

SOCIETY OF WOMEN WRITERS VICTORIA INC

STYLE GUIDE

The purpose of this guide is to standardise style across the society's written material.

When an **abbreviation** ends with the same last letter as its source, no full stop is required:

Mr – Mister

Otherwise, abbreviations should end with a full stop:

co. – company

Acronyms contain no full stops, nor do they end in them as some abbreviations do. Also, they appear in SMALLCAPS, one font point dropped from the standard font size:

We will call on NASA to solve the problem.

Bold is used for headings and subheadings. Some writers may use it for **emphasis**. While this is not distinctly wrong, italics are *preferable*.

The best format for dates is the structure of: DAY MONTH YEAR. On the page, it would look like this:

22 September 2008

The month separates the numerals, avoiding confusion, and eliminates any need for further punctuation. When using just numerals, the correct punctuation is full stops:

22.09.08

Dialogue requires several stylistic conventions.

Quotation Marks

The standard style requires that single quotation marks be used for dialogue:

'Get away with you,' Tom said.

Quotes Within Quotes

When a speaker is quoting somebody else in dialogue, double quotation marks are used to identify the quote:

'And Tom told him, "Get away with you",' Kev said.

Of course, this wouldn't be the case if the speaker was simply paraphrasing:

'And Tom told him to get away,' Kev said.

Attributors and Pronouns

When pronouns are designated to attributors, the pronouns are always in lowercase:

'I told you, get away with you,' she said.

This remains the case even when the dialogue ends with closing punctuation such as a question mark, an exclamation mark, or an ellipsis:

'For the last time, get away with you!' she said.

This convention only applies, however, with legitimate attributors, such as said, asked, cried, screamed, roared, etc. (See *Illegitimate Attributors*.)

Preceding Attributor

When the attributor precedes the dialogue, the correct punctuation is not a colon (which is acceptable, but not our style), but a comma:

Karin said, 'Get away with you!'

A space should be placed before and after the **ellipsis**:
There should be a space before ... and after the ellipsis.

The **em dash** can show a sudden, if not disconnected, change in a sentence:

Karin swore she'd pay me—but that was hardly the point of this example.

However, when a speaker is interrupted by another speaker, or an action, this should be symbolised with the em dash:

'I wish you'd go—' she said.

'No, damnit, I'm staying!'

The **en dash** gets its name from being the same width as the letter n.

It's useful for explanation and emphasis – and asides:

I would love to have a book published – if I ever actually finished writing one, that is.

It's handy for parenthetical insertion of appositive information:

The book I've written – just something I knocked together over the weekend – is going to win the Booker Prize.

The en dash is used also for measuring the span of figures:

Please read pages 31–35.

The best way to work out whether the **parental address** should be capitalised is to substitute it for a name. If it makes sense:

Is Dad going to watch the footy?

Is Dave going to watch the footy?

Capitalise! If not:

Is your dad going to watch the footy?

Is your Dave going to watch the footy?

Hyphens.

twenty-two, thirty-four, fifty-six, sixty-seven, seventy-eight, eighty-nine, ninety-one

It loiters between a numbered figure and its measurement:

10-year-old

15-hour week

20-day vacation

It can clarify meaning:

re-signed *as opposed to* resigned

Or a tripled-up consonant:

bell-like

will-less

In **fiction**, **numbers** are written out as words, regardless of how high the number.

For **non-fiction**, numbers from one to ninety-nine are written out as words, except when those numbers involve measurements.

It's 48 kilometres away.

You owe me 24 dollars!

Buy 3 bottles of scotch, 4 bottles of tequila, and 12 boxes of beer.

Use a comma to separate numbers higher than thousands.

25,000

175,000

1,000,000

When the text contains two series of figures, it's easier to read if one series is in numbers, and the other is written out.

There were 58 eighteen-year-olds.

If spanning numbers between 10 and 19, write out the full numbers.

Please read pages 12–18.

For larger numbers where the prefix is the same, use two digits:

After you've read that, read pages 342–48.

Similarly with dates:

Barry taught at Warrandyte from 1905–08.

If the clause preceding the parenthetical insertion requires a comma, that comma should be bumped to the closing parentheses:

Although I volunteered to write the Style Guide (I must've been drinking), I now envision that I will triumph over grammar.

If you're going to reproduce **copyright material**, you need to get permission from the copyright holder. Acknowledging the source *isn't* enough.

Preference for **referencing** and bibliographies is the *Harvard Style*.

In-Text

Citations should be accompanied by the author's name, the year of publication, and – if necessary – the page number. They should be included in parenthesis at the end of the sentence, but before the full stop.

It remains a common assertion that the ukulele is mightier than the sword (Carozzi 1990).

It remains a common assertion that the ukulele is mightier than the sword (Carozzi 1990, p. 61).

Otherwise, the author's name can be included in the text:

Carozzi (1990) has shown that it remains a common assertion that the ukulele is mightier than the sword.

Carozzi (1990, p. 61–62) has shown that it remains a common assertion that the ukulele is mightier than the sword.

The **semicolon** offers a pause stronger than the comma's, but weaker than the full stop. It usually links two clauses which could stand alone as individual sentences, but whose link is closer than a (full stop) separation would imply.

Busybird Publishing will pay me next week; then I'm going to begin work. Maybe.

The **solidus** is used for indicating alternatives.

male / female

Although Australian English continues to evolve due to the influx of Englishes from around the world, when it's a case of British or American spelling, use **British spelling**.

Use *-re* instead of *-er*:

fibre *instead of* fiber

centre *instead of* center

theatre *instead of* theater

And *-our* instead of *or*:

colour *instead of* color

As well as *-ise* instead of *-ize*:

realise *instead of* realize

Books, Magazines, and Periodicals

The titles of books, magazines, and periods are all italicised:

Have you read *The Lord of the Rings* yet?
It was reviewed in the *Herald Sun*.
But it wasn't covered in the *Woman's Weekly*.

Film titles

Film titles are italicised:

For the second time, you should watch *Groundhog Day*.

Song titles are quoted:

And to Cold Chisel's 'When the war is over.'

Trademarks, proprietary names, and brand names, should be capitalised:

Aspirin

Brylcreem