

## Story Notes:

1. **Foreign words** – Italicize foreign words unless they are found in a standard English dictionary. If they are used repeatedly throughout the piece, italicize only the first instance. If they are used randomly, italicize each instance.

My grandmother made a great *pot-au-feu*, beef and vegetable stew.

2. **Location names** – For those of us who are geographically challenged, it's good to mention the state/province and/or country referred to in your story unless it is commonly known, such as Chicago, Orlando, New York City, Montreal, etc.

Our cruise last summer left from Civitavecchia, Italy.

3. **Unusual words.** Make sure to define words with which your readers may not be familiar. What may be obvious to you might not be to the person reading your story.

I went fishing with my grandpa and caught a five-pound *goujon* or yellow catfish.

4. **Use the dictionary.** Make it a practice to check unusual or uncommon words to determine if they are capitalized and/or open or closed compounds even if your spellchecker tells you otherwise.

I bought home some deutsch marks for my grandchildren.

5. **Academic degrees.** In most instances, academic degrees are lowercase even though you worked so hard to acquire them.

I earned my bachelor of arts degree from LSU in Baton Rouge.

6. **Semicolon.** I've heard a semicolon called the *love child of a colon and comma*, and it has *only* two uses. It can be used to *replace* a conjunction in a compound sentence.

*I enjoyed the movie, but I loved the dinner afterward.  
I enjoyed the movie; I loved the dinner afterward.*

A semicolon is needed for clarity in a complex list where each entry includes explanatory details.

*Family members in attendance included Jeff, my brother, Mary, my aunt, and Chris, my cousin.* There may be six people there.

*Family members in attendance included Jeff, my brother; Mary, my aunt; and Chris, my cousin.* Accurately identifies three people there.

7. **Proper nouns.** Capitalize words in a proper noun but lowercase subsequent references when the full name is not used.

I enjoy walking in New York's Central Park in spring. The park is most beautiful then.

8. **Sentence structure.** Vary your sentence structure. Move away from your favorite. If you begin almost every sentence with the subject followed by a verb, add an opening or closing clause or phrase.

*I went to the mall after lunch.  
After lunch, I went to the mall.*