The STLCC Online Writing Style Guide

The St. Louis Community College Online Style Guide overviews the brand voice for STLCC digital properties. This guide encompasses style guidelines, best practices for writing and college standards.

Brand Voice and Tone

STLCC is:
- An approachable, inclusive, student-centric teacher who values and embraces diversity.
- A genuine and honest higher education expert who is committed to the continuous improvement of students' lives through education.
- An invested education partner who values practicality and helps every student establish and work toward achievable goals.
- A trusted community leader who is invested in the betterment of St. Louis through education.
- A thought leader who is recognized for inspiring students and our community to live elevated lives.

STLCC is not:
Silly, sarcastic, snarky, sophomoric, philosophical, cerebral, snobby, exclusive, pretentious

Use Scenarios

Acronyms
- Avoid using acronyms in general.
- Use full name on first mention; on second reference either use a designated second mention or use a general term.
- Acronyms are acceptable for commonly understood concepts (ex. ACT, GED, GPA etc.)
  Example: "The William J. Harrison Education Center is located in the historic JeffVanderLou neighborhood. The education center's goal is to bring education to under-served areas."

Addresses
- Always use numerals for specific addresses and use abbreviated Ave., Blvd., St.
  Example: 5600 Oakland Ave.
- Abbreviate directional street names (north, south).
  Example: 300 S. Broadway
- Capitalize and spell numbered street names under 10.
  Example: 116 N. Sixth St.
- If mentioning a general road, then you write out the entire street name.
  Example: Stop by some of the delicious international restaurants located on Grand Boulevard.

Ages
- Hyphenate when using a modifier.
  Example: The six-year-old boy threw the ball.
  Example: We were surprised to learn the cat was actually 16 years old.

Alum/Alumni
- An alum of STLCC is anyone who has completed a class with the college and is no longer enrolled.
- When referring to a single person, use gender-neutral alum.
  Example: She is an alum of STLCC.
- When referring to a group, use alumni.
  Example: A group of STLCC alumni started the effort.
- For more on distinguishing students and alumni, see Student Status.

Areas of study
- Capitalize in titles and listings
- Capitalize when used in the full degree or certificate name
  Example: When you earn an Associate in Applied Sciences in Nursing …, Earn your Certificate of Proficiency in Accounting
- In body copy, do not capitalize unless it is a proper noun.
  Example: She decided to study respiratory therapy in fall 2015.
  Example: He came to STLCC to study English.

Board of Trustees
- Capitalize, use *the board* on second mention.
  Example: The Board of Trustees
- Do not capitalize when using as a formal title   .
  Example: board trustee Joe Smith
  Example: the board

Buildings
- Use lower case to refer to buildings unless they have a proper name.
  Example: The humanities building is located on the north corner.
- On buildings with proper names, spell out full name on first mention, then either refer to it by the namesake or the (building, hall, theater).
  Example: Clark Hall
  Example: Clark
  Example: The hall
- Each campus possess' the buildings on its campus
  Example: Meramec's student center

Campuses
- Refer to Forest Park, Florissant Valley, Meramec and Wildwood.
- In titles and listings, use STLCC-(campus).
  Example: STLCC-Meramec
- On first mention, refer to as our (campus name) campus.
  Example: Our Wildwood campus focuses on general transfer.
- Then on subsequent mentions, either refer to as (Campus name) or the campus.
  Example: Meet STLCC-Florissant Valley. The campus is located in the rolling hills of north St. Louis County. Florissant Valley is home to our college radio station.

Center for Workforce Innovation
- Refer to by full name on first mention
  Example: James studied at the Center for Workforce Innovation. He began taking classes at the center in 2011.
- Second mention, refer to as the center

Centers of Excellence
- Use full name for first mention.
- Use second mention (marked in parentheses) if it remains clear to the average reader which it is referring back to.
- For example, in a student story about one of the centers, it would be acceptable to call it the center on second mention, but if a story is talking about all three centers, it needs to be clear which is being referenced.

  Examples: Center for Emerging and Advanced Information Technology (the center)
  Digital Arts and Technology Alliance (the alliance)
  Emerson Center for Engineering and Manufacturing (the center)
  Center for Plant and Life Sciences (the center)

Class
- Refer to the semester a student graduated as semester, year.
  Example: Amelia Wang (Spring 2015)

Comma
- For simple and short lists, do not use an Oxford comma.
  Example: Don't forget your flashlight, hat and backpack.
- For lists longer than three, or a complex list or series, use an Oxford comma.
  Example: Don't forget your flashlight, hat, compass, boots, and backpack.
  Don't forget to keep your flashlight close at hand, turn right after you pass the third oak tree, and do not ever look behind you.

Corporate College
- Refers to the training center in Bridgeton.
- Use name on all references or the training center.
  Example: Our Corporate College gives the college the chance to partner with local business.
  Many large companies in St. Louis will book the training center to host conferences.

Cosand Center
- Refer to by its full name (Joseph P. Cosand Center) on first mention, then simply the Cosand Center or the building.
  Example: The Joseph P. Cosand Center is located downtown. STLCC has owned the building since 1989.

The STLCC Online Writing Style Guide (continued)

Date/Time

- Always list date, time, location
  Example: July 3 at 4 p.m. at STLCC-Florissant Valley
- Use day of the week when it helps orient the date for the reader (deadlines, events, etc.), do not abbreviate and use commas after day of the week and date.
  Example: Commencement will take place Saturday, May 20, at the Chaifetz Arena.
- Do not use days of the week for events that happen far in the future or for events that have happened in the past.
  Example: She received the news on July 27 that she would not be attending school in the fall.
- When listing just month and year, omit comma and always spell out the full month
  Example: Beginning January 2017
- Abbreviate months with six or more letters when used with a date.
  Example: Jan., Feb., March, April, May, June, July, Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.
- Use periods in a.m. and p.m. in body copy, but in listings (such as our Calendar page) or tables use am/pm in the interest of spacing.
- Do not use nd, st or th for dates.
- Use a hyphen to indicate a period of time.
  Example: The festival takes place from July 3-6 in Forest Park.
- Use numerals, spaces and lowercase letters for time. If interval of time takes place in afternoon or morning, don't repeat a.m./p.m.
  Example: 7 a.m., 2-3:30 p.m., 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m.
- Use noon to midnight, instead of 12 a.m. or 12 p.m. Except in listings and tables where it causes spacing issues.
  Example: 10:30 a.m.-noon
- Only use the year when talking about years outside of the current
  Example: The tuition change will begin Jan. 15, 2018.

Degrees

- Use academic degree credentials (B.A., M.A., Ph.D., MBA) only at first mention after full name, without courtesy title.
- Use courtesy titles for guests and college leadership.

  Examples: "Master of Arts, master's degree"
  "Bachelor of Arts, bachelor's degree"
  "Associate in Arts, associate degree"
  "Jeff Pittman, Ph.D."
  "This year's speaker is Nadarajan "Raj" Chetty, Ph.D. Dr. Chetty will speak on the American Dream and its relevance today."

Departments

- Do not capitalize unless it's a proper noun.
  Examples: "Students in the business department…"
  "Students in the English department…"

Education Centers
- These refer to STLCC-South County and the William J. Harrison Education Center.
- Refer to by full name on first mention
- Second mention refer to as the education center
  Examples: "Visit STLCC-South County. This education center offers students the ability to take classes through UMSL onsite."

E-Newsletter
Example: "Subscribe to receive the alumni e-newsletter"

Email
- No hyphen
  Example: "Check your email for invites."

Email address
- Always write out full email addresses (all lowercase) and hyperlink them as well.
  Example: "If you have any questions about the online style guide, contact Jane Doe at jdoe@stlcc.edu."

Farther, further
- Farther refers to physical distance.
  Example: "He can throw the ball farther than anyone else on the team."
- Further refers to an extension of time or degree.
  Example: "He came to STLCC to further his skills in pastry arts."

Files and links
- Always use hyperlinks in the sentence and do not spell out the entire URL.
  Example: "Enrolling is easy with these six, simple steps. Visit our admissions page for more information. "

home page
- The "front page" of a website
  Example: "Links are found on our home page."

internet
- No capitalization

login/log in
- Login is a noun
  Example: "Enter your username an the home page login."
- Log in is a verb
  Example: "After you've created your username, log in from the homepage."

Measurements
- Use numerals for all concrete measurements, even those under 10.
  Example: "The arch observation deck sits 630-feet above the ground and offers great views of the city through windows that are 7-by-27 inches."
- Hyphenate measurements as modifiers
  Example: "The 6-foot-10-inch center easily got the rebound."
- Always use figures and spell out units of measurement (miles, inches, foot).
  Example: "She ran 6 miles every day to train."
- Abbreviate miles per hour
  Example: "35 mph, 23 mpg"
- Use references to make measurements relatable whenever possible.
  Example: "A whale shark can be as long as 40 feet, nearly the length of school bus."

Money
- Always use numerals and use a dollar sign for dollars and spell out centers.
  *Examples: "STLCC leads the area in low-cost education, charging only $106 per credit hour."
  "The tax increased the price by 7 cents."*

More than/over
- Use more when describing numbers
  Example: "More than 500 students participate in commencement"
- Use over for spatial distances/amounts
  Example: "We drove over 600 miles to get to our destination."

Names
- Students: Use first and last name on first mention, followed by first name
  Example: "Rashonda Daniels won the Danforth Scholarship. Rashonda competed with students across St. Louis."
- Faculty: Use first and last name on first mention, followed by first
  Example: "Eiko Saito Shepherd earned the rank of eighth-degree black belt, but Eiko considers helping her students to be a bigger accomplishment."
- Guest: Use first and last name on first mention, followed by courtesy title and last name.
  Example: "This year's speaker is Nadarajan "Raj" Chetty, Ph.D. Dr. Chetty will speak on the American Dream and its relevance today."
- Leadership/board: Use first and last name on first mention, followed by courtesy title and last name.
  Example: "Jeff Pitman, Ph.D., is the chancellor of STLCC. Dr. Pittman stepped into this role in July 2015."

Numbers
- For one through nine, spell out words.
  Example: "I have three apples."
- For 10 or more, use numerals.
  Example: "There were 26 students."

- Use commas for numerals over 999.
  Example: "More than 2,500"
- For general references, use words.
  Example: "Thousands came to walk"
- Spell out million and billion
  Example: "1.2 million students"
- Try to avoid starting out sentences with numbers, but if it can't be avoided, spell out numbers that begin sentences, except for years.
  Example: "Fifteen days ago; 1961 was the year."

online
Not hyphenated

Past/Last
- Use past to describe events that happened previously in time.
  Example: "This past spring, we expanded
- Use last to describe the final event.
  Example: "The last day to enroll in the spring semester is…"

Percentage
- Always use numerals and spell out percentage
  Example: 52 percent

Pronouns
- *They/them/their* is acceptable in singular or gender-neutral pronouns when the person in reference is unknown.
  Example: "Whoever the driver was that night, they must have been in a hurry."
- Clarity is always a top priority, if there is a case where the wording becomes awkward or clumsy; rewording is usually possible and always preferred.
  Example: Do: The suspect will be released into family custody.
  Don't: The suspect will be released into their family's custody.
- *They* can be used in place of he/she when the subject asks not to be gendered, but only in cases where the name become repetitive. You must explain that the subject prefers a gender-neutral pronoun.
  Example: Phoenix, who identifies as gender neutral, spent their summer studying in Montreal.
- When using gender-neutral pronouns, revise for conciseness whenever possible to avoid confusion or repetitiveness
  Example: Do: Felix is honored to be considered.
  Not: Felix said they are honored to be considered.

Quotations
- Use quotation marks around composition titles except newspapers and magazines.
  Example: His favorite book is "Of Mice and Men." He was reading the Wall Street Journal when we met.

Social Media
STLCC Twitter - @stlcc
STLCC Facebook - @stlcc
STLCC Instagram - @stlcc
STLCC hashtag - #stlcc

Sports
- Do not capitalize names or sports or competitive levels
  Example: varsity softball
- Use plural possessive for gender-specific sports
  Example: mens' basketball
- When describing sports action, the school name is singular, but mascot name is plural.
  Example: STLCC scored, the Archers scored
- Use. No. X for ranking
  Example: No. 1

States
- Spell out
  Example: Sam is from Kirksville, Missouri.

St. Louis Community College
- Landing pages: Spell out the full name on first mention. Then use STLCC or the College (uppercase)
- Secondary or tertiary pages: Header on each page acts as the first mention. Always use STLCC or the College (uppercase).
- Use first person when appropriate.
  Example: At STLCC, our goal is make education affordable.
- Never spell out Saint in St. Louis
- STLCC is possessive of all campuses, education centers, centers of excellence and other buildings
  Example: STLCC's Forest Park campus

Students
- Use second person—or "you"—voice on recruiting pages.
  Example: Correct: You can save an average of $4,000 a year by choosing STLCC instead of a four-year university.
  Incorrect: Students save an average of $4,000 by attending STLCC instead of a four-year university.

Student status
- Use students for students actively enrolled in STLCC and alum for anyone who has taken a class at STLCC, transferred or earned a degree or certificate.
  Example: Brandon is a student at our Meramec campus.
  Example: Jordan, an STLCC alum, is the mastermind behind tech startup, PowerSurge.

Super- or subscript
- Do not use superscript or subscript
  Example: During the 36th year of business.

Telephone numbers
- Include area code and use dashes for the entire number. No parentheses or periods.
  Example: 123-456-7891

Title
- Capitalize formal titles before names
  Example: Provost Larry Johnson
- Lowercase formal titles after name
  Example: Andrew Langrehr, vice chancellor of academic affairs

Temperature
- Use numerals for all except zero. Spell out measurements of temperature. Spell out below to indicate temperatures below zero.
  Example: 60 degrees
  Example: Classes were canceled, as temperatures dipped 9 below zero.

URLs
- Don't use full URL whenever possible, only write out full links only when they are simple.
  Example: Visit our admissions page. "pathtostlcc.com"

Website
- Also, webcam, webcast, webinar, the web