

AP STYLE–SLAC TIPS

What is AP Style?

- Associated Press (AP) Style is the style of writing used for various types of newswriting and copyediting. Press releases, news articles etc. will follow this style. AP Style has specific rules for important parts of news stories such as dates, times, titles and quotes.

AP Style Must-Knows

- **The Oxford Comma**
 - o The Oxford Comma is the comma used after the second-to-last item in a list. Ex. “I ate an apple, a banana, and an orange.” The comma after “banana” is the Oxford Comma. AP Style **DOES NOT use the Oxford Comma**. Instead, the sentence would read, “I ate an apple, a banana and an orange.”
- **Dates**
 - o Abbreviations for January, February, August, September, October, November and December must be used when used with a specific date. Ex. Jan. 13, 1993. “Th,” “st,” “rd” and “nd” are not used after date numbers.
 - o Spell out all months when used alone or with a year alone. Ex. “My birthday is in September. September 2014 was a rainy month.”
 - o When referring to specific decades or centuries, add an “s.” Ex. 1800s.
- **Numbers and Times**
 - o Numbers one through nine are typically spelled out, except when dealing with age. 10 and beyond are written numerically. Ex. “I have four apples. The boy was 5 years old. I went to the amusement park 25 times.”
 - o Percentages are written as follows: 25 percent.
 - o Monetary values are written as follows: \$5, or \$5 million.
 - o Times are written in numerals with lowercase letters. Ex. 10 a.m./10 p.m. or 10:30 a.m./10:30 p.m.
 - o Avoid redundancies such as “10 a.m. in the morning.”
 - o “Noon” and “midnight” can be spelled out. **DO NOT** put numerical times in front of these words.

Source: *The Associated Press Stylebook: 2012*. Associated Press: New York, 2012; *The Associated Press Stylebook Online: 2014*.

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STUDENT LEARNING ASSISTANCE CENTER (SLAC)

Texas State University-San Marcos

- **Street Addresses**
 - Abbreviations Ave., Blvd. and St. are used with numbered addresses. Ex. 1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
 - All other road names (Circle, Drive, Road etc.) are spelled out. Ex. 5 Avalon Circle.
 - Any of the above road names are spelled out when used without numbers. Ex. Pennsylvania Avenue. Avalon Circle.
- **Titles**
 - Generally, job titles are capitalized if they come before names and are lowercased if they come after. Ex. “I had an interview with Coach Les Miles. Les Miles, LSU’s football coach, spoke about the game.”
 - Film, book and song titles are capitalized and put in quotations marks. Ex. She read “War and Peace.” Her favorite song was “Thriller” by Michael Jackson. We watched “Forrest Gump.”
 - Generally, the titles of publications such as newspapers and magazines are italicized. Ex. “I picked up a copy of *The University Star*.”
- **Quotes**
 - Put words used ironically and nicknames in quotation marks. Ex. The “debate” turned into a free-for-all (example taken directly from Associated Press Stylebook Online). Michael “The King of Pop” Jackson.
 - **Examples of proper Quote Style:**
 - **Person has been previously introduced:** “I was so excited when Texas State scored the winning touchdown,” Smith said.
 - **Introducing the person and their title:** “We will have a booth set up in the Quad for the Organization Fair,” said Johnny Appleseed, president of the Texas State Environmental Conservation Organization.
 - **Broken quotes:** “I love going to Texas State,” said Jane Doe, freshman anthropology major. “I feel very welcome at this school.”
 - All quotes must have proper attribution. Be sure to confirm and confirm again the name spellings and titles of sources.

Other AP Style Rules That You Will Likely Come Across

- AP Style has some rules that make a lot of sense, and it has some rules that are, as we say, “just the way it is.” That is why it is always important to check the AP

Stylebook if you're unsure of how to write something in a news story. Here are a few examples of these random rules you will likely encounter.

- **Academic Degrees**

- When referred to using common nouns, degrees are written as follows: bachelor's degree, master's degree etc.
- However, there is no apostrophe in associate degree.
- When referred to using proper nouns, degrees are written as follows: Bachelor of Arts, Master of Science, etc.

- **Acronyms**

- Acronyms should be used on the second reference and subsequent references only, UNLESS they are widely-known acronyms.
- Different publication editors may have different opinions on what are considered widely-known acronyms.
- For example, NFL is probably considered to be a widely-known acronym, so it can likely be used on the first reference. However, for a lesser-known organization such as the African Wildlife Foundation, it would be necessary to spell that name out before using the acronym AWF.

- **Advisor vs. Adviser**

- In AP style, "adviser" is always used.

- **College Majors**

- Majors are never capitalized unless the names of the majors contain proper nouns. Ex. "Johnny, political science major, will run for the student council. Sarah, Spanish major, is on the track team."

- **Company Names**

- Be sure to include the full company name somewhere in the story, even if it is widely-recognized.
- Even if a comma before Inc. or Ltd. is present in a company's formal title, it is not used in AP Style.
- DO NOT use all-capital-letter names in stories unless each capital letter is individually pronounced, as in BMW. Ex. Ikea, not IKEA.

- **Want to know more?**

Texas State University has access to the *AP Stylebook Online* through the library research databases. Accuracy in newswriting is crucial, so when in doubt, always check the *AP Stylebook* or the *AP Stylebook Online*!