



Philadelphia Neighborhoods: Style Guide (FULL)

The following is a style guide developed for Philadelphia Neighborhoods. The guide is to create consistency throughout the class and website. However, it isn't a rule book. Please follow the preferences of your editor if there is a difference between what you find here and his/her wishes. If a reporter isn't instructed how to handle certain specifics, please use this guide for direction.

This style guide provides a reference to common words and terms used and information on style issues particular to PhiladelphiaNeighborhoods.com. It is not intended to be a comprehensive manual of grammar and style.

All written material must adhere to **Associated Press Style**. All written material must adhere to Associated Press Style. The only exception is that PN uses italics for names of television programs, movies, books and newspapers rather than quotation marks.

The suggested dictionary is Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th Edition or m-w.com. If more than one spelling of a word is given, the first spelling should generally be used.

In general, follow the AP Style book before Merriam-Webster, but anything mentioned below should overrule both those publications.

Additional information needed for the Story Draft and about posting stories can be found on the [WP Primer](#).

WHAT MAKES A GOOD PACKAGE

STYLE BASICS

DIVERSITY STYLE GUIDE

GENDER PRONOUNS

SOURCES

NEIGHBORHOOD AND REGION GUIDELINES

PUNCTUATION

CITY AND STATE

AGES OF PEOPLE

DATES

NUMBERS IN GENERAL

POLITICAL DESIGNATIONS

POSSESSIVE WORDS

GRAMMAR

TITLES

ADDRESSES

TECHNOLOGY

HOMONYMS AND MISUSED WORDS



WHAT MAKES A GOOD PACKAGE

A good story has all of the following elements: facts, narrative, new information or ideas, relevance, context, details, action. Your story should be concise and precise. You should also understand the topics, terms and ideas being discussed in your story.

Be cohesive, but varied. Rather than squeezing all the information into your article, use visual elements to highlight one aspect.

For example: You're doing a package about a community parade in Point Breeze. Write your article with whatever angle you've chosen, but use video to focus on one interview — maybe the parade organizer, or a resident who's attended the parade every year. Don't pull quotes from the video for your article. Instead, keep the two as separate, but related pieces of the same package.

Your photos should capture color, action and feeling, and be relevant to the story. Photos of buildings and headshots are boring and don't evoke thought or emotion. When featuring a person in a photo, make sure the subject is slightly left or right of center (the same as you would in a video). Candid shots make better photos than posed shots.

STYLE BASICS

WRITTEN

- Follow AP style. (Specifically: *job titles, addresses, numbers*)
- We use past tense and third person voice.
- One space between sentences, not two.
- Keep paragraphs short, two or three sentences at most.
- Make quotes stand alone as their own paragraphs.
- Place attribution after the first sentence in a multi-sentence quote.
- Quote attributions should be formatted by identifying the person speaking first, then the verb: *s/he said*.
- Avoid "partial quotes." Partial quotes may be used if it is obvious who said it.
- When talking about people, say "people who," not "people that."
- "Punctuation ALWAYS goes inside the quotation marks," the editor screamed.

PHOTOS

- Your photos should capture color, action and feeling, and be relevant to the story.
- At every situation, shoot wide, medium range and close-up shots.
- All images need people in them (with the exception of secondary close-up shots). Photos of buildings, signs, people staring straight into the camera or those which are static and have no action will not be accepted.
- Shoot portraits in environments that create a visual story about the subject.
- Follow the subject doing whatever s/he does.
- You need a strong horizontal for the top/featured image.
- Do not over-manipulate images in PhotoShop. Just crop, tone and re-size, please.

Traditional 2-Sentence Formula for Photo Cutlines:



First Sentence: the first clause should describe who is in the photograph and what is going on within the photo in the present tense followed by where the image was made.

Second Sentence: The second sentence of the caption is used to give context to the news event or describes why the photo is significant.

PN Cutline Formula:

Identify who + What is going on + Where it took place + (When, if appropriate)

PN Photo Credit Formula:

(First + Last Name + /PN)

PN Full Cutline and Credit:

Cutline + (Credit)

Example:

John Smith (left) speaks to the audience during the Iowa State Fair on Sunday. (Saleem Ahmed/PN)

VIDEO

- You should always have interviews shot separately from the action stuff.
- Be sure to shoot video of the subject doing whatever the subject does. Try to capture natural sound - including potential soundbites/quotes - while following the subject.
- Your video storytelling should walk the viewer/listener through a narrative, with a beginning, middle and end.
- Here is a rough guideline for video stories:
 - You should have around 3 or 4 soundbites per 60 seconds of video.
 - A soundbite should not last more than 10 seconds, if that.
 - Gather enough B-roll to cover the full video (meaning you will gather extra).
 - Cut away shots should last around 3 to 5 seconds. Preferably 3.
 - *That means for a 90 second video, you'll need between 4 and 7 soundbites and around 18 cut away shots.*
- If you do stand-ups in the video, either do them as ins and outs or as a bridge in the middle. Do not do an in, bridge and out.
- If you do a sig out, it should be: "Reporting in (neighborhood) for Philadelphia Neighborhoods, I'm (name)."
- Everyone who speaks in your video must have a lower third. Lower thirds should be semi-opaque black background with white Verdana text. The file can be found [here](#).

DIVERSITY STYLE GUIDE

Please refer to the PN Diversity Style Guide for direction on how to report on and reference the following subjects: *aging, animals, Asian Americans, Blacks, disabilities, drug abuse and addiction, gender, LGBTQ, mental health, Native American, poverty, race, religion*

GENDER PRONOUNS



(Refer to **LGBTQ and Gender** sections of the *Diversity Style Guide* for additional transgender guidelines)

Because of changing understandings of identity and related terms, it is important to highlight Philadelphia Neighborhoods policy regarding usage.

By default, follow AP style:

gender —

“transgender

An adjective that describes people whose biology at birth does not match their gender identity. Does not require *sex reassignment*. Identify people as transgender only if pertinent, and use the name by which they live publicly. *Bernard is a transgender man. Christina came out as a transgender woman.* The shorthand trans is acceptable on second reference and in headlines: *Grammys add first man and first trans woman as trophy handlers.*

Do not use as a noun or refer to someone as *transgendered*. Not synonymous with terms like *cross-dresser* or *drag queen*, which do not have to do with gender identity. See **cross-dresser, drag performer**. Do not use the outdated term *transsexual*. Do not use a derogatory term such as *tranny* except in rare circumstances - only in a quote when it is crucial to the story or the understanding of a news event. Flag the contents in an editor’s note.

Use the name by which a transgender person now lives: *Caitlyn Jenner*. Refer to a previous name only if relevant to the story: *Caitlyn Jenner, who won a 1976 Olympic gold medal in decathlon as Bruce Jenner.* See **name changes, LGBT, LGBTQ.**

they, them, their —

In most cases, a plural pronoun should agree in number with the antecedent: The children love the books their uncle gave them. They/them/their is acceptable in limited cases as a singular and-or gender-neutral pronoun, when alternative wording is overly awkward or clumsy. However, rewording usually is possible and always is preferable. Clarity is a top priority; gender-neutral use of a singular they is unfamiliar to many readers. We do not use other gender-neutral pronouns such as *xe* or *ze*...

Arguments for using they/them as a singular sometimes arise with an indefinite pronoun (anyone, everyone, someone) or unspecified/unknown gender (a person, the victim, the winner)...

In stories about people who identify as neither male nor female or ask not to be referred to as he/she/him/her: Use the person’s name in place of a pronoun, or otherwise reword the sentence, whenever possible. If they/them/their use is essential, explain in the text that the person prefers a gender-neutral pronoun. Be sure that the phrasing does not imply more than one person...”

RACE

(Refer to **Race** section of the *Diversity Style Guide* for additional race guidelines)

Because of changing understandings of race and related terms, it is important to highlight Philadelphia Neighborhoods policy regarding usage.



Black (from the AP Style Book) —

“Use the capitalized term as an adjective in a racial, ethnic or cultural sense: Black people, Black culture, Black literature, Black studies, Black colleges.

African American is also acceptable for those in the U.S. The terms are not necessarily interchangeable. Americans of Caribbean heritage, for example, generally refer to themselves as Caribbean American. Follow an individual’s preference if known, and be specific when possible and relevant. Minneapolis has a large Somali American population because of refugee resettlement. The author is Senegalese American.

Use of the capitalized Black recognizes that language has evolved, along with the common understanding that especially in the United States, the term reflects a shared identity and culture rather than a skin color alone.

Also use Black in racial, ethnic and cultural differences outside the U.S. to avoid equating a person with a skin color.

Use Negro or colored only in names of organizations or in rare quotations when essential.”

White (PN style) —

Use the capitalized term as an adjective in a racial, ethnic or cultural sense.

This decision was made by Philadelphia Neighborhoods to recognize, acknowledge, and with intentionality draw attention to the shared identity and culture that exists for those who are White..

SOURCES

Find and use primary sources for data and information. If a website, report or source references data or a report you must find, fact check and source where the information originates from. Attributing a third party is not acceptable.

You must retain a list of your sources for each assignment for providing those sources upon request by the editors. That source list should include a full name, telephone number and/or email address of the sources. If you fail to provide this list upon request, you will lose points from the assignment.

But sourcing is fundamental. Attribution is basic to solid story construction. If you don’t reference the material, it amounts to plagiarism.

If you cannot get someone’s full name, you cannot use that individual in a story. That means that people who provide only their first names cannot be used. Anonymous quotes may ONLY be used after consultation with your faculty editors. If someone will not provide you with his or her name, you cannot use that individual in your story.

NEIGHBORHOOD AND REGION GUIDELINES



Philadelphia has the following regions: North, Northeast, Northwest, South, Southwest, West, Center City. All neighborhoods fall into these larger regions.

When referring to central Philadelphia, use Center City, not downtown.

When referencing the city's government, capitalize City.

Correct: Residents were upset about tax increase legislation passed by the City.

Incorrect: Some residents felt the city's response about recent events was inadequate.

In all instances except quotes, use Philadelphia, not Philly.

Remember that you are writing for a Philadelphia publication. Neighborhoods do not need clarification:

Correct: John Smith, a 10-year-resident of Germantown, said there's too much construction on his block.

Incorrect: John Smith, a resident of Philadelphia's Germantown neighborhood, said there's too much construction on his block.

All blocks need clarification and context. Write about the 2300-block of Palmer Street, or Wallace Street between 17th and 18th streets. A story about Palmer Street or Wallace Street with no geographical context creates a disconnect.

HYPERLINKS

All stories should include links to the people, places, organizations, businesses, reports, studies, etc. that you reference. These should appear on the first reference only.

Do not link to Wikipedia.

Do not link to other news organization's stories. Since we can't verify the information, we can't use the information.

Link out to the people who you've spoken with. Whether it's their website or social media.

PUNCTUATION

COMMAS

a. IN A SERIES: use commas to separate elements in a series, but do not put a comma before the conjunction (and) in a simple series. (The flag is red, white and blue. He would nominate Tom, Dick or Harry.) There are exceptions: (I had orange juice, toast, and ham and eggs for breakfast.)

b. IN A SERIES: use commas to separate ALL elements of a series, which is not a simple series. (The main points to consider are whether the athletes are skillful enough to compete, whether they have the stamina to endure the training, and whether they have the proper mental attitude.)

c. TO SET OF INTRODUCTORY CLAUSES AND PHRASES especially if there might be ambiguity in meaning.

d. WITH PLACES AFTER BOTH THE CITY AND STATE: Lower Merion, Pa.,



e. BEFORE AND AFTER AGES. (Mary Jones, 48, was present.)

QUOTATION MARKS.

a. The comma OR period at the end of a quote always goes **INSIDE** the quote.

“I have no intention of staying,” he replied.

“I do not object,” he said, “to the idea of the report.”

Franklin said, “A penny saved is a penny earned.”

Franklin said: “A penny saved is a penny earned. I like pennies.”

An investor said the practice is “too conservative for these times.”

b. Question marks and exclamation points usually go inside the quotes, with the following exception: If the sentence itself is a question, and the quotes refer to a title. For instance: Did you like reading “Brave New World”?

c. A semicolon always goes on the outside of a quote. However, for the purposes of this class we are not using semicolons.

THE SEMICOLON

For this class, let’s avoid using it. Your writing will be stronger and clearer if you can write using shorter sentences with fewer clauses.

CITY AND STATE

Put a comma (,) **AFTER** the city **AND** the state.

She said Cook County, Ill., was where she grew up.

Spell out the name of the 50 states when used in a story.

AGES OF PEOPLE

Always use numbers. If the age is an adjective before a noun or substitutes for a noun, use hyphens.

A 5-year-old boy. The boy, 7, has a sister, 10. The woman, 26, has a daughter 2 months old. The law is 8 years old. The race is for 3-year-olds. The woman is in her 30s. (no apostrophe)

DATES

Always put a comma after the year. She was born Oct. 17, 1965, in Indiana. It is October 1965, but Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., and Dec, are abbreviated for complete dates. For example, it is June 12, 2006. But it is Sept. 12, 2006.

If you are writing about a period of time, don’t use an apostrophe. The 1890s marked a period of intense invention.

NUMBERS IN GENERAL

Write out numbers below 10. Otherwise use the numeral. This is true even in a written sentence that is a list. She ordered three boxes of ginger snaps, 14 boxes of chocolate wonders and five boxes of lemon specials. He had three cats, 17 dogs and two birds.

It is \$1 million. The only number that is **NOT** written out at the beginning of a sentence is a year.



1968 was crazy. Seven people died

POLITICAL DESIGNATIONS

Wards and districts can be found at seventy.org.

POSSESSIVE WORDS

Usually a possessive means adding an “s” at the end of the word. Sally’s dress was blue. There are exceptions.

If the plural noun already ends in “s” then add just an apostrophe. The horses’

For example, it is the states’ rights, the girls’ toys.

In general if a proper name ends with an “s” we add an apostrophe only.

Achilles’ heel, Agnes’ book, Dickens’ novels.

THERE IS NO APOSTROPHE WITH POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS. Yours, its, theirs, whose, his, hers ours, mine.

If you find yourself using an apostrophe with a possessive pronoun...always double-check yourself. It’s, you’re, there’s, who’s are CONTRACTIONS not possessives.

GRAMMAR

WHO AND WHOM, THAT AND WHICH

Use who and whom for references 1) to people and 2) to animals with names.

Use that and which for inanimate objects and animals without names.

Who for subjects of a sentence, clause or phrase.

The woman who rented the room left the window open. Who is there?

Whom is the word when someone is the object of a verb or preposition.

The women to whom the room was rented left the window open. Whom do you wish to see?

That introduces a dependent clause. (It sometimes can be left out and the meaning still be clear) It should always be used if there’s a time element. The president said Monday that he had signed the bill.

Which refers to an inanimate object or a pet without a name. It can be used as a pronoun.

Which dress will you wear?

Also that is restrictive....meaning it refers to a specific thing. Which is more general.

The horse, which is six years old, is in the stable. The horse that is in the stable is six years old.

VERB TENSE AGREEMENT



Don't change tense in the middle of a story.

Make sure the subject of the verb and the verb agree in tense. Be particularly careful about two instances: 1) When there is a phrase between the subject and the verb. Mary, who has many dresses, is always stylish. 2) The subject is a "collective noun" The group was ready to go. The herd of cattle was sold. These nouns usually take the SINGULAR verb. {There are some exceptions, when the collective noun refers to a collection of items. You should ask or look it up. 3) Media is the plural of medium. Media takes a plural verb. The media are changing rapidly.

Avoid passive tenses.

DON'T say, "Johnny was taken to the hospital."

SAY, "Johnny's parents sped him to the hospital."

PRONOUNS

When referring to transgender people, please refer to the **Gender Pronoun** section above.

An organization is an it. The City Council is an it. Don't use they. Make sure you can identify the noun to which you are referring when you use a pronoun. Make sure the pronoun agrees with gender and number.

TITLES

Titles before a name are usually capitalized. Mayor Nutter. But the mayor handled the problem. President George Bush. The president. Style may vary with individual news outlets, but the above is AP policy.

Many titles are abbreviated in AP style. You need to look them up.

ADDRESSES

26 Church St.

26 Church Ave.

26 Church Blvd.

26 Church Lane

Church Street

Church Avenue

Church Boulevard

Church and Park streets

TECHNOLOGY

Proper style is Internet, World Wide Web, website and email. Please use these.

HOMONYMS AND MISUSED WORDS

- *Accept, Except*

Accept is a verb meaning to receive.

Except is usually a preposition meaning excluding.

I will accept all the packages except that one.

Except is also a verb meaning to exclude. Please except that item from the list.



- *Advice, Advise*

Advise is a verb.

Advice is a noun.

You can advise someone, but you can't advice him.

- *Affect, Effect*

Affect is usually a verb meaning to influence.

Effect is usually a noun meaning result.

The drug did not affect the disease, and it had several adverse side effects.

- *Aid, Aide*

Aid is a verb or a noun referring to an inhuman object:

I need more financial aid. (n)

He can aid me in getting home from the doctor's office.

Aide is a noun meaning a person (assistant):

He got a job as a legal aide.

- *Allusion, Elude, Illusion*

An Allusion is an indirect reference.

Elude means to avoid or escape.

An illusion is a misconception or false impression.

Did you catch my allusion to Shakespeare?

The truth eludes me.

Mirrors give the room an illusion of depth.

- *Anxious, Eager*

Both imply desire, but anxious includes an element of fear or concern.

- *As if, Like*

As is a conjunction

Like is a preposition

The proper way to differentiate between like and as is to use like when no verb follows.

John throws like a raccoon.

It acted just like my computer.

If the clause that comes next includes a verb, then you should use as.

John throws as if he were a raccoon.

It acted just as I would expect my computer to behave.

- *Capital, Capitol*

Capital refers to a city and also to wealth or resources

Capitol refers to a building where lawmakers meet.

The capitol has undergone extensive renovations. The residents of the state capital protested the development plans.



- *Censored, Censured*

Censure is a “formal rebuke” or “official displeasure.” It is done by someone, usually some kind of assembly, in authority. The s in the word is pronounced like as sh, just as in the word sure. Censure can be either a noun or a verb, though the verb is more common.

The censure of Sen. McCarthy effectively ended his career.
The Synod voted to censure the priest for his unauthorized activities.

Censor means “to regulate or prohibit writing or speech.” This is normally a verb. When used as a noun, censor is “a person who censors.”

Soldiers’ letters from war zones are frequently censored to avoid passing on sensitive information.

The soldier would have to carefully word his letter so that it would pass the censor.

- *Cite, Sight, Site*

Sight refers to either your vision or to something you see. For example, seeing the sights around town.

Site refers to a physical location, such as a house or a neighborhood. There are construction sites, for examples.

Cite means to quote something, usually something of authority. Citing can also be a case of mentioning supporting facts. Christians, for example, frequently cite the Bible as the foundation for their beliefs.

- *Climactic, Climatic*

Climactic is derived from climax, the point of greatest intensity in a series or progression of events.

Climatic is derived from climate; it refers to meteorological conditions.

The climactic period in the dinosaurs’ reign was reached just before severe climatic conditions brought on the ice age.

- *Compared to, Compared with*

Compared To: When you want to show similarity between two unlike things. Compare to is used to stress the resemblance.

Compared with : When you want to show similarities or differences between show two like things. Compare with can be used to show either similarity or difference but is usually used to stress the difference.

- *Compliment, Complement*

When you pay someone a compliment, you are expressing admiration for something. You are complimenting someone when you tell him he gave a great speech, or when you tell him you like his Mickey Mouse watch.

However, a complement is something that enhances or completes something else. A nice tie



complements a suit. A dessert of pumpkin pie complements a great turkey dinner.

- *Composed, Comprised*

Comprise means “is made up of” or “consists of.” The whole comprises the parts.

Compose means “make up” or “make.” The parts compose the whole.

Incorrect: The rock is comprised of three minerals.

Correct: The rock is composed of three minerals.

Correct: The rock comprises three minerals.

Correct: Three minerals compose the rock.

- *Disinterested, Uninterested*

Disinterested: impartial.

Uninterested: not interested in.

- *Elicit, Illicit*

Elicit is a verb meaning to bring out or to evoke.

Illicit is an adjective meaning unlawful.

The reporter was unable to elicit information from the police about illicit drug traffic.

- *Emigrate from, Immigrate to*

Emigrate means to leave one country or region to settle in another.

In 1900, my grandfather emigrated from Russia.

Immigrate means to enter another country and reside there.

Many Mexicans immigrate to the U.S. to find work.

Hints:

Emigrate begins with the letter E, as does Exit. When you emigrate, you exit a country.

Immigrate begins with the letter I, as does In. When you immigrate, you go into a country.

- *Ensure, Insure*

Ensure means to guarantee or to make sure, safe, or certain.

Insure means to provide insurance coverage on something or someone.

Betsy wrapped the glass vase carefully to ensure it wouldn't break.

Betsy paid extra at the post office to insure the package against loss and damage.

- *Fair, Fare*

Fair refers to being free from bias or injustice. It can also mean pale or light-colored.

Fare refers to the price of a ticket for transportation (such as airfare), or it can refer to how something worked or played out. For example, “He fared well as a pirate.”

- *Farther, Further*

Farther shows a relationship to physical distance.



Further relates to a metaphorical distance or depth and shows time, degree or quantity.

He lives farther from the city than I do, so he wants to further his education in urban studies.

- Flair, Flare

Flair means a special talent or aptitude. It can also refer to elegance or style. You might have a flair for playing the piano, for example, or maybe that snappy tie gives your suit a certain flair.

Flare is something that fire does when it gets stronger. You would also use this word to describe something that starts suddenly and violently, such as a bad argument.

- Imply, Infer

The sender of a message implies

The receiver of a message infers

She implied she had better things to do when we spoke on the phone earlier.

I inferred from his letter that he'd be home soon.

- Lead, Led

Led: past tense of the verb lead (verb)

Lead: element/material (noun)

- Lend, Loan

loan: refers to money

lend: refers to everything else

- More than, Over

More than means having a larger amount of something

Over takes a spatial reference.

She has more than \$500 in her account.

I couldn't see my book on the desk, because she put hers over mine.

- Peak, Peek, Pique

Peak means the highest point of something, such as the peak of a mountain.

Peek means to take a quick, often sneaky look at something.

Pique means to excite interest, but it can also mean being irritated.

He piqued my interest in the princess who lives on top of the mountain, so I decided to climb to the peak and have a peek for myself.

- Principle, Principal

Principal is a noun meaning the head of a school or an organization or a sum of money.

Principle is a noun meaning a basic truth or law.

The principal taught us many important life principles.



- *Reluctant, Reticent*

Reluctant means unwilling.

Reticent means silent.

- *Set, Sit*

Set is a transitive verb meaning to put or to place. Its principal parts are set, set, set.

Sit is an intransitive verb meaning to be seated. Its principal parts are sit, sat, sat.

She set the dough in a warm corner of the kitchen. The cat sat in the warmest part of the room.

- *Than, Then*

Than is a conjunction used in comparisons.

Then is an adverb denoting time.

That pizza is more than I can eat. Tom laughed, and then we recognized him.

Hints:

Than is used to compare; both words have the letter a in them.

Then tells when; both are spelled the same, except for the first letter.

- *Taut, Taught*

Taut means tight

Taught is the past tense of teach.

- *There, Their, They're*

There is an adverb specifying place; it is also an expletive.

Adverb: Sylvia is lying there unconscious.

Expletive: There are two plums left.

Their is a possessive pronoun.

They're is a contraction of they are.

Fred and Jane finally washed their car. They're later than usual today.

- *Wave, Waive*

Wave: a disturbance on the surface of a liquid body, as the sea or a lake, in the form of a moving ridge or swell. (noun)

Wave: a fluttering sign or signal made with the hand, a flag, etc.: a farewell wave. (noun)

Waive: to refrain from claiming or insisting on; give up; forgo: to waive one's right; to waive one's rank; to waive honors. (verb)

- *Your, You're*

Your is a possessive pronoun

You're is a contraction of you are.

You're going to catch a cold if you don't wear your coat.