

LaGuardia Community College

Style Guide
&
LiveWire Submission Guidelines

2008



Guidelines for LiveWire Submissions

Items submitted for publication in LiveWire, LaGuardia's monthly newsletter for faculty and staff should be written according to the rules set forth in this style guide. Items are published at the discretion of the editors and may be edited for style, content, and/or as space dictates.

Maximum word counts for articles varies from 500 words to 100 words based on priority and placement. An editor will advise you on the appropriate length for your item.

How to submit

E-mail is the preferred method of submission. Write a few sentences describing your proposed item and send it to the Office of Communications & Marketing at mktg&comm@lagcc.cuny.edu A member of M&C will advise you on word count, deadlines and any other considerations for the piece. **Please do not send a completed item without first sending a query and receiving permission to contribute.**

Things to Keep in Mind

- There are no deadline extensions for LiveWire submissions.
- Include a headline for your item and include your name and title.
- If providing a photo, include as much information as possible for the caption, such as names and titles of subjects, location, name of event, etc.
- Your writing should be clear, concise, cogent and jargon-free. Someone with no prior knowledge of your topic should be able to easily understand what you are saying.
- LiveWire celebrates the LaGuardia community's achievements, your item should reflect this with a pleasant and positive tone.
- Use simple, compelling words that will capture the reader's attention.

- Provide context and details when writing about events, don't just list speakers. What themes/issues did they address? No one wants to read a list in paragraph form.
- Refer to students by their first name after full name first reference, professors as Professor XYZ, and others as Mr. or Ms. Soandso.

Readers tend to scan, if you want someone to read your entire article, follow the tips below for better writing.

Basic Writing Tips

- 1. The first sentence and the first paragraph are the most important parts of any text.** The first sentence sets the tone for the piece, and, if successful, will draw the reader in and make them want to keep reading; that is the goal of any written piece. "You never get a second chance to make a first impression," exemplifies this rule. Craft the first sentence to hook the reader.
- 2. Understand the purpose of your writing.** Concomitant with this knowledge is using the appropriate style and voice for the piece. You would not write an article for LiveWire in the same style as a grant proposal or press release. If you are unsure of what style is appropriate for a certain piece, view past issues of the publication you are writing for, or search for examples via the Internet.
- 3. Inverted pyramid style is usually best.** Commonly referred to as tabloid style, it is derived from newspaper reporting. This method of prioritizing information involves organizing sentences and paragraphs in order of most important to least important. This is demonstrated by the "5Ws and one H": Who, what, when, where, why and how. This is the basic information necessary for any purposeful writing.
- 4. Always use the spelling and grammar check function.** Even if you don't have a strong grasp of basic grammar and syntax, the spelling and grammar check function can alert you to the

more egregious errors in your work and give you the opportunity to fix them.

5. **Read your copy aloud.** This will help train your ear for awkward constructions and enable you to spot typos in items that the spellchecker may miss, such as proper names or homophones. If it sounds clunky aloud, it will be just as onerous to the eye. If you are unfamiliar with the basics of English grammar and syntax, have someone who is knowledgeable in this area proofread it for you.

6. **Take the time to develop a basic understanding of the rules of language.** The ability to write well is one of the most valuable skills anyone can develop. Popular style guides and reference works on English grammar and syntax include:
 - ***The Elements of Style*** by William Strunk J. and E.B. White – The oldest, and possibly the definitive style guide for English grammar and syntax. This classic, indispensable guide gets straight to the point, and is supremely easy to understand.

 - ***Woe is I: The Grammarphobe's Guide to Better English in Plain English*** by Patricia T. O'Connor – A witty, yet thorough, take on English language usage for the average person. This small volume also features a helpful section dealing with e-mail composition, and succeeds in a seemingly impossible feat: making grammar fun.

 - ***The Borzoi Handbook for Writers*** by Frederick Crews and Sandra Shor – Geared toward the student writer, this useful manual features large sections on college-level composition, as well as providing the fundamentals of English grammar and syntax.

 - ***The Chicago Manual of Style 15th Edition*** University of Chicago Press – A bible of stylistic reference for decades, this comprehensive tome offers instruction on numerous types of writing, from how to edit a manuscript to the annotation options for a bibliography, and countless other style points. Its use

spans academic, professional and creative endeavors.

- ***The Associated Press Stylebook*** Norman Goldstein, Ed. – A guide that presents the high standards to which newswriters adhere. This may be of interest to current or future journalists, but is perhaps too secular for the layperson.
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Abbreviations

Space-saving, colloquial abbreviations are avoided in running text.

Thanks to Buildings and Grounds for their help. **not** *Thanks to Bldgs. & Grnds. for their help.*

The Department of Natural and Applied Sciences **not** *The Dept. of Natural & Applied Sciences*

Abbreviations that are **part of official names** are acceptable.

NY Designs

There are certain **abbreviations that do not take points**, such as those for degrees and some others.

AA, AS, AAS, BA, MA, GPA, USA, ID, and W-2s, but, U.S., Ph.D., Ed.D., a.m. and p.m.

Professor Jones, not Prof. Jones

Acronyms for names of schools, organizations, programs, professional associations, centers, tests, forms, and job titles are styled without periods and pluralized without apostrophes, unless the last letter of the acronym is an s, in which case an apostrophe is used.

SOS's SATs

Acronyms that are **not commonly recognizable** are spelled out on first reference in text, followed immediately by the acronym in parentheses. Thereafter they take their abbreviated form without the parentheses.

*Anastasia is a single mother and full-time student enrolled in LaGuardia's tuition-free **Accelerated Study in Associate Program (ASAP)**. Despite these challenges, she maintains a 3.79 GPA and **ASAP** eases the financial burdens tied to a college education.*

Commonly recognizable acronyms may stand alone on first and future references.

Don enrolled in a GED program at the age of 20; after earning his GED, he enrolled at LaGuardia.

Jane Smith is the founder and CEO of Smith Consulting Group.

I swim daily at the YMCA.

Capitalization

Official names are capitalized, while shortened or generic names are not. This general rule applies to **names of offices, buildings, schools, departments, programs, institutes, centers, course titles (with or without attendant course number appearing either before or after the course title), bulletins, newsletters, and named events and spaces.**

*The Office of Student Affairs **Not** the student affairs office*

The office is acceptable in subsequent usage.

Introduction to Anthropology SSA 100

ELN101 Introduction to Bilingualism

This spring the department is offering Advanced Japanese.

E-building Atrium

5th Annual Asian Heritage Festival

Joseph Shenker Hall

Capitalize names of **degrees** whether spelled out or abbreviated.

Associate of Applied Science in Computer Information Systems **or**
AAS in Computer Information Systems

Associate of Science in Business Management **or** *AS in Business
Management*

Associate of Arts in Secondary Education **or** *AA in Secondary
Education*

When referring to degrees in a general way, do not capitalize them.
Note that **bachelor's and master's** end in 's.

A master's in chemistry, a bachelor's degree, a doctoral degree **or** *a
doctorate*

Do not capitalize the names of **academic periods**.

fall semester *spring break* *intersession* *fall 2008*

Titles and Proper Names

LaGuardia

No space between La and Guardia, always capitalize the G. First reference in full: **LaGuardia Community College**. LaGuardia is acceptable after first reference. When referring to it without proper name attribution, or when usage is frequent throughout a piece and you wish to avoid excessive repetition, capitalize college, as below.

*LaGuardia's long tradition of innovative teaching practices led to the
College's recent award from the Hesburgh Foundation.*

Personal titles immediately preceding a name are capitalized; those following a name are not.

Professor Jones teaches computer programming.

Dan Jones, a professor of computer information systems, teaches computer programming.

Numerals

Spell out **whole numbers between one and nine**, from 10 on use figures. Use figures for mixed numbers such as a whole number plus a fraction; credit hours; page, volume, or chapter numbers; percentages; dates; grade point averages; decimal fractions; and units of measurement.

LaGuardia has three computer labs and 11 laptops.

a 14 ½-credit load

chapter 7, page 5

12 percent

3.85 GPA

10 pounds, gallons, miles, or volts

Always spell out **a number at the beginning of sentence** or rephrase the sentence.

Two thousand is year we are not likely to forget. **or,**

Few who lived to see the year 2000 will forget the fanfare surrounding its arrival.

Use figures **with abbreviations**.

35-mm camera

Use figures for **ages of persons, places and things**.

A 15 year-old girl. 18 year-long tenure He is 5 years-old.

Use figures for seconds, minutes, and hours, but spell out numbers used with longer **units of time**, unless copy is promotional. **Figures in invitations, brochures, and marketing collateral** are acceptable.

Classes are held for 1 hour and and fifteen minutes three days a week.

six months seventy-five years eight weeks

25th Commencement Exercises LaGuardia: 40 Years of Excellence

Use figures for **clock time**, do not use zeros with even hours. Only use the o'clock styling on formal invitations (commencement, fundraising events, honorary ceremonies, etc.). Never use a.m. and p.m. designations with 12 o'clock, use noon or midnight.

7 a.m. to noon The movie starts at 3:30 p.m. We left at five a.m.

Spell out **months and days of the week**; use numerals for **days and years**.

On Thursday, August 26, 1999, the millennial calendar indicated that the century would run out in four months and six days.

Use figures for **decades cited in full**, but spell them out if they are truncated.

1960s the nineties

All **references to centuries** should be configured as numerical ordinals.

the 20th century the 21st century the 8th century

Use an s without an apostrophe to **indicate spans of decades or centuries**.

the 1890s

the 1800s

Use figures with dollar signs for **sums of money**.

\$45.90 \$100 \$2 million \$2.5 million \$500,000 \$1,500

Spell **fractions** out, except for units of credit and measurement when styling a mixed number.

a two-thirds majority 1 ½ days ½ credit ¾ mile track

Use consistency when styling **numbers in the same sentence and in consecutive sentences** of the same paragraph. If one number must be expressed in figures, express all in figures. Disregard this rule when spelling numbers at the beginning of sentence.

The school offers undergraduate programs in 21 fields, graduate programs in 12 fields, and doctoral programs in 3 fields.

When a **number in a compound adjective** falls next to another number, spell one and use a figure for the other. The number in the compound adjective is usually the one in figures.

eight 3-week terms two 9-week summer sessions

Telephone and fax numbers are styled with parentheses around the area code.

(718) 482-5000

Express **ranges of numbers** with an en dash. But **do not combine a preposition and an en dash**.

1999-2003 40-45 percent pages 55-60

Costs range from \$175 to \$325, depending on the student's state residency status.

For **numbers in addresses**, follow the version used in the city where located.

Spell out **ordinals in running text**, with the exception of centuries.

First-class programs second edition third-rate postage

*Fourth of July **but,** 2nd century*

Use a cardinal number after “**grade**” and an ordinal spelled word before it.

*grade 12 **or** twelfth grade*

Italics

Italicize **names of works of art** including: books (fiction, non-fiction, and plays), paintings, sculptures, movies, television and radio programs, newspapers, magazines and journals. Titles of operas, oratorios, tone poems and other long musical compositions are also italicized.

John watches *The Today Show* every morning before reading *The New York Times*.

Handel’s Messiah Rhapsody in Blue Madame Butterfly

When **citing books published by professors or LAGCC community members**, include the publisher and publication year in parentheses immediately following the title without italics.

LaGuardia President Gail O. Mellow wrote a book with Cynthia Heelan entitled *Minding the Dream: The Process and Practice of The American Community College* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2008).

Quotation marks

Titles of **songs and poems** are enclosed in quotation marks using title caps, as are individual episodes of television programs.

“Stairway to Heaven” is a classic rock song by Led Zeppelin.

Walt Whitman wrote “Song of Myself” in 1855.

Direct quotes are enclosed in quotation marks as well.

“Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country,” said JFK in his 1961 inaugural speech.

Punctuation

Commas

Do not use a comma before the last element in a series of three or more words, phrases, or clauses; this is known as **the serial comma**.

The graduating student was decorated with awards for scholarship, athletics and community service.

When **items in a series contain internal commas**, the serial comma becomes a semicolon.

Professor Smith’s itinerary includes Dublin, Ireland; St. Andrews, Scotland; Cardiff, Wales and London, England.

Put **a comma before “and” “but” “or” “nor” “for” “so” and “yet”** when they connect independent clauses unless the clauses are closely related and very short.

The faculty was honored for outstanding service to the College during the current academic year, and the staff was honored for their multimillion dollar grant contributions.

Colons

A colon is best used to present a statement or a series.

The 2008 winners are: John Smith, Mary Allen, Robert Moore, and Laura Burke.

She realized there was only one option: learn the language.

Semicolons

When **items in a series contain internal commas**, the serial comma becomes a semicolon.

Professor Smith's itinerary includes Dublin, Ireland; St. Andrews, Scotland; Cardiff, Wales and London, England.

Use a **semicolon to separate clauses when there's no "and"** in between.

She ran after him for five blocks; her shoe fell off somewhere along the way.

Dashes

Dashes should be used sparingly. Never use more than two per sentence; a colon is often the preferred choice. The dash interrupts a sentence and inserts another thought.

After the transatlantic flight, Amy looked-and she'd be the first to admit it-like an unmade bed.

Hypens

Conform hyphenation of words to Webster's. Some basic rules are:

Hyphenate **compounds consisting of comparatives and superlatives plus a participle.**

lower-priced alternative best-informed customer better-paid job

Use hyphens with **prefixes before a capital letter.**

pre- and post-Jurassic

Use hyphens to **join a prefix to a numeral**.

mid-1970s

Use **hyphens with ex, in-law, self, quasi, and great**.

Ex-husband mother-in-law self-confident quasi-official great-grandmother

A hyphen is needed when using two descriptors before a noun, do not use the hyphen if they come after the noun.

My red-haired cousin Amy is a strong-willed woman. Amy is a woman with a strong will.

However, if **both words could be used separately and still make sense**, no hyphen is needed.

*Chico is a **naughty young** dog. Clancy is a **brave old** dog.*

Use a hyphen **when adding like would create a double or triple “L”, or a double vowel is created by the ending or beginning of words**.

shell-like still-life ultra-average anti-isolationist

Use a hyphen **with fractions**.

a two-thirds majority three-quarters of a cup

Parentheses

Avoid them; they are used to indicate an aside or observation that is often better served as a sentence on its own.

Spelling

Communications & Marketing **uses the Merriam-Webster Dictionary**, also known simply as Webster’s. Conform all spelling to

this volume. Access the online version: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/>

Styling of **certain recent additions to common English usage** often vary. Again, conform to Webster's, but some frequent offenders include:

Internet (always capitalized), website (one word), the Web (always capitalized) or the World Wide Web (archaic), e-mail (often seen without the hyphen).

Although it may be listed in some dictionaries, "irregardless" is not a standard, English word. This is a non-standard, illogical, double negative. The word "regardless" is the proper choice to replace "irregardless."

Possessives

Commonly **misused possessive pronouns** include **its and it's, who's and whose** and **your and you're**.

Its is the possessive, *it's* is a contraction of *it is*.

The College has its own swimming pool. It's time to go.

Whose is the possessive, *who's* is a contraction of *who is* or *who has*.

Whose life is it, anyway? John, who's the chief of staff, arrived yesterday.

Your is the possessive, *you're* is a contraction of *you are*.

Your hair is on fire! You're going to have to buy a wig.

A good rule of thumb to ease the confusion is: If you can substitute the contraction of these words in a sentence and it still makes sense, use it.

Idiosyncratic preferences

LaGuardia prefers “theatre,” **not** “theater.”

The Little Theatre is favored for intimate, dramatic productions.

Miscellaneous

Usage of *that* and *which* is often confused.

Two rules to help figure out whether a clause (a group of words with its own subject and verb) should start with *that* or *which*:

1. If you can drop the clause and not lose the point of the sentence, use *which*. If you can't, use *that*.
2. A *which* clause goes inside commas. A *that* clause does not.

Usage of *than* versus *then* can be confusing.

Than and *then* are homophones, they sound alike, but have different meanings. **Use *than* to compare and contrast things.**

I like pizza more than lasagna. Celery has less than ten calories.
If one thing follows or results from another, use *then*.

Look, then leap. First, gather your ingredients, then pre-heat the oven.

Usage of *affect* versus *effect* can be confusing.

***Effect* is most often used when referring to a thing (noun).**

Rain has a bad effect on my hair.

***Affect* is most often used when referring to an action (verb).**

The problem affects my self-confidence.

This guide was created by Lara Moon the Writer/Editor for LaGuardia's Office of Marketing and Communications.