

## SJMC's AP Style *lite*

**1. Numerals:** Spell out zero through nine in most cases. The main exceptions are ages, height, weight, time, money, percentages, points, sports scores and athletic records, but there are others. Check the stylebook.

**Height and weight:** The 5-foot-10 woman; the man is 5 feet, 10 inches tall. The baby weighed 7 pounds.

**Dollars and cents:** \$4 (no zeroes). \$4.25, \$1 million, 50 cents, 5 cents.

**Percentages:** Spell out percent and use a numeral: 6 percent.

**2. Lists:** Use commas to separate elements in a series, but *do not put a comma* before the conjunction in most simple series: The flag is red, white and blue. He would nominate Tom, Dick, Harry or Jeannette.

EXCEPTION 1: *Do put a comma* before the closing conjunction if an element of the series includes a conjunction: I had orange juice, toast, and ham and eggs for breakfast.

EXCEPTION 2: *Do put a comma* before the closing conjunction in a simple series if omitting it could make the meaning unclear. The governor convened his most trusted advisers, economist Olivia Schneider, and polling expert Carlton Torres.

EXCEPTION 3: *Do put a comma* before the concluding conjunction in a complex series of phrases: The main points to consider are whether the athletes are skillful enough to compete, whether they have the stamina to endure the training, and whether they have the proper mental attitude.

**3. Quotations:** Quotation marks (“”) are used around verbatim quotes. All quotations should be attributed to both the speaker and the source of the quote.

**Commas:** Commas always go inside quotation marks. Do not use a comma at the start of an indirect or partial quotation: He said the victory put him "firmly on the road to a first-ballot nomination."

**4. Titles/Job titles:** Use lowercase letters when they follow the name, uppercase when they precede the name and are an actual title. When titles are generic (e.g., assistant manager, general counsel, spokeswoman) they are not capitalized.

Examples: Chief Executive Officer Jane Jones or Jane Jones, chief executive officer. Head janitor Jane Jones (not capitalized because it's not a title – it's her job); forward Alex Morgan (player's field position, not a title)

**Military and legislative titles:** Sen., Rep. and military titles should be abbreviated when used in front of a name. They are only used on first reference. Add “police” or “fire” when military-style titles are used by police or firefighters.

**Book and movie titles:** Use quote marks – “The Wizard of Oz,” “The Canterbury Tales,” “Fiddler on the Roof.”

**5. Time, date, place:** use this order – time, then date, then place:

10 a.m. Aug. 25 in Room 30 in the Adler Journalism Building. Note that “room” is capitalized when used with a room number; it serves as a proper noun.

Noon – The class will meet from noon to 2 p.m. Don't use 12 p.m.

Midnight – The fundraiser started at midnight Friday. Don't use 12 a.m.

**6. Months:** Spell out when used without the date: November was the hottest on record. The ceremony will be in January 2019. Abbreviate when used with a date: Sept. 1, 2019, is the deadline. Abbreviations: Jan., Feb., March, April, May, June, July, Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec. Note that March through July are never abbreviated.

**7. States:** Spell out the states in the body of stories. In datelines, use Associated Press abbreviations listed in the AP Stylebook. Do not use postal abbreviations unless you are publishing a postal address. Use AP abbreviations for party affiliations listed with politicians' names: Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., and House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis. Some cities, such as Chicago, do not need to be accompanied by the state (check the DATELINES entry).

**8. Addresses:** Abbreviate street, avenue and boulevard when used in a full address: 111 S. Main St., 111 Grand Ave., 111 Sycamore Blvd. Do not abbreviate if the specific address is not included. Abbreviate directions that precede the street name when the full address is used. Examples: The wreck occurred on South Main Street (specific address not included). The wreck occurred at 111 S. Main St. (specific address included). Spell out other street types: 111 Old Elm Road, 111 E. Walker Terrace.

**9. Polls and surveys:** Any reporting on polls and surveys must include the following: who conducted the poll, who paid for it, who was interviewed, how many people were interviewed, how the poll was conducted, when the poll was taken and the sampling error. AP prefers this term to “margin of error.” Sampling errors are styled as “plus or minus X percentage points,” not “X percent.”

In political races, use “tie,” “close” or similar language for a difference of less than the sampling error. Use “leading,” “trailing,” “ahead,” “behind” or similar words if the difference is more than twice the sampling error. Otherwise a difference should be described as “apparent,” “slight” or similar wording.

Polls and surveys should only be used if they come from reputable sources. Generally, these polls will:

- disclose the questions asked and report the results in a timely manner (and provide access to data if requested).
- come from a source without a stake in the outcome (or be transparent about their funding).
- use random sampling (or provide justification for a different sampling method).

## 10. Academia

**Academic degrees:** bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, doctorate. Ph.D. can be used, but doctorate is preferred. When using “Dr.” in front of a name, the field of the doctorate (e.g., psychiatry, mass communication) must be provided on first or second reference except in the cases of physicians, dentists, optometrists and veterinarians. Note the spelling of adviser (not advisor).

**Departments:** do not capitalize unless the name includes a proper noun – department of English, department of philosophy. Do capitalize if it’s the full proper name: the University of Iowa Department of Philosophy. The same rule applies to departments of other types of organizations including the U.S. government.

**Professor:** Do not capitalize professor before a name unless it’s a conferred title, such as professor emeritus. Example: The class will be taught by professor Jane Johnson. The keynote speaker is Professor Emeritus Jane Johnson, or the keynote speaker is Jane Johnson, professor emeritus.

**Latin plurals:** Most Latin terms that are specific to academia take the Latin form of their plural. Latin terms that have been incorporated into common English are treated normally: alumnus/alumni, alumna/alumnae, curriculum/curricula BUT stadiums, formulas, syllabuses.

Online AP Stylebook (via UI Libraries): <http://purl.lib.uiowa.edu/APstylebook>

**Final note: The AP Stylebook lists preferences for spellings and word usage. Examples: toward (not toward), forward (not forwards), canceled (not cancelled), T-shirt (not t-shirt), OK (not okay, not ok). When in doubt, check the AP Stylebook followed by Webster’s New World College Dictionary.**

*AP style is the dominant style used within news and public relations. However, not all organizations use AP style, and most have their own “house style.” A few examples of other style guides:*

- BuzzFeed: <https://www.buzzfeed.com/emmyf/buzzfeed-style-guide>
- PRSA: <http://apps.prsa.org/AboutPRSA/guidelineslogos/prsastyleguide.pdf>
- U of I: [https://brand.uiowa.edu/sites/brand.uiowa.edu/files/ui\\_editorial\\_style\\_guide\\_2017.pdf](https://brand.uiowa.edu/sites/brand.uiowa.edu/files/ui_editorial_style_guide_2017.pdf)