

Editorial

Style Guide

Updated August 2026



In general, we follow Associated Press (AP) style. There are, however, some instances in which AP style is not followed. This guide contains our style guidelines for most issues you are likely to encounter. For questions about written style, please begin with this guide. If in doubt, send any questions to proofing@gastro.org. AGA journals have their own separate style guide.

This style guide will allow AGA to present one consistent format to the public. The goal is to have a set of simple rules that prioritize clear and concise communications for our members and other stakeholders.

These rules apply to all written communications from AGA, including emails, webpages, apps, meeting materials, mailers, or newsletters.

Table of contents

Association-specific guidelines	4-5	M	10
Punctuation & capitalization guidelines	13-15	Meetup vs. meet up	10
A	6	Money	10
Abbreviations & acronyms	6	N	10
C	6	Numbers	10
Capital vs. capitol	6	O	10
Composition titles	6	On-site/off-site	10
Computer-related words	6	On-demand vs. on demand	10
Congress	7	P	10
Congressional committees & subcommittees.	7	PAC	10
Copyright symbol	7	Party affiliations	10
D	7	Percentages	10
Dates	7	Phone numbers.	11
Degrees & designations	8	Q	11
Disease names	8	Q&A format	11
E	8	R	11
Elect.	8	Registered trademark symbol	11
F	8	S	11
Fractions.	8	Seasons	11
G	9	State names	11
Government	9	T	11
H	9	Time	11
Headlines	9	Titles	11
Healthcare	9	Trademark symbol	12
I	9	U	12
Initials.	9	U.S.	12
J	9	V	12
Junior, senior	9	Versus.	12
L	9	Vice.. . . .	12
Legislative titles.	9	W	12
		Washington, DC.	12

Association-specific guidelines

4

AGA, AGA Institute, AGA PAC: Do not spell out American Gastroenterological Association on first reference in member communications. "AGA" is a proper noun. As such, never use "the" before the abbreviation AGA when it stands alone.

AGA Institute administers practice, research and educational programs of AGA. In all instances, refer to the AGA Institute as the "AGA Institute." Not: American Gastroenterological Association Institute and never: AGAI.

NOTE: It is acceptable to generally use AGA as the primary identifier on all materials, so long as there is attribution to the institute somewhere on the piece, either as a logo or text.

It is acceptable to use AGA PAC or American Gastroenterological Association PAC. Always include one space between AGA and PAC.

AGA Research Foundation: Use AGA Research Foundation on first reference. The foundation is acceptable for further references in the same document. The abbreviation AGARF should not be used.

AGA Research Foundation awards: AGA offers research funding through our foundation. Awards co-sponsored by an outside organization should use a hyphen in their name (AGA-Elsevier Gut Microbiome Pilot Research Award or AGA-Pfizer JAK-IBD Research Grant). Awards that are in honor of a person do not need a hyphen (AGA Caroline Craig Augustyn & Damian Augustyn Award in Digestive Cancer).

Committees and councils: Capitalize the full formal names of groups and committees, such

as the AGA Institute Education and Training Committee, AGA Institute Council, AGA Clinical Practice Section. Use the full formal names on first reference.

On subsequent references in the same document, use lowercase for the informal names of the groups (publications committee) and for the words "committee" or "council" when they stand alone.

The council and all of its sections, the leadership cabinet and most committees fall under the auspices of the AGA Institute and therefore include "Institute" in their full formal names. Committees that fall under the auspices of the AGA Institute continue to be identified with the institute:

- AGA Institute Center for Gut Microbiome Research and Education Scientific Advisory Board
- AGA Institute Clinical Guidelines Committee
- AGA Institute Clinical Practice Updates Committee
- AGA Institute Education and Training Committee
- AGA Institute Ethics Committee
- AGA Institute GI Innovation and Technology Committee
- AGA Institute Publications Committee
- AGA Institute Quality Committee
- AGA Institute Research Awards Panel
- AGA Institute Research Policy Committee

● AGA Institute Council

Clinical guidance: AGA produces guidance for clinicians in the format of clinical guidelines and clinical practice updates (CPUs). The full title of a guideline or CPU should be capitalized when referenced, but general references (“guideline”) and (“clinical practice update”) should be lowercase.

Ex. Read the full “AGA Clinical Practice Update on Management of Iron Deficiency Anemia: Expert Review,” published in the August issue of *Gastroenterology*. This latest clinical practice update, authored by Drs. Thomas DeLoughery and Don Rockey, reviews options for oral and IV iron repletion.

Councillor: Two “Ls” are used in this word when referring to AGA councillors.

Digestive Disease Week® (DDW): DDW is comprised of four sponsoring societies that are recognized in alphabetical order.

Please note, when listing societies in AGA publications, AGA can be listed first.

Fellows program: All members who are AGA Fellows must have the designation AGAF listed after their names. The full list of current AGA Fellows is available on the [AGA website](#).

Governing board: AGA and the AGA Institute each have their own governing board, with overlapping, but not identical, members. AGA is

chaired by the immediate past president of the AGA Institute.

In official documents, such as meeting minutes, capitalize the full formal names of both boards; use the full formal name on first reference.

Use lowercase for the informal “governing board” and “board” after first reference. For media and in member communications, we can informally use AGA board, AGA president, etc.

Ex. The AGA Institute Governing Board will meet in November. Issues to be brought before the board include ...

Membership categories: Use lowercase: full member, international member, etc.

Payors: Spell with an “o” rather than an “e” to follow usage by the federal government.

Trademarks: The copyright symbol (©), as well as the registered trademark symbol (®) and the trademark symbol (™), should be used upon the first instance within the document of the copyrighted, registered or trademarked name. It should not be repeated thereafter, unless the name appears in a headline or caption.

This applies to the following AGA programs:

- Crohn’s and Colitis Congress®
- Digestive Disease Week® (DDW)
- Digestive Diseases Self-Education Program® Plus (DDSEP)

Guidelines

6

A

Abbreviations & acronyms:

When communicating with our members, spell out any acronym that is likely to be unfamiliar. Acronyms are okay to use if it's most likely to be familiar to a member, such as AGA, FDA, MASLD. The goal is for members to be able to quickly and easily read communications so use your best judgement.

- If you are using one word of the title of an organization as an abbreviation on second reference, that word should be lowercase.

Ex. Alliance of Specialty Medicine, the alliance

- Do not capitalize an item to be abbreviated unless it is a proper name.

Ex. fiscal year (FY)

- Do not spell out AGA on first reference in member communications.
- Common GI terms may be abbreviated on first use but we do recommend spelling them out in web content for SEO purposes, making it easier for patients and GIs to find our materials.

Ex. ERCP, GERD, GI, H2 antagonists, HIPAA, IBD, IBS, NSAID, PPIs

- Do not spell out noted medical gastroenterology organizations and government health organizations in member communications.

Ex. AMA, ASGE, AASLD, NIH, CDC, CMS, HHS, FDA, NIDDK

Computer-related words:

- **App:** Short for application. App is acceptable on first reference.
- **Email:** Acceptable in all references for electronic mail.
- **Homepage:** One word.
- **Internet:** Not capitalized.
- **iPad, iPhone, iPod:** Lowercase "i," capital "P," but use a capital "I" AND a capital "P" when they begin a sentence.
- **Login, logon, logoff:** One word when used as nouns, but two words when used as verbs: log in, log on, log off.
- **Online:** One word.
- **Web:** Not capitalized when alone or in terms with separate words: web, webpage, web-based, website, webcam, webinar, webcast.

- Crohn's disease should not be abbreviated.

C

Capital vs. capitol: Capitol refers to a building, all other uses are spelled with an "A." Capitalize capitol when referring to a specific capitol building. (The U.S. Capitol; the capital of Virginia is Richmond.)

Composition titles: Apply the guidelines listed here to all composition titles:

- Capitalize the principal words, including prepositions and conjunctions of four or more letters. Verbs of fewer than four letters (is, was, etc.) are considered principal words.
- Capitalize an article – the, a, an – or words of fewer than four letters if it is the first or last word in a title.

Congress:

- Always capitalize when referring to the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.
- Always lowercase when referring to any other entity, unless in a formal name.

Ex. The 2024 Crohn's & Colitis Congress® was a great success. Please attend the congress this year in Las Vegas, NV.

- Always lowercase "congressional," unless part of a proper name.

Ex. congressional salaries, the Congressional Record

Congressional committees & subcommittees:

- Capitalize "committee" only when part of a formal name.

Ex. the House Appropriations Committee

- Lowercase "subcommittee" when used with the name of a legislative body's full committee.

Ex. a Ways and Means subcommittee

- Capitalize "subcommittee" when the subcommittee has a name of its own.

Ex. the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations

Copyright symbol (©): The copyright symbol (©), as well as the registered trademark symbol (®) and the trademark symbol (™), should be used upon the first instance within the document of the copyrighted, registered, or trademarked

name. It should not be repeated thereafter, unless the name appears in a headline or caption.

D

Dates: Capitalize the names of months in all uses. When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate only Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., and Dec. Spell out when using alone, or with a year alone. When a phrase lists only a month and a year, do not separate the year with commas. When a phrase refers to a month, day, and year, set off the year with commas.

Ex. January 1972 was a cold month. Jan. 2 was the coldest day of the month. His birthday is May 8. Feb. 14, 1987, was the target date. She testified that it was Friday, Dec. 3, when the accident occurred.

If days of the week are included, capitalize and spell them out completely in text and use three-letter abbreviations without periods for charts, tables, etc.

For two consecutive days use "and" or an en-dash to separate them in text (May 23 and 24 or May 23–24). Use "and" for non-consecutive days.

For three or more consecutive days, use "to" or an en-dash to separate them in text (May 23 to 25 or May 23–25).

For a series of non-consecutive days, treat them using the rules for a series: May 23, 25, 27 and 29.

Degrees & designations (professional and medical): Abbreviate degrees and do

Guidelines

not use periods after the letters: BA, MS, MD, and PhD (British medical degrees: MB, ChB). Always include a comma after the last degree listed. Do not precede a name with the title of an academic degree and follow it with the abbreviation for that degree.

Ex. Jane Smith, MD, PhD, attended the session.

On first use, give full name of physician followed by degree designations. Degrees should be listed in the doctor's preference. On second and subsequent uses of an individual with an MD, DO, or PhD, use prefix "Dr." and last name only. When referencing multiple doctors, use the prefix "Drs." followed by their last names in a series.

Ex. Drs. Carson, Smith, and Yun led the workshop on IBD.

Exception: Can use the more informal "Dr." and last name on first use when there are space constraints or design purposes, such as headlines, excerpts, or design pieces.

Disease names: Do not capitalize medical procedures or disease names unless there is a proper name in the title (colorectal cancer; Crohn's disease; Barrett's esophagus; virtual colonoscopy; Stretta procedure.) When in doubt, consult a medical dictionary.

E

Elect: Always hyphenate and lowercase, except when using initial capitals in headings

and headlines.

Ex. John Doe, MD, is AGA's president-elect.

F

Fractions: Spell out fractions less than one, using hyphens between words. Use figures for precise amounts larger than one, converting to decimals when appropriate.

Ex. one-half, two-thirds, 1.5 liters, 8-1/2 x 11 paper

In tables, use figures exclusively, converting to decimals if the amounts involve extensive use of fractions that cannot be expressed as a single character. Decimalization should not exceed two places in textual material unless there are special circumstances.

G

Government: The word "government" is always lowercase (except when beginning a sentence or in a title) and never abbreviated.

Ex. the state government, the U.S. government, the federal government

Use lowercase when the word "federal" is an adjective.

Ex. the federal government, federal court

H

Headlines: Only capitalize the first word and proper nouns.

Exception:

- First word after a colon is always uppercase in headlines.
- Email subject lines should be tested because in some cases headline capitalization can improve open rates.

Healthcare: Always written as one word.

I

Initials: Use periods and no space when an individual uses initials instead of a first name

Ex. H.L. Mencken

Do not use a name with a single initial (J. Jones) unless it is the individual's preference or a first name cannot be learned.

Use middle initials according to a person's preference.

J

Junior, senior: Abbreviate as Jr. and Sr. only with full names. Do not precede by a comma.

The notation II or 2nd may be used if it is the individual's preference.

L

Legislative titles:

- Use "Rep.," "Reps.," "Sen.," and "Sens." as formal titles before one or more names. Spell out and lowercase representative and senator in other uses.
- Spell out other legislative titles in all uses. Capitalize formal titles such as "assemblyman," "assemblywoman," "city councilor," "delegate," etc. when they are used before a name; lowercase in other

uses.

- Add "U.S." or "state" before a title only if necessary to avoid confusion.

Ex. U.S. Sen. Nancy Kassebaum spoke with state Sen. Hugh Carter.

- Do not use legislative titles before a name on second reference unless they are part of a direct quotation.
- Rep. and U.S. Rep. are the preferred first-reference forms when a formal title is used before the name of a U.S. House member. The words "congressman" or "congresswoman," in lowercase, may be used in subsequent references that do not use an individual's name, just as senator is used in references to members of the Senate. "Congressman" and "congresswoman" should appear as capitalized formal titles before a name only in direct quotation.
- Capitalize titles for formal, organizational offices within a legislative body when they are used before a name.

Ex. Speaker John Doe, Majority Leader Sally Smith

- Capitalize "president" only as a formal title before one or more names; lowercase in all other uses.

Ex. President Doe will address the membership. Jane Doe is the society's incoming president.

M

Meetup vs. meet up: Use "meetup" as a noun, and "meet up" to describe the action.

Guidelines

10

Ex. There will be an AGA meetup for early career members on Tuesday. Let's meet up at AGA Central on Tuesday.

Money: Use the dollar sign and numbers. Do not use a decimal and two zeros. Use the comma in dollar amounts in the thousands. For dollar amounts beyond thousands, use the dollar sign, number, and appropriate word. The dollar sign should always be used to express U.S. dollar amounts (not USD).

Ex. \$100, \$1,000 and \$10 million

N

Numbers: Spell out numbers from one to nine. Use numerals for all numbers 10 and above. Use numerals for ages, percentages, charts, dosages, page numbers, and sums of money (when using the symbol, "\$"). Avoid starting a sentence with a number, but, if you must, spell out the number unless it's a year. See also: Fractions, money and percentages.

O

On-site/off-site: Always hyphenated.

Ex. You can pick up your materials on-site. Visit us at the on-site registration desk.

On-demand vs. on demand: when used as an adjective (before a noun) "on-demand" should be used. When used to describe a verb "on demand" should be used.

Ex. Registration includes access to on-demand recordings of the event sessions.

P

PAC: PAC is acceptable on first reference; spell out in body of story.

Party affiliations: Use "R-" for Republicans and "D-" for Democrats, adding the appropriate two-letter state abbreviation after the dash. Set the party affiliation and state off by commas.

Percentages: Always use the percent symbol (%) in text and graphs. Always use numerals (including the numbers 1-9) and, for amounts less than 1 percent, precede the decimal with a zero.

Ex. 0.3% of patients had adverse reactions 2%-8% of the time.

Phone numbers: Always use hyphens, not periods. Do not use parentheses: 301-941-2633.

For international numbers, use a plus sign before the country code, then the city code and the telephone number as normal: +44-20-7535-1515.

If extension numbers are needed, use a comma to separate the main number from the extension: 212-621-1500, ext. 2.

Q

Q&A format: Use "Q&A" capitalized without spaces around the ampersand (&).

R

Registered trademark symbol (®): See Copyright symbol.

S

Seasons: Capitalize only when used in a title or as part of a formal name. Use lowercase when these words stand alone.

Ex. fall semester, summer program, the program started in fall 2024, the AGA Spring Postgraduate Course will be repeated this year.

State names: Spell out the names of the 50 U.S. states when they stand alone in textual material. Any state name may be condensed, however, to fit typographical requirements for tabular material. Place one comma between the city and the state name, and another comma after the state name, unless ending a sentence.

For state abbreviations, it is AGA style to use the two-letter postal abbreviations. See also: Washington, DC.

Ex. AGA is located in Bethesda, MD.

T

Time: Use figures except for noon and midnight. Never use :00, only include minutes if a value is present: :15, :30, etc.

Ex. The board met from 10 a.m. until noon.

Always lowercase a.m. and p.m. and use periods. If including a time zone, use EST, CST, MST, and PST (autumn/winter), or EDT, CDT, MDT, and PDT (spring/summer). If both times listed in a range are either a.m. or p.m.,

list it only after the second time.

Ex. The board met from 8 to 10 a.m.

Use words to separate times in a sentence.

Use en-dashes (without spaces) to separate times in all other uses.

Titles:

- A person's title is capitalized only when used before the name. When using a capitalized title immediately before the name, try to keep it short. Do not capitalize an occupational designation, only a true title.

Ex. We met President Cohen. John Doe, AGA president, will speak at the dinner. Vice President for Enrollment William Elliott issued the memo. Our speaker will be artist William Cooper.

- Titles following a person's name should appear in lowercase. Use lowercase when a title is used alone.

Ex. The president of Carnegie Mellon will address the group. Jeff Bolton, vice president for business and planning, will host the reception.

- Department, division, unit, section and program names are lowercase in a person's title.

Ex. John Doe, MD, chair of the department of gastroenterology ...

- Affiliations with centers are capitalized in a person's title.

Ex. John Doe, director of the Center for Basic Research in Digestive Diseases ...

- Chaired professorships appear in

Guidelines

12

lowercase, except for the proper name.

University professorships also use lowercase.

Ex. Andres Cardenes, the Dorothy Richard Starling and Alexander C. Speyer Jr. professor of music, donated his Stradivarius violin to the School of Music in Carnegie Mellon's College of Fine Arts. Her years of hard work were acknowledged when she earned the rank of university professor.

Trademark symbol (™): See Copyright symbol.

U

U.S.: Use periods in the abbreviation within text.

V

Versus: Spell it out in ordinary speech and writing. In short expressions, however, the abbreviation vs. is permitted.

Vice: Use two words: vice chair, vice president.

W

Washington, DC: Washington should be used in most story references to the U.S. capital because of the name recognition globally. Use Washington, DC, with the added abbreviation only if the city might be confused with the state. Do not use D.C. standing alone other than in quotations. On second reference, the district is acceptable.

Punctuation & Capitalization

Bulleted lists:

- Simple bullet lists should use initial caps and do not require punctuation.

Ex. Topics:

- NAFLD
- ERCP
- Hepatitis C

- Use periods after short phrases that are essential to the grammatical completeness of the statement introducing the list.

Ex. The session topics offered will include:

- NAFLD.
- ERCP.
- Hepatitis C.

- It's not necessary to use periods after short phrases or single words in a list, if the introductory statement is grammatically complete (see below) or if the listed items are like those on an inventory sheet or a shopping list.

Ex. This year's conference will cover a complete range of topics:

- NAFLD
- ERCP
- Hepatitis C

- When one item contains a complete sentence, punctuate all bulleted items as though they were complete sentences; capitalize the beginning words and use a period at the end of each item. Ex. The session topics offered will include:

- NAFLD.

- ERCP.

- An audience-response session on safety measures relevant to the treatment of hepatitis C.

- If you're creating a long document full of bulleted items, you may choose to be consistent and end each item with a period.
- Never use semi-colons to format the list as a sentence.

Buttons:

- Use sentence case capitalization for buttons without end punctuation.

Ex. Learn more today

Commas in a series:

- Use commas to separate elements in a series, and use a comma before the conjunction in a simple series (also known as the Oxford or serial comma).

Ex. The flag is red, white, and blue. He would nominate Tom, Dick, or Harry.

Ellipsis (...): Treat an ellipsis as a three-letter word, constructed with three periods and two spaces.

Em-dash (–):

- Use em-dashes to denote an abrupt change in thought in a sentence or an emphatic pause.

Ex. We will fly to Paris in June – if I get a raise. Smith offered a plan – it was unprecedented – to raise revenues.

Punctuation & Capitalization

- When a phrase that otherwise would be set off by commas contains a series of words that must be separated by commas, use em-dashes to set off the full phrase.

Ex. He listed the qualities – intelligence, humor, conservatism, independence – that he liked in an executive.

- Attribution: Use an em-dash before an author's or composer's name at the end of a quotation.

Ex. "Who steals my purse steals trash." – Shakespeare.

- Put a space on both sides of an em-dash in all uses except the start of a paragraph.

En-dash (–):

- Use en-dashes to denote a range of numbers, including dates, currency, etc.

Ex. Jan. 25–28, \$25–30, 12–15 participants

- Do not use spaces around an en-dash.

Ends of sentences: There should be only one space left after sentence-ending punctuation.

Hyphen (-): Hyphens are joiners. Use them to avoid ambiguity or to form a single idea from two or more words.

Ex. The president will speak to small-business men. ("Businessmen" normally is one word, but "the president will speak to small businessmen" is unclear.)

- Use a hyphen to separate figures in odds, ratios, scores, some fractions, and some

vote tabulations.

- When large numbers must be spelled out (for instance, when beginning a sentence), use a hyphen to connect a word ending in "-y" to another word.

Ex. twenty-one, fifty-five

- Use suspended hyphenation for multiple compound modifications preceding a noun.

Ex. He received a 10- to 20-year sentence in prison.

Parentheses (()): Parentheses are jarring to the reader. The temptation to use parentheses is a clue that a sentence is becoming contorted; rewrite it instead. If a sentence must contain incidental information, then commas or em-dashes are frequently more effective.

When parentheses are used:

- Place a period outside a closing parenthesis if the material inside is not a sentence (such as this fragment).
- (An independent parenthetical sentence such as this one takes a period before the closing parenthesis.)
- When a phrase placed in parentheses (this one is an example) might normally qualify as a complete sentence, but is dependent on the surrounding material, do not capitalize the first word or end with a period.

Punctuation & Capitalization

Quotation marks (" "):

- Periods and commas should always be placed inside of the close quote.
- Dashes, question marks, semicolons, and exclamation marks should be placed inside the close quote only if they apply to the quoted material. They go outside when they apply to the whole sentence.

Ex. "These changes are hurting patient access!"

The police shouted at me, saying "Stop right there"!

- Quotation marks should be used around the titles of articles, lectures, and presentations.

Semicolon (;): In general, use the semicolon to indicate a greater separation of thought and information than a comma can convey, but less than the separation that a period implies.

- Use semicolons to separate elements of a series when the items in the series are long or when individual segments contain material that also must be set off by commas.

Ex. He is survived by a son, John Smith, of Chicago, IL; three daughters, Jane Smith, of Wichita, KS, Mary Smith, of Denver, CO, and Susan, of Boston, MA; and a sister, Martha, of Omaha, NE.

Note: the semicolon is used before the final "and" in such a series.

- Use a semicolon when a coordinating conjunction such as "and," "but," or "for" is not present.

Ex. The package was due last week; it arrived today.

- If a coordinating conjunction is present, use a semicolon before it only if extensive punctuation also is required in one or more of the individual clauses.

Ex. They pulled their boats from the water, sandbagged the retaining walls, and boarded up the windows; but even with these precautions, the island was hard-hit by the hurricane.

- Place semicolons outside of quotation marks.