

# 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 created 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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