



NATIONAL PTA[®] STYLE GUIDE

ABOUT THIS MANUAL

Style is extremely important in writing. Clarity and consistency in writing builds trust in a brand, which is critically important to membership-based institutions such as National PTA.

We have a duty to our members to provide reliable, legible and uniform resources. This style guide is intended to assist you in that process.

In general, National PTA follows the Associated Press Stylebook, with very few exceptions. This updated and revised version of The National PTA Stylebook highlights some of the most important entries from the AP Stylebook, as well as the exceptions we use as part of our brand.

STYLE GUIDE

“AND” SYMBOL (AMPERSAND)

- Do not use the ampersand (&) in place of the word “and” unless it is part of a company name or publication title (e.g., Barnes & Noble, Better Homes & Gardens).
- » Exceptions: Use an ampersand with Health & Safety, National PTA Convention & Expo and Q&A.

ABBREVIATIONS

- Do not use the abbreviation NPTA, always reference us as National PTA.

- United States as a noun: United States (e.g., The woman left for the United States this morning); as an adjective: U.S. (e.g., A U.S. soldier was killed in Iraq).
- Use AP style abbreviations for state names
- Use Washington, DC as the abbreviation for the District of Columbia.

ACADEMIC DEGREES

- Avoid abbreviations (e.g., Mary Ellen has a doctorate in psychology).
- Use an apostrophe in bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, etc.

» Exception: Do not use an apostrophe when mentioning an associate degree

- There is no apostrophe in Bachelor of Arts or Master of Science.
- Use the abbreviations only after a full name and set the abbreviations off with commas (e.g., Michael Brown, Ph.D., lectured yesterday on biology).

ADDRESSES

- Use the abbreviations “Ave.” “Blvd.” and “St.” only with a numbered address (e.g., 1600 Reynard St.).
- Spell Avenue, Boulevard, Street, etc., out when used without a number (e.g., Reynard Street).
- Always spell out “alley,” “drive,” “road” and “terrace.”
- Always use numerical figures for an address number (e.g., 9 Foxlair Drive).
- Spell out and capitalize First through Ninth when referring to a street name (e.g., First Street, 10th Avenue).

BULLETED LISTS

- All list items should be styled the same way—either all sentence fragments or all complete sentences, not a mix of both.

- If the list items form complete sentences on their own, they should each end in a period. Otherwise, no periods are necessary at the ends of list items.

COMMAS

- Do not use a comma after the final item in a series when continuing the sentence. (e.g., The colors red, white and blue are patriotic).
- Do not use a comma before “because.”

CONTACT INFORMATION

- Use these standard formats:
 - » Email National PTA at GovtAffairs@PTA.org for more info.
 - » For more info, contact Editorial and Marketing Specialist, Corinne Canning (703) 518-1252.
 - » Use parentheses to separate area codes (e.g., Call the National PTA Info Center at (800) 307-4782).
 - » Do not use acronyms/ letters in phone numbers, always use numerals (i.e., do not use 4PTA).
 - » It is okay to use “info” (no period) in contact references.

CONTRACTIONS

- Common items that will have contractions include marketing and communications materials such as brochures, posters and flyers, as well as articles for Our Children and other editorial products.
- It is okay to use a contraction if that is the way it commonly appears in speech or writing (e.g., let's instead of let us).
- Avoid the excessive use of contractions.

DASHES

- You can use an em dash (ALT + 0151) in place of a comma or parentheses with no space before or after text. (e.g., Read Our Children—National PTA's magazine for members—for best practices in running your PTA.)
- Use an en dash (ALT + 0150) to connect things that are related to each other by distance (e.g., pages 125–155).
- Use a hyphen to connect two things intimately related, usually words that function together (e.g., log-in to the computer, two-thirds majority, June 22-23).

DATE AND TIME

- Use one of these standard formats for full date and time references:
 - » 7 p.m. EST, Wednesday, June 20
 - » Friday, Aug. 24 at 9:30 a.m. EST
- When writing dates, do not use st, nd, rd, or th (e.g., Registration ends Jan. 15).
- When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec.
- If the month, day, and year are given, commas are used before and after the year. (e.g., The Feb. 17, 2006, event was a success).
- The hour does not require full notation, unless the time given is not at the top of the hour. (e.g., The meeting will begin at 1 p.m. or Exhibit hall hours are from 1 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.)
- Do not use the year, if the date is referencing the current year (e.g. The webinar will be Aug. 13).
- Use numeric figures except for “noon” and “midnight.” Do not write “12 noon” or “12 midnight.”
- To show a span of years, use an en-dash (–) and full year (in four digits) for the first and last years of the span (e.g., 1995–1998, 2000–2005).

- EDT vs. EST: EDT is Eastern Daylight Time for daylight saving time (that starts in the spring) and EST is Eastern Standard Time (that starts in the fall).

DATELINES

A list of domestic cities that stand alone (do not require state abbreviation) in datelines:

Atlanta	New Orleans
Baltimore	New York
Boston	Oklahoma City
Chicago	Philadelphia
Cincinnati	Phoenix
Cleveland	Pittsburgh
Dallas	St. Louis
Denver	Salt Lake City
Detroit	San Antonio
Honolulu	San Diego
Houston	San Francisco
Indianapolis	Seattle
Las Vegas	Washington
Los Angeles	
Miami	

DAYS OF THE WEEK

- Days of the week should be capitalized and not abbreviated.

DIMENSIONS

- Use figures and spell out “inches,” “feet,” “yards,” etc. (e.g., The building has 6,000 square feet of floor space).
- Hyphenate adjectival forms before nouns (e.g., The 9-by-12 rug, the 5-foot-6-inch man.)

ELLIPSES

An ellipsis consists of three periods, with a space before and after. (e.g., Hey, guys ... what are you talking about?)

EMAIL

- Email is acceptable in all references for electronic mail.
- Use a hyphen with other e-terms. (e.g., e-blast, e-book, e-newsletter, e-learning).

ETHNICITY

- Capitalize the proper names of nationalities, peoples, races, tribes, etc.:
 - » African Americans: “black,” not capitalized
 - » Caucasians: “white,” not capitalized
 - » Asians: “Asian,” capitalized
 - » “American Indian,” capitalized with no hyphen, is preferred over “Native American”

FRACTIONS

- Spell out amounts less than one, using hyphens between the words (e.g., two-thirds)
- Use figures for precise amounts larger than one, converting to decimals when practical.

GRADE LEVELS

- Spell out all grades under 10 (e.g., first grade, second grade)
- Do not use superscript for grades above 10 (e.g., 11th grade, 12th grade)
- Hyphenate in combining forms (e.g., a fourth-grade pupil, a 12th-grade student, first-grader, 10th-grader)

MONETARY UNITS

- Spell out the word “cents” in lowercase and use numerals for amounts less than a dollar (e.g., 12 cents).
- Use the \$ sign and decimal system for larger amounts (e.g., \$1.01).
- For dollars, use numerical amounts and the \$ sign except in casual references. In these cases, the word should be spelled in lowercase (e.g., The book cost \$4, Dad, give me a dollar).
- For amounts exceeding \$1 million, use the \$ sign and numerals up to two decimal places (e.g., It is worth \$4.45 million).

NONPROFIT

- No hyphen should be used in nonprofit.

NUMBERS

- For numbers one to nine, always use words; use numeric figures for 10 and up.
- Numbers less than 10 can be numeric figures only when partnered with a % sign (e.g., 5%, 2%, 8.9%).
- Use the % sign instead of spelling out the word percent.
- Spell out numerals that start a sentence (e.g., Twenty-eight students were relocated yesterday).
- For large numbers, use a hyphen to connect a word ending in ‘y’ to another word (e.g., twenty-one; one hundred forty-five).
- Always use the thousands separator or digit group separator in large numbers (e.g., 1,000, 3,452,900).

ORGANIZATIONAL NAMES

- Capitalize committee names (e.g., Board of Directors, the Legislative Committee)
- Lowercase the names of departments, offices and conventions when standing alone (e.g., the resource development department, finance chair, national convention).



OTHER PARENT GROUPS

- Avoid saying “PTO” whenever possible. Instead, use “unaffiliated parent groups” or “other parent groups.”

PROGRAMS AND AWARDS

- If programs, campaigns or awards require branding, use the grassroots market branding of “PTA.” For example:
 - » PTA Take Your Family to School Week
 - » PTA Teacher Appreciation Week
 - » National PTA Reflections
 - » National PTA Healthy Lifestyles Grants
 - » PTA Outstanding Advocacy Award

PTA.ORG / NATIONAL PTA WEBSITE

- The National PTA website should be written as PTA.org in all instances.
- Citations for specific pages and subpages, such as PTA.org/Partnerships also do not have “www.” in front.

PTA®/PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION®/NATIONAL PTA®

- PTA®, Parent Teacher Association® and National PTA® are all registered services (®) and should always be capitalized.
- In documents with non-PTA audiences (e.g., press releases, brochures) write out Parent Teacher Association® (PTA®) on first reference, then use PTA® in subsequent references.
- Parent Teacher Association® is not hyphenated.

PTAS AND PTA’S

- PTAs is the plural case of PTA
- PTA’s is the possessive case of PTA. Try to avoid using it whenever possible. Use PTA as an adjective instead. (e.g., The PTA website is a useful resource for members.)

PTSA®/PARENT-TEACHER-STUDENT ASSOCIATION®

- As a registered service, Parent-Teacher-Student Association® is always capitalized and hyphenated.
- The first reference to PTSA or Parent-Teacher-Student Association should include the registered mark (®)

- The term “PTSA®” or “PTA®/PTSA®” applies to five specific state PTAs
 - » Connecticut PTSA
 - » Hawaii State PTSA
 - » Pacific PTA/PTSA
 - » U.S. Virgin Islands PTSA
 - » Virginia PTA/PTSA

PUNCTUATION AND QUOTATION MARKS

- Periods and commas should always go inside “quotation marks.”
- All semicolons, colons, dashes, question marks, exclamation marks, etc., go outside of the quotation marks unless they are part of the original quoted material.

SEASONS

- Lowercase “spring,” “summer,” “fall” and “winter” and derivatives such as “wintertime” unless the season is part of a formal name (e.g., I love Paris in the springtime, the Winter Olympics).

SPACES

- There should be only one space after punctuation—including periods and colons.
- Never put two spaces after a period.

SPONSORS AND MEMBER BENEFITS PROVIDERS

- The following are the official titles to use when referring to corporate supporters of National PTA:
 - » Proud National Sponsor
 - » National Member Benefits Provider

STATE ABBREVIATIONS

- Use AP Style abbreviations for state names, except when used as a noun.
- Do not abbreviate Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas and Utah.

Ala.	Md.	N.D.
Ariz.	Mass.	Okla.
Ark.	Mich.	Ore.
Calif.	Minn.	Pa.
Colo.	Miss.	Ri.
Conn.	Mo.	S.C.
Del.	Mont.	S.D.
Fla.	Neb.	Tenn.
Ga.	Nev.	Vt.
Ill.	N.H.	Va.
Ind.	N.J.	Wash.
Kan.	N.M.	W.Va.
Ky.	N.Y.	Wis.
La.	N.C.	Wyo.
- Washington, DC: Always include “DC” when referring to Washington, DC.

STATE PTAS

- Capitalize and do not abbreviate the state name when referring to a state PTA (e.g., Arkansas PTA)
- Do not capitalize “state” in phrases such as “the state PTA” or “state PTAs”
- The word “State” is only used in the four following PTAs:
 - » California State PTA
 - » Hawaii State PTSA
 - » New York State PTA
 - » Washington State PTA
- Use DC PTA to differentiate from Washington State PTA

TITLES

- Capitalize titles only if they immediately precede a person’s name, lowercase if they come after the name. (e.g., National PTA President Jane Doe and Jane Doe, National PTA president).
- Capitalize titles in signatures of letters and memos (e.g., Sincerely, Jane Doe, National PTA President).
- Acceptable abbreviated titles include: Dr., Gov., Lt. Gov., Rep. and Sen.
- Titles of newspapers and magazines:
 - » Italicize and do not place in quotation marks.
 - » Capitalize ‘the’ in the name if that is the way the publication prefers to be known.

- » Lowercase ‘the’ before names if listing several publications, some of which use ‘the’ as part of the name and some of which do not (e.g., Time, Newsweek, the Washington Post and the New York Times).
- Titles of books, movies, plays, poems, songs, television programs, workshops, webinars and works of art:
 - » Capitalize the principal words, including all verbs and prepositions and conjunctions with more than three letters
 - » Put quotation marks around the title.
 - » Examples:
 - ◊ Book: “The Cat in the Hat”
 - ◊ Movie: “Remember the Titans”
 - ◊ Play: “Death of a Salesman”
 - ◊ Poem: “Phenomenal Woman”
 - ◊ Song: “The Star-Spangled Banner”
 - ◊ TV Program: “CBS Evening News”
 - ◊ Workshop: “Emerging Minority Leaders Conference Workshop”
 - ◊ Webinar: “10 Ways to Improve Your School”
 - ◊ Work of Art: “Mona Lisa”

URLS

- Do not use “www.” before listing a URL
- List webpages as such: PTA.org/ParentGuides, PTA.org/Reflections
- Avoid using the terms “click here,” instead use “visit” “go to” and hyperlink the relevant text (e.g., For more info, visit our Leader Resources Page, to find a local PTA, go to PTA.org/Join).

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION BEST PRACTICES

Across the country, students, families and educators experience vastly different education systems that either support—or hinder—the ability for all children to reach their full potential. These differences are often due to disparities in opportunities, access and financial resources—and whether or not parents are respected as equal partners in their child’s education.

To be part of the solution, National PTA recognizes that we have our own work to do to advance diversity, equity and inclusion across the association.

OUR COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Diversity is representation of, and respect for, people from different backgrounds and identities—including but not limited to race, culture, religion, socio-economic status, age, geographic area, sexual orientation and gender identification,

language, learning style and physical appearance. It also involves bringing different ideas, perspectives, lived experiences, talents, values and worldviews to the table to represent the broad variety of children, caregivers, educators and communities within the PTA family.

WE BELIEVE DIVERSITY IS OUR STRENGTH...

We represent parents, caregivers, educators and communities of all children, which enables us to best achieve PTA’s mission to make every child’s potential a reality. Our collective backgrounds, perspectives and ideas allow us to best reflect the rich fabric of 21st century children, families, educators and community members—and create the strongest future and direction for PTA.

To embody and live this belief, PTA volunteers and staff must:

- Acknowledge and appreciate individual ideas, knowledge and values that are different from our own.

- Seek out and learn from a diverse set of perspectives, skills and experiences, staying open to the unfamiliar and possibly uncomfortable.
- Actively recruit and elect a team of leaders who represent the school community you serve.
- Support units from less represented or resourced areas, backgrounds and perspectives.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Words matter. For as much as words can make a positive impact on an audience, they can also divide and alienate us. Now more than ever, it’s critical for National PTA to intentionally use inclusive language. Here are some examples.

Noninclusive Language	Inclusive Alternatives
Boy and boys (for men 18 and older)	Man and men
Girl and girls (for women 18 and older)	Woman and women
Guy(s)	Everyone, everybody, team, folks
_____ man (chairman, salesman)	_____ person (chair, salesperson)
Disabled	Person with a disability
Addict	Person with an addiction
Biological male or female	Person assigned male or female at birth
Black or brown	BIPOC , Black, etc . (varies based on individual’s preference)
Mulatto	Multiracial, biracial (varies depending on the individual’s heritage and language)
Both genders	All genders

Noninclusive Language	Inclusive Alternatives
Blacklist or whitelist	Blocklist or passlist
Minorities	Underrepresented groups (or specify groups such as Black and Latinx)
She or he	They
Indian (when referring to Indigenous person in North America)	Indigenous, Native American, American Indian, First Nations (reference specific tribe or nation)
Man_____ (mankind, manpower)	Human_____ (humankind, human power)
Maternity or paternity leave	Parental leave
Men and women	People
Mothering or fathering	Parenting

TRANSLATION INTO LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that more than 60 million residents over the age of five years old, or about 20% of the U.S. population, speak a language other than English at home. For this reason, National PTA maintains a retainer with a translation company to translate any documents, presentations, etc., into Spanish. Our retainer also covers live Spanish interpretation for events, webinars, etc.

- **For Spanish translations,** submit your content to the Communications Department—be advised that most projects take about two weeks. Note: The retainer also currently covers translation from Spanish into English. The process and timeline are the same.
- **For Spanish interpretation,** contact the Communications Department via email as soon as possible (ideally at least one month prior to the event) so we can arrange for an interpreter.

You will need to provide details such as the day, time and location of the event. If the event is virtual, you will need to provide the platform and link.

The next most spoken non-English languages spoken by those attending public schools in the United States are Arabic, Chinese and Vietnamese. National PTA maintains relationships with several qualified translation companies that handle these languages and more.

If you would like to have your content translated into languages other than Spanish, contact the Communications Department by email—be advised that this is not currently covered by our retainer, and therefore your department will need to budget for the project and handle the invoice.

AUTHENTIC VISUAL STORYTELLING

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Walter Lippmann defines stereotypes as, “the pictures in our heads” that we have of a specific group



of people. Stereotypes are formed by what we see, hear and experience, which can be taught or reinforced through many different social influences including friends, family, peer groups, education or the media.

The Most Prominent Visual Stereotypes

- Men shown in leadership positions or as superheroes
- Women depicted as homemakers
- People with larger bodies shown dieting
- LGBTQ+ featured only in romantic relationships
- Seniors depicted as weak and receiving care

Stereotyping can distort our perception of an individual or community that doesn't fit the stereotype and can interfere with our ability to perceive things impartially, unprejudiced or objectively.

A study by Kantar in 2021 found that ads that were inclusive and challenged traditional stereotypes were more effective with consumers and had a longer impact on them.

Examples of Visuals that Challenge Stereotypes

- A father caring for his children (by himself). This portrays a wide range of male emotions and behaviors. Being a nurturing man through giving affection, affirmation and attention to others.
- A Black senior businesswoman talking to her clients in her office. This portrays a more authentic picture of aging and redefines what it means to get older, while also showcasing Black leadership.
- People of all shapes and ages are happily conversing with one another—those with larger bodies are not depicted as worried about body type, but as individuals who are living their lives to the fullest.
- An LGBTQ+ man cooking with his mother, going beyond the fact that he is LGBTQ+ to focus on multiple aspects of his identity: he is also a son and an avid cook. We are seeing more beyond Pride

- and romantic relationships.
- An Asian woman with a darker skin tone and imperfect skin smiling authentically during her workout routine. Challenging the standard of Asian beauty and depicting her as her natural self.
- A Black family laughing and walking outside together, the father carrying his son on his shoulders while the mother looks on fondly—challenging stereotypes of single parenthood and featuring loving relationships.

Other Considerations

- Take care with cultural dynamics—for example, consider the implications of a white person teaching a black person.
- Our association serves a wide range of communities—carefully consider any depictions of holidays, schools and homes.
- Do not simply take a cookie cutter approach to DEI. Images of interracial families are wonderful, but you should look

holistically at your project to determine if they are relevant to the topic at hand.

Making connections within our society means we see the underrepresented and understand what makes each of us unique. Furthermore, giving visibility to groups that have been marginalized will help reduce biases now and into the future. Learn more about this topic by exploring the [Getty Images DEI Toolkit](#).

ACCESSIBILITY TIPS

At least one in four Americans are currently living with a disability—that's roughly 61 million people! Use the following tips to support this population.

General Accessibility Tips

All Microsoft Office products have an option to "Check Accessibility" in the Review tab. Before finalizing any document, presentation, spreadsheet, etc., run the accessibility checker and make any necessary changes.

- *Your emails matter!* You can use the accessibility checker in Outlook (in the

Review tab) to fix issues before you hit Send—but you can tackle these two items now.

- » **Check your email signature.** Add alternative text to any photos, logos, images of actual handwritten signatures, etc., so those with disabilities know they're not missing any critical information.
- » **Consider your font.** Up your default font size to 12—no one likes to squint while reading emails—and ensure your text and background colors have a high enough contrast. This will help improve readability of your emails for all users!

Hearing Accessibility Tips

Statistically, one in six people have some form of hearing loss, and it's often a hidden disability. Keep these tips in mind.

- *Offer captions or transcriptions.* Auto-captions are often a feature of apps like Teams and Zoom, which you can turn on in the settings. Platforms such

as PowerPoint offer auto-captions as well (PPT also lets you translate into 65 languages at the same time!)

- *If you have a sign language interpreter,* pin their feed in your Zoom or Teams meeting to ensure they are always visible. If in-person, ask the interpreter where they would like to be located.
- *In virtual meetings, use simple or blurred backgrounds.* Many people lipread, and busy backgrounds can be distracting!
- *Describe your shared screen in virtual meetings, workshops, etc.* This doesn't have to be awkward, simply pull out the main facts and reinforce them verbally.
- *Take care with the chat function in virtual meetings, webinars or training sessions.* Read aloud any question that is asked in the chat prior to answering, and if you add an image or a meme in the chat, be sure to follow it up with a description.

Vision Accessibility Tips

The latest global research shows that over 1 billion people have some form of vision impairment. Many of these people use screen readers, which read text and navigation aloud—most mainstream devices have this technology built-in (e.g., Microsoft Narrator, Voiceover, TalkBack). Here are some tips to optimize that experience.

- *Alternative Text.* Alternative text is the text equivalent of an image in context. If the image is unavailable, web browsers display the text for users or screen readers to read it. Add alternative text whenever you use an image.
- » **Be accurate and concise:** Describe the core purpose of the image (Keep it to less than 140 characters when possible). Consider, why is it there and what relevant information does the user need to get from it?

» Avoid using images of text:

Images of text can become pixilated or blurry when zoomed in. Instead, use actual text whenever possible.

- *Headings.* Use headings instead of large or bold text to break content into sections. They also give your content structure, making it easier to read. This is especially important for screen reader users who may navigate by headings.
- » **Major sections.** Use heading 1, <h1>.
- » **Sections.** Use heading 2, <h2>.
- » **Sub-sections.** Use heading 3, <h3>, heading 4, <h4>, etc.
- *Descriptive Link Text.* Like headings, distinguishing links from other text on a page makes content easier to skim. Screen readers and other assistive technologies allow users to browse a website by links only. Links should be:

- » **Descriptive and concise**, so users can easily know which link they have navigated to. For example, it's easier to read "See our mission statement at [PTA.org/Mission](https://www.pta.org/home/about-national-parent-teacher-association/mission-values)" instead of a long link like <https://www.pta.org/home/about-national-parent-teacher-association/mission-values>
- If you must include a long link, capitalize each new word so the screen reader can handle it, for example, [PTA.org/Home/About-National-Parent-Teacher-Association/Mission-Values](https://www.pta.org/home/about-national-parent-teacher-association/mission-values)
- This also applies to social media—capitalize each word in your hashtags! For example:
#PTAExcellence,
#ThankATeacher,
#PTATakesAction
- Each link should make sense if read alone; rewrite to avoid ambiguous text such as 'visit this page' or 'click here'

- *Shape and Color*. One in 12 people have colorblindness, so take care not to use only color to convey meaning—shapes or icons should be used as well.

Cognition Accessibility Tips

While potentially uncomfortable to discuss, cognitive differences have a large impact on everyday life, and therefore, the work we do at PTA. For example, the average adult's reading ability is lower than you might think—in the United States, the average reading age is about 12 years old. Additionally, there are approximately 30 million adults in the United States who have dyslexia. Here are some tips to keep in mind.

- *Plain Language*. Content written in plain language allows users to quickly understand and act on your content.
 - » This isn't about "dumbing down" your content. Remember, reading level aside, most of our audience are busy parents or caregivers who

- are volunteering their time on the side, late at night or on weekends—make it easy for them to learn and take action
- » Avoid jargon, idioms, abbreviations and acronyms that may not be familiar to your entire audience.
- » If you must use them, explain them on first reference.
- *Captions and Subtitles*. In addition to supporting those who are hard of hearing, subtitles are extremely helpful to assist with literacy and

- understanding, particularly with technical content.
- *Capitalization*. The National PTA Style Guide requires that each word within a given URL or hashtag be capitalized. This is actually accessible twice—not only does this enable those with disabilities such as dyslexia to read these important items more easily, but it also allows those who use screen readers to hear the actual URL or hashtag, rather than a random string of letters.



QUICK REFERENCES

NATIONAL PTA

National PTA® comprises millions of families, students, teachers, administrators and business and community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and the promotion of family engagement in schools. PTA is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit association that prides itself on being a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families and communities and a strong advocate for public education. Membership in PTA is open to anyone who wants to be involved and make a difference for the education, health and welfare of children and youth.

NATIONAL PTA'S ADVOCACY

As the largest volunteer child advocacy organization in the nation, National PTA is the conscience of the country for children and youth issues. Through advocacy, as well as family and community education, National PTA has established programs and called for legislation that improves our children's lives. Each year National PTA publishes a public policy agenda that outlines policy priorities and

recommendations for Congress. From universal kindergarten to a juvenile justice system—National PTA® advocates have been at the heart of our nation's greatest advances for youth.

NATIONAL PTA'S GOVERNANCE

National PTA—as directed by its board of directors—provides leadership, programs, support and resources to its members at all levels of the association. National, state and local PTAs are connected—forming a nationwide network of members working for every child with one voice. National PTA is comprised of 54 state congresses and over 24,000 local units in all 50 states, Washington, DC; U.S. Virgin Islands; Puerto Rico and the Department of Defense Schools in Europe.

State PTAs are the liaison between local PTAs and National PTA, helping each to function effectively and to support and sustain the other. PTAs at the local level are valuable assets to their school communities by providing educational and parent involvement information, resources, events and activities.

NATIONAL PTA'S MISSION AND VALUES

For almost 120 years, National PTA has worked toward bettering the lives of every child in education, health and safety. Our mission is to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.

National PTA deeply values Collaboration, Commitment, Diversity, Respect and Accountability in our employees and members. As we strive to improve the lives of all children, these values give our association a strong foundation and shine a clear light on the path to success ahead.

- Collaboration: We will work in partnership with a wide array of individuals and organizations to broaden and enhance our ability to serve and advocate for all children and families.
- Commitment: We are dedicated to children's educational success, health and well-being through strong family and community engagement, while remaining accountable to the principles upon which our association was founded.

- Diversity: We acknowledge the potential of everyone without regard, including but not limited to: age, culture, economic status, educational background, ethnicity, gender, geographic location, legal status, marital status, mental ability, national origin, organizational position, parental status, physical ability, political philosophy, race, religion, sexual orientation and work experience.
- Respect: We value the individual contributions of members, employees, volunteers and partners as we work collaboratively to achieve our association's goals.
- Accountability: All members, employees, volunteers and partners have a shared responsibility to align their efforts toward the achievement of our association's strategic initiatives.

WHO NATIONAL PTA SERVES

There are currently over 24,000 total PTAs in the United States, with 4 million PTA members serving 16.5 million students. The average PTA has 186 members.

Contrary to popular stereotypes of PTA schools, 9.6 million (59%) are students of color, while just 6.8 million (41%) are white. Of the students of color, 4.5 million (27%) are Hispanic/Latino, 2.8 million (17%) are black and 2.3 million (14%) are Asian/other.

The majority of PTAs (55%) serve Title I schools. Most PTAs (71%) are in elementary schools, while 17% are middle schools, 10% are high schools and 3% are other.

The majority of PTAs (41%) are located in towns and rural areas, while 26% are in large suburbs, 14% are in large cities, 13% are in midsize/small cities and 5% are in midsize/small suburbs.



IMPORTANT DATES IN NATIONAL PTA HISTORY

For over 120 years, National Parent Teacher Association (National PTA®) has worked to better the lives of every child in education, health and safety. Founded in 1897 as the National Congress of Mothers by Alice McLellan Birney and Phoebe Apperson Hearst, National PTA is a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families and communities and a strong advocate for public education.

1897 – THE FOUNDING OF NATIONAL PTA

Alice McLellan Birney had a simple idea in 1895. As a school teacher, social worker and mother of three daughters, Birney believed every child should enter into life in a happy, uplifting environment; mothers ought to be educated and the nation should recognize the importance of every child. To make these beliefs a reality, Birney sought the help and financial assistance of Phoebe Apperson Hearst, a prominent philanthropist. Hearst opened many doors in Washington for Birney, allowing her to meet and organize with other passionate advocates. The first meeting (convocation) of The National Congress of Mothers was held in Washington, DC on Feb. 17, 1897. More than 2,000 attendees listened to a series of seminars, speeches and panel

discussions focused on subjects like the effectiveness of the kindergarten movement, the importance of mothers learning how to read and the establishment of daycare centers for working mothers in urban areas.

1911 – SUCCESSFULLY ADVOCATE TO ESTABLISH PUBLIC SCHOOL KINDERGARTENS

Phoebe Apperson Hearst, co-founder of National PTA, was a strong supporter of early childhood education and helped establish kindergartens in San Francisco, South Dakota and Washington, DC. At the first National Congress of Mothers Convocation on Feb. 17, 1897, public kindergarten classes and the establishment of daycare centers for working mothers were two of the primary topics discussed. In 1911, the National Convention included the

Second International Congress on the Welfare of the Child, during which advocates began lobbying for kindergarten to be a part of the public school system. Thanks to Hearst's passion for early childhood education and the work of thousands of PTA members for over a century, now nearly 3.8 million students enroll in kindergarten each year.

1926 – FOUNDING OF NATIONAL CONGRESS OF COLORED PARENTS AND TEACHERS

Segregation barred black parents, students and teachers from The National Congress of Mothers. Selena Sloan Butler, a teacher and advocate, saw the need for parental involvement in black schools and dedicated her life to forming The National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers (NCCPT). The NCCPT grew from the bottom up, beginning with local clubs and school improvement associations that eventually coalesced into state associations, who then selected a national president and board. Butler eventually became NCCPT's first president, and called for the

first National Convention. Butler was deliberate about modeling NCCPT on the structure of the National Congress of Mothers and maintained that NCCPT was “a fine channel through which effective interracial work could be carried on.” NCCPT and the National Congress of Mothers worked closely with each other in the following years to improve the conditions in schools for all children, regardless of race.

1938 – SUCCESSFULLY ADVOCATE TO ESTABLISH CHILD LABOR LAWS

In 1922, PTA urged all state branches to “energetically proceed to secure the enforcement of child labor laws” based on the reality that one of every six school-aged children in the United States at the time was not enrolled in school, but instead regularly employed in some form of gainful occupation. PTA went on record that year to “actively support legislative, law-enforcement and child-welfare programs that would get children back into schools, protect their health and restore to them the heritage of their childhood.” Although PTA was unable to secure

adequate child labor laws through a constitutional amendment in the 1920s, PTA members changed tactics and worked tirelessly until the Fair Labor Standards Act was signed into law by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1938.

1941-1946 – SUCCESSFULLY ADVOCATE TO EXPAND FEDERAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

As early as the 1920s, PTAs were responsible for expanding school lunch programs, particularly in rural communities. Children in rural communities did not have the luxury of going home during lunch to eat and rural schools rarely had space for a kitchen or dining area. PTAs would assist these schools in providing lunches for their students by donating funds and kitchen supplies. By the time President Harry S. Truman signed the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act into law in 1945, PTA advocates had been working to improve school nutrition for decades. PTA members helped to guide the implementation of the law and to this day the law provides funding and resources to schools to ensure all students have

access to hot school meals. Because of the sustained advocacy efforts of PTA members from 1941-1946, over 30 million students now receive school lunches each day in the United States through the National School Lunch Program.

1969 – REFLECTIONS PROGRAM KEEPS ART EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

The idea for the Reflections program came out of a casual telephone conversation between Mary Lou Anderson—a member of the National PTA Board of Directors—and her cousin John Allen of Reader’s Digest magazine. Allen suggested that PTA and Reader’s Digest do a cooperative project focusing on children and the arts. Allen and Anderson met with National PTA President Elizabeth Hendryson and Eva Grant, editor of The PTA Magazine, and laid the groundwork for the first Reflections competition. In 1969 the program debuted with the theme, “Reflections: Children and Youth Mirror Their World” and 254 literature, music and visual arts entries from 31 states poured into the national office. Winning entries were displayed at the 1970 National

PTA Convention in New Orleans. Over the years the program has grown tremendously, and today over 300,000 children participate each year.

1970 – NCCPT AND NATIONAL PTA MERGE TO SERVE ALL CHILDREN

With the passing of Brown v. Board of Education in 1954, PTA faced the challenge of supporting desegregation not only in schools, but also in the organization itself. After the Supreme Court’s decision was rendered, the National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers (NCCPT) and National PTA issued their own statements of support, encouraging local and state units to work toward the integration of schools and PTA units. The associations also created the Intergroup Relations committees, an administrative structure that would help facilitate integration. Each state PTA was allowed to determine the pace of the desegregation of its units, leading to a protracted process of integration that took nearly 20 years. The last president of the NCCPT, Clara B. Gay, negotiated and signed the organization’s final unification plan

with National PTA President Pearl Price in June 1970 at a unification convention. Price said of the merger, “At long last we have overcome the barriers and surmounted the obstacles that kept us apart. We have overcome, and we have come together to become one.”

2014 – SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE PROGRAM REJUVENATED TO INCREASE FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

From 2004-2007, National PTA conducted a Parent Involvement School of Excellence Certification program, aimed at encouraging schools to improve parent outreach and family involvement. In 2014, PTA leadership decided to revive and rejuvenate the program, expanding its goals and reach to incorporate pre- and post-program data that examines shifts in family perceptions and the results of specific and sustained actions to change/improve family engagement. The rejuvenated School of Excellence Program operates on the belief that the path to an excellent school environment starts with a joint commitment of PTA and

school leaders to work together to achieve PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships. National PTA staff provides ongoing technical assistance to schools throughout the process, beginning with the Roadmap all the way through Excellence designation. To be recognized as a National PTA School of Excellence, PTAs evaluate their current family engagement strategies, submit a goal for school improvement that families, teachers and administrators have set together and work to improve family engagement strategies. The National PTA School of Excellence designation is awarded to PTAs with demonstrated improvement in family-school partnerships and significant progress toward their goal. Since 2014, nearly 500 designations have been awarded to PTAs.

2016 – PASSAGE OF THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA)

President Barack Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) into law Dec. 10, 2015. This landmark legislation—which received overwhelming bipartisan support in the House

and Senate—reauthorized the long-overdue Elementary and Secondary Education Act/No Child Left Behind (ESEA/NCLB). For years, PTAs and families had been advocating for a comprehensive, bipartisan reauthorization of ESEA/NCLB that included robust family engagement provisions. Thanks to the efforts of PTA advocates nationwide who called, wrote, emailed and met with their members of Congress, ESSA was passed and signed into law with provisions that support strong family engagement policies and practices.



WRITING TIPS

FEATURES VS. BENEFITS

When writing for member-based organizations, it is important to always explain the “what’s in it for me.” Typically, you’re proud of the features of your program/service and assume that members would OF COURSE desire them. But they don’t. They want to know HOW that feature benefits them. You always want to write out the benefit, not the feature.

A feature is what something IS. A benefit is what something DOES.

Features	Benefits
Greek yogurt is nutritious and packed with protein	Choosing Greek yogurt makes you healthier and more satisfied
These tissues have multiple cushiony layers and are velvet to the touch	These tissues will soothe your nose and will make your cold as luxurious as it can be
This medicine has 500mg of acetaminophen	One dose of this medicine will relieve your headache and let you enjoy your day
This phone case is made with layers of carbon fibers and reinforced plastic	With this case, your phone could survive any fall.
This computer has 8GB of RAM and a 3GHz quad-core processor	You’ll be able to work AND play at lightning speed on this computer.

So what are benefits?

- Benefits show how you can help a member; how you will solve a problem
- Define why features are important
- Make the member/PTA’s life easier
- Whenever possible, create an emotional tie to the member or PTA

Examples of PTA features and benefits:

Features	Benefits
Grant money	Our \$2,000 healthy school meals grants will allow your school to buy badly-needed new kitchen equipment.
A social media toolkit	These pre-made social media posts and e-newsletter blurbs make it easy for you to promote your latest event!
A website	The PTA.org website gives members an easily-accessible place to find everything they need, whenever and wherever they need it.
Kindles	This donation of Kindles gives children access to thousands of books they otherwise would never have seen—and saves valuable classroom space.
Worksheets	There’s no need to waste valuable time coming up with things to do. Our ready-to-use worksheets make running your next Family Reading Experience easy—and fun!
A leader’s guide	Running a program can be overwhelming, especially with your busy schedule! Our Reflections Leader’s Guide takes the guesswork out of managing a successful Reflections program.

Here's a two-step guide to writing benefits instead of features:

- Does it pass the “why should I care” and “what’s it for me” test?
- Focus on the results that your member will receive when using your product/program or service

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING DIGITAL CONTENT

The e-mail inbox is an incredibly competitive environment and our members have a low tolerance for irrelevant or poorly written e-communication. These readers will be quick to delete and/or unsubscribe to our communication if it is not clear and concise—and if we send messages too frequently. Therefore, we need to be strategic in how we write and disseminate our content.

Four tips to consider in writing content for digital messages:

- **Keep it short and to the point.** The first two sentences of your content should be short and give the reader all the key information they need to respond. If you take too long to get to the point, they will not read it. Research shows

that readers spend less than 51 seconds reading a complete e-newsletter and only read word-for-word 19% of the time.

- **Watch your word count.** To optimize a digital message for maximum readability, follow these word count guidelines:
 - » Headline length: 8-10 words or less; one line, action focused
 - » E-newsletter sponsor blurb: 50-75 words
 - » E-newsletter general blurb: 75-100 words
 - » E-blast copy: 50-250 words
 - » One Voice Blog posts: 400 words or less
 - » Our Children Articles: 700 words or less
- **Focus on your audience.** Write directly to the needs and interests of the people receiving the message. Readers choose to subscribe to and open e-newsletters because of perceived value and relevance. Therefore, tacking on a generic blurb to get the word out is not a strategy. The Communications Department can help to work on an angle that will resonate with the target audience.

- **The Communications Department reviews all content.** We will edit your content for accuracy, spelling/grammar, relevance and National PTA style/branding. If you are working with a sponsor or partner organization, please set this expectation and build in time for us to provide our edits for additional review (with outside groups) when necessary. Please note that we strategically schedule e-newsletters/e-blasts to ensure our members do not become weary from an abundance of emails from the National PTA.

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