AP STYLE GUIDE
Quick Reference

academic rank/titles
AP style recommends writers capitalize and spell out academic ranks such as dean or professor when they preceded a name; lowercase in other uses.

EX: Distinguished Professor of History and American Studies John Smith. John Smith, distinguished professor of history and American studies.

Capitalize and spell out formal titles such as president, chancellor, chairman, etc. when they precede a name, but lowercase in other uses. Lowercase modifiers such as department. Lowercase "acting" when used as part of title in all uses.

EX: Assistant Professor of Geology Joanne Smith. Joanne Smith, assistant professor of geology. department Chair John Williams. John Williams, department chair. acting Dean John Smith.

academic degrees
Avoid abbreviations. 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; and use the abbreviations only after a full name and set the abbreviations off with commas.

EX: Samuel Cotton, Ph.D., lectured yesterday on bioethics.

Use an apostrophe in bachelor's degree, a master's, etc. However, there is no apostrophe in Bachelor of Arts or Master of Science.

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academic departments
Use lowercase except forewords that are proper nouns or adjectives (as in part of an official or formal name).

EX: the Department of History, the history department; the Department of English, the English department; University of Connecticut Department of Medicine.

addresses
For numbered addresses, always use figures. Abbreviate Ave., Blvd., and St. and directional cues when used with a numbered address. Always spell out other words such as alley, drive and road. If the street name or directional cue is used without a numbered address, it should be capitalized and spelled out. If a street name is a number, spell out First through Ninth and use figures for 10th and higher. Here are some examples of correctly formatted addresses: 101 N. Grant St., Northwestern Avenue, South Ninth Street, 102 S. 10th St., 605 Woodside Drive.
ages
For ages, always use figures. If the age is used as an adjective or as a substitute for a noun, then it should be hyphenated. Don’t use apostrophes when describing an age range. Examples: A 21-year-old student. The student is 21 years old. The girl, 8, has a brother, 11. The contest is for 18-year-olds. He is in his 20s.

Army
Capitalize when referring to U.S. forces. Use lowercase for the forces of other nations. This approach has been adopted for consistency, because many foreign nations do not use army as the proper name.

EX: the U.S. Army, the Army, Army regulations, the French army.

books, periodicals, reference works, and other types of compositions
Use quotation marks around the titles of books, songs, television shows, computer games, poems, lectures, speeches and works of art. Examples: Author Porter Shreve read from his new book, “When the White House Was Ours.” They sang “The Star-Spangled Banner” before the game.
Do not use quotations around the names of magazine, newspapers, the Bible or books that are catalogues of reference materials. Examples: The Washington Post first reported the story. He reads the Bible every morning.
Do not underline or italicize any of the above.

colons
Capitalize the first word after a colon only if it is a proper noun or the start of a complete sentence: She promised this: The team will go to nationals each year. But: There were three issues with the project: expense, time and feasibility.
Colons go outside quotation marks unless they are part of the quoted material.

commas
Do not use a serial comma in a series of more than two items unless it is necessary to clarify the meaning. If more than one series is used in a sentence, separate the series by semicolons if necessary to clarify the sentence.
Correct: Dixie State is one of three open enrollment and dual mission institutions in the State of Utah.
Incorrect: Dixie State is one of only three open enrollment, dual mission institutions in the State of Utah.

dates, months, years, days of the week
For dates and years, use figures. Do not use st, nd, rd, or th with dates, and use Arabic figures. Always capitalize months. Spell out the month unless it is used with a date. When used with a date, abbreviate only the following months: Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec.
Commas are not necessary if only a year and month are given, but commas should be used to set off a year if the date, month and year are given. Use the letter s but not an apostrophe after the figures when expressing decades or centuries. Do, however, use an apostrophe before figures expressing a decade if numerals are left out. Examples: Classes begin Aug. 25. Purdue University was founded May 6, 1869. The semester begins in January. The 1800s. The ’90s.
Armstrong

If you refer to an event that occurred the day prior to when the article will appear, do not use the word yesterday. Instead, use the day of the week. Capitalize days of the week, but do not abbreviate. If an event occurs more than seven days before or after the current date, use the month and a figure.

dimensions
When writing about height, weight or other dimensions, use figures and spell out words such as feet, miles, etc. Examples: *She is 5-foot-3. He wrote with a 2-inch pencil.*

dollars and monetary units
Spell out the word "cents" in lowercase and use numerals for amounts less than a dollar: "12 cents"

Use the $ sign and decimal system for larger amounts: "$1.01."

For dollars, use numerical amounts and the $ sign except in casual references. In these cases, the word should be spelled in lowercase: "The book cost $4." "Dad, give me a dollar."

For amounts exceeding $1 million, use the $ sign and numerals up to two decimal places: "It is worth $4.45 million"

ethnic groups
The preferred usage for African American is "black." The term is not capitalized.

Preferred usage of 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."

grade point average
GPA, grade-point average: Either is acceptable. GPAs normally have two numbers after the decimal, e.g., 3.00, 4.25.

miles
Use figures for any distances over 10. For any distances below 10, spell out the distance. Examples: *My flight covered 1,113 miles. The airport runway is five miles long.*

names
Always use a person’s first and last name the first time they are mentioned in a story. Only use last names on second reference. Do not use courtesy titles such as *Mr.*, *Mrs.*, *Miss* or *Ms.*, unless they are part of a direct quotation or are needed to differentiate between people who have the same last name.

numerals
Never begin a sentence with a figure, except for sentences that begin with a year. Examples: Two hundred freshmen attended. Five actors took the stage. 1776 was an important year.

Use roman numerals to describe wars and to show sequences for people. Examples: World War II, Pope John Paul II, Elizabeth II.

For ordinal numbers, spell out first through ninth and use figures for 10th and above when describing order in time or location. Examples: second base, 10th in a row. Some ordinal numbers, such as those indicating political or geographic order, should use figures in all cases. Examples: 3rd District Court, 9th ward.

For cardinal numbers, consult individual entries in the Associated Press Stylebook. If no usage is specified, spell out numbers below 10 and use figures for numbers 10 and above. Example: The man had five children and 11 grandchildren.

When referring to money, use numerals. For cents or amounts of $1 million or more, spell the words cents, million, billion, trillion etc. Examples: $26.52, $100,200, $8 million, 6 cents.

prefixes
Pre and post
These prefixes generally don't take hyphens unless they come directly before proper nouns. The dictionary contains a list of words with appropriate spelling. Use preregister, premedicine, preveterinary, postbacalaureate, postdoctoral, pre-Columbian. "The rules of prefixes apply, but in general, no hyphen when forming a compound that does not have special meaning and can be understood if [the word] "not" is used before the base word. Use a hyphen, however, before proper nouns or in awkward combinations."

For example: it was a non-nuclear weapon. (See how "not nuclear weapon" doesn't make sense?)

Another example: The nonprofit company is holding a charity ball. (Nonprofit can be rewritten as a not-for-profit company, so use the hyphen.)

Here are some other non-words:

noncombat
noncombatant
nonrestrictive clauses
non-U.S. governmental bodies
non-U.S. legislative bodies

punctuation
Use a single space after a period. Do not use commas before a conjunction in a simple series. Example: In art class, they learned that red, yellow and blue are primary colors. His brothers are Tom, Joe, Frank and Pete. However, a comma should be used before the terminal conjunction in a complex series, if part of that series also contains a conjunction. Example: Purdue University's English Department offers doctoral majors in Literature, Second Language Studies, English Language and Linguistics, and Rhetoric and Composition.
Commas and periods go within quotation marks. Example: “I did nothing wrong,” he said. She said, “Let’s go to the Purdue game.”

range of time
Range of time, day or date: The preferred form in body copy is to spell out to, and/or through when referring to a range of time or days of the week. For a range of dates and in tabular material, use an en dash. The seminar is scheduled for April 1-3. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. World War II lasted from 1939 to 1945.

regions/directions
With directions and regions: Lowercase north, south, east, west when indication compass direction. But capitalize when designate regions. Compass: He drove west and the cold front is moving east. She flew north to see her mother. Capitalized Region: A storm system that developed in the Mideast is spreading eastward. She is a Southerner. He is a Northerner.

states
When the name of a state stands alone in a sentence, spell it out. When the name of a city and state are used together, the name of the state should be abbreviated (except for Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas and Utah). States should also be abbreviated when used as part of a short-form political affiliation. Examples: He came from Lafayette, Ind. The peace accord was signed in Dayton, Ohio. The wildfire began in California and moved east toward Carson City, Nev.

State abbreviations in AP style differ from the two-letter ZIP code abbreviations. Here is how each state is abbreviated in AP style:

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<th>State Abbreviations</th>
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times
The exact time when an event has occurred or will occur is unnecessary for most stories. Of course, there are occasions when the time of day is important. In such cases, use figures, but spell out noon and midnight. Use a colon to separate hours from minutes, but do not use :00. Examples: 1 p.m., 3:30 a.m.

If a time range is entirely in the morning or evening, use a.m. or p.m. only once: “6:30-10 p.m.” If it goes from the morning into the evening (or vice versa), you need both: “10 a.m.-2 p.m.”

titles - people
Generally, capitalize formal titles when they appear before a person’s name, but 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. Also, lowercase adjectives that designate the status of a title. If a title is long, place it after the person’s name, or set it off with commas before the person’s name. Examples: President Bush; President-elect Obama; Sen. Harry Reid; Evan Bayh, a senator from Indiana; the senior senator from Indiana, Dick Lugar; former President George H.W. Bush; Paul Schneider, deputy secretary of homeland security.

titles – books, articles, etc.
For book titles, computer games, movies, operas, poems, etc, capitalize all the principal words (including prepositions and conjunctions of four or more letters), as well as the first and last words. Use italics for book titles and commas for magazine, article and short story titles.

technological terms
Here are the correct spelling and capitalization rules for some common technological terms:

- BlackBerry, BlackBerrys
- download
- eBay Inc. (use EBay Inc. when the word begins a sentence)
- e-book
- e-book reader
- e-reader
- email
Armstrong

- cellphone
- Facebook
- 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 (see the AP's tweet about the change), Web page
- webmaster
- YouTube