

AP Style Tipsheet

Common questions

- Addresses
 - Always use figures for address numbers. “155 Avenue of the Americas”
 - Use abbreviations Ave., Blvd. and St. only with a numbered address. Spell out when used without a number. “1600 Pennsylvania Ave.,” “Pennsylvania Avenue.”
 - Lowercase those when used with more than one street name. “Pennsylvania and Massachusetts avenues.”
 - Spell out and capitalize First through Ninth. “7 Fifth Ave.,” “14th Street”
- Ages
 - Always use figures.
 - Use hyphens with “-year-old”: “The 8-year-old’s opinion,” “the 46-year-old man said.” But “the girl is 12 years old.”
- Composition titles (books, movies, titles of lectures, speeches, works of art, etc.)
 - In general, put quotes around the title. Capitalize principal words, including prepositions and conjunctions that have four or more letters. Capitalize articles that are the first or last word in a title.
 - Don’t use italics.
- Compound modifiers
 - Hyphenate words when they express a single concept and come before a noun. “Full-time job,” “health-care legislation.” But “the job is full time,” “health care is included.”
 - Generally, words that are hyphenated before the noun are not hyphenated after it.
 - Nonprofit is never hyphenated.
- Dates
 - When using a month with a specific date, abbreviate Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec. Spell them out when using alone or with just a year. “Oct. 1, 2007,” “October 2007,” “in October.”
 - Months with five letters or fewer in their names are never abbreviated
 - When a phrase refers to a month, day and year, set off the year with a comma. “March 12, 2016, is the launch date.”
- Fewer/less
 - Use “less” for things you can’t count and “fewer” for things you can. “Less time,” but “fewer minutes.” Also: “two fewer coffee pods,” “less coffee.”
- Percentages
 - Spell out “percent.” except in headlines. Use figures except when the number is at the start of the sentence.
 - “The rate dropped to 20 percent,” “Thirty percent of responders said”
 - In a headline: “20% of Cake-Related Deaths...”
- State names
 - Don’t abbreviate state names in body copy. For datelines, check AP’s stylebook entry for specific abbreviations for each state.
- That/which

- Use “that” for essential clauses: important to a sentence’s meaning, not offset by commas.
- Use “which” for nonessential clauses: less necessary, offset by commas.
 - “The pretzels, which are in the drawer, are a favored ProPublica snack.” “The pretzels that are in the drawer are gone before they get stale.”
- Time elements
 - Use Monday, Tuesday, etc., only for days of the week within seven days before or after the current date.
- Titles: Only capitalize formal titles in front of a name.
 - Formal titles denote a scope of authority: senator, president, pope, etc. Job titles aren’t necessarily formal titles.
 - We don’t use courtesy titles (Mr., Mrs., Ms., etc.)

House style

- al-Qaida
 - (We follow AP style on this)
- Court cases
 - Italicize full or partial court case names. “the *Roe v. Wade* decision,” “as written in *Roe*,”
- Data is always singular
- Drunk, drunken
 - Ignore the AP on this — always use “drunk.”
- News publications’ names
 - Defer to the publication’s preferred style regarding capitalization, etc.: “The New York Times,” but “Los Angeles Times” (no “the”)
- Over/more than
 - We’re with the AP: Over is acceptable to indicate greater numerical value as well as spatial positioning.
- Pageview
 - One word
- Upstyle headlines
 - Each word is capitalized, except for articles and short conjunctions. Conjunctions are capitalized if they’re four letters or longer.

Punctuation

- Em dashes, en dashes, ellipses
 - Em dashes (—) are longer than en dashes (–) and are preferred in body copy. Use a space on either side of an em dash — like this — and avoid overusing them when commas would suffice.
 - Shortcut on Windows: Control + Alt + - (on number keyboard)
 - On Mac: Option + Shift + - (that’s a dash)
 - Same spacing rules apply for ellipses: “As long as there was ... a base, I felt strongly that it was necessary to see the constitutional process through to its conclusion”
- Oxford/serial comma

- We generally don't use the Oxford comma (the one before the "and" in a series). Sometimes you need it for more complex series. If you have questions, look this up in the stylebook for detailed advice and examples.
- Punctuation with quotation marks
 - Periods and commas always go within quotation marks
 - Dashes, semicolons, question marks and exclamation points go within the quotation marks only when they apply to the quoted matter. If they apply to the whole sentence, they go outside.
- Singular, plural possessives (a very partial guide)
 - Singular and plural nouns not ending in s: Add 's
 - Singular: the cafe's bagels
 - Plural: women's rights
 - Plural noun ending in s: Add only an apostrophe
 - states' rights
 - Singular common nouns ending in s: Add 's unless the next word begins with an s
 - the hostess's invitation, the hostess' seat
 - Singular proper nouns ending in s: Use only an apostrophe
 - "The Red Cross' failures"