



Michigan State Historic Preservation Office Style Guide

Updated March 23, 2023

The Michigan State Historic Preservation Office Style Guide is designed to aid in the preparation of National Register nominations, historic resource survey reports, and other narrative documents. These are formal documents that require precise prose. As such, nominations, reports, and other narrative documents must follow *Chicago Manual of Style* (CMOS) rules, except when the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) asserts an editorial preference, as described below. This is not comprehensive document, but a guide to common questions and concerns. Please refer to the *Chicago Manual of Style* 17th Edition for topics that are not covered in this guide. Revisions to the style guide will be made as needed. Note that chapter and section numbers listed refer to the CMOS 17th edition.

ABBREVIATIONS (Chapter 8: Names, Terms, and Titles of Works, and Chapter 10: Abbreviations)

The *Chicago Manual of Style* advises that “outside the area of science and technology abbreviations and symbols are most appropriate in tabular matter, notes, bibliographies, and parenthetical references.” (10.3) Though CMOS does not explicitly guide against the use of abbreviations, SHPO prefers otherwise. Do not use abbreviations unless instructed otherwise by CMOS or SHPO. This is because practice has shown that avoiding abbreviations fosters consistent prose and reduces the time required for review and revision. For example, nominations that abbreviate “United States” have inconsistently used “US,” “U.S.,” and “U. S.” within the same narrative text. Note that while CMOS now permits the use of US as a noun, SHPO does not. (10.32)

Do not abbreviate state names or street types, (8.56) or compass points (10.35).

Spell out proper nouns that include “saint” and “mount,” even when such nouns are commonly abbreviated. For example: “Mount Pleasant” or “Sault Sainte Marie.” (10.20 and 10.30)

When abbreviations are used, they must be introduced (10.3) and conform to the general guidelines in this document and in CMOS sections 10.4 and 10.5.

Do not shorten architectural style names. Use “Art Deco” not “Deco.”

ACRONYMS AND INITIALISMS (10.9)

An **acronym** is read as a single word, e.g. NASA, MSHDA, SHPO. Since acronyms are read aloud as words, they are rarely preceded by an “a,” an “an,” or a “the.” When an abbreviation is preceded by an indefinite article, that article “is determined by the way the abbreviation would be read aloud.

SHPO appreciates the hard work of consultants.

Michigan Modern was a SHPO initiative.

An **initialism** is read aloud as individual initials, e.g. NBA, HMO, MEDC, or DNR, so they are usually preceded by a definite article.

Hunting season is regulated by the DNR.

BRACKETS VS. PARENTHESES

See CMOS for a variety of discussions about the differences between brackets and parentheses, in particular: 6.99–6.101, 13.59–13.61, and 6.95–6.98.

CAPITALIZATION (Chapter 8)

Academic Subjects and Academic Degrees (8.85)

Academic subjects are not capitalized unless they are proper nouns such as English or French, or unless they form a department name or the title of a course.

During winter term the MSU Department of Urban Planning offered the course the History of Historic Preservation.

Academic degrees are lower case in prose. (8.29)

A master of arts in American studies can lead to a fulfilling, but perhaps not financially lucrative, life.

Architectural Style Names

Architectural style names are capitalized, but broad classifications are not. (8.79)

A Collegiate Gothic school building.

Architects who embraced the Modern movement eschewed classical precedent.

The terms “movement,” “school,” and “style” are lowercased in prose.

Examples include “Chicago school” and “International style.”

Note: “movement,” “school,” and “style” are written in upper case in the data category fields in Section 8 of the *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*.

Governmental Units (8.52)

Capitalize “city” and “state” when referring to an official governmental unit but lowercase them when referring to geographical areas.

The City of Menominee is one of Michigan's Certified Local Governments.
[This sentence refers to the governmental unit of the City of Menominee.]

The capitol Christmas tree in the city of Lansing may be the state of Michigan's tallest.
[This sentence refers to the geographical area that is the city of Lansing. Also note that “state” is lowercased.]

Capitalize “County” when using it as part of the name, even when you are referring to more than one in a sentence.

The people in Ontonagon and Keweenaw Counties are among the hardiest of all Michiganders.

Institutions and Companies (8.68)

The names of organizations are capitalized when used in full. They are not capitalized when used in part.

The Michigan Historic Preservation Network tells decision makers everything they need to know about historic preservation but were afraid to ask.

The network hosts a fabulous conference each spring. You should go!

Note: SHPO makes an exception for National Register as a partial name for the National Register of Historic Places to distinguish it from the plethora of registers, lists, databases, and so forth that are national in scope.

Lakes, Rivers, etc. (8.53)

Names of lakes, rivers, islands, etc. are capitalized. The generic terms are also capitalized when they are part of the names, even when you are referring to more than one in a sentence.

The AuSable and Muskegon Rivers attract fisherman who like to wade in cold water.

Professional Titles (8.19)

Professional titles are only capitalized when they precede a person's name. They are not capitalized when they follow the name.

Note that when a title is used in apposition before a person's name, meaning when it is part of a descriptive phrase, it is lowercased. The use of the word "former" makes a title descriptive. For example, "former state historic preservation officer Sally Smith stated..." (8.21)

CITATIONS, FOOTNOTES, AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC ENTRIES

Federal regulations require that National Register nominations be "adequately documented," and Section 9 of the *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* requires that a bibliography of "major sources" be included in each nomination. In addition, **SHPO requires that all ideas, arguments, interpretations, quotations, statements of fact, paraphrases, summaries, data, and so forth that are attributable to another author or source be properly cited using footnotes in all nominations.** End notes and in-text citations are not permitted.

Footnote and bibliographical entries should conform to the format specified for the particular source, as noted in the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Please note that recent editions of the CMOS have changed from recommending the use of *ibid* to the use of the *short form* citation format. Preparers may use either form, but a nomination should use only one of these formats and the selected format should be applied consistently throughout the document. Consistent and properly formatted citations facilitate more efficient reviews by SHPO staff.

Note: photograph and figure references, as described in other documentation do not constitute a citation and should be made in the manner described. Please see *General Guidance and Requirements for National Register of Historic Places Nominations in Michigan* and *Photograph Specifications for National Register Nominations in Michigan* for more information.

COLLOQUIALISMS, ETC.

Colloquialisms, jargon, slang, neologisms, and the like are generally to be avoided in formal or professional prose, such as National Register nominations.

Included in this group are denominal verbs, or nouns used as verbs. While nouns are commonly used as verbs in speech and informal writing, such usage should be avoided in formal or professional prose. As such, denominal verbs should not be used in National Register nominations.

COLONS (6.61-6.67) AND SEMICOLONS (6.56-6.60)

See CMOS 17 for details about the various uses of colons and semicolons. The most common and basic uses are described below.

Colons introduce elements that illustrate or emphasize the information that preceded the colon.

Local building materials add texture to Michigan's landscape: Portage Entry sandstone, Veneklassen brick, and locally gathered fieldstone.

Sometimes colons join two independent clauses, but they should only be used to signal that the second clause illustrates or amplifies the first.

Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credits spur economic development: 371,787,171 dollars were invested in rehabilitating historic properties in 2017.

Semicolons join two independent clauses. While the clauses could stand alone as sentences, the semicolon indicates a closer connection than periods would. At the same time, however, the semicolon should not be used if the second clause amplifies the first. In that case, a colon should be used.

Michigan's State Parks contain archaeological sites investigated by state archaeologists: Fayette, Hartwick Pines and Copper Harbor are among the parks.

Semicolons also separate series elements with internal punctuation.

In 2017 a Governor's Award for Historic Preservation was given to LC Consultants LLC; Concept Design Studio, Inc.; Rockford Construction, Inc.; Nehil-Sivak Structural Engineers; and Past Perfect Inc. for the rehabilitation of the Century Furniture Co. and Central Furniture Co./H. E. Shaw Furniture Buildings in Grand Rapids.

COMMAS (6.16-6.55)

Some basic comma rules include:

Use a serial comma (also known as the Oxford comma) in sentences with a series of three or more items before the conjunction. Although many people omit the serial comma, CMOS—and SHPO—use it to prevent misunderstanding. (6.19)

Note the disastrous consequences of an omitted comma in these amusing examples:

Without comma:

“Top stories: World leaders at Mandela tribute, Obama-Castro handshake and society marriage date set.”

With comma:

“Top stories: World leaders at Mandela tribute, Obama-Castro handshake, and society marriage date set.”

Without comma:

I'd like to thank my parents, the pope and Mother Theresa.

With comma:

I'd like to thank my parents, the pope, and Mother Theresa.

Commas in Pairs (6.17)

In prose a comma should be placed before and after a state name in a **city and state** reference.

If you live in Kalamazoo, Michigan, you probably hear “I've Gotta Gal” more than you would like.

In prose a comma should be placed before and after the year in a **full date**.

The National Historic Preservation Act was signed into law on October 15, 1966, and all seemed right with the world.

Commas with Relative Clauses – “that” vs. “which” (6.27)

“That” and “which” are often misused. Please refer to CMOS 6.27 for a detailed explanation of usage.

In short, restrictive relative clauses are usually introduced with *that*; nonrestrictive clauses (or parenthetical clauses) are introduced with *which*. Restrictive means the clauses are essential to understanding the meaning. Nonrestrictive means the clause can be omitted without causing confusion.

The Multiple Property Documentation Form that provides a historic context for Rock & Roll in Michigan was approved by the keeper.

Grand Marais’s Pickle Barrel, which is listed in the National Register, is a house rather than an enormous vessel for food storage. (Also see 7.18 regarding possessives of words and names ending in an unpronounced “s.”)

Family Relationships and Other Appositives

An appositive provides an explanation for a noun. If it can be omitted without leading to confusion, it is nonrestrictive and you should use commas. If it can be omitted because it provides vital information, then it is restrictive and you should not use commas.

Use parenthetical commas around the name of family members when there can be only one such relative: father, mother, husband, and wife. The parenthetical commas indicate that the name can be omitted without losing the meaning of the sentence. On the other hand, commas should be omitted when referring to daughters, sons, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.

Charles Eames’s wife, Ray, is sometimes misunderstood to have been his brother when people hear them referred to as “Charles and Ray Eames.” (Also see 7.19 regarding possessives of names like “Euripides.”)

Albert Kahn’s brother Julius patented the Kahn system of reinforced concrete construction.

See CMOS 6.29 regarding commas with restrictive and nonrestrictive descriptive phrases.

Junior and Senior

You need not use a comma between a name and the words Junior or Senior. (6.43)

Berry Gordy Jr. founded the Motown record label.

Note: this is a change from earlier versions of the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

Short Introductory Adverbial Phrases

Do not use a comma after short adverbial phrases unless misreading is likely.

In 2019 the State Historic Preservation Office became part of the Michigan Strategic Fund.

But

Before eating, SHPO staff sang "Happy Birthday."

CORRECT AND FORMAL NAMES

The correct, official name of companies, organizations, and institutions should be used in prose. For example:

University of Michigan, instead of Michigan

Michigan State University, instead of Michigan State

Ford Motor Company, instead of Ford or Ford's (this is especially important when a distinction between a member of the Ford family and the company is required.).

Special attention should be paid to historical entities, events, and individuals. The correct name must be used and be used consistently. For example, the Detroit International Fair and Exhibition should be written as such, and not as the Detroit International Exhibition and Fair, the Detroit International Fair, the Detroit World's Fair, or some other construction.

EM DASHES AND EN DASHES (CMOS 6.78–6.92)

Em dashes set off copy for emphasis or explanation. They are the length of a character space (an em) and should not be flanked by spaces.

The building was not completed until June 1895—nearly seven years after it was started—due to a strange variety of impediments, including a “brick famine” in Bay City that lasted for many months.

En dashes are used to specify a range or in place of the word “to” in date ranges, times, page numbers, etc.

Do not use en dashes with words like “and,” “between,” “from,” and the like when expressing a range of dates, times, amounts, etc. In those cases “to” should be used to complete the range.

The State Historic Preservation Office is open daily from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Join us at the State Historic Preservation Review Board meeting, January 28, 2022, 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

The building was constructed between 1898 and 1899.

The dance academy occupied the building from 1919 to 1964.

HYPHENATION AND COMPOUNDS

Hyphenation should be kept to a minimum but should be used when they are necessary to prevent misreading.

Hyphens are used when one or more compound modifiers, or phrasal adjectives, precede a noun. For example: a *three-story, side-gabled, red-brick* building. CMOS guides that “if more than one phrasal adjective modifies a single noun, hyphenation becomes especially important.” (5.92)

Check the dictionary to learn whether to hyphenate particular words. Do not hyphenate closed compounds such as *nonprofit* or *website* (note: *web page*, an open compound, is not hyphenated). In addition, a hyphenation guide is found in CMOS; please refer to 7.89.

Do not insert a hyphen following an adverb ending in “ly.” There is no chance for misreading. (7.86) Example: *The National Register of Historic Places is a federally funded program.*

NUMBERS AND NUMERALS

General Rules

See CMOS 17, chapter 9, for an in-depth discussion of how to treat numbers. Here are some basics.

Spell numbers one through one hundred and any of those numbers followed by hundred, thousand, hundred thousand, or million unless you are writing for a scientific publication or you are referring to monetary amounts. (9.2 and 9.8) SHPO does not follow the “alternative rule” described in 9.3.

Do not spell numbers of military organizations. For example, write “92nd Infantry Division,” and not “Ninety-second Infantry Division.”

SHPO staff reviews roughly five thousand federally funded, permitted, or licensed projects per year.

SHPO staff reviewed 1,302 housing rehabilitations in 2017.

Superscript

Do not use superscript with numerals.

Ordinal numerals should appear as 17th, 2nd, and 33rd, not as 17th, 2nd, and 33rd. (9.6)

Centuries

Spell centuries: *nineteenth century, twenty-first century*. (9.32)

Use a hyphen when it is an adjectival noun: *twentieth-century development*. (7.89 section 3)

Do not use Roman numerals when writing centuries.

Numbered Street Names

SHPO departs from CMOS in the treatment of numbered streets. In general, numbered streets should use the numeral form of the street name (29th Street; 2nd Avenue; etc.) When a municipality uses a specific form of a numbered street name, that form should be used. For example, if a municipality uses 1st Street, use the numeral. If the community uses First Street, use the spelled

version. The names of streets, avenues, roads, courts, drives, and the like should be spelled out in prose and capitalized when used as part of a name. (8.56)

The house is located at 345 First Street.

The house is located on 29th Street between Maple and Elm Streets.

The bungalow on 122nd Street was mistakenly described as Victorian.

Highway numbers should be presented with numerals, (9.50-9.51) but the highway name and type, when used as part of the name, should be capitalized. The terms “interstate,” “highway,” “freeway,” and the like are lowercased when used generically. (8.56)

Interstate 75

United States Highway 31

Michigan 22, a state highway...

Percentages

Do not use percent signs in prose. When percentages are written, use the numeral followed by the word “percent.” If a percentage begins a sentence, it should be spelled. (9.18)

The population of the city increased 53 percent between 1910 and 1919.

Monetary Amounts and Currency

CMOS advises that “isolated references to amounts of money are spelled out for whole numbers of one hundred or less,” (9.20) but that large monetary amounts (more than one hundred dollars) are “a mixture of numerals and spelled-out numbers, even for whole numbers.” (9.24)

The parcel was acquired in 1892 for one hundred dollars.

The building was constructed for \$34,500.

The building was constructed at a cost of \$1.45 million.

PLURALS AND POSSESSIVES

See CMOS 7.5–7.29 regarding plurals and possessives,

PROBLEMATIC WORDS AND PHRASES

Many books have been written about words that are frequently confused, misused, or used inaccurately. Here are some that commonly occur in National Register nominations. Please be sure to review your text to ensure these common mistakes have not been made.

Built vs. Designed

It is common in narrative texts for “built” to be used in place of “designed,” but a distinction must be made between the two. Except in rare instances, architects design buildings, contractors or builders build them.

Likewise, business owners, property owners, and the like typically did not build the buildings they owned or were associated with. It is incorrect to write “John Smith built his house...” unless evidence exists that he actually built it. Otherwise, write “the house was built for John Smith.”

Comprise vs. Compose

To quote the American Heritage College Dictionary, “the whole comprises its parts.”

The United States of America comprises fifty states.

Eighty-three counties compose the state of Michigan.

The State Historic Preservation Office staff comprises archaeologists, historians, architects, historic architects, and preservation planners.

Farther vs. Further

Farther relates to physical distance.

The drive to Copper Harbor Lighthouse was farther than the drive to a lighthouse conference in Des Moines, Iowa.

Further relates to depth or abstract distance.

When a contract proposal estimated 100,000 dollars for travel, staff pledged to investigate further.

Fewer vs. Less

“Less” has somehow been incorrectly replaced by “fewer.” Someone might say “There were less people at MHPN’s conference last year than this year,” when in fact they mean fewer. You will not ever hear “A liter of milk is fewer than a gallon”!

Fewer denotes individual items that can be counted.

The historic district contains five fewer Queen Anne houses than it does Second Empire houses.

Less denotes an imprecise quantity or something that is uncountable.

The Jones School, a more elaborate example of a Gothic Revival school, is less than a mile north.

More than vs. Over

Most style guides do not indicate a preference between “more than” and “over” and instead, like CMOS (5.250), suggest they can be used interchangeably. However, as a matter of style, SHPO distinguishes between “more than” and “over.” SHPO prefers “more than” when used in relation to numbers and quantity and “over” when used in relation to conceptual amounts and spatial relationships.

Historic vs. Historical

Historic is the adjective used to denote something that is old or happened in the past **and** is presumably important.

Historical is the adjective used when the subject relates to history.

Note that not all events that happened in the past are historic, but they are historical. Old newspapers, photographs, and similar documents are seldom considered to be historic. So, one might say, “the cornice of the building is depicted in a *historical* photograph of the town’s main street,” or, “based on *historical* postcard...”

Which vs. That

See the preceding discussion under “Commas with relative clauses.”

PUNCTUATION

In general, punctuation such as slashes, em and en dashes, parentheses, etc., should be used sparingly. Text should be written so as to avoid these marks when possible. Please see the sections on em dashes, en dashes, and slashes for more information on the use of these marks.

QUOTATIONS AND QUOTATION MARKS

See CMOS 17, 6.9 for guidance on the use of quotation marks and other punctuation marks.

Quotations

All quotations must be cited using footnotes, following the *Chicago Manual of Style* format.

Block Quotes

A block quotation should be used when quoting five or more lines of text, or more than one hundred words.

Do not use opening and closing quotation marks with block quotations.

Begin block quotations on a new line and indent the text one-half inch on both the right and left sides.

NOTE: If you quote material within the block, then double marks should be used. (CMOS 13.30 and 13.36)

Floating Quotations

Floating quotations, those that lack an introduction or explanation, must not be used in prose. Quotations must be introduced or explained when used in prose and incorporated into a sentence.

For example, this text:

In that short amount of time, Yamasaki left an indelible impression upon Francis Keally. "Of all the young men that I have come in contact with during the past ten years, I consider Mr. Yamasaki the most brilliant."

May instead be written as:

In that short amount of time, Yamasaki left an indelible impression upon Francis Keally. In a letter supporting Yamasaki's application to become a registered architect in New York, Keally wrote, "of all the young men that I have come in contact with during the past ten years, I consider Mr. Yamasaki the most brilliant."

Capitalization and Syntax

In general, "when a quotation introduced mid-sentence forms a syntactical part of the sentence... it begins with a lowercase letter even if the original begins with a capital." (CMOS 13.19) For example:

Eero Saarinen wrote, "our architecture is too humble. It should be prouder, more aggressive, much richer and larger than we see today."

Not

Eero Saarinen wrote, "Our architecture is too humble. It should be prouder, more aggressive, much richer and larger than we see today."

See CMOS 13.18-13.21 for advice on various aspects of using lower case or capital letters in quotations.

RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITY

To help achieve our goal of National Register nominations, survey reports, and other narrative texts that are inclusive, respectful, appropriate, sensitive, specific, and consistent the State Historic Preservation Office follows the guidelines of the Chicago Manual of Style, the National Association of Black Journalists, and the American Psychological Association when using color terms to describe racial and ethnic identity. In brief, color used to appropriately describe race should be capitalized. For example, rather than "black," "brown," "white," write "Black," "Brown," or "White."

SHPO encourages preparers of narrative documents to review the following statements and guidelines, which provide a fuller discussion of the capitalization of color when referring to race:

American Psychological Association

“Racial and Ethnic Identity,” <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/racial-ethnic-minorities>.

“General Principles for Reducing Bias,” <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/general-principles>

Chicago Manual of Style

“Black and White: A Matter of Capitalization,” <http://cmosshoptalk.com/2020/06/22/black-and-white-a-matter-of-capitalization/>

National Association of Black Journalists

“NABJ Statement on Capitalizing Black and Other Racial Identifiers,” <https://nabjonline.org/blog/nabj-statement-on-capitalizing-black-and-other-racial-identifiers/>

SLASHES

In most cases a slash (/) should not be used in formal prose. A slash (/) is often used to signify alternatives. For example, “to the west of the entry is the former cafeteria/gymnasium.” While convenient, this is informal and should not be used. The preceding statement should be written instead as: “to the west of the entry is the former cafeteria and gymnasium,” or “to the west of the entry is the former cafeteria-gymnasium.”

SPACING

Line Spacing

One or two spaces may be used after a period but must be used consistently throughout the text.

Paragraph Spacing

Paragraph spacing must be set to single-line spacing, with zero-point spacing before and after each line. Paragraphs must not abut and must be separated by one line.

Paragraphs must be left justified, and the first line of the paragraph must not be indented.

“STYLE” IN ASSOCIATION WITH ARCHITECTURAL TERMS

Avoid using the word “style” unless it is needed for clarity, e.g.: a Greek Revival house, a Prairie-style church. (The absence of “style” in the latter could indicate a church located on a prairie, or, perhaps, a heretofore undiscovered denomination.)

GENERAL COMMENTS

Use the active voice rather than the passive voice whenever possible. If you minimize use of the words “is” and “was” your text will be clearer and you will use fewer words.

When writing declarative sentences, do not use “did” (and other forms of “do”) with the root form of a verb, unless: the emphasis of the action is necessary to confirm a previous statement, the action is unexpected, or the previous statement needs correction.

Frank Lloyd Wright designed the Meyer May House in Grand Rapids.

Not

Frank Lloyd Wright did design the Meyer May House in Grand Rapids.

In oral communication, the use of “did” to respond to a question about the house may be appropriate, however, the use of “did” and a verb is generally unnecessary in written communication, especially formal or professional prose.

QUESTIONS

If you have questions about a particular topic, please contact the State Historic Preservation Office by email at preservation@michigan.gov, by telephone at (517) 335-9840, or by mail at State Historic Preservation Office, 300 North Washington Square, Lansing, Michigan 48913.