ALGONQUIN COLLEGE

Algonquin College
Written Identity Standards

August 2025

AC

Table of Contents

1.0

Introduction

1.1

Introduction

Algonquin College's Written Identity Standards provide consistency and clarity in the delivery of written communication material. The guide outlines broad and general rules for most online and print applications. Formal/official written material (e.g., letters, invitations and certificates) or unique content (e.g., advertisement) may differ from these guidelines for editorial or design reasons.

Similar to most Canadian universities and colleges, Algonquin College follows Canadian Press (CP) style. *The Canadian Press Stylebook* and *The Canadian Press Caps and Spelling* outline comprehensive CP style. *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary* provides an additional spelling reference. This guide serves as a supplement to these reference books. It also outlines style and spelling elements particular to Algonquin College.

1.0
Academic Terminology

1.1

Academic Honours

✔ **DO...**

- Lowercase program, diploma, degree and certificate when they appear after the program name.

- Capitalize full, official degree names; lowercase general references.

- Capitalize the names of commonly recognized credentials.

- Capitalize words like diploma or certificate only if in the proper name of the credential or program title.

- Compound abbreviations take spaces. Mixed abbreviations that begin and end with a capital letter do not take periods.

Examples

1. Game Development diploma, Public Relations program, Marketing degree

2. Bachelor of Education; bachelor's degree Master of Science; master's degree

3. Jill Barber is a Chartered Certified Accountant.

4. Ontario College Graduate Certificate program, Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), Ontario College Certificate, Ontario College Diploma

5. P.Eng.
   PhD, BA, MA

1.2

Achievements, Awards and Distinctions

Lowercase common references to achievements and awards, including grants, bursaries, medals and prizes. Capitalize the proper names of awards and other honours.

Examples

> Jerry Popowich won the Alumnus of the Year Award at the Alumni of Distinction Awards Gala.

1.3

Faculties and Schools

✔ **DO...**

- Capitalize the proper names of schools, faculties, centres, institutes and offices.

- Use lowercase for general references.

- Use lowercase when referring to more than one.

- Use an acronym only for the second and subsequent references, if commonly known.

- Use lowercase when referring to multiple faculties or to a faculty in a general sense.

Examples

1. Algonquin College School of Business and Hospitality, Faculty of Technology and Trades, Algonquin Centre for Construction Excellence (ACCE), the Police and Public Safety Institute.

2. the business school, the centre, the institute

3. the faculties of Technology and Trades, and Health, Public Safety and Community Studies organized the event the schools of Business and Media & Design

4. ACCE

5. The faculty attended the President's Breakfast.

1.4

Programs and Courses

✔ **DO...**

- Use uppercase for the specific titles of courses and programs.

- Use lowercase for general references to knowledge areas or professions.

- Use lowercase for subjects (e.g., mathematics and science) unless they are in a course title (exception: subjects that are also a culture, religion or language).

Examples

1. In the Business-Marketing program, first-term courses include Retail Environments and Marketing Research.
   She is taking Social Behaviours this term as part of the Sociology program.
   Algonquin College programs include Animation and Public Relations.

2. The students learned about retail and marketing in their program.
   He wrote an essay for his sociology class.
   The professor was a public relations expert.

3. He improved his English in the English as a Second Language program at Algonquin College.
   She had to decide between a career in sociology and a career in marketing.

1.5

Other Terms

CONVOCATION

Capitalize in official title or reference to official event, lowercase in general reference.

Examples

Spring Convocation is in June.

The families gathered for the convocation ceremony.

COAT OF ARMS AND LETTERS PATENT:

Capitalize in reference to Algonquin College's Coat of Arms. Also capitalize Flags and Badges in reference to those designated by the Letters Patent.

CO-OP PROGRAMS

Co-op program, *not* Co-operative program
(*see Common Spelling Errors on p. 79-80*)

FORMS

If a generic term in reference to a form, do not capitalize. If the specific name of the form, capitalize. Do not capitalize the word "form".

Examples

An immunization form

Transcript Request form

2.0
Acronyms and Abbreviations

2.1

General

✔ DO…

- When using an acronym or abbreviation, spell out on the first reference followed by the short form in brackets. Use the acronym or abbreviation alone on subsequent references.

- Use any acronym if an organization is well known by the acronym.

✘ DO NOT…

- Do not use an acronym if the organization is not mentioned more than once in a story or is not well known by the acronym.

- Do not use acronyms in headlines — except for less formal communications (e.g., email, myAC post headlines).

- Do not capitalize acronyms that have become common words, such as radar (radio detection and ranging).

- Do not use periods in all caps acronyms or abbreviations (e.g., NSERC, BA, MA unless geographical, such as U.S., P.E.I., or a single letter, such as E. or p.).

- Do not use periods with metric symbols as they are not abbreviations. They are followed by a period only when they are at the end of a sentence *(see p. 34 for more)*.

- Do not abbreviate March, April, May, June, July *(see p. 21 for more)*.

- Do not abbreviate "professor" as Prof. Ever. *(see p. 13 for honorifics)*.

2.2

Frequently Used Acronyms

ALGONQUIN COLLEGE

ACCE — Algonquin Centre for Construction Excellence

ACIF — Algonquin College Innovation Fund

ACLT — Algonquin College Leadership Team

ACET — Algonquin College Executive Team

ACSIS — Algonquin College Student Information System

CAL — Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL)

LMS — Learning Management System (e.g., Blackboard or Brightspace)

ITS — Information Technology Services

PD — Professional Development

RO — Registrar's Office

SA — Algonquin Students' Association

SIP — Strategic Investment Priority

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

AUCC — Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada

NSERC — Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada

OCE — Ontario Centres of Excellence Inc.

OSAP — Ontario Student Assistance Program

SSHRC — Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

Please Note: A comprehensive list is available here

3.0
Capitalization

3.1
General

✔ **DO...**

- Capitalize all proper names; trade names; government departments; agencies of government; names of associations, companies, clubs, religions, languages, nations, races, places; and addresses. Otherwise, use lowercase where a reasonable option exists.

- Capitalize common nouns when they represent the full version of a formal name; use lowercase if a name is informal or a partial version.

Examples

1. City of Ottawa; the city
   Government of Ontario; the Ontario government; the government

2. Board of Governors; the board
   Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, Siemens Canada, Cree

3.2

Specific

- Academic Honours: See p. 6
- Campuses and Buildings: See Locations on p. 23
- Faculties and Schools: See p. 9
- Titles: See p. 39

GEOGRAPHY

Capitalize widely recognized descriptive regions and specific natural features; lowercase their derivatives. Lowercase if referencing a general direction or position

Examples

- eastern Ontario, southern Ontario, southern France, southern states
- East Coast, Western Canada, the Canadian North, Southeast Asia
- West Coast (region), west coast (shoreline), western Canadian (people), Western Canada
- the West (world or region of Canada), Western nations, Eastern Europe, Lower Manhattan, North Pole

HEADLINES

For headlines and subheads, capitalize only the first word and proper names. Do not use periods in a headline.

Examples

- Algonquin College wins sustainability award
- Green initiatives improve campus
- Animation professor wins Academy Award

HOLIDAYS AND EVENTS

Capitalize holidays and official event names, but not general references.

Examples

- New Year's Eve
- Mother's Day
- Halloween
- Canada Day
- AC Day 1
- Fall Convocation
- Fall Open House
- President's Breakfast
- President's BBQ
- Employee Awards
- The Tragically Hip Tribute Concert
- the festival, the ceremony, the awards' banquet, the Tragically Hip concert

LANGUAGES

Uppercase first letter in all variations.

Examples

English
French
English Canada
French Canada

*When used as an adjective:
English-Canadian
French-Canadian

PROVINCES

Abbreviate province and territory names when they follow a place name. Spell them out when they do not. Provincial abbreviations follow Canadian Press style instead of Canada Post.

Examples

B.C.
Alta.
Sask.
Man.
Ont.
Que.
N.B.
N.S.
Nfld.
P.E.I.
Nunavut
Yukon
N.W.T.

4.0
Dates and Time

4.1

Time

✔ DO...

- Use a colon to separate hours and minutes; use lowercase for letters; use periods with "a.m." and "p.m." Omit zeroes after colon if time referenced is on the hour.

- Spell out noon and midnight, *not* 12 noon and 12 midnight.

- Use "from" and "to" instead of an em dash (—) when writing a range of times (exceptions in some formats such as invitations).

Examples

1. 5:30 p.m., 5 p.m., 9 a.m.

2. I took the dog for a walk at midnight.

3. 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.

✘ DO NOT...

Examples

six o'clock

nine p.m.

five thirty in the morning

9:00 a.m.

9:00 AM

4.2

Date

✔ **DO...**

MONTHS

- Use an abbreviation if accompanied by a specific date (i.e., number).

- Abbreviate all months except March, April, May, June and July.

- Spell out full name of month when used by itself without a date or with only a year.

DAYS

- Spell out days of the week in full. (Exception: Days of the week can be abbreviated in tabular form — without periods.)

- Numbers in dates should not have suffixes (e.g., of common suffixes: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or 4th, etc.)

Examples

1. Feb. 28

2. May 24

3. January 2029

4. The College will be painted green in September.

5. Wednesday, Sept. 30

4.3
Time Periods

DATE RANGES

2011-2018 or 1990-1995 (not '90-'85, or 2011-18)

DECADES

the 1990s, the '90s, the mid-1990s

CENTURIES

20th century, *not* twentieth century

SEASONS:

✔ **DO...**

• Lowercase in general.

• Use capitals when the season name is used in conjunction with the academic term or official event name.

Examples

1. The spring day was lovely.
   Fall 2017, Winter 2018
   2017 Fall Term, 2018 Winter Term

2. Fall Convocation, Spring Convocation

5.0
Locations

These are common rules when referring to places — physical locations on Algonquin College campuses or common off-campus affiliates and partners.

5.1

Algonquin College

✅ DO...

- Spell out "Algonquin College" in full on first reference.

- "The College" can be used in subsequent references, but use of "Algonquin" by itself should be avoided when possible. If you can replace the word "college" with the word "Algonquin," capitalize College. (Exception: For names of other post-secondary schools, lowercase for college and university in all subsequent references.)

- Use lowercase for "college" only when the word cannot stand in for Algonquin College as an institution.

- Ottawa Campus can be used on second and subsequent references, especially when clarifying the location of an event or service (not Woodroffe Campus).

Examples

1. Algonquin College's new Coat of Arms is stunning.

2. The College is home to the Student Commons.

3. The life of a college student is hectic.

4. The ceremony was held on Ottawa Campus.

ADDITIONAL TIPS:

- Avoid the abbreviation "AC" in all formal writing and external communication (e.g., course calendar, annual report, communication with industry partners, speaking remarks). AC can be used in some informal and internal communication, such as social media (e.g., X (Twitter), myAC, Good Morning Algonquin and internal employee communications (e.g., newsletters, emails).

- Avoid using the term "community college"; if necessary to mention, Algonquin College is a polytechnic college.

5.2

Buildings

✔ **DO...**

- Capitalize formal, complete names; lowercase informal or partial versions of names.

- Uppercase for Building in all lettered buildings at Algonquin College.

- The building letter-identifier always follows the word Building and is capitalized.

Examples

1. Algonquin Centre for Construction Excellence (ACCE), the centre, Police and Public Safety Institute, the institute

2. Building A, Building B

5.3

Campuses

✔ DO...

- Capitalize the word "Campus" when referring to our Ottawa Campus, Pembroke Campus, Perth Campus and AC Online Campus.

- Always use lowercase when referring to a campus without the name or to multiple campuses.

Examples

1. The president visited Perth Campus.
   ACCE is located on the Ottawa Campus.

2. The campus is located in Perth.
   Pembroke and Perth campuses are located outside Ottawa.

5.4

Rooms and Common Locations

✔ DO...

- Capitalize rooms, offices, labs and lecture theatres that have an official name, such as Minto Hall, the Algonquin Commons Theatre or the Rosser Boardroom. Do not capitalize second and subsequent references if a partial reference to the name (e.g., hall, theatre).

- Capitalize the few locations around campus that do not bear official names but are well known by the community for their nicknames or unofficial titles.

- For most internal communications, abbreviations are acceptable when identifying rooms and building (e.g., C521), but the full building name should be used in external communications.

- Lowercase the word "office" when not part of an official title.

Examples

1. Algonquin Commons Theatre, theatre
   The Office of Applied Research and Innovation, the office
   Minto Hall, the hall

2. The Commons, Four Corners

3. C521, Building C (Room 521)

4. Office of the President, the Algonquin Students' Association office

6.0
Numbers

6.1

General

✔ DO...

- Spell out all numbers from one to nine.

- Use numerals for numbers 10 and greater.

- Spell out all numbers that begin sentences or headlines.

Examples

1. nine, 10, 250

2. first, second, third, 10th (note: no superscript on th)

3. Fifty students graduated.

EXCEPTIONS:

- Include a zero before the decimal point in numbers less than 1 (e.g., 0.25 cm).

- Use a combination of numerals and spelled-out numbers for numbers in combination: six 50-page textbooks, 150 three-inch screws.

- Use numerals in reference to days, years, grades, official games, etc. Capitalize the word associated with the term: Grade 9, Year 1, Game 3 of the Stanley Cup Finals.

- Academic program references: Level 01, Level 02, Level 03...

6.2

Addresses

✔ DO...

- Abbreviate the type of street when giving a specific address (St., Ave., Dr., etc.) and the direction if it has one.

- Spell out all words if mentioning a street name without a specific address.

Examples

1. 200 Bank St., 500 Somerset St. W.

2. The bakery is on trendy Sparks Street.

6.3

Money

✔ **DO...**

- Spell out numbers zero to nine if followed by the word dollar(s).

- Use decimal points if cents are included in the dollar amount.

- Use million instead of million dollars; use decimal as break after millions.

- Omit periods from currency abbreviations.

Examples

1. one dollar, two dollars

2. $10, $425.75, $4,000, $4,500.02 (not $10.00)

3. $2.7 million

4. $5 US (not $5 U.S.), $15.25 Cdn

✘ **DO NOT...**

- Use *over* or *under* (use *more than* or *less than*) when describing money amounts.

6.4

Symbols and Fractions

✔ DO...

- Use per cent, not percent or % (exceptions: charts, graphics).

- Spell out and hyphenate common fractions.

- Express a mixed fraction in figures unless it begins a sentence.

Examples

1. one per cent, 10 per cent

2. Three-quarters of the students...
   One-half of the class...

3. 6/10
   Six out of 10 students...

6.5

Measurements

✔ **DO...**

- Use metric: kilometres (not miles), kilograms (not pounds). Spell out on first reference.

- Use km/h when measuring speed.

- Add metric conversion in brackets if use of imperial is unavoidable — for example, in a quote.

Examples

1. 75 kilometres, 68 kilograms (150 pounds)

2. 75 km/h

3. "The brown bear weighs 150 pounds (68 kilograms)."

6.6

Phone Numbers

✔ **DO...**

• For phone and fax numbers, use dots.

Example

613.727.4723 x1234

6.7

Temperature

✔ DO...

• Write out degrees Celsius on first reference.

• On subsequent references, symbol can be used, or simply C.

Examples

1. 25 degrees Celsius

2. 25°C, 25 C

7.0
People and Groups

7.1

Learners/Students

✔ DO...

- Learner/learners is preferable on first reference (especially in material developed for an internal audience); student/students can be used in subsequent references.

- Use full-time students, part-time students for status — not part-time learners.

- Use Level 01, Level 02 in reference to program years (especially official program material) years. Note: "first-year student" is acceptable in news stories and casual references.

7.2

Titles

✔ DO...

- Capitalize official job titles when they appear before or directly after a person's name.

- Lowercase if no name appears and the title is a general reference.

- Use only the surname on subsequent references; do not repeat the title.

Examples

1. Deputy Manager Bart Simpson is Algonquin College's latest hire.

2. "This is fantastic news," said Mary Mary Quite Contrary, Vice-President, External Affairs, after
   a majority of deans voted in favour of creating the new position of deputy manager.

3. Simpson is a strong advocate for wearing green on campus. Simpson's experience includes five years as vice-principal of education at Fake News College.

.

7.3

Alumni

✔ DO...

• Use alumni as the plural form when describing Algonquin College graduates.

• Use alumnus for a male individual.

• Use alumna for a female individual.

Examples

1. John and Jane Fogerty are Algonquin College alumni.

2. John Fogerty is an Algonquin College alumnus.

3. Jane Fogerty is an Algonquin College alumna.

7.4
Board of Governors

✔ **DO...**

- Capitalize the full and proper names.

- Lowercase the general term.

Examples

1. The Algonquin College Board of Governors
   The Board of Governors' chair is James McCracken.

2. The board includes both internal and external members.

.

7.5

Groups and Committees

Capitalize proper names of groups and committees. Abbreviations can be used after the first reference, but introduce on first reference in brackets. Lowercase all informal group names.

Example

Program Planning and Review Committee (PPRC), the committee

7.6

Individuals

✅ **DO...**

- Use lowercase for general occupational titles such as manager, coach, police officer, teacher, professor and instructor unless they are part of an official title.

- Include a person's first and last name on first reference when a formal title is not required. Use only the last name in subsequent references. (Note: Informal or creative materials, like a speech or advertising campaign, may deviate from this.)

Examples

1. Their Police Foundations instructor is a police officer.
   Paul Newman, a professor in the School of Nursing, gave the presentation.
   Communications Manager Ruth Dunley wrote the speech.

2. Josh Donaldson is a professor at Algonquin College. Donaldson is the chair of his department.

❌ **DO NOT...**

- It is not necessary to use the term "Honourable" when identifying federal and provincial cabinet ministers, judges and other officials, except in formal communications such as invitations, letters and speeches.

7.7

Honorifics

Do not refer to professors/instructors as "Dr." unless the title is especially relevant to their expertise (e.g., medicine). In general, do not use courtesy titles such as Mr., Mrs. (exceptions: formal invitations and some formal speaking occasions).

7.8

Government Officials

✔ DO...

- Use lowercase for titles unless you are formally and directly identifying a premier, minister, head of state or important official.

Examples

Premier Mick Jagger

Governor General Keith Richards

The premier sat next to me on the bus.

The former governor general was born in Haiti.

Governor General Charlie Watts

✖ DO NOT...

- It is not necessary to use the term "Honourable" when identifying federal and provincial cabinet ministers, judges and other officials, except in formal communications such as invitations, letters and speeches.

7.9
Inclusive Language

DISABILITIES

When possible, put the person before the disability. The goal is not to label or define people by their disabilities.

If required, use acceptable terminology for a specific disability the term preferred by the individual. For example, a person with a visual disability may prefer "blind" or "visually impaired"

✖ DO NOT...

- Use "a schizophrenic," "the deaf," "the disabled student."

✔ DO...

- Use "person with schizophrenia," "persons with loss of hearing," "a person with a disability."

RACE AND ETHNICITY

- Capitalize the proper names of nationalities, peoples, races, and ancestral identities: Indigenous Peoples (see pg. 47), Asian, French-Canadian, Latin, German, etc.

- If including details about ethnic backgrounds or racial identities, use acceptable, specific terminology – or use the terms preferred by the person or group concerned.

- Avoid generalizations based in race or ethnicity; do no use common expressions with a history rooted in oppression.

✖ DO NOT...

- Use "minority", "gyp/gypped"

✔ DO...

- Use "racial/visible/ethnic/linguistic minority"

GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Use inclusive, gender-neutral terms when possible. (They can be a suitable option if you aren't sure of the person's pronoun.)

Be aware of appropriate terminology. Use 2SLGBTQ+ (Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer) as a term to encompass all communities of gender and sexual diversity.

Use a gender-neutral term if available/suitable.

Use terms of equal status.

✖ DO NOT...

- Use "sexual preference", "chairman", "spokeswoman", "husband/wife", "girls in the office", "man and wife"

✔ DO...

- Use "sexual orientation", "chair', "spokesperson", "spouse/partner", "staff in the office", "husband and wife"

AGE

- When referring to someone's age, list the specific age number rather than categorizing them in a way that may be vague or have negative connotations.

- Avoid ageist words

✖ DO NOT...

- Use "elderly" or "geriatric" (unless in the case of geriatric medicine)

✔ DO...

- Use "older person" or "senior"

7.10

Indigenous

GENERAL

- First Nations, Métis and Inuit is preferred on general reference to First Nations or Aboriginal People(s) unless otherwise specified or in official titles of individuals, jobs, organizations, communities, etc.

Example

> Indigenous Counsellor, Assembly of First Nations

- Capitalize the proper names of Indigenous communities, Nations and peoples

Example

> Métis, Cree, Indigenous, Inuit, Anishinàbe, Algonquin

INDIGENOUS WORDS AND SPELLINGS

- Algonquins of Pikwakanagan
- First Nation
- Adjidjàk Private
- Anishinàbe
- Anishinàbemowin
- Elder in Residence
- Elder
- First Nations, Métis and Inuit
- Indigenous
- Indigenous Peoples
- Indigenous Knowledge
- Indigenous Pathways
- Indigenization

- Ishkodewan
- Kampus Kokum
- Kejeyàdizidjigwogamig – Knowledge Keeper's Place
- Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg
- Kwey Indigenous Language Series
- The Lodge
- Mamidosewin Centre
- Medicine Wheel Garden
- Métis
- Mìgwech
- Nawapon
- Nigig Private
- Pìdàban

- Remember the Children Art Installation
- Seven Grandfather Teachings
- Three Sisters Garden
- Truth and Reconciliation (upper case when together)
- Wàbisheshì Private
- Wajashk Private

7.10

Indigenous

UPPERCASE INDIGENOUS TERMS

- Elder, Good Way, Good Mind, Indigenous Knowledge, Three Sisters, Thunderbird (from Algonquin College's Coat of Arms)

LOWERCASE INDIGENOUS TERMS

- mígwech, ceremonial fire, sacred fire

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

- Truth and Reconciliation (general reference); Truth and Reconciliation Commission; Algonquin College's Truth, Reconciliation & Indigenization team; Director, Indigenous Initiatives

TRADITIONAL TERRITORY REFERENCES (ESPECIALLY FOR SPEECHES AND LIVE EVENTS)

- the unceded, traditional territory of the Anishinàbe Algonquin People

Example

"I want to recognize that today's event is taking place on the unceded, traditional territory of the Anishinàbe Algonquin People ."

INDIGENOUS LOCATIONS

- Mamidosewin Centre

- Three Sisters Garden

- Medicine Wheel Garden at the Pembroke Campus

DARE DISTRICT (C BUILDING, OTTAWA CAMPUS)

- *Nawapon* - Indigenous Learning Commons

- *The Lodge* - a circular space within Nawapon that can be used for smaller gatherings

- *Ishkodewan* - is the title for the outdoor courtyard with its Gathering Circle and fire-vessel. The word means "there is fire."

- *Pìdàban* - the Institute for Indigenization on the second floor of the DARE District; Pìdàban translates as "past, present, and future" and alludes to the natural phenomena of "daybreak" - that moment in the morning when night becomes a new day.

- *Kejeyàdizidjigwogamig*, or Knowledge Keeper's Place - repository of traditional Indigenous knowledge in the Library.

- *Anishinàbemowin*, the name of the Anishinàbe Algonquin language that is a part of the larger Algonquian language family.

8.0
Punctuation

8.1

Ampersand

Avoid using the ampersand symbol (&) unless it is part of a formal name or title or in an email address.

Examples

Director, President's Office & Communications

School of Media & Design

8.2

Bullets

✔ **DO...**

- Capitalize the first words and use periods if you are creating a bulleted list that consists of complete sentences.

Examples

The hero had the following superpowers:

- flight

- super strength

- x-ray vision

The writing workshop was instructed to:

- Use the present tense.

- Use simple sentence structure and concise language.

- Use gender-neutral language.

8.3

Colons

✔ **DO...**

- Use a colon (not a comma) to introduce a direct quote longer than a short sentence. Capitalize the first letter of a sentence following a colon if it is a quote.

- Use a colon when introducing lists.

- Lowercase the first word following a colon if it is not a complete sentence.

Examples

1. The best quote from the speech was: "We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets..."

2. All campers should take the following items: warm clothes, a tent, a water bottle, boots, a raincoat and a compass.

3. Algonquin College taught me four values: Caring, Learning, Integrity and Respect.

8.4

Commas

✔ **DO...**

• Limit use of commas (less is more). Use commas to separate word groups and words - especially in longer series of items.

• Use commas with transition words.

Examples

1. a Canadian painter, sculptor and architect

2. , as well as
   , such as
   , however
   However,

8.5

Dashes and Hyphens

✔ **DO...**

- Add space before and after long (em) dashes (—). Use long dashes to break up long sentences, around modifying clauses as one way to avoid using brackets and semi-colons, and sometimes instead of commas.

- Use hyphens (-) when hyphenating words; hyphens are not required after a word ending in "ly".

- A two-word noun is typically not hyphenated unless it becomes descriptive. A two-word verb is typically hyphenated.

Examples

1. The buildings at Algonquin College — not to mention its staff — were decorated green for the 50th-anniversary party.

2. a first-class seat, a dimly lit room

3. health care, health-care worker

✘ **DO NOT...**

- Use dashes next to colons, semicolons and commas.

8.6

Ellipses

✔ **DO...**

- Use an ellipsis (three periods) to indicate an omission from text inside or at the end of a sentence. Add spaces before, between and after the period. Or the symbol can be inserted: Ctrl Alt period.

Example

O Canada, our home and native land... With glowing hearts we see thee rise, the true north strong and free.

8.7

Italics

✔ **DO...**

• Avoid using all caps, quotation marks or *asterisks* for emphasis. If necessary, use italics or bold.

• Italicize names of publications (except the word "the").

• Italicize titles of albums, books, movies, and television shows, but use quotation marks for titles of songs, art pieces, and titles of essays in a book or journal.

Examples

1. An Algonquin College student would *never* cheer for a team from Carleton University.

2. the *Algonquin Times*

3. "Learning to Fly" is a song from Tom Petty's *Into the Great Wide Open.*

8.8

Quotation Marks

✔ DO...

- Use double quotation marks when introducing and ending a direct quote. Punctuation usually goes inside quotation marks (exceptions: colons and semicolons).

- Use double quotes sparingly to set off ironic or unfamiliar words and phrases.

- Use single quotation marks when quoting within a quote; use single quotes in headlines and photo cutlines.

Examples

1. "I believe the children are our future!"
   She said she believed in "Algonquin College's four values": Caring, Learning, Integrity, and Respect.

2. He certainly didn't feel like "Algonquin Thunder" after losing the race.

3. "Canadian communication theorist Marshall McLuhan coined the phrase 'the medium is the message' in his book Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man."

PARAGRAPH QUOTES:

When a quote runs over two or more paragraphs, each new paragraph starts with a quotation mark, but only the final quoted paragraph has a closing quotation mark.

8.9

Semicolon

✔ DO...

- Use to separate closely related clauses that could be written as two separate sentences or two closely related thoughts when each is in a separate sentence.

- Use to precede explanatory phrases introduced by "for example," "namely," or "that is."

- Use as a "super comma" for items in a series that use commas for non-series purposes, to separate sub-lists, or to separate phrases that contain commas.

Examples

1. "I never read a book before reviewing it; I prefer to judge books by their cover."

2. Some pleasures cost next to nothing; for example, reading.

3. Today's speakers include Bob Dylan, Seneca College; Tom Petty, Mohawk College; and Thor, Algonquin College.

9.0
Typographic Guidelines

9.1

General

✔ **DO...**

- Use only one space after a period. Arial (12) is the College's default/ standard font (multiple exceptions, depending on projects/design requirements).

- Avoid using symbols in written text. The common exception is the symbol for "at" (@) but only when dealing with email addresses and social media accounts (X (Twitter) Instagram etc.). The ampersand (&), the symbol for "and," is also common to some Algonquin College schools and programs.

- Use bold and italic words instead of ALL CAPS for emphasis.

Examples

1. The College has three campuses. All of them saw a boost in enrolment.

2. Health & Community Studies

3. The president was *very* excited. The college was full of students.

9.2

Web and Email Guidelines

Email: no capital letters in email addresses.

Websites: These do not need the prefix http:// or www. in the displayed text. (Exception: the code for hyperlinks.)

Example

| thor@algonquincollege.com

Example

| algonquincollege.com

10.0
Copywriting and Web Writing Guide

10.1

How to Create Effective Copy

Always take your audience and format into consideration. Algonquin College communicates with a wide variety of groups (high school students, mature students, current students, employees, external media, the general public, government, community leaders, etc.) and in many different formats (press releases, news stories, advertisements, speeches, ads, program material, formal letters, etc.).

Whether digital or print content, make your copy easy to read and your message clear. Always answer the question "Why should my audience care?" Before your readers invest their time in hearing what you have to say, they will want to know why it is worth it. Does your writing help and/or inform? What are you trying to accomplish with said content? Explain these things up front.

✔ **DO...**

- Lead with the results or impact of the story you are telling.

- Use the clearest, most compelling language.

- Avoid unnecessary repetition and words. Strategic use of fewer words makes for more compelling content.

- Write with purpose.

- Active voice: In general, an active voice is far more effective (e.g., The Algonquin Wolves defeated our rival) than the passive voice (e.g., Our rival was defeated by the Algonquin Wolves). The passive voice happens when you switch the subject and object in a sentence. Instead of the man throws the ball, you have the ball is thrown by the man. Notice how the second sentence is less engaging?

- Vary sentence length to create energy and impact in your writing.

- Avoid jargon.

- Who, what, when, where and why: answer the famous five Ws if you can (though shorter forms of writing may not allow this).

- Online, address your targeted web visitors directly (see subsequent web guide for more details).

10.2

Algonquin College: Phrases, Themes, and Concepts

Algonquin College has some phrases and concepts that have become commonplace — evolving from either market research, brand identity, or key documents like the Strategic Plan. These should influence, and appear regularly, in your content. For instance, one popular College term is *experiential learning*.

Examples

Applied Research

Faculty/instructors with real-life experience

Collaborative

Community leader

Dynamic learning environments

Digitally connected

Entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial

Experiential learning

Global impact

Innovation, innovative

Sustainable

Open to new ideas, perspectives, experiences

Future-focused

Modern labs

Learner driven or learner-driven

Personalized learning

Co-op learning

10.3

Tips on Writing Headlines and Ledes

You typically find headlines and sub-headlines at the top of news stories and press releases (and variations appear in other forms of writing, including website and report sections/subsections). A lede refers to the opening line/paragraph of a news story, but the principles behind a good lede can apply to almost all forms of writing.

✔ **DO...**

- Use simple, powerful language.

- Define what the story/content is about.

- Use strong adjectives and verbs.

- Make your point and hook readers quickly.

- Reinforce the angle/goal and tone of your copy.

11.0
Web Writing

This section outlines additional guidelines for creating new, or managing existing, web content on the algonquincollege.com domain. A consistent web experience is important for the integrity of the Algonquin College identity/brand. Please contact **Marketing and Recruitment department** for any subjects not addressed below.
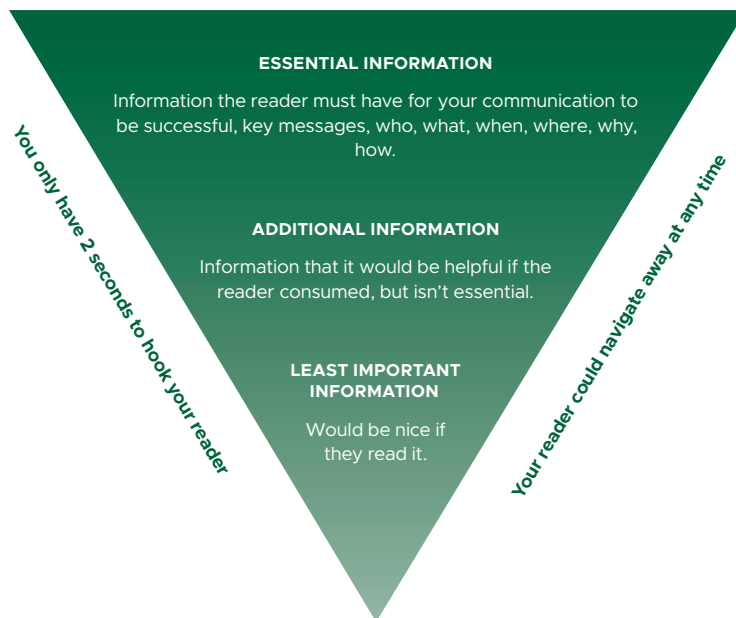
11.1

Effective Web Writing

Web readers scan and skim instead of reading word by word. Writers should focus on the users. Make sure they can complete their task and find key information quickly and easily. Keep content short and to the point. Consider what information the user is seeking and make it immediately available.

When writing for Algonquin College websites, keep visitors engaged with a "call to action" on every page. Guide users to the next natural step on the site.

INVERTED PYRAMID FOR WEB WRITING

You only have 2 seconds to hook your reader

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Information the reader must have for your communication to be successful, key messages, who, what, when, where, why, how.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Information that it would be helpful if the reader consumed, but isn't essential.

LEAST IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Would be nice if they read it.

Your reader could navigate away at any time

✔ **DO...**

- **Keywords**: Develop content that is easy to discover. Keywords are ideas and topics that define content. Regarding Search Engine Optimization, these are typical words and phrases entered into search engines. (Here are Google's tips on SEO best practices.)

- **Headlines:** Make sure your headlines communicate your single best point.

- **Subheadings:** Use meaningful headlines and subheadings to summarize key points. Using headlines and subheadings makes it easier for readers to skim.

- **Images:** Image and photo caption should convey your most important message.

- **Bulleted Lists**: Where applicable, use bulleted lists to break up text and make your copy easier to read.

- **Paragraphs:** Stick to one idea, or complete thought, per paragraph. Use short paragraphs. Long paragraphs work like speed bumps to derail the flow of the article and attention spans.

- **Lean Text (short paragraphs, short sentences, short words):** Maximum 10 words per sentence. Maximum three sentences per paragraph. Break it up.

- **Write high-quality content:** The best way to get people to read and engage with your content is to write useful and entertaining copy. Search engines reward sites that have high quality, relevant content.

- **Length:** Google gives priority to longer articles, but if they are too long, you will lose readers. Your pages should be a minimum of 300 words. To maintain reader interest, try to cap content at around 500 words (700 to 800 max in special cases). Keywords should make up one to two per cent of the text. Therefore, a 500-word article should include five to 10 keywords.

- **Structure:** Use inverted pyramid style (start with the conclusion — see graphic left).

✔ DO...

- Avoid excessive introductory text.

- Avoid long sentences or large, unbroken paragraphs. Break text up into easily digestible pieces.

- Avoid complicated language and sentence structure.

- Avoid uncommon jargon, words, slang and technical terms.

11.2

Reader Navigation

Expect people to arrive anywhere on your website. People usually begin reading a book from the first page. However, web visitors may arrive on any of your web pages, so you should treat each as an entry point (a beginning).

✔ **DO…**

- Each page should be easy to scan.

- Each page should clarify to people where they are and what your site is about.

- Each page needs a call to action. Get people to read more, sign up for something, or move deeper into your website for more information (e.g., program description or testimonial page).

11.3

Links

✔ **DO...**

- **Stay internal**: Every page on your website should link to other Algonquin College pages. This helps boost the search engine rankings of the pages you link to, and it also compels users to engage with your site longer.

- **Revisit and revise**: Go back to older posts and pages to update them with new links.

- Hyperlinks: Make sure they are accurate and up to date (whether external or internal).

- *From Google*: "Links help our crawlers find your site and can give your site greater visibility in our search results. When returning results for a search, Google uses sophisticated text-matching techniques to display pages that are both important and relevant to each search. Google interprets a link from page A to page B as a vote by page A for page B. Votes cast by pages that are themselves 'important' weigh more heavily and help to make other pages 'important.'"

- Therefore, where appropriate, link to other pages on the Algonquin College site.

- Add links to previous content.

- Use credible sources within the body of your text to create your readers' trust.

11.4

Search Engine Optimization: Making content SEO-friendly

Many of the widely known search engines offer advice on search engine optimization through their websites and blogs. Their authorities on the subject are not condemning the use of SEO practices — rather, they are advising how to use them properly.

The Algonquin College website's platform is WordPress. A plug-in module is available to help you develop SEO-friendly content.

Students, parents, media and other parties are hunting for information. How can you help them find you? Attract readers to our web pages by providing useful information.

✔ **DO…**

- Answer the questions your audience is asking.

- Discuss one key topic for each web page/story.

- Use phrases and words your audience is seeking.

- Remember to place your target keyword in headers, in the meta description and even in the alt tags of your images.

11.5

Writing for Mobile

For mobile content, concise writing is essential. In this case, the necessity has more to do with the screen size than the user's attention span. Your goal is to present the user with as much on-screen information as possible without requiring the user to swipe or tap. The more cogently you can express an idea, the better. Tighten your writing — whether headlines, paragraphs, or sentences.

✔ **DO...**

- Get rid of unnecessary words, phrases, sentences or points.

- Create short, strong headlines (they are easier to view in a quick scan).

- Front-load the most powerful content.

- Start your content with a few attention-grabbing sentences.

- Use short paragraphs.

11.6

Visuals: optimize your images

Images are essential to making your content interesting and shareable. You can optimize the photos by adding keywords to the image files and providing the ALT tags. Make sure to optimize the size of the photo. Pictures that are too large will slow load time and impact SEO. Make the image as small as possible without compromising the visibility or quality.

The visual appeal of your website affects the readability of your text and influences whether web visitors can quickly understand the content.

Although this section of the guide does not address page design, keep in mind that *you cannot compose content without considering how your web page will look*. Web copy and web design should work together. Be sure to discuss your needs with the College's Marketing department design professionals.

✔ **DO...**

• Replace text of photographs or videos.

• Emphasize quotes from customers (or experts) to add credibility.

• Break a long headline into a headline with a sub-headline.

• Change paragraphs into bullet points.

• Most importantly, de-clutter. Reduce noise and add white space. Not only does it make your pages easier to read but it also increases your perceived trust.

11.7

AODA and WCAG

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) is provincial legislation passed in 2005 with the goal of removing barriers for people with disabilities by 2025. This legislation has specific deadlines for implementation to ensure compliance.

In addition to the above, the College must ensure the College website and web content conform with the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, initially at Level A and increasing to Level AA.

12.0
Social Media

12.1
General

Algonquin College is active on many different social media platforms across multiple different accounts. From X (Twitter) and Facebook to TikTok and more, the College
uses these platforms to keep students and the wider community up to date with a mixture of informational and entertaining posts. While best practices of each of these platforms may differ, below are some general DOs and DO NOTs for Algonquin College social media.

✔ **DO...**

- **Include an image in your post.**

  No matter the medium, it is important to have a visual component(s) to your post. Images draw the eye to content and increase engagement.

- **Use message-appropriate language.**

  One of the expectations for social media is that the language used will be more conversational than, for example, an operational email sent to all students. Social media is a viable channel for serious news, too. In these cases, the language must reflect the College as a professional institution and brand.

- **Include (or create) relevant hashtags.**

  Any large-scale (and even small-scale) event will have a hashtag attached to it.

  To make sure that everyone can join in one conversation. Make sure that the Algonquin College voice is heard by researching relevant hashtags before posting.

✘ **DO NOT...**

- **Max out the character count on your message.**

  Keep messages short and to the point. Walls of texts typically do not perform well on social platforms.

- **Overuse hashtags.**

  While an important tool to increase reach, do not exceed more than three hashtags per post (except Instagram). Avoid using non-specific hashtags (e.g., #Research), as the "overstuff" the post and generally do not contribute to increasing reach.

- **"Feed the trolls."**

  Algonquin College attracts outside comments of a hostile nature — sometimes people with serious grievances and other times those simply venting their frustrations. While it is important to try to help the College community with their issues, disengage if the conversation becomes too hostile.

13.0
Tricky Words and Common Spelling Errors

AC

These guidelines supplement the *Canadian Press Stylebook* and the *Canadian Press Caps and Spelling* guide. In cases of uncertainty regarding spelling, refer to the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary.*

13.1
Commonly Used Word List

DO...	DO NOT...
3D	3-D
alumnus (m. sing., generic pl.); alumna (f. sing.); alumni (m. pl., generic pl.); alumnae (f. pl.)	alumnus, alumna, etc.
adviser	advisor
bachelor's degree	bachelors degree
behaviour	behavior
Adobe Acrobat	Adobe acrobat
analyze	analyse
cancel cancelled cancelling cancellation	canceled canceling cancelation
catalogue	Catalog
centre	If referring to the name of a specific US site, use 'center'. e.g., Rockefeller Center
chat room	chatroom
Coat of Arms	coat of arms
coordinator	Co-ordinator
co-op co-op program	coop co-operative program

DO...	DO NOT...
corequisite	co-requisite
coursework	course work
Criminal Code	criminal code
database	data base
decision-making (adj.) e.g., decision-making group	decision making
defence	defense
ecommerce eLearning emarketing	e-commerce e-learning, elearning e-marketing
email	e-mail
enrol enrolled enrolling enrolment	enroll enrollment
entry-level (adj.) e.g., entry-level position	entry level
fall, winter, spring, summer (seasons) Use capitals when the season name is used in conjunction with the term. e.g., Academic terms: Fall 2015, Winter 2015, Spring/Summer 2015	Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer

DO...	DO NOT...
field work placement	field-work placement
First Nations	First nations
fulfil fulfilled fulfilling fulfilment	fulfiled fulfiling fulfillment
full-time e.g., He is a full-time student. part-time e.g., This part-time program... fulltime, Full-time	fulltime, Full-time parttime, Part-time
grade point average	grade-point average
hands-on (adj.) e.g., hands-on learning	hands on (n) e.g., He put his hands on the stove...
HTML	html
health care (n.); health-care (adj.)	Healthcare (unless part of an official title)
high school	highschool
Indigenous Peoples	Indigenous peoples
information technology IT, ITS (Information Technology Services)	Information Technology
high-tech high technology	high tech, hightech high-technology

Commonly Used Word List

DO…	DO NOT…
inquire	enquire
inquiry	enquiry
inquiries	enquiries
Internet	internet
	the net, the Net
in-depth (adj.)	in depth, indepth
e.g., in-depth coverage	
labour	labor
life cycle	lifecycle
lifespan	life span
lifetime	life time
login (n)	log in
log-in (v)	login
log off (v)	logoff
log on (v)	logon
logged in (adj.)	logged-in
Examples:	
Log on to access your mail.	
To log-in, you must provide a username and password.	
Access login information.	
long-term (adj.)	long term (n)
e.g., long-term care facility	e.g., Winter is a particularly long term

DO…	DO NOT…
lowercase	Lowercase, lower case
uppercase	Uppercase, upper case
Master's Degree	Masters' Degree
model	
modelling	modeling
modelled	modeled
multimedia	multi-media
myAC	MyAC
offence	offense
online	on-line
Per cent	percent
prerequisite	pre-requisite
problem-solving (adj.)	problem solving
e.g., problem-solving skills	
program	programme
programming	programing
postgraduate	post graduate, post-graduate
post-secondary	postsecondary
realize	realise
real-world (adj.)	real world (n)
e.g., Students gain real-world experience…	e.g., In the real world…

DO…	DO NOT…
reinstate	re-instate
rollover	roll-over
skilful	skillful
streamline	stream line
Twitter, tweet	twitter, Tweet
URL	Url, url
voice mail	voicemail
World Wide Web	Web
web browser	Web browser
webcast	Webcast, web cast
web server	webserver, Web server
website	Website, web site
weekday	week day
weekend	week end
well-being	wellbeing
Wi-Fi	wifi, wi-fi
workforce	work force
workload	work load
workplace	work place
worldwide	world wide

13.2

Commonly Misused Words

advice — noun

advise — verb

accept — to receive

except — to take or leave out

alternate — one thing after another
(e.g., we alternated drivers)

alternative — on the other hand
(e.g., a better alternative is to...)

anyway — (not anyways)

its — a pronoun indicating possession

it's — contraction for "it is"

can and **could** — refer to ability

may and **would** — refer to willingness

compliment — to praise someone

complement — to supplement something

composed of — to be made up of

comprise — to contain all parts

include — to contain some parts

effect — the result of something or the power to produce a result

affect — to influence

ensure — to guarantee

assure — to confirm

insure — to arrange compensation for losses

forword — preface or introductory note

forward — send on or toward the front

historic — important

historical — something that happened in the past

licence — noun, a permit (e.g., driver's licence)

license — verb (e.g., i am licensed to practise law)

licensing — noun formed on the basis of the verb license

practice — noun (e.g., nursing practice)

practise — verb, to perform

principal — main, most important, or school principal

principle — fundamental truth or moral

rational — sensible

rationale — statement of reasons

stationary — (adj.) unmoving

stationery — (noun) writing material

that — use when the clause is essential to the noun it defines or narrows the topic.

(e.g., the movie that opened last week.)

which — use to give a reason or add a new element. generally, need to use commas around the clause.

(e.g., the movie, which cost millions of dollars to make, was a success.)