

This style guide is intended as a starting point for better, more consistent communications coming from SME. Communication “styles” can vary from person-to-person, but there are grammatical rules for effective communications that, when violated, sends a confusing message and degrades that overall impression of the SME.

The goal of all communications should be clear in your own mind before you start drafting your message. Understanding whether you are trying to persuade, educate, inform or entertain will determine the style of your communications. But writing clear communications doesn't just happen. Learning to be an effective writer takes a personal investment in your own ability to craft effective messages. In addition to the two reference books that the SME editorial team uses (*The Associated Press Style Guide* and *AGI Dictionary of Geological Terms*), the following two books are also worth reviewing: *On Writing Well, 30th Anniversary Edition: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction* by William Zinsser, and *The Elements of Style, Fourth Edition* by William Strunk and E.B. White. They are both considered classics for writing in any style, but more specifically in non-fiction/business correspondence area.

It's important that you remember that the intent of a style guide is not to make everyone sound the same. It's to ensure that there's consistency in the communications we make available for consumption by any audience.

In 2013, a consistency review team was established within SME to ensure that these styles are observed, and to make sure that simple proofing mistakes are not overlooked. Also, while marketing communications are often thought to have to be loud, dynamic and impactful, they shouldn't ignore the fact that they start with a clear communications purpose and a strong readability factor. So a marketing review team has been established to review all marketing and branding communications at its start.

Remember, that what we say, and how we say it, has a direct link to how you and SME are perceived by [our audiences](#). A few extra minutes focused on getting the communications right can have a [positive](#) long-term impact on SME's identity.

The official usage of SME's full name is Society for Mining, Metallurgy & Exploration Inc. There is no comma after Exploration. Spell out Society for Mining, Metallurgy & Exploration Inc. (SME) on first reference and then SME going forward.

SME divisions. Use the ampersand (&) in SME divisions: Mining & Exploration Division, Industrial Minerals & Aggregates Division.

Capitalization

Capitalize job titles when in front of a name: SME President Jessica Elzea Kogel; lowercase when following the name: Jessica Elzea Kogel, president of SME.

Capitalize Society when referring to SME (the Society); the same with the SME Foundation (the Foundation).

Capitalize SME Board of Directors; lowercase board of directors when by itself.

Capitalize committee names, the Mining Engineering Committee. Lowercase when by itself.

Internet is capitalized, website is not (it is also one word).

Capitalize paper, session and book titles: Mine to Mill Value Chain Optimization — Role of Blasting. Book, magazine titles and videos are also italicized: *Mining Engineering, Tunneling & Underground Construction, Blasting Principles for Openpit Mining.*

Academic departments. Use lowercase except for words that are proper nouns or adjectives: the history department, the department of English, the Colorado School of Mines Department of Mining Engineering.

Proofreading. Don't depend on your spell-check program. Slow down and take the time to proofread your material. Here are few tips on proofreading.

Do not take headers, subheads or headlines for granted. Read them. People often assume headers, subheads and headlines are correct and look past them so they can get to the body copy where the typos are hidden. Mistakes made in headers, subheads and headlines can kill a good story. (The editors speak from experience on this.)

Read every letter. We have a tendency to read what we expect to see and not what is actually there. Force yourself to take your time and see every letter to spot mistakes.

Read the copy backward once. This is a good way to spot typos and punctuation errors. You are not focusing on the narrative, but on catching typos.

Word usage and spelling

Following are some general guidelines for word usage, spelling, more capitalization and some punctuation. This is by no means a complete list, but commonly used words. When in doubt, use a dictionary.

A

App is OK to use for application.

Accept, except. Accept means to receive. Except means to exclude.

Acronyms. Spell out on first reference with acronym in parenthesis. Use acronym thereafter. Society for Mining, Metallurgy & Exploration Inc. (SME).

Affect, effect. Affect, as a verb, means to influence: The game will affect the standings. Effect, as a verb, means to cause: The effect was overwhelming. Dave will affect many changes to SME.

Afterward, not afterwards

All time, all-time. The greatest player of all time. An all-time record.

Ampersand (&). Use when part of a proper name. Otherwise spell out the word and.

am, pm. No periods, lowercase.

Annual meeting. Capitalize when referring to the SME meeting. The SME Annual Meeting was held in Denver. Lowercase when used by itself. The annual meeting was held in Denver.

Apostrophes. Acceptable to use to indicate possession or a contraction. Also, 1980s, not 1980's.

B

Back up, verb. Backup as an adjective.

Blasthole. One word.

Break up, verb. Breakup, noun and adjective.

C

Compliment, complement. Compliment is a noun or a verb that denotes praise or courtesy: Dave complimented Mary on her stellar work on the board minutes. Mary was flattered by Dave's compliments. Complement is a noun or a verb denoting completeness or the process of supplementing something: SME has a complement of 50 staff members. His tie complements his shirt.

Colon (:). A colon is most frequently used at the end of a sentence to introduce a list. Three items were being considered: expense, time and feasibility. Capitalize the first word after a colon only if it is a proper noun or the start of a complete sentence. He promised this: The company will make good all of the losses.

Commas. There are several rules for commas. Generally, though, use a comma to separate elements in a series but do not use a comma before the word "and" in a series: The flag is red, white and blue. However, use a comma before the concluding conjunction (and) if one element of the series requires a conjunction: I had juice, toast, and ham and eggs for breakfast. Use a comma to separate the two independent clauses in a compound sentence. An independent clause can stand alone as a complete sentence. It has a subject and a verb.

Congress, congressional. Capitalize Congress when referring to the U.S. Congress. Lowercase congressional unless it is part of a proper name: *Congressional Quarterly*, the *Congressional Record*.

Corporation. Abbreviate as Corp. when used with a company name. Newmont Mining Corp. Lowercase and spell out when it stands alone.

Cross section, noun. **Cross-section,** verb.

Cutterhead. One word.

D

Dates. The month should be spelled out when used as reference to a date: October 15, 2013. The international form for a date is 15 October, 2013.

Directions, regions. Lower case north, south, east, west, etc. when they indicate a compass direction. Capitalize when they designate regions: the Midwest, the East Coast, the West; but southern Colorado, eastern Canada.

Drillhole. One word.

E

Environmental impact statement (EIS). Spell out on first reference and then EIS, lowercase.

Electronic mail, email, no capital or hyphen.

Electrowinning. One word.

Exclamation points. Please, please, please, please, please go easy on these!

F

Federal. Capitalize when used in proper name, Federal Trade Commission; but lowercase in other uses, federal government, federal court.

Full time, full-time. He works full time. She has a full-time job.

Fundraising, fundraiser. One word.

G

Grassroots. One word.

Gross domestic product (GDP). Spell on first reference, lowercase.

Ground water. Two words.

H

High tech is acceptable for high technology.

Homepage. One word.

Homebuilder, homebuyer and homeowner. One word. Home-schooled, home-schooler. Hyphenated.

Hyphens. Use hyphens for clarity or to form a single idea from two words. Correct: The president will speak to small-businessmen. Incorrect: The president will speak to small businessmen (He will not be speaking to tall businessmen).

I

Incorporated. Abbreviate as Inc. when used with a corporate name. No comma: Society for Mining, Metallurgy & Exploration Inc.

Internet. Capitalized.

In situ. Two words, no italics

IRR. Internal rate of return. Spell out on first reference.

Irregardless. No such animal. The word is regardless.

It's versus its. It's is the contraction for it is or it has. Its is the possessive of a pronoun: SME will hold its awards dinner during the annual meeting. SME is an entity, not a person. A company is an "it" not "they."

L

Lie, lay. You lay the book on the desk. Correct: I am going to lie down. Incorrect: I'm going to lay down.

Long term, long-term. Hyphenate when used as a compound modifier: He has a long-term assignment. Otherwise, We will win in the long term.

Words ending in ly are not hyphenated: An easily remembered rule.

M

Mid. No hyphen unless a capitalized word follows: mid-America, midterm. SME midyear meeting.

Months. When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate only Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec.: Dec. 31, 2013. Spell out when by itself or with a year: December 2013.

N

Net present value (NPV). Spell out on first reference, lowercase.

Nighttime. One word.

Non. No hyphens and no space unless before proper nouns or in awkward combinations: non-nuclear.

Numerals and numbers. Spell out all numerals at the beginning of a sentence. Also, May 1, not May 1st.

O

Offline. One word.

Off-site, on-site. Hyphenate.

Online. One word.

Openpit. One word.

Orebody. One word.

Over. Do not use the word “over” to mean “more than,” “through” or “during.”

P

Percent. Spell out.

Prefixes. Do not hyphenate when using a prefix with a word starting with a consonant. Except for cooperate and coordinate, use a hyphen if the prefix ends with a vowel and the following word begins with a vowel.

Prepositions. Do not end sentences with prepositions. Incorrect: “The boss explained company policy, which we had to abide by.” Correct: “The boss explained company policy, by which we

had to abide.” Better yet, make it simple for the reader: “The boss explained the mandatory company policy.”

Q

Quotation marks. Quotation marks are placed outside of the final punctuation. Do not use for emphasis. Use sparingly to indicate sarcasm, slang or irony.

R

Re-elect, re-enlist, re-election, re-enact. **Recover** (regain), but re-cover (cover again); **reform** (improve), but re-form (form again), **resign** (quit), but re-sign (sign again).

Roundup (noun). Round-up (verb).

S

Self-. Hyphenate: self-assured, self-defense.

Semi. Generally, no hyphen, but semi-invalid.

Semicolon (;). A semicolon is generally used to indicate greater separation of a thought or information than a comma can convey. The best and easiest way to handle that, though, is to break it into separate sentences. Also used to separate elements of a series of items if the series is long or when parts of the sentence include commas: He is survived by a son, John, of Chicago, IL; Jane, of Wichita, KS; and Joe, of Denver, CO.

Sinkhole. One word.

Shut down (verb). Shut-down (noun).

Shut off (verb). Shut-off (noun).

Sign-up (noun and adjective). Sign up (verb).

Startup. One word as a noun or adjective. Two words as a verb.

State abbreviations. Abbreviate state names when used with a city: Denver, CO, Birmingham, AL. Spell out state name when by itself.

Sub. In general, no hyphen.

T

Take over (verb). Takeover (noun and adjective).

There, their, they're. There is an adverb indicating direction: They went over there. Their is a possessive noun: They went to their house. They're is the contraction for they are.

Time. 5 am, 6 pm, lowercase, no periods.

Toward, not towards.

U

Underway. One word.

U.S. and United States. Use initials in instances such as, The U.S. mining industry. Spell out in instances such as “The mining industry in the United States.” No periods if US is used in a headline

V

Versus. Spell out, not vs.

Vice versa. No hyphen.

W

Waste water. Two words.

Website. One word. Lowercase. Try to use the simplest version. Try to have urls that are clear and simple, especially for printed material.

White paper. Two words. Lowercase.

Work force. Two words.

X

X-ray. Capitalize X. Hyphenate.

Y

Your and you're. You're is the contraction for you are.