

Italics

Italics refers to a type that slopes upward to the right. It has taken over many of the functions once performed by quotation marks. When a manuscript is typed or handwritten, underlining is used to indicate italics. Thus if the material is printed, the printer will italicize or use italic print for all underlined words.

- I. **Use italics to designate titles of separate publications, such as books, magazines, newspapers, pamphlets, long poems, and other compositions, such as published speeches, movies and videotapes, television and radio programs, plays, works of visual art, operas and musicals, ships and aircraft.**

Examples:

Book – *War and Peace*, *Bleak House*

Our book club is reading *Mapp and Lucia* next month

Newspaper – *Chicago Sun-Times*, *Madison County Gazette*

Do you subscribe to the *Kansas City Star*?

Magazine or Periodical – *Vogue*, *Time*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*

Be sure to read “My Brother, the Clown” in *Reader’s Digest*.

Pamphlet – *The Truth About Alcoholism*, *10 Steps to Better Writing*

I left a copy of *Garden City Attractions* at the front desk.

Book-length Poem – *Beowulf*, *The Song of Roland*

My favorite character in *Paradise Lost* is Satan.

Collection of Works – *Fables for Our Times*

Darrel Bowlin’s short story collection, *Second Wives’ Walking Club*, explores the rocky relationships among blended families.

Published Speeches – Lincoln’s *Gettysburg Address*

My mother was present when Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered his *I Have a Dream* speech.

Television or Radio Program – *60 Minutes*, *Seinfeld*, *The Shadow*

The Simpsons is on every Sunday night.

(Note that episode titles of a television or radio program are enclosed in quotation marks: *The X-Files* episode called “Home” has been shown only once on television.)

Film – *The Quiet Man*, *Pulp Fiction*

Michelle Pfeiffer will star in *The Deep End of the Ocean*.

Play – *Death of a Salesman*, *Hamlet*

The drama students will present *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* this semester.

Work of visual art – the *Mona Lisa*, Michelangelo’s *David*

Every year thousands of people visit the Chicago Art Institute to view Edward Hopper’s *Nighthawks*.

Musical – *Guys and Dolls*, *The Fantasticks*

The musical *Cats* is the longest running production on Broadway.

Opera or full-length musical composition –

The Gillespie Opera Company recently staged Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*.

The Kansas City Symphony performed Sibelius's *Finlandia*.
Ships, Aircraft, Spacecraft, and Trains –
Lindberg's *Spirit of St. Louis* is on display.
I was home with a cold the day the *Challenger* space shuttle exploded.

Notes:

- Do not italicize the title of a composition unless certain words (or all words) in the title would be italicized anyway. A composition written for a class is not a publication.
- Do not italicize or capitalize “the” in newspaper or magazine titles. (Mary reads the *Kansas Update*.) Do italicize the first article (a, an, the) in a book title. (He enjoyed *The Last of the Just*.)
- Many newspapers and some magazines and other publications enclose such names and titles in quotation marks instead of using italics; some use all capital letters. Although not wrong, these alternative practices are not recommended.
- Legal documents, the Bible, the Koran, and their parts (Genesis, the Book of Revelation) are generally not italicized.

II **Italicize foreign words that are not yet anglicized.**

Example: It was a *fait accompli*.

Notes:

- Italicize *ibid.*, *loc.*, *cit. op. cit.*, *sic*.
- Do not italicize common abbreviations such as A.M., P.M., viz., vs., i.e., e.g., etc., and so on.
- Do not italicize words of foreign origin that are now part of English: alumni, cliché, karate, genre, hacienda, and so on.
- Consult the dictionary to determine whether or not a word is still considered foreign to English.

II **Italicize words, letters, figures, phrases, or symbols named as words.**

Examples:

The *t* in *often* is silent.
His *4's* and *7's* are indistinct.
Many people confuse *to* and *too*.
Avoid using *&* for *and* in formal writing.
She received two *A's* and three *B's*.

Note:

- Quotation marks may also be used for words being defined.

IV **Use italics for emphasis only where it cannot be conveyed by the order or choice of words.**

Examples:

“You are *so* right,” he remarked. (Only italics will convey the speaker's oral emphasis.)
I said that he *was* a good football player. (The emphasis of *was* conveys important meaning.)

Note:

- Italicizing can stress an important word or phrase, especially in reporting how someone said something. But use such emphasis very rarely, or your writing may sound immature or hysterical.

Writing Center