### **Stylistic Writing Rules and Techniques for MUD Zone Building**

1. **Start with Clear Planning**Begin by sitting down to conceptualize the zone. Consider the primary purpose: Is it for experience, gold/money, equipment, questing, or a mixture of these? Once you have this idea, map the zone to provide a concrete reference, numbering rooms for easy vnum tracking. Mapping helps avoid issues with direction bias, where players can understand layout without relying on special clients.
2. **Descriptions as Engagement**Recognize that descriptions are a primary vehicle for immersion. Write creatively to ensure players are drawn into reading them, knowing that descriptions represent the game world and encourage players to explore.
3. **Depth and Complexity**Descriptions benefit from complexity, offering players hidden depths to discover. Incorporate subtle clues, secrets, unique items, and special locations to enrich the game environment and reward exploration.
4. **Avoid Repetition**Do not clone rooms without a specific reason. Repetition can make the zone feel monotonous and reduces player engagement. Even minor differences between descriptions help maintain interest. Always make each room unique in its own right.
5. **Use the Active Voice and Avoid “Is”**Descriptions benefit from the active voice, which makes them feel more dynamic and engaging. Avoid using "is" frequently, as it tends to result in passive or repetitive statements, like “It is red, it is big.”
6. **Eliminate “You” from Descriptions**Using “you” can impose unwanted emotions or actions on players. Avoid statements like “You feel a cool breeze” and opt for indirect descriptions, like “A cool breeze drifts through the area.”
7. **Do Not Impose Feelings or Thoughts on Players**Instead of stating an emotion, use sensory details to evoke it. For example, instead of saying “You feel uneasy,” describe the room to make players feel uneasy through the environment.
8. **Minimize and Use Color Thoughtfully**If using color, keep it minimal and, if possible, restricted to titles. If colors appear in descriptions, they should be subtle and limited, as excessive color can be distracting and disrupt immersion.
9. **Create Exit and Object Descriptions**Each room exit should be described, even if it goes nowhere. Explain what players see looking up, down, and around the room. Similarly, every object should have a descriptive tag, and players should be able to examine it in detail. Don’t mention an object in a room unless it can be interacted with.
10. **Room Titles and Object Naming Conventions**
    * Titles should capture the most significant aspect of a room. Avoid vague names like "Main Hall" and be specific, e.g., "By a Cluster of Birch Trees."
    * Do not include periods in room titles.
    * Object and mob names should begin with an article (like “a,” “the,” or “some”) and long descriptions should include the keyword of the object or mob.
11. **Avoid Describing Player Actions in Room Descriptions**Let players decide their actions rather than imposing them. Avoid phrases like “You step on a rat” or “You wince at the sight.” Allow the environment to speak for itself, and let players interpret and react to it on their own terms.
12. **Add Extra Descriptions for Enhanced Exploration**Extra descriptions are valuable for exploration and immersion. Describe key objects and allow players to look at items within rooms to uncover further details.
13. **Balance Complexity and Accessibility**Avoid over-complicating zones. If a puzzle or hidden element is essential for the zone’s progression, provide subtle hints in descriptions. Extra complexity should enhance the zone, not hinder players from achieving goals.
14. **Avoid Overloading Rooms with Color or Symbols**Too much color can be overwhelming. Use it sparingly, particularly in room titles, and avoid multiple colors in descriptions to maintain readability.
15. **Maintain Descriptive Focus and Avoid Redundancy**Describe the room holistically rather than focusing on a single detail. Include multiple points of interest and avoid making the main item in the room overly obvious. Likewise, avoid unnecessary filler details if they don’t contribute to the setting.
16. **Avoid Seasonal, Temporal, or Directional Biases**
    * **Directional Bias:** Avoid assumptions like “The castle lies before you,” as the player could be facing any direction.
    * **Movement Bias:** Avoid phrases like “You walk along a path,” since players may not be walking (e.g., flying or crawling).
    * **Time/Season Bias:** Avoid references to time or season unless these are dynamically represented in-game. Statements like “The sun shines brightly” are problematic if the game’s day-night cycle isn’t reflected in the description.
17. **Mob Descriptions (mdesc)**Mobs should serve a purpose and enhance the setting. Descriptions should make them feel like a natural part of the environment. Avoid describing items a mob wears in its “look” description if those items are actual inventory objects.
18. **Mob Presence and Avoiding NPC Redundancy**Mobs should not be described in the room description. They should appear as separate entities, such as butterflies in a garden, only if not loaded as actual mobs. For sentient mobs (humanoid characters), they must be separate entities, not simply included in the room description.
19. **Use Language to Enrich Room Descriptions**Avoid scaling descriptions based on room count; instead, use language to convey size, space, and ambiance. Words are the main tool for building setting, not sheer number of rooms.
20. **Write Descriptions to Match Room Titles without Redundancy**Titles should reflect the key feature of the room but should not be directly restated in the room description. For example, if the title is “Patch of Daisies,” avoid simply restating the presence of daisies. Instead, detail the daisies’ appearance or other surrounding elements.
21. **Avoid Unrealistic Loot on Non-Humanoids**Non-humanoids should not carry gold or clothing. Instead, reward players with items that make sense (e.g., pelts, claws).
22. **Optimize Room Description Length**Descriptions should be between three and eight lines, allowing for readability and player scrolling. For extended details, use extra descriptions.
23. **Grammar and Syntax Consistency**Use correct grammar throughout. Each description should flow naturally and remain easy to read.
24. **Utilize Keywords Intuitively**If players can see an object, they should be able to interact with it. Ensure all interactive elements have intuitive keywords.
25. **Eliminate Object/Mob Repetition**Do not describe objects or mobs in both the room description and as individual entities. An object described in the room should not also be a separate, interactable object to avoid redundancy.
26. **Room Goal and Structure Consistency**Each room should support the zone’s overarching goal. Be sure the zone’s intent is clear before building begins. Avoid generic placeholders like “Main Street,” using unique or evocative names instead (e.g., “Cobbler’s Row”).
27. **Use of Natural and Intuitive Environmental Interaction**Descriptions should simulate the experience of exploring in real life, focusing on natural sensory inputs. Avoid mentioning the player’s thoughts or emotions, and refrain from directly asking rhetorical questions in room descriptions.
28. **Seasonal and Weather Descriptions**Use these elements sparingly and only if they align with the game’s coded environment. Avoid descriptions that could be mismatched due to lack of seasonal programming, like autumn leaves year-round.