

APPENDIX 1

ASSOCIATED PRESS STYLE CHEAT SHEET

The *Associated Press Stylebook* is the most commonly used style guide for college newspapers. This “cheat sheet” is designed for quick reference. Your news organization may have its own style guide that supersedes AP style.

Abbreviations and acronyms

- Avoid “alphabet soup.” Don’t use abbreviations that a reader would not quickly recognize. The most common abbreviations, such as CNN, GOP and CIA, can be used on all references. Less well-known but still common ones such as OSHA and NATO can be used after you spell out the full name on first mention. In most cases, however, the stylebook suggests using a generic reference such as *the association* or *the organization* for all references after the first.
- Avoid using multiple acronyms or abbreviations in a sentence unless their meaning is clear.
- Do not use periods for most acronyms, but do use periods for two-letter acronyms: *FBI* for Federal Bureau of Investigation or *U.S.* for United States. If the acronym spells an unrelated word, use periods between letters to avoid confusion.
- Don’t put unfamiliar abbreviations in parentheses after the first reference (for example, “*Online News Association (ONA)*”). Instead either repeat the full name on subsequent references or use a generic reference, such as *the association*.
- After a name, abbreviate *junior* or *senior* as *Jr.* or *Sr.* with no comma to set it off: *John Moraga Sr.*

Academic terms

Some student newspapers deviate from AP style on academic terms; check your newspaper’s stylebook.

Academic degrees—AP recommends avoiding degree abbreviations after the name. Instead, use an explanatory phrase: *Walter Corrigan, who has a*

doctorate in psychology, will speak at the commencement ceremony. Use an apostrophe in *bachelor’s degree*, or a *master’s* but there is no possessive in *Bachelor of Arts* or *Master of Science*. Use abbreviations such as B.A., M.A., LL.D. and Ph.D. only when you need to identify many individuals by degree on first reference. When used after a name, an academic abbreviation is set off by commas: *Mildred Smith, Ph.D., spoke at the meeting.*

Academic departments—Lowercase except for words that are proper nouns (*the psychology department, the department of history, the French department, the department of Spanish language and literature*) or when the department is part of the official and formal name: *San Francisco State University Department of Journalism*.

Academic titles—Capitalize and spell out formal titles such as chancellor, chairman, etc. when they precede a name. Lowercase elsewhere: *Chancellor John Smith addressed the students Tuesday. John Smith, chancellor of Cornell University, addressed the students Tuesday.*

Academic divisions—Pay attention to how departments, colleges, schools, programs and divisions are organized at your school. Generally departments are subdivisions of colleges or schools. Also be aware of the difference between deans, who generally oversee colleges or schools, and chairs, who oversee departments: *The chair of the journalism department reports to the dean of the College of Humanities.*

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Courses—Capitalize the name of a specific course but don't capitalize generic courses: *Introduction to Reporting was his favorite journalism course.*

Addresses

Street, avenue and *boulevard* are abbreviated when you write the full street address; all others are spelled out. But *street, avenue* and *boulevard* are spelled out without the specific address: *The crime occurred at 790 Main St. The fraternity house on Century Boulevard was razed after the fire.*

Compass points are abbreviated in full street addresses but spelled out when just the street name is mentioned: *The carwash will take place in front of the Phi Delta Theta fraternity on Northeast 47th Street. Police foiled a robbery attempt at a liquor store at 800N. Main St.*

When using two roads with the same designation (such as street), use lowercase street, road, etc. *The anti-war group often protests at the corner of Chestnut and Main streets.*

Adviser

Not *advisor*. However, there are advisory committees.

Alumnus, alumni, alumna, alumnae

These terms refer to people who have attended (but not necessarily graduated from) a school.

A male is an *alumnus*. A group of men are *alumni*.

A female is an *alumna*. A group of females are *alumnae*.

Use *alumni* when referring to a group of men and women.

Board of Regents, Board of Trustees

On first reference, call it the *Board of Regents* or *Board of Trustees*. On second reference, it's *the board* or *the regents* or *the trustees*.

Capitalization

Avoid unnecessary capitalization. Use lowercase if the dictionary lists it as an acceptable form.

- Capitalize proper nouns: *James Olmos was a student at Ithaca University in New York.*
- Capitalize common nouns when they're part of the full name for a person, place or thing: *the Democratic Party, Lake Tahoe*. Lowercase when common nouns stand alone in subsequent references: *The party, the lake*. Lowercase the common noun elements of names in plural uses: *the Democratic and Republican parties. Tower and Lake streets*. Exception: plurals of formal titles *Presidents Jimmy Carter and George H.W. Bush attended the event.*
- In composition titles, the principal words in the titles of books, movies, songs, works of art, etc. are capitalized: *The New York Review of Books, To Kill a Mockingbird.*
- Lowercase the names of the seasons unless they are used in a proper name: *the Winter Olympics.*

- Lowercase the word *room* except when used with the number of the room or the name of the room: *Room 215, the Lincoln Room.*

Chairman, chairwoman

Do not use chairperson, chair or co-chair unless it is an organization's formal title for an office (academic department heads are often called chair). Capitalize as a formal title before a name: *Chairman Marc Rosen.*

Computer-related terms and styles

- byte
- CD-ROM
- database
- disk, diskette (but *compact disc*)
- dot-com
- email, e-book, e-commerce
- gigabyte
- Internet
- laptop, laptop computer
- megabyte
- online
- Web, World Wide Web, website, webcam, webcast, webmaster, Web page
- When listing Web addresses, use this format: <http://www.collegenewspaper.com>

Day/date/time

- Lowercase a.m. and p.m. and use periods: *The meeting will begin at 7:30 p.m.*
- Do not use :00 after an on-the-hour time. Simply use the numeral: *The game starts at 2 p.m.*
- Avoid redundancies like *7 p.m. Thursday night.*
- Use noon or midnight for 12:00, but only use the word, not the redundant 12 noon or 12 midnight: *The party was supposed to end at midnight.*
- Spell out months when not part of a date: *The school year begins in September.* When part of a date, abbreviate these months: *Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec. Classes begin Sept. 9.* Spell out: March, April, May, June, July.
- Spell out days of the week: *The class meets every Tuesday.*
- Generally use day or date, not both. *Finals week begins on May 4* or *Finals week begins Monday.*
- Use Arabic figures to indicate decades of history. Use an apostrophe before the decade if you leave out the first two digits but don't put an apostrophe between the year

and the “s”: *This economic depression is often compared to the Great Depression of the 1920s. The fraternity is planning a ‘70s party.*

Directions and regions

Lowercase *north, south, northwest, northern*, etc. when they indicate compass direction but capitalize when they designate regions or are part of a proper noun. Lowercase the compass point unless it’s a widely known section, as in *Southern California* or *South Florida*. *Duke University is one of the top universities in the South. The motorcycle was traveling west on Thornton Street when it was hit by the truck. The campus is one of the biggest in Northern California, but there are larger ones in the southern part of the state.*

Greek

Always capitalized, whether you’re talking about an ethnic background or the university’s fraternity/sorority system: *Greek Row, the Greek system.*

Numbers

- Spell out numbers under 10; for 10 and up use numerals. Include commas for numbers in the thousands (5,000, 100,000).
- For numbers greater than 999,999, use numeral and million or billion: *7 million people; \$3 trillion.*
- If a sentence begins with a number, either spell it out or rewrite the sentence, unless it is a year: *2009 was a very good year for the Tigers.*

These are exceptions (always use figures):

Ages: *She is 5 years old.* Use hyphens for ages expressed as adjectives before a noun or in place of a noun: *A 6-year-old girl, the 6-year-old.*

Days of the month: *The rally is scheduled for March 4.*

Degrees of temperature: *The temperature hit a high of 92 degrees.*

Dimensions: *The 5-foot-2-inch tennis player is powerful for her height.*

House numerals: *The president’s family lives at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave.*

Percentages: *The board approved a 5 percent increase.*

Scores: *The Tigers beat the Braves 5-2.*

Speeds: *The car was traveling 45 mph.*

Sums of money: *The new library will cost \$3.5 million; the pencil costs 25 cents and the notebook costs \$4.95.*

Time of day: *The performance will start at 6 p.m.*

Votes: *The board voted 5 to 2.*

Years: *She was born in 1961.*

Possessives

The stylebook goes into great detail on how to handle every possible type of possessive.

- To form the possessive of a singular common noun *not* ending in “s,” add an apostrophe and an “s”: *The provost’s speech.*
- To form the possessive of a singular common noun ending in “s,” add only an apostrophe: *Mathematics’ rules.*
- To form the possessive of a singular proper noun ending in “s,” add an apostrophe only: *Moses’ law* or *Jesus’ parables.*
- To form the possessive of a plural common noun ending in “s,” add an apostrophe: *The ladies’ bathroom, states’ rights.*
- For plural nouns not ending in “s,” add “s”: *Women’s rights.*
- Understand the difference between *its* (possessive) and *it’s* (contraction of *it is*): *It’s a nice day. The snail curled into its shell.*

Punctuation

AP style uses as little punctuation as necessary. The goal is to write clearly and succinctly.

- Do not use the serial comma (the final comma before the conjunction) in a series: *She is taking chemistry, biology and English courses this semester.*
- Use a semicolon to clarify a series that includes a number of commas. Include a semicolon before the conjunction: *The university choir will perform in Tampa, Fla.; Austin, Texas; and Baton Rouge, La.*
- When punctuating quotations, always place the comma (and most other punctuation) before the closing quote: *“The surgery went well,” said Jill Smith, sister of the injured player.*
- Capitalize the word after a colon only if it could stand alone as a sentence: *The chancellor announced his decision: no fee hike. The chancellor announced his decision: He will not raise fees.* Exception: In headlines, the word after a colon always is capitalized: *Provost: Smoking ban will stand*

States

- Spell out names of states when they stand alone but abbreviate when they run with the name of a city, with commas before and after the abbreviation: *Calistoga, Calif., is a great weekend getaway spot for students who attend San Francisco State University.*
- Eight states are never abbreviated: *Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas and Utah.* See the *Associated Press Stylebook* for state abbreviations.

- Be sure to use the stylebook abbreviations and *not* the U.S. Postal Service abbreviations for states *unless* you are providing a full address including ZIP code: *Send contributions to the Student Press Law Center, 1101 Wilson Blvd., Suite 1100, Arlington, VA 22209.*

Titles and jobs

- Titles are generally only capitalized when used before a name: *President Jose Lopez approved the smoking ban. Jose Lopez, president of the university, approved the smoking ban.*
- Put long titles after a name: *Sandra Smith, associate vice president for academic affairs, is scheduled to speak at the meeting.*
- Qualifying words before a title are not capitalized: *On Sunday, former university President John Mason visited the campus.*

- Do not capitalize job descriptions, even when they come before a name: *The school named janitor Marco Smith the top employee of the year.*
- Abbreviate these titles before a full name, except in quotations: *Dr., Gov., Lt. Gov., Mr., Ms., Mrs., Rep., Sen., the Rev.* When used in a quotation before a full name, spell out all except *Dr., Mr., Mrs.* and *Ms.*
- Generally avoid courtesy titles (Mr., Mrs., Ms.) except for clarity: *Mrs. Rosenbloom is 88 and Mr. Rosenbloom is 85.*

University

Uppercase when part of a proper name; lowercase when it stands alone: *Students at Harvard University launched a new social media site this week. The university will not accept new students for the spring semester.*