



DeYoung Consulting Services

Helping People Learn up to Their Potential

Here's a quick quiz. Which of these is correct?

My husband was awarded his Ph.D. in theology.
My husband was awarded his PhD in theology.

It's a trick question. Both answers are correct. According to the Associated Press Stylebook (published 2002) writers should include the periods in an academic degree. But the 15th edition of The Chicago Manual of Style omits them.

So what's a writer to do when faced with contradictory writing style advice? Forge your own path and stick to it. The best way to do that is to develop your own style manual.

While book, magazine and newspaper publishers use official customized style manuals to guide their choice of words, yours doesn't have to quite so formal. The key is to be consistent with your word choice and spellings. A style manual, whether saved on your computer for reference or on a Post-it note in front of you, can help.

For example, while most publishers use *e-mail* as the abbreviation for electronic mail, you've undoubtedly seen *email*, as well. Either one will pass. Just be consistent in which version you use. Other words that are often spelled differently are: *Website/Web site/website* and *on-line/online*. Again, stick to one spelling throughout all your writing.

Here are a few tips to help you develop a consistent style in your writing.

- Check with your communications department to see if your organization has an official style guide to get you started.
- Include in your personal style guide any recurring punctuation and spelling troubles you have. You won't need to return to the dictionary or grammar book every time you encounter the situation.
- You might also want to add the names of fonts commonly used in your organization and the titles of key employees.

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If you're looking for a handy online reference, try the [University of Minnesota Style Manual](#). But keep in mind every industry and organization has its own preferences.

If you'd like help creating a style manual or reviewing training materials for consistency of style, give me a call. I'm available to improve your written educational curriculum and consult on the best learning experiences.

Karen DeYoung is principal of DeYoung Consulting Services, which provides quality learning experiences for individuals and groups. We develop training materials and activities that advance individual, team, and organizational learning. Our work is done with integrity, reliability, and accountability.

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