

Italics

Using Italics

Italics have a variety of uses in formal writing, so it's important that we understand when it is appropriate to use this function.

Emphasize words and/or phrases:

- “It wasn't the *only* time I'd ever slipped on the ice, but it was definitely the most embarrassing.”
- “I *swear*, Mrs. Smith, the dog *really did* eat my homework!”

Foreign words that are not commonly used in English, including the use of Latin terms for living organisms:

- “*Homo sapiens* have a very complex central nervous system.”
- “I made a delicious *coq au vin* last night for our guests.”

Mentioning a word as an example of a word rather instead of as a word itself:

- “Instead of using *the*, you should use the word *a*.”
- “While the word *menu* is technically French, it has been adopted into the English language.”

A letter or number mentioned as itself:

- “Many people forget that my name is Anne, spelled with an *e*.”
- “She realized that the *65* written in red on her paper meant that she could not raise her grade enough by the end of the semester to pass the class.”

Introducing or defining terms:

- The basic principles of a beginning writer's essay are the *introduction, body, and conclusion*.”
- An *odd* number is one that does not equal a full number when divided by two.”

Algebraic symbols or symbols for physical quantities or mathematical concepts:

- “The speed of light, *c*, is approximately equal to 3.00×10^8 m/s.”



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Italicize the titles or names of the following sources:

- Books (*The Scarlet Letter*, *Heart of Darkness*)
- Magazines or journals (*Time*, *Shakespeare Quarterly*)
- Newspapers (*The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*)
- Websites (*Austin Peay State University Website*)
- Plays or musicals (*Hamlet*, *Waiting for Godot*, *The Sound of Music*)
- Television or radio programs (*The Colbert Report*, *Talk of the Nation*)
- Movies (*The Shawshank Redemption*, *Casablanca*)
- Legal cases (*Brown v. Board of Education*)
- Music albums (*The White Album*)
- Long musical pieces (*Nutcracker Suite*)
- Works of art (*The Thinker*, *Mona Lisa*)
- Long poems (*The Waste Land*, *Paradise Lost*)
- Pamphlets (*The American Crisis*)
- Famous speeches (*Gettysburg Address*)
- Comic strips (*Calvin and Hobbes*, *Peanuts*)
- Ships, spacecraft, trains, and airplanes (H.M.S. *Pinafore*, U.S.S. *Enterprise* (Do not italicize or underline U.S.S. or H.M.S. in names of these crafts.)