

# MPA Style Guide for Authors

The following are some general style and writing tips for MPA publications, featuring common subjects that come up in our communications.

## Numbers

Figures 1-9 are generally spelled out, with numerals used for 10 and above. Some exceptions:

- Spell out numbers used at the beginning of a sentence. (*Eight hundred people attended ACE*). An exception is years (*2023 was a good year*) and numeral-letter combos (*401(k)*; *4K TV*; *3D movie*).
- Fractions: Generally, spell out amounts less than 1, using hyphens (*two-thirds*, *four-fifths*, *seven-sixteenths*)
  - Use figures for precise amounts larger than 1, converting to decimals when practical
  - For mixed numbers use  $1\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $2\frac{5}{8}$  etc.
- Numbers used to indicate order (*first*, *second*, *10<sup>th</sup>*, *25<sup>th</sup>*, etc.) are called ordinals; spell out first through ninth.
- Telephone numbers: Use figures. (*212-621-1500*).
- Always use figures for:
  - Ages (*Steve Smith, 56, has been a pharmacist for 30 years*; *56-year-old Steve Smith*; *At 56, Steve Smith has been in pharmacy for 30 years*).
  - Percentages (*26%*; *4%*). **NOTE:** AP has changed this in the last few years to allow using the % symbol instead of spelling out “percent.”
  - Dimensions. Spell out the unit (*4 inches*, *5 feet*, *3 centimeters*, *0.5 milligrams*). For more complex measurements, such as *millimeters of mercury (mmHg)*, spell out on first reference and abbreviate in parentheses, then use the abbreviation thereafter.
  - Temperatures: use figures except for 0; spell out “degrees” instead of ° symbol. Distinguish between Celsius, Fahrenheit and Kelvin (*40 degrees Celsius*; *75 degrees Fahrenheit*; also acceptable are *10 K*, *40 C* and *75 F*) if it is not clear which scale is being used. Once you’ve established the unit, the distinction is not necessary in following references unless there is a change. Use “minus” not a hyphen for temperatures below zero (*75 degrees*; *8 degrees below zero*; *minus 8 degrees*).
  - Odds/proportions/ratios (*a 1 in 3 chance*; *3 parts cement to 1 part water*; *1-4 chance*; *9-1 long shot*)
  - Political districts (*District 9*; *Ward 1*)
  - Address numbers (*401 Kalamazoo Plaza*; *4 Championship Drive*)
  - Monetary units (*\$5*, *\$100*, *\$5 billion*)
  - Times, except for *noon* and *midnight* (*1 p.m.*, *10:30 a.m.*, *8 hours*, *30 minutes*). Spell out numbers less than 10 standing alone and in modifiers (*I’ll be there in five minutes*; *an eight-hour day*)

## Alumnus, alumni, alumna, alumnae, alum

*Alumnus* (s.) and *alumni* (pl.) for men; *alumna* (s.) and *alumnae* (pl.) for women; *alums*, *alum* are gender-neutral

## Health care

Two words

## COVID-19

A new coronavirus that emerged in 2019. The official name is SARS-CoV-2 but avoid using this name.

## Diseases

Do not capitalize diseases such as *cancer*, *emphysema*, *leukemia*, etc. When a disease is known by the name of a person or geographical area, capitalize only the proper noun (*Alzheimer’s disease*, *Parkinson’s disease*, *Ebola virus*)

## Emergency room

*ER* acceptable on second reference

### **More than/over**

Both are acceptable in all instances. (*The survey received more than 500 responses; the survey received over 500 responses*).

### **A or an**

Use the article “a” before consonant sounds: *a historic event, a one-year term (sounds as if it begins with a w), a united stand (sounds like you)*. Use the article “an” before vowel sounds: *an energy crisis, an honorable man, an homage (the h is silent), an NBA record (sounds like it begins with the letter e), an 1890s celebration*.

### **Accept or except**

Accept means to receive. Except means to exclude.

### **Affect or effect**

Affect, as a verb, means to influence: *It will affect the company’s profits*. Effect, as a verb, means to cause: *He will effect many changes in the company*. Effect, as a noun, means result: *The effect was overwhelming; it was a law off little effect*.

### **Breath or breathe**

Not interchangeable. Breath is a noun: *He took a breath*. Breathe is a verb: *clothing that allows your skin to breathe*.

### **Cancel, canceled, canceling, cancellation**

Note spellings.

### **College**

Capitalize as part of a formal name: *University of Michigan College of Pharmacy*. The three Michigan-based colleges of pharmacy as an informal group is not capitalized as they all have different official names; this also applies if referring to an individual school in an informal context (*the school’s college of pharmacy held a seminar*).

### **Infant**

Acceptable for children less than 12 months old.

### **Its/it’s**

“It’s” is a contraction for “it is” or “it has”: *It’s up to you. It’s been a long time*. “Its” is the possessive form of the neuter pronoun; used often as a possessive for inanimate objects, such as companies or schools (*The company lost its assets*).

### **IV**

Acceptable in all references for *intravenous*.

### **naloxone**

Use the generic naloxone for the opioid-overdose antidote. Not synonymous with Narcan, which is a brand name for a device that delivers naloxone.

### **Toward**

Not towards.

## Referencing studies and clinical trials

Referencing studies and trials in articles is one thing the AP does not really cover. When they are used, studies are typically not referred to by their proper titles and are more informal (*A 2015 study published in the New England Journal of Medicine*). If it's not possible to word this way, try the following:

- Identify the name of the study or trial if it has one (the *ARISTOTLE trial*, the *ROCKET AF trial*).
- If using the “et al.” identifier, italicize the author(s) names. Be sure to list and link to the trial in your references. (Another random controlled trial by *Adelnabi et al.* compared...)

## Acronyms

- Acronyms should be spelled out on first reference, then use just the acronym on all subsequent mentions.
  - If you only reference something once, designating an acronym is unnecessary. There's no need to say “*the American Medical Association (AMA)*” if that is the only time it's mentioned.
- Avoid “acronym soup.” Pharmacy loves its acronyms, however, stringing together a bunch of them within a few sentences can be difficult to read. Instead, try rewording or rephrasing if possible.
- In general, avoid shortening words or groups of words into an acronym (such as drug names or diseases).
- Avoid immediately following an organization's full name with an acronym in parentheses unless not doing so would cause confusion. Common pharmacy acronyms such as APhA, ASHP, MPA, MSHP, MSCP etc., can be used on second reference without parentheses.

## Academic Degrees and Titles

- *Pharm.D., R.Ph., B.S. Pharm., CPhT, MBA*; note punctuation
- The terms *bachelor's degree*, *master's degree* and *associate's degree* are not capitalized. The official name of the degree (*a Doctor of Pharmacy from Ferris State*) is capitalized. While pharmacists can earn a doctorate in pharmacy, AP Style reserves the formal title of “Dr.” for medical doctors; also note that not all pharmacy schools issue a doctorate.
- When referring to someone by their official title, it is capitalized immediately before the name and lowercase afterwards (*MPA President Sarah Hill addressed the crowd; Sarah Hill, MPA president, addressed the crowd*)
- Board of Directors/Executive Board: Capitalized as part of a proper name (*The MPA Executive Board approved the changes*).
- CEO: Acceptable for chief executive officer on first reference. For terms such as chief strategy officer (CSO) and chief financial officer (CFO), spell out on first reference, then abbreviate if needed. Most commonly, you'll refer to someone by their name on second reference rather than by title.

## Internet terms

*email* – not hyphenated. Use hyphen with other terms such as *e-book*, *e-reader*, *e-commerce*

*website* – one word, not capitalized

web addresses: Web addresses are lowercase (*pharmacist.com; michigan.gov*). It is not necessary to type “*http://www*” before an addresses as modern browsers input this automatically. MPA-branded sites and emails are capitalized to stand out (*MichiganPharmacists.org; MPA@MichiganPharmacists.org; MPFgolf.org*)

## Dates

*July 1, June 30* (not *July 1<sup>st</sup>*, *June 30<sup>th</sup>*)

Add a comma after specific dates that include the year, or day of the week (*The MPF golf outing will be held June 21, 2023, at Eldorado Golf Course in Mason; The MPF golf outing will be held Wednesday, June 21, at Eldorado Golf Course in Mason*).

Months are spelled out when they are used without a specific date (January, February, August 2023, September 1989).

- The following months are abbreviated when a specific date is mentioned: January (Jan.), February (Feb.), August (Aug.), September (Sept.), October (Oct.), November (Nov.) and December (Dec.). Examples: *Aug. 31, 2023; the event will be held Feb. 2.* Days of the week are not abbreviated.
- March, April, May, June and July are never abbreviated.

### State names and locations

State names are always spelled out in the body of a story and no longer abbreviated. The state name is followed by a comma (*A research facility in Memphis, Tennessee, recently published its findings*).

- Standalone cities: The following U.S. cities are not required to be identified with a state name – *Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Honolulu, Houston, Indianapolis, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Miami, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, New Orleans, New York, Oklahoma City, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Salt Lake City, San Antonio, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, Washington, D.C.*
- International standalone cities: The following international cities do not require an accompanying country, state, province or other territorial identifier – *Amsterdam, Baghdad, Bangkok, Beijing, Beirut, Berlin, Brussels, Cairo, Djibouti, Dublin, Geneva, Gibraltar, Guatemala City, Havana, Helsinki, Hong Kong, Islamabad, Istanbul, Jerusalem, Johannesburg, Kuwait City, London, Luxembourg, Macao, Madrid, Mexico City, Milan, Monaco, Montreal, Moscow, Munich, New Delhi, Panama City, Paris, Prague, Quebec City, Rio De Janeiro, Rome, San Marino, Sao Paulo, Shanghai, Singapore, Stockholm, Sydney, Tokyo, Toronto, Vatican City, Vienna, Zurich*
- State names that are never abbreviated in any usage are *Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas and Utah*.
- Generally, it is OK to not specify “Michigan” after a city name in communications that are Michigan-oriented or have a Michigan-based audience (Grand Rapids, Ann Arbor, Lansing, Traverse City, Mount Pleasant, etc.; these places are well-known enough by Michiganders they don’t need to be specified).
  - It may be helpful to include “Michigan” with cities and townships that share names with more globally-known counterparts (St. Louis, Baltimore, Berlin and Portland are a few examples) to avoid confusion.

### Addresses

Use abbreviations *Ave., Blvd.* and *St.* only with numbered addresses. Spell out in other uses (*The Capitol is located on Pennsylvania Avenue*). Road, alley, drive, terrace, etc. are always spelled out. Abbreviate compass points (*222 E. 42<sup>nd</sup> St.*).

### Political terms

Use the abbreviations *Sen.* and *Rep.* as formal titles for senators and representatives; it is lowercase in other uses. If necessary, distinguish between state and federal members using “U.S.” and “state.” “State” is not capitalized in this usage unless it is the first word in the sentence. Include party affiliation and hometown for state officials and home state for federal officials. When using short form abbreviation, offset with commas.

- *U.S. Rep. Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif.; Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky.; state Rep. Lori Stone, D-Warren; Democratic Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts; a group of representatives and senators met at the Capitol*).
- For federal representatives from Michigan, use home city (*U.S. Rep. Elissa Slotkin, D-Lansing*).
- Governor is abbreviated as a formal title (*Gov. Gretchen Whitmer*) and spelled out on other uses (*the governor signed the bill*). Do not use legislative titles on second reference.

Legislature is capitalized when referring to a specific state legislature (*The Michigan Legislature, the Kansas Legislature*) and lowercase when used generically. The capitalized “Legislature” refers to both chambers – typically a senate and house – as a whole; specify when talking about a one chamber (*The Michigan House of Representatives passed the bill*

96-12; the Michigan State Senate has yet to vote; the Michigan Legislature approved the bill, which now heads to the governor).

- The term *Congress* is used for the combined U.S. House and Senate.
- House/Senate – Retain capitalization if U.S. or name of the state is dropped when the reference is to a specific body. (*The Michigan House passed the bill 94-6. The House will vote on more legislation today*).
- Capitol/capital – Capital is the city (*The capital of Michigan is Lansing*). Capitol refers to the building where the government is housed; always capitalized (*Protestors gathered at the Michigan Capitol*).
- Constitution – Always capitalized when referring to U.S. Constitution, with or without the U.S. modifier. Capitalize in reference to other constitutions only with a state name or modifier (*The Michigan Constitution; Sen. John Jones proposed changes to the state constitution*).
- A Democrat is a member of the Democratic Party; it is not the Democrat Party. The Republican Party and its members can be referred to as GOP on second reference. *The GOP; GOP senator*.

## Race

- Caucasian: avoid using as synonym for white, unless in a quotation.
- African American: No hyphen for this and other dual-heritage terms. Acceptable for an American Black person of African descent. The terms are not necessarily interchangeable. Americans of Caribbean heritage, for example, generally refer to themselves as Caribbean American. Follow a person's preference.
- Black (adj.) Use the capitalized term as an adjective in a racial, ethnic or cultural sense: Black people, Black culture, Black literature, Black studies, Black colleges. By contrast, white is not capitalized.
- Native Americans, American Indians: Both are acceptable terms in general references for those in the U.S. when referring to two or more people of different tribal affiliations.
- Indigenous peoples: Groupings of people who are the original inhabitants of their countries. Use "peoples" when referring to multiple Indigenous groups. Use "people" when referring to multiple individuals from different Indigenous groups.

## Punctuation

Sentences get one space after a period.

Colon (:) – 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 recoup its losses; but There were three considerations: cost, time and feasibility*).

Comma (,) and semicolon (;) – Use commas to separate items in a list. AP Style generally **does not** use the Oxford comma – a comma after the word "and" – though there are exceptions, such as using a comma 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*). Clarity is the biggest rule. If a comma does not help make clear what is being said, it should not be there. If omitting a comma could lead to confusion or misinterpretation, then use the comma. Use the semicolon to separate elements of a series when the items are long or when individual segments contain material that also must be set off by commas (*The event package includes a continental breakfast; prizes ranging from golf bags, tees, shirts and hats; lunch at the turn; and an awards ceremony after the round*).

The emdash or long dash (–) is typically used to signal an abrupt change in a sentence. To type in Microsoft Word, hold Ctrl + Windows + - ; in other Windows programs, hold Alt and type 0150 on the number pad.

Ampersand (&) – The ampersand is not to be used in place of "and" unless it's part of a company or event's formal title (*Annual Convention & Exposition; Johnson & Johnson*).

Quotes ("" ) – periods and commas always go inside the quotation marks. The dash, semicolon, colon, question mark and exclamation point go within the quotation marks when they apply to the quoted matter; they go outside when they apply to the whole sentence.

Reference indicators (<sup>2</sup>) – Reference marks go after the period at the end of the sentence, not in the middle of the sentence or immediately before the period.

Ellipsis ( ... ) – Usually indicates the deletion of words in a quote, or a trailing off thought. Three periods and a space before and after if you use it.