

**‘Style to be good must be clear. Clearness is secured by using words that are current and ordinary.’**

**Aristotle**

### **General Rules**

1. Sign your work. As silly as it may sound, we receive a large number of submissions where authors forget to add their names. Please add also your email address and any other contact details. To ensure that your file is not going to get lost, please save in the following format: name\_poems.docx/name\_fiction.docx/name\_essay.docx. etc. Example: **nera natalie\_poems.docx**. This way it is certain that the editor will see immediately that in this file there are poems written by the author Natalie Nera. Please include your short bio in the same file.
2. We prefer Times New Roman pt. 12, double-spacing for prose, essays and CNF, and single spacing for poems.

### **House Rules**

1. Please **title** your writing clearly. Unless you have creative reasons, please capitalise your nouns, verbs, adjectives and pronouns, the first and the last word. Lower case is used for articles the/a/an, prepositions and coordinating conjunction. Make sure the title is included in your file.
2. We accept both American and British English, and any other standardised English. Therefore variants in spelling or usage of verbal tenses are acceptable, provided there are consistent and relevant in the context of the creative piece.
3. **THE:** general rules apply. Names of the countries:  
the Bahamas, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, the Czech Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC, no “the”, on second mention), the Dominican Republic, the Gambia, the Marshall Islands, the Netherlands (but The Hague), the Northern Mariana Islands, the Philippines, the Solomon Islands, the United Arab Emirates (the UAE on second mention), the United Kingdom, the United States.  
no ‘the’  
Central African Republic (CAR on second mention), Ivory Coast, Lebanon, Seychelles, Sudan, Ukraine, Vatican City (but the Vatican), Yemen
4. **abbreviations and acronyms**  
Do not use full stops in abbreviations, or spaces between initials, including those in proper names: IMF, mph, eg, 4am, M&S, No 10, AN Wilson, WH Smith, etc. Use all capitals if an abbreviation is pronounced as the individual letters (an initialism): BBC, CEO, US, VAT, etc; if it is an acronym (pronounced as a word) spell out with initial capital, eg Nasa, Nato, Unicef, unless it can be considered to have entered the language as an everyday word, such as awol,

laser and, more recently, asbo, pin number and sim card. Note that pdf and plc are lowercase.

5. **Adjectives and adverbs:** modern style demands 'killing' any unnecessary adjectives and adverbs. Try to remove them before submitting.
6. **Spelling:** Please check your spelling before you submit. An ordinary spellchecker is fine but also Grammarly can be a huge help with identifying problematic places. If you submit a piece of work full of spelling mistakes, it will be almost certainly rejected.
7. **Punctuation:**
  - a. **Commas:** apart from full stops (periods) and question marks, they are the most used and debated punctuation marks. You use them to add clarity for the reader. It helps to avoid ambiguity in the sentence. Also see the rules for Oxford commas.
  - b. **Where to Write a Comma:**
    - **To illuminate the grammar of a sentence**
    - **To highlight almost like a musical notation** (rhythm; direction; pitch; tone; flow)

### I. Lists

- a. Fruits are orange, lemons, strawberries and apples.
- b. I had a wonderful time swimming in the sea, eating in tavernas, walking on the beaches and sunbathing.
  - a. *Rule: it is correct if you can replace it with 'and' or 'or'. You use a comma in the enumeration before 'and' where there are other 'ands' in the vicinity. Example: I went to Tesco's, and Marks & Spencer's.*

### II. Joining

- a. *Rule: two complete sentences are joined by conjunctions such as and, or, but, yet, while.*
- b. The boys wanted to stay up till midnight, but they grew tired and fell asleep.

### III. Filling Gaps

- a. *Rule: Missing words are replaced with a comma.*
- b. Annie has dark hair; Sally, fair.

### IV. Before direct speech

- a. *An old-fashioned rule*
- b. She said, "Don't you know who I am?"

### V. Two commas

- a. *Rule: A weak interruption or an additional information; the bits between the commas can be removed.*

- b. The man, who did not know his birth date, celebrated a random day as his birthday.

### 8. Other Punctuation Marks:

- . full stop (period)
- : colon
- ; semicolon

Full stop represents the longest musical pause, comma the shortest

- - hyphen, dash
- ? question mark
- ! exclamation mark
- ‘ apostrophe

Use the exclamation marks and dashes sparingly. Do not forget your apostrophes in possessive cases or when it indicates a missing letter: can't; David's book.