

AAUW California Communications Committee

Editing Guide

Content

- Don't assume that the copy you have been sent is correct, including the AAUW information it contains. Don't be afraid to check and/or question.
- Rewrite for clarification, to smooth syntax, to eliminate duplication or to correct grammar, spelling, etc. Reorganize content for better flow of ideas by changing the order of paragraphs and adding transitional sentences or introductory phrases as needed.
- Obtain approval from the original author if changes are substantial.
- When possible, rewrite to avoid technical grammatical errors such as ending a sentence with a preposition.
- When possible, use the active voice, not the passive voice.
 - "The dog bit the man." vs. "The man was bitten by the dog."
 - "Sign the bottom of the form." vs. "The bottom of the form must be signed."
- Define acronyms when they are first used. If acronyms are used in the title of an article, define the acronym when it is first used in the article.
 - "The LOL (Leader on Loan) program is designed to....."
- Add an explanation of AAUW programs, events or features for novice readers.
 - "The deadline to nominate your branch's Named Gift Honoree, *a tribute to an outstanding AAUW member which is allowed to branches donating \$750 or more to AAUW Fund*, is December 31.
- Add links to AAUW California website where appropriate (the landing page itself, not just aauw-ca.org). Be sure general navigation is clear to those reading a printed version.
- The document must use AAUW colors. No new colors or highlights.

Capitalization

- The word "**branch**" is not capitalized unless it is part of the official name of a branch.
 - "all the branches" vs. "Mariposa Branch"
- The words "**state**" and "**national**" are not capitalized when they are used as adjectives. They are capitalized when used alone as a proper noun naming the organization.
 - "national AAUW" vs. "contact National for information..."
 - Capitalize AAUW California and AAUW National.
 - The term "National AAUW" should be changed to "AAUW National" to avoid conflicting with the guidance in the first bullet.
- The word "**committee**" is not capitalized unless it is part of the specific name of a committee.
 - "Program Committee" vs. "state committees"
- Capitalize the words "**peer group**" only if they include the name of the committee.
 - "The Public Policy Peer Group will meet..." vs. "There will be a peer group meeting of the Public Policy Committee."

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- The titles “**president**,” “**chairman**,” “**coordinator**,” “**director**,” etc., are not capitalized unless preceding the person’s specific name.
 - “President Veronica” vs. “Veronica is president.”
 - For reference on capitalizing titles, see <https://grammar.yourdictionary.com/capitalization/capitalization-of-job-titles.html>
 - “**President-elect**” is the correct spelling.
- The term “**board of directors**” is capitalized only when used as a proper noun. The same rule will apply to “**leadership team**.”
 - “AAUW California Board of Directors” vs. “the members of the board of directors”
- The shortcut term “**board**” or “**board of directors**” **should not be capitalized**.
 - The board decided to approve the request.
 - The board of directors of AAUW California vs. AAUW California Board of Directors
- The **titles of events, projects, programs**, etc. are only capitalized when they are proper nouns.
 - “Financial Literacy Program” vs. “a program on financial literacy”
 - “AAUW Fund Event” vs. “AAUW Fund fundraising event”
- The word “**convention**” is not capitalized unless it is being used as a shortcut name for a specific event.
 - “We are making plans for the annual convention” vs. “We hope to see you in April at the Convention.”
- “AAUW Fund” is capitalized, but not preceded by the word “the.” **AAUW Fund Event** is capitalized as the proper name of the event.
- “**Annual Event (Meeting)**” is capitalized.
- Capitalize all **main words in an email subject line and its salutation** (greeting)
- The monthly member communication is titled **the California Compass**.
- Capitalize “Policies and Procedures” only when referring to the specific document itself.
- Since the AAUW program is named Fellowships and Grants, those words will be capitalized, but not the word “recipients,” which is a common noun, i.e., **Fellowship and Grant recipients** (note: Fellow gets a capital F only if it is part of a title. If someone is given the fellowship called the “AAUW American Fellowship” she is called an “AAUW American Fellow,” and if all of the recipients of the various AAUW fellowships are in a room, they could be called a roomful of “AAUW Fellows” but if they are joined by NAUW Fellows, then the room is full of fellows (not Fellows).
- Based on National’s website, **Five-Star Program (or Five-Star Recognition Program)** is the correct spelling and capitalization.
- **Email addresses** should be all lowercase.
- The full names of **Tech Trek camps** should be capitalized, including Virtual Camp.
- Regarding the Four Pivots, use the following format: Pivot One (Awareness), etc.

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Punctuation & Spelling

- **Spacing between sentences:** Put one space between the end of a sentence and the beginning of the next one.
- **Periods and commas:** Periods and commas **are placed inside quotation marks.**
 - AAUW's mission includes the words "education and advocacy."
 - AAUW's mission embraces the three goals of "education," "research," and "advocacy."

Place a **comma before the conjunction (and, or, etc.) in a list of items.**

- The meeting is open to branch leaders, members, and the public.
- **Colons and semicolons**
 - Colons (:)
 - Used to introduce information related to the topic: a list, an example, an explanation, a quotation, etc.
 - Put one space after a colon.
 - Capitalize the first word after a colon if it is the beginning of a complete sentence or if it is the first word is a proper noun.
 - Example: The local branch typically offers several programs to support the AAUW mission: Tech Trek STEM camp, scholarships, voter education, etc.
 - Semicolons (;)
 - Used to combine two complete sentences instead of using a conjunction (and, or, but, etc.). Each sentence must be able to stand alone.
 - Using a semicolon creates a closer relationship between the two sentences.
 - Put one space after a semicolon.
 - Example: "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times." (Charles Dickens)
- **Hyphens and dashes (expanded):**

In order of increasing length (do not include any spaces except as noted*):

 - **Hyphen (-)** (minus key) to:
 - combine words ("well-educated")
 - split a word between lines
 - to separate non-inclusive numbers in SSN, phone numbers, etc.
 - *Space exceptions:
 - to indicate subtraction (e.g., **3 - 5 = -2**)
 - hanging hyphens ("nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature")
 - **En dash (–)** means "through." Use to indicate:
 - inclusive numbers (e.g., pages 33–47, June 30–July 2)
 - game scores
 - **Em dash (—)**

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- indicates a strong break in a sentence
- often used in pairs but not always
- **Question marks and exclamation points:** If they apply to the quoted material, they go within the quotation marks. If they apply to the whole sentence, they go outside.
 - The president opened the meeting by asking, “Did you receive your directory?”
 - Does AAUW mission include the words “education and advocacy”?
- **Parentheses:** If only part of the sentence is parenthetical, then put the final punctuation outside of the parenthesis. If the entire sentence is parenthetical, put the punctuation inside the parenthesis.
 - AAUW offers programs that focus on gender equity (including for men).
 - AAUW has discontinued a few programs. (Leader on Loan was discontinued in 2018.)
- **Ellipsis “ . . . ”** (three dots—spaced before, in between dots, and after)
 - to indicate omitted text in a quotation
 - to indicate a pause or unfinished thought
 - add 4th dot if it’s at the end of a sentence.
- Spell out **numbers** zero to nine. Use numerals for 10 or more (unless starting a sentence).
- **Date and Time:**
 - Use **ordinal numbers for dates** (e.g., October 1st, not October 1) unless part of month-day-year (e.g., October 1, 2019) or unless part of a date range (e.g., Nov 2-13). Do not use superscript.
 - Place a **comma after the day, date, and year** in a sentence (e.g., The meeting is on Tuesday, October 21, 2024, in the community center.)
 - **Time of day:**
 - Abbreviate ante meridiem and post meridiem in lowercase with no periods (e.g., **9 am**; **11 pm**).
 - Do not use 12 pm or 12 am— use “**noon**” or “**midnight**.”
 - To indicate a time of day that is on the hour, write only the hour, not the minutes (e.g 7 pm instead of 7:00 pm).
- **Underlining** should be used only for links and removed by the editors if used in any other way.
- **AAUW CA should be spelled out as AAUW California.**
- Spell out “*Board to Board*” or shorten to **B2B** after defining what that acronym means.
- For a **bulleted list**, put a period at the end of each item if it is a complete sentence, but not if it is just a few words or phrases.
- Punctuate the “**board of directors’ meeting** (or similar)” as plural possessive.
- Use the compound word “**toolkit**,” not “tool kit.”
- Use the compound word “**workgroup**,” not “work group.” “**Task force**” is written as two words.
- Spell out and hyphenate the “**Five-Star Program**.”

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- Write the **names of webinars** and book titles in italics with no quotation marks. Names of chapters within the book are in quotations.
- Materials should use the spelling “**flier**” instead of “flyer.”
- Spell “**bylaws**” as one word, unhyphenated, and without a capital letter.

Other

- **Use of *i.e.* and *e.g.*** The abbreviation *e.g.* roughly translates to “for example.” Use it when listing one or more possible examples of something. The abbreviation *i.e.* roughly translates to “in other words.” Use it when elaborating, clarifying, or further explaining something. Add a comma after the abbreviation in both cases.
- **Hyperlinks:** References to documents, URLs, etc. should be embedded as hyperlinks with the text “HERE.” Be sure the link goes to the official document (usually posted on our website) and not to the draft on our Google Drive.

Socially Conscious Language

AAUW members include men, women, and non-binary individuals from an array of cultural, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds, and all ages are welcome! Anything written about or for members should be framed accordingly.

- Avoid assumptions of any of the above.
- Avoid stereotyping.
- Avoid (within “reason”) language rooted in sexism, racism, ableism, or colonialism.
- Avoid language that is rooted in ableism (e.g., crazy, lame, OCD), ageism (senile), colonialism (master), racism (blacklist, scalper), or that is culturally appropriative (tribe, warpath, powwow), or gender-based (freshman, ladies, manpower).
- **Racial and Ethnic Identity**
 - Capitalize “Black” (adj.), Brown, Native American. Do not capitalize “white.” This is due to a prevailing (but not universal) sense that “White” conveys white supremacist views..
 - Do not hyphenate African American, etc.
- **Sex and Gender**
 - Distinguish sex from gender. Sex (male, female, intersex) refers to physical and biological traits; gender (woman, girl, man, boy) refers to social or cultural traits.
 - “Preference” refers only to gender.
 - When other genders are referenced, defer to author
 - Some expressions, such as “male-dominated” can’t be forced to comply with sex/gender distinction. OK to use.
- **Pronouns:**



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- Use a person's preferred pronouns, when known. If Jeremy specifies "they" then "Jeremy left their briefcase in the car" is an acceptable sentence. If a scholarship or program is specifically for girls or women, then "she" should be okay.
- Try to write as plural, but use "they/them" as singular when a person's preferred pronouns are unknown (e.g., The speaker kicked off the meeting with their opening remarks).

For more, see <https://consciousstyleguide.com>