NC Currents

Style Guide

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Edited by NC AWWA-WEA Communication Committee
**NC Currents Style Guide**

**aboveground storage tank:** acronym is **AST** (*Source: WEFstyle.doc*)

**academic degrees:** Avoid abbreviation and use a phrase instead. (Ex: John Jones, who has a master’s in engineering, has joined the staff.)

**American Water Works Association (AWWA)**

**anaerobic waste treatment:** Do not use AWT as an acronym. (*Source: WEFstyle.doc*)

**Association:** Capitalize when referring to NC AWWA-WEA. (Ex: Our Association is on the move.)

**Association name:** The correct legal name of each individual association is "North Carolina Section, American Water Works Association” and “North Carolina Water Environment Association." The associations do business as “North Carolina American Water Works Association and North Carolina Water Environment Association.” The only acceptable acronym is "NC AWWA-WEA" with a space between "NC" and "AWWA" and a hyphen with no spaces between "AWWA" and "WEA."

**afterward:** not afterwards

**Annual Conference:** Refers to NC AWWA-WEA Annual Conference. (capitalize)

**automated meter reading:** acronym is **AMR**

**backup:** no hyphen

**beneficial use:** Not beneficial reuse of biosolids. (*Source: WEFstyle.doc*)

**billion gallons per day:** Abbreviate as billion gal/d (not bdg) when preceded by a number. (*Source: WEFstyle.doc*)

**biochemical oxygen demand:** acronym is **BOD** (*Source: WEFstyle.doc*)

**blowdown** (*Source: WEFstyle.doc*)

**board of directors, board of trustees:** Always lowercase. (*Source: AP Stylebook*)

**byproduct** (*Source: WEFstyle.doc*)

**certifications:** Do not capitalize certifications (*Grade A Water Surface, Grade IV Biological...*). Use *Grade A water surface, Grade IV biological* instead.
Capital Improvement Plan: acronym is CIP

city, town: Capitalize when used as part of a proper name or when referring specifically and formally to the government body; otherwise, use lower case. (See “Capitalizations” for more.)

citywide

Climb For Water: Capitalize.

committee names: Capitalize. (Ex: The Public Education Committee and our ....)

company names: Companies are inanimate and take singular verbs; use it and that, not they and who when referring to a company. (Source: WEFstyle.doc)

contractor: Lowercase unless part of a proper name. (Ex: The contractor is notified to proceed.)

copyright and/or trademark symbols: Use only on the first reference. Omit it in all subsequent references to the mark. (Source: http://www.digett.com/2010/05/27/brief-guide-using-trademark-and-copyright-symbols)

coworker: no hyphen

cutting edge (noun), cutting-edge (adj.) (Source: WEFTEC12 Style Guide)

dates/decades: No apostrophe between zero and “s.” (Ex: 1970s) When the first two numerals are omitted, use left-facing apostrophe. (Ex: ´70s) Do not use ordinals (th, st, rd, nd) at the end of dates. (Sources: http://grammar.about.com/od/mo/g/ordnumberterm.htm, Kelman Style Guide)

different from: Not different than. (Source: WEFstyle.doc)

e.g.: means for example and should always be followed by a comma.

endowment: lowercase

email: no hyphen (Source: AP Stylebook)

feet, foot: Abbreviate as ft (note absence of period) only when preceded by a number and in compound measurements. Do not use ’ in place of the word “foot” or “feet.” (Ex: 7-ft increments, 2 ft from the wall, 10 ft/s) (Source: WEFstyle.doc)

fellow: Use period after F to indicate fellowship in an association. (Ex: F.NSPE)
floodplain (Source: WEFstyle.doc)
floodwater (Source: WEFstyle.doc)
flowmeter (Source: WEFstyle.doc)
flow rate (Source: WEFstyle.doc)
fly ash (Source: WEFstyle.doc)

Fats, Oils & Grease: acronym is FOG


fresh water (noun), freshwater (adj.) (Source: WEFstyle.doc)

full-scale (adj.), full scale (noun) (Source: WEFstyle.doc)

full-time (adj.), full time (adv) (Source: WEFstyle.doc)

groundwater (Source: WEFstyle.doc)

high-: Most compound adjectives formed with high are hyphenated. (Ex: high-rate, high-velocity, high-speed, high-quality) (Source: WEFTEC12 Style Guide)

high-density polyethylene: acronym is HDPE

i.e.: means that is and should always be followed by a comma.

inch(es): Abbreviate as in. (note the period) when preceded by a number and in compound measurements. Do not use ” in place of the word “inch” or “inches.” (Ex: 2-in. increments, 2 in. from the edge) (Source: WEFstyle.doc)

infiltration/inflow: acronym is I/I (Source: WEFstyle.doc)

job titles: In general, confine capitalization to formal titles used directly before an individual’s name. (See more under “Capitalizations.”) (Source: AP Stylebook)

life cycle: two words (Source: WEFTEC12 Style Guide)

long-term

longtime: no hyphen
**log-in** (noun), **log in** (verb): (*Source: http://www.ithaca.edu/marcom/editorial/*)

**manmade**

**Member Association:** Member Association (MA) of the Water Environment Federation abbreviated to "North Carolina WEA" or "North Carolina MA." NC is acceptable in place of North Carolina.

**MG:** uppercase

**mgd:** lowercase (*Source: WEFTEC12 Style Guide*)

**million:** Do not use M or MM as abbreviations. Always spell out million.

**million gallons:** MG

**NC AWWA-WEA:** The proper full name is "North Carolina American Water Works Association and North Carolina Water Environment Association." "North Carolina American Water Works Association and Water Environment Association" is also acceptable, as is abbreviating North Carolina to "NC." The only acceptable acronym is "NC AWWA-WEA" with a space between "NC" and "AWWA" and a hyphen with no spaces between "AWWA" and "WEA."

**NC Currents:** Always italicize.

**N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources:** Use full name on first reference either and N.C. DENR or DENR in all subsequent references. (*Source: http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/guest*)

**NC Safewater Endowment Fund:** When referring to the endowment, "safewater" is one word.

**North Carolina Rural Water Association (NCRWA):** NC is acceptable in place of North Carolina.

**North Carolina Section AWWA:** When referring to the relationship to just one of the parent organizations, North Carolina Section of the American Water Works Association abbreviated to "North Carolina Section AWWA" or "North Carolina Section." NC is acceptable in place of North Carolina. Member Association (MA) of the Water Environment Federation abbreviated to "North Carolina WEA" or "North Carolina MA." NC is acceptable in place of North Carolina.

**North Carolina Water For People:** Only acceptable abbreviation is NC Water For People.

**North Carolina Water Pollution Control System Operators Certification Commission (NCWPCSOCC)**
North Carolina Water Treatment Facility Operators Certification Board (NCWTFOCB)

North Carolina Waterworks Operators Association (NCWOA): NC is acceptable in place of North Carolina

North Carolina WEA: Member Association (MA) of the Water Environment Federation abbreviated to "North Carolina WEA" or "North Carolina MA." NC is acceptable in place of North Carolina.

NCWFP: Only acceptable abbreviation is NC Water For People.

Notice of Violation: acronym is NOV

numbers (numerals): Spell out whole numbers less than 10, except when used as part of a weight or measure, including time. (Ex: Only nine people attended the 2-day meeting.) Always spell out numbers at the beginning of a sentence. (Ex: Forty-five people are expected to attend.) (Source: WEFstyle.doc)

onsite, offsite: (Source: WEFTEC12 Style Guide)

Operations and Maintenance: Capitalize.

operator certifications: Wastewater operator certifications are indicated by Roman (I, II, III, IV) numerals. Maintenance technician certifications should be Arabic (1, 2, 3, 4) numerals. (Ex: grade III wastewater treatment plant operator, grade 2 maintenance technician) (Source: NC AWWA-WEA Communication Committee, 2/28/14)

ordinal numbers: Spell out first through ninth; use numerals for 10th and higher. (Source: WEFstyle.doc)

outgoing: no hyphen

PE: No periods. Professional designations such as PE, PLS, EI, CPA, etc., should not have periods. A comma should separate the designation from the last name. (Ex: Ed Smith, PE) (As per North Carolina State Board of Examiners for Engineers and Surveyors)

Phase: Capitalize when followed by a number or letter (Ex: Phase 1) (Source: WEFstyle.doc)

proactive

real-life (adj) (Source: WEFTEC12 Style Guide)

real-time (Source: WEFTEC12 Style Guide)
real-world (adj) *(Source: WEFTEC12 Style Guide)*

**re-rate, re-rating** *(Source: WEFTEC12 Style Guide)*

**sanitary sewer overflow**: acronym is SSO

**state names**: Spell out state name when name stands alone. Lowercase in all state of constructions. (Ex: state of North Carolina) Kentucky, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Virginia are legally commonwealths. (Ex: commonwealth of Virginia) *(Source: AP Stylebook)*

**stormwater**: one word *(Source: WEFstyle.doc)*

**system-wide** *(Source: WEFTEC12 Style Guide)*

**tertiary treatment**: advanced wastewater treatment is the preferred term. *(Source: WEFstyle.doc)*

**toward**: not towards

**under way**: two words. The only exception is when used as an adjective before a noun in a nautical sense. (Ex: an underway flotilla) *(Source: AP Stylebook)*

**U.S. EPA** *(Source: WEFTEC12 Style Guide)*

**wastewater** *(Source: WEFTEC12 Style Guide)*

**Water For People**: *(Source: WEFTEC12 Style Guide)*

**web page**: Use website rather than web page.

**website**

**wet wall** *(Source: WEFstyle.doc)*

**wet weather**: never hyphenate *(Source: WEFstyle.doc)*

**world-wide** *(Source: WEFTEC12 Style Guide)*

**WRF**: acronym for water reclamation facility. Spell out in first instance, followed by acronym in parentheses. Use acronym in all subsequent instances. (Ex: The water reclamation facility (WRF) is located at 123 Oak Street. The WRF serves a population of 15,000.)
**WTP:** acronym for water treatment plant. Spell out in first instance, followed by acronym in parentheses. Use acronym in all subsequent instances. (Ex: The water treatment plant (WTP) is located at 123 Oak Street. The WTP serves a population of 15,000.)

**WWTP:** acronym for wastewater treatment plant. Spell out in first instance, followed by acronym in parentheses. Use acronym in all subsequent instances. (Ex: The wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) is located at 456 Oak Street. The WWTP serves a population of 15,000.)

**Acronyms and Abbreviations**
(Source: WEFstyle.doc)

- An acronym is a word formed from the letters (or the first few letters) of a series of words; spell out all terms on first reference, followed by the acronym or abbreviation in parentheses; use the acronym or abbreviation alone in subsequent references. EXCEPTION: Abbreviate terms for weights and measures, except units of time, in all references, when preceded by a number: 32 lb; 14 mi; 1200 gal/d; 3 days; 2 years.

- Generally, it is not necessary to precede acronyms by the word “the.” Ex: EPA published a new rule. The regulation is based on provisions contained in CWA. According to OSHA, the rule does not apply to treatment plants.

- Do not introduce acronyms using plural forms (for example, TMDLs, CAFOs) unless the acronym will be used consistently in that form throughout the article. **Never introduce acronyms using the possessive form:** The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Water, not The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA’s) Office of Water. If the first reference to a term whose acronym will be used in subsequent references is in plural or possessive form, rewrite the sentence to use the singular, nonpossessive form: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published the new rule Nov. 12, not The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA’s) new rule was published Nov. 12.

- Following the first reference, an acronym may be used to represent a plural or possessive form of the term it designates by adding s or ’s, as appropriate: for example, use VOCs for volatile organic compounds and CWA’s for Clean Water Act’s after the acronym is established in singular form on first reference.

- Do not invent acronyms for objects and organizations that typically are not identified as such; for example, do not invent DM to designate database manager or XC to substitute for Xerox Corp.

- Do not use acronyms or abbreviations for terms that are used fewer than three times in the text. Establishing an acronym for a term that is used only a few times generally is wasted effort and adds unnecessary jargon to the narrative; in such cases, the term or alternative words may be substituted in subsequent references. “The Michigan
Department of Environmental Quality issued new recycling regulations this year. According to a department spokesman, the new rules have been the subject of intense debate in several communities.”

- **When using acronyms to refer to public agencies, departments, and similar organizations, the acronym generally should not include letters corresponding to the location of the organization;** for example, use DEQ, not MDEQ, as the acronym for Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. **EXCEPTION:** Some agencies are associated with well-established, commonly used acronyms or abbreviations that include a reference to location or the parent governmental body: for example, the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal EPA); the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). In such cases, indicate the familiar acronym or abbreviation in parentheses on the first reference and use the acronym or abbreviation alone in subsequent references. “The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) promulgated the rule. ... According to Illinois EPA, the rule will not be costly to implement.”

- After an acronym has been established in an initial reference, the acronym may be used to begin a sentence in any subsequent reference: “The Clean Water Act (CWA) is the basis for numerous regulations affecting wastewater treatment facilities. ... CWA is overdue for congressional reauthorization. Gasoline is a volatile organic compound (VOC). ... VOC emissions are regulated under the Clean Air Act (CAA). VOCs may be lethal to humans when inhaled in sufficient quantities. ... CAA regulations affect numerous industries.”

- **Abbreviate all units of weights and measures (except units of time) when preceded by a number and in compound constructions:** 2 in.; 7 gal; 1.5 kg; 23 lb/yr; 67 mi; 40 ppm; 500 kg/m². Abbreviate terms denoting time elements in compound constructions only: 23 lb/yr; 700 ton/d; 500 kg/m²/d; 20 years; 3 days; 4 weeks.

**Capitalizations**

- In general, avoid unnecessary capitalizations.

- **Capitalize the terms city, state, town, village and other generic designations of political units** when used as part of a proper name or when referring specifically and formally to the government body; otherwise, use lower case: “She lives in Rockford, Ill. He works for the City of Alexandria, Va. The Village of Bloomingdale, Ill., published a request for proposals to design the facility. The city of Chicago and its suburbs are served by dozens of wastewater treatment plants.” *(Source: WEFstyle.doc)*

- **Capitalize Legislature when preceded by the name of a state. Retain capitalization when the state name is dropped but the reference is specifically to that state’s**
**legislature:** “The California Legislature adjourned Friday. ... Members of the Legislature seldom remain in Sacramento following adjournment.” Do not retain capitalization in plural references: “The Connecticut and New York legislatures met on the same day.” *(Source: WEFstyle.doc)*

- **Capitalize city council as part of a proper name; retain capitalization on second reference when referring to a specific city council; otherwise, use lower case:** “The proposed state law would restrict the actions a city council could take. The Alexandria City Council denied the permit. ... Members of the City Council cited several legal precedents to justify the denial.” *(Source: WEFstyle.doc)*

- Capitalize job titles used directly before an individual’s name. “Project Manager Joe Blow says ....”

- Lowercase titles when they are not used with an individual’s name. “Joe Blow, project manager for the job, says ...”

- Lowercase titles in constructions that set them off from a name by commas. “The project manager, Joe Blow, says ...”

- Capitalize east, west, north, and south only when they are used as sections of the country, not as directions. “The project is located in the Northeast. The storm sewer is located east of the water main.”

- Capitalize the first word in lists.

- Capitalize types of projects. Ex: Integrated Fixed Film Activated Sludge, Water System Master Plan

- Capitalize the issue season of *NC Currents*. Ex: This is the Fall 2013 edition of *NC Currents*.

### Plurals/Singualrs in Sentence Construction

- **Correct:** One of the things that *irk* me. **Incorrect:** One of the things that *irks* me.

- **Correct:** This is one of the few treatment facilities that weren’t renovated. **Incorrect:** This is one of the few treatment facilities that wasn’t renovated. *(Source: Problems in the Plural – NY Times.com)*

- **Staff is** or **staff are** depends on usage. If the collective noun (staff) is acting as a single unit, then “staff is” is correct. “The staff is very efficient.” If the collective noun is meant to highlight the actions of individuals who are all doing different things, then use the plural: “The staff are providing engineering services for this project.” *(Source: http://www.agriculture.purdue.edu/agcomm/ontarget/0712/Grammer_traps.htm)*
Punctuation

Apostrophe

- Use apostrophes only if showing possession or in contractions. Example:
  - He’s serving as project manager. (Apostrophe used for a contraction.) Sarah’s dog is lost. (Apostrophe used to show possession.)

- Do not use apostrophes when showing plurals, including plurals of numbers, letters, and figures. Example:
  - She consulted three PEs before selecting Joe Blow. (NOT She consulted three PE’s before selecting Joe Blow.)
  - P&IDs and GAs (NOT P&ID’s and GA’s).

Colon

- When a complete sentence follows a colon, capitalize it. Example:
  - This I know: Success is elusive.

- Do not capitalize if it’s not a complete sentence. Example:
  - I have one thing to say to you: no.

Comma

- In a series of three or more items when the next-to-last and last items are separated by a conjunction, use a comma (known as a serial comma). Example:
  - I have to go to the store, the gym, and the drugstore.

  NOTE: The use of the serial comma comes down to style preference. Omitting the serial comma is not incorrect, but usage should be consistent.

- Commas separate an introductory word or group of words from the complete thought. Example:
  - Before going to the presentation, he practiced repeatedly.

- The words therefore, however, nevertheless, and inasmuch are set off by commas when they interrupt a complete thought.

- Commas are used to separate two complete thoughts which are joined by a connecting word such as and, but, or for. Example:
- The office building will be torn down, and a parking lot will replace it.

- A comma always separates the day from the year. A comma can separate the year from the rest of the sentence. (It is no longer considered necessary to separate the year from the rest of the sentence by a comma.) Example:
  - His son graduated on June 14, 1972 from New York University. OR His son graduated on June 14, 1972, from New York University. (Both are correct; just be consistent in your usage.)

- Separate a direct quotation from the rest of the sentence by using commas. Example:
  - “I cannot attend,” he said.

- A comma separates the name of a city from the name of a state or country. Example:
  - She is from Boston, Massachusetts. He once lived in Paris, France.

- Commas always go inside quotation marks.

- Commas should follow i.e., which means “that is.”

- Commas should follow e.g., which means “for example.”

- Use commas to set off degrees or titles used following a name. Example:
  - N.G. Neer, PE, served as project manager.

- Initial adverbial phrases are generally, but not necessarily, set off by commas: Example:
  - At dawn(,) they held an emergency meeting.
  - After breakfast(,) they departed. (Source: AP Stylebook)

  Exception: no comma is used after an introductory adverbial claus that’s immediately followed by the verb it modifies. Example:
  - Out of her fancy kitchen drifted some strangely repugnant odors. (Source: AP Stylebook)

**Hyphen**

- Compound modifiers - As a general guideline, compound modifiers are open or hyphenated before the noun, and open after the noun. Example:
- she was well known; a well-known authority, a first-year student, an off-campus apartment, she will live off campus. (Source: http://www.ithaca.edu/marcom/editorial/)

- Never follow an adverb ending in “ly” with a hyphen. (Source: AP Guide to Punctuation)

- Retain the hyphen in constructions where only the final element is given. Example:
  - They are the third- and fourth-highest mountains in the range. (Source: WEFstyle.doc)

**Question mark**

- Use a question mark only after a direct question. Example:
  - Will you go with me to the presentation?

- Use a question mark when a sentence is half statement and half question. Example:
  - You do want to go, don’t you?

- The placement of question marks within quotes follows logic. If a question is part of the quotation, the question mark should be placed inside the quote. Example:
  - She asked, "Will you still be my friend?"

- If the question applies to the entire sentence, not just the quotation, the question mark goes outside the quotation marks. Example:
  - Do you agree with the saying, "All’s fair in love and war"?

**Quotation mark**

- Periods and commas always go inside quotation marks.

- Use single quotation marks for quotes within quotes. Note that the period goes inside all quote marks. Example:
  - He said, "Mary said, ‘Do not treat me that way.’"

- Use quotation marks to set off a direct quotation only.

**Semicolon**

- Use a semicolon between main clauses not linked by and, but, or, nor, for, so, or yet. Example:
  - No person is born arrogant; arrogance must be taught.
• Use a comma OR a semicolon before introductory words such as namely, that is, i.e., for example, e.g., or for instance when they are followed by a list of three or more items and preceded by a complete sentence. Example:

  – You may be required to bring many items; e.g., sleeping bags, pans, and warm clothing. OR

  – You may be required to bring many items, e.g., sleeping bags, pans, and warm clothing. (Both are correct.)

• Use the semicolon to separate units of a series when one or more of the units contain commas. Example:

  – This conference has people that have come from Boise, Idaho; Los Angeles, California; and Nashville, Tennessee.

• You may use a semicolon between two sentences that are joined by a conjunction but already have one or more commas within the first sentence. Example:

  – If she can, she will attempt that feat; and if her husband is able, he will be there to see her.

• Use a semicolon in front of words such as therefore and however if they connect two complete sentences or are used as interrupters. Example:

  – He says he’ll call back; however, I don’t believe it.

• Do not use a semicolon in front of words such as therefore and however if they do not connect two complete sentences or are used as interrupters. Examples:

  – I would, therefore, like a response. OR

  – I would be happy, however, to volunteer for the Red Cross.

**Frequently Misused Words**

• **about, around**: About is a synonym for approximately; do not substitute around (which refers to physical location) for approximately or about. “It weighs about 200 kg. He walked around the obstacle. They spread the material evenly around the area.” (Source: WEFstyle.doc)

• **above, over**: These terms refer to relative physical location. “The device was placed above the treatment tank. The construction team built a protective cover over the tank.” In most cases, neither above nor over should be used as a substitute for more than. (Source: WEFstyle.doc)
- **affect, effect**: *Affect*, as a verb, means to influence or have a consequence. “Operations and maintenance costs will affect profits.” *Effect*, as a verb, means to cause. “The new technology effected a change in water quality.” *Effect*, as a noun, means a result or consequence. “Applying the new technology had a beneficial effect.” *(Source: WEFstyle.doc)*

- **Bimonthly, semimonthly**: *Bimonthly* means every two months: “We have bimonthly planning meetings.” *Semimonthly* means twice a month. “*Pyramid News* started as a semimonthly publication, but is now published monthly.”

- **Complement, compliment**: *Complement* denotes completeness or the process of supplementing something: “Our professions need to complement each other, not compete.” *Compliment* means praise or an expression of courtesy: “He complimented me on my singing.”

- **Ensure, Insure**: *Ensure* means to make sure: “He needs to ensure the rope is tied securely.” *Insure* should only be used when talking about insurance: “I plan to insure my car.”

- **farther, further**: Use *farther* to indicate distance and *further* to indicate time or degree: “Carl chased the ball farther than Norm; Hank pursued the subject further.” *(Source: WEFstyle.doc)*

- **Few, Less**: *Few* and *fewer* are generally used with countable objects: “There were few people at the conference.” “Fewer than 10 people responded to the offer.” Use *less* for bulk or quantity: “I have less than $10 in my wallet.”

- **Figuratively, literally**: *Figuratively* means metaphorically or symbolically: “They were figuratively scared to death.” *Literally* means in an exact sense: “I literally fell to my knees laughing.” You cannot literally be scared to death unless you truly die from fright.

- **Founder, flounder**: Used as a verb, *founder* means to sink, to fall down, or to fail utterly: “The poor economy has caused some businesses to founder.” As a verb, *flounder* means to struggle clumsily or helplessly: “I floundered through my exam.”

- **Height, Heighth**: Always use *height*, never *heighth*: “What height does the bridge need to be?” *Height* is a non-standard spelling of *height*.

- **Its, It’s**: *Its* is possessive: “The community showed its pride during the parade.” *It’s* is a contraction for “it is”: “It’s high time we left.”
• **Me, Myself, I:** *Me* and *I* are pronouns, while *myself* is a reflexive pronoun. The easiest way to determine whether you should use *me* or *I* in a sentence is to rewrite the sentence as if you are the only one in it: “He and I are going to the fair.” (You wouldn’t say “Me is going to the fair,” so you automatically know that “I” is the correct word here.) Another example: “For more information, contact Mark or me.” (You wouldn’t say, “For more information, contact I,” so you know that “me” is the correct word here.) Use *myself* only if you are the object of your own action or to add emphasis: “I looked at myself in the mirror.” “I, myself, plan to go to the event.”

• **Presently, Currently:** *Presently* means in a little while: “Presently, the waiter will bring our bill.” *Currently* means right now: “I currently have my driver’s license.” *Currently* can often be omitted without changing the meaning of the sentence: “I have my driver’s license.”

• **Principle, Principal:** *Principle* means a basic truth or law: “He understands the basic principles of physics.” *Principal* means the head of a school or organization, or a sum of money: “The principal called my mother today.” “I’m paying down the principal on my loan.”

• **Regard, Regards:** You may use "in regard to," "with regard to," "regarding," or "as regards:” “He asked a question in regard to health benefits.” Never use "in regards to."

• **There, Their, They're:** *There* is an adverb indicating space. “The meteor hit right there.” *Their* is a possessive pronoun. “They left in their car.” *They’re* is a contraction of “they are”: “They’re getting ready to leave.”

• **Toward, Towards:** Always use *toward*, never *towards*: “He leaned toward the railing.”

• **Unique:** *Unique* means literally one of a kind and should not be modified by “very” or “rather.” If what you’re describing is not literally one of a kind, then you should select a different word: “He has a unique viewpoint.”

• **Whether/whether or not:** Usually, *whether* works fine on its own and does not need to be followed by *or not*: “Funding depends on whether the bill passes.” *Whether or not* can be a contraction of “whether it will or will not,” but generally it’s best to avoid this sentence construction.

• **Who, Which, That:** *Who* refers to people: “I have a friend who has red hair.” *Which* and *that* refer to inanimate objects and animals without names. *Which* is used in nonessential clauses and is usually preceded by a comma: “The team, which was ranked poorly last year, is now in first place.” *That* is used for essential clauses and is not preceded by a comma: “I remember the time that we met.” *That* can often be omitted without changing the meaning of the sentence: “I remember the time we met.”
Revision Date: April 25, 2014 (Revision additional of 1) Abbreviation for million; inch(es) and feet, foot abbreviations; MG for million gallons; WTP, WWTP, WRF acronyms.

Pending approval Communication Committee Meeting