Style III: Style Guides

Technical writing course MUNI 2024

The Red Hat Customer Content Services team

Red Hat

Jan Fiala

Senior Technical Writer, at Red Hat for 4+ years. Previously, a translator to and from English for 10 years.

Jana Vrbková

Technical writer at Red Hat for 2+ years. Music journalist, knitting fiend, Warhammer 40k fan.

Jacob Valdez

4+ years as a Technical Writer at Red Hat. Fan of cooking, gardening, dogs, climbing, and mushroom foraging/identification

Labels (left side, annotations)

- Action-based, specific heading
- User-focused abstract
- Clear, parallel prereqs (passive OK)
- Procedure
- Verification
- Next steps

Prepare virtual machines for cloning by using `virt-sysprep`

Before cloning a virtual machine (VM), you have to prepare the guest system. The `virt-sysprep` tool automatically removes selected guest configuration that should not be cloned with the VM. This configuration includes SSH keys, user accounts, and persistent MAC settings.

You can also use `virt-sysprep` to add specific configuration that you want to clone in the VM. To see what configuration you can add or remove, as well as the corresponding command-line arguments, run `virt-sysprep --help`.

NOTE: The `virt-sysprep` tool does not currently support Windows guests.   ← **Distinct note**

Prerequisites

- The `virt-sysprep` package is installed on the host.
- The VM is shut down.
- You are the owner of the VM's disk image.

Procedure

1. (Optional) To create a backup and for verification, create a copy of the disk image. For more information, see…   ← **Optional step marked**

2. Prepare the disk image: ← **Action-based steps**

   ```
   $ virt-sysprep -a /PATH/TO/THE/DISK/IMAGE.qcow2
   ```

   Replace `/PATH/TO/THE/DISK/IMAGE.qcow2` with the path to your image.
   NOTE: By default, disk images are stored in `/var/lib/libvirt/images/`.   ← **Distinct values (code, replaceables)**

Verification

1. Compare the contents of the prepared image with the backup:

   ```
   $ virt-diff -a /PATH/TO/THE/OLD.qcow2 -A /PATH/TO/THE/NEW.qcow2
   ```

   If the preparation process was successful, the command displays…   ← **Show output**

Next steps

After you have prepared the disk image, you can use `virt-clone` to clone the VM.

Style I

- What is style?
- Goals of tech writing

Style II

- Minimalism
- Topic-based authoring

→ **Style III: Style guides** ←

- What are style guides (for)?
- Major TW style guides
- How to use style guides

Discord

https://discord.gg/2pnCgYze

"Follow a style guide, you must."
– Master Yoda, never

"Y u gib me a guiding? Am style."
- all shibas, always

Rewrite the following sentences as memes

Use https://knowyourmeme.com/ as your style guide.
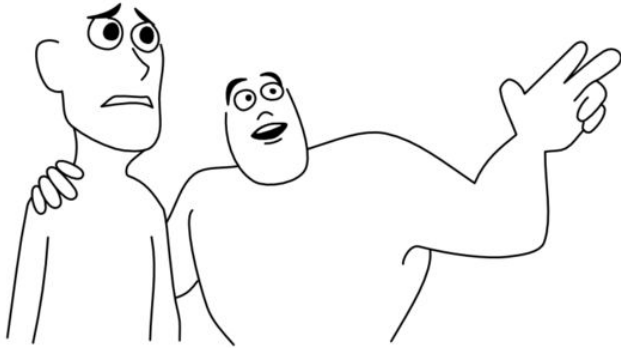
- Press CTRL+ALT+DEL to open the task manager. (Yoda speak)
- There are bugs. (X, X everywhere)
- It works now. (Doge speak)
- "I'm Slim Shady, yes, I'm the real Shady." (Joseph Ducreux)
- I'm sure I typed the password correctly. (Y U NO)

Image:
https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/x-x-everywhere

English is "open source"
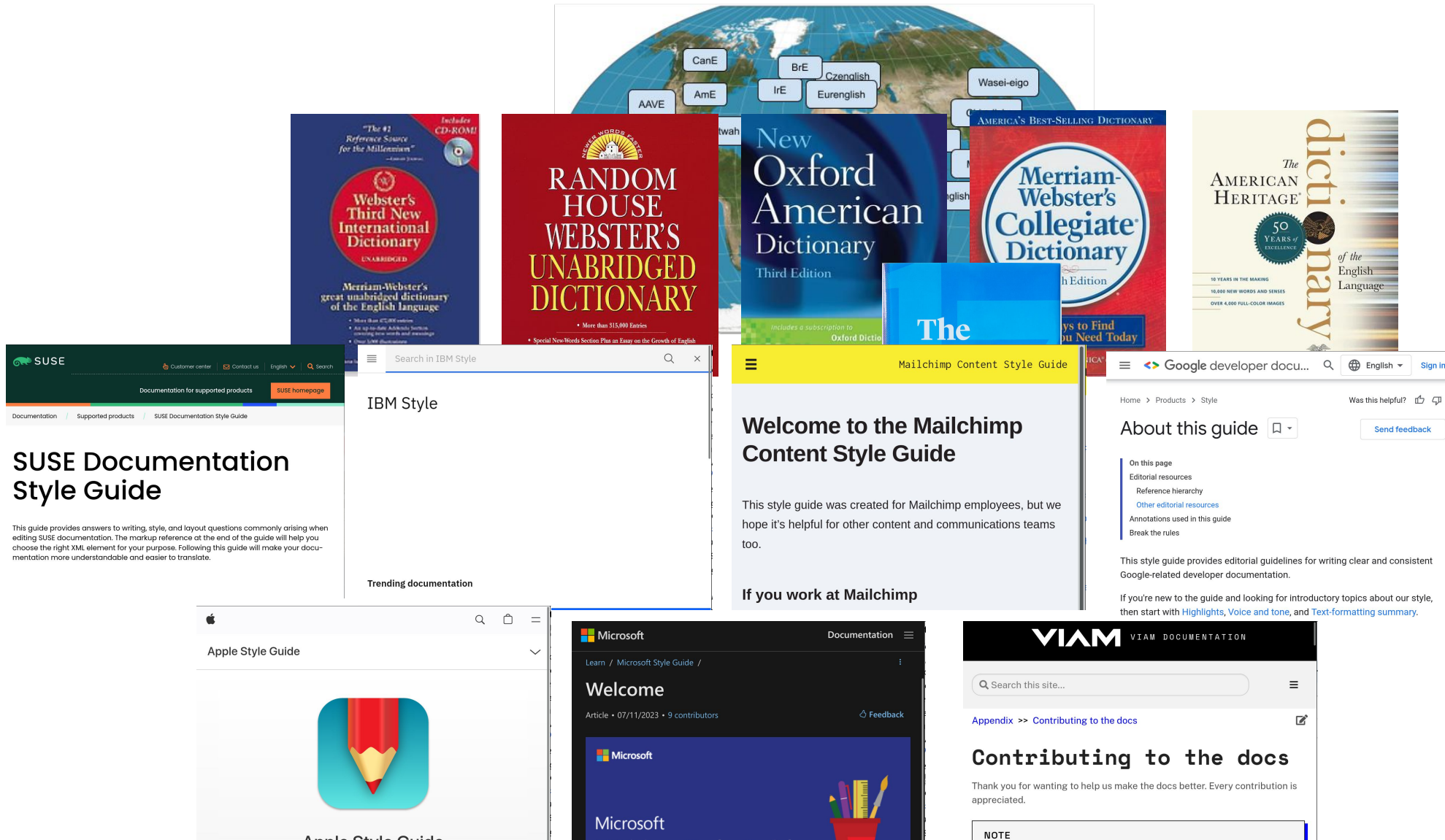
Canonical Documentation Style Guide

This is an as yet incomplete guide to the language and style conventions used for Canonical documentation projects. Topics are listed in the navigation to the left, and presented here as a single page to aid searching.

Spelling

Canonical is a UK based company, and uses British English throughout. There are many small differences between that and US English, but for the most part it comes down to spelling.

Some common differences are:

US ENGLISH	UK ENGLISH
license (verb) license (noun)	license (verb) licence (noun)
defense (noun)	defence (noun)
sausages, beans, and mash	sausages, beans and mash

What is a style guide?

- A guide for writing style (duh)
  - More specific than grammar and dictionary
- Documentation for your documentation

Does this seem familiar?

Follow these style rules when doing the homework:
- *Use simple language.*
- *Avoid anthropomorphisms.*
- *Avoid the passive voice.*
- *Avoid using 'will'.*
- *Avoid phrasal verbs.*
- *Avoid long sentences.*
- *Avoid using words that are unclear and ambiguous.*
- *Make the names of specific commands, utilities, pathways, and filenames visually distinct by using* `monospaced font`*.*

Combining more words into less words

- ▶ Contractions

  - ● Negative contractions

    - ○ *Have not* vs. *Haven't*

    - ○ *Can not* vs. *Can't*

      - ■ How does the use of either one impact the tone of what's being said?

  - ● Noun and verb contractions

    - ○ *"The browser is restarting"* vs *"The browser's restarting"*

      - ■ What are the possible pitfalls of this?

Combining more words into less words (cont.)

- ▶ Hyphens, en dashes, and em dashes
  - First of all, what's the difference?
    - – Hyphens are the shortest of these.
    - – En dashes are about the length of the "N" character.
    - — Em dashes are about the length of the "M" character.
  - Why does that matter?
  - Notes on using them
    - Why hyphens?
      - Noun or modifier?
        - User space vs. User-space
        - [example]-specific
    - Ranges
      - Monday–Friday vs. Monday to Friday
      - 1–8 vs. 1 to 8
    - Various specific words
      - E.g. plug-in or plugin?
    - What about em dashes?

Numbering conventions

▸ When to spell and when to use numerical digits?

- This is often specific to the individual organization

    ○ Some may prescribe a catch-all approach

        ■ Example: Always use number or always spell

    ○ Some may have a varied approach

        ■ Example: Spell out when the number is ten or less, use numbers for 11 and above.

▸ There may also be *other* specific numbering approaches depending on the type of work the company as a whole does, such as:

- Ordinal numbers (1st vs. 1st vs. First)

- Units of measurement

- Currency

- Dates

Capitalization

- ▸ Capitalization as a whole
  - How are titles or section headings approached?
    - ○ *They Use Title Case* vs. *They use sentence case*
  - How are proper and common nouns defined or differentiated?
    - ○ The Internet vs The internet
    - ○ "Several chief operating officers …"
    - ○ "Chief Operating Officer Bob Smith recommends …"
  - Is it ever permissible to start a sentence in lower-case?
    - ○ Specific terms (products, packages, etc) might always be entirely lower-case.
  - Can capitalization be used for emphasis? If not, what are the other available options?

- ▸ Some more-specific scenarios
  - Words that follow a colon: to capitalize or not?
  - Words connected by a slash (e.g. "Use the on/off switch")
  - Hyphenated-words, when they begin a sentence how are they treated?

Abbreviations

▶ Acronyms

 ● How are industry or company-specific acronyms treated?

  ○ Should you spell them out with the acronym in parentheses on first occurrence?

  ○ Can you always default to commonly known acronyms? How is "commonly known"

   defined?

   ■ HTML

▶ Other abbreviations

 ● Often times, specific abbreviations may be addressed independently in a style guide

  ○ Examples: e.g. (exempli gratia, "for example"), i.e. (id est, "that is"), vs/vs./v.

   (versus)

Abbreviations

▶ Some acronyms most people don't realize are acronyms:

- **TASER** **T**homas **A. S**mith's **E**lectric **R**ifle

- **LASER** **L**ight **A**mplification by **S**timulated **E**mission of **R**adiation

- **PAKISTAN** **P**anjab, **A**fghan, **K**ashmir, I*, **S**ind, Baluchis**tan**

- **CAPTCHA** **C**ompletely **A**utomated **P**ublic **T**uring test to tell **C**omputers and **H**umans **A**part

Punctuation

- ▶ How do you present lists?

  - · Bulleted?

  - · Comma separated?

  - · Does it matter?

- ▶ Where do you place periods and commas at the end of phrases in quotes?

  - · *Verify the instance is labelled "Server 1".*

  - · *Verify the instance is labelled "Server 1."*

- ▶ Are semicolons ever permissible?

  - · Semicolons can often be replaced by commas and a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, etc …), but specific direction might differ based on the intended audience and tone.

- ▶ How are appositive phrases handled?

  - · Essential appositive statements add information essential to the meaning of a sentence.

  - · Non-essential appositive statements might add useful information, but do not impact the meaning of a sentence.

    - · Should these be in parentheses or commas? Do you treat them the same?

Punctuation (cont.)

▶ How are appositive phrases handled?

● First off, what are appositives?

"The Recovery log <mark>that contains the most recent information</mark> is in the `current_logs` folder<mark>, which is generated automatically."</mark>

○ <mark>Essential appositive statements</mark> (defining relative clauses) add information essential to the meaning of a sentence.

○ <mark>Non-essential appositive statements</mark> (non-defining relative clauses) might add useful information, but do not impact the meaning of a sentence.

■ Should these be in parentheses, enclosed by commas, or something else?

■ Do you treat them the same?

Highlighting

- ▶ What font or typeface do you use for different elements?

  - **Product Names** or just Product Names?

    You can use **Red Hat Satellite** for…

  - `programs`, `files`, `commands`, `options`, `packages`…

    Install the `schmackage` package to configure the `schmogram` program.

  - *Emphasis* or **emphasis** or <u>emphasis</u> or "emphasis" or EMPHASIS?

    Do ***<u>"NOT"</u>*** share the root password with non-privileged users.

  - User-replaced values

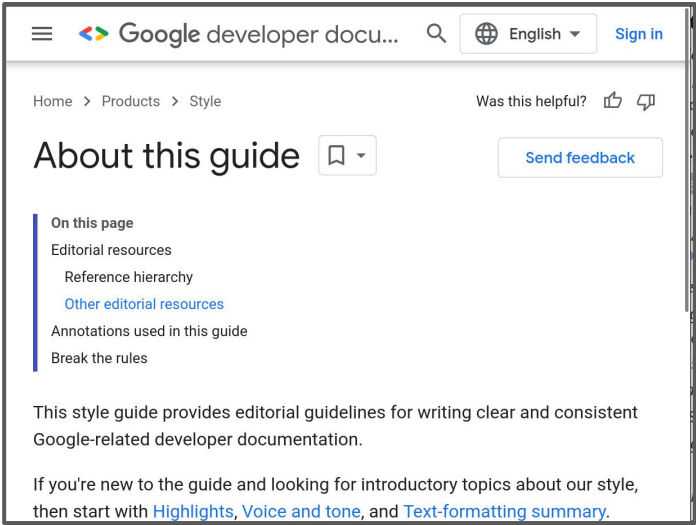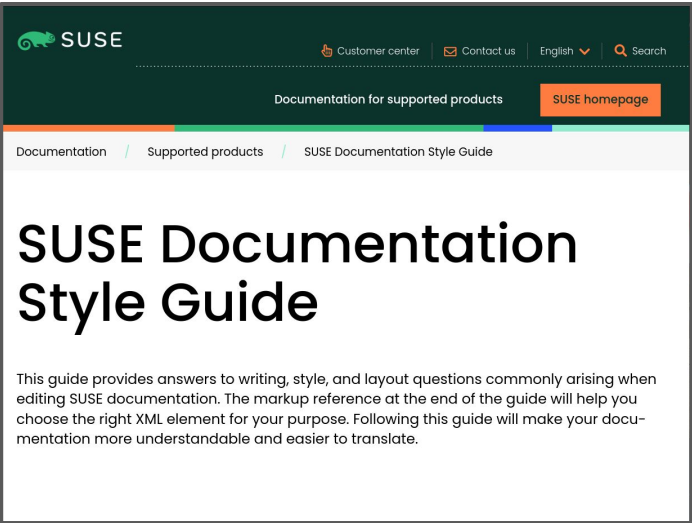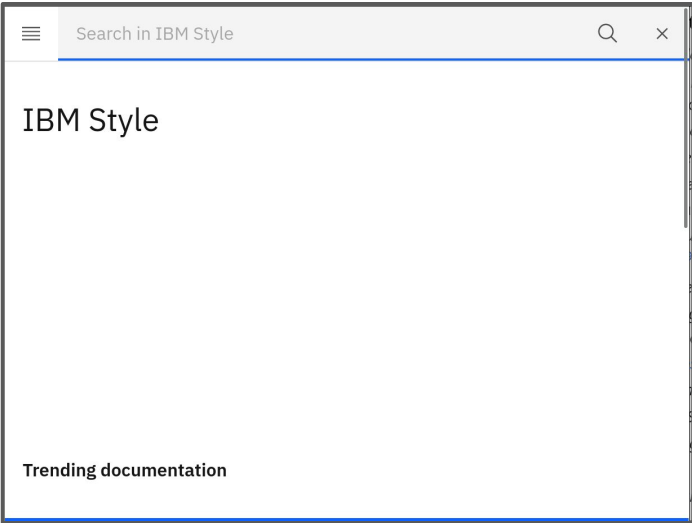 | | |
    |---|---|
    | 2. | Add a new user: |
    | | `# useradd <user name>` |
    | | Replace `<user_name>` with the name of the user. |

Admonitions (notices)

▸ **Note**

- IBM, Apple: Additional info

- SUSE: Version differences

▸ **Tip**

- SUSE: Additional info

▸ **Important**

- Serious, essential information but not dangerous

▸ **Warning**

- Apple: may cause bodily injury, damage, or loss of data

- SUSE: Warn of security issues, potential loss of data, damage to hardware, or physical hazards. Warnings must always precede the action to which they apply.

IBM Style

Search in IBM Style

Trending documentation

SUSE

Customer center   Contact us   English ⌄   Search

Documentation for supported products   SUSE homepage

Documentation   /   Supported products   /   SUSE Documentation Style Guide

SUSE Documentation Style Guide

This guide provides answers to writing, style, and layout questions commonly arising when editing SUSE documentation. The markup reference at the end of the guide will help you choose the right XML element for your purpose. Following this guide will make your documentation more understandable and easier to translate.

Apple Style Guide

Apple Style Guide

October 2022

Microsoft   Documentation

Learn / Microsoft Style Guide /

Welcome

Article • 07/11/2023 • 9 contributors   Feedback

Microsoft

Microsoft
Writing Style Guide

Google developer docu...   🌐 English ⌄   Sign in

Home > Products > Style   Was this helpful? 👍 👎

About this guide   Send feedback

On this page
Editorial resources
    Reference hierarchy
    Other editorial resources
Annotations used in this guide
Break the rules

This style guide provides editorial guidelines for writing clear and consistent Google-related developer documentation.

If you're new to the guide and looking for introductory topics about our style, then start with Highlights, Voice and tone, and Text-formatting summary.
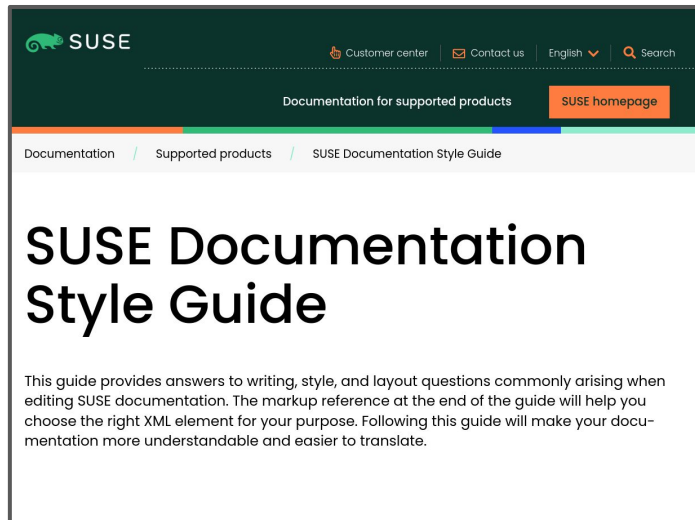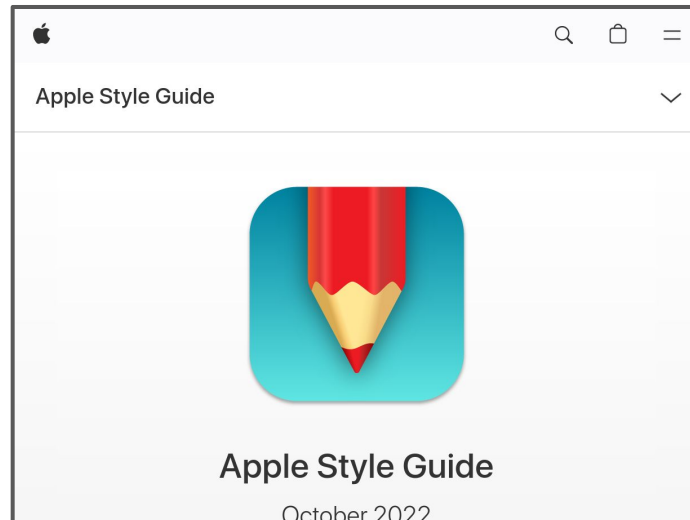
EXERCISE 1

Find the guidance for the following features in various style guides:

1. "plug-in" / "plugin" / "plug in"
2. Non-exhaustive lists ("like", "such as", "etc.")
3. Contractions ("don't", "isn't") and possessives ("user's")
4. "above", "below", "upper left"
5. Moving through content on a touchscreen

https://documentation.suse.com/style/

https://support.apple.com/guide/applestyleguide/

https://learn.microsoft.com/en-us/style-guide/

What are style guides for?

- Unify tone of voice from many writers
  - Different organizations want to convey different tones in their documentation.
    - Formal vs. informal vs. casual
  - Different audiences might be addressed in different tones or terms
    - API documentation vs. an installation guide
- Help resolve difficult questions (such as excessive minimalism over a11y or UX)
- Provide rules and training materials for TWs

What are style guides NOT?

- Grammar books or vocabularies
- Markup guides
- Replacements for making stylistic choices
- Docs type templates
- Eternal, immovable entities

IBM Style

- Relatively formal and conservative tone compared to the rest of the listed guides (with the exception of SUSE).
- Crisp, no-nonsense style that's not riveting to read but very easy to write.
- Locked behind a paywall.
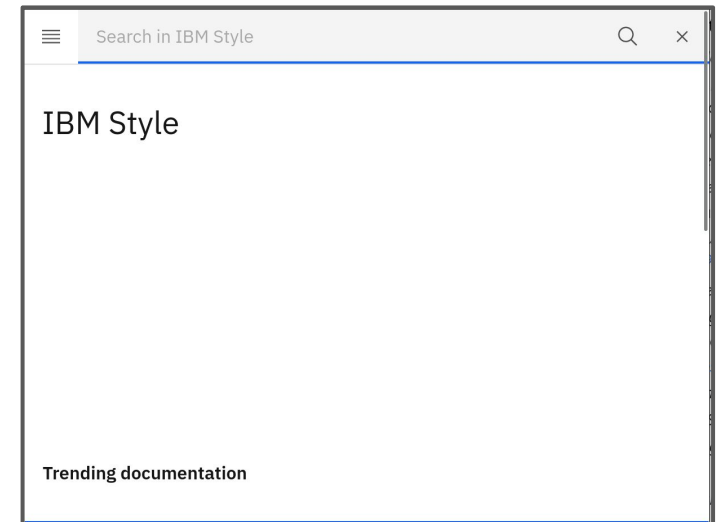
Microsoft Style Guide

- The most casual tone of the listed style guides.
- A friendly, approachable voice, ideal for communicating with casual IT users.
- Communicates complex information in a simple, easily digestible way that doesn't infantilize the audience.
- The friendly voice can be difficult to replicate, making this guide more challenging to use than others.

https://learn.microsoft.com/en-us/style-guide/welcome/

Google Developer Documentation Style Guide

- Friendly tone, less up-close-and-personal than Microsoft Style Guide.
- Aimed at developers but offers a great foundation for tech writers across all knowledge levels.
- Encourages writers to break the rules to achieve better content.

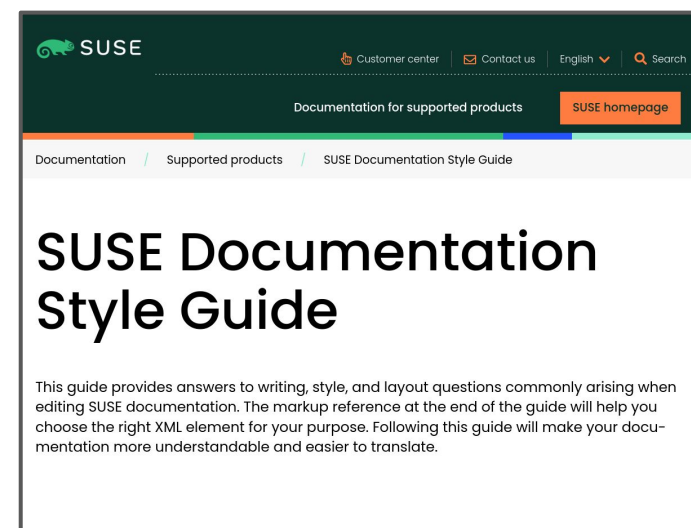https://developers.google.com/style
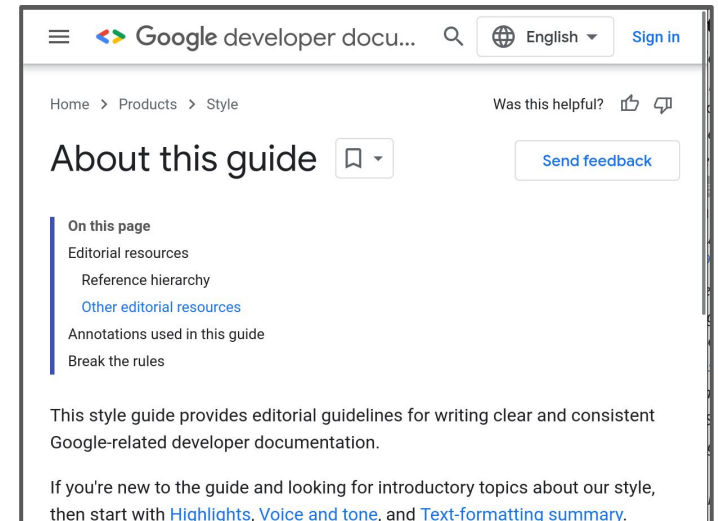
Apple Style Guide

- Less focused on technical writing than the rest of the listed guides.

- A great resource for writing bias-free, inclusive content.

- The guide has a confusing layout and is difficult to navigate.

Apple Style Guide

October 2022

28

https://support.apple.com/guide/applestyleguide/welcome/web

SUSE Documentation Style Guide

- Extremely formal tone focused on professional appearance.

- Provides less examples for its rules than other listed guides.

- Very vague instructions regarding inclusivity and bias-free content creation. This puts non-native speakers at a disadvantage.

https://documentation.suse.com/style/current/

SUSE

Customer center   Contact us   English ∨   Search

Documentation for supported products   SUSE homepage

Documentation / Supported products / SUSE Documentation Style Guide

SUSE Documentation Style Guide

This guide provides answers to writing, style, and layout questions commonly arising when editing SUSE documentation. The markup reference at the end of the guide will help you choose the right XML element for your purpose. Following this guide will make your documentation more understandable and easier to translate.

Edit or change your background during a meeting

To change your background during a meeting, follow these steps:

1. In the meeting window, select **More actions** from the top of the screen > **Background effects**.

2. You can do the following:

    ○ **Blur** your background while everything around you is concealed.

Editing your background during a meeting

You can change your background while you are in a meeting.

1. In the meeting window, select **More actions** from the top of the screen > **Background effects**.

2. Select one of the following options:

    ○ Blur your background by selecting **Blur**.

30

EXERCISE 2

Read the three excerpts, each written according to a different style guide

Configuring the RMT server

Use this procedure to configure the Repository Mirroring Tool (RMT).

Requirements

- System 15 is installed and up to date.
- You have a Customer Center account and organization credentials.

Procedure 1: Configuring the RMT server
1. Install RMT on System 15:
`# zypper in rmt-server`
2. Start the `rmt` module in YaST:
`# yast2 rmt`
3. Enter your *Organization Credentials*, then select *Next*.

💡 To find your organization credentials, log in to the [Customer Center](#), select your organization from *My Organizations*, and click *Proxies*. Your organization's *Mirroring credentials* are in the top right corner.

Turn on device encryption

Encryption helps protect the data on your device so it can only be accessed by people who have authorization. If device encryption isn't available on your device, you might be able to turn on standard BitLocker encryption instead.

Turn on device encryption

1. Sign in to the system with an administrator account (you may have to sign out and back in to switch accounts). For more info, see [Create a local or administrator account](#).

2. Select **Start** > **Settings** > **Privacy & security** > **Device encryption**. If **Device encryption** doesn't appear, it isn't available. You may be able to use standard BitLocker encryption instead. Open Device encryption in Settings.

How to download and install System

Use a web browser for older versions

These older System versions are available as disk images that you can download using your web browser. To get the installer from the disk image, you must use a device that is compatible with that System.

1. Use these links to download a System disk image (.dmg) file. If these links don't work as expected, try again using a browser, which is in your Applications folder.
   - [(list of links)](#)
2. Double-click the .dmg file to open it and see the package (.pkg) file within.
3. Double-click the .pkg file, then follow the onscreen instructions to install the System installer into your Applications folder.
4. Open your Applications folder and double-click the System installer, named Install [*Version Name*]. Follow the onscreen installation instructions.

Internal style guides

- Supplement a more general parent guide
- Provide additional guidance in areas not covered by parent
- Specify divergences from the guidance of the parent
- Contain more specific examples and scenarios
- Therefore, override the more general guidance
- Provide consistency in your specific scenarios

Most specific

Specific

Most general

IBM Style

Trending documentation
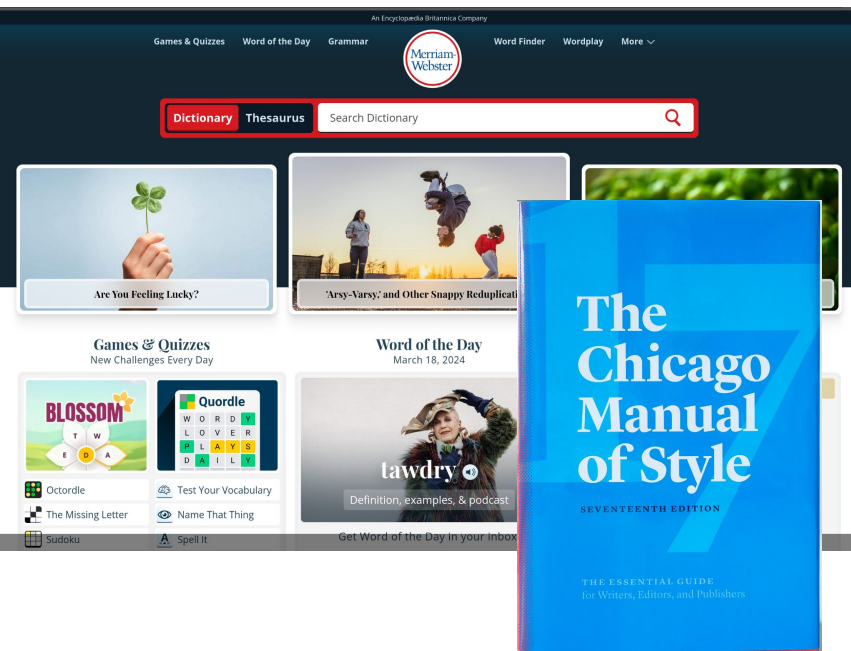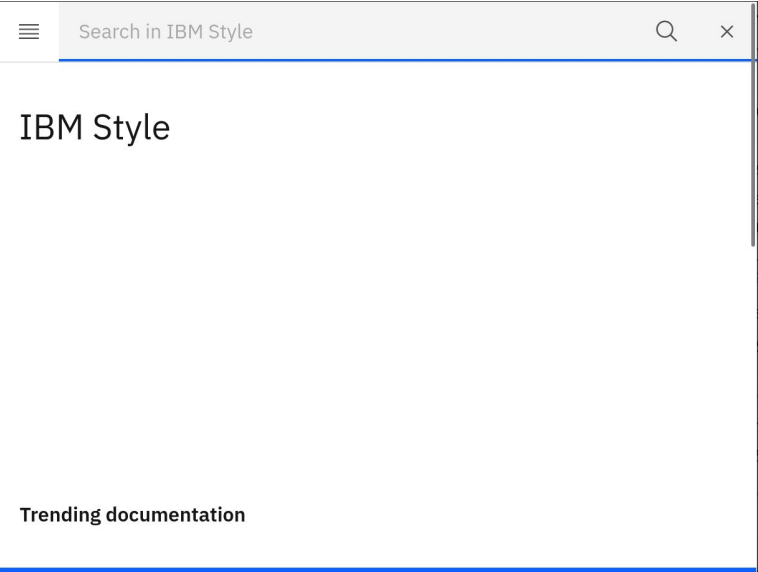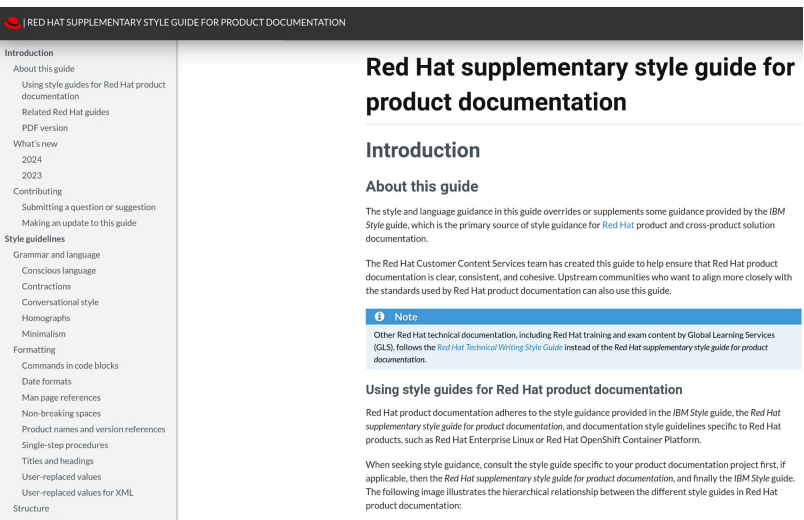
Style III: Style guides

- Docs for your docs
- Provide guidance for:
  - Tone
  - Minimalism
  - Numbers
  - Capitalization
  - Abbreviations
  - Punctuation
  - Highlighting
- Specific ➜ General

Technical writers do not guess. If you're not sure how to write something, look it up.

Prerequisites for next class (26th March)

- Sign up for a GitHub account.

- Add ssh keys to your Github account.

- Install Git

- Set an email address in Git

Homework assignment

[Gdoc here]