

Language, Style and Publication in a University Context



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The importance of house-style: English

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- What is language and what is style
- Diction and spelling
- Typographical conventions
- Useful references



What is language and what is style

What is language?

- diction
- syntax
- composition



What is language?

What grammar teachers taught us:

- Avoid split infinitives
- We aim *to* actively engage our stakeholders in the coming celebrations.
- Avoid ending a sentence with a preposition
- I stopped at the entrance to the park and saw the trailer Dave lived *in*.

What is language?

- Avoid beginning a sentence with a conjunction
- The chairman took the stage. *And* all the floor was quiet.
- Avoid contractions
- ‘In a free enterprise system the free lunch is usually packaged as “loans” or “taxes on corporations” that *won’t* cost the taxpayer a cent.’

Daniel E. Koshland, Jr., “The Laws of Sociodynamics”, *Science*, 27 July 1990.

What is style?

Two senses of style

- 1. Good form (distinguishing)
 - triplets
 - alliteration
 - repetitions and variations

What is style?

Two senses of style

- 2. typographical conventions (capitalization, italics, the dots and commas) (conforming)
- Which is correct?
- ..., e.g., ...
- ..., eg., ...
- ..., e.g. ...
- ..., eg, ...

What is style?

How do you express '4%' in words?

- 4 percent
- 4 per cent
- 4 per cents
- Four %
- Four percent
- Four per cent
- Four per cents

What is style?

Answers:

- 4 percent
- 4 per cent
- 4 per cents X
- Four % X
- Four percent
- Four per cent
- Four per cents X

Good form: triplets

- In good English writing, connected concepts or examples tend to appear in triplets, for precision as well as for inclusiveness.

Good form: triplets

- “If any person over the age of 16 years who has the *custody, charge or care* of any child or young person under that age wilfully assaults, ill-treats, neglects, abandons or exposes such child or young person ... such person shall be guilty of an offence.”

s. 27, Offence Against the Person Ordinance (Cap. 212)

Good form: triplets

- “His cartoons, starring *Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck* and a dozen other barnyard thespians, were the star attractions of countless children’s Sunday afternoons—and internal lives.”

Richard Corliss, ‘Chuck Reducks’, *Time*, 4 March 2002.

Good form: triplets

- “Events in *Eastern Europe, the Far East, and the United States* indicate that there are laws of sociodynamics every bit as fundamental as the laws of thermodynamics.”

Daniel E. Koshland, Jr., ‘The Laws of Sociodynamics’,
Science, 27 July 1990.

Good form: alliteration

Alliteration: words that follow one another have the same consonants.

- friend and foe
- sight and sound
- without fear or favour

Good form: alliteration

- “Korea’s relation with America have long seesawed between *peace* and *peril*.”
Hannah Beech, ‘Winning Respect’, *Time*, 24 June 2002.

- “Tokyo and Seoul are at a safe and expensive distance from *Moscow* and *Manchester* and *Berlin* and *Buenos Aires*.”
Tim Parks, ‘Soccer: A Matter of Love and Hate’, *New York Review of Books*, 18 July 2002)



Good form: alliteration

- 「尋尋覓覓，冷冷清清，淒淒慘慘戚戚」
李清照
- ... so *dim*, so *dark*, so *dense*, so *dull*, so
damp, so *dark*, so *dead*, ...
林語堂

Good form: repetitions and variations

“With equal passion I have sought knowledge. I have wished to understand the hearts of men. I have wished to know why the star shine. And I have tried to apprehend the Pythagorean power by which number holds sway above the flux. A little of this, but not much, I have achieved.”

Bertrand Russell, ‘What I have lived for’, prologue to *Autobiography*.

Good form: repetitions and variations

Verb phrases:

- have sought
- have wished
- have wished
- have tried
- have achieved

Good form: repetitions and variations

Verb variations:

- understand
- know
- apprehend

Good form: repetitions and variations

Kinds of knowledge sought:

- the hearts of men (psychology, mankind)
- why the stars shine (astronomy or physical sciences)
- the Pythagorean power by which number holds sway above the flux (mathematics)

Good form: repetitions and variations

“That’s when the rat appeared. Out of nowhere, a scrawny brown rat materialized on the side bench, nervous and breathless. Richard Parker looked as astonished as I was. The rat leapt onto the tarpaulin and raced my way. At the sight, in shock and surprise, my legs gave way beneath me and I practically fell into the locker. Before my incredulous eyes the rodent hopped over the various parts of the raft, jumped onto me and climbed to the top of my head, where I felt its little claws clamping down on my scalp, holding on for dear life.”

Yann Martel, *The Life of Pi*, pp. 202–203.

Diction and spelling

British vs American spelling

- colour, color
- honour, honor
- behaviour, behavior
- licence, license
- defence, defense
- offence, offense

Diction and spelling

- Note that the *-ize* ending (viz., *-ise*), though widely used in the US, is NOT an Americanism
- *adviser, advisor*—nothing to do with UK or US (*adviser* more frequently used by 6–20 times)
- *programme* (British)
- *program* (American)
- *computer program* (always)

Diction and spelling

Note further:

- labelling (UK); labeling (US)
- enrol (UK); enroll (US)
- benefiting; benefitting (either)
- focusing; focussing (either)

Diction and spelling: plurals

Plural nouns are not defined by sense but by preceding quantifier:

- ...on more than *one occasion*, ...
- ‘Full many a glorious *morning* have I seen’
(Shakespeare, Sonnet 33)

Diction and spelling: plurals

A singular noun does not become a plural one even if other nouns are connected to it by *with*, *as well as*, *in addition to*, etc.

- John, together *with* Jane, *has* joined the Dean's List.
- What he said *as well as* how he said it *was* detestable.

Diction and spelling: plurals

Compound nouns

- sons-in-law
- masters of ceremony
- deans of students

Diction and spelling: plurals

Note:

- curriculum, curricula
- focus, foci
- forum, fora
- formula, formulas (formulae)
- gymnasium, gymnasia

Diction and spelling: plurals

- radius, radii
- stratum, strata
- syllabus, syllabuses (syllabi)
- symposium, symposia

Typographical conventions: numbers

Use words for *one* to *nine*, numerals from 10 onwards:

- The 24 students were divided into *four* groups.
- When I count from *one* to *nine*, do nothing; when I count to 10, push this button.

Typographical conventions: numbers

Follow this practice in:

- First, fifth, ninth, 10th, 21st, 100th

Exceptions:

- at beginning of sentence:
- *Twenty* years ago, they met in college.
- numbers appearing in tables and graphs

Typographical conventions: numbers

Exceptions:

- Numbers listed for comparisons:
- There are 4 Nobel laureates, 1 Fields medalist, 29 members of IEEE ... among CUHK faculty.



Typographical conventions: italics

Titles of the following should be in italics:

- books, magazines, newspapers, journals
- films, pieces of music, works of art,
- TV and radio programmes

Typographical conventions: italics

Foreign words/expressions should be in italics:

- Renoir is famous for his *mise-en-scene*.
- *Cha chaan tangs* are cheap local eateries.
- Mr. Lau was conferred a doctor of laws *honoris causa* by the Chinese University.

Typographical conventions: italics

Do not italicize:

- café
- vice versa
- ad hoc
- in situ
- lecture/conference titles

Typographical conventions: punctuations

Hyphen, en-dash, em-dash

- Use a hyphen as in:
- well-taken
- high-level
- state-of-the-art
- in-house
- Pro-Vice-Chancellor

Typographical conventions: punctuations

Use an en-dash as in:

- ...accounts for 20–25% of ...
- the school year 2012–13
- (different from: 2005–2008)
- the 2012–15 triennium
- The Queensway–Wanchai one-way fare is \$4.

Typographical conventions: punctuations

Use an em-dash as in:

- The triennium—which means a period of three years—is almost over.
- The ending of the novel reaffirms what everyone believes—that there is nobility in man's sufferings.

Typographical conventions: punctuations

Ellipsis

... (three dots, with space before and after)

- The tribunal heard three more witnesses ... and adjourned the hearing.
- “I was ... in really bad shape and so ... , oh, I can’t go on.”

OXFORD REFERENCE

Fowler's Modern English Usage

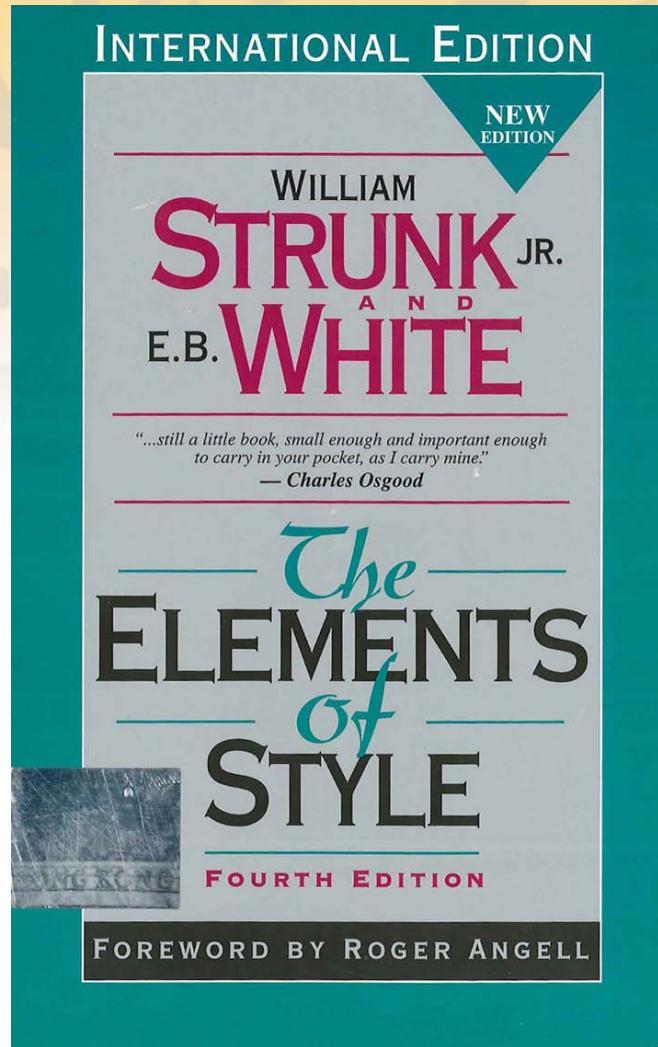


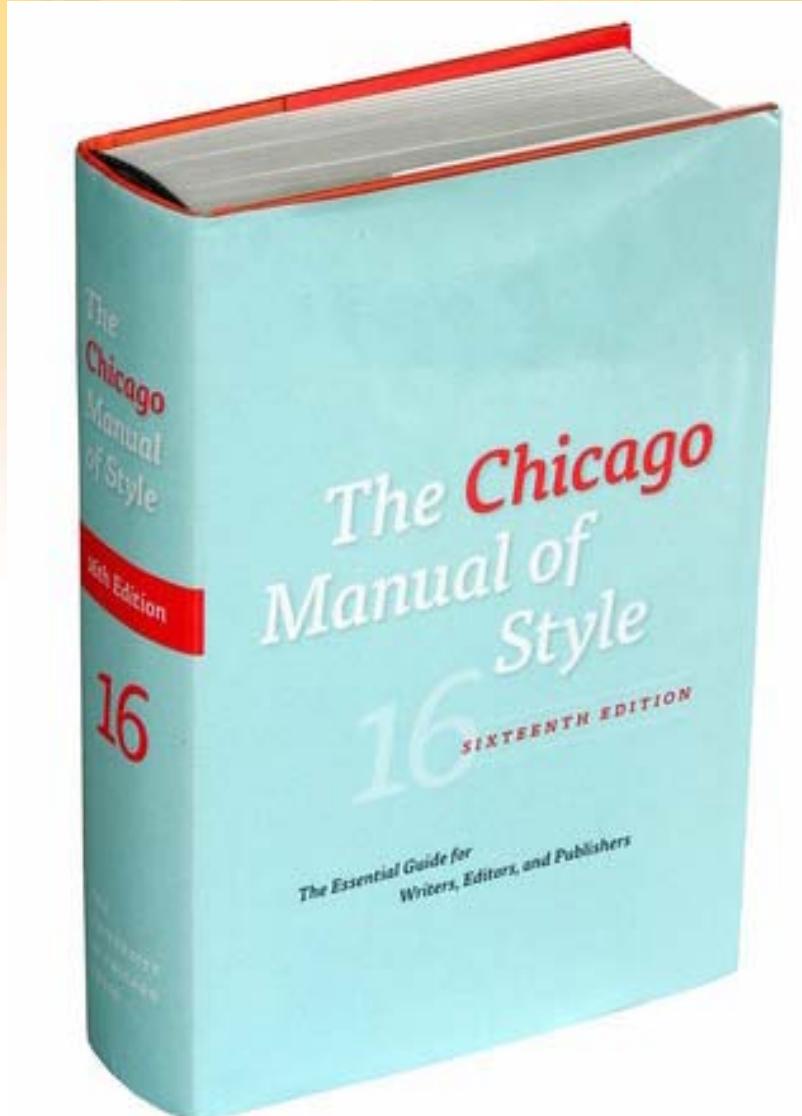
Useful references

Fowler's Modern English Usage

- compared to; compared with
- possessive apostrophe
 - ◆ Rose's
 - ◆ Roses'
 - ◆ Roses's

Useful references





The
Economist

Style Guide

The Bestselling Guide to English Usage

Tenth Edition

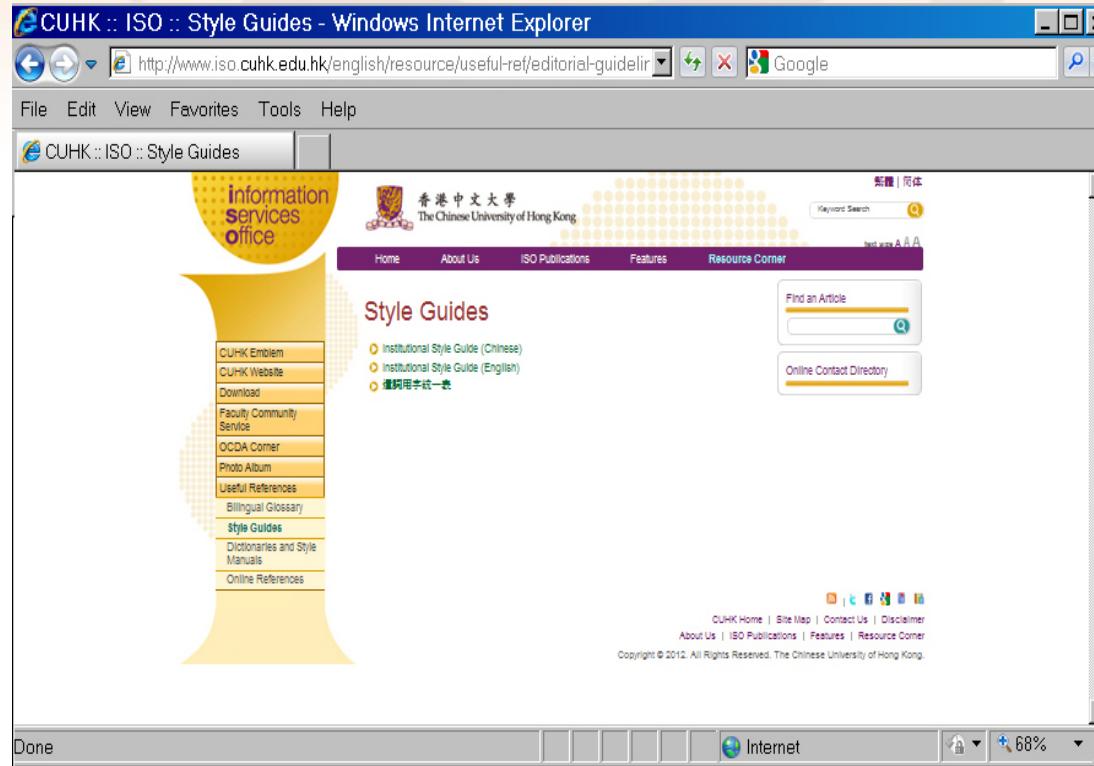


"Indispensable. The best guide of its type." **Bill Bryson**



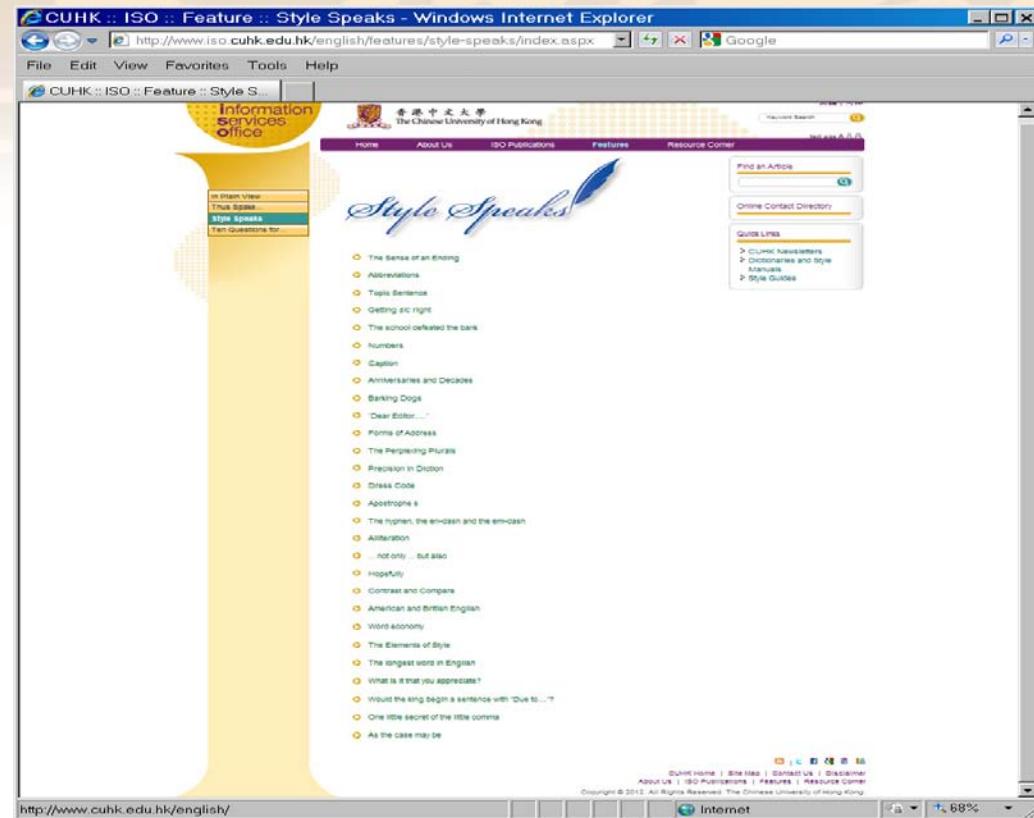
ISO Style Guide (English)

- <http://www.iso.cuhk.edu.hk/english/documents/resource/useful-ref/style-guide-e.pdf>



Style Speaks from CUHK Newsletter

- <http://www.iso.cuhk.edu.hk/english/features/style-speaks/>



Useful references

- Don't forget what good a good dictionary can do to you.
- Not just the general dictionary, but also specialized dictionaries, e.g.,
- Dictionary of abbreviations
- Dictionary of quotations
- Dictionary of scientific terms

THANK YOU!

