

# Editing Reference Manual



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National Park Service



# **Editing Reference Manual**

January 2005

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**Denver Service Center**



## COMMON PRACTICES TO USE AND MISTAKES TO AVOID

1. Documents are easier to read when done in columns.
2. Keep your sentences short and to the point. (The DSC *wrong-way* record for a sentence is 152 words.)
3. Avoid using superfluous words; the italicized word in the following list indicates the redundant element:

big <i>in size</i>	<i>integral</i> part
<i>close</i> proximity	<i>local</i> resident
consensus <i>of opinion</i>	<i>very</i> unique
filled <i>to capacity</i>	last <i>of all</i>
The park is <i>located</i> in the southern part of the state.	rehabilitate the <i>existing</i> building

4. Use simple words: for example, *use* instead of *utilize/utilization*, *sign(s)* instead of *signage*, *link* instead of *linkage*, and (as an adjective) *local* instead of *localized*.
5. Use serial commas, those commas that are before the and in a series, e.g., The flag is red, white, and blue. True, many times there would be little misunderstanding if the comma was not used, however, some sentences would be misunderstood. For example, “Anna, May and Walter are here” has a different meaning from “Anna, May, and Walter are here.” In the first example, someone is telling Anna that May and Walter are here. In the second example, we are being told that three people are here. To easily avoid possible problems, get in the habit of putting the comma in before that “and.”

There is a new book from England on punctuation, *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*, by Lynne Truss. The title derives from one of the book's numerous jokes. A panda goes into a bar, orders a sandwich, fires a gun, and heads for the door. A shaken barman asks why. “Look it up,” says the panda, throwing him a badly punctuated wildlife manual. The barman turns to the relevant page: “Panda: Bear-like mammal native to China. Eats, shoots and leaves.” Although this joke really isn’t about serial commas, it does illustrate the importance of correct punctuation (the panda eats shoots and leaves).

6. When using quotation marks, the comma and the period are placed inside the closing quotation mark. The semicolon is placed outside the closing quotation mark.
7. Use one space after periods and colons (referred to as close spacing). Using two spaces results in too much space between sentences, especially when the text is justified. Also, a number of successive open lines may produce the printing phenomenon called a river — white spaces meandering vertically down the page and distracting the reader. Word processing programs now incorporate proportional spacing, which typewriters did not, and this precludes the need for double spaces between periods. This is based on publishing industry standards and typesetting practices.
8. Do not hyphenate *-ly* modifiers (e.g., a federally listed species, *not* a federally-listed species).
9. In general, do not capitalize titles of individuals unless they precede a name.

10. Minimize the use of abbreviations and acronyms in documents. Their excessive use (as shown in the following example) would probably confuse the general public. (Initials for agencies are acceptable as adjectives.)

This GMP/EIS describes four alternatives for management of BICY by the NPS. BLM and USGS, as well as USFS, have participated as cooperators. After a 30-day public review, either a FONSI or NOI to prepare a DEIS will be prepared. That will be followed by a FEIS and a ROD.

11. Most words with “multi” (multipage, multidisciplinary, multimedia) do NOT have a hyphen. This is also true for most “non” words (nonnative, nontoxic, nonmotorized)
12. Use *that* for clauses that restrict the meaning of a sentence; use *which* for clauses that provide additional information and are not necessary to understand the sentence. In the following example, the first sentence means that only bears eating out of garbage cans will be removed (thus restrictive). The second sentence means that all bears will be removed and, incidentally, bears eat from garbage cans.

Bears that eat out of garbage cans will be removed from the park.  
Bears, which eat garbage out of garbage cans, will be removed from the park.
13. NPS *Management Policies* – don’t italicize the “NPS” when referencing this document.
14. The National Park Service is the name of the agency. The national park system (lowercased) refers to the sites the National Park Service manages and is not interchangeable with the National Park Service. We have national park system sites or units, not NPS sites or units. We have NPS reports, not national park system reports.
15. Avoid the overuse of bold and italics to emphasize text. If everything is in bold or italics, then nothing is being emphasized.
16. If you are writing about a national monument (instead of, for example, a national lakeshore or national park), try not to say “the park”; use “the national lakeshore” or “the national monument.” Although “the park” is understood and used throughout the National Park Service, the public doesn’t understand and may not even know that something other than a national park is managed by the National Park Service. We can explain that the national monument/national lakeshore/park/national historic site/etc. is one of almost 400 units in America that are managed by the National Park Service.
17. Avoid footnotes (see section on “Footnotes”).
18. We strongly advise against the use of odd or even page section breaks in the Word software, especially if you are bringing something to the DSC editors for editing. Use “next page” breaks between sections. We strongly advise against the use of odd and even section breaks in Word for long documents undergoing many reviews and changes.
19. When writing impacts, one would say it is “a long-term minor adverse impact,” without commas. All modify impact. It is not an impact that is long term and minor and adverse.
20. There will be instances where a park disagrees with these standards, and contractors/parks will sometimes follow what the park wants.

See also “Word Use,” page 84.

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# INTRODUCTION

This reference manual (which supersedes the September 1999 version) has been developed by the editorial staff at the Denver Service Center to suit the particular requirements of documents produced by this office. The sections in this document have been arranged alphabetically. This guideline is mostly aimed at producing general management plans / environmental impact statements. It is primarily a reference manual for editors; however, others may find it a useful reference for matters such as capitalization, bibliographic style, or compound words. Style decisions are based on *The Chicago Manual of Style* (15th ed. rev., hereafter cited as *CMS*). Other guides, including Kate Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (6th ed.) and the *Microsoft Encarta College Dictionary*, are used on occasion but are not considered primary references. Policy and procedural guidelines (DO-2, DO-12, etc.) are referred to in the organization, formatting, and substantive editing of documents.

Some house styles have been adopted for formatting, numbers, capitalization, compounding, and some aspects of footnoting and bibliography preparation, as discussed in this manual. Specific questions concerning style, format, grammar, and organization should be referred to the DSC editing staff, Planning Communications Group, (303) 969-2943, 987-6652, or 969-2941.

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Most documents prepared by the Denver Service Center are meant to be read by the general public; therefore, the excessive use of in-house abbreviations or acronyms should be avoided. Frequently, these abbreviations are useful shortcuts inside the agency, but for the general reader they can turn an otherwise simple sentence into gibberish.

The NPS, after consulting with WASO, the BLM, and USFWS, will prepare a DEIS/DCP for the tertiary sewage treatment plant at DETO after the BMP has been approved; no work on this project will begin until 30 days after the ROD is issued by the NWRO.

Generally, limit the use of abbreviations to common ones included in the dictionary; it is also permissible to abbreviate agency names when they are used as adjectives or unit modifiers (e.g., NPS guidelines or BLM land). Identify abbreviations parenthetically after the full name is used the first time. If you do not use an abbreviation or acronym later in the document, there is no need to identify it.

The National Park Service (NPS) will study impacts on the grizzly bear in Yellowstone National Park.

*But* The NPS study team held nine public meetings.

Generally avoid the use of abbreviations for document names: GMP, DCP, D/FEIS, HSR, etc.; instead use a short title (this/the plan, this/the document, or the/this environmental impact statement) (see also “Short Titles and Modifiers” section).

The following standard abbreviations are acceptable. (CMS 9.38, 9.42, 15.41, 15.44)

Abbreviate without periods (no spaces):

AD, BC (CMS now recommends full capitals and no periods [9.38, 15.41])

Note: For dates with AD and BC, the AD comes before the date and the BC comes after— for example, Britain was invaded successfully in 55 BC and in AD 1066. Also, inclusive dates used with AD or BC should be given in full to avoid confusion, e.g., “350–345 BC” instead of “350 BC –345 BC” or “between AD 1150 and 1600,” not “between AD 1150 and AD 1600.”

a.m. or AM; p.m. or PM (CMS now approves either lowercase initials with periods or small caps with no periods [CMS 9.42, 15.44]; DSC editing staff prefers the lowercase versions with periods.

**Government abbreviations** (spell out initially): USDI (U.S. Department of the Interior, *not* DOI and note it is the Department of the Interior, not Department of Interior), NPS (National Park Service), PL (Public Law), DO (Director’s Order), EO (Executive Order), USC (*United States Code*), CFR (*Code of Federal Regulations*), FR (*Federal Register*), DM (*Departmental Manual*). Make other department abbreviations conform to this style (change DOC [Department of Commerce] to USDC). See CMS 17.315 for further information about using the *Federal Register*.

cfs, mph, gpd, kV, kW, kWh, MW

sq ft, km, m (meter), ha (hectare)

N/E/S/W/NE





































































































































































































