

AP Style

All journalism writing follows Associated Press (AP) style guidelines. The AP style guidelines can be accessed online or in-print, and they are updated every year. AP style includes specific rules on capitalization, numbers, abbreviations, dates and more. Some rules include:

- Spelling out numbers zero through nine, while numerically typing numbers 10+
- Spelling out the word “percent,” not using the shorthand symbol (%)
- Capitalizing datelines in hard news stories
- Abbreviating calendar dates
- Omitting the Oxford comma

Examples of correct vs. incorrect AP style rules

Correct	Incorrect
Four dogs	4 dogs
45 percent	45%
Jan. 15, 2018	January 15 th 2018
Eggs, milk and cheese	Eggs, milk, and cheese

News & Feature Writing

Hard news stories mostly have the qualities of proximity, timeliness and conflict. These stories hold important information about what is happening in particular communities. In contrast, feature stories mainly focus on prominence, entertainment and human interest. However, both news and feature writing share many of the same elements.

Journalism stories are written using Inverted Pyramid Style. This includes:

- A headline and byline
- A lead sentence of 35 words or less at the beginning of the story.
- Nut graph that explains the significance of the story (The “so what?”)
- Quotes that express emotion or opinion, with attributions
- Elaboration, context and background including the **most recent** news details first
- Conclusion including future action, a circle kicker (anecdote) or summary quote

Lead Sentences

Lead sentences are the beginning sentences of news stories. They must include the who, what, when, where, why and how of the story in 35 words or less. There are different types of leads including summary leads, delayed-identification leads and descriptive leads.

Examples:

- **Summary lead:** A man robbed a Chinese food delivery driver at gunpoint Thursday at an apartment complex in Denton, when the man threatened to kill the driver unless he handed over the food, police said.
- **Delayed-identification lead:** A 24-year-old man is in critical condition at the Denton Regional Hospital after he was shot by a state trooper in an incident early Friday morning, officials said.

Sources, Quotes & Attributions

In hard news, the writer **must** not include biased or opinionated adjectives or descriptions. The writer must include direct quotes from outside sources to convey opinion and emotion.

Hard news stories require a minimum of three unique sources and their proper attribution. Quotes from sources require their own paragraph, and the text will be in quotation marks followed by an attribution.

All quotes will be attributed using the word **“said”** unless the information comes from a research study. Sources will also be listed with first name, last name and title for the first appearance, and by last name only if they are quoted multiple times. Anonymous sources may **only** be used if the person’s job, safety or life will be in danger by revealing their identity.

Examples:

- “I like PB&J,” UNT junior Lola George said.
- “I like to eat PB&J as a snack,” George said. “It’s been my favorite since I was a kid.”
- 45 percent of college students enjoy PB&J sandwiches, according to a recent poll at the University of North Texas.

Active vs. Passive Voice

In news writing, always emphasize the receiver of the action by using active voice.

Active vs. Passive Voice Examples

Active Voice (Correct)	Passive Voice (Incorrect)
The city council passed an ordinance today.	An ordinance was passed today by the city council.

Example Short Hard News Story:

Two 12-year-old Harworth boys returned home after being reported missing for two days, Harworth police said.

Friends Jerome Fine and Sandy Angelo revealed that they were camping.

“It was just a little camping trip, that was all,” Angelo said. “But I guess I see now we should have told somebody.”

The parents of the two boys reported them missing after they failed to return home from school Wednesday afternoon. The Harworth police department conducted a search for the two boys.

“We had the whole force looking for those boys,” Harworth Police Officer Ellen Saunders said. “I guess you could call it a full-scale search.”

The boys are home safely with their parents on Hotchkins Drive. It is expected that they will inform their parents before their next camping trip.

“The camping? It was great, but boy do I feel awful,” Fine said.

Example Short Feature Story:

Nancy Workman, a letter carrier for the U.S. Postal Service, walks 12 miles each day to deliver the mail to patrons in her town. She enjoys spending four to four and a half hours each day walking and meeting new people as she works.

“Most letter carriers prefer driving routes, but driving just never appealed to me,” Workman said. “Walking is tremendous medicine, as it’s a great time for reflection.”

Along her route, Workman encounters many unpredictable circumstances including the weather, encounters with dogs and tremendous amounts of mail to be delivered. Despite many unusual circumstances, she has a lot of enthusiasm for her job.

“Once you’re out there, you have no shelter. There’s no place you can hide,” Workman said. “I love the outdoors, and I love the freedom of the street.”

The most unusual experience she had was discovering the death of one of her patrons on her route. After noticing that his mail had piled up, Workman asked his next door neighbors to call the police.

“The police discovered that the middle-aged man had died of a heart attack several days ago,” Workman said. “It was really scary because I knew this man, and suddenly he was dead.”

The patron’s death was difficult for Workman because she makes close connections with the people on her delivery route.

“I love meeting the people on my route and getting to know them,” Workman said.

Workman has worked for the U.S. Postal Service for five and a half years and plans to remain a letter carrier indefinitely.

In addition to walking the delivery routes, Workman comes in each morning at 7:15 a.m. to sort the mail and stays until 3:15 p.m. to prepare for the next day’s route after her deliveries.

“I really do love this job,” Workman said. “I plan to keep delivering mail until I can’t walk anymore.”

Press Release Writing

A press release is a public announcement written for news media. Public relations specialists are generally responsible for drafting press releases to help promote their clients’ organization, products or special campaigns.

When writing a press release, **without exceeding one page**, be sure to include:

- The release date and contact information
- A catchy title
- Detailed information about the product, event or campaign being promoted
- Quotes from important or infamous representatives
- A call-to-action or instructions for interested consumers
- A **boilerplate** with background information about the company

Press Release

For Immediate Release

April 4, 2017

Contacts:

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WANTED: College Students with Junky Rooms

DENTON – College students can earn money for having a junky room.

Excaliber Entertainment is promoting their new website to college students by sponsoring the contest “Junkiest Dorm Room in America”. The contest encourages students to share pictures of their messy rooms to win a cash prize.

Though a messy room is usually criticized, Richard McNary, founder and president of www.vaultcracker.com, wants to turn it into a positive thing.

“We know how busy college students are and we wanted to turn a negative into a positive,” McNary said. “Now two students with junky rooms will be able to brag about the fact that they earned cash because of their junky rooms.”

The contest will award \$300 to a college student whose pictures of his or her dorm room is judged the junkiest. A second place winner will be awarded \$100.

All students who are enrolled full time at a college or university are eligible to enter the contest. For more information on the contest and submission guidelines, go to www.vaultcracker.com.

Excaliber Entertainment Inc., founded in 2017, is headquartered in San Antonio, Texas and consists of 12,000 members nationwide. The goal of the corporation is to provide an information and entertainment outlet for collegiate students.

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Resources

UNT Writing Center
Owl.Purdue.edu/Owl/Subject_Specific_Writing/Journalism_And_Journalistic_Writing/AP_Style.html
APStyleBook.com

Handout Created by Lola George

