

What is a style sheet? Do you need to use one?

If you want your writing to look polished and professional, consistency is key. One way to do this is to create a style sheet. A style sheet is a reference guide that clarifies how you plan to treat certain aspects of writing such as spelling, punctuation, numbers etc. Sometimes there is no right or wrong way but it's a good idea to decide on one way and stick to it!

What should I include in a style sheet?

It's totally up to you, but here are a few suggestions of what type of thing to include:

Spelling Preferences

Do you want to use -ise spellings or -ize spellings, e.g. recognise or recognize?

Do you want to use British English or US English, e.g. colour or color?

Abbreviations, Acronyms and Initialisms

Do you want to use full stops or not? Usually, abbreviations take a full stop, but acronyms and initialisms leave them out.

Punctuation

Do you want to use the serial (oxford) comma?

Numbers, Dates and Time

Generally, use words for numbers up to and including ten and use numerals for 11 and above.

How do you want to write the date? There are many different formats, and all are correct. You just need to decide on your preferred style. For example, you can write 12 August 1960, 12th August 1960, 12/8/60 (or 8/12/60 if you are in the US).

How do you want to write the time? Again, there are several ways to do this. You can use the 12-hour clock or the 24-hour clock. You can write am and pm or a.m. and p.m. It's up to you.

There are many other items you can include in your style sheet such as capitalisation and hyphenation. It's also a good idea to make decisions about the style of your document, such as the type of heading you want to use and what kind of bullet points you prefer.

If it all seems overwhelming, there are many resources online to help you get started. You could also hire someone, such as a proofreader, to devise a style sheet on your behalf.

Remember that consistent spelling, punctuation and formatting demonstrate professionalism and give you and your business credibility.