

Datelines

Datelines are the line at the beginning of a press release that indicates the city and state where the news originated and the date it was issued.

Format: CITY, State (or Country).

The city is in all caps, followed by the state.

Example: CAMBRIDGE, Massachusetts

The Standalones: Major cities (e.g., NEW YORK, CHICAGO, LOS ANGELES, ATLANTA) do not need the state name.

Abbreviations: Per the latest edition, use the full state name in the dateline (e.g., SEATTLE, Washington – not WA or Wash.).

Punctuation & Quotes

Use the Oxford Comma: AP Style does not use the serial comma unless it is necessary for clarity. (Red, white and blue.)

Quotations: Commas and periods always go INSIDE the quotation marks.

Attribution: Use "said" for professional attribution (e.g., "We are thrilled," Smith said.).

Avoid using "exclaimed" or "stated."

Save the word "stated" for academic writing (such as literature reviews and research papers).

Times & Dates

Times: Use figures and lowercase periods. (7 a.m. or 8:30 p.m.— never 7:00 or AM/PM).

Use "noon" and "midnight" instead of 12 p.m. or 12 a.m.

Months: Abbreviate months with more than five letters only when used with a specific date (Aug. 20, 2026). Spell them out when used alone (August 2026).

Months to always spell out: March, April, May, June, July.

The Top 3 Errors Students Make

Percent: Always use the symbol % when paired with a number (e.g., 15%). Do not spell out "percent."

Addresses: Abbreviate Ave., St., and Blvd. only with a numbered address (123 Main St.). Spell them out if the number is missing (Main Street).

Toward: There is no "s" at the end of toward, forward, backward, or upward.

Titles & Capitalization

Formal Titles: Capitalize formal titles only when they appear immediately before a name.

(President Jane Doe vs. Jane Doe, the president of the company.)

Job Descriptions: Lowercase job descriptions or "occupational" titles. (coach Jim Harbaugh, astronaut Buzz Aldrin).

Composition Titles: Put "quotation marks" around book titles, movie titles, and song titles.

Do not use italics.

Numerals

0 through 9: Spell out the word (one, two, three...).

10 and above: Use figures (10, 11, 50, 1,000).

Exceptions: Always use figures for ages (The 5-year-old child), money (\$5 million), percentages (7%), and addresses (9 Main St.).

Start of Sentence: Never start a sentence with a figure unless it is a year (e.g., "Twenty students attended..." vs. "2026 was a great year").

Attribution

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