

Basic AP Style Rules

Academic

- Lowercase degrees; punctuate if abbreviated. Ex: Sam has a master's degree in English; SamLe, M.A.
- Lowercase department names unless a proper noun or part of a formal name.
- Lowercase dean's list.
- Capitalize title preceding a name. Ex: Dean Monroe; William Monroe, dean of the Honors College
- Lowercase modifiers in a title. Ex: department Chair ...,
- Do not use Dr. or other modifier; follow name with degree or field of study.

Punctuation

- Do not put a comma before a conjunction in a series: apples, oranges and bananas unless the final item contains a conjunction or complex phrase: soda, ham, and macaroni and cheese.
- Put quotes around titles of books, songs, TV shows, computer games, poems, lectures, speeches and works of art and capitalize principal words of 4+ letters.
- Capitalize the titles of magazines, newspapers and reference materials (no italics).
- Periods and commas always go inside the quotation marks; dashes, semicolons, colons, questions marks and exclamation points only go inside the quotation marks if they apply only to the quote.
- Use a semicolon to distinguish commas. Ex: Bill, dean; Jan, director of admissions; and Julie, graphic designer.
- Use the em dash — with a space on both sides; do not put spaces on either side of the slash /.
- An apostrophe faces outward in abbreviated dates; no apostrophe before s. '90s
- No comma before Jr., Sr.
- Hyphenate compound adjectives Ex: five-volume report, 10-year period. No hyphen for -ly Ex: barely legal
- Use apostrophe for plural of single letters. She made all A's. He had many CDs.
- Capitalize the first word after a colon if it begins a complete sentence. Ex: I read the first draft: It was painful.

Numbers

- Write out numbers zero through nine, and use numerals for 10+.
- Write out a number if it is the first word in a sentence.
- Punctuate a.m./p.m. and do not put :00. Ex: 1 p.m., 3:30 a.m.
- Always use figures for ages; hyphenate if used as adjective or substitute for a noun. Ex: 21-year-old student. The student is 21 years old.
- Use number/word combination for millions, billions etc. Ex: 1.4 billion
- Use figures for dimensions; hyphenate if an adjective. Ex: It is 6 square feet. It was a six-foot long snake.

Tips

- Use the first and last name only in the first reference in an article; use the last name thereafter.
- Do not use st, nd, rd, or th with dates.
- Abbreviate months of 6+ letters if they are used with a specific date; write out if only the month.
- Lowercase city of, state of phrases. Ex: city of Houston
- Written information should be single spaced.
- Italics are not used unless for specific items such as an invitation.

Common Words

- Associate degree (no possessive)
- Acknowledgment, judgment (no e before ment)
- African American (no hyphen)
- Alumnus/alumni for male; alumna/alumnae for female
- Black (capitalize)