



## cSw Writing Style Guide (2017/18)

### Capitalization:

Capitalize all proper nouns/names of people, places, or things; lowercase common nouns.

Capitalize the first word in a sentence (including in a quote or following a colon).

Capitalize organization names except for prepositions (Society of Professional Journalists)

When pluralizing, capitalize proper name, but lower case common noun (York and James rivers)

Capitalize titles except for prepositions (Director of Virology)

Capitalize planets/constellations (Earth, Mars), but lowercase sun and moon.

Capitalize proper nouns in animals/plants but lowercase common noun (Douglas fir, Boston terrier, German shepherd.)

Capitalize and italicize scientific names of species but not common name (*Lepomis macrochirus* for bluegill sunfish)

Do not capitalize diseases unless they contain a proper name (diabetes, autism, Lou Gehrig's disease)

**COMMAS:** Put commas between the last two items in a list. (He likes ham, eggs, and cheese.)

**DATES:** If day and/or year are used, abbreviate months (Jan. 14, 2010)  
If no day is used, spell out month; don't use comma (January 2010)  
Do not use *th* or *st* (Jan. 14, not Jan. 14th)

**DASHES:** Use an em dash with a space before and after.  
(The scientists — all mountain climbers themselves — understand the challenges of developing versatile limb joints.)

**DEGREES/temperature:** Spell out (10 degrees, not: 10°)

**DEGREES/professional:** Use commas to separate name, degree, title (Joe Smith, PhD, Director)  
Use degree abbreviations without periods (BA, MS, MBA, PhD)

**HEADLINES:** Capitalize first word and all other words in headline except prepositions  
(as, at, by, in, of, than, the, to, with, etc.)

**HEALTH AGENCIES/ORGANIZATIONS:** Spell out on first reference, followed by acronym/abbreviation in parenthesis without periods. On subsequent references, use acronym/abbreviation. [Food and Drug Administration (FDA), European Medicines Authority (EMA), curiousSCIENCEwriters (cSw)]



**NUMBERS LESS THAN 10:** Spell out all whole numbers less than 10 (four, not 4)

Exceptions: When a number –  
starts a sentence or is in a headline  
is after a dollar sign (\$9)  
is in a date (May 6)  
is a fraction (4.5)

**NUMBERS 10 OR GREATER:** Use numerals. When referring to quantities like millions/billions, use whole numbers + word (245 million, not 245,000,000.)

**PARENTHESIS:** If parenthetical material is a full sentence, put the period *inside* the parenthesis. If parenthetical material is not a full sentence, put period *outside* the parenthesis.

**PERCENT:** Spell the word (percent not %). Exception is if space is needed in headline.

**QUOTES:** Capitalize beginning of quote, if it starts a sentence.

Use punctuation *before* the end quote. ("I like it," he said.)

Put nicknames in quotes (researcher Joseph "Buddy" Jones)

Use single quotes for a quote within a quote ("He told me, 'I hate eggs,' so I made pancakes.")

**STATES/COUNTRIES:** Use postal abbreviations (NJ, CA, FL). Use comma after city/state ("He attended the San Francisco, CA, conference in March."). Abbreviate US, UK, EU; spell out other countries.

**TIME:** Use numbers for hour:minutes, followed by lower case letters with periods (7 p.m., 5:45 a.m.)

**TITLES:** Capitalize all job/professional titles except prepositions (Director of Research)

Use "of" or comma (not both) to separate role/title (Director of Biomedical Research or Director, Biomedical Research -- not Director, of Biomedical Research)

Use italics for titles of books, journals, published papers, newspapers, magazines, major musical works, videos

**WORDS (misc.):**

email, not e-mail

offline/online, not off-line, on-line

internet, not Internet