

# Author Quick Start

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Prepared by the Staff of *Interpreter*

This document has been prepared to assist you, as an author, in preparing your manuscript for potential publication in *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Faith and Scholarship*.

## Background Information

No single document can be all things to all people. With that in mind, here are some resources that will help you understand how you submit your paper to *Interpreter*, what we do with it, and the processes that we employ.

- “Submissions.” This is the online page where you actually submit your paper to *Interpreter*. It also includes information about the publication process. Available online at [interpreterfoundation.org/submissions/](https://interpreterfoundation.org/submissions/).
- “Peer Review.” This describes what it takes to be a peer reviewer for *Interpreter* and how the peer reviewer should evaluate submissions. Understanding this, as an author, can help you prepare and revise your submission. Available online at [journal.interpreterfoundation.org/peer-review/](https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/peer-review/).
- “A Long and Winding Road.” This article, published in *Interpreter* at the end of 2023, discusses the publication process in detail. Available online at [journal.interpreterfoundation.org/a-long-and-winding-road/](https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/a-long-and-winding-road/).
- *Interpreter Style Guide*. This is the must-have resource for anyone writing for *Interpreter*. This document—along with other documents mentioned in the style guide—provides the nuts-and-bolts guidance on how your paper should be put together. Available online at [interpreterfoundation.org/Interpreter-Style-Guide.pdf](https://interpreterfoundation.org/Interpreter-Style-Guide.pdf).

## Ideas for Better Writing

Experience has demonstrated that the following ideas can help you in creating the best paper possible.

- **Be organized.** Start with an outline and then use your outline for headings in your article.
- **Be concise.** Longer, run-on sentences are more difficult for readers to understand. Shorter sentences are easier to process and hold the reader’s attention longer. Look for opportunities to break long sentences. At the same time, many short sentences in a row sounds choppy, so seek a balance. (Moderation in all things.)
- **Be clear.** Write with a goal of avoiding ambiguity. The more specific you can make your prose, the less confusing it will be for the reader.
- **Be focused.** Your article should not be meandering. Construct a focused hypothesis and then stick to supporting that hypothesis. It is essential to have a clear thesis statement near the beginning of your paper to aid the reader in following your logic. New concepts that are introduced later in the paper may not seem as clearly related to the content if they are not first indicated in the thesis statement.
- **Be fair.** When considering the arguments of others who have written in your subject area, do not cherry pick. Engage with existing scholarship in a responsible manner.
- **Be complete.** When engaging with existing scholarship, don’t ignore the ideas and arguments you

don't like or to which you don't have answers. The goal of the reader is to seek for truth and your goal is to let the reader know that your approach may help in that. When you ignore the thoughts of others, readers will quickly discover you are trying to "sell" something and not help them reach their goal.

- **Be charitable.** It is a safe bet that your hypothesis and arguments are not so completely new that nobody has ever thought of it before. It is also a safe bet that those who have thought (or written) about your subject area won't agree with you completely. Treat the ideas of others in a way you would want your ideas to be treated. ("I don't suffer fools lightly" is not an admirable character trait in writers.)
- **Be tentative.** When establishing your arguments, don't use absolutist language like *never*, *always*, or *every time*. Doing so sets your arguments up for failure, as all that needs to be done to disprove an absolute is to provide one contrary example. Instead, use language such as *mostly*, *commonly*, *maybe*, *seems to be*, or *often*.
- **Be open-minded.** Your article will go through peer review, and it may be a painful process for you. Nobody likes having their ideas critiqued and challenged. If you approach comments with an open mind, then you can work with your editor to make your paper more academically sound.
- **Be gracious.** When your manuscript is going through development and the editorial process, be kind and gracious toward those working on your article. Their purpose is to help you create the best expression of your ideas possible, and they have skills that can benefit your article. Nobody spins literary gold that cannot be improved.

## Preparing Your Paper

In the broadest possible sense, a style guide defines how a paper should be constructed. It sets forth the rules for just about everything related to authoring, editing, and publishing.

In the literary world, there are scores of different style guides. In your educational and workplace experiences, you may have become familiar with one or more style guides. One of the most widely used style guides is *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Now in its seventeenth edition, the guide provides well over 1,100 pages of explanation, rules, guidance, examples, and minutia.

As voluminous as it is, *The Chicago Manual of Style* cannot provide exacting and detailed guidance for all publications. Thus, publishers (such as The Interpreter Foundation) create their own style guides. Such guides adapt the guidance in other style guides to the specific needs of the publisher. As explained in our style guide, we rely upon three specific style guides to form the basis of our approach to publishing:

- *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th ed.
- *Style Guide for Publications of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 8th ed.
- *SBL Handbook of Style*, 2nd ed.

You are welcome to read all these publications, though you are not expected to do so. We as publishers, however, must be familiar with them and do our best to apply the style rules they contain to all of the papers and books that we publish. You can help in that process by crafting your paper to comport with those rules. Plus, an added bonus is that you'll be much less frustrated by the publication process as your paper is developed, source checked, edited, and typeset.

Even if you are much more comfortable with following a different style guide, we expect papers submitted to and accepted by us to adhere to the *Interpreter Style Guide* and to the style guides on which it is based.

In this rest of this document you'll find some quick guidance — big things you should look out for that will help make the processing of your paper smoother. You will, from time to time, see references to specific sections of the *Interpreter Style Guide* or one of the three style guides mentioned above. (References to the *Interpreter Style Guide* use the acronym *ISG*.) **This Author Quick Start should not be treated as a replacement for the Interpreter Style Guide.** You would do well to read the *Interpreter Style Guide* fully, using the information in this document as your key to understanding the style guide.

## Organization and Headings

It is a good idea to create your paper with organization in mind from the beginning. In other words, start with an outline, and then you can write from that outline. It will help you to be more focused and will benefit your reader.

Assuming you start with an outline, the different parts of your outline can become the headings in your paper. *Interpreter* allows no more than three heading levels in a document. If you are writing your paper in Microsoft Word, you should use the styles “Heading 1,” “Heading 2,” and “Heading 3” for these headings. Keep in mind that the title of your paper is not considered a heading level.

It is also a good idea to not use just primary headings (Heading 1 headings) in your article. Dividing a paper into subheadings can be helpful to both reviewers and readers in revealing the structure of a scholarly presentation.

It is tempting to put the “Introduction” or “Background” heading at the beginning of your paper. Don’t fall for the temptation; people expect that the beginning of your paper will be introductory in nature, and you don’t need a heading to call out the obvious (*ISG 2.4*).

There should be no “lone headings” at any heading level (*ISG 2.6*). Thus, the following is an incorrect organization of an article:

Taking Up the Light Yoke of Christ  
 An Early Christian Perspective  
     The Unique Approach of Peter  
 Sacred Rest, the House of Rest, and the Day of Rest  
     Sabbath Connections  
     The Proper Place of Fasting  
 Expanding Our Horizons

It is the heading “The Unique Approach of Peter” that is a lone heading. Only use a subheading for a section if you will have at least two of the same-level heading. (This is the case with the “Sacred Rest, the House of Rest, and the Day of Rest” heading—it is further divided into two subheadings; neither of them is a lone heading.)

Remember—the purpose of headings is to organizationally divide your paper so that readers can understand the structure of your content. A lone heading doesn’t divide anything.

Finally, a word about sequential headings (*ISG 2.7*). You should have no instance of two sequential headings without any text between those headings. For instance, you may believe it best to immediately follow a primary heading with a secondary heading. This is not proper, however. You need to ensure there is text following every heading.

More detailed information about organization and headings can be found in *ISG* section 2.

## Grammar, Punctuation, and Usage

Use American English for your spelling, punctuation, and usage. We understand that authors may live anywhere in the world and each has followed a different education path. Even so, try to avoid non-American English variations. Our copy editors will try to catch the variations, but you make their job harder if you don’t start with the goal of following our requirements.

When indicating a possessive form of proper names ending in *s*, add an apostrophe and an additional *s* (*ISG 5.1*). For instance, the possessive form of *Moses* would be *Moses’s* and the possessive form of *Ellis* would be *Ellis’s*. (And, yes, the possessive form of *Jesus* would be *Jesus’s*.)

In everyday speech and informal writing, exclamation marks on comments, even long ones, are used in the sense of “I really mean that!” or “isn’t that amazing!” Such usage is usually inappropriate in technical and scholarly writing. Allow the reader to decide if a point is amazing or not without using an exclamation point to try to decide for them.

When you create an inline list of three or more items, make sure you use serial (Oxford) commas (*ISG 4.4*). For example:

John and Stacy ran down the road, hopped in their car, and sped off in pursuit of the taxicab.

Serial commas are used between each clause (item) in the list and before the final conjunction (in this case, *and*). If the list of items may contain commas within any of the clauses, then separate the items in your list with semicolons:

John and Stacy ran down the road; hopped in their car, even though it was pointed in the wrong direction; and sped off in pursuit of the taxicab.

When you use numbers within your text, spell them out. (Not years, but numbers used for other purposes.) Any numbers between zero and one hundred should be spelled out. Numbers over a thousand should include commas every three digits from the right. (A full discussion on dealing with numbers can be found in *ISG* section 7.)

When referring to the Church, see *ISG* 6.6–8.

There is a very high probability that you will use dates either within your text or within citations. You should use the day-month-year format for all dates (*ISG* section 8). Here are a couple of examples. The first is an example from within a paragraph and the second is a footnote or endnote:

John Thomas appeared at the meeting on 22 January 1835 to confront Church leaders on the issue.

7. Mary Richards, “Power of covenant-keeping women celebrated during Relief Society anniversary worldwide gathering,” *Church News*, 17 March 2024, [thechurchnews.com/leaders/2024/03/17/worldwide-relief-society-anniversary-devotional-president-nelson-covenants-priesthood-power/](https://www.thechurchnews.com/leaders/2024/03/17/worldwide-relief-society-anniversary-devotional-president-nelson-covenants-priesthood-power/).

## Using Lists

A common element in any paper is a list. There are two types of lists you can use — bulleted lists and numbered lists.

Knowing which list to use is crucial. The general guidance is that you should use a numbered list if you are detailing steps that must be followed in a particular order. In all other instances you should use a bulleted list.

## Using Tables

Sometimes it is helpful for your paper to have a table, something with rows and columns. If you add tables to your paper, here are things you should keep in mind:

- Any table should be original with you. If you use a table from a different source, you will need written permission from the author of that table.
- Your table should not have too many columns. Remember that the print area for the Journal is only 4.4 inches, and books don’t offer much more space.
- Your table should not have too much information, vertically, within each row. When printed, rows cannot straddle a page break, so shorter rows are better.
- Your table needs a heading. It will be something like this:

**Table 1.** My awesome information I want you to know.

- Each table should be numbered sequentially, and table numbers cannot be table 3a, table 3b, etc. They must only be numbers.
- The heading portion (the part right after “Table 1.”) should be short and to the point, no more than one short sentence.
- Each column in your table should have a column heading that, very concisely, explains what the information in the column represents.
- Your table must be referenced within the text of your paper. Rather than saying “As you see in the table below . . .”, say “As shown in table 1 . . .”. This allows typesetters to know where your table should be placed, approximately. (Rule of thumb: The table is placed as soon as practicable after the first textual reference to that table.)

## Using Figures

Some papers include figures. These include: charts, illustrations, photos, and the like. Keep the following in mind if you want to use figures:

- You must have permission to use any non-original artwork in your paper. This permission must be procured in writing.
- We need digital copies of any figures for your article, one file per figure. The resolution of the figures should be as high as possible.
- If you are using charts or graphs created in a spreadsheet program (or some other software), we will need the original files used to create the charts or graphs.
- Remember that when your figure is placed in the Journal, it will be resized so it is no larger than 4.4 inches wide and approximately 7 inches tall. (Figures in books may be a bit larger.) Resizing can obscure detail you may want the reader to see.
- Each figure should be numbered sequentially, and figure numbers cannot be figure 6a, figure 6b, etc. They must only be numbers.
- Be aware of how many figures you are attempting to include in your paper relative to the amount of text in the paper. If the figures are too dense (there are too many of them relative to the text), then your paper will be very difficult to typeset.
- Your figure must be referenced within the text of your paper. Rather than saying, “As you see in the figure below . . . ,” say, “As shown in figure 1 . . . .” This allows typesetters to know where the figure should be placed, approximately. (Rule of thumb: Figures are placed as soon as practicable after the first textual reference to that figure.)

## Preparing an Abstract

If your paper is being published in the Journal, we need an abstract. This abstract will appear at the beginning of the paper and will be used in email notifications sent to subscribers.

The abstract should be designed to accomplish two purposes: It gives an “executive overview” of what your paper accomplishes, and it entices the reader to read the article. The abstract needs to summarize the entire article, including the conclusions, not just the thesis explored.

If your paper is a book review, don’t use the name of the book being reviewed within the abstract. Abstracts should be no longer than a single paragraph. Do not use notes within an abstract (JSG 11.7).

## Preparing an Author Biography

At the end of your paper and in the authors’ section of our website, we want to tell people a bit about you. This is the purpose of the author biography. This should be short (no more than a single paragraph) and start with your name. Here’s an example of an author bio for one of our lesser-known authors:

**Allen Wyatt** *has been working in the computer and publishing industries for over three decades. He has written more than sixty books explaining many facets of working with computers, as well as numerous magazine articles. He has been publishing free weekly newsletters about Microsoft Word, Excel, and Windows since 1997. Allen has also helped educate thousands of individuals through seminars, lectures, and online video courses. He has served as vice president of FAIR, founding president of the More Good Foundation, and is currently a vice president of The Interpreter Foundation. He has written articles for the FARMS Review, Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship, and various online venues, including Meridian Magazine. In the Church, he has served in many ward, stake, region, and area callings. He lives in southwest Wyoming with his wife and takes great joy in his three children and nine grandchildren.*

As you are writing your biography, don’t include information that will date quickly. For instance, don’t indicate that you will be graduating this Spring or that you are expecting your third grandchild. You should talk about

your education and may talk, briefly, about your family, but when you include date markers such as these, they will be out of date shortly after your paper is published.

### Preparing an Author's Note

Some authors choose to include an Author's Note at the end of their paper. Typically this is used to thank people who helped the author or had significant impact on the paper. An Author's Note is entirely optional. If you choose to include such a note, enclose it in [brackets] and start with the text "Author's Note." Here is an example of such a note:

**[Author's Note:** *I would like to express gratitude for the assistance of Melissa Larrieu BA, Skellefteå, Sweden, for editing, primary source research, and translation of non-English citations.*]

An Author's Note should be direct and concise, written in the first person. Author's Notes will be edited like other parts of a paper.

### Notes and Citations

One of the tell-tale signs of a scholarly paper is that it uses notes. These notes can appear either at the bottom of the page (footnotes) or at the end of the paper (endnotes). We prefer footnotes but may need to use endnotes if individual footnotes are too long or your notes are too voluminous. We will make the decision of whether to use footnotes or endnotes when your paper is typeset. You, when writing, should always use footnotes.

Notes are used for two purposes. The less-common purpose is to include tangential information that would otherwise detract from the flow of your main prose. The most common purpose is to provide citations.

A citation is needed anytime you quote a source or make an assertion that needs substantiation. There are many rules that define how citations should be put together, and a fuller treatment is provided in *ISG* section 11 and *Chicago* chapter 14. Table 1 provides examples of several common types of notes and how they should be formatted.

**Table 1.** Examples of citations used in notes.

Type	Example Note	Comments
Book citation	12. William G. Dever, <i>Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?</i> (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 227.	See <i>ISG</i> 11.12–19. Books always include a publisher's location, company name, and publication year. The page number is prefaced by a comma.
Journal citation	5. Warren P. Aston, "Across Arabia with Lehi and Sariah: 'Truth Shall Spring out of the Earth,'" <i>Journal of Book of Mormon Studies</i> 15, no. 2 (2006): 15.	See <i>ISG</i> 11.22–23. Journals almost always include a volume and use a colon before the page number instead of a comma.
Magazine citation	39. Maurine and Scot Proctor, "Where Did Nephi Build the Ship?," <i>This People</i> , Fall 1993, 40–53.	See <i>ISG</i> 11.23.
General Conference address citation	10. Joaquin E. Costa, "The Power of Jesus Christ in Our Lives Every Day," <i>Liahona</i> , November 2023, 40, <a href="http://churchofjesuschrist.org/study/liahona/2023/11/24/costa">churchofjesuschrist.org/study/liahona/2023/11/24/costa</a> .	See <i>ISG</i> 11.24.
Dictionary	15. <i>Webster's New International Dictionary</i> , 3rd ed., s.v. "charity."	See <i>ISG</i> 11.32.
Personal communication citation	22. John Q. Doe, email correspondence to author, 24 June 2023.	See <i>ISG</i> 11.28. For dates, see <i>ISG</i> 8.1.

Many, many rules determine how a citation should be formatted, thus it is easy to make mistakes. In general, mimic the examples shown above and you should be good. You will, however, want to pay particular attention to the order of citation elements, how punctuation is used in the citations, and what should be in italics (and what shouldn't).

For instance, make sure that when a publisher is involved (as in the case of a book), you need to put the city, followed by a colon, then the publisher name, followed by a comma, then the year of publication. Another

common mistake is to include a comma after a book title and before the parenthetical publisher information. The comma is correctly placed after the parenthetical information and before a page number.

It is also important to remember that the examples in Table 1 are for the first time a source is cited. If a source is being cited a second time, use a shortened citation (*ISG* 11.8). For instance, the following is a shortened citation to the journal citation provided in Table 1:

19. Aston, "Across Arabia with Lehi and Sariah," 23.

When providing a citation for a specific quote, make sure that the citation provides the specific page number(s) on which the quote occurs in the source. In such cases, do not provide page number references to just the first page of the source or the entire range of all pages in the source. Remember that you are providing information so that the reader, if desired, can locate your source and check whether you have used the quote properly or so he can read more from the source.

Many sources are available online in today's connected world. If your source is available online, make sure you provide a URL for that source (*ISG* section 12). That being said, be aware that a URL, by itself, does not constitute a valid citation. Make sure you put together a full citation as described above and in the *Interpreter Style Guide*.

### Using Block Text

If you are quoting from a source or scripture and the quote is longer, then you should format it as block text. This simply means that the quote is in its own paragraph(s) and that it is indented on the left and right to set it off (as a "block") from the main text.

Block text should be used if your quote is over forty-five to fifty words long. You don't need to put quote marks around the block text.

Any citation to the block text should be placed at the end of the block text. Such attribution should not precede the block text (*ISG* 10.2). If the block quote is a scripture, then the citation for the scripture is placed at the end of the block quote in parentheses.

### Gathering Sources

When you cite a source in your paper, make a copy of that source. When it comes time to source check your paper, we will need those copies in order to verify your citations.

- If your source is online, we just need the URL of the source.
- If your source is from a journal, we need a copy of the page (or pages) on which your quote is located. We do not need a copy if the journal being cited is *Interpreter* or *BYU Studies*.
- If your source is from a book, we need a copy of the page (or pages) on which your quote is located, plus a copy of the legal page for the book. (The legal page shows the title and publication information for the book.)

Copies can be scans or photos. (Some authors use the camera in their phone to take photos of sources.) Your personal notes about the sources are not acceptable; we need the actual pages and legal information. We require the copies to be provided in digital format. If you only have them in paper (printed) format and you don't have a scanner, most modern copiers will allow you to scan paper to a digital format. (Visit your local copy shop if you have questions about how this works.)

### Additional Information

If you need additional information about how to format or prepare your paper, be sure to check out the references provided at the beginning of this document. Pay particular attention to the full *Interpreter Style Guide*, which, again, is available at this location: [interpreterfoundation.org/Interpreter-Style-Guide.pdf](http://interpreterfoundation.org/Interpreter-Style-Guide.pdf).

If you have any questions, be sure to contact your editor at the Foundation. We look forward to working with you to make your paper the absolute best it can be.