



MVCC

MOHAWK VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

WRITING STYLE GUIDE

Guidelines for writing style



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The Mohawk Valley Community College Writing Style Guide exists to support the MVCC brand by providing a consistent tone of professionalism in all College communications.

This Style Guide will be a useful tool in helping anyone preparing internal or external communications, including, but not limited to, news releases, posters, one-sheets, brochures, catalogs, postcards, banners, and advertisements. Strictly following these guidelines unifies the College's voice and fosters clarity and practicality.

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INTRODUCTION

The Writing Style Guide was developed by the MVCC Marketing and Communications Department to provide consistent language to the College for use in all publications. Many entries follow Associated Press style, but other style guides also were consulted, including those from local publications, local colleges, other community colleges, and SUNY.

Be advised that this Writing Style Guide will be updated periodically to incorporate new usages as language evolves.



A-Z STYLE GUIDE

A

Acronyms

Do not use periods in acronyms, including MVCC, GPA (grade point average), US, BCE/CE (Common Era), etc. [Deviation from AP Style] See **States**.

Spell out what the acronym stands for on first reference with the acronym in parentheses. Acronym can then be used on all following references. Exceptions for acronyms that are well-known (FBI, CIA, MVCC, etc.).

Addresses

Follow AP Style, including always spelling out “Drive” when it’s used. (1101 Sherman Drive OR “...campus on Sherman Drive;” 1101 Floyd Ave. OR “...campus on Floyd Avenue”)

Advisor

Ages

Always use numbers.

Also

“Also” should not split an infinitive verb (ex. Correct usage: “She also will be taking English next semester.” Incorrect usage: “She will also be taking English next semester.”)

Alumni

Use “alumnus” for a single male. Use “alumna” for a single female. Use “alumni” for plural men, women, or a combination of both [deviation from the plural Latin usage]. “Alum” or “alums” can be used informally.

And

Always use “and,” not an ampersand symbol (&); acceptable as use as a graphic element.

C

Cancel, Canceled, Canceling, Cancellation

Only “cancellation” has two “l’s.”

Central New York

Always capitalize.

Class Year

Always use for MVCC alumni. Make sure the apostrophe is facing away from the year (ex. Joe Smith '05).

Coed

Not hyphenated.

Course Names

Courses are either to be referred to as their name

- English: Composition - or by their abbreviation

- EN101. Never use spaces between the the abbreviated category and the course number.

D

Dates

AP Style is preferred when space allows. When full dates are used (ex. July 9, 2015), abbreviate months as follows:

Jan.	April	July	Oct.
Feb.	May	Aug.	Nov.
March	June	Sept.	Dec.

When using only the month and year, spell out all of the months (ex. September 2015). All event notifications should follow this order: time, date, place (ex. The Cultural Series event will take place at 7 p.m. Jan. 1, 2019, in Schafer Theater). Exceptions can be made for usage on formal invitations.

Degrees

See **Appendix 3: Official Names of MVCC Degrees and Certificates.**

Capitalize official MVCC degree programs. Do not capitalize it if it's a general program or a program from another institution (ex. Joe Smith '05 earned a certificate in Airframe and Powerplant Technology. Joe Smith earned a degree in electrical engineering.).

Always use “associate,” never “associate’s” degree. Don’t include periods in the acronyms for associate degree designations (AA, AS, AAS, AOS).

Preferred style is that degrees are “earned,” not “received” (ex. Joe Smith earned an associate degree in Nursing from MVCC in 2005.).

Capitalize the name and abbreviations of academic degrees whether they follow personal names or stand by themselves (ex. Joe Smith, Doctor of Law; Mary Wilson, D.Eng.; She recently earned a Ph.D.). Do not use degree designations with names unless it's relevant to the story. Refer to it as “a bachelor’s,” “master’s,” or “doctoral” degree. Don’t capitalize doctorate, doctoral, bachelor’s, master’s, or other degrees. The plural form of a degree is the same as the singular (ex. bachelor’s degrees). Refer to the person as a doctor only if they are a medical doctor. Refer to a person with a Ph.D. as professor if they hold that title, or add Ph.D. after the name. Use periods with degree abbreviations for advanced degrees, including Ph.D., J.D., Ed.D., Psy.D., etc.

E

Email

All one word, not capitalized in copy.

F

Faculty Names

Only use middle initial if they ask for it or give it for use. Always use it for President Randall J. VanWagoner when he is addressed formally.

First-come, First-served

G

Grade Point Average

Always use "GPA" - all capitals and no periods.

Grades

Letter grades: Always include quotation marks around letter grades in text.

School grades: Follow AP Style standard rules for numbers; spell out first through ninth grades and use numerals for 10th through 12th grades.

H

Healthcare

Always one word except in official names of organizations and degree programs.

Home-schooled

Hyphenated when used as a verb, but not as a noun. (Ap Style says it is hyphenated in all cases except "home schooling" as a noun, including "home-school," "home-schooled," and "home-schooler.")

L

Locations

For external communications, always spell out the name of buildings. If a room is included in the copy, use this style: Payne Hall room 366. For internal communications, use of abbreviations is accepted in this style: PH366 (no space in between building abbreviation and room number).

M

Media

Treat as a collective noun (ex. The media is invited.). Also the preferred usage for all forms of the plural of "medium."

Mohawk Valley Community College

Spell out the name of the College of first reference. Use "MVCC" on all following references. When referring to MVCC as "the College," capitalize "college."

Money

Follow AP Style. Always use the dollar sign (\$) in front of a numerical monetary value. If the value is a whole number, do not include the decimal or the tenths and hundredths value places (ex. Use \$13, not \$13.00). For cents or amounts of \$1 million or more, spell out the words "cents," "million," "billion," etc. (ex. \$26, \$26.52, \$100, \$8 million, 6 cents).

Mustache

N

New York State

Always capitalize. Preferred usage over "State of New York."

Numbers

Follow AP Style, except as a graphic element. Spell out zero through nine, and use numerals for 10 and above. If the number begins a sentence, always spell it out.

Use numbers for units of measurement, including feet, height, and weight, ages, money, percentages, and temperatures.

O

Offices

Capitalize the name of an MVCC office when referring to it as listed in **Appendix 1: Official Names of MVCC Offices**. Follow writer's discretion in publications.

P

Percentages

Follow AP Style. Use “%” following numerals, with no space, in most cases. “Percent” may be used in casual cases (ex. “zero percent change of winning”). Avoid using percentages at the beginning of sentences. If unavoidable, spell numeral and percent out.

Phone Numbers

Always include area codes. Use this style - 315-792-5330 - for external communications and this style - x5330 - for internal communications.

Prerequisite

All one word; no hyphens.

R

Restaurateur

The French word for a person who owns or runs a restaurant is restaurateur, with no *n*, and this is the spelling used most often in English, especially in edited writing. Restaurateur, with an *n*, appears in English about once for every 10 instances of restaurateur. While this spelling is common and has a long history, many people consider it wrong.

S

Semesters

Seasonal semesters are always capitalized (ex. Fall semester and Spring semester) when referred to as a specific semester.

Sports Teams

MVCC's athletic teams are the Hawks.

The mascot's name is Mo.

When teams are designated by men's or women's, use an apostrophe (ex. “women's basketball,” not “womens basketball”).

States

Follow AP Style:

Alabama	Ala.
Arizona	Ariz.
Arkansas	Ark.
California	Calif.
Colorado	Colo.
Connecticut	Conn.
Delaware	Del.
Florida	Fla.
Georgia	Ga.
Illinois	Ill.
Indiana	Ind.
Kansas	Kan.
Kentucky	Ky.
Louisiana	La.
Maryland	Md.
Massachusetts	Mass.
Michigan	Mich.
Minnesota	Minn.
Mississippi	Miss.
Missouri	Mo.
Montana	Mont.
Nebraska	Neb.
Nevada	Nev.
New Hampshire	N.H.
New Jersey	N.J.
New Mexico	N.M.
New York	N.Y.
North Carolina	N.C.
North Dakota	N.D.
Oklahoma	Okla.
Oregon	Ore.
Pennsylvania	Penn.
Rhode Island	R.I.

South Carolina.....	S.C.
South Dakota	S.D.
Tennessee	Tenn.
Vermont.....	Vt.
Virginia	Va.
Washington	Wash.
West Virginia.....	W.Va.
Wisconsin.....	Wis.
Wyoming	Wyo.

T

Time

Follow AP Style. When a time is indicated, do not use the minute places if the time is on the hour (ex. 9 a.m., not 9:00 a.m.). Always use this style when referring to morning or evening after the time: a.m./p.m. (always lowercase and with periods). If morning or evening is indicated in the copy, do not use a.m./p.m. to avoid redundancy. For 12 p.m., use “noon,” and for 12 a.m., use “midnight.”

Titles

Capitalize all MVCC faculty and staff titles no matter where they are in the sentence. For people with outside titles, only capitalize their title if it comes before their name.

U

Upstate New York

Never use this phrase. Always use the official region name.

V

Veterans Education Services

Follows federal department name style. Also correct: Student Veterans Association.

W

Webpage/Website

One word; not capitalized in copy.

Include “www.” in front of website URLs in copy.

Include a period after the URL if they end a sentence.



PUNCTUATION GUIDE

Apostrophes

PLURAL NOUNS NOT ENDING IN S: Add 's: the alumni's contributions, women's rights.

PLURAL NOUNS ENDING IN S: Add only an apostrophe: the churches' needs, the girls' toys, the horses' food, the ships' wake, states' rights, the VIPs' entrance.

QUASI POSSESSIVES: Follow the rules above in composing the possessive form of words that occur in such phrases as a day's pay, two weeks' vacation, three months' work, five years' probation. The apostrophe is used with a measurement followed by a noun (a quantity of whatever the noun is). The examples could be rephrased as a day of pay, two weeks of vacation, three months of work, five years of probation. No apostrophe when the quantity precedes an adjective: six months pregnant, three weeks overdue, 11 years old.

OMITTED FIGURES: The class of '62. The Spirit of '76. The '20s. The apostrophe should curl away from the number if the font has different shapes for opening or closing apostrophes.

PLURALS OF A SINGLE LETTER: Mind your p's and q's. He learned the three R's and brought home a report card with four A's and two B's. The Oakland A's won the pennant.

FIGURES: Add s: The custom began in the 1920s. The airline has two 727s. Temperatures will be in the low 20s. There were five size 7s.

Commas

OXFORD COMMA: Always use the final comma in a series.

PLACEMENT WITH QUOTES: Commas always go inside quotation marks.

WITH FULL DATES: When a phrase refers to a month, day, and year, set off the year with a comma: Feb. 14, 2020, is the target date.

WITH HOMETOWNS AND AGES: Use a comma to set off an individual's hometown when it is placed in apposition to a name (whether of is used or not): Mary Richards, Minneapolis, and Maude Findlay, Tuckahoe, N.Y., were there.

If an individual's age is used, set it off by commas: Maude Findlay, 48, Tuckahoe, N.Y., was present.

Asterisks

Include a space after an asterisk before text begins.

Hyphens

Use hyphens for ranges, such as Jan. 1-4 and 4-5 p.m. There should be no spaces surrounding a hyphen.

COMPOUND MODIFIERS: Use a hyphen if it's needed to make the meaning clear and avoid unintended meanings: small-business owner, better-qualified candidate, little-known song, etc. No hyphen is needed when such terms are used as modifiers if the meaning is clear and unambiguous without the hyphen: third grade teacher, chocolate chip cookie, etc.

Hyphenate "well-" combinations before a noun, but not after: a well-known judge, but the judge is well known.

No hyphen is needed to link a two-word phrase that includes the adverb very and all adverbs ending in -ly: a very good time, an easily remembered rule.

COMPOUND PROPER NOUNS AND ADJECTIVES:

Do not use a hyphen to designate dual heritage: African American, Italian American, Mexican American.

PREFIXES: Use a hyphen if the prefix ends in a

vowel and the word that follows begins with the same vowel. Exceptions: cooperate, coordinate, and double-e combinations such as preestablish, preeminent, preeclampsia, preempt.

Use a hyphen if the word that follows is capitalized.

Use a hyphen to join doubled prefixes: sub-subparagraph.

SUFFIXES: Suffixes that generally require hyphens include -free, -based, -elect.

SUSPENSIVE HYPHENATION: When the elements are joined by “and” or “or,” expressing more than one element: 10-, 15- or 20-minute intervals; 5- and 6-year-olds. But: The intervals are 10, 15 or 20 minutes; the children are 5 to 6 years old. When the elements are joined by “to” or “by,” expressing a single element: a 10-to-15-year prison term; an 8-by-12-inch pan. But: The prison term is 10 to 15 years; the pan is 8 by 12 inches.

Periods

PLACEMENT WITH QUOTATION MARKS: Periods always go inside quotation marks.

SPACING: Use a single space after a period at the end of a sentence.

ACRONYMS: Do not use periods in acronyms, including MVCC, GPA (grade point average), US, BCE/CE (Common Era), etc. [Deviation from AP Style] See **States**.

Quotation Marks

TITLES: Put quotation marks around the titles of books, movies, plays, poems, albums, songs, operas, radio and television programs, lectures, speeches, and works of art.

PLACEMENT WITH OTHER PUNCTUATION: The period and the comma always go within the quotation marks.

The dash, the semicolon, the colon, 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.

HEADLINES: Use single quote marks in headlines.

Semicolons

TO CLARIFY A SERIES: Use semicolons to separate elements of a series when the items in the series are long or when individual segments contain material that also must be set off by commas. The semicolon is used before the final “and” in such a series.

TO LINK INDEPENDENT CLAUSES: Use a semicolon when a coordinating conjunction such as “and,” “but,” or “for” is not present: The package was due last week; it arrived today.

Slashes

In regular copy in which the font’s readability is not affected, do not use spaces surrounding slashes.

In cases where readability is affected or when used as a graphic element, a slash may be surrounded by spaces.



Appendix 1: Official Names of MVCC Offices

Office of the President

Alumni Office
Center for Corporate and Community Education (CCED)
Events and Guest Services
Foundation
Human Resources
Institutional Advancement
Marketing and Communications
Organizational Development

Grant Programs and Partnerships

Advanced Institute for Manufacturing (AIM)
Center for Leadership Excellence (CLE)
FIRST® (always italicized, use Registered symbol on first use)
Mohawk Valley Institute for Learning in Retirement (MVILR)
Small Business Development Center (SBDC)

Rome Campus

Office of the Dean
Student Services Center

Vice President for Administrative Services

American Dining Creations
Auxiliary Services
Business Office
Department of Public Safety (DPS)
Facilities and Operations
Barnes & Noble Bookstore
Information Technology
Institutional Research and Analysis
Office Services
Payroll
Purchasing

Vice President for Learning and Academic Affairs

Academic Development and Innovation
Academic Systems
Athletics
Dual Credit
Educational Technologies
School of Art (ARGD)
School of Business and Hospitality (HOBS)
School of Health Sciences (HLTS)
School of Humanities (HUMT)
School of Public and Human Services (PAHS)
School of STEM-Career (STCR)
School of STEM-Transfer (STTR)
Rome Campus Library
Utica Campus Library

Vice President for Student Affairs

Academic Advisement
Admissions
Assessment and Testing Center
Career Development Center
College-Community-Connection (C3)
Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (CSTEP)
Counseling Services
Dormitory Corporation
Dual Credit
Financial Aid
Health and Wellness Center
Holistic Student Support
International Student Services Office
Judicial Affairs and Community Standards
MVCC Math Corps.
Office of Accessibility Resources (OAR)
Office of Records and Registration
Residence Life
Student Activities
Student Congress
Student Engagement and Leadership
Student Enrollment and Retention Services
Student Service Center
Upward Bound/GEAR UP
Veterans Education Services



Appendix 2: Official Names of MVCC Spaces

Science and Technology Building (ST)

FABLab

thINCubator (thINC, informally)

Academic Building (AB)

Alumni College Center (ACC)

Commons

Barnes & Noble Bookstore

Hawks Nest Resident Dining Hall

Bellamy Hall

Butterfield Hall

Daughtery Hall

Huntington Hall

Francis A. Wilcox Hall (WH) [formerly known as Information Technology and Performing Arts Building (IT)]

Beebe Construction Services Lounge

Denise DiGiorgio Lounge

Excellus Blue Cross Blue Shield Training and
Conference Center

Mandia Family Learning Commons

Michael I. Schafer Theater

The Community Foundation of Herkimer and
Oneida Counties Atrium

Virginia M. and Edward Juergensen Gallery

Payne Hall (PH)

Penfield Hall

Plumley Complex (PC)

Festine Auditorium

Robert R. Jorgensen Athletic and Event Center (JC)

Field House

Mike Briggs Fitness Center



Appendix 3: Official Names of MVCC Degrees and Certificates

School of Art (ARGD)

Digital Media & Marketing AS
Fashion Design AAS
Fine Arts AS
Game Art AAS
Graphic Design AAS
Illustration AAS
Motion Media AAS
Photography AAS
Theater Arts AS
Video Production AS

School of Business and Hospitality (HOBS)

Accounting AAS
Business Administration AS
Business Analytics AS
Business Management AAS
Data Analytics Certificate
Entrepreneurship Certificate
Finance Certificate
Sports Management AS
Baking & Pastry Arts Management AOS
Chef Training Certificate
Culinary Arts Management AOS
Hospitality Management AAS

School of Health Sciences (HLTS)

Health Information Technology AAS
Health Sciences AS
Nursing AAS
Nutrition & Dietetics AS
Radiologic Technology AAS
Respiratory Care AAS
Surgical Technology AAS

School of Humanities (HUMT)

English for Speakers of Other Languages
Certificate
Liberal Arts & Sciences: General Studies AS
Liberal Arts & Sciences: Humanities & Social
Sciences AA

School of Public and Human Services (PAHS)

Chemical Dependency Practitioner AAS
Coaching Certificate
Criminal Justice AAS and AS
Criminal Justice: Law Enforcement AAS and
Certificate
EMS/Paramedic AAS
Fire Protection Technology AAS
Human Services AAS
Liberal Arts & Sciences: Psychology AS
Liberal Arts & Sciences: Mathematics & Science
AS (Physical Education Transfer Advising Guide)
Recreation & Leisure Services AAS
Adolescence Education Studies AS (Transfer
Advising Guides in: Biology, Chemistry, Earth
Science, English, History/Social Studies,
Mathematics, Physics)
Childhood Education Studies AS (Transfer Advising
Guides in: English, General Science, History)
Childhood Education Studies: Early Childhood
Education Track
Liberal Arts & Sciences: General Studies Childhood
Education AS (Jointly registered with SUNY
Oneonta)

School of STEM-Career (STCR)

Carpentry & Masonry Certificate
Civil Engineering Technology AAS
Computer Aided Drafting AOS and Certificate
Computer Numerical Control (CNC) Machinist
Technology Certificate
Electrical Engineering Technology AAS
Electrical Service Technician AOS

Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning, Refrigeration
& Building Automation AOS
Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning &
Refrigeration (HVAC-R) Certificate
Mechanical Engineering Technology AAS
Mechatronics Certificate
Metal Fabrication AOS
Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems AAS
School Facilities Management AAS and Certificate
Semiconductor Manufacturing Technology AAS
Welding Certificate

School of STEM-Transfer (STTR)

Computer Applications Programming AAS
Computer Information Systems AAS
Computer Science AS
Cybersecurity AS
Engineering Science AS
Liberal Arts & Sciences: Mathematics & Science
AS (Transfer Advising Guides in: Biology,
Chemistry, Environmental Sciences, General
Sciences, Math, Physics)



Appendix 4: Department Exceptions

MVCC Foundation

Dates

Months may be written out on formal invitations.

Courtesy Titles

Courtesy titles may be used in copy as requested.

If they are used in a publication, they must be used consistently throughout for anyone who has one, including medical doctors.