

Wet Apple Media Style Guide for Writers

The following is a style guide for submission of written materials for all Wet Apple Media publications. Adherence to these guidelines will help us streamline the editing process considerably, as well as enhance the efficiency of the final production processes, and will be greatly appreciated.

Formatting Text

- Text must be submitted single-spaced in Microsoft Word. If you don't have Word, please paste plain text into the body of your email. Do not send PDFs. We may be able to open Apple Pages or Google Docs files, but please confirm in advance.
- Do *not* indent the beginning of each paragraph or add blank lines between paragraphs. Our layout software automatically adds the proper formatting.
- Please only use *one* space between the end of a sentence and beginning of the next one.
- We do not use italics; no exceptions.

Art/Photography Submissions

- Do not embed photos in an MS Word document or send them as a PDF; we are not able to use them.
- Please send the original JPG or RAW photos, not photo-retouched or resized in any way. The original photos directly as downloaded from the camera is the preferred format. Use the "fine quality" or "highest quality" setting on your camera.
- If you're sending multiple photos, we prefer a zipped file submitted via mailbigfile.com or wetransfer.com.
- If you're unable to submit photos digitally, you may deliver them to us on a USB thumb drive, labeled with the title of your submitted article. Please include your contact information.
- Refer the Wet Apple Media website on this page for more specific information: wetapple.com/send-us-files

Editorial Requirements

- Check your spelling and grammar before submission. Double and triple check the spellings of names, brands, places, internet addresses and other proper nouns.
- We strive to preserve editorial integrity of our content, and therefore do not allow interviewed sources/featured subject to preview content and exercise editorial control. Exceptions may include stories that contain many factual details that need to be verified. If you feel that your story needs to be reviewed by your sources, please inform us in advance and provide your reason.
- Please do fact-check your work. It is acceptable to read aloud or email your sources select sentences to verify information or select quotes to ensure they have not been misinterpreted.
- Refrain from editing direct quotes as much as possible. We do allow small edits for basic style/grammar or for clarity; however, if you're editing for clarity or accuracy, please confirm your changes with your source. A better approach to editing quotes that are incomplete or confusing is to paraphrase them altogether.
- Please don't write your story in first person unless you have prior permission from the editors. We allow first-person stories and columns as an exception rather than the rule, and the editorial staff must approve the exception before you submit your work. In all other cases, first-person references will be edited out or sent back to the writer for revisions. Refrain from saying "this writer..." as well, unless your experience is germane to the story. (For example, write "the Caesar salad is highly recommended" instead of, "I recommend the Caesar salad." Or "some families" instead of "my family.")

- Only include your personal observations if they are descriptions (for example, scenery, crowd size, weather, etc.); otherwise, refrain from adding commentary and opinions (unless you are writing an approved column). You may use your judgment to include descriptive adjectives such as beautiful etc., but use them sparingly since they are subjective.
- If you're using statistics and other facts, always cite sources. Only use reputable, direct sources instead of statistics referenced in other articles or on third-party websites. (Never cite Wikipedia, for example. Instead, go directly to the included links, verify the information and then cite the direct source.) If you're describing something you didn't witness firsthand or a novel idea you didn't come up with, give credit to the source.
- Speak directly to reader in the story, using primarily second person. Third person is acceptable but is typically used when providing general statements rather than direct advice. Avoid using plural first person (we) as much as possible. We reserve "we" for referring to WestSound Magazine.
- Do not use any material that may be subject to copyright unless you have obtained explicit permission in writing. This includes song lyrics, images and other creative work. If you're including verbatim language from marketing materials such as a website, even with permission, use quotation marks for the quoted content and attribute it to the source (e.g., "according to the company's website.") Note that we do use plagiarism tools to check select submission.
- We do not allow AI-generated content, either text or imagery. If you use AI tools for research, please verify every source independently to avoid inaccuracies.
- Make your content as reader friendly as possible. Vary the length of your sentences, keep paragraphs short and use bulleted lists when appropriate. If your story is longer than about 1,000 words (and even when shorter), include at least one subhead to help break up a wall of text.

Style Guide for Common Scenarios

We generally follow Associated Press style and the Merriam-Webster dictionary, with some exceptions. When in doubt, default to AP.

Punctuation

- We do not use the serial comma.
- All punctuation, except for the semicolon, goes on the *inside* of quotation marks.
- The first word of a full quotation should always be capitalized; do not capitalize it if you're only using a partial quote that's part of another sentence. (Example: *John said that he "spent an awesome day" with his friends.*)
- Use double quotation marks except for headlines/subheads, plant names, quotes within quotes.

Titles, headlines, subheads and bylines

- Headlines and subheads use title case style. This is an exception to AP. Capitalize every word except articles (e.g., a, an), coordinating conjunctions (e.g., and, for, but) and prepositions shorter than three letters (e.g., in, at).
- Do not use all CAPS except for acronyms and proper names that use full capitalization.
- Bylines should appear as the first line in the story. Our style is "Text by."

Capitalization

- Capitalize job title or position only when it comes before the name. Titles are not capitalized when following a name, but are usually used as a preposition and bordered by commas: John Jones, general manager of the firm,... Do not capitalize formal titles used as generic terms, such a president, general, etc. Note that some generic titles, such as editor and chef, are not capitalized even when preceding a name.

- If a proper name of a brand or person begins with lower case, it would still need to be capitalized at the beginning of a sentence. In these situations, it is best to avoid starting the sentence with that noun.
- Positions or departments within a company are not capitalized. Such as, “He will head the credit department at the bank.” However, credit department would be capitalized if it’s part of the person’s title: Credit Department Director John Jones...
- Do not capitalize references to nonspecific entities that would be capitalized as a proper name (for example, fire department, city council).
- Common plant names are lower case except for proper nouns that are part of the name (e.g., Douglas fir). For botanical names, capitalize the first name only (e.g., red cedar—*Juniperus virginiana*; pine tree — *Pinus*).
- Likewise, for scientific or biological names, capitalize the first, Latin name for the class of plant or animal and lowercase the species that follows (e.g., *Homo sapiens*, *Tyrannosaurus rex*). (Note that both words will be capitalized when they’re part of a headline or subhead.)

Numbers

- Dates are always written as just the number (Jan. 12, Oct. 15, etc.), with no “th” or “st” suffix after the number. Do not use the year for the current year. The following months are abbreviated when they include dates: Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.
- Time of day is “a.m.” or “p.m.” (6 a.m. or 10 p.m. is correct.)
- Only use the numeral if it is the top of the hour. 10 a.m. is correct. 10:00 a.m. is NOT.
- Numbers from one to nine are spelled out and numbers from 10 and above use numerals. Numbers that specify measurements (e.g., height, weight, length) and age are an exception — they always use numerals.
- Telephone numbers always have the area code without parentheses and a period following the area code (but no pace after period): 360.555-1212. This includes toll-free numbers as well (800, 888, 877, 866 etc.) Do NOT use the numeral 1 in front of a toll-free number — just use the toll-free prefix as if it were an area code: 800.555-1212.
- Dollar amounts do not use the cents unless it is a specific amount. (\$5,600, not \$5,600.00), but \$5,656.56 would be correct. In the case of millions of dollars, use a decimal and round it off (\$1.5 million, not \$1,523,462). If the amount is more than half of the next step up, round upward. (\$1,596,000 would round up to \$1.6 million, while \$1,523,462 would round down to \$1.5 million).
- Use numerals for all numbers indicating percentage and the symbol % with no space after the numeral. This is a recent change to AP style, and we’ve been phased out the usage of the word percent. (10% is correct, 10 percent is not).

Other General Style Notes

- The proper references to technology terms are website, email, online (one word) and internet.
- When referring to a person in a story, use the first and last names, as well as title if applicable, in only the first reference to the person.
- Use only the last name in additional references. The only exception is when there is more than one person in the story with the same last name. In those instances, use both first and last names, or only last time if it is clear which person you’re referring to. In some exceptional circumstances, using only first name may be acceptable to avoid a cumbersome flow, but these exceptions should be discussed with or determined by the editors. Note: AP allows also the use of only first name for minors.
- Do not use the TM or R symbol for trademarked names or brands; they are reserved for advertisements.
- Do not use ampersands unless they are part of a company or proper name.