

CMoS and AP Style Guide Differences

Flipping between *The Chicago Manual of Style* (CMoS) and *The AP Style Manual* (AP) can make any editor dizzy. I've collected some rules I look up most often when dancing between these styles.

Quick Rules

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

Possessives

Rule	<i>CMS</i>	<i>AP</i>
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*

CMoS Possessive Rules

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

- 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

About the Author

Award-winning copywriter Erin Brenner has been providing high-quality writing and editing for clients since 2005 through [Right Touch Editing](#). Clients include SAP, O'Reilly Media, Dictionary.com, and numerous independent authors.

She is the author of [Copyediting's Grammar Tune-Up Workbook](#), [1001 Words for Success: Synonyms, Antonyms, and Homonyms](#), and [Quick Study Dictionary of Commonly Confused and Misspelled Words](#) (with Steve Berner), as well as hundreds of articles and blog posts for Copyediting.com, [Visual Thesaurus](#), and other publications. Read more of her work on [Right Touch Editing's blog](#).



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