

BU Law Editorial Style Guide

In order to align BU Law's communications with that of the overall style of Boston University and the BU Law Branding Guidelines (<https://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 (<https://www.bu.edu/brand/guidelines/editorial-style/>) 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.
- Use BU Law or LAW when referring to the school as a whole. *Please note that BUSL and BUSOL are no longer accepted use.*
- Titles should be capitalized when used before a name, but lowercase when they appear after. For example:
 - Dean Angela Onwuachi-Willig, of BU Law
 - Angela Onwuachi-Willig, 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

Use 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 or BU School of Law **not** BUSL

the 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)

Ethnicity, Race, National Groups, and Associated Adjectives

Race or ethnicity should be included in a story only when race is directly relevant to the story. 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.

Capitalize Black (adj.) when reflective of people who are part of the African diaspora with shared cultures and experiences; do not use Black as a singular or plural noun. When choosing between African American or Black, ask the individual which they prefer. If a preference cannot be determined, use Black.

Lowercase white (adj.), for people with light-colored skin whose backgrounds may spring from many different cultures.

Homepage

One word without a hyphen

internet

Lowercase 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

Avoid reference to gender unless it’s relevant to the topic of the piece. If a person’s gender is noteworthy for a particular reason, use “man” or “woman” rather than “male” or “female.”

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.

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

In general text, the four seasons are lowercase, including when referencing a given semester or year

winter; spring; summer; fall

fall 2020

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.