

Creative Services style guide tip sheet

The following list summarizes some common writing style issues we deal with each day.

It's a brief and general guide to help maintain consistency. And there are exceptions to the rules. For detailed information consult: The Canadian Press Stylebook (14th edition); Canadian Oxford Dictionary (second edition); The City of Calgary's online guide at <http://commstandards>.

The City of Calgary's writing style is conversational. It helps to remember that we're communicating in a friendly manner with citizens, not at them. So, we write in a similar fashion to the way people speak. For more information, see City writing style – plain language at <http://commstandards>.

Use of bullets (short bullets with few words)

Heart attack symptoms include:

- dizziness
- shortness of breath
- confusion
- chest pain

Bullets (more words that could stand as a phrase or sentence)

Heart attacks may be caused when:

- Congenital heart conditions are present at birth.
- A blood clot from elsewhere in the body breaks away and travels to the heart.
- Drug abuse, where substances like cocaine impede blood flow in the heart.

Capitalization (The City)

- Use the formal legal name of Calgary's municipal government – The Corporation of The City of Calgary – in first reference in formal or legal documents.
- Use The City of Calgary or The City, or The Corporation in second reference or in informal use.
- Use the city (lower case) when referring to the community (e.g. I work for The City. I moved to the city in 1981.).

Capitalization (in general)

- In body copy, headlines, subheads, etc., the first letter of the initial word is capitalized (or upper case), followed by lower case. For example we would write: Council plans three key initiatives. We would not write: Council Plans Three Key Initiatives, nor would we write COUNCIL PLANS THREE KEY INITIATIVES
- There will be obvious exceptions where proper names, proper program names, etc., are uppercase (e.g. Calgary Police Service tips for safe driving or Wellness Opportunities at Work (WoW!).

Capitalization (headings and titles)

- Again, in general, use upper and lower case for words that form a sentence (e.g. Council plans three initiatives).
 - It's permissible to upper case the first letters of words, proper nouns, official programs, etc., when used as a title (e.g. Winter/Fall/Activities).
 - Use all capitals sparingly (e.g. WINTER/FALL/ACTIVITIES).
- * Note: We do capitalize all letters when we use The City's name as a word mark: THE CITY OF CALGARY



THE CITY OF
CALGARY

CUSTOMER SERVICE & COMMUNICATIONS

**Capitalization
(job titles)**

When a job title precedes a person's name, we capitalize the job title (e.g. Customer Service Representative John Doe).
If a job title follows the name, it's lower case (e.g. John Doe, customer service representative).

Numbers

Normally write out one to nine, then use numbers, 10, 11 and so on. If a number starts a sentence, write it out (e.g. Twelve designers went to lunch.).

**Troublesome words
(Canadian Oxford
takes precedence)**

- Licence, practice, etc., are nouns.
- License, practise, etc., are verbs.
- Organize, recognize, etc., take the letter 'z', not an 's' (which is the British version).
- Write email (no hyphen), website (one word, lower case) but the Web.
- City style is to hyphenate double-vowel words such as co-ordinate, re-emerge, co-operate, etc.

**Dates
(in text)**

- When there's a specific date, abbreviate the month (e.g. Jan. 5, 2007).
 - Don't abbreviate March, April, May, June, or July since they're short enough on their own.
 - With no specific date, spell out the month (e.g. January 2007).
 - Some formal documents require year/month/day (e.g. 2007 June 22).
- * Note: Days and months should be abbreviated to first three letters when presented in tabular manner. But they don't have periods (e.g. Mon Tues Wed, etc., and Jan Feb Mar Apr, etc.).

Time

- 7 p.m. not 7:00 p.m. (same for a.m.)
- Not PM or pm
- It's noon, not 12 noon, or 12 p.m. (same for midnight)

Italics

For clarity in text, use italics for titles of City documents, or compositions, including books, movies and songs. Do not use quotation marks around such titles. Do not use italics or quotation marks around names of newspapers, magazines, reference books, catalogues or the Bible.

**Phone numbers
(effective June 23/08)**

For internal documents: 403-268-1234
For external use: 403-268-1234
For outside area code: 1-905-428-1234
* Note: For design purposes it's OK to use periods (1.905.428.1234) instead of hyphens.

Plurals

I just bought 12 CDs, not 12 CD's.

Apostrophe

It's = It is
The 1890s can be shortened to the '90s (not the 90's)
Or rock and roll can be rock 'n' roll

Ellipses (. . .)

Three dots with spaces in between.
(e.g. Christmas, New Year's Day . . . Remembrance Day are all stat holidays.)



Slash (/)	No space between words (e.g. and/or, either/or)
Dash	Takes one equal space on each side (e.g. She works — and plays — hard.)
Hyphen	Generally there is no spacing with the hyphen (e.g. mother-in-law, -30 degrees)
Web addresses	When an Internet address (a URL) ends a sentence, there is no space between the last letter of the URL and the period. (e.g. Visit our website at calgary.ca.)
Addresses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spell out Boulevard, Drive, etc. in general locations (e.g. I live on Sifton Boulevard.) • Abbreviate if it's a numbered address (e.g. I live at 36 Sifton Blvd.) • Quadrants have periods: S.W., N.W., etc. • Spell out First through Ninth as street and avenue names (e.g. 37 Fifth Ave. S.W.) • Use th, nd, rd with addresses higher than the nine (e.g. 1234 45th St. N.W.) • If there is a suite number, office number, etc., use an (en) dash (e.g. 28 – 1234 45th St. N.W.)
Ampersand (&)	Don't use in text or in titles, but do use in formal names of City departments (e.g. Animal & Bylaw Services). But fish and chips, not fish & chips.
Money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$2 not \$2.00 • 30 cents, not \$0.30 • C\$800 and US\$800 to denote Canadian and U.S. dollars
Measurements	In general spell out terms such as feet, kilometres, kilograms in first reference. It's OK to abbreviate (ft., km, kg, etc.) if in tabular matter or if used frequently. (e.g. Bob weighs 87 kilograms. But Fred is 68 kg, Grant's 66 kg and Susie's 55 kg.)
Per cent (%)	Write out per cent in text. (e.g. He earned 80 per cent on his exam.) The % symbol can be used in numerical documents where space is tight, such as budget documents or tables.
Punctuation within a quote	In most cases, punctuation goes inside quotation marks. "He's a gentleman." "He's a gentleman," as long as he's not drinking. "I've said it before and I'll say it again, 'He's a gentleman.'"

