

Excerpt from *Style Meister: The Quick-Reference Custom Style Guide*

By Lana Castle

THE Answer



Most people I've encountered view style the way I used to – as an either/or proposition. They want THE answer to whatever question they currently confront. They seek a rule they can apply to any situation, any time. They want an authority to back up their decisions. They want certainty where certainty rarely exists.

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It's time we trotted the truth out of the closet: What's "right" is simply a matter of style. Period! Often, the most honest answer to a style question is, it depends. Exceptions can emerge for any rule because what's "right" depends on the situation – especially in this age of global communications and accelerated change. The truth is, THE answer varies with the audience, market, medium, organization, publication, product, personal taste and the writer's intent. It also varies from country to country. Besides all that, style simply changes over time, adapting as our language changes. Just like the rest of life, publication style is a work in progress.

The Reality

Many style guides prescribe one option over another – not because that option is inherently "right," but because most style guides are written for *very specific markets*. Often, such guides don't acknowledge that, in other situations, a different guideline may be preferable. . . .

The rules in style guides are not universal. The style that works for book publishers often counters that used for magazines and newspapers. Large

organizations often scorn styles that work for smaller firms. U.S. style often differs from British. So, using one style guide for every situation rarely does the trick.

You may work in more than one medium. Or, you may use a primary style guide but need to make occasional exceptions. *Style Meister* fills the void that such needs present. This book –

- Helps writers write successfully for different audiences,
- Helps editors deal with subtle differences between projects and publishers,
- Helps production people manage physical formatting issues and individual preferences, and
- Helps office personnel deal with all of the above.

Style Meister provides a foundation to help you develop custom style guides and make solid style decisions.