

The **WILDER VOICE** *Guide to Style*

I. ABOUT THIS GUIDE
(page 3)

II. PUNCTUATION
(pages 4–7)

- A. Colons (page 4)
- B. Commas (page 4)
- C. Ellipses (page 5)
- D. Em-dashes (page 5)
- E. En-dashes (page 6)
- F. Periods (page 6)
- G. Quotation Marks (page 6)
- H. Semi-colons (page 7)

II. NUMBERS
(pages 8–9)

- A. General Numbers (page 8)
- B. Dates (page 8)
- C. Dollar Amounts (page 8)
- D. Percentages (page 8)
- E. Time (page 9)
- F. Years (page 9)

III. CAPITALIZATION
(page 10)

V. POSSESSIVES
(pages 11)

VI. MISCELLANY
(pages 12–14)

VII. SOME WORDS
(pages 15–20)

I. ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is, and always will be, a work in progress. It is used to maintain a consistent voice across volumes of *Wilder Voice*. This consistency can only go so far—the English language is always in flux. Each issue brings new challenges and new changes to the guide.

As such, this guide is a rather eclectic collection. Our embrace of ~new lingo~, our use of the serial comma, and our policy on blogs and the internet aren't universal. Whether you find our guide hopelessly behind the times or unnecessarily avant-garde, there's no doubt that you'll find it, well, unique.

It is for this reason that we insist you remember: These are rules for *Wilder Voice*, not necessarily for your own writing or life at large. Some parts of the guide are just friendly reminders of (hegemonic) Standard American English grammar, syntax, and spelling. Other parts are our own loony preferences. Enjoy this guide and heed it well. Our style “backstop” is the Chicago Manual to Style—if there's not an answer for your question in this guide, then off to Chicago it is!

(And here's a tip: try using the “find” function to search for whatever rule you're looking for.)

-The Editors (Updated Fall 2020)

PS: As a college mag, we want our writers to sound like Cool College Students! This means we permit the use of Youth Lingo—from Unnecessary Caps to ~Using tildes for emphasis~ to using emojis and emoticons. Have fun!

II. PUNCTUATION

A. Colons

NB: Colons are used to extract salt and water from solid wastes before they are eliminated from the body. They are also used to describe (a colon followed by a list) and to balance (to create a deductive relationship between two clauses).

1. When using a descriptive colon (a colon followed by a list) **do not** capitalize the first letter following the colon (unless it would otherwise be capitalized).
As in: Nolan was turned down by many people in middle school: blonds, brunettes, and one very mean redhead.
2. This holds even if the descriptive colon is followed by a series of independent clauses.
As in: This week Carla ate many things: on Monday, she ate celery; on Tuesday, she feasted on a Bundt cake; and on Wednesday, she inhaled almonds and had an allergic reaction
3. When using a colon to balance two independent clauses, **do** capitalize the first letter following the colon.
As in: Paolo's writers enjoy working with him: He's hawtt.

B. Commas

1. When using a conjunction (and, but, etc.) to combine two sentences, **do** put a comma before that conjunction. ****Stylistic exceptions are permitted.****
As in: I thought those weirdos up the hill were in a cult, but they're just misunderstood.
2. You **may** omit this comma when combining two very short sentences (this exception is especially applicable in the cases of short imperative sentences).
As in: Get excited and make things.
3. **Do** use the serial comma.
As in: Margaret is pretty, smart, and often punctual.

C. Ellipses

1. **Do** put spaces before and after an ellipsis that replaces a body of text. If the body of text is longer than one sentence, put brackets around it.

As in: According to a witness, “Wilder Voice editors at parties seem socially anxious ... I saw one of them pretending to write a text message.”

As in: Greenblatt sleepily said, “I really think it’s creepy that I can see her glancing through my window across the street [...] what a creep.”

2. **However**, an ellipsis that designates a pause rather than an omission takes no space before and one space after.

As in: Yeah... whatever.

D. Em-dashes

NB: Em-dashes are used to create close relationships between clauses—generally between dependent clauses, although they can be independent clauses, too. They are also used to mark parenthetical statements. They are generally stronger than a comma, but weaker than a colon or semicolon. Use them, don’t abuse them—Always, always, ALWAYS ask yourself: is there any reason this em-dash can’t be replaced by a comma or two?

NB: To type an em-dash in any word processor, hold down the “option (alt)” and “shift” keys and then hit the hyphen key.

1. **Do not** put spaces before or after em-dashes.

As in: *Wilder Voice*—a shining beacon of journalism—flips its hair back and forth.

2. **Do** make sure em-dashes are actually em-dashes.

As in: This, —, is an em-dash. They are called this because in old letterpress studios, they take up the same amount of space as the letter “m.” This, -, is an en-dash, that takes up the space of an “n.” Don’t use the latter when you mean to use the former, and vice versa.

E. En-dashes

NB: En-dashes are rarely used; we prefer the “from ... to ...” construction. Though sometimes it is helpful when showing a relationship between two things. Apart from their use as a formatting tool (see examples below) they can be used when constructing compound hyphenated modifiers. For example, the term “our pre–Coronavirus apocalypse lives” takes an en-dash since “pre” is modifying both of the words that follow it.

NB: to type an en-dash into a word processor, hold down “option (alt)” and hit the hyphen key.

1. **Do not** put spaces before or after en-dashes.

As in: Brent beat Carla 5–0.

As in: The McCain–Feingold bill was a weak attempt.

As in: John McCain (R–Arizona) should really be called (Asshat–Arizona).

2. **Do** make sure you’re using an en-dash and not a hyphen. A hyphen (-), which is what you get when you hit the key in between the “0” and “=” keys, is smaller than an en-dash, which is in turn smaller than an em-dash.

F. Periods

1. **Only one hard space after a period.**

As in: I will kill the next editor or writer who does not follow this simple rule.
Well, maybe I’ll just maim them.

G. Quotation Marks

NB: At Wilder Voice, we use curly quotes in place of straight quotes. Some fonts don’t differentiate between the two, but some do. To be sure, input quotes and apostrophes using keyboard shortcuts: for opening double quotation marks, hold down “option” and hit the open bracket key (“[”), and for closing double-quotations, hold down “shift” and “option” while hitting the open bracket key. Follow the same shortcuts with the close bracket key (“]”) for single quotation marks.

1. **Do** use (“...” for scare quotes. As in:

As in: Apparently, cutting out thousands of pictures of your crush and putting them on your wall is “creepy.”

2. **Do** Use (‘...’) for quotes within quotes.

As in: Nolan wrote down in his journal, “My friend Paolo came up to me today with a crazed look in his eyes, saying, ‘I’m feeling really manic.’”

3. **Do** Use ('...') when talking about the word-as-word.
As in: That depends on what the meaning of the word 'is' is.
4. **Do** use quotes when quoting someone else word-for-word, but **do not** use quotes when paraphrasing.
As in: She told me, "Jemma, I'm very concerned about you."
As in: She told me to fuck right off, in so many words.
5. **Do** use quotes when quoting what someone else wrote.
As in: She wrote in her notebook, "I hate when people look at what I write in my notebook."
6. **Do** put punctuation (excepting colons and semicolons) within quotation marks.
As in: "I know it's silly," said Carla, "but we're American, and here in America, we put our damn punctuation within quotation marks."

H. Semicolons

NB Semicolons are used to join two closely related but independent clauses (i.e. two things that could function as their own sentences but might be expressed more elegantly as a single sentence). They are also used to order lists when individual items in the list include commas. Think of them as an extra strong comma (or a weak period).

1. When using a semicolon to combine two sentences, **do not** use a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, etc.) unless the length of the sentence absolutely demands it and **do not** capitalize the beginning of the second independent clause.
As in: I thought she was nice; there's just one problem... she has a Tumblr.
2. When a series of three or more clauses contains internal punctuation, **do** separate them with semicolons, and **do** use a serial semicolon.
As in: Oberlin is home to many publications, including the *Oberlin Review*, the serious newspaper; the *Grape*, the not-so-serious newspaper; *Wilder Voice*, the pretentious magazine; and *Plum Creek Review*, the other pretentious magazine.

III. NUMBERS

A. General Numbers

1. **Do** use numerals for 10 and above; spell out nine and below.
As in: Dude, I hear she has three cats.
As in: No, man, I checked. She has 52 cats.
2. This holds for ordinal forms as well. Once again, spell to ninth; 10th and above, use ‘st,’ ‘nd,’ ‘rd,’ or ‘th.’ **Do** use superscript.
As in: This is the second time Carla winked at the delivery person.
As in: Meredith wiped the sweat off her brow, as she prepared to walk up the hill for the 15th time today.
As in: Nolan won 51st place in a drag contest.
3. When two numbers are used together and one is 10 or above and one is nine or below, **do** spell them out.
As in: Between five and thirty-two women have rejected Carla, not that she keeps count.

B. Dates

1. **Do not** spell out numbers in dates, but **do** spell out months. **Do** use ordinal forms for days.
As in: On November 4th, I’m giving Alec a sweet birthday present.

C. Dollar Amounts

1. **Do** use numerals for 10 and above, and **do** spell out ‘dollar,’ except for amounts with decimals.
As in: I paid five dollars for a jello shot.
As in: I paid \$5.25 for a jello shot.
As in: I paid \$500.23 for a jello shot—seemed expensive, but I regret nothing.

D. Percentages

1. **Do** use the percent symbol.
As in: Yeah, probably 38% of the time I burn my breakfast.

E. Time

1. If writing the time as a number, **do** use a colon to indicate minutes, then add a space and put “AM” or “PM” in caps without periods.
As in: *Wilder Voice* meets every Sunday at 1:00 PM.
2. If writing out the time in letters, **do** observe our normal rules for spelling out numerals, followed by “o’clock.”
As in: We were told to meet back at Wilder at two o’clock.
As in: We were told to arrive at the Feve around 11 o’clock.
3. **Do** write out the words noon and midnight.

F. Years

1. **Do not** spell out the decades. Format them with a right-facing apostrophe and the last two digits.
As in: No Doubt rocked it in the ’90s.

IV. CAPITALIZATION

1. **Do not** capitalize years of students, even when used as a title.
As in: I hate junior Allison McPoopants.
2. **Do** capitalize and spell out proper honorifics when introducing a person for the first time. On subsequent reference, the use of the honorific on its own, the last name on its own, or both are permitted. In all instances, they are capitalized.
As in: The Reverend Doctor McPoopants saved my life.
As in: The Reverend Doctor saved my life.
As in: McPoopants saved my life.
3. **Do** capitalize the proper names of classes, but **do not** capitalize generic class names.
As in: Sage and John take hard classes like Bowling 101.
As in: I failed my intro to econ class.
4. **Do** capitalize the names of departments, but not disciplines.
As in: A hard-edged woman named Margie runs the Archeology Department.
As in: I'm walking to my history class.
5. **Do not** capitalize the names of general subjects (unless they would be capitalized otherwise).
As in: Jackson likes history, but he hates French.
6. **Do not** capitalize (or italicize) the 'the' in newspapers, magazines, etc.
As in: Don't hate the *Oberlin Review*; that's petty.
As in: Man, the Queen Mary in Long Beach, CA sucks; it's a boat but it doesn't even move.
7. **Do not** capitalize seasons, unless they would be capitalized otherwise.
As in: I don't know what classes I'm taking in the fall.
As in: But I do know what I'm doing for my Winter Term.
8. **Do not** capitalize the names of diseases, unless they would otherwise be capitalized.
As in: He died tragically of leukemia.
As in: She struggles with Chron's diseases.
9. **Do** capitalize the names of constellations and celestial bodies.
As in: We could see Ursa Minor from my bedroom window.

V. POSSESSIVES

A. Ending in ‘s’

1. If a name ends with an ‘s,’ add an apostrophe and an ‘s.’
As in: Tennessee Williams’s second play took place in New Orleans.
2. Any plural that ends in an ‘s’ only takes an apostrophe.
As in: The narwhals’ sadness was felt throughout the ocean.

B. Italicizing possessives

1. If adding a possessive to an italicized subject, **do not** put the possessive in italics; **do** leave it in roman
As in: The *Washington Post*’s op-eds are honestly so fucking baby-brained that I cancelled my subscription.

C. Its v. It’s

1. ‘Its’ is the possessive form of ‘it.’ ‘It’s’ is a contraction for ‘it is.’
As in: It’s not that ugly, but its smell is overwhelming.

D. Whose v. Who’s

1. ‘Whose’ is the possessive form of ‘who.’ ‘Who’s’ is a contraction for ‘who is.’
As in: Who’s to blame for the Great Recession? That guy whose last name rhymes with ‘tush.’

VI. MISCELLANY

A. Diacritical Marks

1. When typing out a foreign language that uses accents, **do** preserve all accents as they would appear in that language, including common ones like “café”. Otherwise, don’t use them to modify English words.

As in: If you’re talking about Lukács, you’d better keep that accent mark over the ‘a.’ But for the love of God don’t put umlauts over the second ‘o’ in ‘cooperate’—this isn’t the *New Yorker*, which is to say we simply do not have the clout to get away with it.

B. Foreign Words

1. **Do** italicize all foreign words, unless they are really indisputably part of the Standard American English vernacular (as are common Latin phrases like “de facto,” as well as words like “café” or “sans”). If you’re wondering whether to italicize a word, that’s a sign that you probably should!
2. Foreign words, even those like “café,” maintain their diacritical marks.

As in: I don’t know his *raison d’être*.

C. Interior monologues

1. **Do** put a writer’s interior monologue in italics, not in quotes.
2. **Do** put a comma before a full sentence that is being told as interior monologue and **do** start that full sentence with a capital letter.

As in: She seemed calm, and I was thinking, *Well, maybe I can be calm too.*

As in: She seemed calm, but internally I was thinking *holy shit holy shit holy shit.*

D. Line breaks

1. When using slashes to indicate line breaks (for example, when quoting a song or poem), **do** put a space on each side of the slash.

As in: “A little bit of Monica in my life / A little bit of Erica by my side / A little bit of Rita is all I need / A little bit of Tina is what I see.”

E. Onomatopoeias

1. **Do** italicize words that represent the sound that something makes.

As in: The egg landed on the ground with a *splat*.

F. Quotation Marks v. Italics

1. Quotation Marks...

...are for short things, like:

Songs
 TV show episodes
 Short stories
 Book chapters
 Newspaper articles
 Short poetry
 Radio shows
 Speeches
 Art show titles

2. Italics...

...are for big things, like:

Books
 Newspapers
 Operas
 Albums
 Movies
 Works of art
 Magazines
 TV shows
 Long poems (like *Howl* or *The Odyssey*)
 Plays
 Long music, like symphonies
 Legal cases
 Blogs
 Websites that act as newsgathering institutions (like *CNN.com*)

G. Socioeconomic class

1. **Do not** use hyphens to denote a socioeconomic class, unless referring to something like “upper-middle” or “lower-middle.”
As in: She was from a working class family.
As in: He was born into an upper-middle class family

H. The His or Her Problem

1. **Do** avoid words that distinguish between male and female workers of a particular profession, such as ‘postman’ and ‘fireman.’ Instead, use phrases like ‘post officer’ and ‘firefighter.’

I. Which v. That

NB: It seems like a pretentious distinction, and you can often get it right by trusting your gut on which ‘sounds better,’ but the rule is pretty simple (and makes a lot of sense once you know it!).

1. A clause that starts with ‘which’ is nonrestrictive, meaning it imports nonessential information; it requires a comma before the ‘which.’
As in: The rules set forth in this style guide, which are a little over the top, are the result of many hours of work. (The information is nonessential, and without it the sentence is still clear.)
2. A clause that starts with ‘that’ is restrictive; it does not take a comma before the ‘that.’ A restrictive clause is essential to the meaning of the sentence; often, it sets the thing it modifies apart from something else of the same type.
As in: He has an internet presence that makes him seem well-manicured and shiny. (The clause introduced by ‘that’ is essential to the sentence.)
As in: The Minecraft save he has that he loves. (As opposed to the many Minecraft saves that he has but does not love.)

J. Who vs. Whom

1. There is a very simple trick for who vs. whom: if the answer to the question “who(m)” would be “he,” “she,” or “they,” use ‘who’. If the answer is “him,” “her,” or “them,” use ‘whom.’

VII. SOME WORDS

-A-

A-sides

The ‘A’ is capitalized; the ‘sides’ is not. This word is hyphenated.

As in: I love Weezer so much, I’ve heard all of their A-sides. (note: this sentence has never and will never be said.)

afterward

There is no ‘s’ at the end of this word.

As in: Afterward, I cried.

Attorney(s) General

This title is not hyphenated, and its plural is Attorneys General.

As in: Attorney General John Ashcroft can sing like a bird, a rare give among Attorneys General.

-B-

B cells

The ‘B’ is capitalized; the ‘cells’ is not. There is no hyphen.

As in: What the fuck are B cells?

B-sides

See “A-sides.”

bona fide

This Latin phrase, like all Latin phrases, is set in roman, not italics.

brand-new

This term takes a hyphen.

-C-

cohort

NB: “Cohort” can refer to an individual, subset of a group, or an entire group, and can carry an a priori negative connotation in certain contexts. For that reason, refrain from using “cohort” on first mention—you risk confusing the reader.

When this word is in reference to a single group, it is singular, not plural.

As in: Sage is bad, but his cohort is worse.

co-op

This word is hyphenated.

As in: Emily lives in a co-op because she's a dirty, dirty hippie.

cooperative

This word is not hyphenated.

As in: Some people call 'co-ops' 'cooperatives,' but they have sticks up their asses.

COVID-19/coronavirus

Refer to this disease as one of the two names above. Note that "coronavirus" is not capitalized.

As in: I had an awful time during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As in: She caught the coronavirus, but thankfully she was asymptomatic.

co-worker

This word is hyphenated, as are all words where without the hyphen you end up seeing the word "cow" (e.g. "co-working," "co-writing," etc.). In all other instances except for those listed in this style guide, there is no hyphen after the "co."

As in: my co-worker cooperated with me in the co-working space at my co-op; we're codependent, you could say.

-D-

die-hard

This word is hyphenated.

As in: We're all die-hard *Battlestar Galactica* fans.

doo-wop

This word is hyphenated.

As in: Camille sways along to the sweet doo-wop beat.

downtown

This word is not capitalized (unless it would otherwise be).

As in: Visit beautiful and bustling downtown Oberlin!

-E-

eReader

This is not capitalized (unless it would otherwise be) and does not take a hyphen.

As in: Why get an eReader when you can get an iPad?

estrogen

This word is not capitalized.

-F-

Facebook

The word 'Facebook' is capitalized whether it's being used as a noun or in a context like "I Facebook messaged them."

As in: Once I Facebook stalked a crush only to discover that he liked Dave Matthews, which is a total dealbreaker, ladies. Thank God for Facebook.

farther

Use this word when describing a physical distance. See 'further.'

As in: The bank is five blocks farther than the auto repair shop.

first-year

Use this word in place of 'freshman' and its derivatives.

As in: Barrows is a first-year haunt that is haunted by first-years.

firsthand

This is one word.

As in: I have firsthand evidence that you and she were sitting in a tree. Firsthand, I saw you K-I-S-S-I-N-G.

french fries

In this phrase, the 'F' in 'french' is **not** capitalized.

As in: Do OSCA-ites ever eat french fries?

freshman

See 'first-year.'

further

Use this when describing metaphorical differences.

As in: We are much further from full LGBTQ rights than we should be.

-G-

G20

This is one word. Other groups (G8, etc.) are the same.

As in: Kalen was dressed like a cow at the G20 protest.

gadgethead

This is one word.

As in: That cyborg? Yeah, he's a total gadgethead.

gray

Not "grey."

-H-

hark, hearken

Note the difference in spelling.

As in: Hark! The copy editors approach! But as in: It hearkens back to the days of yore.

hip-hop

This phrase is spelled as two words with a hyphen.

As in: John Cheng loves the hip-hop, and the hip-hop reciprocates.

homepage

This is one word.

As in: John's homepage is neat-o. Not as neat-o as Rebecca Nieto's, though.

-I-

impart

This verb takes the preposition 'to' after it.

As in: My professors have a lot of knowledge to impart to me—or not.

in-house

This word is hyphenated.

As in: We do our copy editing in-house.

internet, World Wide Web

This word and its derivatives are **not** capitalized. Note that World Wide Web **is** capitalized, but “web” is **not**.

As in: I found epic cat pictures on the internet.

As in: Hello everyone on the web!

As in: What’s up with this newfangled World Wide Web?

-M-

midair

This word is not hyphenated.

As in: He caught the flying cat in midair.

-P-

people of color, POC

This phrase **is not** capitalized. Its abbreviation, however, **is** capitalized.

As in: Some Americans are people of color.

As in: Some Americans are POC.

-Q-

quotation, quote

To quote is a verb; a quotation is a noun. Don’t use the latter when you mean the former.

As in: He was quoted as saying, “I love reading a good quotation every now and again.”

-R-

reportage vs. reporting

“Reporting” refers to the formal end-product of the journalistic process, while “reportage” is the nominalization of the act of reporting.

As in: His reporting, based on his reportage, has won awards.

-S-

STI

When plural, the abbreviation for sexually transmitted infection does not take an apostrophe.

As in: John is single and does not have any STIs.

-T-

theater

Not “theatre.”

toward

There is no ‘s’ at the end of this word.

As in: I walked toward the Chuck E. Cheese, head held high.

TV

The abbreviation for television **does not** take periods.

As in: On Sundays, Saul sits on the couch, pops open a beer, and watches the big game on the TV.

-V-

video games

Titles of video games are set in roman and capitalized like any other proper noun.

As in: She’s put over 400 hours into her most recent save in Skyrim.

-W-

Washington, D.C., DC

The abbreviation for the District of Columbia **does not** take periods—but the full “Washington, D.C.” **does**.

As in: Ethan is from DC, not Bethesda or some shit like that.

As in: Because he was bullied for being from stinky DC, Ethan moved back to Washington, D.C.

Wikipedia

This website is **not** italicized.

As in: When John doesn’t know the people referenced in the *New York Times’s* crosswords, he checks Wikipedia.

world-historic

Not “world-historical.” This term takes a hyphen.

-Z-

Zoom

When referring to the online videoconferencing platform, this word and its various derivatives are always capitalized.

As in: He zoomed home in his car to Zoom into a Zoom call on Zoom.