no starch press

Author Guide

Welcome to No Starch Press! Here's a brief guide to many of the practical details involved in creating a book with us. If your questions aren't covered here, please check with your editor or our production people and we'll do our best to answer them.

A Quick Who's Who

We're loosely divided into three teams: Editorial, Production, and Sales and Marketing. We say "loosely divided" because we sometimes overlap; our company is essentially one big team with various roles to play. You'll likely hear from most of us over the course of your project, but you'll also have a specific Developmental Editor, Production Editor, and marketing person assigned to your book.

You'll find our staff bios at *https://nostarch.com/about/*. Our email addresses are usually just our first names at *nostarch.com*, so we're easy to find. If you ever have questions about contract details, print runs, marketing strategies, or sales numbers, please direct those questions to our Executive Editor or the Production or Marketing Manager.

Submitting Chapters

Please submit your manuscript as individual chapters, not as one big book. Please submit chapters in Word or LibreOffice format (unless agreed otherwise with your Developmental Editor), and embed all images in the chapter (low res is fine for editing purposes) so that we'll see a chapter complete with all elements. Additionally please make sure to send a non-embedded archive of your high res art along with the embedded images.

Name your graphics in order of appearance (for example, *f01001.png*, *f01002.png*, and so on) and be prepared to send us all the image files for a chapter when it reaches the copyediting stage. We'll be importing your copyedited chapters into a layout program, and we'll import your final images at that time. Add an insertion note in your manuscript for each image, styled "GraphicSlug" with the name of the art within square brackets, such as [*f01001.png*] for Chapter 1, Figure 1.

Styling Your Manuscript (Using Templates)

Please use the Word or LibreOffice template included in this packet to style your manuscript. Attach the template to your document and then apply the paragraph styles and character styles to tell us how you want us to style your text.

▸   Paragraph styles style all text up to a hard return.

▸   Character styles style a word, phrase, or character differently from the paragraph.

The paragraph and character styles are mapped to the styles in the layout template we'll use for your book. This means that there's no need for you to "lay out" your manuscript. But it also means that any formatting you apply without a style may

be lost when it's imported into the layout program. So if you want to make a word italic, don't just click the "I" formatting button—use the *Italic* character style. See page 11 for some examples of manuscripts and laid-out pages.

If you have existing work that is formatted but not styled, or if you have any questions about using styles, please contact your Production Editor. We're happy to help. If you need help attaching or using the templates, see "How to Use Templates" on page 8.

Styling Code

When styling your code, please apply styles as follows:

- ▶ Each line should be its own paragraph (ending with a hard return).

- ▶ Code lines can be up to 78 characters long in standard layout; CodeWide lines are 95 characters. If your lines will break, break them and indent the second line as appropriate, using spaces only.

- ▶ Use only spaces for whitespace in code; tabs will not align properly since they relate to the tabs set in individual documents.

- ▶ Use `LiteralBold` for user input and highlighting; use *`LiteralItalic`* for variables or placeholders (such as *`username`*); and use CodeAnnotation to talk the reader through your code. The annotations will display as monospaced wingdings (❶) in the printed book, but will simply display as a white number in Courier with a black bar behind it (**1**)in Word/ODT. (Your DE can discuss this with you.) The maximum number of annotations is 10. Use a 0 (zero) to indicate the 10th annotation.

Images

Please discuss your planned images with us as early in the writing process as possible to make sure that they're in the right format and at the correct DPI. And of course, if you're using any images that you do not own, please be sure to request permission for them. (Your editor can supply you with a permissions form.) Also be sure to communicate your expectations and goals for the images: some authors prefer that we use a very light hand when processing their artwork, while others like us to take a little more creative license. If you have a certain look and feel you're trying to achieve, examples are always helpful.

Standard figure size on finished book pages is 4.675 inches wide, so consider whether the important information in your image will be readable at that size.

Wherever you include images, be sure to "clear your visuals." That is, make sure that you reference your image in text before the image appears, and talk your reader through the visual. Make sure that they know what you want them to see in your image and don't overwhelm them with stuff that's irrelevant. If you want to show your reader just a particular pop-up menu, consider showing only that menu or zoom in on the menu and crop out most of the background.

Screenshots

When capturing screenshots, please keep the following rules in mind:

▶ Use only the lossless PNG or TIFF file formats. Do not save as a JPEG or use JPEG compression in a TIFF file. This creates "noise" around high-contrast elements like text.

▶ Capture screenshots at your operating system's native DPI (usually 72 or 96). Do not increase or decrease the resolution of your captured images.

▶ Keep cursors out of your screenshots unless you're using them to point something out. Stray cursors just look messy.

▶ Try not to include personal information, ads on websites, or other extraneous content that might confuse or distract your reader from your message.

▶ Keep the crop of the image in mind when taking your screenshot.

Diagrams

When creating diagrams (whether finals or roughs for us to re-render), please do the following:

▶ Send us editable EPS, SVG, or Adobe Illustrator files so we can make corrections during copyedit and proofreading. Please do not include multiple images in one file.

▶ Your diagrams should read left to right, clockwise, or top to bottom.

▶ Use simple boxes, lines, or arrows for annotations and description. Keep things simple and clear and don't get fancy unless fancy is the point.

Photographs

When producing and using photographs, please keep the following in mind:

▶ Take photos at the largest size available on your camera, and please do not resize. A digital camera might give you a 72 DPI file at approximately 20×30 inches, which will size down to more than 300 DPI in layout.

▶ Save photos as JPEG or TIFF.

▶ Please don't modify your images unless you've discussed doing so first with your editor. It's better for us to see your primary sources first so that we can advise you as to the best way to handle them.

▶ When taking photos, try to avoid using complex backgrounds, and use soft lighting if possible.

Photography is an art, and we don't claim to be experts. You'll find various tutorials online as well as suggestions for creating your own setups for photo shoots, but we try not to tread too deeply into the land of photography. We'll help and advise where we can, of course.

Illustrations

Illustrations should be vector files or hi-res for clear printing. Please check with your editor about sizing, file types, and other details.

Color

Whether your book is one color (black and white) or four color, please consider the following when creating images:

► For *diagrams and other illustrations*, make sure meaningful colors or shades of gray are consistent and easily recognizable.

► For *screenshots*, avoid large areas of black where possible.

► For *photographs*, use good contrast, especially for important details. Aim for a good balance of dark areas, light areas, and midtones in black and white photos. Keep in mind that printed images are approximately 20 percent darker than what shows onscreen. In color photos, you'll probably want bright, vibrant colors.

Dos and Don'ts from Our Editors

Here's a list of some things for you to think about as you write. These are general guidelines and your editor may suggest others as you write. We will read and edit everything that you send in and our comments can be quite extensive.

► Don't stack headings. In other words, don't stack a HeadA over a HeadB with no text between them. Every heading (including the chapter title) should have text following it, even if it's only a sentence or two, or things start to look very choppy.

► Don't stack notes, figures, tables, code listings, and so on. Your reader doesn't want your laundry list; they want you to explain things to them.

► HeadAs are your main section headings. Use them to break up the few larger sections in a chapter. HeadBs break up the HeadA sections, and if you have one HeadB in a section, you should probably have more than one HeadB in that section. The same goes for HeadCs. If you find you have a singleton HeadC, consider promoting it to a HeadB or converting it to a box (sidebar).

► Always discuss and explain your figures, tables, code listings, photos, diagrams, and so on. Don't make your reader work to figure out what you're trying to say. They're counting on you to explain it to them. When you insert an object into your chapter, explain why it's there. Talk your reader through it.

► Always call out (that is, reference) your figures, tables, and captioned code listings with in-text references such as "shown in Figure 3-2" so that your reader knows where to look and what relates to what. And make sure that your figures follow their in-text references.

► Use brief captions where possible and keep the detailed explanations in the main text, unless your style is to use detailed captions for all figures, consistently. Be consistent.

- Don't overdo it with notes. You might shoot to use a note every couple of pages or every three pages or so. Notes should really call out something unusually important that a reader might want to reference later on.

- Use boxes for asides that are relevant to the discussion but not central to the discussion. Longer notes are sometimes more appropriate as boxes.

- Be "I" and let the reader be "you." In other words, inject yourself into the book. It's much more fun to read the writing of an individual rather than the some-what amorphous "we."

- Read the first sentence or two of every paragraph to make sure that your chapter is coherent and that it flows. If things are holding together, you should be able to read the first sentences of each paragraph and get the gist of the chapter.

- Be consistent. Don't throw your reader off unnecessarily. If you always have a certain section in each chapter (like a What You've Learned or Summary section), don't leave that section out for no apparent reason in another chapter.

- Say what you mean and don't complicate discussions for no good reason. Don't make the reader guess. Tell them what's important and what they should learn.

- If a program offers more than one way to do things (choose the menu or press the F7 key), pick one way for your reader. They can always look up the second way.

- When handling code, use CodeAnnotations to highlight the key points in your code and walk your reader through your listings. Annotations shouldn't be used as line numbers; think of them as akin to using a laser pointer to call attention to some element of the code. Don't bother with the extraneous code; even consider snipping it out (and marking it as having been snipped with `--snip--`).

- Consider adding comments within your code together with CodeAnnotations if commenting your code seems to work better. If your code listings are short, consider just quoting from the code in text.

- Try to use active rather than passive voice throughout your book. And be consistent.

- Avoid abbreviations when possible. Use "and so on" instead of "etc.", "for example" instead of "e.g.", "that is" instead of "i.e." We want the end product to look like a book and not a technical manual.

- Use top-level domains and suggest search terms instead of using page-level URLs that are subject to change. Run URLs into body text rather than pull-ing them out as footnotes (unless the footnote is a complete bibliographic reference).

- Don't overquote. Not everything is a special phrase.

- Always define and discuss new terms at first mention. Do that early and you don't have to do it later, and you can assume that your reader is following you. Style new terms using *Italic*.

- Your first chapter or two should build the foundation of your book. Make sure that your readers are in the same place as you and give them enough of a base so that you can take them places.

- Use contractions. Don't be afraid of them. People speak using contractions and we want to create the feeling in the reader that you're there with them and speaking to them.

- If your book has complex equations, consider setting them as images instead of inline. In particular, avoid using inline vertical fractions, which can create odd line spacing and text too small to easily read.

- Please don't begin phrases with "so" and don't use words like "special" as in a "special keyword." What's so special about that keyword? Probably nothing. It's just another keyword.

- If you find yourself using the word "things," ask yourself if you can be more specific.

- Watch for jargon or you're liable to lose your reader in a mess of jargon.

Our Editing and Production Process

Please don't send us chapters until you think they're ready for editing, and send us only complete chapters (with images embedded), unless you've arranged differently with your editor. We're generally not in a rush. We want you to take the time to make your work great.

Once we've received your chapter, we'll edit using change tracking and send your chapter back to you to review. When reviewing, we suggest hiding the changes but still recording them. It's much easier to read a chapter without all of those messy revision marks. And be sure to use change tracking when you make edits and revisions, so we can focus on the new material when you return the chapter to us.

Our editing and production process goes something like this:

1. You submit a chapter. Your Developmental Editor reads and edits the chapter, focusing on structure and other high-level concerns.
2. You receive your edited chapter for review and revision, and return it to us.
3. We review your reworked chapter and may send it back to you again. If not, it's off to technical review.
4. The technical reviewer (an outside reviewer who's knowledgeable on the topic) reads the text and tests code, project how-tos, and so on. The tech review comments go back to you for any necessary fixes.
5. We tidy up the chapter and send it to Production. Next it goes to a copyeditor to clean up more granular details, line by line, with an eye toward consistency.
6. You receive the copyedit for review so you can revise as necessary and make sure that the copyeditor did not introduce any technical errors or misinterpret what you were trying to say.

7. You return the chapter to us and we move it into layout. We also process the art at this time (see samples below).
8. Laid-out PDFs go to you for review and to a proofreader. You and the proofreader make sure that everything is laid out correctly, and the proofreader also checks for any remaining typos or inconsistencies. You'll both be annotating the PDFs in Acrobat or Reader (please don't use Preview for the Mac, which tends to garble the markup).
9. We'll make corrections from proofreading and your review. At this point we will probably have some remaining queries for you, but the pages are almost final.
10. Now we do another review to check corrections and once the whole book catches up to this point, it's indexed (unless you've been indexing all along). You'll sign off on final PDFs of the interior and cover. Then it's off to the printer!

The most important thing to realize here is that you will have lots of opportunities to review and revise and tweak your chapters, so go ahead and send them to your editor! You'll get them back.

Indexing

Unless you've arranged otherwise with your Developmental Editor, you are responsible for your index. This means that either you will create your index, or we will hire a professional indexer on your behalf who will be paid out of your royalties. Please be sure to discuss indexing with your editor early and decide what's best for you.

Creating Your Own Index

You can create your own index by tagging your manuscript files if you are using Word or a markup language like LaTeX. (In our experience LibreOffice does not have reliable index tags; they tend to disappear.) Alternatively, you can create an index in an RTF or Word file from the final PDFs.

Creating an index is a significant amount of work, but a good author-made index is usually the best kind of index, because no one knows the content of the book better than you do. Your Production Editor can share our Indexing Guidelines and samples if you're interested in this option.

What Kind of List Is It?

We use various list styles in our books.

Bullets   A collection of points in no particular order

Numbers   A step-by-step progression, such as a how-to

Run-in   Bolded items or terms followed by descriptions (like this one!)

If you're associating two or more categories of items, you may be better off using a table rather than a list.

What Part of the Book Is This?

Some authors have been confused about what constitutes each part of a book. Here's a brief list. (Your book may or may not include all of these pieces.)

Dedication   A few words or a line dedicating the book to a person or group.

Contributors   A paragraph or two about the book's contributors, such as authors, technical reviewers, or illustrators.

Foreword   A note by someone other than you telling the reader about your book, and ideally how great it is. Forewords should be written by an expert in the field and will typically run from two to four pages.

Preface   Your discussion of the process of writing the book, including why you wrote it, how you researched it, and so on. A preface should run about two to four pages.

Acknowledgments   A thank-you from you to your friends and family, colleagues, editors, and so on. This might be one page or so unless you worked with several people. And if you did, thank them all. Each one of them becomes a champion for your book.

Introduction   An introduction to the material in the book, with substantive information including a brief walkthrough of each chapter, an introduction to terms and conventions, installation instructions for software, or other things the reader needs to know before they start reading the rest of the book.

Chapter 1   The first chapter in your book should cover beginning material, but with the same structure and length as the rest of the chapters in the book.

How to Use Templates

Here's how to apply templates in Word and LibreOffice.

Applying NSP_template_010721_AU.dotm in Word 2003 and Earlier Versions

You can open a new untitled document with the template attached by double-clicking the template file itself (*NSP_template_01072021_AU.dotm*). This file also contains examples and explanations of the styles we use.

To apply the template to an existing document:

1. Open your chapter.
2. Go to **Tools ▸ Templates and Add-ins**.
3. Click the **Attach** button and browse to *NSP_template_01072021_AU.dotm*.
4. Check the box next to the words *Automatically update document styles*, then click **OK**.
5. Go to **Format ▸ Styles and Formatting**. The Styles and Formatting pane should open at the right side of your document window. (The Styles and Formatting pane is available in Word 2002 and later versions.)

6. In the drop-down menu at the bottom of the Styles and Formatting pane, choose **Show: Formatting in use** or **Show: All Styles**. Apply No Starch Press styles as necessary by selecting text and clicking the styles in the Styles and Formatting pane. If the version of Word you're using doesn't offer this Styles and Formatting pane, you can also select and apply styles using the drop-down menu on the toolbar.

Viewing Paragraph Styles

You can view paragraph style labels in the margin of your workspace by doing the following:

1. Select **View ▸ Normal**.
2. Go to **Tools ▸ Options**. Under the View tab, near the bottom, there is a setting called Style Area Width. In the measurement box, enter 1.0" (or more). A Style Area should appear to the left of your text, like a margin. The name of the paragraph style for each paragraph will be visible.
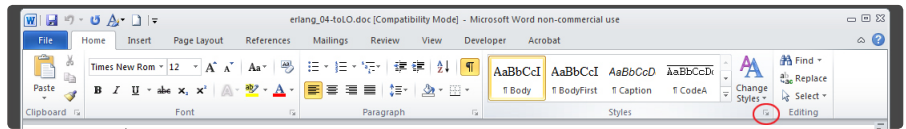
Applying NSP_template_01072021_AU.dotm in Word 2007 or later

You can open a new untitled document with the template attached by double-clicking the template file itself (*NSP_template_01072021_AU.dotm*). This file also contains examples and explanations of the styles we use.

To apply the template to an existing document, do the following:

1. Open your chapter.
2. From the **Office Button** menu (2007) or the **File** tab menu (2010), choose **Word Options** or **Options**.
3. Choose **Add-Ins** from the left side of the Word Options dialog.
4. On the right side of the window, near the bottom, choose **Templates** from the **Manage** drop-down list. Click **Go**.
5. Click the **Attach** button and browse to *NSP_template_01072021_AU.dotm*. Click **Open**.
6. Check the box next to the words *Automatically update document styles*, then click **OK**.

To show the Styles pane, navigate to the Home tab and click the small diagonal arrow at the bottom-right corner of the Styles gallery. The Styles pane will appear on the right side of your document.

Applying NSP_template_02072021_AU.ott in LibreOffice

1. Open LibreOffice.
2. Press **CTRL-O** and navigate to and select *NSP_template_02072021_AU.ott*. (The template is in OOo 2.x format.)
3. Choose **File ▸ Templates ▸ Save**. Type `NSP_template_02072021_AU.ott` into the Name field at the top of the window. Make sure *My Templates* is highlighted, then click **OK**.
4. Open your chapter.
5. Press F11 to open the Styles and Formatting window.
6. Click the button at the top right of the Styles and Formatting window (it has a + sign and a drop-down arrow), and select **Load Styles**. The Load Styles window should pop up (it is the same as the window you saw in step 2). If you are not saving the template, click the **From File...** button, navigate to your saved template, and click **OK**. If you've saved the template, be sure that *My Templates* and *1* are highlighted, then click **OK**.
7. Return to the Styles and Formatting window. Click the drop-down arrow at the very bottom (likely next to the word *Automatic*) and select **All Styles**. You should now see all the No Starch Press styles. If you want to see only the No Starch Press styles, choose **Custom Styles**.

   Here are some tips:

▸ Consider docking the Styles and Formatting window to one side of your OOo workspace. Just drag it off to the very edge and it should dock there.

▸ Once you've applied some styles (headings and such), you can choose Applied Styles from the drop-down menu at the bottom of the Styles and Formatting window to show only applied styles and reduce the clutter.

▸ Click the uppercase "A" icon to show character styles (Bold and such).

Style Area
showing
paragraph
styles in
Word

Character
styles are
shown in
blue, and
xrefs will
appear in
red until
the final
print PDF.

Styles

Current style:

> Body ¶

[New Style...]   [Select All]

Apply a style:

FootnoteRef	a
FootnoteReference	a
GraphicInline	a
Highlight	a
Italic	a
KEYCAPS	a
KeyTerm	a
LinkEmail	a
LinkTwitter	a
LinkURL	a
Literal	a
LiteralBold	a
LiteralBoldItalic	a
LiteralGray	a
LiteralItalic	a
🔒🔊🔵⊡✕✕◢[	a
No Spacing	¶
	a

List: [All styles ⇕]

☐ Show styles guides
☐ Show direct formatting guides

Document (top — Word view):

Body — The /etc/group file defines the group IDs (such as the ones found in the /etc/passwd file). Listing 7-2 is an example.

```
root:*:0:juser
daemon:*:1:
bin:*:2:
sys:*:3:
adm:*:4:
disk:*:6:juser,beazley
nogroup:*:65534:
user:*:1000:
```

Listing 7-2   A sample /etc/group file

As with the /etc/passwd file, each line in /etc/group is a set of fields separated by colons. The fields in each entry are as follows, from left to right:

The group name
This appears when you run a command like `ls -l`.

The group password
Unix group passwords are hardly ever used, nor should you use them (a good alternative in most cases is `sudo`). Use `*` or any other default value. An `x` here means that there's an corresponding entry in /etc/gshadow, and this is also nearly always a disabled password, denoted with a `*` or `!`.

The group ID (a number)
The GID must be unique within the group file. This number goes into a user's group field in that user's /etc/passwd entry.

An optional list of users that belong to the group
In addition to the users listed here, users with the corresponding group ID in their passwd file entries also belong to the group.

Figure 7-2 identifies the fields in a group file entry.

[F07002.EPS]
Figure 7-2   An entry in the group file

To see the groups you belong to, run `groups`.

NOTE   Linux distributions often create a new group for each new user added,

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Document (bottom — print PDF view):

The /etc/group file defines the group IDs (such as the ones found in the /etc/passwd file). Listing 7-2 is an example.

```
root:*:0:juser
daemon:*:1:
bin:*:2:
sys:*:3:
adm:*:4:
disk:*:6:juser,beazley
nogroup:*:65534:
user:*:1000:
```

Listing 7-2: A sample /etc/group file

As with the /etc/passwd file, each line in /etc/group is a set of fields separated by colons. The fields in each entry are as follows, from left to right:

The group name   This appears when you run a command like ls -l.

The group password   Unix group passwords are hardly ever used, nor should you use them (a good alternative in most cases is sudo). Use * or any other default value. An x here means that there's an corresponding entry in /etc/gshadow, and this is also nearly always a disabled password, denoted with a * or !.

The group ID (a number)   The GID must be unique within the group file. This number goes into a user's group field in that user's /etc/passwd entry.

An optional list of users that belong to the group   In addition to the users listed here, users with the corresponding group ID in their passwd file entries also belong to the group.

Figure 7-2 identifies the fields in a group file entry.


```
      ┌Group name
      │  ┌Password
      │  │  ┌Group ID
      │  │  │    ┌Additional members
disk:*:6:juser,beazley
```
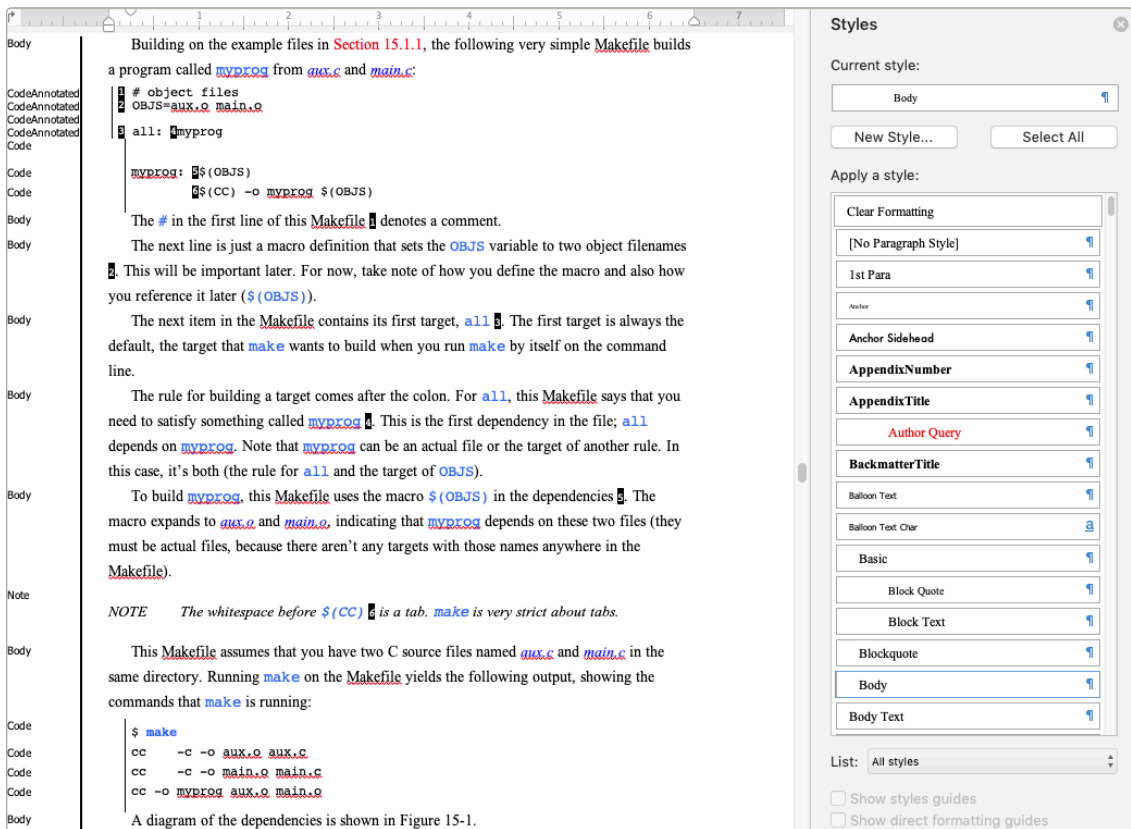
Figure 7-2: An entry in the group file

To see the groups you belong to, run groups.

NOTE   *Linux distributions often create a new group for each new user added, with the same name as the user.*

Building on the example files in Section 15.1.1, the following very simple Makefile builds a program called myprog from *aux.c* and *main.c*:

```
❶ # object files
❷ OBJS=aux.o main.o

❸ all: ❹myprog

myprog: ❺$(OBJS)
         ❻$(CC) -o myprog $(OBJS)
```

The # in the first line of this Makefile ❶ denotes a comment.

The next line is just a macro definition that sets the OBJS variable to two object filenames ❷. This will be important later. For now, take note of how you define the macro and also how you reference it later ($(OBJS)).

The next item in the Makefile contains its first target, all ❸. The first target is always the default, the target that make wants to build when you run make by itself on the command line.

The rule for building a target comes after the colon. For all, this Makefile says that you need to satisfy something called myprog ❹. This is the first dependency in the file; all depends on myprog. Note that myprog can be an actual file or the target of another rule. In this case, it's both (the rule for all and the target of OBJS).

To build myprog, this Makefile uses the macro $(OBJS) in the dependencies ❺. The macro expands to *aux.o* and *main.o*, indicating that myprog depends on these two files (they must be actual files, because there aren't any targets with those names anywhere in the Makefile).

NOTE   *The whitespace before $(CC)* ❻ *is a tab.* make *is very strict about tabs.*

This Makefile assumes that you have two C source files named *aux.c* and *main.c* in the same directory. Running make on the Makefile yields the following output, showing the commands that make is running:

```
$ make
cc    -c -o aux.o aux.c
cc    -c -o main.o main.c
cc -o myprog aux.o main.o
```

A diagram of the dependencies is shown in Figure 15-1.

Examples of manuscript pages in Word and the same content in layout (this page and previous page)