

BCcampus Style Guide

Our mandate is to provide teaching, learning, educational technology, and open education support to post-secondary institutions throughout British Columbia. We create relevant, interesting, and engaging content for our audience, written by multiple authors. This guide has been developed to ensure we have a unified voice and use consistent style in our writing. BCcampus, like the provincial government, follows the [Canadian Press Stylebook](#) and the [Canadian Oxford Dictionary](#).

Tone and Voice

The preferred tone for informal communications – social media, web content, articles, newsletters, and similar channels – is professional and compelling. The content we create and share should make our readers feel:

- **Curious** about our people and programs
- **Informed**; trusting that we're sharing relevant and factual information
- **Included** in our decisions, activities, and programs
- **Respected** for their opinions, experiences, and intelligence
- **Engaged** in the spirit and focus of BCcampus

At BCcampus, we are:

- **Collaborative** – we use 'we, us, and our' to include the people and teams we work with.
- **Facilitators** – we work with others. We don't make anyone do anything.
- **Name-droppers** – we quote our sources and share the accomplishments of the professional educators we work with to ensure they receive credit and recognition for their contributions.
- **Passionate** – we share information about the people, resources, and methodologies that excite us, and this excitement is shared with our audience.

Some Basics

1. Our name is BCcampus, not BC Campus, BC campus, B.C. Campus, or B.C. campus.

2. Our province is abbreviated B.C., not BC, except where it occurs as part of a proper noun or brand (BCCAT, CoursesBC).
3. One space between sentences
4. Avoid using italics, especially for web writing. Italics are welcome in other relevant uses (book titles, etc.)
5. Try not to use quotations, italics, or boldface for emphasis. Rewrite the content to provide the emphasis you need
6. We use hyphens in phone numbers (e.g., 123-456-7890)

Elements of Indigenous Style

Please refer to [*Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing By and About Indigenous Peoples*](#) to ensure you are using Indigenous terminology appropriately.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

In all things, we strive to be the leading example of how to create an inclusive environment for our audience. This means that we are fluid in our communications and strive to use the currently acceptable and appropriate definitions, terminologies, and spellings. Please be aware that language and identities change, so it's good practice to confirm you are using the most inclusive definition wherever possible.

For example:

- **LGBTQIA2S+** – this is the currently accepted (as of June 16, 2020) acronym that we use to show respect to this community
- **Person vs. individual** — we are committed to ensuring our communications are as inclusive as possible, and word-choice can play an import factor. When referring to specific but unnamed members of a group, please use the term people or person instead of individual or individuals. This is because the term individual excludes a person from a group, whereas people or person does not. Our thinking on this is informed and [influenced by this report](#), funded by a BCcampus DEI grant.
- **CamelCaps** — capitalize the first letter of each word in a hashtag so that screen readers can announce each word separately. #InclusionMatters.

For additional DEI concepts, a good reference is the University of Washington's [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Glossary](#).

Principles

When referring to culture, ethnicity, or groups of people, the word Black is capitalized. “Black with a capital B refers to people of the African diaspora. Lowercase black is simply a color.” – [Lori L. Tharpshad](#)

Capitalize according to Indigenous preference, not to standard resources.

Avoid possessives before groups (e.g., Canada’s Indigenous Peoples).

Always refer to the three major groups of Indigenous Peoples in the same order: First Nations, Métis, Inuit. (Where Urban Indigenous people are included in the list, it follows Inuit.)

Use Indigenous Peoples as a term specifically referring to groups of people — i.e., peoples. Use Indigenous people as a more generic term referring more to the people than to the groups — e.g., when Indigenous people move to urban centres.

Use the term settlers (noun) instead of colonizers, Europeans, newcomers, and so on; use settler (adjective) instead of colonial, European, Euro-Canadian, and so on.

Use terms such as settler perspectives, settler governments, settler policies, settler laws, but use Western when referring to larger systems, such as Western knowledge system, Western educational systems, and Western-dominated systems.

For authors, instructors, Elders, etc., add which Nation they are from after their name in parenthesis, unless this has been explicitly shared in the sentence itself. Some examples:

- Bradley Dick (Lekwungen First Nation)
- Mi’kmaq educator Marie Battiste
- Elder Albert Marshall from the Eskasoni Mi’kmaq First Nation describes Etuaptmumk, the approach of “two-eyed seeing”

Do not use “the” or “people” with “Inuit.”

Spelling

We strive to adhere to CP Style, but have defined spellings for the following words and phrases:

- 20th century
- Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN)
- acknowledgement

- adviser (BCcampus style guide)
- a.m./p.m.
- among (not amongst)
- B.C. (the province – except in wordmarks)
- BCcampus
- benefited, benefitting
- biosecurity
- Chinook Jargon
- colonization
- coexist (CanOx)
- co-manage
- contact
- co-operation
- decision making (n; CanOx but contra CP Style, which doesn't speak to similar constructions like problem solving, information gathering, capacity building, so we have left all open in the noun form)
- decolonization
- Elder
- enroll, enrolment
- fundraise (v)
- geopolitical
- Google
- Green Report
- holism/holistic (except Michelle Pidgeon uses “wholistic” for her Indigenous wholistic framework in the Front-Line Workers Guide)
- Hudson's Bay Company
- Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement

- Indian Residential School Survivors Society (IRSSS)
- Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous people
- Indigenize, Indigenization (but indigenous in relation to plants, animals, etc.)
- International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)
- judgment
- K–12 (use en-dash)
- knowledge-keepers
- Kwakwaka'wakw
- Kwak'wala language
- Lik'wala language
- Māori
- map-makers
- massive open online course (MOOC)
- Medicine Wheel
- Métis, Métis citizens
- Métis Nation British Columbia
- Métis Nation Homeland, historic Métis Nation Homeland
- Métis National Council (MNC)
- Michif (use this spelling for Métis language)
- microaggression
- mindset
- Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training
- Mi'kmaq and Maliseet First Nations
- modelling
- multi-faceted (CanOx)
- Nation (when referring to First Nation)

- ‘Namgis (straight apostrophe)
- Neuroinclusivity
- non-Indigenous people
- North West Company
- northwest coast
- Nuu-chah-nulth
- per cent (in running text, two words, BCcampus style)
- reconciliation
- Reconciliation Canada website
- re-evaluate
- re-traumatize
- Royal Proclamation, 1763 (rom)
- self-mastery
- Sixties Scoop or ’60s Scoop
- socio-economic
- socio-historic
- Stó:lō
- TCPS2 (Tri-Council Council Policy Statement, version 2)
- TELFIN TFE WILNEW
- *terra nullius* (ital)
- the Yukon
- toward (not towards)
- treaty-making
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC)
- U’mista
- UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

- Voyageur sash
- website (not web site)
- well-being
- Western and the West (when referring to European culture/knowledge in contrast to Indigenous culture/knowledge)
- worldview (contra CanOx)
- W̱SÁNEĆ
- Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC)

Preferred word usage

- Adviser, not advisor
- Alternative (one or the other); alternate (one after the other)
- Assist (use help)
- Clean up (verb), cleanup (noun)
- Data (plural in scientific writing but usually singular in other uses)
- Defence (not defense, no matter what your spell-checker says) but defensive
- Dialogue tags – after the initial use of the full name, please use first names to identify the speaker in the article. e.g., “Open is the best thing in the world,” said Mary Burgess, executive director at BCcampus ... “I really love the world of open,” said Mary.
- Fulfil (not fulfill), fulfilled, fulfilling, fulfilment
- Historic (important or outstanding in history), historical (about history). A, not an, historical site
- Honourifics – Please include the appropriate honourific when first identifying the person, but unless requested, do not repeatedly reference. e.g., Dr. Rick Morty from PickleRick University... Rick told us that...
- It’s (it is), its (possessive)
- Judgment, not judgement
- Lend, lent (verb), loan (noun)

- Licence (noun), license (verb). (Easy test: substitute the words “advice” or “advise” to determine which part of speech it is.) – Also, licensed, licensing, licensee
- Lock out (verb), lockout (noun), lock up (verb), lockup (noun)
- m., p.m. (periods and lower case). Noon, not 12 noon, which is redundant. 1 p.m., not 1:00 p.m.
- Metre (metric), meter (gauge)
- microaggression
- New Westminster (not New Westminister)
- Northeast, northwest (one word). Northwestern B.C., not northwest B.C.
- Offence, offensive
- Practice (noun or adjective), practise (verb)
- Set up (verb), setup (noun)
- Spin off (verb), spinoff (noun and adjective)
- Underway (one word)
- Upcoming (use coming)
- Use inquiry, not enquiry, except when referring to Enquiry BC

Capitalization

| Capitalize | Lowercase |
|--|--|
| Black – when referring to culture, ethnicity, or groups of people, use a capital B | Use lowercase when describing the colour |
| Proper nouns – e.g., B.C. Open Textbooks | Nouns, verbs, adjectives – e.g., open educational resources, open education, open |
| Universities, colleges, and institutes – e.g., University of Victoria, BCIT | Departments – e.g., faculty of education Degrees – e.g., bachelor of science (unless abbreviated BSc, BA) |

| | |
|--|---|
| Names of ministries – e.g., Ministry of Health Services, the Health Services Ministry | Generic reference to ‘the ministry’ or ‘ministries’ (plural) |
| Mayor and Coun. (for councillor) are uppercase before names only | Lowercase job titles for everybody Lowercase titles preceded by “former” or “acting” |
| Full names of acts (Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act), at all times | Use lowercase when writing “the act will...” DO NOT italicize the names of acts |
| Uppercase Aboriginal and Indigenous at all times | |
| West Coast, the West, the Interior, the Island, Lower Mainland, the North, the Northeast (regions) | west coast of Vancouver Island, the B.C. coast |
| Use all caps for abbreviations and acronyms like HTML, CD-ROM, RAM and URL | website, webmaster, web page, webcast, etc. |

*Please note: The Canadian Press Stylebook changed in 2017 regarding the capitalization of internet – it should not be capitalized

Title or sentence case

Excerpted from the [Government Communications & Public Engagement web style guide](#)

Use title case for H1 and H2 headings. Capitalize all words except:

- Prepositions and articles (a, by, or, an, for, the, and, in, to, at, of, up, but, on)
- Coordinating conjunctions (and, but, or) of less than four letters

Use sentence case for H3 and H4 headings unless headings are three words or less and linked.

Capitalize the first word and proper nouns.

- [H1] Aboriginal Justice
 - [H2] Justice B.C. Services

- [H3] Custody, sentencing and corrections support
- [H3] Adult offender corrections support
 - [H4] How do you apply for support?

If the heading contains a hyphenated word, only capitalize the first part.

Citations

When citing your content, please refer to the citation and style guides shared by [Simon Fraser University](#) to find out the right citation style for your article or web page.

Numbers

Numbers one through nine are spelled out (except when saying No. 1 or number 1 priority). Use numerals for 10 and higher (except when starting a sentence with a number) and for decimals (4.5 per cent – and note: per cent is two words). Also Phase 1, Section 1, Grade 1, page 1, line 9.

- Grade 7, grades 7 and 8, seventh grade

Abbreviations

Geographical locations take periods. Therefore, B.C. stands for British Columbia; BC stands for Before Christ. Some organizations think because their logo doesn't use periods, their name shouldn't have them either. Not true. A logo is a visual thing, a graphic device, and just because the artist didn't want dots messing up the design doesn't change the fact that B.C. takes periods.

HOWEVER, CP also says that in a proper name (a company, for instance), if they insist on odd spellings etc., it's the company's name, so go with their version. For example, BCcampus, BC Ferries, BC Hydro.

Months: In dates, abbreviate when followed by day, except March, April, May, June and July. Thus we write Jan. 13, 2003, April 2, 2003. But January 2003 (no comma).

Days of week: don't abbreviate, except in a table if you need to save space.

Quotes:

If a quote continues from one paragraph to the next, do not put closing quotation marks at the end of the previous paragraph, but do put open quotation marks at the beginning of the new paragraph, as follows:

- “Our strategy is simple...

- “We speak in bureaucratese like ‘initiatives’ and ‘strategy,’ and no one can understand a word we say...

Please don’t start a quote with “I am pleased...”. It’s generic and banal. (“I am pleased by this pleasing strategic initiative that pleases me.”)

Also, do not use quotations to emphasize a word or phrase. Rewrite the sentence to show the appropriate emphasis without relying on cheap gimmicks. The exception is to indicate sarcasm. BCcampus does not use sarcasm in any communications.

Punctuation

Some exceptions to the following guidelines may be appropriate in specific disciplines. Please check with your project manager or copy editor.

Ampersands

As per CP Style, the ampersand (&) should only be used when it forms part of a corporate name

Citations

Do not use periods in abbreviations, acronyms, and initialisms, except as noted in a spelling list (e.g., et al., etc., i.e. are the most common that retain the periods).

Commas

We love Oxford commas (also known as the serial comma). We have done a 180-turnaround on this one since 2011. Put commas between the elements of a series and before the final and, or nor.

- men, women, children, and pets
- the ministries of Health, Labour, and Forests

In a sentence made of two distinct clauses, put a comma before the and so each clause can stand alone.

- Wally presented his budget and walked out of the house.
- Wally presented his budget, and he walked out of the house.

Use commas in numerals over 999 (e.g., 1,000; 45,000).

Colons

Do NOT capitalize the first letter of the first word after a colon unless the colon introduces two or more sentences.

Emphasizing words with punctuation

Sometimes an author will want to stress or emphasize a word or phrase. While acceptable, this practise should be kept to a minimum. In most cases, the word(s) should be written in a way that the stress or importance of a word or term is clear in context. Follow these guidelines:

- Do not use boldface or quotation marks for emphasis
- Use italics for words used as words (e.g., The term *vocal cords* is often misspelled. What do you mean by *nexus*?)
- Words that are meant to alert the reader that a term or word is used in a non-standard, ironic, or other special sense should be marked off with quotation marks (e.g., “Child protection” sometimes fails to protect).
- Words that are common expressions and figures of speech should NOT be set off in any way.

Hyphens and dashes

- Post-secondary
- Micro-credentials and micro-course
 - Exception: BCcampus [FLO MicroCourses](#)
- Adverbs ending in *-ly* are not followed by a hyphen. The *-ly* alerts readers that the word that follows is modified: a brightly lit room, an eagerly awaited speech.
- The \$50-million project vs. cost of the project is \$50 million. (A simple test – do you hear an “s” on dollar when said out loud? If not, then hyphenate). The 25-seat arena. The arena has 25 seats. She is 12 years old. The 12-year-old.
- Bylaw, byelection (no hyphen).
- Child care (standing alone) but child-care centre, child-care grant (compound modifiers).
- Co-operate, co-ordinate (hyphenate when a prefix brings two identical vowels together). Also hyphenate if you end up with three of the same consonants in a row.
- Co-creating (if the first element is merely a prefix or combining form that could not stand by itself as a word (*co*, *anti*, *pre*, etc.), do not capitalize the second element unless it is a proper noun or proper adjective).

- Fundraise, fundraiser, fundraising – no hyphen.
- Nationwide, provincewide (no hyphens). But Canada-wide.

Do not hyphenate Latin phrases used adjectivally (e.g., ad hoc proposal, post hoc analysis).

For hanging hyphen constructions (15- to 19-year-olds), do not hyphenate after “to.”

Em dashes (—)

- The em dash is the standard for breaking a sentence or setting off parenthetical statements
- With em dashes, insert a space on either side

En dashes (-)

- Use an en dash when expressing a range of numbers, such as the years of a person’s life, e.g., 1955-2001
- There should be no space on either side of the en dash

Lists

In displayed lists, always start items with a capital letter. Use end punctuation, such as a period, with full sentences only.

Quotations

Use the North American system for quotation marks: periods and commas always go inside quotation marks; semicolons and colons go outside.

Use double quotation marks for all quoted matters. Single quotation marks should be reserved to enclose quotes within quotes (e.g., Mark exclaimed, “You have driven a stake into my heart! Now I truly understand Caesar’s words, ‘Et tu Brute?’ How could you treat me so?”).

Do not use quotation marks with so-called. (e.g., Her so-called friend left her standing in the rain.)

Spacing

Use only one space after a period (i.e., between sentences) and after a colon (:)

Measurement

Canada is metric and so is Canadian Press. This applies to distance, height, weight, and area. Here's a [conversion website](#) for quick reference.

Exception: historical contexts. The speed limit on the Lions Gate Bridge when it opened in 1938 was 15 miles per hour.

Miscellaneous

That and which

As a conjunction, that should be omitted if no confusion results (e.g., Linden said (that) he would go). When choosing between that and which, that is used to introduce an essential clause, and there's no comma before it. Which introduces a non-essential clause, and it does take a comma.

- He cited the case that changed Canadian law.
- He cited the Kilroy case, which changed Canadian law.

Web addresses

Do not post raw URLs (e.g. <http://www.bccampus.ca>). Embedded links are preferred for all online distribution, using appropriate anchor text. For printed content or hardcopy materials, make the link usable if typed as plain text into the address line of a browser (e.g., bccampus.ca).

Addresses

Uppercase street, road, etc. with names unless two or more are referred to (Howe Street, but Howe and Seymour streets) and abbreviate in addresses when the number is used – 645 Fort St.