

An A-to-Z listing of college-related words along with their recommended usage by the Associated Press.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

A few universally recognized abbreviations are required in some circumstances. Some others are acceptable depending on the context. But in general, avoid alphabet soup. Do not use abbreviations or acronyms that a reader would not quickly recognize.

Academic Degrees

There is no apostrophe after associate in *Associate in Arts*, *Associate in Science*, and *Associate in Applied Science*. There is also no apostrophe in *associate degree*.

Use an apostrophe in *bachelor's degree*, *master's*, etc., but there is no possessive in *Bachelor of Arts* or *Master of Science*.

Use periods whenever abbreviating a degree: A.A., A.S., A.A.S., B.A.

Academic Departments

Use lowercase letters except for words that are proper nouns or adjectives: *the department of English* or *the English department*, *the department of mathematics* or *the mathematics department*.

Use uppercase when *department* (or *center* or *office*) is part of the official and formal name: *Valencia Community College Testing Center*.

Academic Titles

Capitalize and spell out formal titles when they precede a name: *Chairman Lew Oliver*, *President Sanford Shugart*, etc.

Use lowercase when these titles follow the name: *Sanford Shugart, president of Valencia*.

After a full name, set off the abbreviation of a degree or a title by commas: *John Snow, Ph.D.*

Collegewide

There is no hyphen for words which end in *-wide*. Examples: *collegewide*, *citywide*, *statewide*, *nationwide*, *worldwide*.

Dean

Capitalize when used as a formal title before a name: *Dean John Jones*, *Deans John Jones and Susan Smith*.

Lowercase in other uses: *John Jones, dean of social sciences; the dean*.

Dean's List

Lowercase in all uses: *He is on the dean's list. She is a dean's list student*.

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Department

The following are examples of some U.S. government departments:

Department of Education; Department of Energy; Department of Health and Human Services (HHS is acceptable); Department of Homeland Security; Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD is acceptable); Department of Justice; Department of Labor; Department of State; Department of Transportation; Department of the Treasury; Department of Veterans Affairs (VA is acceptable).

Avoid acronyms when possible. A phrase such as *the department* is preferable on second reference because it is more readable.

Lowercase *department* in plural uses, but capitalize the proper name element: *the departments of Labor and Justice.*

Lowercase *the department* whenever it stands alone. Do not abbreviate department in any usage.

Dictionaries

For spelling, style and usage questions not covered in this stylebook, consult Webster's New World College Dictionary, Fourth Edition, published by Wiley.

Dimensions

Use figures and spell out *inches, feet, yards, etc.*, to indicate depth, height, length and width. Use the apostrophe to indicate feet and quote marks to indicate inches (*5' 6"*) only in very technical contexts.

Directions and Regions

In general, lowercase *north, south, northeast, northern, etc.*, when they indicate compass direction; capitalize these words when they designate regions. *He drove west. The Northeast depends on the Midwest for its food supply.*

Capitalize compass points when part of a proper name or when used in denoting widely known sections: Central Florida, Southern California, etc.

Dollars

Always lowercase. Use figures and the \$ sign in all cases, except casual references or amounts without a figure: *The book cost \$4. Dad, please give me a dollar.*

For amounts more than \$1 million, use up to two decimal places: *He is worth \$4.35 million. He proposed \$300 billion budget.* For amounts less than a million: *\$5, \$25, \$500, \$1,000, \$650,000.*

Spell out the word *cents* and lowercase, using numerals for amounts less than a dollar: *5 cents, 12 cents, \$1.01, and \$2.50.*

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e.g.	Meaning for <i>example</i> ; it is always followed by a comma.
e-mail	Acceptable in all references for <i>electronic mail</i> .
Emeritus	Word added to formal title to denote an individual who has retired and retained his or her rank or title. Place <i>emeritus</i> after the formal title, keeping with the general practice of the academic institution: <i>Professor Emeritus Samuel Eliot Morison, Dean Emeritus Courtney C. Brown. Samuel Eliot Morison, professor emeritus of history.</i>
Executive Director	Capitalize before a name only if it is a formal corporate or organizational title.
Google	Written in uppercase, it is a trademark for a Web search engine. Also used informally as a verb for searching for information on the Internet.
Government	Always in lowercase, never abbreviate: <i>The federal government, the state government, the U.S. government.</i>
Honorary degrees	All references to honorary degrees should specify that the degree was honorary. Do not use <i>Dr.</i> before the name of an individual whose only doctorate is honorary.
Internet	<p>A decentralized, worldwide network of computers that can communicate with each other. Always capitalize Internet. In later references, <i>the Net</i> is acceptable.</p> <p>The World Wide Web, like e-mail, is a subset of <i>the Internet</i>. They are not synonymous and should not be used interchangeably.</p>
Internet Addresses	<p>Follow the spelling and capitalization of the Web site rather than the Web address. Use “.com” only if it is part of the legal name, as in <i>Amazon.com Inc.</i></p> <p>If the Internet address falls at the end of a sentence, use a period. If an address breaks between lines, split it directly after a slash or a dot that is part of the address, without an inserted hyphen. Use the <i>http://</i> protocol at the start of the Web address, as well as other starts, such as <i>ftp://</i>.</p> <p>When a story prominently mentions a specific Web site or Web service, include within the text the full Internet address with <i>http://</i> and set it off with commas.</p> <p>Avoid URLs that are particularly lengthy and complicated unless essential to guide the reader to a particular document. Consider a URL abbreviation service such as <i>TinyURL.com</i>.</p>

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IT	Abbreviation for <i>Information Technology</i> ; <i>IT</i> is acceptable on second reference.
Italics	AP does not italicize words in news stories. Italics are used in the Stylebook entries to highlight examples of correct and incorrect usage.
Ivy League	Examples are: Brown University, Columbia University, Cornell University, Dartmouth College, Harvard University, Princeton University, the University of Pennsylvania and Yale University.
Jargon	Avoid the use of jargon – the special vocabulary and idioms of a particular class or occupational group. Include an explanation of any words likely to be unfamiliar to most readers.
Legislative Titles	<p>For first reference, use <i>Rep.</i>, <i>Reps.</i>, <i>Sen.</i> and <i>Sens.</i> as formal titles before one or more names.</p> <p>Spell out and lowercase <i>representative</i> and <i>senator</i> in other uses.</p> <p>Spell out other legislative titles in all uses. Capitalize formal titles such as <i>assemblyman</i>, <i>assemblywoman</i>, <i>city counselor</i>, <i>delegate</i>, etc., when they are used before a name. Lowercase in other uses.</p> <p>Add <i>U.S.</i> or <i>state</i> before a title only if necessary to avoid confusion: <i>U.S. Rep. Don Young of Alaska now has a Republican primary opponent, state Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux of Kodiak.</i></p> <p>Deletion of the title on first reference is frequently appropriate, for example, when an individual has become well known: <i>Barack Obama declared Americans were ready “to cast aside cynicism” as he looked for a convincing win in the Democratic contest. The Illinois senator was leading in the polls.</i></p> <p>For second reference, do not use legislative titles before a name unless they are part of a direct quotation. <i>Congressman</i> and <i>congresswoman</i> should appear as capitalized formal titles before a name only in direct quotation.</p>
Organizational Titles	Capitalize titles for formal, organizational offices within a legislative body when they are used before a name: <i>Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Majority Leader Harry Reid, Republican Whip Jon Kyl, President Pro Term Robert C. Byrd.</i>
Legislature	Capitalize <i>legislature</i> when preceded by the name of the state: <i>the Kansas Legislature</i> . Capitalize <i>legislature</i> in subsequent specific references and in such construction as: <i>the 100th Legislature, the state Legislature.</i>

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Although the word legislature is not part of the formal, proper name for lawmaking bodies in many states, it commonly is used that way and should be treated as such in any story that does not use the formal name. Lowercase *legislature* when it is used generically: *No legislature has approved the amendment.*

Magazine Names

Capitalize the initial letters of the name but do not place it in quotes. Lowercase *magazine* unless it is part of the publication’s formal title: *Harper’s Magazine, Newsweek magazine, Time magazine.*

Manager

Capitalize when used as a formal title before a name: *General Manager Dick O’Connell.*

Do not capitalize in job descriptions such as: *equipment manager John Smith.*

Military Titles

Capitalize a military rank when used as a formal title before an individual’s name. On first reference, use the appropriate title before the full name of a member of the military. On second reference, do not continue using the title before the name. Use only the last name. Spell out and lowercase a title when it is substituted for a name:

Gen. David Petraeus is the top U.S. commander in Iraq. The general endorsed the idea.

For plurals, add *s* to the principal element in the title: *Majs. John Jones and Robert Smith, Spcs. John Jones and Robert Smith.*

For *firefighters* and *police officers*, use the abbreviations listed when a military-style title is used before the name. Add *police* or *fire* before the title if needed for clarity: *police Sgt. William Smith, fire Capt. David Jones.*

For *retired* personnel, do not use *Ret.* instead use *retired* just before the rank and name: *They invited retired Army Gen. John Smith.*

Nationalities and Races

Capitalize the proper names of nationalities, peoples, races, tribes, etc.

African-American is acceptable for an American black person of African descent. Black is also acceptable. The terms are not necessarily interchangeable. People from Caribbean nations, for example, generally refer to themselves as Caribbean-American.

Newspaper Names

Capitalize *the* in a newspaper’s name if that is the way the publication prefers to be known. Do not place in quotes: *The New York Times, the Orlando Sentinel.*

Numbers

Spell out a numeral at the beginning of a sentence. Do not begin a sentence

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and Numerals

with a numeral. A year may be written at the beginning of a sentence.

–*Wrong: 993 freshmen entered the college last year.*

–*Right: Last year 993 freshmen entered the college.*

–*Right: 1976 was a very good year.*

Spell out *first* through *ninth*: *first base, the First Amendment.*

Starting with the 10th use figures: 10 class sections, 17 faculty, etc.

Some punctuation and usage samples:

–*Act 1, Scene 2*

–*3 ounces*

–*No. 3 choice*

–*1 percent*

–*a ratio of 2-to-1*

–*5 cents*

–*\$1.02*

–*\$650,000*

–*\$2.45 million*

–*a -year-old girl*

Organizations and Institutions

Capitalize the full names of organizations and institutions: the *American Medical Association, First Presbyterian Church; General Motors Corp., Valencia Community College.*

For internal elements of an organization, use lowercase when they have names which are widely used generic terms: *the board of directors of General Motors, the board of trustees of Columbia University, the board of trustees of Valencia.*

Possessives Rules

For descriptive phrases, do not add an apostrophe to a word ending in *s* when it is used primarily in a descriptive sense: *a teachers college, a writers guide.*

However, if the term involves a plural word that does not end in an *s*, add the ‘*s* as in: *a children’s hospital, a people’s republic.*

For compound words, add an apostrophe or ‘*s* to the word closest to the object possessed: *the major general’s decision, the major generals’ decisions, the attorney generals’ request, Fred and Sylvia’s apartment.* Use a possessive form after both words if the objects are individually owned: *Fred’s and Sylvia’s books.*

For inanimate objects, in general avoid excessive personalization of inanimate objects and give preference to a construction with the word *of* when it fits the makeup of the sentence: *he is a friend of the college.* Not *college’s friend* because college is inanimate. *Mathematics’ rules, measles’ effects* would be better phrased as: *the rules of mathematics* and *the effects of measles.*

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Room, Building And Numbers Use figures and capitalize *room* when used with a figure: *Room 2, Room 211, Lincoln Room, Blue Room.*

The same rule applies to *building*. Capitalize *building* when using a figure: *Building 3, Room 12, the Empire State Building.*

Time Usage Capitalize the full name of the time in force within a particular zone: *Eastern Standard Time; Eastern Daylight Time.*

Spell out time zone in references not accompanied by a clock reading: *Orlando is in the Eastern time zone.*

Use figures except for *noon* and *midnight*. Avoid redundancies: *10 a.m. this morning.*

List times with *a.m.* or *p.m.*

Spell out time sequences: *50 hours, 23 minutes, 14 seconds.*

In sports statistics, the form is: *2:30:21.65 (hours, minutes, seconds, tenths, hundredths.)*

Titles of Creative Works In book titles, movie titles, opera titles, play titles, poem titles, album and song titles, radio and television program titles, computer game titles, and the titles of lectures, speeches and works of art:

- Capitalize the principal words, including prepositions and conjunctions of four or more letters.
- Capitalize an article – *the, a, an* – or words of fewer than four letters if it is the first or last word in a title.
- Put quotation marks around the names of all such works except the Bible and books that are primarily catalogs of reference material (including dictionaries, the college catalog, student handbooks, etc.)

Today, Tonight Use the day of the week and not *today* or *tonight* in copy.

United Nations Abbreviation – *U.N.* In headlines, it's *UN* (no periods).

United States Abbreviation – *U.S.*, use periods within texts. In headlines, it's *US* (no periods).

United States of America Abbreviation—*USA* (no periods)

User Friendly Avoid this term. Instead write: The system is *easy to use*.

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- Web** Short form of *World Wide Web*. The *Web* is not the same as the *Internet*, but is a subset of the Internet. *Web page* is two words. But *website*, *webcam*, *webcast*, *webmaster*, are written as one word.
- Who, Whom** *Who* is the subject of a sentence, clause or phrase (never the object). *Whom* is used when someone is the object of the verb or preposition: Who is at the door? The woman to whom the room was rented left the window open. Whom do you wish to see?
- wide and wide-** There is no hyphen for words which end in *-wide*. Examples: *citywide*, *collegewide*, *worldwide*, *nationwide*, *countrywide*, *statewide*
- For words which start with *-wide*, use a hyphen. Examples: *wide-angle*, *wide-eyed*, *wide-open*, *wide-brimmed*.