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.
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.

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’ll 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 scholarships; 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 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.

WRITING THE THANK-YOU NOTE

**Fundraiser example:**

January 5, 2013

Name
Address
City, State ZIP

Dear Clay and Wanda,

Because traveling and the holidays, I just returned to my office and found a December 21, 2011, envelope containing the $150 I’ve instructed you to send to Notre Dame. I’m sure you’re as busy as I am these days, but I hope you get a chance to read this note. Let me know what you think of the idea. We will have to keep track of all the gifts we receive for the Family Scholarship.

Sincerely,

Bruce Danilchenko

**Lou Nanni example:**

January 11, 2012

Name
Address
City, State ZIP

Dear Clay and Wanda,

I am honored to acknowledge your $10,000 gift, which underwrote the cost of tuition for one student’s Family Scholarship. Our students’ families show kindness, compassion, and generosity. I’m usually not one to write thank you notes, but this has been one of the most special things I have ever received.

Sincerely,

Lou Nanni

**Father Jenkins example:**

January 13, 2012

Name
Address
City, State ZIP

Dear Clay and Wanda,

Thank you for your always generous gift. I can imagine how much time and effort it must have taken to make this gift possible.

Sincerely,

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

Notre Dame Official Style Guide

Quick Punctuation Reference

Marketing Communications

Marketing Communications

Style Guide

Introduction

The English language is constantly changing, as new words and phrases enter the language. Here are some rules that are generally accepted:

- Use possessive case with singular nouns:
  - possessive: John's book

Quick Punctuation Reference

This is a quick reference for some common punctuation marks:

- Apostrophes
- Commas
- Quotation marks
- Parentheses
- Periods

Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary

New Edition of Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary

Groundbreaking Eleventh Edition Sets New Standard


Branding Matters

On Message

On Message design examples

Quick Resources

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Official Colors

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Photography

Points of Price

About amonograph

The resources have been designed for use by the University’s print and electronic media. They are intended to extend the wide range of graphical elements used by the Department of Marketing and Communications. For a more detailed explanation of amonograph’s use, contact the Director of Marketing and Communications.
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).

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.