

emerald city style guide

first edition

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Emerald City Style Guide

1. Grammar and Usage

Plurals

1.1 Plurals in general. Most words form the plural by adding *s* or *es*—if they end with *ch*, *j*, *s*, *sh*, *x*, or *z*.

1.2 Letters (alphabet), abbreviations, and numbers. Add an *s* to abbreviations, capital letters functioning as words, and numerals functioning as nouns to form the plural. Lowercase words require an apostrophe and an *s*:

the four Cs
x's and y's
the 1980s
URLs

1.3 Compound nouns. In most cases, common sense can provide the answer for these plurals. If there is any confusion, refer to *Webster's Dictionary*:

fathers-in-law
masters of arts

1.4 Proper nouns. Normally, names of persons or names of capitalized nouns become plural by adding *s* or *es*. There are some exceptions, which can be found in *Webster's*. Never use an apostrophe to form the plural of family names:

The Joneses
The Smiths
The Moldazhanovas

1.5 Words in quotation marks. The plural form of a term in quotation marks may be formed in the usual way (without an apostrophe) or you may rephrase to avoid the plural:

How many more “To be continueds” can we expect?

or,

How many more times can we expect to see “To be continued”?

1.6 Words or phrases in italics. Usually, a term in the plural that is also italicized will keep the *s* in roman. If the title is already in the plural form, it may remain unchanged. If either is awkward, rephrase to avoid the plural:

There were several *Pride and Prejudices* on the shelf.

Possessives

1.7 Possessives in general. Most singular nouns form the possessive when an apostrophe and an *s* are added. Plural nouns—excepting some irregular plurals—form the possessive with an apostrophe only. This rule applies to proper nouns, including names ending in *s*, *x*, and *z*. Also see 2.18 – 2.22.

1.8 Joint v separate possession. When two nouns are closely linked, they are considered a single unit. When they share the thing being “possessed,” only the second element of the unit forms the possessive. When the thing being “possessed” is separately owned, each element takes the possessive:

Janet and Greg’s room is dirty.

or

Janet’s and Greg’s cars were stolen.

Conventions

1.9 Passive Voice. Passive voice shows that the subject of a sentence receives the action rather than performs the action in a sentence. Only transitive verbs have voice. Joining an inflected form of *be* or *get* (colloquial) with the verb's past participle forms the passive voice. Often, the passive-voice sentence uses a verb in a modifying phrase with an implied *be*-verb. Even when the *be*-verb is implied, the past participle must be used:

Active: The boy broke the window. 😊

Passive: The window was broken. ☹️

Generally, it is better to use active voice.

1.10 That v which. *That* should be used for information that is essential for understanding the full context of the sentence and does not require the use of commas:

The car **that is at the end of the lot** is mine.

Information that is not essential and may simply be there provide additional interest should be set off with commas and should be introduced with *which*. If this non-essential bit is taken out of the sentence, it will still make sense:

My car, **which I've had for twelve years**, needs to go to the mechanic.

1.11 Who v whom. Who and whoever are used as subjects. They are cousins with "he," "she," "they," and "I." Whom and whomever are used as objects. They are cousins with "him," "her," "them," and "me." If "who" or "whoever" or "whom" or "whomever" are replaced with their cousin words, the sentence will still be proper:

Who gave you the umbrella? 😊

not
Whom gave you the umbrella? ☹

She gave the umbrella to who? ☺

not
She gave the umbrella to whom? ☹

1.12 Singular *they*. *He* is generally no longer accepted to refer to a genderless, unknown, or anonymous person. In informal writing, *he* or *she* may be substituted with *they* to refer to one person. On a case-by-case basis, authors may be referred to as *they*.

1.13 Bias-free language. This may be handled on a case-by-case basis, but any biased language that finds should be retained by choice and only when it is relevant to the purpose of the work. To achieve gender neutrality, you can use any of these nine techniques: omit the pronoun, repeat the noun, use a plural antecedent, use an article instead of a personal pronoun, use the neutral singular pronoun, use the relative pronoun *who*, use the imperative mood, use *he* and *she* sparingly, revise the clause. Don't always substitute *-person* for *-man* (chairman->chairperson->chair) unless the word is established (*salesperson*).

2. Punctuation

Periods

2.1 Use of the period. A period (.) should be used to mark the end of a declarative or imperative sentence. When used for this purpose, one space (rather than two) should be inserted afterward.

2.2 Acronyms and Initialisms. Periods should not separate letters in an acronym or an initialism. For instance, FBI rather than F.B.I. and LGBTQ rather than L.G.B.T.Q. For more on initials, see 3.5

Commas

2.3 Use of the comma. In dialogue, a comma (,) is representative of a slight pause. In regard to prose, effective usage of the comma requires some consideration. Use good judgement when deciding when to use a comma and adhere to these guidelines.

2.4 Series (Oxford) Comma. A series comma is used in a list to separate the penultimate item from the coordinating conjunction preceding the final item. A series comma should *always* be used in lists of more than two items:

I went to the grocery store to buy apples, pears, **and** bananas.

2.5 Connecting two independent clauses. Two independent clauses may be separated by a comma and a coordinating conjunction:

I went to the grocery store to buy produce, **but** I forgot my wallet.

2.6 Compound predicates. When a sentence includes a compound predicate, a comma *should not* be used to separate the items within it:

I *went* to the grocery store **and** *bought* produce. ☺
not

I *went* to the grocery store, **and** *bought* produce. ☹

2.7 Introductory (dependent) clauses. When a sentence begins with an introductory or dependent clause, a comma should be used to separate it from the rest of the sentence:

After I went to the grocery store, I went to Jamie's house for dinner.

2.8 Independent clauses. When a sentence begins with an independent clause, no comma is necessary to separate it from the rest of the sentence:

I went to Jamie's house for **dinner after** I went to the grocery store.

Colons

2.9 Use of the colon. A colon (:) is most commonly used to introduce an element or a list explaining what has preceded the colon. Between two independent clauses it functions like a semicolon; however, a colon should be used more sparingly, and *at least one clause* on either side of the colon should be independent. When a colon is used, it should not have a space between it and the preceding clause. There should, however, be a space following the colon:

I needed the following **items: butter**, milk, and eggs.

2.11 Introducing a list. A colon can be used to introduce a list of items. However, the clause preceding the colon should be independent:

We were given a choice of three meals: tacos, spaghetti, or sandwiches.

2.12 Misuse. A colon should *not always* be used to introduce a list. For example, it should not be used before a list that serves as the object of the verb. Remember, when using a colon to introduce a list, the information which precedes it should serve as a grammatically complete sentence:

The day consisted of fishing, hiking, and snorkeling. ☺

not

The day consisted of: fishing, hiking, and snorkeling. ☹

Semicolons

2.13 Use of the semicolon. The semicolon (;) is used between two independent clauses to suggest a stronger connection between them than a period:

Sweet basil is used in many Mediterranean dishes; Thai basil is used in Asian and East Indian recipes.

2.14 To separate items in a list. If a list is introduced by a colon, use a semicolon to separate the items in the list if those items include multiple words, a comma, and/or large numbers:

These are the pool rules: do not run; do not splash others; if you see unsafe behavior, report it to the lifeguard; and do not pee in the pool.

or

These were the distances (in kilometers) traversed by the tanks: 12,500; 18,785; and 19,000.

2.15 With conjunctive adverbs. Semicolons are often seen with conjunctive adverbs (however, therefore, consequently, etc.). If this is the case, the conjunctive adverb will always be bracketed by punctuation:

The culinary uses of basil are well known; **however**, this herb also has medical uses.

Ellipses

2.16 Use of ellipses. Ellipses (. . .) are traditionally used to indicate the omission of a word or a phrase. In dialogue, they are used to indicate that a character is drifting off midsentence.

2.17 Formatting ellipses. Inserting ellipses requires seven keystrokes (space, period, space, period, space, period, space). Observe the example:

“I miss my boyfriend,” she remarked. “I remember how we used to . . .”
she drifted off dreamily.

Apostrophes

2.18 Use of the apostrophe. An apostrophe (') is most typically used to indicate the possessive case and to stand in for missing letters or numerals. An apostrophe should *never* be used to pluralize a word or an abbreviation (CDs rather than CD's). However, they *should* be used to pluralize letters (p's and q's rather than ps and qs).

2.19 “Smart” apostrophes. All apostrophes should be directional (or “smart”) apostrophes, which, in most typefaces, appears as a raised comma. Do not use a unidirectional apostrophe.

2.20 Relative to other punctuation. Apostrophes function differently than quotation marks in the sense that an apostrophe is part of the word for which it is used. For that reason, no punctuation should separate the apostrophe from the word:

The house which was destroyed by the tornado was the Smiths'. ☺
not
The house which was destroyed by the tornado was the Smiths.' ☹

2.21 Possessive form of plural nouns. The possessive of plural nouns (excluding irregular plurals, like *oxen*, which do not end in *s*) is formed by adding an apostrophe only:

the barbers' quartet
the kittens' paws
the managers' retreat

2.22 With words ending in -s. These words should be apostrophized in the same fashion as any other word. Do not omit the *s* following the apostrophe:

Jesus's disciples
the walrus's dinner
the virus's intrusion

Parentheses

2.23 Use of parentheses. (Parentheses) are used to set information off from the rest of the material in a sentence or a paragraph. The information within the set of parentheses need not have a grammatical relationship with the rest of the sentence's material.

2.24 Capitalization within. The parenthesized information will begin with a lowercase letter (just like this) unless it begins with a proper noun (Benjamin Dreyer taught me this rule).

2.25 Punctuation within. The parenthesized information will not include ending punctuation (but didn't you already know this?) unless it is an exclamatory or interrogative statement. If the parenthesized information comes at the end of a sentence, make sure the ending punctuation goes outside the parentheses (like this).

Quotation Marks

2.26 Use of quotation marks. Quotation marks (" ") are used to set off spoken dialogue. Like apostrophes, they should be directional marks (opening quotations should look like a 6, closing quotation marks should look like a 9).

2.27 Adjacent punctuation. If there is a bit of quoted matter at the end of a sentence, the ending punctuation goes outside rather than inside the quotation marks if that ending punctuation refers to the larger sentence rather than the quoted material:

Were his last words truly “Don’t tell me what to do”?
or
How dare you say “We aren’t friends”!

2.28 Italics used instead. Some writers may choose to indicate dialogue with italicized text rather than quoted text. However, *if* there is confusion regarding the difference between narration and dialogue, it should be converted to quoted text.

Hyphens and Dashes

2.29 When to use a hyphen (-). Always consult a dictionary when faced with the question of whether or not to hyphenate a compound word. Generally speaking, hyphens are used to link up a pair of words (or more) preceding and modifying a noun:

first-class ticket
fourth-floor apartment
gross-tasting cheeseburger
all-you-can-eat buffet

2.30 Use of the em dash. The em dash (—) is most commonly used to set off an explanatory or amplifying element of a sentence and can function as an alternative to parentheses and commas:

She graduated from Harvard—although she didn’t try very hard.
or
The king—he had been disturbed by the jester—had a lucid nightmare.

The em dash should also be used to convey interruption in dialogue:

“The culprit,” she said, “is someone in this—”
The doorbell rang.

2.31 Use of the en dash. The en dash (–) should be used to connect numbers. With continuing numbers (dates, times, page numbers) it signifies *up to and including*. If the word *from* is used, however, use the word *to* or *until* rather than an en dash:

The years 1999-2001 were very rough for my family.
or
The psychologist is booked December 2009–February 2010.
but not
We were at the supermarket **from** noon **to** four.

3. Names and Terms

Capitalization in General

3.1 Used to emphasize. It is acceptable for a writer to capitalize words which might otherwise not be if they wish to emphasize them:

One might say I am a Horrible Father.

3.2 Entire words. It is rarely appropriate to capitalize an entire word when trying to emphasize a word, especially in prose. If the writer wishes to emphasize an entire word, they may either italicize it or use small caps:

That man is a *complete ignoramus*. ☺
or
That man is a COMPLETE IGNORAMUS. ☺
not
That man is a COMPLETE IGNORAMUS. ☹

To make a word small caps in Microsoft Word, highlight the word while it is in all lowercase. Right click the word, then select “font” from the dropdown menu. Check the box that says “Small Caps” and then click OK.

3.3 Titles of works included in the manuscript. Capitalize all of the nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs in the title. Coordinating conjunctions should be lowercased. All articles and prepositions, unless they are used as an adverb or as an adjective, should be lowercased. The first and last words in the title should always be capitalized.

Names of Persons

3.4 Full names. The name of a person, whether she is real or fictional, is capitalized. If the author uses intentional, unconventional spelling or capitalization of their name that they prefer, then that version should be respected.

3.5 Initials. Initials of a person, whether she is real or fictional, are capitalized. A space and a period should be used between any initials in a person's name unless the initials alone are enough to convey the name of the person:

W. E. B. Du Bois
but
FDR, JFK

For authors who always use their initials, there is no reason to use their full name:

T. S. Eliot and F. Scott Fitzgerald ☺
not
Thomas Stearns Eliot and Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald ☹

3.6 When used as an adjective. When a name is used as an adjective, that word should be capitalized. Examples include *Kubrickian*, *Shakespearian*, and *Hitchcockian*.

3.7 Names with numerals. If a person's name is accompanied by roman numerals, no punctuation is needed:

Patrick Mahomes II ☺
not
Patrick Mahomes I.I. ☹

3.8 Names with suffixes. If a person's name includes a suffix, a comma *is not used* to set it off. The period that is included with the suffix *does not* denote the end of the sentence:

John Doe Sr. went to the mall yesterday.

Titles

3.9 General use of titles. If a civil, military, and/or religious title precedes someone's name, use it as part of the name and capitalize it:

I met **President** Washington in 1796. ☺
not
I met president Washington in 1796. ☹

If the title comes after the name or is used to reference the person and is not attached to the name, then it should not be capitalized:

He was George Washington, our first **president**.

3.10 Corporate and organizational titles. These titles are not capitalized; however, acronyms used as titles should be capitalized:

Jimmy Goods is the chief financial officer.
or
Jimmy Goods is the CEO.

3.11 Academic titles. If the title precedes the person's name, use it as part of the name and capitalize it. If the title comes after the name or is used to reference the person and is not attached to the name, then it should not be capitalized:

I had an appointment with **Professor** Dearing.
or

I had an appointment with Chase Dearing, **professor** or creative writing.
likewise
The **assistant professor** is Dean Koontz.
or
That man is **Assistant Professor** Dean Koontz.

3.12 Academic degrees. The abbreviations of academic degrees do not need punctuation. They should be set off by a comma when used as part of a name:

Jane Doe got her **PhD** at Harvard University.
or
I took a course taught by Jane Doe, **PhD**.

When referred to in general, names of degrees and fellowships are generally lowercased:

a master's degree
or
a doctorate

4. Abbreviations

Use of Abbreviations

4.1 Shortening a word or words. Abbreviations, acronyms, initialisms, and contractions shorten a word or words for convenience. *Abbreviations* are shortened forms of words (vol., no., etc.); *acronyms* are terms based on the first letter of a series of words understood as one word (WHO, scuba, NOW, NASA); *initialisms* refer to terms where each letter is understood on its own (NAACP, NFL, GPS, APA); *contractions* shorten a word to its first and last letters (Mrs., Mr., Sr., Jr.).

4.2 When to use abbreviations. Abbreviations are appropriate in notes, citations, tables, and other areas where a shortened form is best suited. In prose,

abbreviations are appropriate when the term is familiar to a majority of readers or have their own entry in *Webster's*. However, if a term is not immediately recognizable or does not have an entry, a definition might be necessary.

4.3 Abbreviations and periods. Only use periods for abbreviations that end with a lowercase letter:

Vol. 1, 3:00 a.m., Smith et al.

Common Abbreviations

4.4 Versions and sections of the Bible. These have their own abbreviations, similar to acronyms, and usually follow initialism where the first letter of each word creates the abbreviations.

4.5 Days of the week. There are three ways to abbreviate the days of the week if room demands a shortened version. The first is more formal, the second is used in computer code, and the third is informal:

1. Sun., Mon., Tues., Wed., Thurs., Fri., Sat
2. Sun, Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
3. Su, M, Tu, W, Th, F, Sa

4.6 Months. There are three ways to abbreviate months if room demands a shortened version. The first is more formal, the second is used in computer systems, and the third is used in periodical literature:

1. Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr., May, June, July, Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.
2. Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec
3. Ja, F, Mr, Ap, My, Je, Jl, Aug, Sup, Oct, Nov, Dec

4.7 Time. In technical contexts, the singular and plural form of time abbreviations are the same. In nontechnical contexts, the singular and plural form of time abbreviations are different and will add an 's' at the end of the abbreviation.

4.8 US Measure. Periods are common for nonscientific contexts of abbreviations for US measure. In scientific contexts, periods are not used. Plural forms of abbreviations will be the same as the singular form.

4.9 Length, area, and volume. Use prime (') and double prime (") for foot and inch, *not* quotation marks. Additionally, there should be no spaces between prime and numbers when listing a measurement in feet or inches (5'4").

4.10 Weight and capacity. US measure has three systems: avoirdupois (common), troy, and apothecaries measure. Confusion between the three is unlikely, but if necessary, each have their own abbreviations; lb. av., lb. t., lb. ap. respectively. As with length, abbreviations for singular and plural measurements will be the same.

Tables of Abbreviations

4.11 Table of abbreviations for academic degrees.

AB	atrium baccaulaureus (bachelor of arts)
AM	atrium magister (master of arts)
BA	bachelor of arts
BD	bachelor of divinity
BFA	bachelor of fine arts
BM	bachelor of music
BS	bachelor of science

DB	divinitatis baccalaureus (bachelor of divinity)
DD	divinitatis doctor (doctor of divinity)
DDS	doctor of dental surgery
DMD	dentariae medicinae doctor (doctor of dental medicine)
EdM	educationis magister (master of education)
JD	juris doctor (doctor of law)
LLB	legume baccalaureus (bachelor of laws)
LLD	legume doctor (doctor of laws)
LLM	legume magister (master of laws)
MA	master of arts
MBA	master of business administration
MD	medicinae doctor (doctor of medicine)
MDiv	master of divinity
MFA	master of fine arts
MS	master of science
MSN	master of science in nursing
MSW	master of social welfare or master of social work
PhB	philosophiae baccalaureus (bachelor of philosophy)
PhD	philosophiae doctor (doctor of philosophy)
SB	scientiae baccalaureus (bachelor of science)
SM	scientiae magister (master of science)

4.12 Table of abbreviations for versions and sections of the Bible.

Apoc.	Apocrypha
ARV	American Revised Version
ASV	American Standard Version
AT	American Translation
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
CEV	Contemporary English Version
DV	Douay Version
ERV	English Revised Version
EV	English Version(s)
HB	Hebrew Bible
JB	Jerusalem Bible
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NAB	New American Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
RSV	Revised Standard Version

RV	Revised Version
Syr.	Syriac
Vulg.	Vulgate
WEB	World English Bible

4.13 Table of time abbreviations

sec.	second
min.	minute
h. or hr.	hour
d. or day	day
mo.	month
yr.	year

4.14 Table of length abbreviations

in. or "	inch
ft. or '	foot
yd.	yard
rd.	rod
mi.	mile

4.15 Table of area abbreviations

sq. in.	square inch
sq. ft.	square feet

4.16 Table of volume abbreviations

cu. in.	cubic inch
cu. ft.	cubic feet
cu. yd.	cubic yard

4.17 Table of weight and mass abbreviations

gr.	grain
s.	scruple
dr.	dram
dwt.	pennyweight
oz.	ounce
lb. or #	pound
cwt.	hundredweight
tn.	ton

4.18 Table of liquid measure abbreviations

min.	minim
------	-------

fl. dr.	fluid dram
fl. oz.	fluid ounce
gi.	gill
pt.	pint
qt.	quart
gal.	gallon
dbl.	barrel

4.19 Table of dry measure abbreviations

pt.	pint
qt.	quart
pk.	peck
bu.	bushel

5. Foreign Languages

5.1 Formatting foreign language terms. If a word or phrase is not listed in standard English-language dictionary, or is likely to be unfamiliar to readers, it should be italicized. If this word or phrase is used repeatedly throughout a work, it needs only be italicized on its first occurrence. However, if it appears only rarely, italics may be retained:

The *grève du zèle* is not a true strike.
She preferred to think of it optimistically as a *sueño reparador*.

However, in a novel or story in which two characters are from two different origins, italics are only used to distinguish a word or phrase as foreign. When attempting to normalize the variations in language origin, you should not italicize.

5.2 Capitalization of foreign terms. Unless the term appears in a standard English-language dictionary and is being used in such a context, one should observe the capitalization conventions of the word's language of origin:

The German word for computer is *Computer*. The French word is *ordinateur*. In Spanish, the word is either *computadora* or *ordenador*, depending on region or context.

or

We were prepared to learn the nuances of *la langue française*.

5.3 Titles of major works. When a title of a work in another language is mentioned in text, an English translation may be added in parentheses. If the translation has not been published, the English needs to be capitalized sentence style and should not be set in italics or within quotation marks:

Leonardo Fioravanti's *Compendio de i secreti rationali* (Compendium of rational secrets) became a best seller.

However, if a translation has been published, it should be capitalized headline style and should appear in italics or quotation marks:

Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (*Remembrance of Things Past*) was the subject of her dissertation.

5.4 Diacritical marks. Diacritical marks are the accents marks that can accompany many foreign-derived words. In written English they *should not* be omitted:

Résumé

not

Resume

5.5 British English v American English. Do not appropriate British English in favor of American English. Americans do not wear *jumpers*; we wear *sweaters*. We do not ride in *lifts*; we ride in *elevators*. Forgo the extra “l” in words such as *traveled*, *canceled*, and *marvelous*. Avoid the British “ou” in words like *neighbor*, *color*, *harbor*, and *labor*. Finally, avoid using the British “-re”: *miter*, *scepter*, *fiber*, and *center*.

6. Numbers

Numbers in General

6.1 Words v numerals. Spell out whole numbers from zero through one hundred.

When a sentence starts with a number, it is *always* spelled out, whether in narration or dialogue:

We went on a twenty-minute bike ride.
We went on a 250-mile road trip.
Five hundred men went running up the hill.

6.2 Consistency. When many numbers occur in a paragraph, maintain consistency within the context and/or make use of parallel structures to avoid confusion, *even if* it requires breaking the rule from 6.1:

There were a few farms—one of 20 acres, two of more than 50 acres, and three which boasted 100 acres.

6.3 Large numbers. Whole numbers followed by *hundred*, *thousand*, or *hundred thousand* should be spelled out—whether used exactly or as an approximated value. Whole numbers followed by *million*, *billion*, or *trillion* should be spelled out. If

the number includes a decimal, a mixture of numerals and spelled-out numbers is used:

There were twenty-eight million teenagers at the summit
I owed him one trillion doll hairs.
The movies budget was reportedly 1.8 billion dollars.

Dialogue

6.4 In spoken dialogue. Numerals should be completely avoided in dialogue (if possible), since characters speak words, not numerals:

“I ate five waffles before class.” ☺
not
“I ate 5 waffles before class.” ☹

6.5 Exceptions to the rule. There may be instances where using numerals in dialogue is warranted. Times and years may be expressed as numerals as long as they are not the first item of the sentence, or if it looks awkward spelled out:

“I was born in a ball pit at the Kansas State Fair in 1982.”
but
“Nineteen eighty-two was a strange year.”

“I’m supposed to meet her at the party at 8:00 this evening.”
or
“I’m supposed to meet her at the party at eight o’clock this evening.”

6.6 Consistency. Use discretion when choosing to opt for numerals in dialogue and, above all, maintain consistency:

“I left the house at 5:30 to catch the 6:00 show.” ☺
or
“I left the house at five thirty to catch the six o’clock show.” ☺
but not
“I left the house at five thirty to catch the 6:00 show.” ☹