AP: Days, Dates and Times

**Months:** When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec. The date always appears as a numeral without th, nd, rd (etc.) Spell out the month’s name when it stands alone.

  *Class meets on Dec. 13. The class meets three times in December.*

**Punctuation:** When month, date and year appear together, the month and date are set off by a comma. When the full date (including year) appears within a sentence, the year is also set off with a comma.

  *She was born on Dec. 24, 1949, at St. John’s Hospital.*

**Season:** Lowercase the names of seasons UNLESS they appear with a year.

  *The class begins in the spring. BUT The event first took place in Winter 2009.*

**Month and Year:** When the month appears with the year — but without a date — the two words are **not** set off with commas.


**Using the Year With Dates:** Dates within the current year, especially those close to today, usually do not require the year. Use years only when they are different from the current one EXCEPT “2012” isn’t necessary in December stories about upcoming 2012 events.

  *The second semester began on Jan. 16. [NOT Jan. 16, 2012] The meeting is March 1 [NOT March 1, 2012]*

**Time of day:** Exact times aren’t usually necessary in news and feature writing except in reference to when events will start.

  *The shopper was accosted outside of Target on Monday evening. NOT ... at 7:45 p.m. Monday.*

  *Use figures for all times except for noon and midnight. Use a colon to separate hours from minutes. [3:30 p.m.]*

  *Don’t use the zeroes for times on the hour. [11 a.m., 2 p.m. NOT 11:00 and 2:00]*

  *Times are designated by [a.m.] and [p.m.]. [NOT AM, PM, A.M. and P.M.]*

  *Since “a.m.” and “p.m.” designate early or late in the day, it’s redundant to restate the daypart. NOT “... at 6:30 p.m. this evening.” — just “at 6:30 p.m.”*

**Day of the week:** Days of the week are not normally used along with exact dates.

  *Use day of the week for the immediate past or coming seven days, and dates for more distant occurrences.*

  *The latest flood meeting was held Monday. BUT: The first meeting was held March 11.*

  *The Class B finals are on Saturday. BUT: The Easter parade is on March 30.*

**NEWSWRITING STYLE TIP:** The time factor — days, dates and times — almost never leads off the story. Nor is it used at the beginning of a sentence. Days, dates and times are traditionally placed at the end.

  *Standard sentence structure: Who ... what (verb) ... where ... when.*