

## GUIDE TO NEW YORK STATE PTA TERMS, PUNCTUATION AND ABBREVIATIONS



New York State PTA, as an affiliate of National PTA, follows the National PTA model for abbreviations, punctuation and language usage. It is recommended that unit, council and region PTAs also follow the style guidelines given below.

*Please note: Our State PTA logo should always appear as above, and the registered trademark symbol is a superscript and should appear above the line of text.*

### **A B C** of PTA Leadership

**A**ll-inclusive; our membership is open to anyone who adheres to the Mission and Purposes of PTA.

**B**oard members are the elected officers, chairmen, administrators – everyone listed in your bylaws.

**C**ommittee members are smaller groups within the board.

The **Executive Committee** refers to the elected officers as listed in your bylaws.

### **AWARDS**

*All award names should be written out exactly as shown below:*

National PTA:

- Mary Lou Anderson Reflections Arts Enhancement Grant Program
- National PTA Schools of Excellence Award
- National PTA Life Achievement Award
- Reflections Program

New York State PTA awards:

- Twin Projects
  - Jenkins Memorial Scholarship for Teacher Education
  - Teacher Fellowship for Graduate Study in Memory of Richard Gazzola
- Youth Humanitarian Award in Memory of Stanley Marcus
- Parents As Reading Partners Award
- Leadership Award in Honor of Jane Skrzypek
- Honorary Life Membership
- Distinguished Service Award
- Advocate in Action and ACT Awards
- The Golden Oak Award
- The Diamond Award

## **BOARD OF MANAGERS**

The NYS PTA Board of Managers is a board, or board of managers. **Refrain from using “BOM”.**

## **CAPITALIZATION**

Capitalize full official names of associations, meetings, committees, and conferences.

*Examples: The National PTA Resolutions Committee met last night. The convention resolutions committee agreed with the plan. The National PTA Convention drew 2,000 attendees. The New York State PTA Board of Managers met.*

Capitalize formal titles when they are used immediately before a name as part of the name. *President Mary Jones thanked the volunteers.*

## **DISABILITY VS. HANDICAP**

A disability is a functional limitation that interferes with a person’s ability to do such things as walk, talk, and hear. This disability may also be called a *handicapping condition*. A *handicap* is a situation or barrier imposed by society, the environment, or oneself.

## **EDUCATION VS. EDUCATIONAL (adj.)**

Correct: *The school board saw many positive changes in the education reform policy. I found the workshop to be very educational.*

Wrong: *The committee examined the proposed educational reform policy.*

## **ET CETERA AND ETC.**

Do not use *et cetera* and especially its abbreviation *etc.* in formal writing. *Etc.* is more acceptable in lists, tables, and parenthetical series. Similar expressions such as *and so on* and *and so forth* are more acceptable.

## **LEGISLATION/EDUCATION CONFERENCE**

Legislation/Education Conference is the correct title; Leg/Ed is the correct abbreviation.

## **MONEY**

- Spell out *cents* and use numerals for amounts less than a dollar. *The boutique item sold for 35 cents.*

- Use a \$ sign and numerals when referring to amounts equal to or greater than a dollar. **Exception:** Put zeros after the decimal when dollars and cents are used in the same text. *The brochure costs \$2. The brochure costs \$2.00, and the book costs \$6.75.*
- In non-text matter (e.g., prices in the National PTA Catalog), dollars with no zeros and with decimal points may be mixed. *\$10 for a one-year subscription; \$2.50 per single issue.*
- Use figures for all percentages and spell out percent.

## **NAMES**

The abbreviation for New York State Congress of Parents and Teachers, Inc. can be written as New York State PTA, or as NYS PTA. **Please note: there is a space between NYS and PTA.**

### **National PTA may not be abbreviated.**

Provide a person's full name on first mention. Use only the last name on subsequent mentions. **Courtesy titles:** Do not use the courtesy titles *Miss, Mr., Mrs.* or *Ms.* with first and last names of the person or in any reference unless needed to distinguish among people of the same last name. *Example: Paul Simon and Carly Simon are touring together. Ms. Simon will open the program and will later be joined by Mr. Simon to perform duets.*

## **NONSEXIST LANGUAGE**

Avoid using masculine and feminine pronouns and adjectives when referring to hypothetical people. Recasting into the plural or using a specific example (e.g., if your daughter... then she) helps avoid the *he or she* and *his or her* issue. If masculine and feminine pronouns can't be avoided, use *he or she* (or *she or he*). **Do not use** *(s)he, he/she or s/he*. Within an article, brochure, or section of a longer piece, remain consistent with the order of *he or she* and *she or he*.

Look out for sexual bias. Replace gender-specific terms with non-gender-specific terms when available. For example, replace *fireman* with *fire fighter, policeman-police officer, stewardess-flight attendant, housewife-homemaker, chairman-chair*.

## **NUMBERS**

Numbers that are below 10 and do not represent precise measurements are spelled out: one dog, seven kittens. A number at the beginning of a sentence is also spelled out. If the number represents dates, ages, time, or an amount of money, they are written as numerals: March 15, 2003, 3 years ago, 2-year-olds.

Time is expressed in figures, such as 1:45 p.m. or 8 a.m. - note small letters with periods in a.m. and p.m. Twelve o'clock in the middle of the day is written as noon; twelve o'clock in the middle of the night is midnight.

Dates are not written with th, nd, rd, st at the end.

The preferred format for writing telephone numbers is 1-344-678-1209.

## **PLURALS**

The plural of *PTA* is *PTAs*; the plural of *PTSA* is *PTSAs*. There is no apostrophe before the *s*. The possessive form of *PTA* is *PTA's*; the possessive of *PTAs* is *PTAs'*.

## **PUBLICATIONS, TITLES, AND ARTICLES**

A major publication's title is always italicized:

- *New York State PTA Resource Guide*
- *Our Children* magazine
- *New York Parent Teacher* periodical. It is abbreviated as *NYPT*.

Smaller publications, booklet titles or theme names are placed in quotation marks:

- "Where We Stand"
- "Fast Facts"

Titles of PTA resolutions and position statements are put in quotation marks.

Reflections:

Does your school have a Reflections\* Program?

\*To clarify why the word *Reflections* may appear in both italic and Roman type within the same article or paragraph, use the words *brochure* and *program* to differentiate between the two Reflections products. The *Reflections* brochure is typeset in italic or underlined. And the Reflections Program is only capitalized. It does not take quotes or underlining.

Region PTA:

The 16 "arms" of NYS PTA should be written as: \_\_\_\_\_ name \_\_\_\_\_ Region PTA; the \_\_\_\_\_ Region PTA board; this spring our region will be hosting a conference...

***Regional*** is always incorrect.

## **PUNCTUATION**

Use only one space after punctuation at the end of a sentence.

### **Apostrophe (')**

Do not use an apostrophe with figures, abbreviations, or acronyms to make them plural.

Correct: *the styles of the 1960s / the local unit PTAs.*

Incorrect: *a temperature in the low 30's / children learning their ABC's*

Use apostrophe s ('s) to make a single letter plural. *Mind your p's and q's*

*It's* is a contraction for *it is* or *it has*. Use *its* as the possessive form of *it*. *The book has lost its cover.*

### **Colon (:)**

The colon generally is used to introduce lists, for emphasis, to introduce a long statement, or to indicate that the initial clause in the sentence will be further explained. Capitalize the first word after a colon if it is a proper noun or the start of a complete sentence. Colons are followed by a single space.

Correct: *He called out the winner's name: Betty Wallace.*

*They all had the same thought: This is too good to be true.*

Do not use a colon after a verb introducing a series or a vertical list. Use a colon to introduce a series or list **only** if the introductory phrase can stand alone as a sentence.

*These are my favorite writers: John Irving, Agatha Christie and Susan Isaacs.*

Colons and semicolons go outside quotation marks (commas and periods go inside).

Example: *John told Miriam the car was "too ostentatious": The leather upholstery, CD player, and car phone were not his style.*

### **Comma (,)**

Leave out the final comma in a series before the and, unless there is a need for a distinction between the last two words. Example: *The flag is red, white and blue.*

Separate phrases in a series with commas, not semicolons, unless series items contain internal commas. Examples: *Kay is thinking about quitting her job, going to Mexico, and living in a hut on the beach. Kay is thinking about quitting her job; going to Mexico, where the sun is high and prices low; and living on the beach.*

Use a comma as follows:

Names of states and nations used with cities: *Chicago, Illinois, is ...*

Dates using month, day, and year: *April 19, 1965, was a significant day.*

## Dash (–)

Use a dash to mark an abrupt change in thought, to suggest halting or hesitant speech, to indicate a sudden break or interruption before a sentence is completed, to add emphasis to parenthetical material, or to replace an offensive word. Do not use a space on either side of a dash, unless you are using it as a minus sign.

## Ellipses (...)

Do not put spaces before, between, or after the three points of an ellipsis. Ellipsis points are closed up to the words on either side. *Example: We the people...in order to form a more perfect union...*

## Hyphenation (-)

Many word combinations that are hyphenated before a noun are not hyphenated after a noun. Do not use a space before or after a hyphen.

Before a noun: *full-time job; a bluish-green dress; a know-it-all attitude*

After a noun: *She works full time. the dress, a bluish green... They act as if they know it all.*

## Quotation Marks (“,”)

Words used in an ironic sense may be enclosed in quotation marks: *The “debate” resulted in two broken noses and a cracked rib.* Use for this purpose only when the irony might be lost.

The period and the comma always go inside the closing quotation mark: (.”) (,”)

The semicolon and the colon go outside the closing quotation mark: (”;) (”:)

*The exclamation point, question mark, and dash go inside the closing quotation mark only when they apply to the quoted matter.*

**Use quotation marks for** themes, such as for conventions or administrations, for song titles, short stories, episodes of TV and radio programs, chapters, columns and articles in periodicals, and sections in brochures and guides.

## Semicolon (;)

Use semicolons to separate elements of a series when the elements contain information that is set off by commas. Use a semicolon before the final and in such a series. *He leaves a son, John Grey of Chicago; three daughters, Jane White of Wichita, Mary Brown of Denver, and Susan Grey of Boston; and a sister, Martha Green of Miami.*

Use a semicolon to join two clauses when a coordinating conjunction such as *and*, *but*, or *for* is not present: *The package was due last week; it arrived today.*

## COPYRIGHT GUIDELINES

Unless otherwise noted, National PTA (and NYS PTA materials) may be duplicated by PTA member organizations without permission. This includes such materials as PTA brochures and items from PTA kits. Most items carry the message “Copyright 200\_ by the National PTA.”

When a PTA member organization excerpts from or reprints PTA materials, the organization should add a credit line such as “Reprinted from *Talking to Your Child About Sex* by the National PTA.”

**Note:** While most articles in *Our Children* magazine may be reproduced for use by PTAs, there are exceptions. Some authors put limitations on how their articles may be used. In those instances, a special notice will run at the beginning or end of the article, stating the author’s wishes. Anyone wishing to reprint such an article must contact the editor of *Our Children*.

**Non-PTA members:** National and NYS PTA materials may not be duplicated by any organization or person not directly affiliated with and working for the benefit of a PTA member organization without the express written permission of the National PTA.

**Non-PTA materials:** It is not advisable to reproduce comic strips, newspaper or magazine articles, items from other organization newsletters, or other printed material without permission from the owner of the copyright.

To request permission to reprint outside materials, contact the owner of the copyright directly. Be prepared to answer how the material will be used, when it will be used, who the audience is, the quantity to be distributed, and whether the publication that the reprint would appear in is for sale.

### Examples:

If you wish to reprint an article for your local unit or council newsletter, you would tell the publisher that the publication is a newsletter for a nonprofit organization with a circulation of “X,” composed of officers, parents, teachers, and administrators, and that the newsletter is a service provided by the (type of) PTA.

If you plan to use the information in a training session, you would tell this to the publisher, along with how many people would be in the session and that they are volunteers who are attending to learn about (name of) topic.

### Information Available as a Right of Membership

Documents or publications that contain PTA-specific information created exclusively for the benefit of PTA members, such as the *NYS PTA Resource Guide*, should not be published to a website, or printed or republished in any way that allows unlimited access to the information by non-members.

## SPELLING LIST OF FREQUENTLY USED PTA WORDS

after school (n.) e.g., He liked to read after school.  
after-school (adj.) e.g., the after-school program  
AIDS (no periods) acquired immune deficiency (immunodeficiency) syndrome  
a.m.  
at-risk (adj.)  
babysitter/babysitting  
back-to-school (adj.) e.g., back-to-school night  
board of directors (Exception: Capitalize only when immediately preceded by *National PTA*.)  
bylaws  
caregiver  
child care (n.) e.g., Good child care was hard to find.  
child-care (adj.) e.g., She looked for a new child-care facility.  
citywide (Close up *wide* to root word.)  
cofounder (Close up *co* to root word.)  
curricula (plural of curriculum)  
database  
day care (n.) e.g., She was licensed to provide day care services.  
day-care (adj.) e.g., The day-care center was lively and cheerful.  
decision maker  
decision making (n.) e.g., Decision making should include consensus building.  
decision-making (adj.) e.g., The local school council is the decision-making body.  
Down syndrome  
email  
ex officio  
exhibitor (a person or company that pays us to exhibit their product at our events)  
Founders Day (no apostrophe)  
flier (it looks wrong, but is right according to Webster)  
fundraiser, fundraising - to match the current National PTA spelling  
grassroots (adj.) e.g., the grassroots movement  
grass roots (n.) e.g., The movement began at the state's grass roots.  
handout (n.) e.g., Please pass the handouts.  
hand out (v.) Please hand out the flyers.  
health care (n.) e.g., contain the costs of health care  
health-care (adj.) e.g., health-care providers  
high-schooler  
HIV (human immunodeficiency virus)  
HIV/AIDS  
hotline  
in-service (adj., n.)  
low-income (adj.)  
nonprofit (primarily commercial business)  
not-for-profit (charitable entity) **This is the term we use in all our materials.**  
outcome-based education (OBE) (There is no *s* on the end of *outcome*.)



parent/family involvement  
parent involvement (not *parental involvement*)  
playground  
p.m.  
policy makers  
preschool (or pre-K)  
prekindergarten  
preteen  
problem solving (n.)  
problem-solving (adj.)  
PTA–Parent Teacher Association (Do not put hyphens—and never periods—between words.)  
local PTA (Lowercase the initial *l* in *local*.)  
National PTA  
PTSA–Parent-Teacher-Student Association (Use hyphens between *Parent*, *Teacher* and *Student*.)  
role-play (v.)  
role playing (n.)  
school-based health-care clinics  
seat belt  
self-discipline (Hyphenate all *self* compounds.)  
SEPTA (Abbreviation for a Special Education PTA)  
sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)  
single parent (n.)  
single-parent (adj.)  
stepfamily (Close up all *step* compounds.)  
teenage  
teenage years  
T-shirt  
Universal Prekindergarten (This is the title of a program.)  
vendor (an entity which provides a service for which we pay them)  
vice president (not hyphenated); Vice President (not hyphenated)  
videocassette or videotape  
website (Web site is still appropriate according to Webster’s Dictionary.)