Style Guide for Days of Wonder

by Austin Ballard

Days of Wonder (www.daysofwonder.com) is a board game publishing company based in Los Altos, California, USA; and Paris, France. It has been in operation since 2002—relatively young for a board game company—and distributes board games to 30 countries across the world in English, French, German, and Korean. Some games that Days of Wonder has released are *Pirate's Cove*, *SmallWorld*, and the highly-acclaimed *Ticket to Ride*, which won Days of Wonder the coveted Spiel des Jahres board game prize in 2004 (making it the youngest company to do so). The company also produces digital versions of its board games, available at outlets such as Steam, iOS, and the Days of Wonder website. The mission of Days of Wonder is to release a very limited number of games based on high standards of design.

The purpose of this in-house style guide is to allow for better consistency and clarity in the publication of instruction manuals that come with released board games, as well as online manuals, cards in card games, and any other written part of released games. Having a resource such as this will help consumers to better understand the instructions of games, helping them learn to play faster, have more fun, and be more likely to recommend Days of Wonder products to their friends. The guide is not comprehensive, but will increase the efficiency and clarity of the manuals and written publications. This guide uses the *Chicago Manual of Style* as a basis for making decisions, but will focus mostly on game instruction usage principles that are either not covered by *Chicago*, run contrary to it, or are ambiguous. Since Days of Wonder is an international company, global English decisions will be made consulting Edmond H. Weiss's *The Elements of International English Style* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharp).

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1 Grammar and Usage

1.1 Parallelism

Chicago states "When linked items are not like items, the syntax of the sentence breaks down" (5.212). Parallel structure should always be used to maintain clarity, especially in bulleted lists and instructions.

> The object of the game is to claim a route between two adjacent cities on the map, successfully complete a continuous path of routes between two cities listed on your Destination Ticket(s), and complete the longest continuous path of routes.
>
> NOT
>
> The object of the game is to claim a route between two adjacent cities on the map, successfully completing a continuous path of routes between two cities listed on your Destination Ticket(s), and completing the longest continuous path of routes.

1.2 Dangling modifiers

Weiss suggests careful avoidance of dangling or ambiguous modifiers, because such constructions are especially confusing for foreign speakers (see Weiss, p. 40).

> Only a flipped token may be placed on the board.
>
> NOT
>
> A token may not be placed on the board unless it is flipped over.

1.3 Pronoun agreement

A pronoun's number must always agree with its antecedent. (See *Chicago* 5.31.)

> Roll the dice. If their combined number is even, move forward one space.
>
> NOT
>
> Roll the dice. If its numbers are even, move forward one space.

1.4 Pronoun gender

The male pronouns *he*, *his*, and *him* should be used to refer to the player in the third person. Though this may be considered biased to gender, for board game manuals it is preferred for the sake of having simple language, saving space, and avoiding distraction. When appropriate, *you* may be used.

> A player may play any Volley card he desires, as far as his resources allow.
>
> NOT

A player may play any Volley card he/she desires, as far as his or her resources allow.

1.5 Capitalization

Specific names of cards, tokens, dice, and other game components should be capitalized. Specific areas or points on the map should be capitalized, as well as specific verbs that count as named actions or phases of gameplay. General resources or elements should be kept lowercase.

Players may buy 1 Resource card per 1 gold that they have.

NOT

Players may buy 1 resource card per 1 Gold that they have.

1.6 Logical language

Take special care to be logical, clear, and precise when explaining rules and game mechanics. Eliminate ambiguities and redundancies, no matter how slight. This will help non-native speakers of English to understand instructions more easily. As Weiss states, "Understanding a text, even in the best of circumstances . . . requires the reader to draw inferences, make guesses, bring personal interpretation into the words" (p. 15). Make it as easy as possible for the reader to understand the text.

Pull the removable storage tray with all of its Race tokens out of the box and place it open next to the board map within easy reach of all players.

NOT

Pull the removable storage tray and the tokens out of the box, which you should then place open next to the map and players, so that they will easily be able to reach it without difficulty.

1.7 Verb usage in headings

When describing an aspect of the game in the game guide, use the gerund form of the word, ending in -ing, rather than the infinitive form.

Setting up the Board

NOT

Set up the Board

1.8 Restrictive and nonrestrictive clauses

To ensure that non-native speakers understand sentences as clearly as possible, follow *Chicago*'s guidelines (6.22) and only use the adverbial *which* after nonrestrictive clauses. *That* should only be used after restrictive clauses.

The areas on the map that yield the most resources are shown in green.

NOT

The areas on the map which yield the most resources are shown in green.

2 Punctuation

2.1 Colons

Use *Chicago*'s rules on colons (6.59) for the most part; however, if a dependent clause or list describes a game mechanic that would be clearer isolated in its own sentence, a colon should be used to introduce it (whether it is in a bulleted list or not).

To conquer a region, a player must have available to deploy: 2 Race tokens, + 1 additional Race token for each Encampment, Fortress, Mountain, or Troll's Lair marker.

NOT

To conquer a region, a player must have available to deploy 2 Race tokens, + 1 additional Race token for each Encampment, Fortress, Mountain, or Troll's Lair marker.

2.2 Em dashes

Em dashes, rather than hyphens, should be used to introduce nonrestrictive clauses. (See *Chicago* 6.82.)

The first combo—located at the top of the column—is free.

NOT

The first combo - located at the top of the column - is free.

2.3 Possessives

Use the word *its* as a possessive. (See *Chicago* 5.220.)

The number on the card's lower-right corner is its cost.

NOT

The number on the card's lower-right corner is it's cost.

2.4 Contractions

To assist in clarity, do not use contractions of auxiliary verbs and be-verbs.

Points are lost if you do not successfully complete the route you kept.

NOT

Points are lost if you don't successfully complete the route you kept.

2.5 Spaces

To maintain consistency in formatting, always use a single space (rather than a double space) after the end of a sentence. (See *Chicago* 2.9.)

Shuffle all the race banners. Pick one at random.

NOT

Shuffle all the race banners.   Pick one at random.

2.6 En dashes

When displaying a range of numbers, always use an en dash, rather than a hyphen, in between the two numbers.

40–80 minute game duration

NOT

40-80 minute game duration

2.7 Semicolons

Chicago states that "a semicolon is most commonly used between two independent clauses not joined by a conjunction to signal a closer connection between them than a period would" (6.54).

A single Troll token with its Troll's Lair is considered alone for this purpose; likewise for a Race token in a Fortress or on a Mountain, these markers provide no protection to a lone Race token.

NOT

A single Troll token with its Troll's Lair is considered alone for this purpose. Likewise for a Race token in a Fortress or on a Mountain, these markers provide no protection to a lone Race token.

2.8 Serial commas

In lists of more than two items, always add a comma after the second-to-last item for clarity and to avoid ambiguity. (See *Chicago* 6.18.).

Each Race has its own distinctive Race banner, Ability banner, and tokens.

NOT

Each Race has its own distinctive Race banner, Ability banner and tokens.

2.9 Fragments

Avoid sentence fragments, as they may confuse nonnative speakers. Weiss states that they "will probably be perceived as an error by the many E2 readers who know the rules of sentence formation" (p. 129).

> If you roll higher than your opponent, he is defeated.
>
> NOT
>
> If you roll higher than your opponent, he is defeated. Destroyed. Annihilated.

2.10 Slashes

Slashes may be used for space-saving reasons in headings as an alternative to *or*, and in terms such as *and/or* (which are acceptable as long as they are not ambiguous or confusing). (See *Chicago* 6.104.)

> The player may also collect additional Victory coins as a result of his Race and/or Special Power benefit.
>
> NOT
>
> The player may also collect additional Victory coins as a result of his Race and/or Special Power and/or Lineage benefit.

2.11 Quotation Marks

Commas and periods should precede quotation marks in a quoted phrase. Smart quotes should always be used. (See *Chicago* 6.9–10.)

> At this point, your ship is "Docked."
>
> NOT
>
> At this point, your ship is "Docked".

3 Distinctive Treatment of Words

3.1 Dice

The singular form of the word *dice* is *die*, and should be used as such. Use numerals as nouns when describing a roll's outcome.

> Roll 1 die; if you roll a 1, a mutiny occurs.
>
> NOT
>
> Roll 1 dice; if you roll a one, a mutiny occurs.

3.2 Plurals of proper nouns

Chicago states, "Names of persons and other capitalized nouns normally form the plural by adding *s* or *es*" (7.8). Follow this rule generally for all proper nouns, as well as uniquely capitalized nouns as game components. (See *1.5 Capitalization* herein.)

> If there are more than one Squire Trelawneys on the board, draw a card.
>
> NOT
>
> If there are more than one Squire Trelawnies on the board, draw a card.

4 Names and Terms

4.1 Name consistency

Do not italicize Days of Wonder unless part of an already italicized style.

> Here is your Days of Wonder access code.
>
> NOT
>
> Here is your *Days of Wonder* access code.

4.2 Registered and trademark symbols

In manual text, do not use the ® or ™ symbols. Use these on web pages when promoting the games or company.

> Here is your Days of Wonder access code.
>
> NOT
>
> Here is your Days of Wonder® access code.

5 Numbers and Symbols

5.1 Numerals

When referring to game pieces or components, numerals should be used. When referring to a number of players, specific areas on the game board (but not pieces), game board components with numbers in their name (i.e. "5" cards), or game aspects that are *not* components, the numbers should be in word form.

> The players on each of the four counties must each take 1 plague token.
>
> NOT

The players on each of the 4 counties must each take one plague token.

5.2 Mathematical symbols

Mathematical symbols should be used in text for rules and game mechanics that require math, as well as on game cards for simplicity and clarity.

> To conquer a Region, a player must have available to deploy: 2 Race tokens + 1 additional Race token for each Encampment, Fortress, Mountain, or Troll's Lair marker + 1 additional Race token for each Lost Tribe or other player's Race token already present in the Region.

> NOT

> To conquer a Region, a player must have available to deploy: 2 Race tokens plus 1 additional Race token for each Encampment, Fortress, Mountain, or Troll's Lair marker plus 1 additional Race token for each Lost Tribe or other player's Race token already present in the Region.

5.3 Ambiguous plurals

In text, when talking about an object or game component that could be either plural or singular depending on the circumstance, add *(s)* to the end of the object to clarify the possibility, and conjugate any verbs referring to the object as plural. In headings, simply refer to the object as plural.

> Move the Legendary Pirate black ship(s) one island westward each.

> NOT

> Move the Legendary Pirate black ship one island westward.

5.4 Number signs

Number signs should be used for components or areas on the game board with specific designations.

> You may place your game marker on any island (#1–#5) to begin each round.

> NOT

> You may place your game marker on any island (1–5) to begin each round.

5.5 Plural numbers

Use double quotes (") around numbers when used as the name of a card or other game component. When plural, add a lowercase *s* after the last quote.

> 10 Victory coins (5 "10"s, 3 "20"s, and 2 "30"s)

> NOT

10 Victory coins (5 10's, 3 20's, and 2 30's)

6 Abbreviations

6.1 Latin abbreviations

Latin abbreviations, such as i.e., e.g., and etc., are encouraged for the sake of conciseness and clarity, especially when clarifying rules.

> The Flying Dutchman will regain up to 2 hull points at the end of each combat round (i.e. after all ships in the battle have fired once), until sunk.
>
> IS BETTER THAN
>
> The Flying Dutchman will regain up to 2 hull points at the end of each combat round (in other words, after all ships in the battle have fired once), until sunk.

6.2 Ampersands

Only use ampersands in headings, captions, and bulleted lists, and only when using one would save space or appear cleaner between numbers than the word *and* would.

> (heading) Moving & Attacking
>
> IS PREFERRED OVER
>
> Moving and Attacking