

Consider using the Associated Press Style book as a starting point for writing style, then make any additions or exceptions unique to your school and put them in your staff manual. For example, you will need to address group and team photo identification. Another good source is *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White.

Here are some of the most common style issues that you will have to address, and a common solution for them.

## **Names**

- Use first and last names on first reference for both students and adults. If the name is mentioned again in the story, use only the last name.
- Do not use courtesy titles such as Mr. or Ms. in front of names of teachers or other adults.
- Identify people the first time their name is used. Identify students by year or class, teachers or other school employees by position at school and people from outside school by position held relevant to the story. (Brian Roberts '09 or senior Brian Roberts; James Witt, English Department, or Principal Roger Mills; Jane Smith, parent of senior Janet Smith)

## **Dates**

- Do not use st, nd, rd or th. (June 16, not June 16<sup>th</sup>)
- Do not use the year for a date that occurs in the current year.
- Spell out months without a specific date. (School starts in August.)
- Abbreviate months when used with a specific date except for March, April, May, June and July. (The first day of school is Aug. 21.)
- Do not abbreviate days of the week.
- Do not use on in reference to dates. (The dance is Sept. 15.)
- When a phrase lists only a month and year, do not separate the year with a comma (May 2010). When a phrase includes a month, day and year, set off with commas. (May 22, 2010, is the last day of class.)

## **Time**

- Use 9 a.m. and 9:15 a.m., not 9 o'clock in the morning, 9:00 a.m. or 9 A.M.
- Use midnight or noon instead of 12 a.m. or 12 p.m.
- Do not use today, tonight, yesterday or tomorrow because yearbook is a yearly publication.

## **Numbers**

- Spell out numbers less than 10 (seven).
- Use numerals for numbers 10 and greater (45).
- Do not start sentences with numerals. (Twenty-one students studied in the library. In the library, 21 students studied.)
- Use numerals in dates, times, scores and addresses.
- For dollars, use numerals, not words, and do not use cents when there are none (\$5, not \$5.00).
- For amounts less than \$1, use numerals and the word cents (25 cents).
- For amounts up to 999,9999, use numerals, but for 1 million and above, use numerals and the word million (\$2 million).

## Abbreviations

- Always write the complete name of an organization on first reference (National Honor Society), and the abbreviation without periods on subsequent references (NHS).
- Titles written before a name should be abbreviated (Dr. Lucy Lewis).
- Capitalize mascots (Red Devils), group names (National Scholastic Press Association), awards (Pacemaker), documents (Bill of Rights), geographic locations (the West) and other proper nouns.
- Do not capitalize school subjects unless you are referring to specific courses (Pre-Calculus, math; World History, history class). Always capitalize languages (English, Spanish).
- Do not capitalize junior varsity, varsity or freshman and the names of sports in copy and captions (junior varsity football, freshman basketball). You will probably have a different style for identification of team pictures.
- Do not capitalize names of classes (senior class, sophomore girls).
- For school departments, capitalize the name but not the word department (English department). For clubs, capitalize the name and the word club (Chess Club).
- Capitalize titles when they precede names but not when they follow names. (Principal Roger Mills; Roger Mills, principal)

## Punctuation

- Do not use a comma prior to the word and in a series, unless the series is long and complicated (peas, carrots and beans).
- Always place commas inside quotation marks.
- Use a comma to end a quote when quote is followed by attribution ("I like her," senior David Gell said.)
- Always place periods inside quotation marks. ("It is true.")
- Do not use periods in abbreviations for schools or school organizations. (OHS, NHS)
- Use periods in time and school degrees. (a.m.; B.A., Ph.D.)
- A dash, semicolon, question mark or exclamation mark go inside quotation marks when they apply to the quoted matter only. They go outside when they apply to the whole sentence.
- Include a space before and after a dash.
- Do not use a colon after verbs such as are or include.
- Use double quotation marks around names of TV shows, books, plays and movies.

## Attribution

- Use said when attributing quotes unless a person actually yelled, whispered, etc. Do not use present tense, says.
- Place said after the name because the name is most important.
- Do not use phrases such as "when asked."
- Do not use direct quotes for factual information. Source's exact words are not necessary.
- Place the attribution after the quote; start a new paragraph after the attribution. Do not bury direct quotes in the middle of paragraphs; place them in paragraphs of their own.
- When direct quotes are long, place the attribution in the middle, between sentences.