

Editorial Style Guide

This style guide is designed for the Made to Flourish community who will write in various capacities for our website, in general communication, and beyond. It is adapted from various style guides, including the Associated Press Stylebook.

GENERAL WRITING ADVICE:

“Writers do not merely reflect and interpret life, they inform and shape life.” E.B. White

Think about your audience: Made to Flourish reaches mostly pastors, so we want our articles to encourage, instruct, and help them as they work for the flourishing of their communities.

Use conversational language, but not too much: We want our readers to feel welcomed, not talked to, but invited into a conversation. Contractions, personal pronouns, and other conversational language are appropriate in certain forms.

Avoid clichés, tired metaphors, and similes: Don’t use a catchy phrase you read in the newspaper, popular magazines, or other mediums. Also avoid over-using adverbs. Use strong, visual phrases or different descriptors. String words together that will encourage and benefit your reader.

Avoid passive voice: Writers who use active voice often present their work with more clarity, grace, and accessibility to the reader. More information about active and passive voice verbs is available here: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/539/01/> and here: <https://rabbitroom.com/2018/03/whats-so-bad-about-the-passive-voice/>.

Be concise: Being concise shows consideration for your reader and their time. Use one word instead of two. George Orwell said “If it is possible to cut out a word, always cut it out.” Use strong words, which create strong sentences.

Don’t use insider language or acronyms: Assume the best about your reader, but also realize they may not know the same lingo you do about faith, work, and economic integration (or other theological/practical ideas). Explain things clearly and in a way that anyone can understand the main point.

Read your work aloud for self-editing: Before you submit an article to a potential publisher, one helpful way to self-edit your work is to read your article aloud.

FOR FURTHER READING:

*Writing Tools:
50 Essential
Strategies for
Every Writer,*
Roy Peter Clark

On Writing Well,
William Zinsser

The Writing Life,
Annie Dillard



HERE ARE A FEW QUICK RULES THAT OUR ARTICLES SHOULD FOLLOW:

Capitalizations

Only capitalize proper nouns, and when in doubt, leave it lowercase. Certain cases we often see capitalizations, yet should lowercase:

- Personal pronouns in reference to God — it is “he” and not “He”
- The word “gospel” is only capitalized in reference to one or all four of the Gospels - Gospel of Matthew, Gospel of Mark, etc.
- It is “biblical” and not “Biblical”
- Job titles (president of Made to Flourish) are only capitalized when used as proper nouns. Proper noun usage: Made to Flourish President Tom Nelson, only when not within body text. In other instances, it will read like this: “Tom Nelson serves as the president of Made to Flourish.”
- Academic degrees are only capitalized when stated specifically: Bachelor of Science in Humanities, Master of Arts in Counseling, etc. All other instances (master’s of arts, bachelor of science) are lowercase.

Italics

Italicize book titles, magazines, newspaper names. Don’t use quotation marks unless it’s an article, chapter, or section within another work.

Acronyms:

On the first reference of Made to Flourish, spell it out in full. On subsequent references, the acronym MTF is appropriate, unless it’s at the beginning of a sentence, which must be spelt. The same rule applies to City Network Leaders, etc. (see the “insider language” section of the general writing tips for more information.)

Punctuation

- In general, do not use exclamation points.
- AP adopted the Oxford comma rule.
- Periods always go within quotation marks.
- Use em-dashes instead of dashes (—) within body text and include spaces on each side. On a Mac, shift+option+minus (-). On a PC/Windows, alt+ctrl+minus (-). Chromebook, press ctrl+ shift+u, write “2014” and press enter.
- Do not use a double space after a period.

Courtesy titles

Do not use courtesy titles such as Mr., Mrs., Dr., in articles. Exceptions are made when quoted in interviews.





▶ **Books of the Bible**

Only abbreviate books of the Bible in parentheses, without periods.

Gen, Exod, Lev, Num, Deut, Josh, Judg, Ruth, 1-2 Sam, 1-2 Kgs, 1-2, Chr, Ezra, Neh, Esth, Job, Ps (plural: Pss), Prov, Eccl, Song of Sol, Isa, Jer, Lam, Ezek, Dan, Hos, Joel, Amos, Obad, Jonah, Mic, Nah, Hab, Zeph, Hag, Zech, Mal, Matt, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Rom, 1-2 Cor, Gal, Eph, Phil, Col, 1-2 Thess, 1-2 Tim, Titus, Phlm, Heb, Jas, 1-2 Pet, 1-3 John, Jude, Rev

Numbers/time

Spell numbers below 10, and use numerals above 10. Spell any number that begins a sentence. Abbreviations for time are a.m. and p.m. — lowercase in all instances. Include a space between the time and the abbreviation, but never use :00 (2 p.m., 4 a.m., and generally use noon in reference to 12 p.m. and midnight in reference to 12 a.m.) In the instance of events, deviation is acceptable.

Abbreviations

- Months — spell months when used within a sentence or announcement: “Her birthday is January 22, 2018.” If space does not permit a full spelling, abbreviate with a period - Jan. 22, 2018.
- Days — never abbreviate weekdays.
- States — spell names of states in body copy. “Made to Flourish is located in Kansas City, Missouri.”