

## Tips on Writing in the AP Style

*The Associated Press (AP) Stylebook* is widely accepted as a standard guide for writing and is frequently used as a reference on how to deal with numbers, names and titles, abbreviations, punctuation, time, capitalization, and many other important issues.

While it's best to read the stylebook to learn all of the rules, there are some common ones you can learn without the book.

- Spell out numbers between one and nine, and use Arabic numbers for 10 and higher. If you are referring to an age or percentage, use an Arabic number even if it is less than 10. When you start a sentence with a number, it should be spelled out even if it is 10 or higher.
- When you refer to the United States as a noun, the two words should be spelled out. If you are using it as an adjective, it should be abbreviated as U.S.
- Dates should always be expressed in Arabic numbers and should not end with a suffix such as "rd" or "th." Months should always be capitalized, and certain months (Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec.) should be abbreviated when they are used with a specific date. Spell out when using alone, or with a year alone.
- Arabic numbers (1, 2, 3... ) should be used for time, with the exception of midnight and noon. Insert a colon to separate hours and minutes, and use a.m. or p.m. to indicate whether the time is during the day or night.
- Academic degrees should not be abbreviated, and an apostrophe should be used to indicate a bachelor's or master's degree, but there is no possessive in Bachelor of Arts or Master of Science. Abbreviations are only acceptable when you are referring to a list of people with degrees.

- Check for correct spelling and capitalization rules for some common technological terms: email, e-book, cellphone, smartphone, BlackBerry, download, Internet.
- Also, it is important to ensure there are no statements in the text that might be considered libelous, that the meaning is clear, and there is no personal opinion, bias, or prejudice in the story. You should look for the following:
- Check that you do not use adjectives to characterize persons and institutions as 'good' or 'bad' in hard news stories - this injects your biases or prejudices in your reporting.

*Example: The eloquent mayor of Paris gave a speech Sunday. (biased)*  
*The major of Paris gave a speech Sunday. (neutral)*

- Don't make inferences, or statements about the unknown. Your judgment may be relevant in analytical writing, but not news reporting.

*Example: The building caught fire early in the morning. It is likely that homeless residents set the fire. (unfair inference)*  
*The building caught fire early in the morning. The cause is unknown, but under investigation. (fair)*

- Discriminate between the need for present and past verb tenses. Make your choice depending on emphasis and perspective: if what happened and its impact are more important, use present tense. If the emphasis is on time when or during what period an event occurred, use simple past.

*Example: Last November's election has changed the laws on marriage in California. (present)*  
*The cease-fire was signed at 11:00 p.m. yesterday. (past)*

- Decide when to use active or passive voice. Consider whether you are emphasizing a subject or an object in your story. Active is typically the

preferred voice in news writing because it reveals the subjects that perform the actions. Passive voice shifts emphasis from subjects to objects, and thus can conceal the actor. This is especially common with crime stories, political and war reporting.

*Example: The prime minister signed the treaty. (active)*

*The cars were stolen sometime last night. (passive)*