Creative Services Copy Style Guide 2025

About This Style Guide

Our established standards closely align with "The Associated Press Stylebook," but there are some differences. Our guide consists of two sections: a list of general style conventions and a [Word List](#). Please observe these guidelines when creating and editing G5/RP content to ensure consistency in punctuation, grammar, spelling, capitalization, abbreviations, numerals, and other style elements.

If you come across an unfamiliar style element, please consult this guide. If the guide doesn't address your question and you don't have access to a current AP Stylebook, please contact the copy team.

General Guidelines

1. Default to the style and spelling standards established by The AP Stylebook or [Merriam-Webster](#) unless otherwise specified by house style.

2. Use contractions freely to maintain a conversational and inviting tone.

3. Apply AP-style [title case](#) for all headings and taglines:
   - Capitalize the first and last words of the title, words of at least four letters, principal words, and "to" infinitives (e.g., "to be" verbs).
   - Do not capitalize articles, conjunctions, or prepositions of three or fewer letters.
   - The ampersand (&) may only be used in headings and bullet lists, not body copy.
     Work & Play in Tampa Bay
   - Use Oxford (series) commas in complete sentences. An exception applies when using ampersands in a bullet list or headings.
     1, 2 & 3 Bedroom Floor Plans

4. Don't use a hyphen to connect two words in a phrase if one of the words is "very" or an adverb ending in "ly": *fully equipped kitchen, universally recognized symbol, very large living room*

5. Look on the bright side! Focus on positive language and reword phrases that sound slightly negative or remind customers of anything less than "the best."
   Fun and convenience are always close to home
   ~~*Fun and convenience are never far from home.*~~
   Life at {{location_name}} is extraordinary
   ~~*Life at {{location_name}} is never boring.*~~

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6. Ensure correct syntax and avoid word repetition. *A note about branded templated copy (BTCs): When creating an initial BTC or UTC template, be mindful of words or phrases that might lead to repetition or language errors in future add-on locations.

See BTCs.

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Abbreviations

In this guide, the umbrella term "abbreviation" will be used for acronyms, initialisms, contractions, and shortened forms of words (*etc., prof.*) Acronyms are terms based on the initial letters of their various elements and read as a single word (*NASA, ASAP, GIF*). Initialisms are terms read as a series of letters (*NBA, IBM, HTML*), and contractions are abbreviations that include the first and last letters of the full word (*Mr., Ms., Dr.*). You may use Merriam-Webster for spelling standardization.

Please follow these general guidelines for abbreviations:
- Use periods with abbreviations that end in a lowercase letter: *e.g., i.e., etc., Ms., Dr.*

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- Use periods for initials standing for given names: *E.B. White*. Do not use periods for an entire name replaced by initials: *JFK, LBJ*

- Use no periods with abbreviations that include two or more capital letters, even if the abbreviation also includes lowercase letters: *VP, CEO, MA, MD, PhD, UK, NY*
- In general, use no periods for headers or bullets except in cases where a period is added for effect or readability (use your judgment)
- Do not abbreviate U.S. cities or states except 50 states. (Exceptions for headers with city or state abbreviations that are universally understood or chosen for visual appeal
- Time: Capitalize *AM* and *PM* with one space after the numeral. Use an en dash (–) without spaces to indicate a range of numerals. *7:30 AM, 10 AM–11 PM*
- Units of measurement: Spell out *feet*, *inches*, *miles*, etc. rather than using symbols or abbreviations. Use numerals with units of measurement (even 1 through 9).
  Use a hyphen when the numeral is part of a compound modifier preceding a noun. *The soaring 10-foot ceilings give you room to breathe. The ceilings are nine feet tall.*

List of common abbreviations:

3D (but *two-dimensional*), *HD TV, H-E-B, IHOP, TV*

ATL (Atlanta, Georgia), NYC (New York/New York City), TX (Texas), PNW (Pacific Northwest), L.A. (Los Angeles), PDX (Portland)

Washington, D.C. (Do not use D.C. standing alone other than in quotations. Always offset D.C. with commas on both sides of the abbreviation)

Inc., Co. (Abbreviate and capitalize when part of a business name. Do not offset "Inc." with commas.)

Ampersands (&)
Use in place of "and" in all headings, subheadings, and bulleted lists. Do not use in body copy unless it is part of a company name (*Barnes & Noble*).

BTCs
When writing an initial template, be mindful of how add-on locations will utilize it. To streamline add-ons, position liquid values in sentences that require no punctuation or grammar edits. Avoid words or phrases that might result in repetition or language errors. For example, if "apartments" is part of a location's official name (e.g., Yankee Doodle Apartments), reword sentences that already include the word "apartments."

Examples:

*Every luxury **home** at Yankee Doodle Apartments features hardwood floors*
*~~Every luxury **apartment** at Yankee Doodle Apartments features hardwood floors.~~*

To see more of {{location_name}}, we invite you to browse the photo gallery.

~~*We invite you to browse **the** {{location_name}} photo gallery.*~~ (A location name that begins with "The" would read "browse **the** The Banana Leaf Apartments ...")
~~*We invite you to browse {{location_name}}'s photo gallery.*~~ (To avoid punctuation errors for add-ons, don't use a possessive "s" with a liquid value).

Capitalization
Generally, use AP title capitalization standards for headings, subheadings, bulleted lists, and senior living care types. Capitalize every word except articles (*a, an, the)*, coordinating conjunctions (*and, or, but*), and short prepositions (*in, on, for, up*), but capitalize when they appear at the end of a header line unless it doesn't work well with the site design or font.

Many words change depending on where they fall in a sentence. For example, in *Lay It All on Me*, "on" is a preposition and must be lowercased, but it is used as an adjective in *It's On Again* and as an adverb in *I Could Go On Singing*, so it must be capitalized in both cases.

Examples:
> to: *Your Space To Thrive,* but *Welcome to a New Wave of Living*
> in: *Zoom In on Picturesque Living* (adverb)
> out: *Fresh out the Oven*, but *School's Out Forever* (adjective)
> up: *Crawling up a Hill*, but *Picking Up the Pieces* (adverb)
> but: *Nothing but the Truth*, but *Life Is But a Dream* (adverb)
> by: *Stand by Me*, but *Stand By for Action* (adverb)

> Header all on one line:
> > *H1: Picture-Perfect Living **in** Norfolk, Virginia*
> Header split into two lines:
> > *H1 small text:*
> > *Picture-Perfect Living **In***
> > *H1:*
> > *Norfolk, Virginia*

*See [Abbreviations](#) and [Lists](#).

Colons (:)
Capitalize the first word after a colon only if it is a proper noun or the start of a complete sentence.
> *He promised this: The company will make good on all the losses.*
> but
> *There were three considerations: expense, time, and feasibility.*

Commas (,)
Clarity is the most important factor. If a comma does not help make clear what is being said, don't use it. If omitting a comma could lead to confusion or misinterpretation for the audience, use a comma. In general, use commas to separate elements in a series, to separate equal adjectives, with nonessential clauses and phrases, with introductory clauses and phrases, with conjunctions, with names of states and nations used with city

names, to separate duplicated words, and in figures over 999 (except street addresses). In general, use a comma if the sentence still makes sense when you flip the order of the adjectives (*your new, convenient address* but *a quaint New England farmhouse)*. Examples:

> *each one, two, and three bedroom apartment*
> *our small, intimate community*
> *a modern, state-of-the-art fitness center*
> *sleek stainless-steel appliances* (no comma)
> *sleek energy-efficient, stainless-steel appliances*
> *white Shaker cabinetry*
> *a convenient {{location_city}}, {{location_state_name}}, location*

In a series: Always use the Oxford comma when listing three or more items. Do not use a series/Oxford comma with an ampersand.

> *1, 2 & 3 Bedroom Floor Plans*
> *A vibrant, bustling city. A modern, pet-friendly community*

Names of states and nations used with city names: Use commas after the city name *and* the state/nation. *His journey will take him from Dublin, Ireland, to Los Angeles, California, next year. The group from Honolulu, Hawaii, met with the governor.*

Compound Modifiers
When a compound modifier (i.e., two or more words that express a single concept) precedes a noun, it sometimes requires a hyphen and sometimes does not. In general, use a hyphen if it's needed to make the meaning clear and avoid unintended meanings (*small-business owner*, *better-qualified candidate*, *self-driving car*, etc.). Often, arguments for or against a hyphen could be made either way. Try to judge what is most clear and logical to the average reader.

> *garden-style apartments*
> *home-cooked meal*
> *a small, intimate community*
> *The setting is very laid back* vs. *A very laid-back community*

Exception: Due to SEO keyword guidelines, certain word combinations or phrases that would normally be hyphenated are not in G5/RP copy (*two bedroom apartment* and *self storage unit*).

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See <u>Hyphens and Dashes,</u> <u>Word List,</u> and <u>Merriam-Webster</u> for additional guidance on common usage and exceptions for compound modifiers.

Date & Time
When pairing a month with a date, abbreviate months with six or more letters (e.g., Jan., Feb., Aug., etc.)

> *7 days a week:* The preferred way to state this, per SEO

AM and PM: Always capitalize, use numerals for time of day, include a space after the numeral, and do not use a space next to the en dash when referring to a range of time (*7:30 PM, 8 AM–5 PM*)
24/7

End Punctuation
Do not use an exclamation point unless the statement is genuinely exciting or it feels too blunt with a period.

Please give us a call to learn more about our luxury apartment community. We can't wait to show you around!

Geographical Terms & Compass Directions
Abbreviate street names only when referring to a specific address

Flamingo Village
2845 Pink Bird Blvd.
Flamingoville, FL 44895

Check Google to see if you can find out how locals refer to a specific roadway.
The preferred unit of measurement to describe distance is "miles" (not length of time it takes to travel). Always use numerals with miles. *The apartment is 4 miles from downtown*. ~~*The apartment is 15 minutes from downtown.*~~

Capitalize geographic regions of the US (the West, North, Southeast, etc.), "Downtown," "Greater (city name) area," and "(city name) Metropolitan Area" when used in conjunction with the name of a city.
Our convenient location makes it easy for you to explore the Raleigh Metro Area.
Hop on the light-rail for a quick commute into Downtown Charleston.
Our community offers prime access to the bustling downtown business district.
Traverse the Greater Portland Area from our convenient spot.
We have the tallest apartments in Central Texas.

State names: Use the full state name throughout copy using the liquid variable, {{location_state_name}}. **Be sure to include a comma after *city, state,* if they occur in the middle of a sentence.** *Our community in {{location_city}}, {{location_state_name}}, is perfect for…*

Street names: Abbreviate *Ave., Blvd.,* and *St.,* only when referring to a specific numbered address. Do not abbreviate *Road*, *Court*, *Lane*, *Circle*, *Loop*, etc. Spell out if referring to a street without an address. *Explore the local antique shops on Franklin Avenue.*

*See Word List.

Headers

See capitalization. For doubleheader H1/H2s: If the small text is intended to be a searchable H1, style it like this:

> H1 Small Text:
> Modern 1 & 2 Bedroom Apartments In
> H1:
> Boise, Idaho

If the small text is not intended to be searchable H1-level copy, style like this:

> Small Text:
> A Thriving Community In
> H1:
> Portland, Oregon

Hyphens & Dashes (-, –)
Hyphens and en dashes are joiners. If a hyphen or dash makes the meaning clearer, use it. If it just adds clutter and distraction to the sentence, don't use it. Often, arguments for or against a hyphen could be made either way. Try to judge what would be most clear and logical to the average reader.

Em dash (—): Do not use.

En dash (–): Use to 1.) denote an abrupt change in thought in a sentence, 2.) break up a long sentence, 3.) separate ideas for emphasis, 4.) indicate a time range, 5.) set off an explanatory phrase. Use sparingly. Put a space on both sides of a dash in all uses except where it indicates a range of time.

> *Prepare to be amazed by our stellar amenities – from a clubhouse with a gumball machine to a swimming pool with a zip line!*
> *7 AM–5 PM*

Hyphen (-): Use a hyphen to avoid ambiguity or to form a compound modifier (two or more words that express a single concept) before a noun. Hyphenate all spelled-out compound numbers between 21 and 99 and fractions.
Examples:

> *eighty-eight, twenty-two, forty-nine*
> *resort-style apartments*

> *extra-large living room*
> *energy-efficient, stainless-steel appliances*
> *five-star amenities*
> *one-way street*
> *He ate one-fifth of the pizza.*
> *The recipe requires two-thirds of a cup*
> *brushed-nickel hardware, satin-nickel hardware*

*In-house exceptions include *one, two, or three bedroom floor plan* **and** *self storage facility*

Hyphens and compound modifiers: Don't use a hyphen to connect two words in a phrase if one of the words is "very" or an adverb ending in "ly." *elegantly appointed homes, very lovely neighborhood.*

Suspended hyphens: When multiple compound modifiers or noun phrases sharing a common word are joined by *and* or *or*, they may be shortened using a suspended hyphen. *You will love our dog- and cat-friendly community*

Exception: When referencing bedroom count, do not follow the standard style for suspended hyphens. *a selection of one, two, and three bedroom homes*
Examples:

> *two bedroom apartment* and *self storage unit* (exceptions to the rule)
> *hardwood-style flooring*
> *trend-forward finishes*
> *energy-efficient appliances*
> *stainless-steel appliances*
> *9-foot ceilings*
> *A licensed, on-call nurse* (but *staff members are **on call** and available* – no
> hyphen)

See [Compound Modifiers](#), [Word List,](#) and [MW](#).

Lists (bulleted or otherwise separate from body text)
Lists follow slightly different style rules than body copy. Use title case, ampersands (&), and numerals (even for numbers under 10) throughout.

For the apartment amenities, use the singular form of each noun (*Fully Equipped Kitchen, Washer & Dryer, Patio or Balcony*) unless one home could have more than one of the items (*Walk-In Closets, Updated Light Fixtures, Extra-Large Windows)* or the noun is always plural in the context of a one bedroom floor plan (*Granite Countertops, Hardwood-Style Floors, Stainless-Steel Appliances).*

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Capitalize the second word in a compound modifier with a hyphen (*High-Speed Internet, Walk-In Closet)*. Place a capitalized **In Select Homes* at the end of a list where required.

Grouping related bullets/amenities may help with readability or help audience visualize the location (i.e., list all amenities found in a kitchen, nontangible services, exercise-related amenities, outdoor amenities).

Style examples for lists:

H2: Community Amenities

- *Chic Clubhouse w/ Wide-Screen Theater*
- *Resort-Style Saltwater Pool*
- *Fenced, Off-Leash Dog Park*
- *9 Acres of Lush, Landscaped Grounds*
- *BBQ & Picnic Area*
- *Outdoor Exercise Stations*
- *State-of-the-Art Fitness Center*
- *Yoga & Spin Room*
- *Off-Street Parking*
- *Laundry Facilities*
- *Amazon Hub Apartment Locker*
- *On-Site Management*
- *Online Maintenance Portal*
- *Prequalified Renters Insurance*
- *Close to Shopping, Dining, Parks & Schools*
- *Easy Access to I-5 & Hwy 405*
- *Public Transportation*
- *Pet Friendly*

H2: Apartment Features

- *Patio or Balcony*
- *Large Floor Plans w/ Oversized Bedrooms*
- *Walk-In Closets*
- *2-Inch Wooden Blinds*
- *10-Foot Ceilings*
- *Extra Storage*
- *Quartz Countertops*
- *Energy-Efficient, Stainless-Steel Appliances*
- *Shaker-Style Cabinets*
- *Refrigerator*
- *Washer & Dryer in Home**
- *Washer & Dryer Connections*

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- *Ceiling Fans*
- *Cable Ready*
- *Nest® Smart Home Thermostat*
- *Water, Sewer & Garbage Included*
- *Valet Trash Pickup*
- *Lake Views**

*In Select Homes

Numerals

In general, spell out numbers one through nine unless they occur in bulleted lists or headers or as a percentage, unit of measurement, or numbered address. (*100%*, *4*

miles, 8 feet tall, 453 Sycamore St.) Use numerals for any number greater than or equal to 10. Spell out *any* number that occurs as the first word in a sentence (or even better, reword the sentence to avoid beginning with a number).

In headers and lists, *always* use numerals. *2 Fitness Centers, 4 Swimming Pools, Modern 2 Bedroom Layouts*

When describing self storage unit dimensions, use numerals and a lowercase "x."
5x5 unit

See *Lists*.

Periods
In general, a period marks the end of a declarative sentence and many abbreviations. Between sentences, periods are followed by a single space. When an independent sentence is enclosed in parentheses, the period belongs inside the closing parenthesis.

See *Abbreviations*.

Pet Policies
Please follow this style for consistency unless a client requests an alternative:

$25 Maximum Monthly Pet Rent per Pet
$300 One-Time, Nonrefundable Fee per Pet
$150 Refundable Deposit per Pet

Points of Interest (POIs)
Refrain from using LVs in POI lists. Spell the full names of cities states, neighborhoods, and landmarks even if they share a name or part of their name with their liquid value (e.g., {{location_city}}, {{location_state_name}}, {{location_primary_landmark}}, or {{location_neighborhood}}).

Style each POI according to its official business name on Google Maps, including punctuation, special characters, nontraditional capitalization or lowercase, and the name of a town if the listing includes one.
See *Lists*.

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Examples of frequently used POI styles as found on Google Maps:

Food & Drink
Buffalo Wild Wings, Boise
Number 4 SteakHouse in Snohomish
El Mazatlan Mexican Restaurant – Newport
Tequila Jack's Restaurant & Cantina Long Beach
Cluck-n-Moo
Fogo de Chão Brazilian Steakhouse
In-N-Out Burger

De La Tierra Café
LALA's Argentine Grill On Melrose

Shopping
ALDI
H-E-B
Publix Super Market at Camden Towne Shopping Centre
Walmart Supercenter
Towne Center
Westfield Century City
Hy Vee

Entertainment
Darrell K. Royal Texas Memorial Stadium
UCLA's Center for the Art of Performance
MSU Track & Field Complex
South Coast Botanical Garden
St. Petersburg Memorial Park
AMC DINE-IN Marina 6
AMC Regal 14 Cinemas

Schools & Employers (e.g., top employers for location's zip code, municipal offices, public libraries, schools, medical centers, etc.)
Mark Twain Jr. High
Minnesota State University – Mankato
University of California, Los Angeles
B&B Transport, Inc.
Graham Packaging Co

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Amazon
Tippecanoe County Public Library Downtown Branch
Mariposa County Health & Human Services Agency

Possessives
Plural nouns not ending in "s": Add *'s*: *children's playground*, *women's locker room*
Plural nouns ending in "s": Add only an apostrophe: *the residents' parking garage, all the buildings' entrances*
Nouns plural in form, singular in meaning: Add only an apostrophe: *mathematics' rules, measles' effects, United States' policies*
Singular nouns not ending in "s": Add *'s*: *your home's airy atmosphere; I have a doctor's appointment, the community's prime location*

Semicolons
Avoid for ease of readability.

Slash Marks
In bulleted lists, abbreviate "with" using a lowercase "w" with a slash mark and one space unless the client requests something different. *Swimming Pool w/ Sundeck*
Avoid using in place of "or" or "and."

Symbols
Accent mark: Include accent marks and other symbols when they are used as part of a company's listing on Google Maps or when omitting will change its meaning (e.g., rose vs. rosé)
Registered trademark symbol: Include symbol if the name of the business or product includes it. *kitchens with Whirlpool® appliances, a Starbucks® around the corner*
Percent (%): Use percent symbol and a numeral in all instances for "percent."

Units of Measurement
Use numerals and spell out inches, feet, yards, miles, etc., to indicate depth, height, length, distance, and width. Hyphenate adjectival forms before nouns.
Examples of measurements in a bulleted list: *9-Foot Ceilings, 2-Inch Wooden Blinds*

Examples of measurements in body copy:
Vaulted 9-foot ceilings
The bedroom is 15 feet wide.
Each home comes with 2-inch wooden blinds.
The building has 6,000 square feet of floor space
Each storage unit is 5x6 square feet
The apartment is 4 miles from downtown. ~~The apartment is 15 minutes from downtown.~~

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