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Guide to

AP Style

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# 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).
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# 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*

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# 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.*

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# 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.*

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# 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.*

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## 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*

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# 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.*

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# 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.”
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# 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.
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## ■ 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*
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# “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.*

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# 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
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# 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](http://www.bu.edu/com/writingprgm/ap_styleguide1.pdf)
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