FO° Style Guidelines

Article Structure
- The first paragraph should give the reader a clear sense of what will be contained in the article and encapsulate ("in a nutshell") the main point. Don't [bury the lead](#).
- Use short sentences. Transition is key. So, make sure they connect with preceding and succeeding sentences.
- Use short paragraphs as well. Let your text breathe. Remember transition from one paragraph to another is important.
- Narrative structure
  - If the article is a narrative, then it should roughly follow chronological order. Making connections between events occurring at different times is fine (and encouraged), but the reader should be able to get lost from the sequence of events.

Rhetorical Structure
- Fair Observer values opinion, but opinion should be in some way supported by facts.
- Please cite statistics and other non-obvious statements of fact by providing a hyperlink to a reliable source.
- We are not Wikipedia; you can, and should, make original conclusions and do not need to cite every statement in a reliable source.
  - Steer clear of sources known for sensationalism, such as *The Daily Mail*.
  - Be wary of sources that refer to Wikipedia.
  - Use credible sources such as the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and the Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- You should avoid rhetoric which departs from the facts and makes statements that are not supported by objective data.
  - Acceptable argument: The British Prime Minister has acquired more powers traditionally belonging to other ministers or to Parliament (fact). This is undemocratic, and must be curtailed (opinion).
  - Unacceptable argument: The British Prime Minister has acquired more powers traditionally belonging to other ministers or to Parliament (fact). This is undemocratic, and must be curtailed (opinion). Britain is an imperialist state which must repent of its crimes against Scotland. (unsupported opinion).
    - Not every opinion needs to be supported by directly cited facts, especially if they are commonly accepted opinions. The reader should never, however, be given the impression that the author's opinions have no basis in the facts.
  - Seek to persuade with arguments, not assertions.

Sentence Structure
- Keep sentences short. Try to restrict to 1 idea per sentence. Avoid including multiple ideas in complete sentences that will confuse the reader.
- Use active voice, rather than passive voice, when possible.
  - "China rivals the United States for global supremacy," rather than "The United States is rivaled by China for global supremacy"
- Use transitive verbs rather than "to be" when possible, as they are more engaging.
  - "China rivals the United States for global supremacy," rather than "China is the United States' rival for global supremacy"
- Avoid [mixed metaphors](#).

- Avoid slanderous claims, i.e. claims which may substantially damage the reputation of a person if those claims cannot be substantiated with evidence or shown to be matters of public concern.

Spelling
- Use American English spelling.
  - Refer to [Webster's Dictionary](#).
- Check spelling of proper nouns (people, places, etc.)
  - Use native spellings when possible. Retain special characters.
    - This is especially true for languages, like Turkish, which use the Latin alphabet natively.
      - "François Hollande," not "Francois"
      - "Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu," not "Kilicdaroglu."
    - Names from languages which use other alphabets generally do not have diacritics when they are spelled in English; make sure of the spelling, however, as exceptions do exist.
      - "Şahan Arzruni," not "Sahan"
      - "Itō Hirobumi," not "Ito"
    - The easiest way to include foreign characters is copy-pasting the Wikipedia article title, since Wikipedia usually uses foreign diacritics.
  - Retain stylized capitalizations of brand names.
    - YouTube, not Youtube.
- State money figures in US dollars first, and then include figures in the local currency, where applicable, in parentheses.
  - "The project cost $1 million (1.48 Australian dollars)."
- Abbreviations
  - Spell out the first instance of acronyms.
    - "The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) … "
    - This is not necessary for universally known acronyms like USA, NATO, etc.
  - Do not use periods in acronyms.
    - US and EU, not U.S. and E.U.
- Numbers
  - Spell numbers from one to ten, and use numerals for 11 and higher numbers.
  - Do not abbreviate numbers.
    - "million" and "billion," not "M" or "bn."
  - Always include commas to mark thousands. Use 1,000 instead of 1000.
  - Do not use superscripts for ordinal numbers. "19th," not "19th."

Formatting and Punctuation
- Use italics for:
  - titles of publications such as *The New York Times* and *The Economist*. This includes the initial "The," which is also capitalized.
  - names of books such as *Animal Farm* and *War and Peace*,
  - names of movies such as *The Godfather* and *Citizen Kane*, and
  - foreign words and phrases, except for ones that have become commonly used in English.
    - "*café au lait*" but "fait accompli"
- Commas
  - Do not use the serial comma ("Oxford comma") except when it removes ambiguity:
    - "A cat, a mouse and a rat," not "A cat, a mouse, and a rat"
    - But you might consider: "Nutella, peanut butter and jelly, and vegemite sandwiches"

- - - Keep commas within quotes, even if they are not part of the original sentence, per US custom.
      - "'If life were easy, it wouldn't be difficult," said Kermit. Not: "If life were easy, it wouldn't be difficult", said Kermit.
- Dashes
  - Do not confuse hyphens and dashes
    - Em dashes — like this — are used for parentheticals, and they are set off with spaces.
    - En dashes (not hyphens) are used for ranges: 1945–1991 (not 1945-1991), and relationships between separated things.
    - If you have a number pad, you can type "—" with ALT+0151, and "–" with ALT+0150
    - Hyphens (for which you have a key on your keyboard) are used to join close pairs of things into a single word. Unlike en dashes, they do not imply separation.
- Please use double quotation marks, according to the US convention. Single quotation marks are only for quotations within quotations, not for paraphrases in main text.
  - Use curly quotes, not straight quotes:

- Be aware of capitalization.
  - The names of offices and agencies should only be capitalized when they are part of someone's title. "The prime minister of the UK," but "Prime Minister Rishi Sunak."
    - Retain certain traditional expressions that may appear to violate this rule; in other words, common nouns may sometimes be used as proper nouns or nicknames. The CIA is "the Agency," and the City of London is "the City."
  - After a colon, capitalize the first word if what follows is a complete sentence: You would capitalize it like this. If it is not a complete sentence, do not capitalize: like this.
  - Title case
    - In the title case, all nouns, verbs and adjectives are capitalized, including forms of the verb "to be," but not including articles.
      - Prepositions are capitalized if they are four or more letters.
      - Articles and prepositions are capitalized if they are the first or last word in a title or follow a colon.
    - Use title case for the article's title and for English-language titles mentioned in the text. For non-English titles, follow that language's standard. *The Catcher in the Rye,* but *Como agua para chocolate*.
    - Do not use title case for section headings.
- Use % instead of "percent."
  - "Inflation in Europe has crossed 10%."
- Temperature
  - Always use digits, not words. 9°, not nine degrees.
  - Use the minus sign ("-") rather than words for negative temperature. -12°, not minus 12°.
  - Use the degree symbol ("°"), followed by a space, for Fahrenheit and Celsius. 15° C, not 15 C.
  - If temperatures are given by the author in Fahrenheit, give the equivalent in Celsius as a parenthetical. -32° F (0° C)
- Dates

- ○ We use American dates. June 6, 1944, not 6 June 1944.
  - ○ We use cardinal numbers for dates, not ordinal numbers. June 6, not June 6th.
- Spacing
  - ○ On Google Docs, press CTRL+SHIFT+P to reveal spaces and other invisible characters. This will enable you to remove stray characters.
  - ○ Use 1.15 spacing between lines and 12 pt. spacing between paragraphs.
  - ○ Do not indent paragraphs, except for these cases:
    - ■ Block quotes, which are indented 0.5 inches on both sides.
    - ■ Bulleted or numbered lists, which get a hanging indent.
  - ○ Do not use double spaces after a period. Use the search feature (CTRL+F) to ensure that there are no double spaces in a document.

Other Matters
- Use [Grammarly](#) to check
  - ○ Grammarly is great at spotting errors that may be otherwise invisible, but use your judgment when accepting or rejecting its suggestions.
  - ○ Grammarly will always add the serial comma. Ignore this; we are using AP style, not Chicago style.
- Refer to the [University of Oxford Style Guide](#) and the [AP Stylebook](#) for further guidance.
- Other useful links:
  - ○ [Headline SEO Analyzer](#)
  - ○ [Word Frequency Analyzer](#)
  - ○ [Plagiarism Checker](#)