

DeSmog Style Guide

Please familiarize yourself with this [refresher doc](#) about structuring news stories and what makes a good headline, dek, nut graph, and kicker.

Style Manuals

When in doubt, defer to the [AP Stylebook](#) or the [Merriam-Webster dictionary](#). Googling your question to see how AP/other outlets handle different words/phrasing can also provide quick and easy answers.

External style guides can also help you choose the best language. Please refer to this [media guide](#) for reporting on LGBTQ issues, this [media guide](#) for reporting on disability issues, this [media guide](#) for reporting on mental health issues, and this [media guide](#) for reporting on a major tragedy. The National Association for Black Journalists also has a [style guide](#), as does the [Native American Journalists Association](#) (see also the Tyee's "[A Copy Editor's Education in Indigenous Style](#)").

Headlines & Deks

Keep headlines under 80 characters. Capitalize everything except articles, prepositions or conjunctions that have fewer than four letters. (ex. a, on, the, of, at, an, and, yet, by, or, etc.)

If you're quoting something in the headline, use single quotes; it must be an exact quote and not a paraphrase. Don't end your headline in a period unless it includes two different sentences.

Keep deks to around 150 characters (max. under 350). Write your dek in sentence case with a period at the end. If you're quoting something in the dek, use double quotes. Avoid writing a dek that merely repeats the main concept in your headline.

Subheds

If your story requires section headers, use the "Heading 2" font in Wordpress. Write your subheds with same capitalization as headlines and don't use ending punctuation. If you're quoting something in the subhed, use single quotes.

Bylines

Staff members' bylines are automatically formatted/selected in WordPress.

Guest bylines and crossposts: There is a 'guest' author account for these articles which will be entered in Wordpress.

The guest or crosspost article itself should also include the following at the top of the piece. The first should be bolded, the second line (if required) in italics:

By [NAME], [AFFILIATION IF REPOSTED OR AN ACADEMIC]

Originally published on [TK OUTLET]

Hyperlink to the outlet and original article, and if any additional terms are required (ex. Creative commons license) include this as well in the second, italicized line.

Datelines

To begin a story that was reported and written on the ground, write the capitalized name of the town or city and the AP abbreviation for the state, in all caps, followed by an em dash.

BIRMINGHAM, ALA. —

Special Styles

X/Twitter

AP Style for referencing X/Twitter in copy is as follows:

"Use the social platform X on first reference. Reference to its former name of Twitter may or may not be necessary, depending on the story. Limit use of the verbs tweet and tweeted other than in direct quotations. Instead: posted on X, said in a post on X, etc."

Image Captions & Credits

Captions

Image captions should be as concise as possible; ideally, they should display as no more than one line of text on the website when viewing your story on your desktop browser. Otherwise, they format poorly on mobile devices.

Photo captions: The caption should describe what is happening in the photo. If taken from Creative Commons, you can often use the caption provided verbatim. Include a general date and location within the caption sentence.

Following these best practices: <https://creativecommons.org/use-remix/attribution/>

Crediting Stock Images

When using a stock photo, credit the image as required by the stock source (Getty Images, AP Photo, Alamy, etc.), and link the credit back to the sourced stock photo. For example:

Flamingos feeding and feeding on a lake. Yarisli Lake in Burdur, Turkey. Taken via drone. Credit: [temizyurek/E+ via Getty Images](#)

Crediting Creative Commons Images

Include the imagemaker's name, linked to the image's page on whatever platform (Flickr, Wikimedia Commons, etc.) the creator has used to share it, followed by the specific Creative Commons license they have assigned, in parentheses and linked to the relevant CC license page.

Examples:

An ExxonMobil refinery on the banks of the Mississippi River. Credit: [Terekhova \(CC BY-NC-ND 2.0 DEED\)](#)

Ocean reef. Credit: [United Nations Development Programme \(CC BY-NC-ND 2.0\)](#)

Crediting Public Domain Images

If an image is in the public domain, add (Public Domain) at the end of the credit.

Special Cases: Public Domain, CC0, and No Known Copyright

Crediting Individuals and Organizations

Pretty simple: Credit the image creator or provider.

Credit: Julie Dermansky

Credit: Ad Free Images

Credit: Courtesy of Justin Nobel

Credit: Greenpeace

Linking Credits in Featured Image Captions

When adding captions to featured images, the links in the image credit must be manually added.

Examples:

Ocean reef. Credit: <a

href="<https://www.flickr.com/photos/unitednationsdevelopmentprogramme/32540194650/>">United Nations Development Program <a

href="<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/>">(CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

George Floyd protest near the White House in 2020. Credit: <a

href="<https://www.flickr.com/photos/9397412@N06/49953042223/>">

Geoff Livingston <a href="<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/>">(CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Note: Always encase the URL (web address) in double quotes!

Crediting Social Media Posts and Images taken from Social Media Posts

When embedding a post on a social media platform, such as on Facebook, X, or Instagram, identify the source by account name and platform, and link to the post:

Format as follows: TKcaption. Source: ACCOUNT NAME on PLATFORM

Example:

After Campaign magazine published an interview with Yannick Bolloré about the Havas-Shell deal, Rob Mayhew parodied Bolloré on TikTok. Source: [@mrrobertmayhew on TikTok](#)

When using an image posted to a social media account, such as a photo or illustration:

First, do your best to make sure that use of the image is permissible under [fair use](#). For instance, it is almost never legal to republish AP News or Getty Images images licensed by another organization in a DeSmog article, even when the image appears in a social media post. When in doubt, do not publish on DeSmog.

Next, identify the source in the same way as for an embedded social media post: TKcaption. Source: ACCOUNT NAME on PLATFORM

Capitalization

Capitalize officials' titles only when they're serving as proper nouns; typically, when they come before that person's name.

Always capitalize "Congress," but not "congressmen" or "congressional." Likewise, don't capitalize "senator" or "pope" or "president" when speaking about those people generally. Don't capitalize the "administration" when you're referring to presidential administrations.

Attorney General Eric Holder testified before Congress.

Eric Holder, the U.S. attorney general, testified before a congressional committee.

A group of GOP congressmen offered the amendment.

The president says this policy is a top priority of the Obama administration.

Many progressives say Pope Francis is their favorite pope so far.

Somewhat of an exception to this rule: When referencing the Catholic Church or the Supreme Court, you should continue capitalizing “Church” and “Court” even when they stand alone.

The pope’s statements reinforce the Church’s longstanding position on poverty.

The case before the Court on Tuesday could reshape the voting rights landscape.

Capitalize Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), as well as Black and Indigenous when appearing on their own, but “people of color” should be lowercase when referencing separately.

Percentages

DeSmog spells out the word “percentage” and “percent.”

Commas

DeSmog uses the Oxford comma, which is sometimes also called the serial comma, in all cases. Even in headlines!

The activists are calling for freedom, liberty, and justice for all.

The latest GOP health care proposal would raise the national deficit, increase the uninsured rate, and throw the country into chaos.

Contractions

You may use common contractions in your writing; in fact, please don’t consciously avoid contractions altogether. Using zero contractions can come across as too stiff and unnatural. There’s an exception when it comes to more awkward contractions that are hard to say, like should’ve and could’ve. Don’t use those.

Ellipses

Use three dots, with spaces around them, when you are cutting out part of a sentence. Use three dots in brackets surrounded by spaces when you are linking two sentences that do not appear next to each other in the text.

"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation ... dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation ... dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. [...] But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate — we cannot consecrate — we cannot hallow — this ground."

If you are cutting out a part of a paragraph but not within the same sentence — or stitching together two different quotes from the same source — end the first sentence with a period, enter a space, and put an ellipsis before the next sentence begins. Alternatively, you can do the following: "First part of quote here," said Source. "And something else they said later next."

Ellipses should not be used to signal a pause. If you're transcribing audio and you want to show a pause, write in [Pause] or note in the writing near the quote that "So and so paused before answering."

Acronyms & Abbreviations

When you want to use an acronym, spell out the entire title upon first reference, followed by the acronym in parentheses. Then, simply use the acronym for the rest of the piece. Acronyms typically do not take periods; neither do postal codes for states.

There are some very recognizable acronyms — like LGBTQ, CEO, IUD, NSA, CIA, FBI, and GDP — that you don't necessarily need to spell out the first time you use them. Essentially, think about whether the majority of Americans are more familiar with the acronym itself than they are with the agency's or subject's full name.

Whenever possible, please spell out titles and proper nouns in headlines rather than using acronyms — with some very specific exceptions: 1) If the acronym is better known than the full name (e.g., FBI, CIA, NASA, AG), then use the acronym; 2) If you need to condense for length, use abbreviations like CA (but not Calif.) or Rep. or GOP.

Dates & Times

For time of day, use a.m. and p.m. with lowercase letters and periods. (Note: when writing for the UK do not use full stops between the letters.)

Don't abbreviate months when you're writing out a date; write out the whole word. If you're referring to a month more generally, you can write the year immediately after the month.

Similarly, write out full years — i.e., 1998 rather than '98.

Linking

Use links sparingly but effectively. They should typically be used to link back to source material (primary sources whenever possible), DeSmog database profiles (always do this upon first reference), and past relevant DeSmog articles.

Make sure that the copy of your story includes all the necessary information; don't make a reader click through on your link to have a full understanding of your point. And if you want to embed a tweet in the text and the quote/content with the tweet is essential to the story, also write out the person's name and quote in the text of the story. Don't count on the reader (or a web reader for blind/hard of seeing) reading the tweet as an essential part of the story; they may skim over it.

Links should never be more than a few words; don't link entire sentences or your story will become difficult to read. Also try to avoid linking words that are right next to each other unless they're part of a list that makes it clear they lead to different sources.

Don't link punctuation unless it's internally part of the phrase being linked.

Numbers

Numbers should always be numerical in headlines, except in cases where the meaning is confused by using a numeral.

Spell out numbers when they're at the beginning of a sentence. When they're spelled out, numbers take hyphens.

Spell out numbers nine and under, and use numerals for numbers 10 and above. The same rule holds true for ordinal numbers (i.e., first, second, third), which are spelled out until 10, when it switches to 10th, 11th, 12th, and so on.

Forty-seven members of Congress wished President Obama a happy birthday. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX) has been filibustering for 13 hours. There are three branches of government. This is the 17th time that Republicans have voted to defund Planned Parenthood.

Spell out the number for courts.

Seventh Court of Appeals
U.S. Court Of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit

For ages, always use numerals. If the age is used as an adjective or as a substitute for a noun, then it takes hyphens. Don't use apostrophes when describing an age range.

The 5-year-old boy lives in Baltimore.

Maria, who is 12 years old, says she wants to become a doctor.

Large numbers, dimensions, and monetary units less than a dollar — i.e., 5 million, 6 feet long, 12 cents — also use numerals. There's an exception for one million, which you should write out.

UK / U.S. Editions: spelling + punctuation

Note: the U.S. and UK use different punctuation and spelling. Please adhere to whichever is appropriate for the edition the article will appear on (i.e. UK-specific articles use UK punctuation.)

Some differences when it comes to punctuation:

Mr., Mrs., and Ms. all take periods in American English. In British English, the periods are omitted.

American punctuation rules require all commas and periods to be given within quote marks. British English, meanwhile, only places punctuation within quote marks if it is part of the original text:

American English: Smith also reports that witnesses "suffered headaches," as well as experiencing "feelings of nausea."

British English: Smith also reports that witnesses "suffered headaches", as well as experiencing "feelings of nausea".

Publication Names

Italicize the titles of TV shows, books, movies, and scientific journals. Put the titles of academic

papers and reports in quotes. Do not italicize or put in quotes the names of newspapers, magazines, or other news outlets — write them out normally.

States

Abbreviating states as part of lawmakers' titles, per AP style Some frequent mistakes:

- AL - Alabama
- AK - Alaska
- AR - Arkansas
- AZ - Arizona
- MI - Michigan
- MS - Mississippi
- MN - Minnesota
- MO - Missouri
- MT - Montana

If you're naming a state within the text of your piece, spell out the name of the state.

He was traveling from Nashville, Tennessee, to Austin, Texas, en route to his home in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She said Cook County, Illinois, was Mayor Daley's stronghold.

When referring to UK members of parliament, use the following formulation:

Graham Stringer, Labour MP for Blackley and Broughton, is a trustee of the Global Warming Policy Foundation.

For the UK, please use “UK” (without full stops) when referring to all of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. When referring to the UK minus Northern Ireland, please use “Great Britain” (spelled out). In general, when talking about the national government based in Westminster (led by the prime minister), it will be the “UK government” (but please be careful and specific). If in doubt, check with a UK editor.

For the United States, use “United States” upon first reference, and then “U.S.” afterwards. Use “America” and “Americans” sparingly, as “United States” is more precise and not everyone living in the United States may be an American citizen.

Titles

Always include a title upon first reference of senators, representatives, government officials, and clergy. Official titles before names should always be capitalized as proper nouns; titles used as

a stand-in for full names or set off as a descriptor do not take capitalization.

Only use “Dr.” if the individual is a medical professional (i.e. not academic PhD).

White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders defended the president’s tweet attacking Sens. John McCain (R-AZ), Bob Corker (R-TN), and Rand Paul (R-KY).

Sarah Huckabee Sanders, the White House press secretary, took the podium on Tuesday to defend President Trump’s latest tweet attacking a group of GOP senators.

For members of Congress, abbreviate Sen. and Rep. instead of the full Senator and Representative. Upon second reference, drop the title and just use their last name.

The first time you refer to a lawmaker, include their title, party affiliation, and home state — i.e., Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT) or Rep. Diana DeGette (D-CO) — with no commas around the parentheses. After that, just use their last name (Hatch, not Sen. Hatch). Follow the same procedure for cabinet members: Education Secretary Arne Duncan, followed by simply Duncan.

If you’re using the title as a possessive, the punctuation comes before the parenthesis.

Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker’s (R) presidential campaign kicked off on Monday, and ThinkProgress promptly published nine articles about how terrible he is.

If you group senators and representatives together by their titles, you only have to use the demarcation once.

Sens. Lindsey Graham (R-SC), John McCain (R-AZ), and Claire McCaskill (D-MO), along with Reps. Diana DeGette (D-CO) and Barbara Lee (D-CA), all ate lunch together.

For UK and European politicians, please use the following:

Member of UK Parliament (in Westminster): MP

Member of Scottish Parliament: MSP

Member of the Welsh Assembly: AM

Member of the European Parliament: MEP

Member of the Legislative Assembly of Northern Ireland: MLA

Member of Dáil Éireann (Ireland’s lower house): Teachtaí Dála in first instance, abbreviated to TD

For others please check style guide

Carbon Dioxide

Spell out on first reference followed by (CO₂). Use CO₂ for every reference thereafter. Exception is headlines; use CO₂ in headlines (do not spell out). In all cases, do not superscript the 2.

Climate Skeptic / Climate Denier / Climate Science Denier

Avoid using the term “climate skeptic” to describe individuals and organizations that disagree with the mainstream scientific consensus on climate change and its causes. (There is a legitimate and separate social movement of skepticism that does not identify with so-called “climate skeptics.”) Instead, use “climate science denier” or where appropriate “climate denier” for shorthand. Do not use the phrase “contrarian.” Alternate phrases to use include “climate solutions denier,” “climate crisis denier,” “climate change denier.”

Legal has asked us to qualify the term to help with any potential litigation. If you use the phrase “climate denier,” or any similar phrase in a story, please qualify, explain or illustrate what you mean by it:

“He has repeatedly denied that countries need to move away from fossil fuels.”

After a headline referred to Nigel Farage as a climate denier, the story states: “Reform UK leader Nigel Farage is a vocal critic of green policies and climate science . . .”

If a reference in our database is available, please link to a profile that includes information about the individual or organization you’re labeling as a climate denier as another form of legal protection.

Don’t shy away from calling anyone a climate denier. We just want to legally cover our bases.

Editorial Guide

A story will fall under one of the following categories, when they meet certain criteria:

News: An account of true events presented, as best as possible, in real time.

Opinion: Combines reporting, storytelling and commentary to make a point. Unlike news stories, an opinion article includes an individual writer’s voice and opinion.

Analysis: An interpretation of news events using context, trends, and data. Analysis is rarely considered straight-news and more often aligns with opinion.

Note: you will be able to select “opinion” and “analysis” as topics on the website. Everything by default is categorized as news so that it appears on the homepages. If an article does not fit the above description for “news” please discuss with your editor whether “opinion” or “analysis” best applies.

Journalism ethics

A few useful resources to brush up on include guidance from the [Center for Public Integrity](#), [Buzzfeed](#), and [ProPublica](#).

Key tenets of journalism include: seeking truth; acting transparently and independently; minimizing harm.

Some important aspects of upholding these values include:

- Never plagiarize
- Test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error.
- Diligently seek out subjects of news stories to give them the opportunity to respond to allegations of wrongdoing.
- Identify sources whenever feasible. The public is entitled to as much information as possible on sources’ reliability.
- Distinguish between advocacy and news reporting. Analysis and commentary should be labeled and not misrepresent fact or context.
- Examine your own cultural values and avoid imposing those values on others. Avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance or social status. Try to have a diverse set of sources/voices quoted in every story.
- Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived. If a commentary piece or quote is provided by someone with links to DeSmog (for example a board member), this must be stated clearly.
- Remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility. Disclose unavoidable conflicts.

Reaching out for comment

Per [the AP](#), we must make significant efforts to reach anyone who may be portrayed in a negative way in our stories, and we must give them a reasonable amount of time to get back to us before we move the story. IMPRESS also has a useful [Best Practice note](#) on this subject and the [BBC’s Right of Reply guidance](#) may be helpful too.

What is “reasonable” may depend on the urgency and competitiveness of the story. If we don’t reach the parties involved, we must explain in the story what efforts were made to do so. If we don’t hear from them, the fact they have been approached should be stated in the story. If we hear from them post-publication, it is an editorial call whether or not to update the story or publish a follow-up piece (if the response materially changes the story this becomes imperative).

For general reporting interviews: When reaching out to sources, whether for an interview or for comment, it’s preferable to do this either in person or by phone or video call. If none of those options are available then email is an acceptable alternate. If for no other reason, a spoken conversation can help establish a human connection with the source, yield much more information as well as much more powerful quotes than conducting an interview by text.

For right-of-reply requests: Taking a “no surprises” ethos, all questions for and criticisms/claims about a source must be sent to them in writing ahead of publication for comment with a reasonable deadline for them to respond (also in writing). This deadline can vary depending on the public interest urgency of a story or the complexity of the right of reply request. The Global Investigative Journalism Network has [tips for sending a “no surprises” letter](#) to the subjects of investigative reporting.

As a rule of thumb, we suggest the following timelines for a minimum amount of time to approach people for comment. But note this will vary on a story-by-story basis and please confer with your editor if you have any questions. Editors will have final say on any queries about this and in determining when to publish a story / how much time to give sources etc.

For half day stories: 1 hour,

Full day stories: 3 hours,

Multi day stories: 24 hours,

Multi week/month stories: minimum of 48 hours (more if their answer could significantly change the story).

For right-of-reply requests involving documents: In cases where our reporting is based on documents produced by an individual or group still in existence, we need to reach out to them for comment. When sending the initial request for a reply, it is best to not include the documents in whole or in part. If they ask to see the documents to help formulate a response, then we approach this on a case-by-case basis in consultation with our lawyers. The [BBC’s Right of Reply guidance](#) and the guidance from [the Global Investigative Journalism Network](#) can be helpful starting points for navigating whether or not (and how) to share documents.

In the event that documents are shared, take care to make sure that the metadata does not expose or compromise any sources.

Legal review

Typically, it will be a DeSmog editor who decides when/if a story should be run by legal.

Legal counsel should review stories with serious or potentially damaging allegations in them; if there is any doubt, do not hesitate to contact them. Writers are also required to send a "no surprises" email to subjects of investigative reports prior to publication, giving them time to comment. Any questions on how to word the letter should be run by your editor.

On the record, on background, deep background etc.

These are the [AP's definitions](#), we have tweaked them slightly to align with DeSmog's international approach. Assume you are on the record unless the source requests otherwise. If a source requests otherwise, be sure to define the term before diving into the information they are going to tell you so that you are both on the same page as to how you can refer to the source and the information.

On the record. The information can be used with no caveats, quoting the source by name.

Off the record. The information cannot be used for publication.

Background. The information can be published but only under conditions negotiated with the source. Generally, the sources do not want their names published but will agree to a description of their position. Often government officials will seek to only give information "on background" but reporters should try and push to get them either on the record or agree to a description such as "an official in TK department" or "a TK staffer" etc.

Deep background. The source does not want to be identified in any way, even on condition of anonymity. This information shouldn't be published but is used as a starting-off point to find on-the-record sources to verify this information. Deep background information should almost never be used as the sole source of a piece of information.

In general, information obtained under any of these circumstances can be pursued with other sources to be placed on the record.

Sourcing

It's always important to include attribution for the information used in your stories (i.e. what is the evidence that backs up each statement made?). Information — excluding common knowledge

— should come from a verified source. [Acceptable verified sources](#) include interviews, legal documents, research by experts, academic journals, databases, and, with attribution, stories from trusted news organizations.

Anonymous sources

DeSmog generally refrains from basing stories solely on the assertions of confidential sources, except in extraordinary circumstances and after review by the Executive Director or their approved designee.

Please refer to AP guidelines [here](#) and copied in part below. (The [BBC](#) also has some useful guidance if you would like more information, as well as [ProPublica](#) and the [New York Times](#))

Broadly speaking: Always question sources' motives before promising anonymity. Clarify conditions attached to any promise made in exchange for information, and keep those promises.

Under AP's rules, material from anonymous sources may be used only if:

- The material is information and not opinion or speculation, and is vital to the news report.
- The information is not available except under the conditions of anonymity imposed by the source.
- The source is reliable, and in a position to have accurate information.

Reporters who intend to use material from anonymous sources must get approval from their editor before sending the story to the desk. The editor is responsible for vetting the material and making sure it meets DeSmog's guidelines. The editor must know the identity of the source, and is obligated, like the reporter, to keep the source's identity confidential. Reporters and editors should ensure they are using secure communications channels (i.e not email) when discussing sensitive sources. Only after they are assured that the source material has been vetted should editors allow it to be transmitted.

Reporters should proceed with interviews on the assumption they are on the record. If the source wants to set conditions, these should be negotiated at the start of the interview. At the end of the interview, the reporter should try once again to move some or all of the information back on the record.

Before agreeing to use anonymous source material, the reporter should ask how the source knows the information is accurate, ensuring that the source has direct knowledge. Reporters may not agree to a source's request that DeSmog not pursue additional comment or information.

We must explain in the story why the source requested anonymity. And, when it's relevant, we must describe the source's motive for disclosing the information. If the story hinges on documents, as opposed to interviews, the reporter must describe how the documents were obtained, at least to the extent possible.

The story also must provide attribution that establishes the source's credibility; simply quoting "a source" is not allowed. We should be as descriptive as possible: "according to top White House aides" or "a senior official in the British Foreign Office." The description of a source must never be altered without consulting the reporter.

We must not say that a person declined comment when he or she is already quoted anonymously. And we should not attribute information to anonymous sources when it is obvious or well known. We should just state the information as fact.

Surreptitious Reporting

As a general matter, DeSmog writers will identify themselves and their relationship to DeSmog when covering a story. DeSmog staff should not lie about their identities or connection to DeSmog. However, in rare circumstances, it may be appropriate for DeSmog writers not to disclose their identity or connection to DeSmog if doing so would prevent DeSmog obtaining information in the public interest — undercover or other surreptitious methods of gathering information should be used only when traditional open methods will not yield such information. Use of such methods should be explained as part of the story. Any exceptions must be approved by the Executive Director or their designee.

Photo sourcing

A few best practice habits when finding creative commons photos:

Places to search for photos:

- Google image search (select "creative commons licenses" under tools)
- [Climate Visuals](#)
- [Greenpeace Media](#)
- [Creative Commons](#)
- [Wikimedia Commons](#)
- [Unsplash](#)
- [Pixabay](#)

Tips and tricks:

- Check the user's other photos in their account. Do they all have a similar style? If widely varied in style, subject, quality etc. then they might be being reposted from elsewhere and therefore not truly 'free to use'.

When embedding social media, keep [this advice](#) in mind:

"Outside of breaking news situations, writers are encouraged to contact Instagram and Twitter users when embedding a photo or a tweet on a sensitive subject. Contacting the user has the added benefit of giving the story more context for the reader. In cases where identifying the user is inappropriate but the content is still newsworthy, screenshots with the name and image blurred are fine."

Updates, Corrections, and Clarifications:

Writers must notify editors as soon as possible of errors or potential errors, whether in their work or that of a colleague. Every effort should be made to contact the writer and his or her supervisor before a correction is moved.

When we're wrong, we must say so as soon as possible.

When we make a correction, clarification, or update we point out the error and its fix in the editor's note.

A correction can be the result of reporting errors or typographical mistakes, or may happen because the newspaper was provided incorrect information. Note: if it's simply the case of correcting a typo that in no way changes the meaning of the sentence/paragraph/article, we do not need to include an editor's note about the correction to the article.

A clarification clears up a statement that — while factually correct — may result in a misunderstanding or an unfair assumption.

An update is when new information comes to light that brings the information within the story up to date but does not substantially change the nature of the story (think: would this change the headline or require substantial re-writing of the text?). If the update substantially changes things or adds significantly to the conversation, this very well could be enough for a new article entirely.

Example of editor's notes:

UPDATE (MM/DD/YY): This article has been updated to include a statement from TK organization/person in response to DeSmog's request for comment.

UPDATE (MM/DD/YY): This story has been updated to reflect an amended FEC filing by Jeff Miller clarifying that he helped raise over \$1 million dollars for Trump Victory fund, not \$111,000 as originally reported.

CLARIFICATION (MM/DD/YY): This article has been updated to clarify the relationship between Kaiser Permanente and Kaiser Health News. The two share historical roots but operate entirely separately.

CORRECTION (MM/DD/YY): The original version of this article stated that the locals used snowmobiles to hunt the caribou. That has been corrected.

UK IMPRESS Standards Code

DeSmog UK Ltd is regulated by state-mandated body [IMPRESS](#). The main requirement of IMPRESS membership is that we follow its [Standards Code](#). **All editors (across the globe) must familiarise themselves with this code.**

As a rule of thumb, content is IMPRESS-regulated when any part of it has been paid for out of the UK budget (including editing, reporting and research), or it is published predominantly in the UK edition.

Further guidance on when content is IMPRESS-regulated, key clauses in the code, and the process for handling complaints can be found in the [Editor's Guide to IMPRESS](#)

Republication & Crossposting

[DeSmog Republishing Guidelines for Print and Online](#)

Our guidelines for other publications that want to republish DeSmog articles.

Covering Climate Now

DeSmog is a member of Covering Climate Now, a global journalism collaboration. This allows us to both reprint stories from other members via the CCN Sharing Library, and share DeSmog stories with other members.

Editors can find stories shared by other members via the [Covering Climate Now's Sharing Library](#). A login and password are required.

DeSmog can also share our own article [via this form](#). A login and password are required.

Our 2023 signed sharing guidelines agreement with CCN is [here](#).

CCN's republication rules as of mid-2023:

Required tagline: Place this tagline, in this style, at the beginning the story:

This article by [originating outlet name, with a link to story or homepage] is published here as part of the global journalism collaboration Covering Climate Now.

Images: Images may not be reproduced, unless doing so is clearly permitted. When imagery is provided, credit accordingly.

Alterations: Stories must not be altered and must be republished in their entirety. Headlines may be altered, as long as your headline retains the original meaning and does not introduce new spin or agenda.

Localization: Stories may be “localized.” For example, a story that mentions the city “Norwich” may need to say “Norwich, England,” for publications and websites outside of the UK. Edits should stop at matters of style.

Time: Time markers may be altered, where significant time having passed since the original story's publication makes them inaccurate.

Translation: Stories may be translated. Please submit the translated story to the Sharing Library so that partners benefit from the translation.

Grammar/Spelling: Grammar and spelling may be corrected, both when a story contains typos and when picking up a story from another region (eg., US English to UK English).

Gas Outlook

As of November 2023, we have a republishing agreement with Gas Outlook. The guidelines for this arrangement are the same as [our own republication guidelines](#).

When promoting crossposts from Gas Outlook on social, tag them as follows:

- X: @gasoutlook @sophiedavised
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/gas-outlook/> <https://gasoutlook.com/>