



MU PHI EPSILON WRITING STYLE GUIDE

Adopted by the International Executive Board, August 2007

Introduction

In general, Mu Phi Epsilon should follow contemporary style rules as set forth in *The Chicago Manual of Style* or a similar current reference. Hence this document makes no attempt to be a comprehensive style guide. Rather, it is intended to clarify style matters that frequently appear in, or are unique to, Mu Phi Epsilon's documents and publications.

Acronyms

Like many organizations, Mu Phi Epsilon often uses acronyms for lengthy titles and proper names. Standard Mu Phi acronyms are:

ACME – Artists, Composers, Musicologists, and Educators (honorary designation)

IEB – International Executive Board

IEO – International Executive Office

INEST – International Executive Secretary Treasurer

IP – International President

MΦE or MPE – Mu Phi Epsilon (Use of the Greek Φ for “Phi” is preferable. Hint: Use the Character Map in your computer, copy and paste.)

SERV – Service, Education, Resource, Volunteer (service hours)

Apostrophes

Founders Day has no apostrophe. Mu Phi Epsilon has two founders (Winthrop S. Sterling and Elizabeth Mathis Fuqua). The day honors them but is not “their” day, hence no apostrophe for either the singular or plural possessive.

Capitalization

Modern usage calls for sparing use of capitals – excessive capitalization in a sentence or paragraph is distracting to the reader's eye. Mu Phi Epsilon aims for the use of capitalization to be both respectful and user-friendly.

Always capitalize:

A proper name (a person, a chapter, an organization)

Examples:

Mary Smith

Mu Phi Epsilon International Professional Music Fraternity

District P1

Palos Verdes Peninsula Alumni Chapter

An organizational title used with a specific name.

Examples:

International President Mary Smith

District Director Jane Doe

It is not necessary to capitalize:

A generic term or title when not used in conjunction with a specific name.

Examples:

the fraternity, the district, the chapter, etc.

It is necessary for district directors to travel a great deal.

A generic term when it follows and refers back to a specific name.

Example:

The Austin Alumni Chapter had an excellent program ... The chapter deemed the year a success.

Special notes on capitalization of Mu Phi Epsilon titles

Mu Phi Epsilon uses several words, which normally are generic, as organizational titles or proper nouns. They should be capitalized when used in context as titles, proper nouns, or adjectives referring specifically to Mu Phi Epsilon, and lowercased when used generically.

Examples:

The bassoonist was Collegiate Nicole Miller. [In this context “Collegiate” is the Mu Phi Epsilon membership title of a specific person.]

Each year there are more Fraternity members who perform and teach outside the U.S. [In this context “Fraternity” refers specifically to Mu Phi Epsilon. If not capitalized, it could mean any fraternity.]

Most of the collegiate chapters turned in their reports on time. [In this context “collegiate” is a generic adjective that does not refer to a specific member or chapter.]

This can get tricky! More examples:

There were many Collegiates in the audience. [In this context “Collegiate” is a proper noun, i.e. the name of a specific Mu Phi Epsilon membership category.]

BUT

There were many collegiate members in the audience. [In this context “collegiate” is a generic adjective that modifies the generic noun “member.”]

If in doubt whether the meaning is clear, try rewriting the sentence:

Many collegiate members of Mu Phi Epsilon were in the audience. [Allows correct lowercase with generic adjective but clarifies the organizational connection]

Commas

Please refer to a general style guide for contemporary rules on use of commas. Many writers who were educated several decades ago tend to overuse commas. Like capitals, excessive commas clutter up a sentence and distract the reader’s eye. On the other hand, occasionally an omitted comma can unintentionally and dramatically change the meaning of a sentence! If in doubt, try reading your sentence aloud to decide whether or not a comma is needed to make your meaning clear.

Electronic Communications

Filenames

For the recipient’s convenience in keeping track of documents received as attachments, the file name should be concise but descriptive of its content. Preferably, the filename should also be dated, especially if multiple drafts are anticipated.

Examples:

Editors report 2007-06-30.doc [not “edrpt.doc”]

Operating budget 2007-07-25.xls [not “opbud.xls”]

Subject Line

The subject field or line should always be filled in when sending an email. Because of spam and viruses, many recipients will not open an email for which the subject field is blank.

Attachments

An attachment should always be referenced in either the subject field or body of an email message. This ensures that the recipient knows what is being attached. Because of spam and viruses, many recipients will not download an attachment that is not identified.

Website

The preferred spelling is one word, “website,” instead of two.

Italics

Names of chapters are italicized the first time they appear in context in Mu Phi Epsilon documents and publications. “In context” means with a member’s name, in a list or directory, or in a narrative sentence. If the full chapter name is repeated in the same paragraph, it is not necessary to italicize it again.

Examples:

Mu Theta

Kansas City Area Alumni

Melissa Eddy (*Mu Theta, Austin Alumni*)

The *Dayton Alumni* presented a program entitled “Flams, Rolls, and Paradiddles.”

[Note: Including the word “Chapter” is optional when it is obvious in context, as in this example.]

Special Case: Patrons

A “Sterling Patron” is recognized only at the international level. This designation is a proper noun and always capitalized.

A “chapter patron” is recognized at the local level. If used in context in reference to a specific person, Chapter Patron is capitalized. If used generically, it is lowercased.

Important: A patron at any level is **not** an initiated Mu Phi Epsilon member and should **never** be referred to as a “member” or “patron member.”

Examples:

The 2006 Mu Phi Epsilon Sterling Patron John Neal was honored at a gala dinner.

The newest patron of the *Kansas City Alumni* is Jane Jones.

Kansas City Alumni Chapter Patron Jane Jones was honored at a gala dinner.

INTERPRETATION OF WRITING STYLE GUIDELINES

We recognize that many of these style guidelines and rules are complex and detailed. For additional help, please do not hesitate to contact International Editor Melissa Eddy at editor@muphiepsilon.org.