

## **MORBIDLY BEAUTIFUL STYLE GUIDE (Nov. 2019)**

*This is, for the most part, following AP Style with a few exceptions. The goal of this is to help all of you become better, neater writers who are capable of stronger self-edits before they reach our editing team. If you have any questions, feel free to email Jack (Managing Editor) at [jackwilhelmi89@gmail.com](mailto:jackwilhelmi89@gmail.com).*

### **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. soldier was killed in Baghdad yesterday.

#### **States**

- Spell out the names of the states in text: *Wildfires continued to rage through southern California yesterday.*
- Place one comma between the city and the state name, and another after the state name, unless at the end of a sentence or in a dateline (e.g. She traveled from San Diego, California, to go to school in Kansas City, Missouri. Now, she's thinking of moving to Santa Fe, New Mexico.)
- Spell out all US Cities even if there are abbreviations: New York City is a wonderful place to visit at Christmastime. (**Do not use**: NYC is a wonderful place to visit at Christmastime.)

### **DATES AND TIMES**

#### **Dates**

- Capitalize months.
- When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate only Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec. (e.g. Oct. 4 was the day of her birthday.)
- When a phrase lists only a month and year, do not separate the month and the year with commas. (e.g. February 1980 was his best month.)
- When a phrase refers to a month, day and year, set off the year with commas. (e.g. Aug. 20, 1964, was the day they had all been waiting for.) **Do not add *th*, *rd*, *st*, etc. here. You may use them otherwise.** (e.g. 34<sup>th</sup> street; The boy's 10<sup>th</sup>

birthday; Stephen's King's 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary; *Texas Chainsaw Massacre's* 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary, etc.)

## **Time**

- Use figures except for noon and midnight
- Use a colon to separate hours from minutes (e.g. 2:30 a.m.)
- 4 o'clock is acceptable, but time listings with a.m. or p.m. are preferred

## **NUMBERS:**

- Spell out the numbers one through nine; for 10 and up, use Arabic numerals.
- *Spell out numerals that start a sentence; if the result is awkward, recast the sentence: Twenty-seven detainees were released yesterday. Yesterday, 993 freshmen entered the college.*
- The one exception to this rule is in a sentence that begins with a calendar year: *1938 was a turbulent year for Leon.*
- Use Roman numerals for wars, monarchs and Popes: *World War II, King George VI, Pope John XXIII*
- *For large numbers: use a hyphen to connect a word ending in y to another word: twenty-one, one hundred forty-three, seventy-six thousand five hundred eighty-seven*
- Do not use commas between other separate words that are part of one number: *one thousand one hundred fifty-five*
- Spell out casual expressions: *A thousand times no!*
- Proper names: use words or numerals according to an organization's practice: *3M, Twentieth Century Fox, Big Ten*

## **PUNCTUATION:**

### **1. Apostrophe (')**

- *For plural nouns ending in s, add only an apostrophe: the girls' toys, states' rights.*
- *For singular common nouns ending in s, add 's: the hostess's invitation, the witness's answer.*
- *For singular proper names ending in s, use only an apostrophe: Descartes' theories, Kansas' schools.*

- For singular proper names ending in s sounds such as x, ce, and z, use 's: *Marx's theories, the prince's life.*
- For plurals of a single letter, add 's: *Mind your p's and q's, the Red Sox defeated the Oakland A's.*
- Do not use 's for plurals of numbers, or multiple letter combinations: *the 1980s, RBIs*

### 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 make good all the losses.* But: *There were three considerations: expense, time and feasibility.*
- Colons go outside quotation marks unless they are part of the quoted material.

### Comma (,)

- Use a comma to set off a person's hometown and age: *Jane Doe, Framingham, was absent. Joe Blow, 34, was arrested yesterday.*
- Commas exist wherever there is a natural pause in the sentence, so keep that in mind. When in doubt, speak the sentence aloud. (Try it out with the previous sentences!)
- Use commas for lists: *I went to the store to buy eggs, butter, and milk.*
- Use commas for groups: *We invited Stan, Steve, and Jerry to the party.*

### Dash (—)

- Make a dash by striking the hyphen key twice. Put a space on either side of the dash: *Smith offered a plan — it was unprecedented — to raise revenues.*

### Hyphen (-)

- Use a hyphen for compound adjectives before the noun: *well-known actor, full-time job, 20-year sentence*
- Do not use a hyphen when the compound modifier occurs after the verb: *The actor was well known. Her job became full time. He was sentenced to 20 years.*

- Do not use a hyphen to denote an abrupt change in a sentence—use a dash.

### **Parentheses**

- The perceived need for parentheses is an indication that your sentence is becoming contorted. Try to rewrite the sentence, putting the incidental information in commas, dashes or in another sentence. If you do use parentheses, follow these guidelines:
- If the material is inside a sentence, place the period outside the parentheses.
- If the parenthetical statement is a complete independent sentence, place the period inside the parentheses.
- Use parentheses for citing the works of actors after you've made an initial reference to them: *Kane Hodder (Hatchet) is no stranger to doing his own stunts.*
- Use parentheses for citing films as a pull-out list inside a sentence: *Rob Zombie has showcased the murderous Firefly clan in several of his movies (House of 1000 Corpses, The Devil's Rejects, 3 From Hell) and is excellent at directing films about killer rednecks.*
- When choosing to use a pull-out list in sentence, the sentence should still be completely sensible and intact without the parenthetical. When in doubt, test it out. The parenthetical should always add to the sentence by giving the reader more information but be able to exist without it. Do not use a parenthetical to off-load extra information when you could just write another sentence.

### **Periods**

- Use a single space after the period at the end of a sentence.
- Do not put a space between initials: *C.S. Lewis; G.K. Chesterton.*

### **Quotation Marks**

- In dialogue, each person's words are placed in a separate paragraph, with quotation marks at the beginning and end of each person's speech.
- Periods and commas always go within quotation marks.
- Dashes, semicolons, question marks and exclamation points go within the quotation marks when they apply to the quoted material. They go outside when they apply to the whole sentence.

- Use single marks for quotes within quotes: *She said, "He told me, 'I love you.'"*

## **TITLES:**

Of longer works such as **books, computer games, movies, operas, plays, television programs, publication titles, magazines, etc:**

- Italicize the title.
- Capitalize the first and last words of the title.
- Capitalize the principal words, including all verbs and prepositions and conjunctions with more than three letters.
- **Short stories, songs, poems, and short works go in quotations.**
- Translate a foreign title into English, unless the American public knows the work by its foreign name: *Nietzsche's Thus Spake Zarathustra; Mozart's Magic Flute* BUT LEAVE *Amores Perros; The Bhagavad-Gita*.
- Television shows when episode titles are pulled-out should be formatted as such: *James Marsters' first appearance in Buffy the Vampire Slayer was Season 3, Episode 2, "School Hard"*.

Of **newspapers** and **magazines:**

- Capitalize *the* in the name if that is the way the publication prefers to be known.
- Lowercase *the* before names if listing several publications, some of which use *the* as part of the name and some of which do not: *Time Newsweek, the Washington Post, and the New York Times*.

Of **places:**

- Lowercase compass directions: *The warm front is moving east*.
- Capitalize names of U.S. regions: *The Northeast depends on the Midwest for its food supply*.

Of **ethnic groups:**

- The preferred usage for African Americans is "black." The term is not capitalized.
- Preferred usage for Caucasians is "white," also not capitalized.
- Preferred usage for Asian people is "Asian," capitalized. Please note that in British usage the term applies only to people of the Indian Subcontinent.

- “American Indian,” capitalized with no hyphen, is preferred over “Native American.”

Of **seasons:**

- Lowercase “spring,” “summer,” “fall” and “winter” and derivatives such as “wintertime” unless part of a formal name: *I love Paris in the springtime; the Winter Olympics.*

**NAMES:**

- When making an initial reference to a person, use First Name/Last name: *Bill Moseley gave a standout performance in The Devil's Rejects.*
- Every following reference to that same person should use their last name only: *Moseley has collaborated with Rob Zombie on other projects.*
- When citing a character in a movie, television show, etc, use their character's name and follow with the actor's name in parentheses: *Nancy Thompson (Heather Langenkamp) is the perfect foil for Freddy Krueger.*
- When referring to characters throughout a piece, it's okay to continue using their first names throughout.