

Capitalization

Headlines and titles:

- » Prepositions of four letters or less (such as “of” and “with”) are lowercase, unless appearing as either the first or last word in a headline or title, in which case they are capitalized.
- » The first element of hyphenated compounds is always capitalized; the second element is also capitalized except for articles (“the,” “a,” etc.) and prepositions of four letters or less (examples: Self-Renewal, Not-forProfit).

Capitalize initial letters of:

- » any official title that directly precedes a person’s name (Chief Operating Officer Mary Jones, Director of National Meetings Judy Smith)
- » names of projects, activities, events, and initiatives
- » names of trademarked games (Trivial Pursuit)
- » department/team/group/board names when stated in full (GSUSA Communications, Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles Board of Directors, CFO Call Advisory Group)
- » book series (It’s Your World—Change It!)

NOTE: When a colon is used between clauses that are linked but independent, the first word after the colon is not initial-capped, even if what follows the colon is a complete sentence.

Lowercase initial letters of the following:

- » titles that don’t directly precede a person’s name (Laura Johnson, vice president of communications; the vice president, Laura Johnson) in running text; however, in a list format it may be appropriate to cap
- » titles that are more descriptive than official in nature (developmental psychologist Sue Blue)
- » generic, stand-alone references to Girl Scout program, projects, and publications (“the project,” even if it refers to the Girl Scout Bronze Award Project)
- » Girl Scout council (but Girl Scout Council of Tropical Florida)

Hyperlinking

Defined as a word, group of words, or image in an electronic document that readers can click on to jump to another document, the hyperlink is a hyper-efficient means of transportation.

A few tips:

- » Be direct. Steer clear of outmoded constructions like “click here,” which crowd text with extra, unnecessary words. Instead, insert hyperlinks precisely where indicated by your messaging to streamline copy and avoid link ambiguity for those who routinely scan emails without taking in the context surrounding links—as well as for screen reader users. For example, if you’re pointing readers to a webinar registration page, link off of “register for the webinar”—direct, clear.
- » Be choosy. Keep in mind that hyperlinks can serve as a tiresome distraction to readers, particularly when used *indiscriminately* and abundantly. So link wisely.

- » Know the drill. 1) Highlight the word(s)/image you wish to link from. 2) At the top of your screen, click Insert and select Hyperlink. 3) Click Web Page, Document, or E-mail Address, depending on the nature of the item you wish to link to. 4) Proceed as instructed, entering or pasting relevant text into the designated fields.

Italics and Quotation Marks

Italicize titles of:

- » books (*The Chicago Manual of Style*)
- » magazines and newspapers (*Los Angeles Times*, *the American Girl*); about not capping/italicizing “the”
- » movies
- » plays
- » TV shows and series
- » podcasts (*This American Life*)

Also italicize words in a language other than English (takk skal du ha), unless the constructions are widely familiar (pro bono, ex officio).

While there aren’t really hard-and-fast rules for boldfacing, keep in mind:

- » Titles and section heads in a piece of writing are good targets.
- » Particular phrasing that you wish to emphasize in a piece can benefit from boldfacing, but remember...
- » Less is more. Too much boldface in a piece often has the opposite effect of what’s sought (emphasis), making text appear cluttered and reader eyes tired before they’ve even begun to process your messaging.

Use double quotation marks for titles of:

- » book chapters and sections (“Be Healthy, Be Fit” chapter)
- » magazine and newspaper articles
- » poems
- » songs (“Watch Me Shine” Girl Scout anthem)
- » TV series episodes (the “Election Night” episode of *The West Wing*)
- » public service announcements (Girl Scouts’ “I’m Prepared” PSA)

You might also use double quotation marks to indicate that a word/construction is somehow special, for instance because:

- » It constitutes a play on words. (The girls used their cookie “dough” to fund the service project.)
- » You don’t buy into its meaning. (Women achieved “equality” when they were granted the right to vote in 1920.)
- » It’s a clear reference point in your sentence. (See the “earth” entry in the “Words, Terms, Names” section of the guide.)

Use single quotation marks for:

- » quotes within quotes (“I’m really feeling Girl Scouts’ new anthem, ‘Let Me Shine,’” said the Girl Scout.)

Numbers

Spell out numbers one through ten, and use numerals for higher numbers. Exceptions: when used with a unit (4 inches, 2 centimeters; 3 billion people); in a series of three or more numbers, with one or more above nine (8, 9, 18).

You may use an en dash to mean “to” for continuing numbers (examples: ages 12–14; pgs. 10–12).

Numbers that begin a sentence are always spelled out.

Specific rules by category:

- » **ages:** eight- to nine-year-old girls, six-month-old baby, five-year-old child, five years old, ages 15–18 (use en dash), ages 16 and older, student in first grade, first-grade student, first-grader, 11th grader
- » **dates:** September 1984; October 1, 1980, (commas before and after the year when the day is included after the month)
- » **fractions:** one-half, two and one-half days
- » **money:** \$150
- » **noun plus number:** Chapter 1, Activity 1 (not Chapter #1 or Activity #1)
- » **page numbers:** pages 2–6 (use en dash with date and other number spreads)
- » **phone numbers:** in print, 212-852-8000
- » **plurals of numbers used as nouns:** Add only an s to numbers being used as nouns, whether numerals or spelled out (the 1940s; fours and fives).
- » **plural acronyms and abbreviations:** Do not use apostrophes: IOUs, CODs, YWCAs.
- » **temperature:** 300 degrees
- » **time:** 3:00 a.m. (3:00 AM also acceptable; note that the no-periods rule also applies to small caps); 24-hour period
- » **weight:** 1 1/2- to 2-pound sleeping bag

Punctuation

ampersand: Avoid using ampersands in text, unless referring to trademarks.

ellipsis: Used to indicate missing text or a trailing thought, the ellipsis consists of three consecutive periods. While our default style guide, *The Chicago Manual of Style*, states otherwise, GS style does not call for separating the periods with spaces; anyhow, often MS Word defaults to automatically inserting half-spaces between ellipsis periods.

em dash, en dash, and hyphen: Do not use a space before or after dashes and hyphens.

- » Use an em dash to set off clauses. (Choose a goal—saving money, for example.) An em dash should also be used before names in source lines, such as the author of a quotation. (*To make an em dash in Microsoft Word, with NUM LOCK on, hold down ALT while pressing 0151 in the number pad.*)
- » Use an en dash for number spreads and in other cases when the meaning is “to” (ages 12–14; 1997–99; 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.); also when making a compound adjective with a proper noun (Girl Scout-related case study). (*To make an em dash in Microsoft Word, with NUM LOCK on, hold down ALT while pressing 0150 in the number pad.*)
- » Use a hyphen only in compound words (one-half, mother-in-law) and in end-of-line word division.

exclamation point: Use sparingly to mark an outcry or following an emphatic comment. (Oh, no! or Woohoo, it’s Friday!)

punctuation in lists:

Use numbered lists if items are in a sequence.

1. Mix flour, macadamia chips, and baking powder.
2. Add 2 cups of water.
3. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 minutes.

Use a bulleted list for items that are nonsequential.

Be sure to bring the following:

- » canteen
- » hiking boots
- » matches
- » poncho

Items within a list should be of parallel grammatical structure. Do not mix sentences and phrases within a list. Use periods in bulleted lists only when the items are grammatically complete sentences, or if ambiguity would result. Either:

- » Drive on the right side of the road.
- » Eat only in designated restaurants.
- » Sleep at official campsites.

or:

- » driving on the right
- » eating in designated restaurants
- » sleeping at official campsites

percent: Should be written out in text; the % symbol should be used only in charts/tables and in scientific/statistical text.

serial comma: Always insert a comma before the conjunction in a series. (Girls from Wisconsin, Illinois, and Michigan attended the event. Some girls choose English, others prefer science, and still others like art or music.)

*NOTE: For other style issues, reference *The Chicago Manual of Style, 16th Edition*, and *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th Edition*.*

Brand Story

Our Tenants

The Girl Scout legacy is spirited and storied. To move our story forward, we use a voice that's encouraging, emotive, thoughtful, inclusive, and bold.

As Girl Scouts, we speak and show up distinctly. This way of speaking—our brand voice—is guided by our tenets.

Think of our tenets as levers you can pull across all your written and verbal communications. In some situations, you may end up using all of them, but in other instances, only one or two work best to get your point across or inspire action. When applied consistently across communications, the tenets bring our voice to life in vibrant, authentic ways.

Although we use the tenets for all our audiences, the following explains each tenet through the girl lens.

Encouraging and Earnest

Our brand voice speaks to girls, not at them. We believe in them and all the incredible things they'll accomplish today and tomorrow, and we make that clear by how we talk to them.

Emotive and Substantive

We express ourselves with depth—grounding our language in the truth of who we are and what we value.

We only look back if it means we can look forward in new, interesting ways.

Thoughtful and Unreserved

Girls are smart and think deeply about the world around them. We never underestimate their intelligence. Instead, we celebrate and champion it. And we practice what we preach by consistently speaking up for what we believe in.

Inclusive and Uplifting

We help girls discover more about who they are, what they care about, and what they're capable of. Our language welcomes every Girl Scout, just as she is, in all her extraordinary complexity and potential, and celebrates her at every step of her journey.

Bold and Determined

We're confident in our convictions, so we avoid language that feels flashy or overcompensating. When we set an example by speaking truthfully in simple, straightforward language, girls also express themselves with confidence.