

Style Guide.

1. Purpose of This Guide

This guide establishes the editorial standards for submissions to *Playtest Material*.

2. General Style Principles

Tone

Avoid too much jargon and ensure that pieces can be read by non-specialists. Keep tone and content measured and precise (avoid overly generalising or moralistic statements). Writing in your own distinctive style is great where appropriate, but please try to avoid first person (I/we think) unless it is clearly an opinion piece.

As long as submissions are clear and well structured, pieces can be scholarly, essayistic, polemical, or experimental in content.

English Variant

Use **Commonwealth Standard English** (British English) throughout.

Examples:

- optimise (not optimize)
- armour (not armor)
- centre (not center)
- defence (not defense)
- talk to (not talk with)

If you *must* Americanise (if you are, for example, American) please do so consistently and accept that this will almost certainly be changed by editors.

Formatting

Please submit pieces as .docx, .odt or as a Google doc link (make sure you give viewing access.)

Please use a 12pt readable font with a space between each paragraph.

Avoid manually styled headings, text justification and unnecessary line breaks.

Use *italics* for emphasis, titles, and game systems. Avoid underlining and bold.

3. Capitalisation & Naming Conventions

Games & Systems

Italicise the titles of games, books, journals, films, and major works.

(*Dungeons & Dragons*, *Apocalypse World*)

Game mechanics, classes, playbooks, or named rules do not need to be italicised. They may need to be capitalised. (Grit System, Powered By The Apocalypse.)

Use Arabic numerals for editions unless there's a clear common use alternative. (*Dungeons & Dragons 3.5*, *Traveller 5*, "fifth edition")

Key Terms

Capitalise only where conventionally required.

Examples:

- OSR
- Nordic larp
- actual play

4. Quotations

Short Quotations

Quotations under 40 words should remain inline with quotation marks, for example:

As Huizinga argues, play exists within a “magic circle” separated from ordinary life.

Block Quotations

Quotations over 40 words should be formatted as indented block quotations without quotation marks. Always include a citation. For example:

All play moves and has its being within a play-ground marked off beforehand either materially or ideally, deliberately or as a matter of course. Just as there is no formal difference between play and ritual, so the 'consecrated spot' cannot be formally distinguished from the play-ground. The arena, the card-table, the magic circle, the temple, the stage, the screen, the tennis court, the court of justice, etc., are all in form and function play-grounds[.]¹

¹ Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949), 10.

5. Citations & Referencing

The journal uses a **Chicago-style notes and bibliography system** with some adaptations for games and digital media.

Authors may use either footnotes + bibliography (preferred), or author-date citation where appropriate to disciplinary convention.

Please *do not use AI* to generate your references, as it *always* gets it wrong and it can be a nightmare going through the entire bibliography to figure out which sources have been hallucinated by an AI.

6. Footnotes

Use footnotes rather than endnotes.

7. Bibliography Formatting

Include a bibliography for all substantive submissions. Arrange alphabetically by surname.

Books

Surname, First Name. *Title*. Place: Publisher, Year.

Fine, Gary Alan. *Shared Fantasy: Roleplaying Games as Social Worlds*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

Journal Articles

Surname, First Name. "Article Title." *Journal Name* volume, no. issue (year): page range.

Bowman, Sarah Lynne. "Social Conflict in Role-Playing Communities." *International Journal of Role-Playing* 4 (2013): 4–25.

Chapters in Edited Collections

Surname, First Name. "Chapter Title." In *Collection Title*, edited by Editor Name, pages. Place: Publisher, Year

Websites

Organisation or Author. "Page Title." Website Name. Accessed Day Month Year. URL.

8. Referencing Games

Games should be referenced as cultural works, similarly to films or software.

Tabletop RPGs

Designer/Studio. *Game Title*. Edition. Publisher, Year.

Baker, Vincent and Meguey Baker. *Apocalypse World*. 2nd ed. Lumpley Games, 2016.

Video Games

Studio. *Game Title*. Platform. Publisher, Year.

Live Games & Larps

Where possible include:

- organisers/designers

- location
- year run
- edition/version if relevant

Because many larps are ephemeral works, descriptive citations are acceptable.

9. Actual Play & Ephemeral Sources

When citing actual play and ephemeral sources, such as streams, podcasts, convention games, forum posts, informal discussions, social media, and unpublished design documents, we just ask for authors to provide as much information as they can to assist readers in locating or contextualising the source.

Example:

- creator/GM
- series title
- episode/session
- platform
- date accessed

10. Images & Illustrations

Authors are responsible for securing permission where required.

Please submit images via email with a high resolution, and indicate placement in text. Images should be included with captions, credits, and an abstract for visually impaired readers.

11. Accessibility & Readability

We strongly encourage descriptive prose over jargon, translations and explanations of specialist terminology, and the use of inclusive language wherever possible.

12. Questions

Questions regarding style, accessibility, permissions, or unusual source formats may be directed to the editorial team before submission.