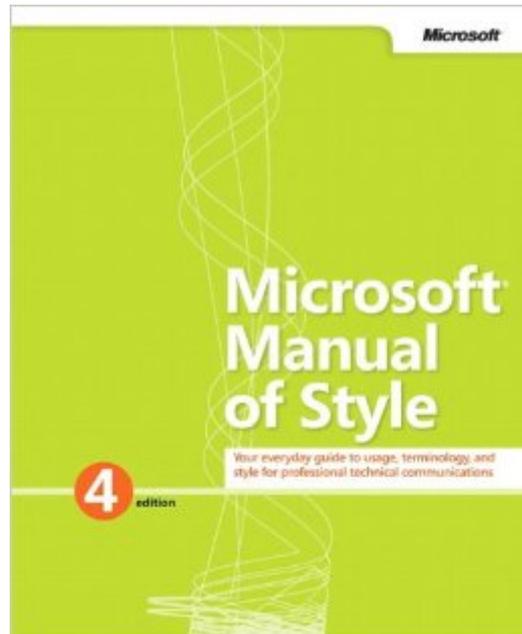


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Microsoft Manual Of Style (4th Edition)



Synopsis

Maximize the impact and precision of your message! Now in its fourth edition, the Microsoft Manual of Style provides essential guidance to content creators, journalists, technical writers, editors, and everyone else who writes about computer technology. Direct from the Editorial Style Board at Microsoftâyou get a comprehensive glossary of both general technology terms and those specific to Microsoft; clear, concise usage and style guidelines with helpful examples and alternatives; guidance on grammar, tone, and voice; and best practices for writing content for the web, optimizing for accessibility, and communicating to a worldwide audience. Fully updated and optimized for ease of use, the Microsoft Manual of Style is designed to help you communicate clearly, consistently, and accurately about technical topicsâacross a range of audiences and media.

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Customer Reviews

My review consists of commentary for three areas of Microsoft's update: (1) the pros and cons of the manual, (2) stylistic considerations, and (3) the need for the manual. The Pros and Cons of the Manual

Pros

1. It is affordable. I have yet to meet someone who paid the full purchase price for the previous edition, which approximated nearly \$100 upon release.
2. It includes conventions for documenting newer technologies and content. The standards for documenting XML-based content and mobile technologies will probably be helpful to me.
3. Sensible prescriptions. Although many might disagree with specific style prescriptions, I find the general prescriptions straightforward and well-advised, as described in the section "Principles of Microsoft style."

Cons

1. It lacks an electronic

version. This is no small detail as the printed book is not in color. I was specifically curious to find out how Microsoft prescribes documenting its new Windows 7 color scheme in its boxes (by default, the boundaries are translucent, showing whatever is behind it). Unfortunately, the book provides no enlightenment. However, I found an advance, sample chapter on the internet, and only then could I determine that Microsoft uses a silver color, and not the default scheme (unless, of course, they are simply using the default scheme over silver wallpaper, in which case the prescription is to change the default Windows wallpaper). Color is important, and that is just one reason why an electronic version is needed.² It is decidedly less readable than the previous version.

As a technical writer, the Microsoft Manual of Style is the first style guide I reach for when I am working on a documentation project when the organization doesn't have a corporate style guide. Now, Microsoft has published the Microsoft Manual of Style, 4th Edition that includes some timely updates documenting how Microsoft's editorial style is adapting and changing to meet new technologies. The Microsoft Manual of Style is a soup to nuts guide to the Microsoft style for writing technical documentation. I like its holistic approach that includes principles of Microsoft Style, web content, international audience considerations, writing about user interface guidelines, and writing procedures. It rounds out with a well-documented usage dictionary. The Microsoft writers and editors behind this edition have put together a solid guide that can serve both experienced and novice writers alike even just to help resolve stylistic arguments during the writing and editing of documents. Some notable updates in this edition include how Microsoft handles writing about mobile phones, gestures, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), and for international audiences. Chapter 2 Content for the web could really benefit from some screen shot examples from Microsoft web properties to show examples. It also is light on Community-based content coverage. Sparing my feelings as a technical writer, I realize community provided content is playing a role in documentation and support. Unfortunately, I've had my issues with community provided content as a user seeking support online for technical issues.

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMS), now in its 16th edition, is the de facto a style guide for American writers. It deals with aspects of editorial practice, grammar, usage, document preparation and more. It's just one of many style guides for writers. The Microsoft Manual of Style, just released in its 4th edition, attempts to do for the technical writers what the CMS has done for journalists and other writers. A style guide or style manual is a set of standards for the writing and design of documents, either for general use or for a specific publication, organization or field. The

implementation of a style guide provides uniformity in style and formatting of a document. There are hundreds of different style guides available - from the EU Interinstitutional style guide, The Elements of Style by Strunk and White, to the Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law and many more. Microsoft's goal in creating this style manual is about standardizing, clarifying and simplifying the creation of content by providing the latest usage guidelines that apply across the genres of technical communications. The manual has over 1,000 items, so that each author does not have to make the same 1,000 decisions. Anyone who has read Microsoft documentation knows it has a consistent look, feel and consistency; be it a manual for Visual C#, Forefront or Excel. With that, the Microsoft Manual of Style is an invaluable guide to anyone who wants to better the documentation they write. For example, many writers incorrectly use words such as less, fewer and under as synonymous terms.

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