

# Associated Press Style

The Associated Press was founded in 1848 as a cooperative effort among six New York newspapers that wished to pool resources for gathering international news. Today, with over 3,700 employees in 121 countries, the AP is the world's single largest news organization. Every day, more than a billion people read, hear or see AP news.

From the beginning, AP reporters have written their dispatches for readers from diverse social, economic and educational backgrounds and a wide range of political views. The AP therefore strives to keep its writing style easy to read, concise and free of bias. *The Associated Press Stylebook*, first published in 1977, clarified the news organization's rules on grammar, spelling, punctuation and usage. Now in its sixth edition, the *Stylebook* is the standard style guide for most U.S. newspapers, magazines and public relations firms.

The following Quick Reference is taken from *The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual*, Sixth Trade Edition.

## Numbers

- Spell out the numbers one through nine; for 10 and up, use Arabic numerals. For ages and percentages, always use Arabic numerals, even for numbers less than 10.
- Spell out numerals that start a sentence; if the result is awkward, recast the sentence: *Twenty-seven detainees were released yesterday. Yesterday, 993 freshmen entered the college.*
- The one exception to this rule is in a sentence that begins with a calendar year: *1938 was a turbulent year for Leon.*
- Use Roman numerals for wars, monarchs and Popes: *World War II, King George VI, Pope John XXIII*
- The figures 1, 2, 10, 101, and so on and the corresponding words — one, two, ten, one hundred one and so on — are called cardinal numbers. The terms 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 101<sup>st</sup>, first, second, tenth, one hundred first and so on are called ordinal numbers.
- For large numbers: use a hyphen to connect a word ending in y to another word: *twenty-one, one hundred forty-three, seventy-six thousand five hundred eighty-seven*
- Do not use commas between other separate words that are part of one number: *one thousand one hundred fifty-five*
- Spell out casual expressions: *A thousand times no!*
- Proper names: use words or numerals according to an organization's practice: *twentieth Century Fund, Big Ten*

# Abbreviations

## United States

- as a **noun**, United States: *The prime minister left for the United States yesterday.*
- as an **adjective**, U.S. (no spaces): *A U.S. soldier was killed in Baghdad yesterday.*
- as part of **organization names** (see the *AP Stylebook* under “U.S.”)

## States

- Spell out the names of the states in text when they appear alone: *Wildfires continued to rage through southern California yesterday.*
- Abbreviate them when they appear in conjunction with the name of a city, town, village or military base: *Needham, Mass., Oxnard Air Force Base, Calif.*
- Do not abbreviate Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas and Utah (the two states that are not part of the contiguous United States and the states that are five letters or fewer)

When abbreviating U.S. states, do so as follows:

- Place one comma between the city and the state name, and another after the state name, unless at the end of a sentence or in a dateline (e.g. She traveled from San Diego, Calif., to go to school in Kansas City, Mo. Now, she’s thinking of moving to Santa Fe, N.M.)

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.	

## Datelines

- Put the city name in CAPITAL LETTERS, usually followed by the state, country or territory where the city is located.
- Domestic and international large cities stand alone in datelines (see the *AP Stylebook* under “datelines” for a complete listing).
- Do not abbreviate Canadian provinces and territories.
- In most cases, use the conventionally accepted short form of a nation’s official name (e.g. Argentina rather than Republic of Argentina), but there are exceptions.
- Use an article with El Salvador (but not with Gambia, Niger, and so on).
- Within stories: Follow the city name with further identification in most cases where it is not in the same state or nation as the dateline city.

## Academic Degrees

- Avoid abbreviations: Billy Bob, who has a doctorate in philosophy.
- Use an apostrophe in bachelor's degree, a master's, 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: *Samuel Cotton, Ph.D., lectured yesterday on bioethics.*

## Dates

- Always use Arabic figures, without *st*, *nd*, *rd* or *th*.
- Capitalize months.
- When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate only Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec. (e.g. Oct. 4 was the day of her birthday.)
- When a phrase lists only a month and year, do not separate the month and the year with commas. (e.g. February 1980 was his best month.)
- When a phrase refers to a month, day and year, set off the year with commas (e.g. Aug. 20, 1964, was the day they had all been waiting for.)

## Time

- Use figures except for noon and midnight
- Use a colon to separate hours from minutes (e.g. 2:30 a.m.)
- 4 o'clock is acceptable, but time listings with a.m. or p.m. are preferred

## Punctuation

### apostrophe (')

- For plural nouns ending in *s*, add only an apostrophe: *the girls' toys, 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: *Descartes' theories, Kansas' schools.*
- For singular proper names ending in *s* sounds such as *x*, *ce*, and *z*, use 's: *Marx's theories, the prince's life.*
- For plurals of a single letter, add 's: *Mind your p's and q's, the Red Sox defeated the Oakland A's.*
- Do not use 's for plurals of numbers, or multiple letter combinations: *the 1980s, RBIs*

### colon (:)

- Capitalize the first word after a colon only if it is a proper noun or the start of a complete sentence: *He promised this: The company will make good all the losses.* But: *There were three considerations: 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: *John, Paul, George and Ringo; red, white and blue.*
- Use a comma to set off a person's hometown and age: *Jane Doe, Framingham, was absent. Joe Blow, 34, was arrested yesterday.*

**dash (--)**

- Make a dash by striking the hyphen key twice. Put a space on either side of the dash: *Smith offered a plan — it was unprecedented — to raise revenues.*
- Use a dash after a dateline: *SOMERVILLE — The city is broke.*

**Hyphen (-)**

- Use a hyphen for compound adjectives before the noun: *well-known actor, full-time job, 20-year sentence*
- Do not use a hyphen when the compound modifier occurs after the verb: *The actor was well known. Her job became full time. He was sentenced to 20 years.*
- Do not use a hyphen to denote an abrupt change in a sentence—use a dash

**Parentheses**

- The perceived need for parentheses is an indication that your sentence is becoming contorted. Try to rewrite the sentence, putting the incidental information in commas, dashes or in another sentence. If you do use parentheses, follow these guidelines:
- If the material is inside a sentence, place the period outside the parentheses.
- If the parenthetical statement is a complete independent 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; G.K. Chesterton.*

**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: *She said, "He told me, 'I love you.'"*

## Titles

- Of **books, computer games, movies, operas, plays, poems, songs, television programs, lectures, speeches** and **works of art**: -Put quotation marks around the title. -Capitalize the first and last words of the title. -Capitalize the principal words, including all verbs and prepositions and

conjunctions with more than three letters

- Translate a foreign title into English, unless the American public knows the work by its foreign name: *Nietzsche's "Thus Spake Zarathustra"*; *Mozart's "Magic Flute"* BUT *"Amores Perros"*; *"The Bhagavad-Gita."*

- Of **newspapers** and **magazines**: -Do not place 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*.  
-Where location is needed but not part of the official name, use parentheses: *The Huntsville (Ala.) Times, The Toledo (Ohio) Blade*.

- Of **places**: -The best reference for all place names is the "U.S. Postal Service Directory of Post Offices."

-The best reference for foreign geographic names is the most recent edition of "Webster's New World College Dictionary." The second-best reference is the "National Geographic Atlas of the World."

-Lowercase compass directions: *The warm front is moving east.* -

Capitalize names of U.S. regions: *The Northeast depends on the Midwest for its food supply.*

-The "Middle East" applies to Afghanistan, Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Kuwait, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Yemen, Sudan, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. The term is preferable to "Mideast."

- Of **ethnic groups**: -The preferred usage for African Americans is "black." The term is not

capitalized. -Preferred usage for Caucasians is "white," also not capitalized.

-Preferred usage for Asian people is "Asian," capitalized. Please note

that in British usage the term applies only to people of the Indian Subcontinent. -"American Indian," capitalized with no hyphen, is preferred over "Native American."

- Of **seasons**:

- Lowercase "spring," "summer," "fall" and "winter" and derivatives such as "wintertime" unless part of a formal name: *I love Paris in the springtime;* *the Winter Olympics.*