



Colorado Department  
of Public Health  
and Environment

# Associated Press Style

## Quick Reference Guide

- To subscribe to The Associated Press Stylebook online, or to find out about purchasing hard copies of the book, [start here](#).
- To find out about StyleGuard for Word, [start here](#).
- For slide presentations of AP Style basics, [go here](#).

Style	Rules	Examples
<b>Academic degrees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use an apostrophe and spell out academic degrees</li><li>• Use abbreviations for degrees only when you need to include a list of credentials after a name; set them off with commas.</li></ul>	<p>She has a <b>bachelor's</b> degree.</p> <p>Peter White, <b>LL.D., Ph.D.</b>, was the keynote speaker.</p>
<b>Acronyms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Don't use them</li><li>• Spell out on first mention. On subsequent mentions, use generic terms such as the board, the division, etc.</li><li>• Don't put acronyms in parentheses after the first reference (for example, "The Water Quality Control Division (WQCD) ...").</li></ul>	<p>The <b>state Board of Health</b> meets the third Wednesday of each month. The <b>board's</b> agenda is available about a week before the meeting.</p>
<b>Addresses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Spell out all generic parts of street names (avenue, north, road) when no specific address is given.</li><li>• When a number is used, abbreviate avenue (Ave.), boulevard (Blvd.), street (St.) and directional parts of street names.</li></ul>	<p>Our main campus is on Cherry Creek South <b>Drive</b>.</p> <p>The suspect was identified as Michael Shawn of <b>1512 N. Mission St.</b></p>

<p><b>Capitalization</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Do not capitalize federal, state, department, division, board, program, section, unit, etc., unless the word is part of a formal name.</li> <li>● Capitalize common nouns such as party, river and street when they are part of a proper name.</li> <li>● Capitalize the word room when used with the number of the room or when part of the name of a specially designated room</li> <li>● Lowercase directional indicators except when they refer to specific geographic regions or popularized names for those regions.</li> <li>● Capitalize formal titles that come directly before a name.</li> <li>● Lowercase formal titles that appear on their own or follow a name.</li> <li>● Never capitalize job descriptions regardless of whether they are before or after a name</li> </ul>	<p>The Water Quality Control <b>Division</b> Sarah contacted the <b>division</b>.</p> <p>the <b>Libertarian Party</b>, the <b>Ohio River</b>.</p> <p><b>Room 315, the Carson Room</b>. Go <b>south</b> on University Boulevard; the <b>Northeast</b>; the <b>Midwest</b>. <b>Gov.</b> John Hickenlooper; <b>Public Health Programs Director</b> Joni Reynolds The <b>governor</b> said to wear orange; Joni Reynolds is the <b>director of Public Health Programs</b>. <b>shortstop, police officer, attorney</b></p>
<p><b>Dates, days and times</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Always use Arabic figures, without st, nd, rd or th.</li> <li>● When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec.</li> <li>● When a phrase lists only a month and year, spell out the month and do not separate the month and the year with commas.</li> <li>● When a phrase refers to a month, day and year, set off the year with commas.</li> <li>● Use figures except for noon and midnight</li> <li>● Use a.m. or p.m. (with periods)</li> </ul>	<p>Fall Open House will be held on <b>Oct. 8 (not Oct. 8th)</b>.</p> <p>The new website will launch in <b>December 2024</b>. <b>Jan. 15, 2008</b>, was the first day of the semester.</p> <p>The meeting is at <b>4 p.m.</b> Jan. 15.</p>
<p><b>Names</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use a person’s first and last name the first time he or she is mentioned. On second reference, use only last name with no title.</li> <li>● Do not use courtesy titles such as <i>Mr.</i>, <i>Mrs.</i>, <i>Miss</i> or <i>Ms.</i> unless they are part of a direct quotation or are needed to differentiate between people who have the same last name.</li> </ul>	<p>Water Quality Control Division Director <b>Steve Gunderson</b> led the panel. <b>Gunderson</b> said clean water is very important.</p>

## Numbers

- In general, spell out numbers one through nine, and use figures for numbers 10 and higher. There are many exceptions that always take figures. Common exceptions include:
  - Addresses
  - Ages, but not for inanimate objects
  - Cents
  - Dollars. Do not include a period and two zeroes when referring to an even dollar figure.
  - Dates. Dates take cardinal numbers.
  - Dimensions
  - Highways
  - Millions, billions
  - Percentages. Percent is one word.
  - Speed
  - Temperatures
  - Times. Do not include a colon and two zeroes when referring to an even hour.
- Spell out numbers used at the beginning of a sentence. Exception: Never spell out years.
- Use commas to set off each group of three digits in numerals higher than 999 (except for years and addresses)
- Use decimals (up to two places) for amounts in the millions and billions that do not require a precise figure.
- Add an s but no apostrophe to a number to make it plural. The same rule applies to decades. Use an apostrophe on a decade only if cutting off the initial figures.
- Use hyphens for phone numbers

**7 Park Pl.**  
**the 4-year-old cat; the four-year-old car**  
**8 cents**  
**\$3**

**March 4, not March 4th**  
**5 foot 2 inches, 5-by-9 cell**  
**Route 7**  
**6 billion people**  
**1 percent**  
**8 mph**  
**2 degrees or 2 F**  
**4 p.m.**

**Ten thousand** people marched on the capital.  
**1999** was a bad year for technology companies.

**12,650**

**\$3.74 billion**

**She kept rolling 7s; the 1980s; the '80s**

**303-692-2000**

## Punctuation, quotation

### Apostrophe

For plural nouns ending in s, add only an apostrophe.

For singular common nouns ending in s, add 's

For singular proper names ending in s, use only an apostrophe:

For singular proper names ending in s sounds such as x, ce, and z, use 's

For plurals of a single letter, add 's

Do not use 's for plurals of numbers or multiple letter combinations

### Bullets

Associated Press style is to use dashes, not bullets, for lists that follow a colon. The department prefers bullets, but punctuate them per AP style: After each bullet, capitalize the first letter and use periods at the end of each item.

### Colon

- Capitalize the first word after a colon only if it is a proper noun or the start of a complete sentence.
- Colons go outside quotation marks unless they are part of the quoted material.

### Comma

- Don't use a comma before a conjunction in a simple series.
- Use a comma for a series that included elements containing and or or

### Hyphen

- Use hyphens to link all the words in a compound adjective.
- Do not use a hyphen if the construction includes very or an adverb ending in -ly

### Parentheses

- Avoid using parentheses when possible. If parentheses are required the rules are: If the parenthetical is a complete, independent sentence, place the period inside the parentheses; if not, the period goes outside.

the students' grades, states' rights  
the hostess's invitation, the witness's answer  
Brandeis' mission  
Marx's theories  
She received all A's this semester.  
the 1960s

There were three issues with the project:  
expense, time and feasibility.

The dinner choices were **chicken, cod or beef**.  
The menu offered a choice of **bacon and eggs, pancakes, or waffles**.

“The five-volume report called for cleaning up the area over a 10-year period.”  
a **very big** project, **barely legal** procedures

“The governor said he will ‘leave no stone unturned’ in the matter,” the director said.

### Period

- Use only one space after the end of a sentence. Period. **Here's why.**

### Quotation marks

- Single quotation marks should be used only for a quote within a quote. Do not use quotation marks for word emphasis.
- The period and the comma always go within the quotation marks.
- The dash, semicolon, question mark and exclamation point go within the quotation marks when they apply to the quoted matter only. They go outside when they apply to the whole sentence.

### Semicolon

- Use a semicolon to clarify a series that includes a number of commas. Include a semicolon before the conjunction.

### Spacing

- Use only one space between sentences. **Here's why.**

“Did you wish to file a complaint?” he asked. Who said, "Fame means when your computer modem is broken, the repair guy comes out to your house a little faster"?

Parts for the carrier are made in Tampa, Fla.; Austin, Texas; and Baton Rouge, La.

East St. Louis, Ill., or **West Palm Beach**, Fla. **the west end**, northern Los Angeles. South Side (Chicago), **Lower East Side** (New York).

**State abbreviations**

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

**Cities not requiring state names**

Atlanta	Milwaukee
Baltimore	Minneapolis
Boston	New Orleans
Chicago	New York
Cincinnati	Oklahoma City
Cleveland	Philadelphia
Dallas	Phoenix
Denver	Pittsburgh
Detroit	St. Louis
Honolulu	Salt Lake City
Houston	San Antonio
Indianapolis	San Diego
Las Vegas	San Francisco
Los Angeles	Seattle
Miami	Washington

<p><b>Titles</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● These formal titles are capitalized and abbreviated as shown when used before a name both inside and outside quotations: <b>Dr., Gov., Lt. Gov., Rep., Sen.</b> On second reference, use the last name only.</li> <li>● Generally, capitalize formal titles when they appear before a person's name</li> <li>● Lowercase titles if they are informal, appear without a person's name, follow a person's name or are set off before a name by commas.</li> <li>● Lowercase adjectives that designate the status of a title.</li> <li>● If a title is long, place it after the person's name, or set it off with commas before the person's name.</li> <li>● Abbreviate and capitalize most titles when they are used directly before a name</li> <li>● Spell out titles with names used in direct quotes with the exception of Dr., Mr. and Mrs.</li> <li>● Lowercase formal titles that appear on their own or follow a name</li> <li>● Never capitalize job descriptions -- shortstop, police officer, attorney and so on.</li> <li>● Titles of books, movies, recordings, television shows and similar works are set off in quotation marks, with all principal words capitalized</li> <li>● Titles of magazines, newspapers and reference works get no special treatment</li> </ul>	<p><b>President</b> Bush; <b>President-elect</b> Obama; <b>Sen.</b> Harry Reid  Evan Bayh, a <b>senator</b> from Indiana; the senior <b>senator</b> from Indiana Dick Lugar</p> <p><b>former</b> President George H.W. Bush  Paul Schneider, <b>deputy secretary</b> of Homeland Security,  <b>Sen.</b> Boxer posed hard questions for Rice.</p> <p><b>“Governor</b> Hickenlooper is obviously no Peyton Manning,” she said.  Will Allison, <b>director</b> of the Air Pollution Control Division</p> <p><b>“Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows,”</b>  <b>“Letters from Iwo Jima,”</b> <b>“Memory Almost Full,”</b> <b>“Grey’s Anatomy”</b>  <b>The New York Times, Today’s Broadcast</b></p>
<p><b>Technological terms</b></p>	<p>Here are the correct spelling and capitalization rules for some common technological terms.</p>	<p>BlackBerry, BlackBerrys  download  eBay Inc. (use EBay Inc. when the word begins a sentence)  e-book  e-book reader  e-reader  email  cellphone  Facebook</p>

<p><b>Technological terms</b></p>		<p>Google, Googling, Googled  hashtag  IM (IMed, IMing; for first reference, use instant messenger)  Internet (after first reference, the Net)  iPad, iPhone, iPod (use iPad, iPhone, or iPod when the word begins a sentence)  LinkedIn  social media  smartphone  the Net  Twitter, tweet, tweeted, retweet  World Wide Web  website  Web page  webmaster  YouTube</p>
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