

The Go-To Style Guide for Content Marketers



Style Guides Are Essential

One of the most important actions you can take to create high-quality, original content is to maintain a specific style within your content.

Professional writers rarely spend time debating if the word “Internet” is capitalized or not because they’ve been trained to adhere by the rules of a style guide. Specifically, The Associated Press Stylebook is a style guide turned to by the majority of American media outlets. This is how professional writers know how to write out specific phrases (is it Ms. or Miss spelled out?).

The book is more than 200 pages long, thus being impossible to include every detail in your own style guide. However, there are common roadblocks that every content marketer may frequently face. Here, we’ve put together a handy, go-to style guide for you to turn to the next time you’re scratching your head.

1 Headlines

Scripted Best Practices:

A good rule of thumb is to keep your headline to eight words. If you're going to write a "listicle" (which should only be done with caution and good reason) choose an odd number over an even number. The more concise the title, the better. Be as specific as possible with keywords to narrow the scope.

Never Capitalize:

a
an
and
at
but

by
for
up
nor
of

on
or
so
the
to

Numbers in Headlines

Always use a numerical figure in headlines (even if it's lower than 10).

Examples:

5 Reasons Content is Awesome

Original Content: 5 Reasons to Outsource Your Content

Active vs. Passive Voice

Write in active voice whenever possible, not passive (was, were, etc). If you notice you're writing in passive, take a minute and ask yourself: "How can I make this sentence active?"

Active: The engineer launched a new application for the software company on Monday.

Passive: A new application was launched by an engineer at the software company on Monday.

Numbers in Paragraphs

Write out numbers one through nine; use figures for 10 and above in sentences.

Example:

There are two chickens out of 20 animals at the farm.

3 Quotations & Italicizing

“Quotation Marks:”

Titles of books, songs, TV shows, speeches, works of art, computer games, poems and lectures.

Italicize

Names of magazines, newspapers, the Bible or books.

Farther vs. Further

Farther refers to physical distance while further refers to an extension of time or degree.

Example: Jason walked farther than Dory to the grocery store. She will look further into the investigation.

4 Dates & Measurements

Dates

For dates and years, use figures. Do not use “st”, “nd,” “rd,” or “th” with dates in a sentence.

Measurements

Spell out measurements: inches, feet, yards, gallons, ounces, pounds when used in a sentence.

However, always use figures before the spelled-out measurement.

Example:

8 inches, 10 feet, 2 ounces, 200 pounds, etc.

Proper style for common tech terms according to AP:

BlackBerry, BlackBerrys

download

e-book

e-reader

email

cellphone

Facebook

Google, Googling, Googled

hashtag

IM (IMed, IMing)

Internet (capital I)

iPad, iPhone, iPod (use iPad, iPhone, or iPod when the word begins a sentence)

LinkedIn

Twitter, tweet, tweeted, retweet

YouTube

Google+



Need content to follow your style guide?