

For the Chesapeake Crimes anthology series, we follow the Chicago Manual of Style. The following guidelines should assist you in ensuring your story meets our specifications. If you have any questions about style that are not covered here, please consult the Chicago Manual of Style.

Manuscript formatting issues

1. Use italics or boldface where needed. Do not use underlining to indicate italics or boldface.
2. Use double-spacing. Indent each paragraph, and do not skip a line between paragraphs. If your word processing program is set to leave extra space between paragraphs, change it. (In Microsoft Word, this feature can be found under Format/Paragraph/Spacing)
3. If you want to indicate a break between sections, use a single centered pound sign (#)
4. Indicate the end of your story by typing
THE END
-30-

(Use only one of these, and center it)
5. Number your pages, using the header feature of your word processing program. Do not use a footer, and do not end pages and create numbering by using line breaks/hard returns.

Punctuation issues

6. For ellipses: do not use the Word ellipsis function. Use a nonbreaking space before and between the three periods, and a regular space after it. (To make a nonbreaking space in Word, hold down the control and shift keys while pressing the spacebar. Seems like a lot of trouble? Well, ellipses SHOULD be rare.)

7. Use the serial comma
Apples, oranges, and lemons
NOT
Apples, oranges and lemons

8. If you want to use a dash, either insert an M-dash if possible or use two hyphens
Wombats--instead of aardvarks
Or
Wombats—instead of aardvarks
Not
Wombats -- instead of aardvarks
Wombats - instead of aardvarks
Wombats-instead of aardvarks

9. Use proper punctuation of dialogue. Begin with double quotation marks, and use a punctuation mark before the closing quotation marks.
"Thank you," he said.
"Why?" he asked.
"Rats!" he exclaimed.
"Nonsense."
"Wait! Don't fire! I sur--" (to indicate interruption)
"His name is . . ." (to indicate trailing off)

10. If possible, use Smart Quotes (quotes that are curly ("Yes") not straight ("No")).

11. Italicize names of movies, books, newspapers, and magazines. Put song names in quotes.
"I loved the movie *Titanic*, but I hated the "My Heart Will Go On" theme song.

12. Avoid using quotation marks to indicate irony or highlight individual words.
Okay:
He said "Eeek!"
Not okay
He made a "polite" criticism.
His BMW, or "beamer," was red.

13. Do not use a hyphen between a word ending in "ly" and word it modifies.

A friendly faced woman

Not

A friendly-faced woman

14. Capitalize titles only when they are used with a proper name

Detective Logan

The detective

SinC President Marcia Talley

The president of SinC

"Hello, Mother."

My mother

The Wombat Corporation Legal Department

Our legal department

Aunt Grace

My aunt Grace

15. Avoid run-on sentences. If the two parts of a sentence could stand alone, they probably should.

No:

I'm tired, I think I'll go to bed.

Yes:

I'm tired. I think I'll go to bed.

I'm tired; I think I'll go to bed.

I'm tired, so I think I'll go to bed.

16. When to s' (s apostrophe), when to use s's (s apostrophe s), and when to use es.

For words that end in S but aren't proper nouns, use s' to indicate possessive:

My boss' vacation was nearly over.

The octopus' arms were purple.

For proper names ending in S, use es to indicate plural and 's to indicate possessive:

Donna invited all the Andrewses to her signing

Donna Andrews's books are in our library

(An exception is traditionally made for Jesus, where the possessive is traditionally Jesus'. Should a plural be needed, use es: "There are many Jesuses in Mexico, but far fewer Irvings.")

17. Italicize foreign words.

"Thank you, *amigo*, for your assistance."

"Did you like your trip to Russia?" I asked. "*Nyet*," he said.

18. To indicate time before or after noon, use a.m. or p.m. Do not use am/pm, AM/PM, or A.M./P.M.

19. Use only one space after a period.

Spelling and word use

20. Use American spellings

Gray, not grey

Theater, not theatre.

Toward, not towards.

21. Spell out numbers up to one hundred as well as approximate or rounded numbers after that.

I have five manuscripts

My short story is twenty-seven pages long

Ninety-nine bottles of beer on the wall

I am going to count to a hundred

My novel is 320 pages long

The used book costs \$250

My short story contains 5,000 words

He's one in a thousand,

He earned a million dollars with his first book.

But when dealing with percentages and with dollar amounts that go into decimal points, use numbers.

I asked for a 10 percent raise. (Note that percent is one word, spelled out.)

The coffee cost \$4.52

When dealing with time:

If something is occurring on the hour, spell out the number. If something is not occurring on the hour, use numerals.

We're meeting for coffee at one.

We're meeting for tea at two o'clock.

We're meeting for dinner at 6:30.

When dealing with years, use numbers unless the year starts a sentence. If the year does start a sentence, try to rewrite.

He was born in 1960.

Nineteen hundred sixty was a great year for wine. (Would be better as: Wines bottled in 1960 typically are great.)

When dealing with ages, hyphenate as follows:

She is a forty-year-old woman

She is a forty-year-old.

She is forty years old

She is forty.

22. Be very conservative about using adverbs, particularly with "said" and its equivalents. It is acceptable to use--sparingly--adverbs that indicate the physical way in which something is said.

"Yes," he said quickly.

"No," he said softly.

But this can easily be overdone. And you should avoid all adverbs that tell rather than showing.

"Yes," he said happily.

"No," he said morosely.

23. Said is an excellent word, and should be your most commonly used dialogue tag. Asked is also perfectly acceptable. You should have a specific reason for using a word other than these two. Moderate use of words such as "exclaimed," "replied," or "answered" is okay. Words such as "shouted," or "whispered," may be used--again, in moderation--to indicate the way in which something is said.

Avoid using less common alternatives to said. Don't have your characters aver, assert, expostulate, interject, or any other high-falutin' synonyms for said.

24. Place your dialogue tags after the noun or pronoun, not before.

"Thanks," John said.

"Why?" Jane asked.

"Off with her head!" the Red Queen shouted.

No:

"Thanks," said John.

Exceptions:

If you are using a modifier of more than one word with the noun or pronoun, said comes first.

"Hey, Snow White!" said Sleepy, the youngest and most annoying of the seven dwarves.

25. Blonde/blond

Blonde is a noun referring to a woman or girl with fair hair.

Blond (no e at the end) is a noun referring to a man or boy with fair hair.

Blond (no e at the end) also is used as an adjective whether describing a male or female.

The blonde shook her head.

The blond shook his head.

The blond woman shook her head.

26. Awhile/a while

Awhile is an adjective. For a while is a prepositional phrase meaning much the same thing. Either is acceptable. For awhile is incorrect.

27. Alright/all right

All right is all right. Alright is not.

28. TV, not t.v. or T.V.

When abbreviating the word television, use TV (all caps, no periods) rather than t.v. or T.V.

29. Use earth (lowercase) when you mean the ground, and Earth (uppercase) when you mean the planet.

30. Use can't or cannot. Can not is not an accepted usage in American English.

31. Once you've introduced a character, avoid referring to them as "the man," or "the woman" or other generic terms. Use the name or the appropriate pronoun.

32. Directions

When indicating a direction, use lowercase letters.

The wind was coming from the northeast.

Birds fly south for the winter.

When indicating a place, capitalize the name.

I love the Northwest.

I'm going to retire in the South.

I have a new job on the East Coast.

When describing a person in terms of place, lowercase.

He is an easterner.

She's a southerner.