

## SJMC's AP Style *lite*

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

### 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.

Use a comma for most figures greater than 999. For numbers greater than 999,999 use a numeral followed by million, billion, etc.

Spell out numbers if they begin a sentence.

**Height:** The 5-foot-10 woman; the man is 5 feet, 10 inches tall.

**Weight:** 6 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. Differences between two percentages are generally expressed in percentage points: According to the Census, 23 percent of Iowans are less than 18 years old, 6 percentage points more than the 17 percent who are 65 or older.

### 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.

*A note on the Oxford comma: The Oxford, or serial, comma is the use of a comma before the final conjunction in a list of three or more items. AP Style does not use the Oxford comma, but most academic stylebooks call for it. Many organizations, and magazine and book publishers use The Chicago Manual of Style, which requires the Oxford comma. In certain journalism writing classes, a professor may ask you to use the Oxford comma.*

### 3. Quotations

Quotation marks (") are used around verbatim quotes. All quotations should be attributed to both the speaker and the source of the quote.

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."

**Commas:** Commas always go inside quotation marks.

#### 4. Titles

**Job titles:** Use lowercase letters when they follow the name, uppercase when they precede the name and are an actual title. Do not uppercase a phrase that is not a formal title but more of a job description. When titles are “generic” (e.g., assistant manager, general counsel, spokeswoman) they are not capitalized.

Titles are only used on first reference.

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. Iowa is not abbreviated in datelines, but Illinois is. Neither is abbreviated in the text of stories. **Side note:** Chicago and several other major cities (see DATELINES in the stylebook) can be used in a dateline or story without including the state.

#### 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.

**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 organization 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.

### Watch out for the following

- toward (not towards)
- backward (not backwards)
- forward (not forwards)
- canceled (not cancelled),
- benefiting (not benefitting)
- worshipped (not worshiped)
- OK (not okay, not ok)
- T-shirt (not t-shirt)
- adviser (not advisor)

### AP state abbreviations

Ala.	Alabama	Maine	Maine	Okla.	Oklahoma
Alaska	Alaska	Md.	Maryland	Ore.	Oregon
Ariz.	Arizona	Mass.	Massachusetts	Pa.	Pennsylvania
Ark.	Arkansas	Mich.	Michigan	R.I.	Rhode Island
Calif.	California	Minn.	Minnesota	S.C.	South Carolina
Colo.	Colorado	Miss.	Mississippi	S.D.	South Dakota
Conn.	Connecticut	Mo.	Missouri	Tenn.	Tennessee
Del.	Delaware	Mont.	Montana	Texas	Texas
Fla.	Florida	Neb.	Nebraska	Utah	Utah
Ga.	Georgia	Nev.	Nevada	Vt.	Vermont
Hawaii	Hawaii	N.H.	New Hampshire	Va.	Virginia
Idaho	Idaho	N.J.	New Jersey	Wash.	Washington
Ill.	Illinois	N.M.	New Mexico	W.Va.	West Virginia
Ind.	Indiana	N.Y.	New York	Wis.	Wisconsin
Kan.	Kansas	N.C.	North Carolina	Wyo.	Wyoming
Ky.	Kentucky	N.D.	North Dakota	<i>District of Columbia is not abbreviated</i>	
La.	Louisiana	Ohio	Ohio		

**When in doubt, check the AP Stylebook followed by Webster’s New World College Dictionary as the authorities on preferred spelling and usage.**

### Additional style guides

AP Style is the dominant style used within news and public relations, for this reason SJMC uses a specific subset of AP Style in our writing courses. However not all organizations use AP Style and most which do have their own “house style” variations.

BuzzFeed: <https://www.buzzfeed.com/emmyf/buzzfeed-style-guide>

PRSA: <http://apps.prsa.org/AboutPRSA/guidelineslogos/prsastyleguide.pdf>

Iowa: [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)