



**CERRITOS
COLLEGE**

Communication Guidelines



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Introduction to this Guide

This Communication Guide is intended to help writers and editors communicate clearly and consistently about Cerritos College in publications and correspondence. This guide should be used in conjunction with the Cerritos College Visual & Branding Guidelines, which lays out additional specifics.

Please keep in mind that because this is an ongoing document, entries may be added or revised. If you have additions or suggestions, please contact the Office of College Relations, Public Affairs, and Governmental Relations.

The Cerritos College Voice

The Cerritos College Voice is helpful, responsive to our audience’s questions, and empathetic to their needs. While ambitious and confident in our expertise and abilities, the Cerritos College Voice communicates with humility and compassion.

In writing, our voice is created through our word choice, sentence structure, and point of view. When writing in the Cerritos College Voice, a few key things to remember are:

Foster an inclusive environment through first-person plural pronouns

- After the first reference, use first-person plural pronouns such as we, our, and us.
- Instead of “Cerritos College puts students first,” say “At Cerritos College, we put students first.”



Communicate directly to your audience

- Doing so creates a more welcoming, personable feeling between our words and our users.
- Instead of “Students who would like to try a course may do so by taking a Pass/No Pass class.” say “Do you want to try a course? Try taking a Pass/No Pass class to explore your options.”

Deliver a positive and memorable customer service experience

- When writing rules, requirements, directions, focus on what users should do rather than what they can’t do.
- Instead of saying “You **cannot** register for classes if you have past fees or academic holds on your record,” say “Clear past fees and/or academic holds to be able to register for your classes.”

Be conversational but professional

- Use warm, conversational words to create a sense of friendliness and customer service.
- Avoid slang to protect the professionalism of your writing.

Be responsive and efficient through concise word choice

- Ensure all content is based on the user’s needs - avoid including trivial or redundant information.
- Choose simple words that are easy to understand.
- Provide context to help make more complex words (i.e. academic jargon) understandable.



- Use our Grammar and Editorial Guide to help determine the correct academic words to use.
 - Avoid jargon and idioms, which can create confusion as well as prevent some from accessing the information.
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Grammar and Editorial Guide

The grammar and editorial guide will help you communicate clearly and consistently in the Cerritos College Voice.

We generally follow the *AP Style Guide*. This list includes some exceptions, extra important topics, and guidelines specific to Cerritos College. For issues not addressed here, look to the *AP Style Guide* for more information.

Academic Degrees

1. Spell out a degree on first formal use and then use the abbreviation with periods.
 - Associate in Arts degree, AA degree
 - Associate in Science degree, AS degree
 - Associate Degree for Transfer (AD-T)
 - Associate in Arts Degree for Transfer (AA-T)
 - Associate in Science Degree for Transfer (AS-T)
 - Larry Miller earned an Associate in Science degree at Cerritos College.



2. Associate degree is never possessive. Use lowercase when not referring to a specific area of study.
 - You should consult with a counselor regarding options for completing a related associate degree.

Academic Titles

1. Capitalize a title before a name. If a title appears before a name, no comma is needed.
 - Professor of History Jane Doe; Professor Jane Doe; Instructor Jane Doe.
2. If the title does not precede the name, do not capitalize it. The same applies to dean and president.
 - Jane Doe, professor of history, will introduce a new course starting next semester.
 - John Jones, dean of the College, spoke at November's Rotary event.
3. Once a professor or instructor's title is mentioned, that professor or instructor can be referred to by his/her last name only.
 - Professor Sam Smith's history class is one of the most popular on campus. Smith expects to teach two new classes next semester.



Acronyms

1. Acronyms should be included in the first reference to an organization or program. The program may be referred to by its acronym on subsequent references.
2. No periods are used with acronyms.
 - Extended Opportunity Programs & Services (EOPS) is a state-funded program designed to go above and beyond other services offered on campus.

Addresses

1. Use the abbreviations Ave., Blvd., and St. only with a numbered address. Spell them out and capitalize when part of a formal street name.
 - 11110 Alondra Blvd.
 - Cerritos College is located on Alondra Boulevard

Ages

1. Always use figures when dealing with ages. Use hyphens for ages expressed as adjectives before a noun or as substitutes for a noun. When using decades for age, do not use an apostrophe.
 - The student is 18 years old. She is an 18-year-old student.
 - She is a younger woman in her 20s.



Class Year

1. Use first-year students rather than freshman. Terms denoting student status are lowercase.
 - Registration for first-year students starts on Wednesday, August 2; registration for second-year students begins Thursday, August 3.
2. Use future students to refer to potential/prospective students

College Name

1. Use Cerritos College on the first reference and on all covers of campus publications.
2. The College may be used on subsequent references and must be capitalized.

Credits, Units, and Grades

1. Unit is the favored term for credit received at Cerritos College. Use the term “unit” any time it appears with a numeral. Use numerals to refer to the number of units.
 - A minimum of twelve (12) units of course work within the certificate must be taken at Cerritos College.
2. Hyphenate between the numeral and unit when using it as an adjective.
 - You must pass the 3-unit course.
3. The word credit may be used as a general word for a non-specific number of units.



Days, Months, and Dates

1. In a calendar listing, list as [Day, Date at Time]
 - Monday, October 19, 2021 at 2 p.m.
2. No comma is used when only the month and year are used or when only the month and day are used.
 - She received her diploma in May 2021. The ceremony was on May 15.
3. When typing a month and a day (but not a year), do not use a “th,” “nd,” “st,” or “rd” after the day.
4. When typing just a day, you should use the complete name of the day (i.e. Monday).
 - October 8 not October 8th.
5. Always spell out the days of the week.

Division, Section, School, Department

1. **Courses and Sections:**
 - Capitalize the abbreviation of the course subject (ACCT 101).
 - Capitalize the name of the course (Fundamentals of Auditing)
 - There are 15 sections in ACCT 202: Intermediate Accounting II.
2. **Divisions:** Cerritos College is divided into the following divisions. When referencing a division, they should always be written as follows:



- Business, Humanities & Social Sciences
- Counseling
- Fine Arts & Communications
- Health Occupations
- Kinesiology: Health, Physical Education, Dance & Athletics
- Liberal Arts
- Library & Learning Resource Center
- Science, Engineering & Mathematics
- Student Success
- Technology

Hyphens and Dashes

1. **Hyphen (-)** Do not use a space between hyphens. Do not use a hyphen in cases such as African American, Asian American, etc. Commonly hyphenated terms include:

- First-year student
- Two-year or four-year institution
- Question-and-answer
- Short-term, long-term
- Student-oriented, college-bound



2. **En dash (–)** The en dash signifies up to and including (or through). There's no space immediately before and after a long en dash.
 - Her college years, 1998–2002, were the happiest in her life.
3. **Em dash (—)** The em dash is the long dash. It is the most commonly used dash and shows an abrupt change in thought. Insert a space on both sides of an em dash.
 - Steve Jones — a first-year student — received a Fullbright scholarship.

Grades

1. Capitalize grade names when using them as proper nouns.
 - B grade, grade of B, a grade of Incomplete.
2. Do not capitalize grade names when using them as adjectives
 - The professor marked her math assignment incomplete.

Internet Terms and Usage

1. Use the term website rather than Website or web site.
2. Capitalize Internet; lowercase intranet.
3. Do not use http:// when including a URL (www.cerritos.edu).
4. Be sure to check Internet links for accuracy and accessibility.

Numerals

1. Spell out whole numbers from one through nine and any number beginning a sentence. For other numbers, numerals are used.
 - There were 32 students at the conference. We saw three of our friends.



- One hundred and ten candidates were accepted.
2. Use figures for academic course numbers and addresses.
 - History 6, Business 020
 3. Spell out ordinal numbers in the text.
 - First, second, third – not 1st, 2nd, 3rd.
 4. For numbers of four digits or larger, use a comma.
 - 1,500; 35,000.
 5. Very large numbers should be expressed with a numeral and word. Decimals are preferred where practical.
 - 450 million; 1.5 million
 6. In headlines, abbreviate only millions and billions.
 - Announcing the \$5M capital campaign.
 7. Percentages are always given in numerals and the word percent is used.
 - Females make up 51 percent of the College.
 8. If the sentence begins with a numeral, it should be spelled out.
 - Thirty-two percent of Cerritos College students are 19 or younger.

Cerritos College Mascot

1. Cerritos College's mascot is the Falcon.



2. Use an apostrophe when referring to the Falcons as possessive. Additionally, use a plural possessive when referring to the specific group.
 - The Falcons' women's basketball team won the game.
3. Franco Falcon is the historical name of the Cerritos College mascot. Franco Falcon is a symbol of Falcon pride.

Semesters

1. Semesters should be lower-cased, even when referring to a specific semester or session.
 - a. She attended Cerritos College in the fall 2021 semester.
 - b. She will offer the course in the fall.

Time

1. For **printed documents**, the letters are lowercase and followed by periods. Leave a space after the number. Do not add "00" to the time.
 - 10 a.m., not 10:00A.M.
2. When used digitally, including the Cerritos College website, the letters are lowercase and **not** followed by periods. Leave a space after the number. Do not add "00" to the time.
 - 10 am
3. The hour of the day or night is followed by a.m. or p.m. You can omit abbreviations if the context is clear.
 - The morning flight to Philadelphia leaves at 10:15. It lands at 2:15 p.m.



4. Use noon, not 12 p.m. Use midnight, not 12 a.m.
 - The seminar is at noon. We expect the meeting to run until midnight.

Titles

Page Titles and Headings at Levels 1 and 2:

1. Capitalize the first word of the title/heading and any subtitle/subheading;
2. Capitalize all “major” words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and pronouns) in the title/heading, including the second part of hyphenated major words (e.g., Self-Report not Self-report); and
3. Capitalize all words of four letters or more.

Headings Levels 3, 4, and 5

1. Capitalize the first word of the title/heading and of any subtitle/subheading;
2. Capitalize any proper nouns and certain other types of words; and
3. Use lowercase for everything else.