Online Editorial Guidelines

Here you will find the main editorial guidelines which we follow here at Smashing Magazine. You can find a more visual explanation in the *readme.html* file in the .ZIP archive you've just downloaded, but please read this guide first. You can then start writing right away using the *template.html* file.

Key Points

— Your article should bridge theory and practice. Our readers are quite advanced and seek professional advice. Practical examples are quite important. After reading the article, readers should not only have gained new insights and ideas, but also know how to actually implement these insights and ideas in practice. Share your expertise with us, mistakes you've made, things you've learned throughout your career and things you wish you had known earlier. The more practical your tips, techniques and ideas are, the better.

— Don't be afraid to express your own opinion. The more thought-provoking your article, the better. Our readers appreciate articles that describe the various workflows of designers and developers all over the globe. When sharing your opinions or statements, please double check them and make sure to provide a link to the sources that support your claims. Our ultimate goal is to engage members of the design community in meaningful design discussions — not flame wars.

— Your article will be read by a large international audience, so please try not to restrict your examples to your country only.

— Please make your article useful and comprehensive. Ask yourself whether you have addressed the most obvious issues that our readers might wonder about? Can you anticipate any specific questions that might be asked and probably should be discussed in the article as well?

— Be concise, and don't exaggerate; for example, "absolutely awesome!" and "the coolest feature I've ever seen!" doesn't quite fit Smashing Magazine's objective style.

- Your article should be original and valuable; make sure that it exhibits your personal tone and perspective. If possible, avoid iterating on arguments and ideas that have been endlessly discussed on the Web.

- Please provide links and references to related articles, tools, services, books and other resources at the end of the article.

- The biography that you submit in the profile section of WordPress will be automatically generated at the end of your post.

Headings

- The title and all headings should be appealing, concrete and descriptive.

- Please avoid putting a heading right after the title of the article (i.e. with no body text in between).

- Markup headings within the article: <h3>Heading</h3> for headings and <h4>Sub-Heading</h4> for sub-headings.

- In <h3> headings, please capitalize the first letter of every word, e.g. *"How To Improve Your Branding With Your Content."*

- In <h4> headings, capitalize only the main words, e.g. *"Keep Your Web Copy to the Point."*

- Please use title case, e.g. *"Photoshop Tips and Tricks for Photo Retouching."* Capitalize the first and last words, regardless of the length of the word or the part of speech. For the words in between, capitalize all nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and pronouns.

- Do not capitalize articles (*a*, *an* and *the*), nor prepositions of three or fewer letters (such as *of*, *in* and *for*). This applies to conjunctions as well (*as*, *and*, *or*, *but*...).

- Verbs (even short ones like *is*, *be*, *do*...) should always be capitalized. Don't forget to capitalize pronouns as well (*he*, *she*, *it*, *me*, *you*...).

- Please do not use fullstops (.) at the end of your headings.

Dashes

- Feel free to use a dash (written as — in HTML code) instead of a comma to draw attention, e.g. *"He's a creative individual — and he knows it."* Leaving a full space instead of a hair space ( ) on either side of the em dash is OK.

Ellipsis

— Use an ellipsis (…) to indicate an omission or a pause in speech. Leave a space after it, but not before, e.g. "*Developing a website is a cinch these days… but then again, maybe it's not as easy as we think.*"

Punctuation

— Place periods and commas inside double quotation marks and outside single quotation marks, e.g. *It was 'fast'. He said, "It was fast."*

Quotation Marks

— Use double quotation marks for quotes, and single quotation marks for quotes within quotes, e.g. *Williams said, "The university encourages 'appropriate clothing.'"*

— Put commas and periods inside quotation marks and semi-colons and colons outside, e.g. *He said, "Let's move," but she said "No way"; they eventually compromised.*

— If a quote is more than a couple of lines, set it off as its own paragraph, wrapped in <blockquote> tags, and omit the quotation marks. Wrap each paragraph within the quote in the usual paragraph tags (<p>). Please use <blockquote> *only* for quotes drawn from other sources, not to add supplementary information or to make a tangential point or to draw attention to an important idea.

Commas

— Do not use the serial comma (i.e. leave out the last comma before the "and"), unless to avoid confusion, e.g. "*Use blue, green and red.*"

— Add a comma before etc.: "*Use blue, green, red, etc.*"

Colon

- If a colon introduces multiple complete sentences, then consider formatting the sentences as a list. Do not use a colon to introduce a heading or section. A plain stop will do. If the sentence preceding a heading is a fragment, then rephrase it to be complete.

Abbreviations

- Please do not abbreviate or use symbols for everyday words:

  50 to 60%, not *50–60%*
  give and take, not *give & take*
  design and develop, not *design/develop.*
  versus, not *vs.* (except in headings).

- Using *"i.e."* to precede a clarification is OK. It comes from the Latin "id est" and means "that is" or "in other words." E.g. "*Your client (i.e. the one in charge) will have final say.*"

- Using *"e.g."* is also fine when brevity is required. It comes from the Latin expression "exempli gratia" and means "for example." Use it when listing only some of all instances of a concept, and do not follow it with a period, e.g. "*Open your browser of choice (e.g. Firefox, Chrome, Safari).*"

Acronyms

- In general, write acronyms in all caps, but follow convention, e.g. *DPI (dots per inch)*, *PDF (Portable Document Format)*, *VoIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol).*

- Spell out the first instance of acronyms that are not commonly known, e.g. *You might want to check your click-through rate (CTR).*

- If a term is used only once or twice in an chapter, then spell it out and omit the abbreviation (unless the reader would find it useful).

Highlighting and Code Snippets

- Please highlight keywords with **bold** (<strong> tag in HTML) (at most one phrase per paragraph). But use *italics* (<em> tag in HTML) for tonal emphasis, e.g. "That may not be what *you* want, but it's what the *user* wants."

— Style code snippets with the following tags: `<code>` for inline code, attributes and values, and `<pre class="brush: ~">` for multiple lines of code, replacing the ~ with the relevant type of code (see below):

`<code>word-wrap</code>` property

`<code>#container</code>` width

`<pre class="brush: css">...</pre>`

`<pre class="brush: xml">...</pre>`

`<pre class="brush: html">...</pre>`

`<pre class="brush: js">...</pre>`

`<pre class="brush: php">...</pre>`

`<pre class="brush: ruby">...</pre>`

— For code snippets, please use line breaks before the ending brace and after the starting brace, and use one tab space before each property. E.g.:

article {

    width: 80%;

    font-size: 1.5em;

}

Keyboard Shortcuts and Functions

— To show a sequence of actions or the opening of a series of folders, use the `<code>` tag and a rightwards arrow (➜ or `→`) without any other formatting (italics, quotation marks, etc.), e.g. "To create a new document, go to `<code>`File`</code>` ➜ `<code>`New`</code>` ➜ `<code>`Document`</code>."

— When describing keyboard shortcuts, using the plus sign (+) to indicate the pressing and holding of a sequence of keys is the best option, e.g. "*To save a file, press Ctrl/ Cmd + S on Win/Mac.*"

— If the sequence of keys requires pressing but not holding, then write as normal. "*To return to your inbox in Gmail, type* G *and then* I.*"

— If a shortcut action is different between operating systems, then write out in full, e.g. "*If the program is giving you trouble, just force quit by hitting Ctrl/Cmd + Alt + Delete/ Esc on Win/Mac.*"

— If a shortcut action is the same between operating systems but different merely in terminology, then write out the first instance and use a slash thereafter, e.g. "*To open a new tab, press Ctrl/Cmd + T on Win/Mac.*"

File Names and Formats

– Italicize file names, using the `<code>` tag in HTML, e.g.
  "Drag the `<code>`story.txt`</code>` file to your desktop."

– In general, write out file formats as acronyms rather than file extensions, e.g. *PDF*, not *.pdf*.

Images

– High-quality images and screenshots are important in our articles. Please always store full-size images locally in case we may need them again. Images should be attractive and relevant and should not have low-quality artifacts. They should be legible and properly cropped.

– Please avoid rescaling images as much as possible, and crop images to focus on the point of interest.

– Images should be 500 pixels wide and a maximum of 600 pixels high.

– Always make the image a link, either to the source or to a larger version:

  1. if the image cannot be read clearly (i.e. it is a downscaled version of a graph, illustration, etc.), please link to a larger version of the image (which should be uploaded to Smashing Magazine's server as well).

  2. If the image you've chosen a Creative Commons-licensed photo from Flickr or a screenshot in a showcase, please link the image directly to the source, and credit the author as well, e.g. "Color is critical in Web design. (Image: *opensourceway*)".

– Ideally, all images in an article should have the same width and be accompanied by captions. Please make sure to include a larger version if the screenshot is unclear. For example:

  `<p><a href="large-preview.jpg"><img src="image.jpg" width="500" height="300" alt="Description of the image." /></a><br /><em>A short caption that explains the image. <a href="large-preview.jpg">Large version</a>.</em></p>`

– Please avoid using figure numbers in your image captions. Rather, think of ways to connect the image to the rest of the article using meaningful descriptions. Also, please use full stops at the end of image captions.

- Please avoid embedding text into images if possible. While this is sometimes needed, simply putting the text in the body of a paragraph or in an image caption is often more appropriate.

Links

- Footnotes and endnotes make sense in books (where they keep the main content from getting cluttered), but Web articles should really be using the Web for what it was intended (i.e. to link between pages). So please do so. E.g.:

  "Smashing Magazine is organizing *its first conference*," rather than "Smashing Magazine is organizing its first conference (*see here*)".

- Please do not force links to open in a new tab (i.e. omit the target="_blank" attribute).

- Link to an external Web page only once. Linking to different pages from a single website is OK if warranted.

- Make anchor text for links descriptive and only as long as necessary, e.g. *Learn more about WordPress in the Codex.*

- Use human-readable text for link anchors, not URLs (unless significant). So, *Twitter,* not *http://twitter.com/*.

- In general, do not link punctuation or the spaces at the beginning and end of the anchor, e.g. *For more information, see our earlier chapter, "Lessons From A Review Of JavaScript Code."*

- When linking to any document other than a freely accessible Web page, give readers a heads up by providing useful information in brackets, e.g. "*See a specimen of the Calluna font (PDF)."*

- When linking a hash tag to the search results on a social network, such as Twitter, include the entire tag in the link anchor, e.g. *Follow #SxSW2011 for the latest updates.*

- When linking a person's user name to their profile on a social network, spell the user name as it appears. Including the @ symbol in the anchor to indicate a Twitter profile is fine, e.g. *You can find Smashing Magazine @smashingmag.*

Lists

- In general, punctuate lists as you would normal sentences:
  - Introduce the list with a colon, and end it with a period.
  - If the list items are sentence fragments, end with commas.

- If the list items have internal punctuation, end with semi-colons.

- If the list items are full sentences, end with periods.

- Uppercasing the first letter in list items is fine if it improves scanning.

- If every item in a list begins with a heading or short statement, then bold the word and insert a break (<br />). E.g.

  <p>Customers first
Remember that a great Web service lives or dies by how appreciated its users feel.</p>

— In HTML, use <ul> to open up an unordered list, and <ol> to open up an ordered list; for each list item use <li>.

— For lists of links, use the following format: title (hyperlinked), then the author (whether a website or person), then the description after a break.

  <p>"In Defense of Eye Candy," Stephen P. Anderson
This chapter digs deep into how we react emotionally to aesthetically diverse elements.</p>

  The above would look like this:

  "In Defense of Eye Candy," Stephen P. Anderson
  This chapter digs deep into how we react emotionally to aesthetically diverse elements.

Money and Currency

— In general, use US currency. Please note the following styles:

  $8.00, not *eight dollars*.
  $6,000, not *$6 thousand* or *$6K*.
  $4.5 million, not *$4,500,000* or *four and a half million dollars*.

Names

— Use a person's full name when referring to them for the first time, and their last name for subsequent mentions.

— Follow the official spelling of company, website and product names. The footer or "About" page of the official website is usually the best place to check.

- Omit punctuation that could disrupt the flow of the text or cause confusion, unless significant to the context. E.g. '*Aol*', not '*Aol.*' (i.e. no trailing stop) and *Yahoo*, not *Yahoo!*

- Omit the top-level domain (.com, .net, etc.) unless it is part of the name. E.g. *Salesforce.com.*

Names of Web Pages and Buttons

- If the conventional term for a website page makes grammatical sense on its own, then write as normal. Otherwise, uppercase it and enclose in quotation marks, e.g.

  When in doubt, return to the home page.
  Read the privacy policy carefully before signing up.
  Visit the "About" page for a thorough history.
  You will usually find an address on the "Contact" page.

- When referring to buttons in software and on websites, uppercase and enclose in quotation marks.

  Click the "Back" button in your browser.
  Open the "File" menu to see the options for saving.
  Fill out the form, and then hit "Submit."

Numbers

- Spell out numbers one through nine, and use digits for 10 and up. But use only one or the other to be consistent, e.g. *"usually 1 to 10 days."*

- Spell the number if it begins a sentence.

- Add a comma for numbers 1,000 and up.

- Please note the following styles:

  6,000, not *six thousand*.
  4.5 million, not *4,500,000* or *four and a half million*.
  20th century, not *twentieth century*.
  50%, not *50 percent*.
  80° (°), not 80 degrees.

- Abbreviating decades is fine if appropriate and clear. E.g. *Back in the '90s, few people had mobile phones.*

Place Names

- When referring to a city, omit the region or country if the average reader would easily recognize where it is. Otherwise, write out the region or country (without abbreviating) and enclose in commas, e.g.

  Johannesburg will host the next conference.
  In Palo Alto, California, the start-up has found a location for its headquarters.
  Next week, all eyes will be on Nagoya, Japan.

- Refer to the United States as the US and the United Kingdom as the UK.

Pronouns

- Refer to companies with inanimate pronouns (*it*, *that*, *which*), e.g.

  The only exception was Nokia, which beat market forecasts.
  The team performed its job admirably.

- Refer to people with personal pronouns (*who, they*).
- Use the singular "they" if the gender of the person is not known, unless it would be confusing or awkward. Avoid he/she, (s)he, etc. E.g. *If a diplomat needs to make a quick exit, they will usually ask for the washroom.*
- If the gender of a hypothetical figure is implied, then a definite pronoun is fine. E.g. *If Joe Customer insists on a demo, then a demo he shall get.*
- Using second-person pronouns (*you, your*) to refer to the reader is fine, but don't be repetitious.
- To make the writing as clear as possible, please use perspectives consistently. Use "we" (or "I") for your own perspective; use "you" for the reader of the article (who will usually be a professional or aspiring designer); and use "the user(s)" (or "the customer(s)") for the real or imagined users of a website or product (i.e. the end users). E.g.:

  "In this article you will find button designs that you can incorporate into your website to point users to various pages."

— It also helps to avoid saying "you" for something that applies to a website's end user. For example, "If you want to make a contact form truly usable, then set up some JavaScript that enables you to submit the form without refreshing the page." In this case, the second "you" should really be "the user," because the reader of the article will be the one who implements the contact form, not the one who "uses" the contact form. Thus, "...that enables the user to submit the form..."

Units of Measurement

— Use only numerals with units of measurement. And spell out units of time and distance, unless an abbreviation suits the context.

20 miles, not *20 mi.*
5 feet, 4 inches, not *5" 4'*.
20 × 30 pixels (note the multiplication sign *×* (° in HTML, not an *x*) and the spacing).

— The following abbreviations of units of measurement are fine if appropriate to the context and if spelled out in the first instance.

mm (millimeter), *cm*
mph (miles per hour)
KB (kilobyte), *MB*, *GB*, etc.
kbps (kilobyte per second)

Series

— If items in a series are clearly some among many, then omit redundant endings such as "etc." and "and so on." E.g. *Clean code brings many benefits, such as speed, maintainability and compatibility.*

Words as Words

— Use quotation marks to set off words used as words, e.g. *Tim Berners-Lee coined the term "World Wide Web" in 1990.*

Spelling

- — Smashing Magazine follows US spelling (e.g. "*color*" instead of "*colour*," "*organize*" instead of "*organise*"). Please follow the spellings below, and refer to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (merriam-webster.com) for all other spellings.

2-D
3-D
add-on (as in *new Firefox add-on*)
AJAX
auto-complete
auto-suggest
back up (verb)
back-up (noun)
blog
breadcrumb
click-through (noun or adjective, as in *click-through rate*)
client-side
cross-browser (as in "compatible")
crowdsource
CSS (and CSS2, CSS3, etc.)
dot-com (adjective, as in *dot-com bubble*)
drop-down (adjective, as in *drop-down menu*)
eBook
e-commerce
eReader
email
EPUB
FAQ
firewall
freemium
FTP
GIF
grayscale
hash tag
home page
HTML (and HTML4, HTML5, etc.)
iframe
inbox
inline
Internet

IE8 and below (rather than IE<=8)

IE below version 9 (rather than IE<9)

JavaScript

JPEG

keyword

kick-off

log in (verb)

log-in (adjective, as in *log-in name*)

mark up (verb)

markup (noun)

mash-up (noun)

meta tag

microformat

mock-up (noun)

news feed

open source (noun)

open-source (adjective)

paywall

PDF

permalink

PHP

plugin (noun, adjective)

PNG

podcast

pop up (verb)

pop-up (noun, adjective)

QWERTY

real time (noun)

real-time (adjective)

responsive design, adj.

responsive Web design, adj.

Responsive Web Design (as title)

RSS

screencast

screenshot

server-side

sidebar

slide deck

slideshow

smartphone

start up (verb)

start-up (noun, adjective)

style guide

style sheet

TIFF

tooltip (n.)

touchscreen

TrackBack

tweet

URL

user name

user-generated

voicemail

VoIP

Web (as in *the Web*, *Web page*, *Web design*, *Web designer*)

Web 2.0

website (not site, but *site map* is fine.)

Wi-Fi

widescreen (adjective)

wiki

wildcard (as in character substitution)

XHTML

XML

Submitting Your Article To Our WordPress Engine

Here are the login details (your editor will inform you of which URL you should use).

URLs:

http://mgmt.smashingmagazine.com/wp-admin/
http://mcoding.smashingmagazine.com/wp-admin/
http://muxdesign.smashingmagazine.com/wp-admin/
http://mwp.smashingmagazine.com/wp-admin/, etc.

Please store these login credentials carefully:

HTTP Authentication:
Username: xahcohD6Aoghe8ve
Password: Sie7ahY8Que9aing

WordPress Access:
Username: see e-mail
Password: see e-mail

In case you're not familiar with WordPress, please log in and take a look around. Once you are logged in, click on "New Post" in the upper-right area of the page. Please be careful not to work in "Visual" mode, and use "HTML" mode instead. Also, do not add tags nor categories — we'll take care of that.

You can upload images using the first icon next to the "Upload/insert" section. Please pay attention to size; images should be a maximum of 85 to 100 KB but still be of high quality. Please make sure that the image URLs in your article are correct. You can double-check how the article looks like by clicking "Preview" on the right side of the WordPress post's editing window.

Once the article is ready, please click "Submit for Review" and send an email confirming that you have submitted your article for review. Feel free to change the info on your profile page, adding your Twitter account and/or URL. To change your image displayed in the "About the Author" section, you'll have to log in with your email address on www.gravatar.com; the rest will be taken care of automatically.

Disclosures and Conflicting Interests

- Please link no more than once to a website that you're affiliated with.

- Please keep the links to websites that you are affiliated with to as few as possible. We always provide you with the option to add a link in your author biography. Any excessive links will be either altered or removed.

- Please clearly state at the beginning of the article or beside the relevant text any affiliation that you have with a company or product that you're discussing.

(al, vf, il, 11/07/2012)