

WRITING ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT: A BRIEF STYLE GUIDE

These are writing conventions and styles normally used when writing about U.S. government. Please observe them and write accordingly! Consult *The Everyday Writer* or other style guides for more detail.

- people elected to the House of Representatives are **representatives** or **members of Congress**; people elected to the Senate are **senators**; while you may use "congressmen" and "congresswomen," these are **not** the preferred terms
- **Congress** is capitalized, but **congressional** is not!
- on first reference, it is standard practice to give the party affiliation and state of specific members of Congress in parentheses after their names; state names can be abbreviated or given in full
e.g. Representative Michelle Bachmann (R-MN), Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-Minnesota)
- capitalize **Senator** or **Representative** only when referring to a specific one
Senator Collins visited a child care center in Augusta
The senators debated the economic stimulus bill for 139 hours before adjourning for libations
- capitalize **President** and **Administration** only when referring to a specific one
e.g. President Obama and the Obama Administration decided to eat lunch in Baltimore on Fridays
Most presidents see their popularity rise and fall during their terms in office
- italicize Supreme Court case names; usually, the date of the **decision** is given in parentheses
e.g. *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896)
- **Supreme Court** is capitalized; second and future references can be shortened to "the Court" (note that Court is capitalized when using this shorthand reference)
- members of the Supreme Court are **justices**, not judges; members of lower federal courts are **judges**
- capitalize **Justice** only when referring to a specific one
Justice Scalia wrote the majority opinion
Seven justices voted not to hear the appeal
- acronyms (initials that form a name) do **not** need periods in between; give the FULL name when referencing the acronym for the first time, then you can use the acronym thereafter
e.g. CIA, FBI, IRS; "The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) said today..."
- Use periods with the abbreviation **U.S.**, and use **U.S.** or **United States** rather than **America**
- the names of the parties **are** capitalized - Democratic Party, Republican Party, and all references to party labels are capitalized (the lower-case words **democratic** and **republican** mean something different than **Democratic** and **Republican**!)
- Do not use "we" or "us" in reference to the United States or any actions taken by the United States