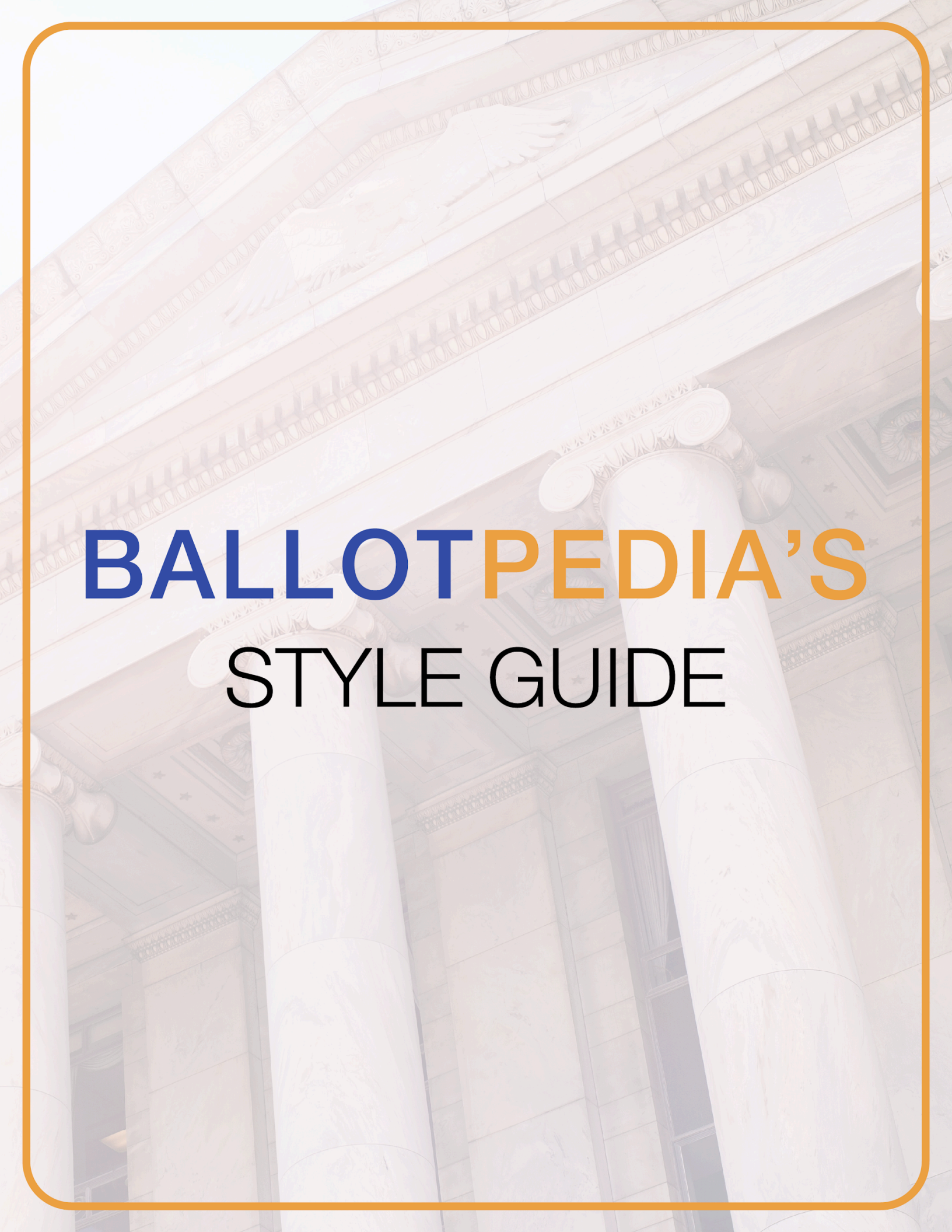




BALLOT **PEDIA**'S

STYLE GUIDE

Dear Ballotpedia Staff,

Ballotpedia's Style Guide is your primary resource for crafting neutral, encyclopedic content. It outlines our editorial guidelines on language and formatting.

When readers come to Ballotpedia, we want them to see a unified style — one that makes our work professional and trustworthy. The four guiding principles for our style guide are *credibility*, *consistency*, *clarity*, and *cachet*.

Credibility

First and foremost, our style guide demonstrates our commitment to neutrality and fact-based content. Every editorial choice we make should reinforce our mission of providing unbiased information to educate and inspire American voters. Because language evolves, especially political language, this style guide will evolve as well.

Consistency

Uniform style choices make our content professional and polished. Consistency demonstrates our attention to detail and fosters trust in our work.

Clarity

We want our writing to be accessible, not alienating. We aim for straightforward prose that prioritizes clarity and plain language over political jargon and speech tribe terminology.

Cachet

Thoughtful phrasing, along with the use of custom tooltips and footnotes, illustrates the sophisticated nature of our writing and our consideration for our readers.

This iteration of the style guide is Ballotpedia's authoritative reference for editorial style and usage. However, our style guidelines will require ongoing re-evaluation and discussion. If you want to submit changes, updates, or additions, please use [this form](#).

Tips for using this guide

- Begin with the Table of contents for an overview.
- Use the search function (Cmd+F or Ctrl+F) to quickly locate specific entries.
- Explore the "Related entries and documentation" section of each entry to read more about a topic.

I hope this style guide makes your writing process more efficient. If you have questions about anything included or missing, I am happy to help you find an answer.

Sincerely,
Kelly Coyle
Editorial Quality Associate

Table of contents

[Instructions recommending a new entry or update](#)

[Sample Entry Template](#)

[Entry Name](#)

[BP Style Guide changelog](#)

A

[Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Initialisms](#)

[Abbreviations, Political titles](#)

[Academic Degrees](#)

[Abortion](#)

[Accent Marks](#)

[Adviser, advisor](#)

[African American](#)

[Amid](#)

[Apostrophes](#)

[Arab American](#)

[Army Reserve](#)

[Article, section, and clause numbers](#)

[Asian, Asian American](#)

[Assisted death](#)

[At large, at-large](#)

[At-Large Congressional District](#)

B

[Ballotpedia](#)

[Ballot initiative](#)

[Between ... and, From ... to](#)

[Bills and resolutions](#)

[Bipartisan](#)

[BIPOC](#)

[Biracial, multiracial](#)

[Black](#)

[Board member](#)

[Bolding](#)

[Brackets, internal links](#)

[Brackets, Internal links with titles, possessives](#)

[Bulleted lists](#)

[By district, by-district](#)

C

[Campaign slogans](#)

[Cancel, canceled, canceling, cancellation](#)

[Capitalization, the basics](#)
[Capitalization, Governing bodies](#)
[Capitalization, Political titles](#)
[Capitalization, Districts](#)
[Capitalization, Occupational titles](#)
[Capitalization, Political affiliations and ideologies](#)
[Capitol](#)
[Caucus](#)
[Chairman, chairwoman, chair](#)
[Cisgender](#)
[City](#)
[City council](#)
[Clean energy, green energy](#)
[Climate change](#)
[Comma](#)
[Comma, introductory words and phrases](#)
[Comma, with conjunctions](#)
[Comprised of, composed of](#)
[Congressman, congresswoman](#)
[Coordinating conjunction, beginning a sentence with](#)
[Councilman, councilwoman, council member](#)
[County](#)
[Court names](#)
[Crime, criminal justice](#)
[Critical race theory \(CRT\)](#)

D

[Dangling prepositions](#)
[Dates, basic format: \[month\] \[day\], \[year\]](#)
[Dates, Historical periods and events](#)
[Dates, Formatting dates for news posts](#)
[Decimals, rounding](#)
[Democrat, Democratic Party](#)
[Disabled, disability](#)
[Disambiguation pages](#)
[Disclaimers](#)
[District of Columbia](#)
[District](#)
[Dual heritage](#)

E

[Election, Election Day, election night](#)
[Electoral College](#)

[— Em dash](#)

[Ellipsis](#)

[Email](#)

[Ensure, insure](#)

[– En dash](#)

[ESG \(environmental, social, and governance\)](#)

[Ex officio](#)

[Exclamation point \(!\)](#)

[Explanatory notes](#)

[External links](#)

[F](#)

[Factive verbs](#)

[Federal](#)

[Fewer, less](#)

[Firearms, guns](#)

[Fiscal year](#)

[Front-runner](#)

[G](#)

[Global warming](#)

[Governor](#)

[Greener](#)

[Greenhouse gases, emissions](#)

[H](#)

[Headers](#)

[Hiding content](#)

[Healthcare](#)

[Hispanic](#)

[However](#)

[Hyphen](#)

[I](#)

[Immigration](#)

[Incumbent](#)

[Independent, political affiliation](#)

[Indian American](#)

[Internal links](#)

[Internet](#)

[Italics](#)

[J](#)

[Judge, justice](#)

[Judgment](#)

[L](#)

[Latino/Latina](#)
[Left-wing, leftist, far-left](#)
[Legislatively referred](#)
[Legislature](#)

M

[Majority, plurality](#)
[Media](#)
[Middle class, middle-class](#)
[Middle initials](#)
[Midterm election](#)
[Months](#)
[Myriad](#)

N

[Names, individuals](#)
[Nationwide](#)
[Native Americans](#)
[Nicknames, individuals](#)
[Noncitizen](#)
[None](#)
[Nonpartisan](#)
[Nonprofit](#)
[Numerals](#)
[Numeric ranges](#)

O

[Obamacare, Affordable Care Act](#)
[Officeholder](#)
[Opt-out/ opt out](#)

P

[Pacific Islander](#)
[Parentheses](#)
[Parental Bill of Rights](#)
[Passive voice](#)
[Percentage points or less](#)
[Percent](#)
[Person/people of color](#)
[Photo captions](#)
[Political affiliation](#)
[Preschool](#)
[President](#)
[Profile pages, names](#)
[Profile pages, nicknames](#)

[Profanity](#)

[Pronouns](#)

[Proper nouns with shared words](#)

[Proved, proven](#)

[Public assistance programs](#)

[Public servant](#)

[Q](#)

[Question mark \(?\)](#)

[Quotations, Direct quotations](#)

[Quotations, Dialogue](#)

[Quotations, Altering the text of a quote](#)

[Quotations, Quotes within quotes](#)

[Quotations, Splitting quotes](#)

[Quotations, Quote template use](#)

[Quotations, Scare quotes](#)

[R](#)

[Re-elect, re-election](#)

[Redirects](#)

[Referendum](#)

[Referring to other articles on BP](#)

[Republican, Republican Party](#)

[Right-wing, rightist, far-right](#)

[Runner-up, runners-up](#)

[Running mate](#)

[Runoff](#)

[S](#)

[Same-sex marriage](#)

[Sample Ballot Lookup Tool](#)

[Satellite spending](#)

[Seasons](#)

[See also](#)

[Sexual commerce and exploitation](#)

[Sexuality and gender identity](#)

[\[sic\]](#)

[Signature filing deadline](#)

[Singular proper nouns ending in -s](#)

[Split infinitives](#)

[Spokesman, spokeswoman, spokesperson](#)

[State](#)

[State names, abbreviations for](#)

[Statehouse, State House](#)

[State nicknames](#)

[State of the Union, State of the State, State of the City](#)

[Statewide](#)

[Supreme Court of the United States](#)

[Supreme courts of the states](#)

I

[Teachers union](#)

[Telephone numbers](#)

[The, usage with proper nouns](#)

[They/them, as a singular pronoun](#)

[They/them/their, nonbinary](#)

[Think tank](#)

[Third party/third-party](#)

[Tilde](#)

[Time](#)

[Titles, courtesy](#)

[Today, tomorrow, tonight](#)

[Tooltips](#)

[Toward](#)

[Transclusion](#)

[Transgender](#)

[Travel, traveled, traveling, traveler](#)

U

[United States](#)

V

[Vote-getters, vote recipients](#)

[Votes counted, votes cast](#)

[Vote totals](#)

W

[White](#)

[Who, whom](#)

Y

[Year](#)

Z

[Zero](#)

Footnotes

[Academic journal articles](#)

[Amicus curiae briefs](#)

[Archived links](#)

[Article titles ending in punctuation marks](#)

[Ballotpedia articles](#)

[BP links in footnotes section](#)

[Books](#)

[Campaign websites](#)

[Court cases](#)

[Case of article titles](#)

[Footnotes with ending punctuation](#)

[Original interviews and correspondence](#)

[Placement of footnotes in text](#)

[Search results in a reference](#)

[\[sic\] in footnotes](#)

[Spelling out website names](#)

[Social media](#)

[Websites](#)

[YouTube](#)

[Additional resources](#)

[Capitalization guidelines for political terms](#)

[Election policy project reference examples](#)

[How to properly tense election language](#)

[Preventing tense errors](#)

[Proofreading checklist & tips](#)

[Tensing legislation and regulation articles](#)

[Titles and naming conventions](#)

Instructions recommending a new entry or update

Submit suggestions for new entries, updates, or changes to the style guide by using the [BP Style Guide Updates form](#) or contact [Kelly Coyle](#) .

Sample Entry Template

Entry Name

Guidelines:

- **Examples:**
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:**

BP Style Guide changelog

You can view changes and updates to Ballotpedia's Style Guide [here](#).

A

Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Initialisms

Guidelines: An abbreviation is any shortened word or phrase. Acronyms and initialisms are specific types of abbreviations. Both acronyms and initialisms are formed by taking the first letter of each word in a name or phrase, but acronyms are pronounced by sounding out the letters (as if the first letters formed their own word), while initialisms are pronounced by naming each letter individually. For example, FEMA is an acronym, while FBI is an initialism. Both are abbreviations.

If a particular name or phrase (e.g., an organization, a standardized test, or a law) is commonly abbreviated, we may want to refer to it by its abbreviation in order to avoid writing it out multiple times. These names or phrases should normally be written out in full on first reference, followed by the abbreviation in parentheses. Subsequent references may use the abbreviated form.

- **Examples:** Republican National Committee (RNC); Center for Medical Progress (CMP)

If an abbreviation is widely recognized (i.e., listed in a standard dictionary), the full name may not need to be written out on first reference.

- **Examples:** the FBI; the U.S.; NASA

Do not add an apostrophe to a plural abbreviation.

- **Example:** More than one ID = IDs

Abbreviations, Political titles

Guidelines: Use the following abbreviations for political titles:

- Governor: Gov./Govs.
- Lieutenant governor: Lt. Gov./Lt. Govs.
- Senator: Sen./Sens.
- Representative: Rep./Reps.
 - *Note:* When appearing before a name, the four titles above can be abbreviated at the writer's discretion. Do not abbreviate titles that would not be easily recognized by readers (e.g., Assemblyman, Assemblywoman).
- **Related entries and documentation:**
 - 📖 Monthly style email, March 2022, Political titles and affiliations
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Academic Degrees

Guidelines: Use the following forms: an associate degree (not associate's), a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, a doctorate, a Bachelor of Arts, Master of Science, Juris Doctor (not juris doctorate). Use periods in abbreviated degree forms. Use "an" before abbreviations that

are pronounced by naming the letters. Academic departments or fields of study should not be capitalized unless they are proper nouns. Academic honors should be italicized but not capitalized.

- **Examples:**
 - B.A., M.S., M.B.A., Ph.D., J.D., M.D.
 - An M.S. (read as “em es”).
 - A bachelor’s degree in journalism, a Ph.D. in English.
 - *magna cum laude*, *summa cum laude*.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
 - ☰ Monthly style digest, December 2021, academic degrees
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Abortion

Guidelines: If we are writing about a particular individual or organization and their views on abortion contain some nuance (such as supporting a ban on abortion after a certain number of weeks), be specific. Use as specific and relevant language as possible when describing general ideological sides of the debate.

Avoid using speech tribe terms like *anti-abortion*, *abortion rights*, *pro-life*, *pro-choice*, and *pro-abortion*. If you must use these terms, define them and identify who is using them.

In general, use the terms *people who oppose abortion* and *people who support access to abortion* as neutral alternatives to abortion-related loaded language and speech tribe terminology.

When writing about abortion, it is also acceptable to refer to groups using the terminology that they use. For example, the Ballot Measures Team analyzed the support for and opposition to abortion-related ballot measures by categorizing them as either “campaigns that described themselves as pro-choice or pro-reproductive rights” or “campaigns that described themselves as pro-life.”

- **Example:** “From 1970 to 2024, there were 65 abortion-related ballot measures, and 44 (68%) of these had the support of organizations that described themselves as pro-life. Voters approved 12 (27%) and rejected 32 (73%) of these 44 ballot measures. The other 21 abortion-related ballot measures had the support of organizations that described themselves as pro-choice or pro-reproductive rights. Voters approved 15 (71%) and rejected six (29%).”

In general, when writing about abortion, use *woman* or *girl* when referring to a person who has had an abortion or might seek an abortion. Gender-neutral language should be avoided. Do not use *patient*, *pregnant person*, *pregnant individual*, *pregnant parent*, *birth-giver*, *birthing person*,

person with the capacity for pregnancy, people with uteruses, or any other gender-neutral phrase or term when writing about abortion generally.

Use gender-neutral phrases, like the ones above, when specifically writing about abortion and transgender men or people who identify as nonbinary. Use the pronouns and phrases the individual uses.

Avoid the speech tribe terms *fetal cardiac activity* and *heartbeat bill*. When legislation, a ballot measure, or a person uses these terms, cite the terms directly on first reference, if possible.

People who support access to abortion prefer the term *fetus*, while people who oppose abortion prefer the terms *unborn baby*, *unborn child*, and *unborn life*. Because there isn't a neutral term to use here, include both terms. Use *fetus/baby*.

Family planning and *reproductive health* are speech tribe terms. Be specific about what family planning and reproductive health mean in the context of the debate, legislation, ballot measure, etc. Is the bill describing contraception, abortion, etc.?

Use *abortion in the third trimester* instead of *late-term abortion*.

- **Related entries and documentation:**
 -  Three strikes or four balls?: Women, gender-neutral language, and abortion
 -  Memo: Ballot Measures & Potentially Biased Person Nouns
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Accent Marks

Guidelines: Use accent marks in names that normally use them. On a Mac, these characters may be formed by using the shortcuts listed below. Windows users can find shortcuts at the following website, but they may find it easier to simply copy and paste the characters from another source: www.drlemon.com/accents.html

Accent Type	Characters	Shortcut
Acute	Á, á, É, é, Í, í, Ó, ó, Ú, ú	Option + E, [character]
Circumflex	Â, â, Ê, ê, Î, î, Ô, ô, Û, û	Option + I, [character]
Grave	À, à, È, è, Ì, ì, Ò, ò, Ù, ù	Option + ` , [character]
Tilde	Ã, ã, Ñ, ñ, Õ, õ	Option + N, [character]
Diaeresis/Umlaut	Ä, ä, Ê, ë, Ï, ï, Ö, ö, Ü, ü	Option + U, [character]

To form ü, hold down the Option key and type U, release both keys, then type lowercase u.

- **Example:** Marisela Saldaña.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Adviser, advisor

Guidelines: Though both *advisor* and *adviser* are widely accepted spellings, Ballotpedia prefers *advisor*. For official titles, follow the preferred spelling of the word as written on official websites or documentation.

- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

African American

Guidelines: When used as an indicator of race, the preferred term is *Black* unless the individual self-identifies as an American person of African descent. These terms are not interchangeable, as not all African Americans are Black, nor are all Black Americans necessarily of African descent.

- **Examples:** African American voters, an African American candidate.
- **Related entries and documentation:** Black,
 Monthly style email, May 2024, Writing about race, ethnicity, and national heritage
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Amid

Guidelines: Use *amid*, not *amidst*.

- **Example:**
 - The decision was made amid controversy.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Apostrophes

Guidelines: Do not add an apostrophe to a plural abbreviation.

- **Example:** More than one ID = IDs

Use only an apostrophe for singular proper nouns ending in -s.

- **Examples:** Kansas' schools, Jones' campaign

Do not add an apostrophe to *Yesses and Nos/ Yeas and Nays*.

- **Example:** On this vote, the yeas are 229, and the nays are 198.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
 Monthly style email, October 2023, Apostrophes, brackets, and ellipses
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Arab American

Guidelines: The term *Arab American* is applied to individuals of Arab birth or descent who live in the U.S., though it is preferable to specify the person's country of origin when known (for example, Lebanese American or Egyptian American). Do not hyphenate Arab American.

- **Example:** The *Boston Globe's* Laura Crimaldi wrote, "Although census figures show about 65% of city residents identify as people of color, the upcoming election will be the first in Boston history that won't result in a white man becoming mayor." The four candidates mentioned above are women. Janey and Campbell are Black. Essaibi George is Arab American. Wu is Asian American.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
 Monthly style email, May 2024, Writing about race, ethnicity, and national heritage
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Army Reserve

Guidelines: When referring to someone in the United States Army Reserve, do not add an -s to Reserve

- **Example:** She serves in the U.S. Army Reserve.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Article, section, and clause numbers

Guidelines: Article, section, and clause numbers should be separated by commas without a comma following the last number. For the U.S. Constitution, use Roman numerals for articles and Arabic numerals for sections and clauses.

- **Example:** Article I, Section 8
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Asian, Asian American

Guidelines: The term *Asian American* is applied to individuals of Asian birth or descent who live in the U.S. It is preferable to specify the person's country of origin when known (for example,

Filipino American or Chinese American). Do not hyphenate Asian American. Do not describe Pacific Islanders as Asian Americans.

- **Example:** The plaintiffs in the suit, a group of Asian American voters (a protected class under the CVRA), allege that Santa Clara's at-large electoral system for city council seats prevents them from electing candidates of their choosing.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
 Monthly style email, May 2024, Writing about race, ethnicity, and national heritage
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Assisted death

Guidelines: The issue of assisted death addresses an individual's consent to end their life with the assistance of another person. Do not use the terms *euthanasia*, *physician-assisted suicide*, *right to die*, *medically assisted suicide*, or *death with dignity*. *Physician-assisted death* or *medical aid-in-dying* is acceptable.

- **Example:** Oregon became the first U.S. state to legalize physician-assisted death in 1997.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

At large, at-large

Guidelines: Hyphenate *at large* when used as an adjective. Do not hyphenate *at large* when it is used as an adverb or as a part of a person's title.

- **Example:** There are three at-large positions on the school board.
- **Example:** Three school board members are elected at large.
- **Example:** There are three members at large.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

At-Large Congressional District

Guidelines: Capitalize At-Large when referring to a state's congressional district.

- **Example:** Vermont's At-Large Congressional District, North Dakota's At-Large Congressional District
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

B

Ballotpedia

Guidelines: Do not italicize the name Ballotpedia.

- **Example:** Ballotpedia surveyed 134 strategists, pollsters, activists, and lobbyists.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Ballot initiative

Guidelines: *Ballot initiative* should be used to refer to proposed laws or constitutional amendments placed on the ballot through petition drives by citizens.

- **Example:** The ballot initiative to legalize recreational marijuana was approved by voters.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Between ... and, From ... to

Guidelines: Use between ... and or from ... to, not between ... to or from ... and.

- **Examples:**
 - The meeting is scheduled between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m., not between 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.
 - The event runs from Monday to Friday, not from Monday and Friday.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Bills and resolutions

Guidelines: Avoid periods in abbreviations for bills and resolutions, and include a space between the abbreviation and the number.

- **Examples:**
 - HB 714, not H.B.714.
 - S 123, not S.123.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Bipartisan

Guidelines: Use bipartisan, not bi-partisan.

- **Example:** The bipartisan effort led to the bill's passage.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

BIPOC

Guidelines: BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Avoid this term, “which some see as more inclusive by distinguishing the experiences of Black and Indigenous people, but others see as less inclusive by diminishing the experiences of everyone else,” according to the [Associated Press](#). Instead, be specific when writing about different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

- **Related entries and documentation:**
 Monthly style email, May 2024, Writing about race, ethnicity, and national heritage
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Biracial, multiracial

Guidelines: The terms *biracial* and *multiracial* describe individuals or groups of people with more than one racial heritage and may be used when relevant. Be specific if possible. Avoid the term *mixed-race*.

- **Acceptable:** Former Vice President Kamala Harris is biracial.
- **Preferred:** Former Vice President Kamala Harris is Tamil Indian American and Jamaican American.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
 Monthly style email, May 2024, Writing about race, ethnicity, and national heritage
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Black

Guidelines: When used as an indicator of race, BP’s preferred term is *Black* unless the individual self-identifies as an American person of African descent. African American and Black are not interchangeable, as not all African Americans are Black, nor are all Black Americans necessarily of African descent. Capitalize *Black* when used as an adjective in a racial, ethnic, or cultural sense. Follow a person’s preference if it’s known.

- **Examples:** Tim Scott (R) is the first Black senator from South Carolina. Ketanji Brown Jackson is the first Black woman to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court.
- **Related entries and documentation:** [African American](#),
 Monthly style email, May 2024, Writing about race, ethnicity, and national heritage
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Board member

Guidelines: The phrase board member should not be treated as a formal title, so it should not be capitalized in any case. This guideline also applies to the phrase school board member.

- **Example:** A majority of voters cast ballots in favor of recalling San Francisco Unified School District Board of Education members Gabriela López, Alison Collins, and Faauuga Moliga.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
 - Monthly style email, March 2022, Political titles and affiliations
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Bolding

Guidelines: Be judicious with the use of boldface type, as it can only add emphasis if used sparingly. However, do consider using boldface type for the following types of text:

- numbers/statistics
- dates in timelines
- important names
- key facts

- **Related entries and documentation:**
 - Monthly style email, March 2022, Political titles and affiliations
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Brackets, internal links

Guidelines: An internal link is a link in the text of a Ballotpedia article that links to another Ballotpedia page. These links are created by placing two sets of square brackets around the page title, like this: `[[Page title]]`. In some cases, we may need to alter the linked text to make it fit with the surrounding text. To do this, we can use a pipe (`|`) after the page title, followed by the desired text. These changes may be necessary to change wording or capitalization.

- **Examples:** Maggie Toulouse Oliver is the `[[New Mexico Secretary of State|secretary of state]]` of New Mexico. Cory Booker (D-N.J.) is a `[[United States Senate|U.S. senator]]`.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
 - Monthly style email, October 2023, Apostrophes, brackets, and ellipses
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Brackets, Internal links with titles, possessives

Guidelines: Do not alter the text of an internal link to include a person's full title or to include -'s for a possessive name. It is not considered an error to do so, but it is more efficient to eliminate this extra step.

- **Incorrect:** `[[Rand Paul|Sen. Rand Paul]]` (R-Ky.) said he would run for re-election.
- **Correct:** Sen. `[[Rand Paul]]` (R-Ky.) said he would run for re-election.
- **Incorrect:** Gov. `[[Doug Ducey|Doug Ducey's]]` (R-Ariz.) term ended in 2023.

- **Correct:** Gov. [[Doug Ducey]]'s (R-Ariz.) term ended in 2023.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
 Monthly style email, October 2023, Apostrophes, brackets, and ellipses
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Brackets, altering the text of a quotation

Guidelines: It is acceptable to add clarifications to quotes using square brackets, but the words in brackets should normally be added to the quoted text; under most circumstances, do not use brackets to replace words in the quoted text. It is acceptable to replace a quoted word with a word in brackets in two situations: (1) You can change a verb to a different tense of the same verb if necessary to fit the quote into the sentence, and (2) You can change a pronoun if necessary to keep the quote referring to the correct person.

If the capitalization of the original quote needs to be altered in order to fit with these guidelines, use square brackets around the letter that has been altered. However, it is generally preferable to alter the sentence structure to make the capitalization work as it exists in the quote.

- **Examples:** He said that "[s]he [was] committed to bipartisan solutions." The senator said, "[W]e must prioritize economic growth."
- **Related entries and documentation:**
 Monthly style email, October 2023, Apostrophes, brackets, and ellipses
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Bulleted lists

Guidelines: Bulleted lists may take multiple forms as long as they satisfy two criteria: (1) consistency and (2) parallelism.

Consistency applies to two main aspects of the list: **capitalization** and **punctuation**.

- List items may start with either capital letters or lowercase letters, but this capitalization must be consistent within a list (with the exception of proper nouns in a list of items that are otherwise lowercase).
- Some lists will not contain any punctuation after individual list items, while others will use commas, semicolons, or even periods. In all cases, use the same type of punctuation mark after each list item.
 - When using commas or semicolons, the entire list should be thought of as a complete sentence; it should have a conjunction after the second-to-last list item, and it should end with a period after the last list item.

For **parallelism**, make sure that each list item fits with the phrase/clause that introduces the list.

You should also make sure that each list item uses a similar grammatical structure. This means that if the first list item is a noun, all of the following list items should be nouns. If the first list item begins with a third-person singular verb, the other list items should also begin with third-person singular verbs.

Note: A comment to an individual list item may be inserted under that bullet point and indented further than the others; such comments need not follow the same grammatical structure.

Examples:

Three states signed the lawsuit:

- Alabama,
- Mississippi, and
- Louisiana.

According to the White House, the key features of the bill included:

- \$89.9 billion in new infrastructure funding and reauthorizations
- \$66 billion in funding for Amtrak maintenance and development
- \$40 billion in new funding for bridge repair, replacement, and rehabilitation
- \$55 billion in funding for clean drinking water
- \$65 billion in funding to create universal access to reliable high-speed internet
- \$65 billion in funding for clean energy transmission and power infrastructure upgrades

The proposal included the following:

- merging the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) into a single federal agency;
- restructuring the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Postal Service; and
- reorganizing several administrative programs under different agencies.

Follow the steps below to sign up for an account:

- Go to the website's home page.
- Click on the 'Join now' link at the top of the page.
- Enter the requested information and follow the on-screen instructions.

All of these lists are acceptable because they follow two main rules: (1) **consistency** and (2) **parallelism**.

- **Related entries and documentation:**
 Monthly style digest, January 2023, bulleted lists
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

By district, by-district

Guidelines: Hyphenate by-district when used as an adjective. Do not hyphenate by district when it is used as an adverb or as a part of a person's title.

- **Examples:** The council holds by-district elections. City council members are elected by district.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

C

Campaign slogans

Guidelines: Campaign slogans should be written in standard text. Only use quotation marks or italics if they are part of the official slogan.

- **Examples:** Harris' campaign slogan was, Let's win this! Trump's campaign slogan was, Make America Great Again!
- **Related entries and documentation:** [CPC: Data attribute research guidelines](#)
- **Last Updated:** September 2025

Cancel, canceled, canceling, cancellation

Guidelines: Spell as follows: cancel, canceled, canceling, cancellation.

- **Example:** The event was canceled due to weather.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Capitalization, the basics

Guidelines: A proper noun refers to a specific person, place, or thing: John Smith, New Orleans, or the Statue of Liberty. A common noun refers to a more general person, place, or thing: a candidate, a city, or a statue. The basic rule is to capitalize proper nouns and lowercase common nouns. Adjectives derived from proper nouns maintain this capitalization (e.g., America becomes American, and Democrat becomes Democratic). On Ballotpedia, most issues with capitalization occur with political titles, governing bodies, political affiliations, and academic fields of study.

- **Related entries and documentation:** [Monthly style digest, July 2022, Capitalization](#)
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Capitalization, Governing bodies

Guidelines: The official names of governing bodies are always capitalized. When referring to a general type of governing body without referring to a specific one, the name should be lowercased.

- **Examples of governing bodies:** the U.S. Senate, the Austin City Council, St. Joseph School District, the Missouri House of Representatives, the Alaska State Legislature, the U.S. Supreme Court
- **Examples:** Heading into the election, the Democratic Party controlled the Colorado State Senate. A trifecta occurs when one party controls the state house, the state senate, and the governorship in any given state.

Shortened names for governing bodies are often lowercased.

- **Example:** The city council took a vote.
- **Related entries and documentation:** [Monthly style digest, July 2022, Capitalization](#)
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Capitalization, Political titles

Political titles are *only* capitalized when they directly precede an official's name. Otherwise, political titles should be lowercased. Political titles are always lowercased when set off from the official's name by a comma. When a single title is held by more than one individual in a sentence, the names can be consolidated under one plural title.

- **Examples of political titles:** the president of the United States, the Kansas secretary of state, the governor of North Carolina, the South Dakota lieutenant governor, the superintendent, the federal judge
- **Example:** Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) is the first and only woman to serve as speaker of the House. Pelosi was first elected speaker in 2007.
- **Example:** She met U.S. Senators John Cornyn (R-Texas) and Ted Cruz (R-Texas) at the event.
- **Related entries and documentation:** [Monthly style digest, July 2022, Capitalization](#)
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Capitalization, Districts

All district names should be capitalized.

- **Examples:** Ohio's 3rd Congressional District, Houston Independent School District
- **Related entries and documentation:** [Monthly style digest, July 2022, Capitalization](#)
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Capitalization, Occupational titles

Guidelines: There is also a difference between a formal title and an occupational title. Most political titles are formal. However, titles such as *chief of staff*, *campaign manager*, *press secretary*, and *first lady* are occupational (along with *teacher*, *policeman*, *dentist*, program manager, etc.). These titles should not be capitalized even if they directly precede the individual's name. If a position is elected or appointed with a defined scope of authority, you can assume that it is a formal title. If you are unsure, the safest choice is to lowercase the title and set it off from the name with commas.

- **Examples:** Julie Chávez Rodríguez was the campaign manager for Vice President Kamala Harris' (D) 2024 presidential campaign. First lady Melania Trump worked as a fashion model and married President Donald Trump in 2005.
- **Related entries and documentation:** [Monthly style digest, July 2022, Capitalization](#)
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Capitalization, Political affiliations and ideologies

Guidelines: Names referring to official political parties — such as *Republican* and *Democratic* — refer to distinct organizations, so they are considered proper names and are capitalized.

- **Example:** John Fetterman, a Democrat, will face Mehmet Oz, a Republican, in the general election in November.

Labels for most political ideologies that don't refer to an official party — such as *conservative* or *liberal*, in most uses — are common names and are lowercased. Political ideologies not referring to an official party should only be capitalized when they are derived from a proper, such as *Marxist*.

- **Example:** Of the three candidates for the Democratic nomination, he was seen as the most liberal.

Unlike *Democratic* and *Republican*, the words *independent* and *nonpartisan* do not refer to official parties. As a result, they are not proper nouns and therefore should not be capitalized in the text of an article. (*Note: Capitalization can be retained in infoboxes, tables, charts, etc., where the labels are not part of a complete sentence.*)

- **Examples:** Michael Delaney is a 2022 independent candidate seeking election to the U.S. Senate. Rick Blangiardi is the nonpartisan mayor of Honolulu.
- **Related entries and documentation:** [Monthly style digest, July 2022, Capitalization](#)
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Capitol

Guidelines: Capitol should be capitalized when referring to the U.S. Capitol, even when the word stands alone. When referring to state capitol buildings, capitol should be lowercase unless it is part of a proper name.

- **Examples:** the U.S. Capitol, the Capitol, Michigan State Capitol, the state capitol
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Caucus

Guidelines: Capitalize *caucus* when referring to a party's group in the legislature

- **Example:** At the House Democratic Caucus leadership elections, the caucus voted to allow the House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-N.Y.) to select a chairperson, whose selection would then be voted on by the full caucus.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Chairman, chairwoman, chair

Guidelines: Use *chairman* or *chairwoman* when the gender of the individual is known. Use the term *chair* if the gender is unknown or if making a generic reference to the office. All three terms should be capitalized as formal titles when they directly precede a chair's name.

- **Example:** Policy and Communications Committee Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.)
- **Related entries and documentation:**
[Monthly style email, March 2022, Political titles and affiliations](#)
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Cisgender

Guidelines: The term *cisgender* describes a person whose gender identity matches his or her sex. Avoid using the term *cisgender* unless it is part of a direct quote. It is a speech tribe term.

- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

City

Guidelines: When used alone or after a proper noun, *city* should be lowercase. When used as part of a proper name, *city* should be capitalized.

- **Examples:** the city of Chicago, the city, Kansas City
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

City council

Guidelines: Do not capitalize city council unless it is being used with the municipality's name as the body's official title.

- **Examples:** the Oakland City Council; the city council of Oakland; members of Oakland's city council
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Clean energy, green energy

Guidelines: Try to be specific when referring to energy sources such as wind, solar, or hydropower. Avoid *clean energy* or *green energy* unless part of a formal name (e.g., Clean Energy Act). Attribute those terms to speakers or groups.

- **Example:** The governor announced a program to expand solar energy. She said it would "position New York as a leader in the clean energy transition."
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** September 2025

Climate change

Guidelines: *Climate change* is a borderline speech term; however, writers may use it because both supporters and opponents commonly do. Ballotpedia does not currently have a preferred neutral alternative, and substituting another term would likely cause confusion, as climate change is the widely recognized phrase.

Climate change may appear in quotations or when part of the formal name of a law, agency, or program. Be specific about what policies are being debated. Wherever possible, use neutral, descriptive language instead (e.g., carbon emissions, air quality standards, renewable energy requirements). Attribute claims about climate change to the source when possible.

- **Example:** Supporters said the bill was needed to address climate change.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** September 2025

Comma

Guidelines: Ballotpedia uses the serial (Oxford) comma. In a series of three or more elements, use a comma before etc.

- **Examples:**
 - The agenda covered budget cuts, new hiring policies, and curriculum changes.
 - The report addressed taxes, fees, bonds, etc.
- **Related entries and documentation:**

- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Comma, introductory words and phrases

Guidelines: Introductory words and phrases should be followed by a comma when they function as adverbs. Do not use a comma after short prepositional phrases of four or fewer words unless needed for clarity.

- **Examples:**
 - However, the meeting was postponed.
 - In 2024, the law was passed.
 - Before the election, voters were surveyed.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Comma, with conjunctions

Guidelines: Use a comma before a conjunction separating two independent clauses. Do not use a comma before a conjunction when the second clause is dependent.

- **Examples:**
 - The bill passed the House, but it failed in the Senate.
 - The bill passed the House but failed to gain Senate approval.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Comprised of, composed of

Guidelines: Though the phrases comprised of and composed of are used interchangeably in casual speech, the word comprise actually means the opposite of compose. The verb to comprise means “to contain,” so it is normally used in the following way: [larger entity] comprises [smaller parts of entity]. As an alternative, you can also use the phrases composed of or made up of.

- **Incorrect:** The U.S. is comprised of 50 states.
- **Correct:** The U.S. is composed of 50 states. The U.S. is made up of 50 states. The U.S. comprises 50 states.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Congressman, congresswoman

Guidelines: *Congressman* and *congresswoman* should be used only when referring to a specific member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Use *representative* for general references.

- **Examples:** Congressman John Smith, Congresswoman Jane Doe. The representative from Ohio
- **Related entries and documentation:**
 Monthly style email, March 2022, Political titles and affiliations
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Coordinating conjunction, beginning a sentence with

Guidelines: Coordinating conjunctions (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so) are generally used to connect two words, phrases, or clauses within a sentence. Ballotpedia does not consider it an error to start a sentence with a coordinating conjunction. That being said, this should not be overused because it does give a more informal tone of voice. When beginning a sentence with a coordinating conjunction, never use a comma after the conjunction unless you are setting off a nonessential clause or phrase.

- **Example:** Joe Smith claimed that he did. But we find that Smith's statement mischaracterizes what Jones said.
- **Example:** They have pooled over a quarter of a million dollars into this year's school board races. And those with the biggest contributions were candidates on board with charter schools.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Councilman, councilwoman, council member

Guidelines: Use *councilman* or *councilwoman* when the gender of the individual is known. Use the term *council member* if the gender is unknown or if making a generic reference to the office. Capitalize councilman and councilwoman when they appear as formal titles directly before a person's name. Also, capitalize the word city if it precedes one of these titles. Treat council member as an occupational description rather than as a formal title; do not capitalize it in any case.

- **Examples:** City Councilman John Connolly; Councilman John Connolly; city council member John Connolly; the city council member; the city councilman
- **Related entries and documentation:**
 Monthly style email, March 2022, Political titles and affiliations
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

County

Guidelines: County should be lowercase when used alone or after a proper noun.

- **Examples:** the county of Los Angeles, the county, Los Angeles County
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Court names

Guidelines: Capitalize the full proper names of all state and federal courts, retaining capitalization when the state name is dropped. Note: When referring to state supreme courts, lowercase when the state name is dropped. Do not capitalize if the name is shortened in a way that excludes the state name and the relevant district number/region. If the wording of a court name is subtly rearranged, retain capitalization.

- **Examples:** the Virginia Circuit Courts; the Norfolk Circuit Court; the circuit courts; the Oregon 20th Judicial District Court; the 20th Judicial District Court; the district courts, the Minnesota Court of Appeals; the Minnesota Appeals Court
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Credentials: Do not use any internal periods with occupational or professional credentials (e.g., CPA, RN, etc.).

- **Example:** Her career experience includes working as a CPA since 1995 and as a partner at Benford Brown & Associates since 1996.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Crime, criminal justice

Guidelines: When writing about people in prison generally, acknowledge the crime that was committed and also the person who committed the crime. Use the terms *person (people) in prison*, *person (people) with a felony conviction*, and similar variations depending on the context. Adding context and being as specific as possible is the best approach when writing about the people involved in the criminal justice system.

Additionally, although this is likely rare in our coverage, when writing about a specific person who committed a crime, we should use the term he or she prefers and provide context about the crime and the person's experience. Include the victim's experience of the crime when possible.

Avoid the terms *criminals*, *ex-cons*, *felons*, *justice-involved individual/youth*, and *juvenile delinquent*.

- **Related entries and documentation:**
 - Three Strikes or Four Balls?: The language of incarceration
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Critical race theory (CRT)

Guidelines: Critical race theory (CRT) refers to a set of ideas, theories, and principles that can influence the understanding of race and racism. These include the idea that racism is embedded in legal and social systems. The term can also refer to activism based on this

framework or specific conclusions, opinions, or policies attributed to CRT. The term originated in legal scholarship in the 1970s but became more widely used, both in other academic disciplines and popular culture, throughout the 1990s and 2000s.

On the first use, refer to critical race theory as critical race theory (CRT), and then use the initialism in subsequent instances. When writing about debates, legislation, or curriculum that discuss or define CRT, use quoted language with clear attribution to avoid presenting contested definitions as Ballotpedia's own.

- **Related entries and documentation:** [Critical race theory \(CRT\)](#)
- **Last Updated:** September 2025

D

Dangling prepositions

Guidelines: Every preposition has an object (though sometimes it may be only implied). A book can't simply be in; it must be in something. In the sentence, "The book is in the bag," the bag is the object of the preposition in.

A dangling preposition is a preposition that has been separated from its object. In these cases, the preposition will appear at the end of the sentence or clause rather than in its normal place next to the object. Examples include "What are you talking about?" and "I want to find a store I can walk to."

Ballotpedia does not consider dangling prepositions to be errors. If the sentence can easily be rephrased to place the preposition next to its object, it is preferable to do so. In other cases, though, a dangling preposition may be the best option.

- **Example:** He had taken more tax breaks than his real estate portfolio entitled him to.
- **Example:** On his campaign website, Saindon lists four issues he is concerned about.
- **Example:** Voters had to vote for the same party whose primary they voted in.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Dates, basic format: [month] [day], [year]

Guidelines:

Never use ordinal numbers (1st, 2nd, etc.) with dates.

- **Example:** The election was held on November 5, 2024.

Whenever possible, avoid using full dates as adjectives. If avoiding this phrasing is not possible, remember to include a comma following the year.

- **Acceptable:** He won the November 5, 2024, election.

- **Preferred:** He won the election on November 5, 2024.

When using only the month and year, no commas are required.

- **Example:** He assumed office in April 2025.

When including the day of the week with a date, set it off from the rest of the date with a comma.

- **Example:** The election will be held on Tuesday, November 5, 2024.

- **Related entries and documentation:**  Monthly style email, April 2022, Dates
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Dates, formatting date ranges

Guidelines: When writing a range of dates, a hyphen may be used instead of the word *to*. Hyphens should not be used in phrases such as “from ___ to ___” and “between ___ and ___.” When only years are given, do not include a space before or after the hyphen.

- **Example:** Ginsburg's Martin-Quinn score following the 2019-2020 term was -2.82, making her the second-most liberal justice on the court at that time.
- **Example:** Ginsburg served on the United States Supreme Court from 1993 to 2020.

When full dates are given, include a space on both sides of the hyphen. If the date range is ongoing, capitalize the word Present and use spaces around the hyphen.

- **Example:** January 3, 1997 - January 3, 2013
- **Example:** January 3, 2013 - Present

In general, use full years when giving a range of years. In some cases, it might be preferable to use only the last two digits of the latter year. In either case, be consistent throughout the page.

- **Incorrect:** 2012-2013 and 2014-15
- **Acceptable:** 2024-25 and 2024-25
- **Preferred:** 2024-2025 and 2024- 2025

- **Related entries and documentation:**  Monthly style email, April 2022, Dates
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Dates, Historical periods and events

Guidelines:

Capitalize widely recognized popular names for periods and events.

- **Examples:** the Atomic Age, the Great Depression, Prohibition

When writing about centuries or decades, use an -s without the apostrophe to indicate a plural noun rather than a possessive noun.

- **Example:** The 1800s were a time of rapid change in the United States.

When abbreviating a decade, include an apostrophe at the start.

- **Example:** During the '80s, people feared nuclear war.

For centuries, spell out numbers under 10, and use numerals for 10 and higher.

- **Examples:** the third century, the 21st century

- **Related entries and documentation:** [Monthly style email, April 2022, Dates](#)
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Dates, Formatting dates for news posts

Guidelines: In some cases, news posts follow slightly different style rules than our on-site style rules. Spell out the names of March, April, May, June, and July, and abbreviate all other months.

- **Example:** The legislature adjourned on Aug. 25.

Avoid starting a post with the date that something happened.

- **Example:** Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker's (R) administration announced on April 15 that the state intends to issue \$2.6 billion of bonds to help replenish the state's unemployment trust fund.

If you refer to a month without an exact date, do not abbreviate the month.

- **Example:** She took office in November 2021.

- **Related entries and documentation:** [Monthly style email, April 2022, Dates](#)
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Decimals, rounding

Guidelines: Decimals should always be rounded to the same place in tables, charts, and graphs. These numbers should not be written out past two decimal places (the hundredths place) unless there is a compelling reason to do so.

In the text of an article, decimals should generally be rounded to one decimal place (the tenths place) unless greater precision is needed. When reporting decimals under one, the number may be rounded to two decimal places (or more, if necessary). For example, 24.86% should be rounded to 24.9%, but 0.352 tons should be rounded to 0.35 tons.

When making comparisons about a related set of data, always bring the numbers out to the same decimal place, even if the data set includes some whole numbers.

- **Example:** The candidates received 41.5%, 40.0%, and 18.5% of the vote total, respectively.
- **Related entries and documentation:** [Monthly style email, February 2022, Numbers](#)
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Democrat, Democratic Party

Guidelines: Use Democrat as a noun, Democratic as an adjective. Capitalize both terms when referring to the political party. Do not use the term Democrat Party. It is a speech tribe term.

- **Examples:** The Democrat voted for the Democratic Party's platform.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Disabled, disability

Guidelines: The terms *people with disabilities* and *disabled people* are acceptable when writing about disabilities. When possible, use the term that a person or group prefers.

Do not use the term *handicap* to describe a disability or *handicapped* to describe a person with a disability. Do not use the terms *differently abled* or *physically challenged*.

For more specific questions related to this topic (e.g., use of the term *amputation* or *amputee*), consult the [National Center on Disability and Journalism's style guide](#). Then, consult your managing editor for specific guidance.

- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Disambiguation pages

Guidelines: In any case where two or more people share the same first and last name, a disambiguation page titled [First name] [Last name] should be created. This page will link to all profile pages of individuals with the same name.

- **Related entries and documentation:**
 - [BP basics documentation: Titles and naming conventions](#) ;
 - [BP Basics: Disambiguation page policy \(Version 12.3\)](#)
- **Last Updated:** October 2025

Disclaimers

Guidelines: Disclaimers should be used to clarify limitations or conditions of the page. Use them when the article's neutrality, sourcing, or completeness is under review. Disclaimers

typically appear at the top of the page, especially if the disclaimer addresses concerns about bias or timeliness. Disclaimers should signal to our readers that we are being honest about the complexity or disagreement of a topic.

Use disclaimers when:

- Accuracy or neutrality could be questioned.
- Data has multiple valid interpretations.
- Leaving information out could make Ballotpedia appear biased or misleading.

Italicize disclaimers.

- **Example:** *These statistics are mainly from government sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau and the National Center for Education Statistics. Figures given were the most recent as of October 2022.*
- **Example:** *This article is outside of Ballotpedia's coverage scope and does not receive scheduled updates.*
- **Related entries and documentation:** Explanatory notes, Tooltips,
 - [Ballotpedia basics: Customized Disclaimers \(Version 2.1\)](#) ;
 - [BP Basics Documentation: On-site disclaimers](#)
- **Last Updated:** October 2025

District of Columbia

Guidelines: On first reference, use Washington, D.C. On second reference, D.C. is acceptable. Use *District of Columbia* only when the full name seems necessary for context.

- **Example:** The mayor of Washington, D.C., is the city's chief executive. The current mayor of D.C. is Muriel Bowser (D).
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** August 2025

District

Guidelines: Capitalize *District* when part of a proper name.

- **Examples:** Ohio's 3rd Congressional District, the district, congressional districts
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Dual heritage

Guidelines: Do not hyphenate terms describing dual heritage.

- **Incorrect:** Asian-American
- **Correct:** Asian American

- **Related entries and documentation:**

☰ Monthly style email, May 2024, Writing about race, ethnicity, and national heritage

- **Last Updated:** July 2025

E

Election, Election Day, election night

Guidelines: Reserve capitalization of Election Day only for the November general election (the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November). All other elections may be referred to as election day (lowercase). The phrase election night should be lowercased in all cases.

- **Example:** This section includes articles covering events related to the presidential election that took place after Election Day.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Electoral College

Guidelines: The Electoral College is the process by which the states and the District of Columbia elect the president of the United States. Each state and D.C. is represented by a number of electors equal to the size of its congressional delegation. There are 538 electors in total. To win the Electoral College, a candidate must receive a majority — at least 270—electoral votes. Capitalize Electoral College; lowercase electoral votes.

The president of the U.S. is elected by electoral votes, not by popular vote. When discussing vote totals, include the number of electoral votes and the total number of votes each candidate received when it is relevant.

- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

— Em dash

Guidelines: Use an em dash when you want to set off a list or phrase in a sentence. An em dash implies a longer pause than a comma, creating greater emphasis. Add a space both before and after an em dash.

- **Examples:**
 - Kansas is one of six states — including Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, and Vermont — with neither a trifecta nor a triplex.
 - The committee requested that the “Big Three” asset managers — BlackRock, State Street Global Advisors (State Street), and Vanguard — appear.

- **Related entries and documentation:**
 Monthly style digest, December 2022, Hyphens and dashes
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Ellipsis

Guidelines: Avoid using an ellipsis at the beginning or end of direct quotes. It is better to use the full quote or find a different quote. If you must use an ellipsis, follow this format: "TEXT" When altering quotes, be sure to avoid distorting the meaning of the speaker's words.

- **Example:** White said, "I just got re-elected in November with 20,000 votes. ... We really don't feel like the council had the authority to really get me out of office, and people feel like that as well, so it's going to show in this upcoming election."
- **Example:** Gorsuch wrote, "Today, administrative law doesn't confine itself to the regulation of large and sophisticated entities. Our administrative state 'touches almost every aspect of daily life.' *Free Enterprise Fund v. Public Company Accounting Oversight Bd.*, 561 U. S. 477, 499 (2010). And often it is ordinary individuals who are unexpectedly caught in the whipsaw of all the rule changes a broad reading of *Chevron* invites. Mr. Buffington's case illustrates the impact on disabled veterans. Those who left active service before the VA changed its rule received all their promised benefits; those who served later do not. Not because of any change in law, only a change in an agency's view. So many other individuals who interact with the federal government have found themselves facing similar fates"
- **Related entries and documentation:**
 Monthly style email, October 2023, Apostrophes, brackets, and ellipses
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Email

Guidelines: Use email, not e-mail.

- **Example:** Send the report via email.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Ensure, insure

Guidelines: Use *ensure* to mean "to make certain." Use *insure* for insurance contexts.

- **Examples:** The law ensures voter access. The policy insures against flood damage.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

– En dash

Guidelines: The en dash is slightly shorter than the em dash, and it is used when listing ranges, vote totals, and connections. There should be no spaces before or after an en dash.

Note: On Ballotpedia, en dashes can be substituted with hyphens.

- **Examples:**
 - The Senate confirmed the nomination on December 7, 2022, by a vote of 52–48.
 - 2022–Present: Governor of Ohio
 - Eighty percent of the entire population lived along the I-25 corridor, the state's main north–south highway.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
 - 📘 Monthly style digest, December 2022, Hyphens and dashes
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

ESG (environmental, social, and governance)

Guidelines: On first reference, spell out environmental, social, and governance (ESG). Avoid speech tribe terms such as *woke investing* or *sustainable investing* unless they are part of a quotation or attributed to a person or group.

- **Examples:** The environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG) bill required asset managers to prioritize carbon emission reductions when investing pension funds. Supporters said the policy would ensure sustainable investing practices, while opponents described the investing approach as political.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** September 2025

Ex officio

Guidelines: The word ex officio should not be italicized, hyphenated, or placed in quotation marks.

- **Example:** He is an ex officio member of the committee.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Exclamation point (!)

Guidelines: Exclamation points should never be combined with a comma or a period (whether in text or in footnotes).

- **Example:** Supporters all carried signs reading “Jeb!” which they were handing out at the front door.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Explanatory notes

Guidelines: Explanatory notes enhance the reader's knowledge by providing context or clarifying terminology to help the reader understand the content without interrupting the main narrative. Explanatory notes should be italicized and placed after closing punctuation unless doing so would cause confusion. [Tooltips](#) should be used rather than explanatory notes to define terms.

Use an explanatory note when:

- A concept is unique to a specific time, place, or legal framework.
- You need to note exceptions, caveats, or distinctions (but not lengthy analysis).
- **Example:** In Arizona, all polling places are open from 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. local time. `<ref>"Arizona generally observes Mountain Standard Time; however, the Navajo Nation observes daylight saving time. Because of this, Mountain Daylight Time is sometimes observed in Arizona."</ref>`
- **Example:** As of September 30, 2025, 41 states restricted abortions after a certain point in pregnancy. `<ref>"Note: Exceptions to these thresholds are generally provided when pregnancy threatens the mother's life or health."</ref>`
- **Related entries and documentation:** [Tooltips](#), Disclaimers
- **Last Updated:** October 2025

External links

Guidelines: Do not capitalize *links* in External links.

- **Incorrect:** ==External Links==
- **Correct:** ==External links==
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

F

Factive verbs

Guidelines: Factive verbs are verbs of attribution that presuppose the truth of the claim they try to make. You can *say*, *claim*, or *write* something that isn't true. But you can't *note*, *affirm*, or *realize* something that isn't true. Factive verbs are fine to use when discussing verifiable facts, but they should be avoided when discussing opinions, narratives, or talking points. Use *said*, *stated*, or *wrote* to avoid introducing bias.

- **Related entries and documentation:** [Bias basics: factive verbs](#)

- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Federal

Guidelines: Capitalize Federal when part of a proper name or title.

- **Examples:** Federal Election Commission, Federal Register, the federal government
- **Related entries and documentation:** .
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Fewer, less

Guidelines: Use *fewer* for countable items and *less* for uncountable quantities.

- **Examples:** Fewer voters attended. Less support was evident.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Firearms, guns

Guidelines: When writing about firearms-related policy, legislation, or ballot measures, use the term *firearms* or *guns*. Avoid using *assault rifle* or *assault weapon*; these are speech tribe terms.

Additionally, avoid the speech tribe terms *gun control* and *gun rights*. Instead of using the speech tribe term *constitutional carry*, use some version of this: state law does/does not require citizens to have a permit to carry a firearm. Instead of *Second Amendment rights*, use the constitutional right to own a firearm. Do not use the speech tribe terms listed unless they appear in a direct quotation.

- **Example:** Here is an example of how to handle speech tribe terms when writing about firearms from [Massachusetts Firearm Regulations Referendum \(2026\) - Ballotpedia](#): “changing the law from a ban on people possessing, selling, or otherwise transferring *assault weapons* to a ban on *assault-style firearms*, except those registered by August 1, 2024 (Note: The terms *assault weapons* and *assault-style firearms* are legal terms in Massachusetts with specific definitions.);”
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Fiscal year

Guidelines: Use fiscal year, not FY, on first reference.

- **Examples:** The fiscal year 2025 budget was approved. FY 2025 spending increased.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Front-runner

Guidelines: Always include a hyphen in the term *front-runner*.

- **Example:** Smith emerged as the front-runner in the presidential race after the debate.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

G

Global warming

Guidelines: Generally, avoid using the speech tribe term *global warming*. It may appear in quotations or when part of the formal name of a law, agency, or program. Be specific about what policies are being debated.

- **Example:** Supporters said the bill was needed to address global warming.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** September 2025

Governor

Guidelines: Capitalize *governor* when used as a title before a name. Lowercase governor in general use or when separated by a comma.

- **Examples:** Governor Wes Moore (D-Md.); Wes Moore (D), the governor of Maryland;
The governor
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Greener

Guidelines: `{{Greener}}` is a template used across Ballotpedia that allows writers to control the text that appears to the reader in date-dependent circumstances, preventing tense errors.

- **Examples:** Five seats `{{Greener|start=11/5/2025 8pm EST|before=are|after=were}}` on the ballot.
- **Related entries and documentation:** [Template:Greener](#), [{{Greener}} Training](#)
- **Last Updated:** September 2025

Greenhouse gases, emissions

Guidelines: Specify the gas you are writing about when possible (e.g., carbon dioxide, methane). Avoid terms such as *carbon pollution* or *decarbonization* unless they are part of a quotation or are attributed to a speaker or group.

- **Example:** The EPA projected the rule would reduce carbon, methane, and other emissions by 30% by 2030.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** September 2025

H

Headers

Guidelines: On a wiki-based site, headers can be as big as Level 1 (=Header=) and as small as Level 6 (=====Header=====). On Ballotpedia, normal headers should stay between Level 2 and Level 5. Level 1 is the same size as the page title, and Level 6 is smaller than the normal page text, so these levels should be avoided under most circumstances. *Note:* Level 1 headers can be used to create tabs.

- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Hiding content

Guidelines: At times, we may want to hide content instead of deleting it. To do so, use the following code: `<!--XXXX-->` *Note:* transclusion tags cannot be hidden without breaking the transclusion.

- **Example:** `<!--New York's 21st Congressional District voted for [[Barack Obama]] (D) in 2008 and 2012 and [[Donald Trump|Trump]] in 2016 and 2020.<ref>[https://www.cnn.com/2021/05/11/politics/elise-stefanik-district-voter-reaction/index.html "CNN", "Voters in Elise Stefanik's district have mixed reactions to her embrace of Trump and rise in the GOP," May 11, 2021]</ref>-->`
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Healthcare

Guidelines: Use one word for healthcare.

- **Examples:** the healthcare bill; her policy on healthcare
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Hispanic

Guidelines: *Hispanic* refers to someone from any Spanish-speaking country. The terms *Hispanic* and *Latino/Latina* should not be used interchangeably, though both may be used to describe the same person in some cases. A person from Brazil would be Latino/Latina but not Hispanic. A person from Spain would be Hispanic but not Latino/Latina. A person from Cuba would be both Hispanic and Latino/Latina.

In cases where either word would be appropriate, follow the person's preference if known. Otherwise, Latino/Latina is preferred. When possible, be more specific (for example, Mexican American, Cuban, or Puerto Rican).

- **Example:** Opponents of the recall argued that it was racially motivated, since Ebel is the first Hispanic woman to be elected to the board.
- **Related entries and documentation:** [Latino/Latina](#)
 Monthly style email, May 2024, Writing about race, ethnicity, and national heritage
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

However

Guidelines: Writers are permitted to start sentences with the conjunctive adverb *however*, but this construction should not be overused.

- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Hyphen

Guidelines: The hyphen is used to connect two words and show that they convey a single idea. Hyphens are most often used in compound modifiers, such as “little-known” or “well-liked,” when they come directly before a noun. Hyphens should never be used when the first word is an adverb ending in -ly. When setting off a nonessential element from the rest of the text, use commas or em dashes, but never hyphens.

Along with many aspects of the English language, rules for hyphen usage are complicated and allow for many exceptions. Sometimes, the best way to figure out whether or not a word should be hyphenated is to type it into a Google search and see what comes up. However, there are a few basic guidelines to remember when dealing with hyphens. The *AP Stylebook* gives us the most important hyphen advice: “**The fewer hyphens the better**; use them only when not using them causes confusion.”

- Use a hyphen to join words in a compound modifier when the modifier comes directly before the noun or when it follows a form of *to be* after the noun. In general, do not hyphenate a modifier that follows the noun without a form of *to be*.
 - **Examples:** a little-known candidate; he is well-liked

- Do not hyphenate modifiers when the two words are strongly associated as one concept.
 - **Examples:** a vice presidential candidate; the U.S. Senate seat
- Never use a hyphen to join two words in a compound modifier when the first word ends with *-ly*.
 - **Examples:** the highly partisan group; the rapidly increasing price tag
- Hyphenate words starting with prefixes like *re-* or *anti-* only when the last vowel is repeated.
 - **Examples:** re-elect; renominate
- Do not hyphenate words ending in *-wide*.
 - **Examples:** nationwide; statewide; citywide
- Hyphenate numbers 21-99 when it is necessary to spell them out rather than using figures. This should only occur when a number is the first word of a sentence.
 - **Examples:** twenty-three; four hundred ninety-seven
- Hyphenate all fractions less than one.
 - **Examples:** a two-thirds majority; nine-tenths of the voters
- Hyphenate an age only if it is used as a noun or as an adjective preceding a noun.
 - **Examples:** the three-year-old laughed; his 16-year-old daughter; he is 50 years old
- Most (but not all) nouns are either written as two words or compounded into one word without a hyphen.
 - **Examples:** a businessman; term limits
- **Related entries and documentation:**
 -  Monthly style digest, December 2022, Hyphens and dashes
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

I

Immigration

Guidelines: Immigration policy determines who may enter the country as a temporary worker, student, refugee, or permanent resident and who may become a new citizen of the United States. Immigration affects a variety of public policy areas, including national security, criminal justice, budgets, education, and healthcare. The federal government is responsible for setting and enforcing most immigration policy. States have a largely supportive role, enacting policies that may, for example, determine which public services immigrants can access, establish employee screening requirements, or guide the interaction between related state agencies and their federal counterparts.

When writing about foreign nationals residing in the country without legal permission, who either illegally crossed a border without proper documentation or overstayed a visa, use the term *individual(s) residing in the United States without legal permission*.

Avoid these speech tribe terms: *illegal alien*, *illegals*, *unaccompanied alien children*, *undocumented noncitizen*, *undocumented immigrant*, *migrant*, *anchor baby*, and *irregular migrant*.

The term *illegal immigration* is acceptable; the term *illegal immigrant* is not.

- **Example:** In 2024, Adams proposed a budget that included increased spending on education and police officers, and cuts to costs associated with housing individuals residing in the country without legal permission.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
 Memo: Neutrality panel results on immigration terminology
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Incumbent

Guidelines: Use incumbent to refer to a current officeholder seeking re-election.

- **Example:** The incumbent senator won by 12 percentage points.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Independent, political affiliation

Guidelines: Do not capitalize *independent* when referring to a person's political affiliation. An independent voter or politician is a person who is not affiliated with a political party.

- **Examples:** Angus King (independent) is a member of the U.S. Senate from Maine. Sen. Bernie Sanders (Vt.) is an independent member of Congress who caucuses with the Democratic Party.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** August 2025

Indian American

Guidelines: The term *Indian American* is used to describe people who were born or have come from the South Asian nation of India and now live in the U.S. Do not use the term as a shorthand for Native Americans. Do not hyphenate *Indian American*.

- **Example:** Haley's election in 2010 made her the first Indian American woman to become governor of South Carolina and the second Indian American governor in the United States after Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal (R).
- **Related entries and documentation:**
 Monthly style email, May 2024, Writing about race, ethnicity, and national heritage
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Internal links

Guidelines: An internal link is a link in the text of a Ballotpedia article that links to another Ballotpedia page. These links are created by placing two sets of square brackets around the page title, like this: `[[Page title]]`. In some cases, we may need to alter the linked text to make it fit with the surrounding text. To do this, we can use a pipe (`|`) after the page title, followed by the desired text. These changes may be necessary to change wording or capitalization.

- **Example:** Wes Moore is the `[[Governor of Maryland|governor of Maryland]]`.

Internal links should be used with the first reference of that page name (or of a closely related concept) in any article. The internal link should generally be added again if the term is repeated on the page under a different Level 2 heading. Additional internal links may be used if they would add to the user experience, but they are not required.

You do not need to alter the text of an internal link to include a person's full title or to include 's for a possessive name. It is not considered an error to do so, but it is more efficient to eliminate this extra step.

- **Incorrect:** `[[Donald Trump|President Donald Trump's]]` One Big Beautiful Bill Act became law on July 4, 2025.
- **Correct:** President `[[Donald Trump]]`'s One Big Beautiful Bill Act became law on July 4, 2025.

Internet

Guidelines: Always lowercase *internet*.

- **Examples:** Access to the internet is widespread.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Italics

Guidelines:

- **Companies, organizations, and law firms:** Write the names of companies and organizations in plain text, without italics.
 - **Example:** TikTok has vowed to wage a legal war after President Joe Biden signed a bipartisan bill that forces its Beijing-based parent company to sell the popular video-sharing app or face a U.S. ban.
 - Because law firms are simply companies, their names should be formatted in plain text like those of any other company. If the name of the law firm looks too confusing, try changing the phrasing of the sentence.
 - **Example:** He spent five years as an attorney at Pietragallo, Bosick & Gordon.
- **Court cases:** Always italicize the names of court cases.
 - **Example:** *City of Grants Pass, Oregon v. Johnson* concerns laws regulating camping on public property and the Eighth Amendment.
- **For emphasis:** Try to avoid using italics for emphasis. Draw attention to important text through phrasing rather than formatting.
 - **Incorrect:** Martinez said that women's issues are *really* important to her.
 - **Correct:** Martinez, who is running on a platform she titled A Woman's Agenda, said her plan is a "call to action for an MD-06 that prioritizes women's issues and empowerment."
- **Foreign words:** Do not italicize foreign words that have been largely adopted by the English language, but do italicize words in other languages unfamiliar to most English speakers. One way to determine this is to see if the word is in the English dictionary.
 - **Example:** He hosted a party with drinks and hors d'oeuvres.
 - **Example:** She served as the committee's de facto president.
 - **Example:** His melancholic attitude was caused by a strong sense of *Weltschmerz*.
 - Latin species names are considered unfamiliar foreign words and should be italicized.

- **Example:** Gray wolves (*canis lupus*) live in packs and hunt as a group.
- **Titles:** Italicize the names of long artistic works and works that can be broken down into parts. These works include the following:
 - Books
 - Newsletters, including our own (*Daily Brew*, *Hall Pass*, etc.)
 - Newspapers
 - Magazines
 - Academic journals
 - Movies
 - Television series
 - Plays, operas, and musicals
 - Music albums
 - Long poems
 - Blogs
 - Podcasts
 - Websites containing individual articles
- **Put quotation marks around the names of the smaller sections that comprise items in the list above.** These smaller sections include the following:
 - Chapters of a book
 - Articles in a newspaper, magazine, or academic journal
 - Titles of episodes in a television series
 - Acts of a play
 - Songs in an album
 - Articles from a blog or website
- Note that television and radio stations (including call signs) should not be italicized. These are treated as companies rather than as artistic works. If we need to cite the website of a television or radio station, the website title may be written in italics, but in these cases, the website domain should be added for clarity.
 - **Example:** Fox News reported that Biden said he wanted to debate Trump.
 - **Example:** The article on sending aid to Ukraine can be found on *CNN.com*.
- **Words as words:** When referring to a word as a word rather than as the object it represents, italicize the word rather than putting it in quotation marks. This rule also applies when referring to letters as letters.

- **Example:** The word *amnesty* has a positive connotation for some and a negative connotation for others.
- **Example:** The letter *i* appears four times in the word Mississippi.
- **Misc. rules:** Italicize the names of specific ships, trains, airplanes, and spacecraft. Italicize titles of visual artwork, such as paintings and sculptures. Do not italicize the names of products, games, or computer/phone applications.
- **Related entries and documentation:**  Monthly style email, April 2024, Italics
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

J

Judge, justice

Guidelines: Capitalize judge or justice when used as a title before a name. Lowercase judge or justice in general use or when separated by a comma.

- **Examples:** Judge Judy Smith, Justice John Roberts, the judge, John Roberts, the chief justice
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Judgment

Guidelines: Use *judgment* without the extra -e, which is more common in American English, while British English uses *judgement*.

- **Example:** The judgment under review came from the United States District Court for the Western District of Texas.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

L

Latino/Latina

Guidelines: *Latino/Latina* refers to someone from Latin America (Mexico, Central America, or South America). The terms *Latino/Latina* and *Hispanic* should not be used interchangeably, though both may be used to describe the same person in some cases. A person from Brazil would be Latino/Latina but not Hispanic. A person from Spain would be Hispanic but not Latino/Latina. A person from Cuba would be both Hispanic and Latino/Latina.

In cases where either word would be appropriate, follow the person's preference if known. Otherwise, Latino/Latina is preferred. When possible, be more specific (for example, Mexican American, Cuban, or Puerto Rican).

Avoid the terms *Latinx* and *Latine*. They are speech tribe terms.

- **Example:** Cortez Masto, the first Latina elected to the U.S. Senate, took office in 2017 after defeating Heck (R) 47.1% to 44.7%.
- **Related entries and documentation:** [Hispanic](#)
 Monthly style email, May 2024, Writing about race, ethnicity, and national heritage
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Left-wing, leftist, far-left

Guidelines: Do not use *left-wing*, *leftist*, or *far-left* to describe a person's political ideology and beliefs. Instead, describe the person's political affiliation by including details about voting history and issue stances.

- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Legislatively referred

Guidelines: Do not hyphenate the modifier legislatively referred.

- **Example:** It is a legislatively referred constitutional amendment.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Legislature

Guidelines: Capitalize the word *legislature* when it follows a state name. Do not capitalize it when it stands alone or when the word state is used in place of the state's name. A full list of official state legislature names appears [here](#).

- **Examples:** the Washington Legislature; the Wyoming State Legislature; the state legislature; the legislature
- **Related entries and documentation:** [Official names of state legislatures](#)
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

M

Majority, plurality

Guidelines: A majority is more than half the votes cast; a plurality is the largest number of votes, but less than a majority.

- **Examples:** Lincoln won a plurality of the popular vote (about 40%) and a majority of electoral votes (180 of 303).
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Media

Guidelines: The word media may be treated as singular or plural. When referring to multiple sources of mass communication, use media as a count noun and treat it as plural (the plural form of medium). On the other hand, when referring to mass communication as one collective unit, use media as a mass noun and treat it as singular. Do not use the speech tribe term *fake news* unless it is in a quotation.

- **Examples:** The media have largely ignored the issue. The media is often considered biased.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Middle class, middle-class

Guidelines: Use middle class (no hyphen) as a noun and middle-class (with a hyphen) as an adjective.

- **Examples:** Politicians often appeal to the middle class for votes, promising to protect middle-class values and economic stability.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Middle initials

Guidelines: Avoid using middle initials unless the person specifically requests or prefers them. This preference can be inferred if a candidate uses the initial in his or her campaign materials. If the middle initial is used, ensure that it appears in the page title, first reference, and infobox.

- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Midterm election

Guidelines: Use midterm election, not mid-term election.

- **Example:** In 2022, the previous midterm election year, the same 30 attorney general offices were on the ballot.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Months

Guidelines: Do not abbreviate months in the text of an article. On *BP News* and in tables, charts, and graphs, months may be abbreviated in the following manner:

- January (Jan.)
- February (Feb.)
- March (March)
- April (April)
- May (May)
- June (June)
- July (July)
- August (Aug.)
- September (Sept.)
- October (Oct.)
- November (Nov.)
- December (Dec.)

- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Myriad

Guidelines: Meaning “a great number” or “innumerable,” myriad may be used as a noun or as an adjective. The adjective form (without the word of) is more widely accepted. However, the phrase a myriad of is acceptable.

- **Examples:** funding for myriad immigration programs; a myriad of state and federal laws
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

N

Names, individuals

Guidelines: Use a person’s full name on the first mention. On subsequent mentions — including those in later sections of an article — use only the last name unless the first name is necessary for clarity. When text is being transcluded onto another page, be sure that no stray last names appear without clear context.

- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Nationwide

Guidelines: Spell in accordance with the listing in this entry.

- **Example:** Nationwide voter turnout increased.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Native Americans

Guidelines: Use the term *Native Americans* when describing two or more people from different tribes or tribal nations. Do not use the terms *Native American* or *Indigenous person* when writing about an individual. Instead, include the name of the tribe. Do not use the term *Indian American* to describe an individual from a tribe or tribal nation.

- **Example:** In an effort to promote tribal sovereignty, the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDA) was passed by Congress in 1975. The ISDA permits qualifying Native American tribes to administer healthcare programs.
- **Example:** Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr. signed legislation redistricting the tribe's legislative council district map based on major population changes over the past decade.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
 - 📧 Monthly style email, May 2024, Writing about race, ethnicity, and national heritage
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Nicknames, individuals

Guidelines: Nicknames can be included in quotes on first reference, but they should generally not appear in page titles or in the infobox. When middle initials are used, the nickname should appear after the initial. If a person is known primarily by his or her nickname — as demonstrated by their campaign materials, references to him or her in media, etc. — a writer may substitute the nickname for the first name in the page title and infobox. Additionally, a redirect page should be created using the legal name.

- **Examples:**
 - Barbara “Bobbi” Petrunaro
 - Hyland “Buddy” Fowler Jr. (The page title is “Buddy Fowler,” which redirects from “Hyland Fowler Jr.”)
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Noncitizen

Guidelines: Use the term noncitizen when writing about:

- 1.) Individuals in the U.S. who are permanent residents with legal permission;
- 2.) Temporary residents visiting the U.S. for a period of time as students, tourists, foreign workers, and foreign officials; and

3.) Individuals in the U.S without legal permission.

Do not use *non-citizen*.

- **Example:** This article covers noncitizen voting in the United States.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

None

Guidelines: The word none may be singular or plural depending on context. It is treated as singular when it means “not one” or when it refers to a mass noun (something that is uncountable). It is treated as plural when it means “not any.” In some cases, either form may be used because “not one” and “not any” both work in context. The easiest rule of thumb for using none is to use a plural verb whenever the noun following “none of” is plural and a singular verb whenever the noun is singular. *Note:* This sentence may also be written with a singular verb if the goal is to stress “not one,” but the plural form is more common.

- **Examples:** None of the members have opposed the bill. None of the water is safe to drink.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Nonpartisan

Guidelines: Write *nonpartisan* as one word without a hyphen.

- **Examples:** a nonpartisan election; the nonpartisan organization
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Nonprofit

Guidelines: Write nonprofit as one word without a hyphen.

- **Example:** a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Numerals

Guidelines:

- **In general, spell out numbers up to nine.**
 - There are three weeks until the general election.

- **Use numerals for 10 and above.**
 - An average of 63 measures were certified for even-year ballots by this point from 2010 through 2020.
- **Use numerals in the following cases:**
 - Academic course numbers
 - American History 101
 - Addresses
 - 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. SE
 - Ages
 - She has a 6-year-old daughter. The building is 200 years old.
 - Aircraft, ships, and spacecraft designations and vehicle names
 - F-18f, QE 2, Apollo 9, Aston Martin DB5
 - *Exception:* Air Force One, the president's plane
 - Court decisions, court districts
 - The Supreme Court ruled 5-4
 - 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals
 - Decimals, percentages, and fractions
 - 5.6, 8%, 3 ½
 - *Exception:* Spell out simple fractions under one.
 - two-fifths, three-quarters
 - Dimensions
 - He is 5 feet 11 inches tall. The car is 17 feet long.
 - Military ranks, used as titles with names; military terms and weapons
 - Petty Officer Second Class Alan Smith; M16 rifle; 9 mm pistol; 6th fleet
 - Millions, Billions, and Trillions: For large round numbers, AP style suggests a mix of numerals and words.
 - 1 million people; \$2 billion lawsuit
 - Money
 - \$8; £100
 - Odds and ratios
 - A 2-1 chance
 - Page numbers and sequential designations
 - Page 4; Chapter 2
 - Political districts
 - Ward 9; 3rd congressional district
 - School grades
 - Use figures for grades 10 and above
 - 10th grade
 - Spell out first through ninth grades
 - Second grade
 - Sports scores
 - The Cleveland Browns won the Super Bowl 31-21.
 - Times

- 3:30 p.m.; 6 a.m.; 5 o'clock
 - *Exception:* Write out noon and midnight.
- Votes
 - The bill passed by a vote of 96-4.
- **Spell out a number at the beginning of a sentence.**
 - Two thousand people attended the rally.
 - *Exception:* In some cases, it is acceptable to use a numeral at the beginning of a sentence in a newsletter.
 - *Exception:* Write out the year in numbers at the beginning of a sentence.
 - 2021 saw a record number of school board recall elections.
 - In general, avoid beginning a sentence with a year.
- **Related entries and documentation:** [Monthly style email, February 2022, Numbers](#)
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Numeric ranges

Guidelines: When prefacing a range with a preposition (from or between), link the numbers with a written word (to or and) rather than with a hyphen. When displaying a range with a hyphen, use figures for all numbers, even if they are less than 10. When writing dollar ranges that include the word million, write million beside both the upper and lower bounds to avoid confusion. With percent ranges, no such repetition is required.

- **Examples:** \$14 million to \$36 million (not \$14 to \$36 million); between 14 and 36%, between four and 12 vetoes per term; candidates who earned 9-15% of the vote; from 50 to 60 cases a year
- **Related entries and documentation:** [Monthly style email, February 2022, Numbers](#)
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

O

Obamacare, Affordable Care Act

Guidelines: On the first use, refer to Obama's healthcare law as the Affordable Care Act (or the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act) and mention that it is commonly called Obamacare. In subsequent references, use the word Obamacare or the abbreviation ACA. Do not use quotes when referring to Obamacare.

- **Example:** President Barack Obama (D) signed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, commonly known as Obamacare, into law on March 23, 2010. The ACA created a new type of nonprofit health insurance company. Under Obamacare, insurance companies cannot deny an individual coverage due to pre-existing conditions.

- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Officeholder

Guidelines: Spell in accordance with the listing in this entry.

- **Example:** The officeholder addressed the community's concerns during the town hall meeting.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Opt-out/ opt out

Guidelines: When using *opt out* as a verb, do not include a hyphen. When using *opt-out* as an adjective, use the hyphen.

- **Example:** The senator decided to opt out of the controversial bill due to concerns raised by her constituents.
- **Example:** The opt-out clause was included in the treaty to provide member states with the option to withdraw from certain provisions.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

P

Pacific Islander

Guidelines: Use the term *Pacific Islander* to describe people from the Pacific Islands, which include the three major subregions of Oceania (Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia). This term should only be used for people who are ethnically Pacific Islander. Be specific when possible (Hawaiian, Samoan, etc.).

- **Example:** Samoan is the primary language, but English, Tongan, and other Pacific islander languages are also spoken.
- **Example:** Tulsi Gabbard was the first American Samoan congresswoman.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
 - 📧 Monthly style email, May 2024, Writing about race, ethnicity, and national heritage
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Parentheses

Guidelines: Writers are welcome to use parentheses when doing so improves clarity and ease of reading. Parentheses may also be used to communicate a person's party affiliation or to

display an organization's abbreviated name. Parentheses should not be used to add supplemental information to quoted material; use brackets for this purpose instead.

- **Examples:** Read King (R); Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Parental Bill of Rights

Guidelines: A Parental Bill of Rights, also known as a Parents' Bill of Rights, is a set of state laws that grant parents specific rights regarding their children's education. Statewide Parents' Bills of Rights can constrain a school board's authority over school policies, including parental notification requirements and required curriculum, among others. However, the specific provisions of Parents' Bills of Rights vary by state. Writers should explain each law's specific provisions or quote from the law itself.

Parental Bill of Rights is a borderline speech term; however, writers may use it because both supporters and opponents commonly do. Ballotpedia does not currently have a preferred neutral alternative, and substituting another term would likely cause confusion, as Parental Bill of Rights is the widely recognized phrase.

- **Example:** Parents' Bills of Rights, though they vary across states, contain provisions related to parent involvement in public schools, sometimes including parental notification requirements or parental opt-out rights for specific curricular topics.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** October 2025

Passive voice

Guidelines: The passive voice places emphasis on the object rather than on the subject of a sentence. In other words, it emphasizes the thing that is acted upon rather than the thing that is acting. The active voice is generally preferable because it is stronger than the passive voice. Furthermore, the passive voice can often leave out important details. For instance, “the lamp was broken” (passive) avoids placing blame on the actor, whereas “John broke the lamp” (active) adds an important detail to the story. While the passive voice can be overused, it is acceptable — and often preferable — when the actor isn't important or is already known.

- **Examples:** She was elected to the court in 2024. Each section of the report was given a separate scoring structure.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
[Monthly style email, April 2023, Grammar rules you can break](#)
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Percentage points or less

Guidelines: Use “percentage points or less” — not “percentage points or fewer” — when describing differences in percentages.

- **Incorrect:** Voter turnout was 10 percentage points or fewer in most counties.
- **Correct:** Voter turnout was 10 percentage points or less in most counties.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Percent

Guidelines: Use the % sign when paired with a numeral, with no space, in most cases. For amounts less than 1%, place a zero to the left of the decimal. When writing about percentage points, use numerals.

- **Examples:**
 - He won 56.2% of the vote.
 - Gas prices rose by 0.8% last month.
 - The party’s approval rating is up 4 percentage points.
- **Related entries and documentation:** [Monthly style email, February 2022, Numbers](#)
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Person/people of color

Guidelines: Avoid the term *people of color*. While some use this [term](#), others avoid it because it groups all non-white people together who may not share the same experiences. Instead, be specific when writing about different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

- **Possible alternatives:** people from various racial and ethnic backgrounds; people from different cultures
- **Related entries and documentation:** [Monthly style email, May 2024, Writing about race, ethnicity, and national heritage](#)
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Photo captions

Guidelines: Photo captions may be written as complete sentences or as short phrases/clauses. Capitalize the first word in all cases. If a complete sentence is used to caption a photo, use proper grammar and punctuation. Do not end sentence fragments with a period.

- **Example:** Feral swine in Michigan
- **Example:** Parrot feather, an invasive aquatic species, has been found to threaten freshwater resources.

When identifying members of a photo, list them from left to right (starting at the top row if applicable), prefacing the names with “from left” and a colon.

- **Example:** From left: Sens. Robert Thompson (R), Tim Johnson (D), John Peterson (R)
- **Example:** Top row, from left: Sens. Robert Thompson (R), Tim Johnson (D), John Peterson (R); middle row: Rep. Jim Swenson (D), Sen. Peter Robertson (R)
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Political affiliation

Guidelines: Political affiliations after a candidate’s or official’s name should be written in parentheses, following the formats written below. If the party is anything other than Republican (R), Democratic (D), Libertarian (L), Green (G), or Constitution (C), write out the party’s full name. If the candidate is an independent candidate, his or her name should be followed by (I). In all cases, if the state or district is obvious in context, the party or affiliation alone may be used. If both the state/district and party are obvious, no parenthetical affiliation is necessary. *Any party that is ballot-qualified in more than 10 states will be abbreviated in parentheses after a person’s name.* For parties that are not on more than 10 state ballots, write out the name of the party in parentheses after the person’s name. See also: [List of political parties in the United States](#).

- For candidates for any office, format as Firstname Lastname (party abbreviation).
 - **Examples:** Joe Biden (D); Donald Trump (R); Jo Jorgensen (L); Howie Hawkins (G); Don Blankenship (C); Kanye West (I)
- For members of the U.S. Congress, format as Firstname Lastname (party abbreviation + hyphen + state abbreviation).
 - **Examples:** Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.); Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.)
 - *Note:* Remember to use the AP state abbreviation rather than the postal code abbreviation.
- For members of a state legislature, format as State Firstname Lastname (party abbreviation + hyphen + district number).
 - **Examples:** Louisiana State Sen. Troy Brown (D-2); Alabama State Rep. Phil Williams (R-6)
 - *Note:* With state legislators, the state is not given in the parenthetical affiliation, so it must be made clear from the context of the article.

- **Related entries and documentation:** [List of political parties in the United States](#),
 Monthly style email, March 2022, Political titles and affiliations
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Preschool

Guidelines: Do not include a hyphen in *preschool*.

- **Examples:** In April 2022, he signed a bill that funded 10 hours per week of free preschool.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** August 2025

President

Guidelines: Capitalize *president* when used as a title before a name or when referring to the current U.S. president. Lowercase *president* in general use.

- **Examples:** President Donald Trump (R), former President Barack Obama (D), the president, the president of the organization
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Profile pages, names

Guidelines: The basic format for an individual's profile page — regardless of whether that person is a candidate, an elected official, an influencer, etc. — is [First name] [Last name]. In cases where a candidate goes by a [First initial] [Middle name] [Last name] (example: K. Charles Reeves), use [[K. Charles Reeves]] as the profile page title. If you know the candidate's full first name, add that to the first name field in the database. If you do not know the candidate's full first name, add the initial to the first name field. Do not put the middle name in this field.

In cases where a candidate goes by [Two initials] [Last name] (example: KC Reeves), group the two initials together with no space between them. Only add periods between them if that is how the candidate list displays the name. If you know the candidate's full first name, add that to the first name field in the database. If you do not know the candidate's full first name, add the first initial to the first name field.

- **Related entries and documentation:**
 BP basics documentation: Titles and naming conventions
- **Last Updated:** October 2025

Profile pages, nicknames

Guidelines: An individual's nickname should only be used in a page title if a person is primarily known by that nickname. If campaign materials, other news sources, or official filing documents

refer to an individual primarily by his or her nickname, then this nickname should be substituted for the individual's legal first name in the page title. This guideline also applies to individuals who go by their initials.

If a nickname is used in place of an individual's legal first name in a page title, then a redirect page should be created with the person's legal first and last name. For more information on how to create a redirect page, see [BP Basics Documentation: Redirect policy](#).

- **Examples:**

- Main profile page: Bobby Jindal
 - Redirect page: Piyush Jindal
- Main profile page: Buddy Fowler
 - Redirect page: Hyland Fowler Jr.
- Main profile page: T.J. Donovan
 - Redirect page: Thomas Donovan

- **Related entries and documentation:**

[BP basics documentation: Titles and naming conventions](#)

- **Last Updated:** October 2025

Profanity

Guidelines: Include profanity in quotes only when essential. Use symbols (e.g., “f***”) to censor offensive words unless full spelling is required.

- **Example:** This is complete bull****,” she said of the ruling.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** September 2025

Pronouns

Guidelines: Avoid using pronouns in standardized language when possible. This prevents gender-related errors. Use a person's last name in most cases.

- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Proper nouns with shared words

Guidelines: When two or more proper nouns each end with a common word, the word does not need to be repeated unless failure to do so would cause confusion. The shared word — made plural in this construction — should not be capitalized. If the shared word comes at the beginning of the phrase, it may be appropriate to capitalize it. In these cases, the word can function as something of a title to the words that follow.

- **Examples:** Polk and Miami-Dade counties; the Manchester and Mettawee school districts; the 14th and 15th circuits; the Republican and Democratic parties; Districts 1 and 3; Circuits 5 and 6; Reps. Smith and Jones
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Proved, proven

Guidelines: The words *proved* and *proven* are both forms of the verb to prove. The word *proved* is used for the simple past. As a past participle, *proven* is Ballotpedia's preferred form.

- **Examples:** She proved him wrong. He was proven wrong. It is a proven fact. There are proven gas reserves.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Public assistance programs

Guidelines: Public assistance programs include measures regarding government-funded financial aid and support services for eligible individuals and groups, including age-based, disability-based, and income-based assistance, as well as restrictions or conditions on the services provided through such programs. This includes Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), child care subsidies (CCDF and TANF), and public housing. Be specific about the program you are writing about. Do not use the terms *welfare* or *food stamps*.

- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Public servant

Guidelines: Do not use the term *public servant*. Instead, use elected official, appointed official, or government employee.

- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Q

Question mark (?)

Guidelines: Question marks should never be combined with a comma or a period (whether in text or in footnotes).

- **Examples:** *The Washington Post*, "Political insiders answer: Will there be a brokered convention in 2016?" January 31, 2016.

- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Quotations, Direct quotations

Guidelines: Here are some basic guidelines for using quoted material:

Start a quote that is a complete sentence following a form of “to say” or a similar word with a capital letter. Surround the exact words of the speaker or writer with quotation marks.

- **Example:** “I have no intention of running for governor,” Smith said.

Do not use a comma at the start of an indirect or partial quotation.

- **Example:** He said the victory put him “firmly on the road to a first-ballot nomination.”

The period and comma always go within the quotation marks. The dash, semicolon, colon, question mark, and exclamation point go within the quotation marks when they apply to the quoted matter only. They go outside when they apply to the whole sentence.

- **Example:** “Why should I run for governor?” he asked.

Do not use quotation marks to report a few ordinary words that a speaker or writer has used.

- **Incorrect:** The senator said that he would “go home to Michigan” if he lost the election.
- **Correct:** The senator said that he would go home to Michigan if he lost the election.

- **Related entries and documentation:**

 [BP Basics Documentation: BP policy on quoted text](#)

- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Quotations, Dialogue

Guidelines: Each person’s words, no matter how brief, are placed in a separate paragraph, with quotation marks at the beginning and the end of each person’s speech.

Example:

“My sense, my take of today is that there was a huge display of unity amongst Europeans but also Europeans together with the Americans,” Dutch Foreign Minister Wopke Hoekstra said.

Slovak Foreign Minister Ivan Korčok said, “There’s unity that if red lines are crossed, then we have to respond with a robust package of sanctions.”

- **Related entries and documentation:**

- BP Basics Documentation: BP policy on quoted text

- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Quotations, Altering the text of a quote

Guidelines: Observe the following guidelines when deciding whether or how to alter the text of a quotation:

- Adding clarification using brackets
 - You can add clarifications to quotes using square brackets, but the words in brackets should normally be added to the quoted text; under most circumstances, do not use brackets to replace words in the quoted text.
 - **Example:** Murphy said, “He [Smith] has no interest in running for governor.”
 - It is acceptable to replace a quoted word with a word in brackets in two situations:
 - (1) You can change a verb to a different tense of the same verb if necessary to fit the quote into the sentence, and
 - (2) You can change a pronoun if necessary to keep the quote referring to the correct person.
 - If you need to alter the capitalization of the original quote in order to fit with these guidelines, use square brackets around the letter that has been altered. However, it is generally preferable to alter the sentence structure to make the capitalization work as it exists in the quote.
- Stylistic changes
 - Do not alter quotations to bring them into conformity with BP style. If the quote uses a hyphen where an em dash should be used, leave the hyphen. If the quote fails to italicize a newspaper title, leave it in plain text.

- **Related entries and documentation:**

- BP Basics Documentation: BP policy on quoted text

- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Quotations, Quotes within quotes

Guidelines: Always use single quotation marks (' ') around a quote that appears within another quote. Use double quotation marks (" ") around the outer quote. This rule also applies to quotes that appear inside the {{quote}} template. The large, blue quotation marks count as the double quotation marks, so any quotes that appear within the larger quote should be surrounded by single quotation marks.

- **Example:** The candidate stated, "Our campaign is focused on 'putting people first,' ensuring that every policy prioritizes the needs of our community."
- **Related entries and documentation:**
[BP Basics Documentation: BP policy on quoted text](#)
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Quotations, Splitting quotes

Guidelines: Split quotes occur when a writer interrupts a quote with a phrase such as “he said” or “she continued.” Split quotes should generally be avoided, but they may be used in moderation, especially when the source you are quoting from has already split the quote. While the two parts of the split quote probably went together, we cannot be certain, so split quotes from other sources should not be combined.

- **Example:** “I want to think seriously about it,” Clinton said. “I probably won’t begin thinking about it until sometime next year.”
- **Related entries and documentation:**
[BP Basics Documentation: BP policy on quoted text](#)
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Quotations, Quote template use

Guidelines: As a general rule, use the {{quote}} template for quotes longer than two sentences. Writers may use their discretion on this, however, keeping in mind that the {{quote}} template may alter the alignment of surrounding text.

- **Related entries and documentation:**
[BP Basics Documentation: BP policy on quoted text](#)
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Quotations, Scare quotes

Guidelines: In order to avoid bias errors, do not use scare quotes in your writing. Writers sometimes use quotation marks to distance themselves from a certain term, as if to say, “These are their words, not mine.” However, using quotes around short phrases or around just one word can often come across as sarcastic or skeptical. These are called scare quotes. When the quotation marks could be replaced by the phrase *so-called*, they are likely scare quotes and should be removed. It is never okay to use the phrase *so-called*.

- **Examples:**

- Once the law officially changes on January 1, marijuana “reform” will be in full effect in the state.
- This is the central problem of any “content moderation” scheme: somebody has to do the judging.
- The “core interest” of the Washington consensus is war.

You can avoid scare quotes by paraphrasing a short quote or using a longer quote.

- **Related entries and documentation:**  Bias basics: Scare quotes
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

R

Re-elect, re-election

Guidelines: Use a hyphen in re-elect and re-election.

- **Examples:** She was re-elected. He lost his re-election bid.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Redirects

Guidelines: A redirect is a page that automatically navigates a reader to a different page. A redirect page will contain only the following text, where pagename refers to the name of the page that you want the redirect page to link to. Here is a link to [BP's redirect policy](#).

- **Example:** #REDIRECT [[pagename]]
- **Related entries and documentation:**  BP Basics Documentation: Redirect policy
- **Last Updated:** September 2025

Referendum

Guidelines: Use referendum to refer to measures placed on the ballot by a legislature for voter approval.

- **Example:** The referendum on tax increases was rejected.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Referring to other articles on BP

Guidelines: When referring to other articles on Ballotpedia, use “click here.” Do not use “see here,” “see this article,” or “see Name of article.”

- **Example:** For more information regarding this dispute, [[2025 Minnesota legislative session#Changes in party control after the 2024 general elections|click here]].
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Republican, Republican Party

Guidelines: Use Republican as a noun, and Republican Party as the proper name. Capitalize both when referring to the political party.

- **Example:** The Republican candidate supports the Republican Party platform.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Right-wing, rightist, far-right

Guidelines: Do not use right-wing, rightist, or far-right to describe a person's political ideology and beliefs. Instead, describe the person's political affiliation by including details about voting history and issue stances.

- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Runner-up, runners-up

Guidelines: Spell in accordance with the listing in this entry.

- **Examples:** The runner-up conceded the race. The runners-up were announced at the event.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Running mate

Guidelines: Spell in accordance with the listing in this entry.

- **Example:** The candidate chose a running mate for the election.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Runoff

Guidelines: Write *runoff* as one word without a hyphen.

- **Example:** The top two vote recipients advanced to a runoff.
- **Related entries and documentation:**

- **Last Updated:** July 2025

S

Same-sex marriage

Guidelines: Use the term *same-sex marriage*, not *gay marriage*. Use the traditional designation of wife or husband for those who are legally married. The term spouse may also be applied to either partner in any marriage, but do not use it simply to avoid applying the terms husband and wife to same-sex couples.

- **Example:** The same-sex marriage law recognized them as husband and husband.
- **Related entries and documentation:** [Sexuality and gender identity](#)
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Sample Ballot Lookup Tool

Guidelines: Capitalize Ballotpedia's Sample Ballot Lookup Tool.

- **Example:** Our coverage scope for local elections continues to grow, and you can use Ballotpedia's Sample Ballot Lookup Tool to see what mayoral elections we are covering in your area.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** September 2025

Satellite spending

Guidelines: Satellite spending refers to political spending not controlled by candidates or their campaigns; that is, any political expenditures made by groups or individuals that are not directly affiliated with a candidate. This includes spending by political party committees, super PACs, trade associations, and 501(c)(4) nonprofit groups. This type of spending includes express and issue advocacy. Do not use the terms *outside spending* or *dark money*.

- **Example:** On March 12, *WisPolitics* reported that the candidates and satellite groups had spent nearly \$59 million in the race, including \$25.5 million supporting Crawford and \$33.3 million supporting Schimel. Here's a breakdown of satellite spending mentioned in the report.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Seasons

Guidelines: Lowercase all seasons — spring, summer, fall, winter — unless the season is part of a formal title.

- **Example:** the 2026 Winter Olympics, the Arab Spring

- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** August 2025

See also

Guidelines: In the text of an article, we may want to direct readers to another page on Ballotpedia without using an in-text internal link. Often, we do this through a “See also” link at the top of a section. Use the “See also” designation to direct readers to related topics. *Note:* The “See also” link is separate from the See also section at the bottom of the page. Such links should be italicized, and they should be indented by placing the code `::` before the text.

- **Example:** `::"See also: [[Voting in Washington]]"`
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Sexual commerce and exploitation

Guidelines: When writing about sexual commerce and exploitation, distinguish clearly between consensual activity and coercion, and provide context when necessary. *Commercial sexual solicitation*, *prostitution*, and *sex trafficking* are all acceptable terms.

Commercial sexual solicitation is offering or requesting sexual activity for payment. It is often illegal.

Prostitution is the exchange of sexual activity for money. It is a legal term.

Sex trafficking is coerced or forced sexual exploitation. It is always criminal and nonconsensual.

Avoid ideologically loaded language like *sex work*. The term *sex work*, which emphasizes labor and agency, is commonly used by advocates for decriminalization.

- **Example:** The law prohibits prostitution, including solicitation in public areas.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** September 2025

Sexuality and gender identity

Guidelines: Be sensitive to issues of bias when writing about the sexuality and gender identity of an individual or group. In general, do not make references to one’s sexuality or gender identity unless that detail is pertinent to the story. Avoid references to *sexual preference*.

- **Example:** The candidate’s gender identity was relevant to their advocacy for transgender legislation.
- **Related entries and documentation:** [Same-sex marriage](#), [Transgender](#)
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

[sic]

Guidelines: From [Merriam Webster](#): “In *Modern English Usage*, the grammarian H. W. Fowler wrote that sic ‘should only be used when doubt [about the intent behind another writer’s words] is natural; but reviewers and controversialists are tempted to pretend that it is; because sic provides them with a neat and compendious form of sneer’; *The New Yorker*’s Louis Menand describes sic as a ‘damning interpolation, combining ordinary, garden-variety contempt with pedantic condescension.’ Sometimes it may be better to paraphrase the text and avoid what seems like a haughty comment on another writer’s choices.” Following this advice, only use *sic* when a typo or other issue makes a sentence unclear. Do not add sic to candidate surveys, and do not make corrections to a candidate’s statements..

Use the `{{sic}}` template, which will properly format *[sic]* every time. In all cases, *[sic]* should be italicized and placed inside square brackets. Use *[sic]* directly after the error (not at the end of the sentence) to show that it is an error in the original source rather than our error.

Use *[sic]* in inline quotes, but not in block quotes that use the `{{quote}}` template. Our quote template contains a footnote, stating, “Note: This text is quoted verbatim from the original source. Any inconsistencies are attributed to the original source.” This note is meant to take the place of *[sic]*.

- **Example:** They asked the court for an order that would prohibit election officials "from permitting invalidly submitted absentee and mail-in ballots to be 'cured' by the submission of provisions *[sic]* ballots."
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Signature filing deadline

Guidelines: Do not hyphenate any words in the phrase signature filing deadline.

- **Example:** The signature filing deadline is on June 13, 2024.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Singular proper nouns ending in -s

Guidelines: Use only an apostrophe for singular proper nouns ending in -s.

- **Examples:** Kansas’ schools, Jones’ campaign
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Split infinitives

Guidelines: An infinitive is a verb form consisting of the word *to* plus the most basic form of a verb. For instance, *to run*, *to eat*, and *to work* are all infinitives. A split infinitive occurs when an adverb is placed between the word *to* and the verb, such as in “*to quickly run*” or “*to diligently work*.” Split infinitives can normally be avoided by moving the adverb to a different location in the sentence. Some grammarians hold that split infinitives constitute a grammatical error, so it’s often best to avoid them. However, split infinitives are almost necessary in some cases, and they will not be considered errors on Ballotpedia.

- **Examples:**
 - The group failed to explicitly request a special election.
 - It should be easy for anyone to quickly locate the budget on the website.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
 - 📖 Monthly style email, April 2023, Grammar rules you can break
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Spokesman, spokeswoman, spokesperson

Guidelines: Use *spokesman* or *spokeswoman* when the gender of the individual is known. Use the term *spokesperson* if the gender is unknown or if making a generic reference to the position. None of these terms function as official titles, so they should not be capitalized even if they directly precede a person’s name.

- **Examples:** Spokeswoman Jane Doe addressed the media. The campaign sought a spokesperson for the event.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

State

Guidelines: Capitalize the word *state* when it is used (1) between a state name and a governmental body or (2) between a state name and an official title used directly before an official’s name.

- **Examples:**
 - He won election to the state Senate.
 - He won election to the Connecticut State Senate.
 - The state representative is running for re-election.
 - In North Carolina, state Representative James Dixon is running for re-election.
 - North Carolina State Representative James Dixon is running for re-election.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

State names, abbreviations for

Guidelines: Do not abbreviate state names in the text of an article. In tables, charts, and graphs, state names may be abbreviated. Use the *Associated Press*' abbreviations for state names rather than the two-letter postal code abbreviations. *Note:* If you have difficulty remembering the *AP* abbreviations, use the `{{abbr}}` template. For instance, `{{abbr|mi}}` will show up as "Mich." and `{{abbr|ok}}` will show up as "Okla."

- **Ala.** (Alabama)
- **Ariz.** (Arizona)
- **Ark.** (Arkansas)
- **Calif.** (California)
- **Colo.** (Colorado)
- **Conn.** (Connecticut)
- **Del.** (Delaware)
- **Fla.** (Florida)
- **Ga.** (Georgia)
- **Ill.** (Illinois)
- **Ind.** (Indiana)
- **Kan.** (Kansas)
- **Ky.** (Kentucky)
- **La.** (Louisiana)
- **Md.** (Maryland)
- **Mass.** (Massachusetts)
- **Mich.** (Michigan)
- **Minn.** (Minnesota)
- **Miss.** (Mississippi)
- **Mo.** (Missouri)
- **Mont.** (Montana)
- **Neb.** (Nebraska)
- **Nev.** (Nevada)
- **N.H.:** (New Hampshire)
- **N.J.:** (New Jersey)
- **N.M.:** (New Mexico)
- **N.Y.:** (New York)
- **N.C.:** (North Carolina)
- **N.D.:** (North Dakota)
- **Okla.** (Oklahoma)
- **Ore.** (Oregon)
- **Pa.** (Pennsylvania)

- **R.I.:** (Rhode Island)
- **S.C.:** (South Carolina)
- **S.D.:** (South Dakota)
- **Tenn.** (Tennessee)
- **Vt.** (Vermont)
- **Va.** (Virginia)
- **Wash.** (Washington)
- **W.Va.** (West Virginia)
- **Wis.** (Wisconsin)
- **Wyo.** (Wyoming)

- **Examples:** California voters, not CA voters; Gov. Gavin Newsom (D-Calif.)
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Statehouse, State House

Guidelines: Always capitalize statehouse or state house when used in conjunction with a specific state, but lowercase when it appears alone. Different states have different names for the buildings where their legislatures conduct business. Depending on the state, these buildings may be referred to as a state capitol, a state house, a statehouse, or even a legislative hall.

- **Example:** the Vermont Statehouse, the statehouse
- **Related entries and documentation:** [Official names of state legislatures - Ballotpedia](#)
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

State nicknames

Guidelines: In general, use state nicknames sparingly and only when the context of the article is informal enough to support such usage. Be conscientious of readers' relative familiarity with certain state nicknames as opposed to others.

- **Example:** Ohio is the Buckeye State.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

State of the Union, State of the State, State of the City

Guidelines: Capitalize State of the Union, State of the State, and State of the City when referring to the addresses given by a president, governor, or mayor, respectively. Do not capitalize the words address or speech when used with these terms.

- **Example:** The president delivered the State of the Union address.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Statewide

Guidelines: Spell in accordance with the listing in this entry.

- **Examples:** The statewide election saw record turnout.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Supreme Court of the United States

Guidelines: Always capitalize the full proper name *Supreme Court of the United States*. Retain capitalization when shortened to Supreme Court, but do not capitalize when shortened further to court.

- **Examples:** the Supreme Court of the United States; the Supreme Court; the court
- **Related entries and documentation:** supreme courts of the states
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Supreme courts of the states

Guidelines: Capitalize full proper names of state supreme courts, but lowercase supreme court when the state name is dropped. Do not capitalize when shortened to court, and do not capitalize when referring generically to supreme courts across the states. Note that in New York, the courts known as supreme courts are trial courts rather than courts of last resort. This should be clarified if the fact is unclear from the context. Conversely, not all courts of last resort are known as supreme courts (e.g., the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals).

- **Examples:** the Wisconsin Supreme Court; the supreme court; the court; eight state supreme courts have ruled
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Swearing in, swear in, sworn in

Guidelines: When using the term as a noun, use "swearing-in" with a hyphen. When using it as a verb, use "swear in" (base form) or "sworn in" (past participle), without a hyphen.

- **Examples:** The senator's swearing-in will take place on Monday. The senator was sworn in today.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** August 2025

T

Teachers union

Guidelines: Treat *teachers union* as a descriptive noun phrase referring to a labor organization representing educators. Do *not* treat it as a possessive noun by including an apostrophe (e.g., teacher's union, teachers' union).

- **Examples:** In 2024, three candidates aligned with the business community and one candidate backed by the teachers union won.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** October 2025

Telephone numbers

Guidelines: Format telephone numbers as follows: (XXX) XXX-XXXX. Do not preface area codes with a 1, even if the number is toll-free.

- **Examples:** Contact the office at (202) 555-1234.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

The, usage with proper nouns

Guidelines: Some proper nouns (political organizations, universities, newspapers, school districts, etc.) are normally preceded by the word *the*, while others are not. If the word *the* is improperly included or omitted, our writing will sound unnatural to those familiar with that particular subject. There are not always solid rules as to when *the* is needed and when it is not. The most general rule is that proper nouns containing a preposition (usually *of*) are almost always preceded by *the*. However, there are also many proper nouns that do not contain a preposition but that should still be preceded by *the*. Often, the best way to determine whether or not to include *the* is to run a Google News search and see how a majority of other news sources format the name. There are a few constructions that apply almost universally. In all cases, the word *the* should be capitalized only if it is part of the noun's proper name. For most organizations, universities, and school districts, the word *the* should be left lowercase.

- **Examples:** the University of ...; University ...; the *Times/Journal/Post*; the School Board; the Board of Education; the Association; the Center; the Center for ...; the Department of ...; the Foundation
- **Related entries and documentation:** Capitalization
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

They/them, as a singular pronoun

Guidelines: *They* and *their* can be used as singular pronouns to refer to a person whose gender is unknown or unspecified. This usage has become more acceptable in recent years. *He* or *she* is also acceptable.

- **Examples:** Each candidate submitted their platform. Each candidate submitted his or her platform.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

They/them/their, nonbinary

Guidelines: The third-person pronouns *they*, *them*, and *their* are used by some transgender, nonbinary, and gender-fluid people. When this is the case, use these pronouns when referring to the individual. The use of *they/them* can be confusing to a reader when writing about a singular person. To avoid confusion, write the sentence without the pronoun or explain that the individual uses they/them pronouns.

- **Examples:** Smith, who uses the pronouns they/them, said they will run for re-election.
- **Related entries and documentation:** [Transgender](#)
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Think tank

Guidelines: Do not hyphenate the term think tank.

- **Examples:** The Heritage Foundation is a conservative think tank.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Third party/third-party

Guidelines: Use *minor party* without a hyphen when writing about people running as candidates in parties other than the major parties (Democratic, Republican).

- **Incorrect:** Twenty-two candidates were on the regular primary ballot: nine undeclared or nonpartisan candidates, nine Republicans, one Democrat, and three third-party candidates.
- **Incorrect:** Twenty-two candidates were on the regular primary ballot: nine undeclared or nonpartisan candidates, nine Republicans, one Democrat, and three minor-party candidates.
- **Correct:** Twenty-two candidates were on the regular primary ballot: nine undeclared or nonpartisan candidates, nine Republicans, one Democrat, and three minor party candidates.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Tilde

Guidelines: Use a tilde in names that normally include them. Never use ~ or ≈ to indicate approximations; instead, use about or approximately.

- **Examples:** Marisela Saldaña; La Nueva España
- **Related entries and documentation:** [Accent Marks](#)
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Time

Guidelines: Use a.m. and p.m. with lowercase letters and periods. Include a space between the number and a.m./p.m. For time zones, use abbreviations such as EST, CDT, PST, etc., only when paired with a clock time. Do not set off time zone abbreviations with commas. Apply time zone abbreviations only for locations within the continental United States, Canada, and Mexico.

- **Examples:** 11 a.m., 1 p.m., 3:30 p.m. PST
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Titles, courtesy

Guidelines: Use courtesy titles (Mr., Mrs., Ms.) only in direct quotations. Avoid courtesy titles in narrative text.

- **Examples:** She said, “Mr. Smith voted yes.”
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Today, tomorrow, tonight

Guidelines: Even in news articles that include datelines, write out the date instead of using a relative marker of time, such as today, tomorrow, or tonight, or a day of the week, such as Wednesday.

- **Example:** The event occurred on June 20, 2018.
- **Related entries and documentation:** Dates
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Tooltips

The <CustomTooltip> tags allow you to define text to display as a user hovers over some text. It allows the writer to put wikitext content between <CustomTooltip> tags, and the text will appear when you hover over a link.

- **Example:** [Template:Writ](#): "<CustomToolTip linktext='writ'>A court's written order commanding the recipient to either do or refrain from doing a specified act.</CustomToolTip>"
- **Related entries and documentation:** Disclaimers, Explanatory notes
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Toward

Guidelines: Use *toward*, not *towards*.

- **Examples:** The campaign moved toward reform.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Transclusion

Guidelines: At its most basic level, transclusion refers to the inclusion of code from one page onto another via a coding shortcut, rather than copying and pasting text that would be the same between two pages. Transclusion is usually desirable because there is standard language or phrasing that will be used over and over again on many different pages, or because there is language that needs frequent updating that is repeated over several pages. While different methods of transclusion exist in other markup coding languages, the methods used on Ballotpedia rely on wiki markup, primarily through templates. Two other options exist: labeled section transclusion and transclusion by section headers. You can find an example of each option in this [sandbox](#). To learn more about transclusion, please review [this document](#).

- **Related entries and documentation:** [BP Intermediate Documentation: Transclusion](#)
- **Last Updated:** September 2025

Transgender

Guidelines: An adjective, transgender is a term for people whose gender identity and/or expression differs from what is typically associated with their sex. Though some transgender people may take hormones prescribed by doctors or undergo surgery to change their bodies, a transgender identity is not dependent upon medical procedures.

Use the terms *transgender boy* or *transgender man* to describe a person who transitions from female to male. Use the terms *transgender girl* or *transgender woman* to describe a person who transitions from male to female. Avoid the one-word compounds *transman* and *transwoman*. Do not use the term transgender as a noun (e.g., a transgender); it is a speech tribe term. Do not use the following speech tribe terms: *transgendered*, *transgenderism*, *transsexual*, or *cross-dresser*.

Do not use the term *gender-affirming care* unless it is in a direct quote. It is a speech tribe term. Instead, use *social, psychological, and medical services for transgender individuals*.

Avoid using the term *anti-trans legislation* or *pro-woman legislation*. Instead, use *legislation about transgender issues*, and then describe the legislation in detail.

Avoid the terms *sex assigned at birth* and *sex observed at birth*. They are speech tribe terms. Instead, use *sex*.

- **Examples:** In March of 2023, the board voted 3-2 against a resolution supporting the Ohio Board of Education's opposition to proposed changes to Title IX regarding transgender students.
- **Related entries and documentation:** [Sexuality and gender identity](#)
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Travel, traveled, traveling, traveler

Guidelines: Spell in accordance with the listing in this entry.

- **Examples:** The candidate traveled to the event, traveling across the state as a traveler.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

U

United States

Guidelines: Use United States as a noun, and U.S. as an adjective. Abbreviate to U.S. with periods in text and headlines.

- **Examples:** The United States economy, U.S. policy, U.S. Senate
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

V

Vote-getters, vote recipients

Guidelines: The term vote-getters should be written with a hyphen. In contrast, vote recipients should not be hyphenated. Both terms may be used interchangeably.

- **Examples:** The top vote-getters were also referred to as vote recipients in the election results.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Votes counted, votes cast

Guidelines: When describing election returns, it is often most accurate to describe totals as a subset of votes counted and not votes cast. The total and final number of votes cast is usually not available until several days or weeks after an election.

- **Example:** Hernandez had a lead of about 500 votes, of more than 1.1 million votes counted.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Vote totals

Guidelines: Do not use spaces before and after the hyphen when listing vote totals.

- **Example:** The bill passed by a vote of 269-151.
- **Related entries and documentation:** [Hyphens](#)
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

W

White

Guidelines: When used as an indicator of race, BP's preferred term is White. Capitalize White when used as an adjective in a racial, ethnic, or cultural sense.

- **Example:** White voters accounted for nearly half of all ballots cast in the statewide election, according to official turnout data.
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** September 2025

Who, whom

Guidelines: Use *who* as the subject of a sentence or clause, *whom* as the object.

- **Examples:** Who voted? To whom was the award given?
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Y

Year

Guidelines: Use numerals for years, even at the start of a sentence. Do not use apostrophes for plural years.

- **Examples:** 2024 was a pivotal year. The 1990s.

- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Z

Zero

Guidelines: Spell out zero when used alone. Use 0 in numerical contexts or tables.

- **Examples:** The vote was zero. 0% (in a table)
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Footnotes

Academic journal articles

Follow the format recommended by the Chicago Manual of Style.

EDIT VIEW	<ref>Last name, First name. "Article title." "Journal Title" Volume, Issue no. (Year): page range.</ref>
READ VIEW	Last name, First name. "Article title." Journal Title Volume, Issue no. (Year): page range.
EXAMPLE	<ref>Christens, Brian, and Paul W. Speer. "Predicting Violent Crime Using Suburban Densities." "Behavior and Social Issues" 14, 2. (2005): 113-27.</ref>

Note: Include a URL if one is available.

Amicus curiae briefs

EDIT VIEW	<ref>Court, "Case name", Date decision is handed down</ref>
READ VIEW	Court, Case name, Brief name, Date filed
EXAMPLE	<ref>Supreme Court of the United States, "DIRECTV, Inc. v. Imburgia", "Brief Amicus Curiae of DRI: The Voice of the Defense Bar in support of petitioner," filed June 4, 2015</ref>

Archived links

In order to prevent our links from going out of date, writers may choose to archive the current version of a page and provide the URL of the archive rather than that of the original site. Most often, this is done through the Wayback Machine (<https://archive.org/web/>). In these cases, the citation should be formatted the same as if you were citing the original source, but rather than giving the publication or accessed dates, you should include the "archived" date.

- **Example:** <ref>[URL "San Francisco Elections Office website", "Proposition J Simplification Digest," archived September 9, 2014]</ref>

EXAMPL E	<ref>Cohen, R., et al. (2015). "The Almanac of American Politics 2016". Bethesda, MD: Columbia Books Inc. (pages 78-85)</ref>
-------------	---

- Include a URL if one is available.
- If there are two authors, put both names in the same format, separated by an ampersand (&).
- If there are three or more authors, use a comma and the term et al. (no italics) after the first name.

Campaign websites

EDIT VIEW	<ref>[URL "NAME YEAR campaign website", "Page name," accessed DATE]</ref>
READ VIEW	NAME YEAR campaign website, "Page name," accessed DATE
EXAMPL E	<ref>[http://www.coleforcolorado.com/about-tj/ "TJ Cole 2016 campaign website", "About TJ," accessed March 9, 2016]</ref>

- Examples of common page names include "Meet NAME," "The Issues" and "Endorsements."
- Since campaign websites often expire the year after an election, writers may wish to archive these URLs.

Court cases

EDIT VIEW	<ref>Court, "Case name", Date decision is handed down</ref>
READ VIEW	Court, Case name, Date decision is handed down
EXAMPL E	<ref>Supreme Court of Kansas, "United States v. Nixon", July 24, 1974</ref>

Note: The court name should be the same as the Ballotpedia page name for that court. Include a URL if one is available.

Case of article titles

Article titles may be copied and pasted directly into footnotes in their original format, so some article titles may be written in title case (where all words other than articles, conjunctions, and prepositions are capitalized), while other titles will be written in sentence case (where only the first word and proper nouns are capitalized). Ballotpedia's preference is that articles written in all caps be changed to sentence case. This can be done manually or by using a browser extension such as Convert Case for Google Chrome.

Footnotes with ending punctuation

If an article title ends in a question mark, exclamation point, or period, do not place an additional comma after the final punctuation mark. If an article title ends in a quotation mark, change the inner quotation marks to single quotation marks (' ') and place the comma inside both sets of quotation marks. The most frequent style mistakes occur with article titles ending with a question mark.

- **Incorrect:**
<ref><https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/politics/2018/05/05/iowa-legislature-adjourns-bills-passed-2018-session-water-quality-obamacare-abortion-mental-health/456079002/> "Des Moines Register", "Iowa Legislature adjourned: How will this year's session change Iowa?," May 5, 2018</ref>
- **Correct:**
<ref><https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/politics/2018/05/05/iowa-legislature-adjourns-bills-passed-2018-session-water-quality-obamacare-abortion-mental-health/456079002/> "Des Moines Register", "Iowa Legislature adjourned: How will this year's session change Iowa?" May 5, 2018</ref>
- **Related entries and documentation:**
- **Last Updated:** July 2025

Original interviews and correspondence

EDIT VIEW	<ref>"Ballotpedia staff OR [[Ballotpedia:Name Name]] ", "Method of correspondence with Interview Subject," DATE</ref>
READ VIEW	Ballotpedia staff or Name, "Method of correspondence with Interview Subject," DATE
EXAMPLE	<ref>" [[Ballotpedia:Abbey Smith Abbey Smith]] ", "Email communication with Jean McHatton," October 20, 2015</ref>

Placement of footnotes in text

Place each reference immediately after the ending punctuation mark of the sentence it follows (i.e., no extra space).

- **Example:** The chief judge of a circuit court is selected by peer vote and serves a three-year term.^[1]

When citing multiple sources in a row, arrange them roughly in the order in which the cited information appears; do not spend extra time arranging footnotes in numerical order within the text. Footnotes do not need to be placed only at the end of a paragraph.

Search results in a reference

On some websites, running a search for a particular term will not yield a new URL. In these cases, the URL will simply take readers to the main search page rather than to the page containing the cited information. Since we cannot provide a direct link to the desired page, writers are encouraged to include a search term at the end of the reference instead. These search terms should be placed in parentheses and italicized.

Example:

EDIT VIEW	<ref> http://thomas.loc.gov/home/nomis.html "The Library of Congress", "Search Presidential Nominations," accessed October 29, 2015] "(Search term PN1786-103)"</ref>
READ VIEW	The Library of Congress, "Search Presidential Nominations," accessed October 29, 2015 (Search term PN1786-103)

[sic] in footnotes

When quoted text contains a typo, we may want to draw attention to the fact that it isn't our error. In these cases, we would normally use the `{{sic}}` template, which would appear as [sic]. Unfortunately, this doesn't work for article titles in footnotes because the brackets in the template break the code of the reference. An HTML workaround accomplishes the same thing. Instead of the normal `{{sic}}` template, simply type in this text, starting with the ampersand and ending with the semicolon: `["sic"]`

You can see an example of how this appears on the page [here](#). Failure to include [sic] for typos in footnotes will not be counted as an error, but this tip can make our footnotes section even more polished.

Spelling out website names

In footnotes, remember to write out the website's formal name rather than copying and pasting from the URL.

- **Incorrect:** <ref><http://www.opensecrets.org/pres16/> "opensecrets.org", "2016 Presidential Race," accessed October 1, 2015]</ref>
- **Correct:** <ref><http://www.opensecrets.org/pres16/> "OpenSecrets", "2016 Presidential Race," accessed October 1, 2015]</ref>

Social media

EDIT VIEW	<ref>[URL "Name of Social Media Platform", "Page name," accessed MONTH DAY, YEAR]</ref>
READ VIEW	Name of Social Media Platform, "Page name," accessed MONTH DAY, YEAR

Facebook, X, Instagram, etc.: When referencing general user pages, use the person's official social media name (if available) rather than the "@" handle.

Examples:

- X, "@JDVance," accessed August 28, 2025
- Facebook, "JD Vance," accessed August 28, 2025
- LinkedIn, "JD Vance," accessed August 28, 2025

When referencing content from a specific social media post, link to that specific post rather than to the general user account (e.g., rather than linking to the "JD Vance" page on Facebook, link to the post in question). On Facebook and X, this unique URL can be found by clicking the timestamp of the post. Format those footnotes as follows:

- **Example:** X, "JD Vance on August 27, 2025," accessed August 28, 2025
- **Example:** Facebook, "JD Vance on August 27, 2025," accessed August 28, 2025

Websites

EDIT VIEW	<ref>[URL "Name of Website", "Article or page name," accessed MONTH DAY, YEAR]</ref>
--------------	--

READ VIEW	Name of Website, "Article or page name," accessed MONTH DAY, YEAR
EXAMPL E	<ref>[https://thebaynet.com/maryland-approves-13m-for-community-center s-playgrounds-and-land-conservation-in-16-counties/ "The BayNet", "Maryland Approves \$13M For Community Centers, Playgrounds, And Land Conservation In 16 Counties," August 28, 2025]</ref>

- If the publication date is known, a publication date may be given instead of an accessed date. If a publication date is given, simply omit the word accessed.
- When linking to any website's main page, writers may leave out the "Article or page name" part of the reference.

YouTube

When referencing YouTube videos, use YouTube as the source and the video title as the page name. Date the reference using the upload date.

- **Example:** YouTube, "Remarks by Senator Warren on Citigroup and its bailout provision," February 26, 2016

Additional resources

[Capitalization guidelines for political terms](#)

[Election policy project reference examples](#)

[How to properly tense election language](#)

[Preventing tense errors](#)

[Proofreading checklist & tips](#)

[Tensing legislation and regulation articles](#)

[Titles and naming conventions](#)