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Editing Style Guide

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Introduction

Purpose and Scope of This Editing Style Guide

Describe the purpose and scope of the editing style guide, including its aims and objectives, the types of content it covers, and the intended users.

For example:

This editing style guide outlines the editorial standards and best practices for content published by [Company Name]. It serves as a reference for writers, editors, and proofreaders.

The purpose of this editing style guide is to:

- *Establish a consistent voice and tone for [Company Name]'s content*
- *Provide guidelines for grammar, punctuation, spelling, and formatting*
- *Ensure content adheres to [Company Name]'s brand identity and values*
- *Streamline the editing and proofreading process*

Using This Editing Style Guide

Provide instructions on how to use and interpret the editing style guide effectively.

For example:

Writers should refer to this guide when drafting content to avoid common style and formatting errors. Editors and proofreaders should use this guide as the primary reference when reviewing content for publication.

If this guide doesn't address a specific issue, refer to the latest edition of the [Primary Style Guide Used, e.g., AP Stylebook or Chicago Manual of Style]. For industry-specific terminology, consult the relevant resources listed in Section 6.

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1. General Guidelines

1.1. Content Description

Briefly describe the type of content and its purpose.

For example:

[Company Name] publishes online content, including a weekly blog post, a monthly newsletter, social media posts (Facebook, Instagram, X, and LinkedIn), eBooks, and promotional emails.

Our content aims to be:

- *Helpful and actionable*
- *Engaging and easy to read*
- *Authoritative yet approachable*

1.2. Target Audience

Identify the primary audience for the content. Consider age, background, education level, interests, and any other relevant demographic information.

For example:

[Company Name]'s target audience includes self-made South African SMB owners, entrepreneurs, and freelancers aged 21 to 35 in the marketing and advertising industry.

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2. Language Use

2.1. Language Variant

Specify the preferred language variant.

For example:

All content should use standard British English. Be mindful not to use American terminology ('pavement', not 'sidewalk') or American spellings ('colour', not 'color').

2.2. Tone and Voice

Describe the desired tone and voice for your content.

For example:

Our content should have a friendly, conversational tone that engages the reader. Use active voice as far as possible.

2.3. Formality

Clarify the level of formality required.

For example:

Use a semi-formal register, avoiding overly casual language or slang.

2.4. Point of View

Specify the preferred point of view (first, second, or third person).

For example:

Write from a first-person point of view ('we' and 'our'), and use a second-person point of view ('you') to address the reader directly.

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2.5. Use of Technical Terminology

Provide guidelines on when and how to use technical terms. You can include and link to a list of commonly used terms as an additional resource in Section 6.

For example:

Only use technical language when absolutely necessary. When using technical terms or industry jargon, ensure they are clearly explained or defined for the target audience.

2.6. Use of Contractions

Indicate whether contractions are allowed or discouraged and provide examples or guidelines for their use.

For example:

Use contractions to maintain a conversational tone. For example, 'you're' is preferred over 'you are'.

2.7. Inclusive Language

Encourage the use of inclusive language. Provide examples and guidelines for avoiding biased or discriminatory language.

For example:

Use gender-neutral language (use 'they' as a singular pronoun) and avoid stereotypes or biased terms (e.g., 'chairperson', not 'chairman').

2.8. Words and Phrases to Avoid

List specific words and phrases that should not be used, such as slang, profanity, or cliches. Where appropriate, provide explanations and the preferred alternatives.

For example:

Avoid using 'click here' for hyperlinks. Use descriptive anchor texts instead (e.g., 'read more on Google Ads').

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3. Spelling and Punctuation

3.1. Capitalisation

Provide rules and guidelines for capitalisation, including specific cases, such as proper nouns, titles, headings, and acronyms. If applicable, you can also reference a particular style guide (e.g., Chicago Manual of Style).

For example:

Capitalise the first letter of each word in headings, except for articles, conjunctions, and prepositions with three or fewer letters.

3.2. Spelling: One Word vs Two

Specify the preferred spelling for commonly confused words and provide examples.

For example:

Spell the following compound nouns as one word: [provide a list].

Spell the following as two words: [provide a list].

When in doubt, refer to the Oxford English Dictionary for the preferred spelling.

3.3. Hyphenation

Provide rules for hyphenation, including compound words and prefixes.

For example:

Hyphenate compound adjectives before a noun, such as 'well-written article'.

3.4. Em Dashes

Provide guidelines for when and how to use em dashes (—) with examples.

For example:

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Use em dashes without spaces to indicate a break in thought, emphasise a phrase, or add additional information. For example, 'When the company finally received the funds—five months after it was due—it had already lost two key investors'.

3.5. Quotation Marks

Specify the preferred style for quotation marks (single or double) and provide guidelines for their use, including punctuation rules.

For example:

Use single quotation marks for quotes and double quotation marks for quotes within quotes. For example, Chandre explained, 'He said something like, "I plan to resign soon because HR hasn't resolved the issue", but I can't be sure of his exact words.'

3.6. Oxford (Serial) Comma

Indicate whether the Oxford comma should be used or omitted, and provide examples.

For example:

Use a comma before the conjunction in a list of three or more items (e.g., red, white, and blue).

3.7. Acronyms and Abbreviations

Provide guidelines for introducing and using acronyms and abbreviations, including when to spell out the full term and when to use the abbreviated form.

For example:

Spell out acronyms on first use, followed by the abbreviation in parentheses (e.g., search engine optimisation (SEO)).

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4. Numbers and Symbols

4.1. Words vs Numerals

Specify when to use words or numerals for numbers.

For example:

Spell out numbers one through nine, and use numerals for 10 and above.

4.2. Formatting Large Numbers

Specify the preferred format for large numbers, such as using commas, spaces, or other separators.

For example:

Use commas to separate digits in numbers of 1,000 or more.

4.3. Dates

Indicate the preferred date format (month day, year or day month year) and provide examples.

For example:

Use the format 'Month Day, Year' (e.g., January 1, 2024).

4.4. Times

Specify the preferred time format (i.e., 12-hour or 24-hour clock) and how to punctuate times. Clarify your explanations by providing examples.

For example:

Use the 12-hour clock with 'a.m.' and 'p.m.' written in lowercase with periods (e.g., 8 p.m.).

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4.5. Units of Measurement

Outline the preferred style for units of measurement, including whether to use abbreviations or spelled-out forms and any specific conventions or standards.

For example:

Use the metric system for measurements. When using numerals, always abbreviate the unit of measurement and include a space between the digit and the abbreviation (e.g., 12 km).

4.6. Currency

Indicate the preferred style for expressing currency, including the currency symbol and its position relative to the numeric value.

For example:

Use the currency symbol followed by the amount without a space (e.g., \$10.99).

4.7. Symbol Usage

Provide guidelines for the use of symbols, such as per cent signs, degree symbols, and ampersands, and specify any preferred styles or conventions.

For example:

Use the ampersand (&) only in company names or when space is limited. Always use the per cent symbol (%) with numerals (e.g., 25%).

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5. Formatting

5.1. Page Formatting

5.1.1. Page Margins

Specify the preferred page margins, including top, bottom, left, and right margins.

For example:

Use 0.5 cm margins on all sides.

5.1.2. Text Alignment

Indicate the preferred text alignment (e.g., left-aligned, justified, or other styles) for different sections or elements of the content.

For example:

Use left alignment for body text. Use centre alignment for headings.

5.1.3. Line Spacing

Outline the preferred line spacing for various elements, such as body text, headings, and block quotes.

For example:

Use 1.5 line spacing for body text and single spacing for headings.

5.1.4. Indents

Provide guidelines for indentation, including paragraph indents, hanging indents, and any specific rules.

For example:

Indent the first line of each paragraph by 1.5 cm.

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5.1.5. Headings

Specify the preferred heading styles, including formatting (e.g., bold, italics, capitalisation) and hierarchy (e.g., Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.). Include examples for each heading level.

For example:

Use Heading 1 for the main title, Heading 2 for section titles, and Heading 3 for subsections. Heading 1: Arial 24pt, bold, title case; Heading 2: Arial 18pt, bold, title case; Heading 3: Arial 14pt, bold, sentence case.

5.1.6. Fonts

Indicate the preferred font families and sizes for various elements, such as body text, headings, and captions.

For example:

Use Arial 16pt black for headings and Times New Roman 12pt black for body text.

5.1.7. Italics and Bolding

Provide guidelines for using italics and bold formatting, including when to use them and any specific details.

For example:

Use italics for book titles, movie titles, and foreign words. Use bolding sparingly for emphasis.

5.1.8. Lists

Specify the preferred formatting for different types of lists and provide examples.

For example:

Use round bullets for unordered lists. Use Arabic numerals followed by a period for ordered lists.

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5.2. Formatting Visual and Media Elements

5.2.1. Images

Outline the guidelines for formatting and presenting images, including file formats, resolution, sizing, placement, captioning, and alt texts. Consider providing a few images illustrating good and bad examples.

For example:

Images should be in PNG or JPEG format with a minimum resolution of 300 DPI. Place images near the relevant text and include descriptive captions and alt text for accessibility.

5.2.2. Videos

Provide guidelines for embedding or linking to video content, including preferred platforms, aspect ratios, and captioning.

For example:

Embed videos using the HTML5 <video> tag or link to videos hosted on platforms like YouTube or Vimeo. Use a 16:9 aspect ratio and include captions or transcripts for accessibility.

5.2.3. Tables

Specify the preferred formatting for tables, including styles for headings, borders, and alignment. Provide an example of a correctly formatted table.

For example:

Bold column headings and use 1px+ borders between cells. Left-align text and right-align numbers.

5.2.4. Charts

Outline the guidelines for presenting charts and graphs, including preferred chart types, styles, and labelling instructions. Consider providing annotated examples of charts to clarify all their requirements.

For example:

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Use bar charts for comparisons, line graphs for trends, and pie charts for percentages. Include titles, axis labels, and legends. Use consistent colours and styles that adhere to brand guidelines.

5.2.5. Infographics

Define content guidelines for infographics and specify preferred formatting, including layout, colour schemes, and typography. Be sure to include one or two infographic examples to clarify their requirements.

For example:

Ensure infographics have a logical flow and clear hierarchy. Adhere to the brand's colour scheme and typography guidelines.

5.3. Referencing

5.3.1. Preferred Referencing Style

Indicate the preferred referencing style (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago, or others) for in-text citations, endnotes, footnotes, and bibliographies. Briefly explain why you chose this style and include a link to the official style guide for reference.

For example:

We use the APA 7th edition referencing style for all our publications. This style is commonly used in the social sciences and provides clear guidelines for in-text citations and reference list formatting. For more information, consult the official [APA Style guide](#).

5.3.2. Citations

Provide guidelines for in-text citations, including formatting and placement rules. Include examples of how to cite various sources, such as books, articles, websites, and more.

For example:

Insert in-text citations at the end of the sentence before the period. For paraphrased information, include the author's last name and the year of publication (Smith, 2021). For direct quotations, also include the page number (Smith, 2021, p. 45).

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5.3.3. Endnotes and Footnotes

Outline the preferred formatting and placement of endnotes and footnotes. Specify when to use endnotes or footnotes and provide examples of how to format them correctly.

For example:

Use endnotes for supplementary information that would disrupt the flow of the main text. Place endnotes at the end of the document before the reference list. Format endnotes using superscript numbers in the main text and corresponding numbers in the endnotes list.

5.3.4. Bibliography or Reference List

Specify the preferred formatting and organisation for bibliographies or reference lists. Include examples of how to format various types of sources, such as books, articles, websites, eBooks, etc. For full referencing details, link to the relevant style guide.

For example:

The reference list should be placed at the end of the document, starting on a new page. References should be alphabetised by the author's last name and formatted according to the APA 7th Edition guidelines.

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6. Resources

Note:

This section includes any resources, reference materials, or appendices that will benefit the style guide user. The type of resources will differ significantly from one editing style guide to the next. These are just a few examples of what you could include.

6.1. Industry-Specific Resources

This could include a list of recommended books and websites relevant to a specific industry.

For example:

For online content editors, you could link to websites explaining SEO best practices.

6.2. List of Abbreviations

Provide a list of frequently used abbreviations and their full forms as a quick reference for writers and editors.

For example:

- *AI: Artificial Intelligence*
- *CMS: Content Management System*
- *CTA: Call to Action*

6.3. List of Technical Terms or Glossary

Another helpful quick reference is an alphabetical list of industry-specific terminology, technical terms, or other vocabulary that is not common knowledge. Include brief definitions or explanations for each term.

For example:

- *Bounce rate: The percentage of visitors who leave a website after viewing only one page.*

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- **Metadata:** Data that provides information about other data, such as page titles, descriptions, and keywords.
- **Responsive design:** A design approach that ensures a website adapts to different screen sizes and devices.

6.4. Commonly Misused and Misspelt Words

List commonly misused and misspelt words specific to your project or industry. Explain their correct usage and provide the correct spelling.

For example:

- *Affect (verb): To influence or impact. | Effect (noun): A result or consequence.*
- *Complement (noun): Something that completes or enhances. | Compliment (noun): An expression of praise or admiration.*

6.5. Editing Tools and Software

Recommend and link to any helpful tools, software, or online resources for editing and proofreading, such as grammar checkers, plagiarism detectors, AI writing tools, or online dictionaries and thesauruses. Provide a brief description of each tool and its benefits.

For example:

- *Copyscape: A plagiarism detection service that checks web content against other online sources to ensure originality.*
- *Hemingway Editor: A tool that helps improve writing by highlighting complex sentences, passive voice, and other readability issues.*

6.6. Templates and Checklists

Include any document templates or editing checklists that can help streamline the writing or editing process.

For example:

Include a blog post template comprising a pre-formatted document with sections for the title, meta description, introduction, headings and subheadings, conclusion, and call-to-action.

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7. Revision History

7.1. Version Number

Assign a version number to each revision.

7.2. Date of Revision

Record the date of each revision.

7.3. Changes Made

Briefly describe the changes made in each revision.

7.4. Author of Changes

Identify the person who made the changes.

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8. Contact Information

8.1. Contact Details for Questions

Provide contact information (e.g., name, email address, and phone number) for enquiries or questions regarding the editing style guide.

8.2. Contact Details for Feedback

Provide contact information (e.g., name, email address, and phone number) for submitting feedback, suggestions, or proposed updates to the editing style guide.