

**Division Board for Certification of Health  
Education Specialists,  
The National Commission  
For Health Education Credentialing, Inc.**

**Style Guide**

- **Abbreviations**

Health education specialists use many abbreviations in their daily work. As a general rule it is okay to use abbreviations in exam questions: 1) if the abbreviations used should be common knowledge for the entry-level health education specialist (e.g., CDC, MATCH, PATCH, PRECEED-PROCEED) and, 2) if by not using an abbreviation the answer to a question would be obvious (e.g., Data gathered from which source would be most useful to teachers looking for health risk data about school-age children? a. BRFSS, b. YRBSS, c. CINHAL, d. NHANES).

- **Health Education Specialist vs. Health Educator**

The term *health education specialist* should always be used when referring to a professional health educator.

The term *health educator* should never be used.

- **Priority population vs. target population or target audience**

The term *priority population* should always be used when referring to those for whom a program is being planned.

The terms *target population* and *target audience* should never be used.

- **Web site vs. Website, Web Site, website, web site**

The term *Web site* should always read as follows: *Web site*

The term *Web site* should never read as follows: *Website, Web Site, website, web site*

The term *Web site* should always be split into two separate words, with *Web* always being capitalized.

- **Internet vs. internet**

The term *Internet*, when used as a noun, should always read as follows: *Internet*

The term *internet*, when used as an adjective or adverb, should read as follows: *internet*

- **United States vs. U.S**

The term *United States*, when used as a noun, should always read as follows: *United States*

The term *U.S.*, when used as an adjective or adverb, should read as follows: *U.S.*

- **E-mail vs. Email, email**

The term *e-mail* should always read as follows: *E-mail, e-mail*

The term *e-mail* should never read as follows: *Email, email*

The term “*E-mail*” should either begin with a capitalized or lowercase “*E*” pending on the circumstances of capitalization. A hyphen (-) should always be included in between the “*E*” and the word “*mail*.”

- **Hyphen Usage & Prefixes**

Generally, a hyphen is only used if a prefix ends in a vowel and the word that follows begins with the same vowel:

Pre-election  
Pre-eminent  
Pre-empt

Otherwise, a hyphen should not be used in this case. This mistake is commonly made with these following terms:

Incorrect	Correct
Non-student	Nonstudent
Non-profit	Nonprofit
Pre-approval	Preapproval
Pre-screen	Prescreen

**Exceptions:**

**Co-**

Retain the hyphen when forming nouns, adjectives and verbs that indicate occupation or status:

co-author  
co-worker  
co-developer  
co-sponsor

health-related

Typically, spell-check functions on computers will recognize these terms as being misspelled. But in actuality, this is correct. This is the proper way to write. Spell check functions are mainly useful in the analysis of the spellings of commonly used words, not so much in grammar, despite what the tool what may be labeled as.

- **Dates, Months, Seasons**

Capitalize the names of months in all uses. When a month is used in text with a specific date, abbreviate (*Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., and Dec.*) with periods. The other months will never be abbreviated (*March, April, June, July*).

Spell the month in full when using alone, or with a year alone. When only the month and year is used, never separate with a comma.

Incorrect: January, 2007

Correct: January 2007

In tabular form (charts/tables), abbreviate **all** months without periods as follows:

Jan	Jul
Feb	Aug
Mar	Sep
Apr	Oct
May	Nov
Jun	Dec

The names of seasons should always be used in the lowercase and never capitalized.

summer

winter

fall

spring

- **Punctuation & Tabular Form**

Punctuation ending a sentence, clause or phrase in tabular form should never be used. More specifically – periods, colons, semicolons, question marks, exclamation points. Tabular form refers to bulleted or numbered lists, tables, charts, etc.

- **Health care vs. Healthcare**

The term *health care* should always read as follows: *health care*

The term *health care* should never read as follows: *healthcare*

Either form of the spelling may be deemed acceptable depending on the organization. But literally, this is the proper way to spell “*health care*.”

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