



*Tips and tools*  
FOR THE WRITING WORLD

# Dragonfly Guide to Style Guides

Next to a dictionary, an editor's top resource is a style guide. Style guides dictate how editors should handle hyphenation, capitalization, and number style. They describe how to format elements like bulleted lists and reference lists. They even proscribe certain elements of spelling, grammar, and punctuation. But which style guide should be used for which type of material? This handy guide explains it all.

## The big two

These all-purpose guides can be used in almost any situation, in almost any industry, to answer almost any question you might have on editorial style. Pick either one as your default guide and you can't go wrong. Both are available in hard copy and online.



### ***The Chicago Manual of Style, 17th Edition***

Standard resource for book publishing and other industries; contains comprehensive guidelines on grammar, punctuation, syntax, usage, and reference style  
[chicagomanualofstyle.org](http://chicagomanualofstyle.org)



### ***The AP Stylebook***

Go-to resource for journalism and news writing, with a massive A-Z words list and other entries outlining rules of grammar, punctuation, and usage  
[apstylebook.com](http://apstylebook.com)

## Guides to medical and scientific style

There are three major style guides governing medical and scientific content.

### ***AMA Manual of Style, 10th Edition***

Essential style guide for medical and scientific publishing  
[amamanualofstyle.com](http://amamanualofstyle.com)

### ***Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th Edition***

Style manual for writers in the social and behavioral sciences; dabblers in APA style can use the *Concise Rules of APA Style*, Sixth Edition  
[apastyle.org](http://apastyle.org)

### ***Scientific Style and Format: The CSE Manual for Authors, Editors, and Publishers, 8th edition***

Reference for editors in all areas of science and related fields  
[scientificstyleandformat.org](http://scientificstyleandformat.org)

In addition, many scientific associations publish their own guidelines. For example:

### ***The ACS Style Guide, 3rd Edition, published by the American Chemical Society***

[pubs.acs.org/styleguide](http://pubs.acs.org/styleguide)

### ***AGU Grammar and Style Guide, published by the American Geophysical Union***

[publications.agu.org/agu-grammar-and-style-guide](http://publications.agu.org/agu-grammar-and-style-guide)

### ***ASA Style Guide, 5th Edition, published by the American Sociological Association***

[asa.enoah.com/Bookstore/Reference-Materials](http://asa.enoah.com/Bookstore/Reference-Materials)

### ***IEEE Computer Society Style Guide***

[computer.org/web/publications/styleguide](http://computer.org/web/publications/styleguide)

## Guides for academic publishing

### ***MLA Handbook, 8th Edition***

Style manual used in the liberal arts and humanities, especially for research focused on language, literature, and culture  
[style.mla.org](http://style.mla.org)

### ***A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers, 9th Edition (aka "Turabian")***

Comprehensive guide to Chicago's two methods of source citation: notes-bibliography and author-date  
[press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/M/bo27847540.html](http://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/M/bo27847540.html)

## Guides to non-U.S. English

Use these guides to edit English written for an Australian, Canadian, or UK audience.

### ***The Cambridge Guide to Australian English Usage, 2nd Edition***

In-depth, A–Z coverage of Australian spelling, punctuation, and word choice  
[www.cambridge.org/au/9780521702423](http://www.cambridge.org/au/9780521702423)

### ***Style Manual: For Authors, Editors, and Printers, 6th Edition***

Style guidance published by the Australian Government; describes best practices in design, editing, production, and writing  
[australia.gov.au/about-government/publications/style-manual](http://australia.gov.au/about-government/publications/style-manual)

### ***Editing Canadian English, 3rd Edition***

Guidance on Canadian English usage, spelling, and punctuation; Canadianisms; and working with French in an English text  
[editingcanadianenglish.ca](http://editingcanadianenglish.ca)

### ***The Guardian and Observer Style Guide***

Online A–Z listing of word usage; contains UK-specific terms, such as BBC One, garryowen, and parliamentary Labour party  
[theguardian.com/guardian-observer-style-guide](http://theguardian.com/guardian-observer-style-guide)

### ***The Economist Style Guide, 11th Edition***

Contains an A–Z words list similar to AP's; guidance on handling UK-specific terms, such as knight, dame, and baroness; and a section outlining the differences between American and British English  
[shop.economist.com/products/style-guide](http://shop.economist.com/products/style-guide)

## Business writing

### ***The Business Style Handbook: An A-to-Z Guide for Effective Writing on the Job***

A–Z entries on handling terms such as “consumer price index” and “return on investment”; also includes results from a survey of Fortune 500 communications pros about effective business writing  
[www.mhprofessional.com](http://www.mhprofessional.com)

## Legal citation

These two guides govern legal citation. The Bluebook is the definitive guide; The Maroonbook, a simplified alternative.

### ***The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation, 20th Edition***

[legalbluebook.com](http://legalbluebook.com)

### ***The Maroonbook***

[lawreview.uchicago.edu/maroonbook](http://lawreview.uchicago.edu/maroonbook)

## Entertainment and news

### ***BuzzFeed Style Guide***

Online guide for entertainment and news writers, reflecting current internet and social media usage  
[buzzfeed.com/emmyf/buzzfeed-style-guide](http://buzzfeed.com/emmyf/buzzfeed-style-guide)

## Government-specific guides

### ***U.S. Government Publishing Office Style Manual, 2016 Edition***

PDF manual listing style conventions for U.S. government publications. Includes appendices on foreign countries, U.S. geographic divisions, and currencies.  
[www.govinfo.gov/collection/gpo-style-manual](http://www.govinfo.gov/collection/gpo-style-manual)

In addition to GPO's “one guide to rule them” manual, some branches of government and defense publish their own guides. For example:

### ***Department of Defense Visual Information Style Guide***

[www.dimoc.mil/documents/styleGuide/DoD\\_Captioning\\_Style\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.dimoc.mil/documents/styleGuide/DoD_Captioning_Style_Guide.pdf)

### ***U.S. Army Style Guide***

[www.army.mil/e2/rv5\\_downloads/armydotmil\\_style\\_guide.pdf](http://www.army.mil/e2/rv5_downloads/armydotmil_style_guide.pdf)

### ***U.S. Navy Style Guide***

<http://www.navy.mil/submit/navyStyleGuide.pdf>

### ***USA.gov Bilingual Style Guide***

[www.usa.gov/style-guide/table-of-contents](http://www.usa.gov/style-guide/table-of-contents)

### ***USAID Style Guide***

[pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/pnacu595.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnacu595.pdf)

## Company-specific guides

Most large companies publish in-house editorial style guides stipulating how company divisions, product names, and trademarks should be handled. Most guides are private; a few are public. For example:

### **Cleveland Clinic**

[onbrand.clevelandclinic.org/explore-the-guidelines](http://onbrand.clevelandclinic.org/explore-the-guidelines)

### **MailChimp**

[styleguide.mailchimp.com](http://styleguide.mailchimp.com)

### **Mozilla**

[mozilla.org/en-US/styleguide](http://mozilla.org/en-US/styleguide)

## University-specific guides

Most large universities publish style guides defining university-specific terms, such as campus locations, departments, and degrees. For example:

### **Emory University**

[communications.emory.edu/resources/identity/guidelines/style-guide-editorial](http://communications.emory.edu/resources/identity/guidelines/style-guide-editorial)

### **Indiana University**

[brand.iu.edu/messaging-strategy/editorial-style](http://brand.iu.edu/messaging-strategy/editorial-style)

### **University of Baltimore**

[ubalt.edu/about-ub/offices-and-services/marketing-and-creative-services/resources/style-guide](http://ubalt.edu/about-ub/offices-and-services/marketing-and-creative-services/resources/style-guide)

### **University of Oxford**

[ox.ac.uk/public-affairs/style-guide](http://ox.ac.uk/public-affairs/style-guide)

## Guides to conscious language

These guides can help you create content that is respectful, accurate, and inclusive.

### ***AAJA Guide to Covering Asian America***

Guidelines published by the Asian American Journalists Association  
[www.aaja.org/aajahandbook](http://www.aaja.org/aajahandbook)

### ***NABJ Style Guide***

Guidelines published by the National Association of Black Journalists  
[nabj.org/page/styleguide](http://nabj.org/page/styleguide)

### ***NAJA AP Style Guide***

Guidelines published by the Native American Journalists Association  
[naja.com/resources/naja-ap-style-guide](http://naja.com/resources/naja-ap-style-guide)

### ***NCDJ Disability Language Style Guide***

Guidelines published by the National Center on Disability and Journalism  
[ncdj.org/style-guide](http://ncdj.org/style-guide)

### ***NLGJA Stylebook***

Guidelines published by the Association of LGBTQ Journalists  
[nlgja.org/stylebook](http://nlgja.org/stylebook)

## The one style guide you shouldn't use

### ***The Elements of Style*, by William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White**

Yes, this is a classic. But it was published in 1959, and some of its stylistic advice is dated, such as advice to avoid split infinitives, ban the word “hopefully,” and set “all right” and “worth while” as two words. Turn to *The Elements* not as a rule book but as a source for lyrical inspiration. For example: “Writing is, for most, laborious and slow. The mind travels faster than the pen; consequently, writing becomes a question of learning to make occasional wing shots, bringing down the bird of thought as it flashes by.”