**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.

**Gender**

* **Neutrality.** Examine your manuscript for uses of “he or she,” “his or hers,” and “him or her.” Replace them with language that is not gender-specific. If necessary, use a plural pronoun such as “they” or “their.” See *CMS* 5.255 for an extensive discussion of alternatives.
* **Humans Only.** Check to be sure that all forms of “man” and “woman” are used only to identify human characters.
* **Feminine Nouns.** Verify that feminine forms of nouns, such as “actress” and “goddess,” do not appear in the narrative (though such terms are permitted in dialogue and other in-world references).

**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).

**Word Usage**

* **Drop the *s*.** Don’t let “towards,” “backwards,” and similar words creep into your narration; use “toward” and so forth.
* **Contractions.** Limit or avoid the use of contractions that end in *s*, such as “who’s” and “he’s,” because the meaning is not always immediately clear.
* **Half.** Make sure that “one-half” does not appear in your work unless you’re referring specifically to the fraction. In other cases, “half” is sufficient.

**D&Details**

Special requirements apply to the language of the D&D game. To learn how we do things, it’s essential for any writer or editor to be familiar with how the rules in the *Player’s Handbook*, *Dungeon Master’s Guide*, and *Monster Manual* are phrased. Some of the nuances that often get overlooked are summarized here.

* **Class Features.** Capitalize a noun or a noun phrase when it is used as the name of a class feature.
* **Traits.** Similarly, capitalize a noun or a noun phrase when it is used as the name of a racial trait or a trait of a monster.
* **Bold Monsters.** If you’re writing adventure material that relies on monster stat blocks, be sure that boldface is properly applied (along with a cross-reference, when needed) where the reference to the stat block appears.
* **Spell vs. Effect.** If you use the same words to identify a spell and describe its effect, use italic only for the spell name. (The casting of a *fireball* spell produces a fireball.)
* **Plane Speaking.** Check any mentions of planes of existence for the proper preposition. Something is **on** a plane whose name includes “Plane” (such as the Plane of Air), but **in** a plane whose name does not include the word (such as the Abyss).
* **Proficiency.** Locate all uses of “proficient” or “proficiency” in a game-rule context and be sure each has the proper preposition. Someone is proficient **in** a skill, a language, or some other capability, but **with** a tool, a weapon, or some other object.
* **Make it So.** Double-check all rules text and stat blocks where an ability check or a saving throw is mentioned, to be sure that making the check or the saving throw is not treated as equivalent to succeeding on it.
* **Magical Advice.** Be sensitive to the use of the adjective “magic” versus “magical.” The former usually applies to objects or phenomena that have magical qualities (magic item, magic trap, magic aura); the latter is often used in other contexts (magical talent, magical atmosphere).
* **Success or Failure.** Be careful with expressions of success or failure. When players roll dice, characters don’t succeed or fail; their checks and saving throws do. Likewise, characters don’t hit or miss when they attack; their attack rolls do.
* **Advantage.** Look at any uses of “advantage” (or “disadvantage”) as a game rule to ensure that the expressions are properly worded. An attack roll, saving throw, or ability check is made **with** advantage. A creature has advantage **on** the roll, saving throw, or check that it attempts.

**Old Habits**

If you’re familiar with D&D rulebooks from earlier editions of the game—particularly if you’ve done any writing for those versions—you might have picked up a few ways of expressing things that we have abandoned. These tips will help you determine if those old habits need to be broken.

* **Extra (d) Damage.** In an expression of extra damage, the word “extra” goes in front of the amount of damage. For instance, we don’t say “1d6 extra damage.”
* **No to Points.** In contrast to earlier editions, “points of” does not appear in a damage expression.
* **Yes to Types.** Every effect deals damage of a particular type, such as bludgeoning or fire. The “Damage and Healing” section in chapter 9 of the *Player’s Handbook* has a list of all the damage types in the game.
* **Hit Point Maximum.** This is a new term in the game. Don’t confuse it with “maximum hit points,” which is no longer used.
* **Irregular Plurals.** Several monster names (such as djinni, efreeti, and slaad) form their plurals in nonstandard fashion. In other cases, the singular and plural forms of a monster’s name are identical. Earlier editions treat some of these plurals differently. Consult the word list in the style guide for the proper way to express them.
* **Save.** If you use the word “save” in rules text involving a saving throw, check to be sure that it’s not treated as equivalent to “successful saving throw.” That practice, from earlier versions of the rules, has been abandoned. Also, watch out for “Wisdom save” (and the like), which should always be “Wisdom saving throw.”