

# CMS and AP Style Guide Differences

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A cheat sheet of some differences between *The Chicago Manual of Style* (CMS) and *The AP Style Manual* (AP).

## Quick Rules

Rules	CMS	AP
<b>Compound modifiers after the verb</b>	No hyphen	Hyphen after <i>to be</i> verbs
<b>Dash</b>	No space before or after	Space before and after
<b>Ellipsis</b>	Half or regular space before and after	Space, three periods, space
<b>State abbreviations</b>	Use USPS abbreviations (MA, CT) in small spaces, such as tables	Use long abbreviations (Mass., Calif.) in small spaces, such as tables
<b>Serial comma</b>	Yes	no, unless the series would be misread without it
<b>Spelling</b>	Follow <i>Merriam-Webster's Collegiate</i> (11 <sup>th</sup> ed.)	Follow <i>Webster's New World</i> (5 <sup>th</sup> ed.)

## Possessives

Rule	CMS	AP
Singular common noun not ending in <i>s</i>	's	's
Singular common noun ending in <i>s</i>	's	's*
Singular proper noun not ending in <i>s</i>	's	's
Singular proper noun ending in <i>s</i>	's	'
Plural common noun not ending in <i>s</i>	's	's
Plural common noun ending in <i>s</i> (with plural or singular meaning)	'	'
Plural proper noun ending in <i>s</i> (with plural or singular meaning)	'	'
Plural proper noun not ending in <i>s</i>	's	's
Noun ending in unpronounced <i>s</i>	's	'

\* Unless the next word starts with *s*

CMS:

- ▶ Singular, not ending in *s*: apostrophe + *s*
- ▶ Singular common, ending in *s*: apostrophe + *s*

## Resources for Writers and Editors

- ▶ Singular proper noun, ending in *s*: apostrophe + *s*
- ▶ Plural common, ending in *s* (w/plural or sing meaning): apostrophe
- ▶ Plural proper noun, ending in *s*: apostrophe
- ▶ Plural, not ending in *s*: apostrophe + *s*
- ▶ Noun ending in unpronounced *s*: apostrophe + *s*

AP:

- ▶ Singular, not ending in *s*: apostrophe + *s*
- ▶ Singular common, ending in *s*: apostrophe + *s* (unless next word starts with *s*)
- ▶ Singular proper noun, ending in *s*: apostrophe
- ▶ Plural, ending in *s* (w/plural or sing meaning): apostrophe
- ▶ Plural, not ending in *s*: apostrophe + *s*
- ▶ Noun the same in singular and plural: treat as plural
- ▶ Noun ending in unpronounced *s*: apostrophe

See *APvsChicago* for more on possessives: <http://www.apvschicago.com/2011/06/apostrophe-s-vs-apostrophe-forming.html>

## Title Capitalization

CMS:

- ▶ Sentence style: Capitalize only the first word in a title, the first word in a subtitle, and any proper names are capitalized.
- ▶ Headline style:
  1. Capitalize the first and last words in titles and subtitles (but see rule 7), and capitalize all other major words (nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and some conjunctions—but see rule 4).
  2. Lowercase the articles *the*, *a*, and *an*.
  3. Lowercase prepositions, regardless of length, except when they are used adverbially or adjectivally (*up* in *Look Up*, *down* in *Turn Down*, *on* in *The On Button*, *to* in *Come To*, etc.) or when they compose part of a Latin expression used adjectivally or adverbially (*De Facto*, *In Vitro*, etc.).
  4. Lowercase the conjunctions *and*, *but*, *for*, *or*, and *nor*.
  5. Lowercase *to* not only as a preposition (rule 3) but also as part of an infinitive (*to Run*, *to Hide*, etc.), and lowercase *as* in any grammatical function.
  6. Lowercase the part of a proper name that would be lowercased in text, such as *de* or *von*.
  7. Lowercase the second part of a species name, such as *fulvescens* in *Acipenser fulvescens*, even if it is the last word in a title or subtitle.

## Resources for Writers and Editors

AP:

- ▶ Capitalize the principal words, including prepositions and conjunctions of four or more letters.
- ▶ Capitalize an article—*the, a, an*—or words of fewer than four letters if it is the first or last word in a title.
- ▶ Put quotation marks around the names of all such works except the Bible and books that are primarily catalogs of reference material. In addition to catalogs, this category includes almanacs, directories, dictionaries, encyclopedias, gazetteers, handbooks and similar publications. Do not use quotation marks around such software titles as WordPerfect or Windows.
- ▶ Translate a foreign title into English unless a work is generally known by its foreign name. An exception to this is reviews of musical performances. In those instances, generally refer to the work in the language it was sung in, so as to differentiate for the reader. However, musical compositions in Slavic languages are always referred to in their English translations.
- ▶ Examples: “The Star-Spangled Banner,” “The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich,” “Gone With the Wind,” “Of Mice and Men,” “For Whom the Bell Tolls,” “Time After Time,” the NBC-TV “Today” program, the “CBS Evening News,” “The Mary Tyler Moore Show.”



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### About the Author



Erin Brenner, owner of [Right Touch Editing](http://Right Touch Editing), has been an editing professional for two decades, specializing in content marketing and website materials. Her clients includes SAP, IT SMA, and Collins Education Associates.

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