

**Council for Exceptional Children**  
**PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MARKETING STYLE GUIDE**  
*For public relations and marketing materials*

For internal use by CEC staff, divisions and state/provincial units

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## **CEC Public Relations and Marketing Style Guide**

The CEC Style Guide serves as a reference for all written materials produced by CEC, both externally and internally, and will be updated yearly. By following these guidelines, we will ensure our messages are consistent and clear, allowing CEC to be the strong, cohesive voice of special education.

CEC uses the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, 2009)) as the style guide for all publications and the Associated Press (AP) style guide for all other forms of communication, including marketing materials, Web content, and *CEC Today*. Press materials (releases, media advisories) will follow AP style. *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* is CEC's preferred spelling guide. The guidelines that follow highlight usage that is specific to CEC and supersedes APA, AP, and *Webster's*.

### **Person-First Language**

A critical part of CEC's specialized communications are the guidelines pertaining to the treatment of exceptional persons, commonly referred to as person-first language. CEC staff should continually check their personal written and verbal communications to be sure they are always using person-first language. Person-first language is referenced in the "disability" entry of this guide, but some other examples are:

"A student with cognitive disabilities" instead of "a cognitively disabled student."

"A child with autism spectrum disorder" instead of "an autistic child."

### **Universal Language**

In CEC publications, authors should strive for clear communication to the intended audience. They should use precision and clarity of language. They should avoid jargon, including legal jargon, except when the legal term is the specific focus of the topic. They should also strive to make their language explicit versus implicit and remember the audience to whom they are writing.

Terms derived from any law frequently have meanings restricted by the law, and can be confusing to readers. This is especially true for broad audiences that cross jurisdictions and international boundaries. Generally, authors should avoid using legal terms except when the focus of the topic is a specific legal requirement. For example, if the topic is individualized education planning for an individual with an exceptionality, the author should describe the individualized education planning, rather than using a specific legal term such as "Individual Education Program" or IEP. On those occasions when the topic focus is a specific national, state, or provincial legal requirement(s), the use of the specific term with appropriate citation and explanation would best facilitate precision of meaning and clear communication.

### **Diversity Terminology**

Out of our respect for values and education traditions and practices across diverse cultures, CEC's Board-approved Diversity Terminology is included as an appendix to the style guide.

## A

**a.m.** (lower case, with periods)

**a priori** (no italics)

**AAC** (augmentative and alternative communication)

**About** (initial cap in titles)

**Above or previously**—When authors refer to something that is mentioned earlier in an article, use the word “previously” instead of “above.” In final layout, the item referenced may end up being on the previous page.

**acronyms**—Spell out at first mention with acronym following in parentheses, [e.g., “individualized education program (IEP).”] Use acronym alone after first use.

**ADA** (Americans With Disabilities Act)

**ADD** (attention deficit disorder)

**ADHD** (attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder)

**African American** (no hyphen, even if modifier)

**AIDS** (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome)

**and/or**—avoid use where possible, opting for one or the other

**annual convention**—Use this when casually referring to the event. The formal name of the institution is the CEC Annual Convention & Expo or CEC’s Annual Convention & Expo (always use the ampersand). When referring to a specific year’s event, please use CEC [year] Convention & Expo.

**appendix**—Try to avoid the use of an appendix. Query the author to see if the material can be changed to a figure/table. If an appendix is necessary, label it “Appendix.” If there are multiple appendices, they are labeled “Appendix A,” “Appendix B,” etc., and are placed after references.

**article**—Use the word “article,” not “paper,” to refer to manuscripts.

**as**—All prepositions are lower case in titles except when a preposition is the first word or contains four or more letters.

**ASD** (autism spectrum disorder)

**Asian American, Pacific Islander** (no hyphen, even if a modifier)

**Asperger’s syndrome** (AS) (use “AS” or “Asperger’s” on second reference)

**at-risk children** (but “children at risk”)

**audiotape**

**audiovisual**

**autism/PDD** (pervasive developmental disorder)

**autism spectrum disorder(s)** (ASD)

**AYP** (adequate yearly progress)

## B

**bachelor’s degree**—Lower case when used generally, but upper case when specific (e.g., Bachelor of Arts degree).

**BD** (behavior(al) disorder/behaviorally disordered)

**bilingual**

**BIP** (behavior intervention plan)

**birth-to-two** (adj.)

**Black** (and White, when referring to race)

**Braille**

**bulleted list**—Capitalize first letter of each bulleted item; end item with a period.

**bylaws** (when referring to international CEC Bylaws, not local unit’s)

## C

**CAN** (Children and Youth Action Network)

**CAPD** (central auditory processing disorder)

caregiver

**CASE** (Council of Administrators of Special Education)

**CBM** (curriculum-based measurement)

**CCBD** (Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders)

**CEC-DR** (Division for Research)

**CEC-PD** (CEC Pioneers Division)

**CEC Annual Convention & Expo** (or CEC’s Annual Convention & Expo)—Always use the ampersand. When referring to a specific year, please use CEC [year] Convention & Expo. You can use “annual convention” to casually refer to the event.

**CEC Headquarters**

**CEDS** (Council for Educational Diagnostic Services)

**chapter** (as in “local chapter”)

**Chapter 1** (referring to law)

**children ages 5 to 10**—Use “to” when in a sentence; use hyphen when in parentheses (5-10).

**child care** (noun, when referring to care given to preschoolers or others)

**child-care** (adj)

**CLD** (culturally and linguistically diverse)

**co-chairperson**

**co-editor**

**co-leader**

**Committee** (Upper case “C” in the context of referring to a specific committee)

**a committee chairperson** (no caps, but, “Committee Chairperson John Jones”)

**community wide**—use community-wide when using as an adjective

**Congress’s**

**Constitution** (when referring to international CEC, not a unit’s constitution)

**copyright**—Authors need to obtain permission from original author when adapting or copying materials. Query author when copyediting article. (APA p. 169, 174, 333)

**co-sponsor**

**co-teacher**

**the Council**—When used to refer to the Council for Exceptional Children; do not capitalize “the.”

**Council for Exceptional Children** (CEC)

**course work**

**CRT** (criterion-referenced tests)

**CSPD** (comprehensive system of personnel development)

**C-SPED** (Center for Special Education Services)

## D

**DADD** (Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities)

**data**—Uses plural verb, e.g., “data are included in reporting research.” When referring to computer systems, data takes a singular verb, e.g., the data is corrupted.

**database** (noun)

**day care** (noun, when referring to care given to preschoolers or others)

**day-care** (adj.)

**days of the week**—Abbreviate only in tabular format, when space is tight.

**DCDD** (Division for Communicative Disabilities and Deafness)

**DCDT** (Division on Career Development and Transition)

**DDEL** (Division for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners)

**deaf and hard-of-hearing** (preferred in place of “hearing impaired”)

**deaf-blind** and **deaf-blindness**

**DEC** (Division for Early Childhood)

**decision-making** (adj.) and **decision making** (noun) and **decision maker** (noun)

**disability** (not handicap)—Do not use disability as an adjective. Instead, put person first, e.g., “student with mental retardation” or “student who has cognitive disabilities,” not “student who is mentally retarded” or “mentally retarded student.”

**DISES** (Division of International Special Education and Services)

division (of CEC—no cap)

**DLI** (Division for Learning Disabilities)

**DOE** (Department of Education)

**DOI**—digital object identifier

**Down syndrome**

**DPHMD** (Division for Physical, Health, and Multiple Disabilities)

**dropout** (noun and adjective)

**drop out** (verb)

**DVI** (Division on Visual Impairments)

## *E*

**early childhood**—Preferred to “preschool”; can cover birth to 3, birth to 5, or birth to 8.

**EBD** (emotional/behavioral disorders)

**ECER** (Exceptional Child Education Resources)

**ECSE** (early childhood special education)

**ED** (Department of Education)

**Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 renamed**—see IDEA

**e.g.** (means “for example”)

**elementary-age children**

**ELL** (English Language Learners—now preferred to LEP, or limited English proficient/proficiency)

**e-blast**

**e-mail**

**ESEA** (Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965)

**ESL** (English as a Second Language)

**ESOL** (English for Speakers of Other Languages)

**etc.**—Use “etc.” in parentheses only. In text, use “e.g.” or “and so forth.”

**Executive Director**—Upper case when used before a name, lower case without.

## *F*

**fall** (seasons are lower case)

**FAPE** (Free Appropriate Public Education)

**FBA** (Functional Behavior Assessment)

**federation** (of CEC—no cap)

**FEP** (fluent English proficient/proficiency)

**field-test** (verb)

**field test** (noun)

**First Vice President** (no hyphens)

**follow-up** (adj. and noun)

follow up (verb)

**Follows or below**—When authors refer to something that is mentioned later in their article, use the word “follows” instead of “below.” In final layout, it may end up being on a different page.

**footnotes**—CEC does not use footnotes. Incorporate the footnote in the text at point footnote is mentioned, and put entire footnote into parentheses. Query authors to inform them that you have incorporated footnote into text to adhere to CEC style.

**foreword** (in front matter of publication—not “forward”)

From (upper case in titles)

**full-time** (adj.) (e.g., full-time worker)

**fund-raising** (adj.)

**fund raising** (noun)

## *G*

**general education** (not “regular education”)

**GLD** (gifted and learning disabled)

**geographic region**—Initial cap when referring to specific region (e.g., South, Midwest, etc.). Use lower case when referring to a direction (e.g., to the northeast).

**grade**—Use number for all grades when number follows grade (e.g., grade 8).

**grader**—spell out numbers below 10 (e.g., seventh grader or seventh grade); for 10 and above, use number (e.g., 11th grader, 11th grade)

**grassroots** (noun)

**grass-roots** (adj.)

## *H*

**hard-of-hearing** (adj.; preferred instead of “hearing impaired”)

**hard-to-teach** (adj.)

**Headquarters** (e.g., CEC Headquarters)—Lower case for other uses.

**Head Start**

**HFA** (high-functioning autism)

**high school student** (adj. and noun—no hyphens)

**his or her** (not “his/her”)

**Hispanic**

**Hispanic American** (no hyphen, even when modifier)

**HIV** (human immunodeficiency virus)

**home page**

## ***I***

**IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)**—Public Law 101-476 (1990); reauthorization P.L. 105-17 (1997). Must write out “Public Law” first time it is referenced and then can use P.L.

**IDEA 2004 (Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act)**—Use IDEA 2004 as acronym, not IDEIA.

**i.e.** (means “that is”)

**IEP** (individualized education program)

**IFSP** (individualized family services plan)

**Immediate Past President** (no hyphens)

**in-depth** (adj.)—All other uses, “in depth.”

in-house (adj.)

**inner-city** (adj.)

**inservice**

**INTASC** (Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium)

**interesting**—Do not use “interestingly.” (“It is interesting to note that...”)

**international convention** (no caps—see “annual convention”)

**Internet**

Into (upper case in titles for *APA-guided* products.)

**IPE** (individualized plan for employment)

**ITP** (individualized transition plan)

## ***J***

**job classification model**

**junior high school** (adj. and noun—no hyphens)

## ***L***

**Latin abbreviations** (see APA p. 106)

**Latino**

**LD** (learning disabled/disability)

**LEA** (local education agency)

**LEP** (limited English proficient/proficiency)—Hyphenate when modifier. See ELL.

**lists/seriation**—Lists should be parallel in structure and follow APA style when within text. CEC style allows for bulleted lists. (see APA p. 115–117)

**long-standing** (adj.)

**long-term** (adj.)

**long-time** (adj.)

**LRE** (least restrictive environment)

**low-vision** (adj.)

**low vision** (noun)

## *M*

**master's degree**—Lower case when used generally, but upper case “M” when specific (e.g., Master's degree in Special Education).

**member of ethnic or multicultural group** (use instead of “minorities”)

**middle school student** (adj. and noun—no hyphens)

**mini-libraries**

**months**—Spell out when used alone or with a year alone (e.g., “February 2010” — no comma). When mentioning a specific date, abbreviate months with more than five letters (e.g., “Oct. 5, 2010” but “April 21, 2010”).

**multicultural**

**multimedia**

## *N*

**NASDSE** (National Association of State Directors of Special Education)

**Native American** (no hyphen for adj. or noun)

**Navaho or Navajo** (both acceptable)

**NCATE** (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education)

**NCLB** (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, P.L. 107-110)

**NCTM** (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics)

**NICHCY** (National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities)

**nondisabled, nondiscrimination, nonvoting, etc.** (no hyphen)

**note** (italicize and initial cap when used as a note to a table or figure; followed by a period)

**notion** (means concept)

**numbered list**—Use numbers rather than letters when order is specific and important; cap first letter of each numbered item; end item with a period.

**numbers**—Use numbers when referring to participants in a study, even when less than 10 (5 children, 2 students, 7 animals, etc.). Use all numbers in abstract section unless first word of a sentence. (see APA p. 122).

**numbers and hyphens**—Use a hyphen between a span of numbers only when in parentheses. In text, use the word “to” between them. For example, 5 to 10 or (5–10). (see APA p. 291)

## *O*

**OHI** (other health impairment)

**ongoing**

**online** (adj. and noun)

**on-site** (adj.)

**on site** (noun)

**OSEP** (Office of Special Education Programs)

**OSERS** (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services)

## *P*

**p.m.** (lower case, with periods)

**paraeducator**

**paraprofessional**

**part-time** (adj., adv.)

**pen pal**

**percent**—In text, use symbol when preceded by a number (e.g., 20%). Use percentage if no number is referenced. (see APA p. 140)

**Personnel Handbook**

**P.L. 94-142** (spell out when first mentioned in text—Public Law 94-142)

**P.L. 100-297** Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act of 1988

**PLEP** (present levels of educational performance)

**plural of acronyms, abbreviations, etc.**—LEAs, IEPs,

**policy-making** (adj.)

**policy maker, policy making** (noun)

**post hoc**

**postsecondary**

**PowerPoint**

**preschool** (early childhood preferred to preschool)

**presenter**

**preservice**

**President** (professional and other titles are initial cap when preceding names)

**President Elect** (no hyphen)

**problem solver and problem solving (noun) and problem-solving** (adj)

**provincial unit** (of CEC—no cap)

**PSI** (postsecondary institution)

**PTSD** (post traumatic stress disorder)

**Public Law**—Write out “Public Law” first time it is referenced and then can use P.L. (in *APA-guided* products).

## *Q*

**quotes**—Block quote any quote over 40 words. See APA p. 117 for style guide for quotes in text.

## *R*

**regular education** (use “general education” instead)

**References**—Query author if more than 10 years old.

**REI** (Regular Education Initiative)

role-play (verb)

**Roman numerals**—Put after name without comma (Asa Hilliard III), but a comma is used with Jr. or Sr. (Asa Hilliard, Jr.).

**roundtable**

**RTI** (response to intervention)

## S

**school-age children**

**schoolchildren**

**schoolteacher**

**schoolwide**

**schoolwise**

**schoolwork**

**SDE** (State Department of Education)

**SED** (serious emotional disturbance)

**SES** (socioeconomic status)

**set-aside** (noun)

**sign-up** (adj.)

**sign up** (verb)

**since**—Use only when it refers to time (to mean “after that”); use “because” when not referring to time. (see APA p. 57)

**SLD** (specific learning disability)

**SLP** (speech language pathology)

**SM** (selective mutism)

**software**—Do not italicize names of software, programs, or languages if off the shelf. Also do not put in reference list. (see APA p. 280)

**SPA** (specialized professional associations)

**spring** (seasons lower case)

**SSI** (Supplemental Security Income)

**state abbreviations**—Refer to the AP style guide for proper abbreviations. Use two-letter postal **code abbreviations** (e.g., VA for Virginia) only with full mailing addresses.

**state unit** (of CEC—no cap)

**statewide** (adj.)

**students'** (plural possessive)

**students ages 6 to 21**—not “aged 6 to 21”

**summer** (seasons lower case)

**SWD** (students with disabilities)

## T

**TAG** (The Association for the Gifted)

**TAM** (Technology and Media Division)

**TBI** (traumatic brain injury)

**TED** (Teacher Education Division)

**telephone numbers:** 703/620-3660 (Voice); 1-800-224-6830 (Toll-free); 866-915-5000 (TTY); 703/264-9494 (Fax); 1-888-232-7733 (Constituent Services).

**tests**—All tests (e.g., WISC-III) must be cited in text and referenced.

That (upper case “T” in titles that are *APA-guided* products)

**theater** (e.g., film theater)

**timeframe**

**timeline**

**time-out**

**titles**—in articles, should be no more than 10 words

**Title I** (refers to law, use cap I, not number 1)

**toll-free** (adj.)—Otherwise, use “toll free.”

**Tourette’s syndrome** (also Tourette syndrome)

**trademarks**—Initial cap first letter of brand name, trademark symbol not necessary. Use generic term after trademark at least once (e.g., Kodak cameras, Pampers diapers).

**twice exceptional** (refers to individuals with disabilities *and* gifts or talents)

## U

**underlined words** (use in place of italics, if italics font is not available)

**United States** (abbreviate as U.S. only when adjective)

**units of measure**—Abbreviate units of measure (e.g., min=minutes, s=seconds, hr=hours). (see APA p. 106).

**up-to-date**

## V

**versus**—Write out unless in parentheses (e.g., vs.). For exceptions and when to use “v.,” see APA Appendix D, References to Legal Materials.

**videotape** (noun and verb)

## W

**Washington, DC** (no periods)

**Web browser**

**Webmaster**

**Web page**

**Web server**

**Web site**

**well-being**

**wheelchair user** (do not use “wheelchair bound” or “confined to a wheelchair”)

**while**—Refers to time; use “while” to link events occurring simultaneously. When not referring to time, use “although,” “whereas,” “and,” or “but” instead. (see APA p. 56)

**White** (initial cap when referring to race, likewise use “Black”)

**winter** (seasons in lower case)

**WISC-III** (Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, Third Edition)

**With** (initial cap in titles)

**with regard to** (not “in regard to”)

**Without** (initial cap in titles)

**workforce**

**workload**

**workplace**

**work-site**

**workweek**

**wraparound services**

## Y

**year**—No comma when stands alone (e.g., June 2002, but exact date would be June 6, 2002).  
(see APA p. 79)

**the *Yes I Can!* Awards** (lower case “the” and italicize *Yes I Can!*)

**youth**

## Z

**ZIP code for CEC:** 22201-5704

### *Misc:*

**1990s**—no apostrophe

**3 years**

**3-week period**

**21-year-old student**

**2-year-old**

**No commas in page numbers** (1000)

**Reference list**—Order earliest to latest; place in-press citations last.

**2000–2001**—Use en-dash when identifying school years.

## CEC Web Style Guide

### Typefaces

- For screen, only sans-serif typefaces (Verdana, Arial, Helvetica, etc.).
- For print, serif or sans-serif (Times New Roman, Arial, Helvetica, etc.).

Body text size: ~11pt.

All body text should be left aligned.

Headlines should be left aligned.

Do not use all-caps; only capitalize the first letter of a sentence or heading.

Avoid double treatment in text (i.e., bold and italics, bold and underline). Choose *one* format to emphasize important content.

Italics should not be used as it is generally more difficult to read on computer screens.

### Hyperlinks

- All should be underlined. Only underline text that indicates a hyperlink; otherwise use bold or italics or bold for emphasis.
- Un-clicked: blue ~#2100CE.
- Clicked: purple ~#52188C.
- Only hyperlinked texts may be underlined.

Importance of text should not be conveyed by color alone.

Text color should be black/near black: ~#000000.

Reverse type should not be used outside of images and “buttons.”

**Appendix**  
**Council for Exceptional Children New Diversity Terminology**  
**April 2008**

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:** *The country where you were born or which holds the most identity with a person.*

**CULTURAL IDENTITY:** *The context of one's life experience as shaped by membership in groups which can be based on ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, abilities, age, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographic region.*

**CULTURE:** *The sum of a group's socially transmitted behavior patterns, thoughts and experiences, and its perceptions, values, and assumptions about living that influence behavior and how those emerge with interactions and communications with other cultures.*

**DIVERSITY:** *Understanding and valuing the range and variety of characteristics and beliefs of individuals (including those who provide services to exceptional children, youth and adults) who demonstrate a wide range of characteristics. This includes ethnic and racial backgrounds, language, age, abilities, family status, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religious and spiritual values, geographic location, and country of origin.*

**ETHNIC OR MULTICULTURAL GROUP:** *Any group which, because of racial or ethnic origin, constitutes a distinctive and recognizable entity in our society. Examples of such groups include Blacks or African Americans; American Indians, Alaskan Natives, or First Nations; Hispanics, such as Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Central and South Americans; Asians; and Pacific Islanders. (This term to be used only for the purpose of delineating the composition of the Board and the Nominations Committee as outlined in CEC's Constitution and Bylaws Article V- Board of Directors and Article IX- Committees).*

**ETHNICITY:** *Takes into consideration people's national origin, religion, or language. When applied to a group, it refers to a community within a larger society that is set apart by others or who identifies itself primarily on the basis of cultural characteristics such as national origin, religion, beliefs, language or tradition, that can be influenced by racial identity.*

**GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION:** *A physical place where a person is regarded as established.*

**MULTICULTURAL:** *An understanding pertaining to, and respect for the range and variety of social, political, economic, academic, and historical constructs of ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, age, abilities, language, religion, sexual orientation, geographic location, or country of origin.*

**RACE:** *A social construction, traditionally based on biological/physical features, which may also include an individual's cultural identity.*