Escambia County Editorial Style Guide

About the Escambia County Style Guide

The Escambia County Editorial Style Guide is a supplement to the Associated Press Stylebook and addresses frequently used county-related language.

This guide is based on the principles found in the Associated Press Stylebook. This style guide is intended to provide answers questions of grammar such as punctuation, capitalization and acceptable word usage.

On spelling matters, please reference Webster's New World Dictionary.

Why We Use the AP Style Guide

The AP Style Guide is widely used by newspapers and magazines, AP style is familiar to readers and easy to read. Have questions about a specific entry or looking for something you don't see listed? Email the Community and Media Relations Department at cmr@myescambia.com.

abbreviations and acronyms

Spell out the name or program on first reference and use the acronym for second reference. If an abbreviation or acronym of the term or name would not be clear on second reference, avoid using it. Instead, use a shortened version of the name or a generic word, such as *the agency, the committee, the department, the division or the company*.

Do not follow the name of the organization, project or program with an abbreviation or acronym in parentheses.

Examples:

- *Escambia County Fire Rescue responded to a residential structure fire. The ECFR crew rescued one adult from the home.*
- *The Florida Department of Environmental Protection issued an ordinance.*

common acronyms on second reference:

- Board of County Commissioners – BCC
- Escambia County Area Transit – ECAT
- Escambia County Fire Rescue – ECFR

A few universally recognized abbreviations are required on first reference: Examples: *Dr., Mr., Mrs., Jr., a.m., p.m.,* but in general, avoid alphabet soup.

Abbreviate *junior* and *senior* as part of a name; do not set off with commas: *John Doe Jr.*

addresses

When writing a numbered address, use abbreviations for avenue, boulevard and street only: *The meeting will take place at 100 Jefferson Ave. The office is located at 221 Palafox Place.*

If writing a street name without a number address, do not abbreviate any portion of the street name: *The school is located on University Avenue.*

All similar words such as road, alley, terrace, place, drive, parkway and highway are always spelled out, regardless of if they accompany a numbered address: *The party is at her home at 345 Meadow Lane.*

Always use figures for an address number: *9 Government St.*

Spell out and capitalize *First* through *Ninth* when used as a street name; use figures for *10th* and above: *7 Fifth Ave., 100 21st St.*

Abbreviate compass points used to indicate directional ends of a street or quadrants of a city in a numbered address and follow with a period: *221 S. Palafox Place*

Do not abbreviate the directional word if the address is not numbered: *West Cervantes Street.*

Use periods in the abbreviation *P.O.* for P. O. Box Numbers.

affect, effect

Affect is usually used as a verb and mean to influence. *Effect* is usually used as a noun and means result.

ages

Always use numbers. If used as an adjective, use hyphens: *the 5-year-old boy; the professor, 35, teaches a new course; the woman is in her 30s.*

ampersand

Do not use an ampersand (&) in running text unless it is part of a trademarked or registered business name: *Proctor & Gamble.*

a.m., p.m.

Do not use 0s to designate hours and lowercase with periods in narrative text and most promotional materials: *8 a.m.; 11 p.m. N*oon is 12 p.m.; midnight is 12 a.m. Both times are better expressed without the number as simply *noon* or *midnight*. Do not use A.M. or P.M. or am or pm.

bimonthly

No hyphen necessary and means every other month.

buildings

Capitalize buildings that have a formal name, including the words *Hall* or *Building*: *Ernie Lee Magaha Government Building.*

Capitalize only proper nouns in common references: *the department moved to a new building.*

Use lowercase for buildings with generic names that reflect the discipline taught or the activity it houses: *the training building.*

Capitalize names of rooms or areas within buildings: *Ernie Lee Magaha Government Building*

For rooms that are numbered, the preferred style is: *Ernie Lee Magaha Government Building, Room 200.*

Frequently used building names:

Ernie Lee Magaha Government Building

Escambia County Central Office Complex

Rosa L. Parks Transit Center

Escambia County Jail

Public Safety Building

Emergency Operations Center (can be referred to as EOC on second reference)

All Escambia County community center names:

Beulah Sr. Citizen Center

Felix Miga Sr. Citizen Center

Lexington Terrace Community Center

Marie Ella Davis Community Center

Mayfair Community Center

Perdido Key Community Center

Brownsville Community Center

Dorrie Miller Community Center

Ebonwood Community Center

Englewood Community Center (Also referred to as the Boys & Girls Club)

Englewood Neighborhood Center

Marie K. Young-Wedgewood Community Center & Park

Barrineau Park Community Center & Historical Society

Byrneville Community Center

Carver Park Resource Center

Davisville Community Center

Molino Community Center & Historical Museum

Oak Grove Community Center

Quintette Community Center

Walnut Hill Community Center & Ruritan Club

coronavirus and related terms

coronavirus and COVID-19

COVID-19, which stands for *coronavirus disease 2019*, is caused by a virus named SARS-CoV-2. When referring specifically to the virus, *the COVID-19 virus* and *the virus* are acceptable. Referring to simply *the coronavirus* is acceptable on first reference in stories about COVID-19.

Do not capitalize *coronavirus*, use all caps for *COVID-19*.

But, because COVID-19 is the name of the disease, not the virus, it is not accurate to write a new virus called COVID-19. Also incorrect are usages such as: *COVID-19 spreads through the air; scientists are investigating how long COVID-19 may remain on surfaces; she worries about catching COVID-19*. In each of those, it should be *the coronavirus*, not *COVID-19*.

Do not shorten to COVID, even in headlines, unless part of a quotation or proper name.

In stories, do not refer to *coronavirus* without the article *the*. Incorrect: *She is concerned about coronavirus*. Omitting *the* is acceptable in headlines and in uses such as: *He said coronavirus concerns are increasing.*

CARES Act

Avoid using this term unless in a direct quotation in reference to the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act. Instead, use phrasing such as *the coronavirus relief bill, the coronavirus aid bill, the coronavirus rescue package*, etc., for the U.S. government's $2.2 trillion package to help businesses, workers and a health care system staggered by the coronavirus. Do not refer to it as a stimulus, a stimulus package, etc. The measure was passed to replace money lost in the collapse of the economy, rather than to stimulate demand.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

On first reference, use *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. *CDC* is acceptable on second reference.

front line, front-line

Example: He was working on the front lines.

Example: She was a front-line worker.

hand-washing

Compound modifier, use a hyphen.

health care

Two words in all uses.

nonessential

One word, no hyphen.

personal protective equipment

Don't use *PPE* on first reference, spell out first. If necessary, to use PPE in a direct quotation, spell it out later and explain the term.

reopen

One word, no hyphen.

shutdown, shut down

Example: A shutdown will begin today at 5 p.m.

Example: Stores will begin to shut down this evening.

telemedicine

One word, no hyphen.

cities and towns

Capitalize the names of cities and towns in all uses. Capitalize city as part of a proper name: *New York City, Kansas City*.

Lowercase city when used as an adjective or noun: *the city budget, mayor of the city.*

Capitalize city when it's part of the proper name of a governmental unit: *He worked for the City of Pensacola*.

Omit the redundant city of (or lowercase it) when naming cities in other uses: *They visited Chicago. They visited the city of Pensacola.*

comma

Use a comma after each item in a series, but not before a conjunction like the word "and": *The park is large, shaded and beautiful.*

Do not use the final comma before a conjunction in a series.

You may include a comma in a simple series if omitting it would make the sentence unclear.

commissioner

Capitalize the word commissioner when it appears directly before or after a name, but not when used alone: *District 1 Commissioner John Smith will speak at the event. The commissioner will speak at the event.*

compass directions

Compass directions are not capitalized. *He lived just north of the park.*

composition titles

Use quotes for titles of books, songs, television shows, computer games, poems, lectures, speeches and works of art.

Italicize names of magazines, newspapers, the Bible or books that are catalogues of reference materials. Examples: *The Washington Post first reported the story.*

Do not underline any of the above.

contractions

Contractions make for informal, conversational-sounding copy and are acceptable for some non-academic writing, such as social media. Avoid purely colloquial contractions like *what'll*.

county

Do not capitalize "county" when it appears without "Escambia" in front of it: *Escambia County is divided into five districts. The county maintains over 100 parks and community centers*

Also lowercase county when referring to the geographic entity: *Population is increasing in the county. The county population is increasing*. Lowercase plural combinations: *Escambia and Santa Rosa counties.*

Never abbreviate county.

Countywide is one word , lowercase.

dates

When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate the following months: *Jan., Feb. Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec.*: *The park opened on Oct. 4, 2011*.

Spell out the name of the month when it is used alone, or with a year alone: *The park opened in October 2011.*

When using the day of the week in dates, spell out the day: *The grand opening is Friday, March 3.*

 If the year is included in a specific date, a comma should be placed after the year: *The park opened on Oct. 4, 2011.*

Use hyphens to join ranges of years within the same century and shorten the second year: *1970-80, 2012-16, 1980-2010.*

Generally, avoid using a year with the date if the year is within the current year.

Do not use the word *on* before a date unless it would lead to confusion: *The program ends Dec. 15.*

Do not use *st*, *rd* or *th* with dates: *Oct. 14* NOT *Oct. 14th*.

Do not abbreviate days of the week.

department and division names

Capitalize the names of all Escambia County departments, divisions, sections, offices, units and groups. For example: *Escambia County Department of Natural Resources Management, Building Services Department, Corrections Department, Roads Division, Engineering Department.*

Include the complete name on first reference; for later references, capitalized shortened versions of organizational names without the words department, division, section, unit and group--are acceptable: *Public Works, Mass Transit, Engineering*.

Also capitalize the word *department* when it follows the department name: *John Smith works for the Building Services Department. He has been a Building Services employee for 10 years.*

Avoid the use of ampersands in department names that have an "and" in them, unless specifically doing so in a design piece or for space/character county on twitter: *Community and Media Relations, Parks and Recreation, Neighborhood and Human Services.*

dollars

Use numbers to indicate dollar amount, followed by the written designation as needed: *2 cents; $60,000; $4 million to $5 million.*

elected officials, senior leadership, directors

Most formal titles should be spelled out at all times. Specific exceptions include *Dr., Rep., Sen., Gov., Lt. Gov.* and certain ranks in the military. These titles should be abbreviated only when used directly before a name.

Titles after names should be set off by commas. Without a name, do not capitalize the title: *The Director of Mass Transit Jane Smith will be in attendance. Jane Smith, department director, said she supported the plan.*

administrator, commissioner

Capitalize the words administrator, commissioner and chairman when they appear directly before a person's name. Do not capitalize the words when they do not appear with a name.

Example: Commissioner John Smith voted in favor of the motion.

Example: The administrator will provide a presentation.

Example: The commissioner will attend the event.

Governor

Abbreviate and capitalize before a name. Lowercase after a name and when standing alone. In business correspondence, spell out before a name.

Examples:

- *Gov. Ron DeSantis will hold a press conference today.*
- *The governor will be in attendance.*

mayor, councilperson

Capitalize the words administrator, commissioner and chairman when they appear directly before a person's name. Do not capitalize the words when they do not appear with a name.

Example: Commissioner John Smith voted in favor of the motion.

Example: The administrator will provide a presentation.

president

Capitalize *president* only as a formal title before one or more names.

Example: President John F. Kennedy signed the bill.

Example: He is running for president.

email

Email is one word and is not hyphenated. Lowercase in all instances.

emergency management

Fire Rescue

Escambia County Fire Rescue is preferred on first reference. ECFR is acceptable on second reference.

Fire stations and squad numbers are displayed using numerals: *Squad 3 will replace an Escambia County Fire Rescue engine. ECFR will hold a ceremony for the new truck.*

events

Capitalize names of county events: *Brownsville Summer Fun Day, Innerarity Point Park Ribbon Cutting.*

exclamation point

Avoid uses in press releases and other formal documents.

Escambia County Sheriff's Office

Spell out *Escambia County Sheriff's Office* on first reference. The abbreviation *ECSO* is acceptable on second reference.

first responders

Acceptable in general references to police, fire, medical, hazmat and other professionals who respond to emergencies.

If it is difficult or unnecessary to describe a first medical responder's specific title, *medic* is acceptable shorthand for breaking news.

full time, full-time

Hyphenate when used as a compound modifier: She is a full-time employee of the county. She works full time at the county.

general capitalization

Avoid unnecessary capitalization. Begin proper nouns, official titles, organizations, publications, executive orders. holidays, department names and division with capital letters.

Do not capitalize the first letter of a word (or words in a phrase) simply to highlight it or to express its importance.

Do not capitalize a common noun unless it is part of an official title.

government buildings, facilities

Capitalize the official proper name of all Escambia County facilities: Brownsville Community Center, Escambia County Central Office Complex, Perdido Landfill, Escambia County Area Transit. But lowercase common noun descriptions of facilities.

Examples:

- *The event will take place in the Central Office Complex parking lot.*
- *Guests will gather at the transit center.*
- *County vehicles must be filled up at the ECAT pump station.*

Gulf, Gulf Coast

Capitalize when referring to the region of the United States lying along the Gulf of Mexico: *Flooding from the Gulf was possible. The citizens lived along the Gulf Coast.*

holidays

Capitalize the full name of all federal legal holidays: *New Year's Eve, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas.*

Presidents Day does not use an apostrophe.

internet

lowercase.

meetings

The following meetings are typically capitalized when referred to in a press release or social media post:

Board of County Commissioners Regular Meeting – can also be referred to as BCC Regular Meeting and Regular Meeting

Board of County Commissioners Agenda Review – can also be referred to as Agenda Review

Board of County Commissioners Public Forum – can also be referred to as BCC Public Forum or just Public Forum

Board of County Commissioners Special Meeting – can also be referred to as BCC Special Meeting or just Special Meeting

Committee of the Whole – can be referred to as COW on second reference

mission

The mission of Escambia County government is to provide efficient, responsive services that enhance our quality of life, meet common needs and promote a safe and healthy community.

numbers, dates and times

numerals

Spell out numbers one through nine, and when any number begins a sentence. Use Arabic numbers for everything equal to or greater than 10.

Examples:

- *Three citizens signed up to speak at the meeting.*
- *More than 11 people attended the town hall event.*

ordinal numbers

Spell out first through ninth when they indicate sequence in time or location: first base; *the First Amendment; he was first in line*. Starting with 10th use figures. Use 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, etc. when the sequence has been assigned in forming names, primarily used in geographic, military and political designations: 1st Ward; 7th Fleet; 1st Sgt.

over vs. more than

More than is preferred with numerals: *There were more than 20 members involved in the student organization.*

percent

Use the % sign when paired with a numeral, with no space, in most cases: *Average hourly pay rose 3.1% from a year ago.* In casual uses, use words rather than figures and numbers: *She said he has a zero percent chance of winning*. If it's necessary to start a sentence with a percentage, spell out both: *Eighty-nine percent of sentences don't have to begin with a number*.

times

Use figures, except for noon (12 p.m.) and midnight (12 a.m.). Use a colon to separate hours from minutes: *11 a.m.; 4:15 p.m.*

Do not use :00 if the time is on the hour, except for use in formal invitations: *Please join us from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., or 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.*

For all other instances: *The show will be held from 3-5 p.m.*

online

Online is one word and is not hyphenated. Lowercase in all instances.

parentheses

Avoid parentheses when possible, and instead rewrite text or using dashes or commas to set off the information. If parentheses are required the rules are: If the parenthetical is a complete, independent sentence, place the period inside the parentheses; if not, the period goes outside.

Do not place an acronym in parentheses after the name of an organization. Simply use the acronym on second reference.

Example: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued guidance on the topic. Doctors are implementing all new information from the CDC.

percent

use the % sign when paired with a numeral, with no space between: *Average hourly pay rose 3% from last year.*

phone numbers

Do not add 1 before phone numbers with an area code: *850-535-4934.*

program

Capitalize only when program is part of the formal name: *the after school programs will begin soon; the Play, Learn, Grow Program is underway.*

reopen

One word, no hyphen.

right of way

no hyphens.

seasons

Lowercase summer, fall, winter and spring. Don't separate the season and the year with a comma: The report is scheduled to come out in summer 2004.

social media

Facebook, Instagram and *Twitter* are all capitalized. Do not abbreviate these names on second reference or in any instance.

spacing

Use one space after a period, not two.

state names

In text, always spell out state names when they stand alone: *She visited Florida for the first time to go to the beach.*

When used in conjunction with a city or town, abbreviate per AP style and set off with commas: *Fort Walton Beach, Fla., is the site of the Billy Bowlegs Festival.*

Do not abbreviate Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas and Utah, unless as part of an address with a ZIP code.

stormwater

one word.

superscript

Do not use superscript when writing dates or listing an order.

Incorrect: *9th Avenue, 1st place*

Correct: *9th Avenue, 1st place*

titles

Capitalize official job titles only when used immediately before a name: *Natural Resources Management Director Chips Kirschenfeld*, *Animal Services Manager John Robinson*.

Titles are lowercased when used after a name: *Jane Smith, administrative specialist, is scheduled to speak at the meeting.*

Always lowercase job descriptions: *The department will be hiring for an administrative assistant.*

Use Dr. before the name on first reference only if their title is after the name: *Dr. Jane Doe, human resources specialist.* Do not use Dr. after first reference: *Doe stated that the training would begin Monday.*

underway

one word, all uses.

URL

one word, all caps is acceptable in all references.

It is common and preferred to omit the "www" in a URL and simply write: *myescambia.com*.

web, webpage, website, weblog

When referring to "the web," short for the World Wide Web, *web* should not be capitalized. Terms such as *webpage, website*, etc. are one word, neither capitalized nor hyphenated.

Web address and *web browser* are both two words, lowercase in all instances.

weather terms

floodwaters

one word, lowercase.

hurricane

Capitalize the word hurricane when it's part of a storm's assigned name: *Hurricane Katrina was devastating to the city of New Orleans.*

 Regardless of the name, use it and its, not she, her or hers or he, him or his, in pronoun references.

Capitalize category and use a numeral when you give a hurricane's strength: *The storm is a Category 5.*

hurricane categories:

Capitalize *Category 1, 2, etc. Example: The storm is a Category 5.*

Category 1 – winds from 74 to 95 mph.

Category 2 – winds from 96 to 110 mph.

Category 3 – winds from 111 to 129 mph.

Category 4 – winds from 130 to 156 mph.

Category 5 – winds of 157 mph or higher.

hurricane season

Always lowercase unless part of a heading.

miles per hour

The abbreviation mph is acceptable in all references. No hyphen is used when paired with a figure: 60 mph.

National Hurricane Center

Spell out on first reference, abbreviate on second reference to NHC.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Spell out on first reference, abbreviate on second reference to NOAA.

National Weather Service of Mobile

Spell out on first reference, abbreviate on second reference to NWS of Mobile.

rip currents

Two words, always lowercase.

tropical depression

Always lowercase**.** A tropical depression has sustained surface winds of 38 mph or less.

tropical storm

A tropical storm has winds of 39 to 73 mph.

Capitalize *tropical storm* only when it is part of a name assigned to the storm: *Tropical Storm Bonnie approached the coast. The tropical storm took a turn to the west.*

stormwater

One word.

straight-line wind

Hyphen used between straight and line, always lowercase.

waterspout

One word.

year-end, year-round

Use a hyphen with year-end and year-round: *The year-round program has many applicants.*

yearlong is one word when used as an adjective: *The yearlong campaign is time consuming.*

ZIP code

Use all caps for *ZIP*, which stands for Zoning Improvement Plan, but always lowercase *code*.

Quick tips for writing effective copy

1. Know your audience and write copy that addresses your audience's needs. Are you writing for 18-year-olds? Parents? Regardless, make sure your copy addresses that audience's needs.

2. Write compelling copy that is to the point and avoid overly flowery language. We live in a time when audiences are overwhelmed with the amount of information they receive. Writing shorter copy increases the possibility that audiences will read and retain messages. Use bullet points rather than long narrative text for key messages. Break long blocks of copy into several shorter paragraphs.

3. Include a call to action. It's what moves your audience from being passive prospects to taking the next step to becoming a customer. Tell them exactly how they can obtain more information, sign up for a class or purchase a service.