



## Editorial Style Guide

These guidelines are designed to help Sigma Tau Delta members prepare copy for Sigma Tau Delta publications (print and digital). They are intended to ensure consistency of style, and are based on the most current Modern Language Association [MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers](#) as well as on organizational preference. In any circumstance where this guide does not provide enough information, members should defer to the most recent MLA guidelines. The following quick reference provides preferences and examples for frequently occurring inconsistencies.

### Abbreviations

As a general rule, abbreviations made up of lowercase letters should have a period after each letter, without spaces between letters: e.g., i.e. For abbreviations made up of predominately capital letters, use neither periods after letters nor spaces between letters: BC, NJ, US, DVD, PhD.

**Degrees:** Abbreviate whenever possible: MA, BA, MFA, MBA, PhD.  
Capitalize all majors and minors; use lowercase for general reference.  
She has a BA in English with minors in Creative Writing and Secondary Education.  
He has an MA in Mass Communication with an emphasis in digital publishing.  
The position requires a bachelor's degree in a related field.

**Schools:** Spell out the names of colleges and universities.  
He is pursuing a BA in English at Tennessee State University.

**States:** Use the two-letter ZIP Code style to abbreviate states when used with a city or town.  
Note: Use two commas to set off the name of a state when it follows the name of a city.  
David Rodriguez, a junior at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, IL, is pursuing a BA in English.

**Time:** Use a.m. and p.m. (with periods) to designate time.  
The program is scheduled for 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

### Capitalization

**Awards:** Capitalize the full official name. Do not capitalize *award* when plural or standing alone.  
He won the Student Leadership Award.  
They announced the Student Leadership and Outstanding Advisor awards.  
The award recognizes outstanding service at the local level.

**Board:** Capitalize all references to the ΣΤΔ Board of Directors.  
The management of the Society is vested in the Board of Directors.  
A Board meeting is always scheduled immediately preceding or during the annual convention.  
All Board members are expected to attend; attendance is optional for non-Board members.

**Central Office:** Always capitalize *Central Office (CO)*.

**Chapter:** Capitalize *chapter* when part of a ΣΤΔ chapter's name.  
She is a member of the Omega Xi Chapter at Spelman College.  
She is a member of the chapter at Spelman College.

**Class:** Do not capitalize freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, undergraduate, or graduate.

**Committees:** Capitalize the full official name. Do not capitalize the noun when plural or standing alone.  
The Student Leadership Committee provides the students' voice within the Society.  
He spoke to the Executive and Service committees.  
The committee chair will send a meeting notice.

- Common Reader:** Capitalize all references to a specific common reader once it has been selected.  
*The Rock Eaters*, by Brenda Peynado, is the Common Reader for 2023.  
Next year's common reader will be announced in the spring.
- Constitution:** Always capitalize references to the  $\Sigma\tau\Delta$  Constitution and Bylaws.  
Any member may initiate a proposed amendment or addition to the Constitution.  
One of the charges of the Strategic Planning Committee is to recommend constitutional revisions.
- Convention:** Capitalize when immediately preceded by Sigma Tau Delta, a date, or city.  
(Note: Only the international event is referred to as a *convention*; regional events are referred to as *conferences*.)  
The theme of the Atlanta Convention was *Action*.  
The Sigma Tau Delta 2023 International Convention will be held in Denver.  
The 2023 Annual Convention will be in Denver.  
Consider submitting a paper for the convention in Denver.  
Check the convention website for additional information.  
The annual international convention is Sigma Tau Delta's signature event.
- Convention Chair:** Capitalize *chair* when immediately preceded by *convention*.  
The Convention Chair establishes the theme and selects the keynote speakers.  
The chair of the convention establishes the theme and selects the keynote speakers.
- Degrees/Programs:** Capitalize all degree and program names.  
She is an English Education Major at Minot State University.  
She also is pursuing a Minor in Women's Studies.  
He is a student in the Creative Writing program at Chadron State College.
- Departments:** Capitalize department names.  
The Department of English is located in the Arts & Sciences Building.  
Applications are available in the English Department.
- Regions:** Capitalize *region* when part of a  $\Sigma\tau\Delta$  region's name (i.e., Eastern Region, Far Western Region, High Plains Region, Midwestern Region, Southern Region, and Southwestern Region).  
The Southwestern Region held a conference in October 2018.  
Each region is encouraged to hold a conference during the fall session of the academic year.  
Join the Eastern Region's Facebook group to stay informed.  
Join your region's Facebook group to stay informed.  
  
Capitalize such words as *Midwesterner* and *Southerner* (referring to people in a region).  
Several famous Southerners were featured in the article.  
Welcome fellow Midwesterners!  
Back home in Texas, he was reminded of how good it felt to be a Southwesterner.
- Scholarships:** Capitalize the full official name. Do not capitalize *scholarship* when plural or standing alone.  
He won the Study Abroad Scholarship.  
They announced the winners of the Junior, Senior, and Graduate scholarships.  
Sigma Tau Delta offers a variety of scholarship opportunities.
- Seasons:** Do not capitalize unless part of a title.  
Elections take place at the annual spring convention.  
The fall 2022 Board meeting will be held in Denver.  
It was published in *The Sigma Tau Delta Newsletter*, Spring 2015.
- Society:** Capitalize when used in place of Sigma Tau Delta; do not capitalize a general reference that does not replace the title of our organization.  
The official motto of the Society, identified by its initials, is Sincerity, Truth, Design.  
The Society strongly encourages local chapters to plan and participate in social service activities.  
Stay abreast of Society activities by reading *Footnotes*, our bi-monthly email newsletter.  
We have developed into a society that increasingly interacts with the wider academic community.

- Titles/general:** When titles precede a name, use capitalization.  
The discussion will be led by Professor Carl White.
- When titles follow a name or stand alone, use lowercase.  
Carl White, professor of English history, will lead the discussion.
- Titles/ΣΤΔ:** Always capitalize ΣΤΔ Board positions: President, Vice President/President-Elect, Immediate Past President, Secretary/Treasurer, Officer at Large, Regent, Student Advisor (SA); and the plurals: Officers, Regents, and Student Advisors.
- Always capitalize ΣΤΔ Central Office (CO) positions: Executive Director, NEHS Director, Director of Society Operations, Director of Marketing and Technology, Director of Social Media Strategies, Web Technology Specialist, Office Manager.
- Always capitalize the singular and plural forms of ΣΤΔ student-related positions: Student Representative (SR), Associate Student Representative (ASR), and Alumni Representative (AR).
- Always capitalize the singular and plural forms of ΣΤΔ chapter positions: Chapter Advisor (and all variations, e.g., Faculty Advisor, Advisor), Chapter Administrator, and chapter officer positions.
- Jean Smith, Chapter Advisor of the Alpha Phi Omega Chapter, was recognized for 15 years of service. Include a cover letter signed by the Chapter Advisor (or sent from the Advisor's email address). She is very involved in Sigma Tau Delta as President of her local Theta Zeta Chapter.
- Always capitalize Sponsorship, Student Leaders, and Student Leadership in relation to sponsored events.  
The Student Leadership and Alumni Epsilon groups are co-sponsoring several events at the convention.
- The use of "Sigma Tau Deltans" to reference Sigma Tau Delta members is acceptable.

## Comma

- In a series:** MLA style includes the use of the serial/Oxford comma before the conjunction. Use commas to separate words, phrases, and clauses in a series.  
The 2023 Convention will feature student papers, workshops, and a number of outstanding guest speakers.
- Publications:** Use a comma after title, followed by the author.  
This year's Common Reader is *The Rock Eaters*, by Brenda Peynado.

## Computer and Internet Terms,

- One word:** online, email, website, webpage (lowercase)

## Dates

- Punctuation:** Use two commas to set off the year when it follows the month and day.  
The meeting scheduled for Thursday, January 9, 2023, has been cancelled.
- Do not use a comma between month and year or season and year.  
The January 2021 issue has been archived.  
He graduated in spring 2022.
- Sequence:** Use month-day-year format.  
Submissions must be completed by November 11, 2022.

## Graphics

- ΣΤΔ Identity:** Graphic standards, including [ΣΤΔ logo formats and guidelines](#), are posted on the website.

As the need arises to update chapter materials in print and on websites, we ask chapters to adopt and incorporate these graphic elements. Images are available in many formats. Instructions on appropriate typography and colors are also included.

## Money

- Use of figures:** In general, use figures to express amounts of money.  
Tickets are \$7.50 each.
- You may spell out infrequent references to money if the amount can be written in three words or less (e.g., five dollars, ten thousand dollars).  
He was down to his last five dollars.
- Whole dollars:** Do not add a decimal point and zeros for whole dollar amounts, unless listed in a series or if they are in a column format.  
Tickets are \$7.50 each or two for \$14.  
The committee suggested several pricing options:  
\$7.50, \$7.75, or \$8.00
- Under a dollar:** For amounts under a dollar, use figures with the word *cents*.  
A small coffee is 99 cents.
- Large amounts:** Large amounts of money may be expressed in both figures and words.  
The original cost of the building was \$4.5 million.

## Numbers

- Figure style:** Spell out numbers that can be written in one or two words and represent other numbers by numerals. Always spell out numbers that begin a sentence.  
One, thirty-six, one hundred, fifteen hundred, 2 ½, 101, 137, 1,275.  
Twenty-two students were awarded scholarships this year.
- For infrequent use of numbers, you may spell out numbers if they can be written in one or two words (ten, ninety-nine, one hundred, six million).
- Related numbers:** Express in the same style.  
He reported that 8 of 12 chapters were represented.
- Four-digit:** Use a comma (\$3,000).
- Plurals:** Do not use an apostrophe to form the plural of a number (1990s; temperatures in the 90s).

## Principles of Inclusive Language

- Pronouns:** Avoid he/she and instead use they as a generic, third-person singular pronoun in reference to hypothetical or anonymous people.  
Once someone joins Sigma Tau Delta, they are a member for life.
- Use singular they to refer to a specific person whose gender is unknown or not relevant to the context.
- Always follow the personal pronoun of individuals when an individual's pronouns are known.
- Identity:** Make references to identity relevant. Consider whether terms that specify a subject's ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, or economic or social status are meaningful to the context.
- Reword gender-specific terms for gender neutrality. Avoid using *man* to mean *human beings, humankind, humanity, or people*.

Avoid negatively judging other's experiences. When writing about a person who has a disability or health condition or who has experienced trauma, avoid descriptions like *suffers from*, *afflicted with*, *prisoner of*, or *victim of*.

## Publication Titles

Italics: Italicize the names of books, plays, poems published as books, pamphlets, newsletters, and periodicals (newspapers, magazines, and journals).

Quotation marks: Use quotation marks for the titles of articles, essays, stories, and poems published within larger works.

## Sentence Spacing

General rule: Use one space after the punctuation at the end of a sentence.

## Sigma Tau Delta

General reference: Spell out *Sigma Tau Delta*; do not use the acronym *STD*.  
The Greek letters (Symbol font) ΣΤΔ or *Society* may also be used.

International: Since Sigma Tau Delta is an ***international*** organization, when referring to events or activities use "Society level" rather than "national level."

Publications: *Footnotes*  
*Sigma Tau Delta Rectangle*; after the first reference, *Rectangle* is acceptable.  
*Sigma Tau Delta Review*; after the first reference, *Review* is acceptable.

## Word Preferences

Alum: A gender neutral graduate from a particular school  
Alex Miller is an alum of Florida State University.

Alumna: A female graduate from a particular school.  
Jane Smith is an alumna of Florida State University.

Alumni: The plural of alumna/alumnus.  
Jane Smith and Bill Jones are alumni of Florida State University.

Alumnus: A male graduate from a particular school.  
Bill Jones is an alumnus of Florida State University.

Conference: Regional events are referred to as *conferences*.  
The Southwestern Region held a conference in October 2021.

Convention: The annual international event is referred to as a *convention*.  
The Sigma Tau Delta 2023 International Convention will be held in Denver.

Nonfiction: Always write *nonfiction* as one word with no hyphen.  
*This I Believe* is a popular creative nonfiction anthology.

Theatre: Preferred variant of *theater* when referring to a live production, unless the preferred spelling of a specific venue is *theater*.  
There was a Broadway production playing at the local theatre.  
The Harris Theater for Music and Dance is located at the north end of Millennium Park in downtown Chicago.

T-shirt: Always capitalize the T.  
There are several T-shirts available for purchase at the event.