The Importance of Associated Press Style and Other Forms of Style in Journalism

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Purpose of Thesis

This discussion of Associated Press Style usage is intended to reflect its importance in newspapers and other publications, such as newsletters and magazines. Along with the discussion are copies of a project, which is intended for use in Journalism 210 and 211. Included are the pretest and eight quizzes. The pretest is to be used as a tool to determine the students' knowledge of AP style prior to any instruction in the courses. The eight quizzes are to be used as practice and study tools. After the quizzes have been given, a post-test would be administered to determine the students' progress and the helpfulness of the project.

Also included is a list of copy-editing marks, which were used to show the corrections on the pretest and quizzes.
Part 1  Style Usage and Users

Any journalism course syllabus found at Ball State University will always list among other books The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual. Journalism professors consider it one of the most valuable tools in teaching and learning.

What is Style? - Who Uses It?

The AP Stylebook deals with various topics. Some examples are abbreviations, numbers, word usage, capitalization, punctuation and spelling. It is a source that journalists can use to check errors of almost any type.

Users of AP style vary from publication to publication. Most newspapers throughout the United States use AP style but incorporate their own styles as well. Copy editors use AP style when correcting stories as well as photo captions, headlines and graphics.

Other publications, such as magazines, often use AP style but may also refer to other style manuals, such as the Chicago Manual of Style.

Yet no matter what style is used in a publication, it must be uniform and used throughout the publication. Copy editors edit for style errors as well as mistakes in spelling, grammar and punctuation. But they do not
work alone in the editing process. Every writer must edit his or her own work the same way a copy editor does. The writer must use his or her style manual and other references, such as the dictionary when composing and constantly check for errors. The editing process begins with the writer and ends with the reading audience, so it is important that there be no need for the reader to HAVE to edit.

Writers and editors should always have a style book within reach. Since the memory cannot always be trusted, any uncertainties should be checked. Both writers and editors should always remain willing to look up an obscure or forgotten point rather than risk being wrong and publishing an embarrassing mistake. A dictionary should always be kept in near reach to check spellings and meanings of questionable words. Grammar books are also helpful tools when questions arise in grammar and in sentence structure. A thesaurus might even be necessary to replace a word, which might confuse the reader.

**Style as a Word**

Associated Press style is not the only style that exists for writers and editors in the world of journalism. Some journalists prefer some words over others. Writers will adopt their own unique styles of writing, while many editors will edit in a style all their own as well.
Bill Holbrook, journalism instructor at Ball State University, said in a Journalism 211 lecture that style is really the person and that there is a difference between editing and revising.

"We revise all the time," said Holbrook. "But we do editing at the end of each piece like dotting i's and crossing t's. Writing is not a linear thing. Most of the time it's a circular thing. For example, some of us can't go two paragraphs before going back and making sure all the words are spelled right. Some type A personalities cannot go through without revising as we go along."

He continued by saying that revisions must often be made without the writer's choice in the matter.

"When it comes to media writing, style is limited. You don't have choices in a personal way. We are saying in media writing, this is the way we have to do it."

Holbrook said that how people use words in newspapers will always differ, but AP style is needed for uniformity, mechanics and clarity.

"You would like your newspaper to look as if it were written or stylized by the same person," he said.

Instructor Larry Lough also commented on AP style at the same lecture.

"Style has to make some sense," said Lough. "It's a contract with
your reader that you know what you're doing."

"The AP Stylebook is about consistency," he said. "Newspaper style is the attempt to achieve consistency. It is a set of consistent guidelines that reflect usage."

So when a newspaper reporter cranks out a story, that story must essentially follow the same style usage as every other story that will eventually find its place on a page. It is up to the writer to make sure that happens, but most importantly, the copy editor's main duty is to achieve style consistency in every story presented to him or her. If there are inconsistencies in style, the reader may unconsciously question the accuracy of facts.
Copy editors assume a very important role in today’s newspapers. Job duties often include laying out pages, writing headlines and editing for style, content, grammar and punctuation. In other words, great responsibility is put upon the shoulders of those who occupy the copy desk.

A copy editor might consider the style manual one of his or her most valuable possessions, but style is not the only concern.

A good background in the English language is one of the most important requirements. Basic grammar and usage knowledge is a must. Many copy editors lack these abilities but often do an excellent job because they learn to check and double-check the rules. They learn to check the dictionary, grammar book or style manual sitting on the corner of their desk and are able to catch the same errors an English whiz might see.

Memorization of AP style and other styles is not a requirement for copy editors and other newspaper or journalism employees. Journalists should not try to commit every rule to memory – the entries in the AP Stylebook are too numerous for anyone to remember. It is better to keep reference books handy and check them as often as needed.
The AP Stylebook is not difficult to use and to find things in if it is used often. It is hoped that the worksheets included with this thesis will make it possible for students to familiarize themselves with AP style so that they might learn how to look up entries.
A good copy editor will show consistency in his or her use of copy-editing symbols. This is of great importance because those who see the symbols must know what they stand for in order to correct material before it goes to press. If an editor changes the way an error is marked, he or she may confuse many people and cause confusion before a deadline.

The AP Stylebook provides proofreaders' marks. Most editors use these symbols, but others often adapt some of their own symbols and symbols from other references. There may be several way to correct an error, but those who see the corrections may not understand the marks if they are not used correctly and consistently.
Proofreaders' Marks

The following are some commonly used editing marks as shown in the Associate Press and Libel Manual and other reference books. These symbols are marked on the Pretest and on the quizzes.

- **Indianapolis (AP)** - The meeting ended yesterday.
- The president of the Reid Bancroft agreement over thirty years the last six people Evansville, ind., is in The man from Ind. is classes on election day the Vice President of the company the four burglars Six people were not according to Dan Jackson he wrote letter
Proofreaders' Marks continued

the *three* children

two spoons, two forks and

was not needed

transpose letters

insert punctuation

retain; do not change as marked
Getting to know AP style

Each of the following sentences contains style and/or word usage errors. Find the errors and correct them with the appropriate copy-editing symbols. Do not rewrite the sentences.

1. Their contract is on a day to day basis.

2. He did good on the style quiz.

3. He is six feet tall.

4. The meeting was yesterday.

5. College pupils are intelligent and easy going.

6. The United Nations peace keepers will remain in Bosnia.

7. Roe versus Wade was a controversial case.

8. The group met in Boston, Mass.

9. The evidence won't effect the results.

10. The usher lit the candles before the ceremony began.

11. The editor's duty is to insure accuracy.

12. Equipment Manager Alex Jones will hire two new employees.

13. They went to New Orleans, La., after graduation.

14. They put him in a straight jacket.

15. The earrings compliment her outfit.

16. Hopefully, the company will not lose its assets.
17. None of the answers were correct.

18. Her favorite season is Winter.

19. They broadcast from campus today.

20. The book was entitled "Hidden Jewel."

21. The game was a sellout.

22. He received two-thirds of the votes.

23. The group will travel to Springfield, Illinois.

24. The meeting ended at 9 P.M. tonight.

25. She met her boyfriend in men's wear at Lazarus.

26. She wracked her brain.

27. Children watch too many hours of TV.

28. The Pacers traveled to Orlando, Fla.

29. He died in the 1890's.

30. They rode the ferris wheel for hours.

31. Most people who attend the university live in the midwest.

32. She saw the Lieutenant Governor when she walked in the room.

33. The professor gave syllabi to her pupils.

34. Government censorship is minimal.

35. The media no longer has an interest in the case.

36. Thirty four people registered for the class.

37. The President of the company resigned today.

38. There were no classes on election day.

39. The Indiana and Illinois Legislatures adjourned early today.
40. She was convicted for murder.
41. The fund-raising campaign was successful.
42. She and her husband shop at K-Mart.
43. They visited R.I. last year.
44. The weapon found at the crime scene was a 12-gauge shotgun.
45. They had bologna for lunch.
46. The U.S. Government has shut down.
47. The meeting was held in room two.
48. He bought a t-shirt for his mother.
49. The zip code is incorrect.
50. His grandmother has alzheimer's disease.
51. She serves as chairperson of the committee.
52. The meeting was held Mar. 8, 1995.
53. The students filled out a questionnaire.
54. The x-ray showed a break in her right arm.
55. She works in the data-processing department.
56. Sheryl is an easy-going person.
57. She learned the Ten commandments when she was 6.
58. She bought a vacuum.
59. He saw the advertisement on his way to history class.
60. His goal is to become editor-in-chief.
61. Veterans met in Indianapolis to remember the Korean Conflict.
62. He is the person that signed the check.
63. The waiter that seated us is my sister.
64. Thousands will travel to Atlanta, Ga.
65. They tune their radio to WERK-fm every morning.
66. There was a hold up at the corner grocery store.
67. Her granddaughter is a third grader.
68. Mark Allen, Jr. was elected as the city's Justice of the Peace.
69. The Governor will run for reelection.
70. The rush hour traffic enabled the kidnapper to escape.
71. The scissors is on the table.
72. Who's ring is this?
73. He joined the army after graduating from high school.
74. The play was a box office smash.
75. Dr. Earl Conn is chairman of the department.
76. Members of the state legislature will meet today.
77. They read the rosary at the funeral.
78. The band hails from Seattle, Wash.
79. The duties were divided among you and me.
80. He attended the Kentucky derby.
81. The population has reached six million.
82. The company is located in Dallas, Tex.
83. She had a five-pound, 11-ounce boy.
84. He moved to upstate New York.
85. Her father is a marine.
86. Her son is a first grader at Southgrove Elementary.
87. Milk will decrease six cents starting Jan. 31.
88. Klus Klux Klan members held a meeting in Indianapolis today.
89. The players bowed their heads as 'The Star-Spangled Banner' was played.
90. She lives in St. Paul, Minn.
91. The protesters left at 6 p.m. tonight.
92. He went to the Post Office today.
93. The General is a likeable man.
94. The Queen began her reign 3 years ago.
95. She always watches 'Melrose Place'.
96. Troops left their stations in the middle east today.
97. The Michigan legislature met last Monday.
98. The Pope visited the United States earlier this year.
99. Mr. Alan Jenkins left at 8 a.m. this morning.
100. Less than eight students completed the assignment.
101. She works as a dietician at Ball Memorial Hospital.
102. He uses tabasco sauce on all foods.
104. The president of the company okayed the new agreement.
105. The project is underway.
Quiz 1
a through corporation

Getting to know AP style

Each of the following sentences contains style and/or word usage errors. Find the errors and correct them with the appropriate copy-editing symbols. Do not rewrite the sentences.

1. They hired a babysitter for their three-year-old son.
2. She is the new chairperson of the committee.
3. He was the celebrant of the Mass.
4. The money was divided among Don and Sheila.
5. His advisor suggested a curriculum change.
6. The shoes complement his suit.
7. The meeting was at 9 a.m. this morning.
8. We visited the San Francisco bay area this summer.
9. His meeting was in Boston, Mass.
10. She sang The Star-Spangled Banner before the basketball game.
11. She will travel to Atlanta, Ga., in June.
12. He was convicted of murder.
Quiz 2

corporation through February

Getting to know AP style

Each of the following sentences contains style and/or word usage errors. Find the errors and correct them with the appropriate copy-editing symbols. Do not rewrite the sentences.

1. Mr. John Walters lives in Denver, Colo.
2. The baby was found in a dumpster.
3. Dr. Earl Conn is chairman of the department.
4. She walked further into the woods.
5. He is editor-in-chief of the magazine.
6. She is a dietician at the hospital.
7. She is enrolled in history 150.
8. Jim and Holly went to Las Vegas, Nev.
9. Everyone agreed with her decision.
10. She works in the data-processing department.
11. He is six feet tall.
12. The stroke affected his speech.
13. Mark is an easygoing person.
14. He will depart LaGuardia at 9 a.m.
15. He is far-sighted.
16. She is a dean's list student.
Quiz 3
February through Indianapolis

Getting to know AP style

Each of the following sentences contains style and/or word usage errors. Find the errors and correct them with the appropriate copy-editing symbols. Do not rewrite the sentences.

1. He is a third grader at Eastway Elementary.

2. She said her boss harassed her.

3. She did good on the style quiz.

4. He was arrested by the Highway Patrol.

5. A popular travel destination is Lauderdale, Florida.

6. Her granddaughter lives in Indianapolis, Ind.

7. He walked in the room.

8. Three of the hangers at the airport were damaged.

9. The girl turned 20 today.

10. The bridge was impassable.

11. Hopefully, the company will not lose its assets.

12. They rode the ferris wheel at the carnival.

13. The fundraising campaign was successful.
Each of the following sentences contains style and/or word usage errors. Find the errors and correct them with the appropriate copy-editing symbols. Do not rewrite the sentences.

1. She saw the lieutenant governor at the press conference.
2. Her son will begin kindergarten in the fall.
3. Jeff Owen is the newest member of the committee.
4. She was told to use her best judgement.
5. He enquired at the desk about her condition.
6. The company lost its assets.
7. Jake Scott was elected as the city's justice of the peace.
8. Less than 10 people attended the meeting.
9. He is a Ku Klux Klan member.
10. He went to a picnic on Labor Day.
11. She went to a meeting last Monday.
12. They shop at Kmart.
Quiz 5
lifetime through Oregon

Getting to know AP style

Each of the following sentences contains style and/or word usage errors. Find the errors and correct them with the appropriate copy-editing symbols. Do not rewrite the sentences.

1. The town's curfew is at midnight.
2. Her father was in the U.S. navy.
3. None of the students were prepared for the test.
4. The population is two million.
5. Her mother called long distance.
6. He buys a newspaper every morning at the corner news stand.
7. 600 freshmen entered the college last year.
8. She bought his gift in men's wear at Lazarus.
9. She was taken by ambulance to a local hospital.
10. The professor okayed the student's absence.
11. The students eat lunch at noon.
12. He is a onetime winner.
13. He was the number one man in Saturday's race.
14. The pilot prepared for takeoff.
15. She took three rolls of film on her vacation to the Rocky mountains.
16. They are longtime business partners.
17. The usher lit the candles before the ceremony.
18. He is a likeable professor.
Quiz 6
Oregon through reference works

Getting to know AP style

Each of the following sentences contains style and/or word usage errors. Find the errors and correct them with the appropriate copy-editing symbols. Do not rewrite the sentences.

1. The astronauts returned to earth Monday.

2. Prof. Townsel will retire at the end of June.

3. He will run for re-election.

4. He filled out a questionnaire in history class.

5. The game will be televised at 9 P.M. tonight.

6. He will travel to the Philippines.

7. The ball went out of bounds.

8. Her grandmother has Parkinson's disease.

9. He was told to do 50 push-ups.

10. College pupils rarely miss class.

11. I bought stamps at the Post Office.

12. He settled out of court.
Each of the following sentences contains style and/or word usage errors. Find the errors and correct them with the appropriate copy-editing symbols. Do not rewrite the sentences.

1. He was a rock and roll singer in the 1960s.

2. He took a job in Salt Lake City, Utah.

3. She was traveling from Evansville, Ind., en route to her home in San Francisco, Calif.

4. There is no food in the refrigerator.

5. They went to class yesterday.

6. He said, "My favorite season is Spring."

7. The scissors is on the table.

8. She is the spokesperson for the new product.

9. The plane will take off at noon.

10. He lives in Fla.

11. She wears a size eight dress.

12. He repaired the torn paper with scotch tape.

Quiz 8
TNT through ZIP codes

Getting to know AP style

Each of the following sentences contains style and/or word usage errors. Find the errors and correct them with the appropriate copy-editing symbols. Do not rewrite the sentences.

1. They travelled to Charleston, West Virginia.
2. Her mother said there is too much violence on TV.
3. The project is underway.
4. The zip code is incorrect.
5. He bought a T-shirt for his brother.
6. The United Nations peacekeepers left the area today.
7. Roe versus Wade was a controversial case.
8. The man that greeted us is her brother.
9. He is a veteran of the Vietnam War.
11. The waiter who served them is my sister.
12. She bought a new vacuum.
13. We made a u-turn when we realized we had made a wrong turn.
14. The baby weighed six pounds, eight ounces.
15. Who's at the door?
16. The x-ray showed a broken leg.
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