




A STYLE GUIDE FOR PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

This style guide has been produced as a quick reference tool for the Division of University Relations. Effective communications require appropriate voice, grammar, branding, and writing. We include [Writing Resources](#), [Writing thank-you notes](#), and [Reference Links](#).



WRITING RESOURCES

Every writer needs a set of tools. The following are links and titles to the guides you should turn to first when faced with a grammar, punctuation, or style question.

ND Style Guide

When writing a piece for Notre Dame, the first place you should check for answers to your questions is the [official editorial style guide](#), created and maintained by University Communications. Here you'll find answers to questions such as how to write about academic degrees, whether or not baby boomer is capitalized or not (it never is), and that the Board of Trustees can be “the board” or “the trustees.”

The guide also has an excellent [Quick Punctuation Reference](#) section on how to manage everything from pesky apostrophes to the elusive, shape-shifting semicolon.

The Chicago Manual of Style

If an issue isn't addressed in the Notre Dame Style Guide, follow the link found in the guide to *The Chicago Manual of Style*, the official University guide of choice.

Some of you may wonder if you can use *The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual*. The easy answer is “no.” The AP stylebook is ONLY for materials such as press releases and news stories going to news outlets. With the exception of perhaps a few individuals in University Relations no one submits material to the media, so AP is not for you.

Branding

The University Communications team created *On Message* to help unify the work of campus communicators. This resource helps ensure that the University's visual elements, regardless of platform, reflect the brand's heritage and tell a story that is authentic, accurate, and uniquely Notre Dame's.

For the official word on branding, go to the [OnMessage website](#) and find answers on the following topics:

- Notre Dame Brand Standards
- More Standards Info for Academic and Administrative Units
- Templates for PowerPoint, letterhead, web pages, logos, and graphic elements
- Communications Channels and Vehicles
- Marketing Communications Resources:
 - Strategic Planning Print and Web Photography and Video
 - Writing and Editing Public Relations Internal Communications
- Communications Policies and Guidelines
- Campus Communicators Network

Notre Dame's dictionary of choice

The number one rule to remember: don't rely on the spelling and grammar tool in Microsoft Word. It is unreliable. If you need to look up a word, Notre Dame prefers the [Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary](#), 11th ed., Merriam Webster, Springfield, Mass., 2003.

Good grammar rules by which to live

For one of the oldest and most reliable resources to help you make sense of grammar rules, seasoned writers still rely on *The Elements of Style*, by William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White. It isn't available online, but you can buy a copy of your own or ask a writer to share theirs with you.

Preferred Bible translation

For University Communications, the *New American Bible* is the choice. It is the translation used in the Mass and is given highest standing among authorized versions by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Editing versus Proofreading

Ideally, you should always have someone proof your work as a final step before you print or send a document. After writing and rewriting a piece numerous times, you can't see your own mistakes. But first, everyone involved needs to understand the somewhat subtle difference between the two tasks:

- **Editing** is looking at how something is written. This is the time to make suggestions on word choice, grammar, and sentence structure.
- **Proofreading** is when you look for typos, incorrect form of word (such as affect/effect), spacing errors, etc. This is not the time to challenge the structure and tone of someone's piece. A tip for accurate proofing is to start at the end of a piece and read each word independently from the sentence. By taking words one at a time, typos pop out more readily.

A reminder about your spell checker ... while it might give you grammar suggestions, it doesn't know you meant “from” not “form,” for example, and it won't know if “Pat” is “Mr.” or “Ms.”



WRITING THE THANK-YOU NOTE

Writing a thank-you note is one of the loveliest traditions to have been utterly compromised by the information age. Let’s start a movement to revive a little gracious living.

Since an email won’t suffice, and more is expected of you than saying “Thanks 100,000 for your support,” we want to provide some help. As extra motivation, know that thank-you notes improve the frequency and quality of the gifts you receive. People like being appreciated, and if they feel you actually notice the nice things they do for the University, they’re more likely to give an “encore performance.”

One of the most important criteria is to ensure the correspondence is in your own voice. The University asks that you please do not copy the approved verbiage from Lou Nanni’s and Father John Jenkins’ letters, but rather create your own. Stewardship writers have mastered the voices of Lou (Sara Kassen and Mary Fisher write these) and Father John (Heather Moriconi and Beth Ferlic write these), and we want to ensure the integrity of their words, as well as support your unique and individual dialogue with University donors.

Fundraisers

Acknowledgments can be short, sweet, and very personal. They should reflect the growing personal relationship with the donor. The detail in these letters is also helpful to the writers of the letters for Lou Nanni and Father Jenkins.

Father John Jenkins

Letters are brief, presidential, and official.

Lou Nanni

Letters thank the donors for the specific gift and give a statement on the particular priority.

Writing a thank-you note is easier than you think. There is a six-point formula for the proper thank-you: Learn it, know it, memorize it—and it will never fail you. You can apply these tips to your work here at Notre Dame.

1 Greet the giver

Dear Clay and Wanda,

That’s the easy part, but you’d be surprised how many people forget it. Dale Carnegie taught us that people love to hear their own names and direct marketing is sure we also love to read them in ink/print. Most fundraisers send typed thank you notes, but hand-written notes are very nice and perfectly acceptable. Just be sure to scan them and place in Advance before mailing.

2 Express your gratitude

What a wonderful Christmas present for Our Lady’s University!

This first paragraph seems like it would be the easiest, but it is actually the most complicated. Use the present-perfect tense, which essentially means write as if whatever you say is happening in the moment.

If you’re writing to thank someone for an intangible (such as hosting a reception at their home), first define what the intangible thing is, and then make the gift sound as attractive as possible. In other words, don’t say: ‘Thanks for letting us crash at your place.’ Instead say: ‘Thank you for your hospitality.’ Don’t worry if it sounds too simple; the point of writing the note is to create a simple expression of a heartfelt sentiment.

3 Discuss use

We will direct the gift to the Baten Family Scholarship and apply it against your \$250,000 obligation.

Say something nice about the gift and how it will be used. You can get arty here, but not flowery. It’s a fine line. Small, realistic statements work best.

4 Mention the past, allude to the future

As I reflect on your wonderful commitment to Notre Dame, I hope you will allow me to reminisce a bit. Hard to believe that it has been three and a half years since Clay and I first met for breakfast with Van in Midland. A lot has happened since then! The two of you have grown your business exponentially; you have attended two dozen Notre Dame football games; ten students have received financial aid through your scholarship; you spent a few days with Father John during the Leadership weekend; you brought down the house at the Scholarship Recognition dinner; you came to four or five football parties at our home; we had many meals together; and, most importantly, we became very good friends!

Why did they give the gift? What does it mean to your relationship with the giver? Let the giver know how they fit into the fabric of your life and that of the University.

5 Grace

Thank you for your friendship and thank you for all you do for Notre Dame.

It’s not overkill to say thanks again. So say it.

6 Regards

Sincerely,

Bruce Danielson


Simply wrap it up. Use whatever works for you: *In Notre Dame, Yours Truly, For Our Lady.* Then sign your name, and you’re done. For your reference, here are three acknowledgement letters to a donor -- one from Bruce Danielson and the others from Lou Nanni and Father John Jenkins.



WRITING THE THANK-YOU NOTE

Writing a thank-you note is one of the loveliest traditions to have been utterly compromised by the information age. Let’s start a movement to revive a little gracious living.

Fundraiser example:



UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME

BRUCE A. DANIELSON

January 5, 2012

Name
Address
City, State ZIP

Dear Clay and Wanda,

Between traveling and the holidays, I just returned to my office and found a December 21, 2011, receipt for \$50,620 in securities from the two of you! What a wonderful Christmas present for Our Lady’s University!! We will direct that gift to the Baten Family Scholarship and apply it against your \$250,000 obligation. As I am sure you are aware, this fulfills your pledge to the University.

As I reflect on your wonderful commitment to Notre Dame, I hope you will allow me to reminisce a bit. Hard to believe that it has been three and a half years since Clay and I first met for breakfast with Van in Midland. A lot has happened since then! The two of you have grown your business exponentially; you have attended two dozen Notre Dame football games; ten students have received financial aid through your scholarship; you spent a few days with Father John during the Leadership weekend; you brought down the house at the Scholarship Recognition dinner; you came to four or five football parties at our home; we had many meals together; and, most importantly, we became very good friends!

Clay and Wanda, I cannot tell you how much you mean to Nancy and me. We look forward to many years of talking about grandchildren, golf, football, and Notre Dame. We are so delighted that you will be joining us on the trip to Ireland later this year. Thank you for the many great memories and for the many more to come. Thank you for your friendship, and thank you for all you do for Notre Dame.

All the best to you and your family.

Sincerely,

Bruce Danielson

SENIOR DIRECTOR, PRINCIPAL GIFTS


OFFICE OF DEVELOPMENT, 1251 N. EDDY STREET, SUITE 300

SOUTH BEND, INDIANA 46617-1405 USA

OFFICE (574) 631-0453 – FACSIMILE (574) 631-8325

EMAIL DANIELSON.4@ND.EDU

Lou Nanni example:



UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME

OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY RELATIONS

January 13, 2012

Name
Address
City, State ZIP

Dear Clay and Wanda,

I am humbled to acknowledge your \$50,000 gift, which I understand fulfills your original commitment to the Baten Family Scholarship. We are tremendously moved by your ongoing generosity in support of Our Lady’s University.

Scholarship assistance quite literally makes dreams come true. It is a gift of hope, allowing young people to think big and forget about barriers. It is a gift of education, expanding our students’ minds and opening their hearts. And it is a gift of humanity, for the students you help are sure to show compassion, kindness, and care for all others God places in their paths.

Once again, my heartfelt thanks, Clay and Wanda. You are giving talented young people the opportunity to receive an education that I wholeheartedly believe is second to none. Please be assured of my continued prayers for you both.

Yours in Our Lady,

Louis M. Nanni
Vice President for University Relations

Father Jenkins example:



UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

January 13, 2012

Name
Address
City, State ZIP

Dear Clay and Wanda,

Thank you for your most recent gift, which I understand from Bruce Danielson fulfills your commitment to the Baten Family Scholarship. On behalf of the many students who will study under the auspices of your generosity, I offer my personal thanks.

Over the past two decades, Notre Dame has made tremendous strides in terms of the scholarship dollars we are able to offer students who demonstrate financial need. Such advances would not have been possible without people like you, who witnessed a need and responded with robust support.

Please accept my best wishes for a blessed new year, Clay and Wanda. You and your family will certainly be in my prayers, as I hope Notre Dame remains in yours.

In Notre Dame,

Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C.
President

100 Main Building, Notre Dame, Indiana 46556 USA

[To Top](#)



REFERENCE LINKS

Notre Dame Official Style Guide

UNIVERSITY of NOTRE DAME

OFFICE of PUBLIC AFFAIRS & COMMUNICATIONS

Marketing Communications

Home

Services

Resources and Downloads

Style Guide

- ND Degrees
- States
- Punctuation Quick Reference

Learning and How-To Guides

General Information for Mailing

Diagnostics

Web Resources

Video Specs

Conductor

Web Support

Contact Us

work with us...

LinkedinCampus Communicators

What do our clients say?

“...a pleasure to work with... such an understanding of what we want...”

Bernie CafarelliAthletics

Style Guide

Introduction

This style guide provides basic guidelines for grammar, spelling, and punctuation issues commonly encountered. It is intended as a general guide to [The Chicago Manual of Style](#) and covers matters of style specific to Notre Dame.

The English language is constantly changing, as are rules about grammar. Likewise, there are many different styles and publication guidelines (as evidenced by the bibliography included below), adding to the confusion of how to write clearly.

While you may not agree with every “rule” set forth in this guide, you may find an answer to a nagging question. If you have a question that is not addressed in this guide, please feel free to contact us at University Communications. We compiled this guide as a handy resource in dealing with matters of style specific to the University of Notre Dame not quickly covered in the *Chicago Manual of Style* or the *Associated Press Stylebook*.

In compiling this guide, we used the following sources:

- The Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th ed., University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Ill., 2010.
- The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual*, Perseus Books, Reading, Mass., 2011.
- Webster's New World College Dictionary*, 4th ed., Wiley Publishing, Cleveland, Ohio., 2010.
- Dowling, Dave, *The Wrong Word Dictionary*, Marion Street Press, Inc., Oak Park, Ill., 2005.
- The Yahoo! Style Guide*, 1st ed., St. Martin's Press, New York, NY, 2010.

Style Guide Entries

A

A (and B, C, D, F)

When referring to a letter grade, do not use quotation marks to set the grade apart, or an apostrophe for a plural. Note: Use an en dash for a minus: A–, etc.

Olivia was relieved to see that her final exam score raised her grade to an A in English class, meaning she had earned all As for the fall semester.

A (and B, C, D, F)

a

abbreviations

academic degrees

acronyms

advisor

Advisory Council

affect, effect

affirmative action, Affirmative Action

African American, African-American

afterward

aid, aide

aka

All-Class Mass, All-Class Picnic

all right

All-American

all-BIG EAST

alma mater

alumna, alumnage, alumnus, alumni

Alzheimer's disease

American Indian, Indian, Native American

amid

and, &

apostrophes

appositives, commas and as well as

Asian-American Alumni of ND

assure, ensure, insure

award

awhile, a while

baby boomer

Quick Punctuation Reference

UNIVERSITY of NOTRE DAME

OFFICE of PUBLIC AFFAIRS & COMMUNICATIONS

Marketing Communications

Home

Services

Resources and Downloads

Style Guide

- ND Degrees
- States
- Punctuation Quick Reference

Learning and How-To Guides

General Information for Mailing

Diagnostics

Web Resources

Video Specs

Conductor

Web Support

Contact Us

work with us...

LinkedinCampus Communicators

What do our clients say?

“...a pleasure to work with... such an understanding of what we want...”

Bernie CafarelliAthletics

Punctuation Quick Reference

This is a quick reference for some common punctuation marks.

- [Apostrophes](#)
- [Colons](#)
- [Commas](#)
- [Dashes](#)
- [Ellipses](#)
- [Exclamation Points](#)
- [Hyphens](#)
- [Periods](#)
- [Question Marks](#)
- [Quotation Marks](#)
- [Semicolons](#)

Apostrophes

Use an apostrophe and s to form possessives:

Singular nouns, not ending in s:

the University's commitment to undergraduate education

the student's transcripts; professor's syllabus

BUT when words and names end in an unpronounced s: Father Jenkins' presidency; Jesus' teachings

Singular proper nouns, letters, numbers, add an apostrophe and s:

St. Louis's arch; Illinois's governor; 2011's blizzard

Plural nouns, possessives:

dogs' tails; Jones's phone number

Use an apostrophe to indicate omitted numbers:

He is a product of the '60s.

Use an apostrophe to form a contraction (omitted letters)

The University of Notre Dame is next to South Bend, Ind.—it's one of the most beautiful campuses in the country.

For clarity, use an apostrophe to form special plurals:

Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary

Merriam-Webster

m-w.com

Quizzes & Games

Word of the Day

Video

New Words

My Favorites

Dictionary

Thesaurus

Spanish-English

Medical

Encyclo.

About Us

New Edition of Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary

Groundbreaking Eleventh Edition Sets New Standard

SPRINGFIELD, MASS., July 2003 — A major new chapter in the history of college-level desk dictionaries begins this month, with the arrival of *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate® Dictionary, Eleventh Edition*. The fully revised Eleventh Edition of America's best-selling dictionary sets a new standard by merging print, CD-ROM, and Internet-based formats into one affordable package, providing a revolutionary combination of high-quality reference content and state-of-the-art technology.

The completely updated and redesigned print version includes more than 100,000 changes from the last edition—featuring thousands of new words and definitions, hundreds of new and original pictorial illustrations, more usage examples than ever before, and a fresh new page design with a more readable typeface.

Added to this is an easily installable CD-ROM component and a free one-year subscription to [Merriam-WebsterCollegiate.com](#), a new premium Web site offering access to:

- Merriam-Webster's Collegiate® Dictionary*,
- Collegiate® Thesaurus*,
- Collegiate® Encyclopedia*, and
- Merriam-Webster's Spanish-English Dictionary*.

The result is unprecedented language reference accessibility and flexibility.

"We live in a hybrid world, part print, part electronic," said John Morse, President and Publisher of Merriam-Webster, "and these parts are mutually reinforcing. We've learned from our customers that the same person who uses a laptop and the Web in the afternoon will use our print dictionary in the evening. The new Eleventh Edition of our Collegiate Dictionary, with its three interconnecting components, meets this range of needs."

AdChoices

The PLATINUM CARD® from American Express

Apply Now

Branding Matters

UNIVERSITY of NOTRE DAME

OFFICE of PUBLIC AFFAIRS and COMMUNICATIONS

On Message

Notre Dame Brand Standards

More Standards Info for Academic and Administrative Units

Downloads

Communications Channels and Vehicles

Marketing Communications Resources

Communications Policies and Guidelines

Campus Communicators Network

On Message design examples

Do the [new brand standards](#) allow you to:

- Separate or stack the academic mark's components?
- Place type over the Golden Dome?
- Use the monogram as a graphic element?

On this website, you'll discover the answers. In the four design examples above each showcasing various tactical executions using our new brand standards you'll also discover that although the designs are inspired by the same recommended family of fonts and color palettes, the standards accommodate a wide variety of creative applications.

Quick Resources

Logos

Official Colors

Brand Typography

Photography

Points of Pride

About onmessage

Created by University Communications' [Marketing Communications](#) team, On Message helps unify the work of campus communicators by providing standards, guidelines, and best practices for University approved fonts, imagery, color palettes and more.

The resources here help ensure that our University's visual and verbal elements, regardless of platform, reflect our brand's heritage and tell a story that is authentic, accurate, and uniquely Notre Dame's. By telling our story together in clear, compelling, and consistent ways, we can more fully embrace and faithfully articulate Father

STYLE GUIDE TEST

Q: How many spaces after a period?

A: One

Q: How many line spaces between the end of a letter and the signature line?

A: One

Q: Is “president” always capitalized when referring to the Notre Dame president?

A: No. Capitalize when the title is listed before the name (past or present presidents). Lowercase when the title follows the name. Examples: President Jenkins or President Emeritus Hesburgh, but president of his alumni club.

Q: Which numbers do I spell out?

A: Use figures for numbers 10 and larger, including ordinal numbers (22nd, 34th, and so on).
Exception: Ten Commandments

Q: For a thank-you letter, whose name goes first in a salutation – the husband’s or wife’s name?

A: That depends ... a good rule to follow is who gave the gift? If the wife is the donor or the alumna, it is probable she’d like to see her name first on a letter.

Q: Do I capitalize advisory council?

A: When referring to an advisory council for a college or school at the University of Notre Dame, capitalize Advisory Council. Subsequent use in a shortened form, however, is lowercased: the council.

Q: What is the proper way to write the name of a priest?

A: The first reference to a priest should give his full title: Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C. Thereafter, he may be referred to as Father John or Father Jenkins. Note that in running text, there is always a comma after the religious designation (C.S.C., S.J.) unless it falls at the end of the sentence.

Q: Is there a comma before “Jr.”? What about “Inc.”?

A: There is no comma between the last name and Jr., Sr., III, etc.; the same is true for a business name.

Q: So is there a comma before “M.D.”?

A: Yes: “Dr. Jean Brown, M.D.” (and note there are periods in the title.)

Q: When do I use “Dr.” for someone’s title?

A: *Dr.* is used to refer to a doctor of medicine, dentistry, or veterinary medicine. It is *not* used to refer to people who hold a doctor’s degree but don’t practice in one of these fields, including professors. *Professor Jones* teaches English. *Dr. Jones* is a well-known obstetrician.