



**WRITER'S  
HANDBOOK &  
STYLE GUIDE**

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## Table of Contents

3..... Introduction – The Medium’s Mandate  
5..... Objectives  
6..... Code of Ethics  
7..... General Writing Tips  
9..... News  
12..... Opinion  
14..... Features  
16..... Arts & Entertainment  
18..... Sports & Health  
21..... Satire  
22..... Medium Style Guide

*Note: This document was updated and edited in July, 2021 by Elizabeth Provost, Editor-in-Chief, 2021-2022.*

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## INTRODUCTION – The Medium’s Mandate

Before all else, a campus newspaper sets out to maintain an accurate account of its university. Students are transient—they come and go, and the campus forgets. In the current age, fragments of UTM’s history live on via social media posts, tweets, and the university’s communications team (who only ever write about the university in a positive light), but a complete and impartial record of the campus is the true mandate of a well-ordered campus newspaper, and that is what *The Medium* strives for. As a campus newspaper, we set out to do three things:

### **1. Uncover the truth**

In journalism, subjectivity is the adversary of truth. There is my truth, and your truth, and their truth: relative experiences that are interchangeable based on context. But from those truths, which one is *the* truth? This question drives all journalists forward in search of facts, logic, and certainty. An article in a newspaper must relay the facts of the situation. For a journalist, the matter simply boils down to whether the event occurred or not. If it has, it will be recorded.

### **2. Serve the general will, and unify the campus**

We not only strive to discover the truth, but to serve the general will of a community that lacks an open, accessible medium to exchange information and opinion. When a newspaper declares itself “the voice of the students,” it does so with the intent of including student voices within its pages.

As much as *The Medium* is an index of the progress of the University of Toronto Mississauga, it also is (or should be) an important aspect of campus life. An engaging student newspaper attracts the interest and enthusiasm of a diverse student body. We help develop qualities of cooperation, accuracy, critical thinking, tolerance, responsibility, and leadership among our writers, and we offer them professional training in writing, editing, organization, time management, and team building.

### **3. Entertain, inform, educate, and challenge**

Mass media shapes our every day lives. We wake up, check our texts, watch television, read an online magazine or news article, listen to a podcast, or turn on the radio. We are surrounded by information and opinions, and it can be difficult to make sense of it all.

*The Medium* is the central hub of information and opinions relating to the UTM campus. *The Medium* not only covers campus news and student politics, but many other areas of interest for our students, staff, and faculty. We provide information and updates on local talent, concerts, art exhibits, and sporting events. We also publish investigative long-form articles on a variety of topics. Our editorials and op-eds challenge students to critically

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engage with a wide range of ideas, and to carry out meaningful discussions with their friends, family, and peers.

These various sections culminate in a powerful and legitimate medium for students to learn about new ideas, opinions, and events.

That said, *The Medium* shall never:

- Publish a story based on rumor, gossip, or any unsubstantiated facts;
- Publish a story smearing, defaming, or assassinating the character of an individual or group;
- Publish or suppress a story for personal interests.

When all the parts of a newspaper are working in harmony, it's a beautiful thing. But to have a strong newspaper, you need to have a strong team of writers. Inside this booklet you will find a "how-to" guide for each section, as well as a style guide to help you properly place your commas and periods, so as not to incur the wrath of your editors. We hope you find this guide informative, and that it helps you become better writers, editors, and journalists.

All the best!

**Ali Taha**

*Editor-in-Chief, 2019-2020*

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## The Objectives of *The Medium*:

- i) To provide the students of the University of Toronto with the most fair and accurate coverage of the events that affect their lives, especially, but not limited to, events at the University of Toronto Mississauga;
- ii) To provide a permanent structure for facilitating communication among various interest groups at the University of Toronto, particularly the Mississauga campus, and the students without endangering the principle of freedom of press;
- iii) To provide the students of the University of Toronto Mississauga with that information and analysis which is essential to their understanding of and interaction within the University community and the larger society of which they are a part of;
- iv) To provide the students of the University of Toronto with a forum for a pluralistic and educational exchange of ideas and critical commentary of the day;
- v) To maintain the independence and editorial integrity of *The Medium* from the Administration, student societies, national student organizations, advertising interests and other external bodies;
- vi) To provide any interested student with the opportunity to learn journalistic, photographic, business, administrative, and graphic skills in the environment of a student newspaper and to continually strive for the highest standards of excellence in all aspects of the production and management of *The Medium*.

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## Code of Ethics

- All student journalists should strive continually to be fair and accurate in their reports and should strive to equip themselves with facts to support published statements. They should realize fully their personal responsibility for everything submitted for publication. They should not falsify information or documents, nor distort or misrepresent the facts.
- Student journalists should respect all confidences regarding sources of information and private documents unless this interferes with the freedom of the press or the need to inform the public on vital matters.
- Student journalists should be familiar with the laws of libel and contempt of court which exist in this country and should observe the international copyright agreement, unless this interferes with the freedom of the press or the need to inform the public on vital matters.
- Racial, sexual orientation, religious, or gender bias or prejudice against humanity shall have no place in the editorial policy of the newspaper.

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## GENERAL WRITING TIPS

Here are some guidelines to follow when writing articles for us, and in fact for most journalistic purposes. It's not a checklist, just advice that will reduce the amount of editing your article needs.

If you want more detail on a particular section—because they do differ in how one writes for them—then refer to the appropriate sections below for News, Opinion, Features, Arts & Entertainment, Sports & Health, or Satire.

### Style

- You're not writing an essay. No need to make your language especially fancy or use long, complicated sentences. The point is to be understood, not to impress.
- Say what you have to say in as little space as possible. "A reliable professor" simply sounds better than "a professor students can rely on", and the reader is less likely to get bored before they finish the sentence.
- Avoid clichés and other shortcuts. Be precise but natural. Read the first four sections of this short book (full text available here).
- Pay attention to how formal your section requires you to be. Features and arts articles often involve the writer's personal views. Sportswriters sometimes root for their home team. In the news section, though, you should never say "I went to the event," but always "The event took place at..."
- Always give someone's first and last name. Refer to them by their last name only after the first usage.

### Structure

- Plan your article before you sit down to write it. You don't need to go paragraph by paragraph. Just have a list of the points you need to communicate.
- Start a new paragraph for every new idea. It's okay to have a paragraph of one or two sentences as long as it's self-contained. Assign quotes their own paragraphs.
- In most cases, aim for the classic "inverted pyramid" journalistic structure. This means putting the most important information first, proceeding through the details, and finally

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ending with the “extras”, such as related background information.

- Construct a lead. The lead is the opening, the hook that draws your readers in. Ask yourself: Why is my article interesting? Get that across as soon as possible.
- Too meandering: “Campus Council, the highest governing body of UTM, held a meeting on Wednesday, February 7, 2012 to discuss the possibility of a policy that will allow students to drop up to 1.0 credits from their academic record for the second time this year.”
- More to the point: “The highest governing body of UTM reopened discussion of the drop credit policy last week.”

### **Submitting**

- Don’t worry about layout. The margins, font, spacing, and so on will all change.
- Run a spell-check. These things are far from perfect, but they can bring it a long way.
- Confirm your dates, numbers, and names. (Never assume you can spell a name by ear!)
- Feel free to suggest a headline and/or subtitle to point out the article’s focus.
- Save the file as a .docx or .doc if your word processor allows you to do so.
- Remain available for contact by email or phone over the weekend. You never know when we might need you to clarify something or check a fact!

### **Finally**

- Don’t panic. Even if you don’t nail every point on this list, we usually catch it in editing. Plus, we’re always available to go over your work with you and help you grow in your abilities. Whether this is your first article or your fifth, we’re glad to have you writing for us.

Thanks for reading, and good luck!

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## Writing for NEWS

[news@themedium.ca](mailto:news@themedium.ca)

### THE GOLDEN RULE: BE IMPARTIAL

*The Medium's* News section provides fair and neutral coverages on issues that are relevant and important to students and faculty at the University of Toronto Mississauga campus.

It is crucial that all Medium writers appear objective and impartial in the stories they write. Barriers that prevent a writer from doing so can range from conflicts of interest, to simply being viewed as having an opinion or bias in favor of a particular side.

To combat this, you should treat all sources and sides of an issue with dignity and respect. Do not express any personal opinions or biases that might limit your ability to fairly cover a story. If you worry you may be viewed as having a conflict of interest on a story, immediately contact the News Editor for advice.

### How to write a News article

#### *The inverted pyramid*

- News stories should be written in inverted pyramid style. The most important information should be at the beginning of the story and the less important information should follow.
- What happened? Who was involved? What was the outcome? What will happen? The five W's (who, what, when, where, and why) are a good place to start when writing a News article.
- Writing in inverted pyramid allows readers to get the gist of an article without reading the entire story. It also allows a story to be quickly shortened during production if there is too much content for the issue.

#### *The importance of quotations*

- Quotations are the bread and butter of a news story. Every story, unless otherwise stated, should interview at least three sources. Quotations should be used to move the story forward. As a news writer, your job is to conduct interviews and weave quotations together to make a story.

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- A news assignment will often include a list of sources to interview for the story. Don't feel limited by this list! You should talk to anyone you feel is important in building your story. Email sources introducing yourself as a writer with *The Medium* – do this as soon as you receive your story assignment. If you do not hear back from the source within a reasonable amount of time, call the source.
  - When you quote a person, you need to transcribe the exact words the source originally used when speaking to you. When conducting interviews, use a voice recorder – if you don't have one email or call the News Editor, who will be able to lend you one from the office.

#### *Use active voice*

- When writing a news article, always try to use active voice rather than passive voice. An example of passive voice would be: “the ball is thrown.”
  - Passive voice raises a couple of questions: who threw the ball, and where (or who) was it thrown to?
  - Active voice answers these questions by placing the subject before the verb. For example, the above sentence would now be, “Peter throws the ball to the dog.”
- Rule of thumb:
  - Active verbs move the action and reveal the actors
  - Passive verbs emphasize the receiver, the victim
  - The verb *to be* links words and ideas

#### *Focus on keeping paragraphs short*

- Three or four sentences is the longest a paragraph should get in a news article. And keep sentences short. Like this.

#### *Use simple language*

- Don't use “concomitant” when you can use “associated.” Save the fancy words for writing the GRE—always ask yourself whether there is a more straightforward way to write your story. In fact, when you edit your story before submitting it, read through it once asking, “What information is repetitive in my story?”
- Remember that simple doesn't always mean short. Sometimes a story needs to be longer to explain background or context.

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*Word counts and deadlines*

- Word counts can always go over the set amount, but never under. And deadlines are **firm**. If you have any issues with the word count or deadline talk to the News Editor ASAP.

**Pitching Stories**

- *The Medium* is always looking for story ideas for upcoming issues. If you have an idea, email it to [news@themedium.ca](mailto:news@themedium.ca). A pitch can be anything you feel is important to students who attend U of T. When pitching please provide as much detail about the story as possible, who you think should be interviewed, and why you think it is a good fit for *The Medium*. The news team is always happy to discuss potential news on campus! Please avoid pitching a story about a group or organization you're involved in. A club you run is not an appropriate topic for you to pitch.

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## Writing for OPINION

[opinion@themedium.ca](mailto:opinion@themedium.ca)

### What is the opinion section?

- The opinion section is where U of T students are given the opportunity to express their thoughts on any given issue that is timely and relevant. Opinion also hosts Editorials, Letters to the Editor, Columns and some Satire articles.
- Articles can be almost about anything that one can have an opinion on: politics, religion, economics, the environment, U of T student politics, etc.

### *How to write an op-ed*

- Be opinionated. This is the most important aspect of writing an op-ed. You should persuade the reader and know what you are trying to say from the very beginning. You should be able to summarize your argument into a single sentence.
- Hook the reader from the very beginning and use direct argumentation more often than indirect argumentation.
  - Direct argumentation gets to the point fast.
  - Indirect argumentation builds empathy with the reader.
- Think carefully about how much narrative summary you need to include in your opinion. Educate the reader about what happened but be economical!
- Give the reader a reason to care. Find a way to make your issue the reader's issue. Take it a step further and show how your position is their position.
  - Some questions to ask yourself: who is your audience? What do you think they would want to hear? How could you construct your op-ed so that by the end of it, the audience is on your side?
  - Speak directly to your audience.
  - Ask for small changes, but big changes. Small requests are easier for audiences to accept than "big asks."
- Locate the higher-level issue. Articulate the archetypal values or virtues that are the basis of the central argument.
  - What are the competing ideas of goodness? How are people arguing points of virtue, and how might they be misunderstanding these virtues? What values are under attack?

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- Tie your argument to a case and comment on a specific set of events.
  - Be willing to be wrong and change your mind when you're wrong. Be morally principled and intellectually honest. And don't let yourself be co-opted by ideological positions.
  - Use facts to back up your argument. Provide a visual, statistic, or anecdote that will stick in the reader's mind.
  - Bring your voice and experience into the discussion. You have something to bring to the discussion, and you have a personal experience that gives you credibility. But avoid the mistake of presenting your experience as the final word. "Because I said so" is less persuasive than "because the evidence says so."

Many journalists are fans of George Orwell and much of his writing philosophy applies to the opinion section. Here is a link to his famous essay "Politics and the English Language," which should be required reading for anyone interested in writing an opinions piece for any purpose:

<https://www.orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell-foundation/orwell/essays-and-other-works/politics-and-the-english-language/>

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## Writing for FEATURES

[features@themedium.ca](mailto:features@themedium.ca)

### What is a feature? How does it differ from a news piece?

- Often longer than a standard news piece, but not necessarily.
- Often an issue piece—about an idea rather than an event, less-time sensitive.
- Different writing style.
- Most features have at least a gentle point of view – an argument, not a opinion piece, but you’re making a point.
- Can be a detailed story about an important event, article about some event or person in history, long interview, and more...

### *What sort of features does The Medium publish?*

- A feature article is something that speaks to us as students—the student interest is not necessarily something that students think about, but it’s something they will respond to positively when they see it in print.
- Topics we have not covered much, or about groups we tend to ignore.

### *Coming up with the idea*

- Talk to friends.
- Look at variations on existing ideas.
- Flesh out existing Medium articles and topics.
- Flesh out under-reported stories in the mainstream news.
- Find an interesting profile subject.

### *Reporting*

- Reporting for a features article is not much different from a normal news piece, except that you have more time.
- One interview is more than likely to lead to another.
- You want to think hard about whether you’re missing anyone who’s important to this issue, but eventually you WILL have to stop, as space is limited.

### *Structure*

- You really need to think about structure and outline for a features article
- Good examples can be found in the WSJ’s feature format (lead -> nut graf -> story -> anecdotal conclusion).

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- o The nut graf tells the reader what the story is really about!  
For more information on this format, follow this link:  
<https://www.poynter.org/archive/2003/the-nut-graf-part-i/>

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## Writing for ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

[arts@themedium.ca](mailto:arts@themedium.ca)

### So, you think you can write for the Arts section?

- We're looking to be an arts guide, a reference point for students who are looking for something cool to do in the city—directing them to a great band to see, an artist to check out, etc. When pitching a topic, keep your info Toronto-based, keep it cheap, and keep it student-relevant. Students doing cool things is always good too.
- We're not looking for stuff that is irrelevant or has lost its relevancy. We aren't interested in reviewing an MCU film three weeks after its release, or a report on Jennifer Lawrence's new movie (if we don't have an interview, that is...).

### *Interview Etiquette*

- Do your homework! Have a familiarity with a person or group's work.
- Remember the power of silence: let the person speak for themselves. If they're pausing, don't be too quick to jump to the next question.
- Keep the subject on them.
- Make sure your questions aren't too ambiguous: "How is your career?"
- As a courtesy, ask before you turn on your recorder.
- Be polite and courteous, but don't be afraid to ask the hard questions.
- Always save your notes and audio files!
- Don't ask your subject for an autograph, and don't ask for them to take a picture with you. That is horribly unprofessional.
- Never show a source or publicist your story before it's published, even if they ask. If you do get asked and are unsure of how to proceed, consult your editor.

### *Reviewing a creative*

- Be honest. Don't review what you think the consensus is, instead stick to your guns. It's your review people are reading, not the consensus. Don't like something just because you think that you 'should.'
- Explain why something is good, or why something is bad. If you are reviewing a comedy film, don't just say something is funny, analyze why it was funny. Be specific.

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- Be informed and know what you're reviewing.
  - Keep an open mind. Even if it's something you're pretty sure is going to be terrible, hope for the best.
  - Be fair, and judge things on their own terms.

### *Writing interviews/profile pieces*

- Don't practice hero worship. Find what's interesting about your subject, but don't write about them like you describe your fifth-grade crush to your bestie. A bad lead: "The multi-talented, multi-faceted Justin Bieber can always be counted on to reinvent himself, and no one can predict just how transcendent his next work could be."
- Let the interview subjects speak for themselves. Their quotes are always better than if you simply describe what they said.
- Be pointed in your physical descriptions. If there isn't a broader purpose to describing your subject's torn t-shirt, don't bother. Make sure you can justify every line as part of your 'thesis statement.'
- Structurally, it is often satisfying to begin with a brief lead, a quote, and then a brief explanation of who the person is and why they're being interviewed. However, this is not a set-in-stone rule.
- Don't quote/paraphrase the press release. Find out what is interesting about the subject, not what the publicity materials tell you is interesting.
- Don't be afraid to be less than adulatory. Sometimes you have to hurt feelings in this biz.

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## Writing for SPORTS & HEALTH

[sports@themedium.ca](mailto:sports@themedium.ca)

### Sports journalism: how it works

- Sports journalism reports on sports topics and events. It involves investigating a story rather than relying on press releases and prepared statements. Sports stories can take on a sociopolitical significance and deal with issues ranging from the hyper-compensation of top athletes to the use of anabolic steroids, the cost of building sports venues, to breaking down barriers of race and gender.
- The section also allows for the exploration of the subject of health. Be it mental, physical, or emotional health.

### *Types of Sports stories*

- There are three types of stories that can be found in the sports section of the newspaper:
  - Game and event coverage essentially provide readers with a summary of the game, who won and by how much, and any background necessary to understand the significance of the highlights recapped later paragraphs.
  - Human interest and feature stories tend to delve deeper into issues in the sporting world and are written with the same format as a hard news story or feature.
  - Editorial reflections of a writer's views on subject matter relating to sports.

### *How to write a Sports article*

- There's a specific formula that newspaper journalists follow when composing an article. Sports writing, while an art in and of itself, is no exception. Here are a few tips:
  - You must know what you're talking about or the context of the story. A working knowledge of the sport(s) you're reporting on is essential and encompasses not only the current players, coaches and standings, but rules, history, and current controversies as well. Keep in mind that many sports teams, the UTM Eagles included, have press centres equipped with extensive information and are designed to serve as a resource for the media.
  - The opening sentence or lead should be catchy, concise, and place emphasis on an interesting fact or highlight

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of the story. Although not necessarily in the first paragraph, the lead must encapsulate the basic “who, what, where, when, why, and how” of the story.

- When reporting on a game or an event, your job as a reporter is to give the major play-by-play. You want to provide a basic chronology from beginning to end with details on major turning points, big plays, mistakes, or momentum-building moments.
- Use quotes from people involved. Be prepared to ask good questions and collect information from players and coaches to incorporate into the body of your article. (NOTE: Make sure to find out the appropriate background information on the person you’re citing. For example, when quoting a student fan you’d want to get their full name, institution attended, major and year of studying, but when quoting a player, the most important things would be their position, how long they’ve played with the team for, and on occasion, where they were playing before.)
- Be clear and concise. Sports articles found in newspapers tend to be to the point and stick with basic vocabulary. When explained in context, metaphors and technical terms can be imposed, but for all intents and purposes try to steer clear of jargon that anyone but an avid enthusiast might not be familiar with.

#### *What you need to know*

- In the world of sports journalism, media needs to be accredited! While this holds true to journalists reporting on most subject matter, it is especially important to the sports writer. Not only is it near impossible to get an interview without going through the teams’ press centre and media director, but neglecting to go through the appropriate channels could really peeve administration. The relationship between the sports reporter and the management of the team their reporting on is a crucial one, and while management is generally appreciative of publicity, they are responsible for protecting their athletes, coaches and brand. Before you go to a game, or profile an athlete make sure you’ve taken the proper steps. If you ever have any questions on this matter, contact the press centre for the sports team directly or email your editor.

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- Sports stories are time sensitive! That means that news tends to get old fast and pitching a story on an event that happened last month is more or less a lost cause unless you can find some particular relevance or implication to the here and now.

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## Writing for SATIRE

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[opinion@themedium.ca](mailto:opinion@themedium.ca)

Satire articles are published in the Opinion section of the paper.

### The facts of writing satire

- Fact #1: there are no facts! Satire, by definition, is “the use of humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize people’s stupidity or vices, particularly in the context of contemporary politics and other topical issues.” Satire in a newspaper is an exaggerated, ironic, and hopefully funny take on current politics.
  - For example, a title of a satirical article could be something like, “Horde of UTM students storms Registrar’s office to demand tuition refund.” The article could go on to say that their university experience finally taught them how to think critically, leading them to realize that graduating with debt and entering a failing job/housing market was a bad idea. So, they’re rioting!
- Fact #2: It’s not actual news, but it sounds like it could be. The best kind of satire reads like it could be in the news section. It *sounds* factual. It *sounds* objective. But people should be able to catch on that it’s just a joke. In today’s political climate the line between news and satire is quickly blurring, but sometimes that can be a hilarious thing.
- Fact #3: Although satire is not factual, it should be based in reality. By this we mean that satire should exaggerate what is true and have a certain amount of irony or sarcasm running throughout the article.
- Fact #4: Satire articles are short – 150-250 words. You can make them longer, but make sure you don’t lose steam.
- Fact #5: Satire should stay relevant, and focus on news, trends, and popular culture that are currently happening.

### Examples of satire

- The best way to write satire is to read it. Here are examples:
  - <https://www.newyorker.com/humor/borowitz-report>
  - <https://www.theonion.com>
  - <https://www.thebeaverton.com>

The most difficult part of writing satire is coming up with titles that are subtle, but funny, and can be understood by your wider audience. Once you have the punchline, the article will come easily.

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# **THE MEDIUM STYLE GUIDE**

<b><u>TOPIC</u></b>	<b><u>PAGE No.</u></b>
Intro.	23
Elements of an Article	24
Punctuation	25
Numbers - General rules; numbers and commas; year of study	28
Centuries, decades, dates, times, and percentages	29
Personal titles – uppercase/lowercase - Formal titles; occupational titles	30
Italicizing and Romanizing	31
More directives re: Italics	32
Writing style re: organizations at U of T	33
Style rules for News	34
Style rules for interviews	35
Style rules for Arts & Entertainment, Sports & Health, and Opinion sections	36
Spelling variants	37
In Other Words...	39
Fact-checking and Common Errors	40

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## **INTRO.**

*The Medium's* Style Guide is based largely on the *Canadian Press Stylebook*. It serves to inform our writers about the writing formalities at *The Medium*, and to instruct our copy editors in matters of editing.

A checklist for editors:

- o Be sure to highlight every fact and claim made in the article for fact-checking purposes.
- o Be sure to indicate whether you have fact-checked the article.

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## **ELEMENTS OF AN ARTICLE**

Every article must have a headline, sub-heading, and a byline. The following elements should appear on a draft of an article.

**HED:** The headline of an article, which tells the reader what the article is about. No period is necessary at the end of a headline. Be creative with your HEDs!

**DEK:** The sub-heading of an article, which provides the reader with more information about the story. No period is necessary at the end of a sub- heading.

**BYLINE:** The author.

Example:

HED: Fee diversions approved

DEK: UTMSU largely silent as discontented students bring case to university administration

BYLINE: Jane Doe

Also consider the following format: Georgia, 12pt, 1.5 spacing, spaces between paragraphs, no indents.

## PUNCTUATION

<b>APOSTROPHE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Apostrophes are used to denote a contraction of two words.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ e.g. Don't try to stop me.</li> </ul> <p><b>NOTE:</b> <i>The Medium's</i> News section tends to avoid using contracted words, except if the contraction appears in a quote.</p> </li> <li>▪ Apostrophes are used to denote possession.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ e.g. Sue's book.</li> <li>○ e.g. Alex's house.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Use the apostrophe for plural or singular possessive terms ending in s.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ e.g. The Jones' cat</li> <li>○ e.g. Erasmus' ideas.</li> </ul> <p><b>NOTE:</b> do not use the apostrophe where numbers or capital letters are pluralized (unless it is necessary to avoid ambiguity).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ e.g. He learned his ABCs. (<i>Not ABC's</i>)</li> <li>○ e.g. She minded her Ps and Qs. (<i>Not P's and Q's</i>)</li> <li>○ e.g. I bought him a few CDs.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>COMMA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use the oxford comma (also called the serial comma) in a list:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ e.g. She ate strawberries, apples, and oranges.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Input a comma between two independent clauses conjoined by <i>but, and, or, etc.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ e.g. I told him to go to the store, but he went home instead.</li> <li>○ e.g. I told him to go to the store but learned that he went home instead.</li> </ul> <p><b>NOTE:</b> the second sentence above lacks a comma because “but learned that he went home instead” lacks a subject and cannot stand on its own as a sentence.</p> </li> <li>▪ Input a comma when introducing a relative clause and to set off non-restrictive or non- essential elements of the sentence.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ e.g. The car, which was covered in decals, was on fire.</li> <li>○ e.g. Students, who get into the library free of charge, need to show identification.</li> </ul> <p><b>NOTE:</b> “which” clauses give a reason to add a description to the sentence that may not always be essential; “that” is generally used when the clause defines or limits the noun (e.g. The car that was covered in decals was on fire).  <b><i>“Which” clauses need commas, and “that” clauses do not.</i></b></p> </li> </ul>
<b>SEMICOLON</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The semicolon helps to convey a close connection between two related ideas. Use the semicolon to join two independent clauses that are closely related in meaning.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ e.g. Abdominal exercises help prevent back pain; proper posture is also important.</li> <li>○ e.g. She has been falling asleep in class lately; she needs to get more rest.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Also use the semicolon to separate list items that are long and complex.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ e.g. Thomas Mulcair, leader of the NDP; Bob Rae, leader of the Liberals; Stephen Harper, leader of the Conservatives and prime minister of Canada.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>COLON</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Using the colon in a sentence is like using an equal sign (=) in math. The colon is placed after an independent clause to introduce a list, a quotation, or an explanation. Use it only in cases when it can be replaced by the phrases <i>for example, namely, and that is.</i></li> </ul>

	<p>Make sure that the first part of the sentence can stand alone as a complete sentence (rather than a fragmented one).</p> <p>Do not capitalize the first letter of a sentence following a colon, unless the word is a proper noun or the beginning of a quotation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ e.g. Visitors to foreign countries require the following items: a foreign language phrase book, money, health insurance, and a desire to experience different cultures.</li> <li>○ e.g. The coach urged his struggling team to reflect on the immortal words of Buddha: “There is suffering in life.”</li> <li>○ e.g. The reason for the company’s success is plain: it is far more nimble than its competitors.</li> </ul>
<b>EM DASH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The em dash is the width of the letter M. Use the em dash when a comma or parentheses would create confusion for the reader. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ e.g. The tea—infused with lavender and chamomile—was fragrant and soothing.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Use the em dash to indicate an abrupt change of thought, an interruption, or added emphasis within a sentence. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ e.g. Never have a met such a lovely person—before you.</li> <li>○ e.g. My agreement with her was clear—she teaches me math and I teach her English.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Keyboard shortcut (for Mac):</b> <i>em dash</i> = <i>alt+shift+hyphen</i></p>
<b>EN DASH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The en dash is roughly the width of the letter N. Use the en dash to express a range of values. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ e.g. It will take me 5–6 hours to drive to Detroit.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ En dashes are also used in place of a hyphen in compound terms where one element of the compound itself is a compound of two or more words. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ e.g. post–World War II (not post-World-War-II)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Keyboard shortcut (for Mac):</b> <i>en dash</i> = <i>alt+hyphen</i></p>
<b>HYPHENS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hyphens are used in hyphenated compound phrases. Use a dictionary to determine whether a word is commonly hyphenated. There are no spaces before or after a hyphen. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ e.g. Three-year degree programs.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>ELLIPSIS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The ellipsis is its own glyph; it is not three adjacent periods. It is used to indicate any omission from the text or a quotation. For an intrasentential omission, make sure that the ellipsis is preceded and succeeded by a space. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Original:</b> “Brevity is the soul of wit.”</li> <li>○ <b>Abbreviated:</b> “Brevity is ... wit.”</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Where there is an elision between sentences, do not place a space before the ellipsis, and only place a space after it. Make sure the first letter of the second sentence is capitalized. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Original:</b> He said, “Hamlet is one of my favourite plays, and I always enjoy reading it. It has endless subtleties to be noticed.”</li> <li>○ <b>Abbreviated:</b> He said, “Hamlet is one of my favourite plays... It has endless subtleties to be noticed.”</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ For an elision at the end of the sentence and quotation, an ellipsis should not be preceded by a space and should be immediately followed by the closing quotation mark.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o e.g. He said, “Hamlet is one of my favourite plays, and I always enjoy reading it...”</li> </ul>
<b>PARENTHESES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use parentheses sparingly.</li> <li>▪ It is better to create separate sentences, use commas, or use em dashes in the place of a parenthetical remark. Parenthetical remarks generally don’t contain information that is vital to the entire sentence.</li> <li>▪ Punctuation is to be placed outside of parentheses. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o e.g. (Like this), okay?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>QUOTATION MARKS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Capitalize the first word in every quote. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o e.g. The woman said, “He sneered and said nothing.”</li> <li>o e.g. The woman said, “No, thank you.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Single quotes are to be placed around quoted phrases embedded in quoted statements. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o e.g. Jane explained, “Bruno didn’t say whether he would be attending the meeting, but he said, ‘I’ll be there if I don’t have any dinner plans.’”</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Place punctuation inside quotation marks. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o e.g. She belted out the lyrics “Thunder only happens when it rains.”</li> </ul> <p><b><u>EXCEPTIONS:</u></b> if the last word(s) of a sentence appear in quotations, the followings marks should be kept outside the quotation marks: ?, !, ;, and :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o e.g. I love the song “Maxwell’s Silver Hammer”!</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Do not use quotation marks to enclose slang or colloquialisms, but idiosyncratic words should appear in quotation marks accompanied by an explanation the first time the word appears in the article.</li> </ul>

## **NUMBERS**

Spell out numbers below 10 and use numerical figures for numbers 10 and above. Never begin a sentence with a number.

### **Examples:**

- During the first three periods five of the eight games goals were scored on powerplays.
- The game stayed tied for almost 12 minutes, but the Blues scored within the final two minutes.
- A deadly disease, six to 11 per cent of individuals who suffer from anorexia die.

### **Exceptions to the rule:**

- First word of a sentence.
  - e.g. Twenty-four people died in the avalanche.
- Official names and organizations.
  - e.g. *The 6<sup>th</sup> Day* (a film)
  - e.g. *8 Mile* (a film)
  - e.g. Firm 13 Limited (a company)
- Addresses.
  - e.g. 2 Albertus Ave.
- Dates and years.
  - e.g. September 4, 2020
  - Use numerals for dates and years, but do not use *st*, *nd*, *th*, or *rd* with dates
  - Do not say “yesterday” or “earlier this week.” Instead call it by the day of the week or write exact date (On October 15, ...)
- Monetary units when using a symbol.
  - e.g. A \$5 lunch.
  - e.g. A \$35 dinner.
- The ordinal ranking of numbers.
  - e.g. He ranked twelfth out of 20.
  - e.g. They were the twenty-second team to register.

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### **Numbers and commas:**

Use commas to set off numbers of four or more digits.

- e.g. 1,000
- e.g. \$14,000

### **Year of Study:**

Always spell out the year of study — do not use numerals.

- e.g. She was a fourth-year student.
- e.g. He was in his second year of study.

### **Ages**

- Use a hyphen only for ages written as adjectives (i.e. a 14-year-old girl) as opposed to statements (i.e. Brian is 21 years old)

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# **CENTURIES, DECADES, DATES, TIMES, and PERCENTAGES**

## **Centuries**

Spell out the ordinal ranking of centuries. Avoid using numerals.

- e.g. The nineteenth century screed by Marx.
- e.g. The music of the mid-twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

## **Decades**

Decades are plurals, and as such do not need an apostrophe before the letter s.

- e.g. The 1980s British band The Cure.

When abbreviating a decade, be sure to place an apostrophe before the first digit. *Be sure that the apostrophe appears as a closed single quotation mark.*

- e.g. The '80s British band The Cure.
- e.g. They met in the '90s.

## **Dates**

Never place a “th” after the numeral of a date.

- e.g. The election is scheduled for March 11, 2012.
- e.g. They were scheduled to meet on May 8.

## **Times**

Always write “a.m.” or “p.m.” in lowercase with periods between the letters.

- e.g. Breakfast was served at 7:30 a.m.
- e.g. Dinner was served at 8 p.m.

## **Percentages**

*The Medium* does not use the per cent symbol (%) in its writing; rather, the word “per cent” is spelled out.

- e.g. An eight per cent raise.
- e.g. A 54 per cent decrease.
- e.g. Two per cent of students believe that Dean Meric Gertler’s first name is Dean.

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## **PERSONAL TITLES** **— UPPERCASE/LOWERCASE —**

### **Titles**

The *CP Stylebook* makes a distinction between formal titles — those that are almost an integral part of a person’s identity — and occupational titles. How “integral” a title is to a person’s identity is, of course, a matter of opinion, so use your judgment when deciding whether to capitalize.

Here are some general guidelines, mostly adopted from the *CP Stylebook*.

### **Formal Titles**

Formal titles that appear directly before a name should be capitalized.

- e.g. President Obama
- e.g. Prime Minister Stephen Harper
- e.g. Governor General David Johnson
- e.g. Queen Elizabeth II

All other uses of these formal titles should be written in lowercase.

- e.g. The president will arrive at Camp David in the morning.
- e.g. Michelle Obama, the president’s wife, supports the veterans.

### **Occupational Titles**

Occupational titles are never capitalized, unless, of course, the title is the first word in the sentence.

- e.g. That was when professor Smith lost his marbles.
- e.g. U of T president David Naylor found said marbles.
- e.g. The UTMSU’s president Atif Abdullah gave an interview to *The Medium*.
- e.g. Order was restored when vice-dean Suzanne Stephenson spoke.

### **Just as important capitalize:**

- Academic divisions (Faculty of Engineering),
- Clubs (Women in Science), and
- University offices (Office of the Vice-President and Principal or Office of the Registrar)
- Committees (Principal’s Sustainability Advisory Committee)
- Don’t capitalize academic programs (professional writing and communication)
- Capitalize titles before a person’s name (i.e. Professor Kimberley)
- Titles like “President,” “Vice-President,” etc. should only be capitalized before a name. Lowercase in other uses (i.e. following the name)
- “university,” not “University”

### **Names**

- All names should be written in full (i.e. first name and second name) in the first mention (Maria Fuller)
- In subsequential mentions you can just use the last name
- No nicknames. Last name in full.

For a more comprehensive explanation, please refer to the *CP Stylebook*’s sections on capitalization.

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## **ITALICIZING AND ROMANIZING**

### **Creative Works**

Most of the time, whole works must appear in italics; constituent parts must appear in quotes. University courses are not creative, so do not italicize them.

Follow this style:

<i>Album</i>	“Song”
<i>Collection of Stories</i>	“Individual Story”
<i>Novel</i>	“Chapter Title”
<i>Television show</i>	“Episode Title or Description”
<i>Journal or Blog</i>	“Title of Article”
<i>Film</i>	
<i>Newspaper or Magazine</i>	“Title of Article”

Do not italicize the following:

- Exhibits and exhibitions
- Conferences
- Course names

### **Also note:**

- All newspaper titles are written in full and italicized
  - *The Medium, In Sauga, and Missisauga News*
  - Exceptions include *CBC, BCC*, etc. where it doesn't have to be written in full but should still be italicized.
- TV shows, movies titles, play names, book, exhibits, etc. are italicized
- Quote song titles, chapter titles, and a section of a larger composition
- The names of actors, authors, and directors are bolded once the first time

### **Romanizing**

Romanize any words or phrases when the surrounding text is italicized.

- e.g. *With sources from The Globe and Mail and The New York Times.*

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## **MORE DIRECTIVES RE: ITALICS**

Italicize foreign phrases and words.

- e.g. *habeas corpus* (“may you have the body”)
- e.g. *caveat emptor* (“let the buyer beware”)
- e.g. *burek* (an Eastern European cheese pie)
- e.g. *gurdwara* (a Sikh temple)

**NOTE:** when using a foreign phrase in a sentence, define the phrase in round brackets (or square brackets if the phrase appears in the middle of quoted text) for the benefit of the reader.

- e.g. The PhD candidate studies land rights and the *parsi panachayat* (community government)
  - e.g. “I do *navjotes* [a religious initiation ceremony] of kids.”
- Italicize genus and species.
    - e.g. *Rattus norvegicus*
  - Italicize legislation.
    - e.g. The *Stop Online Piracy Act*.
    - e.g. The *Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act*.
  - Italicize websites.
    - e.g. *theMedium.ca*
    - e.g. *blogTO.com*
    - e.g. *news.sciencemag.org*

**EXCEPTION TO THE RULE:** sites such as Facebook, YouTube, Wikipedia, Reddit, Etsy, Pinterest, and Twitter (among others) have become corporatized cultural mainstays, and are so widely known that their zeitgeist status makes it unnecessary to italicize and write out their web address when they appear in text.

## **WRITING STYLE RE: ORGANIZATIONS AT U OF T**

U of T has a number of colleges, unions, clubs, and associations, many of which are commonly referred to by their acronym.

**When writing about any of these groups and associations, it is important for the benefit of the reader to write out the full title of the organization in the first instance that it appears in the article, then put the organization's acronym in parentheses. Use the acronym in every instance thereafter when referring to the organization.**

Below is an example of an acronym with directions on how it must appear in *The Medium*.

### **The University of Toronto Students' Union Mississauga (UTMSU)**

- e.g.: The UTMSU's annual general meeting is scheduled for March 16, 2019.
  - Note: when making reference to the union it is not necessary to capitalize "union"
    - e.g. The union's treasurer spoke with *The Medium*.
- UTM, UTMSU, RAWC, etc. — these are common abbreviations that readers can easily recognize. As such, you can write out the full name in the first mention and use the abbreviation for the rest of the article
  - More difficult to recognize abbreviations (i.e. Sustainability Pathways Working Group) should have the abbreviations immediately after in brackets.
- Spell out the academic program in the first mention (professional writing and communication, then PWC)

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## **STYLE RULES FOR NEWS**

News briefs are very short summaries of news stories. The writer's name should appear on the line below the last sentence of the body of the brief preceded by an em dash and in boldface and italics. The writer's name should be flush with the left margin.

The sources used should appear italicized on the line directly below the writer's line.

- Example:  
—**Newsy P. Writer**  
*With files from The Globe and Mail.*
- Example:  
—**Brian R. Science**  
*Source: Science Daily and Nature.*

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## **STYLE RULES FOR INTERVIEWS**

### **Interviews**

- *The Medium*'s questions must always appear in boldface and italics, and the interview subject's responses must appear in boldface only.
- The first question and response in the interview should be preceded by the full titles for each the interviewer (which will be *The Medium*) and the interviewee. The initials of the interviewer and interviewee must precede every subsequent question and response.

Example:

***The Medium:*** *What is the title of your new album?*

**David Bowie:** I have no idea. I was hoping we could figure that out during this interview.

***TV:*** *Seriously?*

**DB:** I'm afraid so. I've got nothing.

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## **STYLE RULES FOR ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT, SPORTS, AND OPINION SECTIONS**

### **Arts**

- Use parentheses for actor and director names.
  - e.g. The character Benjamin Button (Brad Pitt) slightly resembled Golem.
  - e.g. *Fight Club* (Dir. David Fincher) is a movie that explores the inner workings of the male psyche.

### **Sports**

- Be sure to report scores using en dashes (see pg. 6 for instructions re: en dashes)
  - e.g. The Eagles won 32–2.
- When writing about competitions relating to distance (i.e. track and field, swimming, etc.) be sure to write like so:
  - e.g. He ran the 60-metre dash (**not**. He ran the 60m dash **or** 60 m dash).

### **Opinion**

- When a letter to the editor refers to a past story, include the date and title of the story in parentheses. The title of the article in question should appear in quotes.

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## SPELLING VARIANTS

### British vs. American spelling

There are several areas of English writing in which the British and American spelling of words differ.

**\*\*\*Please note that *The Medium* generally favours the British spelling of words.**

Below is a short list of examples of the differences between British and American spellings of commonly used words.

<u>BRITISH</u>	<u>AMERICAN</u>
<b><i>-our</i> words</b>	
Endeavour	Endeavour
Demeanour	Demeanor
Colour	Color
Neighbour	Neighbor
Harbour	Harbor
Labour	Labor
Humour	Humor
Valour	Valor
Favour	Favor
<b><i>-re</i> words</b>	
Centre	Center
Metre	Meter
Fibre	Fiber
Litre	Liter
Theatre	Theater
Calibre	Caliber
<b><i>-gue</i> words</b>	
Catalogue	Catalog
Monologue	Monolog
Dialogue	Dialog

### **Some Exceptions:**

Words ending in *-yse* are the traditional British spelling of such words, however, *The Medium* generally adopts the American spelling in these instances.

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The following are a few such words in which *The Medium* adopts the American spelling:

Realize/Realization

Capitalize

Authorize/Authorization

Organize/Organization

Apologize

Paralyze

Colonize

Harmonize

Anthologize

Cozy

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## **IN OTHER WORDS...**

Here are some other words and phrases with variant spellings.

The words that appear in bold typeface in the left column accord with *The Medium's* style:

<b><u>MEDIUM'S SPELLING PREFERENCE</u></b>	<b><u>ALTERNATE SPELLING</u></b>
<b>Bylaw</b>	by-law, by law
<b>Email</b>	e-mail
<b>Preventive</b>	preventative
<b>Exploitive</b>	exploitative
<b>In regard to...</b>	In regards to...
<b>UK</b>	U.K.
<b>US</b>	U.S.
<b>Montréal</b>	Montreal
<b>PhD</b>	Ph.D.
<b>Internet</b>	internet
<b>Okay</b>	OK, O.K.
<b>BA</b>	B.A.
<b>MA</b>	M.A.
<b>Versus (“vs.” is used for court cases)</b>	Vs.
<b>Covid-19</b>	COVID-19

*Note that this list will expand over time.*

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## **FACT-CHECKING**

Accurately reporting facts is integral to maintaining *The Medium's* journalistic integrity.

While you are editing an article, please be sure to highlight any facts that are being reported so that they can be verified for their accuracy.

### ***What qualifies as a fact?***

- Names of people, places, species, books, albums, published works, etc.
  - e.g. The president of Djibouti is Ismail Omar Guelleh.
- Titles
  - e.g. The former UTMSU vice-president of university affairs is Vanessa Demello.
- Statistics
  - e.g. According to a Canadian Mental Health Association, five per cent of Canadians are affected by anxiety disorders.
    - **Exception:** scores from *The Medium* sports section are not fact-checked.
- Quotes
  - e.g. “I would say that the likelihood is that they are not going to be able to get an assault weapons ban through this Congress,” NRA President David Keene told CNN’s State of the Union.
    - **Exceptions:**
      - *The Medium* sports section (remarks made by UTM players are not fact- checked.)
      - if the author is clearly quoting a phrase for effect  
e.g. He strikes me as a man “in love” with his career.

### **A CAVEAT ABOUT QUOTES:**

Under no circumstances are quotes to be edited for grammar. Only edit for punctuation and spelling, no matter how grammatically incorrect the quote might be. The idea here is not to over-edit something that someone has said. If, for ease of readability, an additional word or phrase may provide context to the quote, make a note in the margin suggesting to the section editor that the additional word or phrase should appear in the sentence in square brackets.

e.g. “Even if the outer representation of self doesn’t reflect a diagnosis, [it] doesn’t mean you’re not interacting with it on an interior level every day,” she said.

### **How to fact-check**

- Verify facts by conducting a key word search in Google.
- Verify quotes by inputting the quote in part or in its entirety into the search field, along with the name of the person who uttered the remark.

- 
- **Example of search terms:** Councilor Doug Holyday, controversy, “the mayor should resign.”
  - Place an encircled check-mark beside all facts that you have been able to confirm.

**A CAVEAT ABOUT THE INTERNET AS A FACT-FINDING TOOL:**

The Internet is brimming with all manner of claims and opinions. Be sure when you are verifying facts from the Internet that the source is reputable. Sources such as *The Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star*, *CTV News*, *CBC*, *National Post*, *Science Daily*, etc. are reputable sources because they are held to a high standard of journalistic integrity, whereas personal blogs are not. Proceed with caution when using Wikipedia.

Fret not if your eternal quest for truth has been fruitless. Simply demarcate the fact in question with a square bracket and note in the margin that you could not locate the fact.

### **COMMON ERRORS**

- Use “more than” instead of “over” when referring to numerals.
  - “Over” refers to spatial relationships (i.e. the plane flew over the city)
  - “More than” is preferred with numerals (i.e. more than 20 students attended the meeting)
- Every one and everyone
  - “Every one” when referring to each individual item (every one of the clues were worthless)
  - “Everyone” when used as a pronoun meaning all persons (everyone likes cheese)
- Every day and everyday
  - “Every day” = adverb
  - “Everyday” = adjective
- That and which
  - Use both when referring to an inanimate object (organizations, companies, schools, etc.)
  - “That” = for essential clauses important to the meaning of the sentence, and *without* commas (I remember the day that we met)
  - “Which” = nonessential clauses, when the pronoun is less necessary, and *use* commas (the team, which finished last a year ago, is in first place)
- Always “toward,” not “towards”
  - While both mean the same thing, “toward” is the preferred term in North America (U.S. and Canada), while “towards” is used when your audience is predominately British.
  - The same notion for the following two points
- “Backward,” not “backwards”
- “Forward,” not “forwards”
- “All right,” never “alright”