

## The Tattler Style

- **Acronyms:** Write out acronyms the first time they are used and include the acronym in parentheses. The exception is “IHS”; it should be written as an acronym every time. No periods are used in acronyms.

Always use “Board of Education (BoE),” then “BoE.” Never use School Board.

- **Because/Since:** Know when to use since and when to use because. Because implies a reason, since implies a time period.

Because I have a hairy back, I don’t have a girlfriend.

Since fourth grade, I have had a hairy back.

- **Brackets:** Used to clarify quotations: "And it jumped over my head to devour the woman across the street!" becomes "And [the giant man-eating rat] jumped over my head to devour the woman across the street!"

- **Bylines:** By ANDREW ALEXANDER

- **Classes:** For example, Global History II, AP Biology, Foods That Changed History. Do not abbreviate.

- **Comma:** the smallest pause in a sentence (dashes, colons, and semicolons are longer). If you don’t know how to use one, read one of the Tattler’s reference books.

Rules: commas *always* go inside of “quotation marks,” and on the outside of parentheses. ALWAYS ALWAYS ALWAYS ALWAYS, DAMMIT!!!!!!

- **Dashes:** To separate words in a sentence—like this—use em dashes, with no space on either side. Both en and em dashes should be inserted in Word, i.e. not by stringing hyphens together (go to Insert --> Symbol and then pick the correct one).

- **Departments:** Capitalize Math Department, Guidance Department.

- **Dates:** August 6, NOT August 6th. (GRRR...)

- **Headlines:** Semicolons are replaced by commas.

- **Hyphenation:** Things to hyphenate: 30-page, two-hour-long, two-and-a-half years, special-ed, last names. Compound nouns are often over-hyphenated.

Hyphenation is often used to clear up ambiguity. Consider the difference between “Nazi-treasure hunter” and “Nazi treasure-hunter” (a real-life example from Stephen Colbert).

- **Adverbs and Adjectives:** When you have an adverb and an adjective together, whether they are hyphenated depends on which word in the phrase is emphasized:

“A satisfyingly short article was written by Anna Komor yesterday.” – The adjective, “short,” is the main point of the phrase; “satisfyingly” is auxiliary. The phrase is not hyphenated.

“The conveniently-located Planned Parenthood clinic is only a few blocks away.” – The emphasis is on convenience: It makes sense to say “The clinic is located **conveniently**,” but not “The clinic is located.” In this case the adjective (“located”) is auxiliary and the adverb is the important word, so the phrase is hyphenated.

- **Hyphenating to Phrases:** Ambiguities often arise when a word is to be hyphenated to a multiple-word phrase. Consider the following cases:

“reproductive health-related vote”

“anti-vigilante violence”

“**anti-child pornography organization**”

The smallest units in these phrases are “reproductive health,” “vigilante violence,” and “child pornography.” These units are understood to be connected without

requiring hyphenation, and so adding a hyphen between them and a preceding word can be misleading. “Anti-child pornography organization”—meant to indicate a group opposing child pornography—actually translates as a group of pornographers who hate kids. To clarify, add another hyphen: “anti-child-pornography organization.”

- **IHS Buildings:** G-Building, H-Building etc.
- **IHS Rooms:** room F41 (NOT F041), room H101, the attendance office, H Courtyard.
- **“Its” vs. “It’s”:** “Its” is possessive, as in “The library wants its books returned. “It’s” is short for “it is.” PLEASE KNOW THE DIFFERENCE.
- **Like/As:** “Like” is used for nouns, i.e. “He ran like a monkey.” “As” is used for clauses, i.e. “I felt the same as they did.”
- **Money:** \$20 million, \$5, \$2.50, 25¢
- **Titles:** For longer works (books, plays, films, long musical compositions, periodicals, television series, CDs, comic strips, software, websites, artwork, aircraft, ships, trains), use italics. For shorter works (poems, short stories, songs, essays, chapters in a book, episodes of television programs, lectures, articles, album tracks, subdivisions of websites), use quotation marks. In a headline, single quotation marks are used; in the rest of the article, use normal quotation marks.
- **Names (Administrators):** Principal Joe Wilson, Superintendent Judith Pastel
- **Names (Student):** First time: Rob Ochshorn ’04, then Ochshorn. ALWAYS make sure to include a student’s year in the article. THIS INCLUDES THE SPORTS SECTION. This year, seniors are ’08, juniors are ’09, sophomores are ’10, and freshmen are ’11. The apostrophe has to curve to the left, and Word frequently screws it up, so the best way is to insert it using the symbol box. Year is also included after alumni names.
- **Names (Non-student):** Severin Drix, Kate Gefell. Then Drix, Gefell. Otherwise, always Ms. or Mr., never Mrs.
- **Names (Titles):** Interim Principal Charles LaBarbera; Mr. LaBarbera, interim principal of IHS. Rob Ochshorn, editor-in-chief of *The Tattler*. Secretary of State Madeline Albright; Madeline Albright, secretary of state under President Clinton.
- **Numbers:** Zero through nine are written out. The only exception is with sports scores, for example “The girls’ varsity soccer team lost 6-7.” Ten and higher are presented numerically (10) unless they begin a sentence. However, you may begin a sentence with a date (i.e. the year) presented numerically.
- **Ordinals:** 1st, 223rd. If you use Word, turn off the feature that automatically superscripts the letters.
- **Percentages:** Write out 20 percent, rather than 20%.
- **Plurality:** Remember, anyone, everyone, no one, someone, and nobody are all singular nouns. The pronouns for these words are he, she, and it, or one (used carefully). This is one of the most common mistakes.

For anyone who lives in Ithaca, it is his or her god-given right to wear a Cornell shirt, OR it is one’s god-given right to wear a Cornell shirt.
- **Semicolon:** Is used to connect two complete sentences that are related but have no conjunction between them. Also can be used in listing things if the items in the list are long or contain commas themselves (see serial commas). When two complete sentences are joined with then, however, thus, hence, indeed, accordingly, besides, or therefore, a

semicolon goes before the adverb, and a comma goes after (a very common mistake). A period can be used instead of the semicolon.

- **Serial Commas:** My favorite foods are ketchup, mayonnaise, and lemonade.
- **Slashes:** Write out “his or her” and “he or she” instead of “his/her” and “he/she.”
- **Spaces:** After every word and sentence there should be one space only.
- **Spelling:** No British spelling! (Theater, not theatre). Advisor: spelled advisor, not adviser. “After school,” “of course,” and “no one” are all two words. Website and webpage are both one word.
- **Sports teams:** Ithaca Boys’ Varsity Soccer, for example. “Ithaca” precedes the team name the first time, “Boys” and “Varsity” are capitalized, and there is always an apostrophe after “Boys” or “Girls’.”
- **Times:** 3 p.m., 4:36 a.m.
- **Titles:** *The Tattler*
- **That/Which:** Word choice with regard to that and which is somewhat tricky. That is used for dependent clauses, while which is used for independent clauses. Many people use which almost exclusively when writing because it sounds more sophisticated, but this is grammatically incorrect. Which is usually preceded by a comma, and is usually followed by an additional description or explanation. That is usually used to further define a specific thing. Examples:
  - The towel that I used to dry off my foot is over there.
  - I dried off my foot with a towel, which is what I always do if my foot gets wet.
  - The classrooms that they painted over winter break look very nice. (Of all the classrooms in the school, only the ones that got painted look nice.)
  - The classrooms, which they painted over winter break, look very nice. (The classrooms – all of them – look very nice. By the way, they were painted over winter break.)
- **Webpages:** When giving a webpage, “http://” is omitted if and only if “www.” exists (ex. <http://mail.yahoo.com> and [www.google.com](http://www.google.com))
- **Ellipses:** These are the dots (...) that show that material has been omitted, e.g. from a quote. Leave a space on each side of the ellipsis.
- **Punctuation and Quotation Marks:** Commas and periods go inside quotation marks, regardless of whether they are part of the actual quote. For other punctuation marks, including colons, semicolons, question marks, and exclamation marks, the placement depends on the situation: if the punctuation is part of the quote, put it inside the quotation marks; otherwise put it on the outside. Example:
  - He said, “We’re going tomorrow?”
  - Did he say, “We’re going tomorrow”?
- **Capitalization and Quotes:** If a quote starts with a complete sentence, the first letter should be capitalized, regardless of where the quote is introduced within the outside sentence.
- **Tense:** Use the past tense when quoting someone; e.g. “Wilson said” rather than “Wilson says.”
- **Double “the”:** When a sentence calls for the word “the” before a title that begins with “the,” drop “the” from the title in order to avoid repeating it. For example, “For more information, stop by the *Tattler* office” rather than “For more information, stop by the *The Tattler* office.”

- **Possessives:** To make a name (or a singular word) that ends in ‘s’ possessive, add an apostrophe and another ‘s’. For example, “Gonzales’s.” (There are some exceptions, like Achilles—possessive is Achilles’—that kind of depend on pronunciation: if you don’t pronounce it with an extra ‘s’ then don’t use one.) To make a plural word ending in ‘s’ possessive, add only an apostrophe.
- **Years:** When talking about a range of years, as in a school year spanning two calendar years, write “2008-09” rather than “2008-2009.”

Article Format (when sent in by section editors)

Articles are to be sent as individual files to the copy editor. **The files should be Microsoft word files (.doc). Please send these as attachments, and check that they really do end in “.doc.” Simply copying them into an e-mail makes doing the layout very difficult.** Please just use very simple formatting (“normal” style) exactly like the example below. If extensive reformatting must be done, then some of the special choices by the writer might be lost. Commentary from the editor about the articles should be included in the email, or distinctly different from the article text within the file. Notice that the indentation in front of paragraphs consists of a tab, not a Microsoft Word false indentation gap that does not REALLY exist. The reason these tabs are important is that the layout editor needs them to be there when he or she copies the article into InDesign. The first paragraph is not indented.

School Board Does Something Interesting  
By ANDREW ALEXANDER

Director of Transportation Dave Bacharach is apprehensive about the possibility of redistricting. “Redistricting has the potential to alleviate problems, but usually just causes more.”

School start times that elicit concern are more concentrated around the middle and high schools, where parents complain that their teenagers need more sleep. In addition, “there is a big concern about the middle schools starting at different times,” says Evans, because both schools share many after school activities.

Evans stresses the word “if” when discussing redistricting; the main barrier not being lack of need, but the domino effect. For example, some special-ed students endure an hour-long bus ride from Caroline to Enfield to take advantage of the special-ed programs at Enfield. The special-ed programs are paid for by the federal government, and schools must meet an enrollment quota to qualify for the funds. If Caroline students were removed from the Enfield program, neither Enfield nor Caroline schools might meet their enrollment quota to receive funds.