

Guide to AP Style

Associated Press in Brief

- Associated Press founded in 1848
 - Cooperative effort among six New York newspapers pooling resources for gathering international news
 - Currently world's single largest news organization (over 3700 employees in 121 countries)
 - More than a billion people read, hear or see AP news daily
 - *The Associated Press Stylebook*, first published in 1977
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What is AP Style

- Commonly accepted journalistic standards for usage, spelling, grammar and punctuation.
 - Keep writing style easy to read, concise and free of bias.
 - Standard style guide for most U.S. newspapers, magazines and public relations firms.
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Why AP Style?

1. Accurate
 2. Clear
 3. Tight
 4. Neutral (non-offensive)
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Numbers

- **Spell out:**

- Whole numbers below 10
- Numerals that start a sentence.
 - Example: *Twenty-seven detainees were released yesterday.*
- For large numbers use hyphen to connect word ending in **y** to another word:
 - Example: *twenty-one or seventy-six thousand*

- **Use figures:**

- For 10 and above.
- For all ages and percentages (even less than 10).

PLACES: *Addresses*

- Abbreviate words street, avenue and boulevard only after numbered address.
 - Never abbreviate drive, highway, place, etc.
- Abbreviate compass directions in numbered address.

Example: *50 S. Court St.,*
South Court Street

PLACES: States

- Spell out names of states unless preceded by a city, county or military base name.
 - Spell out Alaska & Hawaii and states with five or fewer letters.
- For second references, abbreviate all state names.

Examples: *I lived in Oklahoma.*
 I lived in Tulsa, Okla.
 I lived in Iowa.
 I lived in Council Bluffs, Iowa.

TIME: Days vs. dates?

- Always use numerals without *st*, *nd*, *rd* or *th* in dates.
 - Avoid using yesterday, today and tomorrow
 - story publication could be delayed
 - When writing about events use months and dates
 - Example: "*April 30*" and "*June 5*."
 - When referring to a month, day and year, set off year with commas.
 - Example: *Aug. 20, 1964, was the day they had all been waiting for.*
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TIME: Months

- Never abbreviate months not immediately precede a date
- Abbreviate only if month's name is six letters or longer

Example: *We got married in September last year.*

They were married Aug. 6 last year and divorced March 5.

TIME: Years

- Add an "s" to first year in the decade.
- Years are never spelled out.
 - Even at beginning of sentence use figure.

Example: *In the 1960s, I did a lot of things I don't remember.*

1968 was a good year, I'm told.

TIME: a.m. vs. p.m.

- Recognize “8 p.m. tonight” is redundant.
Write *8 p.m. Monday*.
 - Use figures except for noon and midnight
 - Write time of day like this: *2:30 a.m.* or *8:45 p.m.*
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TITLES: Compositions

- Capitalize first and last word of title.
- Capitalize all words four letters or longer.
- Do not capitalize articles "a," "an" and "the" OR conjunctions or prepositions, unless four letters or longer.
- Capitalize *the* in title if that is the way publication prefers to be known.

Examples: *The Elements of Style*
 Gone With the Wind
 The Angler

TITLES: People

- Capitalize formal titles before a name
 - ▣ do not separate title from name by a comma.
- Titles after a name or standing alone are ALMOST NEVER capitalized (*exceptions for nobility—see AP Stylebook*)

Examples: *I saw President Obama.*
He met Prince Charles.
Dr. Mojock, LSCC president, attended the meeting.

TITLES: Places

- General compass directions should be lowercase
 - Example: *The warm front is moving east.*
- Capitalize names of U.S. regions
 - Example: *The Northeast depends on the Midwest for its food supply.*
- NOTE
 - Best reference for correct spelling/punctuation of place names: “U.S. Postal Service Directory of Post Offices.”
 - Best reference for foreign geographic names: “Webster’s New World College Dictionary.”

TITLES: Ethnic Groups

- Preferred usage for African Americans is “black.” It is not capitalized.
 - Preferred usage for Caucasians is “white,” also not capitalized.
 - Preferred usage for Asian people is “Asian,” capitalized.
 - “American Indian,” capitalized with no hyphen, is preferred over “Native American.”
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A Guide to Punctuation

■ Comma (,)

- Do not put a comma before conjunction in a simple series.
 - Example: *John, Paul, George and Ringo; red, white and blue.*
- Use a comma to set off a person's hometown and age.
 - Example: *Jane Doe, Framingham, was absent.*
 - *Joe Blow, 34, was arrested yesterday.*

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- ❑ Place a comma before and after the following:
 - A year, if it follows a month and date.
 - ❑ Example: *I was born on Nov. 6, 1958, in Madison, Wis.*
 - A state, if it follows a city or county name.
 - ❑ Example: *I was born in Madison, Wis., on Nov. 6, 1958.*
 - An appositive (a word or phrase that says same thing as a word or phrase next to it)
 - ❑ Example: *I saw my boss, John Smith, in the hall.* (My boss and John Smith are identical.)
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■ Colon (:)

- Capitalize first word after colon only if it is a proper noun or start of a complete sentence:
 - Example: *He promised this: The company will make good all the losses.*
 - *But: There were three considerations: expense, time and feasibility.*
- Colons go outside quotation marks unless part of quoted material.

■ Hyphen (-)

- Use a hyphen for compound adjectives before the noun:
 - Example: *well-known actor, full-time job, 20-year sentence*
- Do not use when compound modifier occurs after verb:
 - Example: *The actor was well known. Her job became full time. He was sentenced to 20 years.*

■ Period (.)

- Use a single space after period at end of sentence.
- Do not put space between initials:
 - *C.S. Lewis; G.K. Chesterton*

“Quotations” in the news

- **Quote marks indicate exact wording.**
 - They tell reader, "This is exactly what was said."
 - Quote marks always appear outside punctuation.
 - When a full-sentence quotation is introduced or followed by attribution, place a comma between them.
 - Quotations that are questions only need a question mark.
 - Example: “*Did he really say that?*” *he asked.*
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- In dialogue, each person's words are placed in a separate paragraph with quotation marks.
 - Begin a new paragraph with each speaker
- Use single marks for quotes within quotes:
 - Example: *She said, "He told me, 'I love you.'"*
- If a quote is more than 2 sentences use a colon after attribution.

Examples:

I said: "Isn't this great. . . It's the state fair."

"What's going on?" he asked.

He said he felt "sicker than a dead frog " after he drank too much tequila.

Spellings to NOTE

- accommodate (two c's, two m's)
- adviser (AP likes an "e" in it)
- afterward (no "s" at the end)
- amid (has no "st" at the end)
- among (has no "st" at the end)
- calendar
- canceled, cancellation
- embarrass (two "r's" and two "s's")
- harass (only one "r.")
- homicide (not homocide)
- judgment (there is no "judge" in judgment)
- knowledge
- livable
- privilege (no "d")
- sheriff

Activity: AP Style Check

- a vs. an
 - affect vs. effect
 - burglary vs. larceny
 - robbery vs. theft
 - counsel vs. council
 - principal vs. principle
 - lay vs. lie
 - Scots vs. scotch
 - Marshall vs. marshal
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SOURCES

- Guide to AP style by Dr. Michael S. Sweeney, Utah State University
<http://www.usu.edu/journalism/faculty/sweeney/resources/ap.html>
 - **Quick Reference Associated Press Style**
www.bu.edu/com/writingprgm/ap_styleguide1.pdf
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