

Web Style Guide – Associated Press Style

Quick Reference

Numbers

- Spell out the numbers one through nine. Use Arabic numerals for 10 and up. Always use Arabic numerals for ages and percentages, even for numbers less than 10.
- Spell out numbers that start a sentence. If the result is awkward, re-work the sentence: *Seventy-five students attended the symposium yesterday. Yesterday, 635 seniors were awarded degrees.*
- The exception to this rule is a sentence that begins with a calendar year: *2007 was a record-breaking year for fundraising.*
- Use Roman numerals for wars, monarchs and Popes: *World War II, King George VI, Pope John XXIII*
- In the case of proper names, use words or numerals according to the organization's practice: *3M, Twentieth Century Fund, Big Ten*

Abbreviations

Academic Degrees

- Avoid abbreviations: *Jehuda Reinharz, who has a doctorate in modern Jewish history ...*
- Use an apostrophe in bachelor's degree, master's degree, etc.
- There is no apostrophe in Bachelor of Arts or Master of Science.
- Use abbreviations such as B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. only when the need to identify many people by degree on first reference would make the preferred method cumbersome; use the abbreviations only after a full name and set the abbreviations off with commas: *Dorothee Kern, Ph.D., delivered a lecture on enzymes.*

Dates

- Always use Arabic figures, without *st*, *nd*, *rd* or *th*.
- When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate only Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec.: *Fall Open House will be held on Oct. 8.*
- When a phrase lists only a month and year, do not separate the month and the year with commas: *The new Web site will launch in December 2007.*
- When a phrase refers to a month, day and year, set off the year with commas: *Jan. 15 2008, was the first day of the semester.*

Time

- Use figures except for noon and midnight
- Use a colon to separate hours from minutes: *3:30 p.m.*
- 4 o'clock is acceptable, but time listings with a.m. or p.m. (with periods) are preferred

United States

- As a noun, use United States: *Brandeis is one of the youngest private research*

universities in the United States.

- As an adjective, use U.S. (no spaces): *A U.S. senator will speak at Brandeis tomorrow.*

States

- Spell out the names of the states when they appear alone: *The governor of Massachusetts was re-elected.*
- Abbreviate the names of states when they appear with the name of a city, town, village or military base: *Waltham, Mass., Hanscom Air Force Base, Mass.*
- Do not abbreviate Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas or Utah
- Use the following state abbreviations:

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

Punctuation

Apostrophe

- For plural nouns ending in *s*, add only an apostrophe: *the students' grades, states' rights*
- For singular common nouns ending in *s*, add 's: *the hostess's invitation, the witness's answer*
- For singular proper names ending in *s*, use only an apostrophe: *Brandeis' mission*
- For singular proper names ending in *s* sounds such as *x*, *ce*, and *z*, use 's: *Marx's theories*
- For plurals of a single letter, add 's: *She received all A's this semester.*
- Do not use 's for plurals of numbers or multiple letter combinations: *the 1960s, USEM's*

Colon

- Capitalize the first word after a colon only if it is a proper noun or the start of a complete sentence: *She promised this: The team will go to nationals this year. But: There were three issues with the project: expense, time and feasibility.*

- Colons go outside quotation marks unless they are part of the quoted material.

Comma

- Do not put a comma before the conjunction in a simple series: *Boston, Newton, Cambridge and Lexington*
- Use a comma to set off a person's hometown and age: *John Smith, Newton, was accepted to Brandeis. Jane Smith, 22, graduated yesterday.*

Hyphen

- Use a hyphen for compound adjectives before the noun: *well-known student, full-time job, 20-year sentence*
- Do not use a hyphen when the compound modifier occurs after the verb: *The student*

was

well known. Her job became full time. He was sentenced to 20 years.

Parentheses

• The temptation to use parentheses is a clue that a sentence is becoming contorted. Try to

rewrite the sentence, putting the incidental information between commas or dashes, or in a separate sentence. If you must use parentheses, follow these punctuation guidelines:

• Place a period outside a closing parenthesis if the material inside is not a sentence (*such as this fragment*).

• If the material is an independent complete sentence, place the period inside the parentheses.

Period

• Use a single space after the period at the end of a sentence.

• Do not put a space between initials: *C.S. Lewis; J.K. Rowling*.

Quotation marks

• In dialogue, each person's words are placed in a separate paragraph, with quotation marks at the beginning and end of each person's speech.

• Periods and commas always go within quotation marks.

• Dashes, semicolons, question marks and exclamation points go within the quotation marks when they apply to the quoted material. They go outside when they apply to the whole sentence.

• Use single marks for quotes within quotes: *Smith said, "She told me, 'I wish I had been accepted to Brandeis.'"*

Titles

• Titles of **academic courses**:

- Do not italicize course titles or put quotation marks around them.

• Titles of **books, computer games, movies, operas, plays, poems, albums, songs, radio and television programs, lectures, speeches and works of art**:

- Capitalize the principal words, including prepositions and conjunctions of four or more letters

- Put quotation marks around all such works except the Bible and books that are primarily catalogs of reference material: "*The Star-Spangled Banner*," "*Gone With the Wind*," *NBC's "Today Show*," *Encyclopedia Britannica*

- Translate a foreign title into English, unless the American public knows the work by its foreign name: Rousseau's "War," not Rousseau's "La Guerre." BUT: Leonardo da Vinci's "Mona Lisa."

• Titles of **newspapers and magazines**:

- Do not place these titles in quotation marks.

- Capitalize *the* in the name if that is the way the publication prefers to be known.

- Lowercase *the* before names if listing several publications, some of which use *the* as part of the name and some of which do not: *Time, Newsweek, the Washington*

Post and the New York Times

• Titles of **directions/regions**:

- Lowercase north, south, northeast, northern, etc. when they indicate compass direction: *The cold front is moving east.*

- Capitalize compass points when they designate U.S. regions: *A storm system that developed in the Midwest is spreading eastward.*

- With names of countries, lowercase compass points unless they are part of a proper name or are used to designate a politically divided nation: *northern France, western United States, Northern Ireland*

- With states and cities, lowercase compass points when they describe a section of a state or city: *western Massachusetts, southern Atlanta*

- Capitalize compass points when used in denoting widely known sections: *Southern California, the Lower East Side of Manhattan*

• Titles of **seasons**:

- Lowercase spring, summer, fall and winter, as well as derivatives like wintertime unless part of a formal name: *the Winter Olympics*