

Elements of Style

4th edition

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FOREWORD

INTRODUCTION

I. ELEMENTARY RULES OF USAGE

1. Form the possessive singular of nouns by adding 's
2. In a series of three or more terms with a single conjunction, use a comma after each term except the last
3. Enclose parenthetical expressions between commas
4. Place a comma before a conjunction introducing an independent clause
5. Do not join independent clauses with a comma
6. Do not break sentences in two
7. Use a colon after an independent clause to introduce a list of particulars, an appositive, an amplification, or an illustrative question
8. Use a dash to set off an abrupt break or interruption and to announce a long appositive or summary
9. The number of the subject determines the number of the verb
10. Use the proper case of pronoun
11. A participial phrase at the beginning of the sentence must refer to the grammatical subject

II. ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF COMPOSITION

12. Choose a suitable design and hold to it
13. Make the paragraph the unit of composition
14. Use the active voice
15. Put statements in positive form
16. Use definite, specific, concrete language
17. Omit needless words
18. Avoid a succession of loose sentences
19. Express coordinate ideas in similar form
20. Keep related words together
21. In summaries, keep to one tense
22. Place the emphatic words of a sentence at the end

III. A FEW MATTERS OF FORM

IV. WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS COMMONLY MISUSED

V. AN APPROACH TO STYLE (WITH A LIST OF REMINDERS)

1. Place yourself in the background
2. Write in a way that comes naturally
3. Work from a suitable style
4. Write with nouns and verbs
5. Revise and rewrite
6. Do not overwrite
7. Do not overstate
8. Avoid the use of qualifiers
9. Do not affect a breezy manner
10. Use orthodox spelling
11. Do not explain too much
12. Do not construct awkward adverbs
13. Make sure the reader knows who is speaking
14. Avoid fancy words
15. Do not use dialect unless your ear is good
16. Be clear
17. Do not inject opinion
18. Use figures of speech sparingly
19. Do not take shortcuts at the cost of clarity
20. Avoid foreign languages
21. Prefer the standard to the offbeat

AFTERWORD

GLOSSARY