

IAAO Style and Usage Guidelines

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IAAO Style and Usage Guidelines

&, use the ampersand only if it is part of the title, e.g., *Fair & Equitable*, not *Fair and Equitable*; Planning and Rules Committee, not Planning & Rules Committee

A

abbreviations/acronyms/initialisms, an acronym is an abbreviation, pronounced as if it were a word, from the initial letters or other parts of a name or expression, e.g., NATO, FEMA; an initialism is an abbreviation formed like an acronym but pronounced letter by letter, e.g., SUV, FAA, IRS. The abbreviation is placed in parentheses immediately after the first mention of the name or expression, e.g., Private entities need to download the parcel geographic information system (GIS) data into their own mapping systems to satisfy their business requirements [note that in this instance the initialism is capitalized even though the name is not]. Note also that if the term is mentioned only once in the material, there is no need to include the abbreviation.

AssessorNET, not Assessornet, Assessor net, or AssessorNet

assure versus ensure versus insure (*verbs*), a person assures (makes promises to, convinces) other people; a person ensures (makes certain) that things occur or that events take place; insure is restricted to financial contexts involving indemnification

B

because of, use in the adverbial sense of “owing to,” e.g., Because of a mistake in the company’s press material, the maximum cargo room listed for the vehicle in the review was incorrect. See also *due to*

C

capitalization, use uppercase sparingly, i.e., only for full titles: The United States, but the 48 states; Cook County, but the county; the Clean Air Act of 1996, but the act;

comma, *see serial comma*.

committee (singular) /committee members (plural), the committee approves the report; committee members discuss the motion

comprise versus compose (*verbs*), to comprise is “to be made up of,” i.e., the whole comprises the parts; to compose is “to make up, to form the substance of something,” i.e., the parts compose the whole.

criteria (*noun*), the plural form of criterion; one criterion, two criteria

D

data, use as a plural, e.g., To help focus the standardization, the data have been grouped in themes such as climate, hydrography, and parcels. The singular is “datum.”

due to, use in the adjectival sense of “caused by,” e.g., the near-record heat wave was due to a strong high pressure system. See also *because of*.

E

e.g., stands for *exempli gratia* (“for example”), spell out *for example* unless in parentheses

e-mail (*noun or verb*)

et al., the abbreviated form of *et alli* (“and others”), the others being people, not things. Since *al.* is an abbreviation, the period is required.

etc., the abbreviated form of *et cetera* (“and other things”), never use in reference to people; *etc.* implies a list of things too exhaustive to recite but is often used for no real purpose; delete it or use “and so forth” or “and the like” instead.

Executive Board (singular)/Executive Board members (plural), the Executive Board meets quarterly; Executive Board members attend quarterly meetings. The Executive Board is an “it” not a “they.” Executive Board members are a “they.”

I

IAAO (singular), not *the* IAAO or *our* or *your* association; IAAO is an “it” not a “they”

IAAO members, not *our* or *your* members

i.e., stands for *id est* (“that is”), spell out *that is* unless in parentheses

include (*verb*), use to introduce a nonexhaustive list, not for “consists of,” e.g., The three colors in the American flag *are* (not include) red, white, and blue.

Internet, not internet

italics, use for titles of books, e.g., *Fundamentals of Mass Appraisal*; magazines, e.g., *Fair & Equitable*; journals, e.g., *Journal of Property Tax Assessment & Administration*; reports and standards, e.g., *Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice*. Italics are not used for article titles.

it’s versus its, *it’s* is the contraction of “it is”; *its* is the possessive of “it”

L

last (*adverb, adjective*), anything at the end of a series

less versus fewer, use *less* for mass nouns, or amounts, e.g., less salt, dirt, water; use *fewer* for countable things, e.g., fewer people, calories, grocery items, suggestions. An easy guideline is to use *less* with singular nouns and *fewer* with plural nouns.

loose (*adjective*), not rigidly fastened or securely attached

lose (*verb*), to miss from one’s possession

M

midnight, not 12:00 a.m.

N

non (*prefix*), usually there is no hyphen between “non” and the base word, as in nonstop, nonfinancial, nonmarket; exceptions are instances in which the base word is capitalized, e.g., non-English, or the base word is more than one word, e.g., non-arm’s length

noon, not 12:00 p.m.

P

past (*adjective*), something that has occurred previously and is not at the end of a series
possessive, avoid the use of the possessive apostrophe for organizations, federal and state agencies, committees, and similar formal entities, e.g., the IAAO Chapter and Affiliate Committee, not IAAO's Chapter and Affiliate Committee; the Property Tax Division of the New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Department, not the New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Department's Property Tax Division
President-Elect, Past-President, Immediate Past-President, not President Elect, Past President, or Immediate Past President

Q

quotation marks versus italics, use quotation marks for quoted speech, dialogue, or conversation and for material taken from other sources. Terms considered slang or jargon should be enclosed in quotation marks only if they are foreign to the normal vocabulary. Use italics for emphasis sparingly; overused, they quickly lose their force.

R

regardless, not irregardless

S

serial comma, the one before the concluding conjunction at the end of a series, e.g., "the good, the bad, and the ugly," will never cause a problem for the reader, but its absence can create ambiguity.
spacing, use one space after a period or a colon
staff (singular)/staff members (plural), staff is planning the meeting; staff members are planning the meeting. Staff is an "it" not a "they."

T

telephone numbers, use 800-616-4225, not 800/616-4225 or 800.616.4225
thank you, use instead of "thanking you in advance" or "I would like to thank"
that versus which, *that* introduces restrictive clauses, information essential to the sentence, without a comma, e.g., The lawnmower that is broken is in the garage [tells which one]; *which* introduces nonrestrictive clauses, information incidental to the sentence, with a comma, e.g., The lawnmower, which is broken, is in the garage [adds a fact about the only mower in question].

U

underlining, do not use, for URLs, for titles of published material, or for emphasizing terms

W

web, Capitalize only at the beginning of a sentence.

web page, two words

website, one word, capitalize only at the beginning of a sentence.

webinar, one word, capitalize only at the beginning of a sentence.

which versus who (relative pronouns), *which* is used for anything other than humans; *who* is used for human beings and characters that have been personified

who versus whom, *who*, the nominative pronoun, is used as the subject of a verb, e.g., it was Kate who rescued the dog, and as the complement of a linking verb, e.g, they know who you are; *whom* , the objective pronoun, is used as the object of a verb, e.g., whom did you see? and as the object of a preposition, e.g., the person to whom we're indebted.

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