

AILA STYLE GUIDE 2016



AMERICAN
IMMIGRATION
LAWYERS
ASSOCIATION

In general, the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) follows *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Please refer to that source for any style questions unanswered here, and for further examples of the rules outlined below. For citations, AILA adheres to *The Bluebook*. Consistency is key in creating professional content. To that end, AILA incorporates the same style guidance across all products and publications. If you have any specific style-related questions, please contact Lisa Waters at LWaters@aila.org or (202) 507-7633.

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ABBREVIATION

Spell out the full name of a term the first time it is used, followed by the abbreviation in parentheses. Thereafter, use the abbreviation.

- Basic style: lawful permanent resident (LPR)
- When possessive: lawful permanent resident's (LPR)
- When plural: lawful permanent residents (LPRs)

States

Do not abbreviate state names unless they follow a city name or are used to designate political affiliation.

- The state of California
- but* Sacramento, CA
- but* Senator Harry Reid (D-NV)

Abbreviate D.C. with periods, except when used as part of a postal address.
The conference will be held in Washington, D.C.
but AILA National's address is 1331 G St. NW, Washington, DC 20005.

Spell out United States, except when used as an adjective.
The United States and Mexico share a border.
but The U.S. border with Mexico is nearly 2,000 miles long.

Degrees

For educational degrees, abbreviate as follows: B.A., B.S., M.A., J.D., Ph.D., M.B.A., LL.M., LL.B.

CAPITALIZATION

Titles

Use title case, *i.e.*, capitalize the initial letter of each word, except for articles, conjunctions, and prepositions of four or fewer letters (unless it begins a sentence).

Examples of words not capitalized in title case include:

- Articles such as: a, an, the
- Conjunctions such as: and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet, as, than, when, if
- Prepositions such as: at, but, by, in, of, off, on, out, over, to, up, with, into

Examples of words of five or more letters that take initial capitalization:

- Under, Between, Through, After, Because, Insofar as, Among

The words *to* and *as* are never capitalized in titles, unless they are the first word in a title.

Capitalize any word that immediately follows a colon or em-dash.

Always capitalize the first element of a hyphenated word or phrase. Capitalize subsequent elements as well, unless the subsequent element is an article, conjunction, or preposition of four or fewer letters. *E.g.*, Foreign-Born; Employment-Based; In-Fighting; Brother-in-Law's Petition; Out-of-District Applicants; Live-in Alien.

Note: Also capitalize the second element of hyphenated words where the hyphen is inserted after a prefix for clarification purposes. *E.g.*, Re-Entry Permit; Pre-Examination Interview; Non-Native Speaker; Bi-Specialization Procedures.

Job title, office, or position

Capitalize a title, office, or position (1) directly preceding the name, or (2) set off immediately after with commas:

Attorney General Loretta Lynch was born in North Carolina.

Loretta Lynch, Attorney General, was born in North Carolina.

On specific and first reference: President Barack Obama; Senator Barbara Boxer; Representative Luis Gutiérrez; Secretary of State John Kerry; Attorney General Loretta Lynch; Judge Richard Posner; Immigration Judge Elizabeth Kessler.

On general and subsequent reference: The president of the United States; the president; the senator; the congressman; the pope; the representatives; the secretary of state; the secretary of homeland security; the immigration judge.

Governmental bodies and courts

Senate, House, and Congress are capitalized. However, “administration” is not capitalized, even when preceded by the name of the administration (*i.e.*, the Obama administration). Adjectival forms of these words are not capitalized unless otherwise required. *E.g.*, senatorial; congressional.

Names of particular courts or tribunals are capitalized. *E.g.*, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit; Board of Immigration Appeals; the Eleventh Circuit.

Court, when referring to the U.S. Supreme Court, is capitalized in all instances. Otherwise, court is not capitalized when not used as part of a name.

Words such as Board, when referring to a specific tribunal, are capitalized. Otherwise, they are not.

Acts, laws, and regulations

Names of specific pieces of legislation and regulation are capitalized. On subsequent reference, do not capitalize “the act,” “the regulation,” “the public law,” etc. Capitalization also is not used when referring to no specific act, law, or regulation.

After a colon

When a colon is used within a sentence, the first word following the colon is lowercased unless it is a proper name. When a colon introduces a complete sentence, or when it introduces a speech in dialogue or an excerpt, the first word following it is capitalized.

The advocates had one focus: immigration reform.

Most practitioners agree: Immigration reform is desperately needed.

AILA-specific words and titles

Chapter and Committee are capitalized only when used to designate the AILA chapter or committee itself. *E.g.*, the New York Chapter; the EOIR Liaison Committee. Subsequent references to the “chapter” or “committee” are not capitalized. *E.g.*, the chapter; committee chair; chapter bylaws.

The American Immigration Council is abbreviated as “The Council.”

The full names of AILA departments are capitalized. When referring generally to a department generally, “department” is not capitalized.. *E.g.*, the Publications Department; AILA’s Membership Department; the department.

Capitalize the AILA National Office and AILA’s Board of Governors. Board and National Office are capitalized when making a short-hand reference to either.

NUMBERS

Basic rule: Spell out numbers one to nine, and ordinal numbers first to ninth. Use numerals for numbers 10 and above, and for ordinal numbers 10th and above.

Always spell out a number when it is the first word of a sentence.

Use numerals to indicate when it is referring to:

- age (4 years old)
- money (7 million dollars)

- time on the clock (2:00 pm)
- a page or section of an enactment or publication (INA §101)
- percentages (*e.g.*, 3 percent)

Spell out percent (don't use Word's % symbol), except in tables or in informal writing.

Spell out the words million, billion, etc., rather than using the numeral, when referring to numbers of million, billion, etc.:

More than eleven million immigrants live in the United States.

Phone numbers:

Basic style: (202) 507-7600

Toll-free: 1-800-622-7189

Omit zeroes indicating no cents when describing whole dollar amounts. *E.g.*, \$250, *not* \$250.00.

TIME AND DATE

Basic style:

October 1, 2016; October 1 (*not* October 1st)

June 2015

2:00 pm (ET) (*not* EST or EDT)

When a date consisting of a month, day, and year is not immediately followed by a period, colon, or semi-colon, a comma follows the year:

The November 20, 2014, memorandum from the secretary set forth new guidelines.

Range of dates

Two styles are acceptable:

(1) an en dash (*e.g.*, October 16–18); or

(2) the “from”/“to” construction (*e.g.*, from October 16 to 18).

PUNCTUATION AND TYPOGRAPHY

Spacing

There should be only one space between all characters requiring spacing. Use only one space between concluding punctuation (periods, semi-colons, colons, exclamation points, and question marks) and the beginning of the next character, clause, or sentence.

Do not insert a space between symbols such as section (§), paragraph (§), or dollar (\$) and the next character.

Indentation

In a book manuscript or other formal piece of writing, indent the beginning of a new paragraph.

Commas

AILA uses the serial comma, also known as the Oxford comma. Where there is a series of three or more items, place a comma before the conjunction joining the last two items in a series. *E.g.*, red, white, and blue.

Exception: Use of an ampersand (&) is not favored, but do not use a serial comma before an ampersand.

Follow *e.g.* and *i.e.* with a comma. Note that the comma is not italicized.

Quotation marks

In main text, use double quotation marks with singles within:

“Abraham Lincoln once said, ‘Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves.’”

Closing punctuation, such as a period, belongs inside the quotation mark; colons and semicolons belong outside the quotation mark.

Exception: A period or comma goes outside the close-quote mark if the quotation marks are around a single letter. *E.g.*, the letter “A”.

Double and single quotes next to each other should appear as triple quote marks, with no space in between.

“To quote Abraham Lincoln, ‘Don’t interfere with anything in the Constitution,’” the teacher said.

Visa category designations (and any other designation) using a single letter require quotes around the single letter on first reference (*e.g.*, “O” visa). Subsequent references should not have quotes around the single letter.

Hyphens

Use a hyphen between compound adjectives. *E.g.*, non-case-specific questions, early-bird rate, far-reaching effects, well-known author.

Do not use a hyphen with prefixes such as anti, counter, inter, multi, re, semi, super, ultra, etc., even when two like vowels or consonants fall together, unless:

- the second element is capitalized (un-American)
- the second element is a number (pre-1914)
- the term consists of than one word (Tokyo-like)
- the word might be misread (re-create, un-ionized)

AILA prefers the following use/nonuse of hyphens:

asylum seeker	non-native
bimonthly	nonrefundable
bipartisan	nontransferable
bi-specialization	online
decisionmaking	onsite, offsite
email	parole in place
factfinding	recordkeeping

Visa category and agency form designations take a hyphen. *E.g.*, a P-1 visa; Form I-9.

Do not use a hyphen after an adverb ending with *-ly*:

A recently updated manual

If using a shortened construction for the first of parallel words or phrases (*e.g.*, him- or herself), use a hyphen after the first element, followed by a space. However, use an en dash after the first element, followed by a space, if the second element contains a hyphen (*e.g.*, 6– or 7-year-old child; three– and ten-year bars).

En dashes

Use en dashes for date ranges:

2011–2015

Em dashes

Use em dashes to set off an amplifying or explanatory element:

Tokyo—the largest city in the world—has a population of over 33 million people.

Italics

Italicize the names of newspapers, periodicals, and books mentioned in text:

She reads the *Washington Post* on the train.

Use italics for emphasis. Italics are generally preferred over bolding for that purpose. Do not underline for emphasis.

Italicize case names and short-hand references to case names. *E.g.*, *Roe v. Wade*; the *Roe* decision.

Italicize *e.g.*, *i.e.*, *id.*, *et seq.*, and *et al.* (As previously noted, however, do not italicize the comma following these items.)

Do not italicize common foreign words or common legal words in Latin, such as *etc.*, *sua sponte*, *en banc*, *non sequitur*, *inter alia*, *de novo*, *ad hoc*, *pro bono*, *nolo contendere*, *bona fide*. Italicize all other foreign words or unusual Latin phrases.

Do not italicize the title of TV shows, radio programs, plays, and other performances. Use title case instead. *E.g.*, *The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon*.

Apostrophes

Generally, apostrophes are not used to pluralize (*e.g.*, 1990s, URLs), but may be used to avoid confusion when pluralizing lowercase letters and abbreviations with two or more interior periods or with both capital and lowercase letters (*e.g.*, x's and y's; M.A.'s; Ph.D.'s; do's and don'ts).

Do not use an apostrophe to pluralize the names of forms (*e.g.*, I-9s, *not* I-9's).

“U.S. Attorney’s Office” and “attorney’s fees” are correct.

Ellipses

Do not use an ellipsis to begin quoted material.

When using quoted material as a full sentence, use an ellipsis followed by a period (or other punctuation) if you’re not using the rest of the source sentence.

To generate an ellipsis, either type three consecutive periods or insert Word's ellipsis symbol. A space must precede the ellipsis. A space follows an ellipsis. If you have an ellipsis-period combination, the four periods appear consecutively:

The author stated, "We cannot turn our back on refugees.... We should welcome them."

Ampersands

In general, use the word "and" rather than an ampersand ("&").

Superscripts

Footnote/endnote numbers in the text are superscript. They are inserted after any punctuation. Do not use superscript for ordinals (*i.e.*, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, *not* 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th).

Never bold or italicize superscripts.

USAGE AND OTHER GENERAL MATTERS

Avoid the terms "illegal" and "alien" when referring to undocumented persons. Unless required for legal precision when describing or quoting a statute or regulation that uses the term, "alien" should be avoided. "Undocumented worker" or "foreign national" are acceptable substitutes in many instances.

Most acronyms, when used as a noun, are not preceded by "the":

IIRAIRA; EOIR; DHS; CBP; ICE; USCIS; VSC; TSC; NBC; KCC

but the INA, the BIA, the AAO, the FAM

Set out a series of items with either numbers or letters. The series can be preceded by a colon, or not, but be consistent within the document:

This series will contain (1) the first item; (2) the second item; and (3) the third item.

This series will contain: (1) the first item; (2) the second item; and (3) the third item.

If the series is formatted as a list, there should be a colon preceding the list:

This list will contain the following three items:

- (a) the first item;
- (b) the second item;
- (c) the third item; and
- (d) the fourth item.

CITATIONS

In general, AILA follows *The Bluebook* citation style.

The INA and Other Statutes

Basic style:

INA §101(a)(15)(E)

28 USC §1292

Immigration Act of 1990, Pub. L. No. 101-649, 104 Stat. 4978 (1990).

When citing a statute that is part of the INA, cite to the INA only (*i.e.*, do not cite to 8 USC only or give a parallel cite to 8 USC).

No periods in acronyms such as INA or USC.

No space between the section symbol (§) and the statute number.

Regulations

Basic style:

8 CFR §214.2(d)(2)(ii)
59 Fed. Reg. 55910 (Nov. 9, 1994)

Cases (nonadministrative courts)

Basic style:

Clark v. Martinez, 543 U.S. 371 (2005)
Zhu v. Gonzalez, 411 F.3d 292 (D.C. Cir. 2005)
Glassroth v. Moore, 229 F. Supp. 2d 1290 (M.D. Ala. 2002)

Cases (administrative courts)

Precedent decisions:

Matter of Penner, 18 I&N Dec. 49 (Comm’r 1982)
Matter of Andrade, 19 I&N Dec. 488 (BIA 1987)
Matter of R–A–, 22 I&N Dec. 906 (AG 2001; BIA 1999)
*Use en dashes after initials where the case name is redacted

Hyperlink

See *BlueBook* Rule 18.2.2 for various examples of citations containing hyperlinks.

AILA documents

Format the citation as AILA Doc. No. _____.

Department of Homeland Security, “DHS Announces Final Rule Impacting Highly Skilled Workers” (Jan. 15, 2016), AILA [InfoNet](#) Doc. No. 16011502.

Agency memoranda

Use the subject line as the title of the document. Absent any subject line or clear indication of how to title a document, follow the title that appears in *Agency Interpretations of Immigration Policy (Cables, Memos, and Liaison Minutes)*.

COMMONLY USED WORD FORMS

toward not towards	database, not data-base
website not web-site	federal, not Federal (unless part of a title)
acknowledgment not acknowledgement	health care not healthcare
web page not web-page	habeas, not habeus
online, not on-line	Internet not internet
driver’s license or driver’s licenses not drivers’ licenses	résumé not resume
H-1B not H1-B	Social Security card (or number)
USCIS not U.S.C.I.S. and NEVER CIS	worksite, jobsite not work-site, job-site
nontransferable not non-transferable	percent not per-cent
green card not Green-Card	pleaded or pled (be consistent)

WORDS AND PHRASES TO BE AWARE OF

assure/ensure/insure. Ensure is to make sure (in the sense of a virtual guarantee); insure refers to insurance; you assure someone of something (in the sense of removing doubt).

that/which. Use which for nonessential (independent or nonrestrictive) clauses, and that for essential (dependent or restrictive) clauses.

reign/rein. Rein is to restrain someone or something: The driver pulled the reins. Reign refers to royalty and the length of time a monarch rules a country.

compose/comprise. Compose is to bring things together: The committee is composed of seven members. Comprise is to include within a particular scope: The plan comprises 12 initiatives related to immigration.

then/than. Then shows next in order: If this occurs, then that should be the result. Than shows a point of comparison: easier said than done; she is older than I am.

peek/peak/pique. Peek is to glance at something: I peeked around the corner. Peak is a high point or sharp end: off-peak hours; the peak of a mountaintop. Pique refers to resentment/excitement/pride: it piqued my curiosity.

illusion/allusion. Illusion is something that's not real. Allusion is hinting at something; an indirect reference: Without naming names, the candidate criticized the national leaders by allusion.

further/farther. Further is to move forward: to further one's career; to further your education. Farther refers to distance: the store is farther than you think.

compliment/complement. Compliment is to express admiration or esteem for someone. Complement is to complete, fill up, or make perfect.

disinterested/uninterested. Although both may be used in the sense of not engaged or interested, only disinterested is used in the sense of unbiased or indifferent.

immigrate/emigrate. Immigrate to a country. Emigrate from a country.

principle/principal. Principle is a noun; principal is both adjective and noun. Principle is a fundamental law, doctrine, or assumption: the principles of law. Principal means most important, consequential, or influential: a principal ingredient, the principal of a school.

capital/capitol. A capital is a city serving as a seat of government: The nation's capital is Washington, D.C. Capitol is only used to refer to a building in which a legislative body meets or works. It is capitalized when referring to the U.S. Congress. Capitol Hill is used to refer to the U.S. Congress and surrounding neighborhood.

stationery/stationary. Stationary means unchanging. Stationery refers to writing materials.

discreet/discrete. Discreet refers to something unnoticeable: The man was discreet in his approach. Discrete refers to something distinct and/or separate: discrete possibilities.

presently/currently. Presently refers to an imminent event: A bill will be introduced in the Senate presently. Currently means right now: A bill is currently under consideration in the House.

COMMON ACRONYMS

AAO—Administrative Appeals Office (the AAO)

AC21—American Competitiveness in the 21st Century Act of 2000

AFM—Adjudicator's Field Manual

BALCA—Board of Alien Labor Certification Appeals

BIA—Board of Immigration Appeals (the BIA)

CBP—U.S. Customs and Border Protection

CIA—Central Intelligence Agency (the CIA)

CIS Ombudsman—U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman

CRCL—DHS's Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

CSC—California Service Center
CSPA—Child Status Protection Act
DHS—Department of Homeland Security
DOJ—Department of Justice
DOL—Department of Labor
DOS—Department of State
EOIR—Executive Office for Immigration Review
ETA—Employment and Training Administration
FAM—Foreign Affairs Manual (the FAM)
FOIA—Freedom of Information Act
J.D.—Juris Doctor
IIRAIRA—Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996
IJ—Immigration Judge
INA—Immigration and Nationality Act (the INA)
LCA—Labor Condition Application
LPR—Lawful Permanent Resident
NACARA—Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act
NIV—Nonimmigrant Visa
NIW—National Interest Waiver
NSC—Nebraska Service Center
NTA—Notice to Appear
NVC—National Visa Center
OCAHO—Office of the Chief Administrative Hearing Officer
OFLC—Office of Foreign Labor Certification
OIL—DOJ's Office of Immigration Litigation
OIJ—DOJ's Office of Inspector General
OMB—Office of Management and Budget
OPT—Optional Practical Training
PERM—Program Electronic Review Management System
RFE—Request for Evidence
SEVIS—Student and Exchange Visitor Information System
SEVP—Student and Exchange Visitor Program
SSN—Social Security Number
SWA—State Workforce Agency
TPS—Temporary Protected Status
TSA—Transportation Security Administration
TSC—Texas Service Center
UNHCR—United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UPL—Unauthorized Practice of Law
U.S.—United States (spell out when used as a noun, except when used as the name of a party in a case citation)
USCIS—U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
VAWA—Violence Against Women Act
VSC—Vermont Service Center
VWP—Visa Waiver Program