

# Style III: Style Guides

Technical writing course | BUT 2024

The Red Hat Customer Content Services team

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.*

### 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...
2. Prepare the disk image:

```
$ 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/`.*

### 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...

### Next steps

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

Distinct note

Optional step  
marked

Action-based  
steps

Distinct values  
(code,  
replaceables)

Show output

## 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



*"Follow a style guide,  
you must."*

*- Master Yoda, never*

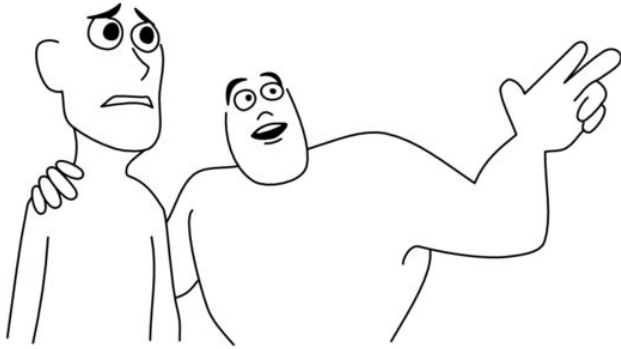
*"Y u gib me a  
guiding? Am style."*

*- all shibas, always*



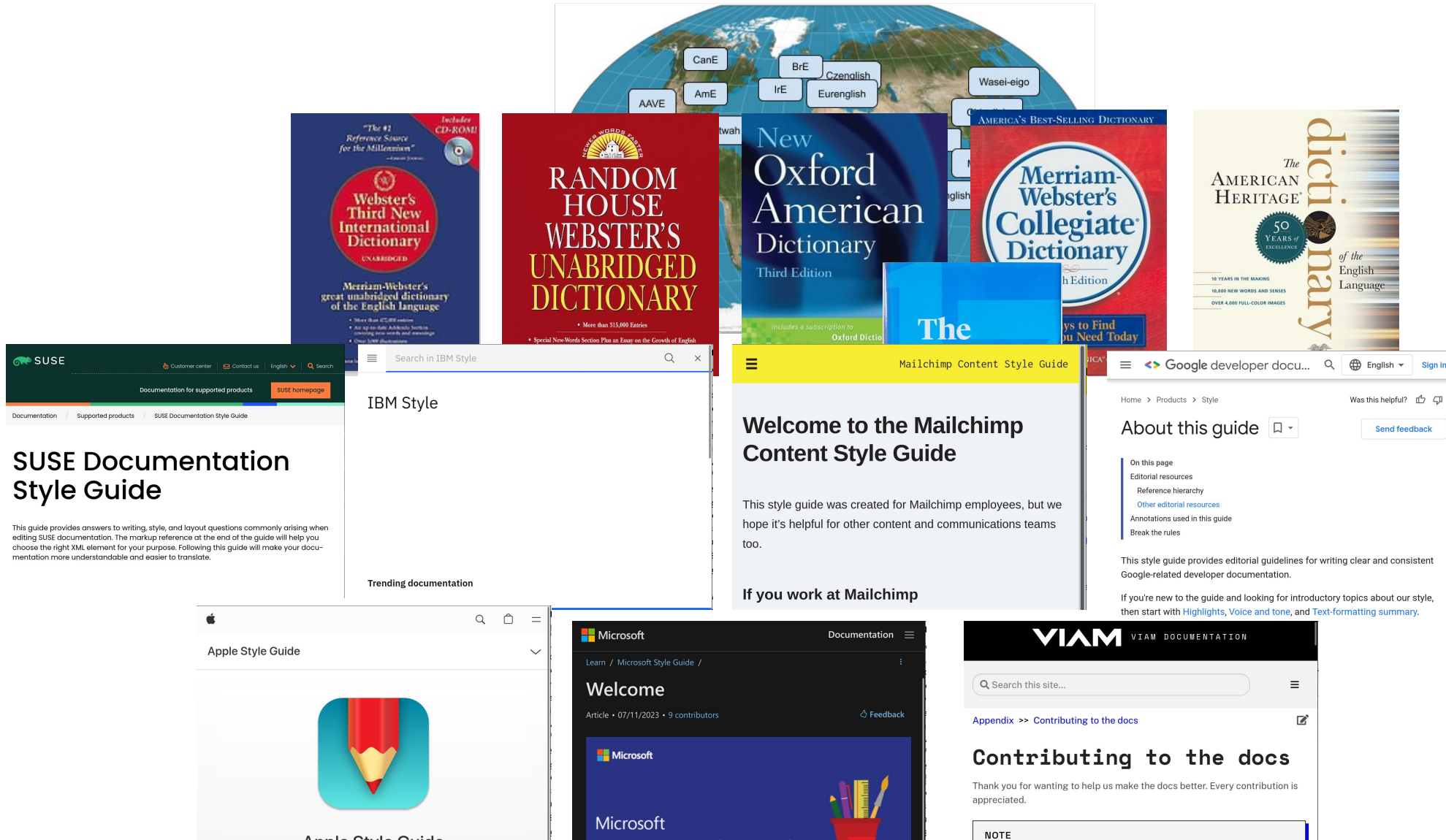
## Rewrite the following sentences as memes

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)
- Update the system to receive security patches. (1337 sp34k)

# 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 assignment:***

- *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*
    - *Cannot* 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. 1<sup>st</sup> 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** is **A. S**mith's **E**lectric **R**ifle
  - **LASER** is **L**ight **A**mplification by **S**timulated **E**mission of **R**adiation
  - **PAKISTAN** is **P**akistan, **K**ashmir, **I**ndia, **S**ind, **B**aluchistan
  - **CAPTCHA** is **C**omputer **A**utomated **P**ublic **T**esting to tell **C**omputers and **H**umans **A**part

# Punctuation

- ▶ Lists
  - Bulleted?
  - Comma separated?
  - Does it matter?
- ▶ Periods and commas at the end of quotes
  - *Verify the instance is labelled "Server 1".*
  - *Verify the instance is labelled "Server 1."*
- ▶ Semicolons
  - Are they even permitted?
  - Semicolons can often be replaced by commas and a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, etc ... ).



## Relative clauses (appositives)

- ▶ **Defining** relative clauses (Essential appositive statements)

Add information essential to the meaning of a sentence.

*All daemons that restart the system require root privileges.*

- ▶ **Non-defining** relative clauses (Non-essential appositive statements)

Might add useful information, but do not impact the meaning of a sentence.

- ▶ *The `omnpt` service, which launches the `omnptd` daemon, requires root privileges.*

*The `omnpt` service launches the `omnptd` daemon. The `omnpt` service requires root privileges.*

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

*Companies that do research, which requires expensive workforce, have higher capital expenditures.*

## Punctuation (cont.)

- ▶ How are appositive phrases handled?
  - First off, what are appositives?

“The Recovery log **that contains the most recent information** is in the `current_logs` folder, **which is generated automatically.**”

- **Essential appositive statements** (defining relative clauses) add information essential to the meaning of a sentence.
- **Non-essential appositive statements** (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 emphasis or “emphasis” or EMPHASIS?

Do **“NOT”** share the root password with non-privileged users.

- User-replaced values

2. Add a new user:

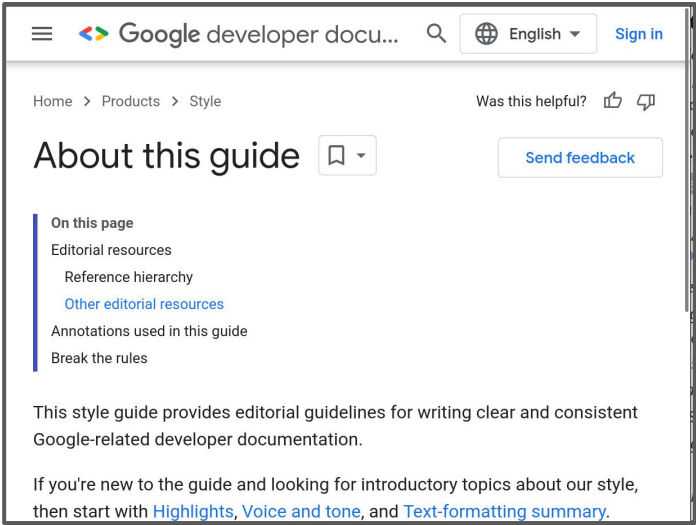
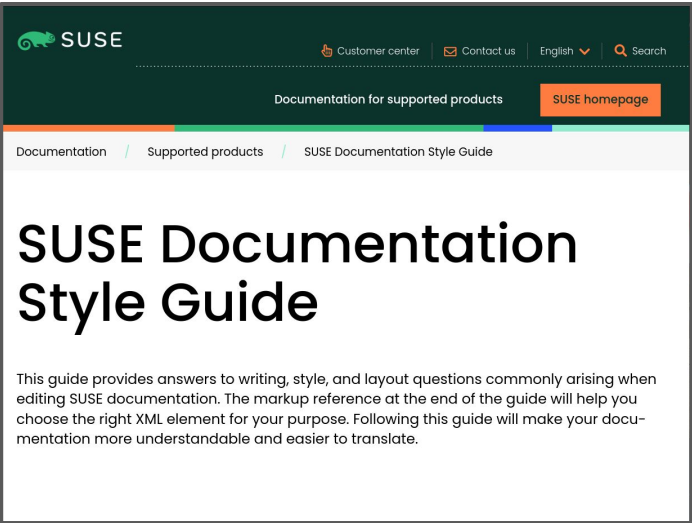
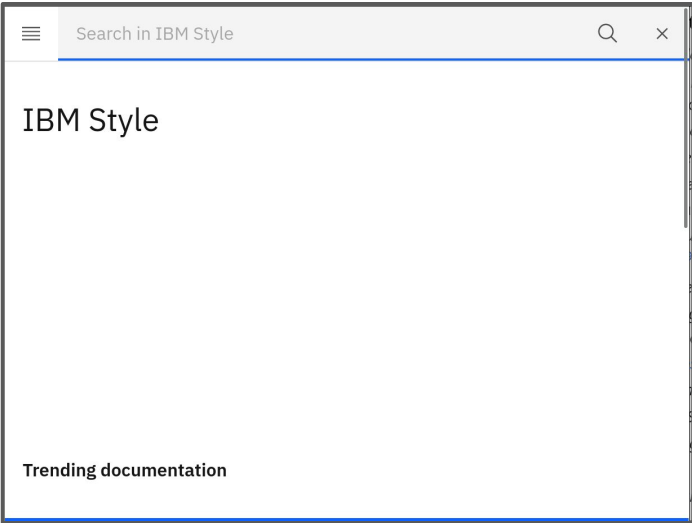
```
# useradd <user name>
```

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.

Major Style Guides

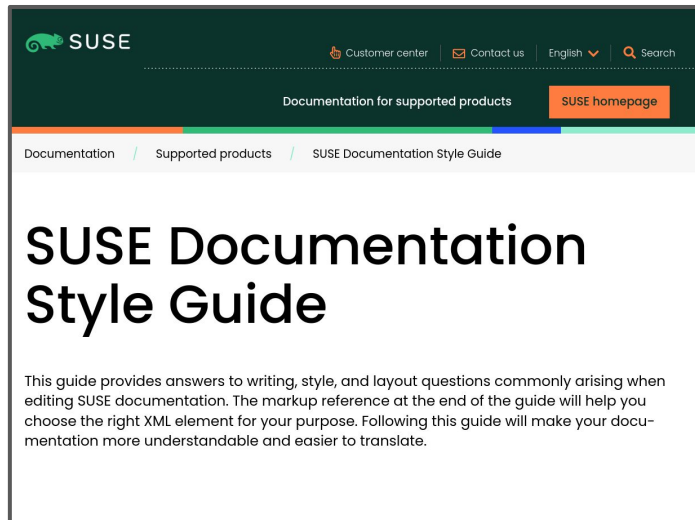


# EXERCISE 1

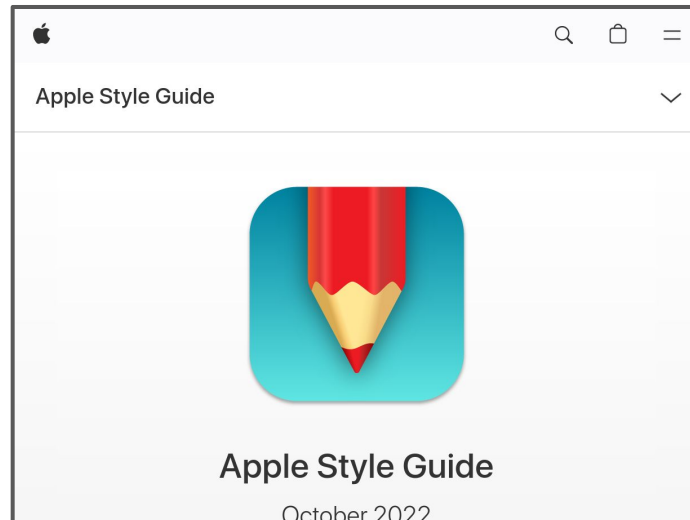
Find the guidance for the following features in various style guides:

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 ally or UX)
- Provide rules and training materials for TWs

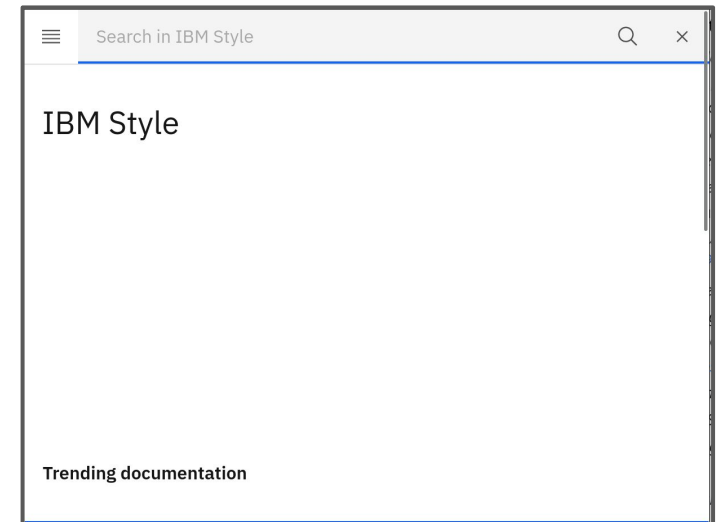
## What are style guides NOT?

- 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.



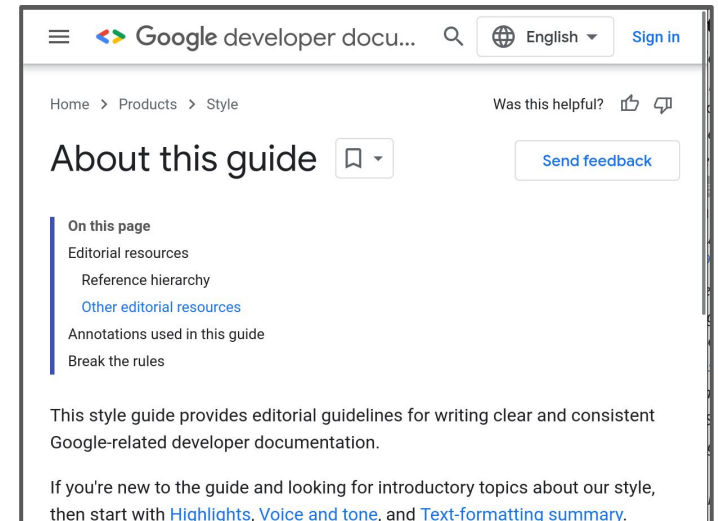
# Microsoft Style Guide

- 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.



# 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.



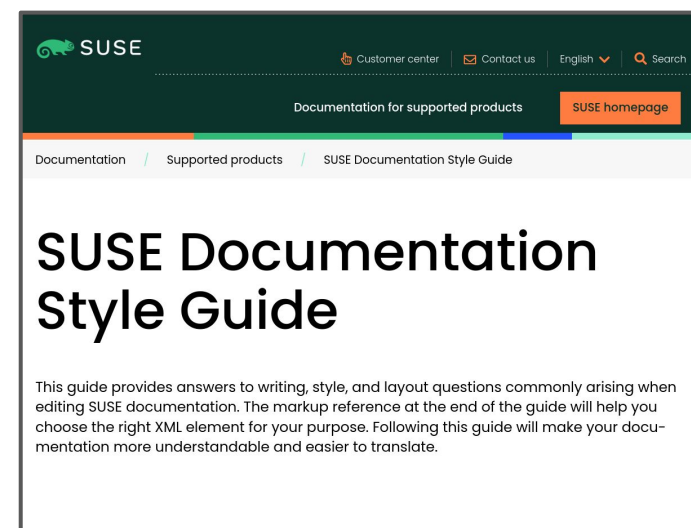
# Apple Style Guide

- 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.



# 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.



# 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.

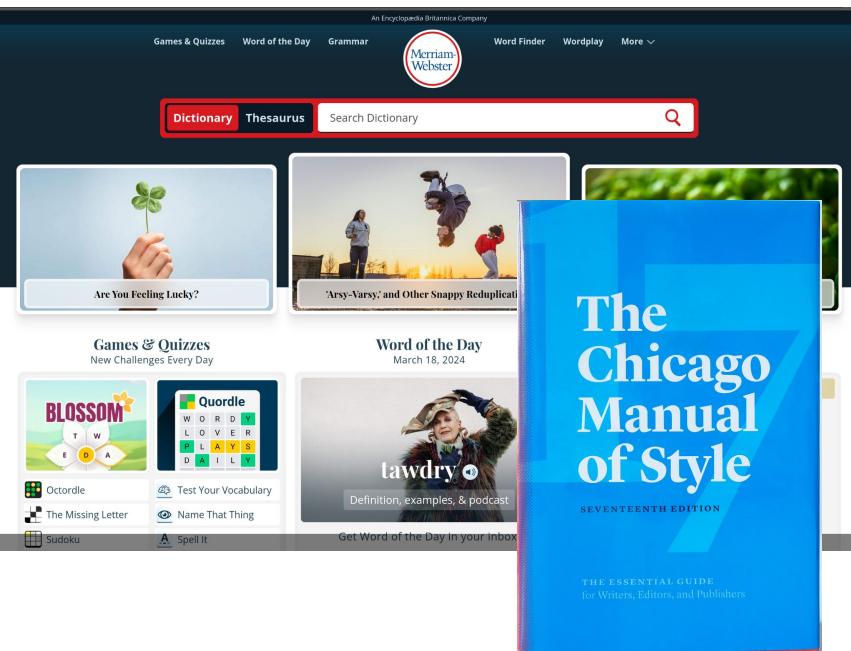
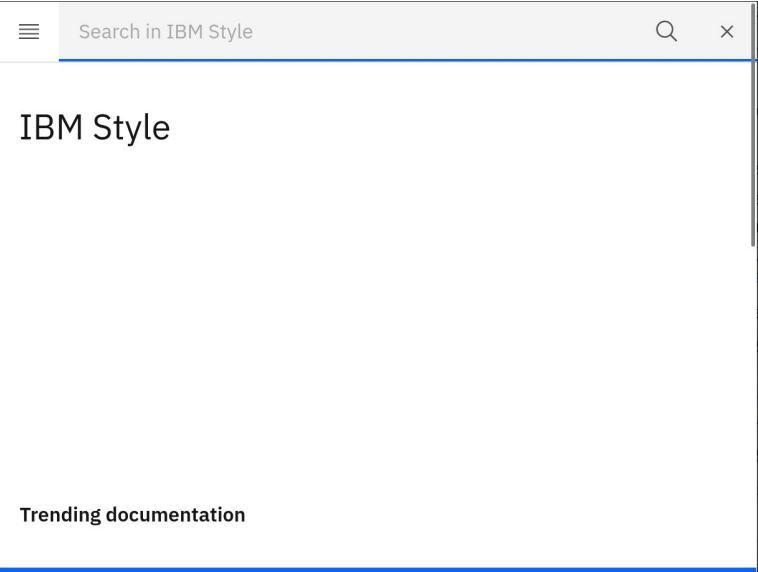
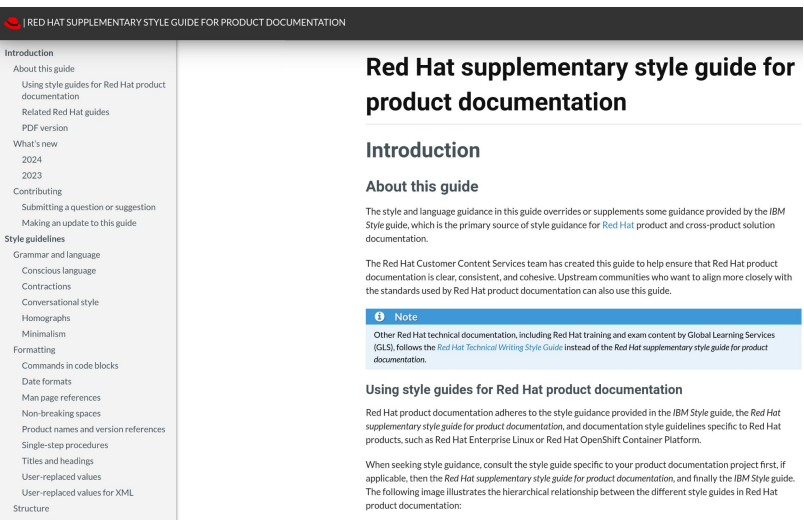
## Internal style guides

- 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





## 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 the next class (tomorrow)

- Install Git <https://www.git-scm.com/downloads> (keep all the default configurations)
- Create a Github account

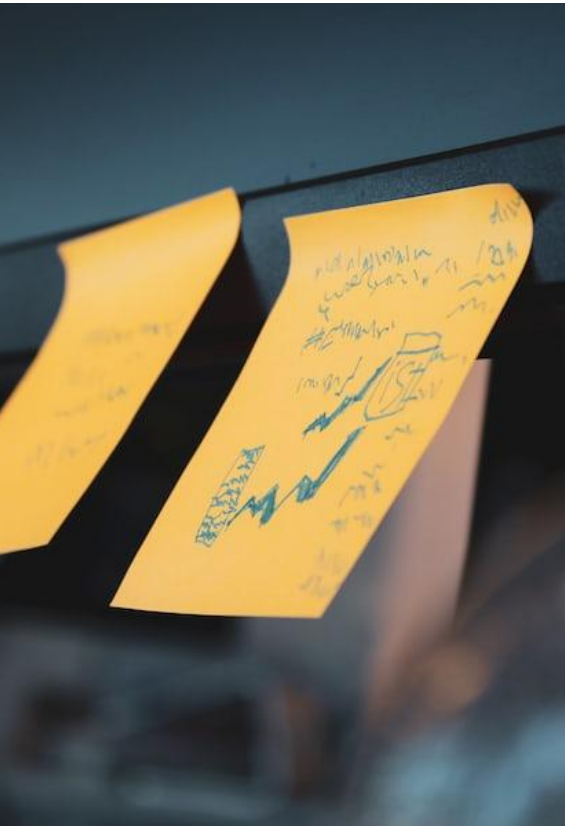
## Signing up for a new personal account

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- 1 Navigate to <https://github.com/>.
- 2 Click **Sign up**.
- 3 Follow the prompts to create your personal account.

During sign up, you'll be asked to verify your email address. Without a verified email address, you won't be able to complete some basic GitHub tasks, such as creating a repository.

If you're having problems verifying your email address, there are some troubleshooting steps you can take. For more information, see "[Verifying your email address](#)."



# Homework assignment

[[Gdoc here](#)]