



## STYLE GUIDE

### I. PUNCTUATION

- \* Avoid using an ampersand (&) as a substitute for “and” (i.e. Ways and Means Committee). ONLY use it in a formal title, such as AT&T).
- \* Its and It’s are NOT the same: Its is possessive; it’s is a contraction for it is. And while on that topic, please do not use contractions in any story.
- \* NEVER start a sentence with a digit; always spell it out, i.e. Three staff members were present.
- \* Always spell out numbers one through nine. For all others, you should use the digits.
- \* Please follow proper hyphenation rules. In general, words that are grouped are hyphenated such as small-business operator and hard-working person. However, health care and other two-word phrases are NOT hyphenated when they stand alone, only when they modify another word. (Health care is NEVER hyphenated.)
- \* Please use ONLY one space after EVERY sentence for all stories (Web and print), press releases, etc.
- \* Please avoid split infinitives, misplaced modifiers, and dangling participles. Some examples: Molly Brogan and David Mack both have sponsored a bill NOT have both sponsored. People are paying \$4,000 on average more for Super Bowl tickets this year than they did last year NOT on average \$4,000
- \* Avoid long, confusing sentences. Keep sentences as short as possible.
- \* If you are using a dash in a sentence, make sure it is an emdash (—) and not just a normal one (-). Also, there are NO spaces around the emdash.
- \* Please use more than and less than for numbers NOT over and under, i.e. NSBA reaches more than 150,000 small-business owners not over 150,000.
- \* NEVER use the phrase first annual. There is no such thing.
- \* Stories should avoid using first-person phrases such as I and we.
- \* Please DO NOT end a sentence with a preposition or infinitive such as for, to, be, in, of.
- \* Avoid using clichés unless absolutely necessary or appropriate.

- \* If using quotes in a headline, use a single quote (') instead of a normal one (").
- \* Speaking of quotes, punctuation goes inside of the quotation marks. Also avoid using long quotes. Try to break it up with the attribution.
- \* Cannot is one word.
- \* Do not abbreviate anything on first reference (see below for more), except NSBA.

## II. STORY FORMATTING

- \* Please spell-check, grammar-check, and proofread all stories/entries before submitting them.
- \* Make sure there are NO blank lines after the end of your story.
- \* **Deadlines:** Stories are due by the close of business on the date listed on the schedule (see attachment). Please do not make me chase you to find out when the story will be submitted.
- \* **Submitting stories:** Stories for the print newsletter should be in Word format. For the blog and Web site, they should be put into the appropriate Internet tool. Please remember that there are no notifications sent to me for blog entries, only for Web site stories.
- \* For the print newsletter, stories should be written in Calisto MT (11pt) font and there are no blank lines between paragraphs. Please leave a blank line before a section head within the story. Please set the **first line** setting (under the Format-Paragraph menu) at 0.25. **DO NOT** use a tab to indent a paragraph. (See attached example.)
- \* **Please do not forget to write a headline, subhead if requested, and include your byline.**
- \* For the blog and Web site, a blank line is left between paragraphs. Again, do not forget to put your name on all Web stories you write.
- \* Also, if you would like a word to be bold, italicized, or underlined for a Web site story, please use the following HTML code:

(Note: Codes can be capitalized or lowercase)

<B> bold  
</b> end bold  
<i> italics  
</i> end italics  
<u>underline  
</u>end underline

- \* To link to another site or page (using our site as an example):  
<a href="http://www.nsbabiz">D-Mac's Singing Debut</a>

\* Another thing for Web site stories: Please replace the smart quotes (“”) with normal ones after you copy a story from Word. The smart quotes do not translate well onto the Internet.

\* If you need to put a note to me inside a Web site story, please put it in parentheses and not in brackets, as the program will think it is HTML code if it is in brackets.

\* For the newsletter, you only need to put <I> for italics, etc. as no slashes are needed. Please remember that Web sites and e-mail addresses should be italicized.

\* **Story length:** Cover stories should be 1,100-1,300 words and should be accompanied by at least one picture. Inside stories should be 500-600 words. Please do not submit a 300-word story without prior notice.

\* Headlines have every word uppercase, except A/An, the, and similar-type words. Subheads only have the first word capitalized. Please keep both headlines and subheads to no more than four or five words. Headlines also should be somewhat upbeat, if possible.

### III. LOCATIONS

\* **State Names:** If the state name stands alone, then you spell out its name for all 50 states. However, if you are using a name in conjunction with a city (such as Helena, Mont.) or party affiliation, then you abbreviate the state using the table below (from the AP Style Guide):

Following are the state abbreviations, which also appear in the entries for each state (ZIP code abbreviations in parentheses):

Ala. (AL)	Md. (MD)	N.D. (ND)
Ariz. (AZ)	Mass. (MA)	Okla. (OK)
Ark. (AR)	Mich. (MI)	Ore. (OR)
Calif. (CA)	Minn. (MN)	Pa. (PA)
Colo. (CO)	Miss. (MS)	R.I. (RI)
Conn. (CT)	Mo. (MO)	S.C. (SC)
Del. (DE)	Mont. (MT)	S.D. (SD)
Fla. (FL)	Neb. (NE)	Tenn. (TN)
Ga. (GA)	Nev. (NV)	Vt. (VT)
Ill. (IL)	N.H. (NH)	Va. (VA)
Ind. (IN)	N.J. (NJ)	Wash. (WA)
Kan. (KS)	N.M. (NM)	W.Va. (WV)
Ky. (KY)	N.Y. (NY)	Wis. (WI)
La. (LA)	N.C. (NC)	Wyo. (WY)

(These are the ZIP code abbreviations for the eight states that are not abbreviated in datelines or text: AK (Alaska), HI (Hawaii), ID (Idaho), IA (Iowa), ME (Maine), OH (Ohio), TX (Texas), UT (Utah).

### **Other things to remember:**

\* A comma is placed after the state names (when it is joined by a city), no matter whether it is spelled out or abbreviated, i.e. Ann Arbor, Mich., Provo, Utah., etc. This applies even when a comma may not otherwise be used. For example: Citizens of Saratoga Springs, N.Y., are getting ready for the Travers Stakes.

\* If the city is recognizable by itself (e.g. Denver, Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, et al), then no state name is needed.

\* Never use D.C. alone in a sentence. Either use Washington, D.C., the District of Columbia, or Washington.

### **IV. TITLES/NAMES**

\* ALWAYS use first names on first reference, even for President George W. Bush.

\* Speaking of the president, the word president ONLY is capitalized when joined with a specific name (President Bill Clinton, President Richard Nixon). However, if you're talking about the president, then it is lowercase. This applies to all formal titles, which are only capitalized BEFORE the person's name and only on the first reference.

\* Proper format for members of Congress: Rep. John Linder (R-Ga.), Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) or House Ways and Means Committee Chair Bill Thomas (R-Calif.). For multiple people, use Reps. and Sens. Second reference is last name ONLY. Please do not use courtesy titles (i.e. Mr. or Mrs.) on any reference for anybody. (Note that the word member always is lowercased.)

\* U.S. Congress and Congress are capitalized as is Senate and House. But congressional is lowercase unless it is part of a formal name, i.e. *Congressional Quarterly*. The same applies to the word administration: The Bush Administration but the administration.

\* **Academic Degrees:** Try to avoid abbreviations, bachelor's degree but Bachelor of Arts, Daniel Moynihan, Ph.D., and Dr. Pam Jones.

\* **Military Titles:** Use the full title before a person's name. Rules for other titles apply to all other uses. Please consult the AP Stylebook for appropriate abbreviations.

\* Spell out names of all federal departments (i.e. Department of Justice) and try to avoid abbreviations; however they are acceptable on second reference when indicated. For example, Department of Defense (DOD). The two biggest exceptions are CIA and FBI. Note that IRS must be spelled out on first reference, but you do not need to put (IRS) next to it.

\* Names of formal groups (President's Advisory Panel on Tax Reform) are capitalized on first reference but not on subsequent, shorter references (i.e. the panel).

\* **Names of the titles of books, movies, songs, television programs, and speeches:** Put quotation marks around the entire title and capitalize all words more than four letters except articles (a, an, the). Reference book names are not placed in quotations.

Examples:

“The Star-Spangled Banner”

“The Odd Couple”

“CBS Evening News”

Encyclopedia Britannica

\* **Newspaper and Magazine names:** Capitalize and italicize but do not place in quotes. Lowercase the word magazine unless it is part of the formal name, i.e. *Harper’s Magazine* but *Newsweek Magazine* and *Time* magazine.

\* **Web site names** are italicized.

\* When talking about an executive order, both words are lowercase unless it is at the beginning of a sentence.

\* NEVER only use a first name on any reference, except for people known that way such as Madonna. Try to use an accent mark or tilde for foreign names such as Rep. Nydia Velázquez (D-N.Y.).

## V. DATES/NUMBERS

\* **Times:** a.m. and p.m. are both lowercase with periods.

\* Daylight-saving times (not savings). Please remember the hyphen. You do not need to use the specific time zone if Eastern time is implied. However, if you chose to use it in other instances, please make sure you use the proper one with the proper abbreviation (i.e. CDT, MST, etc.)

\* **Money:** \$4, \$7.3 million, \$8.2 billion

\* Use figures for all formal uses of million and billion, as listed above, and do not go above two decimal places and NEVER use the entire number, such as \$4,342,000.

\* **Percentages:** Please always spell out the word percent. NEVER use the % sign.

\* **Months:** Capitalize the names of all months in all uses. When talking about a specific date, use the following list (note that some are abbreviated and some are not): Jan., Feb., March, April, May, June, July, Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.

\* If no date is mentioned but only a year, spell out the month (for all months). NEVER use *th* for any date.

Examples: Jan. 1, 2006; November 2008; July 4, 1776.

\* **Telephone numbers:** 202-293-8830 ext. 224 NOT (202) 893-8830 x224

\* **Bill Numbers:** The proper form is *H.R. 123* and *S. 224*. Please note the space and use of periods and italics.

\* When talking about a specific session of Congress, you can use 108th Congress, but make sure the *th* is **NOT** a superscript.

**VI. In-House Terms (use full spelling on first reference with abbreviation in quotes on all of the below. NSBA is acceptable on first reference in most cases)**

National Small Business Association (NSBA)  
Small Business Exporters Association (SBEA)  
Small Business Technology Council (SBTC)

**VII. Specific Words and Phrases**

Web site/Internet  
health care

Sept. 11 terrorist attacks—never use 9/11 or just the date Sept. 11

**Sources:**

Associated Press Stylebook 2004  
Associated Press Guide to Punctuation