

# CP Cheat Sheet

This document is based on the CP *Stylebook*, but it's an extract. There is lots in the book that is NOT covered here, so when in doubt, use the book/online Stylebook.

## What you need to know now

There are some CP Style basics that are so common, and so absolutely vital, you should start learning them now and integrating them into your writing immediately.

### Places and addresses

#### Provincial & territorial abbreviations: when to (not) use them

CP's abbreviations for provinces and territories are not the same as the ones used by Canada Post. This is what CP uses:

Alta.	N.B.	N.W.T.	Que.
B.C.	N.L.	Ont.	Sask.
Man.	N.S.	P.E.I.	Nvt.

Here is an example of what this looks like in a sentence: [Bridgewater, N.S.](#), is more fun than [Leduc, Alta.](#)

There are no abbreviations for Yukon — it is spelled out in full.

[I loved my visit to the tiny community of Pelly Crossing, Yukon.](#)

When indicating both a town/city and its province/territory, note that the province or territory has commas both before AND after it.

[People in Baker Lake, Nvt., were without electricity for more than a week after the storm.](#)

[We plan to take the ferry from North Sydney, N.S., to Cornerbrook, N.L., later this week.](#)

However, not all cities require a province immediately after their names (memory trick = the cities that don't require a province are (1) most provincial capitals; (2) places with an NHL team; (3) Hamilton; and (4) Saskatoon. [Here's the full list of cities that do not need to be followed by the name of their province or territory:](#)

[Calgary, Charlottetown, Edmonton, Fredericton, Halifax, Hamilton, Iqaluit, Montreal, Ottawa,](#)

Quebec City, Regina, Saskatoon, Toronto, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Victoria, Whitehorse, Yellowknife

But there's an exception:

Write St. John's, N.L., and Saint John, N.B., to avoid confusion.

### Key rules for places outside Canada

The *Stylebook* has a list of abbreviations of state names that may be used after the name of a community. But not all state names have an abbreviation. Check the *Stylebook*.

Big U.S. cities Do NOT take the state abbreviation. There's a list in the *Stylebook* — check it.

### Civic addresses

In numbered addresses, write Ave., Blvd., Cir., Cres., Dr., Hwy., Pky., Rd., Rte., Sq., St., Ter.

36 King St. E., 111 Sunderland Dr., 9 Hurricane Ter.

But spell out general locations.

Most of my classes are in a building on Gould Street, just a five-minute walk to the Yonge Street subway.

## SPELLING, ABBREVIATIONS

### Canadian vs U.S. spelling

For the most part, CP style dictates that we use Canadian spelling. If in doubt, check the Canadian Oxford Dictionary and CP's caps and spelling guide, which you can find at the bottom right corner of the *Stylebook*'s home page. Here's Canadian spelling in action:

The processing centre has been criticized by local politicians for violating labour laws and discriminating on the basis of applicants' skin colour.

But we don't *always* use Canadian spelling — places in the United States or entities created there take U.S. spelling, even when being written about in Canada.

e.g. Lincoln Center (not Lincoln Centre); Bar Harbor, Me. (not Bar Harbour); the book or movie *The Color Purple* (not *The Colour Purple*); the U.S. Defense Department (not Defence Department) and U.S. Labor Department (not Labour Department).

### Other spelling rules

- Foods: entirely random, e.g. oysters Rockefeller, McIntosh apple, Bing cherries, Parmesan cheese but baked alaska, caesar salad, french fries. CP bottom line: Look it up.

- Richard? Rich? Richie? Dick? It's up to him — name people according to their preference, e.g. Bob Rae, John F. Kennedy, P.G. Wodehouse. This applies to First Nations bands and people whose names are written in script other than the English alphabet.
- Use only abbreviations and acronyms (abbreviations pronounced as words) that are familiar to ordinary readers, e.g. CN, CTV, MP, NATO, radar (RADio Detection And Ranging)
- Spell out United Nations, but UN as adjective – UN Security Council -- is OK
- OK is OK but okay is not OK.
- “Abbreviations that have become household terms are acceptable in all references. That is, they need not be spelled out, though the full word or phrase may make for more graceful reading,” CP says e.g. CBC, MP, NATO, NDP, PoW, RCMP
- Acronyms: the bookstore sells CD-ROMs, VANOC ran the Olympics
- “In general, do not put a bracketed abbreviation after the name of an organization: Transportation Safety Board (TSB), World Health Organization (WHO),” CP says. “Abbreviations that need this device to be clear should rarely be used.”
- For ease of reading, a general term often beats an abbreviation in the lead, e.g. the industrial relations board (for CIRB), mad cow disease (for BSE), the union, the company, the association. If you do this, you must give the full name pretty quickly.
- Adobe Acrobat, Windows Explorer, email (no hyphen), internet, World Wide Web, but the web. (This is an example of a more general rule – the full name of many institutions is capped – Toronto Metropolitan University – but on second reference, it's the university, with no cap.) Plural form of an abbreviation = add s (but no apostrophe) - UFOs
- No periods in all capitals abbreviations UNLESS it's geography or a person, e.g. P.E.I., J.J. Abrams, but DND, VIP
- Abbreviations expressed in either lowercase or a mix of upper- and lower-case take periods, e.g. Jr., m.p.h.
- Metric measures are not abbreviations, but symbols, so no periods, e.g. km, one kilometre, 500 kilometres
- CP says: “The names of metric units are usually spelled out: a 20-kilogram sack, not a 20-kg sack; covering 50 hectares, not covering 50 ha; ran 10 kilometres, not ran 10 km.”

## Capitalization, uppercase letters & italics

This is a very complicated area — there is a whole chapter in the online guide about this; to find it, search “capitalization.”

### Key rule

“Capitalize all proper names, trade names, government departments and agencies of government, names of associations, companies, clubs, religions, languages, nations, races, places, addresses. Otherwise lowercase is favoured.”

### Common words (i.e. *not* proper nouns)

CP says not to capitalize common words

base, drive, ocean, church, department, university, school

... unless they are part of a formal name:

Canadian Forces Base Trenton  
Sussex Drive  
Atlantic Ocean  
Catholic Church  
Toronto Metropolitan University  
Lessard Park

But generally, lowercase them when standing alone in subsequent references:

the Canadian Forces base  
the drive  
the ocean  
the university  
the school  
the park

“Lowercase the common-noun elements of names in plural uses.”:

“The accident happened where John and Leslie streets cross.”

But “He lives at 31 John St. and she lives at 99 Leslie St.” (Abbreviations with specific numbers.)

NB: CP caps Black in reference to race, but not brown and white.

## Titles & positions

Capitalize formal titles – “those that are almost an integral part of a person’s identity” - directly preceding a name

Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland

Lowercase them when standing alone or set off from the name with commas:

The heritage minister said ...  
The finance minister, Chrystia Freeland, said ...  
Mélanie Joly, the minister of finance, said ...

Lowercase occupational titles and job descriptions:

GM president Andre Lefort, general manager Sally James, news editor Agathe Simard, author Susan Sontag, nurse Tom Atfield

Rules for royalty:

- Where possible use “King” rather than “King Charles” and use King of Canada, never King of England
- Prince William is not heir to the British throne; he is heir to the throne

- Camilla, wife of King Charles, is known as Queen Camilla or simply the Queen
- Kate, wife of Prince William, uses the title the Princess of Wales
- Prince Harry remains the Duke of Sussex and his wife Meghan the Duchess of Sussex – do not use the titles His Royal Highness or Her Royal Highness.
- Don't refer to the late Princess of Wales as Princess Diana, since she wasn't a princess by birth

## Names of people and things

Except in all-lowercase or all-uppercase names, do what the person/company wants “unless it hampers readability,” says CP.

eBay, iPod, WestJet, PepsiCo, iPad, iPhone

So what does CP file under the category of “hampers readability”? ...

Yahoo Inc. (*not* Yahoo! Inc.), Ikea (*not* IKEA)

Capitalize lowercase names at the beginning of a sentence:

EBay is ...

If a corporate or promotional name is all lowercase, cap the first letter for clarity.

Adidas (*not* adidas); Citytv (*not* citytv)

For names of people, follow their preference.

J.D. Martinez

If the name is all uppercase, cap only the first letter.

Band-Aid (*not* BAND-AID), Scrabble (*not* SCRABBLE), Via Rail (*not* VIA Rail)

Capitalize universities and colleges but not their departments, courses or programs.

the mathematics department, but Toronto Metropolitan University School of Journalism (it's a proper name); but the journalism (not Journalism) school

Capitalize all trade names but use them only when they give colour or impact to a story — if not, stick with the generic term — for example, use “beer,” not “Corona.”

bandage (Band-Aid); cola (Coca-Cola); tissues (Kleenex); cotton swabs (Q-Tips); petroleum jelly (Vaseline); photocopier (Xerox), stun gun (Taser)

Capitalize trademarks, i.e. names (and symbols) used by organizations and protected by law.

Frigidaire, Skor bars, Tamiflu

Family and place names that include saint or a variant are tricky, needing the same care in checking as Mac and Mc names.

In general, do not use the courtesy titles Ms., Miss, Mr., etc. Use just the surname on second and subsequent references.

According to CP, “first names may be used on second reference for children and youths under 18, except in sports stories; they may also be used for adults for deliberate informality.”

Nicknames style = use parentheses, not quotation marks.

[Abel \(The Weeknd\) Tesfaye](#)

When married people do not use a common surname, an explanation can be added for clarity:

[Former premier Kathleen Wynne and her wife, Jane Rounthwaite.](#)

If two people who share a surname are **not** husband and wife, explain. And, to distinguish between persons of the same last name on second reference, repeat first names:

[Wayne Gretzky and his sister, Kim.](#)

Capitalize the full names of political parties and movements, but lowercase the party in short forms.

[The Liberal Party of Canada won the October 2015 federal election.](#)  
[The Liberal party campaigned on a platform of inclusion.](#)

Capitalize the proper names of well-known buildings, bridges, canals, parks, roads, rooms and other manufactured features.

[Parliament Buildings, East Block, White House, Oval Office, Buckingham Palace, U.S. Capitol, Archambault Penitentiary, Calgary City Hall, Lions Gate Bridge, French Embassy](#)

The language of personal computing:

[iPad \(same is true for iPod, iCloud, etc. unless it's at the start of a sentence, then it's IPad\), Twitter \(but note it's lower-case “tweet”\); internet is lower case](#)

In general, capitalize a noun followed by a number denoting place in a numbered series. (Or, to put it another way, it's Act 1 only because there is an Act 2.) That's why grades are written with a capital and numeral — a grade is a noun followed by a number showing its place in a series.

[Act 1, Article 2, Book 3, Channel 4, Section 5, Grade 6](#)

Capitalize the principal words and italicize titles of books, broadcast programs, films, plays, poems, songs, speeches, works of art and other compositions.

[CBC's \*World at Six\*, \*Gone With the Wind\*, \*The Taming of the Shrew\*, \*In Flanders Fields\*, \*Gettysburg Address\*, \*The Da Vinci Code\*, the \*Mona Lisa\*](#)

romantic comedy on first reference, rom-com on second

Note: Composition titles, except for the Bible, should be written in italics.

## DATES AND TIMES

The full date (date - month - year) takes commas, but not just the month + year.

Dec. 14, 2004, VERSUS December 2004.

For dates use figures (numerals), not words.

July 3, NOT July three or July 3rd or 3rd of July.

Spell out months standing alone or with a year alone; for months used with a specific date, abbreviate only these:

Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec.

Oct. 1, 1999, was a Friday. January 2012 was wet.

Time of day - Use numbers after the colon only when they are not zero; if there are no numbers after the colon, don't add zeroes:

10 a.m. (NOT 10:00 a.m.), 3:30 p.m.

Use time zones when clarity requires it.

The plane crashed at 2 p.m. local time (5 p.m. EDT).

For close dates — within a week — just use the day. So if you're referring on Wednesday to something that happened earlier that week on Monday, just say Monday. For more distant dates, use the date: if you're referring on Wednesday to something on Monday nine days earlier, use the date IF it's important that your reader have the precise date; in many cases, it may be sufficient to speak more generally,

On Monday, Trudeau was admitted to hospital, where he was treated for food poisoning.

She announced her resignation at a news conference last week.

The couple spoke at the Democratic National Convention on July 28.

On Monday, he told reporters he sold his interest in the company almost two months earlier.

Capitalize holidays, religious feasts and all special times — there are plenty of examples below, but at least one notable exception: "election day" is lower case.

New Year's Eve (but talking about the coming year, lowercase: "We'll start volleyball in the new year," coach said.)

Ash Wednesday

April Fool's Day

Mother's Day

Eid

July Fourth OR Fourth of July

Halloween

Christmas Day

Hanukkah

Ramadan

D-Day

## IMPERIAL vs METRIC, WEIGHTS, HEIGHTS, DISTANCE

As a starting point, CP usually uses metric, not imperial — but there are exceptions — baseball, golf, football, horse racing and certain classes of auto racing are reported in imperial. Use the measurement the sport uses. If in doubt, look up the sport.

“Among the lingering exceptions to metric are cases where some other measurement remains conventional — personal weights and heights, precious metals in troy ounces, two-by-fours, quarter-inch screws and the like.”

a woman five feet 11 inches tall  
the baby weighs seven pounds six ounces  
the six-foot-three, 250-pound tackle

In general, write out metric units.

I carry a five-kilogram backpack on my daily commute.

## NUMBERS

Write out whole numbers of nine or less, and write out ninth and under BUT use numerals for fractions.

two kilometres, but 2.5 (or 2 1/2) kilometres  
the fifth inning  
nine minutes  
the 16th hole  
the 22nd day  
a man in his 50s

Use numerals for 10 and greater, and 10th and greater ... unless the number is at the start of a sentence — in that case, write it out.

Ten years from now, I'll have mastered Canadian Press Style.

... *but* ...

I hope that, 10 years from now, I'll have mastered Canadian Press Style.

There is never an apostrophe immediately after a numeral and before an “s” unless numbers were dropped. She is a woman in her 40s.

I'm not sure whether she was born in the late 1960s or early '70s.

Use numerals for fractions with a whole number.

It took me more than 2½ hours to climb 2.5 kilometres.



BUT write out fractions standing alone that are less than one

By now, at least three-quarters of the class is sick of Canadian Press style.

This means that, in a single sentence, there will often be a mix of numbers that are written out AND numerals.

There are 27 trees: two beeches, 10 chestnuts, three elms and 12 maples.

For numbers in official names, follow the organization's spelling style even when it is at odds with Canadian Press practice.

the film *7 Fathers*  
360networks Inc.

Spell out for casual usage.

There were thousands of mosquitoes.

For dollar amounts, the general rule is to use the \$ sign and numerals but there are exceptions.

\$3  
\$14.59  
\$297,000  
\$3.7 billion  
seven bucks (although keep in mind that, given the highly informal nature of "bucks," you're likely to encounter this only in a direct quote)

Use commas to set off numbers of four or more figures except for civic addresses, telephone numbers, page, years and serial numbers.

2,500  
100,000 1-800-268-9237  
p. 1025  
In 2015, the Liberal Party of Canada ...

Use figures for numbers up to 999,999. Above that, switch to words unless absolute precision is required.

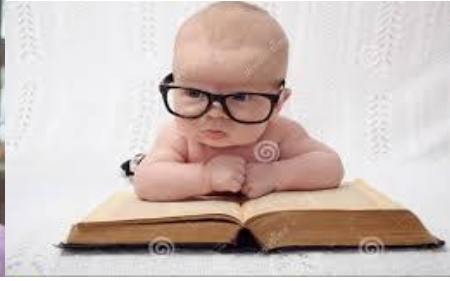
a loss of \$100,000  
a \$1.2-million project (NOT a \$1,200,000 project)

## Hyphens

The rules that explain how and when to use a hyphen are complex, thus misplaced and/or missing hyphens are a common problem in journalism. However, this isn't just a question of style — misplaced hyphens can change the meaning of a phrase.



She is an old book-collector.



She is an old-book collector.

Review hyphen use, especially hyphens for compound modifiers, in the CP online guide. Check out **Tools and Technical Guides** → **Punctuation** → **Hyphens**, paying particular attention to **Nos. 3, 4, 10, 12, 14, 16 and 17**.

## Dashes

CP puts spaces around dashes.

The ministers will discuss common problems — trade, tourism, immigration and defence — before going to the summit talks.

Use dashes when commas (generally preferable) would create confusion.

The pies — meat and fruit — were cheap.

## Use of pronouns

As identified in the CP *Stylebook*, it is best practice to ask the person you are interviewing what their pronouns are and then use those pronouns throughout your story. Simply ask, “What are your pronouns?” And this holds true for whatever platform your story is being delivered on. To avoid confusion about who you are referring to when using “they” as a singular pronoun, CP also suggests that you provide an explanation where necessary.

James (who uses gender-neutral pronouns) says they will continue to fight for pay equity.

LGBTQ+ (OK on first reference for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning community, with the + symbol representing additional identities and orientations, including intersex, pansexual, two-spirit, androgynous and asexual)

## Social Media

X—The social media service formerly known as Twitter. For maximum clarity, explain and include the previous name on first reference:

The comments were posted to the X platform, formerly known as Twitter.

The comments were posted to X, formerly known as Twitter.

Terms like *tweet* and *retweet* are permissible, but prefer generic language like *post*, *reply*, *message* and the like.

Meta Platforms Inc. (parent company of Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp; Meta acceptable on first reference)

[Meta is moving forward with its plan to block news in Canada.](#)

## Scientific names

Capitalize when a full scientific name or an abbreviation of that name is used, eg., **Listeria monocytogenes**, **L. monocytogenes**, **Salmonella typhi**.

Use lowercase for commonly used versions: **listeria**, **salmonella**, and for resulting conditions: **listeriosis**, **salmonellosis**. Names can be shortened for common references, eg., E. coli, instead of **Escherichia coli** (intestinal bacterium)

Prepared by Lisa Taylor, Dan Westell and Nicole Blanchett