Editorial Style Guide

The University at Albany, with some minor exceptions, follows AP style for its internal and external print materials. This includes articles published in Today at UAlbany and on the website; news releases; University publications (ie: annual reports, student-facing publications); and body text on University web pages.

Note: Social Media posts and marketing materials do not have to follow AP style. Social media posts are, by design, a more informal content style and often constrained by character limitations. Marketing materials, including advertising and flyers, likewise need to break with AP style on occasion, especially in display type.

These guidelines apply to press releases and media advisories; articles published on University web pages, including school, college, center and departmental pages; campus-wide emails and other University-written communications. This includes following AP style guidelines on time and dates, numbers, titles and punctuation.

Some Common AP Style Examples:

Time: Use numerals, and write a.m. and p.m. in lower case with periods – ie. 10 a.m., 11:30 p.m. (Do not use :00 for times on the hour.) When using a timeframe where both times fall within the morning or afternoon, use the a.m. or p.m. only once: 10 – 11:30 a.m. or 5:45 – 9 p.m.

Dates: Abbreviate month when using full date (Oct. 27, 2017) but spell it out if no date (She joined the faculty in October 2017).

Addresses: Abbreviate St. Ave. Blvd. with numbered address only (The building is on Washington Avenue, or, the building is at 1400 Washington Ave.) Spell out Road, Court etc., even when part of address (She lives at 5 Galileo Court)

Phone numbers: Area codes in parentheses (518) 426-0000

Numbers/Numerals: In general, spell out all numbers one through nine, and use numerals for 10 and up.

Exceptions: Always use numerals for ages (she is 3 years old); percentages (5 percent); times (1:15 p.m.); stats and scores (the Great Danes won 9-2); measurements (size 9, 3 ounces, 4-by-8-foot rug); and distances (2 miles away).

Punctuation:

In general, avoid Oxford or serial commas. (He ate toast, eggs and grits). Exception: If the series is complex, you can use the last comma. (They’re taking courses in German, magic in the media, and Slavic culture.)

Hyphenate compound modifiers for clarity: “fastest-growing company”; “high-level discussion.” Don’t use hyphens with commonly understood terms, adverbs that end in ly and between figures and units of measure: “greatly exaggerated claims”; “2 percent rule.” Do not use a hyphen with a compound modifier after the noun: “The driver was well paid.”
For titles, including academic titles, capitalize only when used as part of the name (The speaker was Associate Professor Alice Fortuna...) but not when title is used as description (Alice Fortuna, an associate professor who spoke... ) Same goes for deans, presidents, vice presidents etc. (Interim Provost Edelgard Wulfert said... but Wulfert, the interim provost, said...)

Exclamation points: Avoid or use very sparingly.

Semicolons are used to divide complex lists (The speakers included alumni Peter Graves ’16 and Pamela Flax ’77; graduate student Molly Pearson; and Vice President for Student Affairs Michael Christakis,) or to divide two full sentences that are connected in meaning (The forecast called for dangerous thunderstorms; commencement was canceled.) Note second sentence is not capitalized.

Colons are used to set off explanations, via a list or a sentence, or for emphasis. (The puppy left a trail destruction: shredded papers, mangled stuffed animals and the remains of a shoe. The puppy’s owners tried to curb this habit: They hired a professional trainer and tried to rid the house of loose objects. There was only one thing missing in the celebration: fireworks.) Note: A full sentence after a colon is capitalized.

Periods with parentheses. If the parenthetical phrase is not a complete sentence, the period goes outside (like this). (When a full sentence is in parentheses the period stays inside.)

**Update: Pronouns**

Use people’s preferred pronouns. If you are unsure what pronouns they use, ask.

Be aware that not everyone identifies as male or female and some people prefer to use the pronouns “they/them” rather than “he/him” or “she/her.” To avoid confusing the reader, introduce the pronouns: “Ali, who uses the pronouns they/them, said they traveled to Iceland every January.” If it’s possible without being awkward, rephrase to avoid using pronouns. “Ali travels to Iceland every January.”

AP has accepted the use of “they/them” as singular pronouns since 2017.

*They/them/their* is acceptable in limited cases as a singular and/or gender-neutral pronoun, when alternative wording is overly awkward or clumsy. However, rewording usually is possible and always is preferable. Clarity is a top priority; gender-neutral use of a singular they is unfamiliar to many readers...

*In stories about people who identify as neither male nor female or ask not to be referred to as he/she/him/her: Use the person’s name in place of a pronoun, or otherwise reword the sentence, whenever possible. If they/them/their use is essential, explain in the text that the person prefers a gender-neutral pronoun. Be sure that the phrasing does not imply more than one person.*

**Local style modifications to AP style**

**Abbreviations:** AP says “avoid alphabet soup,” but since we work at a University and for the state, they can be hard to avoid. So limit abbreviations and acronyms and try not to overwhelm the reader. On first reference write out the full name and put the abbreviation in parentheses — The School of Social Welfare (SSW) — so the reader knows what the letters stand for the next time they pop up.

**Alumni ID:** Graduating year goes after the name, no comma: (Langie Cadesca ’19 spoke at commencement.)

For multiple UAlbany degrees, the first year listed is the bachelor’s, subsequent degrees are named. (Mike Nolan ’12, MBA ’17)

**Departments and majors:** Capitalize when using entire name of department or school or college (Elise Jones of the Department of Biological Sciences) but not when referring to a discipline or major, unless the word is a proper noun (Frank Martin is a chemistry major and a Spanish minor). Capitalize major words in school or college names (College of
Arts and Sciences, College of Engineering and Applied Sciences) and include abbreviations (CAS, CEAS) in parentheses after first reference to use in subsequent references.

**Degrees:** We vary from AP Style here by skipping periods on degrees: BA, BS, MBA, PhD. Like AP, write out degree when possible (He has a bachelor’s degree in biology and is studying for his doctorate.) If you use a degree after a name (John Smith, PhD.) it is set off by commas.

**Headlines:** Unlike AP, we capitalize all major words in a headline (e.g.: Pushing the Boundaries for Public Health). When using quotation marks in a headline, use single quotes.

**Honorifics:** We follow AP, identifying people by full name on first reference and by last name on subsequent references. AP uses the title Dr. primarily for medical doctors, not PhDs. We don’t use Dr. for PhDs in news releases (since most news outlets use AP style and will simply delete it) or in *Today at UAlbany*. However, for brochures, reports, college and school web pages, it is appropriate to use Dr. on first reference, and then to use last name only on subsequent references.

**Titles of publications,** movies, books, television shows etc.: Unlike AP, we use italics for certain titles and quotation marks for others.

- **Use italics** for books, including anthologies, collections and monographs; movies; albums (CDs, vinyl records); novellas (*A Christmas Carol*, *Ethan Frome*); extended musical compositions, such as symphonies, operas, operettas; plays; ballets; newspaper and magazine titles; published and/or funded research studies.

- **Use quotes** for short stories and poems (collections would use italics); TV shows; songs, newspaper or magazine articles; book chapters; essays; thesis papers; movements from extended musical works (songs, arias, scenes such as the “Polovtsian Dances” from the opera *Prince Igor* by Aleksandr Borodin); unpublished research studies.

**Word preferences:**

- **SUNY** is acceptable on all references to the State University of New York.

- **UAlbany** is the accepted abbreviation for the University at Albany. NEVER use UA, Albany, SUNY Albany. When writing for an external audience, use University at Albany on first reference, and UAlbany or the University on subsequent references. In communications that are intended for our internal audience (*Today at UAlbany*, campus emails) UAlbany is an acceptable first reference.

We capitalize **University** when it refers to the University at Albany. However, we do not capitalize School or College as a subsequent reference to a particular school or college, such as the College of Arts and Sciences or the School of Social Welfare.

- **Athletics**, not sports, when referring to the department.

- **Great Danes** in all references – never Danes or Lady Danes

- **Residence halls**, not dorms or dormitories

- **Advisor**, not adviser

- **Alum** for singular, **alumni** for plural

- **Emeritus** for singular, **emeriti** for plural

We capitalize the state in **New York State**, but whenever possible, avoid by just saying New York