

# 15 for '09: New media terms to know for a new year

By Joseph Priest

BlackBerry and Blu-ray. Podcasts and vodcasts. Wiki and Wi-Fi. Today's new-media technologies have precipitated a blizzard of modern words whose spellings often confound. Compound words little known a few years ago are merging into one-word terms that are shortcuts and, sometimes, just plain errors.

Since these words figure so prominently into our work and continue to evolve rapidly, it's important to know the rules for consistent spelling and usage. Let's take a look at some of the most frequently confused new media terms and understand how to write them.

**BlackBerry:** The name of this popular personal digital assistant product has an internal capital B.

**Blu-ray:** Blu-ray is a high-definition disc format that is competing to replace the DVD. The name Blu-ray is hyphenated with a lowercase r. It's derived from the blue-violet laser used to read and write this type of disc.

**blog:** A derivation formed from the words Web log, blog should not be capitalized.

**cell phone:** Or cellphone? Although Associated Press style says two words, the media are split on the issue, leading to



much confusion. What's more, Webster's New World College Dictionary, the official dictionary of the Associated Press, spells it as one word. Write cell phone as two words for now but keep in mind that it's a word in transition and the one-word spelling likely will become more common.

**Del.icio.us:** Although the company spells the name of its social bookmarking Web service with a lowercase d, this is generally considered a logo affectation, in the same way that *Fortune* magazine spells its name *FORTUNE*. For this reason, capitalize Del.icio.us as a proper noun.

**e-mail:** This spelling with a hyphen — not email — is the correct one for the shortened form of electronic mail and still the rule for AP style. The reason: Words based on single letters never lose their hyphenation: B-movie, D-Day, T-shirt, X-

ray. So keep that hyphen and help reverse the unfortunate practice of writing this term as one word.

**Facebook:** Although the logo for this social networking site is written with a lowercase f, don't let that fool you into not capitalizing it as you would for the names of other Web sites.

**LinkedIn:** Remember it's one word with a capital I in the middle.

**MySpace:** Note the one-word spelling and capital S.

**podcast:** Even though this name derives from the Apple iPod, podcast should not be capitalized. The P stays capitalized as long as iPod is its own word, but loses the capitalization in legitimate compound forms and with suffixes as other proper nouns do. For example, Bible becomes biblical and Congress becomes congressional.

**videocast:** Although this word is so new that no standard has been established, videocast is the term used by most well-edited publications such as *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post*. To a lesser degree, the word VODcast or vodcast (derived from the abbreviation for "video on demand") is used, but this is a trademark of the company SeaChange International. Stay away from the variant vidcast.

**Web site:** As with cell phone, Web site is a word that's evolving. Although website is becoming the popular spelling, AP style still spells this as two words with a capital W. The argument: Web is short for the proper noun World Wide Web and stays capitalized as long as it's its own word. And just as construction site and grave site remain two words, Web site stays two words.

**wiki:** Taken from the Hawaiian word meaning "quick," this word isn't capitalized. However, one of the most well-known wikis — Wikipedia, the free, user-written, online encyclopedia — is capitalized because it's a proper noun.

**Wi-Fi:** The abbreviated form of Wireless Fidelity — the technology that allows laptop computers to wirelessly connect to the Internet, among other capabilities — contains two capital letters and a hyphen.

**YouTube:** This online video site is one word with a capital T in the middle. **T**



Joseph Priest is editor of online communications at Ketchum's New York office, where he co-writes a monthly style-and-usage newsletter. He can be reached at [joseph.priest@ketchum.com](mailto:joseph.priest@ketchum.com).