

AP Style Guide

2019-2020 Interns

Dates

- When writing out complete dates, abbreviate the month (Jan., Feb., March, April, May, June, July, Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.).
- Do not use “th” or “rd.”
 - Correct: Sept. 11, 2001
 - Incorrect: September 11th, 2001
- When writing only month and year, spell out the month. Do not use “of.”
 - Correct: September 2001
 - Incorrect: September of 2001

Punctuation

- AP Style does not use Oxford/Serial commas. Oxford/Serial commas are only used if they are needed for sentence clarity or if the sentence is complicated.
- When referencing Navy ships “USS” does not use periods.
- Ex: USS Eisenhower.
- When referencing the United States, U.S. should include periods.

Capitalizations

- The VA capitalizes “Veteran” in any and all contexts.
- Branches of the military are always capitalized.
 - Examples: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard
- Capitalize units.
 - Examples: 3rd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division
- When referring to the reserves, capitalize when in the form of “U.S. Navy Reserve” or “U.S. Army Reserve.”
- Capitalize the official military academies.
 - Examples: U.S. Air Force Academy, U.S. Naval Academy
- Titles are only capitalized when they directly precede a name and are not separated by a comma.
 - Correct example: John Smith, secretary of Veterans Affairs
 - Incorrect example: John Smith, Secretary of Veterans Affairs

Capitalizations

- Organizations and offices should be treated as proper nouns when used as a name, and lowercase when used as a topic.
 - Correct: Joe Smith joined VA's Office of Public Health in 1999.
 - Incorrect: Joe Smith developed an interest in Public Health early in his career.
- Educational degrees are not capitalized unless it is an official title.
 - Correct: Pursuing a bachelor's degree. Pursuing a master's degree. Pursuing a Master's in Science.
 - Incorrect: Pursuing a Bachelor's degree. Pursuing a Master's degree.
- When referring to a Veteran's rank or position in a sentence it is spelled out and capitalized.
 - "Retired at the rank of sergeant." "John served as a torpedoman."
- Medals and ribbons are always capitalized. Army Commendation Medal, Purple Heart, Bronze Star, Medal of Honor.

Phrases

- Per AP style, service member is two words both lowercase.
- Air Force is two words. The exception is when writing out Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP).
- **To end a VOD write-up:**
 - If we know the Veteran has passed, end with “We honor his/her service.”
 - If the Veteran is alive, end with “Thank you for your service, [name]!”
- Write out basic training. Use both words (not just basic) and do not capitalize.
- Army is soldier. Navy/Marines is sailor. Air Force is airman.
- Aircraft is the acceptable characterization of military aviation platforms. Do not use airplane or plane. Aircraft is both the singular and plural version of the word.

Acronyms

- Spell out *everything*. This includes fairly common military abbreviations, such as ROTC or POW. Our audience may not always be familiar with military or Veteran language.
- The only acronyms that are generally acceptable to use are extremely common ones such as: VA, Navy SEAL, VFW.
- Spell out wars.
 - Correct: World War I, World War II.
 - Incorrect: WWI, WWII.

Numbers

- Numbers one through nine should be written out.
- Numbers 10 and higher should be numerical.

Locations

- States are spelled out in the body of content, whether standing alone or in conjunction with a city. (This is a recent update to AP Style Guide)
 - Correct: Alexandria, Virginia. Chicago, Illinois. Corpus Christi, Texas.
 - Incorrect: Annapolis, MD

Other Writing Tip & Notes

- Write in plain language. Use few and simple words to communicate your message.
- Do not include full dates of birth. Even if the information is publicly available, it is considered personal information. Birth month and year (November 1950) is fine.
- When referring to military medals/decorations use: earned, awarded or recipient.
 - "Win" is inflammatory within the Veteran community.
- Combat is simply combat. No need to include "active" as there is no passive combat.
- The Veteran is referred to by their entire name the first time. After that, it is just their first name. No rank or last name.
 - Special cases may include senators or former presidents where just the first name is too informal. Instead, you may refer to them as Sen. McCain or Former President Bush for example.
 - If a Veteran goes by their middle name, introduce them with their full name and the nickname in quotes. Then you may reference them with the nickname throughout.
- Do not use words that editorialize the content. Phrases like "American hero," "valiantly served," "brave soldier" need to be reworded to a neutral voice.

Helpful Resources

- [AP Style Military Titles](#)
- [Army Style Guide](#)
- [U.S. Navy Style Guide](#)
- [Air Force Journalistic Style Guide](#)
- [SALUTE YOUR VETERANS PROPERLY. HERE'S THE AP STYLE YOU NEED TO KNOW](#)