



General Style Sheet

Edits by Stacey

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General Style Sheet

Introduction

Welcome Author,

You are about to really put in some work. Editing has been likened to “killing your children” by most notable authors. I understand the work that it takes to craft a sentence, scratch it out, and then rewrite it fifteen times. In some cases, it might feel like murder if an editor comes in behind all that work and axes the whole thing. I understand the pain. However, editing is essential to the publishing process.

Writing is a form of communication, and you will hear many writers and editors acknowledge that writing is NOT speaking. You will not write the same way you speak. So do not get too discouraged if you don’t understand or apply all the correct rules to your writing. Grammar and language are always evolving. They are living things. Unless you are embedded in the industry, you will often find that the rules you learned in primary school or secondary school no longer apply.

It is best to understand that writing is a different—in some instances, a foreign—language.

So, give yourself permission to make mistakes and be corrected.

Many freelance editors have their own rules, and as a rule of thumb, you should know that all edits are subjective in nature. To prevent miscommunication, inconsistency, and errors, professional editors will create a style sheet to use as a guide. As an author, you can contribute to the style guide if you have spellings, capitalizations, and grammar rules that you wish to apply in your manuscript. If you have a glossary of terms for words that you have created, including spellings of character names, please submit those or establish them early in the first edit to be sure that they are considered.

This style guide is provided to help you understand the rules that I generally apply to your manuscript. I commonly defer to the [*Chicago Manual of Style*](#). The rules in this guide may sometimes be challenged by some editing software and other editors. An author also has the right to challenge these rules. However, unless you have a good argument to challenge the rule, I will defer to the *Chicago Manual of Style*. I will generally stick to these rules through my editing process.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me. If you can apply these rules before you submit your manuscript, that will significantly aid in the speed with which I can return your manuscript to you.

Again, congratulations on embarking on this stage of your publishing journey. I am here to help you through this somewhat challenging portion.

Stacey Smekofske
Edits by Stacey, LLC



Abbreviations

- Use full words rather than abbreviations in the body of the text.
 - ‘for example’ rather than ‘e.g.’
 - ‘that is’ instead of ‘i.e.’
 - ‘and so on’ instead of ‘etc.’
- If you are using abbreviations, use full stops where appropriate.
 - For example: i.e., etc., et al.
- No full stops should be used in upper-case abbreviations.
 - For example: US, UK
- Abbreviated units of measurement should be SI standard. These do not have full stops and do not take a plural ‘s’.
 - For example: 1km, 2kg, 3L

Accents, diacritics, and special characters

- When you are typing your manuscript, use Unicode for all special characters, including letters with accents or diacritics.
- To select a Unicode character in MS Word, go to the ‘Insert’ tab and click on ‘Symbol’, and choose it from there.
 - The commonest fonts include single precomposed characters. Use these rather than combinations of characters and symbols.
 - For example: for ‘ū’, use the character of u with a bar above it from the Symbol menu, instead of combining the letter u with a macron.
- Do not copy and paste special characters from the internet or a PDF document: this introduces hidden code gremlins that cause problems during typesetting and might delay the publication of your book.

Ayn (‘) and hamza (’)

- You can use either the Unicode special characters or curly apostrophes for ayn and hamza.
- Whichever option you decide on, be consistent.
- The hamza Unicode character is 02BE.
- The ayn Unicode character is 02BF.

See also: *Transliteration for non-Roman alphabets*

Capitalization

- Keep capitals to a minimum.

When to use capitals

- Full caps for acronyms, e.g., NATO, USA, TV.

Dates

- Write dates as: day of the week, comma, full name of the month, and full year in numerals.
 - For example: Monday, November 11, 2019



- Decades do not take an apostrophe before the 's'.
 - For example: the 1930s
- For date ranges, use an en rule with no spaces.
 - For example: 1999–2001, 2005–18, 9–15 August 1984.

See also: *En and em rules; Numbers*

Eras

- For the Christian era, you can use either BC and AD or CE and BCE as long as you are consistent.
 - BC, CE, and BCE follow the year.
 - AD comes before the year.
 - Do not use AD or CE from the year 500 onwards (unless it is important in the context of the book).
 - For example: 43 BC, AD 499, 1984
- For the Islamic dating system, use H or AH and BH.
 - H, AH, and BH follow the year.
 - For example: 123 H, 1440 AH, 16 BH
- If the date is approximate, indicate this with 'c.'
 - For example: 'c. AD 350'

Definite article – using 'the'

- Use a lowercase 't' before the names of associations, companies, institutions, and other bodies.
- For newspapers and periodicals, follow the use of 'the' in the title.
 - For example: the *Daily Mail*, *The Guardian*

Ellipsis

- Do not use a space before an ellipsis
- Use either a space or the appropriate closing punctuation (for example, a closing quotation mark or bracket) after an ellipsis.
- Avoid following ellipses with a full stop or a comma.

See also: *Quotations*

Emphasis

- Avoid using italics for emphasis. You should use your wording and grammar to emphasize words and phrases.

En and em rules

- No spaces around en dashes and em dashes.



Examples

Em rule as parenthetical dash

Burns refers to one such collection—generally believed to be Joseph Ritson’s *Select Collection of English Songs*—in his letter to Moore as being his ‘vade mecum’.

En rule for ranges

- Dates: 1900–1, 1900–10, 1910–18, 1923–4
- Pages: pp. 368–71
- Note: do not write ‘from’ before a range joined with an en rule.

See also: *Numbers*

Fonts and typography

- When submitting a manuscript do not attempt to format the pages into a book format.
- The font should be Times New Roman or Calibri 12.
- Double space.
- Use default margins for 8.5 x 11 size documents.

Headings and sub-headings

- Use as simple a hierarchy as possible.
- If you choose to use subheadings, use the headings available in Word.

Hyphenation

- Keep hyphenation to a minimum.
- Use hyphens used for compound adjectives.
 - For example: A nineteenth-century building (but, a building of the nineteenth century)

Italics

- Only italicize what is necessary.
- Use italics for foreign words, except when part of a foreign-language quotation or when the word has been assimilated into the English language.
- Italicize titles of newspapers, journals, plays, books, films, works of art, and names of ships.
- Do not italicize the names of institutions or associations.
- Do not italicize for emphasis.
 - See also: *Emphasis*
- Do not italicize surrounding punctuation.

Legal cases

- When citing legal cases, set the parties’ names in italics and use ‘v.’ in Roman between them.
 - For example: *Roe v. Wade*.



Legal issues

- If there is any danger of text being interpreted as libelous, err on the side of caution.
- Do not make personal criticism of living individuals without very careful consideration of the possible legal consequences.

Miscellaneous Punctuation

- No spaces before any punctuation.
- Use three asterisks for ornamental breaks.
- Do not use two ending punctuation marks at the end of a sentence. Pick the most appropriate one (i.e., ?!, !!, !!).
- If an abbreviation ends a sentence, you don't need a second period (i.e., Sam ran to the house of the Dr.). That was an extremely horrible sentence, but you get the idea.
Also, see Abbreviations
- DO NOT use apostrophes to accent or highlight a word or phrase. Instead, use italics or bold.

Notes

- All notes should appear as chapter endnotes.
- Indicate notes with superscript numerals, without parentheses, outside any punctuation. Or use the settings in Word to create those seamlessly.

Numbered lists

- All numbered lists should be numbered '1.', '2.', and so on.
- Do not use letters or Roman numerals.
- Parentheses around numbers can be used in running text
 - For example: I saw (1) an elephant and (2) a mouse]
- Parentheses should not be used for note indicators or in numbered lists.
 - For example:
I saw:
 1. an elephant
 2. a mouse

Numbers

- Spell out numbers up to but not including 10 for technical books.
- Spell out words up to but not including 100 for more literary texts, especially in dialogue. In the case of manuscripts that are more scientific in nature, spell out numbers under 10.
 - Exceptions to the rule include the following:
 - Phone numbers (particularly 911, the emergency number),
 - Years
 - Decimals
 - Vehicle designations (such as aircraft call signs)
 - Weapon names (AK-47) and calibers are usually presented in digits.



- Time when using a.m. and p.m. use the colon and numerals. But if you are in dialogue or some other instances and choose to use o'clock, then spell it out. (He went out at ten. He picked her up at four o'clock. She ate her dinner at ten to four.)
- Room numbers (room 308)

- In general, use digits for numbers that would become unwieldy if spelled out. Common entries on my style sheet include heights (five-foot-one, six-four)
- Spell out the decades (the seventies).
- Spell out clothing sizes (size eight)
- Ranges of numbers: omit any digits that are not necessary to understanding.
- Use commas, not spaces or full points, for large numbers.
 - For example: 6,000, 10,000

Oxford comma

- Use the serial comma (aka, the Oxford comma).

Paragraphs

- Separate paragraphs using one line break (press 'return' on your keyboard).
- Do not use lines of asterisks or other symbols to separate text.
- If you choose to indent or not, remain consistent.

Possessives

- Use an 's for words ending in 's'.
 - For example: Fawkes's, Woods's, James's, Dickens's, and Descartes's.
- If a noun is plural and ends in an 's', then you will use an apostrophe after the 's'.
 - For example: cows', houses', families'

Quotation marks

- Be consistent and use curly quotations.
- Use single quotation marks when appropriate, like a quote within a quote.
 - For example: "Newman says, 'get off that iron,' when he was angry," George said.

Quotations

- In the case of nonfiction, quotations of more than 40 words should be displayed.
 - Type long quotes (40 words or more) in their own paragraph. It doesn't need a quotation mark.
- Don't use an introductory ellipsis.
- It is acceptable to use a concluding ellipsis.
- Use original spellings. Add [*sic*] if necessary.
- Capitalize quotations according to the standard rules of capitalization.
- Include the source of the quote, following the guidelines set out by your chosen citation style. I prefer MLM but if you are doing a manuscript based in science, use APA.



Sexist usage

- In nonfiction, try not to overuse ‘he and she’. Reword to avoid using pronouns in some instances.
- Consider using the plural ‘they’ if it seems appropriate.
- If rewording is not possible, it is preferable to use ‘he or she’, not ‘s/he’ or ‘he/she’.
- Avoid using the word ‘Man’ to refer to the species and in stereotyped clichés.
 - For example, do not say: They decided he was the right man for the job.

Spaces

- Use **one character space between sentences** (after the full stop), not two.
- Close up figures and abbreviated measurements.
 - For example: 20km, not 20 km.

Spellings

- Use American spellings.

Web addresses

- Do not underline web addresses unless you are hyperlinking them in the digital book.
- Do not include terminal punctuation, as this could confuse someone typing the address into their computer.
 - For example: <https://editsbystacey.com>

Your Additions

- Use this space or create a new document to add your own rules that you wish to apply to your manuscript.