

# Harvard Business Review Style Guide

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ENGL 5124

## Reference Materials

- Default to AP Style and Merriam-Webster's Dictionary for any issues not specified

## Punctuation

### *Ampersands*

- No space between letters and ampersand for abbreviations
  - R&D centers

### *Apostrophes*

- Used to show possession
  - "It stands to reason that job worries influence leaders' behavior"
- Used for contractions
  - Can't

### *Colons*

- When a complete sentence follows the colon, capitalize the first word after the colon as you would for a period
  - "But context was crucial: When leaders perceived the company as underperforming"
- When a fragment or list follows a colon, do not capitalize the first word
  - "...they turned to third parties: spouses, families, friends, and close colleagues"
- Used to introduce quotes
  - "Lee offers this explanation: 'Once you've learned enough...'"
- Used to introduce findings/results
  - "Results differed according to the age and industry of the firm under considerations: The management team..."
- Used to introduce an example
  - "...they have an impact: For example, they study finds that half of Silicon Valley's entrepreneurs..."
- Used to introduce a list of items
  - "...they turned to third parties: spouses, families, friends, and close colleagues"

### *Commas*

- In favor of the oxford (or serial) comma when listing three or more items
  - "...they're more communicative, collaborative, and creative"

### *Ellipses*

- Used for omitting sections of larger quotations
  - "It is...possible that anxiety is beneficial"

### *Em dashes*

- Used for interjections and descriptive phrases
  - "...the most important factor—even more important than the business idea being pitched"
  - "Desks are cleared, boxes are packed, daily work is disrupted—for what, exactly?"
- Do not include a space between the words and em dash

- “they account for 27% of entrepreneurs—a number that’s risen sharply”

### *Hyphens*

- Hyphenate compound adjectives before nouns
  - Business-related factors
  - Early-stage start-ups
  - Wide-ranging study
- Hyphenate a range of numbers
  - 10-22
- Hyphenate compound nouns
  - Start-up
  - Mid-1990s
  - E-commerce
- Exceptions: do not hyphenate/conventionalize open compounds
  - Health care
  - Free price promotions
  - South Korean firm
- Exceptions: do not hyphenate/conventionalized closed compounds
  - Underperforming
  - Slipup
  - Worldwide
- Do not hyphenate compound modifiers that contain adverbs
  - Highly skilled

### *Parenthesis*

- Used for interjections or additional pieces of information
  - “...(typically the founders)”
- For sentences entirely inside of parenthesis, put the period on the inside of the parenthesis
  - “(Most of the rest prioritized the company’s “fit” within the VC’s portfolio.)”

### *Quotation Marks*

- Used around quoted material
- Used when introducing a research or psychological term
  - *See Psychological and Research Terms section (pg.3)*

### *Semi-Colons*

- Used to connect two independent clauses
  - “The deals weren’t the result of collaboration; they marked a change in the quality of people’s work.”
- Can be used to clarify a series

## **Abbreviations**

### *Abbreviations with periods*

- Commonly known abbreviations
  - e.g.,
  - U.S

- a.m. / p.m.
  - Can be spelled out “United States;” interchangeable

*Abbreviations without periods*

- Technology and industry terms
  - VCs
  - CEOs
  - IP protection
  - OECD
  - DVDs
  - STEM
    - AP style says to spell out “science, math, engineering, and technology” shortly after using the STEM acronym for the first time

*Do not abbreviate*

- Names of states
  - California instead of CA

## Style

*Contractions*

- Contractions are acceptable for use
- Keep consistency between contractions versus full spelling of words
  - “can’t” instead of cannot for all uses

*Conjunctions*

- Permissible to begin a sentence with a conjunction occasionally if used intentionally for tone or stylistic purposes
  - “But new research suggests that this isn’t the biggest motivation...”

*Passive Voice*

- Permissible to use occasionally, but should be avoided if possible

*Pronouns*

- Avoid using singular pronouns
- Refer to an author or researcher by their surname or “the researcher(s)/author(s)”

## Psychological and Research terms

- When a psychological or research phenomenon is introduced by its proper name for the first time, put term in quotation marks
  - “social buffering”
  - “algorithm aversion”
  - “natural experiment”
- When taking terms directly from research, put in quotes.
  - “exploitation” to “exploration”
  - “Incremental” to “radical”
  - “merchandisers”

## Treatment of Numbers

### *Numerals versus Spelling out*

- Spell out numbers one through nine
- Use numerals for numbers 10 and above

### *Dates*

- Use numerals for years
  - 1995
- List dates with spelled out month and numeral date format
  - April 1

### *Percentages*

- Use a numeral and the percentage sign with no space between numeral and sign
  - 25%
- For percentages less than 1%, a 0 should precede the number
  - 0.6

### *Fractions*

- Spell out and hyphenate all fractions
  - Three-quarters

### *Money*

- Use numeral and dollar sign with no space between numeral and sign
  - \$6,000
- For quantities exceeding one million, spell out million, billion, and so on
  - \$7 million

## Capitalization and Formatting

### *Formatting*

- Use all caps and bold for the first three words in every section

### *Capitalized Words*

- Capitalize Internet terms
  - Internet
  - Bluetooth
- Capitalize brands, software, and companies
  - HubSpot
  - Pixar
  - Kayak
- Capitalize academic terms and institutions
  - the Allen Curve
  - Carnegie Mellon University
- Capitalize languages, regions, and bodies of government
  - English
  - Silicon Valley
  - U.S. Senate
- Capitalize sports teams and events
  - Super Bowl
  - Seattle Seahawks

## Treatment of Terms

### *Additional Closed Compounds*

- Nonnative
- Counterintuitive
- Workspaces
- Workstations
- Postmove
- Multinational

### *Plurals*

- Board of directors; plural is boards of directors

### *Commonly Confused Words*

- Definitions from Merriam Webster's Dictionary
- Effect/affect
  - Effect: generally used as a noun
  - Affect: generally used as a verb
- Emigrate/immigrate/migrate
  - Emigrate: to leave one's country to live elsewhere
  - Immigrate: to enter or to come into a country of which one is not from
  - Migrate: to move from one place to another
- Systematic/systemic
  - Systematic: relating to or consisting of a system; presented or formulate as a coherent body of ideas of principles; methodical in procedure or plan; of, relating to, or concerned with classification
  - Systemic: of, relating to, or common to a system: such as, affecting the body generally; fundamental to a predominant social, economic, or political practice