

## **ASSOCIATED PRESS STYLE ESSENTIALS**

This AP short guide is modeled on one made available in the past by the University of Montana School of Journalism and by North Idaho College. It is based on material in "The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on media law," copyright 2002.

### **NUMERALS**

- Use figures for all numbers above nine; spell out all numbers under 10. (Note, however, the exceptions below.)

\*Use figures for ages, sums of money, time of day, percentages, house numerals, years, days of month, degrees of temperature, proportions, votes, scores, speeds, time of races, dimensions and serial numbers.

\*Spell out numbers, no matter how large, when they begin sentences; rephrase the sentence if long numbers are awkward. Exception: When starting a sentence with a year, do not write it out.

1999 was a very good year.

\*Use figures for ordinal numbers above ninth; spell out ordinals under 10th.

Ninth 21st 156th 192nd 21st century

- Use 21 million instead of 21,000,000. Also: \$39 million, \$22.5 billion. Don't carry beyond two decimals.
- Avoid unnecessary ciphers. Use \$1, not \$1.00; 1 p.m., not 1:00 p.m.
- Spell out an approximate number if it can be expressed in a few words.  
Nearly a thousand half a million about four hundred  
BUT: the city's population of about 575,000
- DO NOT use Roman numerals except when they are part of a title or a name.  
World War I World War II King Henry VIII Rocco Colabella III
- Fractions standing alone are spelled out.  
One-fourth of the students
- Insert commas with four or more figures, except in dates.  
\$5,900 1,576 skateboards 1990 2001

- Avoid successive numerals in a single expression.  
15 six-inch boards

#### **ABBREVIATIONS AND TITLES**

- Never use an abbreviation that will not be easily understood.
- Abbreviate names of states when used after the names of cities and towns, but spell out when referring to the state generally. The state may be omitted in references to Washington communities and to major cities when names alone are adequate identification (Chicago, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, Seattle, Philadelphia, etc.).

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

Del. La. Mont. N.C. S.D. Wyo.

DO NOT abbreviate Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Utah, Texas.

DO NOT abbreviate the names of Canadian Provinces.

DO NOT abbreviate the Canal Zone, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, British West Indies,

except when repeated full references in a story would be cumbersome.

- Abbreviate Saint before a city or institution, but see AP for Saint John and Sault Ste. Marie. Do not abbreviate Fort or Mount.  
St. Paul Mount Bachelor Mount Vernon Mount Sinai Hospital  
St. Louis Fort Bragg Fort Lauderdale Saint John

- Abbreviate names of months more than five letters when followed by a date, but spell out when referring to the month generally. DO NOT abbreviate March, April, May, June, July.  
in February Feb. 5 March 30 April 7 Sept. 10, 2000  
in September 2000

- Abbreviate names of political parties when used parenthetically or in election statistics:  
U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., said today...

- Abbreviate and use numerals in specific addresses. Spell out and follow the normal style rule for numbers when making a general reference to a street. Abbreviate building when giving a room number, but spell it out in a general reference. Always spell out Route and Highway.

815 E. Harris Ave. East Harris Avenue 314 S. Eighth St. W.  
South Third Street West Humanities Building 338 Humanities Bldg.  
California Press Assn. U.S. Route 2 U.S. Highway 93

• DO NOT abbreviate:

\*United States and United Nations when used as nouns. (Abbreviate as modifiers and as parts of military titles: U.S. Ambassador, U.N. General Assembly, Gen. Thomas Jones, U.S.A. - ret.)

\*Names of foreign countries \*percent (spell out)

\*days of the week (except in tabulations) \*cents (spell out)

\*William to Wm., James to Jas., etc.

• Abbreviate titles followed by a name. DO NOT abbreviate titles following names or standing alone.

Prof. Lyle E. Harris Lt. Gen.

Assoc. Prof. Tim Pilgrim Maj. Gen.

Asst. Prof. Cheryl Breeden Brig. Gen.

Atty. Gen. Col.

Gov. Lt. Col.

Lt. Gov. Maj.

Sen. Capt.

Rep. 1st Lt.

Gen. 2nd Lt.

\*DO NOT abbreviate president, secretary, treasurer, principal, major, superintendent, commodore, director, attorney, manager, auditor, justice, one-syllable titles or any title that is not generally recognized in its abbreviated form. Spell out titles of Navy enlisted men (Boatswain's Mate 1.C., Chief Gunner's Mate, Seaman 2.C., etc.).

• Abbreviate Co., Inc., Ltd. and Corp. when part of a corporate title.

• Always give the first names or initials of persons the first time they appear in a story.

• Use Dr. only for physicians, dentists members of the paramedical professions (osteopaths, optometrists, chiropractors, podiatrists etc.) and clergymen who hold earned or honorary doctorates.

• After first use in a compound title, use only the main word of title.

Lt. Col. Mark J. Clark Col. Clark

Master Sgt. June S. Yeap Sgt. Yeap

Asst. Prof. Alice Boyer Prof. Boyer

• Rev. should always be preceded by "the."

the Rev. R. L. Dale

the Rt. Rev. Msgr. Edward Beal Msgr. Beal

the Most Rev. James Riley, archbishop of Philadelphia Archbishop Riley

Rabbi Joshua Goldbloom Rabbi Goldbloom

Cardinal James McKay Cardinal McKay

• DO NOT capitalize an occupation or descriptive adjectives and nouns used before a name.

defense attorney Arnold Becker

second baseman Bobby Richardson  
futurist Rad Bradbury

- Place long titles after the name.  
Kris Bulcroft, vice provost for undergraduate education

## **CAPITALIZATION**

- Capitalize titles preceding and attached to a name, but use lower case if the title follows a name or stands by itself. Long titles should follow the name.

President Karen Morse

Karen Morse, president of Western Washington University

Mayor Richard Stevens the mayor

Presidents Bush and Clinton

- Capitalize specific regions, but not the points of the compass.  
Middle West the Pacific Northwest Southern California Western District  
back East east the East western

- Capitalize the names of religions, adjectives denoting religious denominations and nouns to designate the Supreme Being. Lowercase pronouns referring to the deity.

Buddhism Methodist Catholic his word he him

thee thy whose

- Capitalize names of races and nationalities, but put descriptive adjectives in lower case

Negro Oriental Egyptian Caucasian white black colored

BUT: Only identify race when it is ESSENTIAL to the story (see AP Style Guide).

- Capitalize abbreviations of college degrees (write without space between letters). But, if mention of academic degrees is necessary, the preferred form is to avoid abbreviation (see AP Style Guide).

- Capitalize common nouns and their distinguishing modifiers in names of associations, societies, companies, streets, etc.

Elizabeth Park Sehome High School Blythe Plumbing Co.

Lake Chelan Parks Hall Associated Student Board

Harris Avenue Westin Hotel Carver Gym

Safeco Field First Methodist Church Budget Committee

- Capitalize the formal names of schools and departments of Western Washington University, but use the informal names whenever possible.

WWU Department of Communications (but: communications department)

WWU Financial Aid Office (but: financial aid office)

- Capitalize the formal names of congressional committees, specific courts, government agencies, etc.

Senate House Legislature Parliament

City Council Supreme Court Foreign Relations Committee

- Capitalize holidays and special or historic events.

Fourth of July National Milk Week Reformation

World War II New Year's Eve Christmas (not Xmas)

15th annual WWU Fine Arts Festival

- DO NOT capitalize student board or board of trustees or other widely used internal elements of an organization unless used as part of the formal title (see organizations and institutions in AP Style Guide).  
board of trustees WWU Board of Trustees

- Capitalize chapter, room, highway, etc. when followed by a number or letter.

Administration 33 Lakeway Inn, Room 2 Interstate 5

- Capitalize the names of the planets, stars and groups of stars. Capitalize earth only when using it in association with the names of other astronomical bodies that are capitalized.

The planets are Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus...  
The sun warms the earth.

- Capitalize the names of political parties and the word "party" if it is customarily used as part of the organization's name, nouns denoting members of a political faith (Democrat, Republican, Nazi, Communist) and adjectives denoting a specific political allegiance (Democrat, Fascist, Red). Do not capitalize such words when they denote a system of government rather than a political party.

Republican Party nazism Communist leader democratic system

- Capitalize articles and prepositions in names when a Christian name or title does not precede them, except in names when personal preference guides the usage.

Henry van Dyke Van Dyke Alexis de Tocqueville De Tocqueville

- DO NOT capitalize a.m. and p.m. Always use figures with them. Do not use spaces in the abbreviations.

9:35 a.m. 9 a.m. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. 3 to 5 p.m. noon

midnight

- DO NOT capitalize academic degrees when spelled out, or names of college classes.

bachelor of arts degree master's degree junior freshman class

- DO NOT capitalize the seasons.

summer winter fall spring

- DO NOT capitalize former, ex-, or -elect when used with titles.  
former President Bill Clinton President-elect Nader  
ex-Sen. Slade Gorton

- DO NOT capitalize prepositions, conjunctions, or articles in titles of books, etc., except when they begin the title. Bands are capitalized, but not contained in quotes.

"The Man Who Came to Dinner" "For Whom the Bell Tolls"  
Pearl Jam

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

- Use Monday, Tuesday, etc. for days of the week within seven days before or after current date. Use today as appropriate for current work. DO NOT use yesterday or tomorrow.

- Avoid using there. Use that, this, and those only when followed by a noun or pronoun. DO NOT use them alone.

NOT: This happened Tuesday.

BUT: This wreck happened Tuesday.

- Their, they're, there

Their is a possessive pronoun: They went to their cabin.

There is an adverb indicating direction: We went there for a movie.

There is also used with the force of a pronoun for impersonal construction in which the real subject follows the verb: There is food in the kitchen.

There is a contraction for "they are": They're all doing so well.

## **PUNCTUATION**

The purpose of punctuation is to clarify meaning.

- Periods indicate ellipsis or a significant pause in a train of thought.

He said: "I will speak ... in all 50 states."

Coeur d'Alene needs better streets ... and more long-range city planning.

- Put the period inside brackets or parentheses when a complete sentence is enclosed in the brackets or parentheses. When the parenthetical expression forms only a part of the sentence, put the period outside the bracket or parenthesis.

(The day was too cold for football.)

The day was too cold for football (or skiing).

- Always put the period and comma inside quotation marks. Put other punctuation marks inside when they are part of the quoted material.

"I saw the play," he said.

He said, "I saw the play."

" Did you see the play?" he asked.  
Should I see "King Lear"?

- DO NOT use a period after abbreviations no longer considered as such.  
pro tem

- Use periods in lower-case abbreviations.  
c.o.d. f.o.b. a.m. p.m. m.p.h. r.p.m.  
Exception: 35mm

DO NOT use periods with upper-case abbreviations.  
WWU FBI CIA UNESCO OPEC ROTC

Exceptions: Use periods in abbreviations of United Nations and names of countries and cities and in special situations where an all-cap abbreviation replaces a common noun (as in D.A. for district attorney).

U.N. I.R.A. U.S. L.A. N.Y.

- DO NOT use a comma between a person's name and college class numeral.

Tim Pilgrim '89 James Smith ex-'94

- DO NOT use a comma between a person's name and Jr. or Sr.  
John Jones Jr.

- Use quotation marks with titles of books, poems, plays, films, speeches, songs, works of art, subjects or lectures, magazine articles. DO NOT use them with newspapers or magazines.  
" The Hanging Tree" Newsweek New York Times "Mona Lisa"

- Use apostrophes to form the plural of single letters but not figures or multiple letters.

Four A's early 1920s IQs temperature in the low 20s

- Use dashes sparingly. Use to show significant pause, abrupt break in thought or broken speech.

I asked for bread and they gave me -- a stone.

The modern world - the modern Christian world - has lapsed from faith into opinion.

" I - I don't know. I am not the man -"

- Use parentheses or brackets around inserted material. Use quotation marks with nicknames when the first name is included.

" The people here (WWU faculty) know what I mean."

Lincoln (Neb.) Star George "Lefty" Moore

letter (Western Front, Dec. 11).

- The hyphen is sometimes used after a prefix ending in a vowel when the prefix is followed by the same vowel. This use is becoming less common, however, and the hyphen may be omitted in words that are used

frequently and are readily recognized without it.  
Reelect reenter preeminent reevaluate cooperate  
Coordinate anti-intellectual pro-oleomargarine

- Use the hyphen to distinguish the meaning of different words that are spelled the same way.

Recover re-cover resent re-sent

- Use the hyphen to separate a prefix from a proper noun.

un-American anti-French pro-Negro

Exception: transatlantic

- Use the hyphen for clarity in compound modifiers.

6-foot shark family-owned business purple-faced tycoon

- DO NOT use the hyphen when not necessary.

statewide vice president sergeant at arms weekend

worldwide

- DO NOT use the hyphen with adverbs ending in -ly.

newly elected badly damaged recently named

- Use the ampersand when it is part of an official name.

Johnson & Co. AT&T U.S. News & World Report

Editor & Publisher

- Spell out degrees when referring to temperature.

49 degrees

- Use figures and spell out inches, feet, yards etc. However, use apostrophes (5'6") to indicate inches and feet in technical contexts.  
He is 5 feet 6 inches tall.

The basketball team signed a 7-footer.

the 6-foot-5 forward

- Use a comma before the concluding conjunction in a series if an integral element of the series requires a conjunction, or if there is a complex series of phrases.

I had orange juice, toast, and ham and eggs for breakfast.

The main points to consider are whether the athletes are skillful enough to compete, whether they have the stamina to endure training, and whether they have the proper mental attitude.

- DO NOT use close-quote marks at the end of the first paragraph if a full paragraph of quoted material is followed by a paragraph that continues the quotation. Use open quote marks at the start of the second paragraph.

He said, "I am shocked and horrified by the incident.

" I am so horrified, in fact, that I will ask for the death penalty."

- If a paragraph does not start with quotation marks but ends with a quotation that is continued into the next paragraph, DO NOT use close-quote marks at the end of the introductory paragraph if the quoted material constitutes a full sentence. Use close-quote marks, however, if the quoted material does not constitute a full sentence.

He said he was "shocked and horrified by the incident."

" I am so horrified, in fact, that I will ask for the death penalty," he said.

- When a partial quote is used, DO NOT put quotation marks around words that the speaker could not have used.

Suppose the individual said, "I am horrified at your slovenly manners."

Wrong: She said she "was horrified at their slovenly manners."

Right: She said she was horrified at their "slovenly manners."

- Suspensive hyphenation:

He received a 10- to 20-year prison sentence.

The 5- and 6-year-olds attend morning classes.

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- End -

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