

Editorial Style Basics (The One Sheet)

Prepared by Lucy Grey 6-7-18 (v. 2023-3) | For complete guidelines, refer to VMFA Style Guide and *Chicago Manual of Style*.

STYLE	EXAMPLE
In long copy, spell out the name at first mention.	Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
When the spelled-out name is used in a sentence, preceding it with “the” is acceptable.	Visit the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
The museum is known as VMFA (an initialism, not acronym).	Visit VMFA. (never <i>the</i> VMFA)
When abbreviating months and days, do not include periods. Keep to only three letters.	Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec; Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
Use the serial comma.	A, B, and C.
Spell out numbers zero to nine. Use numerals for numbers 10 and up and for all centuries. In running text, spell out larger whole numbers.	zero, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10, 11, etc.; 1st century or 21st century (note: no superscript); one hundred or twenty thousand
Set “am” and “pm” lowercase without periods.	9 am and 1 pm (note spacing)
Use an en dash to express a range. (Alt + 0150; no spaces before or after dash)	1905–1987; Sep–Dec; 10 am–5 pm; grades K–12
Use either an en dash or “from/to” (but never both) to express a range of time.	Let’s meet from 9 am to 11:30 am (or 9–11:30 am.)
Use BC and AD, not BCE or CE (no periods).	90 BC–AD 201 (note placement of AD <i>before</i> the year; also note en dash)
Use an em dash to set off parenthetical information, to emphasize, or to mark a break in thought. (Alt + 0151; no spaces before or after dash)	All visitors—staff, members, and guests—were delighted.
Do not precede Jr. or Sr. with a comma.	John Smith Jr.
Insert spaces before and after periods in ellipses. Do not use the automatic key to insert them.	“This quote is missing . . . something.”
Italicize titles of exhibitions and works of art. When italics isn’t possible (e.g. social media), set in quotation marks.	The painting <i>Roof and Steeple</i> will be on view in exhibition <i>The Precisionist Impulse</i> .
A full list of gallery and space names is provided in VMFA’s Style Guide. Here are some frequently referenced locations.	Best Café, Amuse Restaurant, Visitor Services Desk, VMFA Parking Deck, VMFA Shop, WestRock Education Center, Leslie Cheek Theater, Pauley Center, Cochrane Atrium, Robins Sculpture Garden
Check spelling using <i>Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 11 ed.</i> The first variation listed is the preferred spelling. Avoid British spelling.	Examples and exceptions per VMFA style: theater, not <i>theatre</i> ; email; website; Wi-Fi; tearoom; catalogue (per VMFA’s standing style for books)

Caption example:

The Three Sisters: Finette, Babillarde, and Nonchalante (detail), 1824, Jean-Antoine Laurent (French, 1763–1823), oil on canvas, 23 x 19 in. Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph T. Knox, 2005.61