



Domestic Preparedness Style Guide & Official Rules for Writing

Writers should use the *AP Stylebook* for basic guidelines. If not addressed by AP, please use the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

The most important single fact to remember in writing for the *Domestic Preparedness* is that the readership includes not only career members of the numerous disciplines that make up the nation's domestic preparedness community (e.g., law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical services providers, emergency managers, hospital staff, public health officers, hazmat specialists), but also mayors, governors, members of Congress (and of congressional committee staffs), and other decision makers, who are not all conversant with the "insider" language used by working professionals. In short, do not use specialized terms, acronyms, and other language that may not be widely understood by a broad audience of career professionals in other homeland security communities.

Other "Official Rules" are simple and most are self-explanatory:

1. Articles must be nonpartisan and supported with relevant sources and statistics. No unsupported opinion pieces.
2. Articles cannot promote specific products or services. No advertorials.
3. Articles must be written in the third person. *Do not*, except in direct attributed quotes, use any of the following words in your copy: I, we, my, mine, us, our, you, or your.
4. *Do not* editorialize, use contractions, try to amuse with witty comments to readers, ask rhetorical questions, or use slang, colloquialisms, or casualisms.
5. *Do not* quote anonymous sources.
6. *Do not* use footnotes – if information is important enough to merit a footnote, it is important enough to work into the text of the article. However, hyperlinks to sources offering additional information are allowed and encouraged.
7. Provide hyperlinked sources to support any quotes, statistics, and other information that requires attribution.
8. *Do not* use nicknames; use a person's full given name. In bylines, Domestic Preparedness uses the writer's given name, rather than his/her nickname, but no rank, title, or office – all of which can be included in a biographical summary (<200 words) at the end of the article.
9. If a person being quoted or written about has a rank or title, use it only once – after that, use his or her last name.
10. Spell out each acronym the first time it is mentioned and insert the acronym (in parentheses) immediately after the first use. For example, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).
11. A co-author's name may be included in a joint byline, but please provide a short biography for the co-author at the time the article is submitted.
12. A working title and headings for the article should be included, but please remember that the publisher has final say.

Most exceptions to the above are spelled out in the *AP Stylebook*. There are a few other exceptions that Domestic Preparedness uses, mostly to be reader friendly, and a few other unstated rules (e.g., on grammar and spelling) that will be followed at the publisher's discretion.

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