

A

abbreviations

Use all capital (“all-cap”) in most cases. EXCEPTION: For state names use the state abbreviations that are listed in the *AP Stylebook* (see also “state names” entry).

Do not put periods between abbreviations: “MD,” “RN,” “FDA.”

Use an “s” not an apostrophe “’s.” EXCEPTION: to indicate the possessive form of a noun.

For example, “the MRI’s large magnets ...”

See “Using Our Brand Name” in the Brand Center for brand name abbreviations.

academic degrees

Do not use periods in academic abbreviations: “MD,” “PhD.”

Use the degree abbreviation *after* the name instead of the courtesy title “Dr.” *before* the name:

“Stanley A. Levin, MD,” *not* “Dr. Stanley A. Levin.”

Titles that appear after a person’s name are lowercase: “Stanley A. Levin, MD, section chief, Oncology.”

Formal titles that appear before a person’s name are in uppercase: “Oncology Section Chief Stanley A. Levin, MD.”

Place a comma after the last credential after a person’s name if including their title, department or other information: “Stanley A. Levin, MD, section chief, Oncology.”

Lowercase names of degrees unless it is the name of a specific, formal program or it is a proper noun:

“master’s degree in English,” “doctorate of nursing,” “bachelor of science.”

General references, such as “bachelor’s,” “master’s” or “doctoral degree,” are not capitalized.

Use an apostrophe (possessive) with “bachelor’s degree” and “master’s degree,” but not in “Bachelor of Arts” or “Master of Science.” Do not use an apostrophe with “associate degree.”

The names of academic disciplines, majors and minors are not proper nouns and should not be capitalized. EXCEPTION: degrees with proper nouns, such as English and French.

Write out the full name of the degree (not the acronym) in content:

- She has a master of business administration.
- She earned her master’s in biology.

Use only the top three degree and credential abbreviations after a person’s last name in editorial copy.

acronyms

If an acronym is not one that is common use the full name followed by the acronym in parentheses on first use. Then use the acronym after. The term mentioned first should be the one that is more familiar to readers:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Student National Medical Association (SNMA)

When the acronym is a common term or product name, display the acronym first and then the full name in parentheses:

- MRI (magnetic resonance imaging)
- DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid)

Plurals: do not use apostrophe and “s” unless it is possessive: “two MRIs” and “three MDs.”

ages

Use hyphens for ages used as adjectives before a noun or used as a noun:

- A 7-year-old girl.
- This recommendation is for 7-year-olds.

Use numerals instead of words: “The boy is 9 years old,” *not* “The boy is nine years old.” Other examples:

- A girl is 7 years old.
- The girl 7, has a brother, 10.
- The man is in his 40s.

EXCEPTION: do not start a sentence with a numeral, instead spell it out: “Twenty-year-olds are in this recommended group,” *not* “20-year-olds are in this recommended group.”

Use an individual’s age only when it is relevant to what you are writing.

and/or

Use “and” or “or.” Avoid using them together.

attending physician

After first use can be abbreviated to “attending.”

auditorium / auditoria (plural)

B

board-certified / board certified

If used as an adjective, use a hyphen between the words; if not, don't use a hyphen:

- “Look for board-certified allergists,” *not* “Ask whether your doctor is board certified and can provide references.”

board of trustees

Use capitalization and refer to the full name the “Board of Trustees for Dartmouth Health” in the first reference. Do not use capitalization when referring to “the board” or “the trustees” in following references.

brand name

See “Using Our Brand Name” in the Brand Center.

C

capitalization

section headings and titles

- Use sentence-case *not* title-case with no period at the end:
 - » “Return to work guidelines and home antigen testing”
 - » Don't use: “Return to Work Guidelines and Home Antigen Testing”
- Use sentence-style for sub-headings without a period at the end:
 - » Use: “Home antigen testing”
 - » Don't use: “Home Antigen Testing”
- Do not use all-caps:
 - » “HOME ANTIGEN TESTING”

for hospital building entrance names and specific rooms

- Use capitalization: “North Entrance,” “Main Entrance,” “DHMC Parking Garage,” “Main Dining Room” and “East Mall Café.”

seasons

Use lowercase unless it is used in reference to the date of a publication:

- “The fall foliage is beautiful.”

- “The Fall issue has a feature on Cardiology.”

regions, states or cities

When referring to a section of a region, state or city, use capitalization for the formal name of the region or state. Do not use for sections within: “northern New England,” “southern New Hampshire,” “western Vermont.”

- EXCEPTION: If the direction is part of a proper noun, use capitalization:
 - » “Southwest Vermont Medical Center.” If referring to a well-known area, use capitalization: “Southside of Chicago,” or “Lower East Side of New York City.”

copyright guidelines

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If anyone requests to use or post work from another author or company, you must obtain permission from the copyright owner (in writing or by email) to use the content:

- If copyright permission is given, you must include: “Reprinted with permission from...” with the content.
- If copyright permission is not given, cite the source and provide a link to the web content if available: “According to a study on SARS-CoV-2 antibodies published by *Clinical Infectious Diseases*...”

If you know who the copyright owner is, you may contact the owner directly. If you don’t know who owns the content or have other related questions, you can request the Copyright Office to conduct a search of its records, or you may search yourself on the [Copyright Office’s Search section](#) of their website.

You cannot claim copyright to someone else’s work, even if you change it unless you have the owner’s consent.

credentials

The format of credentials is licenses, degrees (most advanced first) and certifications: “Jennifer M. Smith, MD, MPH, FACHE.” EXCEPTION: for nursing the format is name, degree (most advanced first), license and certifications, “Karen Clements, BSN, RN, MSB, FACHE, MHCDS.”

Use up to three credentials after a person’s name: “Jennifer M. Smith, MD, MPH, FACHE.” EXCEPTION: for profiles or biographies you can include all.

Abbreviations for credentials are often used to describe a role. Spell out the first use and then use the abbreviation: “registered nurse (RN).”

D

dates and times

dates

- Always uses numerals, without *st*, *nd*, *rd*, or *th*: “The first Tuesday of the month.”

- » EXCEPTION: If it is an event, “the 25th Annual Prouty.”

Use “to” for a span of months: “from “March to June” *not* “March-June” (through may be used instead of to).

decades

- Use an apostrophe to indicate numerals that are left out: “90s.”
- Show plurals by adding the letter “s” *without* an apostrophe: “the 1890s,” “the ‘90s,” “the 1920s,” “the mid-1930s.”

months

- Use capitalization for the names of months in all uses: “January, February, March, April...”
- When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate only these months: “Jan.,” “Feb.,” “Aug.,” “Sept.,” “Oct.,” “Nov.” and “Dec.” Spell out when using alone, or with a year alone:
 - » “Jan. 1, 2022”
 - » “January was a cold month.”
 - » “January 2022”
- When a phrase lists only a month and a year, do not separate the year with commas. When a phrase refers to a month, day and year, set off the year with commas:
 - » “In January 2022, the ...”
 - » “January 1, 2022, was the coldest day this year.”
- In tables use these three-letter forms without a period: “Jan,” “Feb,” “Mar,” “Apr,” “May,” “Jun,” “Jul,” “Aug,” “Sep,” “Oct,” “Nov,” and “Dec”

years

- Use numerals without commas: “1975.”
- Use commas only with a month, day and year: “Dec. 18, 1994, was a special day.”
- Use an “s” without an apostrophe to indicate spans of decades or centuries: “the 1890s,” “the 1800s.”
- Use “to” for a span of years: “1997 to 1999” *not* 1997-1999 (“through” may also be used instead of “to”).
- EXCEPTION: starting a sentence with the year: “1976 was a very good year.”

time

- Use “to” between two different times instead of a hyphen: “10 am to 4 pm” *not* “10 am-4 pm.”
- Do not use periods or all caps for “am” and “pm.”
- Use a single space between the numeral and am or pm: “1 pm” *not* 1pm.
- If the two times are both “am” and “pm,” use as: “10 to 11 am,” or “1 to 2 pm,” unless it could cause confusion.
- Use “24/7” *not* “twenty-four/seven.”

departments, sections, centers, programs and teams

departments

- As a formal title, use “Department of Orthopaedics,” and then use “the department” in the next reference.
- As a descriptive term, use “physiology department,” and then use “the department” in the next reference.

sections

- As a formal title, use “Section of Oncology,” and then use “the section” in the next reference.
- As a descriptive term, use “oncology section,” and then use “the section” in the next reference.

programs

- Use the full name in the first reference: “Molecular Genetics Program,” and then “the program” in the next use.
- As a descriptive term, use “program in molecular genetics,” and then use “the program” in the next use.

teams

- Unless the word “team” is used in the formal name, do not use capitalization: “Creative Productions team,” on the first reference, and then use “team” on next reference.

disciplines (or specialties)

Use lowercase for names of clinical or academic disciplines, unless they are part of a proper noun:

- “She practices plastic surgery.”
- “They finished their internal medicine residency.”
- “She is chair of the Department of Internal Medicine.”
- “He is a member of the American Board of Internal Medicine.”

Note: Departments have chairs, sections have chiefs and programs usually have directors.

E

eDH

Our electronic medical records system. There is no hyphen between “D” and “H.”

“e.g.” / “i.e.”

“e.g.” stands “for example.” “i.e.” stands for “in other words.”

Use when providing examples. Make sure to follow each with a comma: “e.g., handwashing, social distancing and vaccination.”

email

Not “e-mail”

F

fiscal year (lowercase)

If abbreviated, use FY[and then the year]: FY’22

G

Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth

Spell-out the full name in first reference, and use “Geisel” in next reference *not* “GSM.”

Graduate Medical Education (GME)

The Graduate Medical Education program supports quality residency training and research.

H

healthcare (one word)

house staff

Refers to residents and fellows. May also be referred to as “trainees.”

I

internet (lowercase)

intranet (lowercase)

L

Level I trauma center

lists

Use capitalization for the first word of a bulleted list.

If there is no natural or logical ordering for the content, use ascending or alphabetical ordering—for example, 0-9 or A-Z. For example, you would typically alphabetize a list of names but put a list of dates in chronological order.

Use a period at the end of each item in a bulleted list, whether it is a full sentence or not.

- “If you use an all-terrain vehicle (ATV), you can avoid injury by:
 - » Wearing a helmet.
 - » Not operating the vehicle while intoxicated.
 - » Never driving on a public roadway.”

Do not use commas, semicolons or the words “and” or “or” at the end of bulleted lists. For example:

- “All ambulatory prescriptions, new and refills, must have a linked indication for use in eDH,
- Providers prescribing this for unapproved use will be reviewed for non-compliance, and
- An eD-H alternative alert will be implemented to guide safe practice.”

long-term

If being used as an adjective, use a hyphen: “The patient will require long-term care.” If being used as a noun, do not use a hyphen: “It will be better for the patient in the long term.”

M

measurements

Use numerals for weights: “The baby weighed 9 pounds, 7 ounces.” “She had a 9-pound, 7-ounce baby.”

Weights and volumes:

- “tablespoon” or “tbsp”
- “teaspoon or “tsp”
- “ounce”, spell out
- “pound” or “lb”
- “g” for grams: “total fat 13g”
- “mg” for milligrams: “sodium 370mg”

member

Use the word “member” *not* “affiliate” when referring to organizations within the Dartmouth Health system: “Alice Peck Day Memorial Hospital is a member of Dartmouth Health.”

See “Using Our Brand Name” in the Brand Center for other guidance on using member’s names.

more than

When referring to a quantity use “more than” *not* “over.” “The guidelines have been adopted by *more than* 100 academic health systems around the nation.” Use “over” for a position above.

multispecialty (one word)

myDH

Our patient portal for their medical information and appointment needs.

Lowercase “my,” no space before the “DH” and no hyphen *not* “My DH.”

N

names and titles

names

- Always use middle initials in names on first use. Use last name on next use.
- With two initials in a name, use periods, but no space between the initials: “J.D. Salinger,” “T.S. Eliot.”

- Avoid using suffixes such as “Jr.,” “Sr.,” “III,” etc., EXCEPTIONS:
 - » In bylines and in signature lines on letters.
 - » To distinguish among people with similar names.
 - » In donor lists.
 - » In references to widely known individuals who always use this distinction.
- Use a comma on both sides of the suffix to set off “Jr.” or “Sr.” and degrees, but not “II” or “III:”
 - » John Jones, Jr., MD, PhD, or John Jones, Jr., is...
 - » John Jones III, MD, or John Jones IV is...
- Use quotation marks for nicknames or preferred names, inserted after the formal first name: “John “Chip” Smith.”

names and titles of physicians

- On first mention, of a single doctor: “John T. Smith, MD, MPH.” Next use: “Smith.”
- On first mention of two doctors: “John T. Smith, MD, MPH, and “David R. Jones, MD.” Next mention: “Smith and Jones.”
- Second mention for one doctor, first mention for another: “Smith and David R. Jones, MD.
- We do not use courtesy titles like “Dr.”

titles

- Lowercase title *after* the name: “Joanne M. Conroy, MD, CEO and president, Dartmouth Health.”
- Capitalize a title *before* a name when it is the formal title: “Dartmouth Health CEO and President Joanne M. Conroy, MD.”
 - » Do not use a comma between the title and name.
- If it is a descriptive term, do not capitalize: “physician Sarah Smith, MD..”
- Capitalize and use the full name of an endowed chair title, whether it comes before or after a name: “Heinz Valtin, the Andrew C. Vail Professor of Physiology Emeritus, is a..”

leadership titles

See “Using Our Brand Name” in the Brand Center.

news releases

Use the phrase “news release” *not* “press release.”

numerals and dollar amounts

In text, use numerals instead of the word: “3” *not* “three.”

Use a comma in numerals for “1,000” to “9,999,999.”

For millions, billions and trillions use a number-word combination: “1 million patients,” “\$1 million raised.”

Use the dollar sign “\$” before a dollar amount: “\$5 raised.”

For sporting events, like the CHaD HERO, use an uppercase “K” to represent distance: “5K.”

Do not start a sentence with a numeral; spell it out: “Four hundred and sixty-five medical student graduates joined the Dartmouth Health family as residents in the Graduate Medical Education program.” EXCEPTION: if the sentence starts with a year, “2021 was a year like no other ...” or “2020 is the year when everything changed.”

O

online (one word, no hyphen)

P

percent (%)

Spell out the word percent in a single reference.

Use the “%” symbol in a more statistical context: “75% of patients experience these symptoms.”

phone numbers

Use hyphens between the area code, exchange and number: “603-650-5000.”

Do not use periods between: “603.650.5000.”

photo captions

When there are two or more people in a photo, spell out “left” and “right” and set off with commas: “From left: Mary Smith, Susan Jones and Mark Wright.” When there are two people: “Mary Smith, left, talks with a patient.” Use a period at the end of a caption unless it is a single person: “Mark Wright, MD”

presentation and publication titles

Use italics for published books, pamphlets, proceedings and collections, periodicals and newspapers, and

sections of newspapers published separately (“*New York Times Book Review*”) when mentioned in text or notes.

For articles, the name of the article is offset by quotation marks: “It’s time to focus on women’s heart health.”
Do not use italics.

EXCEPTION: Do not use italics for web content, use quotation marks instead.

pregnant person or pregnant people

primary care provider

Do not use the term “PCP” without first writing “primary care provider”: “The service is for adults and children who do not have primary care provider (PCP) and need one.”

pronouns

he/him

he/they

she/her

she/they

they/them

they/he

they/she

Use they/them/theirs when an individual’s pronoun is not known.

Use gender-neutral terms like “chair” *not* “chairman,” “workforce” *not* “manpower.”

punctuation

See “Quick Tip Sheet” for punctuation.

R

Race and ethnicity

Do not use a hyphen between: “African American,” “Asian American” or “Native American.”

Use “biracial” or “multiracial” to describe people who have more than one racial background.

Capitalize “Black” when referring to race: “Black people,” “Black culture.”

Use the terms Latino/Latina, Hispanic, Chicano to describe people who are from a Spanish-speaking culture. When possible use “Cuban,” “Puerto Rican” or “Mexican American.”

Do not capitalize “white” when referring to race.

S

state names

See the *AP Style Guide* for two-letter postal abbreviations in full address with ZIP Code; spell out the state name when it stands alone (“...in Massachusetts...”) or in direct quotes. Spell out first use and then use abbreviation in next reference.

T

that, which, who

Use “that” if leaving the clause out will change the meaning of the noun it modifies: “The procedure that was developed at Dartmouth is now the standard across the country.”

Use “which” if the clause can be removed without changing the meaning: “The procedure, which is used by doctors at the Dartmouth Hitchcock Clinics, has saved many lives.”

Use “who” not “that” if referring to a person or persons: “The doctor who created the procedure won many awards.”

trademarks

Note all trademarks and registered trademarks with ™ and registered trademarks with ® for the first use in text, but do not use in titles or headings. Once the mark is identified, you do not need to use it again.

TV (and radio) shows

The titles of TV (and radio) programs, but not channels, are italicized: *The Today Show*. But: “the History Channel!”

U

Upper Valley

The Upper Valley region includes the following cities and towns in Vermont and New Hampshire, respectively: Ascutney, Bethel, Bradford, Bridgewater, Chelsea, Corinth, Fairlee, Hartford, Quechee, Hartland, Newbury, Norwich, Orange, Plymouth, Pomfret, Royalton, Sharon, Strafford, Thetford, Topsham, Tunbridge, Vershire, West Fairlee, Wells River, White River Junction, Wilder, Windsor and Woodstock; Canaan, Cornish, Croydon, Dorchester, Enfield, Etna, Groton, Grafton, Grantham, Hanover, Haverhill, Lebanon, Lyme, North Haverhill, Orange, Orford, Orfordville, Plainfield, Piermont, Rumney, Warren, Wentworth, West Lebanon and Woodsville.

United States (U.S.)

“United States” first use, “U.S.” next use.

V

videos (and music)

If someone requests to use music or post a video that our Video Productions team did not produce, we must have written permission to use or publish that video. The owner of the work has the exclusive right to determine how their work is being used, duplicated and distributed.

Note: if you are looking for music to use in a video, and you do not have permission to use it, please contact the Video Productions team to see if they have music that is approved for use.

voice

Use active voice instead of passive voice when possible:

- Active: “Adam Smith, MD, performed the procedure at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center.”
- Passive: “The procedure was performed by Adam Smith, MD, at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center.”

W

website (lowercase)

well-being

wellness

X

X-ray

Z

ZIP Code

Brand

Refer to the Brand Standards for guidance on tone and messaging examples on the Brand Center

of the community

When referring to of the community, use words like:

- accessible
- caring for our community
- compassionate care
- empathetic
- engaged
- individualized care
- interconnected
- interdependent
- local
- neighbors/neighborhood
- our community
- personal
- supportive

pillars

- clinical excellence
- personal and welcoming
- access and support
- community and commitment

world-class care

When referring to world-class care, use words such as:

- advanced
- best-of-class
- breakthrough
- distinguished
- eminent
- esteemed
- exceptional
- exemplary
- expert
- first-class
- first-rate
- innovative
- knowledgeable
- leading
- notable
- outstanding
- preeminent
- prominent
- recognized
- renowned
- respected
- state-of-the-art

“World-class care, woven into the fabric of our communities.”

“The best, where it matters most.”

Common Terms, Spellings and Abbreviations

Accountable Care Organization (ACO)
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
canceled (not cancelled)
coworker
decision-making (n. and adj.)
eDH
email
Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
fiscal year (if abbreviated use FY'22)
healthcare (one word)
house staff (referring to medical residents and fellows)
intensive care (two words)
internet (no capitalization)
intranet (no capitalization)
inpatient
level I trauma center
login/logon/logoff
LNA (licensed nursing assistant)
LPN (licensed practical nurse)
MA (medical assistant)
more than (instead of “over” when referring to quantity)
multispecialty
myDH
National Institutes of Health (NIH)
NEAH (New England Alliance for Health) with no “the” before NEAH
OB-GYN (spell out when referring to the department)
offline
okay (not OK)
online
orthopaedic
outpatient
phase III clinical trial
RN (Registered Nurse)
signup (noun, adjective), sign up (verb)
telehealth (“telePharmacy,” “teleEmergency” if referring to speciality)
toward (not towards)
United States (first use, next use U.S.)
use (not utilize)
well-being
wellness

Punctuation

ampersand (&)

Only use when part of an organization's name, publication or a department name within Dartmouth Health: "U.S. News & World Report," "Heart & Vascular Center."

apostrophes

Used to show possession: "The nurse's badge." "The hospital's policy says you must wear a mask."

colons and semicolons

Always use a colon when introducing a bulleted list, after a full sentence or fragment:

- "There are 5 ways you can reduce your intake of cholesterol:"

If a sentence contains a list of items that are phrases, use a semicolon between each item.

Use capitalization for the first word after a colon if it is a proper noun or starts a complete sentence:

- "Reduce cholesterol: Here are 5 ways to do so"
- "Reduce your blood pressure: exercise"

commas

We do not use the serial, or Oxford, comma.

Use commas in a series:

- To separate elements in a series, but do not put a comma before the "and" in a simple series:
 - » "The message applies to providers, residents, fellows and nursing."
 - » "The upgrade will include Radiology, Cardiology and Neurology."
- In a series, put a comma before the last element of a series only if it is part of the phrase:
 - » "The employee picnic featured barbeque chicken, veggie burgers, and hamburgers and hot dogs."
- Use a comma before the last element in a complex series or phrase to make it easier to read:
 - » "The main points to consider are whether the patient wants to have the procedure, is able to take the time to recover, and is willing to participate in follow-up care."

ellipsis (...)

Treat as a three-letter word, with three periods and two spaces. Use a space before and after the ellipsis: "There was a time ... maybe 10 years ago ... when we were able to visit patients in their homes."

em dash (—)

Use within a sentence, without spaces on either side of the dash: "Employees—regardless of position or location—must complete the attestation."

en dash (-)

Use to offset a phrase: "Summer Internship Programs - Applications for LNA Internship due on Monday, Feb. 7"

exclamation marks (!)

Avoid unnecessary or excessive use exclamation marks!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

hyphen (-)

Use to form a single idea from two or more words to avoid confusion. Example: "patient-centered care."

Use when an adjective and a noun, or an adverb and an adjective are used: "high-quality care." EXCEPTION: when the adverb or adjective follows the noun: "The care was high quality."

Hyphens are not needed for proper nouns or phrases that are read together: "African American."

Use with a modified noun has a "d" or "ed" ending: "able-bodied person."

Use when one word is a number and the other is a noun or adjective: "two-thirds."

Do not use a hyphen when the first word is an adverb ending in -ly: "an easily remembered rule."

parentheses ()

Place periods inside if it is a full sentence. Use a period or comma outside of a closing parenthesis when the parentheses are used as part of a sentence.

periods

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

Do not use periods:

- In academic degrees: “M.D.”
- For “a.m.” or “p.m.”
- At the end of a link or web address: “<https://www.cooking.up.health>”

See “lists” for use of periods in lists.

quotes

Use straight quotation marks *not* curved quotation marks.

Place commas and periods inside, *not* outside of quotation marks: “...they said.” not “they said”.

For a quotation that spans two paragraphs, if the full paragraph is a quotation, and the quotation continues into the next paragraph, do not put a close-quote mark at the end of the first paragraph, but do include an open-quote mark at the start of the next paragraph. Add a closed quotation mark at the end of the paragraph.

For quotes within quotes, use single quotation marks. Make sure to include both end quotes at the end of the quote.

slash

When using a slash there is no space between the word on either side: “OB/GYN.”

spacing

Use a single blank space between sentences.

Use a single blank line between paragraphs.