

Debtors Anonymous Style Guide

This style guide has been developed by the Communications Committee of the General Service Board, with input from Literature Services, and WSC Literature Committee, as a result of reviewing, attempting to conform to, and regularizing usage found in existing D.A. and A.A. literature—asmuch as possible. We suggest this guide be used for all future new and revised D.A. service and Conference-approved literature, the D.A. website, materials approved by the General Service Board for distribution, and D.A. correspondence. It may be updated periodically to meet future needs.

Punctuation and Abbreviations

- ▶ Use periods for Twelve Step fellowship proper names, such as D.A., B.D.A., A.A. and in all other forms such as possessives or adjectives (D.A.'s, A.A.'s). However, D.A. may appear without periods in its logo or in other graphic representations of the D.A. name.
- ▶ Do not use periods for World Service committee abbreviations: PI, RDC, BDA, etc.
- ▶ Do not use periods for the abbreviation of Higher Power (HP)
- ▶ Do not use periods for D.A. organizational acronyms such as PRG, PRM, GSO, GSB, GSR, ISR, WSC, etc.
BUT use periods for outside organizations and countries such as the I.R.S., U.K., U.S., etc.
- ▶ Use a serial comma (aka the Oxford comma). We will begin to live a prosperous life, unencumbered by fear, worry, resentment, or debt.
- ▶ Use semicolons to combine sentences within a list item. We will cease to compare ourselves to others; jealousy and envy will fade.
- ▶ Ways & Means NOT Ways and Means
- ▶ DA Focus NOT D.A. Focus
- ▶ Step One or Tradition Three NOT Step 1 or Tradition 3
- ▶ Use only one space after commas, colons, and semicolons.
- ▶ Use only one space after the period between sentences. Typesetting no longer requires two spaces as many were taught years ago.
- ▶ Use italics for names of pamphlets and chapter titles.
 - The GSO reports that it has reprinted 5,000 copies of our pamphlet *Communicating with Creditors and Debt Repayment*
 - The third chapter in *Currency of Hope* is called *A New Way of Life*
- ▶ We also Italicize movie titles, radio and television programs, podcasts, titles of books, magazines, newspapers, and plays.
(e.g., *A Currency of Hope*, *The New York Times*)
- ▶ Title case (no quote marks or italics) for documents shorter than a pamphlet (e.g, Twelve Signs of Compulsive Debting, Twelve Steps of Debtors Anonymous, Fifteen Questions to Ask Yourself about Compulsive Debting)

Time of day

- ▶ Lowercase with periods (a.m., p.m.), and no :00s.
10 a.m., 10:30 p.m., 6:15 a.m.
10 a.m. to noon (use “to” rather than a hyphen)
2 to 4 p.m.
8 p.m. to midnight
- ▶ Avoid the redundant: 10 a.m. this morning or 12 noon.

Capitalization

- ▶ the Steps, the Twelve Steps, the D.A. Tools, the Promises, the Twelve Traditions, the Traditions, the Twelve Concepts, the Concepts
- ▶ Step One, Tradition Seven, Concept Eight, Steps One through Eight BUT the first eight Steps
- ▶ the First Step, the Seventh Tradition, the Eighth Concept
- ▶ The Tool of Sponsorship or our Tool of Pressure Relief Groups, but sponsorship or pressure relief group when not preceded by “the Tool of,” “our Tool of,” or “the Fellowship’s Tool of.” Capitalize when simply using “the Tools” when “the Twelve Tools of Debtors Anonymous” is meant
- ▶ Intergroup, World Service, World Service Conference, the Conference, Conference-approved, General Service Office, General Service Board, the Board, General Service Representative
- ▶ the Fellowship, BUT a twelve-step fellowship, a spiritual program, the D.A. program.
- ▶ God, Goddess, Higher Power, a Power greater than ourselves, HP, the Universe, God’s
- ▶ the Chair, the Vice-Chair, the Secretary, the Treasurer, the Intergroup Service Representative, the General Service Representative, a Trustee, the Trustees BUT a chair, a vice-chair, a secretary, a treasurer, an intergroup service representative, a general service representative
- ▶ Capitalize committee names: Public Information Committee, Fellowship Communications Committee, the Host Committee, BUT a committee or the committee or our committees.
- ▶ Do not capitalize: groups, the group, a group, group conscience, etc.
- ▶ Do not capitalize sponsor, our sponsor, sponsors, your sponsor, a vision, your vision
- ▶ Do not capitalize a compulsive debtor, an underearner, an overspender, etc.
- ▶ World Service Conference delegates, NOT Delegates.

Title Style

- ▶ Capitalize nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Do not capitalize articles (a, an, the) and prepositions—regardless of length (e.g., with, from, for)
What Does the GSO Do?
Service to Groups and Intergroups at the World Service Conference
- ▶ Use italics for references to book titles within text:

We read a recovery story from *A Currency of Hope*.

- ▶ Use italics for references to pamphlet titles within text.

You can order *Communicating with Creditors and Debt Repayment* from the GSO.

- ▶ Lowercase all prepositions, regardless of length, unless the preposition is a major word in the title.

Living with Integrity

but

A River Runs Through It

See the latest edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style* for more examples and exceptions.

Use of Acronyms

- ▶ Spell out groups and organizations the first time they are mentioned, followed by the acronym in parentheses. Acronyms can be used alone after that.

-We come together in a Pressure Relief Meeting (PRM). At the PRM, we learn . . .

BUT acronyms may be included in a title if they can be spelled out shortly after in the text that follows.

-What Does the GSO Do?

-The General Service Office (GSO) serves the Fellowship by . . .

Numbers vs. Spelling Numbers Out

- ▶ Spell out Twelve Steps within titles. Use 12 Steps within text.

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

Using the spiritual principles of the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions . . .

- ▶ Except as noted above, spell out numerals from one to ninety-nine. Use numerals after that

. . . consisting of ourselves and two other people

. . . who have not incurred unsecured debt for at least ninety days

. . . there are more than 500 groups worldwide

- ▶ Use numerals for informal titles, the “72-hour Rule,” you can do a “90 and 90”

- ▶ Use numerals for percentages: contribute 45% to Intergroup

- ▶ Use numerals for monetary amounts: asked to contribute \$2 per meeting

- ▶ Use a comma in numerals of one thousand and above, except for temperatures and Dates:

-2,957; 18,462

-3000 degrees C

-We look forward to the year 2026, when Debtors Anonymous celebrates its 50th anniversary.

Gender Neutrality

The following motion was approved at the 2007 World Service Conference:

“The Literature Committee moves that all new D.A. literature, including

literature in process, be written in such a way that all references to Higher Power and/or God are gender neutral, except for personal stories. The language of the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions will not be changed as a result of this motion.”

The following motion was approved at the 2021 World Service Conference:

“The Literature Committee moves that the Conference authorize the WSC Literature Committee to identify instances within all existing D.A. literature where gender specific language can be replaced with gender neutral language, except for literature subject to copyright by A.A. (Motion is intended for future printing after current supplies are exhausted.)”

► Use “we” and “us” and “our” rather than “you” and “your.”

as we recover, we . . . OR in our own way, we . . .

► Use “them” and “they” instead of “him/her.”

► Instead of: as he or she recovers, every debtor . . . Use: as they recover, each debtor....

Instead of: in his or her own way, each debtor.... Use: in their own way, each debtor....

► In references to God or a Higher Power, avoid use of the pronouns Him or Her. Use God or Higher Power instead.

In my understanding of God, God isn’t . . . Higher Power is....

► Recast sentences if the use of “person” suffixes seems awkward.

One way individuals and groups are excluded from consideration is by the use of gender-specific pronouns to denote “he” and “she.” To avoid this problem, some suggested alternatives are listed below.

- Eliminate the pronoun completely:

Instead of: Each faculty member grades the exams as quickly as she can.

Use: Each faculty member grades the exams as quickly as possible.

- Replace pronouns with articles:

Instead of: A careful student consults his teacher regularly.

Use: A careful student consults the teacher regularly.

- Use plural pronouns:

Instead of: A staff member can use his ID card to access the library.

Try: Staff members can use their ID cards to access the library.

- Use “their” instead of “him/her”:

Instead of: Each student must speak to his or her instructor.

Try: Each student must speak to their instructor.

- Address your reader

Instead of: If he studies hard, the student’s grades should improve.

Try: If we study hard, our grades should improve.

- Use genderless nouns:

Instead of: A chairman of a committee should speak his mind on issues.

Try: A committee chair should speak out on issues.

► Suggested Gender-Free Language

Instead of: _____ Use: _____

- businessman: business executive, manager, entrepreneur

- chairman: chair
- clergyman: priest, rabbi, minister
- showman: performer
- housewife: homemaker
- mailman: mail carrier, letter carrier, postal worker
- middleman: middle person, wholesaler
- newsman: news broadcaster, reporter
- policeman: police officer, officer
- salesman: salesperson, sales representative, sales clerk
- spokesman: representative, spokesperson
- sportsmanship: fair play
- man/men (nonspecific): human(s), human being(s), humanity, person(s), people, individuals, human race
- mankind: humankind
- man-hours: work hours, staff hours
- manpower: workforce, workers, personnel, human resources
- man-made: synthetic, artificial, constructed, manufactured

Hyphens

Hyphenate compound adjectives before a noun but not after:

- She received well-deserved accolades.
- The accolades were well deserved.

However, there is an exception. If a word is shown as a hyphenated adjective AND adverb at merriam-webster.com, it should always be hyphenated—regardless of where it occurs in the sentence

Example from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/on-site> :

on-site (adverb or adjective)

'ön-'sīt 'än-

: at a particular place especially of business

Spelling

- ▶ Use American English except in personal stories, which should retain the author's vernacular
- ▶ Use merriam-webster.com for spelling, the dictionary used by the *Chicago Manual of Style*, unless otherwise noted below.
- ▶ Use the following spelling conventions in D.A. literature:
 - bylaws NOT by-laws
 - cross talk (n.); cross-talk (adj.) NOT crosstalk
 - Debtors Anonymous NOT Debtor's Anonymous
 - email NOT e-mail or Email
 - eNews NOT Enews or ENews or eNews

- eBlast NOT eblast
- Internet, internet (either are acceptable)
- non-debtor NOT nondebtor
- OK NOT O.K. or okay
- Step work NOT stepwork
- theater, theatre (either are acceptable)
- TV NOT T.V.
- website NOT Web site or Website
- United States, United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates: Spell out on first reference and as a noun; abbreviate on second and subsequent references, and when used as an adjective: U.S. Court of Appeals, U.K. Parliament, U.A.E. dirham

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[with XX being the current year]

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