National Digital Newspaper Program (NDNP)

General Writing Guidelines for Title Essays

Last Updated: September 2021

Each essay should provide authoritative and essential information and should allow for maximum results from keyword searching. Follow the guidelines for names and terms in the seventeenth edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style* (2017*).* Use language that the general reader can understand. The meaning of any regional vernacular should be made clear within the context of the essay.

Title essays should contain basic information about the paper, including:

- place of publication (if not already evident);
- dates and schedule of publication (e.g., weekly, daily, morning, or evening);
- geographic area covered and circulation statistics;
- political, religious, or other affiliation and reason for publication;
- specialized audiences;
- physical attributes;
- changes in name, format, and ownership.

In addition, title essays usually discuss:

- editors, publishers, or reporters of note;
- significant events covered by the paper in the relevant time period (a short quote from the paper itself can help provide a sense of the paper's voice);
- special features such as poetry or fiction, women's section, sports, society, etc.;
- relationships with other area newspapers;
- innovations or advances in newspaper production and technology.

Newspaper Titles

- The title of the newspaper that is the subject of the essay should be listed before the essay as a heading, with the LCCN number following it.
  - The *New York Times* [LCCN: sn12344444]
- Italicize newspaper titles, including location. (*Chicago* 8.170)
  - *Washington Evening Times*, not "Washington Evening Times" or Washington Evening Times
- If a newspaper title begins with "the," the "the" is lowercased (unless it begins a sentence) and not italicized. (*Chicago* 8.170)
  - The *Washington Post* (start of sentence)
  - the *Washington Post* (in a sentence)
- An initial "the" is retained in titles of non-English language papers if the "the" is part of the title. (*Chicago* 14.194)
  - *El País* (both at start of sentence and in a sentence)
- When the title of a newspaper first appears, a city name, even if not part of the name of a US newspaper, should be added and italicized along with the official title. (*Chicago* 14.193)
  - The *Lawrenceburg It*, or the *Lawrenceburg* (KY) *It*.
- The first reference to a newspaper other than the subject of the essay should be followed by the appropriate LCCN, in the following format: [LCCN: sn12344444].
- If the newspaper does not have an LCCN, indicate that in the following format: [No LCCN].

Abbreviations and Acronyms

- Spell out titles of organizations, agencies, or institutions the first time they are mentioned in an essay. Following the title, abbreviate them with capitals letter and no periods, and use parentheses. (*Chicago* 10.2)
  - American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), *not* (A.C.L.U.)
- The appropriate article preceding an abbreviation is determined by its pronunciation. (*Chicago* 10.9)
  - an NDNP title

Names and Titles

- Civil or military titles should be spelled out. Such titles are capitalized only when used as part of a person's name. (*Chicago* 8.22 and 8.24)
  - the general of the army; Omar N. Bradley, general of the army; General Bradley
  - the vice president; Kamala Harris, vice president of the United States; Vice President Harris; vice presidential duties
- Avoid the use of such titles as Mr., Ms., Dr., etc. as much as possible. If it is necessary to use a title, abbreviate it as follows: Mr., Mrs., Messrs., Ms., M., MM., Mme, Mlle, and Dr.
- The name of a US state, territory, or possession should be spelled out when standing alone. When the name follows the name of a city or another geographical term, it can be abbreviated. (*Chicago* 10.31)

Notes

- Do not use endnotes or footnotes. Incorporate source information into the text.
  - Two articles attributed to Lewis, "Forth into the World" and "Odds and Ends," were published on page 1 of the paper's June 5, 1902, issue. Although these articles did not include a byline, they are among the earliest of Lewis's published works.
  - An announcement of Linton's death in the March 25, 1922 issue of the paper describes Linton as having conceived of the Whip as "an independent newspaper unshackled by political or factional entanglements."
  - Turner is said to have adopted Booker T. Washington's ideology of self-help. Irvine Garland Penn quotes Turner as follows: "[w]hen the negro in America begins business for himself, and accumulates wealth and intelligence, the race problem then will be solved. Business must be first and politics last."

Numbers

- Spell out numbers one through nine. Use numerals from 10 on. (*Chicago* 9.3)
  - eight meetings, but 14 reports
- When numbers under and above 10 occur together, use numerals for consistency. (*Chicago* 9.7)
  - 6, 14, and 2, *not* six, 14, and two
- Spell out centuries. When the decade is identified by the century, use numerals. (*Chicago* 9.32-9.34)
  - nineteenth century, not 19th century
  - the nineteenth and twentieth centuries
  - 1920s
- Combine digits and words for quantities are equal to or greater than 1 million. (*Chicago* 9.8)
  - 2 million
  - 60 billion
- Spell out approximate numbers. (*Chicago* 9.4)
  - About a hundred soldiers were killed.

Numbers, *continued*

- Spell out any number that is the first word of a sentence. (*Chicago* 9.5)
    - One hundred ten candidates were accepted.
- Spell out units of measurement in essays. When many measurements appear together in an essay, use numerals with abbreviations. (*Chicago* 9.13)
    - 9 g, 10 mph
- For percentages, use numerals and spell "percent." (*Chicago* 9.8)
    - 20 percent
- Use commas in four-digit numbers except for page numbers or years. (*Chicago* 9.54)
    - 4,508 voters
    - page 1409
    - in 1963
- Fractions are spelled out and hyphenated as either adjectives or nouns. (*Chicago* 8.14)
    - a two-thirds majority
    - two-thirds of those present
- For decimal fractions, use numerals. (*Chicago* 8.17)
    - 3.14, 0.02
- Use numerals for numbered items such as parts of a book. (*Chicago* 8.26)
    - chapter 5, part 2, page 35, volume 4

Dates:

- The year by itself is expressed in numerals, unless it is at the beginning of a sentence. (*Chicago* 9.29)
    - Records for solar eclipses go back at least as far as 1776.
    - The year 2020 should be a good year for clairvoyants.
- The day of the month is expressed as month-day-year, with the year set off by commas. (*Chicago* 9.31 and 6.38)
    - October 6, 1966
    - On October 6, 1966, Archi Cianfrocco was born in Rome, New York.
- Write the day of the month as a cardinal number. (*Chicago* 9.31)
    - April 18, *not* April 18th
- Month and year are written in the sequence month-year with no internal punctuation. (*Chicago* 6.38)
    - April 1993
- Hyphenate compound adjectives.
    - a twentieth-century school of thought

Inclusive Numbers

- Comprehensive guidelines for inclusive numbers are given in *Chicago* 9.60-9.64.
- Use en dashes between numbers. (*Chicago* 9.60)
- Follow this model (*Chicago* 9.61):

FIRST NUMBER	SECOND NUMBER	EXAMPLES
Less than 100	Use all digits	3-10, 71-72, 96-117
100 or multiple of 100	Use all digits	100-104, 600-613, 1100-1123
101 through 109 (in multiples of 100)	Use changed part only, omitting unneeded zeros	107-108, 505-517, 1002-6
110 through 199 (in multiples of 100)	Use two digits, or more if needed	321-25, 415-532, 1536-38, 1496-504, 14325-28, 11564-78, 13792-803

- An en dash indicates "from" and "to;" it is incorrect to use "from" before the numerals when using the en dash. The alternative is to write "from 167 to 172." (*Chicago* 9.60)
- When referring to years within a century but after the first year of that century, drop the repeated numerals. (*Chicago* 9.64)
    - the war of 1914-18
    - 1968-72
    - the years 1701-4
    - 1701-68
- In times spans of more than one century, repeat all the numerals. (*Chicago* 9.64)
    - the years 1579-1601
    - the winter of 1900-1901
    - fiscal year 2000-2001
- When displaying the span of an individual's life, express all the digits. (*Chicago* 9.64)
    - George Washington (1732-1799)
    - Calvin J. Coolidge (1872-1933)

Punctuation

- In almost all cases, periods and commas are placed inside quotation marks, and colons and semi-colons outside. The placement of question marks and exclamation points depends on the intent of the punctuation. (*Chicago* 6.114)
- Separate a list of three or more elements with commas. If the elements in a series are simple and all joined by conjunctions, no commas should be used. (*Chicago* 6.19)
    - We have a choice of copper, silver, or gold.
- Use two hyphens to indicate an em dash. (*Chicago* 6.51)
    - Bones from various small animals--for example, a squirrel, a cat, a pigeon, and a muskrat--were found in the doctor's cabinet.
    - Note than many word processors will autocorrect two hyphens into an en dash; you may need to turn off this feature or manually correct it.
- Ellipses are used to indicate omission of words from a quoited passage. If the omission is in the middle of a sentence, use three ellipsis points. (*Chicago* 13.*54*)
    - When I was four years old . . . I was brought from Boston to New York.
    - An ellipsis at the end of a sentence uses four points. (*Chicago* 13.54)
        - When I was four years old . . . I went from Boston to New York. My first sight of the Big Apple is forever imprinted on my memory . . . .

Spelling

- Follow the guidelines for spelling and distinctive treatment of words outlined in *Chicago* 7.1-7.9.
- NDNP prefers *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (10th Edition), but NDNP will also accept the *American Heritage Dictionary* and the *Random House Dictionary of the English Language*. Use one dictionary consistently with any set of documents.

Representing Identities and Avoiding Biased Language

- Use gender-neutral language. *Chicago* waffles on this point (5.252), but NDNP avoids the use of the generic masculine pronoun, as well as gendered nouns.
    - Instead of "businessman," use "businessperson"
    - Instead of "newspaperman," use "editor" or "publisher" or "printer"
    - Instead of "chairman," use "chairperson" or "chair"

Representing Identities and Avoiding Biased Language, *continued*

- In general, emphasize the person, not a characteristic. When it is important to mention a characteristic because it will help the reader develop a picture of the person you are writing about, use care. Instead of referring to someone as a Catholic or a deaf-mute, put the person first by writing a *Catholic man* or *he is Catholic*; write and *a deaf-and-mute child* or *the child is deaf and mute.* Avoid irrelevant references to personal characteristics such as sex, race, ethnicity, disability, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender status, or social standing. (*Chicago* 5.260)
    - In the sentence "Shirley Chisholm was probably the finest African American woman member of the House of Representatives that New York has ever had," the phrase "African American woman" may imply to some readers that Chisholm was a great representative "for a woman" but may be surpassed by many or all men, that she stands out only among African American members of Congress, or that it is unusual for a woman or an African American to hold high office. But in "Shirley Chisholm was the first African American woman to be elected to Congress and one of New York's all-time best representatives," the purpose of the phrase *African American woman* is not likely to be misunderstood.
- Historical newspapers may contain slighting references or descriptions of identity groups. If the writer of an NDNP title essay chooses to cite such language to illustrate the views of a newspaper's editors, publishers, or authors, be sure to use quotation marks and to make clear the source of the derogatory language. (*Chicago* 5.253)
- Names of ethnic and national groups are capitalized. Adjectives associated with these names are also capitalized. (*Chicago* 8.38) Do not hyphenate compound names when they are used as adjectives. (*Chicago* 8.39)
    - Aboriginal peoples; Aboriginals (or Aborigines); an Aboriginal; Aboriginal art
    - African Americans; African American culture (for Black, see text below)
    - American Indians; an American Indian (see text below)
    - Arabs; Arabian
    - Asians; Asian influence in the West; an Asian American
    - the British; a British person or, colloquially, a Britisher, a Brit
    - Caucasians; a Caucasian
    - Chicanos; a Chicano; a Chicana
    - European Americans; French Canadians
    - Hispanics; a Hispanic
    - the Hopi; a Hopi; Hopi customs (see also *Chicago* 7.10)
    - Inuit; Inuit sculpture
    - Italian Americans; an Italian American neighborhood
    - Jews; a Jew; Jewish ethnicity (see also *Chicago* 8.96)
    - Latinos; a Latino; a Latina; Latino immigration
    - Métis; Métis history and culture
    - Native Americans; Native American poetry (see text below)
    - New Zealanders; New Zealand immigration
    - Pygmies; a Pygmy; Pygmy peoples
    - Romanies; a Romany; the Romany people

Representing Identities and Avoiding Biased Language, *continued*

- Black is increasingly capitalized when referring to racial or ethnic identity. As a matter of editorial consistency, similar terms such as White may also be capitalized when used in this sense. Usage varies according to context, however, and individual preferences should be respected. (*Chicago* 8.38)
- Many among those who trace their roots to the Indigenous peoples of the Americas prefer American Indians to Native Americans, and in certain historical works Indians may be more appropriate. (*Chicago* 8.39)