

## CUW and CUAA Style Guide for Writers

The CUW Style Guide for Writers defines the standards for written communication for the university. It answers questions like whether “health care” should be one word or two, or whether “master’s” should be capitalized or not. Adherence to the rules of a style guide can help set the tone for how others will view us, and in so doing, it strengthens the Concordia brand.

### Concordia follows two Style Guides:

- CUW Style Guide, which covers CUW-specific issues
- [Associated Press Stylebook](#), a universally accepted guide commonly used in journalism and strategic communications.

These guides are among the myriad resources available to assist you in preparing professional-sounding and accurate communications that will present your department, and Concordia, with excellence. Bookmark them. Use them liberally.

All messages and materials should follow the conventions of standard written English, with careful attention to spelling, grammar and punctuation. If a discrepancy exists between the two styles, the CUW Style Guide takes precedence. Written communications include all forms of advertising materials, booklets, brochures, flyers, invitations, newsletters, programs, save-the-date postcards and web pages, among others.

Contact Concordia’s [Director of University Communications](#) for more information.

## A

### Academic Degrees

The preferred form is to avoid an abbreviation and use instead a phrase such as *Tim Smith, who has a bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, or doctorate in history*.

- Use an apostrophe in bachelor’s and master’s.
- Do not capitalize degrees, unless writing out the proper title. *Tim Smith received his bachelor’s degree in physics. Tim Smith received a Bachelor of Arts in music.*
- Use such abbreviations as BA, MA and PhD only when the need to identify many individuals by degree on first reference would make the preferred form cumbersome.
- When used after a name, an academic abbreviation is set off by commas: *Tim Smith, PhD, lectured on biophysics.*
- Do not precede a name with a courtesy title for an academic degree and follow the name with the abbreviation for the degree in the same reference, as in *Dr. Tim Smith, PhD.*

### Academic Schools

Here is a list of the correct names of the six academic schools at CUW.

- Batterman School of Business

- School of Health Professions
- School of Nursing
- School of Pharmacy
- School of Education
- School of Arts and Sciences
- Avoid abbreviation of any of the above.
- Use full title on first reference. *Tim Smith graduated from the Batterman School of Business*. Shortened references are acceptable on second and subsequent mentions. *Tim Smith is a business graduate*. But program specificity is preferred. *Tim Smith is a sport and entertainment business graduate*.
- Refer to them as *academic schools*, not just *schools* to avoid confusion.
- See Titles. (\*LINK to Titles)

### **Academic Subjects**

Lowercase subject areas, unless they are proper nouns (e.g. *physics*, *computer science*, *theology*; *English*). Capitalize official course names, such as *Organic Chemistry I* or *Introduction to Biblical Languages*.

### **Acronyms**

It is preferred to avoid the use of acronyms. However, after use of the full mention on first reference, acronyms may be used where space is a factor (e.g. in headlines or links), or for variance.

- Do not use periods after letters.
- Per the AP Stylebook, do not follow a first reference with a parenthetical abbreviation, as in *Concordia University Wisconsin (CUW)*, unless the acronym is not easily identifiable from the full name.
- Check the AP Stylebook for familiar and acceptable acronyms such as FAFSA or ACT.

### **Admissions**

CUW's Admissions Office uses the plural form of the word when referencing the group or entire department, but uses the singular when referring to an individual counselor.

- Admissions Office
- admission counselor (never capitalized)
- NOT Office of Admissions

### **Advisor**

Use the *-or* ending, not *-er*.

### **Ages**

Spell out all ages under 10. Ages expressed as adjectives before a noun or as substitutes for a noun use hyphens. If no age modifier is specified, it is presumed to be years.

- *She will turn 15 next week*.

- *He is five years old.*
- *He is a five-year-old terror.*

### **Alumni References**

- One man: *alumnus*
- One woman: *alumna*
- Two or more men: *alumni*
- Two or more women: *alumnae*
- For a group containing both men and women: *alumni*
- If addressing a letter to an individual whose gender is unspecified, the use of *alumni* is acceptable.
- Avoid use of the abbreviated *alum*, except when the writing calls for a colloquial tone. *Alums* should never be used.

When identifying Concordia alumni in a profile or story, include their graduation year in this form: *Tim Smith ('97) graduated with his bachelor's degree in accounting.* Note: the apostrophe in the year reference faces left. If alumni have more than one graduating year, separate with a comma. *Tim Smith ('97, '11) served on the board.*

### **And**

Per the AP Stylebook, the university does not use ampersands unless an ampersand is part of the proper name of a non-university entity. Ampersands are also permitted as part of website navigation or design when using “and” interferes with spacing or aesthetics.

Do not use and/or; use either word, or, if necessary, use an *or both* phrase: *ketchup or mustard or both.*

### **Attribution**

Per the AP Stylebook, the university prefers the use of *says* or *said*.

- Do not use verbs denoting non-verbal processes as attribution, as in “You must be mistaken,” he laughed. An acceptable alternative would be: “You must be mistaken,” he said with a laugh.
- Always attribute a quote as well as a paraphrase. A quote is the exact words another individual spoke, and it should be indicated by quotation marks. A paraphrase is the author’s rewording (usually to provide clarity, flow or conciseness) of another person’s words. *“This is the best thing to have happened to the university and I’m overjoyed to be part of it,” Jones said.* -or- *Jones said she was thrilled with the decision.*

## **B**

### **Board of Trustees**

Use Concordia University Board of Trustees on first reference; Board of Trustees for subsequent references. General references to the board may be lowercase, as in *He has been*

a board member since 1992. For board members who are alumni, indicate their graduation year. See Alumni References. (\*LINK to Alumni References)

## **Buildings**

See Locations. (\*LINK to Locations)

## **C**

### **Centers and institutions**

It is preferable to use a descriptor phrase on first reference of an institute, center, or organization to clarify its connection to the university. *The Women's Leadership Institute, a servant institute of Concordia University Wisconsin -or- Concordia Bible Institute is one of several CUW servant institutes designed to serve the laity of the Church*

### **Church**

When referring to a specific congregation, the c in *church* should be lowercase. When referring to the broader LCMS or Lutheran community, the c in *church* is capitalized.

### **Class of**

For all alumni, include their graduation year in parentheses after the first full name reference: *John Smith ('08)*.

For current students, a reference to their grade level (i.e. freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) is preferable, but an intended graduation year, set off by parentheses, may be used at the writer's discretion. Grade levels should never be capitalized unless starting a sentence.

- *When in doubt, ask CUW sophomore John Smith.*
- *John Smith, a sophomore at CUW, is the one to ask.*

Academic classes should be referred to as courses to avoid confusion. Graduating classes should be capitalized when referring to a specific group of graduates.

- *The Class of 2017 will graduate in May.*
- *He is a member of the Class of 1967.*

### **Commas**

The university prefers to use Oxford commas; that is, the use of a comma that precedes the final word in a trio phrase. *Tony Smith received his bachelor's degree, master's degree, and doctorate from Concordia.*

The university chooses to forego an otherwise grammatically correct comma to separate the phrase *Lutheran Christian*, as in *Concordia is a Lutheran Christian university.*

### **Commencement**

Capitalize when referring to the CU event.

## Concordia University

The university consists of two residential campuses in Mequon and Ann Arbor, nine center locations throughout Wisconsin, and online offerings that reach learners globally. Its name is Concordia University Wisconsin and Ann Arbor.

- When communication is going out to an audience in Wisconsin or you are writing about campus-specific information, you may use just *Concordia University Wisconsin* or *Concordia University Ann Arbor*.
- Use the full title on first reference. Acceptable second and subsequent references include *Concordia*, *CUW*, *CUAA*. *CUW/AA* or *CUWAA* is not an acceptable acronym in published writing.
- Concordia University Wisconsin and Ann Arbor is singular. Avoid sentence structures that magnify this idiosyncrasy whenever possible.
- If writing to a non-LCMS and non-geographical audience, *Concordia University* may be used as a first reference instead of *Concordia University Wisconsin and Ann Arbor*. If this form is used, be sure to clarify in proximity to the first reference the distinction of two residential campuses.

## The Concordia University System

The CU System is acceptable on second and subsequent references, if space is needed, but the full title is preferable.

## D

### Dates

Express centuries and decades as follows:

- *the 20th century; the 1880s; the '60s*

Spell out the days of the week and the months of the year, unless it is necessary to abbreviate in charts, tables, or advertising matter with limited space. Note the punctuation of these sentences:

- *The events of Saturday, August 18, 1997, were unforgettable.*
- *The events of August 1918 were decisive.*
- *The events of spring 1998 will determine the future of the university.*

### Degrees

- *Bachelor of Arts in...*
- *bachelor's degree in...*
- *NOT bachelor's of...*
- *master's degree in...*
- *doctorate in...*
- *NOT doctorate of...*
- *associate degree in... (never possessive)*

When an academic degree is used after a name, offset it with commas. Do not separate academic degree abbreviations with periods.

- *John Smith, PhD, will lead it.*
- *NOT Dr. John Smith, PhD*
- *Sample plural forms: PhDs, MAs, MBAs*

There are exceptions to the rules when it comes to titles or headlines, but for the body copy, here are some additional examples:

- *MBA in Sport and Entertainment Business*
  - *She received a Master of Business Administration with a specialization in Nonprofit Management.*
  - *She received a Master of Business Administration in Nonprofit Management.*
  - *She received an MBA in Nonprofit Management.*
  - *She received a master's in Business Administration—Nonprofit Management.*
- *Master's in Education—Teaching and Learning*
  - *He received a Master of Science in Education with a specialization in Teaching and Learning.*
  - *He received his MEd in Teaching and Learning.*
  - *He received a master's degree in Education—Teaching and Learning.*

## Departments

Lowercase all departments, but capitalize academic schools' titles and official offices (i.e. Office of the President, Office of Strategy and University Affairs, Office of Admissions, etc.).

- *The theology department will host its regular meeting.*
- *The program is sponsored by the theatre department.*

## Dormitory

The preferred term is *residence hall*.

## Dual-degree (adj.); Dual degree (noun)

As an adjective, this phrase takes a hyphen:

- *The versatile young woman sought a dual-degree program in Spanish and international business.*

As a noun, no hyphen is used:

- *The confused young man has a dual degree in engineering and psychology.*

## E

### Email

Lowercase the “e” (except when the word appears in a headline or at the beginning of a line or sentence). Do not use a hyphen.

## F

### Faculty and Staff Titles

Per AP style, most titles should be capitalized when preceding a name. When following a name, offset the title by commas and lowercase all non-proper nouns.

- *Webmaster Christopher Halper; Christopher Halper, webmaster, ...*

When referencing the heads of Concordia's academic schools, state their full academic school:

- *Dean of Concordia's Batterman School of Business or Dean of the Batterman School of Business*
- *Dean of Concordia's School of Nursing or Dean of the School of Nursing*

Check directly with the individual to confirm his or her title or with Human Resources.

## **Fundraiser**

Do not separate with a hyphen.

## **G**

### **GPA, grade point average**

The abbreviation does not take periods, and is acceptable on first use if space limitations require it. The words *grade point average* are not capitalized.

### **Grades (academic)**

Use a numeral when it follows the word *grade* and spell out the number when it precedes it.

- *Students in grade 2 at University School put on a play.*
- *University School's second grade went on a field trip.*

### **Grades (letter)**

Use the capital letter alone; no quotation marks around it.

- *Those who miss the final exam will receive an F in the course.*

## **H**

### **Health Care**

Per AP style, the term is two words.

### **Hyphenating -ly Words**

Adjectives that end in *-ly* cannot be hyphenated. *Concordia is a missionally minded university.*

### **Homecoming**

Lowercase when it refers to the general event. Uppercase when used as the official proper name of the event.

- *At my college, homecoming was the social event of the year.*
- *We are making plans for Homecoming 2011.*

### **Into and In To**

*In* is used to indicate position. *Into* indicates movement. *Into* is a preposition that has many definitions, but they all generally relate to direction and motion.

- *Step into the shower.*
- *Put your faith into action.*

Certain phrasal verbs make use of the word *in* with the verb.

- *Log in to retrieve your information.* The word *in* belongs with *log*.
- *Plug in to youth ministry.*

## J

### Jr., Sr.

- *Dr. John Smith, Jr., started cycling in 1998.*
- *Michael Johnson, Sr., reported the crime.*

## L

### Lifelong

One word, as in *lifelong learning*

### The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Use the full title on first reference. The title includes an em dash in the middle of the phrase and a capital *T* in *The*, even if it appears midway through a sentence. *Concordia University Wisconsin is affiliated with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.*

- LCMS may be used for second and subsequent references, or for web design purposes, when space does not allow for the full reference.

## M

### Majors

Should be lowercase when used in plain text.

- *Tom is studying physical therapy.*
- *Sarah is a sport and entertainment management student.*

Capitalize majors when used in a bulleted list.

## N

### Numbers

Spell out whole numbers and ordinal numbers from one through nine; use figures for all other numbers.

- *He is four years old.*
- *These 30 students came from nine states.*
- *This will be his fourth trip to Europe.*
- *The celebration marks the center's 35th year of service.* (Note: The *-th* is not superscript.)

Avoid starting sentences with numerals. If unavoidable, spell out the word.

- *Sixty educators attended the summit.*



## O

### Okay

Note the spelling; this is academic style rather than AP style.

## P

### Paraphrase

See Attribution. (\*LINK to Attribution)

### Passive Voice

Avoid it whenever you can.

- *The professor gave her a passing grade.*
- NOT *She was given a passing grade by the professor.*
- *His friend asked him for his notes.*
- NOT *He was asked for his notes by his friend.*

### Percentages

Use a numeral, followed by the word *percent*. A percent sign may be used in tables or charts where space is tight. Avoid starting sentences with a numeral. *Nearly every student who attends Concordia, or 99 percent, receive tuition assistance.*

### Patrick Ferry

Use this form: *President Rev. Patrick T. Ferry, PhD*, or *Rev. Patrick T. Ferry, PhD, president*. See Faculty and Staff Titles. (\*LINK to Faculty and Staff Titles)

## Q

### Quotes

See Attribution. (\*LINK to Attribution)

## R

### Residence Halls

Use *residence halls*, not *dormitories*.

### Robert W. Plaster Free Enterprise Center

Use the full title on every reference. See Locations. (\*LINK to Locations)

## S

### States

Per AP style, state names are now fully spelled out in all written instances. Offset with commas when it follows a city and is in the middle of a phrase.

- She visited his hometown of St. Cloud, Minnesota, to meet his parents.

### Student Worker

Two words, not separated by a hyphen.

### **Student-athletes**

Per NCAA style, the university chooses to hyphenate the phrase.

## **T**

### **The**

Capitalize the *T* when it is part of the official title, even if it is in the middle of a sentence.

*Concordia is affiliated with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The official magazine of Concordia University Wisconsin is the Concordian.*

### **Theatre**

Use this form when referencing the fine arts program.

### **Time**

Follow AP style. According to AP, for example, only a numeral is used for on-the-hour references; a colon is used to separate minutes. Follow all time references with a lowercase *a.m.* or *p.m.*, separated by periods.

- *The show starts at 6 p.m. Refreshments will be served starting at 5:30 p.m.*

### **Titles**

Titles of major works such as books, epic poems, movies, museum exhibitions, plays, operas, music or dance concerts, TV shows, journals, newspapers, magazines, works of art, computer games, and albums are capitalized and set in italics.

Titles of shorter works such as short stories, poems, songs, lectures, articles, presentations, speeches, and individual episodes of TV shows are capitalized and set in quotations.

Titles of conferences, courses, workshops, books of the Bible and special events are only capitalized.

See also **Faculty and Staff Titles** (\*LINK to Faculty and Staff Titles)

## **U**

### **University**

Lowercase university when used as a common noun. *The university's mission highlights service to Christ in the Church and world.* Uppercase when used as part of a proper noun (i.e. Concordia University).

See **Concordia University**. (\*LINK to Concordia University)

## **W**

## **Who, Whom**

Occasionally, the rules can be bent for the sake of a colloquial tone.

- *In an emergency, whom can you call?*
- Incorrect, but an acceptable colloquial substitute: *In an emergency, who can you call?*