Names, Abbreviations, And Other Thoughts on Written Style

05/26/13 922 W - + 8 - 1

Now for a few words about written style. It took great willpower the other morning to the words "Charleston 9" in my headline about the documentary of the same name. That's because my preference for writing numbers in such instances involves spelling them out. E.g., "Charleston Nine." But I sat on my hands and wrote the thing as it appears in the video and on the web page about the video: "Charleston 9."

Spelling out numbers, what the heck? That's certainly inconsistent with my treatment of fire station numbers, such as "Station 1" or "Station 2" or "Station 3" instead of "Station One" or "Station Two" or "Station Three." The same is true for unit or company numbers, "Engine 1" instead of "Engine One." But for most other uses—outside of dates and measurements, that is—my preference is spelling out the numbers "1" through "99". (You'll see same in the Raleigh FD centennial history book, where I served as writer and editor. The "Chicago Manual of Style" was my choice for most style choices.)

What about abbreviations. Didn't my last sentence just contain "Raleigh FD" instead of "Raleigh Fire Department?" Correct. My preference when citing a fire department's name, headline or sentence, is to spell the thing out. That's why I avoid the abbreviation "RFD" in my postings, and only infrequently use the slightly abbreviated "Raleigh FD."[1] Exceptions to this include sentences containing multiple department names, such as "Raleigh FD, Cary FD, and Garner FD." And my post-posting comments, which are subject to any number of textual shortcuts.[2]

Next question, "fire department" or "fire rescue [department]?" Such as, say, "Eastern Wake Fire Rescue" or "Western Wake Fire Rescue." For the sake of simplicity (and personal preference), I call everything a "fire department." Which is why you'll see, say, "Garner Fire Department" instead of "Garner Fire Rescue." Probably drives each of them nuts. And on my photo site, everybody's an abbreviated fire department. Everyone's listed as "_____ FD."

Speaking of abbreviations, let's talk about capital letters. Another quirk of mine is my reluctance to "up case" letters outside of abbreviations. Dave Statter's web site is named STATter911. Same for his media company. My preference for rendering is Statter911. Probably drives him nuts. And should a ".com" be included at the end? Good question. "Statter911.com" is unique enough that the ".com" can be dropped. Can't say the same for, say, "FireNews.net." Thus it's always written with the ".net" included.

The South Atlantic Fire Rescue Expo is another example of my up-case quirkiness. They brand their event as the "South Atlantic FIRE RESCUE Expo." I render their name without the up-caps, as "South Atlantic Fire Rescue Expo." Heck, you'll even catch me calling the event the "Raleigh Fire Expo" in the same way that I refer to the "Baltimore Fire Expo." (The latter being in the Firehouse Magazine Expo.) Probably drives 'em nuts, though they haven't (yet) banned me from either event. [3]

There are probably other quirks about the written style used on this blog. Readers can take me to task, or just ask questions about why certain words appear in certain ways. My answers might even seem reasonable.[4]

Sources

My brain.

Footnotes

[1]"Raleigh Fire Department" versus "City of Raleigh Fire Department?" The former is almost always my choice on the blog, or anything else that I am writing for the web or print. The latter appears in press releases from the city and thus also occasionally appears here. What's my opinion of "City of Raleigh" on the side of apparatus, and "City of Raleigh Fire Department" as official branded name? That's always seemed whacked to me, but it's an obvious evolution of the branded name "City of Raleigh."

[2]What about "F.D." instead of "FD." Where are the periods? They are omitted, as are periods in the abbreviations of state names. "NC" instead of "N.C."

[3]"SAFRE" is a convenient acronym for the South Atlantic Fire Rescue Expo. The letter combination has always looked ugly to me, and thus I tend to avoid the thing. The exception is in file names, for pictures taken at the expo. e.g., 2013-08-safre-parade-mjl. That works great as a compact file name.

[4]What are my bonafides? Was a mediocre English student in high school and college. Developed an interest in writing during my last year at "State College," as a movie reviewer for the school newspaper. Later wrote some 1,200+ movie reviews over a seven-year period for readers on the 'net. Also returned to college, for a post-graduate "certificate"in Professional Writing. (Five classes/fifteen hours on writing and editing.) Later wrote some books. Still later started a blog. Have also been technical writing in my day job for twenty years. So there.

With numbers, it's grammatically correct and is proper usage to spell out the numbers one through nine, but 10 and above should be in numeric form. However, when it comes to firehouse and apparatus numbering, obviously you should use the numeric value, as that's the proper designation. Isn't grammar and usage fun?!?!?

Duda ([Email](#)) - 05/28/13 - 11:46

Depends in the style guide, Duda.

Chicago Manual of Style is my source for this.
AP Manual of Style says spell only to ten.
Etc.

Legeros - 05/28/13 - 12:41

Name: (real name
preferred)

E-mail: (optional)

Web Site: (optional)

Remember personal info?

Yes

No

Comment: / [Textile](#)

Comment moderation is enabled on this site. This means that your comment will not be visible on this site until it has been approved by an editor.

To prevent spam we require you to answer this silly question

What are the FIRST TWO LETTERS of the word 'fire'?

([Register your username / Log in](#))

Notify: Yes, send me email when someone replies.

Hide email: Yes, hide my email address.

Small print: All html tags except <b> and <i> will be removed from your comment. You can make links by just typing the url or mail-address.