



# WRITING STYLE GUIDE

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The Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) Style Guide is a working reference document outlining common terms, spelling and formatting for OPC staff developing written materials and for individuals looking to submit articles, research reports or written documents for OPC publications. The guide focuses on the areas of formatting, punctuation, capitalization and other grammatical elements, as well as additional style guidance.

## Resources

We use these following resources as a guide when writing

- [Canadian Oxford Dictionary, 2nd Edition](#)
- [Canadian Oxford Thesaurus, 2nd Edition](#)
- [The Canadian Press Style Guide 18th Edition](#)
- [The Canadian Press Caps and Spelling 22nd Edition](#)
- [The Chicago Manual of Style](#)

## Formatting/Fonts/Heading

- Font: Source Sans Pro
- Size 12pt
- Formatting for headings should use the Style Pane headings in Word only for AODA compliance
- For written emphasis, use bold and not italics
- Do not use underlining, as this is reserved for hyperlinks.
- Do not add a colon at the end of a heading unless it is a complete clause
- Headings with following subheadings should be all uppercase on first letters, followed by a colon, then uppercase first letter followed by all lowercase (Alternative Dispute Resolution: Mediation skills)

## Acronyms

- Always spell out the full formal name the first time, then use the acronym without periods between letters. (The Principal's Development Course (PDC) is a new offering. Many people who have taken the PDC will tell you that...)

## Numbers

- Numbers are spelt out from one to nine and numerals are used from 10 on
- If a number is the first word of a sentence, it should be spelt out
- When number from 21 through 99 must be written out, use a hyphen (thirty-five or 36 may have joined)

- Avoid roman numerals except in personal sequences and proper names where specified (Henry Ford III, Rocky IV)
- In general, capitalize a noun followed by a number denoting place in a numbered series (Session 1, Workshop 2)
- For four-digit numbers, use a comma after the first number (3,600)
- For units, percentages and measurement, numerals are used (2L jug, 80 per cent, \$2 million, 3:30 p.m.)
- February 23, 2005
- March 2005
- March 9th
- 21st century (lowercase “c”)
- Currency (US\$500, C\$800)
- 1930s, ’30s
- 1920-21 but 1999-2003 (small dash no spaces)
- Page 23 or p.23

### **Commas, Colons and Semi-Colons**

- Do not use the Oxford or serial comma. (She registered for the PQP, SOQP, Odyssey Conference and a legal issues workshop.)
- Semi-colons are used to separate two complete ideas. (The minister will be making a statement tomorrow; we are looking forward to hearing about the new bill.)
- Semi colons are used to separate items in a list if some of the items include commas. (Three people attended the workshop; the new principal; the teacher; the vice-principal, along with her daughter; and the trustee.)
- Colons are used to connect ideas when the second part is not an independent clause. (You should never come to a workshop without the following items: your College of Teachers’ number, your OPC number and your business cards.)

### **Punctuation Marks**

- Periods and commas always go inside quotation marks, even inside single quotes. (She said, “I want to join the OPC.”)
- Periods and commas always go outside of brackets. (It appeared in the Public Policy section of the document (page 4, paragraph 2).)
- The placement of question marks, exclamation points and dashes with quotes follow logic. If a question is in quotation marks, the question mark should be placed inside the quotation marks. (She asked, "Can I join the OPC?") (Are you sure she said, "The OPC workshop was excellent"?)
- Dashes such as the long dash (em — dash) are used with a single space before or after to indicate a pause in a sentence, introduce an explanation, paraphrase or allow for an interjection. A short dash, (called an en – dash), is used to join two words of equal value (pages 3–10, 2007–2010, 3–5 p.m.)

- Hyphens are for age or durations or measurements. Use hyphens between most compound modifiers and the noun they modify. (This project is two-thirds complete.)
- Use quotation marks around a term or word you are defining. (Why is the word “communities” at the heart of many discussions about education today?)
- Ellipsis are three periods (...) used to indicate an omission from a text or quote. They also require a space before and after they appear. (The decision ... rests solely with your elected representatives.)
- There is only one space after a period. (First, you must register. Then, you... )

## Italics & Other

- Use italics (specifically the emphasis style header option in Word) only for book titles, document titles, website titles, legal references such as Acts and Codes (eg. *Education Act*, *Human Rights Code*) or formal report names.
- No italics are needed on policy documents or program names.
- Use lowercase words in plural use (acts 3 and 5, chapters 1-3, grades 9 through 11).
- Use lowercase for page, paragraph, sentence, size, verse, line (page 36, paragraph 2, line 3).
- Do not capitalize “the” at the start of names such as handbooks, organizations or programs (the *Oxford Dictionary* and the Ontario Principals’ Council).
- Listed websites should be hyperlinked whenever possible.
- If a website must be written out, it does not require “www” to precede it unless it is specific to the usage, such as “ftp.”

## Lists

- When the list is in a chart format, capitalize as you would a sentence. The following list is viewed as one sentence. Do not use a colon at the end of the intro statement, or periods at the end of each point. No commas on a list of items, only use a period at the end, as well as “and” before the last point.
  - You will need to bring
    - a pen
    - a pencil and
    - a pad of paper.
- The following list is viewed as separate sentences. Use a colon at the end of the intro statement and periods after each sentence
  - We recommend that the government move quickly to solve this problem:
    - The bill needs to be revised.
    - Vice-principals will need to provide input.
    - The OPC will seek Council support.
    - All administrators will be provided with a copy of the new Bill.

## Title Capitalization

- In a title, capitalize all words except articles (the, a, an), conjunctions (and, but, if) and prepositions (on, for, after). Capitalize short verb forms (Is, Are and Be).
- Do not capitalize the second word of a hyphenated compound.
- Capitalize only the first word of a subtitle. (Financial Management: An OPC online learning program).
- Capitalize brand names such as Kleenex, Microsoft when referring to the product.
- Capitalize Internet and World Wide Web but not web, website, web browser, email, blog, home page.
- Use lowercase for all references to seasons (spring, summer, fall and winter).

## Reference Formatting

- Within the text at the end of the reference  
(Smith & Scott, 2009, p. 23)
- On a footnote or reference page at the end of the document  
Smith, S., & Jones, C. (2014). *Style Guide Test: Caps and spelling*. Toronto, ON: OPC Group. Section 2, p. 3-4.
- Referencing a website on a footnotes or reference page  
Smith, T. (2013). *The OPC Reference Guide*. As of November 7, 2013, <http://www.web.ca>

## Lexicon: Our commonly used words, spelling and capitalization

- a Member of the OPC (OPC Member always with uppercase “M”)
- an Associate of the OPC
- Aboriginal and Indigenous are uppercase in all uses
- Bill 163
- a bill about safety was introduced
- board (lowercase unless part of a formal title)
- bussing
- candidate (references AQ programs) and participants (for workshops and smaller programs)
- co-operate, co-operation, co-ordinate, co-worker
- coordination, coordinator
- Councillor or Provincial Councillor (representative on OPC Provincial Council)
- decision-making
- *Education Act*
- eight days
- eight-year-old
- email or online (no dash )
- enrolment, enrol, enrolled
- full-day kindergarten, full-day learning (Ministry spelling uses the dash)
- full-day or half-day workshop (with dashes)
- good standing
- grade 9 (no caps on grade) or ninth grade
- Internet
- job-embedded
- Long-term disability (LTD)
- Master’s degree or Master of Education
- mentee & mentor (lowercase when not a title)
- MentoringCoaching Program (OPC’s program) or as part of MentoringCoaching
- MentorCoach (when referring to the OPC or Lois Zachary program)
- Mentor-Mentee relationship (when referring to Lois Zachary’s program)
- mentor-mentee relationship (when referring to the OPC’s program)
- Mentor-Coaching or Mentor-Coaching Institute (trademark term for Kate & Jeannie programs)
- Minister Betty White , or The Honourable Betty White, Minister of Education (formal title in writing)
- Betty White, education minister ... (informal title style)
- North, South, East, West (capitalize geographic regions but not derivatives and lowercase mere direction or position) the North (region of Canada) ..., northern Ontario, the Canadian North ...
- not-for-profit, non-profit (noun and adjective)
- one-day, two-day, three-day, full-day, half-day workshops (with dashes)

- one-time (adjective)
- online learning or e-learning (commonly used to describe web-based learning)
- one year
- *Ontario Leadership Framework* (OLF or can also be written as the Framework)
- per cent, percentage, six per cent increase (no hyphens)
- postgraduate, post-secondary
- post-retirement
- play-based learning
- practising principal (verb), practice (noun or adjective)
- problem solving (no dash)
- "... principal and vice-principal of the school ..." (lowercase all titles, unless preceding a name, and titles that are more than two words long should be set off beside the name with a comma)
- Principal Mary Brown (formal title in writing), Mary Brown, principal (informal title style)
- Provincial Council
- PQP 1 and 2
- short-term and long-term (with dashes)
- they instead of he/she
- deputy Speaker John Smith, Speaker John Smith ... (always with caps)
- supervisory officer, director of education, trustee (all lowercases unless part of a formal title) Supervisory Officer John Smith , Director of Education John Smith, Trustee John Smith
- The board's policy (lowercase b for board)
- the ministry (adjective, staff & programs)
- The Ministry of Education)
- Transfer Payment Agreement (TPA) (how the Ministry refers to agreements for funding)
- UK, US (commonly used with no periods)
- voice mail
- website, web page, web conferences, webcast

## Commonly Used Names/Titles

- Additional Qualification (AQ)
- l'Association des directions et des directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO)
- Catholic Principals' Council | Ontario (CPCO)
- Education Law Additional Qualification (ELQP)
- Education Leadership Canada® (ELC)
- Principal's Development Course (PDC)
- Honorary Life Member
- International Confederation of Principals (ICP)
- Institute for Education Leadership (IEL)
- International School Leadership (ISL)
- Mentoring Qualification Program (MQP)
- Mentor-Coaching Institute (MCI)
- Mentor-Coaching Program
- MentorCoaches
- Mentor-Coaching or Mentor-Coaching Institute (Kate & Jeanie programs)
- Ministry of Education – often referred to as simply Ministry or EDU
- Policy and Program Memorandum (PPM)
- Protective Services Team (PST)
- Principal Association Projects (PAP)
- Principal's Qualification Program (PQP)
- Provincial Council
- Supervisory Officer's Qualification Program (SOQP)
- Special Education Additional Qualification Program (SEAQP)
- the Ontario Principals' Council
- *The Register* (OPC magazine, written in italics since it is a publication heading)
- PhD, BA, BSc, etc.