

Canadian Press Style Guide

An Overview

The Canadian Press Stylebook is the standard for most universities and colleges in the country, but it also goes through regular revisions. The current edition is the thirteenth.

Titles should be used with given name and surname on first reference, and long titles should be offset in apposition. You should only use titles rarely after the first use (this is not always true for the university environment):

Dean John Michaels was in attendance.

Jane Rutherford, Acting Dean of Pharmacy, attended the meeting.

In general, do not use the courtesy titles Mr., Mrs., Ms or Miss. When possible, refer to a married couple by their first names and then their last name; when they do not share the same last name, an explanation is necessary.

Jane Smith and Erin Michaels, a married couple, do not share a surname. Jason and Erin Lee do.

According to CP Style, the professional title “Dr.” is only used for licensed health care professionals, such as dentists, veterinarians, and chiropractors (note that this can conflict with the university environment and the University’s style guide). Currently, the title is followed by a period, though this is not typically the case in many newspapers and some universities or the older editions of the CP Stylebook):

Dr. Jane Smith, a chiropractor, addressed the audience.

Jack Turner, a doctor of philosophy, delivered his presentation to his peers.

In CP Style, capitalize the names of universities but not their departments (this conflicts with much standard practice), and use lowercase for schools:

The University of Alberta’s department of economics has received national accolades.

The faculty of arts is among the largest in Canada, and the department of English is particularly well-known. Both encourage the Victoria high school’s growth.

Spell out numbers under ten, and use figures for those 10 and above. Do not use commas to separate different units of the type of measure. Spell out first through ninth and use figures for higher enumerations:

We had three batteries, nine minutes 30 seconds of preparation time, 12 rolls of wire, nine light bulbs, and 30 inches of solder, but not even one solder iron.

Other rules for numbers:

- For numbers at the beginning of a sentence, always spell the number
- Use Roman numerals only for sequences of people or animals, such as in a lineage
- Do not list decades or centuries in the possessive form (ie: 1920s not 1920's)

For possessives, use an apostrophe s for all words not ending in s. For those that end in an s, plural words are followed by an apostrophe alone while singular words are followed by an apostrophe s, unless it would be distracting to speak it aloud with the extra syllable, in which case use only an apostrophe:

The faculty of engineering raised the instructors' salary. (plural possessive)

Professor Jones's class was unruly. (singular possessive. Alternatively: "Professors Jones' class...")

Joint possessives use only one apostrophe. Individual possessives require two:

Jane Jones and Frank Phung's proposal was unanimously accepted. (joint possessive)

We are interested in two of the proposals coming from faculty members in the department of genetics: Dr. Johnson's and Monica Engstrom's.

CP Style uses the Oxford English Dictionary as its authoritative guide for spelling. Where alternative spellings are listed, use the first.

For abbreviations, omit periods unless the abbreviation is geographical. For degrees, most lowercase and mixed abbreviations take periods unless they begin and end with a capital letter.

Dr. Smithe was present when Ben Nielsen was awarded his PhD, but he did miss the convocation for Nielsen's M.Sc. two years earlier.

Dates and times are not abbreviated, but months may be abbreviated when they follow a specific date.

January 2005 was particularly cold, but on Mar. 5, 2005, this all changed.

Chapter 19

Canadian Press Style

Whether or not you have noticed, you have certainly read a *Canadian Press* news story. Open any Canadian newspaper and you will see many stories that start with the initials CP. These are stories distributed by the Canadian Press.

Even if you've somehow avoided newspapers entirely, you probably still haven't escaped CP — which has a broadcasting arm that produces news and clips for radio stations called Broadcast News, or BN.

The Canadian Press is a newsgathering co-operative financed by Canada's daily newspaper industry. It's had its high points and its low points, but since it was founded in 1917 it has served Canadian newspapers, and Canadian newspaper readers, well.

CP is a *wire service*, a term that once sounded modern and now sounds rather quaint. It is used to describe a service that distributes news coverage by wire — or, nowadays, via the Internet. The idea behind a wire service is that every newspaper in the world can't afford to have a reporter in every place in the world. But every newspaper can subscribe to a wire service instead, and run news gathered in faraway places by wire service contributors.

Some wire services — like *Reuters* of the United Kingdom and *Bloomberg News Service* of the United States — are straight commercial operations that hire reporters and get stories from their bureaus around the globe. More often though, wire services are co-operatives — like the Canadian Press in Canada, the Associated Press in the United States and the Press Trust in Britain — owned and operated by the newspapers of the country.

That way, a story from the Chronicle-Herald in Halifax can be distributed for use by the Victoria Times-Colonist, and a story from the Saskatoon Star Phoenix can be used by the Toronto Globe and Mail, and so on. So the Canadian Press, with bureaus in major cities throughout Canada, can edit and distribute stories from all its member newspapers for use by all its other papers — eliminating the need for member papers to run expensive bureaus of their own in far-flung places.

In addition to editors in its bureaus, CP also employs its own journalists in a few major centres to cover and write important stories.

The embarrassing little secret of Canadian newspapers is that CP's reports are usually better than the stories written by papers' own reporters — clearer, more accurate, with better leads. Young reporters could do far worse than to emulate stories edited and written by the Canadian Press.

If you plan to pursue a career in journalism, the *Canadian Press Stylebook* and *CP's Caps and Spelling* are essential tools. (The latter is a smaller publication that lists words, proper names and abbreviations that frequently cause problems for writers and editors.) Even if you don't, the good news is that they are both more likely to be more valuable additions to your bookshelf than most college textbooks. (The bad news is that CP Style, while religiously consistent with itself, is often illogical. Why are geographical abbreviations — *P.E.I.*, *N.W.T.* — always shown with periods, and non-geographical abbreviations — *RCMP*, *NATO* — written without? It's not logical, but it is the way it is. Memorize the difference!)

They are essential tools because most Canadian newspapers follow CP Style. That is, virtually all of them produce stories in which numbers, addresses, geographical names, dollar amounts, temperatures and dates are written in a uniform format. Consider the simple question of percentages: are they shown as percent, per cent or %? (The Canadian Press Stylebook says "per cent." The Associated Press Stylebook says "percent.")

The advantage of this is obvious when stories are being shared among a large number of newspapers. (The difficulty of keeping copy consistent is obvious too — just look at the number of editors CP must employ in its bureaus!)

The reality for students of journalism in Canada is that they need to know the key points of CP Style. Indeed, it's a good idea to start writing all your stories in CP Style right now. Check the Stylebook when you must be certain about an obscure point, but you need to keep the commonly areas that are listed below in your head. If you do, and your copy reflects your knowledge, you are more likely to be seen as a professional from the day you walk into the newsroom.

There's an old CP proverb, much quoted by journalists: *When in doubt, leave it out.* But if you encounter a question of style, and you've not memorized it from the cheat sheet below, the real proverb is this: *When in doubt, look it up in the Stylebook!*

Essential Points of CP Style

Numbers

The greatest, or at least the most commonly occurring, inconsistency in Canadian Press Style is in its treatment of numbers, which naturally crop up in a wide variety of typical instances.

In general, CP Style requires you to spell out whole numbers below 10 and use figures for 10 and above. When they are in a series, there will often be a mixture.

There were three Fords, two Chevrolets, 15 Volkswagens, 22 Chryslers and one Humber on the car lot, of which 30 had four-cylinder engines, 10 were sixes and three were eights.

Numerals, however, are used in ages when they stand after a name.

Bruce, 3, had two sisters, five and seven.

Numerals are also used in numbers with fractions and decimals.

He fired a .30-calibre revolver at a target 9.5 centimetres by 7.2 centimetres.

Numerals are also used in decisions, votes and scores...

The Oilers beat Calgary 6-5. The court ruled 5-4.

...and in heights expressed informally.

The robber stood 5-10.

Percentages

Percentages are shown in CP Style as two words, “per cent.”

Two per cent, 12 per cent, 1.3 per cent.

Times

Specific times are shown as numerals. Break minutes from the hour with a semicolon.

2 a.m. (but not 2.00 a.m.), 2:20 a.m., 8 in the evening (but never 8 p.m. in the evening, which is redundant), 3 o'clock.

Addresses

Numerals are usually used in specific addresses. Numbered street names nine and below are spelled out — *Fifth Avenue; 123 Fifth Ave.* Streets, Avenues and the like are abbreviated in specific addresses (*1406 Ryan St.*), but not in general addresses (*the 1400 block of Ryan Street*). In cities like Calgary that break addresses into quadrants, CP style requires that we abbreviate the quadrants with periods.

1352 Norfolk Dr., 10015 85th Ave., 3G St. Albert Rd., 1476 Eighth Ave., in the 1200 block of Whyte Avenue, 2178 Fourth Ave. N.W., the crash took place on Crowfoot Trail in Calgary's northwest.

Temperatures

Numerals are used, unless Celsius or Fahrenheit are not specified.

5 C, -20 C, eight degrees.

Number Exceptions

Alas, when it comes to recording numbers, there are many exceptions in CP Style. Here are two common ones.

Spell out a number above 10 at the start of the sentence.

Thirty to 40 men were waiting when the sun rose.

Spell out numbers in figures of speech.

The Ten Commandments, the Twelve Apostles, the Seven Deadly Sins, a ten-gallon hat. (But, CP insists, it's the Gay '90s, the Dirty '30s and the Roaring '20s.)

Months and dates

Months are always written out in full when they are not part of a specific date.

The merry month of May. It was a gloomy November. In September, the kids went back to school. Christmas will come again next December.

In precise dates, however, these months are always abbreviated, as shown: January (Jan.), February (Feb.), August (Aug.), September (Sept.), October (Oct.), November (Nov.) and December (Dec.). March, April, May, June and July are never abbreviated.

Jane was born on Nov. 13, 1951. He sister Sally was born on May 11, 1957. Disaster would strike New York on Sept. 11.

The days of the week are never abbreviated.

The dreadful deed happened on a Saturday. The national holiday will be on Friday, July 1, 2005.

Money

Use numerals if preceded by a symbol representing a currency, write it out if not. Use numerals for fractions under 10. Show U.S., Canadian and other dollars using abbreviations without periods.

\$5, five francs, \$2 million, a \$7-million house, \$6.7 million, 2.5 cents, \$500 million US, \$2 Cdn, 6 cents.

Capitalization of Job Titles

Capitalize job titles before the name, but not after.

AUPE President Dan MacLennan. Dan MacLennan, president of AUPE.

Prime Minister Paul Martin. Paul Martin, the Canadian prime minister.

Punctuation

Always place periods and commas inside quotation marks.

“There’s no way we can make the payments on time,” she said. “If we don’t get support from the city, we will lose the building.” (Not, ... “we will lose the building”.)

Provinces and States

Spell out provinces and states when used in descriptive passages. You may use B.C., N.W.T. and P.E.I. in descriptive passages, however. Abbreviate all province and state names when used after the names of a community. Remember, the CP Style abbreviations are not the same as Canada Post’s — always say Alta. in a news story, even if you prefer AB on an envelope!

CP’s abbreviations for provinces are as follows:

Alta., B.C., Sask., Man., Ont., Que., N.B., N.S., P.E.I., Nfld., and N.W.T. Write out *Yukon and Nunavut*.

Similar rules and exceptions apply to U.S. states, all of which may be found in the CP Stylebook.

Organizations

Abbreviate the titles of legal corporations in their company names. Spell out in descriptive passages.

B.C. Ferries Corp., Cargill Inc., Ford Motor Co. of Canada Ltd., Canadian Pacific Ltd., Sun Microsystems Inc., Smith Bros., General Motors Corp. is one of the largest corporations in the world, and its Canadian subsidiary is the largest company in Ontario.

But spell out words like company when they are not part of a corporate entity.

The Canadian Opera Company, the Company of Young Canadians, the Smothers Brothers.

Abbreviations

CP's general policy on abbreviations is that geographical abbreviations take periods, others do not.

The RCMP have several offices in the N.W.T. HMCS Calgary ran aground on the south coast of P.E.I.

The United Nations, in CP's opinion, is not a geographical entity. Therefore, it takes no periods.

The U.S. and the U.K. are members of the UN.

Titles such as Dr., Capt., Prof., Lieut. are abbreviated, if they come before names, on first reference. They are written out in descriptive passages.

Dr. Ron Anderson. Prof. Daniel VanHeyst. Capt. Hiram McMillan.

The professor stood at the front of the class. Sgt. Darcy Henton of the RCMP said the men were arrested without a struggle. He said one of the men was the captain of the barge and the other the chief lieutenant to the leader of the smugglers.

Spelling

CP Style is generally to spell words as they are spelled in *the Oxford Canadian Dictionary*. However, there are many exceptions, which are set out in *CP Caps and Spelling*.

CP now prefers the British –our spelling for words like *colour, labour and harbour*. It prefers the shortened American *program* over the British *programme*, however.

CP prefers *judgment* (not judgement) and *centre* (not center), *kilometres* (not kilometers).

If the spelling of a proper name differs from CP's style, however, use the spelling favoured by the subject.

The U.S. Department of Defense. The American Federation of Labor, centre stage of the Lincoln Center.

Local preference prevails in the spelling of geographical place names.

Friday Harbor, Wash., in the U.S. San Juan Islands is about 40 kilometres as the crow flies from Bedwell Harbour, B.C., in the Canadian Gulf Islands.

Summary

- The Canadian Press is a news gathering co-operative financed by Canada's daily newspaper industry.
- CP and similar businesses are known as "wire services."
- The idea behind a wire service is that every newspaper in the world can't afford to have a reporter in every place, but they can all subscribe to a wire service and run news gathered in faraway places by wire service contributors.
- The *Canadian Press Stylebook* and *CP's Caps and Spelling* are essential tools for journalists.
- Journalists in Canada should know the key points of CP Style, which are outlined in this chapter.
- Remember the CP adage: When in doubt, leave it out!