



House Style Guide

NOTE: The JSOU Press generally follows the editorial and style rules set forth in the *Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS), 18th Edition*. However, the guidance in this JSOU Press House Style Guide takes precedence. It ensures cohesive, clear, and consistent Press materials. Please refer to the direction provided in this guide first. If not listed, please consult CMOS or the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 12th Edition*.

I. Abbreviations

- A. Academic Degrees: Common academic degrees (BA, BS, JD, MA, MBA, MS, PhD) do not need to be spelled out (expanded), except in listings or contexts where the anticipated audience may not be familiar.

Note: Do not use periods in academic degree abbreviations and offset with commas in running text when following a name (e.g., John Doe, PhD, attended Harvard). See [CMOS 10.23](#).
- B. Fig. vs Figure: “Fig.” is used only in parenthesis in running text (e.g., “(see Fig. 1)”). “Figure” is used in running text without parenthesis (e.g., “See Figure 1.”). Use title case for both.
- C. Miles, Inches, and Feet: Spell out.
- D. Military Ranks: Follow AP style for the correct abbreviations of military ranks.

Note: Ranks should be written in sentence case, not all caps (e.g., Col., Gen., Sgt. Maj., not COL, GEN, or SGM).
- E. U.S. States: Names of states should always be spelled out.

II. Acronyms

Note: Refer to the *DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, December 2025, for additional guidance.

- A. Expand acronyms on first reference only, with the acronym following in parenthesis (ex: These actions demonstrated to the **Special Operations Forces (SOF)** enterprise that there are existing blind spots regarding strategic intelligence and capabilities in emerging technology). The acronym is used on each subsequent reference.

Note: Do not provide an acronym for a term used only once in a document.
- B. Do not use acronyms in captions or pull quotes, unless they appear more than once.
- C. Do not use possessive acronyms (exception: “SOF’s”).

- D. Do not use acronyms in titles and headings (**exception “SOF” and U.S.**).
- E. Do not end a sentence with “U.S.” Rerword to avoid.
- F. United States vs. “U.S.” – Chicago now allows “U.S.” as a noun.
- G. USSOCOM (never SOCOM).
- H. U.S. SOF (never USSOF).
- I. DoD (not DOD); DoW (not DOW)

Commonly known acronyms that **do not** require an expansion on first reference:

- | | | |
|---------|---------|------------------|
| A. AI | G. ATM | M. NASA |
| B. FBI | H. DNA | N. News channels |
| C. CIA | I. GPS | (e.g., BBC, |
| D. NATO | J. HMO | ABC) |
| E. U.S. | K. HTML | |
| F. SEAL | L. JPEG | |

III. Capitalization

- A. Capitalized
 1. Services: Capitalized when referring to a specific military branch (e.g., Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Space Force).
 2. Special Forces: Always capitalized for U.S. forces (not special forces); lowercase for foreign special forces. Note – only U.S. Green Berets are Special Forces (SF).
 3. Special Operations Forces: Always capitalized for U.S. forces.
 4. Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Guardians.
 5. Joint Staff but joint force; joint (alone)
 6. Names of specific ships and other vessels are capitalized and italicized (e.g., *USS Cole*, space shuttle *Discovery*). Note: “USS,” “HMS,” etc. are not italicized, and the word “ship” is not italicized. If a ship is numbered, include on first mention in parenthesis (e.g., “*USS Enterprise (CVN-65)*”). See [CMOS 8.117](#).
 7. Military exercises and operation names: Capitalize “Operation” and put operation name in all caps (e.g., Operation ENDURING FREEDOM); Exercise names are title case (e.g. Exercise Flintlock)
 8. Act/Doctrine/Treaty: Capitalize the specific name when used in full; use lower case when used generically (e.g., the Mann Act, the act, the Treaty of Versailles, the treaty).
 9. Departments of government: Capitalize the department name. Capitalize “department” when included as part of the name; lower case when it is used generically (Department of the Treasury; Treasury department)
 10. Left and Right (political): Capitalize “the Left” and “the Right,” but:
 - i. members of the left wing, right wing; left-winger(s), right-winger(s); on the left, on the right
 - ii. the Far Left, the Far Right
 11. Leadership Forum

12. Media Roundtable
 13. Nation – lowercase national unless National Guard (only for U.S. reference)
 14. Moore’s law
 15. Projects and programs: Project and program titles are capitalized and not italicized. Only capitalize “project” or “program” if part of the official name (Stuart Family Congressional Fellowship Program, Governance in a Time of Technological Change project, JSOU project on China’s Global Sharp Power).
 16. **Per CMOS 18 2024 updates, in titles, prepositions of five or more letters are now capitalized.**
- B. Not capitalized
1. Administration: Lower case (the Biden administration).
 2. bachelor’s degree; bachelor of science
 3. Branch: Lowercase for governmental divisions: the executive branch, the judicial branch.
 4. White: Do not capitalize when referring to ethnicity. **But:** Black.
 5. Always lowercase “classified” and “unclassified” (e.g., Additionally, while the standard five-day course is currently structured as unclassified, it can also be tailored to meet the customer’s unique requirements and conducted in a classified environment, if requested.) **Exception:** If it's a header or footer marking, it is always run in all caps.
 6. Do not capitalize titles when they come *after* the person’s name (e.g., General Fenton; Fenton, the commanding general at USSOCOM). See [CMOS 8.25](#).

IV. Captions, Tables, & Figures

- A. Captions: Write in present tense, flush left, placed below the figure, and sentence case. Include the source. See example below:

Figure 3. A diagram showing the enduring utility of SOF in compound strategic competition. Source: Dr. Isaiah Wilson III

- B. Tables and figures: A figure caption can be a fragment or a title. “Figure” is used in captions with a period following (e.g., “Figure 3.1.”). Tables should have complete and descriptive titles above the table, in title case. Include source information under the table, flush left. Avoid using acronyms in captions unless term is used more than once. **Note: Photos are not figures and do not need to be labeled as such.**
- C. Refer to the figure or table in the text immediately preceding it (e.g., “See Figure 1.”). If in parentheses, abbreviate [e.g., “(see Fig. 1)”). Do NOT include a location (e.g., “See Figure 1 below,” since layout may change placement).
- D. Ensure that direction/callouts are included in the manuscript to direct the typesetter where to place the figure or table. Use brackets (e.g., [Insert Fig. 1 here]).
- E. Provide any images, tables, and figures as separate files; provide source material/permissions as necessary.
- F. Photo credit should be listed without an ending period.

- G. If using DVIDS, there is no need to use the complete caption, but ensure photographer is credited. There is no need to include “DVIDS” or a link.

V. Citations

Note: Refer to Chicago for additional guidance.

- A. Endnotes – JSOU Press, in accordance with Chicago, uses endnotes. See [CMOS 13.27](#).
1. Endnote reference numbers should be superscript and after the period or other punctuation with no space. Ensure the number corresponds to the correct note. *Note: Use a space between end punctuation and the parentheses enclosing an endnote for best readability in Sway documents.*
 2. For Edited Volumes, compile endnotes by chapter and number sequentially by chapter; for other publications, compile at the end of the document.
 3. Include a direct object identifier (DOI, if available) or URL link, if available.
- B. Other
1. Do not use “Ibid.” Use shortened citations.
 2. **Per CMOS 18 2024 updates, when citing books, city of publication is no longer required.**
 3. For notes at the end of documents, use non-superscript numbers and use “hanging” style indents consistently across all publication types (except Sway).
 4. Only one note number is used per citation – but more than one reference can be attributed to a citation in the notes list.
 5. Do not use citation notes on captions, pull quotes, or tables. Spell out the source/reference instead.

VI. Foreign Languages

- A. Arabic/ Persian
1. al-Qaeda (Only capitalize the first “a” when it begins a sentence)
 2. Daesh (not Dae’sh)
 3. Hezbollah (not Hizbollah)
 4. Osama bin Laden (not Usama)
 5. Qur’an (not Koran)
 6. Ayatollah Khamenei
 7. Qassim Soleimani
- B. Chinese
1. Chinese politicians and VIPs: Surname is listed first. Use for subsequent references.

a. Chiang Kai-shek	f. Mao Zedong / Chairman Mao
b. Deng Xiaoping	g. Wen Jiabao
c. Hu Jintao	h. Xi Jinping
d. Jiang Zemin	i. Yang Jiechi
e. Li Kexin	

- j. Zhou Wenzhong
- 2. Uyghur(s): Chinese ethnic minority group
- 3. Xinjiang: Territory in NW China.
- C. French
 - 1. Use diacritics (accents) with capital as well as lower-case letters: *Étienne Manac'h*
 - 2. Follow native language's capitalization rules. If title begins with an article, italicize the article but not the word following (e.g., "*L'origine du monde, La diplomatie n'est pas un dîner de gala.*")
- D. Other
 - 1. Kim Jong-un
 - 2. Kuomintang
 - 3. Kyiv is preferred over "Kiev," but both are correct.
 - 4. Molotov, Vyacheslav
 - 5. Volodymyr Zelenskyy
 - 6. Vladimir Putin
 - 7. Benjamin Netanyahu

VII. Vertical Lists

Use a list for three or more points (at editor's discretion). Punctuate if using complete sentences. To introduce a list, use a complete sentence followed by a colon:

1. Unordered list (we use bullets): no end punctuation unless using a complete sentence.
2. Ordered lists use numbers or letters (we use numbers).
3. If using fragments, no punctuation is used, even for the last item in the list.
4. If using a vertical ordered list, do not include semicolons or closing period on last number. However, if each item is a standalone sentence, use periods for all.
5. Ensure verb consistency and edit accordingly.

VIII. Miscellaneous

- A. Passive voice: Use in moderation.
- B. Pull quotes: Can be suggested/noted by authors, but ultimate decision rests with Press during layout. Must be a complete sentence (without ellipsis) and be short and concise. Don't use a sentence with a citation. Spell out acronyms.
- C. Spacing: Use one space after periods and colons. When indenting or tabulating material, set up proper, consistent tabs rather than using spaces.
- D. Use "curly" apostrophes (') instead of straight marks (').
- E. Italics
 - a. Use for foreign languages unless included in Merriam-Webster. If a word is repeated, italicize on first occurrence only.

- b. Do not italicize or capitalize “the” in titles of papers or magazines when more than one word follows: the *Washington Post*; the *New Yorker*; **but** *The Economist*.
- c. Do not use italics for JSOU research projects, events, or web platforms that contain multiple series.

IX. Naming

A. Pronouns

1. Do not use “he, she, him, or her” *unless gender is identified*. Use “they, them, their” if no gender is identified. (e.g., “The soldier called their mother.” Not “The soldier called his/her mother.”).
2. Do not personify countries, companies, etc. (“it,” not “they”).
3. Do not use first-person (“we” or “I”) or second-person (“you”) pronouns.

B. Other

1. SOF is plural. (SOF are/they are)
2. conventional forces (not general-purpose forces)
3. brand names: Avoid when possible, e.g., “videoconferencing” in place of Zoom and “digital graphics presentation” in place of PowerPoint.
4. COVID-19: Use all capitals and include “-19’ on first reference. OK to use “COVID” alone on subsequent uses. COVID-19 refers to the disease, not the virus.
5. JSOU fellows
 - a. For identities of individual fellows, only capitalize fellow title when used before name.
 - b. When listing, alphabetize.
6. Middle East: Use in place of Near East. OK especially in a cultural or political context. In a geographical context, West Asia may be preferred.
7. Near East: Middle East preferred unless used in a historical sense.
8. West Asia: See entry under Middle East.

X. Numbers

- A. 9/11: when referring to the attacks on 11 September 2001
- B. 4th (not 4th /aka no superscript)
- C. Follow AP style: Spell out one through nine and use digits for 10 and above (always spell out when used as first word in a sentence). Always use digits for:
 1. Sentences with lists of three or more numbers (17 fatalities: 11 Americans, 4 Canadians, and 2 Columbians)
 2. Charts
 3. Military units
 4. Pages and chapters
 5. When preceding percent (3 percent interest)
 6. Ages (e.g., “He was 4 years old.”)
- D. Percent: Spell out (no %).

E. Military Units

1. Army and Marine units: Use figures to designate all Army units except corps and numbered armies. Use Roman numerals for corps and spell out numbered armies.
 - a. 2d Army Group.
 - b. III Corps.
 - c. 7th AA Brigade.
 - d. First Army.
 - e. 2d Infantry Division.
 - f. 92d Infantry Regiment.
 - g. 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) – 1st SFG(A)
 - h. Special Forces refers to U.S. Green Berets only (SF)
2. Navy units: Use figures to designate all navy units except fleet.
 - a. Seventh Fleet Carrier Group 8.
 - b. VF31.
3. Air Force units: Use figures to designate units up to and including wings. Use figures for numbered air forces only if using the abbreviation AF. When abbreviating the organization name (FW, AMW, AF, etc.), do not use st, d, or th with the number.
 - a. 6th Air Mobility Wing; 6 AMW.
 - b. Ninth Air Force; 9 AF.

XI. Punctuation

- A. Commas: The serial/Oxford comma—a comma added after the last word in a series—is always used (e.g., Navy, Marine Corps, Army, Air Force, and Space Force).
- B. Dashes & Hyphens
 1. Em dash (—): Can be used for clauses. No spaces are on either side of the em dash.
 2. En dash (–): Used for ranges (e.g., pages, months, ages, and items of equal weight such as “Civil–military” or “Russia–Ukraine” conflict). No spaces are on either side of the en dash.
- C. Other
 1. Ellipsis: Only used as part of a quotation. No spaces are on either side of the ellipses (e.g., lorem...ipsum). **Do not end or begin a sentence with an ellipsis. Pull quotes should not contain an ellipsis.**
 2. Quotation marks: Avoid the use of “scare quotes” for emphasis unless the term emphasized is used in a nonstandard, ironic, or other special sense. Do not overuse.
 - a. Use for slang or idiomatic phrases (e.g., “Gordian Knot,” except those that are widely used and appear in standard English dictionaries).
 3. Ampersands: Avoid, except in display text
 4. Suffixes such as Jr., Sr., II, and III are not set off by commas after an individual’s name, except upon request of the individual names. Professional

and academic degrees and titles such as “MD,” “PhD,” and “Esq.” are set off by commas, both before and after the title.

5. Washington, D.C. (with periods)
6. No periods used in academic degrees and titles (e.g., PhD, EdD)

XII. Spelling

- A. Adviser (not advisor)
- B. and/or: Avoid when possible
- C. expletives: JSOU does not publish expletives. When used in quoted text or citations, expletives may be replaced with the word’s initial and final letters, with two em-dashes between.
- D. White paper but whiteboard
- E. email (no hyphen)
- F. health care (two words)
- G. gray or grey is ok but be consistent
- H. decision-making
- I. post-traumatic
- J. skill set

XIII. Military Titles & Ranks – Follow AP Style

- A. Army
 1. Commissioned Officers
 1. general - Gen.
 2. lieutenant general - Lt. Gen.
 3. major general - Maj. Gen.
 4. brigadier general - Brig. Gen.
 5. colonel - Col.
 6. lieutenant colonel - Lt. Col.
 7. major - Maj.
 8. captain - Capt.
 9. first lieutenant - 1st Lt.
 10. second lieutenant - 2nd Lt.
 2. Warrant Officers
 1. Chief warrant officer five (CW5) - Chief Warrant Officer 5
 2. Chief warrant officer four (CW4) - Chief Warrant Officer 4
 3. Chief warrant officer three (CW3) - Chief Warrant Officer 3
 4. Chief warrant officer two (CW2) - Chief Warrant Officer 2
 5. Warrant officer (W01) - Warrant Officer
 3. Enlisted Personnel
 1. sergeant major of the Army - Sgt. Maj. of the Army
 2. command sergeant major - Command Sgt. Maj.
 3. sergeant major - Sgt. Maj.

4. first sergeant - 1st Sgt.
5. master sergeant - Master Sgt.
6. sergeant first class - Sgt. 1st Class
7. staff sergeant - Staff Sgt.
8. sergeant - Sgt.
9. corporal - Cpl.
10. specialist - Spc.
11. private first class - Pfc.
12. private - Pvt.

B. Navy and Coast Guard

1. Commissioned Officers

1. Admiral - Adm.
2. vice admiral - Vice Adm.
3. rear admiral upper half - Rear Adm.
4. rear admiral lower half - Rear Adm.
5. captain - Capt.
6. commander - Cmdr.
7. lieutenant commander - Lt. Cmdr.
8. lieutenant - Lt.
9. lieutenant junior grade - Lt. j.g.
10. ensign - Ensign

2. Warrant Officers

1. chief warrant officer - Chief Warrant Officer

3. Enlisted Personnel

1. master chief petty officer of the Navy - Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy
2. master chief petty officer - Master Chief Petty Officer
3. senior chief petty officer - Senior Chief Petty Officer
4. chief petty officer - Chief Petty Officer
5. petty officer first class - Petty Officer 1st Class
6. petty officer second class - Petty Officer 2nd Class
7. petty officer third class - Petty Officer 3rd Class
8. seaman - Seaman
9. seaman apprentice - Seaman Apprentice
10. seaman recruit - Seaman Recruit

C. Marine Corps

1. Commissioned Officers – same as Army

2. Warrant Officers – same as Navy/Coast Guard

3. Enlisted Personnel

1. sergeant major of the Marine Corps - Sgt. Maj. of the Marine Corps
2. sergeant major - Sgt. Maj.
3. master gunnery sergeant - Master Gunnery Sgt.
4. first sergeant - 1st Sgt.
5. master sergeant - Master Sgt.

6. gunnery sergeant - Gunnery Sgt.
7. staff sergeant - Staff Sgt.
8. sergeant - Sgt.
9. corporal - Cpl.
10. lance corporal - Lance Cpl.
11. private first class - Pfc.
12. private - Pvt.

D. Air Force

1. Commissioned Officers – same as Army
2. Enlisted Personnel
 1. chief master sergeant of the Air Force - Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force
 2. chief master sergeant - Chief Master Sgt.
 3. senior master sergeant - Senior Master Sgt.
 4. master sergeant - Master Sgt.
 5. technical sergeant - Tech. Sgt.
 6. staff sergeant - Staff Sgt.
 7. senior airman - Senior Airman
 8. airman first class - Airman 1st Class
 9. airman - Airman
 10. airman basic – Airman

E. Plural – add an “s” to the principal element in the title.

1. Ex: Gens. Jim Smith and Robert Johnson testified at a government hearing.

F. Retired

1. Do not use “Ret.” Instead use “retired” prior to the rank on first reference.
 1. Ex: That is when retired Army Gen. David Petraeus entered the room

CMOS 18 updates

1. “Headline style” will now be called “title case.”
2. Prepositions in headlines of 5 letters or more are capped (e.g., through, above) vs. all prepositions being lowercase, no matter the length.
3. If a periodical title includes an initial “The” (as indicated in its masthead or on its cover), authors will retain “The” in running text. (For example, “The New York Times” but “the American Journal of Sociology”).
4. Proper nouns: A proper noun used in a nonliteral sense will be capitalized according to the first entry at Merriam-Webster.com <<https://dragonflyeditorial.us6.list-manage.com/track/click?u=5fd8917066620b1994087f353&id=ff8a260616&e=7d90e07e1e>> . The examples CMOS editors give are “french fry” <

[manage.com/track/click?u=5fd8917066620b1994087f353&id=90903c0f81&e=7d90e07e1e](https://dragonflyeditorial.us6.list-manage.com/track/click?u=5fd8917066620b1994087f353&id=90903c0f81&e=7d90e07e1e)> ” (no change) and “French dressing
<<https://dragonflyeditorial.us6.list-manage.com/track/click?u=5fd8917066620b1994087f353&id=3934e22a72&e=7d90e07e1e>> ” (a switch to a capital “F.”)

5. Capitalization after a colon: If a colon is followed by a complete sentence, the first letter of the first word will be capitalized. If the colon is followed by a fragment, the first letter of the first word will be lowercase. Note: Chicago’s colon rule will now match AP’s colon rule.
6. E-terms: While some e-terms (e-commerce, e-waste) will continue to use hyphens, “ebook” and “esports” will join “email” on the hyphenless side.
7. Compound modifiers: Under current rules, a compound modifier uses a hyphen before a noun and no hyphen after a noun. Under the new rules, CMOS will add some exceptions. For example, “first-rate” will now be hyphenated no matter where it falls in a sentence, and “guest room” will not, even if it comes before a noun.
8. En dash: When using the names of two or more people as a compound modifier in terms such as “Epstein–Barr virus,” authors will use an en dash rather than a hyphen.