

An Introductory Note

This resource aims to provide a comprehensive hub for Associated Press (AP) Style writing support. AP Style is used by journalists, public relations specialists, and many communication workers to quickly and concisely communicate. These resources include examples of the writing form for journalistic writing and interactive exercises for optimal skills development.

This guide follows the 2019 and 2020 revised *AP Stylebook*. Earlier versions of the book may include different style rules, and specifics are subject to change with future editions of the *AP Stylebook*.

Resources were created with original examples and exercises, along with pulling clips from stories written by the creator for The Oakland Post, Oakland University's independent student newspaper.

To skip to certain sections of the resources, use the links in the table of contents.

TO DOWNLOAD THESE RESOURCES

Website access to resources: <https://katievalley.com/ap-style-resources/>

OR

Click "File" and then "Make a copy." You will be able to take as much space as needed to fill out the document, and existing text can be highlighted, bolded or underlined for annotation purposes.

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Getting Started

The best form of development for journalism-based writing is practice. To get started writing, a good first step is to learn the basics of AP Style. There are a few key elements that first-time users should know:

- For writing specifics, the *AP Stylebook* is the best resource for spelling, punctuation, and other stylistic rules. The Associated Press also answers questions on Twitter, which may be helpful for entries outside of the book.
- There are many story forms, but the most common are: news coverage, features, opinion pieces/ editorials, and sports stories.
- All stories start with a lead (sometimes spelled “lede”), which is a one-sentence paragraph (sometimes two sentences, when counting the “nut graf,” but we’ll get to that later), typically around 25 words, that answers the five W’s of the story: the who, what, when, where, and why/how. All five W’s aren’t necessarily answered in the lead.
- Stories then follow the inverted pyramid, where what readers need to know first is as high up in the story as possible.
- All stories have an angle with the intent of informing readers of particular news events, issues, or offering insight on people. If you can’t think of one, *find one*. What makes the story newsworthy?
- Also consider your audience. Whom is the story meant for? In many news stories, the audience is the general public, but some stories are geared toward a more specific audience (e.g. a story about an event for college students). Use your audience to shape your story.
- Interviewing sources is crucial to a newsworthy story. Outside sources, like statistics and data, are typically cited with hyperlinks embedded in-text (e.g. According to Pew Research...).

These are the big things to know when getting started with the style and will be broken down in the following guides and practice worksheets.

The Lead

Stories open with a *lead*, a 25ish-word sentence that tells readers what the story is about. This is where writers make people want to read the story.

There are five main components that writers can use to guide leads. These do not all have to be in the lead, but they will be answered near the top of the story:

Who: Who is the central focus of the story?

What: What do people need to know?

When: What time frame?

Where: Where does/did this origin?

Why/How: Think “Why is this important? How do we know?”

As many of these components as possible should be in the lead and the following **nut graph**, which gives more context to your story so your audience understands it. There will be cases when it’s difficult to identify certain components, such as stories where the “when” is the immediate present.

When constructing a lead, it may be beneficial to outline the five W’s beforehand. Here’s an example for how to outline these when writing an event coverage story:

Story Headline: ‘We are OU’: 2019 State of the University Address highlights campus efforts

Who: Oakland University President Ora Hirsch Pescovitz

What: Delivered the State of the University Address

When: Tuesday, Oct. 22

Where: Oakland Center, on campus

Why/How: To overview policies and discuss the goals for the school year

Here’s a lead for that story that focuses on the “why/how” components:

Campus-wide initiatives comprising four strategic goals and a plan to “reimagine” Oakland University were discussed at President Ora Hirsch Pescovitz’s second annual State of the University Address on Tuesday, Oct. 22.

The story is separated into sections for each initiative, so the lead sets up the story’s organization.

Lead Writing Practice

Practice is the best way to write better leads. To get accustomed to identifying the five W's, identify them in the lead for this story:

The Oakland University Board of Trustees (BOT) approved construction of campus arts and athletics facilities, following a \$78 million general revenue bond issuance approval at the June 10 Board meeting.

Who:

What:

When:

Where:

Why/How:

Here's a more difficult example with a longer lead. Identify the five W's here:

Golden Grizzlies, faculty and other community members now have the chance to report behavior that doesn't quite fit disciplinary measures, thanks to a new initiative on campus.

An existing behavioral intervention team and a care team in Student Affairs combined to create a force to ensure campus safety, following many other schools in the state. The Grizzlies CARE Team, CARE standing for Counseling Assessment Response Education, is a new multidisciplinary team launched this year by the Office of the Dean of Students (DoS), the Oakland University Police Department (OUPD), and several Student Affairs and Academic Affairs offices.

Who:

What:

When:

Where:

Why/How:

Use the information below to write an example lead. Try to include as many of the W's as possible, but make sure your writing stays concise — meaning avoid extra words.

Who: Oakland University Office for Student Involvement

What: Hosting an open forum with Oakland University President Ora Hirsch Pescovitz

When: Friday, Jan. 25 from 1-2 p.m.

Where: The Oakland Center Ballrooms

Why/How: to give students the chance to ask questions about the coming school year

Write your lead here:

Types of Leads

The type of lead depends on the type of story. As Harrower's *Inside Reporting* says, the list is subjective — there's not one type of lead that works every time.

Basic news lead

- Basic news leads are split up into a few different types. These are the most common, according to Harrower.

Summary lead

- Combines the most important of the five W's into one sentence and effectively summarizes what the story will be about

Example:

More than 5,000 students have visited the Oakland University Counseling Center this semester, surpassing the center's record of 4,000 students receiving counseling last fall.

The previous exercises focused on this type of lead, as it's one of the most common.

Delayed identification lead (termed that in Harrower's Inside Reporting)

- Omits a significant piece of information (typically a person's name when writing a profile-centered news piece) until the second paragraph

Example:

After moving to the U.S. from Iraq at age 16, a student graduating this fall with a bachelor's degree in biology has earned a perfect 4.0 GPA and is the only person in the department to earn a 4.0 overall.

When Jane Doe immigrated to the U.S. with her immediate family, she was in an unfamiliar territory, grappling to succeed with only her family to guide her.

Using the following information, write a delayed identification lead:

Who: George Supper, local author and Oakland University alumnus who graduated in 2007 with a bachelor's degree in English

What: Released his newest novel "Full-time Human" about a zombie-turned-human named Zoey who must decide between humanity or being the forerunner for the zombie rights movement.

When: May, after distributing part of it as a free chapbook

Where: Through Broken Heart Books

*The why/how component of this story is kind of obvious

Immediate identification lead

- When writing stories concerning known public figures or celebrities, they can be immediately identified in a lead.

Example: Reporting on the president of a university

Anecdotal lead

- Unfolds the story through an anecdote or narrative, which lets the writer take a more creative approach
- Anecdotal leads include the "nut graf," which includes the information typically in a lead (the most important of the five W's) in the paragraph after the anecdote.

Example: **'Joker' is a crookedly compelling anthology film with a distorted take on mental illness.** This review of the 2019 film "Joker" begins with a narrative about the story of the Joker.

That purple suit, that emerald green hair, that menacing laugh — whether you've seen a single Batman film or not, you know exactly who I'm talking about.

For nearly 80 years, the Joker has terrorized millions and cemented his status as one of the most iconic villains of all time. But his reputation precedes him, and with all those years and adaptations comes an increasingly daunting pressure to live up to the "genius" of the Joker.

For many, myself included, Heath Ledger's Oscar-winning performance of the Joker in 2008's "The Dark Knight" was truly untouchable. So, Joaquin Phoenix, who boldly took on the role for 2019's "Joker," had a lot of hype to live up to, to say the least. Ledger is the ultimate Joker — and will likely hold that title for many years to come — but Phoenix gives a compelling performance that makes the character feel new and authentic.

That being said, DC's latest cinematic adaptation of Batman's maniacal archnemesis is far from perfect — even if its titular lead comes pretty damn close.

Written by Trevor Tyle, The Oakland Post

There are so many ways to construct anecdotal leads, and the previous example is a more descriptive version of it. Anecdotal leads can also begin with witty comments about the story's subject matter — this option is best for reviews or feature pieces.

Take the delayed identification lead exercise further by starting your lead with an anecdote.

Who: George Supper, local author and Oakland University alumnus who graduated in 2007 with a bachelor's degree in English

What: Released his newest novel "Full-time Human" about a zombie-turned-human named Zoey who must decide between humanity or being the forerunner for the zombie rights movement.

When: May, after distributing part of it as a free chapbook

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The Inverted Pyramid

The inverted pyramid is the story organization structure. It was created with the invention of the telegraph, where the most important information came first in case of a signal break.

The inverted pyramid is the principle to put the most important information — what the readers need to know — is as close to the lead as possible. The higher up in the story the content is, the more people will know if they don't plan on reading the whole thing.

Inverted Pyramid of Journalism

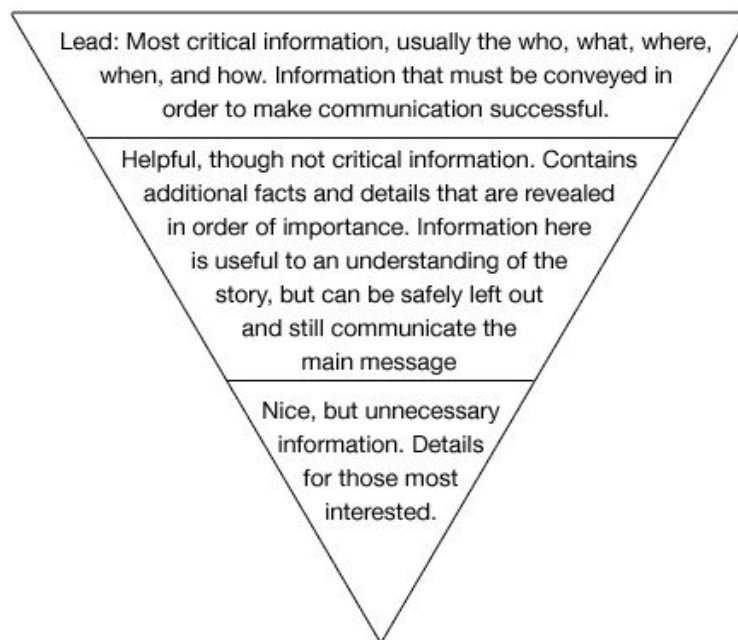


Image: Bradley, Steven. *The Inverted Pyramid of Visual Design*. Pinterest.
<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/339740365617662164/?lp=true>

Here are some tips for following the inverted pyramid:

- Keep sentences concise. The meaning of a sentence can get lost with unnecessary words.
- Think thematically: What do you have to include in the story?
 - Example: If I'm writing a story about the school Ultimate Frisbee team hosting a fundraiser for breast cancer awareness and are also profiling the organization with the piece, there are a few themes you could stick with, in order they would be included in the story: information about the fundraiser, what it's intended for,

the team's current goals, any additional information as it comes up when speaking to sources, the team's future goals.

- Pick the most effective quotes that will add or give context to important information to the story.
- Transitioning is important, but don't rely too heavily on it. Avoid paraphrasing quoted content when introducing a quote — instead paraphrase a related thought from the source or use the quote to transition through themes.

Organization Exercise

Organize the graphs of this brief story on upcoming campus construction so it correctly follows the inverted pyramid. Number them in the order the story should be in.

_____ Varner Hall's renovations focus on modernizing the building and improving student experience. The construction will mark Varner's first update since it was built in 1970.

_____ "Students deserve to have 21st-century facilities, and in that I include the technology that goes along with that," she said. "That's very important to every college on campus, and certainly the students in Varner are no different."

_____ The OU Board of Trustees (BOT) approved construction of campus arts and athletics buildings, following a \$78 million general revenue bond issuance approval at the June 10 Board meeting.

_____ New research labs will also be added to campus and improvements will be made to the central heating plant. According to John Beaghan, vice president for finance and administration and BOT treasurer, the construction does not have an official start date.

_____ According to Amy Hardison Tully, the new School of Music, Theatre and Dance director, issues with heating and cooling, leaky windows and other structural problems in classrooms will be addressed.

Which graph is the lead?

Which is the ending? How do you know?

Inverted Pyramid Practice

Pretend you're previewing an on-campus LGBTQIA+ Pride Month kick-off event that will be hosted by the Gender and Sexuality Center (GSC) on Friday, June 1 and will include a keynote speech by Jeffrey Smith, president of the campus Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA).

The event will also feature a Q+A with Dr. Nancy Doe, Golden Health Center director, about safe sex practices, STI testing, and the importance of consent. There will also be a short reading from the Pride Month book club read "I Am Jazz" by Jazz Jennings, young transgender writer.

For more information on the GSC, the on-campus resource will speak about its services. It also holds a biweekly support group for LGBTQIA+ students.

You've spoken to Smith, and have a quote from him about Pride Month:

"It's important to acknowledge Pride Month as a campus community because so many students are LGBTQIA+ and feel underrepresented on campus," Smith said. "Our goal with this event is to make those students feel recognized and to invite other students to celebrate Pride Month with us."

You've also spoken to Jasmine Oakley, the director of the Gender and Sexuality Center, and she outlined the goals of the center as an on-campus resource for students. You have a few options for quotes to include about this.

Now that a decent amount of information has been presented to you, put together a rough list of the themes/main ideas for the story. What's your angle?

Start with the lead. What will you include? Write it out.

Continue outlining the rest of the story. Think of what people need to know, and remember there's no perfect outline for this.

Story Components: A Breakdown

Here is a completed story. Take a look at each component and think about how the story elements can translate into other stories. (Harrower has a similar image in *Inside Reporting* on page 49.)

Story: **OU researchers contribute to ending mudsnail invasions in Michigan waters**

Katie Valley, Content Editor

June 5, 2019

<p>The lead: A bit of context</p>	<p>With summer comes fishing, but an invasive species may be lurking if fishers do not take the proper precautions to keep it from spreading.</p>
<p>Nut graph</p>	<p>New Zealand mudsnails are small, invasive aquatic snails that are self-cloning and easily adapt to changing climates, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. At just 1/8-inch-long, one adult mudsnail can create a colony of 40 million in one year.</p>
<p>Transitions into angle of story (inclusion of the W's): efforts to decrease # of snails</p>	<p>Oakland University began researching mudsnail prevalence and prevention in 2016 after receiving funding from the Department of Natural Resources' Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program, which led researchers to test the species' prevalence in the Au Sable River in Frederick Township.</p>
<p>Introduction of source, more information on research</p>	<p>Dr. Scott Tiegs, professor and principal investigator of OU's aquatic ecology lab, said the research team has found up to 100,000 mudsnails in a square meter of water, a density that is likely to have negative consequences for native biota.</p>
<p>Tiegs Quote #1 Emphasizes severity of problem</p>	<p>"In the Great Lakes region, we have 20% of the world's liquid fresh water, and, unfortunately, this is also one of the world's hotspots for biological invasions," Tiegs said. "There are over 180 aquatic invasive species in the Great Lakes that really compromise this amazing natural resource."</p>
<p>More details on mudsnails, how OU researchers get data</p>	<p>Mudsnail presence can be detected by environmental DNA (eDNA) samples, which detect whether a material's DNA is present in certain settings. Samples are taken at OU's research stations or remotely by "citizen scientists" using sample kits and then sent to Dr. Douglas Wendell, biological sciences professor, for testing.</p>
<p>Audience appeal: The importance of citizen</p>	<p>Citizen scientists have been able to play a part in eDNA research through a partnership between OU, Grand Valley State</p>

<p>scientists</p>	<p>University, Michigan Trout Unlimited and Anglers of the Au Sable. Wendell said eDNA samples from fishers have led to mudsnail detection in new locations.</p>
<p>Wendell Quote #1 Elaboration on citizen scientists' influence on research</p>	<p>“One thing eDNA is nice for is with citizen scientists who maybe wouldn't be equipped to go and do the actual looking for the organism — they're just out there fishing — they can take a water sample, and if it comes up positive, then Dr. Tiegs' people can follow up on it,” he said. “It sort of expands our reach beyond where we can get our crews out to.”</p>
<p>Transition into remedies for mudsnail invasions</p>	<p>The research team emphasized that early detection is the best way to handle mudsnail invasions. After using eDNA to test how many mudsnails exist in a body of water, different measures can be taken to keep infestations from spreading.</p>
<p>Remedies: What can citizens do to help?</p>	<p>Formula 409 was found to be effective in eradicating mudsnails. Anglers can simply spray their waders and other gear with the substance, which can be a simple way to keep mudsnails from moving to unaffected bodies of water.</p>
<p>Extra details on the significance of the invasion, and emerging developments</p>	<p>Further research has discovered New Zealand mudsnails may have an adverse effect on fish. According to research team member and doctoral degree student Jeremy Geist, trout are increasingly ingesting mudsnails, but the snails are passing through their digestive systems and coming out alive, possibly keeping the trout from receiving nutrition.</p>
<p>Where research currently stands and its next steps</p>	<p>Mudsnail research is in the developmental phase, as consequences such as their lack of nutritional value are undetermined. Wendell hopes to soon explore the sensitivity of eDNA testing to determine how many need to be present for DNA detection.</p>
<p>Transition into end: importance of civilians</p>	<p>With cleaning gear and collecting samples, anglers have been great conservationists and partners in the fight to end the New Zealand mudsnail invasion, according to Tiegs.</p>
<p>Tiegs Quote #2 Appeal to readers to change their behavior and help solve the problem</p>	<p>“If [anglers] want to continue to enjoy this resource — being fresh water in the Great Lakes — and they want future generations to do that, we have to modify our behavior a little bit,” he said. “And it's really unfortunate, but that's the reality that we have now ... We need to take more care that we don't move these around the landscape.”</p>

The story came together after the Michigan Department of Natural Resources published a feature on mudsnails that included OU's research. The story is organized in the way the writer saw best fit and was done so by outlining the story by angles that answer the story's main questions:

1. What are mudsnails/what's the issue with them?
2. What's OU doing? Why is it so serious?
3. What can regular citizens do to prevent the spread? Why should they do so?

Thinking of stories as a process, where the readers' questions are addressed in order of importance/what makes the most sense, can help writers produce better content.

Quoting Rules

When using material from sources, here are some important things to know:

- Three options for including source material in your story:
 - Quoting: WORD-FOR-WORD material from your source to add context to a story.
 - Note: Filler words such as “um” or “you know” can be omitted. Words like “gonna” or “kinda” should always be spelled out, unless including the slang terms is important to the story.
 - Paraphrasing: rewording information from a source to be more concise or to be stated quicker. This is best for long-winded quotes or quotes just summarizing information.
 - Summarizing: similar to paraphrasing, but this is more broad. Instead of paraphrasing sentences, summarizing has to do with summing up larger pieces of or an entire conversation.
- Quote information that matters. Don’t quote something you can report on yourself.
- It’s important to note that the AP prefers *Source said*, rather than *said Source*, unless the source’s title is included in the quote and is too long. (That’s a judgment call the writer has to make.) Example:
 - Correct: “Organizing the event was so much fun,” said John Smith, president of the Student Production Board and student liaison to the OU Board of Trustees.
 - Incorrect: “Organizing the event was so much fun,” John Smith, president of the Student Production Board and student liaison to the OU Board of Trustees, said.
 - The “said” is included before the source’s name because if it were to be at the end, the “said” would get lost.

There are a few quote formats. Pay attention to the punctuation in each:

Full quote with two or more sentences

“I have had cats for as long as I can remember,” Doe said. “Getting to open an animal shelter has always been a dream of mine.”

Note the attribution included between the two sentences; also pay attention to the punctuation here. It’s a good rule-of-thumb to place attribution at the break between the first two sentences of a quote, unless the quote is more than two sentences and the attribution would sound better at a different point.

Exercise: Add the punctuation to this quote:

__The event will be a great opportunity for students and alumni to get input on university policies____ Smith said____ “The Ask Alice events aim to increase campus outreach and give students more authority in decision-making_____

One-sentence quote

Option one: Attribution after quote

“I love getting to work with the people I love, but they get on my nerves sometimes,” Smith said.

Option two: split attribution

“I love getting to work with the people I love,” Smith said, “but they get on my nerves sometimes.”

Note the comma after “said” and the lowercase letter at the next part of the quote.

Option three: Attribution before quote (avoid if possible)

Smith said, “I love getting to work with the people I love, but they get on my nerves sometimes.”

Properly attribute this one-sentence quote. There’s more than one option for this, so pick one.

To be able to say I was part of a student body to survive serious infrastructure changes is phenomenal. - Hannah Kremer, junior graphic design major.

Properly attribute this two-sentence quote.

I’m honored to have received the Service Learning Award. It’s so humbling to know that I did valuable work for my community and helped save lives. - John Julia, senior biology major

How about this three-sentence quote?

The best way to water your plants is to use warm water. This has been scientifically proven to be the most effective and inhibit the best growth in plants. Another technique is to follow a watering schedule -- you don’t want to accidentally forget to water them and let them get droopy. - Dr. Paul Rodgers, botany professor at Oakland University

Writing Compelling Interview Questions

Compelling interview questions are fairly easy to master. They should be open-ended, meaning avoid questions that address “yes/no” answers — those will stop the conversation from flowing.

When you interview sources for stories, it’s good to come with a list of questions and use those to guide the conversation. Do some research before you begin. To write compelling questions, think of what people need to know about the issue you’re covering. What questions might they ask?

For example, if you were writing a story about the Oakland University Counseling Center hiring additional therapists with money from a Dean of Students Office grant to address a semesterlong waitlist and wanted to talk to the dean of students, some questions might be more informational, but others should dig into the dean’s motives for hiring the counselors.

Here are example questions you could ask if this were your story:

What prompted the Dean of Students office to fund the grant?

How many students will benefit from the Counseling Center hiring new therapists?

When can students expect the new therapists to be available? How will hiring them address the current waitlist?

Why should students be interested in utilizing campus services like the Counseling Center?

What other plans does the Dean of Students office have in regard to the Counseling Center, if any? Do you also plan to collaborate with other student services?

These are questions that could be asked to guide the conversation. The questions address the reason for the grant, how many students will benefit from it, and why students should use the resource, three things audience members would very likely want to know. A good note to keep in mind is if your source covers one of your questions before you ask it, avoid asking it yourself — you already received the answer.

Exercise: Pretend you’re writing a story on an Oakland University professor who just received the Teaching Excellence award from the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning for their continued support of their students throughout their academic research. What are some potential interview questions you could ask them?

**note: The answers to this will be a bit subjective. Imagine you do not know much about this person and would like to learn more.*

Identifying Good Source Material

The material sources provide during interviews can vastly change depending on the person, the story and your overall level of preparation. Sometimes, sources give you exactly what you need, but other times, you have to pull the most important material from the conversation. How do you know what information to use from sources? There are a few things to keep in mind:

- If you have an understanding of the themes of your story (or at least your angle, if you do not have much background information), then you can ask your source guided questions that elicit the most relevant responses.
- Pay attention to what your source says. If they don't sound informed about the topic or if they contradict anything, you may need to reach out to a different source.
- Think of what people need to know. If your source says something that's good, but not quite what you're looking for, don't try to squeeze it in.
- Be careful not to rely too heavily on your questions during interviews. Sources can speak more specifically about certain aspects of your questions, which the writer can pursue further by adding new questions to the discussion.
- Always ask your sources at the end of the conversation if there is anything else they would like to add. This is often where the magic happens, where the source summarizes what they think is the most important point. It also helps you cover any content you didn't mention that may be important.

Concluding Stories

Following the inverted pyramid, stories can end in a few ways:

- With a relevant — typically reflective — quote
- With a kicker (a twist, other important information or a good ending quote)
 - Example: For an event preview story, the end could include extra details about the event, such as how to get tickets or where questions can be directed to.
 - This can also work well for profiles or stories about organizations or businesses as a shift into their future plans/what comes next.
 - With a personality profile, consider picking the best, most reflective quote from your subject and end with that. A formula to follow: a) introduce the ending topic in its own graph and b) follow with the quote. Example:
Smith plans to stay closely involved with the OU community.

“OU will always feel like home,” she said. “I know that I can always look to the community for its positivity, advocacy and overall kindheartedness.”

- With a descriptive closer, which works well to close a story that begins with a descriptive or anecdotal lead or to just add a creative twist to feature stories.

Example: Here’s an example story, which begins with the lead and then skips to the ending.

Headline: School of Business Administration’s business and accounting programs receive AACSB-International accreditation renewal

After a rigorous process, the School of Business Administration (SBA) received renewal of the prestigious Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) International accreditation for its business and accounting programs.

The AACSB accreditation is considered prestigious in the business field. Only 836 business institutions in 55 countries and territories hold the accreditation, according to the AACSB website. Approximately 190 institutions have accreditation of both their business and accounting programs, five of which are Michigan schools.

Accreditation comes from meeting separate criteria, including 15 business standards concerning intellectual contribution, financial strategies, sufficiency, assurance of learning, engagement, effectiveness and more. To earn accounting program accreditation, six standards must be met, which include an academic unit mission, intellectual contributions, financial strategies, assurance of learning, information technology skills and faculty sufficiency.

The next step for the SBA is to consider where it would like to grow, which Mazzeo said becomes the challenging part. The biggest improvement in the programs since the last AACSB accreditation renewal was in strategic planning, something Mazzeo and Mukherji plan to continue improving.

Mazzeo said part of the strategic plan is working closely with local communities, and doing so lets the school show its upholding and accomplishing its goals.

“I think we’re a very good program in Southeast Michigan,” he said, “and while I do think we have students from all over the world, we’re predominantly a regional school ... In the business school, we have (it varies) an over 90% placement rate, most of our students stay locally, so we take it upon ourselves to say we’re really educating people for this region.”

The SBA has held the double accreditation since 1994.

Why did the writer choose to end the story the way they did? How does this align with the inverted pyramid?

Try not to stress too much about appropriately ending a story. The ending will come when you no longer have anything relevant to write about. The previous tips may help inspire you, but don't draw a fake conclusion or attempt to wrap things up too nicely. Let the ending come naturally.

AP Style

How to Navigate the *AP Stylebook*

The *AP Stylebook* is the No. 1 most beneficial resource when writing journalistically. A new version is released each year, but larger changes come every few years. Learning how to navigate the AP book is an important step in increasing your AP Style knowledge. Here are some tips to keep in mind when looking through the book:

- The book is how writers find out how certain words are spelled, punctuated, or abbreviated in AP Style stories. Familiarizing yourself with the *AP Stylebook* is essential to achieving overall fluidity in your writing.
- Entries are alphabetized. Think of it like a dictionary. Many individual words or phrases can be found through a simple alphabetical search. Others are categorized under sections, such as “numerals,” “government titles,” “datelines” and “state names”
- The book also includes a punctuation, data journalism, social media, sports writing and a media law/ethics section.

Example: If you were searching for whether to use numerals (1,2,3,4,5, etc.) or spell out ages, you turn to the “numerals” entry in the stylebook, under “N,” of course. The 2019 stylebook’s numeral entry breaks down when to use numerals. It says:

AGES: a 6-year-old girl; an 8-year-old law; the 7-year-old house. Use hyphens for ages expressed as adjectives before a noun or as substitutes for a noun.
(entry continues on page 204)

Sometimes when looking for an entry in the stylebook, readers will come across entries that lead you to the right place or direct to other entries providing more details. An example of this would be if you were looking for whether to abbreviate a state name and searched for the name of the state. The entry for Michigan says:

Abbreviate *Mich.* in datelines only; spell out in stories. Postal code: *MI*. See **state names**.

Visiting the “state names” entry provides more detailed information on including state names in stories.

Some Important AP Style Specifics

These pertain to entries in the AP Stylebook. If you work for a newspaper, another type of publication or are taking a journalism-based course, there may be “house rules” that are a bit different.

- One through nine are written out, 10 and up are numerals. However, ages are always numerals.
- Source said, not said source (unless the source has a long title). Not “says” either.
- Attributions typically go after the first sentence of a quote, but can be placed depending on what sounds best.
- Titles are only capitalized if they precede a name: OU President Ora Hirsch Pescovitz vs. Ora Hirsch Pescovitz, OU president.
- Quotes get their own paragraphs unless they’re fragmented.
- “Towards” is not a word. Always use “toward.”
- Minimize usage of the word “that,” as it’s often unnecessary. You also should not use “said that.”
- Only use the Oxford comma if omitting it could lead to confusion or misinterpretation.
- Book, movie, show, song, album, play, video game and poem titles should always be put in quotation marks, NOT italicized. Newspaper, magazine or academic journal titles should not be in quotes or italicized.
- Periods, commas and ellipses should always go inside quotation marks.
- When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate only Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec. Spell out when using the month by itself, or with a year and no specific date (e.g. November 2020, or this November).
- In accordance with changes made to the 2019 *AP Stylebook*, use the % symbol rather than the word “percent.” State names should also be spelled out in all cases (e.g. Clio, Michigan).
- Times should be written out like this: 8 a.m., 9 p.m., etc. 12 a.m. and 12 p.m. should be written as midnight and noon, respectively. Avoid redundancies like *9 a.m. in the morning*.
- Em dashes are preferred over semicolons (however, check with your house style). When an em dash is used, there should be a space before and after it. Some newspapers may prefer to use two hyphens in place of an em dash, so pay attention to house rules.

AP Style Exercises

Ensure these sentences correctly follow AP Style. The first three will have one AP Style error, and the following sentences will have more than one.

1. Smith is a twenty-one-year-old who has been playing violin his whole life.
2. Doe said that she forgot to turn off the oven before leaving her house.
3. Kerry Krass, Student Body President, enacted a new policy to enforce campus safety.
4. The class begins at 11:00 a.m. in the morning.
5. "Pushing for a better integration of virtual reality into classroom spaces can help students acquire a more realistic view of the medical field before actually entering it" exclaimed Smith.

Style Quiz

Choose the answer that correctly follows these AP Style rules. Feel free to use the *AP Stylebook* and/or previous exercises as a reference guide.

1. She received all of her items for graduation, _____ her tassel.
 - a. accept
 - b. except
 - c. Neither of these.
2. He was the _____ throughout the presidential race.
 - a. front-runner
 - b. frontrunner
 - c. front runner
3. I will _____ down after I have dinner.
 - a. lay
 - b. lie
4. The _____ were some of the best years of his life.
 - a. two-thousands
 - b. 2000's
 - c. 2000s
 - d. 2000s'
5. _____ Josh Richardson was honored for his service at the ceremony. The _____ was the top U.S. commander during the Vietnam War.
 - a. General; General
 - b. Gen.; General
 - c. General; Gen.
 - d. Gen.; general

6. The event was _____ because of inclement weather. The _____ will not affect the schedule for future games.
- cancelled; cancellation
 - cancelled; cancellation
 - cancelled; cancelation
7. He proposed the idea _____.
- October 15th, 2019.
 - Oct. 15, 2019.
 - October 15, 2019.
 - Oct. 15th 2019.

Grammar

Avoiding Sentence-level Issues

If you have experience with MLA/APA-style papers, it can be really easy to want to write longer sentences or be expansive with ideas because you're used to explaining yourself, right? With AP Style, it's important that ideas are conveyed as concisely as possible. Sentences should each be around 20 words, at most.

To avoid wordy sentences, there are a few things to keep in mind:

1. Avoid passive voice.

Instead of "There is" constructions or sentences that start with the direct object (e.g. The Declaration of Independence was signed by the Founding Fathers), start the sentence with the subject (e.g. The Founding Fathers signed the Declaration of Independence. That saves two words and is more understandable to readers).

Exercise: Turn these passive voice sentences into active voice sentences.

The event was hosted by the Student Production Board.

The leaves were raked by Kenny.

The murder was investigated by the police, who had been hot on the trail since day one.

Once sentences are put into active voice, they can be read more clearly and are a bit more concise.

2. Cut out unnecessary words.

Language can be simplified by only including what's necessary to properly convey meaning. Words such as "that" (if the sentence makes sense without it), "in order to," "due to the fact that" and qualifiers like "very" and "really" can be omitted or edited for brevity.

Note: It's "said" when referencing a source, never "said that."

Exercise: Remove the unnecessary words in these sentences to make them more concise.

1. Sanders said that the partnership was something that was an inevitable step in order to merge the companies' missions.
2. Meyers said that the restaurant's food was very good, and he was devastated that it shut down so suddenly.

3. According to Johnson, the mystery was that the president of Student Videography Group somehow misunderstood the time the event was supposed to start, and that he forgot that he was the one to be catering the food, Johnson said.
4. When talking to Harrison, he said that the museum was built behind a large waterfall as a more scenic approach.

Once you've written a story, stopping at the sentence level to remove any unnecessary words or shorten longer phrases can ensure your writing is more concise and clear.

3. Ensure sentence clarity. To do this, avoid confusing sentence structures. Here are some examples of things to watch out for:

A. Sentence fragments

Though shorter sentences most often mean more concise writing, avoid sentence fragments — sentences that don't contain a subject, verb or any other element that is necessary for it to make sense. For Example: Although the team won the game. *Although* does not work as a standalone sentence starter and leaves readers waiting for the rest of the sentence, such as *Although the team won the game, the final minute had fans on the edge of their seats*. Another example: Which was when the grocery stores ran out of toilet paper. What was? There's no subject in this sentence. Reading sentences aloud and making sure they make sense to the writer and convey a complete thought can be a way to train writers to avoid sentence fragments.

Exercise: Turn these sentence fragments into complete sentences.

Example: Once I sold my house.

Rewrite: Once I sold my house, **I finally could move out of the city.**

1. Because the plane took off before he arrived at the gate.
2. Due to the fact that the restaurant had just opened.
3. Which is crucial to aromatherapy, according to Galea.

B. Modifiers

Accidentally misplacing or creating dangling modifiers are common grammar mistakes. Dangling modifiers occur when a phrase or clause is placed awkwardly in a sentence and modifies the wrong thing, meaning the action in the sentence is not connected to the subject/person who does the action. Example: Walking home from school, the rain made Jose wet. This sentence makes it sound like *the rain* was walking home from school, not Jose. Rephrasing the sentence removes the dangling modifier. Two ways to rephrase (though other phrasing is possible): The rain made Jose wet when he was walking home from school, or when walking home from school, Jose was soaked by rain.

Exercise: Rewrite the sentences to get rid of the dangling modifiers.

1. Having changed the oil yesterday, the car was ready for Mandy to finally drive it.

2. Coaching the team flawlessly, the Best Coach award was given to Watson.
3. Working at the store every other day, Stacy's uniform was getting dirty.

C. Comma splices

Comma splices are another common grammar issue. These occur when two independent clauses — parts of a sentence that could be separated into their own sentences — are joined with just a comma. Example: *It's almost midnight, we'll never get home in time.* The comma between the two clauses isn't quite strong enough to support the sentence and give the clauses the pause they need. To avoid comma splice issues, there are a few solutions: a) add a conjunction: *It's almost midnight, and we'll never get home in time.* b) em dash, or long dash: *It's almost midnight — we'll never get home in time.* c) separate the two sentences: *It's almost midnight. We'll never get home in time.*

Exercise: Correct the comma splices in the sentences below.

1. At FCA, he achieved his career goals, he had complete ownership of a vehicle program when he was the chief engineer for Dodge RAM trucks from 2004-2008.
2. The best characters get more screen time, the show discovers the correct pacing and style to deliver their powerful messages.
3. I could not have anticipated a turnout like this, there were so many people supporting the show.

Punctuation

Understanding proper punctuation is crucial in journalism. You can get creative with punctuation through the use of punctuation like long dashes. Here are the punctuation basics:

- Periods: used to separate full sentences or complete thoughts.
- Commas: used to create necessary pauses for maximum readability.....
- Long dashes (also called em dashes)
- Colons: used when specifically stating something (e.g. There was only one thing Doe wanted to do that day: sleep)
- Double quotation marks: used to signify quotes, emphasize certain words, and needed with movie, TV show, book, album, song, artwork, and various other titles.
- Single quotation marks: for quotes within quotes, e.g. "She was like, 'You should seriously consider trying this sport,' so I did," Smith said.
- Semicolons: Avoid using to combine ideas. Split the idea into two sentences instead. However, semicolons are used to separate entries in complex lists (e.g. The candidates for the 2020 Student Congress election are First Last, former vice president; First Last, senior legislator; and First Last, sophomore political science major.)

- Ellipses: used to indicate when material was omitted from quotes. There is no need to put ellipses before or after a quote, but ellipses must be included if any part of the quote was removed, placed where the omitted content would be.

Punctuation Exercises

Which punctuation best fits in each sentence?

Options for all exercises:

comma em dash period ellipses colon semi-colon
quotation marks single quotes apostrophe

1. Sable__who has been president of the organization for two years__thought the best activity to celebrate the holiday would be a read-a-thon.
2. There are three ways students can contribute__donating to their favorite charities, helping students in need and spreading the word.
3. “It really helps us out because not only are we receiving donations__and we’re so thankful for all of that__but we’re also getting in shape and conditioned for our season,” he said.
4. “Making the change is up to us__if we don’t, we don’t know what will happen,” she said.
5. The president__s goal is to ensure maximum campus safety.

Avoiding Bias and Removing Opinion

Journalism is rooted in truth. It's essential to avoid writing biased stories and remain objective, meaning exploring all valid sides of a story to report the truth.

It can be really easy to want to insert your opinion into your story with phrases including the word "I," "in my opinion" or language that unnecessarily adds your opinion to the story, e.g. "Sushi Land, the best sushi restaurant in the area, will be closing for renovations" or "Following Smith's tips will help students get straight A's in their college courses." Statements of fact always should be attributed to someone or to something, or else they sound like the writer's opinion.

These examples include the author's opinion. Other people may not think Sushi Land is the best sushi joint in town, or people may follow Smith's tips and not get straight A's. Maintain your objectivity as the writer by rephrasing these sentences to be more truthful, e.g. "Sushi Land, where many local students love to dine, will be closing for renovations," and "Smith said his tips can help college students strive to achieve straight A's."

Some terms to keep in mind regarding truthful reporting, defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary :

Bias: an inclination of temperament or outlook, especially a personal and sometimes unreasoned judgment

Unconscious biases: learned stereotypes that are automatic, unintentional, deeply ingrained, universal and able to influence behavior.

Objectivity: the quality or character of being objective: lack of favoritism toward one side or another, freedom from bias

*However, objectivity does not always sit directly in the middle of an issue — it depends on where the truth sits.

Note: Opinion pieces and editorials are story types where the writer can show their opinion.

How to Avoid Opinion in Stories

There are a few ways to keep the writer's opinion from their work:

- Attribute the opinion to a source, either primary (your interviewee) or secondary (online info/statistics)
- When dealing with a condition — something that *could be* — put it in conditional tense and provide evidence to your claim. Example: The new resolution could be what raises the university's reputation, as schools like Michigan State saw rises in student satisfaction after raising their campus security measures.

- Maintain your objectivity. Only state things that may be opinionated if necessary or if the point cannot be made in another way.

Exercise: Remove the opinion from these statements, or attribute them correctly.

1. The journalism program is one of the best in the state. (taken from CollegeScore data)
2. Brown is a really smart guy and said the school will see a bright future after the pandemic.
3. Considering all of those options, I think creating more parking on campus would be a great way to increase the commuter population.
4. When speaking to Miller, he said the price of food on campus is astronomical.
5. Pizza Palooza has the best anchovy and cheese pizza in the world. (said by Chris Hendrickson, local pizza connoisseur)

The thing to remember here is you are reporting on an issue, which requires research, interviewing sources, finding the **truth** and uncovering that truth to your audience. Be factual and unbiased.

Exercise Answer Guide

Lead Writing Practice

Practice is the best way to write better leads. To get accustomed to identifying the five W's, identify them in the lead for this story:

The Oakland University Board of Trustees (BOT) approved construction of campus arts and athletics facilities, following a \$78 million general revenue bond issuance approval at the June 10 Board meeting.

Who: The Oakland University Board of Trustees

What: approved construction of campus arts and athletics facilities

When: June 10 Board meeting

Where: on campus/arts and athletics facilities

Why/How: (more in-depth later in the story) to renovate the buildings and modernize technology.

Here's a more difficult example with a longer lead. Identify the five W's here:

Golden Grizzlies, faculty and other community members now have the chance to report behavior that doesn't quite fit disciplinary measures, thanks to a new initiative on campus.

An existing behavioral intervention team and a care team in Student Affairs combined to create a force to ensure campus safety, following many other schools in the state. The Grizzlies CARE Team, CARE standing for Counseling Assessment Response Education, is a new multidisciplinary team launched this year by the Office of the Dean of Students (DoS), the Oakland University Police Department (OUPD), and several Student Affairs and Academic Affairs offices.

Who: the Office of the Dean of Students, the Oakland University Police Department, and several Student Affairs and Academic Affairs offices

What: developed the Grizzlies CARE Team

When: This semester/now

Where: On campus

Why/How: for community members to report behavior that doesn't quite fit disciplinary measures

- **This story begins with the why/how as a hook and then the following graph includes more information.**

Example Leads:

Concise version, including a supporting graf:

Students will get to speak about policies for the coming academic year at a forum with Oakland University President Ora Hirsch Pescovitz on Friday, Jan. 25.

The Office for Student Involvement will host the event in the Oakland Center Ballrooms from 1-2 p.m. Pescovitz will speak about her “We are OU” project to increase campus diversity, and then the forum will open to student questions.

This 26-word lead is paired with a supporting graf that provides more information, splitting the five W’s for brevity.

The longer option including all W’s:

Students can speak about policies for the coming year at a forum with Oakland University President Ora Hirsch Pescovitz, hosted by the Office for Student Involvement (OSI) on Friday, Jan. 25 in the Oakland Center Ballrooms.

Types of Leads

Using the following information, write a delayed identification lead:

Example lead:

A novel about a zombie-turned-human who must decide between humanity or being the forerunner for the zombie rights movement is an Oakland University alumnus’ latest book.

George Supper, who graduated from OU in 2007 with a bachelor’s degree in English, released the book “Full-time Human” in May through Broken Heart Books after distributing part of it as a free chapbook.

This lead avoids mentioning the name of the author until the second graph because the author is not a celebrity or public figure.

Take the delayed identification lead exercise further by starting your lead with an anecdote.

Example lead: Imagine being the first one in a universe full of zombies to turn human, making you the literal start of an apocalypse. That’s the story an Oakland University alumnus depicts in his latest book.

George Supper, who graduated from OU in 2007 with a bachelor’s degree in English, released the book “Full-time Human” in May through Broken Heart Books after distributing part of it as a free chapbook.

Organization Exercise

Organize the graphs of this brief story on upcoming campus construction so it correctly follows the inverted pyramid. Number them in the order the story should be in.

___2___ Varner Hall’s renovations focus on modernizing the building and improving student experience. The construction will mark Varner’s first update since it was built in 1970.

___4___ “Students deserve to have 21st-century facilities, and in that I include the technology that goes along with that,” she said. “That’s very important to every college on campus, and certainly the students in Varner are no different.”

___1___ The Oakland University Board of Trustees (BOT) approved construction of campus arts and athletics buildings, following a \$78 million general revenue bond issuance approval at the June 10 Board meeting.

___5___ New research labs will also be added to campus and improvements will be made to the central heating plant. According to John Beaghan, vice president for finance and administration and BOT treasurer, the construction does not have an official start date.

___3___ According to Amy Hardison Tully, the new School of Music, Theatre and Dance director, issues with heating and cooling, leaky windows and other structural problems in classrooms will be addressed.

The order could potentially be argued differently, but this is the ideal order for this because the lead states what’s going on (the construction), the next graph tells readers the writer plans to get specific about Varner Hall first, the next introduces the director of the school and gives more details on what’s being renovated, the next quotes her take on the important elements of the renovations, and the last graph expands the topic further than Varner and answers a final “What’s next?” question — getting much more reflective than the rest of the story.

Inverted Pyramid Practice

Pretend you’re previewing an on-campus LGBTQIA+ Pride Month kick-off event that will be hosted by the Gender and Sexuality Center (GSC) on Friday, June 1 and will include a keynote speech by Jeffrey Smith, president of the campus Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA).

The event will also feature a Q+A with Dr. Nancy Doe, Golden Health Center director, about safe sex practices, STI testing, and the importance of consent. There will also be a short reading from the Pride Month book club read “I Am Jazz” by Jazz Jennings, young transgender writer.

For more information on the GSC, the on-campus resource will speak about its services. It also holds a biweekly support group for LGBTQIA+ students.

You’ve spoken to Smith, and have a quote from him about Pride Month:

“It’s important to acknowledge Pride Month as a campus community because so many students are LGBTQIA+ and feel underrepresented on campus,” Smith said. “Our goal with this event is to make those students feel recognized and to invite other students to celebrate Pride Month with us.”

You’ve also spoken to Jasmine Oakley, the director of the Gender and Sexuality Center, and she outlined the goals of the center as an on-campus resource for students. You have a few options for quotes to include about this.

Now that a decent amount of information has been presented to you, put together a rough list of the themes/main ideas for the story. What’s your angle?

Example list of themes:

- Pride Month kick-off event information
- GSA president will be speaker: what will he talk about?
- Safe-sex practices Q+A. Why should people attend?
- What services can students get at the Gender and Sexuality Center anytime?
- Why should students attend? (great spot to include quote from Smith)

Start with the lead. What will you include? Write it out.

There’s no perfect answer to this, as the lead will vary depending on the writer, the style chosen and the angle of the story.

Example:

To kick off LGBTQIA+ Pride Month at Oakland University, the Gender and Sexuality Center (GSC) will host a special event on Friday, June 1.

The event will feature a keynote speech from Jeffrey Smith, president of the campus Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA), and Dr. Nancy Doe, Golden Health Center director, will host a Q+A about safe sex practices.

(lead and nut graph providing additional details)

Continue outlining the rest of the story. Think of what people need to know, and remember there’s no perfect outline for this.

This will be subjective. People need to know a few things: what will be going on (details of Q+A, what makes this event different from past Pride Month events, other things to expect, etc.), why they should go, and any other event-specific things they need to know.

Quoting Rules

Full quote with two or more sentences

Exercise: Add the punctuation to this quote:

“The event will be a great opportunity for students and alumni to get input on university policies,” Smith said. “The Ask Alice events aim to increase campus outreach and give students more authority in decision-making.”

Properly attribute this one-sentence quote. There’s more than one option for this, so pick one.

One-sentence quote

Option one: Attribution after quote

“To be able to say I was part of a student body to survive serious infrastructure changes is phenomenal,” Hannah Kremer, junior graphic design major, said.

Note the second comma before “said.”

Option two: split attribution

Option two doesn’t quite work for this type of sentence.

Option three: Attribution before quote (avoid if possible)

Hannah Kremer, junior graphic design major, said, “To be able to say I was part of a student body to survive serious infrastructure changes is phenomenal.”

Properly attribute this two-sentence quote.

“I’m honored to have received the Service Learning Award,” John Julia, senior biology major, said. “It’s so humbling to know that I did valuable work for my community and helped save lives.”

How about this three-sentence quote?

“The best way to water your plants is to use warm water,” said Dr. Paul Rodgers, botany professor at Oakland University. “This has been scientifically proven to be the most effective and inhibit the best growth in plants. Another technique is to follow a watering schedule — you don’t want to accidentally forget to water them and let them get droopy.”

Note: The title “botany professor at Oakland University” is long enough to move the “said” to the front of the attribution. It could, however, be attributed as Dr. Paul Rodgers, botany professor at Oakland University, said. It’s up to the writer.

Also note: The attribution could be placed after the second sentence, depending on the writer’s wishes.

Writing Compelling Interview Questions

Exercise: Pretend you're writing a story profiling an Oakland University professor who just received the Teaching Excellence award from the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning for their continued support of their students throughout their academic research. What are some potential interview questions you could ask them?

**Note: The answers to this will be a bit subjective. Imagine you do not know much about this person and would like to learn more.*

Example questions:

- How did it feel to receive the Teaching Excellence award? What accomplishments do you think qualified you for it?
- How did the award process go? Were you notified of the nomination? (any other detail-based questions if the process is not described online)
- The award was given to you for your support of students throughout their time at OU. Where does your passion for helping students come from?
- How will receiving this award influence you/ your teaching at OU?
- Anything else you would like to add?

Concluding Stories

Why did the writer choose to end the story the way they did? How does this align with the inverted pyramid?

This question does not have a word-for-word correct answer. Here is an explanation from the writer.

I ended the story by transitioning the "news" component to include the future. I asked the School of Business Administration leaders what the future holds for the SBA. I also included a quote from the dean about how the school caters to the region. The story concludes with the simple statement, "The SBA has held the double accreditation since 1994," which I feel rounds off the angle well and is emphasized most by being standalone at the end of the story. This aligns with the inverted pyramid because the most newsworthy component (the accreditation) comes first in the story since it's the most important, the significance of the accreditation is then explored so readers can better understand it, and then the final part of the story — the "future" component — comes at the end because only people invested in the story would care to know more about the SBA.

AP Style Exercises

Ensure these sentences correctly follow AP Style. The first three will have one AP Style error, and the following sentences will have more than one.

1. Smith is a twenty-one-year-old who has been playing violin his whole life.

Rewrite: Smith is a **21-year-old** who has been playing violin his whole life.

2. Doe said that she forgot to turn off the oven before leaving her house.

Rewrite: Doe **said she** forgot to turn off the oven before leaving her house.

3. Kerry Krass, Student Body President, enacted a new policy to enforce campus safety.

Rewrite: Kerry Krass, **student body president**, enacted a new policy to enforce campus safety.

4. The class begins at 11:00 a.m. in the morning.

Rewrite: The class begins at **11 a.m.**

5. "Pushing for a better integration of virtual reality into classroom spaces can help students acquire a more realistic view of the medical field before actually entering it" exclaimed Smith.

Rewrite: "Pushing for a better integration of virtual reality into classroom spaces can help students acquire a more realistic view of the medical field before actually entering **it**," **Smith said**.

Style Quiz

Choose the answer that correctly follows these AP Style specifics. Feel free to use the *AP Stylebook* and/or previous exercises as a reference guide.

1. She received all of her items for graduation, **except** her tassel. (option b)
Accept means to receive. Except means to exclude. AP Stylebook, p. 3
2. He was the **front-runner** throughout the presidential race. (option a)
AP Stylebook, p. 117
3. I will **lie** down after I have dinner. (option b)
Although it's commonly spoken, lay should be used with a direct object, not the subject or person in the sentence. Example: I will lay the book down. Lie typically means to recline and does not take a direct object. AP Stylebook, p. 165
4. The **2000s** were some of the best years of his life. (option c)
Because the year is being made plural, it only needs an s. There is no possessive in this sentence that would require the use of an apostrophe. Under "plurals" entry of the AP Stylebook, p. 222, "FIGURES." section
5. **Gen.** Josh Richardson was honored for his service at the ceremony. The **general** was the top U.S. commander during the Vietnam War. (option d)
The AP Style rule for military title is to capitalize a person's rank when used as a formal title before their name. It also must be abbreviated, even on first use, in accordance with AP Style's list of abbreviations. The second

“general” should be spelled out and lowercase because it’s being substituted for a name. AP Stylebook, p. 186

6. The event was **canceled** because of inclement weather. The **cancellation** will not affect the schedule for future games. (option a)

This can be a tough one. AP Style says: cancel, canceled, canceling, cancellation, p. 43

7. He proposed the idea **Oct. 15, 2019**. (option b)

October must be abbreviated to Oct. when written with a day, dates should always be listed as numerals without any story of “st,” “nd,” “rd” or “th,” and there must be a comma separating the month and day from the year (note: if there wasn’t a specific date, there does not need to be a comma: October 2019). AP Stylebook, “months” entry, p. 191

Grammar

Exercise: Turn these passive voice sentences into active voice sentences.

The event was hosted by the Student Production Board.

Rewrite: The Student Production Board hosted the event.

The leaves were raked by Kenny.

Rewrite: Kenny raked the leaves.

The murder was investigated by the police, who had been hot on the trail since day one.

Rewrite: The police, who had been hot on the trail since day one, investigated the murder.

Once sentences are put into active voice, they can be read more clearly and are a bit more concise.

2. Cut out unnecessary words.

Exercise: Remove the unnecessary words in these sentences to make them more concise.

1. Sanders said that the partnership was something that was an inevitable step in order to merge the companies’ missions.

Rewrite: Sanders said the partnership was an inevitable step to merge the companies’ missions.

2. Meyers said that the restaurant’s food was very good, and he was devastated that it shut down so suddenly.

Rewrite: Meyers said the restaurant's food was great, and he was devastated it shut down so suddenly.

3. According to Johnson, the mystery was that the president of Student Videography Group somehow misunderstood the time the event was supposed to start, and that he forgot that he was the one to be catering the food, Johnson said.

Rewrite: According to Johnson, the Student Videography Group's president misunderstood the event's start time and forgot he was catering the food.

4. When talking to Harrison, he said that the museum was built behind a large waterfall as a more scenic approach.

Rewrite: Harrison said the museum was built behind a large waterfall as a more scenic approach.

3. Ensure sentence clarity.

A. Sentence fragments

Exercise: Turn these sentence fragments into complete sentences.

Example: Once I sold my house.

Rewrite: Once I sold my house, I finally could move out of the city.

These answers are going to be subjective, of course, due to the nature of the exercise.

Here are a couple of example complete sentences:

1. **Harris arrived in France a day behind schedule** because the plane took off before he arrived at the gate.
2. Due to the fact that the restaurant had just opened, **Black could not yet call himself a successful business owner.**

Another option for this would be to reconstruct the sentence to be more concise: The restaurant opened the day before, meaning Black could not yet call himself a successful business owner.

3. **The first step is to pick a comfortable area,** which is crucial to aromatherapy, according to Galea.

B. Modifiers

Exercise: Rewrite the sentences to get rid of the dangling modifiers.

1. Having changed the oil yesterday, ~~the car was ready for Mandy to finally drive it.~~

Mandy was ready to finally drive the car.

Option two: Mandy was ready to finally drive the car after changing the oil yesterday.

2. Coaching the team flawlessly, ~~the Best Coach award was given to Watson.~~

Watson earned the Best Coach award.

Option two: Watson earned the Best Coach award for coaching the team flawlessly.

3. Working at the store every other day, ~~Stacy's uniform was getting dirty.~~

Stacy was dirtying her uniform quickly.

Option two: Stacy's uniform was getting dirty, as she worked at the store every other day.

C. Comma splices

Exercise: Correct the comma splices in the sentences below.

The comma splices can be removed from each sentence in more than one way, so there are additional options not listed here. The important element to this exercise is realizing that commas cannot be used as-is in these sentences.

1. At FCA, he achieved his career goals. He had complete ownership of a vehicle program when he was the chief engineer for Dodge RAM trucks from 2004-2008.

The second sentence is a bit long, so a surefire way to separate the two thoughts is to use a period.

2. **By giving the best characters more screen time,** the show discovers the correct pacing and style to deliver their powerful messages.

To improve the flow of the sentence, the beginning was rewritten to be a dependent clause — or to introduce the more important part of the sentence: how the show uses characters to deliver messages to its audience.

3. I could not have anticipated a turnout like **this — there** were so many people supporting the show.

An em dash here produces a larger pause and serves as a connecting point for the two thoughts. This could also be separated into two sentences, depending on the author's preference.

Punctuation Exercises

Which punctuation best fits in each sentence?

Options for all exercises:

comma em dash period ellipses colon semi-colon
 quotation marks single quotes apostrophe

1. Sable, who has been president of the organization for two years, thought the best activity to celebrate the holiday would be a read-a-thon.

Answer: commas, preferably, or em dashes if the pause needs to be emphasized

2. There are three ways students can contribute: donating to their favorite charities, helping students in need and spreading the word.

Answer: colon. This is a list, so a colon would help keep the whole list together.

3. “It really helps us out because not only are we receiving donations — and we’re so thankful for all of that — but we’re also getting in shape and conditioned for our season,” he said.

Answer: em dashes/long dashes, as this is an interjection from the source.

4. “Making the change is up to us. If we don’t, we don’t know what will happen,” she said.

Answer: period. There needs to be a strong break here, as these are different thoughts. If a comma was used, it would be a comma splice.

5. The president’s goal is to ensure maximum campus safety.

Answer: apostrophe, since this is a possessive.

Avoiding Bias and Removing Opinion

Exercise: Remove the opinion from these statements, or attribute them correctly.

1. The journalism program is one of the best in the state. (taken from CollegeScore data)

Rewrite: According to CollegeScore’s data on program effectiveness, the journalism program is one of the best in the state.

Properly attributing the claim that the journalism program is one of the best keeps the writer from inserting what sounds like their opinion into the story. Ideally, the attribution would also include a hyperlink leading to the source.

2. Brown ~~is a really smart guy and~~ said the school will see a bright future after the pandemic.

The writer may be convinced Brown is a smart guy, but readers do not need to know this. If he weren’t smart, he would not be part of the story.

3. Considering all of those options, I think creating more parking on campus would be a great way to increase the commuter population.

If this is part of a news piece and is just the writer’s opinion, delete it entirely. Attribute claims like this to a source and give additional evidence if available.

4. When speaking to Miller, he said the price of food on campus is astronomical.

Rewrite: Miller said the price of food on campus is astronomical.

Delete “when speaking to.” You had to speak to Miller to write the story, which readers know, so keep yourself out of it.

5. Pizza Palooza has the best anchovy and cheese pizza in the world. (said by Chris Hendrickson, local pizza connoisseur)

Rewrite: According to Chris Hendrickson, local pizza connoisseur, Pizza Palooza has the best anchovy and cheese pizza in the world.

Attributing this claim to the person who said it, Chris Hendrickson, removes any potential bias that may come from the writer. The writer is just reporting source material here.

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Examples and exercises were either created by Katie Valley, the author of these resources, or pulled from Katie Valley's stories in [The Oakland Post](#).