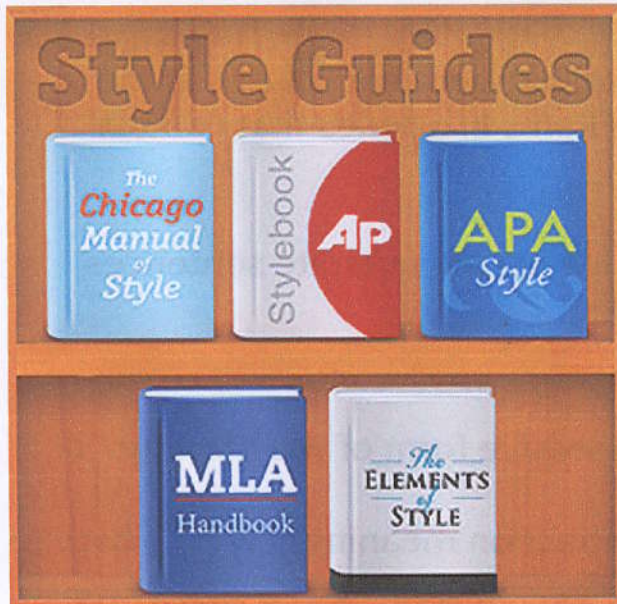


AP Style Basics

WHY SO MANY STYLE GUIDES?



- published by news organizations as a standard set of language rules to promote consistency
- deal primarily with consistency, usage & precision
- first Associated Press (AP) Stylebook published in 1953; revised annually
- most commonly used reference for mass media writers

AP Stylebook Conventions:

1. Capitalization - unnecessary use of upper case slows reading speed; reserve upper case for words that deserve it

2. Abbreviation - conserve space & simplify information when appropriate (15 W. Main St. rather than 15 West Main Street); titles should be abbreviated when attached to a specific name, otherwise spell out the title in lower case (*Dr., Gov., Lt. Gov., Mr., Mrs., Rep., Sen., the Rev.*)

3. Punctuation:

- **Apostrophes (')** indicate the possessive form of most words ("the man's hat"). They can also indicate the plural form of a word. If the word ends in "s" adding a second "s" is unnecessary (whales').



- **Commas (,)**

1. used to set off items like parenthetical or independent words; appositions and modifiers; transitional words
2. used to separate items like introductory clauses or phrases from other parts of the sentence; items in a series; parts of a compound sentence
3. used conventionally like large numbers, dates, addresses & inverted names

- **Semicolon (;)** - used to separate independent clauses in the same sentence and to separate items in a series that contain commas

- **Colon (:)** - used to introduce a list or two separate sentences when the second clarifies the first

- **Holy It!**

- *Its* (no apostrophe) is the possessive form of the pronoun *it* (“its final score”)
- *It’s* (with apostrophe) is a contraction meaning *it is* (“it’s hard to tell”)

4. Numerals - spell out whole numbers below ten; use numerals for 10 & above; avoid beginning a sentence with a number

5. Ages - always use numerals (*3-year-old boy; he was 80; the girl, 6, was rescued*)

6. Dimensions - use numerals (*he is 5 feet 9 inches tall; the rug is 10 by 12; expect 3 ½ inches of snow*)

7. Dates - always capitalize months; spell out *March, April, May, June & July*; abbreviate others; when a month and year are mentioned - but not a specific day - it should appear without a comma (*July 2015*)

8. Language Sensitivity - language choice has the ability to offend & demean; writers must treat subjects fairly and equitably without lapsing into stereotypes

9. Sexist Pronouns - it is unacceptable to use the pronoun *he* in reference to a man or woman; it is better to rewrite using plurals

Correct: *Students* should always do their homework.

Incorrect: A student should always do *his* homework.

10. Titles - *mailman* and *fireman* should be replaced with gender-neutral words like *mail carrier* and *firefighter*

11. Descriptions - media too often describe women in gratuitous terms alluding to beauty, physique or beauty...racial descriptions are often used even if they are unrelated to the story

12. Illness & Disability - labeling someone as *handicapped* assumes something that may be incorrect or irrelevant...don't write that someone is *confined to a wheelchair*; instead say that they *use a wheelchair*