Philadelphia Neighborhoods: Style Guide (SHORT)

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.

STYLE BASICS
DIVERSITY STYLE GUIDE
GENDER PRONOUNS
SOURCES
NEIGHBORHOOD AND REGION GUIDELINES
HYPERLINKS
PUNCTUATION
POLITICAL DESIGNATIONS
VERB TENSE AGREEMENT
PRONOUNS

STYLE BASICS
WRITTEN
• Follow AP style. (Specifically: *job titles, addresses, numbers*)
• Add hyperlinks in your story (more below).
• 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 nat 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 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.

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

In all instances except quotes, use Philadelphia not Philly.

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

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 his/her website or social media.

PUNCTUATION
COMMAS
For this class, we do use a serial/Oxford comma.

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

POLITICAL DESIGNATIONS
Wards and districts can be found at seventy.org.

VERB TENSE AGREEMENT
Don't change tense in the middle of a story.
Avoid passive tenses.

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.