



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

COMMUNICATIONS

STYLE GUIDE

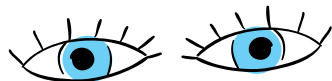
OCTOBER 2020

CHECK ✓ YOURSELF BEFORE YOU WRECK YOURSELF!

Use these ten proofing tips to error-proof your work.

- ✓ I've clearly defined the "call to action."
- ✓ I've answered the 5 Ws (who, what, when, where and why; sometimes how).
- ✓ I've spelled and used all words correctly.
- ✓ I've looked at punctuation and formatting:
 - correct use of commas, colons and semicolons
 - single space after all punctuation
 - end punctuation with bulleted points (only if complete sentences)
- ✓ I've added appropriate dates, with school years written in full (2020-2021 **NOT** 20-21) and correct punctuation for calendar dates.
- ✓ I've checked that my verb tense is consistent and appropriately aligns with the publication date.
- ✓ I've written my sentences
 - in active voice;
 - with correct subject-verb agreement; and
 - with clear structure (no fragments, run-ons, or sentences that are too complex).
- ✓ I've formatted the font consistently.
- ✓ I've inserted and checked all hyperlinks.
- ✓ I've included contact information for my readers.

 Now I can reread, and then send on to a peer for a second review before submitting.



I. INTRODUCTION

Every document you create represents the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), which in turn represents the entire state of Louisiana. This style guide contains the Department’s guidelines for all Department-published communications to ensure our agency demonstrates the same high expectations we request from students and educators.

The elements included in this document act as a guide for all external documents you produce, including but not limited to news releases, legislative reports, memos, guidebooks, BESE executive recommendations, training presentations, newsletter entries, website content and all other Department communications.

For all other questions and guidelines relating to grammar, usage and mechanics that are **not** included here, refer to the *New Oxford American Dictionary*, the [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#), and the *Associated Press (AP) Style* for styling Department communications.

II. LANGUAGE: GRAMMAR, USAGE AND MECHANICS

A. GRAMMAR AND USAGE

a. Grammar.

- i. **Subject-verb agreement.** Proofread your document for subject-verb agreement. For compound subjects that are joined by *and*, the subjects are considered plural.

» *The student, the teacher and the parent are required to attend.*

For compound subjects that are joined by *or*, the verb should agree with the subject nearest to it.
A red ink pen or a highlighter is needed for the activity.

- ii. **Verb tenses.** Tense, whether past, present or future, should be consistent with the document’s publication date and should be consistent within each document or presentation.

- iii. **Subject-pronoun agreement.** A pronoun is a word that replaces a noun in a sentence. The singular “they” is a generic third-person pronoun used in English. It’s not the only third-person singular pronoun—other third-person singular pronouns are “she” and “he.”

The singular “they” is inclusive of all people and helps writers avoid making assumptions about gender. Use the singular “they” in two main cases: (a) when referring to a generic person whose gender is unknown or irrelevant to the context, and (b) when referring to a specific, known person who uses “they” as their pronoun.

- » *All students must turn in their portfolios by June 1.*
» *A student must turn in his or her portfolio by June 1.*
» *A student must turn in their portfolio by June 1.*

- b. **Usage.** When you are writing, consider the intended audience and the message’s delivery method. In order for a message to reach its intended audience, your communication should be **clear, concise and correct**.

COMMON PITFALL: USING EDUCATION JARGON
— Don’t bury your document’s message beneath piles of education jargon.
Keep your point clean and concise.

c. Common pitfalls.

- i. **i.e. versus e.g.** The abbreviations i.e. and e.g. are not interchangeable. They provide different context to the material they are modifying, and you should use them according to their unique meaning. Use these abbreviations (i.e. and e.g.) only within parentheses or footnotes, and place a comma after each abbreviation.

1. The abbreviation *i.e.* stands for *id est* (“that is” or “in other words”) and defines what the sentence means in a finite sense. The following example shows how *red*, *white* and *blue* are the specific, or exact, colors the writer is referring to.

- » *The American flag has three colors (i.e., red, white and blue).*
» *The American flag has three colors (that is, red, white and blue.)*

2. The abbreviation *e.g.* stands for *exempli gratia*, meaning “for example,” and provides only *some* items to help clarify the writer’s point. The following sentence shows that the colors *red and blue* are some, but not all, examples.

- » *Many national flags use similar colors (e.g., red and blue).*
- » *Many national flags use similar colors (red and blue, for example).*

ii. **Acronyms.** Because documents and presentations can and will be shared beyond your primary audience, acronyms should always be spelled out in their first reference.

iii. **Active versus passive voice.** As much as possible, construct your sentences in active voice. In the active voice, the subject of the sentence performs the action. Although both voices are grammatically correct, the passive voice uses more words and is less direct. Often, the message is lost or ineffective in the passive voice.

- » *The scores **will be released** at the end of the week via the data management FTP. (This example is in passive voice and is not direct. The reader is left wondering who will release the scores.)*
- » *The Department **will release** the scores via the data management FTP by the end of the week. (This example is in active voice and is direct.)*

B. **PUNCTUATION.** With few exceptions, Department communications should adhere to the punctuation guidelines in this section. Titles, headings, visual presentations, bibliographies, indexes and specialized math or science content can be considered on a case-by-case basis, according to established style within each specific subject or context. In general, however, follow the guidelines below.

a. **Quotation marks.** Always tuck periods and commas inside the closing quotations marks, single (') and double (").

- » *The data files are titled “LEA Codes for Review,” “Rosters for Verification” and “School Listings.”*

b. **Parentheses.** When you use parenthetical material as a complete sentence by itself and it does not exist within another sentence, place the period inside the parentheses.

- » *She went to the store on Thursday. (Although, she also went on Friday.)*

If your parenthetical material is contained within another sentence, place the period outside the parentheses.

- » *She went to the store on Thursday (and again on Friday).*

c. **Commas.**

i. **Dates and states.** When a sentence includes a month, day and year, offset the year with punctuation on both sides (either comma-comma, comma-semicolon, comma-colon or comma-period). Do not use *st*, *nd*, *rd*, or *th* with dates.

- » *The Department will announce a winner on February 4, 2020, after scores are calculated.*

When a date includes a weekday in front of the date, separate the weekday and the date with a comma or parentheses. **Please note: Do not include the day of the week unless the event is occurring within the same week.**

- » *Scores will be released on Monday, February 9, 2020.*
- » *Scores will be released on Monday, February 9.*
- » *Scores will be released on Monday (February 9).*

The same rule applies to cities and states. When you include the city and state in a sentence, offset the state name.

- » *Her hometown is Denham Springs, Louisiana.*
- » *Denham Springs, Louisiana, is a growing city near the state’s capital.*

d. Times. The exact time when an event has occurred or will occur is unnecessary for most stories. Of course, there are occasions when the time of day is important. In such cases, use figures, but spell out noon and midnight. Use a colon to separate hours from minutes, but do not use :00.

- » *The meeting is scheduled for 1 p.m.*
- » *The meeting is scheduled for 3:30 p.m.*

e. Semicolon. Semicolons can separate two complete, related sentences to show a relationship between the thoughts. Unless it is a proper noun, the word immediately following the semicolon should not be capitalized.

- » *Students in Louisiana are scoring higher on the ACT than the national average; this is in great part due to the increase in classroom standards and teacher preparation.*

Use a semicolon before *however* and *therefore* when these words introduce a complete thought.

- » *High school students are scoring increasingly high on the ACT; however, the dropout rate has not decreased.*
- » *According to statistics, ninth graders are the most likely to drop out of school; therefore, high schools in the state have adopted the ninth-grade academy model to promote higher graduation rates.*

When items in a series are very long or contain internal punctuation, semicolons can separate the items to minimize confusion.

- » *Each student should have a pencil with a good eraser, not a mechanical pencil; a red ink pen for underlining important sentences in the passage, editing example student essays and self-editing in-class writing assignments; and a yellow highlighter to mark new vocabulary within the assigned reading.*

f. Colon. With the exception of titles, headings, subheadings and certain specialized subject matter, you should only use a colon at the end of a complete sentence.

i. Use with run-in lists. If you introduce a run-in list with a full sentence, place a colon between the sentence and the list; if you introduce the run-in list with an incomplete sentence, do not use a colon. If you use numbers in a run-in list, enclose the numbers in parentheses, as shown. Run-in lists with numbers are usually *not* preceded by a complete sentence with a colon.

- » *Each student should have a pencil, red ink pen and highlighter.*
- » *Each student should have all supplies ready for the assignment: a pencil, red ink pen and highlighter.*
- » *Each student should have (1) a pencil with a good eraser, (2) a red ink pen for underlining important sentences in the passage and (3) a yellow highlighter to mark new vocabulary within the story.*

If the items in the list contain internal punctuation, semicolons can be used to separate each element instead of commas. See also *semicolons* and *commas, in a series*.

ii. Use with vertical lists (with or without numbers; with or without bullets). Only use periods at the end of bulleted or numbered text if that text is a complete sentence or if it operates to complete the opening statement. If it is not a complete sentence, it does not need a period. Use the following examples as guides.

If you want to make a list of items stand out, you can

- » *avoid using a colon if your opening is not a complete sentence;*
- » *format the items vertically, to draw the eye;*
- » *number or bullet each point; and*
- » *capitalize and punctuate according to sentence rules—that is, lowercase each initial letter, add commas or semicolons between items and punctuate the final point with a period—since the items act to complete the sentence.*

If your points operate as complete sentences by themselves, you can format like this:

- » *Use a colon only if your opening is a complete sentence.*
- » *Number or bullet each point.*
- » *Capitalize and punctuate each point as its own sentence.*
- » *Make sure all points have parallel structure.*

If your points are just a list to clarify your main sentence, you can format using the following checklist:

- » Numbers or bullets for each point
- » Consistent capitalization for all points
- » Consistent structure (all complete sentences or all incomplete sentences)
- » Only internal punctuation, no ending punctuation

g. Hyphens, en dashes and em dashes.

i. Hyphens (-). Hyphens join phrasal adjectives, join compound words or names and divide words into syllables or letter-by-letter spellings.

- » *The technical report includes the item-response-theory model.*
- » *Mr. Smith-Johnson will attend the meeting.*
- » *She spells her name P-a-t-t-y.*

ii. En dash (–). AP style does not use en dashes.

iii. Em dash (—). Much like commas, colons and parentheses, em dashes create a pause or shift in the text. To create an em dash on a Mac, use Alt + Shift + - or Alt + -- (two hyphens).

- » *I have asked her to bring the supplies — paper, pencils, rulers and protractors — when she presents tomorrow.*
- » *The new office building will house several state officials — the governor, the superintendent and the assistant superintendents.*

h. Slashes. Use a slash, rather than a hyphen, for constructions such as and/or, either/or, over/under, red state/blue state, etc. **No space on either side of the slash.** To break up lines of a verse, use a slash with a space on each side:

- » *Row, row, row your boat / Gently down the stream / Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily / Life is but a dream.*

C. CAPITALIZATION. Capitalize sparingly and reserve capital letters for proper nouns (including the names of people and places), titles of works or documents, the first word of a sentence or specialized terms included in this guide. In general, you should not capitalize civic and professional titles (such as president) within a sentence unless the title is used in place of or as part of a person's name.

- » *She met the superintendent yesterday.*
- » *She met Superintendent Brumley yesterday.*
- » *Dr. Brumley is the Louisiana state superintendent of education.*

For a list of Department terms that require capitalization, see section V.

III. FORMATTING.

- All Department communications should adhere to the Department’s preferred visual style.
- A. Times New Roman 12-point font for formal documents; Calibri 11-point font for other documents; Calibri 18-point font for presentations (may be increased or decreased a point size as needed), 28-point font for presentation headers and 32-point font for presentation section title slides; Arial 10-point font for newsletters and 12-point font for newsletter headers
 - B. Consistent text alignment (left-aligned or centered) and paragraph spacing (single for newsletters; 1.15 for decks) within each document
 - C. Bold or italics to emphasize material, **never underline**
 - D. Minimum 0.5”–1” margins; text should not go to the edge of the slide
 - E. Embedded links (not full URLs) for resources, tools or materials that are released via the web or email; however, spell out the URLs for parent-facing documents or documents that are printed; **do not embed a link to the word “here”**
 - F. Include release date(s) on the document, preferably as a footer
 - G. All photos used in documents should come from Public Affairs’ archives or be approved by Public Affairs prior to use

IV. EMAIL SIGNATURES AND NORMS.

- A. Use the following format for your email signature and replies. The Department requires this format for all email sent from la.gov accounts. (Personal taglines are not allowed.)
 - Name
 - Title
 - Louisiana Department of Education
 - 1201 North Third Street
 - Baton Rouge, LA 70802
 - Phone number
 - Louisiana Believes
- B. All email addresses should be lowercase, with the exception of acronyms.
 - » *cade.brumley@la.gov*
 - » *STEM@la.gov*
- C. Contact information should always be included at the end of each newsletter entry and on the bottom right of every slide in a deck. It should be written in the following format:
 - » *Please contact XX with questions.*
 - » *Please contact cade.brumley@la.gov with questions.*

V. GLOSSARY OF DEPARTMENT TERMS

A

ACT test series; **EXPLORE**, **PLAN**

Advanced Placement (AP)

addendum; plural as **addenda**

AEPSi™; all uppercase except for “i,” no italics; must be followed by trademark symbol

a.m. and **p.m.**; lowercase with periods, no spaces

and/ampersand; use the word “and” rather than the ampersand symbol

B

Believe and Prepare

benchmark assessment; lowercase (adjective and noun) unless part of a title

Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE); the Board

Board of Regents (BOR)

Bulletin 118; italicized

C

Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)

Child Care Criminal Background Check (CCCBC)

Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)

Child Care Resource and Referral agencies (CCR&R)

Child Development Associate (CDA); credential for Early Childhood teachers

CLASS®; uppercase, followed by registered trademark symbol

cohort graduation and **cohort graduation rate index**; lowercase

College-Level Examination Program (CLEP); hyphenated as shown

colons; with few exceptions, the clause preceding the colon should be a complete sentence; the terms that follow may be either complete (and punctuated) or incomplete (and not punctuated); see also the entry on *vertical lists* in section II of this guide

Community Eligibility Program (CEP)

Compass; only the “C” is capitalized (this is not an acronym)

Compass Information System (CIS)

computer-based testing (CBT); lowercase with hyphenation when spelled out

Coordinated Enrollment; Community networks collaborate on four enrollment areas to reduce burdens on families and maximize access: coordinated information campaign, coordinated eligibility determination, coordinated application, and matching based on preference

COVID-19; capitalized and hyphenated

Curriculum System (CUR)

Curriculum Verification and Results (CVR) Reporting Portal; complete text with first inclusion in a document; **CVR Reporting Portal** in subsequent

D

data coordinator; lowercase

the Department; capitalize Department when referring to the Louisiana Department of Education; see also *LDOE*

district; when referring to both districts and charter schools, “school system” should be used

School System Planning Guide; capitalized, not italicized

district test coordinator (DTC); lowercase, not capitalized when spelled out

E

Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate (ECAC); professional credential for Early Childhood teacher

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

Early Childhood Care and Education Network

early childhood programs; also **early childhood newsletters**; lowercase unless part of a title

Early Learning Center; any child day care center, early Head Start, Head Start, or stand-alone prekindergarten program that is not attached to a school

EarlySteps Program; early intervention program providing services to infants and toddlers with disabilities high-quality

ECCE Performance Profile (Performance Profile); information regarding performance in preparing children for kindergarten that is reported each school year for each publicly-funded site and community network composed of the site or community network’s performance rating and informational metrics

ECCE Performance Rating (Performance Rating); measure of performance in preparing children for kindergarten that is reported each school year for each publicly-funded site and community network

economically disadvantaged (ED); new term replacing free and reduced-lunch eligible students

eGrants; use as shown, not *egms* or *eGMS*

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

email; no hyphen

End-of-Course (EOC); End-of-Course tests

end-of-year (EOY) as in **end-of-year process**; lowercase when spelled out; hyphenate end-of-year when used as an adjective; also applies to **end-of-year conversations** and **end-of-year evaluations**

English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT)

English Learner (EL)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

extension and renewal

F

federal; lowercase

fiscal year; lowercase the term; spell out the year numbers in full: 2016-2017, not 16-17; an en dash may also be used, instead of a hyphen, between the years: 2016–2017

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

free or reduced-lunch eligible (FRL); this term is no longer used, replaced by economically disadvantaged (ED); see entry for new term

G

graduation index; lowercase; see also *cohort graduation rate*

GOLD®; uppercase; italicized and followed immediately by the registered trademark symbol

H

home study; two words without hyphenation; as in **home study students**

I

*i*LEAP; italicize the initial “i”

Individual Accommodation Plan (IAP)

Individualized Education Program (IEP); capitalize each word, no periods between letters

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP); capitalize each word, no periods between letters

Individual Graduation Plan (IGP); capitalize each word

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); capitalized as shown

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B; federal program administered by the LDOE that provides education funding for children with disabilities, ages 3 through 21

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C; federal program administered by the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals that provides early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities ages birth to three years and their families to meet the developmental needs as identified by the individualized family services plan. See EarlySteps Program

Industry-Based Credential (IBC); hyphenated as shown

Informational Metric; measure of early childhood care and education best practices at the site or community network level

International Baccalaureate

internet; lowercase

J

Jobs for America’s Graduates-Louisiana (JAG-LA); capitalized as shown, with hyphen

Jump Start; two words; capitalized as shown

K

kindergarten; lowercase

Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA)

L

LA 4 Program; the Cecil J. Picard LA 4 Early Childhood Program

LA B to 3; report endorsed by the Early Childhood Care and Education Commission to increase access and quality of care for children ages birth to three

lead agency; plural as **lead agencies**; lowercase

learning year; lowercase

LEADS

Lead Teacher; the early childhood care and education classroom teacher that is primarily responsible for the classroom and is required to meet all certification requirements

LEAP Alternate Assessment, Level 1 (LAA 1)

LEAP Alternate Assessment, Level 2 (LAA 2)

LEAP Connect

legislation

Act 1 (2014); must have a year; there is an Act 1 every year

House Bill # the first time, then HB#; same applies to Senate Bill (SB)

House Resolution # the first time, then HR#; same applies to Senate Resolutions

House Concurrent Resolution # the first time, then HCR#; same applies to SCR#

legislative sessions; lowercase, but capitalized when used in title, as in 2014 Regular Legislative Session

Local Charter Authorizer; capitalized as shown

local education agency (LEA); used when referring to both traditional public schools and charter schools in BESE or financial documents, otherwise use school system

Louisiana's Birth to Five Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS)

Louisiana Department of Education; the LDOE; the Department; add the article when referring to the noun; **LDOE**, without the article when used as an adjective; the Louisiana Department of Education, the LDOE, LDOE-created assessments

Louisiana Educational Assessment Program 2025 (LEAP)

Louisiana Legislature

Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA)

Louisiana Secure ID (LASID)

Louisiana Student Standards; the standards; the new standards; Louisiana's standards

M

Meeting ID#:

mid-; hyphenate when immediately preceding a month or other capitalized noun; drop hyphen when proximity may create confusion: mid-February, but mid to late February (no hyphen)

Minimum Foundation Program (MFP)

N

network; lowercase as noun and adjective, as in **network teams**, **network leaders**, and **network staff**

nonprofit; one word, no hyphen

nonpublic schools

Nonpublic School Early Childhood Development Program (NSECD)

nonsecure; one word without hyphenation

numbers;

numbers 1 through ten; spell out when used in a sentence, unless they appear in a paragraph where other numerals are used; in cases of proximity to other numerals (within a sentence, paragraph, or short document), the numeral may instead be used

telephone numbers; the area code, prefix, and the final four digits of telephone numbers should be separated by a hyphen.
800-123-4567

O

Office of Juvenile Justice (OJJ); capitalized when spelled out

Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)

online practice tests; lowercase unless part of a document's official title

online testing tools; lowercase

online tests; lowercase unless part of a document's official title

Online Tools Training (OTT); capitalize each word

open source curriculum; lowercase, no hyphen

opt-in; hyphenated as noun; but **opt in** when used as verb

opt-out; hyphenated as noun; but **opt out** when used as verb

P

paper-based testing (PBT); lowercase with hyphenation when spelled out

percent; spell out the full word in sentences instead of using the symbol (%)

Personal Needs Profile (PNP)

personally identifiable information (PII); lowercase when spelled out

point of contact; plural as **points of contact**; lowercase

postgraduate; one word, no hyphen

postsecondary; one word, no hyphen

Praxis[®]; all tests in the series must be followed by a trademark symbol

pre-code; hyphenated; plural as **pre-code rosters**

pre-identified; hyphenated

pre-K; but **prekindergarten**; lowercase the prefix and capitalize the K in the abbreviated form; hyphenate as shown

Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) Federal Early Childhood grant

Profile of Educational Personnel (PEP)

Publicly-Funded Children; children ages birth to five years who have not yet entered kindergarten that are being served full day with state or federal funds

Q

R

Ready Start Network (RSN); model in which communities create and implement a local vision to drive quality improvement and increase access to quality care

Recovery School District (RSD)

S

school boards; capitalize as a proper noun, as in the DeSoto Parish School Board; lowercase when not a proper noun, as in the local school board

school performance score (SPS)

School Readiness Tax Credit (SRTC); an incentive provided to parents at eligible centers to receive refundable tax credits if their center meets four or five-star quality ratings

school system; use in place of district

school years; numbers for school years should be spelled out in full: 2016-2017, not 16-17; an en dash may also be used, instead of a hyphen, between the school years: 2016–2017

seasons; lowercase spring, summer, fall, and winter and derivatives, such as springtime, unless part of a formal noun (as in Jump Start Super Summer Institute) or a semester title, especially a semester title referencing published materials (as in the Spring 2016 assessments)

Section 504

Secure File Transfer Protocol (SFTP or FTP)

Special School District (SSD); spell out in first reference

Special Education Reporting (SER)

Sponsor Calendar (SPC)

Sponsor Site (SPS); since this acronym is the same as school performance scores, the context for using this acronym must be very clear to the audience

Student Information System (SIS)

student learning target (SLT); plural as **student learning targets (SLTs)**

Student Transcript System (STS)

students with disabilities; never SPED students or special education students

subgrant; one word, no hyphen

T

Teacher Certification Management System (TCMS)

Teacher Leader(s); capitalize; but **Teacher Leader point(s) of contact**

Teacher Leader Collaboration; **Teacher Leader Summit**; capitalize; but **Teacher Leader events** and **the summit**

Teacher Student Data Link (TSDL); capitalize each word

technology readiness; lowercase

telephone numbers; phone numbers should include area code or prefix and be joined by hyphens 123-456-7890; do not include personal cell phone numbers on formal documents, only office phone numbers

Third Party Observer; contracted observer who performs CLASS observations on behalf of the Department to ensure reliability

Tier 1 Curriculum

time; times should be written out; use a colon to separate hours from minutes, but do not use :00. Examples: 1 p.m., 3:30 a.m.

toward; never *towards*

transitional student growth data (TSGD); lowercase when spelled out

Type III Early Learning Center; an early learning center that receives CCAP children

U

Unified Quality Rating System; all publicly-funded birth to five sites receive a Performance Profile rating and informational metrics

the United States Department of Education, the ED; add the article when referring to the noun; **ED**, without the article when used as an adjective, as in ED policies

U.S.; abbreviation for the United States, with periods following each letter, no space between the initial period and the second letter

V

value-added model (VAM); lowercase when spelled out

W

the Web; short for the World Wide Web; capitalized; but lowercase **website** and **webpage**

WorkKeys; capitalized as shown, no space

X

Y

Z

