



# ProPublica Style Guide



Adapted from the [AP Stylebook](#)

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## A

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### academic degrees

The long form is preferred: *doctorate, bachelor's degree, a master's*, etc.

The abbreviations are written with periods. (*B.A., M.A., Ph.D.*)

### acronyms

Do not follow an organization's full name with an acronym in parentheses or set off by dashes.

Generally, omit periods in acronyms unless the result would spell an unrelated word. (*ABC, CIA, FBI, NAFTA.*) However, most two-letter abbreviations get periods: *U.S., U.N., U.K., B.A., B.C.*

The correct acronyms of U.S. Cabinet departments are as follows: *USDA* (Agriculture), *DOD* (Defense), *DOE* (Energy), *HHS* (Health and Human Services), *DHS* (Homeland Security), *HUD* (Housing and Urban Development), *DOJ* (Justice), *DOT* (Transportation), *VA* (Veterans Affairs).

### administration

Lowercase: *the administration, the president's administration, the governor's administration, the Trump administration.*

### addresses

Use the abbreviations *Ave.*, *Blvd.*, and *St.* only with a numbered address, *1600 Pennsylvania Ave.* When the address is not numbered, spell them out and capitalize, *Pennsylvania Avenue*, but spell out and lowercase when there is more than one street name: *She lived between Massachusetts and Pennsylvania avenues.*

Spell out and capitalize First through Ninth when used as street names; use figures for 10th and above. *7 Fifth Ave.*, *100 21st St.*

Abbreviate compass points in a numbered address; do not abbreviate if the address is not numbered. *222 E. 42nd St.*, *East 4nd Street.*

### **adviser**

*Adviser*, not *advisor*.

### **African American**

Hyphenate *African-American* only as a compound modifier, *African-American woman*, but:

*Bill Corley, who is African American, started his career as a Farmers Insurance agent in West Los Angeles in 1977.*

*It can strike anyone out of the blue, though the risk is higher for African Americans.*

See [ethnicity](#).

### **ages**

Always use figures. *The girl is 15 years old. The law is 8 years old.*

Use hyphens in ages written as adjectives before a noun. *Mr. Lynch also implies we only applied our analysis to a 30-year-old driver.*

### **AKA**

We differ from the AP on capitalizing this abbreviation for "also known as."

### **a**

## al-Qaida

We defer to the AP: It's *al-Qaida*, not *Al Qaeda*.

## alt-right

We follow [AP's guidance](#): "Avoid using the term generically and without definition, because it is not well-known globally and the term may exist primarily as a public relations device to make its supporters' actual beliefs less clear and more acceptable to a broader audience."

When using the term in copy, include a definition. Depending on the story, terms like "white nationalist," "white supremacist" or "neo-Nazi" might apply. Be as precise as you can be and provide evidence to support the characterization.

In describing what the movement says about itself, the term "alt-right" may be used in quotes or modified as in "the self-described 'alt-right'" or "so-called 'alt-right.'"

## awards

Awards are capitalized. *Medal of Honor, Pulitzer Prize.*

However, award categories are lowercase. *In 2017, ProPublica won a fourth Pulitzer Prize, the Pulitzer Gold Medal for public service.*

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**B**

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**C**

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## Cabinet

Capitalize *Cabinet*. Capitalize the names of cabinet departments: *Department of Education, Education Department*.

A shorthand reference to the proper name is capitalized: *State and Justice must resolve their differences*.

Lowercase *department* in plural uses, or when it stands alone: *the departments of Labor and Justice, the department*.

The title of a Cabinet member should only be capitalized if it immediately precedes their name: *Secretary of Health and Human Services Tom Price*.

but

*Stock trades made by Price while he served in Congress came under scrutiny at his confirmation hearings to become President Donald Trump's secretary of health and human services*.

Unless necessary for clarity, *U.S.* should not precede a Cabinet department or a Cabinet member's title. *Department of Education, Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos*.

## **Capitol**

Capitalize *capitol* when referring to the building in Washington as well as state capitols.

*Construction of the U.S. Capitol began in 1793.*

*The meeting was held on Capitol Hill in the west wing of the Capitol.*

*Louisiana state Rep. Terry Brown, who represents Colfax, seen at the state Capitol building in Baton Rouge.*

## **census**

Capitalize *census* only in specific references to the U.S. Census Bureau. Lowercase in other uses.

*A Census Bureau spokesperson confirmed the agency received the letter.*

*The bureau switched the method of those surveys after the 2000 census.*

## centuries

Lowercase *century* and spell out numbers under 10. *The first century, the 21st century.*

## City Council

Capitalize when part of a proper name: *the New York City Council*. Retain capitalization if the reference is to a specific council but the city name doesn't appear: *the City Council vote*.

Lowercase in plural uses: *the Boston and New York city councils*.

## composition titles

Put quotation marks around the names of all works.

## Congress

Capitalize, but lowercase *congressional*, except when referring to the full name of a specific district: *the 1st Congressional District*.

*The letter was signed by 24 Congress members.*

See [Legislative Titles](#).

## committee

Capitalize when part of a formal name: *the House Appropriations Committee*.

Do not capitalize in shortened versions of a committee name: *the Senate banking committee* (known formally as the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee).

## County

Capitalize when part of a proper name: *Bexar County, Clark County, the Dade County Commission, the Orange County Department of Public Services, the County Commission*.

Capitalize as a formal title before a name: *County Manager John Smith*.

Lowercase if *county* is used to distinguish an agency from state or federal counterparts: *the county Department of Social Services*. Lowercase when not part of a formal title: *county Health Commissioner Frank Jones*.

Lowercase *county of* in the construction *county of Westchester*. Lowercase plural combinations: *Westchester and Rockland counties*.

### **court martial, court martialed, courts martial**

We don't hyphenate, an exception to AP style and the dictionary.

### **courts**

Capitalize the proper names of courts at all levels, even if U.S. or a state name is dropped. *The U.S. Supreme Court, the Supreme Court, the New Jersey Supreme Court, the state Superior Court, the Superior Court, the District Court, 23rd Judicial District*.

Don't spell out a numeral when identifying a court: *2nd District Court, 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals*.

Italicize full or partial names of court cases. The *Roe v. Wade* decision, as written in *Roe*.

Use figures and a hyphen in court decisions. *The Supreme Court ruled 5-4, a 5-4 decision*.

### **cyber**

The prefix *cyber-* takes the general rule for prefixes. Do not use a hyphen: *cyberattack, cyberwarfare, cyberterrorism, cyberbullying, cybersecurity*.

### **conflict of interest**

Do not hyphenate conflict of interest as an adjectival modifier.

*ProPublica [reported](#) recently on how Emanuel has effectively sidestepped conflict of interest rules in some instances.*

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# D

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## **data**

Data is always singular: *the data shows*.

## **dataset**

One word: *dataset*.

## **decades**

Use an apostrophe to indicate numerals that are left out. Show plural by adding the letter s. (But no 's.) *The 1890s, the '90s, the 1920s*.

Use a hyphen when *mid-* precedes a figure: *mid-30s, mid-2000s*.

## **dimensions**

Always use figures and spell out units of measurement, *inches, feet, yards*. *He is 5 feet 6 inches tall, the storm left 5 inches of snow*.

Hyphenate adjectival forms before nouns. *The 5-foot-6-inch man. The 5-foot man. The 9-by-12 rug*.

## **directions**

Lowercase general directions like *north, south, east, west, northeast, northern* when they indicate compass direction. Capitalize these words when they describe regions: *The North, the South, the Northeast and Midwest; a Southern accent, a Western businessman in Southeast Asia*.

Lowercase directions with names of nations or states when they are part of a proper name or a widely known location: *northern France, Northern Ireland, South Korea, western Montana, southern Wisconsin, Southern California, West Texas, South Side Chicago, the West Coast*.

## **doctor**

Use *Dr.* in first reference as a formal title before the name of a physician who holds a doctorate. Use the plural form *Drs.* in a plural construction.

*That's when he found Dr. David L. Brown, a professor in the cardiovascular division of the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis.*

## **drunk**

Use *drunk* in all cases, not *drunken*: *the drunk journalist.*

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# **E**

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## **editor-in-chief**

AP style is *editor-in-chief*.

## **Election Day, election night**

Capitalize *Election Day*, lowercase *election night*.

## **email**

Do not hyphenate, *email*.

## **ethnicity**

Only hyphenate as a compound modifier, an *African-American man*, an *Asian-American woman*. She identifies as *Asian American*.  
Capitalize *Hispanic* and *Latino*.

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# **F**

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## **first lady, first gentleman**



The position of the spouse of a head of state is not an official title and is always lowercase.

*According to Trump's filing, slightly more than half of the money went to four event planning companies, including the firm owned by the first lady's friend, Stephanie Winston Wolkoff.*

## **fractions**

Spell out amounts less than 1, using hyphens between the words: *two-thirds*, *four-fifths*.

Use figures for precise amounts larger than 1, converting to decimals when practical.

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# **G**

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## **governmental offices**

Capitalize the full proper names of governmental agencies, departments and offices: *the U.S. Department of State, the Georgia Department of Human Resources, the Boston City Council, the Chicago Fire Department, state Department of Human Resources, the city Fire Department.*

Lowercase condensations of the name: *the department, the council.*

Lowercase if the reference does not refer to a specific, existing body: *All states except Nebraska have a state senate. The bill requires city council to provide matching funds.*

Capitalize *office* when it is part of an agency's formal name, *Office of Management and Budget*. Lowercase all other uses, *the office of the attorney general, the office of the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District, the Brooklyn district attorney's office.*

## **Governor**

Capitalize and abbreviate as *Gov.* or *Govs.* when used as a formal title before one or more names.

### **Gov't, Gov't's**

Acceptable for headlines. Note the construction for the possessive abbreviation.

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## **H**

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### **health care**

Two words, not one: *health care*. Do not hyphenate as a compound modifier.

### **historical periods**

Capitalize widely recognized popular names for the periods and events (wars, in particular): *Civil War*, *Great Depression*, *Prohibition*.

Capitalize only proper nouns or adjectives in general descriptions of a period: *ancient Greece*, *classical Rome*, *the Victorian era*, *the fall of Rome*.

### **homepage**

One word.

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## **I**

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### **ID**

Short for "identification." Do not abbreviate with periods.

*Signs in polling places about the state's controversial voter ID law contained outdated rules.*

## illegal immigrant

### AP's guidance:

**Illegal immigration:** Entering or residing in a country without authorization in violation of civil or criminal law. Except in direct quotes essential to the story, use *illegal* only to refer to an action, not a person: *illegal immigration*, but not *illegal immigrant*. Acceptable variations include living in or entering a country illegally or without legal permission.

Do not use the terms alien, an illegal, illegals or undocumented (except when quoting people or government documents that use these terms).

Do not describe people as violating immigration laws without attribution.

Specify wherever possible how someone entered the country illegally and from where. Crossed the border? Overstayed a visa? What nationality?

### Arguments against using the phrase:

**It's less specific than alternatives:** What's the actual situation of the person's immigration status? Did they cross the border illegally? Did they overstay a visa? Were they brought into the country by their parents when they were children?

**It's pejorative:** Rather than modifying the crime, "illegal" applies to the whole person ([via Lawrence Downes at NYT](#)). Actions can be illegal; people are not.

- [NYT Insider on this question](#).
- Arizona v. US Supreme Court decision (the most recent law on immigration) is careful to use specific longer terms. But when it comes to three adjectives (illegal, undocumented or unauthorized), the court mostly uses "unauthorized" to talk about people and uses "illegal" only to talk about immigration or other actions. It does not use "undocumented."
- [A good paper on the history of the terms](#), which all became popular in the 1970s and '80s, and [a summary](#) of it.

**It's legalese:** U.S. law still primarily uses the term "illegal alien," which prompts many readers to ask why we don't use the term that's in the law. Even some immigration lawyers will educate you on the legal distinctions between aliens, immigrants and nonimmigrants. But journalists rarely use

the legal terms for topic we write about, preferring instead to use terms that are commonly used and understandable by readers.

**It's inaccurate in many if not most cases:** Per the Supreme Court opinion in Arizona: “As a general rule, it is not a crime for a removable alien to remain present in the United States.” Living in the country without legal permission (which describes many if not most situations we encounter) is an administrative violation. While committing an administrative violation is still illegal, to most readers, the term “illegal” implies that a crime was committed. Similarly, operating a factory unsafely is an administrative violation, but we never describe companies that do that as “illegal businesses.” As AP notes, it is accurate to use “illegal immigration” to talk generally about the issue of people crossing the border without permission or to describe an action of an individual — with attribution.

**It raises legal, ethical and fairness issues:** Immigration is the only context in which journalists regularly describe someone who has not been convicted of a crime as “illegal.” Normally, when we talk about crimes, whether it be a traffic offense or murder, our profession goes to great lengths to not assume guilt, instead using terms like “allegedly” or saying that someone is accused or suspected of doing something (which is preferable to “allegedly”). If someone has not been convicted of a crime, we should not say that they did something illegal, at least without attribution. It could be useful to have a lawyer chime in, but I've often wondered if someone who could make a successful libel claim based on being called an “illegal immigrant”.

### **Our guidance:**

Do not use the terms alien, an illegal (when referring to immigrants) or illegals (except when quoting people or government documents that use these terms). Similarly, do not use the term "legal immigrant" except in quotes.

Do not describe people as violating immigration laws without attribution.

Specify wherever possible how someone entered the country illegally and from where. Crossed the border? Overstayed a visa? What nationality?

- Improper entry is a crime, punishable under federal law. Unlawful entry is not a crime. (It's punishable by civil, not criminal, penalties.) ([More from FindLaw.](#))

## Terms to use instead:

**Undocumented immigrant:** This is an acceptable alternative to “unauthorized” or other terms. Be aware that it’s used primarily by people on one side of an issue — you would never refer to someone as “documented.” But it’s common and generally understood. (See the Hoffman Plastics decision in the U.S. Supreme Court from 2002, which primarily uses the term “undocumented.”)

We should be careful not to use it as default style.

**Unauthorized immigrant:** (From Michael Grabell) My preference is unauthorized immigrants when I'm talking generally and can't describe the specific circumstances of one person, though I sometimes use undocumented if I've used unauthorized too much or if the context begs the question "not authorized to do what?"

We use “undocumented” and “unauthorized” pretty interchangeably. So did the paper we used as the basis for a graphic Lena made.

**Longer, more explicit phrasing:** Person X, who said he/she crossed the border illegally, ... OR who acknowledged crossing the border illegally OR who crossed the border without permission

Person Y, an immigrant who overstayed a visa, ...

Examples in things we’ve published:

- [The Immigration Effect](#)
- [ICE Officers Told to Take Action Against All Undocumented Immigrants Encountered While on Duty](#)

## Inauguration Day

Capitalize when referring to the inauguration of the U.S. president.

## internet

Always lowercase, *internet*.

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## judiciary titles

Capitalize *attorney general* when used as a title before a name, *Attorney General Jeff Sessions*. Capitalize *attorney* when it is an officeholder's title in front of their name: *former District Attorney Preet Bharara*. Capitalize when referring to the formal name for the office of a specific district: *the office of the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District*, but *district attorney's office*.

Capitalize *chief justice* or *justice* as a formal title before a name: *Chief Justice John Roberts*, *Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg*, but *a Supreme Court justice*.

Capitalize *judge* before a name when it is the formal title of an individual who presides in a court of law. Do not continue to use the title in subsequent references. In most cases, do not include *court* — *U.S. District Judge John Bates*. But — *Juvenile Court Judge John Jones*, *Superior Court Judge Robert Harrison*.

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## L

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## legislative titles

Use *Rep.*, *Reps.*, *Sen.* and *Sens.* as formal titles before one or more names. Capitalize formal titles such as *assemblyman*, *assemblywoman*, *city councilor* and *delegate* when they are used before a name. Lowercase these words in all other uses.

*Sen. Elizabeth Warren. The additional signees were Sens. Bernie Sanders, Al Franken, Ron Wyden, Maggie Hassan, Tammy Baldwin and Patty Murray. Rep. Peter Roskam.*

Add U.S. or state before a title only if it avoids confusion. When referring to a state senator, *state* is not capitalized as part of the title: *Illinois state Sen. Egbert Groen*. (It refers to a jurisdiction.) See [state\(s\)](#).

*Congressman* and *congresswoman* should not appear as capitalized formal titles unless in a direct quotation. Elsewhere, they should appear lowercase.

Capitalize titles of formal, organizational offices within a legislative body when used before a name: *House Speaker Paul Ryan, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Charles Grassley.*

See [Political Affiliation](#).

## Legislature

Capitalize *legislature* when preceded by the name of a state: *the Kansas Legislature*. Retain capitalization when the state name is dropped but the reference is to a specific legislature, including *state Legislature*.

*Lawyers for the Trump Department of Justice echoed that perspective and urged Ramos to delay her decision until the new bill could work its way through the [Texas] Legislature.*

Lowercase *legislature* when used generically or for all plural references: *No legislature has approved the amendment. The Arkansas and Colorado legislatures are considering the amendment.*

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## M

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### millions, billions

Always spell out, even in headlines. ("2 billion," not "\$2B")

### money

When expressing an amount of money, use figures and the \$ sign, unless the amount doesn't have a figure. *The book cost \$4. Dad, please give me a dollar.*

For amounts of more than \$1 million, use up to two decimal places. Do not link the numerals and the word by a hyphen.

*Ruddy Quezada, a 54-year-old man wrongfully convicted of a deadly drive-by shooting in 1993, has won a \$4.5 million settlement from New York state, according to court papers.*

## months

Capitalize the names of months in all uses.

Spell out a month when using alone, or with a year alone. *It was a cold February, September 2016.*

When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate *Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec.*

*A federal judge put those rules on hold on Dec. 31. On March 9, the day after the report was published, the Houston school board voted unanimously not to renew its contract with Camelot. We downloaded IDA data on July 21, 2016, and LDC data on Feb. 21, 2017.*

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# N

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## news organizations

Defer to the publication's preferred style regarding capitalization. Common names include *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Boston Globe*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*. Check the masthead if in doubt.

Capitalize *the* in a name if that is how the publication prefers to be known.

If the organization is a magazine, lowercase *magazine* unless it is part of the publication's formal name: *Harper's Magazine*, *New York magazine*, *Time magazine*.

## numbers

Spell out numbers one through nine. *He had nine months to go. She held up five fingers.*



Use figures for numbers 10 and above and whenever preceding a unit of measurement (including distances) or when referring to an age. *50 states; a 9-pound son; a 12-year-old girl; 5 miles.*

Also use figures in constructions using *millions* or *billions*: *1 million people; \$2 billion.*

Other miscellaneous constructions that use figures: ranks (*No. 1*), political districts (*Ward 9, 9th Precinct, 3rd Congressional District*), speeds (*7 mph*), temperatures (*8 degrees*), ratios (*a vote of 6 to 4*).

These rules apply to ordinal numbers as well. *The Yankees finished second. The fifth century, the 15th century. Fifth grade, 10th grade.*

Use a comma for numbers larger than 999: 2,000, 30,000, 500,000.

Spell out numbers when they begin a sentence. *Forty years was a long time to wait.*

See [fractions](#), [money](#), [time](#).

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## O

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### **OB-GYN**

*OB-GYN* is the AP's preferred usage of obstetrics and gynecology. Relevant to our maternal mortality coverage.

### **OK**

Do not use *okay*. *OK, OK'd, OKs.*

### **organizations and institutions**

Capitalize the full names of organizations and institutions: *the American Medical Association, General Motors Co., Harvard University, Harvard University Medical School, Investigative Reporters and Editors.*

Capitalize the names of major subdivisions.

Lowercase internal elements of an organization when they are widely used generic terms.

Capitalize internal elements of an organization when they have names that are not widely used generic terms.

Retain capital letters when commonly accepted practice flips a name to delete the word *of*: *Columbia Graduate School of Journalism*, *Columbia Journalism School*.

### **over/more than**

Both are acceptable in all uses to indicate greater numerical value.

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## **P**

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### **pageview**

One word, *pageview*.

### **political affiliation**

There are a few acceptable constructions to indicate the party affiliation and state of a member of Congress.

*Republican Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina said ...*

*Sen. Tim Scott, R-S.C., said ...*

*Sen. Tim Scott also spoke. The South Carolina Republican said ...*

**The correct short form punctuation is *R-S.C.*, offset by commas.** *Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., spoke at the meeting. Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., chairs the Senate Armed Services Committee.*

Use abbreviations for each state, except for Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas and Utah.

The normal practice for U.S. House members is to identify them by party and state. In contexts where the state affiliation is clear and the home city is more relevant, identify representatives by party and city: *Rep. Frederica Wilson, D-Miami*.

When referring to a state legislator, use a short-form listing only if the legislator's home city is relevant. The normal practice is to say the individual is a Republican or a Democrat.

## **percent**

Always use with figures.

*Percent* takes a singular verb when standing alone or when a singular word follows an *of* construction, and takes a plural verb when a plural word follows an *of* construction. *He said 50 percent of the membership was there. He said 50 percent of the members were there.*

For a range, 12 to 15 percent, between 12 and 16 percent.

## **Police Department**

Capitalize *police department* with or without the name of the community if that is the formal name: *the Los Angeles Police Department, the Police Department*.

If the policy agency uses a different formal name, such as *Division of Police*, capitalize that as the formal name and lowercase *police department* if it appears as a generic term for such an agency.

Lowercase *police department* in plural uses: *the Los Angeles and San Francisco police departments*.

## **political parties and philosophies**

Capitalize both the name of the party and the word party if it is customarily used as part of the organization's proper name: *the Democratic Party, the Republican Party*.

Capitalize *Communist, Conservative, Democrat, Liberal, Republican, Socialist*, etc., when they refer to a specific party or its members, but lowercase the name of a philosophy in noun and adjective forms unless it is the derivative of a proper name: *communism, communist, fascism, fascist, Marxist, Nazism*.

## **prefixes**

AP's general rule on prefixes: Do not hyphenate when using a prefix if the following word starts with a consonant. Except for *cooperate* and *coordinate*, use a hyphen if the prefix ends in a vowel and the following word begins with the same vowel.

*We broke it down further to see what percentage of each ticket is issued to black and nonblack pedestrians.*

## **President**

Capitalize *president* only as a formal title before one or more names: *President Donald Trump, former Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush*.

Lowercase in all other uses: *He is running for president. The president is looking into the matter.*

Use the full name on first reference for a current or former president. On subsequent references, use only the last name.

## **professor**

Don't abbreviate.

Capitalize when it comes before a name and in the title *Professor Emeritus*. Use only the last name on subsequent references.

*Professor Emily Bell.*

## **ProPublican**

*ProPublican* is an internal term that refers to a person who works at ProPublica.

Bear in mind that we have also used it to refer to people external to ProPublica, notably donors who support our mission.

## public-records request

Hyphenated, *public-records request*.

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## Q

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### Q&A

AP's preferred style is Q&A. For the plural, Q&As.

Our Q&A style is as follows: question in <strong> tags, with no preamble before the question, i.e. no *Question:* or restatement of the person speaking. The answer should be styled in roman, with no preamble.

For Q&As that involve more than 2 people, do restate the person speaking, with full names on first reference and last names afterward.

***What has been the biggest lesson journalism has taught you?***

*Empathy. Whenever you try to understand people and to step inside their lives, even just a little bit, it makes you more open to the world.*

[See an example.](#)

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## R

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### regions

Some common regions that are capitalized: *Midwest, East Coast, West Coast, Northeast, the Eastern Shore, Texas Panhandle, the North, the South, the East, the West*. Also capitalize historical regions such as *East Germany*.

The preferred form is to lowercase directional or area descriptions when referring to a section of a state or a city: *western Montana, southern Atlanta*. Capitalize

widely known sections: *Southern California, West Texas, the South Side of Chicago*, etc.

See [directions](#).

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## S

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### **schools**

On first reference, use the full name of a school. Use abbreviations only for well-known schools with unique acronyms that can easily stand alone without being mistaken.

*Harvard University, University of Washington, San Diego State University.*

Use a comma before the name of a university branch: *California State University, Fullerton. University of California, Berkeley.*

Retain capital letters when commonly accepted practice flips a name to delete the word *of*: *Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, Columbia Journalism School.*

For public schools, use figures and capitalize *public school* (or *school*): *Public School 3, Doherty Junior High School.*

Capitalize *school board* only as an integral part of a formal name, such as *Polk County School Board.*

See [organizations and institutions](#).

### **Senate**

Capitalize all specific references to governmental legislative bodies: *the U.S. Senate, the Senate, the Virginia Senate, the state Senate.*

Lowercase plural uses: *the Virginia and North Carolina senates.*

### **Social Security**

Capitalize all references to the U.S. system, *Social Security*, *Social Security card*, *Social Security number*.

## **state(s)**

Do not capitalize *state* when used simply as an adjective to specify a level of jurisdiction: *Democratic state Sen. Mae Flexer, the state Transportation Department, state Capitol*.

Lowercase in all *state of* constructions: *the state of Maine, the states of Maine and Vermont. The state of New Jersey is moving to revoke or suspend the license of a prominent psychologist*.

State names should be spelled out in the body of a story, whether standing alone or with a city, town, village or military base. Place one comma between the city and the state name, and another after the state name.

*The Putney School in Putney, Vermont, which has had an average of 14 voucher students per year over the past five years, charges over \$35,000 in tuition and fees, more than double the voucher amount.*

When identifying a Congress member's state, do not abbreviate the following states: Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas and Utah.

Ala. (AL)	Md. (MD)	N.D. (ND)
Ariz. (AZ)	Mass. (MA)	Okla. (OK)
Ark. (AR)	Mich. (MI)	Ore. (OR)
Calif. (CA)	Minn. (MN)	Pa. (PA)
Colo. (CO)	Miss. (MS)	R.I. (RI)
Conn. (CT)	Mo. (MO)	S.C. (SC)
Del. (DE)	Mont. (MT)	S.D. (SD)
Fla. (FL)	Neb. (NE)	Tenn. (TN)
Ga. (GA)	Nev. (NV)	Vt. (VT)
Ill. (IL)	N.H. (NH)	Va. (VA)

Ind. (IN)	N.J. (NJ)	Wash.(WA)
Kan. (KS)	N.M. (NM)	W.Va. (WV)
Ky. (KY)	N.Y. (NY)	Wis. (WI)
La. (LA)	N.C. (NC)	Wyo. (WY)

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## T

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### tasered

We differ from the AP — saying someone was tasered is fine.

### time

Use figures except for *noon* and *midnight*, and *a.m.* and *p.m.* *11 a.m.*, *1 p.m.*, *3:30 p.m.*, *9-11 p.m.*, *9 a.m. to 5 p.m.*, *4 o'clock*.

*Eastern Standard Time, Eastern Daylight Time, Central Standard Time.*

Lowercase all but the region in short forms: *the Eastern time zone, Eastern time, Mountain time*. Do not write abbreviations for the time zones with periods: *EST, CDT, noon EST, 9 a.m. PST*.

See [months](#).

### titles

These are the general rules for titles.

Capitalize formal titles when they are used immediately before one or more names: *President Donald Trump, Vice President Mike Pence, Sen. Dianne Feinstein, Dr. Benjamin Spock, retired Gen. Colin Powell, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin*.

*The instructions came from the civil rights division's office of acting Assistant Attorney General Tom Wheeler and Deputy Assistant Attorney General John Gore.*



Lowercase and spell out titles when are not used with an individual's name: *The president issued a statement. The HHS secretary promised to divest his shares in a small biotech company.*

Lowercase and spell out titles in constructions that set them off from a name by commas: *The vice president, Mike Pence, did not respond to a request for comment.*

The following are common formal titles that are abbreviated: *Dr., Gov., Rep., Sen., Gen., Lt. Gen., Col., Lt. Col., Capt.*

A formal title that an individual formerly held, is about to hold, or holds temporarily is capitalized if used before the person's name. But do not capitalize the qualifying word: *former President George W. Bush, acting Assistant Attorney General Tom Wheeler, President-elect Donald Trump.*

See [professor](#), [doctor](#).

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## U

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### **United States**

Use periods in the abbreviation, *U.S.*

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## W

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### **Walmart/Wal-Mart**

Unlike in AP Style, only use Wal-Mart in reference to the corporation, Wal-Mart Stores Inc.

### **Washington, D.C.**

Use Washington, D.C., with commas between the abbreviation *D.C.*

## **web**

Always lowercase, *web*, and *website*, *webcam*, *webcast*, *webpage*.

*Though Republicans control both houses of Congress, many have stayed silent, at least on their websites.*

See [internet](#).

## **Wi-Fi**

The correct name is *Wi-Fi*.

*Our inspections found weak and open Wi-Fi networks.*

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# **Z**

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## **ZIP code**

Use all-caps *ZIP* for the abbreviation of *Zone Improvement Plan*, but always lowercase the word *code*.

We have, on occasion, [not followed this rule](#).

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# **Etc.**

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## **(sic)**

The Latin word for *thus* or *so* shows that a quoted material or person's words include a misspelling, incorrect grammar or peculiar usage. Place *(sic)* in the text directly after the problem to show that the passage is precisely reproduced. Use parens, not brackets.

*Last year Trump released this statement to the ScienceDebate.org organization:  
“Perhaps we should be focused on developing energy sources and power  
production that alleviates (sic) the need for dependence on fossil fuels.”*

## **nth Circuit**

When identifying courts by a numeral, use the numeral, do not spell it out. *2nd District Court, 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.*

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# **Punctuation**

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## **Apostrophe**

**Plural nouns not ending in S:** Add 's.

*the alumni's contributions, women's rights*

**Plural nouns ending in S:** Add only an apostrophe.

*the managers' fee, states' rights, the VIPs' entrance.*

**Nouns plural in form, singular in meaning:** Add only an apostrophe.

*mathematics' rules, measles' effects*

Apply the same principle when a plural word occurs in the formal name of a singular entity: *General Motors' profits, the United States' wealth.*

**Singular nouns ending in S sounds** (e.g., “ce,” “x,” and “z”): For consistency, always use 's if the word does not end in the letter s.

*Butz's policies, the fox's den, the justice's verdict, Marx's theories, the prince's life, Xerox's profits.*

**Singular common nouns ending in S:** Add 's.

*the hostess's invitation, the hostess's seat; the witness's answer, the witness's story.*

**Singular proper names ending in S:** Use only an apostrophe.

*The Red Cross' disaster, Achilles' heel, Dickens' novels, Jesus' life*

**Special expressions:** The following exceptions to the general rule for words not ending in s apply to words that end in an s sound and are followed by a word that begins with s.

*for appearance' sake, for conscience' sake, for goodness' sake.*

Use 's otherwise.

*the appearance's cost, my conscience's voice*

**Compound words:** Applying the rules above, add an apostrophe or 's to the word closest to the object possessed.

*the attorney general's request, the attorneys general's request*

**Joint possession, individual possession:** Use a possessive form after only the last word if ownership is joint.

*Fred and Sylvia's apartment.*

**Omitted figures:** *The class of '62. The Spirit of '76. The '20s.*

**Plurals of a single letter:** Mind your *p's and q's*. He learned *the three R's* and brought home a report card with *four A's and two B's*.

## 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.*

## Comma

Clarity is the most important thing to consider when it comes to commas. If a comma does not help make clear what is being said, it should not be there. If omitting a comma could lead to confusion or misinterpretation, then use the comma. Commas are less intrusive separators than dashes and parentheses, so consider them first.

**Oxford comma:** ProPublica does not use the Oxford comma (the comma before “and” or “or” in a series).

*In 2015, after two Five Star workers testified at a City Council hearing about their long hours, low pay and unsafe work conditions, they were fired.*

**In a series:** Use commas to separate elements in a series, but do not put a comma before the conjunction in most simple series: *The flag is red, white and blue. He would nominate Tom, Dick, Harry or Jeannette.*

- Include a final comma in a simple series if omitting it could make the meaning unclear.
- Put a comma before the concluding conjunction in a series if an integral element of the series requires a conjunction: *I had orange juice, toast, and ham and eggs for breakfast.*
- Use a comma also before the concluding conjunction in a complex series of phrases: The main points to consider are whether the athletes are skillful enough to compete, whether they have the stamina to endure the training, and whether they have the proper mental attitude.

**Names of states and nations used with city names:** When referring to specific cities in specific nations, use a comma after the city AND after the nation to offset the location from the rest of the statement.

*His journey will take him from Dublin, Ireland, to Fargo, North Dakota, and back. The Selma, Alabama, group saw the governor.*

**With hometowns and ages:** Use a comma to set off an individual's hometown or age when it is placed in apposition to a name (whether of is used or not).

*Mary Richards, Minneapolis, and Maude Findlay, Tuckahoe, New York, were there.*

*Asha Ivey-Stephenson, 37, and Wanda Irving, 64, became friends through Wanda's daughter, Shalon Irving.*

**Separating similar words:** Use a comma to separate duplicated words that otherwise would be confusing.

*What the problem is, is not clear.*

**Placement with quotes:** Commas always go inside quotation marks.

*Lauren “wasn’t a real mushy person,” Hedges said.*

**With full dates:** When a phrase refers to a month, day and year, set off the year with a comma.

*Feb. 14, 2020, is the target date.*

**Comma splices:** A comma splice occurs when two independent clauses are connected with only a comma. Avoid comma splices, but they are sometimes acceptable in short clauses: *He came, he saw, he conquered.*

*I didn’t like the movie, it was way too long.* This sentence could correctly read: *I didn’t like the movie. It was way too long.* Or it could correctly read: *I didn’t like the movie, and it was way too long.*

## Dashes

We use two different kinds of dashes at ProPublica, the em dash and the en dash.

An **em dash** (—) is longer than an en dash (–) and even longer than a hyphen (-). The em dash can be used for abrupt pauses or changes, to provide context as a parenthetical, and for datelines and attributions. It is generated by typing “shift + option + hyphen” on a Mac, and “Alt + 0151” on a PC. Always put a space before and after an em dash in a sentence.

### Em dash uses:

**Abrupt change/pause:** Use an em dash to denote an abrupt change in thought in a sentence or an emphatic pause.

*He walked out that day exonerated — and with the right to sue the state for the 21 years he spent wrongly imprisoned.*

**Parenthetical:** For practicality, use an em dash when a parenthetical remark contains an internal comma. (See an example below.) Otherwise,

think of an em dash as a pause or parenthesis with a little more emphasis than a comma and a little less than parentheses. (Avoid overuse of em dashes to set off phrases when commas would suffice).

*A case in Baltimore — in which two men were convicted of the same murder and cleared by DNA 20 years later — shows how far prosecutors will go to preserve a conviction.*

**Series within a phrase:** When a phrase that otherwise would be set off by commas contains a series of words that must be separated by commas, use dashes to set off the full phrase.

*He listed the qualities — intelligence, humor, conservatism, independence — that he liked in an executive.*

**Attribution:** Use a dash before an author's or composer's name at the end of a quotation.

*"Who steals my purse steals trash." — Shakespeare.*

**In datelines:** *NEW YORK (AP) — The city is broke.*

The **en dash** (–) is shorter than an em dash (—) but longer than a hyphen (-). The en dash is not a substitute for the em dash. It should be used to show range and link logistical elements. It is generated by typing "option + hyphen" on a Mac and "Alt + 0150" on a PC. Do NOT put spaces around en dashes.

#### **En dash uses:**

**Stand-in for versus:** *the Obama–McCain debate, the Chargers–Broncos game*

**Numerical ranges:** *40–50 people, 2–3 weeks*

**To link the terminal points on a route:** *The London–New York flight.*

To signal a partnership or pairing where both parts are equal: The U.S.–Australia Free Trade Agreement, The Smith–Jones paper

Note that an en dash and hyphen serve different purposes and can therefore alter meaning when one is mistakenly used for the other. For example, the *Spanish-American War* (i.e., the war that took place in

Spanish America) is different from *the Spanish–American War* (i.e., the war between Spain and America).

[Read more about en dashes.](#)

## Hyphen

Hyphens are joiners. They help avoid ambiguity and confusion, or form a single idea from two or more words. Use is not standardized, so ProPublica style is to use your best judgement on a case-by-case basis, avoiding them when deemed unnecessary.

**Avoid ambiguity:** Use a hyphen whenever ambiguity would result if it were omitted.

*The president will speak to small-business owners. She went to the health care center. She recovered her health. She re-covered the leaky roof. This story is a re-creation. This park is for recreation.*

**Compound modifiers:** When a compound modifier — two or more words that express a single concept — precedes a noun, use hyphens to link all the words in the compound except the adverb “very” and all adverbs that end in -ly (readers can expect them to modify the word that follows).

*A first-quarter touchdown, a bluish-green dress, a full-time job, a well-known man, a better-qualified woman, a know-it-all attitude, a very good time, an easily remembered rule.*

Many combinations that are hyphenated before a noun are not hyphenated when they occur after a noun: *The team scored in the first quarter.*

*The dress, a bluish green, was on sale. She works full time. His attitude suggested that he knew it all.*

But when a modifier that would be hyphenated before a noun occurs instead after a form of the verb to be, the hyphen usually must be retained to avoid confusion:

*The job is full-time. The man is well-known. The woman is quick-witted. The children are soft-spoken. The play is second-rate.*

**Compound proper nouns and adjectives:** Use a hyphen to designate dual heritage.



*Italian-American, Mexican-American.*

No hyphen, however, for *French Canadian* or *Latin American*.

**Avoid duplicated vowels and tripled consonants:** *Anti-intellectual, pre-empt, shell-like.*

**With numerals:** Use a hyphen to separate figures in odds, ratios, scores, some fractions and some vote tabulations.

*The House voted 230-205, a 230-205 vote.*

When large numbers must be spelled out, use a hyphen to connect a word ending in -y to another word: *twenty-one, fifty-five, etc.*

**Suspensive hyphenation:** *He received a 10- to 20-year sentence in prison. She wrote short- and long-form investigative pieces.*

## Ellipsis

Treat an ellipsis as a three-letter word, constructed with three periods and two spaces on either side. Use an ellipsis to indicate the deletion of one or more words in condensing quotes, texts and documents, or when someone trails off in a sentence. Be especially careful to avoid deletions that would distort the meaning.

**Punctuation guidelines:** If the words that precede an ellipsis constitute a grammatically complete sentence, either in the original or in the condensation, place a period at the end of the last word before the ellipsis. Follow it with a regular space and an ellipsis.

*I no longer have a strong enough political base. ...*

When ending a thought with a question mark, exclamation point, comma or colon, the sequence is: word, punctuation mark, regular space, ellipsis.

*Will you come? ...*

**Condensing quoted material:** When material is deleted at the end of one paragraph and at the beginning of the one that follows, place an ellipsis in both locations.

*In all the decisions I have made in my public life, I have always tried to do what was best for the nation. ...*

*... However, it has become evident to me that I no longer have a strong enough political base in ... Congress.*

*... As long as there was ... a base, I felt strongly that it was necessary to see the constitutional process through to its conclusion, that to do otherwise would be ... a dangerously destabilizing precedent for the future.*

But you do not need to use ellipses at the beginning and end of direct quotes.

*"It has become evident to me that I no longer have a strong enough political base," Nixon said.*

Not *"... it has become evident to me that I no longer have a strong enough political base ... ,"* Nixon said.

## Parentheses

Parentheses are jarring to the reader. Use them sparingly. If a sentence must contain incidental material, then commas or em dashes are frequently more effective. When they are necessary, follow these guidelines:

**Punctuation:** Place a period outside a closing parenthesis if the material inside is not a sentence (*such as this fragment*).

Place a period inside a closing parenthesis if the material inside is a sentence. (*An independent parenthetical sentence such as this one takes a period before the closing parenthesis.*)

When a phrase placed in parentheses (*this one is an example*) might normally qualify as a complete sentence but is dependent on the surrounding material, do not capitalize the first word or end with a period.

## Quotation Marks

Always use "curly" as opposed to "straight" quotation marks for double and single ( ' ) quotation marks.

Mac

- **option** + **⌘** produces an opening single curly quote ( ' )

- **option** + **Shift** + **]** produces a closing single curly quote ( ' )
- **option** + **[** produces an opening double curly quote ( “ )
- **option** + **Shift** + **[** produces a closing double curly quote ( ” )

#### Windows

- **Alt** + **0145** produces an opening single curly quote ( ‘ )
- **Alt** + **0146** produces a closing single curly quote ( ’ )
- **Alt** + **0147** produces an opening double curly quote ( “ )
- **Alt** + **0148** produces a closing double curly quote ( ” )

Always capitalize the first word in a complete quotation, even mid-sentence.

*When I asked Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., a bankruptcy scholar herself, about it, she responded, “There’s a lot for a family to consider when making the painful decision of whether, when, and how to file for bankruptcy.”*

Do not capitalize quoted material that continues a sentence.

*“If we had adequate access to our legal system,” a judge there told me, vulnerable people with debt “would not be this wonderful ripe field for picking by the fraud artists.”*

**Running quotations:** Include both opening and closing quotes on all paragraphs in running quotations. If a running quotation becomes unwieldy, consider using blockquote styling instead in those cases.

**Q&A:** Quotation marks are not required for the answers in articles that are clearly indicated as Q&A.

**Composition titles:** Put quotation marks around the following: publication titles, book titles, computer and video game titles, movie titles, opera titles, play titles, poem titles, album and song titles, radio and television program titles, and the titles of lectures, speeches and works of art.

Avoid unnecessary fragments: Do not use quotation marks to report a few ordinary words that a speaker or writer has used:

*Wrong: The senator said he would “go home to Michigan” if he lost the election.  
Right: The senator said he would go home to Michigan if he lost the election.*

**Partial quotes:** When a partial quote is used, do not put quotation marks around words that the speaker could not have used.

*Suppose the individual said, "I am horrified at your slovenly manners."*

*Wrong: She said she "was horrified at their slovenly manners."*

*Right: She said she was horrified at their "slovenly manners."*

**Quotes within quotes:** Alternate between double quotation marks and single marks:

*She said, "I quote from his letter, 'I agree with Kipling that "the female of the species is more deadly than the male," but the phenomenon is not an unchangeable law of nature,' a remark he did not explain."*

Use three marks together if two quoted elements end at the same time:

*"He told me, 'I love you.'"*

**Quotation marks and punctuation:** The period and the comma always go inside the quotation marks. The dash, the semicolon, the colon, the question mark and the exclamation point go inside the quotation marks when they apply to the quoted matter only. They go outside when they apply to the whole sentence.

*"If leaders at Trump's VA don't support REAL CHOICE — why won't they resign?" former CVA chief Hegseth tweeted.*

*Do you agree with the saying, "All's fair in love and war"?*

If the quotation comes before *she said, he wrote, according to the report,* or a similar attribution, end the quoted material with a comma.

*Waste companies "routinely violate OSHA requirements," according to the 2016 study by the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health.*

If a quoted question ends in mid-sentence, the question mark replaces a comma.

*"Nobody stood up and said, 'Wait a minute, time out, are we destroying this national resource because a small group of people made a mistake?'" a former senior congressional staffer said.*

Use commas to introduce or interrupt direct quotations.

*When I asked Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., a bankruptcy scholar herself, about it, she responded, "There's a lot for a family to consider when making the painful decision of whether, when, and how to file for bankruptcy."*

## Semicolon

Semicolons can protect you from run-on sentences and comma splices, and add clarity to lists when commas just won't cut it. In general, use the semicolon to indicate a greater separation of thought and information than a comma can convey, but less than the separation that a period implies.

Here are more general guidelines for when to use a semicolon:

**To clarify a series:** Use semicolons to separate elements of a series when the items in the series are long or when individual segments contain material that also must be set off by commas:

*He is survived by a son, John Smith, of Chicago; three daughters, Jane Smith, of Wichita, Mary Smith, of Denver, and Susan, of Boston; and a sister, Martha, of Omaha.*

Note that the semicolon is used before the final "and" in such a series.

**To link independent clauses:** Use a semicolon when a coordinating conjunction such as "and," "but" or "for" is not present:

*The package was due last week; it arrived today.*

**Placement with quotes:** Place semicolons outside quotation marks.

## Spanish Punctuation

There are a few rules of Spanish grammar to apply when writing, editing or producing Spanish language or translated stories.

Heds in Spanish are in sentence case. Every word after the first word, with exceptions, should be lowercase. Exceptions include proper nouns, such as names of people, places, countries, cities, etc. (Like heds, titles of works are also in sentence case.)

Spanish does not capitalize days of the week, months, languages, nationalities, religions, or the first word of geographical names (*río Grande*).

*Un operativo de la DEA jugó un papel oculto en la desaparición de cinco mexicanos inocentes*

*¿Quién exige responsabilidades a la DEA cuando sus misiones cuestan vidas?*

(Note *mexicanos*.)

Closing periods and commas go outside of quotation marks.

*“Esa información causó que varios colaboradores fueran ejecutados”, dijo, “a la par que algunos de sus parientes”.*

*Note that inverted question marks and inverted exclamation points begin interrogative and exclamatory sentences.*

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## Heds and Deks

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### Headlines

**Title headline:** The title headline is the headline that appears on the article landing page on the site. It should be in title case/upstyle. All keywords, verbs, pronouns and words with four or more letters should be capitalized.

*Trump Voter Fraud Commission Is Sued — by One of Its Own Commissioners*

**SEO headline:** This is an alternate headline that goes in the metadata of your article and includes more keywords that could help improve the article’s search ranking. Not required.

*Trump Voter Fraud Commission Is Sued — by Maine Secretary of State Matthew Dunlap, One of Its Own Commissioners*

**Social headline:** A sentence case version of the title that auto-populates Twitter and Facebook share buttons.

*Trump voter fraud commission is sued — by one of its own commissioners*

### Deks

All ProPublica stories, podcasts, press releases, Nerd Blog posts and Get Involved entries require deks. Deks are one or two sentences that summarize

your story. They should be complete sentences. Aim to include information that plays off of the headline or expands upon it in some way. Deks appear in the article page, below the headline, as well as on the homepage and landing pages on the site. Deks also show up in search and on social.

*Hed: How Political Pessimism Helps Doom Tougher Gun Laws*

*Dek: Saying 'nothing will change' has empowered the NRA and ignores its declining punch.*

*Hed: I Approved This Facebook Message — but You Don't Know That*

*Dek: The Federal Election Commission said in December that big political ads on the social network need disclaimers. But many candidates and groups don't seem to be paying attention.*

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## Captions

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A good caption (also called a “cutline”) [satisfies the reader's curiosity quickly](#) and anticipates questions they might have about a picture.

Captions are customarily one or two sentences: The first sentence can identify, in the present tense, the people in the photograph, the place it was taken, the date it was taken, and the action in the photograph. A second sentence is not always necessary but can usefully include context that helps the viewer better understand the story and the situation depicted in the picture. The second sentence is written in the past tense. Captions should rarely exceed two sentences.

There are cases in which simpler identifying information is all that is necessary. In these cases, do not use a period when the caption is not a complete sentence, i.e. *The dome of the U.S. Capitol*

When writing captions that identify individuals in a group, begin by identifying each person from left as they appear in the picture, offsetting their position with commas. Note that this might be necessary to state if the people in the photograph are immediately recognizable, i.e. *President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden in the Rose Garden.*

Examples of positions include: center, foreground, background, sitting, speaking, etc.

Other tips:

- Avoid restating information or duplicating copy that is in the story. Avoid using quotes from the story, which can be an effective device in some cases but quickly becomes repetitive.
- Avoid terms like “is shown” or “is pictured.” These phrases do not contribute anything meaningful to a caption.
- Consider the sequence captions are read in and avoid repeating information that has been included in a prior caption, such as a person’s last name.



*A water truck sprays down dust at Hunters Point in San Francisco, California, in May. The former Navy shipyard is one of thousands of heavily contaminated former defense sites now being redeveloped for housing and public use.*





*Yeom makes some repairs as he prepares for a health inspection for his new restaurant. Yeom bought a fish market after working in the chicken plant for 13 months.*



*Census workers Shamar Drew, center, and David Brown, right, on March 30, 2010, in Los Angeles*

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## Credits

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Use the following format for photo credits, (*Photographer/Organization*).

*(Marcus Yam/Los Angeles Times)*

We have two formats for commissioned photos. *Dustin Chambers for ProPublica* (note “for”) applies to photographers who signed a standard (dual copyright) contract. *Dustin Chambers, special to ProPublica*, (note “special to”) applies to photographers who signed an alternate (no dual copyright) contract.

For photos made by a ProPublica staffer, use just a forward slash.

*(David Sleight/ProPublica)*

A credit can stand alone without parentheses when a photo does not have a caption.

For longer credits, use this format (note the colons and semicolons, no “by”):

*Video: Katie Sullivan; reporting: Melissa Sanchez; data analysis: Sandhya Kambhampati; motion graphics: Lucas Waldron*