



DISCORDER WRITING STYLE GUIDE

Updated May 2018

SO, HERE ARE SOME *DISCORDER* PREFERENCES...

SPELLING is always Canadian / British English. Common trouble-words include *colour* / *honour* (always spelled with a “u”) and *centre* / *sombre* (with an “re” instead of “er”). An exception to our British-English-only policy is *recognize* / *organize* / *realize*, which are spelled with “z” instead of “s.”

WORD COUNT varies for each section, but it is important to stay within the word count that is initially assigned by the editor. Submit articles within 20 words of your assigned word count. If an editor gives you 800 words, your article should be between 780-820 words. Here are word count ranges by section:

UNDER REVIEW	= 400 words maximum
REAL LIVE ACTION	= 400-600 words
WEB EXCLUSIVES	= 800 words maximum
COLUMNS	= 650-750 words
FEATURES	= 800-1100 words

DON'T TALK ABOUT THE WEATHER may seem obvious, but it's surprising how often reviews begins with, “It was a rainy day in Vancouver as I walked up to the venue.” Just avoid mentioning the weather altogether unless it is relevant to the content of the article. There are ways of setting scene and tone without describing cloud clusters. Consider your other senses.

PUNCTUATION always goes *inside* of quotation marks, no exceptions.

CORRECT	= “When I think about the colour orange,” explains BB, “I get all tingly!”
INCORRECT	= “When I think about the colour orange”, explains BB, “I get all tingly!”

DATES are always written out with the month name in full and the numerical date, no “st,” “th,” or “nd.” You can exclude the day of the week and the year, unless they are necessary for clarity.

CORRECT	= The concert is happening February 26.
INCORRECT	= The concert is happening on Monday, Feb 26th, 2018.

WHEN WRITING SONG LYRICS put them in quotation marks, capitalizing the first word of each line and separating each line with one slash. For example, “No, I don't want no scrub / A scrub is a guy that can't get no love from me / Hangin' out the passenger side / Of his best friend's ride / Trying to holla at me.”

EDITORIAL INSERTIONS are always done with square brackets. If you need to clarify a quote by changing a word or two, make sure they are between []. Example, “I really love that” becomes “I really love [pudding],” assuming that I am talking about pudding, and in this case I am.

EM-DASHES are a lot of fun to use in a complex sentence, but make sure you actually put them into your text! Don't just use a hyphen (-) or a double-hyphen (--); a proper em-dash is extra long (—). Different computers have different controls to produce em-dashes, so you may need to search how to type them on your computer. In *Discorder* styling, there is one space on either side of an em-dash. For example, “Whenever I see a cat video — whether on Youtube or posted to social media — I am hypnotized.” Note, an en-dash (–) is slightly longer than a hyphen and shorter than an em-dash. It is reserved for ranges of values or distance. For example, “I ate 8–10 hot dogs at Costco the other day.”



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[...] **VERSUS** ... In *Discorder*, we use both depending on the circumstance. If you're interviewing someone and they 'trail off' what they're saying, you use ... but sparingly! Ellipses can appear really dramatic depending on the context. If you're quoting someone and the quote is really unnecessarily long, you can hop ahead to something else that they say by using square brackets [...].

GENDER is to be respected and regarded as fluid. If you are ever uncertain of a person's preferred pronouns, just ask. Do not use terms like "frontman," in favour of more gender-neutral terms, like "frontperson." Always opt for gender-neutral phrasing. Also try to avoid deifying, sexualizing and objectifying people. For example, "A sultry voice came from quivering lips, her magnetism like Aphrodite, she wore red," is all wrong. These are the types of sentences the editors will watch out for.

ITALICIZE album titles, movies, books and event series. Italicize all other media outlets and publications.

THE FOLLOWING SHOULD BE IN QUOTATIONS: song titles, essay titles, poem titles. Example: "Infinite Return" is my favourite song off the Faith Healer album, *Cosmic Troubles*.

ADD A SPACE around all / and em-dashes, but not hyphens. Do not add an extra space after periods.

DEADLINES should always be respected. When an editor assigns a piece of writing, they will give you a deadline that may just be a date, or a date + time for submission. If you can't make your writing deadline due to an extreme circumstance, tell your editor **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**. Do not wait until the day before a deadline, or the hour before you are supposed to submit. *Discorder* runs on a very sensitive production timeline, and late submissions negatively impact everyone's schedules. Please note that for *Real Live Action*, live show reviews should be submitted within five days of the show.

EDITING EXPECTATIONS. When an article or review is submitted for editing, the editor-in-chief or section editors will respond with edits within 24 hours *or* will respond with a timeline for when they can edit the piece. Editors provide edits on Google Docs. They will share or reshare the article with the writer when edits are complete. Within 24 hours of receiving edits, contributors are expected to address the edits in the Google Doc. This timeline is crucial to keeping the magazine's production schedule on track. *If you cannot address edits within that timeline, please tell the editors as soon as possible.*

SOME STUFF THAT VARIES...

TENSE really depends on what you're writing. Usually, interviews read better in present tense, though there are always exceptions. *Under Review* is always present tense because the writer is reviewing an album / book / podcast / film that continues to exist in real time. *Real Live Action* reviews are generally past tense, unless the writer wants to do something out of the ordinary. If you are confused about tenses, ask your editor to confirm.

GIVEN NAMES AND SURNAMES can change depending on the context. Interviewees and subjects should be introduced with their first and last names initially. After the initial mention, depending on the type of article you're writing, you can refer to them by their first name or last name through the rest of the piece. In the case of artists and musicians, sometimes they don't want their full names or proper names in *Discorder* for privacy reasons. Always respect an artist's wish to remain anonymous.

SOMETIMES PEOPLE SPELL THINGS IN LOWERCASE and that's okay. For example, the Vancouver label, agony klub is always spelled lowercase. Some bands have all uppercase names, as well. Always respect the chosen spelling of a name and keep it consistent throughout your writing.



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COMMAS are weird. As a general rule, add a comma wherever you would add a breath when you read out a sentence. If you are making a simple list, there is no need to add a comma before the “and” or “or” that precedes the last item. However, if the list is more complex and the items don’t relate as closely to one another, use a comma before the “and” or “or” that precedes the last item. In other words, for all the grammar nerds out there, *Discorder* isn’t a fan of the Oxford comma.

- CORRECT = “I love blue, purple and indigo.”
- INCORRECT = “I love blue, purple, and indigo.”
- CORRECT = “I like different shades of blue, including the turquoise ocean, a blue glass bottle, and cobalt pottery glaze.”

INTERVIEW FORMAT. By default, interviews for *Discorder* should be developed into structured articles with quotes embedded throughout. *Discorder* publishes Q&A format interviews, but only for special circumstances where the back-and-forth conversation between interviewee and interviewer is especially witty and engaging, and reveals a certain character that will help strengthen the piece. Unless you have confirmed the Q&A format with an editor in advance, assume that an article that involves an interview *cannot* be submitted as Q&A.

VERIFICATION. Before publication, features, columns and web exclusives that contain quotes are verified with the interviewees. This step is done by the editors. The editors share *the full text* with the interviewees to ensure that their quotes are being used in the correct context. Based on the feedback received, the editors may choose to edit an article directly without consulting the writer, or may ask the writer to rework the text for clarity.

WRITING FOR UNDER REVIEW OR REAL LIVE ACTION?

RECORD ALL THE DETAILS! For *Real Live Action* reviews, make sure you include the date and location of the show, and all the names of opening and headlining performers. For *Under Review* reviews, make sure you include the label name / publisher / filmmaker and the release date of the content you are reviewing. Check out the sections in *Discorder* to see how this information should be presented.

FACT-CHECK band names, publisher names, writers, musicians, etc. Make sure that you are spelling names correctly! If you figure out that something is spelled incorrectly after it is already in print, it can be corrected in the online version of your review. Tell the editors.

SOME OTHER SPECIFIC STUFF...

CORRECT	INCORRECT
B.C., U.K., U.S.	BC, UK, US, American
One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10, 11, 12...	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, ten, eleven, twelve...
rock	rock 'n roll, rock n roll, rock-n-roll, rock 'n' roll
'90s, 1990s	90s, nineties, 90's, Nineties, 1990's
hip hop	hip-hop, hiphop, hippity hoppity [OK if discussing how a rabbit or frog gets around]
EP, LP	ep, e.p., lp, l.p.
AM, PM	A.M., P.M., a.m., p.m.
AKA	a.k.a., aka



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DIY	d.i.y., d-i-y, D.I.Y.
43-year-old	43 year old, 43-year old, 43 year-old
prog rock	Prog rock, progrock, prog-rock
lo-fi, hi-fi, low fidelity, high fidelity, <i>High Fidelity</i>	lofi, low fi, hifi, high-fi, high fi
frontperson	front-man, front man, front-woman, front woman, front person, front-person
R&B	rhythm and blues, R & B, r 'n' b
okay	ok, O.K., OK, oh kay
7", 12"	seven inch, seven-inch, 7-inch, 7 inch, etc.

CULTURAL APPROPRIATION

The Lower Mainland is located on unceded Coast Salish territory, which includes land belonging to the Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, Squamish and Sto:lo people. To be more specific, CiTR broadcasts / *Discorder* is published from the Vancouver campus of the University of British Columbia, which is located on the traditional unceded land of the Hən̓q̓əmiñəm speaking Musqueam people. This land acknowledgement is important to CiTR / *Discorder* because we recognize our privilege to work and study as uninvited guests. Through our mandate to engage underrepresented communities, we are in positions to provide opportunities to dismantle colonial narratives in media. This is an ongoing process of learning and unlearning for magazine and radio.

We ask that *Discorder* contributors be mindful of land claims and using language that may inadvertently appropriate Indigenous culture, or any cultures outside of their own. The way this could manifest in articles and reviews is using words like “totem” or “spirit animal” outside of their contexts, or building metaphors and comparisons around spiritual traditions or sacred symbols. Also, do not use “native” to describe someone’s place of origin. For example, “Vancouver native” should be “Vancouver-based,” or another phrasing.

For the sake of formatting, *Discorder* refers to Indigenous people by their proper name when available (Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, Squamish, Sto:lo, Cree, Anishinaabe, etc.), or “Indigenous” with a capital “I” more broadly. It is our preference not to use the terms Native or Aboriginal unless that is an interviewee’s preferred term or it is a direct quote. Please note, the Indigenous people of Canada fall under distinctions: First Nations, Inuit and Métis. They may also choose alternate terms to describe themselves and their people. If you are interested to learn more, we suggest reading *Indigenous Writes* by Chelsea Vowel (2016, Portage & Main Press). UBC’s First Nations and Indigenous Studies (FNIS) also provides a great web page of definitions at indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/terminology.

If a writer is ever uncertain about Cultural Appropriation, we strongly encourage that they check in with an editor. The *Discorder* masthead works to create a shame-free learning environment. Editors will answer to the best of their knowledge or provide resources and readings to further support the writer.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR NEED CLARIFICATION...

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