OTC STYLE GUIDE

The OTC Communications and Marketing Department developed this style guide to establish a uniform style of writing that reflects OTC's standards of excellence.

OTC adopted the "Associated Press Stylebook" as its official style guide. For any style questions not addressed in this guide, refer to the "Associated Press Stylebook." Please familiarize yourself with these guidelines and use them in official OTC communications. While not required, you are encouraged to adopt these guidelines in any communication in your role as an OTC employee. This guide is not intended to replace other writing style guides used for specific purposes, or for publications such as scholarly journals.

VOICE AND TONE

The voice of OTC is friendly, optimistic, helpful and straightforward. Our words are simple, concise and conversational. When communicating with students, employees, stakeholders and the general public, less is often more. Here are a few tips to help you write in OTC's voice.

BE CLEAR

Always write in active voice.

Example:

Instead of, "Scholarship applications should be submitted online."
Try, "Submit your scholarship applications online."

BE INCLUSIVE

After first reference, use first person plural pronouns when referring to the college such as we, our and us.

Example:

Instead of, "OTC offers associate degrees and certificates."
Try, "We offer associate degrees and certificates."

Speak directly to your audience by using first person plural pronouns including you and your.

Example:

Instead of, "In OTC's Culinary Arts Program, students can pick one of two emphasis areas."
Try, "In our Culinary Arts Program, you can pick one of two emphasis areas."

BE HELPFUL

Make your writing helpful instead of pushy when communicating with students, employees, donors or the general public.

Example:

Instead of, "You must login to myOTC to register for classes."
Try, "Trying to register for classes? Login to myOTC to get started."

BE POSITIVE

Avoid negative words or phrases in your writing. Always opt for the positive alternative.

Example:

Instead of, "Don't forget to apply for fall scholarships."
Try, "Now's the time to apply for fall scholarships."

BE SIMPLE

In the world of academia, there are many institutionalized words that should be used, even if they are complex. Don't dumb down the language. Instead, provide context to make it understandable.

Example:

Instead of, "Alpha Psi Tau received international recognition from Phi Theta Kappa."
Try, "Phi Theta Kappa, the international honor society for two-year colleges, honored OTC's chapter with several international awards.

ABOUT OUR NAME

Our official name is "Ozarks Technical Community College" or "OTC."

In news releases, feature articles, academic journals and web publications, write out "Ozarks Technical Community College" on first reference. Use "OTC" in subsequent references.

Lowercase "college" when referring to OTC.

Example:

Dr. Hal Higdon is the second chancellor in the college's 25-year history.

A company or organization is always "it" — not "they" — when referred to in the singular.

Example:

OTC offers its employees many benefits.

ABOUT OUR CENTERS AND CAMPUSES

OTC has three campuses and three centers. Campuses must be designated by the Higher Learning Commission and the Missouri Department of Higher Education.

Lowercase "campus" or "center" when used alone.

Example:

The campus offers free tutoring to students.

Do not hyphenate OTC centers or campuses.

Example:

OTC Springfield (not OTC-Springfield)

OFFICIAL NAMES OF OTC CAMPUSES AND CENTERS

OTC Springfield Campus

OTC Richwood Valley Campus

OTC Table Rock Campus

OTC Republic Center

OTC Waynesville Center

OTC Lebanon Center

OTC Online

Please use the official names of OTC campuses and centers on first reference. On second reference, "OTC Springfield" or the "Springfield campus" is acceptable.

EDITORIAL STYLE GUIDE

ACADEMIC DEGREES

An OTC graduate earns an "associate degree" from the college. Never say or write "associate's degree." Bachelor's degrees and master's degrees are possessive, associate degrees are not.

Capitalize specific degrees.

Examples:

Associate of Arts

Associate of Applied Sciences

Lowercase general degrees.

Examples:

associate degree

bachelor's degree

master's degree

As per AP, all degree abbreviations take periods.

Examples:

A.A., A.S. — Associate of Arts, Associate of Science

B.A., B.S. — Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science

M.A., M.S. — Master of Arts, Master of Science

Ed.D., Ph.D. — Doctor of Education, Doctor of Philosophy

M.B.A. — Master of Business Administration

Do not add the word degree after an abbreviation of the degree.

Examples:

She has an associate degree in teaching.

She has an Associate of Arts in teaching (not A.A. degree in teaching).

ADDRESSES

Use United States Postal Service style for addresses. Abbreviate directional (N. instead of North) and street (Expy. instead of Expressway, St. instead of Street, and Ave. instead of Avenue). For states, use the postal-code abbreviation in an address (MO instead of Mo. Or Missouri).

Example:

Ozarks Technical Community College, 1001 E. Chestnut Expy., Springfield, MO 65802

AMPERSANDS

Use only when part of a formal name or other proper noun. An ampersand may be used in a list if space is premium.

Example:

Neale & Newman Law Firm

Do not use to substitute for the word "and" in text.

ALUMNI

Examples:

Alumnus (singular masculine)

Alumni (plural masculine — use for collective body of men and women)

Alumna (singular feminine)

Alumnae (plural feminine — use when referring to women only)

Alum/alums (for informal use only)

APOSTROPHIES

Use to show possession and omitted figures. Do not use with plurals of numbers or multiple-letter combinations. Do not use with decades on any reference.

Examples:

1990s becomes '90s on second reference (not 90's)

DVDs (not DVD's)

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Always capitalize "OTC Board of Trustees." In subsequent references, "the board" is acceptable.

CAPITALIZATION

Capitalize the names of programs and departments when the formal name is used. Lowercase when describing a program of study or department.

Examples:

OTC's Aviation Program has been at capacity for two years in a row.

The Marketing and Communications Department unveiled its new campaign.

My son is attending OTC to study aviation.

I work in student affairs at the college.

CLASS YEARS

When referring to a class, use all four digits.

Example:

Class of 2019

When abbreviating years to two digits, put an apostrophe in front of the years of classes.

Example:

David Johnson, '18

COMMON WORDS, TERMS AND USAGE

Advisor (not adviser)

Course work (not coursework)

The words "email" and internet" are lowercase unless they begin a sentence.

Health care (not healthcare)

myOTC (not MyOTC or My OTC)

The words "homepage" and "website" are one word and lowercase. Uppercase the words if they begin a sentence.

Capitalize "OTC Eagle Pride" or "Eagle Pride" on all references.

Ozzy the Eagle (not Ozzie the Eagle or Ozzy Eagle)

COURSES VS. CLASSES

Course means a series of classes, on a particular subject, usually lasting a whole semester or year.

Uppercase specific courses or programs.

Example:

I'm taking Chemistry 101 this semester.

Lowercase when describing courses in general.

Example:

I'm taking chemistry this semester.

DATES

Avoid the use of contractions in dates. Contractions should be used when referring to anniversaries or annual events. Never use the term "first annual." Opt for "inaugural" instead.

Examples:

The registration event will be held Aug. 11. (not Aug. 11th)

The college's 30th anniversary will be held April 3, 2030.

The Richwood Valley campus will host its inaugural 5K in June.

Abbreviate January, February, August, September, October, November and December when they are used with a date. Never abbreviate March, April, May, June or July.

Seasons, semesters and breaks are not capitalized.

Examples:

The fall 2018 semester begins Aug. 20.

OTC picnics are held each fall and spring.

OTC's winter break ends Jan. 3.

DIVISIONS

The college has three divisions: Technical Education Division; Allied Health Division; and General Education Division. On first reference, capitalize and use the full name.

Technical education, allied health and general education do not need to be capitalized when used alone.

GENDER

Avoid "he," "she" or "her" unless gender is essential to the meaning of the sentence. A plural sentence construction often solves this problem.

Example:

Donors may pay by credit card if they so choose.

Be careful not to mix singular and plural.

Examples:

All students have their preferences.

Incorrect – Every student has their preference.

GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS

In general, capitalize compass points when referring to a place. Lowercase when referring to a direction.

Example:

I'm moving to the West Coast.

I'm driving south on Campbell.

Lowercase compass points when describing a section of the nation: southwest Missouri.

Example:

Chancellor Higdon says OTC is the economic engine of southwest Missouri.

HYPHENATION

Hyphenate compounds that are adjectives.

Examples: part-time employment, decision-making skills

Compound adjectives are not hyphenated if recognized as a single concept.

Examples: lower division or upper division class, computer science field, private sector contributions, real estate markets

Do not use a hyphen when forming a compound that does not have special meaning and can be understood if the word "not" is used before the base word.

Examples: noncredit, nondegree-seeking

LETTER SPACING

Use one space after a period in printed materials and online.

LISTS

Introduce lists with a short phrase or sentence, followed by a colon. Capitalize the first word in each bullet and use parallel construction for each item in the list.

Example:

The following services are free to eligible participants:

- Tutoring

- Career exploration and counseling

- Academic advising

- College placement test preparation

NUMBERS

Spell out numbers "zero" through "nine" in ordinary text, and spell out any number that begins a sentence. Exceptions include course numbers, grade point averages, unit and monetary values, scores, percentages, compound numbers and decimal fractions – all of which may be indicated with numerals.

Use commas with numbers above 999.

    Examples:

- 1,000
- $13,500
- 500,000

Spell out ordinals first through ninth.

    Examples:

- First grade
- 21st century
- 25th anniversary

Use numbers to represent ages.

    Examples:

    He has studied Spanish since the age of 6.

OTC FOUNDATION

Always capitalize "OTC Foundation." On subsequent references, "foundation" is acceptable.

    Example:

    The OTC Foundation hosted its 10th annual golf tournament today. Participants raised more than $40,000 in scholarships for the foundation.

PHONE NUMBERS

Use dashes or parentheses, not periods. Be consistent throughout the document.

    Examples:

    (417) 447-7500

    417-447-7500

PUNCTUATION

Use the Oxford comma only in a complex series.

    Examples:

    Simple series – Café 101 has orange juice, toast and eggs.

Complex series – Café 101 sells orange juice, toast, and ham and eggs.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Official OTC social media accounts may follow a more relaxed editorial style.

STATES

Spell out state names in stories. Use AP abbreviations in datelines, photo captions and lists.

TIMES

Use "a.m." and "p.m."

Use "noon" and "midnight" instead of 12 p.m. and 12 a.m.

Never use "o'clock."

Use "to" between the hours in text.

Example:

RegFest will run from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Use an en dash (–) in calendar or tabular entries and academic or fiscal years.

Examples:

11–11:30 a.m.

The board approved the budget for the 2019–2020 fiscal year.

TITLES

Capitalize titles only when they precede personal names.

Example:

The governor agrees with Dr. Hal Higdon, chancellor of Ozarks Technical Community College.

OTC faculty members are referred to as "instructors," not "professors."

When a person holds a doctoral degree, use Dr. on first reference with first and last name. On all further references, use last name only.

Use abbreviations of degrees after an individual's name when needed to establish credentials. However, do not use both Dr. and degree abbreviations at the same time.

Example:

Tracy McGrady, Ed.D. (not Dr. Tracy McGrady, Ed.D)

TITLES OF WORKS

As per AP, put quotations around all titles of works: "The Great Gatsby."

Note the following exceptions:

- The Bible
- Almanacs
- Directories/handbooks
- Dictionaries
- Encyclopedias
- Gazetteers
- Software

WEB ADDRESSES

For digital usage, avoid using website addresses as link text. Write descriptive link text instead. Do not use "click here" as link text.

For print, do not include "www" or http:// before the address. Do not use a backslash after the address.

Example:

otc.edu (not www.otc.edu)

ADMINISTRATIVE STYLE GUIDE

ADDRESS FORMAT

In formal letters and invitations:

Title First Last
Company
Address (spell everything out)
City, State ZIP

Example:
Dr. Hal Higdon
Ozarks Technical Community College

1001 East Chestnut Expressway
Springfield, MO 65802

In business letters:

Attn: First Last
Company
Address (The use of abbreviations is acceptable)
City, State Zip

Example:
Attn: Dr. Jeff Jochems
OTC Richwood Valley Campus
3369 W. Jackson Rd.
Nixa, MO 65714

NAME TAGS

First Last
Title

Example:
Mark Miller
College Director of Communications

If your title pertains to a specific campus or center, place the campus or center name after your title with a comma.

EMAIL FORMAT

Use the following template for faculty/staff email signatures:

Name
Title
Ozarks Technical Community College
Address
Work phone | Cell phone (optional)
Email

If your title pertains to a specific campus or center, place the campus or center name after your title with a comma.

OTC emails are always lowercase: communications@otc.edu.

Do not omit a period when an email address falls at the end of a sentence.

Use sans-serif font of either Arial or Calibri.

Please keep email clean and simple. Avoid distracting colors or backgrounds. Do not use quotes or images in your email signature.