

Comm 1610 Style Rules

Abbreviations Abbreviations save space, especially in headlines. They should not be used too often, or they will end up confusing rather than helping the reader. For this reason, it is essential that writers and editors learn the style rules governing abbreviations. Most of what you need to know about abbreviations will come from specific sections of the AP Stylebook. However, in the Comm 1610 Style Rules, please pay attention to the rules for abbreviating addresses, days and dates, state names and titles.

In general, abbreviations with two or fewer letters require periods: *9:30 a.m., 11 p.m., A.D. 1999, 350 B.C., U.S. policy in Singapore; the U.N. Security Council*

Abbreviations of academic degrees require periods: *B.A., B.S., M.A., M.S., Ph.D.* However, if mention of degrees is necessary to establish a person's credentials, the preferred form is to avoid the abbreviation and use a modifier that spells out the degree: *Ed Lambeth, who has a doctorate in philosophy*

If an abbreviation has three or more letters, no periods are needed: *ABC, AFL-CIO, CBS, CIA, FBI, GOP, NBA, NBC, NATO, 75 mph*

Do not use periods in abbreviations that designate ships or planes: *the USS Constitution, the Boeing-made SST*

Here are some other rules governing abbreviations:

Acronyms — Well-known and commonly used acronyms such as *AIDS, NASA* or *NATO* may be used on first reference without spelling them out. Avoid spelling out an organization's full name on first reference and following with the acronym in parentheses: *The Five County Association of Governments (FCOAG) will meet tonight.* If the acronym would not be clear on subsequent reference, do not use it.

Businesses — Abbreviate the descriptions *Co., Corp., Inc.* and *Ltd.* That come after the name of a business: *Linton Construction Co., B & B Import-Export Corp., Quitters Inc., Classy Furs Ltd.* Spell out *Association, Bureau, Department* and *Division* when they come after a proper noun.

Military, Political and Religious Titles — On first reference, always abbreviate these military, political and religious titles that appear immediately before names: *Gen., Col., Maj., Capt., Lt., Sgt., Pfc., Gov., Lt. Gov., Sen., Rep.,* and the *Rev.* On second reference, do not use the titles; use only the person's last name. Do not abbreviate these titles: *Attorney General, Controller, Detective, District Attorney, Officer, President, Professor* or *Superintendent.*

Miscellaneous Abbreviations — These abbreviations may be used in all references: *AWOL, POW, SOS* and *TV.*

United States — Always spell out *United States* unless it is being used as an adjective. Then it may be abbreviated: *The Ambassador tried to explain U.S. policy in Taiwan.*

Academic degrees *Bachelor's degree, master's degree, associate degree* (not *associate's degree*) and *doctorate* are correct references. Do not refer to an academic degree using the possessive pronouns *his* and *her*, as in, *He earned his bachelor's degree in 1994.* Always use the indefinite article *a*, as in, *She earned a master's degree.*

Capitalize abbreviations of academic degrees when you must use them: *B.A., B.S., M.A., M.S., Ph.D.* However, general references to degrees are preferred: *bachelor's degree, master's degree, doctorate.* Do not capitalize them.

Academic titles Identifying a faculty member by his or her correct academic rank is very important. To call an *instructor* a *professor* is akin to calling a *sergeant* a *general*. Always double-check all academic ranks and titles. A list of faculty and staff members is available in the back of the university catalog.

Also, do not use the title *Dr.* in reference to faculty who have earned doctorates. If the doctorate is relevant to the story, simply note that the faculty member has earned a doctorate and name the discipline or specialization: *Jones earned a doctorate in philosophy from Harvard in 1983.*

Addresses Directional street address, common in Utah, should follow this style: *267 W. 400 South*

Other street addresses should follow this style: *351 W. University Blvd.*

Abbreviate *avenue, boulevard* and *street* in numbered addresses (*123 W. Vista Ave.*) but spell them out when referring only to the street (*on Center Street, along Vista Avenue*).

Never abbreviate *Circle, Court, Drive, Highway, Lane, Place, Road* or *Square* in an address.

Adviser The proper spelling is with an "e." *Adviser*, not *advisor*. (See AP style.)

Affect and effect *Affect* is a verb (*The SUUSA Senate will vote Tuesday on a measure that will affect most students*). On the other hand, *effect* can be used as noun (*The senate's vote will have a positive effect on students*) or as a verb (*The senate hopes to effect significant change*). To learn more, read about *affect* and *effect* in the AP Stylebook.

All right Never *alright*.

Capitalization Avoid unnecessary capitals. Capitalize only when justified by a principle of AP style.

Capitalize proper nouns: *John, Mary, America, Boston, England*

Capitalize common nouns (such as party, river or street) only when they are an integral part of the proper name of a person, place or thing: *Democratic Party, Mississippi River, Fleet Street*.

Use lowercase letters when these common nouns stand alone: *the party, the river, the street*.

Capitalize words that are derived from a proper noun and still depend on it for their meaning: *American, Christian, Christianity, Shakespearean*.

Capitalize abbreviations of academic degrees when you must use them: *B.A., B.S., M.A., M.S., Ph.D.* However, general references are preferred and should not be capitalized: *bachelor's degree, master's degree, doctorate*.

Capitalize geographic regions: *East Coast, Mountain West, Pacific Northwest*. However, do not capitalize general directions: *southern Utah, northern Arizona*.

Capitalize brand names of products when you must use them: *Band-Aid, Books on Tape, Jell-O, Kleenex*. However, general references are preferred and should not be capitalized: *bandages, audiotape, gelatin, tissue*.

As a general rule, the names of colleges and schools at SUU are capitalized: *College of Humanities and Social Sciences, School of Business*. Also, capitalize the names of academic departments: *Communication Department*.

Do not, however, capitalize the names of academic disciplines: *Cheryl Whitelaw, assistant professor of mathematics; Carol Modesitt, associate professor of music*. Some disciplines, however, are taken from proper names and should be capitalized: *Elise Leahy, associate professor of French; Olga Godoy, assistant professor of Spanish*.

Capitalize formal titles when used immediately before names: *Professor Jon Smith*. However, lowercase formal titles when used after names: *Jon Smith, professor*.

Use lowercase in all references to terms that are job descriptions rather than formal titles: *Southern Utah men's basketball coach Roger Reid*.

Other capitalization rules:

- ◆ Capitalize the first word in a statement that stands as a sentence.
- ◆ Capitalize principal words in titles of books, movies, plays, poems, operas, songs, and works of art.

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, The Most reporters who live and work in Utah inevitably reach a point where they must refer to the most common religion in the state. At the *Journal*, the proper form for doing so is *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. Note that the *t* in *The* is capitalized and that *Latter-day* is hyphenated.

Also, the church is never referred to as the *Mormon Church* on first reference in the *Journal*. Members of the church are referred to as *Latter-day Saints*, not *Mormons*.

Finally, the proper way to refer to that building on University Boulevard is the *LDS Institute of Religion*.

Cities and Datelines The Associated Press has designated the names of 30 U.S. cities and 27 foreign cities that can stand alone without a state or country name in a story or dateline. The list appears under the **Datelines** entry in the AP Stylebook. For our purposes, the two cities on the list that do not require state names are Salt Lake City and Las Vegas. NOTE: There is no town or city called *Salt Lake*; it is *Salt Lake City*.

In addition, all cities in Utah stand alone in stories and datelines. There is no need to refer to the city 50 miles north of Cedar City as *Beaver, Utah*. If there is bound to be some doubt among readers about the location of a city or town, a subsequent reference can place the city or town in northeastern Utah (or wherever it is located). For cities outside Utah, the rule of using both city and state still applies: *Amber Flynn, a sophomore elementary education major from Monkey's Elbow, Ky.*

Courtesy titles Do not use courtesy titles such as *Mr., Mrs., Miss, Dr., Brother, Sister,* etc. Treat the names of men and women alike. On first reference, use the first and last name, and the middle initial when applicable.

In particular, we do not use the courtesy title *Dr.* when referring to a professor who has earned a Ph.D. Instead, we use the academic rank: *Patricia Paystrup, associate professor of communication*

When reporting a story in which the principals have the same last name, use first and last name in all references: *Roger Reid, Randy Reid, Robbie Reid*

Courtesy titles are acceptable in obituaries.

Dates, Days of the Week Use *today* only when the event is on the day of publication. Never use *yesterday* or *tomorrow*.

When writing about an event that has occurred or will occur within seven days before or after the date of publication, use the day of the week: *met Monday, is scheduled Tuesday.*

When an event took place or is scheduled to take place more than seven days before or after the date of publication, use the date only: *is scheduled Dec. 22, met Oct. 28.*

The day of the week and date should not appear together in copy. **THIS IS WRONG:** *Tuesday, Dec. 13*

Never abbreviate the day of the week.

Capitalize the names of months in all uses. When a month is used with a specific date (*Feb. 7*), use these abbreviations: *Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.* However, the names of those months are spelled out when used alone: *The council will meet again in December* or *It was a cold, dreary February afternoon.*

Five months are never abbreviated: *March, April, May, June, July.*

A comma should not separate a month and year when they are mentioned together without reference to a specific date: *They met in September 1994* or *A December 2005 wedding is planned.* However, when a specific date includes the year, the year should be set off with commas: *Jan. 14, 2004, is the target date.*

Farther, further *Farther* refers to physical distance; *further* refers to an extension of time or degree.

Forbidden Leads Inexperienced or lazy reporters sometimes try to avoid the work of crafting a lead that contains the important elements of the story. They resort to three types of leads that should never be published in the *Journal*:

- ◆ Direct-quotation leads (using a direct quote to begin the story).
- ◆ Direct-address leads (addressing the reader in the first person as *you*).
- ◆ Question leads (asking a question rather than making a statement).

Stories containing these types of leads will be sent back to the reporter for rewriting.

Identifying Students In general, identify students by name, class standing, hometown and major, like this: *Bob Rogers, a sophomore international finance major from Nacogdoches, Texas.*

Avoid this error: *Bob Rogers, a sophomore majoring in international finance from Nacogdoches, Texas.*

This leads to the question, “What’s so special about international finance from Nacogdoches, Texas? Is it any better than international finance from Las Vegas or Timbuktu?”

Internet Always capitalize it. (Also, see **Web site**.) These rules also apply:

http://www Internet URLs that begin with *www.* need not use *http://* to begin. The exception is the *Journal* Web site, which should be written *suijournal.com* without the customary prefix. Most Internet URLs begin with *www.*, but some do not. Those that are just *http://* or *//https:* should begin that way.

e-mail Lower case the *e* and use the hyphen.

online It’s one word. Do not hyphenate.

Web site It’s two words; always capitalize *Web*. This also applies to *Web page*.

Its and it’s *Its* is the possessive of *it*, while *it’s* is the contraction of *it is* or *it has*. Don’t make the time-honored mistake of writing, *The team won it’s game* or even, *A newspaper is only as good as it’s editors.*

Legislative titles On first reference, follow the names of state and U.S. legislators with party affiliations and locales they represent. Example: *Rep. Jim Matheson, D-Utah*, or *Sen. Dennis E. Stowell, R-District 28*. Note that the party affiliation and locale are always set off by commas after the name: *Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, told reporters to go jump in the lake*.

Money, Dollar Signs In references to exact dollar amounts, do not use *dollars*. The dollar sign should be used: *\$1, \$5, \$500*.

For exact amounts that are uneven, use decimals: *\$4.98, \$64.95*.

For larger amounts that are less than one million, use numerals (be sure to include commas): *\$1,500, \$35,000, \$500,000*.

For one million dollars or more, use this form: *\$1 million* or *\$3.5 million*.

When referring to amounts less than a dollar, use figures and spell out the word cents: *5 cents, 12 cents, 98 cents*.

Numerals In general, spell out the numbers one through nine. Use numerals for numbers 10 and greater.

Always spell out numbers when they begin a sentence: *Sixty-three people were arrested*. Avoid starting sentences with years. If you must, preface it with, *The year*, as in, *The year 2001 brought two big surprises*.

Use numerals in these instances:

- ◆ Ages: *9-year-old country singer Billy Gilman; the girl was 6 years old*
- ◆ Court rulings and votes: *the appellate court ruled 2-1; a 4-3 council vote*
- ◆ Dates: *late registration for Fall 2003 classes is Aug. 9-12* (note the hyphen rather than *to*)
- ◆ Decimals and percentages: *a decrease of 0.5 percent; a 12-percent tax increase*
- ◆ Exact measurements: *the baby weighs 6 pounds, 8 ounces; the largest building lot available is 90 by 120 feet; the 24-foot sailboat*
- ◆ Fractions in numbers greater than one: *for 1½ years*
- ◆ Geographical and political boundaries: *the 9th Congressional District*
- ◆ Heights: *he is 6 feet 3 inches tall; a 5-foot-11-inch guard*
- ◆ Money: *5 cents, \$3, \$250, \$50 million*
- ◆ Numerical ranking: *Florida State is No. 2 in the latest A.P. college football poll*
- ◆ Recipe amounts: *blend 4 tablespoons of butter or margarine with 1 cup of sugar*
- ◆ Speeds: *the speed limit in the trailer park is 5 mph*
- ◆ Scores: *Utah defeated the Warriors 96-88; the Grizzlies beat Chicago 2-1*
- ◆ Street names that are 10 or greater: *18th Street, 33rd Avenue*
- ◆ Temperatures: *8 degrees; minus 8 degrees; however, the overnight low was zero*

Spell out numbers in these instances:

- ◆ Distances less than 10: *Our team won the two-mile relay*.
- ◆ Fractions that are less than one: *We spent one-third the time you spent*.
- ◆ Indefinite or approximate amounts: *We'll leave in about five minutes*.
- ◆ Street names that are less than 10: *on Third Street; along Eighth Avenue*

Other rules governing numerals:

- ◆ In most cases, spell out *first* through *ninth*.
- ◆ Use numerals and letters for ordinal numbers 10 and greater: *10th, 22nd, 131st*. However, do not use the extensions *st, nd, rd* or *th* for dates. **This is correct:** *Lisa finally got a date on Dec. 31.* **This is not correct:** *Joe asked Lisa out on Dec. 31st.*
- ◆ Use numerals where sequence has been assigned in forming proper names: *J. Harlan Burns presides over the 5th Circuit Court* or *Gen. George S. Patton took command of the 8th Army*.
- ◆ Always use commas in numbers four digits and larger: *1,534* or *6,925,871*. The only exception is the year, as in *February 2003*, not *February 2,003*.
- ◆ When a number modifies a word, place a hyphen between them: *67-yard run, 43-year career*.

Over, more than They aren't interchangeable. *Over* is a preposition and refers to spatial relationships; *more than* is used with figures to mean *greater than*. *Over* does not mean *greater than*.

Percentages Do not use the symbol % or decimals. Spell it out. Note, too, in the example below, that percentages are always represented by numerals: *5 percent, 67 percent*.

Seasons Do not capitalize *fall, winter, spring* or *summer*, as in, *They are planning a spring wedding*.

Semesters Couple the semester with the year and capitalize, as in the following: *Fall 2009, Spring 2010, Summer 2010, Fall 2010, etc.* For example, it is permissible to say, *Matt Barton, associate professor of communication, will be on sabbatical during the Fall 2010 semester.*

Southern Utah, southern Utah Lowercase *southern* in geographic references, but be sure to capitalize it when used as part of a proper noun, as in, *Southern Utah Officials Association*.

State names When a state name stands alone in text, spell it out: *Joe South is from Georgia*. However, when the state name is used as subsidiary information to the name of a city, abbreviate most state names, and insert a comma after the state name, as in: *The forensic squad will travel to Tucson, Ariz., this weekend*. Do not use postal service abbreviation for states. Here are the proper abbreviations:

Ala.	Fla.	Md.	Neb.	N.D.	Tenn.
Ariz.	Ga.	Mass.	Nev.	Okla.	Vt.
Ark.	Ill.	Mich.	N.C.	Ore.	Va.
Calif.	Ind.	Minn.	N.H.	Pa.	Wash.
Colo.	Kan.	Miss.	N.J.	R.I.	W. Va.
Conn.	Ky.	Mo.	N.M.	S.C.	Wis.
Del.	La.	Mont.	N.Y.	S.D.	Wyo.

These states names are never abbreviated: *Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas* and *Utah*.

Student body *Student body* is two words. Not *studentbody*.

Student government SUU *student government* is often confused with SUUSA, the campus student association. While all elected, on-campus student representatives are members of SUUSA, not all members of SUUSA are elected representatives. To avoid confusion, refer to members of student government as one of the following: *student body officers* or *SUUSA officers*. Refer to the entire body of officers as *student government*, not simply as *SUUSA*.

SUU Do not use periods in the abbreviation of the name of the university.

SUUSA This abbreviation stands for *Southern Utah University Student Association*. It should be used in all references to that organization; don't spell it out on first reference. Note, too, that no periods are used. Avoid the redundancy of using *SUUSA* and *student body* as adjectives that modify the same proper noun.

This is incorrect: SUUSA Student Body President Andy Boscov

This is correct: SUUSA President Andy Boscov

SUUSA Senate Use the proper name on first reference. After that, use *senate* and do not capitalize it.

Theatre The AP Stylebook says it is *theater*, but on this campus, it is always *theatre*.

They and It In this world, there are *its* and there are *theys*. An *it* refers to a thing or an institution; an *it* is singular. A *they* refers to people; a *they* is plural. Don't confuse them.

If you remember this simple rule, you will avoid one of the most common errors in the *it/they* conundrum: A *team* is an institution and therefore an *it*, whereas *Thunderbirds* (or *Cougars* or *Utes* or whatever) are people and therefore plural. Thus, we would write, *The football team lost, and it was disappointed*, or, *The Thunderbirds lost and they were disappointed*, but we would never write, *The football team lost, and they were disappointed*.

Time These references are correct: *6 a.m., 8 p.m., noon, midnight, 9 to 11 a.m., 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.* Avoid these redundant references: *12 noon* or *12 midnight, 8 p.m. tonight, 10 a.m. Friday morning*.

Titles and Abbreviations Formal titles are capitalized when used before a person's name (see **Capitalization** for details). Abbreviate military and political titles that appear immediately before names: *Sgt. James K. Brown, Gov. Gary Herbert, Sen. Orrin Hatch*. However, always spell out the title *president* when used before an individual's name: *President Michael T. Benson*. Do not use titles on second reference, such as *Gov. Herbert* or *President Benson*.

Toward, towards The first is correct; avoid the second.

University Journal *University Journal* is the complete and correct name of the paper. *The* should be used with the name of the paper, but it is not part of the proper noun and is not italicized. Do not capitalize *the* before the name of the paper unless it is used at the beginning of a sentence.

Under way *Under way* is almost always two words. See AP Stylebook.

Web site Two words; always capitalize *Web*.

Words and Terms to Avoid Do not use these words in stories unless they appear in a direct quotation:

- ◆ **centered around** — Don't use it. Use *centered on* or *revolve(s) around*. The phrase *centered around* makes less sense than the idiotic declaration, *I could care less*.
- ◆ **due to** in place of **because** or **because of** — *Due to* does not mean *because* and should never be used in place of *because* or *because of*. Any reference to a direct causal relationship should use *because*.

This is incorrect: *He dropped all his classes last semester due to poor health.*

This is correct: *He dropped all his classes last semester because of poor health.*

It is correct to use *due to* only after a form of *to be* and only preceding the infinitive form of a verb. Example: *SUU is due to beat BYU in baseball this year.*

It is also possible to use *due* after a form of *to be* and before a prepositional phrase, like this: *The Thunderbirds are due for a win over BYU this spring.*

- ◆ **held** — Do not use *held* to report on meetings or other events. Only babies and children are *held*. Meetings or events *take place, happen* or *occur*.
- ◆ **main** — Avoid *main* as an adjective to describe the principal part or reason. Use *primary* or *principal* rather than *main*. **This is incorrect:** *Financial security is her main goal.* **This is correct:** *Financial security is her primary goal.*
- ◆ **need to, needs to** — Avoid *need to* or *needs to* in place of *must*. **This is incorrect:** *Students need to secure their tickets in advance.* **This is correct:** *Students must secure their tickets in advance.*
- ◆ **plan on, plans on** — *On* is a preposition. It should not be used with *plan, plans, planned* or *will plan* before a gerund, as in this incorrect example: *The editor plans on hiring two new reporters in June.* The preposition *on* should never be used in place of the sign of the infinitive *to*. **This is incorrect:** *Smith plans on shooting film next semester for his documentary about Mexico next semester.* **This is correct:** *Smith plans to shoot film next semester for his documentary about Mexico.*
- ◆ **recently** — This is a relative term. Depending on topic, *recently* can mean two days ago, two weeks ago, two months ago, or two years ago. Be more precise.
- ◆ **special** — Nothing should be *special* in a story unless a source says it is *special* in a direct quote.
- ◆ **very** — This is a meaningless term because it is not possible to quantify the difference between *happy* and *very happy*. Use *very* only in direct quotations.