Editorial and Style Guidelines
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Sound Transit style guidelines

Sound Transit's Communications Department compiled this style guide to maintain a high-quality standard across all agency communications. Whether producing materials for the public or employees, it is important for grammar, naming and style conventions, voice, usage, tone and design elements to remain consistent across flyers, brochures, newsletters and other written communications.

Communications asks all employees who write for the agency to follow these Associated Press Stylebook-based guidelines for the following reasons:

- AP style is the commonly accepted journalistic standard for usage, spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- As the standard style guide for most U.S. newspapers, magazines and public relations firms, readers have familiarity with this style.

Having a style guide for the agency isn’t about simply following rules. Communications, Marketing & Engagement is working to make publications at Sound Transit as clear and consistent as possible. There are times when AP (even Merriam-Webster) guidelines are
awkward, do not fit the goals of a Sound Transit publication or are inconsistent with transit industry standards, so this style guide contains a few customized exceptions.

As a living document, this guide will receive periodic updates. Please contact the department if you have additional style or grammar questions we can address in future editions.

Please email employeecommunications@soundtransit.org if you have style guideline questions or additional entries you would like to see in future updates.
Corporate and service mode information
Use the following when preparing external and internal publications or reports:

Fonts

Arial: Words communicate, and so do typefaces, which offer up subtle visual cues to frame our messages and reinforce our identity. Arial is Sound Transit’s universal typeface — available to all. Use Arial or Arial Black when creating communication materials and templates in Microsoft Office and Adobe Creative.

Logos

Sound Transit logo: Include the Sound Transit logo on all publications or reports, preferably on the first page. Graphic files for download and guidelines are available here.

Program logos: Individual program and service line logos (Link light rail, Sounder and ST Express regional bus) are for use only on signage and equipment.

Use of agency and service names:

Sound Transit: Two words. Do not write using all capital letters. Don’t abbreviate to ST in public documents. Use our legal name — The Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority — in contracts, board resolutions and actions. All other public documents should use Sound Transit.
Use Link or Link trains, depending on context. Avoid using the term ‘light rail’ in public-facing communications. Prior to September 2021, Link when used alone refers to service from UW–Angle Lake, and Tacoma Link refers to service between Tacoma Dome and the Theater District. As of September 2021, Link is an umbrella brand covering current and future light rail service, including the 1 Line and T Line, and future 2, 3 and 4 lines. Do not use LINK, Link, or “Link” or any combination of caps, italics or quotation marks. When sparingly using ‘light rail,’ do not hyphenate, even when used as a compound adjective. (Wrong: *They delivered light-rail cars to Tacoma in September 2002.*) Avoid referring to Tacoma Link/T Line as a streetcar. Avoid the acronyms LRT and LRV. Refer to vehicles as cars or rail vehicles and refer to a set of linked cars as a train. See project names.

Refer to as Sounder or Sounder trains, depending on context. Avoid use of “commuter rail” as much as possible. Do not use SOUNDER, Sounder, “Sounder,” or any combination of caps, italics or quotation marks. Prior to September 2021, Sounder North referred to service running from Everett to Seattle; Sounder South referred to service from Seattle to Lakewood. Do not use North Sounder, South Sounder, Sounder north line or Sounder south line. Sounder North is now the N Line and Sounder South is now the S Line.

Use Stride or Stride buses, depending on context. Use the term “bus rapid transit” sparingly, especially in public-facing communication. Stride routes will have alphanumeric line names beginning with the prefix S followed by a line number. The S1 Line will serve Bellevue – Burien, the S2 Line will serve Lynnwood – Bellevue and the S3 Line will serve Shoreline – Bothell. Stride and ST Express are not interchangeable. Stride buses have lines, not routes, whereas ST Express buses have routes, not lines. We will develop more guidance as the lines get closer to opening, beginning in 2024.
Use ST Express or ST Express buses, depending on context. Do not use ST EXPRESS, *ST Express* or “ST Express.” Do not use older terms such as “regional bus” or REX in any context.

ST: Refer to as the Sound Transit Art Program on first reference and ST (with “art” italicized, no space) on later references.

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**Standard statements**

For inclusion in printed materials prepared for broad distribution to the public and/or employees:

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**Sound Transit mission statement:**
Connecting more people to more places to make life better and create equitable opportunities for all.

**Address/phone/internet:**
Sound Transit Union Station, 401 S. Jackson St. Seattle, WA 98104-2826, 800-201-4900 / 888-889-6368 / TTY: 711, main@soundtransit.org. soundtransit.org.

**Contact information:**
**General** – For information about Sound Transit projects or services, visit us online at soundtransit.org or call 800-201-4900 / TTY: 711. Sign up for service alerts and other updates at soundtransit.org/subscribe.
Project – For more information about [insert project/service/topic], contact [insert contact name] at [insert phone] or [insert email]. Or visit us online at soundtransit.org.

Rider information – For [insert Sounder, ST Express or Link light rail] rider information, call toll free 888-889-6368 / TTY: 711 or visit soundtransit.org.

ADA statement:
For information in alternative formats, call 800-201-4900 / TTY: 711 (do not use TTY Relay) or email accessibility@soundtransit.org.
Please direct requests for an accommodation to participate in a public meeting to the organizers of the meeting. For assistance, contact Accessible Services Manager Donna Smith at 206-370-5534.

Construction hotline:
If you have concerns or complaints about construction activities, please call the 24-Hour Construction Hotline at 888-298-2395.

Web subscription:
To receive email updates about this project, subscribe online at soundtransit.org.

Title VI, translation requirements, foreign language block

Title VI comments:
Sound Transit operates its programs and services without regard to race, color or national origin in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. Any person who believes they have been unlawfully discriminated against for these reasons may file a complaint with Sound Transit.

Obtain more information on Sound Transit’s Title VI Policy and the procedures to file a complaint via one of the following:
• Calling 888-889-6368; TTY: 711.
• Emailing stdiscriminationcomplaint@soundtransit.org.
• Visiting our offices located at 401 S. Jackson St. Seattle, WA 98104.
File a complaint directly with the Federal Transit Administration Office of Civil Rights, Attention: Complaint Team, East Building, fifth floor – TCR, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE, Washington, DC 20590 or call 888-446-4511.

If you have questions about Title VI regulations, please contact Senior Title VI Specialist Mitzi McMahan (mitzi.mcmahan@soundtransit.org).

**Determining languages for translation and interpretation** (Title VI requirement)

Limited English proficiency (LEP) persons must receive equal access to information. This includes, at minimum, the translation of vital agency documents — such as risk claims, ADA requests for reasonable modification, procedures/policies, notice of rights, and Title VI complaint forms and process — into the most prevalent LEP language groups in the Sound Transit District, as outlined in the Title VI Program. These languages are Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Tagalog and Russian. In the early planning/outreach phase, staff determine, through GIS data, investigation and work with the community, where there is a need for translation and/or interpretation services, and which languages are prevalent. In consideration of your target audience, translation into additional languages can take place upon request.

Geographic Information Systems staff are available to provide data to help determine LEP persons in the project area. Contact GIS Specialist Charlie Morton, Charlie.morton@soundtransit.org, or GIS Administrator Mike Strong, mike.strong@soundtransit.org, for further assistance.

**Translation requirements for limited English proficiency persons**

**Foreign language block and symbol (Title VI requirements)**

For key community, project specific materials and rider alerts, you must use a foreign language block and symbol to convey a sentence or two about key messaging. The symbol should not take the place of a language block; it should accompany the language block.
Sample foreign language block text
“For information about <insert key messaging topic here> please call the language line (Language Link) at 800-823-9230.”
For current schedules, visit soundtransit.org/reduced-service or call the language line at 800-823-9230.”

How to use the language line: The caller must identify the language they seek to the customer service representative, who then conferences in a translator. A three-way call will take place between the person requesting help, the translator and the customer service representative.

English:
For information about a project or transportation service, please call the language line (Language Link) at 800-823-9230.

Spanish: (Arial Unicode)
Para obtener información sobre el proyecto, llame al 800-823-9230.

Chinese: (Arial Unicode)
欲知關於此項目的資訊，請致電 800-823-9230.

Korean: (Arial Unicode)
프로젝트에 관한 정보를 위해, 1-800-823-9230로 전화 부탁드립니다.

Japanese: (Arial Unicode)
プロジェクトについて情報が必要な方は 1-800-823-9230までお電話ください。

Russian: (Arial Unicode)
За информацией об этом проекте обращайтесь по телефону 800-823-9230.

Ukranian: (Arial Unicode)
За інформацією щодо проекту звертайтеся за телефоном 800-823-9230.

**Tagalog:** (Arial Unicode)
Para sa impormasyon tungkol sa proyektong ito, tumawag sa 800-823-9230.

**Somali:** (Arial Unicode)
Wixii macluumaad ah ee mashruuca ku saabsan, lahadal 800-823-9230.

**Vietnamese:** (Arial Unicode)
Để biết thông tin về dự án, hãy gọi số 800-823-9230.

**Amharic:** (Nyala with Arial phone #)
ይህንን ፕሮጀክት በተመለከተ ለተጨማሪ መረጃ በ 800-823-9230 ይደውሉ፡፡

**Arabic** *(Times Roman with Arial phone #)*
للحصول على معلومات بشأن المشروع، يُرجى الاتصال على الرقم التالي: 800-823-9230.

**Khmer** *(Khmer Sangam MN with Arial phone #)*
ស្រប់ព័ត៌នអំពីគេ្រងសូមេលខ 800-823-9230.

From Google translate:

**Tigrinya:** (Kefa with Arial phone #)
ስለ እቲ ፕሮጀክት ሓበሬታ ንምርካብ ቅዱስ ቍጽሪ 800-823-9230 ይደውሉ.

Complete the translation request form located on the *Communication department’s Hub team site* and submit to *Community Engagement Coordinator Stormie Beyers*. Please allow at least three to four weeks for completion of translations. You can make expedited requests; however, such requests may incur an additional fee.
If you have questions about which languages you need to include, please contact Senior Equity & Inclusion Specialist Nicole Hill at nicole.hill@soundtransit.org.

Interpreter requests
Arrange interpreters with sufficient notice by contacting stormie.beyers@soundtransit.org.

Dos and don’ts for writing well

Showing vs. telling
Don’t write: XYZ department is excited to present the class! This is “showing” rather than descriptively “telling.” Instead of telling readers to be excited, do this: Write the sentence in a way that makes the class sound exciting. XYZ department presents Transit Training, an interactive experience that will equip you to get the most out of your transit experience and enjoy your commute.

Unbury that lead
Do put your news into the first two lines. People skim, especially online. If you put the most important information at the end of your piece (say the fact this piece of news includes a class, and you need to register by a certain deadline at ST University), some will never get there. Summarize what folks will read in your article with your headline and subheadline. Make these elements as compelling as possible to get people to read but know that if they don’t read beyond the headline and subheadline, at least they will get your basic message.

Use active vs. passive voice
Use active voice whenever possible. A verb is active when it shows that the subject acts or does something: The woman caught the bus. The council passed the resolution unanimously. A verb is passive when the subject of the verb is acted upon: The bus was caught by the woman. The resolution was passed unanimously by the council. The active voice is simpler, more direct, more forceful and makes the subject take responsibility for actions. There may be times when the passive voice is appropriate, however. If the effect is more important than the actor, then passive voice is OK. Just make sure to only use it when it’s appropriate. More than 2 million people were diagnosed with cancer in the U.S. this year. The championship ball had been thrown a total of 72 times in its short career.
Avoid creating ‘alphabet soup’
Don’t introduce a term with its acronym. Do write it out the first time, and if the name or term will not appear again, there is no need for the acronym to appear next to the term in parentheses. If you do plan to use term/name again, just introduce the acronym the next time you use the term. The only time you need to put the acronym in parentheses next to the term is if the acronym would not be easily recognizable if appearing elsewhere.

Use plain language or plain talk over jargon
Say it simply and unpretentiously. Adapted the following from somewhere: “Simplicity doesn’t mean you are simple. If writing is thinking on paper, simplicity means your mind is uncluttered.”

Don’t be redundant
COVID-19 is not a global pandemic. A pandemic is an epidemic that has gone global. There are many places where you can omit words you have already implied. For example, if you have a sentence that says, “including …and more,” drop the “and more” because you have already said there are more by the use of the word “including.” In their classic “The Elements of Style,” William Strunk and E.B. White wrote, “Omit needless words.” The lesson: Avoid using three words when you can say it with one.

10 rules for writing for the web
People read web content differently than they do printed publications. A few things to keep in mind when putting web content together are simplicity, skimming ability and white space.

1. Write short — make every word count: You are not a writer now; you are an information provider. Write 50% shorter than you would for print. Paragraphs no more than three or four sentences. CUT lead-ins, CUT introductions for table of contents. Shorten intros for lists or
2. Assume people will scan and help them: Write for scanners by using bullet points, “five ways to” or steps in a process. Break the information down into components.

3. Write functional, explanatory headlines: Headlines are very important online, in fact, they may be all people read. Be functional and tell the reader exactly what information is going to follow. Give yourself some time to write great headlines with active verbs: Specific subject + dynamic active verb + specific object. Only capitalize the first word of a headline and proper nouns. A comma can replace “and” in headlines. You can use numerals in headlines, such as: 5 ways to catch a phish

4. Use simple, clear, objective language whenever possible. Objective language is fair and accurate; it avoids exaggeration and bias and shows respect for the views of others. Everyday language, opinions and marketing text are subjective. If someone is using subjective language, they may include words such as delicious, interesting, horrible, which are opinions. This is also the difference between “showing” and “telling.” Instead of telling your reader the event is exciting, use language that will make your reader want to attend your event. The fact that you are excited means nothing to the reader. They want to know what’s in it for them.

5. Use white space strategically: No large blocks of text. The amount of white space is more important than the length of your story. If a story is long, use subheadings to help break up blocks of text.

6. Use the inverted pyramid style: Include the most important information first. Scanners who read just the first screen will get all the important information.

7. Use hyperlinks properly: Empower readers to decide how much information they want. Give people a jumping-off point. Do not duplicate what is already on the web.

8. Limit your use of graphics; select graphics carefully to illustrate and clarify content. Be careful not to crowd text or dilute messages with overuse of images. To the extent possible, only use graphics or photos produced by the Communications, Marketing & Engagement tables.
9. Do not make web stories look like print stories: The eye still follows the gaze of the subject in the picture, but it generally moves differently when looking at a webpage. Avoid graphics in the middle of a webpage or complex sidebars.

10. Update when it makes sense: Webpage content changes at different times. It depends on the amount of detail provided online and how quickly decisions and changes occur in projects. (Update triggers: A mailer, ad or event that drives people to your portion of the web, a news article surrounding your subject matter, or a major change in a service or project.)

Style guide entries

A

a, an Use the article a before consonant sounds: a historic event, a one-year term (sounds as if it begins with a w), a united stand (sounds like you). Use the article an before vowel sounds: an energy crisis, an honorable man (the h is silent), an NBA record (sounds like it begins with the latter e), an 1890s celebration.

abbreviations and acronyms

- Do not use an abbreviation or acronym that the reader would not recognize quickly. When in doubt, spell it out.
- Avoid following the name of an organization, project or program with an abbreviation or acronym in parentheses or set off by dashes; Associated Press style never places an acronym in parentheses. Not: State Department of Ecology (DOE). If the abbreviation or acronym would not be clear to readers on second reference without a parenthetical introduction, avoid using it. Instead, use a shortened version of the name or a generic word, such as the agency, the committee, the department or the company.
- Omit periods in most abbreviations unless the result spells an unrelated word: M.A.N. built the buses. There are exceptions to this rule.
- You may use many abbreviations in tabulations, certain types of technical writing, and internal reports and documents.
- If the meaning is clear, you may use abbreviations in headlines and headings.
- States (Read more under *state names*):
  - Avoid using state abbreviations in headlines whenever possible.
  - Abbreviations of states DO NOT use postal codes.
  - Always spell out the following states in datelines or text: Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas and Utah.

**academic degrees**

- If mention of a degree is necessary to establish someone’s credentials, the preferred form is to avoid abbreviation and use instead a phrase such as *John Jones, who has a doctorate in psychology*.
- Capitalize an academic major only if the discipline is a proper noun. *She holds a master’s in French literature. Bachelor of Arts in English. Doctor of Pharmacy degree.*
- Use an apostrophe in *bachelor’s degree, a master’s*, etc., but there is no possessive in *Bachelor of Arts or Master of Science*. Also: *an associate degree* (no possessive).
- Use such abbreviations as *B.A., M.A., LL.D.* and *Ph.D.* only when the need to identify many individuals by degree on first reference would make the preferred form cumbersome. Use these abbreviations only after a full name — never after just a last name.
- When used after a name, set an academic abbreviation off by commas: *John Snow, Ph.D., spoke.*
- Do not precede a name with a courtesy title for an academic degree and follow it with the abbreviation for the degree in the same reference. Not: *Dr. John Snow, Ph.D.*

**academic offices, departments** Formally named academic offices are generally capitalized. AP would lowercase advertising communications program in a news story, even though a school might capitalize it.

**accident, collision** Avoid the words *accident* or *crash* when referring to collisions between buses, trains, people walking and people cycling. *Accident* implies that the event is unavoidable and implies a lack of fault by any party. Overuse of *accident* can minimize or trivialize injuries or fatalities. Also, two objects must be in motion to collide. A moving train cannot collide with a stopped train. Use *collision* with caution.

**active vs. passive verbs** Use active voice whenever possible. A verb is active when it shows that the subject acts or does something: *The woman caught the bus. The council passed the resolution unanimously.* A verb is passive when the subject of the verb is acted upon: *The bus
was caught by the woman. The resolution was passed unanimously by the council. The active voice is simpler, more direct, more forceful and makes the subject take responsibility for actions. Change: Sounder riders were impacted by mudslides on Monday to Mudslides delayed and canceled Sounder trains on Monday. Also, avoid shifts between active and passive within a sentence. Change: Tommy was painting a few pictures when he ran to the window and cried out to While painting, Tommy heard a noise outside and ran to the window. There may be times when the passive voice is appropriate, however. If the effect is more important than the actor, then passive voice is OK. Just make sure to only use it when it’s appropriate. More than 2 million people were diagnosed with cancer in the U.S. this year. The championship ball had been thrown a total of 72 times in its short career.

actually Vague, overused, nearly always superfluous. Avoid. Change: They actually finished the project on time. To: They finished the project on time.

directives

addresses

- Always use numerals for an address number: She lived at 531 Pine Rd.
- Spell out and capitalize First through Ninth when used as a street name: The bus drove down Second Avenue.
- Use numerals with two letters for 10th and above: She lived on 22nd Street.
- Always spell out and capitalize the full name of a street, avenue, road or boulevard when used without a number: He lived on South Washington Street, Pennsylvania Avenue. You may leave off the words, street, avenue, road and boulevard on later references.
- Lowercase street, avenue, boulevard or road when using the plural form: The Bellevue Transit Center is between 108th and 110th avenues northeast on Northeast Sixth Street. Uppercase those words when the form is not plural: You can catch a bus on Second or Third Avenue. Also, lowercase and spell out street, avenue, boulevard or road when used alone: He drove down the tree-lined boulevard.
- Abbreviate compass points (all caps and periods) used to show directional ends of a street or quadrants of a city in a numbered address: The building is at 543 N.W. 252nd St. Exception: Omit periods in compass points for ST maps, postcards and project folios.
- Do not abbreviate if omitting the number: The building is on Northwest 252nd Street.
- Abbreviate only avenue, boulevard and street as Ave., Blvd. and St. when used with a numbered address: Sound Transit is located at 401 S. Jackson St., 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. Or when part of a station name: Tukwila International Blvd. Station.
- It is acceptable to abbreviate street names in tables or on maps. You may also eliminate periods in directions on maps and ST postcards (more information on this ST-specific rule is coming.) Exception to the rule about spelling out directional names without an address: **MLK Jr. Way S.** or in a folio, **MLK Jr Way S.**

- Always spell out words such as alley, drive, road, way and terrace. Capitalize them when part of a formal name: **He worked on Holman Road Northwest.** Lowercase when used alone or with two or more names: **The crew will repave Holman and Somerset roads.**

- Exceptions: You can use abbreviations in situations when there are foreseeable restraints in the size of the copy. These exceptions are in maps, signage and if the abbreviated form is the official name of the center or station.

**administration** (presidential) It is the Biden administration (lowercase a). Reason (per AP Stylebook): It is lowercase as a descriptive, collective term for the executive branch of government. The lowercase usage helps differentiate it from the formal names of various U.S. agencies, including the Federal Housing Administration, Food and Drug Administration and National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

**adviser** The AP Stylebook uses **adviser,** which is the older and preferred spelling. Sound Transit writers should stick with **adviser** in text, but know that in the U.S. it is common to see **advisor** as part of official titles, so only use that spelling if it is in the person’s title. **Advisory** is correct in all usages.

**affect, effect** Often misused or confused. Usually used as a verb, affect means "to influence, to have an effect on." **Construction will affect Link service.** Avoid using the noun version of affect (pronounced AFF-ect) from the field of psychology: **The gambler’s flat, emotionless affect served him well at the poker table.** Effect is usually a noun, meaning "result" or "consequence." **The total effect of the project was disappointing.** Effect is sometimes used as a verb, meaning "to cause, to bring about, to produce." **She will effect many changes in the group.** But use those other simpler, clearer terms instead. Use **impact** sparingly. Do not use impacted.

**agency** Lowercase when standing alone or not the first word in a sentence. **The agency broke ground on the Lynnwood Link Extension.** See **government bodies, capitalization.**
ages For ages, always use figures. If the age appears as an adjective or as a substitute for a noun, then hyphenate. Don’t use apostrophes when describing an age range. Examples: A 21-year-old student. The student is 21 years old. The girl, 8, has a brother, 11. The contest is for 18-year-olds. He is in his 20s.

alignment The horizontal and vertical path followed by a rail line, busway, transitway or other public work. For public-facing documents, use route or route and station locations instead. Alignment is fine for technical documents.

annual Avoid the term “first annual.”

annual meeting Lowercase in all uses.

anti- Hyphenate anti-racism (also these exceptions to Webster’s spellings: anti-abortion, anti-aircraft, anti-labor, anti-social, anti-war. Hyphenate all except the following words, which have specific meanings of their own: antibiotic, antibody, anticlimax, anticoagulant, antidepressant, antidote, antifreeze, antigen, antihistamine, antiknock, antimatter, antimony, antioxidant, antiparticle*, antipasto, antiperspirant, antiphon, antiphony, antipollution, antipsychotic, antiseptic, antiserum, antithesis, antitoxin, antitrust, antitussive. *And similar terms in physics such as antiproton.

anytime vs. any time Anytime is an adverb that means “whenever” or “at any time.” Call me anytime. When in doubt, write any time as two words, which is what writers used to do. It might look a little old-fashioned, but it will not be wrong. If you are not sure if you are using anytime as an adverb, try substituting some other adverb like “quickly or “loudly.” “My new bicycle allows me to go anywhere quickly. If the adverb works, then it’s OK to make anytime one word.

- If you are using a preposition like at, you have to make it two words. They could call at any time.
- Use two words if talking about an amount of time: Do you have any time to speak to us today?

AP Acceptable on second reference for The Associated Press. On second reference use AP or the AP (only capitalize the article when using the formal name).
apostrophes (’). Follow these guidelines:

- **Plural nouns not ending in s** Add ‘s: the alumni’s contributions, women’s rights
- **Plural nouns ending in s** Add only an apostrophe: the churches’ needs, the girls’ toys, the horses’ food, the ships’ wake, states’ rights, the VIPs’ entrance.

- **Singular nouns not ending in s** Add ‘s: the church’s needs, the girl’s toys, the horse’s food, the ship’s route, the VIP’s seat. Some style guides say that singular nouns ending in s sounds such as ce, x, and z may take either the apostrophe alone or ‘s. See special expressions below, but otherwise, for consistency and ease in remembering a rule, always use ‘s if the word does not end in the letter s: Butz’s policies, the fox’s den, the justice’s verdict, Marx’s theories, the prince’s life, Xerox’s profits.
- **Singular common nouns ending in s** Add ‘s (a change from previous guidance calling for just an apostrophe if the next word begins with s): the hostess’s invitation, the witness’s answer.
- **Singular proper names ending in s** Use only an apostrophe: Achilles’ heel, Agnes’ book, Descartes’ theories, Dickens’ novels, Euripides’ dramas, Kansas’ schools, Tennessee Williams’ plays. (An exception is St. James’s Palace.)

- **Special expressions** The following exceptions to the general rule for words not ending in s apply to words that end in an s sound and are followed by a word that begins with s: for appearance’ sake, for conscience’ sake, for goodness’ sake. Use ‘s otherwise: the appearance’s cost, my conscience’s voice.
- **Pronouns** Personal interrogative and relative pronouns have separate forms for the possessive. None involves an apostrophe: mine, ours, your, yours, his, hers, its, theirs, whose. Caution: If you are using an apostrophe with a pronoun, always double-check to be sure that the meaning calls for a contraction: you’re (you are), it’s (it is), there’s (there is), who’s (who is).
- **Joint possession versus individual possession** Use a possessive form after only the last word if ownership is joint: Fred and Sylvia’s apartment, Fred and Sylvia’s stocks. Use a possessive form after both words if the objects are individually owned: Fred’s and Sylvia’s books.
- **Descriptive phrases** Do not add an apostrophe to a word ending in s when it is used primarily in a descriptive sense. Memory aid: The apostrophe usually is not used if for or by rather than of would be appropriate in the longer form: citizens band radio (a radio band for citizens), a Cincinnati Reds infielder (an infielder for the Reds), a teachers college (a college for teachers), a Teamsters request (a request by the Teamsters), a writers guide (a guide for writers). An ‘s is required, however, when a term involves a plural word that does not end in s: a children’s hospital, a people’s republic, the Young Men’s Christian Association.
- **Double possessive** Two conditions must apply for a double possessive — a phrase such as *a friend of John's* — to occur: 1. The word after *of* must refer to an animate object, and 2. The word before *of* must involve only a portion of the animate object's possessions. Otherwise, do not use the possessive form of the word after *of*: *The friends of John Adams mourned his death.* (All the friends were involved.) *He is a friend of the college.* (Not *college's*, because *college* is inanimate). Memory aid: This construction occurs most often, and quite naturally, with the possessive forms of personal pronouns: *He is a friend of mine.*

- **Omitted letters** Use an apostrophe, curving clockwise around your missing letters, to create a contraction: *I've, it's, don't, 'tis the season to be jolly.* *He is a ne'er-do-well.*

- **Omitted figures** Use an apostrophe, curving clockwise around your missing numerals: *The class of '62.* *The Spirit of '76.* *The '20s.*

- **Plurals of a single letter** Mind your *p's and q's.* *He learned the three R's and brought home a report card with four A's and two B's.* *The Oakland A's won the pennant.* Do not use for plurals of numerals or multiple-letter combinations: *She knows her ABCs.* *I gave him five IOUs.* *Four VIPs were there.*

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**at-grade** Describing a junction or intersection where two or more transport axes cross at the same level (or grade). See *hyphens.*

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**B**

**backward** Not backwards.

**baiku** Sound Transit's Bicycle Program uses this to mean bike-related haiku, which is a Japanese verse form, rendered in English as three unrhymed lines of 5, 7 and 5 syllables respectively (total 17 syllables), often on some subject in nature. (Singular and plural)

**beside, besides** Often confused. Beside means "at the side of" or "next to." Besides means "also, in addition to or other than." See *in addition to.*

**biannual, biennial** Biannual means twice a year and is a synonym for the word semiannual. Biennial means every two years.
books, periodicals, reference works and other types of compositions

- Use quotation marks around the titles of books, songs, television shows, computer games, poems, lectures, speeches and works of art.
  
  *Author Porter Shreve read from his new book, “When the White House Was Ours.” They sang “The Star-Spangled Banner” before the game.*

- Do not use quotations around the names of magazine, newspapers, the Bible or books that are catalogues of reference materials.
  
  *The Washington Post first reported the story. He reads the Bible every morning.*

- Do not underline or italicize any of the above (the use of italics is to indicate examples).

bulleted lists, lists AP uses em dashes (which are the width of a capital M) instead of bullets to introduce individual sections of a list; others may choose to use bullets. Put a space between the dash or bullet and the first word of each item in the list. Capitalize the first word following the dash or bullet. Use periods, not semicolons, at the end of each section, whether it is a full sentence or a phrase. See one-word bullet lists as completing a single sentence with each bullet point.

*The flag is:*

- Red.
- White.
- Blue.

- Use your best judgment if creating bullet lists for a PowerPoint, postcard, poster or flyer. Sometimes periods just do not look right.

- Use parallel construction for each item in a list:
  
  - Start with the same part of speech for each item (in this example, a verb).
  - Use the same verb tense for each item.
  - Use the same sentence type (statement, question, exclamation) for each item.
  - Use the same voice (active or passive) for each item.
  - Use just a phrase for each item, if desired.

- Introduce the list with a short phrase or sentence: *Our partners:* or *These are our partners:* or *Our partners are:*

Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Use on first reference. BNSF railway or the railway is acceptable on second reference.
Avoid jargony or branded terms such as Gillig or New Flyer or MCI. Acceptable descriptions include 40-foot, 60-foot, articulated, charter, double deck, double decker, express (unless ST Express), feeder, intercity, longer, regional, shorter. Use the verb forms bus, bused, busing. Not bussed, bussing, as is common in British English. Most American verbs default to a single consonant. You may use coach as a noun to avoid redundancy, especially in employee and transit publications.

**bus-on-shoulder operations** Hyphenate.

**bus stop** Two words.

**busway** Exclusive right-of-way for buses only. One word.

**cardinal directions** Do not capitalize north, south, east, west unless part of a proper name, etc.

**capitalization**

In general, avoid unnecessary capitals. Excessive capitalization, rather than highlighting words, impedes reading. If there is no listing in this manual for a particular word, consult Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary. Avoid capitalizing all the letters in more than one or two words in a sentence. For emphasis instead, try other typographical uses: boldfacing, italics, underlining, different typefaces.

Some basic principles:

- **Proper Nouns:** Capitalize nouns that constitute the unique identification for a specific person, place, or thing: John, Mary, America, Boston, England. Some words, such as the examples just given, are always proper nouns. Some common nouns receive proper noun status when used as the name of a particular entity: General Electric, Gulf Oil.
- **Capitalize common nouns such as party, river, street and west when they are an integral part of the full name for a person, place or thing:** Democratic Party, Mississippi River, Fleet Street, West Virginia.
- **Lowercase these common nouns when they stand alone in subsequent references:** the party, the river, the street.
Lowercase agency when not just as the first word in a sentence. Correct: *The agency announced groundbreaking on the Lynnwood Link Extension.* See [agency](#).

Lowercase the common noun elements of names in plural uses: *the Democratic and Republican parties, Main and State streets, lakes Erie and Ontario.* Exception: Capitalize plurals of formal titles with full names: *Presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump.*

Capitalize the names of rail stations or transit hubs, for example: *International District/Chinatown Station, Tacoma Dome Station.*

Capitalize transit centers when using the full title, for example: *Bellevue Transit Center, Aurora Village Transit Center.*

Capitalize recognized districts, for example: *International District, University District, Tacoma Theater District.* Use SODO for the area in Seattle south of the International District and north of Georgetown. See [University District](#).

Capitalize *Sound Transit Board* or *Sound Transit Board of Directors* on all references. In a deviation from AP-based style, please uppercase *Board* when used alone in reference to the Sound Transit Board: *The Board will meet next Thursday.* The word remains lowercase (per AP Style) when referring to boards other than Sound Transit.

Boardmember is **one word** and capitalized when it appears before a name. However, it is **two words** when referring to board members (*this same rule applies to Councilmember _____ and council members*): *Boardmember Claudia Balducci toured the site. Claudia Balducci spoke to a room filled with Board members (if the ST Board; board members if generic board).*

Capitalize *chair* when used as a formal title before the name of a person in a council or committee position: *Sound Transit Chair Kent Keel spoke to the press.* Lowercase when used generically. *The chair called the meeting to order.*

Spell out and capitalize the full name of the Sound Transit Board committees. The standing committees are: *Executive Committee, Rider Experience and Operations Committee, System Expansion Committee, and Finance and Audit Committee.* Avoid turning the name into an acronym.

**city, cities**: Capitalize the names of cities and towns in all uses.

- Capitalize “city” only as part of a proper name: *Kansas City, Salt Lake City* or when it is part of the full name of a governing body or formal title *Seattle City Council, City Manager Frank Smith.* Lowercase when not part of a proper name or formal title, *city Health Commissioner, city government,* and all city of phrases.
- The AP rule for all “city of” formulations: Lowercase “city” unless “city” is part of the formal name: *The city of Spokane approved its annual budget last night. City of Angels.* Lowercase when referring to geographic description or multiple jurisdictions.
- *city of*: Capitalize “city of” constructions in folios, postcards or other project documents if the city is in a partnership relationship with Sound Transit. *City of Tacoma, City of Seattle.* In keeping with AP Style, please do not uppercase city of constructions.
across the board or when referring to cities that are not working with ST.): The city of Spokane approved its budget. The city has many historic resources. The Puget Sound Regional Council members include more than 80 entities, including King, Pierce, Snohomish and Kitsap counties, as well as cities, towns, ports, state and local transportation agencies, and tribal governments within the region.

- Capitalize city when part of a formal title before a name: City Manager Francis McGrath. Lowercase city when not part of a name or formal title: city Health Commissioner Frank Smith. Lowercase when not part of a proper name or formal title: city Health Commissioner, city government.

- **Job titles:** Capitalize specific job titles preceding a person’s name; do not capitalize descriptions. For example, Marketing Director John Doe is correct, but Marketing Chief John Doe is not, unless “marketing chief” is John Doe’s actual title. After a name, titles are lowercase regardless of whether they are specific or general. Exceptions are letter salutations, program or flyer listings, etc. Sound Transit’s Chief Executive Officer Peter Rogoff addressed a packed house. Peter Rogoff, chief executive officer, has been at Sound Transit since January 2016. Never capitalize ordinary job titles in isolation. The park ranger asked for our permit is a mere description and needs no emphasis. If someone no longer holds a position, what appears to be specific becomes an apposition, part of a job description rather than a title: former marketing director John Doe. Summary: Only capitalize a job title if it is the exact wording, if it appears immediately before a name and if it is not itself preceded by a qualifier (former, for example) or an article (a, an, the) or followed by a comma.

- Capitalize anything you are using as a proper name, including a job title or description when it is standing in for a name, “I’ll get right on it, Chief,” “I’ll let Mom know,” but not “I saw your mom yesterday.”

- Capitalize the full name of programs, projects or plans adopted formally by the Sound Transit Board. Otherwise, avoid capitalizing them. Always lowercase program, project or plan when the word stands alone or when using only part of the formal name. The Sound Transit Board adopted the System Expansion Implementation Plan. The plan implements Sound Transit’s expansion projects. See projects and service names.

- Unless part of a formal name, Washington state is not capitalized; Washington State is a university. (Ignore spellcheck when it tries to capitalize outside this rule.)
committee: Do not abbreviate. Capitalize when part of a formal name: the House Appropriations Committee. Do not capitalize committee in shortened versions of long committee names: The Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee, for example, becomes the Senate banking committee.

Lowercase legislature when used generically: No legislature has approved the amendment.

Capitalize No-Build Alternative and full names of alternatives: Ballard Alternative, Tacoma Dome Alternative, etc. Do not capitalize “alternatives” when used generically. Sound Transit evaluated alternatives for the Ballard Station.

Capitalize recognized districts, for example: International District, University District, Tacoma Theater District. See University District.

academic titles: Capitalize and spell out formal titles such as chancellor, chairperson, etc., when they precede a name. Lowercase elsewhere. Lowercase modifiers such as department in department Chairman Jerome Wiesner.

academic departments: Use lowercase except for words that are proper nouns or adjectives: The department of history, the history department, the department of English, the English department, or when department is part of the official and formal name: University of Connecticut Department of Economics.

Sound Transit departments: In a departure from Associated Press style guidelines, do capitalize the names of all departments and divisions at Sound Transit and other agencies and organizations. Communications Department.

Capitalize reservation when referring to an Indian tribe reservation (do not abbreviate reservation) the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation; however, lowercase if it is not part of the official name of a tribe. For example, it is just the Puyallup Tribe of Indians. Check with the tribe to find out if it would be correct to also refer to them as the Puyallup Nation. In all cases, defer to a specific tribe’s preferences for how they want to be known. See also American Indians, Native Americans within race, ethnicity section.

Capitalize the main words and enclose in quotation marks the titles of dissertations, essays, lectures, short musical compositions, short poems, short stories, songs, speeches, radio and television programs, articles in periodicals and chapters of books.

Capitalize, but do not italicize, underline or enclose in quotation marks the names of brochures, bulletins and reports and catalogs of reference material, such as almanacs, directories, dictionaries, encyclopedias, gazetteers, handbooks and similar publications.

constitution: Capitalize references to the U.S. Constitution, with or without the U.S. modifier: The president said he supports the Constitution. When referring to constitutions of other nations or of states, capitalize only with the name of a nation or a state: the French Constitution, the Massachusetts Constitution, the nation’s constitution, the state constitution, the constitution. Lowercase in other uses: the organization’s constitution. Lowercase constitutional in all uses.
• **congressional**: Lowercase unless part of a proper name: congressional salaries, *the Congressional Quarterly, the Congressional Record*.

• **congressional districts**: Use figures and capitalize district when joined with a figure: *the 1st Congressional District, the 1st District*. Lowercase district whenever it stands alone.

• **cardinal directions**: Capitalize north, south, east, west and derivative words when they designate definite regions or are an integral part of a proper name. *Many water-skiers have relocated from the Northeast to the South*. Do not capitalize these words when they merely indicate direction or general location. *They headed south to Tacoma*.

**carpool** One word. You may use as a noun, verb or adjective: *The neighbors formed a carpool to save time and money. They carpooled to work to save time and money. She requested some carpool information.*

**cellphone** One word not two. Use *mobile* instead.

**Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority** The legal name of Sound Transit. Use the agency’s legal name only on contracts and board motions and resolutions. Do not refer to the agency as the RTA.

**CenturyLink Field** Football and soccer stadium in the SODO District.

**cents** For amounts less than a dollar, use figures, spell out, and lowercase cents. For larger amounts, use the $ sign and decimal system: *25 cents, $1.01, $4.50*. Do not use the cents symbol: 50¢. Do not use zeros if there are no cents: *$6, not $6.00*. Including double zeroes is acceptable; however, when aligning multiple dollar amounts in charts and tables when some amounts include cents. See **dollars**.

**charts, tables** Charts and tables are useful in reports to present information concisely. They should have titles. When using several charts or tables, assign numbers. When referring to a chart or table in the text, capitalize the word chart or table and use the numeral: *As Table 4 shows, ridership is increasing.*
**citizen** A citizen is a person who has acquired the full civil rights of a nation either by birth or naturalization. Cities and states in the United States do not confer citizenship. To avoid confusion, use *resident*, not citizen, in referring to inhabitants of states and cities.

**cliches** A cliche is a phrase or opinion that is overused. It’s something a lot of people say all the time. Cliches in your writing reveal a lack of original thought. AP Stylebook writes, “It is tempting to advise writers to avoid cliches like the plague; they are the bane of our existence.” Get the picture? “Cliches are the junk food of the literary pantry, much loved by lazy writers. But platitudes and shopworn phrases serve as signals to the reader to move along, there’s nothing to see here. Don’t push readers away or lull them to sleep. Engage them with original, specific phrasing.”

**co-** Retain the hyphen when forming nouns, adjectives and verbs that indicate occupation or status:

- *co-author | co-pilot*
- *co-chairperson | co-respondent (in a divorce suit)*
- *co-defendant | co-signer*
- *co-host | co-sponsor*
- *co-owner | co-star*
- *co-partner | co-worker*

**colon capitalization** Capitalize the first word after a colon only when it’s a proper name or the start of a complete sentence or the first word in bulleted lists.

**comfort station** Avoid this term. It is disturbing for some people because during World War II the Japanese military established military brothels where they forced “comfort women” into sexual slavery in “comfort stations” in countries they occupied. Use *public toilet* or *restroom* instead.

**commas** As with all punctuation, clarity is the biggest rule. If a comma does not add clarity and accuracy, it should not be there. Sound Transit does not include a final (serial or Oxford) comma in a simple series.

- Use commas to separate elements in a series, but do not put a comma before the conjunction in most simple series:
- The flag is red, white and blue.
- He would nominate Tom, Dick, Harry or Jeannette.

**She goes to school, plays league soccer and takes private dance lessons** is perfectly clear without the final comma.

- Include a serial comma in a simple series if omitting it could make the meaning unclear. In the following example, if Schneider and Torres are the most trusted advisers, do not use the final comma: **The governor convened his most trusted advisers, economist Olivia Schneider and polling expert Carlton Torres.** If the governor is convening unidentified advisers plus Schneider and Torres, use the final comma: **The governor convened his most trusted advisers, economist Olivia Schneider, and polling expert Carlton Torres.**

- Put a comma before the concluding conjunction in a series if an integral element of the series requires a conjunction: **I had orange juice, toast, and ham and eggs for breakfast.**

- In a complex series of phrases, use a comma before the concluding conjunction to aid readability: **She opened the closet door, grabbed a coat, and picked up an umbrella. The main points to consider are whether the athletes are skillful enough to compete, whether they have the stamina to endure the training, and whether they have the proper mental attitude.**

- With introductory clauses and phrases: Very short introductory phrases don't require a comma unless ambiguity would result without it. **In 2017 the company experienced …** A comma is used to separate an introductory clause or phrase from the main clause: **When he had tired of the mad pace of New York, he moved to Dubuque.** Also use the comma if its omission would slow comprehension: **On the street below, the curious gathered.**

- With conjunctions: **When a conjunction such as and, but or for links two clauses that could stand alone as separate sentences, use a comma before the conjunction in most cases:** **She was glad she had looked, for a man was approaching the house.** As a rule of thumb, use a comma if the subject of each clause is expressly stated: **We are visiting Washington, and we also plan a side trip to Williamsburg.** **We visited Washington, and our senator greeted us personally.** But no comma when the subject of the two clauses is the same and is not repeated in the second: **We are visiting Washington and plan to see the White House.**

- Use of a comma before while: **While is a subordinating conjunction, but in some circumstances, it can act as an adverb of concession as well. In these circumstances it should have a comma before it. Here is a great guideline: If you can replace while with as, then it shouldn’t have a comma before it.** **The man left the restaurant while it was raining.** If you can replace while with whereas then you should use a comma before it because it is being used as an adverb of concession. **The man left the restaurant, while his partner stayed.** (From Prowritingaid.com/grammar.)
With equal vs. unequal adjectives: Use commas to separate a series of adjectives equal in rank. If the commas could be replaced by the word and without changing the sense, the adjectives are equal: a thoughtful, precise manner; a dark, dangerous street. Use no comma when the last adjective before a noun outranks its predecessors because it is an integral element of a noun phrase, which is the equivalent of a single noun: a cheap fur coat (the noun phrase is fur coat); the old oaken bucket; a new, blue spring bonnet.

Introducing direct quotes: Use a comma to introduce a complete one-sentence quotation within a paragraph. Wallace said, "She spent six months in Argentina and came back speaking English with a Spanish accent." But use a colon to introduce quotations of more than one sentence.

Do not use a comma at the start of an indirect or partial quotation: Correct: He said the victory put him "firmly on the road to a first-ballot nomination." Not: He said the victory put him, "firmly on the road to a first-ballot nomination."

Before attribution: Use a comma instead of a period at the end of a quote that is followed by attribution: “Write clearly and concisely,” she said.

Do not use a comma; however, if the quoted statement ends with a question mark or exclamation point: "Why should I?" he asked.

With hometowns and ages: Use a comma to set off an individual's hometown when it is placed next to a name: Mary Richards, Minneapolis, and Maude Findlay, Tuckahoe, New York, were there.

If using an individual's age, set it off by commas: Maude Findlay, 48, Tuckahoe, New York, was present.

Names of states and nations used with city names: His journey will take him from Dublin, Ireland, to Seattle, Washington, and back. The Tacoma, Washington, group saw the governor.

Use parentheses, however, if a state name is inserted within a proper name: The Huntsville (Alabama) Times. (Since this is a newspaper, you would not put it in italics, just straight text.)

With yes and no: Yes, I will be there.

In direct address: Mother, I will be home late. No, sir, I did not take it.

Separating similar words: Use a comma to separate duplicated words that otherwise would be confusing: What the problem is, is not clear.

In large figures: Use a comma for most figures greater than 999. The major exceptions are street addresses (1234 Main St.), broadcast frequencies (1460 kilohertz), room numbers, serial numbers, telephone numbers, and years (1876). See separate entries under these headings.

Placement with quotes: Commas always go inside quotation marks.
With full dates: When a phrase refers to a month, day and year, set off the year with a comma: *Feb. 14, 2020, is the target date.*

**commuter rail** Avoid when possible. In North American usage, commuter rail is typically understood to mean train operations between a central city, its suburbs and/or another central city with a focus on commute hours. Often shares tracks and/or employment arrangements with host freight railroads. ST branding for Sounder omits the words “commuter rail” because it is transit jargon and not all passengers are commuters. Just use Sounder.

**complement, compliment** *Complement* is a noun and a verb denoting completeness or the process of supplementing something: *The ship has a complement of 200 sailors and 20 officers. The tie complements his suit. Compliment* is a noun or a verb that denotes praise or the expression of courtesy: *The captain complimented the sailors. She was flattered by the compliments on her project.*

**composition titles** Capitalize all words in a title except articles (a, an, the); prepositions of three or fewer letters (for, of, on, up, etc.); and conjunctions of three or fewer letters (and, but, for, not, or, so, yet, etc.) unless any of those start or end the title. This applies to books, reports, long poems, long musical compositions, movies, newsletters, plays and works of art such as paintings and sculpture. Italicize the names of such works or underline them if italic type is not available: *To Kill a Mockingbird, The Marriage of Figaro.*

- Capitalize an article — the, a, an — or words of fewer than four letters if it is the first or last word in a title.

**construct** When used as a verb, try replacing it with the simpler “build.” When used as a noun, construction is fine.

**coronaviruses** A family of viruses, some of which cause disease in people and animals, named for crownlike spikes on their surfaces. The viruses can cause the common cold or more severe diseases such as *SARS* (severe acute respiratory syndrome), *MERS* (Middle East respiratory syndrome) and *COVID-19*, the latter of which first appeared in late 2019 in Wuhan, China.

- As of March 2020, simply referring to the coronavirus is acceptable on first reference in stories about COVID-19. While the phrasing incorrectly implies there is only one coronavirus, it is clear in this context. Also acceptable on first reference: *the new coronavirus; the new virus; COVID-19.* (Passages and stories focusing on the science of the disease require sharper distinctions.)
- In stories, do not refer simply to coronavirus without the article *the*. Not: *She is concerned about coronavirus.* However, omitting *the* is acceptable in headlines and in uses such as: *He said coronavirus concerns are increasing.*
**corridor** A long, relatively narrow area within a region that follows a general directional flow. Do not capitalize when referring to geographic location of corridors unless used in the formal title of a report: *north corridor, south corridor*.

**COVID-19**, which stands for coronavirus disease 2019, is caused by a virus named *SARS-CoV-2*. When referring specifically to the virus, *the COVID-19 virus* and *the virus that causes COVID-19* are acceptable. But, because COVID-19 is the name of the disease, not the virus, **it is not accurate to write a new virus called COVID-19**. Do not refer to COVID-19 as a “global pandemic.” A pandemic is an epidemic that has spread worldwide, so “global pandemic” is redundant.

**coworking (n., adj.) vs. co-worker** Sharing workspace and amenities, such as Wi-Fi, a printer, fax machine and the like, when people don’t work for the same company but instead are self-employed or remote workers. No hyphen for this use. But: *co-worker* for a colleague within the same company.

**cut and cover** A method of tunnel or tunnel station construction involving digging or “cutting” a trench along a route and “covering” it with a lid to form the tunnel or station. Hyphenate when used as an adjectival phrase: *Using the cut-and-cover construction method was less expensive than tunneling.*

**D**

**dates** In reports, news releases and other materials for broad distribution, abbreviate Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec. when used with a specific date: *We opened the park-and-ride lot Feb. 11, 1997*. Spell out these months in personal correspondence. Spell out when using a month alone or with a year alone. Do not separate the month and the year with a comma, unless used with a date: *We plan to open the park-and-ride lot in November 1998.* (Not November, 1998)

- **Seasons**: Lowercase when proceeding a year: *The Northgate extension will open in fall 2021.*
- Do not follow numerals used with dates with st, nd, rd or th. Instead of June 5th, write *June 5.*
In most internal communications, you don’t need to include the year if writing about the year we are in. If creating a document for a project team or something that will need historic reference, a year is important. If creating something like a poster, invitation or program, include the year. Text that doesn’t need a year: Short-term internal announcements (e.g., Lunch & Learns). Examples of content that might need a year: Posters, invitations, programs.

If you refer to an event that occurred the day prior to when the article will appear, do not refer to “yesterday.” If someone reads the article two days after the event, “yesterday” will no longer be accurate. Capitalize days of the week, but do not abbreviate. Example: The rally took place Wednesday, March 3. It is OK to abbreviate days of the week as graphic design elements of something like a poster or flyer, but not for standard writing. If an event occurs more than seven days before or after the current date, use the month and a figure. The rally took (or takes) place March 3.

decision-maker decision-maker, decision-making (two words, hyphenated) but policymakers.

degrees Doctorate preferred over the Ph.D. abbreviation. She holds a doctorate in public administration… X holds a master’s degree in public administration from the University of Central Oklahoma. AP stories generally use MBA (no periods). Capitalize formal names of a degree; make descriptive names lowercase.

departments and divisions Capitalize the names of all Sound Transit departments and divisions.

Department of Transportation Refer to the Washington State Department of Transportation as the state Department of Transportation. Do not use abbreviations or acronyms, such as WSDOT, on first reference.

design-build Hyphenate it, and lowercase unless part of a formal name.

diagonal to or diagonally across from Both are preferable to kitty-corner, which is OK. Don’t use catty-corner or catercorner. Cater, which means four, is obsolete.
**dimensions** Use figures and spell out *inches, feet, yards*, etc., to indicate depth, height, length and width. Hyphenate adjectival forms before nouns. EXAMPLES: *He is 5 feet, 6 inches tall. the 5-foot-6-inch man, the 5-foot man, the basketball team signed a 7-footer. The car is 17 feet long, 6 feet wide and 5 feet high. The rug is 9 feet by 12 feet, the 9-by-12 rug. The storm left 5 inches of snow. The building has 6,000 square feet of floor space.* Use an apostrophe to indicate feet and quote marks to indicate inches (*5’6”*) only in very technical contexts. Note: In the examples above, you can use a numeral with exact measurements — even numbers below 10.

**directional words ending in -ward** Virtually none of the following directional words ending with this suffix end with an s: *Toward, backward, forward, downward, upward, onward, outward, inward, southward, skyward, Earthward, heavenward, homeward.* British speakers say “towards,” but it is preferable in American English to omit the s.

**disabled** Recognize that people with disabilities have rights, among them the right to privacy. Treat persons with disabilities with respect. Avoid mentioning a disability when it is not pertinent. When necessary to mention a disability, put the person first, not the disability. If in doubt about referring to their disabilities, ask them. People who are blind, for example, may prefer blind instead of partially sighted. Here are some reminders when writing about people with disabilities:

- Avoid impersonal phrasing such as the handicapped or the disabled. Instead (putting the person first) say *people with disabilities. The man who is blind. The child with a mental illness.* Do not say the paraplegic, the schizophrenic, the brain-damaged person.
  - Avoid condescending euphemisms such as handicappable and special.
  - Avoid the use of disabled or crippled when referring to inanimate objects such as disabled vehicle. Try *stalled vehicle* or change the sentence structure: *The bus with mechanical problems blocked traffic for an hour.*
- **confined**: Instead of confined or wheelchair-bound, say a person uses a wheelchair, has a wheelchair or gets around by wheelchair. Emphasize abilities, not limitations.
- **deaf and dumb, deaf mute**: Most people who are deaf have healthy vocal cords. If they do not speak, it is because they do not hear the correct way to pronounce words. Say a person who is deaf, a person with a hearing impairment, a woman without speech, a child who has a speech disorder.
- **disease**: Most people with disabilities are healthy. Use condition.
- **invalid**: Do not use when referring to people. The interpretation can mean “not valid.”

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- **suffers from**: Do not say a person with a disability suffers from the disability. Say *the person has a disability*.
- **unfortunate**: An adjective that describes someone with bad luck, not a person with a disability.
- **victim**: Having a disability does not make a person a victim.

See the [Inclusive language guide](#) for more.

**diversity**: Use to describe Sound Transit policies that are inclusive of people of color, women and transgender persons. The term “people of color” is generally preferred to using specific ethnic backgrounds, such as African American or Asian American (do not hyphenate either word).

**dollars** Lowercase this word. Beware of accidentally using the word dollars and the dollar sign with the same amount: $465 dollars. Except for casual references or amounts without a figure, use the $ sign instead: *The book cost $20. Dollars stopped flowing into King County*. See [numbers](#).

**double decker** In an exception to AP Style and Merriam-Webster, Sound Transit treats *double decker* as a noun, which is two words. Hyphenate if using it as an adjective before a noun, so *double-decker bus*.

**downtown** Lowercase unless part of a formal name: *downtown Tacoma and downtown Seattle, but the Downtown Seattle Association*.

**Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel, DSTT**: The old term for the four Link stations in downtown Seattle originally opened by King County Metro as a bus tunnel in 1990. Effective March 23, 2019, bus operations ended, and the four stations no longer exist as a separate entity. Do not use the term or its abbreviation in public-facing communications unless specifically referring to retrofits or capital projects affecting only the four older stations. If there is an instance requiring description of Link stations located in downtown Seattle, you can use *downtown Link stations or downtown tunnel stations*. You can also use the project title “Downtown Seattle Light Rail Tunnel” to refer to the project that will build a new tunnel by 2035.

**drop-off** n. 1) A very steep drop. 2) A decline or decrease, as in sales, prices, etc. 3) A location where a person or thing can be dropped off [a drop-off for rental cars]. Hyphenated drop-off (n. and adj.) and drop off (v.); however, *pickup is one word as both a noun and adjective*. 
E

**Eastside** Capitalize when referring to the area that includes Bellevue, Kirkland, Redmond and other King County communities east of Lake Washington.

e.g., i.e. Often confused. The first is the abbreviation for exempli gratia, a Latin phrase meaning "for example." It is always followed by a comma. The second is the abbreviation for id est, a Latin phrase meaning "that is" introducing a clarification of the words that precede it. Unless the material is scientific or academic, use the simpler English words. Commas or semicolons usually precede both, and commas usually follow both. Phrases containing these abbreviations may be contained in parentheses.

either Use it to mean one or the other, not both. Right: *She said to use either door.* Wrong: *There were lions on either side of the door.* Right: *There were lions on each side of the door. There were lions on both sides of the door.*

elderly Use this word carefully and sparingly. It is appropriate in generic phrases that do not refer to specific people: *concern for elderly people,* *service for the elderly.* Try phrases like *people in their 70s and older* instead. Apply the same principles to terms such as senior citizen.

ellipses (...) In general, treat an ellipsis as a three-letter word, constructed with three periods and two spaces, as shown here. Use an ellipsis to indicate the deletion of one or more words in condensing quotes, texts and documents. Be especially careful to avoid deletions that would distort the meaning. An ellipsis also may be used to indicate a thought that the speaker or writer does not complete.

- If the words that precede an ellipsis constitute a grammatically complete sentence, either in the original or in the condensation, place a period at the end of the last word before the ellipsis. Follow it with a regular space and an ellipsis: *I no longer have a strong enough political base. ...* When the grammatical sense calls for a question mark, exclamation point, comma or colon, the sequence is word, punctuation mark, regular space, ellipsis: *Will you come? ...*
- When material is deleted at the end of one paragraph and at the beginning of the one that follows, place an ellipsis in both locations.

**em dash, en dash, hyphens** Em dashes are long dashes (about the width of a capital M) that are stronger than commas or parentheses. Use them to signal abrupt change, with a space on both sides of a dash. *Example: The rare glitch — she had never done this in practice — dinged her execution score and worse, irritated Biles beyond belief.* An en dash is about half the width of an em dash, approximating the width of a capital letter N. *While AP style does not use en dashes, ST may use them for artistic purpose — such as in posters.* In general, when writing time frames, use a hyphen with no space on either side of the hyphen: **6:30-8 p.m.**

**ensure, insure, assure** Use ensure to mean guarantee: *They took steps to ensure accuracy.* Use insure for references to insurance: *The policy insures his life.* Use assure to mean to make sure or give confidence: *She assured us the statement was accurate.*

**Environmental Impact Statement, EIS** A comprehensive study of likely environmental impacts resulting from major federally assisted projects; the National Environmental Policy Act requires such statements. Spell out on first reference. EIS is acceptable on second reference. Capitalize only when used as part of a proper title: *The Brown Street Tunnel Project Environmental Impact Statement.* Avoid overuse of the abbreviation by substituting impact statement. Always spell out draft, final or supplemental when used with the document: *The project team printed the draft EIS last month. The supplemental impact statement is ready for printing.* Not: *The project team printed the DEIS. The SEIS is ready.*

**epidemic, pandemic** An *epidemic* is the rapid spreading of disease in a certain population or region; a *pandemic* is an epidemic that has spread worldwide. Follow declarations of public health officials. *On March 11, the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic.* Do not write *global pandemic,* which is redundant.

**exclamation point** Use the mark to express a high degree of surprise, incredulity or other strong emotion. In general, avoid. When writing for internal audiences, don’t “tell” them something is exciting with an exclamation point, “show” them with descriptive words.
farebox One word.

federal Use a capital letter for corporate or governmental bodies that include the word as part of their formal names: Federal Express, the Federal Trade Commission. Lowercase when used as an adjective: federal Department of Transportation and state Department of Transportation. Always lowercase the phrase federal courts. Use the proper name of the court on first reference.

Federal Transit Administration Formerly the Urban Mass Transportation Administration. FTA is the agency of the U.S. Department of Transportation, which administers the federal program of financial assistance to public transit. Abbreviate as FTA on second reference.

ferry, ferries, ferryboat Ferry is preferable and acceptable as both a noun and a verb. Plural is ferries.

fieldwork One word, per Webster’s.

first-aid kit It’s first aid as a noun, but first-aid as an adjective. After taking a first-aid course, she was able to give first aid.

first-ever/first ever This should be hyphenated, though first should suffice. First-ever is redundant and trite, says the AP stylebook. Make it the first such event or the inaugural event.

first come, first served Not first come, first serve. As a compound modifier it’s hyphenated: first-come, first-served basis.

fixed guideway A system of vehicles that can operate only on its own guideway built for that purpose. Avoid the term when possible in favor of simpler alternatives.
**fixed route** Service provided on a repetitive, fixed-schedule basis along a specific route with vehicles stopping to pick up and deliver passengers to specific locations; each fixed-route trip serves the same origins and destinations, unlike demand responsive transit and taxicabs.

**flier vs. flyer** In 2018, the Associated Press changed their style to flyer for people in an aircraft and for handbills. *He used his frequent flyer miles; they put up flyers announcing the show.*

**formally vs. formerly** Formally means in accordance with the rules of convention or etiquette, or officially: *He was formally attired. The mayor will formally open the new railroad station.* Formerly means in the past; in earlier times: *The building formerly housed their accounting offices. The artist formerly known as Prince.*

**freeway station** A bus stop located on an off ramp of a freeway. Freeway station (or stop) is preferred. To avoid reader confusion, do not use Flyer stop.

**front line** *(n.)* front-line *(adj.)*

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**G**

**goal setting or goal-setting** Hyphenate as modifier, otherwise not.

**good, well** *Good* is an adjective that means something is as it should be or is better than average. When used as an adjective, *well* means suitable, proper, healthy. When used as an adverb, *well* means in a satisfactory manner or skillfully. Do not use *good* as an adverb. It does not lose its status as an adjective in a sentence such as *I feel good.* Such a statement is the idiomatic equivalent of *I am in good health.* An alternative, *I feel well,* could be interpreted as meaning that your sense of touch is good.

**government** Always lowercase, never abbreviate: *the state government, the U.S. government.*
governmental bodies Capitalize the full, proper names of federal, state and local governmental agencies, departments and offices: the U.S. Department of State, the state Department of Transportation, King County Department of Public Works. Also, capitalize the shortened version: the State Department, the Ecology Department, Public Works Department. Lowercase condensations of the name: the department, the agency, etc.

governor Abbreviate and capitalize before a name: Gov. Lowercase after a name and when standing alone. In business correspondence, spell out before a name.

grade crossing The intersection of a railroad track or rail line with a surface street or road.

groundbreaking adj. 1 designating or of the ceremony of breaking ground, as for a new building 2 pioneering — n. a groundbreaking ceremony for a new building — groundbreaker n.

hand-washing Hyphenate

headlines If the meaning is clear, you can use abbreviations in headlines. Capitalize only proper nouns and the first word in headlines. To improve readability, avoid capitalizing all the letters in more than one or two words in a headline. For emphasis, other typographical uses may be more effective: different typefaces, italics, boldfacing, larger type. You may use figures for numbers in headlines. See abbreviations and acronyms; capitalization; numbers, numerals.

- Punctuate headlines like sentences. Some exceptions: A comma may substitute for the word “and;” use semicolons instead of periods to show sentence breaks within the headline.
- Omit end punctuation after the headline.
Use single quotation marks instead of double quotation marks in headlines. In quote attribution, colons may substitute for “said” after the speaker’s name (before a statement), and dashes may substitute for “said” before the speaker’s name (after a statement).

- Avoid using passive voice in headlines.
- Infinitive phrase is preferred to future tense: Governor to speak, not Governor will speak.

**headway** Time between vehicles moving in the same direction on a particular route. Avoid in favor of plain talk, so *four-minute headways* becomes *trains every four minutes*.

**heavy rail.** Avoid. See *light rail*.

**high-capacity transit** A transit system that uses rail or special busways. See *light rail*.

**high-occupancy vehicle** Buses, carpools and vanpools are high-occupancy vehicles. They can travel in high-occupancy-vehicle lanes.

**high-occupancy-vehicle lane** Spell out on first reference. HOV lane is acceptable on second reference. Bus and carpool lane is also acceptable. Avoid referring to the “diamond lane.”

**high-speed rail** Intercity rail service with exclusive right-of-way traveling at speeds of 124 miles per hour and greater. No examples of this in the western U.S or Canada. Avoid the term.


**him, her** Do not presume maleness in constructing a sentence. Usually it is possible, and always preferable, to reword the sentence to avoid sex or gender: *Reporters try to protect their sources*. If essential, use the pronoun *they* as a singular, with a plural verb: *The Trump*
administration told public schools to grant bathroom access even if a student’s gender identity isn’t what’s in their record. The official said they are afraid for their safety. Be sure the context makes clear that only one person is involved. See they, them, their.

**human-made** An acceptable alternative to man-made.

**hyphens**

- Hyphenate compound adjectives made of more than one word when they precede a noun. Do not hyphenate when they follow the noun:  
  *This is an on-site building* (versus the building is located on site).

- **double vowels**: Hyphenate double-vowel words: re-entry, re-engage. Exceptions apply (coordinate)

- Do not use hyphens when just discussing dimensions or distances, only when referring to or describing a noun: The project consists of an 11.8-mile corridor (versus the corridor is 11.8 miles long). I ate a 2-foot-long hot dog (versus the hot dog is 2 feet long).

- The following words are hyphenated: High-capacity transit, long-range plan, low-income fare, pre-construction, right-of-way, park-and-ride, at-grade.

- These are correct: five-plus years, a half-mile.

- The following words are not hyphenated: Light rail, light rail system, groundwater, stormwater.

- Generally, do not hyphenate when using a prefix with a word starting with a consonant. Thus: **subconsultant**.

- Words with “wides” are all one word (no hyphens): Systemwide, departmentwide, agencywide, citywide, statewide, countrywide, corridorwide.

- Hyphens are unnecessary after the adverb very and after all adverbs that end in -ly: A very good time, an easily remembered rule, randomly selected addresses.

- Indicate suspensive hyphenation as follows: The agenda included a 10- to 15-minute period for questions. Dig a 3- to 5-inch-deep hole.

**icon** A simple image that represents a real thing. Pictogram and pictograph are synonyms for icon.
**impact** Do not use as a verb to mean affect: “This closure will impact …” or as a noun to mean effect: “This closure has community impacts.” Consider using affect or influence, or use more specific language such as “This closure will delay trips by five minutes.” As a verb, only use impact to mean to force tightly together, pack or wedge, or to hit with force. Avoid “impacted” (which refers to teeth) and “impactful” (which is just plain awful).

**implement** Jargon. Do not overuse this word. Instead, try a form of begin, carry out, follow, fulfill, do, put in place, put into use, put into effect, start or set up, as a verb, or tool, as a noun.

**imply, infer** Often confused. Imply means to show, hint or suggest, not to express. Infer means to conclude or deduce from evidence or facts. Writers or speakers imply in the words they use. A listener or reader infers something from the words: *He implied in his speech. I inferred from her comment.*

**in-** No hyphen when it means not: inaccurate, insufferable. Some words take a hyphen: *in-depth, in-group, in-house, in-law.* See prefixes.

**in addition to** Wordy. Simplify. Try *besides, beyond, also or and.* See *beside, besides.*

**inbox** One word.

**inter-** Rules in *prefixes* apply, but in general, no hyphen: *interagency.*

**intermodal** Used to denote movements of cargo or passengers interchangeably between transport modes. Intermodal and multimodal are transit jargon, avoid when writing (or speaking) to general audiences. For example: *The Tacoma Dome Station is a transit hub for many types of transportation (or transportation modes).*
J

jargon The special vocabulary and idioms of a particular class or occupational group. William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White put it simply in “The Elements of Style”: “Be clear.” Jargon is the opposite of clarity. In general, rewrite to avoid jargon. Example: The biota exhibited a 100 percent mortality response. Rewrite: All the fish died. When jargon is necessary, explain or define the terms likely to be unfamiliar to most readers. See plain language.

jeopardy Commonly misspelled.

join together, link together Both are redundant. Remove together.

judge Capitalize before a name when it is the formal title for an individual who presides in a court of law. Do not continue to use the title in second reference. Do not use court as part of the title unless confusion would result without it. No court in title: U.S. district Judge John Bates, federal Judge John Bates, appellate Judge Priscilla Owen. Court needed in the title: Juvenile Court Judge John Jones, state Supreme Court Judge William Cushing.

judgment Not judgement.

junior, senior Abbreviate as Jr. and Sr. only with full names, and do not precede with a comma. Do not separate the abbreviations from the name with a comma: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. or Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Similarly, do not use a comma to separate Roman numerals from a person's name: Larry Moe IV is losing his patience.

K

key performance indicator This should be lowercase and spelled out on first reference.
**kickoff** As a verb, *kick off* (two words; not hyphenated). As a noun or adjective, *kickoff* (one word).

**King County Metro** The primary provider of bus service in King County. King County Metro operates some of Sound Transit’s ST Express routes and Link lines. Use King County Metro on the first reference; Metro is acceptable on second reference. Do not use the acronym KCM in public-facing communication.

**kiss-and-ride** Do not use this term for a passenger drop-off area.

**kitty-corner** AP style uses it, Sound Transit prefers *diagonal to*. The derivation has nothing to do with kittens, its origin is the obsolete cater (four at dice) from Middle English.

**Lake Washington Ship Canal** Lake Washington Ship Canal runs from Lake Washington to the Puget Sound and encompasses the Montlake Cut and Portage Bay. Use full name on first reference. Ship canal (lowercase) is acceptable on second reference.

**layover** (n.), **lay over** (v.) Time built into a schedule between arrival at the end of a route and the departure for the return trip, used for delay recovery and preparation for the return trip.

**lead or lede** Refer to the first paragraph of an article as *your lead*. AP says, “The lede is journalistic jargon.”

**light rail** The term light rail has no accepted definition but is instead derivative of the traditional term heavy rail, implying relative contrast of capacity, fuel/power, grade separation and other features. In North American usage, light rail is generally understood to mean electric trains of coupled vehicles powered by overhead catenary wire. Use the term as sparingly as possible. Whenever possible, use Link or Link trains instead.
• Light rail may have at-grade operations or may be mostly or fully grade-separated. Heavy rail is generally understood to mean fully grade-separated trains with traditional third rail or induction motor power with longer trainsets.

• Regional examples of light rail include MAX (Portland), Muni (San Francisco), VTA (San Jose) and LA Metro (Expo, Blue, Green and Gold Lines). Examples of heavy rail include LA Metro (Red and Purple lines) and BART (San Francisco). Some systems have features of both, such as TransLink in Vancouver, where heavy rail features such as induction motors and automated operation coincide with limited capacity and small trainsets.

• In local usage, light rail has an unusually wide and inclusive definition, referring both to T (Tacoma) Line service that runs at-grade with a single vehicle like a streetcar, or the mostly grade separated, two-to-four car trains operating elsewhere in the system.

• Light rail is two words with no hyphen.

• Central Link, Airport Link, U Link, University Link. Legacy names for previous extensions. Do not use in public documents unless referring to past construction or project management.

• The Northgate Link Extension opened in 2021, adding stations at Northgate, Roosevelt and the U District. This new extension is the 1 Line.

• The East Link Extension opens in 2023 and adds 10 new stations in Judkins Park, Mercer Island, South Bellevue, downtown Bellevue, BelRed and Overlake. East Link is acceptable when describing construction issues or projects. When service opens it will form part of the 2 Line.

• Tacoma Link is a 1.6-mile rail line running between Tacoma Dome Station and downtown Tacoma. It opened for service in August 2003. Using Hilltop Tacoma Link Extension is acceptable when referring to the construction project. It will open in 2023 as the T Line.

limited English proficiency LEP Lowercase “limited” and “proficiency.” Or, avoid the jargon and write: A person with limited English or A person with limited proficiency in English.

line names Sound Transit names most services with numbers and/or letters. With 28 new light rail stations and 24 bus rapid transit stations opening by 2024, line names now give us a simple, easy-to-use system that connects our region with fast, reliable transit.

• Link lines
  • 1 Line – Link light rail between Northgate and Angle Lake, using a circular green shield and green line color.
2 Line (Effective 2023) – Link light rail operating between Northgate and Redmond Technology, using a circular blue shield and a blue line color.

3 Line, 4 Line – Future lines 3, between Everett and West Seattle, and 4, between Issaquah and Kirkland, will use magenta and purple shield and line colors, respectively.

T Line (Effective 2022) – Formerly Tacoma Link; operates between Tacoma Dome and St. Joseph Hospital on Hilltop, uses a circular orange shield and an orange line color.

Sounder lines

N Line – formerly Sounder North. Operates between Everett and Seattle, using a circular blue-grey shield and line color.

S Line – formerly Sounder South. Operates between Lakewood and Seattle, using a circular blue-grey shield and line color.

Stride lines (bus rapid transit)

Stride lines will have a route number with an S prefix (S1, S2, S3, etc.), in order by opening date. They will share a square gold shield and line color.

S1 Line (Scheduled to open in 2024) Operates between Bellevue and Burien.

S2 Line (Opening date is under review) Operates between Lynnwood and Bellevue.

S3 Line (Scheduled to open in 2024) Operate between Shoreline and Bothell.

General line usage guidelines

Always refer to numerical lines with a numeral, not a word. 1 Line, not One Line.

Capitalize Line when used with its indicator, lowercase otherwise. The 3 Line runs from Everett to West Seattle. Link has five train lines: 1, 2, 3, 4 and T.

Do not refer to a line by its color on the map, Green Line, etc.

The line indicator should always precede the word ‘line.’ 1 Line, not Line 1.

Use line indicators without hyphens except when used as a compound adjective. The 1 Line is running 10 minutes behind schedule. 1-Line trains will not serve Roosevelt Station on Saturday. NOT The 1-Line runs every 5 minutes.
Use of the word “line” as a suffix is not required but is preferred whenever its omission may cause the line number to be mistaken for a quantity. **2-Line trains will not serve Mercer Island today. NOT 2 trains are serving …**

**Transition between capital projects and operating lines**

When referring to extensions of current service during construction phases, continue referring to their official project name. When describing current or future service patterns, use the line name. *The Federal Way Link Extension adds three new 1-Line stations and will open in 2024. The Lynnwood Link Extension will bring four new stations to Shoreline, Mountlake Terrace and Lynnwood. Riders will be able to take the 1 Line as far as Federal Way or the 2 Line as far as Redmond.*

**long range** Hyphenate when used as a compound adjective: *long-range plan.*

**long term, short term** Hyphenate when used as compound adjectives: *The team developed a long-term regional plan.*

**M**

**man, manned, manning** Outdated. Do not use man as a verb. Use staff instead or forms of use, operate, work or run. Change: Three employees man the office to *Three employees staff the office.*

**Metropolitan Planning Organization** The organization designated by local elected officials as being responsible for carrying out the urban transportation and other planning processes for an area. The Puget Sound Regional Council is the MPO for the Puget Sound region. Spell out on first reference. MPO is acceptable on second reference.

**mid-** No hyphen unless a capitalized word follows: *midday, midair, mid-America, mid-Atlantic, midterm.*
miles Use figures, including for amounts under 10, in dimensions, formulas and speed: *The land measured 2 miles by 3 miles. The bus traveled 60 miles per hour. The coach gets 6 miles per gallon.* Spell out 10 in distances: *He drove eight miles.*

miles per gallon The abbreviation *mpg* (lowercase, no periods) is acceptable on second reference.

miles per hour The abbreviation *mph* (lowercase, no periods) is acceptable in all references.

Minority/Women/Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Spell out on first reference. M/W/DBE is acceptable on second reference in internal documents. Capitalize when referring to the program. Lowercase when referring to a minority business enterprise, a women business enterprise or a disadvantaged business enterprise.

mitigate Means to moderate or to make or become milder, less severe, less rigorous, less painful, less harsh or less hostile. If possible, consider using a synonym for mitigate, such as moderate, compensate for, ease, soften, relieve or reduce, or define the word: *Sound Transit will mitigate, or reduce, the environmental impacts.* Also, mitigate against is incorrect.

modal names For general references the mode name alone (Link, Sounder, Stride, ST Express) is acceptable and the line indicator is (optional). *Sounder trains will serve Saturday’s Mariners game. Sounder (S-Line and N-Line trains) will not operate on Christmas day.*

- For line-specific usage, you must use the line indicator; the modal name is optional.
  
  *(Sounder) S-Line trains will run to the Mariners game this Saturday, but N-Line trains will not operate.*
  
  *S3 Line buses will not operate east of Kenmore on Tuesday due to road construction.*
  
  *Maintenance will close the southbound platform at Roosevelt Station on Tuesday.*
  
  *Board all 1- and 2-Line trains on the northbound platform.*

modal split, mode split A term that describes how many people use alternative forms of transportation. Frequently used to describe the percentage of people using private automobiles as opposed to the percentage using public transportation. Avoid using this term in information intended for a general audience.
monorail An electric railway in which a rail car or train of cars is suspended from or straddles a guideway formed by a single beam or rail.

more than versus over In 2014, AP Stylebook ruled that both “over” and “more than” are acceptable terms when referring to something of greater numerical value. However, many communicators and companies, including Sound Transit, maintain the old guidance: Use more than when referring to numbers and over when referring to spatial elements. For example: We acquired more than 100,000 customers. The cow jumped over the moon.

motion, resolutions The Sound Transit Board adopts motions and resolutions. Capitalize motion and resolution when referring to a specific Sound Transit Board motion or resolution and abbreviate Number (No.): The Board will consider Resolution No. 1112 and Motion No. 4119 Thursday. Lowercase when standing alone.

multilingual One word, no hyphen.

multimodal Most often used to describe a location, site or transit center that connects two or more kinds of transportation modes. For example, Tacoma Dome Station, with access to commuter rail, light rail and regional express and local buses, is a multimodal station. Avoid using intermodal and multimodal when writing or speaking to general audiences. These words are transit jargon. Instead, try: Tacoma Dome Station is a hub for many modes of transportation.

Mx. An English language honorific that does not indicate gender. Coined in 1977, Mx. is an alternative to Mr. and Ms. You can use Mx. as a title for nonbinary people, as well as those who do not wish to reveal, or identification by, their assigned gender. Merriam-Webster Unabridged added Mx. in April 2016, but states it is unclear “whether or when Mx. will catch on in the US.” However, Mx. is moving faster toward acceptance than the 1901 introduction of Ms., which The New York Times adopted in 1986.
names Always use a person’s first and last name the first time they are mentioned in a story. Only use last names on second reference. Do not use courtesy titles such as Mr., Mrs., Miss or Ms. unless they are part of a direct quotation or are needed to differentiate between people who have the same last name.

nation Regarding the use of “nation” in reference to native American tribes. Formally it is Navajo Nation Reservation; informally Navajo reservation. However, not all tribes use nation in their formal names. Do not capitalize nation if used as a synonym for the United States or another country. The museum brings to life the people who created our nation. Do not capitalized nation when used alone (not part of a formal name).

National Environmental Policy Act A comprehensive federal law requiring analysis of the environmental impacts of federal actions such as approval of grants; also requiring preparation of an environmental impact statement for every major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Spell out and capitalize on first reference. NEPA is acceptable in later references.

next generation ORCA The Central Puget Sound region’s public transit agencies are planning to improve the transit customer experience through the development of a next generation ORCA system. The new ORCA system will be flexible to allow more methods of payment and utilize maturing technologies. The transition to the new system may begin in late 2021. Next Gen ORCA is acceptable.

non- The rules of prefixes apply, but in general no hyphen when forming a compound that does not have special meaning and can be understood if not used before the base word, for example: nonrevenue, nonessential. However, use a hyphen before proper nouns. Examples of compounds with special meaning include names with proper nouns: non-U.S. government questions, non-Ambassador, non-Euclidean geometry, non-Hodgkin lymphoma. Hyphenate as a compound modifier, for clarity: non-degree-seeking student.
northbound, southbound One word.

numbers/numerals Spell out most whole numbers below 10. Use figures for 10 and above: five, nine, 15, 650. Also, spell out first through ninth when they show sequence in time or location: first base, Third Avenue. Exceptions include county, legislative and congressional districts: She lives in the 2nd District. Use No. as the abbreviation for number in conjunction with a figure to indicate position or rank: No. 1 woman, No. 3 choice. Do not use in street addresses, with this exception: No. 10 Downing St., the residence of Britain’s prime minister. See miles.

- **annual events**: AP spells ordinals of ninth and below and uses figures for 10th and above (this is within text; posters can use figures). Do not describe an event as annual until it has taken place at least two successive years. Capitalize annual if it is part of the formal name: Third Annual Spring Fair.
- Avoid beginning a sentence with a number. In general, if unavoidable, spell the number out: Forty years was a long time to wait. Fifteen to 20 cars were involved in the accident. An exception is years: 1992 was a very good year. Another exception: Numeral(s) and letter(s) combinations: 401(k) plans are offered. 4K TVs are flying off the shelves. 3D movies are drawing more fans.
- However, you can start a headline with a number: 8 ways to join Sound Transit’s gift drive. Also, spell out casual expressions: thanks a million, a thousand bucks.
- Avoid confirming a written number in a text by enclosing the numeral in parentheses. Avoid: The contract will expire in eight (8) days.
- Use figures for all distances, including measures of numbers below 10: He walked 4 miles, instead of four miles.
- Use figures with million, billion or trillion in all except casual uses: I’d like to make a billion dollars. But: The nation has 1 million citizens. I need $7 billion. The government ran a deficit of more than $1 trillion.
- Do not drop the word million or billion in the first figure of a range: The project could cost $20 million to $25 million, not $20 to $25 million, unless you really mean $20.
- Do not use a hyphen to join the figures and the word million or billion, even in this type of phrase: The president submitted a 300 billion budget.
- In amounts more than a million—unless the exact amount is essential—round off to one decimal point. Write out the word million or billion: The grant was for $6.5 million.
- Do not go beyond two decimal places. 7.51 million people, $256 billion, 7,542,500 people, $2,565,750,000. Decimals are preferred where practical: 1.5 million. Not: 1 1/2 million. Do not use decimals with round numbers: $2 billion. Not: $2.0 billion.
- Do not mix millions and billions in the same figure: 2.6 billion. Not: 2 billion 600 million.
- In headlines, maps, project alerts, mailers, etc., abbreviate only millions, billions. Use capital M and B with no space: $5M project improvement, $17.4B trade deficit.

**objective vs. subjective language**

Objective refers to the elimination of subjective perspectives and a process that is purely based on hard facts. Objective information is fact-based, measurable and observable. Considered fair and accurate, it avoids exaggeration and bias, and shows respect for the views of others. With subjective language, personal points of view, emotions or judgment enter the decision-making process. Everyday language is subjective. It expresses opinions based on personal values, beliefs or preferences rather than evidence. This is the reason stories on the Hub tend to not contain exclamation marks. (Which are also characteristic of writing that attempts to “show” rather than “tell.”) Instead of saying something is exciting and adding exclamation marks, describe what makes it exciting. Use words to paint the picture.

Example: Objective paragraph (From PublicHealth website)

| U.S. public health officials and physicians have been combating misconceptions about vaccine safety for more than 20 years. They've had mixed success. Despite the fact numerous studies have found no evidence to support the notion that vaccines cause autism and other chronic illnesses, a growing number of parents are refusing to vaccinate their children. | clear topic sentence |
| Researchers now link falling immunization rates to recent resurgences of vaccine-preventable diseases. In 2010, California saw 9,120 cases of whooping cough, more than any year since the whooping cough vaccine was introduced in the 1940s. Ten infants too young to be vaccinated died of whooping cough during the outbreak. The CDC warns that events like these will become more frequent and harder to control if vaccination rates continue to fall. | factual evidence |
| | more factual evidence |
| | fair and accurate |
Fears over the safety of vaccines are understandable. The CDC vaccination schedule calls for children to receive up to 14 inoculations by the age of six — many of them vaccines developed within the last twenty years. Many parents distrust these vaccines, worried about the potential for risks and long-term side effects. Research, however, shows that most of our biggest fears about vaccinations are unfounded.

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Example: Subjective paragraph (From the University of Adelaide’s Writing Centre)

Indeed, there are countless values that are shared by our Australian community and which are extremely relevant to the life-threatening issue of compulsory childhood immunization. Of course, the protection of the health and well-being of Australian kids must be a shared response. Obviously, they are such vulnerable creatures who cannot protect themselves, and it is the full responsibility of our communities to stop endangering their fragile lives. Mandatory childhood immunization is definitely consistent with the view we share as Australians, that is, our children’s health care is a total priority. Clearly, if childhood immunity is not vigorously promoted across Australia, then all our children will contract ghastly vaccine-preventable diseases leading to death!! So, enforcing childhood immunization programs TODAY is the only logical way for us to watch over the precious youth of our nation.

off-peak Hyphenate. Try to use simpler language such as “outside commute hours.”
**offshore** One word.

**off-site** Hyphenate. Hyphenate compound adjectives made of more than one word when they precede a noun. Do not hyphenate when they follow the noun: *This is an on-site building (versus the building is located on site).*

**on** Do not use on before a date or day of the week when its absence would not lead to confusion, except at the beginning of a sentence: *The meeting will take place Monday. His inauguration will be Jan. 20. On Sept. 3, the committee will meet to discuss the issue.* Use on to avoid an awkward juxtaposition of a date and a proper name: *John met Mary on Monday. He told Obama on Thursday that the bill was doomed.* Use on also to avoid any suggestion that a date is the object of a transitive verb: *The House killed on Tuesday a bid to raise taxes. The Senate postponed on Wednesday its consideration of a bill to reduce import duties.*

**on board, onboard, onboarding** One word as a modifier: *There was onboard entertainment.* But: *He jumped on board the boat. Let program leads know you are on board to help! They were on board with the idea. Onboarding for new employees will take place tomorrow.*

**online** One word in all cases for the computer connection term. Also acceptable for new transit service “coming online.”

**on-ramp** Hyphenate. Also, *off-ramp.*

**on-site** Hyphenate for all uses as an adjective or adverb. Question regarding the capitalization rule when using as a compound modifier in a section title: Would it be *On-site Services* or *On-Site Services*? In such uses the second element of the hyphenated term is generally lowercase, so *On-site Services.*

**onto vs. on to** One-word onto means on top of, aware of. Otherwise use two words: *hold on to, log on to, Go on to page 400. Hang on to your hat.*
Operations and Maintenance Facility Spell out (lowercase and; do not use an ampersand) and add the directional on the end without a hyphen, dash or colon. Operations and Maintenance Facility East, Operations and Maintenance Facility South. Operations and Maintenance Facilities East (on subsequent uses, refer to as OMF East and OMF South).

Consistent with ST’s graphic design guidelines, use of acronym only (e.g., OMFSE OMFS, etc.) is acceptable in maps, tables, signage or other condensed visual communications where space is limited — provided the full project name appears spelled out in close proximity and will not cause reader confusion.

ORCA, ORCA LIFT The ORCA card is the regional fare media used in the Central Puget Sound region. The ORCA card uses smart-card technology, and all Sound Transit and partner services will accept it. All capitals, no periods. ORCA stands for One Regional Card for All. ORCA LIFT should also be all capitals, no periods.

Overreach 1) To reach or stretch beyond or above; extend beyond 2) To defeat oneself by seeking to do or gain too much. 3) To get the better of [someone] by cunning or cheating; outwit.

page numbers Use numerals and capitalize page when used with a figure: Page 1. Spell out and capitalize the page numbers lower than 10 in business correspondence: Page Five.

pandemic An epidemic that has spread worldwide. Do not call COVID-19 a “global pandemic,” as it is redundant!

paratransit Forms of transportation services that are more flexible and personalized than conventional fixed-route, fixed-schedule bus service. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 requires these comparable transportation services for individuals with disabilities who are unable to use fixed-route transportation systems.
parentheses Avoid the use of parentheses as they are jarring to the reader. AP does not follow a full term with the abbreviation in parentheses. Rather AP uses the abbreviation in a follow-up or substitutes a shorthand form of the full term to avoid an abbreviation that may not be well-known to audiences.

park-and-ride lot A parking lot where transit riders can leave their cars and ride transit, carpool or vanpool to another location. For news releases, news stories and texts, capitalize the P and R and hyphenate park-and-ride lot: Federal Way Park-and-Ride lot, Mercer Island Park-and-Ride lot. Lower case park-and-ride lot when not used with a formal name. Do not refer to a park-and-ride lot as a park-and-ride. Avoid using facility or facilities unless the text becomes redundant. Do not use an ampersand (&) for the word “and” in park-and-ride. You may use the ampersand for signs, maps and in advertising copy such as marketing brochures. See the Signage Manual available from the Transportation Services Department.

passengers Refer to those who use our services as passengers, not customers, patrons or riders.

passenger drop-off area Usually a turn-around point where people drop off or pick up transit riders. Do not use the term “kiss-and-ride.”

passive voice When the noun being acted upon is made the subject of the sentence. (Note: this definition is passive,) The house was haunted. Active voice is when the noun doing the action is the subject. Ghosts haunted the house. Use “by zombies” to help identify passive voice: If you can add “by zombies” after the verb and it makes sense, you probably have passive voice. The town was attacked (by zombies). But Zombies attacked the town (by zombies). Doesn’t work, so this is active voice. See active vs. passive verbs.

peak vs. peek A peak is a noun meaning a mountaintop or height. Mount Rainier’s peak is visible on a clear day. Trains arrive every six minutes during peak times. Peek is a verb or a noun meaning “to look” or “a look.” Go peek through that window. Snag a peek at that snow-covered peak.

per year, a year “A” is preferable in constructions such as a gallon, a mile, a barrel, a share. Use per when the phrase is a modifier, such as a breakdown of earnings on a per-share basis.
percentages (New 07/15/2019) Use the % sign when paired with a numeral, with no space, in most cases: Average hourly pay rose 3.1% from a year ago; her mortgage rate is 4.75%; about 60% of Americans agreed; he won 56.2% of the vote. Use figures: 1%, 4 percentage points.

- For amounts less than 1%, precede the decimal with a zero: The cost of living rose 0.6%.
- In casual uses, use words rather than figures and numbers: She said he has a zero percent chance of winning. Constructions with the percentage sign take a singular verb when standing alone or when a singular word follows an “of” construction: The teacher said 60% was a failing grade. He said 50% of the membership was there. It takes a plural verb when a plural word follows an of construction: He said 50% of the members were there.
- Use decimals, not fractions, in percentages: Her mortgage rate is 4.5%. For a range, 12% to 15%, 12%-15% and between 12% and 15% are all acceptable. Use percentage, rather than percent, when not paired with a number: The percentage of people agreeing is small.
- Be careful not to confuse percent with percentage point. A change from 10% to 13% is a rise of 3 percentage points. This is not equal to a 3% change; rather, it’s a 30% increase.

periods (.) This punctuation mark has two main purposes. It ends all sentences that are not questions or exclamations, and it’s used in some abbreviations.

- Use periods to break up complicated sentences into two or more readable sentences. See sentence length.
- Use a period, not a question mark, after an indirect question: He asked what the score was.
- Don’t put a space between two initials: T.S. Eliot.
- Use periods after numbers or letters in listing elements of a summary: 1. Wash the car. 2. Clean the basement. Or: A. Punctuate properly. B. Write simply.
- Periods always go inside quotation marks.
- Use only one space after a period at the end of a sentence. The following advice comes from an article entitled “Nothing says over 40 like two spaces after a period.” Please do not write ‘We had dinner. It was good.’ Unless you are typing on an actual typewriter, you no longer have to put two spaces after a period or a question mark or an exclamation point. The rule applies to all end punctuation.

pickup, drop-off pickup (n. and adj.), but drop-off (n.) hyphenated or drop off (v.)
pictogram, pictograph are synonyms for icon.

Pierce Transit Sound Transit’s partner agency. Pierce Transit operates the ST Express regional buses that serve Pierce County, with some King County service.

plain language Also called plain English, or plain talk, plain language is communication your audience can understand the first time they read or hear it. Plain language is also likelier to translate well for people using services such as Google Translate. Plain language means:

- Using the clearest, simplest language possible; everyday, familiar words, please.
- Avoiding or explaining jargon and technical words.
- Omitting useless words.
- Being careful with abbreviations.
- Writing in active voice.
- Writing short sentences.
- Avoiding double negatives.
- Using lists.

plans, projects, programs Capitalize the full name of programs adopted formally by the Sound Transit Board. Otherwise, avoid capitalizing them. Always lowercase program, project or plan when the word stands alone or when using only part of the formal name: The project is underway. Avoid interchanging the words program, project or plan within a text.

plurals vs. possessives For possessive questions, see also apostrophes.

Follow these guidelines in forming and using plural words:

- Most words Add s: boys, girls, ships, villages.
- Words ending in ch, s, sh, ss and z Add es: churches, lenses, parishes, glasses, boxes, buzzes. (Monarchs is an exception.)
- Words ending in is Change is to es: oases, parentheses, theses.
- Words ending in y If y is preceded by a consonant or qu, change y to i and add -es: armies, cities, navies, soliloquies. (See proper names below for an exception.) Otherwise add s: donkeys, monkeys.
Words ending in o If o is preceded by a consonant, most plurals require es: buffaloes, dominoes, echoes, heroes, potatoes. But there are exceptions: pianos. See individual entries in this book for many of these exceptions.

Words ending in f In general, change f to v and add es: leaves, selves. (Roof/roofs is an exception.)

Latin endings Latin-root words ending in us change us to i: alumnus, alumni. (Words that have taken on English endings by common usage are exceptions: prospectuses, syllabuses.) Most ending in a change to ae: alumna, alumnae (formula, formulas are exceptions). Most ending in um add s: memorandums, referendums, stadiums. Among those that still use the Latin ending: addenda, curricula, media. Use the plural that Webster’s New World College Dictionary lists as most common for a particular sense of word.

Words the same in singular and plural corps, chassis, deer, moose, sheep, etc. The sense in a particular sentence is conveyed by the use of a singular or plural verb.

Compound words Those written solid add s at the end: cupfuls, handfuls, tablespoonfuls. For those that involve separate words or words linked by a hyphen, make the most significant word plural:

Significant word first: adjutants general, aides-de-camp, attorneys general, courts-martial, daughters-in-law, passers-by, postmasters general, presidents-elect, secretaries-general, sergeants major.

Significant word in the middle: assistant attorneys general, deputy chiefs of staff.

Significant word last: assistant attorneys, assistant corporation counsels, deputy sheriffs, lieutenant colonels, major generals.

Words as words Do not use 's: His speech had too many "ifs," "ands" and "buts."

Proper names Most ending in es or s or z add es: Charlesees, Joneses, Gonzalezes. Most ending in y add s even if preceded by a consonant: the Duffyys, the Kennedys, the two Kansas Cityys. Exceptions include Alleghenies and Rockies. For others, add s: the Carters, the McCoys, the Mondales.

Figures Add s: The custom began in the 1920s. The airline has two 727s. Temperatures will be in the low 20s. There were five size 7s. (No apostrophes, an exception to Webster’s New World College Dictionary guideline under "apostrophe.")

Single letters Use ‘s: Mind your p’s and q’s. He learned the three R’s and brought home a report card with four A’s and two B’s. The Oakland A’s won the pennant.

Multiple letters Add s: She knows her ABCs. I gave him five IOUs. Four VIPs were there.
point of view determines who tells the story as well as the relationship the narrator has to characters in the story. These are also terms that distinguish personal pronouns.

- First, second and third person are ways of describing points of view.
- First person is the “I/we” perspective. When we talk about ourselves, our opinions and things that happen to us we generally speak in the first person. Use we, us, our, ourselves, which are plural first-person pronouns. Do not use I, me, my, mine or myself, which are singular first-person pronouns.
- Second person is the “you” perspective. This point of view belongs to the person (or people) being addressed. Second-person pronouns: you, your, yours, yourself.
- Third person is the “he/she/them/zir …” pronoun, which refers to an entity other than the speaker or listener. This point of view belongs to the person or people being talked about.
- Narratives are typically from a first- or third-person perspective.
- When writing for Sound Transit (speaking for the agency), generally use first person.
- When writing for internal employee publications, generally use second or third person, unless you are writing under a byline. Avoid the use of “we” in writing for internal communications because with so many teams, divisions and departments, readers may not know who is talking to them.

policymaker One word, not hyphenated.

pre- Generally do not hyphenate. A 2019 change in the AP Stylebook: Do not hyphenate double-e combinations with pre- and re-. Examples: preelection, preeminent, preempt, preestablished, preexisting. However, do hyphenate pre-convention, pre-construction, pre-noon.

prefixes Usually, follow these rules for adding a prefix: Don't hyphenate when using a prefix with a root word that begins with a consonant. Use a hyphen if the prefix ends in a vowel and the root word that follows begins with the same vowel. Insert a hyphen if the first listing of the word includes one. If the word is not hyphenated or not listed, drop the hyphen. In addition, use a hyphen when capitalizing the root word. Use a hyphen to join doubled prefixes: sub-subcommittee. At times, a hyphen is necessary for clarity of meaning: He will reform (correct or improve) the congregation. She will re-form (change the shape of) the clay figure.
**preplanned** Per Associated Press and Webster's, no hyphen.

**presidential administration** It is the Biden administration (lowercase a), per administration entry. Reason (per AP Stylebook): It is lowercase as a descriptive, collective term for the executive branch of government. The lowercase usage helps differentiate it from the formal names of various U.S. agencies, including the Federal Housing Administration, Food and Drug Administration and National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Generic use of administration without its current occupant is always acceptable, e.g. “the administration.”

**project and service names** It is important to be consistent and use names that easily and logically convey our projects’ benefits to the public. Please use these names in all communications, especially in public-facing communications. In public-facing materials, avoid using project-name acronyms wherever possible, particularly in content where the eye will travel first, including headlines, subheads, captions or pull quotes. If you must use the formal project name, spell it out, as detailed below. It’s best; however, to refer to the project in plain talk terms readers can see themselves experiencing (e.g., “our light rail extension connecting downtown Seattle to the Eastside”) versus a construction project (“East Link Extension.”) For internal or government-facing documents, acronyms are acceptable. Project names are for use internally or during planning, design, engineering and capital construction. Once in operation, we retire names such as "University Link Extension."

**North Corridor**
- Northgate Link
- Lynnwood Link Extension
- Everett Link Extension

**East Corridor**
- East Link Extension
- Downtown Redmond Link Extension
- South Kirkland-Issaquah Link*

**South Corridor**
- Federal Way Link Extension
- Tacoma Dome Link Extension
- Hilltop Tacoma Link Extension
- TCC Tacoma Link Extension

**Central Corridor**
- West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions**
- Ballard Link Extension**
- New Downtown Seattle Light Rail Tunnel**
- West Seattle Link Extension**
- S Graham St, S Boeing Access Road, NE 130th St Infill Stations

**BRT**
- I-405 BRT
- SR 522/NE 145th BRT
- Bus Base North

**Sounder**
- Sounder Maintenance Base
- DuPont Sounder Extension
- Sounder South Capacity Expansion
- Auburn, Kent, Puyallup and Sumner Stations Parking and Access Improvements
- Edmonds and Mukilteo Stations Parking and Access Improvements

*This line is not an extension of an existing line, so we use different language.*

**These projects are combined during the alternatives analysis and EIS phases. At a later date, we will begin to use project names independently.*

**Other**
- Operations and Maintenance Facilities East (on subsequent uses, refer to as OMF East)
- Operations and Maintenance Facilities Central (Renamed once OMF East opens. On subsequent uses, refer to as OMF Central)
- Operations and Maintenance Facilities North (OMF North)
- Operations and Maintenance Facilities South (OMF South)
- North Sammamish Park-and-Ride
- Bus-on-shoulder operations
Consistent with ST’s graphic design guidelines, use of acronym only (e.g., OMFS, OMFE, etc.) is acceptable in maps, tables, signage or other condensed visual communications where space is limited — provided the full project name appears spelled out in close proximity and will not cause reader confusion.

**pronouns** See him, her and they, them, their and the Inclusive language guide.

**Puget Sound** Use Puget Sound on first reference when referred to the body of water. In an exception to AP style, use uppercase Sound on future references when the word stands alone: *The study focused on Puget Sound. Scientists sampled the Sound during November.* Do not use Puget Sound alone but add the term Central when referring to the region Sound Transit serves: *the Central Puget Sound region.*

**Puget Sound Regional Council** Formerly the Puget Sound Regional Council of Governments. PSRC is the region’s Metropolitan Planning Organization. Spell out on first reference and use PSRC on all other references.

**punctuation** To quote and paraphrase the Associated Press Stylebook (using active voice), “the basic guideline is to use common sense.” The purpose of punctuation is to make a thought clear. If it does not serve that purpose, get rid of it. The following words from "The Elements of Style" by William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White applies to punctuation: “Clarity, clarity, clarity. When you become hopelessly mired in a sentence (note passive voice), it is best to start fresh; do not try to fight your way through against terrible odds of syntax. Usually what is wrong is that the construction has become too involved at some point; the sentence needs to be broken apart and replaced by two or more shorter sentences.” If commas, semicolons and dashes clutter a sentence, start over. See apostrophes, commas, hyphens, ellipses, em dashes, periods, quotation marks semicolons. Please, avoid the use of the exclamation point.

- For punctuation answers that do not appear in this style guide, please visit Sound Transit’s online copy of the Associated Press Stylebook at [https://apstylebook.com/](https://apstylebook.com/) Login/username: library@soundtransit.org; Password: L*brary1.

**quarters** When referring to financial calendar periods, use Q4, not 4Q.
question and answer Write as Q&A, no spaces.

quotation marks Surround the exact words of a speaker or writer. The journalistic approach for stories is to attribute with the word “said” rather than shared, exclaimed, laughed, noted …

- If you have a running quote, which means it carries from one paragraph to the next, do not put close-quote marks at the end of the first paragraph. Do put open-quote marks at the start of the second paragraph. Continue for any succeeding paragraphs, using close-quote marks only at the end of the quoted material.

  He said, "I am shocked and horrified by the slaying.
  "I am so horrified, in fact, that I will ask for the death penalty."

- Do use close-quote marks if the quoted material does not constitute a full sentence.

  He said he was "shocked and horrified by the slaying."
  "I am so horrified, in fact, that I will ask for the death penalty," he said.

- Do not use quotation marks in formats that identify questions and answers by Q: and A:

race, ethnicity While definitions of race have changed over time, scholars in numerous disciplines widely view race as a social construct, rather than a biological fact. Consider carefully when deciding whether to identify people by race. Avoid broad generalizations and labels; race and ethnicity are one part of a person’s identity. People may interpret drawing unnecessary attention to someone’s race or ethnicity as bigotry. However, race is pertinent when writing about significant, groundbreaking or historic events: Barack Obama was the first Black U.S. president. Sonia Sotomayor is the first Hispanic justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Jeremy Lin is the first American-born NBA player of Chinese or Taiwanese descent. Do not write in a way that assumes white is default. Not: The officer is accused of choking Owens, who is Black. Instead write: The white officer is accused of choking Owens, who is Black.

- American Indians, Native Americans Defer to whatever terms a particular group prefers. Both are acceptable terms in general references for those in the U.S. when referring to two or more people of different tribal affiliations. For individuals, use the name of the
tribe; if that information is not immediately available, try to obtain it. He is a Navajo commissioner. She is a member of the Nisqually Indian Tribe. He is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma. Some tribes and tribal nations use member; others use citizen. If in doubt, use citizen. In Alaska, the indigenous groups are Alaska Natives. First Nation is the preferred term for native tribes in Canada. Indian describes the peoples and cultures of the South Asian nation of India. Do not use the term as a shorthand for American Indians. Acceptable when self-identified, e.g. The Puyallup Tribe of Indians.

- **anti-racism** Hyphenate.
- **biracial, multiracial** Acceptable, when clearly relevant, to describe people with more than one racial heritage. Usually more useful when describing large, diverse groups of people than individuals. Avoid mixed-race, which can carry negative connotations, unless a story subject prefers the term. Be specific if possible, and then use biracial for people of two heritages or multiracial for those of two or more on subsequent references if needed. Examples: She has an African American father and a white mother instead of She is biracial. But: The study of biracial people showed a split in support along gender lines. Multiracial can encompass people of any combination of races.
- **Black (adj.)** African American is acceptable for an American Black person of African descent. Use Negro or colored only in names of organizations or in rare quotations when essential. For example, if writing about South Africans who identify as “colored,” use quotation marks around the first use of the word, then use the word, if necessary. The United Negro College Fund is responsible for financing college educations for hundreds of thousands of African Americans each year.
- **Black(s), whites(s) (n.)** Do not use either term as a singular noun. Sound Transit standardizes the capitalization of the “B” in Black in our writing when referring to people of African descent. Lowercase black is simply a color. Uppercase Black signifies the history and racial identity of Black Americans; it refers to people of the African diaspora. ST lowercases “white” when referring to people who are racialized as white in American, including those with ethnicities and nationalities they can trace back to Europe. ST style guide editors considered capitalizing “white” as a way of inviting us to think about the ways in which whiteness survives with explicit and implicit support; however, in accordance with AP Style, we will not capitalize white. Unlike Black people, white people generally do not share the same history and culture, or the experience of being discriminated against because of skin color.
- For plurals, phrasing such as Black people, white people, Black teachers, white students is often preferable when clearly relevant. Black officers account for 47% of the police force and white officers nearly 43%. The gunman targeted Black churchgoers. The plural nouns Blacks and whites are generally acceptable when clearly relevant and needed for reasons of space or sentence construction. He helped integrate dance halls among Blacks, whites, Latinos and Asian Americans. Black and white are acceptable as adjectives when relevant.
- **brown (adj)** Avoid this broad and imprecise term in racial, ethnic or cultural references unless as part of a direct quotation. Interpretations of what the term includes vary widely. Rather than writing Black and b/Brown people, write *people/communities of color*.

- **Caucasian** is *not* a synonym for white. Use this term only when necessary in quotations.

- **dual heritage** Do not use hyphens in expressions denoting dual heritage. For example, *African American, Asian American*, among others. Note: Sound Transit dropped this hyphen before AP dropped it in 2019, mainly because it makes someone appear less than fully American. Also, use of a hyphen is not inclusive. All Black Americans are not African Americans. When possible, find out if a person wants to be referred to as *Black* or *African American*. This includes use of a dual heritage as a compound modifier, so *African American woman* is correct.

- **ghetto, ghettos** Do not use indiscriminately as a synonym for the sections of cities inhabited by minorities or poor people. *Ghetto* has a connotation that government decree has forced people to live in a certain area.

- **Hispanic** A person from — or whose ancestors were from — a Spanish-speaking land or culture. *Latino, Latina or Latinx* are sometimes preferred. Follow the person’s preference. Use a more specific identification when possible, such as *Cuban, Puerto Rican or Mexican American*.

- **indigenous** A term used to refer to original inhabitants of a place. * Aboriginal leaders welcomed a new era of indigenous relations in Australia. Bolivia’s indigenous peoples represent some 62% of the population.*

- **intersectionality** The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class and gender that can create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination of disadvantage. Kimberle Crenshaw coined the term to describe the experiences of Black women who experience both sexism and racism.

- **Latino, Latina, Latinx** Romance languages such as Spanish build gender into all nouns. *Latino*, the male form, has often been the preferred generic noun or adjective for a person from, or whose ancestors were from, a Spanish-speaking land or culture or from Latin America. *Latina* is the feminine form. *Sound Transit prefers the recently coined gender-neutral adjective Latinx, which may need to carry a short explanation*. Plural nouns currently use the gendered forms. For groups of self-identified females, use the plural *Latinas*; for groups of self-identified males or of mixed gender, use the plural *Latinos. Hispanics* is also generally acceptable for those in the U.S. Use a more specific identification when possible, such as *Cuban, Puerto Rican, Brazilian or Mexican American*.

- **minority** Avoid referring to an individual as a minority unless in a quotation. Refer to *people of color* instead.

- **Orient, Oriental** Do not use when referring to East Asian nations and their peoples. Asian is the acceptable term for an inhabitant of those regions.
- **people vs. peoples** *People* can be used as a collective noun, meaning a singular race, group or nationality: *The Greeks are a brave people*. *Peoples* functions as the plural form, meaning multiple races, groups or nationalities. We therefore use it frequently when discussing multiple tribes or indigenous groups: *Not all Coastal Salish peoples identify with constructed tribal names; This book reveals the history of India and the peoples who lived there long ago.*

- **people of color** The term is acceptable when necessary in broad references to multiple races other than white: *We will hire more people of color. Nine playwrights of color collaborated on the script.* Be aware that some object to the term for reasons including that it lumps together into one monolithic group anyone who isn’t white. Avoid using *POC, BIPOC, BAME* unless necessary in a direct quotation; when used, explain it. When talking about just one group, be specific: *Chinese Americans* or *members of the Seminole Indian Tribe of Florida*. Do not use *person of color* to describe an individual.

- **discrimination** A term sometimes used to describe bias or perceived bias against majority groups. Limit its use to quotes; generally, just *discrimination* will suffice to describe such allegations or practices.

- **racial minority** Be sure the term is accurate in each circumstance, since what constitutes a racial minority varies by location. Some Native Americans say the terms *people of color* and *racial minority* fall short by not encompassing their sovereign status. It is always best to be specific. *Most readers of Essence Magazine are Black women,* not *most readers of Essence Magazine are minority women.*

- **racist, racism** Racism is a doctrine asserting racial differences in character, intelligence, etc., and the superiority of one race over another, or racial discrimination or feelings of hatred or bigotry toward people of another race. The terms *systemic racism, structural racism* and *institutional racism* refer to social, political and institutional systems and cultures that contribute to racial inequality in areas such as employment, health care, housing, the criminal justice system and education. Avoid shortening this use to simply *racism*, to avoid confusion with the other definition. Avoid *racially charged, racially motivated* or *racially tinged*, euphemisms which convey little meaning. In some cases, the term *racial* is appropriate: *racial arguments, racial tensions, racial injustice*. Always give specifics about what was done, said or alleged.

- **tribe** Refers to a sovereign political entity, communities sharing a common ancestry, culture or language, and a social group of linked families who may be part of an ethnic group. Capitalize the word *tribe* when part of a formal name of sovereign political entities, or communities sharing a common ancestry, culture or language. Identify tribes by the political identity specified by the tribe, nation or community: *the Apache Tribe of Oklahoma, the Cherokee Nation*. See also *tribes, tribal.*

*For more, please see the Associated Press Stylebook: Race-related coverage.*
railcar A generic term for a railway vehicle. Use when referring to Sounder railcars. For Link, use cars or vehicles.

railroad Capitalize when part of a name: Union Pacific Railroad. Lowercase when using railroad alone.

ranges The form: $12 million to $14 million. Not: $12 to $14 million. Also: A pay increase between 12% and 15%, or A pay increase of 12 percent to 15 percent. For full calendar years, hyphenated 2015-16 is acceptable. Also acceptable per AP: 2018-2019. See percentages.

rapid transit A transit system serving an urban area using relatively high-speed rail cars or buses in exclusive rights-of-way, with few grade crossings.

re- Generally do not hyphenate, except as noted in the prefixes entry. A 2019 change: In recognition of common usage, do not hyphenate double-e combinations with re- and pre-. Examples: reelect, reemerge, reemphasize, reemploy, reenact, reengage, reenlist, reenter, reequip, reestablish, reexamine. It is also important to consider the meaning of the word: recover (regain) vs. re-cover (cover again); reform (improve) vs. re-form (form again); resign (quit) vs. re-sign (sign again), re-create (create again) vs. recreation (play), re-dress a child, but redress a problem.

redeploy One word, no hyphen.

redlining In 1936 a literal red line on map of Seattle enclosed neighborhoods where banks denied home loans or insurance to racial and ethnic minorities based on presumed ‘risk.’ The practice, which continued to shape boundaries in Seattle until the late 70s, also took the form of white, wealthy neighborhoods, introducing racial covenants and exclusions that prohibited selling property to minority buyers. Redlining denied the opportunity for racial and ethnic minorities across Central Puget Sound to build generational wealth through home ownership. As gentrification pushes people of color out of the very same neighborhoods that once bound them, redlining remains part of our cultural consciousness. While the practice of using primary colors to label transit services is widespread across the nation, in 2020 Sound Transit removed references to line colors as a practice to help ensure our system is welcoming for all. See line names.

regional day pass Always lowercase. This is a pass that allows travel on most regional transit services for a specified service day. Valid on Community Transit, Everett Transit, King County Metro, Kitsap Transit (bus and foot ferry), Monorail, Pierce Transit, Seattle Streetcar and Sound Transit.
Sound Transit. Not valid on King County Metro Access vans, Kitsap Transit Fast Ferries or Washington State Ferries. You can use *day pass* or *the pass* on subsequent references when it is clear you are referring to the *regional day pass*.

**Regional “T”** Designation of a transit facility with multiple modes of transit. This can include express buses and commuter rail, or express buses and local buses. A yellow “T” on a purple background marks these centers. ST will phase out the Regional T in the 2020s.

**reverse commuting** Movement in a direction opposite the main flow of traffic, such as from the central city to a suburb during morning rush hour.

**ride-hailing** Ride-hailing services such as Uber and Lyft let people use smartphone apps to book and pay for a private car service or, in some cases, a taxi.

**ride-sharing** Ride-sharing refers to app-based services that let people book a shared shuttle. Zipcar, ReachNow, Car2Go and similar companies are short-term car rental services.

**rider-alert directionals** As Sound Transit opens more Link light rail lines, announcements referencing northbound/southbound or inbound/outbound directionals won’t always make sense geographically. For consistency and rider clarity, please refer to the route terminus: Escalators are out of service on the Redmond-bound platform at Judkins Park Station. The Route 542 bus to the University District will arrive in 1 minute. Sounder South train 1521 to Lakewood will be delayed by 15 minutes.

**ridership** The number of one-way rides taken by people using a public transportation system in a given time period. Measure rides by each individual boarding. A rider who transfers from one vehicle to another is counted as taking two rides.

**right-of-way, rights-of-way** Land acquired for, used by or occupied by a transportation service, including unused space along edges or medians. AP does not hyphenate; Sound Transit and King County Metro both do. The plural is *rights-of-way*, not *right-of-ways*. 
road Capitalize when part of a formal name. Lowercase when used alone or with two or more names. Do not abbreviate: We drove down Holman Road. The crew will pave Altamont and Pine roads.

rolling stock The vehicles used in a transit system including buses, light rail vehicles, and Sounder railcars. Avoid this jargony term when possible.

round trip Two words as a noun but hyphenated as an adjective. He made a round trip on Route 582. He bought a round-trip ticket.

route The horizontal path taken by a rail line or bus (i.e., what streets or alignment it runs along). Use instead of alignment.

route number Do not abbreviate route. The preferred usage for bus route designation is to capitalize Route and follow with the number: Route 550, Route 595. Lowercase when the reference is to two or more routes: routes 550 and 595. On first reference, refer to all Sound Transit buses as ST Express Route 590.

S

scoping notice Lowercase.

scoping process Jargon; explain if used in public-facing communications. Scoping is the first step necessary to develop an environmental impact statement to assess the probable environmental effects of a project. Scoping determines what to analyze in an EIS and eliminates alternatives from further study.

SeaTac The city in south King County. No space or hyphenation between Sea and Tac.
SeaTac/Airport Station  Sound Transit’s Link light rail station. This custom usage intends to be inclusive of both the city of SeaTac and the airport.

Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, or acceptable on second reference, Sea-Tac Airport To avoid confusion with the city of SeaTac, avoid using Sea-Tac alone. Use the abbreviated version with the hyphen only when referring to Sea-Tac Airport.

[The] Seattle Times  Do not use underlines or italics for names of newspapers, just straight type.

semicolons (;) Use semicolons to separate parts of a series when at least one item in the series also contains a comma. A semicolon also goes before the final and in such a series: Attending were Tina Lopez, 223 Main St.; Ron Larson, 1414 Broadway; and Robert Zimmerman, 1976 E. Pine St.

sentence length Varying sentence length makes writing more interesting. Short sentences, 10-15 words or fewer, are good for emphatic, memorable statements. Longer sentences, no more than about 30 words, are good for detailed explanation and support. Try to include only one idea in a sentence, with an average length of 20 to 25 words. See plain language.

shared-ride See rideshare, ridesharing.

sign-up (n and adj.) sign up (v.)

single-occupant vehicle (SOV) A motor vehicle carrying only one person. Spell out. Avoid abbreviation SOV. You may also use solo where contextually appropriate, e.g., solo driver permits instead of “SOV permits.”

SODO District The Seattle district south of the stadiums.
Sound Move The name of the regional transit system plan approved for the Central Puget Sound region by voters on Nov. 6, 1996. The plan includes a mix of Link light rail, Sounder, Regional Express buses and high-occupancy-vehicle access improvements. Italicize Sound Move on all references. When possible, use system expansion instead of referring to specific vote packages.

Sound Transit The Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority operates under this name. Use Sound Transit alone in most cases, but use the legal name—The Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority—in contracts and board resolutions and actions. Two words. Do not use all capital letters. See Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority.

Sound Transit 2 Sound Transit’s second phase of regional transit investments, approved by voters in 2008. It followed the Sound Move plan and preceded ST3, which voters approved in 2016. Avoid talking about ST2 or ST3. When possible, use system expansion.

Sounder Just say Sounder on all references. Do not use all uppercase letters. For the service between Lakewood/Tacoma and Seattle, use Sounder South. For the service between Everett and Seattle, use Sounder North. Do not use North Sounder, South Sounder, Sounder north line, or Sounder south line. Use “commuter rail” very sparingly and only when necessary to distinguish it from Link or Amtrak. In 2021 Sounder North will become the N Line; Sounder South will become the S Line, see Sounder lines.

South Sound A geographic name referring to south King, Pierce and Thurston counties.

Southend To prevent ambiguity, avoid this term to refer to the area of Seattle and King County south of downtown Seattle. Use more precise area names if possible, such as Rainier Beach, Burien, Kent, Federal Way and South King County, which is an increasingly accepted term to refer to areas between Seattle and the Pierce County line.

split infinitives Split infinitives are sentence constructions that split the infinitive forms of a verb by putting a word or words between to and the verb, such as to quickly leave or to boldly go. Despite what you may have learned in school, most past and present writing authorities approve the use of split infinitives. Splitting infinitives is grammatically correct—and even useful if it helps strengthen the meaning of a sentence by placing the modifying word or words before the verb they're modifying: He wanted to really impress the council. However, you should try to not awkwardly split infinitives, as in this sentence. Use of split infinitives also might distract some readers who incorrectly think they are incorrect.
**ST Express** Sound Transit’s regional bus routes operating predominantly on the state’s high-occupancy vehicle lanes. Do not use the outdated term REX.

**STart** Name of Sound Transit’s art program. Use full title on first reference STart—Sound Transit’s Art Program, STart is acceptable on later references.

**standby** One word.

**State Environmental Policy Act** Spell out and capitalize on first reference. SEPA is acceptable in later references.

**state names** Spell out names of the 50 U.S. states when used in the body of a story, whether standing alone or in conjunction with a city, town, village or military base. Abbreviate in short-form listings of party affiliation: D-Ala., R-Mont. When the name of a city and state are used together, the name of the state should be abbreviated (Exceptions: Never abbreviate Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas and Utah).

- AP style does not require the name of a state to accompany the names of the following 30 cities: Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Honolulu, Houston, Indianapolis, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Miami, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, New Orleans, New York, Oklahoma City, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Salt Lake City, San Antonio, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, Washington.
- Punctuation: Place one comma between the city and the state name, and another comma after the state name, unless ending a sentence or indicating a dateline: He was traveling from Nashville, Tennessee, to Austin, Texas, en route to his home in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She said Cook County, Illinois, was Mayor Daley’s stronghold.
- Headlines: Avoid using state abbreviations in headlines whenever possible.
- Never abbreviate the following states in datelines or text: Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas and Utah.
- Use state of Washington or Washington state within a story when it is necessary to differentiate the state name from the U.S. capital, Washington. Write Washington, D.C., with the added abbreviation if the city might be confused with the state.
**station area** The neighborhood immediately surrounding a bus or rail station.

**station-area planning** Planning activities that take place in the area immediately surrounding a transit station. Station-area planning usually defines the neighborhood vision in terms of neighborhood character and plans for accommodating any expected growth or development.

**station names** Avoid use of the term ‘station’ as a suffix for a station name when possible, including online maps, variable messaging systems, onboard audio, platform signs and ticket machines. In narrative contexts, on corporate materials, or to explicitly describe a facility rather than a destination, freely use the word station. Capitalize Station when used directly following the station’s name, but in all other uses lowercase station.

- *Capitol Hill Station is temporarily closed.* NOT *Capitol Hill is temporarily closed.*
- *Now arriving at Roosevelt. Next stop Northgate.*
- *The three stations on the Northgate extension are U District, Roosevelt and Northgate.*

NOT *Travel time from Othello Station to Rainier Beach Station is two minutes.*

Exceptions include:

- *Union Station* on the T Line, where the “Union Station” refers to the name of the historic facility adjacent to it.
- *SeaTac/Airport Station* on the 1 Line, since the name of this station differs in spelling and punctuation from the official name of Sea-Tac Airport. Use *SeaTac/Airport Station* on all references.

- *King Street Station*, which appears on current platform signage. However, when possible, use Seattle (King Street) instead.

**sub-** In general do not hyphenate when using a prefix with a word starting with a consonant, thus: *subconsultant, subrecipient*. See hyphens.

**suffixes** If a word combination does not appear in Webster’s New World (or has a separate listing in the AP Stylebook), use two words for the verb form but hyphenate any noun or adjective forms.

**super-** in general, no hyphen. Superagency, superhighway, supercarrier, superpower, supercharge. As with all prefixes; however, use a hyphen if a capitalized word follows: *super-Republican*. 
symbol a simple image, the meaning of which we must learn.

T

**T-Mobile Field** Baseball stadium in the SODO District, formerly Safeco Field.

**Tacoma Link** The 1.6-mile light rail system with five stations running from Tacoma Dome Station to downtown Tacoma. In 2022 Sound Transit will rename Tacoma Line the T Line.

takeout n. 1 the act of taking out. 2 prepared foods bought to be taken away and eaten at home, etc. – adj. 1 designating or of prepared food sold as by a restaurant to be eaten away from the premises. Also, take-out.

**telephone numbers** Ten numbers, only. Do not use a 1 in front of the phone number for long distance and toll-free numbers, and use a hyphen, not parentheses, to separate the area code from the rest of the phone number: 206-937-XXXX, 800-XXX-XXXX, XXX-NU2-XXXX, XXX-FOR-FREE (367-3733). Don’t use periods (or dots) instead of hyphens. For extension numbers, abbreviate and lowercase extension, and separate it with a comma from the main number: 937-XXXX, Ext. XXX. See hyphens. Agencies no longer use “Relay” in regional ORCA print and online references. TTY relay should now be TTY: 711.

**that, which** That is the defining, or restrictive, pronoun for essential clauses: *The lawn mower that is broken is in the shop (tells which one).* Which is the nondefining, or nonrestrictive, pronoun for nonessential clauses: *The lawn mower, which is broken, is in the shop (adds a fact about the only mower in question).* See that, who below.

- In the examples above, note the correct use of commas: Always set *which* clauses off with commas (or sometimes dashes or parentheses), and *that* clauses aren’t. You cannot cut essential clauses without changing the meaning of a sentence. Do not set off an
that, who When an essential or nonessential clause refers to a human being or an animal with a name, introduce the clause with who (or whom). Do not use commas to separate the who clause from the rest of the sentence if the clause is essential to the meaning of the sentence: The customer who called the office … If the clause is not essential to the meaning, use who: Jack, who lives in Covington, … That is the preferred pronoun to introduce essential clauses that refer to an inanimate object, an animal without a name, and other things: Greg built the house that burned down Tuesday. (Which is the only acceptable pronoun to introduce a nonessential clause that refers to an inanimate object: The house, which Greg built, burned down Tuesday.) See that, which.

the A few rules for usage:

- The is an article that defines a noun as specific or unspecified. The is a definite article, which means it limits the meaning of a noun to one particular thing. Specific: Are you going to the party this weekend? General: Are you going to party this weekend?

Abstract nouns represent concepts, not real things. When talking about a general abstract noun or about something that is a general concept or idea, we do not use “the.” Example: If talking about quality of life as a general idea, do not use the. If specifying which/whose quality of life, then use “the.” The quality of life for my family is important. That is specific, so use the.

- In a comma-separated list of companies in an article, you do not need to include “the,” just refer to the name: National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration.

- When there is only one of something, use the.

they, them, their In most cases, a plural pronoun should agree in number with the antecedent: The children love the books their uncle gave them. They/them/their is acceptable as a singular and/or gender-neutral pronoun. AP Style recommends against using other gender-neutral pronouns such as xe or ze. Usage example: You might use a singular they when you must shield an anonymous source’s gender and other wording is overly awkward: The person feared for their own safety and spoke on condition of anonymity.

- Arguments for using they/them as a singular sometimes arise with an indefinite pronoun (anyone, everyone, someone) or unspecified/unknown gender (a person, the victim, the winner). Examples of rewording: All the class members raised their
hands (instead of everyone raised their hands). The foundation gave grants to anyone who lost a job this year (instead of anyone who lost their job). Police said they would identify the victim after notification of relatives (instead of after notification of their relatives or after notification of his or her relatives). Lottery officials said the winner could claim the prize Tuesday (instead of their or his or her prize).

- In stories about people who identify as neither male nor female or ask not to be referred to as he/she/him/her: Use the person's name in place of a pronoun, or otherwise reword the sentence, whenever possible. If they/them/their use is essential, explain in the text that the person prefers a gender-neutral pronoun.
- Be sure that the phrasing does not imply more than one person. Hendricks said the new job is a thrill (instead of Hendricks said Hendricks is thrilled about the new job or Hendricks said they are thrilled about the new job). Lowry's partner is Dana Adams, an antiques dealer. They bought a house last year (instead of Lowry and Lowry's partner bought a house last year or Lowry and their partner bought a house last year).
- See the inclusive language guide.

ticket vending machine Use the simpler ticket machine when possible. Do not use TVM.

time Lowercase and use periods for a.m., p.m. Use numerals except for noon and midnight. Do not put a 12 in front of noon or midnight. Don't use 12 p.m. or 12 a.m. (In Latin, these abbreviations stand for ante meridiem, "before noon," and post meridiem, "afternoon.")

- Times on the hour do not take zeros. Including double zeroes is acceptable, however, when aligning multiple times in charts and tables.
  Use a colon to separate hours from minutes: 1:30 p.m., 11 a.m., not 11:00 a.m.
- Here are styles for giving ranges of time: The hours are 8:30-10 a.m. and 6-9 p.m. (or 8:30 to 10 a.m. and 6 to 9 p.m.). Service will run from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., from noon to 1:30 p.m., from 1:30-3 p.m.)
- Avoid redundancies like 11:30 a.m. this morning or 11:30 p.m. Tuesday night. Instead, use 11:30 a.m. today, 11 p.m. Tuesday. The wording 3 o'clock in the afternoon is acceptable but wordy.

time frame Two words. A particular time frame: Provide at least a 24-hour notice. Please provide at least 24 hours’ notice.

timeline One word.
timesaving One word.

titles Generally, capitalize formal titles when they appear before a person’s name, but lowercase titles if they are informal, appear without a person’s name, follow a person’s name or are set off before a name by commas. President Bush; President-elect Obama; Sen. Harry Reid; Evan Bayh, a senator from Indiana; Chairman Evans sat down to tie his shoe. The chairman sat down to tie his shoe. Robert Evans, the chairman, looked down and saw that his shoe was untied.

Lowercase adjectives that designate the status of a title. If a title is long, place it after the person’s name, or set it off with commas before the person’s name. Examples: The senior senator from Indiana, Dick Lugar; former President George H.W. Bush; Paul Schneider, deputy secretary of homeland security.

toward Not towards, which is not a word in American English.

trackbed one word. Try using track foundation instead.

transit center A transit stop or station where several routes or lines meet. Capitalize the full name of transit centers: the Bellevue Transit Center, the Federal Way Transit Center. Lowercase transit center when the term stands alone (is not the proper name): The transit center is near Northgate Shopping Center. Avoid the acronym TC whenever possible.

traveling, traveled Not travelling or travelled, as is common in British English. Most American plurals default toward single consonants.

transit operator On first reference, transit operator is the preferred term for people who operate buses or light rail trains. To avoid confusion with other types of operators, include the word transit on first reference. Bus driver or operator is acceptable to avoid redundancy. Always lowercase.

transit-oriented development A public and private development supporting transit use by emphasizing pedestrian and transit access, clustering development, and mixing land uses and activities. Abbreviate to TOD on second reference but use sparingly. (Note: Transit-oriented
development is correct. For a while the agency made an exception to the rule by omitting the hyphen in this compound modifier, but we are back in step with the correct punctuation of the term.)

**transportation demand management** Cooperative efforts by transit agencies, local government and business to manage transportation demand and make public transportation more attractive. Methods include limiting parking, promoting flextime and building park-and-ride lots. Spell out on first reference. TDM is acceptable on second reference but use very sparingly.

**Transportation Improvement Program** A program of intermodal transportation projects, to implement over several years, growing out of the planning process and designed to improve transportation in a community. This program is required as a condition of locality receiving federal transit and highway grants. Spell out on first reference. TIP is acceptable on second reference.

**tribes, tribal** Refers to a sovereign political entity, communities sharing a common ancestry, culture or language, and a social group of linked families who may be part of an ethnic group. Identify tribes by the political identity specified by the tribe, nation or community: *The Apache Tribe of Oklahoma, the Cherokee Nation*. Ethnic group is preferred when referring to ethnicity or ethnic violence. **Normally lowercased in text; however, if corresponding with entities that capitalize their titles, follow their convention.**

- Puyallup Tribe of Indians
- Muckleshoot Indian Tribe
- Nisqually Indian Tribe (although the tribe often uses Nisqually Tribe)

See also *American Indians, Native Americans* within race, ethnicity section.

**trolley bus** Two words. Trolley coach or trolley is acceptable in texts to avoid redundancy. Use the term to refer to a bus propelled by electrical power from two overhead wires.

**TTY** Abbreviation for telecommunications device for the deaf and teletypewriter. Acceptable on first reference when used following a phone number. The following is a recommended format for stating a TTY telephone number: (888) 713-6030 TTY. Do not use TDD.
underway One word in all uses.

union names You can shorten formal names of unions to conventionally accepted names: Change: United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America to: United Auto Workers union. Capitalize short-form names except for union. Capitalize union when it is part of the formal name: Amalgamated Transit Union.

University District Spell out and capitalize on first reference for the neighborhood. On later references, you may use U District. For the station opening in 2021, it’s just U District Station.

University of Washington Spell out and capitalize on first reference. Use UW (all caps, no periods) or the university (lowercase) on second reference. Use the same convention when referring to the University of Washington, Tacoma. Use UW Tacoma on second reference.

US vs. U.S. Use US without periods in headlines and subheads, including online (because it saves space), and U.S. with periods within texts. In all-caps spellings periods in U.S. are needed for clarity. When used in an infographic, if space permits, use periods.

vanpool One word. A vanpool is a prearranged service using passenger vans to carry commuters with similar origins and destinations.

via Means “by way of,” not “by means of.” Use via (or, simpler, use through) to show the direction of a journey: The route goes from Seattle to Southcenter via Rainier Beach. Don’t use via to show the means by which someone makes a journey: He made the trip via bus. Say: He made the trip by bus. Use VIA in all caps when referring to shuttle service to Link stations in the Rainier Valley.
**W**

-ward, -wards Virtually none of the following directional words ending with this suffix end with an s: *Toward, backward, forward, downward, upward, onward, outward, inward, southward, skyward, Earthward, heavenward, homeward*. British speakers say “towards,” but it is not a word in American English.

**weary vs. wary** Both are adjectives, but weary means to be tired, exhausted, or lethargic. *After that long hike, I need to rest my weary bones.* Wary means to be skeptical, suspicious or fearful of something. *Hitting that deer made me wary of driving after dark.*

**website** One word. Also, *webcam, webcast, webmaster, webpage*. But *web address, web browser*. When referencing a web URL, it is not necessary to include *http://* or *www*. Simply type websites as follows: *soundtransit.org* or *seattletimes.com* or *soundtransit.org/connect2020*

**well** Hyphenate as part of a compound modifier: *She is a well-dressed woman. He is well-fed.*

**well-being** Hyphenate well- modifiers.

**well-informed** Hyphenate.

**-wide** No hyphen. Some examples: *citywide, nationwide, continentwide, statewide, countrywide, worldwide, industrywide*.

**workforce** One word, joining *workbook, workday, workhorse, workout, workplace, workstation and workweek.*
Y

**year-end** Hyphenate both the noun and adjective.

**yearlong** One word.

**year-round** Hyphenate.

**years** Use numerals without commas: *In 2003 ...* Use an “s” and no apostrophe to show spans of decades or centuries but use an apostrophe at the start of the year when omitting the first two numerals: *1990s, 1900s, '68, '60s.* Years are the one exception to the rule against beginning a sentence with numerals: *1994 was one of his best years.* See [dates, numbers](#).

Z

**zero, zeros** Don’t include unnecessary zeros in times and dollar amounts: *10 a.m., $35;* not *10:00 a.m., $35.00.* Including double zeroes is acceptable; however, when aligning multiple times or dollar amounts in charts and tables. See [cents, time](#).

**ZIP code** A rare case where you should only use the abbreviation, not the longer Zone Improvement Plan. Run the five digits together without a comma, and do not put a comma between the state name and the ZIP code: *New York, NY 10020.* Except for mailing addresses in business correspondence, put only one space between the state abbreviation and ZIP code; use two spaces in business correspondence. Following post office guidelines, don’t include the ZIP+4 digits in return addresses printed on envelopes, postcards and publications.
How to make your writing inclusive

Words matter, so we must embrace words that are inclusive, meaning they “acknowledge diversity, convey respect to all people, are sensitive to differences and promotes equal opportunities. Inclusive language avoids biases, slang or expressions that discriminate against groups of people based on race, gender or socioeconomic status. It is “communication that respects and reflects people’s lived experience, using the words they find most accurate and centering their point of view. Inclusive language helps us understand and be understood; it shows that we are listening and that we care; it helps us build trust with our readers.” *

Language must also be equitable, which means paying attention to whom you write about, how you tell their stories, whose points of view are present and whose are absent – whose voices did you amplify and whose perspective did you assume? The University of Washington’s equitable language guide asks writers to ask themselves the following in terms of representation:

- Whose point of view is central to the story? If the story focuses on a particular group or culture, are people from within that group the main figures, rather than an outsider coming in as the “hero”?
- Who is left out of the story?
- Does the work rely on unexamined stereotypes?
- As the storyteller, what’s your position and relationship to the subject(s)?
- What does the story assume about the reader? (For instance, does it assume that the reader is or isn’t part of the group being described?)

A few general best practices:
- Use people-first language (i.e., person with a disability vs. disabled or person of color vs. colored) unless the person indicates another preference.
- Never assume a person’s gender identity based on their name or their appearance – if you don’t know, use gender inclusive pronouns or ask for their pronouns.
- Use gender-inclusive language when speaking in generalities or about groups of people that you do not know the individual pronouns of (i.e., everyone vs. ladies and gentlemen and they/them/their vs. he/him/his and she/her/hers).

*From Colorado State University and University of Washington*

ST staff: For an A-to-Z listing of inclusive language, see CREI’s Shared Language Guide. Currently available only on the Hub, it will soon become part of this document.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of using:</th>
<th>Try:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>him, her, she, he</td>
<td>they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>man</td>
<td>person, individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stewardess</td>
<td>flight attendant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>actress</td>
<td>actor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>congressman</td>
<td>congressional representative, legislator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>man and wife</td>
<td>husband and wife or partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom and Jane Doe</td>
<td>Jane and Tom Doe (Doe is her married name, but his birth name, also because people by default put the man first.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ladies or office girls</td>
<td>office staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waiter, waitress</td>
<td>server</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mom</td>
<td>parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on the warpath</td>
<td>angry and seeking retribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gendered</td>
<td>gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minorities</td>
<td>people or communities of color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transgender(s) as a noun, transgendered</td>
<td>transgender person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bathroom bill</td>
<td>nondiscrimination law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sex-change or sex-change operation</td>
<td>sex reassignment (SRS) or gender-affirming surgery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Hey, guys” as a greeting</td>
<td>“Hey, everyone” or “Hi all”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mankind</td>
<td>people, human beings, humanity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manhole</td>
<td>maintenance hole, utility hole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>freshman</td>
<td>first-year student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mailman</td>
<td>mail or letter carrier</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Socioeconomic examples – Instead of:**

| inner city                | under-resourced              |
| disinvested               | low opportunity              |
| disadvantaged             | neighborhoods with high poverty rates |
| distressed neighborhoods   | neighborhoods with access to fewer opportunities |
| working poor              | hardworking, working to make ends meet |
| homeless people or “the homeless” | people experiencing homelessness |
| food desert, food stamps, the hungry | food insecurity, food poverty, worker welfare, hunger |

*Adapted from Northwestern University*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word/phrase to avoid</th>
<th>Meaning or reason to avoid word/phrase</th>
<th>Suggestion for replacement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addicted</td>
<td>like crack</td>
<td>Oftentimes used to describe something that the person uses often, “I’m addicted to Netflix” or “These candies are like crack.” While “addicted” can be appropriate in some situations, it can also cause harm to those who are truly experiencing drug addiction or recovery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>America</td>
<td>The Americas encompass a lot more than the United States. There is South America, Central America, Mexico, Canada, and the Caribbean to name a few of 42 countries in total. Yet, when we talk about &quot;Americans,&quot; we are usually just referring to people from the United States. This erases other cultures and depicts the United States as the dominant American country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basket case</td>
<td></td>
<td>The term originally referred to a person, usually a soldier from World War I, who has lost all four limbs; the basket refers to how others would carry the person around.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The blind</td>
<td>the deaf</td>
<td>eye for an eye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth defect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cakewalk</td>
<td>takes the cake</td>
<td>Black slaves would covertly mock aristocratic white slave owners through exaggerated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word/phrase to avoid</td>
<td>Meaning or reason to avoid word/phrase</td>
<td>Suggestion for replacement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dance. These owners often held “balls”</td>
<td>These owners often held “balls” for entertainment, where slaves would perform these dances to win a cake. Cakewalks became popular through the racism of 19th century minstrel shows.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort station</td>
<td>During World War II the Japanese military established military brothels where they forced “comfort women” into sexual slavery in “comfort stations” in countries they occupied.</td>
<td>Public toilet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghetto</td>
<td>barrio</td>
<td>Has a long history, but eventually came to indicate any socially segregated non-White urban neighborhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handicapped</td>
<td>disabled</td>
<td>suffers from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He or she</td>
<td>These terms imply that gender is binary (i.e., either man or woman) and does not acknowledge that people may identify anywhere along the gender spectrum and/or their biological sex may not match their gender identity. Inclusive language ensures the acknowledgement of all people in a room.</td>
<td>Everyone, people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hip, hip hooray!</td>
<td>During the Holocaust, German citizens started using “hep, hep” (once a harmless Hooray</td>
<td>Hooray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word/phrase to avoid</td>
<td>Meaning or reason to avoid word/phrase</td>
<td>Suggestion for replacement</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>sheep herding call) as a rallying cry when they would hunt down Jewish citizens. The phrase’s anti-Semitic undertones go back to 1819, with the Hep Hep riots — a time of both Jewish emancipation from the German Confederation and communal violence against German Jews.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Widely used term to describe individuals from Spanish-speaking countries. It is problematic because of its origins in colonization and the implication that to be Hispanic or Latinx/Latine/Latino, one needs to be Spanish speaking. It is also problematic to call people Hispanic based on their name or appearance without first checking to see how they identify.</td>
<td>Latinx Using person’s country of origin such as Cuban American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hold down the fort</td>
<td>In the U.S., the historical connotation refers to guarding against Native American “intruders” and feeds into the stereotype of “savages.”</td>
<td>Cover the office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexual</td>
<td>Because of its clinical history, extremists aggressively use the word to suggest gay people are somehow not “normal.”</td>
<td>Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal immigrant</td>
<td>Saying that a person is “illegal” dehumanizes them and implies that they are a criminal, not considering that they may be a refugee</td>
<td>Born in [insert country]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word/phrase to avoid</td>
<td>Meaning or reason to avoid word/phrase</td>
<td>Suggestion for replacement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>seeking asylum. The term also suggests that the individual, and not the potential actions they have taken, are unlawful.</td>
<td>person has been forced to leave their country to escape war, persecution or natural disaster</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>We associate the term &quot;Indian&quot; in the U.S. with Christopher Columbus who mistook the Caribbean islands for those of the Indian Ocean.</td>
<td>Native American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long time no see</td>
<td>Originally mocking Native Americans or Chinese pidgin English.</td>
<td>I haven’t seen you in a long time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Refers to biological sex and not gender. We very rarely need to identify or know a person’s biological sex and more often are referring to gender. In these cases, using gender identity terms is preferred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr.</td>
<td>Mrs.</td>
<td>Ms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraplegic</td>
<td>quadriplegic</td>
<td>These terms can generalize the population and minimize personhood; however, some</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word/phrase to avoid</th>
<th>Meaning or reason to avoid word/phrase</th>
<th>Suggestion for replacement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>people may identify with these terms so ask preference.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peanut gallery</td>
<td>This phrase intends to reference hecklers or critics, usually ill-informed ones. In reality, the &quot;peanut gallery&quot; names a section in theaters, usually the cheapest and worst, where many Black people sat during the era of vaudeville.</td>
<td>Crowd, audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picnic</td>
<td>For many Black people, the word “picnic” is a racially insensitive reminder of the time when Southern white people made lynching a regular occurrence at picnics. The offensiveness hides in the word’s two syllables.</td>
<td>Party, gathering, barbecue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Preferred” pronouns</td>
<td>Using the word “preferred” in front of pronouns suggests that gender identity, especially outside of the binary, is a choice and that the pronouns don’t really belong to the person, they are just “preferring” them over their “true” pronouns.</td>
<td>Pronouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using the word “preferred” in front of pronouns suggests that gender identity, especially outside of the binary, is a choice and that the pronouns don’t really belong to the person, they are just “preferring” them over their “true” pronouns.</td>
<td>Pronouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual preference</td>
<td>Again, this term suggests that being lesbian, gay or bisexual is a choice.</td>
<td>Sexual orientation or orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stands with _____</td>
<td>Being in solidarity with an individual, community/group. A local TV station proclaims they “Stand for truth,” and it sounds great, but the truth is, not everyone can stand. Choose a word that is inclusive.</td>
<td>ST speaks out in solidarity with the _____ community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word/phrase to avoid</td>
<td>Meaning or reason to avoid word/phrase</td>
<td>Suggestion for replacement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starving</td>
<td>I’m starving</td>
<td>I’m broke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The grandfather clause</td>
<td>grandfathered in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgendered</td>
<td>The word transgender never needs the extraneous “ed” at the end of the word. In fact, such a construction is grammatically incorrect. Only verbs can be transformed into participles by adding “ed” to the end of the word, and transgender is an adjective, not a verb or a noun.</td>
<td>Transgender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribe</td>
<td>spirit animal</td>
<td>Tribe is correct if you are referencing an actual Native American tribe, otherwise it is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word/phrase to avoid</td>
<td>Meaning or reason to avoid word/phrase</td>
<td>Suggestion for replacement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an appropriation of Native American culture. As is “spirit animal.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War</td>
<td>go to war</td>
<td>at war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adapted from the Colorado State University’s Inclusive Language Guide*
Acronyms

If you look at the acronym list below and think, it’s not complete, you’d be right. Sound Transit maintains a list of more than 990 acronyms accessible via an intranet search. Acronyms can be handy when dealing with lengthy terms that appear repeatedly in your document, but, when possible, write without them.

Avoid producing slides like the one above by following a few guidelines for acronym use:

- Avoid as many acronyms as you can so that you don’t end up with what the Associated Press Stylebook calls “alphabet soup.”
- If you must use them, acronyms usually appear in uppercase, no full stops (AWOL, not A.W.O.L).
- Always write the term out at first reference. Headlines can be an exception. You can save space in a headline with an easily recognizable acronyms and then spell it out in the subheadline. (Headline) Help shape CREI’s second Equity Summit. (Subhead) Take three minutes to complete a survey and give the Office of Civil Rights, Equity & Inclusion your thoughts about what should be part of the next agencywide Equity Summit.
- Unless the acronym is obscure, do not put it in parentheses next to the term. Just let it appear as an acronym in future references.
• If the acronym will only appear once in your document or not at all, please don’t go to the trouble of defining it. Ditto if the term only appears a couple of times, just write it out. The purpose of acronyms is to be able to quickly reference a term or name that appears multiple times in a document.
• Beware the use of acronyms causing unintentional repetition:
  PIN number—Personal Identification Number
  ATM machine—Automated Teller Machine

Thanks to Terry Beals for compiling most of this list. A more growing list of more than 995 acronyms lives in ST’s intranet.

ACEC   Acute Critical Effluent Concentration
ACHP   Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
ACOE   United States Army Corps of Engineers
ADA    American Disabilities Act
ADA AG  Accessibility Guidelines
AIW    Accelerated Improvement Workshop
AKART  All Known, Available and Reasonable Technology
ALTA   American Land & Title Association
AP     Associated Press
APS    Accessible Pedestrian Signals
APTA   American Public Transit Association
ARMT   Archaeological Resources Monitoring and Treatment
ASAT   Airplane Stabilizer Assembly Tool
ASL    Air Space Lease (WSDOT)
BAFO   Best and Final Offer Proposal
BA     Biological Analysis (Assessment)
B&A    Bid and Award
BAT    Best Available Technology
BAT   Business Access and Transit Lane
BCAG  Boeing Commercial Airplane Group
BCT   Best Conventional Pollution Control
BIM   Building Information Modeling
BMP   Best Management Practices
BMP   Bicycle Master Plan
BNSF  Exception: Use BNSF Railway the first time, then just the acronym (the company no longer uses its full name)
BOCA  Building Officials Code Administrators
BOD   Biological Oxygen Demand
BRT   Bus Rapid Transit
CB    Catch Basin
CBO   Certified Building Official
Cs    Seismic Coefficient
CDF   Control Density Fill
CERCLA Comprehensive Environmental Remediation Compensation and Liability Act
CFR   Code of Federal Regulations
CHH   Capitol Hill Housing
CHTC  Capitol Hill Transit Coalition
CIH   Certified Industrial Hygienist
CLPRC Central Link Project Review Committee (PRC)
CM    Construction Management
CMB   Central Maintenance Base
CMS   Content Management System
COC   Contaminants of Concern
COD   Chemical Oxygen Demand
COMTO Conference of Minority Transportation Officials
COP   Citizen’s Oversight Panel
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPM</td>
<td>Critical Path Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPTED</td>
<td>Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSA</td>
<td>Council of State Governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSM</td>
<td>Construction Safety Manual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSMC</td>
<td>Coastal Zone Management Certification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSMH</td>
<td>Combined Sewer Manhole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Combined Sewer Overflow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTA</td>
<td>Community Transportation Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTMP</td>
<td>Construction Transportation Management Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTR</td>
<td>Commute Trip Reduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUD</td>
<td>Contract Unit Descriptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUP</td>
<td>Conditional Use Permit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWA</td>
<td>Clean Water Act (EPA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWR</td>
<td>Council of World Regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CX</td>
<td>Customer Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DA</td>
<td>Developer Agreement (WSDOT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D/B</td>
<td>Design-Build</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dB(A)</td>
<td>Decibel Levels using the “A” weighting network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DBE</td>
<td>Disadvantaged Business Enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCAC/MRM</td>
<td>Define and Control Airplane Configuration/Manufacturing Resource Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCLU</td>
<td>Department of Construction and Land Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCM</td>
<td>Design Criteria Manual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCTED</td>
<td>Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (WA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEIS</td>
<td>Draft Environmental Impact Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DM</td>
<td>Design Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMR</td>
<td>Discharge Monitoring Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNR</td>
<td>Department of Natural Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNS</td>
<td>Determination of Nonsignificance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOE</td>
<td>Department of Ecology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPM</td>
<td>Deputy Project Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRB</td>
<td>Design Review Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DS</td>
<td>Determination of Significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSTT</td>
<td>Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSC</td>
<td>Differing Site Conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EA</td>
<td>Environmental Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIS</td>
<td>Environmental Impact Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>Emergency Access Point (Emergency Fire Water Supply)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEO</td>
<td>Equal Employment Opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELE</td>
<td>East Link Extension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELP</td>
<td>Executive Leaders Program (launches at ST September 2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMF</td>
<td>Electromagnetic Fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EOFA</td>
<td>Extended Object Free Area (KC Airport regulations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPA</td>
<td>Environmental Protection Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPB</td>
<td>Earth Pressure Balance (type of TBM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPF</td>
<td>Essential Public Facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERA</td>
<td>Ecological Risk Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESC</td>
<td>Erosion and Sediment Control Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVLE</td>
<td>Everett Link Extension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exp Mod</td>
<td>Experience Rating Modifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAA</td>
<td>Federal Aviation Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCWA</td>
<td>Federal Clean Water Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEIS</td>
<td>Final Environmental Impact Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFGA</td>
<td>Full Funding Grant Agreement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FHCA  First Hill Condominium Association
FHIA  First Hill Improvement Association
FHWA  Federal Highway Administration
FMRC  Factory Mutual Research Corporation
FRA  Federal Railway Administration
FTA  Federal Transit Administration
FWLE  Federal Way Link Extension
GBR  Geotechnical Baseline Report
GCR  Geotechnical Characterization Report
GDR  Geotechnical Data Report
GIR  Geotechnical Interpretive Report
GP  General Provision (part of RFP)
G-Value  Velocity gradient related to turbulence during mixing
GVWR  Gross Vehicle Weight Rating
HAZWOPER  Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response
HE  Hearing Examiner
HMC  Hazardous Materials Coordinator
HCSHSP  Hazardous and Contaminated Substance Health and Safety Plan
HCT  High-Capacity Transit
HOV  High Occupancy Vehicle
HPA  Hydraulic Project Approval
HTLE  Hilltop Tacoma Link Extension
IAQV  Indoor Air Quality and Ventilation
IBC  International Building Code
IBEW  International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
ICBO  International Conference of Building Officials
ICC  International Code Council
ILA   Interlocal Agreement
ILP   Influential Leaders Program (launches at ST September 2019)
IPA   Intergovernmental Personnel Act
JARPA  Joint Aquatic Resources Permit Application
JIT   Just In Time (Manufacturing term versus push & pull)
JV    Joint Venture
K     Contract
KCM   King County Metro
KPIT  King County Key Partners in Transportation
KSS   King Street Station
LC50  Lethal Concentration, 50% (toxicity test that will kill 50% of test organisms)
LEP   Limited English proficiency
LLE   Lynnwood Link Extension
LOS   Level of Service
LPA   Locally Preferred Alternative
LRT   Light Rail Transit
LRV   Light Rail Vehicles
LUST  Leaking Underground Storage Tanks
MBO   Management by Objective
MCL   Maximum Contaminant Level
MCA   Master Cooperation Agreement
MIC   Manufacturing Industrial Council
MIP   Mobility Initiative Program
MDE   Maximum Design Earthquake
MDL   Method Detection Limit
MOS   Minimum Operating Segment
MOA   Memorandum of Agreement
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MOU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTBE</td>
<td>Methyl Tertiary Butyl Ether</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTCA</td>
<td>Model Toxic Control Act (Washington State)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUP</td>
<td>Master Use Permit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M/W/DBE</td>
<td>Minority, Women and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAAQS</td>
<td>National Ambient Air Quality Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAGPRA</td>
<td>Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATM</td>
<td>New Austrian Tunneling Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCSBCS</td>
<td>National Conference of States on Building Codes and Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEPD</td>
<td>North End Development Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEPA</td>
<td>National Environmental Protection Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGA</td>
<td>National Governor's Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIST</td>
<td>National Institute of Science and Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>NMFS</td>
<td>National Marine Fisheries Service</td>
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<td>NPDES</td>
<td>National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTP</td>
<td>Notice to Proceed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTU</td>
<td>Nephelometric Turbidity Units</td>
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<tr>
<td>NWR</td>
<td>Northwest Region (WSDOT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCIP</td>
<td>Owner Controlled Insurance Plan</td>
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<td>OCS</td>
<td>Overhead Contact System</td>
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<tr>
<td>OED</td>
<td>Office of Economic Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>ODE</td>
<td>Operational Design Earthquake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORO</td>
<td>Olympic Region Offices (WSDOT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSC</td>
<td>Olympic Service Center (WSDOT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMF East/E</td>
<td>Operations Maintenance Facility East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMF North/N</td>
<td>Operations Maintenance Facility North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMF South/S</td>
<td>Operations Maintenance Facility South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAHs</td>
<td>Polynuclear Aromatic Hydrocarbons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAM</td>
<td>Polyacrylamide (for polymer batch chemical treatment process)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PB</td>
<td>Parsons-Brinkerhoff (consultant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCCTC</td>
<td>Pierce County Coordinated Transportation Coalition</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCO</td>
<td>Pollution Control Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCS</td>
<td>Permits Compliance System</td>
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<tr>
<td>PDA</td>
<td>Public Development Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDb</td>
<td>Permit Database</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEO</td>
<td>Public Enforcement Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PID</td>
<td>Photoionization Detector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLA</td>
<td>Project Labor Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLP</td>
<td>People Leaders Program (Formerly the Management Excellence Program, MEP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PM</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMP</td>
<td>Project Management Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>PNOA</td>
<td>Public Notice of Application (DOE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNOD</td>
<td>Public Notice of Draft (DOE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMOC</td>
<td>Project Management Oversight Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>PNOH</td>
<td>Public Notice of Hearings (DOE)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PNOM</td>
<td>Public Notice of Meetings (DOE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POD</td>
<td>Plan of the Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPV</td>
<td>Peak Particle Velocity Vector</td>
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<tr>
<td>PQL</td>
<td>Practical Quantitation Limit</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRC</td>
<td>Project Review Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRT</td>
<td>Personal Rapid Transit</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSCAA</td>
<td>Puget Sound Clean Air Agency (replaces PSAPCA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSO</td>
<td>Portfolio Services Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSRC</td>
<td>Puget Sound Regional Council</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
PSTC  Puget Sound Transit Consultants
PSWQMP Puget Sound Water Quality Management Plan
PUD   Public Utilities Department
PTS   Permit Tracking System (Used by DCLU)
QC/QA  Quality Control/Quality Assurance
Qpgl  Glacial Lacustrine Deposits
Qpgm  Glaciomarine Deposits
Qpnl  Non-glacial Lacustrine Deposits
Qva, Qpgo, Geological Granular Material
Qpnf
RAPID Make Recommendations, establish Agreement, Perform, provide Inputs, make Decisions
RACI Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed
RCW   Revised Code of Washington
RE    Resident Engineer
REO   Rider Experience and Operations Committee
RFI   Request for Information (request for clarification or a change to an RFQ)
RFP   Request for Proposal
RFQ   Request for Qualifications
RIAS  Remote Infrared Audible Signage (Talking Signs)
RI/FS Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study
RM    Rational Method
ROD   Record of Decision
ROM   Rough Order of Magnitude
ROW   Right-of-Way
RPA   Reasonable Potential Analysis
RPPV  Resultant Peak Particle Velocity Vector
RS    Responsive Summary (DOE)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RSNTCP</td>
<td>Regional Special Needs Transportation Coordination Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>RTID</td>
<td>Regional Transportation Investment District</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAD</td>
<td>Special Approved Discharge authorization</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBCCI</td>
<td>Southern Building Code Congress International</td>
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<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Site Conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCADA</td>
<td>Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (for trains)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCL</td>
<td>Seattle City Light</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCTP</td>
<td>Seattle Comprehensive Transportation Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDMH</td>
<td>Storm Drain Manhole</td>
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<td>SDOT</td>
<td>Seattle Department of Transportation</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEIS</td>
<td>Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEM</td>
<td>Sequential Excavation Method (same as NATM)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEPA</td>
<td>State Environmental Policy Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>SFD</td>
<td>Seattle Fire Department</td>
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<td>SHPO</td>
<td>State Historical Preservation Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIP</td>
<td>Service Implementation Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIU</td>
<td>Significant Industrial User</td>
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<tr>
<td>SLP</td>
<td>Senior Leaders Program (Launches at ST September 2020)</td>
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<td>SLRRP</td>
<td>Seattle Light Rail Review Panel</td>
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<td>SLURP</td>
<td>Seattle Land Use Review Panel</td>
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<tr>
<td>SM</td>
<td>Site Manager</td>
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<td>SMC</td>
<td>Seattle Municipal Code</td>
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<td>SME</td>
<td>Subject Matter Expert</td>
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<td>SMS</td>
<td>Safety Management Systems</td>
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<td>SNOTRAC</td>
<td>Snohomish County Special Needs Transportation Coalition</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOB</td>
<td>Special Operations Bureau (Seattle Police Department)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOQ</td>
<td>Statement of Qualifications</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOV</td>
<td>Save Our Valley (Rainier Valley Community Group)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOV</td>
<td>Single Occupancy Vehicle</td>
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<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>Special Provision (part of RFP)</td>
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<td>SPO</td>
<td>Strategic Planning Office (Seattle)</td>
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<td>SPU</td>
<td>Seattle Public Utilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPUI</td>
<td>Single Point Urban Interchange</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSHB</td>
<td>State Shoreline Hearings Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSHO</td>
<td>Site Safety and Health Officer</td>
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<td>SSMH</td>
<td>Sanitary Sewer Manhole</td>
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<td>ST</td>
<td>Sound Transit</td>
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<tr>
<td>STart</td>
<td>Sound Transit Art Program</td>
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<td>STARTS</td>
<td>Sound Transit Anti-Racist Training Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>STEL</td>
<td>Short Term Exposure Limits</td>
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<tr>
<td>SVOCs</td>
<td>Semivolatile Organic Compounds</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWMM</td>
<td>Stormwater Management Manual (Doe)</td>
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<td>SWPPP</td>
<td>Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan</td>
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<td>TAB</td>
<td>Tunnel Advisory Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>TACID</td>
<td>Tacoma Area Coalition of Individuals with Disabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>TBM</td>
<td>Tunnel Boring Machine</td>
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<tr>
<td>TCLP</td>
<td>Toxicity Characteristic Leaching Procedure</td>
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<tr>
<td>TCM</td>
<td>Traffic Control Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>TCps</td>
<td>Traditional Cultural Properties (Native American)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TDM</td>
<td>Transportation Demand Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>TDLE</td>
<td>Tacoma Dome Link Extension</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEE</td>
<td>Terrestrial Ecological Evaluations (for wildlife, plants, soil biota)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TESC</td>
<td>Temporary Erosion and Sediment Control Plan (DCLU)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TIFIA</td>
<td>Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>TIP</td>
<td>Transportation Improvement Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>TMDL</td>
<td>Total Maximum Daily Loading (DOE)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOC</td>
<td>Total Organic Carbon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOD</td>
<td>Transit Oriented Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOR</td>
<td>Top of Rail</td>
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<tr>
<td>TORP</td>
<td>Tunnel Oversight Review Panel</td>
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<tr>
<td>TP</td>
<td>Technical Provisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPH</td>
<td>Total Petroleum Hydrocarbons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPSS</td>
<td>Traction Power Substations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPU</td>
<td>Tacoma Public Utilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRA</td>
<td>Trip Reduction Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TS&amp;L</td>
<td>Type, Size and Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSS</td>
<td>Total Soluble Solids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTO</td>
<td>Total Toxic Organics</td>
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<tr>
<td>TTY</td>
<td>Teletypewriter</td>
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<td>TVM</td>
<td>Ticket Vending Machines</td>
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<tr>
<td>UBC</td>
<td>Uniform Building Code</td>
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<tr>
<td>UL</td>
<td>Underwriter’s Laboratory</td>
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<tr>
<td>UUP</td>
<td>Unclassified Use Permit</td>
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<tr>
<td>UPD</td>
<td>Urban Planned Development</td>
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<td>UPRR</td>
<td>Union Pacific Railroad</td>
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<td>USFW</td>
<td>United States Department of Fish and Wildlife</td>
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<tr>
<td>VCP</td>
<td>Voluntary Cleanup Plan (DOE)</td>
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<tr>
<td>VMS</td>
<td>Variable Message Signs</td>
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<tr>
<td>VOC</td>
<td>Volatile Organic Compounds</td>
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<tr>
<td>VR</td>
<td>Virtual Reality</td>
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<tr>
<td>WABO</td>
<td>Washington Association of Building Officials</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
WAC  Washington Administrative Code
WDFW  Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
WET  Whole Effluent Toxicity
WOBO  World Organization of Building Officials
WRIA  Water Resource Inventory Area
WSBCC  Washington State Building Code Council
WSBLE  West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions
WSDOE  Washington Department of Ecology
WSDOT  Washington State Department of Transportation
WUTC  Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission

Style guide resources

For additional information, please consult the following resources:

- The Associated Press Stylebook. Access the library’s online version as follows:
  Go to https://apstylebook.com/
  Login/Username: library@soundtransit.org
  Password: L*brary1

- Webster’s New World Dictionary

- Contact [Galen Motin Crawford](mailto:Galen.Motin.Crawford@kingcounty.gov) in Communications Marketing & Engagement