

IN-HOUSE CONTENT STYLE GUIDE

SECRETS THAT SELL BOOKS

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This AuthorsDoor In-House Content Style Guide incorporates teachings from Strunk & White’s “The Elements of Style” for American English composition instruction, which combines the practice of composition with the study of literature. It succinctly outlines the principal requirements of plain English style and aims to ease the tasks of publishers and authors by focusing on the most commonly breached rules of usage and principles of composition. The style sheets serve as references for manuscript corrections. Once writers have mastered plain English for everyday use through this guidance, they should then explore the secrets of style through the study of literary masters.

NOTE: The information contained herein covers only a small portion of the field of English style. However, the experience of its writers and editors suggests that beyond the essentials, authors benefit most from individual instruction tailored to the challenges of their own work. Each publisher may have their own preferred theories, which they prioritize over those presented in any textbook.

For a more in-depth study of the written word, explore my book available for free as a PDF, “AuthorsDoor Edition: Elements of Style Revisited—The Writing Companion.” You can also find the print and e-book versions on Amazon and other major retailers.

Advanced Suggested Reading

The following books are recommended for reference or further study:

- ❖ F. Howard Collins, *Author and Printer*.
- ❖ Chicago University Press, *The Chicago Manual of Style*.
- ❖ T. L. De Vinne, *Correct Composition*.
- ❖ Horace Hart, *Rules for Compositors and Printers*.
- ❖ George McLane Wood, *Extracts from the Style-Book of the Government Printing Office (USGPO)*.
- ❖ Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, *The Art of Writing*.
- ❖ George McLane Wood, *Suggestions to Authors*.
- ❖ John Leslie Hall, *English Usage*.
- ❖ James P. Kelly, *Workmanship in Words*.

❖ T. R. Lounsbury, *Standard of Usage in English*.

NOTE: I recommend “The Chicago Manual of Style” for those interested in enhancing their writing. To explore this guide further, watch my free course on the Ridge Publishing Group's YouTube channel, “Publisher and Her World at Ridge Publishing Group.” The Course, titled **AuthorsDoor Series: Publisher & Her World: Secrets that Sell Books**, features a Bonus Chapter: In-House Content Style Guide. If you’re looking for a transcript of this course along with detailed step-by-step exercises, consider purchasing the **AuthorsDoor Leadership Program Workbook: Secrets that Sell Books**—available in print on Amazon.com and other platforms.

Section 1.1. Rules of Usage

While countless grammar guidelines exist, the fundamental ones focus on sentence structure and the categories of words such as nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, and conjunctions. A strong grasp of reading and writing begins with understanding the core rules of English grammar. This discussion will delve deeper into sentence construction and word classes, emphasizing their critical role in grammatical principles.

1. Form the possessive singular of nouns with 's. Follow this rule whatever the final consonant. Thus write, *Charles's friend, Burns's poems, the witch's malice*. Exceptions are the possessives of ancient proper names in *-e* and *-is*, the possessive *Jesus's*, and such forms as *for conscience's sake, for righteousness's sake*. But such forms as *Achilles's heel, Moses's laws, Isis's temple* are commonly replaced by *the heel of Achilles, the laws of Moses, the temple of Isis*.

The general rule for forming the possessive of a singular noun is to add an apostrophe and “s”, regardless of whether the noun ends in “s” or not. For plural nouns that end in “s”, the possessive is formed by adding only an apostrophe. If the plural noun does not end in “s”, add both an apostrophe and “s” to form the possessive. However, pronominal possessives such as *hers, its, theirs, yours, and oneself* do not include an apostrophe.

- ❖ A **consonant** is any letter in the English alphabet that is not a vowel (A, E, I, O, U, and sometimes Y). Consonants are characterized by sounds produced with a closure or narrowing in the vocal tract that causes audible turbulence.
- ❖ **Noun** is a part of speech that names a person, place, thing, idea, or quality.
- ❖ The **pronominal** relates to or serves as a pronoun, referring to words or elements in speech that function as or replace pronouns.
- ❖ A **pronoun** (such as *I, me, he, she, herself, you, it, that, they, each, few, many, who, whoever, whose, someone, everybody*, etc.) is a word that takes the place of a noun. In the sentence *Jake saw Erica, and he kissed her*, the pronouns *he* and *her* take the place of *Jake* and *Erica*, respectively. Pronouns can be classified into several types, including **subject** (e.g., *he*), **object** (e.g., *him*), **possessive** (e.g., *his*), and **reflexive** (e.g., *himself*).

2. In a series of three or more terms with a single conjunction, use a comma after each term except the last. This comma is often referred to as the “serial comma.” Thus write, *red, white, and blue; honest, energetic, but headstrong; He opened the letter, read it, and made a note of its contents*. However, in the names of business firms, the last comma is omitted, as *Brown, Shipley and Company*.

The abbreviation *etc.* is typically preceded by a comma, even if only a single term comes before it. This practice follows the general punctuation rule for lists, ensuring clarity and consistency.

❖ A **conjunction** is a word that joins words, phrases, or clauses within a sentence. Conjunctions can be used as single words or in pairs. For example, *and*, *but*, and *or* are used individually, whereas *neither/nor* and *either/or* are examples of conjunction pairs.

3. **Enclose parenthetical expressions between commas.** *The best way to see a country, unless you are pressed for time, is to travel on foot.* Applying this rule can be challenging; it is often difficult to decide whether a single word, such as *however*, or a brief phrase should be considered parenthetical. If the interruption to the flow of the sentence is slight, the writer may safely omit the commas. However, regardless of whether the interruption is slight or considerable, it is crucial never to omit one comma and leave the other. Incorrect punctuation such as in *Marjorie's husband, Colonel Nelson, paid us a visit yesterday,* or *My brother, you will be pleased to hear, is now in perfect health,* should be avoided. Both examples should have commas both before and after the parenthetical expressions.

Nonrestrictive relative clauses are, in accordance with this rule, set off by commas. For example, the sentence *The audience, which had at first been indifferent, became more and more interested,* is correctly punctuated. Similar clauses introduced by *where* and *when* are punctuated in the same manner. For instance, *In 1769, when Napoleon was born, Corsica had but recently been acquired by France,* and *Nether Stowey, where Coleridge wrote *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, is a few miles from Bridgewater.* In these sentences, the clauses introduced by *which*, *when*, and *where* are nonrestrictive; they do not limit the application of the words on which they depend but add, parenthetically, statements supplementing those in the principal clauses. Each sentence is a combination of two statements that might have been made independently.

Restrictive relative clauses are not set off by commas because they are essential to the meaning of the sentence. For example, in the sentence *The candidate who best meets these requirements will obtain the place,* the relative clause *who best meets these requirements* restricts the application of the word *candidate* to a single person. Unlike nonrestrictive clauses, this sentence cannot be split into two independent statements without losing its original meaning.

The abbreviations *etc.* is usually preceded by a comma, and except at the end of a sentence, it may be followed by one. The abbreviation *jr.* when used after a person's name, is traditionally preceded by a comma, though modern usage often omits it.

- ❖ **Too many commas can clutter a sentence.** If your independent clauses contain commas, consider using a semicolon before the conjunction for clearer separation. While this practice may seem outdated to some, it remains a valid option for improving readability when sentences are complex.
- ❖ **Do not use a comma to join two list items in a list.** Avoid using a comma before a conjunction that joins two simple items, such as in *Burger and fries.*
- ❖ **When listing three or more items, the use of the serial comma**—also known as the Oxford comma—varies by convention. In the United States, it is standard to use a comma before the conjunction in a series (e.g., *apples, oranges, and bananas*). However, in the United Kingdom, this final comma is typically omitted (e.g., *apples, oranges and bananas*).

4. **Place a comma before *and* or *but* when introducing an independent clause.** For example: *The early records of the city have disappeared, and the story of its first years can no longer be reconstructed. The situation is perilous, but there is still one chance of escape.* These sentences, when taken out of context, might seem to require rewriting because the second clause can appear as an afterthought. This is often because *and* is a non-specific

connective that simply indicates a relationship between the clauses without defining it. In the examples above, the relationship is one of cause and result.

To make the relationship clearer or to enhance the flow, these sentences could be rewritten with subordinate clauses or phrases: *As the early records of the city have disappeared, the story of its first years can no longer be reconstructed. Although the situation is perilous, there is still one chance of escape.* Alternatively: *Owing to the disappearance of the early records of the city, the story of its first years can no longer be reconstructed. In this perilous situation, there is still one chance of escape.*

Two-part sentences where the second part is introduced by conjunctions such as *as* (in the sense of *because*), *for*, *or*, *nor*, and *while* (meaning *and at the same time*) typically require a comma before the conjunction.

If a dependent clause or an introductory phrase that requires a comma precedes the second independent clause, no comma is needed after the conjunction. *The situation is perilous, but if we are prepared to act promptly, there is still one chance of escape.* (For two-part sentences connected by an adverb, see the next section.)

5. **Do not join independent clauses with just a comma.** If two or more clauses, grammatically complete and not joined by a conjunction, are to form a single compound sentence, the proper mark of punctuation is a semicolon. For example: *It is nearly half past five; we cannot reach town before dark.* Alternatively, it is equally correct to write these as two separate sentences, replacing the semicolons with periods. *It is nearly half past five. We cannot reach town before dark.*

If a conjunction is inserted, the proper mark is a comma (Rule 4). *It is nearly half past five, and we cannot reach town before dark.* Note that if the second clause is preceded by an adverb, such as *accordingly*, *besides*, *so*, *then*, *therefore*, or *thus*, and not by a conjunction, the semicolon is still required. *I had never been in the place before; so I had difficulty in finding my way about.*

In general, however, it is best to avoid using *so* in this manner when writing; there is a danger that the writer who uses it may rely on it too often. A simple and usually effective correction is to omit *so* and begin the first clause with *as*: *As I had never been in the place before, I had difficulty in finding my way about.* However, if the clauses are very short and similar in form, using a comma is usually permissible: *Man proposes, God disposes.*

- ❖ An **adverb** is a word that modifies a verb, providing additional information about how, when, where, to what extent, or under what conditions the action occurs. Adverbs can also modify adjectives, other adverbs, phrases, or even entire sentences. Most adverbs are formed by adding *-ly* to an adjective. If the adjective ends in *-y*, it usually changes to *-ily* (e.g., *happy* becomes *happily*).
 - ❖ A **verb** is a word used to describe an action, state, or occurrence, forming the main part of the predicate of a sentence.
 - ❖ An **adjective** describes or modifies nouns and pronouns in a sentence.
6. **Do not break sentences in two.** In other words, do not use periods where commas are appropriate. For example, the sentence *I met them on a Cunard liner several years ago. Coming home from Liverpool to New York.* is incorrect because the second part is not a complete sentence. It should be rewritten as: *I met them on a Cunard liner several years ago, coming home from Liverpool to New York.* In this corrected version, the period is replaced by a comma, and *coming* should not be capitalized.

It is permissible to make an emphatic word or expression serve the purpose of a sentence and to punctuate it accordingly. For example: *Again and again he called out. No reply.* The writer must, however, ensure that the

emphasis is warranted and that the punctuation is not perceived as a mere blunder. It is important to consider the context and the audience to avoid any misunderstanding.

7. **A participial phrase at the beginning of a sentence must refer to the grammatical subject.** For example: *Walking slowly down the road, he saw a woman accompanied by two children.* The word *walking* refers to the subject of the sentence, not the woman. If the writer wishes to make it refer to the woman, the sentence must be recast: *He saw a woman, accompanied by two children, walking slowly down the road.*

Participial phrases preceded by a conjunction or by a preposition, nouns in apposition, adjectives, and adjective phrases come under the same rule if they begin the sentence. For example: *On arriving in Chicago, his friends met him at the station* is incorrect. The correct version is: *When he arrived in Chicago, his friends met him at the station.*

- ❖ A **participial phrase** is a phrase that looks like a verb but functions as an adjective, modifying a noun in the same sentence. These phrases can “spice up” a noun by providing additional description about what it is doing or what it looks like. Participial phrases are often used in writing that needs to convey a lot of information in a few words, such as newspaper articles or fiction books.
 - ❖ A **preposition** is a word used to link nouns, pronouns, or phrases to other words within a sentence. Prepositions connect the people, objects, time, and locations of a sentence. They are usually short words placed directly in front of nouns.
 - ❖ **Apposition** is a relationship between two or more words or phrases in which the units are grammatically parallel and have the same referent (e.g., *my friend Sue; the first United States president, George Washington*).
8. **Divide words at line-ends according to their formation and pronunciation.** If there is room at the end of a line for one or more syllables of a word but not for the whole word, divide the word. Avoid dividing a word if it results in cutting off only a single letter or only two letters of a long word. No single rule applies to all words.

Section 1.2. Principles of Composition

Every piece of writing has an underlying structural blueprint. Depending on the writer’s expertise, requirements, and the unpredictabilities that arise during the writing process, this blueprint may be adhered to or deviated from. For writing to resonate, it should align with the author’s thoughts, though not always in the sequence they first appear. This necessitates a strategic approach. In certain instances, an unstructured approach might be best, such as in a heartfelt love letter or an informal essay. However, for most writings, intentional planning is essential. Thus, the primary rule of crafting a piece is to visualize and stick to its intended structure.

9. **Make the paragraph the unit of composition: one paragraph to each topic.** Use paragraphs to delineate distinct topics. If you’re discussing a narrow topic or providing a succinct overview, you might not need multiple sections; a single paragraph can suffice. For instance, a concise summary, a fleeting description, an overview of a narrative, or the presentation of a singular idea is often best encapsulated within one paragraph. Once written, it’s wise to review if breaking it down further enhances clarity.

Most subjects, however, benefit from subdivision into specific topics, with each taking its own paragraph. This approach helps readers navigate and comprehend the material; the start of a new paragraph indicates the onset of a new aspect or viewpoint related to the topic.

It's generally advisable to avoid standalone sentences as separate paragraphs. However, transitional sentences, which highlight the connection between parts of a discourse or debate, can be exceptions.

In dialogues, every utterance, even if it's just a word, starts a new paragraph, denoting a shift in the speaker. For a clear understanding of this, especially when dialogue intertwines with narrative, consult well-structured fiction as a guide.

- 10. As a rule, each paragraph should begin with a topic sentence and end in a manner consistent with its beginning.** This structure is crucial for guiding readers, enabling them to quickly grasp the central idea introduced at the outset and maintain focus throughout. Effective paragraphs, especially in explanatory or argumentative writing, typically adhere to this framework: (1) A topic sentence placed at the beginning or near it; (2) supporting sentences that elaborate, substantiate, or expand on the initial statement; and (3) a concluding sentence that reinforces the main idea or highlights its broader implication.

It's crucial to avoid ending with irrelevant details or tangents. However, it's worth noting that short, lively narrative paragraphs might not always adhere to this structure. Instead, the separation between such paragraphs can act as a rhetorical pause, spotlighting specific aspects of the narrative.

- 11. Use the active voice.** The active voice is typically more straightforward and energetic compared to the passive voice. For instance, *I shall always remember my first visit to Boston* has more impact than *My first visit to Boston will always be remembered by me*. However, this isn't a call to abandon the passive voice altogether; there are times when it is apt and necessary. Yet, using the active voice regularly often results in more dynamic writing, applicable across various genres. Many descriptions or explanations that may initially seem dull can gain vibrancy by replacing passive constructions like *there is* or *could be heard* with active verbs. For example, *There were a great number of dead leaves lying on the ground* (passive) can be more vividly stated as *Dead leaves covered the ground* (active).

In terms of English grammar, the active voice occurs when the subject performs the action of the verb, while the passive voice occurs when the subject receives the action of the verb. Verbs in English are characterized by five attributes: (1) mood (e.g., subjunctive, which relates to hypotheticals or desires), (2) number (singular or plural), (3) person (first, second, or third), (4) tense (indicating time such as past, present, or future), and (5) voice (active or passive). Here, our focus is on voice.

- 12. Put statements in positive form by affirmatively stating your ideas.** Choose precise, confident language and avoid vague, muted, or indecisive expressions. Use "not" for direct negation or contrasting ideas, rather than to obscure clarity. For example, *He usually came late* is clearer than *He was not very often on time*. Aim to frame negatives positively: say *dishonest* instead of *not honest*, *trifling* instead of *not important*, *forgot* instead of *did not remember*, *ignored* instead of *did not pay any attention to*, and *distrusted* instead of *did not have much confidence in*.
- 13. Omit needless words.** Be succinct and remove superfluous words. Strong writing is marked by its brevity. Just as a sketch shouldn't have redundant lines or a device extraneous components, sentences and paragraphs should be free of unnecessary elements. This doesn't mean all sentences should be brief or merely present an overview, but each word should serve a purpose. Common phrases often violate this guideline. For example, *there is no doubt but that* is more effectively expressed as *doubtless*. Another phrase to watch out for is *the fact that* which can often be replaced with *though* or *although*. Additionally, phrases like *who is* or *which was* can often be omitted. Instead of *His brother, who is a member of the same firm*, simply state, *His brother, a member of the same firm*.

- 14. Avoid a succession of loose sentences** composed of two coordinated clauses connected by conjunctions or relatives. While an occasional sentence of this structure might be acceptable, a continuous sequence can quickly become repetitive and dull.

Inexperienced writers often compose entire paragraphs using such sentences, frequently linking them with conjunctions like *and*, *but* or occasionally *who*, *which*, *when*, *where*, and *while* in nonrestrictive contexts. If writers recognize they have fallen into this pattern, they should restructure several sentences to eliminate the redundancy. This can be achieved by using simple sentences or those with up to three clauses, depending on what best conveys the intended meaning.

- 15. Express co-ordinate ideas in similar form** to maintain uniformity. This concept, known as parallel construction, emphasizes that ideas of equal value and meaning should be presented in a matching manner. Such consistency helps readers identify and relate to the content. Consider the biblical verses like *Blessed are the poor in spirit*, *Blessed are they that mourn*, and so on. Each follows a similar structure, making them easily recognizable and resonant.

Novice writers sometimes sidestep this principle, mistakenly thinking that they should continuously diversify their expression styles. While there are instances, such as when emphasizing a point, where variation might be needed, it's generally wise to adhere to parallel construction.

If one wonders about presenting numerous similar ideas, say twenty, does this mean twenty successive sentences of identical format? Upon closer examination, these ideas likely fall into categories, allowing for parallelism within each subset. If organizing them seems daunting, presenting the ideas in a tabular form might be more effective.

- 16. Keep related words together by placing them close within the sentence.** The arrangement of words primarily illustrates their interrelationship. Misplaced words can lead to confusion or ambiguity. To convey thoughts clearly, group related words and separate unrelated ones. Ideally, a sentence's subject and main verb shouldn't be separated by phrases or clauses that could be positioned at the start. For instance, instead of saying *Wordsworth, in the fifth book of The Excursion, gives a minute description of this church*, say *In the fifth book of The Excursion, Wordsworth gives a minute description of this church*. Such separations can disrupt the flow of the primary statement, though exceptions exist, such as when the interruption is a relative clause, an appositive expression, or is used in sentences crafted for suspense.

The relative pronoun should typically follow its antecedent immediately. For instance, instead of *There was a look in his eye that boded mischief*, it's clearer to write *In his eye was a look that boded mischief*. If the antecedent is a phrase, the relative pronoun should conclude the phrase, unless that creates confusion. For example, it's more apt to say *William Henry Harrison's grandson, Benjamin Harrison, who*, rather than *The grandson of William Henry Harrison, who*. However, a noun in apposition can sit between the antecedent and relative, as this doesn't typically cause ambiguity, e.g., *The Duke of York, his brother, who was regarded with hostility by the Whigs*.

- An **antecedent**, when used as a *noun*, refers to a thing or event that existed before or logically precedes another. When used as an *adjective*, antecedent describes something that precedes in time or order; it means previous or pre-existing.

Modifiers should ideally sit adjacent to the words they modify. If multiple modifiers relate to one word, ensure their arrangement doesn't imply an incorrect relationship. For instance, the phrase *All members were not present* might be misinterpreted. It is clearer to say *Not all members were present*.

17. In summaries, maintain consistent tense usage. For dramas, always use the present tense. For poems, stories, or novels, the present tense is preferable, though the past tense can also be used. If the summary is in the present, denote prior actions with the present perfect tense; if in the past, use the past perfect tense. However, in indirect discourse or questions, a past tense remains unchanged.

Regardless of the chosen tense, stick to it consistently. Switching tenses can convey indecisiveness, similar to the importance of maintaining parallel structure (as noted in Rule 15). When presenting another person's thoughts or statements, such as in summarizing an essay or recounting a speech, refrain from frequently interjecting phrases like *he said* or *the author thinks*. Clearly indicate from the start that what follows is a summary, then proceed without redundant reminders.

Summaries are often essential in notebooks, newspapers, and literature guides. They're also beneficial exercises for primary school students to retell stories. However, when critically analyzing literature, avoid excessive summarization. While a brief introduction to the subject or initial situation might be necessary, the focus should be on a structured discussion backed by evidence rather than a mere overview. When discussing multiple works, it's generally more effective to draw overarching conclusions than to address each one chronologically.

18. Place the emphatic words of a sentence at the end. Position key words or phrases at the end of a sentence for emphasis. The most significant word or phrase often finds its strongest impact at the conclusion of a statement. For example, the sentence *Humanity has hardly advanced in fortitude since that time, though it has advanced in many other ways* is more effectively conveyed as *Humanity, since that time, has advanced in many other ways, but it has hardly advanced in fortitude*.

Typically, the logical predicate, or the new information introduced in a sentence, claims this position of prominence. For instance, instead of *This steel is principally used for making razors, because of its hardness*, it's clearer to say, *Because of its hardness, this steel is principally used in making razors*. The strength of a periodic sentence lies in its ability to emphasize the main point by building up to it.

The sentence's beginning is the other primary position for emphasis. Placing any element (other than the subject) at the start makes it stand out: *Deceit or treachery he could never forgive*. While a subject can be emphasized when it's at the beginning, other factors, like context, usually amplify this. For instance in *Great kings worshiped at his shrine*, "kings" is emphasized due to its inherent meaning and surrounding context. If the subject needs particular emphasis, it can be effectively highlighted by positioning it as the predicate, as in *Through the middle of the valley flowed a winding stream*. This principle of end-placement for emphasis applies to words in a sentence, sentences in a paragraph, and paragraphs in an entire piece.

- A **predicate** is the part of a sentence or clause containing a verb and stating something about the subject (e.g., *went home* in *John went home*).

Section 1.3. Matters of Form

The subsequent content does not aim to provide a comprehensive overview or exhaustive exploration of the entire subject. Instead, its primary purpose is to highlight and elucidate the core requirements regarding matters of form within the broader context. By doing so, we aim to shed light on the foundational elements that are often overlooked or misinterpreted. This focus on the basics ensures that authors, editors, and proofreaders can gain a solid understanding of the most crucial aspects. Moreover, it seeks to address and rectify the most frequent violations and

misunderstandings related to form, offering clarity and guidance for those who wish to navigate this subject with precision and accuracy.

Colloquialisms and slang. When incorporating colloquial or slang expressions into your writing, use them naturally without placing them in quotation marks. Highlighting them in this manner can appear pretentious, suggesting an exclusivity between you and the reader that may seem condescending.

Colon usage. The colon is used to separate two independent clauses when the second one elucidates or exemplifies the first. Unlike the semicolon, which links two independent clauses, the colon introduces information that explains or builds upon the preceding text. After a colon, the initial word should generally be lowercase unless it begins a complete sentence or is a proper noun like “Bible.” When what follows the colon is a list, begin with a lowercase letter unless standard rules of capitalization dictate otherwise.

E-book. In the widely respected 17th edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style*, the term “e-book” continues to be presented with a hyphen. While linguistic evolution often leads to the dropping of hyphens over time as terms become more familiar, this particular style manual has, at least up to this edition, retained the traditional hyphenated form.

E.g. E.g., an abbreviation derived from the Latin “*exempli gratia*,” means “for example.” When it appears mid-sentence, it should be in lowercase (e.g., in this manner). Most style guides in the U.S. advise placing a period after each letter and typically recommend including a comma following “e.g.” and between each example, especially when listing multiple items.

Ellipsis points. An ellipsis, represented by three dots (...), signifies the omission of words within a quoted sentence or the exclusion of entire sentences from a quoted passage. In creative writing, it serves as a tool to imply that the speaker has drifted off or left a thought or sentence incomplete. The formatting of an ellipsis can vary: some style guides recommend no spaces between the dots, while others suggest spacing (. . .). When employing an ellipsis, each dot is usually not spaced unless specifically recommended by a style guide. For example, at AuthorsDoor, we use (. . .). If the ellipsis is juxtaposed with a quotation mark, omit the space immediately next to the quotation mark.

Email. In the 17th edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style*, the term “email” underwent a notable change. Whereas previous conventions might have included a hyphen, this edition presented “email” as a single, unhyphenated word. This adaptation reflects the evolving nature of language and how common usage can influence standardized style guidelines, especially as technological terms become more integrated into everyday language. This specific alteration underscores the fluidity of linguistic norms and the importance of style manuals in capturing and reflecting these shifts.

Exclamation marks. Exclamation marks convey strong emotions such as excitement, surprise, astonishment, or other intense feelings. However, it’s essential not to overuse them to emphasize ordinary statements. Writing *It was a wonderful show!* is considered excessive. A more appropriate phrasing would be: *It was a wonderful show.* The exclamation mark should primarily be used following genuine exclamations or imperative commands. For instance, *What a wonderful show!* or *Halt!* are both apt uses of the mark.

Headings. When starting a new chapter in a manuscript, it’s advisable to allocate ample space at the top of the first page. Position the chapter title or heading about a quarter way down the page, ensuring there’s a blank line or an equivalent gap following the heading. For the following pages, begin the text closer to the top, but ensure it doesn’t look cramped. Refrain from adding a period at the end of titles or headings. However, if the context demands it, a question mark or exclamation point can be included.

Hyphen. A small yet crucial punctuation mark, the hyphen is employed to connect two or more words when they come together to function as a singular descriptive term before a noun. This combined form helps in clarifying meaning, ensuring that the reader interprets the two words as one unified descriptor. For instance, when describing a *blue-green sea*, the hyphen indicates that the sea is a shade between blue and green, rather than distinctly blue and green. Thus, the hyphen serves to enhance clarity and precision in written communication.

Hyphen and em dash, or long hyphen. These punctuation marks serve different purposes. The hyphen (-) connects two or more words to function as a single descriptor (e.g., *well-known author*). The em dash (—), or long hyphen, introduces a significant pause or break within a sentence’s structure. Em dashes can be used in pairs, similar to parentheses, to encapsulate a word, phrase, or clause—as demonstrated here—or stand alone to separate a sentence fragment from its main section. Conventionally, the em dash is used with no spaces flanking it, marking a distinct style choice. However, many newspapers diverge from this convention. Those adhering to AP (Associated Press) style, for instance, place a space both before and after the em dash, creating a visually distinct format.

Hyphen, en dash, or short hyphen. The en dash, situated in length between the brief hyphen and the longer em dash, serves a specific purpose in punctuation. Distinct in its function, the en dash is employed to represent spans or ranges, most commonly in numbers and dates. For instance, when indicating a range between dates or pages, like “1990–2000” or “pages 32–45,” the en dash is the preferred choice. Its unique length and purpose provide clarity and precision in written communication, ensuring that ranges are understood clearly by the reader.

I.e. This abbreviation is derived from Latin and stands for “*id est*,” which translates to “in other words.” When it appears within a sentence, it should be presented in lowercase (i.e., as demonstrated here). A majority of U.S. style guides advise placing a period after each letter in “i.e.” Typically, you should follow “i.e.” with a comma, and if you’re listing multiple items, separate them with commas as well.

Internet. In its early usage, the term “internet” was capitalized as it was considered a proper noun. However, as the concept became ubiquitous and deeply integrated into daily life, the trend shifted towards treating “internet” as a generic noun, leading to its common lowercase representation in recent years.

Italics in text. Italics serve as a tool to highlight specific words or phrases, acting as a spotlight in written content. They are used to ensure that particular portions of text, especially those deemed critical or surprising, stand out. By italicizing these segments, writers can guide readers to take note of essential points or elements, ensuring they don’t gloss over them. Italics are also frequently used for the titles of books, films, television shows, and other works; for foreign words that have not been fully assimilated into English; and for scientific names of species, enhancing the clarity and readability of written materials.

Jr. in names. Traditionally, names were formatted with a comma before “Jr.,” as in “John Smith, Jr.” However, contemporary style, as recommended by The Associated Press stylebook, often omits this comma, resulting in “Martin Luther King Jr.” This modern approach is predominantly adopted in private newspapers and online platforms. Nonetheless, for those drafting content for U.S. government publications or adhering to the guidelines of the United States Government Printing Office, the comma before “Jr.” remains a requirement.

Margins in documents. It’s advisable to maintain uniformity by keeping both the right and left margins of a document approximately equal in width. However, an exception arises when extensive annotations or edits are expected. In such cases, the left margin should be sufficiently broad to facilitate and accommodate these additional notes or changes.

Numerical representation. When presenting dates or sequential numbers, avoid spelling them out. Instead, represent them using digits or Roman numerals, depending on the context. For example, use formats like *August 9, 1918*, *Rule*

3, *Chapter XII*, or *352d infantry*. Roman numerals are typically reserved for formal or hierarchical numbering such as book chapters or historical volumes.

Parenthetical usage. When a sentence includes a parenthetical phrase or clause, it should be punctuated just as it would be without the parenthesis. The content inside the parentheses should be treated as if it were separate, omitting the ending punctuation unless it's a question mark or exclamation point. For instance, *He declares (and why wouldn't we trust his sincerity?) that he's sure of success*. If the parenthetical content is entirely separated from the surrounding sentence, the ending punctuation precedes the closing parenthesis. For example, *(A completely independent statement would be punctuated like this.)*

Quotations, double quotation marks. In American English, commas and periods are consistently placed within double quotation marks. In contrast, dashes, colons, and semicolons generally sit outside. The placement of question marks and exclamation points can vary, residing either inside or outside the quotation marks, depending on the context of the sentence. For formal citations or documentary references, a colon introduces the quote, which is then enclosed in quotation marks. If a quote is followed by an attributive phrase, such as a dialogue tag, the comma is placed within the quotation marks, as in: *"I can't attend," she said*. Although it might seem more logical for the comma to be outside from a grammatical standpoint, typographical conventions dictate its position within the quotation marks.

Quotations, single quotation marks. The standard practice in American English is to use double quotation marks consistently. However, if you're embedding a quote within another quote, single quotation marks are used. The convention varies in the broader English-speaking world, known as the Anglosphere. In many of these regions outside the United States, such as the United Kingdom, books typically utilize single quotation marks for primary quotations, while newspapers often prefer double quotation marks.

References, citations in scholarly works. In academic or research-intensive works where precise references are crucial, it's practical to abbreviate recurrent titles. Ensure that the complete versions of these titles are listed alphabetically at the document's conclusion. Ideally, references should be placed within parentheses or as footnotes, to avoid disrupting the flow of the main text. When citing, it's generally best to omit general terms like *act*, *scene*, *line*, *book*, *volume*, or *page*, unless referencing a specific section within a larger work is necessary. Proper punctuation is vital for clarity and accuracy. For example, a citation like *2 Samuel 1:17–27* effectively demonstrates how to reference specific passages succinctly.

Semicolon usage. The semicolon serves as a connector within a sentence, binding two independent clauses that share a close thematic relationship. For example, *She loves books; he prefers movies*. This sentence uses a semicolon to link two related thoughts about personal preferences.

Title formatting. In academic and literary contexts, titles of works are typically presented in italics with each major word capitalized. However, practices among editors and publishers can differ. Some may prefer italics with all major words capitalized, while others opt for regular Roman font (non-italicized), with or without quotation marks, but still capitalizing key words. When preparing a manuscript, it's conventional to use italics, often signified by underlining the title. However, this can vary if you're writing for a publication that adheres to a distinct style guide. Additionally, when forming possessive cases of titles, it is common to include initial articles like "A" or "The" unless stylistically omitted.

Section 1.4. Words and Expressions Commonly Misused

Many terms and phrases highlighted in this section aren't necessarily incorrect but often reflect a lackluster style, typically seen in inattentive writing. For example, the misuse of the term "Feature" illustrates that the optimal remedy is often not just replacing one word with another but refining vague generalities into clear, specific statements. Language usage is fluid, and no single authority conclusively dictates right or wrong usage. Writers and publishers intrigued by these interpretations, or those seeking deeper understanding, may find it beneficial to explore these nuances further. For additional insights, the following books are recommended:

- ❖ *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Eleventh Edition.
- ❖ *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Third Edition.
- ❖ *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*.
- ❖ *The New Fowler's Modern English Usage*, Third Edition, edited by R.W. Burchfield.
- ❖ *Modern American Usage: A Guide* by Wilson Follett and Erik Wensberg.
- ❖ *The Careful Writer* by Theodore M. Bernstein.

Aforesaid. While the term "aforesaid" holds value in legal jargon, it can be cumbersome in everyday writing. Instead, opt for phrases like *previously mentioned* or *stated earlier*, which are clearer and more suited to general communication.

Aggravate vs. irritate. It's essential to distinguish between *aggravate* and *irritate*. *Aggravate* implies intensifying an existing problem or condition, while *irritate* refers to causing annoyance or vexation. Ensure you use each word in its appropriate context to communicate effectively.

All right vs. alright. Many are surprised to learn that *alright* is not an approved spelling of *all right*. While *alright* might appear in casual writing, educators and editors consistently deem it improper. When aiming for correct usage, it's advised to use the two word form: *all right*, which conveys agreement, affirmation, or approval. *OK* (with its variations *Okay* and *O.K.*) is synonymous with *all right* and can be used interchangeably in both casual and less formal writing contexts. However, in very formal writing, *all right* is often preferred. Personal preference also plays a role; for instance, I lean towards *OK*.

Allude vs. elude. It's important to differentiate between *allude* and *elude*. You allude to a book, implying an indirect mention. On the other hand, you elude someone when you evade or escape from them. Additionally, *allude* shouldn't be mistaken for *refer*. While an allusion suggests a subtle or indirect hint, a reference indicates a direct and specific mention. For example, if you *refer* to a book, you directly mention it or cite it explicitly in your discussion.

Allusion vs. illusion. It's crucial to distinguish between *allusion* and *illusion*. *Allusion* denotes an indirect mention or hint, while *illusion* refers to a deceptive appearance or a mistaken perception of reality. For example, an author might make an *allusion* to Shakespeare's works to enhance the thematic depth of a story. Conversely, a magician creates *illusions* to trick the audience into seeing something that isn't there.

Alternate vs. alternative. It's essential to differentiate between *alternate* and *alternative*. While the terms might seem synonymous, they serve distinct roles. As an adjective, *alternate* signifies every second item in a sequence and can also mean a substitute in a series of two. As a noun, it refers to a stand-in or substitute. *Alternative*, on the other hand, typically represents one of two or more choices and suggests a choice between options, a nuance not inherently present in *alternate*. For instance, *when a flooded road posed a dilemma, they opted for the alternate route since it was the only alternative available.*

Among vs. between. It's essential to clearly distinguish between *among* and *between*. Generally, when referring to interactions or relationships involving more than two entities collectively, *among* is the appropriate choice, as in: *The money was distributed among the four players.* However, when each entity out of a group larger than two is considered distinctly or individually, *between* is the apt word: *an agreement made between the six heirs.*

And/or vs. or. This construction *and/or* often borrowed from legal jargon, can disrupt the fluidity of a sentence. It's primarily useful for those who write in a highly structured or technical manner. Essentially, *and/or* serves as a conjunction to suggest that any combination of the linked options might apply. In logical or mathematical contexts, it functions as an inclusive *or*. In everyday speech, however, *or* can have either inclusive or exclusive connotations, depending on the context. When clarity is paramount, consider using *either... or*, *or*, or another clearer structure to avoid potential confusion.

Anticipate vs. expect. It's crucial to differentiate between *anticipate* and *expect*. *Expect* should be used when referring to a basic presumption or forecast. For instance, *I expected him to look older* rather than *I anticipated he would look older*. Similarly, *My husband expected the market to rise* is clearer than *My husband anticipated the market upturn*. In the latter case, *anticipated* might merely suggest that the husband foresaw the upturn, or it might imply he took preemptive action in light of the forthcoming upturn, such as investing in stocks.

Anybody vs. any body. It's essential to discern the difference between *anybody* and *any body*. When referring to any unspecified person, *anybody* is the single word choice. For example, *Is there anybody who can help?* On the other hand, *any body* refers to a physical form or entity, such as a human body or a corpse, exemplified by *Did they find any body in the wreckage?* The same distinction applies to similar constructions like *everybody*, *nobody*, and *somebody*, where the single word refers to people in general, and the two-word form could refer to any group or amount of physical forms, as in *every body of water*.

Anyone vs. any one. It's important to differentiate between *anyone* and *any one*. *Anyone* is used as a single word to mean any unspecified individual, akin to *anybody*. For example, *Can anyone answer this question?* In contrast, *any one* emphasizes singularity and refers to any specific individual or item among a group. For example, *Please choose any one of these books.*

Bear vs. bare. It's crucial to distinguish between *bear* and *bare*, even though they sound alike. *Bare* primarily means "to uncover or expose," as in *He bared his feelings*. Conversely, *bear* has a multifaceted use. As a verb, it can signify "to endure," "to tolerate," or "to carry," such as in *bearing a burden*. Thus, when asking for patience, *bear with me* is the correct expression. Additionally, *bear* can refer to the large mammal or describe actions like giving birth or shouldering responsibilities, unlike *bare*, which is used for describing exposure, such as *bare skin*.

Can vs. may. It's essential to differentiate between *can* and *may*. *Can* denotes capability or ability, implying the capacity to do something. For example, *Can you lift this box?* suggests questioning someone's physical ability to lift a box. On the other hand, *may* indicates permission or likelihood. For example, *May I leave early today?* asks for permission, while *it may rain later* discusses the possibility of rain. Avoid using *can* in situations where *may* is more appropriate to accurately convey permission or probability.

Can't hardly vs. can hardly. This is an inadvertent double negative. The proper expressions to use are *can hardly* or *can scarcely*. For example, saying *I can hardly believe it* correctly expresses that something is difficult to believe, while *I can't hardly believe it* would incorrectly suggest that it is not difficult to believe.

Certainly vs. very. Some writers frequently deploy *certainly*, akin to how others overuse *very*, aiming to amplify their statements. Such stylistic habits, while they may pass unnoticed in spoken language, become more glaring and detrimental in written form, where conciseness and precision are highly valued. For example, the sentence *I certainly*

believe that is true can be more effectively written as *I believe that is true*, which is stronger and more direct. Similarly, *I am very happy* can often be better expressed simply as *I am happy*.

Compare to vs. compare with. It's important to distinguish between *compare to* and *compare with*. *Compare to* is used when highlighting similarities between two things typically viewed as distinct or different in nature. For instance, likening life to a journey or a drama. On the other hand, *compare with* is employed when highlighting differences or similarities between items of a similar category or kind. For example, contrasting the workings of Congress with that of the British Parliament, or drawing parallels between Paris and London.

Comprise vs. constitute. It's important to differentiate between *comprise* and *constitute*. The word *comprise* means “to include” or “to consist of” all components directly, implying completeness. For instance, a zoo *comprises* mammals, reptiles, and birds, indicating that it includes these groups as a part of its whole composition. On the other hand, these animals can be said to *constitute* the zoo, meaning they make up or form the zoo's composition. Therefore, while the animals *constitute* the zoo, the zoo itself *comprises* these animals.

Consider vs. consider as. When using the verb *consider*, it's important to know when to include “as.” If *consider* is used in the sense of “deeming” or “believing” something about someone or something, it should not be followed by “as.” For example, you would correctly say, *I consider him thoroughly competent*. On the other hand, when *consider* means to “examine” or “discuss” various aspects or roles of a subject, using “as” is appropriate. For instance, *The lecturer discussed Cromwell, first considering him as a soldier and then as an administrator*. These distinctions ensure the verb is used accurately according to its intended meaning.

Contact vs. other phrases. When used as a transitive verb, *contact* can sometimes feel overly formal or impersonal. Instead of saying *contact someone*, consider using more direct and engaging phrases like “reach out to them,” “call them,” “meet them,” or “email them.” These alternatives often convey a clearer intention of the action you plan to take and can add a more personal touch to your communication.

Currently vs. now. It's essential to differentiate between *currently* and *now*, as both imply the present but are used differently. Using *currently* with verbs in the present continuous tense can often be redundant since the tense already indicates ongoing action. For instance, instead of saying, *We are currently reviewing your application*, it's more direct and clear to say, *We are reviewing your application now* or *We are reviewing your application at this moment*. The latter options avoid redundancy and better emphasize the immediacy of the action.

Divided into vs. composed of. It's essential to distinguish between these two phrases. Typically, *divided into* refers to sections or parts of a whole, while *composed of* highlights the elements or materials that make up something. For instance, plays are segmented or *divided into* acts, whereas poems are *composed of* various stanzas. Similarly, when an apple is cut, it is *divided into* pieces, but inherently, an apple is *composed of* seeds, flesh, and skin.

Due to vs. other phrases. It's important to differentiate between *due to* and other causal phrases such as *because of*, *through*, or *owing to*. People often use *due to* in places where *because of* would be more appropriate. For example, *He lost the first game due to carelessness* isn't as accurate as *He lost the first game because of carelessness*. This is because “due to” is traditionally used only when it can follow a form of the verb *to be* and modify a noun. Thus, *due to* is appropriate in sentences like *His loss was due to carelessness* or in noun modifications such as *This invention is due to Edison* and *losses due to preventable fires*.

Effect vs. affect. It's essential to distinguish between *effect* and *affect*. When used as nouns, *effect* typically means “outcome” or “result.” As a verb, *effect* implies bringing about a change or realization, such as in “to effect change.” On the other hand, *affect* as a verb means “to have an impact on.” Occasionally, *affect* can also be a noun in psychology, referring to an observable expression of emotion. In writing pertaining to art, fashion, or music, the term *effect* is

sometimes used ambiguously to describe a certain style or impression, such as “a Southwestern effect” or “effects in pale green.” Writers aiming for clarity should steer clear of such ambiguous usage.

Etc. vs. etcetera. Avoid using the abbreviation *etc.* when referring to people. The term *etcetera* is synonymous with “and the rest,” “and so on,” or “and so forth.” It shouldn’t be used when these phrases would leave ambiguity, particularly if the reader might remain uncertain about significant details. *Etc.* is most appropriate when representing the concluding items of a fully presented list or inconsequential words at the end of a quotation. It’s incorrect to use *etc.* following a list that begins with qualifiers like “such as” or “for example,” because these phrases already suggest that the list is not exhaustive and additional examples could be provided.

Everything vs. everyone vs. everybody. The term *everything* is always a single word and refers to all things or elements in a context. Both *everyone* and *everybody* serve as indefinite pronouns and are interchangeable, referring to all individuals within a group. On the other hand, *every one* (two separate words) emphasizes individuality within a collective or group. In essence, while *everyone* or *everybody* points to the entire group as a whole, *every one* highlights each distinct member of that group.

Fact vs. opinion. The term *fact* should be reserved for statements that can be directly verified or proven. For instance, a specific event occurring on a particular date or the melting point of lead are examples of facts. However, conclusions or judgments, such as claiming Napoleon was the most outstanding modern general or praising the delightful climate of California, are not facts in the strictest sense. Even if these statements might be widely accepted, they are more accurately described as *opinions* or assessments. While opinions can be informed by facts, they are not themselves verifiable facts and reflect personal or subjective interpretations.

Farther vs. further. These two terms are often used interchangeably, but it’s beneficial to distinguish between them: *farther* is more appropriate when referring to physical distance, while *further* is suited for referencing an extension in time, degree, or abstract measures. For instance, you’d run *farther* in a race, indicating a measurable distance. Conversely, you’d explore a topic *further* in a discussion, which suggests a deeper or extended engagement. Additionally, *further* can imply a continuation, such as furthering one’s education, indicating progress or advancement in abstract terms.

Get vs. have. It’s important not to interchange *get* with *have* carelessly. Using the informal “have got” in place of *have* is generally less suitable for formal writing. Moreover, the usage of the past participle forms “got” and “gotten” varies by dialect. In American English, “gotten” is often the correct past participle of “get,” whereas in British English, “got” is used. For instance, an American might say, *He has gotten no results*, while a British person would say, *He has got no results*. Similarly, for the phrase about returning without any acquisitions, Americans would typically say, *They returned without having gotten any*, whereas in British English, it would be *They returned without having got any*.

However vs. nevertheless. It’s essential not to muddle *however* with *nevertheless* when using them to start sentences. Both can be used at the beginning of a sentence as conjunctive adverbs to introduce contrast. For example, *The roads were almost impassable. Nevertheless, we eventually reached the camp*. However, *however* can also imply “in whichever manner” or “to whatever degree” when placed at the start. For instance, *However you advise him, he’s likely to follow his instincts*. Therefore, when *however* is used to mean *nevertheless*, it often fits better within the sentence for clarity, as in *The roads were almost impassable, but we eventually reached the camp*, instead of at the beginning.

Imply vs. infer. It’s crucial not to interchange *imply* with *infer*. The two terms serve distinct purposes. To *imply* is to suggest or hint at something without directly stating it. On the other hand, to *infer* is to draw a conclusion based on the information presented or available. For instance, if one says, *Farming requires dedication*, they imply that it’s a

demanding job. If someone hears this and concludes that a farmer probably has a long working day, they are inferring from the statement made.

Inasmuch as vs. insofar as. Both *inasmuch as* and *insofar as* convey the idea of “to the extent that.” While they can sometimes be used interchangeably, there are subtle differences in their usage. *Inasmuch as* often implies a reason or cause, effectively linking it to the rationale behind an action. For example, *Inasmuch as we lack sufficient data, we must delay the project launch.* On the other hand, *insofar as* emphasizes the degree or extent of something. For example, *The project will continue insofar as funding permits,* indicating that the continuation of the project depends on the availability of funds.

Interesting vs. funny. These terms, *interesting* and *funny*, often fall flat when used as introductory words. Rather than proclaiming that the forthcoming information is *interesting*, it is more effective to present it in a manner that inherently captures interest. Similarly, starting a statement with the word *funny* does not guarantee that the content will be humorous. The content itself should evoke the amusement, not the label. By allowing the material to engage or entertain on its own merits, communicators can more genuinely captivate their audience.

Kind of vs. other phrases. Avoid using the phrase *kind of* as a replacement for “rather” or “something like,” except in informal contexts. It is best to reserve *kind of* for its literal meaning. For example, the phrase *Amber is a kind of fossil resin,* or *I’m not fond of that kind of attention,* demonstrates its correct use. Similarly, exercise caution with “sort of” in formal writing, where it can also detract from the precision and formality of the text.

Lay vs. lie. Avoid confusing the verbs *lay* and *lie*. *Lay* requires a direct object—something being laid down. For example, *The hen lays an egg.* On the other hand, *lie* doesn’t require a direct object. For instance, *The llama lies down.* The past tense of *lie* is *lay*, as in *He lay down yesterday,* and its past participle is *lain*, used in perfect tenses like *He has lain down.* The sequence for *lie* is lie-lay-lain-lying, and for *lay* it’s lay-laid-laid-laying, respectively.

Less vs. fewer. Ensure you distinguish between *less* and *fewer*. Saying *He had less men than before* is incorrect because “men” can be counted. Instead, say *He had fewer men than before.* Use *less* for quantities that can’t be counted and *fewer* for items that can be counted. For instance, *less trouble* implies the trouble is not as intense, whereas *fewer troubles* means the number of troubles is smaller. Additionally, you might use *less water* when referring to a volume that cannot be individually counted.

Like vs. as. Be mindful not to confuse *like* with *as*. Use *like* when comparing nouns or pronouns to show similarity. For example, you might say, *He fights like a lion,* where *like* introduces a noun (lion) to compare with the subject (He). In contrast, *as* is used before phrases and clauses that include a verb, describing the manner of an action. For instance, instead of saying *We spent the evening like in the past,* the correct form is *We spent the evening as we did in the past,* because *as* precedes a phrase containing a verb (did). Additionally, it’s incorrect to say, *Chloe smells nice, like a pretty girl should,* because *like* should not introduce clauses with verbs. The correct sentence would be, *Chloe smells nice, as a pretty girl should,* using *as* to introduce the verb (should). In professional writing, using *like* before phrases and clauses with verbs is typically considered an error.

Me vs. I. Ensure clarity in its usage. Avoid incorrectly using *I* as the object of a verb or preposition in an attempt to sound formal. Saying *Between you and I* is a mistake. The correct form is *Between you and me.* Likewise, *They came to meet my wife and I* is wrong; the accurate expression is *they came to meet my wife and me.*

Nauseous vs. nauseated. It’s essential to distinguish between *nauseous* and *nauseated*. Traditionally, *nauseous* describes something that induces a feeling of nausea, whereas *nauseated* refers to the feeling of being sick or queasy. Therefore, saying *I feel nauseous* traditionally implies you believe you might induce nausea in others, while *I feel*

nauseated correctly expresses that you yourself feel sick. However, in modern usage, *nauseous* is also commonly used to describe feeling nausea.

Nor vs. or. It's crucial to differentiate between *nor* and *or*. After a negative statement, some mistakenly use *nor* in place of *or*. The statement *He cannot eat nor sleep* is incorrect; it should be *He cannot eat or sleep*. However, when using *neither*, the correct conjunction to follow is *nor*, as in *He can neither eat nor sleep*. If emphasizing the negativity of both actions separately, one might say, *He cannot eat, nor can he sleep*.

Oftentimes vs. oftentimes. Both are archaic expressions, having roots deep in historical and literary contexts. While once common in classic literature and old writings, these terms have largely fallen out of modern usage. Today, the streamlined and more commonly accepted term is “often,” which captures the intended frequency without the old-fashioned flourish. Using “often” helps maintain clarity and simplicity in contemporary writing and speech.

One of the most vs. other phrases. Consider avoiding the phrase *one of the most* at the start of essays or paragraphs. While not incorrect, it is overused and can make writing seem unoriginal. For example, instead of beginning with *One of the most interesting developments in modern science is . . .*, or *Switzerland is one of the most interesting countries in Europe*, try more dynamic and engaging openings. This approach enhances the freshness and vigor of your writing, making it more engaging and impactful.

One hundred and one vs. other phrases. In expressions like *one hundred and one*, the inclusion of “and” aligns with traditional British English usage, which dates back to the Old English period. This practice not only adheres to traditional writing styles but also aids in clarity and rhythmic flow, making numbers easier to read and comprehend in written form. However, it's important to note that American English often omits “and” in such numerical expressions, writing *one hundred one* instead. Understanding these differences can enhance precision and appropriateness in both international and locale-specific contexts.

Partially vs. partly. Avoid interchanging *partially* with *partly* without considering their nuanced differences. *Partially* is more appropriate when discussing degrees of a condition or state, as in, *He was partially satisfied with the outcome*. On the other hand, *partly* is apt when distinguishing a part from the whole, often in the context of physical entities. For instance, *The boat was partly in the water* is more appropriate than saying it was *partially in the water*. Use *partly* to describe distinct portions, while *partially* to describe extents or degrees.

People vs. public. Be mindful of the distinction between *people* and *public*. *People* is a general term for groups or assemblies of individuals, whereas “the people” typically refers to a collective in a political context, implying involvement in governance or civil activities. Conversely, *public* refers to the broader audience or community from which artists gain appreciation or businesses derive support. When specifying a number, it's generally more appropriate to use “persons” rather than *people*. For instance, if you start with “six persons” and five depart, you're left with one person. Using *people* in this context can be ambiguous, as *people* usually refers to a group in a less specific sense.

Please advise vs. other phrases. Please advise is a formal way to request information, commonly found in professional communication. In business settings, some perceive it as having a passive-aggressive tone, while in informal situations, it might be used humorously or sarcastically.

Respective vs. respectively. *Respective* and *respectively* are often used to clarify individual correspondence in lists or comparisons, but they can be redundant in simpler contexts. For example, *Works of fiction are listed under the names of their respective authors* can be more succinctly stated as *Works of fiction are listed under their authors' names*, as the possession clearly implies individual correspondence. While *respectively* is useful in sequences where it clarifies one-to-one correspondences, such as in *Alice, Bob, and Carol won first, second, and third places*,

respectively, it's generally unnecessary in everyday prose where such detail is not needed. This distinction helps avoid over-complication and enhances clarity in writing.

Shall vs. will. Be careful when choosing between *shall* and *will*. In formal English, *shall* is typically used with the first person to indicate the future tense, expressing an expectation or inevitability (e.g., *I shall go to the market*), while *will* is used for the second and third persons, conveying determination or consent (e.g., *You will understand*). For instance, a distressed swimmer might exclaim, *I shall drown; no one will save me!* To suggest inevitability, whereas someone determined might declare, *I will drown; no one shall save me!* To express a deliberate choice. However, in casual conversation, these distinctions often blur, and the correct usage largely depends on context and regional variations.

So vs. and so. Be cautious when using *so* as an intensifier, such as in expressions like *so good*, *so warm*, or *so delightful*. Its overuse can dilute the impact of your statements. When using *so* to introduce a clause indicating a result or consequence, like in *It was raining, so we stayed indoors*, ensure it clearly connects the cause and its effect without additional emphasis. In contrast, *and so* often serves to underline the significance of the result or conclusion, adding narrative weight. For example, *We had run out of options, and so we decided to return home*. This usage not only links the cause and effect but also emphasizes the consequential nature of the action, making it a stronger, more formal choice. In summary, use *so* for straightforward causal connections and consider *and so* when you need to emphasize the inevitability or gravity of the conclusion drawn from preceding statements.

Stationary vs. stationery. It's essential to distinguish between *stationary* and *stationery*. *Stationary* means not moving or not intended to be moved. *The car remained stationary in the parking spot for hours*. *Stationery* means writing materials, such as paper, pens, and envelopes, often used in an office setting. *I need to buy some new stationery for my office, especially notepads and pens*.

Than vs. then. Avoid mixing up *than* with *then*. Use *than* when making comparisons, indicating a preference or difference, such as in *apples are sweeter than oranges*. On the other hand, *then* refers to a sequence in time or a subsequent event, like *I went for a run, then had breakfast*. Ensure you pick the right word based on the context.

Thank you in advance vs. thank you. Using *thank you in advance* or *thanking you in advance* can come across as presumptuous, as it suggests that the writer assumes the requested favor will be granted without further interaction. A more considerate approach is to simply say *thank you*. Once the request is fulfilled, a follow-up acknowledgment or expression of appreciation is appropriate. While *thanks in advance* is commonly used in informal settings, it's important to gauge the tone and relationship to determine if its use is fitting. In some contexts, making assumptions can be perceived as impolite.

That vs. which. Use *that* for essential clauses and *which* for non-essential clauses. Essential clauses, which are necessary to the meaning of the sentence, do not require commas, while non-essential clauses, which provide additional information, do. For example: *The lawn mower that is broken is in the garage* specifies a particular mower and does not use commas. Conversely, *The lawn mower, which is broken, is in the garage* adds non-essential information about the mower and is set off with commas. Remember, use commas with *which* to enclose clauses that add extra information, but not with *that*, which identifies key information crucial to the sentence's meaning.

They vs. other phrases. Often, people use *they* as a singular pronoun to refer to antecedents like "each," "everybody," or "anyone," even though these terms suggest individuality and would traditionally be paired with singular pronouns. The use of *they* in these instances serves to sidestep the cumbersome "he or she" or to remain gender-neutral. For example, one might say, *A friend of mine told me that they said so*. Traditionally, "he" was used for such antecedents

unless referring to a specifically female subject. However, the use of singular *they* is increasingly accepted in modern English, reflecting evolving language norms and a growing awareness of gender identity.

Too vs. other phrases. The word *too* is often used to convey the meaning of “also” or “in addition.” When using *too* in the middle of a sentence, it’s customary to place a comma before it to set it off from the rest of the sentence, highlighting its additive nature. For example, *I love chocolate, too, but it’s not good for my diet.* When *too* is used at the end of a sentence, a comma generally precedes it to include a pause or add emphasis, depending on the context. For instance: *I enjoy reading novels, and I like nonfiction, too.* This use of commas helps readers or listeners understand that *too* is adding information or emphasizing agreement or similarity with a previous statement.

Tortuous vs. torturous. Be careful not to mix up *tortuous* with *torturous*. *Tortuous* describes something with twists and turns, like a winding path. On the other hand, *torturous* relates to pain or suffering, reminiscent of the word “torture.” While both terms have roots in the concept of “twisting,” it’s crucial to use them in their respective contexts to convey the correct meaning.

United Kingdom. In formal writing, spell out, do not abbreviate.

United States. In formal writing, spell out, do not abbreviate.

While vs. other phrases. Be cautious when using *while* in place of connectors like “and,” “but,” or “although.” Some writers use *while* to vary their phrasing or due to uncertainty about the most suitable conjunction. In cases where *while* is used to mean “although” or to introduce a contrast not related to time, a semicolon might sometimes be a clearer choice. For instance, the sentence *The office and salesrooms are on the ground floor, while the rest of the building is devoted to manufacturing,* suggests a contrast in function within the same timeframe. If the timing or simultaneous contrast isn’t relevant, it might be clearer to say, *The office and salesrooms are on the ground floor; the rest of the building is devoted to manufacturing.* Although *while* can sometimes substitute for “although,” ensure it is used correctly to avoid confusion. Ideally, use *while* to denote concurrent events or durations.

Whom vs. who. Be vigilant when choosing between *whom* and *who*. It’s common to mistakenly use *whom* in places where *who* should be used if it acts as the subject of the verb in the relative clause. Think of *who* as akin to “he/she” and *whom* as akin to “him/her.” For instance, in the sentence *His brother, whom he said would send him the money,* the word *whom* might seem correct at first glance, but *who* is actually appropriate because it is the subject of “would send.” Therefore, the correct formulation is: *His brother, who he said would send him the money.*

Whose vs. who’s. Be cautious when distinguishing between *whose* and *who’s*. *Who’s* is a contraction that stands for “who is” or “who has.” For example, *Who’s coming to dinner?* or *Who’s been calling you?* On the other hand, *whose* is a possessive pronoun, similar to “my” or “their.” It is used when the owner of something is unknown or unspecified, as in *Whose book is this?* This distinction is crucial for correct grammar in writing and speech.

-wise vs. other phrases. Avoid the unchecked use of *-wise* as a makeshift suffix, such as in “taxwise” or “saltwater taffy-wise.” This suffix is most effective when it indicates a manner or direction, as in “clockwise.” Responsible writers should refrain from adding *-wise* to any noun without careful consideration, avoiding the temptation of this overused construction. In formal writing, using *-wise* inappropriately can appear informal or jargonistic. It is best replaced with more precise language to enhance both clarity and professionalism.

Worthwhile vs other phrases. *Worthwhile* is an adjective that signifies something that has value or merit, and it is particularly suited to describe actions or endeavors, asking whether they justify the effort or resources required. For example, asking *Is it worthwhile to make a call?* uses the term appropriately. However, using it carelessly, especially in terms of general praise or criticism, can dilute its meaning. Phrases like *His books are not worthwhile* are misused

because they incorrectly apply the adjective to objects. A more accurate expression would be: *His books are not worth reading*, as this phrase correctly evaluates the worthiness of engaging with the books, rather than the books themselves possessing the attribute of *worthwhile*.

Would vs. should. Be careful not to mix up *would* and *should*. *Should* is often used to advise or suggest what is appropriate, as in *I should not have made it without his assistance*. It can also express expectation or prediction, particularly in indirect speech following a past-tense verb, e.g., *He said that we should expect a significant surprise soon*. On the other hand, *would* is typically used to describe habitual actions in the past or hypothetical scenarios, such as *He would wake up early daily*. When narrating repeated actions, *would* emphasizes the habitual nature, but for straightforward factual statements about frequency, the simple past tense can be more direct and clear, e.g., *Every year, he visited the ancestral home* rather than *Every year, he would visit the ancestral home*. When narrating, ensure clear transitions between general habits and specific instances to maintain clarity.

Section 1.5. Style Considerations and Techniques

Diving into the realm of style, we're about to embark on an exhilarating journey, treading the thin line between the expected and the extraordinary. Until now, our "In-House Content Style Guide" has focused on the *rights* and *wrongs* of English, but as we venture into this final chapter, it's all about capturing that unique flair, that *je ne sais quoi*, which distinguishes the mundane from the magnificent.

It's a bit like asking why some melodies make our hearts soar while others, with just a few notes changed, barely register. There's no precise formula to this magic, no secret potion. And as tantalizing as it might sound, there isn't a straightforward guide to spellbinding writing either. Clear thinking doesn't always translate into lucid writing.

Picture this: writing, for many of us, feels like trying to catch lightning in a bottle. Our minds, those racing whirlwinds of ideas, always seem to be a few steps ahead of our pens. Imagine being an adventurer, where every writing expedition is about seizing those fleeting thoughts, much like a photographer captures a bird mid-flight.

As a writer, you're more of an explorer—sometimes lying in ambush in your favorite cozy nook, waiting for inspiration to saunter in; other times, you're on a quest, hunting down that elusive idea. Much like the thrill of the hunt, patience is the writer's best companion. Think of it: sometimes, it might take combing through a forest of thoughts just to find that one golden acorn.

So, dear reader, brace yourself! For the young and budding writer, navigating this chapter might feel like sailing vast seas, guided by stars that play hide and seek. It's thrilling, it's mysterious, and while there may not be a definite map, there's a world of wonder waiting to be discovered. Here are a few golden nuggets and pro-tips to help you weave your own captivating tapestry of words. Let the adventure begin!

1. The art of subtle storytelling.

Imagine being at a grand performance where the spotlight isn't on the performer, but on the mesmerizing dance or the soulful music. That's what your writing should aim for—where the author gracefully steps into the shadows, letting the story dance in the limelight.

Think of it this way: good writing is like a magic trick. When it's executed perfectly, the audience is so captivated by the illusion that they don't notice the magician. Your first golden rule? Keep it real and let go of pretense. Dive deep into the authentic rhythm of your words, and your unique style will naturally shimmer through. After all, it's YOU at the core of your stories.

And here's the secret sauce: as you hone your craft, not only will you carve out your niche, but you'll also find the magical bridge to connect with readers' hearts and minds. That's the ultimate goal and the sweetest reward of writing. Remember, writing is both an art and a discipline. It challenges your thoughts and at the same time, enriches them. It's a cycle of emptying and filling, a beautiful dance of the mind that never grows old. So, take the pen, let your thoughts flow, and witness the magic unfold!

2. The dance of authentic writing.

Imagine writing as a dance to your favorite tune—it's all about moving to the rhythm that feels most organic to you. When you write your thoughts, let them flow as spontaneously as a conversation with a close friend. Use words that feel like home, the ones that come without hesitation.

But here's a little twist: just because your words flowed effortlessly doesn't mean they're pitch-perfect. Remember how, when we first started talking, we mimicked the sounds around us, soaking up words like sponges? As we grow, our linguistic repertoire does too, often mirroring the words and styles we adore.

So, should you shy away from echoing your favorite authors? Not at all! Just ensure you aren't copying them intentionally. Surround yourself with exceptional writing; let the beauty of good literature seep into your bones. This way, when you write from the heart, the essence of what's truly worth echoing will naturally reverberate through your words. So, dance to your own beat, but let the echoes of great rhythms inspire your steps!

3. Plotting the path.

Picture this: you're about to embark on a grand adventure. Would you dive in without a map or at least some idea of the landscape? Similarly, when crafting a piece of writing, having a rough blueprint in your mind can work wonders.

Think of it as the foundation for a magnificent building. Whether it's a skyscraper or a story, a design helps give it form and direction. That's not to say you always need a detailed plan sketched out. For instance, when jotting down a simple list of laundry items, you proceed item-by-item, much like checking off garments from a pile.

But imagine diving into a sprawling biography without any roadmap. It's like wandering through a dense forest without a compass; you'll likely get lost amid myriad details and facts, losing sight of the bigger narrative. So, whether you're weaving a short story or a grand epic, always have a sense of your journey's blueprint. It'll be your guiding star, ensuring your tale shines bright and true!

4. Creating masterpieces with words.

Think of writing as creating a vibrant painting. Nouns and verbs are your bold brushstrokes, the primary colors that breathe life into our canvas. Adjectives and adverbs? They're the delicate shades and tints, adding nuance but best used sparingly.

No shade or color can salvage a poorly drawn figure, just as no adjective can rescue a weak noun. That's not to say we don't love the flair of adjectives and adverbs—when used right, they can dazzle and transform a sentence. But by and large, it's the strength of nouns and verbs that truly makes your prose pop and sizzle. So, next time you're painting with words, let nouns and verbs be your star performers, and watch your masterpiece come alive!

5. Sculpting your story to perfection.

Imagine writing as sculpting a block of marble. Your first draft? That's just chipping away the excess, revealing a rough form. But to turn that form into a masterpiece, you need to carve, polish, and sometimes, start certain sections from scratch.

Every writer, no matter how seasoned, knows the dance of revision. Sometimes, it's a subtle shuffle of paragraphs; at other times, a dramatic overhaul. Think of your manuscript as a puzzle. Don't hesitate to shuffle the pieces, snip them, or even toss some out to see the bigger picture. And hey, if you go a snip too far, there's always the comforting thought that you can start afresh the next day.

Grab those scissors and be fearless in your revisions. It's not a mark of your manuscript's frailty, but rather the refining fire through which all great writing must pass. Embrace it, and remember, every revision is a step closer to brilliance!

6. Finding the perfect writing recipe.

Think of writing as preparing a gourmet meal. Overwriting is like over-seasoning—while a dash of spice can elevate a dish, too much can overwhelm the palate and mask the true flavors. Writing that's overly ornate or flamboyant is akin to a dish dripping with excess sauce; it becomes hard to savor and can leave the reader feeling full before they've truly tasted the essence of your message.

A balance is essential. Just as a chef knows the importance of letting the natural flavors of ingredients shine, a writer should aim for clarity and simplicity. It's okay to sprinkle in some rich descriptions or fancy words here and there, but moderation is key. After all, you want your readers to leave satisfied, not overwhelmed by a buffet of extravagance. So in the kitchen of composition, remember: less is often more, and the best flavors are often the simplest.

7. Crafting credible narratives.

Picture this: writing is like weaving a delicate fabric of trust with your reader. Now, imagine spilling a big blot of ink on it—that's overstatement. The moment you exaggerate, it's like sounding an alarm, making your reader pull back, skeptical of every thread you've woven.

It's like inviting someone to marvel at a magical landscape, but then pointing out a mountain and calling it "the tallest in the universe." That one lofty claim can overshadow the genuine beauty around it. The reader, once entranced, now raises an eyebrow, questioning not just the height of the mountain, but the authenticity of the entire vista.

It's tempting to amplify for effect, but the cost can be trust. Keep your narrative genuine, for even a momentary lapse into the realm of exaggeration can cast a long shadow over your tale's credibility. So, tread carefully and let the true magic of your words shine through!

8. Crafting clearer narratives without qualifiers.

Imagine your writing is a clear, sparkling lake. Now picture qualifiers like "rather," "very," "little," and "pretty" as pesky little critters muddying those pristine waters. These wordy critters tend to latch onto your prose, dimming the vibrancy of your language.

Consider the word "little." It's a sneaky one! Outside of indicating size, it often dilutes the power of a statement. It's akin to pouring water into a flavorful drink—the essence gets lost. Let's make a pact: let's sharpen our writing, keep an eagle eye on these qualifiers, and ensure they don't gatecrash our prose party too often. Because, believe it or not, removing these little intruders can make a "pretty" big difference to the clarity and punch of our writing! Dive in and make those words sparkle!

9. Perfecting your writing tone.

Imagine writing as a gentle sailboat ride. Now, while a gust of wind might make things exciting momentarily, a perpetual, strong breeze could tip the boat over. Similarly, in writing, adopting a persistently breezy, over-the-top style can make your prose feel like it's teetering on the edge.

In today's era of abundant writing, it's easy to spot content that seems as if the writer had one too many cups of caffeine. Sure, Walt Whitman celebrated the "spontaneous self," but let's not mistake unbridled enthusiasm for genuine insight. It's like assuming every photobomb is a masterpiece.

In essence, a constantly breezy style might give the impression of someone a tad too in love with their own voice, assuming every thought they have is a gem. So, let's not let our prose get swept away in a gust. Instead, strive for authenticity, balance, and true connection with the reader. Smooth sailing!

10. Picking the timeless over trendy in spelling.

Think of writing as dressing up for an important event. While it's fun to experiment with fashion, there are times when classic and timeless attire is the way to go. Similarly, in the world of words, sticking to conventional spelling is like donning that classic outfit.

Imagine texting a friend and saying "nite" instead of "night" or "thru" instead of "through." While it might be quirky in a casual setting, in formal writing, it's akin to wearing sneakers to a black-tie event. Unless you're setting a whole new trend and ready to face the raised eyebrows, it's best to stick to the traditional.

In short, while there's a time and place for creative spelling, most writing occasions call for the elegance of tradition. So, when in doubt, dress your prose in its timeless best!

11. Trusting dialogue to tell the tale.

Picture writing as crafting a suspenseful movie. Now, imagine a director giving away all the plot twists in the first ten minutes. Not very thrilling, right? Similarly, in writing, there's an art to leaving some things unsaid, letting the narrative unfold and the readers connect the dots.

Take dialogue, for instance. It's like watching two actors on a stage. If their conversation is genuine, you won't need a narrator constantly chiming in with "he said sadly" or "she replied excitedly." The dialogue itself, the raw emotion and rhythm of the words, should paint the picture.

Sometimes, budding writers sprinkle their dialogues with a dash too many adverbs or switch up simple "said" with fancier verbs. It's as if they're adding neon signs to their prose saying, "Look here! Feel this!" But true magic lies in subtlety. The trick? Trust your dialogue to convey the mood and trust your reader to catch the nuance. After all, less is often more, especially when it allows imagination to take the lead!

12. Mixing the right ingredients.

Imagine crafting words as if you're whipping up a delicious smoothie. While it's tempting to throw in every ingredient at hand, sometimes that results in a weird, unpalatable mix. Crafting adverbs is similar. Sure, slap on an "ly" to an adjective, and voila, you have an adverb. But, is it always a tasty choice?

Consider the concoction "tangledly." It feels like trying to sip a smoothie with too many chunky bits. Or "tiredly," which, though it might seem fine, doesn't roll off the tongue in everyday chatter.

The secret sauce? Stick to the ingredients—or in this case, words—that people relish in daily conversation. If it sounds odd out loud, it might just stick out on paper. So, blend wisely, and serve up prose that's both delightful and easy to digest!

13. Directing dialogue with precision.

Imagine diving into a book, getting lost in an engrossing conversation between characters, only to realize . . . wait, who just said that? Dialogue, without clear signposts, is like watching a play with all actors behind a curtain. You hear the voices, but you're left guessing who's who.

When you dive into the world of dialogue, it's essential to leave breadcrumbs for your reader. If you lead them down a long conversation with no clear markers, they might end up retracing their steps, and that's like making them rewatch a movie scene because they missed the plot. Not the best experience, right?

And hey, while attributives like "he said" or "she replied" are your guiding stars, make sure they don't stumble into the conversation and trip up the flow. Think of them as subtle stage directions. If you're ever in doubt about where to place them, just voice out the dialogue. Let the natural pauses guide you, ensuring the reader enjoys a seamless performance. After all, clarity is the ultimate showstopper!

14. Styling sentences for the occasion.

Think of words as wardrobe choices. Just as you wouldn't wear a tuxedo to a beach party, don't reach for grandiose words when simpler ones will do the trick. Why strut in high heels when comfy sneakers fit the occasion perfectly? Remember, while "resplendent" might sound exquisite, sometimes "shiny" captures the essence just right.

Our language has its roots, with snappy Anglo-Saxon words often packing more punch than their Latin counterparts. Compare "gut" to "intestine." Sure, "gut" has that raw, visceral sound, but it won't always fit the mood. Just like you wouldn't casually call a stomach a "tummy" in a medical journal.

The boundary between overly ornate and the refreshingly clear can be as thin as a razor's edge. It all boils down to having a good ear. It's your secret weapon in the world of writing. Just like a musician knows when a note is off, a writer with a tuned ear knows when to ditch formality for a splash of colloquial charm or when to play by the grammar rules. So, keep your ears perked up. Let them be your compass, guiding you through the symphony of words, helping you hit the right notes every time!

15. More than just words, it's a dance.

Imagine trying to mimic a dance from a culture different than your own. If you don't get the steps just right, you might come off as inauthentic or even disrespectful. Similarly, playing with dialect in writing is a delicate dance. Unless you've truly grooved to its rhythm, it's easy to miss a step.

Dialect isn't just about sprinkling a few quirky words here and there. It's about capturing the very essence of a language, its nuances, its cadence. For instance, take the word "once." You might be tempted to spell it "oncet" in dialect, but that could read like "onset." Perhaps "wunst" would be a closer match. But remember, consistency is key! If you twirl one way at the beginning, make sure to keep twirling the same way throughout.

Top-notch dialect writers are like skilled dancers; they don't overdo their moves. They capture the essence with subtlety, ensuring the reader feels the rhythm without getting overwhelmed. So, if you decide to dance the dialect dance, make sure to do so with finesse and respect for its original beauty!

16. Striving for clarity in every sentence.

Imagine writing as building a crystal-clear windowpane. What good is a window if it's murky or foggy, blocking the view? Your primary mission? Keep it clear, so clear that the reader can see right through the heart of your message.

Ever felt like you're wrestling with a sentence, trapped in a twisty maze of words? Don't push against the thicket. Sometimes, it's best to take a step back and carve a new path. Maybe that winding sentence can be split into two breezy ones, or perhaps a few excess words are clouding the view.

Unclear prose isn't just a hiccup; it can lead to grand misunderstandings. It's like sending someone on a treasure hunt but forgetting the map. So, whenever you lay down your words, ensure they shine with clarity. After all, in the theater of writing, clarity is the star that steals the show!

17. Serving up relevance over ego.

Imagine writing as hosting a dinner party. While it's a great platform to showcase your culinary skills, it's probably not the best time to share your strong views on, say, pineapple on pizza. Just like with food, when it comes to writing, it's key to know when to serve your opinions and when to keep them on the back burner.

We all have a treasure trove of opinions, and oh, how tempting it is to sprinkle them into our prose! But, dishing them out without a good reason can come off as assuming everyone's hungry for them. And let's face it, a piece peppered with unsolicited views might leave behind a whiff of ego.

Let's say you're invited to speak at a new cat café opening, but you're more of a dog person. In your polite decline, there's no need to launch into a tirade about feline foes. Keep it classy, keep it relevant. Remember, they wanted your voice, not necessarily your views on cats versus dogs. In writing, as in hosting, knowing what to serve and when makes all the difference!

18. The dos and don'ts of flavorful writing.

Imagine your writing as a seasoning cabinet. Figures of speech are those exotic spices that can turn a simple dish into a culinary delight. But what happens when you toss in too much saffron, followed by a dash of truffle oil, then a sprinkle of star anise? Your readers, or in this case, taste-testers, might be left overwhelmed, trying to decipher the explosion of flavors.

It's like being at a fireworks show where every firework goes off at once—dazzling, sure, but also chaotic. Readers need a moment to savor each simile, to revel in its beauty. If they're always jumping from one comparison to another, they might end up feeling more like they're on a wild goose chase than on a delightful journey.

And let's talk about mixed metaphors. It's like starting a story in a deep-sea dive with swordfish and suddenly shifting to a desert with hourglasses. A tad disorienting, right? So, as you sprinkle in those figures of speech, remember: a pinch here and there enhances the flavor, but a heavy hand can leave things tasting a bit off!

19. Guiding readers through the forest of acronyms.

Picture writing as mapping out a treasure hunt. While shortcuts can make the journey quick, if they lead to confusion, your readers might end up lost in the woods, missing the treasure altogether.

Initials can be like secret paths known only to the locals. For instance, not everyone might recognize that "N.A.A.C.P." stands for the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People. And even if seasoned explorers are familiar, newcomers might be scratching their heads.

Think about the future generations of treasure hunters—the young adventurers stepping onto the trail for the first time. They deserve clear signposts, not cryptic symbols. A savvy move? Start with the full name, like laying down the base of the map. Once your readers have their compass set, you can lead them through shortcuts. That way, everyone's on the same adventurous page, finding the treasure with glee!

20. The risks and rewards of multilingual writing.

Imagine writing as hosting an international potluck dinner. While it's exciting to introduce guests to exotic flavors from around the globe, serving dish after dish from different cuisines might leave them craving a comforting, familiar taste.

Dabbling in other languages can add a dash of flair to your prose, a sprinkle of worldly charm. But, going overboard? It can be like serving your guests a five-course French meal when they came expecting good ol' comfort food. Some writers, in their zest to dazzle, garnish their pages with a medley of foreign phrases, often leaving readers feeling like they've bitten into something they can't quite chew.

The key is balance. A sprinkle of international flavor can be delightful, but make sure the main course remains relatable and digestible. After all, when your readers sit down to feast on your words, you want them to leave satisfied, not reaching for a translation menu. Bon appétit—or better yet, enjoy your meal!

21. Navigating the marketplace of language.

Think of language as a bustling city marketplace. There are well-trodden main streets, familiar and comfortable. Then, there are those intriguing alleyways—offbeat, eccentric, each humming to its own unique rhythm. As a writer, you're a traveler in this marketplace, captivated by every corner.

From the catchy jingles of the Advertising Avenue, with its playful twist on words, to the structured dialogues in Business Boulevard or the intricate lingo lanes of Law and Government Gardens, there are countless dialects and jargons to explore. The language landscape is ever-evolving, like a river, constantly reshaped by incoming streams of slang, industry jargon, and cultural nuances.

But here's the thing: while those quirky alleyways are fun to explore, the main streets have stood the test of time for a reason. They're familiar to everyone. Writing in standard language might seem like sticking to the main road, but navigating it is an adventure in itself. So, while it's great to be inspired by the many dialects of our vast language city, it's equally vital to master the art of walking the main streets with confidence and flair. Adventure awaits at every linguistic turn!

Imagine writing as being a chef. Your style? It's not just about the ingredients or the method, but about the passion, intuition, and personal flair you infuse into every dish. As a wise culinary master once put it, "Cooking isn't about following a recipe to the letter, but the joy of creating."

This cookbook frequently mentions "the diner." It's vital to appreciate the diner's tastes, but pandering exclusively to them is a slippery slope. Cook primarily for yourself. If you're always looking over your shoulder, trying to anticipate the next food trend or what diners might crave, you risk losing the essence of your unique culinary voice—even if it means having a packed restaurant every night.

Loaded with passion and guided by age-old cooking rules, the chef is ready to serve. It's like being the fearless cow in the old rhyme by Robert Louis Stevenson—buffeted by winds, drenched in rains, yet standing tall and undeterred. In today's terms, she's totally embracing the elements. Thanks to Stevenson's poetic touch, this one cow, amongst countless others, became iconic. Just like that steadfast chef or writer, she remains timeless, unswayed by passing storms. Her story will be savored for generations. So, write or cook with your heart, and let the world feast on your creations!

APPENDIX

STYLE GUIDE TEMPLATE

This AuthorsDoor Style Guide template is a living document, starting off minimal and expanding over time. Begin by familiarizing yourself with this **template**. Then, delve into the 'Bonus Chapter: In-House Content Style Guide' from the **book** or **workbook**, “Secrets that Sell Books.” While reading, note any nuances that particularly affect your writing. Next, explore “Authors Edition: Elements of Style Revisited—The Writing Companion,” a 200-page recreation of William Strunk’s original 43-page book, which simplifies concepts introduced over eighty years ago. By subscribing to our **AuthorsDoor Leadership Program Newsletter**, you will receive a **free PDF** copy of this book—also available in print on Amazon.com and other platforms. Lastly, watch the **free course** on the “Publisher and Her World at Ridge Publishing Group” YouTube channel. Search for “AuthorsDoor Series: Publisher & Her World: Secrets that Sell Books,” and specifically listen to the **Bonus Chapter: In-House Content Style Guide** segment about the “Chicago Manual of Style” book.

To help you begin, here is a list of common issues in writing, editing, and proofreading. Remember, this style guide is a living document; continue to add to it and adapt it to fit your own writing works.

NOTES: SPELLING, PUNCTUATION, AND GRAMMAR

- Book titles italicized.
- Book series are NOT italicized.
- YouTube channel, Publisher and Her World at Ridge Publishing Group is NOT italicized.
- Book chapter references are capitalized and NOT italicized but should be in quotation marks.
- Omit initial **A** or **The** from titles when you place the possessive before them (Dickens’s Tale of Two Cities).
- Bullets should be same whether square or round, bold or not (periods before/after bullet point explanation).
- Numbers as a practice should always been written out, e.g., *thousand years*.
- No hyphens with *inches*, *seven years*, etc.
- **Em-dash** isolates the idea that follows; a semicolon combines two ideas into one.
- **Commas** between words = yes, unless a list or business firms, the last comma is omitted.
- **Comma** before “and” or “but” if introducing an independent clause.
- Overuse of the word “**so**”; omitting and replace with “**as**” at the beginning of the sentence.
- Eliminate adverbs! Modify: ly, very tall, etc. Eliminate “was.”

COMMON KEYBOARD MISTAKES: (1) used (sued); judgment (judgement); acknowledgment (acknowledgement). (2) <https://www.authorsdoor.com/books> (no-hyperlink; all lowercase). (3) titled, (always use a comma before book or course title). (4) **NOTE**: (always capitals and bold).

A

Acknowledgment (it is spelled “acknowledgement” in British English and “acknowledgment” in American English).

All right is NOT alright (one word).

Also and or is NOT and/or.

Another words (used to introduce a statement that repeats what has been said in a different and usually a simpler or more exact way, e.g., one other word; re-wording. Contrast: in other words; i.e., one other way to explain it would be . . .).

B

Bear vs. bare. Bare means “naked,” but to bear is to carry something. If a bear bares his teeth, run!
Bottom line (two words, NO hyphen).

C

D

Dialogue (standard spelling for conversations; while “dialog” is used in relation to computers).

E

E-book (beginning sentence), e-books (with hyphen).

Email (no-hyphen).

Everything vs. everyone. Everything is written as one word. Everyone (one word) should be used referring to all people within a group, e.g., everyone may be replaced by everybody. Every one (two words should be used when referring to each individual member of group).

E-zine (beginning sentence), e-zine (with hyphen).

F

Face-to-face (hyphenate).

G

Gmail (no hyphen).

H

Have had is NOT had had.

I

In other words (see another words).

Internet or internet (use lowercase only).

J

Jesus’ (use Jesus’; Jesus’ and Jesus’s are both correct according to the Chicago Manual of Style).

Judgment (it is spelled “judgement” in British English and “judgment” in American English).

K

L

Left-hand (hyphenate).

M

N

Nonfiction is a single word, NO hyphen needed.

O

OK (use capitals; instead of Okay or O.K.).

P**Q****R**

Right-hand (hyphenate).

S

Step-by-step vs. step by step; book-by-book vs. book by book, etc. (when a compound adjective comes before a noun, hyphenate it: **step-by-step instructions**; if the adjectives follow the noun, do not hyphenate them: the **instructions were step by step**).

T

That (which vs. that, and comma placements; see *which*).

Time to time is NOT hyphenated.

U

United Kingdom (spell out; no abbreviations).

United States (spell out; no abbreviations).

V**W**

Website not Web site.

Which (place a comma before *which* when *which* precedes a nonrestrictive clause. **A nonrestrictive clause is a phrase that adds non-essential information to a sentence without changing the overall meaning.** Don't place a comma before *which* when *which* is part of a prepositional phrase. Don't use a comma before *which* when its used to pose an indirect question. We use *which* with nonrestrictive clauses, while we use *that* with restrictive clauses. When used with a restrictive clause, you don't need to put a comma before *that*. **Restrictive clauses function as identifiers.** Removing a restrictive clause from a sentence changes the sentence's meaning).

X**Y****Z**

