Magical Insights from #KelseyDH

AP Style Cheat Sheet

State names:

- Spell out the names of all 50 states in the body of a story, or in social copy

City names:

- Every city should be referred to in association with its home state

  Ex: Wichita, Kansas or Kansas City, Missouri

- City names that can stand alone:
  - Los Angeles
  - Atlanta
  - Miami
  - Houston
  - New Orleans
  - Dallas
  - Denver
  - San Francisco
  - Seattle
  - Oklahoma City
  - Baltimore
  - Oklahoma City
  - Detroit
  - Las Vegas
  - Philadelphia
  - Chicago
  - Detroit

Numbers:

- Spell out numbers under 10 when referring to days, weeks, months, years
  Ex: I've been working in public relations and communications for five years

- Use figure-word combinations when referring to millions, billions, trillions
  Ex: The world has seen more than 1 million reported cases of the coronavirus

- Percentages
  Use the % sign when paired with a numeral, with no space. Use "percentage" when not paired with a numeral.
  Ex: My email had a 20% open rate
  Ex: What percentage of those who open your email click on the links?

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AP style cheat sheet

Ages: use hyphens for ages expressed as adjectives before a noun or as substitutes for a noun

Ex: a 6-year-old girl; an 18-year-old woman; *the boy is 5 years old; the woman in her 30s… 30-something, but thirty-something to start a sentence.*

- Use ages when deemed relevant to the situation – generally for profiles, obituaries, significant career milestones and achievements unusual for the age.
  Boy, girl: under 18 years old; Man, woman: 18 years old or older

- Millennial: members of the generation following Generation X, or two generations behind the baby-boom generation. Also known as Generation Y. Definitions vary on the years, though widely identified as those born between 1981 – 1996.

  Generation Z is on spring break.

Race *(AP advises to consider carefully whether to identify a person's race)*:

- Black, white: lowercase except for when beginning a sentence; black(s), white(s) do not use either as a singular noun; for plural use – black professionals…

- African American is acceptable for an American black person of African descent.

- Dual heritage
  No hypen: Asian American, African American, Mexican American

- Asian American is acceptable for an American of Asian descent. When possible, refer to a person's country of origin or follow the person's preference
  Ex: Indian American, Filipino American

- People of color refers to all black and brown minorities; **not** to be used interchangeably when describing one race of people; avoid referring to an individual as a minority unless in quotation

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Coronavirus topical guide:

- AP accepts *the* coronavirus on first reference without use of COVID-19

  Simply "coronavirus" infers that there is only one virus when there are multiple coronaviruses.

  *Ex: Many things are changing with the spread of **the** coronavirus.*

- Social distancing
  Two words, no hyphens, no quotation marks

- Stay-at-home order (*adj.*)
  In using multiple words combined as an adjective, hyphens in between the words link them together to form a complete description
  Ex: The governor issued a stay-at-home order to slow the spread of the pandemic.

- Shelter in place (*v.*) vs. Shelter-in-place (*adj.*)
  See "stay-at-home order"

- Shut down (*v.*) vs. shutdown (*n.)*

- Health care

- Isolation, quarantine
  According to the CDC: Isolation is separating sick people from healthy people to prevent spread of disease. For example, people believed to have COVID-19 or to have been exposed to the coronavirus are put in isolation in hospitals or are asked to practice self-isolation. Quarantine separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick.

- World Health Organization
  Spell out the full name of the organization on first reference. WHO is acceptable on second reference.

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Tips for communicating about COVID-19:

- Take caution in this time of heightened sensitivity to not scare your audience with bad news, assumptions and/or theories or opinions. All communication should be objective and only share confirmed facts.

- In all crises, it's better to be proactive than reactive. Now is the time to prepare your communications plan for how you'll respond before the virus gets to your lobby, so that you're not scrambling around later trying to figure it out. Things to think about:

    - **Identify everyone you need to alert – and in what order – if someone within your organization tests positive for COVID-19.**
      (Examples include donors, staff, volunteers, clients/customers)

    - **Map out standard operating procedures for all communications:**
      What are the messaging points you want to communicate?
      Who will draft communication, and who edits and approves messaging?
      (Who will be your backup if your point person is unavailable?)
      Who will be the point person for all questions, comments or concerns?
      (Who will be your backup if your point person is unavailable?)
      How will you communicate with each of your stakeholder groups should COVID-19 hit your organization?
      (identify all communication media: email, social media, formal letters)
      How often will you communicate updates to stakeholders?

- There's an opportunity now to leverage media to inform in a useful, organic and authentic way.
    - Share stories about your health care heroes on the front-line helping to stop the spread of the virus.
    - How are new policies impacting your company recovery plans? How are you going to continue supporting your employees and customers?
    - Travel stories: inspire travel when people can travel again.
    - Lifestyle stories: there are stories breaking through, but be smart about how you share

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Guide to effective pitching:

1. Do your research. If you don't have the budget to invest in media research tools, start following journalists on social media and keeping up with the news to see what is being reported by whom and to which audiences, and make notes of the stories you have that can contribute to that theme.

   Questions:
   Who do you want to see your story? How are they getting their news? Who is reporting on that particular subject, and have they covered your brand before?

   How will you tailor your pitch to fit who you're trying to contact? Make your pitch appealing by offering a unique perspective they may have not covered before, pitch an out-of-the-box initiative your brand is launching to benefit your stakeholders, or those in need, during this time.

2. Personalization and outreach – send each reporter a direct email introducing who you are, why you're reaching out (hook a previous story they wrote and to show them you've done your homework) and a summary of what your story is about.

   Make things easy for the journalist and present all the information up front: who, what, when, where, why, how…and (if you are not the expert) offer to make the connection with the identified expert for your story. Be sure to note their experiences to answer the "why should I talk to them" question.

   Make sure your subject line speaks to what's in your email. It should be enticing and use specific key words related to the journalist's coverage.
   Ex: My Brand Launches New Mobile App to Help Locate PPE for Hospital Staff

3. Give the journalist a couple of days before following up. They're going through a lot trying to keep up right now, so incessant follow up, though it is the norm for those in PR, is not the way to go during this pandemic.

4. Anticipate their needs before they ask.

   If you expect they'll need images for a print or web piece, have some options on hand ready to send over. Be quick in your response so to respect their deadlines and increase your likelihood of coverage.

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Tips for social media during COVID-19:

The most important question is not whether to post but what your content contributes to your audience's socially isolated lives.

- This is a great time to engage with your followers on social media. Business is **not** as usual, so be careful not to present as tone def. Do **not** ignore the issue. Your social strategy will change. Here are some things to think about:
    - User-generated content is golden. Like and share photos from your followers that show their make-shift office spaces and tips on how to stay productive in their **home**work.
    - Brainstorm promotional content that helps your audience see how your products and services benefit them as they social distance.
    - It's okay to be humorous – we all need some extra laughter – but don't cross the line…tact.
    - Focus on quality over quantity
    - Don't post on auto-pilot. Make sure each post has a purpose.
    - Social listening is key right now. Monitor, anticipate and categorize types of questions and concerns you'll get from your audience on social and have pre-approved responses ready to go when you need them.

- Try using the H.A.T.C.H Method
    - **Helpful** – people are looking for brands to fulfill their varying needs
    - **Accurate** – making sure you distribute accurate information and giving insight into what your company is doing to help
    - **Timeliness** – communicate updates as to how you are responding to the crisis in a timely manner. You can't afford to be late.
    - **Compassionate** – showcase your compassion care factor; shoutout front-line workers, offer encouragement for the vulnerable
    - **Human** – showcase that you understand your audiences' situations on a personal level