Communications Style Guide

Guide to NECC Writing Standards for
Internal and External Communications

Prepared by the Development Department
Online at www.necc.org/media-kit
October 2019
About this Style Guide

The New England Center for Children® (NECC®) is a leading autism education center and research institute. We build and maintain our image through marketing programs and by producing accurate and consistent internal and external communications.

These guidelines are intended to promote clarity and consistency in communications from NECC. By adhering to the standards presented in the following pages, you are helping to project a positive, professional image of NECC.


For guidance, contact Michele Hart, Director, Marketing & Communications, x4049.
Useful Links

All logo files, branding guides, and this communication style guide can be found in Box under NECC Resources – Marketing Public. Bookmark this link for quick access.

https://necc.box.com/s/g6252hsxyo4taavnlwe7ck4hl5kybuwz

For assistance or for questions, contact Development at 508.481.1015 x4049 or mhart@necc.org.
NECC Mission
To transform the lives of children with autism worldwide through education, research, and technology.

NECC Vision
To be a global leader in the provision of effective, evidence-based educational services for the millions of underserved children with autism and their families.

NECC Logo Signature
Together, the logo and the registered trademark (see Registered Trademark) make up the organization signature. The signature is the primary element of the NECC identity.

![NECC Logo](image)

Our logo is a legal entity. Please refer to the NECC Branding Guidelines for details on logo use.

NECC Mailing Address
NECC’s full mailing address, including 9-digit postal code, must appear on all print communications. When available, use the organization stationery, which is pre-printed. If stationery is not available do the following:

Type the full address, including ® symbol.
The New England Center for Children®
33 Turnpike Rd.
Southborough, MA 01772-2108

Or
Use the logo in conjunction with the typed address. In this case, do not type out the organization name.

33 Turnpike Rd.
Southborough, MA 01772-2108
(Be sure the logo is at least 2 inches wide.)

Or
Use the digital letterhead found in Templates.
Typography and Formatting Standards
A typeface is a family of fonts, such as Times New Roman. Within a typeface there are fonts of varying weights or other variations, e.g., light, bold, semi-bold, condensed, italic, etc. Each such variation is a different font.

NECC’s typefaces are Sabon and Whitney. Sabon is used in the logo signature (the organization name) and Whitney is used in the tagline. Use these fonts or their approved substitutes in documents or presentations.

Acceptable substitute fonts
- Palatino Linotype (for Sabon)
- Ebrima (for Whitney)

Typeface size
Sabon 18-26 pt. for document titles
Sabon 14-18 pt. for headlines and sub headings
Whitney 12-14 pt. for headings and subheadings
Whitney – 10-12 pt. for body text.

Communications Format
Set body text at “left margin flush, ragged right” format with margins at:
Right: 1.0 inch
Left: 1.0 inch
Top: 1.0 inch
Bottom: 1.0 inch

Stationery Standards
Specifications and layout for business cards, name badges, letterhead, and envelopes should always be followed. These standards cannot be altered in any way. To order any of these items, contact Katherine Reilly, NECC Purchasing Specialist, at x 3097 or kreilly@necc.org.

Templates
Digital letterhead and PowerPoint templates are available on Box at
https://necc.box.com/s/ns2r96lt6lkw58u33lbcy8c66z81vy6. There are two PPT template formats available:
1. PPT Template Wide (16:9)
2. PPT Template Standard (4:3)

*Research has a separate PPT template. For research templates contact Kathy Clark, Research Specialist, at x3054 or kclark@necc.org.
Building Names – quick reference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First reference</th>
<th>Subsequent references</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John and Diane Kim Autism Institute</td>
<td>Kim Autism Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael S. Dukakis Aquatic Center</td>
<td>Dukakis Aquatic Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dillon Arledge Student Center</td>
<td>Arledge Student Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael F. Downey Center for Child Development</td>
<td>Downey Center for Child Development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Registered Trademark Usage – quick reference

The New England Center for Children has a registered trademark for the following:

- ABAplus®
- ACE®
- Autism Curriculum Encyclopedia®
- CALM®
- NECC®
- The New England Center for Children® (and Design)
- The New England Center for Children®
- The New England Center for Children We Open Doors and Design
- We Open Doors®

Given the trademark status of the above listed words/phrases/designs, they must be protected by using an ®. The ® should be “superscript”. Go to Insert – Symbol to add a registered trademark symbol to your Word document. Use the superscript function in Word to reduce the size of the symbol: Ctrl+shift++ or X² in the Font toolbar.

The ® must be used on the first and most prominent use of each of the protected words/phrases/designs on each page.

The New England Center for Children also has a United States Patent for the Autism Curriculum Encyclopedia. This patent should be indicated as such: The ACE® System is covered by U.S. Patent 7,974,569 B2; other patent pending.
Style Guide

ABaplus®
NECC's online professional learning platform. The registered trademark symbol ® must be used with ABAplus® on first reference.

Do not refer to as simply ABAplus. Use a descriptor after the name as follows:

- ABAplus® professional learning platform
- ABAplus® learning platform

For information about ABAplus® contact Meg Cyr in the Public School Services Division at mcyr@necc.org.

abbreviations
Write out the full name of an organization, office, or institution on first reference, followed by its acronym in parentheses. Use acronyms on subsequent references. Do not use periods or letter spaces between entity names or acronyms, for example: ABAI not A.B.A.I.

**Exception**: Use periods between the letters for U.S. for United States.

ACE®

Do not refer to as simply ACE. Use a descriptor after the name as follows:

- ACE® software
- ACE® ABA software system

acronyms
Do not use acronyms in sequential order in a sentence:

**Correct**: She earned her BCBA while working at NECC in 2015.

**Incorrect**: She earned her NECC BCBA in 2015.

accept
Accept means to take something, not to be confused with except, which means to not include.

adapted
adapted physical education, not adaptive

addresses
In running text, it is preferable not to abbreviate addresses. Spell out avenue, boulevard, street, and numbered street names of one hundred or less.

**Example**: The store is located at 1544 Thirty-Sixth Street.

In mailing address labels, it is acceptable to abbreviate addresses, including when direction is indicated in the street name: NW, NE, SE, and SW

**Example**: 1544 36th St. NW

ages
Use figures. When used as a modifier or a noun, use hyphens:

**Example**: A 5-year-old student joined the program this week.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Rules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>alumnus</strong></td>
<td>- alumnus (singular masculine)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- alumni (plural- use for collective body of males and females)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- alumna (singular feminine)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- alumnae (plural feminine)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ampersands</strong></td>
<td>Do not use ampersands (&amp;) unless it is part of an organization name or entity. Use the word <em>and</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>applied behavior analysis</strong></td>
<td>Not <em>applied behavioral analysis</em>. Applied behavior analysis is lowercase but ABA, written as an acronym, is uppercase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ASD</strong></td>
<td>Acronym for autism spectrum disorder. Do not use periods between the letters. Spell out autism spectrum disorder on first use, with ASD in parentheses: autism spectrum disorder (ASD).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>autism spectrum disorder</strong></td>
<td><em>not disorders</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>autism</em> is also acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Autism Curriculum Encyclopedia®</strong></td>
<td>The full name of the ACE® application. Spell out as Autism Curriculum Encyclopedia® (ACE®) on first reference. Use the registered trademark symbol on first reference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do not refer to as simply Autism Curriculum Encyclopedia. Use a descriptor after the name as follows: Autism Curriculum Encyclopedia® software</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>awards</strong></td>
<td>Capitalize award names. Capitalize “Award” if an official part of the award name: Innovation Award from SBANE, National Award for Model Professional Development, SABA Award for Enduring Programmatic Contributions in Behavior Analysis, NASET School of Excellence – National Association of Special Education Teachers, Entrepreneur of the Year in New England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>bachelor’s degree</strong></td>
<td>The correct use is with an apostrophe unless the degree in full is spelled out. <em>Correct:</em> He has a bachelor’s degree. <em>Correct:</em> He has a bachelor’s in science <em>Correct:</em> He has a bachelor of arts degree in science.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>behavior analysis</strong></td>
<td><em>not behavioral analysis</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **BACB®** | Behavior Analyst Certification Board. Requires registered trademark symbol on first reference. When referencing the BACB on CE trainings or webinars, include the following disclaimer:  
_The Behavior Analyst Certification Board, Inc.® (“BACB”) does not sponsor, approve or endorse The New England Center for Children®, the material, information or sessions identified herein._ |
| **BCBA®** | Board Certified Behavior Analyst or BCBA Consultant. Requires registered trademark symbol on first reference. |
| **capital vs capitol** | _Capital_ refers to finances, wealth and assets or the governmental center of a state or commonwealth, i.e. _Boston is the capital of Massachusetts_. Not to be confused with _capital_, which means a building or group of buildings where legislative bodies meet. |
| **century** | Spell out and lowercase: _twenty-first century, the eighth century, twentieth century_ |
| **Commonwealth of Massachusetts** | _not State of Massachusetts_ |
| **compose, comprise** | _Compose_ means _to write, create, make up_, as in “The coursework is composed of reading and writing.” _Comprise_ means _to contain, to include all, to consist of_. The whole comprises the parts. Never say “is comprised of.”  
**Correct:** NECC comprises three buildings.  
**Incorrect:** NECC is comprised of three buildings. |
| **Cooperative Learning interns** | _Not Interns or cooperative learning interns_ |
| **Cooperative Learning Program** | _not Co-Op or Coop or cooperative learning program_ |
| **copyright** | Copyright is for original works of literature, drama, music, art or intellectual property. The symbol is a letter C in a circle: © |
| **dates** | Always use figures. Do not abbreviate days of the week unless in a table. When a phrase contains month, day and year, use commas before and after the year.  
**Example:** She was born July 1, 1999, in Southborough.  
When including a day of the week with the date, use a comma after the day and after the date.  
**Example:** The Gala will be Friday, Nov. 30, at 6 p.m. |
When a phrase contains a date but not a year, do not use a comma with the date.

*Example*: The Gala will be Nov. 30 at the InterContinental.

When referring to just the month and year, do not use a comma.

*Example*: The program began in October 1975 with 6 students.

When writing a span of dates, do not combine a preposition with a hyphen.

*Incorrect*: Registration will be from August 5-8.

*Correct*: Registration will be August 5-8.

*Correct*: Registration will be from August 5 through August 8.

When writing a day and date, use a comma after the day and after the date.

*Example*: The Gala will be Friday, Nov. 30, at the InterContinental

daycare

*one word*

decades

Spell out and lowercase or express in numerals. When expressing in numerals, do not use an apostrophe between the year and the s.

*Correct*: the nineties, 1990s, or ‘90s

*Incorrect*: the 1990’s

degrees

When text requires a degree be written in long form write as: He holds a bachelor’s degree OR he holds a bachelor of arts in music. She holds a master of science in biology OR she holds a master’s degree.

degrees, abbreviated

Do not use periods between letters of academic degrees and do not use periods between letters of titles that denote a field or board certification entity, for example: BA, BS, MA, MS, MSEd, PhD or BCBA, BACB, LABA

departments and administrative offices

Capitalize department names when referring to a specific department within an organization. Do not capitalize departments when making a generic reference, i.e. She hopes to work in a human resources department someday.

*Example*: NECC Human Resources Department

A shortened version (i.e., dropping “Department,” “Office of,” etc.) may be used on second reference

Dillon Arledge Student Center

Capitalize; on second reference may be referred to as Arledge Student Center.

donor signage

Avoid ampersands unless official part of a company or organization name. Use and between donor names, unless otherwise specified.

*Example*: Jennifer and Joseph Smith

*Example*: Ernst & Young

Use typeface **Adobe Garamond Regular** in donor signage.
email
Not e-mail. In print and email communications, always lowercase an email address, i.e. mhart@necc.org. Keep the period when ending a sentence with an email address.

ensure
Means to make certain.
Example: It’s my job to ensure you follow these writing guidelines.
Not to be confused with insure, which refers to financial insurance policies.

except
Means to not include, not to be confused with accept, which means to take something.

farther, further
Farther denotes physical distance. The building is 100 feet farther down Rt. 9. Further denotes a figurative distance. She’s further in her graduate training program than he is.

fiscal year
The year that runs from July 1 through June 30. Do not abbreviate.
Correct: FY 2019 or FY19
Incorrect: FY ’19

fundraiser, fundraising
one word

home-based
When referring to NECC’s service program, use home-based services.
The department should be referenced as Home-based.

insure
Use when referring to financial insurance policies.
Example: After purchasing the building, the organization chose to insure it for $1 million.
Not to be confused with ensure, which means to make certain.

it’s, its
The contraction it’s means it is. Remember that in contractions, the apostrophe replaces letters that are left out to contract the word. The possessive of it is is its:
Example: Its T-shirt is oversized.
Pronouns do not form the possessive with apostrophes: his, hers, its, ours, yours.

John and Diane Kim Autism Institute
Capitalize and use full name on first reference. On subsequent references use Kim Autism Institute.

lay, lie
You lay something down, people lie down by themselves.
Example: Please lay the book on the table.
Example: You look unwell. Please lie down.
**lose, loose**

Lose is to misplace something; loose is when something is not tight.

**Massachusetts**

Massachusetts is a Commonwealth, not a state. Always refer to it as either Massachusetts or the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

To abbreviate, use MA for addresses. Avoid abbreviating as Mass. within text. Instead, write out as Massachusetts.

**master’s degree**

The correct use is with an apostrophe unless the degree in full is spelled out.

Correct

She has a master’s degree.

Correct

She has a master’s in ABA.

Correct

She has a master of science degree.

**Michael F. Downey Center for Child Development**

Capitalize and use full name on first reference. On subsequent references use Downey Center for Child Development. May also be referred to as NECC daycare generally.

**Michael S. Dukakis Aquatic Center**

Capitalize and use full name on first reference. On subsequent references use Dukakis Aquatic Center. May also be referred to as natatorium generally.

**moot**

(adj.) Mean to have little relevance. Not to be confused with mute.

Example. The whole issue is becoming increasingly moot.

**more than**

The correct term to use when denoting a figure or amount greater than another, however “over” has come to be equally acceptable.

**mute**

Means (adj.) to refrain from speech, unable to speak; (verb) to muffle, reduce or eliminate sound.

Example. The TV remote has a mute button.

**natatorium**

A building containing a swimming pool.

**NECC®**

The common abbreviated name of the organization should be used only after the first reference of The New England Center for Children (within the body of a letter or communication) is spelled out and (NECC) is included in parentheses following the initial reference. Use the ® on first reference.

When speaking, refer to as “en e see see” not “neck.”

**The New England Center for Children®**

The New England Center for Children, Inc.® is the legal name of the Center. The New England Center for Children® is the widely accepted use. Always capitalize The when using the full name.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nonprofit</td>
<td>not non-profit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| numbers              | Spell out whole numbers zero through nine. Use digits for 10 and above. Spell out any number that begins a sentence. Use numerals when denoting measurements, age, specific time, and decades:  
  - 70th birthday  
  - 2 cups of water, two glasses  
  - 2% not two %  
  - 1930s, no apostrophe  
   Example: 4 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. |
| on-site              | not onsite                                   |
| pages                | Spell out pages:  
  Correct: pages 35-26  
  Incorrect: pp 35-36. |
| percent              | Spell out as “percent.” Do not use % except in tables, graphs, or other visual representations of data. Always use numerals with the % symbol in a table. |
| principal, principle | A principal is the head of a school or organization.  
  A principle is a tenet or fundamental rule that supports a belief system. |
| protective measure   | The term used by NECC to describe a restraint. See restraint, below. |
| restraint            | The term used by Massachusetts to define what NECC calls a protective measure. A restraint, as defined by Massachusetts is “the use of any physical, mechanical or chemical means to temporarily control behavior.” |
| Registered Behavior  | Spell out on first use. Both the full name and the acronym require a registered trademark on first use. |
| Technician® (RBT®)   | When using RBT as part of NECC’s ABAplus™ program, include the following disclaimer:  
  The RBT® training program is based on the Registered Behavior Technician Task List and is designed to meet the 40-hour training requirement for the RBT credential. The program is offered independent of the BACB®. |
| registered trademark | With a registration, a trademark is legally protected against another company’s use of the name or image. A registered trademark is designated with the letter R in a circle: ® Go to Insert - Symbol to add a registered trademark symbol to |
your Word document. Use the superscript function in Word to reduce the size of the symbol: Ctrl+shift++ or X² in Font toolbar

*The New England Center for Children® requires a registered trademark symbol on first use.*

NECC® requires a registered trademark symbol on first use.

See Registered trademark – quick reference on page 6 for more uses.

regions

In general, lowercase north, south, southeast, etc. when they indicate compass directions. Capitalize when they designate regions.

seasons

Do not capitalize the season name: spring of 2009, fall of 2009.

T-shirt

Hyphenate and use capital T.

telephone numbers

For fax and phone use dashes or periods between numbers and the lowercase x to denote extension: 508.481.1015 x4049 or 508-481-1015 x4049. Be sure to keep the format consistent throughout your document.

time

Do not capitalize A.M. or P.M. Use a.m. and p.m. with periods. Always use a number when referring to a specific time: 4 a.m. Spell out if referencing a general time: about three in the morning.

titles, individuals

Do not capitalize an individual’s operational title when preceding the name.

*Example:* The president and chief executive officer, Vinnie Strully, attended the ceremony.

Capitalize a title when following the individual’s name.

*Example:* Vinnie Strully, President and CEO of The New England Center for Children, attended the ceremony.

Do not use periods between C-level titles: CEO, COO, CFO, CDO, CPO

titles, professional works

In general communications, italicize titles of books, periodicals, film titles, and works of art. When referring to dissertation and theses titles, course names, lectures, manuscripts, articles, songs, and television episodes, set type in Roman or Regular and enclose in quotes. *Research is exempt. Research papers and documentation follow professional standards outlined by the APA.*

*Example:* Have you read “Inside the Effort to Rescue the Soccer Team” in The New York Times?

In titles and headings, capitalize all major words, including those in hyphenated compounds, unless they are preceded by a prefix:

*Example:* Best-in-Class Software, Post-secondary Degree Fields

*Example:* “Teaching Essential Discrimination Skills in Children with Autism” is an excellent article.

trademarks

Trademarks are for words, symbols, devices or names that are used to distinguish the goods of one manufacturer or seller from that of another.
| **TM symbol** | A ™ symbol is used when an organization or entity has not yet registered their brand name with the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) or for those whose applications have been submitted but not yet accepted. |
| **United States** | It is preferable to spell out the name of the country as a noun, however U.S. is acceptable |
| **URLs** | Type all internet URLs using www. Do not include http:// |
| **501c3** | not 501c(3) |
Punctuation and Grammar Guidelines

addresses—When writing addresses on letters and envelopes, include the addressee’s full name and title, or full name and credential, but not both.

*Correct:* Dr. Jared R. Smith  
*Correct:* Jared R. Smith, MD  
*Incorrect:* Dr. Jared R. Smith, MD

If addressing two individuals who are married and have the same title, include the title only once.

*Correct:* Drs. Jared and Judith Smith  
*Correct:* Jared Smith, MD and Judith Smith, MD  
*Incorrect:* Dr. Jared and Dr. Judith Smith

acronyms—Avoid beginning a sentence with an acronym. Instead, rewrite the sentence or spell out the acronym.

*Correct:* Yesterday, OSHA issued a statement.  
*Incorrect:* OSHA issued a statement yesterday.

capitalization—Capitalize proper nouns. Do not use all capital letters to emphasize words, except for words that are trade names or acronyms, such as NECC, BCBA, etc.

commas—Use the serial comma, which means using a comma before *and* in a series. This prevents ambiguity.

*Correct:* The dog is black, brown, and white.  
*Incorrect:* The dog is black, brown and white.

Always place a period or comma inside punctuation. Place a semi-colon or colon outside of punctuation.

*Example:* When speaking, refer to NECC as “en e see see.”  
*Example:* When speaking, refer to NECC as “en e see see”; do not refer to NECC as “neck.”

emphasis—Use *italics* to add emphasis to individual words or phrases, or to introduce a new word, technical term, or label on first use.

Use “quotes” to introduce coined phrases or portions of speech.

Use **bold** to highlight a word in a sentence. Limit use to reduce ineffectiveness.

Use *underline* to indicate a hyperlink. Do not use underline to emphasize a word or phrase. Use italics or bold instead.

em dash—Use to offset thoughts within a sentence instead of parentheses. Do not use a space on either side of an em dash. In Microsoft Word you can find the em dash under Insert – Symbol – Special Characters.

*Example:* The program was started in 1975 by three founders—Mary, James, and Natalie—and continues operating today led by our current officers.
**en dash**—Use the en dash with numbers and time; do not use hyphens. Do not use a space on either side of an en dash. In Microsoft Word you can find the en dash under Insert – Symbol – Special Characters.


**hyphens**—Use a hyphen to join compound adjectives that are followed by a noun. Do not use a space on either side of a hyphen.

*Example:* Best-in-class software
*Example:* World-class organization

Although most people will not notice the difference between an en dash and a hyphen, be consistent throughout your document. Note that Microsoft Word may use auto-correct features and change the size of your dashes when you add spaces around it.

**lists**—Punctuate a bulleted list if it is made up of a series of phrases that constitute a complete sentence.

*Example:* The NECC gardening committee requested items to assist them throughout the year, including:

- three 5-pound bags of potting soil with a low PH;
- plants, including parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme;
- a composter bin with a handle and a release door; and
- a hose that is 35 feet in length.

**names**—Use a comma in names with suffixes.

*Correct:* Joe Smith, Jr.

**spacing, paragraphs**—For general NECC communications, use a single space between paragraphs, and indent the first line of a new paragraph.

**spacing, sentences**—Use a single space between sentences.