**Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area Style Guide**

**This MSNHA style guide highlights grammar, punctuation, spellings and word choices we use in our content. For more recommendations, check our editorial & brand guidelines.**

**ACRONYMS AND SHORTHAND**

* We follow Associated Press style for acronyms. Some widely accepted acronyms are always used and never spelled out -- FBI, CIA, etc. For most other organizations with commonly accepted acronyms, spell out name in first reference and use acronym (or appositive such as “the school”) after first reference. For groups that are never referred to by an acronym, use complete name on first reference and appositives or shortened names after first reference. If an accepted acronym doesn’t exist, don’t make one up!

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| **First Use** | **Acronym / Shorthand** |
| Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources | ADCNR |
| Alabama Department of Environmental Management | ADEM |
| Alabama Historical Commission | AHC |
| Alabama Music Hall of Fame | AMOF |
| Alliance of National Heritage Areas | ANHA |
| American Association of State and Local Historians | AASLH |
| Department of Interior | DOI |
| Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion | DEI |
| Florence Lauderdale Public Library | FLPL |
| National Heritage Area(s) | NHA(s) |
| National Park Service | NPS |
| State Historic Preservation Officer | SHIPO |
| Tennessee Valley Art Association | TVAA |
| Tennessee Valley Art Center | TVAC |
| Tennessee Valley Authority | TVA |
| University of North Alabama | UNA |
| US Fish & Wildlife Service | USFWS |
| US Forest Service | USFS |

**PROPER USE OF COMMON WORDS AND PHRASES**

* Nonprofit (not non-profit)
* Recreationist (not recreator, recreationalist, etc.)
* Lowercase “climate change”
* Do not capitalize “state” unless part of a formal name: the Washington State Department of Transportation. Do not capitalize “state” in Washington state
* In all cases, we use the racial/ethnic identifier that the demographic itself prefers. Our defaults are
  + “Indigenous” for American Indian
  + “Black” uppercase for African-American
  + “Latino” for Hispanic
  + “enslaved person” or “She was enslaved” instead of “She was a slave.”
  + “Unhoused” or “experiencing homelessness,” dependent upon context instead of “She was homeless” or “She was a homeless person.”
  + See educational links below for greater clarification.
    - <https://libguides.pratt.edu/c.php?g=1278195&p=9399990>
    - <https://schoolhouseconnection.org/article/why-we-use-the-phrase-experiencing-homelessness>

**OTHER**

* We generally follow the Associated Press style book, unless there’s a unique circumstance where we do otherwise
* We use a single space after punctuation
* Periods should go **inside** quotation marks (ex: With more than 300,000 visitors annually, this is an example of a popular trail that has been “loved to death.”)
* Dates
  + When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec. Spell out the month when using alone or with a year alone.
  + Always use Arabic figures, without st, nd, rd or th: Oct. 9, not Oct. 9th.
  + When a phrase lists only a month and a year, do not separate the year with commas: November 2021.
  + When a phrase refers to a month, day and year, set off the year with commas: Please join us Jan. 24, 2022, at our open house.
* Directions
  + Lowercase when referring to compass direction: east, western, northwest, southbound, etc.
  + Capitalize when referring to a region: The storm hit the Northwest hard.
* Numbers
  + Spell out numbers under 10 (ex: one, two, three).
  + Use figures when referring to a person's age.
  + Spell out a numeral at the start of a sentence, except for years, or rephrase the sentence.
  + Shorten long figures by using million or billion: $5 million, $5 billion.
  + Use decimals when appropriate and round up: $5.4 million.
  + Numbers less than one million should be written out numerically: $530,000, $4,000, $200.
* Times
  + Use figures except for noon and midnight. Use a colon to separate hours from minutes: 11 a.m., 1 p.m., 3:30 p.m.
* Job titles
  + Job titles are capitalized if they are formal, rather than occupational, and immediately precede the name: President Joe Biden, Sheriff Bob Smith. Engineer, attorney, farmer, spokesman – all occupations.
* People, places and things:
  + Capitalize proper nouns, such as names of people, places, organizations, etc.
  + No state name if it’s in Alabama.
  + Use state names with cities except for commonly recognized metro areas such as New York City, Seattle, Los Angeles, etc. Also omit country names for commonly recognized metro areas such as Paris, London, Tokyo, etc. Spell out names of states and countries when used and separate with a comma when used with a town/city.
  + Use quotation marks for titles of books, movies, artworks, etc. Italics can be difficult to read.
  + Use quotation marks for direct quotes and titles of articles, chapters, songs, etc.
  + Use “CE” to denote “Common Era” and “BCE” to denote “Before the Common Era” when the year designations are needed to avoid confusion.

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