

Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICfL) Style Guide

Style Manual

“The Associated Press Stylebook”

(Copies are: on the bookshelves in the management team area and in the Public Information Officer’s office. Plus, many staff members have a copy. Tell Donna if you’d like your own copy.)

Please note: many examples in “The Associated Press Stylebook” are printed in italics.

THAT DOES NOT MEAN the example should be in italics. It is a choice by the editors of the book to highlight the example. If something should be in italics, that fact will be written as an instruction in the text of the book. (Very few things should be italicized.)

Acronyms

Spell out acronyms for the **first** use in a document, with the acronym in parentheses. Include “the” before acronyms if “the” would be used were the acronym called out.

Examples:

The books were donated by the Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICfL).

The books were donated by the ICfL.

Generally, omit periods in acronyms.

Capitalization

Directions/Regions: Lowercase for compass points when they describe an area of a state or city. Examples: eastern Idaho, northwest Boise

Lists: Do not capitalize or punctuate if list items are not complete sentences.

Example:

The library offers the following:

- storytimes
- book discussions
- teen programs

Punctuation is optional but recommended in this example:

After receiving grant funding, the library was able to offer

- storytimes,
- book discussions,
- and teen programs.

Do capitalize and punctuate if the list items are complete sentences.

Example:

The library offers the following:

- A storytime is presented in the children’s area every weekday at 2 p.m.
- A variety of book discussions are held each week.
- A number of teen programs are led by teen volunteers every weekend.

State: Lowercase in all “state of” construction: the state of Idaho

Statehouse: Capitalize all references to a specific statehouse, with or without the name of the state.

Examples:

The Idaho Statehouse is in Boise.

The governor will visit the event at the Statehouse today.

Titles: Capitalize formal titles when used immediately before a name. Lowercase formal titles when used alone or in constructions that set them off from a name by commas.

Examples:

State Librarian Stephanie Bailey-White attended the library's grand opening.
The state librarian attended the library's grand opening.

Contact Info

email (not e-mail)

Phone number: 208-334-2150 (not 208.334.2150)

Font

Calibri, size 12

(Certain products, like the TBS newsletter, have different requirements. Also, there may be various font sizes in a document, headings may be a different font and/or size, etc.)

Grammar

a / an

use "a" before consonant sounds (example: a historic event)

use "an" before vowel sounds (examples: an energy crisis, an 1890s celebration)

affect / effect

affect (as a noun): generally best to avoid; it is used in psychology

affect (as a verb): to influence (example: The game will affect the standings.)

effect (as a noun): the result (example: The effect was overwhelming.)

effect (as a verb): to cause (example: He will effect many changes.)

all right -- always two words

already (formerly) / all ready (prepared)

amount (used with bulk, weight, or sums) / number (used with things that can be counted)

everyday (adjective) / every day (adverb)

it's / its

it's: a contraction for "it is" or "it has" (example: It's up to you.)

its: possessive form of the pronoun. (example: The company lost its assets.)

When referring to an **entity**, such as a library, use "it," "that," "which," etc.

When referring to a **person**, such as a librarian or library staff, use a pronoun such as "she," "they," or "who/whom."

fewer / less -- If it is something that could be counted, use "fewer" not "less."

Examples:

There were fewer people in the audience than they planned for.

There is less water in the lake than there used to be.

more than / over -- Most of the time, “more than” is correct.

Examples:

The library received more than 100 new books.

He is over six feet tall.

me / I -- If it is a compound subject, remove one of the subjects to easily determine which is correct.

Examples:

Mary and I went to the store.

(“Me went to the store.” -- is incorrect, so “Mary and me went to the store.” -- is also incorrect. Use this method to determine others, such as “she/her” or “me/myself.”

Example: For further information, please contact Pete or me. (“please contact myself” is incorrect, so “please contact Pete or myself” is also incorrect.)

who / whom -- “who” is the pronoun used for reference to human beings and to animals with a name.

Example: At the library, she is the person who is in charge. (Not “that is in charge.”)

“Whom” is used when someone is the object of a verb or preposition.

Example: Whom do you wish to see?

Punctuation

Use one space after the ending punctuation of a sentence NOT two spaces.

Commas:

If there is a subject and verb on each side of a conjunction (and, or, but), then put a comma before the conjunction.

Example:

Mary and I went to the library, and we brought home a huge stack of books.

Example of no comma (because there is no subject on the other side of the “and”):

Mary and I went to the library and brought home a huge stack of books.

A comma is used to separate an introductory clause or phrase from the main clause. (The comma may be omitted after a short introductory phrase if no ambiguity would result.)

Examples:

Once the librarian finished helping a patron, she returned to her office.

From time to time, the mayor comes into the library to speak with staff members.

City/State -- Place one comma between the city and the state name and another comma after the state name (unless it ends the sentence). Example: Her son will be relocating to Boise, Idaho, in the new year.

Other:

Dear Tammy,

Hello Pete,

Composition Titles. The following applies to book titles, computer/video game titles, movie titles, poem titles, play titles, song titles, radio/television program titles, and titles of lectures, speeches, and works of art:

- Capitalize the principal words, including prepositions and conjunctions of four or more letters.
- Capitalize an article (the, a, an) or words of fewer than four letters if it is the first or last word in a title.
- Put quotation marks around the names of all such works **except** the Bible, the Quran, other holy books, books that are primarily catalogs of reference material, or reference materials such as dictionaries or encyclopedias. Also, do not put quotation marks around such software titles as Windows. In addition, do not put quotes around the name of a newspaper.

ICfL exception: In a list of book titles, song titles, etc., the quotation marks may be excluded for all titles if the quotation marks negatively affect the appearance of the document.

Dates.

Examples:

May 2019 (With only a month and year, do not separate with a comma.)

May 5, 2019

May 5, 2019, is the target date.

the 1960s (no apostrophe)

Hyphens. Use them to avoid ambiguity or to form a single idea from two or more words. When a compound modifier -- two or more words that express a single concept -- precedes a noun, use hyphens to link all the words in the compound except the adverb "very" and all adverbs that end in "ly."

Examples:

The librarian will speak to small-business owners.

a first-quarter touchdown, a bluish-green dress, an easily remembered rule

Quotation Marks. Where the punctuation goes:

a period -- inside the quotation marks

a comma -- inside the quotation marks

"I have no intention of staying," he said.

The dash, semicolon, the question mark, and the exclamation point go outside the quotation marks when they apply to the whole sentence.

Who wrote "Gone with the Wind"?

They go within the quotes when they apply to the quoted material only.

"Who is there?" she asked.

Numbers/Symbols

Write out whole numbers one through nine; use figures for numbers 10 and above.

Example:

The library held 12 teen programs, five storytimes, and three cooking classes last week.

Note: See the “numerals” section of the AP Stylebook for the numerous exceptions, including for ages, dimensions, and many more.

Indefinite/Casual:

Examples:

Thanks a million. One at a time. An eleventh-hour decision.
dollar store, a hundred dollars

Use a comma for most figures greater than 999. (Exceptions: street address, room number, serial number, telephone number, broadcast frequencies, and years.)

Example: 1,200

Spell out a number at the beginning of a sentence. The only exception is a year.

Examples: Fifteen to 20 cars were involved in the accident.

1992 was a very good year.

Century. Lowercase (unless part of a proper name) and spell out numbers below 10.

Examples: the first century, the 21st century, 21st-century learning (with a hyphen because it is used as an adjective)

Fractions. Write out fractions of **less than one** that are not used as modifiers.

Examples: reduced by one-third, he made three-fourths of his shots

Millions, Billions, Trillions: Use a figure-word combination.

Examples: 1 million people, \$2 billion (Do not go beyond two decimal places: 7.52 million people)

Note: a hyphen is **not** used to join the figures and the word million or billion, even in this type of phrase -- The president submitted a \$300 billion budget.

Monetary Units.

Cents: Spell out the word “cents” and lowercase, using numerals for amounts less than a dollar. Example: 5 cents (For larger amounts: \$1.01)

Dollars: Use figures and the \$ sign in all but casual reference or amounts without a figure. Examples: The book cost \$4. Dad, please give me a dollar.

Percent. Use the % symbol. (This changed in 2019.)

School grades. Spell out for first through ninth grades. Use figures for grades 10 and above. Examples: fourth grade, fifth-grader (note the hyphen)

Temperature. Use figures, except for zero.

Example: It was 8 degrees below zero or minus 8.

Time. Use figures for the time of day except for noon and midnight (which do **not** have a 12 before noon or midnight).

Examples: 1 p.m., 10:30 a.m., 5 o'clock, 8 hours

The Zoom meeting will start at 2:30 p.m. MT / 1:30 p.m. PT.

Mary will meet me at the library at noon.

I'll be there in five minutes. (does not denote the time of day)

If you want to designate Standard Time or Daylight time, that's fine, but that really only needs to be done in official minutes, of which our board meeting minutes are the only ones we have.

Mountain Standard Time (MST) is from November to March.

Mountain Daylight Time (MDT) is from March to November.

Vote. Example: The bill was defeated by a vote of 6 to 4, but by a two-vote margin.

Other:

biannual (twice a year)

biennial (every two years)

biweekly (every other week)

braille (only capitalize if referring to Louis Braille)

byte

 kilobyte (KB)

 megabyte (MB) = 1,000 kilobytes or 1 million bytes

 gigabyte (GB) = 1,000 megabytes or 1 billion bytes

 terabyte (TB) = 1,000 gigabytes or 1 trillion bytes

DVD

e-audio

e-book

e-commerce

e-reader

E-rate (the "E" is capitalized)

Generation X, Gen X, Gen Xers

homeschool, homeschooling

internet

internet addresses -- In stories, use the name of the website rather than the web address (Facebook not facebook.com). Use ".com" only if it is part of the legal name, as in "Amazon.com Inc."

iOS (the operating system used in many Apple mobile devices)

iPad, iPhone, iPod

K-12

kindergarten

Listserv

login, logon, logoff (nouns) -- two words in verb form (Example: I log in to my computer.)

mid -- no hyphen unless a capitalized word follows (midair, mid-America). Do use a hyphen when "mid" precedes a figure (mid-30s).

MDT

MST

non -- generally, no hyphen when forming a compound except before proper nouns or in awkward combinations

nonfiction
nonprofit
off-site (any usage)
post -- see AP Stylebook for “post” words that do have a hyphen and ones that do not
Post-it (trademarked -- but trademark symbol is not required)
pre-K
smartphone
Statehouse (capitalize even if it doesn’t specify which Statehouse)
statewide
storytime
3-D
time frame (still two words -- will likely become one)
touch screen (noun) / touch-screen (adjective)
TV
tweet
20-something
24/7
URL
virtual reality (VR is acceptable on second reference) / augmented reality (**do NOT use AR** on second reference)
voicemail
VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol)
web, the web, website, webcam, webcast, webmaster, webpage, webfeed
Wi-Fi
Zoom