

PRIA Style Committee Guidelines

Approved by the PRIA Board of Directors

05/20/2026

Contents

PRIA Style Committee Guidelines	1
1. General Writing Rules	2
2. Punctuation.....	2
3. Capitalization	3
4. Word Usage.....	3
5. Numerals	3
6. Footnotes, Indexes, and Table of Contents	4
7. Defined Terms	4
8. Structure & Formatting.....	4
9. Consistency & Professionalism.....	5
10. Use of Artificial Intelligence	5

These guidelines should be used by work groups during drafting and the Style Committee during final review prior to publication.

1. General Writing Rules

- a. Sentences are short, clear, and simple (no labyrinthine clauses).
- b. Present tense and active voice are used throughout.
- c. Gender-neutral language (no he/she, his/her).
- d. Consistent terminology and formatting throughout document.
- e. Unnecessary words omitted; brevity maintained.
- f. No contractions or abbreviations unless official acronym.
- g. Parallel structure should be maintained in itemized lists.
- h. For acronyms, spell out the full name followed by the acronym in parentheses.

2. Punctuation

- a. Serial (Oxford) comma used in all lists.
- b. Colons introduce lists, no semicolons for chaining clauses.
- c. Em dash (type two hyphens [--] immediately after a word) used with spaces.
- d. Hyphens used only for ranges or compound words.
 - i. Hyphenate two or more words when used as a single adjective.
- e. Parentheses used only for examples or enumerations.
- f. The first word of a fragmentary quotation is not capitalized, but it is preceded by an ellipsis.
 - i. Example: "...all good men to come to the aid of the country."
- g. Periods and commas go inside the quotation marks. Colons and semicolons go outside the quotation marks.
 - i. If the quoted words are themselves a question or exclamation, put the mark inside.
 - ii. If the whole sentence (not the quoted words) is the question or exclamation, put it outside.

3. Capitalization

- a. Proper names and titles before names are capitalized.
- b. Common nouns used alone are lowercased.
- c. Geographic regions capitalized when proper nouns.
- d. “e” prefixes correctly formatted without punctuation:
 - i. Example, eRecording.
- e. Headings capitalized properly, no unnecessary title case.

4. Word Usage

- a. No slang, legalese (archaic or Latin phrases), or jargon.
- b. No duplication of synonyms.
- c. Words chosen for clarity (e.g., before not prior to).
- d. Pronouns have clear antecedents.
- e. Correct use of which/that and who/whom/whose.
- f. “Such as” used only for 'for example' or 'of that kind.'
- g. Use of e.g. (for example) or i.e. (specifically).
- h. Do not use personal pronouns.
- i. Limit use of possessive nouns.
- j. Do not use “and/or.”
- k. Use of “which” and “that” should be limited and follow rules of grammar.

5. Numerals

- a. Spell out a number if it is the first word in a sentence.
- b. For single numbers, spell out the number; for numbers 10 or larger, use the numeral.
- c. When 2 or more numbers appear in a sentence and 1 of them is 10 or larger, figures are used for each number.
- d. For typographic appearance and easy grasp of large numbers beginning with million, the word million or billion is used.

6. Footnotes, Indexes, and Table of Contents

- a. Always use footnotes rather than endnotes.
- b. Footnotes to charts, graphs, and other illustrations should be placed immediately beneath such illustrative material.
- c. Footnotes must always begin on the page where they are referenced. If the entire footnote will not fit on the page where it is cited, it will be continued at the bottom of the next page.
- d. The indexes and a table of contents are set in the same font style and size as the text.
- e. These functionalities are available in most word processing applications.

7. Defined Terms

- a. Define words or phrases on the first usage that may be unfamiliar to the reader.
- b. Defined terms, if necessary, appear within the document or listed alphabetically in an appendix.
- c. Once a term has been defined, use the defined term instead of the definition whenever possible.

8. Structure & Formatting

- a. PRIA logo and cover page correct.
- b. The date that the PRIA Board approves, adopts, or endorses the publication shall be included on the cover page as required by the Operating Rules.
- c. All documents must comply with the PRIA antitrust policy as set forth in the current PRIA Operating Rules.
- d. Title format: sans serif 36 pt, Bold.
- e. PRIA's Intellectual Property Rights Policy immediately follows the cover page.
- f. Roman numeral pagination for introductory page
- g. Arabic pagination for main body content.
- h. Drafts include diagonal 'DRAFT' watermark.
- i. Table of Contents present if >5 pages/subheadings.
- j. Document body font San Serif 12 pt; margins 1 inch all sides.
- k. Paragraphs left-aligned, block style, 1.15 spacing.
- l. Page numbers in footer, flush right, numerals only.
- m. No widowed/orphaned lines.
- n. For bulleted lists that are:

- i. Complete sentences: period.
 - ii. Fragments or labels: no period.
- o. Maximum of three heading levels.
- p. No colons at heading ends.
- q. Italics used to:
 - i. Give greater emphasis to words and phrases.
 - ii. Properly format the names of legal cases.
- r. Include links to PRIA Glossary and Acronyms List where terms appear in the contents of the document.

9. Consistency & Professionalism

- a. Formatting consistent with PRIA Word Template.
- b. Tone professional and neutral – no slang, contractions, abbreviations, legalese or colloquial expressions.
- c. No extra spaces, irregular breaks, or misaligned paragraphs.
- d. Select short, familiar words, and phrases that best express the intended meaning.

10. Use of Artificial Intelligence

- a. Work groups should acknowledge the use of artificial intelligence as an investigative tool with a statement in the footer or in the conclusion of the paper.
- b. All artificial intelligence produced information should be reviewed by the work group prior to publication.
- c. Sample statement: *Drafting assistance provided by [name of tool used].
Final text reviewed and approved by the members of the work group.*