NARA Writing Style Guide

2020

(Last update, December 9, 2024)

Preface

Clear writing conveys clear thought. NARA writers in all offices must strive for clear communication to explain their increasingly complex work. They write letters, memorandums, finding aids, web pages, blogs, leaflets, reports, articles, exhibit scripts, brochures, budget requests, speeches, forms, and email messages. This style guide establishes agency standards of punctuation, word usage, and grammar that will answer writers' most common questions and will, we hope, promote clear and effective writing throughout NARA.

Style changes over time and even from place to place, depending on the intended audience. These differences do not necessarily make one choice "wrong." What is "right" is consistency within your own work and using the appropriate language and usage for your audience.

The *NARA Style Guide* fills two needs. First, the section "Writing for Plain Language" helps us comply with the Plain Writing Act of 2010. Second, it addresses many of the questions and issues unanswered by the *Government Printing Office Style Manual* (GPO manual). This guide is based on the GPO manual but includes modifications that reflect current usage.

The most notable difference from the GPO manual concerns the lowercasing of the word "federal" and treatment of numbers. Moving away from capitalizing "federal" is in line with the practice of several other agencies and the Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN). (See section 1.4.4.) In most cases, writers will spell out numbers under 10 and use numerals for numbers 10 and over. (See section 1.10.)

The GPO manual is still NARA's primary reference for style. For issues not covered in the NARA guide, continue to consult the GPO manual.

Appendix B, Quick Reference, may be particularly helpful to NARA writers. This list of words and phrases provides quick answers to common questions about capitalization, spelling, compound words, and plurals.

The *NARA Style Guide* took shape from the agency's specific language needs and will continue to change to reflect the needs and concerns of NARA writers.

Use the *NARA Style Guide* for all NARA communications.

If you have questions about spelling, grammar, or usage that are not addressed by this guide, contact Editorial Services at editorial@nara.gov.

Resources

PlainLanguage.gov (www.plainlanguage.gov). The Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN) developed the Federal Plain Language Guidelines (www.plainlanguage.gov/guidelines). The website also has links to style guides from several agencies (www.plainlanguage.gov/resources/guides/).

United States Government Printing Office Style Manual. Washington, DC: GPO, 2016. *https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/GPO-STYLEMANUAL-2016/context*

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Other useful references

Grammar Girl quickanddirtytips.com/grammar-girl

Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary. merriam-webster.com (or [m-w.com](m-w.com)).

National Archives and Records Administration, *Guide for Preparing NARA Correspondence: A Supplement to NARA 201* (June 13, 2005). work.nara.gov/files/0200_series/nara0201-s1.pdf

National Archives and Records Administration, Office of the Federal Register*, Plain Language Tools.* archives.gov/federal-register/write/plain-language/

National Archives and Records Administration, *Visual Identity Guide: A Supplement to NARA 105* December 18, 2019) nara.gov/visual-identity-guide/index.html

The New York Public Library Writer's Guide to Style and Usage. New York: HarperCollins, 1994.

Redish, Janice (Ginny). *Letting Go of the Words: Writing Web Content that Works.* 2nd ed. San Francisco: Morgan Kaufman, 2012.

Strunk, William, Jr. *The Elements of Style.* With revisions, an introduction, and a chapter on writing by E. B. White. 4th ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1999. (commonly known as *Strunk and White)*

The Slot: A Spot for Copy Editors theslot.com

Contents

1. Style and Usage

This style guide aims to cover the most common usages at NARA but is not comprehensive. If you cannot find an exact match for your question, use the examples in the guide to make a logical deduction. On-screen, use the CTRL-F keys to quickly search for examples.

A note about formal versus informal writing: Several places in the guide recommend a style for "formal" writing. Use a formal style for text that is meant for publication and wide distribution: an Archives.gov or NARA@work web page, a report, correspondence with the public (letter or email), a NARA Notice, and the like. Examples of informal writing would include email sent within NARA to conduct daily business and personal posts or comments on the ICN.

1.1 Abbreviations and symbols

a.m. and *p.m.* (lowercase with periods) *5 p.m., 10:30 a.m.*

ET, CT, MT, PT for time zones. Use the two-letter abbreviations rather than three (e.g,. EST, PDT) so you won't have to keep track of when we are in standard time or daylight saving time. Capitalize the words if you spell out the zone (Eastern Time, Central Time, Mountain Time, Pacific Time).

FY 2017 four numerals; one space between "FY" and the numerals (for fiscal year 2017—note lowercase "f" and "y")
FY17 two numerals; no space (This format can appear after the full form has been used and in comparisons between fiscal years.)

i.e. and *e.g.* The abbreviation *i.e.* stands for "that is" or "in other words." Use it when you paraphrase what you've just written or point out something important about what you've just written. *Human error contributed to the accident at Chernobyl (i.e., the technology was only partly to blame).*

The abbreviation *e.g.* stands for "for example." Use it to introduce one or more examples of a point you've just made. *The legislation was supported by a number of former Presidents (e.g., Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, and Ronald Reagan).* Notice that *i.e.* and *e.g.* appear inside parentheses. They never begin a sentence.

To help remember the difference between *i.e.* and *e.g.,* match "i" to *is* and "e" to *example.*

1.1.1 Geographic locations

Except in cases where the location of the city is universally known (e.g., *Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles),* identify the state when using the name of a city (*Los Alamos, NM*). NARA's style (based on GPO style) is to use postal code

abbreviations of states for this purpose (*She was born in Dublin, OH*). If you do not name a city, always spell out the name of the state. *The Rio Grande separates Texas from Mexico.*

An exception: Exhibit labels will spell out the state names.

(Note: In communications between NARA organizations in the same regional area, the state reference can be eliminated.)

1.1.2 United States / U.S.

U.S.: Use the abbreviation *U.S.* as an adjective, but spell out United States when used as a noun. *U.S. Government, U.S. foreign policy, U.S. citizen.*

United States: *United States Code, foreign policy of the United States*.

1.1.3 Personal titles

The following titles are not abbreviated: President, Commander in Chief, Governor, Senator, Congressman/Congresswoman, and Representative. Secretary is spelled out when it refers to an individual at the Cabinet level or at the international level. *Secretary of the Treasury* is correct, not *Sec. of the Treasury* or *Treasury Sec*.

Titles of military rank are abbreviated when they precede a full name (Lt. George Armstrong Custer). On second reference, use just the surname.

With full name or initials

ARMY
Gen. of the Army, Gen., Lt. Gen., Maj.
    Gen., Brig. Gen.
Col., Lt. Col.
Maj.
Capt.
1st Lt., 2nd Lt. (First Lt. or Second Lt.
    at beginning of sentence)
Chief Warrant Officer, Warrant Officer
Sgt. Maj.
1st Sgt. (First Sgt. at beginning of
    sentence), Master Sgt., Sgt. 1st Class,
    Staff Sgt., Sgt.
Specialist
Cpl.
Pvt., Pfc.

NAVY/COAST GUARD
Fleet Adm., Adm., Vice Adm., Rear
  Adm.
Commodore
Capt.
Cmdr., Lt. Cmdr.
Lt., Lt. (j.g.)
Ensign
Chief Warrant Officer, Warrant Officer

Master Chief Petty Officer
Senior Chief Petty Officer
Chief Petty Officer
Petty Officer 1st Class (or 2nd or 3rd)
Seaman

MARINE CORPS (same as Army plus
  these)
Master Gunnery Sgt., Gunnery Sgt.
Lance Cpl.

AIR FORCE (same as Army plus
  these)
Chief Master Sgt.
Senior Master Sgt., Tech. Sgt.
Airman (includes Basic Airman),
  Airman 1st Class

1.1.4 Citations

When citing a particular law, statute, regulation, or executive order, use the abbreviated form. When referring to these items in general, spell out the names. For more specialized guidance on citations, see the Federal Register's *Document Drafting Handbook* (www.archives.gov/federal-register/write/handbook/)*.

Citation	Spelled-out descriptions
E.O. 13164	Executive Order 13164, Requiring Federal Agencies to Establish Procedures to Facilitate theProvision of Reasonable Accommodation; an executive order
Pub. L. 89-1	Public Law 89-1; public laws
80 Stat. 1423	Statutes at Large
15 U.S.C. 311	United States Code
36 CFR part 1200	Code of Federal Regulations citation to a group of regulations

36 CFR 1200.1   Code of Federal Regulations citation to a specific regulation
                     (Title 36 Code of Federal Regulations, part 1200, section 1

1.1.5 Typographic symbols

The only symbol considered formal is the dollar sign ($). Other symbols (for example, %, +, >) appear in text only on fairly informal occasions or in charts, tables, and graphs.

In a report where statistics are clustered, use the percent sign (%). *Since FY 2014, NARA has increased the percentage of traditional holdings processed from 68% to 81% of total traditional holdings at the end of FY 2019. This progress was made despite a 15% increase in holdings over the period.*

In nontechnical writing that makes one or two references to percentages, use the word. *About 90 percent identified their country of origin or nationality as Germany or a "German" state, city, or region.*

The symbol @ is used when indicating an email address and social media accounts. The symbol # is used at the start of a social media hashtag (#HistoryHub).

1.2 Acronyms and initials

Be judicious in your use of acronyms and initials. When an acronym is familiar to your primary audience, as "NARA" is to employees of NARA, then introducing it and explaining it is unnecessary. However, when you believe that an abbreviation might not be instantly understood, spell out the full name and introduce the acronym or initials in parentheses. *NARA's regulations are found in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR).*

Discretion is important. Never introduce an acronym or initials unless you plan to use it at least once more (and fairly soon) in the document.

Never use "the" in front of "NARA," as in *The NARA safeguards the records . . .* Acronyms, which are pronounced as words (e.g., NARA, NASA, OSHA), are considered proper names and are not preceded by "the." Only when we pronounce each letter of the shortened form(e.g., FBI, CIA, SEC) does the word "the" precede it.

1.3 Addresses

The address of the National Archives Building is *700 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20408-0001.* Note that neither NW nor DC requires periods.

When citing a web (or email) address in text, use roman type and link to the page or email address. Note that "http://" and "www" are often unnecessary. Use a live link whenever possible.

Please visit our website, Archives.gov, for additional information. Send your questions to plainlanguage@nara.gov.

1.4 Capitalization

Capitalize the important words in a proper name (National Archives and Records Administration) and the shortened forms of proper names *(Foundation for the National Archives, the Foundation; the House of Representatives, the House)*.

Do not capitalize common nouns (i.e., generic names).

Proper noun	*Common noun*
Porter Street	street
the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers	the rivers
20th Century Fox	the 20th century
EPA's Region 3	EPA's regional offices
the Wagner Act	the act
Record Group 115	many record groups
Washington National Records Center	records center
the Truman and Eisenhower Libraries	the libraries
the Jimmy Carter Library	the Carter Library
the National Archives Catalog	the Catalog
the Center for Legislative Archives	the Center
XYZ 50th Anniversary Commission	the 50th anniversary
First Congressional District	congressional district
19th Amendment	first 10 amendments

Presidential administration: the Bush administration; the Roosevelt administration; the administration; this administration.

Capitalize "Executive" when referring to the President of the United States in such phrases as "Chief Executive" and "Executive Office." The shortened form of the latter would be "Office." But *executive branch, executive power*.

Capitalize "Order" when you refer to a specific executive order. *According to Executive Order 11907 . . .* The word is lowercase when the phrase is used in the generic sense: *an executive order, some executive orders*. (See also *E.O.* in section 4.1.4.)

Lowercase "fiscal year" unless it is used in a title. *NARA submitted its budget request for fiscal year 2018. Funding for the previous fiscal year . . .* (Capitalize the

abbreviation "FY.")

Lowercase specific parts of a document: *the preface, a preface, chapter 3, the chapter, an appendix, appendix C.* Capitalize the part if it is followed by the full name: *Chapter 18, Typography and Design; Table 6, Mortgage Highlights; Appendix C, Quick Reference.*

1.4.1 Geographic terms

Capitalize "state" when referring to a specific domestic or international state. *Washington State, the State of Veracruz.* The word is lowercase when used in a generic sense: *state parks, states with high crime rates, all state governments.*

>   Hawaii has the most temperate climate in the country. The state also . . .

Note that only with Washington is the addition of "state" sometimes necessary; in most writing, the *State of Ohio* is redundant.

capital: The seat of government of a state or nation (the "Nation's Capital" may be used to refer to Washington, DC)

Capitol: The building in Washington, DC, that houses Congress
Lowercase "capitol" when not referring to the U.S. Capitol *(Thomas Jefferson designed Virginia's capitol in Richmond.)*

Capitalize geographic terms such as *Middle East, Northern Hemisphere,* and *West Coast.* Lowercase descriptive terms in expressions such as *southern Europe* and *northern California.*

1.4.2 Military terms

Capitalize the full proper name of the force at the national level. Capitalize "Army," "Navy," "Air Force," and "Marines" when the words refer to the U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, and so on.

>   the U.S. Army, the Army, Army adviser groups
>   the Russian Navy, the navy
>   *but*
>   U.S. artillery units, Russian naval forces, Korean ground troops

Capitalize the full proper name of military subunits, but lowercase subsequent shortened references to the subunit.

>   the 2nd Army, the army, army adviser groups
>   the 7th Fleet, the fleet

the 82nd Airborne Division, the division
Charlie Company, the company

Capitalize the names of famous battles and specific military operations.

Battle of the Bulge   Operation Desert Storm

Capitalize "War" in references to specific wars (*Revolutionary War, Korean War, Gulf War*) and in the term *Cold War*.

Confederate and Union (when referring to the Civil War)

For military ranks, see 1.1.3.

1.4.3 NARA forms, directives, and notices

Use initial capital letters (no italics or quotations marks) to name forms.

Full form name	*Short name for later references*
Standard Form 1, Printing and Binding Requisition to the Public Printer	SF 1
NA Form 14001, Reference Service Slip	NA Form 14001
NATF Form 82, National Archives Order for Copies of Census Record	NATF Form 82

Use initial capital letters (no italics or quotations marks) to name notices and directives.

NARA Notice 2003-144, Retroactive Salary Increase *(Notice)*	a NARA Notice, the notice
NARA 802, Appropriate Use of NARA Office Equipment *(Directive)*	NARA 802

1.4.4 Organizations

Always follow an entity's formal name. If it is formally known as the "International Monetary Fund," then capitalize "Fund" when the word is used to stand for the entity.

Note the difference in the following expressions. The first is the formal name. The second is not.

Security is an issue in the Portland District Office. Security is an issue at the district office in Portland.

Capitalize "Federal" when it is part of a formal name.
    Federal Aviation Administration   Federal Records Act

Otherwise "federal" is lowercase.

The size of the federal government has been greatly reduced.
    a federal record   federal employee
    federal law   federal agency
    a federal form of government

Capitalize the full proper name of a national government body as well as the shortened form of the name.

    the United States Congress, the Congress
    the British Parliament, the Parliament
    the United States Senate, the Senate

Capitalize the names of Cabinet-level bodies and shortened forms.
    the Department of Labor, the Department

Capitalize the full names of sub-Cabinet-level bodies and shortened forms.
    the United States Geological Survey, the Survey
    the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau

Capitalize "Electoral College."

Capitalize "Communist" when referring to the Communist Party.
    communist, communism, communistic: used in a descriptive sense (spread of communism, communist government, communist propaganda)

1.4.5 Personal titles

Capitalize "President," "Presidency," "Presidential" when referring to the President of the United States (as well as to former Presidents).
Capitalize "Vice President" in the same manner.

    The President spoke . . .
    Presidential Library
    the Truman Presidency
    Presidential records

Capitalize the full title and the shortened form when you refer to the head of a federal or international body (regardless of whether you include the individual's name).

    Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, the Secretary
    the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, the Chairman

Capitalize "Archivist" when referring to the Archivist of the United States.

> The Archivist is speaking to the Senate committee.
> Many archivists have recognized . . .

Capitalize most personal titles when they appear before a name. Lowercase titles after a name *unless* the title is unique to a person (i.e., only one person at a time may hold the position).

Amanda Gray, Executive for Agency Services	Executive for Agency Services Amanda Gray
Mark Lucas, Chief Records Officer	Chief Records Officer Mark Lucas
Peter White, Director of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library	Director of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library Peter White
Isabel Hamilton, Director of Preservation Programs	Director of Preservation Programs Isabel Hamilton
Jessica Farrell, archives technician	Archives Technician Jessica Farrell
Bob Brown, budget analyst	Budget Analyst Bob Brown
Edmund Morgan, professor of history	Professor Edmund Morgan
James White, vice president for marketing	Vice President for Marketing James White

Lowercase "executive," "senior executive," "unit head," "staff director," "library director" when they are not part of a full, official title.

> The library directors met last week.
> Send copies to all executives.

Capitalize "Management Team" and "Executive Leadership Team."

1.5 Compounds

Two or more words that express a single idea are called *compound words*. Compounds may be open (two separate words), hyphenated, or closed: *sailing ship, post office box, blockade-runner, sister-in-law, birthplace, groundwater*. Verb forms

of compound words are generally open. The more widely a compound is used, the more likely it is to evolve into a closed compound. A current dictionary will be your best guide to which form to use.

The *follow-up* is scheduled for December 2.	noun, hyphenated
She attended the *follow-up* session.	adjective, hyphenated
Please *follow up* before the end of the month.	verb, two words
When *runoff* enters storm drains, it carries many pollutants with it.	noun, one word
The *runoff* election will be held in two weeks.	adjective, one word
Please *run off* these labels for me.	verb, two words

The most troublesome compounds can be found in Appendix B, Quick Reference, at the end of this guide.

1.5.1 Prefixes

Standard American usage generally closes up compounds with prefixes. Consult a current dictionary if you are unsure of whether to close up or leave open a compound. Closed compounds are written as one word: *antislavery, cybersecurity, multistate, pretax*.

ante	macro	proto
anti	mega	pseudo
auto	meta	re
bi	micro	semi
bio	mid	socio
co	mini	sub
counter	multi	super
cyber	neo	supra
extra	non	trans
hyper	over	ultra
infra	post	un
inter	pre	under
intra	pro	

When you put a prefix in front of a number, hyphenate:

pre-1999   post-1986   mid-20th century

When you put a prefix in front of a capitalized word, hyphenate:

un-American   neo-Nazi   pro-British

Use a hyphen to prevent confusion or mispronunciation. *Resign* is to leave a position, but *re-sign* is to sign again. *Recover* is to get something back, but *re-cover* is to cover again.

> re-encasement   rededicate   reinstall

e- as a prefix: The prefix *e-* is short for *electronic*. Use a hyphen in most creations (e-commerce). Close up the word when the closed version has become common usage, as with email. The term eBook doesn't follow the standard rule but has become the accepted spelling. Some commercial terms may differ from the rules (eBay, E-Verify).

Capitalize these terms when they begin a sentence, but in many cases you may want to write the sentence so that you don't start with the "e-" term.

Note: You will likely see several variations of the term "e-government." This style guide recommends "e-government" in most cases. The E-Government Act of 2002 capitalizes the entire term.

1.5.2 Compound adjectives

Omit the hyphen in a two-word modifier when the first word is an adverb ending in "ly."

> the recently received shipment
> a quickly reached verdict
> a rapidly approaching storm

Hyphenate two or more words that behave as a single adjective and precede the noun. When two (or more) adjectives precede the noun but can describe it individually, use a comma. A *little, used car* is a car that is both little and used; a *little-used* car is a car of indeterminate size that hasn't been used much.

When the compound appears before the noun, it is usually hyphenated. When it appears after the noun, omit the hyphen.

> This is an *up-to-date* report. The report is *up to date*.

> He is a *well-known* artist. He is *well known*.

1.5.3 Compound nouns

Follow the conventions with regard to compound nouns such as *President-elect, self-consciousness, recordkeeping, deck chair,* and so on. A current American-usage

dictionary is your best guide. (The Merriam-Webster dictionary is found at merriam-webster.com).

1.5.4 Suspended compounds

In a compound with two or more parallel adjectives, hyphenate the incomplete term(s), but leave a space before the next word:

> temperature- and humidity-controlled area
> German- and English-language journals
> third-, fourth-, and fifth-floor reading rooms

1.5.5 References to ethnicity

Phrases such as Japanese American, African American, Native American, and Polish American are always two words, regardless of whether the phrase is used as a noun or adjective.

1.6 Dates

Abbreviations and order
Dates must be fully written out (*August 1973* or *August 10, 1973*) in formal writing. The month is never abbreviated.
> the September 1970 report
> The museum was closed between September 2 and 7, 2003.

Except in charts or graphs, do not abbreviate dates in purely numeral form (*12/10/1973*).

Do not use the European and military form (*10 August 1973*).

Use commas with the full date
When you mention a precise date in a sentence, place a comma after the day and after the year.

> The author was born on April 13, 1906, in Dublin, Ireland.

Do not use a comma between the month and the year

> October 2005 (not October, 2005)

Using "th"
When you name the month, never use the ordinal number (*June l0th*) but always the

cardinal number (*June 10*). Use ordinal numbers only when you do not name the month.

> Lincoln had every reason to be optimistic on May 1. By the 30th, however, he had grave doubts about victory.

Span of time
Do not use a dash between dates when you use "from" or "between." The correct form is *from 1996 to 1999* or *between 1996 and 1999*, not "from 1996–99" or "between 1996–99."

When a period of time is used as an adjective and is confined to a specific century, use an en dash and two digits for the second term.
> the 1820–39 expansion   the 1991–92 campaign

When a period of time is used as an adjective and spans a century, use all four digits for the second term.

> the 1797–1816 Barbary conflicts

How to make an en dash
Microsoft Word: Press the Control (Ctrl) key and the hyphen in the number pad.

Google Docs: Click the "Insert" drop-down menu, then select "Special Characters." In the left small box, choose "Punctuation," then in the right small box, choose "Dash/Connector." Hover over the characters until you find the en dash.

Drupal and Wordpress: In the menu bar, click on the special characters symbol (Ω) and hover over the characters until you find the en dash.

If you copy text from MS Word and paste it into Google Docs, Drupal, and Wordpress, the en dash will carry over.

Decades
Decades are written as "1840s," not "1840's."

Shortened references to decades are spelled out, as in "the sixties," not "the 60s."

Compounds
A compound adjective involving "century" requires a hyphen.

> 17th-century philosophy   ninth-century sagas

"Mid" takes a hyphen in such constructions as "mid-1990s."

1.7 Gender-neutral language

Avoid the implied sexual bias of words such as "chairman" and "mailman" as well as sentences such as *Each manager must submit his report by July 15*.

Use gender-neutral terms or revise the sentence to avoid the personal pronoun.

>   Every individual must use ~~his~~ good judgment.
>   The applicant must be prepared to spend ~~his~~ weekends traveling.
>   Susan James *staffed* ~~manned~~ the booth at the conference.

Original sentence: *Each researcher must bring his driver's license or other photo identification.*

Possible options:

- When you are writing to someone, use "you."
  You must bring your driver's license or other photo identification.

- Make the first term plural.
  All researchers must bring their driver's licenses or other photo identification.

- Use an article (an "a," "an," or "the").
  Each researcher must bring a driver's license or other photo identification.

Singular "they": Using "they/their" in place of "he/his" and "she/her" simplifies the sentence and avoids assumptions of gender. *Each badged employee is allowed to bring no more than four family members or friends with them.*

In official NARA communications (such as notices and all-staff emails), NARA style encourages the use of "they" and "their" instead of "she or he" or "her or his."

You can also say what a person *does* (as opposed to what that person *is*). Instead of "Chairwoman," "Chairman," or "Chairperson," you can say that someone *chairs* a committee.

When you must use a title and you know the individual's preference, use *Chairwoman, Chairperson,* or *Chair,* as appropriate. In the same way, use a person's preferred pronoun when it is known.

1.8 NARA references

NARA has had several names throughout its history. When making historical references, use the appropriate name. From its creation until 1949, the agency was

referred to as the "National Archives of the United States" or the "National Archives." In 1949, when the National Archives became part of the General Services Administration, the name changed to the "National Archives and Records Service" With independence in 1985, the name became the "National Archives and Records Administration."

When referring to the entire agency, use "National Archives and Records Administration" at the first reference. Use "NARA" or "the National Archives" in subsequent references; consider your audience when you choose which term to use. To refer to the collections of our permanent holdings, use the full title, as in *the holdings of the National Archives of the United States.* Later references to permanent holdings may be stated as *National Archives holdings.*

Never write "the" in front of "NARA," as in *The NARA safeguards the records . . .*

On organization charts and on internal mail, NARA units are identified by an organization code. Don't use these codes when writing for an external audience. In internal communications, spell out the unit's name before using the code (e.g., spell out Business Support Services before using "B"). In general, avoid "talking in code" and use names whenever possible.

Washington, DC, area
National Archives Building
  Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom; the Rotunda
  National Archives Experience
  Public Vaults exhibition (the Public Vaults)
  Visitor Orientation Plaza
  William G. McGowan Theater (second reference, the McGowan Theater, the
    theater)
  Lawrence F. O'Brien Gallery (second reference, the O'Brien Gallery, the gallery)
  Boeing Learning Center / the Learning Center
  Robert M. Warner Research Center / the Research Center

National Archives at College Park
  Steny H. Hoyer Research Center / the Research Center
  Adrienne C. Thomas Auditorium / the auditorium

Use the terms "Archives I" and "Archives II" only in informal and internal communications. Do not use these terms in external communications.

In the few cases where the abbreviation might be appropriate, "AI," "AII," "A1," or "A2" are acceptable as long as the writer is consistent throughout the document. (Don't use both A1 and AI in the same document.)

Washington National Records Center (WNRC)
Office of the Federal Register (OFR) / the Federal Register
Office of Government Information Services (OGIS)

Information Security Oversight Office (ISOO)

Archival Operations Facilities
National Archives at Boston
National Archives at Philadelphia
National Archives at Atlanta
National Archives at Chicago
National Archives at New York City
National Archives at Denver
National Archives at Fort Worth
National Archives at Kansas City
National Archives at Riverside
National Archives at San Francisco
National Archives at Seattle

When writing for a NARA audience about units in Research Services, you may use
whatever organizational names that apply (e.g., Archival Operations—Chicago or
National Archives at Chicago), as listed in organization charts and NARA 101.

Federal Records Centers
Atlanta Federal Records Center
Boston Federal Records Center
Chicago Federal Records Center
Dayton Federal Records Center
Denver Federal Records Center
Fort Worth Federal Records Center
Dayton-Kingsridge Federal Records Center
Lee's Summit Federal Records Center
Lenexa Federal Records Center
Philadelphia Federal Records Center
Pittsfield Federal Records Center
Riverside Federal Records Center
San Bruno Federal Records Center
Seattle Federal Records Center
National Personnel Records Center
Washington National Records Center

Capitalize the term "Federal Records Center" when referring to the full name of a
part of the Federal Records Center Program.
>   the Seattle Federal Records Center
>   the Federal Records Center at Seattle

Lowercase "records center" when using the term in a generic sense or as a
subsequent reference to a NARA records center.

The Denver Federal Records Center sponsored a charity drive.
Staff at the records center collected food and clothing for the local shelter.

Presidential Libraries
Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum
Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum
Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum
Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum
John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum
Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library and Museum
Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum
Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library and Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum Jimmy
Carter Presidential Library and Museum
Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum
George Bush Presidential Library and Museum
William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum
George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum
Barack Obama Presidential Library

NARA Senior Leadership Positions
Archivist of the United States
Deputy Archivist of the United States
Chief of Staff
Chief Operating Officer
General Counsel
Director, Congressional Affairs
Chief Innovation Officer
Director, Office of the Federal Register
Executive for Agency Services
Chief Records Officer
Executive for Research Services
Executive for Legislative Archives, Presidential Libraries, and Museum Services
Chief Information Officer
Executive for Business Support Services
Chief, Management and Administration
Chief Financial Officer
Chief Human Capital Officer
Director, Communications and Marketing
Director, Executive Secretariat
Inspector General
Director, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Program
Executive Director, National Historical Publications and Records Commission
Director, Information Security Oversight Office
Director, Office of Government Information Services
Director, Federal Records Center Program
Director, National Declassification Center

Director, National Personnel Records Center
Director, Preservation Programs
Director, Center for Legislative Archives
Director, Office of Presidential Libraries
Chief Acquisition Officer

1.9 Numbers

[adapted from *New York Public Library Writer's Guide to Style and Usage* (1992)]

	Examples	**Exceptions**
Spell out numbers zero to nine	eight children, one-time offer, nine applicants ordinal numbers first to ninth	Use figures— With numbers nine and below grouped for comparison in the same sentence or paragraph with numbers 10 and above—3 of 21 students; 9th and 12th grades With ages—5-year-old; age 8 With numbers preceding symbols and abbreviations—8ºC, 4 MB, 5-mg dose With names of parts of books, series, tables, etc.—chapter 2, volume 7, row 9, grade 3 With percentages—1 percent; mixed fractions—2½ years; decimals—1.3 times; and ratios—2 to 1 With sums of money—$5.25, $7 million With military units—1st Army, 7th Fleet
Use numerals for numbers 10 and over	49 states, 200,000 people, 14 million residents, two million files (spell *million, billion, trillion*) ordinal numbers 10th and above (21st birthday, 18th century, 13th edition)	Spell out at beginning of sentence or list item—Forty women helped. Spell out all numbers in dialogue—"Meet me in forty-five minutes." Spell out to clarify back-to-back modifiers—12 thirty-minute segments, 100 twenty-nine-cent stamps Spell out decades—the sixties *or* the 1960s

Inclusive numbers (use the en dash; see 3.2.4 for how to type dashes)

103–210   141–48   107–8
1960–64   1903–5   1882–1902   1900–1920

Telephone numbers (use hyphens) 202-357-5000
When writing just the extension number, omit the hyphen: ext. 75000

1.10 Plurals

Do not use the apostrophe to make the plural form. Apostrophes show possession.

To make an acronym plural, add *s*: ABMs, CEOs, MIAs.

Exceptions: Use an apostrophe for the plural forms of abbreviations with periods, of abbreviations that end in *s,* and single lowercase letters of the alphabet.
When an acronym ends in *s,* it is best to rewrite. Rather than *The crew sent numerous SOS's,* try The crew sent numerous SOS signals.

Criteria is the plural form of *criterion* and takes a plural verb.
These criteria are . . .

In nontechnical writing (most of what we do at NARA), *data* is paired with the singular verb. In a scientific, technical context, *data* is considered a plural form:
These data indicate . . .

Some plural forms

addendum / addenda
adjutant general / adjutants general
alumnus / alumnae (feminine)
alumnus / alumni (masculine, or for mixed groups)
appendix / appendixes (general)
appendix / appendices (scientific)
attorney general / attorneys general
brother-in-law / brothers-in-law
chief of staff / chiefs of staff
court-martial / courts-martial
crisis / crises
formula / formulas
general counsel / general counsels
governor general / governors general
higher-up / higher-ups
grant-in-aid / grants-in-aid
hypothesis / hypotheses
index / indexes (general)

index / indices (scientific)
inspector general / inspectors general
major general/ major generals
matrix / matrices
memorandum / memorandums (common usage)
Model A's
millennium / millennia
p's and q's
passer-by / passers-by
Ph.D. / Ph.D.'s
phenomenon / phenomena
plateau / plateaus (not plateaux)
right-of-way / rights-of-way
symposium / symposia
SF 115 / SF 115s
tableau / tableaus (not tableaux)
thesis / theses

1.11 Possessives

When a proper noun ends in *s*, add an apostrophe and an *s: Adams's, Davis's*

Acronyms are treated as ordinary nouns: *NARA's mission, NASA's funding*

When writing about an organization, always follow the organization's preference. *Reader's Digest* prefers the singular possessive, but in *Typesetters Union* and *Dramatists Guild*, the first word is treated as descriptive, as is the third word in *Department of Veterans Affairs*.

Users manual, teachers guide, and *officers club* are considered descriptive and do not take the apostrophe.

1.12 Technology-related terms

This section lists some of the most common terms and presents the preferred style that you should use in NARA communications. You will undoubtedly find alternative spelling and capitalization for these terms from other sources. In many cases, there is no "right" answer;we can only pick one and use it consistently in our work at NARA.

Lowercase "web" in all web-related constructions: webmaster, web address, presence on the web. The only exception is the exact phrase "World Wide Web."

Google Doc
ICN (Internal Communications Network)
PDF (Portable Document Format), a PDF file
S:\ drive: *Save the file in the S:\ drive.*
IT Call Center
URL (Uniform Resource Locator)

Compounds
database
double-click, right-click, left-click (verbs)
email
internet
intranet
livestream (verb and noun)
log in/log on (verbs: log in to your account)
login/logon (adjectives: the login page)
password-protected (hyphenate the adjective before the noun)
user-friendly (hyphenate the adjective before the noun)
voicemail
webmaster
web page

website
Wi-Fi

See the appendix B for more terms.

1.13 Titles of works: italics or quotation marks

Italicize the following:

books and plays	*Lord of the Flies, The Iceman Cometh*
	United States Government Manual
movies	*King of Hearts*
television series	*The Simpsons*
newsreel series	*World at War*
documentaries	*The Civil War*
catalogs and brochures	*Sources for Family History*
newspapers	*New York Times*
magazines	*Prologue, National Geographic*
other periodicals	*Federal Register*
works of art	*Pietà, Mona Lisa*
named aircraft	*Enola Gay, Hindenburg*
ships	USS *Arizona*, HMS *Victory*
court cases	*United States of America* v. *Karl Bundt*

Note that USS and HMS in ships' names are not italicized.

As a general rule, specific parts of larger wholes are placed in quotation marks. Chapters of books, articles in magazines and newspapers, and episodes of newsreel and television series are quoted:

Chapter 7, "Of Chocolate Quarks," proves that a physicist can have a sense of humor.

There was a fascinating article in *Newsweek* titled "Biology's Big Bang."

Exhibit titles use italics.

Rightfully Hers
Amending America
What's Cooking, Uncle Sam?
The Charters of Freedom—"A New World Is at Hand"

2. Writing in Plain Language

Writing in plain language means writing clearly. It means writing so that readers can
- find what they need,
- understand what they find, and
- use what they find to meet their needs.

The more clearly you communicate, the more likely your readers will grasp what you want them to grasp and do what you want them to do, from filling out a form correctly to complying with a regulation. And the less likely it is that your readers will call or write you to ask questions or express frustration.

Ultimately, your job will be easier, more effective, and more pleasant if you take the time to communicate clearly.

2.1 Think about your audience.

A misconception about plain language is that it means "dumbing down" your writing so that everyone can read it. That's not true. The first rule of plain language is *write for your audience.*

That starts with figuring out who your audience is, then focusing on your audience's needs. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- Who is my audience?
- What does my audience need to know?
- How can I clearly serve the interests of the audience?

You should also consider what your audience may already know about the subject and what questions they may have.

2.2 Organize your material.

We're all busy—including your readers. Nobody wants to waste time slogging through dense, convoluted documents. Write so that your readers can read your document quickly and understand it the first time they read it.

Before you start writing, think about what you want to say and what order it makes the most sense to say it. Organize to serve your audience's needs. Think about the questions your audience will have and the order in which those questions will most naturally arise.

Stay focused. Resist the temptation to tell people everything you know about a topic. Tell them what they need to know and avoid squeezing in unnecessary details.

2.2.1 Use headings and subheadings.

Use headings and subheadings to indicate (1) where the important ideas are and (2) where major separations of thought occur. Think of headings as signs along the highway. Readers depend on such signs as much as drivers do.

There are three types of headings: question headings, statement headings, and topic headings.

- Question headings (for example, *How Do I Locate the Records I Want?*) are particularly useful in letters and general instructions. Readers move through the document with particular questions in mind, and question headings guide them to the answers. Phrase the question headings from the reader's point of view:
  Will I Be Charged for the Service? rather than
  Will You Be Charged for the Service?

- Statement headings are short declarative sentences (for example, *Lodging Is Available Nearby*) and are the next most engaging.

- Topic headings (the most common form) consist of a word or phrase (e.g*.,* *Requesting Records*). If you use topic headings, make sure they are clear and accurate and not so vague as to be unhelpful.

2.2.2 Limit heading levels to three or fewer.

Don't use more than three levels of headings. In most cases, you will need only the main heading and one level of subheading.

The Office of the Federal Register recommends that regulations contain no more than three levels, noting that more than three levels make regulations hard to read and use.

2.2.3 Write short sections.

Long paragraphs are daunting and discourage the reader. Short paragraphs are more inviting and are easier to read and understand.

Each paragraph should discuss one main idea, not two. But if the idea requires 20 sentences to develop, that doesn't mean you should have a 20-sentence paragraph. Find places to break lengthy paragraphs.

Short paragraphs also give you the opportunity to insert informative headings into

your material.

2.3 Verbs

2.3.1 Use the active voice (unless passive makes more sense).

Active voice is the best way to identify who is responsible for what action.

In an active sentence, the person or organization that's acting is the subject of the sentence. Passive voice obscures who is responsible for what and is one of the biggest problems with government documents.

Passive	Active
Mistakes were made.	The committee made mistakes.
New regulations were proposed.	NARA proposed new regulations.

Especially in directives, regulations, or instructions, use the active voice to make it clear to the reader who takes what action.

Passive	Active
The form is sent to Business Support Services.	The executive sends the form to Business Support Services.
The request will be approved by Information Services.	Information Services approves the request.
The following information must be included.	You must include the following information.

Passive voice is not "wrong," however. We would write "She was born" instead of "Her mother bore her."

The passive voice is acceptable whenever the emphasis of the sentence should not be on the actor but rather on what was, is, or will be done. Any of the following sentences could be just fine, depending upon which word the writer thinks deserves emphasis.

Passive	Active
We were amazed by the results.	The *results* amazed us.
Materials must be handled with care.	Y*ou* must handle materials with care.
Your *shipment* has been received.	*We* have received your shipment.
Many *documents* must be declassified.	*We* must declassify many documents.

The passive voice may also be appropriate when one action follows another as a matter of law, and there is no actor (besides the law itself) for the second action.

If you do not pay the royalty on your mineral production, your lease will be terminated.

2.3.2 Use the simplest form of the verb.

The simplest and strongest form of a verb is present tense. Using the present tense makes your document more direct and forceful and less complicated.

These sections describe types of information that would satisfy the application requirements of Circular A-110 as it would apply to this grant program.

These sections tell you how to meet the requirements of Circular A-110 for this grant program.

2.3.3 Don't hide the verb.

Verbs are the heart of clear writing. They tell what happened or tell the reader what to do. Avoid hiding verbs by turning them into nouns. Turning verbs into nouns makes them less effective and requires you to use more words than necessary.

Watch out for the words *make, do, give, have, provide, perform,* and *conduct,* which often indicate that a verb has been turned into a noun.

Words ending in *-ment, -ion, -ity, -ance,* and *-ence* are clues to finding the hidden verbs.

We made the decision to	We decided
They did a study of	They studied
This gives the indication that	This indicates
This has the tendency to	This tends
He provided an explanation	He explained
They performed an assessment of	They assessed
She conducted a review of	She reviewed
Have researchers show	Ask researchers to show

2.3.4 Don't use "shall."

Avoid the ambiguous *shall.* The word can suggest obligation or simply a future event. Good business writing never forces the reader to interpret.

For obligation, use "must."
When you examine records, you must keep them in their original order.

For permission, use "may."
You may bring a coin purse or wallet into the research room.

When recommending a course of action, use "should."
You and your financial institution should agree on how invoice information will be provided to you.

When indicating the future, use "will."
Our facility will reopen on September 1.

2.3.5 Avoid the false subjects *It is* and *There are.*

It is shown in the photographs	The photographs show
It was proven by the research	The research proved
It will be argued by the plaintiff	The plaintiff will argue
There are times when	Occasionally/Sometimes
There were delays due to	Delays were caused by
There will be complications unless	Complications will occur unless

It is her opinion that there are several issues that need to be resolved.
She believes that several issues need to be resolved.

2.3.6 Use contractions when appropriate.

When appropriate, use contractions to foster a conversational tone. While contractions make text less formal, very few documents are purely formal.

This office will put forth the utmost effort to accommodate the needs of researchers.

Better: We'll do our best to accommodate your research needs.

It is the hope of everyone at the Hoover Library that researchers have benefited from their visit.

Better: We hope you've enjoyed your visit.

Note: Be consistent within a given document and avoid informality when informality is inappropriate. Press releases, public announcements, letters to individuals, and information packets are good candidates for using contractions. Official policy statements and directives can be more formal.

2.4 Nouns and pronouns

2.4.1 Use everyday words.

Clarity begins with the choice of words. When a writer describes an elevator as *a vertical transportation system*, or refers to a leak as a *moisture event*, clarity goes out the door.

Rather than using *subsequent to,* use *after*. Rather than *taking a proactive position vis-à-vis the problematic situation*, the writer *anticipates the problem*.

Avoid unnecessarily complicated language used to impress, rather than inform, your audience. That doesn't mean you need to avoid necessary technical terms, if your audience is familiar with them.

2.4.2 Avoid "noun strings."

Often, when a writer attempts to be brief by stringing nouns together, confusion results. Below, compare the meaning of the original sentences with the intended meaning, revealed in the revisions.

> We must modernize our obsolete nuclear weapons tracking system.
> *We must modernize our system for tracking obsolete nuclear weapons.*

> We must revise our outdated check redemption procedures.
> *We must revise our procedures for redeeming outdated checks.*

2.4.3 Use pronouns.

Pronouns include *you, your, we, us, our, he, she,* and *they.*

"You" pulls readers into the document. It helps them understand how the document relates to them and what they need to do. And it helps make your sentences shorter, more direct, and clearer.

> Researchers traveling by car may reach Hyde Park via the New York State Thruway . . .
> *If you are driving, take the New York State Thruway . . .*

> A research pass will be issued after the researcher completes an application and furnishes photographic identification.
> *You will receive a research pass after you complete an application and show photographic identification.*

Use "we," "our," and "us" to stand for NARA or your particular office.

> Beginners are urged to read "Getting Started" before commencing research at a National Archives facility.
> *If you are a beginner, you should read "Getting Started" before coming to a research room.*

When you are writing *about* a person or a group, use "she," "he," or "they."

2.5 Omit unnecessary words.

Dense, wordy construction is one of the biggest problems in government writing. Nothing is more confusing or frustrating to the reader than long, complex sentences full of words that are doing no useful work.

To address the problem, become a tougher critic of your own writing. Consider whether you need every word.

Would you rather read this:
> This letter concerns your request under the Freedom of Information Act. We received your request on 13 February 2000. We then sent it to the Agency for Regulatory Policy. Unfortunately, the Agency cannot process your request without more information. We need you to reasonably describe the records you are seeking. Specifically, we need to know what records you need.

Or this:
> Unfortunately, the Agency for Regulatory Policy dealing with your Freedom of Information Act request cannot reply to you until it knows specifically what records you need.

(examples from the Plain Language Action and Information Network)

2.5.1 Write with a word, not with a phrase.

Don't use a phrase if a single word will do the job.

at this point in time	currently, now
in the vicinity of	near
it is clear that	clearly
in order to	to

Be especially watchful for phrases using "the fact that." Often, the simple word "because" can stand in place of many words.

in consideration of the fact that	because
in view of the fact that	because
due to the fact that	because
given the fact that	because

2.5.2 Avoid redundancy.

Weigh the meanings of words and let those meanings do their job. October is a month, so there's no need to say "the month of October."

the month of October	October
joint cooperation	cooperation
the State of Nebraska	Nebraska
advance planning	planning
completely destroyed	destroyed
advance warning	warning
absolutely essential	essential
past experience	experience
including, but not limited to	including
forecast for the future	forecast
predict in advance	predict
period of three weeks	three weeks
12 noon	noon
hidden pitfall	pitfall
postpone until later	postpone
whether or not	whether
specific example	example
established tradition	tradition
depreciate in value	depreciate
completely ignored	ignored
general consensus	consensus

2.5.3 Avoid intruding words.

"Intruders" are another type of verbal padding—extra words that contribute nothing to the meaning of the sentence. Common intruders include *program, event, effort, method, conditions*, and *activities*.

Records are endangered by fluctuating temperature conditions.
Records are endangered by fluctuating temperatures.

The new policy simplifies reporting activities.
The new policy simplifies reporting.

The declassification effort is proceeding on schedule.

The declassification is proceeding on schedule.

2.5.4 Don't "double" terms.

Don't repeat the same concept by using different words that mean the same thing. Use one word. (While you're at it, make it an everyday word.)

These data must be *assessed* and *evaluated*.	(Use one or the other.)
The accessions must be *entered* and *recorded*.	(Use one or the other.)
You must *cease* and *desist.*	(Use *stop.*)
The program will *begin* and *commence*…	(Use *start.*)
The *measure* and *breadth*...	(Use *scope.*)

2.5.5 Beware *basis, manner, fashion*, and *way*.

These words often signal the presence of verbal clutter.

in a timely manner	promptly, soon
in a rapid manner	rapidly
on a periodic basis	periodically
in an unusual fashion	unusually
in an unpredictable way	unpredictably

2.6 Sentences

2.6.1 Write short sentences.

Readers process information easily when it is presented in short chunks. Long sentences require much more effort to figure out.

> In light of the fact that the report does not include specific examples in its discussion of ways to improve productivity, we are of the strong belief that it should undergo revision.

> *We believe the report should be revised because it does not include examples of how to improve productivity.*

2.6.2 Place words carefully.

Even in short sentences, place your words carefully. Sloppy word placement can cause ambiguity. To reduce ambiguity:

- Keep subjects and objects close to their verbs.

- Put conditionals such as "only" or "always" and other modifiers next to the words they modify.
  Instead of "You are only required to provide the following," write.
  You are required to provide only the following.

- Put long conditions after the main clause.
  Instead of "If you own more than 50 acres and cultivate grapes, complete Form 9-123," write
  Complete Form 9-123 if you own more than 50 acres and cultivate grapes.

2.6.3 Minimize the use of "not."

It's clearer and more concise to say what something is or does than to say what it is not or does not do.

did not remember	forgot
not on time	late
does not consider	ignores
did not bother	neglected
not precise	imprecise

3. Grammar and punctuation

3.1 Grammar

3.1.1 Subject/verb agreement

The subject and the verb must agree. If the subject is plural, use a plural verb.

> The Kyl and Lott Amendments require that . . .
> All staff are required to wear ID badges in the research areas.

Sometimes it is not so obvious. Collective nouns may look plural, but they usually take the singular verb.

> The team practices on Mondays.
> The ERA staff is giving a presentation in Lecture Room A.

Or a group of words may contain a singular noun but conveys the idea of a number of individuals. Use the plural verb in these cases.

> A majority of the population are . . .
> Only a fraction of the records are considered to be permanent.

3.1.2 Prepositions and pronouns

Use the objective case after prepositions. Prepositions connect verbs and objects.

One of the most common errors in spoken and written language is the use of "between you and I." "Between" is a preposition; therefore, the words that follow must be in the objective case. The correct usage is "between you and me."

"Myself" is not a substitute for "me." It is a reflexive pronoun, not an object or subject. Use it in conjunction with "I": I did it myself. I asked myself, "What should I do next?"

Subjective case	Objective case *Use these forms after prepositions*
I	me
you	you
he/she/it	him/her/it
we	us
you	you
they	them

Common prepositions:

aboard	besides	inside	save
about	between	into	since
above	beyond	like	than
across	but	minus	through
after	by	near	to
against	concerning	of	toward
along	considering	off	under
amid	despite	on	underneath
among	down	onto	unlike
anti	during	opposite	until
around	except	outside	up
as	excepting	over	upon
at	excluding	past	versus
before	following	per	via
behind	for	plus	with
below	from	regarding	within
beneath	in	round	without
beside			

3.2 Punctuation

3.2.1 Apostrophe

Use the apostrophe to form contractions and possessives.
The apostrophe is never used to form plurals except in instances of single-character elements.

They had better mind their p's and q's.
It's difficult to distinguish his 1's from his 7's.

3.2.2 Colons and semicolons

Use a colon to introduce a summary statement:

> The dictator learned something important: brutality has consequences. She came right to the point: the cost overruns must stop.

Use a colon after a complete sentence that introduces a list. Use a comma or a dash after an introductory phrase.

> We have yet to finish three activities: recataloging, reclassifying, and reorganizing the collection.

The exhibit includes copies of the Charters of Freedom:
- the Declaration of Independence,
- the Constitution, and
- the Bill of Rights.

To improve our service, we have set three goals:
- We will respond to all written requests within 10 working days.
- We will assist all researchers within 15 minutes of their signing in.
- We will acknowledge all FOIA requests within 20 working days.

Use a semicolon to separate phrases in a series when one or more of the phrases already contain a comma. Follow this practice in vertical lists as well.

The conferences were held in Dallas, TX, on May 1; in Denver, CO, on June 30; and in San Francisco, CA, on September 2.

Do not use a colon to express ratio. Instead of "3:1," write *3-to-1* (as an adjective, as in *a 3-to-1 vote*) or *3 to 1* (when the numerals are nouns, as in *odds of 3 to 1*).

3.2.3 Comma

In the phrase the "Washington, DC, area," place commas on both sides of "DC."

Personal names with suffixes do not need commas:

Martin Luther King Jr.
Douglas Fairbanks Sr.
John Dean III

When your sentence contains a list of three or more items, always place a comma after the next-to-last item in the series (i.e., before the *and* or *or)*:

The President visited Helsinki, St. Petersburg, and Berlin. Please bring your passport, driver's license, or birth certificate.

Use a comma after an introductory phrase only when your meaning would be unclear without it:

In February 1999 we issued the directive. In 1998, 1,406 documents were released.

Always place a comma after an opening dependent clause:

When we returned, we found the materials in disarray.

Compound sentences require a comma when they are connected by these conjunctions: *and, but, or, for, nor, so, yet.* A compound sentence contains two independent clauses (two subjects and two verbs).

> Some took great care of the materials, but many did not.

When a sentence has one subject and two verbs, it is said to have a compound predicate. Do not use a comma in a compound predicate:

> The documents are now on display and may be viewed by the public. Lewis and Clark endured many hardships but finally prevailed.

Nonrestrictive (also called "parenthetical" and "nonessential") phrases require punctuation. In the sentence below, *which has been NARA's principal finding aid since 1974,* could be omitted without changing the meaning.

> The McGowan Theater, which opened in 2004, was renovated after a flood in 2006.

Restrictive phrases must not be punctuated. In the example below*, that were written before 2016* specifies the regulations you are talking about. (If it were cut, the sentence would read "Revise all regulations," which is not the intended meaning.)

> Revise all regulations that were written before 2016.

3.2.4 Dash

Use dashes instead of commas when you wish to call special attention to nonrestrictive material. This is always a judgment call.

> Senator Smith—reversing his position—has announced that he will resign.

Use dashes around appositives if the use of commas might cause confusion.

> Three former Presidents—Ford, Carter, and Bush—attended the ceremony.

The dash discussed above is called the em dash. Published works (including NARA publications) use the em dash and the en dash; both are longer than a hyphen. The em dash is commonly used to set off parts of a sentence (as in the examples above).

The shorter en dash connects inclusive numbers (e.g., 1997–98; pp.123–126; 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.). For further information about the uses of these dashes, see *United States Government Printing Office Style Manual* 2016, sections 8.64–8.9, and the *Chicago Manual of Style*, sections 6.75–6.92.

You do not need to leave space before or after em and en dashes.

How to create em and en dashes

Microsoft Word: When you type a space, then two hyphens (--), then another space, an en dash is automatically inserted. When you type two hyphens without leaving space, an em dash is inserted. You can also create an en dash by pressing the Control (Ctrl) key and the hyphen in the number pad. Create an em dash by pressing Ctrl, Alt, and that hyphen.

Google Docs: Click the "Insert" drop-down menu, then select "Special Characters." In the left small box, choose "Punctuation," then in the right small box, choose "Dash/Connector." Hover over the characters until you find the en or em dash.

Drupal and Wordpress: In the menu bar, click on the special characters symbol (Ω) and hover over the characters until you find the en or em dash.

If you copy text from MS Word and paste it into Google Docs, Drupal, and Wordpress, the em and en dashes will carry over.

3.2.5 Ellipses

Use ellipses only to indicate that part of a quotation has been left out. If a politician's exact words were, "The American people are smarter than my Aunt Sallie's mule and can't be fooled forever," and you omit the colorful comparison, you write *He said, "The American people . . . can't be fooled forever."*

Ellipses are written as three spaced periods when words have been omitted from the beginning or the middle of a sentence. However, when you omit words from the end of a sentence, use the appropriate punctuation and three spaced periods.

> The introduction declared: "The pages that follow present some of these great documents. . . . Many have heralded new departures or marked closed chapters."

Note that in the four-dot ellipsis above, the first dot is the period. Ellipses always appear inside quotation marks.

3.2.6 Parentheses

If the material within parentheses appears within a sentence, do not use a capital letter or period to punctuate that material, even if the material is itself a complete sentence. (A question mark or exclamation mark, however, might be appropriate and necessary.) If the material within your parentheses is written as a separate sentence (not included within another sentence), punctuate it as if it were a separate sentence.

> Thirty-five years after his death, Robert Frost (we remember him at Kennedy's inauguration) remains America's favorite poet.

Thirty-five years after his death, Robert Frost (do you remember him?) remains America's favorite poet.

Thirty-five years after his death, Robert Frost remains America's favorite poet. (We remember him at Kennedy's inauguration.)

Use parentheses when you introduce an acronym.

The collection contains hundreds of documents pertaining to the formation of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA).

Use parentheses to capture *i.e.* and *e.g.* expressions.

Several species (e.g., the bald eagle, the dusky marmot, the spotted owl) have been removed from the "endangered" list.

Use parentheses instead of commas or dashes when you wish to indicate that nonrestrictive information is of only minor importance. As is true of dashes, this is always a judgment call.

The records (which arrived in damaged condition) require immediate attention.

Use brackets as parentheses within parentheses.

The collection contains the papers from the terms of three former Secretaries of State (John Hay [1898–1905], Elihu Root [1905–9], and Robert Bacon [1909]).

3.2.7 Quotation marks

In American usage, the comma and the period always go inside closing quotation marks.

In Chapter 7, "The Missing Link," the author poses a number of questions.

She stated, "I have read Chapter 2, 'Nature of Archives.'"

The conference ended with the playing of "Rule Britannia," "The Marseillaise," and "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Colons, semicolons, and dashes always go *outside* closing quotation marks.

I have only one question about the word "proactive": What does it mean?

They call it a "leather personnel carrier"; what they mean is *boot*.

He attended the lecture "The New Physics"—and says he is more confused than ever.

The question mark goes inside closing quotes whenever the quoted material is a question.

She asked, "Are you talking about Harry Truman?"

Have you read the article entitled "When Does the Millennium End?"

He asked, "Have you read Chapter 2, 'Nature of Archives'?"

Which President said, "The buck stops here"?

The exclamation point requires the same treatment as the question mark. It goes inside closing quotes whenever the quoted material is exclamatory.

The speaker asked, "Do you want me to continue?" In unison, the audience yelled, "No!"

Use single quotation marks to enclose a quotation within a quotation.

She asked, "Have you read Chapter 2, 'Nature of Archives'?"

When you have a lengthy quotation, set it off as a block quotation. Indent the text, and do not use quotation marks at the beginning or end. Do not use ellipsis points when the quotation begins with a complete sentence or is introduced by a sentence that is completed by the quotation.

Malone explains that Jefferson

had been a close observer of financial affairs at home and abroad. Furthermore, he was familiar with the literature of the young science of political economy. He paid his respects to Adam Smith and Jean Baptiste Say in the introduction he wrote to Destutt de Tracy's treatise.

4. Formatting for readability

The reader should be able to tell at a glance what the document is, how it is organized, and where the important points are.

The page should invite reading, not discourage it. Use lots of white space, and give the reader landmarks. Make the page reader-friendly. Break things up. *Direct the eye*.

Understand that isolation is emphasis.

When you want the reader to pay particular attention to an idea, find a way to segregate it visually. *Make it stand out*. You might, for example, boldface the essential sentence in a memo or letter, or you might grab the reader's attention with a centered table, a heading, or an italicized phrase.

Don't hesitate to use headings in any document.

Use headings wherever headings are helpful. In very short documents, there is probably no need for them. In longer documents, however, they are crucial clarifying devices. Rather than telling yourself, "I can't use headings because this is a letter (or memo, or email)," ask yourself, "Would headings help clarify the text?"

Isolate lead sentences.

Isolate lead sentences to alert your reader to the main idea of a paragraph. This page exemplifies the technique. The "thesis statements" are presented in boldface. People who wish to read the remainder of the paragraph can do so; those who already know the explanation can skip it. You can use either boldface or italics for emphasis.

Feel free to write one-sentence paragraphs.

Since most paragraphs contain more than one sentence, a one-sentence paragraph will stand out.The warning against one-sentence paragraphs applied when we were trying to learn the principles of unity and coherence. What we are trying to do now is convey information quickly.

Use standard typefaces for the text.

Common fonts installed on word processors include Times Roman, Arial, Univers, Palatino, and Garamond. Use the same typeface throughout your document. You may choose another (compatible) typeface for headings, if you wish.

NARA's Visual Identity Guide (work.nara.gov/visual-identity-guide/index.html) recommends Source Sans Pro and Merryweather for products destined for the web.

NARA's Guide for Preparing NARA Correspondence: A Supplement to NARA 201 (work.nara.gov/files/0200_series/nara0201-s1.pdf) specifies that the typeface for official correspondence should be Times New Roman, 12 pt.

Leave the right margin ragged.

Research strongly indicates that most people read more quickly and with better comprehension when the right margin is ragged, as opposed to justified.

Leave plenty of white space.

Pages that contain dense blocks of text are intimidating. Establish reasonable margins (i.e., don't crowd the text to within a quarter-inch of the sides of the paper), use headings, and employ bulleted lists to make the page visually appealing and the information easy to grasp.

Use discretion with graphics.

In other words, don't go overboard with headings, subheadings, leads, boldface, italics, and so on. Too much of a good thing is a bad thing, and when writers overuse graphics, the result is a page that looks cluttered or "busy." Remember that graphics should be helpful—never distracting, and never there merely for their own sake.

Use tables to present lists.

Tables are easy to set up, interesting to the eye, helpful in breaking up the text, and far more concise than sentences can ever be. They have the added advantage of requiring minimal effort from the reader.

Consider the following sentence.

> Current ethics officials and Standards of Conduct advisers are George M. Smith, General Counsel; Charles G. Harris, Designated Agency Ethics Official (DAEO); Anne L. Kupchak, Alternate DAEO; and Charles Branson, Denise Mead, Keith Cain, Estelle Orokian, and James Landon, Deputy Ethics Officials.

Contrast that sentence with the following visual presentation of the same information.

Current ethics officials and Standards of Conduct advisers are:

General Counsel	George M. Smith
Designated Agency Ethics Officer	Charles G. Harris Official (DAEO
Alternate DAEO	Anne L. Kupchak

Deputy Ethics Officials	Charles Branson, Denise Mead, Keith Cain, Estelle Orokian, and James Landon

Most readers find that the table is easier to understand than the sentence. It isn't that the sentence is unclear—only that the table is simpler, which means "clearer on first reading."

Use vertical lists.

Vertical lists highlight a series of requirements or other information in a visually clear way. Use vertical lists to help your user focus on important material.

Vertical lists
- highlight levels of importance,
- help the user understand the order in which things happen,
- make it easy for the user to identify all necessary steps in a process, add blank space for easy reading, and
- are an ideal way to present items, conditions, and exceptions.

Use bullets if the order of the listed items is not critical. Use numbers if the steps must be followed in order.

For guidance on how to punctuate vertical lists, see section 3.2.2 and GPO 8.28.

Adjust established formats when necessary.

Just because we've been using a certain format for years doesn't mean we have to continue. The whole purpose of format is to simplify the reader's job; when changes are necessary, make the changes. If the established format complicates the reading, change the format.

5. Writing and formatting email

It's easy to dash off a note and hit "send," but we still need to remember to create messages that are written and formatted for readability and usefulness.

NARA's Guide for Preparing NARA Correspondence: A Supplement to NARA 201 (work.nara.gov/files/0200_series/nara0201-s1.pdf) provides standards for preparing a variety of kinds of correspondence.

Think before sending.

Even in a quick response to a question from a colleague, look over the message before hitting "send." Chances are you'll find a typo or two, an imprecise word, a way you could easily clarify a sentence.

Especially when sending email to an external reader, edit and proofread the message as carefully as you would any more formal document. Remember that you are representing NARA; create and maintain an impression of professionalism.

Use the subject field.

This is all that shows up in the recipient's mailbox, and busy people often decide whether to read email based on what they see there.. Be as precise as you can, and briefly describe the subject of the email.

Instead of using a vague term such as "plan" or "question" in the subject field, use full statements or questions. "Send performance stats for quarterly report" or "Request editing for annual report" provide the recipient with more useful information.

Maintain a businesslike tone.

Although email is more casual than a formal letter, keep in mind that you are still presenting an image of NARA to the recipient. Be polite. Remember that humor, irony, and sarcasm don't always come across as intended in writing—especially in writing to strangers. They don't belong in good business writing.

Keep paragraphs short.

Rather than indent to indicate a paragraph break, skip a line instead. Small blocks of type are easier to read. Only a portion of the page may appear on the reader's screen at any given time, so make sure your important points are at the top.

Use the NARA signature block.

A signature block ensures that the recipient has all your contact information. The Visual Identity Guide (work.nara.gov/visual-identity-guide/index.html) has instructions on how to create and insert the standard NARA signature block with logo.

Appendix A: Problem Words and Phrases

a / an
Use "a" before a consonant sound and "an" before a vowel sound.
a European office, a unique event, a one-time adjustment, a historian, an hour, an FDIC-insured account, an SOS

abovementioned, aforesaid, said
These are cumbersome words. Use *this, that, these*, and *those*. Rather than "the abovementioned collection" or "said collection," write *this collection*. Rather than "the aforesaid dates," write *these dates*.

adverse / averse
"Adverse" applies to conditions. *The snow created adverse driving conditions.* "Averse" applies to people and is a close synonym of "opposes." *They are averse to change.*

affect / effect
Use "affect" only in the sense of "to influence"; never use "effect" as a verb.

Always ask yourself if you are using the most precise word. *The policy affected morale* and *the proposed regulation will impact revenue* are unclear. If you mean the policy *improved* or *damaged* morale and the regulation will *increase* or *jeopardize* revenue, say so. *The ruling negatively impacts our budget* is a waste of a sentence: the reader waits to hear exactly how much funding has been lost, and the writer should say so in the first place. *The ruling decreases our FY 2003 budget by $2.5 million.*

"Affect" may be used to ask a question. *How will the decision affect us?* "Affect" is the right word when you wish to specify no particular effect. *The new tax law does not affect your take-home pay.*

Using "effect" as a verb always results in imprecision. If they are attempting to *effect a solution* to the problem, all they are doing is trying to *solve* it.

"Effect" is a noun, where it is a close synonym of "result." *The effect of rising interest rates is profound.*

and / or
Use this construction only after you've made sure that you don't mean both ("and") or one or the other ("or").

anxious / eager
"Anxious" has anxiety in it. *The defendant waited anxiously for the verdict.*
"Eager" is used to express a pleasant prospect. *We eagerly await your visit.*

attached please find / enclosed please find
Write "enclosed is" or "attached is," whichever is accurate. If you wish to suggest a conversational tone, use "I'm enclosing."

because / since / as
Use "because" when you are reasoning; use "since" when you refer to time; use "as" when you mean "during the time that."

"Since" can logically mean both "because of" and "from the time of." Use "because" if there is a chance of confusion. *Since the secretary left, the office has become a shambles* can mean either that trouble began after the secretary left or that the loss of the secretary caused the problem. *Since you won't share the information with me, I can't help you* is not confusing.

Using "as" to mean "because" can confuse the reader in a sentence such as *He couldn't hear the siren as he was listening to the car radio*.

between you and me
The preposition "between" takes the objective case. *Between you and me* is correct; *between you and I* is not.

biannual, biennial
These words are notoriously confusing to readers, and it is best to define them before using them. *The conference will be held every two years. Holding it biennially will ensure that . . . The sale will be held twice a year. We have had great success holding this sale biannually.*

bimonthly, biweekly
These words are even more confusing to readers as both words can have two different meanings. "Bimonthly" can mean both twice a month and every two months. "Biweekly" can mean twice a week or every two weeks. Define the terms before you use them.

compose / comprise / constitute
The parts compose (or constitute) the whole. *The book is composed of 15 chapters*. (not *The book is comprised of 15 chapters.) These reasons constitute her argument*.

The whole comprises the parts (a close synonym is "embraces"). *The collection comprises more than 4,000 letters*.

currently, presently, at this point
These words prepare the reader for a contrast. *Currently, we are receiving 50 shipments every week* must be followed by a sentence like *We expect this number to double within six months* or *Less than a year ago, we rarely received 50 per month*.

different from / different than
"Different from" is the preferred form. *Requirements for women applicants should be no different from those for men.*

due to / because of
"Due to" is not equivalent to "because" Use "because of" for cases of clear cause and effect. *The trucker lost control on the slippery pavement because of [not due to] bald tires.* Use "due to" only following forms of the verb "to be": *His fall was due to the icy pavement.*

ensure / insure / assure
The only meaning of "insure" is "to cover with insurance." *The collection is insured by Aetna.* "Assure" applies only to persons. *We assure you that . . .* "Ensure" is used for all other senses of making an outcome certain or securing from harm. *To ensure the privacy of your records . . .*

fewer / less
If you can count the things you're writing about, use "fewer." If you can't, use "less." *Fewer people, fewer hours; less of an audience, less time.*

foreign words and phrases
Write in English. Rather than *vis-à-vis*, use "about," "regarding." or "concerning."

herein, hereto, herewith
We often read these words in such phrases as "herein enclosed is" or "is attached hereto." The words do not add meaning to a sentence—do not use them.

if / when
"If"means "in the event of"; "when" means "on the occasion of." *If you discontinue using public transportation, immediately notify your local PTSP manager.* You will take the action only if you decide to discontinue using public transportation. *When your application expires, you must submit a new one.*

imply / infer
"Imply" means "to suggest" and is the verb applied to speakers, writers, and text. *He implied that NATO would partition the country.* "Infer" is a close synonym of "guess" and is the word applied to listeners and readers. *When Hemingway noticed that the large unopened package was marked "Return to Sender," he inferred that his manuscript had been rejected.*

include
The word indicates that your list is <u>not</u> exhaustive. Use it only when you are giving examples, never when you list everything. *On her visit she toured a number of popular sites, including the Washington Monument, the National Air*

and Space Museum, and the Capitol. That sentence is accurate if she toured other sites as well. If, however, she toured only those three sites, then *including* is misleading. The sentence should then read, *On her visit she toured the Washington Monument, the National Air and Space Museum, and the Capitol*.

including, but not limited to
Avoid this redundant phrase. Write "including."

issues / problems
Issues are resolved, not solved. Problems are solved, not resolved.

loose / lose
"Loose" is the opposite of tight. "Lose" is the opposite of win and is also the word we use when we no longer have something. *She continually loses her car keys*.

only
Be sure to place this word precisely where it should go (i.e., immediately before the distinction you are drawing). *He plays basketball only on weekends* means that he confines his basketball playing to weekends. *He only plays basketball on weekends* means that he does nothing but play basketball on weekends.

principal / principle
"Principal" is an adjective or a noun. As an adjective, it means "main" or "major." *Her principal motive was fame*. As a noun, it signifies (1) money, as in principal and interest, or (2) a person with responsibility, as in *a principal of the corporation* or *the principal of the elementary school*. A "principle" is a rule of action or conduct, as in *the principles of physics* and *unprincipled behavior*.

prior to / before
In most cases, "before" is the word you need. "Prior to" carries the idea of necessary precedence—something must happen *prior* to something else happening. Because this usage is limited, you'll be safe in sticking with "before."

proactive
This word is both faddish and without fixed meaning. *We must take a proactive position vis-à-vis the problem* is gobbledygook. If you mean "act," "anticipate" or "preempt," use those words instead.

shall
Don't use shall (see section 1.3.4).

subsequent to / after
Many readers confuse "subsequent to" with "because of." "After" is the better word. The same holds for "subsequently." Use "later" or "afterward" instead.

than / then

"Than" is used in comparisons. *He wrote more than 8,000 letters*. "Then" is used in reference to time. *They said they'd have the project finished by then*. Until recently, "then" was also used to introduce the outcome of a conditional, as in *If the software saves us time, then we should buy it*. Now, however, most writers drop the implied "then."

that / which

"That" introduces information essential to the meaning of a sentence. *The committee that has jurisdiction on the issue is the House Appropriations Committee*. The phrase "that has jurisdiction on the issue" cannot be cut from the sentence; if it were, the result would be meaningless. *The committee is the House Appropriations Committee.* Use "that" to specify.

"Which" is used to introduce a phrase or clause that is nonessential to meaning. *The House Appropriations Committee, which debated the matter yesterday, is scheduled to vote on it today.* There is only one House Appropriations Committee, so we do not need to specify the one that we're talking about. We are adding some interesting information to the sentence, but the information is nonessential, and thus it must be punctuated. Use commas, dashes, or parentheses, depending on your intended emphasis.

this office, this division

Once the reference has been made clear, use *we, us*, and *our*. Rather than write *The principal function of this office,* write *Our main function*.

Time: noon / midnight / 12 a.m. / 12 p.m.

Write "noon" or "midnight." "12 a.m." and "12 p.m." are ambiguous. "Noon" and "midnight" are clear.

under way

The adverb "under way" is spelled as two words: *The project is under way.*

unique

"Unique" means one of a kind. There are no degrees on uniqueness, such as "most unique."

use / utilize

Reserve "utilize" for occasions when the sense is "ingeniously made use of." *She utilized a paper clip to pick the lock*. Nearly always, the right word is "use."

v. / vs.

Though "versus" should usually be spelled out, "vs." is the correct abbreviation in most cases; "v." is used in citations of legal cases.

who / whom

To decide whether to use "who" or "whom" in a sentence, delete the word "who" or "whom" and substitute "he" or "him." If "he" completes the thought, then "who" is correct. If "him" makes sense, use "whom."

Appendix B: Quick Reference

This appendix is <u>not</u> an index. Listed below are words and phrases commonly used by NARA writers. Also included are words that are commonly misspelled (these words do not have references to a section of this guide). Not listed here are usages that require explanation (e.g., how to handle "his/her" [see section 4.9, "Gender-neutral language."]). If the word or phrase you're looking for isn't listed here, we encourage you to check the appropriate section of this guide or an up-to-date dictionary (the Merriam-Webster dictionary is found at *www.merriam-webster.com*).

<u>Numbers</u> *(1.9)*
four boxes
40 boxes
4 percent (adj. and noun)
4-to-1 (adj.)
4 to 1 (noun)
4-year-old (adj. and noun)
400-horsepower (adj.)
400 horsepower (noun)
fourth-quarter (adj.)
fourth quarter (noun)
21st-century records

A
acknowledgment (not acknowledgement)
addenda *(1.10, Plurals)*
adjutants general *(1.10, Plurals)*
administration (the Clinton administration) *(1.4, Capitalization)*
adviser (not advisor)
African American *(1.5.5, Compounds)*
agency-wide *(1.5.2, Compounds)*
airborne *(1.5, Compounds)*
alumnae (feminine) *(1.10, Plurals)*
alumni (masculine, or for mixed groups) *(1.10, Plurals)*
Amendment (19th Amendment), but the amendment *(1.4, Capitalization)*
American Indians
anniversary (not Anniversary)
appendices (scientific) *(1.10, Plurals)*
appendixes (general) *(1.10, Plurals)*
Archives I *(1.8, NARA References)*
Archives II *(1.8, NARA References)*
archivist *(1.4.5, Capitalization)*
Archivist (the Archivist of the United States) *(1.4.5, Capitalization)*
artwork *(1.5, Compounds)*
at-risk (adj.) *(1.5.2, Compounds)*

audiocassette *(1.5, Compounds)*
audiotape *(1.5, Compounds)*
autumn (season) *(1.4, Capitalization)*

B
back up (verb) *(1.5, Compounds)*
backup (noun/adj.) *(1.5, Compounds)*
bestseller *(1.5, Compounds)*
bestselling *(1.5, Compounds)*
biannual / biennial *(appendix B)*
bimonthy *(appendix B)*
biweekly *(appendix B)*
Black (when used in a racial, ethnic or cultural sense)
black-and-white (adj.) *(1.5.2, Compounds)*
black-market (adj.) *(1.5.2, Compounds)*
black market (noun) *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
book signing *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
branch chief *(1.4.5, Capitalization)*
brothers-in-law *(1.10, Plurals)*
bureau-wide *(1.5, Compounds)*

C
Cabinet (of the United States) *(1.4.4, Capitalization)*
capital (state or national) *(1.4.4, Capitalization)*
Capitol, U.S. (building) *(1.4.1, Capitalization)*
catalog (not catalogue)
Catalog (capitalized alone when referring to the National Archives Catalog)
Charters of Freedom (Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of
Rights)
chiefs of staff *(1.10, Plurals)*
codename *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
Communist/communist *(1.4.4, Capitalization)*
Confederate and Union (when referring to the Civil War) *(1.4.2, Capitalization)*
congressional *(1.4, Capitalization)*
cost-effective *(1.5.2, Compounds)*
constitutional
cost-of-living (adj.) *(1.5.2, Compounds)*
cost of living (noun) *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
courthouse *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
court(s)-martial (noun) *(1.10, Plurals)*
co-worker *(1.5.1, Prefixes)*
cross-reference (adj. and noun) *(1.5.2, Compounds)*
cross reference (verb) *(1.5, Compounds)*
customhouse *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
cutoff (adj. and noun) *(1.5, Compounds)*
cut off (verb) *(1.5, Compounds)*

D
data *(1.10 Plurals)*
D-Day (June 6, 1944)
decision-making (adj. and noun) *(1.5.2, Compounds)*
deck log *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
Deputy Archivist *(1.4, Capitalization)*
dialogue
division director *(1.4.5, Capitalization)*

E
eBook *(1.5.1, Prefixes)*
e-commerce *(1.5.1, Prefixes)*
e-government *(1.5.1, Prefixes)*
Electoral College *(1.4.4, Capitalization)*
email *(1.5.1, Prefixes)*
Executive Order 9066 (but an executive order) *(1.4, Capitalization)*
E.O. (abbreviation for a specific executive order, as in E.O. 10101) *(1.1.4, Abbreviations)*
ERA (Electronic Records Archives)

F
fall (season) *(1.4, Capitalization)*
fax
Federal *(1.4, Capitalization)*
fiscal year 2018/the fiscal year *(1.4.4, Capitalization)*
floorplans *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
focusing focused
follow-up (adj. and noun) *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
follow up (verb) *(1.5, Compounds)*
formulas
Foundation (referring to Foundation for the National Archives) *(1.4, Capitalization)*
free enterprise (adj. and noun) *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
freethinking *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
fundraiser *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
fundraising (adj. and noun) *(1.5.3, Compounds)*

G
general counsels *(1.10, Plurals)*
government-wide (U.S.) *(1.5, Compounds)*
grants-in-aid *(1.10, Plurals)*
Great Depression *(1.4, Capitalization)*
Great Society *(1.4, Capitalization)*

H
higher-ups *(1.10, Plurals)*
high-level (adj.) *(1.5.2, Compounds)*

home page *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
homefront *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
House Minority Leader *(1.4.5, Capitalization)*
hypotheses *(1.10, Plurals)*

I
indexes (general) *(1.10, Plurals)*
indices (scientific) *(1.10, Plurals)*
inhouse *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
inspectors general *(1.10, Plurals)*
interagency *(1.5.1, Compounds)*
internet *(1.12, Technology-related terms)*
interoffice *(1.5.1, Compounds)*
intranet *(1.12, Technology-related terms)*

J
judgment (not judgement)

K
knowledgeable

L
labor force (adj. and noun) *(1.5, Compounds)*
landowner *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
levelheaded *(1.5, Compounds)*
LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer +)
Library (e.g., the Reagan Library, the Presidential Library) *(1.4, Capitalization)*
life cycle (noun) *(1.5,2, Compounds)*
life-cycle (adj.) *(1.5,2, Compounds)*
life insurance *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
lifesaving *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
livestream (verb and noun) *(1.12, Technology-related terms)*
logbook *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
login (adj. and noun) *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
log in (verb) *(1.5, Compounds)*
logon (adj. and noun) *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
log on (verb) *(1.5, Compounds)*
long-term (adj.) *(1.5.2, Compounds)*
longtime (adj.) *(1.5, Compounds)*
loose (not tight)
lose (the opposite of "win")

M
McGowan Theater (William G. McGowan Theater; *1.8, NARA References*)
major generals *(1.10, Plurals)*
Manhattan Project *(1.4, Capitalization)*
manmade *(1.5, Compounds)*

matrices *(1.10, Plurals)*
memorandums (not memoranda) *(1.10, Plurals)*
midair *(1.5.1, Compounds)*
mid-term (adj.) *(1.5.1, Compounds)*
midterm (noun) *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
mid-twenties (age) *(1.4, Capitalization; 1.5.1, Compounds; 1.9, Numbers)*
mid-seventies (decade) *(4.4, Capitalization; 1.5.1, Compounds; 1.9, Numbers)*
millennia *(1.10, Plurals)*
minefield *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
multivolume *(1.5.1, Compounds)*

N
NARA home page *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
NARA@work (NARA's intranet for staff)
NARANET *(1.4, Capitalization)*
NARA Notice 2000-001 *(1.4.3, Capitalization)*
NARA Notice *(1.4.3, Capitalization)*
NARA-wide *(1.5, Compounds)*
nation (The President will address the nation tonight) *(1.4.1, Capitalization)*
nationwide *(1.5, Compounds)*
National Archives and Records Administration *(1.8, NARA References)*
National Archives Building *(1.8, NARA References)*
National Archives at College Park *(1.8, NARA References)*
National Archives Experience *(1.8, NARA References)*
National Archives Trust Fund (Trust Fund) *(1.4, Capitalization)*
Native Americans *(1.5.5., Compounds)*
neoclassical *(1.5.1, Compounds)*
New Deal *(1.4, Capitalization)*
next-of-kin (noun) *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
noncurrent *(1.5.1, Compounds)*
nonfederal *(1.5.1, Compounds)*
non-government *(1.5.1, Compounds)*
non-NARA *(1.5.1, Compounds)*
North and South (when referring to the Civil War) *(1.4, Capitalization)*
notice *(1.4.3, Capitalization)*

O
executive *(1.4.5, Capitalization)* off-limits (adj.) *(1.5.2, Compounds)*
off-site *(1.5, Compounds)*
off-the-shelf (adj.) *(1.5.2, Compounds)*
ongoing *(1.5, Compounds)*
online *(1.5, Compounds)*
on-site *(4.5 Compounds)*
out-of-print (adj.) *(1.5.2, Compounds)*

P
pagemaster *(1.5.3, Compounds)*

part-time (adj.) *(1.5.2, Compounds)*
passbooks *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
percent *(1.5, Compounds)*
phenomena *(1.10, Plurals)*
plateaus (not plateaux) *(1.10, Plurals)*
postwar *(1.5, Compounds)*
pre-existing *(1.5.1, Compounds)*
preprint *(1.5.1, Compounds)*
present-day (adj.) *(1.5.2, Compounds)*
present day (noun) *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
Presidency *(1.4, Capitalization)*
Presidential *(1.4, Capitalization)*
pre-war *(1.5.1, Compounds)*
prisoner-of-war (adj.) *(1.5.2, Compounds)*
prisoner of war (noun) *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
private-sector (adj.) *(1.5.2, Compounds)*
private sector (noun) *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
problem solver (noun) *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
problem solving (noun) *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
problem-solving (adj.) *(1.5.2, Compounds)*
public law (generic sense, as in a Public law . . .) *(1.4, Capitalization)*
Public Law (a particular law, as in Public Law 89-1) *(1.4, Capitalization)*
Pub. L. (abbreviation for a particular law, as in Pub. L. 89-1) *(1.1.4, Citations)*
Public Vaults *(1.8, NARA References)*

R
Record Group ## *(1.4, Capitalization)*
record group *(1.4, Capitalization)*
record keeper *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
recordkeeping *(1.5, Compounds)*
Records Center Revolving Fund (Revolving Fund) *(1.4, Capitalization)*
reduction in force *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
re-encasing *(1.5.1, Compounds)*
reengineering *(1.5.1, Compounds)*
reexamine *(1.5.1, Compounds)*
requester (not requestor)
Research Center (at the National Archives Building, *1.8, NARA References)*
rights-of-way *(1.10, Plurals)*
risk-taking (adj. and noun) *(1.5.2, Compounds)*
rollout (noun) *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
room 410, the research room
Room (Archivist's Reception Room, Central Research Room) *(1.4 Capitalization)*
Rotunda (the National Archives Building and U.S. Capitol) *(1.4, Capitalization)*
roundtrip *(1.5, Compounds)*

S
security-classified (adj.) *(1.5.2, Compounds)*

self-government *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
Senate (at the national level) *(1.4.4, Capitalization)*
senate (at the state level) *(1.4.4, Capitalization)*
Senior Executives *(1.4.5, Capitalization)*
set-aside (noun) *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
sixties, seventies (when referring to the decade) *(1.6, Dates; Numbers, 1.9)*
South and North (when referring to the Civil War) *(1.4, Capitalization)*
Speaker of the House *(1.4.5, Capitalization)*
spring (season) *(1.4, Capitalization)*
Standard Form 115 (SF 115) *(1.4.3, Capitalization)*
Standard Form 115s (SF 115s) *(1.10, Plurals)* subsection *(1.5.1, Compounds)*
Strategic Goal (when used to name Strategic Goal 1, etc.)
strategic goals
Strategic Plan (when used to name the official NARA Strategic Plan)
strategic plan (when referring to "a" strategic plan)
summer (season) *(1.4, Capitalization)*
symposiums *(1.10, Plurals)*

T
time-consuming (adj.) *(1.5.2, Compounds)*
timeline *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
tableaus (not tableaux) *(1.10, Plurals)*
theses *(1.10, Plurals)*

U
under way (adverb) *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
Union and Confederate (when referring to the Civil War) *(1.4.2, Capitalization)*
up-to-date report *(1.5.2, Compounds)*
usable (not useable)

V
Vice President (of the United States) *(1.4.5, Capitalization)*
vice president (generic, a vice president) *(1.4.5, Capitalization)*
Vice-Presidential *(1.4, Capitalization)*
videocassette *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
videotape *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
voicemail (*1.12, Technology-related terms*)

W
wartime *(1.5, Compounds)*
war-torn *(1.5.2, Compounds)*
waterways *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
weather and safety leave
web *(1.12, Technology-related terms)*
web address *(1.12, Technology-related terms)*
webmaster *(1.12, Technology-related terms)*
web page *(1.12, Technology-related terms)*

website (noun) *(1.12, Technology-related terms)*
well-known (adj.) *(1.5.2, Compounds)*
White (when used in a racial, ethnic or cultural sense)
winter (season) *(1.4, Capitalization)*
workday/working day *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
workforce *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
work hours *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
workplace *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
worksheet *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
workstation *(1.5.3, Compounds)*
World Wide Web *(1.12, Technology-related terms)*
worldwide *(1.5, Compounds)*

X
X-ray (adj.) *(1.5.2, Compounds)*
X ray (noun) *(1.5.3, Compounds)*