

Documenters

POWERED BY CITY BUREAU & NEIGHBOR UP

Best Practices for Revising Your Notes

Summarize: Detail what happened in your words. When you use someone's exact words, put that in quotes.

Aim for 2-6 pages of notes.

Don't forget your summary bullets and follow-up questions!

- **Your summary:** Share what you found most interesting or newsworthy.
- **Your follow-up questions:** What did you want to know more about? Did you have unanswered questions?

It's OK if you don't know the answer

- When something comes up that you are unsure of:
 - Email the team at documenters@neighborhoodgrants.org
 - Mark the issue in your notes and continue documenting.

Fact-check:

- Spelling of names and official titles
- Controversial, vague or indirect statements
- Topic-specific terms, abbreviations or other jargon

Cite all of your sources:

- Identify speakers or hyperlink sources
- Properly "quote" or paraphrase
- Use full names, titles and organization names on first reference.
- Don't forget your summary bullets and follow-up questions!

Spell out abbreviations: For example, use Cleveland Public Power (CPP) the first time it's mentioned so people know what CPP means.

Use gender-neutral titles where appropriate:

- “Council member” not “councilwoman” or “councilman”
- “Chairperson” not “chairman” or “chairwoman.”
- No “Mr.” “Ms.” or “Mrs.”

Include 8-10 inline links:

- To agency websites
- To background articles
- To orgs or companies mentioned
- To streaming video, agendas, or other meeting materials.
- To previous Documenters reporting
- To legislation. [Code Library](#) or [Legistar](#).

Documenters Style Guide

compiled by Documenters Copy Editor Mary Ellen Huesken

Double-check the spelling of all first names and last names

Double-check titles

Write in past tense

Use “said” as often as possible, rather than “suggested” or “commented.”

On second reference, identify a person by last name only, just Jones, not Mr. Jones or Ms. Jones

Only capitalize proper nouns—names, titles, cities. Most words should not be capitalized.

Monies: This should always be money or funds

Hyphens: Use two to serve as a dash, with no spaces between the words and the dashes

Percentage-point: The numerical difference between two percentages. When unemployment drops from 10 percent to 7 percent, it drops 3 percentage points, not 3 percent.

Percent: Spell out, as in 27 percent

Healthcare: One word.

M for million: Always spell out the million

No Ms. or Mr. And generally don't use Dr., at least for PhDs. We also can skip the various degrees that follow the names of education and healthcare officials, such as people with Master's degrees in Social Work or Certified Nurse Practitioner. The news they are generating is independent of their degrees.

Council Member: Both words should be capitalized when appearing before a person's name. But neither would be capitalized in "and council members continued to discuss the issue."

Capitalization: When a title appears after a person's name, it need not be capitalized. As in: Suzy Queue, director of budget.

Alleged/claimed: Use "reported" or "asserted."

Editor's notes should be bracketed and in italics, for example: *[Editor's note: Neighborhood Connections, a small-grants and community-building program, is also the home of Cleveland Documenters.]*