

ALE Project Guidelines and Style Guide

1. Quality of work completed

The first and hopefully obvious step is “do no harm.” Beyond that, we ask that your completed text be not only correct grammatically, but also clear, polished, and well-organized. As language experts, our role is not merely correcting errors, but also elevating the level of language and presentation to meet the client's needs.

Read your project's instructions!

Then go back and read them again. Check whether the client has specified a style guide to follow (e.g. APA, Chicago Manual of Style, a journal's guidelines). If you have a question, ask your managing editor.

2. Our stance on machine translation

For translation projects, we ask that you do not use Google Translate or any other machine translation as the basis for parts of your translation. This is because we are looking for a target text that is clear and coherent independent of the source text, and the use of machine translation is detrimental to sentence structure and readability. You can of course use online tools to help you with individual words or phrases. If we identify that sections were translated using machine translation (even if you then edited them) and the quality is

substandard, we reserve the right to deduct payment for the project.

3. Leaving a comment

When you'd like to leave a comment with a query or in order to draw attention to a certain word or passage, use Word's comment feature and make sure to:

- Address the client, not the editor
- If you are undecided between two ways of wording a sentence or passage, use one in the main text, and include the other as a suggestion in a comment. Be as specific as possible so that the client can change the text themselves if they so choose.
- Be polite! Make suggestions instead of passing judgement.
 - Instead of: "This doesn't make any sense" → "I am not sure I understood your meaning here."
 - Instead of: "I think this is better" → "Perhaps replace this with 'xyz'"

4. Basic formatting guidelines

If you have not been asked to do formatting on your project, stick to the format in which you have received the document. That said, use common sense to make sure the document is neat and organized. When no other preferences are indicated, we suggest the following:

- Write in 12 point, 1.5” spacing, 6 point space after each paragraph. Left and right justified.
- Use Times New Roman font.
- One space, not two, between punctuation and the next sentence.
- Avoid using contractions such as don’t, can’t, wasn’t etc. in academic texts.
- Use smart quotes (“ ” and ‘ ’), **not** straight quotes (" " and ' '). If you do not know how to change this setting in Microsoft Word, please [read this article](#).
- Following American style, use punctuation inside quote marks. Semicolons and colons go outside of quote marks.
- We prefer en-dashes to em-dashes; take care to use hyphens only in the proper spots

5. When in doubt – be consistent!

If no style guide has been provided, you can refer to [the standard style guides](#) for the relevant field. Whatever stylistic choices you make, be sure to follow them consistently throughout the document. (For example, use of Oxford comma – we prefer you use it, but if you don’t be consistent.)

If the project includes text that requires transliteration or the insertion of primary sources (or the translation of primary sources) and you are unsure exactly what you are expected to do, please be in touch with us.

6. Before you submit....

Make sure to review your work. Ensure that you have followed instructions fully. We recommend the following proofreading tools: Grammarly, PerfectIt, and Edifix.

Especially for translations, read through your work again with fresh eyes (even out loud) and make any changes you see fit. Remember: A good translation should read as if it was originally written in the target language! See this blog post on avoiding 'translatese' and [improving your translations](#).