

### 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-for-Profit).

#### 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. Avoid outmoded constructions like “[click here](#)” when directing readers to an outside resource; this only crowds text with extra, unnecessary words. Instead, insert hyperlinks precisely where indicated by the text itself.
- » 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
- » videos, DVDs, CDs, and cassettes

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

### 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, for example, 8 percent (not eight percent, not 8%); 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 CTRL and ALT while pressing the dash key 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 en dash, hold down CTRL while pressing the dash key 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 VOICE

Our brand voice is key to communicating with our customers, supporters, the media, and the general public. Keeping it on point and tonally consistent allows us to be heard, recognized, and easily remembered. It brings our Girl Scout personality to life and enables us to build connections with our various audiences.

The voice takes cues from our brand platform, G.I.R.L. (Go-getter, Innovator, Risk-taker, Leader)<sup>TM</sup>, the expression of our brand's core attitudes, values, and history:

**GO-GETTER.** Determined to succeed. Bold. Honest. Goal-oriented. Can-do mentality. Ambitious. Lifelong learner.

**INNOVATOR.** Creative. Thinks outside the box. Always looking for a new approach. Visionary. Uses resources wisely. Original. Do-it-yourselfer. Experimenter.

**RISK-TAKER.** Not afraid to try new things. Courageous. Strong. Breaks the mold. Steps up. Discoverer. Pioneer. Embraces the unfamiliar.

**LEADER.** Confident. Knows how to get the job done. Responsible. Committed to making the world a better place. Empathetic. Advocate. Empowers others.

It's helpful to think of the Hero character (we're serving a cause, we're loyal and trustworthy, we stand up for our values) and Every G.I.R.L. persona (we're unpretentious, relatable, approachable; we represent everyone on a path to stepping out of their comfort zones to achieve their goals) as we write in a real-talk, motivational way for our readers, avoiding vague, generic references to fun and good times. For example, instead of saying "Let's get this Girl Scout party started!" we might say "Join us to find the G.I.R.L. within as you try new things and discover all you're capable of!" We aim to describe what it is that makes the Girl Scout experience so amazing—what's behind the fun. With G.I.R.L., the focus is also on preparing girls to empower themselves, rather than the idea of us empowering them.

It's important that we infuse our G.I.R.L. brand voice across all marketing and communications initiatives, both internally and externally, to highlight authentic stories that feature members and nonmembers practicing leadership the Girl Scout way—as go-getters, innovators, risk-takers, and leaders. And audience should always be considered. For instance, we'd probably want to take a more buttoned-up approach to writing for a group of boardroom executives (potential Girl Scout investors, say) than for would-be parents and volunteers in a series of promotional emails. It's also not necessary, or even desirable, to always use "G.I.R.L.," "go-getter," "innovator," etc.; we should look to weave other strong, action- and leadership-oriented terms that embody our brand platform and strategy into our copy as well, or even instead. This adds variety and specificity, which in turn makes for more enjoyable reading.