

# Harvard Law School Editorial Style Guide

The Harvard Law School Editorial Style Guide was developed by the HLS Communications Office to support consistency within and among multiauthor HLS publications (magazines, reports, journals, and newsletters) and platforms (websites and blogs) across the school. Originally developed by the Harvard Gazette, it is based on the AP Stylebook, with minor modifications specific to Harvard University and Harvard Law School. Going forward, it will serve as the guide for all written editorial content on the Harvard Law School website, Harvard Law Today, the Harvard Law Bulletin, and other platforms, and will be updated at least once each year.

The [HLS A-Z Style Guide](#) is also available as a reference — providing recommendations for spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and proper usage of common words and phrases.

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Spelling guidance will be drawn from the Webster's New World College Dictionary or, lacking a physical dictionary, [Merriam Webster online](#).

For questions about this guide, please contact the HLS Communications Office at [editorial@lists.law.harvard.edu](mailto:editorial@lists.law.harvard.edu).

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In this document:

- [Degrees and Academic Terms](#)
- [Titles \(Faculty and Courses\)](#)
- [HLS Names](#)
- [Capitalization](#)
- [Abbreviations and Acronyms](#)
- [Punctuation](#)
- [Numbers](#)
- [Symbols](#)
- [Publications](#)
- [Language](#)
- [Identity - Race](#)
- [Identity - Gender](#)
- [Political References](#)
- [Courts, Judges, Court Cases](#)
- [Online Formatting](#)

# Degrees and Academic Terms

## Degrees

Specific law degrees, always capitalize and use periods as noted below:

- J.D., J.D.s, juris doctor (three-year degree)
- LL.M., LL.M.s, master of laws (one-year program)
  - use “an” before LL.M.
- LL.B., LL.B.s, bachelor of laws (the first professional law degree in the U.S. before the J.D.)
  - use “an” before LL.B.
- S.J.D., S.J.D.s, Doctor of Juridical Science (equivalent to research doctorate)
  - use “an” before S.J.D.

Joint degrees:

- J.D./M.B.A.: Law and Business (Master of Business Administration)
- J.D./M.P.P.: Law and Government (Master in Public Policy)
- J.D./M.P.A./I.D.: Law and Government (Master in Public Administration in International Development)
- J.D./M.P.H.: Law and Public Health (Master of Public Health)
- J.D./M.U.P.: Law and Urban Planning (Master in Urban Planning)
- J.D./Ph.D.: Coordinated program to earn Ph.D. from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (Doctor of Philosophy)
- J.D./LL.M.: International Joint Degree with the University of Cambridge Faculty of Law to earn a Cambridge LL.M.

Non-law degrees:

- The following degree formats are lower case: master’s degree, bachelor’s degree, doctorate. Use an apostrophe in *bachelor’s degree*, a *master’s*, etc.
- Capitalize official degree names, such as Bachelor of Arts, which can be written out or abbreviated. There is no possessive in Bachelor of Arts (or Master of Science).
- To abbreviate, use initials with periods: B.A., B.S., M.A., M.S., Ph.D., Ph.D.s.
- Harvard uses the following degrees: A.B., S.B., A.M., S.M.
- If mention of degrees is necessary to establish someone’s credentials, the preferred form is to avoid an abbreviation and use instead a phrase such as: *Fatima Kader, who has a doctorate in psychology*.
- Do not precede a name with a courtesy title for an academic degree and follow it with the abbreviation for the degree in the same reference.

For editorial purposes we will always use the periods in degrees. However, if you are creating a poster, social media post, etc. – something where space is at a premium or readability is an issue – you can use your discretion.

## Referring to students and alumni

- When referring to HLS faculty, students, and alumni who have a J.D. or LL.B. degree (see LL.B. exception below if they graduated more than 100 years ago) include their two-digit graduation year after their name, but do not include the degree unless they have a joint degree: *John F. Manning '85, Justice Stephen Breyer '66, Ann Wong J.D./M.P.P. '12.*
- For HLS students and alumni (including our faculty who are graduates) who have an LL.M., an S.J.D., or a joint degree, include the degree and the two-digit graduation year: *Yuji Iwasawa LL.M. '78, Ann Wong J.D./M.P.P. '12.*
- If they have multiple degrees from HLS, list both degrees and graduation years; there is no comma between the two HLS degrees: *Jody Freeman LL.M. '91 S.J.D. '95.* If someone has earned both an LL.M. and S.J.D. from HLS, but has **waived** the LL.M. degree, the LL.M. degree should not be listed, just the S.J.D. Please consult the Graduate Program with questions.
- For people who graduated more than 100 years ago, use the four-digit graduation year and the degree: *Oliver Wendell Holmes LL.B.1866.*
- We do not typically list other Harvard degrees, unless they are part of joint HLS degrees or they are relevant to the story.
- The preferred format is to spell out the degree name in a story. Capitalize an individual's specific degree, but do not capitalize when referring to a degree generically. If it is appropriate to write out juris doctor and master of laws in places to make something clearer, please do, but recognize some readers won't know what master of laws is any more than they would LL.M.: *John Smith holds a Master of Arts in English. She is working toward her bachelor's degree.*

## Academic Years and Terms

1L, 1Ls = First-year law student

2L, 2Ls = Second-year law student

3L, 3Ls = Third-year law student

- No periods and no apostrophe before the s when plural
- Writing out the student's year is preferred, at least on first reference: *First-year student Jamie Jones.* Not: *1L Jamie Jones.*

## Graduation Years

- When listing faculty, staff, students, or alumni in a post or page title, you do not have to use grad years, but do use in first mention in the story and when appropriate in excerpts and photo captions (more information available in Post and Page Titles in the Online Formatting section).
  - Use grad year for any faculty, students, or alumni on first mention within a post.
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## Titles

### Class and Course Titles

Official course/class titles are capitalized, but generic areas of study are not: *Jody Freeman's Climate and Energy Law and Policy class*; *Professor Mark Roe's bankruptcy class*.

### Faculty Titles

- Refer to the [HLS Faculty Directory](#) for the complete list of faculty names and titles.
  - Capitalize titles before a name, but lowercase after: *Professor of Practice Naz Modirzadeh is an expert on counterterrorism and international law*; *Naz Modirzadeh, professor of practice, is researching counterterrorism*; *"We are closing in on an answer," the professor said*.
  - Make sure the title is in fact a title and not a description of expertise: *Assistant Professor of Law Nikolas Bowie* references his full title and should be capitalized when it appears before his name; *HLS constitutional law scholar Nikolas Bowie* describes his area of focus and should not be capitalized.
  - Named professorships are capped even following the person's name: *Yochai Benkler, Jack N. and Lillian R. Berman Professor for Entrepreneurial Legal Studies, has released a new study*.
  - In subsequent citations, use the individual's last name only: *Bartholet said*, not *Professor Bartholet said*.
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## HLS Names

### Faculty Names

For the most up-to-date faculty names, please refer to the [HLS Faculty Directory](#). Use the faculty name as listed, unless instructed otherwise. For example, use *Randall Kennedy*, not *Randy Kennedy*. The use of a middle initial however is often based on personal preference, and you are not required to use a middle initial for all faculty members even when listed in the directory. One exception to that is HLS Dean *John F. Manning*; use the middle initial F.

There are some faculty members who prefer including their middle name, such as *Andrew Manuel Crespo* and *Michael Ashley Stein*. When in doubt, verify with [Harvard Law Today](#) stories or other trusted sources, such as the faculty member's own website or social media accounts.

### Research Program Names

Current research program names can be found in the [Research Program and Centers](#) page. Please use full names on first mention: *Berkman Klein Center for Internet and*

*Society*, not just *Berkman Klein*, as well as specific punctuation, such as *Animal Law & Policy Program* uses an ampersand, not the word “and.”

### **Clinic Names**

Visit the [HLS Clinics](#) page for full names and descriptions of each of the in-house clinics, externships, advanced clinical programs, and independent clinical programs.

### **Department Names**

The [HLS Department Directory](#) lists the proper names, department heads and titles, contact information, and a link to the staff directory for each department.

### **Harvard Law School Library**

The preferred ways of referring to the library, in order, are:

- Harvard Law School Library
- HLS Library
- HLSL
- Harvard Law Library (only use when space constraints don't leave room for the full name and HLSL and HLS Library are too short to be clear).

Do not use Langdell Library. The HLS Library is located in, and entered through, Langdell Hall, but Langdell is not the name of the library.

### **Student Organizations**

To find the proper name for student orgs, please use the [Student Organizations Directory](#) or visit the student org website to see how they refer to themselves (often in the “About” section).

### **Student Journals and Publications**

To find the proper name for student journals and publications, please use the [HLS Journals and Publications Directory](#) or visit the student journal or publication website to see how they refer to themselves (often in the “About” section).

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## **Capitalization**

- For editorial content, capitalize the first word of a sentence and proper nouns in titles, headlines, and subheads. Do not capitalize all words in a title, headline, or subhead. Exception allowed for print layouts, when capitalization (and even all caps) may be necessary for design purposes.
- For transactional web content, you may use title case and capitalize words in a title or headline.
- For nouns specific to Harvard University, and other common academic uses, please refer to the guidelines below.

- When referring to HLS as “school” or “law school” or Harvard University as “university” in editorial content, we do not capitalize those words. This deviates from the Gazette’s style.
- Harvard University and HLS Proper Nouns — capitalize the full, formal names of:
  - departments
  - colleges and schools
  - offices
  - centers
  - institutions
  - buildings
  - libraries
  - programs
  - awards
  - scholarships
- Do not capitalize shortened names, which may be used after the first reference. For example: *The Center on the Legal Profession held a conference on virtual courts. An issue of the center’s publication also focused on the topic.*

## Abbreviations and Acronyms

In editorial content, avoid putting abbreviations in quotes or parentheses after the name – work the abbreviation into the story later: *The American Civil Liberties Union, also known as the ACLU, is actively involved.*

- Exceptions: it is not necessary to spell out some of the more common abbreviations on first reference, including: ABA, IP, IT, LGBTQ, ACLU, YMCA, PAC, NGO, UCLA, NYU.
- Generally, omit periods from acronyms, including for EU. Exceptions are acronyms such as U.S., U.K., B.A., B.C., and U.N. However, refer to an organization as it refers to itself: Boston University refers to itself as *BU*, not *B.U.*; *WTO*, not *W.T.O.* Note: Harvard Law Today will use U.N. with periods per AP Style, but recognizes the United Nations does refer to themselves as UN.
- No periods after letters in abbreviations or acronyms in headlines, even if used in body copy; *U.S.* or *U.N.* in the body of a story and *US* or *UN* in the headline.
- States are abbreviated according to AP style guidelines. AP likes state names written out in the body of a story, with or without a town/city name. Do not use two-letter postal codes unless it is for an address.
- Abbreviate months when they are a part of a date, with the exception of March through July. See Dates section below.
- Do not abbreviate days of the week.
- It is appropriate to list office name abbreviations in parentheses after the name. *Office of Career Service (OCS)*

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## Punctuation

### Accents

Use accents or other diacritical marks with names of people who request them or are widely known to use them, or if quoting directly in a language that uses them: *An officer spotted him and asked a question: “Cómo estás?” How are you?* Otherwise, do not use these marks in English-language stories.

We would not use the accent in the word *resume* (when meaning a CV).

### Ampersand

Do not use in place of the word *and* in a sentence. Incorrect: *Students must take physics & chemistry classes.* Use an ampersand only in body text when it is part of an official name: *AT&T; Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society.*

### Apostrophe

- Apostrophes should be used only for contractions and to demonstrate possession.
- For singular proper names ending in *s*, including acronyms, add only an apostrophe: *Chris’ dog, Achilles’ heel, DOS’ resources.*
- For plural nouns ending in *s*, add an apostrophe: *the students’ grades.*
- For singular common nouns ending in *s*, add *’s*: *the virus’s reach; the witness’s answer.*
- For descriptive phrases, do not add an apostrophe to a word ending in *s* when it is used primarily in a descriptive sense: *a Bruins goalie, a teachers college.* You can use this memory aid: The apostrophe usually is not used if “for” or “by” rather than “of” would be appropriate in the longer form: *a goalie for the Bruins, a college for teachers.* An *’s* is required, however, when a term involves a plural word that does not end in *s*: *a children’s hospital, a people’s republic, the Young Men’s Christian Association.*
- Do not use *’s* for plurals of numbers. *The 1960s.*
- Commonly used apostrophe examples: *United States’; the attorneys general’s request; John Adams Jr.’s father; Congress’; two weeks’ vacation; the effects of measles vs. measles’ effects* (mainly just because it’s inanimate); *p’s and q’s; and three R’s but VIPs.*

### Brackets

AP doesn’t like them, but we find we need them in specific cases. For example, when inserting a first name or a year or a location in a quote or for letting the reader know that a change was made to a quote:

*“I used to work with Ralph Nader [’58] in D.C.”*

*“I took several courses with Professor [David] Rosenberg.”*

*“I started working at Michaels Inc. [in Los Angeles] in September.”*

## Colon

- Capitalize the first word after a colon only if it is a proper noun or the start of a complete sentence. Post-colon lists or fragmentary phrases should begin with a lowercase letter: *He promised this: The new program will succeed. There were three issues with the program: expense, staffing, and feasibility.*
- Exception: In a title or headline, use a cap after the colon, even if it is not a complete sentence.

## Comma

Use the serial comma: *She rides planes, trains, airplanes, and boats.*

## Ellipsis ( ... )

Use an ellipsis to indicate the deletion of one or more words in quoted material. Be especially careful to avoid deletions that would distort the meaning. An ellipsis also may be used to indicate a thought that the speaker or writer does not complete.

- Within a sentence: Use three periods ... with one space on either side of each character.
- Between sentences: Use four periods (dot space dot dot dot space) to indicate an omission: *Widespread opposition soon arose. ... The result was a broad legislative backlash.*

Create an ellipsis: Mac – Option + semicolon; PC – hold down Alt key and type 0133

## Em dash (—)

Add surrounding space around the em dash — like this. Do not use two hyphens (-) as an em dash.

Create an em dash: Mac - Option + Shift + hyphen key; PC - hold down the Alt key and type 0151

## En dash (–)

Use in spans of numbers, no surrounding space: *pages 44–72*

Use between years in obituaries: 1923–2021

Create an en dash: Mac - Option + hyphen key; PC - hold down the Alt key and type 0150

## Exclamation Points

Avoid using exclamation points in editorial content.

## Hyphen

- Use a hyphen to avoid ambiguity: *He recovered his health; He re-covered the leaky roof.*
- Use a hyphen to avoid unintended meanings: *small-business owner; free-thinking philosophy.*
- Generally, use a hyphen in modifiers of three or more words: *black-and-white photo, well-thought-out plan.*
- Generally, no hyphen for double e combinations: *reelect, preempted*
- No hyphen for dual heritage (adj. or noun): *African American*



- No hyphen for two-word terms that are commonly recognized as, in effect, one word: *third grade teacher, climate change report, emergency room visit*
- Suspensive hyphenation: When the elements are joined by *and* or *or*, expressing more than one element: *10-, 15-, or 20-minute intervals; 5- and 6-year-olds*
- But: *The intervals are 10, 15, or 20 minutes; the children are 5 to 6 years old.* When the elements are joined by *to* or *by*, expressing a single element: *a 10-to-15-year prison term; an 8-by-12-inch pan.* But: *The prison term is 10 to 15 years; the pan is 8 by 12 inches.*
- Hyphens can be helpful after a verb if confusion could result: *the technology is state-of-the-art.*
- Use a hyphen for compound adjectives occurring before a noun: *well-known student, full-time job.*
- Do not use a hyphen when the compound modifier occurs after the verb: *The student was well known. Her job became full time.*

### Parentheses

- Avoid overuse of parentheses. Try to rewrite the sentence in a more direct manner, putting the incidental information between commas or dashes, or write a separate sentence.
- If you must use parentheses, place a period outside a closing parenthesis if the material inside is not a sentence (such as this fragment). If the material is an independent complete sentence, place the period inside the parentheses.

### Period

- Use a single space after the period at the end of a sentence.
- Do not put a space between initials: *W.E.B. Du Bois Institute.*

### Quotation marks

- Periods and commas always go inside quotation marks.
- Colons, dashes, semicolons, question marks, and exclamation points go within the quotation marks when they apply to the quotation. They go outside when they apply to the entire sentence. *In high school I absolutely hated reading "Moby Dick"! I haven't yet read Power's "A Problem from Hell": America ... Genocide."*
- If there is a quote in a title, use a single quote, not double.
- Journal articles and book titles go within quotation marks, but not magazine titles.

### Semicolons

Use semicolons in a series with elements that have internal commas: *Attending the meeting were Laurence H. Tribe, Carl M. Loeb University Professor Emeritus; Charles Fried, Beneficial Professor of Law; and Deputy Dean John Goldberg.*

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## Numbers

### General rules for using words vs. numerals

- Spell out numbers one through nine. Numbers 10 and above get a numeral, but note the treatment for specific cases below.
- Spell out numbers at the beginning of sentences.
- Always use numerals for the following:
  - Ages; use hyphens for ages expressed as adjectives before a noun or as substitutes for a noun: *a 5-year-old boy*, but *the boy is 5 years old*. *The boy, 5, has a sister, 10*. *The woman is in her 30s* (no apostrophe), but *is also 30-something*. However, start a sentence with the words spelled out: *Thirty-somethings take over the industry*.
  - Days of the month
  - Degrees of temperature; note that “degrees” is spelled out; do not use the symbol; and Celsius and Fahrenheit are both capitalized.
  - Percentage — use the symbol %; do not write out the word
  - In a title, use the numeral. Do not spell out numbers in a title, even under 10.

### Dates

For dates and years, use numerals.

- Do not use st, nd, rd, or th with dates. See ordinal numbers below for other uses.
- Abbreviate months when a specific date is included; otherwise, spell it out. However, do not abbreviate March, April, May, June, July: *Classes begin Jan. 25*. *The semester begins in January*.
- Use a comma between the date and year as well as after the year: *On May 22, 2021, Harvard Law School will host the conference*.
- For the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, 9/11 is acceptable in all references.

### Fractions

Spell out fractions less than 1 and hyphenate between words. Use figures for numbers above one: two-thirds teaspoon of vanilla, 1 1/3 cups of milk.

### Large numbers

For very large numbers, millions and more, use a combination of numerals (carried to one decimal point) and words (to eliminate a string of zeros): *The program cost \$2.3 million*. Do not go beyond two decimal places. In a headline, this would be: *The program cost \$2.3M*.

### Multiple numbers used together

When two numbers occur together, spell out one of them for clarity. When this happens, one of the numbers is usually a unit of measurement; that number is the better one to set in numerals: *Stephen is taking three 4-credit courses during the fall term*.

## Numbers at the beginning of a sentence

Spell out numbers when they begin sentences. If the number is too long and awkward to spell out, rephrase the sentence. The exception is if the sentence starts with a year; years are always numerals. Use: *Fifty students passed the exam* instead of: *50 students passed the exam*. The exception is in titles or headlines; there you can use numerals, even under 10.

## Ordinal numbers

Use figures for ordinal numbers above ninth; spell out ordinals under 10th: fifth place, 21st century.

- Court decisions are figures: *It was a 5-4 decision.*
- Some courts are identified by a numeral: *2nd District Court, 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.*

## Percent

When using figures with percent, use a % sign; do not spell out “percent.” Do not hyphenate as a noun or adjective: The loan program was set at 9%. He received a 3% raise.

## Time

- Use numerals, but spell out noon and midnight. Use a colon to separate hours from minutes, but do not use :00: *1 p.m.; 3:30 a.m.*
- Always use periods after letters in a.m. and p.m.

**See Symbols section for more uses for numbers referencing money.**

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## Symbols

### Currencies

dollar / dollar sign

- The word dollar is always lowercase.
- Use figures and the \$ sign in all except casual references or amounts without a figure: *The book cost \$4. Dad, please give me a dollar. Dollars are flowing overseas.*
- For specified amounts, the word takes a singular verb: *He said \$500,000 is what they want.*
- For amounts of more than \$1 million, use up to two decimal places. Do not link the numerals and the word by a hyphen: *He is worth \$4.35 million.*
- The form for amounts less than \$1 million: *\$4, \$25, \$500, \$1,000, \$650,000*
- Use figures with million, billion, or trillion in all except casual uses: *I'd like to make a billion dollars. But: The nation has 1 million citizens. I need \$7 billion. The government ran a deficit of more than \$1 trillion.*

- Do not drop the word million or billion in the first figure of a range: *He is worth from \$2 million to \$4 million, not \$2 to \$4 million, unless you really mean 2 dollars.*
- In headlines, abbreviate thousands, millions, billions: *\$3K investment, \$5M lawsuit, \$17.4B trade deficit.*

### Foreign currency

- AP uses \$ to designate amounts in U.S. dollars, as in \$1 million or \$1. When the story involves other dollar currencies, use these: AU\$ for Australian dollars, CA\$ for Canadian dollars, SG\$ for Singapore dollars, NZ\$ for New Zealand dollars, HK\$ for Hong Kong dollars, NT\$ for New Taiwan dollars, and ZW\$ for Zimbabwe dollars.
- Currency conversions are necessary in stories that use foreign currency to make clear for readers how a number translates into dollars: *It came to \$680 million Canadian dollars (\$618 million).* But conversions should be used sparingly and preferably not in the lead unless it's a significant part of a story. A conversion is generally needed only the first time a currency is mentioned. The reader can make the necessary conversions after that.
- Do not convert amounts that are not current because exchange rates change over time.
- If necessary for clarity in the story, specify that the conversion is at current exchange rates.

### Latitude and longitude

Latitude, the distance north or south of the equator, is designated by parallels. Longitude, the distance east or west of Greenwich, England, is designated by meridians. Use these forms to express degrees of latitude and longitude: *New York City lies at 40 degrees 45 minutes north latitude and 74 degrees 0 minutes west longitude; New York City lies south of the 41st parallel north and along the 74th meridian west.*

### Measurements

In nontechnical text, units of measurement are abbreviated only when space is at a premium (e.g., in tables) or when the abbreviations facilitate comprehension (e.g., when numerical data cluster thickly in a paragraph). *Foot (ft), kilogram (kg), meter (m), mile (mi), second (sec — U.S. abbrev)*

When an abbreviated unit of measurement appears in a compound adjective preceding a noun, the compound is not hyphenated: *a 20 ft wall, a 13 m tube, a 10 km race, a 5 kg carton.*

### Temperature

Use figures for all except *zero*. Use a word, not a minus sign, to indicate temperatures below zero: *The day's low was minus 10. The day's low was 10 below zero.*

Temperatures get *higher* or *lower*, but they don't get warmer or cooler: *Temperatures are expected to rise in the area Friday.*

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## Publications

Do not underline or italicize publications, including journals, magazines and newspapers. Use the following conventions:

Use quotation marks around the titles of:

- books
- journal articles (but not the name of the journal)
- conferences and symposiums
- lectures
- museum exhibits
- poems
- songs
- speeches
- television shows
- blog post titles

Example: *They sang “The Star-Spangled Banner” before the game. “Edward Steichen: A Biography” (Harvard University Press, 2000)*

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## Language

### that and which:

Use “that” and “which” in referring to inanimate objects and to animals without a name.

- Use **that** for essential clauses, important to the meaning of a sentence, and without commas: *I remember the day that we met.*
- Use **which** for nonessential clauses, where the clause is less necessary, and use commas: *The team, which finished last a year ago, is in first place.*
- If you can drop the clause and not lose the meaning of the sentence, use which; otherwise, use that. A which clause is surrounded by commas; no commas are used with that clauses.

### onto vs. on to

Onto is a preposition, it implies movement and is more specific than on.

A good trick to remember when to use “on to” vs. “onto” is to try inserting “up” before “on” in a sentence. If it still makes sense, then onto is probably the correct choice: *Hang on to the handlebars. Don't climb onto that beam. I can't log on to my computer.*

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## Identity

The language in the Identity section currently comes directly from the AP Stylebook. HLS is seeking internal guidance in contemplation of ongoing revisions that are reflective of identity within the HLS community. If you have any questions about these recommendations, please feel free to contact us at [editorial@lists.law.harvard.edu](mailto:editorial@lists.law.harvard.edu).

## Race

### Black(s), white(s) (n.)

- Do not use either term as a singular noun.
- Consider carefully when deciding whether to identify people by race. Make sure such references are relevant to the story.
- For plurals, phrasing such as Black people, white people, Black teachers, white students is often preferable: *White officers account for 64% of the police force, Black officers 21%, and Latino officers 15%. The gunman targeted Black churchgoers.*
- The plural nouns Blacks and whites are generally acceptable and needed for reasons of space or sentence construction: *He helped integrate dance halls among Blacks, whites, Latinos, and Asian Americans.*
- Black and white are acceptable as adjectives when relevant.

### Black (adj.)

- Use the capitalized term as an adjective in a racial, ethnic or cultural sense: *Black people, Black culture, Black literature, Black studies, Black colleges.*
- African American is also acceptable for those in the U.S. However, see entry for African American below for more information.
- Use of the capitalized word Black recognizes that language has evolved, along with the common understanding that especially in the United States, the term reflects a shared identity and culture rather than a skin color alone.

### African American

- No hyphen
- Acceptable for an American Black person of African descent
- The terms are not necessarily interchangeable; Americans of Caribbean heritage, for example, generally refer to themselves as Caribbean American.
- Follow a person's preference.

### Asian American

- No hyphen
- Acceptable for an American of Asian descent
- When possible, refer to a person's country of origin or follow the person's preference: Filipino American or Indian American.

### **brown (adj.)**

- Avoid this broad and imprecise term in racial, ethnic, or cultural references unless as part of a direct quotation. Interpretations of what the term includes vary widely.

### **Latino, Latina**

- Latino is often the preferred noun or adjective for a person from, or whose ancestors were from, a Spanish-speaking land or culture or from Latin America.
- Latina is the feminine form.
- Some prefer the recently coined gender-neutral term Latinx, which should be confined to quotations, names of organizations, or descriptions of individuals who request it: *Hernandez prefers the gender-neutral term Latinx.*
- For groups of women, use the plural Latinas; for groups of men or of mixed gender, use the plural Latinos.
- Hispanics is also generally acceptable for those in the U.S. Use a more specific identification when possible, such as Cuban, Puerto Rican, Brazilian, or Mexican American.

### **Hispanic**

- A person from — or whose ancestors were from — a Spanish-speaking land or culture. Latino, Latina or Latinx are sometimes preferred.
- Follow the person's preference.
- Use a more specific identification when possible, such as Cuban, Puerto Rican or Mexican American.

### **American Indians, Native Americans**

- Both are acceptable terms in general references for those in the U.S. when referring to two or more people of different tribal affiliations.
- For individuals, use the name of the tribe; if that information is not immediately available, try to obtain it: *He is a Navajo commissioner. She is a member of the Nisqually Indian Tribe. He is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma.*
- Some tribes and tribal nations use member; others use citizen. If in doubt, use citizen.
- Avoid words such as wampum, warpath, powwow, teepee, brave, squaw, etc., which can be disparaging and offensive.
- In Alaska, the Indigenous groups are collectively known as Alaska Natives.

### **Caucasian**

Avoid as a synonym for white, unless in a quotation.

### **people of color**

- The term is acceptable when necessary in broad references to multiple races other than white: *We will hire more people of color. Nine playwrights of color collaborated on the script.*

- Be aware, however, that many people of various races object to the term for various reasons, including that it lumps together into one monolithic group anyone who isn't white.
- Do not use "person of color" for an individual.

## BIPOC

- Do not use the term Black, Indigenous, and people of color, 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. Similarly, do not use the term Black, Asian and minority ethnic.
- The exception is to use it when in a direct quotation, and then explain it.
- Do not use the shorthand POC, BIPOC, or BAME unless necessary in a direct quotation; when used, explain it.

## Gender

### Gender-inclusive language

We acknowledge that best practices when it comes to writing about gender, sex, and sexual identity are constantly evolving; even individual preferences vary over time. As always, please respect the preferences of the person you are writing about, which may be different from what is written in this guide.

In general, use terms that can apply to any gender. Such language aims to treat people equally and is inclusive of people whose gender identity is not strictly male or female.

Balance these aims with common sense, respect for the language, and an understanding that gender-neutral or gender-inclusive language is evolving and in some cases is challenging to achieve.

Consider any word or term that has the effect of emphasizing one gender over another. Is there another word that could be substituted? For example: *search* instead of *manhunt*, *police officer* instead of *policeman*, *door attendant* instead of *doorman*.

A true gender-neutral noun often presents itself easily: *chair* or *chairperson*, *firefighter*, *workforce*. In other cases, a noun may technically not be gender-neutral but instead be a masculine noun that assumes the generic case under English language convention: *actor*, *host*.

In general, use terms such as *chair* or *chairperson*, *councilperson* or *council member*, and *spokesperson* unless the *-man* or *-woman* terms are specified by an organization. *Councilmember* is acceptable in jurisdictions that have adopted the one-word version.



The terms *U.S. representative*, *representative*, *member of Congress* are preferred. *Congressman* and *congresswoman* are acceptable because of their common use. Do not use *congressperson*.

### **Gender and Sexuality**

*Gender* is not synonymous with *sex*. *Gender* refers to a person's social identity, while *sex* refers to biological characteristics. Not all people fall under one of two categories for *sex* or *gender*, according to leading medical organizations, so avoid references to *both*, *either* or *opposite sexes* or *genders* as a way to encompass all people. When needed for clarity or in certain stories about scientific studies, alternatives include *men and women*, *boys and girls*, *males and females*. Language around *gender* is evolving.

### **they, them, their**

In most cases, a plural pronoun should agree in number with the antecedent: *The children love the books their uncle gave them*. *They/them/their* is acceptable as a singular and/or gender-neutral pronoun, when alternative wording is overly awkward or clumsy. Rewording is usually possible and preferable. Clarity is a top priority; gender-neutral use of a singular *they* is unfamiliar to many readers.

### **Avoid him/her he/she**

- *Police said the victim would be identified after relatives are notified* (instead of *after their relatives are notified* or *after his or her relatives are notified*).
- *Lottery officials said the winner could claim the prize Tuesday* (instead of *their* or *his* or *her* prize).

In stories about people who identify as neither male nor female or ask not to be referred to as *he/she/him/her*: Use the person's name in place of a pronoun, or otherwise reword the sentence, whenever possible. If *they/them/their* use is essential, explain in the text that the person prefers a gender-neutral pronoun. Be sure that the phrasing does not imply more than one person. Examples of rewording: *Hendricks said the new job is a thrill* (instead of *Hendricks said Hendricks is thrilled about the new job* or *Hendricks said they are thrilled about the new job*).

When *they* is used in the singular, it takes a plural verb: *Taylor said they need a new car*. (Again, be sure it's clear from the context that only one person is involved.)

The singular reflexive *themselves* is acceptable only if needed in constructions involving people who identify as neither male nor female. Again, it's usually possible and always best to rephrase. *Dana Adams was not available for comment yet* (instead of *Dana Adams did not make themselves available for comment*).

Some frequently used terms and definitions:

**asexual**

Describes people who don't experience sexual attraction, though they may feel other types of attraction, such as romantic or aesthetic. Not synonymous with and does not assume celibacy.

**bisexual**

Describes people attracted to more than one gender. Some people prefer *pansexual*, which describes people attracted to others regardless of their gender. The shortened version *bi* is acceptable in quotations.

**cisgender**

Describes people whose gender identity matches the one they were assigned at birth; that is, not *transgender*. Explain if necessary. Do not use terms like *normal* to describe people who are not *transgender*. Not synonymous with *heterosexual*, which refers to sexual orientation.

**gay, lesbian**

Used to describe people attracted to the same sex, though *lesbian* is the more common term for women. Preferred over *homosexual*. Include sexual orientation only when it is pertinent to a story, and avoid references to *sexual preference* or to a *gay* or *alternative lifestyle*. *Gays* is acceptable as a plural noun when necessary, but do not use the singular *gay* as a noun. *Lesbian* is acceptable as a noun in singular or plural form. *Sexual orientation* is not synonymous with *gender*.

**gender-nonconforming** (adj.)

Acceptable in broad references as a term for people who do not conform to gender expectations. *The group is providing scholarships for gender-nonconforming students*. When talking about individuals, be specific about how a person describes or expresses gender identity and behavior. *Roberta identifies as both male and female*. Not synonymous with *transgender*. Use other terms like *bigender* (a term for people who identify as a combination of two genders) or *agender* (people who identify as having no gender) only if used by subjects to describe themselves, and only with explanation.

**heterosexual** (n. and adj.)

In males, a sexual orientation that describes attraction to females, and vice versa. *Straight* is acceptable. *Transgender* people can be *heterosexual*.

**homophobia, homophobic**

Acceptable in broad references or in quotations to the concept of fear or hatred of gays,

lesbians, and bisexuals. *The governor denounced homophobia.* In individual cases, be specific about observable actions; avoid descriptions or language that assumes motives. *The leaflets contained an anti-gay slur. The voters opposed same-sex marriage.* Related terms include *biphobia* (fear or hatred specifically of bisexuals) and *transphobia* (fear or hatred of transgender people).

**homosexual** (adj.), **homosexuality** (n.)

Refers to the sexual orientations of *gay* and/or *lesbian*. *Gay* and *lesbian* is preferred as an adjective; *homosexuality* is acceptable when an umbrella term is needed. Avoid *homosexual* as a noun.

**intersex**

Describes people born with genitalia, chromosomes or reproductive organs that don't fit typical definitions for males or females. *Gonzalez is an intersex person who identifies as female. Zimmerman is intersex.* Do not use the outdated term *hermaphrodite*.

**LGBT, LGBTQ** (adj.)

Acceptable in all references for *lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender*, or *lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning and/or queer*. In quotations and the formal names of organizations and events, other forms such as *LGBTQIA* and other variations are also acceptable with the other letters explained. *I* generally stands for *intersex*, and *A* can stand for *asexual* (a person who doesn't experience sexual attraction), *ally* (some activists decry this use of the abbreviation for a person who is not LGBT but who actively supports LGBT communities) or both. Use of *LGBT* or *LGBTQ* is best as an adjective and an umbrella term. Don't use it, for instance, when the group you're referring to is limited to bisexuals. *Walters joined the LGBTQ business association.* *Queer* is an umbrella term covering people who are not *heterosexual* or *cisgender* and is acceptable for people and organizations that use the term to identify themselves. Do not use it when intended as a slur.

**nonbinary**

People are *nonbinary* if their gender identity is not strictly male or female. Not synonymous with *transgender*. Explain in a story if the context doesn't make it clear.

**pronouns**

Do not presume maleness in constructing a sentence by defaulting to *he/his/him*. Usually it is possible, and always preferable, to reword the sentence to avoid gender: *Reporters try to protect their sources.*

In most cases, a plural pronoun such as *they, them* or *their* should agree in number with the antecedent: *The children love the books their uncle gave them. They/them/their* is

acceptable in limited cases as a gender-neutral pronoun, when alternative wording is overly awkward or clumsy. However, rewording usually is possible and always is preferable. Clarity is a top priority; gender-neutral use of a singular *they* is unfamiliar to many readers.

Arguments for using *they/them* as a singular sometimes arise with unspecified/unknown gender (*the victim, the winner*). In stories about people who identify as neither male nor female or ask not to be referred to as *he/she/him/her*. Use the person's name in place of a pronoun, or otherwise reword the sentence, whenever possible. If *they/them/their* use is essential, explain in the text that the person prefers a gender-neutral pronoun. Be sure that the phrasing does not imply more than one person.

Examples of rewording: *Hendricks said the new job is a thrill* (instead of *Hendricks said Hendricks is thrilled about the new job* or *Hendricks said they are thrilled about the new job*). *Lowry's partner is Dana Adams, an antiques dealer. They bought a house last year* (instead of *Lowry and Lowry's partner bought a house last year* or *Lowry and their partner bought a house last year*).

When *they* is used in the singular, it takes a plural verb: *Taylor said they need a new car*. (Again, be sure it's clear from the context that only one person is involved.)

The singular reflexive *themselves* is acceptable only if needed in constructions involving people who identify as neither male nor female. Again, it's usually possible and always best to rephrase. *Dana Adams was not available for comment* (instead of *Dana Adams did not make themselves available for comment*).

### **same-sex marriage**

The preferred term over *gay marriage* because the laws generally don't address sexual orientation. In places where it's legal, *same-sex marriage* is no different from other marriages, so the term should be used only when germane and needed to distinguish from marriages between male-female heterosexual couples. *Gertrude Boxer and Savannah Boxer dated for several years before their marriage in 2014*. *Sex* is not synonymous with *gender*.

### **transgender (adj.)**

Describes people whose gender identity does not match the sex they were identified as having at birth. Does not require what are often known as *sex reassignment* or *gender confirmation* procedures. Identify people as *transgender* only if pertinent, and use the name by which they live publicly. Generally, avoid references to a transgender person being born a boy or girl, since it's an unnecessary detail and excludes *intersex* babies. *Bernard is a transgender man. Christina is transgender*. The

shorthand *trans* is acceptable on second reference and in headlines: *Grammys add first man and first trans woman as trophy handlers.*

Do not use as a noun, such as referring to someone as a *transgender*, or use the term *transgendered*. Not synonymous with terms like *cross-dresser* or *drag queen*, which do not have to do with gender identity. Do not use the outdated term *transsexual*.

Use the name by which a transgender person now lives. Refer to a previous name, sometimes called a *deadname*, only if relevant to the story.

### **transition, gender transition**

The processes *transgender people* go through to match their gender identity, which may include *sex reassignment* or *gender confirmation* procedures, but not necessarily. *Washington is transitioning while helping his daughter consider universities. Chamberlain's family offered support during her transition.*

### **woman, women**

Use *female* as an adjective, not *woman*. *She is the first female governor of North Carolina.*

Treatment of the sexes should be evenhanded and free of assumptions and stereotypes.

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## **Political References**

- Capitalize both the name of the party and the word “party” if it is customarily used as part of the organization’s proper name: *the Democratic Party, the Republican Party.*
- Include the political affiliation of any elected officeholder:
  - Party affiliation can be used on first reference when it is the most important element to connect with the subject: *Republican Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina said ...*
  - On second reference to add context between the party affiliation and the rest of the story: *Rep. Frank Lucas of Oklahoma, the senior Republican on the House Agriculture Committee, said he supports the amendment.*
  - Leave out when the story is clearly not political: *The governor attended the NCAA Tournament basketball game, having graduated from Villanova in 1995. The senator attended her daughter’s high school graduation.*
  - But use when a political connection exists: *The Democratic governor sat courtside next to the top donor to his campaign. The Republican senator spoke at her daughter’s graduation two weeks after voting on the education bill.*
  - Use the abbreviations listed in the AP Stylebook for each state. No abbreviations for Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas, and Utah.

- The normal practice for U.S. House members is to identify them by party and state. In contexts where state affiliation is clear and home city is relevant, such as a state election roundup, identify representatives by party and city: *U.S. Reps. Ander Crenshaw, R-Jacksonville, and Frederica Wilson, D-Miami*. If this option is used, be consistent throughout the story.
  - Capitalize the following: Communist, Conservative, Democrat, Liberal, Republican, Socialist, etc., when they refer to a specific party or its members. Lowercase these words when they refer to political philosophy.
  - Lowercase the name of a philosophy in noun and adjective forms unless it is the derivative of a proper name: communism, communist; fascism, fascist. But: Marxism, Marxist; Nazism, Nazi
  - Examples: *John Adams was a Federalist, but a man who subscribed to his philosophy today would be described as a federalist. The liberal Republican senator and his Conservative Party colleague said they believe that democracy and communism are incompatible. The Communist Party member said he is basically a socialist who has reservations about Marxism.*
  - Capitalize “U.S. Congress” and “Congress” when referring to the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. Although Congress sometimes is used as a substitute for the House, it properly is reserved for reference to both the Senate and House.
  - Congressional is lowercase unless part of a proper name: *congressional salaries, the Congressional Quarterly*.
  - Congressional districts: Use figures and capitalize district when joined with a figure: *the 1st Congressional District; the 11th District*. Lowercase district when it stands alone.
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## Courts, Judges, Court Cases

### Court Cases

- Court case names are italicized.
- The versus in a court case name is always “v.” not “vs.”
- For court cases, you can use a shortened version of a longer case name, but make sure to use the official decision shortened name and keep it italicized.

### Justice

Capitalize before a name when it is the formal title. It is the formal title for members of the U.S. Supreme Court and for jurists on some state courts. In such cases, do not use judge in the first or subsequent references.

### Judge

Capitalize before a name when it is the formal title for an individual who presides in a court of law. Do not continue to use the title in second reference. Do not use court as part of the title unless confusion would result without it.

- If there is no court in the title: *U.S. District Judge Jalen Garner, District Judge Jalen Garner, federal Judge Jalen Garner, Judge Jalen Garner, U.S. Circuit Judge Priscilla Owen, appellate Judge Priscilla Owen*
- Court needed in the title: *Juvenile Court Judge Gabriela Cabrera, Criminal Court Judge John Jones, Superior Court Judge Robert Harrison, state Supreme Court Judge Keri Liu*
- When the formal title chief judge is relevant, put the court name after the judge's name: *Chief Judge Royce Lamberth of the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C.; Chief Judge Karen Williams of the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals*
- Do not pile up long court names before the name of a judge: *Judge John Smith of Allegheny County Common Pleas Court*. Not: *Allegheny County Common Pleas Court Judge John Smith*.
- A judge serves “on” or presides “over” a court. A judge is a member “of” a court: *Nancy Gertner served as a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts from 1994 to 2011 and is now a senior lecturer on law at Harvard Law School. Sachs clerked for Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. '79 during the 2009–2010 Supreme Court term, and for the late Judge Stephen F. Williams '61 of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit in 2007–2008.*
- Lowercase judge as an occupational designation in phrases: American Idol judge Simon Cowell.

### **Supreme Court of the United States**

- Capitalize “U.S. Supreme Court” and also the “Supreme Court” (when the context makes the U.S. designation unnecessary). Also capitalize “Court” when referring to the Supreme Court in copy.
- The chief justice is properly the chief justice of the United States, not of just the Supreme Court: *Chief Justice John Roberts*.
- The proper title for the eight other members of the court is associate justice. When used as a formal title before a name, it should be shortened to justice and should be used in each mention: *Justice Elena Kagan*.

### **U.S. Constitution**

- Capitalize references to the U.S. Constitution, with or without the U.S. modifier: *The president said he supports the Constitution*.
- When referring to constitutions of other nations or of states, capitalize only with the name of a nation or a state: *the French Constitution, the Massachusetts Constitution, the nation's constitution, the state constitution, the constitution*.
- Lowercase in other uses: *the organization's constitution*
- Lowercase constitutional in all uses.

### **Law firm names**

Do not include P.C. or LLC unless it's in a quote or a profile.

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## Online Formatting

### Hyperlinks

- All links should open in the same window for accessibility/screen readers.
- In first reference, when possible, link faculty names to official HLS directory page (as opposed to program page like Berkman Klein Center, or personal website).
- Link name and grad year only, not title.
- Avoid using text hyperlinks with the specific web URL: [hls.harvard.edu/dept/dos](https://hls.harvard.edu/dept/dos). Use descriptive link text instead: *Visit the DOS site*.
- Avoid single words or short vague phrases such as click here or read more; make sure the reader knows where the link will take them. Provide descriptive link text without being too verbose. Include action verbs if appropriate: *Apply for the fellowship today. Learn more about the application process.*
- Include “(PDF)” after a link to a PDF: *Read Professor Sullivan’s prepared remarks (PDF)*.
- Don’t hyperlink punctuation unless it’s part of the link text, including quotes around a book title.
- Hyperlink within a story to other prominent people (outside HLS faculty), relevant stories, articles, papers, etc. However, be judicious and make sure it is to relevant content.
- Per Harvard endorsement policies, we should avoid linking to third-party fundraising efforts.

### Images

- Optimize images before bringing them into WordPress.
- Photos should not be more than 5MB.
- 2550 pixels is a good maximum width or height for editorial or full-width images.
- Enter alt text for every photo. It should be descriptive of the photo content, but concise, providing assistance for people using screen readers, but also in case the image doesn’t load in the browser.

### Photo captions and credits

- Always include a photographer attribution when we have one.
- Use Name/HLS photographer for internal employees: *Lorin Granger/HLS photographer*
- Include just the first and last names for external photographer, unless they request something else: *Martha Stewart*
- When an image is provided, start with “Courtesy of.”
- For location of individuals in a photo, we recommend the following: *From left; Clockwise from top left; More than 50 people participated, including Sally Yates, third from left.*



- We have no official rule on including class years and degrees in photo captions. It depends on context within story, space limitations, etc. Ideally, we do include grad year in captions, but not in title.

### **Page and post titles**

- For editorial content, use initial cap then caps on proper nouns only. For other content, initial caps on all words, except for minor words (unless they are the first or last word of the title), is acceptable.
- Include as many keywords as possible in titles.
- Give thought to what users might search by and for.
- Keep length in mind — title should be less than 60 characters, if possible, for search purposes.

### **Page and post subtitles**

- For editorial content, use initial cap then caps on proper nouns only.

### **Headings**

- Use the Heading 2 style for the first heading on the page. (Heading 1 is being used for the page title.)
- Use Heading 3 for the next heading under Heading 2, and Heading 4 for the next heading under Heading 3, and so on.
- Do not use Heading 3 unless there is a Heading 2 in use above it.
- Try to include as many keywords in headings as possible. Give thought to what users might search by or scan for.

### **Excerpts**

- Always include an excerpt for a post, page, event, link, or deadline.
- Excerpt should not be the same as the title or subtitle; it should be a teaser of the full post – you are trying to grab attention.
- Complement the title; don't repeat it. Describe the post, tease the first paragraph, or ask a question to prompt readers to click through to get the answer.
- Many search engines display approximately 155 characters (or possibly less) before the excerpt is truncated.
- Currently, social media sites share even fewer characters.
  - Twitter gives you two lines, which is approximately 20-23 words or 125 characters, including spaces.
  - Facebook gives just one line of the excerpt, which is between 8-13 words. You can add more context in the text HLS provides in Facebook, but remember the first few words are critical.

### **Curly quotes**

Use curly quotes in WordPress instead of straight quotes. This should be the default, but if you need keyboard shortcuts to create one:

On Macs:

- Option + ] produces an opening single curly quote ( ‘ )
- Option + Shift + ] produces a closing single curly quote ( ’ )
- Option + [ produces an opening double curly quote ( “ )
- Option + Shift + [ produces a closing double curly quote ( ” )

On PCs:

- Alt + 0145 produces an opening single curly quote ( ‘ )
- Alt + 0146 produces a closing single curly quote ( ’ )
- Alt + 0147 produces an opening double curly quote ( “ )
- Alt + 0148 produces a closing double curly quote ( ” )

## Bylines

- Always have a byline for editorial content. The default in the Harvard Law Today WordPress site is “HLS News Staff” if no author is selected.
- When the author works in the communications office, use their name and the add-on “HLS News Staff.”
- For people who work at HLS, but outside our office, use their name and the add-on “HLS Staff Contributor.”
- For freelance writers who do not work at HLS, use their name and the add-on “HLS Correspondent.”
- For Harvard Gazette writers, use their name and the add-on “Harvard Gazette.”

## Brackets in pull content

**This is for the Harvard Law Today website only.** If using brackets in pull content, you will need to add the bracket after the pull content is finalized. Go to text view for the page and enter the bracket within the text within the <div class="content"> section of the page.

## Q&A formatting

For editorial content in Harvard Law Today:

- Italicized intro text, start with a small drop cap
- Horizontal rule after intro text before questions and answers
- Questions: publication name = “Harvard Law Today” on first mention, “HLT” on all following
- Answers: respondent name(s) = Full name on first mention, last name only on all following

## Horizontal rules

They can be used at the end of posts to create a Related Content section, after intros, sometimes to offset callouts or sidebars.

## Keyboard shortcuts

- Ellipsis: Option + semicolon, on a PC hold down Alt key and type 0133

- En dash: Mac Option + hyphen key, on a PC hold down Alt key and type 0150
- Em dash: Mac Option + Shift + hyphen key, on a PC hold down Alt key and type 0151
- See Curly quotes above for additional shortcuts.