

Pop Talk: Let's Talk AP Style: A Cheat Sheet

If you're going to be emailing the media with press releases and story ideas, it's time you learn to speak their language - AP style. AP style is the style guide put out each year by the Associated Press, the world's oldest news service. It's important to comply with AP style rules because it decreases the amount of editing a reporter needs to do. Editors work on tight deadlines and anything you can do to speed things up makes them happier.

There's a lot to know in order to speak perfect "AP style" but there are many oft-used rules you can commit to memory – rules for dates, ages, books and more. Perdue's Online Writing Lab (Owl) has a great list of [common AP style rules](#) that you should become familiar with. In addition, here are some others we come across often:

1. **Spell out "percent".** It's not 10 %, or 10%. It's "10 percent."
2. **Nonprofit is one word.** It can also be written "not-for-profit organization" with hyphens.
3. **Say goodbye to the "s" in "towards."** It's toward, upward, forward and backward. No "s".
4. **Set off a quote in its own paragraph and introduce the speaker in the first instance.** For example:
"I love AP style," said April Harter Enriquez, owner and lead publicist at WordPop Public Relations. "It's worth your time to commit AP style rules to memory."
5. **Get clear on "that" and "which."** Use "which" for people and animals with names. Also, use ["that" for essential clauses and "which" for nonessential clauses](#).
6. **Don't overuse 's:** We see people spell decades "1980's" but refrain from that apostrophe – it should be "1980s". However, if you're skipping the 19, you need to put in an apostrophe to hold the space for "19", i.e. '80s.
7. **The rule about possessive nouns ending in "s".** Add an apostrophe and "s" unless the next word begins with the letter "s". E.g. "Elvis's blue suede shoes" but "Elvis' suede shoes."
8. **It's flier, not flyer.** That is, if you're talking about a poster in miniature that you print from your home printer.

A special note on capitalization. We live in an overcapitalized culture. Everything is IMPORTANT and we feel we must emphasize with ALL CAPS or at least Initial Caps! This is just plain incorrect. Job titles should only have initial caps when they precede the person's name (e.g. Owner and Lead Publicist April Harter Enriquez). A general rule is that if it's not a proper name, don't capitalize it.

With that said, it's "OK", not "okay" according to AP style.

If you need a second set of eyes, WordPop is available to edit your press release! Contact April at april@wordpoppr.com for pricing.