

# 10 Style Guidelines You Should Know



These guidelines adhere to AP style as a first reference and Webster's dictionary as a secondary source. The below categories touch upon common questions and issues but do not represent a full list. For more information, visit [apstylebook.com](http://apstylebook.com).

## A, b, c, d, Ph.D.

Periods are always used when abbreviating academic degrees and certifications: *B.S., F.A.A.N., M.S., M.D., Ph.D., R.N., D.D.S.*, etc. Even when an acronym/degree is long or unwieldy, the punctuation is still retained: *P.A.-C.* (AP Style makes an exception for MBA where periods are not used. These style guidelines do not follow that exception for consistency and to avoid confusion.)

These guidelines do not apply when titles are included in databases where space is constrained.

## Location, location, location

When directing to a location: First give context as to which part of town the visitor will need to navigate. Identify the campus first, followed by the parking garage, building name, elevator location, floor number and final destination.

When using postal delivery:

*OHSU  
Vein Clinic  
Mail code: L492  
3181 S.W. Sam Jackson Park Road  
Portland, OR 97239-3098*

When directing to a website: Use a link rather than giving a URL, as in *Read more about deep brain stimulation at OHSU*, with the link directing to the appropriate site. It is preferred that websites referenced in printed materials do not include <http://> at the beginning of the URL except in those

instances where navigation to a site requires it. *Visit us at [www.ohsu.edu](http://www.ohsu.edu).* Always test URLs before use to be sure they are valid.

## And and &

Use an ampersand when it is part of a company's formal name or composition title: *House & Garden, Procter & Gamble, Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway.* The ampersand should not otherwise be used in place of and.

For certain circumstances OHSU units may be granted approval to use their unit name along with the OHSU master logo. In those instances where the name is very long an ampersand can be used to replace and. However, uses in text always require spelling out and.

## Making a list and getting it right

**Bulleted lists:**

- Include periods after bulleted items if those items are clauses or long phrases, or if they are short phrases that complete the statement introducing them. Do not use periods if the items resemble a shopping list, regardless of whether they complete the introductory statement.
- Capitalize the first letter of each item in a bulleted list.
- Do not use semi-colons after each bulleted item.

**Commas:** Do not use an Oxford comma in a simple series but do include it in a complex series. *He ate peas, carrots and celery. Not peas, carrots, and celery. The meal consisted of a roasted turkey that was stuffed with feta cheese and pine nuts, baked sweet potatoes with thyme, and a Brussels sprouts side dish.*



## Upper or lower: Take it case by case

**Colons:** Capitalize the first word after a colon if the word starts a complete sentence: *Then he made a promise: The research results will be available to scientists worldwide within 12 months.*

**Departments** are capitalized when referring to their proper names, but not in faculty titles referencing the specialty: It's the *Department of Pediatrics* but *Elisha DuBois, M.D., chairman of pediatrics.*

**Professional title:** Capitalize when a formal title directly precedes a name: *OHSU President Joe Robertson, M.D.* Do not capitalize when set off from the name by punctuation: *OHSU's president, Joe Robertson, M.D., and Joe Robertson, M.D., president of OHSU.* And don't capitalize an informal title: *ICU nurse Jane Smith.* Capitalize chairman, chairwoman as a formal title before a name: *department Chairman, Henry Ford, committee Chairwoman Margaret Chase Smith.*

Do not capitalize a casual, temporary position: *meeting chairman Robert Jones.* Use chairperson, chair or co-chair as preferred by your program or department.

A title with a signature on letterhead is the exception to the above guidelines: *Joe Robertson, M.D., President.*

Capitalize book titles and the names of newspapers and magazines. Include magazine, journal, etc. lowercase and without italics unless it's part of the publication's formal name: *Harper's Magazine, Time magazine, the journal Nature.* See the composition titles section of the AP Stylebook for further clarification.

**Headings and subheadings:** Wondering where to use capitals in a document? The table below provides some answers.

<b>This Heading Is in Title Case.</b> Capitalize the principal words, including verbs, prepositions and conjunctions of four letters or more.	<b>This heading is in sentence case.</b> Only the first word is capitalized.
Title of a document or website: <i>NICU Services at Doernbecher, The Economic Impact of OHSU</i>	Subhead within a document, website, publication such as brochure, poster or newsletter: <i>Find a provider, Infants younger than six months, OHSU community service</i>
Titles in publications, such as a brochure, poster, newsletter or magazine titles: <i>You and Your Baby at Doernbecher, Community Connections, OHSU At a Glance</i>	Headlines in press releases: <i>OHSU cures cancer once and for all.</i>
Lecture titles: <i>The 24-Hour Clock in Human Health, The Promise of Gene Therapy</i>	All sentences within body copy, regardless of whether they are online or printed.

Although AP Stylebook does not stipulate within its guidelines where title or sentence case is used, the guidelines above represent the examples AP provides in the layout of its printed and online guides.



## Make a date to check the time

There's more to know than how many days are in each month. Capitalize every month in all uses. When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate only Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec. Spell out months when using alone, or with a year alone: *The lectures will be held Feb. 16 and March 22 this year.*

**When listing time of day:** *11:30 a.m., 11 a.m.* (not *11:00*), *12 p.m. or noon*, (never *12 noon*). AP Stylebook encourages noon over 12 p.m.



## Don't carry the abbrevs. too far

In general, avoid alphabet soup. Do not use abbreviations or acronyms that the reader would not quickly recognize and do not use abbreviations or acronyms in headings and titles.

Do not follow the name of a program or other formal nouns with an abbreviation or acronym in parentheses or set off by dashes. If an abbreviation or acronym would not be clear on second reference without this arrangement, do not use it. Names not commonly before the public should not be reduced to acronyms solely to save a few words.

**Correct:** *The Center for Typed Words was formed to enlighten the public about printed communications. The center has many members.*

**Incorrect:** *The Center for Typed Words (CTW) was formed to enlighten the public about printed communications. The CTW has many members.*

Do not abbreviate department and specialty names. For example, use: *Hematology and Medical Oncology* not *Hem Onc.* Use *Obstetrics and Gynecology* not *OB GYN.*

When composing posts for social media, adhere to the style guidelines with the exception of posting to twitter. Due to the character limit set by the platform, it's acceptable to use abbreviations, use figures for numbers below 10 and use an ampersand instead of and. If your post requires more than one tweet to communicate the message, end each tweet with 1/3, 2/3, 3/3, etc. This will show readers each tweet is a part of a longer message.



## Do you take one or two words with your health care?

Two words, except in the use of a formal noun, as in *Tuality Healthcare* or *OHSU Healthcare*.



## Make your numerals count

Spell out whole numbers below 10. *The Yankees finished second. He had nine months to go.*

Use figures for 10 or above and whenever preceding a unit of measure or referring to ages of people, animals, events or things, and also, in all tabular matter, and in statistical and sequential forms. *The law is 8 years old; the 101-year-old house.*

**Some exceptions to the below-10 rule:** Ages, weights, millions and billions (except casual uses), percentages and currency: *My 8-year-old daughter, who weighs 9 pounds, just inherited \$3 million from her aunt. A week ago she had about 5 cents to her name. I asked her to lend me a thousand at 6 percent, and she said she'd think about it.*

**At the start of a sentence:** *Forty years was a long time to wait. Fifteen to 20 cars were involved in the accident. The only exception is years: 1992 was a very good year.*



## Calling all hyphens

**Phone listings:** Use hyphens after area code and prefix. Do not use parentheses around area code. For example: *503-494-8311.*

**An em dash (—)** with a space on either side is used to indicate an abrupt change in thought or an emphatic pause in a sentence.

**A hyphen (-)** is a word joiner. Use it to avoid ambiguity or to form a single idea from two or more words.

Questions? Contact Brand Strategy in Marketing and Communications at [branding@ohsu.edu](mailto:branding@ohsu.edu)