

AP Style

The *Associated Press Stylebook* offers guidelines for news writing. Many public relations offices and publications, such as magazines and newspapers, use AP style as a standardized writing style.

This handout will provide an introduction to AP style and a summary of common rules. For a complete guide to AP style, writers should consult the most recent edition of the *Associated Press Stylebook*, download the AP Style App or visit the AP Stylebook website.

Using the AP Style Guide

Memorizing all the rules is unnecessary. The *Associated Press Stylebook* includes more than 5,000 entries. However, a basic knowledge of AP style and a basic knowledge of how to use the style guide are fundamental to those working in journalism. The style guide works like a dictionary and includes special sections, such as a pronunciation guide, standards for sports writing and a briefing on media law.

Understanding Common Rules

Numbers

- Generally spell out numbers below 10 and use figures for 10 and higher. Spell out an approximate number if it can be expressed in a few words.
 - Example: Every day, nine farmers pick 500 pounds of apples.
- Use figures for ages, times, votes, years, scores, speeds, money, dimensions, percentages, addresses, days of the month, temperature degrees and serial numbers.
 - Example: The winner of the magazine drive is 8-year-old Sasha. She sold \$6,000 worth of subscriptions, which is 25 percent of the fundraiser total.
- Spell out numbers (except years) that begin sentences. Tip: Try to avoid beginning sentences with numbers.
 - Example: Thirty-two students in the classroom became ill.
- Write out stand-alone fractions.
 - Example: One-fourth of the class admitted to plagiarism.
- Avoid successive numerals in a single expression.
 - Example: The project required 32 five-inch boards.
- Spell out the word *percent* instead of using the “%” sign.
 - Example: Most of the students received either an “A” or a “B.” Only 6 percent of the class received a “D.”

Street Addresses

- Only abbreviate street, avenue and boulevard when they are included in a numbered address.
 - Example: The store is located at 45 Butterfield Blvd.
 - Example: The president lives on Pennsylvania Avenue.
- The words drive, court, way and lane are not abbreviated.
 - Example: Sarah lives on Fargo Drive.

State Names

- Spell out state names when they stand alone in textual material.
 - Example: The prosecutor hails from California, a traditionally liberal state.
- Always use state abbreviations in conjunction with a city name, town, village or military base in most datelines and in text.
 - Example: The woman from Morgan Hill, Calif. is a suspect in a Portland, Ore. robbery.
- To punctuate, insert a comma between the city and the state name and insert another comma after the state name, unless ending a sentence or indicating a dateline.
 - Example: The suspect drove from Little Rock, Ark., to Port Townsend, Wash., before settling in Eugene, Ore.
- In headlines, drop the periods for states abbreviated with two capital letters but retain the periods for the rest.
- Do not use postal abbreviations except with full addresses. Use AP Style Abbreviations:

• Ala.	• Mass.	• Okla.
• Ariz.	• Mich.	• Ore.
• Ark.	• Minn.	• Pa.
• Calif.	• Miss.	• R.I.
• Colo.	• Mo.	• S.C.
• Del.	• Mont.	• S.D.
• Fla.	• Neb.	• Tenn.
• Ga.	• Nev.	• Vt.
• Ill.	• N.H.	• Va.
• Ind.	• N.J.	• Wash.
• Kan.	• N.M.	• W.Va.
• Ky.	• N.Y.	• Wis.
• La.	• N.C.	• Wy.
• Md.	• N.D.	

The Oxford Comma

- In a list, do not insert a comma before the conjunction that stands prior to the final item in the series.
 - Example: The store sells tortillas, beans and rice.

Time

- Do not use AM, PM, am or pm to denote time. Use a.m. and p.m.
 - Example: The city council meeting starts at 5:30 p.m.
- If the time takes place on the hour, do not include a colon followed by zeros.
 - Example: The press conference begins at 11 a.m.

Titles

Capitalize formal titles when they precede a person's name. If the title follows a person's name, do not capitalize it, and set it off with commas.

- Example: Mayor Sherri McDonald is running against Sarah Tran, former city council member.

Toward

Spell *toward* not *towards*. The same rule applies to *forward*, *backward*, *upward* and *downward*.

Composition Titles

- Use quotation marks around the titles of books, television shows, films, computer games, works of art, speeches and lectures.
- Do not use quotation marks around the titles of magazines, newspapers, the Bible or books that are catalogues of reference materials.
- Do not italicize or underline any of the above.

Technological Terms

- The following list provides the correct spelling and capitalization for common technological terms. (Reference: Purdue OWL)

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|--|---|
| • BlackBerry, BlackBerrys | • Internet |
| • download | • iPad, iPhone, iPod (<i>use iPad, iPhone, or iPod when the word begins a sentence</i>) |
| • eBay Inc. (<i>use eBay Inc. when the word begins a sentence</i>) | • LinkedIn |
| • e-book | • social media |
| • e-reader | • smartphone |
| • email | • the Net |
| • cellphone | • Twitter, tweet, tweeted, retweet |
| • Facebook | • World Wide Web, website, Web page |
| • Google, Googling, Googled | • webmaster |
| • hashtag | • YouTube |
| • IM | |

Activity

Correct the following errors using the rules from above and the *Associated Press Stylebook*. Some sentences will require you to use the *Stylebook*!

1. A hair model scout stopped the blonde man and his adult brunette son to offer them modeling gigs for a revolutionary shampoo that stops grey hair from growing.

2. The wife complemented her husband by telling him that his scarf complimented his eyes.
3. The seventeen-year-old boy was arrested for stealing one hundred dollars from the liquor store on 135 Market Street. The police knew he would head towards the forest outside of town.
4. Governor Jerry Brown did not continue some of the policies of Arnold Schwarzenegger, the former Governor.
5. The team comprised of students of all majors.
6. The defense argued that the jury was biased, bribed, or threatened.
7. I cannot wait to see the film version of Marjane Satrapi's graphic novel Persepolis.
8. I think most people prefer to receive e-mails rather than phone calls.
9. Her date was supposed to start at 8:00 PM, but it started at 7:00 pm.
10. Students who spend too much time on the internet need more time to rest, study, and exercise.

Answer Key for Activity

1. A hair model scout stopped the blond man and his adult brown-haired son to offer them modeling gigs for a revolutionary shampoo that stops gray hair from growing.
2. The wife complimented her husband by telling him that his scarf complemented his eyes.
3. The 17-year-old boy was arrested for stealing \$100 from the liquor store on 135 Market St. The police knew he would head toward the forest outside of town.
4. Gov. Jerry Brown did not continue some of the policies of Arnold Schwarzenegger, the former governor.
5. The team included students of all majors. (Answers may vary.)
6. The defense argued that the jury was biased, bribed or threatened.
7. I cannot wait to see the film version of Marjane Satrapi's graphic novel "Persepolis."
8. I think most people prefer to receive emails rather than phone calls.
9. Her date was supposed to start at 8 p.m., but it started at 7 p.m.
10. Students who spend too much time on the Internet need more time to rest, study and exercise.