

JOR 220 • Basic AP Style Rules

Your syllabus, Course Goals chart and instructor refer to your need to master basic AP style rules. **This requires memorization!** You should begin immediately to learn these basic rules and apply them in your writing. **By midterm**, you should be making few, if any, basic style errors in your writing. You also should be familiar with the organization and content of the AP Stylebook so you can use it as a reference book as you write. By the **Final Exam**, you should be able to apply basic style rules without needing your Stylebook. A **Final Exam story** cannot be an “A” story unless it contains **no** basic style errors.

Appendix 2 in your text, pages 527-532, will be useful to you in learning basic style rules. The following list, compiled by Professor Pantalone, is another tool.

Numbers

- For *quantities*, the rule is: Spell out single digits as words, e.g., nine dogs, three frigates. Anything above a single digit gets written as a numeral, e.g., 24 dogs, 376 frigates, 107,000 baseballs. Once you get into the millions of things, it is best to write in abbreviated form: 4.5 million women, 7.8 million jailbirds, four million frigates, 18 billion piles of dirt.
- *Ages* are always written as numerals, e.g., 7 years old, 7-year-old girl, 38 years old, 38-year-old jailbird. Mary Poppins, 38, of Elderberry Farm, shot and killed her husband, Buster Poppins, last night, according to Elderberry Police Chief Wallace Cleaver.
- *Percentages* are always written as numerals, e.g., 7 percent, 57 percent. The % sign is not used in text.

Money

Dollar figures are always written as numerals preceded by a dollar sign, e.g., \$1, \$321, \$470.56, \$107,578. Once you reach the millions, you abbreviate or round off, e.g., \$4.5 million, \$18 million, \$17.45 billion. *Small change* should be written as 50 cents, 79 cents etc. The cent sign should be used.

Time

Time is always written as a numeral attached to a.m. or p.m., e.g., 7 a.m., 2 p.m., 8:15 a.m., 9:21 p.m. If you choose to write the time as 5 o'clock, you do not write 5 o'clock p.m.; you write 5 o'clock in the morning or evening. There is no such thing as 12 a.m. or 12 p.m.; use midnight and noon.

Addresses

Street addresses must always have a numeral with the name of the street, otherwise it isn't an address, it's just a street name. For addresses, abbreviate *only* Street (St.), Avenue (Ave.) and Boulevard (Blvd.), e.g., 17 Smith St., 2478 La La Lane, 546 Momentary Blvd., 5 Cupcake Road, 679 Mimi Hortense Ave., 76432 Mushroom Highway, 3 Butch Circle.

Street names unaccompanied by addresses are always spelled out, e.g., She lives on Love Street. When referring to multiple streets, spell out and capitalize the street names, but lower case streets, avenues, roads, etc., e.g., The accident occurred at the corner of Dog and Cat streets.

Geographical Locations

The following are *never* abbreviated: city and town names, countries, continents, hemispheres, oceans, seas and mountain ranges.

State names are spelled out unless accompanied by a city or town, e.g. Wisconsin, Oregon, Maryland but Green Bay, Wis.; Eugene, Ore.; Elkton, Md. Note: Do not use the two-letter, capitalized abbreviations used by the U.S. Postal Service, unless you are writing a complete mailing address, including ZIP code.

Never abbreviate Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas or Utah.

Spell out United States as a noun (I live in the United States.) but abbreviate when it's an adjective (The U.S. Senate has 100 members.). Same goes for United Nations/U.N.

Titles

There is a difference between a title and a job description. When in doubt, consult the AP Stylebook.

For official titles, capitalize the title when it appears before the name (According to Deputy Police Chief Gutsy Poltrooski, the killer was a dangerous person.). Lower-case the title when it appears after the name (Gutsy Poltrooski, deputy police chief, said the killer was a dangerous person.).

Some titles are abbreviated when used before the name, e.g. Gov. Smith, Sen. Reed. Again, consult the AP Stylebook.