

20 MOST COMMON AP STYLE MISTAKES CHECKLIST

Please note that I grade on a learning curve (i.e. lenient) for issues one and two. Get in the habit of referring to the AP section of The Signal Handbook to double check your own work for AP Style errors prior to submitting it for a grade (you should also use the AP Stylebook for any questions not answered in handbook). By issue three, I should not still be reminding you about frequently used style rules (i.e. those in the handbook, and most especially those noted on this list below). A quick check for style errors on your part prior to submitting your work to me will greatly improve your grade.

1. Quotes go in a paragraph by themselves so they do not get buried.
2. Attribution for quotes goes at the end of the first sentence.
EX: More than 200 people attended this year's commencement ceremony," said President William Staples. "It was the best graduate reception we've ever had at UHCL. I hope it will be the start of a new trend."
3. How to attribute quotes: When to use "said" – For example, "Smith said" versus "said Smith."
Use "said Smith" when you introduce a person with a full name and title.
EX: "More than 200 people attended this year's commencement ceremony," said President William Staples.

Use "Smith said" when the person has already been introduced and you are using his/her last name only.
EX: "More than 200 people attended this year's commencement ceremony," Staples said.
4. Lowercase titles when used after the name.
EX: William Staples, president of UHCL.
NOT: John Smith, President of UHCL.
5. Must use full names (first and last) and titles for anyone quoted or photographed in the newspaper.
Students' titles are their majors.
EX: Mary Doe, communication major.

Faculty titles are the programs they teach. Use "of" for professors and "in" for instructors.
EX: Ashley Packard, professor of communication
EX: Paul McGrath, adjunct instructor in communication
(Also, always check to see if the faculty is a professor, associate professor, assistant professor, visiting professor, lecturer or adjunct.)
6. No courtesy titles: Mr. Mrs., Dr. (unless a medical doctor)
7. Abbreviate months when used with a date.
EX: Sept. 12
NOT: September 12, September 12th, Sept. 12th
8. Do not use the word "on" before a date or day of the week when its absence does not lead to confusion:
EX: The meeting will be held Monday.
NOT: The meeting will be held on Monday.

EX: The meeting will be held Sept. 6
NOT: The meeting will be held on Sept. 6

9. Avoid using “according to.” It implies that what a person says is suspect.
EX: The Center for Disease Control reports on its website . . .
NOT: According to The Center for Disease Control . . .
10. Use “more than” instead of “over” when referring to numbers. “Over” is a direction.
EX: The cow jumped over the moon.
We sold more than 100 tickets.
11. That versus Which: This has to do with essential versus non-essential clauses. “That” is used for essential clauses – those not set off by commas. “Which” is used for non-essential clauses – those that are set off by commas.
EX: The first car that Henry Ford made was the Model T.
He drives a Ranger Truck, which is made by Ford.
12. Who versus Whom versus That: Use “who” and “whom” when referring to people and to animals with a name. Use “that” when referring to inanimate objects and animals without a name. A good way to remember whether to use “who” or “whom” is whether you can replace it with he (for who) or him (for whom).
EX: For whom the bell tolls (For him the bell tolls NOT for he the bell tolls)
The man who would be king (He would be king NOT Him would be king)
13. Its versus It’s: “It’s” always means it is. Use “its” to show possession.
14. Rule of thumb for numbers: Spell out numbers under 10: one, two, three.
Use numerals for numbers larger than single digits: 10, 100, 1000.
Notable exceptions: ages, percentages (there are others too, see AP Stylebook).
16. Watch out for singular versus plural pronoun agreement.
EX: A student (singular) should use his or her (singular) UHCL email account.
NOT: A student (singular) should use their (plural) UHCL email account.
17. Comma usage in a simple series: In AP Style, you do not use a comma before the conjunction in a simple series.
EX: The flag is red, white and blue.
NOT: The flag is red, white, and blue.
- 18: Internet references:
Internet is always capitalized
Web is always capitalized when referring to the World Wide Web
website is now one word, lowercase (It used to be Web site, but no longer)
email NOT e-mail
online NOT on-line
19. Other quick AP Style references:
Adviser NOT advisor
Toward NOT towards
Forward NOT forewards
20. Watch out for editorializing in anything not an opinion piece. Instead, use quotes to provide opinions. Remember, just because you’re right doesn’t mean it’s not an opinion.