BU Law Grammar Tool Kit

A note about this revision... In order to align BU Law’s communications with that of the overall style of Boston University, the School has made several changes to the accepted grammar, punctuation, and presentation of text in its communications. Overall, these changes will make the tone of the law school's communications more in agreement with central BU style and the new BU Law Branding Guidelines [http://www.bu.edu/law/faculty-and-staff/logos-and-brand-standards/].

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.
- 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.
- BU style uses the Oxford (serial) comma in all series.

Please find additional updates, which may be useful for the law school community, in red text below.

**LANGUAGE**

**African American vs. black**
Use black

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

**alumnus** (alumni plural)
When referring to a man who has attended a school

**alumna** (alumnae plural)
For reference to a woman

**alum or alums**
For gender-neutral references to a single or group of people who have attended a school

**alumni**
When referring to a group of both men and women
**alum 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

**Bar/bar**
For specific state associations capitalize both state and Bar. Otherwise lower case.

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”*

**attorney**
Do not abbreviate or capitalize unless it is an officeholder’s title

defense attorney Joe Smith or attorney Joe Smith or
District Attorney Joe Smith

**attorney general**
Capitalized only when used as a title before a name

Attorney General Michael Jones

**board of directors, board of trustees**
Always lowercase
Boston University School of Law
   BU Law
   BU School of Law
   law school
   the School
   Sumner M. Redstone Building, but Redstone building
   law tower, but BU Law tower

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

School/school
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...

curricula
Plural of curriculum (not curriculums)

dean
Capitalize when used as a formal title before a name
   Dean Maureen O’Rourke
   Maureen O’Rourke, dean of the law school

district attorney
Capitalize only when used as a formal title before a name
   District Attorney Sue Smalley or DA (with no periods)

e-mail
Short for electronic mail (do not hyphenate or capitalize)

federal court
Always lower case

general court
Capitalize when used as a specific reference
   The Massachusetts General Court

homepage
One word without a hyphen

Internet
Capitalize when used in a sentence
JD and LLM
JD and LLM without periods

online
No hyphen

website
Write website as one word, lowercased

judge
Capitalize before a name when used as a formal title
Judge Judy Ball or federal Judge John Jones

p.m., a.m.
Lowercase, with periods

upper-class
With hyphen

US
Always capitalize; do not use periods

US Court of Appeals
On first reference use 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

PUNCTUATION

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.

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, such as: Having served as
  an associate for seven years at Day, Berry & Howard LLM, he chose to do
  xyz. As opposed to: He worked at Day, Berry & Howard LLM as an
  associate for seven years.
**quotation marks**
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.

**plural JD/LLM**
JDs /LLMs—no apostrophe

**dates**
1950s, 1860s—no apostrophe

**STYLE**

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

**at a room, in a building**
An event is at the ballroom in the Kansas Union.

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

**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
  The US Supreme Court or the Supreme Court or the state Superior Court  
  Second District Court or Eighth US Circuit Court of Appeals

**dates**
It is from Dec. 15 to 25 but not from Dec. 15–25.
Use Arabic figures, without st, nd, rd, or th.

**numbers**
write out one through nine; numerals for 10+  
spell out round numbers or approximations
**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
astronaut Jimmy Jones

*This guide has been constructed from* The Chicago Manual of Style, 16th edition.