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Author Guidelines and Editorial Style

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NIJ Style Guide

The comprehensive NIJ Style Guide serves as a resource for NIJ content providers across all media.

NIJ publications adhere to *The Associated Press Stylebook*, with exceptions noted in this manual. Web-based and digital content require additional editorial considerations.

This guide outlines editorial standards for the following:

- Print Documents
- Notes and References
- Web Writing
- Multimedia
- 508 Compliance

Please consult Jolene Hernon, Director of NIJ's Office of Communications, with any questions or comments: jolene.hernon@usdoj.gov; 202-307-1464.

Author Guidelines and Editorial Style

Section 1: General Editorial Guidelines

Over the past few years, NIJ transitioned from Government Printing Office (GPO) to Associated Press (AP) style. This section highlights the main differences between the two, details NIJ exceptions to AP style, and outlines key style features used to produce NIJ materials.

For spelling, compounding, style and usage questions that the *AP Stylebook* does not cover, AP recommends consulting *Webster's New World College Dictionary* (4th ed.). As a rule of thumb, use the first spelling listed in that dictionary unless the *AP Stylebook* provides a specific exception.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

- Acronyms are words formed from the first letter or letters of a series of words (*laser is light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation*).
- Abbreviations are shortened words (*co. for company*).
- Abbreviations and initials of personal names that are followed by periods are set without spaces (*U.S., A.B. Carter*).
- Abbreviations of contractions and initials or numbers retain a space (*S. 116, op. cit.*).
- Use periods for most two-letter abbreviations, e.g., D.C. (except in addresses), *U.S., U.K., U.N.*, but *AP, GI, EU* are exceptions.
- U.S., U.N., U.K. are acceptable on first reference and as both nouns and adjectives.
- Use all capitals, but no periods, for longer abbreviations and acronyms when individual letters are pronounced: *FBI, DOJ, DHHS, CDC*.
- For abbreviations and acronyms of more than six letters, use an initial cap only.
- Abbreviate the following formal titles when they appear directly before a person's name: *Dr., Gov., Lt. Gov., Rep., Sen.* For example:
 - *Gov. Martin O'Malley*
 - *former Lt. Gov. Michael Steele* (note that "former" is not capitalized)
 - *Sen. Benjamin Cardin*
 - *Rep. Chris Van Hollen* (note that Rep. or Representative is the preferred term, not Congressman or Congresswoman)

All other formal titles are spelled out in all uses (*President, Vice President, Attorney General*).

- Place acronyms in parentheses after the full term on first use. *Note: This is an exception to AP style, which does not use acronyms on first reference. Instead, AP allows use of the acronym without the full term on the second reference.*
- AP style lists a number of acronyms and abbreviations that can be used on first reference without definition. Some examples: *CIA, FBI*.
- Do not use an article in front of an acronym used as a noun, unless the usage is generally accepted (*the FBI, the CIA, the IRS*, but *DOJ, NIJ, BJS, ONDCP, EPA, BOP, CDC*).

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Addresses

- Use the abbreviations *Ave.*, *Blvd.* and *St.* with a numbered address in both text and mailing lists: *1600 Pennsylvania Ave.* Otherwise, spell out the full word in text: *Pennsylvania Avenue.*
- Spell out other words used as street designations in both text and mailing lists (*alley*, *circle*, *drive*, *road*, *highway*, *pike*, *place*, *terrace*, *turnpike*).
- Capitalize street designations only when referring to a specific formal street name: *New York Avenue*, but *the avenue*.
- Lowercase street designations when referring to two or more streets: *Massachusetts and Pennsylvania avenues.*
- Abbreviate compass points used as directional indicators in numbered street addresses: *N.*, *E.*, *S. W.*, *N.E.*, *N.W.*, *S.E.*, *S.W.*, *810 Seventh St. N.W.*, *1500 N. Lee Highway*. Do not use commas between the street name and directional indicator.
- Spell out directional indicators if the street name is used alone without a number: *Seventh Street Northwest*, *South Washington Street*.
- Use two-letter postal abbreviations for states only when they are followed by a ZIP code:
810 Seventh St. N.W.
Washington, DC 20531
Otherwise, use the AP standard abbreviations for states both in text and in notes and references. The following states are not abbreviated per AP style: Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas, and Utah. Other state abbreviations are in the *AP Stylebook*.
- Use periods with *P.O. Box*.

Capitalization

- In general, avoid unnecessary capitals.
- Capitalize all job titles or official titles of federal officials before or after the person's name or if the title stands alone. *Note: This is an exception to AP style.* For example:
 - *President Barack Obama*
 - *Barack Obama, President of the United States*
 - *The President gave the State of the Union address.*
 - *Director John H. Laub*
 - *John H, Laub, Director*
 - *The Attorney General*
- Capitalize names of government departments and offices when they are not widely used or generic (*Office of Research and Evaluation*). Lowercase widely used or generic names of government agencies and offices (*communications division*), unless used in reference to a specific office (NIJ's Office of Communications). Capitalize subsequent references to proper names of government departments (*Agency, Institute*). For example:
 - *Office of Investigative and Forensic Sciences*
 - *Office of Science and Technology*
 - *community outreach divisions*

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- adult protective services
- Capitalize *act* only when it appears as part of the formal title of enacted or pending legislation: *the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Act*, but *the act*. The term *bill* is not capitalized.
- Do not capitalize prepositions and conjunctions in titles and headings, including *to* as part of an infinitive, unless they have more than three letters:
 - *Convicted by Juries, Exonerated by Science*
 - *Police Integrity: Public Service With Honor*
 - *Policing Neighborhoods: A Report From St. Petersburg*
 - *Battered Women and Their Children*
- Some common capitalization uses to note include:
 - *Congress*, but *congressional, congressionally*
 - *federal, state, territory, tribe, nation*
 - *federally, statewide, territorial, tribal, national, nationwide*
 - *government*, not *Government*
 - *Web* (as short for *World Wide Web, Web feed, and Web page*, but *website, webcam, webcast, webmaster* (Note that compounds beginning with *web* are one word and lowercase.))
 - *PDF*, not *pdf*
 - *URL*, not *url*
 - *email* in text; capitalize *Email* in an address/telephone list
 - *First Amendment, 14th Amendment*
 - *U.S. Constitution, the Constitution* (always capitalized when referring to the U.S. Constitution), *Massachusetts Constitution*, but *state constitution*
 - *Legislature* when referring to a specific state legislature (*Kansas Legislature, the Legislature*), but *legislature* when used generically or when referring to more than one legislature (*the Kansas and Colorado legislatures*)
 - *Senate* (for *U.S. Senate and a state senate*), but *the Virginia and Maryland senates*

Compounding and Unit Modifiers

- In general, AP style suggests using hyphens unless the meaning is clear and the hyphen does not improve readability. Do not hyphenate two-word phrases when the first word is an adverb that ends in “ly.” However, predicate adjectives following a form of the verb “to be” are hyphenated if they would be hyphenated as a unit modifier preceding a noun. When in doubt, check the *AP Stylebook* for individual prefixes and suffixes. For compounding, AP style generally follows *Webster’s New World College Dictionary*.
- Note some of the following uses in AP style:
 - words beginning with *anti-* are hyphenated, except for words with specific meanings (see the list in the *AP Stylebook*)
 - *cease-fire* (n.), *cease fire* (v.), but *Operation Ceasefire* or *CeaseFire* (depending on the city of the program)
 - *child care* (n., u.m.)

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- *cross-examine, cross-examination, cross section* (n.), but *crossover* (n., adj.)
- *day care* (n., u.m.)
- *email*, but hyphenate other *e-* terms: *e-book, e-commerce, e-publication*
- *front line* (n.), *front-line* (adj.)
- *follow-up* (n., u.m.), *follow up* (v.)
- *health care* (n., u.m.)
- *in-depth* (u.m.)
- *re-entry*, but *Reentry Initiative*
- *under way*
- In general, do not hyphenate prefixes that appear before a word starting with a consonant. Except for coordinate and cooperate, hyphenate prefixes that end with the same vowel as the vowel that begins the word they precede: *re-elect, pre-existing*. Some of these may be exceptions to first listed spellings in *Webster's New World College Dictionary*.
- Prefixes that generally do not need a hyphen include the following, noting some exceptions:
 - *bi*
 - *co* (except when forming words that indicate occupation or status: *co-author, co-defendant, co-signer, co-worker*)
 - *counter*
 - *fore*
 - *infra*
 - *inter*
 - *intra*
 - *mid*, but *mid-America, mid-1990s*
 - *mini*
 - *multi*
 - *non*
 - *pre*, but *pre-empt, pre-existing, pre-convention, pre-dawn*
 - *re*, but hyphenate before words beginning with “e” or if the word would have a different meaning as one word, e.g., *re-cover* (cover again), *re-sign* (sign again)
 - *semi*
 - *trans*
 - *ultra*
 - *un*
 - *under*
- *After*, as a prefix, is printed solid when used to form a noun, but is hyphenated when used to form a unit modifier: *aftereffect, afterthought*, but *after-school activities*.
- *Post*, as a prefix, should be hyphenated if not listed in *Webster's New World College Dictionary*. Some exceptions: *postdate, postelection, postgraduate, postoperative, postwar*, but *post-bellum, post-mortem*.
- Use a hyphen for unit modifiers beginning with “all”: *all-around* (not *all-round*), *all-inclusive, all-out, all-time*.

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- For suffixes, generally follow *Webster's New World Dictionary*. If a combination is not listed there, use two words for the verb form and hyphenate nouns and unit modifiers. Some common examples:
 - *breakup, buildup, checkup, crackup, pileup, setup, smashup, speedup, tuneup*
 - *businesslike*, but *bill-like, shell-like* (to avoid tripling a consonant)
 - *citywide, communitywide, countrywide, statewide, nationwide*
 - *childless, tailless, waterless*, but *shell-less* (to avoid tripling a consonant)
 - *clockwise, lengthwise, otherwise*, but *penny-wise, street-wise*
 - *crossover*
 - *cutoff, liftoff, playoff, standoff, showoff, takeoff*, but *rip-off, send-off, shut-off*
 - *fallout, flameout, pullout, sellout, walkout, washout*, but *cop-out, fade-out, hide-out*
 - *holdover, stopover, takeover, walkover*, but *carry-over*
 - *shutdown, slowdown*
 - *standoff, standout*
 - *takeout, takeover*
 - *twofold, fourfold*

Dates

- In text, write out months in full when they appear alone or with the year only. Use the following forms for months as part of a month, day and year.
 - *Jan.* *Feb.* *March* *April* *May* *June*
 - *July* *Aug.* *Sept.* *Oct.* *Nov.* *Dec.*
- Also use the above forms with periods and the year (all four digits) on the covers and title pages of NIJ publications: *Sept. 2011, April 2012*.
- When a phrase lists a month and year, do not separate with commas: *February 2008*.
- When a phrase lists a month, day and year, place a comma before and after the year: *Feb. 14, 2008, is the target date*.
- In tables and figures only, use the following forms for months without a period:
 - *Jan* *Feb* *Mar* *Apr* *May* *Jun*
 - *Jul* *Aug* *Sep* *Oct* *Nov* *Dec*
- In text, write out days of the week in full. Use the following forms without periods in tables:
 - *Sun* *Mon* *Tue* *Wed* *Thu* *Fri* *Sat*

Italics

Within text, use italics for the titles of books, online publications, journals, magazines and other periodicals. However, place articles, chapters, etc., within a publication in quotations. Titles of NIJ grant reports are also in quotations.

Use italics for pull quotes, a graphic element that cites or emphasizes special text within a publication. In general, do not use italics to emphasize words or sentences in main text. Before

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placing word(s) in italics, ask the following questions: Why is this word/sentence more important than the others? Will the audience discern its importance, or can it only be conveyed through italics?

Numbers

- Spell out numbers one through nine except for units of measurement (dimensions), degrees, decimals, money, percentages or proportions; use figures for 10 and above. The ordinals first through ninth are also spelled out, except in political, geographical and military designations:
 - *The suspect was accused of four robberies.*
 - *The gang was linked to 17 shootings.*
 - *first floor*
 - *Seventh Street*
 - *1st Congressional District*
 - *8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, the 8th Circuit*
- When using numerals for second and third, use *2nd* and *3rd*, not *2d* and *3d*, except as part of a legal citation: *2nd ed.*, but *214 F.3d 417*.
- Spell out all numbers except for years at the beginning of a sentence. Spell out numbers one through nine when they appear in the same sentence as a number 10 and above:
 - *The group of sex offenders interviewed included eight rapists, 16 child molesters, and 14 whose victims comprised both adults and children.*
 - *Thirteen inmates escaped from the state penitentiary.*
 - *1974 saw the passage of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act.* Avoid this construction if possible. Instead, write *The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act was enacted in 1974.*
- Use figures for time of day and dates, but write out one through nine when referring to durations of time: *8 a.m.*, *8:30 p.m.*; *Feb. 14, 2008*, but *one day, two weeks, three months, four years, five decades, six centuries*.
- Use figures to denote percentages. Do not use the % symbol in text; however, it may be used in exhibits.
- Use figures for units of dimension: *5 feet, 6 inches, 4 yards, a 6-foot-4-inch man*.
- Always use figures for ages.
 - *The incest victim was 6 years old.*
 - *The USA PATRIOT Act is 9 years old.* Suggest rewriting to avoid this construction. Instead, write *The USA PATRIOT Act passed nine years ago.*
 - *a 5-year-old boy, a 7-year-old girl, a 35-year-old woman*
 - Fractions standing alone or followed by *of a* or *of an* are generally spelled out: *three-fourths of an inch, a quarter of a mile*. Don't mix percentages and fractions: *20 percent of the men and three-fourths of the women.*
 - Use hyphens in number ranges in text: *a 5-4 vote*. Also use hyphens for telephone numbers: *800-851-3420*.

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Preferred Terms and Usage

- *al-Qaida*
- *although*, not *while* (unless noting a period of time)
- *American Indian, Alaska Native or Native American*, not *Native, Indian, AIAN, AI/AN, AI&AN*
- *compared to* when pointing out resemblances, often unexpected, between essentially dissimilar objects; use *compared with* to point out differences, often unexpected, between essentially similar objects.
- *conducted energy device*, not *Taser*
- *correctional officers*, not *prison guards*
- *crime laboratory(ies)*, not *crime lab(s)*
- *data set*
- *decision-maker, decision-making*
- *intimate partner violence, not domestic violence*
- *exhibit* for tables, figures and charts.
- *firearm* when referring to the actual weapon (*shot by a firearm*); *gun* when referring to crime (*gun violence*)
- *http://* at the start of a Web address: *http://www.ncjrs.gov* but *NIJ.gov* and *DNA.gov*
- *human remains*, not *dead body*
- *law enforcement officer*, not *police officer*
- *more than* when referring to quantity (*more than five people*); *over* when referring to a physical comparison (*over the bridge*)
- *Muslim*, not *Moslem*
- *offenders*, not *ex-convicts*
- *offline, online*
- *Operation Ceasefire*, or *Operation CeaseFire* may be acceptable depending on the city. Confirm the proper spelling with the individual program. Chicago's program is *Operation CeaseFire*, but Boston's is *Operation Ceasefire*
- *or*, not *and/or*; avoid *and/or* in any case
- *Pan-American*
- *percent* when a number appears in a sentence; *percentage* when no specific number is mentioned
- *policymaker, policymaking*
- *postconviction*
- *prostituted women*, not *sex workers* or *prostitutes*
- *protection orders* or *protective orders*; either is acceptable
- *Sept. 11* and *9/11* are both acceptable.
- *staff* is a collective noun that takes a singular verb. *NIJ staff is reviewing ...*
- *victim advocate*
- *Web. Web feed and Web page*, but, *website, webcam, webcast, webmaster*

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Punctuation

The *AP Stylebook* has a complete punctuation guide, but you can refer to the list below for guidance on common questions.

- **Apostrophe:**

Use only to indicate possession, not to form the plural or contraction of a figure, symbol or combination of letters: *1920s, OKs, YMCAs*.

Omit the apostrophe after a word ending in “s” when it is used primarily in a descriptive sense: *citizens band radio, teachers college, writers guide*.

Proper names that end in “s” use only an apostrophe, as follows:

- *Harris’ hat*
- *Chalmers’ house*
- *Higgins’ presentation*
- *Brahms’ symphonies*

- **Comma:**

Do not use a serial comma before *and* in a simple list: *The flag is red, white and blue*.

Use a comma before the concluding conjunction in a series if an integral element in the series requires a conjunction: *He had orange juice, toast, and ham and eggs for breakfast*.

Use a comma before the concluding conjunction in a complex series of phrases: *The main points to consider are whether the athletes are skillful enough to compete, whether they have the stamina to endure the training, and whether they have the proper mental attitude*.

Use a comma before a conjunction that connects two independent clauses if the subject of each clause is expressly stated: *We visited Washington, and our senator greeted us personally*. Omit the comma, however, if the subject of the clauses is the same and is not repeated: *We are visiting Washington and plan a side trip to Williamsburg*.

Use a comma before and after explanatory phrases, appositives and identifiers:

- After a state when using a city and state: *In Newark, N.J., the police department ...*
- In a complete date within a sentence: *On May 1, 1995, President Clinton signed the bill*. Do not use a comma if only writing the month and year (*June 1994*).
- In city/state lists, use commas between individual cities and states: *Portland, Ore.; Tucson, Ariz.; and Springfield, Mass.*

- **Colon:**

Use a colon at the end of a sentence to introduce lists, texts, tabulations, etc. Capitalize the text following the colon only if it forms a complete sentence.

- **Dash:**

Use an em-dash to set off a phrase that contains a series of words set off by commas or to indicate an abrupt change in thought. Place a space before and after an em-dash in a

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

AP style does not use en-dashes. Use hyphens in number ranges, including page ranges; telephone numbers; and acronyms and abbreviations: *a 5-4 vote, 202-307-2942, CD-ROM.*

- **Ellipsis:**

Treat an ellipsis as a three-letter word with spaces before and after: *I ... tried to do what was best.* Do not place spaces between the dots in an ellipsis.

- **Period:**

Use only one space after a period.

- **Quotation marks:**

Place periods and commas inside quotation marks. Colons, semicolons, question marks, dashes and exclamation points are placed outside quotation marks unless they are part of the material being quoted.

Quotation marks are not necessary for nonliteral terms that have a commonly accepted meaning in the criminal justice field: *hot spot, broken windows.* However, when quotation marks are used for such a term, they should be used only the first time.

- **Semicolon:**

Use a semicolon to separate a complex series of major elements when those elements also contain commas: *the country's resources consist of large ore deposits; lumber, waterpower, and fertile soils; and a strong, rugged people.* Do not use a semicolon when a comma will suffice.

Trademarks

Do not use the symbol with a trademark name. Capitalize the word when referring to a trademark brand, word, etc. When possible, use the generic equivalent unless the trademark name is necessary. For example:

- *Taser* is the widely known trademark for *conducted energy device*. Use *conducted energy device*, unless referring specifically to *Taser*.

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Section 2: Print Documents

Audience

NIJ recognizes the need to translate research for a nontechnical audience of readers at all levels — from the chief of police to street officers, from the elected state’s attorney to assistant district attorneys, from the Governor to members of the Governor’s task force on public safety. The people who read NIJ publications are like the people who read *Newsweek*, the *Harvard Business Review* and the *New York Times*. They are intelligent and busy individuals who may or may not know much about methodology or NIJ. They want accurate information that is timely, easy to read and helps them do their job better.

The Inverted Pyramid

NIJ editors follow the newspaper industry’s inverted pyramid rule: We put the most important part of the story at the beginning. The introductory sentences tell the reader what the finding is, why it is significant, and why it is relevant to the field. Newspaper editors cut text from the end of the story because they know few people read all the way to the end. NIJ editors are less ruthless about space, but still follow the newspaper rule of thumb: Put the most important information at the beginning and cut from the end.

Manuscripts must be clear, concise and well-structured. Headings, subheadings, lists, tables, graphs and illustrations should be presented in such a way that a busy reader can scan the report and still get the main points.

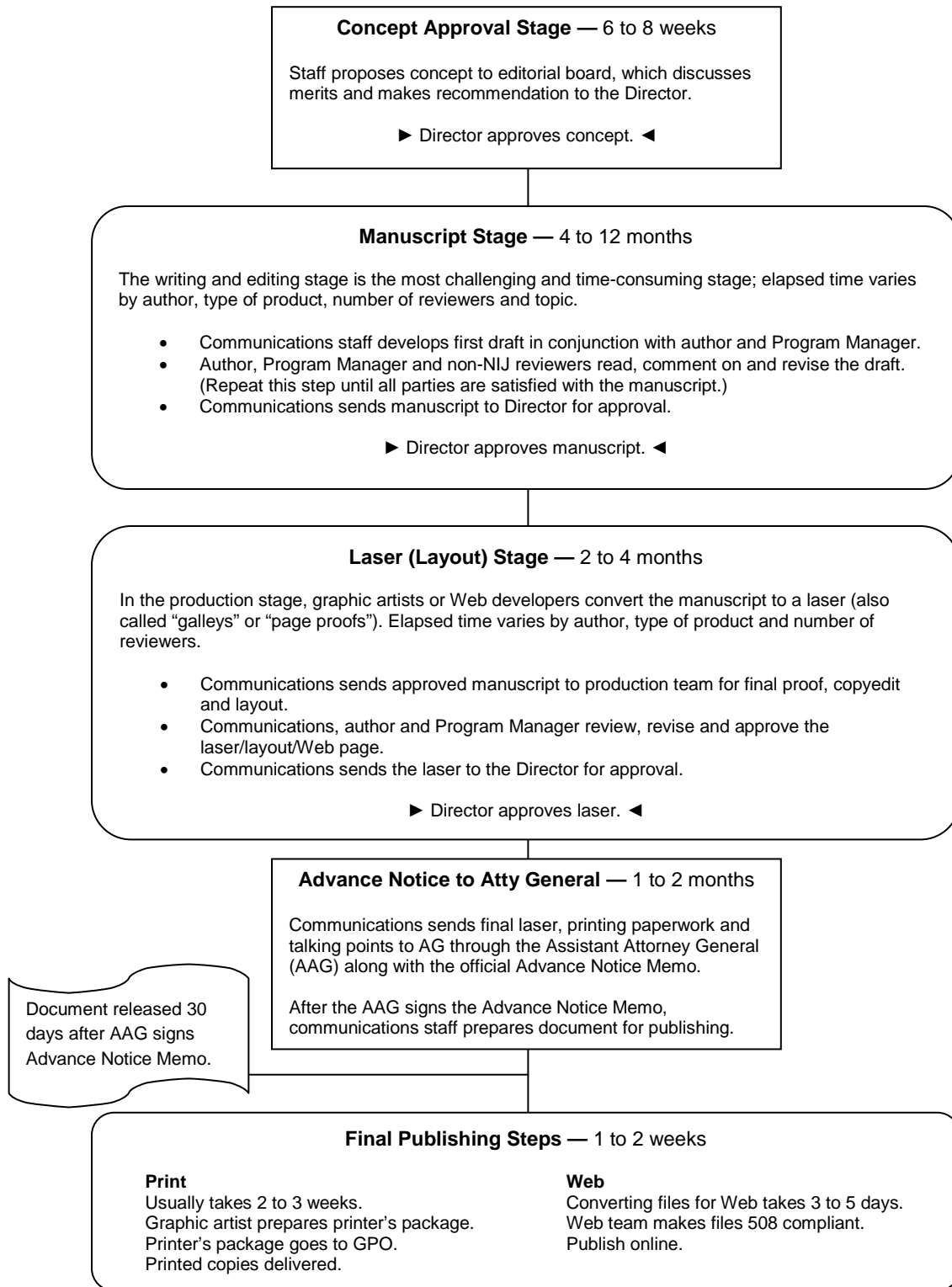
The Process

The NIJ Editorial Board reviews proposals to publish. It assesses the rigor of the science and the value to the field. The Board makes recommendations to the Director, who approves all communications products before work on the product begins. On average, publications take six to 12 months to produce after the director approves the grant manager’s request to publish the findings. The production time for each publication varies depending on its length and issues that are unique to the document. See the flowchart on the next page for the NIJ publishing steps.

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NIJ's Publishing Steps

Updated September 2011



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Peer Reviews

All final reports and summaries submitted to NIJ are sent to an external peer review panel whose comments are a major factor in NIJ's dissemination decision.

The peer review panel concentrates primarily on the substance of the research methodology and findings but frequently addresses the editorial quality and the contribution to the field. Peer reviewers forward their comments to program managers who then help authors address concerns raised during the review period.

After the external and internal reviews, program managers present their ideas about dissemination to the NIJ Editorial Board, which makes recommendations to the NIJ Director regarding publication. After the Director approves the Editorial Board's dissemination recommendations, NIJ's Office of Communications begins editorial and production work.

Manuscript

After the director authorizes NIJ's Office of Communications to begin work, an NIJ editor reviews the manuscript and assesses what needs to be done to prepare the manuscript for publication.

Working closely with the author and the program manager, the editor often rewrites sections of the manuscript to conform with NIJ's requirement to present research in plain language. Sometimes the author will redraft sections. Some reports require more than four drafts before the manuscript is ready for review by the Director.

We strongly encourage authors to make all revisions at the manuscript stage because changes made at this point are the least expensive and time-consuming.

Laser

Once the director approves the manuscript, the report is laid out in pages. Usually two sets of lasers are prepared (the initial laser and the final laser). Changes made at this stage are expensive and time-consuming.

Camera-Ready

When all revisions are complete, the document is prepared for the printer. Changes at this stage are very expensive and time-consuming.

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