

Common AP style functions to know and mistakes to avoid

Use the following to get you started on your AP journey, and go ahead and buy an AP Stylebook while you're at it!

Dates and Times

- Don't use st, rd, nd or th when writing a date.
- January 2009 – Spell out the month when using alone or with a year alone.
- Feb. 16 – Abbreviate Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Nov., and Dec. *only* when used with a specific date.
- September 2009 – Do not abbreviate when using the month only or with the year alone.
- April 25, 2009, is the wedding – When a phrase refers to a month, day and year, set off the year with commas.
- April 2009 – When a phrase lists only a year, do not separate the year with commas.
- Sunday, Nov. 9, is my birthday – Set off the date with commas when used with the day.
- a.m.
- p.m.
- noon, midnight – don't use 12 with either.

Money, Numbers and Years

- \$5, not \$5.00; 5 cents (use the \$ sign and a decimal for amounts more than a dollar - \$1.01, \$2.50); \$5 million
- Spell out one through nine. Use figures for 10 and above (except for exceptions like age, snow/rainfall amounts, etc.).
- 1990s – No apostrophe when indicating spans of decades or centuries.

Punctuation

- Periods and commas always go inside quotation marks.
- No comma before the conjunction in a simple series: The flag is red, white and blue.
- Don't use exclamation marks.

States and the U.S.

- Spell out the names of states when they stand alone.
- Abbreviate state names (except Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas and Utah) according to AP style when preceded by a city. Kansas is Kan. Examples: He was traveling from Nashville, Tenn., to Austin, Texas, en route to his home in Albuquerque, N.M.
- U.S.

Technology

- Internet – always capitalized
- e-mail
- Web site – two words
- Online

Titles

- Capitalize when used right before name; lowercase when not used with a name or set off from the name with commas.

Common errors and misspelled words

- Accommodate
- Advisers
- Affect/effect – Affect as a verb means to influence. Effect as a verb means to cause; as a noun, it means result.
- Among/between – Among generally introduces more than two items; between introduces two items.
- Annual, not first annual – Something doesn't happen annually until the second time.
- Canceled
- Complement/compliment – Complement denotes completeness or the process of supplementing something; compliment denotes praise.
- Compose/comprise – Compose means to create or put together; comprise means to contain, to include all or embrace.
- Embarrass
- Ensure, insure – Ensure means to guarantee; insure is used with insurance.
- Farther/further – Farther refers to physical distance; further to an extension of time or degree.
- Fewer/less – Fewer is used with individual items; less for bulk or quantity.
- Fliers, not flyers when referring to a paper "poster."
- Forward (no s)
- It's, its – It's is a contraction for it is; its is a possessive form of the pronoun.
- Irregardless—A double negative, just use regardless.
- More than/over – Use more than with numbers; over with spatial relationships.
- Percent (spell out)
- Stationary, stationery – Stationary is to stand still; stationery is writing paper.
- That, which – Use that for essential clauses important to the meaning of the sentence; which for nonessential clauses. If you can drop the clause and not lose the meaning of the sentence, use which.
- Their, they're, there – Their is a possessive pronoun; they're is a contraction for they are; there is an adverb indicating direction.
- Toward (no s)
- Who, whom – Who is used for references to humans and animals with a name, it is grammatically the subject of a sentence, clause or phrase; whom is used when someone is the object of a verb or preposition.
- Your, you're – Your is a possessive adjective; you're is a contraction for you are.