



This document has been compiled from the Associated Press (AP) Stylebook (various versions), along with other materials cited. If you're serious about working in communication, especially PR or Journalism, you should buy the online AP Stylebook version for your mobile device and use it daily!

[LINK HERE TO PURCHASE](#)

WHY IS IT CALLED AP STYLE?

The Associated Press was founded in 1848 as a cooperative effort among six New York newspapers that wished to pool resources for gathering international news.

Today, with over 3,700 employees in 121 countries, the AP is the world's single largest news organization. Every day, more than a billion people read, hear or see AP news.

From the beginning, AP reporters have written their dispatches for readers from diverse social, economic and educational backgrounds and a wide range of political views. The AP strives to keep its writing style easy to read, concise and free of bias.

The Associated Press Stylebook, first published in 1977, clarified the news organization's rules on grammar, spelling, punctuation and usage. AP style provides consistent guidelines for publications in terms of grammar, spelling, punctuation and language usage. Some guiding principles behind AP style are: Consistency, clarity, accuracy, and brevity. The Stylebook is the

standard style guide for most media outlets and public relations firms and all professionals who aspire to work in sports should master it.

WHAT IS A LEAD AND WHAT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION I NEED TO KNOW?

The lead, or opening paragraph, is the most important part of a news story. With so many sources of information - newspapers, magazines, TV, radio and the Internet - audiences simply are not willing to read beyond the first paragraph (and even sentence) of a story unless it grabs their interest. A good lead does just that. It gives readers the most important information in a clear, concise and interesting manner.

What kinds of leads do I need to master to be successful in this class and at least early on in my career in sports PR?

A summary lead, which is the most traditional type of lead in news writing. It is a presentation of a "just the facts"-style of paragraph. It's the most common way to recap a sporting event.

In a news-style sports lead for this class, four of the five W questions and at least a basic answer to the H question get answered, usually in one sentence.

W = Who - In a sports story about a team competition there is always two who answers: Winning and losing teams answer it. In a sports story about an individual competition, both players answer the question who.

The exception: In a sports story with many individual competitors (such as a marathon) "who" can be answered with just the winning competitor's name.

W = What - What is the result of the competition (the score)—the winning score always goes first (i.e. 2-1); and what are the

consequences for the winner and loser; for example, in a tournament the winner advances to the next round. In a team sport the other what consequence is usually handled by noting the team's record after the contest; i.e. (20-4).

W = When - The date goes above the dateline city. "When" is also often answered in the lead sentence as the day of the week and the informal time of day, for clarity. For example, Monday night.

W = Where - The city where the event occurred in bold type completes the "dateline" and it occurs before you even start the sentence. Then, in the body of the lead the exact name of the venue should be included.

H = How - In the lead there should be a simple explanation of how a competition was won. In a team sport this is usually a mention of the leading scorer, a pitcher who threw a no-hitter, or the player who scored a winning goal, for example. For individual competitions, it might be by including the words "straight sets" (tennis) or by citing the winning time in a race. This is one area of writing a lead where the writer gets to choose the reason why the team or person won.

WHY DON'T WE ANSWER THE QUESTION WHY IN A SUMMARY OF A SPORTS CONTEST?

Because, the answer to the question why did they compete in a sports contest is: To see who would win. Therefore, including the result of the contest answers that question.

Other leads for new releases, besides those which summarize sport competitions, should include a why answer, thereby having all 5 Ws and an H questions answered.

WHAT DOES INVERTED PYRAMID MEAN?

The most important information goes first. For example, in any news lead about a sporting contest the result of the contest must be included. (See page 4)

WHAT KIND OF LANGUAGE SHOULD BE USED?

Be brief and use clear language and, for heaven's sake, the verb should always be the past tense because the contest is over! Avoid "flowery" language or subjective comments. For example, "Her play was awful" is a subjective comment. Far better to let the performance describe the action. "She shot 0-17 from the floor" would tell the reader that her play was awful without the writer typing those words!

BUT, WHAT'S AN "ACTIVE" VERB?

A verb like "belted" (as in a home run) is more active than "hit" is. A good writer chooses verbs that describe the action well, therefore are considered more "active" verbs. As you're learning this skill, remember that a verb that best describes the action of a sporting event—and is appropriate for that event—may be used whenever you're in doubt. For example, "He scored the winning basket" is just fine and is always acceptable. Don't confuse the term "active" with present tense, "She shoots and scores" with the past tense of the verb, "She scored the winning basket."

ENDING THE NEWS (PRESS) RELEASE?

Like this: ###
Centered on its own line at the end.

DOES PART OF THE AP STYLEBOOK INCLUDE INFORMATION ABOUT SPORTS, SPECIFICALLY?

Yes. You should get the book.

WAIT? WON'T YOU GIVE US ANY HELP?

Yes. Here are some of the most common things you should know.

ABBREVIATIONS

United States:

- as a noun, United States. The prime minister left for the United States yesterday.
- as an adjective, U.S. (no spaces). A U.S. ambassador met with the prime minister yesterday.

For associations or team leagues, it isn't necessary to spell out the most common abbreviations on first reference, for leagues like the NBA, NFL, MLB, NHL, etc.

For the words All-America, All-American, The Associated Press recognizes only one All-America football and basketball team each year. In football, only Walter Camp's selections through 1924, and the AP selections after that, are recognized.

Do not call anyone an All-America selection unless he is listed on either the Camp or AP roster.

Similarly, do not call anyone an All-America basketball player or another collegiate sport unless the awardee is listed as an AP selection. Use All-American when referring specifically to an individual. Use All-America when referring to the team. The first All-America basketball team was chosen in 1948.

ERA: Acceptable in all references to baseball's earned run average. but do not separate with periods.

See the end of this document for important cities, states and country abbreviations.

AGES

For ages, always use figures. If the age is used as an adjective or as a substitute for a noun, then it should be hyphenated. Don't use apostrophes when describing an age range. Examples: A 21-year-old student. The student is 21 years old. The girl, 8, has a brother, 11. The contest is for 18-year-olds. He is in his 20s.

CAPITALIZATION

Athletic teams: Capitalize teams, associations or leagues and recognized names: the Red Sox, the Big Ten, the A's, the Cowboys, the Sparks.

When written, it is always the Big 12, NOT the Big XII, which is the logo or emblem for that league.

The word "coach" should be lowercase in all uses.

For the Olympics, capitalize all references to the international athletic contests, the Olympics, the Winter Olympics, the Olympic Games, an Olympic-size swimming pool. Lowercase games in the second reference.

For sports sponsorship, if the sponsor's name is part of the sports event, such as Pepsi 500 or Buick Open, use the name in the title. If there is a previously established name commonly accepted for the event (Orange Bowl, Sugar Bowl, Rose Bowl, Cotton Bowl) use that name even if it currently has a corporate sponsor. However, mention the sponsor in an editor's note at the end of the copy.

For the word stadium (or arena, field, etc.): Capitalize only when part of a proper name. For example, Yankee Stadium; AT&T Stadium.

Championship events like the World Series should be capitalized. Then, the "Series" can be used on second reference. It's the College World Series and then CWS in subsequent use and the Women's College World Series and then WCWS in subsequent use.

DATELINES

Datelines are both the date of an event and the place where it occurred. Datelines appear at the beginning of the lead (or news release) and include the name of the city in all capital letters, usually followed by the state or territory in which the city is located.

The Associated Press Stylebook lists 30 U.S. cities that do not need to be followed by the name of a state. See states and city abbreviations below.

HERE IS AN EXAMPLE OF A DATELINE:

May 31, 2018

OAKLAND, Calif. – The lead sentence begins here.

NUMBERS (A FEW EXAMPLES OF USES)

Baseball, some sample uses of numbers are: first inning, seventh-inning stretch, 10th inning; first base, second base, third base; first home run, 10th home run; first place, last place; one RBI, 10 RBIs.

The final score was 1-0.

Football, sample uses of numbers are: Use figures for yardage.

The 5-yard line, the 10-yard line, a 5-yard pass play, he plunged in from the 2, he ran 6 yards, a 7-yard gain. But: a fourth-and-two play.

The final score was 21-14. The team won its fourth game in 10 starts.

Golf, some sample uses of numbers: Use figures for handicaps. She has a 3 handicap; is a 3-handicap golfer, a handicap of 3 strokes; or a 3-stroke handicap.

Use figures for par listings. He had a par 5 to finish 2-up for the round, a par-4 hole; a 7-under-par 64, the par-3 seventh hole.

The first hole, the ninth hole, a nine-hole course, the 10th hole, the back nine, the final 18.

When you work with different sports, you'll need the book to be sure you're showing numbers correctly!

WORD USES:

(v. = verb; n = noun; adj. = adjective, see all that grammar you should've learned as an elementary students is still valid!)

For play off (v.) playoff, playoffs (n. and adj.) The noun and adjective forms are exceptions to Webster's New World Dictionary, in keeping with widespread practice in the sports world. The words postseason and preseason should have no hyphen.

The terms are right hand (n.) right-handed (adj.) right-hander (n.) and the same is true for references to a leftie. (A leftie is slang for a person who is left-handed.)

STATE ABBREVIATIONS

Ala. (for Alabama)	Neb. (for Nebraska)
Ariz. (for Arizona)	Nev. (for Nevada)
Ark. (for Arkansas)	N.H. (for New Hampshire)
Calif. (for California)	N.J. (for New Jersey)
Colo. (for Colorado)	N.M. (for New Mexico)
Conn. (for Connecticut)	N.Y. (for New York)
Del. (for Delaware)	N.C. (for North Carolina)
Fla. (for Florida)	N.D. (for North Dakota)
Ga. (for Georgia)	Okla. (for Oklahoma)
Ill. (for Illinois)	Ore. (for Oregon)
Ind. (for Indiana)	Pa. (for Pennsylvania)
Kan. (for Kansas)	R.I. (for Rhode Island)
Ky. (for Kentucky)	S.C. (for South Carolina)
La. (for Louisiana)	S.D. (for South Dakota)
Md. (for Maryland)	Tenn. (for Tennessee)
Mass. (for Massachusetts)	Vt. (for Vermont)
Mich. (for Michigan)	Va. (for Virginia)
Minn. (for Minnesota)	Wash. (for Washington)
Miss. (for Mississippi)	W.Va. (for West Virginia)
Mo. (for Missouri)	Wis. (for Wisconsin)
Mont. (for Montana)	Wyo. (for Wyoming)

Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas and Utah are never abbreviated.

CITIES NOT REQUIRING STATE NAMES

Atlanta	Milwaukee
Baltimore	Minneapolis
Boston	New Orleans
Chicago	New York (yes, it's a city, too)
Cincinnati	Oklahoma City
Cleveland	Philadelphia
Dallas	Phoenix
Denver	Pittsburgh
Detroit	St. Louis
Honolulu	Salt Lake City
Houston	San Antonio
Indianapolis	San Diego
Las Vegas	San Francisco
Los Angeles	Seattle
Miami	Washington (for Washington D.C.)

There are also international cities that do not require their countries to be listed after them. For those, you'll need to get the book!

MORE ABOUT INVERTED PYRAMID STYLE

In reading and learning materials in future levels, you'll consider how a good AP-style foundation will help any professional communicator with the various kinds of written communication for which they may be responsible.

For example, any business-style document should be prepared keeping the concept shown at the right in mind. The most important information should always go at the top. If you haven't heard this before, let me be the first to introduce an important saying to you:

Don't bury the lead!

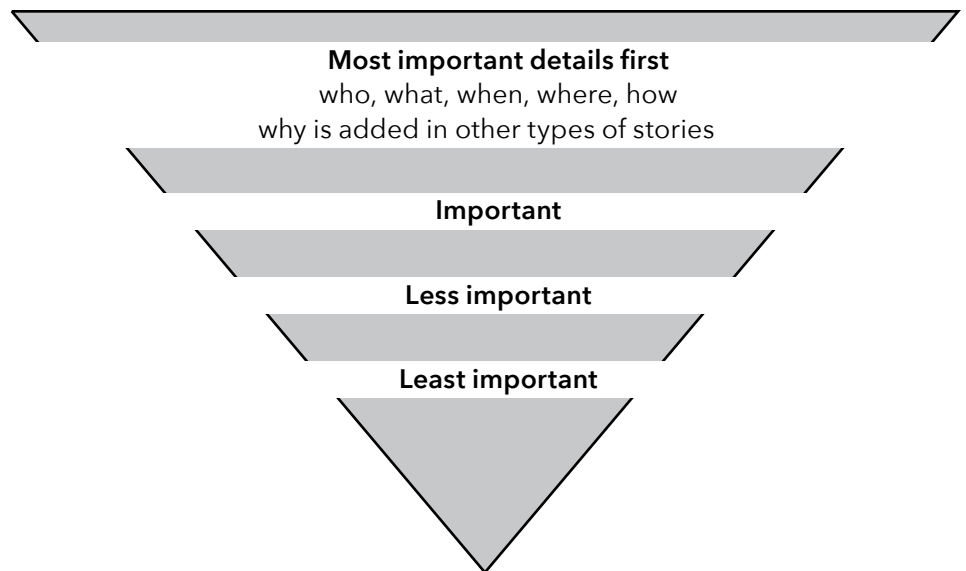
The most important information goes at the top of a story. Here is other advice from a collection of authors: In a sports story the final score, with very few exceptions, should not only be the first numbers used in a story, the score **MUST** be in the lead sentence (Murray, 2018, p 73 from Kian, et al, 2019).

OTHER SPORTS WRITING BASICS AND GREAT ADVICE

Some of this material is from an interview with Jenni Carlson, past president of the Association for Women in Sports Media (AWSM) as it appears in Kian et al (2019). (Yes, the book is not yet in print for distribution, but we have a few excerpts from it in this course.)

Know Sports and Read Regularly from a Variety of Subjects (both sports and other subjects)

Getting a job in sports communication is difficult. If a person applies to 50 jobs before landing their first full-time job, that same person should expect that it would take 100 applications before landing a job in sport. The reason is simple to understand: Many people think they want to work in sports covering their favorite teams. (One of the goals for this class is that you experience



enough of the reality of working in the industry that you can make a more informed decision than just thinking it "sounds like fun" when the reality is takes hard work and a lot of time, for not a lot of pay.

Most of you are fans of a team or a person or a product, for example perhaps you're interested in apparel. "But do you follow the sports industry as a whole, including trends and the business of sport? Do you follow, watch and—most important—read about a variety of sports, so that you can correctly write and speak about the rules and terminology for each sport? If not, start now" (Carlson, 2018, pp 74-76, as it appears in Kian et al, 2019).

During the first few years of a person's career in sports, they most often **will not work in a sport they love** and they certainly will need to stay informed about teams, athletes, coaches, issues, rules and trends that they otherwise do not care at all about.

Regardless of what type of sports media you work in, you may have to cover all types of sports and you will certainly need to be able to speak the language of sports appropriately.

Get in the habit of reading other people's work and even of noting how you would write about something differently. That can help

you grow more quickly. Reading stories and summaries from other kinds of industries will help you expand your vocabulary and will make you a more informed person, in general, for when issues impact sports.

Spend time learning about unfamiliar sports and conduct thorough research. This is especially important before you conduct an interview with someone about a particular sport, team, or person. Do your homework to learn about them.

If you really want to work in sports, you should not wait for an assignment in some class to hone your writing skills, either. After you watch a game—and if you aren't watching a game in its entirety, you will **not** enjoy working in sports—you should practice writing a lead.

You should also commit to, at least once per week, watching a full sporting event (or attending one) that is unfamiliar to you. This streaming, digital world provides you an opportunity to consume a lot of niche (or uncommon) sports.

Water polo anyone?

Kian, E., Schultz, B., Clavio, G., & Sheffer, M. (2019); *Multimedia Sports Journalism*, Oxford University Press, New York.