Get Your Book Right Before the World Judges You

What Agents, Publishers, and Reviewers Are Looking For

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Judge a Book by How it Looks

- Visual
- Technical
- Content
- Style

You need an editor!

Style Guides

- . The Chicago Manual of Style
- The Center for Military History
- Publisher's Style Guide

Consistency is important!

Editing Basics

- Shorter sentences keep the action moving more quickly
- Long sentences are saved for works of literature
- Variety is key
- Shorter paragraphs and white space are good

Numbers

- Always spell out in dialogue (except years)
- Fiction and most nonfiction: 1-99 spelled out
- Technical non-fiction: 0-9 spelled out; 10 and up numerals

Dialogue

- One person speaks per paragraph
- Don't bury dialogue in a paragraph
- Present tense (even when book is past tense)
- Contractions are more natural
- Everyone doesn't sound the same
- Unspoken dialogue: Italics is typically used for thoughts inside a person's head (without quotation marks) – BE CONSISTENT!

Dialogue Tags

- I thought vs I thought to myself
- He said vs he retorted
- Avoid –ly words; let actions/words speak for themselves

- Dialogue tags vs action tags
 - "I need to get out of here," Tom said.
 - "I need to get out of here," Tom said, pacing the room.
 - "I need to get out of here." Tom paced the room.

Spelling

- Towards and grey = British spelling; toward and gray = American
- Blonde (with e) typically describes females; blond is male
- It's (It is) vs its (possessive)
- There, their, they're
- Lead vs led (past tense of the verb lead)

- Spellcheck will not always catch your homonym mistakes
- **Free version of Grammarly

Overused Words

- Just, so, now, however, such as, back, really
- Go/Going to: "I'm going to try to get help" vs. "I'll try to get help" or "I'll get help"
- Started to: He started to fill the tank. vs He filled the tank.
- Tried to: "He tried to help me" vs. "He helped me."
- Would: "He would sing me to sleep" is really "He sang me to sleep."

Punctuation

- Oxford Comma for fiction; nonfiction can be either—be CONSISTENT
 - He bought cheese, milk, and eggs.
- One Space after a period
- Ellipse
 - . . . VS ...
- Use! Sparingly!!!
- "What?!" even more sparingly (never "What???!!!!")
- Hyphen vs en dash vs em dash

Quotation Marks

- "Get up," said Jack.
- "Get up!" said Jack.
- "Where did she go?" she asked.
- "On the other hand," he said, "we can go out to dinner."
- "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son" (John 3:16).

Commas

- Avoid Comma Clutter
- Where commas are required
 - Before a person's name or nickname in dialogue (direct address):

RIGHT: Hi, Tom. WRONG: Hi Tom.

RIGHT: What do you think, my friend?

WRONG: What do you think my friend?

After an introductory phrase of more than a few words:

RIGHT: After the snow melts in the spring, the rivers flow faster.

RIGHT: In April the rivers flow faster.

ALSO NOT WRONG: In April, the rivers flow faster.

Commas

Between two independent clauses (each has a subject and a verb)

RIGHT: The Allies won the war and celebrated the victory. (one subject, two verbs)

RIGHT: The *Allies* won the war, and the *soldiers* celebrated in the streets. (two subjects, two verbs)

WRONG: The *Allies* won the war, and <u>created</u> newsreels of their parades. (one subject, two verbs)

Commas with Interjections

The Coast Guard became stronger and better connected.

The Coast Guard became stronger and, ultimately, better connected.

The *Coast Guard* became stronger by strengthening their accession programs, and they improved their succession management programs.

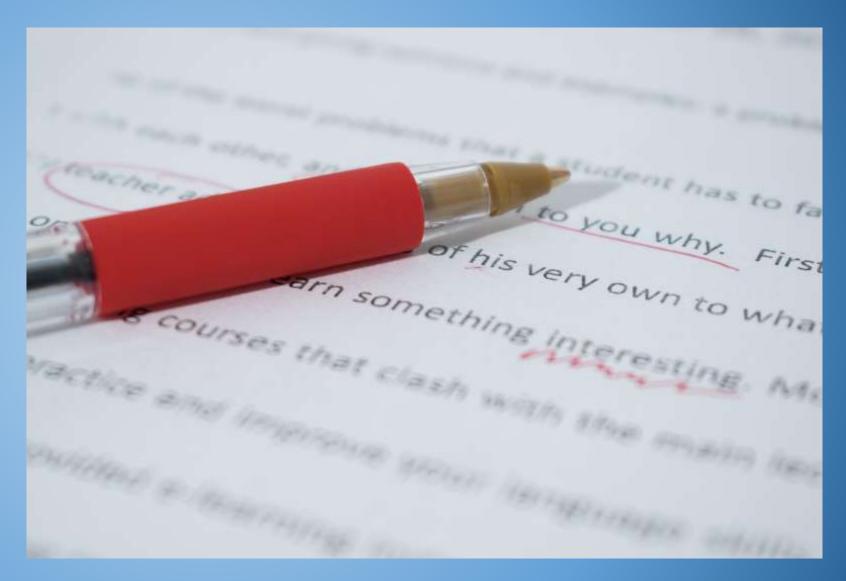
The Coast Guard became stronger by strengthening their accession programs, and ultimately, they improved their succession management programs.

Capitalization

- The president of the United States
- She got to see Queen Elizabeth
- Nero, emperor of Rome, lived many years ago.
- My mother took me to school. vs He told me Mom would take me to school.
- Ranks are lower case upon reference, but upper as a title. Col Brotherton vs colonel in the Air Force.
- The colonel entered the room.
- "Yes, Sergeant. I'll be there." or "Yes, sergeant. I'll be there." be CONSISTENT!

Editors

- Developmental editor
- Fact checker
- Copy editor
- Proofreader





Part 3 Coming Soon

- Visual
- Technical
- Content
- Style

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