

AP STYLE — *Cheat Sheet*

Academic Degrees

If mention of degrees is necessary to establish someone's credentials, the preferred form is to avoid an abbreviation and use instead a phrase such as: John Jones, who has a doctorate in psychology.

Use an apostrophe in bachelor's degree, a master's, etc.

Use such abbreviations as B.A., M.A., LL.D. and Ph.D. only when the need to identify many individuals by degree on first reference would make the preferred form cumbersome. Use these abbreviations only after a full name never after just a last name.

When used after a name, an academic abbreviation is set off by commas: Daniel Moynihan, Ph.D., spoke.

Do not precede a name with a courtesy title for an academic degree and follow it with the abbreviation for the degree in the same reference:

Wrong: Dr. Pam Jones, Ph.D.

Right: Dr. Pam Jones, a chemist.

When in doubt about the proper abbreviation for a degree, follow the first listing in Webster's New World Dictionary.

Academic Departments

Use lowercase except for words that are proper nouns or adjectives: the department of history, the history department, the department of English, the English department.

Academic Titles

Capitalize and spell out formal titles such as chancellor, chairman, etc., when they precede a name. Lowercase elsewhere.

Lowercase modifiers such as department in department Chairman Jerome Wiesner.

Ages

Always use figures. Ages expressed as adjectives before a noun or as substitutes for a noun use hyphens.

i.e. A 5-year-old boy, but the boy is 5 years old. The woman is in her 30s. The woman, 26, has a daughter 2 months old. The law is 8 years old.

Alumni

ALUMNI? ALUMNUS? ALUMNA? ALUMNAE?

Alumnus is masculine singular (but is often used in referring to either male or female)

Pronounce "uh-lum(rhymes with yum)nus," (rhymes with us).

i.e. In speaking to a graduate of VMI, "Deb, so you're an alumnus of VMI?"

Alumna is feminine singular.

Pronounce "alum-nuh." Rhymes with first sound you hear as you start to say "Ugh!"

i.e. To a Hollins woman, "I see from your resume that you are an alumna of Hollins?"

Alumni is masculine plural.

Pronounce "alum-neye" (or long i).

i.e. To the graduating class at VMI, "Congratulations, you are now all officially alumni of this institution." Likewise, to the graduating class at CNU, "Congratulations, you are now all alumni of CNU."

Alumnae is feminine plural.

Pronounce "alum-knee."

To the graduates of Norma's alma mater, Marion College, a Lutheran school for women that closed its doors (sob, sob) after over 100 years, "So, all you wonderful-in-every-way, brilliant, and gorgeous women are alumnae of Marion?"

Composition Titles

Apply guidelines to book titles, movie titles, opera titles, play titles, poem titles, song titles, titles of lectures, speeches and works of art. Capitalize the principal words, including prepositions and conjunctions of four or more letters. Capitalize the article if it is the first or last word in the title.

Put quotation marks around the names of all such works except the Bible and books of reference.

i.e. "The New York Times"
Encyclopedia Britannica

Numerals

Figures or words?

Spell out first through ninth when they indicate sequence in time or location: first base, the First Amendment, he was first in line. Starting with 10th use figures.

Spell out whole numbers below 10, use figures for 10 and above.

i.e. They had a fleet of 10 station wagons and two buses.

Some Punctuation and usage examples

–Act 1, Scene 2

–a five-year-old girl

–a 5-4 court decision

–2nd District Court

–the 1980s, the '80s

Percent

i.e. He said 50 percent of the membership was there.

He said 50 percent of the members were there.

Titles

In general, confine capitalization to formal titles used directly before an individual's name.

i.e. Pope Paul, President Bush

Lowercase and spell out titles when they are not used with an individual's name

i.e. the vice president, Nelson Rockefeller, declined to run again.

REMEMBER—LESS IS BEST! USE CAPITALIZATION AND PUNCTUATION FRUGALLY!