



Rest Stop 1: An Introduction to Formatting & Style

Formatting refers to a manuscript's visual appearance. Most manuscripts are formatted twice—once for editing, and once when they are designed and turned into a book. The first formatting is functional, and the second is both functional and aesthetic.

During editing, we recommend *standard formatting*. This will help the editor focus on your writing (the words you've chosen, the order in which you've put them, your intended meaning, and so on), rather than on how your writing looks (the size or color of the words, the fanciness of the font, and so on). This will produce a stronger edit!

Here are the main features of standard formatting:

12-point Times New Roman font.

Double-spacing throughout the manuscript.

One space between sentences.

One-inch margins on all four sides.

Indented first lines of each paragraph—use the paragraph setting in Word and set it to half an inch. (Don't use the space bar to indent!)

Make the first paragraph of a chapter or section (after a space break) flush left.

Consistently style chapter and section headings, using presets in Word's style pane or a styling choice of your own.

Indicate intentional space breaks with a centered hashtag.

Now: what about style?

Style refers to both

an author’s personal manner of literary expression, and

general rules and norms of writing—grammar, spelling, punctuation, and the like.

A *style guide* is a codification of the general rules and norms of writing. Different publishers use different style guides. Newspapers, for instance, use AP style, codified in *The Associated Press Style Guide*. Humanities scholars use MLA style, as determined by the Modern Language Association.

Most book publishers use *The Chicago Manual of Style* (aka *CMoS*), and this is our primary style guide at Yellow Bike Press as well. For spelling, we refer to the *Oxford English Dictionary*. We also consult the *Conscious Style Guide* for the most up-to-date thinking on how language can be both inclusive and respectful.

No style guide can cover every contingency! When a technical matter isn’t addressed by a style guide, we consider the goals of the manuscript, the expectations of the intended audience, linguistic trends tracked by tools like Google’s NGram Viewer, and the author’s preference.

Thank you for reading. Happy writing!



Yellow Bike Press: A Literary Services Company
Portland, Oregon
www.yellowbikepress.com