1WORLDSYNC
GENERAL STYLE GUIDE

v1.0

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I. Introduction

1. In work you've performed as a professional writer and/or editor, you've undoubtedly worked with an in-house style guide or two.

   a) If not, you've likely worked on projects (or papers for school) that required you to follow a particular universal style guide. Examples include the AP Stylebook (aka AP Style), The Chicago Manual of Style (aka CMOS or Chicago), the MLA Handbook (MLA) or APA Style.

2. This guide is based on AP Style. If you're familiar with doing things a certain way based on Chicago or MLA, set those practices aside when you're writing for 1WorldSync. Here, AP is the standard.

   a) **Note:** Despite its name, a style guide does not determine "stylistic" choices in writing copy. The style guide is a list of rules. We all must follow the rules included here when writing, editing and reviewing copy. This ensures consistency from the start of the process to the end.

3. Certain projects with 1WorldSync will come with specific requirements from the client, and those requirements might be exceptions to this style guide and/or AP Style. In those cases, always defer to the client's requirements. Otherwise, follow the style you see here.

4. Here's a bulleted list to make that clear. When you're determining which style to use, this is your process:

a) Default to any <u>specific exceptions</u> from the client for the given project.

   [If there's no exception listed there...]

b) Default to the style noted in <u>this</u> guide.

   [If no style is listed here...]

c) Default to AP Style.

   (1) **Note:** that the complete AP Stylebook is <u>not</u> provided free on the internet. It's a retail product. You could purchase a physical or digital copy (including a subscription option), or you could make do with the many online sources that provide guidance on various AP issues.

5. In our community forums, you can get clarifications on issues that relate to AP Style, so that should largely be sufficient for your needs.

II.   Dictionary of Choice (back to top)

A. General Information (back to top)

1. This guide will include the spelling (and capitalization/hyphenation) you must use for certain terms. However, <u>this guide is not a dictionary.</u> To ensure consistency in the spelling (and capitalization/hyphenation) of common words, we use one specific free online dictionary:

<p align="center">merriam-webster.com</p>

2. You can also use the short URL <u>m-w.com</u>. Bookmark it. Put a link on your desktop and toolbar. You'll be referring to it all the time.

3. Unless there are any exceptions (by the client or in this guide), you'll be responsible for styling terms exactly as they appear on the Merriam-Webster site.

4. You might be used to seeing "night-light" as "night light" or "nightlight," but all that matters in the M-W style: "night-light." Similarly, it's "light bulb," not "lightbulb." It's "Wi-Fi," not "wi-fi" or "WiFi."

5. You're not expected to know these styles off the top of your head, but you are required to double-check them at M-W to use the spelling/capitalization/hyphenation seen there. (And spelling the term as one word or two, whichever the case may be.)

   a) <u>Note: We can't stress this enough:</u> Anytime you're not <u>100 percent</u> certain that a term is spelled/styled properly, check it. This is especially critical for editors, but all contributors are expected to do this.

6. A few things to know about M-W:

   a) If you search for a term and see more than one spelling listed there, you must <u>use the one listed first.</u> That's considered the preferred spelling. So it's judgment, not "judgement." It's cancellation, not "cancelation."

   b) Sometimes you'll be searching for whether a term is hyphenated and M-W will come back with the prefix of that term, followed by a list. <u>Scroll down the list</u> to see if your word is there.

(1) For example, searching "preseason" takes you to the page for "pre-." Scrolling down the list, preseason is listed there. Spell it just like that — no hyphen.

c) This dictionary defaults to American spellings. Unless a particular project has a different requirement, always use American spellings. It's color, center, organize and defense, not "colour," "centre," "organise" and "defence."

B. Spelling/style exceptions from M-W (back to top)

1. We're putting these right up top because M-W still has some defaults that do not conform to common styles in modern marketing copy. It's a good idea to memorize this short list of very common exceptions. (We will update this list as needed.)

email (no hyphen)
FullHD (no listing in M-W)
gameplay (no listing in M-W)
internet (don't capitalize)
touchscreen (one word)
widescreen (no hyphen)

III.   Grammar & Punctuation (back to top)

A. General Information (back to top)

1. To work on these projects, your grammar must be pretty strong already. With rare exception, this guide will not go into rules regarding standard grammar, syntax, sentence structure and other general writing matters.

2. If you're not sure <u>how semicolons work</u> or what constitutes a <u>dangling modifier</u>, for example, now is a good time to bone up. That's the beauty of the internet: It's all right there at your fingertips.

3. Just make sure you're getting your answers from a well-regarded site that focuses on professional American English.

   a) For example, Grammar Girl is an excellent resource. Our community forums also can help if you're having issues with a particular grammatical matter.

4. For general grammatical issues, default to standard grammar rules and AP Style. If an editor clarifies an issue for you, follow that direction. However, if an editor provides incorrect feedback (it happens; we're all human), advise a QA/admin.

B. Grammar

1. Capitalization (back to top)

   a) <u>Capitalize each word in the "proper portion" of product name</u> except for articles, conjunctions and prepositions. Trademarked words keep their capitalization style (e.g., iPod). Honor manufacturers' treatment (capitalization, spelling, spacing, etc.) of product and company names.

   b) The "proper" portion of the product name is the brand name, brand line, a specific proprietary feature, etc. <u>The "generic" portion is the part that's a universal term used by lots of different brands.</u> Again, the key is to capitalize the proper part; lowercase the generic part. If something isn't proprietary or otherwise unique to that product, it's lowercase.

c) To further clarify, the generic part is the <u>actual thing</u> you're describing. If it's not the actual thing, cap it.

(1) Example 1: a speakerphone that looks like a Star Trek communicator. It's not a real communicator — it's a speakerphone. Write it as "Star Trek Communcator speakerphone." This brand also makes a remote control that looks like a phaser. It's not a "phaser" (lowercase). It's a "Star Trek Phaser remote control." The lowercase part lets the reader know what the product actually <u>is</u>.

(2) Additional Examples:

(a) AT&T GoPhone Z222 no-contract mobile phone

(b)   HoMedics UHE-CM65 ultrasonic humidifier

(c) Protocol Dronium remote-controlled quad-copter

(d)   Insignia black stereo receiver with Bluetooth*

d) If something is a <u>proper</u> term, <u>do</u> capitalize it, even if it's technically in the "generic" part.

(1) Example 1:

(a) <u>Bluetooth</u> technology is used by lots of different brands, so it's technically in the generic part of the name, but Bluetooth itself also a <u>proper</u> name, so it's capped. Same with Android or Windows, etc.

e) Still not sure? Check the community forums or ask an editor before moving forward.

2. Compound Verbs [(back to top)](#)

   a) **Don't split up compound verbs.** Write "Don't <u>split up</u> compound verbs," not "Don't <u>split</u> compound verbs <u>up</u>."

3. Imperatives [(back to top)](#)

   a) An imperative sentence gives a direct command to the reader, <u>beginning with a verb:</u> "Enjoy powerful sound with [this thing]." "Create attractive illustrations with [this thing]."

     (1) Many projects require that the first sentence in a product description be an imperative, but this is not necessarily true of all project. Check the project rules to be sure.

     (2) However, <u>never make every sentence</u> in the PD an imperative. It's best used in the first sentence, perhaps once more. A description that uses only imperatives reads poorly.

     (3) An imperative is written in second person (the subject is "you"). Never switch from second person to third person (or vice versa) within the same sentence. That's always ungrammatical.

       (a) Examples of errors:

         (i)　"This cat toy looks lovely in a living room, or place it over your bed."

         (ii)　"Call friends from this smartphone, or it can be used as a camera."

(a) We've actually seen sentences such as these in submissions, and they need to be recrafted every time.

4. Introductory Clauses

a) This is a standard grammar issue, but we're specifying it here because we've had a lot of issues with it. Please review the following. Incorrect introductory clauses are errors, and they will be cause for correction or (on occasion) rejection.

(1) Whenever you use an introductory clause, it must set up (in meaning) the main clause of the sentence. It's providing information that <u>directly relates</u> to the main clause.

(2) Per Grammarly, the introductory clause "sets the stage for the main part of the sentence. When you use [it] in your writing, you're signaling to the reader that the central message of the sentence is yet to come."

(a) Correct Example: "After riding his bike around the neighborhood twice, Rob was sweating profusely."

(i) Because Rob did so much riding, he's sweating a lot. The introductory clause <u>directly sets up</u> the main clause.

(b) Incorrect Example: "Made for 38mm Apple watches, this Winx Melody Marble band secures safely with a buckle clasp."

(i)   The fact that it's made for 38mm Apple watches has nothing to do with how it secures. This is just gluing two unrelated features together with improper structure.

(ii)   To fix this, simply put the subject in front and then explain the features: "This Winx Melody Marble band is made for 38mm Apple watches and secures safely with a buckle clasp."

5. Superlatives (back to top)

a) Avoid the use of superlatives or comparisons. This includes terms such as "award-winning," "for generations," "for years," "ultimate," "unique" and "superior." Let the product's features and benefits speak for themselves.

(1) It's fine to subtly impress the reader with positive notes on a product, but don't make it sound like the product puts others to shame. Remember that you'll often be writing about many different brands that sell the same types of products.

c. Punctuation (back to top)

1. Commas (back to top)

a) In nontechnical references, use commas with numbers greater than 999 (e.g., "This morning, 1,000 people attended the event."). See specifics on certain technical references later in this document.

(1) Do not use a comma in 4-digit technical numbers (e.g., 1500W)

(2) Do use a comma in all 5-digit numbers (e.g., 12,000 BTUs).

(3)<u>Do not use the serial/Oxford comma.</u>

2. Dashes/em-dashes/en-dashes <u>(back to top)</u>

   a) Our general rule at this point is to not use dashes (of any kind) in general product descriptions. If a particular project allows for exceptions, they will be noted there.

   b) For ranges, use a hyphen.

3. Exclamation points <u>(back to top)</u>

   a) <u>Never use them in general copy</u>. The only time this mark is allowed is when a brand or product specifically uses the exclamation point as part of its proper name. (In that case, you do need to put it in there.)

4. Hyphens <u>(back to top)</u>

   a) Do not copy and paste hyphens: They cause coding errors upon delivery. It is critical that you key in hyphens rather than copying them. (This is yet another good reason to avoid copying and pasting material.)

   b) **Never use the hanging hyphen.** Though grammatical, it often looks clunky, and we do not use it in our default house style. So instead of writing "full- and part-time positions," write out "full-time and part-time positions."

   c) Never hyphenate compound adverbs in which the first part ends in -ly (e.g., specially designed product, poorly directed film).

d) Unless otherwise noted in a specific style guide, compound adjectives are usually hyphenated when preceding the object noun (e.g., 2-quart jar, 10-minute cycle, 30-second delay, solar-powered system).

(1)**Note:** that common compound noun modifiers <u>are not the same</u> as compound adjectives. <u>Hyphenating common compound noun modifiers is a common error</u>. Most remain open regardless of position: "real estate agent, first base coach, car repair shop, swimming pool pump," etc. If you're unsure on this point, check in the forums or speak with an editor.

5. Quotation Marks <u>(back to top)</u>

a) Don't use them (except for inch marks as needed). Leave titles of books, games, movies, etc. naked.

(1) **Note:** This is another area where client-specific rules often could differ, so be sure to check.

6. Decimals <u>(back to top)</u>

a) Add a zero (aka the "leading zero") before the decimal point in numbers less than 1 (e.g., 0.28mm).

7. Dimensions <u>(back to top)</u>

a) Express dimensions using height, width and depth, in that order. Close up the unit of measurement (inch marks in the examples below) and the H, W or D.

(1) Example: 3.5"H x 9"W x 6.3"D bread box

(a) **Note:** Dimensions are <u>very rarely useful</u> in most product descriptions, particularly ones of fewer than 75 words; they take up a lot of real estate for little benefit. So please use them <u>only when they're highly relevant</u> to the particular item (or absolutely necessary to fill word count on an extremely simple item).

b) Excessive/unnecessary use of dimensions is typically considered word padding/fluff.

8. Fractions [(back to top)](back to top)

a) Use a hyphen to separate a whole number from a fraction

(1) Example: 6-1/2"H x 10"W x 4-3/8"D).

9. Ranges [(back to top)](back to top)

a) On ranges in which the unit of measure is the same (e.g., 50-100W), the space around the hyphen is closed; when the units of measure are different (e.g., 5Hz - 23kHz), place a space on each side of the hyphen.

(1) The exception to this rule is ranges with inch marks, which should be written with a space on both sides of the hyphen and an inch mark after each value (e.g., 30" - 60").

10. Spaces after a period/colon [(back to top)](back to top)

a) Never use more than one space after a period or a colon. Incorrect spaces between sentences are considered unforced errors, and those are big red flags.

(1) Yes, many people learned to type in classes that taught two spaces after periods and colons, but it's now archaic.

IV.   Acceptable Copy [(back to top)](#)

Clean Copy, Clean Copy, Clean Copy

A. General Information [(back to top)](#)

1. While we always want colorful, concise, enticing copy, none of that matters if the copy has typos, misspellings, punctuation errors, style errors, etc. For writers and editors, priorities #1–3 are always to ensure the copy is clean.

2. That often translates to double-checking an oddly styled product name to ensure you have it right or rereading your copy to see whether you might have written "there" when you meant "their" or "they're." It definitely means never relying on spell-check instead of checking it carefully yourself.

3. If you're consistently producing copy that's clean and reasonably concise, we can work with you on practically everything else. If you submit copy with lots of "unforced errors" — typos, blatant misspellings, spacing errors, etc. — that's a serious problem.

B. Abbreviations/Acronyms/Styles of Particular Terms [(back to top)](#)

1. These will often depend on whether the particular client has an in-house glossary/preferred style list. If it does not, default to the M-W style for the term.

2. As a general rule, if a term is broadly understood (common in everyday American English use) in its acronym form, stick with the acronym. Some common examples in this type of work:

a) AC/DC – CPU – DVD – DVR – GB – HDTV LCD – LED – RAM – SLR - USB

3. <u>This is in no way a comprehensive list</u>. It's simply a short list of examples. When in doubt (and barring client exceptions), refer to the forums and/or check with an editor.

C. Ampersands [(back to top)](#)

1. Don't use ampersands in general text. Only use them for official manufacturer or product names (e.g., Black & Decker).

D. By Using"/"Using"/with-with repetition [(back to top)](#)

1. Some writers have gotten in the habit of incorrectly writing "using" when they mean "by using": "Set yourself apart from the pack using this GE cattle prod." This is a common error, but it's still an error.

2. The best choice is to simply write "with" if possible. However, if this creates a repetition of "with," you have the option to go with "**by using**."

3. When facing a with/with issue, the best practice is to remove the additional "with" feature and mention it elsewhere — or to rework it.

   a) Example: If the item is "Dyson vacuum with turbo power:

   (1)Incorrect: "Clean up pet hair with this Dyson vacuum with turbo power."

   (2)Correct: "Clean up pet hair with this Dyson vacuum, which has a turbo power feature."

4. If there's no other way to get around the with/with thing, swap out the first "with" with "by using." That's fine. It just can't simply be "using."

E. Copyright/Registration Marks/Trademarks (®, ™, etc.) (back to top)

  1. As a general rule, do not include any of these marks in crafting copy. Don't include accent marks either. Everything must be simple ASCII text.

     a) **Note:** This doesn't preclude the possibility of a future project requiring such symbols; if that occurs, such exceptions will be made clear on the particular project

F. Multipacks (back to top)

  1. "-count"

     a) Use this term for a multipack of items in which the included items are not identical (e.g., "60-count" for paper clips that come in different colors or sizes).

  2. "-pack"

     a) Use for a multipack of items in which the included items are identical (e.g., "three-pack" of the same replaceable filter).

  3. Additional Information:

     a) Although certain clients in the past have used different number styles for "pieces," "packs" and "counts," because these are technically quantities, our default style is to <u>spell out the number in all cases if it's zero through nine</u> and <u>use figures when it's 10 and up</u>.

(1) Examples: "six-pack," "two-piece," "eight-count," "18-pack," "32-count," "55-piece."

b) Additionally, when you're referring to a pack or a set, that's technically a singular noun, regardless of it comprising many elements.

G. Numbers [(back to top)](#)

1. Regarding numbers, it's important to keep a few factors in mind:

   a) This tends to be one of the most complex aspects of any style guide, particularly one relating to commercial products, because there can be all sorts of little exceptions.

   b) Many clients tend to have specific preferences regarding number styles, so be especially careful to check for client-specific exceptions.

   c) Barring any client-specific exceptions, default to the information listed here. If something isn't covered, inquire in the community forums and/or check with an editor.

2. With that said, here are the general defaults:

   a) Spell out all numbers (four, eight) from <u>zero through nine.</u> Use numerals (14, 37, 184) for all numbers 10 and up. This includes <u>quantities</u> and most other <u>general</u> uses.

   b) One exception is when writing a percentage. Always use numerals: 4 percent, 35 percent, 100 percent. (Do not use the percent sign. Never use a hyphen, even when you're modifying a noun: "99 percent satisfaction rate.")

c) <u>Measurements</u> are different than <u>quantities</u>.
For <u>measurements</u>, use numerals: 3 cu. ft. / 8km / 2 lbs.

d) However, <u>never begin</u> a sentence with a numeral. Always spell out the number: "Twenty-eight products in this line have been approved for general use."

e) Use a lowercase x to denote disk speeds (8x CD-ROM drive; 8x4x32 CD-RW drive).

H. Optional Items (back to top)

1. When a feature statement refers to an optional accessory, write "(not included)" in the statement. Do not write "(sold separately)". Example: 15-pin D-sub input and output for optional HP subwoofer (not included).

   a) **Note:** <u>Do not</u> add "not included" if there's no logical reason to believe something might be included.

      (1) Example: "These guitar strings fit any Gibson guitar (not included)."

         (a) That would be ridiculous. If you're writing about an inexpensive accessory to an expensive main item, no one's going to think the main item is included.

I. Prefixes/Hyphenated Terms (back to top)

1. You're likely familiar with a number of general practices for when to hyphenate compound words and words with prefixes. Instead of assuming which ones relate to a particular term, first check <u>this SG</u> for an exception. If it's not here, always <u>look up the specific word on</u> Merriam Webster.

2. If your compound word does not have an entry in M-W and is not listed under a prefix for the term, <u>hyphenate it.</u>

3. <u>Hyphenate</u> terms such as "machine-washable," "stain-resistant" and "BPA-free" regardless of position. (Although this differs from some styles, it's just easiest for everyone to always hyphenate them.)

4. <u>Do</u> hyphenate prefixes when clarity is an issue (e.g., recreation [as in "parks and recreation"] vs. re-creation [as in "this is a re-creation of a famous statue]; co-op vs. coop).

5. Although some writing guides advise to always hyphenate a term if a vowel follows the prefix, especially if the prefix ends with the same letter the root word begins with, this is <u>not necessarily true</u> for our style or M-W. For example, there is no hyphen in "preexisting." <u>Go with the style you see in the glossary or M-W.</u>

6. Words that are shortened versions of longer words stand on their own. Auto is short for automatic; mini is short for miniature (e.g., auto latch and mini game).

J. Singular pronouns for a company or brand <u>(back to top)</u>

1. Always treat a company or brand as <u>singular:</u> "Apple released <u>its</u> latest earnings," NOT "Apple released <u>their</u> latest earnings.

V. Units of Measurement [(back to top)](back to top)

a) Spell out or abbreviate units of measure per the table below. Either use no space or a separate number with a space per the examples. When a different adjective form is not noted, use the example listed in all instances within a record.

Measurement	Abbreviation	Examples with Numbers
ampere	amp	5 amps; 5-amp [adj.]
American Wire Gauge	AWG	12 AWG
baud	spell out	8 baud; 8-baud [adj.]
bit	spell out	8 bits; 8-bit [adj.]
British thermal unit	BTU	12,000 BTUs; 5,000 BTU [adj.]
Byte	spell out	8 bytes; 8-byte [adj.]
candela per square meter	cd/m²	450 cd/m² brightness
centimeter	cm	5cm
copies per minute	cpm	10 cpm
cubic feet per minute	cfm	10 cfm (10 cfm adjectivally)
cup(s)	spell out	5 cups; 5-cup [adj.]
decibel	dB	42dB
decibel adjusted	dbA	42dbA
degrees	spell out (no degree mark)	Convert Celsius to Fahrenheit as needed; always use Fahrenheit value
dots per inch	dpi	360 dpi; 600 x 1200 dpi
foot/feet (does not include cubic foot/feet: see separate entry for that)	spell out, except in dimensions	ONLY use the foot mark in dimensions. 12-foot cable, runs up to 15 feet, 6' x 8' Use decimals for fractional amounts: 12.5.
frames per second	fps	30fps
gallon	gal.	5 gal.; 5-gal. [adj.]
gigabit	Gb	8Gb
gigabit per second	Gbps	25 Gbps
gigabyte	GB	6GB
gigahertz	GHz	2.0GHz
Grams	g	120g (see an editor if unsure if conversion is necessary)
Hertz	Hz	100Hz

hour(s)	spell out	5 hours; 6-hour [adj.]
horsepower	HP	1/3 HP
inch(es)	spell out, except in dimensions	ONLY USE THE INCH MARK IN DIMENSIONS. Spell out "inch" when it's a general measurement. Use decimals for fractional amounts. For dimensions:11"H x 8.5"W
joule	spell out	320 joules; 1100-joule [adj.]
Karat	K	24K gold
kilobit	Kb	56 Kb
kilobits per second	Kbps	56 Kbps
kilobyte	KB	128KB L2 pipeline burst cache memory
kilobyte per second	KB/sec.	48KB/sec.
kilograms	kg	120kg (see an editor if unsure if conversion is necessary)
kilohertz	kHz	20kHz
kilometer	km	15km
Liter	L	5L
lux		0 lux
megabit	Mb	8 Mb
megabits per second	Mbps	33.3 Mbps
megabyte	MB	8MB
megabytes per second	MB/sec.	8MB/sec.
megahertz	MHz	900MHz
megapixel	spell out	4.0 megapixels; 1.3-megapixel [adj.]
megatexels	spell out	366 megatexels
meter	m	10m
mil (for thickness)	spell out	10 mil
miles per hour	mph	55mph
milliampere	mA	1600 mA
milliliter	ml	500ml
milliampere per hour	mAh	2000 mAh
millimeter	mm	16mm; 50mm x 75mm
millisecond	ms	9 ms
milliwatt	mW	300 0 mW
month	mo.	5,000 pages/mo.
nanosecond	ns	9 ns
ohms	spell out	8 ohms

ounce(s)	oz.	5 oz.; 10-oz. [adj.]
pages per minute	ppm	6 ppm
percent	spell out, always use numerals (even <10), never use hyphens	50 percent, 8 percent increase, rose by 22.5 percent
pixels	p	1020p
pixels per inch	ppi	1500 ppi
pound (for paper)	spell out, use hyphen	50-pound stock
pound	lb.	0.5 lb.; 1 lb. 6 oz.; 250-lb. weight capacity
pounds	lbs.	2 lbs.
revolutions per minute	rpm	7200 rpm
square inch(es)	sq. in.	12 sq. in.
Time		3 p.m.; 4:30 a.m.; from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; from 9 to 11 a.m. (Never use :00 with times on the hour. Always use periods in a.m. and p.m.) (Note that 12 a.m. is midnight and 12 p.m. is noon. It's fine to use the latter terms.)
volts	spell out	100 volts; 9-volt battery
volts alternating current	VA	5VA
Watts	W (never "watt")	100W; 1500W; 500W or 1000W [adj.]
watts per second	Wps	200Wps

VI.   Final Word [(back to top)](#)

1. You will likely have questions this guide can't answer. That's fine. Inquire in the online forums. Don't be shy about letting us know what you'd like to see added or changed in this guide.