



AP Style Quick Guide

2014 Edition

Top 10 Most Common AP Errors

1. Do not use first or second person (I, you, me, we, us, etc.) unless in a commentary article
2. Do not use serial commas: “I had eggs, cheese and ham”; not “I had eggs, cheese, and ham”
3. Do not end sentences with a preposition
4. Attribute quotes to speakers in the same paragraph where the quote appears
5. Attribute a quote after a quotation, not before a quotation
6. When attributing quotes, the word “said” comes first: “said so-and-so”; not “so-and-so said.”
7. Do not add st, nd, or rd to a date: “December 3”; not “December 3rd”
8. Do not start or end a paragraph with a quote
9. Do not end a story with a quote
10. Spell check stories at least twice and double check the spellings of first and last names

Other Common AP Concerns

Datelines:

- Datelines tell the reader the basic information concerning the location of the story
Ex: ALLIANCE, Ohio -

Quotation Marks and Punctuation:

- Commas, periods, and question marks go inside quotation marks if they end a sentence. Semicolons, colons and sometimes question marks go outside

Capitalization:

- Capitalize proper nouns, days of the week and full names of institutions and organizations
- Avoid unnecessary capitalization. When in doubt, check the *AP Style Manual* or *AP Guide to Punctuation*

Independent Clauses:

- Do not use commas between two independent clauses (full sentences). Instead, use a semicolon or period



Abbreviate the Following:

- Titles when used before a full name (Dr., Mrs., Ms.); after a name (Jr., Sr.)
- Company (co.), corporation (corp.), incorporated (inc.)
- Dates/numerals (A.D./ B.C., a.m./p.m.)
- Certain months when no year is given; months with specific dates (Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.)
- Addresses when paired with numbers (Ave., Blvd., St.)
- The names of some organizations and government agencies (CIA, FBI, GOP)
- B.A., M.A., Ph.D only when referencing a person's *full* name
- Abbreviations after a name are set off by commas: John Smith, Ph.D, believes...

Academic Degrees:

- If credentials are needed, avoid abbreviations and use a phrase: John Smith, who has a doctorate in psychology,...
- Apostrophes should be used as follows: bachelor's, master's, etc.
- Do not use apostrophes when spelling out the name of the degree: Bachelor of Arts, Master of Science and associate degree

Numerals:

- Spell out numbers one through nine or if a number appears at the beginning of a sentence
- Use figures for 10 or above; when preceding a unit of measure and when referring to ages; academic course numbers; addresses; plane destination; dimensions or ratios

State Names:

- Spell out state names when they stand by themselves
- Eight states are never abbreviated: Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas and Utah

Time:

- Use the days of the week, not "today" or "tonight" in print
- Use the month and date when appropriate

Titles:

- Use lowercase and spell out titles when they are not used with a name (The president issued a statement.)
- Capitalize formal titles when they are used immediately before one or more names (President Barack Obama)

LOCATION

KHIC Library
Across from Circulation
x3560

HOURS

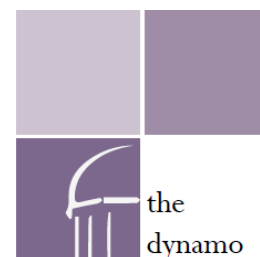
Sunday: 6–10 PM
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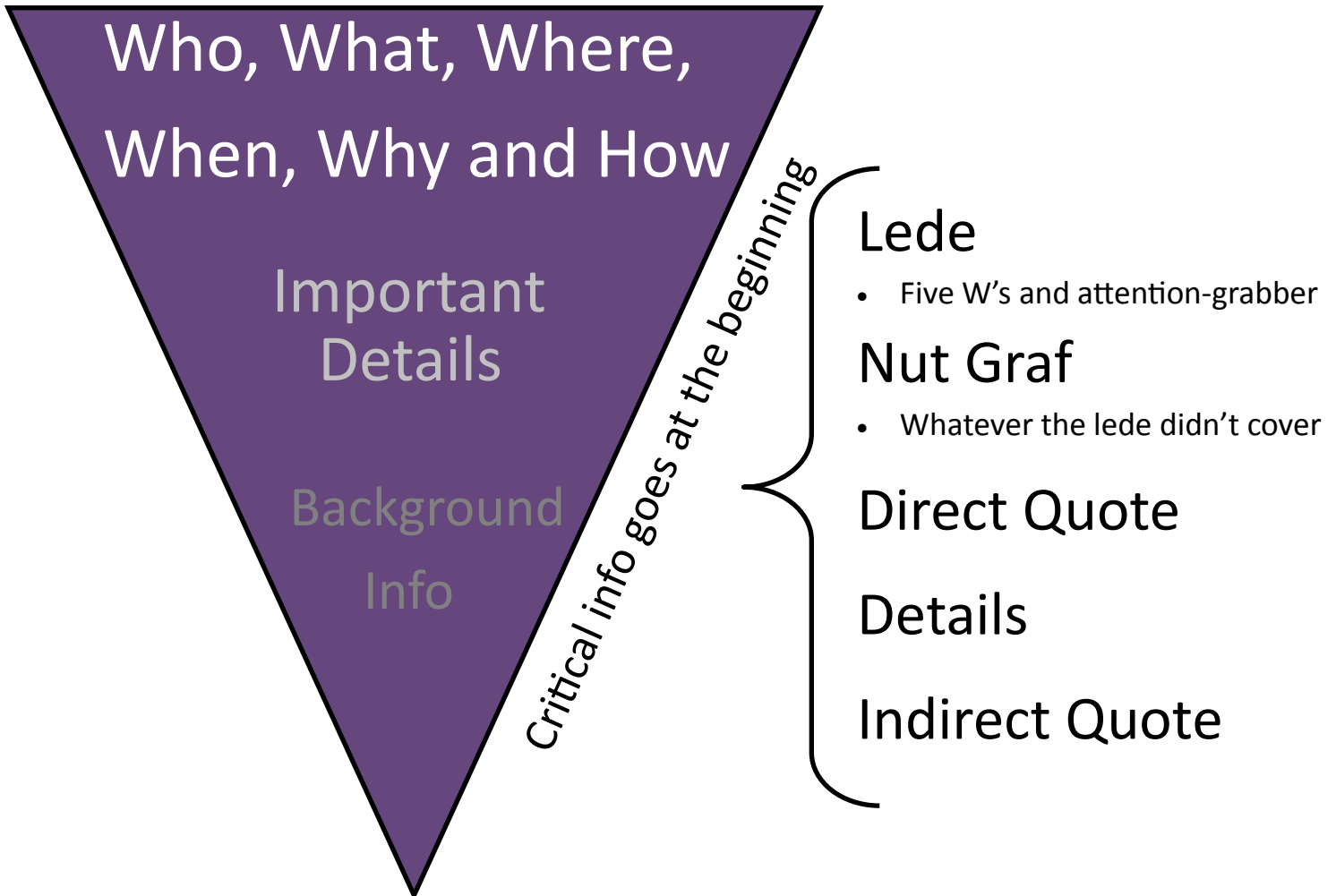
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AP Style Quick Guide

The Structure of News Stories: Inverted Pyramid



Other important notes on writing news stories:

- Don't bury the lede! Start with the most important info first so that readers can quickly get the gist of the story
- Conciseness is key in AP style. Most paragraphs should be 2 sentences long
- Don't be lazy—when in doubt, check the AP Style Guide. The CWOC has copies available

