

CREATIVE MARKETING STYLE GUIDE

Choose your words. Edit, rewrite, repeat.

1. Avoid passive verbs.

- ▶ The subject is always acting, and never receives the action.
- Ex.** The receiver caught the ball.
(Not) The ball was caught.

2. Strong verbs and nouns make writing better.

- ▶ “Adverbs are bacon. If you overindulge, you get flabby.”

3. That!

- ▶ Avoid the word “that” when unnecessary.
- ▶ But only change “that” to “which” when it’s a nonrestrictive (aka optional) phrase. And use a comma.

4. Semi-colons

- ▶ Replace semi-colons with two independent sentences when possible. And, it’s usually possible.

5. Never write “utilize.”

- ▶ You mean “use.”

6. Remember when you killed helping verbs in sixth grade?

- ▶ They’re still dead.
- ▶ To be: Am, is, are, was, were, be, being, been. To have: Have, has, had
- Ex.** “The staff had created a new mod.” Should be, “The staff created a new mod.”

7. Keep sentences positive.

- ▶ Say what something is, not what it is not.

8. Quote marks

- ▶ Always hang outside.

9. We don’t capitalize...

- ▶ yearbook or marketing. Even when referring to the division or the department.

10. No need to end with an ‘s.’

- ▶ “Toward,” “backward,” “forward” and “anyway”

11. Do not leave a preposition dangling.

- ▶ Sentences don’t end in prepositions. A preposition is anything a mouse can do with a box (in the box, on the box)

12. Never humanize an entity

- ▶ The soccer team, the band, the department, the company are all “its.” Only people are “they” and “their.”

13. Write in plural

- ▶ Students = their. As opposed to singular: Student = his or her. Never write “when one believes,” or when “one” does anything.

14. Names

- ▶ Italicize book names, but leave school names and themes alone. Themes should be flanked by quotes.

15. Tense

- ▶ If a story starts in present tense, it stays that way.
- ▶ When we’re talking about a book, it’s present tense.
- ▶ When we’re talking about something a staff did in the past, it’s past tense.

16. Quotes

- ▶ Stand as their own paragraphs.

17. Avoid indenting the first line of paragraphs.

- ▶ Hit enter two times at paragraph breaks.

18. Contractions

- ▶ They’re okay, sometimes.

19. Canada

- ▶ Always spell out Canadian provinces.
- Ex.** Pembroke, Ontario

20. Dashes and hyphens

- ▶ Hyphen: Within compound modifiers
- Ex.** Hayley is 23 years old. The 23-year-old girl loves cheese.
- ▶ En dash: Duration/replace “to.”
- Ex.** Designating A–F, G–L and more (option -)
- ▶ Em dash: Shows interruption of thought, usually between independent clauses.
- Ex.** Kail likes chai tea lattes — don’t forget the Stevia — from Starbucks. (option shift -)

21. Punctuation

- ▶ Lives inside quotation marks. Unless it is a question.
- Ex.** Did she say, “I’ve got a lifetime a knowledge”? She said, “I’ve got a lifetime a knowledge.”

22. Don’t use the same word:

- ▶ More than once in the same sentence or paragraph.
- ▶ That’s especially true for the word ‘yearbook.’

23. Headlines

- ▶ Write them in sentence case/downstyle or all caps.
- Ex.** Hayley is a data girl
HAYLEY IS A DATA GIRL

24. Further/farther

- ▶ Further: More (not quantity)
- Ex.** Explain that further.
- ▶ Farther: Distance. You can’t go fur. Unless you’re in the South.
- Ex.** Move that one nudge farther.

25. Something you can count?

- ▶ Don’t use amount.
- Ex.** You have an amount of mashed potatoes. You have a number of potatoes.

26. Numerous

- ▶ It means too many to count.
- Ex.** Becky said numerous “She’s the Man” quotes. Amanda Bynes uses several different accents when pretending to be her brother.

27. It’s usually more than

- ▶ Only use “over” when it is truly, physically over. Otherwise, be specific: Older, more than, throughout. The same with “under” vs. “less than.”
- Ex.** Nelson ate lunch over his keyboard. Now there are crumbs in the keys. Nelson ate more than one crumbly lunch.

28. Never write “exact same.”

- ▶ It’s “exactly the same.”

29. “Try to,” not “try and.”

30. Colon?

- ▶ Capitalize the next letter.

31. Use bullet points.

32. Be clear.

- ▶ Generalizations kill.
- ▶ “When you say something, make sure you have said it. The chances of your having said it are only fair.”

33. Choose the fewest words.

- ▶ To communicate clearly, less is more.

34. Avoid...

- ▶ Acronyms, abbreviations and jargon. Plain language gets the point across.

35. Oxford comma?

- ▶ Don’t you dare. We follow AP Style here.