

Ross's the BEST of... journalism Style, according to the Associated Press

(Updated Spring 2019)

1. Time before date before place (memorize "TDP"). Example: **The speech will be 3 p.m. Thursday in Reineke Fine Arts Center.** If the event takes place within the week, we usually use just the day; otherwise use dates.

2. Time expressions: lower case with periods: **5 p.m. 10 a.m.** BUT noon (not 12). Midnight. Drop colon and zeros.

3. Numbers. Generally, spell out one through nine, use numerals for the rest. Spell out numbers at the beginning of a sentence. **He had five oranges. She sold 15 manuscripts this year. Twenty-five robins are at the feeder.**

Exceptions:

- Use numerals for all percentages. As of 2019 AP changed to allow use of the percent sign (%) instead of spelling out the word. Examples: **The cost has been reduced by 5%.** If less than 1%, precede number with a zero: **The tax increase amounts to 0.5%.**
- For large numbers (millions, billions, trillions), use numerals and decimals, but write out amount. **A \$1.2 billion deficit.** (Not 1,200,000,000.) **He collected 7 million sea shells.**
- In larger numbers less than 1 million, use commas after each three digits: **135,000; 1,275.**
- Ages require numerals: **A 5-year-old got caught in traffic yesterday.** Note hyphens if used before the noun, but **the girl was 5 years old.** Or you can drop the two words entirely as most journalists consider it word clutter: **The girl was 5.**

4. State names. AP changed the rule in 2015. State names are now always spelled out, even when used with city names. For example, **Minot, North Dakota. Hibbing, Minnesota. Rapid City, South Dakota.** (Not ND., Minn., S.D.) AP does not use two-letter postal abbreviations, although many other publications do. Names of large cities stand alone. **She goes to Minneapolis for the night life.**

5. Prices. Use dollar sign, \$. Drop zeros: **\$7** (not \$7.00); **\$2.** But **\$2.50** (if cents are used). Use numbers in all cases, including one through nine. Spell out cents if it stands alone. **He gave me 75 cents to buy a soda.**

6. Months; if used with actual date, abbreviate: Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec. Spell out the rest. Spell out if no date. **The semester ends Dec. 15.** But: **The semester ends in December.**

7. Formal titles. See AP Stylebook entry for details. In general, capitalize titles before the name (**Mayor Tim Mahoney**) but don't capitalize after the name (**John Rowell, alderman**). Titles after names should be set off by commas. **David Bertolini, dean of arts, humanities and sciences.** Without name, do not capitalize titles. **The dean also said Tuesday....**

Spell out most formal titles before names. **President Donald Trump** (NOT Pres.); **Superintendent Gary Nelson** (NOT Sup.). Common exceptions: **Gov. Doug Burgum** (NOT Governor); **Sen. John Hoeven**(NOT Senator); **Rep. Kevin Cramer** (NOT Representative). Spell out without the name. **The senator said he will vote in favor of continued agricultural subsidies.** Note many publications do not follow this rule, but spell out all formal titles.

8. Addresses. Abbreviate St., Ave., N., S., E., W., and N.W., S.W., etc., if full address is used. **He now lives at 211 15th St. S., Fargo.** First through ninth streets and avenues are spelled out (First, Second, etc.); the rest are numerals with "th." BUT spell out street and avenue if used without full address. **She moved to 1016 Ninth St. S., Moorhead. Until last year, Larson lived on Vine Avenue.**

For house addresses, drop the comma between digits. **The fire was at 1607 10th St. N., Casselton, N.D.** (NOT 1,607.)

9. U.S.: With period, okay as an adjective (The U.S. Postal Service) but not as a noun. **He plans to return to the United States Sunday.**

10. Academics. Use lower case for departments, except if proper nouns. **The department of history. The economics department. The English department.** "Dr." before a name (abbreviated) is normally used only for medical doctors, unless necessary to establish credentials. Do not use on second reference. Example: Mark Meister chaired a committee on academic improvement. Dr. John Thomas will run for re-election. Thomas says he's "still excited about Moorhead."

11. Days of the week. Capitalize, do not abbreviate. Example: Monday (not Mon.).

12. **Internet.** Note: this was updated in 2016. The AP standard no longer capitalizes internet and web, and website, lower case, is one word. Online is also lower case, and one word.

13. New in 2017: The pronoun "they or "their" will now be acceptable in some uses as a non-gendered pronoun instead of he or she. However it's best to rewrite sentences to avoid the usage, as many readers still find it incorrect. **Any competent lawyer will believe the case worth their time.** "His or her" is actually correct, but the sentence could be recast to avoid the construction: **Any competent lawyer will believe the case worth the time.**

14. **Over** and **more than** are now interchangeable; correct grammar had allowed only "more than" for actual numbers of items, such as "more than 10 people will be required before we offer the class." But apparently AP gave up as people commonly say, "Over 10 people will be required...."