



Associated Press (AP) Style Checklist

Associated Press Style is a form of writing used primarily by journalists and public relations professionals. Unlike academic writing, AP Style does not require a reference list or in text citations. It focuses on clear and concise writing, with each paragraph only being about two or three sentences long. AP Stylebooks list information alphabetically for writers to look up various rules. This is a brief checklist of common AP Style questions or mistakes.

Academic Degrees

- If the mention of degrees is necessary to establish someone's credentials, the preferred form is to avoid an abbreviation and use a phrase instead, such as: *Daniel Robinson, who has a doctorate in psychology, called me.*
 - ⇒ Use abbreviations B.A., M.A., LL.D. and Ph.D. only when the preferred way is cumbersome
- When using an abbreviation after a name, it is set off by commas
Daniel Robinson, Ph.D., spoke at the conference.
- Do not use an abbreviation if it is essentially the same as the courtesy title
Wrong: Dr. Walter Ford, Ph.D.
Right: Dr. Walter Ford, a chemist.
- Use an apostrophe in bachelor's degree, master's, etc.

Academic Departments

- Lowercase EXCEPT for words that proper nouns or adjectives: the department of history, the history department, the department of English, the English department

Academic Titles

- Capitalize and spell out formal titles when they are before a name. Lowercase elsewhere.
I spoke to Chairman James Matthews. James Matthews is the chairman.
- Lowercase modifiers such as "department" in "department Chairman Kyle Whitaker."

Ages

- Always use figures
- Use hyphens when expressed as an adjective or as a substitute for a noun
He is a 9-year-old boy. The boy is 9 years old.
- No apostrophes when expressing an age range
The woman is in her 30s.

Alumni

- "Alumnus" is masculine singular, but is often used in referring to either male or female
- "Alumna" is feminine singular
- "Alumni" is masculine plural
- "Alumnae" is feminine plural



Commas

- When you have a simple list, do NOT put a comma before the conjunction
Wrong: first, second, and third
Right: first, second and third
- Use a comma in a list ONLY when used for clarification (e.g. if an item's name has a conjunction)
Sally brought chips, peanut butter and jelly, and cookies.

Composition Titles

- Capitalize important words, including prepositions and conjunctions of at least four letters
- Capitalize an article if it is the first or last word in the title
- Put quotation marks around everything except the Bible and books of reference

Dimensions

- Always use figures
- Spell out inches, feet, yards, etc.
- Hyphenate adjectival forms before nouns
The 5-foot-10-inch man walked down the street.
- Use an apostrophe to indicate feet and quotation marks to indicate inches (only in technical contexts), such as *5'10"*

Dates

- Always use figures ALONE — do not use *st*, *nd*, *rd* or *th*.

Days of the Week

- Always capitalize them
- Spell them out EXCEPT when needed in a tabular format (tables, graphs, charts)

Distance

- Spell out whole numbers below 10, use figures for 10 and above
⇒ *Hint*: if it's only one digit, spell it out

Fractions

- Spell out all amounts less than one, using hyphens between the words
Three-fourths, one-fifth

Money

- Cents — always spell it out and lowercase, and use numerals for amounts than one dollar
Example:
- Dollars — always lowercase; always use figures and the \$ sign EXCEPT for casual references or amounts without a figure



Months

- Always capitalize the names of months
- Spell out the month name when used alone or only with a year
- When using a month with a specific date, abbreviate ONLY Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec.

Numerals

- Spell out whole numbers below 10, use figures for 10 and above
- Spell out first through ninth when they indicate sequence in time or location (first base, he was first in line); use figures starting with 10th

Percent

- Always spell out “percent” — never use “%”

State Names

- Spell out the names of states when they stand alone
- NEVER abbreviate Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas and Utah UNLESS using the postal code abbreviation
 - ⇒ *Hint:* this applies to the two states that aren't part of the contiguous United States or states that have five or fewer letters
- Abbreviate state names when used with the name of a city, town or village
She lives in Illinois. She goes to school in Romeoville, Ill.
- Postal code abbreviations (two letters) are used only with the full address, including the zip code
- When listing a city and state in the middle of the sentence, put a comma after both
She goes to school in Romeoville, Ill., and loves it.

Time

- Always use figures EXCEPT for “noon” and “midnight”
- Use a colon to separate the hour from the minutes
- Avoid redundancies
 - Wrong: At 8 a.m. this morning
 - Right: At 8 a.m. OR at 8 this morning

Titles

- Capitalize titles if used directly before a person's name (President Obama)
- Lowercase and spell out titles when not before a person's name (the president)