

AP Style

Here is a list of the most common items high school students are likely to encounter when addressing style issues.

CAPITALIZATION

Do not capitalize

- names of classes: freshman, sophomore, junior, senior
- names of school subjects unless it is the official course titles or the name of a language. Example: math, Algebra I, science, Biology II
- the word varsity
- district or state when referring to sports unless referring to a specific meet in its complete official title. Example: The 32 5-A District Meet but not the district track meet.
- a.m. and p.m.
- words that are not proper nouns

Do capitalize

- the name of athletic teams: Hawks, Cardinals, but not football team, varsity soccer team
- college degrees when abbreviated after a name but not when spelled out. Use bachelor's, master's, doctorate rather than saying "She has her B.A.")

ABBREVIATIONS

Do abbreviate

- names of colleges in your area or that have been previously mentioned in a story. Abbreviate names in all caps with no periods (UT, SMU, TCU)
- states when preceded by the name of a city. (Exceptions: All states with five or fewer letters and Alaska and Hawaii). Abbreviations are found in the AP Stylebook. DO NOT use U.S. Postal Service abbreviations)
- United States when it is an adjective. Spell it out when it is a noun.
- Months when they are followed by a date. Months with no abbreviated form are March, April, May, June, July.
- versus as vs. (with a period)

Do not abbreviate

- state names that stand alone
- days of the week.

Other rules

- Lower case abbreviations: a.m. and p.m., c.o.d., mph

- Use all caps without periods of accepted and well known abbreviations: PTA, NHS.
- Avoid referring to an organization by abbreviations when it is not commonly known. Instead of Students Against School Rules (SARS), refer to the group as the anti-rule group or something else that makes it easy for the reader to understand.

NAMES

- On first mention of a person in a story, use his/her first and last name and appropriate identification (English teacher Carolyn Brown, sophomore Jody Smith.)
- After first mention, refer to students by their last names in all stories. Some high school publications refer to the adults with an appropriate courtesy title (Mr., Mrs., Dr.). If your staff decides to use last names without courtesy titles, be consistent.
- Short titles should precede the name and be capitalized. If long, place behind the name and do not capitalize. Principal Joe Jones. Mary Smith, director of student involvement.
- When identification follows the name, it is set off by commas and is not capitalized: Sue Smith, junior; Gil Tello, assistant principal.

NUMBERS

- With the exceptions noted below, numbers one through nine are written out and numbers 10 and up are numerals. This is true even in a sequence: 9 boys, 11 girls and three teachers.
- Spell out ninth, tenth, etc. when referring to grades
- Use figures when referring to ages, weights, sizes, dimensions, scores, prices, degrees, percents, time ratings and hours of the day.
- Use a hyphen in scores. The Cardinals edged the Hawks, 25-22.

- Use the numeral and the word cents for any amount less than a dollar.
- For even amounts of money or times, eliminate the extra zeros. \$10, 7 p.m.
- Spell out fractions.
- Use noon and midnight rather than 12 a.m and 12 p.m.
- When writing out a date span, use a hyphen instead of the word to: April 11-30.

PUNCTUATION

Apostrophe

- Use an apostrophe to indicate possession in singular and plural nouns that do not end in s. boy's shorts, Margie's books, Francis's telephone.
- Use an apostrophe to indicate omitted letters or numbers: '03-04 school year.
- Do not use an apostrophe behind a year unless you are showing possession.
- The possessive form of personal pronouns such as its and yours do not need an apostrophe.

Comma

- In a series, don't use them before an "and."
- Use one in a sentence after a conjunction IF the part of the sentence following the comma would be a complete sentence (it must have its own subject).

Exclamation point

- Don't use exclamation points. Use a period instead.

Period

- Rather than building a complicated sentence, consider a period.

Semicolon

- Use the semicolon to separate phrases containing commas, statements of contrast and statements too closely related.
- Do not use a semicolon when a period would work just as well.

INTERNET

- Capitalize Internet and Web and World Wide Web.

- Do not capitalize intranet, a private network within an organization.
- dot-com, not dot.com.
- dpi does not take periods.
- e-mail is hyphenated.
- online is NOT hyphenated.
- chat room is two words.
- home page is two words.
- login, logon, logoff are all one word.
- screen saver is two words.
- search engine is two words.
- server is not capitalized.
- shareware is one word.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Use the word "said" instead of commented, related, stated etc. The only exception to use of the word "said" is if it is truly descriptive. The coach screamed, the teen whispered, etc.
- Place the attribution at the end of short quotes or in the middle of two or more sentences.
- Place the attribution in subject verb order. He said, she said.
- Don't end with a summary or a conclusion or an editorial statement.
- Avoid passive voice (and "to be" verbs).
- Spell out percent as one word.
- Avoid partial quotes, but don't be afraid to paraphrase. If you can say something clearer and better, do it.
- Use quotes for reactions rather than to state facts.

For other uses, please consult an AP stylebook. It's a good idea to look up brand names, store names and the like to make sure you are correct. Be consistent.