

## Style Guide

SAPIENS draws on the best of anthropological research, written for the general public. Help us reach the widest possible audience by:

- Using a conversational and accessible style and tone.
- Keeping close to the word count for the type of article you are submitting.
- Avoiding jargon, and if jargon can't be avoided, then explaining the term(s).
- Embedding hyperlinks in text. Links should be used sparingly to deepen readers' understanding of a point or to direct them to further reading on a subject.
- Being prompt, since news-driven posts should be published when they are fresh and relevant.
- Valuing honest and accurate reporting and writing.
- Providing us with an annotated version of your writing (footnotes preferred) for fact-checking purposes.

We follow the [Associated Press \(AP\) Stylebook](#) and the [Webster's New World College Dictionary](#), except as otherwise directed below. Note that some text and examples are drawn directly from the 2015 AP Stylebook.

**Comma, serial (a.k.a. Oxford comma):** Use it.

**Composition titles:** Put quotation marks around titles of books, movies, songs, television programs, etc. When referring in writing to magazines or online publications such as SAPIENS or Nautilus, do not use quotation marks or italics. Simply spell out the name, capitalizing the first letter and other main words (in the case of SAPIENS, we use all caps for the whole name). Online publication names are enclosed in quotation marks only in cases of unusual spelling or when the context might otherwise be unclear.

**Em dash:** There should be no spaces between an em dash and its adjacent words. Em dashes should be [used sparingly](#).

**En dash:** Use for number ranges (25–75) including dates (1900–1920). Also use to create compound adjectives in which one element is an open compound: *Joe Blow–style music, or post–World War I fashion*.

**Foreign terms:** Place the first instance of a foreign word or phrase in quotation marks, followed by a parenthetical definition in quotation marks. Foreign words or phrases that have become commonly used in English (and are found in Webster's New World College Dictionary) are not placed in quotation marks and do not require a definition.



**Genus and species (Latin) names:** Capitalize the genus name and italicize both names: *Homo sapiens*.

**Headline style:** We essentially use AP's style for composition titles (without quotation marks) for our headlines: *A Flower and a Way of Life in Peril*.

**Hyphens:** Use hyphens when compound modifiers precede a noun (*small-town residents, small-business owner, 72-day marriage, full-time job*), except when compounds include the word *very* (*a very small town*) or any adverbs that end in *-ly* (*an easily forgotten rule*).

**Metric system:** For U.S. members, use metric terms only in situations where they are universally accepted forms of measurement (*16 mm film*) or where the metric distance is an important number in itself: *He vowed to walk 100 kilometers (62 miles) in a week*. In these cases, the equivalent should be in parentheses after the metric figure. A general statement, however, such as *A kilometer equals about five-eighths of a mile*, would be acceptable to avoid repeated use of parenthetical equivalents in a story that uses *kilometers* or *other similar unit* many times. A conversion is generally needed only the first time a metric number is mentioned. The reader can make the necessary conversions after that.

**Numerals:** In written text, spell out numerals one through nine; use figures for 10 and above. EXCEPTIONS: Always use figures when they precede a unit of measurement (*6 miles*) or a percentage (*6 percent*) and when referring to ages (*6-year-old girl*).

**Percentages:** Spell out the word "percent" rather than using the percent symbol: *98 percent*.

**Quotation marks with other punctuation:** Commas and periods always go inside quotation marks. Other punctuation marks go inside only when they are part of the quoted material: *"Why should I?" she asked.*

**Square brackets:** Use them for parenthetical material within parentheses: (*A separate agency, the National Indian Foundation [FUNAI], manages indigenous lands while the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform [INCRA] is tasked with sorting out the rights of squatters and traditional people with informal land rights.*)

**State abbreviations:** The names of the 50 U.S. states should always be spelled out when used in the body of a story.

**Superscript:** Do not use it.

**Titles:** In general, confine capitalization to formal titles used directly before an individual's name: *Secretary of State John Kerry*. Otherwise, the title is lowercase: *John Kerry, secretary of state*.



**Units of measure:** Use metric terms only in situations where they are universally accepted forms of measurement: *16 mm film* or where the metric distance is an important number in itself or is necessary for added context for our international readership: *He vowed to walk 100 kilometers (62 miles) in a week*. In these cases, the equivalent should be placed in parentheses after the metric figure.

**If you're ever in doubt about how to style something, just make a note to us using Word's comment feature. Hopefully, we'll know the answer. And, if we don't know, we'll figure it out!**

