

Write – Edit – Rewrite

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Tom Jirik

Communications Coordinator

Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute

North Dakota State University

701-231-9629


thomas.jirik@ndsu.edu

The logo for the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute (UGPTI) is located in the bottom right corner. It features the acronym "UGPTI" in a bold, italicized, sans-serif font, with a stylized orange and white swoosh above the letters. The logo is set against a white oval background that is partially obscured by a dark green orbital graphic.




“It’s as interesting and as difficult to say
a thing well as to paint it. There is the
art of lines and colours, but the art of
words exists too, and will never be less
important.”

-- *Vincent van Gogh*



“The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug.”

-- *Mark Twain*



“Writing – the art of applying
the seat of the pants to the
seat of the chair.”

--Mary Heaton Vorse

Put tools in your toolbox



Put tools in your toolbox

- Style guides
- Dictionaries
- Thesaurus
- Books on writing
- Another set of eyes
- Learn your weaknesses
- Tips and tricks



Style

More than being a snappy dresser.

Style guide or style manual:

a set of standards for the writing and design of documents, either for general use or for a specific publication, organization or field.

The implementation of a style guide provides uniformity in style and formatting of a document.

Examples of style guides

- ACS Style Guide
- AMA Manual of Style
- The Associated Press Stylebook
- **The Chicago Manual of Style**
- Turabian
- The Elements of Style
- The Elements of Typographic Style
- ISO 690
- MHRA Style Guide
- MLA Handbook
- MLA Style Manual
- The New York Times Manual
- The Oxford Guide to Style/New Hart's Rules
- **The Publication Manual of the APA**
- The ASA Style Guide

Many on-line guides available

- University writing programs
- Professional organizations
- Publishing companies/organizations

Be careful

Is it complete?

Is it up to date?

Does it apply to you?

A word about documentation

Footnotes, endnotes, bibliographies and reference lists

Demanded by:

- ethics
- copyright laws
- courtesy to readers

Helpful to:

- future researchers
- you

Dictionary & Thesaurus

- Hard copies are a standby
- Several good on-line sources are available

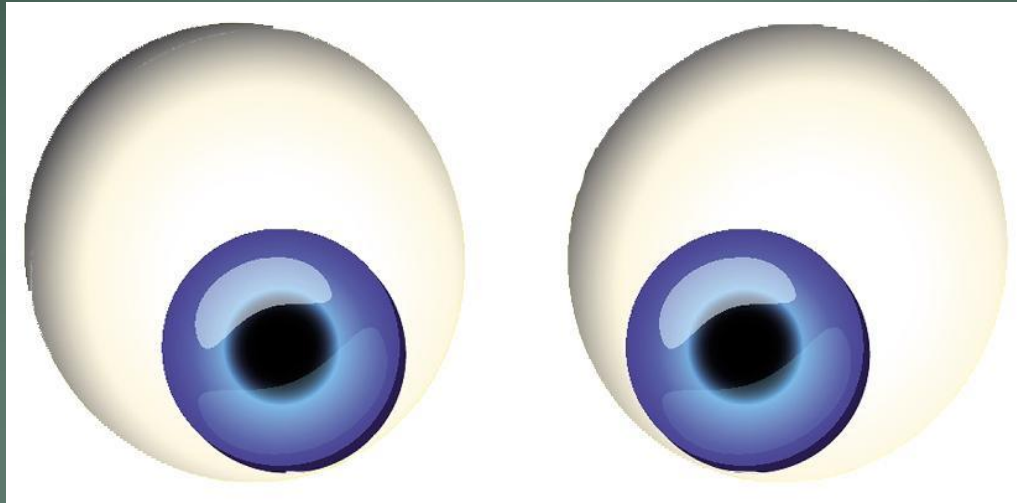
One example:

www.merriam-webster.com/

Books on Writing

- Many available
- Find one that fits you and your writing

Another set of Eyes



Find someone else to read your copy

- Critical eye
- Willing to be honest
- Unfamiliar with what you've written

Learn your weaknesses

- Learn what to watch out for in your text
- Be cautious in your writing
- Pay extra attention to these items in your editing



Tips, tricks, and things
to watch out for

Punctuation

“If you find a sentence particularly hard to punctuate, consider rewriting it; the problem may be one of style rather than punctuation. A well-written sentence almost punctuates itself.”

Jan Venolia, Write Right!



Punctuation makes a difference!

Let's eat, Grandma!

Let's eat Grandma!

Spacing

Colons should be followed by two spaces.

Commas, semicolons, and periods denoting an abbreviation are followed by one space.

The style manual will dictate whether or not there should be one space or two following punctuation which ends a sentence.

Apostrophe

Not only is an apostrophe sometimes omitted where it is needed, but even more often it is used where it doesn't belong.

Who's book is this?

Whose book is this?

Remember: The apostrophe takes the place of "is" when you say Who's...

Apostrophe

With plural words that end in s, add only an apostrophe.

employees' union

students' grades

With plural words that do not end in s,
add 's

children's story

women's issues

Apostrophe

Never use an apostrophe with possessive pronouns.

yours

not your's

its

not it's – it is

theirs

not their's

Apostrophe

Apostrophes are not used with simple plurals:

Wrong: “In the 1990’s, TMA’s became increasingly common.”

Correct: “In the 1990s, TMAs became increasingly common.”

Use an apostrophe to form certain plurals in abbreviations that have periods: M.D.’s
Ph.D.’s

Colon

Use a colon to introduce a list, summary, or long quotation.

Capitalize the first letter following the colon only if it begins a complete statement or quotation.

The company has a new policy: Every employee will earn two weeks of paid vacation.

Colon

Do not place a colon immediately after a verb.

Wrong: The prerequisites for the course are: two years of history, Sociology 101, and fluency in Spanish.

Right: The prerequisites for the course are two years of history, Sociology 101, and fluency in Spanish.

Comma

When two complete statements are joined by *and, but, or, nor, for, yet, so* you should use a comma.

The results of the study are not definitive, so additional work is needed.

The samples are all very similar, yet differences remain.

You are a valued member of the association, and your input on the committee is important.

Comma

Use commas to separate three or more items in a series.

The research looked at age,
gender, and ethnicity.

Comma

Although journalists tend to omit the final comma to save space, technical writing recommends retaining the final comma to avoid confusion. Note the problem with this sentence:

The 15-member marching band, a drum major carrying the flag and 20 gymnasts were in the parade.

Comma

The elements in a series separated by commas may be short, independent clauses:

“The only way to keep your health is to eat what you don’t want, drink what you don’t like, and do what you’d rather not.”

--Mark Twain

Comma

Use a comma between adjectives if you could add the word *and* between them and the sentence would still make sense.

...a young, energetic student (young and energetic)

...white tennis shoes (You would not say white and tennis shoes.)

Comma

Commas are needed after an introductory phrase (many of which begin with a preposition).

In the case of two competing theories, choose one that you seek to prove or to disprove through your research.

Through our analysis, we...

In conclusion,

Comma

Put a comma after introductory words:

However,

Thus,

Therefore,

Consequently,

This is also the case when a semi-colon precedes the introductory word:

A shortage of materials has currently halted the construction; however, we plan to resume as soon as possible once our shipment arrives.

Semicolon

Semicolons are useful between independent clauses that contain commas.

The coach, a man of few words, led his team by example; however, the words he used were chosen carefully.

If you rephrase the sentence or create two separate sentences and avoid semicolons, your document may be easier to read.

Semicolon

Use semicolons to separate long or complicated items in a series:

The lottery winners included an elderly gentleman who had never before bought a lottery ticket; a high school student hoping to use the winnings for college; and a reporter who bought her ticket while writing a story about corruption in the lottery system.

Semicolon

Use a semicolon to separate many items in a series:

The following items must be tracked monthly: gallons of fuel; vehicle mileage; driver hours; passenger one-way trips; passenger fares; contract income; supply costs; personnel wages; and maintenance costs.

Hyphen or Dash

Use a single hyphen or dash between inclusive numbers or dates.

1990-2000

pp. 111-136

Use a single hyphen or dash between a compound of two or more words or within a hyphenated word.

Minneapolis-St. Paul area
post-World War I

well-balanced
quasi-judicial

Hyphen or Dash

Use two hyphens or dashes for emphasis, to indicate an abrupt change, or with explanatory words or phrases.

“People want to know why I...write such gross stuff. I like to tell them I have the heart of a small boy—and I keep it in a jar on my desk.”

Stephen King

UGPTI

Hyphen

One of the most common spelling questions for writers and editors concerns compound terms – whether to use two words, hyphenate, or omit a space and write a single word.

on line on-line online

When in doubt, check the dictionary. In general, if the term is not listed, hyphenate it.

Hyphen

The Chicago Manual of Style gives some latitude in using hyphens and urges that readability should be the final guide. If the writing is clearer and easier to read without the hyphens, leave them off.

Hyphen

Use a hyphen with certain prefixes:

self- ex- vice- well-

Use a hyphen to avoid doubling a letter:

semi-independent shell-like part-time

Use a hyphen if the root word begins with a capital letter:

pre-Columbian sub-Saharan non-English

Hyphen

Use a hyphen to form certain compound words:

right-of-way editor-in-chief president-elect

Use a hyphen to promote clarity:

co-worker re-read caffeine-free

re-creation (vs. recreation)

un-ionized (vs. unionized)

Hyphen

Use a hyphen to clarify suspended compounds:

full- and part-time workers

first-, second-, and third-quarter earnings

Hyphen

Use a hyphen to combine numeral unit adjectives:

12-inch ruler 100-year lifespan 250-page book

Use hyphens within age terms:

three-year-old

55-year-old

Hyphen

Use a hyphen in titles that describe a dual function:

Secretary-Treasurer

Chairman-CEO

Do not use a hyphen in a job title that describes a single function:

Attorney General

Chief Executive Officer

Hyphen

For the sake of consistency, when the word *from* is used, you should use the word *to* instead of a hyphen.

Sarah attended NDSU from 2001 to 2005.

Hyphen

When the word *between* is used, you should use the word *and* instead of a hyphen.

She published her articles between 2001 and 2005.

Hyphen

Do not use a hyphen when you have an adverb ending in *-ly* combined with an adjective:

Wrong: widely-held belief
highly-regarded individual

Correct: widely held belief
highly regarded individual

Ellipsis Points

Ellipsis points are three equally spaced periods that indicate omission of words in quoted material. When used in the middle of a sentence, use three periods.

“The collision between two purposes...shows by the uniformity of its solution.”

Ellipsis Points

Between sentences, retain the period or other punctuation mark that ends the sentence before the omission. Use four equally spaced periods followed by a capital letter.

“The spirit of our American radicalism is destructive and aimless....On the other side, the conservative party...is timid and merely defensive of property.”

Ellipsis Points

Note: You have a duty not to misrepresent the original work through the use of ellipsis. **Accuracy of intent** is critical.

Quotation Marks

Periods and commas are always placed inside the closing quotation marks.

Colons, semicolons, question marks and exclamation points all follow closing quotation marks unless a question mark or exclamation point belongs to the quoted material.

Which of Shakespeare's characters said, "All the world's a stage...."?

Capitalization

Capitalize prepositions in titles if they consist of four or more letters:

Since

Through

Under

Around

During

Toward

Above

Between

Until

Against...

Capitalization

Do not capitalize words such as **government, federal, state, administration** unless they are part of the title of a specific entity.

U.S. Government vs. federal government

Capitalization

Do not capitalize seasons (*fall, winter, spring, summer*) except when used to denote an issue of a journal (*Summer 2005*).

Capitalization

Do not capitalize terms when they suggest direction (*western provinces, eastern Australia, central states*) unless they refer to a compass point or specific location (*Middle East, North Pole, the Left Bank*).

Capitalization

Capitalize **African American, Caucasian, Hispanic, Native American, Asian** but do not capitalize generic terms such as black(s) or white(s).

Capitalize personal titles only if they precede the name and are not separated by a comma:

President George Bush
the treasurer, Bill Olson

Professor Johnson
board chair, Al Jones

Words Often Confused

Accept/Except

Adverse/Averse

Advice/Advise

Affect/Effect

Allude/Elude/Refer

Alternate/Alternative

Apt/Liable/Likely/Prone

Because/Since

Biannual/Biennial

Complement/Compliment

Comprise/Composed of

Words Often Confused

Due to/Because of

Fewer/Less

Further/Farther

Imply/Infer

In/Into/In to

Insure/Ensure/Assure

Lay/Lie

Like/As

When in
doubt, look it
up!

Words Often Confused

Loose/Lose

Predominant/Predominate

Principal/Principle

Proved/Proven

Rare/Scarce

That/Which

To/Too

Helpful Hints

Bi- vs. Semi-

bi- means “two”

Semi- means “half”

If you want to avoid confusion when referring to a period of time, abandon the use of the prefixes *bi-* and *semi-*, and instead say *every two weeks*, *every two months*, *twice a year* or whatever interval you are describing.

Hints!

Between vs. Among

Use **between** for two items; **among** for three or more.

Never use **irregardless** – Use **regardless**

It's vs. Its

It's = It is

Its = “belongs to”

More Hints!!

Data

While acceptance of the word **data** as a singular has become common, in scientific and formal writing, the plural form is still preferred.

data are... **not data is...**

Still More Hints!!!

People vs. Persons

Use **people** for larger groups; **persons** for an exact or small number.

Never use **and etc.** Use etc.

et cetera means “and other unspecified things of the same class.”

Make Sure Your Meaning is Clear

Rephrase to eliminate misplaced modifiers:

People with deficient metabolizing systems or children may be unjustly burdened by genetically engineered food.

It's a 30-minute documentary on the Bay Area's housing and growth crisis produced by the Association of Bay Area Governments.

Using Numbers in Text

Numbers **less than 10** should be spelled out.

Numbers **10 or greater** should be written as numerals.

This rule applies for rankings also: **first, second and third but 12th, 20th, and 25th.**

Using Numbers in Text

Avoid starting a sentence with a numeral. Rewrite the sentence to start with a word.

Percentages are always given in numerals. (No space appears between the numeral and the symbol (15%).

Parallel Construction

Be consistent when you create lists, outlines or headings. If a list begins with a verb, make the entire list begin with verbs:

1. Provide operating funds...
2. Work with all state agencies...
3. Coordinate efforts...

Consistency in Headings

Check your document for consistency in:

- spacing before and after headings
- underlining
- indenting
- the use of bold type
- numbering systems
- capitalization

Repetition

Avoid repeating the same word or variations of the word too close together. Use a thesaurus to help you find alternative words and rephrase your sentences.

Rephrasing

Clumsy: All programs except one are mainstay programs for this state. That one program is Section 5309. This program has provided additional support but is not necessarily a funded program every year.

Improved: The 5310 and 5311 programs are mainstays in funding for this state. The exception is Section 5309, which has provided additional support but is not necessarily funded every year.”

Things to Watch for...

Don't use plural pronouns *they* or *their* to refer to a singular noun.

“Each person interviewed believed that they should have taken more time to develop their particular center.”

Instead, the sentence should read:

“Each person interviewed believed that more time was needed to develop that particular center.”

Dr. Pat Mokhtar

UGPTI

More Hints!

The phrase *in order to* is usually unnecessary.

“In order to study the commute mode choice process, a survey was designed and administered to a random sample of 1,000 Sacramento residents.”

Instead, the sentence should read,

“To study the commute mode choice process, a survey was designed...”

Dr. Pat Mokhtarian

More Hints!!

Don't use *over* when *more than* is appropriate.

“Over 800 respondents completed the survey.”

Over designates a place. A better way to phrase the sentence is:

“More than 800 respondents completed the survey.”

Dr. Pat Mokhtarian

More Hints!!!

i.e. means “that is”

e.g. means “for example”

Always put a comma after either of them.

(i.e.,...) or (e.g.,...)

Note that **e.g.** and **i.e.** are not italicized.

Still More Hints!!!

et al. means “and others”

It is always written with a period after the second element only. It is used in bibliographies, but as a rule should not be used for the words “and others” within the text (except in citing references). The abbreviation is applied only to persons, not to things.

Limiting Prepositional Phrases

Prepositions can easily be overdone. Words ending in **-ance, -ence, -ity, -ment, -sion, or -tion** are often “buried verbs” and require additional prepositional phrases to complete the idea.

Our efforts toward maximization of profits failed.

vs. Our efforts to maximize profits failed.

Jargon and Acronyms

- Know your audience
- Overuse can lead to:
 - 👉 Misunderstandings
 - 👉 Lack of comprehension
 - 👉 Reader exasperation



Last week's seminar included the following acronyms:

TEUs / RFID / GPS / EAS / RTLS / GDP
FDA / SMARTSe / HAZMAT / RADAR / LA
US / GPRS / CDMA / UHF / HF / LF / MHz
NFC / ISO / Wi-Fi / EPC / TDMA



WTF

LOL



UGPTI



WTF

Wisconsin Trucking Federation

LOL

League of On-line Librarians



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Proofreading

“Proofread carefully to see if you any words out.”

It is **YOUR** job to proofread your documents.

Can You Read This?

According to research at Harvard University, it doesn't matter what order the letters in a word are, the only important thing is that the first and last letter be in the right place.

This is because the human mind does not read every letter by itself, but the word as a whole.

References

Write Right: A Desktop Digest of Punctuation, Grammar and Style (4th Edition) by Jan Venolia

The Chicago Manual of Style (15th Edition) – University of Chicago Press

Both are available by special order from the NDSU Book Store.

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