananas.

**Time**
Unless used in formal settings like the Commencement program, etc., eliminate unnecessary figures in times of day, and write *am* and *pm* in lowercase, without periods
7–9 pm (*not* 7:00–9:00 p.m.)

**JD and LLM**
JD and LLM without periods (*plural* JDs /LLMs—no apostrophe)

**Upper-class**
With hyphen

**US**
Always capitalize; do not use periods

*This guide has been constructed from The Chicago Manual of Style, 17th edition.*