

RCA STYLE GUIDE

Updated January 2009

This RCA Style Guide is based on the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th edition, with some variations, emphases, and additions to meet the RCA's particular needs. Number references are to sections of the *Chicago Manual*.

ABBREVIATIONS

Acronyms

Use the full title of RCA agencies and publications followed by their acronyms the first time they appear in the text. Thereafter, use only the acronym. Do not use periods in the acronyms for RCA agencies and publications, and in most cases do not use an article before the acronym (14.15).

Example: The General Synod Council (GSC) met in October. Most members of GSC were present.

Books of the Bible

Write the full names of Bible books unless they appear in parenthesis, where abbreviations are optional.

Examples: He recited 1 Corinthians 13.

Paul said it best (1 Cor. 13).

Use the following abbreviations (note Arabic numbers):

Genesis	Gen.	2 Chronicles	2 Chron.	Daniel	Dan.
Exodus	Exod.	Ezra	Ezra	Hosea	Hos.
Leviticus	Lev.	Nehemiah	Neh.	Joel	Joel
Numbers	Num.	Esther	Esther	Amos	Amos
Deuteronomy	Deut.	Job	Job	Obadiah	Obad.
Joshua	Josh.	Psalms	Ps.	Jonah	Jon.
Judges	Judg.	Proverbs	Prov.	Micah	Mic.
Ruth	Ruth	Ecclesiastes	Eccles.	Nahum	Nah.
1 Samuel	1 Sam.	Song of Solomon	Song of Sol.	Habakkuk	Hab.
2 Samuel	2 Sam.	Isaiah	Isa.	Zephaniah	Zeph.
1 Kings	1 Kings	Jeremiah	Jer.	Haggai	Hag.
2 Kings	2 Kings	Lamentations	Lam.	Zechariah	Zech.
1 Chronicles	1 Chron.	Ezekiel	Ezek.	Malachi	Mal.
Matthew	Matt.	Ephesians	Eph.	1 Peter	1 Pet.
Mark	Mark	Philippians	Phil.	2 Peter	2 Pet.
Luke	Luke	Colossians	Col.	1 John	1 John
John	John	1 Thessalonians	1 Thess.	2 John	2 John
Acts of the Apostles	Acts	2 Thessalonians	2 Thess.	3 John	3 John
Romans	Rom.	Titus	Titus	Jude	Jude
1 Corinthians	1 Cor.	Philemon	Philem.	Revelation	Rev.
2 Corinthians	2 Cor.	Hebrews	Heb.		
Galatians	Gal.	James	James		

States and Provinces

Spell out names of states and provinces except in lists, notes, bibliographies, indexes, and mailing addresses. In general, reserve the two-letter form, as specified by the government, for zip and postal codes. Abbreviations and zip codes of states are posted online at http://www.usps.com/ncsc/lookups/usps_abbreviations.html.

Example: He traveled to Monroe, South Dakota (not *Monroe, SD*).

Note: Since the RCA is a North American denomination, do not include *Canada* in geographical references.

Example: She attended a meeting at Emmanuel Reformed Church in Whitby, Ontario.

Note: While U.S. address codes are called *zip codes*, Canadian codes are called *postal codes*.

Canadian abbreviations are as follows:

Alberta	AL	Nunavut	NU
British Columbia	BC	Ontario	ON
Manitoba	MB	Prince Edward Island	PE
New Brunswick	NB	Quebec	QC
Newfoundland	NL	Saskatchewan	SK
Nova Scotia	NS	Yukon Territory	YT
Northwest Territories	NT		

Time and References

a.m., p.m.

p., pp. (singular and plural for page)

vs., vss. (singular and plural for verse) (this is a change from previous style guide)

CAPITALIZATION

Biblical and religious terms

(Several of these items depart from the *Chicago Manual* style, especially in events such as the creation, fall, crucifixion, etc. When in doubt, do not capitalize.)

Advent	Ascension Day
amillennial	baby Jesus
antichrist	baptism
Apocalypse, the (Revelation)	Beatitudes, the
Apocrypha, the	biblical
apostle Peter, Paul, etc.	body of Christ (the church)
apostles	Book, the (Bible)
Apostles' Creed	Book of Acts
apostolic age	Bread of Life
ark, the (Noah's)	Calvary
ark of the covenant	catholic (meaning universal)
ascension, the	Catholic (spell out: Roman Catholic Church)

Catholicism
 child Jesus
 children of Israel
 Christ child
 Christian
 christological
 Christology
 Christmas
 church (all except proper names of
 denominations and specific churches)
 Communion (when it means the sacrament)
 covenant, the
 creation, the
 cross, the
 crucifixion, the
 Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)
 day of Pentecost
 day of the Lord
 deity of Christ
 the devil
 Diaspora
 Easter
 Epistle to the Romans
 Epistles (section of the Bible)
 epistles of Paul
 exile, the
 exodus, the
 faith, the (Christian)
 fall, the
 flood, the
 fourth Gospel, the
 Garden of Eden
 godly
 golden rule, the
 good news, the (the gospel)
 Gospels (referring to Matthew, Mark, etc.)
 Hades
 heaven
 hell
 holy catholic church
 Holy Communion
 Holy of Holies
 Holy Week
 the incarnation
 judgment day
 judgment seat of Christ
 kingdom of God

kingship of Christ
 last day, the
 last supper
 Law, the (section of the Bible)
 law of God
 Lent
 Lord's Day
 Lord's Supper
 mercy seat
 messianic
 nativity, the
 New Jerusalem
 parable of the prodigal son
 paradise (heaven)
 parousia
 Passover, the
 Pentateuch
 Pentecost
 Pharisee
 Promised Land, the
 prophet Isaiah, the
 prophets, the
 Prophets, the (section of the Bible)
 Protestant
 providence of God
 psalmist, the
 Psalter, the
 Reformation, the
 reformers, the
 resurrection, the
 sabbath
 sacraments
 Satan
 scriptural
 Scripture/Scriptures, the
 second coming, the
 Sunday school
 synoptic Gospels
 Synoptics, the
 Ten Commandments (but the second
 commandment)
 virgin birth
 Word, the (Bible)
 Word of God

Denominational terms

Advisory Committee on Worship, the advisory committee
 Albertus C. Van Raalte Professor of Theology, professor of theology
 board of deacons, board of elders, consistory
Church Herald Editorial Council, the council
 Classis of Ontario or Ontario Classis, the classis (see current *General Synod Directory* for an up-
 to-date list of regional synods and classes.)
 Commission on Worship, the commission

General Synod Council, the council
General Synod, the synod
General Synod Executive Committee, the executive committee, the committee
minister of Word and sacrament
Presbyterian Church, Presbyterian churches, presbyterian government

Reformed Church (denomination), Reformed churches, Reformed theology
Synod of New York, Synod of New York, the synod

When referring to the committees/divisions/units of the General Synod Council, it is preferable to use the proper name of the committee entity without adding the word *unit* or some other designation.

Example: The matter was referred to Congregational and Ministry Services for study.

Do not refer to *national* when referring to the RCA. Use *denominational* or *North American*.

The RCA's membership categories (*MGS 1995*, pp. 225-231; *MGS 1996*, p. 64) are:

- confessing
- inactive
- baptized
- adherents

Names for God

Use lowercase personal pronouns to refer to deity unless necessary for clarity.

Examples: The one who is to come
God in his mercy
God asked Moses to lead His people.

Do not use thee, thou, or thine to refer to the deity.

In referring to God, try to avoid the use of *him*. An alternative is to use one or more of the many biblical words for God. It is not acceptable, however, to alter scriptural quotations to suit personal sensitivities or theological biases. If a Scripture portion is changed, the quotation marks should be removed or the reference should be noted as an adaptation.

Examples: As John's Gospel indicates (3:16), God so loved the world that God gave an only child.

O give thanks to the Lord, call on God's name,
make known God's deeds among the peoples.

—Adapted from Psalm 105:1

As a general rule uppercase names and titles of God; lowercase metaphors and adjectives.

Almighty (but almighty God)	Savior
Anointed	Son
Comforter	Son of God
Counselor	Son of Man
Creator (but creator of life)	Supreme Being
Deliverer	Teacher
eternal God	Trinity (but third person of the Trinity)
Father	Word (referring to the Bible or Christ)
God	
heavenly Father	
Holy One (but the one God)	
Holy Spirit	
Jehovah	
Judge	
Lamb of God	
Lord (but lordship)	
Maker	
Master	
Mediator	
Messiah	
Most High	
Prince of Peace	
Redeemer	

Nationalities and groups of people

The names of racial, linguistic, tribal, religious, and other groupings of people are capitalized.

- African American
- Native American (U.S.)
- First Nations people (Canada)
- Anglo-American, Anglo
- Asian, Asian American
- Caucasian
- Hispanic
- Indo-European
- Mormon

Designations based only on color are lowercased.

Examples: black, white

Titles, Offices, and Names

The initial reference to a person uses the full name. Subsequent references use the last name only, without a title. An exception is made in very informal works and in Profiles in Mission, which frequently mention both husband and wife.

Example: Pam Snyder, a member of First Reformed Church in Lone Elm, Kansas, recently was named Teacher of the Year by the local school board. Snyder has taught seventh grade...

Titles are capitalized when they immediately precede a personal name.

Example: He read a book about Cardinal Newman.

When titles are used in apposition to a name they are not part of the name and so are lowercased.

Example: He studied about the emperor Maximilian.

Titles following a personal name are lowercased.

Example: Deborah Morris, manager of administrative services, attended the meeting.

When the title includes a segment of the RCA structure that is otherwise capitalized, the capitals are retained.

Examples: Jhonny Alicea-Báez, director of Global Mission, chaired the meeting.
The matter is being handled by the director of Benefits Services.

Titles are lowercased when they appear in text.

Examples: The RCA's general secretary went to South Africa.
As a minister of Word and sacrament she agreed to perform the wedding.

Titles are capitalized when they are part of an address in a brochure or ad.

Example: For further information, contact:
Jane Schuyler, Congregational Support Specialist
Reformed Church in America
4500 60th St. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49512

The title *Reverend* is almost always abbreviated and is always accompanied by *the*.

Example: The Rev. Henry Vandermeer was ordained July 14, 1996.

(The use of *the Rev.* for ordained clergy varies among publications. The title is used in *General Synod Minutes* [except in lists] and the *Church Herald*, but is not used in *RCA Today*, *Mission Today*, the *Plan Calendar*, *Profiles in Mission*, and most other publications. Important historical documents should include the title.)

If the ordained clergy also has an academic doctorate, use *the Rev. Dr.* (but not *Drs.*, no matter how many doctorates he or she has earned).

Mr., Mrs., and Ms. are not ordinarily used as titles.

The term *vice president* is used without a hyphen.

Print and DVD Titles

The names of ongoing publications, such as magazines and newsletters, are italicized, regardless of size or frequency of publication.

Examples: *Mission Today, RCA Today, Plan Calendar*

Even if *the* appears on the publication's masthead, the initial *the* is set in roman type and lowercased (7.136).

Example: The elders were asked to read the *Church Herald* and the *Called to Serve* newsletter.

A publication's title is written in upper/lowercase even if on the publication the title appears in all capitals.

Examples: *Time, Light and Life, Commonweal, Banner*

Titles of books are italicized, and names of series are capitalized but not italicized.

Example: Faith Alive Christian Resources sells the Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America, including *Taking the Jesus Road: The Ministry of the Reformed Church in America among Native Americans*, by LeRoy Koopman.

Quotation marks are used for titles of such works as articles, reports, poems, essays, chapters, and short stories.

Example: "Joyful Directions," by Barbara Fullerton, appeared in the 2009 issue of *Giving: Growing Joyful Stewards in Your Congregation* magazine.

The titles of brochures, especially those of an ongoing nature, are italicized. Titles of incidental promotional brochures and fliers (not flyers) are sometimes set in roman type and capitalized.

Examples: The brochure titled *A Three-Minute Tour of the Reformed Church in America* is included with each *Deacons and Elders: Called to Serve* booklet.

A Mission Resources flier is included in monthly *Mission Today* mailings.

Creeds and confessions are capitalized but not italicized (7.91).

Examples: Apostles' Creed, Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dort

The *Book of Church Order*'s title is italicized. The titles of its components are set in roman type, as are the bylaws, constitutions, and other official rules of subsidiary organizations of the General Synod.

Examples: The *Book of Church Order* contains the Government, the Disciplinary and Judicial Procedures, the Bylaws and Special Rules of Order of the General Synod, and the Formularies.

Article II of the Bylaws of Reformed Church Press outlines the corporation's purpose and responsibilities.

Note: The Constitution of the Reformed Church in America consists of the doctrinal standards (Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dort), the *Liturgy with the Directory for Worship*, and two components of the *Book of Church Order*: 1) The Government and 2) The Disciplinary and Judicial Procedures.

The names of curricula are set in roman type. Course materials and books within the curricula are italicized.

Examples: *Disciples—Year One* is the first book in the two-year Disciples curriculum.

The study book *Sex, Lies, and City Gates* is part of the Prime Time Bible Study series.

The titles of DVDs and motion pictures are italicized.

Example: *Sister Share*, a DVD that highlights five ways to meet the needs of women and children around the world, is shown widely in RCA churches.

Continuing series of television and radio programs are italicized, while titles of individual segments are set in roman type and quoted.

Example: The program "The Deity of Christ" aired in December on *Words of Hope*.

Titles of operas, oratorios, and other long musical compositions are italicized, while titles of songs, hymns, and other short compositions are set in roman type and quoted.

Examples: *Don Giovanni*, "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring," "His Name Is Wonderful," "He Shall Feed His Flock" (from Handel's *Messiah*)

CONFERENCES, EVENTS, FUND DRIVES

Use uppercase without quotation marks or italics for conferences, convocations, and retreats.

Examples: One Thing, Church Planters Regional Summit, ESC 2008 Leadership Seminar

Subsequent references which do not repeat the formal name of the event are in lower case.

Examples: the gathering, the summit, the seminar

Themes of conferences and retreats are in quotation marks.

Example: The theme of the ESC's spring 2009 conference is "It's Easy Being Green."

For fund drives, use uppercase but not quotation marks.

Examples: Church Growth Fund, Mobilizing for Mission

The terms *fundraiser* and *fundraising* are one word, without a hyphen.

LISTS

Except for very short lines, begin with a capital letter and end with a period, even if the phrase is not a complete sentence. Use numbers or bullets rather than letters.

Example: The task of the RCA teaching church shall be to provide:

1. A setting for candidates to assess their learning needs and test their ministry skills.
2. A contract for reimbursed ministry time in accordance with the candidate's personal and seminary schedule.

For lists consisting of short lines of one to five words, use initial capitals but not periods. Numbering is usually not necessary.

Example: Candidates must complete a full-time schedule which includes:

Leading consistory or steering committee meetings
Planning weekly worship
Equipping lay leaders
Calling
Teaching

If a run-on list is long and/or cumbersome, number the items for clarity, use single parentheses, and keep a parallel structure.

Example: The inquiry provides an opportunity to explore the following: 1) the place and purpose of the service of ordination to office in the Reformed tradition, 2) the meaning of the laying on of hands in such services, 3) the relationship between the several offices of the Reformed Church in America, and 4) the relationship of these offices to the ministry of the whole people of God.

MISCELLANEOUS

Computer terms

Although Internet addresses never end with a period, it is permissible to include the period of a sentence after an Internet address.

Example: The RCWS website is www.rca.org/rcws.

When writing Internet addresses, do not include http://.

Example: Visit the *Church Herald* website: herald.rca.org.

Basic computer terms:

email (no hyphen)
online (used as either noun or adjective)
homepage
Internet
website
WordPerfect (no space)
World Wide Web, the Web

Miscellaneous spellings

audiovisuals (not *audio-visuals*)
childcare, healthcare
database
fundraiser, fundraising (either noun or adjective)
ongoing (not *on-going*)
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (use parentheses and periods)
sign up (not *please sign-up*)
Stephen Ministries

Ellipses

Use three dots for any omission, regardless of whether the omission comes in the middle of a sentence or between sentences. (The rules are complicated [see 10.48-62], and the *Chicago Manual* allows the above common sense style if used consistently [10.49-50].)

Example: “It put things into perspective...It’s helped us grow.”

Do not, unless the sense clearly calls for it, use ellipses before or after quoted material, even if that quotation is incomplete.

Prefixes

Prefixes like *non*, *anti*, *co*, *multi*, and *semi* are seldom followed by a hyphen.

Examples: nonconformist, anticlerical, copastor, semicircular

There are exceptions to this rule: if the second element is capitalized and if the absence of a hyphen could cause misunderstanding.

Examples: non-Christian, anti-Semitic, re-create

A temporary compound is hyphenated when used as an adjective. (The *Chicago Manual* makes this mandatory only when it might be confusing if not hyphenated, but we think it's good to be consistent.)

Examples: all-powerful God, full-length mirror

A helpful guide for compound words and words with prefixes and suffixes is found in Table 6.1 (pp. 219-231) of the *Chicago Manual*.

Formatting

Use single spaces between sentences and after colons. (Double spaces are leftovers from the typesetting age.)

Commas

Unless it's important for clarity, commas are not used after an introductory prepositional phrase.

Example: In 2008 the General Synod Council approved adding the phrase "Multiracial Future" to the Our Call logo.

A comma is used before the conjunction in a series.

Example: Copper, silver, and gold are mentioned in the Bible.

Numbers

Use Associated Press– (AP-) style numbers except in more formal text (i.e., *Minutes of General Synod*) or in certain materials for non-RCA clients (i.e., *Giving* magazine), where *Chicago Manual* style is used.

AP-Style Numbers

Generally, spell out numbers less than 10. Exceptions to this rule are:

- Addresses: 6 Maple St.
- Ages, even for inanimate objects: The 2-year-old building
- Cents: 5 cents
- Dollars: \$5
- Dates: June 6
- Dimensions: 6 feet tall; 9-by-12 rug
- Highways: U.S. Route 1
- Millions, billions: 3 million people
- Percentages: 4 percent
- Proportions: 2 parts water
- Speed: 7 miles per hour
- Temperature: 8 degrees
- Time: 8 a.m.

Use Arabic numerals for numbers with two or more digits.

For figures of more than 999, use commas to set off each group of three numerals (except for years). For sums in the million and billion range, consider using decimals as in \$5.1 million. (You may not do this for some annual and quarterly report uses.)

Fractions: Spell out amounts less than 1, using hyphens between the words.

Examples: Two-thirds, three-quarters

Spell out numbers at the beginning of a sentence, with one exception—years.

Examples: Two hundred twenty riders joined the cross-country tour.

1492 was the year Europeans discovered the Americas.

Plural forms: Numbers like 3s get the s but no apostrophe. (The same rule applies to decades: The 1920s.)

Letters: Single letters like K's get the s and an apostrophe. Multiple letters like ABCs get the s but no apostrophe.

Chicago Manual–Style Numbers

Numbers from one through ninety-nine are spelled out, as are whole numbers followed by hundred, thousand, hundred thousand, million, and so on (8.3).

Examples: Promise Keepers drew seventy thousand men to the Pontiac Silverdome.

Ecumenical Testimony is 322 pages long.

The *Church Herald* employs six people, some of whom work full time.

If numbers in a sentence (especially in a series) fall on both sides of 100, be consistent with one style.

Example: She ordered 215 Bibles, 101 hymnals, 22 tapes, and 18 study booklets.

Percentages are indicated by a number followed by the word percent.

Example: He asked for a 20 percent discount.

A number that begins a sentence should be spelled out.

Example: One hundred fifty-five deacons attended the workshop.

The numerical designation of a time period is spelled out and lowercased (7.63).

Examples: twenty-first century, the twenties

Zeros are generally not used for even dollar amounts.

Example: *Our Reformed Church* can be purchased from Faith Alive Christian Resources for \$4.

Addresses and phone numbers

For area codes of phone numbers, use parenthesis without the 1 prefix.

Example: For further information, call (708) 895-4030.

Exception: When listing a toll-free telephone number at the bottom of an ad or brochure, it is permissible to dispense with the parentheses and add the 1 prefix.

Example: Faith Alive Christian Resources
1-800-333-8300

Lowercase *telephone*, *fax*, and *email* except when at the beginning of a line as part of an address.

Examples: His fax number was (616) 698-6606.
Fax: (616) 698-6606.

Except for NW, NE, SE, SW (or N., S., E., and W. when they occur before the street name), spell out addresses in running text.

Examples: The RCA's Heartland office is at 612 Eighth Street SE in Orange City, Iowa.
Her new address is 123 E. Cloverdale Dr.

Address abbreviations: Ave., Blvd., Bldg., Ct., Dr., Ln., Pl., Rd., Sq., St., Terr.

Biblical quotations

Place biblical references in parentheses at the end of the quotation but before the ending punctuation.

Example: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”
(Rom. 8:1).

Use the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) unless there is a good reason for using another translation, such as clarity or author preference. If the NRSV is used, there is no need to identify it. Other translations should be identified.

Example: “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”
(Rom. 8:1, NIV).

All biblical quotations must be from some published translation.

Inclusive language

Use inclusive language whenever possible. Avoid using male pronouns exclusively throughout the text. A solution that often works is to use plurals. If a singular is used, use *he* or *she* rather than the nonword *s/he*. Use *his* or *her* rather than *his/her*. The following list illustrates alternatives to male words.

<u>Previous term</u>	<u>Alternative</u>
chairman	chair, chairperson (or chairman, chairwoman if accurate)
man-hours	work hours, staff time
mankind	humankind, human beings, people
the family of man	the human family
one-man show	one-person show
foreman	supervisor
pastor's wife	pastor's spouse
newsman	reporter, journalist
fellowship	social hour, social time

Note: The NRSV is a good translation for avoiding sexism in biblical quotes.

(See the section “Names for God” for inclusive language as it relates to deity.)