

AFS mission continues to inspire a movement of people work to create a more just and peaceful world through volunteerism and intercultural understanding. As the preeminent provider of intercultural learning in the United States, AFS-USA's exchanges, products, programs, and services help people to develop global competency and to understand and appreciate other cultures in such profound ways that they choose to be connected with the organization throughout their lifetimes. By purposefully



THE AFS-USA

# STYLE GUIDE

2016

## Email

### ■ Signature Formatting

All staff, and any Volunteers with an @afsusa.org email address, should use the following formatting for email signatures:

*[First and Last Name]  
[Job Title]  
AFS-USA*

*Email: xxxxxxxx@afsusa.org  
Phone: (###) ###-[ext.]  
Fax number or Skype username\**

*120 Wall Street, 4th Floor  
New York, NY 10005  
www.afsusa.org  
Additional URLs (3 max) highlighting specific programs or resources\**

*This e-mail is sent by AFS-USA, Inc., and contains information that may be privileged and confidential. If you think you have received this email in error, please advise us by reply email and then delete this email immediately.*

All Signature and message text should be in the Outlook default style: Calibri, 14 point, black. No other images, designs, or text decorations should be included.

\*Including this information is optional.

### ■ Basic Etiquette

Reading, responding to, and organizing emails can be incredibly time consuming. Please adhere to the following guidelines to help minimize email clutter and allow everyone to work more efficiently.

#### **CC Sparingly**

Only CC individuals who truly need to see the contents of your email. If you simply want to inform a colleague that you are sending a particular message, use the BCC option so that they are automatically excluded from subsequent back-and-forth. Alternatively, you can forward them a copy of the message as an FYI.

#### **Rethink “Reply All”**

Again, colleagues should only be CC'd on a need-to-know basis. If you use an existing email thread to broach a new topic, remove any original recipients who no longer need to be involved. Or, better yet, start a new thread.

### **Aim for Brevity**

Remember that your colleagues have to spend valuable time reading the messages you send them. Before sending, make sure you've collected your thoughts and are communicating only the relevant information in a concise manner. Emails are not the place to "think aloud."

### **Proofread**

Help your colleagues decipher your messages quickly and accurately by proofreading for typos, ambiguity and any unnecessary information.

### **Keep It Professional**

Try to devote your emails to professional topics only and use Skype or other means for extra conversation. Personal email conversations in employee inboxes can compete for attention with more important or time-sensitive messages, leading to slower response times and a sense of email overload.

## **Rules for Referring to AFS-USA**

### **■ AFS Intercultural Programs/USA**

Use the organization's full name in any formal or official contexts, such as vendor contracts and partnership agreements, or those in which the audience may not be familiar with AFS in general, such as media outreach.

### **■ AFS-USA**

Use the acronym form in most day-to-day contexts and among people who already know the organization. It may also be used in formal or official contexts after the full name has been stated at least once.

**Note:** AFS-USA is *a/ways* hyphenated

### **■ American Field Service**

Only use this historic title when referring to our predecessor organization, the ambulance driver corps from WWI and WWII. Any kind of student exchange or education activity should NOT be attributed to the American Field Service.

## **How to Define AFS-USA**

### **■ What We Do**

#### **In a Sentence:**

AFS-USA works to foster global competency among U.S. citizens by providing international and intercultural education opportunities for students, schools, families, and communities through a global volunteer partnership.

### **In a Word:**

AFS-USA is an “intercultural education organization.” It is NOT:

- ◆ A travel company
- ◆ A student exchange organization
- ◆ A study abroad provider

While our work touches each of these areas, none of them sufficiently describes who we are, what we do and how we should be regarded within our industry.

## ■ **The AFS Mission**

The official AFS Mission is: “To build a more just and peaceful world by providing international and intercultural learning experiences to individuals, families, schools, and communities through a global volunteer partnership.”

## Using AFS Terminology

### ■ **Returnees Vs. Alumni**

**Returnee** = An AFS-branded term used within the AFS Community to refer to past sending program participants of all ages.

**Alumni** = A generic term used only outside the AFS Community to refer to past AFS program participants of all ages. It may be used in all contexts to refer to past Volunteers and Host Families.

#### Rule

Staff should use ‘Returnee’ as the default term for referring to past sending participants and ‘Alumni’ as the default term for referring to all other affiliates.

### ■ **Alumnus/Returnee Credentials**

The following format should be used when listing AFS Alumnus or Returnee credentials after a person’s name:

*Jorge Castro, AFS Alumnus – Argentina to the U.S., 1977-78*

*Lisa George, AFS Alumna – U.S. to Costa Rica, 1998*

*Cathy and Keith Stock, AFS Returnees – U.S. to Panama, 1969 and U.S. to Germany, 1970*

**Note:** See correct grammatical use of Alumni in its masculine, feminine and plural forms under “Plurals”

### ■ **Hosted Students**

Current and former hosted participants should be referred to using the past tense of the word ‘host.’

*The NH15 hosted students...*

*Our hosted son and daughter...*

## ■ AFSer

The term “AFSer” can be used broadly, both publicly and internally, to refer to any individual with an AFS affiliation. This includes Alumni/Returnees, Host Families, Natural Families, Volunteers and Staff. Anyone who is part of the AFS Community—either the U.S.-based AFS Community or the global AFS Community—is an AFSer.

## ■ AFS Community

The AFS Community is comprised of all types of AFSers (see definition above). Unless otherwise stated, using this term in a U.S. context implies U.S.-based AFSers. If the community in question is not U.S.-based, then qualifiers should be added (e.g. the “global AFS Community” or the “Italian AFS Community”).

# Capitalizing AFS Terms

## ■ General Titles

The following titles should be capitalized when used in conjunction with AFS or AFS-USA:

- ◆ Volunteer(s)
- ◆ Returnee(s)
- ◆ Alumni/Alumnae/Alumnus/Alumna\*
- ◆ AFSer(s)
- ◆ Host Family/Host Families\*
- ◆ Host Family Member(s)\*
- ◆ Study Abroad Participant(s)/Student(s)/Exchange Student(s)\*
- ◆ Hosted Student(s)/Son(s)/Daughter(s)\*

\*Capitalization is not required when titles are not stated as a complete phrase.

*Alex is a participant in an AFS study abroad program.*

*They are a host family for an AFS Exchange Student.*

## ■ AFS Job Titles

When writing AFS Staff job titles, capitalize key words but do not capitalize articles and prepositions.

*Field Marketing and Operations Specialist*

*Director of Team Development, Midwest Territory\**

\*Extra modifiers like “Midwest Territory” should be added using a comma, not a dash.

# General Style Rules

(In accordance with the AP Style Guide)

## Photo Captions

Photo captions in reports, marketing materials and online content should:

- ◆ Be one or two sentences in length, whereby:
  - ✦ The first sentence describes who's in the photo, what's happening (in present tense), and when\* and where\*\* it took place
  - ✦ The second sentence gives any extra background information, if needed
- ◆ List people's names, if known, from left to right

\*For photos depicting an event (i.e. AFS Alumni gatherings), the exact date should be listed if known (e.g. January 12, 2015). Photos depicting experiences abroad should indicate the program year and duration (e.g. India Semester Program, 2015)

\*\*Photos depicting a U.S. location should indicate the city and state, if known. Photos depicting an international location should name the country at a minimum, and the city if known.

*AFS Exchange Student Carly Watkins (left) explores the tea fields of Java with a new friend in Indonesia, Year Program, 2014. Carly was a recipient of the Kennedy-Luger Youth Exchange & Study Scholarship, funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs.*

## Commas

There is no need to use commas in the following instances:

- ◆ At the end of a series:

*The four SENTIO program categories are Volunteering, Internships, Language Study and Academic.*

- ◆ Between names and titles when the title precedes the name:

*AFS-USA President Jorge Castro is originally from Buenos Aires, Argentina.*

## Periods

Periods are not necessary in official acronyms (e.g. NSHSS), but should be used in abbreviations, including:

- ◆ Washington, D.C.
- ◆ The U.S.
- ◆ 11 a.m. /11 p.m.

# Plurals

## ■ Acronyms & Numbers

When writing the plural form of acronyms or numerical figures, add an s with no apostrophe:

*Bilateral AFS exchanges between the U.S. and other countries began in the 1950s.*

*This afternoon I have a call with the TDSs from the Great Lakes Region.*

## ■ Pluralizing “Alumni”

Alumni has four different forms, depending on gender and number.

### **Singular:**

Masculine = Alumnus

Feminine = Alumna

### **Plural:**

Masculine = Alumni

Feminine = Alumnae

**Note:** Alumni is the default plural form when both genders are represented.

# Em Dashes

Use em dashes to offset an abrupt change in thought or an emphatic phrase. They can also be used to when a phrase that is normally offset by commas contains commas within it.

*He listed the qualities—intelligence, humor, conservatism, independence—that he liked in an executive.*

# Ellipsis

An ellipsis should always be comprised of three periods and two spaces. In formal writing, it's most often used to join two segments of a quotation from which excess words have been omitted.

*“My AFS experience was ... truly life-changing.”*

# Hyphen

Hyphens should be used in the following circumstances:

## ■ Suspended Statements

*A 10- to 20-year sentence*

*A full- to part-time Manager*

## ■ Compound Modifiers

*A full-time job” or “A hard-working person\**

\*Do NOT use a hyphen when the modifiers come after the noun (e.g. “*he job is full time*”).

## ■ Referring to Age

Use hyphens when using age as an adjective preceding a noun, or as the noun itself.

Adjective: *The 5-year-old boy is learning to read.*

Noun: *The 5-year-old is learning to read.*

# Quotation Marks

## ■ Correct Punctuation

Any punctuation required at the end of the quote should go inside the quotation marks.

*The student affirmed that, “lasting friendships are part of the ‘AFS Effect.’”*

*The volunteer asked, “When will the students arrive?”*

**Note:** When a phrase or term that is typically offset by quotation marks, such as “AFS Effect,” appears within a quotation, a single apostrophe should be used, as in the example above.

## ■ Use with Foreign Words

Quotation marks should be used when writing a foreign word that hasn’t been universally accepted into the English language.

*The Egyptian student often used the Arabic term “inshallah,” which means “god willing” or, in some contexts, “hopefully.”*

## ■ Use with Titles

Quotation marks and italics should be used for the titles of books, movies, songs, articles, etc.

*The Asia Society’s report, “Mapping the Nation,” is a useful resource for international and intercultural education organizations.*

# Numbers

When writing numbers, spell out numbers one through nine. Then use the numerical form for numbers 10 and higher.

# Ages

## ■ Use of Numbers

Always use numbers to refer to a person's age rather than spelling it out.

*"18 years old" (NOT "eighteen years old")*

**Note:** This is an exception to the general rule of spelling out numbers one through nine.

## ■ Hyphenation

See "Referring to Age" in the *Hyphenation* section for details.

# Capitalization

## ■ Religions

Always capitalize religions (Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, etc.), as well as their adjective forms (Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, etc.)

## ■ Professional Titles

Capitalize key words in Professional titles, but do not capitalize articles or prepositions:

*Director of Sales and Marketing*

# Dates

Always write the full year in numerical format, except when indicating a time period that spans multiple years.

*He studied abroad in 1971.*

*He is a study abroad alumnus from the 1971-72 program year.*

## Outbound Sponsored Programs

### ■ Rules for Referring to Programs

When referring to any of the outbound sponsored programs that AFS-USA administers, the following proper names and acronyms should be used:

- ◆ Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Abroad | Acronym: YES Abroad\*
- ◆ Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange | Acronym: CBYX
- ◆ National Security Language Initiative for Youth | Acronym: NSLI-Y

### ■ Rules for Referring to Participants

When referring to participants of any of the above listed outbound sponsored programs, funder credit should be given to the Department of State (DoS) in the following format:

*Anna is a recipient of the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange\*\* scholarship, funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.*

## Inbound Sponsored Programs

### ■ Rules for Referring to Programs

When referring to the inbound sponsored program that AFS-USA administers, the following proper name and acronym should be used:

- ◆ Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) | Acronym: YES\*

### ■ Rules for Referring to Participants

When referring to participants of the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program, funder credit should be given to the DoS in the following format:

*Mehmet is a recipient of the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES)\*\* scholarship, funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.*

\*Do not use acronyms such as “KL-YES” or “K-L YES.” When spelled out, the name should read “Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study,” and wherever an acronym is used, it should just be “YES.” The hashtag #KLYES can still be used, however.

\*\*If the text appears online, then the program title should be hyperlinked to the program’s webpage (e.g. <http://yes-abroad.org>).

# General

## ■ Referring to the DoS as an Event Sponsor

If an event is at least partially funded through a U.S. Department of State program, any promotional materials or event programs should give funder credit to the DoS in the following format:

*We are pleased to receive sponsorship support from the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. <http://exchanges.state.gov>*

## ■ Referring to Sponsored Programs Alumni

Sponsored Programs Alumni—both inbound and outbound—should always, and primarily, be identified as alumni of a U.S. government-sponsored program (rather than solely, or primarily, as alumni of AFS).

*Anna is an Alumna the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Abroad\* scholarship program, funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and administered by AFS.*

\*If the text appears online, the program title should be hyperlinked to the program's webpage (e.g. <http://yes-abroad.org>)

**Note:** A full version of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' communications guidelines for the web, social media and press outreach can be found at: [http://eca.state.gov/files/bureau/communications\\_guidance\\_for\\_eca\\_recipient\\_organizations.pdf](http://eca.state.gov/files/bureau/communications_guidance_for_eca_recipient_organizations.pdf)