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Description of document: Forest Service (USFS) "Correspondence Handbook" Style Manual, 2005, 2007

Requested date: 20-June-2014

Released date: 30-July-2014

Posted date: 25-April-2016

Source of document: FOIA Request
USDA Departmental FOIA Officer
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Room 428-W, Whitten Building
Washington, DC 20250-0706
Email: USDAFOIA@ocio.usda.gov
[Submit a FOIA Request Online](#)

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File Code: 6270
2014-FS-WO-04128-F (HRM)

Date:

JUL 30 2014

This letter is our response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request dated June 20, 2014 and received by the Washington Headquarters FOIA Service Center, Office of Regulatory and Management Services (ORMS) on June 23, 2014. Your request was assigned FOIA Control Number 2014-FS-WO-04128-F. You requested the following:

“...a copy of the US Forest Service Style Manual. (If the Forest Service uses instead the USDA Style Manual, then you may withdraw this request). A style guide or style manual is a set of standards for the writing and design of documents, either for general use or for a specific publication, organization or field. The implementation of a style guide provides uniformity in style and formatting within a document and across multiple documents.”

We searched for responsive documents, both hard-copy and electronic, everywhere a reasonably knowledgeable professional could expect to find responsive records. We found 70 pages, which are enclosed in full. Enclosed are "Correspondence Handbook, Chapter 30: Correspondence Format, Standards, and Reviews" and "Correspondence Handbook, Chapter 40: Writing Tips and Style Practices."

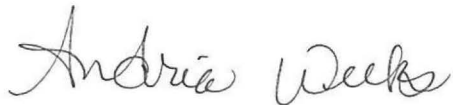
Pursuant to Title 7, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Subtitle A, Part 1, Subpart A, Appendix A, there is no charge for processing this request as the amount falls below the minimum amount required for the FOIA Service Center to collect fees.

The FOIA provides you the right to appeal my response. Any appeal must be made in writing, within 45 days from the date of this letter, to the Chief, USDA, Forest Service: 1) by email to wo_foia@fs.fed.us ; 2) by regular mail to 201 14th Street SW, Attn: FOIA Office, Washington DC 20250-1143, Washington, DC, 20250-1143; 3) by Fed Ex or UPS to 1400 Independence Ave SW, Washington, DC, 20250; telephone number (202) 205-1542; or 4) by fax at (703) 605-5221. The term "FOIA APPEAL" should be placed in capital letters on the subject line of the email or



on the front of the envelope. To facilitate the processing of your appeal, please include a copy of this letter and/or the FOIA control number, 2014-FS-WO-04128-F, assigned to your FOIA request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Andria Weeks".

ANDRIA WEEKS
Director, Office of Regulatory and Management Services

Enclosures



**FOREST SERVICE HANDBOOK
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS (WO)
WASHINGTON, DC**

FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK

CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS

Amendment No.: 6209.12-2007-1

Effective Date: December 19, 2007

Duration: This amendment is effective until superseded or removed.

Approved: JACQUELINE MYERS
Associate Deputy Chief

Date Approved: 12/14/2007

Posting Instructions: Amendments are numbered consecutively by handbook number and calendar year. Post by document; remove the entire document and replace it with this amendment. Retain this transmittal as the first page(s) of this document. The last amendment to this handbook was 6209.12-2005-7 to 6209.12_contents.

New Document	6209.12_30	36 Pages
Superseded Document(s) by Issuance Number and Effective Date	6209.12_30 (Amendment 6209.12-2005-3, 10/04/2005)	37 Pages

Digest:

32 - Exhibit 04 - Changes the zip code in the address from 20210 to 20515 and removes the duplicated reference to the Speaker of the House of Representatives exhibit showing example of forms of address, salutation, and complimentary closing.

Exhibit 05 & Exhibit 06 - Removes the zip code from the addresses.

FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS

Table of Contents

30.1 - Authority.....3
30.2 - Objectives3
30.4 - Responsibility3
30.5 - Definitions6
30.6 - Procedures for Preparing and Reviewing Correspondence6
30.7 - References.....7
31 - RULES FOR ADDRESSING INDIVIDUALS AND COMPLIMENTARY CLOSE 9
 31.1 - General Rules for Salutation and Complimentary Close9
 31.2 - Formal Salutation and Complimentary Close.....10
32 - EXHIBITS OF SALUTATIONS AND COMPLIMENTARY CLOSE..... 10

FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS

30.1 - Authority

See FSM 6220.1 for authorities applicable to correspondence creation and processing.

30.2 - Objectives

The objectives of providing correspondence format standards are to:

1. Clarify responsibilities for the author, correspondence manager, staff, technical and policy review supervisor, concurring staffs, and the signer.
2. Improve the quality of correspondence.
3. Increase the turnaround time in responses.
4. Increase knowledge of correspondence content so that fewer drafts are needed.

30.4 - Responsibility

Producing correspondence is a team effort. No one person has sole responsibility for the content of a letter. The author, correspondence manager, staff supervisor/director, and signer should use the Correspondence Review Checklist in 30.4, exhibit 01, before mailing a letter.

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
 CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS**

30.4 - Exhibit 01

Correspondence Review Checklist

Author	Editorial Review	Technical & Policy Review	Signer	Due Dates <u>General Correspondence</u> : 30 days from receipt. <u>Controlled Correspondence</u> : Set by regional office, station, Area, Institute, and WO/Department. See FSH 6209.12, chapter 20.
	Corresp. Manager	Staff Unit Supervisor or Director		
X	X			Response conforms to formal or informal format.
X	X			File code line identifies main subject of the response.
X	X			Subject line presents the main point and references request (Your letter 6/14/04) and/or (Our letter 7/26/04).
	X			Salutation is correct.
X	X			Enclosures and copies are correctly noted.
	X			All recipients are correctly identified. Names are spelled correctly.
	X			Succeeding pages are correctly titled with addressee's name and the page number. Names are spelled correctly.
X	X			Response thanks sender for the incoming letter and identifies that letter by its date. Response shows respect and interest in serving the requestor's needs.
X	X			Main point(s) of the response appears early.
X				Information in the text of the response is correct.
X	X			Technical terms are clear.
X	X			Key information is highlighted for emphasis.
	X			Acronyms are defined/written out (each page).
	X			Grammar, punctuation, and spelling are correct.

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
 CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS**

30.4 - Exhibit 01--Continued

Correspondence Review Checklist

Author	Editorial Review	Technical & Policy Review	Signer	Due Dates <u>General Correspondence:</u> 30 days from receipt. <u>Controlled Correspondence:</u> Set by regional office, station, Area, Institute, and WO/Department. See FSH 6209.12, chapter 20.
	Corresp. Manager	Staff Unit Supervisor or Director		
	X			Sentences are direct and logical and they use: √ Active voice. √ Concise phrases and sentences. √ Strong verbs. √ Short sentences. √ Correct sentence structure.
	X		X	Response easily understood.
X	X	X		Concepts flow.
X		X	X	Explanations of issues, answers to questions, and responses to request(s) are included.
		X	X	Appropriate staff review is complete.
		X	X	All necessary concurrences are complete.
		X	X	Consistent with Forest Service law, policy, direction, and regulations.

FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS

30.5 - Definitions

See FSM 6220.5 for definitions.

30.6 - Procedures for Preparing and Reviewing Correspondence

Section 30.4, exhibit 01, shows who is responsible during correspondence preparation and review procedures. Follow these procedures when issuing correspondence:

1. Use the formal or informal format, according to direction in this handbook. See the following chapters for detailed instructions:
 - a. Chapter 10, Noncontrolled Correspondence;
 - b. Chapter 20, Controlled Correspondence;
 - c. Chapter 30, Correspondence Format, Standards, and Review, and
 - d. Chapter 60, Correspondence Database.
2. Identify the main subject of the letter with a file code.
3. Use subject line to present the main point and to reference requests.
 - a. The first letter of the first word in the subject line is capitalized and each successive word, except articles (a, an, the), prepositions (at, by, in, on, down, from, between, among, and so forth), and conjunctions (and, but, or, for, nor, so, and yet), is capitalized, unless one of these words happens to be the first word, in which case, it would be capitalized.
 - b. When responding to a letter, the date of that letter (in parentheses) is typed in the subject line after the subject, for example, (Your ltr. 5/28/04). This can fall on the second line of the subject.
 - c. If it is necessary to respond a second time before receiving a reply from the first response, the author should refer to the date of the first response in the subject line, for example, (Our ltr. 7/26/04).
4. Use the correct salutation.
5. Check references to enclosures and copies.
6. Identify all recipients of the letter and determine proper salutation. Check the correct spelling of the names.

FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS

7. Correctly title succeeding pages with addressee's name and the page number.
8. Thank the sender for the incoming letter in the first paragraph, and identify that letter by date.
9. Show respect and interest in serving the requestor's needs in the opening paragraph(s).
10. Put in the main point(s) of the letter early.
11. Verify:
 - a. Information in the text of the letter is correct.
 - b. Technical terms are clear.
 - c. Key information is highlighted for emphasis.
 - d. Acronyms and abbreviations are defined/written out (each page).
12. Check grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
13. Produce a letter that is clear, simple, and concise by using:
 - a. Active voice.
 - b. Correct punctuation.
 - c. Strong verbs.
 - d. Short sentences.
 - e. Correct sentence structure.

30.7 - References

See the following exhibit for Postal Service Information.

FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS

30.7 - Exhibit 01

United States Postal Service Information

Internet address for ZIP+4 code: *http://www.usps.com/zip4/*

General Information

1-800-ASK-USPS or (800) 275-8777

Hours of Operation:

Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. (Eastern Time)

Saturdays from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (Eastern Time)

Closed Sundays and Holidays

Domestic Package Tracking

1-800-222-1811

Hours of Operation:

Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. (Eastern Time)

Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. (Eastern Time)

International Package Tracking

1-800-222-1811

Hours of Operation:

Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. (Eastern Time)

Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. (Eastern Time)

Closed Sundays and Holidays

TDD/TTY

1-877-877-7TDD (1-877-877-7833)

Hours of Operation:

Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. (Eastern Time)

Saturdays from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. (Eastern Time)

Sundays and Holidays from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. (Eastern Time)

FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS

31 - RULES FOR ADDRESSING INDIVIDUALS AND COMPLIMENTARY CLOSE

31.1 - General Rules for Salutation and Complimentary Close

1. Use standard style punctuation.
 - a. Include a colon after the salutation.

Dear Mr. Gulliver:

- b. Include a comma after the complimentary close.

Sincerely,

2. Spell out all titles in the address except *Dr.*, *Mr.*, *Ms.*, and *Mrs.* With the exception of addressing a minister, do not use two titles with one name.

Correct	Incorrect
Dr. Paul A. White or Paul A. White, M.D.	Dr. Paul A. White, M.D.
The Reverend Mr. White The Reverend Ms. White	

3. Use the person's full name if it is not known whether the addressee is a man or woman.

Dear Leslie Brown:

4. Use *Ms.* if it is not known whether to use *Mrs.* or *Miss.* Use *Miss* only if the addressee is known to use this title.
5. Some Department of Agriculture rules for addresses and signature vary from the GPO Style Manual. In these cases, follow the correspondence database direction in the correspondence manual and handbooks.

FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS

31.2 - Formal Salutation and Complimentary Close

Unless different instructions are issued by the White House, the Office of the Secretary, or other Federal and State agencies, use the address elements (including nine-digit ZIP code where appropriate), salutation, and complimentary close for the categories of addressee and addresses in the exhibits shown on the following pages.

1. Spell out the name of the state on the inside address.
2. Skip two spaces and type the ZIP code plus the 4-digit ZIP code extension. See section 30.7, exhibit 01 for zip codes and other mailing information.
3. District of Columbia should be abbreviated (D.C.) on the inside address. On the envelope, use the two-letter abbreviation without periods (DC).

32 - EXHIBITS OF SALUTATIONS AND COMPLIMENTARY CLOSE

FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS

32 - Exhibit 01

The White House (<http://www.whitehouse.gov>)

Addressee	Address	Salutation	Complimentary Close
The President	The President The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW Washington, DC 20500	Dear Mr./Madam President:	Respectfully,
Spouse of the President	Mr./Mrs. (Full name) The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW Washington, DC 20500 (+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs. (Surname):	Sincerely,
Assistant to the President	The Honorable (Full name) Assistant to the President The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW Washington, DC 20500 (+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,
Secretary to the President	The Honorable (Full name) Secretary to the President The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW Washington, DC 20500 (+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
 CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS**

32 - Exhibit 01--Continued

The White House (<http://www.whitehouse.gov>)

Addressee	Address	Salutation	Complimentary Close
Secretary to the President (with military rank)	(Full rank) (Full name) Secretary to the President The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW Washington, DC 20500 (+4 code)	Dear (rank) (surname):	Sincerely,
Former President	The Honorable (Full name) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear President (Surname):	Sincerely,
Vice President Formal:	The Vice President United States Senate 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW Washington, DC 20510 (+4 code)	Dear Mr./Madam Vice President:	Sincerely,
Informal:	The Honorable (Full name) The Vice President of the United States 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW Washington, DC 20501 (+4 code)	Dear Mr./Madam Vice President:	Sincerely,
Former Vice President	The Honorable (Full name) (No title) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS**

32 - Exhibit 02

The Federal Judiciary (<http://www.uscourts.gov>)

Addressee	Address On Letter And Envelope	Salutation	Complimentary Close
Chief Justice	The Chief Justice of the United States The Supreme Court of the United States Washington, DC 20543 (+4 code)	Dear Chief Justice:	Sincerely,
Associate Justice	Mr./Mrs./Ms. Justice (Surname) The Supreme Court of the United States Washington, DC 20543 (+4 code)	Dear Justice (Surname):	Sincerely,
Retired Justice	The Honorable (Full name) (Local Address) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Madam Justice:	Sincerely,
Presiding Justice	The Honorable (Full name) Presiding Justice (Name of Court) (Local address) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Madam Justice:	Sincerely

FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS

32 - Exhibit 02--Continued

The Federal Judiciary

Addressee	Address	Salutation	Complimentary Close
Judge of a Court	The Honorable (Full name) Justice of the (name of court; if a US District Court, give district) (Local address) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Judge (Surname):	Sincerely,
Clerk of the Supreme Court	The Clerk of the Supreme Court The Supreme Court Washington, DC 20543 (+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,
Clerk of a Court	Mr./Mrs./Ms. (Name) Clerk of the (Name of the court; if a District Court, give district) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
 CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS**

32 - Exhibit 03

The Congress: The Senate (<http://www.senate.gov>)

Addressee	Address On Letter And Envelope	Salutation	Complimentary Close
The President of the Senate	The Honorable (Full name) President of the Senate Washington, DC 20502 (+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname) Mr. President:	Sincerely,
President Pro Tempore of the Senate	The Honorable (Full name) President Pro Tempore of the Senate United States Senate Washington, DC 20510 (+4 code)	Dear Mr./Madam President:	Sincerely,
Majority or Minority Leader United States Senate	The Honorable (Full name) Majority (or Minority) Leader United States Senate Washington, DC 20510 (+4 code)	Dear Mr./Madam Leader:	Sincerely,
United States Senator	The Honorable (Full name) United States Senate Washington, DC 20510 (+4 code) or The Honorable (Full name) United States Senator (Congressional District office address) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Senator (Surname): Dear Senator (Surname):	Sincerely,

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
 CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS**

32 - Exhibit 03--Continued

The Congress: The Senate

Addressee	Address	Salutation	Complimentary Close
Senator-elect (Surname)	The Honorable (Full name) United States Senator-elect United States Senate Washington, DC 20510 (+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,
Office of a deceased Senator	Office of the late Senator (Full name) United States Senate Washington, DC 20510 (+4 code) Or (Secretary's full name if known) Secretary of the late Honorable (Full name) Unites States Senate Washington, DC (ZIP+4 code)	Dear Sir (or Madam):	Sincerely,
Chaplain of the United States Senate	The Reverend (Full name) Chaplain of the United States Senate Washington, DC 20510 (+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,
Secretary of the United States Senate	The Honorable (Full name) Secretary of the Senate United States Senate Washington, DC 20510 (+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
 CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS**

32 - Exhibit 03--Continued

The Congress: The Senate

Addressee	Address	Salutation	Complimentary Close
Committee Chairman, Chairwoman, or Chair (of Senate)	The Honorable (Full name) Chairman (or Chairwoman), Committee on (Name) United States Senate Washington, DC 20510 (+4 code)	Dear Mr. Chairman (or Madam Chairwoman)	Sincerely,
Subcommittee Chairman, Chairwoman, or Chair (of Senate)	The Honorable (Full name) Chairman (or Chairwoman), Subcommittee on (Name) (Name of parent committee) United States Senate Washington, DC 20510 (+4 code)	Dear Mr. Chairman or Madam Chairwoman:	Sincerely,
Joint Committee Chairman, Chairwoman, or Chair (of Senate)	The Honorable (Full name) Chairman (or Chairwoman), Joint Committee on (Name) Congress of the United States Washington, DC 20510 (+4 code)	Dear Mr. Chairman or Madam Chairwoman:	Sincerely,

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
 CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS**

32 - Exhibit 04

The Congress: The House of Representatives (<http://www.house.gov>)

Addressee	Address On Letter And Envelope	Salutation	Complimentary Close
Speaker of the House of Representatives	The Honorable (Full name) Speaker of the House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515 (+4 code)	Dear Mr./Madam or Speaker:	Sincerely,
Majority or Minority Leader House of Representatives	The Honorable (Full name) Majority (or Minority) Leader House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515 (+4 code)	Dear Mr./Madam Leader:	Sincerely,
United States Representative	The Honorable (Full name) House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515 (+4 code) or The Honorable (Full name) Member, United States House of Representatives (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname): Dear Congressman (Surname): or Congresswoman (Surname):	Sincerely, Sincerely,
Representative-elect	The Honorable (Full name) Representative in Congress-elect House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515 (+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
 CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS**

32 - Exhibit 04--Continued

The Congress: The House of Representatives

Addressee	Address	Salutation	Complimentary Close
Office of a deceased Representative	Office of the late Representative (Full name) House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515 (+4 code) or (Secretary's full name if known) Secretary to the late Honorable (full name) House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515 (+4 code)	Dear Sir (or Madam):	Sincerely,
Committee Chairman, Chairwoman, or Chair	The Honorable (Full name) Chairman (or Chairwoman), Committee on (Name) House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515 (+4 code)	Dear Mr. Chairman (or Madam Chairwoman):	Sincerely,
Subcommittee Chairman or Chairwoman	The Honorable (Full name) Chairman (or Chairwoman), Subcommittee on (Name) (Name of parent committee) House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515 (+4 code)	Dear Mr. Chairman (or Madam Chairwoman):	Sincerely,
Joint Committee Chairman, Chairwoman, Chair	The Honorable (Full name) Chairman (Chairwoman, Chair), Joint Committee on (Name) Congress of the United States Washington, DC 20515 (+4 code)	Dear Mr. Chairman (or Madam Chairwoman):	Sincerely,
Chaplain of the House of Representatives	The Reverend (Full name) Chaplain of the House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515 (+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,

FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS

32 - Exhibit 04--Continued

The Congress: The House of Representatives

Addressee	Address	Salutation	Complimentary Close
Clerk of the House	The Honorable (Full name) Clerk of the House of Representatives House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515 (+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,
Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico	The Honorable (Full name) Resident Commissioner from Puerto Rico United States House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515 (+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,
Delegate	The Honorable Delegate from (Name) Unites States House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515 (+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,

FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS

32 – Exhibit 05

Legislative Agencies and the Library of Congress

Addressee	Address	Salutation	Complimentary Close
Comptroller General (Head of the General Accounting Office) <i>(http://www.gao.gov/)</i>	The Honorable (Name) Comptroller General of the United States General Accounting Office Washington, DC (ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,
Director, Office of Management and Budget <i>(http://www.whitehouse. gov/omb/)</i>	The Honorable (Full name) Director, Office of Management and Budget Washington, DC (ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,
Public Printer (Head of U.S. Government Printing Office) <i>(http://www.gpoaccess. gov/)</i>	The Honorable (Full name) Public Printer U.S. Government Printing Office Washington, DC (ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,
Librarian of Congress <i>(http://www.loc.gov)</i>	The Honorable (Full name) Librarian of Congress Library of Congress Washington, DC (ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
 CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS**

32 - Exhibit 06

Executive Departments and Independent Agencies

Washington Office only: Each Secretary of Agriculture establishes preferences for salutations to other senior government officials. Generally, these preferences apply to all correspondence signed in the offices of the Secretary of Agriculture, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, and the various assistant secretaries and under secretaries of the Department of Agriculture. Contact Correspondence Records Management (CRM) for the preferences of the current Secretary.

Addressee	Address	Salutation	Complimentary Close
Cabinet Members addressed as "Secretary"	The Honorable (Full name) Secretary of (Name of department) (Address) Washington, DC (ZIP+4 code)	Dear Secretary (Surname):	Sincerely,
Postmaster General (Head of the U.S. Postal Service) <i>(http://www.usps.gov)</i>	The Honorable (Full name) The Postmaster General Washington, DC (ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr. Postmaster General (or Madam Postmaster General):	Sincerely,
Attorney General (Head of the Department of Justice) <i>(http://www.usdoj.gov/)</i>	The Honorable (Full name) Attorney General Washington, DC (ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss Attorney General:	Sincerely,
Secretary	The Honorable (Full name) Secretary of (Name of department) Washington, DC (ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Madam:	Sincerely,
Administrative Assistant to the Secretary	(Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss) (Full name) Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the (Name of department) Washington, DC (ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
 CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS**

32 - Exhibit 06--Continued

Executive Departments and Independent Agencies

Addressee	Address	Salutation	Complimentary Close
Under Secretary	The Honorable (Full name) Under Secretary of (Name of department) Washington, DC (ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,
Deputy Secretary/ Deputy Under Secretary	The Honorable (Full name) Deputy Secretary/Deputy Under Secretary of (Name of department) Washington, DC (ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,
Assistant Secretary/Deputy Assistant Secretary	The Honorable (Full name) Assistant Secretary/Deputy Assistant Secretary of (Name of department) Washington, DC (ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,
Chairman or Chairwoman (of a Commission or a Board)	The Honorable (Full name) Chairman (or Chairwoman), (Name of Commission) Washington, DC (ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr. Chairman (or Madam Chairwoman):	Sincerely,
Cabinet Members addressed as "Secretary"	The Honorable (Full name) Secretary of (Name of department) (Address) Washington, DC (ZIP+4 code)	Dear Secretary (Surname):	Sincerely,

FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS

32 - Exhibit 06--Continued

Executive Departments and Independent Agencies

Addressee	Address	Salutation	Complimentary Close
General Counsel of a Department	(Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss) (Full name) General Counsel, (Name of department) Washington, DC (ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,
Head of a Federal Agency	The Honorable (Full name) (Title, name of agency) (Address) Washington, DC (ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,
Head of a major organization within an agency (if the official is appointed by the President)	The Honorable (full name) (Title, name of organization) (Name of agency) (Street) Washington, DC (ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,

FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS

32 - Exhibit 07

American Missions and Foreign Government Officials

Addressee	Address	Salutation	Complimentary Close
<p>American Ambassador Formal:</p> <p>Informal:</p>	<p>The Honorable (full name) American Ambassador (City, Country)*</p> <p>The Honorable (full name) American Ambassador (City, Country)* <i>*Name of country must be written in English.</i></p>	<p>Sir:/Madam:</p> <p>Dear Mr./Madam Ambassador or Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname)</p>	<p>Very truly yours, Sincerely,</p>
<p>American Ambassador with military rank Formal:</p> <p>Informal:</p>	<p>(Full rank) (Full name) American Ambassador (City, Country)*</p> <p>(Full rank) (Full name) American Ambassador (City, Country)* <i>*Name of country must be written in English.</i></p>	<p>Sir:/Madam: Dear (Rank, surname):</p> <p>Dear Mr./Madam Ambassador or Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname)</p>	<p>Very truly yours, Sincerely,</p>
<p>Personal (Special) Representative of the President</p>	<p>The Honorable (Full name) Personal Representative of the President of the United States of America to (Country) (Address) (City, State ZIP+4 code)</p>	<p>Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):</p>	<p>Sincerely,</p>
<p>American Consul General (Full name) or American Consul</p>	<p>(Full Name) American Consul General (or American Consul) (City, Country)* <i>*Name of country must be written in English.</i></p>	<p>Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):</p>	<p>Sincerely,</p>

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
 CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS**

32 - Exhibit 07--Continued

American Missions and Foreign Government Officials

Addressee	Address	Salutation	Complimentary Close
Foreign Ambassador in the United States Formal: Informal:	His/Her Excellency (Full name) Ambassador of (Country) (City, State ZIP code) His/Her Excellency (Full name) Ambassador of (Country) (City, State ZIP code)	Excellency: Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss Ambassador:	Very truly yours, Sincerely,
Foreign Minister in the United States (Head of a Legation)	The Honorable (Full name) Minister of (Country) Washington, DC (ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Madam Minister:	Sincerely,
Foreign Minister in Counselor in the United States	The Honorable (Full name) Minister Counselor Embassy of (Country) Washington, DC (ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Madam Minister:	Sincerely,
Foreign Ambassador in the United States	His/Her Excellency (Full name) Ambassador of (Country) (Local address, ZIP+4 code)	(Formal) Excellency: (Informal) Dear Mr./Madam Ambassador:	Very truly yours, Sincerely,
Foreign Minister in the United States	The Honorable (Full name) Minister of (Country) (Local address, ZIP+4 code)	(Formal) Sir/Madam: (Informal) Dear Mr./Madam Minister:	Very truly yours, Sincerely,

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
 CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS**

32 - Exhibit 08

International Organizations

Addressee	Address On Letter And Envelope	Salutation	Complimentary Close
Secretary General of the United Nations Formal:	His/Her Excellency (Full name) Secretary General of the United Nations (Address) New York, NY (ZIP+4 code)	Excellency: (or Dear Mr./Madam Secretary :)	Very truly yours,
Informal preferred:	His/Her Excellency (Full name) Secretary General of the United Nations (Address) New York, NY (ZIP+4 code)	General: (or Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname) :)	Sincerely,
United States Representative to the United Nations (or Organization of American States) <i>(http://www.un.int/usa)</i> Formal:	The Honorable (Full name) United States Representative to the United Nations (or Organization of American States) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Sir/Madam:	Very truly yours,
Informal:	The Honorable (Full name) United States Representative to the United Nations (or Organization of American States) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss Ambassador:	Sincerely,

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
 CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS**

32 - Exhibit 09

State and Local Governments

**In most states, the lower branch of the legislature is the House of Representatives. In California, New York, New Jersey, Nevada, and Wisconsin, the lower house is known as the Assembly. In Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia, the lower house is known as the House of Delegates. Nebraska has a one-house legislature. Its members are called Senators.*

Addressee	Address On Letter And Envelope	Salutation	Complimentary Close
Governor of State	The Honorable (Full name) Governor of (Name of State) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Governor (Surname):	Sincerely,
Acting Governor of State	The Honorable (Full name) Acting Governor of (Name of State) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,
Lieutenant Governor	The Honorable (Full name) Lieutenant Governor of (Name of State) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,
Secretary of State (of a State)	The Honorable (Full name) Secretary of State of (Name of State) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Madam Secretary:	Sincerely,
Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (of a State)	The Honorable (Full name) Chief Justice Supreme Court of the State of (Name of State) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Madam Chief Justice:	Sincerely,
Attorney General (of a State)	The Honorable (Full name) Attorney General State of (Name of State) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Madam Attorney General:	Sincerely,
Judge (of a State)	The Honorable (Full name) (Address) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Judge (Surname):	Sincerely,

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
 CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS**

32 - Exhibit 09--Continued

State and Local Governments

Addressee	Address	Salutation	Complimentary Close
Treasurer, Auditor, or Comptroller (of a State)	The Honorable (Full name) State Treasurer (Auditor) (Comptroller) State of (Name of State) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,
President of the Senate (of a State)	The Honorable (Full name) President of the Senate of the State of (Name of State) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,
Speaker of the Assembly or of the House of Delegates or of the House of Representatives (of a State) <i>*See note below</i>	The Honorable (Full name) Speaker of the (Assembly/House of Delegates/House of Representatives) of the State of (Name of State) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,
State Senator	The Honorable (Full name) (Name of State) Senate (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Senator (Surname):	Sincerely,

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
 CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS**

32 - Exhibit 09--Continued

State and Local Governments

Addressee	Address	Salutation	Complimentary Close
<p>Secretary, Commissioners, and Directors of State Departments of Agriculture</p> <p><i>(Note: All other officials in the State Government should be addressed as "Honorable" and "Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms. (Surname):" This applies only to correspondence signed in the Office of the Secretary.)</i></p>	<p>The Honorable (Full name) Secretary/Commissioner/Director of Agriculture (Address) (City, State ZIP+4 code)</p>	<p>Dear Secretary/ Commissioner/ Director (Surname):</p>	<p>Sincerely,</p>
<p>State Representative, Assemblyman, Assemblywoman, or Delegate</p>	<p>The Honorable (Full name) (Name of State) House of Representatives (or Assembly or House of Delegates)* (City, State ZIP+4 code)</p>	<p>Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss (Surname):</p>	<p>Sincerely,</p>

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
 CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS**

32 - Exhibit 10

Citizens with Formal Titles: City Government and Ecclesiastical Officials

Addressee	Address	Salutation	Complimentary Close
Mayor	The Honorable (Full name) Mayor of (Name of city) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mayor (Surname):	Sincerely,
President of a Board of Commissioners	The Honorable (Full name) President, Board of Commissioners of (Name of city) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,
Protestant Minister, Pastor, or Rector (with scholastic degree)	The Reverend (Full name, initials of degree) (Title, name of church) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Dr. (Surname):	Sincerely,
Protestant Minister, Pastor, or Rector (without scholastic degree)	The Reverend (Full name, initials of degree) (Title, name of church) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,
Rabbi (with scholastic degree)	Rabbi (Full name, initials of degree) (Address) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Dr. (Surname): or Dear Rabbi (Surname):	Sincerely,
Rabbi (without scholastic degree)	Rabbi (Full name, initials of degree) (Address) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Rabbi (Surname):	Sincerely,

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
 CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS**

32 - Exhibit 11

Citizens with Formal Titles: Education Officials

Addressee	Address	Salutation	Complimentary Close
President of a College or University (with scholastic degree)	(Full name, initials of degree) President, (Name of Institution) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Dr. (Surname):	Sincerely,
President of a College or University (without scholastic degree)	Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss (Full name) President, (Name of Institution) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,
Dean of a School (with scholastic degree)	(Full name, initials of degree) Dean, School of (Name) (Name of Institution) (City, State ZIP code)	Dear Dr. (Surname):	Sincerely,
Dean of a School (without scholastic degree)	Dean, School of (Name) (Name of Institution) (City, State ZIP code)	Dear Dean (Surname):	Sincerely,
Professor (with scholastic degree)	(Full name, initials of degree) Department of (Name) (Name of Institution) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Professor (Surname): or Dear Dr. (Surname):	Sincerely,
Professor (without scholastic degree)	Professor (Full name) Department of (Name) (Name of Institution) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Professor (Surname):	Sincerely,

FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS

32 - Exhibit 12

Citizens with Formal Titles: Physicians and Lawyers

Addressee	Address	Salutation	Complimentary Close
Physician	(Full Name), M.D. (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Dr. (Surname):	Sincerely,
Lawyer	Mr./Mrs./Ms. (Full name) Attorney at Law (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./ Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
 CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS**

32 - Exhibit 13

Corporations, Companies, and Federations

Addressee	Address	Salutation	Complimentary Close
A business, corporation, or entity comprised of several men or women	(Name of company or corporation) (Address) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Gentlemen: Ladies: Ladies and Gentlemen:	Sincerely,
Federation	(Name of official) (Title, name of federation) (Address) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,
President of a company or corporation (or other official)	Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss (Full name) President (or other title) (Name of company) (Address) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss (Surname):	Sincerely,
Individual or a company, corporation, or federation when the name is not known, for example, President, Treasurer, Editor, etc.	(Title of individual) (Name of organization) (Address) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Sir/Madam:	Sincerely,

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
 CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS**

32 - Exhibit 14

Multiple Addressees

Addressee	Address	Salutation	Complimentary Close
Two or more Men	Mr. (Full name) and Mr. (Full name)* (Address) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Gentlemen: or Sirs:	Sincerely,
Two or more Women	Mrs./Ms. (Full name) and Mrs./Ms. Full name)* (Address) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mrs./Ms./Miss (Surname) and Mrs./Ms./Miss (Surname): Or Mesdames:	Sincerely,
One Woman and one Man Informal:	Mrs./Ms. (Full name) and Mr. (Full name)* (Address) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Mrs./Ms. (Surname) and Mr. (Full name):	Sincerely,
Formal:	Mrs./Ms. (Full name) and Mr. (Full name)* (Address) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear Sir and Dear Madam:	Very truly yours,
One or two people with names that could each be either gender	(Full name and full name)* (Address) (City, State ZIP+4 code)	Dear (Full name and full name):	Sincerely,

*A letter to two or more persons may be addressed as above or to only one of them when the other is mentioned by name in the opening paragraph.

FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 30 - CORRESPONDENCE FORMAT, STANDARDS, AND REVIEWS

32 - Exhibit 15

E-mail

Addressee	Address On Letter And Envelope	Salutation	Complimentary Close
An electronic mail address that does not contain a name or a post office address in the message	(E-mail address, <i>such as</i> , <i>lpfog93@inter.net</i>)	(No salutation)	Sincerely,



**FOREST SERVICE HANDBOOK
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS (WO)
WASHINGTON, DC**

FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK

CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES

Amendment No.: 6209.12-2005-4

Effective Date: October 6, 2005

Duration: This amendment is effective until superseded or removed.

Approved: IRVING W. THOMAS
Associate Deputy Chief

Date Approved: 09/15/2005

Posting Instructions: Amendments are numbered consecutively by Handbook number and calendar year. Post by document; remove the entire document and replace it with this amendment. Retain this transmittal as the first page(s) of this document. The last amendment to this Handbook was 6209.12-2005-3 to 6209.12_30.

New Document	6209.12_40	34 Pages
Superseded Document(s) by Issuance Number and Effective Date	40 thru 42 (Amendment No. 6, 6/1988)	4 Pages

Digest:

40 - Changes former chapter caption, “Style Practices,” to “Writing Tips and Style Practices”; provides additional examples throughout the chapter for clarification.

41 - Adds new code and caption for general writing tips; changes and expands content, such as adding compound words to meet current writing standards and capitalization rules. Eliminates obsolete information formerly found in section 41.

41.1 - 41.5 - Adds and expands upon general instruction for writers of correspondence or any other type of written material.

42 - Clarifies Department of Agriculture style preferences.

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

Digest--Continued:

43 - 43.7 - Adds new code, caption, and text about writing clearly; adds direction and examples about writing clearly, concisely, and professionally.

44 - 44.6 - Adds new code, caption, and text concerning style practices; provides direction and examples for capitalization, compound words, italics, abbreviations, acronyms, numerals, and word division.

45 - 45.8 - Adds new code, caption, and text about spelling and usage; provides direction and examples for correct usage and correcting spelling problems.

46 - 46.8 - Adds new code, caption, and text about proper usage when words sound alike; provides new examples.

47 - 47.4 - Adds new code, caption, and text about when words sound similar but have different meanings; provides examples.

48 - 48.9 - Adds new code, caption, and text for spelling and usage; provides examples.

49 - 49.8 - Adds new code, caption, and text on punctuation; provides examples, especially for correct usage of commas.

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

Table of Contents

40.8 - References.....	5
41 - GENERAL WRITING TIPS	5
41.1 - Engaging the Reader in the Beginning.....	5
41.2 - Identifying the Audience	5
41.3 - Using the Question and Answer Format	5
41.4 - Active Sentence Construction.....	6
41.5 - Respectful Tone	6
42 - DEPARTMENT STYLE PREFERENCES.....	6
43 - WRITING CLEARLY.....	6
43.1 - Short Sentences.....	6
43.2 - Writing to One Person.....	7
43.3 - Using Must to Convey Requirements	7
43.4 - Avoiding Confusion.....	7
43.5 - One Topic per Paragraph.....	7
43.6 - Short Sections	7
43.7 - Emphasis Techniques	7
44 - STYLE PRACTICES.....	8
44.1 - Capitalization.....	8
44.11 - Primary Capitalization	8
44.12 - Additional Capitalization.....	9
44.13 - Forest Service Capitalization	11
44.2 - Compound Words	11
44.3 - Italics	12
44.4 - Abbreviations and Acronyms	13
44.5 - Numerals.....	13
44.6 - Word Division.....	14
45 - SPELLING AND USAGE.....	14
45.1 - A, An, The	14
45.2 - A Lot.....	15
45.3 - The "ie/ei" Dilemma	15
45.4 - "Sede," "Ceed," or "Cede"	15
45.5 - Lie and Lay	16
45.6 - Affect and Effect.....	16
45.7 - Word Endings	17
45.71 - Words Ending with ". . . y"	17
45.72 - Words Ending with Silent ". . . e"	17
45.73 - Words Ending with ". . . ed" or ". . . ing"	17
45.8 - Irregular Plurals.....	17

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

46 - WHEN WORDS SOUND ALIKE	17
46.1 - All Ready and Already	18
46.2 - All Together and Altogether	18
46.3 - Cite, Site, and Sight	18
46.4 - Council and Counsel	18
46.5 - Its and It's	18
46.6 - Principal and Principle	19
46.7 - Stationary and Stationery	19
46.8 - Two, To, Too	19
47 - WHEN WORDS SOUND SIMILAR	19
47.1 - Accept and Except	19
47.2 - Advise and Advice	19
47.3 - Allude and Elude	20
47.4 - Capital and Capitol	20
48 - MORE SPELLING AND USAGE	20
48.1 - Allusion, Illusion, Delusion	20
48.2 - Among and Between	20
48.3 - Assure, Ensure, Insure	20
48.4 - Continual and Continuous	21
48.5 - Due To	21
48.6 - Fewer and Less	21
48.7 - Imply and Infer	21
48.8 - Irregardless and Regardless	22
48.9 - That, Which, and Who	22
49 - PUNCTUATION	22
49.1 - Apostrophe	22
49.2 - Brackets, Dash, and Parentheses	23
49.21 - Brackets	23
49.22 - Dash	23
49.23 - Parentheses	24
49.3 - Colon and Semicolon	25
49.31 - Colon	25
49.32 - Semicolon	26
49.4 - Exclamation Point	27
49.5 - Period	27
49.6 - Question Mark	28
49.7 - Quotation Marks	29
49.8 - Comma	29

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

40.8 - References

See FSM 6220.8 for correspondence references.

41 - GENERAL WRITING TIPS

41.1 - Engaging the Reader in the Beginning

1. Subject Line. Provide an informative subject line. If the reader cannot make an accurate prediction of what the letter is about, the letter may invite misreading and misunderstanding.

2. First Paragraph. The tone of voice and the attitude determines how well the letter will be accepted. Open the letter with an expression of friendliness and a willingness to serve. If writing a response, thank people for writing to the Forest Service and for their interest. This occurs in the first paragraph when writers (re)introduce themselves and the agency to the reader.

3. Second Paragraph. Include main points in the second paragraph.

a. Design and organize the letter so the key points, such as any recommendation or conclusion, are immediately visible.

b. If the reader does not find anything of importance within 15 or 20 seconds, the letter may go to the bottom of a stack. Even if the writer has bad news to convey, little is gained by delaying the message. Get to the point as quickly as possible.

41.2 - Identifying the Audience

1. Make the letter personal and convincing. More than any other single technique, using “you” pulls the reader into the document and makes it relevant to that person.

2. Identify the reader; think about what will interest the reader in the letter.

3. If the letter is from an organization, focus on writing to one person who will be the reader.

4. Organize the message to respond to the reader's questions and interest.

41.3 - Using the Question and Answer Format

1. Scan the incoming correspondence to find information the sender wants.

2. Think through the questions the reader is asking, directly or indirectly.

3. Organize the response in the same order as the questions or requests in the incoming letter.

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

41.4 - Active Sentence Construction

Using active construction means the subject comes before the verb and that the verb describes an action of the subject.

The Forest Service issued the report yesterday; your copy is in the mail.

Dave Allen supervises the layout and design of many publications.

41.5 - Respectful Tone

The tone of a letter affects how well readers accept the message. Use a tone that will optimize the readers' receptiveness. Think of their circumstances.

42 - DEPARTMENT STYLE PREFERENCES

Use the following when preparing correspondence for the Secretary of Agriculture's signature.

1. Use the first person, as though the Secretary is writing the response, in a letter written for the Secretary's signature.
2. Use the term "this Administration" rather than "this Department" when referring to policy matters.

43 - WRITING CLEARLY

1. Use a clear, uncluttered presentation; readers will be more likely to understand what the writer wants to convey.
2. With a good visual layout, the writer draws the readers' attention to important information. Even though various government requirements, such as the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), constrain government writers in a number of ways, a writer still has latitude to make documents visually appealing.
3. Keep the language clear so the reader can understand the technical information.

43.1 - Short Sentences

1. Express only one idea in each sentence.
2. Use simple, direct sentences and phrasing.
3. Vary the sentence structure to avoid choppy sentences, and avoid tangled, multi-clause sentences.

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

43.2 - Writing to One Person

Use singular nouns, pronouns, and verbs to direct the writing to one individual reader. This prevents confusion about whether a requirement applies to readers acting individually or in groups.

43.3 - Using Must to Convey Requirements

Use *must* or *shall* for obligation, *may* for permission, and *should* or *ought* for obligation or necessity. Use *shall not* or *must not* to convey prohibitions.

43.4 - Avoiding Confusion

Common sources of confusion are:

1. Undefined or overused abbreviations and acronyms.
2. Legal, technical, and "fashionable," but confusing jargon.
3. The use of lead-in sentences with words or phrases such as, "*As you know*".
4. Long sentences and long phrases that require rereading for meaning.
5. Overuse of adjectives and adverbs (qualifiers).

43.5 - One Topic per Paragraph

Limit each paragraph to one topic; this helps the reader understand the document.

43.6 - Short Sections

Write short sections to break up the material into easily understood segments and to introduce white space. Short sections are easier to read and understand.

43.7 - Emphasis Techniques

Emphasis techniques are useful to draw the reader's attention. Use a full range of techniques such as lists, headings, single-sentence paragraphs, boldface, and italics; they draw the reader's attention to the main area and are easy to read. Do not use all capital letters. Text that is exclusively in capital letters is much harder to read than normal roman caps and lowercase text.

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

44 - STYLE PRACTICES

Effective communication is good customer service. The Forest Service serves its customers well by sharing relevant information quickly and efficiently. Giving information that is unclear, inaccurate, or hard to understand fails to serve anyone. Use currently accepted stylistic conventions or rules for clear, concise, written communication.

44.1 - Capitalization

44.11 - Primary Capitalization

Do not capitalize arbitrarily. The presentation of capitalization in each document, letter, or brochure represents the Forest Service. Two primary rules govern the use of capitals.

1. Capitalizing the First Letter: Capitalize the first letter of the first word in a sentence.
2. Capitalizing a Proper Name and Title: Capitalize a proper name that is a specific, one-of-a-kind name for a person (Dorothy Smith or Professor Dorothy Smith versus the professor), place (Yellowstone National Park versus the park), or thing (the Forest Service versus the agency).
 - a. Always capitalize President (with or without a name) when referring to the President of the United States.
 - b. Always capitalize chief (with or without a name) when referring to the Chief of the Forest Service or Chief Forester.
 - c. The personal pronoun “I” is always capitalized.
3. Capitalizing Plural Proper Names and Titles:
 - a. Capitalize the plural form of a common noun if it is part of a proper name: Hemlock and Main Streets, Port and Bear Lakes, African and Cuban Governments, Mississippi and Illinois Rivers, Fremont and Winema National Forests.
 - b. The GPO Style Manual does not accept capitalization for the plural of titles or positions if the specific title or position is unknown or unattached to specific persons and/or locations.
 - (1) If the reference is to national forest, and no forests are specifically named, the “national forests” are lower case for the initial letters.

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

- (a) When the National Forests are specifically named, such as the Winema and the Fremont National Forests, and there is no confusion about what forests are being referred to in the plural, the N and F are capitalized, even though in the plural.
- (b) When referring to the 125+ forests designated by Congress, the capital is used only in the terminology National Forest System. The NFS are capitalized here.
- (2) If the reference is to two or more directors or deputy chiefs, and no complete titles or positions are specifically named, the directors or deputy chiefs are in lower case for the initial letters. When the Deputy Chief for National Forest System and the Deputy Chief for State and Private are specifically named and there is no confusion about what Deputy Chiefs are being referred to, in Deputy Chiefs, D and C, are capitalized.
4. Writers face numerous exceptions and options when deciding if a word should be capitalized. Check an up-to-date dictionary or the GPO Style Manual for guidance if the choice is not clear. Use the spell-check option on the computer.

44.12 - Additional Capitalization

1. Displayed List or Column:

- a. In a displayed list, the items are listed vertically, one below the other.
- b. Capitalize the first letter of the first word of all items if any of the items is a complete sentence.
- c. If one item is a sentence, make all items sentences by placing a period at the end of all items.

2. Geographic Areas.

Capitalize the first letter of the names of directions when they indicate well known geographic and cultural areas or regions:

Stanley Basin is an example of a place surrounded by steep mountains in the West. Stanley Basin lies west of Montana and east of Boise.

3. Introduced Quotation.

Capitalize the first letter of an introduced quotation. Place a comma before the introduced quotation and a period or other mark of punctuation (except colons or semicolons) inside the end quotation mark.

Assistant District Ranger Jane Smith said, "Capitalization rules and the names of the national forests are easy to remember."

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

4. Miscellaneous Names.

Capitalize the names of buildings, universities, and schools; months, days of the week, and holidays; historic events such as wars or time periods; trade names; organizations, companies, and agencies; geological eras, periods, systems, series, epochs, and ages; proper names within a species (such as Douglas fir); and names of ships, aircraft, and spacecraft.

5. Organized Bodies.

Capitalize the names of members and adherents of organized bodies: a Republican, a Democrat, an Elk, a Moose, a Shriner, a Boy Scout, or Girl Scout.

6. Date, Number or Letter. Do not capitalize a common noun used with a date, number, or letter: paragraph 3, page 54, section L, or chapter 15.

7. Sacred Writings and Religious Bodies.

Capitalize the first letter of the names of sacred writings and religious bodies: the Bible, the Koran, the Muslim faith, Catholicism, Buddhism, the Torah, or the Jewish faith.

8. Synonyms.

a. A synonym is often a word or words lifted from the original proper noun. Capitalize common nouns that are used alone as synonyms for well known proper nouns: Chief of the Forest Service, the Chief; the Forest Service, the Service; or the United States; the States. The Choctaw Nation or Tribe, the Nation.

In the last example, make certain the sentence is clear enough to show that the Nation or the Tribe refers to the Choctaw Nation and not to some other nation or tribe. Do not capitalize tribe or nation when it refers to tribes in general. The Nation (capital N) is used to reference the United States, unless it is clear the reference is to one specific tribal nation.

b. Another example of a well known proper noun is Wilderness.

(1) Wilderness should be capitalized only if the wilderness area is a congressionally designated national wilderness, in which case it will have a name, as in the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness. Without the name in front to identify it as a particular wilderness area, the writer should use the “w” in the lower case.

(2) When referring to wilderness in the generic sense, “Beyond the small town is nothing but wilderness,” wilderness is not capitalized.

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

(3) Wilderness can be used as a synonym for a particular congressionally designated wilderness area, but the reference must show that Wilderness with a capital W is referencing specific wilderness areas that are specifically referenced and not all wilderness areas in general.

(4) Use all initial capital letters for National Wilderness System since this is a federally recognized system.

9. Titles and Headings of Publications.

a. Capitalize the first letters of the main words in titles, headings, and subheadings of documents. This applies to handbook captions as well. Capitalize the first letters of all the words in the titles of books, magazines, articles, newspapers, movies, and plays.

b. Italicize the titles of books, magazines, articles, newspapers, movies, plays and other works individually produced or published when referring to these entities in the body of text: *Canterbury Tales*, *A Man for All Seasons*, *The New York Times*, *Saving Private Ryan*, and *The GPO Style Manual*.

10. Articles.

Usually (but not always), when an article (a, an, or the) is placed in front of the noun, it becomes common. The President keeps a proper noun status as long as it refers to the President of the United States, but a president refers to some other kind of president and would only be capitalized if attached to a name, such as President Jean Smith.

44.13 - Forest Service Capitalization

The Forest Service has adopted some special capitalization rules for use in directives. See FSH 1109.12, section 14, exhibit 01, and 14.1-14.2. These do not apply to correspondence.

44.2 - Compound Words

A compound word is formed when two or more words act together and convey a unit idea that is not as clearly conveyed by separate words. Often, the absence or presence of a hyphen to join compound words is a matter of convention.

1. A compound word may be written as a single word with no space between the joined words (dragonfly, onsite, recreate), with a hyphen between the joined words (all-inclusive, satin-lined, re-create), or in some cases, with spaces between the joined words (sick leave, problem solving, social security). Note that sick leave, problem solving, and social security are pronounced with an equal amount of emphasis on each word, and each have become a commonly used combination.

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

2. Recreate and re-create are two different compound words with different meanings:
 - a. Visitors to the Winema National Forest recreate along the rivers and streams during the summer camping and fishing season.
 - b. Personnel from the Hungry Horse Ranger District may decide to re-create the story of Lewis and Clark as part of the interpretation program.
3. Compound words may be joined with or without a hyphen if they appear as a modifier before a noun or pronoun. These same words may not be joined if they appear after a noun or pronoun. For example, "This is an up-to-date list," versus "The list is up to date." The hyphen both unites and separates the component words, thus aiding readability and correct pronunciation.
4. Compound modifiers are not hyphenated if the first word ends in -ly. Highly motivated supervisor, poorly designed house, smartly dressed clown are all examples of two words modifying another word.
5. As a compound word becomes more and more common, the hyphen or space may be dropped. For example, on-site has become onsite, co-operate has become cooperate.
6. Although the trend is to move away from hyphenating all compound words that modify nouns, make certain that word combinations are easy to read and understand. Some compounds must be combined as a solid word to form both the adjective (Servicewide directive, forestwide plan) and the adverb (the directive is servicewide; the plan is forestwide, and so forth). Be consistent in writing and consult the GPO Style Manual, an up-to-date dictionary, and other references when in doubt.

44.3 - Italics

1. Italics Hint #1. Italicize names of genera and species, for example, *Robinia pseudoacacia* (genus and species for the black locust tree). Names of broader taxonomic categories, such as kingdom, phyla, class, order, or family are not italicized, nor are the names of more specific categories such as varieties or subspecies. For example, the name of the family that includes the black locust tree would be written "Fabaceae," with the first letter capitalized.
2. Italics Hint #2. Italicize the titles of books, magazines, articles, newspapers, movies, plays, and other works individually produced or published when referring to these entities in the body of text, for example, *Trees of the United States*, *Time*, or *Star Wars*.
3. Italics Hint #3. Use italics for *ante*, *post*, *infra*, *et seq.*, *ibid.*, and other foreign words or phrases and their abbreviations when used as part of a legal citation.

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

4. Italics Hint #4. The names of legal cases are italicized except for the v which is roman, such as *John Doe v. Richard Roe*.
5. Italics Hint #5. All letters used as symbols are italicized, such as *x* dollars.
6. Italics Hint #6. Use italics for the title after the signature in the signature block.

44.4 - Abbreviations and Acronyms

1. For reading ease, incorporate most often used abbreviations, mnemonics, and acronyms.
2. When using an abbreviation that may not be familiar to the reader, spell out the word or phrase followed by its abbreviation in parentheses.
3. When using an acronym, abbreviation, or mnemonics, spell it out completely and enclose the shortened version in parentheses afterwards. After this first definition of its meaning, the acronym may be used without further explanation unless the document is lengthy and a reader might have occasion to start reading at some point other than at the beginning. In such case, spell out the word or phrase every few pages or at the beginning of a new section so the reader does not have to refer back to the beginning of the document.
4. The plural of an acronym or mnemonics adds a small s without an apostrophe, such as Contracting Officer Representatives are CORs.

44.5 - Numerals

Instructions on writing numerals are in the GPO Style Manual. General guidance for expressing a number is:

1. Spell out numbers at the beginning of a sentence.
2. A figure is used for a single number of 10 or more with the exception of the first word in the sentence. Numbers under 10 should be spelled out, except when they express time, money, or measurement (these are always typed as numerals), for example:

Fire technician Ozzie Harriet was responsible for prescribed burning on 3 acres on five district areas on the National Forests in Florida, for 6 months a year, at 9 dollars and 75 cents an hour.

Six teams of three people each burn 30 acres of the 200,000 acres within the forests' boundaries every 2 years.

One hundred and eighty dedicated employees care for the land.

3. Arabic numerals are preferable to Roman numerals.

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

44.6 - Word Division

1. Do not separate words that are closely associated with one another, such as the elements of dates and proper names, groups of initials and surnames, abbreviated titles (Dr., Mrs., Ph.D., and so forth), and names.
2. When absolutely unavoidable, dates containing month, day, and year may be divided by carrying the year over to the next line.
3. When absolutely unavoidable, proper names may be divided by placing the last name on the next line.
4. Do not separate figures, letters, or symbols from their accompanying words when used as a group.

45 - SPELLING AND USAGE

1. Proofread for spelling and usage accuracy.
2. Refer to the United States Government Printing Office (GPO) Style Manual or a modern, up-to-date dictionary for specific guidance.
3. Use the electronic spell-check option on the computer.

45.1 - A, An, The

1. **A** and **an** are indefinite articles; they each point to a single unspecified object.

*Patricia Smith has **a** pear; Carol has **an** apple.*

- a. Notice that **a** precedes a word with a consonant sound at the beginning while **an** precedes a word with a vowel sound (silent consonant) at the beginning.

*Andria Smith is **an** amazing woman; she held **a** full-time job with the Forest Service while earning **a** college degree.*

- b. Keep the sound in mind when choosing **a** or **an** to precede acronyms.

*Lee Smith is **a** VIP.*

*Gordon and Fred prepared **a** NEPA definition for the planning team to use in the document.*

*Sandy Smith tells us this is **an** EPA report.*

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

2. **The** is the definite article; that is, it points to a specific object.

*Sarah Smith has **the** money; her son, Bryce, says he has **the** time to spend it.*

*This is **the** document Cecile Smith developed after working on **the** project for 2 months.*

45.2 - A Lot

A lot is a combination of two words. It is not a single word; it is two.

*Many of us use this combination **a lot** in our spoken language and sometimes in our written language.*

45.3 - The "ie/ei" Dilemma

1. Use **ie** before **e** to form the sound of long **e** except after **c**.
 - a. *Niece* has a long **e** sound, but the **e** sound is after an **n**; therefore, *niece* is spelled with **ie**.
 - b. *Receive* also has a long **e** sound, and it comes after **c**, so *receive* is spelled with **ei**.
 - c. *Relieve, grief, or believe* are all words with the long **e** sound; however, the **e** sound does not follow a **c**.
 - d. There are some notable exceptions to this rule: *seize, either, weird, leisure, neither, or sheik*.
2. Use **ei** when the sound is a long **a** as in *neighbor, weigh, or inveigle* (to lure or coax).
 - a. Most other times, when the pair of letters has any sound other than the long **e**, **e** comes before **i**: *height, sovereign, seismograph, and poltergeist*.
 - b. Exceptions to this rule include *financier, view, friend, mischief, or fiery*. However, notice that these exceptions have a different sound from long **e** or long **a**.

45.4 - "Sede," "Ceed," or "Cede"

Supersede is the only word that ends in **sede**. *Proceed, exceed, and succeed* are the only words that end in **ceed**. All the others end in **cede**.

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

45.5 - Lie and Lay

1. Lie (lie, lay, lain) is a verb that can stand alone (or lie alone). If talking to a dog, it can be a complete sentence by itself.

Lie!

*I do believe he will **lie** down for a while.*

2. Lay (lay, laid, laid) is a verb that needs something else to come after it before the sentence is complete. Substitute the verb **put** for **lay**, and if it fits, the correct verb to use is **lay**.

*Ann and Linda will probably **lay** the books on the table where Sue **laid** those reams of paper yesterday.*

45.6 - Affect and Effect

Both words can be used as nouns, but unless the subject is psychology, the writer probably will not use **affect** as a noun.

1. Affect (verb) has a couple of different emotion-related meanings:

- a. To act, bluff, counterfeit, fake, feign, pretend, or put on.
- b. To produce a mental or emotional effect, to influence, to impress, or to sway.

*Brenda **will affect** a British accent when she talks to her wild burro. We will have a lecture on how smoking **affects** health.*

2. Effect

- a. As a verb, it means to induce, to come into being, to bring about, cause, make, produce.

*Kathy Smith **effected** an immediate change in the correspondence process, and everyone was happier.*

- b. As a noun, **effect** means a condition or occurrence traceable to a cause.

*Alison and Samuel discussed the environmental **effect** of the new dam and threw up their hands in dismay.*

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

45.7 - Word Endings

45.71 - Words Ending with "... y"

Change a **y** ending to **i** before adding **es** or **ed** (or another suffix), but keep the **y** before adding **ing**. *Ability* changes to *abilities*; *deny* changes to *denies* or *denying*; *happy* changes to *happiness*, *happiest*, and so forth. *Party* changes to *parties*; *study* changes to *studied* or *studying*. *Money* can be *monies* or *moneys*.

45.72 - Words Ending with Silent "... e"

1. Drop the silent **e** ending before adding suffixes that begin with a vowel, but keep the silent **e** before adding suffixes that begin with a consonant. However, *eye* can be *eying* or *eyeing*.
2. Here are some more examples: *receive* changes to *receiving* and *receivable*; *desperate* changes to *desperately*; *lie* changes to *lying*; *desire* changes to *desirable*; *manage* changes to *management*, and so forth.

45.73 - Words Ending with "... ed" or "... ing"

Double a final consonant before a suffix that begins with a vowel (such as **ed** or **ing**) when:

1. The consonant comes at the end of a stressed syllable, such as in *occur* and *prefer*.
2. The consonant follows a single vowel as in *bag*, *rig*, *stop*, and so forth. These words would become *occurring/occurred*, *preferring/preferred*, *bagging/bagged*, *rigging/rigged*, or *stopping/stopped*.
3. Exceptions are words like *traveled* or *totaling*, which can be spelled with one consonant or two consonants before the suffix.

45.8 - Irregular Plurals

When in doubt about the plural of any word, check the dictionary. Some irregular spellings of singular/plural pairs (usually words that retain their Latin spelling) are *index/indices*, *phenomenon/phenomena*, *medium/media*, *criterion/criteria*, *cactus/cacti*, *matrix/matrices*, *analysis/analyses*, *basis/bases*, *potato/potatoes*, *piano/pianos*, *datum/data* (but it is fast becoming acceptable to use *data* for both singular and plural).

46 - WHEN WORDS SOUND ALIKE

Use of the correct word can make the difference between a concise, clear sentence and one that is not. Make the meaning clear. The following offers some guidance.

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

46.1 - All Ready and Already

All ready means completely finished. **Already** means before now.

The document is all ready.

Wini already sent it to the printer.

Ellen said her team is all ready for the final product.

46.2 - All Together and Altogether

All together means in unison. **Altogether** means entirely or thoroughly.

*Although the family members were **all together** for Christmas, the atmosphere was **altogether** different from past holidays because there had been a recent death in the family.*

46.3 - Cite, Site, and Sight

Cite means to quote. **Site** is a particular place or location. **Sight** is the ability to see with the eyes, vision.

*Wanda can **cite** the record word for word.*

*Aletta told us the recreation building **site** was planned so that it is within **sight** of the river.*

46.4 - Council and Counsel

Council is an assembly or meeting of people elected or appointed as an advisory or legislative body for the purpose of consultation, advice or discussion. A council is a deliberative assembly. **Counsel and counselor** pertain chiefly to advice and guidance in general and to the person (such as a lawyer) who provides it.

*The Office of General Counsel attorney gave the **council** member of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation legal counsel before he took the witness stand.*

46.5 - Its and It's

Its shows possession. **It's** is a contraction of it is.

***It's** a shame the old mill shows **its** age.*

***Its** history is intriguing; **it's** known to be haunted.*

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

46.6 - Principal and Principle

Principal means primary or chief. **Principle** refers to a belief or value.

*The school **principal** told each teacher that his leaving early every day is a matter of **principle**.*

*The **principal** reason he gave was that, of all his principles about living, his health was more important than his pocketbook.*

46.7 - Stationary and Stationery

Stationary means not moving, staying in one spot. **Stationery** is writing paper.

*Lawrence used beautiful **stationery** to write the letter about a **stationary** bicycle.*

46.8 - Two, To, Too

Two is the number 2. **To** is a functional word to indicate movement, action, or direction toward. **Too** means *also*. **Too** also means to an excessive degree or *very*.

*In **two** shakes of a lamb's tail, Becky will be ready **to** sing a song of sixpence.*

*The moon is far **too** high for the cow **to** reach.*

*Tavia and Ann had **too** much work and only **two** hours **to** finish it.*

*Kim playfully told Jack **to** run after the two spoons. Susan caught them **too**.*

47 - WHEN WORDS SOUND SIMILAR

47.1 - Accept and Except

Accept means to receive or to agree to. **Except** means to exclude or leave out.

*The hostess, Margaret, **accepts** all visitors **except** those who refuse to give her a taco.*

47.2 - Advise and Advice

Advise is the verb that means to recommend, or to offer counsel or a suggestion; **advice** is the noun that means the recommendation.

*Sharon will **advise** you to take the **advice** of a wise woman who said, "If you can't have what you want, want what you have."*

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

47.3 - Allude and Elude

Allude means to make reference casually or indirectly. **Elude** means to escape notice of.

*Each participant will **allude** to past happy experiences. Neither Doug, Margaret, Larry, nor Sarah will let the message **elude** them.*

47.4 - Capital and Capitol

Besides meaning money, wealth, or assets; or excellent, first-rate, or serious; **Capital** means the central city of a state. **Capitol** is the main government building where a legislative body meets in the capital. Remember the **o** in **capitol** means the building with the **dome**.

*Lisa Williams expects to spend a lot of **capital** in building apartments near the **capitol** in Salem. Salem is the **capital** of Oregon.*

48 - MORE SPELLING AND USAGE

48.1 - Allusion, Illusion, Delusion

Allusion is a casual or indirect reference. **Illusion** is a false impression, like a mirage. **Delusion** is a false belief.

*Her loud talking and **allusion** to the other employee's lack of skill is unprofessional.*

*The clown has **delusions** about himself as a musician and has created an **illusion** that can fool the best of us.*

48.2 - Among and Between

Among is used for three or more. **Between** is used for two.

*There were two biologists **among** the six people present. **Between** the two of them, they wrote all the reports.*

48.3 - Assure, Ensure, Insure

All of these words mean to make certain. **Assure**, however, is used with reference to a person in the sense of "to set the mind to rest". **Ensure** is used to mean guarantee. **Insure** is used in reference to commercial or financial matters such as in life insurance.

*Laurie **assures** her supervisor that she can finish the job by Sunday.*

*In the correspondence directive, deputy chiefs must **ensure** timely review and concurrence on major correspondence, especially if it is restrictive or controlled.*

*Andrea may plan to live where she does not need to **insure** her car against hailstorms.*

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

48.4 - Continual and Continuous

Continual means something that happens indefinitely but with interruptions. **Continuous** means something that happens indefinitely without interruptions.

*Joyce is delighted with the **continual** stream of congratulatory letters.*

*The cowboy says the train whistle blew **continuously** for 17 minutes and frightened his horses.*

48.5 - Due To

Avoid the overuse of **due to**. It is less resolute than *because* or *as a result of* and very often is used inappropriately. **Due to** is ambiguous. **Due to** means *owing* or *capable of being attributed*. Its use in a sentence can make the meaning of the sentence ambiguous. Its use is also a way to avoid getting straight to the point of the sentence.

Note the difference: *I eat cheesecake because I love it. I eat cheesecake **due to** the fact that I love it.* If the writer has to include *to the fact that*, then **due to** should be removed altogether. Who wants to read the extra words when they do not help the meaning of the sentence? The following is appropriate and works much better than *because* or *as a result of*.

***Due to** heavy rainfall, the roads on the Apalachicola National Forest have washed away.*

48.6 - Fewer and Less

Fewer refer to things that can be counted. **Less** refers to a different kind of measurement such as the measurement of weight, distance, and volume.

*Alice counted **fewer** than 90 people at the public meeting.*

*The building was **less** crowded than Carol expected.*

48.7 - Imply and Infer

To **imply** is to hint. To **infer** is to draw a conclusion from that hint. The speaker **implies**; the listener **infers**.

*By telling me to be careful, you **imply** that I am in danger.*

*Because of her supervisor's demeanor, Flora **inferred** that he had decided to give her a merit award.*

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

48.8 - Irregardless and Regardless

There is no such word as **irregardless**. The correct usage is **regardless**.

Regardless of the odds, Carol believes we will win the race.

*I will be embarrassed for you if you use the nonexistent **irregardless**.*

48.9 - That, Which, and Who

These are three of the most useful, used, misused, and overused words in the English language. Do not use **that** or **which** when talking about people; **who** identifies people.

Acceptable	Preferred
<i>Recreation areas that are near rivers and streams are usually the most popular.</i>	<i>Recreation areas near rivers and streams are usually the most popular.</i>
<i>Employees who are hoping to work in a district office should apply for this job.</i>	<i>Employees hoping to work in a district office should apply for this job.</i>
<i>An important document, which is known as an environmental impact statement, will be available for public comment in September.</i>	<i>An important document, known as an environmental impact statement, will be available for public comment in September.</i>

49 - PUNCTUATION

The apostrophe, brackets, colon and semicolon, comma, dash, exclamation point, hyphen, parentheses, period, question mark, and quotation marks keep the reader following the sentence to the end without stumbling. What follows is a brief discussion on the use of punctuation marks. Because the use of commas presents the majority of punctuation confusion, commas are covered in more detail.

49.1 - Apostrophe

The apostrophe is used in two different instances--for contractions and possessives. Sometimes it is used to show a plural.

1. When the apostrophe is used in a contraction, it indicates omitted letters in a word, for example: **can't** for **cannot**, **you're** for **you are**, **don't** for **do not**. Avoid the use of contractions in correspondence.

2. When the apostrophe is used to show possession and the noun does not already end with an s sound, add 's.

*This is **Katrina's** red ball; the yellow one is the other **girl's**.*

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

3. When the apostrophe is used to show possession and the noun already ends with an *s*, just add the apostrophe.

*This is Mr. **Jones'** house.*

4. When the apostrophe is used to show possession and the noun is plural with an *s* at the end of the word, possession is shown by adding only an apostrophe after the *s*.

*Those are the **boys'** bicycles.*

*There are four Joneses; these are the **Joneses'** houses.*

5. When the apostrophe is used to show a plural, it is only used as a help to the reader, and its use is optional.

*The teacher gave all her students **A's**. Nobody received **I's** or **F's**.*

It is easy to see that if an apostrophe were not used to separate the **A** or the **I** from the *s*, the words would look like **As** and **Is**, creating confusion for the reader. Be consistent and use the apostrophe for the plural of other letters. As for single numbers, keep the reader in mind and use the apostrophe accordingly: **4's** or **4s**; **11's** or **11s**.

6. The apostrophe is not used to show plural acronyms. The *s* should be added without the apostrophe: **EISs**, **EAs**, **ADCs**.

7. Do not use the apostrophe to show the possessive of personal pronouns: **yours**, **theirs**, **its**, **his**, **hers**, **ours**.

49.2 - Brackets, Dash, and Parentheses

49.21 - Brackets

Brackets are usually used in transcripts, congressional hearings, or testimony in court work. Often they are used to show omissions, explanations, or corrections. They are rarely used in correspondence.

49.22 - Dash

An **em** dash is the size of two hyphens typed together with no space on either side of the dash. In *Microsoft Word*, the double hyphen defaults to an **em** dash. An **en** dash is one hyphen and is smaller than the **em** dash. It is used for such things as separating pages or dates.

*See the **1997-1999** yearbook, pages **15-30**.*

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

1. Dashes interrupt or break the sentence to make a statement or indicate a thought that is related but not part of the sentence.

*As a result of Kathleen's hard work and leadership, the management team finished its **report**—**in spite of their low budget**—**and** submitted it to the Washington Office.*

2. Dashes interrupt or break the sentence to emphasize explanatory information.

*Two members of the **team**—**the biologist and the soil scientist**—**were** willing to meet with the team leader a day early.*

3. Dashes can link introductory or concluding thoughts to the rest of the sentence.

*Developing the best environmental **analysis**—**that is the primary focus of this team effort**.*

4. Dashes link a list to a summary statement.

*Eighteen hours of darkness, difficult terrain, and weather that is **unpredictable**—**these** are factors the rescue team must consider.*

5. Dashes in dialogue can show an interruption of speech.

*"I believe the **way to**—“ “Do you think we **could**—“*

49.23 - Parentheses

Like dashes, parentheses are used to set off or insert information into the sentence.

1. Parentheses can enclose an entire sentence within a paragraph.

2. Parentheses can be used to enclose bibliography citations and other references, examples, and ideas that are not part of the sentence.

Dick and Jane write (in several books listed in the reference section of this handbook) that it will take a team of 20 horses and 15 mules (plus several strong people for lifting) to carry the bags of controlled correspondence every day.

3. Like dashes, parentheses can be used to enclose an idea or an explanation in the middle of a sentence.

Two members of the handbook improvement committee (Judy and John) were willing to meet with the leader of the project today.

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

4. Parentheses are used to enclose acronyms, abbreviations, definitions, and figures.

Eddie asked questions (see earlier referenced document for specific questions) about the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

5. Parentheses can be used to enclose the numbers for each item in a list.

The reasons Linda will postpone the camping trip are (1) bad weather, (2) rough terrain, and (3) a full moon.

6. Parentheses can enclose other parentheses.

Correspondence direction is found in Forest Service handbook (FSH) 6209.12 (see chapter 40 (especially section 49.2 for writing tips for parentheses)).

49.3 - Colon and Semicolon

49.31 - Colon

The colon is a punctuation mark that separates, introduces, and links. It does not, however, need to follow a heading or subheading that introduces a list.

1. The colon separates an introductory statement from a list or summary of information.

The national forest boasted three different valleys: a wide one, a narrow one, and one that was 25 miles long.

2. Notice the link between related thoughts and that one of the thoughts (in this case, the first one) stands alone.

Joe has a dream: to get finished in the mailroom just once before noon.

3. The colon separates an introductory phrase that leads into two or more successive endings.

He plans to continue work while he: finishes the manuscript; submits it for review; and offers it for publication.

4. The colon serves to introduce formal statements, questions, or quotations.

The primary question behind the report is: "Does the agency really want to serve its customers or is it becoming an organization that doesn't really care?"

5. The colon follows a formal salutation to link it with the body of a letter.

Dear Mr. Holmes:

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

6. The colon separates the hour and the minutes in clock time.

8:30 a.m.

7. The colon separates volumes from pages.

See National Geographic 11:786.

8. The colon is used after introductory lines in a sentence with a list.

The planning team needed:

- a. Two more natural resource people.*
- b. A writer-editor familiar with forest plans.*
- c. A large office with five computers.*

49.32 - Semicolon

The semicolon can link or separate thoughts in a sentence. It is stronger than a comma and weaker than a period. The word following a semicolon is not capitalized unless it is a proper noun or the personal pronoun *I*.

1. A semicolon separates two related thoughts, both of which must stand alone as a sentence.

It rained last night; there are gigantic puddles everywhere.

2. A semicolon separates items in a series when one or more has a comma.

Susan's new office furniture will include two ornately decorated tables; a red, white, and blue chair; a desk that is too large; and two tall cabinets.

3. A semicolon separates explanatory abbreviations, words that summarize or explain preceding matter, or statements too closely related in meaning to be written as separate sentences.

The digest included several new captions and codes; namely, 49.32, semicolons; 49.4, exclamation point; and 49.5, period.

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

49.4 - Exclamation Point

1. Place an exclamation point at the end of a sentence that expresses surprise or excitement.

Ron finished the project in record time! I could not have done it better!

2. Place an exclamation point in quotations that are exclamations. Put the exclamation mark inside the ending quotation mark.

Brad said, "Grab your rifle! Here comes a charging bear!"

3. Place the exclamation mark outside the ending quotation mark if the quotation itself is not part of the exclamation.

We were shocked when Honey said, "This is my cat's fiddle"!

49.5 - Period

A period indicates a full stop in the sentence.

1. A period is placed at the end of a statement or command.

Elaines reviewed the report earlier today. Turn immediately to page 15 for an overview of her comments.

2. A period is placed at the end of a question intended as statement or suggestion.

I wonder if the weather is getting worse. Would you please let us hear from you about the cat and the fiddle and hididdlediddle.

3. A period is placed inside the closing quotation mark.

Denise said, "I'm finished."

4. Three periods together with spaces in the middle of a sentence indicate that a word or words are missing. This grouping of three periods separated by “en” spaces is called an **ellipsis**. If the ellipsis comes at the end of a sentence, there should be four periods, because the final one is the period that ends the sentence. More than one ellipsis in a sentence or paragraph is referred to in the plural as **ellipses**. The following sentence contains four **ellipses**.

Forest Service employees care . . . land . . . serve . . . people. Only you can prevent

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

5. A period is used as a decimal point.

The Tongass National Forest is more than 16.5 million acres. If you change that into a mile-wide forest, it would wrap around the earth like a big, green ribbon with enough left to tie a bow.

6. A period is placed after the number or letter of the alphabet when making a displayed list that is numbered or alphabetized (as in this list).

7. A period is placed at the end of headings, but only if the heading is immediately followed by text.

8. Use a period in abbreviations like *a.m./p.m., i.e., e.g., and etc.*

49.6 - Question Mark

This mark indicates that a question is being asked, a query is being made. When a question mark is used to end a sentence, there is no need for a period. The question mark itself is end punctuation and does not require any other punctuation unless it is part of parenthetical information or it is part of a quotation. In these cases, the parenthesis (followed by a period) or the quotation mark is the end punctuation.

That's when he asked, "What time is it?"

The deadline is soon (21 days)?

She kept asking the same question (What time is it?).

1. The question mark indicates a direct question.

What time is it?

2. Use the question mark to indicate a question within a sentence.

You are leaving, aren't you, before the end of the month?

3. Use a question mark for each question in a series of questions within a sentence.

Did the secretary win enough money for a house? a car? the European vacation she'd like to have?

Note that after each question mark, the sentence is continued with lower case letters.

4. Use a question mark within parentheses to indicate doubt.

Greg said the temperature is climbing and forest fires may be the worst ever (?) by the end of August.

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

49.7 - Quotation Marks

These marks indicate which words actually come from a speaker.

1. Use quotation marks to indicate a direct quote.

Mary said, "I can name that tune in 3 notes."

Note that the period is placed inside the quotation mark.

2. Use quotation marks to enclose the title of an article, section, or other parts of a longer document.

Chapter 5 under "Soil Types" will provide the information you need.

3. Use quotation marks to identify unusual words or words that are used in a special sense.

In Great Britain, "et" is the past tense of eat.

4. An indirect quotation paraphrases the exact words of a speaker, usually with that, and no quotation marks are needed. The word *that* is not needed but is implied. If the indirect quotation needs to be set apart, use one apostrophe.

She said (that) he will finish the project without any problems.

I understood him to say 'Get your ugly bodies outside NOW'!

49.8 - Comma

There are some simple rules on the use of commas. Most of these rules are fixed. However, there is some flexibility, depending on which reference publication is used. The first two rules examine flexible punctuation that causes the most trouble.

1. **Comma Rule #1 - Commas in a series.** Use a comma before the word **and** between the last two items in a series. Careless writers create ambiguity by leaving out that comma. Read the following sentence carefully.

Diana bought an antique chair, spinning wheel and spindle assembly.

Are the spinning wheel and spindle part of the same assembly? Placing the comma after spinning wheel and before **and** clearly indicates that the spinning wheel and spindle assembly are two separate objects.

Diana bought an antique chair, spinning wheel, and spindle assembly.

FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES

Clarity and precision are important. Eliminate the chance of misunderstanding by using the comma before *and* in a series.

Before fighting a fire, firefighters know to don their Nomex, boots, gloves, and helmet.

2. **Comma Rule #2** - Commas in dates. The presence or absence of the comma in dates does not interfere with meaning. However, the formal style of punctuation eliminates all possibility of ambiguity. The date written with day, month, and year is usually divided with a comma between the day and year.

January 22, 1945.

Brenda and Doug told us that on January 22, 1945 the building collapsed.

Insert a comma after the year.

On January 22, 1945, the building collapsed.

The following are examples of commas in dates, measurements, and references.

November 21, 2004, when . . . (Comma before and after year when midsentence)

November 21, 2004. (Comma before year at end of sentence)

21 November 2004. (No comma in inverted date)

November 2004. (No comma if no day)

November 2004 when.... (No comma after year when no comma before year)

Tuesday, November 21, 2004. (Comma after day of week)

6 feet, 3 inches. (Comma to separate related measurements; numerals to denote measurements)

Page 11, line 14. (Comma to separate page reference from line reference; numerals to denote page and line number)

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

3. Comma Rule #3 - Commas before coordinating conjunctions.

a. Use a comma before and, but, or, nor, for, yet, and so when the word joins two complete sentences. When these words are used as joiners, they are called coordinating conjunctions.

Mares eat oats, and does eat oats, but little lambs eat ivy.

Mickie wore black patent boots to the wedding, and Dee wore a red hat with a purple feather, but Peggy and Marge wore yellow polka-dot dresses and rode in on their pale horses.

b. Remember that a complete sentence must have a subject and a verb, and it must express a complete thought. Do not use a comma before the words **and, but, or, nor, for,** and **so** if there is not a complete sentence on each side of the conjunction.

Sadie and Bob like holidays and parties.

Sharon and Delores love their jobs but would prefer shorter hours.

Sharon and Delores love their jobs is a complete sentence in the second example, but would prefer shorter hours does not have a subject and is not a complete sentence.

Therefore, there is no comma before but.

4. **Comma Rule #4 - Commas and dependent clauses.** A dependent clause (bold below) *depends* on the rest of the sentence for completion. Use a comma at the end of a dependent clause **if** the dependent clause comes first in the sentence. This separates it from the *independent* clause or the part of the sentence that could stand independently and still make sense.

When Zena gets too old to dream, she'll stay up all night and drink coffee.

Until Simone quits laughing, she can't sing the blues with the boys.

The first word(s) in the sentence provide the clue. Other words or phrases that are tipoffs to the fact that there will be a comma at the end of the clause are: **after, although, as far as, as soon as, as if, as though, because, before, if, even if, even though, inasmuch as, in case, no matter how, now that, since, so that, unless, whenever, where, wherever, whether, while.**

Note: The old rule, "Never begin a sentence with because" was a bad rule then and is a bad rule now. A writer can begin a sentence with *because* if the dependent clause it introduces is followed by a comma and a complete thought or sentence (an independent clause).

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

No comma is needed if the dependent clause is later in the sentence.

Zena will stay up all night and drink coffee when she gets too old to dream.

Simone can't sing the blues with the boys until she quits laughing.

5. **Comma Rule #5** - Commas and adjectives. Use a comma after each member within a series of three or more words, phrases, letters, or figures used with *and*, *or*, *or nor*, and to separate two or more adjectives that describe the same noun.

The short, bald, awkward stranger stepped on Robert's sore, aching feet.

Short, bald, and awkward all describe the stranger. Sore and aching describe the feet.

The small, bright red, cuddly shawl was exactly what Norene wanted.

This is tricky because *bright* is describing *red* and not *shawl*. Be careful to separate just the adjectives that describe the noun. *Small, red, and cuddly* describe the shawl.

6. **Comma Rule #6** - Commas and interrupting words or phrases. Set off interrupting words or phrases in a sentence with a pair of commas.

Randy, however, will beat a path to the electric blanket after shoveling the snow. He might, therefore, get his feet thawed so he can wear his cowboy boots and jingley spurs. He will, even if his lips are blue, run to the fish fry tomorrow!

7. **Comma Rule #7** - Commas and participial phrases. Use a comma after a participial phrase beginning a sentence. A participle is a **form** of a verb, and it can also function independently as an adjective for a noun.

Chased by the wild boar, Drew ran as fast as he could to the nearest tree.

Wearing a tattoo and a smile, Rich won everyone's confidence.

8. **Comma Rule #8** - Commas and appositives. Use a comma to set off an appositive. An appositive is a word or phrase that renames someone or something already named.

Mary, Miss Quite Contrary, was once a bull rider at the Winnemucca roundup.

Mary = Miss Quite Contrary

The lucky winners, Kim and Linda, went to Virginia Beach to see the swami turn cartwheels.

The lucky winners = Kim and Linda

FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES

If the comma comes towards the end of the sentence, just one comma is needed. The period removes the need for the second comma.

Laci wants to visit Alaska, one of the most beautiful places in the world.

Alaska = one of the most beautiful places in the world.

Ollie went to tell it on the mountain, the one with the jagged peak.

Mountain = the one with the jagged peak.

9. **Comma Rule #9** - Commas with who, whose, which. Use commas to set off a group of words that begin with *who*, *whose*, or *which* when it states a fact not essential to the meaning of the sentence.

Toot and Frute, who are Bonnie's 12-year-old squirrels, are fat and happy.

Toot and Frute are fat and happy.

The apple seeds, which are the ones left by Angela, will grow into beautiful trees.

The apple seeds will grow into beautiful trees.

Beware! Sometimes groups of words beginning with *who*, *whose*, or *which* are essential to the sentence and are not set off with commas.

The old couple who are standing by Chris are the sweepstakes winners.

Who are standing by Chris identifies a specific old couple; therefore, the words are essential and no commas are needed.

The dog whose mouth is foaming is the one he told us to watch.

Whose mouth is foaming identifies a certain dog; therefore, the words are essential and no commas are needed.

A good way to determine whether a group of words starting with *who*, *whose*, or *which* is essential to the meaning of a sentence is to read the sentence without them to see if it says all that it needs to say.

**FSH 6209.12 - CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 40 - WRITING TIPS AND STYLE PRACTICES**

10. **Comma Rule #10** - Commas and sentence beginnings. Use a comma to set off short words and phrases such as *yes, no, well, oh, nevertheless, therefore, after all, finally*, and *in conclusion* when they appear at the beginning of a sentence.

After all, Janet, Kathy, and Tanya are the real dispatch experts in Missoula.

Yes, Jerry said he will continue to be supportive of our efforts.

11. **Comma Rule #12** - Commas and conversational questions. Use a comma before a conversational question that is added to the end of a statement. (These are questions that are not of life-and-death importance, and the asker usually already knows the answer.)

*Lori had the winning lottery ticket, **didn't she?***

*You believe in sharing with your friends, **don't you, Lori?***

12. **Comma Rule #13** - Commas and pauses. Use a comma to separate words that might confuse the reader if the words were read together. The comma provides a pause so the reader won't have to read the sentence several times to find out what is meant.

***To begin with**, rubies and garnets are Erin's favorite gems.*

Without the comma as a stopping point, a person might read: To begin with rubies and garnets

***To you**, snakes and skunks are lovely animals.*

The comma keeps the reader from reading: To you snakes and skunks