

# AP STYLE BASICS

Goals: Clear, concise writing that describes or informs without using unnecessary words, including adjectives. Avoid “eduspeak.” Don’t use a \$5-word when a 50-cent one will do.

**Acronyms and parentheses**—In general, avoid alphabet soup. Do not use acronyms that readers (families, staff, etc.) would not recognize. Do not put a group’s acronym in parentheses following its full name.

No: The Environmental Stewardship Advisory Committee (ESAC) will meet every day this week. ESAC members will hear from families and staff.

**Yes: The Environmental Stewardship Advisory Committee will meet every day this week. Committee members will hear from families and staff.**

**Addresses**—Abbreviate Ave., St. and Blvd. when used with a numbered address. Spell out all other designations. Spell out and capitalize First through Ninth when used as street names. Abbreviate compass points when used with a street number.

No: Join us at CAC, 1111 West 6th Street | **Yes: Join us at CAC, 1111 W. Sixth St. OR CAC is on West Sixth Street.**

**Attribution**—When writing a web story, use the verb *said*. Do not use *commented*, *declared*, *related*, *stated* or similar words. Write in past tense. Do not use *says*.

No: “Recapture is the single worst idea the legislature has ever had,” claimed Austin ISD CFO Nicole Conley Johnson.

**Yes: “Recapture is the single worst idea the legislature has ever had,” said Austin ISD Chief Financial Officer Nicole Conley Johnson.**

**Austin ISD**—Use Austin ISD on first reference. Second reference can be *AISD* or *the district*. Do not capitalize district. Do not use the entire name unless in a formal or legal document.

No: After AISD’s bond passed, the District began looking for contractors.

**Yes: After Austin ISD’s 2017 Bond passed, the district began looking for contractors.**

**Board of Trustees**—The verb should agree with the singular word *board*. On second reference, use either *the board* or *trustees*. Do not capitalize board or trustees on second reference. Do not capitalize if the name does not also include Austin ISD. Apply this same rule to other collective nouns: *class*, *crowd*, *committee*, *family*, *group*, *orchestra*, *PTA*, *staff*, *team*.

No: The Board of Trustees are scheduled to take action Monday. The Board will approve the 2018–2019 calendar.

**Yes: The Austin ISD Board of Trustees is scheduled to take action Monday. Trustees will approve the calendar for the 2018–19 school year.**

**Commas**—Do not include a comma before the last item in a series.

No: Registration is open Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday. OR Registration is open Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.

**Yes: Registration is open Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. OR Registration is open Monday–Friday.**

**Compose/comprise**—*Compose* means to create or put together. *Comprise* means to contain, to include all or embrace.

No: The United States is comprised of 50 states.

**Yes: The United States is composed of (or made up of) 50 states. OR Fifty states comprise the United States.**

**Dates**—Do not abbreviate the names of months if they stand alone. Abbreviate when the date includes a day. Do not include the year unless comparing items from year to year or listing dates that include two years. Do not include th, rd, st or nd with the date. Never abbreviate the following months: March, April, May, June or July. Use *on* only for clarity.

No: Summer break ends in early Aug. Classes resume on August 31st, 2018.

**Yes: Summer break ends in early August. Classes resume Aug. 31.**

**Each**—The word takes a singular verb.

No: Each of the teachers are preparing for Spring Break. **Yes: Each of the teachers is preparing for Spring Break.**

**Hyphens**—Use hyphens to avoid ambiguity and to form compound modifiers. Do not hyphenate adverbs ( *-ly* words).

No: The president will speak to small business men. **Yes: The president will speak to small-business men.**

No: The highly-qualified teacher sought a full time job. **Yes: The highly qualified teacher sought a full-time job.**

**Its/It’s**—*Its* is the possessive. *It’s* is a contraction meaning *it is*. *The team won its first game. It’s the start of a great season.*

**Myriad**—The word is not followed by *of*: There are myriad books in the library.



**Names and titles**—Use a person’s title and full name on first reference. Shorter titles (four or five words) can be given before a person’s name. All other titles should follow the name. Do not use courtesy titles such as Mr., Ms. or Mrs. You may use Dr. for a physician when it’s related to the material. Do not include Ph.D., M.A., MBA, etc.

No: Students and their families met with Dr. Paul Cruz and Director of Research and Evaluation Holly Williams, Ph.D.

**Yes: Students and their families met with Superintendent Paul Cruz and Director of Research and Evaluation Holly Williams.**

**Numbers**—Spell out numbers from one through nine and when a sentence begins with a number. Use figures for 10th and more. Hyphenate designations such as third-grade when used as a compound modifier. Use *more than*, not *over*; *over* is a designation of location. Use *fewer* for numbers that can be counted, *less* for bulk or quantity.

No: The trend is towards more students and less teachers. There are twenty-seven fifth graders and only one teacher.

**Yes: The trend is toward more students and fewer teachers. There are 27 fifth-graders and one teacher.  
Yes: I had less than \$50 in my account at the end of January. I had fewer than five \$10 bills.**

**Order of information** is time, date, place.

No: Graduations will be at the Erwin Center starting May 31 at 11:00 a.m.

**Yes: Graduations will begin at 11 a.m. May 31 at the Frank Erwin Center.**

**People/persons**—Use *people* in all plural uses. *Persons* should be used only when it is in a direct quote or part of a title.

**Ranges**—For monetary amounts, use *\$12 million to \$14 million*, not *\$12 to \$14 million*. Also, *a pay increase of 12–15 percent*, or *a pay increase of between 12 and 15 percent*. For calendar years, use *2018–19*, not *2018–2019*.

**Schools**—Use the full name of a school on first reference. Lowercase the level when listing multiple schools of the same level.

No: From Akins and Bailey to Zavala and Zilker, and all points in between, ...

**Yes: From Akins and Bowie high schools to Zavala and Zilker elementary schools, and all points in between, ...**

**Telephone numbers**—Use hyphens, not parentheses, for phone numbers.

No: (512) 414-1700 **Yes: 512-414-1700**

**That/which**—Use *that* for essential clauses important to the meaning of the sentence; do not use commas. Use *which* for nonessential clauses; use commas. If you can drop the clause and not lose the meaning of the sentence, use *which*. *Which* clauses are surrounded by commas.

No: I remember the first game which our team won.

**Yes: I remember the first game that our team won. Our team, which finished last a year ago, is now in first place.**

**Time**—Use a.m. and p.m. Do not repeat a.m. and p.m. when listing the time for an event. Use noon, not 12 p.m.

No: The Martin course fair is Monday, January 30th, 2018 from 8:00 a.m.–11:00 a.m. in the Cafeteria.

**Yes: The Martin Middle School Course Fair is 8–11 a.m. Jan. 30 in the school’s cafeteria.**

**Who/That and Whose/Who’s**—Use *who* for people. Use *that* for things, organizations, etc. *Whose* is the possessive. *Who’s* is a contraction meaning *who is*. *Whose book is that? Who’s in class today?*

**Unique**—It means one-of-a-kind. Do not describe something as *rather unique*, *the most unique* or *very unique*.

## ALSO

adviser

associate degree

athletic director

bus, buses, bused, busing

backward, forward, toward

barbecue

cancel, canceled, canceling,

cancellation

Central, East, North, West and

South Austin

child care, health care

districtwide, schoolwide

email

farmers market

inbox

index, indexes

judgment

OK, OK’d, OK’ing, OKs (not okay)

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

percent (not %)

real estate agent, Realtor

special education (not *Sped* or *SpEd*)

T-shirt

tweet, retweet

use (not *utilize*)

web address, web browser, webmaster,

webpage, website, the web

winter, spring, summer, fall

Veterans Day

Winter Break, Spring Break,

Summer Break, Thanksgiving Break

y’all

ZIP code

