

SBTS Style Guide Summary

Southern Seminary's Office of Communications uses *The Associated Press Stylebook 2015* as the default style guide for all print materials. What follows is a summary of the most relevant and applied areas of this style. Included, also, are points of style unique to Southern Seminary.

Abbreviations

Months

(Only abbreviate a month when referencing a specific day or days)

Jan., Feb., March, April, May, June, July, Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., and Dec.

Days

Capitalize and spell out days of the week in narrative form. Abbreviations for days of the week are only appropriate for seminary offices listing hours of operation (three letters without periods, per AP Style): Sun, Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat

States

Only abbreviate states in datelines and political party affiliations, but spell out in the body of the story. [e.g., LOUISVILLE, Ky. (SBTS); e.g. U.S. Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.); e.g., James A. Smith Sr., of Norfolk, Virginia, NOT James A. Smith Sr., of Norfolk, Va.]

Scripture references

Only abbreviate books of the Bible in parenthetical references

Gen, Exod, Lev, Num, Deut, Josh, Judg, Ruth, 1-2 Sam, 1-2 Kgs, 1-2, Chr, Ezra, Neh, Esth, Job, Ps (plural: Pss), Prov, Eccl, Cant (or Song of Sol), Isa, Jer, Lam, Ezek, Dan, Hos, Joel, Amos, Obad, Jonah, Mic, Nah, Hab, Zeph, Hag, Zech, Mal, Matt, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Rom, 1-2 Cor, Gal, Eph, Phil, Col, 1-2 Thess, 1-2 Tim, Titus, Phlm, Heb, Jas, 1-2 Pet, 1-3 John, Jude, Rev

Capitalization

Only capitalize proper nouns. The most common mistake in this regard is the mindset that capitalization carries a sense of prestige and importance, hence the assumption that not capitalizing a word is somehow disrespectful or offensive. Besides the fact that capitalization is no longer trendy, keep in mind that this style guide does not capitalize the divine pronoun or the very word "gospel," both of which we deeply cherish. If you are not sure whether or not to capitalize a word, evaluate if it is 1) a proper noun or 2) better than the gospel.

Common mistakes:

- God is "he" NOT "He"
- The word "gospel" is only capitalized when referencing the canonical Gospels (e.g., Gospel of Matthew)
- "biblical" NOT "Biblical"
- "scriptural" NOT "Scriptural"
- Job titles are only capitalized when used as proper nouns (e.g., positions NOT capitalized in narrative text)
- See "Academic titles" below

- Academic degrees and concentrations are capitalized when stated specifically (e.g., Master of Divinity in Biblical and Theological Studies; otherwise, master’s and bachelor’s degrees or abbreviate).

Ellipsis and emdash

Insert a space on both sides of both the emdash and ellipsis

Numbers

Write out all numbers lower than 10; use Arabic numerals for all numbers 10 and higher. Write out all numbers that begin a sentence (the best practice is to avoid writing sentences that begin with numbers).

Dates

Abbreviate the month, followed by the date without suffixes. Ex. Jan. 16 OR Friday, Jan. 16 (day of the week only when necessary).

Time

Abbreviations for ante meridian and post meridian are “a.m.” and “p.m.”; these abbreviations always follows a space (e.g., 4:15 p.m.). Use a colon to separate hours from minutes, but do not use :00. Examples: 1 p.m., 3:30 a.m. Always use “noon” and “midnight” when appropriate.

Serial comma

Use the serial or Oxford comma (e.g., the comma following the second-to-last item in a list; e.g., “Me, myself, and I”; NOT “Me, myself and I.”). Although it is the AP’s practice to omit the serial comma, the communications office produces materials for an academic institution and therefore follows its style in regard to the comma. In news releases intended for distribution, omit the serial comma for use in media publications.

Accent marks

The AP Stylebook continues to omit any all accent marks in words like resume and cafe. This practice is outdated, as is the omission of the serial comma and refusal to italicize book and movie titles. Our style guide also omits accent marks in English words like resume and cafe, but we make the following exceptions:

- In a formal business name: Founders’ Café
- The tilde in Hispanic and Latino names (e.g. Miguel Nuñez)

Book, music, and movie titles

The AP Stylebook places the titles of all songs, books, movies, and TV shows in quotation marks. Our style guide, however, italicizes the names of major works. Individual song titles, like poems, are placed in quotation marks, but the album names are italicized.

- Doxology’s new music video, “My Ransom,” from its album *O, Great Redeemer*
- The opening chapter in Donald S. Whitney’s *Praying the Bible* is simply “The Problem”

SEMINARY GUIDE

Seminary name

Always use “The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary” on first reference in news releases — “Southern Seminary” appropriate only in Towers or seminary magazine; “SBTS” and “Southern” are acceptable only as secondary references.

Academic Degrees

Abbreviations: B.A., B.S., M.A., M.Div., D.Min., D.Ed.Min., D.Miss., Th.M., Ph.D. _____

When referring to specific degrees or programs, spell out and capitalize. For instance, “Craig earned his Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies before enrolling in the Master of Divinity in Christian Ministry at Southern Seminary.” When referring to general undergraduate or graduate degrees, it is acceptable to write, “she earned her bachelor’s and master’s degrees before seeking a doctorate.”

Common mistakes

- master’s of divinity or MDiv

Academic programs and tracks should also be capitalized (e.g., Seminary Track or Worldview Certificate program).

Southern Seminary personalities

On first reference, always use “R. Albert Mohler Jr.”; “Randy L. Stinson”; “Gregory A. Wills”; “Adam W. Greenway”; “Dan DeWitt”; and “Matthew J. Hall.” For subsequent references, use last names only.

Academic titles

Academic titles should not be capitalized. Exceptions are endowed chairs, which are proper titles, and administrative titles used before a name.

Examples:

- James M. Hamilton Jr., associate professor of biblical theology
- M. David Sills, A.P. and Faye Stone Professor of Christian Missions and Cultural Anthropology
- R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
 - OR Southern Seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr.
- Dan DeWitt, dean of Boyce College
 - OR Boyce College Dean Dan DeWitt

Titles

Do NOT use courtesy titles. Examples: Dr., Mr., Ms. Exceptions are acceptable when quoted in an interview.