

AP Style Essentials

Here is a highlight of style covered by the Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual

1. **Capitalization.** Unnecessary capitalization, like unnecessary punctuation, should be avoided because uppercase letters are harder to read and make the sentence look uninviting. Some examples: Main St., but Main and Market streets. Mayor John Smith, but John Smith, mayor of Jonesville.
2. **Abbreviation.** The trend is away from alphabet soup in body type and headlines. But some abbreviations help conserve space and help to simplify information. For example: West Main Street, but 20 W. Main St. the only titles for which abbreviations are used (all before the name) are Dr., Gov., Lt. Gov., Mr., Mrs., Rep., the Rev., Sen., and most military ranks. Standing alone, all of these are spelled out and are lowercased.
3. **Punctuation.** Especially helpful are the sections of the stylebook dealing with the comma, hyphen, period, colon, semicolon, dash, ellipsis, apostrophe, quotation marks and restrictive and nonrestrictive elements.
4. **Numerals.** Spell out whole numbers below 10 and use figures for numbers 10 and above. This rule applies to numbers used in a series or individually. Don't begin sentences with numbers, as a rule, but if you must, spell them out. Use numbers for virtually all measurements and dimensions.
5. **Spelling.** In journalism a word has but one spelling. Alternate spellings are incorrect because of the requirement of style consistency. Make it adviser, not advisor; employee, not employe; kidnapped, not kidnaped; judgment, not judgement; television, not TV, when used as a noun; percent, not per cent; toward, upward, forward—no s; vice president, not vice-president.
6. **Usage.** Comprise means contain, not make up. The region comprises five states, not five states comprise the region and not the region is comprised of five states. Affect means to influence not carry out. Effect means a result when it's a noun and means to carry out when it's a verb.
7. **Ages.** Use numbers always: a 2-month-old baby; she was 80, the youth, 18, and the girl, 6, were rescued.
8. **Dates.** Feb. 6, 2011; in February 2011, no commas. Last February.
9. **Dimensions.** She is 5 feet 9 inches tall; the 5-foot-9-inch woman, 5-foot-9 woman; a 7-footer; the car left a skid mark 8 inches wide and 17 feet long; the rug is 10 by 12. The storm brought 1½ inches of rain.