CORNELL POLICY REVIEW

Style Manual

Cornell Policy Review

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The *Cornell Policy Review Style Manual* is a guide to preferred style and usage. It is not meant to be definitive; use it with other sources and your own editorial judgment.

The manual is broken into three sections. The first concerns publication types accepted by The Cornell Policy Review and accompanying structure recommendations. The second provides general guidelines for style and composition, while the third explains specific grammar and style expectations. Throughout this manual, William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White's *The Elements of Style* is quoted. Please refer to these Cornellians and their book for more general information on principles of writing.

This manual should help authors, editors, and other contributors understand and navigate the editing process, and should be revised as necessary. If you have recommendations for its improvement, please do not hesitate to contact the executive editors of The Cornell Policy Review.

"Revising is part of writing. Few writers are so expert that they can produce what they are after on the first try. Quite often you will discover, on examining the completed work, that there are serious flaws in the arrangement of the material, calling for transpositions. When this is the case, a word processor can save you time and labor as you rearrange the manuscript. You can select material on your screen and move it to a more appropriate spot, or, if you cannot find the right spot, you can move the material to the end of the manuscript until you decide whether to delete it. Some writers find that working with a printed copy of the manuscript helps them to visualize the process of change; others prefer to revise entirely on screen. Above all, do not be afraid to experiment with what you have written. Save both the original and the revised versions; you can always use the computer to restore the manuscript to its original condition, should that course seem best. Remember, it is no sign of weakness or defeat that your manuscript ends up in need of major surgery. This is a common occurrence in all writing, and among the best writers."
– Strunk and White, The Elements of Style, Part V, page 72

Types of Policy Publications

Policy Analysis

Analysis pieces should attempt to highlight contemporary, relevant policy issues through analytical lenses, and they will be written by students or non-experts. Policy analysis defines a specific problem and goals, examines the arguments, and analyzes implementation of a given policy. These are not op-ed pieces, however; they should be flavored with multiple perspectives.

Analysis pieces will be 500-1500 words in length and should specifically address one of six topic areas:

i. Domestic Politics/Law/Government
ii. International Affairs and Development
iii. Environmental and Energy Policy
iv. Social/Health/Education Policy
v. Finance and Economic Policy
vi. Science, Technology, Infrastructure

These topic areas can expand to encompass more detailed analysis, and it is possible to digitally tag articles with more than one subject area. However, issues of scope can quickly arise. For example, an article exploring solar paneling policy could fall under all of the above subjects, depending on the article's range and intent. To this end, the author should question whether the purpose of the analysis is to discuss the implications of taxes on solar paneling, the role of the technology in developing countries, the implications of local or national laws on the installation of paneling, etc. Simply listing all associated problems and implications does not make a piece analytical. Defining and maintaining the subject, scope, and purpose of an article is often difficult, and it is within this effort that editing and revisions find purpose.

Tips:

1. Track the news, attend talks and lectures, and jump at opportunities you find interesting. This publication is not news-driven, but it is news-related. The timing of your analysis can be essential. Remember, this is a piece not about politics, but policy. While politics are involved in the telling of your story, it is not the focus.

2. Make fewer points well. Your analysis will not solve all of a policy's associated problems in 500-1500 words. It is better to make one to three points extremely well than to make four to six points half-heartedly.
3. Tell readers why they should care – quickly. Is there an injustice occurring? Are implications of a policy inhibiting the full potential of groups or individuals? What is the problem and why is it relevant? Appeals to self-interest usually are more effective than abstract punditry.
4. Be specific. How exactly does your policy of choice protect the environment? What exactly are the implications of the White House changing its foreign policy or parents choosing healthier foods for their children? You will need to do more than call for "more research" or suggest that opposing parties work out their differences.
5. Be objective. Acknowledge multiple sides/perspectives and explore their credibility. An examination of why policy issues exist must examine why people hold different views. Making objectivity interesting can be difficult. This is why some news networks prefer sensationalism. This is why The Cornell Policy Review is not a news network.
6. Title is succinct and to the point. Your article's title will likely be edited by the Review, and you should not stress about making it catchy, apolitical, etc. Instead, write in plain words what you are talking about. Ex. *Low voter turnout tends to produce bad government, so how do we get more Americans to the polls?* This will help us contextualize your topic and if necessary, we can work on a catchy, brief title later.
7. Offer graphics. A picture is worth 1000 words. If you have a terrific illustration, chart, graphic, video, or photograph, alert the editor when submitting your draft. He or she can ensure that copyrighted material is respected while still contributing to your work.

Interviews and Podcasts

Interviews of policy experts or professionals can be conducted in video, audio (podcast), and/or print. Interview questions should be screened and approved by an executive editor prior to the interview. Keep in mind that these interviews are analysis-oriented. While interviews should be insightful and intellectually provocative, the purpose of Policy Review interviews is not to uncover scandal, corruption, or wrongdoing. Instead, interviews should elucidate a candidate's stance on a matter, why that stance is held, what alternatives to the related policy are, and the implications of these alternative stances. Text, audio, and video interviews should include commentary from the editor, including an introduction and background of the topic. An interview consisting of only quoted questions and answers may do little to provide analytical insight on the discussed policy.

The structure of interviews can be more fluid than other types of articles. As with analysis pieces, an interviewer should strive to define the subject, scope, and purpose of an interview long before it is conducted. The best way to accomplish this is by writing down the questions and submitting them to an executive editor well before the date of the interview. However, do not be surprised if an interview ends up including a broader range of subjects than originally intended. Be flexible. Interviewing policy experts and professionals is an artful practice.

Tips:

1. Find a good location and reserve it in advance. Avoid coffee shops and crowded spaces, especially for podcast and video interviews. Attempt to find a location that has some relevance to the focus of the interview. People often feel more comfortable in familiar spaces. Locations for audio and video interviews should accommodate the necessary equipment, crew, acoustic and lighting requirements, etc.
2. Write down your questions. As mentioned above, this practice will help to ensure quality. Write down more questions than you expect to ask. This can help refocus meandering subject matter. Have an overarching goal for the interview.
3. Work on flow. The most difficult aspect of interviews is striking a balance between maintaining a conversation and getting the material you need. As your subject is answering each question, think about your next question and its relevance to the conversation.
4. Think about the medium. Is your interview audio/video or text-only? If you are interviewing for audio or video, ask two-part questions, which encourage subjects to talk for longer blocks of time. Conversely, when you are interviewing for print, try to break questions up for shorter and more concise answers (easier for taking notes and for quoting later). You can be more conversational with interviews that are not being filmed — you can say "yeah" and "uh-huh" if the interview will only be published as transcribed text. Avoiding these lingual crutches is one of the biggest challenges when you are interviewing for video. Nodding and smiling accomplishes the same sort of conversational encouragement and keeps your tape clean. This is a good habit for any situation, and should be practiced regularly.

   In particular for podcasts (audio recording), you focus on the flow of the conversation. When questions are read off one by one through your interview, it will seem too rehearsed and becomes monotonous and boring for the listener. Having questions will be helpful when you need them, but try to ensure that you are engaging in a conversation: stop to contextualize; stop to ask questions; confirm details as you go

along to help the listeners make out the narrative thread of your conversation. Unlike video interviews, you will be able to review the content to remove the "umm"s and such to make a polished finished piece. Don't worry if you make a mistake, just make sure you correct anything on the recording so the final version can be utilized.

5. Bring another writer or editor. Having a second person as a note taker and extra set of ears can be useful, if you do not think another person will overwhelm or distract your subject. He or she can help check your quotes and information after the interview and can put you at ease during the interview process.
6. Perfect note taking is not necessary. Good notes are important, but not more important than the conversation. Do not sacrifice the flow of your interview for meticulous notes.
7. Empower your subject. Be wary of putting your subject on the defensive. Instead, if relevant, ask for your subject's ideal solution or resolution to the subject of the interview. If he or she is a policy expert or professional, let him or her speculate. You are conducting the interview to learn about an individual's perspective or opinion Why does the issue matter? What was the turning point in the subject's experience? Why is he or she working on this issue? You do not want your subject to lose his or her composure, but invoking strong emotions can be positive.
8. Watch the best. There are many high-profile interviewers who masterfully guide conversations to elucidate points on public policy. Explore the work of journalist interviewers in video and print and try to emulate their successful techniques.
9. Ask for what you need. Sometimes, a subject may simply not understand what you are looking for. You can ask to be walked through a chronology, issue, or scene. For the most part, people want to be helpful.
10. Endure awkward silences. This may seem counterintuitive. Ask your question, let the subject give you the rehearsed and generic answer, and then pause to see what comes next. You will be surprised how often this technique yields powerful results.
11. Be courteous. Depending on the subject, some information may be private, classified, etc. It is acceptable to be inquisitive, but not to be rude. As an interviewer, you are representing the tact and intellectual caliber of this publication, CIPA, and Cornell University. Disrespecting a subject will not bode well for a follow-up interview.

Opinion-editorials

Opinion-editorials will consist of content written by outside contributing authors, including professors, topic specialists, policy professionals, and alumni. Op-eds will be solicited by editors. *The Cornell Policy Review does not accept op-eds by non-topic experts or non-policy professionals*. The editor soliciting the op-ed should notify an executive editor of the intended

topic and author. Pending the author's experience in writing op-eds, light to moderate revisions may be required.

Tips:

1. Be mindful of the news. Know what is occurring in the world and how it relates to policy. Again, timing can be critical when soliciting an expert's opinion on an issue.
2. You already know world-class experts. What sort of expert would have unique insight on your issue of choice? Professors, though busy, are often looking for opportunities to contribute to policy discussions. At Cornell, you are surrounded by some of the foremost experts and scholars in the world. Guest speakers and policy makers visit campus weekly; you can also consider contacting topic experts from your prior experiences in work and academia. Soliciting op-eds is a chance to meet and interact with some of academia's best, or connect with old advisors and mentors.
3. Reach out. Professionals and scholars can be busy, but they will almost always jump at the chance to talk about their passions. Do not be afraid to reach out seeking an oped, and do not be surprised if this outreach turns into an interview.

Original Research

Because Policy Review content is solicited, edited, and published on a rolling basis, contemporary research articles can be published while still relevant. Research articles are typically 5000+ words in length, and they usually include qualitative or quantitative methods, an abstract, a literature review, a methodology section, a findings section, a conclusion, and a bibliography. These research articles may be repurposed research papers from coursework or may be composed of independent research. Research articles may not have been previously published in another journal, and they must adhere to the Chicago Manual of Style. This includes the use of endnote citations rather than in-text citations. Please see section III of this manual for further guidelines and tips on editing and composing original academic research.

Case Studies

Case studies explore single instances or manifestations of real policy issues and can be written in two formats:

1. The Analytical Approach: The case study is examined in order to understand what has happened and why. It is not necessary to identify the history of specific policy issues or suggest solutions.
2. The Problem-Oriented Method: The case is analyzed to identify the major problems and to suggest solutions to these problems. Through this method, case studies can:
    a. Relate theory to a practical situation, as in applying ideas and knowledge from coursework to practical situations.
    b. Identify the existing problems or issues related to a policy.
    c. Select the major problems in the case.
    d. Suggest solutions to these major problems.
    e. Recommend solutions to be implemented.
    f. Detail how such solutions should be implemented.

A case study should be about 4000 - 6000 words in length and is usually divided into eight sections. These sections are:

1. Synopsis/Executive Summary
2. Findings
3. Discussion
4. Conclusion
5. Recommendations
6. Implementation
7. References
8. Appendices

All case studies should be written in accordance with the Chicago Manual of Style. Further details and tips regarding the style of case studies are found in section three of this manual.

Other Content

Infographics, lists (top 5s, things to look for, etc.), relevant book reviews, and other forms of creative content are encouraged. Ideas for creative or non-traditional content should be discussed with and approved by an executive editor.

A Guiding Principle of Composition and Style

There are many principles of style worth discussing. Please refer to the Chicago Manual of Style for detailed explanations of usage and grammar. For the purposes of The Cornell Policy Review, one issue manifests itself in academic writing most often: the use of unnecessary words.

Write to inform, not to impress. The use of uncommon vocabulary and high prose do not always make a piece of writing better. Instead, it is preferred to write concisely without using complex language. Well-written analysis flows without wordiness.

From Strunk and White's Introduction and Part I, Elementary Rules of Usage:

Avoid the elaborate, the pretentious, the coy, and the cute. Do not be tempted by a twenty-dollar word when there is a ten-center handy, ready, and able.

Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all sentences short, or avoid all detail and treat subjects only in outline, but that every word tell.

Many expressions in common use violate this principle.

- *the question as to whether - whether (the question whether)*
- *there is no doubt but that - no doubt (doubtless)*
- *used for fuel purposes - used for fuel*
- *he is a man who - he*
- *in a hasty manner - hastily*
- *this is a subject that - this subject*
- *Her story is a strange one. - Her story is strange.*
- *the reason why is that - because*

The fact that is an especially debilitating expression. It should be revised out of every sentence in which it occurs.

- *owing to the fact that - since (because)*
- *in spite of the fact that - though (although)*
- *call your attention to the fact that - remind you (notify you)*
- *I was unaware of the fact that - I was unaware that (did not know)*
- *the fact that he had not succeeded - his failure*
- *the fact that I had arrived - my arrival*

See also the words case, character, nature in Chapter IV. Who is, which was, and the like are often superfluous.

- *His cousin, who is a member of the same firm*
- *His cousin, a member of the same firm*
- *Trafalgar, which was Nelson's last battle*
- *Trafalgar, Nelson's last battle*

As the active voice is more concise than the passive, and a positive statement more concise than a negative one, many of the examples given under Rules 14 and 15 illustrate this rule as well.

A common way to fall into wordiness is to present a single complex idea, step by step, in a series of sentences that might to advantage be combined into one.

- *Macbeth was very ambitious. This led him to wish to become king of Scotland. The witches told him that this wish of his would come true. The king of Scotland at this time was Duncan. Encouraged by his wife, Macbeth murdered Duncan. He was thus enabled to succeed Duncan as king. (51 words)*
- *Encouraged by his wife, Macbeth achieved his ambition and realized the prediction of the witches by murdering Duncan and becoming king of Scotland in his place. (26 words)*

Grammar and Style

The Cornell Policy Review follows the Chicago Manual of Style (available online through the Cornell Library System). This section will review some helpful tips and common questions.

Let's first start with a nice rule of thumb, George Orwell's Rules of Writing:

1. *Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.*

2. *Never use a long word where a short one will do.*

3. *If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.*

4. *Never use the passive where you can use the active.*

5. *Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.*

6. *Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.*

-From Orwell's essay "Politics and the English Language."

Grammar

1. Be mindful of split infinitives.
    a. Incorrect: The girl decided to slowly walk across the street.
    b. Correct: The girl decided to walk across the street slowly.
    c. Correct: The girl decided to walk slowly across the street.
2. Be mindful of dangling participles.
    a. Incorrect: Walking up the familiar drive, the house seemed strangely quiet.
    b. Correct: Walking up the familiar drive, I noticed that the house seemed strangely quiet.
3. Be mindful of improper word usage. i.e. adverse vs. averse; comprise vs. compose; assure vs. ensure; discreet vs. discrete; immanent vs. imminent; principle vs. principal
4. Hyphen usage:

    a. Correct: when verb phrases are used as nouns “start-up, lay-offs, set-up”
    b. Incorrect: when nouns revert to being verb phrases “They intend to start-up a new company.”
5. Be mindful of pronoun usage. Check that pronoun uses are correct and agree with regard to number (singular/plural).
    a. Incorrect: Everyone is entitled to their own opinion because everybody has their own unique experiences.
    b. Correct: Everyone is entitled to his/her own opinion because everybody has his/her own unique experiences.
6. Do not end a sentence with a preposition.
    a. Incorrect: What is he doing that for?
    b. Correct: Why is he doing that?
7. Write out contractions.
    a. Incorrect: Don’t use contractions in formal writing.
    b. Correct: Do not use contractions.
8. “It’s” means “it is.” “Its” is possessive.
9. Use active, not passive, verbs whenever possible.
    a. Incorrect: The issue was raised by the speaker.
    b. Correct: The speaker raised the issue.
10. Make sure your verb tense (past, present, future) is consistent throughout the article. Do not switch between “it has,” “it does,” and “it will.”
11. Try to be gender neutral. Remember that “they” is plural, so if you use that pronoun, your verbs must also be plural.

Graphs/Tables/Charts

Remember that The Review is now published online. There is no need for graphs and charts to be in black and white. However, please make sure that a reader can easily distinguish between groups/lines. Additionally, make sure that your graphics are in the appropriate file-type as indicated by the executive content editor. Title your graphics and axes, and include a citation for all graphics.

Style

1. Oxford commas: There should be a comma before the "and" or "or" in a list of three or more items.
2. References should be cited with footnotes or endnotes following the Chicago Manual of Style. Please note, when published on the website, all references will appear as endnotes due to the lack of pagination. Authors may use hyperlinks in addition to endnotes to link readers to relevant content. Please use this template as an example for your work.
3. Include one space between sentences, not two.
4. "Percent" should be written out. Do not use the % symbol.
5. Do not write about the U.S. as "us" or "our government." CIPA is an international program.
6. Do not use the first person ("I," "we") unless you are explaining your methodology.
7. Do not refer to the paper or section (e.g. "This paper seeks to…" or "This section is divided into three parts…").
8. Punctuation goes inside quotation marks, except for a citation number. You also would not add an exclamation point, dash, or question mark inside quotation marks (unless it were already there).
    a. "Of course," she said; "I'd be happy to!"
    b. Can you believe she said "I'm too busy"?
9. Use colloquialisms and figures of speech sparingly and professionally. When in doubt, avoid their usage.
    a. Incorrect: The policies go together like peas and carrots.
    b. Permissible: The policies are cut from the same cloth.
    c. Better sentence: The policies are highly compatible.
10. Utilize headings/subheadings as needed.
11. Punctuation goes outside of the parentheses.
    a. Incorrect: I love to write about policy (especially for The Review.)
    b. Correct: I love to write about policy (especially for The Review).
    c. When a wholly detached expression is parenthesized, however, the punctuation goes inside the parentheses: I love to write. (I particularly like writing policy.)
12. Spell out the numbers one through ninety-nine.
13. Use definite, specific, and concrete language.
    a. Permissible: A period of unfavorable weather set in.
    b. Better sentence: It rained every day for a week.

14. Use American English spellings: color is preferred over colour, armor over armour, etc.
15. Exclamation marks should almost never be used in an article.
16. Avoid rhetorical questions.
17. Each paragraph should have a clear and accurate topic sentence that relates the subject of the paragraph to your broader analysis.
18. To check grammar, readability statistics, and percentages of sentences in passive voice: in MS Word, Go to File→ Options→ Proofing → check boxes for "grammar and spelling" and "readability statistics."

Resources

For further grammar and style usage, see:

The Chicago Manual of Style. (Can be accessed online through the Cornell Library site.)

William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White, The Elements of Style, 4th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000).