

Montclair State University Communications style guide and AP style short cuts

Montclair State University Communications uses a combination of AP style and University style when writing and editing University publications. The following are frequently used examples of both styles. This guide is updated as new questions arise. For any style questions, email Robert Gano at ganor@mail.montclair.edu or Laura Griffin at griffinla@mail.montclair.edu.

Academic titles

Capitalize and spell out formal titles such as chancellor, chairman, etc., when they precede a name. Lowercase when they come after the name or appear generically elsewhere.

Examples: College of Science and Mathematics Dean Robert Prezant OR Robert Prezant, dean of the College of Science and Mathematics.

Academic degrees

If mention of degrees is necessary to establish someone's credentials, the preferred form is to avoid an abbreviation and use instead a phrase such as: John Jones, who has a doctorate in psychology.

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

Use such abbreviations as BA, MA and PhD **only** when the need to identify many individuals by degree on first reference would make the preferred form cumbersome. Use these abbreviations only after a full name, never just a last name. (**Montclair State style uses no periods: PhD, PhDs**)

When used after a name, academic abbreviations are set off by commas, but are usually only used in that way in a listing. Example: John Snow, PhD. Do not precede a name with a courtesy title for an academic degree and follow it with the abbreviation for the degree in the same reference.

Academic departments

Use lowercase when generic, except for words that are proper nouns or adjectives: the history department, the department of English, the English department. Capitalize when department is part of the official and formal name: Montclair State University Department of Art and Design or referring to the official department without the school name, such as Department of Musical Theatre, College of Arts, School of Business.

Courses

Generics are lowercase, proper nouns and courses with numbers are capped. Examples: U.S. history, civics, philosophy, French literature and Linguistics 101.

Clubs

Formal names of school clubs are capitalized. Honors Student Organization, but lowercase any informal or shortened terms for clubs, such as crew.

COMPOSITION TITLES

Apply the guidelines listed here to book titles, computer game titles, movie titles, opera titles, play titles, poem titles, album and song titles, radio and television program titles, and the titles of lectures, speeches and works of art. (We italicize movies, plays, books, TV shows).

The guidelines, followed by a block of examples:

- Use Title case: Capitalize the principal words, including prepositions and conjunctions of four or more letters.
- Italicize movies, books,
- Capitalize an article — the, a, an — or words of fewer than four letters if it is the first or last word in a title — set articles in quotations
- Italicize the names of all such works except the Bible and books that are primarily catalogs of reference material. In addition to catalogs, this category includes almanacs, directories, dictionaries, encyclopedias, gazetteers, handbooks and similar publications. Do not use quotation marks around such software titles as WordPerfect or Windows.
- Translate a foreign title into English unless a work is generally known by its foreign name. An exception to this is reviews of musical performances. In those instances, generally refer to the work in the language it was sung in, so as to differentiate for the reader. However, musical compositions in Slavic languages are always referred to in their English translations.

Italicize names of movies, books, TV shows, newspapers, magazines: i.e. *Gone With the Wind*, *Of Mice and Men*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, *Time After Time*, the NBC-TV *Today* show, the CBS *Evening News*, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*. *The New York Times*.

Use quotation marks also for the title of an episode, a chapter of a book or the title of an article inside a magazine or newspaper...i.e. : "Chuckles Bites the Dust," an episode of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, a chapter of a book or the title of an article inside a magazine, such as "Out of the Shadows" in the Sept. 2013 issue of *Montclair* magazine.

Names of most websites and apps are capitalized without quotes: Facebook, Foursquare. **Exception:** "FarmVille" and similar computer game apps are in quotes.

Foreign works: Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* if sung in English but *Le Nozze di Figaro* if sung in Italian. Mozart's *The Magic Flute* if sung in English but *Die Zauberflöte* if sung in German.

For other classical music titles, use quotation marks around the composition's nicknames but not compositions identified by its sequence.

Examples: Dvorak's "New World Symphony." Dvorak's *Symphony No. 9*.

Magazine, Newspapers

Use ital for newspaper and magazine titles. Also, if the word magazine is part of the name it gets capitalized and italicized, if not, it does not:

Examples: *Montclair* magazine; *O, The Oprah Magazine*; *The New York Times Magazine*, *TIME* magazine, *People* magazine.

If the *the* in newspaper names is part of the paper's official name, capitalize it. If not, use lowercase. Examples: *The New York Times*, *the New York Daily News*, *The Montclarion*, *the Tampa Bay Times*.

Media

In the sense of mass communication, such as magazines, newspapers, the news services, radio, television and online, etc., the word is plural: **The news media are** resisting attempts to limit their freedom.

WEB/INTERNET

Use Web (short for World Wide Web), but website, webcam, webcast and webmaster. Also it's the Internet, email, e-book, e-reader, iPhone, Google,

Avoid URLs that are particularly lengthy and complicated, unless essential to guide the reader to a particular document (get a short URL). Also don't use the <http://www>.

Example: Use **montclair.edu** instead of www.montclair.edu.

Radio

Radio stations' call letters appear in all caps. Use hyphens to separate from AM or FM: WDAY-FM, KFYZ-AM.

SPORTS

Athletic director

Use the singular athletic (not athletics) unless otherwise in a formal title, but also director of athletics

Coach

Lowercase as a job description, not a formal title. Capitalize when used as a term of address. "Coach told me," or "Coach Taylor told me." When used as a full title before the name, capitalize but lowercase after the name.

NCAA

NCAA is acceptable in all references for National Collegiate Athletic Association. We are Division III.

Team names

Capitalize teams, associations and recognized nicknames: Red Hawks, the Big Ten, the A's, the Colts, New Jersey Devils. A team is a unit and is there for singular. The women's basketball team won its 26th game this season.

COMMONLY USED PUNCTUATION (AP Style)

QUOTATION MARKS

For direct quotations: To surround the exact words of a speaker or writer when reported in a story:

“I have no intention of staying,” he replied.

“I do not object,” he said, “to the tenor of the report.”

Franklin said, “A penny saved is a penny earned.”

A speculator said the practice is “too conservative for inflationary times.”

Quotes within quotes: Alternate between double quotation marks (“or”) and single marks (‘or’):

She said, “I quote from his letter, ‘I agree that the female of the species is deadlier than the male, but the phenomenon is not an unchangeable law of nature.’”

(Note that at the end of the above sentence, the use of three marks together because the two quoted elements end at the same time.)

Placement with other punctuation: Follow these long-established printers' rules:

- The period and the comma always go within the quotation marks.
- The dash, semicolon, question mark and exclamation point go within the quotation marks when they apply to the quoted matter only. They go outside when they apply to the whole sentence.

Use a space on either side of the dash when setting something – words, for instance – apart.

COMMAS

The following guidelines treat some of the most frequent questions about the use of commas. (For detailed guidance, consult the punctuation section in the back of Webster's New World College Dictionary.)

IN A SERIES: Use commas to separate elements in a series, but do not put a comma before the conjunction in a simple series: The flag is red, white and blue. He would nominate Tom, Dick or Harry.

Put a comma before the concluding conjunction in a series, however, if an integral element of the series requires a conjunction: I had orange juice, toast, and ham and eggs for breakfast.

Use a comma also before the concluding conjunction in a complex series of phrases: The main points to consider are whether the athletes are skillful enough to compete, whether they have the stamina to endure the training, and whether they have the proper mental attitude.

WITH EQUAL ADJECTIVES: Use commas to separate a series of adjectives equal in rank. If the commas could be replaced by the word and without changing the sense, the

adjectives are equal: a thoughtful, precise manner; a dark, dangerous street.

Use no comma when the last adjective before a noun outranks its predecessors because it is an integral element of a noun phrase, which is the equivalent of a single noun: a cheap fur coat (the noun phrase is fur coat); the old oaken bucket; a new, blue spring bonnet.

WITH NONESSENTIAL CLAUSES: A nonessential clause must be set off by commas. An essential clause must not be set off from the rest of a sentence by commas.

WITH INTRODUCTORY CLAUSES AND PHRASES: A comma is used to separate an introductory clause or phrase from the main clause: When he had tired of the mad pace of New York, he moved to Dubuque.

The comma may be omitted after short introductory phrases if no ambiguity would result: During the night he heard many noises.

But use the comma if its omission would slow comprehension: On the street below, the curious gathered.

WITH CONJUNCTIONS: When a conjunction such as and, but or for links two clauses that could stand alone as separate sentences, use a comma before the conjunction in most cases: She was glad she had looked, for a man was approaching the house.

As a rule of thumb, use a comma if the subject of each clause is expressly stated: We are visiting Washington, and we also plan a side trip to Williamsburg. We visited Washington, and our senator greeted us personally. But no comma when the subject of the two clauses is the same and is not repeated in the second: We are visiting Washington and plan to see the White House.

The comma may be dropped if two clauses with expressly stated subjects are short. In general, however, favor use of a comma unless a particular literary effect is desired or if it would distort the sense of a sentence.

INTRODUCING DIRECT QUOTES: Use a comma to introduce a complete one-sentence quotation within a paragraph: Wallace said, "She spent six months in Argentina and came back speaking English with a Spanish accent." But use a colon to introduce quotations of more than one sentence. See [colon](#).

Do not use a comma at the start of an indirect or partial quotation: He said the victory put him "firmly on the road to a first-ballot nomination."

BEFORE ATTRIBUTION: Use a comma instead of a period at the end of a quote that is followed by attribution: "Rub my shoulders," Miss Cawley suggested.

Do not use a comma, however, if the quoted statement ends with a question mark or exclamation point: "Why should I?" he asked.

WITH HOMETOWNS AND AGES: Use a comma to set off an individual's hometown when it is placed in apposition to a name (whether of is used or not): Mary Johnson, South Orange, New Jersey, and Meg Fisher, Westchester, New York, were there.

If an individual's age is used, set it off by commas: Meg Fisher, 18, Westchester, New York, was present.

WITH PARTY AFFILIATION, ACADEMIC DEGREES, RELIGIOUS

AFFILIATIONS: See separate entries under each of these terms.

NAMES OF STATES AND NATIONS USED WITH CITY NAMES: His journey will take him from Dublin, Ireland, to Fargo, North Dakota, and back. The Selma, Alabama, group saw the governor.

IN LARGE FIGURES: Use a comma for most figures greater than 999. Example: Montclair State has 20,022 students. The major exceptions are street addresses (1234

Main St.), broadcast frequencies (1460 kilohertz), room numbers, serial numbers, telephone numbers, and years (1876).

PLACEMENT WITH QUOTES: Commas always go inside quotation marks.

WITH FULL DATES: When a phrase refers to a month, day and year, set off the year with a comma: Feb. 14, 1987, is the target date.

DASH (Follow these AP STYLE guidelines):

ABRUPT CHANGE: Use dashes to denote an abrupt change in thought in a sentence or an emphatic pause: Through her long reign, the queen and her family have adapted – usually skillfully – to the changing taste of the time. But avoid overuse of dashes to set off phrases when commas would suffice.

SERIES WITHIN A PHRASE: When a phrase that otherwise would be set off by commas contains a series of words that must be separated by commas, use dashes to set off the full phrase: He listed the qualities – intelligence, humor, conservatism, independence – that he liked in an executive.

ATTRIBUTION: Use a dash before an author's or composer's name at the end of a quotation: "Who steals my purse steals trash." –Shakespeare.

WITH SPACES: Put a space on both sides of a dash in all uses.

COLON (:) The most frequent use of a colon is at the end of a sentence to introduce lists, tabulations, texts, etc.

Capitalize the first word after a colon only if it is a proper noun or the start of a complete sentence: He promised this: The company will make good all the losses. But: There were three considerations: expense, time and feasibility.

EMPHASIS: The colon often can be effective in giving emphasis: He had only one hobby: eating.

LISTINGS: Use the colon in such listings as time elapsed (1:31:07.2), time of day (8:31 p.m.), biblical and legal citations (2 Kings 2:14; Missouri Code 3:245-260).

SEMICOLON (;) In general, use the semicolon to indicate a greater separation of thought and information than a comma can convey but less than the separation that a period implies.

The basic guidelines:

TO CLARIFY A SERIES: Use semicolons to separate elements of a series when the items in the series are long or when individual segments contain material that also must be set off by commas:

He is survived by a son, John Smith, of Chicago; three daughters, Jane Smith, of Wichita, Kansas, Mary Smith, of Denver, and Susan, of Boston; and a sister, Martha, of Omaha, Nebraska.

Note that the semicolon is used before the final and in such a series.

EXCLAMATION POINT (!)

AVOID OVERUSE: Use a comma after mild interjections. End mildly exclamatory sentences with a period. Use only with a high degree of surprise, incredulity or other

strong emotion.

PLACEMENT WITH QUOTES: Place the mark inside quotation marks when it is part of the quoted material: "How wonderful!" he exclaimed. "Never!" she shouted.