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IEEE Computer Society Style Guide

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Introduction

Mission statement

The IEEE Computer Society Style Guide Committee's mission is to clarify the editorial styles and standards that the Society's publications use. We maintain and periodically update a style guide to clarify those usages not adequately defined in accepted external sources. Our purpose is to promote coherence, consistency, and identity of style, making it easier for CS editors and our authors to produce quality submissions and publications that communicate clearly to all our readers.

General information

This revised (December 2004) edition of the IEEE Computer Society Style Guide is intended as a complement to the primary reference guides listed below. This style guide defines and explains unique IEEE Computer Society usages, particularly where they differ from other usages. It also defines specialized terms to help editors determine proper usage and phraseology. The references on style and usage are listed below in the order in which they should be consulted.

- **Preferred dictionary:** *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., 2003.
- **General style guide:** *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed., 2003 (referred to as *CMS* in this style guide).
- **Math style guide:** *The Handbook of Writing for the Mathematical Sciences*, 1998. Published by the Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics, this handbook provides some helpful information about math typography and other stylistic matters.
- **Press style guide:** *The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing in Media Law*, 2002.

Entries in the alphabetical listing include commonly used acronyms, definitions, and brief remarks on points of style. Entries for terms are listed with their initial letter in lowercase, unless the term is a proper name or conventionally appears with an initial capital letter. A keyword given in italics denotes entries for remarks on style. Where topics cannot be covered by short explanations, they are presented in the special sections listed in the Table of Contents.

An * denotes entries in the alphabetical listing that can be used as acronyms on first reference. An individual magazine's editorial staff can make determinations about applying this

designation to other acronyms on the list. Because some terms look like acronyms and some acronyms look like terms, the style guide provides overlapping entries to make it easier to use. Likewise, the listings include cross-references where necessary.

This style guide will be updated as required.

The Style Guide Committee is a permanent body with a mandate to rule on questions of style and to provide guidelines where none exist. If you have a question to pose, or you find an entry that needs to be added or changed, please send your request by e-mail to style@computer.org. The committee will endeavor to reply within 30 days.

Resolving differences with authors

The Style Guide Committee's goal is to direct editors to published works and offer guidelines that they should consider and follow, except in cases where they have good reasons to do otherwise. We recognize that each CS publication has its own minor style variations. Moreover, a good editor knows when to bend a good rule in order to maintain clarity of meaning within a written passage.

Authors provide the technical content for Computer Society publications and, together with referees, bear the major responsibility for ensuring technical accuracy. The editor's job is to present the material in the most effective manner possible, consistent with established CS publishing practices.

Computer Society style is not intended to alienate authors, universities, or corporations; its goal is to achieve professionalism and consistency while treating all firms, organizations, and individuals equally. This house style is generally supported by US trademark law and the US trademark association.

Occasional author-editor disagreements can be expected, and compromises are often necessary. Each party should recognize that the other has a stake in the outcome: The author's name appears on the book or article for all the world (and numerous colleagues) to see, and the editor must follow guidelines established by senior editors, managers, the publisher, and accepted CS editing practices.

Authors frequently feel that a particular usage is correct because it has appeared in a variety of printed communications. However, if these communications are conference proceedings, in-house technical reports, or unpublished papers that have not been professionally edited, no one has yet applied standard publishing rules. Once in a while, though, CS style may indeed be out of step, and questionable cases should be referred to the Style Guide Committee. Willingness to view a situation from another's vantage point is a big step toward resolving differences.

Editors should be flexible enough to compromise when firm publishing and editing principles are not being violated. If an author's preference violates strict grammar rules or firm CS guidelines, the editor should make clear what that violation is, explain why it is not good practice, and suggest an alternative.

An editor's decisions should not be, or appear to be, arbitrary. Explaining that the Style Guide Committee has given considerable thought to CS policies and has established guidelines intended to enhance the authority, effectiveness, and prestige of CS publications is usually the best way to enlist an author's cooperation in the search for a solution. Unresolved disputes between an equally adamant author and editor should be referred to the department manager.

Acknowledgments

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If you have a question about this style guide, or if you find an entry that needs to be added or changed, please send your request to style@computer.org.

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