

FRONTIERS WRITING STYLE GUIDE



Version 2.8



Welcome to the Frontiers Writing Style Guide.

This style guide helps us create clear and engaging content that is consistent with the Frontiers USA brand.

This guide not only highlights grammar tips and style. It's also your resource for writing in a clear, informative voice that reflects our community, mission, and values.

About Frontiers

Frontiers is working to fulfill the Great Commission among Muslim people groups that don't know the saving message of Jesus Christ. We focus our global priorities on the regions with the largest concentrations of unengaged Muslim people groups. To this end, we recruit, train, send, and serve church planting teams to inspire transformational movements to Christ in the Muslim world.

Mission Statement

With love and respect, inviting all Muslim peoples to follow Jesus.

Unofficial tagline

Jesus for Muslims

Vision Statement

We inspire transformational movements within unengaged Muslim communities by sending teams to catalyze change—because even the most uncharted frontiers need Jesus.

Is it Frontiers' or Frontiers?

When used as a possessive noun, use an apostrophe.

Frontiers' mission is to invite Muslims to follow Jesus.

When used as an adjective, omit the apostrophe.

Frontiers field workers serve in over 40 countries.

Hint: Substitute another brand name in place of Frontiers (e.g. Wycliffe) to determine if an apostrophe is needed.

Writing Goals and Values

With love and respect

Frontiers' mission statement reflects our commitment to show love and respect—both in sharing Jesus with Muslims and telling others about our ministry.

Do not use demeaning language that portrays Muslims, foreign cultures, or governments in a negative light. Avoid using words and phrases with militaristic, political, or colonialist connotations (such as *spiritual battle*, *frontlines*, *convert*, and *crusade*).

Avoid subjective viewpoints and personal opinion in writing for Frontiers.

Stories

Muslims are men, women, and children with hopes and dreams much like our own—and they're in desperate need of Jesus Christ. By telling the stories of specific individuals, we present Muslims as people who are relatable, personable, and human.

Use stories to share specific details about the life, thoughts, emotions, and spiritual journey of one person—not to talk about a group of people. Write personal, sensitive, and descriptive narratives that show how a worker is introducing a Muslim to the power of the Gospel. Visit the [Frontiers USA blog](#) for examples.

Security

Before sharing field stories, ask for permission from the field worker and save your communications as documentation.

Names

Do not use real names; change them as needed without enclosing them in quotation marks.

Do not reference cities where Frontiers workers serve; specify the names of regions instead.

Voice

We write to communicate Frontiers' mission, introduce others to unengaged Muslim people groups, train and send new laborers, and inspire people to give.

Frontiers' voice is:

- **Hopeful.** Use positive language that emphasizes trust in God.
- **Biblical.** Back up your statements with God's Word and sound theology.
- **Accessible.** Write plainly; avoid jargon and academic or preachy tones.
- **Entrepreneurial.** Build excitement toward accomplishing our mission.
- **Inclusive.** Invite others to find their unique role in helping advance the Kingdom.
- **Clear.** Educate readers without patronizing or confusing them.

Grammar Guidelines

Adhering to certain rules and standards helps keep our messaging clear and consistent.

This section lays out our house style. For questions outside the scope of this guide, please refer to the AP Stylebook, our preferred published grammar style guide.

Basics

- **Write for all readers.** Use language that is familiar to the broadest possible audience. Avoid Christianese and jargon.
- **Make strong statements.** Avoid asking questions that can be answered with *no*.
- **Be concise.** Use short words and sentences; omit needless ones. Show; don't tell.
- **Use active voice.** Avoid passive writing.
- **Write positively.** Favor positive language over negative.
- **Write plainly.** Aim for a 5th grade reading level (use hemingwayapp.com to help).

Abbreviations

Avoid using abbreviations and acronyms when writing for external audiences (e.g. donors and future workers). Spell out the following phrases and do not overuse them:

Muslim-background believer
Discovery Bible Study

Disciple-making movement
Church planting

Sometimes context allows for the use of abbreviations. Spell out the phrase when it is first mentioned, followed by its abbreviation in parentheses.

First use: *Kylie is a third culture kid (TCK).*
Second use: *As a TCK, she grew up speaking Arabic.*

Postscript: Use PS— followed by a space.

United States: U.S.

Bible citations

Use ESV, Frontiers' preferred version of the Bible. If using a different version, provide its abbreviation after the reference. For partial verses, do not include "a" or "b" in the reference.

For **in-line** verses, use quotation marks and parentheses around the Bible reference, followed by punctuation.

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5).

Non-ESV example: *"The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world" (John 1:9 NIV).*

Spoken words example: *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3).*

Indent in-line **block quotes** and stylize with no italics, quotation marks only for spoken words, and punctuation before the reference.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.

"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matthew 5:11-12)

Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat.

With **pull quotes**, precede the reference with an em dash and a space on the next line. If space forces it to stay on the same line, place two spaces after the verse's final punctuation before the em dash. Use quotation marks only for spoken words. Further stylize as best fits the space and context (e.g. centered or right-justified; italicized; etc.)

"Blessed are the poor in spirit."
— *Matthew 5:3*

"Blessed are the poor in spirit." — Matthew 5:3

Capitalization

Capitalize the following words and phrases:

- Bible and related references (e.g. Bible, Gospel, Scripture[s], Word, Good News, Old Testament)
- Commonly accepted names for the persons of the Trinity (e.g. Son, Father, Spirit, Creator, Savior, Bread of Life, Promised One)
- Pronouns associated with the persons of the Trinity (Him, His, He, Himself)

Do not capitalize:

- Adjectives and adverbs (e.g. biblical, biblically, scriptural, scripturally)
- References to the church, unless in the name of a specific church (e.g. Saddleback Church)
- Heaven, creation, the fall, crucifixion, atonement, resurrection, evangelical, etc.

After a colon, capitalize the first word if it starts a complete sentence.

Headings

Capitalize the first, last, and important words in the title, including:

- Adjectives (beautiful, large, hopeful)
- Adverbs (forcefully, silently, hurriedly)
- Nouns (computer, table, manuscript)
- Pronouns (they, she, he)
- Subordinating conjunctions (as, so, that)
- Verbs (write, type, create)

Do not capitalize:

- Articles (a, an, the)
- Conjunctions (and, but, for)
- Prepositions shorter than five letters (at, by, from)

Numbers

Spell out one through nine; use numerals for 10 and above.

Always use numerals for ages, measurements, and in headlines. Do not start a sentence with a numeral.

Ages

Use numerals for ages; for ages expressed as adjectives, use hyphens.

The boy is 15 years old.
They met a 15-year-old boy.

Dates

Spell out the names of months unless used with a specific date. Abbreviate as follows: Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., and Dec—but not March, April, May, June, or July.

February 1983
Feb. 20, 1983
March 20, 2018

Times

Use figures except for noon and midnight. Specify with a.m. or p.m., using spaces and periods as follows:

Office hours are from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Time Zones

Use PT, MT, CT, and ET for time zone abbreviations. When communicating to an audience spread across the U.S., provide the local time, followed by Eastern time.

Join us at 4 p.m. MT, 7 p.m. ET.

For Arizona, use *MT* during the winter and *PT* during daylight-saving time.

Telephone numbers

Use hyphens, not periods, for phone numbers:

Contact Frontiers' Partner Impact team at 800-462-8436.

Punctuation

Commas

Use the serial or Oxford comma after the penultimate item in a series or list. Notice the change in meaning without the serial comma below:

Serial comma: *I'm eating my favorite sandwich, coleslaw, and chocolate cake.*

No serial comma: *I'm eating my favorite sandwich, coleslaw and chocolate cake.*

Dashes and hyphens

An **em dash** (—) provides an abrupt break in the middle of the sentence. It's stronger than a comma but less formal than a colon.

Their stories—and their friendships—are precious gifts.

It's risky—but it also comes with God's faithful promise.

En dashes (–) connect ranges of numbers such as dates, times, and page numbers.

The session will last 20–30 minutes.

5:00 p.m.–6:00 p.m.

Hyphens (-) join two or more words that modify other words to express a single concept.

Note how hyphens are used in the two-word modifiers in the following:

Jason serves as a long-term field worker.

Frontiers sends teams to the least-reached regions.

The same two-word phrases are not hyphenated below since they do not precede and modify another word.

Jason wants to go to the field for the long term.

This people group is one that is least reached by the Gospel.

Adverbs ending in *-ly* are not hyphenated (e.g. *biblically based*).

Use hyphens as in the following:

Muslim-background believer

Disciple-making movement

Under-supported worker

The undersupported (used as a noun)

Do not use hyphens in *third culture kid*.

Ellipses

Ellipses are generally used only to mark omitted words.

Use ellipses (...) as follows to mark omitted words.

... not with perishable things ... but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. ... Having purified your souls ... (1 Peter 1:18-19, 22)

In development letters and similar persuasive writing, an ellipsis may also be used to indicate a pause, with no space before the ellipsis.

It's a promise for all peoples of the world... but hundreds of millions of Muslims still have no access to God's Word.

Periods

Use one space between a period and the next sentence. Never two.

Why? By the early 20th century, typographers had standardized the use of a single space. But until the 1970s, many manual typewriters used monospaced fonts, and double spaces made these fonts easier to read. Today's proportional fonts render double spaces unnecessary and obsolete.

Grammar Trouble Spots

That vs. which

Generally, use *that* unless it makes the meaning unclear. If your sentence needs a comma for clarity, you should probably use *which*.

Plastic chairs that don't have cushions are uncomfortable to sit on.

Plastic chairs, which are found in many workplaces, are often uncomfortable to sit on.

Who vs. whom

Who refers to the subject and *whom* to the object. If you can replace the word with *he*, use *who*. If *him* is a better replacement, use *whom*.

Who is chasing that boy?

Whom is that woman chasing?

Farther vs. further

Use *farther* for physical distance and *further* for quantity or an extension of time or degree.

He chased the ball farther.

She pursued the subject further.

E.g. vs. i.e.

E.g. means *for example*; i.e. means *that is, in other words*.

I like citrus fruits, i.e., the juicy, edible fruits with leathery, aromatic rinds.

I like citrus fruits, e.g., tangerines, lemons, and limes.

Like vs. such as

Like is used to compare things; if you can substitute *for example* into a sentence, then use *such as*.

Her desserts are like mine.

She enjoys eating desserts such as brownies, cheesecake, and macaroons.

Commonly Misspelled Words

Use the correct spelling for the following words:

Worshipped
Worshipping
Traveled
Traveling
Toward

Non-English Words

Italicize foreign words and phrases that, without context, may be unfamiliar to readers. Provide the meaning of the word as necessary.

Use standardized spellings for the following non-English words:

Allahu akbar
Eid al-Fitr
Eid al-Adha
Muhammad
Quran
Ramadan
Sheikh
Shiites
The hajj

Attribution of Content and Images

Always cite sources. Attribute photos under the Creative Commons license by including "Photo by [photographer's name]" and linking it back to the original source image.

Additional Resources

"The Elements of Style," Strunk and White – Classic and succinct, this small book is a definitive style guide on the principles of writing clearly.

"On Writing Well," Zinsser – Full of clarity, sound advice, and warmth of style, this book also includes sections on writing about people and places, memoir, science and technology, business, and more.

Hemingwayapp.com – This free online tool helps you write clearly by targeting run-on sentences, passive voice, and unnecessary adjectives and adverbs. It also scores readability. Aim for a 5th grade reading level—the same level as Ernest Hemingway's writing.

Grammarly Handbook – This online guide can help you find answers to your grammar and style questions.