

[Style Guide]

Catalyst Magazine

Contents

Page One: Tone ~ Page Three: Spelling & Grammar ~ Page Twelve: Pitch your work to Catalyst

[TONE]

Not the poly or mono kind

Keep it casual, but not too casual: Imagine you're having coffee with a new friend. They're not a professional colleague but they're not your best mate either. That person is essentially our audience. As such, keep your tone friendly but not overly casual. **For instance**, rather than saying something like 'Avocado is shit' (even though we all know it is) perhaps say 'Avocado is really not that great'. That said, we're not looking for anything to be overly formal, so don't be afraid to let your voice come through in your work.

Feature Pieces: Let the content of your piece define the specifics of your tone. If you're writing an upbeat piece about an eccentric character or business then by all means keep things light and bubbly. But, if you're writing about someone struggling with a devastating loss it's probably best to change your tone, so it fits with the situation/subject of the piece. Otherwise you'll come across as a sociopathic weirdo and that's just off putting. **Form (tone) follows function (content).**

Keep it objective, avoid using first person pronouns, keep your opinion out of it unless previously discussed with Editors (and we've given it the okay to be an op-ed).

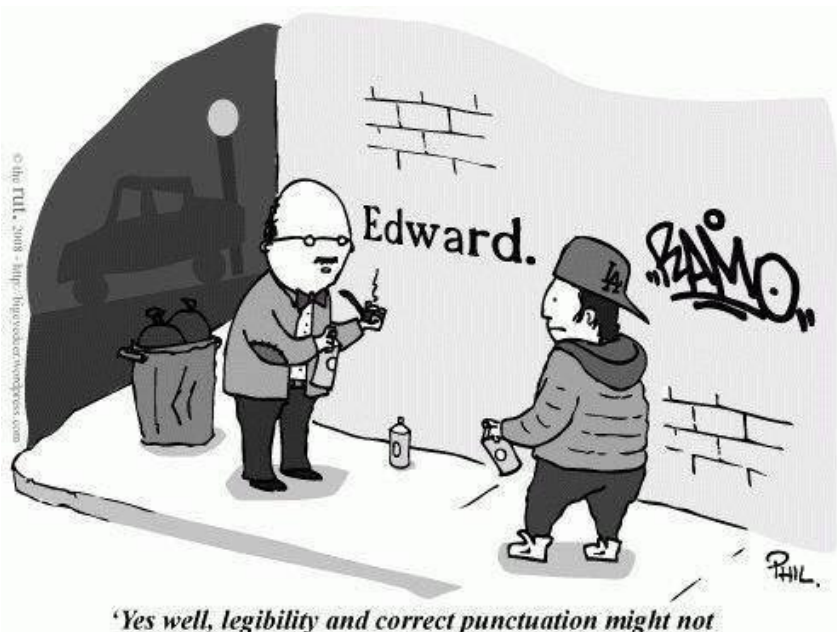
Tech pieces/columns: Keep your writing friendly and accessible. You may be trying to condense really complex topics but it's important not to use too much technical jargon because it makes readers tune out. Assume your readers have the same level of knowledge in this area as the average year 10 student.

Science pieces/columns: Because you're writing a piece for a magazine and not a scientific journal it's important to keep your tone relatively upbeat. In order to engage readers keep complex scientific language to a minimum. Of course, it's ok to use technical terms that are relevant to your piece if you explain what they mean in a simple, straightforward manner.

Fashion pieces/columns: Catalyst is looking for fashion pieces that are easily accessible for all of our readers. As with all our articles try to keep the use of overly technical terms to a minimum and maintain a friendly tone.

Design+Architecture pieces/columns: See 'Fashion pieces/columns'

Business pieces/columns: As many of our business and commerce articles will be about helping our readers learn about, save and generally deal with their finances it's particularly important to use an upbeat/humorous tone. Because these topics can be quite dry the best way to keep your readers engaged with your work is to boil down complex concepts into everyday language and chuck in a few jokes if you can. As with all Catalyst pieces, please keep your use of technical jargon to a minimum.



'Yes well, legibility and correct punctuation might not

[SPELLING AND GRAMMAR]

The difference between knowing your shit and knowing you're shit.

[Spelling]

Australian spelling is to be used throughout. Please refer to this list of particular ways to spell or format your writing (in alphabetical order).

Abbreviations

Abbreviated phrases or words that do not end in the last letter of the last word take a full stop to convey elision ('e.g.', 'i.e.', 'etc.'). However always spell out abbreviations that aren't in everyday usage (for instance 'e.g.' is fine, but 'Mon.' for 'Monday' is not).

Accents

French words like *résumé* generally take an 'é' at the end to distinguish them from similar English words (compare 'résumé' to 'resume'), whereas words like *cafe* can be used without the accent because there is no way you can confuse them with other words. In the interests of consistency, and simplicity, ***Catalyst* does not use accents unless the word is not commonly used in English.**

Americanisms

Be wary of these—especially if you are/the writer is working on a Mac (or their version of Word has been set to American spelling). Also keep in mind that Australian spelling doesn't always conform to British conventions—in a few cases it

aligns itself with American English; at other times it dispenses with both. Generally, watch out for the following:

-se vs. -ze

Australian conventions prefer the –se suffix. Therefore, it should be ‘recognise’ not ‘recognize’, ‘analyse’ not ‘analyze’.

-our vs. -or

Australian conventions prefer –our, despite –or being used prior to the 1960s. Therefore, it should be ‘colour’ not ‘color’, ‘honour’ not ‘honor’.

-ll vs. -l

Australian conventions prefer the –ll form. Therefore, it should be ‘travelled’ not ‘traveled’, ‘modelling’ not ‘modeling’. However, please note that –l is preferred when –ll precedes it: ‘paralleled’, ‘paralleling’.

-ogue vs. -og

Australian conventions prefer the –ogue form. Therefore, it is ‘dialogue’ not ‘dialog’, ‘catalogue’ not ‘catalog’.

-t vs. -ed

Australian conventions allow for both spellings. Research suggests that nowadays –t is used more often in the adjectival sense, whereas –ed is used more often for the past tense of a verb due to an American influence. For consistency, *Catalyst* will use –ed for past-tense verbs and –t for adjectives unless otherwise stated by the editors. A prime example is the use of –t in the adjective sense but –ed in the verb for the verb ‘to burn’. Compare: ‘The clothes burned in the flames’ with ‘Her burnt clothes’. The reverse is true for the form ‘to learn’: ‘learnt’ is the past tense verb while ‘learned’ is a (now antiquated) adjective.

Ampersands

Do not use ampersands ('&') unless they are included in a placename, the name of an organisation or a title.

Currency

Use numerals with the dollar sign, or the cents symbol with only cents is given. It is not necessary to put two zeros after the period if only the dollars are known and not the cents. Make sure the dollar sign is an Australian dollar sign, not an American one (one stroke through the 's', not two). Only spell out currency if the money is used in an approximate or idiomatic sense or in dialogue, e.g. 'I think you'll save twenty dollars if you buy this one.'

Dates

The general format for dates should be the day in numerals, followed by the month spelt out in full (and, if necessary, the year in full). For example: 'The bill was passed on 17 January' or 'He was born on 24 February 1993'. Use 1990-91 not 1990-1. Abbreviate years with an apostrophe ('90s, would refer to the decade; nineties a person's age). Spell out centuries (twentieth century, not 20th century). It is 1940s if using the full year ('s' without an apostrophe). It is 'World War I' and 'World War II' respectively, and can be abbreviated after the first instance to 'WWI' or 'WWII'.

Em-dashes, not en-dashes

Use em-dashes (the big ones with no space on either side) rather than en dashes (the smaller ones with a space on either side). So it should be 'the expenses—mainly legal fees—will have to be paid by her parents' instead of 'the expenses – mainly legal fees – will have to be paid by her parents'. Dashes are

meant to provide a striking tangent or conclusion to a sentence and, with this in mind, em-dashes are more striking than en-dashes. Using em-dashes is also important because it creates a visible distinction between dashes and hyphens. (Plus it makes you look like the *New York Times*. Fuck yeah.)

Ellipses

Use an ellipsis ('...') directly after the end of a sentence to imply trailing off. However use an ellipsis with a space on either side to indicate elision (i.e. that part of a quote has been removed).

Foreign words

All foreign words or text are italicised.

Honorifics

Honorifics that end in the last letter of the full word do not take a full stop (i.e. 'Mr' not 'Mr.'). Spell out the honorifics and titles that aren't common (i.e. 'Professor' not 'Prof.', but 'Mr' not 'Mister').

Hyphens

Hyphenate compound adjectives ('the hot-red car' refers to a hot-red colour, whereas 'the hot red car' refers to a car that is hot and red). This provides clarity between a string of words.

Indefinite articles

All words beginning with 'h' take an 'a'. For example it should be 'a historian' not 'an historian', 'a hotel' not 'an hotel'. The exception is when the 'h' is silent, e.g. 'an heir'. Using 'an' for words beginning with an 'h' sound is archaic and reflects particular British accents where 'h' is not pronounced. **Saying something like 'An hotel'? Australia says no.**



When I was a kid, my
English teacher looked
my way and said,
"Name two pronouns."
I said, **"Who, me?"**



Loan words

Many English words have been borrowed from other languages. Some words retain the conventions of their mother tongue when it comes to the plural form. For example, 'stimulus' becomes 'stimuli' (the word is of Latin origin). Generally, Latin loan-words only retain their spelling for the plural form if the word is strongly associated with science. Words of Greek origin are a little more ambiguous. The plural form of 'criterion' is often used as the singular ('criteria'), whereas the plural form of 'phenomenon' is still distinct ('phenomena'). Words from French now take the English formation ('bureaus' not 'bureaux'), as with words of Italian origin.

Measurement

Spell out units in text and only use the symbols in tables, graphs, charts, etc. In tables and graphs, use numerals with the symbol (the symbol appears after a space). So in a chart it would be acceptable to have '22 km', but otherwise it should be transcribed as '22 kilometres'.

Names of Organisations

The name of an organisation should be spelt as the organisation spells them—even if the organisation dispenses with grammatical conventions (capital letters, apostrophes, etc.) or conflicts with Australian spelling. Therefore, it is 'World Health Organization' not 'World Health Organisation'. Spell out acronyms in the first instance, unless the organisation is well-known by its acronym ('RSPCA' not 'Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals').

Numbers

Spell out stand-alone numbers from one to nine. **Use the numerals for 10 and above, but spell out big units (million, billion, etc.).** Use a comma to separate the numerals from 10,000 to 999,999. Always spell out a number that starts a sentence, but always use numerals for anything with a decimal point (however try to round numbers unless exact precision is necessary). Use the numerals for hyphenated words (24-year-old), addresses (80 Wilson Street) and year levels (year 12). It is okay to spell out numbers no matter how high if known only in a general sense, as well as in dialogue and quotes.

Okay, not OK

Okay is not an acronym, it is a word in itself like 'yes'. Therefore it is incorrect to use 'OK', despite the fact that most news organisations do this (probably in the interests of taking up less space). Essentially, **it is not okay to write 'ok'**.

Oxford commas

Note the difference between 'Today I saw Janice, a thief and a spinster' and 'Today I saw Janice, a thief, and a spinster'. The lack of an Oxford comma would indicate that Janice is a thief and spinster. Adding the Oxford comma provides clarity—that the speaker saw three people: Janice, a thief and finally a spinster. In other words, only use an Oxford comma where it is necessary to convey the exact meaning of a sentence.

Placenames

Australian placenames can be found in a telephone directory or at auslig.gov.au. Note that Australian place names do not have possessive apostrophes in them where there otherwise would be (for example, the Melbourne suburb 'Princes Hill' is not 'Prince's Hill'). This applies to streets and parks. When it comes to foreign placenames, the established English forms should be used (for example, 'Beijing' and 'Rome'). Be aware of names that change over time ('Burma' to 'Myanmar', 'Ayers Rock' to 'Uluru').

Possessive apostrophes

This is the most misused punctuation mark in the English language. If a word is in italics, then the apostrophe and 's' also go in italics. Words like CDs and Ps never take the apostrophe unless they are possessive ('The CD's cover' not 'The expensive CD's'). The rules are as follows:

Singular nouns

Use an apostrophe before the plural -s of a singular noun, even when the noun already ends in 's'. Therefore, it is 'the government's policies', 'the atlas's maps', 'Thomas's homework'. The exception is if it is a time-honoured name ending in 's' like Jesus or Odysseus. These names only take the apostrophe in the possessive, no matter the length or pronunciation (i.e. Jesus' robes).

Plural nouns

Plural nouns that do not end in 's' take both the 's' and the apostrophe, whereas plural nouns ending in 's' simply take the apostrophe. Therefore, it is 'the children's toys', but 'the students' response'.

Family names that end in 's'

The construction 'Williams's trophy' refers to a tennis trophy won by one of the Williams sisters, whereas 'The Williamses' trophy' refers to a trophy won by both sisters. Similarly, if referring to the whole family it should be 'The Joneses' family home' not 'The Jones' family home'.

Time

The apostrophe is left out in expressions of time involving a plural reference (i.e. 'Three weeks time' instead of 'three weeks' time'). This is because the sentence is often more descriptive than possessive. However when the time reference is in the singular, the apostrophe should be retained to help mark the noun as singular (i.e. 'A day's journey' rather than 'A days journey').

Punctuation

Punctuation is best used sparingly. While punctuation helps navigate the reader, too much of it can make the copy look cluttered and ugly.

Its and It's

We know how complicated this can get. Here's a summary:

- **It's = it is.**

Example- It's a lovely day!

- **Its = 'of it' (possessive form).**

Example- The tree has lost all of its leaves.

Quotation marks

For direct quotes, speech marks are used. These consist of double inverted commas, with a quote within a direct quote being shown with singular quotation marks. If a sentence consists entirely of a quote, then all punctuation marks appear inside the quotation marks—if the quote is introduced later in the sentence without a colon then the full stop appears directly after the quotation marks. Please note that

we use smart quotes instead of straight quotes (i.e. they must be curly not straight). So it should be “Hello, you’re using quotes correctly” not "Hello you’re using quotes incorrectly". Straight quotes are not quotes at all; they’re actually the symbols used to denote feet and inches. Some news websites have popularised straight quotes because they require a much simpler code for your computer screens. However we use smart (curly) quotes because not only are they correct, but they look nicer on the eye.

Time

When the exact time is known use numerals, a period (not a colon) and either ‘am’ or ‘pm’ without a space. Therefore, it should be ‘8.30am’ or ‘5.25pm’. It is not essential to use two zeros after the hour—this is just taking up space. As such, ‘8am’ is preferred to ‘8.00am’. It is okay to spell out time when it is only known in a general sense (two o’clock, seven o’clock).

Titles

Italicise the names of books, newspapers, magazines, films, plays, television shows, artworks, albums, games and the scientific names of animals and plants. Names of websites are just capitalised, not italicised (so it is Google, not *Google*). The names of poems, songs, articles, chapters within a book, etc. are placed within singular inverted commas to distinguish them from larger works. Acts of parliament are both capitalised and italicised. **Here’s an example:** I read *Catalyst* today and shared my favourite piece on Facebook! It was called ‘Don Dons: King of my heart’.

when someone writes “your welcome”

This belongs to you



thanks



[Pitch Your Work to Catalyst]

The how, what, when and where of pitching to your university magazine.

Sending us your pitch

Step 1: Have a read through the content list we've sent you, come up with two or three ideas.

Step 2: Fill out [this form](#) (which can be found at bit.ly/2iZjtjr if you're not reading this on a computer)

Step 3: Please pitch at least two ideas if you can, limited to a no more than a paragraph for each (the form will allow you to do this, just label each par 'Story 1' and 'Story 2'). Tell us about how you will approach your story, **what's your angle?** Who will you speak to? Do you need help finding sources? We're more than happy to help!

Once you've pitched

- If we want you to write the story, we'll send you a confirmation email. If we don't think that particular pitch is a great fit for the issue, we'll let you know why.
- We'll assign you a word limit. For the love of god **this is not-negotiable**, stories over the assigned word limit will be cut. Don't be that guy that goes over the word limit with a 10'000 word epic tale. No one likes that guy.

- Start writing and make sure you get your piece in by the deadline. If you're struggling or don't think you'll be able to deliver **that is ok**, just let us know as soon as you know.

And that's it! We can't wait to receive your pitches and read your work. If you have other questions that haven't been answered in this guide then please send us an email at rmitcatalyst@gmail.com

Sources:

Style Manual (sixth edition)

The Australian Editing Handbook (second edition)

News Ltd Style Guide (fourth edition)

ABC Radio National Style Guide (style.radionational.net.au)

Last updated: January 2016

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