



MIT Alumni Association

# MIT ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

BRAND STYLE GUIDE AND  
EDITORIAL STYLE GUIDE

Volunteer Edition

**MIT ALUMNI  
ASSOCIATION  
BRAND STYLE  
GUIDE**

## INTRODUCTION TO THE BRAND

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MIT alumni are a diverse, talented, and invigorating community. The MIT Alumni Association provides services and resources that strengthen alumni ties to MIT and each other—across every stage of life and around the globe.

This brand style guide presents the elements and visual standards that govern the application of a new visual identity system to all communications from the MIT Alumni Association. These standards represent an effort to achieve a number of goals:

- To support the mission to engage alumni in serving the strategic goals of MIT;
- To establish a distinctive visual language (i.e., logotype, color, typeface, imagery) that clearly identifies communications from all of the programs of the Association;
- To provide flexibility within the system so that each piece of communication can achieve the marketing objectives of its respective program;
- To express the key personality attributes of MIT and the MIT alumni community:
  - Innovative
  - Curious
  - Entrepreneurial
  - Diverse
  - Global
  - Quirky
  - Fun
- To be consistent with the MIT institutional brand identity.

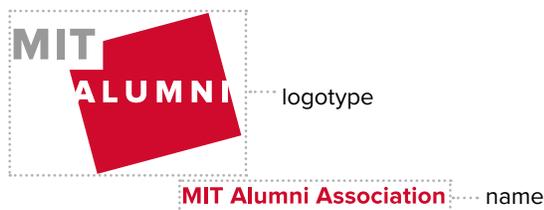
The MIT Alumni Association brand will become stronger and more effective when these visual identity standards are applied consistently from program to program and across all physical and digital media. If you have questions or if you need files or templates, please contact the MIT Alumni Association communications team.

## PRIMARY VISUAL IDENTIFIERS

The visual identifiers are the core of the MIT Alumni Association brand. In addition to the primary MIT Alumni Association identifier, there are two related identifiers: MIT Annual Fund and MIT Parents. The tilted square and the name are in *Alumni Red* (PMS 186). “MIT” is in *Alumni Gray* (PMS Cool Gray 7). All the text in both identifier variations are in Proxima Nova Regular. Each identifier is comprised of two parts: the logotype and the name. It is usually preferable to use the logotype + name identifier, but the logotype-only identifier may be used by itself if horizontal space is limited and the context is clear.

### LOGOTYPE + NAME IDENTIFIER

The identifier may be scaled as a unit but not altered. This serves as the primary branding element and is used on most of the Association's communications. This identifier consists of the logotype with the full Association name. When there is enough space, it is preferable to use the identifier so the organization branding is recognizable to everyone.



### LOGOTYPE-ONLY IDENTIFIER

The logotype is the core of the visual identity of the MIT Alumni Association. It serves as an alternate version of the identifier and should only be used when space does not allow for the name to appear with the identifier. When using just the logotype, make sure to show the full name as close to it as possible and make sure that it is visually connected to the logotype by using the same typeface and color.



**NOTE:** Always consult with MIT Alumni Association Communications when using the visual identifier and always use the appropriate files. Do not try to create the identifiers. Also always consult the communications team to ensure the correct file format is used and/or shared with your vendors.

## MINIMUM DISPLAY SIZE

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To assure the quality and legibility of the identifier, never reduce it to a scale smaller than specified below.

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### LOGOTYPE + NAME IDENTIFIER

**PRINT:**

The smallest acceptable print width is 120 points, or 1.6667 inches.



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### LOGOTYPE-ONLY IDENTIFIER

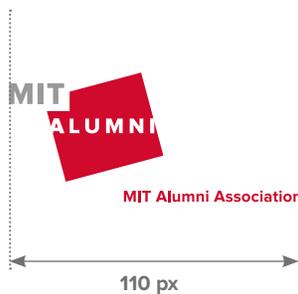
**PRINT:**

The smallest acceptable print width is 65 points, or 0.9028 inches.



**ONLINE:**

The smallest acceptable online width is 110 pixels.



**ONLINE:**

The smallest acceptable online width is 53 pixels.



## PROTECTED AREA AROUND IDENTIFIER

To assure the integrity and visibility of the identifier, provide a minimum amount of protected area on all sides. The protected area should be free of any graphic elements that might crowd or obscure the identifier. The dimensions of the protected area are determined by measuring the height of the letter M in MIT as shown below. The protected area specifications are the same for the MIT Annual Fund and MIT Parents identifiers.

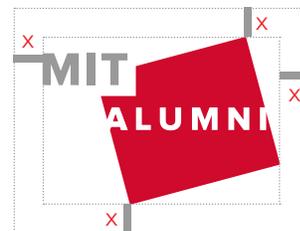
### LOGOTYPE + NAME IDENTIFIER

Requires a clear space based on the height of the letter “M” in MIT, marked “X” in the diagram below. The same will occur for Annual Fund and Parents versions.



### LOGOTYPE-ONLY IDENTIFIER

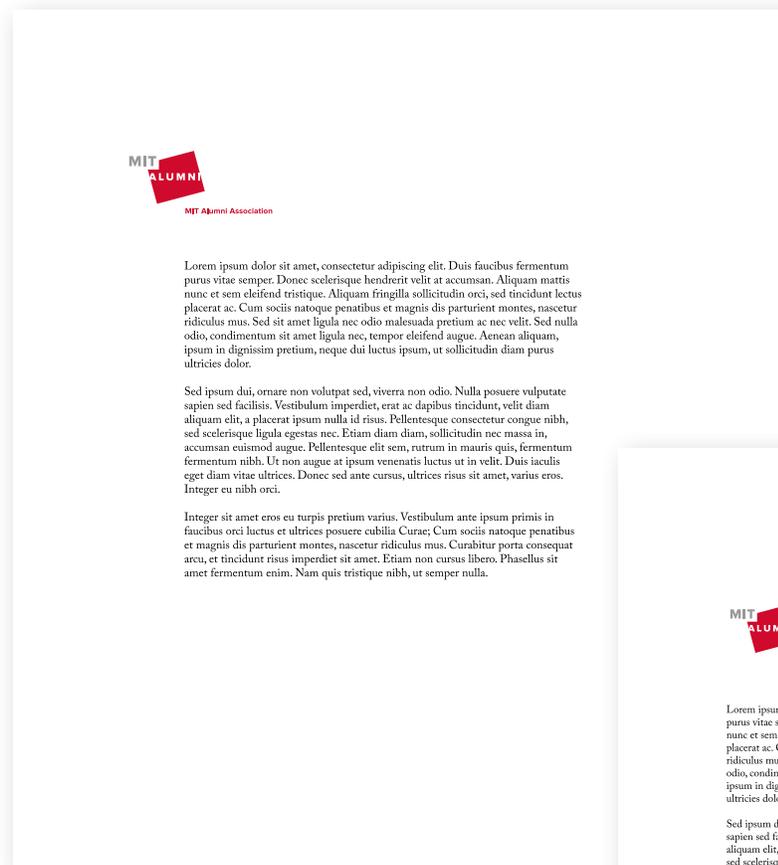
Requires a clear space based on the height of the letter “M” in MIT, marked “X” in the diagram below. The same will occur for Annual Fund and Parents versions.



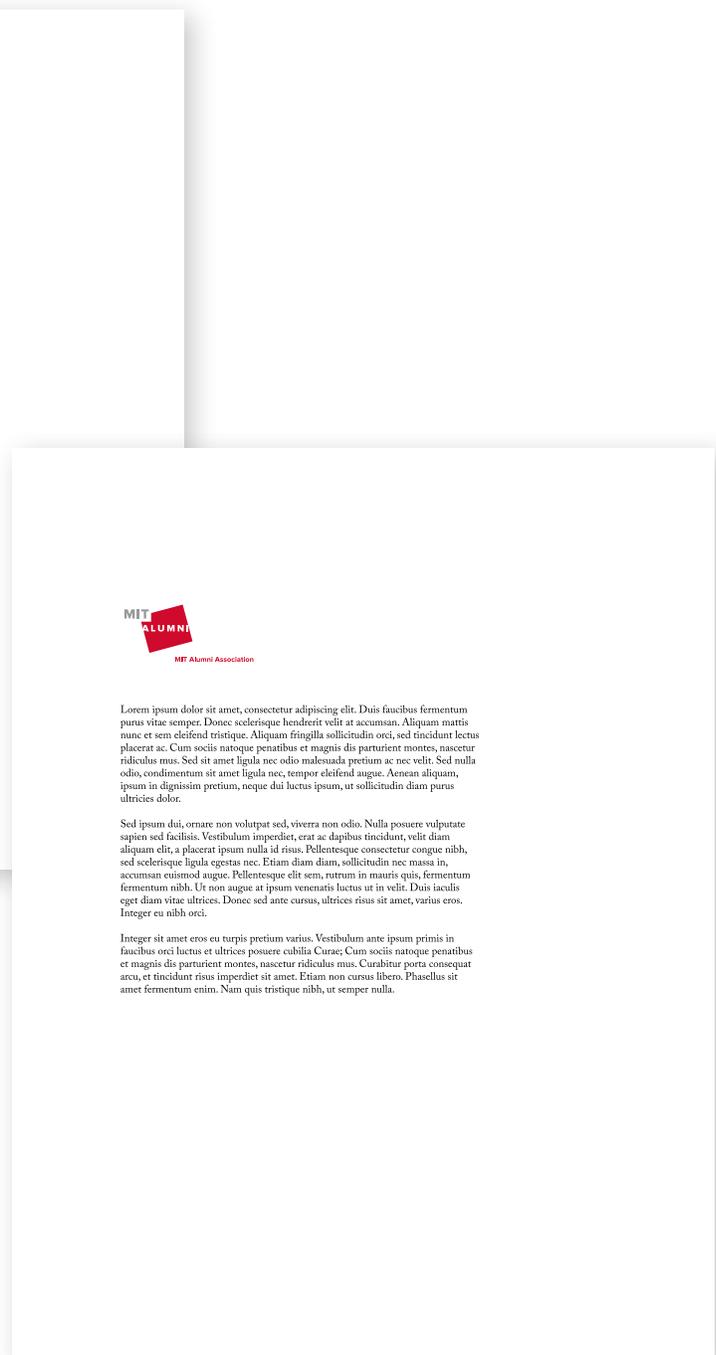
**NOTE:** The relationship between the identifier and the protected area is proportional, not absolute. When the identifier gets smaller, the protected area scales down as well.

## TEXT ALIGNMENT

When placing the identifier on a page with text, align the text with the “M” of “MIT Alumni Association” (as seen in example 1). When spacing is limited, align text to the left of “MIT” (as seen in example 2).



Example 1



Example 2

## USE IN ONE-COLOR PRINT COMMUNICATIONS

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The identifier should appear in color whenever possible. In print communications it is preferable to use spot colors (e.g. Pantone) rather than four-color process (CMYK). When color is not an option, the visual identifier should appear in solid (100%) black or reversed out of a solid black. When printing the identifier on a one-color piece, use a solid of that color. Limit the use of the grayscale versions of identifiers. Please consult page 19 of the style guide for color palettes.

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### LOGOTYPE + NAME IDENTIFIER



MIT Alumni Association



MIT Alumni Association



MIT Alumni Association

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### LOGOTYPE-ONLY IDENTIFIER



**NOTE:** Always consult with MIT Alumni Association Communications when using the visual identifier in one-color print pieces. Always use the one-color files for one-color applications.

## USE IN ONE- AND TWO-COLOR PRINT COMMUNICATIONS EXCEPTIONS

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If red or black are not available in a communications piece, the identifier can be displayed in a different color. Make sure that colors work harmoniously and there is enough contrast that the identifier is still legible and clear.

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### LOGOTYPE + NAME IDENTIFIER



MIT Alumni Association

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### LOGOTYPE-ONLY IDENTIFIER



MIT Alumni Association



**NOTE:** Always consult with MIT Alumni Association Communications when using the visual identifier in one-color print pieces. Always use the one-color files for one-color applications.

## USE WITH SOLID BACKGROUNDS

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When the identifier appears on a solid color background, it should be reversed.

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### LOGOTYPE + NAME IDENTIFIER



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### LOGOTYPE-ONLY IDENTIFIER



**NOTE:** Always consult with MIT Alumni Association Communications when reversing out the visual identifiers from a solid color. Always use the appropriate files for reversing the identifier out of a solid.

## BEST PRACTICES

	LOGOTYPE-ONLY IDENTIFIER	LOGOTYPE + NAME IDENTIFIER
<p>✓ <b>DO</b> Use the appropriate artwork file.</p>	<p>✓ </p>	<p>✓ </p>
<p>✓ <b>DO</b> Place identifiers on a solid background color that has enough contrast.</p>	<p>✓ </p>	<p>✓ </p>
<p>✓ <b>DO</b> Reverse identifier on a solid color.</p>	<p>✓ </p>	<p>✓ </p>
<p>✓ <b>DO</b> Reverse identifiers when on a photograph.</p>	<p>✓ </p>	<p>✓ </p>
<p>✗ <b>DON'T</b> Skew or distort the identifier or logotype.</p>	<p>✗ </p>	<p>✗ </p>
<p>✗ <b>DON'T</b> Alter the identifier's or logotype's perspective.</p>	<p>✗ </p>	<p>✗ </p>
<p>✓ <b>DO</b> Check that the correct file type and size is being used so the logotype remains crisp in the selected medium.</p>		

LOGOTYPE-ONLY IDENTIFIER

LOGOTYPE + NAME IDENTIFIER

**DON'T**  
Change the color of the identifier or logotype to the official MIT palette (PMS 201 + 424) unless restricted.



**DON'T**  
Place identifiers on patterns or textures that may be distracting.



**DON'T**  
Alter configuration or size relationships.



**DON'T**  
Use the MITAA red in a way that may conflict with the MIT red.



**DON'T**  
Use identifiers on gray that may conflict with MITAA gray.



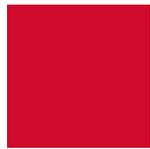
**DON'T**  
Use patterns that compromise legibility of identifiers when reversed.



## PRIMARY COLOR PALETTE

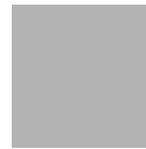
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The primary colors for the MIT Alumni Association identity are indicated below for both print applications (spot and CMYK) and digital applications (RGB and HEX). For print communications, spot colors are preferable to CMYK values. *Alumni Red* and *Alumni Gray* are the colors for the Association identity. It is preferable to use these colors when possible. The *Alumni Alternate Gray* should only be used when the *Alumni Gray* is not available or is too dark.



### ALUMNI RED

SPOT	PMS 186 C
CMYK	0   100   81   4
RGB	207   30   54
HEX	#CE1126



### ALUMNI ALTERNATE GRAY

SPOT	PMS 421 C
CMYK	13   8   11   26
RGB	178   180   178
HEX	#B2B4B2
GRAYSCALE	37% Black



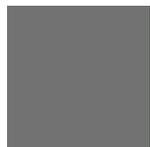
### ALUMNI GRAY

SPOT	PMS Cool Gray 7
CMYK	0   1   4   35
RGB	165   163   158
HEX	#A5A39E
GRAYSCALE	48% Black



### MIT RED

SPOT	PMS 201 C
CMYK	0   100   65   34
RGB	153   51   51
HEX	#993333



### MIT GRAY

SPOT	PMS 424 C
CMYK	0   0   0   70 (70% black)
RGB	102   102   102
HEX	#666666

### OFFICIAL MIT PALETTE

The MIT Red and Gray are to be used only in official documents that are produced by the Office of the President. For all other communications, please use the Association colors.

## PRIMARY DISPLAY TYPEFACE: PROXIMA NOVA

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Proxima Nova is a sans serif typeface most appropriate for titles, headlines, and callouts. Proxima Nova should not be used for large amounts of continuous text. In situations where font selection is limited, Arial is the preferred substitute. See *Typeface Usage* on page 25.

### PROXIMA NOVA BLACK

**ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ**  
**abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz**  
**1234567890**

### PROXIMA NOVA EXTRA BOLD

**ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ**  
**abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz**  
**1234567890**

### PROXIMA NOVA SEMIBOLD

**ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ**  
**abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz**  
**1234567890**

### PROXIMA NOVA REGULAR

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
1234567890

### PROXIMA NOVA LIGHT

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
1234567890

## PRIMARY TEXT TYPEFACE: ADOBE CASLON PRO

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Adobe Caslon Pro is ideally suited for large quantities of continuous text and for the contact information on Association stationery. Adobe Caslon Pro should not be used for titles, headlines, and callouts. In situations where font selection is limited, Georgia is the preferred substitute. See *Typeface Usage* on page 25.

### ADOBE CASLON PRO BOLD

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
1234567890

### ADOBE CASLON PRO SEMIBOLD

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
1234567890

### ADOBE CASLON PRO REGULAR

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
1234567890

## ALTERNATE TYPEFACES

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These alternative typefaces are to be used only when the primary typefaces are not available. See *Typeface Usage* on page 25.

### ALTERNATIVE DISPLAY TYPEFACE: ARIAL

#### ARIAL BOLD

**ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
1234567890**

#### ARIAL REGULAR

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
1234567890

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### ALTERNATIVE TEXT TYPEFACE: GEORGIA

#### GEORGIA BOLD

**ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
1234567890**

#### GEORGIA REGULAR

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
1234567890

## TYPEFACE USAGE

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Below is a guide to which applications are most likely to have, or not have, the primary typefaces available.

	PRIMARY TYPEFACES	ALTERNATIVE TYPEFACES
<b>Adobe Creative Suite Programs</b>		
Photoshop	✓	✗
Illustrator	✓	✗
InDesign	✓	✗
Flash	✓	✗
After Effects	✓	✗
<b>Microsoft Office Programs</b>		
Word	✗	✓
PowerPoint	✗	✓
Excel	✗	✓
Outlook	✗	✓

## MERCHANDISE

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**NOTE:** Always consult with MIT Alumni Association Communications when using images inside the tilted box. Do not try to create or edit the identifiers. Always consult the communications team to ensure the correct file format is used and/or shared with your vendors.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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For overall brand-related questions including style, brand assets, and messaging, please contact:

**Emily Muldoon Kathan**

[emkathan@mit.edu](mailto:emkathan@mit.edu)

**MIT ALUMNI  
ASSOCIATION  
EDITORIAL STYLE  
GUIDE**

## INTRODUCTION

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The MIT Alumni Association Editorial Style Guide provides guidelines for copy created by the Association for print and electronic media. The goal is to make it easier for staff to solve common editorial problems and streamline the publication process.

**The editorial guide** consists of two sections that list topics in alphabetical order:

- MIT Style covers degrees, nomenclature, acronyms, and other Institute guidelines.
- Grammar, Usage, and Style (GUS) offers best practices for clear writing.

### Other References and Guides

For more detailed queries, please consult these sources:

#### Style Guide

- [Chicago Manual of Style](#), 16th edition (requires MIT certificate)
- [Chicago Manual of Style Q & A](#)

#### Dictionary

- [Merriam-Webster](#)

#### Additional References

- [MIT Libraries References](#)
- [MIT Publications Office Style Guide](#)
- [MITAA Brand Style Guide](#)

Hyperlinks are highlighted throughout this document in **THIS COLOR** and are additionally listed in the order they appear, at the end of each section.

[www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/16/contents.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/16/contents.html)

[www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/latest.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/latest.html)

[www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com)

[libguides.mit.edu/content.php?pid=12379&sid=82999](http://libguides.mit.edu/content.php?pid=12379&sid=82999)

[web.mit.edu/annualreports/stylesheet.html](http://web.mit.edu/annualreports/stylesheet.html)

**MIT STYLE**

## ACADEMIC DEGREES

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**MIT.** Abbreviated MIT degrees do not have periods (Correct—PhD; Incorrect—Ph.D.).

Current List of MIT Degrees Offered

Abbreviation	Degree	Abbreviation	Degree
SB	Bachelor Science	MArch	Master of Architecture
MBA	Master of Business Administration	SM	Master of Science
MCP	Master of City Planning	PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
MEng	Master of Engineering	ScD	Doctor of Science
MFin	Master of Finance		

**Advance database.** Degree abbreviations from the Advance software database reports may not be correct for publications. Some examples:

Correct	Incorrect (Advance)
MArch	MAR
MEng	MNG
MFin	MF
PhD	PHD
ScD	SCD

For more information, see MIT's [degrees offered](#). For history and past degrees offered, see the Registrar's [degree and enrollment history](#).

**Referencing alumni.** Upon first reference of alumni, list all MIT degrees. The undergraduate degree is noted by year only—do not precede the undergraduate year with “SB.” Graduate and doctoral degrees should list degree and year earned (Tim Beaver '99, SM '03, PhD '07).

All single quotes abbreviating class years must face away from the number {'99} in print text. Online, straight quotes are used.

[web.mit.edu/facts/degrees.html](http://web.mit.edu/facts/degrees.html)

[web.mit.edu/registrar/stats/mobile/all-time/degree.html](http://web.mit.edu/registrar/stats/mobile/all-time/degree.html)

## ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL TITLES

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Professional titles—both academic and administrative—should be uppercase before a person’s name and lowercase after. {The lecture will be led by Professor Simon Johnson.} {Simon Johnson, a professor of global economics and management at Sloan, will lead the lecture.}

**Faculty.** In formal contexts, faculty with endowed professorships should be identified by their complete title {Ronald A. Kurtz ’54 Professor of Entrepreneurship Simon Johnson}. In less formal settings, including *Slice of MIT*, emails, and newsletters, faculty should be referred to by their professional title only {Professor Simon Johnson}.

If faculty members have multiple titles, they should be listed in descending order based on rank {Matthew Wilson, associate department head for education, brain, and cognitive sciences and a Picower scholar, is the featured speaker at next month’s Faculty Forum Online}.

**Alumni faculty.** Faculty, staff, and administrators who are also MIT alumni should have their MIT degrees listed after their name upon first reference {Chancellor Eric Grimson PhD ’80}.

## ACRONYMS

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Institute acronyms do not use periods. The acronym MIT is acceptable for first reference. All other acronyms must first list the complete name immediately followed by the acronym in parentheses {Black Alumni of MIT (BAMIT)}. The acronym alone is acceptable thereafter.

[MIT Acronyms](#) offers a comprehensive list.

[wikis.mit.edu/confluence/display/ACRONYMS/Acronyms+Home](https://wikis.mit.edu/confluence/display/ACRONYMS/Acronyms+Home)

## ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

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In first reference, MIT Alumni Association or Alumni Association is acceptable. In second and other references, MITAA or the Association can be used but must be capitalized. Do not capitalize “the” in “the Association.” AA is only acceptable for internal documents.

## ALUMNI DEFINED

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Former MIT students are considered alumni if they earned a degree from MIT or completed one semester of undergraduate study or one year of graduate study.

## BUILDINGS AND ROOMS

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Upon first reference, locations with a specific building and room should be denoted as building-hyphen-room. {Building W98, room 302 becomes W98-302}. Building addresses that do not refer to a specific room should be noted as Bldg. [#]. “Bldg.” is always capitalized {Building W98 = Bldg. W98}. In formal contexts, endowed buildings should be referred to by their endowed name with the building number in parentheses {The Cecil and Ida Green Building (Bldg. 54)}. When an event is in a named room, add that after the room number {10-105, Bush Room}. In second references and less formal settings, the building number can be used alone.

A complete list of MIT building numbers and addresses are listed in the [building appendix](#) or check the Institute’s [interactive map](#).

[web.mit.edu/comdor/editguide/appendices/campus.html](http://web.mit.edu/comdor/editguide/appendices/campus.html)  
[whereis.mit.edu/](http://whereis.mit.edu/)

## CAPITALIZATION

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Massachusetts Institute of Technology is always capitalized. MIT is acceptable for first reference. The word Institute, when referring to MIT, can be used as a second reference and is always capitalized {Tim Beaver has been the Institute’s mascot for nearly 100 years.}

The following items are always capitalized.

Item	Example
Building names	Bldg. 7
Complete names of MIT locations	Killian Court
Complete course names	Ecology I: The Earth System
Course numbers	Course 6
Full names of committees, programs, groups, and clubs	MIT Club of Germany
Formal department names	Department of Physics

The following items are not capitalized.

Item	Example
Second, generic references to MIT locations	the student center
Second, abbreviated references to committees, programs, groups, and clubs	the club
Informal or second references to departments	the physics department

## COUPLES, SPOUSES, AND PARTNERS

In most cases, the Association addresses invitations and letters to individual alumni. If the invitation is sent to a couple or a couple is being acknowledged for a gift, they may be addressed either formally or less formally using first names with the woman's name first. For same-sex couples, the names will be listed alphabetically.

The style of named gifts will be negotiated with donors.

### Same last name

Mr. and Mrs. Curtis Marble (traditional)  
Kathy Marble and Curtis Marble (modern)

### Different last names

Nancy Fellows and Scott Dunn  
Dr. Barbara Harris and Mr. James Werner  
Mr. Robert Hanson and Mr. James Watson

### If the occasion calls for degree years

Betty and Tim Beaver '52  
Betty '52, SM '53 and Tim Beaver '53

## COURSE/COURSE

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**Course (capitalized).** The organized curriculum leading to a specific degree, also called a major at other institutions {Course 15: SB in management from the Sloan school}. For MIT-specific audiences only.

**course (lowercase).** A generic subject or class. View a complete list of the [courses offered](#) within each school's departments.

[web.mit.edu/facts/academic.html](http://web.mit.edu/facts/academic.html)

## CURRENT STUDENTS

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**Undergraduate.** Current undergraduate students may be referred to by their anticipated graduation year {John Smith '17}. They can also be referred to as sophomore John Smith or some variation {engineering student John Smith, undergraduate John Smith}.

**Graduate.** Graduate students may be referred to with a “G” following their name {Jane Smith G} or as graduate student Jane Smith.

## DEGREES

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**MIT.** Unless beginning a sentence, the terms master's degree, master of science, bachelor's degree, bachelor of science, doctorate, and similar degree terminology are not capitalized. Please note the apostrophe in master's and bachelor's. Degree names are not capitalized. {Jane Smith received a bachelor's degree in biology from MIT.}

If MIT alumni received more than one undergraduate degree in the same year, that year should only be mentioned once {John Smith '98}. If alumni received more than one graduate or doctoral degree in the same year, each degree should be listed {John Smith SM '08, SM '08, PhD '13}.

**Non-MIT degrees.** On name badges, list only MIT degrees, not degrees from other universities. In text, non-MIT degrees may be mentioned {Stevens, who also holds a master's degree from Boston College, was named president of the company in 2006.} Avoid non-MIT suffixes (JD, MD, etc.) Active military titles should be included in the first reference.

## DEPARTMENT NAMES AND NUMBERS

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Department names are capitalized when written formally as the complete official title. Otherwise, they are not capitalized. {Samuel Allen was appointed associate professor in the Department of Material Science and Engineering.}

## LABORATORIES AND CENTERS

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View a list of [labs, centers, and programs](#) offered at MIT. Use the same rules as Department Names and Numbers.

[web.mit.edu/research/](http://web.mit.edu/research/)

## MIT

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Use the indefinite article “an” when preceding MIT instead of “a.” {Amar Gopal Bose '51, SM '52, ScD '56 became an MIT professor in the 1950s.} However, use “a” before Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

## NAME BADGES

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**Tech reunions, AA events.** Name badges should have three lines. Line one has the graduate’s preferred first name in bold and larger than the other lines {Bob}. The second line has the last name and degree {Ferrara '67}. The third line has additional information that can be changed based on the event, including location, volunteer role, living group, and course.

If the name badge has a particularly large font or if alumni have many degrees, the third line cannot be used. Do not use middle initials on name badges. The Alumni Association logo should appear at the bottom of the badge and another event or department logo may appear next to the AA logo.

**Fonts.** Use a serif font {serif vs. sans serif.} See the MITAA Brand Style Guide for specifics.

**Cardinal and Gray.** Events with an older population should use large font sizes.

## PARENTS

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Parents should be identified with a “P” and the graduation or anticipated graduation year of their student following their last name. If the parent has more than one graduate or student, the earliest degree year should be listed first {Ron Stevens P ’10, P ’14, P ’16}. Parents of current graduate students may request the designation P G.

## PRESIDENT REIF

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On written first reference, always use the full name and title {MIT President L. Rafael Reif}. On second reference, Rafael Reif and President Reif are correct. {President Reif became an MIT faculty member in 1980.} Phonetics: (rīf).

## PUBLICATIONS

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MIT newspapers, blogs, and magazines are italicized {*The Tech*, *Slice of MIT*, *Spectrum*, *MIT Technology Review*}. Web-only news sites are not italicized {MIT News}.

## SCHOOLS WITHIN MIT

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MIT has five schools. Upon first reference, they should be spelled out and capitalized. If the abbreviated second reference is an acronym, it should be listed in parentheses immediately after the first reference.

School (First Reference)	Second Reference
School of Architecture and Planning (SA+P)	SA+P
School of Engineering	the engineering school
MIT Sloan School of Management	Sloan
School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (SHASS)	SHASS
School of Science	the science school

## SLANG

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**MIT slang.** [View a helpful, comprehensive](#) list of MIT slang and nomenclature. Using MIT slang may not be appropriate for more formal publications or marketing materials.

[studentlife.mit.edu/mindandhandbook/campus-life/mit-slang](https://studentlife.mit.edu/mindandhandbook/campus-life/mit-slang)

## WIDOWS AND WIDOWERS

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Widows and widowers may be referred with a W preceding their late spouse's year of graduation {Jane Smith W '47}.

**GRAMMAR,  
USAGE,  
AND STYLE**

## ACRONYMS

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When using acronyms, write out the full name with the first mention and put the acronym in parentheses after that mention. Exceptions include MIT, US, and USA. In general, use all caps and no periods {ACLU, NASA, US}. Avoid using acronyms in headlines unless they are widely known.

## ADDRESSES

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Differentiate the parts of an address with commas: addressee, street info, and state info {Send photos to the Class of '73 secretary, 82 Jones Street, Billings, Montana, 59101}. If you are using the US postal state abbreviations, no commas separate town, state, and ZIP code, but do put two spaces between state and ZIP code. {Send your registration to Tech Reunions, MIT, W98-200, 600 Memorial Dr., Cambridge MA 02139, before midnight EDT.}

## ALUMNI/ALUMNAE/ALUMNUS/ALUMNA

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alumni	a group of male graduates or a group of both male and female graduates
alumnae	a group of female graduates
alumnus	one male graduate
alumna	one female graduate

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## AMPERSAND (&)

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Avoid using the ampersand as an abbreviation for “and” except when it is part of an official name of a company, product, or other proper noun.

## CAPITALIZATION

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Capitalize complete formal names {Department of Biology, but not biology department}. Capitalize class names {Introduction to Bioengineering}. Avoid capitalizing "the" even if the organization uses that style. {She is a longtime reader of the *New York Times*.} Seasons are not capitalized unless they begin a sentence. {Spring, summer, fall, and winter can be lovely in New England.}

## CLICHÉS

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Avoid overused language, such as *elephant in the room* or *reinvent the wheel*. Research shows that clichés are meaningless to readers. Never put a cliché in quotes—that just emphasizes the error. For a quick reminder, see this [cliché list](#).

[www.clichelist.net/](http://www.clichelist.net/)

## COMMAS

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**Serial commas.** Place a comma before the conjunction {and, or} when using three or more items. {Giving to MIT benefits MIT, the donor, and current students.}

**Complex sentences.** Use a comma to separate parts of a compound sentence when there is a subject and verb in both parts. {He lived in Africa, and she lived in the United States.} Do not use a comma if the sentence has one subject and two verbs. {He lived in Africa and then moved to Holland.} Avoid comfort commas—commas that are placed in long, wordy sentences where a speaker might want to pause. It's better to rewrite it or break the sentence into two.

Use a comma to set off a slight break in a sentence. {The report was, to say the least, a bombshell.} Use an em dash when a more abrupt break in thought occurs. {Professor Miller's lecture—an explosive commentary on Syria—was published on the Huffington Post website.}

**Locations.** When using a city and state, put commas around the state. {My aunt once lived in Missoula, Montana, but hated the cold.} If abbreviations are necessary, use the US postal code without the comma {Missoula MT}.

## DASHES AND HYPHENS

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**Em dash.** Use the em dash to set up abrupt changes, digressions, or defining elements in a sentence. {She only invited three people—those who could appreciate the movie—to go with her.}

**En dash.** Use the en dash with dates, times, and in place of “through” or “to” in inclusive dates and times. {The dinner is 6:30–7:30 p.m. tonight.}

**Hyphens.** Hyphens are used for word breaks, compound adjectives, and prefixes. {The right-hand choice is best.}

Dashes and hyphens should not be surrounded by spaces.

## DATES, TIME, AND ERAS

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**Dates.** In regular text, use month, date, and year. {The event was scheduled for December 12, 2014, from 10:00 a.m.–1:30 p.m.} In display text (programs or booklets), you may use abbreviations as long as they are consistent throughout the publication {Dec. 12, 10:00 a.m.–1:30 p.m.}.

A comma should be placed before and after the year in a three-part date. {On January 22, 2004, Chuck Will spoke to the WebPub group about blogging.} When only the month and year are given, however, do not use commas. {Anne sent around the March 2004 meeting agenda.}

**Time.** 12:00 p.m. should be written as noon; 12:00 a.m. should be written as midnight. {The reception was set for September 23, 9:00 p.m.–midnight.}

If the times are both morning or afternoon, do not repeat a.m./p.m. {Dec. 12, 1:00–2:30 p.m.}

**Centuries and eras.** Use words for fewer than 10 centuries, numerals for 10 or more. {The Aya Sofya was built in the fourth century; its use was changed from church to mosque in the 15th century.}

For decades, use an apostrophe to indicate something is missing. All single quotes abbreviating decades must face away from the number {the '90s}.

### Time zones

When a time zone is critical, such as a registration deadline, use Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) or Eastern Standard Time (EST), as needed. {Submit your entry by 10:00 p.m. EDT to enter the contest.} Daylight time changes mid-March and early November.

## EMAIL TEXT

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**Subject lines.** Keep subject lines short (6-8 words). Load the first two words of subject lines, headlines, and bullet points with information-carrying words—they are the most visible to readers. {Wrap Your Baby in Swaddling Gear?}

**Best email practices.** Use concise, easy-to-scan text. Avoid excessive font sizes and treatments, exclamation points, too many links, and lengthy paragraphs.

Propose a clear call to action: be specific about the message and response options.

Check emails on multiple browsers and mobile devices. When possible, make file sizes smaller by reducing photos and PDF attachments to improve deliverability and ease mobile users' data loads.

## LISTS

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**In text.** Colons may begin lists, but only after a complete phrase or sentence. {Three elements comprise alumni engagement: event attendance, giving, and online activities.} To avoid problems, never put a colon after a verb or a preposition such as "to." In display text or for emphasis, you may turn lists into bullet lists.

{Three elements comprise alumni engagement:

- Event attendance
- Giving
- Online activities}

## NONDISCRIMINATORY LANGUAGE

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**Gender.** Avoid using male terms to describe mixed groups or positions held by either gender. Use plurals rather than gender-specific singular. Use gender-neutral titles.

### Correct

Contestants must submit their portfolios.

The child left a lunch box on the bus.

Bill was chair of the board of trustees, taking over from Jill.

Humans lived on the Savannah for thousands of years.

First-year students arrive for orientation early.

They were staffing the registration desk.

### Incorrect

A contestant must submit her portfolio.

The child left his lunch box on the bus.

Bill was chairman of the board of trustees, taking over from Jill.

Men lived on the Savannah for thousands of years.

Freshmen arrive for orientation early.

They were manning the registration desk.

**Other biases.** Emphasize the person, not the characteristic. Terms are best used as adjectives, not nouns. Avoid using labels, such as sex, race, ethnicity, disability, religion, or sexual orientation, unless they are relevant.

### Correct

The six-year-old child was deaf and mute.

Shirley Chisolm was the first African-American woman elected to Congress.

### Incorrect

The deaf-mute was six years old.

Shirley Chisolm was a fine African-American Congressional representative.

## NUMBERS

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Spell out numbers under 10; use numerals starting with 10 and above.

## PARENTHETICAL ELEMENTS

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When adding explanatory material, set off the phrase with punctuation. If just a slight break is needed, use commas to offset the explanation or comment. {The report was, to say the least, provocative.} Use an em dash if more emphasis is desired. {The report—which condemned the decision—was widely circulated to senior managers.}

## PERSON: I, YOU, THEY

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**First person.** Only use first person (I or we) when the author is named. {I hope you will attend our 30th reunion in June—Class President John Jones.} Convert phrases like “Join us at the xxx.” to “Please come to the xxx.”

**Second person.** Use second person, or direct address, to emphasize a connection between the reader and the event or topic. Overuse, however, can sound like sales copy. {You can register now for your 30th reunion.}

**Third person.** Use third person most of the time. {The Association welcomed 300 alumni to their 30th reunion last year.}

## QUOTATION MARKS

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Use smart quotes in print; on the web, use straight quotes (to avoid coding disasters).

Periods and commas always go inside quotation marks. {He always wanted “to hear only the best about his friends.”}

Question marks and exclamation points go outside quotes unless they are part of the quoted material. {It was too bad he never got an answer to his question, “What is the meaning of life?”}

Colons and semicolons go outside of quotation marks. {The students protested lab animal conditions that were “beyond abysmal”; however, they could not cite examples of problems.}

Quotes are used around titles of short works or parts of whole works. {I wrote the chapter, “Ruminating about God,” published in the 2013 book, *Life’s Great Puzzles*.} {The article, “How to Use Social Media,” was published in the *New York Times*.}

## RESTRICTIVE AND NONRESTRICTIVE CLAUSES

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**Restrictive.** Use “that” if the clause includes information essential to the meaning of the sentence and do not add commas. {The book that I just finished reading is due back tomorrow.}

**Nonrestrictive.** Use “which” and offset with commas if the absence of the material would not change the meaning of the sentence. {The book, which described French cathedrals, is due back tomorrow.} Use the same rule with phrases beginning with “such as” and “including” i.e. use a comma when the information is nonrestrictive.

## SPACES BETWEEN SENTENCES

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Use only one space between sentences in published text whether print or digital. However, use two spaces between a postal state abbreviation and the ZIP code.

## TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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Do not use parentheses around area codes since they are no longer optional. Use hyphens to separate the groups of numbers {617-333-4444}.

## TITLES

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Example	Action
Event and program titles	Capitalize and do not use quotation marks. {The panel on How to Reverse Climate Change drew a wide audience.}
MIT classes and lectures	Capitalize and do not use quotation marks. {He took 2.009 Product Engineering Processes.}
Whole units	Books, operas, magazines, TV series are capitalized and in italics {I love <i>NCIS</i> .}
Parts of whole units	Chapters, songs, articles, episodes: capitalized in quotes. {The fifth <i>NCIS</i> episode, “Dante’s Dilemma,” was great.}

**People.** Capitalize titles in front of names {President L. Rafael Reif was inaugurated last year.} Titles following a name or as a subsequent reference should be lowercase. {L. Rafael Reif, president of MIT, was inaugurated last year. The chancellor has agreed to serve on the board for an additional year.}

Use the same rules for club and class officers. {MIT Club of Boston President Tim Beaver '67 received an award this year. Beaver, president since 2010, holds two MIT degrees.}

## WEB LINKS, URLS, AND SOCIAL MEDIA

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Both the Internet and the World Wide Web, the formal names, are capitalized but informal references like the web or the net are not.

Use each social media's preferred capitalization: LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter (but you contribute tweets), Google+, Instagram, etc.

**URLs.** URLs in print text do not need "http://" or "https://." {Learn more on the MIT Alumni Association website: [alum.mit.edu](http://alum.mit.edu).}

### Email

The Association uses the modern term, email, without the hyphen.

**Digital links.** Text links in digital text should use a few key words that describe what the link leads to or actions to take. Avoid terms like "click here" or "more." {After the election, the state published the [county-by-county totals](#). For the discount, [please register](#) by May 15.}

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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