

# Washington State University Spokane

## Website Style Guide

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# 1. Visual Consistency and Aesthetics

To retain a professional look, formatting must stay consistent throughout the WSU Spokane website. The new design has a mechanism to achieve this—called “cascading style sheets” or CSS—but it does require attention on the content manager’s end. Please note that these design guidelines are based on best practices and exist to make web pages easier to read and to use.

## Fonts

CSS automatically switches the default font in FrontPage to the correct font for the website. If you assign a font other than the default Times New Roman, it will mess things up. Here’s how to avoid problems:

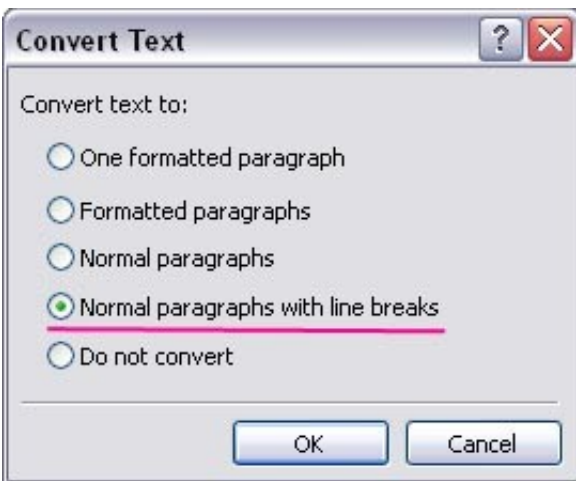


When copying text from another program (such as MS Word) into FrontPage, follow these steps:

1. In the “Edit” menu, choose “Paste Special.”
2. When you choose “Paste Special,” a “Convert Text” box appears and gives a number of choices. Choose “Normal paragraphs with line breaks.”
3. After pasting the text, you’ll need to go through it to add formatting (such as spaces between paragraphs, headings, and hyperlinks).

### Font Guidelines

- We ask that you absolutely **do not** use fonts other than the default.
- Avoid bolding hyperlinks.
- CSS automatically makes hyperlinks blue.
- Use font colors sparingly.



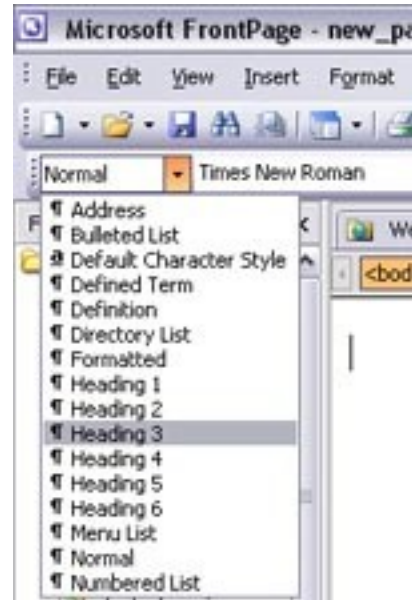
## Headings

CSS also switches plain Times New Roman into an attractive, colored heading that matches the rest of the WSU Spokane website.

Apply header fonts by going to the drop-down box on the far left side of the tool bar and choosing your heading size.

### Heading Guidelines

- Do not use anything larger than Heading 3. Generally, a page's main title should be in Heading 3, with subtitles in Heading 4.
- Do not italicize, bold, underline, size, or color the heading.
- Do not add hyperlinks to headings.
- Do not center or right justify headings.
- *Do* use headings—they brighten pages.



## Paragraph

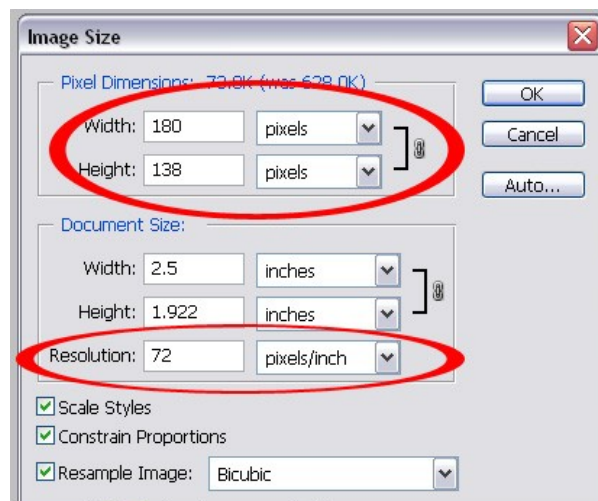
- Do not full justify text.
- Do not indent the first line of each paragraph.
- Use a single space following the end of sentences.

## Graphics

Don't make pictures too big!

Try cropping out unnecessary information in order to focus on the most important part of the picture.

- Resolution: **72** dpi
- For narrow column of web page: no larger than 180 pixels wide
- For main column of web page: no larger than 365 pixels wide
- Save as .JPG or .GIF

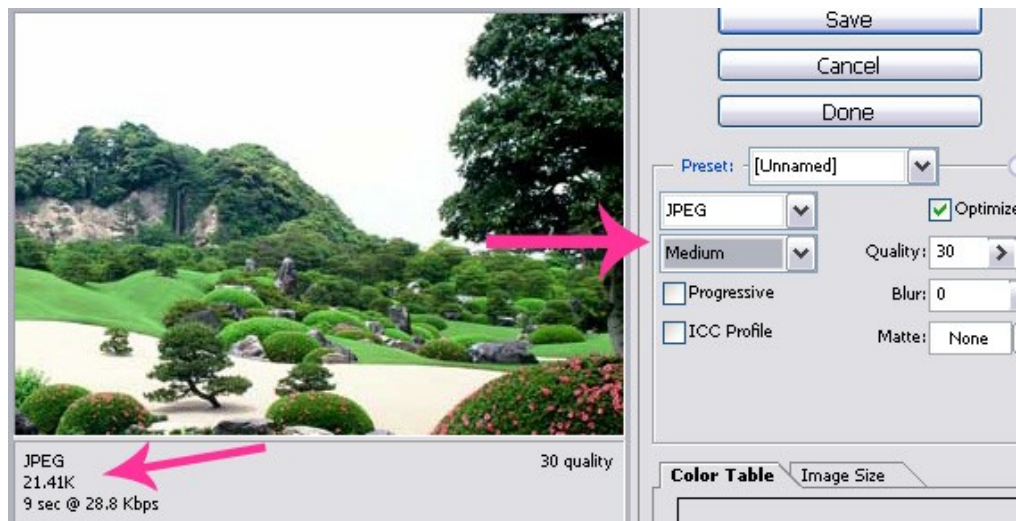


*In Photoshop, change the picture's size by choosing "Image Size" in the Image menu.*

**Never** scale a picture up from its source. In other words, if the original size is 235 pixels wide and 300 pixels high, do not size it up to 400x500—it will be a fuzzy, “pixilated” mess. If you have access to it, use Adobe Photoshop rather than FrontPage to edit images.

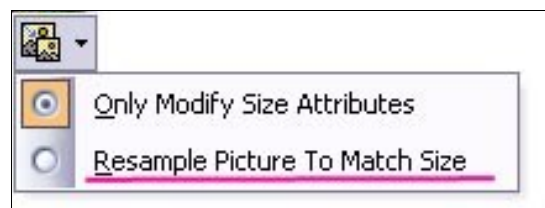
**In Photoshop**, follow these steps to get pictures down to a size appropriate for the Internet:

1. Choose “Save for Web” in the File menu.
2. In “Save for Web,” make certain
  - The file type is either JPEG (JPG) or GIF.
  - The file is no larger than 30K.
3. For file quality, choose low, medium, or high—just as long as the file doesn’t get too big.



### Microsoft FrontPage

1. After you scale an image down (not up!) a little picture icon appears.
2. Click on it and choose “Resample Picture to Match Size.” Otherwise, your image will be jagged.



*Use images wisely.* While they are crucial to the visual attractiveness of your site, photos and other graphics increase the time it takes to load each page. This is especially true for users with slow modems or Internet connections (including many prospective students). So be selective—pick only high-quality images that relate to and enhance your page content. With the exception of photo gallery pages, you should include no more than two images on any page.

*Refrain from using clip art and prefabricated graphics.* This will help maintain the clean, professional feel of our Web site. Never use emoticons.

## **Links**

- *Always check your links to see if they work.* It's very easy for a typo to slip in when you are creating a new link. Also, links may break, so it is good practice to periodically check links on your site.
- *Do not underline text that is not a link.* Users expect underlined text to link to something. When it doesn't, they become frustrated.
- Do not add links to headings.

## **2. Timeliness**

*Keep your web pages current and dynamic.* Because of the timely nature of the web, people expect information on it to be current. Outdated information is a major turnoff that may impede readers from returning to the site.

Add new information when it becomes available and remove information that is outdated or no longer relevant. Suggestion: use a planner or electronic calendar to remind you to update time-sensitive information on your site.

## **3. Writing for the Web**

Text displayed on a computer screen is harder on the eye and takes longer to read than printed text, which is why people don't want to read large amounts of text online. Additionally, they're often looking for specific information on a particular topic.

As a result, most people scan web pages rather than reading every word. Only when they see particular terms or phrases that interest them will they stop scanning and start reading. These factors should be considered when writing for the Web.

To create efficient and effective copy that will keep users coming back for more, use the following guidelines:

### **Keep It Short and Scannable**

*Try cutting any paper-based text in half before putting it on the Web.* You can streamline your text by cutting out redundancy. Look for repeated words and overuse of adjectives and adverbs. Use strong, active verbs instead of passive "to be" verbs. Eliminate needless words.

When choosing between two words with the same meaning, always choose the shortest one (e.g., “use” instead of “utilize”).

*Example\**

Macbeth was very ambitious. This led him to wish to become king of Scotland. The witches told him that this wish of his would come true. The king of Scotland at this time was Duncan. Encouraged by his wife, Macbeth murdered Duncan. He was thus enabled to succeed Duncan as king. (55 words)
Encouraged by his wife, Macbeth achieved his ambition and realized the prediction of the witches by murdering Duncan and becoming king of Scotland in his place. (26 words)

*Example: Cut out redundancy*

<i>Original text</i>	We would like to provide you with assistance in using our available resources.
<i>Concise text</i>	Let us assist you with our resources.

*Example: Using active verbs\**

<i>Original text</i>	There were a great number of dead leaves lying on the ground.
<i>Concise text</i>	Dead leaves covered the ground.

*Example: Remove unnecessary words\**

<i>Original text</i>	<i>Concise text</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• owing to the fact that</li> <li>• call your attention to the fact that</li> <li>• the question as to whether</li> <li>• this is a subject which</li> <li>• he is a man who</li> <li>• used for fuel purposes</li> <li>• the fact that he had not succeeded</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• since</li> <li>• remind you</li> <li>• whether</li> <li>• this subject</li> <li>• he</li> <li>• used for fuel</li> <li>• his failure</li> </ul>

\*Examples taken from *Elements of Style*, by William Strunk Jr. and E. B. White.

## Be Direct

Avoid clever introductions and flowery prose, which make it harder for readers to determine your topic. Readers should know what your topic is from the first line. Any text that follows should be concise and relevant to that topic. Particularly, introductions such as “We hope that this site will be a useful resource to you” are unnecessary.

*Example: Avoiding lengthy introductions*

<i>Original text</i>	Would you like to know more about student life? Meet with an admissions counselor? Discuss your options for Financial Aid? Or talk to current students about their experience? If so, then come to the New Student Open House on January 31.
<i>Concise text</i>	Come to the New Student Open House on January 31 to learn more about admissions, financial aid, and student life.

## Keep paragraphs short

Multiple short paragraphs are easier to scan. When users come across a solid block of text with many ideas, they are likely to skip over parts, possibly missing important points.

## Short and meaningful headings

With a good heading, your audience will know immediately if your site has what they seek. In addition, subheadings will guide them through the text and identify those parts that are of particular interest, allowing them to skip what is not relevant to their needs.

## Bulleted or numbered lists

Information in bulleted and numbered lists is easier to process than lists buried in text.

*Example*

<i>Original text</i>	You must complete the online quizzes, first paper rough draft, first paper final draft, second paper, and reading journal before you can take the final exam.
<i>Concise text</i>	You must complete these assignments before taking the final exam: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Online quizzes</li><li>• First paper: rough draft and final draft</li><li>• Second paper</li><li>• Reading journal</li></ul>

### **Use links to prevent duplication**

If information is available elsewhere on WSU websites, link to the information rather than repeating it.

## **4. Usability & Accessibility**

### **Minimize scrolling**

Users generally do not like to scroll. If you have a long page that necessitates scrolling, look for ways to shorten the information or reorganize it so that it can be divided over multiple pages. If that is not possible, provide an anchor menu at the top of the page that enables users to jump to specific sections, as well as anchors at the end of each section that link to the top of the page.

### **Downloading files**

When possible, make text and graphic based files available as PDFs, rather than leaving them in the original file format. The advantage of the PDF file format is that anyone can download free Acrobat Reader software to view or print PDFs, whereas files in other formats (even ones as common as Word) may not be compatible with the software people have.

Label all documents with their file extension (such as PDF, GIF, or DOC), so that users know what they're clicking on.

## **5. Grammatical Guidelines**

### **Abbreviations**

Degrees: Generally, it is preferred to spell out degrees (She has a Bachelor of Arts in...). If you do need to abbreviate, do not use periods in the abbreviation.

- Correct: He has a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration.
- Correct: He has a BA in Business Administration.
- Incorrect: She holds a Pharm.D. from the College of Pharmacy.

Acronyms: When using an acronym, spell out the full name or title the first time it is used in the text, immediately followed by the acronym in parentheses.

- Correct: The American Historical Association (AHA) is the oldest and largest society of historians and in the United States. The AHA was founded in 1884.
- Incorrect: The American Historical Association is the oldest and largest society of historians and in the United States. The AHA was founded in 1884.

- Incorrect: The AHA is the oldest and largest society of historians and in the United States. The AHA was founded in 1884.

Addresses: Abbreviations such as Ave., Blvd., St., and Dr. should not be used in running text, but can be used in lists and tables.

- Correct: John Considine opened his theater on Howard Street.
- Incorrect: John Considine opened his theater on Howard St.

Geographical Locations: The names of states should be spelled out when used by themselves in text. When mentioning a city or town along with the state, it is preferred that you spell out the state name, except in lists, tables, and mailing addresses. Use standard postal abbreviations for mailing addresses, lists, and tables.

- Correct: Most students come from Washington, Oregon, and Idaho.
- Incorrect: Most students come from WA, OR, and ID.
- Correct: The College of Nursing has sites in Yakima, Walla Walla, and Vancouver, Washington.

Spell out *United States* when used as a noun; use the abbreviation *U.S.* when used as an adjective.

## Capitalization

Generally, we favor the “down style” of capitalization –the fewer capitals, the better.

Addresses: Formal street names should be capitalized. Use lower case when not part of the formal name.

- Correct: Spokane Falls Boulevard becomes Trent Avenue.
- Correct: The Couer d’Alene Hotel was located at the corner of Trent Avenue and Howard Street.
- Correct: I crossed the avenue and turned left, but couldn’t find that street.
- Incorrect: After crossing the Street, turn left.

Board of Regents: The Board of Regents should be capitalized when referring to WSU’s board. The words *board* and *regents* by themselves are not capitalized.

- Correct: The Board of Regents is meeting this month at the Academic Center.
- Correct: Several regents could not attend the board meeting.

Buildings: All proper names of buildings should be capitalized. When referring to buildings in general terms, words like *center*, *hall*, and *building* are lowercased.

- Correct: Nursing students gathered at the entrance to Health Sciences Building.
- Correct: Design students gathered behind the building.
- Correct: Most undergraduate students live in residence halls.

Centers and Institutes: Formal names of centers and institutes should be capitalized. When used by themselves, the words *center* and *institute* should be lowercased.

- Correct: She works for the Interdisciplinary Design Institute.
- Correct: Among the institute's faculty are many nationally known designers.

Classes and Courses: Use lower case when referring to classes and courses in general terms. Capitalize only the formal title of the class or course.

- Correct: I'm taking a class in sociology.
- Correct: I'm taking Introduction to Sociology this semester.

Commencement: Use lower case for *commencement* in text.

Committees: Capitalize the formal names of committees. Lowercase the word *committee* when it stands alone.

- Correct: The Strategic Planning Committee has discussed the university's new mission.
- Correct: The committee came up with recommendations for improving the campus.

Degrees: Use the lower case and an apostrophe s ('s) when referring to degrees in general. Capitalize when referring to a specific degree.

- Correct: She holds a bachelor's degree in nursing from WSU.
- Correct: She holds a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from WSU.
- Correct: He received his Doctor of Pharmacy from WSU.

Departments and Offices: Capitalize the formal names of departments or offices. Lowercase the words *department* and *office* when used alone.

- Correct: The Office of Communications published these guidelines.

- Correct: The office publishes many of the university's publications.

E-mail: When used in running text, *e-mail* is lowercased. Note that a hyphen should be used.

Honors: Use lower case, unless it is part of a proper name.

- Correct: He is an honors student.
- Correct: The Honors College provides curriculum for students of motivation and ability.

Internet: *Internet* is capitalized.

Majors and Programs: Use lower case for majors, programs, concentrations, and tracks, with the exception of specific languages, which should always be capitalized.

- Correct: She studies chemistry.
- Correct: He is a French major.

Rooms: Capitalize only when used as a proper name.

- Correct: The class is held in Room 220.
- Correct: What room are we in today?

Regions: Region names are capitalized when they stand alone and are widely understood to designate a specific area. Please note that *Washington State* is the correct capitalization when writing about the state of Washington.

- Correct: WSU's main campus is located in southeastern Washington.
- Correct: Many of our students come from the Inland Northwest.

Seasons: Capitalize only when part of a formal name.

- Correct: The fall semester is about to start.
- Incorrect: I taught during Spring semester.

Student Status: Do not capitalize *freshman*, *sophomore*, *junior*, *senior*, *graduate student*, and other designations of student status unless they are used as a class designation or formal title.

- Correct: He is a junior social work major.
- Correct: The Senior Class will sponsor the event.

Titles: Capitalize a person's title only when it is used before the name. Titles that follow a person's name or that are used alone should be lowercase.

- Correct: President Floyd spoke yesterday.
- Correct: Dr. Floyd is president of Washington State University.
- Correct: The president of WSU spoke at a conference on service learning.

University: Capitalize *university* only as part of an official name. When used by itself, *university* should be lowercased.

- Correct: The Board of Regents recently approved the university's new mission.
- Incorrect: The professor spoke with gratitude of his connection with the University.

## **Numerals**

Dates and Years: In running text, it is preferred to spell out the names of months. When using a month and a year only, do not use commas to set them off. When a date in running text includes a month, day, and year, commas must be used to set off the year.

- Correct: The event took place October 4, 2002, in Spokane.
- Correct: The event took place October 2002 in Spokane.
- Incorrect: The event took place October, 2002, in Spokane.
- Incorrect: The event took place October 4 2002 in Spokane.
- Incorrect: The inauguration took place October 4, 2002 on the main campus.

Do not write dates as ordinals, even if they are pronounced that way.

- Correct: The deadline is January 7.
- Incorrect: The priority deadline is January 1<sup>st</sup>.

When indicating spans of decades or centuries, use an "s" without an apostrophe after the year. For possessives, an apostrophe before the "s" is needed.

- Correct: He studied at the University of Washington in the 1950s.
- Correct: The 1980's most impressive event was the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Money: Use the dollar sign and two numbers. Whole-dollar amounts are set with zeros after the decimal point only if they are used alongside fractional amounts.

- Correct: Admission is \$8.50 for faculty and staff and \$5.00 for students.

- Correct: Admission is \$5 for students.
- Incorrect: Admission is \$5.00 for students.

For dollar amounts in the thousands, remember to include a comma.

- Correct: Washington residents pay roughly \$20,000 in tuition.
- Incorrect: Washington residents pay roughly \$20000 dollars in tuition.

For dollar amounts beyond thousands, use the dollar sign, number, and appropriate word.

- Correct: The College of Nursing received \$1.2 million to set up a new program.
- Incorrect: The College of Nursing received \$1,200,000 million to set up a new program.

Numbers: Generally, you should spell out numbers one through nine and use numerals for numbers 10 and above.

- Correct: There are nine students in the class.
- Correct: There are 10 students in the class.

When amounts are mixed, use numerals.

- Correct: I have 12 blue pens and 5 red pens.
- Incorrect: I have 11 blue pens and three red pens.

Avoid starting a sentence with a number. If you must, spell the number out.

- Correct: Twenty-five students attended the seminar.
- Incorrect: 25 students attended the seminar.

Percentages: Always use numerals with percentages (including the numbers 1 through 9). In running text, the word “percent” should be spelled out. In tables or figures, the % symbol may be used.

- Correct: Design majors make up 80 percent of the class.
- Incorrect: Design majors make up eighty percent of the class.
- Incorrect: Design majors make up 80% of the class.

Time: Use lower case with periods for *a.m.* and *p.m.* Do not use *12 a.m.* or *12 p.m.* Use *noon* and *midnight* (without the 12) instead.

- Correct: The class starts at 2 p.m.

- Correct: The class starts at noon.
- Incorrect: The class starts at 12 a.m.
- Incorrect: The class starts at 12 noon.

If you use a time that breaks down to minutes, all times should break down to minutes.

- Correct: We meet at 2:00 and 4:30 p.m.
- Incorrect: We meet at 2 and 4:30 p.m.

### **Plurals and Possessives**

Names: Plurals of family names that end in *s* should be formed by adding *es*:

- Correct: The Hendrickses live in Stevens County.

Plurals and possessives of proper names that end with *s*, *x*, and *z* are formed as follows:

- Correct: Jones's car
- Correct: Lennox's vases
- Correct: The Ritz's sales

Plurals: In most cases, plurals of single or multiple letters and numbers used as nouns are formed by adding an *s* to the end of the word. Only in cases where confusion might result is an apostrophe used.

- Correct: The ship's SOSs went unanswered.
- Correct: The group was divided up in twos and threes
- Correct: Remember to cross your t's and dot your i's.

Collective Nouns: Collective nouns *like faculty, staff, data, and media* are considered plural and should be used with a plural verb.

- Correct: The faculty are dedicated to their students.
- Correct: It seems that the data are incorrect.

### **Punctuation**

Ampersand: The ampersand (&) should **only** be used in titles. A possible exception is when space is tight in right sidebars. This is for reasons of both grammatical correctness and HTML formatting.

Comma: Parenthetical clauses (clauses that can be omitted without affecting the meaning of the sentence) should be enclosed by commas. Note that states (when mentioned to clarify the location of a town or city) and years (when mentioned with a specific date) are considered parenthetical clauses.

- Correct: Floyd, president of Washington State University, spoke to the media yesterday.
- Correct: She was in Las Vegas, Nevada, for two weeks.
- Correct: The conference will take place on March 1, 2004, in New York City.

In a listing of three or more items, always use a comma after the second to last item.

- Correct: WSU has undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs.
- Incorrect: WSU has undergraduate, graduate and professional programs.

Semicolon: Use a semicolon between the two parts of a compound sentence when they are not connected by a conjunction.

- Correct: The project has been completed; your help is no longer required.

In addition, a semicolon precedes words like *then*, *however*, *thus*, and *therefore* when they are used transitionally between clauses of a compound sentence.

- Correct: The project has been completed; therefore, your help is no longer required.

Colon: Use a colon to introduce a list or series. Do not use a colon to introduce a list that is the complement or object of an element in the introductory statement.

- Correct: WSU has campuses in four locations: the Tri-Cities, Vancouver, Spokane, and Pullman.
- Incorrect: Washington State University's four campuses are: Pullman, Spokane, Vancouver, and Tri-Cities.

Hyphenation: Use a hyphen with compound words used as adjectives. Do not use a hyphen with compound words used as nouns or adverbs.

- Correct: She is a part-time student who works full time in a clothing store.

Hyphenating a series is done as follows:

- Correct: She has a 40- to 60-hour workweek.

## En dash and Em dash

The **en dash** is used to connect continuing or inclusive numbers, such as dates and times. It is also used instead of the word “to” to indicate a connection between things, such as geographic references and routes.

- Correct: 1990–2000
- Correct: 10 a.m.–1 p.m.
- Correct: the Mason–Dixon Line
- Correct: the Philadelphia–Atlanta flight

Note: Form the em dash in Microsoft Word or Open Office by these methods:

- Type ALT + 0150 on the 10-key pad.
- Type a dash with spaces on both sides.

The **em dash** is used to indicate a sudden break in thought, a parenthetical statement, or instead of a colon or semicolon to link clauses.

- Correct: The ceremony started at—what time did it start again?
- Correct: The School of Nursing’s doctoral program—the Doctor of Nursing Science—trains nurses to become educators.

Note: Form the em dash in Microsoft Word or Open Office by these methods:

- Type ALT + 0151 on the 10-key pad.
- Type two dashes with letters, but no spaces, on both sides.

## **Titles**

Academic Papers: Titles of dissertations, theses, or other unpublished works should be capitalized and put inside quotation marks.

- Correct: His paper “U.S.–Soviet Relationships During the Cold War” was well written.

Articles and Parts of Books: Titles of articles in periodicals or newspapers and parts of books (e.g., chapter titles and titles of short stories or essays) are set in roman type and enclosed in quotation marks.

- Correct: I enjoyed Johnson’s article, “One Man’s War,” which appeared in *Newsweek*.

- Correct: Students should read “International Marketing,” which is Chapter 10 in *Principles and Practices of Marketing*.

Books: Title of books should be capitalized and set in italics.

- Correct: *The Web Style Guide* by Gerry McGovern offers useful information on writing for the Web.

Courses: Formal titles of courses should be capitalized. Italics or quotation marks are not needed.

- Correct: She took Speech Sound Disorders this semester.

Newspapers and Periodicals: Magazine and newspaper names should be capitalized and set in italics. If the name of the magazine or newspaper starts with *the*, it should be set in roman type and, unless it starts a sentence, lowercased. Do not capitalize *magazine* unless it is part of the publication's title.

- Correct: I always read David Brooks's editorial column in the *New York Times*.
- Correct: *Time* magazine featured an interesting article last week.
- Correct: The *New England Journal of Medicine* published the results of his study.

Movies, TV, and Radio: The titles of movies and television series are italicized. The titles of individual television and radio shows should be set in roman type and enclosed in quotation marks.

- Correct: As part of their Spanish class, the students watched the movie *Frida*.
- Correct: Many students stayed home to watch "Friends No More," the last episode of *Friends*.

Music: Descriptive titles for orchestral works should be capitalized. If a work has a formal title, it should be italicized.

- Correct: The orchestra performed Dvorak's New World Symphony.
- Correct: Ms. Fleming sang the famous aria from *Gianni Schicchi*.