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City Style Guide

Citizens count on City of Calgary services to be dependable and consistent.

This guide will help you present consistent City information.

Style guide content

* Builds on accepted Canadian and international rules of English grammar use and effective writing.
* Key sources include:
	+ The Canadian Press Stylebook (14th Edition).
	+ Canadian Oxford Dictionary (second edition).

Our Identity Matrix

Our Identity Matrix is another tool for communications planning. It will help you decide how formal or informal messages should be.

The identity matrix is a City of Calgary tool to help communication planners decide on the tone of a particular message and how closely communication materials should adhere to certain corporate standards.

The Creative Services team works with business unit clients to determine where a project fits on the identity matrix, which shapes style and content. These audience guidelines are flexible enough to accommodate communications ranging from the formality of legal public notices to the informality of skateboard park posters.

Whenever appropriate, strategic corporate messaging should be integrated into tactical communication pieces. This involves key messages, phrases and reinforcing Council priority items and/or corporate goals. All strategic messages should be communicated in terms of their relevance to the target audience, and should never be self-serving.

Using the identity matrix as a guide will create crossover benefits of coordinated messaging both internally and externally.



## Common to all quadrants

The copy must:

* Be friendly, jargon-free and audience-appropriate.
* Be concise with a maximum of three short sentences per paragraph.
* Be inclusive rather than exclusive, using personal pronouns like “we” and "you".
* Use connecting words and phrases to draw readers through the copy..

## Informational-Wide audience

Should be institutional and formal, a straightforward, explanatory and neutral presentation of information. Words and images used should be concrete, direct, factual and jargon-free.

Pronouns should be first-person plural (we) speaking directly to (you) second-person singular or plural. Contractions may be used and some continuity techniques (so, but, and) are permissible.

In print, headlines should express a complete thought, with subheads to break up copy blocks and aid comprehension and retention. Wherever appropriate, contact information should be included.

## Informational-Niche audience

Should be appropriate to the target market while maintaining a strong corporate base. Words and images should be compelling and meaningful to the target audience, while respectful of the corporate persona. Corporate jargon must be avoided; all messaging must be written in street-speak. The only appropriate jargon or buzz words are used by members of the target group themselves. Such language or imagery may be an appropriate way to make a connection with the audience.

Pronouns should be first-person plural (we) speaking directly to (you) second-person singular or plural. Contractions may be used and some continuity techniques (so, but, and) would be helpful.

All messages should open with an identifier – a statement or call for attention that the target audience can immediately recognize. Contact information should be included with all messages. Copy blocks should be short and divided by subheads, encouraging the reader to move through the copy.

## Motivational-Wide audience

Present the selling/convincing arguments from the top down, beginning with the most powerful point and repeating this point at the end of the message. Words should be informal and conversational. Images should be emotional and personal.

Use the pronouns we and you with your family, your community and other personal connections where appropriate. The use of contractions is encouraged and continuity techniques (so, but, and) are essential.

Copy blocks should be short and paragraphs kept to two or three sentences. Headlines may call for action supported by a reason why. Copy subheads should be crafted as at-a-glance persuaders.

## Motivational-Niche audience

Present selling/convincing arguments based on what is meaningful to the specific target audience. Words and images should be informal, personal and appropriate to the target audience.

Use the pronouns we and you with other personal connections wherever appropriate. Contractions and continuity techniques (so, but, and) guide the reader through the content.

Copy blocks should be short and conversational and paragraphs kept to two or three sentences. Headlines may call for action supported by a reason why. Copy subheads tell the message even if the reader skims the heads and subheads.

Writing in City style

## Choosing the right tone and style

Written and verbal City communications are important parts of how we engage citizens. Our style and tone should be appropriate to the type of conversation we’re having and with whom we’re having it. It helps to remember that we’re communicating with citizens, not at them.

There are some cases — public notices, for example — when legal requirements dictate a very formal style of writing. However, most City communication is information-based and is not bound to a legalistic, impersonal messaging style. [Writing in plain language](https://mycity.calgary.ca/ourorg/dept/cfo/customerservicecommunications/toolsresources/communicationstandards/city_style_guide/writing_city_style/writinginplainlanguage.html) builds clarity and understanding of messages.

Using the identity matrix tool to plan your writing will save you time and help make sure your intended message is received. While all City communication must convey a sense of professionalism and responsibility, some simple style and tone guidelines can help make communication more friendly and local government seem more approachable.

## Pretend you are the reader/viewer

Picture how your messages look and sound to your audiences. Communicate about what’s of most interest and significance to them. Frame all messages in terms of how citizens may be affected by City activities and services.

## Simplify and focus messages and language

Although effective writing techniques vary somewhat from one medium to another, one technique applies to all: make it as easy as possible for your readers/viewers/listeners to get your message. They shouldn’t have to work — or think — very hard to understand it! Visuals — from photos to the use of type and white space - as well as copy, should direct the audience to the core message about the subject at hand.

Limit the number of main thoughts in any paragraph to one per paragraph. And make sure there is a focus, a key message, on every "page" or unit of communications, be it on the Web, in a brochure, a radio message or a newspaper ad.

## "We" are speaking with "you"

Write and speak from the first person plural — (we) are having a conversation with the second person (you and your neighbours).

### For example:

*At The City of Calgary, we’re introducing a new program to help you recycle your old computer terminals.*

It’s much friendlier, more inclusive, more direct and compelling than saying the same thing in the third person:

*The City of Calgary is introducing a new program to help citizens recycle old computer terminals.*

Editing

Your Creative Services advisor can help you obtain editing services for your communication materials. The Editors Association of Canada has developed a useful detailed set of [standards for editing](http://www.editors.ca/resources/eac_publications/pes/index.html) .

Besides alerting you to what to expect when text or documents are being edited, the standards offer good insights into different aspects of writing that warrant consideration when developing communication content.

* [Introduction](http://www.editors.ca/resources/eac_publications/pes/introduction.html) to editing standards
* Standards for [structural and stylistic editing](http://www.editors.ca/resources/eac_publications/pes/structure_style.html) 
* Standards for [copy editing](http://www.editors.ca/resources/eac_publications/pes/copy_editing.html) 
* Standards for [proofreading](http://www.editors.ca/resources/eac_publications/pes/proofreading.html) 
* Standards for elementary knowledge of the [publishing process](http://www.editors.ca/resources/eac_publications/pes/pub_knowledge.html) .

# Abbreviations and acronyms

City style is to use acronyms and abbreviations **as little as possible**.

The reading public (even City employees) may not know the acronym and probably don’t have time to find out.

If they are used:

* spell out acronyms and abbreviations in full the first time and,
* use an abbreviated version in parentheses afterwards.

*The Administrative Leadership Team (ALT) ate pretzels with visiting dignitaries from Germany. The ALT reported the pretzels as delicious.*

If the document is long, spell the word out again on every second page.

Names whose acronyms are common household terms in Canada, such as RCMP, CBC, NDP do not need to be spelled out in full on first reference **unless you think your audience is unlikely to recognize them.**

## Measurements

Spell out terms such as *feet, kilometers, kilograms* in first reference.

It is permissible to abbreviate (ft., km, kg, etc.) if in tabular matter or used frequently.

*This ostrich weighs 87 kilograms. But the emu is 68 kg, the cassowary is 66 kg and the turkey is only 55 kg.*

## Latin abbreviations

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Abbreviation** | **Meaning** | **City style** |
| e.g. | for example | use periods and do **not** capitalize the letters |
| i.e. | that is to say | use periods and do **not** capitalize the letters |
| et cetera or etcetera | unspecified similar kinds of things | spell out completely rather than using etc. |
| versus | in contrast to **or** as the alternative of | spell out completely rather than using vs. |

## Company and business abbreviations

On first reference to a company or business name, include the applicable suffixes with periods: Bros., Co., Corp., Inc. and Ltd.

**These suffixes are considered part of the formal legal name of a business and should not be left off or separated from the rest of the name by a comma.**

After the first mention, it’s okay to state the name without suffixes.

## Provinces and states

Abbreviate provincial names rather than using the two-letter postal abbreviations.
Also avoid using postal abbreviations in regular sentences.

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

Do **not** abbreviate Yukon or Nunavut.

Addresses

The preferred format for the street and mailing address of The City of Calgary is:

*The City of Calgary
800 Macleod Tr. S.E.
P.O. Box 2100, Station M
Calgary, AB T2P 2M5*

The preferred format for a business unit and division located at this same address is:

*Customer Service & Communications
Creative Services, Mail Code #8080
The City of Calgary
800 Macleod Tr. S.E.
P.O. Box 2100, Station M
Calgary, AB T2P 2M5*

Tips

In regular copy:

* Spell out Boulevard, Drive, etc. in general locations
(e.g. The skunk crossed Sifton Boulevard).
* Abbreviate if it’s a numbered address
(e.g. I saw the skunk, because I live at 36 Sifton Blvd).
* Quadrants have periods: S.W., N.W., etc.
* Spell out First through Ninth as street and avenue names
(e.g. 37 Fifth Ave. S.W.).
* Use th, nd, rd with addresses higher than the nine
(e.g. 1234 45th St. N.W.).
* If there is a suite number, office number, etc., use an (en) dash
(e.g. 28 - 1234 45th St. N.W.).

Age

Use numbers for ages standing alone after a name.

Write out the number if it is used as a compound word.

Write out numbers between one and nine.

* Accordion tap dancer Kevin VonFlukenstein, 75, says you’re never too old to rock and roll.
* My iguana is two years old. He is a rambunctious two-year-old.

Dates

General Format

Different City documents use different date formats for different reasons.

For example, the City Clerk’s Office asks that documents use the format: *2003 April 26* on City Council agendas, minutes and other official documents for consistency in City record-keeping practices.

Less formal style in City stationery templates uses: *April 26, 2003* as the format.

(If you are uncertain which to use, check with the office for whom you are preparing documents.)

When expressing the date **using only numbers**, City style follows the international style of listing: year followed by month followed by day (YYYY/MM/DD).

Use all four digits of the year (e.g. April 26, 2003 translates to 2003/04/26.)

Tips

* When there’s a specific date, abbreviate the month.
(e.g. Jan. 5, 2007).
* Do **not** abbreviate March, April, May, June, or July since they’re short enough on their own.
* With no specific date, spell out the month.
(e.g. January 2007).
* Some formal documents require year/month/day.
(e.g. 2007 June 22).
* When describing a historical time period, do **not** use an apostrophe.
(e.g. The 1950s were great, but the 1960s were groovy, man).
* **Note:** Days and months should be abbreviated to first three letters when presented in tabular manner. But they don’t have periods.
(e.g. Mon Tues Wed, etc., and Jan Feb Mar Apr, etc.).

# Email signature

Emails signatures have the same purpose as a return address on paper mail.

City style is to have email signature information identical to the sender's City business card information in style and content.



**Mitchell Gherkins**, B.Comm., MACT
Production Artist, Creative Services
Customer Service & Communications
The City of Calgary | Mail code: #5555
**T** 403.268.2222 | **C** 403.268.4444 | **F** 403.268.3333 | [calgary.ca](http://www.calgary.ca/)
Floor 4, Administration Building - H20, 800 Macleod Tr. S.E.
P.O. Box 2100, Station M, Calgary, AB Canada T2P 2M5

#  Internet addresses

When an Internet address (URL) ends a sentence, there is no space between the last letter of the URL and the period.

* Visit our website at [calgary.ca](http://www.calgary.ca/).

# Measurements and temperature

## Measurements

* Canada uses metric measurements.
* Use metric when referring to distance, length, area, mass, volume, speed or electronic capacity.
* City style spells out metric measurements the first time they appear in text. You can shorten measurement names on second reference or when using them in a table or a list, like on a map. In these cases, use the metric symbols for the names.
* There are no term abbreviations in the metric system, only symbols for the terms.
* Metric symbols are separated from the number by a single space and do not require an "s" to make them plural.
* All metric symbols appear in lower case except symbols for technology capacity, which appear in upper case.
* Periods follow metric symbols only when the symbol appears at the end of a sentence.

### **Some symbols for metric terms include:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| KB = kilobyteMB = megabyteGB = gigabyteTB = terabyte | mm = millimetrecm = centimetrem = metrekm = kilometre | ml = millilitrel = litre | GHz = gigaherz |

 *Posted speed limit = 100 km/h
We drove 240 kilometres to find Mundare’s giant sausage.*

*The recipe calls for 1.5 kilograms of beef. Mom’s meatloaf recipe:*

*1.5 kg of beef
5 ml soya sauce
5 ml HP sauce
30 ml ketchup
2 eggs
10 saltine crackers, crushed*

## Temperature

**Canadian temperature** is measured in Celsius.

You can use the abbreviation "C" when it comes after a number. Put a space between the number and the symbol.

*It was a beautiful 27 C today.
The mercury dropped to -5 C last night.
It was twenty degrees at the delicatessen yesterday.*

## Exceptions to using metric

There are exceptions where imperial is used due to common preferences, at least in North America.

In all cases, a space is inserted between the number and the measurement name or abbreviation.

Precious metals and minerals are described in troy ounces and carats.

Common wood and tool measurements in North America include two-by-fours and quarter-inch screws, although metric tool measurements are becoming more frequent.

Page size measurements often appear as 8.5 x 11 (letter size) or 11 x 14 (legal size). City style is to leave a space on either side of the "x" that represents "by."

# Money

## Dollars

If a number refers to money, it can be preceded by the dollar sign, or followed by the word dollars. There is **no space** between the dollar sign and the numeral.

*This pig is five dollars.*

*She won five hundred hamsters.*

*She won $5 hundred.*

City style is that numbers that refer to money but lack a dollar sign should follow the rule of spelling out any number below 10.

*Of the $30 budgeted, I spent nine on grape yogurt and 11 on balogna.*

## Cents

Spell out the word **cents**.

Avoid using the form $0.30 (for 30 cents) in day-to-day writing unless the amount is more than one dollar.

*It cost me 30 cents.
I paid $12.50 for the banana.
My tip was $2.*

## Tips

* $2 not $2.00
* 30 cents, not $0.30
* C$800 and US$800 to denote Canadian and U.S. dollars

Names

* For materials to be read outside The City, on the second and each subsequent reference to a person, use the last name, not the first.

*Gertie Buttresson is responsible for change in the division. Buttresson said she enjoys working with other staff.*

* When writing articles for internal employee publications use the individual’s first name on subsequent references if the individual is a city employee and the reference is clear.

*Ruteger Simpson has big plans for his division. "It’s going to be fun," Ruteger said.*

Numbers

**Spell out numbers from one to nine** and use numerals for all numbers 10 and above.

Exceptions are addresses, proper names of businesses or organizations and some technical terms.

*Mikey Papers bought his El Camino five years ago.*

*Mary Poppler has worked for the company for 10 years.*

*They stopped at 7-Eleven to get an air freshener.*

*The largest union membership is in CUPE Local 38.*

*The newsletter is printed in eight-point type.*

For **large numbers** (millions and higher), use a digit followed by the denomination spelled out. Do not load the text with zeroes or digits unless absolute precision is required.

*In 2000, Canada’s population was more than 30 million.*

*Alberta’s population according to the 2000 census was 2,345,432.*

Spell out **any number that starts a sentence**.

*Fifteen people were honoured for their beaver-wiring volunteer efforts.*

# Phone numbers

When referencing City of Calgary phone numbers in internal and external documents, include the entire number - not just the local extension.

## Tips

* For internal documents: 403-268-1234
* For external use: 403-268-1234
* For outside area code: 1-905-428-1234
* For design purposes, it’s OK to use periods (1.905.428.1234) instead of hyphens.
	+ Use hyphens in written text.

Seasons

City style doesn’t capitalize the seasons of the year.

This applies whether the season-identifying word is used as an adjective or as a noun.

*Her favourite season is fall because that’s when she bought her first poodle.*

*It’s not even winter, but Christmas stuff is already is in stores.*

# Sentences

Aim to have one main thought per sentence, and keep to 10 to 12 words in length. Short sentences can add emphasis or variety.

Clear sentences are unified, economical, clear, and coherent.

* **unity:** each sentence contains only one thought.
* **economy:** as few words as possible to convey the thought.
* **clarity:** the meaning of the thought is clear.
* **coherence:** the sentence is logical and appropriate in context of other sentences.

# Spelling

City style uses the newest editions of the Canadian Oxford Dictionary and the Canadian Press Caps and Spelling as primary spelling sources.

Oxford takes precedence if sources conflict.

### **General rules**

Use the Canadian-British "-our" spellings for words having more than one syllable.

*rumour, neighbour, endeavour, honour, favour, behaviour, humour, colour*

City style is to hyphenate words that have double vowels.

*co-ordinate, co-operate, re-emerge*

Use the "-re" spelling for words that are not part of a proper name.

*centre, kilometre, Rockefeller Center*

# Time

## Time of day

For informal writing, City style uses the 12-hour clock when indicating time.

When referring to an exact time at the top of the hour, do not use **:00**.

Use periods in a.m. and p.m. and use lower case letters.

*8 a.m., 9:15 p.m.*

Use lower case **n** for **noon**.

## Time zones

* Spell out word references to time zones using lowercase letters.
* Abbreviate time zones using all capitals without periods in between.

*Today we switched back to mountain standard time.
She said that 8 a.m. MST would mark the start of the festival.*

## Tips

* **7 p.m.** (not 7:00 p.m.) (same for a.m.)
* Not PM or pm
* **noon**, not 12 noon, or 12 p.m. (same for midnight)

Titles

Honourary terms

* The terms **Right Honourable** and **Honourable** are not used unless they appear in a direct quotation or as a proper title.
* However, these honourary titles may be used as signs of respect on official City of Calgary proclamations, letters and other formal documents.

Academic titles

* Titles of academic degrees and academic institutions often are abbreviated and may use both capitals and lower-case letters.

*PhD., B.Comm., B.Sc., M.Sc., B.Nursing, M. Nursing, BA, MA, MBA, MACT, PhD., OBE, SJ, VC, P.Eng.*

Courtesy titles

* **Avoid** using courtesy titles such as Mrs., Ms. and Mr. in written materials. Historically, such titles referred to a person’s marital status.
* Such titles in speeches, opening remarks and letters may be used as a sign of courtesy.

Capitalization

In body copy, headlines, subheads, etc., the first letter of the initial word is capitalized (or upper case), followed by lower case.

*Yes: Council plans three key initiatives.*

*No: Council Plans Three Key Initiatives or COUNCIL PLANS THREE KEY INITIATIVES*

There will be obvious exceptions where proper names, proper program names, etc., are uppercase (e.g. Calgary Police Service tips for safe driving).

City style is to avoid unnecessary capitalization. This helps create a more friendly and informal tone of communication.

# Names

Capitalize all proper names, trade names, names of government departments and agencies, association names, companies, clubs, religions, languages, nations, races, places. Otherwise, use lower case whenever a reasonable option exists.

Capitalize general nouns (e.g. ocean, base, drive, church, department) **only** when they are part of a proper noun (e.g. Atlantic Ocean, Catholic Church).

Use **lower case** for the nouns in plural (e.g. Atlantic and Pacific oceans).

City names

The formal legal name of Calgary’s municipal government (**"The Corporation of The City of Calgary"**) - in first reference in formal or legal documents.

**City of Calgary** or **The City** or **The Corporation** in second reference or in informal use.

The city (lower case) when referring to the community.

*I work for The City. I moved to the city in 1981.*

The corporation (lower case) when referring to Calgary's local government as a generic entity or to corporation/organizations other than Calgary's municipal government.

*The City of Calgary is one of many Canadian municipal corporations.*

**City Council and Administration**

The body of elected officials of Calgary’s local government or another municipality’s governing group, use only **Council** (capitalized).

Use lower case when referring to the term **city council** in a generic sense.

The civic administrative group, use only **Administration** (capitalized).

**City departments, business units and divisions**

Capitalize the names of one-of-a-kind City groups.

*Calgary Transit is a business unit in the Transportation department.*

Do **not** capitalize the words "department," "division" or "business unit" unless they begin a sentence, title, heading or sub-heading.

# Headings and titles

* In general, use upper and lower case for words that form a sentence (e.g. Council plans three initiatives).
* It’s permissible to upper case the first letters of words, proper nouns, official programs, etc., when used as a title (e.g. Winter/Fall/Activities).
* **Use all capitals sparingly** (e.g. WINTER/FALL/ACTIVITIES).
**Note:** we do capitalize all letters when we use The City’s name as a word mark: THE CITY OF CALGARY.

## City publications

Capitalize **only** the first letter of the first word and any proper nouns used in the title. This includes books, reports, brochures, posters, newspaper and magazine articles.

Job and position titles

* Capitalize the position titles of individuals when a job title **precedes** a person’s name.

*Customer Service Representative John Doe says “heck yes!” to new headsets.*

*Mary Lawless became known as Councilor Lawless when she joined Council seven years ago.*

* Use lower case when a job title **follows** the name or is used **without** an individual's name.

*John Doe, customer service representative, enjoys serving the public.*

*Charlie Brown and Peppermint Patty, both vice presidents, voted Snoopy into power.*

*Mary Brown is a Calgary councilor and fried-chicken baroness.*

* Capitalize honourific terms of protocol.

*Your Highness . . . His Darkness . . . Her Honour . . .*

* Capitalize titles that use **acting** or **designate**.

*Acting Board Chairwoman Diana Ross was a entertainment professional before joining the company.*

*He was met by Prime Minister-designate Elizabeth May.*

# Paragraphs

Paragraphing is:

* left-aligned,
* first-line-not-indented,
* ragged right paragraphs and
* single-line spacing.

A paragraph contains one main idea, are short and have four or five sentences.

When listing more than one paragraph, the style is left-aligned and hanging: all lines including the first line are indented and aligned a fixed distance from the left margin.

# Bullets and lists

## Short bullets with few words

*Heart attack symptoms can include:*

* *dizziness*
* *shortness of breath*
* *confusion*
* *chest pain*

## More words that could stand as a phrase or sentence

*Heart attacks may be result from:*

* *Congenital heart conditions are present at birth.*
* *A blood clot in the body breaks away and travels to the heart.*
* *Drug abuse can cause substances like cocaine to impede blood flow in the heart.*

# Font types

## Bold type

* Use bold type sparingly for **emphasis** in text headings or sub-headings.
* Avoid peppering paragraphs with words bolded for emphasis because it slows down reading speed.

Overuse of bolding also implies that the writer does not think readers are intelligent enough to determine for themselves what is important.

This is especially important when writing for online use, where readers try to scan quickly rather than read normally.

## Italic type

For clarity in text, use italics for:

* *titles of City documents,*
* *compositions,*
* *books, movies and songs*.
* Do **not** use quotation marks around such titles.
* Do **not** use italics or quotation marks around:
	+ names of newspapers,
	+ magazines,
	+ reference books,
	+ catalogues or,
	+ religious texts.

## Underlined type

* **Avoid** underlining type- it makes text harder to read, as eye movement stops at any horizontal line.
* In online text underlined words usually signify a hyperlink, so do **not** underline for emphasis.

Footers - external and internal

Public/external correspondence

For **public/external correspondence**, begin numbering correspondence on the second page. Second and subsequent pages should have headers or footers that identify:

***At left:****The name of the recipient.****Centre:****Page number.****At right:****Date of correspondence.*

For information security and professional appearance do not use internal file locations on public correspondence or documents.

Footer content for **multi-page public documents**, such as reports, should at minimum identify:

***At left:****The name of the document.****Centre:****Page number of # pages.****At right:****Date of publication.*

Footers - internal documents

Include specific information on the bottom of each page, in the footer; this helps us track versions of changing internal documents.

Using the Microsoft "Find" function to locate a document helps avoid cluttering page footers with lengthy file location addresses.

Internal document footers should contain at least the following information in eight-point Arial or Helvetica type:

***At bottom left:******First line:****Date and time.****Second line:****File name and path.*

***At bottom right:******First line:****Author name.****Second line:****Page x of y.*

Footers - reports and special documents

Footer requirements for reports and special documents vary with the nature of the content. Please check with the office who owns the document.

Punctuation and Symbols

Accent (´)

Use accents and other language symbols when they occur in proper names or in words from other languages commonly used in English vernacular:

*Jean Chrétien bought a jalapeño mocha from Café les Squealing Eels*

Accents are not required for French Canadian names like Quebec (Québec) and Montreal (Montréal) since the unaccented versions are accepted English spellings.

(You may wish to consider using the accented version if your document is intended for representatives of or residents in the province of Quebec.)

Ampersand (&)

The ampersand is used only in department and business unit names.

Do **not** use the ampersand as a substitute for the word "and" in text, titles, headings or sub-headings.

Only use the ampersand when the symbol is part of an official or proper name, publication title or entity name.

*Customer Service & Communications is a City business unit.*

*Charlie, Susie and Tom went shopping.*

*Green & Brown’s report noted substantial profits for squirrel farming in 2019.*

*"The Black & Blue Wrestlers’ Weekly" and "Running & Hiding from Bears for Fun" publications sold out first.*

# Asterisk (\*)

Avoid using an asterisk unless it is required in formal document footnotes.

At (@)

Do **not** use the @ symbol as a substitute for the word "at."

In email addresses, the symbol is an essential part of an electronic signature necessary for email to function.

*Want more info on tobogganing? Email Ova Lottabumps at* ***citybusinessunit@calgary.ca****.*

# Copyright and trademarks (© ® ™)

These symbols are signs of compliance with laws and normally appears in smaller, superscript font immediately following the end of the registered, trademarked or copyrighted word or name.

Legal documents may require repeated use of the symbol, but in text for informal reading (both public and internal) is to avoid repeating the symbols.

* Use the symbol for the first prominent mention (e.g. on banners) in document titles, web page titles, or in the text of body copy.

Trade names subject to protection in Canada are normally listed in the [Canadian Trade Index](http://www.ctidirectory.com/).

Marks subject to protection in the United States appear on the site of the [Unites States Patent & Trademark Office](http://www.uspto.gov/).

Do **not** follow the Canadian Oxford Dictionary capitalization.

# Apostrophe (')

Apostrophes symbolize ownership or a contraction.

An apostrophe **plus "s"** is used to form the possessive case of these nouns:

* All singular nouns, including those ending in "s":

*Rachel’s broomstick
the cat’s rotary saw
Alice’s annual soiree
Chris’s poisonous plants
the fox’s luxurious tail*

* Plural nouns which do not end in "s":

*The People’s Court*

An apostrophe **alone** is used to form the possessive case of these nouns:

* Plural possessive nouns ending in "s":

*the Jones’ underground house*

*the foxes’ bushy tails*

* Singular nouns that would sound awkward with another "s" added:

*Ulysses’ Hair Cream
Borges’ Typewriters*

* If two or more nouns own something, only the last noun in the list gets the apostrophe:

*Homer and Marge’s party*.

* If the two nouns own separate things, however, they each take an apostrophe:

*We’ll go in Robert’s and Neil’s carriages.*

* In hyphenated words, only the last word takes an apostrophe:

*my brother-in-law’s submarine*

* Do not use an apostrophe followed by an "s" to create the plural of acronyms (pronounceable abbreviations such as APTEA and URL) and other abbreviations.

*Fernando got four As on his last wizarding report card.*

*The GMs met last week.*

*The URLs noted in the document were hard to find.*

* Possessive personal and interrogative pronouns (*yours* and *whose*) do not include apostrophes, but possessive indefinite pronouns (*anyone’s* and *each other’s*) do.
* Apostrophes also indicate two words condensed into one:

*How’ve you been lately, Grand Madame?*

*Besides the monkey attack, I’m doing just fine.*

*I’ll be going back to my planet now.*

* Or a short form of a word plus the words "not," "is" or "has."

*Why can’t we drive down this haunted road?*

*He hadn’t remembered an umbrella for the acid rain.*

*She’s decided to run in the Halloween marathon.*

* Apostrophes also are used to indicate missing letters in a word where space is limited.

*Int’l phone number: 2890-3655-3215.*

*Gov’t contacts are listed above.*

# Colon (:)

Use a colon before a series of items that need to be perceived as a group or are related to one another:

*The grocery list included: milk, eggs, butter and ham.*

*Agenda items for today’s meeting will cover:*

* *Starting times for regular meetings.*
* *What attendees should bring to the meeting.*
* *How often meetings are needed.*

*The shopping list included:*

* *green eggs*
* *ham*
* *antacid*

It is preferable to use lowercase following a colon.

Comma (,)

* Use a comma whenever the writer thinks it makes sense for the reader to pause in order to improve understanding:

*Yesterday I walked, ran and jumped for exercise. Although running seemed like a good idea at the time, the bear still caught me.*

* Comma use in series: City style does not use an oxford comma before the word "and" in a series of items, **unless it is needed to clarify meaning**:

*No comma: Tomorrow I plan on exercising, cooking, doing the laundry and resting.*

*Comma needed: We invited professional jugglers, the Mayor, and Sister Mary to the event.*

* Comma use in quotations: The comma that sets off a quotation from the rest of the sentence should precede and where needed, close the quotation:

*She wanted to say, "Yesterday I baked 3 eel pies, played cricket and continued work on my crocheting," but before she could finish, the bell rang.*

* The closing punctuation in a quotation, such as commas, periods or question marks, should come before the last quotation mark, without a space in between the mark and the last quotation symbol:

*He suggested, "You may want to work on this project first," and then continued, "And if you encounter problems, give me a phone call."*

Dashes (—)

Long dash (—)

A long dash (em dash) is used to reflect enthusiasm, emphasize subsequent content or suggest a pause. It can make a complicated thought more easily understood. City style leaves a space before and after a long dash for ease in reading.

*I began my speech — but everyone was napping!*

If a less emphatic tone is appropriate, other punctuation such as a comma, or two separate sentences, would better reflect the intended spirit of the sentence.

Hyphen (–)

Hyphens are short horizontal dashes. They are used to link two parts of a word together or to form a compound word from two different words. City style does not insert a space before and after a hyphen:

*high-tech; chicken-fried; hide-and-seek; used-toaster salesman (a salesman of used toasters); one-of-a-kind*

# Dollar sign ($)

Do not add a space between the dollar sign and the number.

# Exclamation mark (!)

**Use exclamation points extremely rarely in public City communication materials.**

* The tone for public information is neutral, reliable and accurate rather than emotional or promotional.
* Because exclamation points suggest a subjective feeling (urgency, emotion) their use doesn't reflect City style.
* In particular, avoided using an exclamation mark when writing for online readers.

For internal communication, use the symbol in moderation if urgency or enthusiasm is important to an informal message you are trying to convey. Overuse can create the impression that the writer is imposing their opinion of what is important on readers.

Mathematical (+ - = %)

**Avoid** using mathematical symbols in written text unlessspace is at a premium, as in financial statements or tables.

# Number sign (#)

City style is to **type the words** wherever possible. Exceptions might be in financial or other documents where space is limited.

# Period (.)

Keep sentences short — 10 or 12 words maximum.

* A period causes a reader to come to a full stop. Short sentences support clear expression, faster reading and easier understanding.

Per cent (%)

The **%** symbol is acceptable on numerical documents where space is at a premium, such as budget documents or tables.

* In sentences, use the words **per cent** (two words). **Percentage** on the other hand, is one word.

*The TV station said there was a 40 per cent chance of mimes.*

*The percentages were low this quarter.*

Quotation marks ("")('')

* Use **full quotation marks** (") to start and end all quotations.
* Use **half quotation marks** (‘) when a quote appears within another quote.
* The **comma** that sets off a quotation from the rest of the sentence should precede and follow the quotation.
* The **closing punctuation** in a quotation, such as periods or question marks, should precede the last quotation mark.

*When asked what his favourite quote was, John F. Kennedy replied, "I think ‘Play it again, Sam.’ has a nice ring to it."*

*"I want a new sword," said Betty. "Should I hold my breath until I get one?"*

# Semicolon (;)

A semicolon ties two related thoughts or a series of related phrases together.

* City style avoids semicolons wherever possible because they tend to create overly long sentences. You can improve readability by using two separate sentences — instead of stringing them together with a semicolon.

# Slash (/)

Use a slash to separate alternatives, such as "and/or" or "neither/nor," but use a hyphen between separate but related elements, such as "secretary-treasurer" or "comedy-tragedy."

* A slash also can replace the word "per" in measurements and can separate the numerator and denominator of a fraction.

*As per the request of the secretary-treasurer, Quidditch members ordered 1/2 of their uniforms from Sears/J.C. Penney's.*

## Tips

* Don't use a space on either side of the slash
(e.g. peacock/sloth **not** peacock / sloth).