



AP Style Quick Guide

This document is intended for ANM News journalists and columnists. As there are numerous rules (and exceptions) for following AP Style properly, the easiest way to learn them is to have a printable reference guide. Be sure to print out this Quick Guide and keep it handy as you write your articles on ANMNews.com.

Times

- Use numerical figures (1, 2, 3, etc) rather than spelling out numbers (four, five, six) when writing the time. Also be sure to specify whether the time is a.m. or p.m.
- If it's necessary to include the time zone, use PST, MST, CST, EST or PDT, MDT, CDT, EDT, depending on whether or not daylight saving time is in effect.
- For time ranges or spans of time, use a dash (rather than "to") to indicate the range.
- Do not use "in the morning" or "at night" with the time. Since you're specifying a.m. or p.m., it would be redundant. Also, use "midnight" or "noon" rather than "12 midnight" or "12 noon."

Correct:

- The rally begins at 7 p.m. in front of City Hall.
- Rescue workers arrived at the scene at approximately 8:30 a.m.
- The ceremony will air at 7 p.m. EST.
- The sale runs from 1–5 p.m. on Thursday.
- Expect long lines from 10 a.m.–3:30 p.m.
- There will be an invitation-only screening at midnight on Wednesday.

Incorrect:

- The stores close at seven p.m.
- She held a press conference Tuesday at 4:30 PM.
- The event takes place Saturday from 1 p.m.–5 p.m.
- Lunch crowds generally arrive at 12 noon.

Months and Dates

- When the month stands alone or when used in conjunction with the year, always spell the month out fully. When the month is used as part of a specific date, abbreviate the following seven months only (as shown):

Jan. Oct.

Feb. Nov.

Aug. Dec.

Sep.

- March, April, May, June and July are never abbreviated.
- When using the day, month and date, abbreviate the month (if it's one of the seven listed above) and separate the day from the month with a comma. Ex. Saturday, Jan. 15.
- When using the month, date and year, abbreviate the month (if it's one of the seven listed above) and separate the date from the year with a comma. Ex. Jan. 15, 2012.
- Do not use st, nd, rd or th to create ordinal numbers (1st, 15th, 22nd, etc) for dates.

Correct:

On Jan. 15, disaster struck.

In January 2012, it will be cold.

The meeting is Saturday, March 20.

The movie will be released Oct. 24, 2011.

Incorrect:

Classes begin Oct. 2011.

He will take office temporarily on January 10th.

Be sure to register by Monday, November 12.

Years

- When writing about specific years or decades, use numerical figures.
- Apostrophes are only used when abbreviating years or decades, and they only serve to replace the omitted numbers.

Correct:

the '60s were a colorful time

the 1960s were a colorful time

graduated in '94

Incorrect:

the 60s

the 60's (very commonly seen – do not do this)

the sixties

State Abbreviations

- Never abbreviate the name of a state when it stands alone. However, you should abbreviate state names when they're preceded by the name of a town or city.
- The following states should never be abbreviated: Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas or Utah.
- "New York" and "Washington" may require extra clarification by adding "state" or "City."

Correct:

He lives in Colorado.

They relocated to Philadelphia, Pa.

She will become the next mayor of New York City.

Incorrect:

The organization is based in Tenn.

The vehicles will be manufactured in Louisville, Kentucky.

AP 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.	Vt.
Ill.	N.H.	Va.
Ind.	N.J.	Wash.
Kan.	N.M.	W.Va.
Ky.	N.Y.	Wis.
La.	N.C.	Wyo.

Titles

- Titles are ordinarily lowercase. Exceptions include academic titles when they precede a person's name or formal titles when they precede a person's name.
- Occupational titles should not be capitalized. Dr. (or Drs.) should only be used for those holding medical or doctoral degrees – but not for honorary doctorates.

Numbers

- Spell out whole numbers less than 10: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine.
- Use numerical figures for numbers 10 and up: 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 ... 124, 125, etc.
- Always spell out the number when it begins a sentence, unless it's a year.
- Spell out ordinal numbers first through ninth: first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, etc.
- Use figures for 10th and greater: 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, etc.

- Spell out numbers when they're part of an expression.
- Just to make things confusing, AP states that numbers in headlines should always be written as numerical figures (not spelled out).

Correct:

There were 35 children on the bus.

2010 was a horrible year.

Ninety-seven people were arrested for drunk driving.

The four main ingredients were full of carbohydrates.

He was the 25th person in line, but the first to arrive.

Thanks a million.

Incorrect:

There were 6 issues raised at the meeting.

47 people were injured when the boat capsized.

He was the 5th of his siblings to graduate from Yale.

Thanks 1,000,000.

Hyphens and dashes

- Hyphens are longer than dashes. Hyphens join things together (usually compound modifiers) to form a single idea.
- For compound modifiers, only hyphenate two words when they precede the noun and never use hyphens for the adverb "very" or any adverbs ending in "-ly."
- Dashes are used to denote an abrupt change or emphatic pause or to attribute a quote to an author, but they should be used very infrequently.

Correct:

She works a full-time job.

This was an ill-conceived idea.

The lemon-flavored pastry was delicious.

The pastry is lemon flavored.

Incorrect:

The organically-grown apples are expensive.

Her job is full-time.

The frequently-spoofed film is a classic.

Serial commas

- Serial commas separate items in a series. Each item should be separated with a comma, but you should not place a comma in front of the conjunction (and, but, or).
- The exception to the above rule is when leaving out the comma before the conjunction would cause confusion (such as when the last item in the series has an “and” in it).

Correct:

The group discussed politics, religion and celebrity gossip.

The menu includes taco, enchiladas, and bean and cheese burritos.

Mary, John, Vincent and Dmitri attended the event.

Incorrect:

The group discussed politics, religion, and celebrity gossip.

Mary, John, Vincent, and Dmitri attended the event.

Apostrophes

- Apostrophes are basically used for two things: forming contractions and demonstrating possession.
- When showing possession for a word already ending in ‘s,’ leave off the extra ‘s.’

Correct:

She won’t be attending the event. He isn’t going either.

The beavers built a dam in the stream behind my house.

The beaver’s dam was destroyed by the flood. (singular)

The beavers’ creations were breathtaking. (plural)

Thomas’ mother was ill.

Incorrect:

Banana's were on sale last week.

The 60's were an amazing era.

Thomas's mother was ill.

The ellipsis

- The ellipsis is used to indicate you've omitted one or more words from a quote.
- An ellipsis should be constructed with three periods and a space on each side.
- Never begin a sentence with an ellipsis, even if you're not using the first word(s) of the original quote being used.

Exclamation points

- Don't use them.

Headlines

- ANMNews.com has adopted the AP down style for headlines.
- Only the first word and any proper nouns should be capitalized.

Correct:

Emails led FBI to bombing suspect

Video shows failed Cassidy DUI test

Couple allegedly hid 5 kids from society

Incorrect:

Setbacks Don't Stop These Haiti Voters

Aging Partly Reversed in Mice

Dr. Drew Pinsky to Host New HLN Show

