

# *Developing and Maintaining Style Guides*

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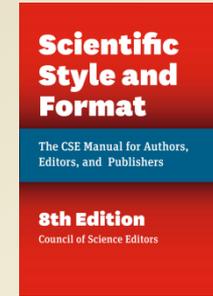
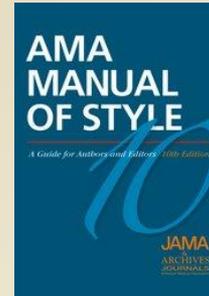
Waterbury, VT



# Why have a style guide in the first place?

## You will find that:

~ the information in a general style manual is too sparse to address your journal's needs fully



- ~ certain components of your journal are not covered in a general style manual
- ~ you want to tailor a general manual's guidelines to suit the needs of your journal
- ~ you publish different article types that have different style rules
- ~ you have certain author queries that must be worded precisely and consistently
- ~ you just want to be **different**



**co·py·ed·it·or**  
**(*Textus obsessivus*)**



## **EXAMPLE 1: Style point stated too broadly**

**Style manual:** CSE

**Style point:** Acknowledgments

### **§27.7.3 Acknowledgments**

An Acknowledgment section can carry notices of permission to cite unpublished work, identification of grants and other kinds of financial support, and credits for contributions so the reported work that did not justify authorship. If grants and contracts are mentioned, provide the relevant grant and contract numbers as well as the name of the supporting institution. Note that the ICMJE requires financial information on the title page.



Should the heading be singular if only **one** person is acknowledged?



Do I include the location of the affiliation?



Should I use “We thank...” or “The authors thank...”?



Are the authors allowed to thank their reviewers?

Should I allow “Dr.” or “Prof.” before the name?



## EXAMPLE 2: Style point not covered

Style manual: **AMA**

Style point: **Figure citations in text**

**§4.2.8 Placement of Figures in the Text.** In the published article, figures should be placed as close as possible to their first mention in the text. Figures should be cited in consecutive numerical order in the text, and references to figures should include their respective numbers. For example:

Patient participation and progress through the study are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 shows patient participation and progress through the study.

Patient participation and progress through the study were monitored by the investigators (Figure 1).

**...but what about:**

figure panel letters?

Figure 1A  
Figure 1*A*  
Figure 1, A

figure subpanels?

Figure 1Aii  
Figure 1A*ii*  
Figure 1, A, ii

more than one figure?

Figures 1, 2, 3  
Figures 1, 2, and 3  
Figures 1-3

more than one panel?

Figure 1A,B  
Figure 1A,1B  
Figure 1A and 1B

figures and tables cited together?

Figure 1, Table 2  
Figure 1 and Table 2  
Figure 1; Table 2

figures in supplemental data?

Supplemental Figure 1  
Supplemental Figure S1  
Supporting Figure 1

## EXAMPLE 3: Tailoring to your journal

Style manual: **AMA**

Style point: **Abbreviation expansions**

**§14.11 Clinical, Technical, and Other Common Terms.** This compilation of clinical, technical, and other common terms and their abbreviations is not intended to be all-encompassing but is provided as a short reference.

AIDS*	acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
COPD*	chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
ECG*	electrocardiogram, electrocardiographic
RBC*	red blood cell
WBC*	white blood cell

\*This abbreviation may be used without expansion.

Are you publishing a cardiology journal? You may want to allow **all** of these abbreviations without expansion.

## EXAMPLE 4: Special article types

Reviews

CME papers

Errata

Image of the Month

Letters to the Editor

Editorials

Commentaries

Case Reports

Retrospectives

Short Communications

These article types will by their very nature require modified, divergent, and/or additional style rules.

## EXAMPLE 5: Author Queries

Integrating **standard** author queries into your style guide will:

- ~ ensure that all of your authors are held to the same standards
- ~ ensure that all of your authors are receiving the same message
- ~ elicit a specific and/or desired response from the author
- ~ reduce confusion

Per journal style, titles cannot run onto three lines in print.

Because your title is more than 120 characters, it may run onto three lines. Please provide an alternate title that is fewer than 120 characters in the event a shorter title is needed.

## Author Queries (cont.)

The journal does not allow citations of unpublished data; the citation for unpublished data has thus been removed from the text. If you wish to reinstate the citation, please (a) provide the data as Supporting Information or (b) provide an “in press” reference if citing an article that has been accepted for publication.

Does the use of “African American” pertain specifically to American citizens who are of African descent? If not, please provide further specification; otherwise, all instances of “African American” will be changed to “black” per journal style.

## EXAMPLE 6: Being Different

Style manual: **AMA**

Style point: **Author contributions**

**§5.2.3 | Author Contributions.** The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors encourages authors and journals to disclose authors' individual contributions to the work reported in published articles. Following this recommendation, a number of journals now publish lists of author contributions in the article's "Acknowledgment" section. For example, *JAMA* publishes each author's contributions, as shown in the example in the Box on pages 143-144.

**Author Contributions:** As principal investigator, Dr Kroll had full access to all the data in the study and takes responsibility for the integrity of the data and the accuracy of the data analysis.

*Study concept and design:* Kroll, Smith, Otter

*Acquisition of data:* Kroll, Otter

*Analysis and interpretation of data:* Kroll, Smith, Otter

*Drafting of the manuscript:* Kroll

*Critical revision of the manuscript for important intellectual content:* Smith, Otter

*Statistical analysis:* Kroll, Smith

*Obtained funding:* Kroll

*Administrative, technical, or material support:* Kroll

*Study supervision:* Kroll

## Being Different (cont.)

I want to publish author contributions, but I also want to:

- ~ limit the types of contributions
- ~ categorize contributions differently
- ~ make the contributions roman, not italic
- ~ identify the authors by their initials
- ~ list the contributions in a different order
- ~ run the contributions into one paragraph

# Keys to developing a style guide

- ~ Effective categorization
- ~ Effective cross-references
- ~ Effective examples



# Effective categorization

Always consider the user's perspective. Where are they most likely to look?

## COMMA

Use to separate statistics (eg, OR 1.25, 95% CI 1.04–1.49)



**STATISTICS**

Use in numbers of  $\geq 4$  digits (eg, 1,000 not 1000)



**NUMBERS**

## SEMICOLON

Use to separate citations of figures and tables (eg, Fig. 3; Table 5)



**CITATIONS**

Use to separate product from supplier name (eg, MaxArray; Invitrogen)



**SUPPLIERS**

**TIP:** Focus on the *question*, not the *outcome*.

# Effective cross-references

Incorporating cross-references into your style guide:

- ~ helps the user find information quickly
- ~ reduces the risk of contradiction and discrepancy
- ~ allows flexibility in organization and categorization

*Example:* Abbreviations footnotes in tables

Tables



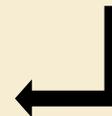
Abbreviations

See Tables.



Footnotes

See Tables.



*Solution:* Place the rule in a section about **tables**; use cross-references in **abbreviations** and **footnotes** sections to redirect the user.

# Effective examples

Effective examples are:

clear

concise

comprehensive

realistic

## *Original:*

Fig. 1. Blah blah blah...

## *Better:*

Fig. 1. Schematic of a cell cycle...

## *Original:*

<sup>1</sup>Present address of H. Solo: Padawan Academy, 1 Jedi Master St., Coruscant City, Coruscant, New Republic.

## *Better:*

<sup>1</sup>Present address of H. Sullivan: University of Wisconsin, 1 University Avenue, Madison, Wisconsin.

**TIP:** Simple, clear, and realistic examples help the user make real-life connections and apply editorial style correctly.

# Keys to maintaining a style guide

~ Centralization

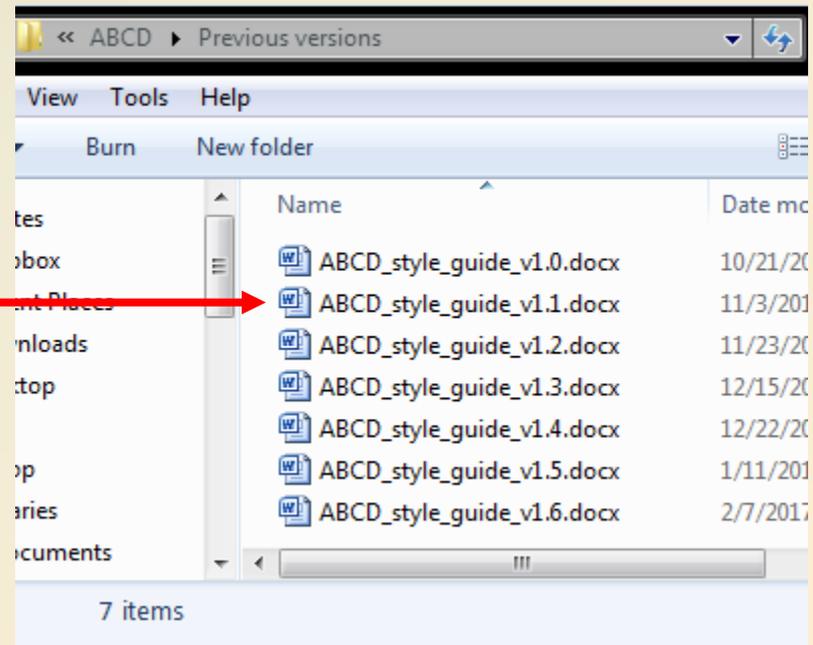
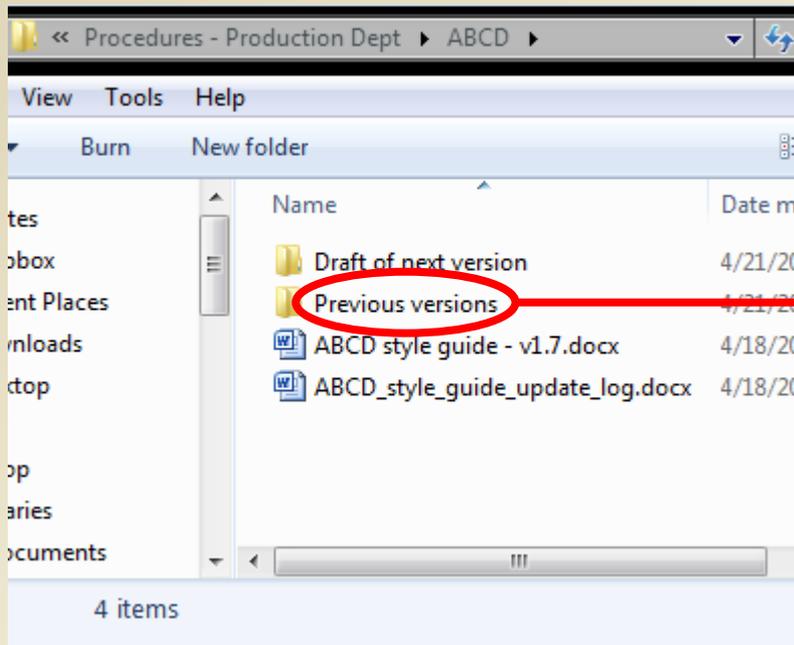
~ Frequent updates

~ Online hosting



# Centralization

- ~ Decide **who** will be the keeper of the guide
- ~ Decide **what** the protocol will be for submitting and suggesting updates
- ~ Decide **where** the files will be stored, including files for previous versions

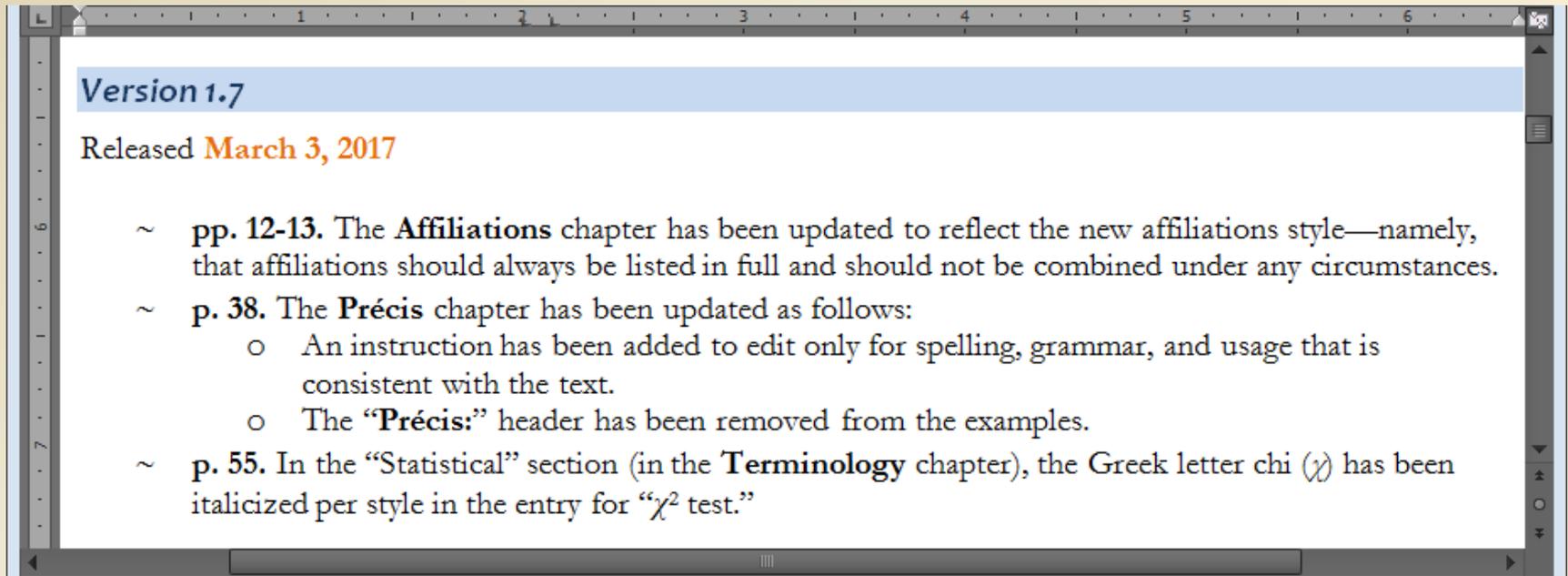


# Frequent updates

Making frequent updates will:

- ~ ensure consistency
- ~ minimize confusion about preferred style
- ~ simplify maintenance
- ~ help users assimilate to changes more readily

Consider releasing a summary of updates with each new version:

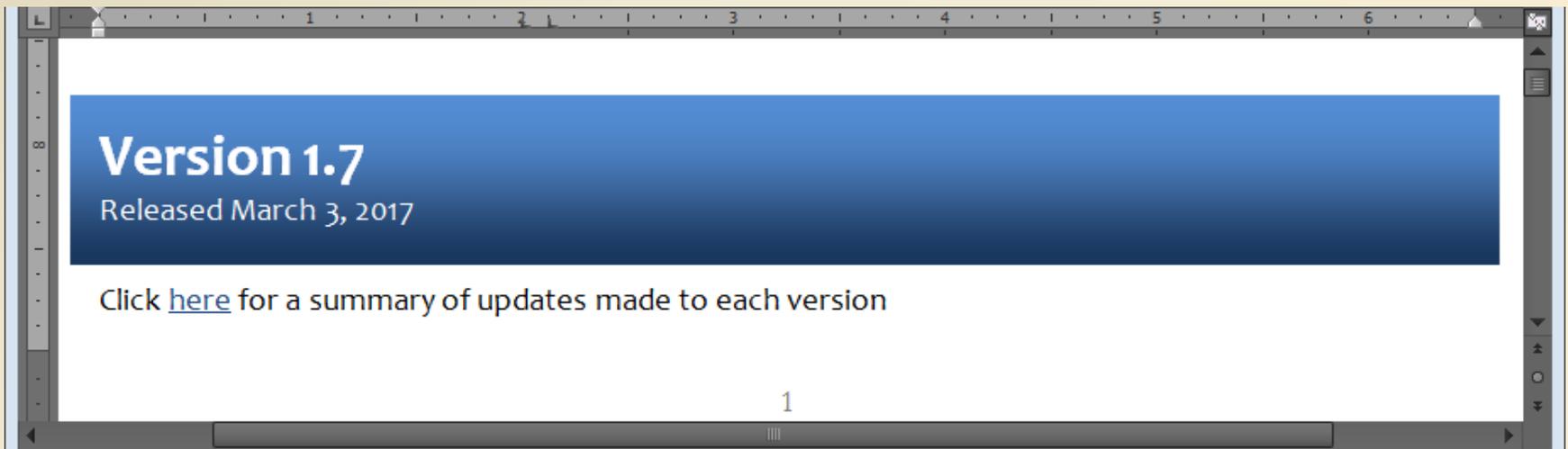


# Online hosting

Hosting your style guide online:

- ~ helps the user find information quickly
- ~ reduces the risk of contradiction and discrepancy
- ~ allows flexibility in organization and categorization

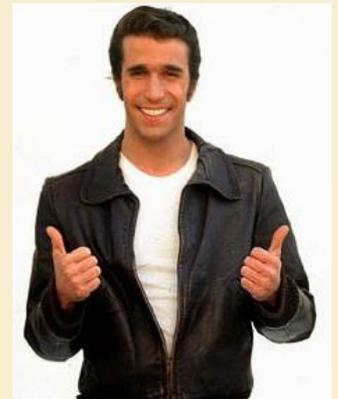
Consider [hyperlinking](#) to related documents hosted on the same server:



# In closing...

Developing and maintaining a journal-specific style guide:

- ~ documents/communicates essential style customizations
- ~ promotes consistency and uniformity in your publication
- ~ minimizes confusion
- ~ reduces editing time
- ~ simplifies implementation of style changes/updates
- ~ makes your copyeditors happy



# Thank you!

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