Acronyms
Avoid using when possible. When necessary for clarity sake, spell out on first reference. Do not use the acronym in parenthesis next to the full spelling. Use recognizable acronyms on second reference. If the acronym is not easily recognized, do not use it. The reader should not have to look back through the text to determine what an acronym stands for.

Preferable: The N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries will hold public meetings in February and March to receive suggestions and comments on cultch planting.

The division’s Shellfish Rehabilitation Section staff constantly looks for ways to improve the cultch planting program, so annual meetings are held to provide fishermen and interested parties the opportunity to give advice regarding planting sites, methods, materials and quantities.

To avoid confusion: The N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission voted to go out of compliance with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s Weakfish Fishery Management Plan.

MFC members said they thought the ASMFC plan unfairly targeted North Carolina fishermen.

Do not use: The Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (ACFCMA) gives the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) authority to adopt fishery management plans (FMPs) for coastal fisheries resources that are located in or move between several states.

The ACFCMA requires member states to implement the ASMFC FMPs and comply with management requirements of the FMPs.

Abreviations

United States – Spell out when used as a noun; abbreviate when used as an adjective or part of an agency name.
Examples: Imports greatly impact the shrimp industry in the United States.

The U.S. shrimp industry must compete with foreign imports.

The U.S. Department of Commerce released a report on shrimp dumping.

State names – Spell out the names of the 50 U.S. states when they stand alone in textual material. Any state name may be condensed, however, to fit typographical requirements for tabular material. Follow the guidance for United States for use as a noun or adjective or as part of an agency
name. However, the names of eight states are never abbreviated in text: Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas and Utah.

Examples: Shrimp is one of the top commercial species landed in North Carolina.

The N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries monitors shrimp landings annually.

Fresh N.C.-caught shrimp is usually available in the summer.

Use the state abbreviations listed below in conjunction with the name of a city, town, village or military base, unless it is part of a formal address.

Following are the AP state abbreviations (postal code abbreviations in parentheses):

- Ala. (AL)
- Md. (MD)
- N.D. (ND)
- Ariz. (AZ)
- Mass. (MA)
- Okla. (OK)
- Ark. (AR)
- Mich. (MI)
- Ore. (OR)
- Calif. (CA)
- Minn. (MN)
- Pa. (PA)
- Colo. (CO)
- Miss. (MS)
- R.I. (RI)
- Conn. (CT)
- Mo. (MO)
- S.C. (SC)
- Del. (DE)
- Mont. (MT)
- S.D. (SD)
- Fla. (FL)
- Neb. (NE)
- Tenn. (TN)
- Ga. (GA)
- Nev. (NV)
- Vt. (VT)
- Ill. (IL)
- N.H. (NH)
- Va. (VA)
- Ind. (IN)
- N.J. (NJ)
- Wash. (WA)
- Kan. (KS)
- N.M. (NM)
- W.Va. (WV)
- Ky. (KY)
- N.Y. (NY)
- Wis. (WI)
- La. (LA)
- N.C. (NC)
- Wyo. (WY)

These are the postal code abbreviations for the eight states that are not abbreviated in datelines or text: AK (Alaska), HI (Hawaii), ID (Idaho), IA (Iowa), ME (Maine), OH (Ohio), TX (Texas), UT (Utah). Also: District of Columbia (DC).

Use the two-letter Postal Service abbreviations only with full addresses, including ZIP code.

Punctuation: Place one comma between the city and the state name, and another comma after the state name, unless ending a sentence: He was traveling from Nashville, Tenn., to Austin, Texas, en route to his home in Albuquerque, N.M. She said Cook County, Ill., was Mayor Daley's stronghold.

States in headlines: No periods for those abbreviated with two capital letters: NY, NJ, NH, NM, NC, SC, ND, SD and RI. Other states retain periods: Ga., Ky., Mont., Conn.
**Academic degrees** – Use an apostrophe and spell out academic degrees: “She holds a bachelor’s degree.” Use abbreviations for degrees only when you need to include a list of credentials after a name; set them off with commas: “Peter White, LL.D., Ph.D., was the keynote speaker.”

**Titles** – Abbreviate these titles before a full name: Dr., Gov., Lt. Gov., Rep., the Rev. and Sen. Spell out all of these titles (except Dr.) before a name in a quotation. Do not use courtesy titles, such as Mr. or Mrs. Do not use Dr. as a title for a professor. Use doctorate degree and only establish academic credentials when it’s relevant.

Never abbreviate the below in text (You may abbreviate these words in tabular or graphic materials):
- Days of the week (Mon., Tue. Wed.)
- Pounds (lbs.)

**Months** – When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate only Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec. Spell out when using alone, or with a year alone. When a phrase lists only a month and a year, do not separate the year with commas. When a phrase refers to a month, day and year, set off the year with commas.

Examples: The meeting is scheduled for Aug. 1, 2012.

The meeting will be held sometime in August or September.

The first meeting was held in May 2012.

In tabular material, use these three-letter forms without a period: Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec.

**Symbols**

Never use symbols for the below in text (You may use symbols for these words in tabular or graphic material):
- Percent as %
- Cents as ¢.
- And as & unless it is an official part of a name

**Capitalization**

State- Lowercase in all state of constructions: the state of Maine, the states of Maine and Vermont. Do not capitalize state when used simply as an adjective to specify a level of jurisdiction: state Rep. William Smith, the state Transportation Department, state funds. Apply the same principle to phrases such as the city of Chicago, the town of Auburn, etc.

**Bridge** – Capitalize only when part of the formal name.
Examples: Oregon Inlet bridge
Herbert C. Bonner Bridge
Emerald Isle bridge
B. Cameron Langston Bridge

Common nouns – Capitalize common nouns such as committee, river and street when they are part of a proper name for place, person or thing, but lowercase these common nouns when they stand alone or in subsequent references:
Examples: The fish were caught in the Cape Fear River.
They have fished the river for years.
The Northern Regional Advisory Committee will discuss the issue.
The Northern and Southern committees will discuss the issue.
The rules affect fishing in the Neuse and Pamlico rivers.

Directional indicators – Lowercase directional indicators like north, south, east and west, except when they refer to specific geographic regions or popularized names for those regions: East Coast.

Formal titles – Lowercase formal titles that appear on their own or follow a name (in the latter case, they should be set off by commas). Capitalize formal titles that come directly before a name:
Examples: Division Director Louis Daniel spoke at the meeting.
The director spoke at the meeting.
Louis Daniel, director of the Division of Marine Fisheries spoke at the meeting.

Seasons – Lowercase spring, summer, fall, winter and derivatives such as springtime, unless part of a formal name: Summer Olympics, Boone Winter Carnival.

Trademarks – A trademark is a brand, symbol, word, etc., used by a manufacturer or dealer and protected by law to prevent a competitor from using it, such as Gulp! bait or MirrOLure. In general, use a generic equivalent unless the trademark name is essential to the meaning. When a trademark is used, capitalize it.

Internet – A decentralized, worldwide network of computers that can communicate with each other. Capitalize Internet in all uses. In later references, the Net is acceptable.

The World Wide Web, like email, is a subset of the Internet. They are not synonymous and should not be used interchangeably.
Internet addresses: Website addresses are also known as Uniform Resource Locators, or URLs. Follow the spelling and capitalization of the website owner. For general references, use the name of the website rather than the Web address (Facebook, not Facebook.com). When a URL is used:

- If it falls at the end of a sentence, use a period.
- Use the http:// protocol at the start of the Web address, as well as other starts, such as ftp://.
- Try to avoid URLs that are particularly lengthy and complicated, unless essential to guide the reader to a particular document.
- Use URL abbreviation services with caution. They work well for time-limited messages on Twitter, but there are potential problems with their shelf life. The service may stop working or go out of business. Also, some websites block redirected URLs.

**Numbers**

In general, spell out numbers one through nine and use figures for numbers 10 and up. There are many exceptions that always take figures, however. Most, but not all, involve units of measurement.

*Common exceptions include:*

- Addresses: 7 Park Place
- Ages, but not for inanimate objects: The 4-year-old cat, the four-year-old car
- Cents: 8 cents
- Dollars: $3 (notice that AP style does not include a period and two zeroes when referring to an even dollar figure)
- Dates: March 4 (notice that dates take cardinal numbers, not ordinal numbers -- do not use 4th)
- Dimensions: 5 foot 2, 5-by-9 cell
- Highways: Route 7
- Millions, billions: 6 billion people
- Percentages: 1 percent (notice that percent is one word)
- Speed: 8 mph
- Temperatures: 2 degrees
- Times: 4 p.m. (notice that AP style does not include a colon and two zeroes when referring to an even hour)
- Weights: The fish weighed 9 pounds, 7 ounces

Spell out numbers used at the beginning of a sentence: “Two hundred people attended the meeting.” Exception: Never spell out years: “1999 was a terrible year for technology companies.”

Use commas to set off each group of three digits in numerals higher than 999 (except for years and addresses): 12,650

Use decimals (up to two places) for amounts in the millions and billions that do not require a precise figure: $3.74 billion.
Add an s but no apostrophe to a number to make it plural. The same rule applies to decades: the 1980s. Use an apostrophe on a decade only if cutting off the initial figures: the ’80s.

**Dollars** – Use figures and the $ sign in all except casual references or amounts without a figure: The project has cost $40,000 so far, but could cost several thousand dollars more next year. Use figures up to two decimal places with the words million or billion. The project costs $4.35 million a year. The form for amounts less than $1 million: $4, $25, $500, $1,000, $650,000.

**Dates** – Always use Arabic figures, without st, nd, rd or th.

**Punctuation**
For the most part, follow the same rules of punctuation as you were taught in grade school, except:

- Don’t use a comma before a conjunction in a simple series. A simple series is defined as one in which no elements contain the words and or or: “The dinner choices were chicken, cod or beef.” Use a comma for series that include elements containing and or or: “The menu offered a choice of bacon and eggs, pancakes, or waffles.”
- Use a semicolon to clarify a series that includes a number of commas. Include a semicolon before the conjunction: Parts for the carrier are made in Tampa, Fla.; Austin, Texas; and Baton Rouge, La.

**Other Common Style Rules**

- Use a person’s full name on first reference. On subsequent references, use only his or her last name with no title. If two people share the last name, use full names on each reference.
- Time should be expressed as a figure followed by a.m. or p.m.: 8:33 p.m. Do not add other words (night, morning, and so on) to distinguish between day and night. Use noon or midnight rather than 12 p.m. or 12 a.m.
- Use hyphens to link all the words in a compound adjective: “The five-volume report called for cleaning up the area over a 10-year period.” Do not use a hyphen if the construction includes very or an adverb ending in –ly: a very big project, barely legal procedures.
- Form a plural of a single letter by using s and an apostrophe: “All the B’s lined up to the right.” To form a plural of multiple letters, add s with no apostrophe: “She mastered her ABCs in little time.”
- Form the plural of words made out of a group of letters by adding the letter s: CDs, ABCs, TVs.
- Use one space between sentences. The two-space rule is a hangover from the typewriter days. There is no need for it with modern computer programs.
Usage

Accept: To receive, to believe in
Except: To exclude, to omit

Affect: To influence (use only as a verb)
Effect: To accomplish (verb), a result (noun)

Assure: To convince, give confidence
Ensure: To guarantee
Insure: To contract for insurance on life or property, etc.

Biannual: Two times each year (same as semiannual)
Biennial: Every two years

Council: An assembly or group
Counsel: A legal adviser

Farther: Refers to distance
Further: Refers to time, degree or quantity; to advance

Few: Refers to numbers
Less: Refers to quantity

Preferred spellings

bycatch  gill net  sportfishing  mackerel
charter boat  gray  website  vermilion
email  headboat  ZIP code

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