AAUW California Communications Committee Editing Guide

Content

- Don't assume that the copy you have been sent is correct, including the AAUW information it contains. Don't be afraid to check and/or question.
- Rewrite for clarification, to smooth syntax, to eliminate duplication or to correct grammar, spelling, etc. Reorganize content for better flow of ideas by changing the order of paragraphs and adding transitional sentences or introductory phrases as needed.
- Obtain approval from the original author if changes are substantial.
- When possible, rewrite to avoid technical grammatical errors such as ending a sentence with a preposition.
- When possible, use the active, not passive, voice.
    - "The dog bit the man." vs. "The man was bitten by the dog."
    - "Sign the bottom of the form." vs. "The bottom of the form must be signed."
- Define acronyms when they are first used. If acronyms are used in the title of an article, define the acronym when it is first used in the article.
    - "The LOL (Leader on Loan) program is designed to…….."
- Add an explanation of AAUW programs, events or features for novice readers.
    - "Encourage members to use the MPP (*Membership Payment Program*), which allows them to pay online by credit card.
    - "The deadline to nominate your branch's Named Gift Honoree, *a tribute to an outstanding AAUW member which is allowed to branches donating $750 or more to AAUW Fund*, is December 31.
- Add links to AAUW California website where appropriate (the final page, not just aauw-ca.org). Be sure general navigation is clear to those reading a printed version.
- The document must use AAUW colors. No new colors or highlights.
- LINKS - Embed links with the text "here", not 'HERE." Be sure the link goes to the official document (usually posted on our website) and not to the draft on our Google drive.

Capitalization

- The word **"branch"** is not capitalized unless it is part of the official name of a branch.
    - "all the branches" vs. "Mariposa Branch"
- The words **"state"** and **"national"** are not capitalized when they are used as adjectives. They are capitalized when used alone as a proper noun naming the organization.
    - "national AAUW" vs. "contact National for information…"
    - Capitalize AAUW California and AAUW National.
    - The term "National AAUW" should be changed to "AAUW National" to avoid conflicting with the guidance in the first bullet.
- The word **"committee"** is not capitalized unless it is part of the specific name of a committee.
    - "Program Committee" vs. "state committees"

- The titles **"president," "chairman," "coordinator," "director,"** etc. are not capitalized unless preceding the person's specific name.
  - "President Veronica" vs. "Veronica is president."
  - For reference on capitalizing titles, see https://grammar.yourdictionary.com/capitalization/capitalization-of-job-titles.html
- The term **"Board of Directors"** is capitalized only when used as a proper noun.
  - "AAUW California Board of Directors" vs. "the members of the board of directors"
- The shortcut term **"board" or "board of directors" should not be capitalized.**
  - The board decided to approve the request.
  - The board of directors of AAUW California vs. AAUW California Board of Directors
- Although in conflict with capitalization rules, the titles of positions in the Tech Trek world are commonly capitalized due to widespread and grandfathered usage.
  - Tech Trek Program Director, Tech Trek Financial Liaison, Branch Tech Trek Coordinator, Branch Tech Trek Treasurer, Camp Director, Camp Treasurer, etc.
- The **titles of events, projects, programs**, etc. are only capitalized when they are proper nouns.
  - "Financial Literacy program" vs. "a commitment to financial literacy"
  - "AAUW Fund Event" vs. "AAUW Fund fundraising event"
- The word **"convention"** is not capitalized unless it is being used as a shortcut name for a specific event.
  - "We are making plans for the annual convention" vs. "We hope to see you in April at the Convention."
- "AAUW Fund" is capitalized, but not preceded by the word "the." **AAUW Fund Event** is capitalized as the proper name of the event.
- **"Annual Meeting"** is capitalized.
- The monthly member communication is titled **the *California Connection***.
- Capitalize "Policies and Procedures" only when referring to the specific document itself.
- Since the AAUW program is named Fellowships and Grants, those words will be capitalized, but not the word "recipients," which is a common nouns, i.e. **Fellowship and Grant recipients** (note: Fellow gets a capital F only if it is part of a title. If someone is given the fellowship called the "AAUW American Fellowship" she is called an "AAUW American Fellow," and if all of the recipients of the various AAUW fellowships are in a room, they could be called a roomful of "AAUW Fellows" but if they are joined by NAUW Fellows, then the room is full of fellows (not Fellows).

Punctuation & Spelling

- **Periods and commas:** Periods and commas **are placed inside quotation marks.**
  - AAUW's mission includes the words "education and advocacy."

○ AAUW's mission embraces the three goals of "education," "research," and "advocacy."

Place a **comma before the conjunction (and, or, etc.) in a list of items**.

○ The meeting is open to branch leaders, members, and the public.

● **Colons, semicolons, and dashes**: Generally speaking, these are placed after quotation marks.

○ The state manages "TechTrek"; the branches manage their scholarship programs.

○ The branch sent a two-question "interest survey": Why did you join? and What events have you attended?

● **Hyphens and dashes (expanded):**

In order of increasing length (do not include any spaces except as noted*):

○ **Hyphen (-)** (minus key) to:

■ combine words ("well-educated")

■ split a word between lines

■ to separate non-inclusive numbers in SSN, phone numbers, etc.

*Space exceptions:

■ to indicate subtraction (e.g., **3 - 5 = -2**)

■ hanging hyphens ("nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature")

○ **En dash (–)** means "through." Use to indicate:

■ inclusive numbers (e.g., pages 33–47, June 30–July 2)

■ game scores

○ **Em dash (—)**

■ indicates a strong break in a sentence

■ often used in pairs but not always

● **Question marks and exclamation points**: If they apply to the quoted material, they go within the quotation marks. If they apply to the whole sentence, they go outside.

○ The president opened the meeting by asking, "Did you receive your directory?"

○ Does AAUW mission include the words "education and advocacy"?

● **Parentheses**: If only part of the sentence is parenthetical, then put the final punctuation outside of the parenthesis. If the entire sentence is parenthetical, put the punctuation inside the parenthesis.

○ AAUW offers programs that focus on gender equity (including for men).

○ AAUW has discontinued a few programs. (Leader on Loan was discontinued in 2018.)

● **Ellipsis " . . . "** (three dots—spaced before, in between dots, and after)

○ to indicate omitted text in a quotation

○ to indicate a pause or unfinished thought

○ add 4th dot if it's at the end of a sentence.

● Spell out **numbers** zero to nine. Use numerals for 10 or more (unless starting a sentence).

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- Use **ordinal numbers for dates** (e.g., October 1st, not October 1) unless part of month-day-year (e.g., October 1, 2019).
- **Time of day:** abbreviate ante meridiem and post meridiem in lower case with no periods, as **(**e.g. **9 am; 11 pm**). Do not use 12 pm or 12 am— use "**noon**" or "**midnight.**"
- **AAUW CA should be spelled out as AAUW California**.
- Spell out "Board to Board" or shorten as **B2B** after defining what that acronym means.
- For a **bulleted list**, put a period at the end of each item if it is a complete sentence, but not if it is just a few words or phrases.
- Punctuate the **"board of directors' meeting** (or similar)**"** as plural possessive.
- Use the compound word **"toolkit,"** not "tool kit."
- Use the compound word **"workgroup,"** not "work group." **"Task force"** is written as two words.
- The 2021 marketing plans are written as "**M&M's**."The marketing workgroups are written as **"Working Age Recruitment"** (WAR) and **"Retirement Age Recruitment"** (RAR) -- not hyphenated.
- Spell out and hyphenate the **"Five-Star Program."**
- Write the **names of webinars** in italics with no quotations marks

Socially Conscious Language

Avoid (within "reason") language rooted in sexism, racism, ableism, or colonialism, ...
For more, see https://consciousstyleguide.com

- **Racial and Ethnic Identity**
  - Capitalize "Black" (adj.), Brown, Native American. Do not capitalize "white." This is due to a prevailing (but not universal) sense that "White" conveys white supremacist views..
  - Do not hyphenate African American, etc.
- **Sex and Gender**
  - Distinguish sex from gender. Sex (male, female, intersex) refers to physical and biological traits; gender (woman, girl, man, boy), refers to social or cultural traits.
  - "Preference" refers only to gender.
  - When other genders are referenced, defer to author
  - Some expressions, such as "male-dominated" can't be forced to comply with sex/gender distinction. OK to use.
- **Pronouns:**
  - Use a person's preferred pronouns, when known. If Jeremy specifies "they" then "Jeremy left their briefcase in the car" is an acceptable sentence.
  - Do not use "they" when gender is simply unknown. That is still "one."