MC210: Professional and Honorary Titles

Capitalize brief titles when used before the individual’s name. Never capitalize titles used after the name or titles that stand alone.

- Never capitalize a title used alone, no matter how important it seems.
  *The president signed the bill. The pope blessed the multitude.*

- Job titles used before an individual's name are capitalized.

- Avoid using long, bureaucratic, elaborate titles before names.
  - Instead of "State Forensic Pathologist and Director of State Laboratories Gus Grissom," paraphrase and lower-case: "lab director Gus Grissom" or "state pathologist Gus Grissom."
  - The alternative is to place the full title after the name, set off by a comma. (Since it's behind the name, it shouldn't be capitalized.)

- Never capitalize a job title that stands alone. If it isn't followed by a proper name, it's lower case.
  *She was promoted to vice president for market development.*

- Most job descriptions are not considered formal titles and are not capitalized: *astronaut John Glenn, actor Zac Efron, teacher Nancy Hanson.*

- Formal titles are those the denote a scope of authority, professional rank or academic rank: professor, judge, mayor, doctor, king, emperor. They are capitalized when used with a proper name, but not when used alone.

- Most formal titles are not abbreviated when used with a proper name. Only a few titles can be abbreviated:
  - Gov. Dayton
  - Lt. Gov. Drew Wrigley
  - Sen. Conrad
  - Rep. Berg
  - Dr. Dreamy
  - the Rev. Boilerplate
  - **NEVER ABBREVIATED:** President, vice president, superintendent, secretary, treasurer, principal, professor and most others

**Courtesy Titles: Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms.**

- Both men and women are introduced with their first and last names — and without a courtesy title — on first reference.

- Use courtesy titles (Mr., Miss etc) only in direct quotations. Refer to all adults by last name on second reference. First names are generally used for children (usually those under 16, depending on context).

- If the person's gender isn't clear from his or her first name (Pat, Lesley), make this clear by referring to him or her by the appropriate pronoun soon after the first reference.