Formatting & Editing

Headings

* **No More than Four.** In the outline of your document, organize the information so that it uses no more than four levels of headings inside each chapter. The headings go in the following order: Chapter Title, Heading 1, Heading 2, Heading 3, and then Inline Subhead.
* **Check the Structure.** After composing all the text and adjusting headings if necessary, verify that the headings for subtopics are subordinate to the headings for the broader topics they pertain to.
* **Spells Are Special.** Ensure that a spell’s title uses Heading 3, even if the previous heading is not a Heading 2, and structure the text so that spells aren’t nested under a Heading 3.
* **No Subheads in Text.** Make sure that Inline Subhead isn’t used simply to emphasize text or to start a list item. Use bold in those situations.

Special Elements

* **Sidebars.** If your document uses sidebars, verify that each one is located near the text it’s associated with and that no two sidebars are too close together.
* **Vertical Lists.** Check each vertical list in the manuscript to be sure that it’s properly introduced and that each list element begins with a capital letter.
* **Cross-references.** Verify that all cross-references are correct and as specific as they need to be, and that they comply with our capitalization and punctuation style. Every cross-reference must point to a chapter, an appendix, a sidebar, a section, or a table.

Punctuation

* **Inline Subheads.** Check all the inline subheads in your document to be sure that the terminal punctuation uses the same typography (bold italic) as the text of the heading.
* **No Bold or Italic.** In places where a word or a phrase is set in bold or italic inside a sentence, and the text is not an inline subhead, be sure that any trailing punctuation does not also appear in bold or italic.
* **Serial Comma.** When the narrative lists three or more elements separated by commas and the word “and” or “or,” the second-to-last item must be followed by a comma (the serial comma).

Headings

We expect headings to be used logically and consistently throughout a manuscript. Work your way down the heading hierarchy without skipping steps (each heading has an associated style in our Word and InDesign templates):

* Chapter Title
* Heading 1
* Heading 2
* Heading 3
* Inline Subhead [aka Heading 4]

Use a heading for a structural reason, not an aesthetic one. Moreover, don’t use a bunch of inline subheads out of a desire to avoid having more than one Heading 1–3 on the page. If you aren’t happy with the headings in your manuscript, restructure the text. Don’t misuse headings.

Inline Subheads

The lowest level of our heading hierarchy is the inline subhead. It functions as our heading 4. Contrary to past D&D usage, this subhead should be followed by terminal punctuation, not a colon. Use a period, an exclamation point, or a question mark.

If you’re using our styles in Word or InDesign, apply the Inline Subhead style to the subhead (including the terminal punctuation). If you don’t have access to the style, set the subhead in bold italics to distinguish it from text that is simply bold.

Here’s an example of doing it correctly:

Keen Senses. You have proficiency in the Perception skill.

Here’s an example of doing it incorrectly:

**Keen Senses:** You have proficiency in the Perception skill.

Don’t confuse an inline subhead with the bolded title of a stat block entry or other data field. Such an entry rarely contains a complete sentence. The entry takes the form of a bolded variable name—sometimes followed by a colon—and then the variable’s value. Here are examples:

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Child Names:** Ara, Bryn, Del, Eryn, Faen, Innil, Lael, Mella

**Range:** 60 ft.

Finally, don’t use an inline subhead when you simply want to emphasize a word or phrase. Use bold for such emphasis, unless the emphasized term or phrase appears in the section’s heading. Then, no emphasis is required. For example, if a Heading 3 says “Ki Points,” don’t bold “ki points” in the associated running text.

Exceptions in the RPG

One thing in the RPG defies the heading hierarchy: the **name of a spell** at the top of a spell description always uses the Heading 3 style, even if preceded by Heading 1 or Chapter Title. Given this fact, a section of spells shouldn’t be introduced by a Heading 3.

Some adventures contain other exceptions to the heading hierarchy, but such exceptions are nonstandard and shouldn’t be mimicked without the managing editor’s approval.

Sidebars

Avoid overusing sidebars. If a sidebar must follow a particular section of text to be intelligible, it probably shouldn’t be a sidebar. The best sidebars can appear anywhere on a page and still make sense.

Formatting Game Terms

In the RPG, certain terms receive special typographic treatment. Examples here are given in curly brackets.

Terms to Capitalize

* Ability scores {Strength, Intelligence}
* Action names {the Attack action, the Dash action}
* Armor Class
* Artifacts {*Axe of the Dwarvish Lords*}
* Class features {Sneak Attack, Rage}
* Difficulty Class
* Dungeon Master
* Feats {Loremaster}
* Languages {Common, Dwarvish, Elvish}
* Planes of existence {the Abyss, the Nine Hells, the Ethereal Plane, the Plane of Air}
* Skills {Arcana, Perception}
* Traits in races and monsters {Aquatic, Keen Senses}

Terms to Set in Bold

Stat block names in running text {three **hobgoblins**, one **drow mage**, two **fire elementals**}

By default, a bold stat block name refers to a stat block in the *Monster Manual*. If you’re referring to a stat block in your manuscript, instead of in the Monster Manual, use a parenthetical to make that fact clear. Here’s an example: “Four **air elemental myrmidons** (see chapter 7) lurk here.”

Make sure no text gets between the number of monsters appearing and the name of the stat block. For example, write “four goblins,” not “four loud goblins”; that adjective needs to go somewhere else in the sentence.

Set a monster’s name in bold only the first time it appears in an encounter area or other subsection.

Terms to Italicize

Artifacts {*Axe of the Dwarvish Lords*}

Magic items {*flame tongue*}

Spells {*magic missile*}

The italicized terms are treated as titles, even when they don’t use title capitalization. Don’t confuse one of these titles with an effect it creates (see *Chicago* 8.174). For example, the *wall of fire* spell produces a wall of fire, not a *wall of fire* (the latter would imply an infinite loop).